


GUILD'S AMERICAN WORKER
SURVEY REPORT

The New “Up or Out”

Workers want career advancement
and opportunity. Without it, they'll
keep quitting.

GUILD ▶



In 2021, employers saw more workers quit or change jobs than ever before.

And through the first half of 2022, workers continued leaving their jobs at a faster rate than at any point in the two decades preceding the pandemic.

Many headlines have cast blame on workers for “quiet quitting” or joining the “Great Resignation.” But the underlying reality is that employers have failed to meet the changing expectations of workers.

WORKERS ARE QUITTING TO FIND CAREER PATHWAYS, PAY & PURPOSE ELSEWHERE

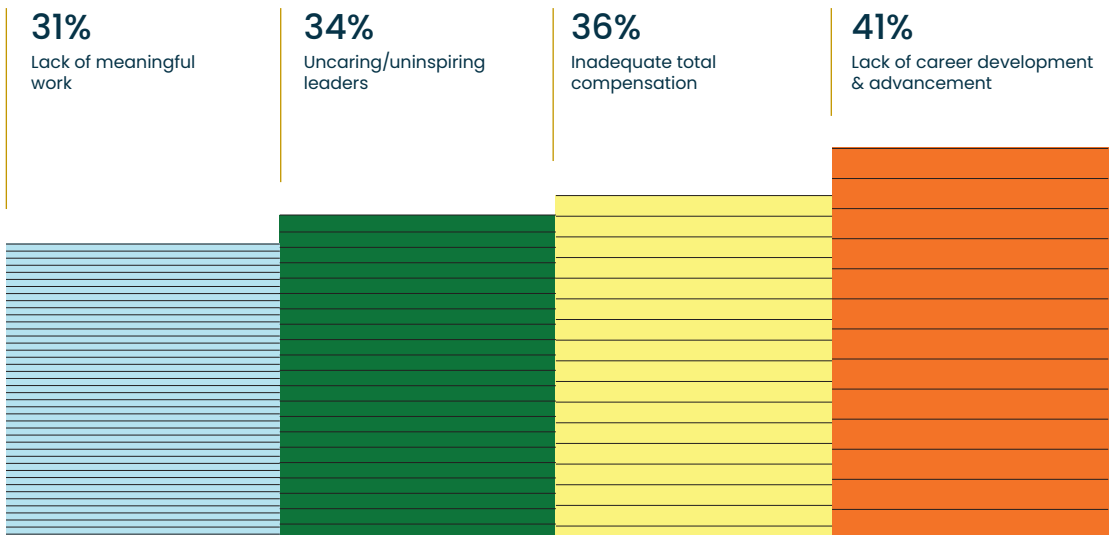
Some 60 million workers are currently looking for their next job. But what they’re actually searching for is not just higher pay or a change of scenery. They’re demanding career pathways. A desire for career mobility creates pressure to either move up or move out.

Guild’s inaugural survey of American workers found that employees want to stay at their companies, but they feel like their only choice is to leave. Faced with unclear paths for advancement, employees are voting with their feet to pursue opportunities elsewhere that offer not only better pay and benefits in the near term, but also greater opportunity for future growth.

“I sought internal opportunities, but (my employer) didn’t seem willing to take a chance on someone who didn’t have traditional experience in the area that I was looking for, despite me having just received my master’s in the field. I found a company that was willing to see my ENTIRE resume as relevant experience, and they took a chance on me.”

—Jason, hospitality worker

Top reasons for quitting previous job,
April 2021–April 2022



INSIGHTS FROM AMERICAN WORKERS

Guild Research conducted a public online survey of 1,867 workers aged 18-60 (oversampling for those in healthcare, retail, and financial services) across the United States in August 2022 and learned:

Two-thirds of workers want to move into a new role. More than half of them hope it's at their same company.

Sixty-four percent of all workers say they hope to be in a new role within the next 2-5 years. Thirty-four percent say they want to grow into a new role with their current employer, versus 31 percent who hope to be with a different employer in any role.

Where do you hope to be in 2-5 years?

