

ORACLE + WORKPLACE INTELLIGENCE

# Back in the Driver's Seat: Employees Use Tech to Regain Control

AI leads as a critical career development tool



**AI@Work: 2021 Global Study**



# Eager to regain control over their lives, people are turning to technology to help define their future

Over the past three years, we've explored the evolving relationship between people and technology at work—how it impacts our trust, our relationships, and our mental health. But what about how technology impacts our future? Our success? And how will technology help us navigate this evolving world of work that has recently been turned upside down?

The global pandemic changed everything: where we work, how we work, why we work, and who we work with. Organizations and employees were forced to adapt to situations beyond their control, finding strategies to stay afloat, retain jobs, and keep the loneliness of social distancing at bay.

As we prepare for 2022, employees are eager to regain control of their futures, and many have re-evaluated what success means to them. Technology has carried us through the toughest challenges in recent history, but the question remains: What role will it play in our future workplace?





To find out, Oracle partnered with Workplace Intelligence to survey 14,639 employees, managers, HR leaders, and C-Suite executives across 13 countries. This year, the results revealed eye-opening shifts in thinking. Some of the most surprising findings were that:



**82%** of people believe robots can support their careers better than humans

**85%** want technology to help define their future

**We also discovered that:**

**85%** of employees aren't satisfied with their employer's support of their careers

**87%** believe their company should be doing more to listen to their needs

As people continue to reflect on what truly matters to them in life, it's up to organizations to step up and offer the right tools to help their workforce thrive. Those that don't will risk losing their greatest asset—their people.

# Key findings

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## The pandemic continued to affect the global workforce in 2021

**80%**

say the past year negatively impacted them, with many struggling financially, suffering from declining mental health, and lacking career motivation.

## People are eager to regain control over their lives

**83%**

want to make career changes over the next year, and **93%** want to make changes in their personal life.

## People felt “stuck” and unable to move forward

**75%**

felt stuck in their professional lives and **76%** felt stuck in their personal lives.

## Major obstacles are preventing people from making a career change

**76%**

are facing obstacles, including financial struggles, not knowing what career change makes sense, and a lack of confidence.



# Key findings

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## One silver lining: People found time to reflect

**93%**

used the past year to reflect on their personal and professional lives and think about the future.

## Companies aren't doing enough to support their workforce

**85%**

are not satisfied with their employer's career support, and **87%** say their company should do more to listen to their needs.

## Success has been redefined

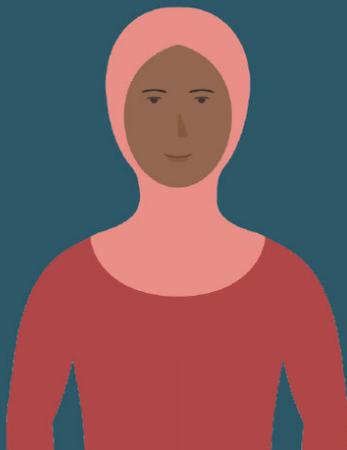
**88%**

say the meaning of success has changed for them. Work-life balance, mental health, and flexibility are now top priorities.

## Employees are turning to AI for help

**82%**

believe robots can support their careers better than humans, and **85%** want technology to help define their future.



# 2021 has proven to be another difficult year for workers

A year in lockdown left the global workforce feeling lonely, disconnected, and out of control. Our research found that 8 out of 10 people say the past year negatively impacted them, with many struggling financially, suffering from declining mental health and loneliness, lacking career motivation, and feeling disconnected from their own lives.

