Workera

Workera 2026

AI Workforce Preview

How everyday American workers expect AI to impact their jobs over the next 12 months.

Introduction

For the last two years, we've heard constantly from tech CEOs and thought leaders about how AI will impact the American workforce, and skills are at the heart of this change. Whether that's augmenting existing roles or automating away millions of white-collar jobs. But we rarely hear from the workers themselves.

Workera wanted to change that. We surveyed 1,000 everyday Americans — full-time workers with at least a college degree — working in industries like tech, finance, and the public sector. We asked them if they plan to pursue new roles over the next 12 months, how AI is impacting their current jobs, and whether they expect AI to affect their employment status in 2026.

The results are fascinating. Respondents are ready for new roles and feeling the jolt of the new technology on their day-to-day workflows and careers. But perhaps the most interesting findings came when we simply asked Americans: How do you expect your work to change?

Here's a sample:

"I expect AI will take over and perform many of the repetitive administrative tasks I currently perform. Likely freeing up 6 to 8 hours of work each week for other tasks."

"Less manual work."

"A robot can do my job easily."

"I think my company is downsizing and I'm scared about 2026."

"My role may no longer be needed."

"More automation."

"Not sure how but we have been made aware to learn about AI as much as we can."

"I expect that I will be more productive because of AI."

"I expect my work to be elevated with less mundane tasks."

"My field will get more specialized and will require a lot of additional education."

Skills are the clearest signal of how work is actually changing. As AI reshapes roles faster than job titles, org charts, and resumes can keep up, skills have become the common language between what work requires and what people can do.

It's clear that white-collar Americans are well aware of the impact AI is having on their jobs. But they're not sitting still and waiting for the wave of change to sweep over them: Our survey found that 76% of respondents plan on learning new AI skills in 2026.

