Indeed & Glassdoor's Hiring and Worklife Trends Report 2027

The Indeed & Glassdoor 2027 US Hiring and Worklife Trends Report is based on intensive research conducted by the Indeed Hiring Lab and Glassdoor Economic Research teams.

indeed · GLASSDOOR

Table of Contents

Foreword: Why the Labor Market Holding Pattern will End in 2027

Data Dictionary and Glossary of Terms

Trend 01: A Restless Labor Market Antsy to Move Again

Trend 02: A National Market, Shaped by Local Dynamics

Trend 03: Gen Z at Work: They're Here, They're (Surprisingly) Positive, and They're Different

Trend 04: There Is No AI Jobpocalypse, But Plenty of AI-nxiety

Trend 05: Experience Wanted. But Where Do You Get It?

Trend 06: It's Not Just the Paycheck: Total Compensation is Under Pressure

Detailed Methodology and List of Data Sources

Foreword: **Why the Labor Market Holding Pattern will End in 2027**

Dr. Svenja Gudell, Chief Economist, Indeed | Daniel Zhao, Chief Economist, Glassdoor

For nearly three years, the US labor market has been stuck in a low-hire, low-fire holding pattern. Unemployment is low, but there's also a clear lack of dynamism. The market is generally stable for workers that already have a job, but immensely frustrating for those seeking one.

2027 looks like the year something gives.

For much of the past year, pressures have been building. Wages trail inflation, and workers are increasingly dissatisfied with their career opportunities. Sustained energy price shocks, possible rate hikes and any cracks in the foundation of the ongoing, debt-financed AI buildout could tip the economy toward recession. But there are green shoots, too: Indeed job postings grew year-over-year in September for the first time since 2022, and more local markets are beginning to turn the corner as demand for workers creeps higher.

Here are the trends we're monitoring that will tell us which way this market will break, and what it means for employers and job seekers trying to navigate a tricky environment.



Six trends shaping 2027

01 **An inflection year.** Pent-up frustration means a hiring rebound could quickly turn into a turnover wave. The unhappy employee who stayed put in 2026 may be the first to leave in 2027.

02 **Local markets are moving first.** Job postings sit 12% to 15% above pre-pandemic levels in Dallas, Austin and Houston, but roughly 30% below in Seattle and San Francisco. Competition for talent will heat up locally first.

03 **Gen Z is growing up, and moving into management.** Gen Z makes up nearly a quarter of the labor force and will likely outnumber Baby Boomers in management next year. They're optimistic but restless, and while 58% want a mentor, only 25% have one.

04 **AI isn't taking jobs, but is creating skeptics.** AI's impact so far is broad but shallow as adoption steadily increases and more jobs – particularly outside of tech – are touched by the technology. But workers are skeptical: Only 45% of AI mentions in Glassdoor reviews are positive, down from 81% in 2019.

05 **The bottom rung of the career ladder is moving higher.** Senior-level postings are up 19% since January 2025, while entry-level postings have fallen. More than half of 2025 college graduates were underemployed a year after graduating.

06 **Costs are up, satisfaction is down.** Advertised wages are growing 2.5% a year while prices rise 3.7%, and employers' health insurance costs are up 25% in four years. Worker ratings of pay and benefits are the lowest since 2017.

The next decade has already started

The trends that shape 2027 will set the stage for the long-term future of the US labor market. AI and an aging workforce, the two main forces that will shape the next decade-plus, are already here and their effects will only intensify going forward. At current immigration levels, the US labor force could shrink by roughly 5.9 million workers by 2032 as Boomers retire. AI can't fill that gap alone, and the jobs it's most likely to reshape aren't the ones expected to face the worst shortages. These are the table stakes that will determine the next 15 years of US economic growth.

The good news is that many of employers' best remedies for these challenges will cost little to implement:

- **Get ahead of turnover.** Find out what's frustrating your people now, before a stronger market gives them options.
- **Keep the bottom rung.** Hire early-career workers and pair them with mentors. It's an investment in your future leadership
- **Hire for skills, not pedigree.** Separate what's truly needed on day one from what can be taught, and look for transferable skills in candidates from other industries.
- **Bring workers along on AI.** Explain why you're adopting new tools, train people to use them, and listen when they don't work.
- **Sell the total package.** Advertise the benefits you already offer. It costs almost nothing.

Job seekers need to prepare, too, and understand how demographic and technological change will shape the opportunities available to them:

- **Your next job may be in a different industry.** As demand shifts, more workers will need to be ready to move between industries, not just employers.
- **Leverage universal skills.** A surprising number of skills, including communication and business operations skills, transfer well from one job to another. Mastering these skills will unlock more opportunities.
- **Embrace lifelong learning.** The future will not slow down, and neither can workers. Continuous upskilling, re-skilling and training will be essential for success.

Ready for what's next

Together, Indeed and Glassdoor see the labor market from every angle: what employers are hiring for, what job seekers are searching for, and how workers feel about their jobs. That world-class, real-time data guides everything we do, and it's how we help employers and job seekers make smarter decisions. The challenges ahead are real. With the right information, they are not insurmountable.

Data Dictionary and Glossary of Terms

The Indeed & Glassdoor 2027 US Hiring and Worklife Trends Report is based on intensive research conducted by the Indeed Hiring Lab and Glassdoor Economic Research teams. Researchers relied on several proprietary data products, surveys, ratings and indices, in conjunction with benchmark public data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics and other reputable sources. Many of Indeed's proprietary data products are available for free use and download at data.indeed.com.

In addition to our full methodology, here is a list of common indicators referenced throughout this report, and a primer on how to interpret them.

Indeed Job Postings Index (JPI): An indexed measure of the change in the level of job postings on Indeed at a given time, relative to baseline, pre-pandemic benchmarks. A JPI reading of 101 means job postings are 1% higher than they were on February 1, 2020. This indicator is used as a proxy for overall hiring demand – rising readings indicate demand is growing, and vice versa.

Indeed AI Tracker: Measures the share of job postings on Indeed at a given time that include any of a basket of AI and AI-related keywords, in any context. A reading of 1% means that across all job postings on Indeed, 1% contained keywords associated specifically with AI.

Glassdoor Ratings & Reviews: Glassdoor users can leave 1-5 star reviews about their companies across several workplace factors including overall employee satisfaction, career opportunities, compensation & benefits, and 6-month business outlook. Additionally, users can also review their benefits packages (both as a total package and individually by benefit) on a 1–5 star scale. Text reviews can be left alongside the star ratings, including pros and cons of their experiences at a company, which can be analyzed for themes. Reviews can also be grouped based on self-reported information including job title, location, years of experience, or demographics.

Hires, Quits & Layoffs: This data comes from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics's (BLS) Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (JOLTS), published monthly. Hires, quits and layoffs are typically expressed as rates. The hires rate, for example, is calculated as the number of total hires during a given time period (usually a month) divided by total employment, expressed as a percent.

Indeed Wage Tracker: Measures the year-over-year percentage change in the wages/salaries advertised in job postings on Indeed. A reading of 1% means wages have grown by 1% (on average) since the previous year. This measure should be interpreted as a forward-looking measure of wage growth for applicants applying to jobs, and is not equivalent to changes in actual wages paid.

Indeed Workforce Insights Survey (WIS): An annual, nationally representative survey of 80,000+ workers across eight countries (minimum sample of 10,000 respondents per country), sponsored by Indeed and administered by YouGov. Sampling was random and representative by age, gender, education, region, and race, aligned to census population statistics from reliable external third-party sources. In the US, fieldwork was conducted during the months of May and June of 2026, with a total of n=10,353 interviews. This sample size provides a margin of error of ±1% at the 95% confidence level. 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 race, to ensure representation to the true market population proportions.

Job Applications Started: Users can start a job application on Indeed and Glassdoor in response to job postings. In this report, we use this as a signal of intent to leave their current company.

Other BLS data: the Employment Cost Index (ECI; private-industry wages and salaries, 12-month change), the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U, all items; used for inflation and inflation-adjusted dollars), and Employer Costs for Employee Compensation (ECEC; employer cost per hour worked, private industry). ECI figures reflect the September 2026 release and ECEC figures the June 2026 release.

01: A Restless Labor Market Antsy to Move Again

The labor market held steady in 2026, but cracks are forming. Unemployment and layoffs remained low all year. But long-term unemployment hit its highest share outside a recession since 1950, and wage growth slowed.

Workers are stuck and unhappy. The share of Glassdoor reviewers dissatisfied with their career opportunities rose to 21%, up from 17% in 2022. Yet quits are running about 349,000 a month below what that discontent would predict. If market conditions improve, these dissatisfied workers could be the first to leave.

2027 is likely to break the stalemate, one way or another. Rising job postings and hiring manager sentiment point to a rebound that could unleash pent-up turnover. Meanwhile, high energy prices, expected rate hikes and a costly AI buildout could push the economy toward layoffs.

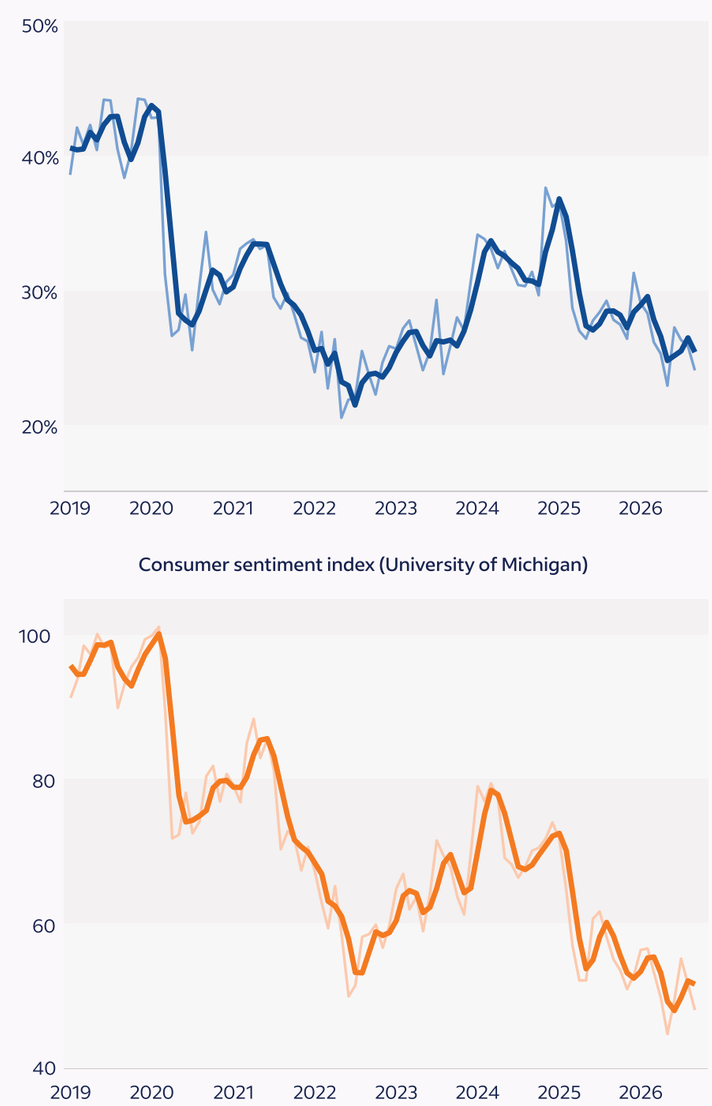
Heading into 2027, US workers and consumers appear anxious. From rapid technological advancement to a sharp decline in immigration, energy price shocks and rising interest rates, the US economy withstood a barrage of disruptions over the past year. Various measures of economic sentiment show a consistent pattern - people don't feel great, or even good, about current conditions.

Yet, if you were to only look at data from the labor market, you might have no idea.



Consumer pessimism is back to 2022 levels

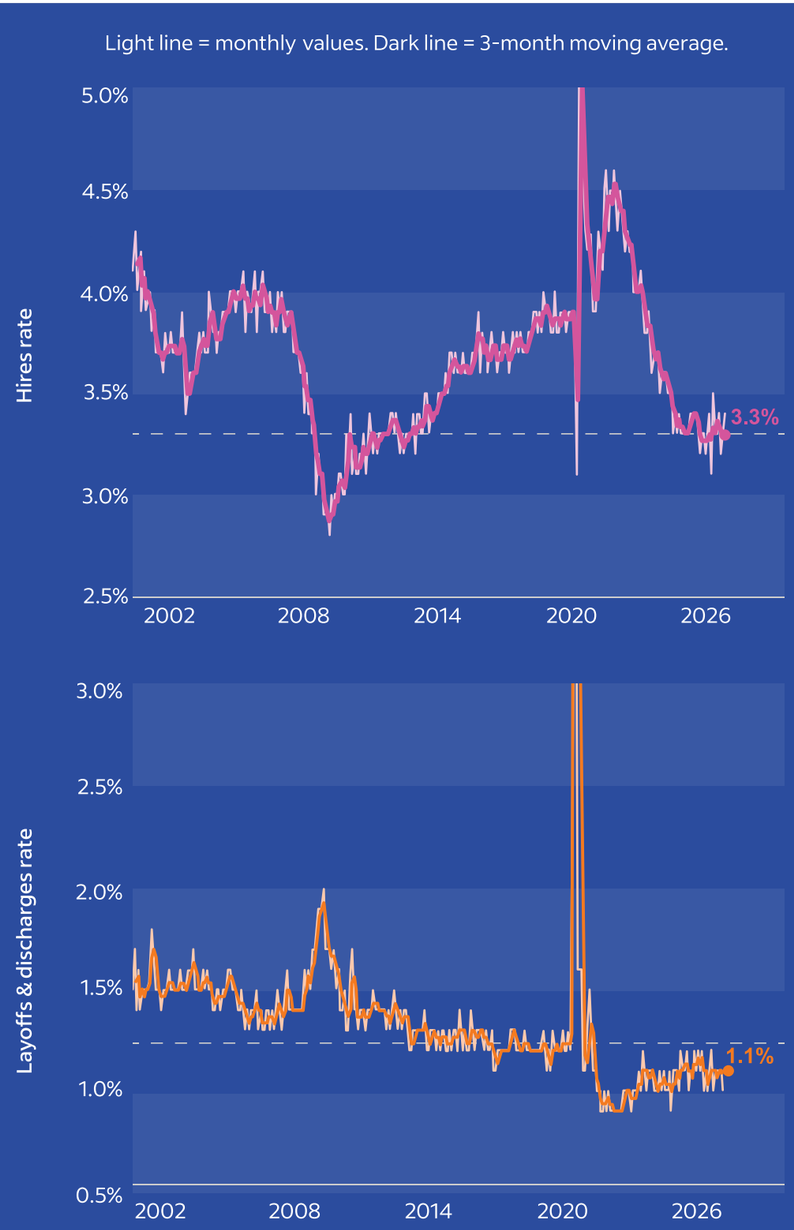
Monthly, Jan 2019 - Sep 2026. Light line = monthly value. Bold line = 3-month moving average.



Source: Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Survey of Consumer Expectations (share answering "somewhat" or "much" better off a year from now); University of Michigan, Surveys of Consumers, Index of Consumer Sentiment (1966 Q1 = 100). Neither vertical axis starts at zero.

Hiring has slowed to early-2010s levels, while layoffs remain low

Percent of total employment, monthly, seasonally adjusted, Dec 2000- Sep 2026.



Source: BLS Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey via FRED (JTSHIR, JTSLDR). Shaded areas indicate NBER recessions. Neither vertical axis starts at zero. Both axes are capped to exclude the 2020 pandemic spikes.

The US labor market remained remarkably steady in 2026, proving more durable than policymakers feared coming into the year, offering stability to those already employed but also providing little relief to struggling job seekers. Employers added just 696,000 jobs through the first three quarters of 2026, only a slight improvement from 2025 and near the fifth-lowest rate recorded during an economic expansion. Still, much of that slowdown has been absorbed by retirements, changing demographics, and subsequent declines in the size of the labor force, thus far preventing the materialization of mass layoffs. The layoff and discharge rate has ranged between 1% and 1.2% this year, a notch below its pre-pandemic level, and, if anything, it appears to be set for further long-term declines. Several other of the labor market's most-watched indicators have also barely budged. The overall unemployment rate has hovered between 4.1% and 4.4% thus far this year, with similarly small deviations for quits and wage growth.

