What Workers Expect When They're Expecting Better Work: Findings From the 2025 Indeed Workforce Insights Survey

The 2025 Indeed Workforce Insights Survey asked 80,000 workers from 8 countries to share their opinions on AI, their outlook for the future of their industries and national economies, how they do and would like to build skills – and more.

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The global labor market is defined by tension: between resilience and stagnation, opportunity and constraint, optimism and fatigue. Drawing on data from the 2025 Indeed Workforce Insights Survey, this report examines how workers across countries, generations, and backgrounds are navigating a world of work shaped by slow hiring, rising costs, demographic change, and rapid technological adoption. Across these eight chapters, a consistent theme emerges — while workers' circumstances and priorities vary widely, their expectations of work are becoming more complex, extending well beyond pay alone.

The findings reveal a workforce that continues to respond rationally to economic realities. Education remains a durable advantage, delivering higher earnings, lower unemployment, and greater access to training. At the same time, workers increasingly evaluate jobs as bundles of compensation, flexibility, stability, and meaning. Benefits such as health insurance and paid time off remain central, especially in countries where public provision is limited. And flexible work arrangements have become critical for retention — particularly for women and younger workers — even as their availability has stalled or declined in job postings.

This report also highlights widening divides in how opportunity is distributed. Migrants enter the labor market with optimism that often erodes over time as structural barriers persist. Generational preferences reveal mismatches between what workers want and what jobs offer, especially around remote and hybrid work. And the uneven adoption of artificial intelligence has created a growing split between workers who are supported, trained, and gaining productivity — and those who remain disengaged from both AI and career development more broadly.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: KEY FINDINGS AND DATA POINTS

→ AI USAGE & CONCERNS

- Globally, AI adoption at work varies dramatically across countries. Among observable factors, employer encouragement shows a strong association with adoption rates.
- Between 16% and 40% of workers are disengaged with AI; they don't use AI, and don't feel they need training on AI. This group is more likely to be older, in manual occupations, and less engaged at work.
- The risk for rural workers isn't just being replaced by AI — it's being left behind by the people and industries who learn how to use it first.

→ DEMOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

- Education pays: Any increase in education, even outside of a four-year degree, generally comes with an increase in pay.
- The share of people working primarily in the office is relatively stable across generations, but preferences differ by age — millennials and Gen Z prefer more workplace flexibility.
- When it comes to changing fields for the next job, however (and against popular belief), Baby Boomers aren't the least flexible ones.
- More than half of rural workers (54%) say they're "not at all" or "not really" concerned about losing their jobs in the next year, compared to just 41% of urban workers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: KEY FINDINGS AND DATA POINTS

→ IMMIGRANTS' OUTLOOK

- Working-age migrants in the US for five years or less were almost 18 percentage points more likely to be employed than native-born individuals, while also being more likely to be actively seeking employment.
- Migrants were systematically more positive than native-born peers about the future labor conditions of their industry and country. But the differences narrowed as migrants' time living in the US increased.

→ BENEFITS BEYOND PAY

- In every country surveyed, higher pay was the number one motivator for jobseekers.
- Across all eight countries surveyed, workers share several core priorities: a desire for better work-life balance, increased flexibility, healthier work cultures and greater control over how they use their time.
- Benefits, including health insurance and paid sick leave, are most desired in countries where these are not publicly provided.
- Gender shapes priorities: Women value benefits that help manage work and family demands, such as flexible working hours, remote work options, and childcare assistance. Men tend to prioritize financial benefits, including stock compensation, company cars, and performance bonuses.

Chapter 01

From Classrooms to Careers: Every Lesson Pays

By Allison Shrivastava

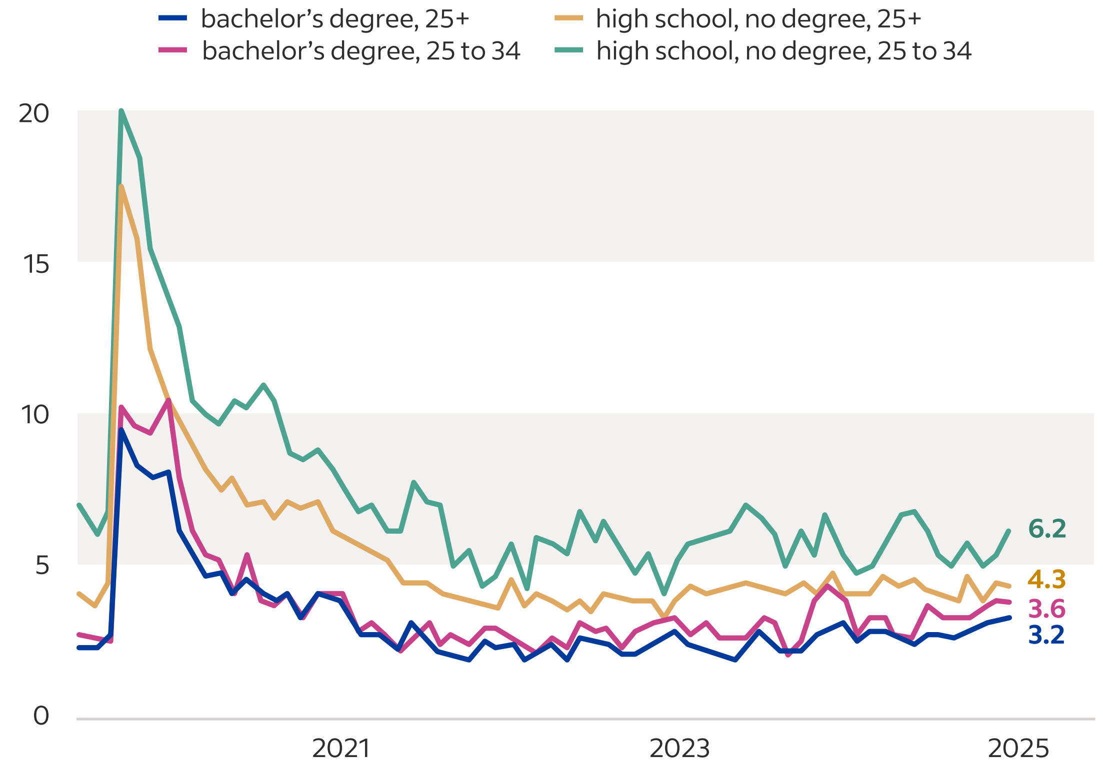
While the merit of a college degree is becoming increasingly contested, the value of education remains strong. A bachelor's degree continues to be associated with higher employment rates and better earnings. But workers with an associate degree — or even some college but no degree — also fare better than those whose education ends at high school. The advantages of education also extend beyond monetary benefits, with opportunities for workplace reskilling and career growth increasing with higher levels of education.

Education still pays off

Today's job market is challenging, particularly for those seeking employment for the first time. Despite a historically low overall unemployment rate, young workers are struggling to secure opportunities in what has become a stagnant labor market, marred by weak hiring and limited turnover. This stagnation affects nearly all new entrants, but its impact is particularly severe for young workers without a college degree.

Young workers are struggling to find work, but degree holders are faring better

Unemployment rates for workers by age and education, January 2020 to August 2025



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (IPUMS)

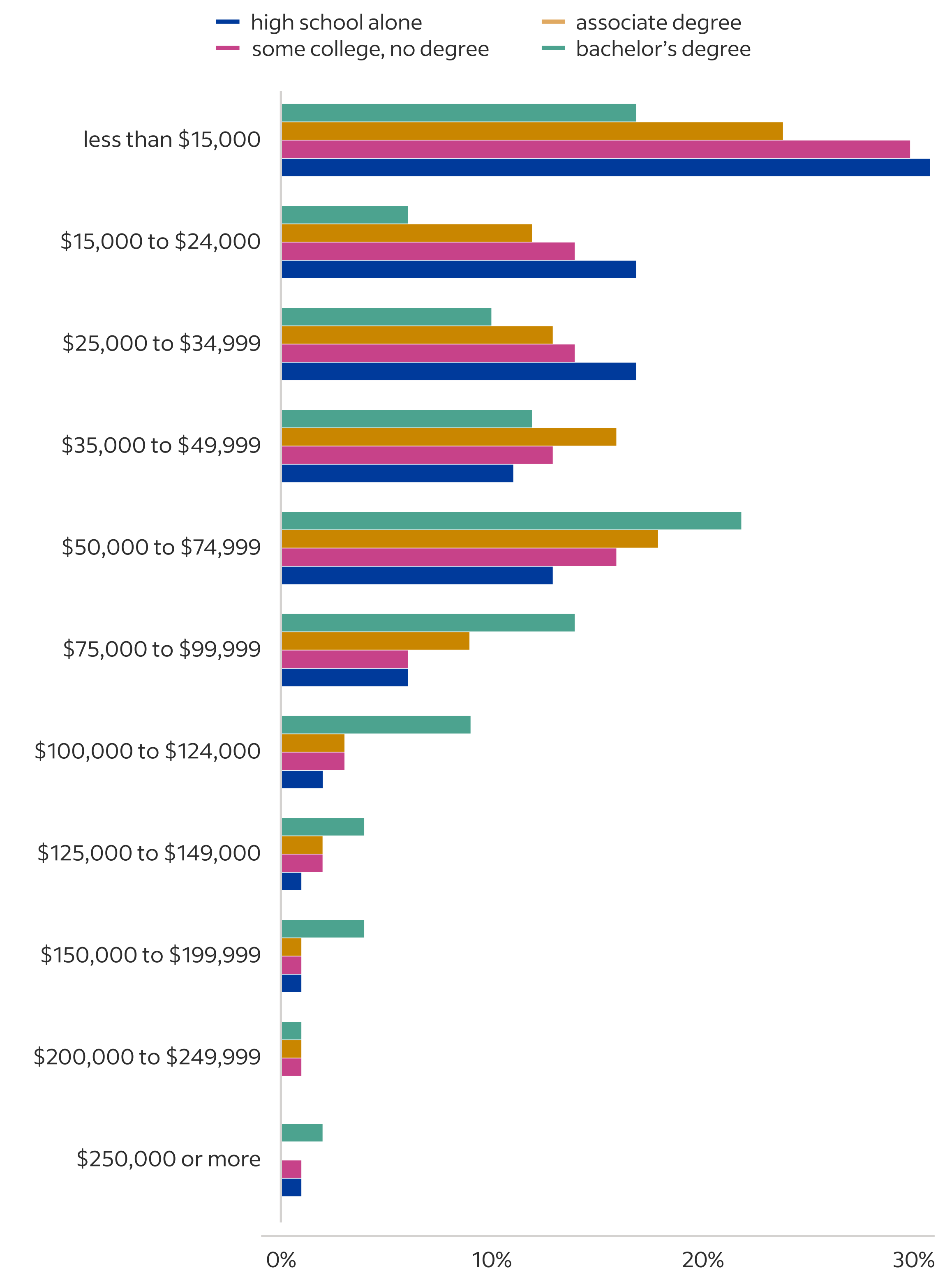
Even as public debate about the value of higher education intensifies, it remains true that those with only a high school degree (or some college but no degree) experience higher unemployment rates and lower earnings than workers with a bachelor's degree. This educational disparity persists despite estimates that 35% of all jobs require a bachelor's degree or higher — a share expected to increase to 42% by 2031.

Approximately 75% of high school graduates report earning less than $50,000 per year, compared with 71% of those with some college education and 65% of associate degree holders

Weekly median earnings for those with a bachelor's degree are $322 higher than for workers overall, a clear signal of the immediate financial benefits of having a degree vs not. However, even some college experience holds advantages over only holding a high school diploma, suggesting a general pattern: the more education one attains, the better the outcomes. New survey data from the Indeed Hiring Lab shows that 31% of respondents with a high school diploma alone were making less than $15,000 a year, compared to 30% for those with some college but no degree, 24% of associate degree holders, and just 17% for those with a four-year education. Because this survey includes all employment statuses (not just full-time), underemployment is a factor, as are differences in wages. According to the 2025 Indeed Workforce Insights Report — a national, population-weighted survey of more than 10,000 US residents — approximately 75% of high school graduates report earning less than $50,000 per year, compared with 71% of those with some college education and 65% of associate degree holders. However, less than half of bachelor's degree holders (45%) reported earning less than $50,000/year. In other words, the financial payoff comes at the bachelor's degree finish line.

Any increase in education is associated with higher earnings

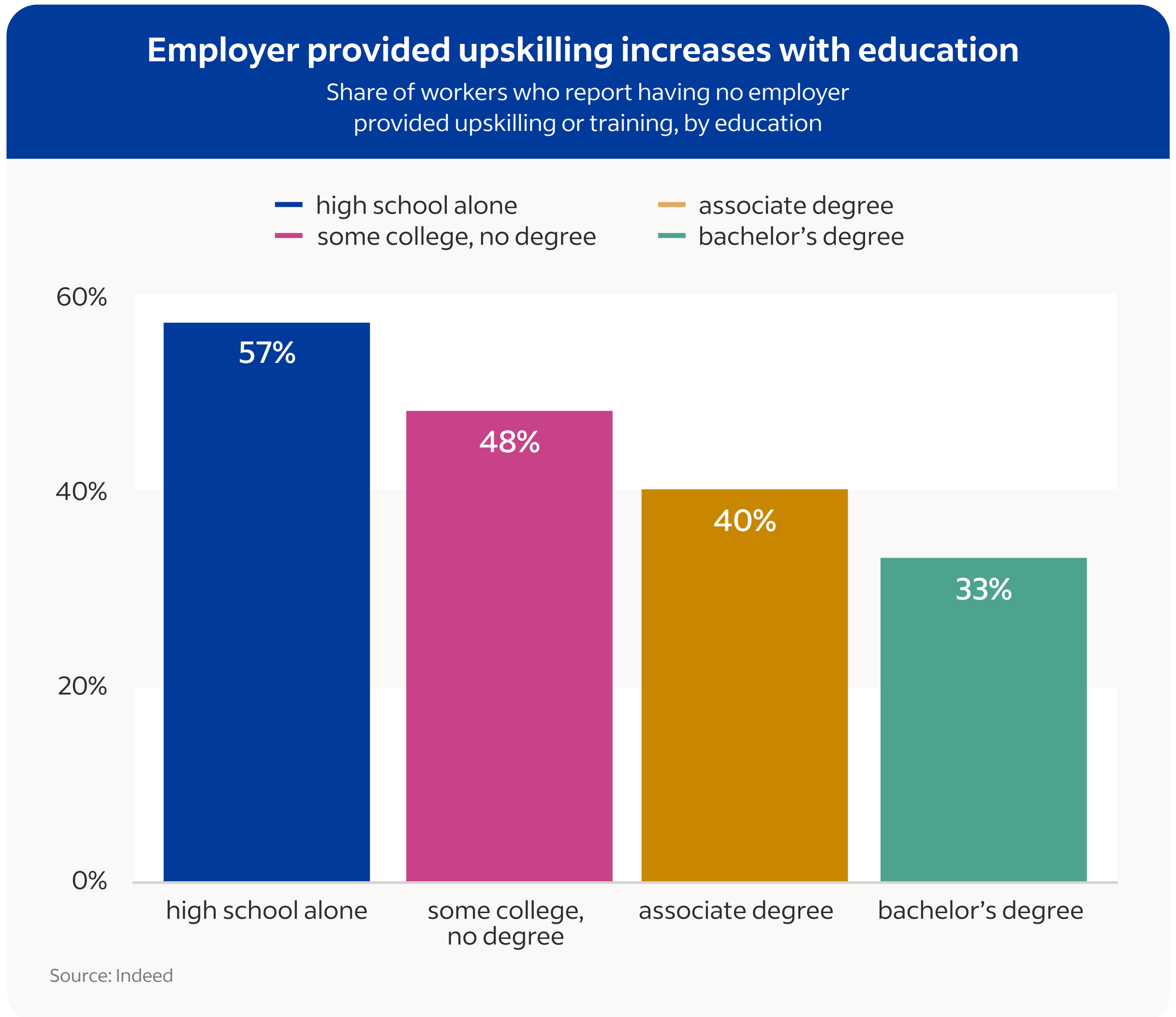
Earnings by education level



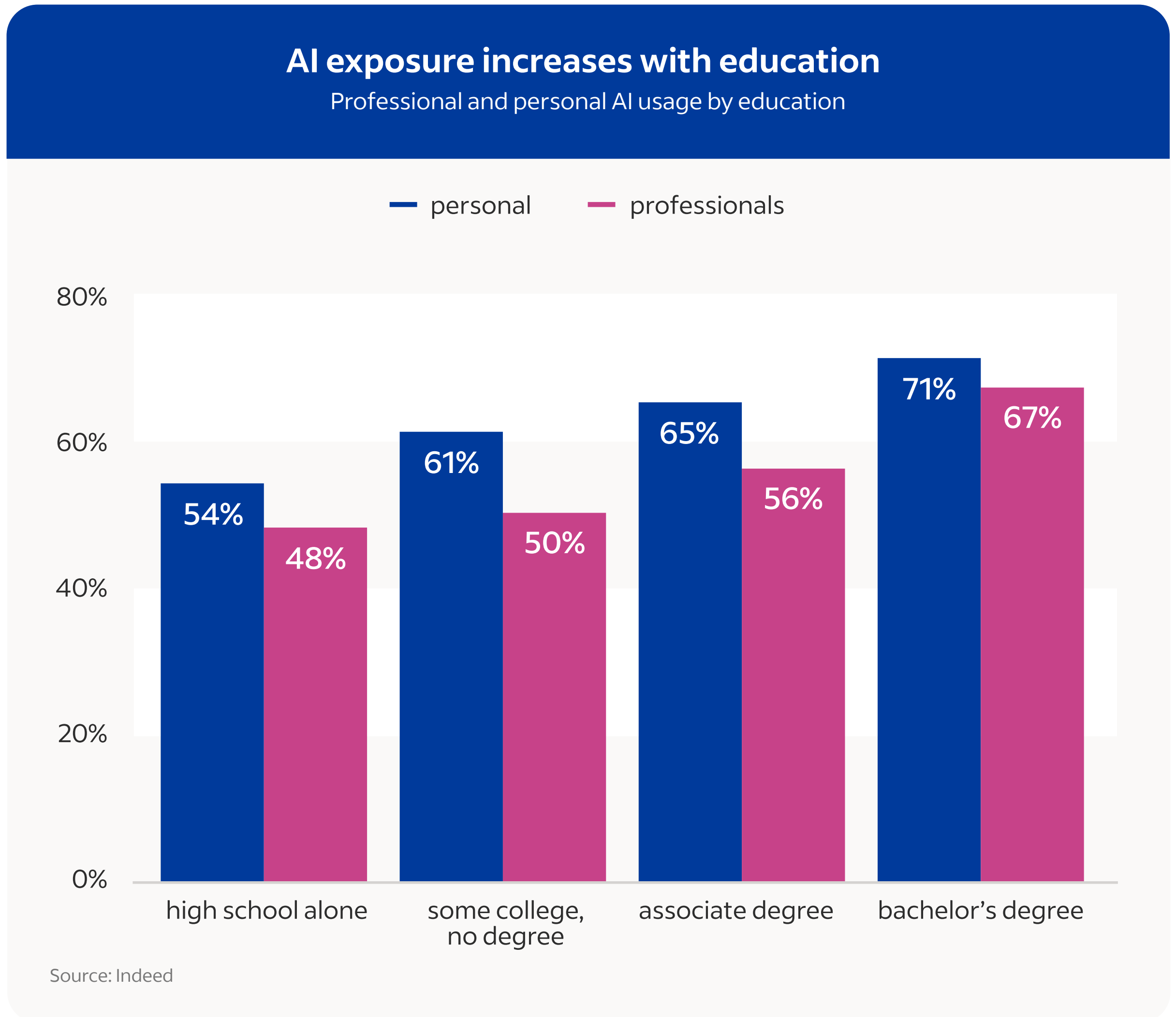
Source: Indeed.

