



RETENTION REPORT 2026

EMPLOYEE TURNOVER INSIGHTS AND TRENDS IN 2025



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I CONDITIONS

Foreword

As we release the tenth edition of the Retention Report, I find myself pausing more than usual. Not out of nostalgia but out of respect for what a decade of listening has taught us about the workforce and about leadership.

Since our first report in 2017, we have had the privilege of hearing directly from hundreds of thousands of employees. Their voices have shaped this research year after year, often challenging popular narratives and, at times, compelling employers to confront uncomfortable truths about why people leave.

This year also marks Work Institute's 25th year as an organization dedicated to listening to employees and translating those insights into action. Over that time, we observed multiple economic cycles, periods of workforce stability, and moments of profound disruption. While the context of work has changed repeatedly, one pattern has remained consistent: risk accumulates quietly before it becomes visible when expectations outpace organizational readiness.

In the early years, the Retention Report was largely about establishing credibility and urgency. From 2017 through 2019, the focus was on making the business case for retention. We wanted leaders to clearly understand that turnover was not inevitable and certainly not free. The conversation centered on cost, disruption, and accountability.

Then the world changed.

Between 2020 and 2021, the pandemic forced organizations to confront the human side of work in ways for which few were prepared. Flexibility, wellbeing, and empathy moved from peripheral conversations to central expectations. Employees began reevaluating not just where they worked, but how work fit into their lives.

By 2022 and 2023, those questions evolved into expectations. The workforce reset its priorities. Flexibility, development, meaningful work, and leadership support were no longer differentiators. They became requirements.

In 2024 and 2025, retention entered a new phase. It was no longer just a workforce issue. It became a strategic one and, in some cases, a fiduciary one. Leaders began to recognize that unmanaged turnover created real risk to performance, continuity, and trust.

That brings us to 2026.

At first glance, the data appear reassuring. Quit rates have declined to levels not seen in more than a decade. Job openings have moderated. Core measures of sentiment show modest improvement. On the surface, stability seems to have returned.

But stability is not the same as confidence.

As we examined this year's data, a more nuanced picture emerged. Employees are not rushing for the exits, nor are they broadly satisfied. Many are staying put while quietly reassessing their future. They are weighing uncertainty, watching how their organizations respond, and deciding whether the employment experience being offered today is one they can commit to tomorrow.

In many ways, the current labor market offers employers something scarce: time, time that was not available during the height of the pandemic or the rapid reshuffling that followed. The risk employers take is mistaking reduced movement for renewed commitment.

Career-related exits remain stubbornly high. Job security concerns have more than doubled. While some measures of sentiment have stabilized, the underlying pressures that influence retention decisions have not disappeared. New forces, including AI and automation, are amplifying long standing questions about growth, relevance, and stability.

Employees are not waiting for the economy to change. They are watching how their organizations respond to these pressures and deciding what that response means for their future.

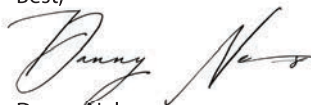
This year's Retention Report is grounded in that tension. It draws primarily on exit interview data, complemented by broader workforce research, to help leaders understand not just why employees leave, but how the decision to leave often forms long before it is acted upon. It is less about reacting to turnover and more about identifying risk while there is still time to act.

After ten years of publishing the Retention Report, one truth remains consistent: retention is not accidental. It is the outcome of intentional choices made by leaders who are willing to confront reality, set clear expectations, equip managers, and act earlier rather than explain later.

My hope is that this report helps leaders recognize this moment for what it is, not a return to normal, but an opportunity, an opportunity to build clarity, confidence, and trust that endure beyond the next shift in the labor market.

The workforce is watching and how leaders respond now will shape trust for years to come.

Best,



Danny Nelms
Work Institute CEO



Executive Summary

Stability Does Not Equal Confidence

As organizations enter 2026, the labor market appears calmer than it has been in years. Quit rates have declined to pre-pandemic levels. Job openings have moderated. Headlines suggest a return to stability.

Yet beneath the surface, the workforce remains under strain.

Work Institute data reveal a workforce that is staying put but not necessarily staying committed. Employees are delaying exits, not abandoning dissatisfaction. Turnover has slowed faster than confidence has recovered, creating a gap between perceived stability and underlying risk.

This is not a cooling labor market. It is a cautious one.

Employees are weighing uncertainty around career growth, leadership capability, workload, and job security. Economic pressure, shifting industry dynamics, and the rapid adoption of AI have changed how employees evaluate risk. Rather than making immediate moves, many are watching closely and deciding whether their current employer is prepared to support them through what comes next.

These dynamics matter because delayed decisions do not eliminate turnover risk. They concentrate it.

Key Findings from the 2026 Retention Report

Career remains the primary driver of employee turnover.

Career related exits account for nearly one in five departures, continuing a pattern that has persisted for more than a decade. Employees are not just seeking promotions. They are seeking clarity. When development pathways, advancement criteria, and future opportunities are unclear, dissatisfaction builds quietly until employees decide to leave.

Work-Life Balance has become a baseline expectation.

Flexibility is no longer viewed as a perk or a pandemic accommodation. Scheduling consistency, workload manageability, commute impact, and hybrid capability are now core components of retention. Organizations that treat Work-Life Balance as optional face growing risk.

Managers remain the most influential point of failure and opportunity.

Manager-related exits remain elevated and highly predictable. While some indicators suggest stabilization, dissatisfaction tied to professional behavior, communication, and expectation setting continue to rise. Employees do not separate their experience with their manager from their perception of the organization.

Job security concerns are reemerging.

Job security has more than doubled as a reason for leaving over the past year. This increase is not driven by widespread job loss, but by anticipatory anxiety tied to AI, automation, and economic uncertainty. Employees are not panicking. They are recalibrating.

Turnover is becoming more expensive, not less.

Even as quit rates decline, the financial exposure tied to each exit continues to grow. Higher wages, longer time to productivity, specialized skill requirements, and downstream disruption mean that fewer exits do not necessarily translate into lower cost. In many cases, risk is simply deferred.



What This Means for Leaders

The defining risk of 2026 is not mass resignation. It is quiet disengagement.

Employees are staying longer while reassessing their future. Engagement may appear stable. Headcount may look secure. But when expectations around growth, leadership, flexibility, and clarity are not addressed, dissatisfaction accumulates beneath the surface.

This creates a fragile workforce. When conditions shift, exits often come faster, in clusters, and at a higher cost.

At the same time, this moment presents a rare opportunity.

Organizations now have something they lacked during the Great Resignation era. They have time.

- Time to strengthen career systems instead of selling career promises.
- Time to equip managers to lead the workforce they have today, not the one they remember.
- Time to address AI related uncertainty with clarity rather than silence.
- Time to close the gap between employee expectations and organizational reality before turnover accelerates again.

Retention has never been about preventing employees from leaving at all costs. It has always been about reducing preventable loss.

The message is clear: turnover is not accidental. It is the result of choices leaders make or avoid.

The organizations that succeed in 2026 will be those that use this period of relative stability to act intentionally, align expectations, and build trust that endures beyond the next shift in the labor market.

State of the Workforce

Stability at the Surface and Strain Beneath

A Labor Market that Appears Calmer than it Feels

Lower Quit Rates Do Not Mean Healthier Workplaces

As organizations enter 2026, macro workforce indicators suggest a labor market that is stabilizing. The national quit rate has declined to levels not seen since before the pandemic. Unemployment has edged up modestly. Job openings remain elevated but no longer dominate headlines in the same way they did during the peak of the Great Resignation.

At first glance, these signals point toward normalization.

Historically, declining quit rates have often coincided with improving confidence, stronger alignment between workers and employers, and a cooling of labor market volatility. Many leaders interpret this combination as evidence that workforce pressures are easing.

But that is not the full story for many organizations, as that interpretation does not fully align with what they experience day to day.

Here's what the data actually shows. Employers continue to report difficulty filling critical roles. Employees continue to express dissatisfaction, particularly around career growth, development, and manager effectiveness. Turnover may be slowing, but the underlying drivers of retention risk remain present.

This gap between macro indicators and organizational reality sets the stage for understanding the current state of the workforce.

The decline in quit rates is real. What is less clear is what that decline represents.

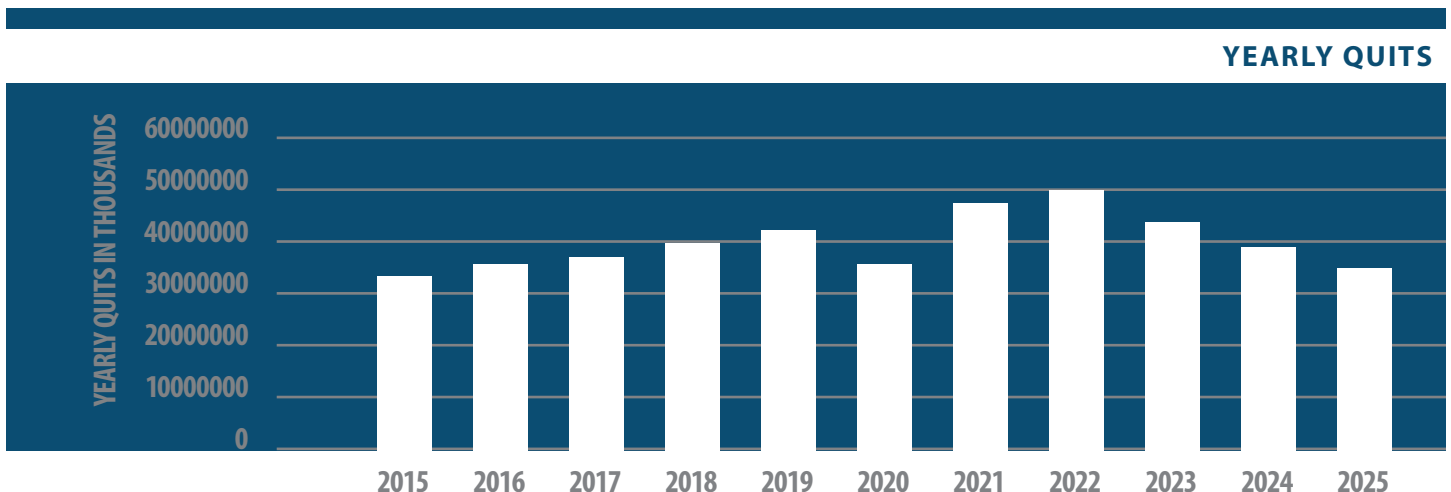
Work Institute data suggest that turnover is declining faster than the employee experience is recovering, creating a gap between apparent stability and underlying sentiment. Some employee experience indicators are improving, but the recovery is early, uneven, and fragile.

Dissatisfaction related to career progression, development opportunities, and manager capability continues to surface consistently across industries and job levels. In other words, employees are staying longer, but many are doing so with increased caution rather than renewed confidence.

Instead of signaling a return to healthier workforce conditions, the current environment reflects early stabilization. Employees appear more hesitant to move, recalibrating risk amid economic uncertainty, shifting industry dynamics, and concerns about job stability. Rather than exiting quickly, many are delaying decisions, waiting for clearer signals that change is safe or worthwhile.

This difference changes how leaders should respond.

If turnover slows because employees feel cautious, not committed, the risk does not disappear. It quietly builds. Frustration, disengagement, and stalled expectations build quietly beneath the surface until conditions shift again.



Regional Patterns Reinforce Strain

Regional quit rate differences continue to highlight how uneven workforce conditions remain. Quit rates are highest in the South, consistent with long-standing patterns tied to several overlapping dynamics:

- Higher concentrations of frontline, healthcare, and manufacturing roles
- Rapid population growth outpacing infrastructure and talent pipelines
- Greater job mobility in lower wage and high demand occupations

These regional dynamics reinforce an important reality. National averages often mask localized strain. In many labor markets, demand for workers remains strong, but readiness, confidence, and alignment lag.

For employers operating across multiple regions, this creates uneven retention risk that cannot be addressed through uniform strategies or assumptions about workforce health.

Economic Factors

Economic conditions continue to shape employee decision making.

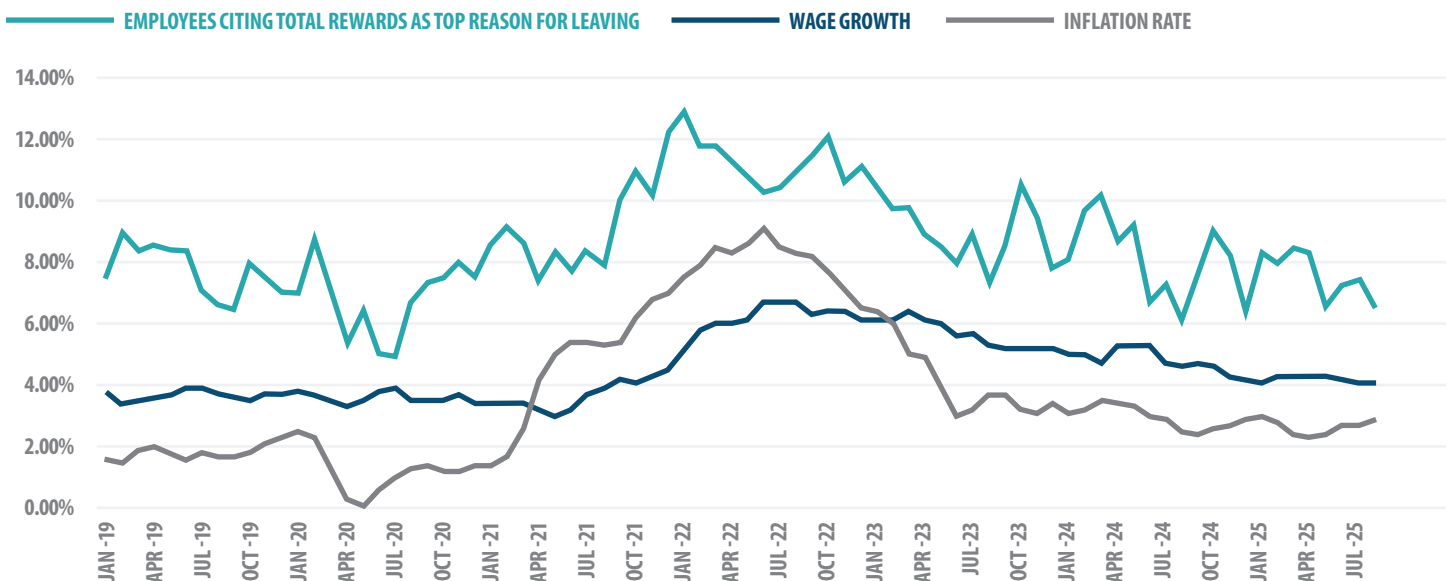
After several years of inflation driven wage acceleration, real wage growth has largely flattened. While nominal pay increased during the inflation surge, purchasing power gains have stalled or reversed for many workers.

