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Addressing today's healthcare workforce challenges:
Results from a national study

EXPLORE
the expectations & perceptions of healthcare workers

DISCOVER
research-based recruitment strategies

IDENTIFY
the factors that influence employee retention

2025 EDITION

Addressing today's healthcare workforce challenges: Results from a national study

The healthcare industry is grappling with tough and urgent workforce challenges, including the need to attract new team members, retain seasoned professionals, and inspire a workforce that is strained by escalating demands, burnout, and evolving expectations. So, how can healthcare leaders tackle these pressing challenges head-on? It starts with understanding exactly what today's workers want, need, and expect from their jobs.

Workers feel *overwhelmingly* positive about healthcare careers.

To uncover these critical insights, **WellSky® partnered with The Center for Generational Kinetics** to conduct an extensive national study. The study surveyed 1,200 U.S. workers—including 400 nurses, 400 healthcare workers in other roles, and 400 non-healthcare workers who expressed a willingness to work in healthcare. The results uncovered powerful, **actionable** findings about employment perceptions, onboarding, training, compensation, technology, culture, retention strategies, and more. These findings might surprise you, but we believe they'll reassure you, too.

First, some great news: Workers feel *overwhelmingly* positive about healthcare careers. Ninety-seven percent of all respondents said they'd be proud to tell their family they work in healthcare. Even better, an overwhelming majority agreed that healthcare offers a more rewarding and meaningful career path than other options they considered. Clearly, the perception of healthcare work is positive—a critical insight for recruiting leaders to leverage.

The good news is that there are solutions, and healthcare workers themselves shared with us exactly what matters most to them.

But there's a catch. While workers are proud, they're also stressed and overwhelmed. A startling 51% of nurses reported seeking mental health support to cope with job-related pressures. Staffing shortages, emotional stress, and burnout cause personal struggles, but they're also organizational risks that threaten retention and care quality. As one study participant put it, "People shouldn't have to choose between being a good employee and being a healthy person."

The good news is that there are solutions, and healthcare workers themselves shared with us *exactly* what matters most to them. They crave clear career pathways, competitive and transparent compensation, positive and supportive cultures, and meaningful training opportunities. Plus, there's optimism about technology's potential: Over half (55%) said they believe AI could help reduce burnout.

Throughout this white paper, you'll discover insights that are as practical as they are eye-opening. Each finding translates directly into actionable strategies, equipping you with the tools you need to attract, retain, and motivate the healthcare workforce of today and tomorrow.

If you'd like to learn more about what we're doing to create a more effective, connected, and sustainable healthcare system, we invite you to visit WellSky.com.

Sincerely,
The WellSky team

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When you hear people talk about working in healthcare, you may expect to hear about stress, long hours, or tough days. And yes, those realities exist. Despite that, the research from our national study revealed working in healthcare is overwhelmingly viewed in a positive light. In fact, **81% of all participants have a positive perception of working in acute care, 80% have a positive perception of working in home-based care, 78% have a positive perception of working in post-acute care, and 73% have a positive perception of working in transfusion medicine and biotherapies**.

Pride and heart run deep in healthcare

An overwhelming **97% of participants said they would be proud to tell their family they work in healthcare**. Even more telling, **96% said they'd be proud if their own child chose healthcare as a career**. This is great news for recruiters and leaders who sometimes worry that healthcare careers suffer from an image problem.

Participants are not only proud of this work, but they also believe it to be fulfilling. More than half (52%) report that the ability to help others and doing rewarding work that makes a difference are among the top three benefits of working in healthcare—ahead of benefits related to salary, schedule flexibility, career paths, and more.

What are the biggest benefits or advantages of working in the healthcare field? (Percentage totals of rankings in top three)

Benefit	%
Ability to help others/rewarding work that makes a difference	52%
Stable or steady employment	49%
Competitive salary	42%
Wide range of job opportunities	36%
Employee benefits	34%
Flexible work schedule or hours	24%
Clear path to career advancement	21%
Being around diverse people	19%
On-the-job training or talent development	15%

96%
of participants would be proud if their own child chose healthcare as a career

Healthcare careers vs. careers in other industries

The positivity continues when healthcare careers are compared with careers in other fields. Among all participants in our survey, **80% said working in healthcare is better than other career options they've considered**. But when you zoom in further, it gets even more interesting:

- **82%** of healthcare workers said healthcare is better than other careers.
- Among nurses specifically, **87%** said healthcare is better than other careers.
- Meanwhile, only **75%** of non-healthcare workers thought the same.

Those who have worked in healthcare firsthand report a notably higher regard for the field.

Generational perceptions: A critical risk?

Generational differences in our data also emerged. The study found older Millennial participants (ages 37–45) have the most positive view, with 85% believing healthcare is better than other career options they've explored. Gen X (ages 46–59) came next at 80%, with Gen Z (ages 18–29) slightly behind at 76%.

Generational differences influence participants' positive view of healthcare careers

85% Millennials (ages 37–45)

80% Gen X (ages 46–59)

76% Gen Z (ages 18–29)
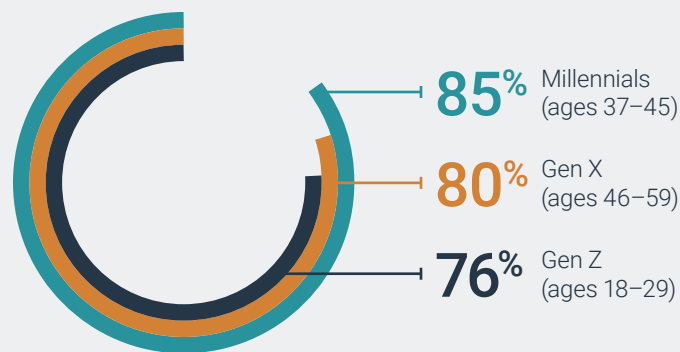
This gap may not seem huge at first glance. But it is meaningful, especially for an industry where attracting younger talent is necessary to meet demand. If Gen Z doesn't view healthcare careers quite as positively as older generations, how might that affect long-term workforce sustainability?

On the bright side, there's widespread recognition of the contributions that Gen Z offers: **84% of all participants believe healthcare workers aged 28 and younger bring new strengths and perspectives to the industry**. There's an opportunity here to tap into Gen Z's unique skills and perspectives.