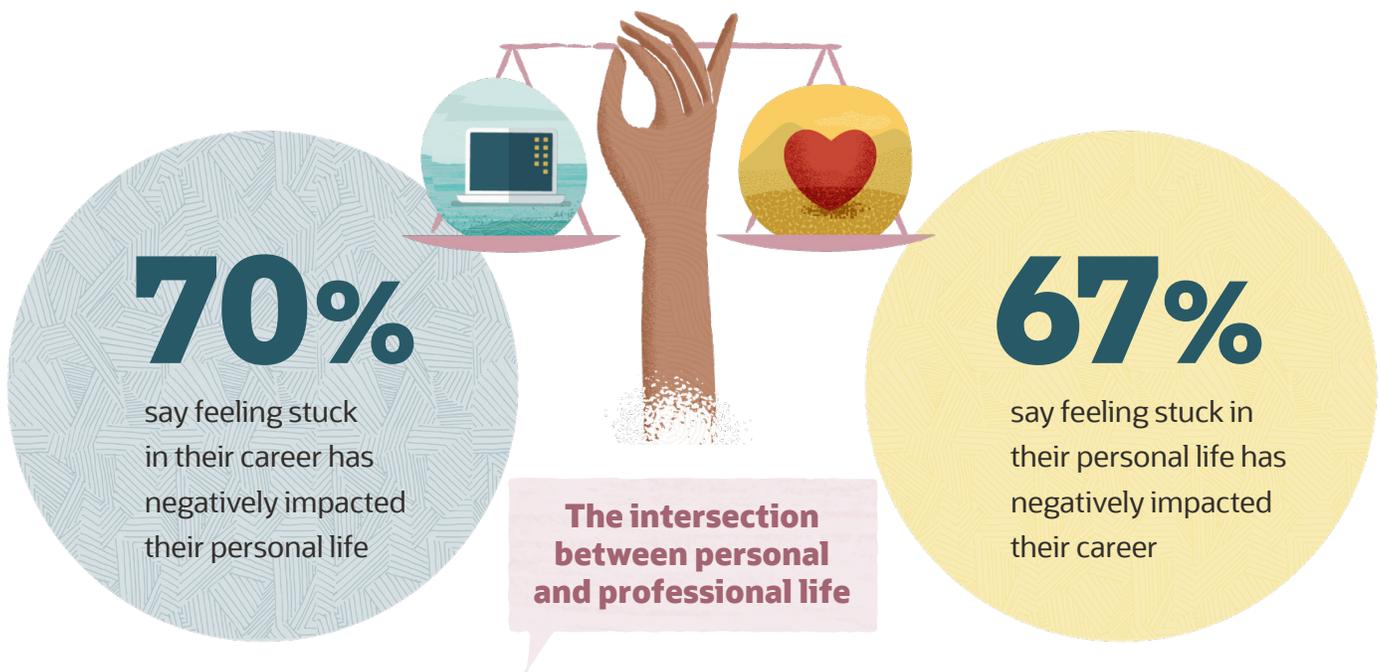
Perhaps even more notable is the fact that **52%** of respondents say they struggled with mental health at work more in 2021 than in 2020. And **62%** say that in 2021, they've experienced more stress and anxiety at work than any year before. These findings are a grim reminder that we're still in the throes of the pandemic, and its repercussions could be felt for years to come.

Our survey also uncovered that people have felt a loss of control over many aspects of their lives over the past year. Around 4 out of 10 respondents felt like they lost control of their futures, personal lives, careers, and relationships. In fact, since the start of the pandemic, the amount of people who felt little to no control over their personal and professional lives more than doubled.

In addition, three-quarters of respondents reported feeling stuck in their personal and professional lives over the past year. Many were overwhelmed and anxious with everything that was happening. Twenty-five percent expressed a lack of growth opportunities at their company as a cause of anxiety. Meanwhile, **20%** felt that their skills have gone stale, and **45%** are worried that the rise of robots and technology will make their skills redundant in the future.



It's no surprise that most people say that feeling stuck in one area of their lives has affected other parts of their lives as well. For example, we found that **70%** of respondents say feeling stuck in their career has negatively impacted their personal lives: **40%** say it added extra stress and anxiety to their personal lives, **29%** say it contributed to them feeling stuck personally, and **27%** say it took focus away from their personal lives. While our professional and personal lives have always been intertwined, it's clear that the lines between work and life have blurred even further as more people shift to remote or hybrid working models.