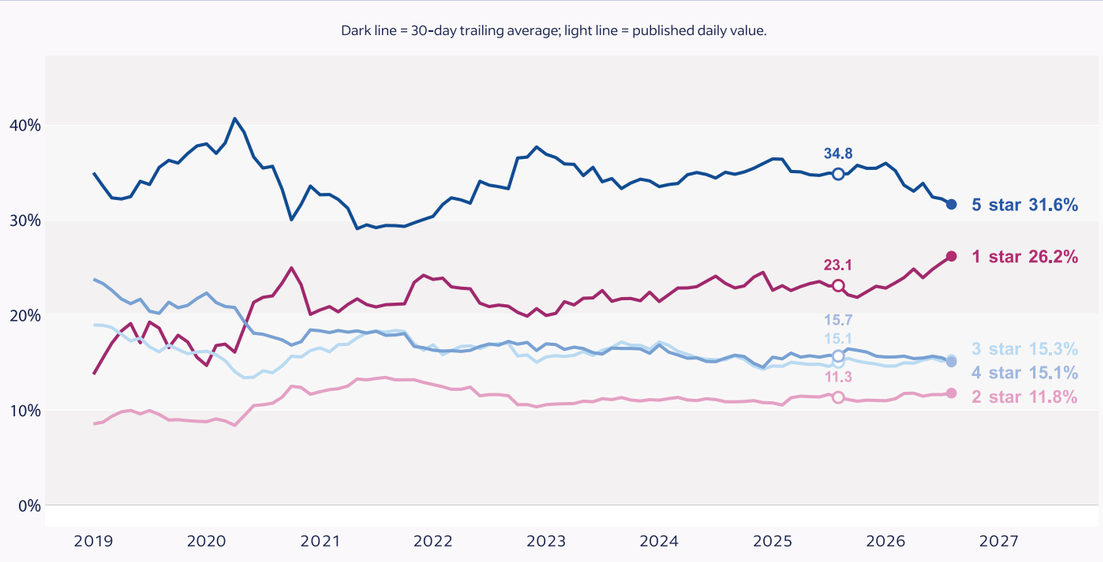


But cracks have begun to form. More than a quarter (27.6%) of unemployed workers have been out of work for 27 weeks or more, the highest level since 1950 (outside of periods immediately following a recession). And even for workers with a job, weaker hiring has eroded bargaining power, in turn slowing wage growth. According to analysis by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, median wage growth has fallen to its lowest level since 2021, and the Indeed wage tracker shows a similar trend for advertised wages.

Meanwhile, employer reviews left by workers on Indeed and Glassdoor reveal growing discontent. The share of workers giving their employer a one-star rating (out of five) on Indeed, for example, has risen by about 3 percentage points over the past year – largely at the expense of 5 star ratings.

The one-star and five-star review lines have converged sharply since early

Share of US Indeed company reviews at each overall star rating, channel and status held fixed. Hollow markers are August 2025. Over the past year one-star gained 3.1 pp and five-star lost 3.2



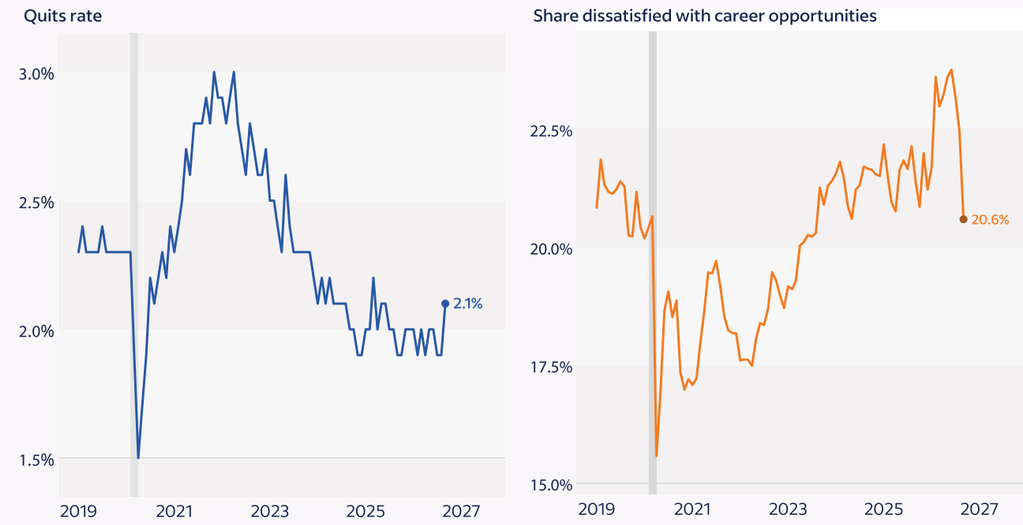
Source: Indeed company reviews (US, approved), pulled 23 Sep 2026. Submission channel and employment status held at Jan 2024

On Glassdoor, the share of employees dissatisfied with their existing career opportunities (rating them 1 or 2 stars out of 5) stood at 21% in September 2026, up from 17% in April 2022.

Coincidentally, the quits rate peaked at 3.3% in April 2022, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, but has since declined sharply to 2.1%. Hiring slowed and quits fell at the same time as worker dissatisfaction grew, a likely signal of workers feeling increasingly trapped without the ability to quit and find a better job on the open market.

Fewer workers are quitting even as more are dissatisfied

Monthly, Jan 2019 - Sep 2026. Quits rate is seasonally adjusted; dissatisfaction share is not.



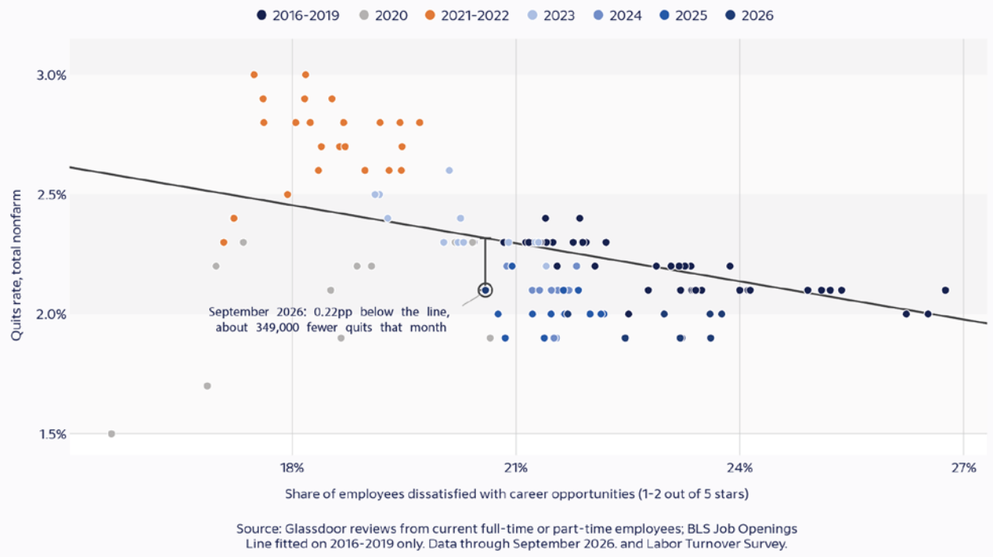
Source: BLS Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey; Glassdoor reviews from current US employees. Shaded area indicates the COVID recession (Feb-Apr 2020).

On a worker level, employee dissatisfaction predicts higher likelihood of turnover, with a 1-star decline in career opportunities ratings associated with a 28% increase in turnover intent (measured by job applications started on Glassdoor).

But what makes the current job market unusual is that quits are even lower than what worker dissatisfaction would predict. Given the current level of worker satisfaction and assuming a consistent historical relationship between the two, the quits rate should be 0.22 percentage points higher than it is, which corresponds to 349,000 more quits on a monthly basis. The soft hiring environment may be locking those unhappy workers into their jobs, and their engagement and productivity are likely suffering in the short-term. Over the longer-term, they are likely to be the first to exit if and when the job market heats up again.

Quitting is unusually low for how dissatisfied workers are

Quits rate vs. share of Glassdoor reviews dissatisfied with career opportunities, monthly, Jan 2016 - Sep 2026



Source: Glassdoor reviews from current full-time or part-time employees; BLS Job Openings Line fitted on 2016-2019 only. Data through September 2026. and Labor Turnover Survey.

An inflection year

But thus far, the bottom hasn't fallen out. Signs are mounting that that is likely to change in 2027, one way or another.

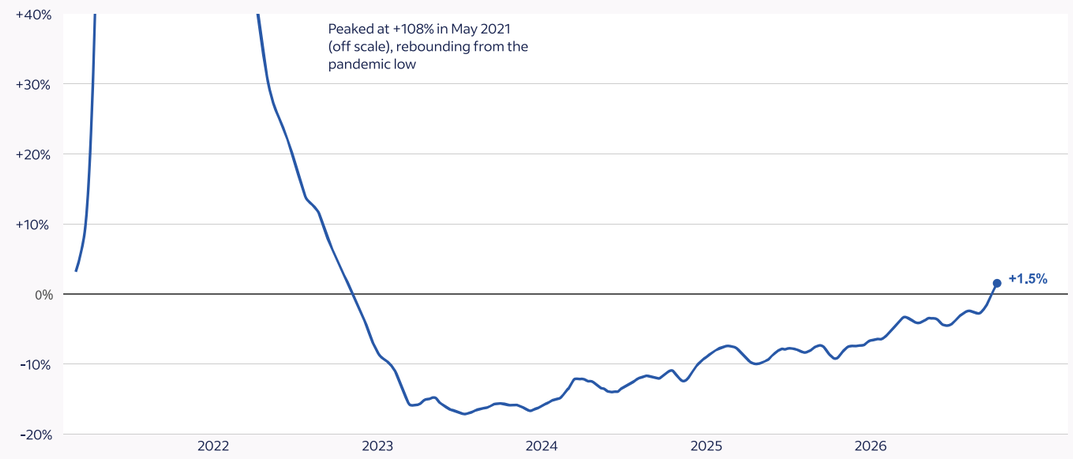
As geopolitical tensions continue to drive up energy prices with no clear end in sight, markets increasingly expect the Federal Reserve to step in and continue to raise interest rates to rein in price growth. In turn, that would only make an already outrageously costly, debt-fueled AI infrastructure and data center buildout even more expensive. Recent analyses suggest that the AI industry will need to generate staggering revenues by 2030, equivalent to nearly 10% of current GDP, in order to meet its debt obligations. Failure to do so could drag down the value of AI loans and batter tech stocks, and in a worst-case scenario could cause bank runs or crises of confidence at overexposed lenders (as we saw with Silicon Valley Bank in 2022).

It wouldn't require a full-blown financial crisis to produce significant economic drag. With wage growth largely stalled, wealth created by rapid stock market growth has supported consumer spending for large swaths of the economy. A significant decline in asset prices risks shutting down that valve and removing what has been one of the economy's most reliable sources of growth for the past five years. Absent this spending to prop up growth, we would expect to see layoffs start rising.

On the other hand, reports of the labor market's impending death have been greatly exaggerated over the past few years. If anything, current trends point to expansion. The Indeed Job Posting Index (JPI), for example, grew on an annual basis this September for the first time since 2022. JPI rises when more jobs are posted and can also increase if and when existing job postings stay active for a longer time, which is also likely happening in the current environment. Anecdotal evidence does suggest that employers are gearing up to hire more in the coming months.

Indeed job postings are growing again year over year

Year-over-year change in the Indeed Job Postings Index, US, seasonally adjusted, Feb 1, 2021 - Oct 9, 2026.



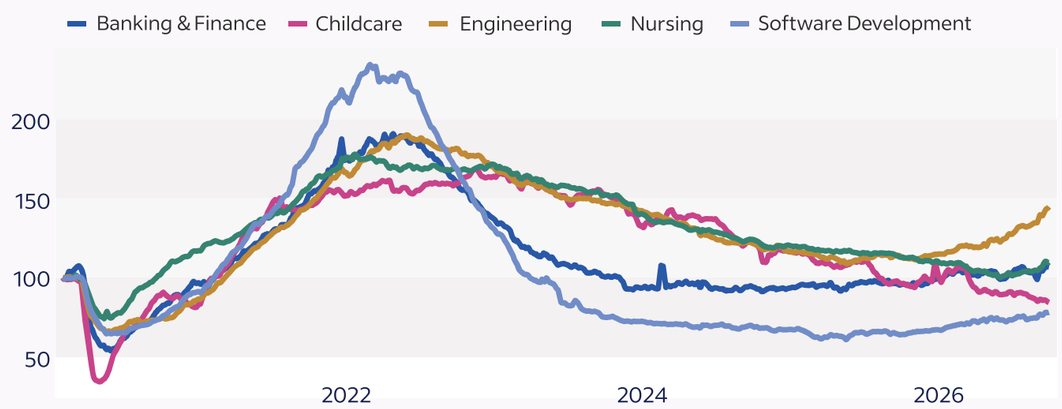
Source: Indeed Hiring Lab, Indeed Job Postings Index (total postings, github.com/hiring-lab/job_postings_tracker). Axis capped to exclude the 2021 rebound.

Not only have job postings on Indeed been growing, but they're growing in the same segments that were previously pulling JPI down – mainly those highly exposed to AI. Postings for software development, banking and finance, and engineering have seen recent growth, while less-AI-exposed sectors including childcare and nursing have softened. If this trend continues, and hires increase in some of these previously-soft white collar sectors, pent up quits could result in a relatively quick return to dynamism.

With both sides ready to move, the foundation exists for the labor market to shift into gear this year. The state of financial markets will likely determine if it's in drive or reverse.

Engineering job postings are pulling away

Indexed level of job postings by selected sector (100 = February 1, 2020), through September 30, 2026



Source: Indeed. The engineering category aggregates postings from Industrial, Mechanical, Civil, Electrical, and Chemical Engineering fields.

Takeaways for employers and job seekers

Employers should be prepared to embrace a potential economic rebound in 2027, but also be clear-eyed about what that may mean for their current and future workforces. A stronger economy would mean a stronger job market and more competition for talent, especially if pent-up frustration gives way to a wave of turnover next year.

For job seekers, a stronger job market would be a welcome relief. Now is the time to prepare for the possibility of clearer skies – by updating resumes, practicing for interviews, activating networks and developing in-demand skills so they are ready when the clouds part.

02: A National Market, Shaped by Local Dynamics

Most local markets have stopped cooling. Job postings are above pre-pandemic levels in 299 of 385 US metros analyzed, but local dynamics vary widely. Job postings are 12% to 15% above baseline in several Texas markets, for example, but roughly 30% below in tech-heavy Seattle and San Francisco.

More metros are turning the corner. The share of metros with year-over-year postings growth jumped from 1-in-10 at the start of 2026 to almost half (49%) by September. That's the broadest growth since late 2022, though still short of the roughly 90% that were growing prior to the pandemic.

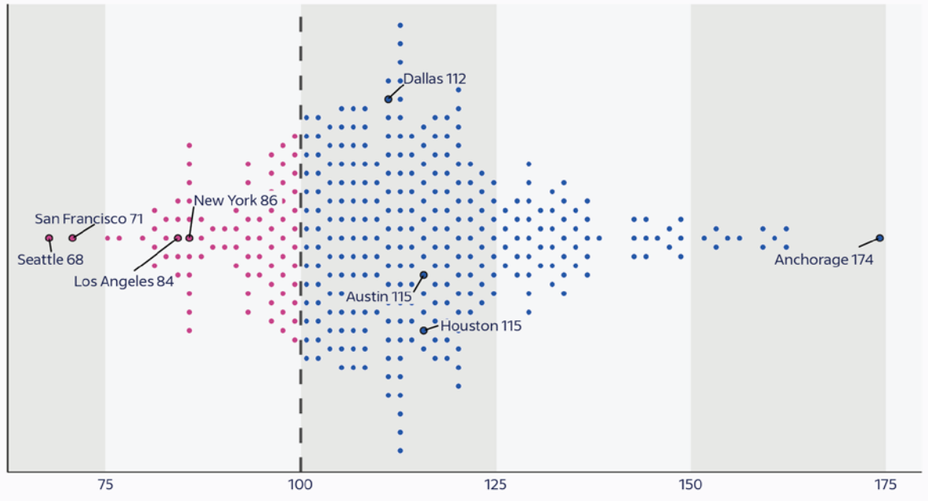
Workers aren't feeling it yet. Employee confidence on Glassdoor fell in about 70% of metros analyzed, including most where hiring demand has picked up. For employers, competition for talent will heat up first in specific roles and locations.

While the national labor market moved mostly sideways in 2026, a growing number of local markets started to turn the corner. If that momentum holds, 2027 could finally be the year the US breaks out of the low-hire environment that has frustrated job seekers for the past two years. So far, though, many workers don't seem to have noticed the green shoots in their own backyards. For employers, it could mean more competition for workers, starting in the places where hiring demand picks up first.

