

2025 Career Optimism Index®

In its 5th year, surveying more than 5,000 U.S. adults and 500 employers, the study provides a comprehensive evaluation of U.S. career perceptions.

American workers' professional future feels out of their control



Nearly 1 in 4 workers feels less control over their careers than five years ago



51%

of employees report burnout (record high for the Index)

76%

of Americans rely on hope just to get through the year



Workers whose jobs don't align with their values are 47% more likely to experience burnout

How do we reduce burnout? Career control.

Workers lacking career control are 56% more likely to experience burnout

Workers who feel they are not progressing in their career at the right pace are

71% Say upskilling is necessary for advancement (+5 pts since 2024)

52%

more likely to experience burnout

86% Want to expand their skillsets (+6 pts since 2021)

Employers are faced with an opportunity—what will they do?



60%

of employers prefer external hires over upskilling



Employer investment in reskilling



13 pts since 2022

Upskilling investment



10 pts since 2022



43%

of workers lack access to needed training (+8 pts since 2021)

The bottom line:



Upskilling hiring costs



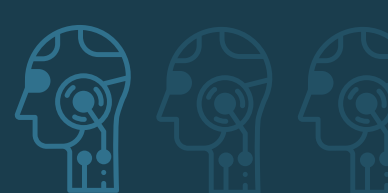
Investing in employees Higher adaptability, resilience and autonomy



THE GAME CHANGER



AI is making a difference

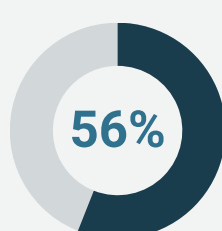


AI USERS REPORT:

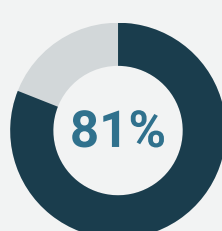
+ 12 pts Autonomy

+ 5 pts Resilience

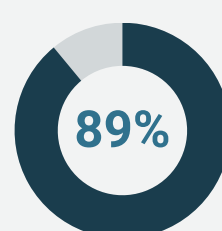
+ 5 pts Adaptability



say AI accelerates skill development



say it improves work-life balance



say it boosts productivity (+4 pts YoY)

What's next? Employers are at a crossroads

Empower or risk losing talent

If employers invest in upskilling and AI, they can build resilient and engaged teams.

If employers ignore, they could see lower productivity and reduced competitive edge.



Visit the Career Institute® website to read the full report.