Opportunities continue after college

Income isn't the only advantage education provides. While at least half of respondents across all education levels said upskilling is a priority, a majority (57%) of workers with only a high school education reported having no access to employer-provided training, compared to 48% of those with some college but no degree, and 40% of associate degree holders. By comparison, just 33% of bachelor's degree holders said they have no access to employer-provided skill development.



The rise of AI as a critical skill across industries further highlights this disparity. Because AI is relatively new, most workers must develop expertise outside traditional college programs. Yet, only 54% of high school graduates report using AI in their personal lives, compared to 61% of individuals with some college but no degree, 65% of those with an associate degree, and 71% of those with a bachelor's-level education. In professional settings, usage drops even further: half, or even fewer, of both high school graduates and those with some college experience reported using AI at work, increasing slightly to 56% for those with an associate degree, and roughly two-thirds (67%) of bachelor's degree holders.



Despite the advantages education provides at any level, 40% of those with some college but no degree reported that a lack of education and certification has been a barrier in finding a job — a startling 10 percentage points more than those with just a high school diploma, and 5 percentage points higher than those with a two-year degree. This difference in perception could be because those with some college but no degree are seeking jobs that are typically only attainable to degree holders, while associate degree holders and high school graduates had different expectations about their career trajectories. Regardless of sentiment, those with some college but no degree are still represented in a much wider range of occupations compared to those whose education ends at high school. And while many employers are lowering degree requirements in job postings, it's clear that more education means more access to a variety of jobs, particularly well-paying ones with more training opportunities.

> A degree may not guarantee employment, but it consistently expands opportunity.

In a stagnant labor market, skepticism about the value of a degree has reached a fever pitch. Rising costs and uncertain job prospects make the investment appear less compelling. However, the advantages of education remain clear. A degree may not guarantee employment, but it consistently expands opportunity. Postsecondary credentials improve access to higher earnings, career advancement, and employer-sponsored reskilling — especially as artificial intelligence reshapes the workplace. Education is not a cure-all for economic stagnation. However, dismissing its value risks overlooking one of the most reliable tools for resilience and mobility in a shifting economy. Education completion at any level still opens doors.

Chapter 02

"Classic" Employer Benefits Are A Strong Draw For US Job Seekers Across Ages

By Brendon Bernard

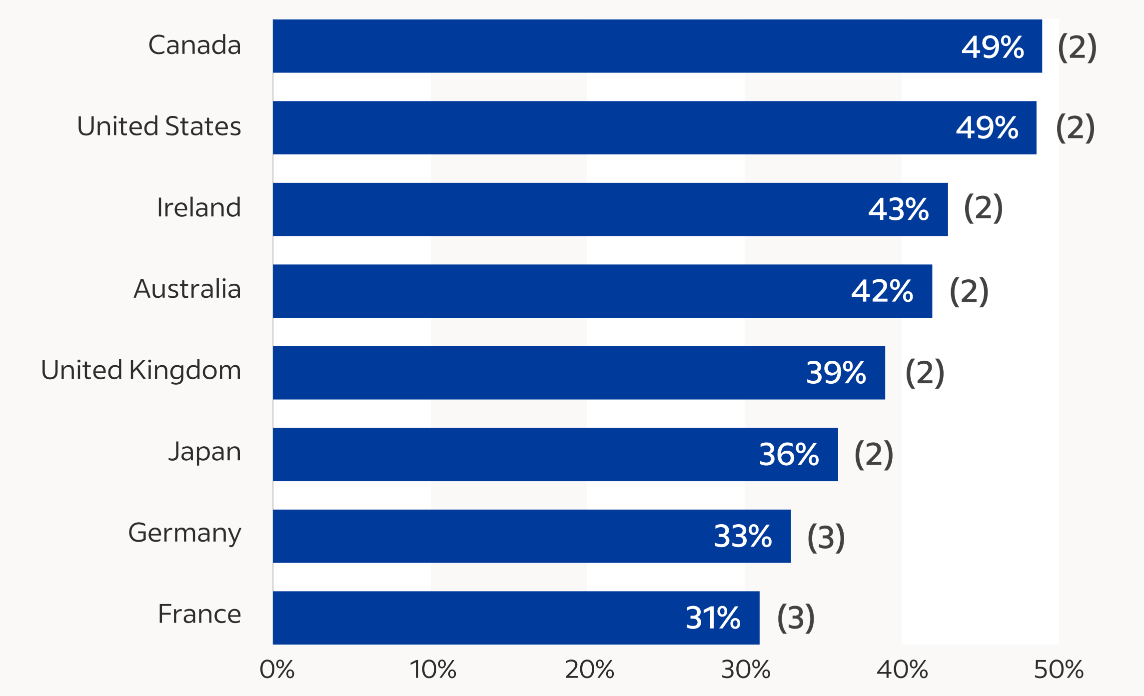
Job seekers looking to change employers aren't just searching for higher pay. Securing a better benefits package is also a common priority, according to the 2025 Indeed Workforce Insights Survey. Among the different offerings, health insurance and paid time off stand out as the most popular benefits, both overall and across the age spectrum. Meanwhile, how much workers value different secondary benefits often varies substantially by age, and other demographic characteristics.

Employer-sponsored benefits don't often get the same coverage in labor market discussions as wages, but they loom large. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employer benefits (excluding contributions for government programs, like Social Security) accounted for 24% of total compensation of US employees in July 2025. Health insurance and paid leave are the two most prominent benefits paid out, according to the federal data, but supplemental pay and retirement benefits are also significant. One reason for this elevated share is that many job seekers place substantial importance on receiving employer-sponsored benefits when undertaking their job searches.

The 2025 Indeed Workforce Insights survey polled more than 80,000 respondents in eight countries on a variety of topics. Employed job seekers were asked to select 5 to 10 factors (out of a list of 24) that were motivating their search for new work. Higher pay was the most frequently selected motivator in all eight countries, but ranking second in six of the eight were people looking for better benefits. Almost half (49%) of employed US job seekers selected "better benefits" as a motivator, a level above all other countries surveyed except Canada. In each of the eight countries, searching for a job with better benefits was a motivator for more than 30% of job seekers.

Better benefits are one of the most common job attributes workers are looking for

Share of employed job seekers selecting 'better benefits' as a motivator of their job search (%, rank within country in parenthesis)

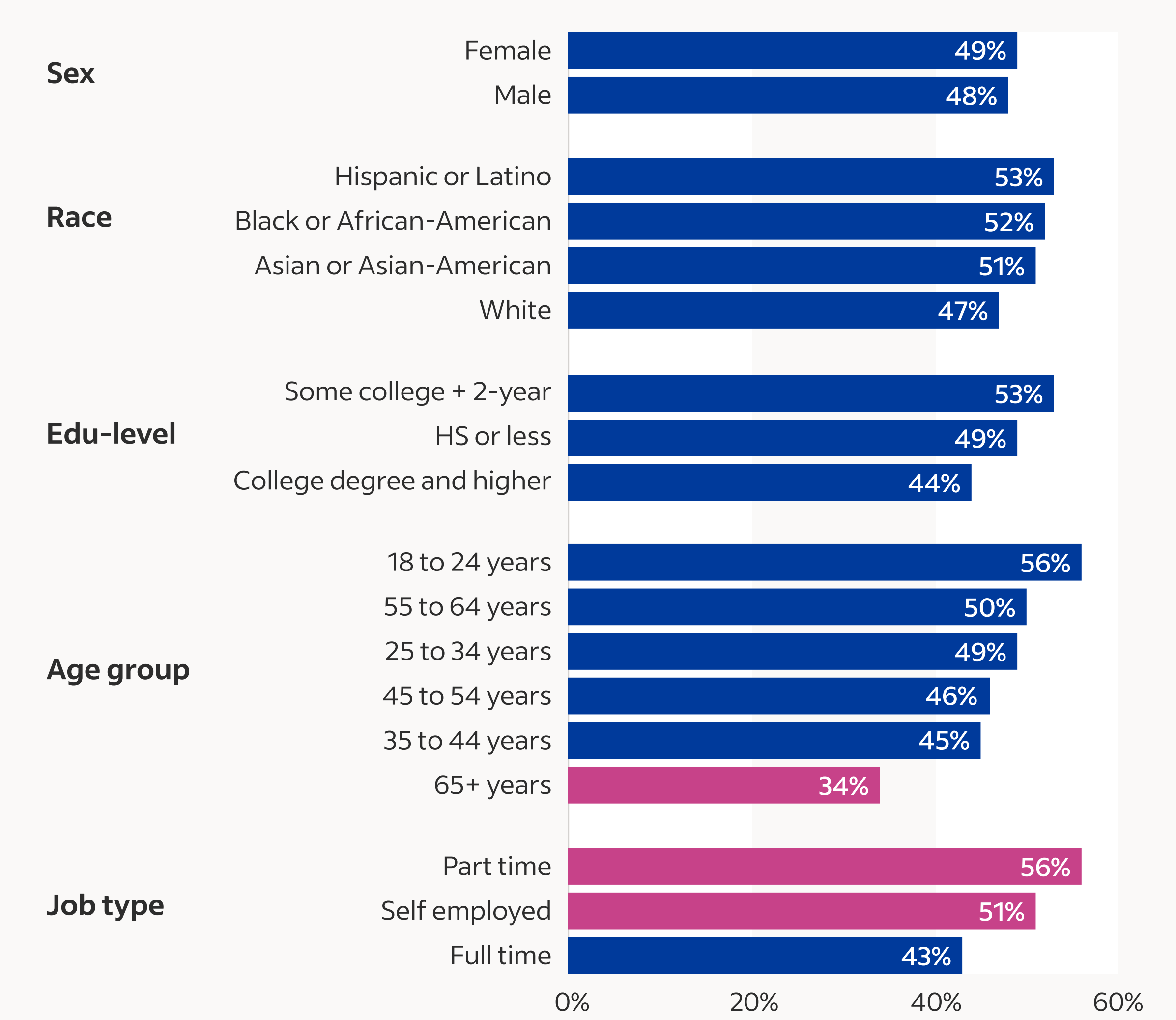


Source: Indeed 2025 Workforce Insights Survey

Among US job seekers, better benefits were selected as a motivator at similar rates (roughly half) across most demographics, including sex, race, and most levels of educational attainment. Moreover, of the few groups that selected better benefits somewhat more often (like those ages 18-24), or less often (those with college degrees) than others, the different propensities reflected the types of jobs they were presently working in. One exception though was among job seekers 65 and older, who were significantly less focused on benefits than others, likely because many are already eligible for Medicare and Social Security benefits, and might have lower needs for benefits related to dependent care.

Searching for better benefits more common among part-time and self-employed workers

Share of employed U.S. job seekers selecting 'better benefits' as a motivator of their job search (%)



Source: Indeed 2025 Workforce Insights Survey
Pink-coloured bars indicates difference in share is statistically significant share compared to other groups after controlling for the factors listed above

Instead of demographic characteristics, the types of jobs respondents were currently working in were more predictive of whether benefits were a key job search motivator. Respondents who were self-employed, and in particular, those currently working part-time jobs, were significantly more likely to mention better benefits (51% and 56%, respectively) than those working full-time (43%), including after controlling for demographic characteristics. Given that part-time workers typically receive fewer employer-sponsored benefits than their full-time peers, it's unsurprising that benefits rank higher in their job search considerations.

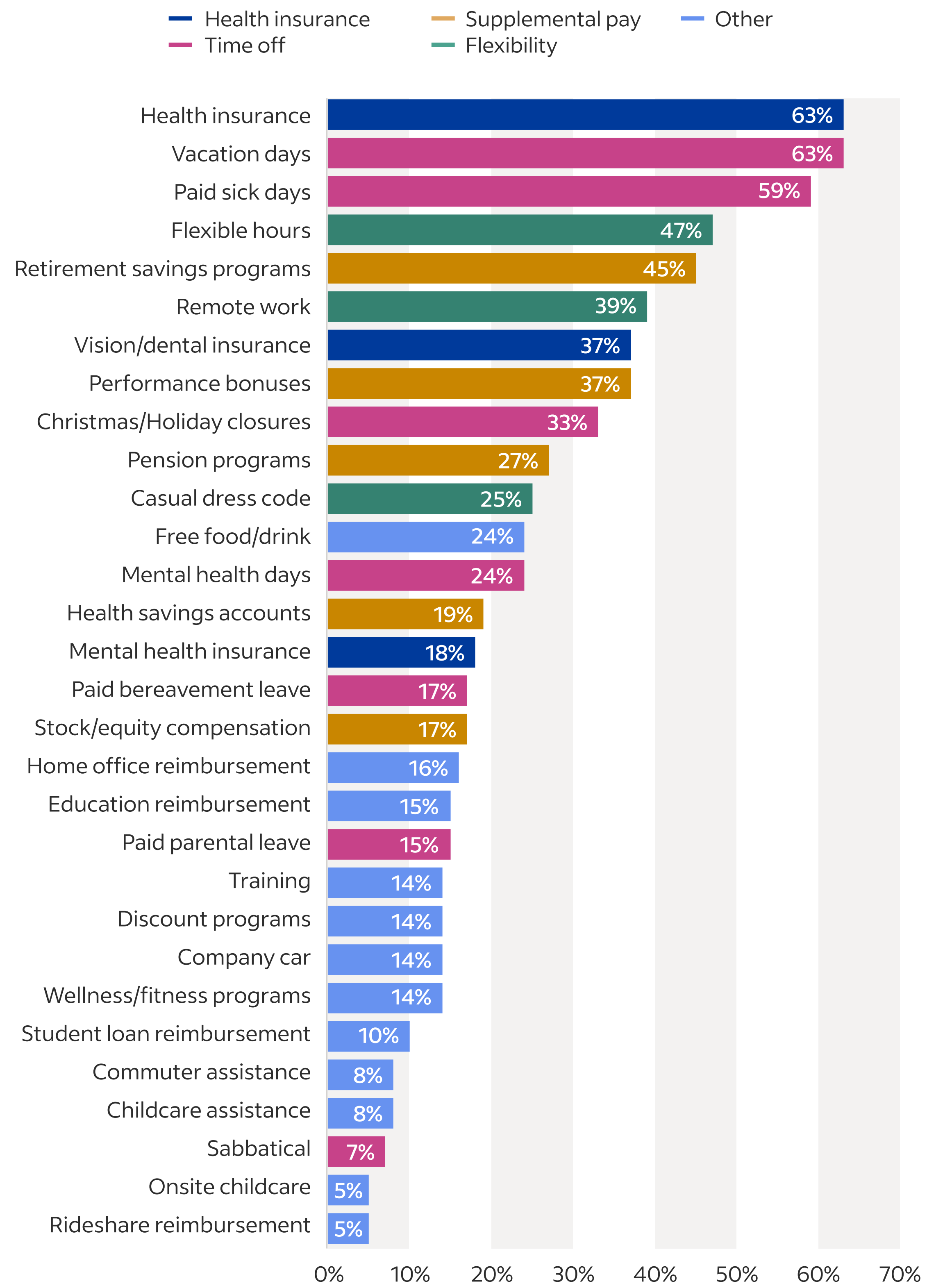
Health insurance and paid time-off rank as the most popular benefits

Unlike wages and salaries, which are standardized in dollars and cents, the types of benefits valued by job seekers vary more broadly. We asked workers to select 5 to 10 benefits and job amenities (from a list of 30) that would interest them most when considering a new employer.

Health insurance stood out as the most popular benefit, identified by 63% of the US labor force (i.e., those either employed, or actively searching for work) as a benefit they'd value substantially. This share was higher than in [other countries surveyed](), likely reflecting a greater presence of publicly provided health insurance outside of the US. Dental and vision insurance (37%) also made the top 10 of most popular benefits, while mental health insurance (18%) ranked somewhat lower.

Health insurance and paid time off are the most popular employer-sponsored benefits

'What types of benefits would you value in a new job?' % of US labor force



Source: Indeed 2025 Workforce Insights Survey
Respondents select 5 to 10 options.

The other most popular form of benefits was the availability of paid time off. Paid vacation and sick days were selected by 63% and 59% of US workers, respectively, as a benefit they'd value. Holiday closures were also a common interest, chosen by 33% of respondents. Other forms of paid time off, like mental health days, bereavement leave, and parental leave, didn't rank as high, selected by fewer than a quarter of workers.

The popularity of different benefits varies by age groups

While interest in benefits overall was fairly similar across different demographics, the types of benefits identified as desirable varied more substantially. One of the characteristics where this appeared was across different age groups.

The most popular benefits — health insurance and paid time off — ranked high across generations. However, interest in these benefits also tends to rise with age. For instance, vacation days garnered interest from 51% of workers aged 18-24, rising across the age spectrum to 72% of 55-to-64-year-olds. Similar patterns were also evident for sick days, health and dental insurance, and different forms of supplementary pay. Retirement savings programs had a particularly steep age gradient, with 35% of workers under 25 indicating interest, compared to 59% among 55-to-65-year-olds. Overall, these "classic" benefits are popular across the board, but particularly among workers middle-aged and older, who tend to be substantially less interested in other offerings.

