

# Job Security and “Blue-Collar Confidence” Define the 2026 Labour Market, Report Shows

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The era of the “Great Resignation” has officially ended, according to the inaugural Workforce Trends 2026 Report released by [The Adecco Group](#). The findings suggest a global shift toward a “return to ambition,” where employees are eager to grow but are increasingly prioritising tangible security and fair pay over personal fulfilment.

The comprehensive study, which surveyed 37,500 workers and 2,000 C-suite executives across 31 countries, provides a roadmap for employers navigating a volatile economic landscape and the rapid integration of artificial intelligence.

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## The New Non-Negotiables: Security Overtakes Purpose

In a significant departure from the trends of the early 2020s, the report reveals that stable income and job certainty have decisively overtaken personal fulfilment as the primary factors for employee retention. As macroeconomic uncertainty persists, workers are consolidating their demands around “concrete fundamentals,” viewing fair and reliable pay as the ultimate decisive factor in staying with an employer.

The report also highlights a “rebalancing” of the labour market. For the first time in three years, blue-collar workers report higher confidence in their salaries than their white-collar counterparts. This shift reflects the acute global demand for skilled manual labour and a more cautious salary outlook for professional roles among C-suite executives.

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## The Flexibility and Mobility Disconnect

While flexibility remains a “must-have,” the report identifies a growing divide in how different generations define it:

- Senior Leaders: Prioritise the “where” (remote and hybrid work opportunities).
- Junior Workers: Focus on the “when” (schedule flexibility and control over hours).

A major barrier to organisational agility remains the “internal mobility gap.” While 61% of organisations struggle to transition existing staff into new internal roles, only 33% are currently investing in the data needed to understand their workforce’s internal skills. This “buy-over-build” mentality is cited as a significant risk to both job security and long-term business resilience.

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## The AI Challenge: Workers Outpacing Employers

Artificial intelligence and Generative AI have surged to the top of the 2026 workforce agenda. However, a startling 71% of workers believe their personal knowledge of AI already exceeds the level of training offered by their employers.

“The workforce is sending a clear message: people want stability, fair pay, and real opportunities to grow,” said Denis Machuel, Chief Executive Officer of The Adecco Group. “Purpose remains crucial, but people demand security during these times of constant change. The future belongs to organisations that lead with empathy and those who invest to accompany their people to stay ahead of the change curve.”

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## Four Imperatives for 2026

The Adecco Group identifies four critical pillars for organisations to thrive in the coming year:

1. Workforce Strategy: Balancing aggressive AI investment with human-centric strategies.
2. Competing for Talent: Treating equitable compensation and work-life balance as decisive retention tools.
3. Upskilling & Mobility: Moving away from external hiring in favour of personalised internal pathways.
4. Talent Evolution: Ensuring inclusion, mental health support, and sustainability are foundations of the culture, not just “features.”

The full Workforce Trends 2026 report is available [here](#).