Organizations — and L&D leaders in particular — will play a crucial role in assuaging their employees' fears about AI and ensuring the workforce has the skills to take advantage of the opportunities the technology provides. This report offers actionable insights and an early look at how Americans feel about AI heading into the new year.
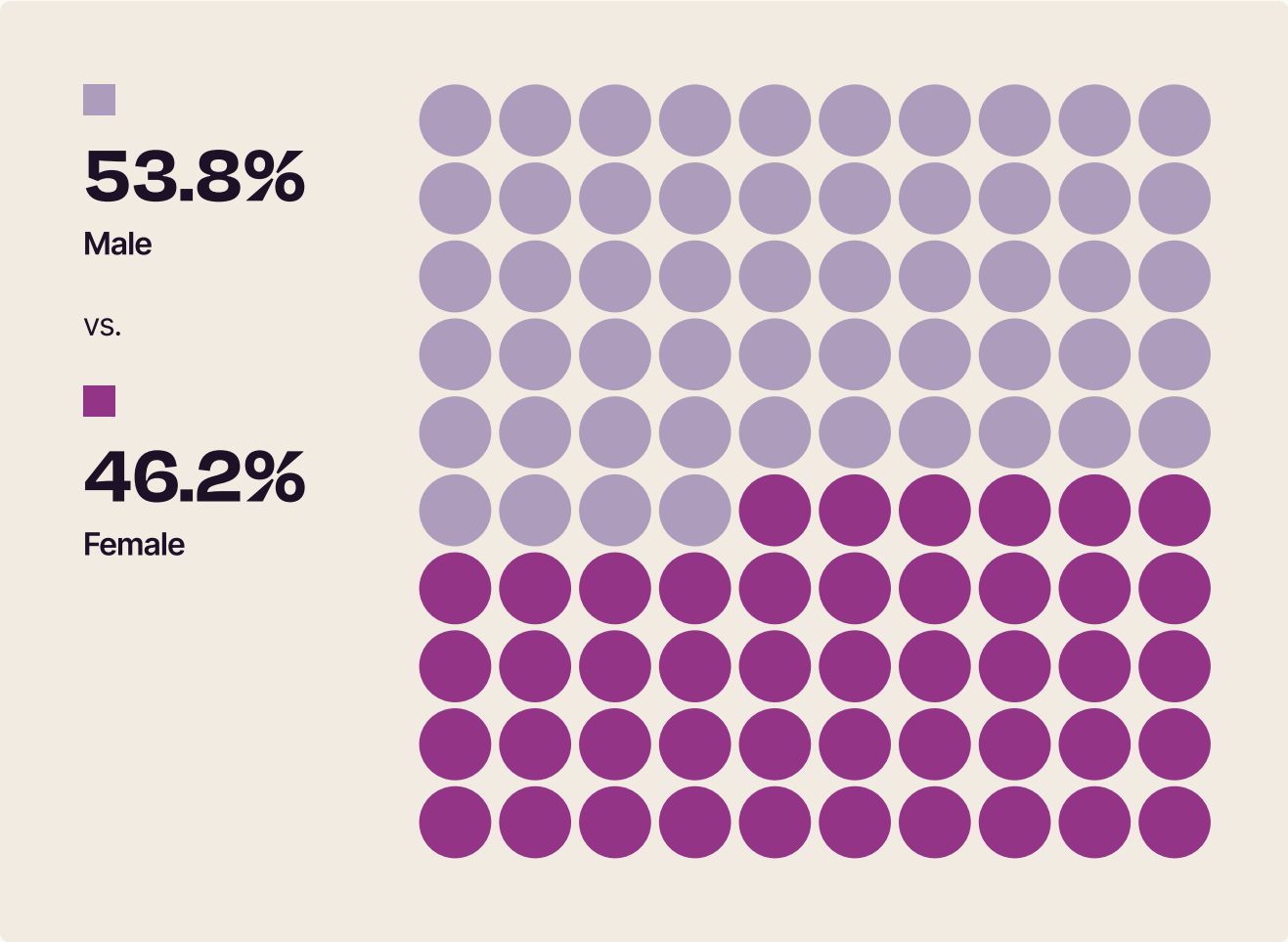
Kian Katanforoosh
Founder & CEO, Workera

Methodology and demographics

Workera surveyed 1,000 Americans, each of whom works full-time and has earned a bachelor's degree. The survey was conducted in December 2025 via Pollfish.
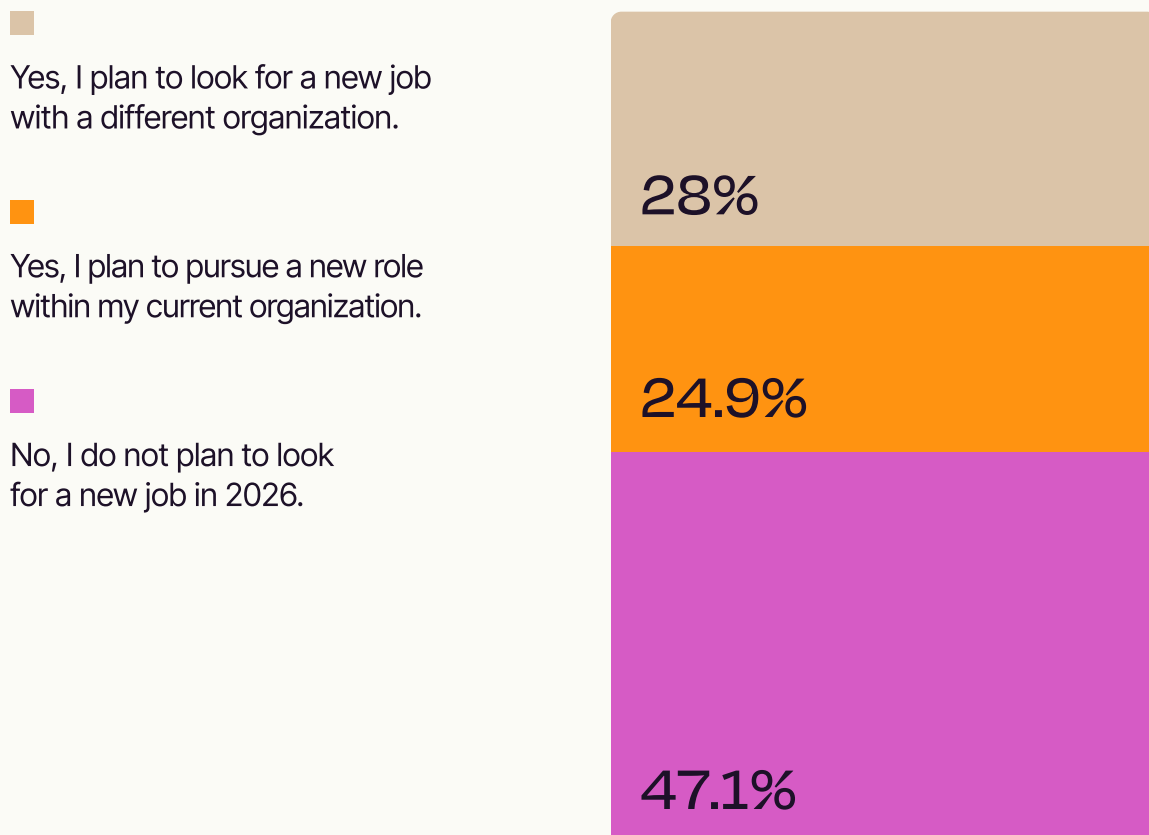
Gender

