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employer brand research 2026

global report.



randstad **KANTAR**



partner for talent.

shaping the future workforce

As global workforce dynamics continue to shift, talent around the globe is adapting to new realities. From the growing integration of AI and automation - reshaping daily work and perceptions of job security - to rising living costs driven by geopolitical tensions, professionals are navigating an increasingly complex world of work. At the same time, the entry of new generations is reshaping expectations around flexibility, purpose, and work-life balance.

In this evolving context, employership faces a distinct set of challenges and opportunities. Regional differences shape what workers value most, while generational and role-based perspectives reveal diverging expectations around compensation, work-life balance, job security, and career growth.

This report highlights the key trends influencing talent attraction and retention worldwide, and offers actionable insights to help organisations refine their employer brand and strengthen their employee value proposition (EVP). By aligning more closely with the evolving priorities of today's workforce, employers can position themselves as employers of choice in an increasingly competitive, skills-driven labour market.

34 markets surveyed.

covering more than 75% of the global economy



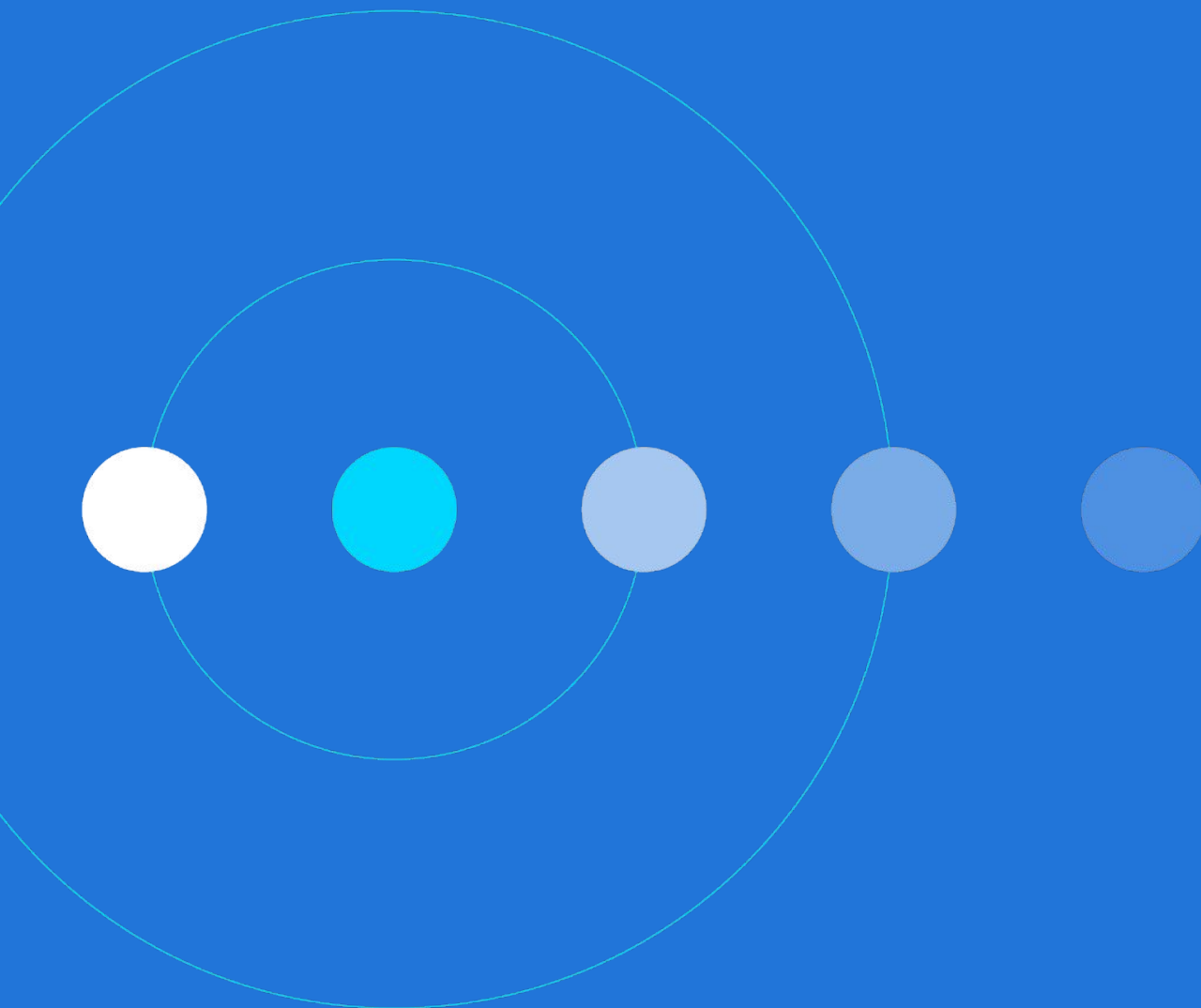
argentina	chile	hungary	the netherlands	spain
australia	china	india	new zealand	sweden
austria	czech republic	italy	norway	switzerland
belgium	france	japan	poland	united kingdom
brazil	germany	luxembourg	portugal	united states
canada	greece	malaysia	romania	uruguay
denmark	hong kong SAR	mexico	singapore	

a representative employer brand research based on perceptions of the general audience. Optimizing more than 25 years of successful employer branding insights.

an independent survey with more than 166,000 respondents and 6,400 companies surveyed worldwide.

sample

- aged 18 to retirement age
- representative on gender
- overrepresentation of age 25– 44
- comprised of students, employed and unemployed workforce



05 executive summary

13 key drivers

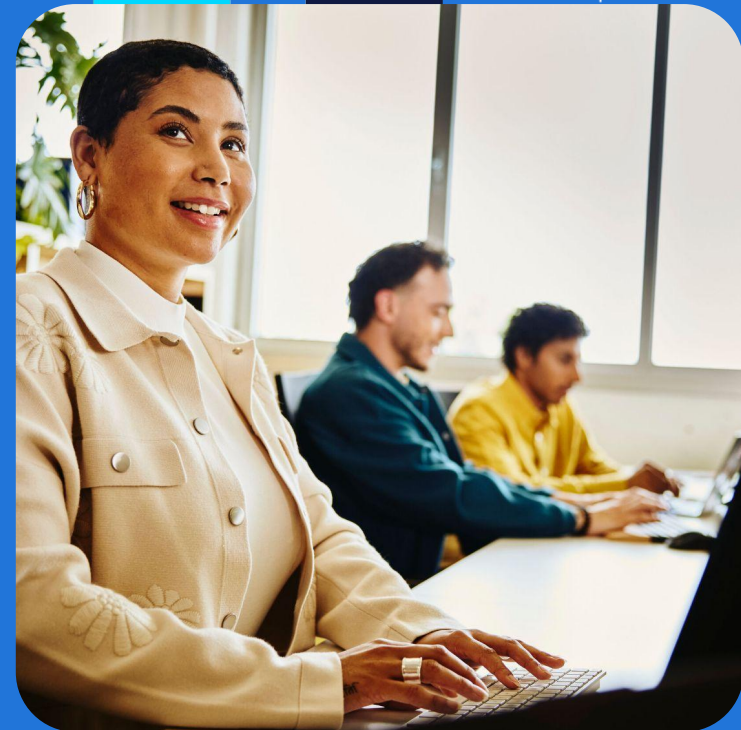
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executive summary.



salary and benefits remain the primary driver of employer choice globally.