As of September 30, job postings on Indeed were above their pre-pandemic baseline in 299 of the 385 US metro and micropolitan areas with at least 100,000 residents. The most extreme growth is in Anchorage, Alaska, with postings at some 74% above baseline. While some metros have seen posting growth exceeding 50%, there are a large number of metros that sit at current Indeed Job Posting Index (JPI) levels between 100 and 120. For example, postings in the Texas hubs of Dallas, Austin and Houston are each 12% to 15% above their February 2020 baseline levels. But it's a different story in some of the country's largest coastal metros. Job postings in Seattle and San Francisco are roughly 30% below their baseline, and are about 15% below baseline in both Los Angeles and New York.

78% of metros were above their February 2020 baseline at the end of September

Indeed Job Postings Index (Feb 1, 2020 = 100), one dot per US metro, Sep 30, 2026



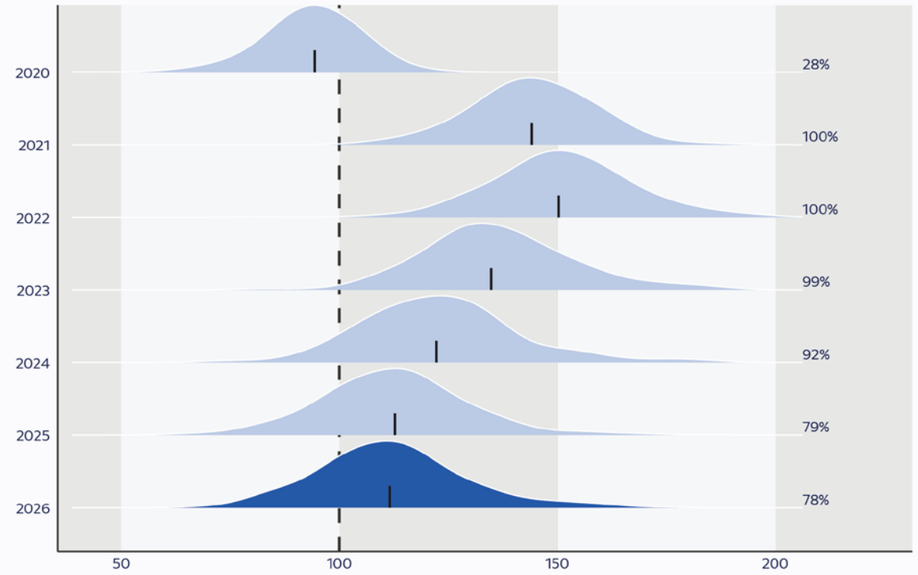
Source: Indeed. 28-day trailing average. Includes the 385 metros with 100,000+ residents in 2019.

Much of the local variation likely comes down to the mix of jobs in each place. Large coastal metros like Seattle and San Francisco have far more tech and other knowledge-work jobs, and demand for those roles has pulled back more than most others since 2022. In September 2026, software development made up nearly four times as large a share of job postings in Seattle and San Francisco as it did nationally. Software development postings are down 20% or more from February 2020, both in these metros and nationwide, which means a heavier reliance on tech jobs has had a much greater impact on overall job postings in those areas.

In September 2022, every metro had more job postings than it did before the pandemic, and postings in the typical (median) metro were about 50% above their February 2020 level. That median fell to 35% in 2023, 22% in 2024, and 13% in 2025. The decline has finally ebbed in 2026, with typical metro postings at around 12% above pre-pandemic levels. Additionally, the share of metros above baseline has barely budged since last year (78% today, compared with 79% a year ago). Put simply, the post-pandemic cooling that has defined the US labor market since 2022 has largely leveled off in most – but not all – local markets.

After three years of decline, metro job postings held steady in 2026

Metro job postings index (Feb 1, 2020 = 100) on Sep 30 of each year; right column = share above 100



Source: Indeed. 28-day trailing average. Includes the 385 metros with 100,000+ residents in 2019.

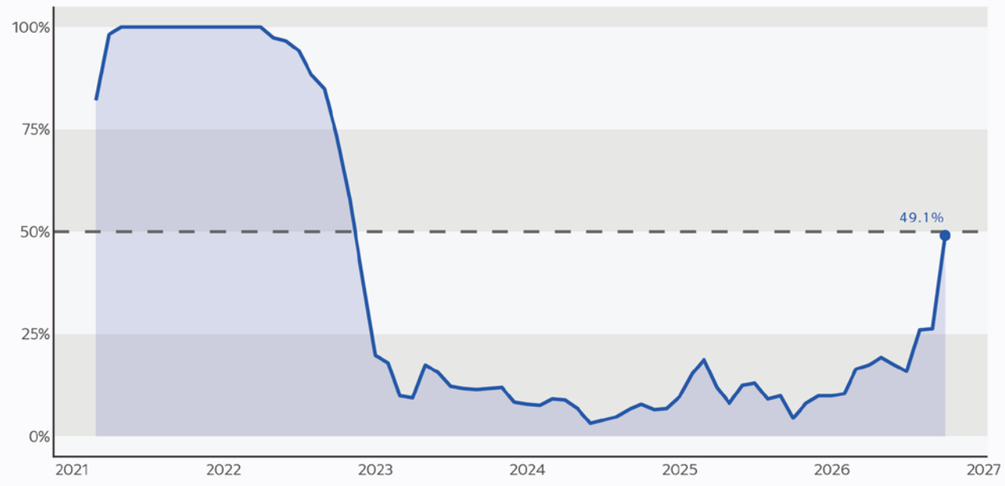
More metros are turning the corner

Leveling off is an important first step, but a growing number of metros are also now moving in a positive direction. Only 1-in-10 US metros had more postings at the beginning of 2026 than at the start of 2025, but that climbed to almost half (49%) by the end of September, the broadest hiring growth since late 2022. It's a remarkable turnaround from mid-2024, when postings were growing year-over-year in only about 3% of metros. Some caution is warranted with a jump that large. Many of these gains are modest and come off a low base after a weak stretch last fall. But the direction has been consistent all year.

In a healthy job market, hiring demand should be growing in a solid majority of metro areas. Indeed's internal data show that job postings grew year-over-year in roughly 9 in 10 metros in 2019. A small majority of metro areas still showing year-over-year declines reinforces the currently anemic hiring environment. But if it holds, September's jump in the share of metros with growing demand is a sure step in the right direction.

Hiring demand is up from a year ago in 49% of US metros

Share of US metros with more job postings than a year earlier, through Sep 30, 2026



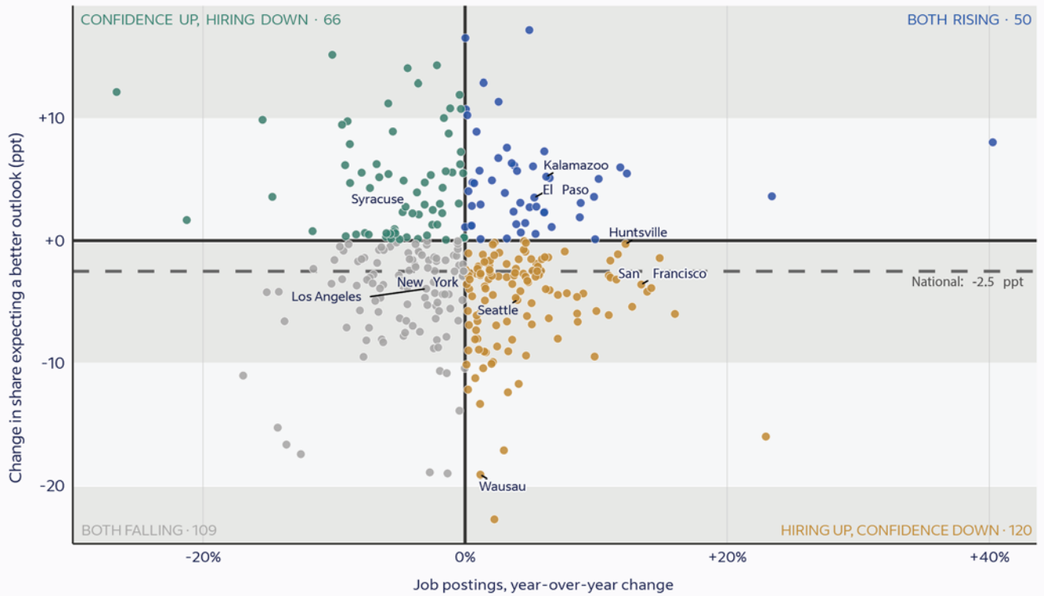
Source: Indeed. Month-end values compared year-over-year for 385 metros with 100,000+ residents in 2019.

A shift in hiring demand isn't translating into confidence

More local hiring should be good news for workers, but so far it hasn't done much to lift their spirits. Over the past year, the share of Glassdoor reviewers saying they expect their employer's business outlook to improve over the next six months fell by 2.5 percentage points nationally, to roughly 52%. When we line that measure up against year-over-year job posting growth in US metros, the two barely move together. Confidence rose alongside postings in just 50 of the 170 metros where job postings grew over the past year. In the other 120, confidence fell even as hiring demand picked up. Overall, confidence slipped year-over-year in about two-thirds of the metros we analyzed.

Improving hiring does not lift worker confidence

Change in worker confidence vs change in job postings over the past year, by US metro



Source: Indeed, Glassdoor. Confidence = share of Glassdoor reviewers expecting a better six-month outlook for their employer. Includes 345 metros with 100,000+ residents in 2019.

While job postings are starting to turn around, worker sentiment has not. It's possible that higher prices and other non-posting-related economic variables are weighing on perceptions. But it may also be that people's views of the economy are more anchored in how far postings have fallen in recent years, rather than in the direction they're now heading.

Confidence fell in 17 of the 20 metros with the lowest JPI levels in September, especially in Seattle, where postings are about 30% below baseline. And the share of workers expecting a better outlook fell by nearly 5 points, well beyond the national drop. In contrast, confidence fell in only 7 of the 20 metro or micropolitan areas with the highest current JPI levels, though some of those are smaller areas with relatively few Glassdoor reviews.

It is also possible that workers may be experiencing a disconnect between the economy's trajectory and their specific employer's outlook. Glassdoor's confidence measure asks workers about their own employer's prospects, so sentiment could diverge if hiring is concentrated among a few employers or industries. Washington, DC, is the clearest example of hiring demand rising while confidence falls. Postings there are up modestly from a year ago, yet confidence dropped by about 4 points as the region shed more than an estimated 62,000 federal jobs between January 2025 and January 2026, leaving the federal workforce at its smallest in decades.

Syracuse, New York, shows the reverse. Postings there are down about 5% from a year ago, but confidence rose by about 3 points to 59%. The reason may lie ahead rather than in today's postings. Central New York is in the early stages of becoming a chipmaking hub, anchored by a $100 billion semiconductor campus that broke ground outside Syracuse in January 2026, the largest private investment in the state's history. Local colleges and universities have spent years building training programs to supply that workforce. As a result, workers may be looking towards opportunities that haven't been posted yet.

Takeaways for employers and job seekers

National hiring has moved mostly sideways over the past two years, but that stability is an average of very different local stories. Those local conditions are what workers and employers actually live with, and if hiring demand picks up unevenly in 2027, they may matter more than the headline numbers.

For employers, local conditions will shape which roles are hardest to fill next year. Workers who don't yet feel the potential recovery may stay put for now. But if their confidence catches up with local hiring demand, it could lead to turnover, especially where postings are already climbing. Employers who know which of their roles and locations are tightening will be better positioned to act before competition heats up.

For job seekers, there's reason for optimism, even if it doesn't feel that way yet. A slow market in one sector or city doesn't mean a slow market everywhere. A broader search across roles, industries, and nearby markets may uncover opportunities that national numbers miss. And because many workers aren't feeling the upturn yet, those who start looking now may face less competition than they expect.

#3: Gen Z at Work: They're Here, They're (Surprisingly) Positive, and They're Different

Gen Z is moving into management. Gen Z makes up 24% of the labor force and 12% of managers, and are projected to outnumber Baby Boomers in management in 2027.

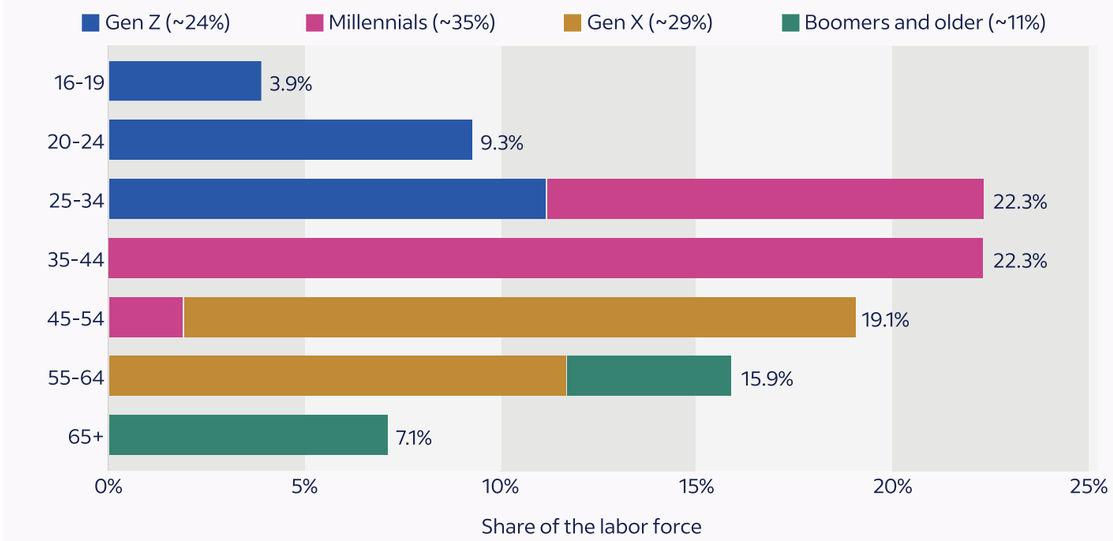
They're optimistic, but restless. Gen Z is the only generation expecting the job market to improve next year, and they rate their employers more highly. Yet nearly a third of employed Gen Z workers are actively job hunting.

They want different things from work. 58% want a mentor, but only 25% have one. Gen Z values flexibility and culture-related benefits more than older generations, and many prefer onsite or hybrid work. Employers that adapt now will be better positioned to keep their future leaders.

Gen Z is growing up fast, with the oldest members turning 30 in 2027. But far from just entering the workforce, this generation is now firmly established in the labor market and will define the way we work for decades to come. Gen Z workers now make up nearly a quarter of the labor force (24%), a much larger share than Baby Boomers (11%). We estimate that the number of Gen Z individuals in the labor force will surpass Gen X in 2028, becoming the second largest working generation behind Millennials.

Four generations make up the US labor force

Share of the civilian labor force by age, August 2026. Color shows estimated generation.



Source: Indeed Hiring Lab analysis of BLS CPS, August 2026. Generations follow Pew birth-year ranges (Gen Z from 1997); shares approximate.



Younger and entry-level workers have faced challenges in the recent labor market. Even in this unfavorable environment, Gen Z has poured into the labor force. Their 24% share is almost exactly the share Millennials held in 2010, when the oldest members of that generation were also 29.

Not only have Gen Z workers moved fully into working age, they are also transitioning into management roles. Gen Z are 12% of managers in 2026, and Gen Z and Millennials combined make up a narrow majority of managers (50.6%). If historical trends continue, we estimate that Gen Z will outnumber Baby Boomers in management in 2027, and will surpass Gen X in 2033 – likely much sooner than many employers expect.

The through line is simple: Gen Z is here to stay, and the workplace will increasingly adapt to their preferences and leadership styles. Here are four trends that business leaders need to understand about how Gen Z works and leads, leaning on Glassdoor sentiment data and findings from the 2026 Indeed Hiring Lab Workforce Insights Survey (WIS).

