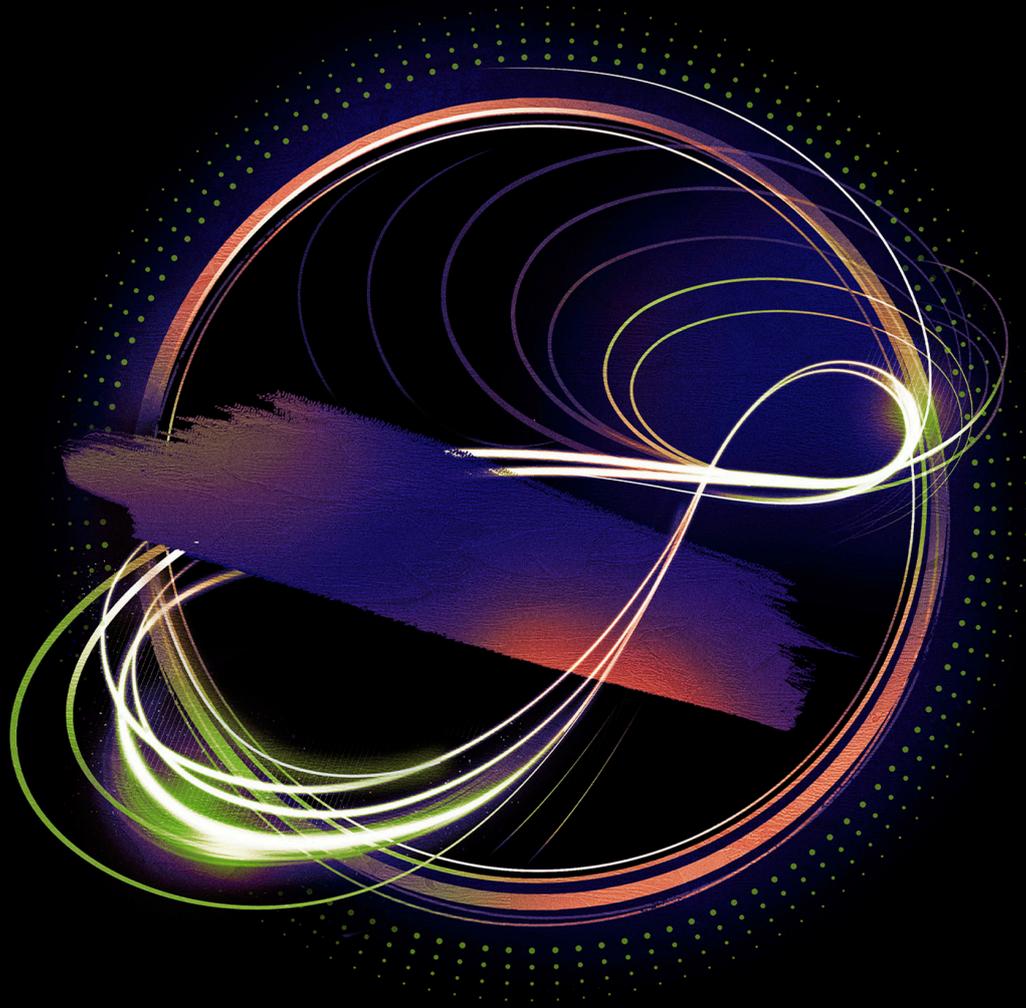


Deloitte.



Cross-border talent agility
is the new competitive edge



As businesses seek to hire and retain talent in a world of rapid technology change, they want every possible advantage. Talent models they have used in the past are becoming less reliable, and hurdles to effective recruitment are getting higher, boosting the importance of agility and cross-border reach.

Introduction

Where can large international companies gain an edge in the competition for talent? One place to start is to recognize how the talent pool is changing as populations age in developed economies and as new cohorts with specific skills enter the workforce in locations spread around the world. Being nimble enough to react is becoming vital. Organizations need to be able to adapt to demographic shifts and other changes, and they need to find skills and hire talent across geographies—they need to foster cross-border talent agility.

