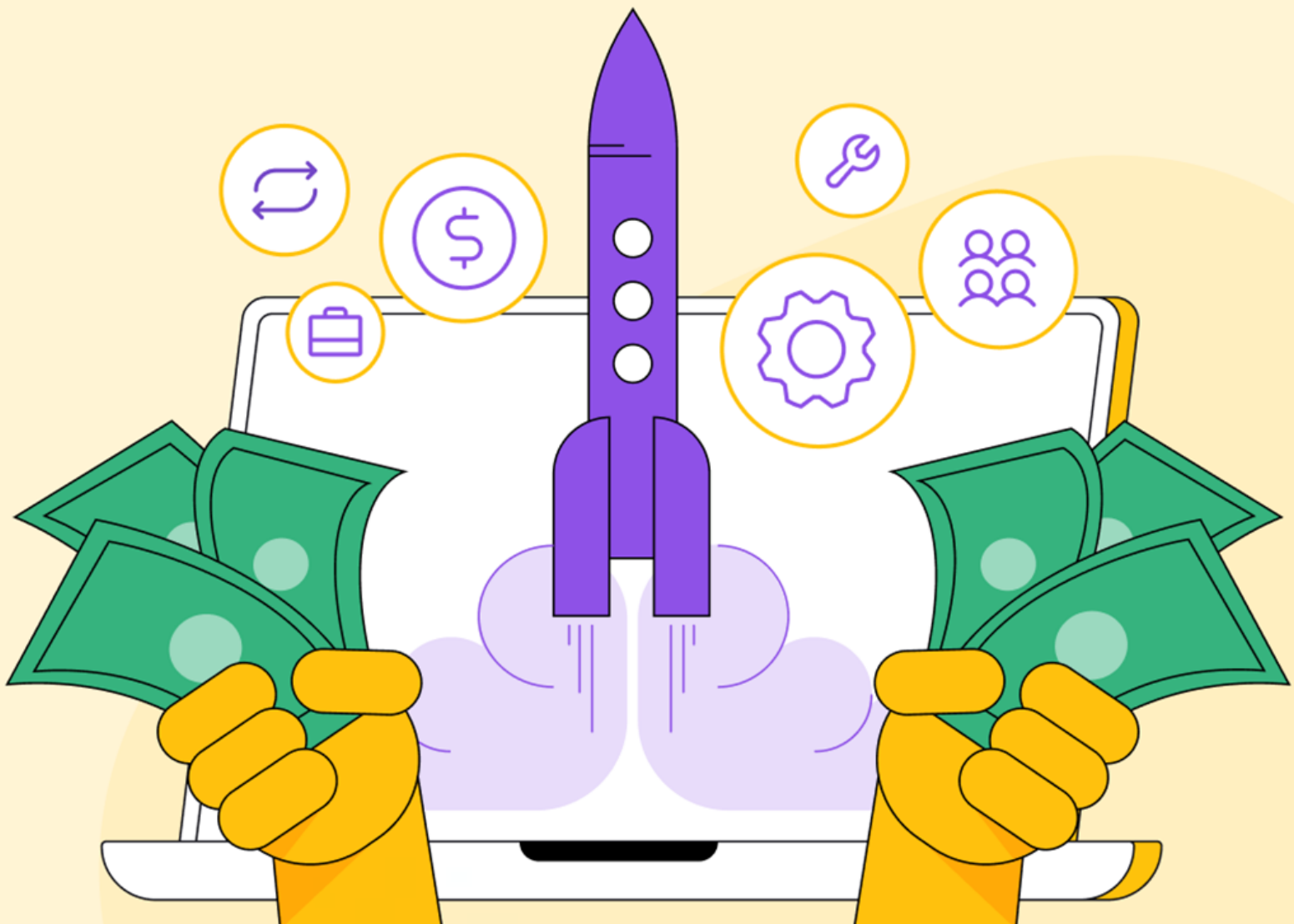# From The Great Resignation to The Great Rethink:

Here's How L&D Teams Can Reshape Our Relationship With Work in the US

About

360Learning

👉 **360Learning** enables companies to upskill from within by turning their experts into champions for employee, customer, and partner growth. With our LMS for collaborative learning, Learning & Development teams can accelerate upskilling with the help of internal experts instead of slow top-down training. 360Learning is the easiest way to onboard and upskill employees, train customer-facing teams, and enable customers and partners–all from one place.

360Learning powers the future of work at 1,700 organizations. Founded in 2013, 360Learning has raised $200 million with 300+ team members across New York, Paris, and London.

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"

You have to run your company as if every employee has one foot out the door. It's time to ramp up your Employee Experience program, focus managers on listening and supporting people, and seriously invest in career pathways and internal growth for your staff.

- [Josh Bersin](#)

By now, most of us are well aware of the tidal wave of resignations that hit the US (and the world) this past year. Anthony Klotz, an organizational psychologist at Texas A&M University, predicted this "Great Resignation"—and the US Bureau of Labor Statistics bore his theory out when they reported a record-breaking four million quits in April 2021.

And those numbers just kept going up:

The Great Resignation

Number of people quitting their jobs in the United States, seasonally adjusted

■ Recession

Sep 2021
4.43m
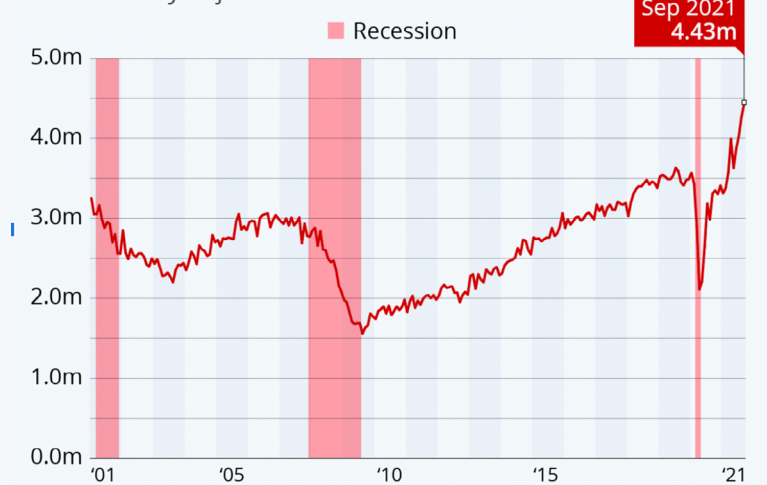
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

statista

But we think there's more to the story. So, we surveyed 1,058 American employees to understand if this ongoing Great Resignation is just a phenomenon about people quitting their jobs in a huff, fed up with demanding and sometimes even dangerous work—or something bigger.

We dug into urgent questions, such as: How does skill development and internal mobility affect quit rates? Is burnout affecting managers more than individual contributors? How do employees really feel about remote vs. in-person work? Are women experiencing the Great Resignation differently than men? Are baby boomers ready to throw in the towel?

For each challenge we explore, we offer concrete advice for how L&D teams can tackle it, based on our countless interviews with L&D leaders, as well as our own clients' experiences.

How are you supporting yourself financially/do you plan to support yourself financially after quitting your job?

My Partner	20.63%
Savings	49.90%
Family	16.31%
Other	13.16%

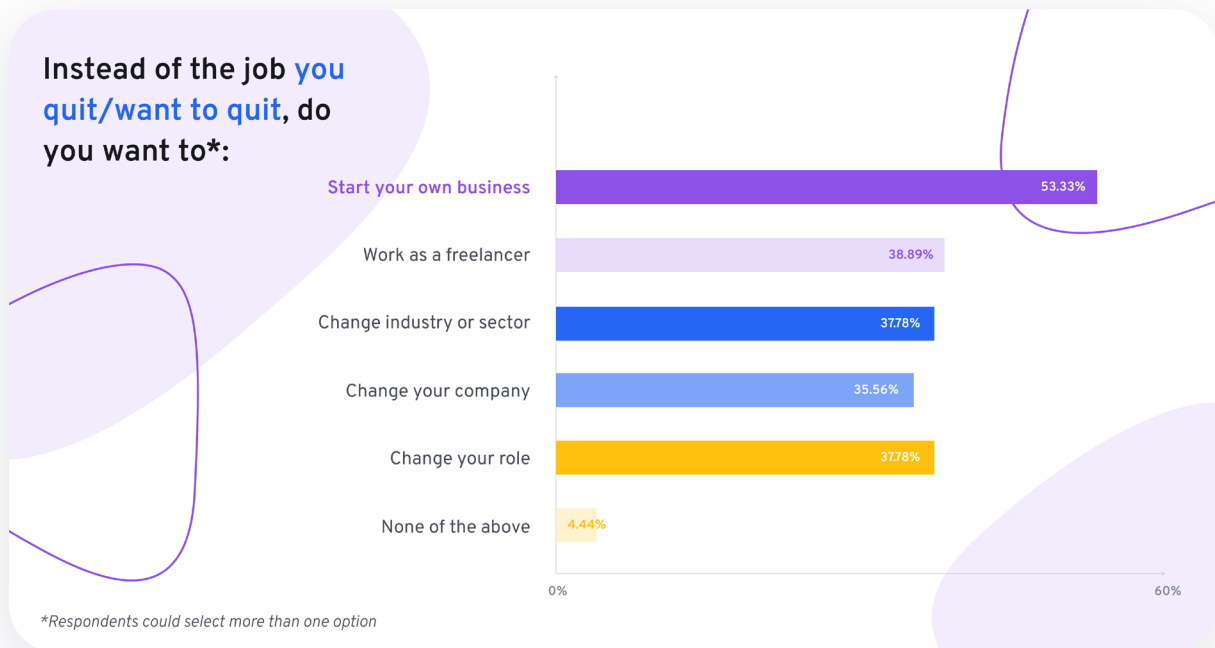0%   50%
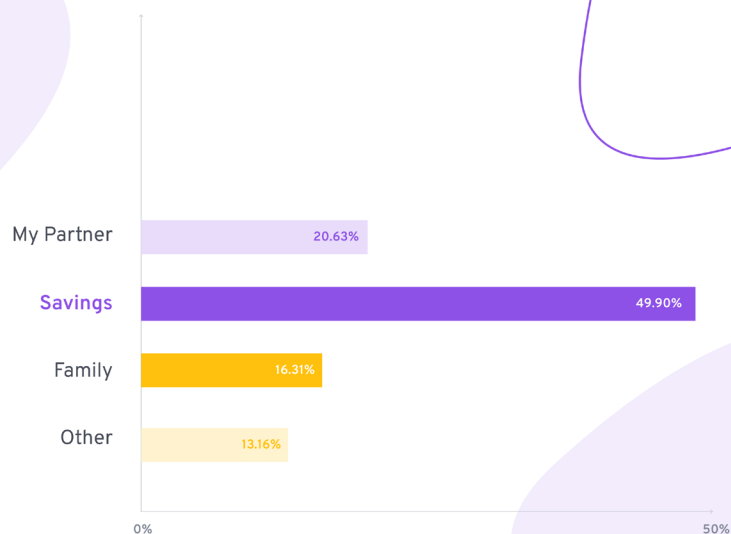
We surveyed 1,058 employees about their feelings towards their jobs, including half that had either quit already or want to quit now. Most are relying on savings to tide them over until their next project—but is that really sustainable?

Introduction

From "The Great Resignation" to "The Great Rethink"

Many pundits seem to agree that yes, the Great Resignation does point to something bigger. For a start, excepting baby boomers who are deciding to retire (perhaps earlier than they had planned), most people are quitting in search of a new job—they don't plan on being unemployed forever. The flip side of the Great Resignation is the Great Rehiring (or Migration, or Reshuffle…).

