

A HUMAN-CENTERED APPROACH TO THE CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL WORKFORCE



GLOBAL WORKER PROJECT RESEARCH REPORT

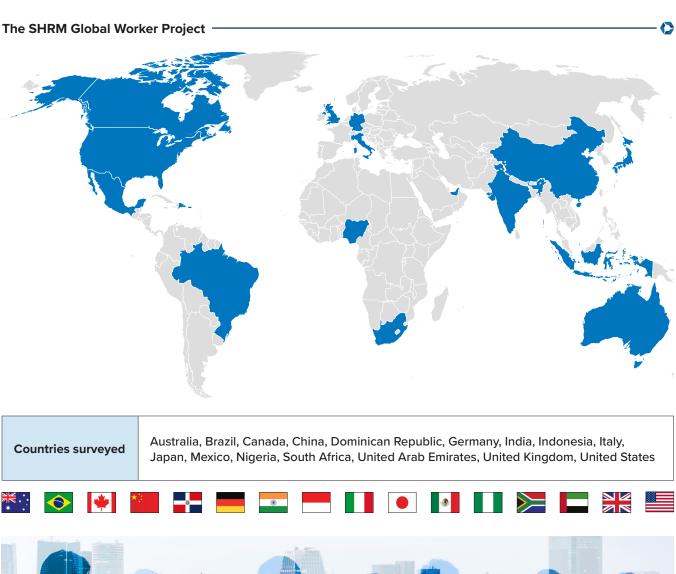
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### INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving workplace, the concept of a "traditional worker" is being uprooted. Amid increasing globalization, economic changes, and demographic shifts, the global workforce has become more diverse than ever before, representing a wide array of different workers with unique needs, preferences, and experiences. For policymakers and employers seeking to effectively navigate this dynamically changing landscape, there is a growing need to look beyond a one-size-fits-all approach to one that recognizes and accounts for a variety of worker types. Yet, global workforce policy and labor laws haven't always kept pace with this evolution, meaning they may fall short of meeting the needs of the contemporary global workforce.

To help employers and policymakers navigate these changes, SHRM surveyed **16,000 workers** across **16 countries**, providing insights into key worker types across the global workforce. By illuminating these workers' unique needs, preferences, and experiences, this research helps build a shared, human-centered understanding of the modern-day workplace and how the global workforce can thrive now and in the future.

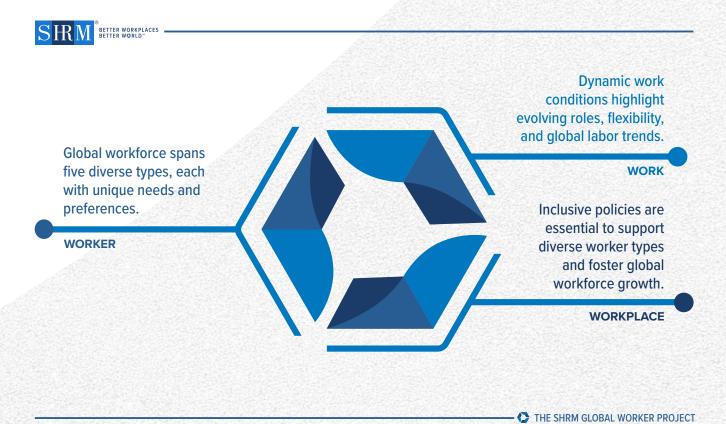


# BUILDING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE GLOBAL WORKFORCE

To foster meaningful workforce discussions among global employers and policymakers, it's essential to establish a shared understanding and a common language. Consequently, categorizing workers into meaningful groups is critical for informing productive policy discussions.

To help categorize workers into types, all 16,000 survey respondents were asked a series of questions about their primary job, including how many hours they work per week, how they are paid, where they work, whether their job is temporary or long term, and whether they are working as an employee or independently. For the purposes of this survey, if a respondent worked more than one job, their primary job refers to the job where they worked the most hours per week.