53.8%
Male

vs.

46.2%
Female

Americans are ready for new roles

The majority (53%) of respondents are looking for a new role in 2026. Of those, 28% will explore opportunities outside their organization while 25% plan to pursue a new internal role. Less than half (48%) are content to stay with their current job.

Do you plan to look for a new job in 2026?

■ Yes, I plan to look for a new job with a different organization.

■ Yes, I plan to pursue a new role within my current organization.

■ No, I do not plan to look for a new job in 2026.
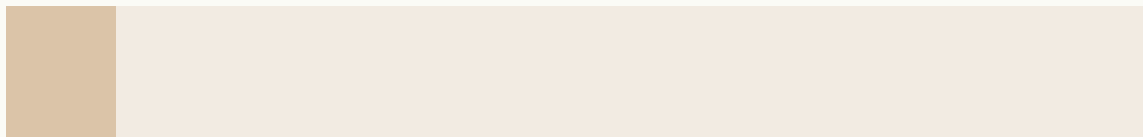
28%

24.9%

47.1%

AI is jolting jobs

Four in 10 (39%) Americans expect AI to impact their employment status in 2026, either by causing them to change roles within their company (29%) or costing them their job (10%). The rest (62%) believe AI will not impact their role.

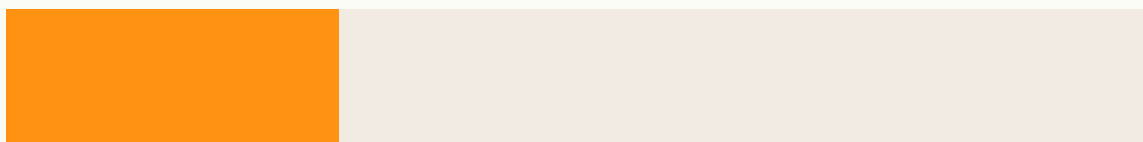## Do you expect AI to impact your employment status in 2026?

9.5%
Yes, AI will cause me to lose my job.