During the height of inflation, compensation emerged as a more visible driver of turnover. As inflation cooled, those pressures eased, but they did not disappear. Instead, compensation concerns settled into a new baseline marked by diminished momentum and increased vulnerability.

At the same time, job stability regained prominence as a decision factor. Ongoing volatility in technology and white-collar professional services, combined with relative stability in manufacturing and operational roles, led some workers to prioritize predictability over flexibility or passion.

This represents a meaningful shift from the immediate post pandemic years, when autonomy and lifestyle considerations dominated retention decisions.

INFLATION RATE VS. WAGE GROWTH VS. TOTAL REWARDS REASON FOR LEAVING (2019–2025)



AI, Automation, and Worker Anxiety

One of the most notable changes entering 2026 is the reemergence of job security as a meaningful driver of employee decision making.

Work Institute data indicate that job security related concerns are surfacing more frequently in employee feedback. While not yet the dominant Reason for Leaving, this category moved from marginal to material in a relatively short period of time.

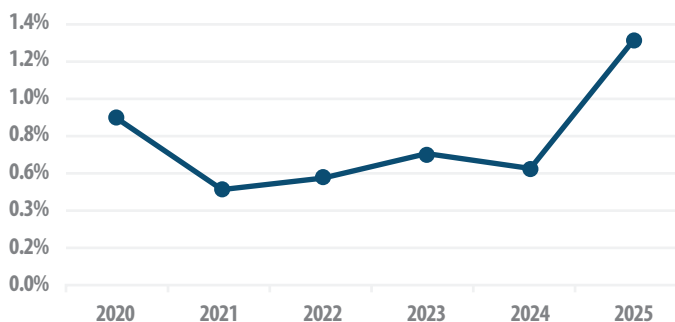
Importantly, this shift does not reflect widespread job loss. It reflects anticipatory anxiety.

Employees are responding not to immediate displacement, but to uncertainty about how automation and AI will reshape roles, skills, and career paths. This anxiety is particularly pronounced among early career and white-collar professionals who lack tenure, institutional clarity, or visible advancement pathways.

What is most concerning is not the presence of anxiety itself, but the absence of clear organizational response. Many employers have not clearly articulated how AI will be used, which skills will remain critical, or how employees can navigate careers in an increasingly automated environment.

In the absence of clarity, uncertainty fills the gap and compounds existing dissatisfaction around growth, development, and trust.

**JOB SECURITY
REASON FOR LEAVING SUBTHEME**



What This Means for Employers

Why “Stable” Workforces Are More Fragile Than They Appear

The 2026 workforce is not defined by mass exits or economic collapse. It is defined by quiet strain.

Employees are staying longer but feeling less certain.

Jobs are available, but not always align with skills, location, flexibility, or career stage.

Opportunities exist, but clarity often does not.

For leaders, the risk lies in equating stability with health. Lower turnover may provide short-term relief, but it can also mask accumulating dissatisfaction and deferred decision making.

At the same time, this moment presents opportunity. Employers that invest in clarity, communication, manager effectiveness, and career visibility can convert caution into commitment.

One final implication of this moment is often overlooked.

Even as turnover slows, the cost exposure associated with employee exits remains significant. Rising wages and persistent replacement costs mean that each departure carries more financial weight than in prior years.

In this environment, delayed turnover does not reduce risk. It concentrates it. When exits eventually occur, they do so at a higher cost and with greater operational disruption.

For employers, the question is no longer whether turnover is expensive. It is whether they are using this period of relative stability to address the conditions that make future exits more costly when they arrive.

**THE REMAINDER OF THIS REPORT
EXAMINES WHERE THAT WORK MUST
BEGIN AND WHAT LEADERS MUST DO NEXT.**





II

DATA

Reasons for Leaving

The Cost of Turnover

Why Familiar Problems Carry Growing Financial Risk

The reasons employees leave are not new. What has changed is the cost of losing someone and how fast that cost compounds.

As wages have risen over the past decade, the cost associated with replacing an employee has increased materially. Even though fewer people quit, the financial damage of every departure is bigger than ever. In many organizations, fewer exits do not translate into lower cost. Instead, risk becomes concentrated.

Turnover today is more expensive because:

- Compensation levels are higher
- Time to productivity has lengthened
- Skill requirements are more specialized
- Disruption to teams and customers carries greater downstream impact

When employees delay exits due to uncertainty rather than commitment, organizations may experience a temporary sense of stability. But when turnover does occur, it often arrives in clusters and at a higher cost per departure.

This is why understanding why employees leave matters as much as how many leave.

Most of the leading Reasons for Leaving identified in this report are preventable. Career clarity, manager effectiveness, work structure, communication, and culture are all areas where leadership

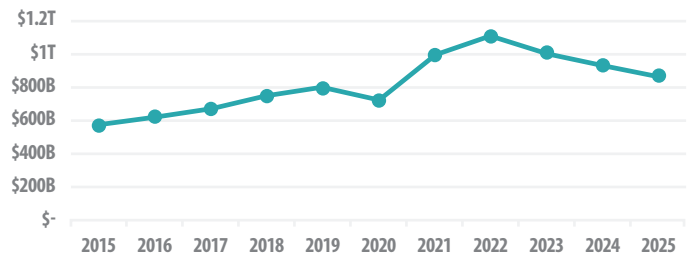
decisions meaningfully influence outcomes. When these issues go unaddressed, the cost of turnover compounds quietly over time.

BASED ON THIS YEAR'S DATA, NEARLY THREE QUARTERS (74.69%) OF ALL REASONS FOR LEAVING FALL INTO CATEGORIES WORK INSTITUTE CLASSIFIES AS PREVENTABLE.

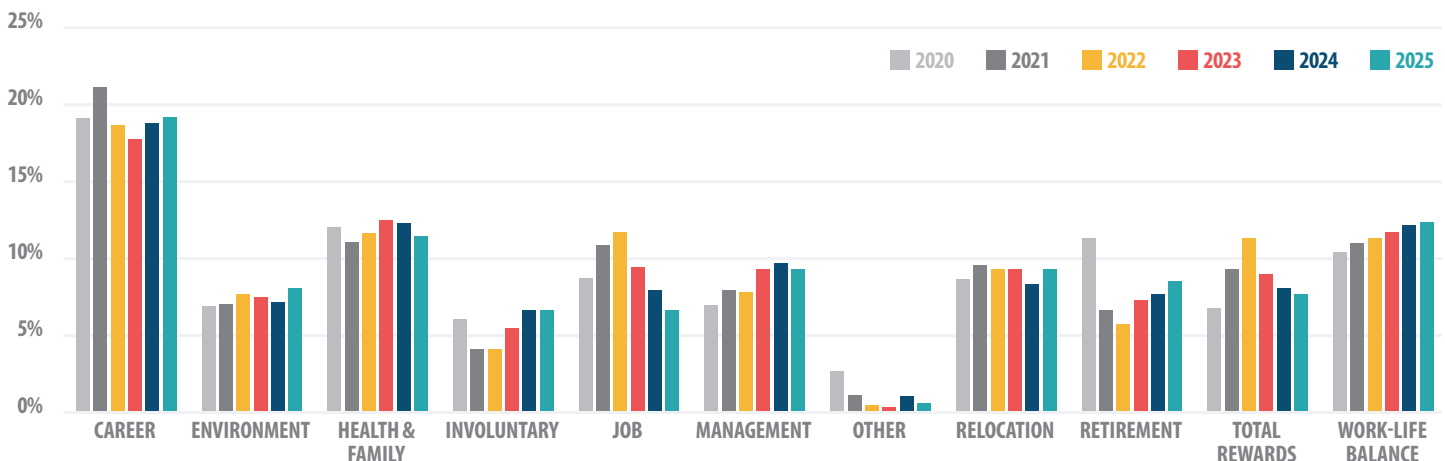
These include Career, Health & Family, Work-Life Balance, Management, Total Rewards, Job, and Environment. Each reflects conditions shaped by how work is designed, how leaders lead, and how consistently organizations respond to employee needs over time.

In the current environment, the question for employers is not whether turnover is expensive. It is whether they are using this period of relative stability to address the conditions that make future exits more costly when they occur.

U.S. COSTS OF TURNOVER



REASONS FOR LEAVING CATEGORY TREND



Topline Category Breakdown

Most of the reasons employees leave are preventable. They are predictable, diagnosable, and addressable when organizations have the right information. This is where organizational risk is building with current employees.

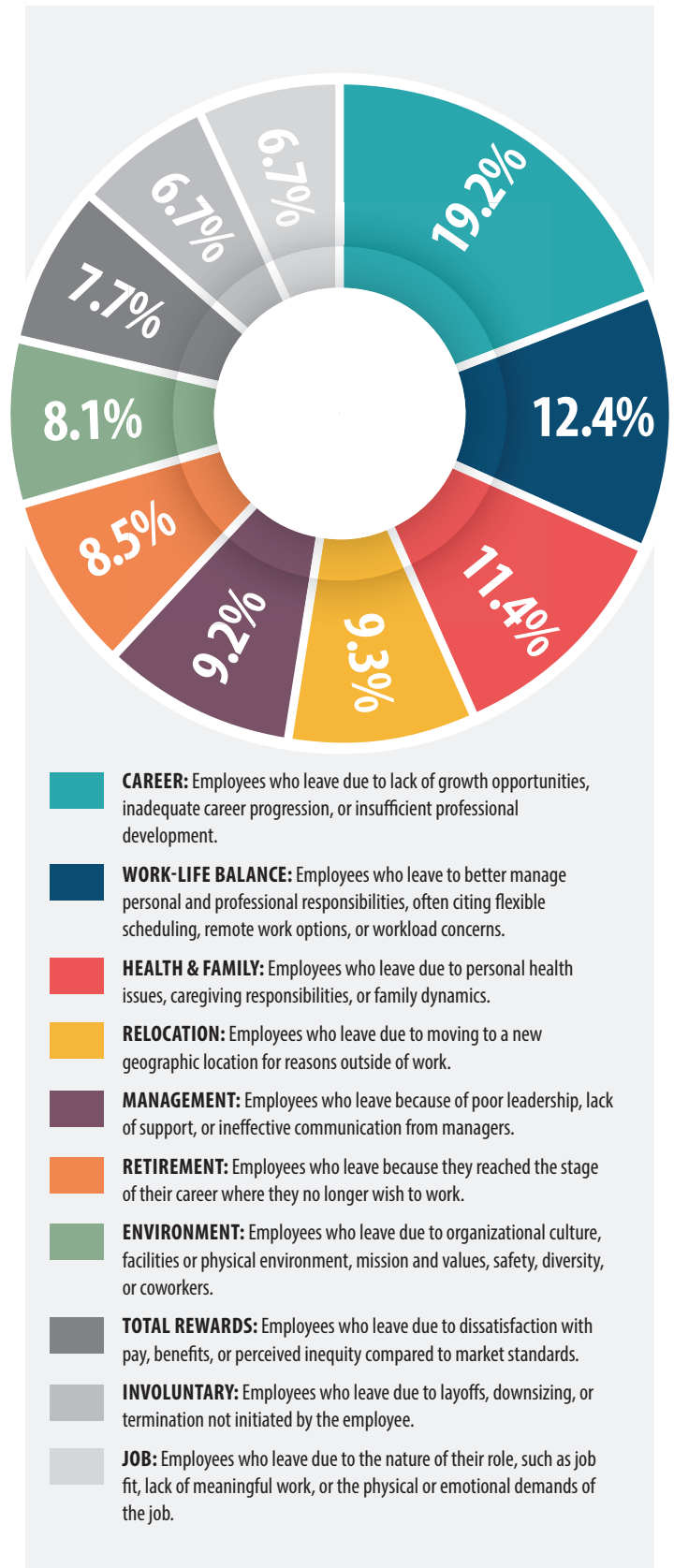
Work Institute's methodology uncovers not just what is driving employee turnover, but why, and how organizations can take action that improves retention. We help organizations

- Decode how employee sentiment insights lead to meaningful change
- Prioritize the issues that matter most
- Design interventions that reduce avoidable turnover
- Build cultures where employees choose to stay

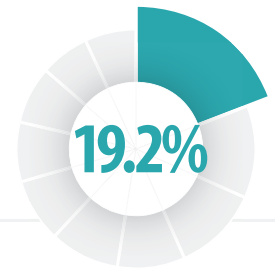
Overall, 2025 Reasons for Leaving show a return to the fundamentals. Employees continue to leave for familiar reasons but with new intensity and nuance. The big picture story tells us:

- Growth matters more, again
- Work-Life Balance is a new baseline
- Managers remain consistently problematic
- Compensation pressure is easing
- Job security concerns are rising
- Culture challenges are emerging

The story of Reasons for Leaving is no longer about the temporary shocks of covid, inflation, and wage pressure and is now about the permanent shift in what employees prioritize and expect.



Career: Remains the #1 Reason for Leaving Reflecting a Lack of Structure



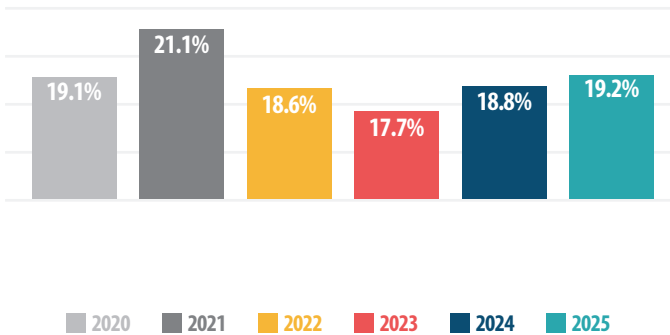
Career remains the #1 Reason for Leaving and reflects the persistent challenge organizations face to provide clear, structured, and attainable development pathways.

Career is the #1 Reason for Leaving as it has been since 2011. Career as a Reason for Leaving has hovered tightly at **one out of every five employees who quit cite career issues**. This consistency shows these motivations are structural and not temporary. It also means organizations still are not solving fundamental issues like:

- Career path clarity
- Skill development
- Long-term role fit
- Upward mobility

19.2% of exited employees cited Career which is the most it has been cited since 2021 and reinforces how employees choose employers based on Career factors and not surface-level benefits.

