

The Kelly® Global Re:work Report

Workforce at a crossroads

Re:work

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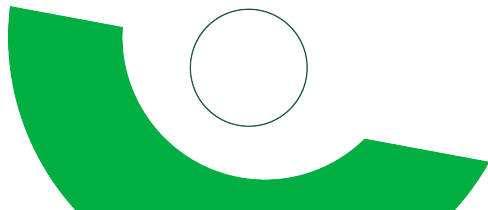
Introduction

Can a company call itself future-ready if its workers feel left behind?

The workplace isn't broken. It's being redefined in real time. AI, automation, economic pressures, and shifting talent expectations are accelerating change at every level. Yet the human experience of work often lags behind.

At the heart of that experience is a growing disconnect between leaders and workers. Executives focus on growth, innovation, and performance. They see promise in new technology and progress in culture. But for many employees, that progress is still out of reach. Some are wary of AI's impact on their careers. Others say upskilling leads nowhere. Many question whether their companies truly deliver on the values they promote.

That tension between technology, talent, and trust runs through the Kelly Global Re:work Report. We heard from more than 6,000 professionals across industries, roles, and regions. Their responses reveal widening disconnects and the risks that come with ignoring them.



Chapter 1 explores the technology gap: the rise of AI at work, and why adoption stalls when trust, training, and support lag. Leaders are optimistic about AI's potential. Yet many workers remain skeptical and unsure how it fits into their roles or what it means for their future.

Chapter 2 highlights the talent gap: the risk of investing in upskilling without clearly showing employees the benefits, especially as generational shifts redefine the meaning of growth and loyalty. Too often, organizations train talent only to see them walk away. Without clear pathways forward, top performers will not stay.

Chapter 3 examines the trust gap: the disconnect between leaders and employees on morale, loyalty, and culture. Executives see progress, but workers are less convinced. That gap erodes trust and makes retention more difficult.

For companies looking to lead with clarity, confidence, and purpose, the Re:work Report is not just a snapshot. It is both a lens into the challenges ahead and a playbook for what to do next.

About the Report

The Kelly Global Re:work Report draws on **three proprietary surveys** conducted with Atomik Research.

The Global Workforce Survey

Captures **global trends across industries and regions**, drawing on **responses from executives and workers** in 13 countries.

The Science, Technology, Engineering, & Telecom (STEM) Survey

Focuses on **executives and workers in these four sectors** across the United States.

The Business Professional & Industrial Survey

Explores the perspectives of **business professional and industrial executives and workers** in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Puerto Rico.

Together, these datasets provide a broad view of today's workforce and highlight gaps between leaders and employees in **strategy, culture, technology, and growth**.



Chapter 1:

The Tech Gap: Positioning AI as a tool, not a replacement



The Tech Gap: Positioning AI as a tool, not a replacement

AI is no longer a future concept. It is already changing how work gets done. Faster workflows, data-driven decisions, and new revenue streams are just the beginning. To some, AI is a smart upgrade. To others, it is a threat to job security.

Our research shows that the real threat is the technology gap: a lack of trust, training, and support that prevents organizations from reaching their full potential.

AI will reshape work, not erase jobs.

Not all jobs are equally vulnerable to AI and automation. The impact hits harder in some industries, particularly among manufacturing workers. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of business professional and industrial executives say AI or automation is prompting job cuts, and 37% say those plans are already underway. But only 43% of workers in these sectors expect layoffs tied to new tech.

By contrast, STEM executives are less likely to predict job loss due to AI. Only 8% say job cuts are ahead, but STEM workers are not as reassured. More than one in five (21%) believe technology or AI will shrink their teams.

This is the tech gap in action: leaders and workers hold different expectations about the scale of disruption, which complicates planning and fuels uncertainty.



Adoption is survival in the age of AI.

Business professional and industrial sectors may face greater disruption, but executives across industries see AI as a chance for growth – if workers are willing to adapt.

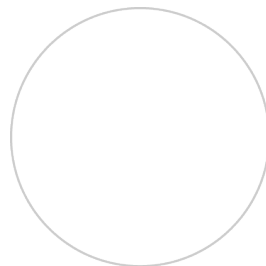
Nearly seven in ten (69%) global executives say refusing to adopt AI is a greater threat to someone's job than AI itself. Still, most workers are not convinced. Nearly half (49%) of global workers say AI does not pose a significant threat to their jobs.

Here, the tech gap shows up differently: not in predictions of layoffs, but in attitudes toward adoption. Leaders see adoption as essential. Workers remain skeptical.



Nearly seven in ten (69%) global executives say refusing to adopt AI is a greater threat to someone's job than AI itself."

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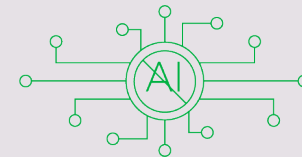


**Read
more**

**AI adoption starts with trust:
Building your team's confidence.**

Only

4%



of business professional and industrial executives say **they are not implementing AI.**

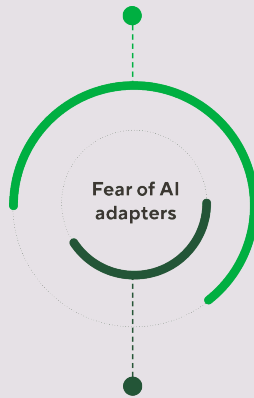
69%

of STEM executives say the **real threat isn't AI itself, but resistance to it.**



63%

of STEM workers don't believe **AI will replace them, but someone who masters it might.**



59%

of business professional and industrial leaders agree, saying they are **likely to replace workers who refuse to adopt AI.**

42%

of business professional and industrial workers believe the same, that **reluctant adapters risk being replaced by AI-savvy talent.**

Leaders see AI as a win for efficiency, workers remain hesitant.

