

employer brand research 2026

life sciences sector report.



randstad

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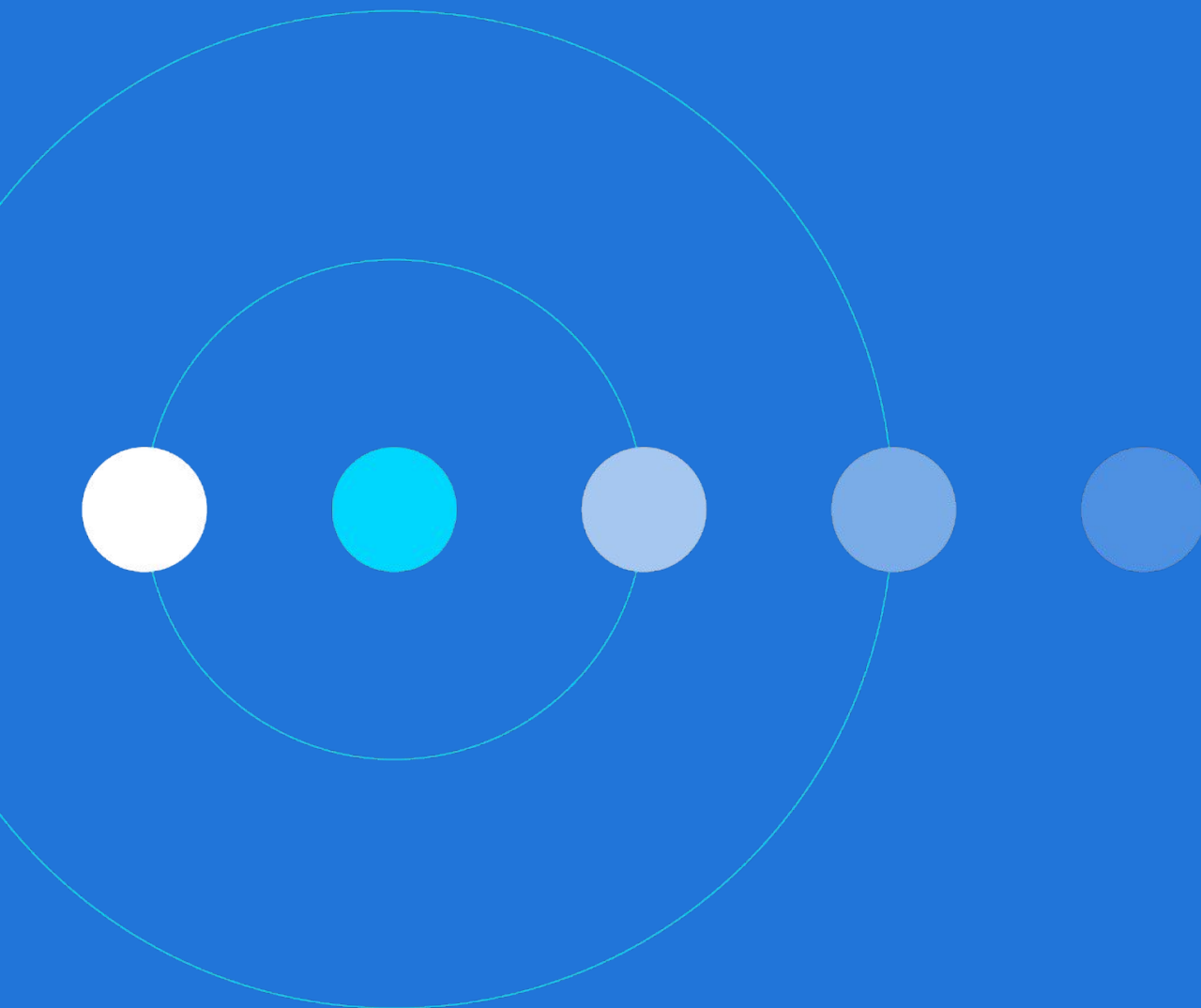


shaping the future workforce in the life sciences sector.

As global workforce dynamics continue to shift, talent in the life sciences is adapting to new realities. From the growing integration of AI and automation - reshaping daily work and perceptions of job security - to rising living costs driven by geopolitical tensions, professionals are navigating an increasingly complex world of work. At the same time, the entry of new generations is reshaping expectations around flexibility, purpose, and work-life balance.

In this evolving context, the life sciences sector faces a distinct set of challenges and opportunities. Regional differences shape what workers value most, while generational and role-based perspectives reveal diverging expectations around compensation, work-life balance, job security, and career growth.

This report highlights the key trends influencing talent attraction and retention in the life sciences sector and offers actionable insights to help organisations refine their employer brand and strengthen their employee value proposition (EVP). By aligning more closely with the evolving priorities of today's workforce, employers can position themselves as employers of choice in an increasingly competitive, skills-driven labour market.



04 executive summary

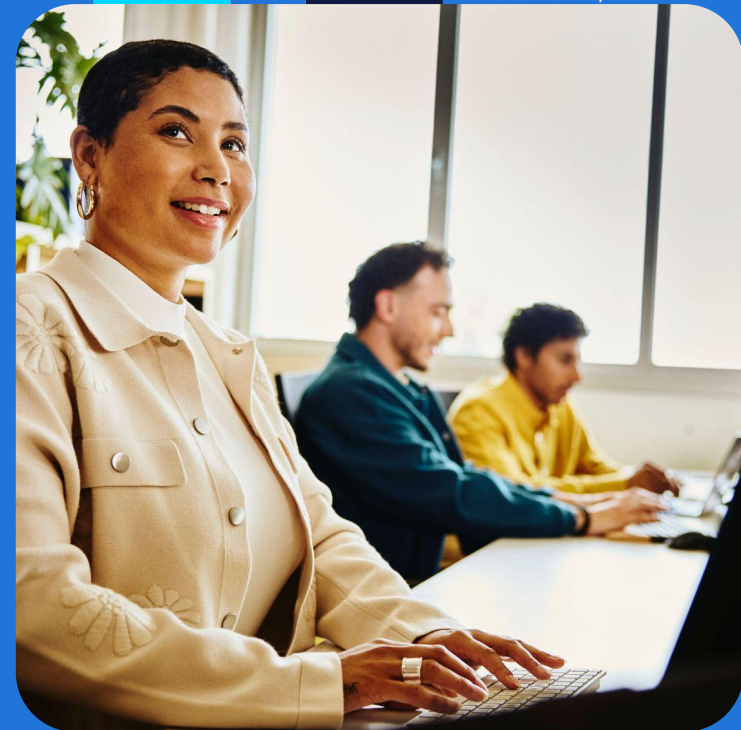
08 key drivers

14 key driver deepdive

18 job-switching behaviour

25 appendix

executive summary.



while competitive salary defines the ideal employer, job security is where employers perform strongest.

