



2026 Human Progress Report

50 States Edition

Speak the new language of adaptability

Paradox



Continuum



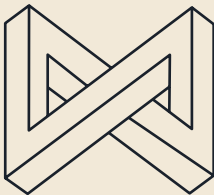
Mindset



Imperative



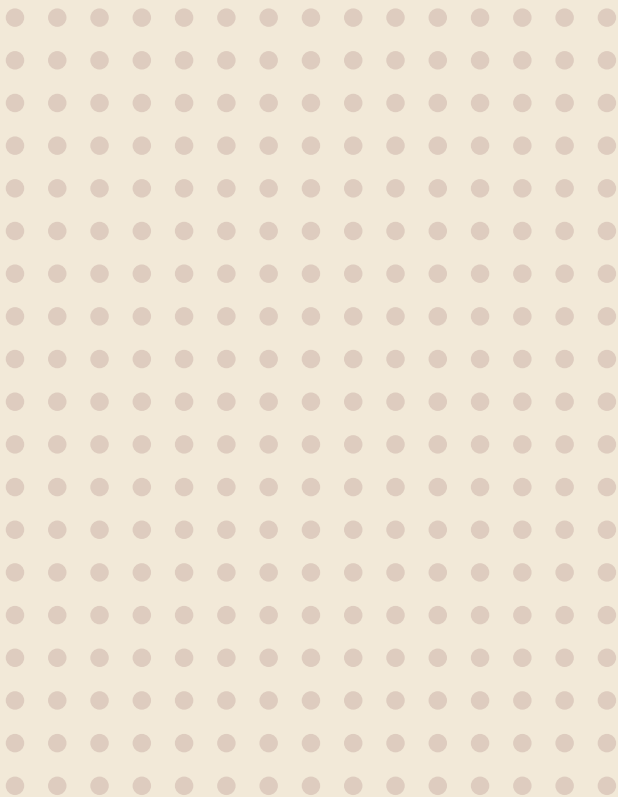
Introduction



This 2026 ETS Human Progress Report — 50 States Edition examines work, learning and human progress across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. It translates national patterns into state-level signals:

where disruption is sharpest, where AI is already reshaping tasks, where workers are proactively building new skills, and where barriers like time, cost, access and employer support are most likely to stall progress.

A recap of the global context



The 2026 ETS Human Progress Report identifies adaptability as a defining characteristic of workforce resilience today. As technology advances accelerate — global workers predict that half of all work will involve AI in the next two years — the ability to adapt is becoming essential for job security.

Yet for many people, the path forward remains uncertain. Sixty-nine percent of global respondents say they have no clear picture of what the next generation of jobs will look like in 2035.

In the absence of clear direction, individuals are proactively investing in their own development. Credentials have emerged as the critical bridge between rapid change and individual stability, with 85% of global respondents saying credentials are essential for career survival.

At the same time, people do not expect to navigate this shift alone. Eighty-eight percent of global respondents expect employer support for upskilling. However, only 71% receive that support, revealing a growing gap between expectations and employer action.

The global picture is of a workforce taking rapid action to adapt, while calling upon systems and institutions to keep up.

Eye on the U.S.



In the U.S., workers share the same awareness: adaptability is now tied to job security. But compared with global attitudes, proactive skill development appears to be happening at lower rates. U.S. workers are taking stock and waiting for clearer guidance, especially from governments, employers and educators.

Executive summary

This 2026 ETS Human Progress Report — 50 States Edition points to a clear story: workers recognize the need to adapt, but action is delayed. Uncertainty about future jobs, stress and structural barriers may be contributing to this slow progress.

To overcome these barriers, people in the U.S. are clear about their desire for support and guidance, calling upon governments, employers and educators to help them navigate change. The picture becomes more nuanced at the state level, as workforce disruptions and structural barriers vary between states. This unevenness highlights where policy, employer action and education innovation can make the greatest difference.

Workers feel underprepared: Fifty-four percent of U.S. workers say they feel underprepared for the next generation of jobs, compared with 49% of global workers.

AI disruption is already underway: U.S. workers estimate that 26% of their work currently involves using AI and they expect it to rise to 43% over the next two years. At the state level, AI integration surfaces as being distributed unevenly. This uneven adoption creates a new divide between states as AI exposure increasingly determines opportunity.

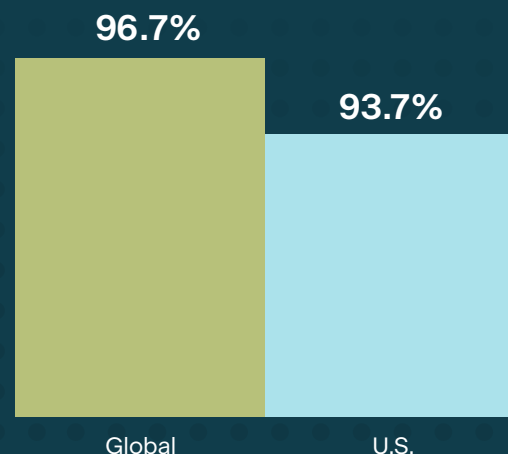
Adaptability is imperative: U.S. workers recognize adaptability as the key to stability in a rapidly changing workforce, with 78% of U.S. workers agreeing job security no longer exists if you don't continuously adapt. This is closely aligned with the global figure of 77% of workers.