Respondents' answers to a subset of these questions were then used to classify them into five broad worker types: full-time salaried employees, full-time hourly employees, part-time employees, temporary employees, and independent workers.





# AN OVERVIEW OF THE FIVE GLOBAL WORKER TYPES

WORKER TYPES <sup>1</sup>	% OF SAMPLE	DEFINITION	DEFINING FEATURES
Full-Time Salaried Employees	43%	Employees who work full time (30 or more hours per week) <sup>2</sup> for an organization and are paid a fixed salary	<ul> <li>Highest share of workers with an undergraduate degree or higher.</li> <li>Highest share of workers with access to various benefits (e.g., health insurance, retirement, education assistance, paid leave).</li> <li>Most likely to be in the highest household income bracket.</li> </ul>
Full-Time Hourly Employees	7%	Employees who work full time (30 or more hours per week) <sup>2</sup> for an organization and are paid an hourly wage	<ul> <li>» Highest share of workers with technical school training, vocational training, or a two-year degree.</li> <li>» Highest share of workers who work fully in person or onsite.</li> <li>» More likely than full-time salaried employees to hold an individual contributor role (i.e., does not manage a team and is not a supervisor).</li> </ul>
Part-Time Employees	9%	Employees who work part time for an organization (less than 30 hours per week)	<ul> <li>» Highest share of workers ages 50 and older.</li> <li>» Highest share of female workers.</li> <li>» Flexibility of schedule and caregiving responsibilities are the top two reasons why these respondents are working part time.</li> </ul>
Temporary Employees	3%	Employees in temporary positions that last for a limited time or until the completion of a project	<ul> <li>Highest share of workers ages 18 to 34.</li> <li>Over 3 in 4 (77%) would prefer to have a job that is long term rather than temporary.</li> <li>Hope that the temporary job leads to a long-term job and temporary work being the only type of work they could find are the top two reasons why these workers are in temporary jobs.</li> </ul>
Independent Workers	38%	Workers such as independent contractors, freelancers, self- employed workers, and gig workers	<ul> <li>» Highest share of workers who work fully remotely or virtually or a hybrid combination of in person and remotely.</li> <li>» Highest share of workers who hold more than one job.</li> <li>» Flexibility of schedule and enjoying being independent and being their own boss are the top two reasons why these respondents work independently.</li> </ul>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Of the 16,000 workers sampled, a small number (n=150) could not be easily classified into one of the five worker types. These workers generally indicated that they were paid outside of typical hourly or salaried pay structures (e.g., commission-based, lump sum, or unpaid) but did not identify as temporary or independent workers. Due to their small sample size, this group was excluded from analyses by worker type but included in overall analyses.

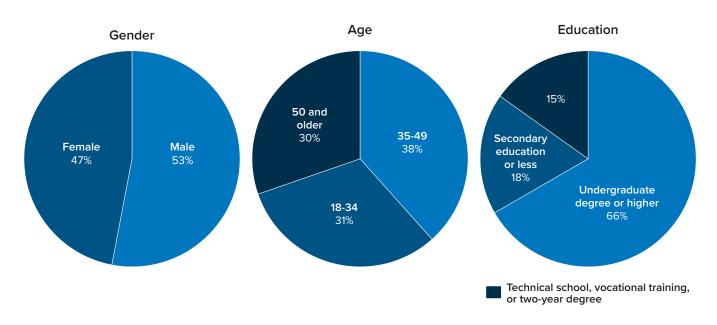
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The definition of a full-time worker can vary between 30 and 40 hours per week, but for the purposes of this survey, full-time work is defined as 30 or more hours per week.

