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Employers Across APME Signal Intentional Growth as Hiring Outlook Improves to +31% for Q1 2026: Latest ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey

- The Net Employment Outlook (NEO) for Q1 2026 in Asia Pacific and the Middle East (APME) stands at +31%.
- Employers in India (+52%), United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) (+46%), and Israel (+25%) report the strongest Outlooks in the region.
- With an NEO of +38%, the Information sector and Finance & Insurance sector leads hiring intentions, followed by Tech & IT Services (+37%), and Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (+36%).
- 44% of employers in the region plan to hire in Q1 2026, with 40% citing company expansion as the top reason for staffing increases, followed by new business areas requiring additional roles (30%).

SINGAPORE (9 DECEMBER 2025) – Hiring optimism across Asia Pacific and the Middle East (APME) is improving, with employers reporting a seasonally adjusted Net Employment Outlook (NEO) of +31% for Q1 2026—up three points from Q4 2025 and seven points higher than Q1 2025.

The survey of 12,193 employers across 10 APME countries and territories, found that 44% of employers expect to expand their workforce, 13% are anticipating a decrease in headcount, and another 39% are planning to maintain current staffing levels. Meanwhile, 4% are uncertain about staffing changes in the upcoming quarter.

Apart from India (+52%) and the U.A.E. (+46%), hiring remains subdued. China's Outlook (+24%) softened by nine points, Hong Kong (+1%) posts the region's lowest and among the weakest globally, while Australia (+18%) and Singapore (+15%) eased by six and five points respectively.

"Hiring plans across Asia Pacific and the Middle East reflect a shift towards intentional growth. Employers are expanding strategically, prioritizing roles that enable innovation and adaptability. While India and the Middle East are driving much of the momentum, other Asia Pacific markets are taking a more measured approach as economic conditions weigh on confidence. This strategy is about building strength for the future—investing in the right skills to stay competitive in a market that continues to evolve," said François Lançon, Regional President, Asia Pacific & Middle East, ManpowerGroup.

Economic Caution Reshapes Workforce Strategies

Economic uncertainty continues to influence workforce planning across APME. Among organizations maintaining headcount, a quarter (25%) are waiting to see how the economy evolves before making hiring decisions.

The impact is more pronounced among companies reducing staff, with 31% citing economic challenges as the main reason for workforce reductions. Other factors include:

- **Market shifts (30%):** Market changes have reduced demand for specific jobs.
- **Automation (26%):** Automation has reduced the need for certain roles
- **Restructuring (24%):** The organization is undergoing reorganization or downsizing.
- **Right-sizing (23%):** Reducing staff to align with current business demand.
- **Operational efficiency (22%):** Optimizing processes to enhance efficiency, leading to role consolidation.

For organizations planning to expand, growth is driven by these high-priority factors:

- **Organizational growth (40%):** The company is expanding in size, creating more positions.
- **New business areas (30%):** Branching into new markets or sectors requires new roles.
- **Technology advancements (28%):** Advancements in technology demand new expertise and roles.
- **Competitive advantage (28%):** Seeking fresh perspectives and skills to maintain a competitive edge.
- **Diversity initiatives (27%):** Committed to enhancing team diversity by opening new positions.

Notably, among employers planning to increase staffing, just 21% are backfilling recent departures and 18% are backfilling more longstanding vacancies. The emphasis is on new roles, underscoring a move toward purposeful talent investments rather than simply replacing departures.

To view the complete results for the Q1 2026 ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey, including regional and country data, visit: www.manpowergroup.com.sg/meos-apme. The next survey will be released in March 2026 and will report hiring expectations for the second quarter of 2026.

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ABOUT THE SURVEY

The ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey, now in its 63rd year, is the most comprehensive, forward-looking employment survey of its kind, used globally as a key labor market indicator. The Net Employment Outlook (NEO) is derived by taking the percentage of employers anticipating an increase in hiring activity and subtracting from this the percentage of employers expecting a decrease in hiring activity.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Survey responses were collected from October 1-31, 2025. Size of organization and sector are standardized across all countries and territories to allow international comparisons.

ABOUT THE INDUSTRY SECTORS

ManpowerGroup has introduced an updated industry sector classification to ensure our insights more closely reflect today's global economy. Beginning with this release, data will be reported across nine sectors: Construction & Real Estate; Finance & Insurance; Hospitality; Information; Manufacturing; Professional, Scientific & Technical Services; Public Sector, Health & Social Services; and Trade & Logistics. Historical data has been reclassified to maintain consistency over time, and national and regional results remain unchanged. This update enhances comparability with other research and ensures greater relevance for clients, media, and market stakeholders

Tech & IT Services is a specialty sector that combines subsectors across Manufacturing, Information, and Professional Services to provide a holistic view of all aspects relating to IT and telecoms. Automotive is a specialty

sector that combines subsectors across Manufacturing and Trade & Logistics to provide a holistic view of all aspects relating to the automotive value chain.

ABOUT MANPOWERGROUP

[ManpowerGroup](#)® (NYSE: MAN), the leading global workforce solutions company, helps organizations transform in a fast-changing world of work by sourcing, assessing, developing, and managing the talent that enables them to win. We develop innovative solutions for hundreds of thousands of organizations every year, providing them with skilled talent while finding meaningful, sustainable employment for millions of people across a wide range of industries and skills. Our expert family of brands – [Manpower](#), [Experis](#), and [Talent Solutions](#) – creates substantially more value for candidates and clients across more than 70 countries and territories and has done so for more than 75 years. We are recognized consistently as a best place to work for Women, Inclusion, Equality, and Disability, and in 2025 ManpowerGroup was named one of the World's Most Ethical Companies for the 16th time; all confirming our position as the brand of choice for in-demand talent.

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FORWARD LOOKING STATEMENTS

This report contains forward-looking statements, including statements regarding labor demand in certain regions, countries and industries, and economic uncertainty. Actual events or results may differ materially from those contained in the forward-looking statements, due to risks, uncertainties and assumptions. These factors include those found in the Company's reports filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), including the information under the heading "Risk Factors" in its Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2024, whose information is incorporated herein by reference. ManpowerGroup disclaims any obligation to update any forward-looking or other statements in this release, except as required by law.