Adaptability paralysis is real: Seventy-one percent of U.S. workers acknowledge that they proactively develop new, diverse skills to safeguard against uncertainty in the future of jobs. However, this sentiment trails the global figure of 77% of workers, suggesting that awareness is not consistently translating into action.

A clear request for support and guidance: Seventy-one percent of U.S. respondents want the government to help them master skills needed for workforce readiness and 89% agree employers should partner with workers to set goals to achieve relevant skills credentials throughout their careers.

The 2026 ETS Human Progress Index:

U.S.: The 2026 ETS Human Progress Index for the U.S. is 93.7, slightly below the global index of 96.7. A lower index indicates that people in the U.S. feel they have more difficulty accessing education, upward mobility, upskilling and reskilling than their global peers.



Part I:

The disruption crisis in the U.S.

In this section:

- 1.1** *U.S. workers feel less prepared than global peers for the next generation of jobs*
- 1.2** *AI disruption is reshaping work unevenly*
- 1.3** *The emotional cost of change: stress and FOBO*
- 1.4** *Ambiguity in the path forward*

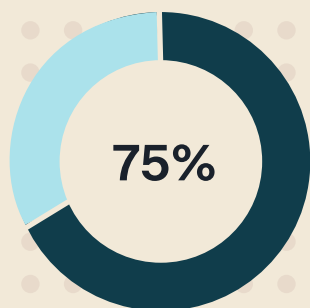
Key findings:

- U.S. workers are less likely than global peers to feel prepared for the next generation of jobs
- AI adoption varies significantly across states, creating an opportunity gap
- Fear of becoming obsolete (FOBO) and career anxiety are widespread, particularly in high-change industries

1.1 U.S. workers feel less prepared than global peers for the next generation of jobs

Disruption has become a baseline condition of work. Globally, workers are experiencing a continuous reshaping of the tools they use, the skills they need and their strategic priorities. The same pattern is seen in the U.S., with 62% of workers experiencing at least one major workplace change in the past 12 months compared with 67% of global workers.

In light of this disruption, people in the U.S. and across the globe say they cannot clearly see the future of work. Seventy-five percent of U.S. respondents agree, “I have no clear picture of what the next generation of jobs will look like in 2035” and 71% of global respondents say the same.



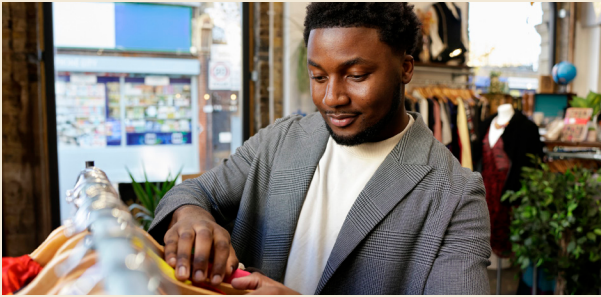
75% of U.S. respondents

have no clear picture of what the next generation of jobs will look like in 2035

When workers cannot see what's coming, preparation becomes harder. Fifty-four percent of U.S. workers say they're underprepared for the next generation of jobs, compared with 49% of global workers.



Reasons for not feeling prepared for next jobs:



“There is so much evolving and it’s harder to stay relevant and adapt to the changes they are expecting. You now have to have skills for unskilled entry-level jobs.”

– Gen Z, Retail/CPG



“I think there are so many factors causing shifts to the job market. One being the political and external threats to the job market which could cause disruptions.”

– Millennial, Education

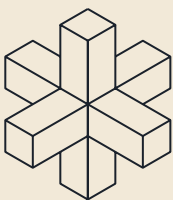


“The job market and requirements from employers, as well as work availability is uncertain. Technology is disrupting many jobs and how they are done.”

– Gen X, Heavy Industry

Across generations and industries, disruption comes from multiple sources. Workers experience this disruption as a constant shifting of requirements and expectations.

1.2 AI disruption is reshaping work unevenly



AI is no longer a distant trend, it is already embedded in a meaningful share of work. Global workers estimate that 32% of their work currently involves AI and predict that over the next two years, that number will rise to 52%.

In the U.S., the current estimate is lower, but the trajectory is the same: AI is accelerating and workers expect it to become a far larger part of their day-to-day tasks soon.

U.S. now:

26% of work involves using AI

At the state level, AI integration surfaces as being distributed unevenly. Some states already operate closer to an AI-embedded work model, while others are approaching a steep adoption curve. This uneven adoption creates a new divide between states as AI exposure increasingly determines opportunity.