84% of participants believe healthcare workers aged 28 and younger bring new strengths and perspectives to the industry
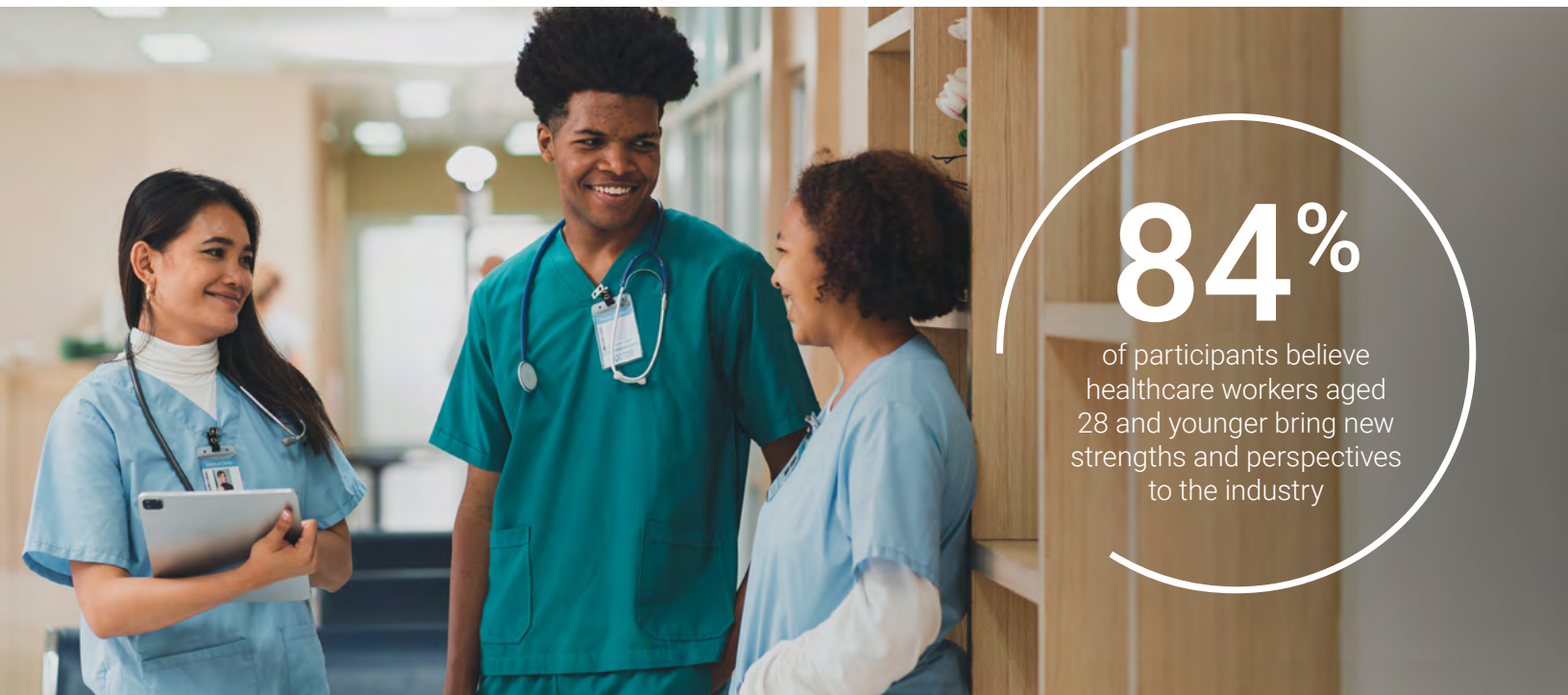
The takeaway: Fuel recruitment and retention with actionable tactics

So, what does all this mean for healthcare leaders, managers, and recruiters? A few big opportunities stand out:

Showcase healthcare careers to a broader audience: Given that healthcare workers have a far more positive perception than non-healthcare workers, exposing more people outside the industry to what healthcare really entails could significantly boost recruitment.

Focus on younger talent: Intentional strategies to increase exposure to the industry—such as internships, job shadowing, and mentorship programs—could help younger generations see the genuine fulfillment a healthcare career can offer.

Leverage pride and passion: Healthcare is clearly a field driven by heart and purpose, and workers are proud to be part of it. Harnessing this sense of pride in recruiting materials, interviews, and company culture can reinforce the positive perception that already exists.

It's undeniable that healthcare work is demanding, but it's also fulfilling in ways many other careers simply aren't. The data reveals that those who know healthcare best genuinely believe in the mission, value, and importance of their work. And that's something worth celebrating.

Action Question:

How can your organization more effectively highlight the positive perceptions healthcare workers hold about their roles as a means to attract more passionate, committed talent?
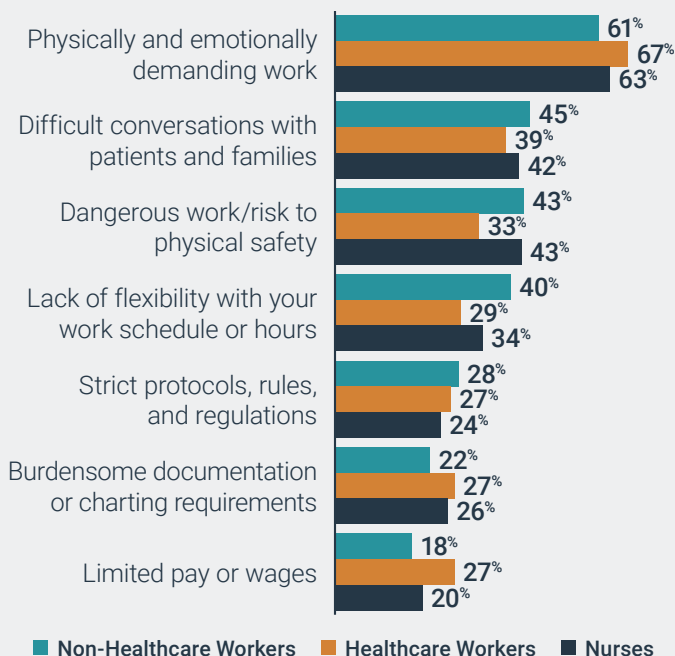
What makes someone say "yes" to a job in healthcare? This national study revealed **healthcare workers prioritize stable employment (96%), a positive work environment (94%), starting salary (94%), and solid employee benefits (93%)** above other job characteristics when deciding to apply for or accept a role. Stability is clearly essential for healthcare workers, in addition to company culture.

Fulfilling work vs. demanding realities

Our data shows that survey participants overwhelmingly perceive healthcare roles as physically and emotionally demanding. In fact, **67% of healthcare workers, 63% of nurses, and 61% of non-healthcare workers see the physical and emotional demands of healthcare as one of the biggest disadvantages of working in the field**. Healthcare leaders should take notice of this perception as it could be a barrier to both employee retention *and* to non-healthcare workers entering the industry.

Additional findings underscore the pressure healthcare providers are under. **Eighty-three percent of all survey participants said they believe healthcare workers shoulder an unfair burden for the problems facing today's healthcare system**. And the healthcare workers themselves feel it most prevalently. For example, **72% of nurses and 68% of other healthcare workers said the scrutiny placed on healthcare companies to improve the healthcare system makes their jobs more difficult**. Many healthcare workers feel overworked and unsupported, often carrying responsibilities that may stretch far beyond their immediate roles. But it can also be deeply meaningful work, and for many, that meaningfulness outweighs the demands.

What are the biggest negatives or disadvantages of working in the healthcare field?

Category	Non-Healthcare Workers	Healthcare Workers	Nurses
Physically and emotionally demanding work	61%	67%	63%
Difficult conversations with patients and families	45%	39%	42%
Dangerous work/risk to physical safety	43%	33%	43%
Lack of flexibility with your work schedule or hours	40%	29%	34%
Strict protocols, rules, and regulations	28%	27%	24%
Burdensome documentation or charting requirements	22%	27%	26%
Limited pay or wages	18%	27%	20%

■ **Non-Healthcare Workers** ■ **Healthcare Workers** ■ **Nurses**

Stability is clearly essential for healthcare workers, in addition to company culture.

## Perception vs. reality: Physical safety and schedule flexibility

Interestingly, perception differs sharply between those inside and outside healthcare regarding physical safety and work flexibility. **Non-healthcare workers are significantly more likely (43%) than healthcare workers (33%) to say "dangerous work or risk to physical safety" is one of the biggest negatives of healthcare careers**. Non-healthcare workers are also more likely (40%) to cite a lack of flexibility with work schedules or hours as a negative, compared to actual healthcare workers (29%).

These gaps suggest those outside the field may have misconceptions about the industry or limited exposure to the actual experience of healthcare professionals. Could job shadowing/mentoring programs, career showcases, or employee storytelling be effective in correcting these misconceptions? Introducing non-healthcare workers to the daily realities of healthcare careers could help bridge the perception gap.

The demand for mental health support

Let's not overlook a crucial finding about mental health. **Fifty-one percent of nurses say they've sought mental health support due to the stresses of their work**. By openly demonstrating how employee mental health is prioritized and supported, organizations can inspire confidence and attract candidates who are considering whether the demands of a healthcare career will be met with meaningful support.

With that openness in mind, a lack of clarity surrounding benefits also emerged as a notable frustration. According to the data, **34% of nurses— significantly more than other healthcare workers (22%) and non-healthcare workers (24%)—said a lack of detailed information about employee benefits is one of their biggest frustrations during the application or interview process**. If benefits aren't clearly outlined, it can leave potential hires feeling uncertain and undervalued.

