

skilling today



a randstad
risesmart global
survey.

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human forward.

the global state of skilling in focus

In an economy characterized by almost constant change, today's employees and the organizations that employ them should be in a constant cycle of upskilling and reskilling. But are they? And when they participate in skilling initiatives, is either party seeing meaningful ROI? And how does the approach to skilling vary in different regions of the globe?

To find out, Randstad RiseSmart surveyed 1,099 HR professionals and 1,142 employees during Q4 2020. Our survey included respondents from:

- Australia
- Belgium
- Canada
- Germany
- India
- The Netherlands
- United Kingdom
- United States

The purpose of this survey was to assess how effective skilling has been for those individuals and companies that participated in it in 2020, as well as to understand key differences in skilling from region to region and across industries. From it, we sought to learn:

- When are skilling programs or opportunities available?
- To whom is skilling most commonly offered?
- What skilling opportunities are offered and when?
- What skills are employers and employees interested in learning or refining?
- How effective is skilling for employers and employees alike?
- Where and how can businesses improve their skilling initiatives?

You'll find answers to those questions – and many more – in this special report.



executive summary

Skilling is a hot topic today, and our survey found that skilling's popularity is rising rapidly. In fact, the employees we surveyed were almost unanimously enthusiastic about skilling opportunities, as were the vast majority of companies.

- Most employers view ongoing skilling as imperative to maintaining a competitive edge, but they don't just view skilling as a way to future-proof their organizations. Almost all the employers surveyed agreed that skilling has delivered at least moderate ROI for their organizations.
- Employers were most likely to offer skilling opportunities to managers/team leads. Individual contributors and high-potential employees received far fewer opportunities and leadership had the fewest opportunities to reskill and upskill. These findings remained consistent across virtually every industry represented by our respondents.
- Somewhat unexpectedly, our survey also found that the training employers offered or encouraged workers to pursue was overwhelmingly around soft skills like adaptability and collaboration, and the employees we surveyed valued those skills to an equal degree.
- Tech-related skills came in second: Almost 20% fewer employers said they encouraged workers to skill up in tech, rather than soft skills.
- Employees overwhelmingly agreed that the time they invested in skilling paid off in their careers, and they're hungry for more opportunities to learn.

Perhaps the biggest takeaway from our survey was that employers and employees alike aren't just eager for more skilling opportunities – they're also in need of expert guidance to help them efficiently pursue the best skill-building strategy. Both groups said they would benefit significantly from guidance on skilling, ranging from working with a career coach, to skills assessments and job market data, to a curated list of available resources.

In short, skilling is already paying dividends for employers and workers – but it could be even more effective if organizations and all their workers had access to seasoned learning partners who could assess and guide their skilling activities.

the skilling imperative

future-proofing the workforce – today

In 2018, the World Economic Forum (WEF) predicted that **42% of the in-demand skills across all industries would change** between 2018 and 2022. Today, that may seem like an understatement. With globalization and the rise of automation, the e-commerce boom and the remote work revolution – among other disruptions – employers and employees alike have more pressure than ever before to keep their skills current.

In fact, the need is so urgent that the WEF has **launched a global network of 'closing the skills gap accelerators'** to focus on lifelong learning and upskilling, proactive redeployment and re-employment, innovative skills-funding models and skills anticipation and job market insight.

To be clear, this need to gain new skills and refine existing ones isn't a nice-to-have – it's simply table stakes in today's economy. It's hardly a surprise, then, that leading companies are making skilling a top priority for 2021. Amazon, for example, **plans to spend \$700 million to reskill a third of its US workforce by 2025**. PwC, meanwhile, announced in 2019 that it would spend an eye-watering **\$3 billion in upskilling over the next three to four years**. Randstad, our parent company, recently pledged to train 40,000 US workers.

These companies aren't just planning for the future – they're working to overcome pain points they're seeing today. In fact, **a recent McKinsey survey found 87% of executives** said their organizations are currently experiencing skill gaps or expect them to emerge within a few years. But almost four in 10 businesses don't have a plan in place to address the problem.

skilling's optimistic outlook

The need for widespread skilling is broadly accepted, but many leaders still don't know exactly how to implement effective skilling initiatives.

However, even amid such uncertainty about how to move forward on skilling initiatives, there's still widespread optimism about skilling's impact on the workforce at large – and equally widespread demand for skilling opportunities.

Another study by Chief Learning Officer found that 54% of respondents expect their learning and development budgets to either grow or remain stable in the year ahead, even in the face of a pandemic. A staggering 81% of respondents to that same survey said they expect their companies to adopt new training methods in 2021, and 73% said their companies will look to create new custom skilling content.



the business case for skilling

Helping employees gain new skills is clearly a must for businesses that want to remain competitive, but it's far from the only reason it pays to invest in training. There are major implications for retention and overall company performance as well.

In fact, one study found that companies in which employees weren't engaged in learning were **twice as likely to lose employees** before those workers reach their third year of tenure. A LinkedIn Learning study found that 94% of **employees would stay at a company longer** if their employers invested in their career development.

What potential impact can this have on companies' bottom lines? **According to Josh Bersin's research**, the cost of recruiting a software engineer who makes up to \$200,000 can be as much as \$30,000 when factoring in the cost of recruiting, job ads and HR technology. This external hire is also as much as three times more likely to leave as an internal recruit. In contrast, reskilling an existing employee can cost just \$20,000 or less, meaning the cost savings realized by skilling can be as much as \$116,000 per person over the course of three years.

In other words, it can cost up to six times as much to hire externally versus hiring from within.

it can cost up to six times as much to
hire externally versus hiring from within

To put those costs in a different perspective, another World Economic Forum study found that, with an investment of just \$4.7 billion, **the US private sector could 'reskill 25% of those expected to be displaced by technology** into growing jobs with an overall positive cost-benefit balance.'

That's the power of skilling – and our survey revealed that both today's workers and their employers clearly understand the impact that power can have on their organizations and their careers.

With so much clearly riding on skilling today, let's explore the findings from our survey and examine the skilling landscape of today – and tomorrow.

why companies invest in skilling

Like the leaders in the McKinsey survey, our HR respondents understand that skilling is critical in today's rapidly evolving business landscape – and they're taking steps to capitalize on it.

anticipating change

Almost 70% of all HR respondents said they ask or require their employees to upskill or reskill in order to meet changing business needs. And when training is offered, 61% said it's offered to all employees, meaning these organizations are engaging in company-wide skilling initiatives open to every employee, regardless of seniority or function.

While companies of all sizes identified the need to adapt to business changes through skilling, it's especially true for the largest companies in our survey. A full 80% of companies with 10,000 or

more employees view adapting to meet new challenges as a must-have in today's changing business landscape. Among all industries, companies in software, electronics and IT were most likely (77%) to say training was aimed at adapting to changing business needs, followed by manufacturing, chemicals and utilities (74%) and healthcare and life sciences organizations (68%).

Organizations with 10,000 or more employees were also most likely (59%) to note that they maintain a culture of continual learning. Surprisingly, among all industries, companies in the software, electronics and IT space were least likely to maintain a culture of continual learning, with just 32% agreeing that statement was true for their organizations.



almost 70% of all HR respondents said they ask or require their employees to upskill or reskill

responding to demand

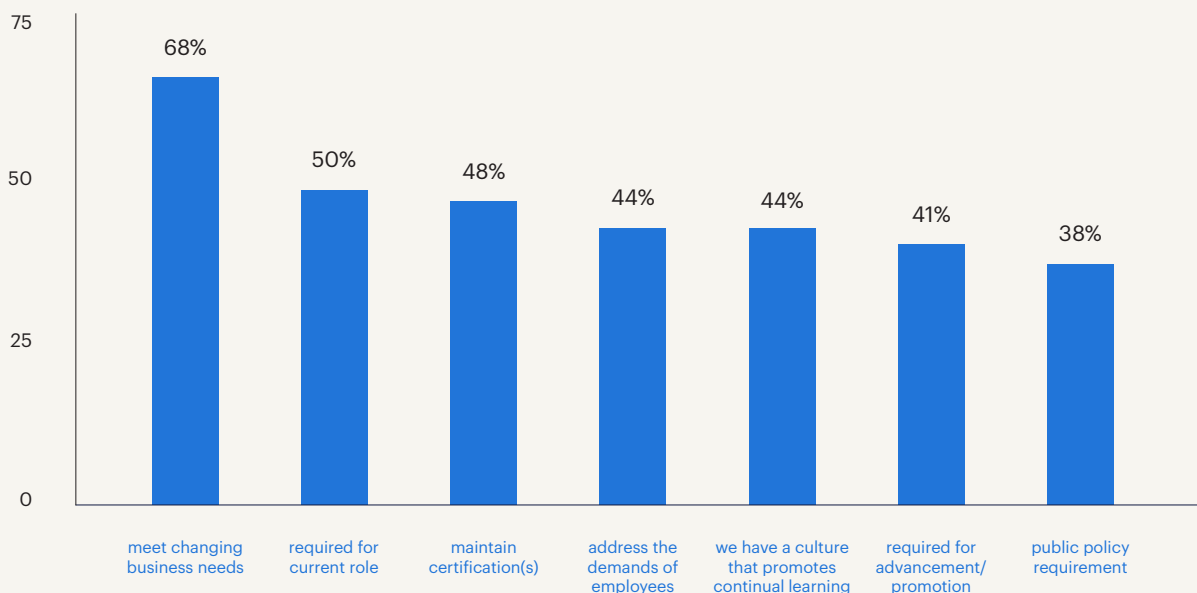
It's also worth noting that a sizable portion of companies offer training because their employees are asking for it.