Instead of the job you quit/want to quit, do you want to*:

Start your own business	53.33%
Work as a freelancer	38.89%
Change industry or sector	37.78%
Change your company	35.56%
Change your role	37.78%
None of the above	4.44%

0% — 60%

*Respondents could select more than one option

Most people who quit (or want to) want to strike out on their own as a business owner or freelancer, though over a third would also like to change roles, companies, or industries.

We also shouldn't treat all employees as a monolith; for instance, data suggests it's workers in traditionally low-paid (and in-person) industries like leisure and hospitality that are driving the high resignation numbers. In contrast, white-collar workers—even though they complain of burnout—don't seem to be leaving at the same rate.

But perhaps the most interesting question to dig into is why—why are so many employees leaving jobs they no longer find suitable? Is it just a question of paychecks and pandemic worries, or are we undergoing a more fundamental shift in what we expect from our careers? As [Anthony Klotz himself framed it](#), are more people looking, "to fit work into their lives, instead of having lives that squeeze into their work"? And, if so, what does all this mean for employers?

We think—as Anthony Klotz, Josh Bersin, and others do—that employees are fundamentally rethinking what they want their professional lives to look like. Now, it's up to employers to make the next move; do they have the motivation and resources to turn their workplaces into the kind of environment post-pandemic employees want to be in? Or will they take the short-term approach of accepting sky-high churn rates and rely on recruiting (and poaching) aggressively?

> **"**
>
> We think—as Anthony Klotz, Josh Bersin, and others do—that employees are fundamentally rethinking what they want their professional lives to look like.

L&D: Employers' most undervalued asset

When employee experience is proving to be a critical component of employee retention, Learning and Development teams are foundational. As the people supporting employees in their career aspirations, surmounting work-related challenges, and training them for their next big step, L&D leaders are at the very heart of employee experience.

As we'll see in the chapters below, much of employees' satisfaction and dissatisfaction—whether they're 'quitters' or not—stems from whether L&D programs were functioning to their fullest potential.

For instance, one of the biggest reasons for quitting (or wanting to), right after 'low salary' and burnout/workplace stress, was because respondents' jobs didn't feel meaningful.

Yet less than half of those respondents asked about internal mobility—and only 50% are absolutely confident they have the skills to pursue the career they really want.

This begs the question: Are L&D leaders able to create environments where employees are able to declare their learning needs, in which they have clear paths to professional development, and where burnout and workplace stress don't add to attrition rates?

> "
> This begs the question: Are L&D leaders able to create environments where employees are able to declare their learning needs, in which they have clear paths to professional development, and where burnout and workplace stress don't add to attrition rates?

Do you feel you have all the necessary skills and experience to start a new job in an area that feels more fulfilling to you?

- Somewhat — 47.78%
- Not at all — 2.22%
- Absolutely — 50%
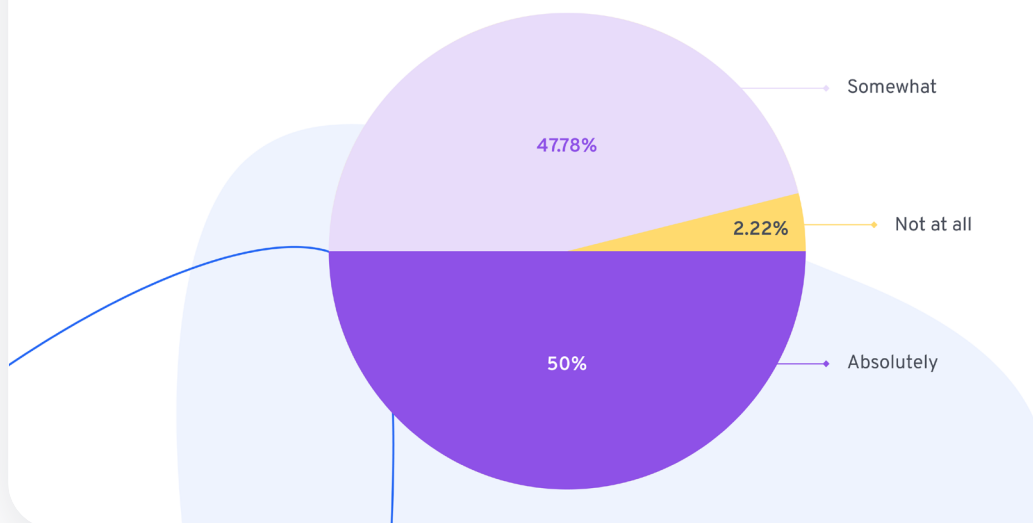
Although 18% of our respondents who recently quit their jobs (or who want to) did so because their job didn't feel meaningful, only half are completely sure they can dive into the career they really want. This suggests people aren't content to wait for the perfect opportunity–instead, they're willing to risk a little uncertainty.

Onboarding, manager and leadership training, remote-friendly learning, professional development opportunities…all of these issues and more are significantly affecting workers during this new, "Great Rethinking" of our relationship with work. Right now, L&D teams, hand in hand with their HR colleagues and leadership teams, are the ones that can improve that relationship, for the benefit of employees and employers alike.

People demand fulfilling work, but not all employers are able to provide it

Of the 1,058 Americans we surveyed, roughly half of them had either quit their job in the last nine months, or were considering doing so. We wanted to dig into what's motivating people to say 'goodbye' to their jobs, and how L&D teams can help employers create environments that inspire employee loyalty.

Finding fulfilling work

Contrary to some recent headlines, our respondents indicated that work was still an important piece of their identity, and even that work became more important to them during the pandemic.

My job is a big part of my self-identity

The pandemic changed my perspective about work:

Yes, work become less important to me
24.48%

Yes, work become more important to me
50.57%

No, the pandemic didn't change my perspective about work
24.10%

Other
0.85%
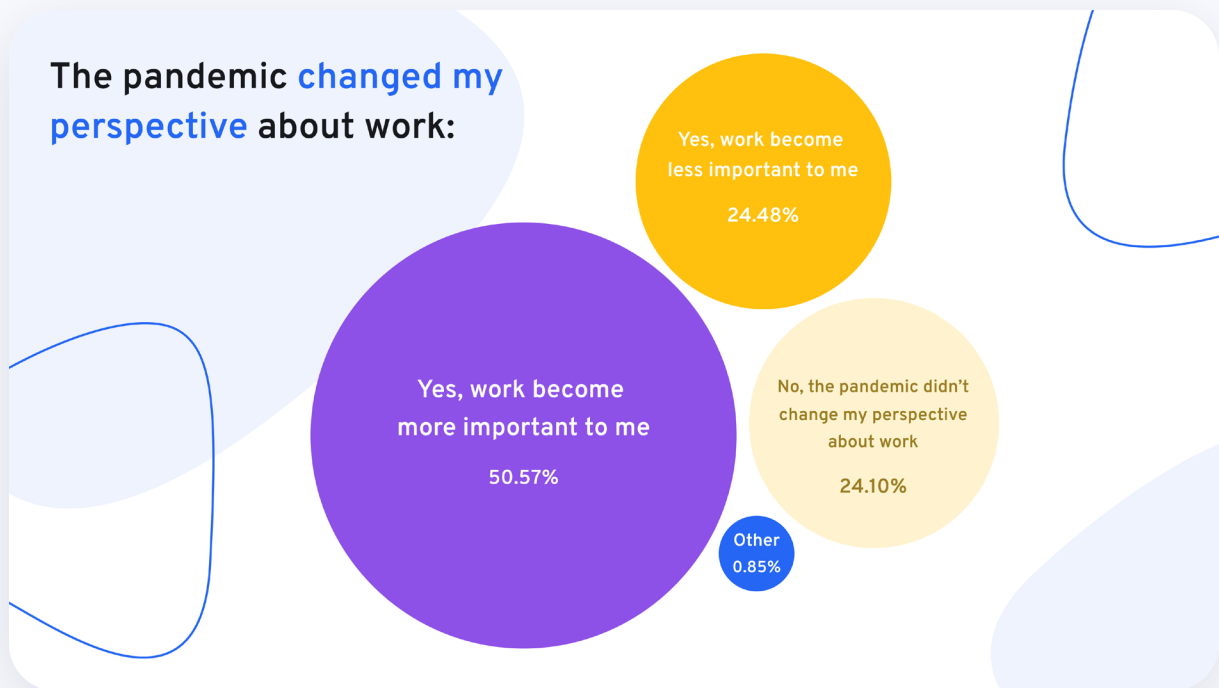
But, to understand the motivations driving the Great Resignation, we specifically sought out respondents (509) that had recently quit their job, or were thinking about it. For them, the third most cited reason was that their work was unfulfilling or not meaningful—the first two were about salary and burnout, respectively:

**What is the main reason you quit your job/
are thinking of quitting your job ?**

Reason	%
I realized my job wasn't in line with what really matters to me/I didn't feel fulfilled at work	17.68%
Burnout/my job was too stressful	18.07%
I wanted to keep working remotely, but my employer wouldn't let me	13.75%
No obvious short- to mid-term prospects for progression	3.54%
I wasn't aligned with the company culture/values	8.06%
I wasn't learning or growing anymore	6.88%
My salary was too low	22.4%
Other	9.63%
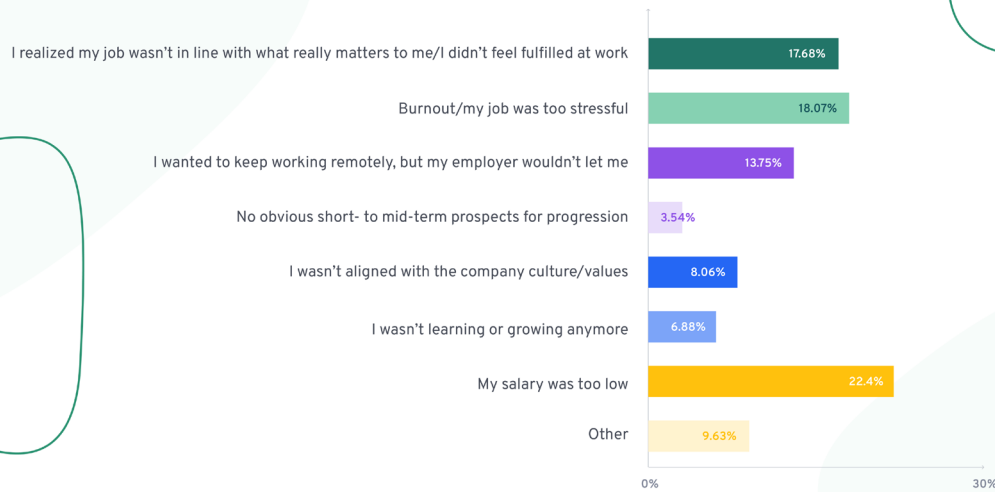
This suggests that it's not that people want to work less—on the contrary, work matters to them a great deal. But what they do want—even to the point of quitting—is work that aligns with who they are and what they value.

> **"**
> But what they do want—even to the point of quitting—is work that aligns with who they are and what they value.

Internal mobility

But just because someone isn't happy in their current position, doesn't necessarily mean leaving their employer is their only option. Internal mobility is one way to help someone find the right fit without having to say goodbye. Yet, this didn't seem to be a viable solution for our respondents; not only was this not an option for 46% of our respondents who left their jobs (or want to), nearly a third (27%) didn't even bother asking.

Only 23% said they wouldn't have wanted to stay even with internal mobility. That might be because about half of all our 1,058 respondents thought that being promoted was the only way to achieve new skills.

"

About half of all our 1,058 respondents thought that being promoted was the only way to achieve new skills.

Did you ask your employer about internal mobility or career development options that aligned with your goals?