Popularity of specific benefits varies by age group

Share of US labor force interested in certain benefits, by age group (%)
Benefits ranked by overall interest
Color indicates how interest varies vs. US average (blue = less, pink = more)

	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45- 54	55- 64	65+
Health insurance	60%	61%	63%	66%	71%	55%
Vacation days	51%	61%	64%	68%	72%	65%
Paid sick days	55%	55%	60%	59%	68%	58%
Flexible hours	49%	46%	48%	47%	45%	50%
Retirement savings programs	35%	39%	47%	50%	59%	46%
Remote work	34%	39%	43%	39%	36%	37%
Vision/dental insurance	29%	30%	37%	42%	49%	44%
Performance bonuses	32%	33%	35%	42%	44%	43%
Christmas/Holiday closures	30%	30%	33%	33%	41%	35%
Pension programs	17%	21%	28%	32%	37%	35%
Casual dress code	27%	22%	22%	26%	26%	32%
Free food/drink	32%	25%	24%	22%	19%	16%
Mental health days	25%	26%	26%	23%	21%	16%
Health savings accounts	21%	20%	19%	19%	20%	15%
Mental health insurance	22%	22%	18%	18%	14%	9%
Paid bereavement leave	12%	14%	18%	18%	22%	22%
Stock/equity compensation	15%	13%	16%	20%	20%	21%
Home office reimbursement	15%	14%	15%	16%	15%	25%
Education reimbursement	22%	18%	14%	14%	10%	11%
Paid parental leave	19%	23%	18%	9%	7%	6%
Training	15%	15%	14%	15%	12%	15%
Discount programs	18%	15%	13%	14%	11%	18%
Company car	13%	17%	13%	14%	13%	13%
Wellness/fitness programs	12%	15%	13%	14%	14%	13%
Student loan reimbursement	17%	12%	11%	9%	5%	3%
Commuter assistance	9%	10%	8%	5%	7%	7%
Childcare assistance	8%	12%	11%	4%	2%	3%
Sabbatical	7%	10%	8%	7%	6%	4%
Onsite childcare	5%	8%	7%	3%	2%	2%
Rideshare reimbursement	7%	7%	5%	3%	3%	2%

Source: Indeed 2025 Workforce Insights Survey
Respondents select 5 to 10 options

Meanwhile, younger workers often indicated interest in a broader range of benefits, including offerings rarely valued by older workers. The most prominent of these is free or discounted food at the workplace, which was selected among 32% of 18-to-24-year-olds, twice the share of those 65 and older. Subsets of younger job seekers also showed a greater interest in student loan reimbursement, commuter and rideshare reimbursements, sabbaticals, parental leave, and childcare assistance and provisions.

Finally, there were a few benefits selected at similar rates across age groups. Schedule flexibility and remote work were broadly popular, while benefits such as training, access to company cars, and/or fitness programs ranked lower. Casual dress was a unique case, more appreciated by those under 25 or older than 54 than by workers between these ages.

Benefits are an important part of talent attraction

Employers seeking to be competitive in their recruitment efforts must consider more than just pay. Benefits are also an essential part of the compensation package for many workers, and job seekers, especially those in part-time roles, are often looking for better offerings than what they're currently receiving. The most prominent benefits in the US labor market today — health insurance and paid time off — are also the most popular among active job seekers. While they're a significant expense for employers, they're often a necessary cost of doing business. And for employers already offering these features, ensuring job seekers are aware of their benefits package can offer an edge in recruiting.

These popular benefits are of interest to different groups of job seekers, but are of particular focus among those over the age of 45. Meanwhile, younger job seekers exhibit a greater variety of interests in some cases, likely due to both generational differences, and others, reflecting people's different stages of life. Moreover, there are other demographic divides — including gender — in the types of benefits that interest job seekers. For employers seeking to improve their ability to attract specific groups of candidates, these differences are important to consider.

Chapter 03

Women Value Flexibility. Are Employers Risking Their Female Talent by Standing Still?

By Virginia Sondergeld

The benefits workers prefer often reflect differences in public services and social insurance in the countries where they work, according to data from Indeed's 2025 Workforce Insights Survey, a representative survey of more than 80,000 workers across eight countries. Priorities also vary by gender. Women place a greater value on flexible working hours and remote work, yet postings offering these benefits have recently plateaued (or even declined) across markets.

Compensation today extends well beyond wages. Employers stand out by offering benefits including comprehensive health coverage, paid time off, and flexible work arrangements. Workers are willing to trade pay for better non-wage benefits: A recent study shows that [40% of US workers] would be willing to give up at least 5% of their salary to keep the option of working from home.

When asked to rank their top 5-to-10 most-valued employer benefits, 67% of US respondents chose health insurance.

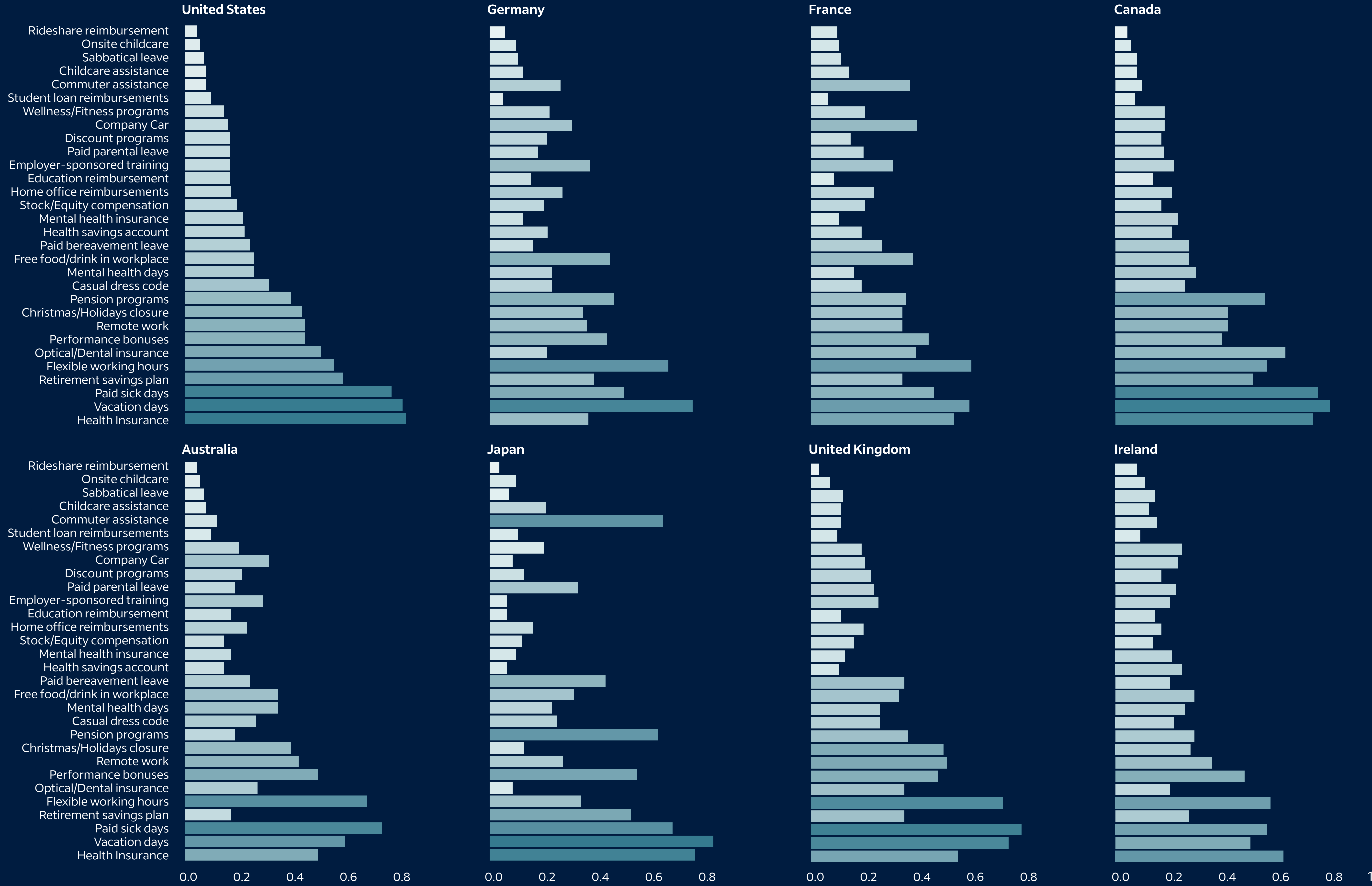
Desired benefits reflect differences in public provision, but can't be fully explained by them

A lack of government-provided public services, including healthcare and retirement plans, drives the perceived value of certain employer-provided benefits in some countries. When asked to rank their top 5-to-10 most-valued employer benefits, 67% of US respondents chose health insurance. This significant demand reflects the lack of universal public healthcare, which makes employer-provided coverage a critical necessity in the US. In contrast, countries with robust universal public healthcare, including Germany (30%), France (43%), and the UK (44%), see lower value placed on employer-provided health insurance.

Paid sick leave shows a similar pattern. With no federal requirement in the US, 63% of American workers consider it a top benefit. It's also highly valued in the UK (64%), where Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) replaces only a portion of typical earnings. By contrast, valuation of paid sick leave is lower in Germany (40%) and France (37%), where strong national policies already provide more-robust protections for workers.

Differences in public provision are reflected, but do not fully explain workers' desired benefits

Share of respondents selecting each benefit as one of their 5 to 10 most valued employee benefits



Source: Indeed.

Still, public guarantees don't fully determine preferences. Vacation days rank among the top three benefits in seven of eight countries — even in those where generous paid time off is mandated (ranging from 0 days in the US to 20 and 25 days in Germany and France, respectively, across the countries surveyed). More than 60% of workers in Japan, the US, Canada, and Germany said they prioritize vacation days, compared to only 40% in Ireland.

And when core needs are met outside of employer-provided benefits, other employer benefits gain traction. Free food and drink is a top choice for 36% of workers in Germany versus 22% in the US. Cultural norms also matter: Commuter assistance is highly valued in Japan (52%), where employers are typically expected to provide it, while company cars are more popular in France (32%), Australia (26%), and Germany (25%) than in the US (14%).

Traditional gender norms shape women's needs

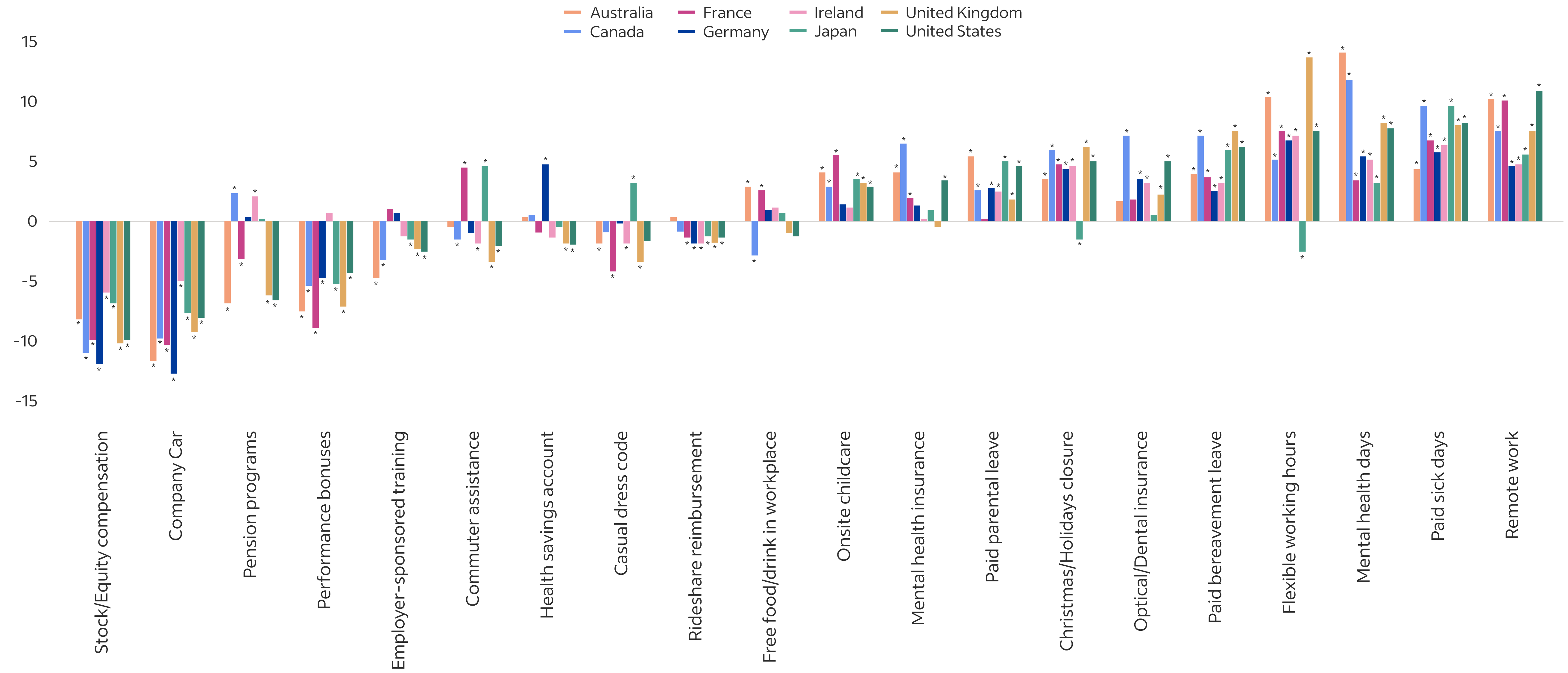
According to the OECD, women were still the primary caretakers and performed significantly more unpaid labor than men in each of the countries surveyed. This unequal burden of care and domestic responsibilities shapes what benefits women, in particular, look for in a job.

Women place a significantly higher value on benefits that help balance work and family life. The share of US female respondents choosing remote work as one of their top-valued benefits is 11 percentage points (ppt) higher than the corresponding share for male respondents. Women also choose flexible working hours (+7 ppt), parental leave (+5 ppt), and childcare assistance (+3 ppt) significantly more often. They further value mental health benefits, including mental health days and bereavement leave, at higher levels than their male colleagues. This holds across countries investigated.

Men, by contrast, are more likely to prioritize financial rewards aligned with traditional breadwinner expectations, including stock compensation (-10 ppt in the US), company cars (-8 ppt), and performance bonuses (-4 ppt) — a pattern also consistent across countries.

Women value benefits related to work-family balance more, men value financial benefits more

Gender difference in share of respondents selecting each benefit as one of their 5 to 10 most valued employee benefits, * = $p < 0.05$



Source: Indeed.

Job postings offering flexible hours or remote work have stagnated

Despite the stronger demand from women for benefits helping to balance work and family life, particularly through flexible working hours and remote work, the availability of these options in job postings has recently stagnated or even declined in many markets.

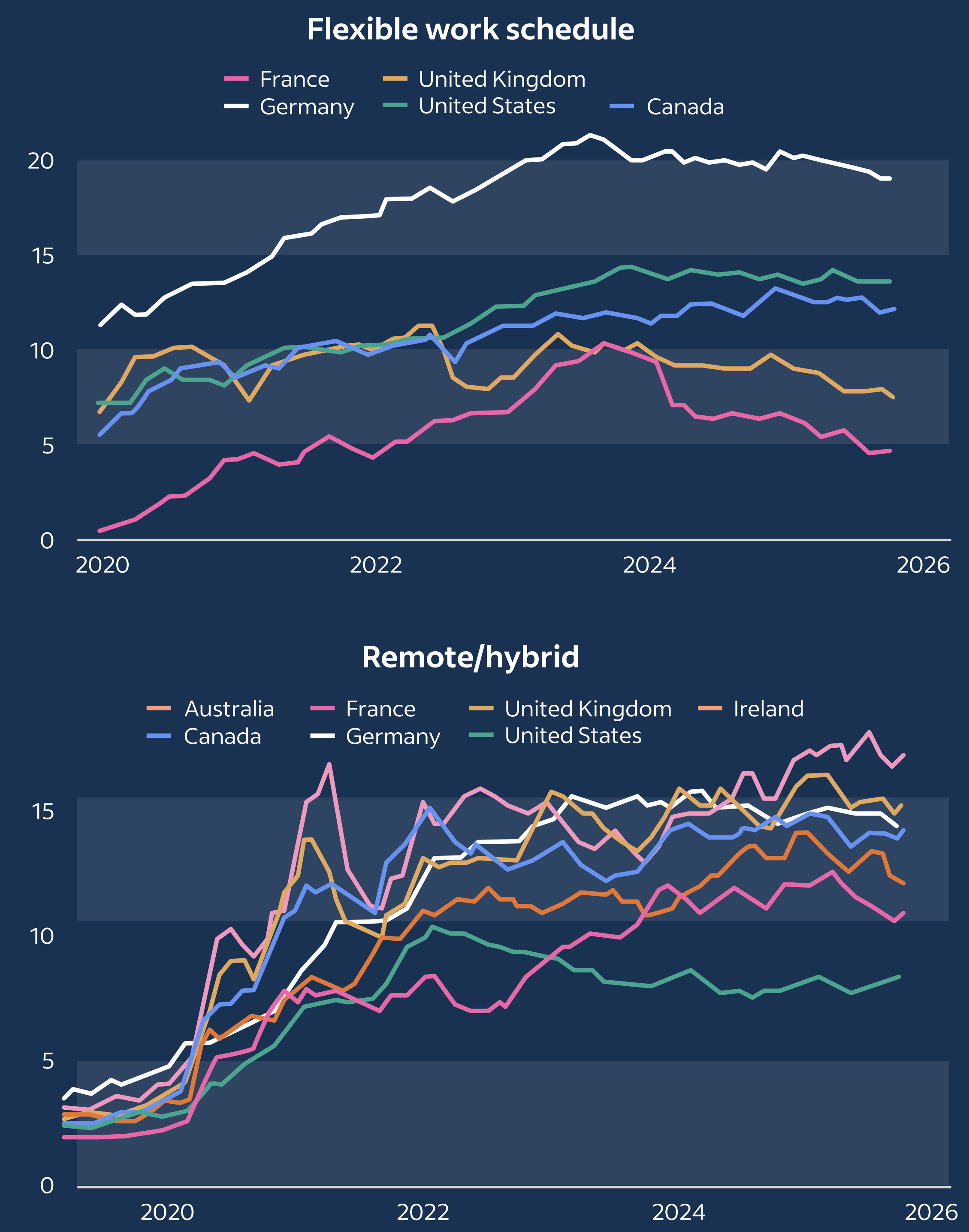
> After rapid growth from below 5% in all markets before the pandemic to more than 15% in Canada, Germany, the UK, and Ireland, momentum has flattened since 2024

In the US, the share of postings advertising flexible schedules more than doubled from 7.1% in early 2020 to 14.4% in November 2023. Since then, progress has stalled, standing at 13.7% as of October 2025. A similar plateau is visible in Canada (from 13.3% in December 2024 to 12.5%), while Germany, which historically had the highest share of flexible work postings, recently slipped from 21.3% in August 2023 to 19% as of October 2025. Recent decreases are also observed in France (from 10.5% in September 2023 to 4.6%) and the United Kingdom (from 11.3% in May 2022 to 7.5%), which remain the lowest among the countries surveyed.

Job postings offering remote or hybrid work tell a similar story. After rapid growth from below 5% in all markets before the pandemic to more than 15% in Canada, Germany, the UK, and Ireland, momentum has flattened since 2024. Recent declines are evident in France (12.4% to 10.9% between March and October 2025), Australia (13.9% in January 2025 to 12%), and Germany (15.7% in March 2024 to 14.1%). The US continues to lag most countries, with remote shares below 10% since 2022.

Both flexibility and remote options in job postings have recently stagnated or decreased across countries

Share of job postings (%) that mention a flexible work schedule or remote/hybrid work, monthly data through October 2025



Source: Indeed.

Workplace flexibility supports both gender equity and labor supply

Desired benefits reflect differences in public provision of services and insurance by country. But culture matters too: Gender norms continue to shape daily responsibilities, and women's higher demand for flexibility underscores the challenge of balancing work and care. Increasing women's labor force participation is both a gender equity priority and an economic necessity to address a shrinking workforce in the light of demographic change across all economies analyzed.