Nearly half of all organizations (44%) offer skilling due to employee demand – a number that's likely to climb in the near future. Perhaps unsurprisingly, companies in computer-related industries were most likely (53%) to offer training due to employee demand, followed closely by those in manufacturing, construction and utilities (52%).

nearly half of all organizations (44%) offer skilling due to employee demand

However, catering to employees' desire for skilling proved to be outside the reach of the smallest companies in our survey. Just 11% of those with nine or fewer employees were able to offer training because their staff asked for it.

why do you ask/encourage or require employees to learn new skills or refresh existing ones? (select all that apply)



the ROI of skilling for employers and workers alike

Both employers and workers were confident that skilling paid off for their businesses and their careers, respectively, but some industries seem to have more success with skilling than others.

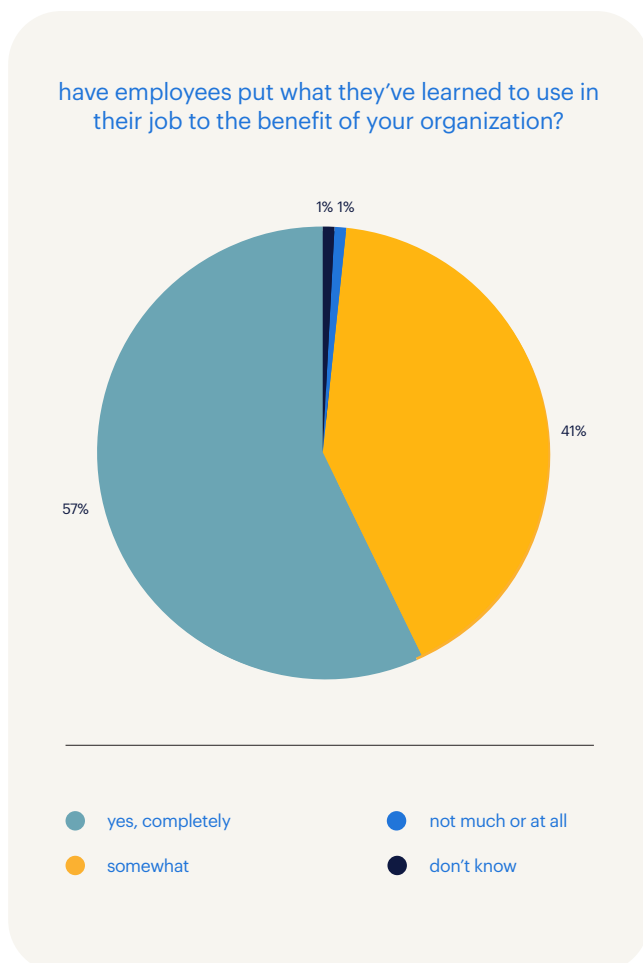
delivering ROI for employers

Almost all respondents (98%) said that employees were able to fully use or at least somewhat use their new skills to benefit their employers' organizations. The majority (57%) said their employees have been fully able to deliver value for their organizations through their new skills.

However, not every industry appears to benefit from training to the same degree. While 71% of respondents in computer-related fields and 67% of those in healthcare and life sciences said that training has paid off completely, just 38% in wholesale/retail agreed. More than half (55%) of those in wholesale/retail said that skilling initiatives had paid off only somewhat. So while the majority in those industries are seeing some value, there's clearly room for improvement when it comes to skilling initiatives.

There's also a significant chance that the training wholesale/retail employees receive isn't the problem, but rather who receives it. Wholesale/retail respondents were the second-most likely to say that training was only offered to some – rather than all – employees, coming just a percentage point (52%) behind manufacturing, chemical and utilities respondents (53%). In other words, wholesale/retail employers may just find that skilling has more impact when learning opportunities are open to everyone.

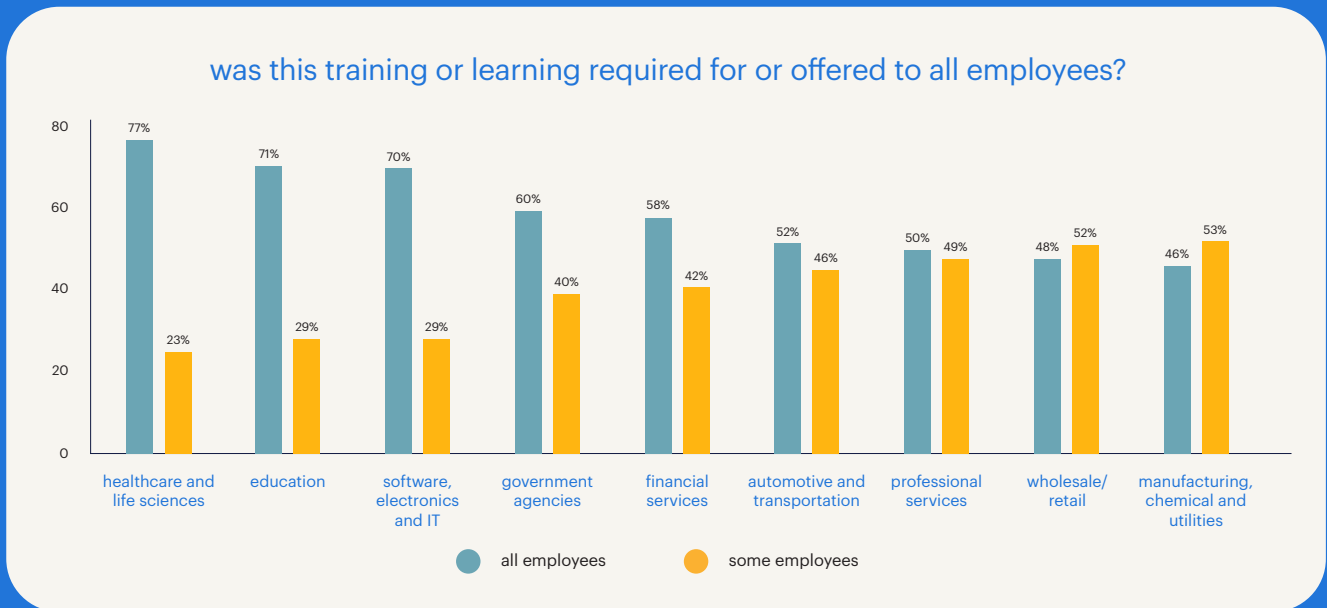
Meanwhile, automotive and transportation and financial services companies — two industries that have been and will continue to be widely disrupted by



emerging technologies — were among the least likely to make training universally available. Just 58% of financial services firms provide skilling to everyone, and just 52% of automotive and transportation respondents do the same. With so much changing so fast in these industries, making training universally accessible might mitigate the need to hire externally

when new technologies create critical skills gaps.

Among those who said their employees had not yet been able to apply their new skills, 60% said the skills workers learned were for future use rather than immediate practical application.



what's in it for workers

When asked why they upskilled or reskilled, 55% of employees told us they wanted to update their skills or refresh existing ones. A further 43% said they wanted to learn new skills to advance in their current role and stay relevant. They likely know that stagnant skills won't do them any favors in their careers, and they're proactively working to make themselves more marketable down the line.

Interestingly, almost 30% said they learned new skills to advance internally, rather than land a job elsewhere. This

underscores just how important it is for organizations to promote internal mobility by advancing the skills of their workforce, rather than adding new skills by hiring primarily from the outside.

30% of workers said they learned new skills to advance internally, rather than land a job elsewhere

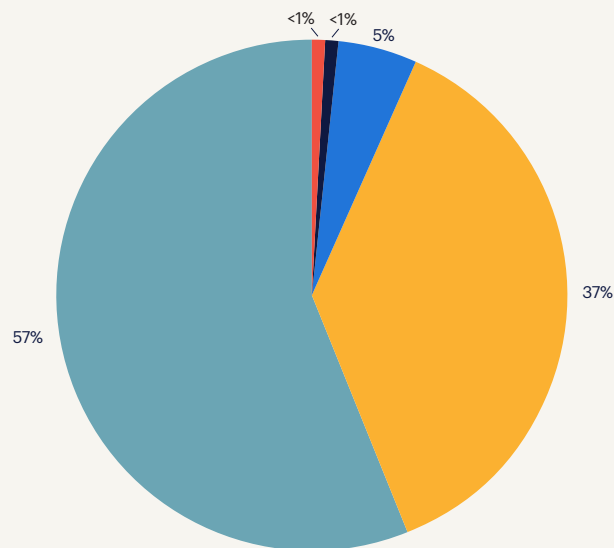
employees see the upside of skilling

Like the employers in this study, employees were equally pleased with the results of the time they invested in learning or refreshing their skills. The vast majority (75%) said the courses they've taken have been very useful, and 94% have been able to use their new skills at work. Fewer than a quarter said the courses were partially useful, and just over 1% said they weren't useful at all.