51%

of nurses say they've sought mental health support due to the stresses of their work
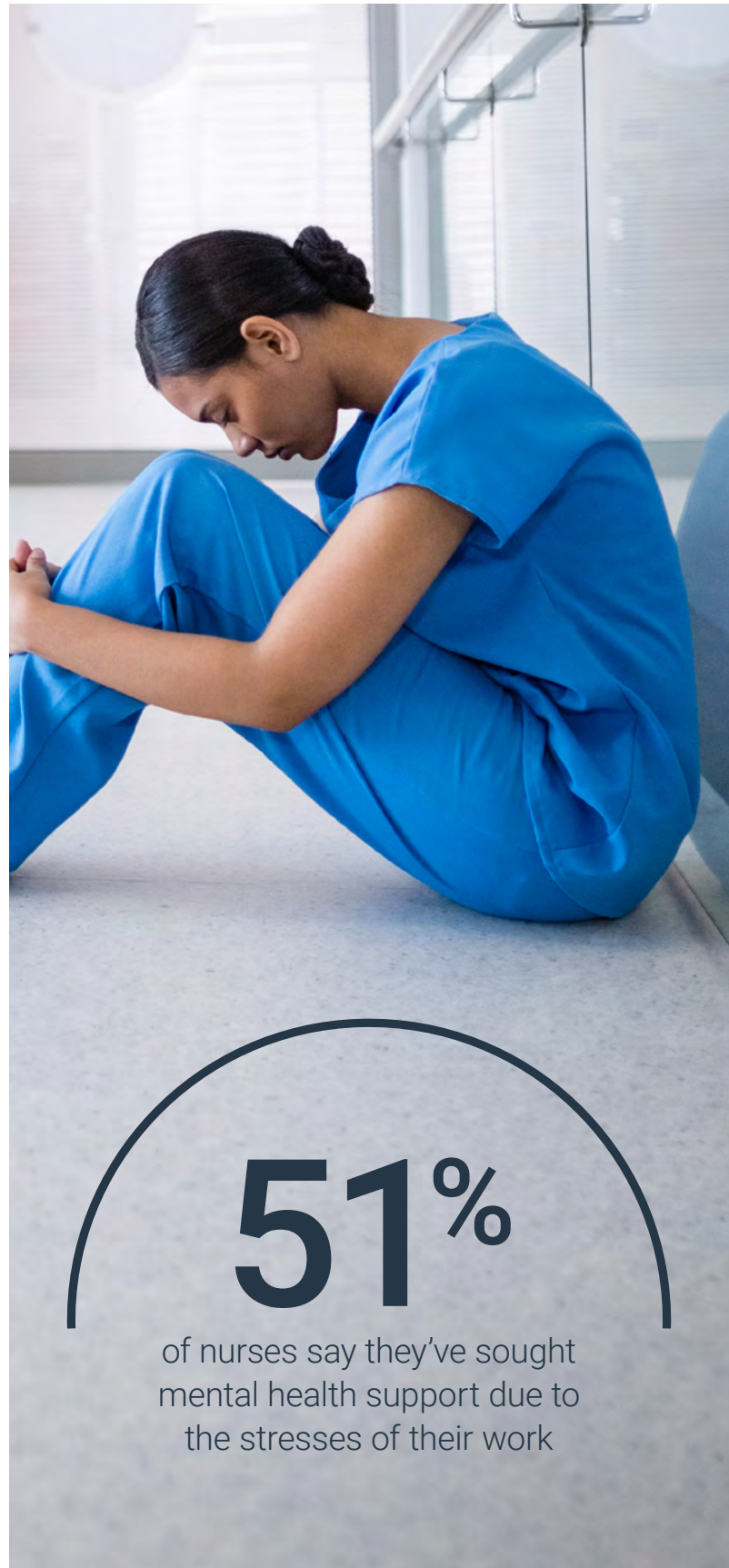
The takeaway: Support healthcare workers

What can healthcare leaders do with these insights? A few important strategies rise to the top:

Highlight stability and ongoing support: Emphasize clear benefits, workplace culture, and consistent, reliable employment.

Address perceptions proactively: To attract more talent from outside healthcare, address misconceptions about physical safety and flexibility through realistic job previews, job shadowing programs, and authentic storytelling.

Prioritize mental health openly: Creating and openly communicating about practical mental health initiatives will demonstrate genuine care and foster a healthier workplace.

The reality is, healthcare work will always be demanding, but workers are drawn to the purpose, impact, and job stability it provides. By actively supporting workers in ways that matter most to them, leaders can attract, retain, and sustain a workforce that's capable and truly committed.

Action Questions: ⚡

In what specific ways does your organization communicate stability, benefits, and mental health support to current and potential employees? What could you do differently to better address workers' concerns and perceptions?

Healthcare work will always be demanding, but workers are drawn to the purpose, impact, and job stability it provides.

Money isn't everything, but let's be honest—it matters a lot when making career decisions. According to our national study, **healthcare workers consistently rate starting salary (59%) and employee benefits (50%) in their top three most influential factors** when deciding to accept a healthcare role over a position in another industry. This isn't surprising when you consider the challenging demands they face every day, as well as the education requirements of many healthcare roles.
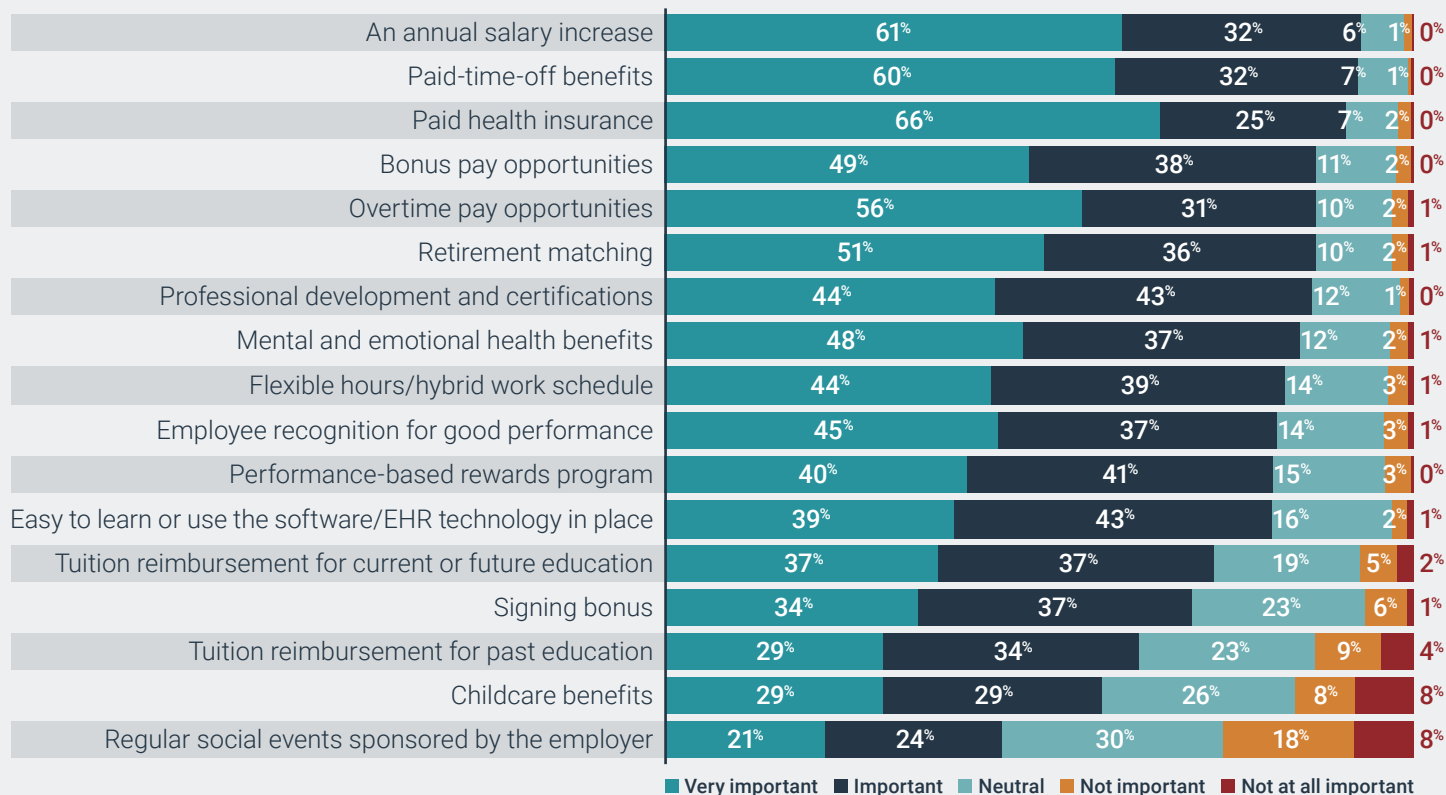
Meeting salary expectations matters