U.S. in two years:

43% of work is expected to involve using AI

Five states with the highest current AI usage at work

Alaska (47%)
North Dakota (38%)
New York (37%)
Iowa (36%)
Idaho (35%)

Five states with the lowest current AI usage at work

New Hampshire (22%)
South Dakota (22%)
North Carolina (21%)
Wisconsin (18%)
Maine (18%)

Five states with the highest expected AI usage at work over the next two years

New York (53%)
Washington (50%)
Nevada (50%)
California (50%)
Delaware (48%)

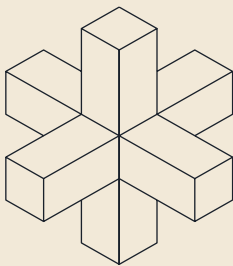
Five states expecting the biggest increase in AI usage at work over the next two years

Rhode Island (24 percentage points)
Nevada (24 percentage points)
California (23 percentage points)
Wisconsin (22 percentage points)
South Dakota (22 percentage points)

1.3 The emotional cost of change: stress and FOBO

In the U.S., concerns around job disruption are having an emotional impact. Fifty-six percent of U.S. workers worry that their current job could be disrupted. Similarly, more than half of U.S. workers (58%) say they have a fear of becoming obsolete (FOBO) — a defining psychological response to rapid change.

This anxiety is particularly acute in high-change industries, where disruption is more frequent: 74% of technology workers and 73% of financial services workers report anxiety about becoming obsolete.



58%

of U.S. workers

say they have FOBO

54%

of U.S. workers

say they've shifted from seeking job security to obsessing over staying relevant

Worries about competition with younger or more skilled workers could be the driving forces behind FOBO. Forty-five percent of U.S. workers say they worry if they can compete with younger or more tech-savvy workers.

In response to FOBO, relevancy has become the new workforce obsession, with 54% of U.S. workers saying they've shifted from seeking job security to obsessing over staying relevant.



1.4 Ambiguity in the path forward

Compounding fears about obsolescence is the ambiguity in paths forward. Forty-six percent of workers worry if they are actually learning the right skills for the future. Even if workers do have the right skills, 36% worry they lack the proof needed to demonstrate their capabilities.

Combined, these figures show a workforce lacking clarity on which skills matter, while also missing the evidence to prove their skillset.

46% of U.S. workers

say they worry if they are learning the right skills for their future



Part II:

The adaptability imperative



In this section:

2.1 *Adaptability becomes the foundation for job security*

Key findings:

- U.S. workers overwhelmingly recognize that continuous adaptation is no longer optional
- Recognition of the adaptability imperative is consistent with global peers

2.1 Adaptability becomes the foundation of job security

U.S. workers recognize that adaptability defines success in today's labor market. Seventy-eight percent of U.S. workers say job security no longer exists without continuous adaptation, aligning closely with global sentiment (77% of global workers say the same). Similarly, 85% of U.S. workers agree “upskilling or reskilling isn't a choice; it's a necessity to compete in today's job market” (compared to 84% of global workers).

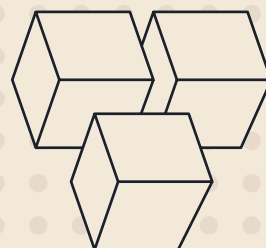
85%
of U.S. workers agree “upskilling or reskilling isn't a choice; it's a necessity to compete in today's job market”

78%
of U.S. workers say job security no longer exists without continuous adaptation

“Job security no longer exists without continuous adaptation”

Top five states showing the highest level of agreement

Alaska (92%)
North Carolina (89%)
Washington (87%)
Iowa (85%)
Oregon (85%)



Workers are clear about what the modern workplace demands of them. They understand that a single qualification, acquired once, is no longer enough. The question is whether the conditions exist to turn that understanding into sustained action.

Part III:

Adaptability paralysis

In this section:

- 3.1** *Action lags behind awareness*
- 3.2** *U.S. workers are choosing stability over change*

Key findings:

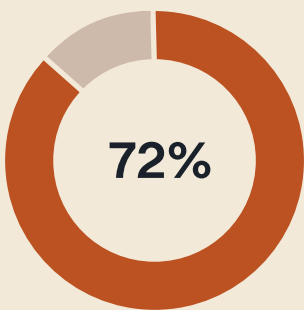
- Despite near-universal acknowledgment that adaptation is essential, U.S. workers are less likely than global peers to be taking proactive action
- Proactive skill development is happening but is unevenly distributed, with pockets of strong engagement in certain states
- U.S. workers are more likely than global peers to accelerate retirement plans or take no action at all in response to disruption

3.1 Action lags behind awareness

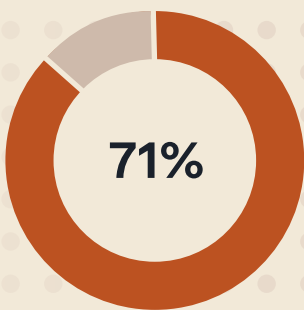
The gap between knowing and doing is one of the defining challenges of the U.S. workforce in 2026.

While awareness of the adaptability imperative is high, actual engagement in proactive upskilling falls consistently behind global levels.

Seventy-two percent of U.S. workers say they are actively thinking about how to future-proof their careers, compared with 79% globally. Similarly, 71% of U.S. workers say they proactively develop new, diverse skills to safeguard against uncertainty in the future of jobs — trailing the global average of 77% of workers.



72%
of U.S. workers are
actively thinking
about how to future
proof their careers



71%
of U.S. workers are
proactively
developing new skills

This gap becomes more pronounced when compared with high-growth markets, where proactive skill development reaches 89% in India and 80% in China.