Interestingly, aerospace and defense workers were far and away the most likely to say they've been able to put their skills to work completely (78%) and the least likely (17%) to say they'd only been somewhat able to put their skills to work. Conversely, nonprofit workers were least likely to say they'd been able to put their skills to work completely (33%) and the most likely to say they'd been able to put their skills to work only somewhat. They were also most likely to say they hadn't been able to put their new skills to work at all (10%).

This may be the tale of two training budgets at work: defense and aerospace firms working on government contracts have significant (and significantly regimented) opportunities to bill training costs through to government agencies. Nonprofits, on the other hand, frequently have razor-thin budgets that place training initiatives out of reach.

have you put what you've learned to use in your job?



- yes, completely
- somewhat
- not much or at all
- not currently employed
- not currently employed and don't think these new skills will affect your chances of finding a job

who receives skilling opportunities – and how they get them

We asked HR respondents to identify who within their organizations received training and when. Answers varied greatly across positions and from one company size cohort to the next, but some important themes quickly emerged.

skilling isn't evenly distributed

Across all company sizes, team leads/managers were the most likely to receive or be required to take skills training. Financial services firms were far and away the most likely (84%) to require training for middle managers, followed by employers in education (75%), with manufacturing, chemical and utility companies coming third (69%).

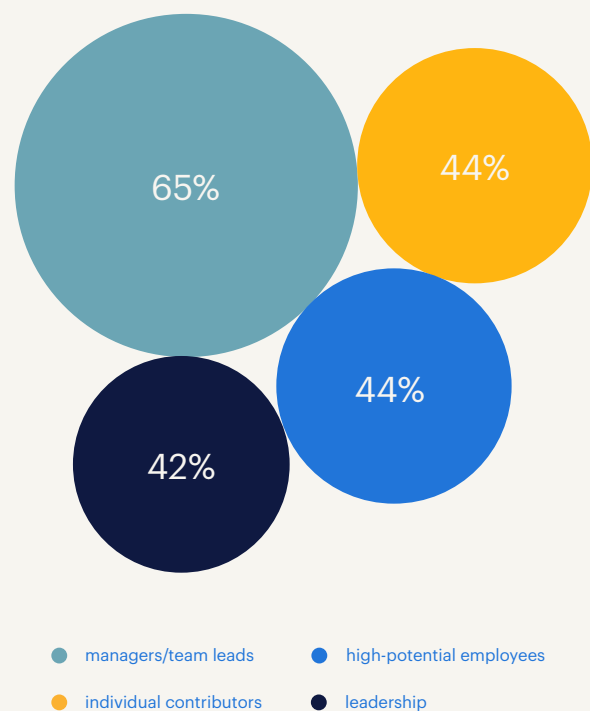
Leadership was the least likely to be a focus for training, albeit with an interesting outlier: Across all companies, leaders received skilling opportunities just 42% of the time, but at wholesale/retail companies, leaders were offered or required training 55% of the time, significantly more than any other industry. They were also among the least likely to offer training to individual contributors.

This may speak to the problem surfaced in the previous chapter: If wholesale/retail organizations are only lukewarm about the impact of skilling, they may be focusing on the wrong employees.

Speaking of individual contributors, our survey found that they were most likely to receive training at the smallest and largest company sizes in our survey. At companies squarely in the middle (250 to 5,000 employees), training opportunities for individual contributors cratered to just 36-38%.

This reveals a missed opportunity: If all employees are provided access to skilling opportunities, organizations will uncover new talents, hidden gems and future leaders. They will benefit from developing an inclusive and agile workforce with a growth mindset that is better prepared to adapt to change.

who was training or learning required of or offered to? (select all that apply)



how and when skilling happens

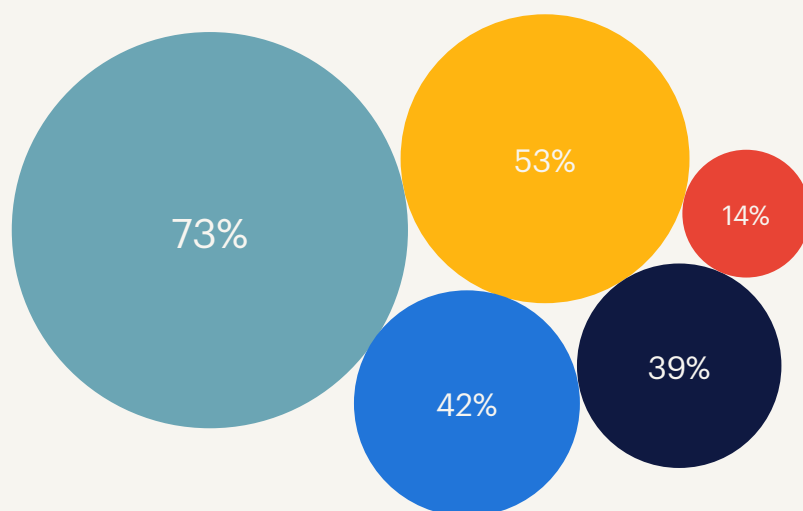
When asked about how their employees undergo training, answers again varied widely by company size, but one method emerged as a clear favorite among companies across the board.

different strategies for different industries

On-the-job training (OJT), project teams, internal gigs or stretch assignments were the preferred approaches, with 72% of respondents identifying these as their most common methods of learning. Internal L&D programs or 'universities' came second at 53%, followed by third-party providers like Coursera, LinkedIn and Udemy (42%) and stipends to fund self-directed learning.

College courses were by far the least popular route for skilling, with just 14% saying that was an option for their employees. Healthcare and life sciences companies were most likely to send their employees back to school, with 21% saying college was an option for their workers.

how did you make these upskilling/reskilling opportunities available? (select all that apply)



- learning through on-the-job training in current roles, project teams, internal gigs or stretch assignments
- company learning & development program or 'university'
- third-party course providers such as LinkedIn Learning, Udemy, Coursera and EdX
- offered stipend to employees to select their own courses or educational experiences
- college courses

how company size and industry impact skilling

Some noteworthy dichotomies also emerge when comparing the skilling preferences of very different industries. For example, 80% of manufacturing, chemical and utility organizations offer some form of on-the-job-training (OJT). Employers in the education sector followed close behind (79%), as did those in software, electronics and IT (76%). Financial services firms, meanwhile, were least likely to leverage OJT, with just 62% saying that was an option.

On-the-job training also proved most popular among the small companies in our survey, with 89% saying they offer some form of OJT. This is likely due, at least in part, to its affordability.

Employers in software, electronics and IT, meanwhile, were by far the most likely (69%) to make skilling available through internal L&D programs or 'universities,' while manufacturers were the least likely, with just 45% saying internal programs were an option. Tech employers also stood out by being most likely (52%) to offer employees stipends to pursue self-directed learning, while manufacturers were, again, the least likely (37%).

It might be tempting to view these distinctions as the story of a progressive industry versus a historically conservative one, but that's an explanation that simply belies a more important point: It's likely that maintaining employee productivity by maximizing their time on the floor is preferable to sitting them in front of a computer to learn a new skill while on the clock.

It's also possible that many of their employees may lack experience with self-directed learning or may even have limited or no access to computers. Employers in software, electronics and IT, conversely, almost certainly realize that the opposite is true of their employees, many – or even most – of whom have learned key skills in a self-directed fashion. In short, it's not about progressive versus traditional: It's about which approach to skilling will deliver meaningful ROI for employers and their employees.



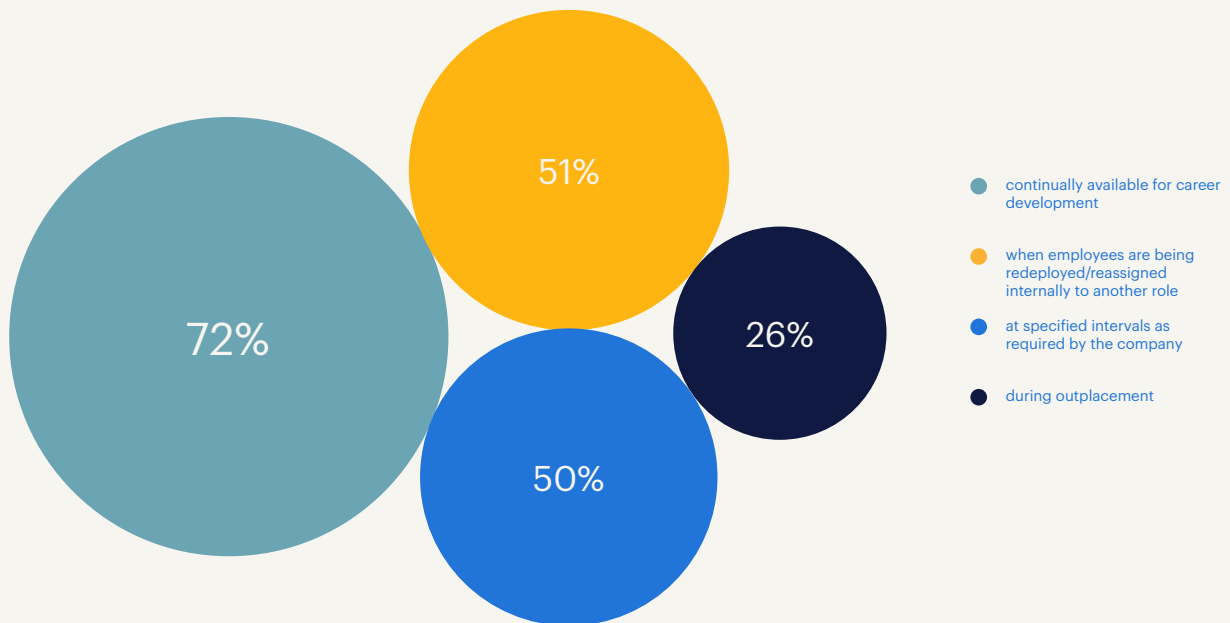
when skilling happens

Do employers primarily offer skilling opportunities at key milestones like promotions or transfers? Or is skilling something that happens continually, regardless of major marks on the calendar? Our survey found that the answer is a mix of both.

