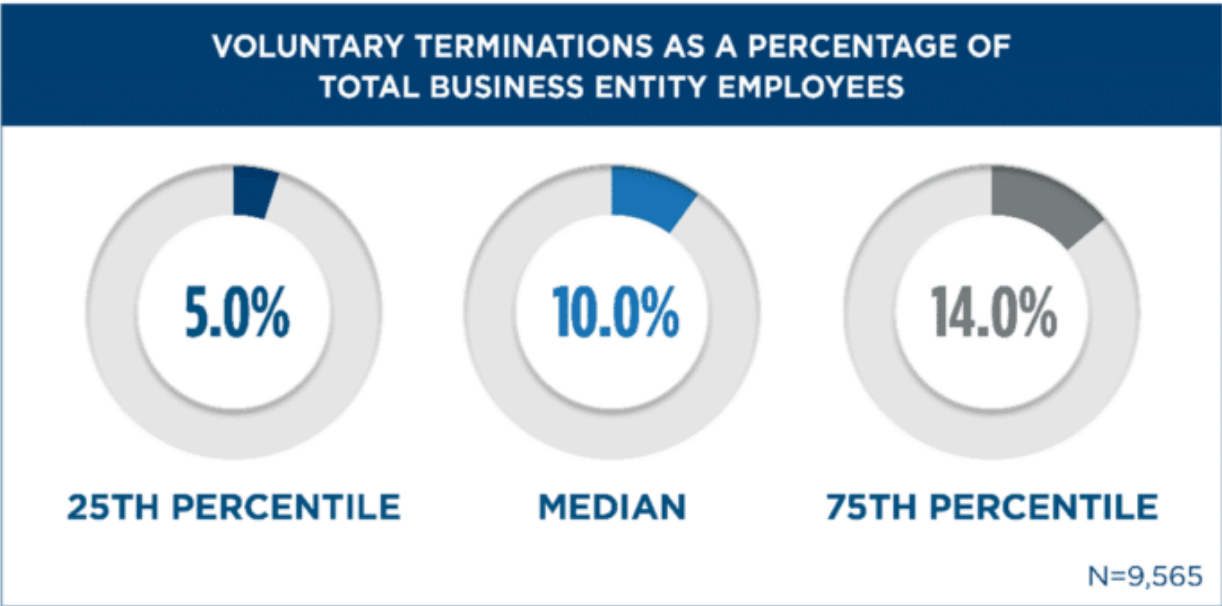


Minimizing Turnover Risk for Today's Workforce: 4 Key Priorities

HR Executive | Elissa Tucker and Nathanael M. Vlachos | April 17, 2025



Imagine 40 of your employees sitting in a room. What would it take to convince 10 of them to leave for another employer? Not much, we've found in new research on voluntary turnover.

APQC surveyed over 600 workers from various industries, organizational sizes and job roles to identify the things they value most about their employee experience and whether they are receiving those things in their current role. A quarter of our respondents disagreed with the statement: "It would take a lot to leave my current job."

