

A man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, is smiling and clapping his hands. He is in an office environment with a brick wall, a bulletin board, and a desk with a laptop in the background. A pink overlay box is positioned in the lower-left corner of the image.

Singapore Workplace Culture 2026

From always-on expectations
to sustainable performance



About Jobstreet by SEEK

Jobstreet is the leading employment platform in Southeast Asia, helping people live more fulfilling and productive working lives and helping organisations succeed. It is a subsidiary of SEEK, a diverse group of companies comprising of a strong portfolio of online employment, educational, commercial and volunteer businesses. SEEK is listed on the Australian Securities Exchange and has a strong presence across the APAC region, including six Asian markets – Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand – through the Jobstreet and Jobsdb brands. SEEK attracts over 500 million visits* a year in Asia.

***Based on survey research in Singapore, Dec 2024-Nov 2025.**

About this report

The Jobstreet by SEEK Singapore Workplace Culture Study 2026 explores how employees and employers perceive Singapore's changing workplace culture.

It examines how flexibility, economic uncertainty, technology and changing expectations are shaping the experience of work—including the pressure to remain responsive and reachable outside working hours.

The report brings together employee and employer perspectives to understand where expectations differ, how always-on working affects employees and what both sides can do to support more sustainable performance.

The findings are based on an online survey of 600 employees and jobseekers and 200 employers and hiring decision-makers in Singapore, conducted by Milieu Insight on behalf of Jobstreet by SEEK.

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Foreword

The way we work continues to evolve, but our understanding of what good work looks like must evolve with it.

Responsiveness, initiative and commitment will always matter. The challenge is ensuring they are understood clearly and do not become an unspoken expectation to remain constantly available. When employees are uncertain about what is expected of them, it can become harder to know when to step forward, when to set boundaries and whether their efforts are being recognised.

At Jobstreet by SEEK, we believe sustainable performance benefits everyone. Employees should be able to contribute meaningfully, develop their careers and protect the energy they need to perform well over time. Employers, in turn, need people who feel trusted, supported and confident about what success looks like.

This report brings employee and employer perspectives together to encourage a more open conversation about how work is designed and experienced. It offers practical guidance for employees navigating workplace expectations and for employers seeking to build environments where people can perform without constant availability becoming a measure of commitment.

We hope these findings help both sides move towards a healthier and more sustainable way of working—one built on clear expectations and mutual trust, as well as a shared understanding of what good performance looks like.



Esther Lee

Managing Director (Singapore)
Jobstreet by SEEK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Work is more flexible, but the pressure to stay switched on remains

Singapore's workplace has become more flexible since 2019, but work has not necessarily become easier.

Employees and employers report more flexibility and work-life balance alongside greater stress and more demanding job scopes. At the same time, wider forces, including AI and automation, economic uncertainty and the rising cost of living, are changing how people think about security, performance and what it takes to succeed at work.

Always-on expectations sit within this wider pressure system. Flexibility has not caused always-on working, but when work happens across different times and places, the boundaries around availability can become less visible. Against this backdrop, being responsive and reachable can become a visible way for employees to show commitment.

Nearly two in three employees feel the need to be always-on almost every day or a few times a week. Eighty-five per cent of employers say their organisations expect employees to be always-on somewhat often or often.

The impact on employees is clear. Among those experiencing always-on pressure, 63% report lower energy and 47% report lower job satisfaction.

Yet most say it has made no difference to their career progression or recognition at work. Employers largely recognise the risks. Among those whose organisations expect always-on working, 81% see a long-term downside. However, half of employees say they receive none of the forms of support listed in the survey.

The findings point to a need for greater clarity on both sides. Employees need to understand when responsiveness genuinely matters and feel able to protect time for recovery. Employers need to set clearer expectations, manage workloads and make support easier to see and use.