When prompted to select all of the intervals at which skilling happens within their organizations, almost 80% of the largest organizations make continual training available, and 72% of the smallest organizations said the same.

More than half of employers (51%) said skilling also happens 'When employees are being redeployed/reassigned internally to another role,' and 50% said 'At specified intervals as required by the company.'

when do you provide on-the-job training or courses to employees? (select all that apply)



the top skills for today – and tomorrow

Not long ago, some observers believed that those who didn't know how to code or had at least some facility with advanced tech would soon become unemployable. Every task that could be automated, many said, would be. In other words, the robots were coming for our jobs. Today, that future seems distinctly less likely.

recognizing the need for soft skills

While some jobs have been and will continue to be displaced by automation, it's more likely that jobs evolve and that new ones are created. The rote, manual tasks humans perform in many jobs today will eventually be automated, freeing workers to focus on tasks that only humans can perform, like critical thinking and problem-solving. In other words, tech skills will always be in demand, but jobs requiring soft skills like communication and collaboration aren't going away any time soon.

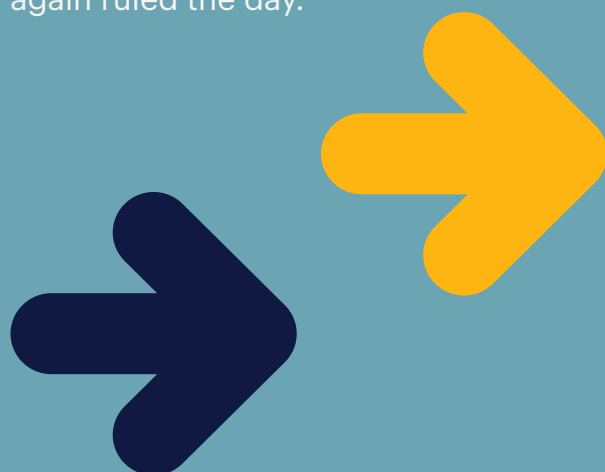
After all, these are transferable and lasting skills that give employees the ability to work cross-functionally and lead. In a tightening economy in which many companies ask their teams to do more with less, these skills will be more critical than ever – and our survey found that today's employers see the writing on the wall already.

In fact, 67% of all HR respondents in our survey said their employees had taken courses on 'soft skills/personal development (e.g., communications,

leadership, collaboration).'¹ While professional services firms and government agencies – industries that require significant human-to-human interaction – were most likely (80%) to encourage soft skills training among their staffs, manufacturing, chemicals and utility employers came in second, with 72% saying soft skills had been an area of focus.

That finding would likely have seemed unbelievable 10 or even five years ago, but as tech both relieves humans of rote work and creates new roles that require human interaction, it's hardly a surprise – and our survey found that that isn't going to change in the near term.

In fact, respondents made it clear that soft skills will play to a critical role in the workplace of the future. When asked to choose the three skills their workforces will need most in the near future, soft skills again ruled the day.



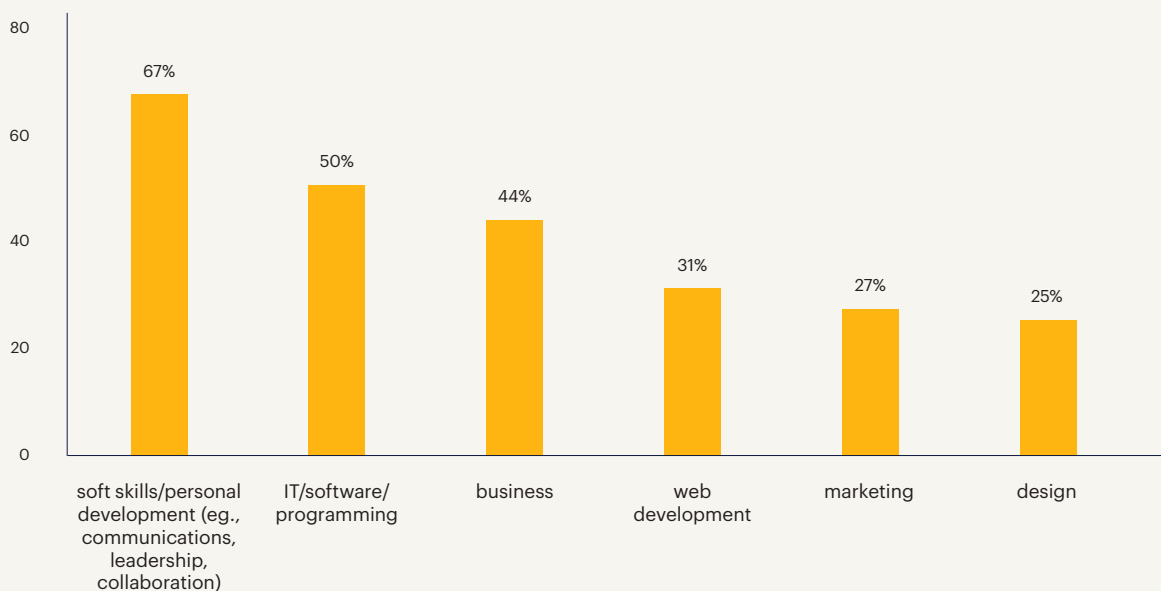
The most common skill needed for the future is adaptability (32%), followed closely by communication (31%) and problem-solving (23%). Adaptability is most prized by the largest organizations: 39% cited it as a must-have skill for the future.

Meanwhile, just 22% of the smallest organizations – adaptability's lowest rating among all company sizes – said the same. There's no surprise here: Large organizations often struggle to adapt and innovate, while small companies rarely do. But in an economy characterized by disruption, being able to adapt will remain a must for companies of all sizes.

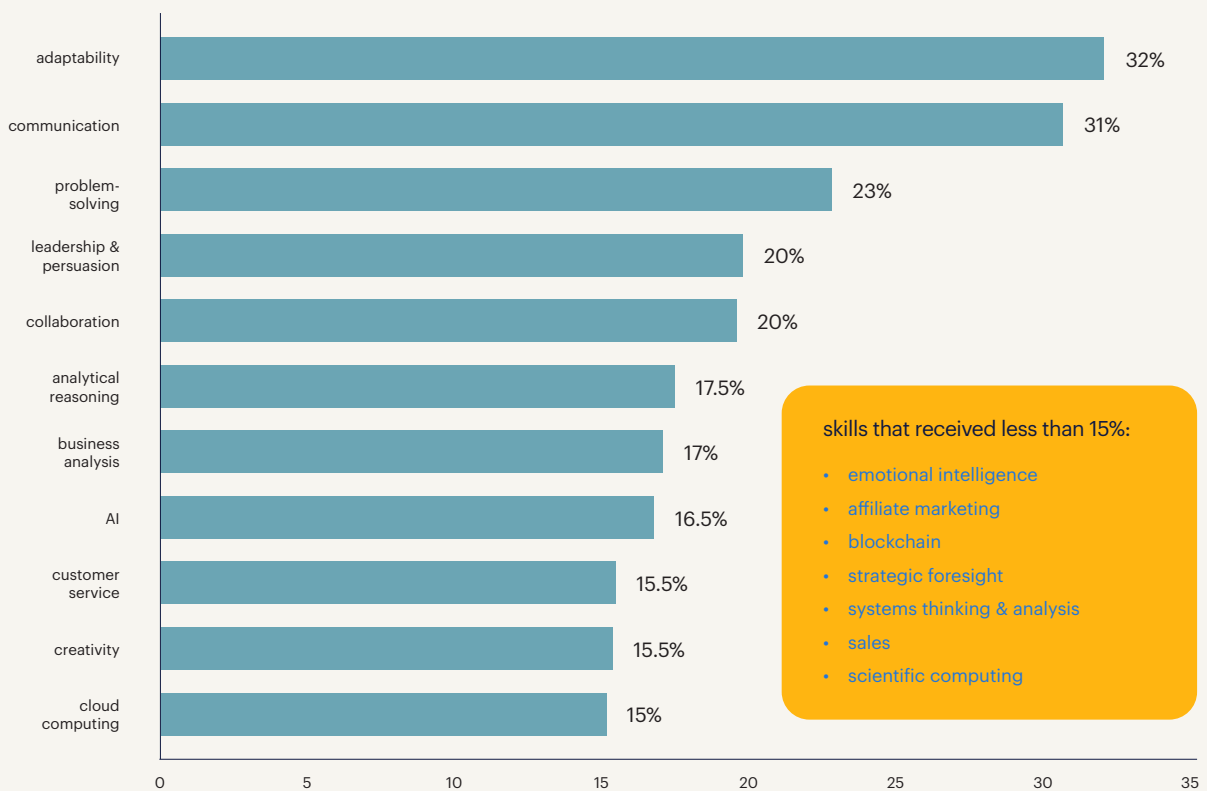
Of course, employees are aware of these trends, too, and our survey revealed that they're planning smartly for the future. Forty-two percent said they'd worked to earn or refine their soft skills. Soft skills are clearly a priority for life sciences and healthcare workers, 64% of whom said they'd made soft skills a focus in the previous year. Those working in government agencies came second, with 60% saying they worked on their soft skills in 2020.