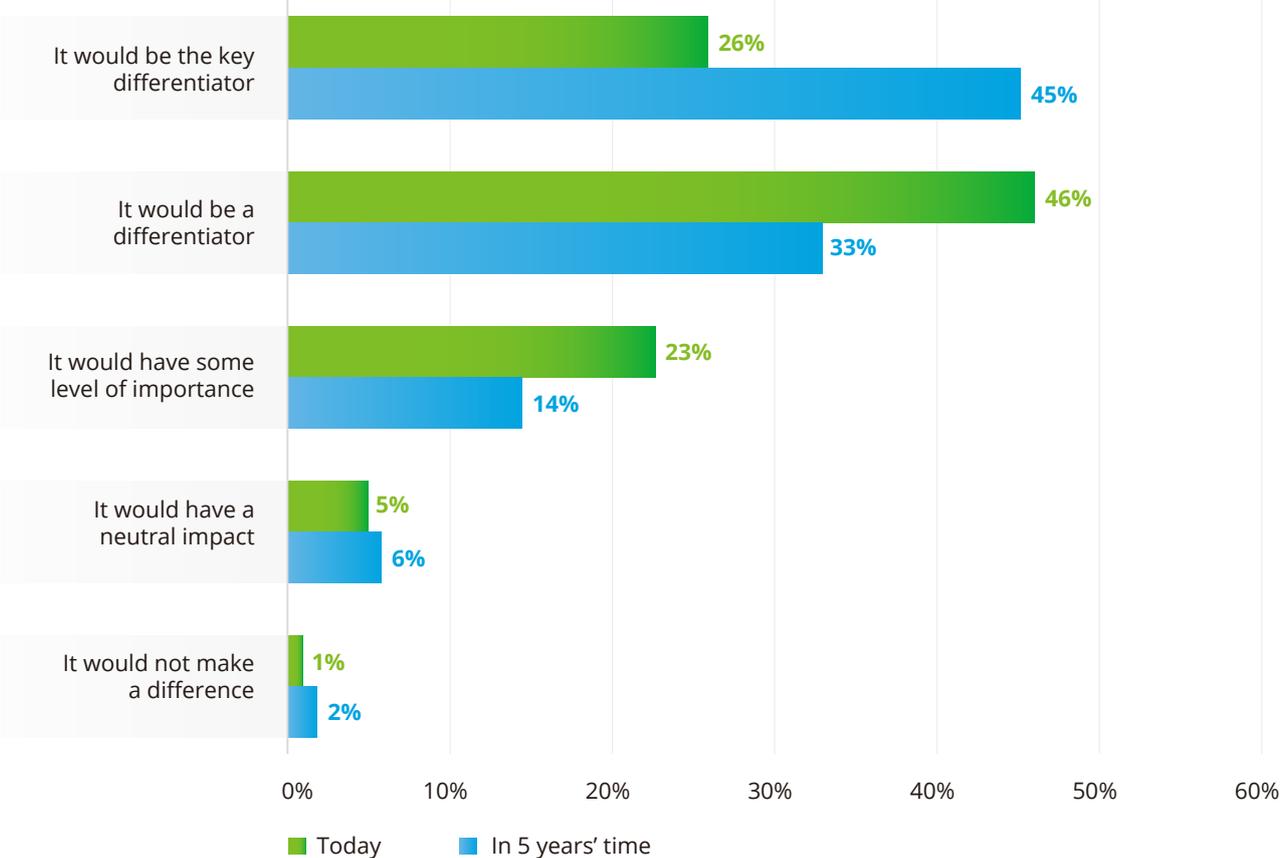
Deloitte's 2025 Talent Agility Survey, delivered in collaboration with Raconteur, shows how companies are doing in this area. Based on responses from **more than 800 global business leaders across industries in more than 27 countries**, the research reveals that global business leaders overwhelmingly recognize the strategic value of cross-border talent agility. It also demonstrates that most organizations remain early in their journey—struggling to move from static approaches to truly skills-driven, borderless models.