AI tools are already in place at most organizations. Executives see great promise in the technology, but the return on investment often falls short. Workers say they are not seeing the promised time savings — often because no one has shown them how to use the tools effectively.

Seventy percent of global executives say AI should free up time for employees to focus on collaboration, mentoring, or sharing knowledge. Still, less than half (47%) of talent say they are getting that time back.

Leaders report two main barriers to AI adoption: vendor challenges and user adoption. Technical problems, security risks, and disconnected systems slow down implementation for nearly half (47%) of leaders in business professional and industrial sectors. Another third (32%) say employees are slow to adopt the tools. The technology is available, but without clear guidance and support, workers fail to experience the promised benefits.

Bridging this gap requires more than better tools. Leaders need to stay aligned with employees through surveys, check-ins, and shared goals, so adoption challenges are spotted early and addressed before trust erodes.

[Read more](#)

[Check out how Kelly helps close adoption gaps with hands-on support.](#)

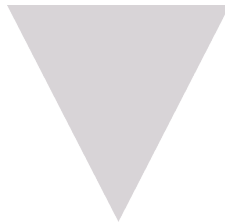
Without skills, AI can't deliver.

AI can be a powerful tool, but it only works if people know how to use it. Half of STEM executives (51%) say their employees lack AI skills, and 42% of STEM workers say the same. The gap is even wider in business professional and industrial roles where 80% of executives say implementation stalls because teams lack the expertise to use the tools effectively.

Among business professional and industrial executives:

47% say technical challenges slowed implementation.

32% say adoption is **slow or low** among users.



30% say employees are **confused by the tools**.

This is not just about adoption. It is about building skills for the future. Companies that do not prepare their people risk slower growth and wasted investments.

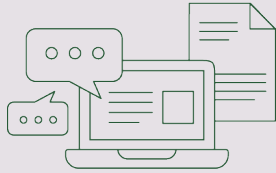
Here, the tech gap runs straight into the talent gap. Closing it means more than a short training course. It requires linking AI skills to hiring, career paths, and long-term workforce planning.



Top skills that recent graduates bring to the workforce, according to global executives:

59%

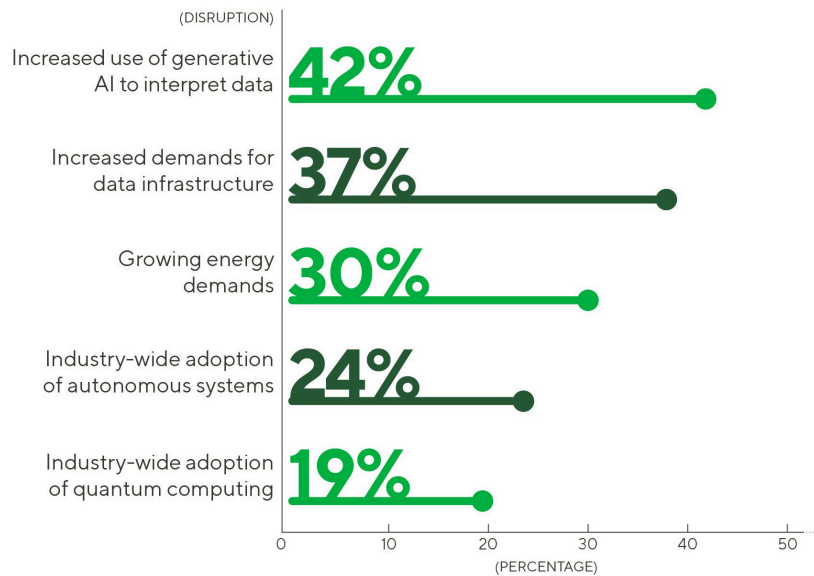
Digital fluency



45%

Data literacy

STEM executives' anticipated disruptions over the next five years:



Key Takeaways: How to turn AI anxiety into confidence and skills.

- **Prepare people for the future:** Build AI into hiring, career paths, and everyday learning so employees see growth, not dead ends.
- **Close the trust gap:** Address fears directly with guided onboarding, hands-on demos and clear communication that shows employees how AI helps them succeed.
- **Align leaders and workers:** Compare perceptions regularly through surveys, one-on-one meetings and shared planning goals to prevent disconnects on adoption and outcomes.
- **Focus where risk is highest:** Use workforce data to identify jobs most vulnerable to disruption, like frontline manufacturing roles, and give them proactive support before gaps appear.
- **Evolve faster than the tools:** Keep AI strategies flexible. Update skills, processes, and partnerships to match the pace of innovation.
- **Measure what matters:** Track ROI by looking at both productivity gains and employee experience. Success means workers see the benefits, not just leaders.

Chapter 2:

The Talent Gap: Redefining hiring for a new era



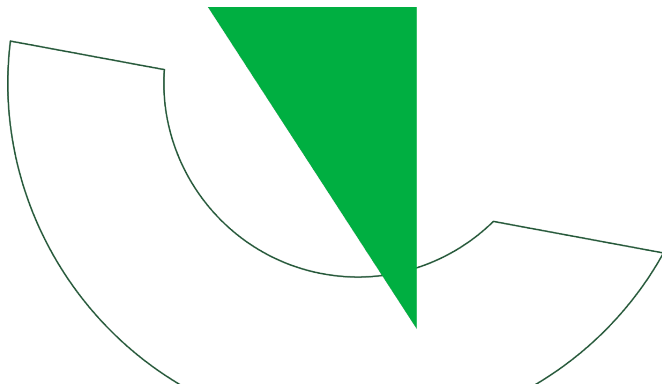
Chapter 2:

The Talent Gap: Redefining hiring for a new era

If the tech gap is about adoption, the talent gap is about attraction and retention. Companies are not just trying to train people on AI. They are competing to attract and keep the people who already have the skills. Some arrive with the right skills on day one. Others grow with the right support. But today's workforce is shifting. In some fields, talent is plentiful. In others, especially in emerging tech or industries facing mass retirements, the competition for talent has become a growing challenge.