The gap to work–life balance has narrowed significantly, positioning both as the central pillars of the ideal employer proposition. Job security, a pleasant work atmosphere, and career progression form a second tier of drivers with relatively small differences in importance. Together, these elements define a clear core package that employees expect employers to deliver.

A high degree of alignment exists between what employees consider important and what they prioritize when trade-offs are required. Salary and benefits stand out as the most decisive factor across all segments and regions. Work–life balance, job security, and career progression also show strong alignment, reinforcing their role as essential, non-negotiable components of the employee value proposition.

However, notable misalignments emerge: pleasant work atmosphere and equal opportunities are widely valued but deprioritised, suggesting they function as baseline expectations and only influence choice when lacking. In contrast, more niche attributes, such as interesting job content or access to the latest technology, appeal to smaller groups but are strongly prioritised by those who value them, making them key differentiators for specific talent segments.





demographic patterns further support these findings.

As careers progress, salary and benefits increase in importance, becoming more decisive for older generations and more highly educated talent. Meanwhile, younger talent and women place relatively greater emphasis on work-life balance, with Gen Z uniquely ranking it as the most important factor. Nonetheless, even among Gen Z, salary and benefits remain the top priority when trade-offs are required, underscoring their universal role as the key decision factor.

Across all segments, job security holds a stable and consistent position, reinforcing its status as a fundamental expectation rather than a point of differentiation. Similarly, equal opportunities and pleasant work atmosphere maintain strong importance across demographics but remain less prioritized, further confirming their role as baseline requirements.

regional differences show similar structures with key nuance.

Across all regions, salary and benefits remain the only universally top-ranked and top-prioritized driver. Work-life balance also consistently ranks highly, though its relative importance varies. The strongest insights emerge where alignment (or misalignment) is consistent across both importance and priority.

In Europe, a pleasant work atmosphere ranks as the most important driver yet is treated as a basic expectation rather than a differentiator, reflecting a clear expectation gap. In North America, equal opportunities show a comparable dynamic: while highly important, they are deprioritized when trade-offs are required, suggesting they function as a hygiene factor. In contrast, Latin America stands out, with career progression not only ranking among the most important drivers but also being strongly prioritized, positioning it as a key differentiator. Additionally, work-life balance in this region receives relatively higher priority than its importance ranking would suggest, indicating it is an essential underlying need, likely driven by career and personal development.

Finally, comparing the ideal employer profile with current employer evaluations reveals a clear delivery gap. Employees rate job security and equal opportunities relatively highly in their current employer experience, while salary and benefits, work-life balance, and career progression receive lower evaluations despite being among the most important drivers. This indicates a structural mismatch between expectations and perceived delivery on the most decisive factors.



job-switching dynamics show early signs of stabilization.

24%

of talent globally have the intention to switch jobs in the first half of 2026.

27%

of North American talent switched jobs in the second half of 2025 - significantly higher than in Europe (18%), and about twice as much as in Latin America and APAC (resp. 14% and 13%).

While actual job switching remains stable compared to last year, intentions to change jobs have declined for the second consecutive year. This marginal decline may indicate either the beginning of a downward trend or a stabilization following several years of growth, suggesting a more settled workforce and potentially increasing satisfaction.

However, beneath this overall stability, important structural patterns persist. Generational differences remain highly pronounced: Gen Z continues to drive mobility, with both the highest switching intentions (30%) and actual switching rates (24%). In contrast, older generations show significantly lower activity, with both intentions and behavior declining progressively with age. The widening gap between intention and actual switching among older talent highlights the stronger exploratory drive and flexibility of early-career professionals, reinforcing Gen Z as a key target group for employers.

From a regional perspective, North America stands out as an exception to the global trend. While intentions are declining in most regions, they continue to rise in North America, supported by high actual switching rates. In contrast, other regions show a growing disconnect between relatively high intentions and lower actual movement, indicating dissatisfaction that may translate into future turnover.

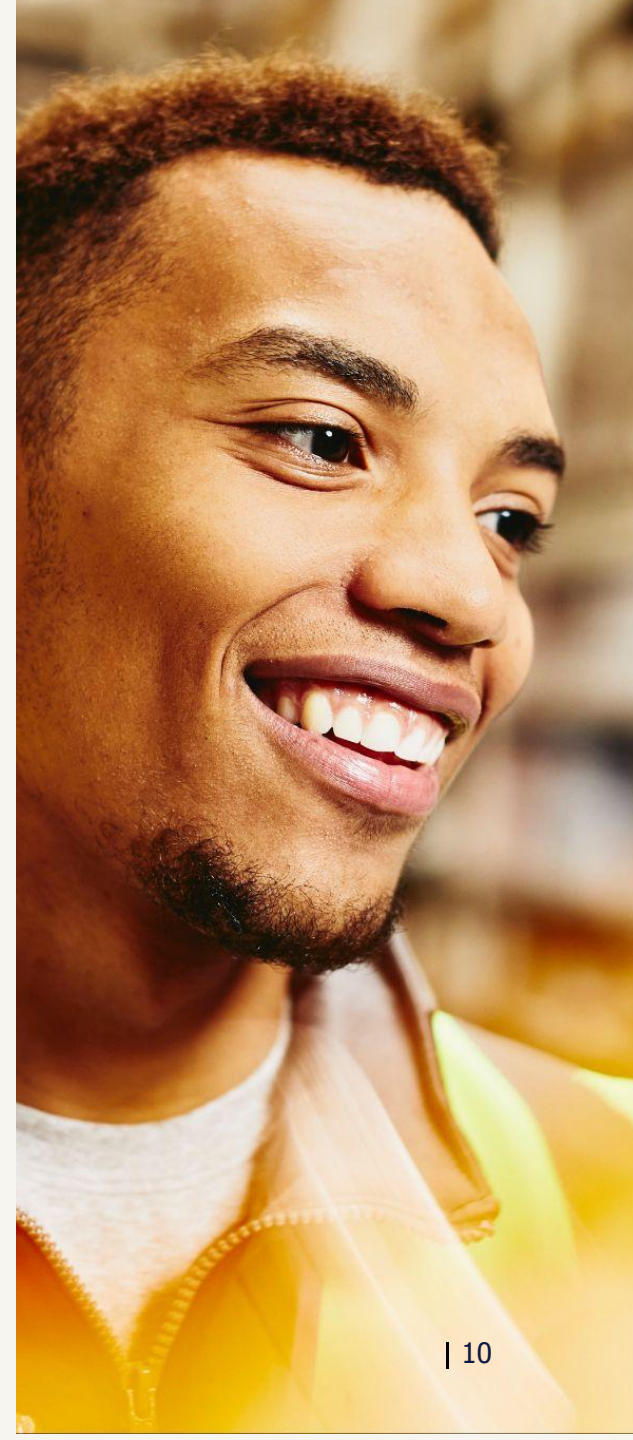
reasons to leave: shifting priorities and persistent retention gap.