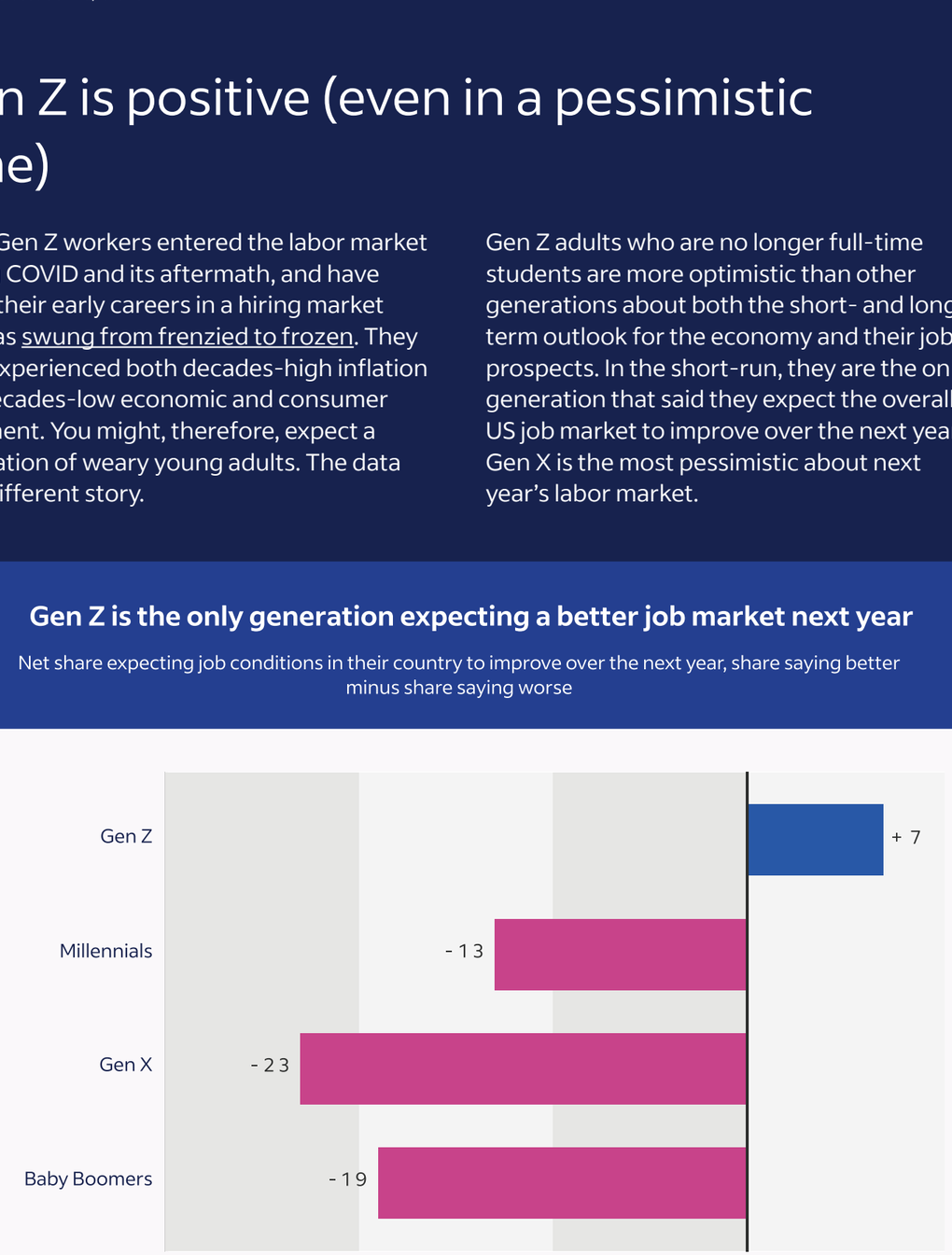
Gen Z is positive (even in a pessimistic time)

Many Gen Z workers entered the labor market during COVID and its aftermath, and have spent their early careers in a hiring market that has swung from frenzied to frozen. They have experienced both decades-high inflation and decades-low economic and consumer sentiment. You might, therefore, expect a generation of weary young adults. The data tell a different story.

Gen Z adults who are no longer full-time students are more optimistic than other generations about both the short- and long-term outlook for the economy and their job prospects. In the short-run, they are the only generation that said they expect the overall US job market to improve over the next year. Gen X is the most pessimistic about next year's labor market.

Gen Z is the only generation expecting a better job market next year

Net share expecting job conditions in their country to improve over the next year, share saying better minus share saying worse

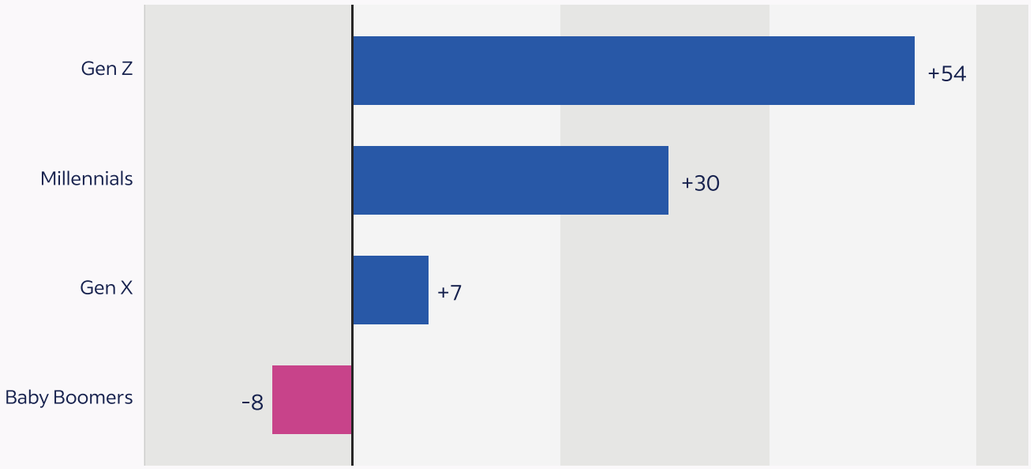


Source: Indeed Workforce Insights Survey, 2026

They are also more positive when it comes to longer-term economic conditions. Compared to the other generations in the labor force, Gen Z respondents were statistically more likely to agree that they will have more opportunity to get ahead and be more successful in their careers over the next five years. Longer-term career sentiment deteriorates with age, with each successive generation significantly less likely to report a positive five-year career outlook.

Each generation is less hopeful about getting ahead than the last

Net share agreeing minus disagreeing, five years from now: "More opportunity to get ahead and be more successful in my career"



Source: Indeed Workforce Insights Survey, 2026

Gen Z's optimism also shows up in Glassdoor reviews. Workers aged 20-29 rate their employers an average of 0.23 stars higher (on a 5-star scale) than workers aged 30-59, and they score career opportunities, senior management, and work-life balance significantly higher as well. Gen Z are also more positive than Millennials were in their 20s. In 2016, twenty-somethings gave overall ratings 0.14 stars higher than older workers, smaller than the 0.23 star difference today. When it comes to evaluating their own futures or their satisfaction with their companies, Gen Z workers are not all doom and gloom.

Workers in their 20s give higher Glassdoor ratings

Average rating out of 5 stars by reviewer age, 2025–2026



Source: Glassdoor reviews, 2025–2026

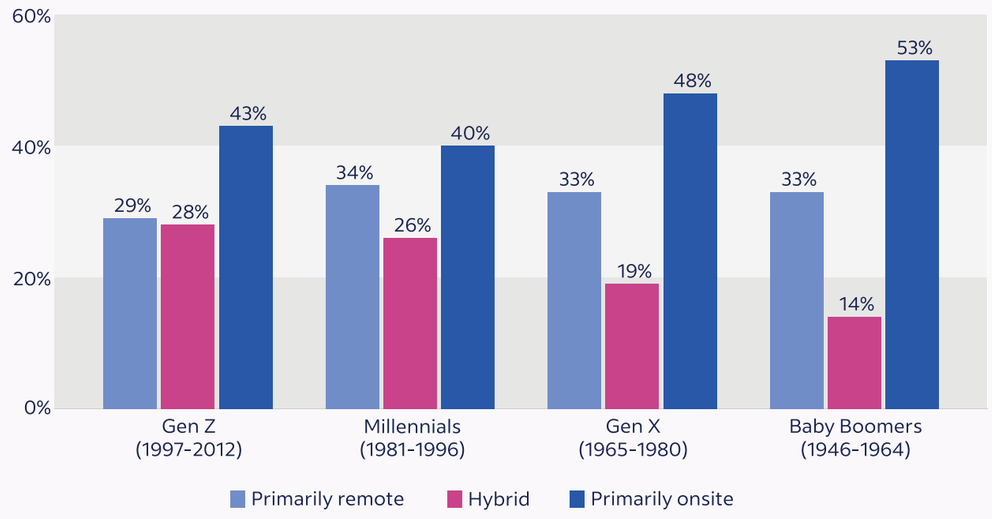


They want flexibility and a mentor (not a home office and isolation)

Employers we've encountered often assume younger workers want to work remotely. But our data show that isn't the case, at least not when compared to many of their older colleagues. In fact, Gen Z individuals prefer to work primarily onsite more than other options and are least likely to prefer working in the office one day or less a week. They are also more likely than Gen X and Boomers to want to work via a hybrid arrangement. Baby Boomers are the only generation where a majority of respondents said they prefer working onsite 4 or more days a week (53%).

Hybrid's appeal fades with age

Preferred work arrangement, share of US respondents within each generation

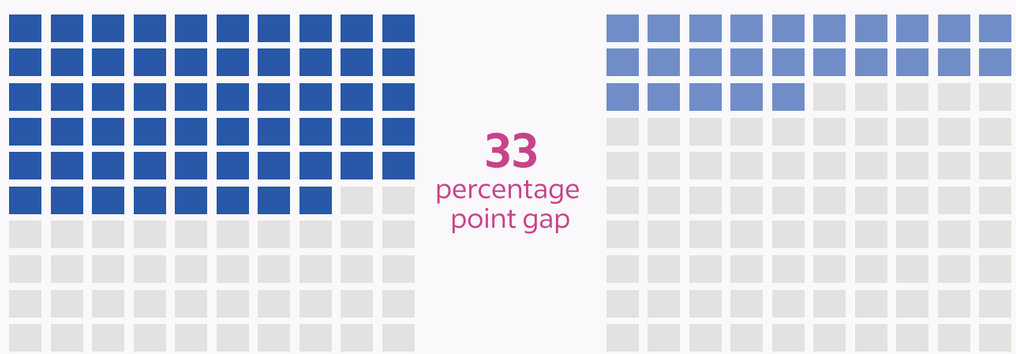


Source: Indeed Workforce Insights Survey, 2026

Gen Z also values something that many employers aren't providing: a mentor. Gen Z respondents who are no longer students report strong interest in upskilling and mentorship. A majority (58%) of them indicate that they want a mentor at work, but only 25% report that their employer provides them one. This gap is notable, and provides employers with an opportunity to do more to meet these mentorship needs. Compared to many other company-sponsored professional development opportunities and employee benefits, mentorship is a low-cost way of meeting Gen Z workers where they are.

Gen Z's mentorship gap is 33 points wide

Share of US Gen Z respondents (born 1997–2012) who are not full-time students, Q2 2026



Each square = 1% of these Gen Z respondents. The same respondents answered both questions.

Source: Indeed Workforce Insights Survey, 2026

They want different benefits

Gen Z also wants different benefits from other generations. Benefits including free food and flexible work hours are especially valued by Gen Z workers, more so than by any older generation.

Our survey asked respondents to rank their top five desired employer benefits. All generations rank health insurance and paid time off highly, but there are notable generational differences beyond those. Gen Z is much more likely to value benefits tied to company culture and flexibility, and within the group these rank above retirement or long-term savings and childcare or family support. About 1-in-5 (21%) of Gen Z respondents chose free food as one of their top 5 employer benefits, significantly higher than any other generation and well above the 13% overall rate at which this benefit was selected. They similarly place higher value on flexible working hours and health savings accounts, known for their flexibility and potentially lower costs. Compared to their elders, they place significantly lower value on benefits such as pension programs, 401(k)s, and dental/optical benefits.

Gen Z favors perks and flexibility; Gen X and Boomers, security

Percentage points above (blue) or below (magenta) the share of all respondents naming each benefit. Rows are ordered by the Gen Z minus Baby Boomer gap, shown in brackets after each label.

	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Free food or drink (+11)	+8	0	-4	-3
Mental health days (+8)	+2	+3	-2	-7
Flexible working hours (+6)	+6	-1	-4	+1
Health savings account (+4)	+2	0	0	-2
Remote work option (+1)	0	+2	-2	-2
Holiday closure (-2)	0	0	-1	+2
Casual dress code (-3)	+1	-2	0	+4
Health insurance (-4)	-5	-1	+6	-1
Stock / equity comp (-5)	-2	-1	+2	+3
Performance bonuses (-8)	-3	-3	+3	+5
Paid sick days (-10)	-4	-1	+2	+5
Vacation days (-11)	-6	-2	+5	+4
Retirement plan (401k) (-11)	-9	0	+6	+2
Pension programs (-13)	-5	-2	+3	+8
Optical / dental insurance (-15)	-10	-1	+6	+5

Source: Indeed Workforce Insights Survey, 2026



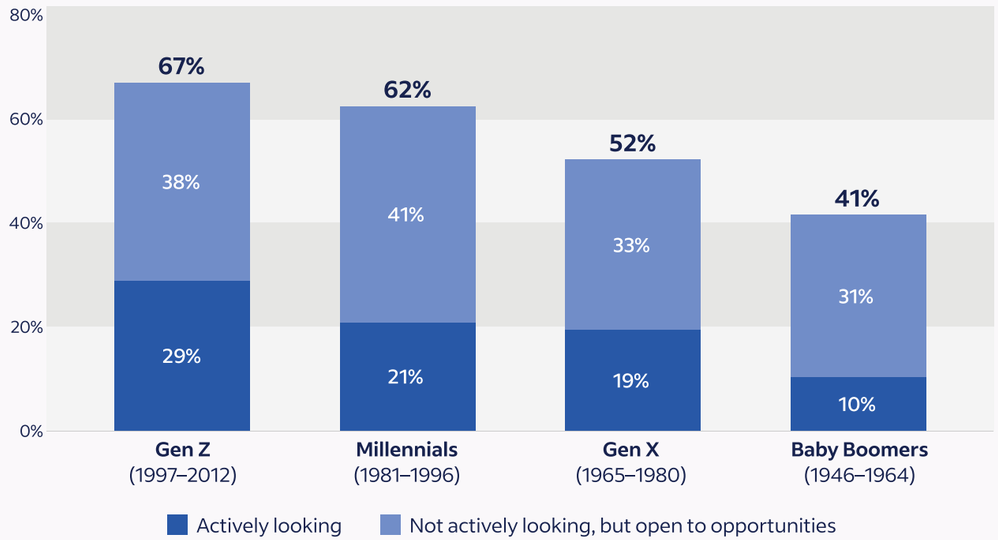
What's driving these differences? Some of the answer exists in other observable economic data. Gen Z is marrying later, having fewer children, is more likely to live at home, and the younger part of the cohort can remain on their parent's health insurance until age 26. They are also more likely than prior generations to report that they don't expect to buy a home or retire traditionally. As a result, traditional employee benefits including health insurance, retirement assistance, and/or parental leave may be less important to Gen Z than the workers who have come before them. While preferences will likely shift as Gen Z ages, some differences will likely persist.

Employed Gen Z workers are more likely to be looking for new opportunities

Gen Z workers, especially those with white collar jobs, might look settled right now. The low-hire, low-fire environment has hit them hard, and few may be eager to change jobs right now. However, things seem to be stirring for these workers under the surface. According to our survey, Gen Z workers who are no longer students are statistically more likely than any other generation to be searching for a job, especially actively, even as Glassdoor data show they are more satisfied than their older colleagues.

Two-thirds of Gen Z workers are open to a new job

Share of employed US workers by job search status, 2026



Source: Indeed Workforce Insights Survey, 2026

This may seem like a contradiction, but it's not. Gen Z appears to be a generation that is content enough to stay where they are for now, but also curious about what exists beyond their current role. If and when the labor market tightens, employers who haven't invested in this generation of workers may find this out the hard way. The good news is that this generation is young enough that investments made now that are designed to appeal to these workers can make a real difference for them as they progress into the next stages of their career.

Takeaways for employers and job seekers

It may be tempting to assume that Gen Z will eventually settle into the habits and preferences of the generations before it. But expecting that won't make it so. Given that they now make up 24% of the labor force, employers will benefit by learning and adapting to their preferences sooner rather than later. They represent the next business leaders and entrepreneurs, and investments in them today will go a long way tomorrow.

For employers, the implications are practical: review your current slate of employee benefits through the lens of what this group values. Investing in mentorship, flexibility, career development, and other desired benefits may help you recruit a high level of young talent that will very soon become the backbone of your management team and succession plan.

For job seekers of any age, Gen Z's outlook carries a lesson. Optimism about your career opportunities can be a competitive advantage in a market where many workers and job seekers are discouraged. Look for employers who prioritize development, mentorship, or education support, and don't be shy about asking about it before you accept the position.

#4: There is no AI Jobpocalypse, but plenty of AI-nxiety

AI's impact is broad, but still shallow. There is little evidence of widespread job losses driven solely by AI. The Indeed AI Tracker roughly doubled over the past year, and nearly two-thirds of AI-touched job titles are now outside traditional tech.