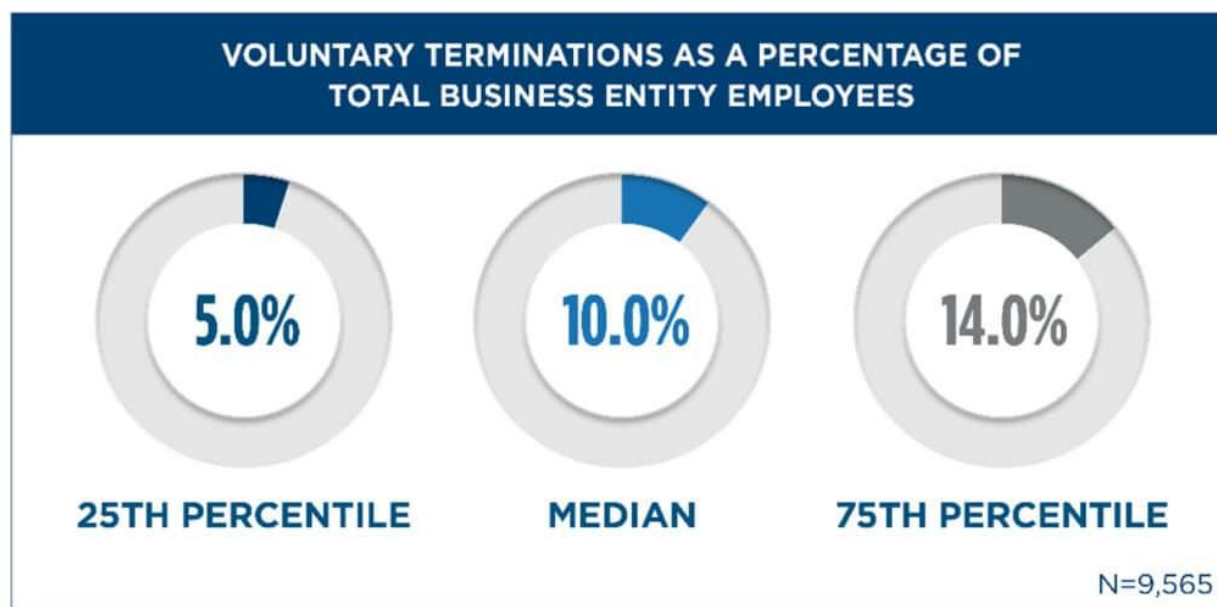
Engagement is down across industries, and there are plenty of reasons for employees to feel disengaged—from return-to-office mandates to layoffs, economic uncertainty and more. It's critical to keep a focus on retention in these moments, not only to retain your top talent but to ensure you remain competitive no matter what is happening in the talent market.

After breaking down cross-industry data on voluntary turnover, we highlight some key drivers of turnover risk and provide guidance to help you build an employee experience that makes people more likely to stay.

Benchmarking Voluntary Turnover

Voluntary turnover calculates the percentage of total employees who leave an organization of their own accord. When used alongside involuntary turnover, this measure helps an organization assess its overall turnover rate, the health of its workforce and its approach to human capital management more broadly.

Voluntary turnover should be a key measure on any HR leader's dashboard. A high rate of voluntary turnover not only means an organization is at risk for higher costs (to hire and train replacements, for example) but can also mean increased knowledge loss, declining morale and other intangible costs that can be just as damaging as the hard dollar costs of high voluntary turnover. Data from APQC's Open Standards Benchmarking Database shows that at the median, organizations lose one out of every 10 employees to voluntary turnover.



It's important to compare your voluntary turnover to organizations that are similar to yours in terms of factors like size, industry and organizational life cycle stage. Finding similar benchmarking peers and considering turnover in the broader context of your business goals and HR strategy will help you assess what "high" and "low" turnover mean for your organization specifically.

4 Focus Areas for Reducing Voluntary Turnover

Below, we provide guidance related to onboarding, career development and advancement, employee burnout and performance feedback. Strengthening these four areas will help to address some of the biggest reasons why employees leave their jobs.

1. Deliver effective onboarding

Many employees in our research do not agree that their onboarding effectively prepared them for their role. When onboarding feels disorganized or doesn't cover all aspects of the job, it's easy for employees to feel disengaged. Engagement can wither even more when new employees feel isolated and don't know where to bring their questions.

To provide an effective onboarding experience:

- Design a formal and structured onboarding program, especially for your most common roles.
- Assign a mentor to each new employee so they have a touchpoint for questions and an immediate form of social connection.
- Have managers periodically check in throughout onboarding.
- Balance classroom or course-based learning with on-the-job learning.
- Provide introductions to key employees in your organization (for example, executives) to help new employees feel connected to the broader mission and how their work fits within it.
- Aim to deliver a holistic onboarding experience that includes activities aimed at cultural integration in addition to an overview of the employees' specific role.

