



Examining Healthcare's Workforce Sustainability Crisis: An Industry Report

Pulse Of Healthcare 2025



Overview

The healthcare industry — the nation's largest employment sector — is confronting an escalating workforce crisis. Working conditions have become so unsustainable that many healthcare professionals no longer see a future in the field. Several factors have converged to fuel both high turnover and a growing exodus from the industry altogether, including unmanageable workloads, chronic staffing shortages, lack of employer support, inadequate pay, and limited opportunities for career advancement.

This is happening at a critical time: according to [Indeed's Hiring Lab](#), as of August 2025, demand for healthcare workers was roughly 33% higher than pre-pandemic levels, far outpacing postings in other sectors. Even as overall labor market demand stabilizes, healthcare employers continue to struggle to attract and retain staff, intensifying the workforce crisis and putting added pressure on the system.

To further examine this crisis, Indeed commissioned a survey of 900+ healthcare professionals who noted they were open to new job opportunities.

The research revealed that solutions to improve workplace conditions do exist, but first, organizations must overcome the barriers that keep employees from accessing them. It also highlights how AI-powered technology can ease administrative overload, allowing workers to refocus on what matters most: patient care.

What We Wanted to Learn

What are key drivers of the healthcare career sustainability crisis, including the factors shaping worker satisfaction and challenges?

How pressures are showing up in the workforce — from lack of employer support to turnover and exits from healthcare?

Which solutions and strategies, from staffing and compensation to leadership support, wellness programs, and new technologies like AI, are truly improving working conditions and employee retention and morale?

How AI could redefine healthcare work, even as it raises questions of trust and judgment?

Key Observations

The healthcare system is under strain as more workers walk away.

The healthcare system faces deeper strain as burnout drives workers not just to switch jobs but to leave the field entirely. In 2025, two in five say their roles feel unsustainable, and one in four are considering exiting healthcare altogether — a shift from turnover to career loss.

Fulfillment through patient relationships is becoming overshadowed.

Patient relationships remain healthcare's greatest source of fulfillment, but that sense of purpose is fading. Many now cite dissatisfaction with pay, staffing, and growth opportunities, especially limited advancement, as key reasons they're considering leaving the field.

Key Observations

Healthcare workers lack the support they need at work.

Only one in five healthcare workers feel strongly supported by their employer, yet the research shows a strong link between this support and overall job satisfaction.

AI adoption is rising — with caution.

AI is used by 60% of healthcare organizations, mostly in support roles like note-taking, charting, and patient education. While many see its potential to lighten workloads, concerns remain over privacy, clinical judgment, and losing the human connection that makes care meaningful

A low-angle shot of a person with curly hair and tattoos, wearing blue scrubs, looking upwards. The background is a wooden wall with horizontal planks. The lighting is warm and natural.