More than 96% of respondents say that talent agility and cross-border skills are at least somewhat important to achieving business objectives.

According to the survey, **72% of respondents say that stronger cross-border talent agility would be a competitive differentiator** for their organization (including 26% of respondents who say it would be a key differentiator). When asked how important cross-border talent agility will be in five years, the numbers go even higher, with 45% of respondents saying it will be a key differentiator.

This is well aligned with what Deloitte is seeing in the market. Organizations are starting to actively develop specialist teams to access cross-border talent in flexible ways. Such teams need to work across silos, bringing expertise on mobility, tax and legal matters to complement human resource capabilities.

Perspectives on cross-border talent agility as a driver for competitive advantage



Survey results from the Deloitte Talent Agility Leadership Survey 2025

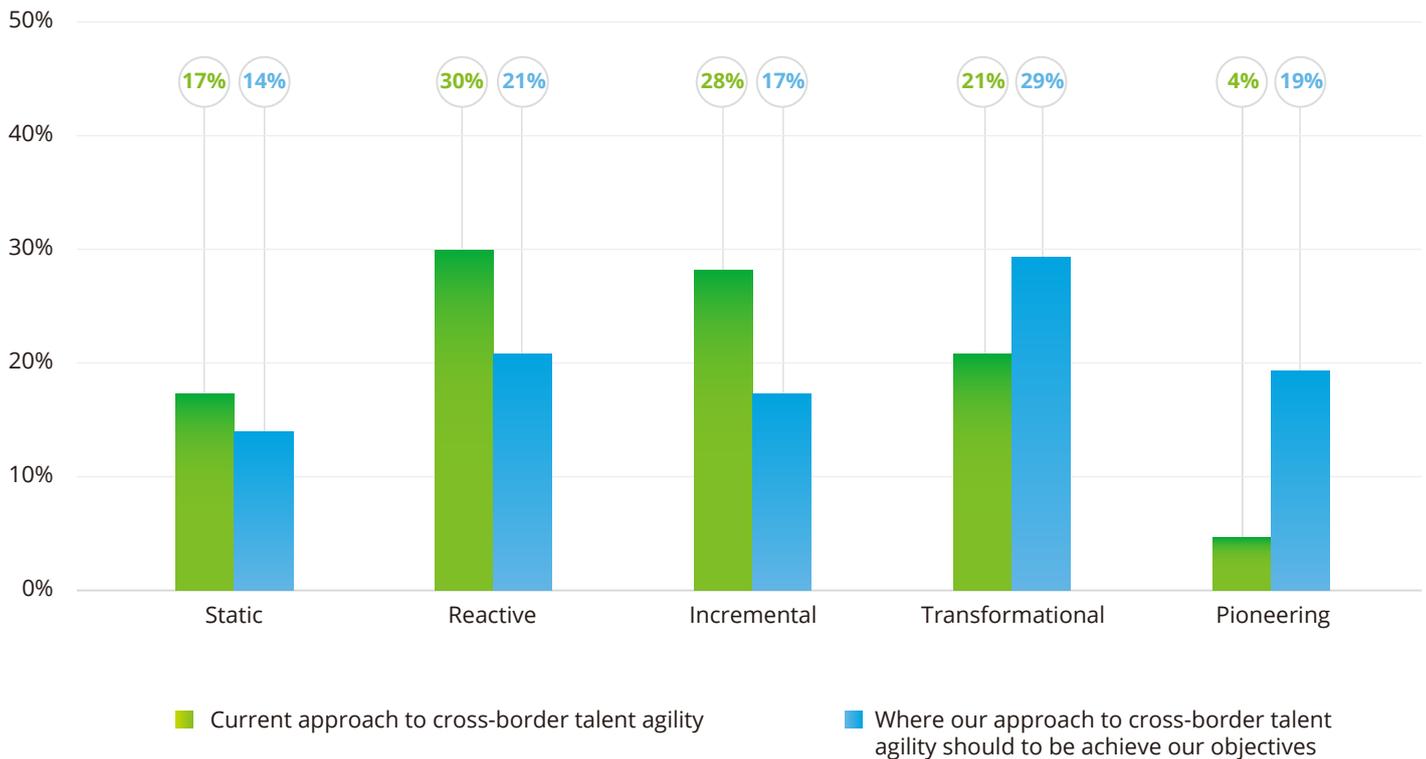
As-yet-untapped potential

The survey findings suggest that, while employers see upside in talent agility, they also recognize that their organizations have far to go to develop such capabilities.