in an economy characterized by disruption, being able to adapt will remain a must for companies of all sizes

what types of courses did employees take, whether through external course providers or internally through your company's learning and development program? (select all that apply)



what are the top skills that your employees need to learn in the near future? (choose top 3)



tech skills remain in focus

Of course, the need for hard skills – especially those related to technology – isn't going anywhere, either. Half of companies (50%) said employees had taken IT, software or programming courses, and 44% said their teams had taken business-focused courses. Tech training was most popular in, well, tech. An overwhelming 84% of employers within software, electronics and IT said employees had taken part in tech-focused skilling in the past year, with financial services firms (54%) coming a distant second, followed by automotive and transportation employers (53%).

Employees also made hard skills a focus area in the past 12 months, with 44% saying they'd taken tech-related coursework. Ninety percent of those in software, electronics and IT either refined their tech skills or added new ones in the previous year. In a field that requires constant learning just to remain relevant, this is hardly a surprise.

However, 41% of banking employees and 36% of those working in manufacturing-related fields also upped their tech game in 2020 – a clear sign that workers are widely aware of tech's impact on their industries.

how skilling is recognized and recorded

For employers, offering skilling is just one piece of the puzzle. Another major piece is recording it. Who has what skills, how proficient they are at those skills and when those skills were last refreshed are vital for companies that want to optimize workforce capacity. Fortunately, our survey found that the majority of employers already know that.

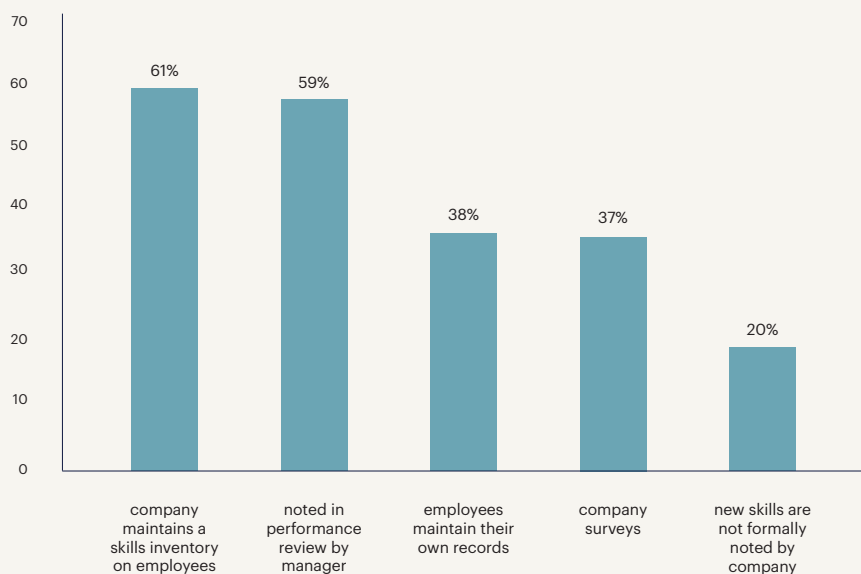
what gets measured gets managed

On average, 61% of HR respondents say their companies actively maintain skills inventories for employees. Manufacturers and other industrial employers were most likely (73%) to maintain skills inventories, while wholesale/retail companies were least likely (48%).

Only a fifth of companies (20%) don't maintain formal skilling records of any kind, which suggests the degree to which skilling is prized by companies across the board.

However, among the smallest companies in our report, just 22% maintain skills inventories. Performance reviews were also a popular option, with 59% reporting that managers noted skilling gains during annual or semiannual reviews. Professional services firms were most likely (71%) to leverage this option. Software companies, meanwhile, were by far the most likely (59%) to report that employees maintain their own records.

how were their new skills recognized or recorded? (select all that apply)



how workers approach skilling

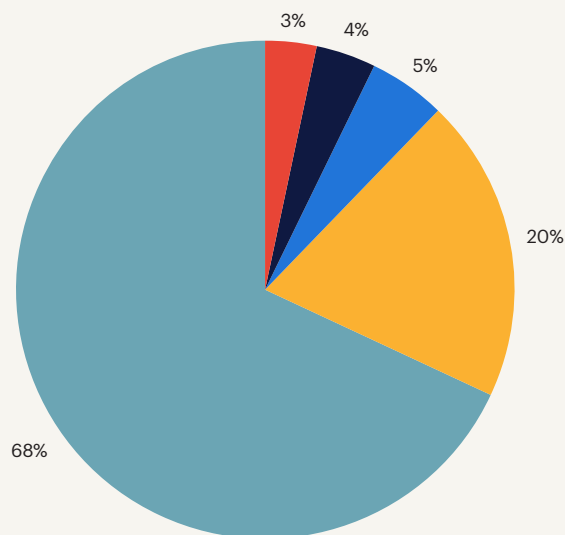
Do today's workers prefer to hone in on a single skill set, or do they want to have broader skill sets but with less depth of knowledge? Our survey found the former is overwhelmingly true – and not only that, employees rarely fail to see their skilling opportunities through to the end.

eager to learn – and willing to see it through

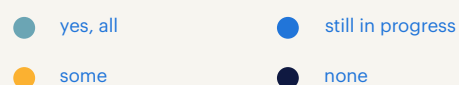
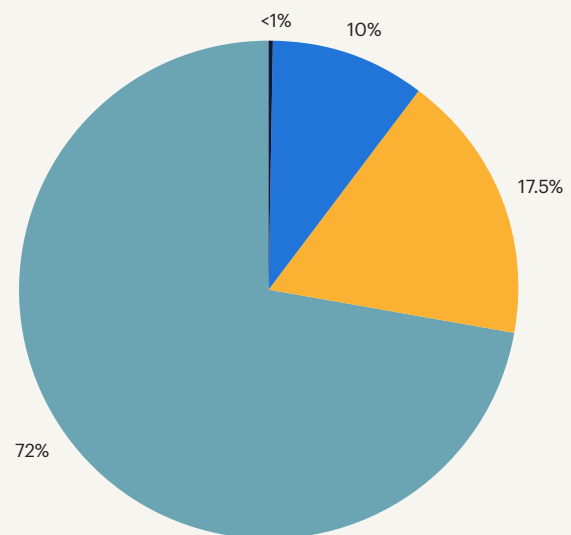
Whether it's a factor of time available or the desire to refine a single skill, our survey found that today's employees rarely cast a wide net with skilling. The vast majority (68%) said they enrolled in one to three courses in the previous year. Fewer than 20% said they enrolled in four to six, and just 7% ambitiously chose to enroll in seven or more.

Among all employees surveyed, 72% completed all their courses. But remarkably, among even the ambitious few (4%) who enrolled in 10 or more courses, 78% completed all of them. These voracious learners were more likely to complete their coursework than those who enrolled in fewer courses.

how many courses did you enroll in during 2020?



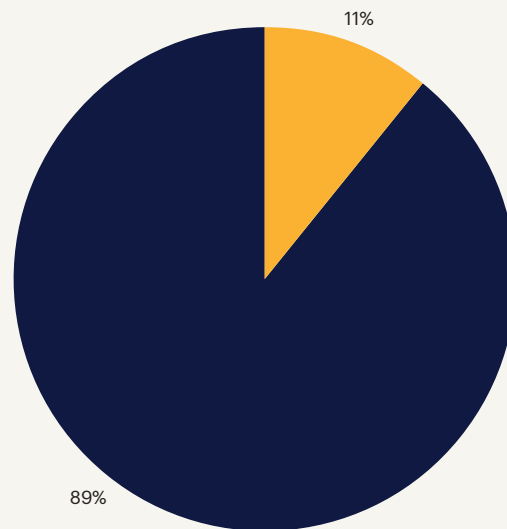
did you complete all courses?



deep versus broad: what employees prefer

When asked if the courses they took were interrelated and allowed them to learn or improve a specific skill, 89% of employees said 'yes.' Whether this is a strategic choice or merely a factor of limited time is unclear, but either way, it's a sign that employees are using their time to master select skill sets.

were any of the courses you took related to each other to allow you to build or progress in your knowledge of a specific skill?