An AI-driven productivity boom hasn't arrived yet. Labor productivity has grown at a 2.1% annual pace since late 2019, in line with its long-run average. 31% of workers say their employer has low-to-zero AI adoption.

Workers are souring on AI. Only 45% of AI mentions in Glassdoor reviews are positive, down from 82% in 2019, and AI-critical reviewers are far more likely to mention burnout and layoffs. Employers that adopt AI without bringing workers along risk losing them when the market turns.

There is still a great deal of uncertainty around the exact ramifications of AI on the labor market, and whether it will ultimately lead to a jobs boom or bust. While there is scant evidence of an AI-driven “jobpocalypse” as of writing, there are many signs that AI is directly changing roles and attitudes — with big implications for employers and job seekers alike.

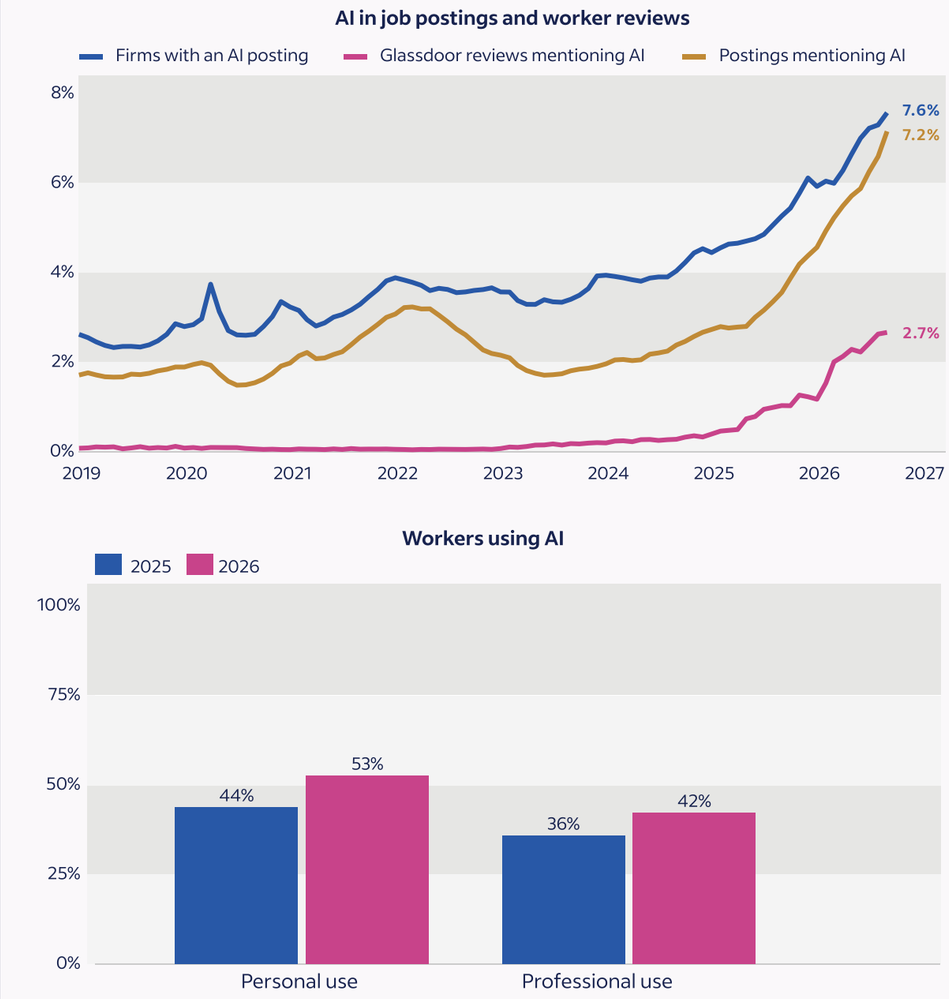
In just the past year alone, the Indeed AI Tracker (which measures the share of Indeed job postings containing AI terms to proxy AI labor demand) has effectively doubled, rising from 3.6% in September 2025 to 7.2% in September 2026. The share of companies with at least one job posting on Indeed that mentions AI is up by 44% over the same time period, and the share of Glassdoor reviews mentioning AI more than doubled. A majority (53%) of employed workers now say they use AI at least weekly in their personal lives, according to the 2026 Indeed Hiring Lab Workforce Insights Report (WIS), up from 44% a year ago, while regular use at work rose from 36% to 42%.



AI is spreading across job postings and worker routines

Share of the civilian labor force by age, August 2026. Color shows estimated generation.

Top: monthly AI shares, through September 2026.
Bottom: share of employed workers using AI at least weekly, 2025 vs 2026



Source: Indeed; Glassdoor; Indeed Workforce Insights Survey.

Transformation and opportunities occur across occupations

Dividing the economy into occupations that are “safe from” or “vulnerable to” AI-driven change is an increasingly misguided approach. Yes, AI will have bigger impacts on some occupations and industries than on others, but it is clear that most types of work will eventually be affected. No sector is truly immune from AI-driven change.

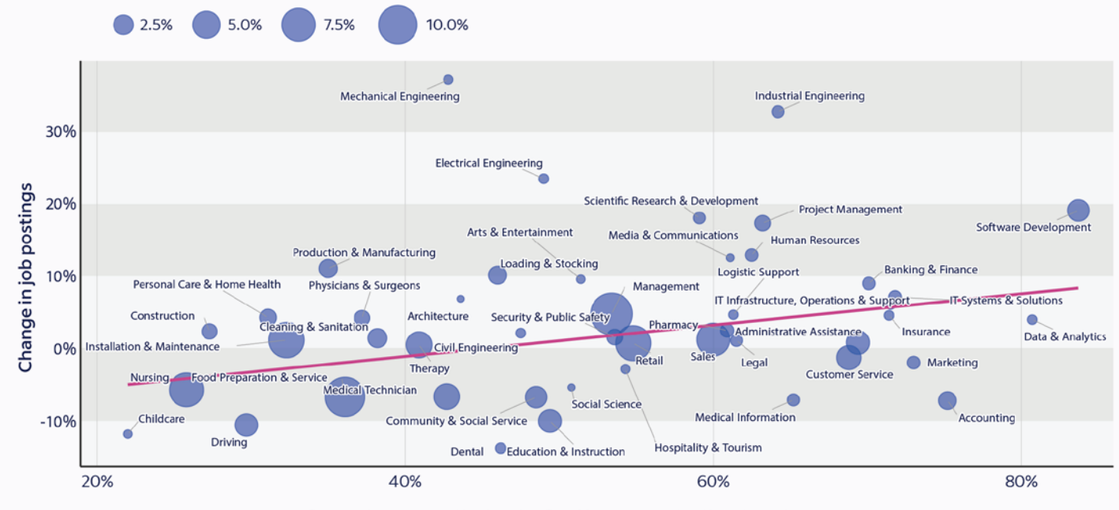
AI-related skills, tasks, and tools are now becoming mainstream across the broader labor market. “AI-touched” roles, postings that explicitly include AI in the job title itself, were initially concentrated in the kinds of software and data roles that are most exposed to AI. But today, almost two-thirds of AI-touched job titles are outside of traditional tech occupations. When employers add AI to the titles of truck drivers, retail sales associates, and physical therapists, they are clearly signalling that they expect workers to understand and use AI tools across a wide array of professions.

The nationwide AI infrastructure and data center build-out has also sparked a surge in demand for the kinds of hands-on, skilled tradespeople previously considered to have limited exposure to AI itself. In data through the first half of this year, a quarter of data center-related job postings were for installation & maintenance workers. Demand for these workers is running so hot that advertised wages are 42% higher for work of this kind done at a data center, compared to similar installation & maintenance positions unrelated to data centers. Just because AI can’t reliably perform the core functions of a job, like installation & maintenance work, does not mean the occupation will escape AI-driven economic transformation.

Job postings have also rebounded for roles where genAI is most-capable of completing tasks, indicating resilient labor demand and the need to keep a “human in the loop.” The recent resurgence in software development jobs, for example, is being driven by demand for more-experienced and/or AI-related roles: 71% of the increase in Software Development job postings were for senior roles, and 37% explicitly mentioned AI in their title. The AI transformation is not yet driving workers out of certain occupations, but it is impacting the sort of skills and experience that employers are looking for.

Job postings rebounded in roles with more AI exposure

United States, September 2025 - September 2026, seasonally adjusted



Source: Indeed. GenAI exposure based on the Indeed Hiring Lab AI at Work Report 2025 (GSTI)

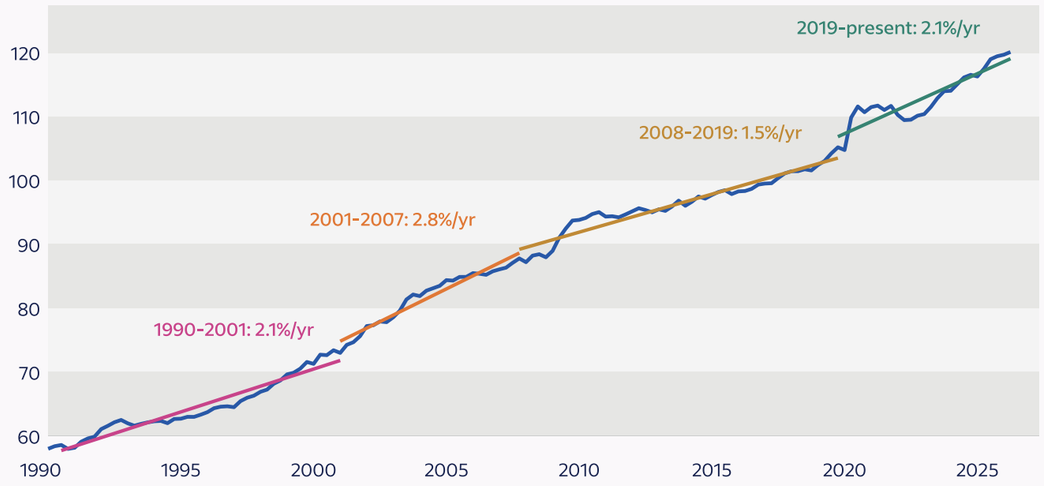
AI hasn't sparked a productivity revolution…yet

Dozens of economic and labor market experts surveyed by Indeed Hiring Lab remain confident AI will meaningfully lift US labor productivity over the next three years. But while the consensus is that AI will boost productivity, we are not yet living in an era of unprecedented productivity growth.

Labor productivity has grown at a 2.1% annualized rate since late 2019, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This is up notably from the 1.5% pace that prevailed from 2008-2019, but in line with the post-1947 long-term average.

Productivity growth has broken free from 2010s slump

Nonfarm business labor productivity, index 2017 = 100



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, seasonally adjusted.
Lines are linear trends fit over each business cycle (NBER peak to peak).



While AI may have contributed to the recent recovery in productivity growth, the data do not yet show a dramatic shift. This doesn't mean a productivity boom won't soon come, as it takes time for the economy to adopt new technologies. While individual usage at work is rising, firm-level adoption of the tools remains low. Almost a third (31%) of workers surveyed in the WIS said that their employers had low-to-zero AI adoption, compared to only a quarter (25%) that reported high adoption and integration.

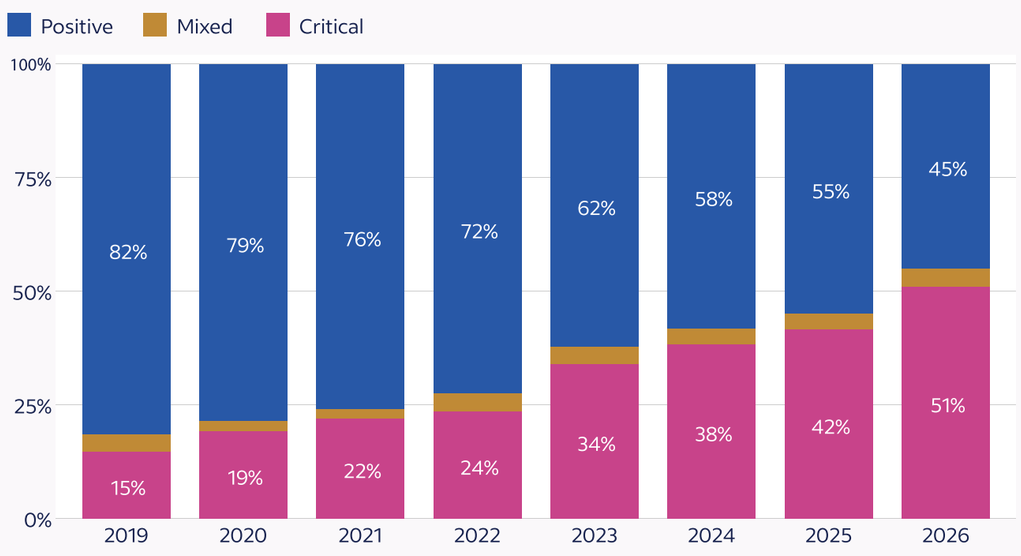
AI still has potential to contribute to seismic improvements in productivity growth, especially as AI capabilities continue to grow and workplace integration becomes more widespread. However, evidence from our survey shows that AI users could see diminishing productivity gains. A majority (56%) of employed US respondents said they did not agree with the statement, "AI makes or could make me more efficient." Interestingly, among regular AI users at work, estimated daily time savings attributed to the tools actually dropped slightly over the past year, from 2.3 to 2.1 hours.

Worker sentiment on AI is deteriorating

Workers are increasingly sharing critical opinions of their company's AI adoption strategies in reviews left on Glassdoor. Workers were 2.6x as likely to mention AI in reviews in September 2026 than they were in the prior year, and the tenor of those comments has sharply soured. In 2019, 82% of reviews mentioning AI framed it positively. By 2026, only 45% of AI mentions in reviews were positive and a slim majority (51%) of reviews now mention AI only in the "cons" section.

About 51% of AI mentions in Glassdoor reviews are now critical

Share of Glassdoor reviews mentioning AI, by sentiment



Source: Glassdoor reviews mentioning AI or LLMs from full-time and part-time employees. 2026 data through September 30.

This rising negativity is deeply intertwined with workplace anxiety. Workers making AI-critical comments were 3.5 times as likely to mention burnout, 3.8 times as likely to mention job insecurity, and 7.1 times as likely to mention layoffs than the base rate. In fact, 20% of workers who listed AI in the "cons" section of their review also explicitly mentioned layoffs. This critical sentiment bleeds into overall company outlook as well: only 37% of AI-critical reviewers said they approve of their CEO and just 31% see a positive business outlook, compared to 89% and 85%, respectively, among AI-positive reviewers. AI-critical reviewers tend to give harsher ratings, but these differences aren't only due to the review being more critical. Statistically significant differences remain even when we account for the review's overall star rating.

Not all of the negativity has to do with workers' fear of AI taking their jobs. In a detailed analysis of Glassdoor comments from June 2025 to May 2026, other common complaints concerned how AI had degraded the experience for both workers and customers. Many comments expressed frustration with the AI tools their employers deployed, despite inadequacies. As one reviewer put it, their company made a "big push for use of AI tools that have provided little value." Although some of the negativity does come directly from workers in occupations facing extreme AI disruption (such as insurance adjusters), there is not a strong relationship between worker sentiment and measures of AI exposure.



Takeaways for employers and job seekers

AI is already triggering subtle but meaningful shifts in the labor market. Some of these are cyclical and likely to fade in coming years, including the boom stoked by red-hot demand for AI infrastructure and hardware. More concerning are the structural shifts occurring alongside these cyclical swings. Structural change requires that jobs be remade to fit a new environment, and that transition can both take a long time to fully unfold and be extremely painful as it does. Navigating these ongoing transformations will require employers, workers and job seekers alike to focus on skills and flexibility.

That is easier said than done. We still don't know precisely how broad, deep, or durable these shifts are. We do know that AI's impact is not narrowly constrained to specific jobs or sectors, that there is still robust demand for professional experience, and that workers' dissatisfaction with AI is growing. Current employees are burnt out and anxious as they incorporate these models into their work, and job seekers need to hit a moving target as skill requirements shift. With current AI capabilities, job seekers should focus on the skills and experience that complement AI, and identify the parts of their professions that still need a human touch.

The challenge for employers is to adapt and innovate without alienating their workforces. The relatively weak labor market has allowed employers to ignore workers' AI concerns largely without consequence as they focused on AI implementation. But this creates future risks: employers cannot neglect their employees, because they will still need to attract, motivate, and retain workers as long as these large language models are best with a human in the loop.