Talent shortages in critical skill areas put significant pressure on organizations. Employers struggle to find workers with the technical skills to meet modern demands. They also worry about losing the deep institutional knowledge of baby boomers.

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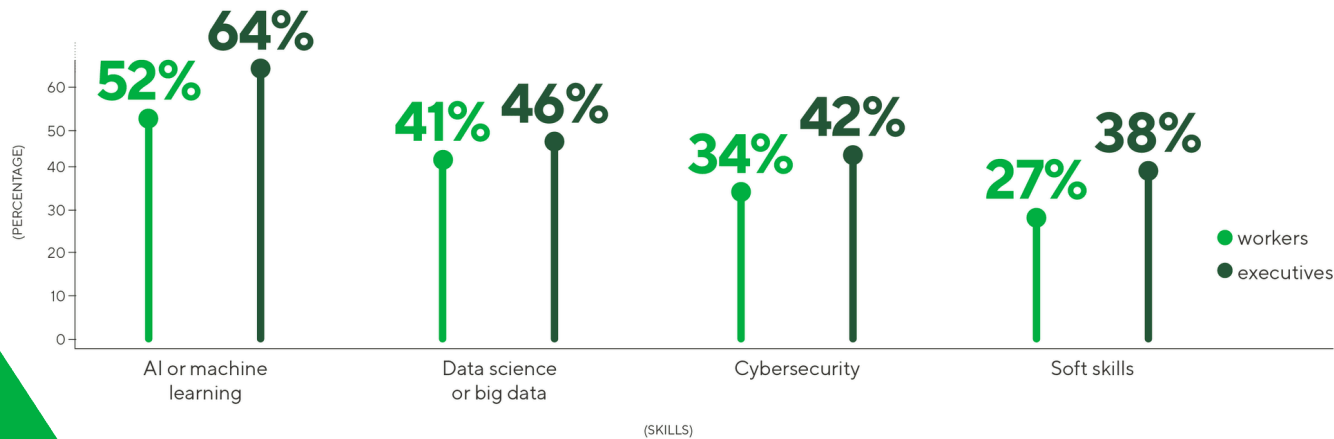


The race is on for tech-savvy talent.

The demand for AI fluency, data science and tech proficiency is only growing, but many organizations say the workforce is not keeping up.

Nearly half (46%) of business professional and industrial executives say they struggle to find talent with technical and operational skills in AI. Yet only 18% of workers say there is a demand for these skills. That mismatch reveals a perception problem. Employers see shortages in specific skills, but many job seekers are not aware of the need. If unresolved, the gap could stall progress as emerging tech becomes central to everyday operations.

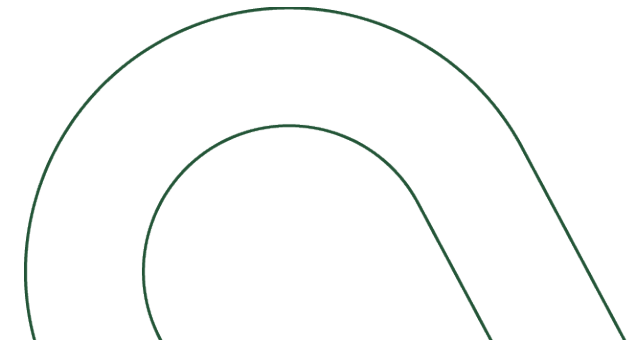
Skills STEM workers and executives say are lacking:



In STEM fields, both executives and workers acknowledge gaps in high-demand skills. Compared to other areas, relatively few point to scientific writing (21% of executives and 20% of workers) or statistics (20% and 27%). But when it comes to emerging technologies and soft skills, like adaptability and leadership, both sides see room for improvement.

[Read more](#)

[See how Kelly sourced 11 specialized scientists in six weeks for a high-impact project.](#)



Boomers are retiring and successors are not ready.

The workforce is aging fast. As boomers retire, they take decades of knowledge with them. Few leaders feel ready for what's next.

Nine in ten (92%) global executives say they are concerned about the impact of retirement on labor shortages, and four in ten (39%) say they are very or extremely worried. Workers feel it, too. Eighty-one percent of global workers say they are concerned their employers will not be able to replace retiring boomers, and more than a quarter (28%) say they are very or extremely worried.

Top skills business professional and industrial executives struggle to find:



49%

Tech proficiency



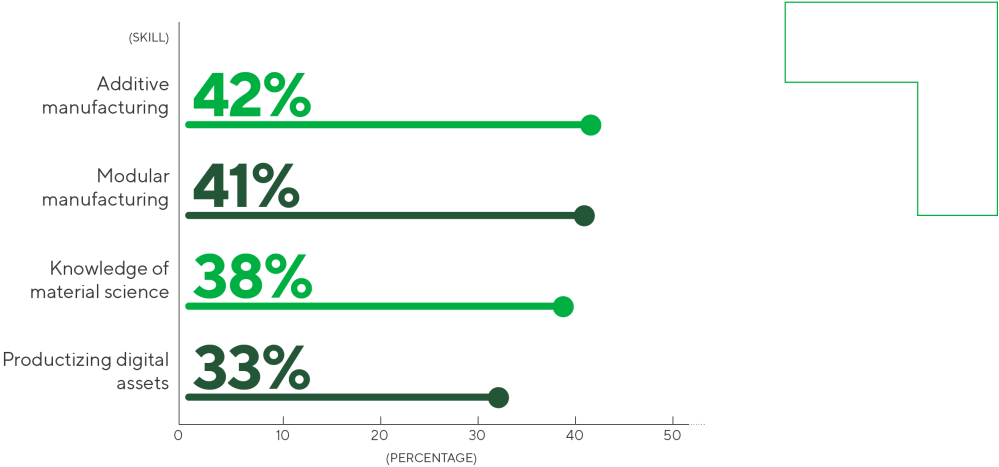
46%

AI operational skills

Some sectors are more confident than others. Two-thirds (67%) of business professional and industrial executives say their organizations are moderately or very prepared to keep organizations running as boomers retire, but just 55% of workers in those same industries agree. That divide highlights the risk of losing valuable knowledge if it isn't shared with others.