No, I didn't think my employer would give me what I wanted

26.52%

Yes I asked, but there were no options for me

45.97%

No, internal mobility wouldn't have made me want to stay

23.18%

Other
4.32%

Skill development

But how confident are people that they can dive into their next, more fulfilling adventure? Half think they "absolutely" have the skills they need, but 48% are only "somewhat" sure— and 2% are convinced they absolutely don't. This split stayed roughly the same, whether people wanted their next career move to be to start their own business, go freelance, or to change roles, companies, or sectors.

Do you feel you have all the necessary skills and experience to start a new job in an area that feels more fulfilling to you?

Somewhat 47.78%

Not at all 2.22%

Absolutely 50%
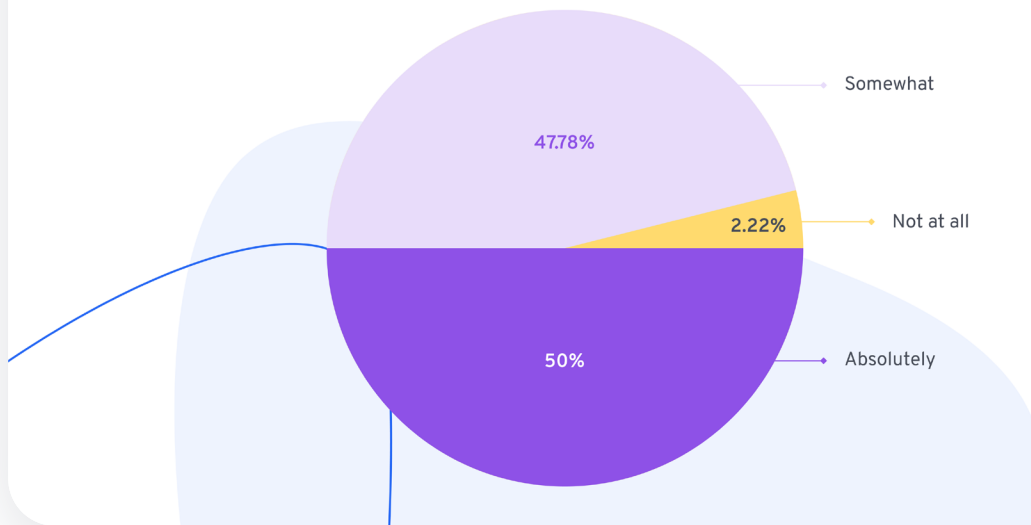
Of those that had doubts, it was self-directed learning, followed by a strong training and development program from their new employers, that respondents said would help. Going back to school was the least appealing option, highlighting the importance of learning on the job, in the flow of work, or at the very least, learning that can co-exist with employment.

"

Going back to school was the least appealing option, highlighting the importance of learning on the job.

What would help you feel you had the skills to confidently pursue this new job?

Shadowing someone who does this job — 42.22%

If my new employer had strong career development training — 48.89%

If I could go back to school — 22.22%

If I could learn the necessary skills myself (online courses, books...) — 55.56%

If my new employer had a mentorship program — 44.44%

Being involved in projects or assignements outside of my day-to-day role — 28.89%

Participating in secondment to another team — 26.67%

None of the above — 2.22%

0%   60%

How L&D teams can help

Work is still an important part of people's identities, and employees want to feel fulfilled on the job—to the point of moving on to a new employer—and internal mobility or professional development isn't doing as much as it can to retain them.

As more and more people decide that work should be more than a "necessary evil" (as Mark Twain put it), employers can either let them leave and double down on recruitment at the expense of retention, or they can focus on building employee experiences that include growth opportunities, especially through self-directed learning.

They can also entice job-hopping employees who feel they have more agency than ever to reach outside their comfort zone with a strong training program. This creates a win-win situation: Happy, loyal employees and employers able to keep up with attrition rates. In this age of 'squiggly' careers, this flexibility will fast become the norm.

And now more than ever, we need better alternatives to this slow, prescriptive, and unengaging form of learning. That's because we're facing a crisis in learning.

L&D teams should:

→   Make sure career pathways are clearly defined for all employees, and that support systems are in place to help them achieve new milestones. You can read about how we set up career paths for our engineering team at 360Learning, here.

→   Even for those who aren't going to make an internal move right now, embrace the Learning Organization approach and continuous learning, where promotion isn't the only way for employees to acquire new skills. You can see how the content marketing agency Animalz embraced skills development, internal mobility, and continuous learning for improved business outcomes, here.

→ Set up training programs for motivated new hires that may not have as much experience as you're used to, but who are ready to get up to speed through self-directed learning. Use your professional development training programs as key points in employer branding and during recruitment.

→ Validate the experiences of all employees through a collaborative learning approach, where, through sharing skills and institutional knowledge, (job crafting) a wider range of employees might feel more fulfilled on the job.

→ Provide opportunities for growth and development outside the traditional bounds of the L&D team through mentorship or coaching. We recently sat down with Shaun Krietemeyer, Director of Learning and Development at Opendoor, about how he creates lean and impactful learning through peer mentoring. You can read the full interview on how they put peer mentoring to work, here.

Additional resources:

1. How Qualtrics Built a Competency Diagnostic Tool to Focus on the Right Development Priorities

2. 3 Great Ways Cisco Empowers Employees To Navigate Career Opportunities

3. How Gong Built a Performance Management Approach to Attract, Motivate, and Reward Ambitious People

4. How Harry's Decentralize L&D with Self-Directed and collaborative learning

Challenge 2

Burnout is still a major concern—and neither managers nor direct reports are getting the support they need

Of the 509 employees we surveyed who said they had recently quit or were thinking about quitting their jobs, "burnout / my job was too stressful" was tied in second place for the most important reason why they felt this way. (The other second-place reason was "I realized my job wasn't in line with what really matters to me / I didn't feel fulfilled at work". The first reason was low salary).

Who's at risk

So, who's most at risk for burning out? Gender seems to play a role, since well over half (72%) of those who quit from burnout or stress—or would like to—were women. Whether someone was a manager or not didn't seem to have a great effect—the split between those who were managers and those who weren't was about fifty-fifty (48% vs 52%).

"

Well over half (72%) of those who quit from burnout or stress—or would like to—were women.

Were you in a management position?

YES 47.83% 👍

NO 52.17% 👎

0%   50%
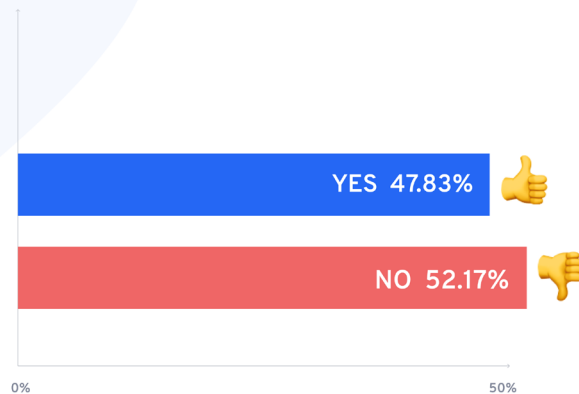
Manager training

Of those that were managers, however, most agreed they didn't get optimal support: while just under half (48%) were happy with the amount of training they received, a full 30% said they didn't receive adequate manager training and support, and 23% said they 'somewhat' did. Tellingly, most (75%) of them agreed additional training and support could have helped them manage workplace stress better.

Did you feel you received adequate manager training and support?

Yes 47.73% 🙂

No 29.55% 🙁

Somewhat 22.73% 😐

0%   50%
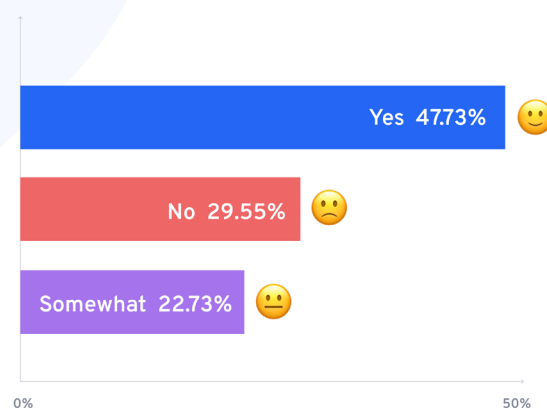
Did you feel additional training and support could have helped you manage workplace stress better?

No
22.73%
2.27%   Somewhat
75%
Yes
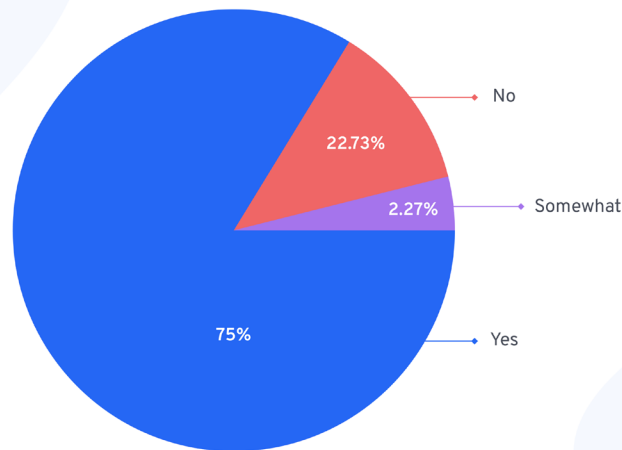
For all respondents who quit or want to quit because of burnout or stress, most rated the relationship they had with their manager as just 'ok' (35%), and a sad few (22%) rated it as either 'poor' or 'terrible'.

It wasn't all doom and gloom, however—44% of respondents indicated they had a 'good' (22%) or even 'great' (22%) relationship with their superior. This just goes to show that even a good relationship with one's manager isn't enough to stave off attrition rates if stress levels get out of hand.

"

Even a good relationship with one's manager isn't enough to stave off attrition rates if stress levels get out of hand.

Adequate onboarding

Most of those who quit or want to quit because of stress or burnout also said they were only 'somewhat satisfied' with their last onboarding experience (37%). This is a lower satisfaction rate than for those quitting for other reasons—suggesting subpar onboarding might be a contributing factor to increased work-related stress. They were also more likely to say work became less important to them during the pandemic.

For those suffering from burnout and who weren't happy with their onboarding, most (50%) said it was because training wasn't specific enough to their job function.

Think about the last time you started a new job. How satisfied were you with the onboarding (new hire orientation) process to help you settle into your new organization and help you to understand how to get things done?

■ Those who quit or want to quit from burnout or job stress
■ Those who quit or want to quit for reasons other than burnout or job stress

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very unsatisfied
Burnout/job stress	30.43%	36.96%	19.57%	9.78%	3.26%
Other reasons	36.45%	34.53%	17.75%	8.63%	2.64%
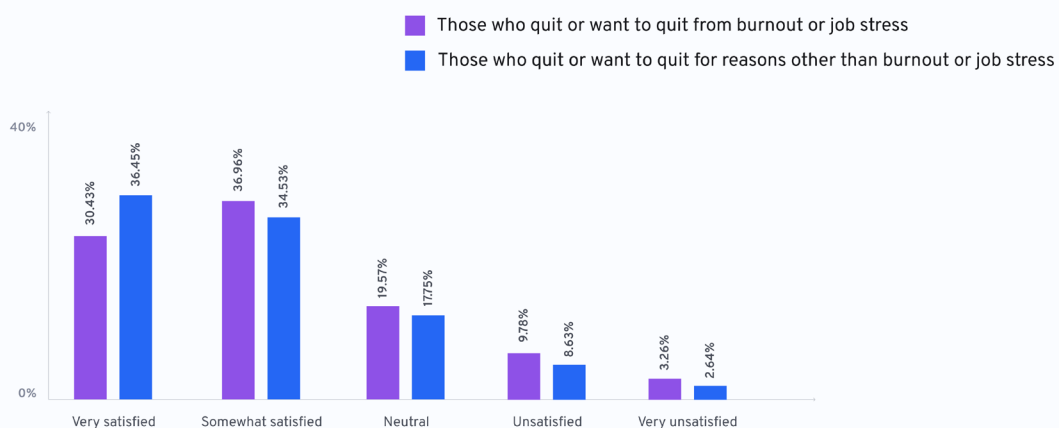
Those who want to quit their jobs because of stress were less satisfied overall with their onboarding experience.