## 75% felt “stuck” in their professional lives— here’s why:

- Did not have career growth opportunities (**25%**)
- Felt too overwhelmed to make any changes (**22%**)
- Felt like their skills went stale due to the changing work environment (**20%**)

## 76% felt “stuck” in their personal lives— here’s why:

- Felt anxiety about their future (**31%**)
- Felt trapped in the same routine (**27%**)
- Felt isolated and lonely (**26%**)

# People are ready for a fresh start

Amid the Great Resignation, the global workforce is demanding more support from their employers. The pandemic caused workers to re-evaluate their priorities and redefine what success means to them. Eager for a fresh start, they're making big changes and forcing organizations to face a moment of reckoning.

Tune in to this four-part docuseries to find out how the global workforce is taking back control of their lives.



[Watch the miniseries](#)

## Episodes



**Episode 1** : Life Disrupted



**Episode 2** : Success Redefined



**Episode 3** : The Reckoning



**Episode 4** : Human and Machine

# A global desire for change

Although **80%** of people were negatively affected by the pandemic, there's a silver lining: **93%** used the past year to reflect on their personal and professional lives and think about their future. For many individuals, the focus over the next year will be on getting out of the rut they've been in during the pandemic and starting a fresh chapter in their lives. In fact, people feel much more confident going into 2022, with **74%** feeling like they have control over their professional lives and **77%** feeling in control of their personal lives.

Armed with this new sense of confidence, **83%** of people say they want to make career changes over the next year, and **93%** want to make changes in their personal lives. At work, **43%** of people would like to gain new skills and advance their education, **34%** want to get a promotion or raise, and **23%** aspire to take on a new role within their company. In their personal lives, **55%** of people want to improve their health and fitness, **41%** hope to travel more, **33%** would like to be more social, and **33%** are eager to start checking off their bucket list items.

In addition to contemplating future plans and goals, people also took the time to reflect on what "success" really means to them. Nearly 9 out of 10 respondents say the meaning of success has changed and is now more aligned with achieving a work-life balance, being in good mental health, and having flexibility at work. Twenty-nine percent say that having a meaningful job is now more important to them than a steady paycheck.

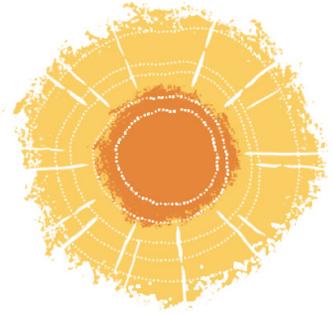
## A global desire for change

Over

**80%**

of the global workforce want to make changes in their personal and professional lives over the next year





## How the pandemic redefined “success”



**88%**

of people say the meaning of “success” has changed over the past year

**42%** say achieving a work-life balance is a bigger factor to achieving success now

**37%** say prioritizing their mental health contributes more to their success now

**33%** say success now means having flexibility over when and where they work

**29%** say having a meaningful job contributes more to their success now than a steady paycheck

These findings clearly indicate that workers have much different priorities now compared to before the pandemic. People are reconsidering the type of employer they want to work for, what they’re looking for in their careers, and the importance they place on their health and well-being. Companies must take this mindset shift into account as they rethink what the post-pandemic workplace will look like for their people. That includes examining how well they’re supporting employees, many of whom are anxious to begin making progress in their lives again.

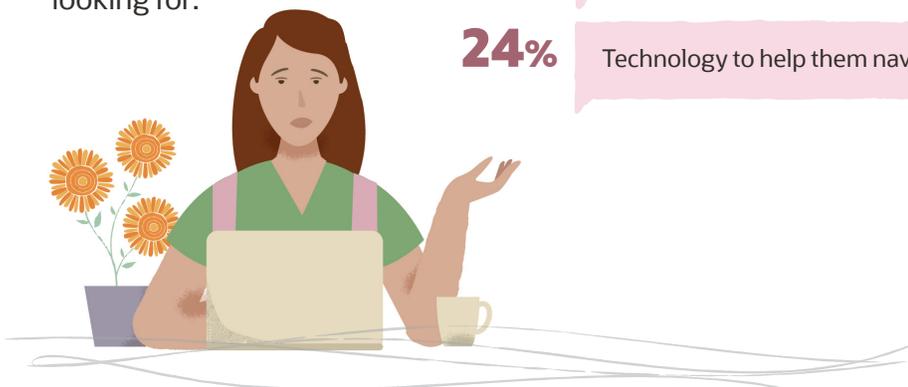
# While people’s motivation for career change is high, employers may not be offering the right support