Employers who tighten return-to-office policies or reduce flexibility in working hours should be aware of the potential consequences.

To empower women to enter and remain in the workforce, efforts must focus on two fronts. In the long term, policymakers and employers can encourage a more equal split of unpaid labor, for instance, through parental leave that incentivizes men to take over more care work.

In the short term, women's current life circumstances need to be addressed. Our Workforce Insights Survey reveals that flexible working hours and remote work benefits continue to be a crucial means of supporting women's retention and advancement in the workforce.

The recent slowdown in flexible schedules and remote offerings is concerning in this respect. Employers who tighten return-to-office policies or reduce flexibility in working hours should be aware of the potential consequences. They risk restricting their talent pool and missing out on skilled workers. Sustaining flexibility isn't just beneficial for employees; it supports broader workforce participation in the face of growing labor shortages.

Chapter 04

Hope and Reality: When the American Dream Starts to Fade

By Sneha Puri

Immigrants, especially those who have arrived in the US within the past five years, are more likely to be employed than their US-born peers, according to the 2025 Indeed Workforce Insights Report, a national population-weighted survey of more than 10,000 US residents. Immigrants' optimism towards work and economic conditions is also more likely to be higher than their US counterparts — but only to a point. Over time, as immigrants face structural barriers, including language and cultural challenges and work authorization barriers, their optimism fades.

Almost two-thirds (65%) of working-age respondents born in the US reported being employed, compared to 83% of migrants who said they had moved to the country in the past five years. But interestingly, despite reporting high levels of employment, 30% of working-age respondents who have lived in the US for under five years also report that they are urgently and actively looking for paid employment; only 7% reported not seeking employment actively or passively. This is significantly less than those born in the country, 26% of whom indicated they are not looking for employment. Furthermore, working-age, foreign-born respondents who are currently employed full-time were nine percentage points more likely to be actively seeking jobs, potentially due to higher rates of underemployment or lower job stability due to work authorization issues.

Working-age, foreign-born respondents who are currently employed full-time were nine percentage points more likely to be actively seeking jobs.

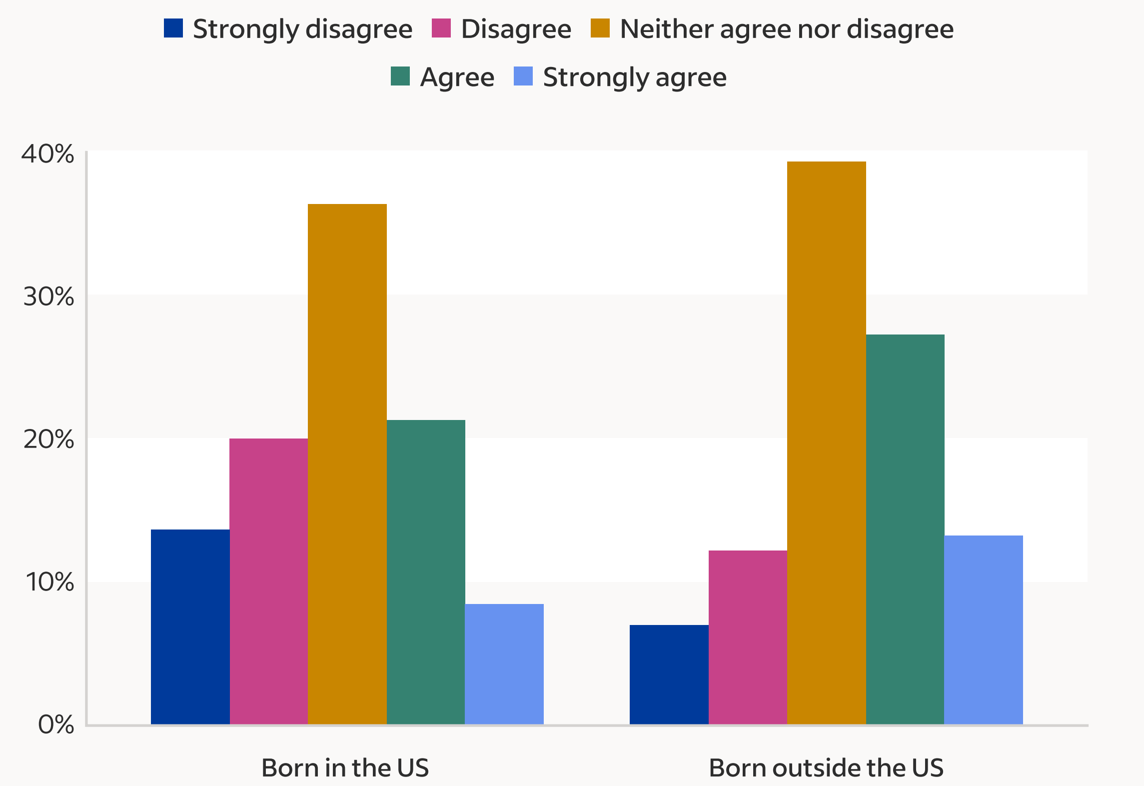
This could also be an indication of the systemic lack of job satisfaction among immigrants, even those who have been here for a long time. Immigrants, regardless of how long they have been in the country, were uniformly more likely than their US-born peers to agree or strongly agree with the following statements:

- They are burned out by their work (42% vs 37%)
- Their work causes them a great deal of stress (39% vs 35%)
- Their work puts stress on their home life (36% vs 28%)

Interestingly, while employed migrants were less likely to say they feel secure in their current jobs, foreign-born job seekers were also more likely to express confidence in their ability to find a job quickly if needed. 39% of foreign-born respondents said they are somewhat or very concerned about their job security over the next 12 months, compared to 31% of native-born workers. This share was highest among recent migrants, with nearly half (49%) of them expressing concern about their job security. However, the share of active job seekers born outside the US who said they agreed or strongly agreed that they were confident they could find a new job in the next month was 11 percentage points higher than the share of US-born workers who said the same.

Foreign-born job seekers are more confident about finding a job

Share of active job seekers in the United States who agree or disagree with the statement, 'I am confident I can find a new job in the next month', by residency status



Source: Indeed.

Migrants in the United States (versus US-born workers) are more likely to agree or strongly agree with the following expectations about the next five years:

- More opportunity to get ahead and be more successful in my career (53% vs 42%)
- More upward mobility (49% vs 40%)
- Better work/life balance (54% vs 48%)

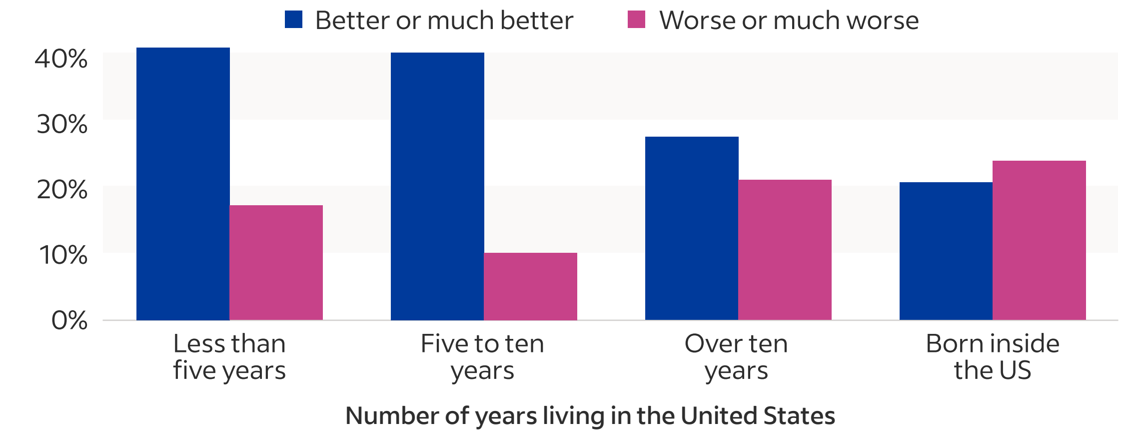
This optimism likely reflects not only confidence in the labor market but also a broader hope that conditions will improve as they integrate into life in the United States. The data also paints a nuanced picture of the migrant experience, wherein the hope for a better future is in tension with currently unstable situations.

Economic outlook

Foreign-born respondents were more likely to report a positive outlook for their industry's labor market conditions in a year. Still, the discrepancy reduces as time living in the US increases. Roughly 40% of foreign-born respondents here for 10 years or less said they expect conditions in their industry to be better or much better in a year, far outpacing the share of similar native-born respondents that said the same. But among migrants here for more than a decade, just 28% said they expected conditions to be better in a year in their industry, similar to the US-born share (21%).

As migrants spend more time in the US, they are less likely to think their industry's job conditions will get better

Share of US respondents who expect industry conditions will be better vs worse over the next one year, by residency status



Source: Indeed

Question: Looking ahead a year from now, do you expect job conditions in your industry will be better, worse or just about the same?

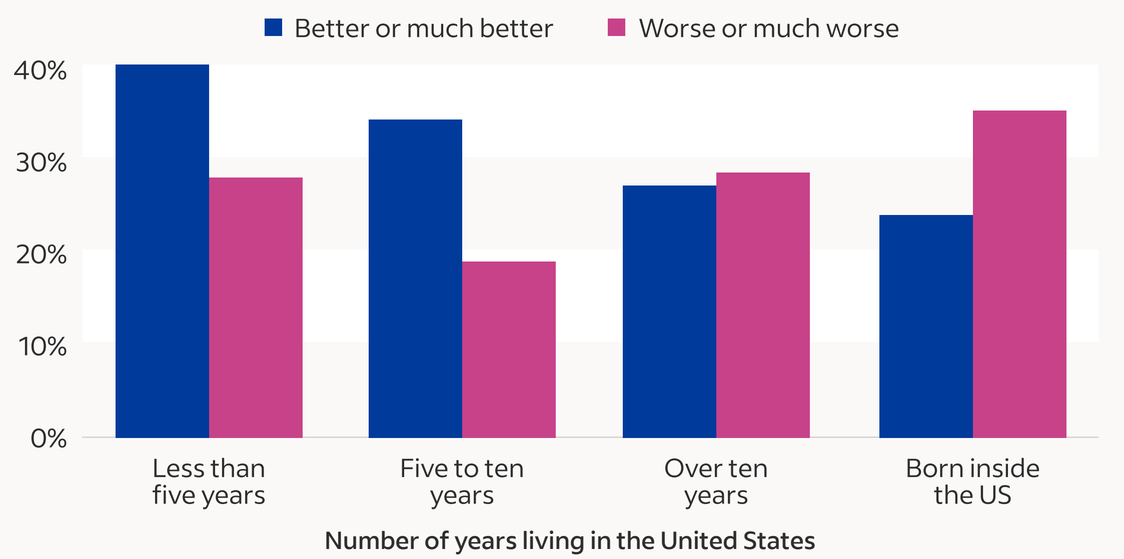
These trends differ by industry, however. In industries where migrants are overrepresented, such as industrial, manufacturing & technology, foreign-born workers were 22 percentage points more likely to report thinking their industry conditions would be worse or much worse over the next year compared to native-born workers. This could be because their over representation in these industries gives them direct exposure to the slowing demand, and within these industries, they are more likely to take roles with higher layoff rates. For example, construction currently faces higher layoff rates than most industries, and migrants working in construction were 11 percentage points more likely to think their industry would be worse or much worse.

On the other hand, native-born workers in service roles — such as public sector & social services — were 10 percentage points more likely to report having a worse or much worse outlook of their industry one year down the line than migrants.

The same is true for broader labor market expectations. Foreign-born people are much more optimistic about job conditions compared to natives. Over 40% of migrants who have lived in the US for less than five years said they expect the overall labor market to improve over the next year, while only about 25% of US-born respondents shared that view. However, optimism declines as migrants spend more time in the country, converging toward the views of natives, and reverses after 10 years, with long-term migrants' outlook turning more negative.

As migrants spend more time in the US, their outlook on the country's labor market deteriorates

Share of US respondents who expect job conditions will be better vs worse over the next one year, by residency status



Source: Indeed
Question: Looking ahead a year from now, do you expect job conditions in your country will be better, worse or just about the same?

One possible interpretation is that newcomers who may not yet feel fully secure or satisfied in their current situation tend to look ahead with greater hope for improvement. Over time, however, this initial optimism gives way to a more tempered or even pessimistic view, as longer-term residents encounter the realities and structural challenges of the US labor market.

These barriers can include discrimination, credential recognition, and/or slower wage growth, all of which could dampen optimism over time.

Occupational barriers

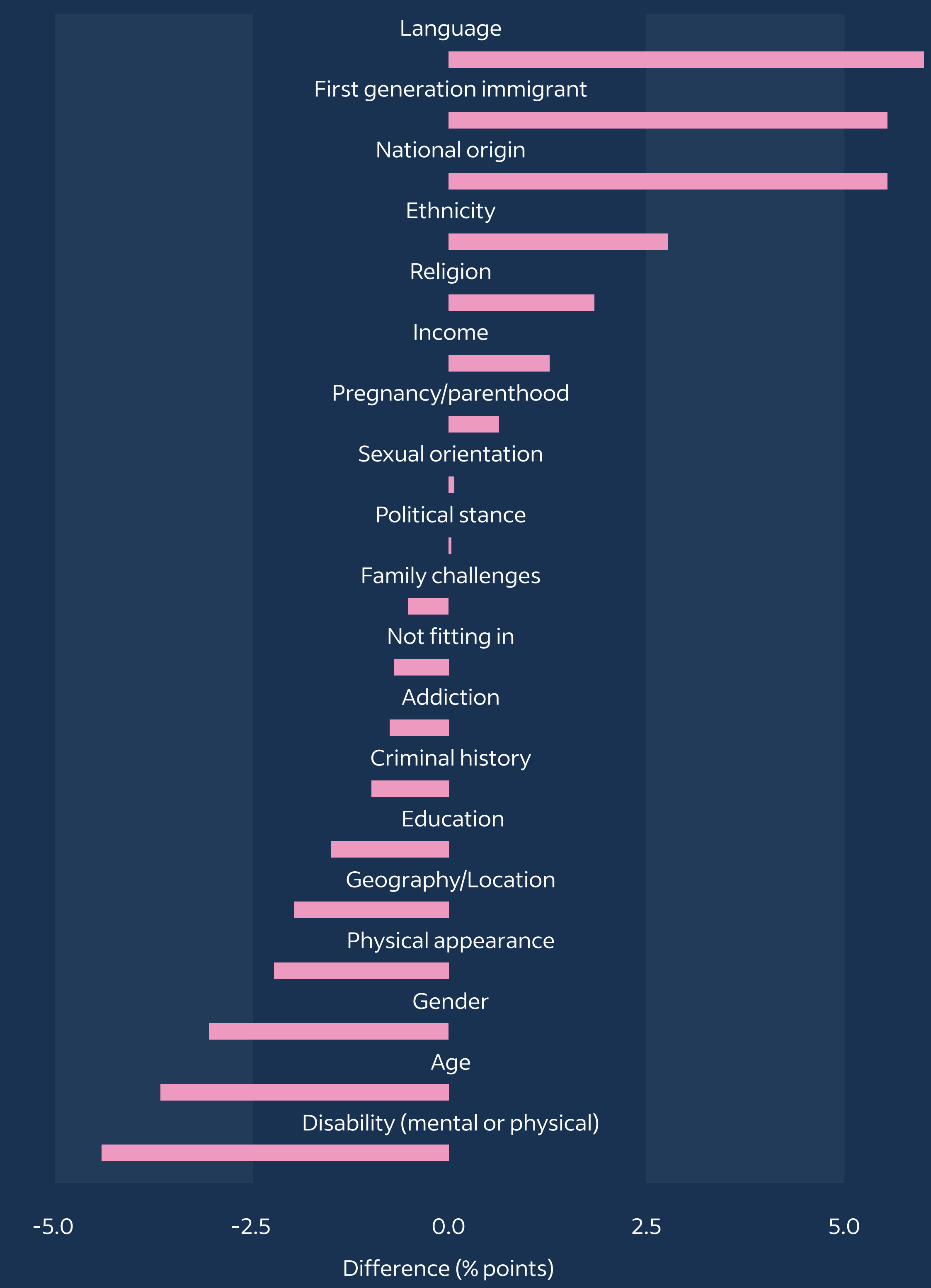
Foreign-born residents who are not employed face unique barriers compared to workers born in the US. They were more likely to note language, ethnicity, and religion as employment barriers, alongside their immigration status and national origin. Compared to native-born workers, they were significantly less likely to note barriers such as geography, gender, age, and disability.

> For many, hopefulness reflects both a willingness to start from scratch and pursue long-term success.

While recent migrants in the United States display greater optimism about their future, this outlook often stands in contrast to current realities: foreign-born workers tend to report experiencing a less positive work culture and lower job security than native-born peers. Their initial elevated expectations may arise in part because of a lower "baseline," and in part because ideals of the American Dream shape their optimism and belief in upward mobility and new opportunities, even if those promises are not always fully realized. For many, hopefulness reflects both a willingness to start from scratch and pursue long-term success, as well as an enduring faith that their risks and hard work will pay off in their new home, despite the challenges and setbacks they face along the way.

Language and immigrant-status barriers sharply divide job seekers born outside vs. inside the US

Percentage point difference in share of respondents reporting a barrier, foreign-born vs native born



Source: Indeed.