● yes

● no

the connection between skilling and separation

Even with the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of respondents (56%) said their companies hadn't laid anyone off during the previous year. However, those that did were evenly split on offering skilling opportunities to impacted employees.

to skill or not to skill

Of those employers who underwent a workforce restructuring, 50% offered skilling to employees in outplacement. Employers in software, electronics and IT were far more likely to offer skilling following separation (37%) than any other field, with wholesale/retail coming in second at 28%. Employers in the automotive and transportation sector were least likely to do so.

Again, this is likely another case of employers in a booming sector — in this case, technology — having the resources available to build goodwill with separated employees. Whenever possible, employers should carefully consider offering skilling opportunities to outgoing workers. After all, it can help employees find their next roles sooner and decrease organizations' unemployment taxes and severance costs.

Additionally, leading companies believe in taking care of their employees throughout their journey with the company, from onboarding to transitioning to roles outside their current organizations. And best of all, our survey found that it works.

Among employers who did offer skilling, 85% believed it helped impacted employees find new work. Remarkably, 100% of those in automotive and transportation said skilling helped their former workers find new jobs, as did 95% of those in healthcare and life sciences, followed by 94% of manufacturers and tech companies.

85% of employers believed skilling helped impacted employees find new work

regional insights and trends

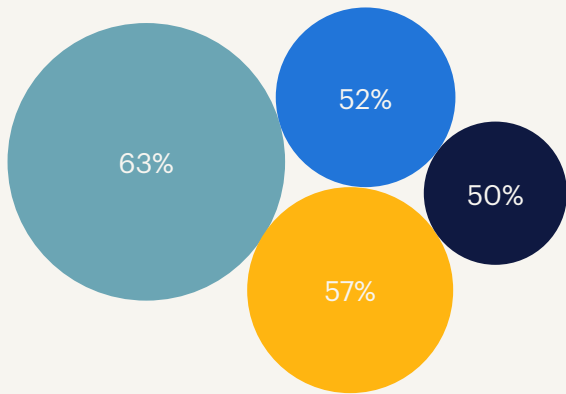
Since our survey was truly global, let's examine some nuances and emerging trends for each region covered.

australia

Australia most closely mirrored our survey findings from Europe, but there were some interesting differences, as well.

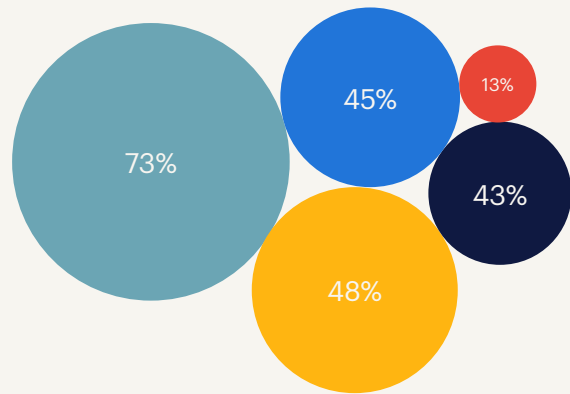
- While team leaders and managers are still top priority for skilling, Australian organizations are the most likely (57%) to offer training to high-potential employees.
- Australia was the only region where third-party course providers outperformed both internal programs and stipends for self-directed learning.
- Australian companies were most likely (77%) to say they have a culture of continual development.
- Australian workers were the least likely (10%) to take 10 or more courses in 2020 – but they're the second-most likely (32%) to have completed all their coursework.
- While Australians were aligned with the rest of the regions in that skills assessments would have the biggest positive impact on their workers' learning, they were also the most likely (54%) to also cite a broad view of learning opportunities.
- Australian employers' most wanted skills for the year ahead are:
 - communication (32%)
 - adaptability (28%)
 - collaboration (26%)

who was training or learning required of or offered to? (select all that apply)



- managers/team leads
- high-potential employees
- leadership
- individual contributors

how did you make these upskilling/reskilling opportunities available? (check all that apply)



- learning through on-the-job training in current roles, project teams, internal gigs or stretch assignments
- company learning & development program or 'university'
- third-party course providers such as LinkedIn Learning, Udemy, Coursera and EdX
- offered stipend to employees to select their own courses or educational experiences
- college courses

what are the top skills that your employees need to learn in the near future? (choose top 3)



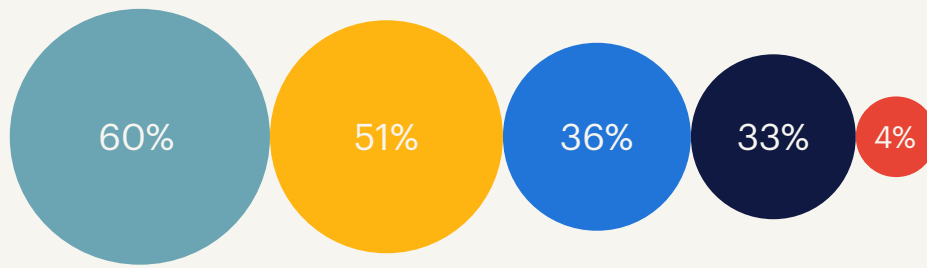
- skills that received fewer than 15%:
- affiliate marketing
 - creativity
 - AI
 - blockchain
 - strategic foresight
 - systems thinking & analysis
 - sales
 - scientific computing
 - UX design
 - video production

EU and UK

Like North America, companies in the EU and the UK largely followed the general trends in our survey, but a few data points are worth noting.

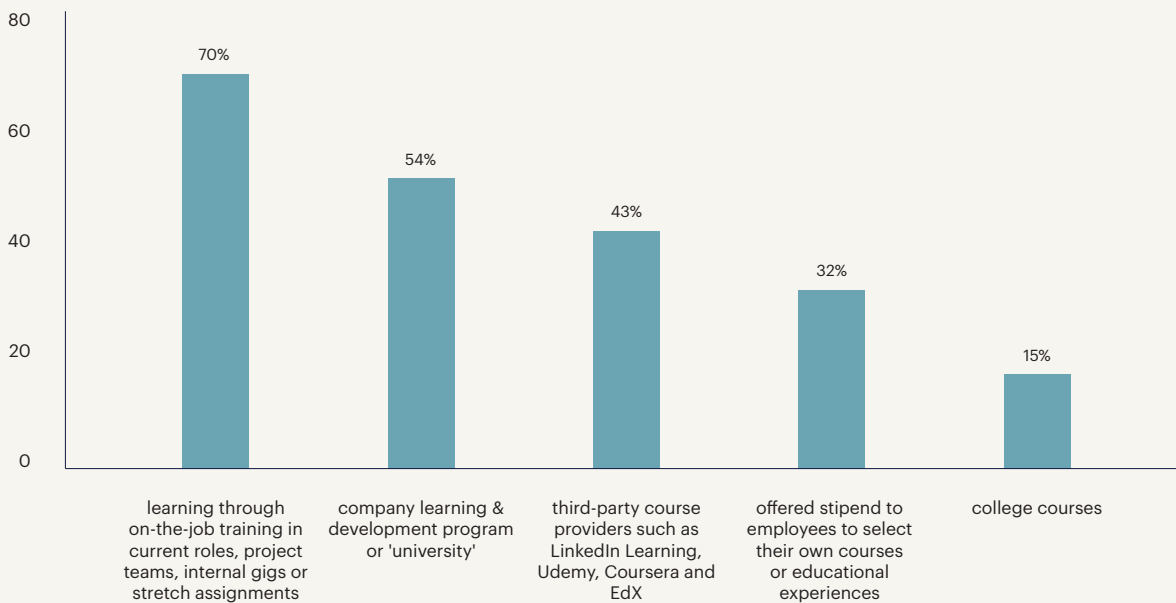
- Individual contributors are most likely (51%) to receive learning opportunities in Europe. Leadership, meanwhile, is the least likely (33%).
- Companies in Europe are least likely (32%) to offer stipends to support self-guided learning.
- 18% of European companies don't formally recognize new skills – more than any region in our survey.
- Companies in Europe were least likely to have reduced staff in the past 12 months – and the least likely (15%) to say they provided them the opportunity to upskill or reskill.
- Soft skills are a primary focus everywhere, but nowhere more so than in Europe, where 71% of employers said workers focused on these skills in the past year.
- The top three skills European employers want their workers to learn in the near future are:
 - communication (36%)
 - adaptability (36%)
 - collaboration (27%)

who was training or learning required of or offered to? (select all that apply)