1 | A workforce in crisis

2 | Breaking the cycle is possible

3 | AI stands on the precipice of
reshaping healthcare work

Findings

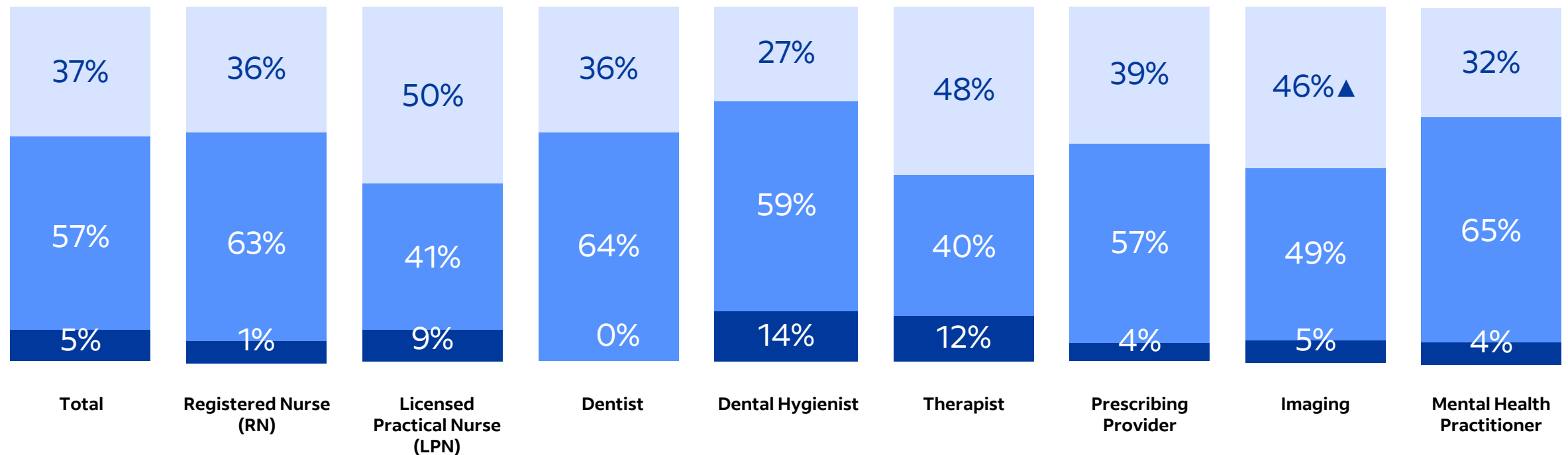


A workforce in crisis

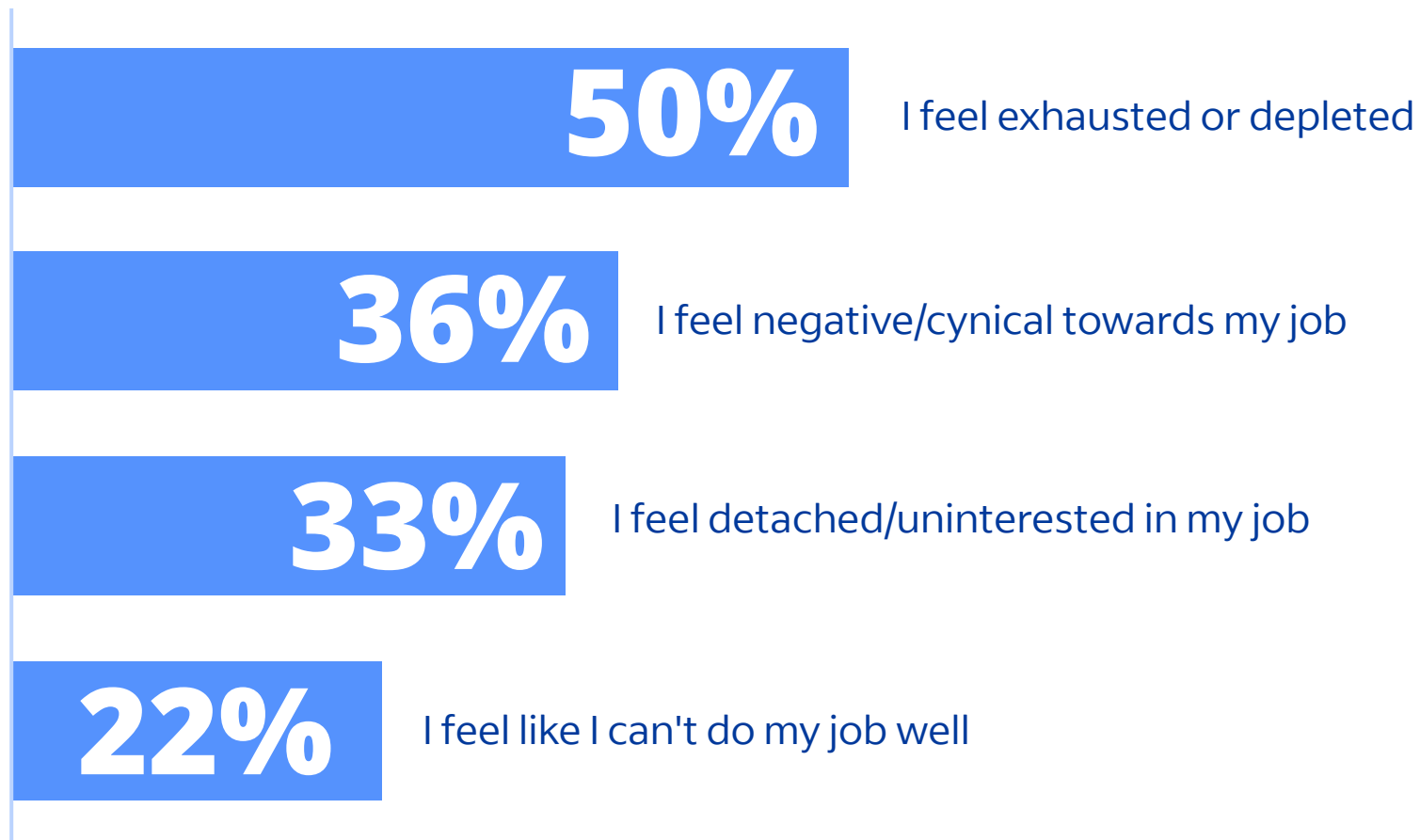
50% of healthcare workers report feeling exhausted in their current role, while only **one in three are satisfied with their job** — underscoring the daily strain that far outweighs long-term fulfillment.

