# Global Talent Barometer 2026: AI Use Accelerates as Worker Confidence Falls and "Job Hugging" Takes Hold

January 20, 2026 at 9:32 AM EST

*New ManpowerGroup data shows rapid AI adoption colliding with a growing training gap, leaving workers struggling to keep pace with technological change.*

MILWAUKEE, Jan. 20, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- Workers around the world are adopting AI faster than ever, but that adoption is no longer translating into confidence. According to ManpowerGroup's 2026 Global Talent Barometer, regular AI usage jumped 13% to 45% of workers, while confidence in using technology fell sharply by 18%. For the first time in three years, overall worker confidence declined, contributing to an overall Global Talent Barometer score of 67%.

The findings reveal people feel capable in the jobs they hold today, but increasingly uncertain about what comes next. While nearly nine in ten workers (89%) are confident they have the skills to succeed in their current roles, 43% fear automation may replace their job within the next two years, an increase of five percent from 2025. This growing uncertainty is fueling a shift toward "job hugging," with 64% of workers planning to stay with their current employer as they seek stability amid rapid technological change.

"The advance of AI means every leader is managing two horizons at once—the Now and the Next. People are waiting for us to build the bridge between what they can do now and what they'll need to do next. But we can't ask them to transform while neglecting their well-being," said Becky Frankiewicz, President and Chief Strategy Officer at ManpowerGroup. "This is a wakeup call to close the gap between innovation and inclusion, and ensure progress is both human first and digital always."

**Key Findings from the 2026 Global Talent Barometer**

- **The AI Confidence Gap:** Despite rapid adoption, technology confidence dropped significantly following the introduction of AI-specific proficiency measures. The decline was most pronounced among older generations, with Baby Boomers reporting a 35% drop in tech confidence and Gen X declining by 25%. This decline in confidence was the primary driver of the year-over-year softening in overall sentiment.

- **The Training Void:** A persistent lack of development support is undermining worker confidence. More than half of the global workforce reported receiving no recent training (56%) and no access to mentorship opportunities (57%), making skills readiness a critical concern as AI use accelerates.

- **Well-Being Remains a Critical Focus:** Burnout continues to weigh heavily on workers. Nearly two-thirds (63%) report experiencing burnout, driven primarily by stress (28%) and heavy workloads (24%). While the Well-Being Index held steady at 67% in 2026, it remains a significant pressure point for workers navigating ongoing change. Job Satisfaction stands at 62%.

- **Financial Pressure and Gen Z:** "Job hugging" is often driven by necessity rather than loyalty. Half of all workers (50%) report supplementing their primary income, rising sharply to 68% among Gen Z.

- **Regional Divide:** Worker sentiment varies widely by geography. India leads globally in overall sentiment (77%) and AI adoption (77%), while Japan reports the lowest overall score at 48%.

**Closing the Gap**

The 2026 data suggests the honeymoon phase of AI adoption is over. As AI use becomes routine, employers that invest in people as deliberately as they invest in technology, through transparent communication, targeted training, mentorship, and well-being support, will be best positioned to unlock productivity while retaining their workforce.

For more information and to download ManpowerGroup's 2026 Global Talent Barometer, visit manpowergroup.com/en/insights/talent-barometer.

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