The Flexibility Paradox

27% **52%**

of staff report more flexibility & work-life balance

more stress since 2019

Employee Experience

63%

feel the need to be always-on almost every day or a few times a week

Employer Expectation

85%

say their organisation expects employees to be always-on somewhat often or often

Long-term Risk

81%

of employers whose organisations expect always-on working recognise a long-term downside

Always-on working is one visible sign of the wider pressure people experience at work. Moving towards sustainable performance will require clearer expectations, manageable workloads and support that makes a difference to employees' everyday experience.

KEY FINDING 1

More flexibility has not made work feel lighter

Flexible work has become an important part of working life in Singapore. More employees and employers now report greater flexibility and work-life balance than they did before the pandemic.

However, flexibility has coincided with greater pressure.

Twenty-seven per cent of employees say Singapore's workplace offers more flexibility and work-life balance than in 2019. At the same time, 52% say workplace culture has become more stressful and 46% say job scopes have become more demanding.

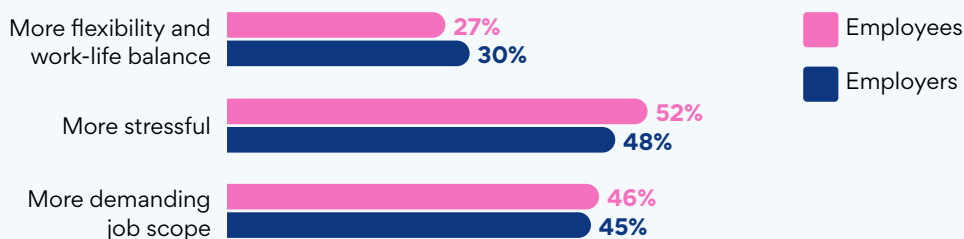
Employers see a similar picture. Thirty per cent report more flexibility and work-life balance, while 48% see greater stress and 45% see more demanding job scopes.

The findings do not mean that flexibility caused stress or heavier workloads. They show that changing where and when people work has not automatically reduced the demands they experience. When work happens across different times and places, employees may also feel a greater need to make their commitment visible through responsiveness.

Flexibility remains valuable. But to work well, it needs to be supported by realistic workloads and clear expectations, as well as time for people to recover.

This means flexible arrangements can give people greater control over when and where they work. Sustainable work also requires clarity about availability, workload and boundaries.

How Singapore's workplace culture has changed since 2019



KEY FINDING 2

Workplace pressure is shaped by forces beyond the office

Employees and employers point to many of the same forces changing Singapore's workplace culture. AI and automation are the most commonly cited drivers for both groups, selected by 56% of employees and 53% of employers. Economic uncertainty, inflation and the cost of living follow at 53% and 46%, respectively.

Although both groups see the same changes, they experience the pressure differently.

For employees, concerns are personal:

Salary growth and the cost of living are the biggest concerns for 60% of employees. Almost half (48%) worry about job security and stability, while 37% are concerned about work-life balance.

One in three employees (33%) also identify increased competition for roles as a driver of workplace change.

For employers, the concerns are operational:

More than half (52%) are concerned about the impact of AI and automation on workflows and teams, while 49% are managing salary expectations amid the rising cost of living.

Almost one in four (24%) identify organisational restructuring and leaner teams as a driver of change.

External pressures can contribute to always-on working, but organisations still shape how employees experience them through workload, priorities and performance expectations.



Employees are looking for greater security and balance, while employers are adapting to changing technology, costs and workforce needs.

Clear expectations become especially important when both sides are under pressure.