People’s desire for change is at an all-time high. In our survey, **83%** of the global workforce said they want to advance their career or make career changes over the next year, and **73%** are motivated to do so. However, **76%** are facing major obstacles in their path forward, including financial struggles, not knowing what career change makes sense for them, not feeling confident enough to make a change, and not having any growth opportunities within their company.

These hurdles are real, and the reality is that inadequate employer support may be the most significant challenge preventing employees from making progress in their careers. An alarming **85%** of people are not satisfied with their company’s support and would like their organization to provide more learning and skills development opportunities, higher salaries, opportunities to take on new roles or projects, flexibility, and technology to help them navigate their careers.

# 85%

of people are not satisfied with their employer’s support for their career—here’s what they’re looking for:



People want to advance their careers; so much so that over half would give up perks like vacation time or a monetary bonus in exchange for more career development opportunities. For organizations, this should be a wake-up call that they may not be offering enough support for their employees. In fact, **87%** of respondents believe their company should be doing more to listen to the needs of their workforce. And since so many people are re-evaluating their priorities and their future—including whether to stay with their current employer—there's never been a more pressing time for companies to take action.



## People would make significant sacrifices for more career development opportunities

**52%** would give vacation time

**51%** would forego a monetary bonus

**43%** would even give up part of their salary

# Employees are turning to technology to help guide their future and their career

Offering new technology to support the workforce is one of the key ways that organizations can support their employees. In 2020, we were surprised to discover that most of the global workforce would be open to seeking mental health support from robots over humans. **This year, we wanted to find out whether people would be willing to have technology help define their future.**

It's a big leap to make—offering mental health support is a much different undertaking than helping people make major life decisions. But to our surprise, we found that the vast majority of those we surveyed would rely on a robot for guidance. In fact, **85%** want technology to help define their future, and an impressive **82%** believe robots can support their career development better than humans. In addition, **75%** would make life changes based on robot recommendations.



# 85%

of people want technology to help define their future, and 82% believe robots can support their career development better than humans