29%
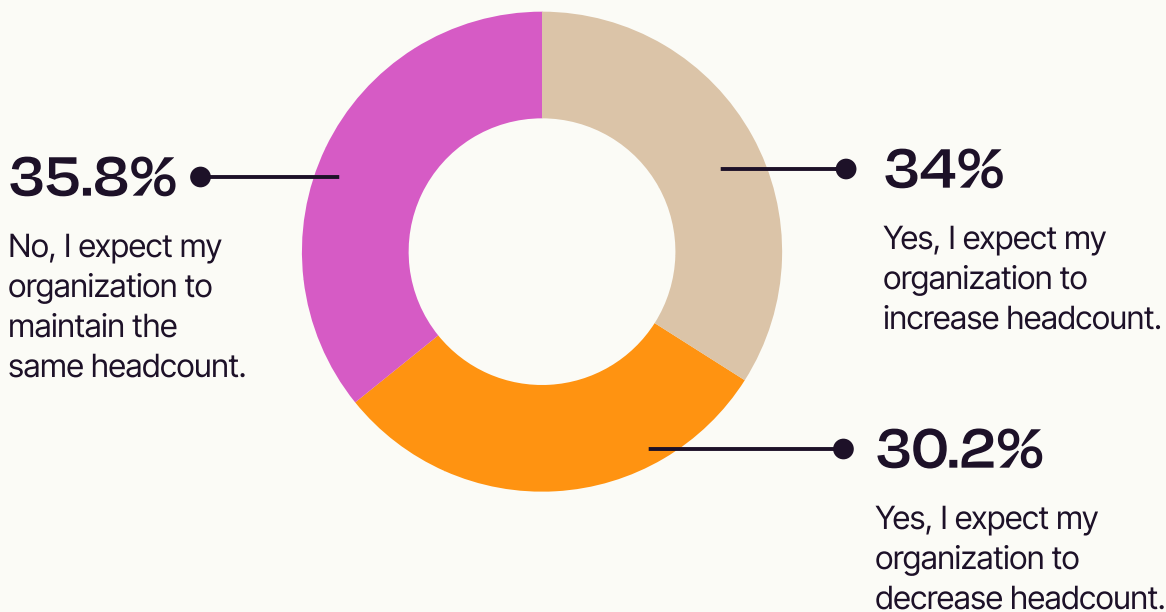Yes, AI will cause me to change roles within my organization.

61.5%
No, AI will not impact my employment status.

One in three (30%) of Americans expect their organization's headcount to decrease in 2026, while 36% expect their company to stay the same size and 34% think theirs will grow over the next 12 months.

Do you expect your organization to change headcount in 2026?

35.8%

No, I expect my organization to maintain the same headcount.

34%

Yes, I expect my organization to increase headcount.

30.2%

Yes, I expect my organization to decrease headcount.

Americans are split on whether they expect AI to change their roles and responsibilities next year, with 49% saying Yes and 51% saying No.

Do you expect your roles and responsibilities to change due to AI in 2026?