#5: Experience Wanted. But Where Do You Get It?

The bottom rung of the career ladder is moving higher. Senior-level postings are up 19.2% since January 2025, while entry- and mid-level postings are each down about 4%. Unemployment among recent grads has risen 1.3 percentage points since 2023.

Landing a job isn't the same as starting a career. 50.4% of the class of 2025 were underemployed a year after graduating, up from just under 40% for most of the past decade.

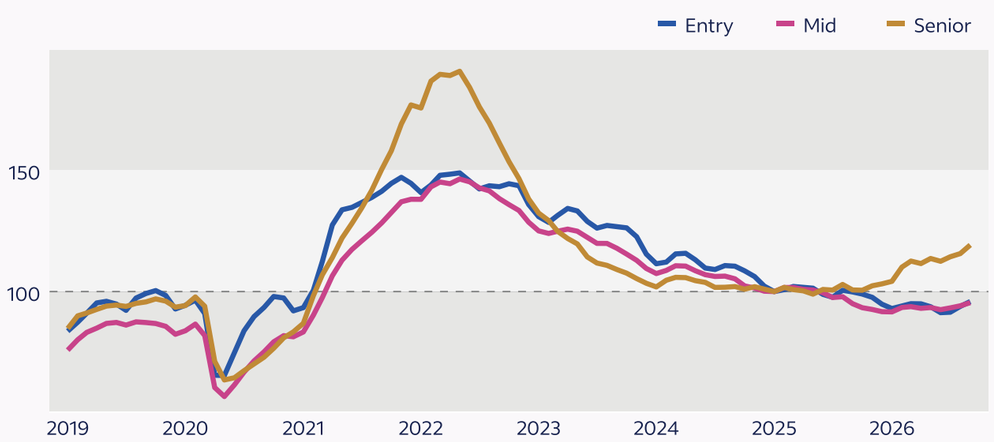
Investing in early-career talent pays off. Entry-level workers who do find jobs are the most satisfied with their career opportunities, and they especially value training and mentorship. Employers that stop hiring and developing junior talent risk thinning their own future pipeline.

Employers want workers who can hit the ground running. But where are those workers supposed to get their start?

The divide between entry- and senior-level hiring is becoming harder to ignore. Employers are starting to show a clear preference for more-experienced workers, lifting the bottom rung of the job ladder higher for workers trying to establish themselves at the same time as opportunities to acquire said experience become more scarce. Recent graduates are often held up as the poster children for this catch-22, but the consequences extend well beyond the graduating class.
Since January 2025, senior-level roles have been the only ones showing growth, partly offsetting broader labor market weakness. By September 2026, senior-level postings were 19.2% above their January 2025 levels, while entry- and mid-level postings were each down around 4%.

Senior-level roles are driving job postings growth

Monthly average of daily job postings with each seniority level (100 = January 2025), through September 2026



Source: Indeed



A closer look at the past three years highlights the squeeze on recent graduates trying to get their start. In September 2026, entry-level job postings as a share of all job postings were almost four percentage points lower than September 2023 levels, and the unemployment rate among recent graduates rose by 1.3 percentage points over the same period (through June 2026). Taken together, these figures paint a clear picture of a market where getting established has become harder, even for those with a degree.

The squeeze is also evident in job seeker activity – entry-level postings attract several times as many applications per posting as senior-level roles. That means workers seeking their first opportunity in the labor market face substantially more competition per job opening, and that volume can help explain why a job search sometimes feels like sending applications into a void.

The problem is compounded by the fact that entry-level jobs don't necessarily have to be set aside for entry-level workers. Prior research shows that as recently as May, almost half of applications from job seekers with 10 or more years of work experience went to entry-level roles. This relative flood of candidates applying for these roles can tax already busy recruiters and hiring managers, lengthening the feedback loop and leaving many jobseekers unsure where they stand once their application is submitted. For many applicants, it's likely that their feelings of being "ghosted" during job search could stem more from a crowded and lengthening hiring process and not necessarily a lack of qualifications.

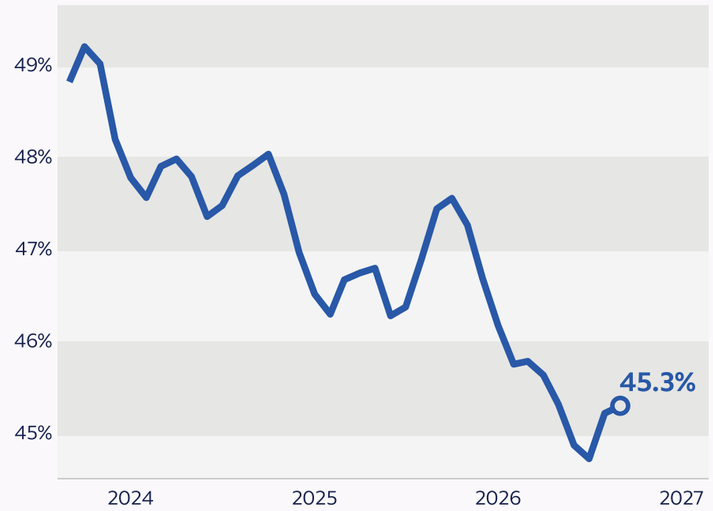
In a market marked by information asymmetry, even relatively simple efforts by employers, including automated application updates or status trackers, can go a long way in preserving goodwill with the job seekers they may one day hope to hire.

Entry-level hiring has fallen as new grad unemployment has risen

Share of entry-level job postings vs recent college graduate unemployment rate

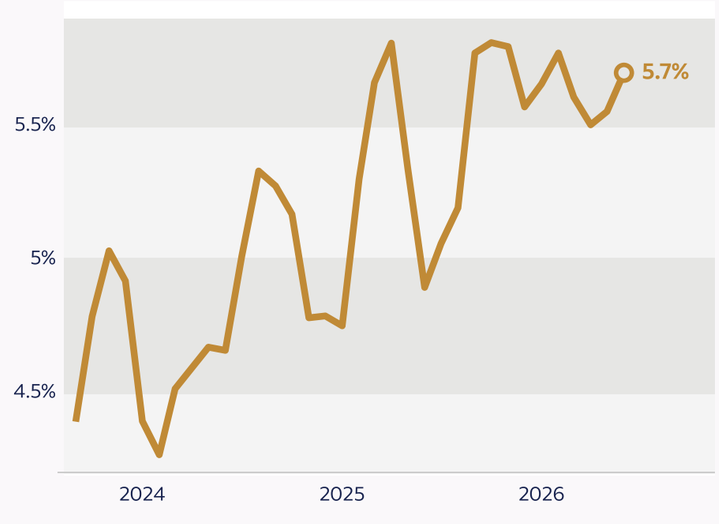
Share of job postings that are entry-level

Monthly avg. of daily counts, Sep 2023–Sep 2026



Recent college grad unemployment rate

Seasonally adjusted, Sep 2023–Jun 2026



Source: Indeed, NY Federal Reserve Bank

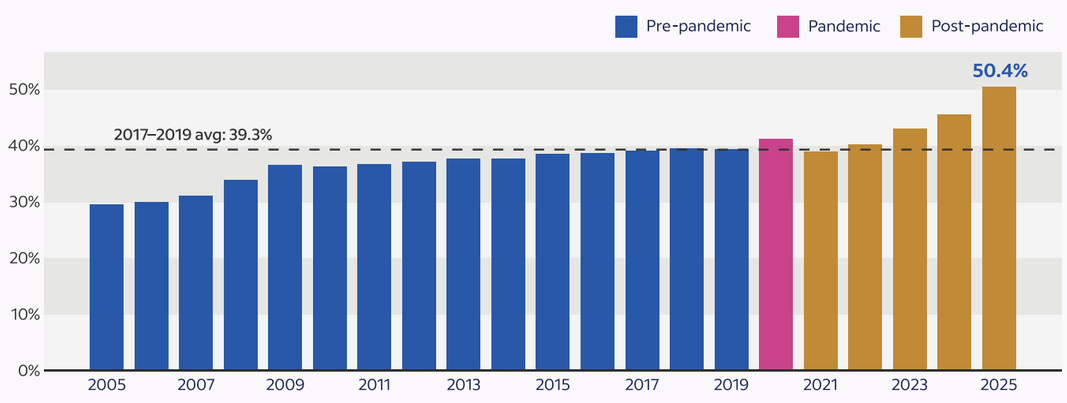
Landing a job is only half the battle

Finding work is one hurdle. Finding work that puts a degree to use is increasingly becoming another.

One measure of how graduates are getting started is whether their jobs typically require a degree – if they are working in a job that is unlikely to require someone with their degree, we consider them "underemployed." We measure underemployment by identifying normalized job titles where more than 20% of that occupation's job listings on Indeed require a Bachelor's degree. We then use Indeed profiles to identify the jobs graduates hold one year after earning their bachelor's degree. After hovering just under 40% for much of the past decade, the share of graduates that were underemployed one year after graduation rose to 50.4% for the class of 2025, a vivid illustration of the challenges facing the more than 2 million people that graduated last year.

New graduates in recent cohorts are more likely to work in non-degree jobs one year after graduation

Share of bachelor's degree holders working in non-degree-requiring jobs 12 months after graduation, by graduation cohort (2005–2025)



Source: Indeed
Non-degree jobs are defined as normalized job titles where fewer than 20% of job postings have a minimum education requirement of a bachelor's degree or higher between September 2025-August 2026
If fewer than 50% but more than 30% of postings state an education requirement, the share is calculated using only postings that state one

Other estimates of underemployment can vary with methodology. What's key is the direction: holding the methodology constant, last year's underemployment rate as calculated by Indeed was more than 10 percentage points above its pre-pandemic average.

For new graduates, the risk then becomes that a first job acts as a detour rather than a stepping stone. Work that does not require a degree can provide valuable experience and reliable income, but it may offer fewer opportunities to build the specialized skills needed for a recent grad's intended career. This can have long-term impact on wages too: graduate underemployment has been shown to lead to lower earnings that persist well beyond the first few years of work.

This doesn't mean that pursuing a degree is no longer worthwhile – employers may prefer or reward a degree even when one isn't explicitly required. For example, a restaurant manager role may not specifically require a bachelor's degree on paper, but having one could still give an applicant an advantage. A degree may therefore help applicants get hired even when it isn't a formal requirement. Research has also found that bachelor's degree holders working in jobs that don't typically require a degree still earn about 38% more at the median than workers with only a high school diploma in the same occupations. Still, a pay advantage over non-degree holders is not the same as a payoff equal to what they might earn in a role that truly requires a bachelor's degree.

Hiring an "overqualified" candidate is often seen as somewhat risky, because that candidate may be more likely to leave when they find a better opportunity. The lesson for employers is not to avoid overqualified candidates, but to give them reasons to stay with you. A softer job market means employers have better access to high-potential talent, even if they don't have the work that fits them best right now. Getting access to this talent is extremely valuable, but access only matters if employers convert that into retention by offering career opportunities that allow that talent to grow along with the company.

At the same time, if a degree is truly a prerequisite, employers need to say so. Leaving it out of a job posting creates a misleading picture of who has a realistic chance of being hired. If a degree really is not necessary for a job, applicants without one should receive genuine consideration. And if employers expect degree-level skills, compensation should reflect those expectations.

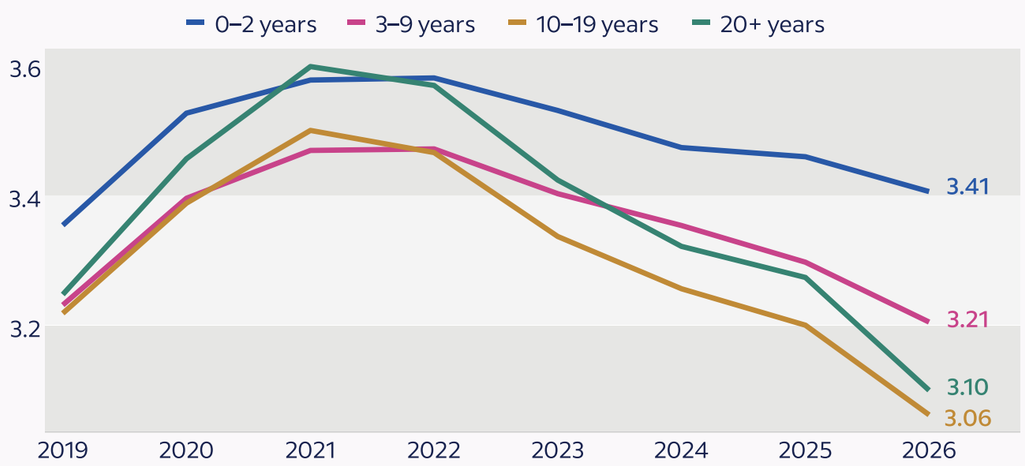
Does the career ladder end at the first rung?

Entry-level opportunities matter beyond the graduating class, and workers' views of their prospects differ by years of experience.

When workers rate their satisfaction with their employers' "career opportunities" on Glassdoor, entry-level workers with 0–2 years of experience are actually the most satisfied. Through mid-September, entry-level workers rated career opportunities 3.41 out of 5 stars, solidly higher than for more-experienced workers. And while career opportunity ratings have declined across all experience groups since 2022, the declines have been larger for workers with more experience. This is not to say that entry-level workers have had it easy, but instead that younger workers who do find jobs in today's job market still feel like they have the ability to grow their careers.

Entry-level workers rate career opportunities highest

Average Glassdoor career opportunities rating (1–5), by years of experience



Source: 2026 data through September 12 Glassdoor

The challenge, then, is not just helping workers get a start, but ensuring that the opportunities to develop do not fade as their careers progress. Entry-level workers are 47% more likely to mention "training" and 35% more likely to mention "mentorship" as workplace positives in Glassdoor reviews than more experienced workers. Growth opportunities matter to employees of every age, but they stand out most for those early in their careers.

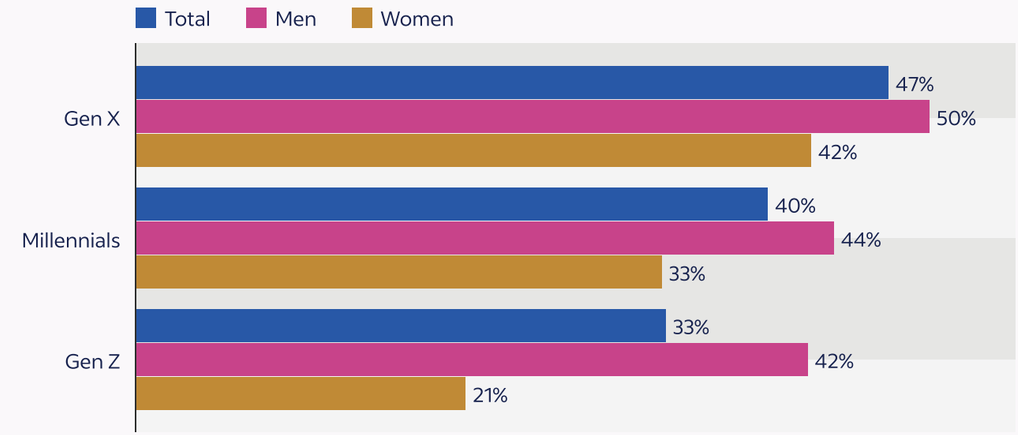


Younger workers worry about AI

AI has also been pointed to as a potential cause of the entry-level hiring slowdown. While evidence for this is still mixed, entry-level workers are nevertheless visibly frustrated with AI. Gen Z workers are most critical about AI in Glassdoor reviews, with only one-third (33%) of mentions being positive, compared to 40% for Millennials and 47% for Gen X. And that's especially stark for Gen Z women: Almost 80% of comments mentioning AI that come from Gen Z women were negative over the past year, while just 21% were positive.

Gen Z is more critical of AI in reviews, especially Gen Z women

Share of mentions of AI in Glassdoor reviews that are positive, Jan 2025 – Jun 2026



Source: Glassdoor
Total combines men and women. A mention is positive if it is in the review's pros and negative if in its consreviews mentioning AI

Takeaways for employers and job seekers

A degree can help applicants qualify for a job. It cannot create an opening. For those entering the labor force, the challenge may be less about having the right credential and more about whether employers are hiring people who still have something to learn.

In order to develop a deep pool of experienced workers tomorrow, employers need to give less experienced workers a way in and invest in career growth today for the workers they do hire. If fewer graduates enter roles that require continuous learning, businesses risk narrowing their own future talent pipeline.