Compensation is the leading trigger globally, reflecting the growing impact of cost-of-living pressures. Limited career progression follows a similar pattern, reinforcing the importance of growth opportunities in retention strategies. At the same time, day-to-day dissatisfaction remains a critical factor. Poor management, negative work environments, and weak interpersonal relationships consistently emerge as key reasons to leave. These factors become more prominent as careers progress.

A clear gap persists between what talent values and how they evaluate their current employer. Salary and career progression, key drivers of employer choice and switching, are among the weakest-rated aspects, indicating a structural misalignment that continues to fuel turnover risk. In contrast, the most positively rated aspects are least likely to drive switching intentions, limiting their impact on retention.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in this context. While currently rated relatively lower, strong management has the potential to positively influence multiple drivers simultaneously, shaping overall employee experience and reinforcing retention.

Job boards and search engines are the primary entry points, with four in ten hires sourced through these channels, combining high reach with strong conversion. However, personal networks remain the most effective channel overall, albeit with more limited reach. Differences across demographic groups underline the need for targeted sourcing strategies.



optimize for impact

deliver on essentials

Focus on strengthening the core value proposition around salary and benefits, work-life balance, job security, and career progression as the primary drivers of attraction and retention, given their consistently high importance and priority. At the same time, ensure reliable delivery of hygiene factors such as work atmosphere and equal opportunities, as shortcomings here can disproportionately damage perceptions despite not differentiating.

differentiate where it matters

Tailor the offer and messaging to both regional and segment needs: prioritize development for early-career talent and in high-growth regions, emphasize work-life balance for younger and female talent, and highlight financial and security benefits for more experienced employees. Complement this with selective use of niche drivers, such as interesting job content and advanced technology, to differentiate where they matter most for specific talent groups.

strengthen retention levers

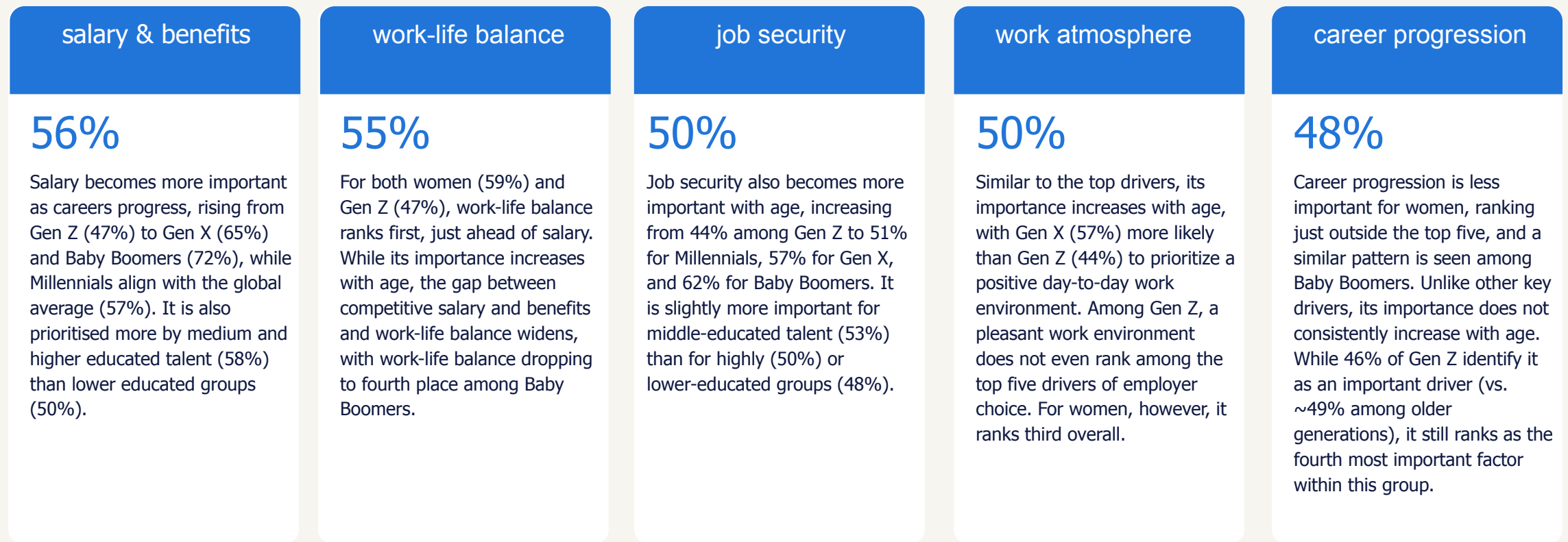
Proactively target high-mobility segments, especially early-career talent, with tailored propositions on development, flexibility, and purpose, supported by focused retention to reduce attrition. Address gaps by prioritizing competitive, transparent compensation and strengthening career pathways and internal mobility. Invest in leadership quality - particularly people leadership and engagement - recognizing its broad impact on satisfaction. Optimize attraction by balancing high-reach and high-conversion channels, tailoring the mix to each target group.

key drivers.