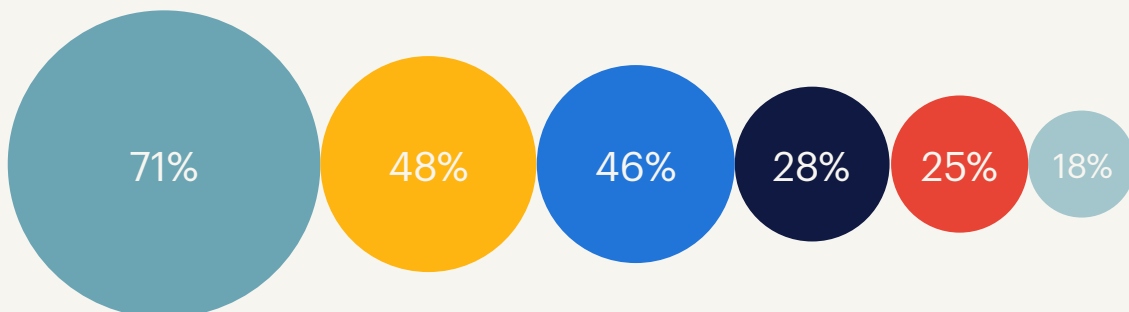


- managers/team leads
- high-potential employees
- other
- individual contributors
- leadership

how did you make these upskilling/reskilling opportunities available? (check all that apply)



what types of courses did employees take, whether through external course providers or internally through your company's learning and development program? (select all that apply)



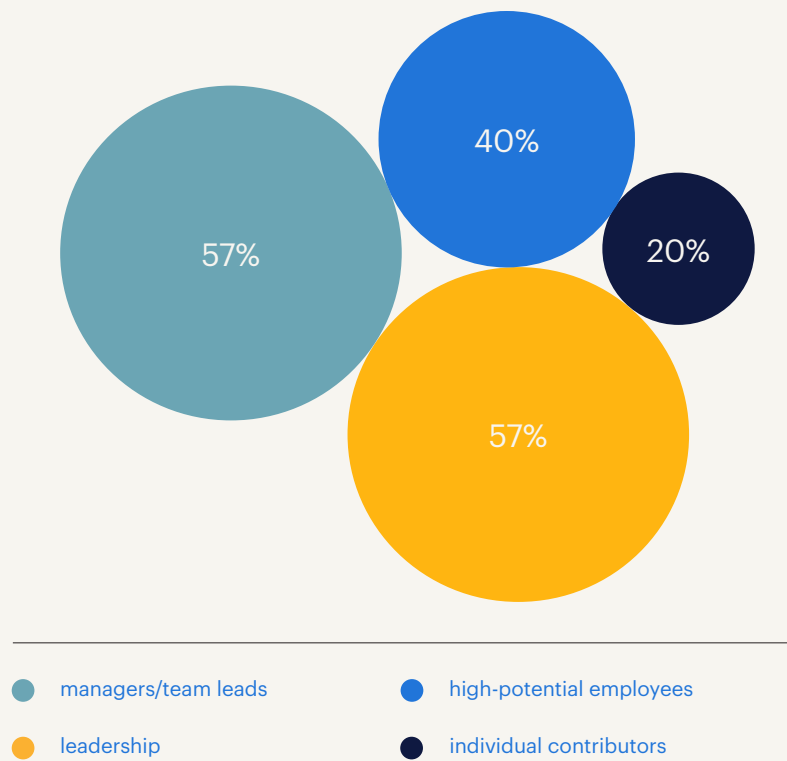
- soft skills/personal development (e.g., communications, leadership, collaboration)
- IT, software, programming
- web development
- business
- marketing
- design

india

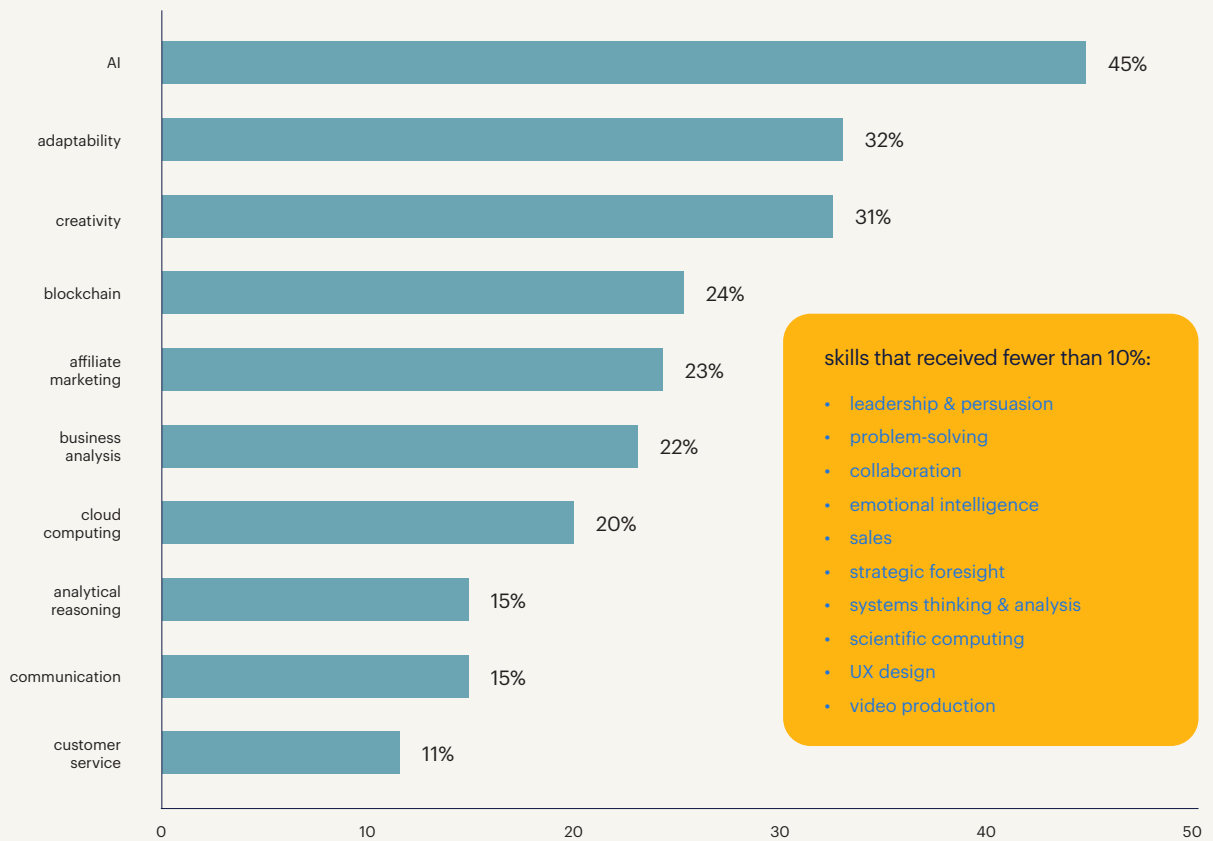
While India largely mirrored the rest of the regions in our survey, it also offered some fascinating differences.

- When it comes to who gets the opportunity to learn, Indian companies are by far the most generous: 77% said training is offered to everyone, far more than any other region in our survey.
- Unlike every other region in our survey, Indian companies skill their leadership equally with their managers and team leads.
- 81% of Indian companies said they maintain skills inventories – far more than any other region.
- Indian companies had the highest percentage of workforce reductions, but were by far the most likely (53%) to offer skilling to separated employees.
- They were also the most optimistic when it came to how effective that skilling was: 98% were confident it helped separated workers find new roles.
- Indian workers have a voracious appetite for learning. Among employers, 18% said their workers had enrolled in 10 or more courses during 2020, by far the highest number in our survey. This may explain why they're the least likely to have completed all their coursework.
- While Indian companies see the value of soft skills like everyone else in our survey, it's the only region where IT skills (65%) and web development (64%) took precedence over soft skills (62%).
- They're also the most bullish on employees' ability to put their new skills to work: 92% said employees' new skills had already delivered value for their organizations.
- In another major divergence, Indian companies' most-wanted skills for the coming year are:
 - AI (45%)
 - adaptability (32%)
 - creativity (31%)

who was training or learning required of or offered to? (select all that apply)



what are the top skills that your employees need to learn in the near future? (choose top 3)

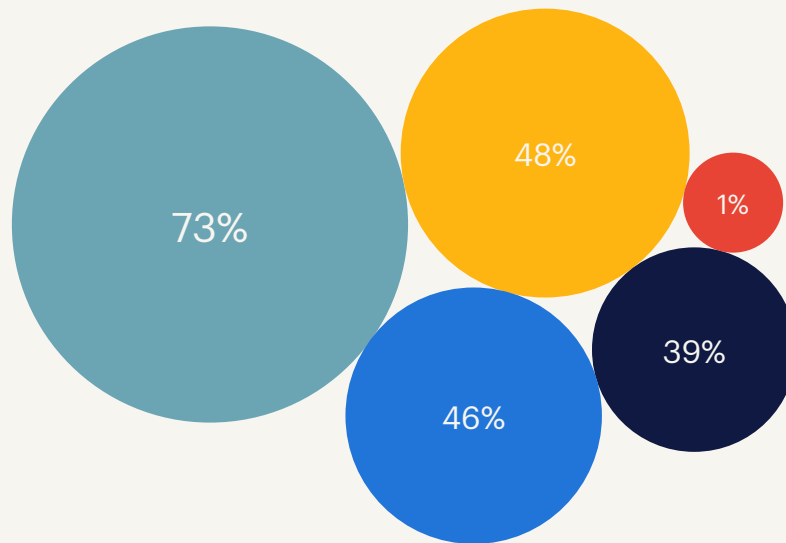


north america

The US and Canada largely mirror the findings of the overall report, albeit with some key distinctions.