What could have been improved about your onboarding process?

Respondents could choose more than one answer

Option	Percentage
Training could have been less general and more specific to my job function	50%
Onboarding process was too short	23.33%
Onboarding process was too long	6.67%
Onboarding hab no human interaction	13.33%
Onboarding process was confusing or not well-structured	43.33%
Onboarding was boring	13.33%
Other	10%

Those who are willing to quit their jobs because of burnout also found their onboarding to be too generic and unstructured.

How L&D teams can help

👌 Although the Great Resignation isn't all about burnout, workplace stress is a contributing factor for some cohorts. Working with the HR team and educating upper management about signs of burnout and prevention methods is one way to keep this phenomenon in check.

Burnout is especially relevant for those in management positions, both because of the added stress people management implies for them, and because they are well-placed to spot burnout in their own teams. Sadly, however, few new managers get adequate training before stepping into their new role. During times of flux, this can exacerbate stress, burnout, and employee churn.

L&D teams should:

→ Setting up a solid manager training program for new managers, with an emphasis on preventing and spotting burnout and creating psychologically safe environments, for in-person, hybrid, and remote teams. You can check out our complete manager's burnout prevention guide, here, or take our quiz to assess your burnout score.

→ Ensuring there are career development opportunities for those who don't wish to manage, so that only those who have a true desire to do so end up leading teams.

→ Investing in leadership training for upper management, with a focus on preventing burnout and creating healthy company cultures. You can read about how companies like Too Good to Go and Toppers Pizza are building up their leadership training, here.

→ Working with HR to proactively assess manager and employees' learning needs, to get to the root of issues early on, and even prevent them from becoming problems and sources of employee churn.

→ Ensure onboarding for new hires is specific to their job function by relying on internal subject-matter experts to create courses. You can read about how spend management platform Spendesk overhauled their entire onboarding process with this in mind, here.

Additional resources:

1 How AlphaSights Built a Scalable Onboarding Program with 99% Satisfaction Rates

2 How Appen saved $240K with Collaborative learning

3 To Increase Top Performance, You Must First Define It: A Lesson From Zapier's L&D and Ops Partnership

4 Better.com's Onboarding Process for Growing From 350 to 3,000 Employees

5 How Instacart Supports and Challenges Managers with Tailored Peer Discussion Circles

6 First Guaranty Mortgage's Key to 300% Growth: Blended Learning for Managers

Challenge 3

Employees demand flexibility, but we haven't quite nailed remote or hybrid work—yet

Of the 549 people we surveyed that hadn't recently quit their jobs and weren't thinking of quitting, most (56%) were working fully in person. 30% were working hybrid, and 14% fully remote.

Most like working remotely

Generally, those working remotely or hybrid like it that way: 65% would not prefer to be fully back to in-person work. In addition, for 14% of our respondents who quit or want to quit their jobs, it was because their employer wouldn't let them work remotely. Of those, most (60%) wanted to work remotely due to safety reasons concerning COVID-19.

Why do you want to work remotely?

Respondents could choose more than one answer

It feels safer (less chance of getting COVID-19)	60%
I need the flexibility to care for my children and/or other family member	40%
I like the work/life balance of working from home	58.57%
I like the convenience of working remotely	55.71%
Other	1.43%

0%   60%
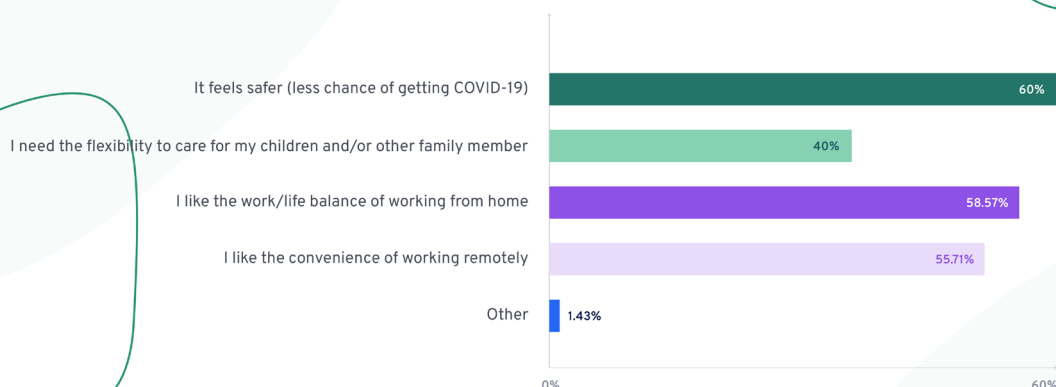
Remote working perks

For those who prefer working remotely, they like the flexibility and work/life balance most, followed by the time they can spend with their family and their increased productivity at home. 81% of those working fully remotely or hybrid also thought their workplace training got better after they went remote. Respondents also reported feeling more engaged with their employer working remotely:

Do you feel more or less engaged with your employer after starting to work remotely?

NUMBER OF RESPONSES

MUCH LESS ENGAGED   NO CHANGE   MUCH MORE ENGAGED
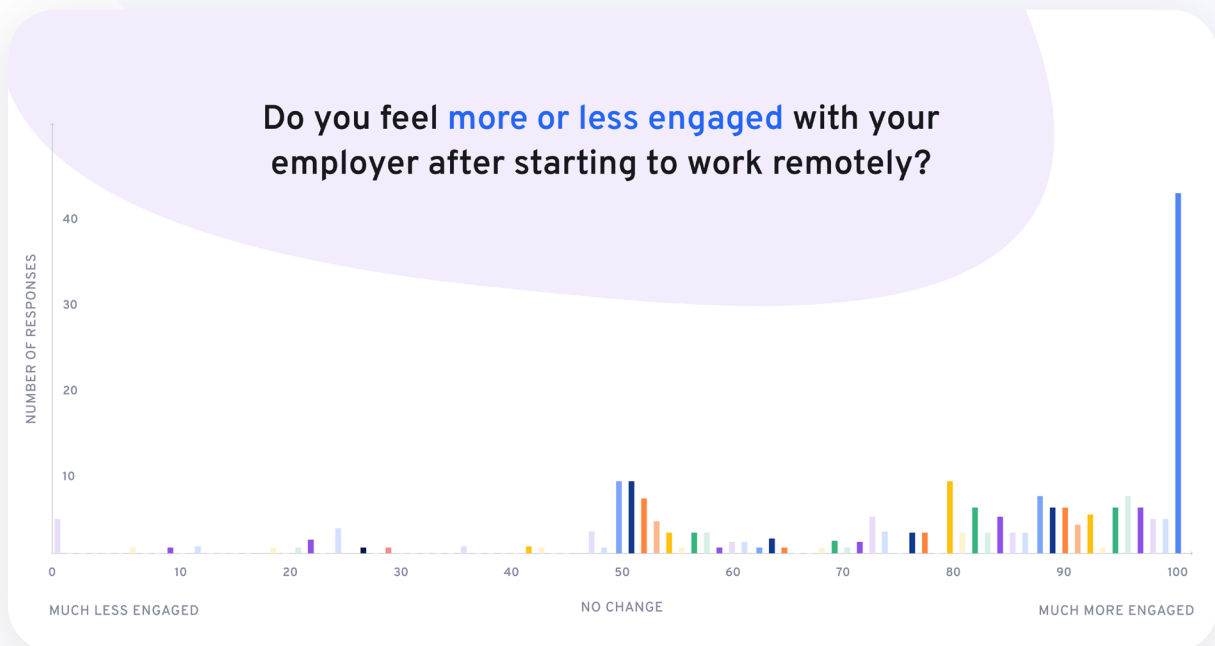
We also asked our respondents if it was difficult for them to juggle their work and family responsibilities; for those who were finding that challenging, 'more flexible working hours' was the thing they said would help most.

Missing in-person work

However, not every respondent was 100% satisfied with their remote working situation: over a third (35%) of those surveyed do miss in-person work; they feel communication is better in person (73%), and crucially, that they have access to more professional development opportunities (58%). Many also miss feeling part of a team (57%).

Why do you miss working in person?

Respondents could choose more than one answer

I miss feeling part of a team	56.63%
I miss the in-person company culture	55.42%
I'm more productive working in person	48.19%
Communication is better when everyone is working in person	73.49%
I have access to more professional development opportunities when working in person	57.83%

0%   80%

How L&D teams can help

Whether it's due to safety concerns, desire for work/life balance, or to help with family responsibilities, flexible and remote working is a priority for most workers. But this setup doesn't come without its challenges. A sizeable portion of employees miss the social aspect of in-person work. Crucially, they also feel they're missing out on professional development opportunities by staying home.

L&D teams can address these issues by:

→ Embracing an L&D program that is both collaborative and re-mote-friendly, one in which social features like discussion forums and reactions are built into the learning platform to facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges and learning, to offset the isolation some employees may be feeling. You can learn about how the technology group Safran approached this challenge, here.

→ Staying on top of any discrepancies between professional development opportunities for in-person vs remote or hybrid workers, and working with managers and leadership to address gaps in career paths, mentorship programs.

→ Embracing an L&D program that includes a blended learning approach that can include both in-person and remote workers in synchronous and asynchronous ways, to make sure everyone feels included and on a level playing field. You can learn more about the 360Learning approach to blended learning, here.

Additional resources:

1. How a New L&D Leader Adapts to Virtual Training and Onboarding

2. How Robert Half Creates Immersive Training Experiences With Remote Learning

3. How The Art of Shaving Uses Remote Training to Bring Great In-Store Experiences into People's Homes

4. How Church's Chicken Achieved 93% Training Completion Rates During a Pandemic

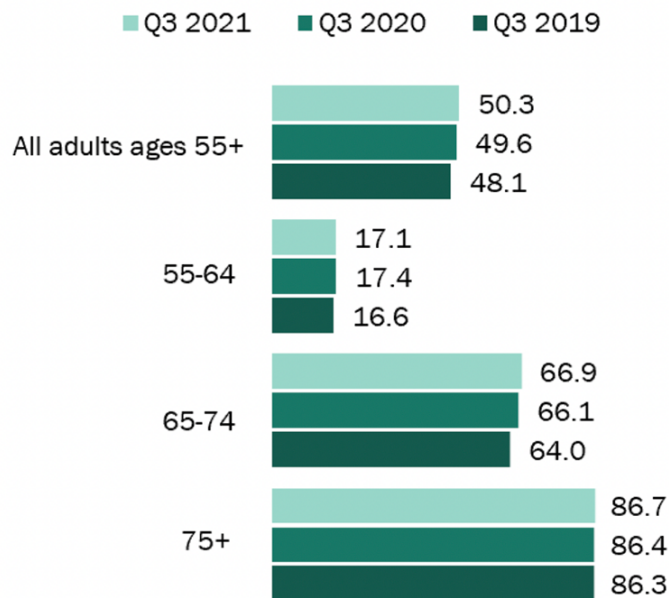Challenge 4

American baby boomers don't love their jobs

The Great Resignation is being fuelled by a myriad of demographics. One major subsection is baby boomers—those born between roughly 1946 and 1964. As CNN reported in December 2021, "Last month, there were 3.6 million more Americans who had left the labor force and said they didn't want a job compared with November 2019. A whopping 90% of them were over 55."

