

Staffmark Group's 2026

Heart of Work Study: Key Findings



BASED ON 3,746 RESPONDENTS ACROSS EIGHT MAJOR INDUSTRIES (JULY 2026).

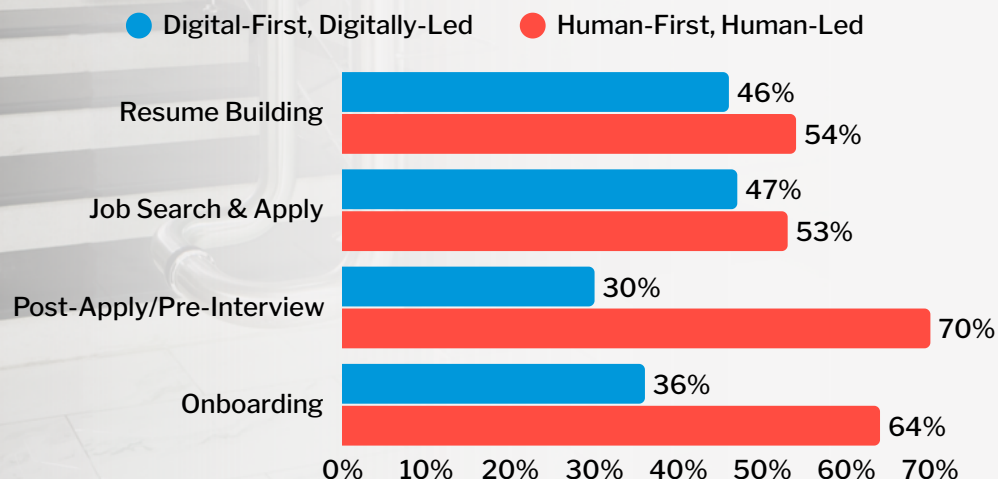
People Over Platforms

Staffmark Group's first annual Heart of Work Index scored 71 out of 100, where 0 represents an all-digital hiring experience and 100 represents an all-human one. Workers' preferred hiring experience leans decisively toward human interaction rather than digital/automated tools.

WHERE WORKERS WANT TECHNOLOGY – AND WHERE THEY DON'T

Workers want technology to open the door and people to guide them through it. Technology is used most for job search/apply and resume building. Human interaction dominates once workers move further into the process, most notably at post-apply, pre-interview and onboarding.

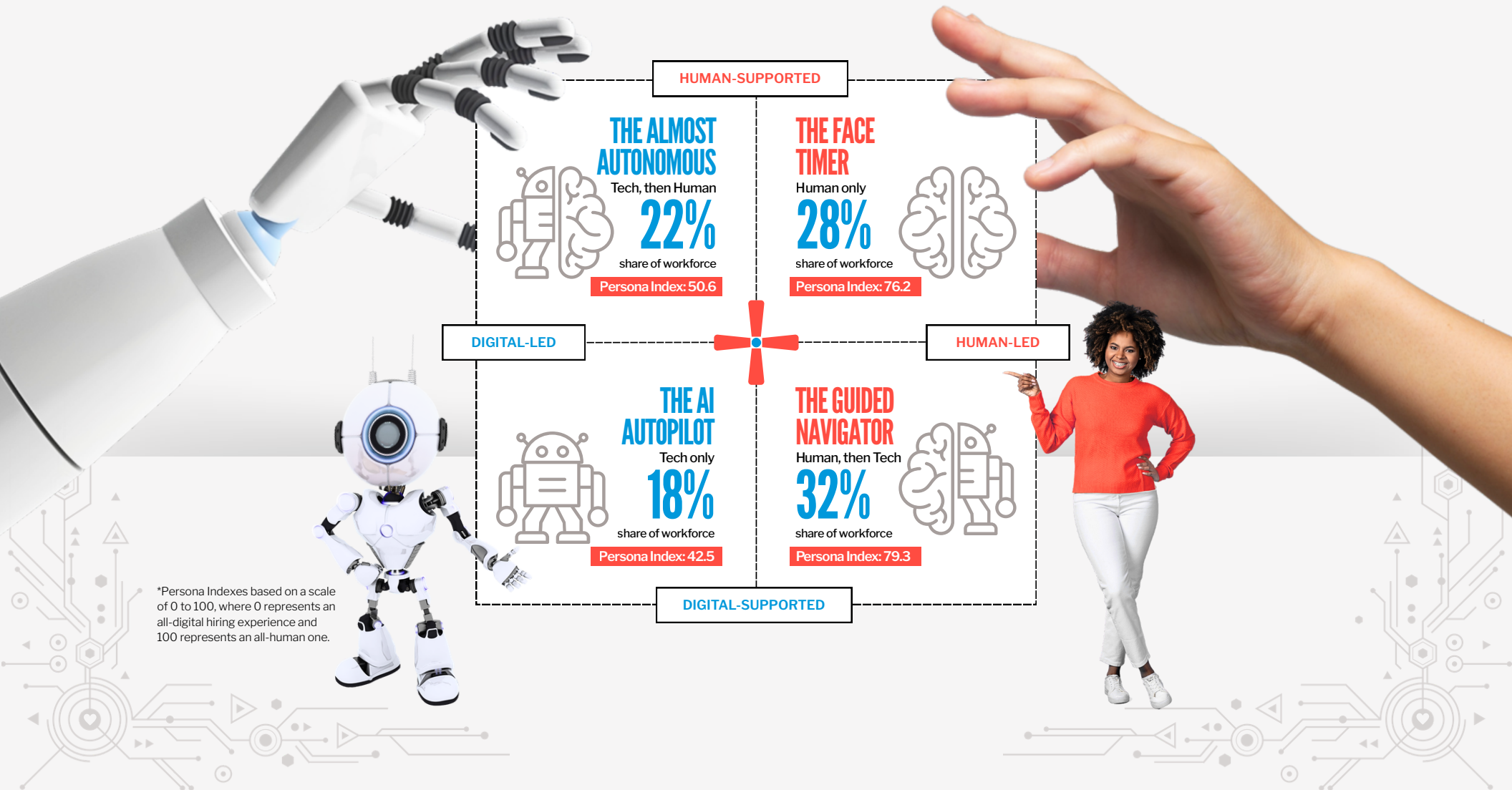
WORKFORCE PREFERENCES ACROSS HIRING STAGES