When asked about their current capabilities for cross-border talent agility, **over half of the respondents (47%) say that their organization's approach today is static or reactive.** Just 21% say their work in this area is transformational, that the organization is actively rethinking cross-border talent topics, while **4% of surveyed leaders say their companies are pioneers in talent agility.**

And the survey signals that, in most organizations, too few people are thinking of looking for talent across international borders. Asked about the level of attention to this possibility, slightly more than a third of respondents say there is little or very little awareness, while slightly less than a third say awareness is high or very high.

Understanding approaches to cross-border talent agility—current reality vs. future ambition



Survey results from the Deloitte Talent Agility Leadership Survey 2025

Meeting employees where they are

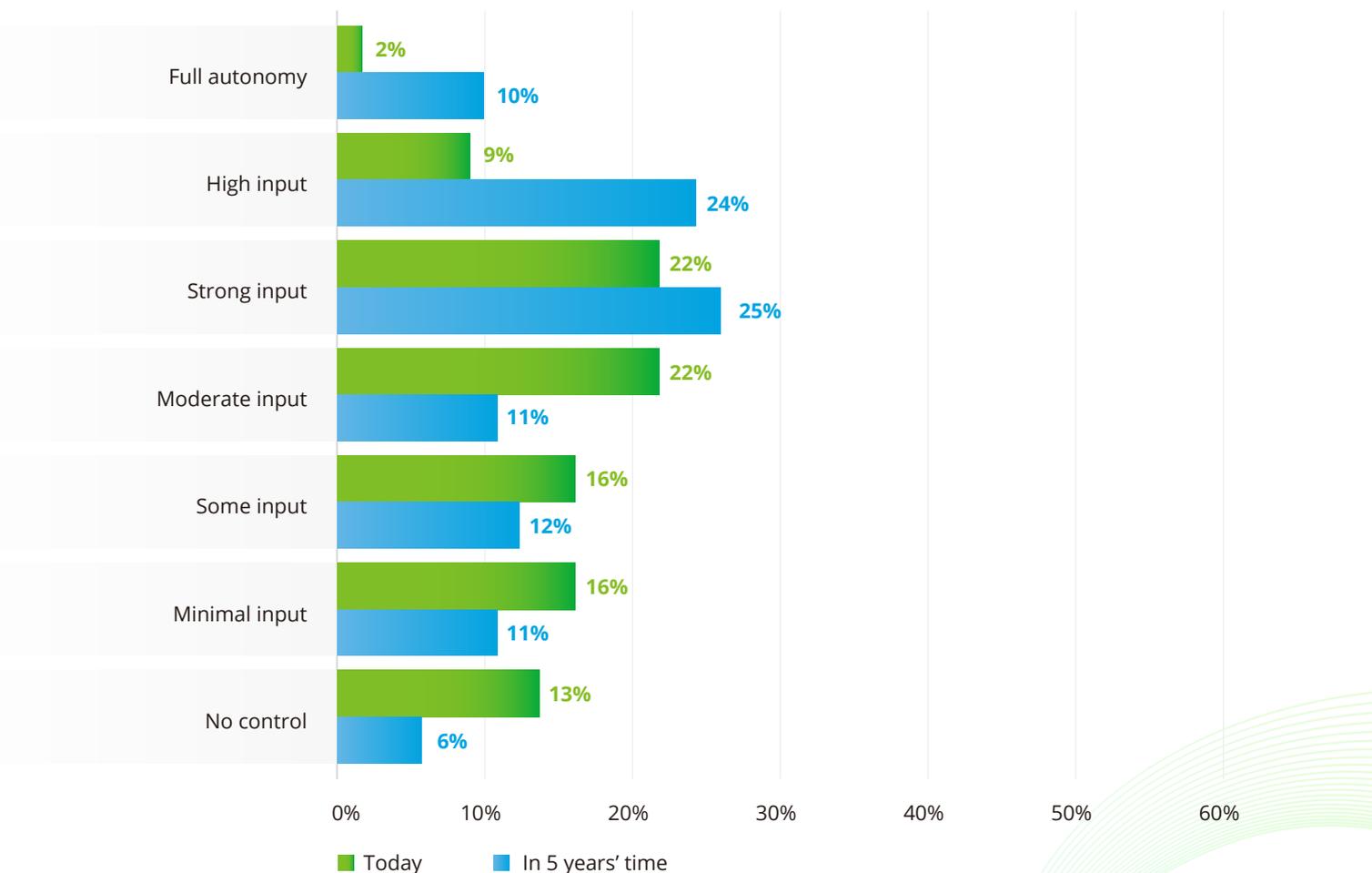
To cultivate cross-border talent agility, employers need to understand how workers and workplaces are changing. They should anticipate how employee expectations are shifting, and they may need to provide more options for people to work from where they are.