STEM leaders are bracing for the shift, too. Nearly a quarter (24%) say their organizations plan to grow headcount over the next five years to get ahead of retirements. But without sharing expertise, added headcount alone will not close the gap.

Skills expected to rise in demand:



Executives turn to outsourcing to close the skills gap.

A skills-first mindset is reshaping how organizations hire. Employers are looking beyond degrees and résumés to focus on real-world capabilities. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of global executives say their organizations are shifting from degree requirements to skills-based hiring. This approach also opens doors for veterans, career switchers, and mid-career professionals who bring proven experience but may not fit traditional résumé filters.

Outsourcing is also a way to bring in critical skills. Nearly nine in ten (89%) business professional and industrial executives say their organizations are outsourcing or considering it. They see outsourcing as a way to expand capacity, fill critical roles and stay competitive while freeing operations leaders to focus on core work.

For business professional and industrial organizations, outsourcing has become a strategic tool.

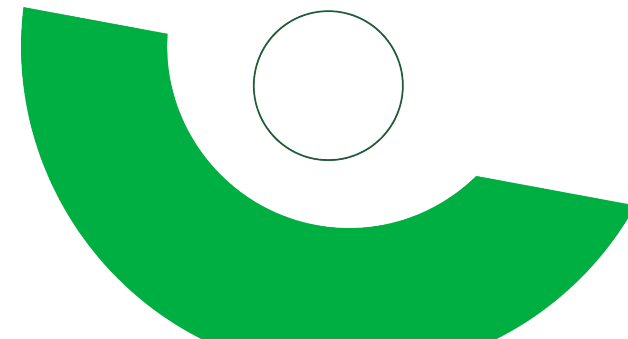
Executives give four main reasons:

40%
Attracting or
hiring talent

37%
Supplementing
the existing
workforce

34%
Expanding
administrative
capacity

30%
Lowering
overhead or
operational costs





Key Takeaways: How to win the race for skills and talent.

- **Plan ahead for retirements:** Boomers are leaving fast. Mentorship, succession planning, and passing down experience are essential to capture expertise before it's gone.
- **Hire for skills, not résumés:** Skills-first strategies broaden access to veterans, career switchers, and mid-career talent with proven leadership.
 - > **Read how organizations are fixing their hiring struggles.**
- **Connect learning to advancement:** Ensure training leads directly to future roles and growth opportunities, so employees see the payoff.
- **Use outsourcing strategically:** Expand capacity, fill gaps, and keep teams focused on high-value work.
 - > **Read how to choose the right BPO partner for growth.**

**Read
more**

See how a global logistics leader used outsourcing to double workforce capacity & exceed 97% of its performance goals.



Chapter 3:

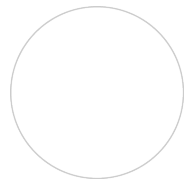
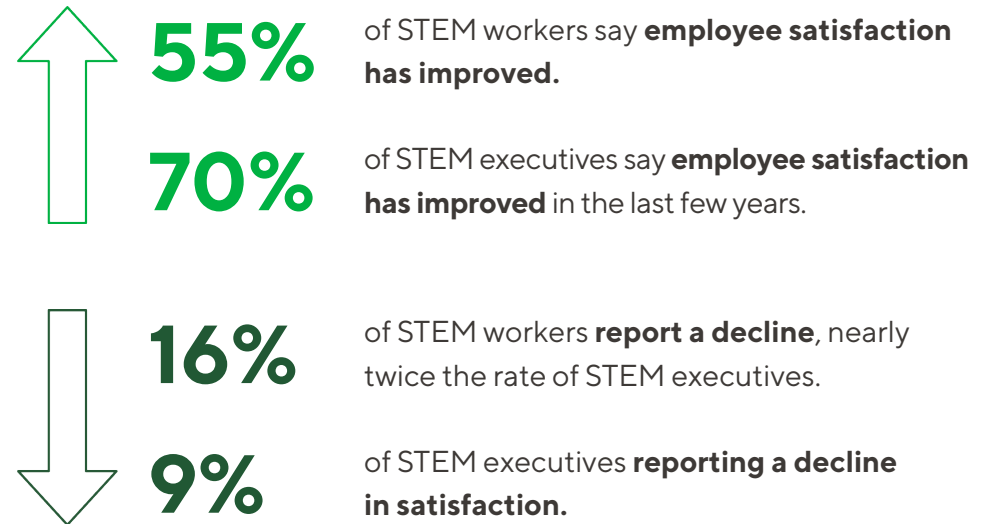
The Trust Gap: Closing the divide between leaders and workers

The Trust Gap: Closing the divide between leaders and workers

Executives and workers may share a workplace, but their experiences can be worlds apart.

Leaders often report rising satisfaction and a stronger culture, while workers see morale and trust eroding. This divide puts stability at risk. Unless organizations close the trust gap, investments in AI and workforce strategies will fall short.

Trust is the starting point for everything else, from adopting technology and committing to training, to having confidence in leadership decisions. But when executives see progress that employees do not, skepticism grows. Workers begin to doubt whether culture, loyalty, and engagement are more than talking points.