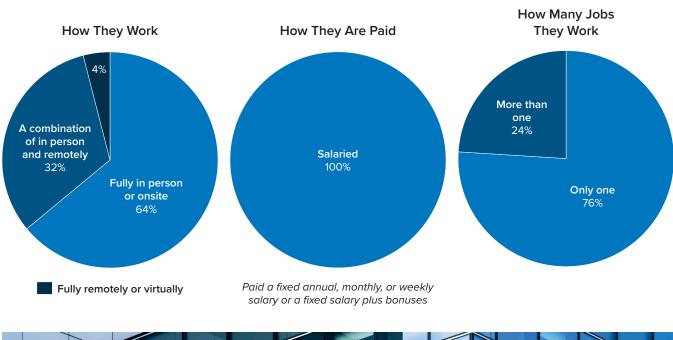
# **FULL-TIME SALARIED EMPLOYEES**

#### **AT A GLANCE**

Full-time salaried employees are employees who work full time (30 or more hours per week) for an organization and are paid a fixed salary.

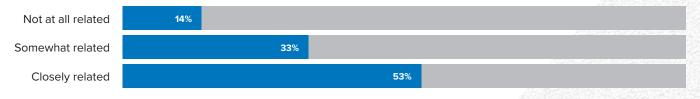
#### Who They Are -





#### **About Their Workplace Experiences**

#### How Closely Their Job Is Related to Their Education and Training



#### **About Their Roles**



#### How They Identify with Work

Which statement do you agree with more — even if neither is exactly right?

I only see my work as a way to earn money

My work is an important part of who I am

70%

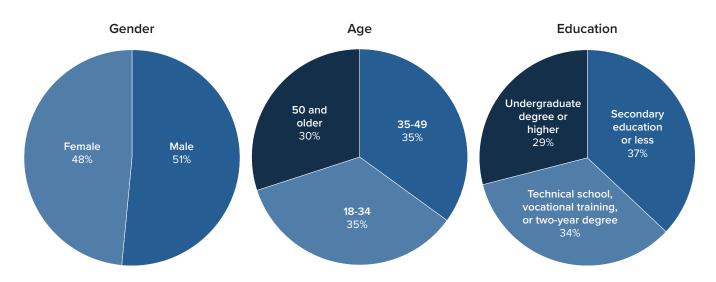


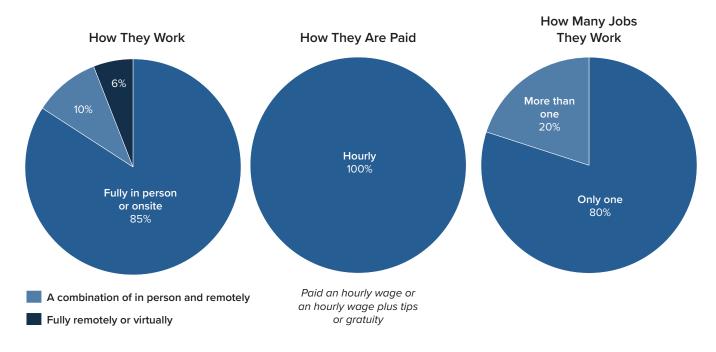
# **FULL-TIME HOURLY EMPLOYEES**

#### **AT A GLANCE**

Full-time hourly employees are employees who work full time (30 or more hours per week) for an organization and are paid an hourly wage.

#### Who They Are -





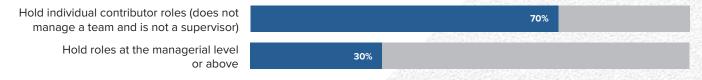


#### **About Their Workplace Experiences**

#### How Closely Their Job Is Related to Their Education and Training



#### **About Their Roles**



#### How They Identify with Work

Which statement do you agree with more — even if neither is exactly right?