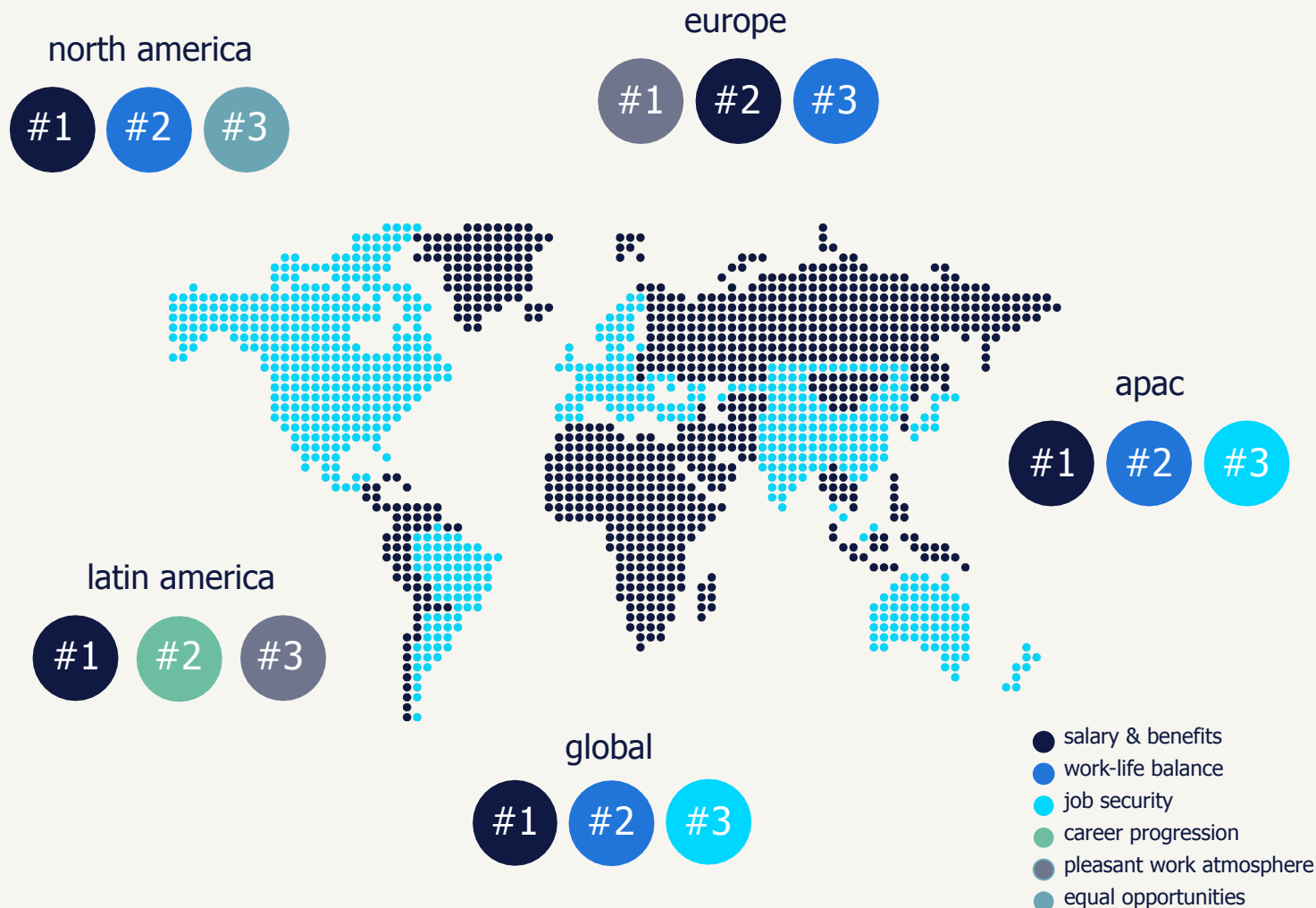


top five reasons global talent choose an employer.

Traditionally, salary and benefits have been by far the strongest driver of employer choice. While it remains the most important factor, work-life balance now follows closely behind, with only a marginal gap. Job security, a pleasant work atmosphere, and career progression follow by some distance, with only minimal differences between them. Equal opportunities falls just short of a top 5 position, but remains important to consider: it shows minimal differences across generations and education levels, while a gender gap between men and women persists.



the ideal employer profile differs across regions.



Across regions, salary and benefits stand out as the only universally top-ranked driver. Work-life balance is also highly valued globally, ranking second in North America and APAC, and third in Europe, though it falls outside the top five in Latin America.

In Europe, differences between the top three drivers are minimal, with pleasant work atmosphere ranking first. In Latin America pleasant work atmosphere completes the top three, but loses relevance in APAC (5th), and even more in North America (7th).

Instead, equal opportunities surface in North America as an important driver, but it stands out most strongly in Latin America, receiving the highest emphasis across all regions (57%).

These variations highlight distinct talent priorities worldwide. Despite these differences, job security maintains a strong and consistent global position, ranking third overall.



Q. Based on your previous selections, please rank the most important factors that an ideal employer should have, in order of importance.

explanation key drivers' relative priority.



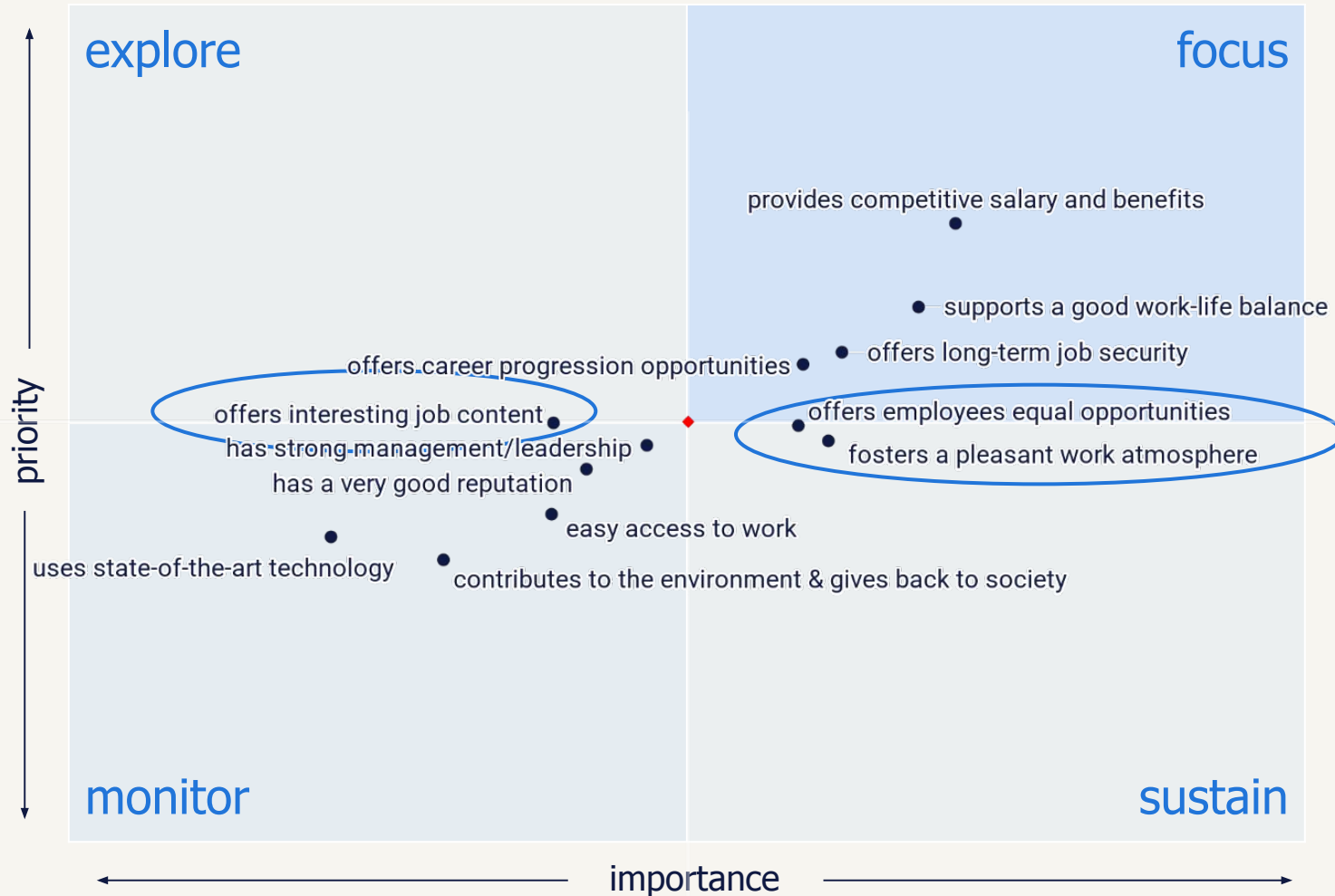
Higher-ranked drivers indicate greater importance or preference compared to those lower down, showing relative priorities.