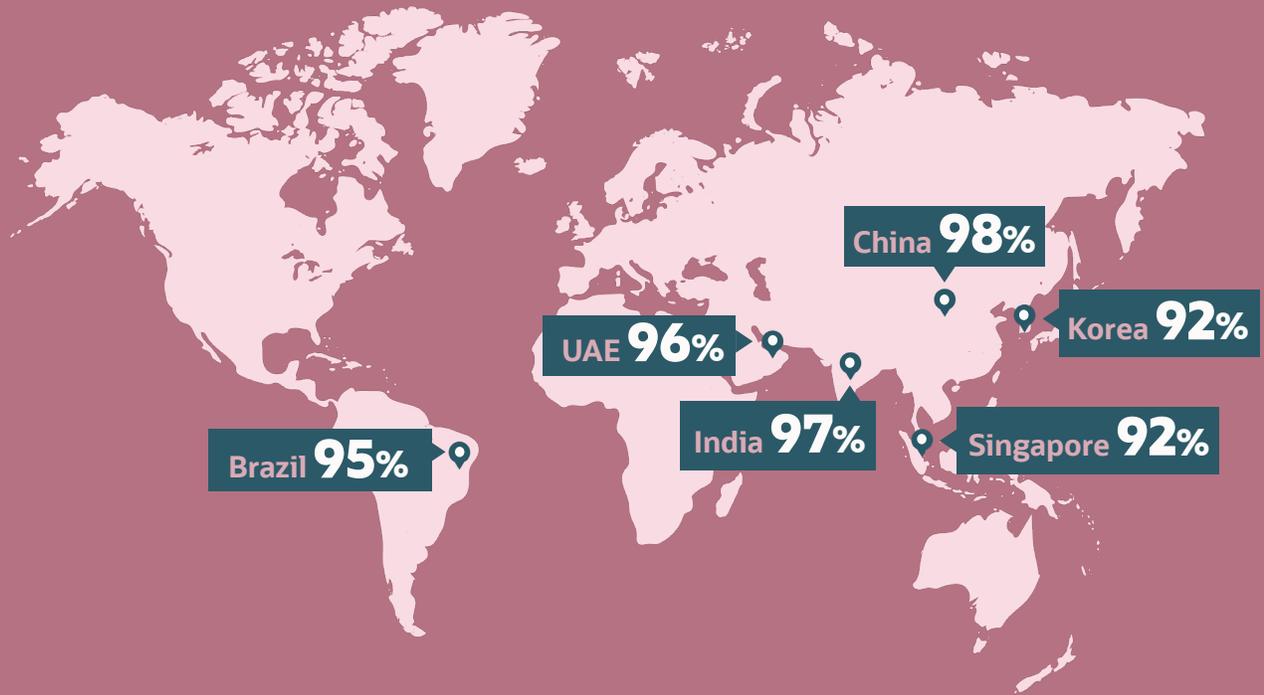
These findings are remarkable, and they clearly illustrate that people's openness to innovative solutions continues to grow every year. Workers have had to quickly adopt new technologies to enable remote and hybrid workstyles, and now they're seeking more. This includes trusting AI to help them navigate their careers and other major milestones with ease.

Despite the widespread desire for new solutions, just **47%** of respondents report that their organization is currently using some form of AI in their workplace and **31%** say their company is not even discussing AI. Although people have grown more confident in technology's ability to help them in new ways, it's apparent that some employers have been slow to adapt. But as our survey results revealed, businesses only stand to benefit from offering AI to support employee career development and personal growth.

<sup>9,10</sup> Workplace Intelligence AI@Work Study, 2021

## Global perspective: Which countries are embracing AI?

Nearly all respondents want technology to help define their future.



- People trust AI less in Germany, France, the UK and the U.S. In those countries, fewer than 2 out of 3 people would make life changes or career-related decisions based on robot recommendations.
- Only **31%** of Japanese respondents say their organizations are currently using some form of AI in their workplace, and **47%** say their company is not even discussing AI.

# Wanted: robot career advisors

There's no question that the demand for AI technology to support career development and other life changes is on the rise. While **47%** of organizations have already adopted AI solutions, those who remain hesitant would be wise to consider the many benefits these tools can offer.

For example, we found that AI will continue to be a helpful day-to-day tool for employees. One-third of respondents note that they'd rely on a robot for resources or quick answers to their career questions. But our survey also revealed that AI can offer much more than that: over half of employees report that using AI would help them feel more empowered and in control of their careers, and **55%** say they would be more likely to stay with an employer that uses AI to support career growth.

## **85% of people want technology to help define their future, by:**

- Identifying the skills they need to develop (**36%**)
- Recommending ways to learn new skills (**36%**)
- Providing next steps to progress toward career goals (**32%**)

## **82% believe robots can support their career development better than humans. They believe robots are better at:**

- Giving unbiased recommendations (**37%**)
- Delivering resources tailored to current skills or goals (**33%**)
- Quickly answering questions about their career (**33%**)
- Finding new jobs that fit their current skills (**32%**)

## **Whereas they believe humans are better at:**

- Offering advice based on personal experience (**46%**)
- Identifying strengths and weaknesses (**44%**)
- Looking beyond a resume to recommend roles that fit their personality (**41%**)
- Providing personal recommendations for new jobs or roles (**38%**)

## **AI would help employees by making them feel:**

- More empowered in their careers (**58%**)
- Less stressed about their careers (**57%**)
- More in control of their careers (**53%**)

**Did you know?**  
**AI could help improve  
employee retention**



# 55%

of the global workforce would be more likely to stay with a company that uses AI to support career growth. This number is even higher among workers in India (**82%**), China (**78%**), and the UAE (**76%**).