When it comes to compensation, healthcare workers have specific expectations. The study found that **an overwhelming majority rank annual salary increases (93%), paid time off (92%), and paid health insurance (91%) as the most important factors** influencing their job acceptance decisions.

Healthcare workers want straightforward, reliable financial recognition of their value. The data sends a clear message to healthcare leaders: If you want to attract and retain talent, start by offering competitive pay and being transparent about salary and benefits.

This is reinforced by a telling statistic: **46% of healthcare workers and nurses ranked financial compensation as a top three factor that would motivate them to handle more patient care without feeling burned out**. Think about that. Nearly *half* of these essential workers explicitly link their workload capacity and burnout prevention directly to their paycheck. Simply put, competitive pay could lead to higher productivity and lower burnout, which in many cases could mean more patients receiving care from a team operating at its best.

How important are each workplace benefit, offering, or perk when deciding to apply for or accept a job in the healthcare field?

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Not important	Not at all important
An annual salary increase	61%	32%	6%	1%	0%
Paid-time-off benefits	60%	32%	7%	1%	0%
Paid health insurance	66%	25%	7%	2%	0%
Bonus pay opportunities	49%	38%	11%	2%	0%
Overtime pay opportunities	56%	31%	10%	2%	1%
Retirement matching	51%	36%	10%	2%	1%
Professional development and certifications	44%	43%	12%	1%	0%
Mental and emotional health benefits	48%	37%	12%	2%	1%
Flexible hours/hybrid work schedule	44%	39%	14%	3%	1%
Employee recognition for good performance	45%	37%	14%	3%	1%
Performance-based rewards program	40%	41%	15%	3%	0%
Easy to learn or use the software/EHR technology in place	39%	43%	16%	2%	1%
Tuition reimbursement for current or future education	37%	37%	19%	5%	2%
Signing bonus	34%	37%	23%	6%	1%
Tuition reimbursement for past education	29%	34%	23%	9%	4%
Childcare benefits	29%	29%	26%	8%	8%
Regular social events sponsored by the employer	21%	24%	30%	18%	8%

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Women and the appeal of flexibility

Flexible scheduling is important—especially to women. Our survey data shows that women (45%) are significantly more likely than men (31%) to accept a healthcare job over a job in another industry if they are offered flexible scheduling. This finding indicates that total compensation isn't about pay alone; it's also about offering benefits and flexible schedules that support employees' lives. Organizations that accommodate this reality—and communicate about it—are likely to gain an edge in recruiting talent.

Timely raises and rewarding performance are keys to feeling valued

Another critical finding in our data revolves around pay raise timing: **31% of all participants expect to receive pay increases every six months after starting a new healthcare role, and another 10% expect an increase about every three months. When looking across all expectations for pay increase timing, 96% expect increases annually or even more frequently**.

The study also found that when it comes to feeling valued at work after starting a new healthcare job, **62% of all respondents rank performance-based bonuses or cash rewards as one of their top recognition** preferences. Employees want concrete proof of appreciation, and performance-based rewards communicate clearly that their efforts matter and are recognized.

Total compensation isn't about pay alone; it's also about offering benefits and flexible schedules.

Which of the following types of employee recognition would make you feel most valued after starting a new healthcare job? (Percentage totals of rankings in top three.)

Recognition type	%
Performance bonuses or cash rewards	62%
Getting rewarded with paid time off	48%
Being recognized at a monthly/quarterly meeting	34%
Getting offered more responsibility	33%
Recognition during a daily team meeting or at the beginning or end of a shift	30%
Being able to shadow or learn from a manager or supervisor	25%
Free food or gift cards	23%
Being asked to provide formal feedback to leadership/administration	22%
Mentions on the company's social media page	11%
Receiving money to donate to a charity of your choice	11%

96%
expect increases annually or even more frequently

The takeaway: Keep it simple, keep it competitive

The bottom line here is refreshingly simple: Healthcare workers want transparent, competitive pay that reflects the demanding nature of their roles. Consistent pay increases and straightforward financial recognition for performance remain the most powerful levers for attracting and retaining top healthcare talent.

Healthcare workers want straightforward, reliable financial recognition of their value.

Action Questions:

What are the main components of your organization's compensation structure? What feedback have you received from employees or job applicants? What analysis could you perform to evaluate the costs versus benefits of better aligning your plan to what the workforce is seeking?

How can healthcare organizations get the attention of top talent? According to the national study, **workers are most likely to turn to employer websites (88%), job search websites (88%) and general online searches (83%) when looking for healthcare jobs**. This suggests that maintaining an easily navigable website—and particularly a clear, up-to-date job listings page—is critical to turn job seekers into applicants. But there's even more to unpack about the importance of an online presence.

The impact of employee reviews

Employees care a great deal about what other workers have to say. The study revealed **68% of respondents said reviews on employee rating and review sites are important when deciding to apply for or accept a healthcare job**.

Peeling back additional layers of data reveals a generational difference: **Gen Z and Millennials believe significantly more than Gen X that the presence of reviews on employee rating and review sites is an important job characteristic (Gen Z: 71%, Millennials: 71%, Gen X: 63%)**.

Healthcare job candidates are checking out prospective employers online, so your online reputation isn't something you can afford to overlook. It's crucial to actively monitor, manage, and engage with online reviews.