Half of older U.S. adults are now retired

% of older adults who are retired

■ Q3 2021   ■ Q3 2020   ■ Q3 2019

	Q3 2021	Q3 2020	Q3 2019
All adults ages 55+	50.3	49.6	48.1
55-64	17.1	17.4	16.6
65-74	66.9	66.1	64.0
75+	86.7	86.4	86.3

Note: "Retired" refers to those not in the labor force due to retirement.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of July, August and September Current Population Survey monthly files (IPUMS).

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This trend of early retirement for boomers showed up in our recent survey as well. Of the 208 respondents in our survey who were over 54, 68% had recently quit their job (or were thinking about it). When asked how they planned to support themselves, just over half cited savings, social security, or retirement.
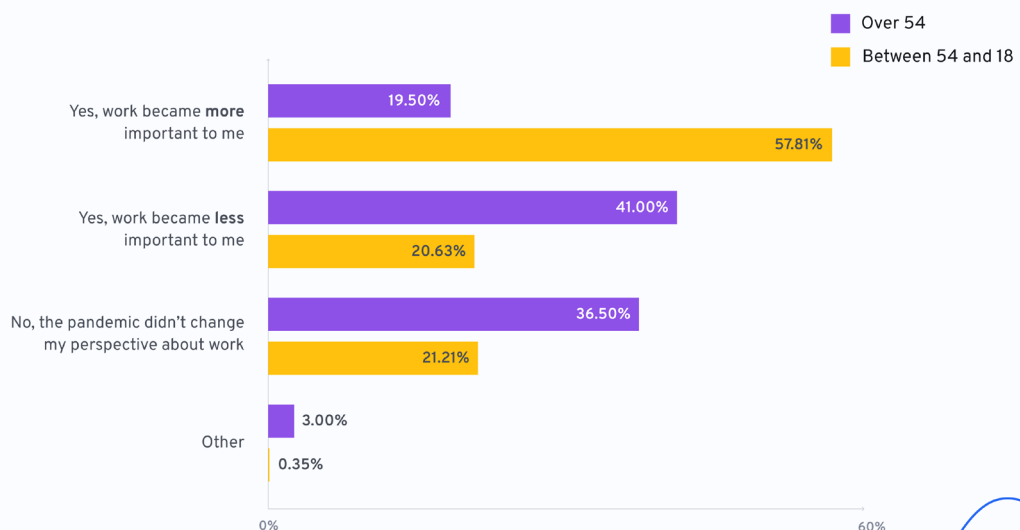
While increasing home prices and fears about COVID certainly play a part in this, another reason, according to CNN's reporting, comes down to boomers' experience in the workplace: "Employers aren't doing enough to lure people out of retirement. They're creating jobs, just not the ones people want."

This is certainly the picture painted by our respondents aged over 54; undervalued and overworked, this cohort doesn't feel passionate about their job, and even feels scared about the future of work.

"

Employers aren't doing enough to lure people out of retirement. They're creating jobs, just not the ones people want.

The pandemic changed my perspective about work:

■ Over 54
■ Between 54 and 18

Yes, work became **more** important to me
19.50%
57.81%

Yes, work became **less** important to me
41.00%
20.63%

No, the pandemic didn't change my perspective about work
36.50%
21.21%

Other
3.00%
0.35%

0%   60%
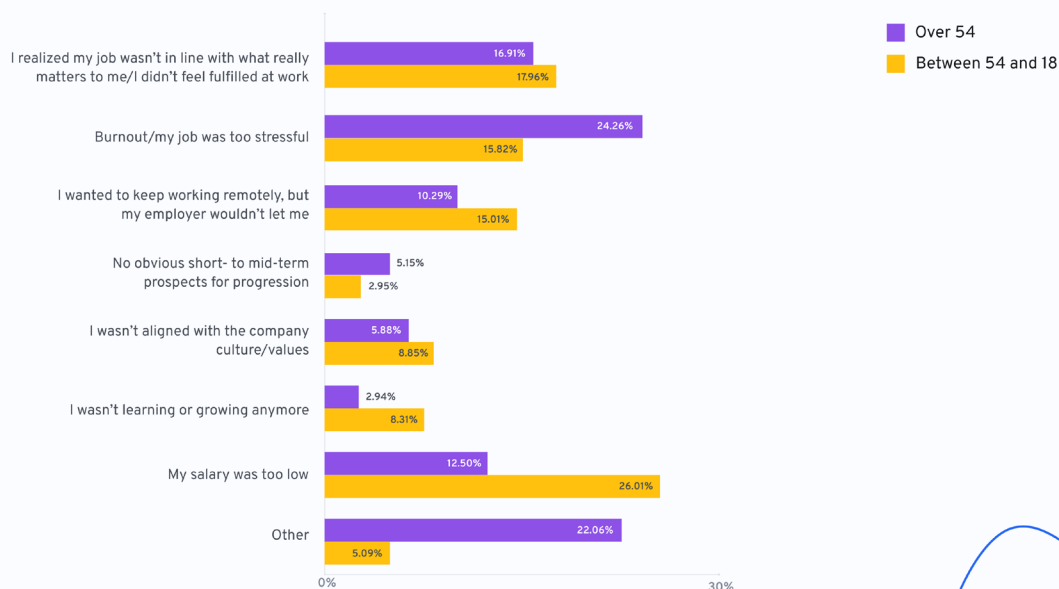
Let's dive into the data to understand how this demographic is reacting to the Great Resignation.

How baby boomers feel about their jobs

Our study found that while those between the ages of 18 and 54 primarily left their jobs in search of a higher salary, those over 54 did so mostly because of stress and burnout:

What is the main reason you quit your job / are thinking of quitting your job?

Legend:
- ■ Over 54 (purple)
- ■ Between 54 and 18 (yellow)

| Reason	Over 54	Between 54 and 18
I realized my job wasn't in line with what really matters to me/I didn't feel fulfilled at work	16.91%	17.96%
Burnout/my job was too stressful	24.26%	15.82%
I wanted to keep working remotely, but my employer wouldn't let me	10.29%	15.01%
No obvious short- to mid-term prospects for progression	5.15%	2.95%
I wasn't aligned with the company culture/values	5.88%	8.85%
I wasn't learning or growing anymore	2.94%	8.31%
My salary was too low	12.50%	26.01%
Other	22.06%	5.09%

Digging a little deeper, these older respondents felt less fulfilled and less passionate about their jobs overall. While 18 to 54-year-olds had a median score of 87 when asked how fulfilled they felt at work, over 54-year-olds scored only 77. Similarly, they were more likely to say that their job was just 'ok', as opposed to younger cohorts who said "I love it, it's my passion."

How **fulfilled** do you feel at your job?

Over 54   Between 54 and 18

| Median Score 76.5% | Median Score 87% |

100%   0%   100%
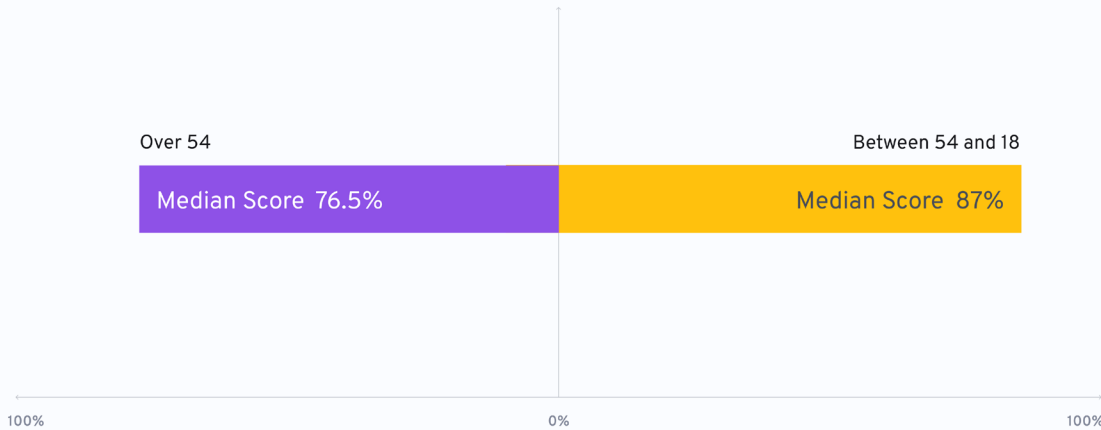
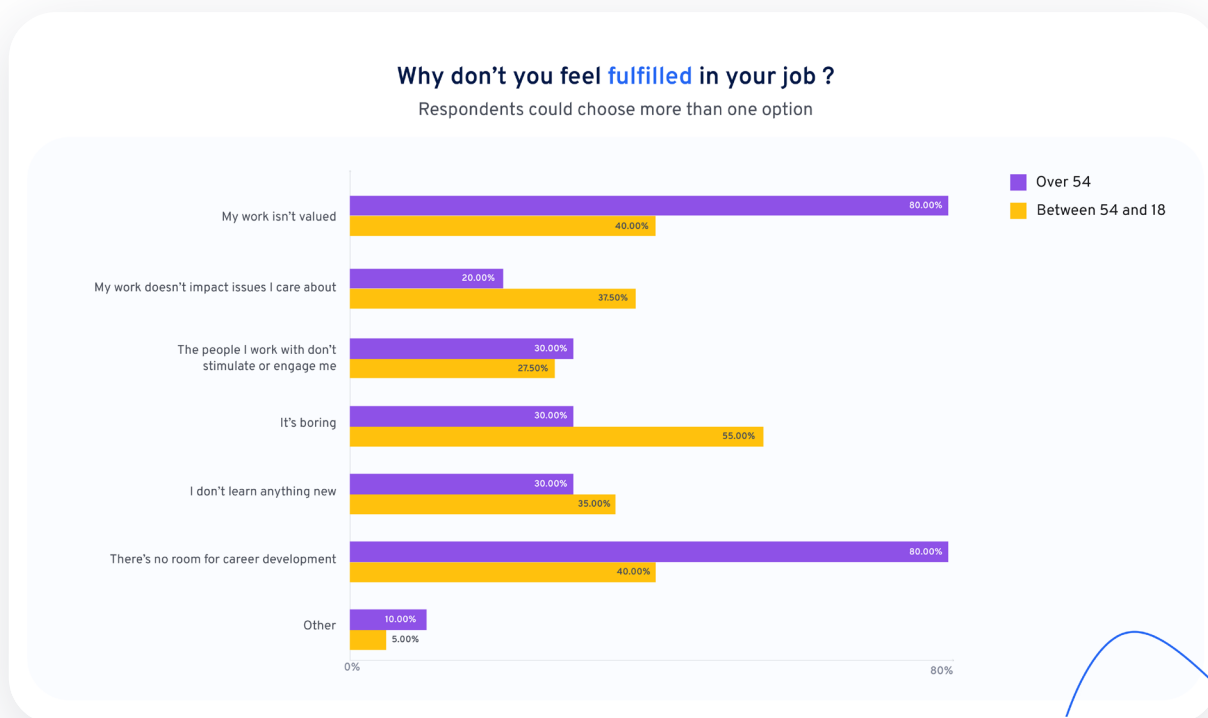They also were markedly less likely to see their job as a big part of their self-identity, as opposed to the younger generations in our survey, with scores of 55 vs. 82, respectively:

My job is a big part of **my self-identity**

Over 54   Between 54 and 18

| Median Score 54.5% | Median Score 82% |

100%   0%   100%
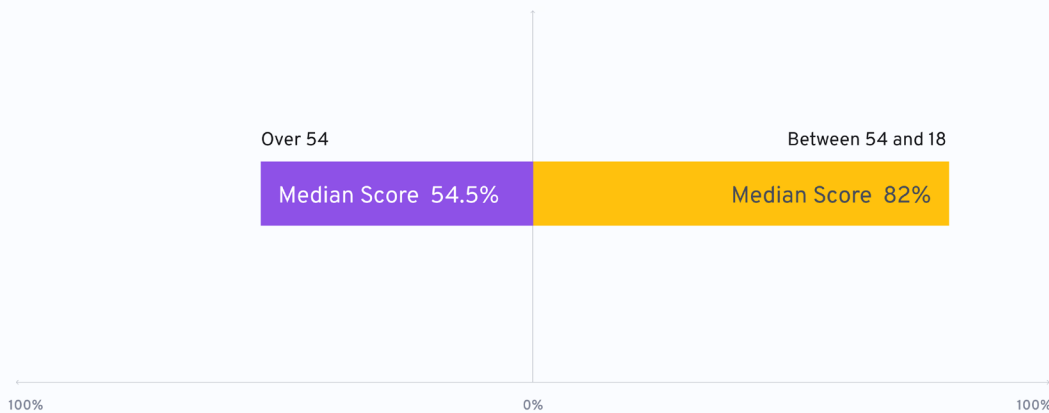
Why might this be? Part of the reason could lie in how their work is perceived. For those who said they didn't feel fulfilled at work, most said it was because either their work wasn't valued (or there was no room for development), while younger respondents said it was because their work was boring:

Why don't you feel fulfilled in your job ?