This table illustrates both the absolute importance and the relative priority of the EVP drivers. Depending on their relationships, each driver falls into a different quadrant, and each quadrant provides distinct actionable insights.



Q. Based on your previous selections, please rank the most important factors that an ideal employer should have, in order of importance.

key drivers' relative priority.



Competitive salary and benefits outweigh work-life balance as the top driver of employer choice and become decisive when trade-offs are made.

Most drivers show strong alignment between importance and priority. Work-life balance, job security, and career progression, key drivers alongside pay, form a consistent core package that talent expect employers to deliver. This alignment also holds for most lower-ranked drivers.

Around half of talent consider a pleasant work atmosphere and equal opportunities essential, yet these factors tend to lose priority when trade-offs are made.

In contrast, interesting job content and access to the latest technology follow the opposite pattern: while cited by fewer talent, those who value them assign higher priority. These drivers are more likely to influence decisions within specific talent segments or roles, reflecting more niche needs.

Job security holds a strong position across all regions and demographics, being regarded as a fundamental necessity with limited willingness to compromise.



Q. Based on your previous selections, please rank the most important factors that an ideal employer should have, in order of importance.

importance and priority differ by generation and region.

interesting job content

is not widely seen as a top driver, but holds relatively greater importance among those who do value it

pleasant work atmosphere

is the most important driver in Europe, but is not prioritised accordingly - treated as a core need rather than a differentiator

salary and benefits hold the highest priority across all generations

While equal opportunities and a pleasant work atmosphere are widely valued but tend to lose importance when trade-offs are required.

The broader dispersion of drivers among older generations suggests that, as careers progress, talent become more selective, distinguishing which factors matter most and assigning them greater priority.

Among Gen Z, a different pattern emerges: although salary and benefits rank second in importance, just behind work-life balance, they stand out as the most prioritised driver. This highlights that, even for younger talent, pay becomes the decisive factor when making choices.

there are clear similarities across regions:

Salary and benefits are consistently the top priority. Other key drivers are broadly aligned in both importance and prioritisation, with notable exceptions for pleasant work atmosphere and equal opportunities. These misalignments are evident in Europe, where a pleasant work atmosphere ranks as the most important driver but is only treated as a core need. A similar pattern is observed in North America: equal opportunities rank third in importance yet are de-prioritised in trade-offs. The region also places more emphasis on strong management and reputation, though these are less prioritised.

Latin America differs: career progression is both highly important (second) and strongly prioritised, while work-life balance, despite lower importance, is prioritised enough to be a core need.

how global talent rate their current employer.

7 in 10 employees rate their current employer highly across all 12 key drivers

Job security is the highest-rated driver when employees evaluate their current employer, with 74% of workers globally expressing satisfaction, closely followed by equal opportunities, also at 74%. While women generally rate their current employer slightly less positively than men, equal opportunities is the area where they give the highest scores (73%), followed by job security (72%).

Both attributes feature prominently in the ideal employer profile; however, equal opportunities is less prioritised when talent are asked to make trade-offs. A similar pattern is seen for pleasant work atmosphere, reinforcing that these more abstract factors act as hygiene factors, valued, but less decisive as long as expectations are met.

the largest expectation gap continues to be around salary

Despite differences across sub-groups, sentiment around pay is consistent, ranking among the lowest-rated drivers when evaluating current employers. Work-life balance and career progression, though less pronounced, still show a notable gap between their importance when choosing a new employer and how current employers perform on them.

Regional differences are largely culturally driven: APAC tend to rate their employers more positively across all aspects, while Europe are more critical, particularly of management, with just over half (53%) expressing satisfaction.

In North America, talent place greater priority on employer reputation and equal opportunities, and employers also receive higher ratings on these aspects, further reinforcing their importance.

53%

of European talent express satisfaction with management, well below 63% in Latin America, 67% in North America, and 74% in APAC.

equal opportunities

is the third most important driver in North America, with employer efforts strongly recognized and 77% of talent report satisfaction.



job-switching
behaviour in focus.