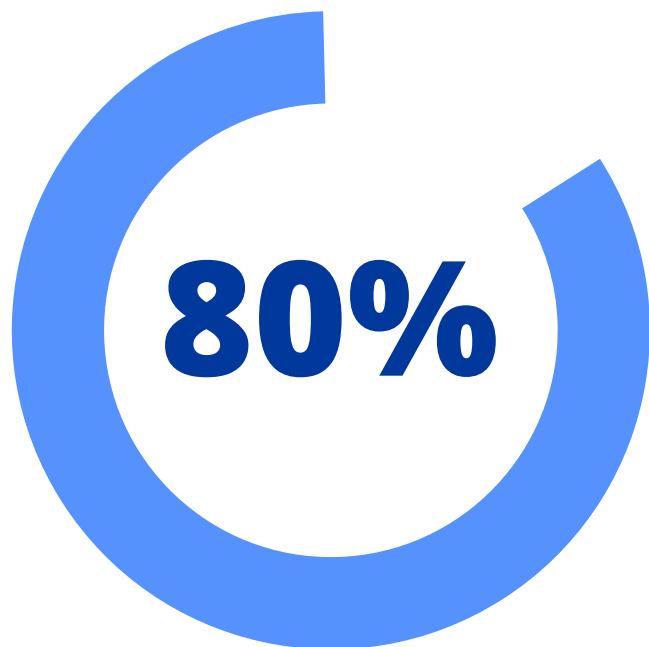
~2 in 3 healthcare employees
are not satisfied with their job.

■ Not at all satisfied ■ Neutral ■ Completely satisfied



The emotional and mental toll of healthcare work.





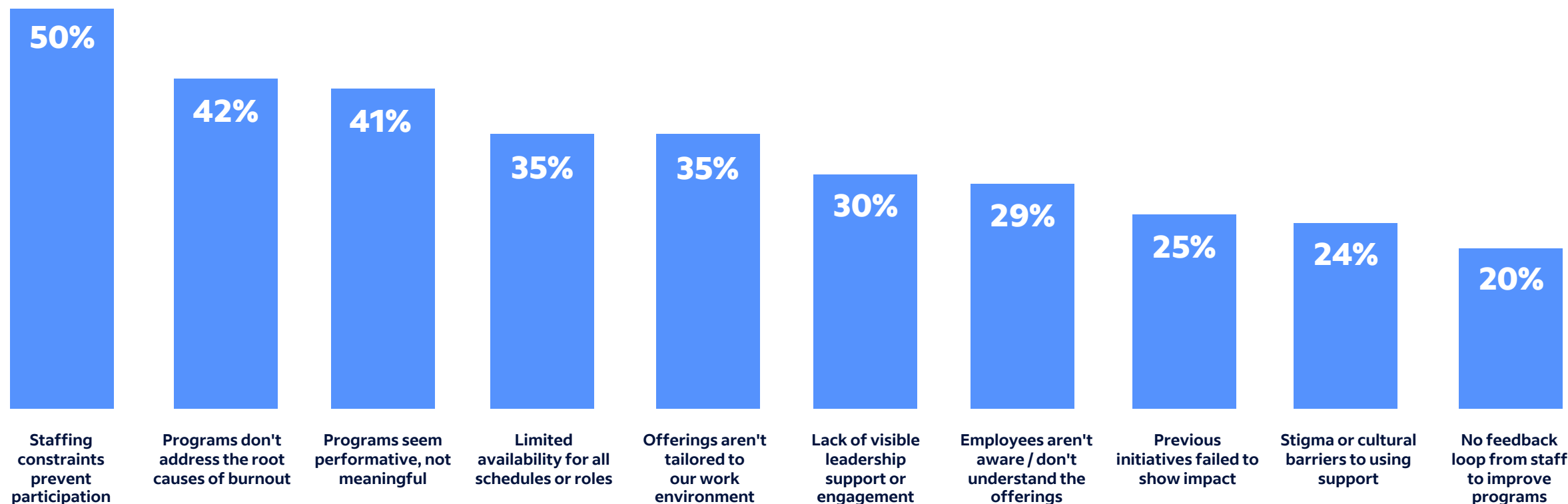
of respondents say existing well-being solutions at their workplace are ineffective.

The disconnect:

Employees acknowledge that initiatives are in place to improve workplace conditions, but they don't have the bandwidth to participate in them, meaning the few solutions that may be effective lack impact. **Healthcare workers report being short-staffed 43% of the time.** This is demonstrative of the cyclical nature of the healthcare workforce sustainability crisis.

Why are offered solutions not impactful?

► Top reasons employee initiatives lack impact in the workplace



Silver lining: Interpersonal relationships and work-life balance remain the strongest sources of satisfaction for healthcare workers.