Respondents could choose more than one option

	Over 54	Between 54 and 18
My work isn't valued	80.00%	40.00%
My work doesn't impact issues I care about	20.00%	37.50%
The people I work with don't stimulate or engage me	30.00%	27.50%
It's boring	30.00%	55.00%
I don't learn anything new	30.00%	35.00%
There's no room for career development	80.00%	40.00%
Other	10.00%	5.00%

These results paint a picture of work for older people, especially of the baby boomer generation, as unrewarding, stressful, and not particularly meaningful. While some workers in this age bracket may decide, if they are able, to retire and leave the workforce early, not everyone will be in this financial position.

Then there's the ongoing question of what work means to different generations today, and the extent to which boomers may be frustrated with changing expectations in the workplace.

> These results paint a picture of work for older people, especially of the baby boomer generation, as unrewarding, stressful, and not particularly meaningful.

For example, older people may be grappling with the gradual erasure of the boundary between our personal and working lives, the need to build competencies with an ever-expanding range of technology, and the general disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As [Lee Branstetter, director of the Center for the Future of Work at Carnegie Mellon University](#), explains, "Many people are living longer, and retirement at 65 is making less and less sense, as many people simply can't accumulate enough wealth in a 30-year career to tide them over 40 or 50 years afterward."

[The Pew Research Center](#) agrees: "It is unclear whether the pandemic-induced increase in retirement among older adults will be temporary or longer-lasting. Newly published [labor force projections](#) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics suggest it will be temporary. BLS projects large increases in labor force participation among older adults from 2020 to 2030, with nearly 40% of 65- to 69-year-olds being in the labor force by 2030, up from 33% in 2020."

If many older workers feel out-of-touch with their work lives, this would leave a large chunk of the workforce likely relatively unhappy and demotivated. This is especially disheartening, since, as Lee explains, "many people want to continue working for the human interaction."
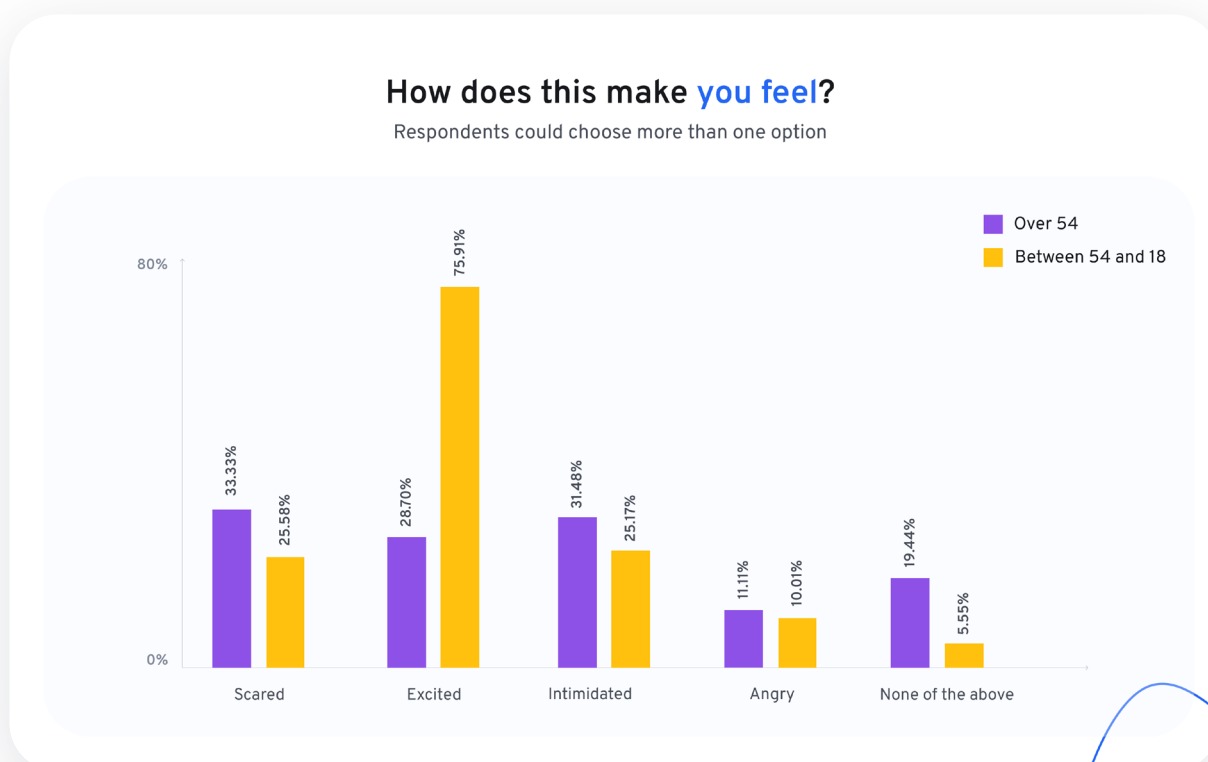
How L&D teams can help

👌 So, how can Learning and Development leaders make work a better place for mature employees, while ensuring their valuable knowledge can be passed on? One way is to ensure their learning needs are being actively solicited and met.

Self-declared learning needs

As [Claire A. Simmers, professor emeritus in the Erivan K. Haub School of Business at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, PA](#). explains, "in general, the learning needs of Baby Boomers and seniors will be based on their previous career experiences and whether they are continuing to work in familiar career areas or if they are making career changes."

They might even need extra encouragement here, as our survey revealed that, while younger generations are excited by the impact automation, market dynamics, and new technology will have on their careers in the future, those over 54 were more likely to be 'scared' by it:

How does this make **you feel**?

Respondents could choose more than one option

Legend:
- Over 54 (purple)
- Between 54 and 18 (yellow)

Category	Over 54	Between 54 and 18
Scared	33.33%	25.58%
Excited	28.70%	75.91%
Intimidated	31.48%	25.17%
Angry	11.11%	10.01%
None of the above	19.44%	5.55%

Make sure you're giving boomers ample opportunity to voice these needs, aligning training with their past work experiences, and valuing their previous work lives.

Involve collaborative learning

It will also be important to capture institutional knowledge easily and from these subject-matter experts themselves. Asking senior employees to engage with the L&D process by becoming course creators themselves could be a handy way to capture this knowledge, while also creating a meaningful human exchange in the process that shines value on this past experience.

Explore mentorship and coaching

Finally, our survey results reveal that many employees are looking to switch jobs to something more meaningful to them, while also not entirely sure they have the necessary skills to do so. These people cited self-directed learning and strong training programs as something that would boost their confidence.

Pairing more experienced workers through a coaching or mentorship program to help new hires that need to ramp up in a new area is one way of addressing the skills gaps that might result from baby boomer departures. It would also enable employees to finds work that was more meaningful to them, even if they have little prior experience.

Additional resources:

1. What is collaborative learning?
2. Why Not Sharing Institutional Knowledge is Costing Your Company Money
3. Embracing the Learning Organization Model
4. Expert Insights Volume 1: How L&D Can Help Your Company Scale
5. Expert Insights Volume 2: How L&D Can Help You Build a Strong Company Culture
6. Expert Insights Volume 3: How to Become the L&D Leader You've Always Wanted to Be
7. How Opendoor Uses Peer Mentoring to Meet Learners Where They Are
8. How Constellation Brands Flipped Classroom Training and Freed Their Subject-Matter Experts
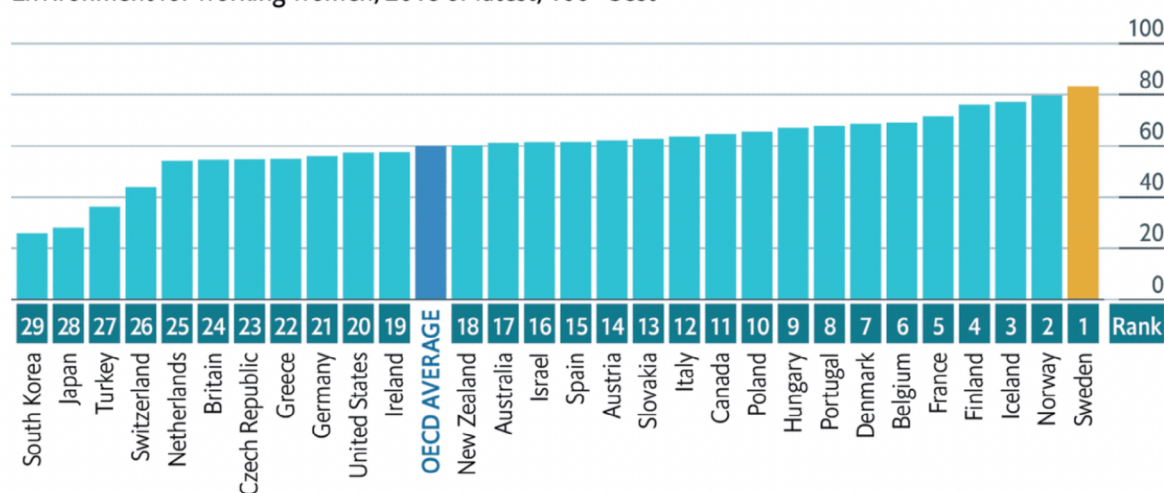
Challenge 5

How to level the playing field for women in the workplace

After polling over 1,000 American employees (half of whom are women), we came to the conclusion that the Great Resignation is, at its core, a story about Americans' shifting expectations about their work lives. But not all employees have the same experience on the job: Women's relationship with the workplace has always been more complicated than that of their male counterparts.

First off, the gender-based wage gap exists: In 2020, women earned 84% of what men earned. And, although efforts are being made to break down the glass ceiling, women are still woefully underrepresented in management positions—especially women of color. Work/life balance is also often a challenge thanks to 'the second shift', with most women working for pay and also shouldering the brunt of domestic responsibilities.