In the life sciences sector, salary and benefits stand out as both the most important and most prioritised driver of the ideal employer. Beyond pay, work–life balance, career progression, equal opportunities, and a pleasant work atmosphere follow closely, with many of these drivers ranking at similar levels overall. The close clustering of these drivers at global level is largely driven by variation beneath the surface, as priorities shift considerably across both regions and generations.

Across regions, salary and benefits remain the leading priority in most markets, but North America stands out as a exception, where career progression ranks first, ahead of pay and work–life balance. In Europe, the focus leans more towards the overall workplace experience, with a pleasant work atmosphere featuring in the top three, while in Latin America, equal opportunities replaces work–life balance.

Employer performance is strongest on job security, reputation, and job content, with only small differences between drivers, indicating a tightly clustered set of strengths. Around 7 in 10 employees rate their employer positively overall, although satisfaction declines with age and varies regionally, with APAC most positive (74%) and North America most critical (57%).

Despite generally strong performance, gaps remain. The largest disconnects are seen in salary and benefits and work–life balance, where expectations outpace delivery, while career progression and equal opportunities are more aligned. Employer strengths also vary by region: North America stands out for its focus on growth, but lags behind on job security. Europe leans more towards stability and balance, while APAC combines strong performance on stability with a positive overall workplace experience.



52%

of talent in North America prioritise career progression in their ideal employer.

48%

of north american talent value career progression in their ideal employer.

pay is the primary driver of job security while work–life balance is influenced by a broader range of factors.

Within the life sciences sector, a strong sense of job security is primarily driven by reliable pay and benefits, followed closely by transparent and trustworthy communication and performance recognition. While priorities are broadly consistent across generations, Gen Z stands out by placing greater emphasis on performance and recognition over pay. Regionally, differences are more pronounced. In North America, job security is driven more by organisational stability and transparent communication than by pay, suggesting a more fluid and less anchored sense of security, which is also reflected in lower evaluations of job security in the current employer. In contrast, Europe and APAC place less emphasis on communication, instead prioritising performance and recognition more strongly.

Work–life balance, by contrast, is shaped by a broader set of factors rather than a single dominant driver. A good work environment leads, followed by flexible work arrangements and reasonable workload, with priorities varying more by generation and region. Generationally, patterns are largely aligned, though with nuance: Gen Z places more importance on personal growth, Millennials prioritise reasonable workload, and Gen X focuses more on time off and recovery. Regionally, Europe mirrors the global pattern, while North America places greater emphasis on flexibility and workload, and APAC puts more weight on work environment, recovery, and wellbeing.

63%

of North American talent cite transparent and trustworthy communication as the primary enabler of job security.

50%

of Gen X talent see time off and recovery as the main driver of work–life balance.

in the life sciences sector, job mobility is relatively high, with more than one in five having changed employers.

38%

of North American talent cite fear of downsizing as a reason for changing employers, making it the second leading driver of job switching.

24%

of APAC talent used AI to search for a job, with 9% successfully finding a role through this channel.

Job mobility in this sector shows clear regional differences in how switching behaviour plays out. North America stands out with a unique pattern, where the share of actual switchers exceeds those intending to switch, pointing to more reactive and unplanned movement. In contrast, Latin America shows a clear conversion gap, with a high intention to switch but less than half translating this into actual movement. Europe demonstrates strong alignment between intention and behaviour, with switching levels remaining relatively high at around one in five. APAC follows a different pattern, with both switching intention and actual mobility remaining comparatively low.

Beyond pay, switching is driven by a lack of career growth, poor leadership, job insecurity and work-life balance, broadly aligning with what talent seeks in an ideal employer. However, these drivers also reveal the largest gaps in delivery. Compensation, relationships with managers and work-life balance underperform significantly relative to their importance, pointing to structural shortcomings. In contrast, career growth and job security are more closely aligned with employer performance, although both still act as push factors if expectations are not met. Notably, in North America, fear of downsizing or job loss stands out as a key trigger, reinforcing that job security remains a persistent vulnerability in the sector.

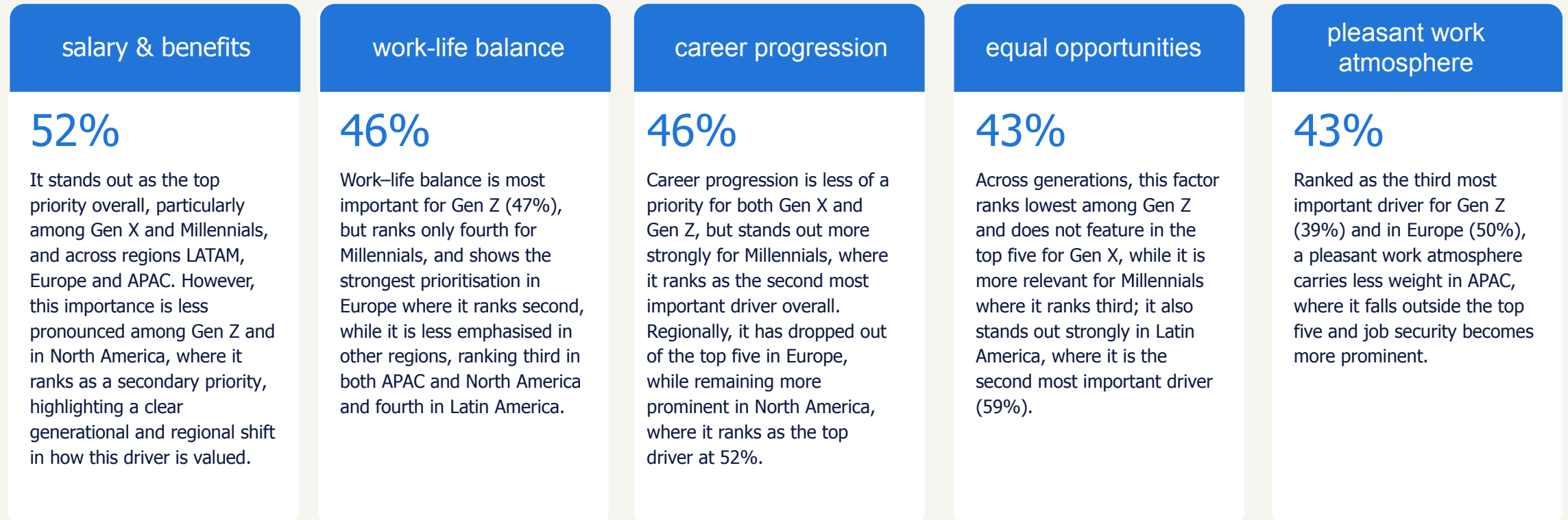
Job search channels are widely used across markets, but effectiveness differs. Job portals and company career websites drive stronger outcomes in Europe and APAC, while social media and staffing agencies are more effective in North America. Generationally, Gen Z relies more on agencies and social media, Millennials on traditional routes and personal connections, and Gen X on LinkedIn and search-based channels.

key drivers.



top five reasons life sciences talent choose an employer.