Bridging the morale gap before it erodes trust.

Frustration is rising among workers, and it's directly tied to stalled growth.

Forty percent of STEM workers say their biggest frustration is the lack of opportunity to grow or upskill. And it's not just STEM. Across industries, workers report slow progress in morale and job satisfaction.

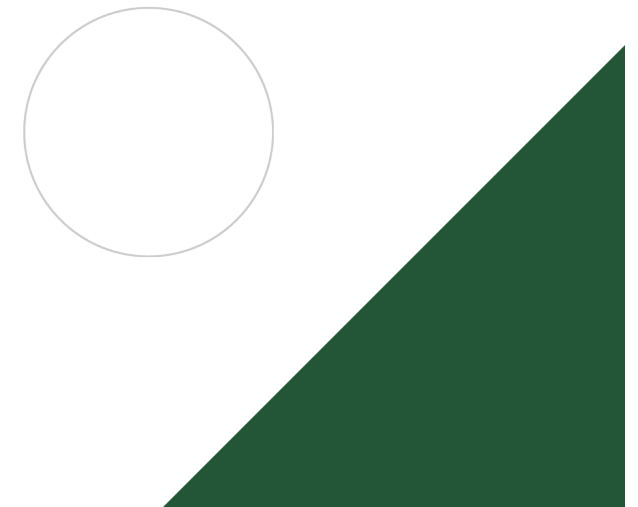
Executives see morale very differently. More than a third of global executives (36%) say their satisfaction at work has improved in the last year, and another 38% say it has stayed the same. In contrast, only 25% of workers report improvements, while 46% say it hasn't changed.

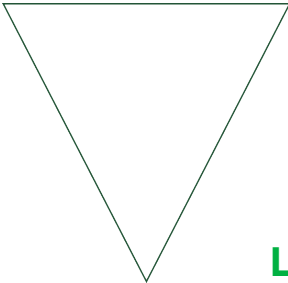
The gap grows when leaders speak for their teams. Forty-two percent of global executives say employee satisfaction is on the rise across their organization, but only 27% of workers say the same. STEM leaders are just as misaligned. Seventy percent of executives say satisfaction has improved, but just 55% of STEM workers agree, and 16% say satisfaction has declined – nearly double the executive perception.

This is a morale problem, not just a perception issue. When leaders assume satisfaction is rising, they overlook early signs of disengagement, and that blind spot erodes trust.

**Read
more**

Discover how to turn workforce data into compelling narratives that drive alignment, inspire action & strengthen culture.





Global workers who say their loyalty has increased vs those who say it has declined:



36% → **24%**
Technology say loyalty has declined



29% → **33%**
Financial services say loyalty has declined



29% → **24%**
Manufacturing say loyalty has declined

Loyalty gaps put retention at risk.

Declining morale doesn't just affect how workers feel – it changes whether they stay.

Many executives believe their teams are staying put, but workers tell a different story. While 40% of global executives say loyalty has improved, only 30% of global workers feel the same, and more than a quarter (27%) say it's getting worse.

The sharpest gaps appear in financial services and manufacturing. In regions like Australia, Europe, the United Kingdom, and Singapore, worker loyalty is flat. India is an outlier, where both executives and workers say loyalty is on the rise.

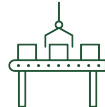
Global executives who say employee loyalty improved in the last year:



49%
Technology

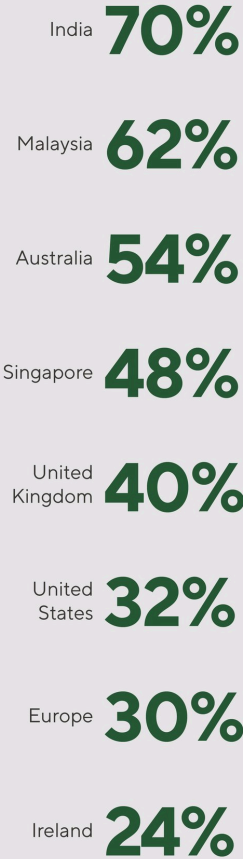


40%
Financial services

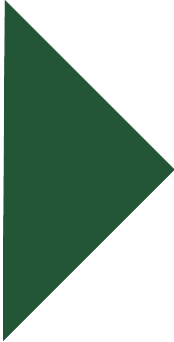


33%
Manufacturing

Global executives who say employee loyalty improved in the last year:

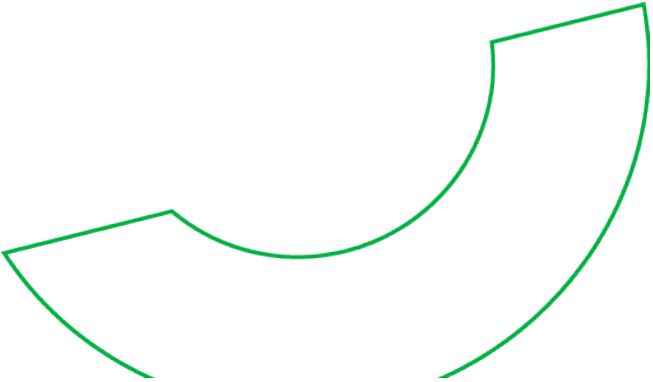


Global workers who say their loyalty grew in the last year:

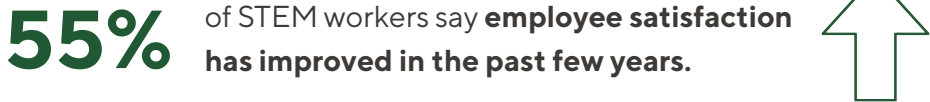


The bottom line: if loyalty continues to slide, organizations face rising turnover risk and the loss of critical skills. Leaders who fail to connect morale with retention may find themselves blindsided when top performers walk out the door.