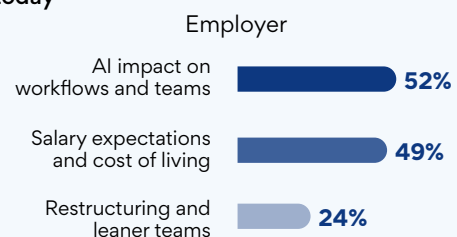
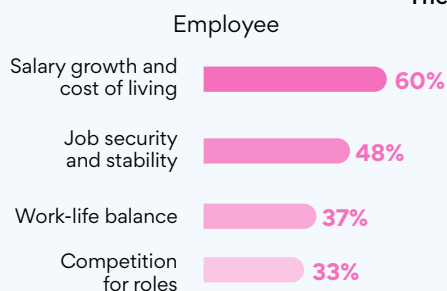
The same pressures, experienced differently

What employees and employers say is driving workplace change

 **AI and automation:**
56% employees | 53% employers

 **Economic uncertainty, inflation and cost of living:**
53% employees | 46% employers

Their biggest concerns today



KEY FINDING 3

Always-on expectations are part of everyday working life

In this study, “always-on” refers to being responsive and always reachable, including outside of working hours.

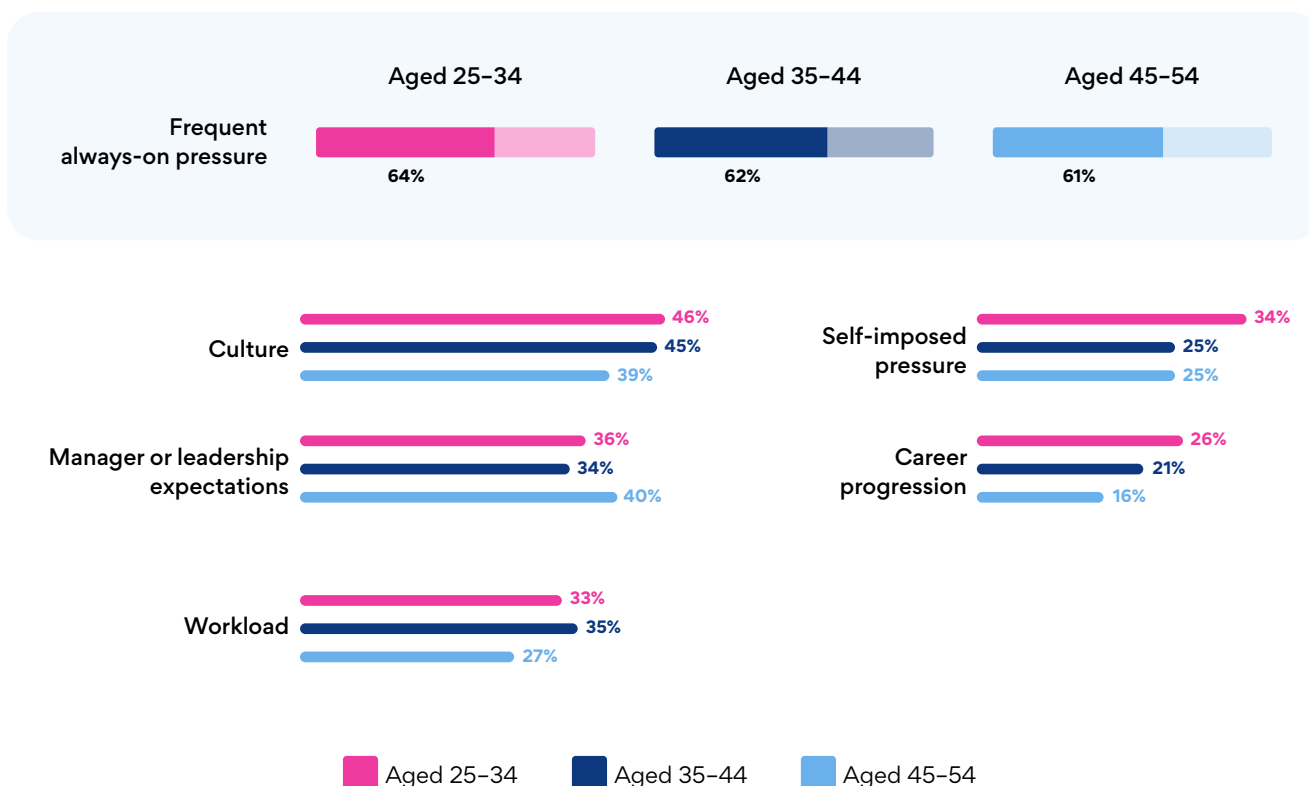
For many employees, being always-on is a regular part of working life. Nearly two in three (63%) feel the need to be always-on almost every day, or a few times a week.