Chapter 05

Why Workers Search: Pay Leads, But Meaning Matters More Than Ever

By Jack Kennedy

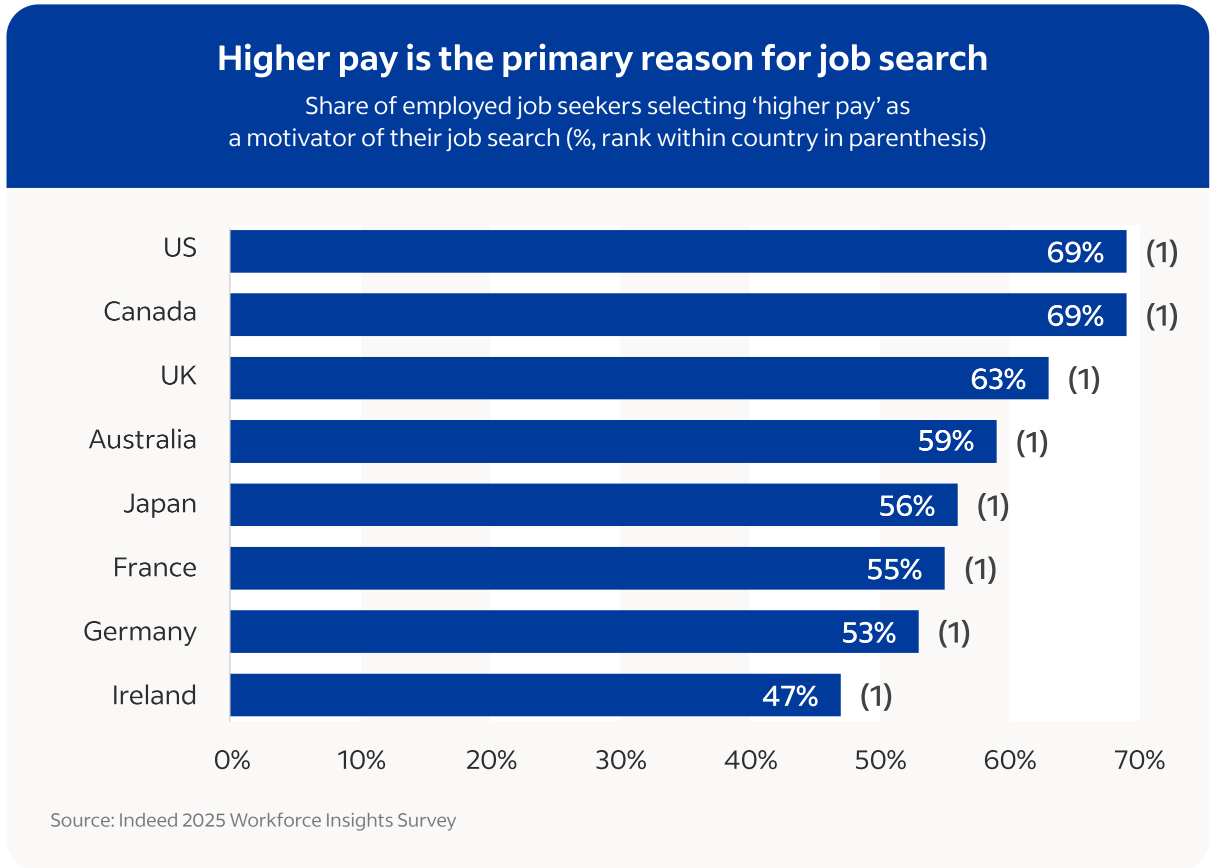
Higher earnings may open the door to a job search, but many workers walk through it carrying far more than financial goals. Their motivations reveal a more comprehensive picture of what makes work worthwhile.

Workers look for new jobs for many reasons, but one stands above the rest: higher pay. That priority is nearly universal, ranking as the highest priority among survey respondents across North America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific. Yet the motivations behind job searches today reveal a labour force that values far more than a bigger paycheck. Workers across countries, demographics, and industries are also seeking roles that feel sustainable, supportive, and aligned with their values and identities.

In our 2025 Indeed Workforce Insights Survey, which polled workers in the United States, Canada, the UK, Australia, Ireland, Germany, France and Japan, we asked employed jobseekers to select between 5 and 10 motivators from a list of 24 possible reasons to search for new work. While pay dominated, a broader story emerged — one that reflects shifting expectations in an era shaped by inflation, burnout, and rethinking the role work should play in life.

Pay tops the list, but it's not the whole story

In every country surveyed, higher pay was the number one motivator for jobseekers. In the US and Canada, 69% of seekers selected this reason, by far the most-cited factor. Though not quite as dominant in Europe and Asia-Pacific, higher pay was still a clear leader over other motivating factors.



Several non-pay factors were chosen by roughly a quarter to a third of UK jobseekers, suggesting that what people want from work is multidimensional. Respondents were also looking for:

- Better benefits (39%)
- Better growth opportunities (33%)
- A role aligned with interests or values (32%)
- A more stimulating role (32%)
- Better company culture (29%)
- More flexibility to work from home (27%)
- Better work-life balance (26%)

These motivations reflect a workforce that is not merely chasing a paycheck, but seeking jobs that support stability, health, personal growth, and a sense of belonging.

How motivations shift across countries: Benefits are key

Across all eight countries surveyed, workers share several core priorities: a better work-life balance, increased flexibility, healthier work cultures and greater control over how they use their time. However, underneath these similarities lie notable differences in how workers rank what matters most, revealing how cultural norms and labour-market structures shape the search for new work.

Better benefits consistently appear as the second-highest motivator (with the exception of France, where they rank third). However, while the ranking is similar, the meaning of "benefits" varies among workers by country.

In the US, benefits often carry outsized weight because employer-sponsored health insurance is foundational to financial stability.

In Canada, the UK, Ireland, and Australia, where public healthcare systems cover most essential medical needs, workers are more likely to associate better benefits with retirement plans, paid leave, supplemental health coverage, family support or overall job security. In Japan, benefits often signal stability and long-term employment, including bonuses, transportation allowances, and company-based social protections.

Across these markets, the through-line is not one specific perk but the broader idea of a stronger, more reliable safety net — a package that reduces financial risk and makes a job feel secure and stable.

Benefits, balance and culture shape job searches

Share of respondents selecting each reason as one of their 5 to 10 most important reasons for job search

Source: Indeed.

How motivations shift across countries: Balance, culture and commute

France and Germany, however, tell a different story. In both countries, the second-most selected reason for searching is a better work-life balance or avoiding excessive overtime (joint-second for Germany, along with better benefits). In Japan, it was the fourth-highest ranked reason.

Seeking a better company culture was also particularly important in Ireland, Australia, and the UK, where it was the fourth, fifth, and sixth-most selected reason, respectively. Commute time offers another point of divergence. While "wanting a shorter commute" ranks tenth or lower in most countries, it rises to the seventh-most selected motivator in both Germany and Japan. Dense transit networks, rising transportation costs and a strong preference for efficient daily routines may all play a role.

A desire for roles that more closely align with personal values or interests was a common theme across countries, ranking seventh or higher in every country and making the top three in the US, Canada, Australia, and Germany. This emphasis on meaning underlines the importance of work as a source of identity, autonomy and purpose — not just income.

Beyond pay: Understanding the new mix of priorities

For workers everywhere, compensation remains the clearest motivator. However, the broader mix of needs — whether benefits, balance, purpose or predictability — shows that jobseekers are evaluating the whole package. Employers that adapt to these priorities will be best equipped to attract and retain talent in a market where expectations continue to evolve.

Chapter 06

Age Is More Than a Number: What Different Generations Want When They Seek a Job

By Lisa Feist

Some stereotypes hold a grain of truth: older generations tend to prefer in-office work, while younger ones often seek greater workplace flexibility. Part-time work is more popular among Baby Boomers, while Millennials prefer — or require — full-time jobs. When it comes to changing fields for the next job, however (and against popular belief), Baby Boomers aren't the least flexible ones.

Active job search decreases with age

At the start of one's career, every step counts. Early career decisions tend to define the pathways and successes throughout one's work life. Younger workers tend to switch jobs more frequently as they work their way up the career (and wage) ladder. Later on, job tenure increases as job switching becomes less common. Higher job switching frequency among younger folks — as well as higher unemployment, typically lower job quality, and lower pay — means they are more likely to be on the lookout for job opportunities, both on and off the job (across all observed countries, Gen Z has the highest share of respondents actively looking for a job).

Millennials, who generally have the highest employment rates, rank second in job search, closely followed by Gen X. Those closest to and beyond the respective retirement age in different countries — Baby Boomers — are both least likely to be currently working and to search for jobs.

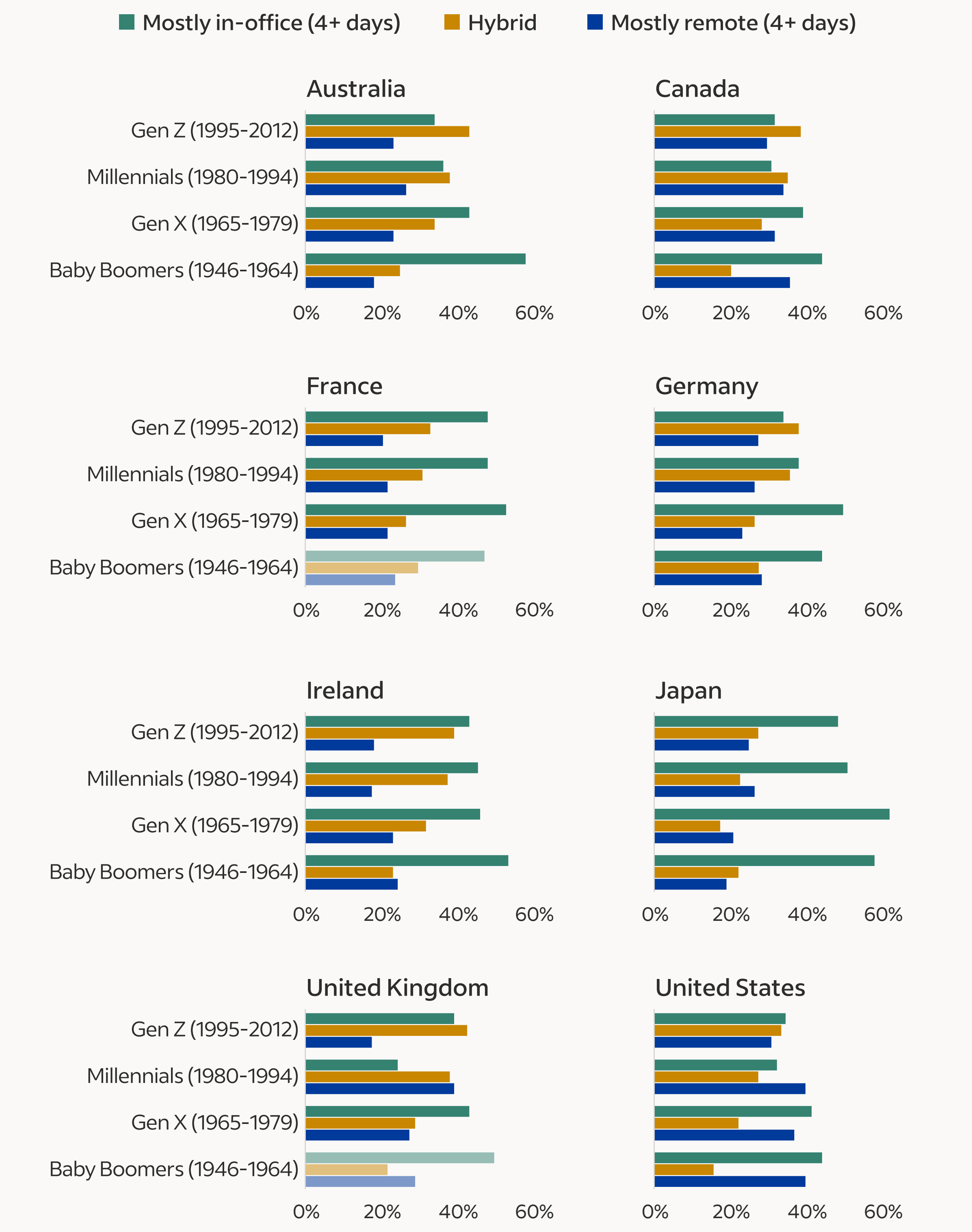
Hybrid work arrangements resonate with younger job hunters

In-office work is the preferred work mode among job-seeking Baby Boomers and Gen X across all countries, among Millennials in Germany, and by a close tie among Gen Z in the US. It is the top choice across all generations in France, Ireland, and Japan. Hybrid work leads among Gen Z and Millennials in Australia and Canada, and among Gen Z in Germany and the UK. Among British and US Millennials, remote work is the most popular option, although in the UK, it is nearly tied with hybrid work.

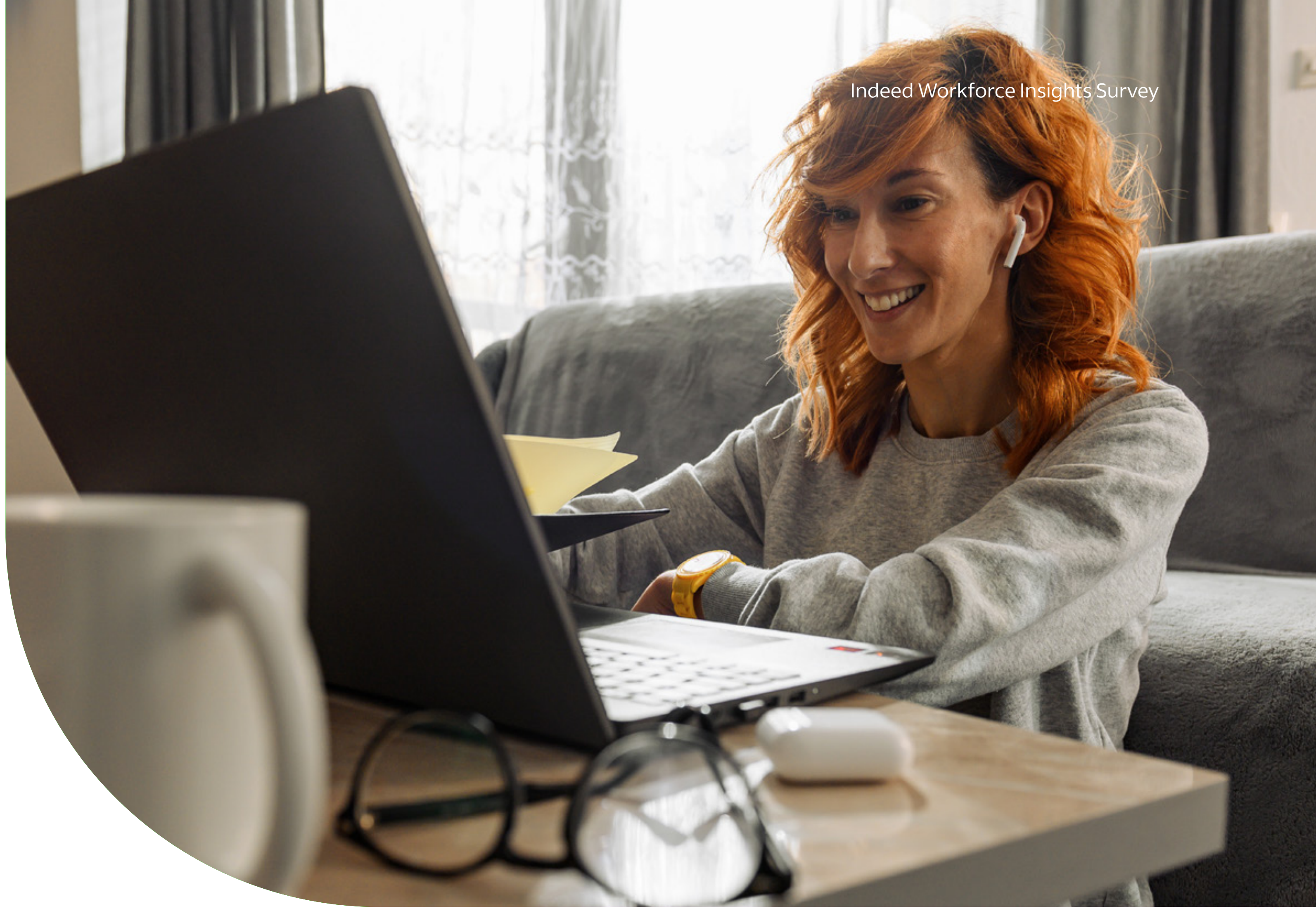
Broadly speaking, preference for in-office work gradually increases with age, rising from Gen Z to Baby Boomers, while hybrid preferences decline across the same span. Hybrid arrangements are especially popular among Gen Z job seekers, who report the highest share of all generations seeking a 2–3 day office schedule and 2–3 days working from home.

Hybrid work is most popular among Gen Z job seekers

Share of work location preferences among job seekers (employed and unemployed), by generation



Source: Indeed Workforce Insight Survey 2025.
Question: "What is your preferred work arrangement? Please select one answer."
Bars for generations with fewer than 100 weighted respondents are shown semi-transparent.

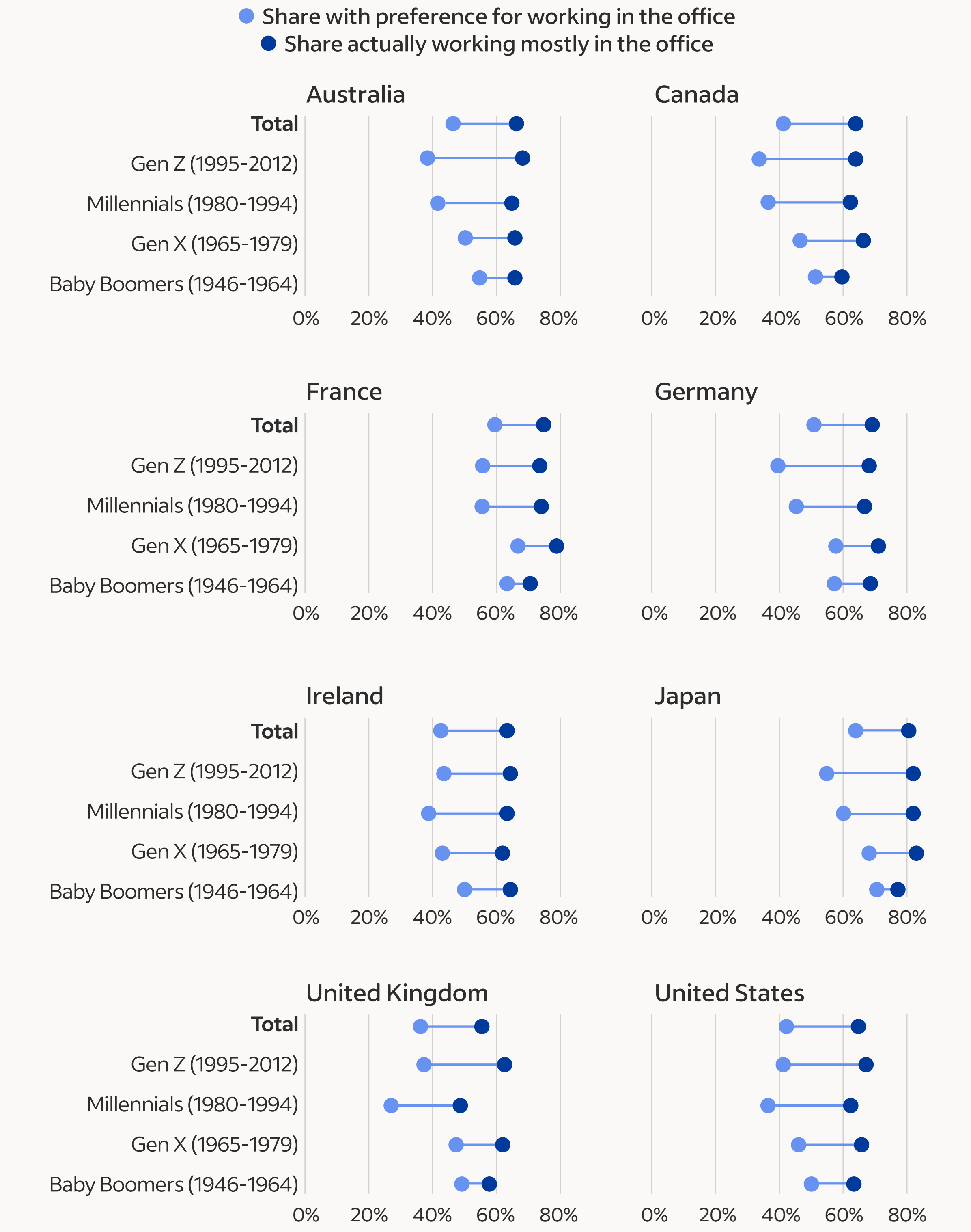


Wishes to work from home or hybrid aren't met in actual work arrangements

Job seeker preferences can help employers gauge how to best attract talent of different age groups. But the preferences of those already employed should not be overlooked, as they can help shape strategies to help retain talent. Among those currently employed (seeking or not), there is a clear gap between the share of respondents who prefer in-office work — defined as at least four days a week in the office — and the share who actually work primarily in the office. This gap is particularly pronounced for Gen Z and Millennial workers.

