



2025 YOUTH WORKFORCE SURVEY:

A REVIEW OF HOW YOUNG
PROFESSIONALS PERCEIVE WORK TODAY

Job Seekers and
Young Professionals Edition



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Preface



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2025 Youth Workforce Survey: A Review of How Young Professionals Perceive Work Today

Having led TopFloor Limited since 2014, I have witnessed firsthand how rapidly our world continues to evolve. Through this journey, one truth has remained clear: sustainable progress is only possible when people are given the voice and space not just to reflect change, but to drive it. Today, people are no longer seen as resources to be managed. They are forces to be nurtured, guided with empathy, and led with insight and heart.

This study is rooted in that belief. It explores the shifting perceptions, aspirations, and challenges of a generation that is redefining what work means. More than a collection of data, this study and report are a mirror held up to the future, shaped by the lived experiences of young professionals aged 18 to 35, drawn from diverse sectors and cultures across all ten provinces of Zambia.

Their insights reveal a workforce that values empathy as much as efficiency, purpose alongside productivity, and collaboration over competition. It is a clear call to reimagine organisational development, not as a linear path focused solely on shareholder interest, but as a dynamic ecosystem. One where psychological safety, cultural intelligence and inclusive leadership are essential motivators to achieving both business outcomes and the sustainable growth of people who deliver them.

As we work toward a progressive, sustainable economy for Zambia and beyond, this study and report reaffirm our belief that development must be both strategic and human centered. It reflects TopFloor Limited's enduring commitment to listening attentively, learning collectively, and leading with purpose.

We invite leaders, educators and policymakers to co-create environments where young professionals can thrive, contribute meaningfully and shape the future with confidence. May this report spark dialogue, inspire innovation and strengthen our shared commitment to building workplaces that reflect the values of a progressive generation.

Contributors Profile



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Wandera Zahura is a visionary HR Professional, with over a decade of experience shaping workforce strategies. As the research lead and author for the groundbreaking 2025 Youth Workforce Survey, he is driven by the conviction that strategic investment in young people is a cornerstone for Zambia's growth.

Acknowledgements: Collaborative Partners

This research was made possible through the invaluable support of key institutions and networks that facilitated data collection. We extend our gratitude to professional bodies such as the **Zambia Institute of Human Resource Management (ZIHRM)** and its Student Chapters, the **Zambia Institute of Marketing**, the **Zambia Institute of Public Relations and Communication**, the **Zambia Institute of Banking and Finance** and the **Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TEVETA)**, whose platforms amplified our reach. Special recognition goes to **DALP Consultancy Limited**, **GS Cash Advance Limited**, and **Power Kwacha**, who played a pivotal role in disseminating the survey across their extensive youthful staff complements. Additionally, **BongoHive**—Zambia's premier innovation hub—connected us with forward-thinking entrepreneurs, while faith-based organizations like **Mount Zion Centre**, **Kings Arena Church**, and select **Seventh-Day Adventist** congregations engaged their youth networks. Further support came from the vibrant leadership of notable student unions, and we thank the leadership representatives from the **University of Zambia**, **Mulungushi University**, **Kwame Nkrumah University**, the **National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA)**, **Copperbelt University**, **Rusangu University**, **Lusaka Apex Medical University**, and **ZCAS University**. We also acknowledge numerous individual entrepreneurs and entities whose contributions, though not all listed here, were instrumental to this project's success.

/List of Acronyms

AI - Artificial Intelligence

NGOs - Non-Governmental Organizations

ROI - Return on Investment

PhD - Doctor of Philosophy (though often used as an acronym, here it appears as part of degree listings)

Note: Proprietary platform names (e.g., LinkedIn, Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, Slack) are excluded as they are brand names rather than acronyms. Thus, only standardized acronyms with clear definitions are included in this list.



Digital Platform Preferences by Career Stage

Professionals are segmenting their digital lives, using different platforms for different purposes. Students, however, are not separating their social habits from their career research, turning to the visual platforms they already know.

Young Professionals: Hybrid networking is key.

57.14% use LinkedIn for formal connections.

53.57% rely on WhatsApp groups for peer discussions.

Students: Engage on visual platforms.

39.29% use YouTube.

35.71% use Instagram for career research.

All Groups: Company websites see low engagement at 25%.