What's more, the employment journey of someone entering the workforce today is unlikely to resemble the career path of a person who has been in the workforce for several decades. The idea of the career ladder is beginning to seem outdated or inadequate. People today may move sideways or diagonally to gain new skills and experiences, rather than simply climbing rung by rung. They may move from project to project or hop between roles based on personal goals.

The future is likely to see employees taking more autonomy in their career development. The arrival of new artificial intelligence (AI) technologies will only accelerate such trends, as workers begin to think in new ways about their skills development and career path.

Companies may take some time to catch up to these developments. When asked what level of control employees have over their career or development, **45% of leaders say workers in their organization have low levels of control or input**, while **33% say they have high levels of input or full autonomy**. Asked how this might look in five years, though, respondents have an inkling of what's coming: 59% say employees will have high levels of input (including 10% of respondents who say that employees will have full autonomy).

Understanding employee autonomy. Employee control over their career development—now and in the future



Survey results from the Deloitte Talent Agility Leadership Survey 2025

Preparing for the skills-based future

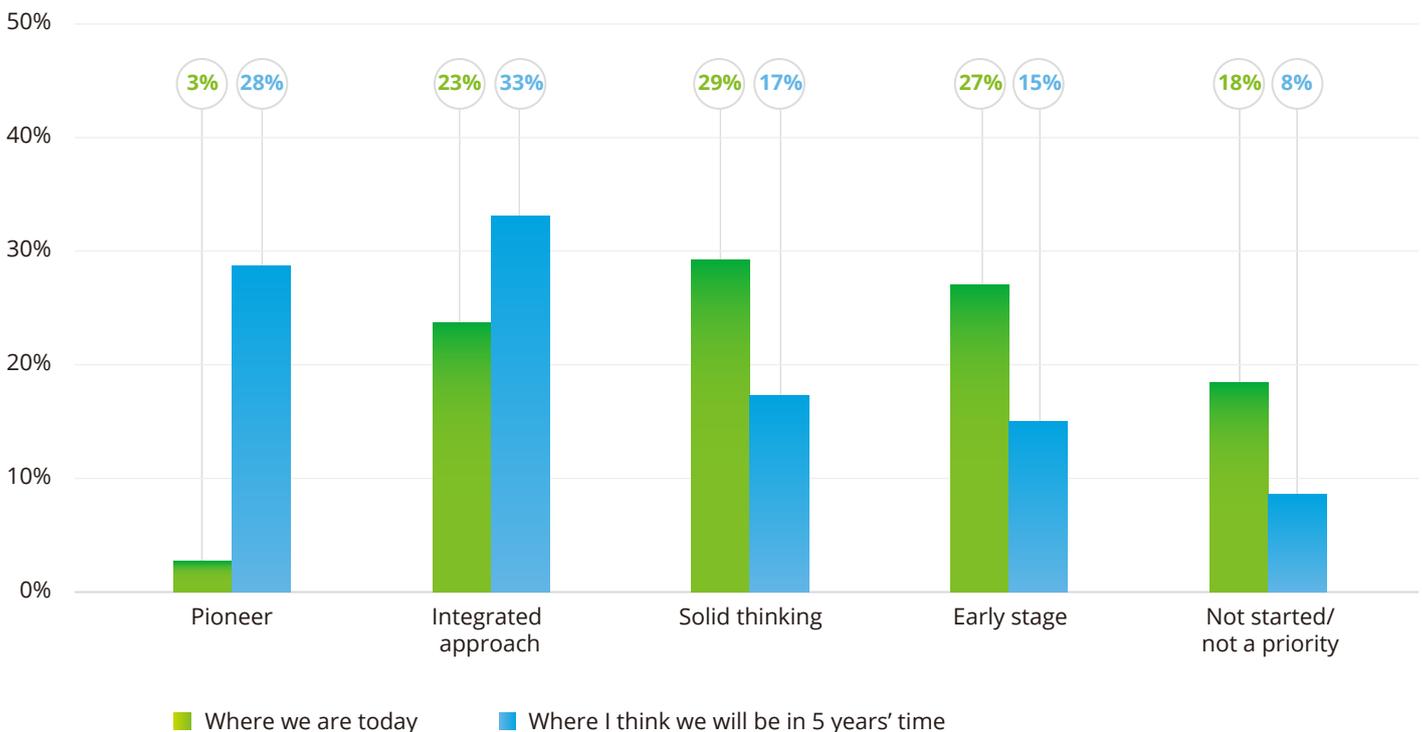
As employees become more focused on skills and mobility—pursuing those less-linear career paths—organizations need to be headed in the same direction. Organizations are likely to find increasing value in skills-based models for recruitment and hiring, workforce development and employee mobility. Skills should become the organizing principle for a company's workforce, rather than job titles, defined advancement tracks and formal credentials.