For job seekers, a slow hiring environment means diversifying your approach. While most job interviews are still earned by online job applications, referrals through alumni or peer networks can help supplement your search. Applying to jobs in a wider variety of industries, occupations or locations can also help widen the net. Outside of more specialized fields, most sectors call for a broad mix of skills, and some skills carry over across nearly every sector, meaning a background that looks unconventional on paper may still be a strong fit. For entry-level workers in a job, formal career growth may be slower at this moment, but there are still opportunities to grow by developing skills, seeking out opportunities to partner outside their team, and preparing for their next step when the job market does heat up again.

#6: It's Not Just the Paycheck: Total Compensation is Under Pressure

Pay is losing ground to inflation. With both advertised wages and employment cost index falling below inflation, the typical raise hasn't kept up with the rising cost of everyday goods. And workers feel it, rating their pay and benefits at the lowest level since 2017.

The pressure has expanded to include benefits, led by health insurance. Health insurance remains the benefit workers value most, but employer costs are up and worker satisfaction with coverage is at a multi-year low.

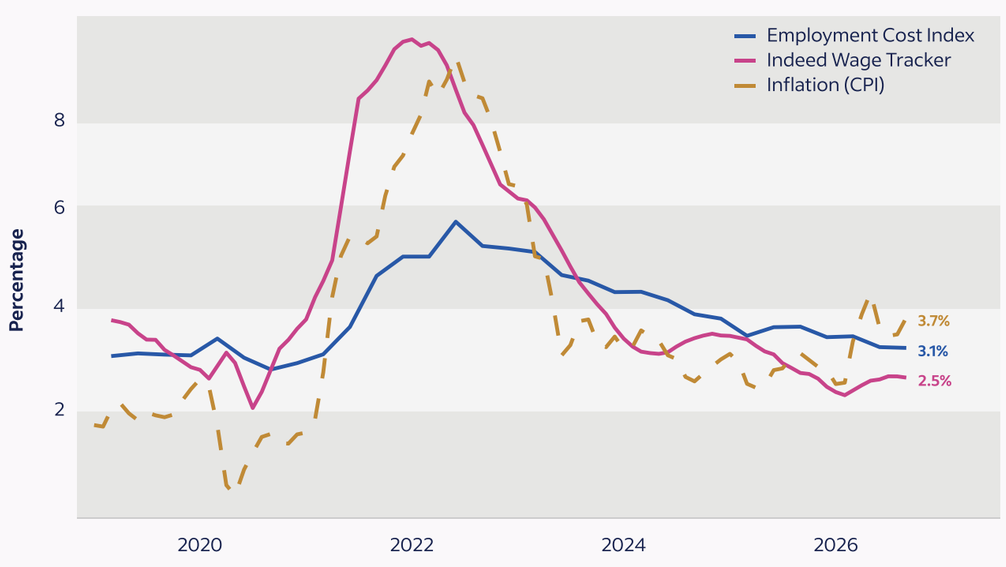
In 2027, focus on total compensation, not just the paycheck. The edge may go to employers who manage and advertise their benefits, including those valued by workers of different ages and experience levels.

In 2026, paychecks are losing ground to inflation – and rising benefit costs are squeezing what's left. There are few signs the pressures will ease heading into 2027, likely forcing changes in how workers weigh a job offer and how employers think about recruitment and retention as employment costs keep rising.

Wage growth has slowed and slipped below inflation. Advertised pay as measured by the Indeed Wage Tracker was up 2.5% year over year as of September 1, 2026, down from a peak of 9.5% reached in 2022. The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Cost Index (ECI), a measure of the change in employers' labor costs over time, rose 3.1% year-over-year for private-sector wages and salaries in the third quarter of 2026. Meanwhile, annual growth in the headline Consumer Price Index, the main measure of inflation, exceeded both – clocking in at 3.7% in September.

Wage growth vs. inflation

Year-over-year change, as of September 2026; Wage Tracker is a 3-month moving average.



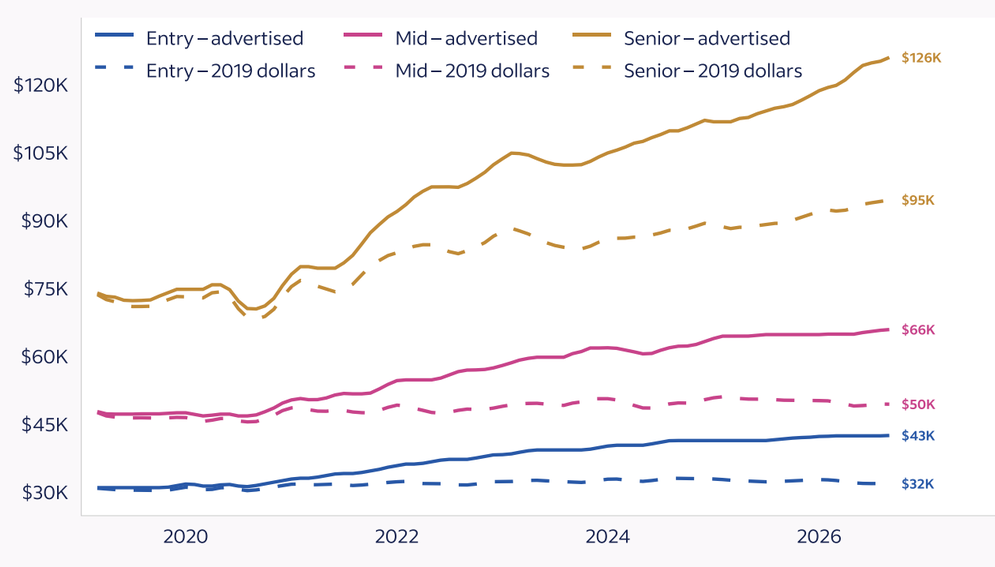
Source: Indeed Hiring Lab, Bureau of Labor Statistics

The wage gains that exist are concentrated at the top. Median advertised pay for senior roles has grown faster than entry- and mid-level roles, climbing from roughly $74,000 in 2019 to roughly $126,000 in 2026, or about 69%, with growth accelerating after 2022. Entry-level roles ($31,000 to $43,000, about 37%) and mid-level roles ($48,000 to $66,000, about 37%) grew more modestly, and the gap between mid-level and senior pay is large and widening. But few workers earn near the senior level. According to the Census Bureau, the typical full-time US worker earned about $65,000 in 2025.

Inflation erodes purchasing power. Prices have climbed about 33% since 2019, meaning that a basket of goods that cost $100 then costs about $133 today. Put another way, a dollar today is equivalent to 75 cents in 2019. For mid- and entry-level roles, today's $66,000 buys about what $50,000 did, and $43,000 buys about what $32,000 did, respectively – meaning real wages for these groups have barely budged. But the median $125,000 salary now advertised for senior roles buys about what $94,000 did in 2019. This represents a considerable increase in real wages for senior level employees.

Purchasing power has stagnated except at the senior level

US median advertised pay by seniority with inflation adjustment (2019 dollars), 3-mo avg through Sep 2026

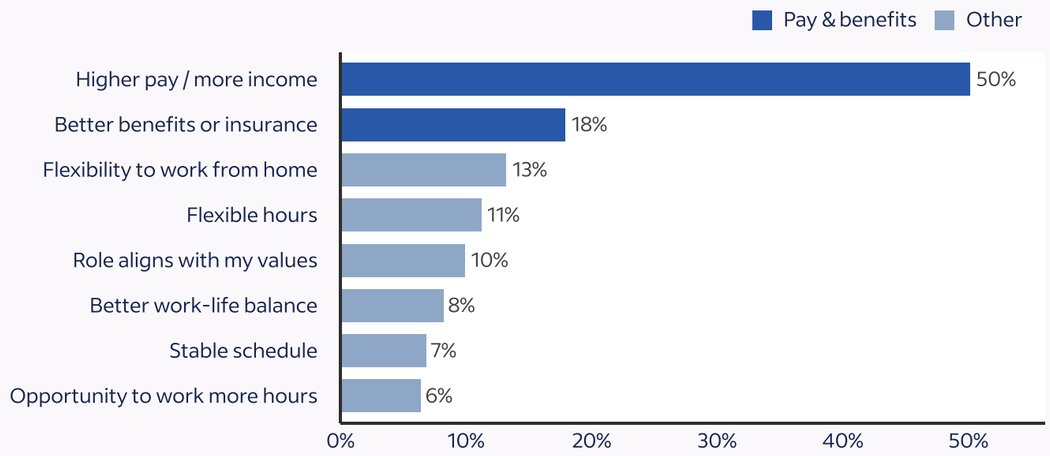


Source: Indeed Hiring Lab, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Against this backdrop, the 2026 Indeed Hiring Lab Workforce Insights Survey (WIS) shows that higher pay is the top motivator for job seekers, with half (50%) ranking it among their net top two reasons for searching. But pay isn't the only factor, and better insurance is also a strong draw, cited by 18% of job seekers as a main motivator. Close behind were flexible hours, a role that fits their values, and better work/life balance.

Pay and benefits top the list of what job seekers want

Share of active job seekers ranking each in their net top two motivators



Source: Indeed Hiring Lab, Workforce Insights Survey

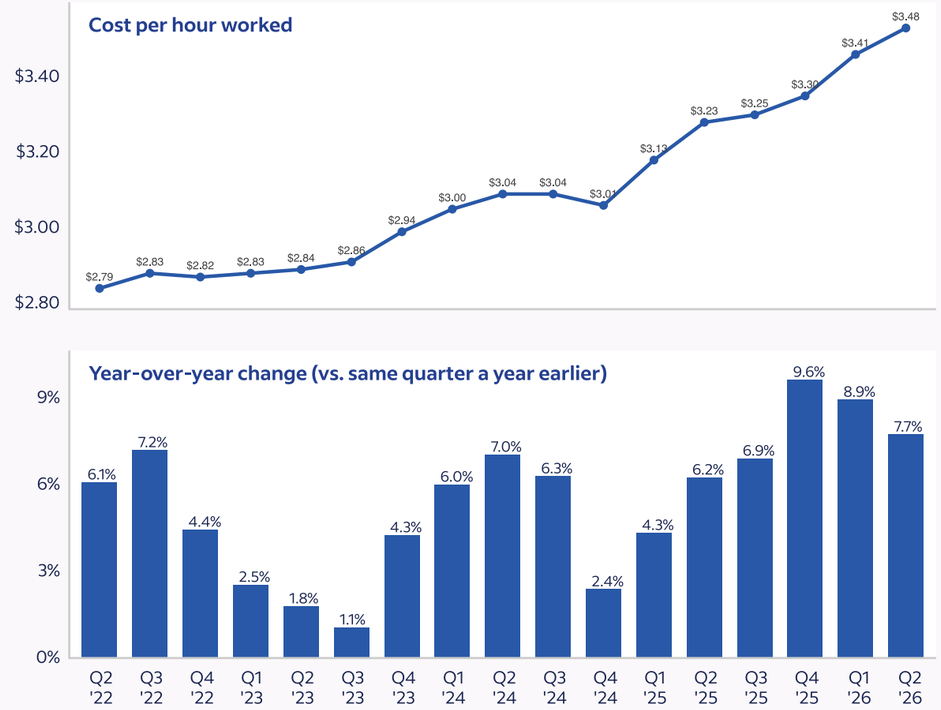
Employers' costs are rising, too…

But while values and schedule flexibility can often be relatively inexpensive benefits for employers to offer, providing other benefits can be quite costly – and is only getting more so.

Health insurance is a prime example, as workers consistently ranked it one of the most important benefits. More than a third (34.7%) of workers said it was their most-valued benefit. And the cost of offering health insurance has been rising rapidly, particularly in the last year. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics' June 2026 Employer Costs for Employee Compensation (ECEC), private-sector employers paid 25% more for health insurance benefits in 2026 than they did in 2022. After a brief plateau in 2024, the increases accelerated every quarter, running 7%-10% year-over-year for the past four quarters.

Employer health-insurance costs keep climbing — and faster lately

Employer cost per hour worked, private industry, quarterly through June 2026



Source: BLS Employer Costs for Employee Compensation (ECEC)

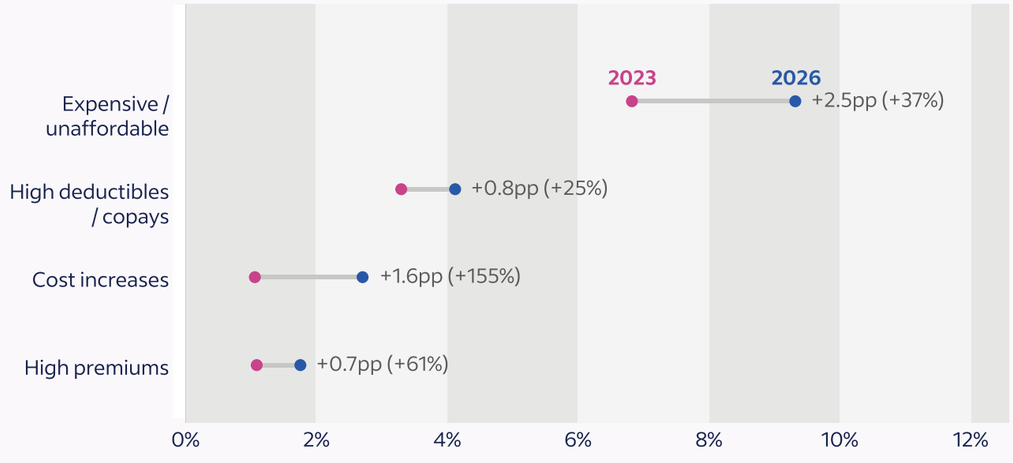
…and workers aren't happy about the impact

The rapidly rising costs of popular benefits like health insurance may leave employers with less room to raise baseline pay at exactly the time more workers need it to keep pace with rising inflation. Adding to the challenge to workers' finances, employers may choose to mitigate their own rising costs by contributing less to premiums and asking their workers to shoulder more of the burden, and/or by switching to lower-quality plans. Workers are increasingly skeptical of these trade-offs, and their dissatisfaction is showing up in Glassdoor reviews.

Compared to 2023, employees are substantially more likely to express concerns about rising costs in their health insurance benefit reviews on Glassdoor. For example, mentions of terms like "expensive," "costly," or "unaffordable" in health insurance reviews were up 37% between 2023 to 2026.

Employees are complaining more about health insurance costs

Share of health insurance reviews mentioning theme, 2023 vs. 2026



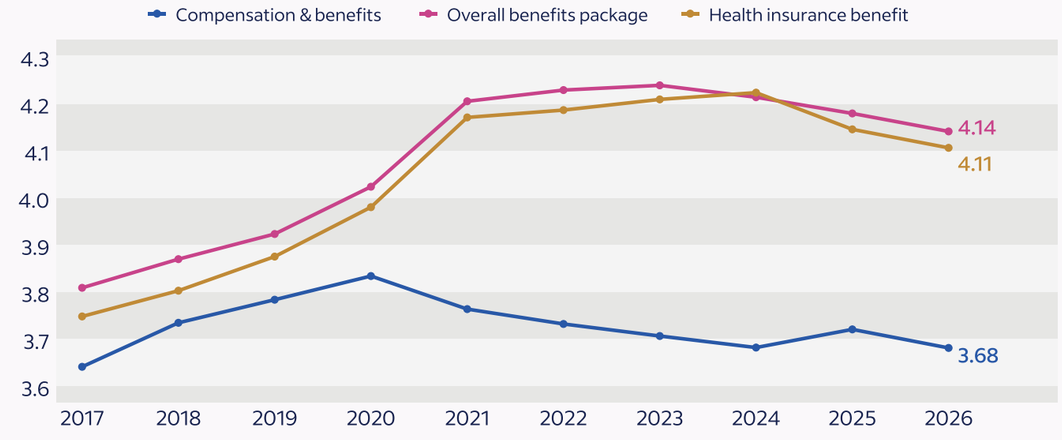
Source: Glassdoor benefit reviews, US full-time current employees, 2019 to Sept 2026

Growing dissatisfaction with health insurance overlaps with growing dissatisfaction with benefit packages overall as benefits shrink and premiums rise. The average overall benefit rating on Glassdoor fell from 4.24 in 2023 to 4.14 out of 5 stars in 2026. Employee ratings for their health insurance benefits in particular peaked slightly later at 4.22 in 2024, but have declined similarly, falling to 4.11 in 2026. This is on top of further erosion in satisfaction with employees' total compensation and benefits offerings. So far in 2026, the average compensation and benefit rating on Glassdoor has fallen to 3.68 out of 5 stars, near its lowest level since 2017.

Falling health insurance satisfaction explains about half of the overall decline in benefits ratings since 2023. The surge in complaints about health insurance costs specifically explains about 29% of the decline, highlighting how important health insurance is to workers.