U.S. worker proactivity in an international context

Percentage of workers who agree they proactively develop new, diverse skills to safeguard against uncertainty in the future of jobs:

Total average (77%)	
Indonesia (92%)	Mexico (78%)
Vietnam (90%)	Australia (75%)
India (89%)	U.S. (71%)
Brazil (89%)	Canada (69%)
Nigeria (86%)	UK (65%)
Kenya (85%)	Germany (63%)
Saudi Arabia (81%)	France (62%)
China (80%)	South Korea (59%)
UAE (79%)	Japan (45%)

Top five most proactive states

At the state level, pockets of progress exist. Delaware leads with 89% of workers saying they are proactively developing skills, followed by Alaska at 87% and District of Columbia at 83%. This suggests that adaptability is not absent in the U.S., but it is unevenly distributed.

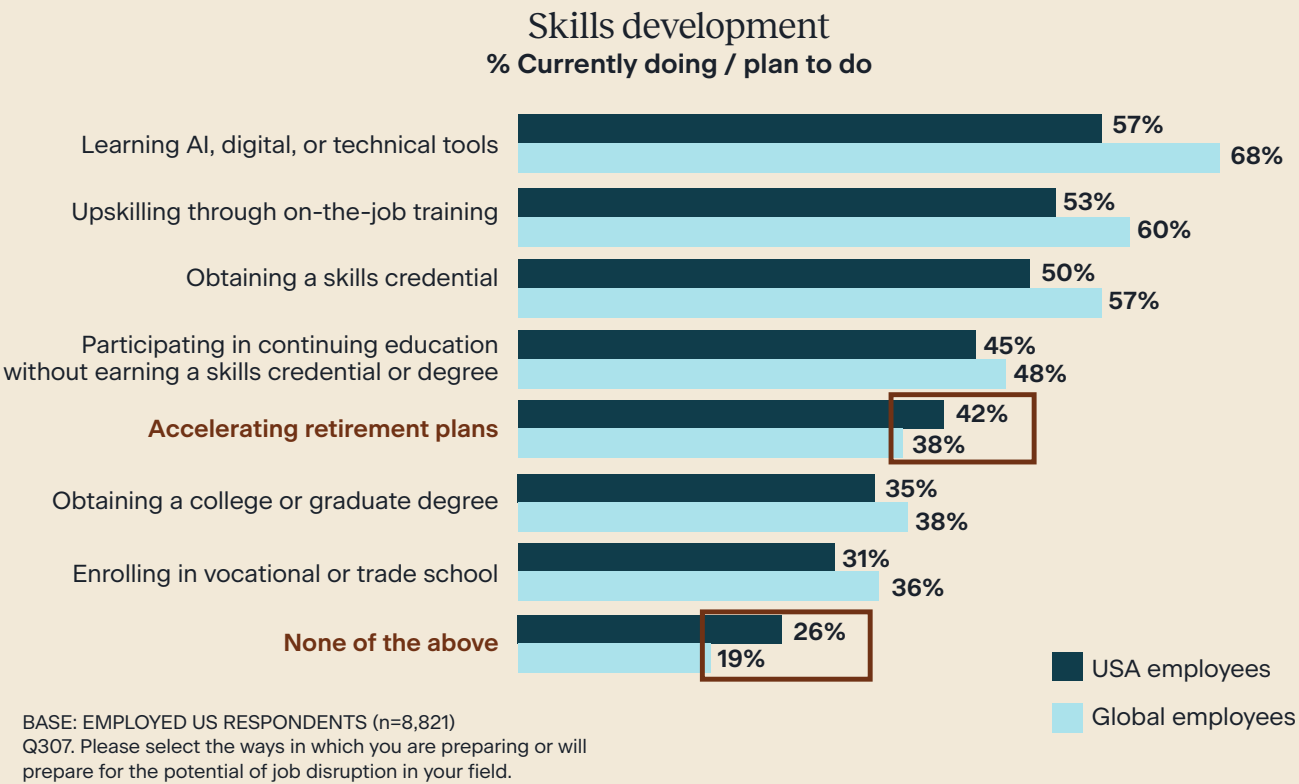
Top states where workers agree they proactively develop new, diverse skills to safeguard against uncertainty in the future of jobs:

- Delaware (89%)
- Alaska (87%)
- District of Columbia (83%)
- Idaho (83%)
- Iowa (83%)

3.2 U.S. workers are choosing stability over change

When disruption strikes, people respond in different ways.

In the U.S., the data points to a pattern that is more passive than the global norm. U.S. workers are more likely than their global peers to respond to workplace disruption by accelerating their retirement plans (42% vs. 38% globally) or by taking no action at all (26% vs. 19% globally).



This passivity stands in contrast to the global picture, where the three most common responses to disruption are more active:

- 68% of global workers are learning AI, digital or technical tools (compared with 57% in the U.S.)
- 60% of global workers are upskilling through on-the-job training (compared with 53% in the U.S.)
- 57% of global workers are obtaining a skills credential (compared with 50% in the U.S.)

U.S. workers are engaging in all these activities at lower rates than their global colleagues. Understanding why requires looking at the barriers that are holding action back.