Salary and benefits is the most valued driver in the life sciences sector, followed by work-life balance and career progression, which are jointly ranked second, while equal opportunities and a pleasant work atmosphere are jointly ranked fourth.

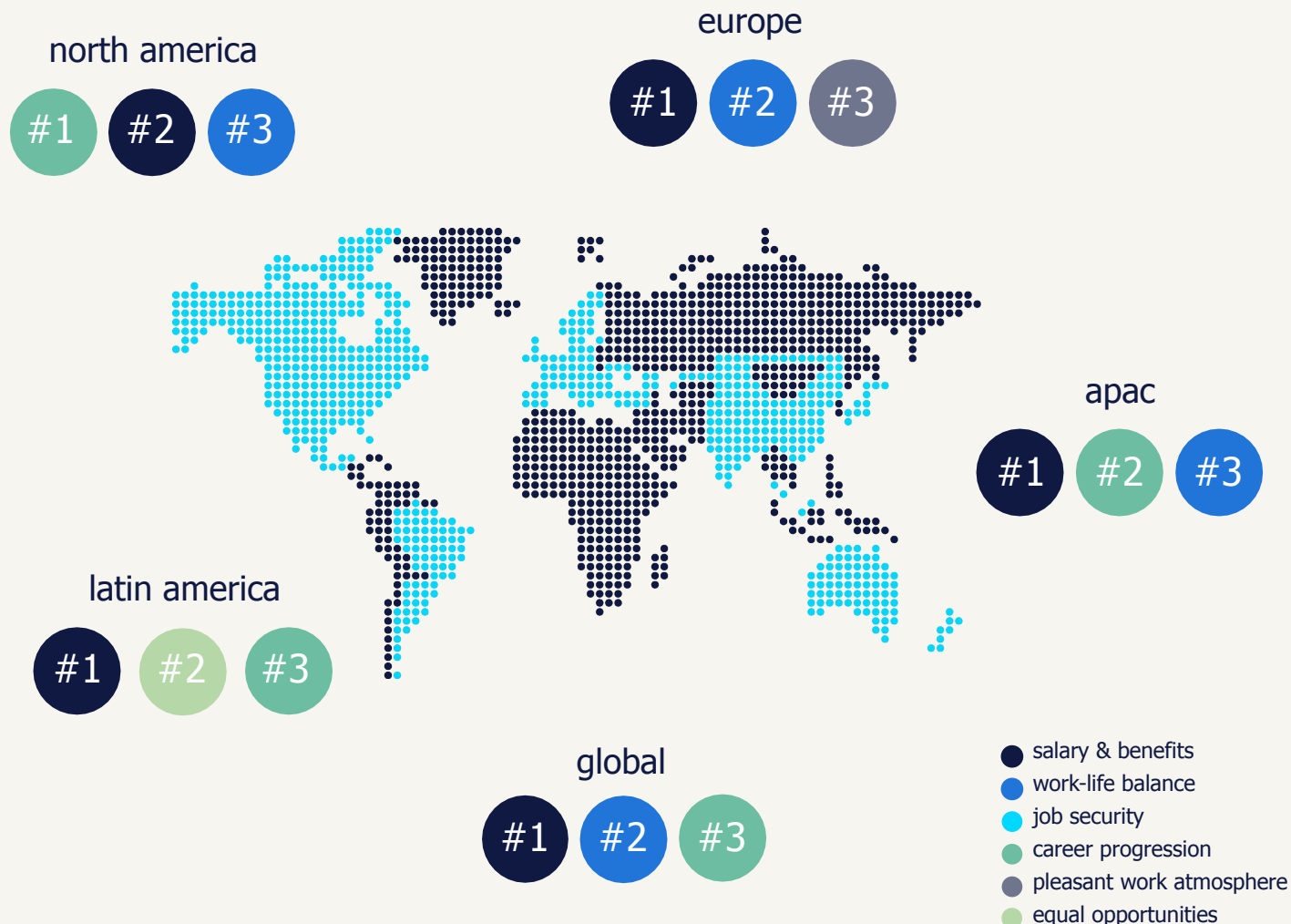


*Given the low sample sizes for Baby Boomers, this group is not reported here.