Key Insight

The younger generation blend professional and informal spaces seamlessly, while company websites remain an underutilized channel for direct talent connection.

Priorities and Challenges in Job Searching

The data reveals a clear misalignment of values: the new workforce is investing in their long-term potential, but the market has unrealistic, barriers to entry.

- Top Priority: 80.05% prioritize development programs.
- Secondary Priority: Only 43.03% prioritize a well-paying salary.
- Biggest Hurdle: 54.41% face excessive experience requirements for entry-level roles.
- The Consequence: 62.59% are forced to consider positions outside their qualifications.
- How They Search: Heavy reliance on referrals (52.94%) and social media (50.98%).

Key Insight

A generational shift values 'growth over immediate compensation', but systemic barriers like unrealistic experience requirements force compromises, making relationship capital essential.



Workplace Dynamics

Mid-career professionals are caught between ambition and caution, a likely reflection of economic instability. Meanwhile, a basic function like communication continues to be a primary source of stress industry-wide. On the other hand, students' strong preference for practical training (52.94%) over theoretical study reveals growing scepticism about traditional education's workplace relevance, while the 47.06% seeking mentorship indicates awareness of the value of networking.

Recent graduates' also stress over toxic workplace culture (64.75%) and poor communication (65.95%) which exposes how workplace realities often clash with expectations formed during their education. Their surprising openness to role flexibility (62.59%) contrasts sharply with employers' experience demands, creating a paradox where candidates demonstrate more adaptability than hiring organizations.

Digital Behaviours

Students' platform preferences mirror their learning behaviours, with 63.96% using LinkedIn alongside academic tools like Google Meet (55.66%) - a convergence that shows how education technology is shaping future professional habits. The mixed reactions to AI - curiosity (32.28%) outweighing concern (11.17%) - suggests students view technology as a tool rather than a threat, though this optimism may need tempering as they encounter real-world automation impacts.



Poor Communication
53.10%

Career Progression
64.92%

Job Security
46.53%

Key
Insight

Economic uncertainty creates tension between ambition and security, while poor communication remains a widespread and underestimated organisational flaw.

Student Preparation for Professional Transition

The line between learning and earning is blurring. Students are building professional habits through their educational tools, showing a pragmatic approach to skills they believe will actually be useful.

- Tools of Choice: 63.96% use LinkedIn alongside academic tools like Google Meet (55.66%).
- Learning Preference: 52.94% prefer practical training over theoretical study.
- Seeking Guidance: 47.06% actively seek mentorship.
- AI Outlook: Curiosity (32.28%) significantly outweighs concern (11.17%).



Students are pragmatically merging educational and professional tools, viewing technology as a career asset and prioritizing practical, mentorship-driven learning.

New Job Entrants' Workplace Adaptation Challenges

For graduates, the first job is often a shock to the system. The qualities they offer most flexibly are the very ones the hiring process often fails to recognize or value.

- Top Stressors:
 - Toxic Culture: 64.75%
 - Poor Communication: 65.95%
- Demonstrated Adaptability: 62.59% are open to role flexibility.
- Primary Value Driver: 77.27% emphasize learning opportunities.



Systemic Support Gaps in Workplaces

Companies are failing to provide support on the issues that matter most to modern employees' well-being and stability. This is not about fancy perks but about foundational support that is treated as optional.

- Mental Health: 29.27% of employees receive no support.
- Financial Health: 45.22% are provided no financial training.
- Guidance: Only 26.45% feel properly mentored.



Critical support systems are treated as optional perks rather than essential infrastructure, leaving employees, especially early-career professionals, fundamentally unsupported.



Evolving Job Search Mechanics

Data Explanation: The job search process is straddling two eras. While candidates use both old and new systems to find roles, a persistent and illogical barrier—demanding unrealistic experience for an entry-level position—undermines the entire process.

- Search Channels: Near-equal use of traditional job boards (48.22%) and LinkedIn (45.97%).
- Persistent Barrier: Unrealistic experience requirements (54.41%).
- Market Reality: Field-specific opportunity shortages (45.78%) force candidates into unrelated roles.



The hiring ecosystem is in transition, but employer biases towards experience create a fundamental mismatch, leading to poor job fit and turnover.



Support / Resource Partners



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Non-Audit/Financial Management Firms Registered with ZICA

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Mental Health Support



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