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Maintaining an easily navigable website is critical to turn job seekers into applicants.
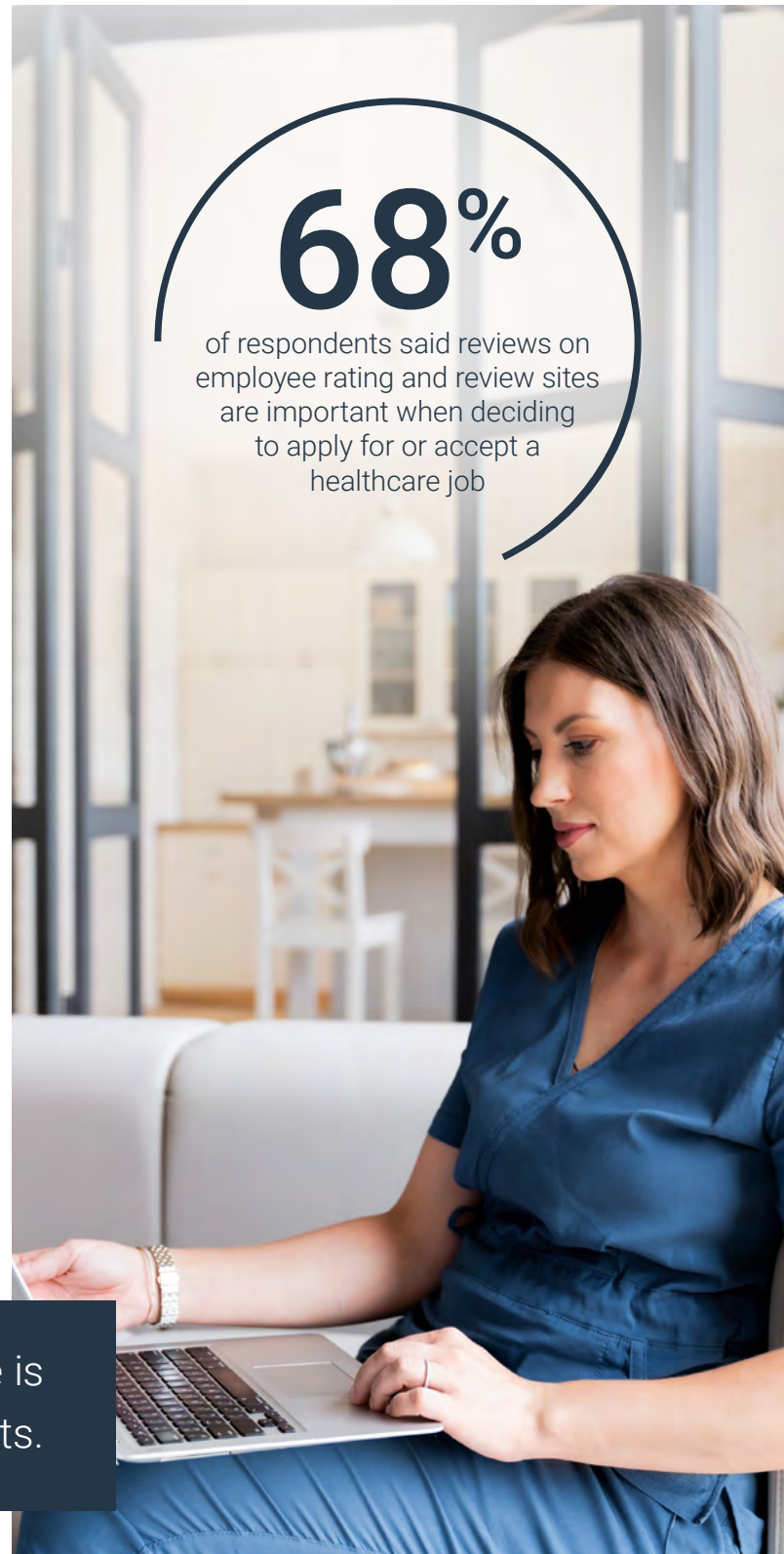
What matters most to candidates

Beyond reviews, when workers are considering applying for or accepting a job, they have specific priorities. **At the top of their list is a positive, healthy company culture (47%)—the most frequently cited top factor when deciding whether to apply for or accept a healthcare job**. This is a major signal to healthcare leaders. Job seekers want an environment where they can thrive personally and professionally. Your website and recruiting messages need to clearly communicate your culture, values, and commitment to employee well-being.

This data highlights a valuable opportunity to audit your online presence to ensure it accurately reflects your workplace culture. If your website feels generic or lacks stories and testimonials from real employees, then it's probably time for a refresh. Authentic storytelling and clear communication of your values can set your organization apart from competitors and attract talent aligned with your culture.

#SocialMediaIsImperative

Let's talk about where Gen Z and Millennials differ from their Gen X counterparts. **Gen Z (64%) and Millennials (66%) are significantly more likely to search for healthcare jobs using social media compared to Gen X (51%)**. This suggests that younger generations are more digitally connected than older generations, more often using platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, and TikTok as key tools in their job search.

Likelihood to search for healthcare jobs using social media

66% Millennials
64% Gen Z
51% Gen X
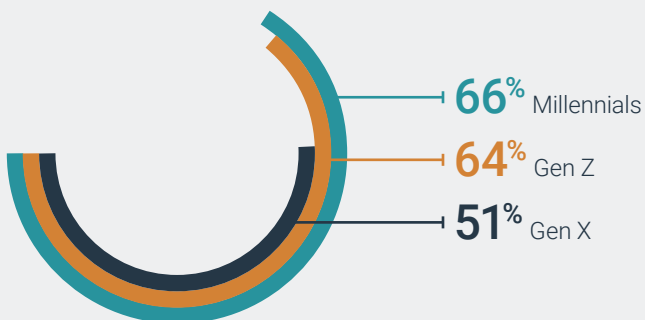
Which healthcare job reputation, workplace culture, and organizational structure are most important when deciding to apply for or accept a job?

A positive, healthy company culture	47%
Employer stability and reputation	39%
Allowing adequate time off (PTO, sick leave, vacation days, etc.)	38%
Allowing a flexible work environment (flexible hours, ability to change shifts, etc.)	34%
Helpful and supportive coworkers	31%
Competent and ethical leadership	31%
A clear path to career advancement	28%
Prioritization of worker safety	18%
Investing in your continuing education or training	16%
Giving back to or partnering with the community	16%

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The takeaway: Get digital

Organizations could benefit from encouraging their current workforce to share genuine and positive experiences online, creating an authentic narrative that prospective employees find appealing. And don't ignore negative reviews either. Responding thoughtfully shows accountability and can turn potential drawbacks into opportunities for transparency and improvement.

Additionally, if your recruitment strategy doesn't prominently feature social media, you're probably missing out on valuable younger talent. Younger workers are digital natives. Social media isn't just where they connect with friends, it's where they explore career opportunities, learn about companies, and form initial impressions. Investing in targeted social media recruiting campaigns can directly boost your visibility among Gen Z and Millennial job seekers.

Action Question:
Take a moment to evaluate your current online recruiting efforts to find out which tactics are working and where you can improve. Are there opportunities for your organization to evaluate and expand your online presence?

If your recruitment strategy doesn't prominently feature social media, you're probably missing out on valuable younger talent

Nearly half (47%) of all study participants rate a positive, healthy company culture as a top factor when deciding whether to apply for or accept a healthcare job. One study participant expressed, "The culture should feel like collaboration, not competition with a smile," while another asserted, "I'm looking for fewer egos and more empathy in the room." While perks like free coffee and being recognized at meetings are nice touches, the core of a truly strong workplace culture is communication.

Feeling heard: The ultimate form of support

An overwhelming **92% of survey respondents said that knowing they have a clear way to share ideas or have their concerns heard would make them feel valued and supported after starting a healthcare job**. People want to know their voice counts. In a high-stakes field like healthcare, where employees regularly manage stressful situations, simply knowing their employer genuinely listens can make all the difference between feeling motivated or feeling overlooked.

Effective communication doesn't happen by accident. Employers need structured, intentional systems to encourage dialogue.

Regular check-ins: Small action, huge impact

The idea of regular, one-on-one check-ins between managers and employees seems rudimentary, but the payoff is immense, as **86% of workers said consistent conversations with their supervisor would make them feel valued and supported**.

These check-ins aren't just performance reviews or task updates; they're genuine conversations about challenges, progress, and even personal goals. This small step, when taken regularly and sincerely, can build lasting trust and loyalty. In fact, in the long run, it could be the best retention strategy you put into practice all year—and it's free to implement.

> The core of a truly strong workplace culture is communication.

92%
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5

The generational nuances of communication

Interestingly, there are notable generational differences when it comes to communication and workplace relationships. For instance, **Gen X (94%) and Millennials (93%) are significantly more likely than Gen Z (85%) to emphasize the importance of having structured ways to share ideas or voice concerns**. This means that your seasoned professionals and mid-career employees crave clearly defined communication channels perhaps even more urgently than your youngest workers.

Would knowing you have a clear way to share your ideas or have your concerns heard by the employer make you feel valued and supported after accepting a new healthcare job?