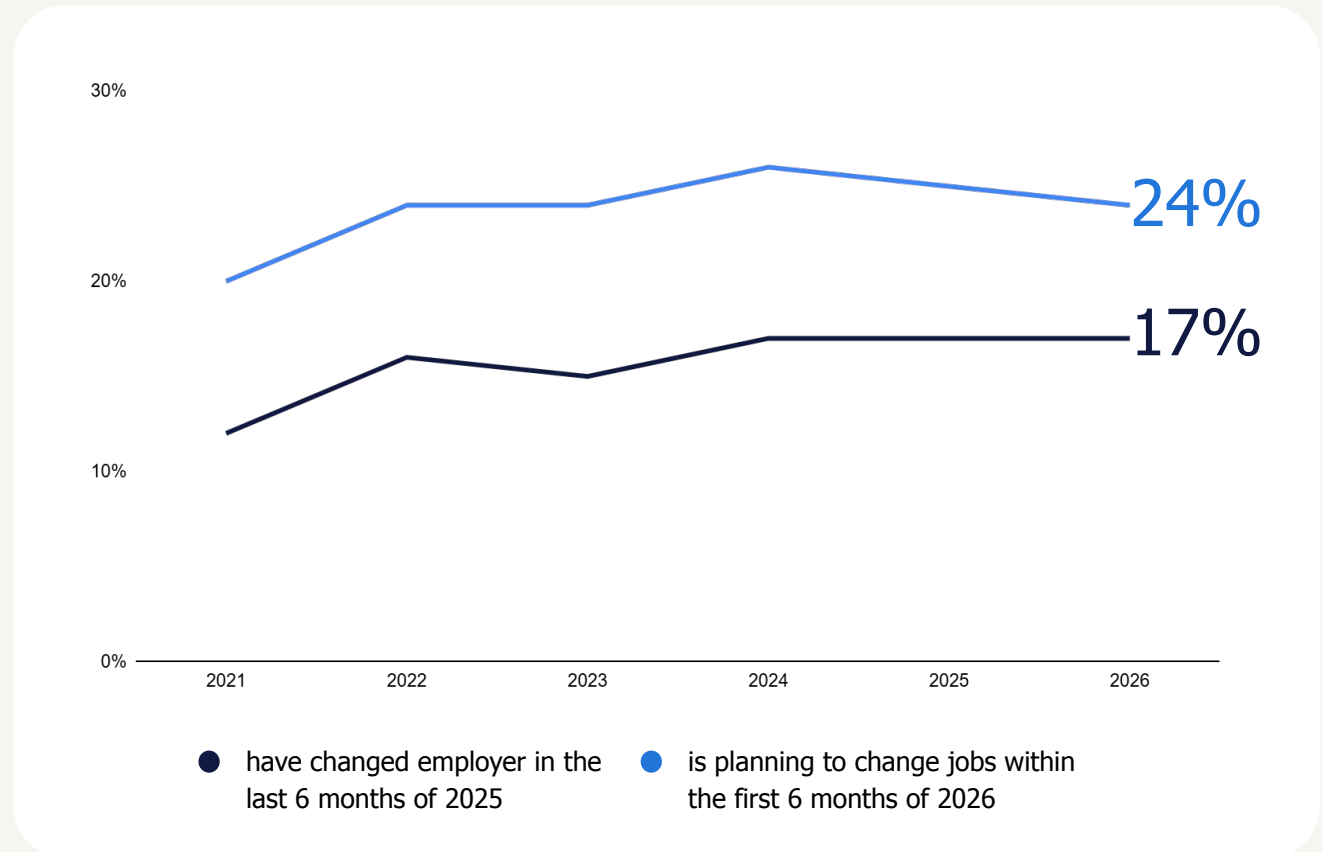


actual job switching remains stable compared to previous year, while intention continues to decline.

This may indicate that job-switching intentions are beginning to stabilise following several years of growth, potentially reflecting increasing satisfaction or stability in the workforce.

Gen Z exhibits the highest intention to switch jobs, at 30%, with intentions gradually declining across older generations (22% among Millennials, 17% among Gen X, and 11% among Baby Boomers). This pattern is also reflected in actual job switching behaviour: 24% of Gen Z changed jobs in the final six months of 2025, significantly higher than Millennials (14%), Gen X (9%), and Baby Boomers (7%).

Notably, the gap between intention and actual switching widens with age, highlighting the stronger drive among early-career professionals to explore opportunities and continue developing. Combined with their greater flexibility, lower demands, and typically less specialized experience, this makes younger talent - in particular Gen Z - an attractive target group for employers.

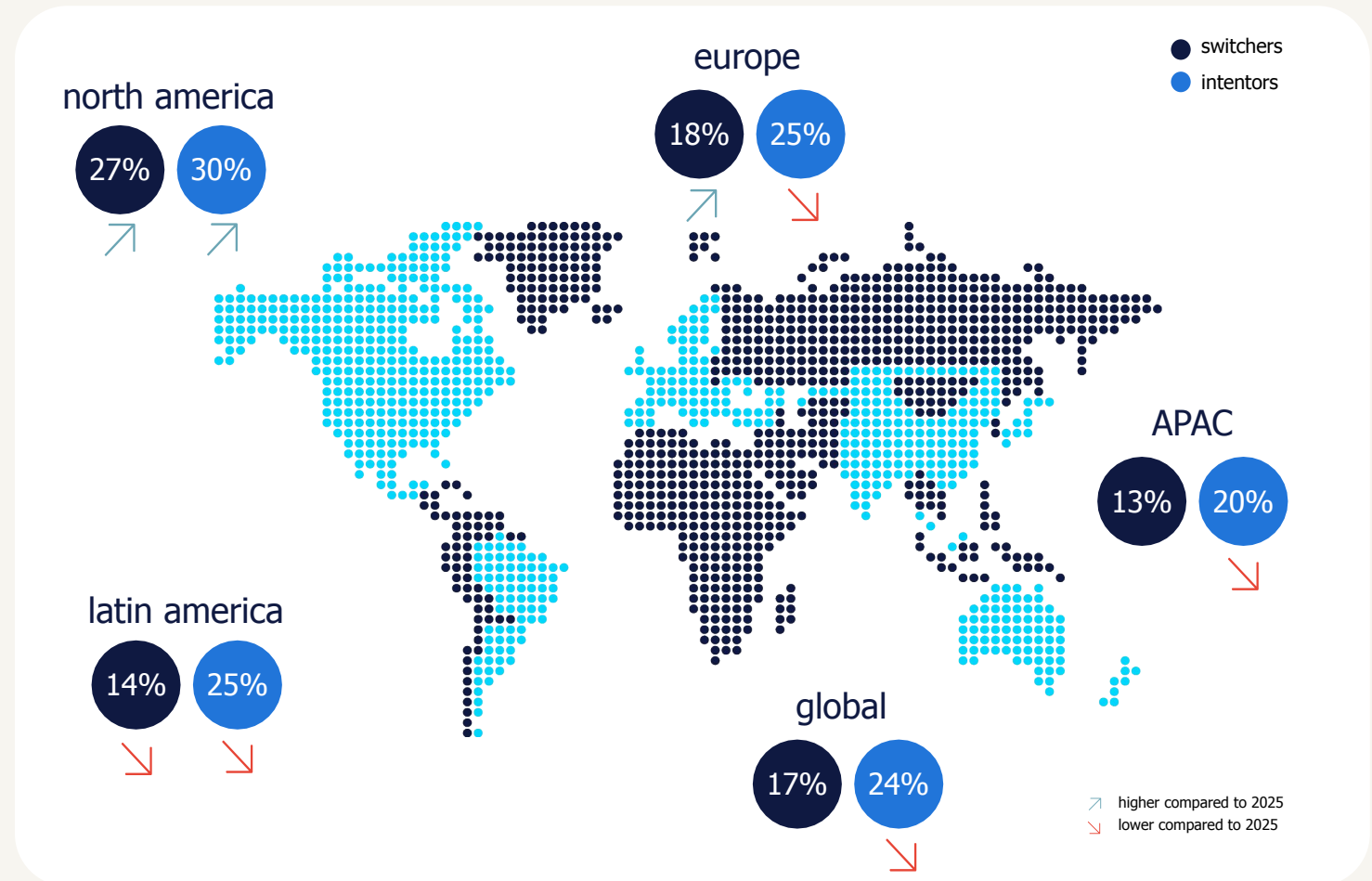


north america deviates from the global turnover trend.