Part IV:

Barriers to upskilling

In this section:

- 4.1** *Time constraints limit progress*
- 4.2** *Financial pressure restricts access*
- 4.3** *Access to credentials is limited*
- 4.4** *Lack of employer support and guidance slows decision-making*
- 4.5** *Barriers to upskilling: state-level pressure points*

U.S. respondents cite four stacked barriers to upskilling: time, finance, access and employer support and guidance. Each is significant on its own. Together, they create conditions in which the will to upskill is frequently not enough to produce action.

Key findings:

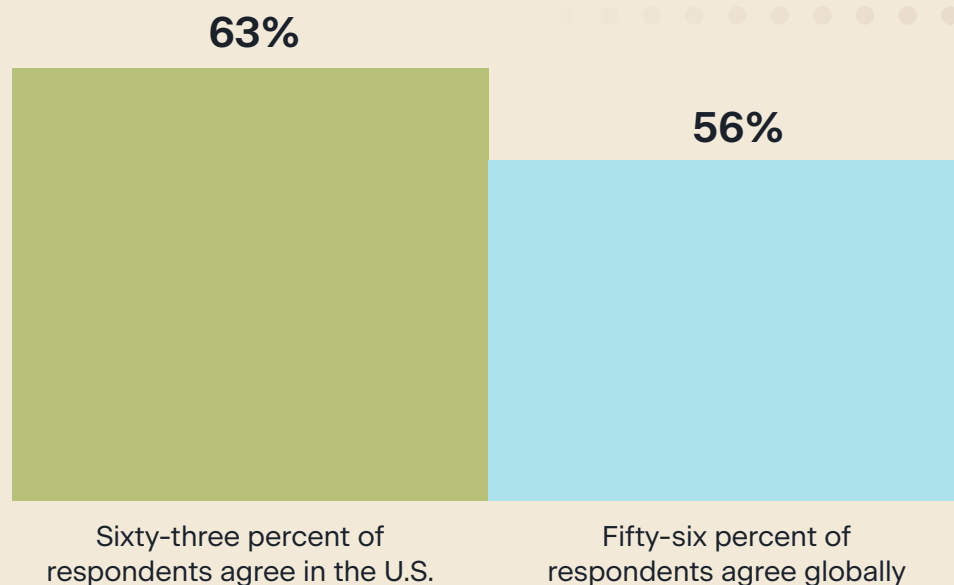
- U.S. workers face barriers to upskilling across time, cost and access
- Financial constraints disproportionately affect rural workers, lower-income households and those without college degrees
- Employer support gaps and a lack of credential guidance are compounding the challenge
- Several states face particularly acute combinations of barriers, with Maine, Hawaii and Pennsylvania standing out

4.1 Time constraints limit progress

Will alone is not enough to initiate upskilling, people need time to learn.

Sixty-three percent of U.S. respondents say it is difficult to find time to learn new skills while maintaining their current workload, compared with 56% of respondents globally. This gap suggests something particular about the conditions of work in the U.S. such as longer working hours, less structured learning time within roles or a culture in which professional development is expected to happen outside of working hours.

“It’s difficult to find time to learn new skills while maintaining my current workload”



4.2 Financial pressure restricts access

Financial barriers to upskilling are persistent in the U.S.

Cost is one of the most cited barriers to upskilling in the U.S. and is a greater issue nationally than it is globally. Sixty-eight percent of U.S. respondents say paying the costs associated with pursuing upskilling and reskilling (e.g. courses, materials) is difficult, compared to 59% of global respondents.