I only see my work as a way to earn money

My work is an important part of who I am

48%



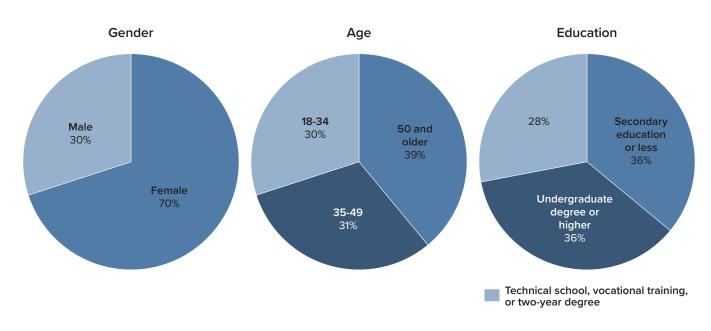
# PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

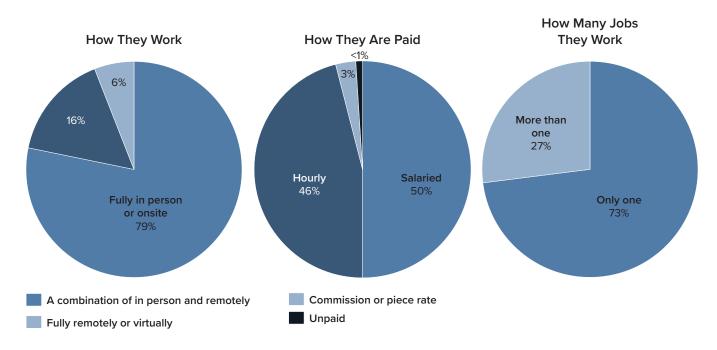
#### **AT A GLANCE**

Part-time employees are employees who work part time for an organization (less than 30 hours per week).

#### Who They Are -

- 🗘





37%

Less than 4 in 10 would prefer to have a full-time job if given the choice.

#### The Top Two Reasons Why They Work Part Time

Flexibility of schedule	27%	
Caregiving responsibilities	18%	

#### How They Identify with Work

Which statement do you agree with more — even if neither is exactly right?

I only see my work as a way to earn money

My work is an important part of who I am

55%

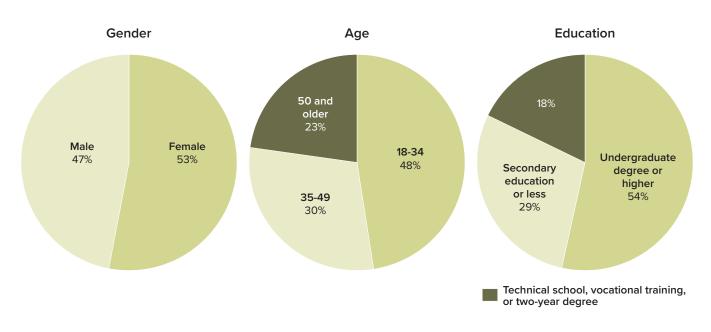


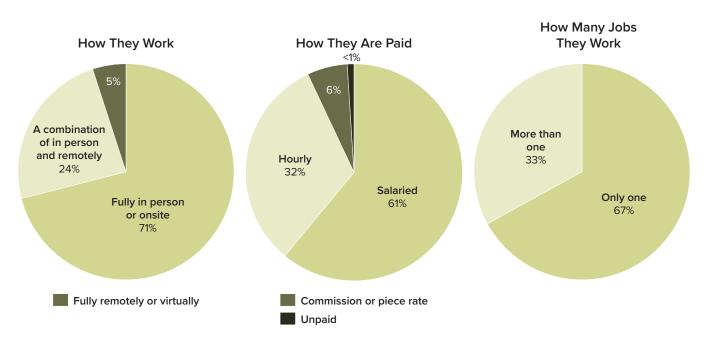
# **TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES**

#### AT A GLANCE

Temporary employees are employees in temporary positions that last for a limited time or until the completion of a project. They may or may not be paid by a temporary staffing agency that supplies workers to other companies, primarily for short-term assignments.

#### Who They Are -





**77%** 

Over 3 in 4 would prefer to have a job that is long term rather than temporary.

#### The Top Two Reasons Why They Work in a Temporary Role

Hope that the temporary job leads to a long-term job

26%

It was the only type of work they could find

19%

#### How They Identify with Work

Which statement do you agree with more — even if neither is exactly right?