In a larger context, many workers acknowledge that employers are their partners in growth rather than the problem. Workers recognize that their employers are champions of their growth and are aware that their organizations readily invest in the means to help them grow. Their challenges stem from the day-to-day constraints that make it difficult to leverage the support available to them.



Workers feel backed by their employer to progress professionally:



Workers feel supported, but struggle to advance.

Most workers say they feel supported by leadership, but support isn't the same as progress. Barriers like limited resources, few chances to upskill, and little room to apply new skills leave many stuck on the same rung.

Sixty-four percent of global workers say leadership recognizes their contributions. More than half (58%) feel confident their roles align with long-term goals, yet 42% remain unsure about the path ahead.

Global workers in several industries are unsure whether their current role supports long-term career goals:



Confidence is especially fragile in energy and logistics, where more than half of workers doubt future growth. Even in STEM and business professional and industrial roles, where confidence runs higher, many still question whether leaders will deliver on promises of advancement.

Executives and workers also disagree on the root of the problem. One-third of executives blame motivation, while only 17% of workers do. Employees point instead to structural barriers like time, resources, and opportunities – gaps that, if ignored, risk wasted investment and rising turnover.

Top barriers to upskilling for:

(Business professional and industrial workers)

35% say **resources and opportunities are limited.**

25% say they face **time constraints.**

24% say they **lack chances to apply new skills.**

(Business professional and industrial executives)

34% say they **lack motivation.**

34% say they face **competing priorities.**

32% say they have **limited resources and opportunities.**



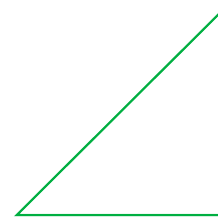
Upskill or exit? Workers see training as a ticket out.

Growth is the real retention test. In business professional and industrial sectors, nearly two-thirds of workers say they would quit after upskilling if their company could not offer the next step. For many, training feels less like an opportunity and more like a springboard to another employer.

Retention hinges on transparency. When workers understand how they can grow within a company, and what skills will get them there, they are far more likely to stay engaged and committed.

83%

of business professional and industrial executives say they are **worried talent will quit for better opportunities after completing upskilling.**

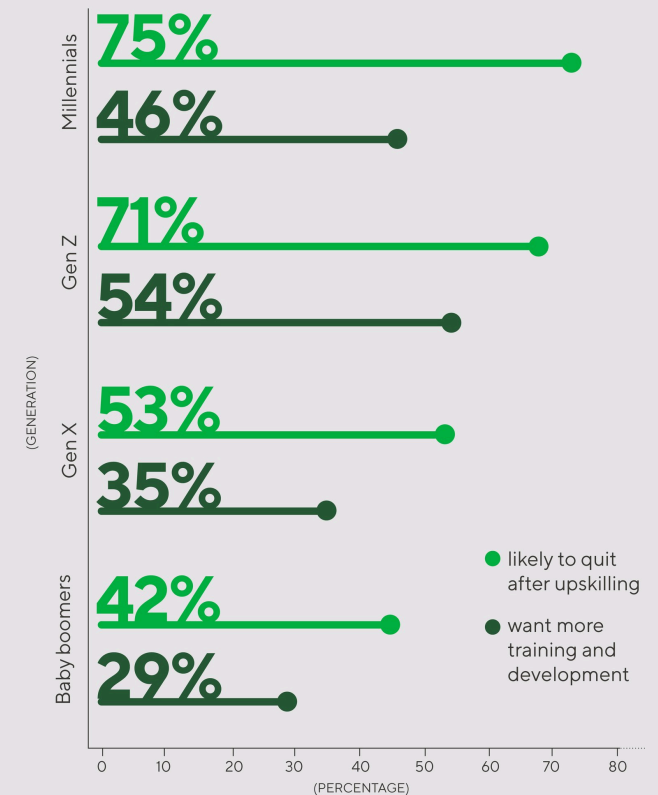


Young workers see growth as non-negotiable.

For Gen Z and millennials, progress isn't optional. Nearly half say stalled advancement is their biggest frustration, compared to just one in five boomers. In business professional and industrial sectors, 40% of millennials say resource constraints hold them back, compared to only 27% of boomers.

That frustration has consequences. More than 7 in 10 of younger workers say they would leave after upskilling if no clear path forward exists. Companies that fail to show mobility risk losing the very people expected to lead in the future.

Skills flight versus interest in professional development among business professional and industrial talent, by generation:



Trust falters when DEI feels like talk, not action.

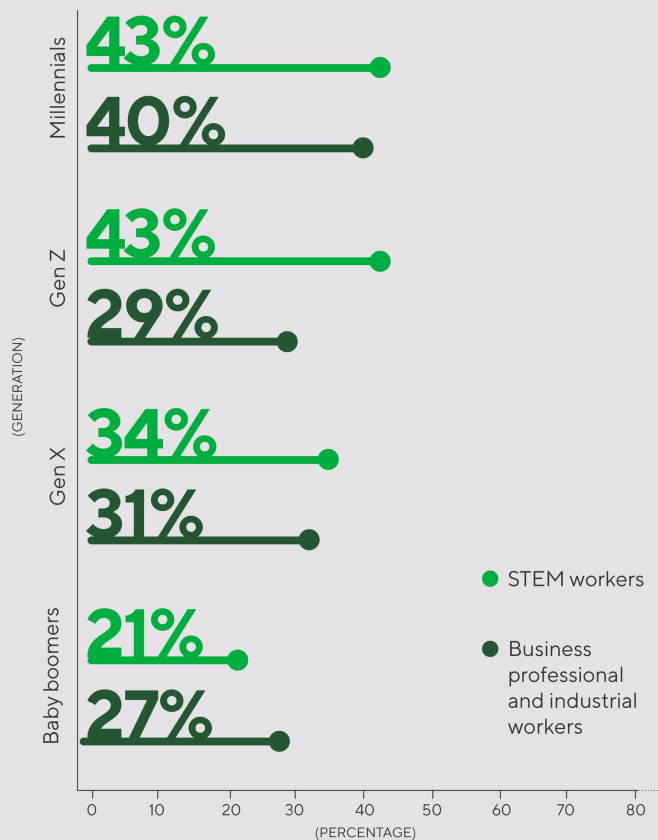
Trust also depends on whether companies keep their cultural promises. For many workers, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is the test of whether leadership promises hold up in practice.