While job-switching intentions have declined globally the second consecutive year, North America - already leading in switching intention - shows the opposite trend.

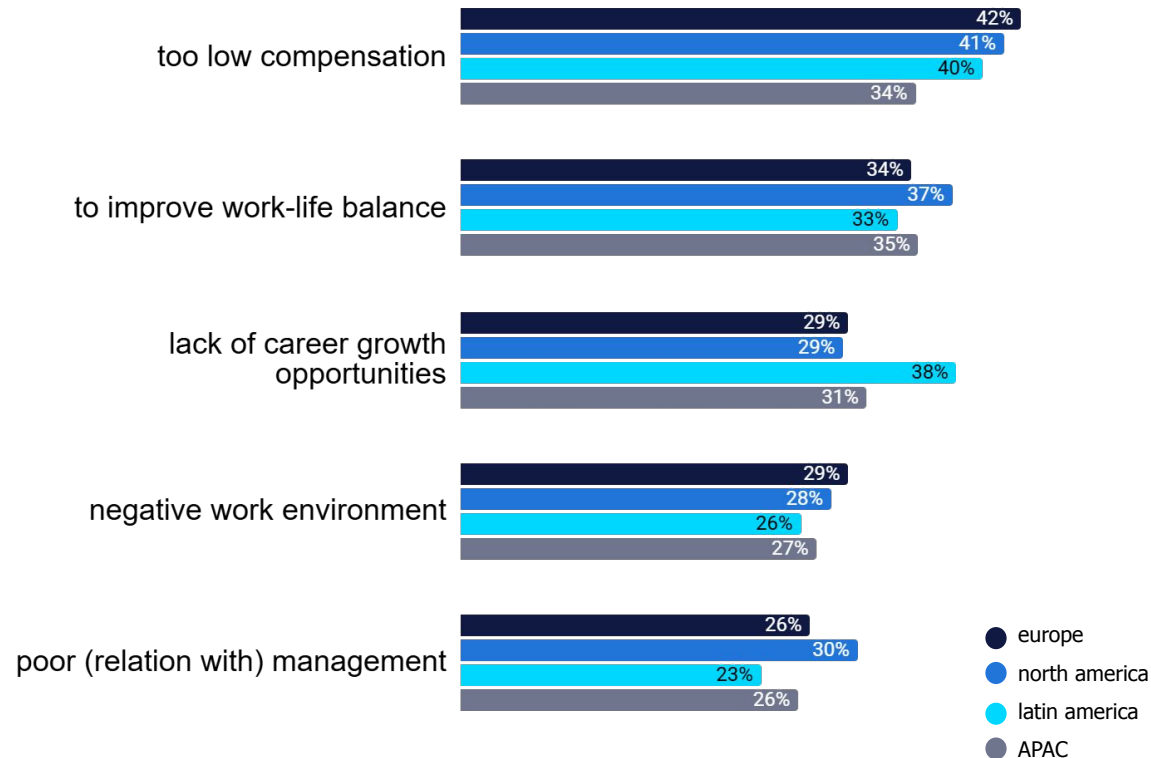
Actual switching rates in North America are also significantly higher than in other regions, with over a quarter of talent changing employer in the second half of 2025. This is supported by a high share of potential movers, with 30% planning to switch jobs within the next six months.

Despite narrowing gaps, other regions show a greater disconnect between high intention and lower actual movement. This signals a growing risk of future turnover, with dissatisfaction building beneath the surface but not yet translating into exits.



insufficient compensation is the top reason employees would consider leaving their current employer.

reasons for leaving



This is followed by improving work-life balance and lack of career growth opportunities but at some distance.

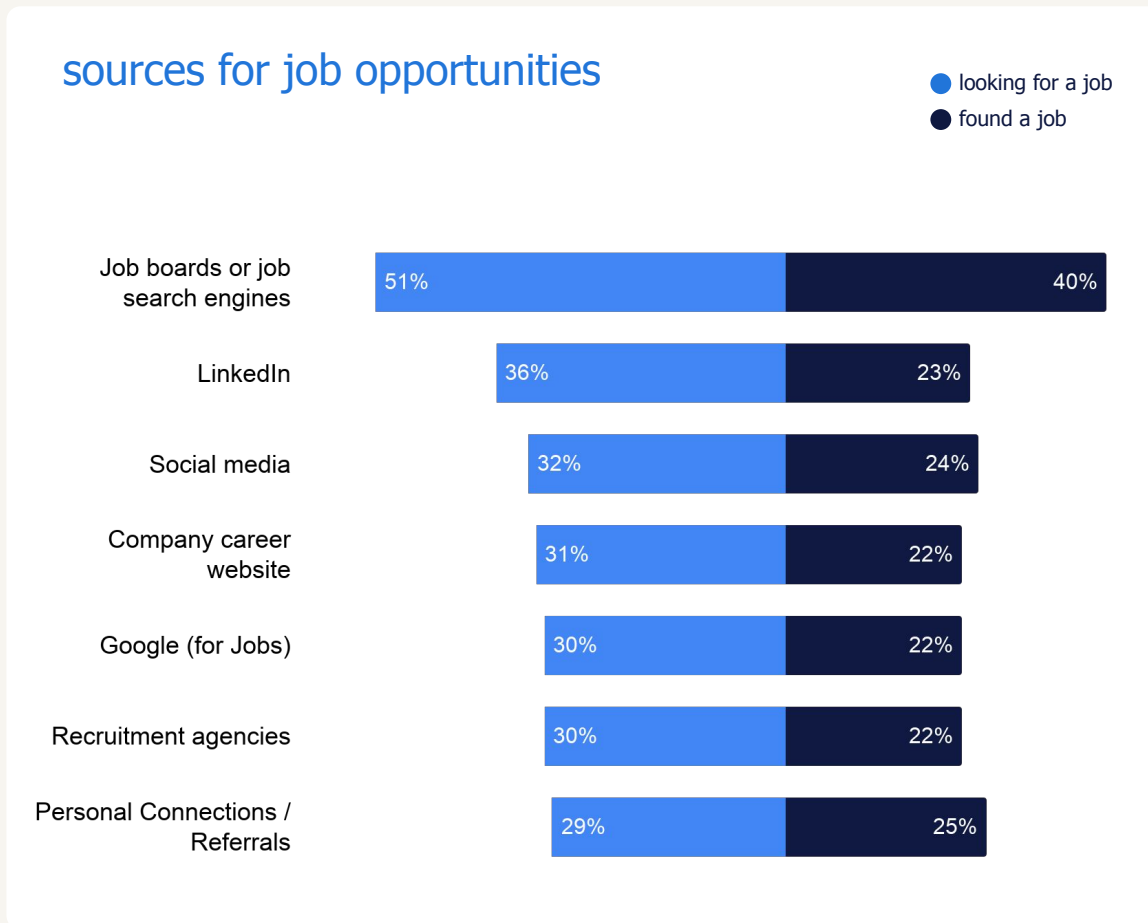
The increasing cost of living is noticeable worldwide, with insufficient compensation emerging as the most important reason for changing employers, except in APAC, where work-life balance is equally important.

