

Instructure.

The State of Learning and Readiness

Building a Future-Ready Workforce

Insights and trends from Instructure's national workforce and higher education readiness survey





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Introduction

In a constantly shifting world, being ready isn't optional; it's essential. **Readiness means having the tools, the mindset, and the support to keep moving forward, whether learning happens in classrooms, at work, or throughout life.**

At Instructure, we believe readiness is more than skills or technology alone. It's about having clarity, trusted ways to grow, and learning environments that fuel genuine growth: wherever people are on their journey.

This report reminds us that readiness is a journey we create together. By connecting people with clear, flexible, and meaningful learning experiences, we can close the confidence gap and build a future where everyone has the chance to thrive.



Melissa Loble

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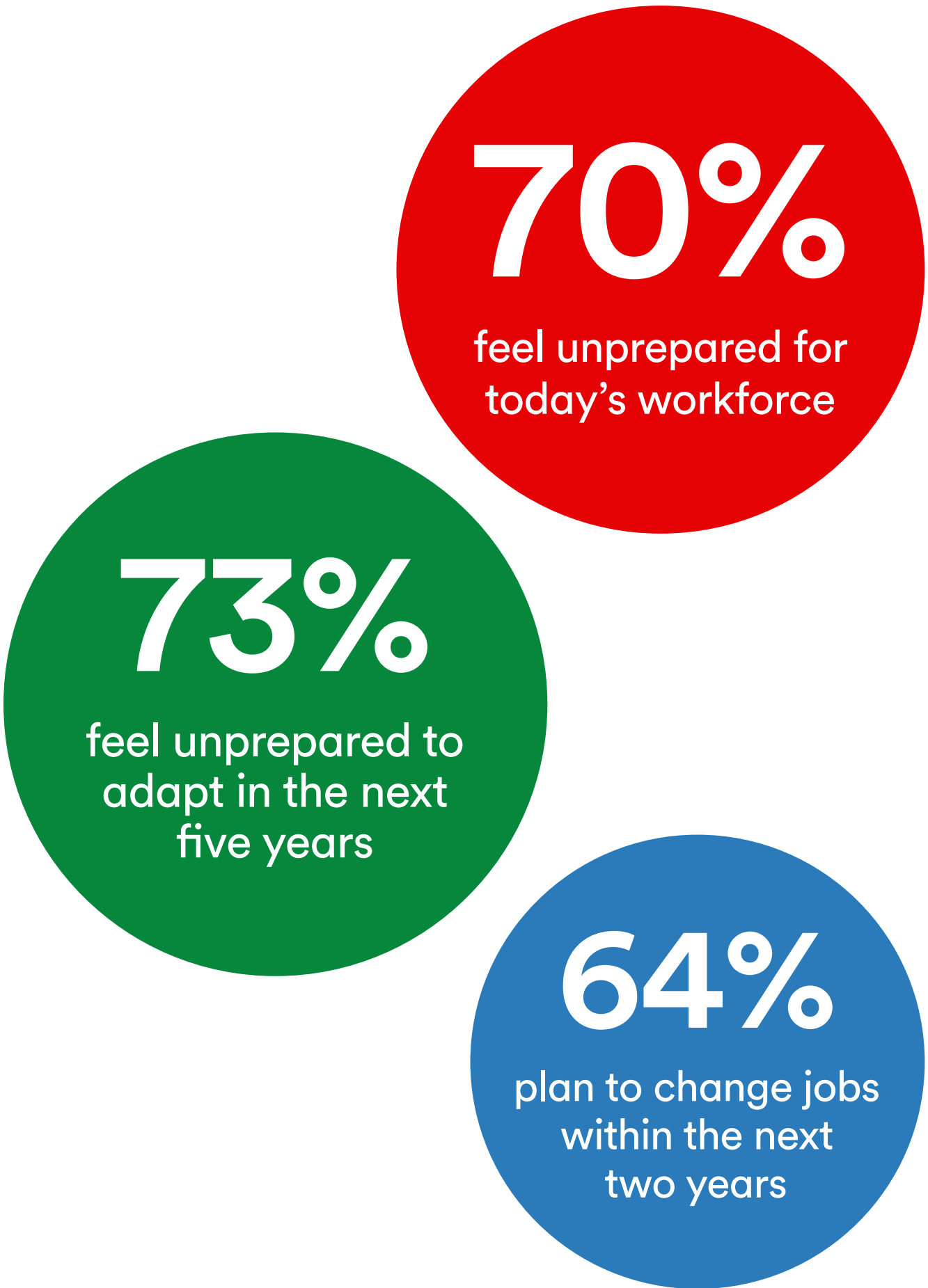
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Workforce at a Crossroads

Economic uncertainty and rapid advances in technology are reshaping entire industries, creating new opportunities but also deepening anxiety about how to keep up. The path from classroom to career is no longer straightforward, and many learners are left questioning which skills, credentials, or experiences will truly help them advance and stay resilient.

At the same time, people are eager to grow. Most say they would benefit from additional training and upskilling, yet many believe they'll need to change jobs or return to school to reach their goals. This readiness gap drives turnover for employers and highlights an opening for colleges and universities to work more closely with industry to help people translate skills into meaningful opportunities.