Satisfaction with compensation & benefits has fallen recently

Average rating on Glassdoor



Source: Glassdoor benefit reviews and company reviews, US current full-time employees, Jan 2017 to Sep 2026



Takeaways for employers and job seekers

Nothing in the 2026 data points to quick relief. Wage growth is positive but cooling, and as long as it trails inflation, real earnings will keep losing ground. Benefit costs have risen every year, especially health insurance, and that is unlikely to reverse any time soon. As those benefit costs climb, more of them tend to land on workers, trimming take-home pay.

For employers, it pays to know that job seekers are paying acute attention to their total pay at this moment. Employers can attract job seekers with a first move that costs almost nothing: advertise what you already offer. Simply naming the benefits employers already provide makes the job more attractive and signals that the employer invests in its people. And while health insurance, paid time off and retirement are the benefits most-valued by workers, other benefits and perks are still valuable. Investing in a wide range of benefits may help an employer stand out to certain workers, particularly younger workers that may expect or value different types of benefits. The bigger risk comes in 2027. A rebound in the labor market could bring more competition for talent, with increased frustration giving way to a wave of turnover – and the compensation and benefits dissatisfaction building is exactly what turns into departures. Employers who let total compensation slide risk losing people to others who don't.

For job seekers, it pays to understand that total compensation encompasses more than just base pay. Higher health insurance premiums, more restrictive benefit policies and/or outright cuts to benefits programs all reduce workers' total compensation. As take-home pay is increasingly eaten up by inflation, workers need to be cognizant of everything their employers offer and measure how it compares to other opportunities on the open market. If pay isn't keeping up, some workers may need a second job to make ends meet, while others may get more out of building in-demand skills that open the door to higher paying roles. Preparing now is worthwhile – and all the more so if labor demand picks up in 2027.

Detailed Methodology and List of Data Sources

Chapter 1: **A Restless Labor Market Antsy to Move Again**

To analyze turnover intent, we measure job applications started on Glassdoor from current full-time or part-time employees in the US who submitted employer reviews between January 1, 2025 and June 19, 2026. We only include job applications started up to 90 days after the review. We do not measure whether job applications were actually completed off Glassdoor nor whether users actually successfully get a new job and attrite. We calculate the linear effect of a 1-star change in career opportunities ratings on likelihood of starting a job application up to 90 days after the rating was submitted. The resulting dataset analyzes about 600,000 reviewers and their subsequent job search activity.



Chapter 2: **A National Market, Shaped by Local Dynamics**

Metro-level hiring demand is measured using the Indeed Job Postings Index (JPI). The JPI is a seasonally adjusted, seven-day trailing average of job postings on Indeed, indexed to February 1, 2020 = 100. To smooth out noise in smaller areas, we take a further 28-day trailing average. Metro areas are Census Bureau Core-Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs), which include both metropolitan and micropolitan areas. The analysis covers the 385 CBSAs with at least 100,000 residents in the Census Bureau's 2019 population estimates. Levels are as of September 30, 2026. The share of metros with year-over-year growth is measured at the end of each month.

The national software development figure uses the JPI for that occupational category. The Seattle and San Francisco figures, along with the 2019 benchmark, use Indeed's internal job postings data, which is not seasonally adjusted and predates the published JPI. Metro software development postings are compared with their national share in September 2026 and with their level on February 1, 2020, using seven-day averages. The 2019 benchmark compares each metro's average daily postings with the same month a year earlier.

Confidence is the share of Glassdoor reviews in which employees expect their employer's business outlook to improve over the next six months. Glassdoor metro areas are matched to CBSAs by principal city and state; where more than one Glassdoor area matches a CBSA, we use the one with the most reviews. The resulting sample covers 345 metros with at least 100,000 residents, which are compared with each metro's year-over-year change in the JPI as of September 30, 2026.

Chapter 3: **Gen Z at Work: They're Here, They're (Surprisingly) Positive, and They're Different**

Labor force by generation: Generation shares of the US labor force are estimated from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey (CPS), using the civilian labor force by age group for August 2026 (not seasonally adjusted). Generations follow Pew Research Center's birth-year definitions: Gen Z (born 1997–2012), Millennials (1981–1996), Gen X (1965–1980), and Baby Boomers (1946–1964). The Baby Boomer share also includes the small number of workers from older generations. Because the CPS reports age groups rather than birth years, we assign each age group to the generation its members belong to in 2026.

Where an age group spans two generations, we split it: ages 25–34 are divided evenly between Gen Z (ages 25–29) and Millennials (ages 30–34); ages 45–54 are allocated 10% to Millennials (age 45) and 90% to Gen X; and ages 60–64 are allocated 40% to Gen X (ages 60–61) and 60% to Baby Boomers. We checked these splits against single-year-of-age data from the Census Bureau's 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). Using the measured splits changes each generation's share by half a percentage point or less and leaves the shares cited in the text (24% for Gen Z, 11% for Baby Boomers) unchanged.

To compare Gen Z with Millennials at the same stage, we use the 2010 ACS PUMS, when the oldest Millennials were 29, the same age as the oldest members of Gen Z in 2026. Birth year is approximated as the survey year minus age, the convention Pew uses, so assignments near generation boundaries may be off by a year. A CPS-only comparison of August 2010 and August 2026 gives a similar result.

To forecast Gen Z's share of management and leadership, we assumed that birth year cohorts follow historical trends for cohort size (increasing through age 40 due to net migration and then decreasing due to mortality) and recent trends for labor market participation (labor market entry is somewhat slower for workers coming of age today compared to in the 90s) and ascension into management.

We forecast a cohort size, labor force participation rate, and the share of workers in management for each future year-birthyear combination. We then aggregate these forecasts by year and generation to compute each generation's share of the workforce and management in future years.

Workforce Insights Survey: Indeed commissioned YouGov to conduct nationally representative research studies among adults aged 18+ in the US. Sampling was random and representative by age, gender, education, region, and race, aligned to census population statistics from reliable external third-party sources. Fieldwork was conducted during the months of May and June of 2026, with a total of n=10,353 interviews. This sample size provides a margin of error of ±1% at the 95% confidence level. 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 race, to ensure representation to the true market population proportions.

Glassdoor reviews come from full-time and part-time employees based in the U.S. who reviewed their current employers or ones they departed within the past calendar year. Reviews were collected between October 1, 2025 and September 30, 2026 and between October 1, 2015 and September 30, 2016 for the comparison set.



Chapter 4: **There is no AI Jobpocalypse, but plenty of AI-nxiety**

To measure AI's spread across job postings, we use the Indeed AI Tracker. It reports the share of US job postings on Indeed that mention AI or GenAI-related terms. The tracker is published daily, and we average it to monthly values. To measure how widely firms are recruiting for AI, we take all firms with at least one US job posting on Indeed in a given month and calculate the share with at least one posting flagged by the AI Tracker. Both series run from January 2019 through September 2026.

To compare hiring demand with AI exposure across occupations, we use the seasonally adjusted Indeed Job Postings Index for each occupational category. We measure the change between monthly averages in September 2025 and September 2026. The analysis covers the occupational categories Hiring Lab regularly reports on. We define an occupation's GenAI exposure as the share of the skills in its job postings that GenAI could substantially transform. These are the skills rated "hybrid transformation" or "full transformation" in the GenAI Skill Transformation Index (GSTI) from our AI at Work Report 2025. The GSTI measures what GenAI could potentially do to each skill, not change that has already happened. In the chart, bubble size reflects each occupation's share of September 2026 postings. The trend line is a linear fit weighted by those postings.

Labor productivity is the Bureau of Labor Statistics' quarterly, seasonally adjusted measure of nonfarm business output per hour (series PRS85006093). The 2017 level is set to 100. Growth rates are compound annualized growth between business-cycle peaks as dated by the National Bureau of Economic Research. The 2008–2019 period runs from Q4 2007 to Q4 2019. The period since late 2019 runs from Q4 2019 to the latest available quarter. The long-term average runs from Q1 1947 onward. The trend lines in the chart are linear fits estimated separately within each cycle.

Survey findings come from Indeed Hiring Lab's Workforce Insights Survey, fielded by YouGov in eight countries in Q2 2025 and Q2 2026. The figures cited here cover employed US respondents, weighted to be representative. We define a respondent as a regular AI user if they use AI at least once a week, with personal and work use asked separately. "High" employer adoption combines respondents who say AI is a core part of their employer's operations with those who say its use is widely encouraged across all teams. "Low-to-zero" adoption combines those who say AI has not been adopted or encouraged with those who say it is actively discouraged. Respondents who were unsure remain in the base. Respondents who "did not agree" that AI makes or could make them more efficient are everyone who did not answer "agree" or "strongly agree." Daily time savings is the weighted average of self-reported hours saved per day among regular AI users at work. Where a question changed between waves, we compare the two years on a common respondent base.

Glassdoor figures cover reviews from full-time and part-time employees based in the U.S. Reviews run through September 30, 2026, and the keyword analysis includes only 2026 reviews. We define a review as mentioning AI if its title, pros, cons, or advice to management includes "AI," "artificial intelligence," "ChatGPT," "GPT," or "LLM." Other LLMs (e.g. "Claude" or "Gemini") are not included due to high rates of false positives. The monthly share of reviews mentioning AI includes current employees and those who left within one calendar year. Sentiment and keyword analyses are based on current employees' reviews only.

A review is positive if it mentions AI only in its pros, critical if it mentions AI only in the cons, and mixed if it mentions AI in both. Mentions of AI in review titles or advice to management are not included.

For the comparisons with burnout, job insecurity, and layoffs, we flagged keyword mentions of each topic for current employees only. "Times as likely" compares the share of AI-critical reviews that mention a topic with the share among all reviews. As a robustness check, we estimated logistic regressions of each outcome on an indicator for AI-critical reviews, controlling for the review's overall star rating. The differences remained statistically significant, directionally consistent, and practically large.

Chapter 5: **Experience Wanted. But Where Do You Get It?**

Job postings by seniority: Each Indeed job posting is assigned one of three seniority levels — Entry, Mid, or Senior — in Indeed's taxonomy using an algorithmic text-classification system; a posting cannot carry more than one label. Trends in postings are indexed to a base period (January 2025 for the recent series; August 2022 for the four-year comparison) and shown relative to that level. Job posting counts are calculated as monthly averages of daily figures, which avoids double-counting postings relisted as a new job within the same period.

Underemployment: We measure the share of recent graduates working one year after graduation in a job that does not typically require a degree. Using the profiles of Indeed job seekers who have updated their profile since 2022, we identify US-based job seekers who report completing a bachelor's degree, excluding degrees listed as in progress or expected. We assign each to a graduation cohort based on the academic year of their earliest bachelor's completion, so graduates from July through June of the following year form one cohort. We then use each graduate's self-reported work history to identify the job they held on June 30 of the year after their cohort year (for example, June 30, 2026, for the 2025 cohort).

For profiles updated in 2026, a job listed as current is treated as held through October 1, 2026. A job is classified as "non-degree" when its normalized job title is one in which fewer than 20% of US job postings from September 2025 to August 2026 list a minimum education requirement of a bachelor's degree or higher.

A posting's minimum requirement is the lowest education level it states. Many knowledge-sector postings assume a degree without stating one, so the share depends on how often a title's postings state any education requirement:

- If at least half of a title's postings state a requirement, we use the share across all postings.
- If 30% to 50% state one, we use the share among only the postings that state a requirement.
- If fewer than 30% state one, we use the share across all postings. Requirements are stated so rarely that we read this as a sign the job doesn't require a degree.

Titles with fewer than 200 postings in this period are not classified, and graduates whose job has an unclassified title are excluded. The same posting-based classification is applied to every cohort; using 2019 or 2022 postings instead does not change the trend. When a graduate holds more than one job at the 12-month mark, we use the job requiring a degree if there is one. Graduates holding a non-degree job alongside a job with an unclassified title are excluded. The underemployment rate is the share of graduates in a classified job at the 12-month mark who are working in a non-degree job. The level of underemployment depends on the thresholds chosen, so we emphasize the change relative to the pre-pandemic average (2017–2019 cohorts) rather than the level itself. The increase holds up under different thresholds for defining a non-degree job and when the sample is limited to profiles updated in 2026. Because the measure is based on active Indeed job seekers and only counts graduates with an observed job at 12 months, it is best read as a directional indicator rather than a population estimate.

Career opportunities ratings: When employees submit employer reviews on Glassdoor, they can rate their company on a 1–5 star scale for satisfaction with "career opportunities". We only included reviews from US-based full-time or part-time employees. We group reviews based on the year that the job was held, only including former employees for whom their review was submitted in the same year they held their job. In order to analyze career opportunities ratings for entry-level workers, we also only include reviews where users also self-reported a salary on Glassdoor, which includes their years of experience. Entry level workers are defined as workers who self report having 0–2 years of experience. The resulting dataset includes 4.9 million career opportunities ratings for workers of different experience levels from 2019 through September 12, 2026.

Employee review text: To measure mentions of certain terms in Glassdoor reviews from US employees, we calculate the share of reviews that mention related terms. For example, for "AI", we count "AI", "artificial intelligence", "LLM" and "ChatGPT." "AI" mentions are further split based on self-reported demographic information from reviewers, based on gender and generation (defined based on age using Pew Research Center's definitions).

To compare mentions of training and mentorship, we measure the share of Glassdoor reviews whose 'pros' mention related terms (such as 'training' or 'onboarding'; 'mentor' or 'coaching'). Entry-level workers (0–2 years of experience) are compared with more experienced workers who report at least 3 years of experience. This is based on reviews from January 1, 2025 through September 12, 2026 from current or former US employees.

Chapter 6: **It's not just the paycheck: Total Compensation is under pressure**

Indeed job postings: Posted pay comes from Indeed job postings in the US. Advertised wage growth is the Indeed Wage Tracker — year-over-year growth in advertised pay (three-month average). Advertised salaries by seniority are the median posted annual-equivalent pay for US postings that disclose pay — yearly salaries as posted plus full-time (only) hourly postings annualized at 2080 hours (40x52). Postings are grouped into entry, mid, and senior levels using Indeed's job-attribute taxonomy and shown as a three-month moving average through August 2026. Inflation-adjusted figures restate these medians in 2019 dollars using the CPI-U.

Indeed's Workforce Insights Survey (WIS): Survey figures come from Indeed's Workforce Insights Survey of US workers and job seekers; all shares use weighted responses for the "All" group. Job-seeker motivators are the net top two reasons active seekers give for searching; most-valued benefits are respondents' top two selections from a longer list. All survey responses are self-reported.

U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics Data: Inflation and employer-cost comparisons use US Bureau of Labor Statistics data: the Employment Cost Index (ECI; private-industry wages and salaries, 12-month change), the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U, all items; used for inflation and inflation-adjusted dollars), and Employer Costs for Employee Compensation (ECEC; employer cost per hour worked, private industry). ECI figures reflect the September 2026 release and ECEC figures the June 2026 release.

Compensation and benefits ratings and reviews: When employees submit employer reviews on Glassdoor, they can rate their company on a 1–5 star scale for satisfaction with "compensation and benefits".

We only included reviews from US-based full-time or part-time employees. We group reviews based on the year that the job was held, only including former employees for whom their review was submitted in the same year they held their job. The resulting dataset includes 6.6 million "compensation and benefits" ratings with 2026 data partially complete through September 12, 2026.

To measure the prevalence and sentiment of "compensation" and "benefits" mentions in Glassdoor reviews, we use Glassdoor's proprietary Review Intelligence™ algorithm which categories review mentions by topic and sentiment.

Benefits satisfaction: Separate from employer reviews that measure "compensation and benefits", employees on Glassdoor can also specifically rate their overall benefits package and individual benefits on a scale of 1 to 5 stars. The benefits satisfaction chart shows the average overall benefits rating and the average health insurance rating by year, based on 385,000 overall benefits ratings and 249,000 health insurance ratings from January 2019 through September 2026. Only benefit reviews from current full-time employees in the US were included.

We estimate how much each benefit's rating moves an employee's overall benefits rating, holding constant that employee's average rating of their other benefits, using 168,000 benefit reviews from January 2019 through September 2026. We run one regression per benefit.

We then break down the 0.098-point decline in current employees' average overall benefits rating from 2023 to 2026. For each benefit, we multiply its weight by the change in its average rating. To isolate the role of cost, we split health insurance's contribution in two. The share of current employees' health insurance comments mentioning cost rose from 22.1% to 27.4%, and those comments rate health insurance about 0.6 points lower. That shift accounts for 31% of health insurance's decline, or about 16% of the decline in overall benefits satisfaction.



indeed · GLASSDOOR