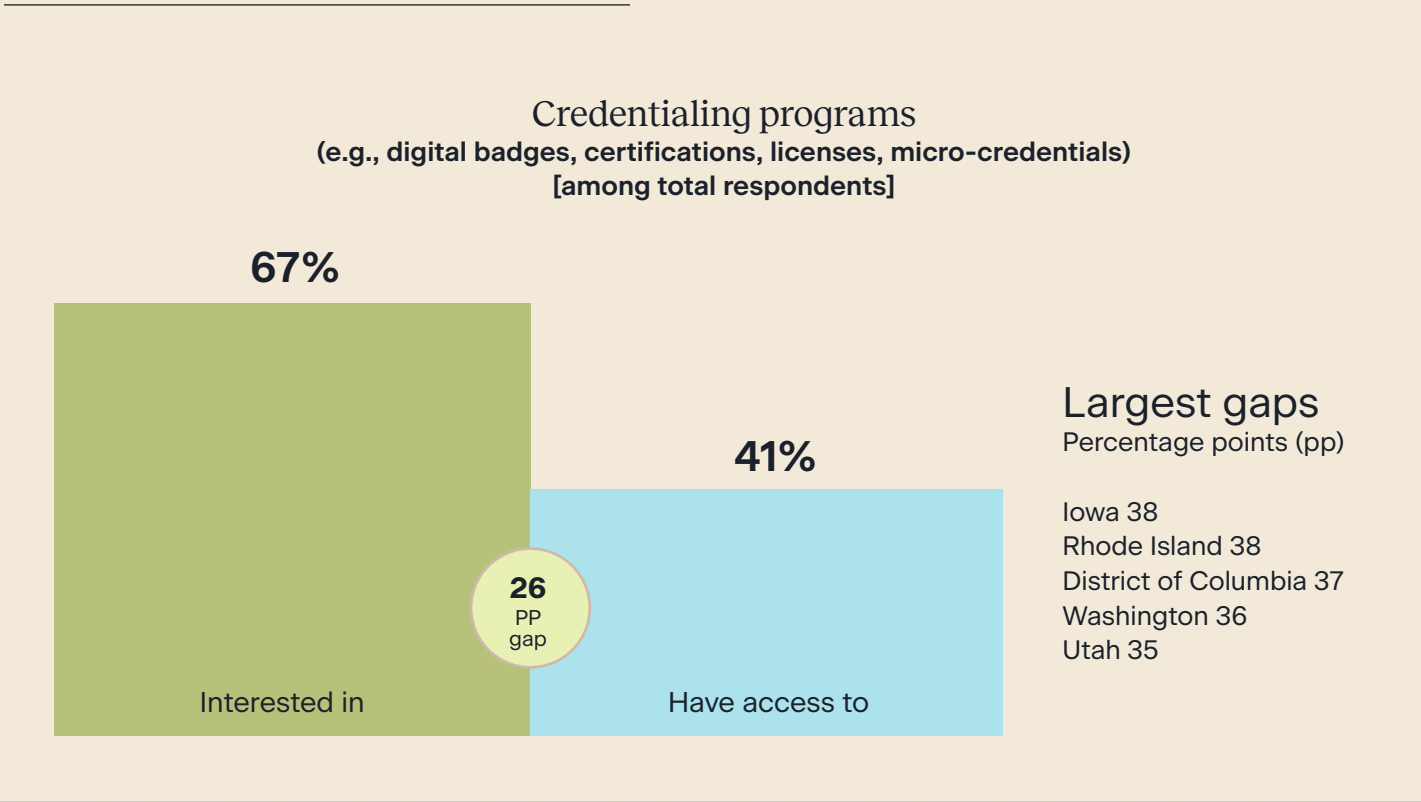
Financial barriers appear to fall hardest on those already facing economic constraints. Rural respondents (77%), respondents with household income under \$75K a year (75%), and non-college graduates (75%) are more likely to say upskilling costs are difficult. These are the workers who may need new skills most to navigate a changing economy yet face the highest financial barriers to acquiring them.



4.3 Access to credentials is limited

Even when people in the U.S. want to pursue credentials, access is a persistent problem.

Sixty-seven percent of U.S. respondents are interested in credentialing programs — digital badges, certifications, licenses and micro-credentials — but only 41% say they have access to them, reflecting a 26-percentage-point gap between interest and access.



At the same time, 52% of U.S. respondents say accessing the certifications they need is difficult. This gap reinforces a core challenge: people know what they need but cannot reach it.

4.4 Access to credentials is limited

Beyond time, cost and accessibility, many people in the U.S. are experiencing a specific deficit of direction.

Forty-eight percent of U.S. respondents say they find it difficult to identify the right skills or areas for upskilling and reskilling and 57% say it is difficult to get employer support for upskilling and reskilling.

57%

of U.S. respondents say it is difficult to get employer support for upskilling and reskilling

Credential credibility adds to the problem, 72% of U.S. respondents agree it is difficult to determine which credentials are recognized and valued by employers. When workers cannot trust that their investment of time and money in a credential will be recognized, the incentive to pursue it is weakened.

“Things are moving too fast and I don’t believe employers support employees at all anymore.”

– Boomer, Healthcare

4.5 Barriers to upskilling: state-level pressure points

The barriers to upskilling are not uniform across the U.S., some states face particularly acute combinations of challenges, while others are managing each barrier far more comfortably. Maine, Hawaii and Pennsylvania stand out as states where workers report significant difficulty across multiple barriers to upskilling.

Understanding the conditions in states with few barriers, where workers can access upskilling more easily, could offer a useful template for states where barriers to progress are more significant.

The five states where U.S. respondents experience the most difficulty and least difficulty overcoming each upskilling barrier are listed below.

Finding time to learn new skills while maintaining current workload

Most difficulty

- Hawaii (77%)
- Utah (76%)
- Maine (73%)
- New Hampshire (72%)
- North Carolina (72%)

Least difficulty

- Alaska (26%)
- District of Columbia (41%)
- Delaware (51%)
- Idaho (53%)
- New York (54%)

Paying the costs associated with pursuing upskilling and/or reskilling

Most difficulty

- Maine (82%)
- Utah (79%)
- Hawaii (78%)
- Arizona (78%)
- Ohio (77%)

Least difficulty

- Alaska (30%)
- District of Columbia (52%)
- Delaware (55%)
- New York (55%)
- North Dakota (57%)

Accessing the certification or license needed to practice or work

Most difficulty

- Maine (68%)
- Montana (62%)
- Hawaii (61%)
- Pennsylvania (60%)
- Florida (60%)

Least difficulty

- Alaska (22%)
- Washington (37%)
- North Dakota (41%)
- District of Columbia (42%)
- Delaware (42%)

Getting employer support to upskill and/or reskill

Most difficulty

- Pennsylvania (69%)
- Maine (66%)
- Hawaii (66%)
- Utah (66%)
- Kentucky (66%)

Least difficulty

- Alaska (24%)
- North Dakota (42%)
- District of Columbia (42%)
- Washington (44%)
- Wyoming (47%)

Part V:

A call to action for workforce future readiness

In this section:

- 5.1** *People want government support*
- 5.2** *Employers play a central role*
- 5.3** *Bridging the education-to-workforce gap*

Key findings:

- U.S. respondents want government support for workforce readiness
- Employer guidance on credentials is expected but frequently absent
- People in the U.S. currently place greater hope in credentials and upskilling than in traditional education

5.1 People want government support

People in the U.S. want public systems to play a supportive role in workforce readiness. Seventy-one percent of U.S. respondents want the government to help them master the skills needed for workforce readiness.