Workers are telling us they're ready to learn, but the systems around them haven't caught up. Education, training, and employment are still too often disconnected. Closing those gaps will shape how prepared people feel for whatever comes next.



Introduction	Workforce at a Crossroads	Readiness Pillars	Generational Readiness	Shared Path to Success	Harris Poll Method
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Readiness Pillars: What It Takes to Be Ready

Across every industry and learning environment, true readiness rests on four key pillars - Digital Literacy & Technological Agility, Continuous Skills Development, Adaptability & Career Mobility, and a Growth Mindset & Future-Ready Thinking. Together, they shape how people learn, grow, and adapt in a world of change.



Digital Literacy & Technological Agility

26%

cite lack of digital skills as a barrier

50%

are actually using AI on the job

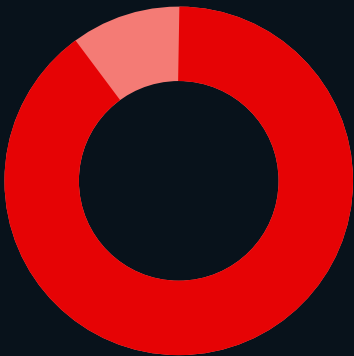
Gen Z

are most likely to feel overwhelmed by tech

In an increasingly digital workplace, comfort with technology is no longer optional; it's fundamental. **Yet, 26% of workers say a lack of digital skills holds them back, and only about half are currently using AI on the job.**

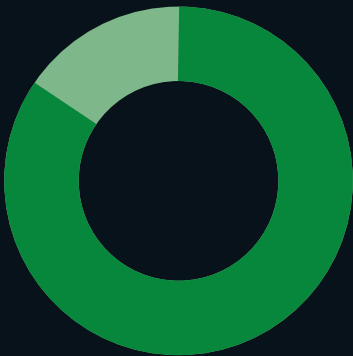
Gen Z and other younger employees are more likely to say the flood of new technology feels overwhelming. What helps is steady digital literacy training, from everyday tech skills to knowing when and how to use AI responsibly. Those investments give people confidence and make organizations stronger.

Continuous Skills Development



88%

say more training would help career advancement



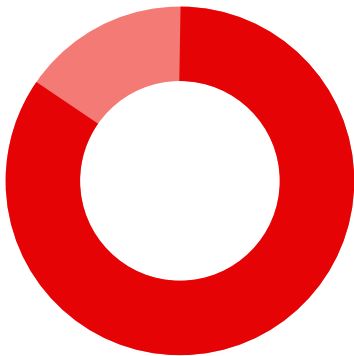
60%

want to upskill to switch careers, but don't know which credentials matter

Learning shouldn't stop once someone lands a job. Most employees agree: **88% say that more training would help them grow, and 60% are eager to upskill to switch careers; yet, many don't know which credentials matter most.**

Ongoing development, trusted certifications, and flexible learning can turn uncertainty into confidence and help people stay ready for whatever comes next.

Adaptability & Career Mobility



73%

worry they can't adapt to career changes



64%

are planning a career change soon



32%

worry their skills won't survive economic shifts

Rapid change is the reality, and workers know it. **73% worry they can't adapt to shifts in their career, and 64% are planning a career change soon, often to find better opportunities for growth.**

Economic uncertainty adds another layer: **nearly one-third worry their current skills might not hold up in an economic downturn.** When people have clear opportunities to pivot, reskill or move into new roles, they can meet change with confidence.

Growth Mindset & Future-Ready Thinking

72%

workers trust credentials, but need a clearer path

Real readiness

= learning, unlearning, and resilience.

Skills matter, but so does mindset. **72% of people trust that earning credentials will unlock real career opportunities, but many want better guidance on how to make sure their learning aligns with their goals.**

Readiness means more than just gaining new knowledge; it's about staying curious, embracing change, and seeing each challenge as an opportunity to grow and become more adaptable. While change is inevitable, helping learners understand the options available to them can provide a sense of direction and stability in uncertain times.

They may not be able to predict exactly where their journey will lead, but with trusted credentials and trusted paths, they'll know where to turn and how to keep moving forward.



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Generational Readiness: A Wake-Up Call