CAREER TREND

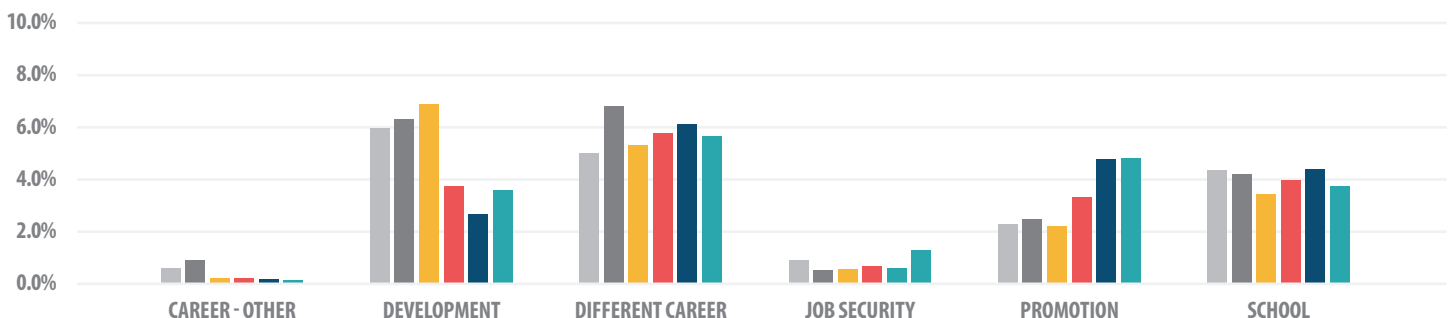


The Career subthemes reveal three different forces that drive employees to quit. Employees who want to grow and evolve in their careers, those who want an entirely different career, and those who want the peace of mind that comes with job security.

1. Growth-seekers:
 - Promotion is up 118% since 2022.
 - Development: rebounded 33% since last year.
2. Career-changers:
 - Different Career was the most cited Career subtheme in 2025.
 - School: third most cited Career subtheme in 2025.
3. Security-seekers:
 - Job Security: doubled year over year and reached its highest rate since 2020.

Fewer workers left their organizations in 2025 to go back to school or to pursue a different career than in 2024, while more left in 2025 citing development, promotion, and job security than in 2024.

CAREER SUBTHEME TREND



Work-Life Balance: Remains Unresolved



The expectation did not normalize but solidified.

Work-Life Balance was the second-most cited Reason for Leaving, at 12.4%. It has also **increased every year since 2020 with a 19% increase over five years**. This pattern confirms that Work-Life Balance expectations are no longer situational or pandemic-driven, but a durable baseline requirement for many employees as they continue to look for ways to integrate their personal and professional lives.

Work-Life Balance is a non-negotiable expectation rather than a perk and signals a permanent mindset change born from pandemic priorities.

The Work-Life Balance subthemes help understand what consistently drives this as a Reason for Leaving.

- Shift/Schedule dominates at 8.5% and continues to rise
- Commute is the second leading factor in Work-Life Balance

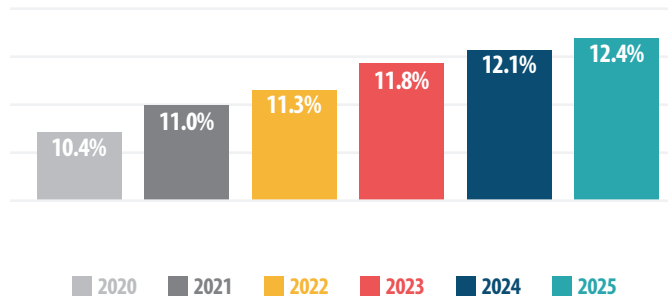
Shift/Schedule and Commute continue to be among the most frequently mentioned sub themes, but remote capability reached its highest share of mentions since we began tracking it. The increase is small, but directionally consistent. Workers continue to look for ways to integrate their personal and professional lives.

In an era of return-to-office mandates, we urge employers to proceed with caution. More than ever, employees leave for roles that offer hybrid flexibility where possible.

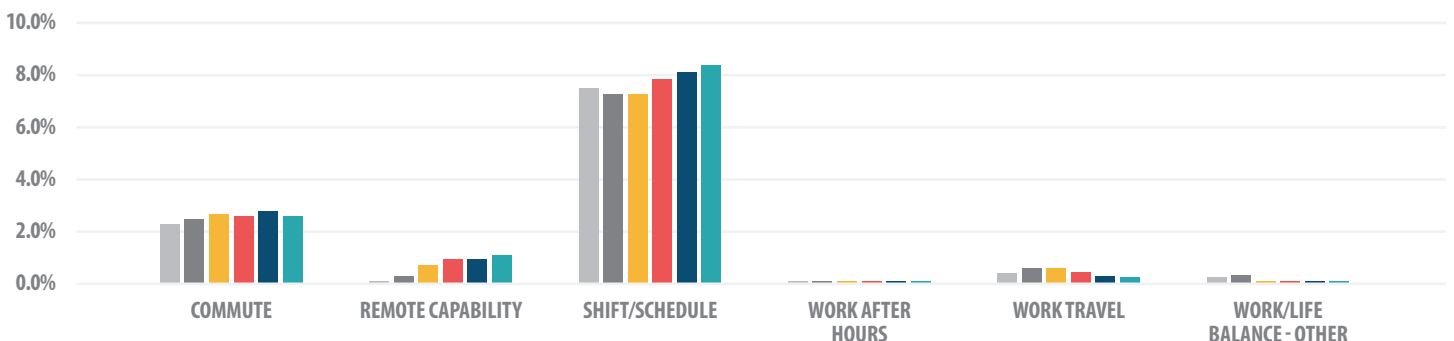
Work-Life Balance is a time structure constraint. It is not an emotional one.

- Schedule consistency
- Commuting impact
- Remote/Hybrid expectations

WORK-LIFE BALANCE TREND



WORK-LIFE BALANCE SUBTHEME TREND



Health & Family: Stability Masks Ongoing Strain



Health & Family are essential, not peripheral, issues for employees.

Despite volatility in other categories, Health & Family stays very tight around 11-12% citing it as their Reason for Leaving but did drop nearly a full percentage point compared to 2024 (12.3% -- 11.4%).

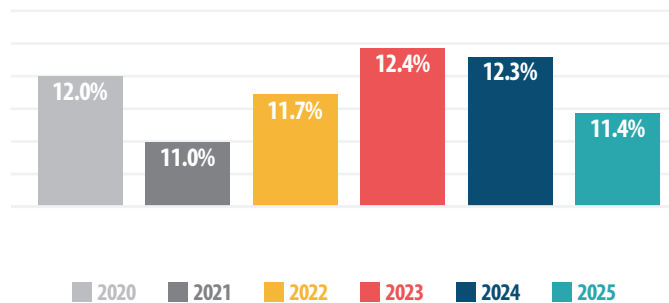
Mentions of child or elder care responsibilities declined, as did mentions of work-related health, which nearly halved. Non-work-related health concerns increased modestly, but overall, fewer employees left for Health & Family reasons in 2025.

While Health & Family remains one of the more stable Reasons for Leaving categories, the stability can be misleading. Many of these pressures start outside work but they show up inside it. Care responsibilities, access to healthcare, chronic conditions, and financial strain tied to health decisions all reduce the margin employees have to navigate work demands.

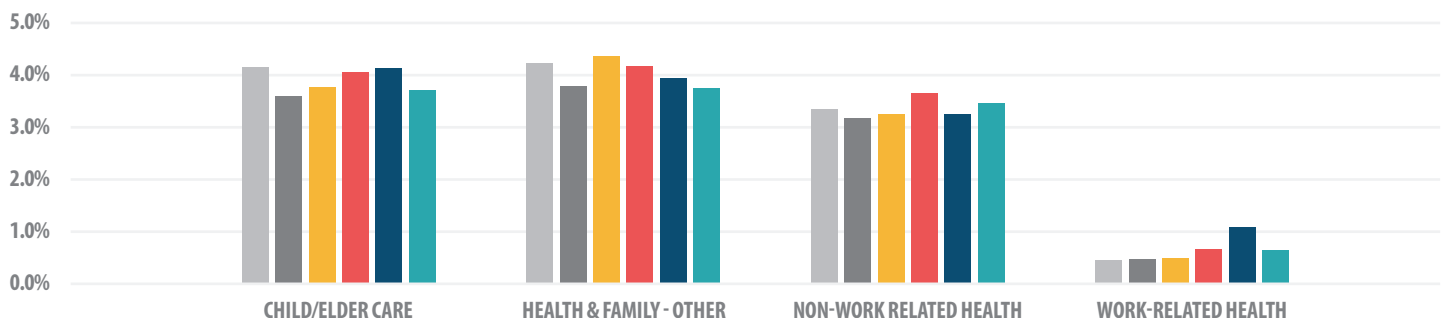
Our work with community organizations, employers, and benefits leaders consistently shows that employees do not leave simply because of health or family challenges. They leave when those challenges collide with rigid schedules, unclear expectations, inconsistent manager support, or a lack of flexibility at critical moments.

In softer labor markets, employees may delay exits tied to Health & Family concerns, but the underlying risk does not disappear. Instead, it often shows up as disengagement, absenteeism, or declining capacity. Organizations that treat Health & Family as a static benefits issue miss the deeper opportunity. The real differentiator is how work is structured, how managers respond, and whether employees believe they can navigate life events without jeopardizing their role or future.

HEALTH & FAMILY TREND



HEALTH & FAMILY SUBTHEME TREND



Relocation: Reflects Life Decisions More Than Labor Market Opportunity



Reexamine how and where work is done.

Relocation increased by nearly a full percentage point to 9.3% in 2025. Both employee-initiated and company-initiated relocations increased, while spouse/partner-initiated moves remained steady.

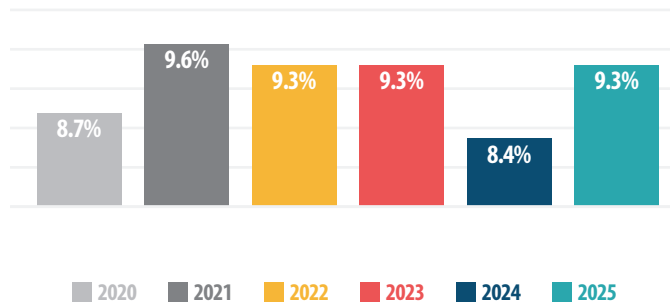
Relocation exits are often misinterpreted as labor market driven or opportunity seeking, but employee comments consistently tell a different story. In most cases, relocation reflects deliberate life decisions rather than dissatisfaction with the role or organization. Family proximity, partner employment, caregiving responsibilities, cost of living considerations, and long-term community choices are the primary drivers.

What distinguishes relocation from other Reasons for Leaving is not intensity, but finality. These decisions are typically made with clarity and resolve, often after extended consideration. As a result, **organizations rarely see strong early warning signals unless they are actively listening.**

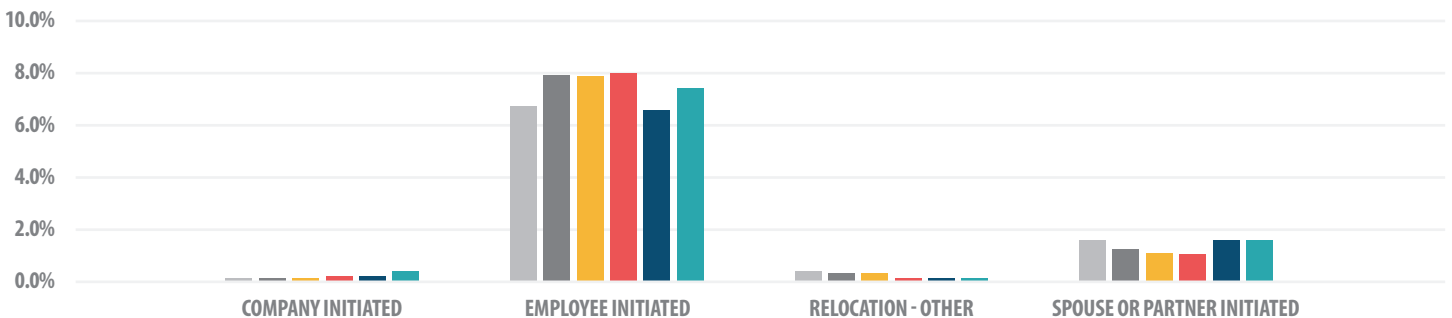
Importantly, relocation exits are not always unavoidable. Employee feedback frequently points to missed opportunities for flexibility, remote or hybrid role redesign, or transitional accommodations that could have extended tenure. In many cases, employees did not want to leave the organization. They simply could not reconcile where work required them to be with where life required them to go.

As workforce expectations continue to evolve, relocation will increasingly test how adaptable organizational structures are to life-driven change. Employers that treat relocation as a binary decision may continue to see these exits as inevitable. Those willing to reexamine how and where work is done may find that some relocation-driven turnover is more preventable than it appears.

RELOCATION TREND



RELOCATION SUBTHEME TREND



Management: Continues to Shape the Experience More Than Any Policy



Persistent, predictable, and still painful.

Management was the fourth most cited Reason for Leaving at 9.2%. It is one of the most stable and constantly problematic categories.

The rise in 2023-2024 coincided with return to the office debates, new manager skills required for hybrid teams, and heightened expectations. After two years of elevated dissatisfaction, management issues show early signs of stabilization but remain historically high.

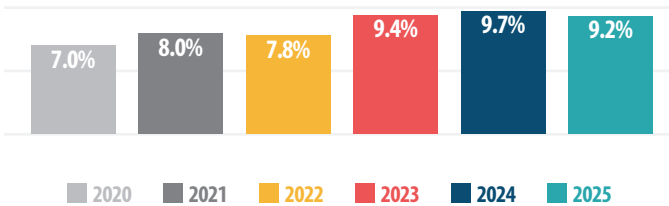
When we look deeper into the subthemes of Management, we learn that managers are failing at interpersonal conduct, as concerns related to Professional Behavior have increased sharply. From 2023 to 2025, employees citing **Professional Behavior as a Reason for Leaving rose nearly 30 percent** and represents largest shift within the Management category. This subtheme now accounts for more than two-thirds of all management-related turnover, making it the dominant driver behind why employees cite their manager as a Reason for Leaving.