Employers also recognise that this expectation exists. Eighty-five per cent say their organisation expects employees to be always-on somewhat often or often.



Always-on pressure cuts across age groups, but the reasons vary

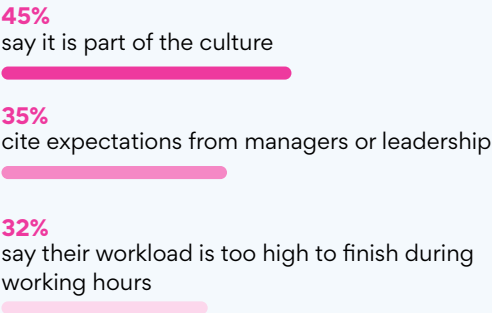
The frequency of always-on pressure is broadly consistent across the age groups analysed. However, the reasons employees give show some differences by age.



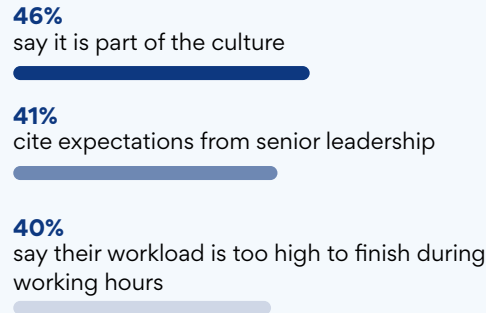
Always-on pressure is widespread across age groups, although the pressures behind it are not experienced in exactly the same way.

When asked why, employers and employees most commonly described always-on working as “part of the culture”. Looking beyond that answer reveals a more detailed picture.

Among employees experiencing always-on pressure:

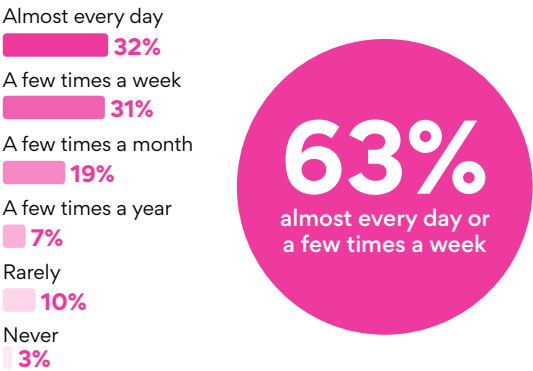


Among employers whose organisations expect always-on working:

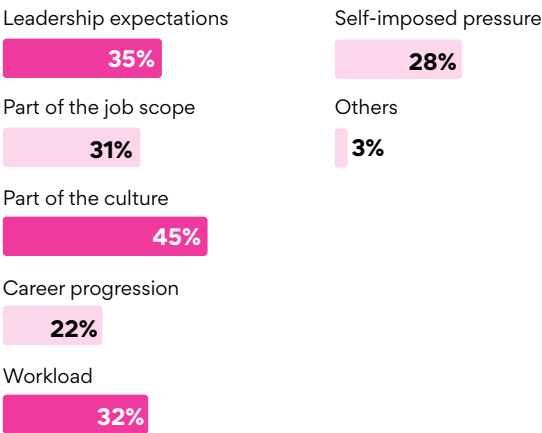


Always-on may be experienced as part of workplace culture, but these findings suggest it is reinforced by identifiable factors—including leadership expectations and workload—which organisations can address.