34%

Current employer, new role

11%

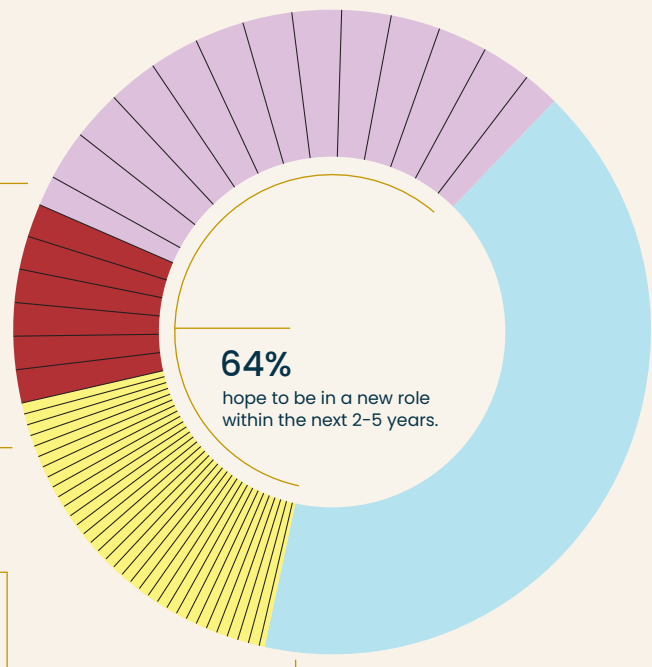
New employer, similar role

20%

New employer, new role

36%

Current employer, same role



The overwhelming majority of workers (78%) are frustrated because they’ve experienced challenges trying to advance their careers.

About half of all workers (47%) are concerned they’ve been held back by not having the right experience, the right education, or access to training programs. Four in ten respondents (39%) say their career paths are unclear or their current employer has a lack of open roles. One in four (26%) think that not having the right connections or network has prevented them from getting ahead.

Which of the following challenges, if any, have you experienced in trying to advance your career?

47%

Not qualified/lack of training options

39%

Unclear career paths/no open roles at employer

26%

Lack of connections or network

In general, how important is having a clear career path in your choice of where to work?



45%

Somewhat important

44%

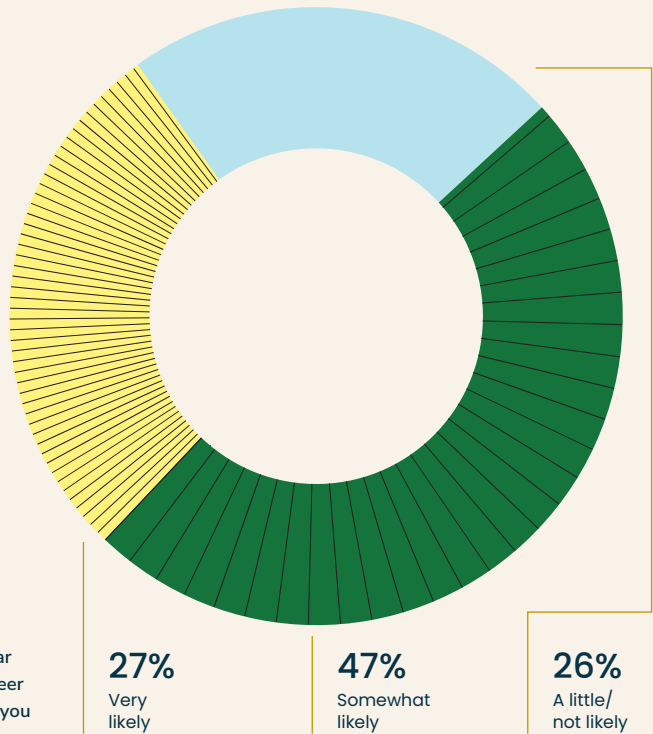
Very important

Workers are begging for career pathways, but employers aren’t hearing them.

Almost every worker (89%) says it’s “very important” or “somewhat important” that they have a clear career path.

Workers who change jobs are choosing companies that will prepare them for the future.

Roughly three-quarters of all workers (74%) said they would be “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to leave their current employer if they were offered another job with additional education and career opportunities.