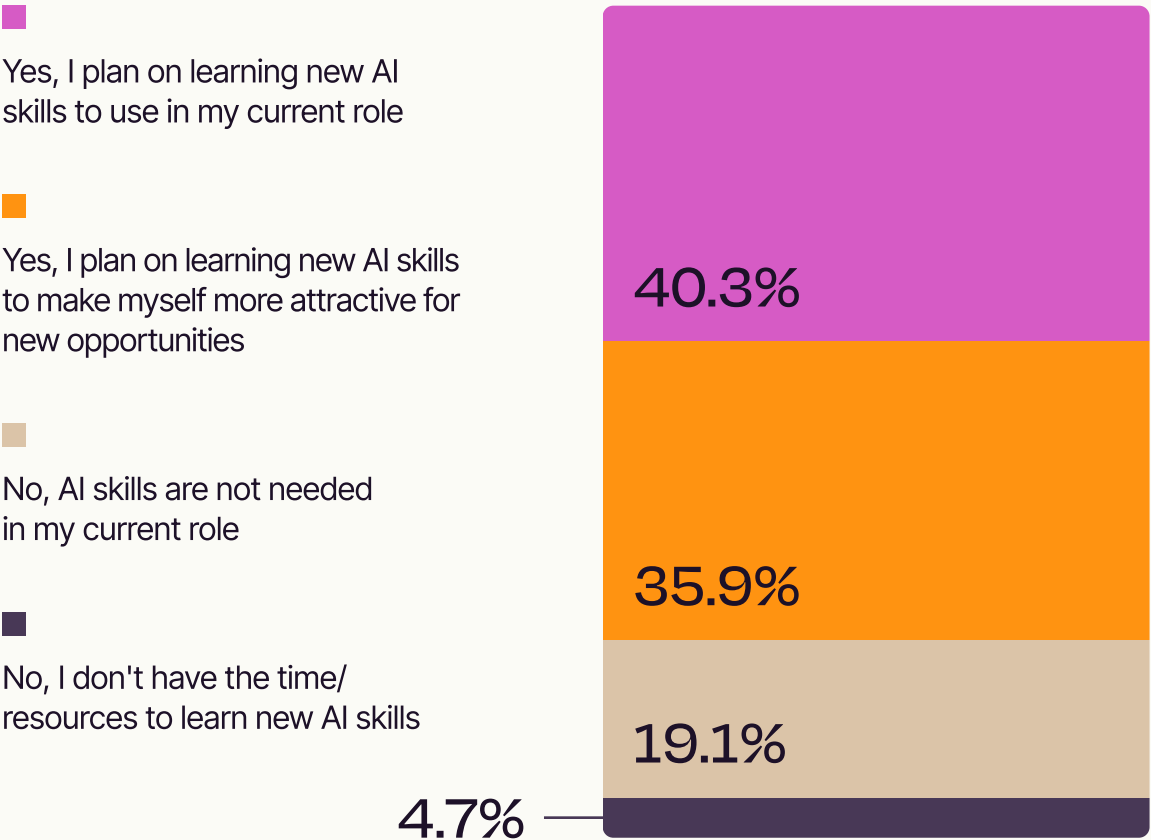| Yes	No
48.6%	**51.4%**
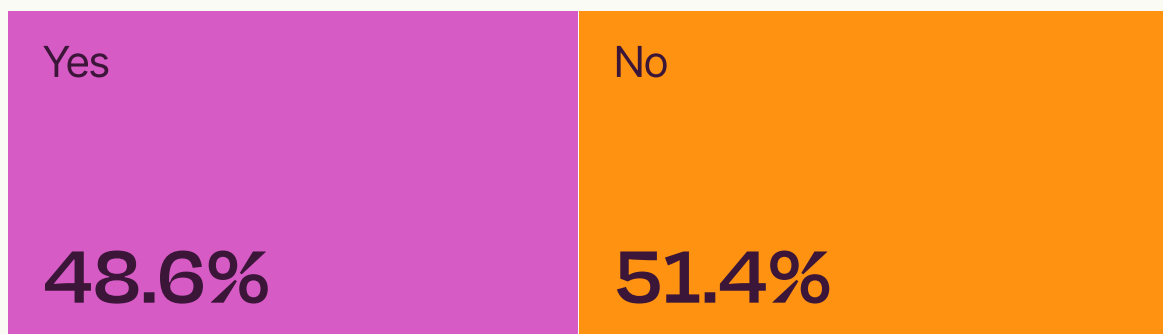
Americans want AI skills

76% of respondents plan on learning new AI skills in 2026 — 40% are doing so to use in their current role and 36% want to make themselves more attractive for new opportunities. Of those who do not want AI skills, 19% say such skills are not needed in their current role and 5% do not have the time or resources to learn.

Do you plan on learning new AI skills in 2026? Why or why not?

■ Yes, I plan on learning new AI skills to use in my current role

■ Yes, I plan on learning new AI skills to make myself more attractive for new opportunities

■ No, AI skills are not needed in my current role

■ No, I don't have the time/ resources to learn new AI skills

40.3%

35.9%

19.1%

4.7%

Workers are ready to leave workplaces where their skills aren't understood

Americans who strongly disagreed with the statement — "My employer accurately understands my skills and abilities" — were much more likely (73% vs 14%) to be planning to look for another job with a new organization in 2026 than those who strongly agreed.

