

# The Great Resignation: Why employees are burnt out and what you can do about it





# What is the Great Resignation?

The Great Resignation is a global, ongoing phenomenon that has dissatisfied employees leaving their jobs in record numbers. The Big Quit, as it's also known, began in the spring of 2021 and in August alone, **4.3 million Americans resigned**<sup>1</sup>.

And despite high levels of unemployment, it doesn't look like it'll be slowing down any time soon. With numbers rising in almost every industry, it's accelerating<sup>2</sup>.

As people search for greater job satisfaction, nearly 70% of UK workers say they're ready to move jobs<sup>3</sup>.

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70%

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1 <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.nr0.htm>

2 <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/10/great-resignation-accelerating/620382/>

3 <https://www.randstad.co.uk/about-us/industry-insight/great-resignation/>

# Who is quitting?

People around the world, in a variety of industries and across a range of demographics are leaving their current positions. Because even though popular opinion centers younger employees at the heart of the Big Quit<sup>4</sup>, the phenomenon is certainly not limited to one age group. In fact, according to Harvard Business Review<sup>5</sup>, the biggest increase in resignations is among mid-career employees, aged 30–45. This includes one in five working parents who are quitting or plan to move on in the coming year.

And this isn't limited to one or two industries either. People are leaving jobs in an array of sectors, with the biggest spikes in tech and healthcare<sup>7</sup>.

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4 <https://www.inc.com/phillip-kane/whats-behind-great-resignation.html>

5 <https://hbr.org/2021/09/who-is-driving-the-great-resignation>

6 <https://info.hellobrightline.com/Pediatric-Behavioral-Health-Needs-Survey.html>

7 <https://hbr.org/2021/09/who-is-driving-the-great-resignation>

# Why is this happening?

The most common reasons cited for quitting include **not feeling valued** by their organizations (54%) and **not feeling a sense of belonging** at work (51%)<sup>8</sup>. While many workplaces are responding with transactional remedies, ie, increased compensation and perks, employees are actually more likely to care about relational factors, such as feeling appreciated and supported at work<sup>9</sup>.

## The role of burnout

Millions of workers have found themselves overwhelmed, emotionally exhausted, and feeling disconnected from their jobs (this is textbook burnout)<sup>10</sup>. Many feel like their employers just don't understand how hard the last 18 months have been. As a result, things have come to a head.

In a McKinsey survey, **36% of respondents quit without a new job lined up**<sup>11</sup>—such is the urgent desire for change. In the healthcare and social assistance industry, that percentage rises to 42%—unsurprising given the toll of the pandemic on frontline workers.

It's also likely that burnout levels have increased due to remote working. Both because of the blurred lines this type of work can create between work and home, but also as people are expected to return to the office, full-time and give up more flexible working arrangements.

Burnout and the greater attrition it's linked to are deeply connected to inadequate employee support. Employers who want to keep their talent on board will need to work on creating a [burnout-proof company culture](#) that protects and prioritizes employee wellbeing.

8 <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours>

9 <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours>

10 <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>

11 <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours>

# What is the impact of the Great Resignation?

At the end of July, a record-breaking 10.9 million jobs needed filling across the United States. This of course means **a significant labor shortage**, as well as huge disruption across multiple industries. And this could easily get worse. Consider the following:

- Microsoft's 2021 Work Trend Index states that more than 40% of the global workforce are considering quitting their job in 2021<sup>12</sup>
- A PwC survey from August 2021 reports that 65% of employees said they're looking for a new job<sup>13</sup>

When people leave a business, remaining teams can find themselves **understaffed** and **lacking key resources** and skill sets. This negatively affects everything from productivity and engagement to quality of work and revenue.

High staff turnover is also an expensive problem<sup>14</sup>. Recruiting and replacing people is costly and time-consuming—even more so in the midst of the Great Resignation, with so many other businesses also looking to refill their ranks. High turnover also makes recruitment even harder as it reflects badly on company culture and reputation.

It also puts added pressure on the employees left behind, who are forced to try and bridge the gap. More pressure on them means a greater chance of poor wellbeing and burnout, which means they're more likely to become part of the Big Quit—this can create a vicious cycle for workplaces already struggling to maintain healthy, productive teams.