Q. Thinking about your ideal employer, please pick those elements that this organization should most definitely have?

the ideal employer profile differs across regions

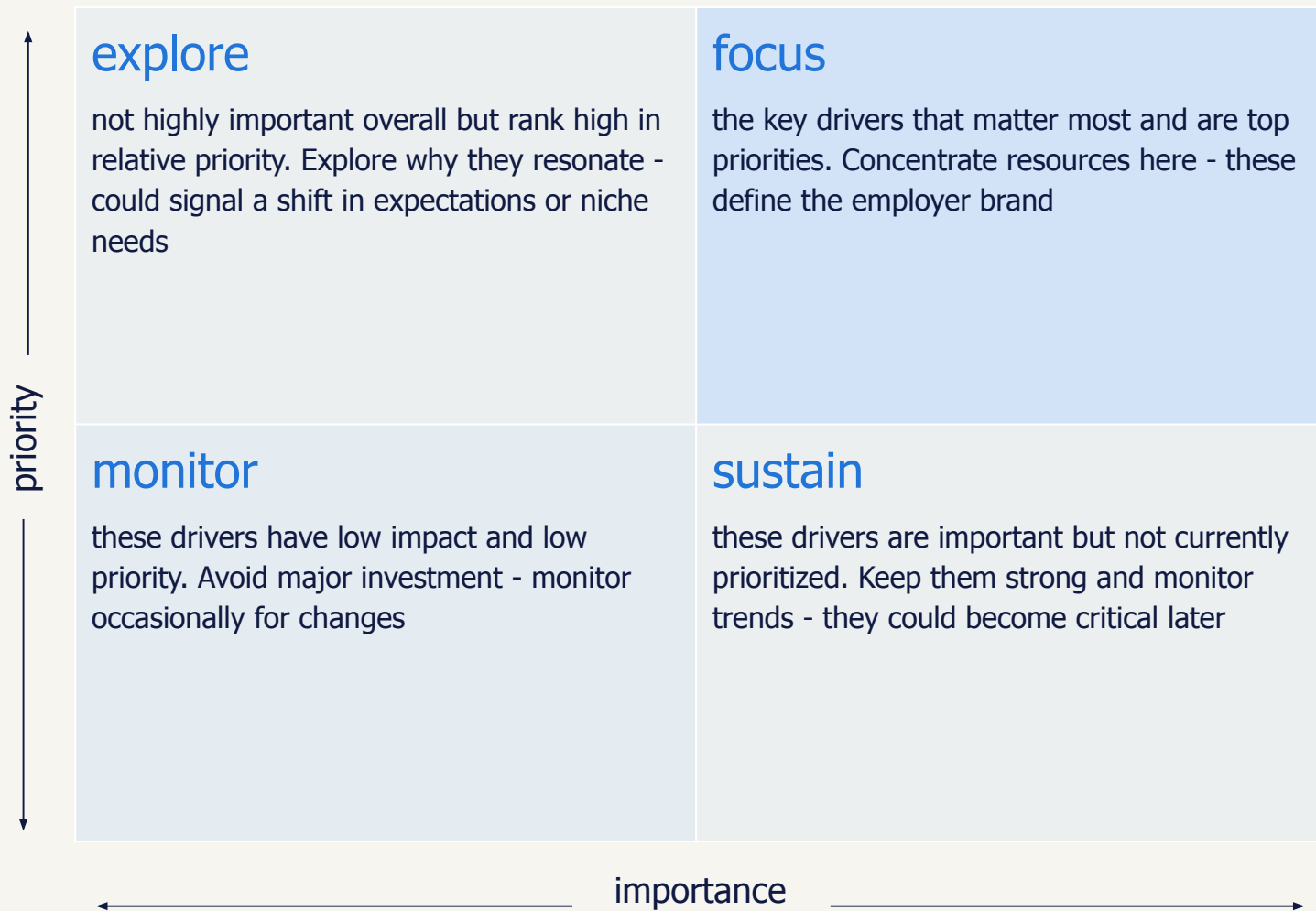


Globally, salary and benefits ranks as the number one driver among life science talent, followed by work-life balance and career progression.

While salary and benefits consistently appears in the top three across all markets, North America stands out as the only exception, where career progression takes the top spot and work-life balance ranks third. A similar pattern is seen in APAC, albeit with some variation in ranking.

In contrast, Europe places greater emphasis on workplace experience, with a pleasant work atmosphere uniquely appearing in the top three alongside salary and benefits and work-life balance, while in Latin America, equal opportunities replaces work-life balance as a key priority.

explanation key drivers' relative priority.



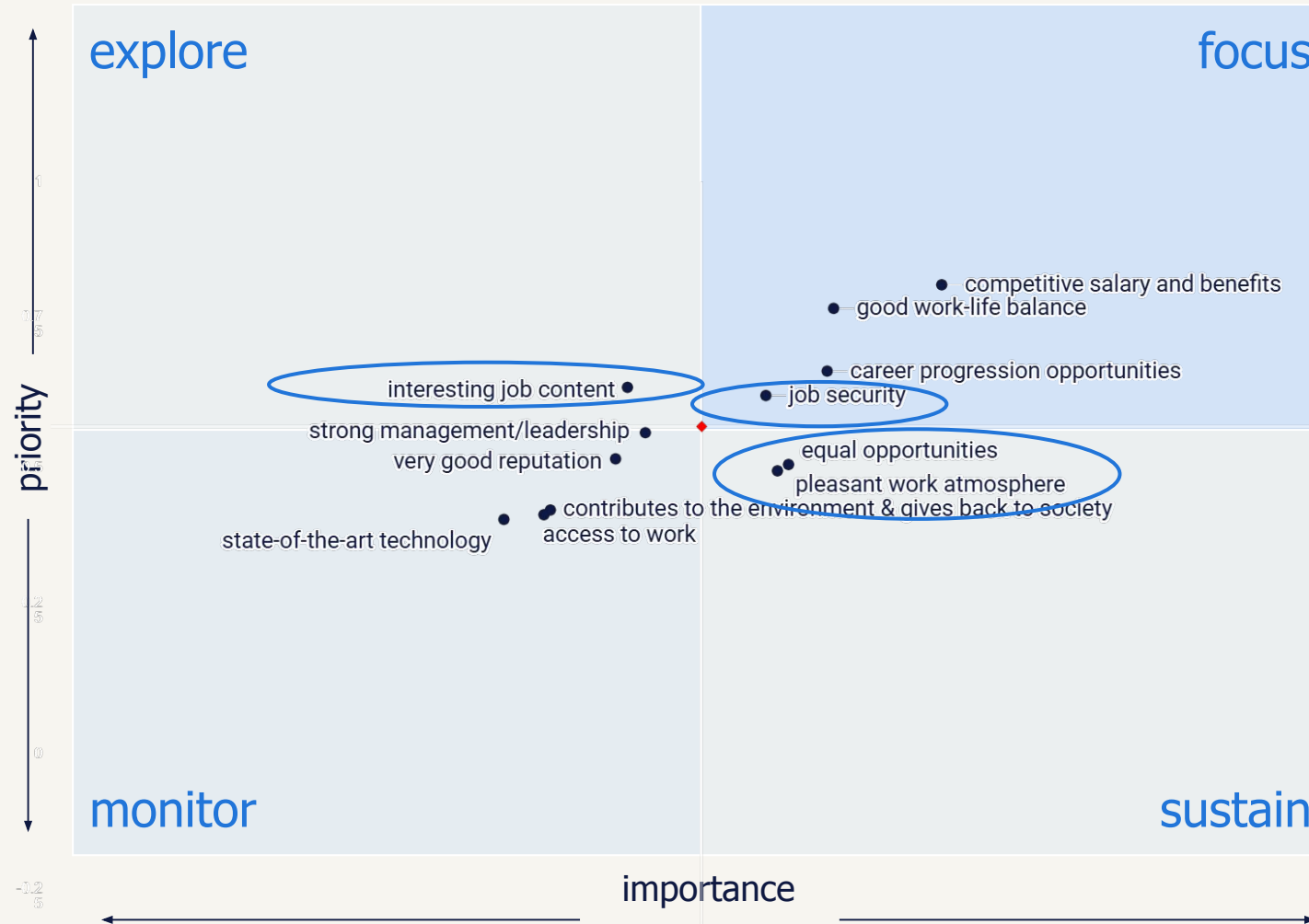
Higher-ranked drivers indicate greater importance or preference compared to those lower down, showing relative priorities.