Glass-ceiling index
Environment for working women, 2018 or latest, 100=best

Sources: European Institute for Gender Equality; Eurostat; GMAC; ILO; Inter-Parliamentary Union; OECD; national sources; *The Economist*
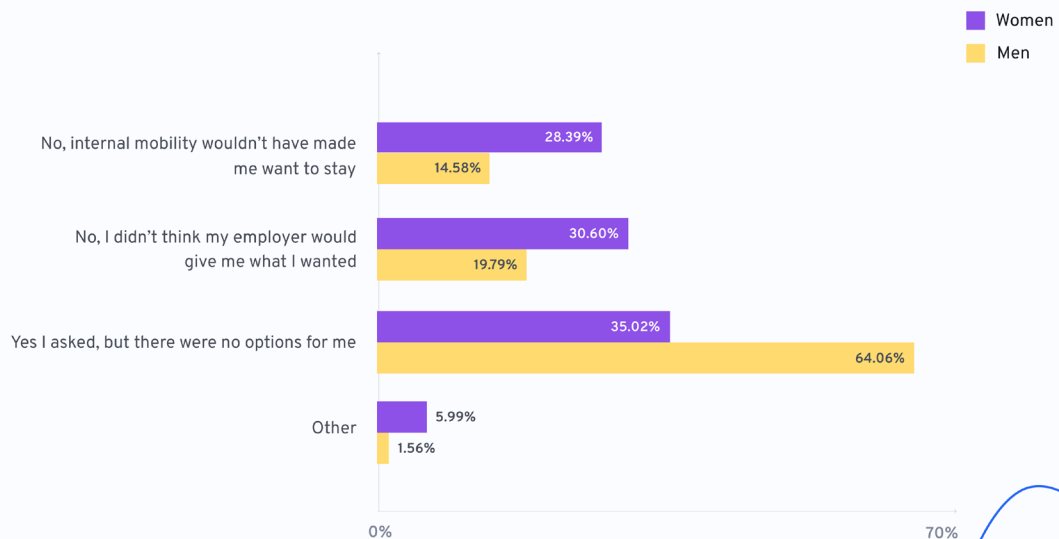
The Economist

Below, we'll take a look at how women in our survey faced particular challenges, and expressed different experiences regarding this great rethinking of work.

Internal mobility

Many of our survey respondents are reassessing their job prospects because of work that's underpaid or unfulfilling. But when it comes to engaging with management to make changes, their responses differed based on their gender.

For instance, of those who recently quit their jobs (or are considering it), women were more likely than men to not ask for internal mobility options, either because they didn't think their employer would give them what they wanted (31% vs 20%), or because it wouldn't have made them want to stay (28% vs 15%).

Did you ask your employer about internal mobility or career development options that aligned with your goals?

■ Women
■ Men

	Women	Men
No, internal mobility wouldn't have made me want to stay	28.39%	14.58%
No, I didn't think my employer would give me what I wanted	30.60%	19.79%
Yes I asked, but there were no options for me	35.02%	64.06%
Other	5.99%	1.56%

0%   70%

Self-confidence

Part of the issue could be one of self-confidence; more women assuming, correctly or incorrectly, that their career development aspirations won't be taken seriously—so why bother asking?

In fact, the aspirations for those who left or want to leave their jobs are the same for both genders—most want to start their own business. However, no matter what their desired next step, men are more likely (58%) to say they "absolutely" have the necessary skills to succeed in it, whereas women mostly say they "somewhat" do (53%).

Do you feel you have all the necessary skills and experience to start a new job in an area that feels more fulfilling to you?
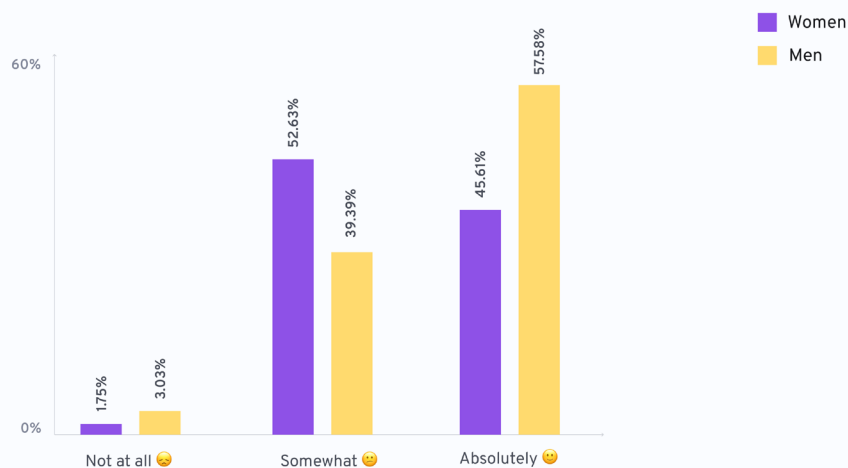
Interestingly, when it comes to the link between learning and promotions, perceptions also seem to differ based on sex. While most men think being promoted is the only way to acquire new skills, women disagree:

Do you think being promoted is the only way to acquire new skills at work?

👍 YES 38.17%

YES 58.56%

👎 NO 61.83%

NO 41.44%

◼ Women
◼ Men

0%   70%
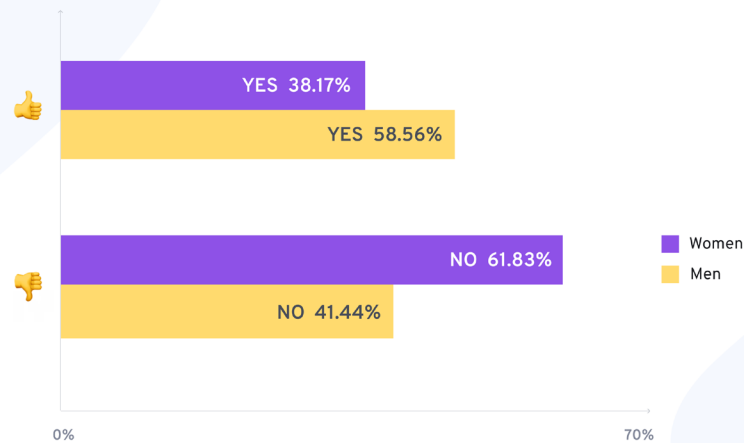
Burnout

It might also be that women who are handing in their notice have simply decided their work-places aren't healthy, with or without career development: Of the people in our survey who quit because of burnout, 72% were women, and while men's clear preference for why they quit was low salary, for women, burnout and low salary were tied. As one female respondent put it, "I'm overworked and exhausted, and no one around me seems to care about physical or mental health."
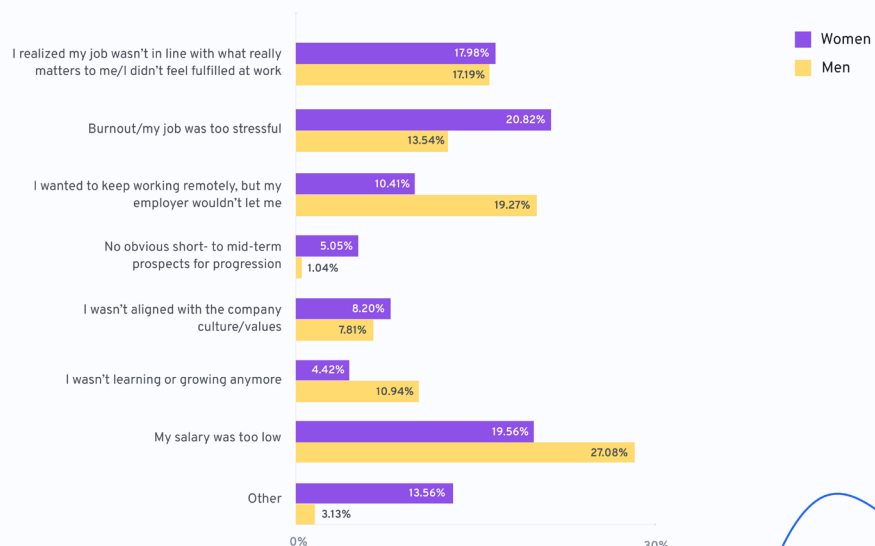
❝

Of the people in our survey who quit because of burnout, 72% were women.

❝

I'm overworked and exhausted, and no one around me seems to care about physical or mental health.

What is the main reason you quit your job/are thinking of quitting your job?

Reason	Women	Men
I realized my job wasn't in line with what really matters to me/I didn't feel fulfilled at work	17.98%	17.19%
Burnout/my job was too stressful	20.82%	13.54%
I wanted to keep working remotely, but my employer wouldn't let me	10.41%	19.27%
No obvious short- to mid-term prospects for progression	5.05%	1.04%
I wasn't aligned with the company culture/values	8.20%	7.81%
I wasn't learning or growing anymore	4.42%	10.94%
My salary was too low	19.56%	27.08%
Other	13.56%	3.13%

As [McKinsey notes](#) in their 2021 Women in the Workplace report, "Women are even more burned out now than they were a year ago, and burnout is escalating much faster among women than among men. One in three women says that they have considered downshifting their career or leaving the workforce this year, compared with one in four who said this a few months into the pandemic."

The missing rung

Whatever the reason for not pursuing internal mobility, the issue is particularly troubling, since women remain underrepresented in management positions. One of the main reasons is that fewer women take the first step into management at the lower levels, meaning that the pool to recruit from for women in leadership positions gets smaller and smaller the higher up the hierarchical ladder one goes.

As the same [McKinsey report](#) explains, "Despite gains for women in leadership, a "broken rung" in promotions at the first step up to manager was still a major barrier in the past year. For every 100 men promoted to manager, only 85 women were promoted."
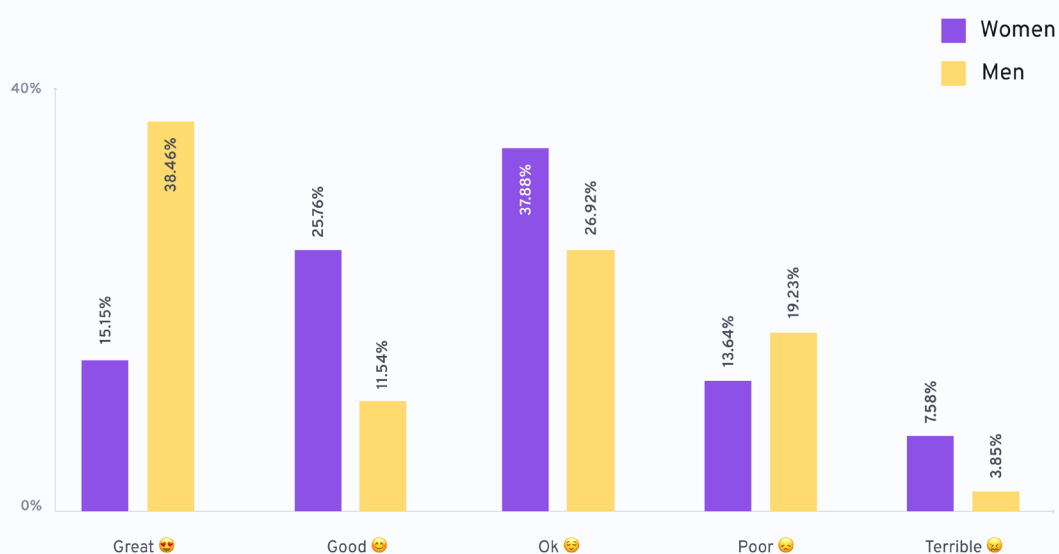
This problem is even more prominent for women of color. "Only 58 Black women and 71 Latinas were promoted. As a result, women remained significantly outnumbered at the manager level at the beginning of 2020—they held just 38 percent of manager positions, while men held 62 percent."

It will be difficult to reach gender parity at all levels of an organization if this initial step up continues to get in the way, which is why suitable coaching and career development programs dedicated to women are crucial.

Relationships at work

When it comes to workplace hierarchies, underrepresentation isn't the only issue. For those opting for resignation due to stress, men say they get on better with their managers, rating their relationships as "great" (39%), women in this category say theirs is just "ok" (38%).

How would you rate the relationship between yourself and your manager?

