

SOURCE STUDY TITLE AND AUTHOR

Workforce 2025 Global Insights Report, Korn Ferry

SUMMARY

The Research: Power Shifts – The Push-Pull Workforce Dynamics Defining 2025

DESCRIPTION

A growing disconnect exists between employer strategies and employee expectations in 2025. As companies push for productivity through leaner structures, AI adoption, and return-to-office mandates, workers are increasingly prioritizing stability, fair compensation, flexibility, and meaningful work. Key trends include the downsizing of middle management, heightened employee financial stress due to stagnant pay, and misalignment between return to office policies and employee preferences. Additionally, generational friction signals a need for stronger cross-generational communication and cultural adaptation. The report underscores the urgency for employers to recalibrate workforce planning to bridge these power and perception gaps.

KEY FINDINGS

The research, based on surveys of 15,000 professionals worldwide, highlights five workplace trends in 2025 that significantly impact employee satisfaction and voluntary attrition:

- **Missing Managers:** 41% of companies have cut middle-management layers in 2025 to reduce corporate expenses. Employees of companies that reduced management report feeling disoriented and 47% of senior leaders at these companies doubt they can manage day-to-day operations - indicating a gap in execution capacity.

- **Salary Squeeze:** 70% of workers reported feeling stressed about cost of living increases and 35% believe they are underpaid relative to their skills—highlighting retention and engagement risks.
- **A New AI World Order:** Regions like India, Brazil, and the Middle East lead in AI readiness—driven by training investments. In contrast, US, EU, and Japan lag behind, compounding the global digital skills gap. Employees that feel confident in their organization's approach and competence with AI report feeling more secure in their jobs.
- **The Hybrid Headache:** Only 19% of survey respondents reported wanting full-time in-office work while 48% prefer a hybrid option with some days in office and other remote. Yet only 27% of companies offer a flexible remote-office option, making remote or hybrid work a valuable asset for attracting and retaining talent.
- **Generational Miscommunications:** A majority of Gen Z employees (83% of respondents) report experiencing tension in cross-generational work, especially around communication, technology use, and values. However, 45% of employees over 60 years old report no issues, highlighting disconnects in understanding coworker needs that can lead to job dissatisfaction and quitting.

[SOURCE STUDY LINK](#)

[Korn Ferry's Workforce 2025 Global Insights Report](#)