This table illustrates both the absolute importance and the relative priority of the EVP drivers. Depending on their relationships, each driver falls into a different quadrant, and each quadrant provides distinct actionable insights.



Q. Based on your previous selections, please rank the most important factors that an ideal employer should have, in order of importance.

key drivers' relative priority.



Competitive salary remains the most important and most prioritised driver amongst life sciences talent, albeit by a relatively small margin, with work-life balance close behind and career progression at a similar level of overall importance but lower in relative priority.

The remaining top five drivers, equal opportunities and a pleasant work atmosphere, sit in the sustain quadrant, indicating they are expected hygiene factors rather than key differentiators.

In contrast, job security, despite not featuring in the top five, falls within the focus quadrant, highlighting that it carries strong relative priority and may be undervalued based on importance alone.

Similarly, interesting job content stands out in the explore quadrant, suggesting that while it is currently less important overall, its relatively high priority, signals emerging potential as a future differentiator.



Q. Based on your previous selections, please rank the most important factors that an ideal employer should have, in order of importance.

how life sciences talent rate their current employer.

around 7 in 10 employees rate their current employer highly across all 10 key drivers

Offering long-term job security is the highest-rated driver, followed by a strong employer reputation, interesting job content and easy access to work, with career progression and equal opportunities jointly ranked fourth. Differences across the top five are minimal, indicating a tightly clustered set of priorities rather than a clear hierarchy.

Younger generations are more positive about their current employer (~ 70%) compared to Gen X (64%), while regionally, North America stands out as the most critical (57%), a reversal of the typical global pattern where Europeans tend to be more critical, whereas APAC shows the highest levels of positivity (74%).

the largest expectation gap continues to be around attractive salary.

There is relatively strong alignment between expectations and delivery when it comes to career progression and offering equal opportunities, with a similarly good match on a pleasant work atmosphere. In contrast, the largest gaps emerge around salary and benefits and work-life balance, where expectations clearly outpace current employer performance.

Employer evaluations show clear regional differences. North America stands out for strong performance on growth-related drivers such as career progression and interesting job content, Europe for foundational and wellbeing-related aspects like job security and work-life balance, and APAC for stability and experience, with strengths in job security, reputation and work atmosphere.

69%

of North American talent say their current employer performs best on having a very good reputation, making it the highest-rated driver.

69%

of talent in Europe cite equal opportunities as the most important driver.



key driver
deepdive.



elements that reinforce a strong sense of job security.

for life sciences talent, a strong sense of job security is mainly shaped by reliable pay and benefits.

which elements most significantly contribute to a strong sense of job security?



Transparent and trustworthy communication follows closely behind, on par with performance and recognition. Across generations, priorities are largely in line with the overall average, with reliable pay being the most important factor for a strong sense of job security, apart from Gen Z, who place greater emphasis on performance and recognition as their top priority.

Regionally, there are clearer differences in emphasis. In North America, transparent and trustworthy communication (63%) is the strongest driver of job security, followed by organizational stability (45%), with reliable pay playing a more limited role and ranking fourth (44%). In contrast, Europe places relatively less emphasis on transparent communication (45%), which ranks fourth, instead placing greater importance on performance and recognition (47%). In APAC transparent communication (41%) is similarly less prominent, while performance and recognition and learning and development opportunities are valued more strongly.

elements that strengthen work-life balance.

a good work environment is the strongest enabler of work-life balance for life sciences talent, closely followed by flexible work arrangements and reasonable workload.

which elements most significantly enhance a healthy work-life balance?



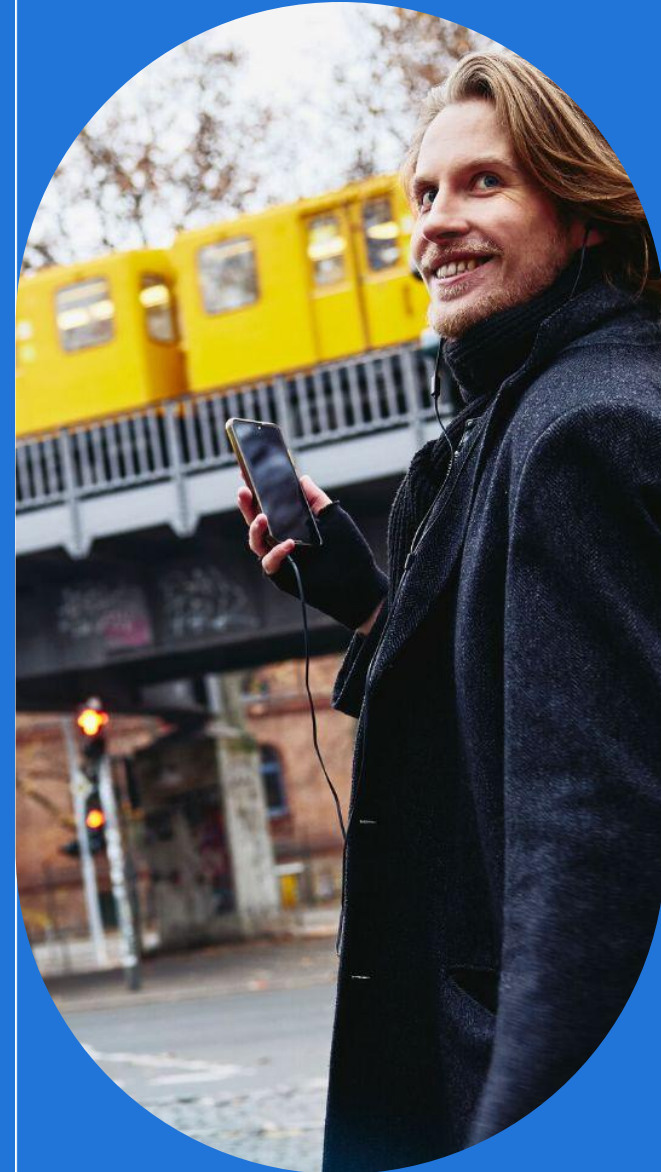
There isn't one single driver underpinning a strong sense of work-life balance; instead, it is shaped by a combination of factors that vary by generation and region.

Across generations, priorities are broadly in line with the overall average, although Gen Z place slightly greater emphasis on personal growth. For Millennials, a reasonable workload emerges as the main driver of a healthy work-life balance, with health and wellbeing support also playing a more prominent role, ranking fourth. Among Gen X, time off and recovery is the most important factor, followed by flexible work arrangements.

Regionally, Europe largely mirrors the global average. In North America, however, flexible work arrangements and a reasonable workload are more important, followed by personal growth and supportive leadership, while a good work environment plays a more minor role, ranking seventh. In APAC, a good work environment is also a key driver, followed by time off and recovery and health and wellbeing support.



job-switching behaviour in focus.