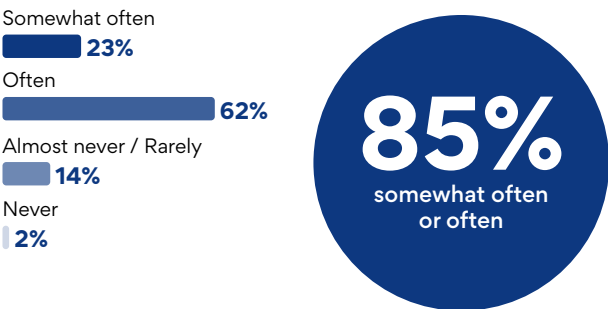
How often employees feel the need to be always-on



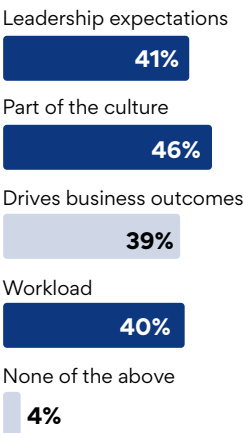
Reasons employees feel the need to be always-on



How often employers say their organisation expects always-on working



Reasons employers expect employees to be always-on

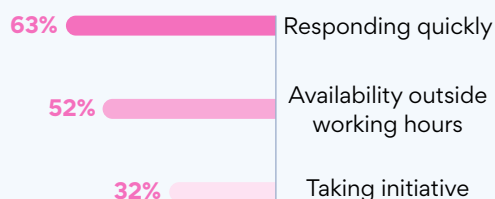


KEY FINDING 4

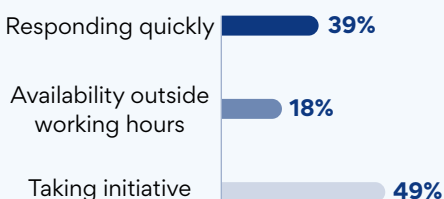
Employers ask for initiative, but employees feel pressure to be responsive

Employers whose organisations expect always-on working most commonly say they want employees to take initiative and deliver results. Employees experiencing always-on pressure are more likely to describe it through speed and availability.

How employees demonstrate being always-on



What employers say they expect most



These findings suggest a possible gap between the performance employers want and the behaviours employees believe will demonstrate it.

An employer may intend to encourage ownership and results. An employee may experience that expectation as a need to respond immediately, stay visible or remain reachable after working hours.

This does not mean employers and employees are necessarily in conflict. It shows why leaders need to explain what good performance looks like, which outcomes matter and when a fast response is genuinely required.

“

Clearer performance expectations can reduce the need for employees to use constant responsiveness as proof of commitment.

- Esther Lee,
Managing Director (Singapore),
Jobstreet by SEEK



KEY FINDING 5

Always-on working takes energy, without offering a reliable career return

The effects of always-on working are felt most clearly in employees' energy and satisfaction.

Among those experiencing always-on pressure, 63% say it has reduced their energy and 47% say it has reduced their job satisfaction.

The perceived career return is less clear: 62% say always-on working has made no difference to their career progression, and 59% say it has made no difference to recognition at work.

Its effect on the quality of work is more mixed: 30% report an improvement, 52% see no difference, and 18% report a decline.

Employees are also responding to always-on expectations in different ways. The most common response, cited by 26%, is to work intensely when needed while otherwise protecting their time.

This suggests many people are still willing to work hard, but want to direct that effort towards the moments when it matters most.

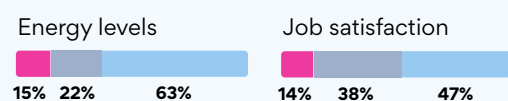
However, signs of strain remain:

- 22% believe always-on culture is unsustainable because of burnout
- 11% want to opt out but feel unable to
- 10% say they are actively looking for a way out
- Only 6% say always-on working is how people get ahead

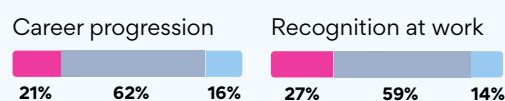
Separately, 36% of all employees say they are exploring new career opportunities in response to their broader work concerns. While this cannot be attributed specifically to always-on working, it shows the wider retention context in which these pressures are being experienced.