In-office work exceeds preferred levels across all generations

Incidence of mostly in-office work (current) and preference for it, by generation and country, % of respondents who are currently in employment (seeking or not)



Source: Indeed Workforce Insight Survey 2025. Limited data availability for Baby Boomers in France and the UK.
Chart shows the share of respondents choosing "Primarily working from home (in office 1 day/week or less)" in response to the question "What is your preferred work arrangement? Please select one answer."
Other alternatives: "Hybrid (2-3 days in-office/field, 2-3 days at home)" or "Primarily working in-office/in-field (4+ days/week not at home)"

The countries with the highest shares of workers who primarily work in the office are Japan (around 80%) and France (75%). In both countries, a majority also prefers in-office work — 64% in Japan and 60% in France — but a substantial gap remains. Around one in six workers would prefer more flexibility than their current job allows. The UK has the lowest share of workers going to the office at least four days a week (under 56%), and only 37% have a preference to do so.

In most countries, preferences differ across generations. Actual work arrangements, however, are similar across age groups, sharply limiting the freedom in work location that Millennials and Gen Z are looking for. The share of employed respondents with a preference for in-office work ranges lowest among Millennials in the UK (27%), the United States (37%), Ireland and Australia (both 39%), and among Gen Z in Canada (34%) and Germany (39%). In France and Japan, although Gen Z shows the lowest preference within both countries, more than half of respondents in both generations still favor in-office work (55% in Japan and 56% in France).

Preferences show who wants — or needs — full-time employment

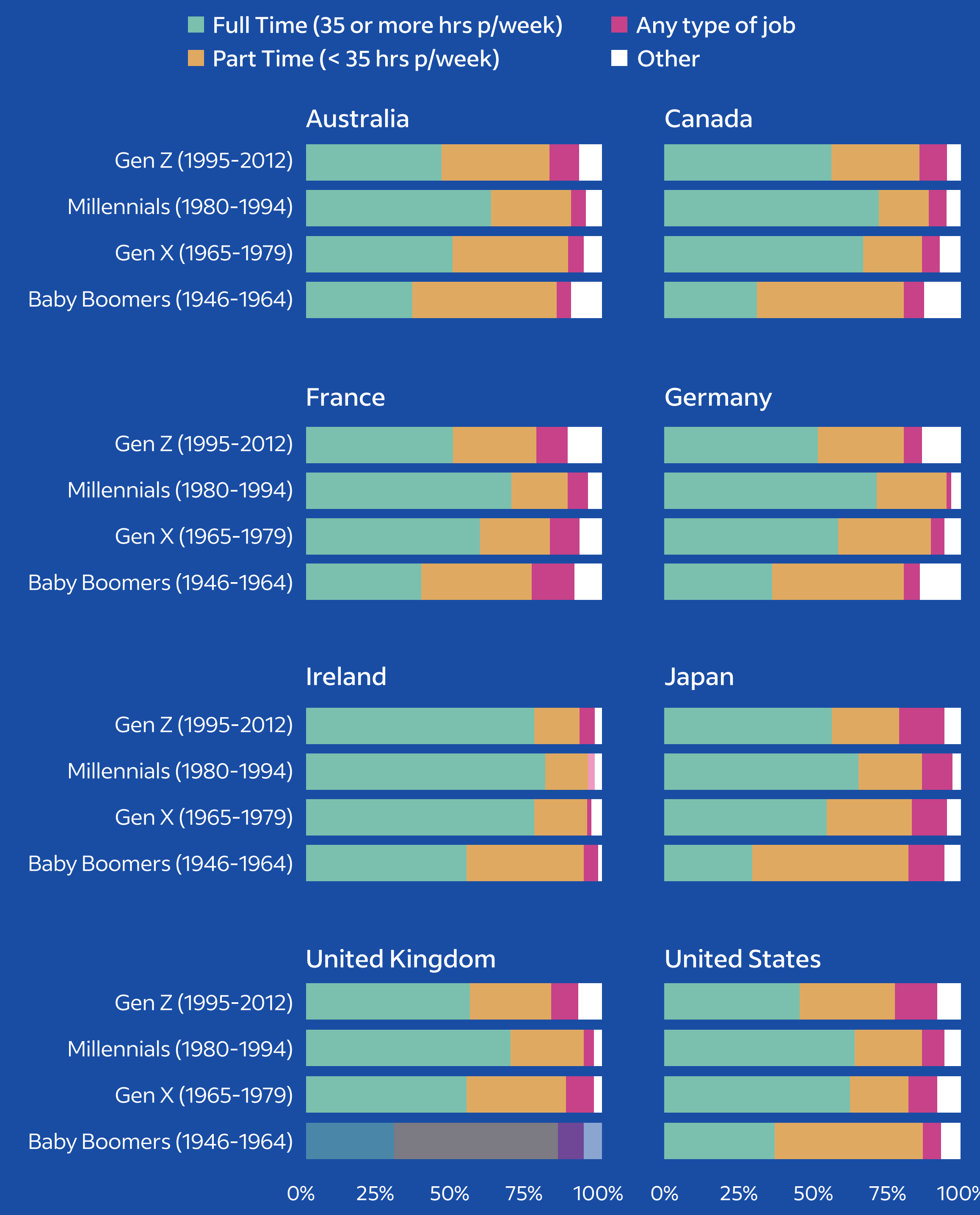
Among those currently seeking employment (regardless of their current employment status), preferences for full-time versus part-time work also differ clearly across generations. Millennial job seekers show the highest share preferring full-time schedules across all countries, ranging from 63% of respondents in Australia to 82% in Ireland. By contrast, only a minority of Baby Boomers who are looking for a job have a preference for full-time work in most countries (ranging from 30% in the UK to 38% in the United States), with the notable exception of Ireland, where 55% of this generation would opt to work full-time if given the choice. Part-time is most popular among job-seeking Baby Boomers, with preference rates from 44% in Germany to 56% in the UK — again, with the exception of Ireland (40%).

Among Baby Boomers, part-time work is the preferred choice, as many are easing into retirement or seeking greater flexibility in their schedules.

Gen X generally falls between Millennials and Baby Boomers, with a moderate preference for full-time work. In most countries, their full-time preference is lower than that of Millennials but higher than Gen Z. In Japan, Ireland, and the UK, both generations show equal preference for full-time schedules. Part-time preferences for both Gen X and Gen Z are lower than those of Baby Boomers, reflecting a greater focus on full-time work among mid- and early-career generations. This is especially the case among younger Gen Z job seekers, while those aged 25 and over have preferences that are closer to those of Millennials.

Millennials are most likely to look for full-time jobs

Share of job seekers by work schedule preference and generation



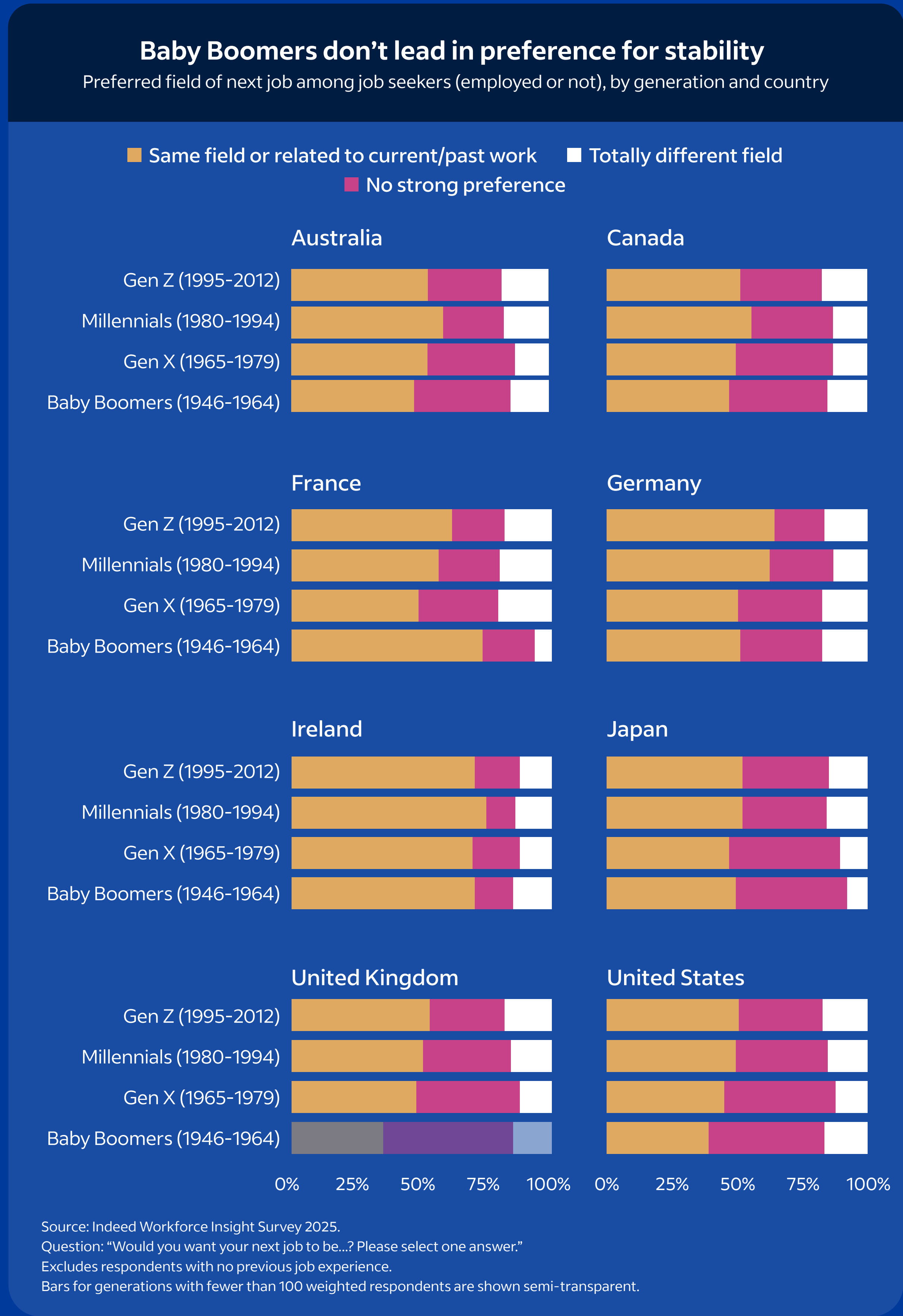
Source: Indeed Workforce Insight Survey 2025.
Question: "What type of job are you interested in? Please select one answer." The category "Other" includes internships and hourly contract work. Bars for generations with fewer than 100 weighted respondents are shown semi-transparent.

Willingness to change fields: Older generations aren't as rigid as you think

Older generations are often assumed to prioritize stability over career mobility, while younger workers are more open to change. However, Baby Boomers are (surprisingly) not the generation with the highest share of job seekers wanting to stay in the same or a related field to their current job: In Australia, Canada, and Ireland, Millennials are most likely to prefer staying in the same or a related field to their current or past work experiences. In France, Germany, the UK, and the US, this is most common among Gen Z. By contrast, Baby Boomers are more likely than other generations to say they have no strong preference in five out of the eight countries surveyed, showcasing their relative flexibility regarding late-career changes. This suggests that older workers are not less willing to make significant career changes — they may actually welcome them. For younger generations, early (and sometimes costly) career investments are still relatively fresh, creating an incentive to build on and leverage their expertise in their current field. Additional pressure for stability comes from family responsibilities, housing costs, and student loans, which usually peak during these life stages.

> Adapting work arrangements to generational preferences can enhance retention, job satisfaction, and productivity, while helping to address labor shortages in ageing societies.

Generations approach work differently, shaping preferences for hours, location, and career moves. Baby Boomers tend to favor part-time and in-office work but are more open to career changes than commonly assumed. Younger generations prioritize flexibility when it comes to remote work, while often preferring full-time schedules and staying within the same or a related field when changing jobs. Employers could support older workers by offering contracts with fewer hours or hybrid arrangements. For Millennials, providing a trusting environment, clear career paths, and genuine remote-work options is key. Adapting work arrangements to generational preferences can enhance retention, job satisfaction, and productivity, while helping to address labor shortages in ageing societies.



Chapter 07

A Tale of Two Workforces: Who's Using AI and Who's Getting Left Behind

By Yusuke Aoki

The rise of generative AI has sparked widespread discussion about how it will reshape work. The headlines foretell both productivity gains and job displacement, but a more nuanced picture is emerging: AI adoption is creating distinct groups of workers with very different relationships to the technology.

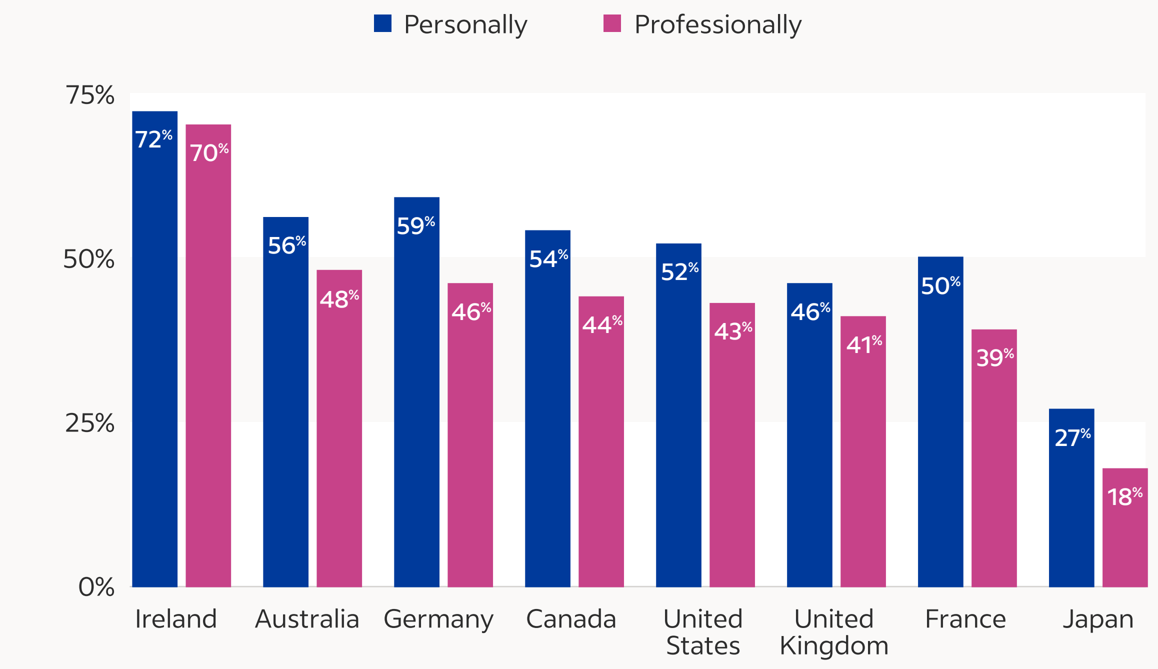
Using data from the 2025 Indeed Workforce Insights Report, which surveyed approximately 80,000 workers across eight countries, we find that across demographics, AI users are more engaged at work. Meanwhile, a substantial segment of workers remains disconnected from both AI and broader career development — a pattern that carries significant implications for employers and policymakers alike.

The global AI adoption landscape

AI adoption at work varies considerably across countries. In Ireland, 70% of employed workers said they have used AI at least more than once per month in their jobs, followed by Australia at 48%, Germany at 46%, the United States at 43% and the United Kingdom at 41%. At the other end of the spectrum, Japan stands at just 18%, with France in the middle at around 39%.

Workers' AI Adoption: Personal vs Professional Use

Share of employed workers who use AI at least a few times per month



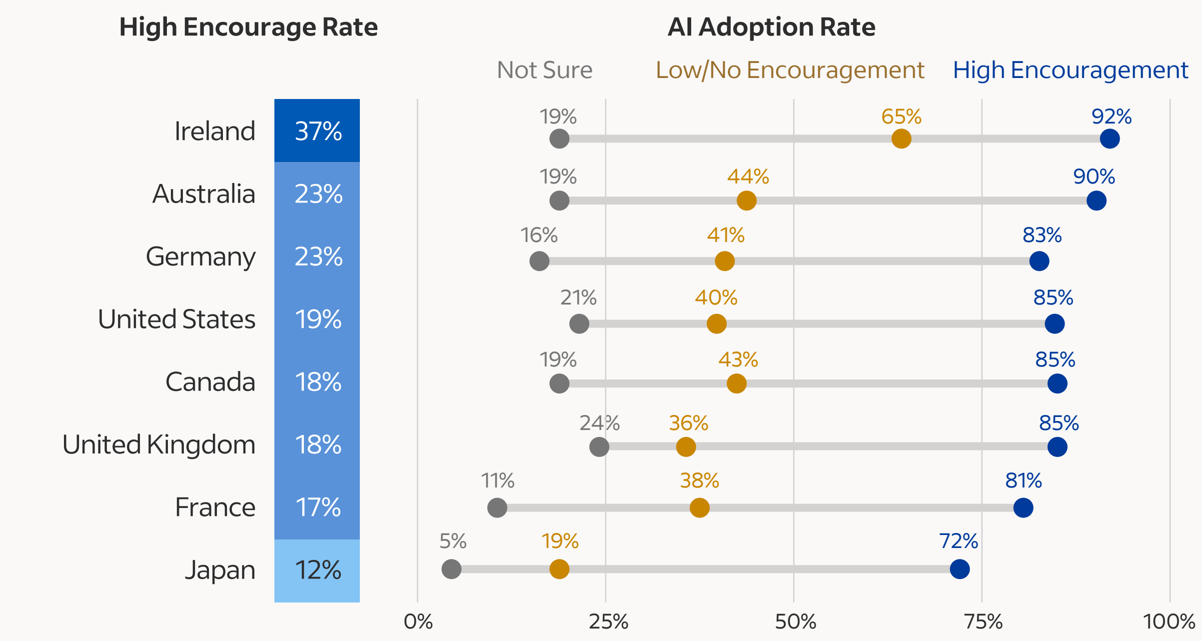
Source: Indeed

Despite country-country differences, one pattern holds steady: personal use exceeds professional use. In our data, this gap ranges from 3 percentage points in Ireland to 13 percentage points in Germany. This suggests workers may be more comfortable exploring AI on their own terms rather than in workplace settings, and/or that using AI at work may not be required cases, but still holds personal interest.