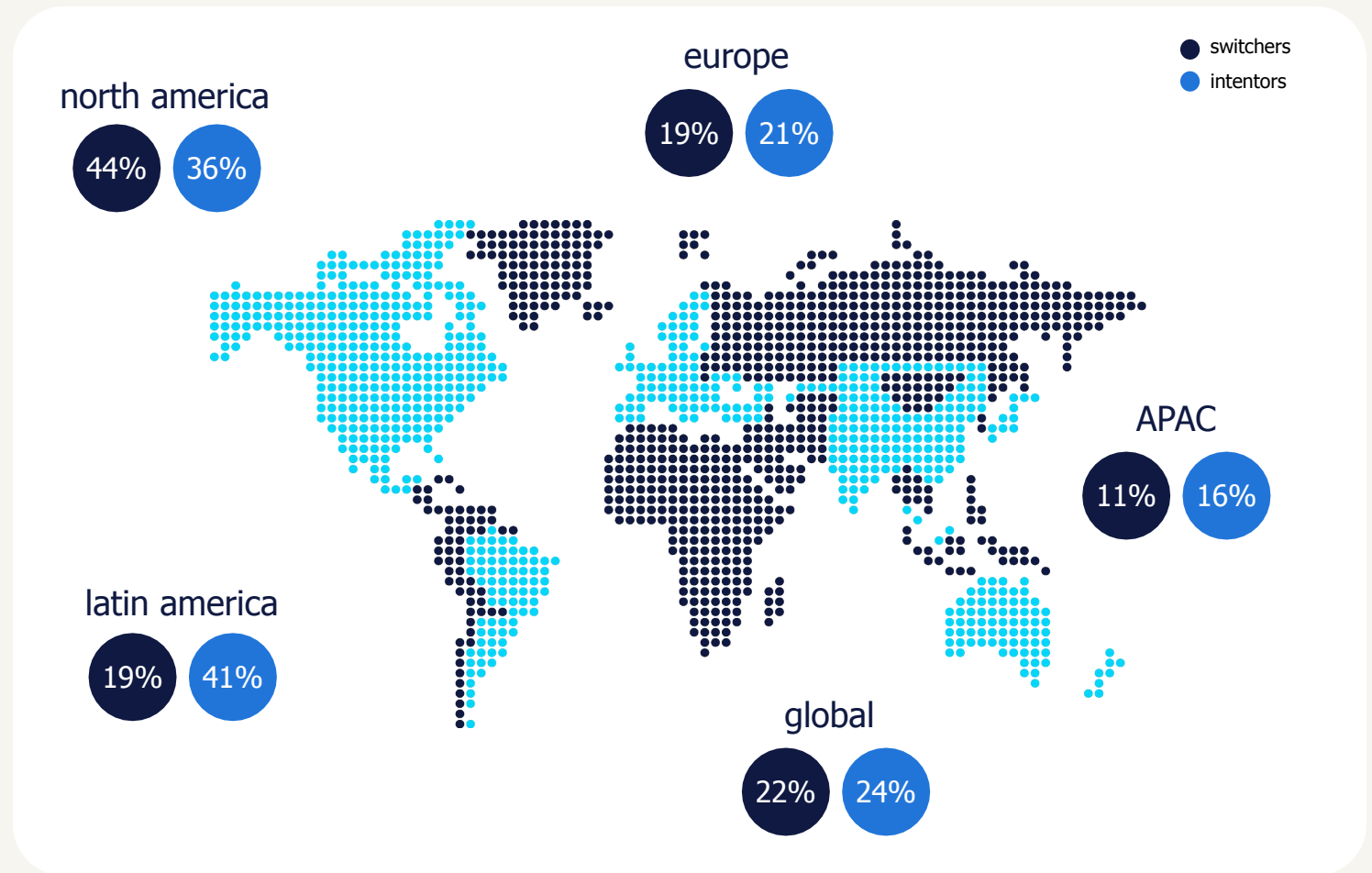
in the life sciences sector, switching behaviour and intention to switch are closely aligned.

North America stands out in that switching behaviour exceeds stated intent, suggesting that a notable share of employees change jobs more opportunistically or are forced to change jobs rather than as part of a planned search.

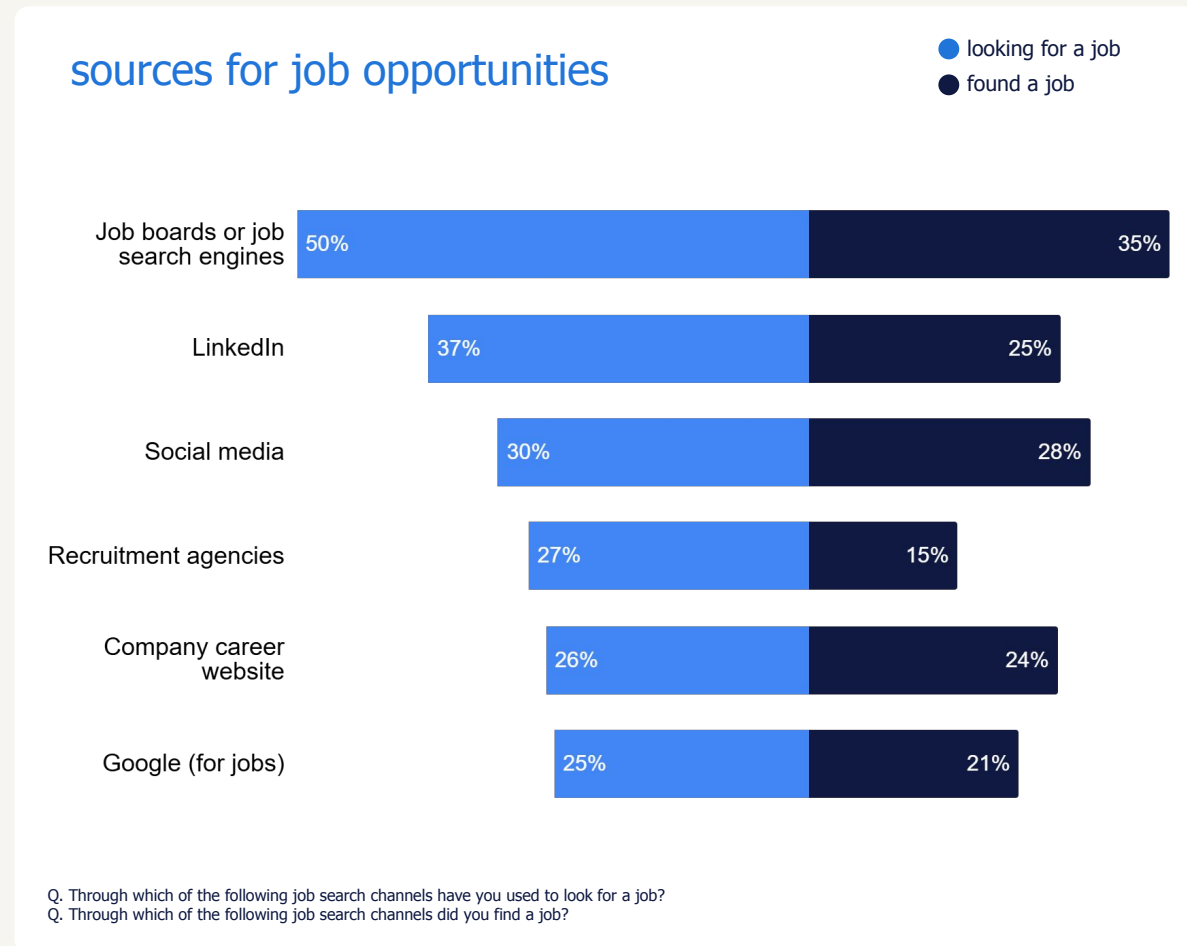
In contrast, LATAM shows the opposite pattern, with very high intention to switch but much lower realised switching, indicating a clear conversion gap between ambition and actual movement.