Four Workforce Personas

Workers fall into four personas, spanning how digitally-led or human-led they prefer their hiring experience. The majority of workers (60%) sit in the two most human-oriented personas — nicknamed the Face Timer and the Guided Navigator in the study. The Face Timer wants a real recruiter from the very first conversation to the final offer,

while the Guided Navigator is happy to let technology handle logistics as long as a person is steering the relationship. By contrast, the Almost Autonomous and the AI Autopilot — who prefer to self-serve through most or all of the process — make up a combined 40%. Only 18% of workers identify as AI Autopilots.



AI: Low Anxiety, Mixed Views on Fairness

Workers are not especially worried about AI displacing them: 29% of all workers (37% of temporary workers) agree AI could replace their job within 12 months, meaning roughly two-thirds do not. The majority (58% of all workers) also say AI has made no change to how they do their jobs. Those who agree AI has made a positive impact on their jobs vary based on gender: 38% of men vs. 24% of women.

Views are more divided on fairness: 56% of all workers agree AI/automation makes hiring fairer, with a notable gender gap (62% of men vs. 50% of women).

AI + JOB REPLACEMENT PERCEPTION

% Agree/Somewhat Agree
AI will replace my job in the next 12 months

37%

TEMPORARY WORKERS

29%

ALL WORKERS

AI + HIRING FAIRNESS

% Agree/Somewhat Agree
AI makes hiring fairer

56%

ALL WORKERS

62%

MEN

50%

WOMEN

Retention Paradox: SATISFACTION IS HIGH, BUT BURNOUT + TURNOVER RISK ARE REAL

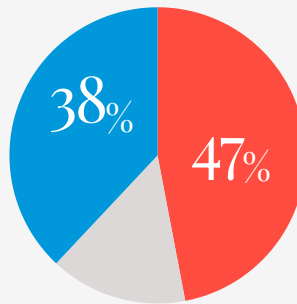
85% of all workers are very/somewhat satisfied with their job.

At the same time, 43% agree they are burned out, and

57% say they're likely to look for a new job within six months.

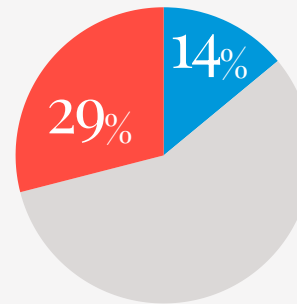


How satisfied are you in your current job?



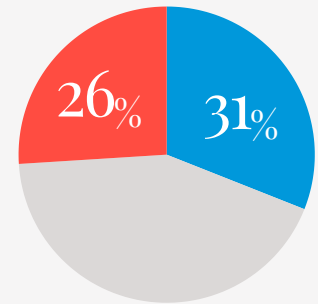
● Very Satisfied
● Somewhat Satisfied
● Somewhat/Very Dissatisfied

How much do you agree or disagree with the statement: I feel burned out at work.



● Strongly agree
● Agree
● Somewhat/Strongly Disagree

How likely are you to look for another job in the next 6 months?



● Very Likely
● Somewhat Likely
● Somewhat/Very Unlikely

Bottom line

Across nearly every measure — index score, persona mix, and stage-by-stage preference — workers tell the same story: people, not platforms, drive the hiring experience workers want most. Technology's strongest role is at the top of the funnel (search, apply, resume building); human relationships carry the weight everywhere after that.