The cost and perceived return of always-on working

What employees say it costs them



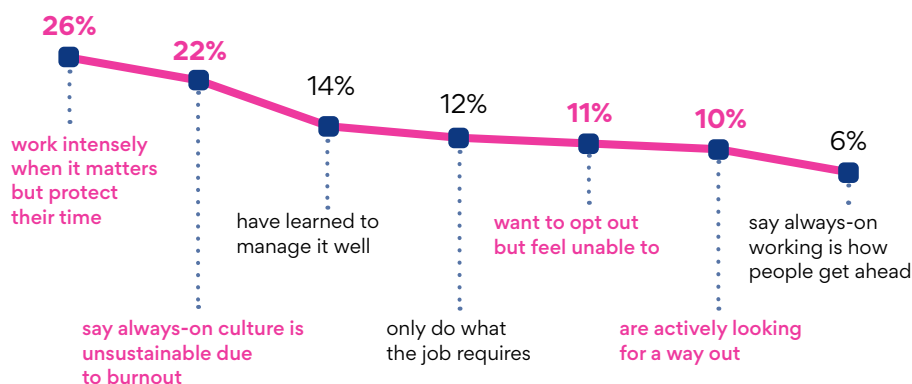
What employees say it gives them



Increased No difference Decreased

How employees are responding to always-on expectations

Employees are not responding to always-on in one way. While some adapt and protect their time, others question whether it's sustainable.



Figures are rounded to one decimal place and may not sum to 100%.

KEY FINDING 6

Employers recognise the risk, but support is not always reaching employees

Employers are not blind to the risks of always-on working. Among those whose organisations expect it, 81% recognise a long-term downside.

81%

recognise a long-term downside

66%

see short-term gains but a long-term risk of burnout

15%

believe always-on expectations lead to disengagement and turnover

48%

have no plans to introduce related policies in the foreseeable future

Recognition has not always translated into support employees can see or use. Half of employees report receiving none of the forms of support listed in the survey, compared with 22% of employers who say their organisation offers none.

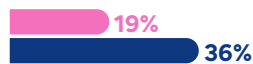
The support perception gap

Form of support

Workload conversations



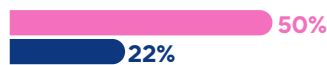
Boundary protections



Confidential feedback channels



None of the listed support



Introducing support is only the first step. Employers also need to make sure employees know it exists, feel able to use it and experience a meaningful difference in their working lives.

Recognising the risk is not the same as changing employees' everyday experience.

How can employees protect their time?

Flexibility gives employees greater choice over how work fits into their lives. But it can also make it easier for work to extend beyond conventional hours. Making flexibility sustainable requires employees to understand what is expected of them and feel able to protect time for recovery.

Protecting time does not mean caring less about work. It means directing energy towards the work that matters and making availability a deliberate choice rather than a permanent state.



1. Clarify what needs an immediate response

Ask which requests are genuinely urgent, which are important but can wait and which can be handled asynchronously. Agree with your manager on the situations that require an after-hours response. This can reduce uncertainty and make it easier to switch off when nothing is genuinely urgent.

2. Make boundaries visible

Use calendar blocks, status messages and clear handovers to show when you are available and when colleagues can expect a response. Visible boundaries can help prevent a reasonable delay from being interpreted as disengagement.

3. Focus effort on the outcomes that matter

Ask how initiative, performance and progression will be assessed. Understanding what good performance looks like can help employees focus on results rather than relying on constant responsiveness as an unspoken career strategy.