Gen Z (18–29)	**85**%
Younger Millennials (30–36)	**91**%
Older Millennials (37–45)	**94**%
Gen X (46–59)	**94**%
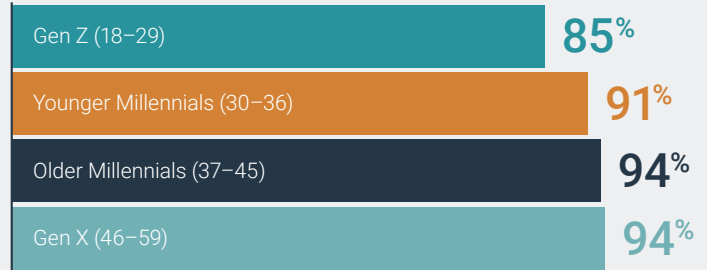
The takeaway: Communicate consistently

You can create an avenue for effective communication with regular employee forums, advisory committees, or digital feedback platforms. Whatever the method, the key is consistency. And remember, it's not enough just to listen; you also must respond and show that employee voices can lead to tangible improvements. That's what builds a culture of communication.

Action Questions:

Does your organization have clear, structured communication channels where every employee knows their voice will be heard and valued? How could you intentionally enhance your internal communication practices or team building initiatives to address generational differences and create a culture of listening?

Workers stepping into new roles need clarity, support, and an immediate sense of belonging. According to our research, the single best way to create that welcoming environment is simple: Let workers shadow someone in their role from day one.
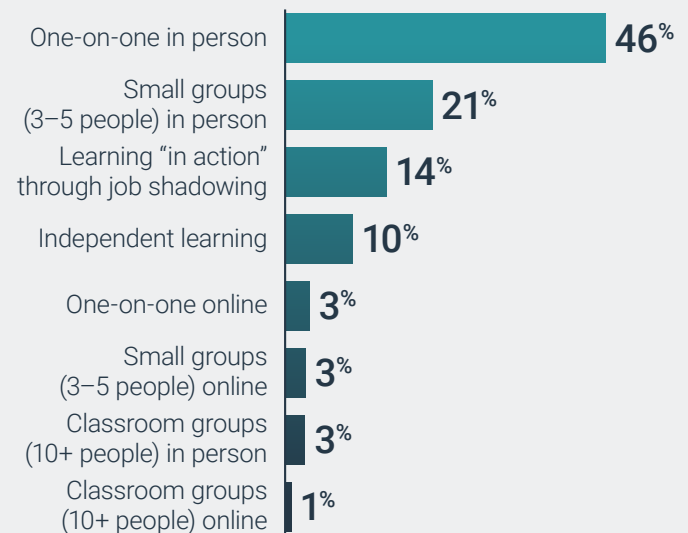
Feeling welcome through job shadowing

According to our data, **48% of participants ranked shadowing someone for the first week or two weeks as one of the top three ways to make them feel welcome during their first 30 days at a new healthcare job**. Healthcare workers seem to prefer learning by doing, observing experienced colleagues in action, and absorbing the subtle details of their role that a manual or orientation session could never fully capture.

The reality is that healthcare roles come with unique pressures and expectations. Workers prefer genuine insights into day-to-day experiences, rather than carefully staged introductions. One study participant's comment summed it up perfectly: "Let me shadow someone who isn't cherry-picked. Give me a glimpse of real culture, not the demo version." Authenticity matters, and new employees crave transparency about the challenges and rewards of the job so they can start strong and avoid surprises.

One-on-one, face-to-face training is preferred

In our increasingly digital world, you may assume one-on-one *online* training would be high on the list of training preferences in healthcare, but that's not what our research discovered. Only 3% of respondents prefer one-on-one online training, while **46% prefer one-on-one, in-person instruction**. Another **21% prefer small group (3-5 people), in-person training**.

How would you most prefer to experience on-the-job training when starting a new healthcare job?

Training type	Percentage
One-on-one in person	46%
Small groups (3–5 people) in person	21%
Learning "in action" through job shadowing	14%
Independent learning	10%
One-on-one online	3%
Small groups (3–5 people) online	3%
Classroom groups (10+ people) in person	3%
Classroom groups (10+ people) online	1%

67%

of participants prefer in-person training of five people or less

Attracting and retaining workers through training

At the intersection of training and skills development, **24% of all workers said on-the-job training is one of the top three factors that would influence them to choose healthcare over another industry**. Digging deeper, **non-healthcare workers (32%) are significantly more likely than healthcare workers or nurses (both 21%) to prioritize on-the-job training when considering healthcare roles**. Non-healthcare workers are also notably more attracted to roles that pay for professional certifications and designations (20% versus around 15% for healthcare workers and nurses).

To expand your talent pool, offer robust on-the-job training and certification programs.

The takeaway: Use training as a recruitment tool

To expand your talent pool, offer robust on-the-job training and certification programs. Training isn't just about compliance; it's a powerful recruitment and retention tool, especially when reaching into a broader, perhaps less experienced, candidate pool.

Action Questions:

Does your organization give new hires the ability to immediately shadow experienced staff and gain authentic insights? How could you incorporate more hands-on, one-on-one training opportunities?

For many healthcare workers, opportunities to grow, learning new skills, and a path for moving forward are what really excite them about starting a new job. The path to career advancement goes beyond promotions or raises; it's about feeling valued, supported, and recognized. And our data highlights a key insight: Healthcare workers want a defined career roadmap.

Career clarity counts, especially for younger millennials

Millennials—especially younger Millennials—crave transparency about career advancement. They want to see how their hard work today translates into opportunities tomorrow. According to the study, **36% of younger Millennials (ages 30–36) say a clear career path is one of their top three most important factors in deciding to apply for or accept a healthcare job. That's significantly higher than older Millennials (28%), Gen Z (25%), and Gen X (24%)**.

It makes sense, doesn't it? Younger Millennials may be in a stage of their careers and life where growth and clarity matter as they look ahead. If they can't envision a future at your organization, they may simply look elsewhere. Healthcare leaders who can clearly define and demonstrate a career path may not only retain younger Millennials, but also career-focused workers across generations who seek a rewarding career.

## The Big C's: Career planning and communication

If clarity is crucial, then communication is critical—as established in the findings analyzed in Insight 5, where **86% of workers said consistent conversations with their supervisor would make them feel valued and supported** (absolutely/somewhat). Furthermore, the study found that **22% of respondents said having career planning discussions with their supervisor once every three months is a top factor that would influence them to stay longer at their current healthcare job**.

Healthcare workers want a defined career roadmap.

Regular check-ins accomplish two powerful things. First, they keep career advancement top-of-mind for employees, ensuring their goals don't become an afterthought. Second, they foster a culture of communication, transparency, and trust. Establishing that type of culture is critical, because as you may recall from Insight 5, **47% of healthcare workers rate a positive, healthy company culture as a top factor when deciding whether to apply for or accept a healthcare job**.

This aligns closely with other findings. Specifically, **92% of younger Millennials and 91% of older Millennials said having a clear pathway to advance their career would make them feel valued and supported (absolutely/somewhat) after accepting a new healthcare job**—significantly higher than Gen X at 86%. If you're not regularly discussing career plans with your team, you might already be falling behind competitors who are.

Would having a clear pathway to advance your career make you feel valued and supported after accepting a new healthcare job? (absolutely/somewhat)

92% younger Millennials

91% older Millennials

86% Gen X

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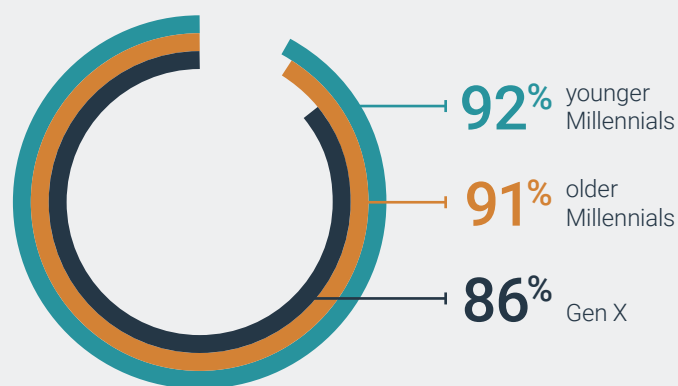
Career development is a viable strategy for long-term retention

Ultimately, investing in clear, structured career paths and regular professional development isn't just good for your employees; it's essential for your organization's future. The numbers speak for themselves: **47% of all participants said having a clear training program for advancement, certification, or promotion would influence them to stay longer at their healthcare job**.