What makes this shift particularly concerning is what did not change. Over the same period, management communication declined, support remained flat, and knowledge and skills showed only modest movement. The problem is not technical skills. It is day-to-day behavior — how managers under pressure treat people, demonstrate respect, enforce fairness, and model accountability. Employees are signaling that interpersonal conduct is no longer a tolerable trade-off for results.

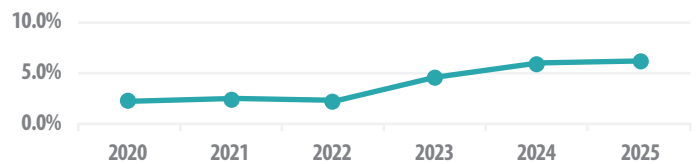
As expectations for leadership continue to evolve, organizations can no longer afford to treat management issues as isolated performance problems. These findings underscore the need for earlier intervention, targeted manager development, and feedback mechanisms that surface behavioral risk before it results in turnover.

When organizations partner with Work Institute, they gain the ability to **identify these issues in real time, equip managers with actionable insight, and address preventable management-related turnover before it escalates.**

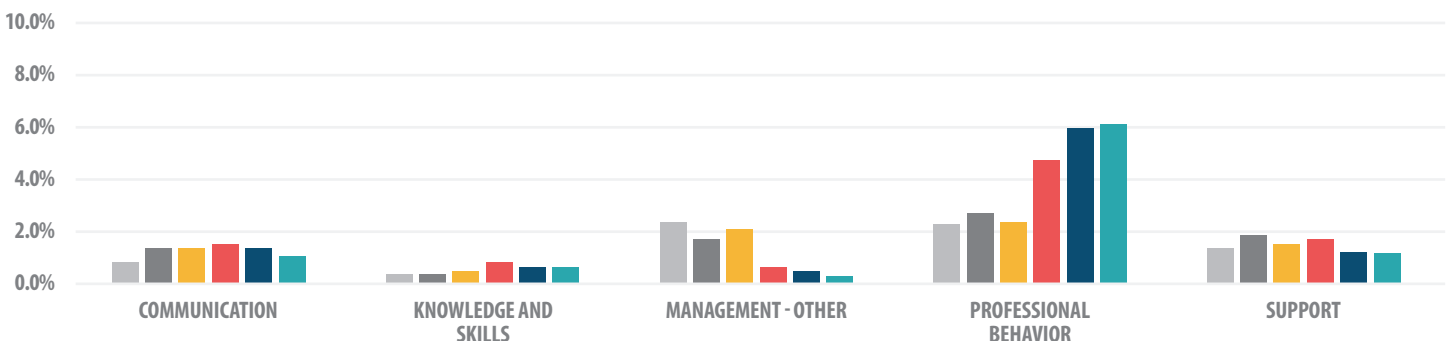
MANAGEMENT TREND



MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR SUBTHEME TREND



MANAGEMENT SUBTHEME TREND



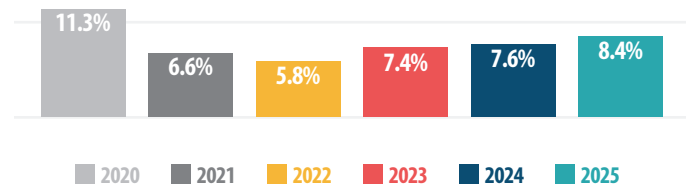
Retirement: Patterns Continue to Normalize Post-Covid



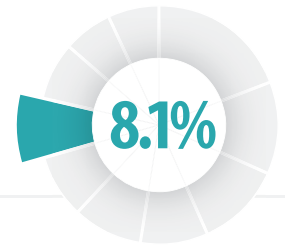
The most cited it has been since 2020.

Retirement increased in 2025 to 8.4% which is the highest cited rate in the past 5 years, but still well below the levels seen at the start of the pandemic in 2020. This increase aligns with broader demographic trends, including the aging of the workforce and the gradual retirement of late career Baby Boomers.

RETIREMENT TREND



Environment: A People Problem as Cultural Friction Rises



A quiet reemergence of culture, fit, and environment.

Environment reached its highest point since 2022 as a Reason for Leaving and reflects the growing dissatisfaction with coworkers and organizational culture. At a time when organizations push for return to office and teams are re-forming, friction starts to show.

Organizational Culture and Co-worker dynamics are a growing friction point and contribute to the increase of the category entirely:

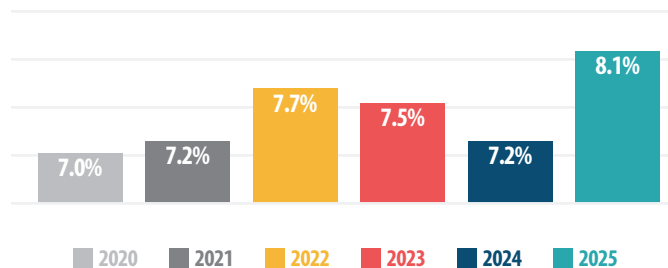
- Organizational Culture: increasing back towards its peak in 2022
- Co-workers: has more than doubled since 2022

Environment-related exits are often described as issues of culture or fit, but employee feedback consistently points to something more concrete. What employees experience as “environment” is the cumulative effect of how work is structured, how expectations are set, and how consistently leadership behavior is applied.

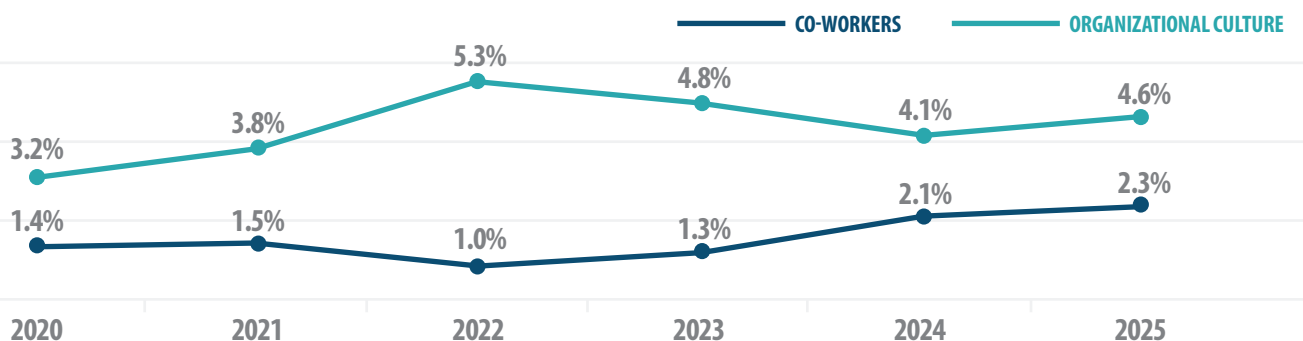
As teams reform and organizations push toward greater in-person collaboration, misalignment becomes harder to avoid. Unclear roles, inconsistent decision making, uneven accountability, and unresolved conflict show up quickly in day-to-day interactions. When those systems are not working well, dissatisfaction with coworkers and organizational culture rises, even among employees who are otherwise committed to their work.

The increase in Environment as a Reason for Leaving is not a soft signal. It reflects growing friction within the systems that shape how work gets done. Organizations that treat these exits as subjective or unavoidable risk overlooking issues that are diagnosable, addressable, and closely tied to leadership and operational design.

ENVIRONMENT TREND

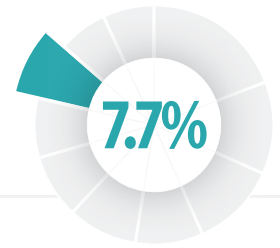


ENVIRONMENT SUBTHEME TREND



Note: additional Environment subthemes not visually represented include Safety (0.9%), Diversity (0.0%), Other (0.0%), Facilities (0.1%), and Mission/Values (0.2%).

Total Rewards: Pay Pressure Eased as Inflation Cooled

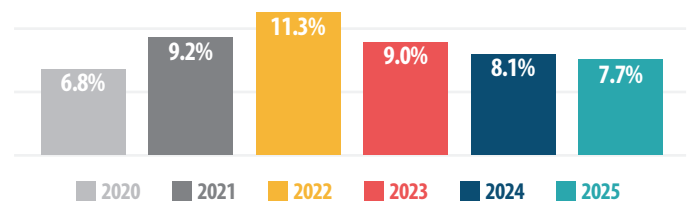


Stabilizing after the inflation era.

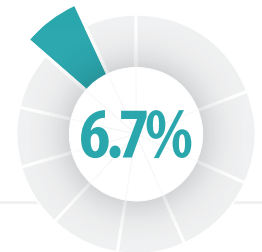
Total Rewards peaked during the inflation era at 11.3% and declined as a Reason for Leaving for three consecutive years to 7.7% in 2025. Even during its peak in 2022, Total Rewards was the 5th most cited driver of employee turnover. Rewards are part of the retention equation but are not the deciding factor.

The compensation concerns, or striking while the iron is hot mentality, of 2022 have normalized since the inflation era and most pay related turnover has dissipated. It is possible that employers offset pay concerns through other incentives, but as we show later in the Report, inflation rates and Total Rewards related exits were inextricably linked through the first half of the decade.

TOTAL REWARDS TREND



Involuntary: Exits Continue to Mask Underlying Issues



The return of employer-driven turnover: Involuntary exits climb above pre-pandemic levels.

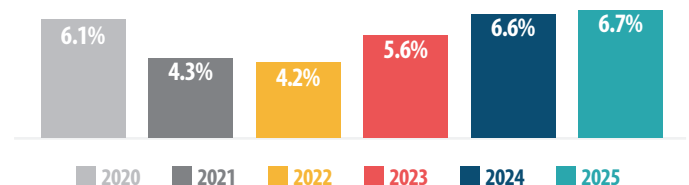
Involuntary exits have risen 59% since 2022, signaling more than employer-driven turnover. Even for employees who remain, increased layoffs and job eliminations heighten perceptions of instability, suppress risk-taking, and contribute to quiet disengagement. This dynamic helps explain why employees stay longer while feeling less secure and less committed.

General terminations and violations of company policy were mentioned less often in 2025, but layoffs and job eliminations increased enough to raise the overall theme.

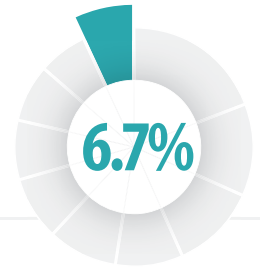
This creates a retention risk that organizations often overlook. Even when employees do not lose their jobs, the perception of instability drives them to seek roles they believe are safer.

Real-time feedback loops help organizations identify stability concerns before they become attrition events.

INVOLUNTARY TREND



Job: Job-related Exits Continue to Drop for the Third Consecutive Year



Job as a Reason for Leaving dropped significantly from 11.8% in 2022 down to 6.7% in 2025.

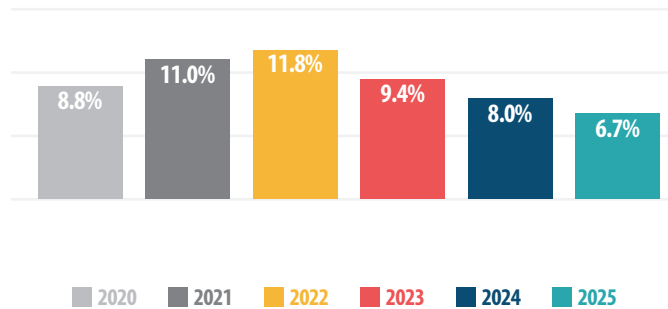
Employees in 2025 exited less because of the nature of the job itself as shown by the healthy decrease from 8.0% in 2024 to 6.7% in 2025.

Job-related exits are often assumed to reflect dissatisfaction with the work itself, but employee feedback suggests a more nuanced dynamic. Historically, Job has served as a broad category for frustrations that were not yet clearly defined, including unclear expectations, insufficient training, or misalignment between what was promised and what was delivered.

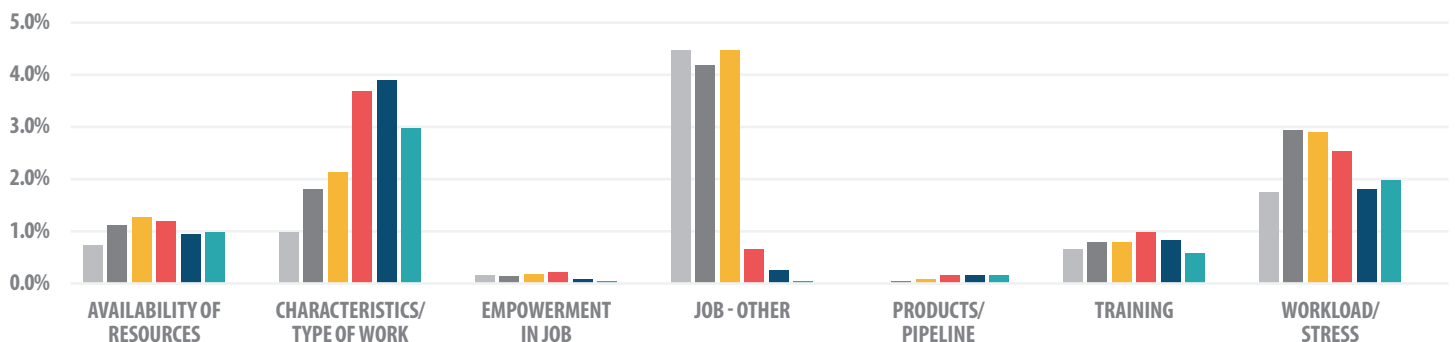
The continued decline in Job as a Reason for Leaving may indicate progress in job design, onboarding, and expectation setting. As roles become clearer, employees are better able to articulate the true source of dissatisfaction, which often shifts exits into categories such as Management, Work-Life Balance, or Environment.

This trend should be viewed as a sign of maturation rather than resolution. Fewer employees are leaving because they “did not like the job,” but that does not mean job-related pressures have disappeared. Instead, they are being named more accurately and addressed through other aspects of the work system.

JOB TREND



JOB SUBTHEME TREND



Reasons for Leaving Key Takeaways

Employees in 2025 left less because of the job itself and more because of people dynamics, growth expectations, and life-driven decisions.