At the state level, the desire for government support with upskilling is highest in: Alaska (89%), Wyoming (84%), New York (84%), District of Columbia (84%) and Washington (82%).

71%
of U.S. respondents
want the
government to
help them master
skills needed for
workforce readiness

When asked what form government support should take, the most popular option is: government funding for multi-session courses with an assessment at the end to earn a credential — selected by 42% of U.S. respondents.

Trust ratings for government as an assessment provider are 30% for state and local government and 28% for federal government. By contrast,

official credentialing organizations and employers both receive trust ratings of 43%.

This points to a clear implication, government support is wanted and welcomed, but it should be channeled through trusted partners — credentialing bodies and employers — rather than delivered directly.

Workforce readiness assessment provider trust rating
[among total respondents]



5.2 Employers play a central role

U.S. respondents view their employers as essential guides in a changing workforce landscape.

89%

of U.S. respondents agree employers should partner with workers to set goals to achieve relevant skills credentials

However, the barrier data shows 57% of U.S. respondents already find it difficult to get employer support for upskilling, and 72% struggle to determine which credentials are valued by employers. The gap between what people expect and what employers are offering is one of the most actionable findings in this report.



5.3 Bridging the education-to-workforce gap

For more than half of U.S. college graduates, the gap between formal education and workforce readiness is something they've experienced first-hand.

Sixty-one percent of U.S. college graduates in work agree that their university did not adequately prepare

them for the workforce. That figure rises to 76% among workers in financial services and 72% among those in tech — industries where skills requirements are shifting rapidly and where the distance between what universities teach and what employers need is felt most keenly.

“My university did not adequately prepare me for the workforce”

Five states showing the highest level of agreement

- Alaska (87%)
- Wyoming (82%)
- North Dakota (77%)
- Iowa (74%)
- Idaho (73%)

Further highlighting the education-to-workforce gap, 59% of U.S. college grads in work agree “My university degree did not align with potential employers’ needs”. The five states showing the highest level of agreement with this statement are: Alaska (91%), North Dakota (80%), Delaware (76%), Iowa (74%) and Idaho (71%).

Perhaps because of this experience, U.S. respondents are placing greater hope in upskilling than in formal education.

- 57% of U.S. respondents are optimistic about upskilling and reskilling opportunities
- 49% of U.S. respondents are optimistic about higher education
- 47% of U.S. respondents are optimistic about K–12 education

Reiterating the importance of alternative paths to skill recognition, 84% of U.S. respondents agree that as the skills considered valuable rapidly evolve, credentials are essential for workers to stay relevant.

84%
of U.S. respondents agree
that as the skills considered
valuable rapidly evolve,
credentials are essential for
workers to stay relevant

At the same time, U.S. respondents show high support for modernizing formal education, particularly in the way learning is measured. Eighty-nine percent of respondents agree the U.S. needs more comprehensive measurements of student skills beyond just test scores and 90% agree that educational assessments should include both academic knowledge and practical skills. This figure rises to 95% among Boomers, a generation that holds significant hiring power and has a particular stake in seeing the next generation enter the workforce well prepared.

“Educational assessments should include both
academic knowledge and practical skills”

Top five states showing the highest level of agreement

Alaska (97%)

Vermont (95%)

Kentucky (94%)

Georgia (94%)

Rhode Island (94%)

Conclusion: the path forward



With the right support, U.S. workers can turn their desire to adapt into sustained action.

U.S. workers are embracing adaptability as a source of stability in a changing world. The majority are thinking about future-proofing their careers, developing new skills and seeking out the credentials that will help them stay relevant. Yet, compared with global levels, proactive skill development in the U.S. appears to be happening at lower rates, shaped by stacked barriers and a lack of clear guidance.

To build a future-ready workforce, three priorities emerge:

1. Employers should turn expectations into pathways

Employers can reduce ambiguity by helping workers set upskilling goals and signposting credentials that are recognised and valued. Employers should treat credential development as a shared investment into building future-ready workers, rather than something workers pursue on their own time and at their own expense.

2. Governments should fund access through trusted partnerships

U.S. respondents want government support for workforce readiness. To meet this desire, governments should build programs in partnership with official credentialing bodies, so workers receive support that is anchored in trusted, recognized qualifications.

3. Educators should bridge learning and workforce readiness through measurement

Both K–12 systems and universities are being asked to do more to close the gap between academic learning and workforce readiness. Integrating practical skills assessment into the learning journey — so that students graduate with verifiable evidence of what they can do, not just what they have studied — is the reform that U.S. students, workers and employers are calling for.