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The takeaway: Provide clear career paths

Workers don't want to guess about their professional future. They want defined steps, actionable feedback, and regular reassurance that their effort and talent matter. When you provide that clarity, you're developing careers while simultaneously building loyalty, motivation, and commitment.

Action Questions:

Do your team members clearly understand their potential career paths within your organization? How frequently do managers meet with employees for structured career conversations, and what steps can you take immediately to improve career transparency and regular career planning discussions?

Nurses, technology, and the future of patient care

Technology is transforming healthcare in many ways, with nurses at the very center of this tech-driven revolution—right on the front line of care. They appreciate tools that help them deliver the best outcomes, improve efficiency, and reduce burnout. And, as our research discovered, they have strong opinions on what technologies matter most, and why.

Nurses want efficiency, ease, and engagement

The data speaks volumes as to which technologies nurses value most. A resounding **90% of healthcare workers and nurses agree care coordination technology (software to identify, track, and manage patients as they move between settings of care) is valuable (very/somewhat), closely followed by electronic health records (EHR) at 89%**. These tools directly impact nurses' daily workflows, ensuring smoother transitions, fewer missed details, and ultimately, better patient outcomes.

Nurses, particularly, show a strong affinity for more advanced, innovative tech solutions. **Nurses are significantly more likely than other healthcare workers to place value (very/somewhat) on technologies like remote patient monitoring (RPM) (84% for nurses versus 79% for healthcare workers) and AI**

(69% for nurses versus 58% for healthcare workers). RPM gives nurses critical visibility and continuous patient oversight, even from far away. Meanwhile, AI presents opportunities to streamline routine tasks and significantly reduce manual documentation.

> AI presents opportunities to streamline routine tasks and significantly reduce manual documentation.

How valuable are each type of healthcare technologies when it comes to the quality and efficiency of your current healthcare job?

	Very valuable	Somewhat valuable	Neutral	Not very valuable	Not at all valuable	NA – I don't know
Care coordination	62%	28%	7%	1%	2%	1%
Electronic Health Records (EHR)	63%	26%	9%	1%	1%	0%
Patient risk assessment	55%	33%	9%	1%	1%	1%
Clinical decision support	48%	39%	11%	1%	1%	2%
Referral and intake management	52%	34%	11%	1%	1%	1%
Discharge planning	52%	34%	11%	1%	1%	2%
Telehealth	49%	35%	12%	2%	1%	1%
Remote patient monitoring	47%	35%	13%	2%	1%	1%
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	29%	34%	24%	7%	3%	3%

Nurses also strongly emphasize ease of use. They want technology that's intuitive, reliable, and easy to learn. In fact, **nurses are significantly more likely than non-healthcare workers (84% nurses versus 78% non-healthcare workers) to prioritize easy-to-learn software or EHR technology when deciding to apply for or accept a job in healthcare**. Simply put, if the technology is too cumbersome or complicated, nurses won't embrace it, no matter how impressive the capabilities.

Technology as a recruitment tool

The technology your organization uses doesn't just impact retention, it also influences recruitment. Nurses pay close attention to the technology a prospective employer uses, and **77% of nurses (compared to 71% of other healthcare workers) say software technology they like or are familiar with is an important factor when deciding whether to apply for or accept a healthcare job**.

This presents an important takeaway: If your organization invests in great technology, make sure it's prominently featured on your website, job postings, and employee review sites. The more nurses see technology they value and understand, the more attractive your organization becomes.

The technology your organization uses doesn't just impact retention, it also influences recruitment.

84%

of nurses prioritize easy-to-learn software or EHR technology when deciding to apply for or accept a job in healthcare

Addressing AI fears

Like so many other industries, AI is a complicated topic in healthcare. On one hand, AI presents incredible opportunities, with **55% of all survey participants believing AI can help reduce healthcare worker burnout**. That's a promising number, especially considering how prevalent burnout and staffing shortages are today. One respondent warned that understaffing is not just a challenge, but a "setup for burnout." Could AI be part of the solution?

AI can handle repetitive tasks, support documentation, and provide valuable insights, allowing nurses to transform data into decisions and focus more fully on patient care. Yet despite these benefits, **almost half of the survey respondents (49%) said they worry that AI could replace some healthcare jobs**, shrinking employment opportunities. The key to counteracting this fear is thoughtful messaging and clear communication. Organizations should proactively educate nurses on the true role of AI: a support system, not a replacement. It can offer them more space to use their judgment, empathy, and expertise.

The takeaway: Get hands-on with AI

Clear education and hands-on AI demonstrations can ease fears, build trust, and encourage faster, more enthusiastic adoption of beneficial technologies.

Action Questions:

Have you asked your nursing staff about their technology experiences, needs, and preferences? Would implementing a survey about technology and evaluating the results help you align your strategy with your team's needs?

Why do some employees quit so soon?

The national survey revealed a key retention discovery: Healthcare professionals have very little patience for unsupportive or micromanaged work environments. Let's break it down.

Conflicts, communication, and micromanagement harm retention

The data revealed that communication and management styles deeply influence retention. After three months at a new job, **participants said conflicts with managers (14%) and micromanagement (13%) would absolutely convince them to leave**.

Gen X workers especially have little patience for micromanagers, with 16% citing micromanagement as a reason to leave compared to 13% of Millennials and only 10% of Gen Z. Micromanagement is more than just a detrimental leadership style. It actively pushes talent away.

Equipment and scheduling, the missing pieces

There are practical matters that also impact retention. For example, **Gen X workers (14%) and Millennials (12%) are significantly more likely than Gen Z (7%) to quickly leave a job if they don't have the necessary equipment or devices to do their job right**. Seasoned professionals expect their workplaces to provide essential tools. Not meeting these basic expectations quickly erodes goodwill.

For nurses, scheduling flexibility is critical. Nurses are significantly more likely than other healthcare workers to leave a job after the first three months if they lack control over their daily schedule or shift hours (12% of nurses vs. 6% of other healthcare workers). Denying them scheduling control could be the factor that tips the scale toward resignation.

For nurses, scheduling flexibility is critical.

Which of the following would absolutely convince you to leave a healthcare job after the first three months?

Response	%
Workplace safety concerns	15%
Conflict with your manager or supervisor	14%
Being micromanaged	13%
Not having the equipment or devices you need to do your job right	11%
Constantly changing job expectations	10%
Lack of control over your daily schedule or shift hours	9%
Poorly defined orientation, onboarding, or training process	9%
Conflict with coworkers	8%
Employer has negative reputation or media coverage	5%
None of these	3%
Frustrations with software (EHR, charting, documentation, etc.)	3%
Other	1%

Micromanagement actively pushes talent away.

The takeaway: Communicate promptly and resolve issues

Here's the good news: Many of these frustrations can be mitigated by incorporating previous takeaways on intentional, proactive communication—and taking action to resolve issues quickly as employees raise them. Ensuring your team has the right tools and support, taking their feedback seriously if they feel otherwise, and offering timely communication about resolutions can go a long way in bolstering retention.

Action Questions:

What options does your organization offer for employees to raise concerns about equipment and support, and what options could be added to make the process easier? What are some specific ways you can assess the status quo and more effectively meet the fundamental needs of your employees?

With the constant churn of patient demands, emotional fatigue, and staffing shortages, burnout is an unfortunate reality among nurses and healthcare workers. But what exactly drives burnout, and what motivates healthcare professionals to take on more patient care without burning out? The data answers these questions, and more.