I only see my work as a way to earn money

43%

My work is an important part of who I am

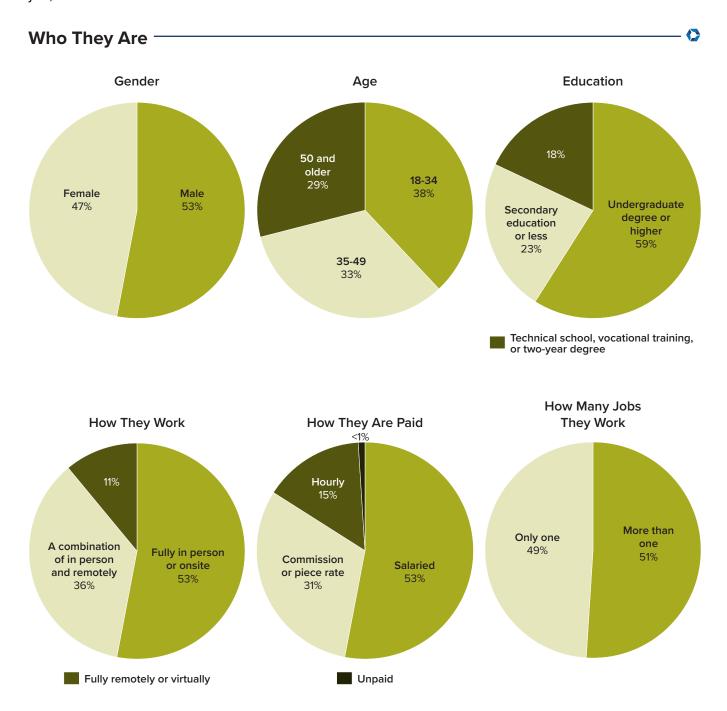
**57**%



### INDEPENDENT WORKERS

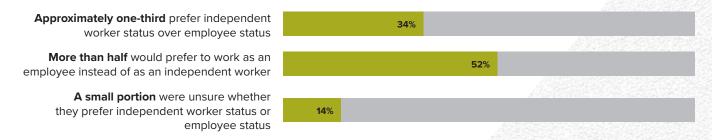
#### AT A GLANCE

Independent workers are workers who are employed as independent contractors, freelancers, self-employed workers, or gig workers. Some independent workers own their own business as their primary job,<sup>3</sup> but others do not.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> For this research, the term "job" is used to describe work engagements performed by an individual worker, including employment as well as self-employment or independent contractor work.

#### How They Feel About Independent Work



#### The Top Two Reasons Why They Work Independently

Flexibility of schedule	22%	
Enjoy being independent and being their own boss	21%	

#### How They Identify with Work

Which statement do you agree with more — even if neither is exactly right?

I only see my work as a way to earn money

My work is an important part of who I am

73%



# **CONCLUSION**

The SHRM Global Worker Project is focused on building a shared, human-centered understanding of the future of the workplace, shedding light on the intricate challenges facing today's workers and the emerging trends shaping tomorrow's workplaces. This study equips employers and policymakers with important information to develop inclusive and effective global policies and practices that recognize and value the unique, diverse needs of the contemporary workforce. By moving beyond a one-size-fits-all definition of a "traditional worker," global leaders can better foster workplaces where workers of all types can thrive.

Want to learn more? Visit SHRM's Global Policy hub page.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

SHRM surveyed 16,000 workers across 16 countries (Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the Dominican Republic, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States) via a third-party online panel from Feb. 22 to June 7, 2024. Workers of all types and from a wide variety of industries were sampled. Responses were balanced to ensure representation of workers across age groups and genders. For each country, the survey was translated into the country's official language. In countries where English was the official language, the survey language was localized.





# OUR PURPOSE IS TO ELEVATE HR

Our mission is to empower people and workplaces by advancing HR practices and by maximizing human potential. Our vision is to build a world of work that works for all.