2. Provide more opportunities for career development and advancement

The pursuit of opportunities for growth and advancement is one of the biggest reasons why employees leave their job. Our research points to several underutilized approaches that you could adopt to better meet employees' desire for professional growth:

- mentoring
- upskilling
- development for managers/supervisors
- cross-skilling/cross-training
- internal talent sharing
- job rotations
- stretch assignments

These activities will help you go beyond well-worn approaches (like self-paced learning in front of a computer) and find engaging ways to help people develop new skills.

It's also important to give employees opportunities to progress in their career if you can. Otherwise, an organization that offers these opportunities could get the benefit of the work you've done to develop employees. Consider one of these underutilized approaches to advancement:

- internal recruiting and hiring
- internal talent markets
- providing career tracks or paths
- offering career coaching

If you already practice internal hiring and have pathways for employee advancement, do employees know what's available? Provide profiles of employees who developed and advanced within your organization or find other creative ways to more explicitly communicate what is possible for employees.

3. Address employee burnout

Burnout comes in many different forms, and all of them increase the risk of turnover. For example, nearly one in four workers in our engagement survey disagreed that they have an optimal work/life balance or that their employer provides the mental health support they need. Optimizing employee workloads and encouraging time away from work can help to address issues like these.

Examine Employee Workloads

An employee's workload plays a big role in shaping the employee experience and a sense of work/life balance, in particular. If workers feel poorly prepared or lack the skills to do a good job, work/life balance will suffer. Work/life balance can also suffer when workers feel competent but face what feels like an insurmountable workload because of structural barriers or resourcing problems.

To avoid outcomes like these:

- Revisit your workforce planning and look for areas where you lack adequate staffing.
- Provide managers with training and tools on how to set team goals, check in with employees and communicate priorities to help employees manage their work without feeling overwhelmed.
- Ensure that employees have the focus time they need to carry out their work. For example, are employees constantly in meetings or having to chat on enterprise social media?
- Find areas where you can use automation, AI or other tools to cut down on highly repetitive or redundant work so employees can focus on the most engaging parts of their job.
- Encourage time away from work
- To help employees get the most from their time off in a way that supports engagement, it's important to:
- Enforce time-off boundaries. Set the expectation that employees aren't required to respond to messages outside of work hours.
- Craft messaging from HR to make sure that employees know about their vacation benefits and how to use them.
- Offer flexibility if you can, like the possibility of four-day work weeks or other forms of flexible scheduling.
- Enlist high-profile champions like executives to model the importance of work-life balance and taking time off.

4. Provide frequent and quality performance feedback

We found that employees today want more time and direction from their managers, not less. Among other benefits, regular performance conversations help managers to provide meaningful

feedback, highlight employee accomplishments and collaborate with employees on a plan to achieve their goals, all of which help to drive engagement.

To ensure that employees get productive feedback, it's important to train and empower managers to:

- Speak with employees about the kind of feedback they find valuable and the frequency with which they want to have that feedback.
- Schedule check-in meetings with employees on a regular basis.
- Stay curious and ask evocative questions. Instead of "How are you?" try something like "What work do you have in front of you?"
- Use check-ins as an opportunity to share updates on company-wide changes, especially those that may impact the employee and their goals.
- Build rapport with employees by having more informal touch-base moments outside of formal performance conversations.
- Feedback grounded in a positive working relationship can significantly increase engagement and performance by creating a more collaborative focus on setting and reaching goals.

Act now to protect engagement and retention

Even your most dedicated workers can be at risk for turnover. For example, 86% of our respondents agreed with the statement: "I am willing to go above and beyond in my job performance." A quarter of them still said it wouldn't take much to get them to leave their current role.

Deficits in any area of the employee experience can be enough to nudge employees away, and many employees experience deficits in multiple areas. Focusing on the four areas above will help you address some of the most common turnover drivers and help improve the employee experience for all employees.