Our survey asked leaders where they are on the journey to becoming a skills-based organization. While 44% say they have not started or are in the early stages, slightly **more than half of respondents report progress**: 29% say the organization has done “solid thinking” on this topic, with some basic mapping of skills; 23% report they are further along and have an integrated approach in which talent intelligence drives workforce planning and mobility; and **3% describe themselves as pioneers**, with skills-based strategy embedded at every level.

When respondents were asked to look out five years, they see even more movement in this direction: **61% expect their organization to be in one of the two most advanced stages**, an integrated approach or skills-based strategy at every level.

Organizations need to improve their ability to understand what skills are needed in a given role, and they need to redefine traditional job descriptions. Work is changing faster than ever—along with what is required of employees. Neither education or work experience are going to fully provide what employees need as they step into new roles and tasks. And that means that educational credentials and work history won't fully capture what an employee has to offer. The way to measure someone's fit for a job is to know what skills they have.

Understanding the journey to becoming skills-based. Where organizations are today vs. their future ambition



Survey results from the Deloitte Talent Agility Leadership Survey 2025

Talent intelligence platforms are key

Businesses will need to inventory the skills within their workforces. An effective talent intelligence platform will not only make it possible to keep track of the skills represented by an organization’s human capital, it will make it easier to present employees with appropriate job or project opportunities. Clean data is indispensable to make a talent intelligence platform robust and useful.

The type of system and the extent to which it meets an organization’s needs are likely to vary widely, however. Asked about how these systems impact the organization’s talent management, the most common answers were faster hiring, better talent mobility, and access to a larger and broader cross-border talent pool.

Almost all of the survey respondents report that their organization has implemented a talent management system or internal talent marketplace, or will soon.