What energizes healthcare workers?

Healthcare professionals have no illusions about what keeps them energized and engaged. According to our study, **nearly half (46%) of healthcare workers and nurses ranked financial compensation among the top three things that would motivate them to take on more patient care without getting burned out**. This shouldn't surprise anyone. Healthcare work is demanding, and compensation is one major way to signal appreciation and respect.

Adequate time off (37%) and support from managers and leadership (37%) closely follow financial compensation. These motivators aren't just perks, they're about giving employees the space and the backing to handle an emotionally demanding job. Other high-ranking motivators, like flexible scheduling (36%) and more assistance from coworkers (32%), further prove this point.

Which of the following would most motivate you to take on more patient care at your current healthcare job without getting burned out?

Financial compensation (salary increases, overtime, bonuses, etc.)	46%
Adequate time off	37%
Support from managers and leadership	37%
Flexible scheduling	36%
More assistance from coworkers	32%
Healthier work culture	30%

The staffing shortage crisis

Staffing shortages loom large, significantly undermining healthcare workers' ability to deliver their best care. A striking **44% of healthcare workers and nurses named staffing shortages as one of the top barriers preventing them from performing at their highest level**. It's a numbers game: Fewer workers mean heavier workloads, less time with patients, more stress, and subsequent burnout.

Interestingly, those with the most tenure feel this most acutely. **Providers who have worked at their current healthcare job for 11 or more years (56%) are significantly more likely to identify staffing shortages as one of the top barriers** compared to those who've been on the job for seven or fewer years. If seasoned workers feel increasingly overwhelmed, healthcare systems risk losing invaluable institutional knowledge just when they need it most.

> If seasoned workers feel increasingly overwhelmed, healthcare systems risk losing invaluable institutional knowledge.

A generational perspective on stress

Burnout combines both physical and emotional stress, and younger workers especially feel the emotional toll. In fact, the national study found that **Gen Z (47%) and younger Millennials (42%) were significantly more likely than older Millennials (29%) or Gen X (29%) to name emotional stress as a primary barrier** preventing them from doing their best work. This insight speaks to the importance of mental health support for healthcare workers of all ages and experience levels.

> Younger generations are significantly more likely than older generations to name emotional stress as a barrier to doing their best work.

AI an ally in the fight against burnout?

Interestingly, the study found a promising bright spot around technology. As mentioned in Insight 8, a majority **(55%) of participants believe AI could help reduce burnout among healthcare workers**. It's a hopeful and intriguing possibility. Conversely, **49% said they worry that AI could replace some healthcare jobs**. These conflicting perspectives illustrate the importance of introducing AI effectively through careful communication. Workers must see AI as a helpful partner, not a threat.

Investment in education and public policy

Finally, there's broad agreement among healthcare workers about the importance of investments in the healthcare workforce. A significant **80% of study participants support making college education free for individuals who commit to healthcare roles facing severe shortages**. Additionally, a resounding majority (92%) believes the government should make support for healthcare jobs and caregivers a national priority. Workers believe solving burnout goes beyond employer action and requires public policy support and larger-scale investment in education and workforce development.

Respondents had conflicting perspectives around AI.

55% believe AI could help reduce burnout among healthcare workers

49% worry that AI could replace some healthcare jobs
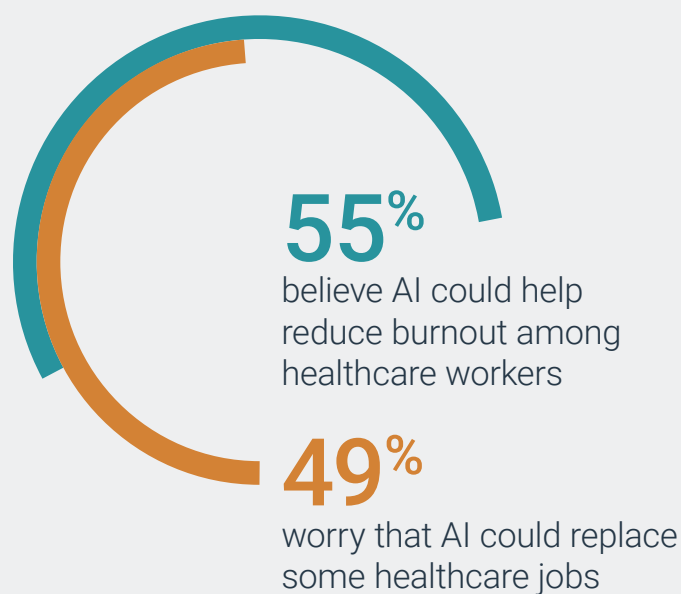
The takeaway:
Tackle burnout head-on

To move the needle on burnout and retention, start with competitive, transparent pay and regular salary increases. Tackle burnout head-on by ensuring adequate time off and support from management. Invest in professional growth; training and upskilling keep your team engaged and ready for the future. Finally, be intentional about applying the takeaways from Insight 4—they'll help you recruit the best talent possible and combat staffing shortages that contribute to burnout.

Action Questions:

Are you addressing burnout in a way that aligns with what healthcare workers themselves say they need? Do your strategies clearly communicate appreciation through competitive compensation, flexible scheduling, emotional support, and thoughtful technology integration?

Research study conclusion and actions to take now

The healthcare workforce is at a crossroads. On one side, we have enthusiastic, passionate professionals who are proud to care for others. On the other, they face intense pressures, burnout, staffing shortages, and unmet expectations around compensation, training, and career advancement. Healthcare leaders have an opportunity to act on what workers have communicated they need. This study offers valuable insights into the values, concerns, and desires of today's healthcare workforce—helping leaders recruit effectively, retain top talent, and strengthen employee engagement.

Here are some ways you can take advantage of the insights in this study:

For recruiting:

- Clearly communicate your positive company culture online and in job postings.
- Offer transparent, competitive salary information early.
- Highlight compensation-based benefits like regular salary increases.

For retention:

- Schedule regular one-on-one manager check-ins with clear employee feedback channels.
- Create transparent career advancement paths and predictable pay increases.

For engagement:

- Implement structured job shadowing and mentorship programs.
- Carefully evaluate technology, including those with secure applications of AI, to streamline processes, manage workloads, and improve care.
- Prioritize employee safety, support, and well-being through targeted programs.

Next steps:

Access our webinar to dive deeper into these actionable insights.

Explore more resources at wellsky.com/resources.

Talk to a WellSky expert today to tailor solutions specifically for your organization.
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The future of healthcare depends on your people. By putting these insights into action, your organization can build a stronger workforce that's prepared, motivated, and committed to making a lasting difference.

About the study's authors

WellSky is one of America's largest and most innovative healthcare technology companies leading the movement for intelligent, coordinated care. Our proven software, analytics, and services power better outcomes and lower costs for stakeholders across the health and community care continuum. In today's value-based care environment, WellSky helps providers, payers, health systems, and community organizations scale processes, improve collaboration for growth, harness the power of data analytics, and achieve better outcomes by further connecting clinical and social care.

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National research study methodology

The research study included a total of 1,200 U.S. participants ages 18 to 59 in three complementary study participant groups. The first participant group included 400 participants weighted to the 2020 U.S. Census for age, gender, region, and ethnicity who were currently employed, but not employed in healthcare. The second participant group included 400 current U.S. healthcare workers ages 18 to 59 weighted to the current U.S. healthcare workforce demographics for age, region, gender, and ethnicity. The third participant group included 400 current U.S. nurses ages 18 to 59 weighted to the current U.S. nursing demographics for age, region, and gender. The margin of error for the overall study is +/-2.83%. The research study was conducted online from March 3, 2025, to March 21, 2025.

1,200
U.S. participants ages 18 to 59

- Gen Z (ages 18–29)
- Younger Millennials (ages 30–36)
- Older Millennials (ages 37–45)
- Gen X (ages 46–59)

22% · 18% · 26% · 34%