- 1 Career is the #1 driver of turnover every year since 2011.
- 2 Managerial relationships, specifically Professional Behavior, are a major driver of turnover.
- 3 Employees want more flexibility in scheduling and remote options as Work-Life Balance is now a core retention requirement where possible.
- 4 Cultural and social environment issues are increasing as co-worker and organizational culture conflicts are steadily climbing.
- 5 Pay pressure has subsided since its peak in 2022.
- 6 Job-specific Reasons for Leaving have declined as Involuntary separations increase.

Top Category Shifts Year over Year

Job decreased 16.2% from 8.0% to 6.7%

WHAT'S DRIVING IT: This suggests clearer job expectations, improved job design, or that job frustrations are now being attributed elsewhere (notably Management and Work-Life Balance).

WHY IT MATTERS: This is a positive sign, but a warning that Job issues did not disappear but shifted.

Environment increased 12.5% year over year and tied with Relocation as the largest increase. (7.2% – 8.1%)

WHAT'S DRIVING IT: Culture and Co-worker dynamics

WHY IT MATTERS: Environment represents a people problem, not a place problem, and is much harder to fix without specific intent.

Health & Family decreased 7.3% since 2024. (12.3% – 11.4%)

WHAT'S DRIVING IT: Reductions across subthemes like work-related health and caregiving pressures.

WHY IT MATTERS: A decline does not mean risk has disappeared. Health & Family pressures often delay exits rather than eliminate them, making proactive listening essential.

Relocation increased back to historical highs at 9.3%

WHAT'S DRIVING IT: Almost entirely employee-initiated moves.

WHY IT MATTERS: Remote and hybrid strategies continue to shape labor mobility even when relocation is not employer driven.

Retirement increased from 7.6% to 8.5%

WHAT'S DRIVING IT: The large population subset of Baby Boomers will continue to retire.

WHY IT MATTERS: Organizations should prepare for knowledge loss and succession gaps in addition to replacement hiring.

2024 & 2025 REASONS FOR LEAVING COMPARISON



Top Subtheme Shifts Year over Year

Development (Career) increased 33% year over year

INSIGHT: After bottoming out in 2024, development dissatisfaction rebounded sharply suggesting that employees once again expect growth, not just stability.

Characteristics/Type of Work (Job) decreased 23%

INSIGHT: This supports the Job Category decrease, as employees are less likely to say “the work itself” was their motivating reason for leaving.

Employee-Initiated (Relocation) increased 14% year over year and was the primary driver of the Relocation Category increase.

INSIGHT: Employees are prioritizing where they live and work even if it means leaving the employer behind.

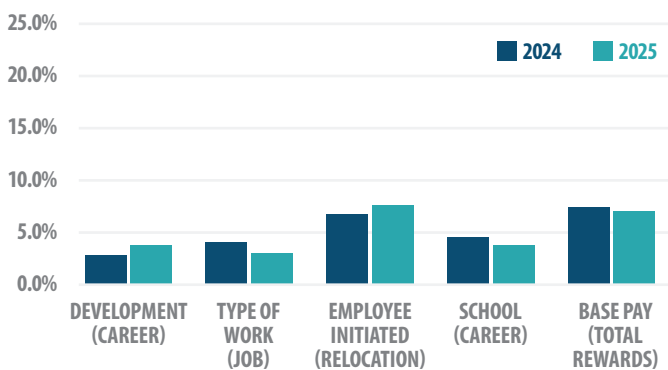
School (Career) had a notable decline of 16%.

INSIGHT: Fewer exits tied to education may signal cost pressures and labor-market pull.

Base Pay (Total Rewards) decreased 8.2% and represents the largest Total Rewards change.

INSIGHT: Pay dissatisfaction continues to ease after its peak during inflation.

TOP SUBTHEME SHIFTS 2024-2025



Reasons for Leaving Conclusion

If the patterns in this section look familiar it is because they are. Organizations have been facing these drivers of employee turnover for years, but that pace of change and the complexity of employee expectations make it harder to manage.

The story told by Reasons for Leaving data is clear: turnover doesn't happen by accident. It happens when the everyday experience of employees fails to align with their expectations, values, and goals. But it also happens in patterns that become visible only when organizations intentionally listen. The insights in this section reveal where employers meet employee needs, where they fall short, and where targeted action dramatically reduces avoidable turnover.

As the workforce continues to evolve, organizations must adopt a more proactive, evidence-based approach to retention. This is where Work Institute becomes a critical partner. Our methodology uncovers not just what employees say when they leave, but why those issues surfaced and how employers can address them before they lead to resignation.

By translating feedback into practical, organization-specific strategies, we help employers protect their talent, strengthen their culture, and build workplaces where people thrive.

The organizations that win the next era of talent will be the ones that listen well, act intentionally, and address turnover at its source, and Work Institute is the leader to help you do that.

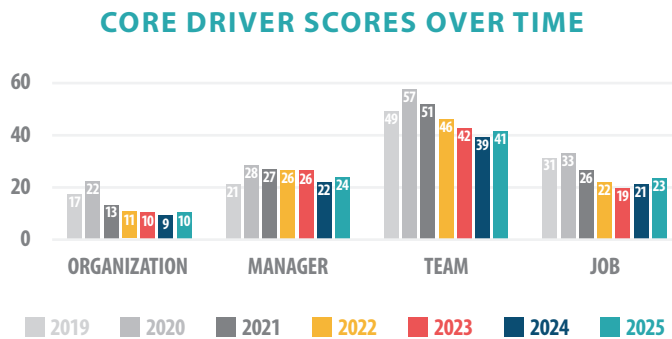
THE ORGANIZATIONS THAT WIN THE NEXT ERA OF TALENT WILL BE THE ONES THAT LISTEN WELL, ACT INTENTIONALLY, AND ADDRESS TURNOVER AT ITS SOURCE, AND WORK INSTITUTE IS THE LEADER TO HELP YOU DO THAT.

Enhanced Thematic Deep Dive

Core Driver Trends

To better understand how employees experienced their work environments in 2025, it is important to look not only at why they left, but also at how they rated key aspects of their day-to-day working lives.

Work Institute's Core Driver **Net Excellence Scores (NES)** measure employee sentiment toward the organization, their manager, their team, and their job on a 5-point scale. These scores show the share of employees who rated each area as excellent minus those who rated it fair or poor, like a Net Promoter Score.



As the chart above shows, Core Driver scores have been in a near steady decline since the start of the pandemic. In many ways, the early years of the pandemic created a brief but measurable surge in positive sentiment. The initial crisis brought people together and fostered a stronger sense of shared purpose, not only across organizations but also within teams. Leaders became more communicative, peers checked in on one another more often, and both companies and colleagues offered a level of grace that matched the difficulty of the moment. It was a unique social contract, created by necessity, and it showed up clearly in the data with record high Net Excellence Scores in 2020.

Since then, however, the conditions and the intentional leadership behaviors that sustained those scores have slowly unraveled. Over time, the return to normal business rhythms and evolving employee expectations eroded the elevated levels of trust and connection that characterized the early pandemic era. The result has been a consistent downward slope across all Core Driver ratings from 2020 through 2023.

There is, however, good news. The historically low levels appear to be behind us. **Every Core Driver rating increased in 2025**, sometimes only slightly, but the directional shift is meaningful

after several consecutive years of decline. These improvements are modest and begin from historically low baselines, but they suggest early stabilization rather than continued erosion.

- Organization NES increased from 9 to 10.
- Manager NES increased from 22 to 24.
- Team NES increased from 39 to 41.
- Job NES, which hit its lowest point in 2023, continued its recovery and increased from 21 to 23 in 2025.

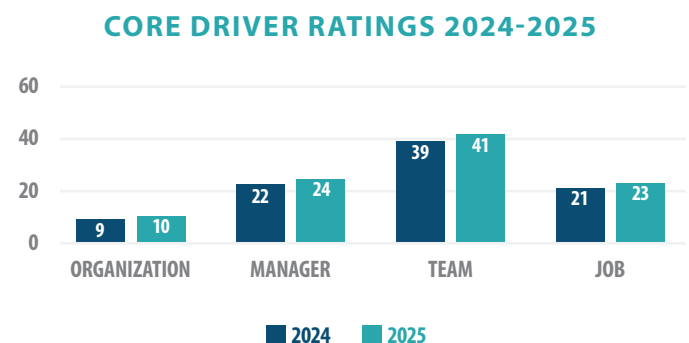
Even with these improvements, the broader story remains one of long-term softness in employee sentiment. Organization NES is still near the lowest levels recorded in our dataset. Team NES, although consistently the strongest of the four drivers, is still far below the highs seen earlier in the decade. Job NES remains modest compared to pre-pandemic levels, and it has not fully rebounded from the disruptions of 2022 and 2023. Manager NES is the one outlier.

Manager NES in 2025 is higher than it was in 2019, suggesting improvements in baseline managerial support and accessibility. At the same time, exit interview data reveal rising dissatisfaction with managerial behavior, communication, and expectation-setting. Together, these findings indicate that while managers may be executing core administrative responsibilities more effectively, many are struggling with the interpersonal and leadership demands of today's workforce.

Taken together, these trends suggest that although employee sentiment remains lower than historical norms, the movement in 2025 reflects a fragile stabilization rather than a sustained recovery.

With the organizational turbulence that came with the Great Resignation, employees regained some trust and alignment in their daily work experience.

Whether this marks the beginning of a longer recovery or simply a short reprieve will depend heavily on the choices leaders make in 2026.

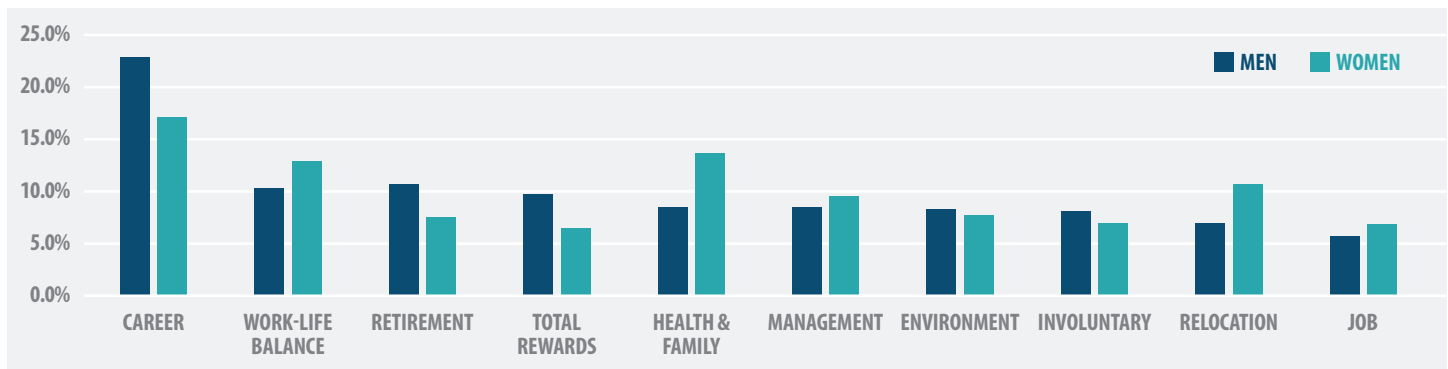


Gender & Generational Differences in Reasons for Leaving & Core Driver Ratings

Men and Women Differences in Reasons for Leaving

In the charts below, you can see that there are substantive differences in why self-identified men and women choose to leave their jobs. While some patterns are shared, the emphasis, frequency, and underlying context behind these decisions often diverge in meaningful ways.

REASONS FOR LEAVING BY GENDER



Career

Career is the number one Reason for Leaving for both men and women, showing that finding a role with long-term growth, purpose, and opportunity is a shared priority. That said, men are more likely to cite career as their Reason for Leaving, at 22.7% compared to 17.2% for women.

The difference widens when we break career down into sub-themes. Men leave at higher rates for development, promotion, job security, and switching to a different career path. Women, by contrast, are more likely to leave for school-related reasons.

Environment

Environment-related exits are cited at nearly the same rate between men (8.1%) and women (7.8%). But there are small distinctions beneath the surface. Women are slightly more likely to cite coworkers, while men cite organizational culture more frequently. Though not drastic, these patterns suggest men may place more weight on macro-level values and norms, while women may be more attuned to the day-to-day dynamics among colleagues.

Health & Family

This is where the gender gap becomes most pronounced. Health & Family is the second most cited reason for women at 13.8%, and the fifth most important for men at just 8.6%. That's a difference of more than five percentage points.

Women are much more likely to cite child or elder care responsibilities, as well as non-work-related health concerns. Work-related health is cited at nearly identical rates between both groups. These differences reinforce long-standing dynamics around caregiving and underscore the persistent tension many women face between personal responsibilities and professional advancement.

Involuntary

Men are slightly more likely to cite involuntary Reason for Leaving their jobs, though the difference is not significant. However, the breakdown is telling: men are almost twice as likely to be terminated due to a violation of company policy. They also leave more often due to general performance issues, while women are more frequently affected by job elimination or layoff. These patterns may reflect both behavioral differences and structural factors in how organizations approach termination across gender lines.

Job

Women are more likely to cite job-related reasons overall (6.8% compared to 5.7%), with notable differences in the subthemes. Women cite workload and stress, resource availability, and insufficient training more frequently than men. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to leave due to the characteristics or nature of the work itself.

These differences are likely influenced by industry distribution. Women are overrepresented in healthcare, where workload, training gaps, and resource constraints are often more intense, especially in patient-facing roles.

Management

Management-related turnover is cited at similar rates for both men (8.3%) and women (9.6%), but the driving factors are different.

Women are more likely to cite their manager's professional behavior, communication breakdowns, or lack of support. Men, by contrast, are more likely to cite their manager's lack of knowledge or skills.

In other words, women focus more on interpersonal and relational dynamics, while men more often question competency. Both are valid concerns, but they reflect different expectations of leadership.

Relocation

Women are significantly more likely to leave for relocation-related reasons, especially when the move is prompted by a spouse or partner. Women cite spouse-initiated moves nearly twice as often as men, reinforcing the idea that women are more likely to sacrifice their job for a partner's career.

Women are also more likely to initiate a relocation themselves. Sometimes family obligations force this relocation, but it's possible that women are also more open to moving for new opportunities, or less anchored by current roles when those roles aren't sustainable.

Retirement

Men are more likely to cite retirement as their most important reason for leaving, 10.3% compared to 7.4% for women. At face value, this may seem straightforward. But it's possible that some women retiring from the workforce do so for family or health reasons and may categorize their exit accordingly, even if the result is the same. That nuance is important when designing retention or succession strategies that account for late-career exits.