Most workers still want progress on DEI, but many doubt leaders are following through.

More than half of global workers (57%) say they want their employer to support DEI efforts. Most executives say those efforts are still happening, but 20% say they have removed DEI language from marketing materials. That disconnect shows up clearly in gender equity. Eighty-two percent of STEM executives say their organization has programs to recruit, develop, and retain women. But only 59% of STEM workers say their organization has these programs.

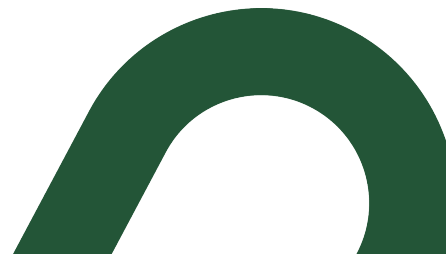
That shift may come at a cost. Forty-three percent of global executives say rolling back DEI efforts would risk losing current talent or alienating new hires. Just 32% of global workers say the same — a gap that shows DEI efforts are not landing equally across organizations.

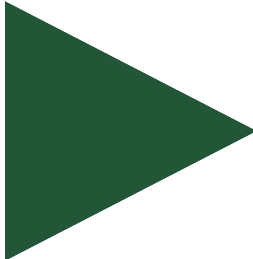
Workers who feel frustrated with a lack of growth or upskilling:



[Read more](#)

[Here's how equity drives stronger teams and better results.](#)





Leaders stay optimistic while workers brace for disruption.

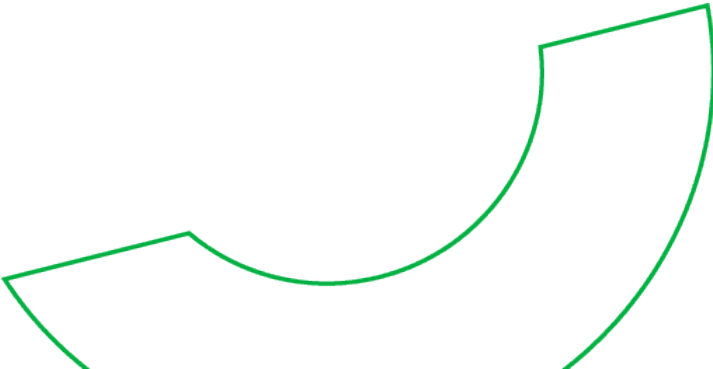
Executives are confident about the year ahead, but many workers are far less certain. Leaders focus on growth, while employees brace for setbacks.

The split is sharpest in STEM. Nearly eight in ten executives (78%) say the future looks strong. Workers see something different: only 65% share that optimism, and nearly twice as many expect conditions to worsen.



Leaders focus on growth, while employees brace for setbacks.

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STEM executives and workers who see only a fair or even poor, economic outlook for their industry over the next five years:

14%

STEM workers

7%

STEM executives

STEM executives rate their organization on attracting and retaining talent:

31%

give an "A" rating

50%

give a "B" rating

STEM executives rate their organization on attracting and retaining talent:

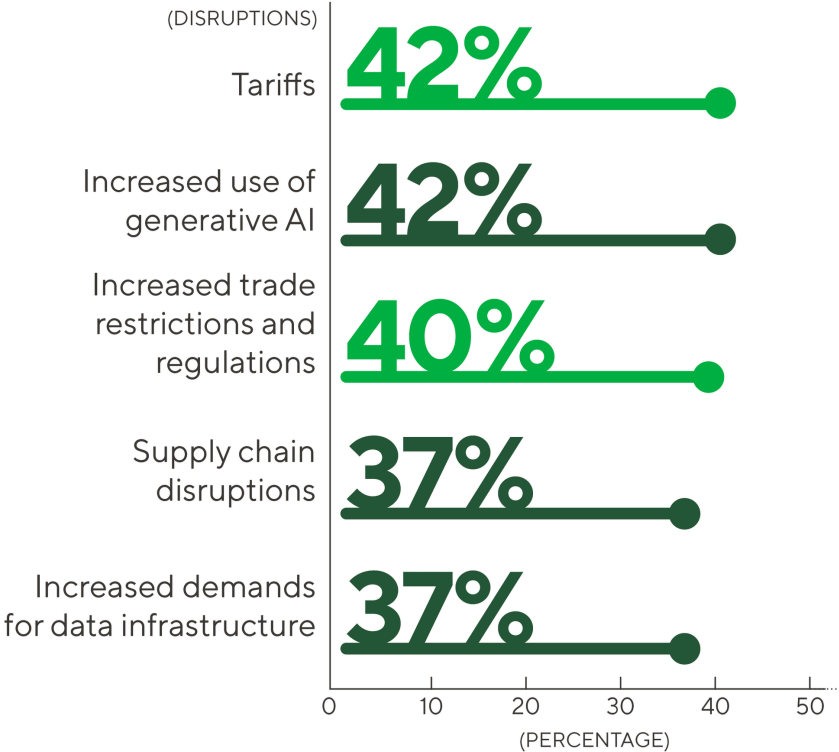
40%

give a "C" rating

That divide shows up in strategy too. Nearly seven in ten (69%) global executives believe their current talent strategy is strong enough to meet business goals this year. Workers see something different: only 65% share that optimism, and nearly twice as many workers (14%) compared to executives (7%) expect conditions to worsen over the next five years. Workers are less certain, with far fewer confident their organizations can deliver.