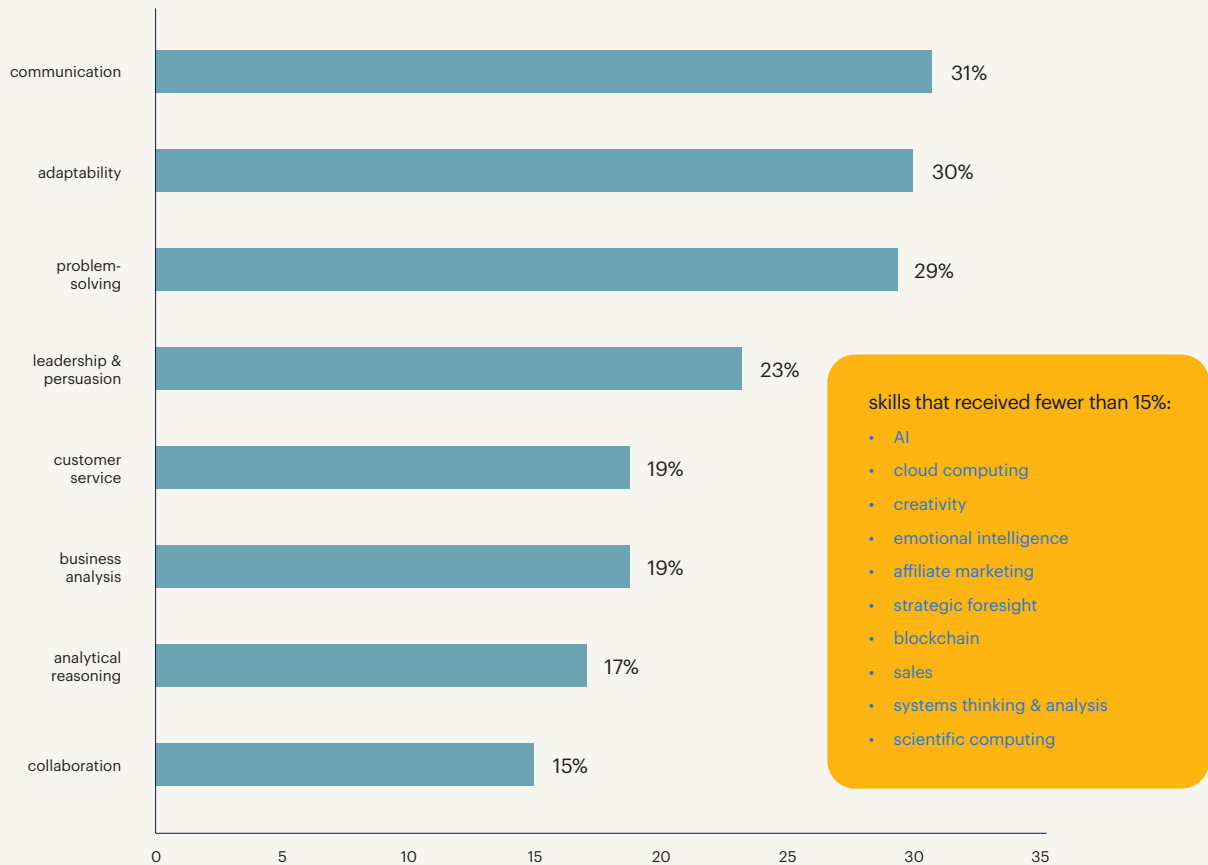
- Among North American respondents, 73% said managers and team leads received training – a rate significantly higher than any other region. North American companies are also the second-least likely (39%) to train individual contributors.
- Almost two thirds (62%) of respondents said training was available to everyone, making North America the number-two region when it comes to providing universal training to employees.
- North American companies were tied with the EU as the least likely (57%) to maintain skills indexes.
- Of the North American companies that had workforce reductions in the past 12 months, 17% of those offered skilling opportunities, making them the second-least likely to have let employees go – and the second-least likely overall to offer skilling to separated employees.
- North Americans were also the most skeptical about skilling's impact on former employees' career prospects. While nearly three quarters (73%) said they believed it helped former employees' career prospects, this was the lowest percentage among all regions.
- 66% of North American respondents said their employees pursued soft skills training – the second highest of any region.
- The top three skills North American employers want their workers to learn in the near future are:
 - communication (31%)
 - adaptability (30%)
 - problem-solving (29%)

who was training or learning required of or offered to? (select all that apply)



- managers/team leads
- leadership
- other
- high-potential employees
- individual contributors

what are the top skills that your employees need to learn in the near future? (choose top 3)



where does skilling go from here?

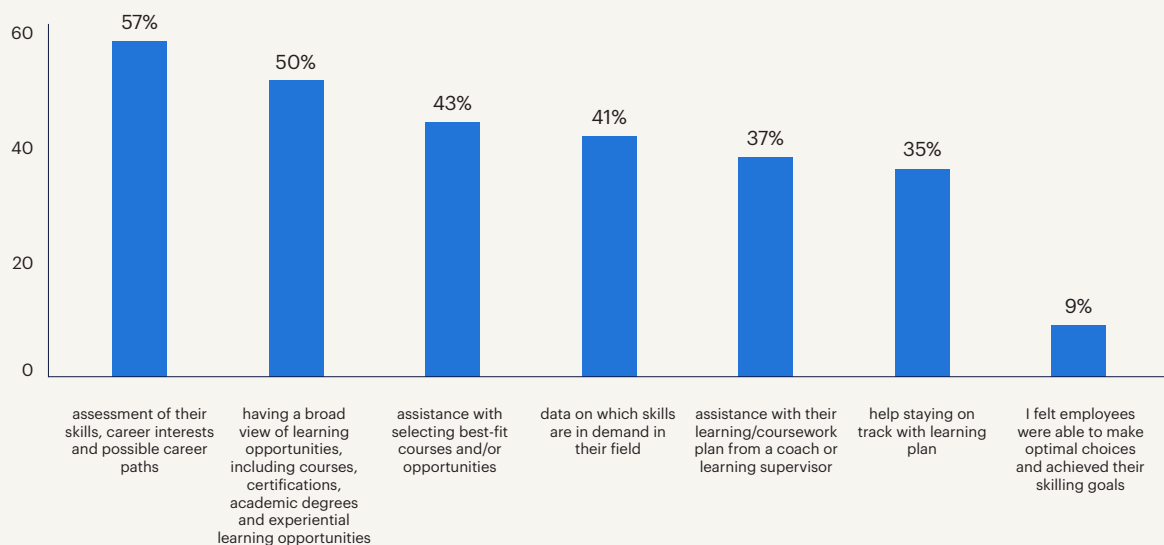
Skilling isn't new, but for many companies, getting it right continues to prove elusive. When asked how they could have helped their teams make better choices about which skilling avenues to pursue, many respondents indicated a need to better understand two things: what skills currently exist and where the relevant learning opportunities can be found.

The majority of employers (57%) said a skills gap analysis would have helped their employees make better decisions about which skills to pursue – and 51% of employees agreed. These assessments can help workers understand their proficiencies with current skills and what skills they'll likely need in the future, making them an invaluable resource for workers' learning journeys.

Both workers and their employers need some help when it comes to effectively charting skilling paths. Exactly half (50%) of employers and 42% of employees said a broad view of the learning landscape would have been beneficial. A further 41% said they would have liked insights into in-demand skills, and for 37%, expert help with a learning plan would have made a difference. Only 9% said they're confident that employees are able to guide their own learning journeys effectively.

And it's easy to see why – with thousands of courses available online and multiple avenues for building skills, the learning landscape can easily become a tangle without expert guidance.

what actions would have helped your employees make better choices about which courses to take or which on-the-job experiential opportunities to seek? (select all that apply)



better skilling through better partnerships

There's also a clear need not only for guidance on which courses or experiential learning opportunities to engage in, but on which skills to cultivate. It's unrealistic for workers or their managers to be able to survey both the entire learning landscape and prevailing industry trends clearly while performing day-to-day duties. A dedicated learning partner, however, can. Such a partner can work with employers and their workers to identify today's top skills as well as tomorrow's in-demand skills and chart learning paths for workers and organizations alike.

Lastly, our survey makes clear that today's employers know the value of skilling and have seen the results. It's equally clear that many can increase the effectiveness of their skilling initiatives by enabling their employees to first develop a strategic skills roadmap that uses data, analysis and expert guidance to plan their skilling journeys.

In the future, expect leading employers to look for such partners, rather than going it alone.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a headset and red-rimmed glasses, is shown in profile, talking on a phone. She is wearing a patterned top and has her hand raised near her face. The background is a bright, blue-tinted office setting.

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