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## **Singapore Employers Willing to Pay a Premium for AI and Critical Thinking Skills Despite Softer Hiring Sentiment: Latest ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey**

- Singapore's seasonally adjusted Net Employment Outlook (NEO) for Q3 2026 stands at +13%, down 11 points quarter-on-quarter and year-on-year.
- The Manufacturing sector leads hiring intentions with an NEO of +25%, decreasing by one point quarter-on-quarter and two points year-on-year.
- Technical skills employers in Singapore are willing to pay a premium for in the coming quarter include AI literacy (66%), AI model and application development (64%), and traditional IT and data skills (56%).
- Soft skills employers in Singapore are willing to pay a premium for in the coming quarter include critical thinking and problem-solving (66%), communication, collaboration, and teamwork (66%), as well as leadership and social influence (64%).

**SINGAPORE (9 JUNE 2026)** – Singapore employers report lower hiring sentiment for the third quarter of 2026, while continuing to indicate a willingness to pay a premium for skills including AI literacy, as well as critical thinking and problem-solving, according to the latest ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey.

Hiring sentiment declined in the third quarter of 2026, with the seasonally adjusted Net Employment Outlook (NEO) at +13%, marking its lowest level since Q4 2021, when the Outlook stood at -2%. Singapore's Outlook is also below the Asia Pacific and Middle East regional average (+28%) and the global average (+26%).

Of the 599 employers in Singapore surveyed about their Q3 2026 hiring plans, 35% plan to increase headcount, 41% expect to maintain current staffing levels, while 22% anticipate a decrease in their staffing levels. The remaining 2% are uncertain about staffing changes in the upcoming quarter.

Notably, among employers expecting to keep staffing levels unchanged, more than a quarter (27%) report waiting to see how the economy changes before making hiring decisions. This is the second most cited reason for maintaining current staffing levels, after employers reporting that their existing headcount is sufficient to meet business goals (38%).

“Employers in Singapore are taking a more cautious approach to hiring this quarter, with many choosing to hold steady on headcount until there is greater clarity on geopolitical

conditions,” says Ms. Linda Teo, Country Manager of ManpowerGroup Singapore. “This does not mean employers are standing still. Instead, hiring decisions are becoming more selective and deliberate, with investment increasingly directed toward skills that deliver the greatest impact. The continued willingness to pay a premium for AI and critical thinking capabilities reflects a skills-based approach to hiring, as organizations focus on strengthening productivity, efficiency, and long-term competitiveness even as overall hiring sentiment softens.”

### **Skills Employers Are Investing In**

Beyond hiring intentions, the survey examined which technical and interpersonal skills employers are willing to pay a premium for in the coming quarter, highlighting where organizations are concentrating their talent investment.

AI-related capabilities lead technical skills demand. Two-thirds (66%) of employers in Singapore report being willing to pay a premium for AI literacy skills, while 64% cite AI model and application development skills. This is followed by traditional IT and data skills, with 56% reporting a willingness to pay more for these capabilities.

Employers in Public Sector, Health & Social Services (78%), Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (72%), and Tech & IT Services (69%) are most willing to pay a premium for AI literacy skills. While those in Information (76%), Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (76%), and Finance & Insurance (71%), are most willing to pay for AI model and application development skills.

When it comes to soft skills, employers are most willing to pay a premium for critical thinking and problem-solving, as well as communication, collaboration, and teamwork, each cited by 66% of employers in Singapore. Leadership and social influence follow closely, with 64% reporting a willingness to pay more for these capabilities.

“What is clear from the latest findings is how deliberately employers are directing their talent investment. Organizations are placing greater emphasis on building capability in areas that support transformation and execution, particularly AI-related skills alongside core human strengths such as problem-solving, collaboration, and leadership. This reinforces the importance of a human-first, digital-always approach—centering workforce strategy on people, while leveraging technology to amplify human capability,” comments Ms. Teo.

### **Employment Outlooks Across the Asia Pacific and the Middle East**

- The Asia Pacific and the Middle East (APME) region reports an Outlook of +28%, declining 10 points quarter-on-quarter and remaining stable year-on-year.
- India (+48%) continues to anchor regional confidence, despite a 20-point quarter-on-quarter decline. It also records the highest Employment Outlook globally in Q3 2026, alongside Puerto Rico (+48%).
- Hong Kong (-9%) remains the most cautious market in the region, following a 20-point quarter-on-quarter decline and a 17-point decrease year-on-year.
- Across the Asia Pacific & Middle East region, employers report a strong willingness to pay a premium for AI literacy skills (69%), as well as for communication, collaboration, and teamwork (74%).

To view complete results for the Q3 2026 ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey, visit: <https://www.manpower.com.sg/en/meos> . The next survey will be released in September 2026 and will report hiring expectations for Q4 2026.

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## **ABOUT THE SURVEY**

The ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey, now in its 64th 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 April 1-30, 2026. 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.

## **ABOUT MANPOWERGROUP SINGAPORE**

Established in 1995 in Singapore, ManpowerGroup works with a range of manufacturing, resources, mining, transport and logistics, government, blue chip investment and retail banks, IT vendors and outsourcers, telecoms service providers and infrastructure, utilities and engineering services companies. In Singapore, the ManpowerGroup suite of solutions is offered through Manpower®, and Talent Solutions. More information on ManpowerGroup Singapore is available at: [www.manpowergroup.com.sg](http://www.manpowergroup.com.sg)

## **ABOUT MANPOWERGROUP**

[ManpowerGroup](http://www.manpowergroup.com)® (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 2026 ManpowerGroup was named one of the World's Most Ethical Companies for the 17th 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, 2025, 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.