Notable regional differences can be found in the Americas. In Latin America, the stronger emphasis on career progression is reflected in job-switching behaviour, with a lack of growth opportunities more often driving talent to seek new employers. In North America, poor management is cited more. Some of these regional differences are largely driven by cultural context and should not be interpreted as direct indicators of retention risk.

Overall, day-to-day job dissatisfaction, particularly a negative work environment and poor relationships with management, emerges as a key reasons to leave. These factors, along with low compensation, become stronger motivators as employees progress in their careers.



job boards and search engines are the most widely used tools among job seekers, with 4 in 10 finding their job through this channel.



The remaining channels show lower levels of both usage and success, with performance largely similar across them.

Men and women use a similar number of sources when searching for a new job, but with different preferences. Women more often rely on job boards, search engines, career websites, and social media, while men more frequently use recruitment and staffing agencies, and job fairs. These differences are reflected in outcomes: men more often secure roles via agencies, job fairs, and LinkedIn, despite LinkedIn being slightly more used by women during the search phase.

Generational differences further shape job search behaviour. Gen Z and Millennials more often use Google for jobs, social media and job fairs than Gen X, while Gen X relies more on personal networks. At the same time, Gen Z makes less use of job boards and LinkedIn. At the hiring stage, generational differences persist. While Gen X ultimately relies on fewer sources to secure a job, the most notable contrast is that Gen Z more often finds roles through recruiters, reflecting their higher mobility and appeal to intermediary-driven hiring channels.



how does it relate to current situation?

employees tend to leave where gaps persist around pay, career growth and work-life balance.

reasons to leave

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1. | too low compensation |
| 2. | to improve work-life balance |
| 3. | lack of career growth opportunities |
| 4. | negative work environment |
| 5. | poor (relation with) management |
| 6. | lack of interest in job |
| 7. | fear of losing job |
| 8. | not equally rewarded |
| 9. | poor reputation |
| 10. | work is not easily accessible |
| 11. | lack of investment in technology and innovation |
| 12. | no environmental or social contribution |

evaluation of current employer

- | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | job security |
| 2. | equal opportunities |
| 3. | easy access to work |
| 4. | very good reputation |
| 5. | pleasant work atmosphere |
| 6. | work-life balance |
| 7. | interesting job content |
| 8. | strong management/leadership |
| 9. | career progression |
| 10. | salary & benefits |
| 11. | benefits the environment and society |
| 12. | state-of-the-art technology |

Salary is the primary driver for considering a job change and is also one of the weaker-rated aspects of the current employer profile. Limited career growth shows a similar pattern. In contrast, the four most positively evaluated aspects are the least likely to trigger intentions to leave.

Poor management and leadership should also not be overlooked: while currently rated relatively low, strong leadership can reinforce and balance key drivers, shape perceptions of the workplace, and ultimately play a critical role in improving retention.

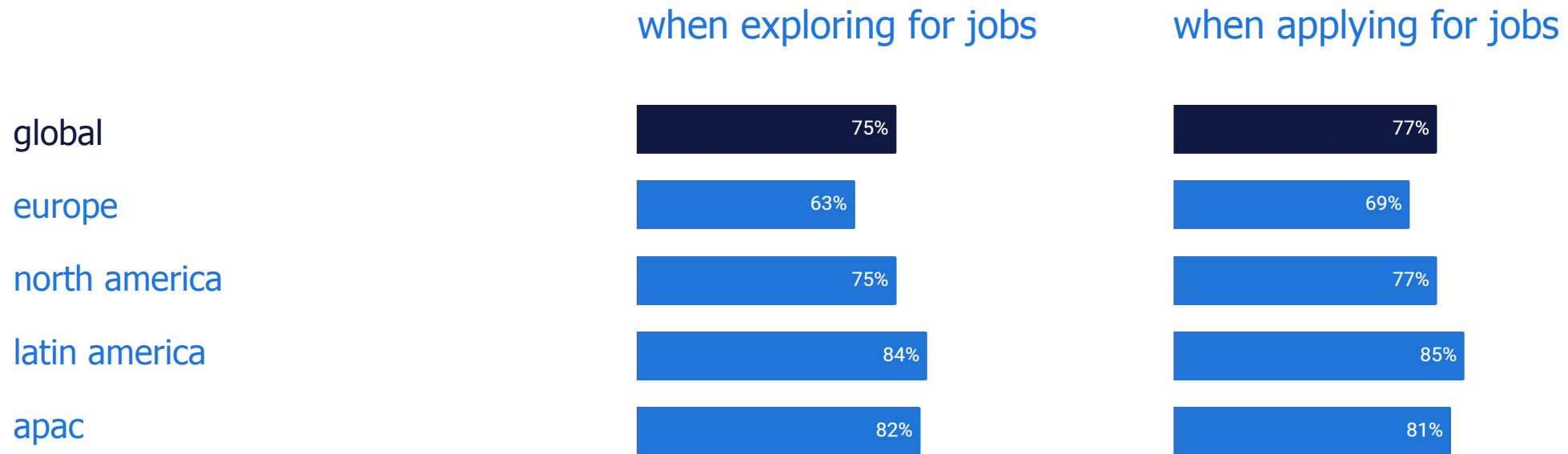
Men tend to be more positive about their current employer overall, while satisfaction generally decreases with career progression and increases with higher education levels.

Regionally, talent in Europe are less positive compared to other regions, with APAC showing the most positive evaluations, followed by North America and Latin America. However, these differences are largely culturally driven and should be interpreted within each region’s specific context rather than as a direct indication of retention risk.



importance of in person contact.

despite the growth of online job search, human contact remains an important part of the hiring journey, with around three in four talent valuing personal interaction when exploring opportunities and applying. This highlights the continued importance of human touchpoints alongside digital channels, particularly in Latin America, where it is most valued, and to a lesser extent in Europe.





closing remarks.

The report has shown the ongoing dynamism within the priorities and perspectives of the global workforce, while also pinpointing key areas where employers can enhance their strategies or focus their efforts.

It provides just a glimpse into the wealth of insights available through our Employer Brand Research (REBR), both globally and locally, and underscores the enduring importance of cultivating a strong employer brand in today's competitive landscape.

The data, enriched with socio-demographic insights, provides a deeper understanding of how talent perceives job security and work-life balance.. These invaluable resources are readily accessible through our local market reports, and they seek to empower organizations to stay informed and stay ahead in an ever-evolving marketplace.

thank you.



partner for talent.