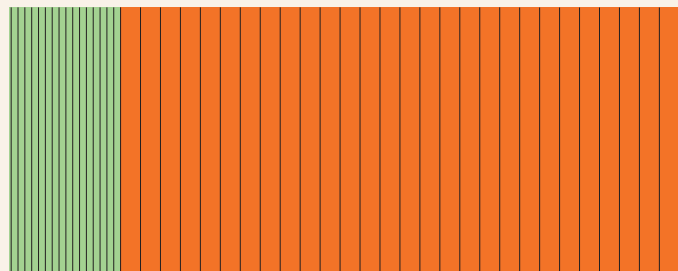
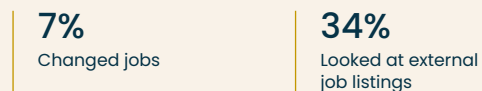


If a different employer offered you a similar job, but with additional education and career guidance opportunities, how likely would you be to change jobs?

Companies that aren't providing pathways should be concerned about employees leaving for better opportunities.

Forty-one percent of workers have either changed jobs or looked for a new job with a different employer in the past six months.

Which of the following, if any, have you done in the past six months?



AMERICA’S FRONTLINE WORKERS

Early in the pandemic, Americans realized just how many jobs were essential to daily life. Grocery store cashiers, bank customer service agents, and nursing assistants, for instance, all gained new recognition for the important role they play in our society. Though there’s no universal term to describe these workers, roughly 80 million Americans call themselves frontline workers. Workers who identify this way tend to be younger and more diverse, with less education, lower income, and more debt than workers overall. Frontline workers also tend to be paid hourly rates and don’t have the option of working from home.

“I was told that I had more opportunity than I actually did. They kind of give you this pie-in-the-sky notion that, if I work hard enough, then I will achieve it.”

– Phillip, retail worker

While their challenges vary depending on the industry in which they work, what they have in common is a desire to improve their financial situation and advance their careers.

Healthcare workers have suffered disproportionately from the physical and emotional toll of COVID-19, leading to burnout, a shrinking workforce, and more onerous demands on those who remain. Workforce shortages have also created some opportunities. Travel nurses, for instance, receive increased pay in exchange for moving where demand is higher. Taken together, these factors have led to a workforce that tends to be somewhat more mobile than those in other industries, and 45% have changed jobs or looked for a new job in the past six months. Education and training requirements in the healthcare industry mean healthcare workers are more likely to have experienced career challenges related to a lack of qualifications (51%), and place a higher value on having a career path (94% say it is at least “somewhat important”).

“A lot of people leave jobs because the company they work for doesn’t care for them. And I actually did leave my last job because (of that). I wanted to go to school (to grow in my role), and it wasn’t an easy process.”

– A.A., healthcare worker

Which of the following, if any, have you done in the past six months?

36%

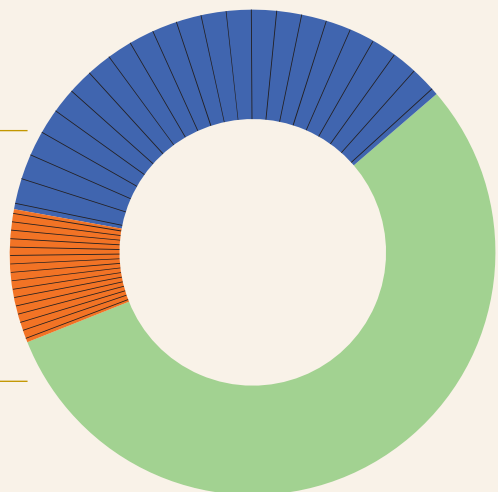
Looked at external job listings

9%

Changed jobs

55%

Neither



Retail workers are among the frontline workers who’ve seen unprecedented levels of disruption to their work lives, including furloughs, layoffs, and mandatory overtime. Given these factors, they are by far the most mobile workers among the industries addressed in this study. Half (50%) have either changed jobs or looked at external job listings in the past six months (versus 41% overall). Over three-fourths (77%) hope to be in a new role in 2-5 years (versus 64% overall), with 47% hoping for the external mobility of moving to a different employer (versus 31% overall). Despite the challenges they face, retail workers are just as likely to cite the importance of a career path as at least “somewhat important” to them.