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12 <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index>

13 <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/library/pulse-survey/future-of-work.html>

14 <https://www.hrdive.com/news/study-turnover-costs-employers-15000-per-worker/449142/>



# What can your organization do about it?

Clearly there's an urgent need to act here. And a clear message from employees: *we want more support, we want flexibility and we want to be valued. And if you aren't able to provide these things, we'll go elsewhere.*

Businesses that respond to this message can minimize staff turnover and the difficulties that brings. But more than that, they can become the kind of place that people love working at. Do that and you'll fix more than just turnover—after all, engaged, happy workers are 21% more profitable<sup>15</sup>.

But how can you best respond to the demands of today's employees?

## 1. Build a caring company culture

It's vital to develop a culture that shows them they're valued as individuals. In order to do this, companies must encourage **honest, open dialogue** between employees and managers. Managers need to regularly check in with staff to gauge satisfaction levels and discover areas where improvement is needed.

Listening to employees is a first step, but **taking action based on feedback** is how organizations can show people that their views are listened to and that they are valued as unique individuals.

A caring and supportive organizational culture leads to a reputation as a place where people thrive and grow, which makes resignations less likely and recruitment easier.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2018/06/22/four-lessons-from-companies-that-get-employee-engagement-right/?sh=358e4c3d21bd>

## 2. Develop a retention strategy

If your turnover rate is high, it may be time to develop a retention strategy that includes tailored retention programs. These should consider:

- **Pay** – are your salary ranges higher or at least equivalent to those offered by your competitors?
- **Working environment** – do you offer perks that make people happier (and therefore more engaged) at work? This could be anything from a casual dress code to free gym memberships and unlimited holidays
- **Personal development** – do employees have the opportunity to learn and progress within a reasonable timeframe? If not, they're likely to be offered opportunities to grow elsewhere
- **Recognition** – do you give deserving employees praise, shout-outs and rewards? A big part of feeling valued is getting recognition for doing good work
- **Relationships with managers** – do your managers act as mentors and develop healthy relationships with their teams? As the phrase goes, "People don't quit jobs, they quit managers."

## 3. Make sure remote staff are included and supported

Working from home can support employee wellbeing, giving employees the flexibility they clearly crave and the chance for **better work-life balance**. But remote workers sometimes struggle with loneliness and connection which can impact their mental wellbeing<sup>16</sup>.

There's also the problem of virtual presenteeism<sup>17</sup>, where people who are not well enough to work, either mentally or physically, feel the need to put in longer hours and always be 'on'.

As the full force of the pandemic recedes and huge numbers of people are still working from home, **managers need to make sure remote employees feel as included, valued and supported as their colleagues in the office**. This means ensuring good work-from-home setups, as well as plenty of face-to-face time in virtual meetings, including some just for socializing.

## 4. Support mental wellbeing

Mental health should be a central consideration when developing a company culture. Employees need to feel comfortable discussing problems like burnout and other wellbeing challenges, for their workplaces to be able to support them with the resources they need.

This means normalizing conversations about mental health and providing **comprehensive, inclusive mental health support** that staff can access—ideally whenever and wherever they need it, to ensure as many employees as possible use it.

Protecting the wellbeing of employees and showing them that they're cared for is crucial for retention, as well as recruitment. After all, 90% of young employees think mental health is as important as physical health<sup>18</sup>. And if the support isn't there, top talent won't be either.

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16 <https://www.koahealth.com/blog-post/how-loneliness-impacts-mental-health>

17 <https://foundations.koahealth.com/report-reducing-virtual-presenteeism/>

18 <https://www.inc.com/phillip-kane/whats-behind-great-resignation.html>





## About Koa Health

[Koa Health](#) is a leading global provider offering evidence-based, personalized, integrated solutions that deliver mental health for all. Available to more than 3 million users worldwide, Koa Health leverages deep clinical expertise, research, and technology to deliver practical and accessible support that adapts to people's unique circumstances, leading to lasting behavioral change and positive mental health outcomes.

Would you like to learn more about how Koa Health can help your business retain and attract great employees? [Book a call](#) today with our sales team.