What explains the cross-country differences within our data? Among the factors observable in survey data, employer encouragement stands out as strongly correlated with adoption. In Ireland, 37% of workers report high levels of employer encouragement to use AI, compared to just 12% in Japan. Across all eight countries, we find that workers whose employers actively encourage AI use are significantly more likely to actually use AI at work, with the gap ranging from 28 percentage points in Ireland to 54 percentage points in Japan.

Workers' AI Adoption: Personal vs Professional Use

Share of employed workers who use AI at least a few times per month



Source: Indeed. Respondents were asked how much encouragement their employer gave them to use AI in their professional role.

This pattern suggests that organizational support plays an important role in AI adoption, though other factors not captured in our survey — such as industry composition, regulatory environment, or technological infrastructure — may also contribute to cross-country differences.

The implication is clear: If employers want workers to use AI effectively, encouragement and training are likely to matter more than waiting for workers to adapt on their own.

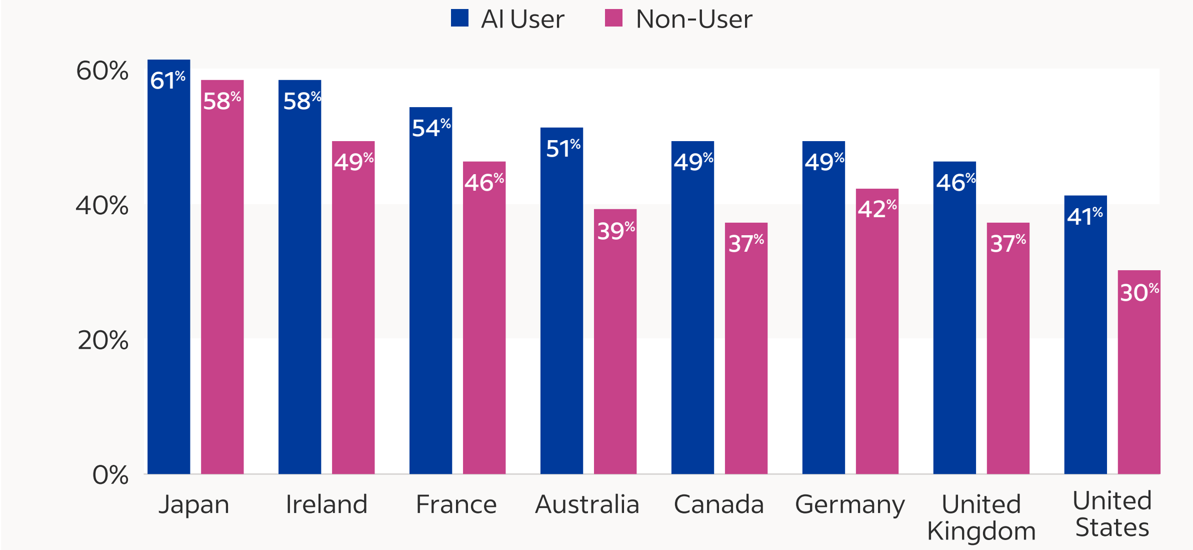
But what happens to workers who do adopt AI — and to those who don't?

Who wants more training on AI?

Demand for AI training varies significantly across countries—and it closely mirrors patterns in employer encouragement. Workers in countries with lower encouragement rates report the highest rates of feeling undertrained. In Japan, where just 12% of workers receive strong employer encouragement, 61% of AI users feel they lack adequate training. France shows a similar pattern: 17% encouragement, 54% feeling undertrained. At the other end, the United States—where encouragement is higher—shows the lowest rates of feeling undertrained at 41%.

Even active AI users feel they need more AI training

Share of workers who agree: 'I'm not receiving enough training on AI'



Source: Indeed. AI users are defined as employed workers who use AI at least a few times per month

But the country-level view masks an important divide: AI users are consistently more likely to feel undertrained than non-users. This gap appears across all eight countries, ranging from 3 percentage points in Japan to 13 percentage points in Australia.

Why do AI users feel they need more training? One interpretation is that hands-on experience reveals just how much there is to learn — users discover capabilities they haven't mastered and applications they haven't explored. Another possibility is that AI users are simply more attuned to technological change and more inclined toward continuous development.

Either way, the takeaway is clear: Those who engage with AI want more support, while many of those who don't may not realize what they're missing.

This raises a question: What about workers who neither use AI nor feel they need training? Are they simply in roles where AI isn't relevant — or are they at risk of being left behind?

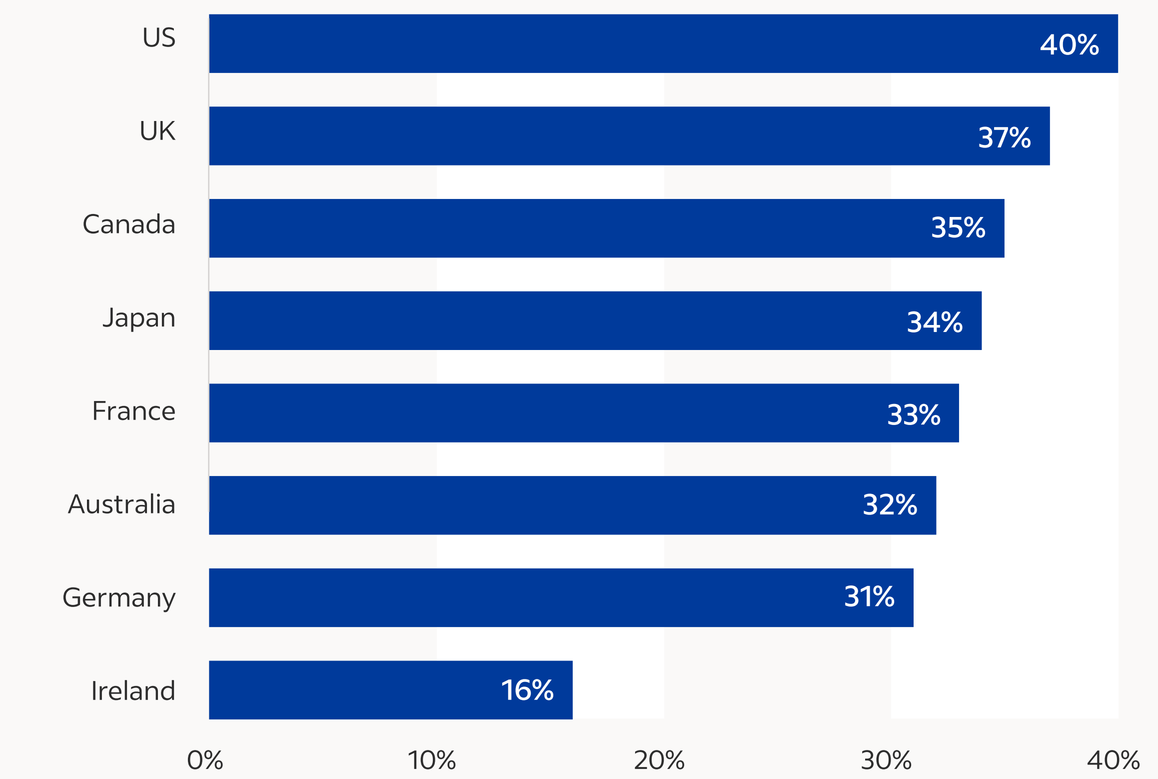
Workers disengaged from AI

Who are these disengaged workers — those who neither regularly use AI nor feel they need training on AI? They represent between 16% (Ireland) and 40% (United States) of employed survey respondents.

What's notable is not active resistance to AI, but a lack of engagement with both the technology and broader career development.

More than one in four workers are disengaged from AI in many countries

Disengaged workers who rarely use AI and see no need for AI training, % of employed workers



Source: Indeed.

Who are these workers? The data reveals clear patterns:

Age:
Older workers are more likely to fall into this group. In the UK, 50% of workers aged 55 and older fall into this category, compared to 40% of those aged 18-24. Notably, Japan shows elevated rates even among young workers (37% for ages 18-24), suggesting that the pattern isn't solely a function of career stage.

Occupation Type:
Workers in manual and production roles have the highest rates of disengagement — reaching 62% in the UK. Those in knowledge-based occupations, by contrast, have the lowest rates (8-30% depending on country). This occupational divide underscores how unevenly AI is being adopted across job types. Notably, even in knowledge-based roles, the United States and Japan show an elevated rate of 30% and 27%, respectively.

Engagement & Culture:
Workers in this segment consistently differ from their peers in how they view both their workplace and AI. The largest gap appears in AI perception — disengaged workers are 35-49 percentage points less likely to believe AI makes work more efficient. They are also 6-25 percentage points less likely to worry that AI will reduce job opportunities, suggesting that AI feels distant and irrelevant to their work lives.

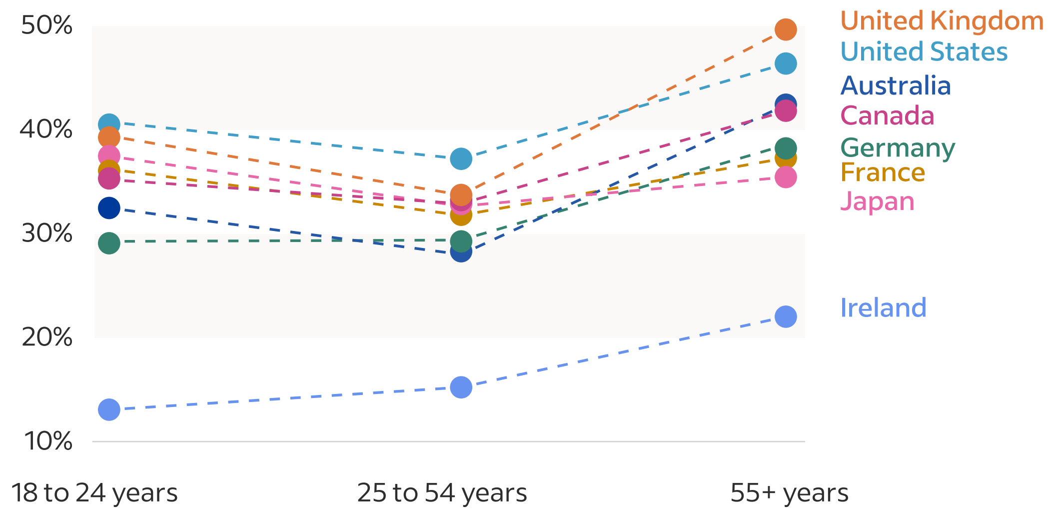
Workplace engagement gaps are smaller but consistent: Disengaged workers are 7-20 percentage points less likely to report that their workplace culture allows them to thrive professionally. Likewise, disengaged workers are 3-16 points less likely to feel a sense of purpose in their work across countries.

Who are the workers disengaged from AI?

Profile of workers who rarely use AI and see no need for AI training

Age Pattern

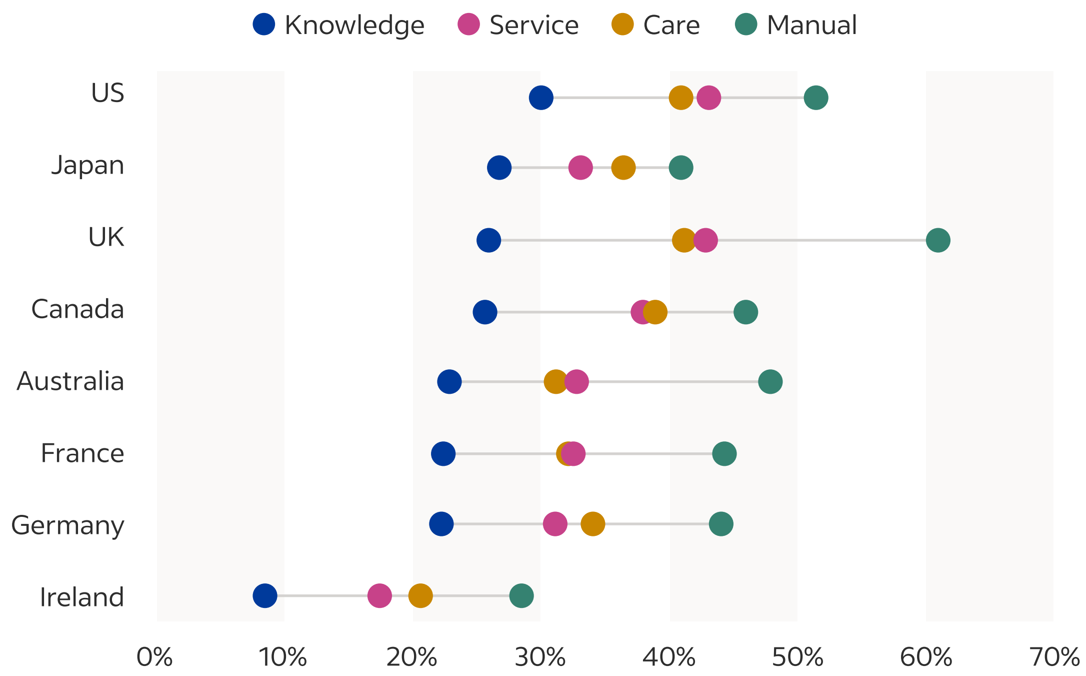
% disengaged in each age group



Source: Indeed. Disengaged = workers who use AI less than a few times per month and see no need for AI training.

Occupation Pattern

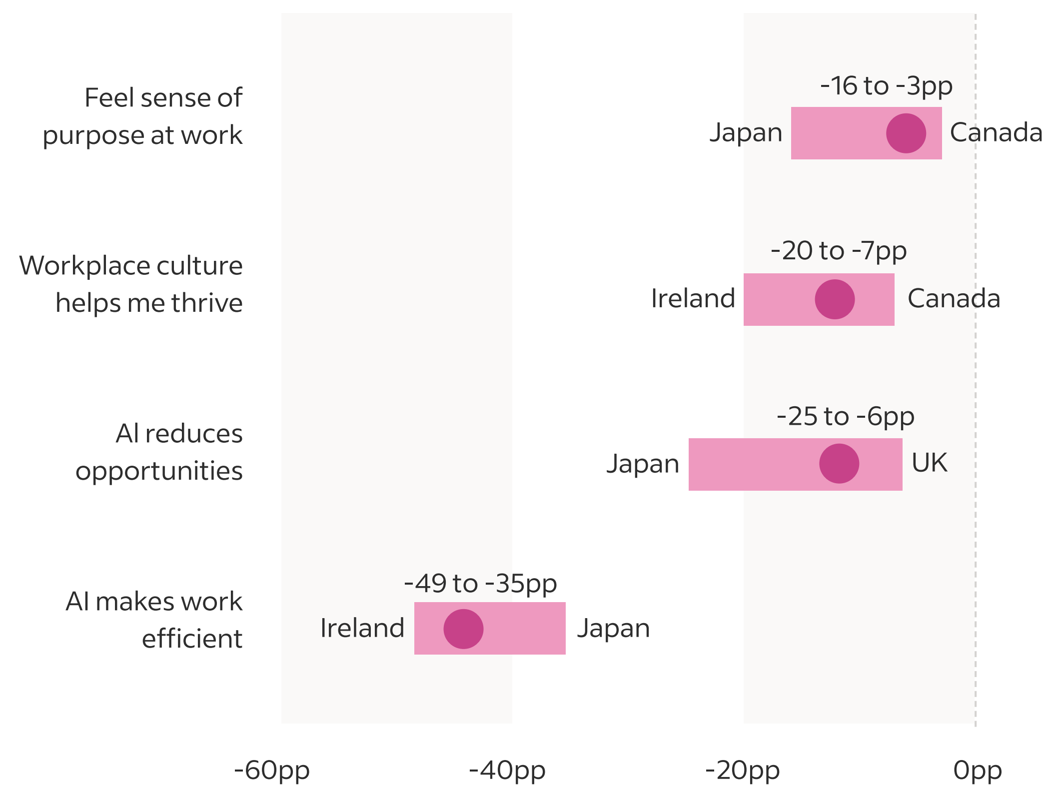
% disengaged by occupation type



Source: Indeed. Disengaged = workers who use AI less than a few times per month and see no need for AI training.

How workers disengaged from AI perceive their work and the technology

Perception gap between disengaged workers and engaged workers, in percentage points, negative = lower among disengaged



Source: Indeed. Disengaged = workers who use AI less than a few times per month and see no need for AI training.

The lower scores on workplace thriving (7-20 percentage points) and sense of purpose (3-16 points) suggest that AI disengagement does not exist in isolation; it appears linked to broader workplace detachment. Whether one causes the other remains an open question, but the association is consistent across all eight countries.

Japan shows a somewhat different pattern. While other countries show clear age and occupation gradients, Japan's disengagement is more evenly spread — even young workers and those in knowledge-based roles show relatively high rates. This suggests that workplace culture and training opportunities may play a larger role in Japan than demographic or occupational factors alone.

What do AI users actually experience?

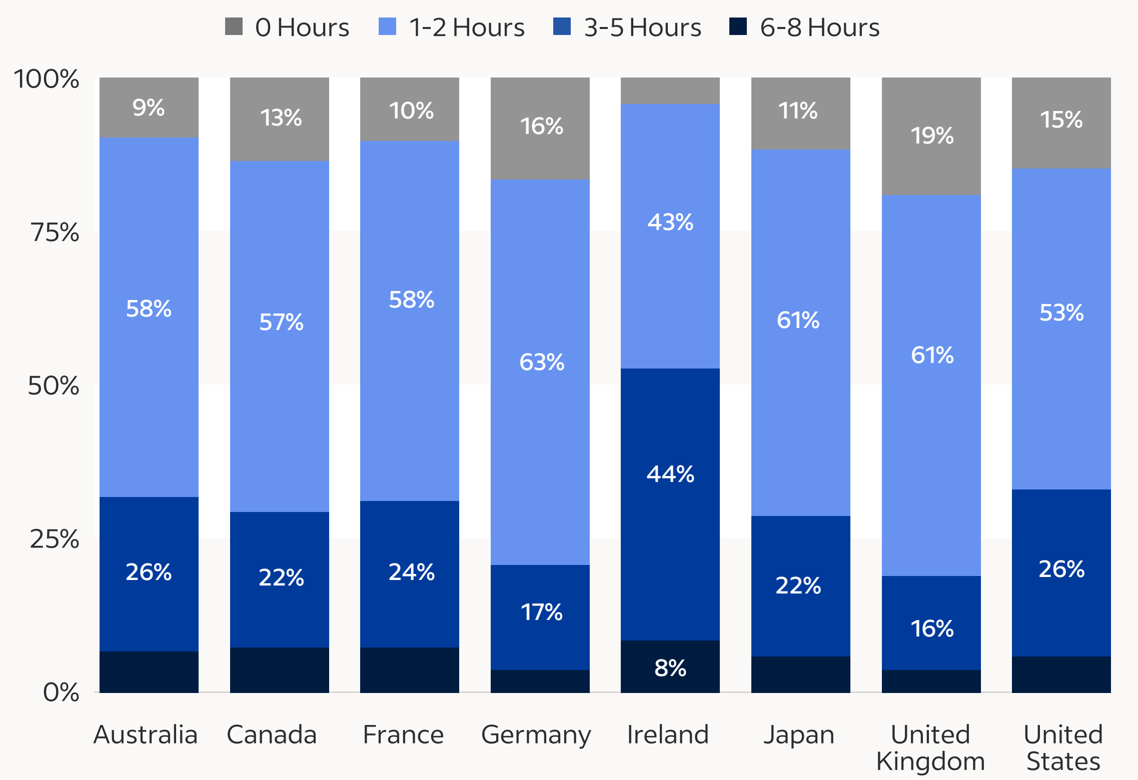
Workers disengaged from AI are 35-49 percentage points less likely to believe AI makes work more efficient. But what do AI users themselves report about the benefits? The data suggests those who aren't embracing AI may be missing out.