Europe is more closely aligned with the global average, though slightly below it, and stands out for its strong conversion, pointing to a more predictable and realised job mobility.

APAC, meanwhile, shows lower levels of both switching and intention to switch, with switching rates around half the global average and similarly lower intent, suggesting a more stable workforce overall.



when looking for a job, job boards are the most widely used channel, however social media is the channel that demonstrates the best conversions.



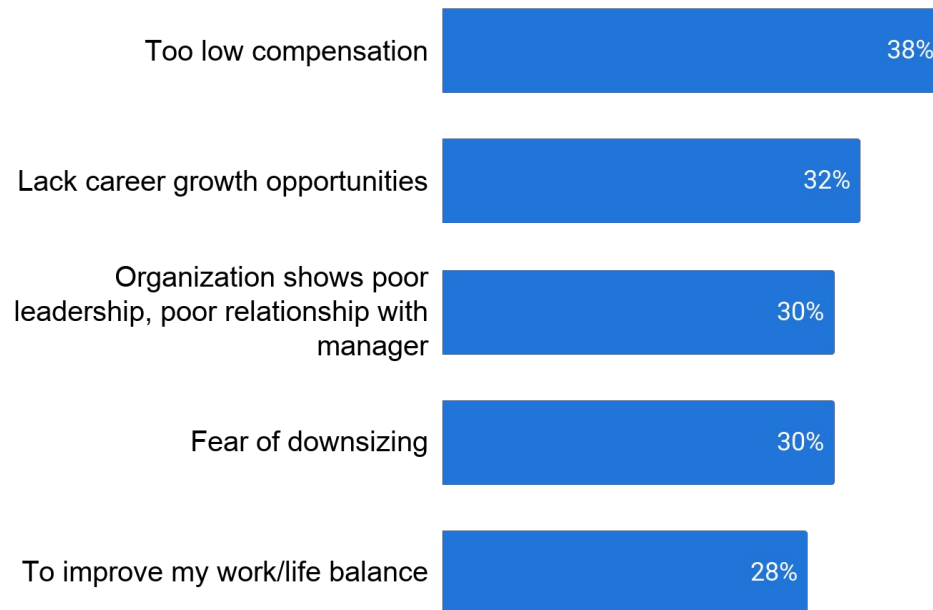
In Europe and North America, LinkedIn and job boards are among the most commonly used search channels, broadly in line with the global average. Still, actual success differs: in Europe, hires are more often driven by job portals and company career websites, while LinkedIn proves less efficient. In North America, social media, plays a more effective role in conversion, and staffing agencies are also more prominent (29%).

In APAC, job portals are also the primary channel for job search, followed by recruitment agencies and company career websites. However, recruitment agencies appear less effective in converting to hires, with job portals and company websites driving more successful outcomes. Notably, while AI tools remain the least used channel overall, adoption is significantly higher in APAC: 24% use AI when job searching, double the level in Europe and six times that of North America, and 9% successfully find jobs through it.

Gen X are the most likely to use LinkedIn (54%) and, report high success rates from searching via Google for jobs (39%) and public employment services. Millennials largely follow the average pattern but place relatively greater importance on personal connections (30%), with more traditional routes proving effective. For Gen Z, recruitment and staffing agencies play a larger role in the search phase, ranking second and third, while social media stands out as the most effective channel for actually finding a job.

too low compensation is the primary driver for life sciences talent to switch employers in the life sciences sector

reasons for leaving



It is followed by lack of career growth, poor organisational leadership, fear of job loss, and the desire to improve work–life balance, aligning with the key attributes of an ideal employer, particularly salary and benefits, work–life balance, and career progression.

Across regions and generations, low compensation consistently ranks as the number one reason for switching. Millennials, Gen X and APAC largely mirror the overall pattern. However, improving work–life balance plays a stronger role for Gen X (32%), where it ranks third, with a similar pattern observed in Europe (36%), where it is also among the top three reasons to change employers.

Gen Z stands out, with fear of downsizing or job loss emerging as the second most important driver, while lack of career growth ranks only fifth. Regionally, North America reflects a more Gen Z–like profile, with greater emphasis on job security concerns.



how does it relate to current situation?

the main triggers for leaving appear to align with areas where employers may be relatively under delivering.

reasons to leave

1. too low compensation
2. lack of career growth opportunities
3. poor (relation with) management
4. fear of losing job
5. to improve work-life balance
6. negative work environment
7. lack of interest in job
8. not equally rewarded
9. lack of investment in technology and innovation
10. work is not easily accessible
11. poor reputation
12. no environmental or social contribution

evaluation of current employer

1. job security
2. very good reputation
3. interesting job content
4. easy access to work
5. career progression
6. equal opportunities
7. pleasant work atmosphere
8. strong management/leadership
9. salary & benefits
10. work-life balance
11. benefits the environment and society
12. state-of-the-art technology

