Employers Shift to Precision Hiring Strategy as Global Employment Outlook Holds at 24% Amid Evolving Economic Conditions

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Latest ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey reveals economic conditions, not AI, driving cautious approach

MILWAUKEE, Dec. 9, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- Global employers are maintaining a stable hiring Outlook to start 2026 according to ManpowerGroup's latest Employment Outlook Survey of more than 39,000 employers across 41 countries. The global Net Employment Outlook (NEO) for the first quarter of 2026 stands at 24%, down 4% year-over-year but rising 4% from the previous quarter.



While 40% of organizations plan to increase staff in Q1, 40% plan to maintain current headcount, and 16% expect to reduce workforce levels.

Among those expanding, the top motivators are organizational growth (37%) and investment in new business areas (26%). Just 19% of new hires are backfilling recent departures, signaling that employers are evolving roles to respond to existing needs vs simply refilling positions.

For those planning headcount reductions, 29% cite economic challenges, 24% say market changes have reduced demand for some roles, and 22% report they are reducing staff to meet current demand. By contrast, only two in ten employers (20%) point to automation, reinforcing that economic conditions, not technology, are driving hiring hesitation.

"What we're seeing is employers responding to the economic signals with a measured and deliberate approach. Over the past nine quarters, the global Outlook has averaged 24%, reflecting a labor market that remains resilient even as the broader economic environment continues to evolve. Hiring is steady because organizations still need human skills to grow, but they are being very intentional about where they invest in additional talent," said Jonas Prising, ManpowerGroup Chair & CEO. "AI will be a powerful driver of productivity in the coming years, but today the economic climate is shaping hiring decisions. Employers are prioritizing specific roles and capabilities needed to meet current demands."

The slowdown is most pronounced among the largest organizations. Employers with 5,000+ employees report the weakest Outlook (21%), down 9% points quarter-over-quarter and 25% year-over-year. Mid-sized companies (250–999 employees) are the most optimistic, posting a 28% Outlook for Q1.

Sector and Regional Highlights

Sector Insights

- Employers in **Finance & Insurance** (32%), Information (29%), and **Construction & Real Estate** (27%) report the most optimistic hiring plans.
- Those in the **Public Sector, Health & Social Services** (20%), **Utilities & Natural Resources** (22%), and **Trade & Logistics** (23%) signal the most cautious hiring plans.
- At 28%, mid-sized organizations (250–999 employees) show the most confident hiring intentions.

Regional Hiring Plans

- **Asia Pacific (APAC):** Leading globally with an Outlook of 30%, unchanged quarter-over-quarter and up three points year-over-year. This extends APAC's position as the strongest region for hiring; a trend largely sustained since early 2021.
    - **India (52%)** leads regional confidence.
    - **Hong Kong (1%)** is the most cautious in the region.

- **The Americas:** Posting the second-strongest Outlook at 26%, up one point quarter-over-quarter but down three points year-over-year.
    - **Brazil (54%)** leads regional confidence and ranks first globally, followed by **Guatemala (28%)** and the **U.S.**

(27%). **Argentina (10%)** reports the weakest Outlook.
    - **North America** stands at 25%, down 22 points year-over-year and marking the region's lowest Outlook since Q2 2021.

- **Europe and the Middle East:** Employers across Europe and the Middle East report the lowest global Outlook at 20%, up two points quarter-over-quarter, but flat year-over-year.
    - **United Arab Emirates (46%)** leads the region, followed by the **Netherlands (36%)** and **Ireland (31%)**.
    - The **U.K. (13%)**, **Romania (0%)**, and **Slovakia (-3%)** post the weakest Outlooks.

To explore global hiring trends in detail, view the full Q1 2026 ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey at: go.manpowergroup.com/meos

The next survey will be released in March 2026, reporting hiring expectations for Q2 2026.

ABOUT THE SURVEY
The ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey, now in its 63rd year, is the most comprehensive, forward-looking employment survey of its kind, used globally as a key labor market indicator. The Net Employment Outlook (NEO) is derived by taking the percentage of employers anticipating an increase in hiring activity and subtracting from this the percentage of employers expecting a decrease in hiring activity.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY
Survey responses were collected from October 1-31, 2025. Size of organization and sector are standardized across all countries and territories to allow international comparisons.

ABOUT MANPOWERGROUP
ManpowerGroup® (NYSE: MAN), the leading global workforce solutions company, helps organizations transform in a fast-changing world of work by sourcing, assessing, developing, and managing the talent that enables them to win. We develop innovative solutions for hundreds of thousands of organizations every year, providing them with skilled talent while finding meaningful, sustainable employment for millions of people across a wide range of industries and skills. Our expert family of brands – Manpower, Experis, and Talent Solutions – creates substantially more value for candidates and clients across more than 70 countries and territories and has done so for more than 75 years. We are recognized consistently as a best place to work for Women, Inclusion, Equality, and Disability, and in 2025 ManpowerGroup was named one of the World's Most Ethical Companies for the 16th time; all confirming our position as the brand of choice for in-demand talent.

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This report contains forward-looking statements, including statements regarding labor demand in certain regions, countries and industries, and economic uncertainty. Actual events or results may differ materially from those contained in the forward-looking statements, due to risks, uncertainties and assumptions. These factors include those found in the Company's reports filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), including the information under the heading "Risk Factors" in its Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2024, whose information is incorporated herein by reference. ManpowerGroup disclaims any obligation to update any forward-looking or other statements in this release, except as required by law.



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