# Survey methodology

Research findings are based on a survey conducted by Savanta, Inc. across the US, the UK, the UAE, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Brazil, India, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Australia between July 27 – August 17, 2021. For this survey, 14,639 C-suite executives, HR leaders, managers and full-time employees were asked questions about the impact of COVID-19 on the workplace, AI and career development, and AI adoption at the workplace.

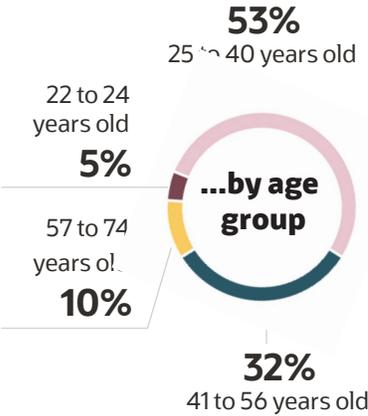
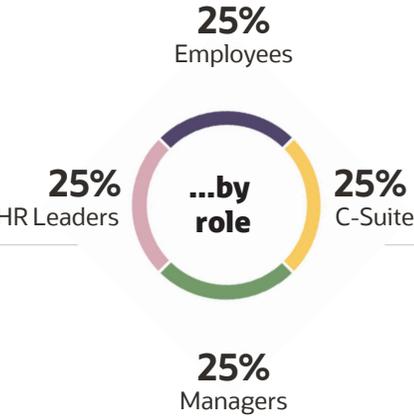


## Respondents by country

Germany	<b>1,004</b>	Australia	<b>1,015</b>
France	<b>1,010</b>	China	<b>1,023</b>
Netherlands	<b>1,010</b>	UAE	<b>1,028</b>
UK	<b>1,011</b>	India	<b>1,032</b>
Singapore	<b>1,013</b>	Brazil	<b>1,058</b>
Japan	<b>1,014</b>	US	<b>2,407</b>
Korea	<b>1,014</b>		

The study targeted full-time employees who were between 22 to 74 years of age. Respondents were recruited through a number of different mechanisms via different sources to join the panels and participate in market research surveys. All panelists have passed a double opt-in process and completed, on average, 300 profiling data points prior to taking part in surveys. Respondents were invited to take part via email and were provided a small monetary incentive for doing so.

Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results. In this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 0.8 percentage points from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.



# Are you offering the tools employees need today to thrive in tomorrow's workplace?

The COVID-19 pandemic caused **75%** of people to feel stuck in their lives, but the global workforce is ready to regain control of their futures. However, people are facing many obstacles on the path ahead. Eighty-five percent aren't satisfied with their employer's support for their careers, citing a lack of learning and skills development and other internal opportunities as key areas for improvement.

Eager to move forward in both their professional and personal lives, people are turning to technology for guidance. But while **85%** of respondents want technology to help define their future—including providing steps to progress toward career goals—fewer than half say their company uses AI in the workplace. For businesses, these findings should be a clear call to action. There's already widespread acceptance of AI, and now it's time for companies to put the right solutions in place for their workforce. Helping people learn new skills and advance their careers will not only be imperative for their ability to succeed in tomorrow's workplace, it will also help them find greater fulfillment in their lives.

A strong commitment to workforce career development could also be critical for business growth, especially as companies face an ever-increasing skills gap. In fact, **76%** of respondents report that there is a skills gap at their organization. Yet just **42%** say their company is upskilling workers, and only **27%** are using AI to help identify and fill internal roles.

Companies have the opportunity to provide tools that can help their workforce navigate the future of work, and the benefits of doing so are clear. Organizations that are early adopters will not only be seen as more innovative and supportive; they'll also be giving employees what they need to be at their personal and professional best in the wake of the pandemic and beyond. And that's a recipe for higher levels of employee satisfaction and a better bottom line.

**As we move forward, will you be ready to meet the needs of your workforce?**  
**Learn how Oracle Cloud HCM can help.**



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