When workers feel their skills are misunderstood, they are far more likely to leave. Organizations with clearer skills data are better positioned to place, develop, and retain talent during periods of rapid change.

How much do you agree with the following statement:
"My employer accurately understands my skills and abilities."

|	
Strongly agree	28%
Agree	48.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	12.3%
Disagree	8.9%
Strongly disagree	1.5%
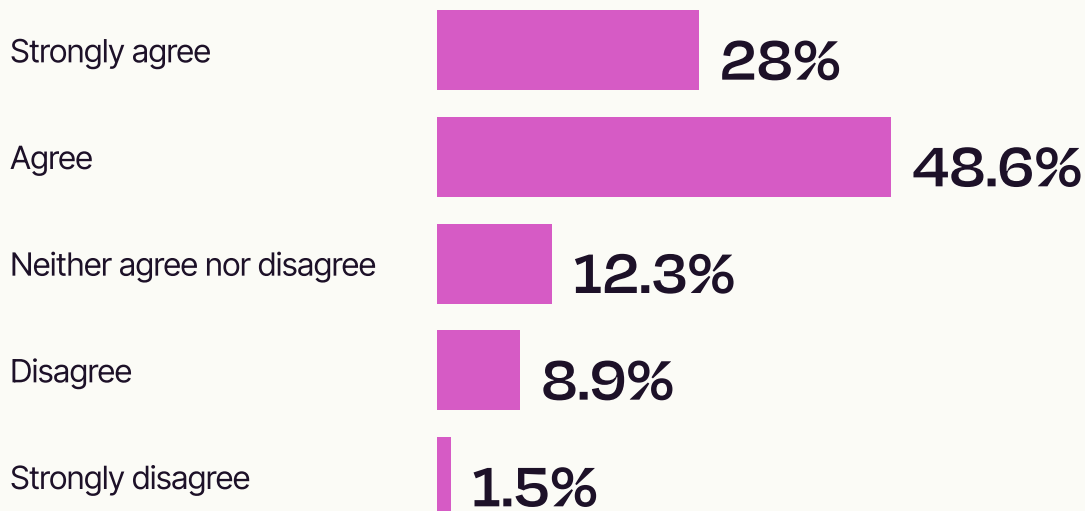
Overall, 77% of respondents believe their employer accurately understands their skills and abilities. 10% feel their employer does not accurately understand their skills and abilities.

Talent decisions still rely on resumes

Prior experience is the top factor (72%) taken into account when making staffing decisions, our survey found, followed by verified skills data (57%) and relationships (48%).

What factors do you think are taken into consideration when making staffing decisions at your organization?