Total Rewards

This is another standout difference. Men are significantly more likely to cite Total Rewards, particularly base pay, as their reason for leaving. Women, meanwhile, are slightly more likely to cite benefits. These patterns may reflect broader pay equity issues, different compensation expectations, or simply different priorities in evaluating the total value of a job offer.

Work-Life Balance

Work-Life Balance is cited more often by women (12.8%) than men (10.3%), with women reporting higher rates across nearly every sub-theme. Commute, remote capability, shift or schedule, and work after hours all show higher mention rates among women. Only work travel is cited more often by men, but the difference is minimal.

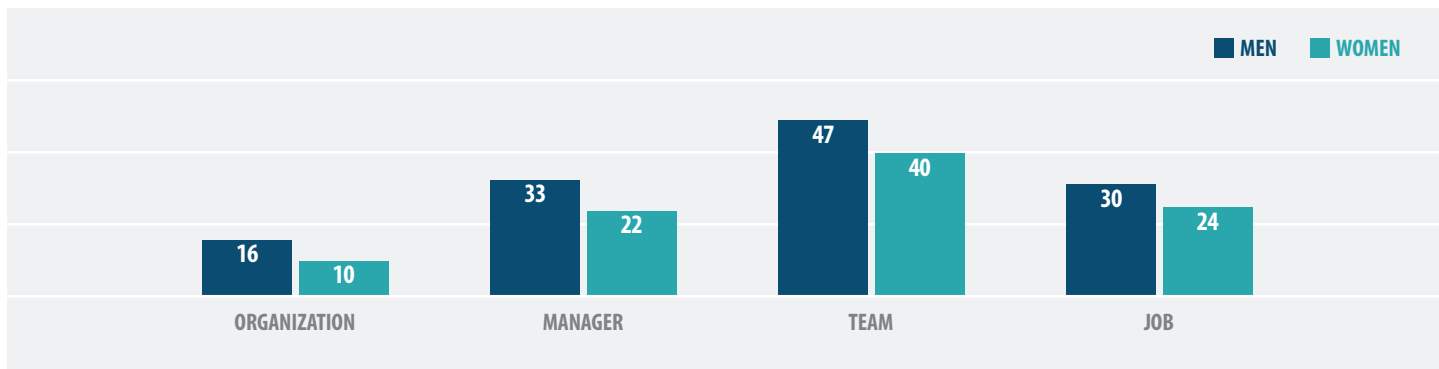
This shows that women are more likely to leave when the structure of work doesn't align with their life and responsibilities at home. And in a post-pandemic world where flexibility is increasingly expected, this dynamic takes on new urgency.



Men and Women Differences in Core Driver Ratings

The Core Drivers of Retention ratings also offer an interesting snapshot of differences in how women and men experience key aspects of their workplace. When we break out these Net Excellence Scores (NES) by gender, we find that women view every Core Driver less positively than men.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CORE DRIVERS OF RETENTION



Despite both groups ranking the drivers in the same order, with Team rated highest and Organization rated the lowest, women view each aspect of the work experience through a more critical lens.

Team is the highest-rated driver for both men and women, but the 7-point gap (47 NES vs 40 NES) is notable. We know that strong team dynamics increase with tenure and can serve as a protective factor against burnout and dissatisfaction. This lower rating from women suggests that the sense of camaraderie and belonging may be less consistent or accessible for them. Lower team scores may reflect weaker peer support or fewer opportunities to build cohesion, which can make job stress harder to manage.

The largest gender gap appears under manager ratings, where men rate their managers at 33 NES compared to just 22 for women. An 11-point difference. This reflects not just different experiences, but potentially different expectations and outcomes when it comes to support, communication, and development.

Women are more likely to cite poor manager behavior, lack of support, and communication breakdowns as their most important Reasons for Leaving. That same sentiment is echoed here in the Core Driver data. While men more often cite their manager's knowledge or technical skill as a concern, they still report stronger overall relationships with their leaders.

Job ratings follow the same gendered pattern. Men rate a 30 NES score, while women rated it 24. Along with Organization, this is one of the smallest gender gaps across the Core Drivers, but still notable. It may reflect differences in workload, expectations, or perceptions of fairness in how work is distributed. We know that

women are more likely to leave for reasons tied to stress, training, and lack of resources, while men are more likely to cite the nature or type of work itself. These unique attitudes from job-related Reasons for Leaving appear to carry over into the overall Job rating itself.

The Organization is the lowest-rated driver overall, and the difference between men (16 NES) and women (10 NES) mirrors the persistent gender gaps visible across all Core Drivers. While just a 6-point gap, it places women squarely in what we consider the critical zone, any rating below 11 warrants closer attention from employers.

We also know that Organization scores tend to dip mid-tenure, the same window where turnover is highest. Both men and women hit this low during their mid-tenure period. But for women, that dip starts from a lower baseline and falls more sharply, pushing their sentiment further into a zone of higher risk and disengagement.

Taken together, these findings reinforce an important reality for employers: men and women do not experience the workplace in the same way. While their Reasons for Leaving often fall into the same categories, the pressures, expectations, and thresholds that drive those decisions differ meaningfully. These differences are not explained by preference alone, nor are they isolated to any single driver. They reflect how work is structured, how leadership behavior is experienced, and how life context intersects with organizational systems. For retention strategies to be effective, leaders must move beyond one size fits all assumptions and recognize that risk, confidence, and commitment are not uniform across the workforce.

Generational Differences in Reasons for Leaving

Work Institute is cautious about leaning too far into generational assumptions. Often, these assumptions lean on tired stereotypes that younger employees are entitled or that older workers are resistant to change. Instead of reinforcing those tropes, we focus on reporting what the data tell us.

What these generational trends ultimately highlight is not a matter of entitlement or resistance. Rather, it's the shifting of needs and priorities of each generation across the employee lifecycle.

Younger workers:

- Explore
- Learn
- Balance entry into adulthood

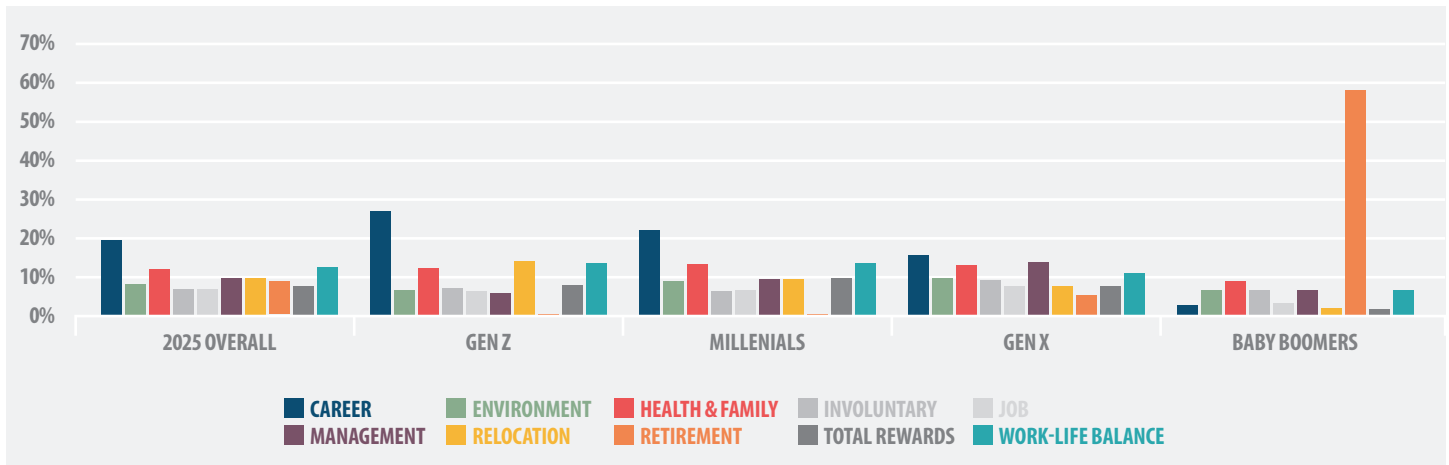
Mid-career employees:

- Juggle growth
- Seek stability
- Provide care to family members

Older workers are:

- Often preparing for or entering retirement

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN REASONS FOR LEAVING



Career

A Shared Priority with Generational Nuance

Career is the top-cited Reason for Leaving among every generation except Baby Boomers, whose exits are dominated by retirement. But beneath that shared priority, the motivations differ in meaningful ways.

Millennials are the most likely to leave for development opportunities, followed by Gen Z and then Gen X. Gen Z, on the other hand, is far more likely to leave for school or to switch careers entirely, reflecting a period of experimentation and alignment. Gen X and Millennials are over twice as likely to cite job security as a concern, indicating a stronger need for predictability and stability as they move through peak earning and caregiving years.

Promotion-related exits follow a similar trend: Millennials and Gen X lead, but Gen Z isn't far behind. Across the board, though, Career stands out most prominently for Gen Z, where it accounts for more than one in four exits.

Health & Family

Caretaking Pressures Are Rising for Younger Workers

Health & Family is the second most cited theme overall, and Gen Z appears more affected than many employers expect. Child and elder care responsibilities are nearly as prominent among Gen Z as they are for Millennials, and even slightly more than for Gen X. This may reflect older Gen Z employees starting families or taking on responsibilities within extended family networks.

Millennials, comprising much of what is referred to as the "sandwich generation" in context of caregiving responsibilities, lead the way in citing Child/Elder Care. These employees are navigating the dual pressures of raising children and supporting aging parents or relatives. This dynamic clearly affects their decisions to stay or leave, and it underscores the importance for family-focused workplace benefits.

Work-Life Balance

Younger Workers Want Flexibility

Gen Z and Millennials leave for Work-Life Balance reasons at nearly identical rates, both higher than Gen X or Boomers. This reinforces what many employers have observed. Younger workers expect flexibility, and they are more likely to make a change if their role infringes on their personal lives. While older workers may have already found jobs that support balance, younger workers are still evaluating whether their current role can meet those expectations.

Interestingly, Millennials and Gen X cite remote capability at identical rates, 3 times more than their Gen Z colleagues. Gen Z may have similar preferences for remote work, but they're not leaving because of it. This may be due to the lack of remote work opportunities for younger employees, or that older workers may be in more need of that flexibility to take care of responsibilities outside of work.

Management

A Source of Friction for Gen X

Though Management is not the most cited reason for exit overall, it spikes significantly for Gen X employees, where it is cited in over 13% of exits. As the most seasoned group in the workforce, Gen X brings experience, context, and expectations to their workplace relationships. When leadership decisions don't align with their values or vision, they may be more inclined to leave rather than settle.

Gen Z, by contrast, reports Management issues at more than half the rate of Gen X and nearly half the rate of Millennials. These younger employees may still be finding their footing and are more likely to take direction than to challenge their supervisors. But as they gain experience, these numbers could shift.

Total Rewards

Most Meaningful for Millennials

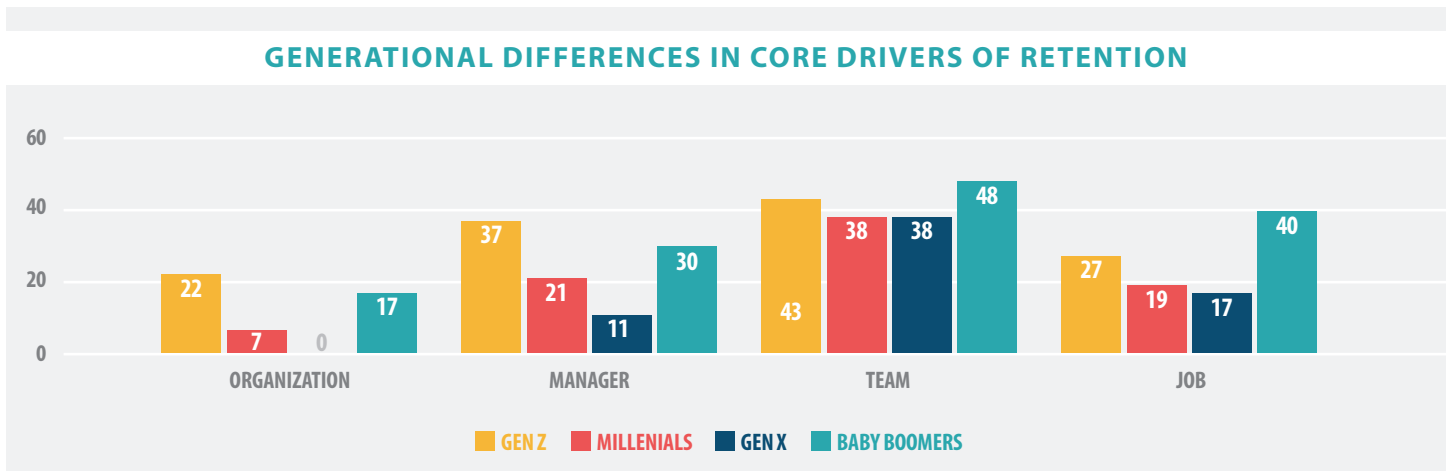
Total Rewards, while not a top-tier Reason for Leaving overall, spikes for Millennials. At 10%, they cite pay, benefits, and incentives more than any other generation. This again may tie into their caregiving burdens and the broader financial pressures associated with raising families, supporting elders, and advancing their careers simultaneously.



Generational Differences in the Core Drivers of Retention

How Generation Impacts Perception of Core Drivers

The Core Driver ratings reinforce the generational story already present in the Reasons for Leaving data. While each generation ranks the four drivers in the same general order, the intensity of their experiences differs significantly, reflecting their unique priorities.



Organization

Millennials (7 NES) and Gen X (0 NES) report the lowest scores for their organizations. Career-related Reasons for Leaving like development, promotions, and job security are most prominent in this group. Many may view the organization as failing to deliver on these priorities. Management-related exits also peak as a Reason for Leaving in the Gen X group. Often, discontentment with managers morphs into broader organizational discontent.

Gen Z (22 NES) views their organizations more positively, suggesting their exits are more about personal fit or external opportunities like school. Baby Boomers (17 NES) fall in between, potentially reflecting long-term adaptation or a more measured outlook as retirement nears.

Manager

Gen X gives managers the lowest score at 11 NES, aligned with their high rate of exits due to poor leadership behavior, communication, and lack of support. Their longer tenure likely brings higher standards that are not always met.

Millennials are next at 21 NES, often expressing frustration with inadequate support and missed development opportunities. Gen Z (37 NES) rates managers far more positively, likely because expectations are still forming or because they have had limited exposure to leadership gaps. Baby Boomers (30 NES) rate managers relatively well, possibly due to long-standing relationships or greater detachment from leadership issues late in their careers.