4. Review priorities and raise concerns early

Regularly take stock of your workload and prioritise tasks according to business needs and performance outcomes. Use this as the basis for conversations with your manager about what needs attention now, what can wait, and where trade-offs may be required.

Thirty-seven per cent of employees manage work concerns by setting clearer boundaries, but only 11% speak with their manager. Regular alignment can help address pressure before an excessive workload becomes normal.

5. Make recovery part of the working rhythm

Taking leave or resting is the most common way employees cope with always-on pressure, cited by 43%. However, 9% say they lack the time or energy to recover. Recovery should not begin only when exhaustion has already set in. Employees can plan leave, protect breaks and use the support available to them before pressure becomes harder to manage.

A conversation starter!
(For aligning on priorities, response times and when you will be offline)

“I’ve reviewed my current priorities against the outcomes we need to deliver. My proposed focus is [X and Y], with [Z] following after. Can we align on this, including anything that genuinely needs an immediate response?”

“I’ll be offline [after 9pm / while I’m on leave], so I’d also like to agree on any cover or handover needed during that time.”

What employers can do beyond offering flexibility

Flexible working arrangements remain important to employees. But flexibility alone cannot address unclear expectations, excessive workload, or uncertainty about career progression.

Employers can create a more sustainable workplace by looking at how work is designed, recognised and managed.



1. Make good performance clear

Define the outcomes that matter, expected response times and what initiative looks like, so employees do not need to rely on speed or constant availability to demonstrate commitment.

2. Review workload and priorities regularly

Review team capacity and make the necessary trade-offs clear when priorities change. Employees should understand what needs attention now, what can wait, what should stop, and where additional support may be required.

3. Protect boundaries in practice

Differentiate between exceptional situations that may require short-term responsiveness outside working hours and normal periods when employees should be able to put down work completely. Leaders should communicate these expectations clearly and model the boundaries they want staff to follow.

4. Prepare managers for better conversations

Equip managers to discuss workload, career progression, AI-related change and wellbeing. Regular conversations can identify pressure early and connect employees with the right support.

5. Give employees confidence in their future

AI and digital training should connect to visible career pathways and internal opportunities, so employees understand how their skills and performance can help them grow.

Where employers plan to invest

Current investment plans show that employers are preparing people and systems for the future of work:

34% plan investment in AI and digital skills

25% plan better technology and workplace tools

23% plan flexible work arrangements

22% plan upskilling and reskilling

Fewer employers plan to invest in areas directly connected to workload and workplace support:

14% plan wellbeing and mental-health initiatives

13% plan workload-management improvements

12% plan leadership and manager development

12% plan additional hiring to reduce workload pressure

Technology, skills and flexibility all matter. Sustainable performance also requires investment in the conditions under which people work.



From always-on to sustainable performance

Employees and employers both recognise a degree of shared responsibility.

Employees 55%

Employers 45%

Survey response:

Both sides contribute equally to always-on working.

But shared responsibility does not mean identical responsibility. Employees can clarify expectations and protect their time. Employers have greater influence over workload, performance signals, manager behaviour and access to support.

Creating a more sustainable workplace requires three shifts:

1. From availability to outcomes

People should be assessed by the value and results of their work, not how quickly, visibly or constantly they respond.

2. From flexibility to sustainable work design

Flexibility works best when it is supported by manageable workloads, clear boundaries and time to recover.

3. From support on paper to support in practice

Policies matter only when employees know they exist, feel safe using them and experience a meaningful difference.

Responsiveness will always matter at certain moments. It becomes unsustainable when it turns into a permanent test of commitment.



The opportunity is to create a workplace where employees know what to switch on for, when they can switch off, and how good performance will be recognised.

LEARN MORE

Contact your account manager or reach out to our local representatives at customerservice-sg@seek.com for more information, if you're interested in a Workplace Culture deep dive or training for people leaders.