25.5%
Gut feeling

72.1%
Prior experience / CV / Resume

48.2%
Relationships

39.1%
Seniority

56.9%
Verified skills data
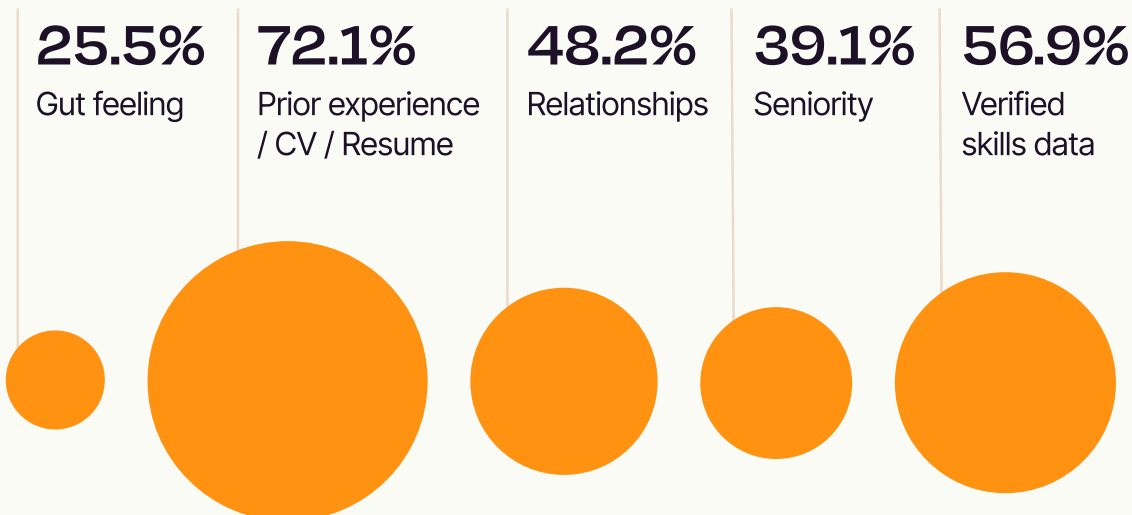
Notably, 72% of Americans who strongly felt their employer accurately understands their skills and abilities said that verified skills data is taken into consideration when their company is making staffing decisions. Only 7% of those who feel strongly that their skills are not accurately understood said the same.

Those who strongly feel their skills are misunderstood are much more likely to say that gut feelings (40% vs 24%) and relationships (60% vs 41%) are important factors in staffing decisions.

Workera's perspective

Workera is the gold standard for measuring human potential. Workera helps organizations assess, benchmark, and verify workforce skills so leaders can understand real capabilities, identify gaps, and track skill development over time.

Conclusion

Americans are hungry for AI skills. They are already feeling the technology's impact on their roles and know the next 12 months will likely only accelerate the process.

But this isn't just a high-pressure moment for employees — the stakes are also high for their employers. Our survey shows that employees are ready to leave workplaces where their skills aren't understood and valued.

Too many companies still rely on outdated methods like resumes and relationships for staffing decisions rather than verified skills data. By accurately assessing employee skills, business leaders can transform skill gaps into measurable growth, match the right people to the right roles at the right time, and retain employees at a moment of unprecedented mobility.

As AI changes roles and org structures, do you have the skills data you need to make talent decisions with confidence?

How leading organizations are building workforce readiness

As roles evolve, leading organizations are turning to Workera to assess and verify employee skills, benchmark proficiency, and deliver targeted learning at scale. The result is faster skill development and clearer visibility into workforce readiness.

Read the case study

SIEMENS energy

Siemens Energy Improves Workforce Learning with Personalized Paths Using Workera's AI Platform

4,923
Completed skills assessments on the Workera platform

97%
Learners who completed an assessment were certified in less than 90 days

62%
Improvement in generative AI and ChatGPT skills after 2 weeks

Read Story >

See how leading organizations are putting skills data into practice.

Explore how companies like Siemens Energy use Workera to assess, benchmark, and improve workforce skills.

Book Demo   →

About Workera

Workera is pioneering the future of skills technology, reimagining how organizations align business needs with verified skills data to future-fit their workforce and accelerate productivity and innovation.

Trusted by the Fortune 500 and recognized by World Economic Forum's Tech Pioneers, TIME's Best EdTech Companies 2025, Inc 5000, and Josh Bersin's HR Tech AI Trailblazers, Workera leverages proprietary AI agents to deliver unparalleled insights into workforce capabilities, utilizing a state-of-the-art skills ontology and large language models for the most precise skill measurements available.

Workera was named in Fast Company's exclusive Most Innovative Companies list alongside Microsoft, Canva, and others leading the AI revolution.

Trusted by leaders

accenture

U.S. AIR FORCE

SAMSUNG

Commonwealth Bank

SoftBank

Lilly

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Fastest Growing Companies 2025

Learn more at **www.workera.ai** →