



Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey 2026

Malaysia highlights



October 2026



Kartina Abdul Latif

Workforce Leader,
PwC Malaysia

kartina.a.latif@pwc.com



Mohammad Iesa Morshidi

Director,
Workforce Management,
PwC Malaysia

iesa.morshidi@pwc.com



Carmen Lee

Director,
Workforce Transformation,
PwC Malaysia

carmen.ll.lee@pwc.com

Contacts listed reflect personnel at the time of publication and may be subject to change. For current inquiries, please contact my_info@pwc.com or visit pwc.com/my/en/services/workforce.html

PwC's Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey 2026 highlight a workforce that is confident and adaptable today but increasingly concerned about the challenges ahead.

PwC's Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey 2026 gathered insights from nearly 50,000 workers worldwide in May and June 2026, including 1,201 in Malaysia, to understand employee perspectives on their jobs and the future of work.

This year's survey reveals a paradox at the heart of Malaysia's workforce. While AI-enabled front-runners look ahead with confidence, most core workers remain concerned about their finances, economic uncertainty, and future prospects. This reveals increasingly distinct experiences for different groups in the workforce.

Overall, employees are increasingly optimistic about the opportunities created by new technologies, particularly AI. Workers report relatively high trust in their managers, strong confidence in their ability to develop new skills to support both routine and complex tasks. These qualities position many employees to navigate an increasingly dynamic workplace.

Yet, this confidence is tempered by a growing sense of uncertainty about what lies ahead. Workers are facing rising workloads and financial pressures, while concerns about long-term job security remain. At the same time, many feel they are not receiving sufficient clarity, guidance or support from their organisations as the pace of change accelerates.

This presents Malaysian organisations with a critical leadership challenge. While employees appear willing to embrace new technologies and ways of working, sustained value will depend on whether organisations can provide the support, skills, and work redesign needed to translate workforce readiness into productivity, innovation, and growth.

As AI adoption continues to accelerate, the opportunity extends beyond deploying technology. Organisations that successfully combine technology investment with workforce transformation will be better positioned to strengthen trust, unlock new sources of value, and remain competitive in an increasingly complex business environment.

Key findings

78%

feel proud of the work they do

Workers remain motivated and value stability amidst uncertainty

Worker motivation continues to strengthen, with 78% feeling proud of their work and 73% looking forward to work. Most are also ready to adapt to new ways of working (63%) and confident in learning new skills (75%). At the same time, workers are prioritising stability, with 64% unlikely to change employers in the next 12 months amid concerns about economic volatility (79%) and geopolitical conflict (68%).

49%

likely to ask for a pay raise in the next 12 months

Reward expectations outpace recognition

Nearly half of workers (49%) are seeking a pay raise as workloads increase (69%), with many applying new skills (81%) and learning new technologies (66%) to a large extent, while 80% face cost-of-living pressures. At the same time, many feel future-ready behaviours such as AI use (10%), initiative (16%), and innovation (23%) are seen as less rewarded than technical expertise (38%) and avoiding mistakes (30%), highlighting a growing reward gap as workforce needs evolve.

55%

AI increased the quality of their work in the last 12 months

AI is improving outcomes but increasing work demands

Nearly three quarters of Malaysian workers use AI at work (71%), helping improve work quality (55%), creativity (48%) and value delivered to employers (43%). AI is also boosting workers' confidence (75%), energy (77%) and sense of empowerment (78%). However, these gains are accompanied by rising demands, with more workers reporting increased workloads (28%) vs. decreased workloads (13%) and greater job complexity (25%) vs. reduced job complexity (16%).

52%

experienced more change in the last year than in the 12 months prior

Pace of change is accelerating

More than half of workers (52%) experienced greater change in the past year than in the previous 12 months, with signs of change fatigue emerging. While 51% remain optimistic about their organisation's future, 29% struggle to manage change and 58% lack clarity on the reasons behind recent change, which is more pronounced among senior executives (71%) and managers (62%).

20%

of Malaysian workforce are "front-runners," bringing together high-value capabilities and strong AI advantage

Four worker archetypes to workforce transformation

To better understand workforce needs, the survey groups workers into four archetypes based on their market value and AI advantage. This framework enables organisations to tailor talent, skills, and AI strategies to different segments of the workforce.

"Front-runners" (20%) combine high-demand skills with strong AI adoption, while the **"Engine room"** (43%) provides dependable delivery but has lower engagement with AI and change. The remaining groups include **"AI insurgents"** workers (27%), who are highly AI-oriented, and **"Indispensable"** workers (10%), who bring valuable expertise but are less engaged with AI.

Workforce imperatives for the future

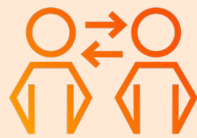


1 Rewire work to translate AI into value

To realise the full value of AI, organisations need to move beyond tool adoption and **redesign work, roles, and operating models around effective human-AI collaboration.**

This requires embedding AI into workflows, building role-based capabilities and creating incentives that encourage experimentation and innovation.

By tailoring support to different worker cohorts and fostering an AI-enabled culture, organisations can translate AI investments into sustainable productivity, innovation and business value.



2 Empower workers and managers to embrace change and build new skills

In an increasingly dynamic business environment, organisations can only sustain reinvention if their workforce has the capacity, capability, and confidence to adapt and keep pace with change.

It is essential that workers and managers understand how change affects their roles, have access to the skills needed to adapt, and trust leadership to navigate uncertainty.

Failing to do so risks losing talent to more innovative and rewarding workplaces, particularly among workers who are already embracing AI and continuous learning.



3 Making strategic choices on rewards, learning and workloads

Organisations need to make deliberate trade-offs in rewards, performance management, learning, and work design to support workforce transformation.

Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach, leaders should tailor employee experiences, skills development and rewards to the needs of different worker cohorts, enabling stronger engagement, productivity, and readiness for an AI-enabled future.

“

Ambition is high and workers are embracing an AI future, but effort alone may no longer be enough to sustain progress. Our findings show that workforce transformation is becoming inseparable from business transformation, and the challenge isn't adoption—it's creating the conditions that help people and technology evolve together.

Success will depend on how effectively organisations build trust, develop new capabilities, and redesign work to help people adapt, contribute and create value in a changing world.



Kartina Abdul Latif

Workforce Leader,
PwC Malaysia