Learn more about how adaptability is driving human progress worldwide and explore ETS's commitment toward equipping today's learners for tomorrow's workforce at ets.org

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Appendix

Survey methodology:

This survey was conducted online by The Harris Poll on behalf of ETS from August 25 to September 10, 2025, among a total of 15,357 general population U.S. respondents aged 18 or older, with a minimum of 300 respondents per state and the District of Columbia. The data is weighted to ensure demographic representation reflecting U.S. Census distribution.

This 50 States Edition draws on the same dataset as the global 2026 ETS Human Progress Report, which surveyed a total of 32,558 adults across 18 countries. Country-level and global comparisons cited throughout this report are drawn from that global dataset.

Key terms used in this report:

For clarity and consistency in interpreting the findings, this report uses the following definitions.

Generational groups:

- Gen Z: ages 18 to 27
- Millennials: ages 28 to 43
- Gen X: ages 44 to 59
- Boomers+: ages 60 and older

A **credential** is an overarching term that refers to evidence of qualification, competence, or authority. It can include:

- Certifications
- Licenses
- Academic Degrees

A **certification** is a professional credential awarded by a third-party, typically non-governmental body, based on:

- Assessment of knowledge, skills, or competencies
- Validation against an industry or professional standard
- Typically requires ongoing maintenance e.g., Continuing Education (CE), Maintenance of Certification (MOC), retesting

Worker mindset classification methodology:

Respondents were classified based on statements they agreed with most strongly. The question and statements are as follows:

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about change and growth in your work life?

1. I see technological change as an opportunity to expand my skills and advance my career
2. I feel confident in my ability to adapt to new technologies and work processes
3. I actively seek out learning opportunities to stay ahead of industry changes
4. I have a clear vision of where my career is heading despite technological disruption
5. I feel constantly pressured to learn new skills just to keep up with my job requirements
6. I worry that no matter how much I upskill, it won't be enough to stay competitive
7. I often feel like I'm running as fast as I can, but not making real progress in my career
8. I feel obligated to constantly grow in my career, driven by fear of being left behind
9. I want to adapt to changes in my field, but I don't know where to start
10. There are so many learning options available that I feel paralyzed about which to choose
11. I feel like the systems and support I need for learning are not available to me
12. I have the motivation to learn but lack the resources or guidance to do it effectively
13. I'm afraid that my current skills will become obsolete in the near future
14. I feel like the pace of change in my industry is too fast for me to keep up
15. I believe that no matter what I learn, technology will eventually replace me
16. I feel systematically unsupported by my employer in preparing for future changes

The ETS Human Progress Index methodology:

Respondents were surveyed on the perceived difficulty of related tasks, utilizing a nuanced 4-point scale ranging from ‘Very difficult’ to ‘Very easy.’ Each of these factors was composed of questions with high reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha =.873 for Accessing Education, .891 for Upward Mobility and .874 for Upskilling & Reskilling) and each question had an equal weight in that factor. Each factor was equally weighted into the ETS Human Progress Index.

This index demonstrates how difficult or effortless it is to access the foundational factors or progress. A score above 100 indicates that the task is generally easier for respondents, while a score below 100 indicates it is relatively difficult. The distance from 100 is indicative of the level of ease or difficulty.

Accessing Education

1. Finding the right educational institutions or programs for one’s needs (e.g., schools, courses, etc.)
2. Paying for the costs associated with education (e.g., tuition, fees, materials, etc.)
3. Accessing education by people from a variety of social backgrounds (e.g., different levels of income, different parts of the country, ethnicity, social class/caste, etc.)
4. Prioritizing quality education over other needs (e.g., job commitments, family commitments, etc.)
5. Gaining admittance to institutions that offer quality education
6. Accessing teachers that offer quality education

Upward Mobility

1. Accessing better career opportunities (e.g., finding job openings, career advancements, etc.)
2. Increasing one’s income (e.g., getting a new higher-paying job, finding additional jobs, etc.)
3. Making connections to improve one’s social status (e.g., networking, finding mentors and/or support, etc.)
4. Getting the education needed to improve one’s social or economic position
5. Accessing lifestyle elements associated with higher social or economic positioning (e.g., housing, transportation, etc.)
6. Maintaining a higher social or economic status once it has been achieved

Upskilling & Reskilling

1. Identifying the right skills or areas for upskilling/reskilling
2. Paying the costs associated with pursuing upskilling/reskilling (e.g., courses, materials, etc.)
3. Finding time to learn new skills while maintaining current workload
4. Getting employer support to upskill and/or reskill (e.g., help with new opportunities that align with new skills, time to focus on trainings, etc.)
5. Determining which upskilling/reskilling programs fit one’s career goals
6. Determining which upskilling/reskilling programs fit one’s personal strengths

This methodology formed the foundation for the ETS Human Progress Index, offering a gauge of global advancement and pinpointing gaps that require a heightened focus on closing. Designed to establish an annual baseline, this index not only serves as a tool to track the evolving landscape of human progress but invites collaboration and partnership to address global gaps in prosperity.

Contributors

- The Harris Poll