

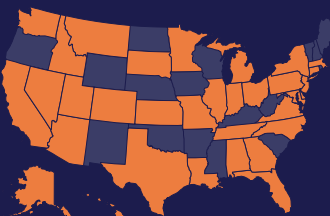
State of the Paper Ceiling Dashboard: A Skills–First Progress Tracker

SUMMER 2026

AWARENESS TO ACTION

O@W raises awareness of STARs, the systemic barriers they face, and the value of their skills, to shift perceptions and drive action.

We are actively shifting how employers, workers, and policymakers understand talent



33 states

have committed to removing unnecessary degree requirements or advancing skills-based talent practices

75% of employers consider hiring STARs for more jobs now than 2–3 years ago

83% of employers believe the idea that a college diploma is required for job-ready skills is **biased or should change**

+56%
from 2023 to 2025

19% of STARs have described themselves as "STARs". Before 2020, this term did not exist.

39% of employers report they are aware of the Tear the Paper Ceiling campaign

+44%
from 2022 to 2025

Methods and sources

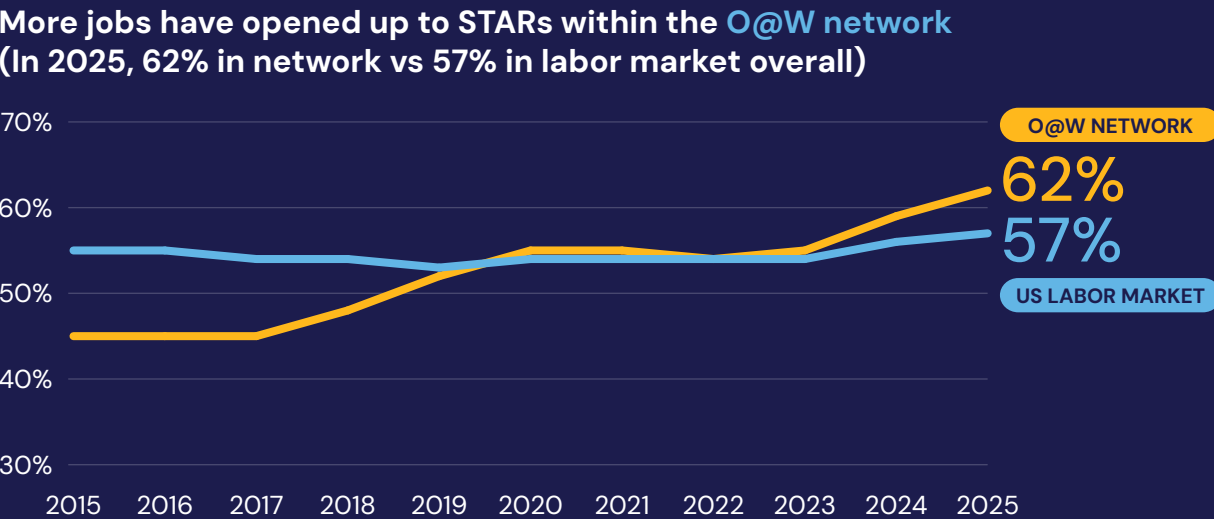
- This data analysis is produced from Opportunity@Work analysis of:
- Quarterly surveys of STARs and employers attitudes, perceptions and behaviors, conducted by the Ad Council in partnership with Opportunity@Work and C+R Research. (2022–2025).
 - Lightcast. (2010–2025). Job postings and social profile data. <https://lightcast.io/>.
 - U.S.Census Bureau. (2023). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates*.
- * We weight job postings and social profiles shares to align with employment distributions. When looking at STAR transitions in the labor market, we find that ~10% of STARs start a new role annually. The proportion of STARs achieving mobility here is limited to those STARs starting a new role.
- * We define "upwardly mobile" as STARs transitioning into roles and achieving a 10% or greater salary increase from their previous role.
- Contact Opportunity@Work with any questions.



BEHAVIOR SHIFTS

O@W equips the workforce field with data, tools, and support to shift their talent management behavior and show what is possible at scale.

Employers who interact with O@W have shifted behaviors more towards skills-first practices



Source: Lightcast job posting data

775,000+

Jobs committed to be opened to STARs by Public Sector over last three years

590,000+

Job postings open to STARs in our network in 2025

+20%
YoY

Employers have **changed degree requirements** in at least one job description

US LABOR MARKET

37%

O@W NETWORK

43%

Job postings with no degree requirement in jobs paying above a median wage

US LABOR MARKET

+4%
in 3 years

Q4-2025: 67%
Q4-2022: 64%

O@W NETWORK

+11%
in 3 years

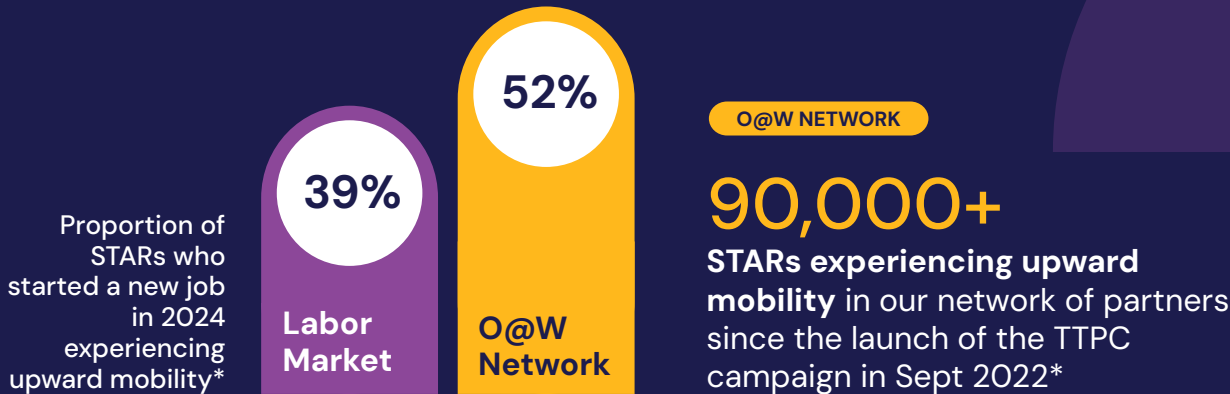
Q4-2025: 70%
Q4-2022: 63%

CHANGED OUTCOMES

O@W rewires the labor market to enable sustained economic mobility for STARs and meet employers' critical talent needs.

When signals and hiring practices change, workers gain access to opportunity

STARs have experienced better hiring outcomes in O@W employer networks than the labor market*



In February 2026, Opportunity@Work and Lightcast announced a groundbreaking partnership that fundamentally changes how data about STARs flows to the decision-makers across the labor market.

We will be able to reach:

- 67 of the Fortune 100
- 1,000 educational institutions
- 775 workforce and economic dev orgs

US LABOR MARKET

\$14.8K

Median wage gain for upwardly mobile STARs in 2024 in market overall*

O@W NETWORK

\$17.4K

Median wage gain for upwardly mobile STARs in 2024 in our network*

Over the next decade, O@W aims to enable at least 1 million STARs in the US to translate their learning into earning — generating a \$100 billion boost in their annual earnings.



Download this dashboard at opportunityatwork.org/impact/dashboard