“I just could not wait much for opportunities to come. For example, to apply to leadership opportunities there, one needs to wait six months to be eligible even if you have all needed skills.”

– Livia, retail worker

Where do you hope to be in 2-5 years?

39%

New employer,
new role

8%

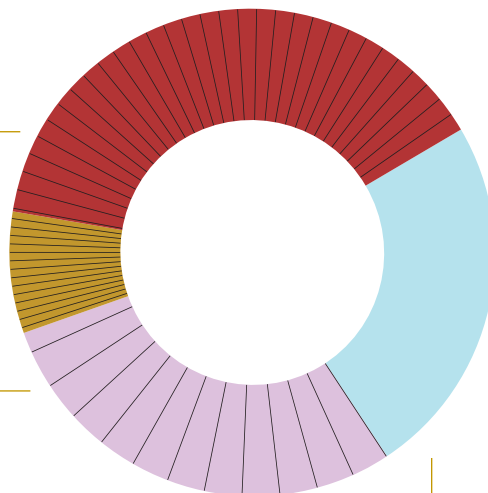
New employer,
similar role

29%

Current employer,
new role

23%

Current employer,
same role



Financial services workers tend to be more focused on internal mobility than workers in other industries, but they expect their loyalty to be reciprocated with a career path and opportunity. They're focused on finding roles that allow them to evolve within their industry. Almost half (47%) hope to be in a new role at their current employer in 2-5 years (versus 34% overall). Even so, these workers are still slightly more likely to move on when a better opportunity arises: 79% say they would change jobs for better education and career opportunities.

"I applied for (a) job because I wanted to learn about finances, but at the same time I felt like at such a big company, they have to offer something else. During my interview, I actually asked him on the spot, 'Do you offer anything else? Potentially higher education?'"

- Omar, financial services worker

Where do you hope to be in 2-5 years?

47%

Current employer, new role

12%

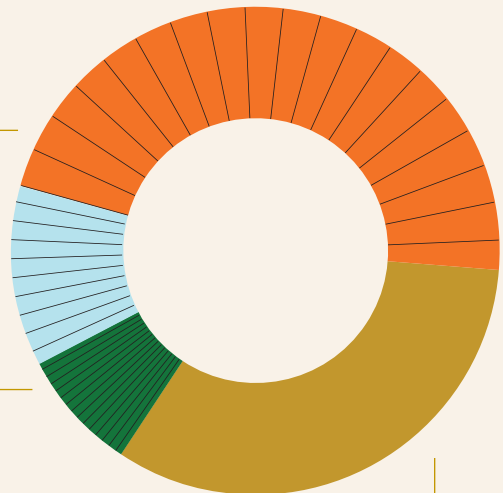
New employer, new role


8%

New employer, similar role

33%

Current employer, same role





For two years, the pandemic shook up the core principles of work in this country. But what we are experiencing now is a larger and sustained groundswell from a workforce that has reckoned with a broken system long enough. Workers have made it loud and clear they're frustrated by the barriers that stand in their path and are willing to leave behind employers who don't meet them in this new moment.

The good news? Businesses stand to gain from this shift, too. Workers don't just want a paycheck; they want opportunities to grow and advance. By delivering on what employees want – pathways to career opportunity and mobility – companies can increase their workers' skills and engagement to not only survive but thrive through the changes we know lie ahead.

DATA SOURCES:

Public online survey of 1,867 workers (oversampling for healthcare, retail, and financial services workers) across the United States between ages 18-60 conducted by Guild Research in August 2022. The results were weighted to represent the general population of workers based on age, gender identity, industry, and household income.

In-depth interviews conducted by Guild in 2021-2022 across a variety of topics related to career development.

"The Great Attrition Is Making Hiring Harder. Are You Searching the Right Talent Pools?" McKinsey & Company, July 13, 2022.

"Employment of the civilian population by sex and age." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, retrieved September 22, 2022.

"Quits: Total Nonfarm." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, retrieved from Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, September 22, 2022.