- Women
- Men

Rating	Women	Men
Great 😍	15.15%	38.46%
Good 😊	25.76%	11.54%
Ok 😐	37.88%	26.92%
Poor 😟	13.64%	19.23%
Terrible 😣	7.58%	3.85%

While their relationships with their managers might be lukewarm, that doesn't mean the women in our survey don't prioritize the social aspect of work. For those who miss working in person, men say it's mostly because communication is better in person, while women give equal weight to communication and feeling part of a team.
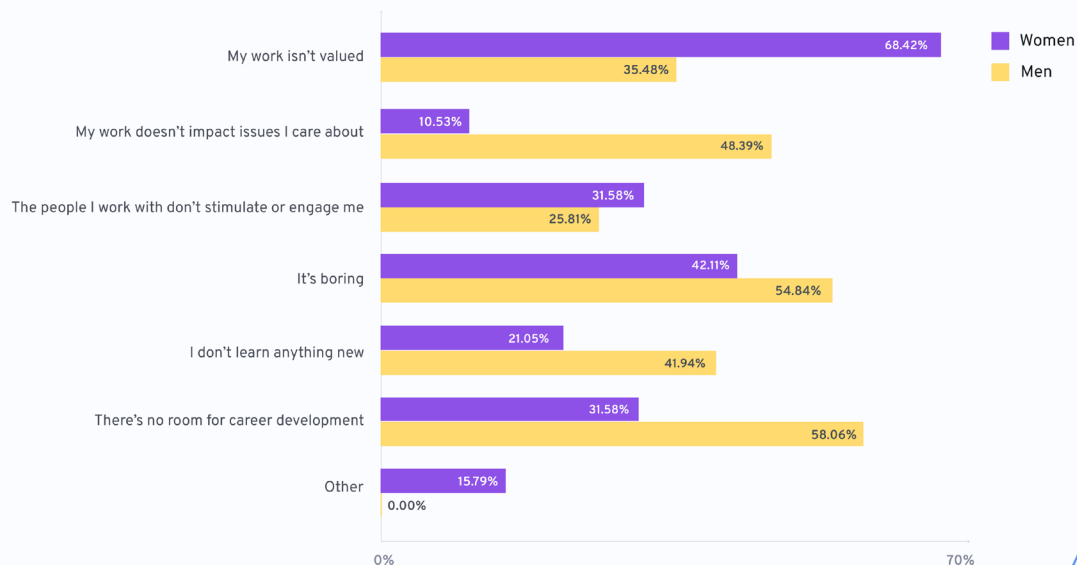
Why do you miss working in person?

Respondents could choose more than one answer

Legend: Women (purple), Men (yellow)

	Women	Men
I miss feeling part of team	86.36%	45.90%
I miss the in-person company culture	59.09%	54.10%
I'm more prodcutive working in person	72.73%	39.34%
Communication is better when everyone is working in person	86.36%	68.85%
I have access to more professional development opportunities when working in person	72.73%	52.46%

0% — 90%

"Women's work"

So, how fulfilling do women in our survey find their jobs? Of those working and not looking to quit, men said they were slightly more fulfilled at their job than women (88 vs 85 median score).

But, for those who said they didn't feel fulfilled in their job, women were much more likely to say it was because their work wasn't valued. For men, it was because there was no room for career development—their work not being valued was the second least chosen response.

Why don't you **feel fulfilled** in your job?

Respondents could choose more than one answer

■ Women
■ Men

My work isn't valued
68.42%
35.48%

My work doesn't impact issues I care about
10.53%
48.39%

The people I work with don't stimulate or engage me
31.58%
25.81%

It's boring
42.11%
54.84%

I don't learn anything new
21.05%
41.94%

There's no room for career development
31.58%
58.06%

Other
15.79%
0.00%

0%   70%

Interestingly, when asked if they found it difficult to balance job and family responsibilities, men found it significantly more difficult. On a scale of 1 to 100, with 100 being 'extremely difficult', and 0, 'not at all', women answered a median of 55 - men, 73. This was true even for younger men (aged 18 - 24) with children, who came in at 70 - women came in at 62.

What does seem to be clear is the importance of work for men's self-identity: Of those who hadn't recently quit and weren't considering it, men reported that their jobs were a bigger part of their self-identity, with a median score of 86, versus 68 for women.

My job is a big part of my self-identity

Women

| Median Score 68% |

Men

| Median Score 86% |

100%   0%   100%
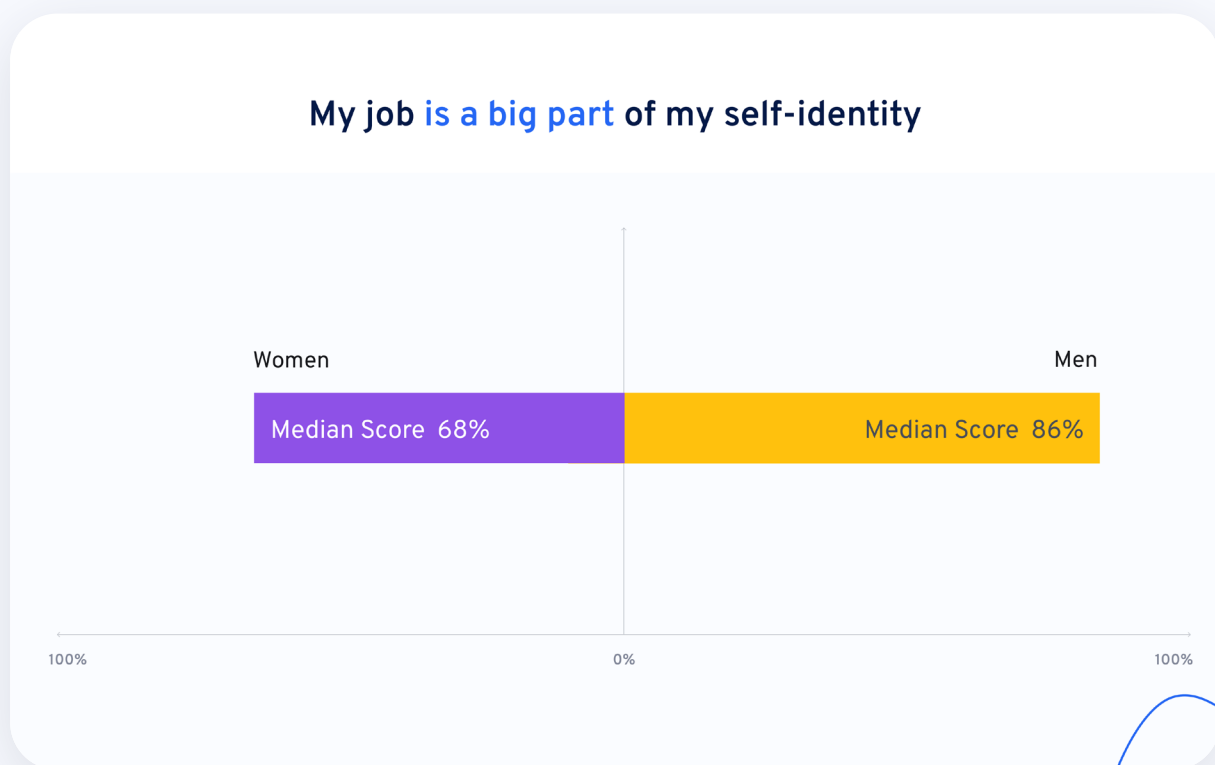
How L&D teams can help

👌 Women face a particular set of challenges in the workplace, many of which were exacerbated due to the pandemic. With mounting concern that the women who left the workforce due to COVID won't return, it's more important than ever for L&D teams to support women in the workplace. They can do this through:

Implicit bias training

It's crucial that hiring managers and anyone involved in the recruitment process are aware of any implicit bias they may have, and are given the tools to eliminate it. But this type of training should also be applied to managers when promoting employees, to help fix the 'broken rung' that continues to keep women from climbing the organizational ladder.

Keeping an eye on remote work policies

Are you sure your remote work policies aren't favoring male employees? If more women choose to work from home, with they be locked out of certain professional development opportunities, whether formally or informally? Be sure to check in with employees and managers to be sure that some workers aren't being inadvertently left behind. You can read how 360Learning runs its remote working policy, [here](#).

Coaching and mentorships focused on women's development

Organizing coaching and mentoring programs aimed at supporting women's growth is an excellent way to ensure this group gets a fair shot at internal mobility. For instance, at 360Learning, we have a Women@360 Developmental Coaching program, run with MoovOne, that enables women at the company to identify personal growth areas and work to improve them with a personal coach.

Reviewing your numbers

It's crucial for HR teams to comb through their data to understand where bias and representation issues might be lurking. Hiring, promotions, bonuses, salaries…as [we've argued on our blog](#), we believe full transparency is vital to leveling the playing field for all employees, and communicating openly about how women are faring at your company is the first step to identifying areas of improvement.

Additional resources:

1. [The What, Why, and How of Mentorship Programs at Work](#)
2. [Women's History Month Ideas: How Our DE&I Team Brought Them to Life](#)
3. [How to Develop Anti-Bias and Diversity Training That's Truly Effective](#)
4. [Disney Media & Entertainment Distribution's 4-Step Mentor Circle Program](#)
5. [Diversity in Learning: 10 Tips for Building an Inclusive L&D Culture from Visa, Qualtrics, WEX, and More](#)
6. [L&D for Diversity: How Coca-Cola Celebrates its Diverse Workforce](#)

What's next? 🚀

Engage employees during the great rethink with collaborative learning

The COVID-19 pandemic pushed all of us to rethink our relationship with work. It made us reconsider what we're willing to do to find a job we love, not just one we can tolerate. Reskilling and upskilling from within will have a crucial part to play in enabling employees to make these types of transitions. Harnessing peers' knowledge, whether it's role-specific, like learning how to code, or soft skills, like managerial techniques, can help organizations to smooth out wrinkles in times of adaptation.

A collaborative learning approach can help L&D teams rise to the occasion by:

→ Helping new or future employees develop new skills thanks to in-house experts

→ Spreading best practices regarding management, leadership training, hiring and promotion bias, and mental health in the workplace

→ Improving onboarding courses by making them more role-specific and structured

→ Empowering individual learners to declare their own learning needs, and L&D teams to easily act on them

→ Enabling learning that is remote and hybrid work friendly, while also keeping a social component

→ Reengaging learners with relevant, interactive courses

In collaborative learning, subject-matter experts, with the guiding hand of the L&D team, engage in course creation and iteration, based on a bottom-up learning needs analysis.

Not only does relying on this institutional knowledge render courses more contextually relevant and engaging, but it takes much of the burden of course creation from L&D, enabling them to deliver more relevant training, faster. Consider that most HR professionals that create training courses say that only 1-5% of their employees help them to create course material. tasks like updating old content, scheduling courses, and tracking completions.

More than that, it helps your organization respond to opportunities for innovation and invention.

collaborative learning achieves this by:

→ Making it easy for people to declare their learning needs

→ Empowering any team to make and ship courses quickly in response

→ Shaping learner recommendations based on user data relating to skills, interests, role, feedback from other learners, and more

→ Encouraging subject-matter experts to contribute their skills, share their knowledge, and iterate learning content over time

→ Enabling L&D teams to build tailored programs by curating courses from 3rd party platforms - including existing SCORM libraries

→ Using a continuous feedback loop to keep learning content current, accurate, and engaging

→ Fostering a shared sense of connection and belonging through making every step of the learning process as interactive as possible

If you're facing some of the same challenges described above, it's highly likely adopting a collaborative learning approach would help.

You can learn more about collaborative learning and the ways in which this approach to learning is benefitting learners and L&D teams in our dedicated ebook.

Request a free demo today! 💡

Data in this report was taken from a survey conducted by 360Learning of 1,058 adults in the United States using Poll-fish, from November - December 2021.

Contact us

(US) +1 917-936-4632
contact@360learning.com
www.360learning.com