STEM leaders see disruptors ahead, from tariffs and generative AI to data infrastructure and supply chain risks. But where executives frame disruption as opportunity, workers see risk. The real test is whether leaders can turn confidence into credibility. If optimism is not backed by action, disruption will reshape more than business plans. It will reshape the workforce itself.

STEM executives anticipate these top disruptors over the next 5 years:



Key Takeaways: How to build trust that retains and engages talent.

- **Close perception gaps quickly:** Compare leader and employee sentiment on morale, loyalty, and satisfaction to catch misalignment before it undermines trust.
> [Here's how to design engagement surveys that surface the truth.](#)
- **Watch for early warning signs:** Track shifts in engagement or performance to intervene before workers disengage fully.
- **Link upskilling to mobility:** Show employees how training connects to career growth, or risk developing talent for your competitors.
> [Learn how to unlock the leadership potential within your workforce.](#)
- **Create clear career pathways:** Show every worker a clear path to grow, improve retention, and strengthen future leadership.
- **Make DEI progress visible:** Back commitments with actions that are measurable, consistent, and clearly communicated to keep trust alive.
- **Pair optimism with a plan:** Show how you will turn challenges like AI, supply chain issues, and tariffs into opportunities that build confidence.
- **Build feedback loops:** Keep workers informed about progress on engagement, DEI, and retention efforts.



Conclusion:

Shaping Tomorrow: Turning insight into action



Conclusion:

Shaping Tomorrow: Turning insight into action

You can't build the future of work without the workforce.

The Kelly Global Re:work Report highlights three gaps leaders can't ignore: technology, talent, and trust. These are not abstract ideas. They shape how teams function, whether people stay or leave, and how ready a company is to adapt.

The tech gap, shows a clear disconnect: executives are optimistic about AI, but nearly one in three workers (32%) say they are not seeing the benefits. The talent gap is just as urgent. While 58% of workers feel confident their roles align with long-term goals, many still worry they don't have the training to keep up. The trust gap remains the sharpest. Executives report rising satisfaction and a stronger culture, while many workers remain doubtful.

The data underscores that divide:

42%

of global executives say **employee satisfaction is better than last year**

89%

say they feel **well-informed about their team's performance**

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The challenge ahead is aligning optimism with action so confidence is something every worker can share.

Closing these divides requires more than good intentions. It means aligning strategy with day-to-day reality, making learning opportunities real and visible, and backing promises with action.

The next era of work demands future-ready organizations and future-ready people. The leaders who succeed will be those who:

- **Connect AI investments to adoption and productivity**
- **Link training to advancement, not turnover**
- **Make engagement, trust, and DEI visible and measurable**

Now is the time to turn insight into action. Closing these divides is not just about solving today's challenges. It's how organizations build resilience and gain the confidence to grow.



Methodologies

Researchers classified professionals into two groups throughout all surveys across business units. One group comprises those who indicate a job title of manager, senior manager, department head, director, vice president, or C-suite. Individuals in this category will be referred to as “executives” throughout the report. The second group comprises those who indicate holding an individual contributor role at their organization. These respondents will be referred to as “workers.”

Methodology for the Global Workforce Survey: Kelly commissioned Atomik Research to conduct an online survey of 4,020 professionals across the globe. Professionals surveyed are employed full-time at organizations that operate within industries such as financial services, e-commerce, energy/oil/natural gas, higher education, life sciences, logistics, manufacturing, and technology. Further, researchers sampled respondents based in Australia (n=331), France (n=301), Germany (n=380), India (n=440), Ireland (n=100), Malaysia (n=141), the Netherlands (n=146), Poland (n=300), Singapore (n=330), Sweden (n=150), Switzerland (n=70), the United Kingdom (n=331), and the United States (n=1,000). Respondents had the option to complete the questionnaire in Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Malay, Polish, and Swedish.

Fieldwork took place between April 25 and May 16, 2025. The margin of error for the sample of executives (N=2,011) is +/- 2 percentage points with a confidence level of 95%. The margin of error for the sample of workers (N=2,009) is +/- 2 percentage points with a confidence level of 95%.



Methodology for the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Telecom (STEM) Survey:

Kelly commissioned Atomik Research to conduct an online survey of 1,005 professionals throughout the United States. Professionals surveyed are employed full-time at organizations that operate within industries such as aerospace and defense, automotive, aviation, biologics, chemicals/plastics/rubber, diagnostics, energy/oil/natural gas, industrial automation, IT, logistics, medical devices, pharmaceuticals, robotics, semiconductors, shipping, and trucking.

Fieldwork took place between May 5 and May 15, 2025. The margin of error for the sample of executives (N=505) is +/- 4 percentage points with a confidence level of 95%. The margin of error for the sample of talent (N=500) is +/- 4 percentage points with a confidence level of 95%.

Methodology for the Business Professional & Industrial Survey: Kelly commissioned Atomik Research to conduct an online survey of 1,004 professionals throughout Canada (n=200), Mexico (n=200), Puerto Rico (n=104), and the United States (n=500). Professionals surveyed are employed full-time at organizations that operate within industries such as manufacturing, electronics, computer hardware, and call centers.

Fieldwork took place between May 13 and June 2, 2025. The margin of error for the sample of executives (N=503) is +/- 4 percentage points with a confidence level of 95%. The margin of error for the sample of talent (N=501) is +/- 4 percentage points with a confidence level of 95%.





Thank you for reading

The 2025 Kelly Global Rework Report



Re:work