Time savings are real and significant. Across all eight countries, 81-96% of AI users report saving at least one hour per day through AI tools. In Ireland, where AI adoption is highest, half of users said they save three or more hours daily. Even in countries with more modest adoption, the majority of AI users report meaningful time savings.

Not everyone benefits equally, however. In the United Kingdom, one-fifth of AI users report saving no time at all — the highest rate among the eight countries. This variation suggests that simply using AI is not enough; how it's integrated into workflows matters.

How much time does AI save?

Distribution of daily time savings among AI users, % of AI Users



Source: Indeed.

Where does the saved time go? When asked how they actually use time freed up by AI, workers' top responses reveal a mix of productivity and personal benefit.

The most common use is taking on other tasks and projects (21-45%), with UK workers leading at 45% and Japan lowest at 21%. Around one-third use the time to enhance the quality and efficiency of their current tasks (26-36%). A similar share uses the time for more of the same tasks (25-33%), increasing throughput on existing responsibilities.

Improved work-life balance also features prominently, ranging from 19% in France to 34% in Ireland and 32% in the US. Workers also redirect saved time toward breaks and stress management (19-25% across countries), learning and professional development (15-26%), and innovation and creative work (13-25%).

Ireland stands out as the country where AI users most actively channel saved time into higher-value activities: 34% toward improved work-life balance, 26% toward learning and professional development, and 25% toward innovation and creative work.

Implications for employers

These findings suggest four priorities. First, employer encouragement appears to be a key lever for AI adoption. Organizations seeking broader usage should invest in active support rather than passive availability. Second, training needs are widespread and persistent: Even active AI users report insufficient training, indicating that one-time introductions are inadequate. Ongoing skill development will be essential as AI capabilities evolve. Third, the disengaged segment — older workers, manual occupations, and those with lower workplace engagement — may require targeted outreach, as they currently see no need for change. Finally, the productivity benefits are tangible: Over 80% of AI users report saving at least one hour daily, with many redirecting that time toward higher-value work such as improving task quality, learning, and creative projects. Employers who take into consideration all priorities are well-positioned in an evolving and competitive job market.

How did workers use the time AI saved?

Actual use of extra time, % selected

	Aus	Can	Fra	Ger	Ire	Jap	UK	US
Other tasks/projects	35	39	34	33	27	21	45	39
Task quality/efficiency	36	32	30	30	31	26	33	35
More of same tasks	32	30	25	27	25	29	33	32
Work-life balance improvement	30	27	19	22	34	24	30	32
Breaks/stress management	23	23	19	21	25	24	25	23
Learning/professional development	20	20	17	15	26	16	20	21
Client/customer interaction	21	20	18	17	23	13	16	19
Innovation/creative work	21	19	13	14	25	13	21	21
Internal collaboration	18	17	18	16	23	13	17	15
Subject matter expertise	18	15	17	11	22	8	15	18
Special projects	17	17	13	13	22	8	16	17
Expanded responsibilities	17	13	12	10	20	7	13	15
Mentorship/coaching	14	12	10	7	19	9	11	11

Source: Indeed. Tasks are ordered from highest to lowest average response rate across countries.

Chapter 08

The Great Divide: Why Urban and Rural Workers See the Future So Differently

By Laura Ullrich

For as long as there have been cities and countryside, there have been differences in how people see the world and their place in it. The two settings offer different trade-offs and cultivate different opportunities. But what does that mean for how those in each setting feel about the future of work?

According to Indeed's Workforce Insights Survey, the urban/rural divide is alive and well when it comes to workers' sense of possibility. While rural respondents feel confident about maintaining their current position, they also express pessimism about their career prospects over the next five years.

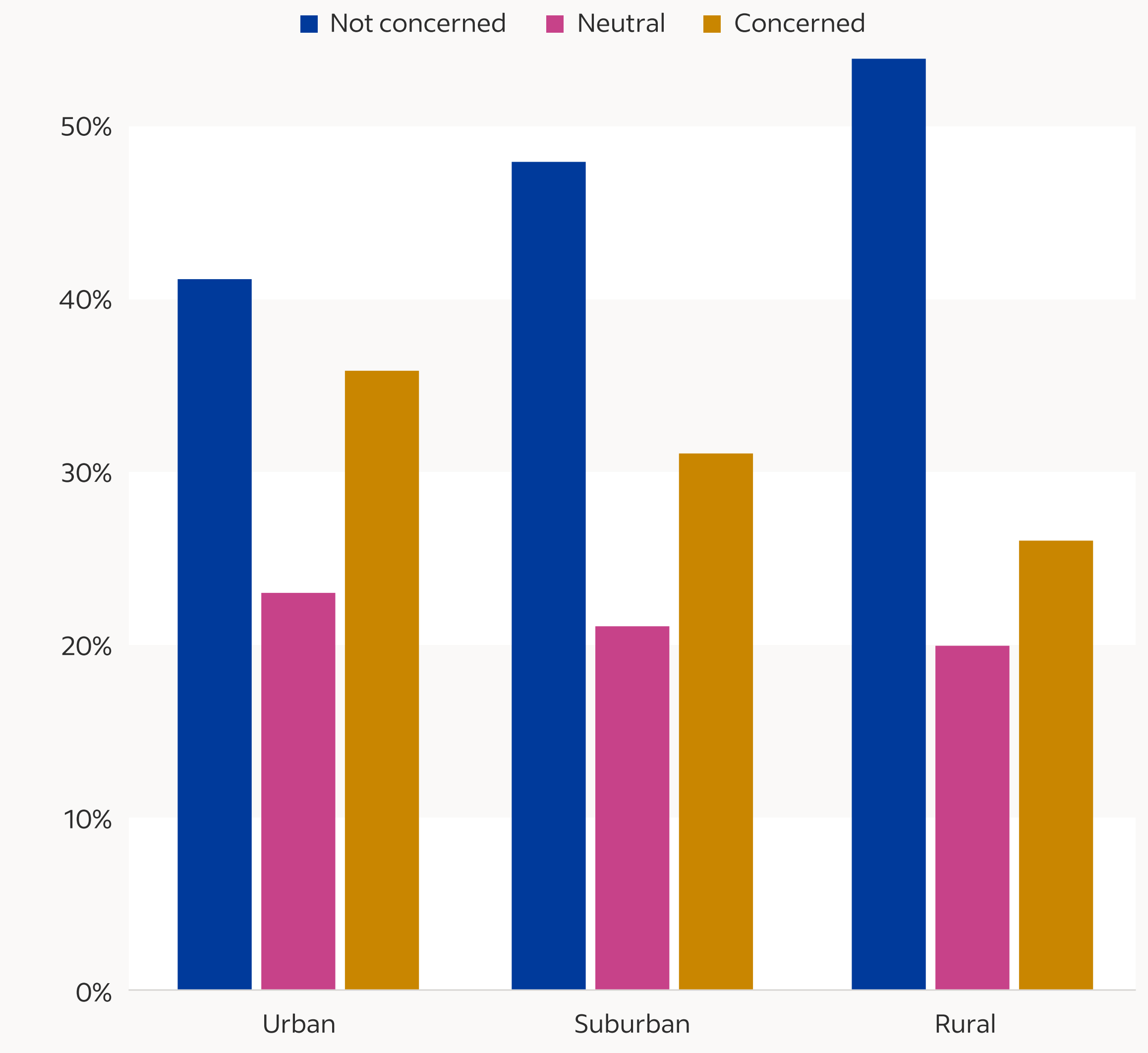
How much of it is about infrastructure, education, industry, or simply the kinds of jobs available? And what role does technology play in widening or narrowing that gap? The answers offer a glimpse into not just what people believe about their own careers, but what they think about the economy itself — and who it really works for.

Future outlook: Shakier today, but more room to climb in the city

When it comes to job security, rural workers actually feel steadier than their urban counterparts, at least in the short term. More than half of rural workers (54%) say they're "not at all" or "not really" concerned about losing their jobs in the next year, compared to just 41% of urban workers. Urban workers are far more likely to express concern, with 36% of them reporting that they are indeed worried about losing their jobs in the next 12 months, compared to just 26% of rural respondents.

Rural workers were less likely to express anxiety about near-term stability

Share of US respondents who are concerned about their job security over the next year, by community type

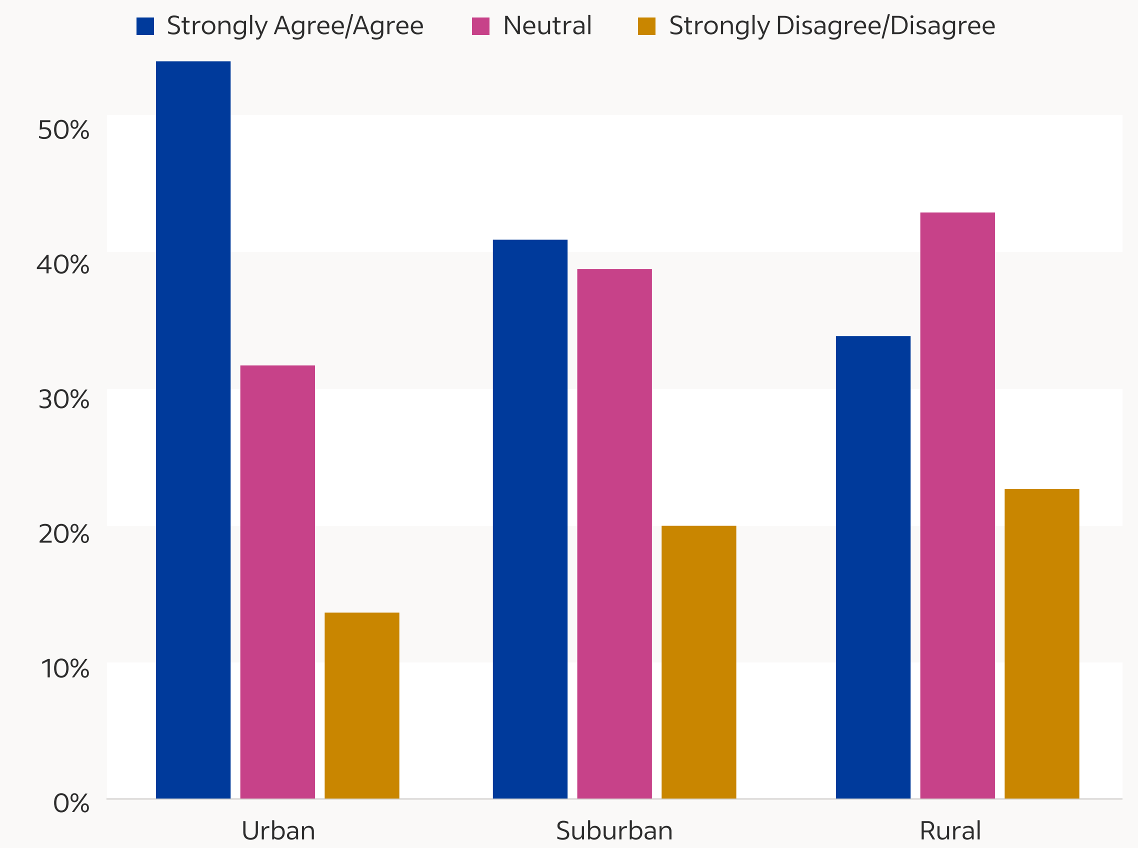


Source: Indeed

Urban workers might have anxiety about near-term stability, but they also report being more likely to see long-term opportunities. While 54% of urban respondents say they agree or strongly agree that they will have more opportunities to advance and be more successful in their careers over the next five years, only 34% of rural respondents share the same level of confidence. Suburban workers fall exactly between the two, with 41% reporting confidence in their 5-year career outlook.

Urban respondents show greater long-term optimism

Share of US respondents who expect more opportunity to get ahead and be professionally successful in the next five years, by community type



Source: Indeed
Question: Looking ahead five years from now, how much do you agree with 'I will have more opportunity to get ahead and be more successful in my career'

Urban respondents consistently report a stronger sense of longer-term optimism and possibility across multiple dimensions. More than half of city dwellers (51%) expect to advance into new roles and increase their income within the next five years, compared to just 31% of rural workers. Even work-life balance feels brighter in the city, with nearly 6 in 10 urban workers saying they see improvement ahead, compared to just 42% of rural workers.

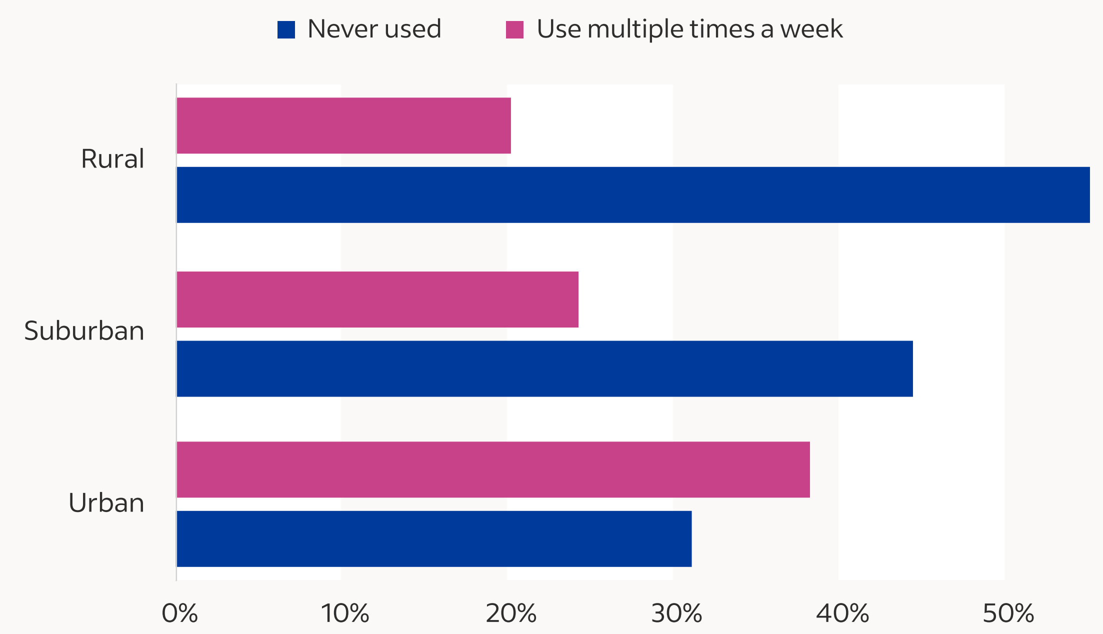
The potential role of technology

Part of the explanation may lie in technology. Artificial intelligence concerns loom larger in cities, where workers report higher daily use and more employer encouragement to experiment with AI. Rural workers appear to feel safer in their current roles, but less connected to the emerging tools and skills that are shaping the future. Urban workers, meanwhile, live closer to the frontier, feeling both more exposed and more prepared as technology reshapes the workplace.

While 38% of urban respondents reported using AI multiple times a week professionally, suburban and rural respondents reported levels of just 24% and 20%, respectively. Over 50% of rural workers indicated that they had never used AI professionally, which is far greater than the 31% of urban workers who reported the same. Interestingly, the gap between urban and rural use of AI professionally holds across all age and education groups.

Urban workers are more likely to use AI professionally than rural workers

Share of US respondents who never or frequently use AI in their work, by community type



Source: Indeed
Question: How often would you say you use AI tools for professional purposes?

There are also gaps between how workers feel about how AI could impact their jobs going forward. About a quarter of urban workers say AI could already perform their job, versus just 17% of rural workers. Yet both groups share the same worry — around 56% in each say they're concerned AI will reduce job opportunities overall.

Tech's uneven footing: Left behind or leaping ahead?

The AI story also highlights a deeper paradox facing rural workers: they have a lot to gain from AI, but they're also at greater risk of being left behind in the longer run. In industries central to rural economies, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and logistics, AI has already begun to unlock new efficiencies, enabling organizations to work smarter and stay competitive.

For rural workers, who often have fewer in-person opportunities to reskill or advance, AI could open doors to remote learning, virtual collaboration, and more flexible, higher-paying roles. In this sense, the promise of AI in rural areas is enormous; however, certain external factors, such as limited broadband access and fewer training opportunities, can hinder workers from realizing those gains.

As a result, the risk for rural workers isn't just being replaced by AI — it's being left behind by the people and industries who learn how to use it first.

Bridging the divide

The urban-rural split in how workers see their prospects is more than just a matter of geography. It's a window into how unevenly hope, opportunity, and progress are distributed — who feels they're moving forward, who feels left behind, and who's not sure which way to turn.

In an economy that promises everyone a shot, where you live shapes what you believe is possible, especially in a rapidly shifting landscape. Closing that divide will take more than technology or infrastructure. It will require a renewed focus on ensuring that, no matter where you are, the future still feels within reach. It's a gap worth watching as the world of work continues to evolve.

Methodology

Indeed commissioned YouGov to conduct nationally representative research studies among adults aged 18+ across eight markets — the United States, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Japan, Canada, and France.

Sampling was random and representative by age, gender, education, and region in all markets, and by race (United States only), aligned to census population statistics from reliable external third-party sources. Fieldwork was conducted during the months of May and June of 2025, with a total of n=80,936 interviews globally, and a minimum of n=10,000 interviews per market. This sample size provides a margin of error of ±1% at the 95% confidence level within each market.

Fieldwork dates and sample sizes by market:

- United States: May 8–June 9, 2025 (n=10,125)
- Ireland: May 23–June 30, 2025 (n=10,004)
- United Kingdom: May 28–June 13, 2025 (n=10,115)
- Australia: May 30–June 30, 2025 (n=10,159)
- Germany: June 3–30, 2025 (n=10,142)
- Japan: June 3–26, 2025 (n=10,153)
- Canada: June 6–30, 2025 (n=10,164)
- France: June 8–29, 2025 (n=10,074)

The same census-based population frames used for sampling were applied in weighting to correct any imbalances. Final data was weighted within each market by age, gender, education, region and (in the United States only) race, to ensure representation to the true market populations proportions.

Population frames used for weighting:

- United States: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2022
- Ireland: Eurobarometer, 2023
- United Kingdom: Eurobarometer, 2023
- Australia: Pew Research Center, 2023
- Germany: Eurobarometer, 2023
- Japan: Pew Research Center, 2023
- Canada: LAPOP, 2021
- France: Eurobarometer, 2023

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