Team

Team is the most positively rated driver across every generation. Gen Z (43 NES) and Boomers (48 NES) report the strongest scores. For Gen Z, they are experiencing their first workplace relationships and are happy to navigate the new aspects of the workplace with their peers. For Boomers, these relationships have likely been built over years and carry deep value.

Millennials and Gen X both score Team at 38 NES. While still positive, this slight drop may reflect ongoing stress or shifting team dynamics during peak career and family years. After all, something must give when you're dealing with taking care of children or ageing parents while trying to navigate your career.

Job

Job scores follow the familiar U-shaped pattern.

- Gen Z leads with 27 NES, consistent with exits related to school or career changes rather than major job dissatisfaction.
- Millennials (19 NES) and Gen X (17 NES) report much lower scores, in line with their more critical views of the workplace overall.
- Boomers at 40 NES report the highest Job satisfaction. By this point in their careers, roles have often been shaped to fit their strengths, or they've been able to find roles that fit their preferences.





III INSIGHTS

Expectations vs. Reality

The Growing Gap at the Center of Today's Workforce

For the past several years, Work Institute research has pointed to a widening gap between what employees expect from work and what employers are able or willing to provide. In 2026, that gap is no longer subtle. It has become one of the defining features of the modern workforce.

This disconnect helps explain a central paradox in today's labor market. Turnover has declined, yet confidence and alignment have not fully recovered. Employees are staying longer, but often with greater caution and uncertainty about the future. Organizations are filling roles, but many continue to struggle to build sustained commitment.

The issue is not that employee expectations are unreasonable. Nor is it that employers are intentionally failing. The issue is that expectations have evolved faster than organizational systems, leadership capability, and communication norms.



Employers Are Positioned to Deliver

Work Institute research consistently shows a common set of expectations across industries, roles, and tenure groups. Employees increasingly expect:

- Growth and development that is visible, attainable, and individualized
- Manageable workload with realistic capacity expectations
- Supportive managers who provide clarity, feedback, and advocacy
- Alignment and purpose, including understanding how their work fits into something larger
- Flexibility, not as a perk, but as a baseline assumption of modern work

These expectations are not fringe views. They are mainstream, particularly among early and mid-career employees.

Ongoing employee feedback, where available, reinforces this pattern. Many employees who remain describe staying as a holding pattern rather than a commitment. They cite hope more often than satisfaction, believing opportunity is possible but uncertain about when or how it will materialize.

At the same time, employers face real constraints. Organizations balance:

- productivity pressures
- margin compression
- staffing shortages
- regulatory requirements
- technology disruption
- leadership pipelines built for a different era

As a result, many employers struggle to deliver on all expectations consistently. Career paths are unclear. Managers are overextended. Development conversations are uneven. Flexibility varies widely by role and function.

This is not a failure of intent. It is a failure of alignment and communication.

When expectations are not clearly defined, or when managers are not equipped to set realistic norms, the gap between perception and reality widens quickly, increasing retention risk even when turnover remains suppressed.

A Values Disconnect, not a Work Ethic Crisis

Recent public commentary has framed this gap as a generational work ethic problem, particularly among younger workers. A Wall Street Journal opinion piece in late 2025 highlighted research suggesting a misalignment between values prioritized by Generation Z and those most prized by hiring managers.

While such framing is attention grabbing, it oversimplifies the issue.

Work Institute data do not suggest that younger employees are unwilling to work. Instead, they reveal a cohort entering the workforce with different assumptions about work, identity, and fulfillment, shaped by:

- economic instability
- the pandemic
- rapid technological change
- shifting social norms

Younger employees place greater emphasis on individuality, wellbeing, and meaning. Employers, particularly those built around traditional advancement models, continue to prize visible achievement, pace, and endurance.

Neither perspective is inherently wrong. But when they collide without adjustment, frustration emerges on both sides.

This is not a question of employability. It is a question of expectation alignment.

This misalignment does not affect all employees equally. Work Institute data show that men and women often experience the same workplace through different lenses, shaped by differences in role distribution, caregiving responsibility, managerial interaction, and access to flexibility and development.

While men and women frequently cite the same broad Reasons for Leaving, the intensity, timing, and context of those decisions diverge in meaningful ways. Women more frequently report higher sensitivity to workload, manager behavior, work life structure, and organizational support, while men more often cite career trajectory, compensation, and role characteristics.

These differences do not reflect divergent commitment to work. They reflect how expectations are formed and met within organizational systems that were not designed to produce uniform experiences.

Why the Gap is Expanding in 2026

Several forces have amplified this disconnect:

Career expectations have risen as opportunity clarity has declined. Employees expect growth, but many organizations lack defined pathways or the managerial discipline to support them.

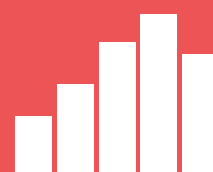
Managers are the bottleneck. Managers are expected to coach, support wellbeing, drive performance, and communicate change, often without training or capacity. Employees experience this as inconsistency or indifference.

Flexibility expectations are unevenly met. What feels reasonable to employees often feels operationally impossible to employers. Without transparency, this breeds resentment.

AI and automation have added uncertainty. Employees expect reassurance and clarity about their future. Many employers are still forming their own answers.

Together, these forces widen the gap between what employees believe work should be and what it is.

WHEN LEADERS ASSUME A SINGLE EMPLOYEE REALITY, EXPECTATION GAPS WIDEN UNEVENLY AND INCREASE RETENTION RISK IN WAYS THAT ARE OFTEN INVISIBLE UNTIL EXIT DECISIONS ARE MADE.



Why This Gap Matters for Retention

The danger is not immediate turnover. It is latent disengagement. When expectations are unmet and exits are delayed, organizations experience:

- Lower discretionary effort
- Reduced trust in leadership
- Favorable engagement scores that mask risk
- Sudden spikes in turnover when conditions shift

This is why dissatisfaction can rise even as quit rates fall.

Organizations cannot give employees everything they want, but they can do three things exceptionally well:

- Communicate clearly about what is possible and what is not.
- Train managers to set expectations, have career conversations, and explain tradeoffs.
- Create alignment between stated values and daily workplace experience.

When leaders fail to do these things, employees fill the gaps with assumptions, often negative ones.

The central question for leaders in 2026 is not “how do we meet every employee expectation?” and should be “how do we clearly define, communicate, and support realistic expectations in a changed workforce?”

Organizations that answer this will retain talent even in uncertain times. Those that do not will experience delayed but accelerated turnover when confidence returns.



Perceptions of AI's Effect on the Workforce

Artificial Intelligence and the Workforce: An Amplifier of Uncertainty

Co-authored with Jennifer Miller, Managing Partner, Millan

Artificial intelligence has moved quickly from concept to daily reality for many employees. To better understand how this shift is being experienced inside organizations, Work Institute partnered with Millan in the fourth quarter of 2025 to conduct the Impact of AI on the Workforce Survey. The findings provide important context for understanding how employees are navigating AI implementation in their companies.

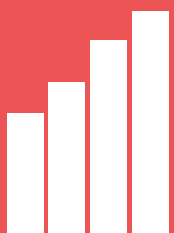
Individual Gains, Organizational Gaps

Surprisingly, most employees report that AI has positively impacted their job performance. Most are experiencing tangible benefits through increased productivity and enhanced innovation in their individual work.

Yet beneath this optimism lie significant gaps. Fewer than half of employees say they have access to training opportunities for growth and development in utilizing AI. The positive impact narrows further when we examine team dynamics: less than half of employees report positive effects on collaboration. Most telling, many supervisors lack confidence in guiding their teams through AI implementation.

This pattern reveals a critical disconnect. AI delivers results at the individual level, but organizations have not yet built the infrastructure—training, team processes, leadership capability—to scale that success. Employees are accepting AI as part of work, but without a clear narrative about growth, expectations, or opportunity. They are learning to work alongside AI while quietly evaluating whether their organization is prepared to support them as roles evolve.

EMPLOYEES ARE NOT SIMPLY REACTING TO CHANGE ITSELF – THEY ARE EVALUATING LEADERSHIP'S ABILITY TO GUIDE THEM THROUGH IT.



How AI Uncertainty Varies Across Career Stages

Most employees do not view AI as an immediate threat. Only a small portion express strong concern that AI will replace their jobs or directly undermine their near-term security.

However, one of the survey's most important insights emerges from how AI-related uncertainty manifests differently across the workforce—not as panic, but as questions specific to career stage.

Early-career employees experience AI uncertainty as a question of relevance. Still building foundational skills and professional identity, they worry about whether they are developing the right capabilities fast enough. Concerns about automation and accelerated productivity expectations create quiet anxiety about long-term viability in their chosen field.

Mid-career employees experience AI uncertainty as displacement risk. Often balancing performance expectations, leadership aspirations, and financial responsibilities, they question how roles may change, whether their accumulated experience will continue to be valued, and how to remain competitive as work evolves.

These differences help explain why AI-related concern does not translate into immediate turnover intent. Instead, uncertainty accumulates differently across tenure and career stage, shaping how employees assess risk, opportunity, and organizational trust over time.

The Leadership Readiness Gap

Uncertainty becomes pronounced when employees assess leadership and organizational preparedness. Survey responses reveal that employees are less confident in how AI is being communicated, governed, and supported than in AI's technical usefulness itself. Confidence drops noticeably when asked about training availability, risk communication, and leadership readiness.

This reinforces a central theme of the 2026 Retention Report: employees are not simply reacting to change itself – they are evaluating leadership's ability to guide them through it. When communication is unclear or inconsistent, employees fill in the gaps themselves. In the context of AI, that often translates into uncertainty about skill relevance, performance expectations, and future opportunity.

The supervisor confidence gap is particularly revealing. If most supervisors don't feel equipped to guide their teams through AI implementation, employees are left navigating the transition largely on their own.

What Leaders Misunderstand about AI and the Workforce

Many organizations assume that AI uncertainty stems primarily from fear of job loss. The survey data reveal a more nuanced reality: employees are not broadly panicked about replacement. What they lack is clarity beyond their own immediate usage.

Leaders often underestimate the importance of explaining how AI will be used organizationally, how expectations may change, and what support will be provided as roles evolve. They mistake neutrality for comfort, when it more frequently reflects hesitation or unanswered questions.

There's also a tendency to frame AI as a productivity initiative rather than a workforce transition. Tools get introduced, but conversations about governance, ownership, skills, development, and long-term opportunity lag. When that happens, AI becomes another unresolved variable layered onto existing concerns about career clarity and leadership capability.

Silence, more than AI itself, is what creates risk.

Why This Matters for Retention

AI is not currently a primary driver of turnover. Exit interview data show no widespread AI-driven departures. But in a labor market where mobility has slowed, uncertainty doesn't always produce immediate exits. More often, it delays decisions.

Employees stay, observe, and reassess quietly. Over time, unresolved questions about growth, relevance, and leadership response accumulate. This is where AI intersects with retention.

AI doesn't create workforce concerns on its own—it amplifies existing ones. When career pathways are unclear, managers are unprepared, or communication is inconsistent, AI becomes another factor employees weigh when deciding whether to commit or disengage. The technology reveals and intensifies organizational weaknesses that may have been manageable before.

Leadership Response Is the Differentiator

Organizations don't need perfect answers about AI. But they do need intentional leadership.

Employees are looking for leaders who can:

- Explain how AI will and will not be used in their organization.
- Clarify how expectations and responsibilities may evolve.
- Identify which skills will remain valuable and which need development.
- Acknowledge uncertainty honestly rather than avoid difficult conversations.

When leaders engage these conversations proactively, AI becomes part of a broader narrative about preparedness and growth. When they do not, AI reinforces hesitation and erodes trust, particularly when supervisors themselves lack the confidence and support to guide their teams.

In 2026, AI is best understood not as a standalone disruptor of retention, but as a test of leadership clarity and organizational readiness. How organizations lead through this transition will determine whether today's stability becomes sustained commitment—or simply delays the next wave of preventable exits.

Learn More: Impact of AI on the Workforce

Work Institute and Millan Chicago conducted a national survey in Q4 2025 to examine how employees are experiencing the growing use of artificial intelligence at work. This section highlights select insights that reinforce broader workforce themes.

To access the full Impact of AI on the Workforce report and detailed findings, visit www.millanchicago.com/research.



Employer Engagement Assessment

New Framework to Assess Engagement

Rethink Engagement: From Sentiment to Signal

For organizations seeking to understand future retention risk, insight from current employees remains essential. Turnover events are, by definition, lagging indicators. By the time an employee exits, the opportunity to retain that individual has passed. However, the data captured through exit interviews often reveal patterns and conditions that help predict why other employees will leave in the future if those issues remain unaddressed.

This reality has driven widespread use of engagement surveys to surface risk earlier. Yet despite their prevalence, many organizations remain frustrated by how little clarity those tools provide.

Engagement scores may stabilize or improve, benchmarks may appear favorable, and action plans may be created. Still, the same issues continue to surface in exit data. Career related exits remain high. Manager effectiveness remains uneven. Early tenure turnover persists.

The issue is not that engagement measurement lacks value. It is that much of what passes for engagement measurement today is poorly aligned with how retention decisions form.

The Limits of Traditional Engagement Models

Most traditional engagement tools were designed to measure sentiment, not risk.

They focus on how employees feel at a point in time, often emphasizing satisfaction, pride, or advocacy. Results are typically aggregated into percent favorable scores and benchmarked externally. While this approach can provide a broad sense of morale, it is far less effective at identifying where commitment is fragile or where future turnover is likely.

Several limitations appear consistently.

First, positivity is often overweighted. Favorable responses are aggregated in ways that obscure neutral or negative signals. As a result, high average scores can coexist with meaningful pockets of concern, particularly among early tenure, mid-career, or frontline employees.

Second, benchmarking frequently takes precedence over diagnosis. Organizations learn how they compare themselves to others, but not why employees are experiencing work the way they are. Strong relative scores can create false confidence while underlying issues remain unresolved.

Third, engagement results are often disconnected from accountability. Data is shared broadly, but managers lack the clarity, capability, or authority to act on what the data reveals. Over time, employees learn that participation does not lead to meaningful change.

Finally, many engagement models fail to distinguish between satisfaction and commitment. Employees may report being generally satisfied while simultaneously questioning their growth, relevance, or future. These are precisely the conditions under which the decision to leave begins to form.