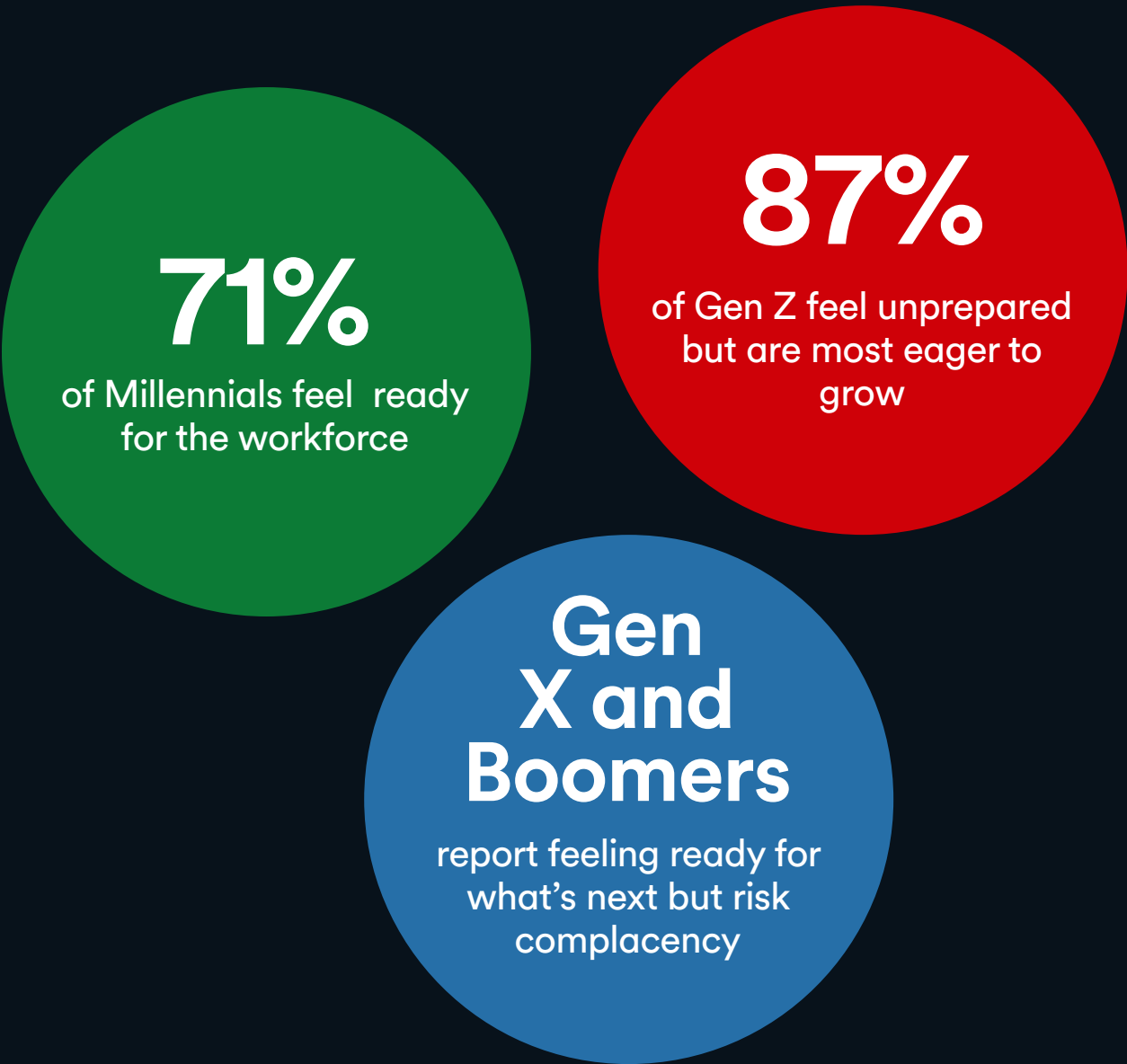
Readiness looks different for every generation, and today’s learners and youngest workers are sending a clear signal: they want help connecting their learning to real opportunities.

Gen Z, the newest generation in the workforce, feels the least prepared, with **87% stating they feel unprepared to succeed at work**. Many point to limited guidance, unclear paths from school to career, and uncertainty about which skills and credentials matter most.

Learners today will become the leaders of tomorrow. Supporting this generation isn’t just about meeting today’s expectations; it’s an investment in the workforce, innovation, and leadership of the future. Now is the time to shape not only their success, but ours.

By contrast, Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers report higher levels of confidence, but this shouldn’t mean readiness can be taken for granted. Change affects everyone, and staying future-ready means continually refreshing skills and mindsets at every stage of life.

These generational differences remind us that a one-size-fits-all approach won’t close the readiness gap. Flexible learning options, recognized credentials, and clear paths from education to employment can help every generation move forward with confidence.



Shared Path to Success

TL;DR: Readiness is the new currency of work.

Building a future-ready workforce is a responsibility, but it’s also a chance to create something better together. People want to grow, adapt, and feel ready for what’s next. Organizations and educators can help turn that readiness into reality in ways that benefit everyone.

The data shows that many people feel unprepared, but it also shows hope: most believe that training and upskilling can help them succeed. When individuals have access to learning experiences and meaningful credentials, they gain the confidence to navigate change. Employers gain teams who are resilient, engaged, and ready for what’s next.

Shaping a future-ready workforce is a collective effort.



Readiness happens when everyone plays a part:

Individuals

bring curiosity and a willingness to grow.

Organizations

provide tools, guidance, and opportunities to upskill and reskill.

Educators

deliver flexible learning and credentials that align with real-world goals.

Together, we can close the readiness gap and build a culture where learning is continuous, progress is clear, and everyone has the chance to thrive.

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Harris Poll Method

This survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Instructure and from April 23 - 25, 2025, among 1,210 employed U.S. adults ages 18 and older.

Data were weighted where necessary by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, household income, and political party affiliation, to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

Respondents are selected among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. The sample data is accurate to within +/- 3.4 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.