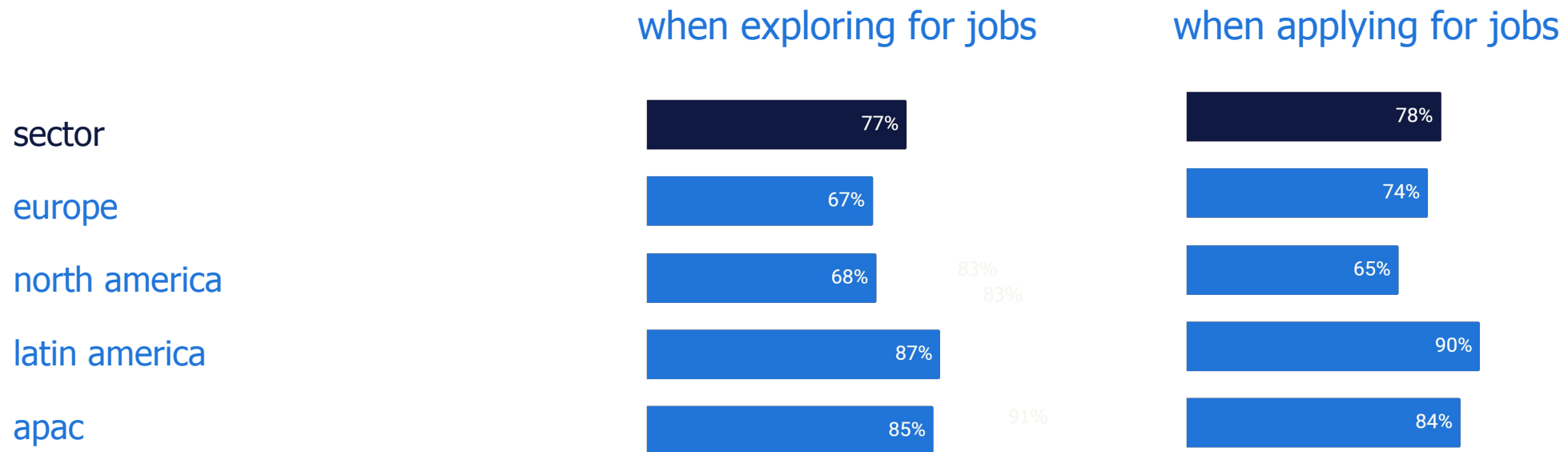
Low compensation stands out as the biggest disconnect, while it is the primary reason for leaving, it only ranks 9th in the current employer profile, highlighting a clear shortfall. Similarly, relationships with managers and work-life balance show clear gaps, ranking 3rd and 5th as reasons to leave, but only 8th and 10th respectively in the current employer profile.

By contrast, alignment is stronger on drivers such as career growth, and job security, which over delivers but still remains a relevant push factor, indicating that even where expectations are met, this is not always enough to retain talent. This is particularly pronounced in North America, where concerns around job security further amplify dissatisfaction, with only around half of talent rating their employer positively on this driver and overall performance ranking 8th in the current employer evaluation



importance of in person contact for life sciences talent.

personal contacts is playing a similarly strong role both when exploring opportunities and when applying among life sciences talent. The importance is lowest in Europe and North America, although in Europe it becomes more relevant once candidates reach the application stage. Overall, personal contact is most important in LATAM.





closing remarks.

The report has shown the ongoing dynamism within the priorities and perspectives of the global workforce in the life sciences sector, while also pinpointing key areas where employers can enhance their strategies or focus their efforts.

It provides just a glimpse into the wealth of insights available through our Employer Brand Research, both globally and locally, and underscores the enduring importance of cultivating a strong employer brand in today's competitive landscape.

Detailed data and deeper insights into sub-group analysis and the specializations are available in our local market reports, designed to help organizations stay informed and remain ahead in an ever-evolving marketplace.



appendix.

background
information.



34 markets surveyed.

covering more than 75% of the global economy



argentina	chile	hungary	the netherlands	spain
australia	china	india	new zealand	sweden
austria	czech republic	italy	norway	switzerland
belgium	france	japan	poland	united kingdom
brazil	germany	luxembourg	portugal	united states
canada	greece	malaysia	romania	uruguay
denmark	hong kong SAR	mexico	singapore	

a representative employer brand research based on perceptions of the general audience. Optimizing more than 25 years of successful employer branding insights.

an independent survey with more than 160,000 respondents and 6,400 companies surveyed worldwide.

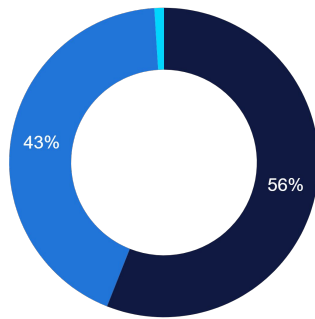
sample

- a total of 2,841 interviews among life sciences talent worldwide
- aged 18 to retirement age
- representative on gender
- overrepresentation of age 25– 44
- comprised of students, employed and unemployed workforce

sample composition in life sciences sector report.

socio-demographics, education, region

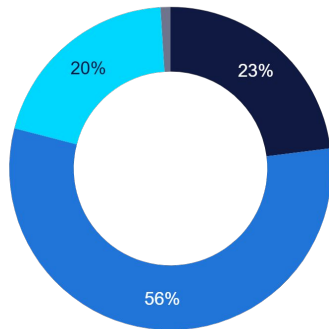
gender



- male
- female
- other*

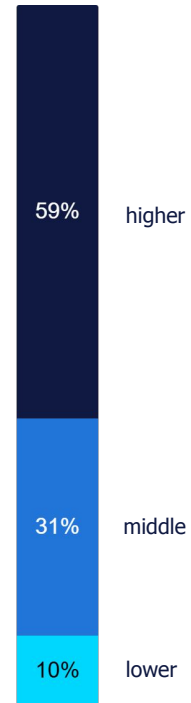
* other is comprised of all other gender identities and people who prefer not to answer the question

age

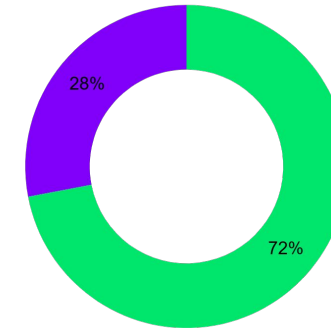


- Gen Z (1997-2012)
- Millennials (1981-1996)
- Gen X (1965-1980)
- Baby boomers (1946-1964)

education

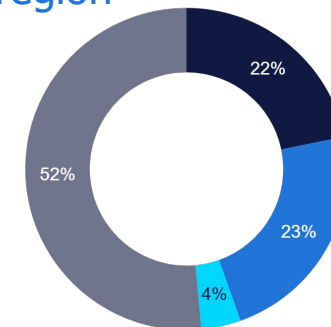


specializations



- operational
- professional
- digital

region



- Europe
- North America
- Latin America
- APAC

thank you.



partner for talent.