The result is a familiar paradox: organizations report favorable engagement scores while exit data tells a very different story.

View Engagement Through a Retention Lens

Work Institute exit interview data consistently show that the reasons employees cite for leaving are rarely sudden. Career dissatisfaction, management strain, workload imbalance, and organizational clarity develop over time. Engagement data should help leaders see these patterns early. Too often, it does not.

This gap exists because most engagement models are not designed to surface emerging risk. They are designed to summarize sentiment.

To be useful in a retention context, engagement data must do more than describe how employees feel today. It must help leaders understand where pressure is building, where expectations are diverging, and where leadership behavior is influencing future decisions.

That requires a different framework.

A More Practical Approach to Engagement Measurement

An engagement assessment intended to inform retention decisions should meet several criteria.

It should focus on the core drivers that consistently shape employee decisions. Work Institute research has identified four primary drivers of engagement and retention: **the Organization, the Manager, the Job, and the Team**. Engagement measurement should align directly to these domains.

It should distinguish excellence from adequacy. Treating “agree” and “strongly agree” as equivalent masks meaningful differences in experience. Organizations seeking to reduce turnover must be able to identify where experiences are truly strong and where they are merely acceptable.

It should surface negative signals clearly. Neutral and unfavorable responses often carry more predictive value than favorable ones. A retention focused assessment must make those signals visible rather than averaging them away.

And it should be actionable at the manager and team level. Data that cannot be acted upon by those closest to the employee experience rarely lead to sustained change.

The Core Drivers Across the Employee Lifecycle

One of the advantages of a retention and engagement focused framework is the ability to apply a consistent lens across the entire employee lifecycle.

The same four core drivers (Organization, Manager, Job, and Team) influence employee experience from onboarding through exit. What changes over time is not the drivers themselves, but how they are experienced as tenure increases.

In early tenure, clarity around role expectations, workload, and manager support tends to dominate. When these signals are weak, early frustration forms quickly and often later appears in exit data as unmet expectations or insufficient preparation.

In mid tenure, career development, growth conversations, and leadership consistency become more prominent. Engagement sentiment may remain generally positive while confidence about the future begins to erode quietly.

In later tenure, organizational trust, fairness, and alignment with leadership direction often carry greater weight. Exits at this stage are more likely to reflect broader organizational concerns rather than immediate job dissatisfaction.

Because these drivers persist across onboarding, engagement, stay, and exit points, organizations that measure them consistently through the same lens gain a clearer view of how experience evolves over time. Patterns observed in exit interviews often mirror concerns already present among current employees. Engagement data, when structured around the same drivers, can surface those signals earlier and at scale.

Engagement as Early Warning

The Employer Engagement Assessment was designed with this lifecycle perspective in mind. Rather than attempting to measure engagement as a broad emotional construct, it focuses on identifying where experiences support or undermine retention and engagement over time.

Structured around the four core drivers and using a Net Excellence Score methodology, the assessment highlights where experiences are truly strong and where risk may emerge. When interpreted alongside exit interview patterns and tenure trends, it helps organizations move from reactive explanations to proactive intervention.

In the context of the 2026 workforce, engagement measurement must evolve. Employees are staying longer but deciding more cautiously. Stability has returned, but confidence has not.

Engagement data should function as an early warning system, not a reassurance mechanism.

The question for leaders is no longer whether to measure engagement. It is whether the tools being used can reveal what truly matters before delayed decisions become departures.



Strategic Imperatives

How to Close the Gap Between Expectations and Reality

The workforce entering 2026 is not leaving in large numbers, but it is not broadly confident either. Today's retention challenge is not driven by a single generation, economic cycle, or workplace policy. It reflects a widening gap between what employees increasingly expect from work and what organizations are structurally prepared to deliver. Many employees are staying, but they are doing so cautiously and reassessing their future rather than fully recommitting.

Turnover may be down, but underlying risk is not. Career exits remain elevated. Job security anxiety has doubled. Early tenure turnover continues to carry significant cost. And while modest improvements in sentiment are encouraging, they remain fragile and uneven.

The organizations that succeed in 2026 will be the ones that intentionally realign expectations, leadership capability, and the lived employee experience.

The following imperatives represent the most critical actions leaders must take to reduce risk, restore trust, and build durable commitment in the year ahead. They are not retention tactics. They are leadership corrections informed by what the data is warning us about next.



Imperative 1

Build Career Development Systems, Not Career Promises

**Stop Selling Career Promises.
Start Building Career Systems.**

Career is the number one reason employees leave their organizations for the 15th consecutive year. This is no longer a trend. It is a constant.

What has changed is the nature of career dissatisfaction. Employees are not simply leaving for promotions or higher titles. They are leaving because they cannot see a future. Development opportunities feel vague. Advancement pathways are unclear. Growth conversations are inconsistent or nonexistent.

In many organizations, career is aspirational language rather than operational reality.

Career development in 2026 must move beyond programs and slogans. It must become infrastructure.

That infrastructure includes:

- Clear role progression, including lateral and nontraditional pathways.
- Visible development opportunities tied to skills, not just tenure.
- Consistent career conversations led by managers.
- Honest communication when advancement is limited.
- Internal mobility that feels attainable, not theoretical.

Employees do not expect every organization to offer unlimited growth. They do expect clarity. When that clarity is missing, career dissatisfaction grows quietly until it becomes the reason they leave.

Imperative 2

Train Managers for the Workforce They Have, Not the One They Remember

Train Managers for Today's Workforce not Yesterday's Playbook.

Managers sit at the center of the expectation versus reality gap.

They are expected to coach performance, support wellbeing, guide careers, manage workload, communicate change, and reassure employees about an uncertain future. Yet most were never trained to do this work.

Work Institute data consistently show that manager experience shapes employee decisions most acutely during mid tenure, precisely when career dissatisfaction peaks. Gender and generational differences further amplify this effect, particularly for women and Gen X employees, who report lower manager sentiment and higher leadership related exits.

In 2026, managers are no longer just supervisors. They are interpreters of reality.

Organizations must equip managers to:

- Set realistic expectations early and often.
- Have credible career conversations.
- Explain tradeoffs between flexibility, workload, and performance.
- Address AI and job security questions with confidence.
- Recognize effort and progress, not just outcomes.

When managers lack these skills, employees do not blame the manager alone. They blame the organization.

Imperative 3

Address AI Anxiety Proactively and Transparently

AI Anxiety is a Communication Failure Before It's a Technology Problem.

Job security reentered the conversation in a meaningful way.

In 2025, job security related exits more than doubled and reached the highest level ever recorded in Work Institute's dataset. This shift is closely tied to increased AI adoption, automation, and broader economic uncertainty.

Employees are not necessarily reacting to job loss. They are reacting to ambiguity.

Search behavior, exit interviews, and generational data all point to the same conclusion: employees are internalizing risk faster than organizations are communicating stability.

The most dangerous response to AI anxiety is silence.

Organizations do not need all the answers. But they must provide direction. Leaders should:

- Clearly articulate how AI will and will not be used.
- Identify skills that remain valuable and transferable.
- Outline how roles may evolve over time.
- Acknowledge uncertainty honestly rather than avoiding it.
- Train managers to address concerns consistently.

AI is not driving turnover. Uncertainty is. And uncertainty is a leadership problem.

Imperative 4

Treat Early Tenure Retention as a Cultural Investment

Investing in Early Tenure Retention Strengthens Culture.

Early tenure turnover remains one of the most costly and preventable failures organizations face.

Exits within the first 90 days represent tens of billions of dollars in lost productivity, disrupted teams, and compromised continuity. The reasons employees leave early are telling:

- workload and scheduling misalignment
- job expectations not matching reality
- insufficient training
- weak early team integration
- cultural disconnect

These are not hiring mistakes. They are expectation failures.

Organizations that excel in early tenure retention:

- Provide realistic job previews.
- Clarify workload and scheduling expectations upfront.
- Establish early manager connection.
- Create structured peer integration.
- Check in before frustration becomes resignation.

The first weeks of employment set the tone for retention and culture alike.

Imperative 5

Close the Expectation Gap Through Clarity, Not Concessions

Employees Are Not Asking for Everything. They Are Asking for Honesty.

Many organizations respond to rising expectations by attempting to give more: more flexibility, more benefits, and more programs. This approach is often unsustainable and frequently ineffective.

The most trusted organizations in 2026 will be those that:

- Clearly define what flexibility means in their context.
- Explain why certain roles require different expectations.
- Align messaging across leaders and managers.
- Communicate tradeoffs transparently.
- Reinforce norms consistently.

When expectations are unclear, employees create their own narratives. Those narratives are rarely charitable.

Clarity builds trust even when limitations exist.



Imperative 6

Reevaluate Engagement: From Sentiment to Risk Signal

Engagement is Most Valuable when it Functions as an Early Warning System.

In 2026, engagement can no longer be treated as a standalone sentiment exercise. Leaders must view engagement data as an early indicator of retention risk, not as a scorecard of morale or satisfaction.

The most dangerous workforce conditions are not those where dissatisfaction is visible, but those where confidence erodes quietly. Employees may report neutral or even positive sentiment while simultaneously questioning their growth, leadership support, or long-term relevance. These are the conditions under which delayed turnover decisions form.

Organizations that rely on favorable averages or external benchmarks often miss this risk. Stability in engagement scores can create false reassurance, particularly when pockets of concern exist among early tenure, mid-career, or critical roles. What matters most is not how engagement looks overall, but where it is softening and why.

Leaders must shift their focus from managing engagement results to interpreting engagement signals. That means using engagement data to identify emerging pressure points, leadership blind spots, and expectation gaps before they surface in exit data. **When engagement insights are aligned with known retention drivers and examined through tenure, role, and manager lenses, they become predictive rather than retrospective.**

In a labor market defined by delayed decisions and cautious mobility, engagement is most valuable when it functions as an early warning system. Organizations that use it this way will act earlier, target intervention more precisely, and reduce preventable turnover before confidence gives way to departure.

Imperative 7

Use Integrated Data to Identify Risk Before Turnover Accelerates

Turnover is a Lagging Indicator. Risk Shows Up Much Earlier.

Turnover is a lagging indicator. By the time it spikes, the damage is already done.

Work Institute data show that shifts in sentiment, particularly around career, manager support, and organizational alignment, precede exits by months or years. Declines in Net Excellence Scores often signal risk long before employees act.

Organizations must move from reactive to predictive retention strategies by:

- Integrating exit, stay, and engagement data.
- Identifying crossover themes, especially career dissatisfaction.
- Monitoring early warning signals by tenure and role.
- Prioritizing interventions where risk is highest.
- Holding leaders accountable for acting on insights.

In 2026, retention is not about collecting more data. It is about connecting it.

The Leadership Choice Ahead

The workforce has changed. Expectations have changed. The reasons people leave have not.

Organizations that succeed in 2026 will not be those that chase the lowest turnover rate. They will be those that intentionally align expectations, leadership capability, and employee experience.

- Career systems reduce long-term risk.
- Manager training stabilizes daily experience.
- AI communication prevents uncertainty-driven turnover.
- Early tenure focus stops risk at the front door.

Turnover may be temporarily suppressed. Dissatisfaction is not.

The choices leaders make now will determine whether the next shift brings stability or another surge of preventable exits.

About the Data & Methodology

The data used in the 2026 Retention Report represents one of the most comprehensive and behaviorally rich analyses of employee turnover available in the United States. In 2025, the Work Institute Research Center conducted 15,424 exit interviews, and across the six-year period from 2020 through 2025, the dataset includes insights from more than 120,000 exit interviews.

Over 90% of these interviews were conducted after the employee had left the organization and all were administered by an objective third party. This approach reduces response bias and allows departing employees to speak candidly about their experiences and the factors that influenced their decision to leave.

The dataset is built on in depth mixed method behavioral interviews designed to move beyond surface level explanations and uncover the underlying drivers of turnover. These interviews capture both structured quantitative inputs and rich qualitative narratives, providing a nuanced view of employee perceptions and decision making.

In 2025, approximately 60% of the interviews were conducted within healthcare organizations, with the remaining 40% representing a broad cross section of non-healthcare industries. These include manufacturing, transportation and logistics, finance, insurance, government, higher education, technology, consulting, utilities and energy, facilities management, hospitality and leisure, non-profit organizations, and consumer focused industries. Collectively, this breadth reflects a wide spectrum of the North American workforce.

The dataset includes a statistically significant range of demographic variables, including age, sex, ethnicity, and employment classification such as hourly and salaried roles. Exit interviews were conducted across more than 175 organizations, varying in size, structure, and industry focus.

Methodology Disclosure

In 2023, Work Institute refined select code definitions within the Job and Management categories. These updates were made to improve clarity and consistency in how responses were coded and analyzed. As a result, subtheme level comparisons for Job and Management should be interpreted with this change in mind when reviewing trends across multiple years.

About Work Institute

Established in 2000, Work Institute helps organizations understand and act on employee perceptions across the full lifecycle. We turn objective voice-of-employee insights into clear, practical actions that reduce turnover, strengthen culture, and drive meaningful change. Our work is grounded in 25 years of trusted research and human-centered partnership with organizations of all sizes including many Fortune 500 clients across multiple industries and geographies.

Our workplace experts help companies attract & retain talent, improve performance, diminish risk, manage human capital cost by improving workplace conditions, and provide Training & Development for your current and future leaders.

Through our commitment to asking the right questions, matching research and analysis to the client's needs, Work Institute provides employers with employee retention and engagement programs that drastically improve overall employee satisfaction, reduce costs, improve retention, and promote profitable growth.

Work Institute's surveys and interviews marry sound scientific methodology with meaningful conversations. Asking the right questions makes a huge difference in the quality of data collected and the insights needed to drive higher employee retention and engagement. Work Institute is the leading authority in workforce intelligence and retention. Utilizing evidence-based research methods that capture "the why" behind employee thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, Work Institute helps organizations improve employee engagement, performance, and retention.

Organizations use the Retention Report not only to understand why employees leave, but to educate leaders on what retention truly requires. Work Institute licenses this Report for team-wide use, leadership education, and internal discussions to help organizations turn insights into action.

Work Institute also presents Retention Report findings to professional organizations, executive teams, and HR audiences – bringing the data to life through expert interpretation, real-world examples, and practical guidance. To learn more about purchasing Reports for your organization or scheduling a presentation, visit workinstitute.com/contact.







Work Institute

EMPLOYEE TURNOVER INSIGHTS AND TRENDS IN 2025

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