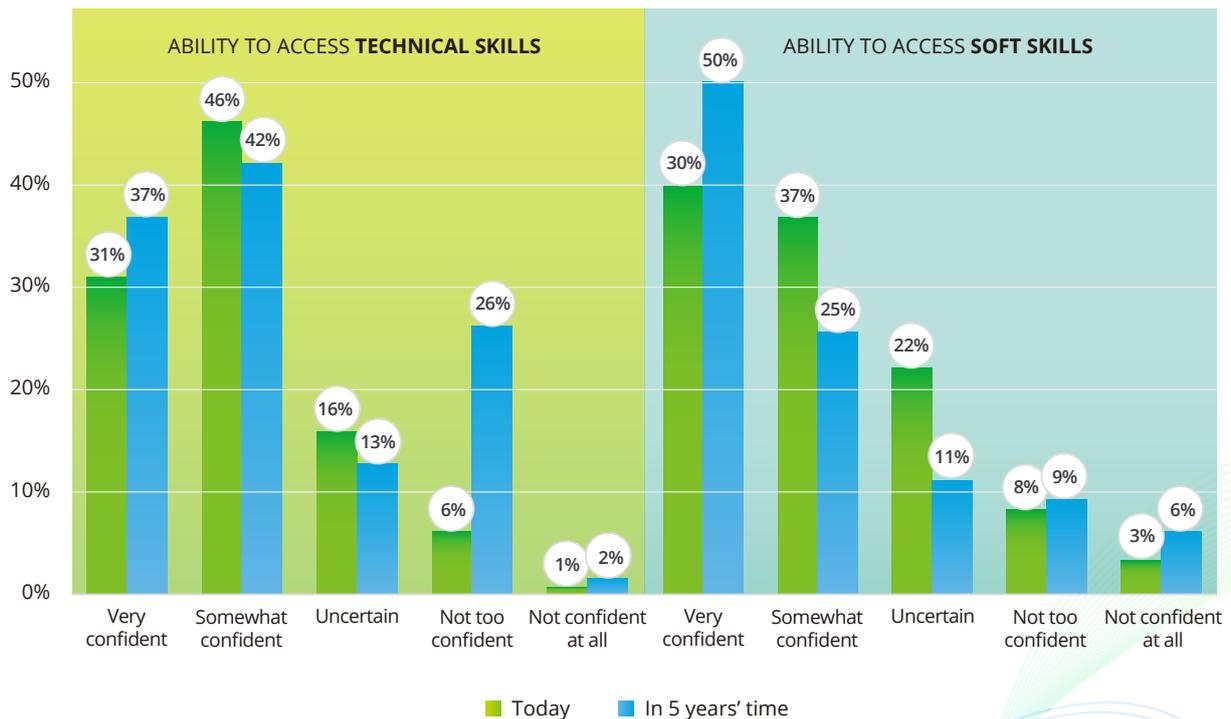
New technologies like AI will almost certainly play a role in empowering organizations to make positive steps toward being more skills-based.

Valuing soft skills too

Overall, when asked about the critical skills an organization needs to stay competitive, business leaders are confident about accessing technical talent and a bit less sure about finding soft skills such as leadership, communications and emotional intelligence. **More than 76% of respondents are somewhat or very confident that they can access technical skills today**, compared with about 7% who are not confident. For the same question about soft skills, 67% are somewhat or very confident.

It is likely that soft skills are going to become more important as we move into a workplace more dominated by AI tools. Organizations are looking at how AI can augment work and create opportunities for employees to be more productive and creative. But this will only put a higher premium on human capabilities from empathy to critical thinking to ethical decision making.

Accessibility to critical skills - confidence in obtaining technical and soft skills, now and in the future



Survey results from the Deloitte Talent Agility Leadership Survey 2025

Leading the next talent revolution

For people leaders responsible for finding the talent that businesses need, the coming decade won't reward caution—it will reward courage. Those who can build an agile, borderless, skills-driven organizations are most likely to be rewarded with stronger growth and greater resilience.

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If you would like to better understand how talent agility can deliver business advantage for your organization please get in touch with your local Deloitte contact, or one of the GES contacts listed.

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