Top 5 Most Satisfied Job Factors

- 01.** Relationships with patients (50%)
- 02.** Consistent and predictable work hours (41%)
- 03.** Relationships with managers and coworkers (39%)
- 04.** Ability to take time off (36%)
- 05.** Flexibility and control over schedule (33%)



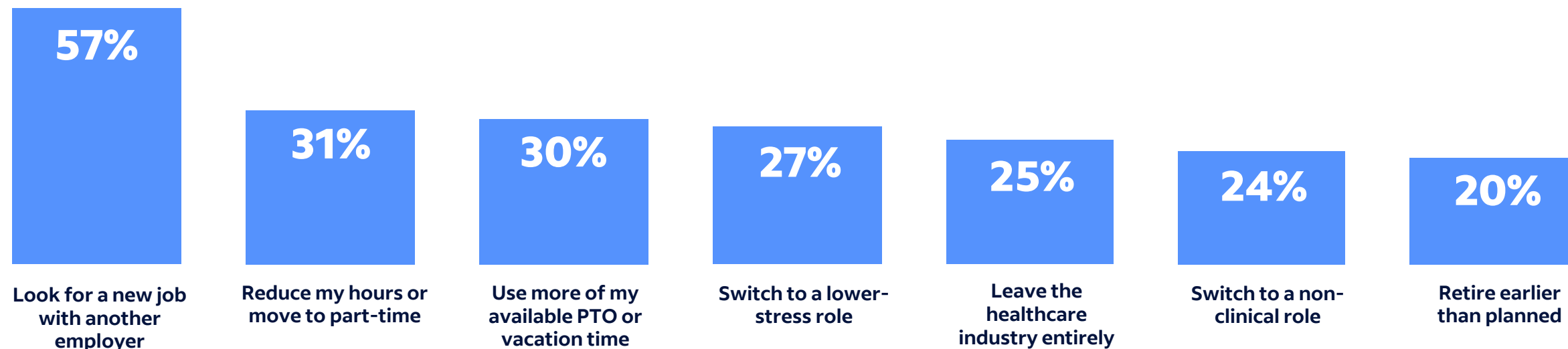
Top 5 Least Satisfied Job Factors

- 01.** Pay and financial incentives (40%)
- 02.** Staffing levels and support (36%)
- 03.** Opportunities for growth and career advancement (33%)
- 04.** Benefits package (31%)
- 05.** Employer's commitment to employee well-being (27%)

Nearly 60% of those who feel their job is unsustainable are looking for a new role.

Beyond the personal toll, this churn carries major financial costs: the 2024 Pulse of Healthcare found that **replacing a single healthcare worker costs employers an average of six to nine months of salary**. Among those in unsustainable roles, **one in four are considering leaving the industry** altogether, while **one in five are weighing early retirement**.

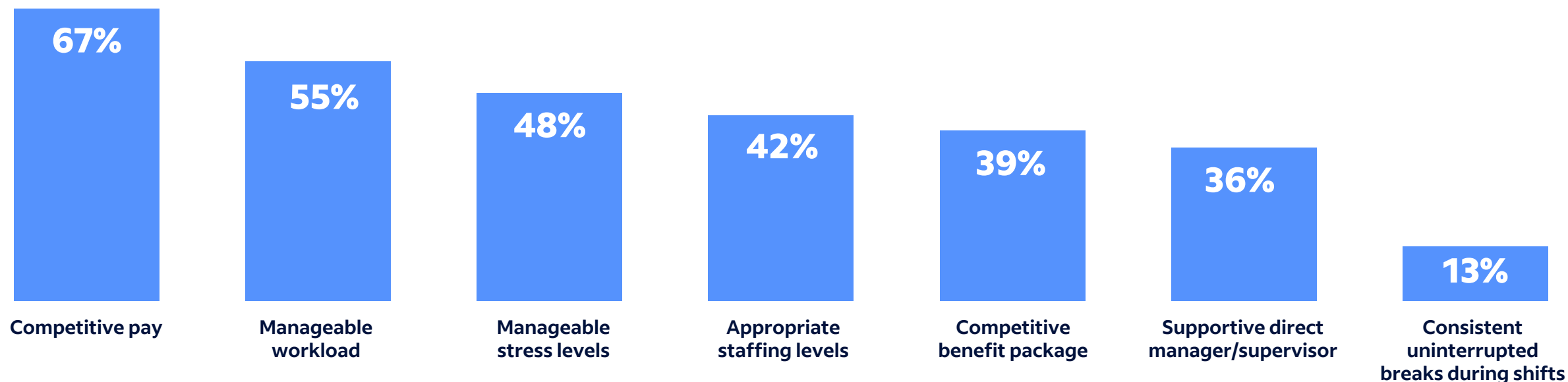
► Actions employees are considering to change their current working situation



What matters most: Higher pay coupled with manageable workload.

Compensation is the top source of dissatisfaction for healthcare workers (40%) — and the **single most important factor** for long-term job sustainability (67%). It's followed by **manageable workload** (55%) and **manageable stress levels** (48%).

► Factors that contribute to long-term job sustainability



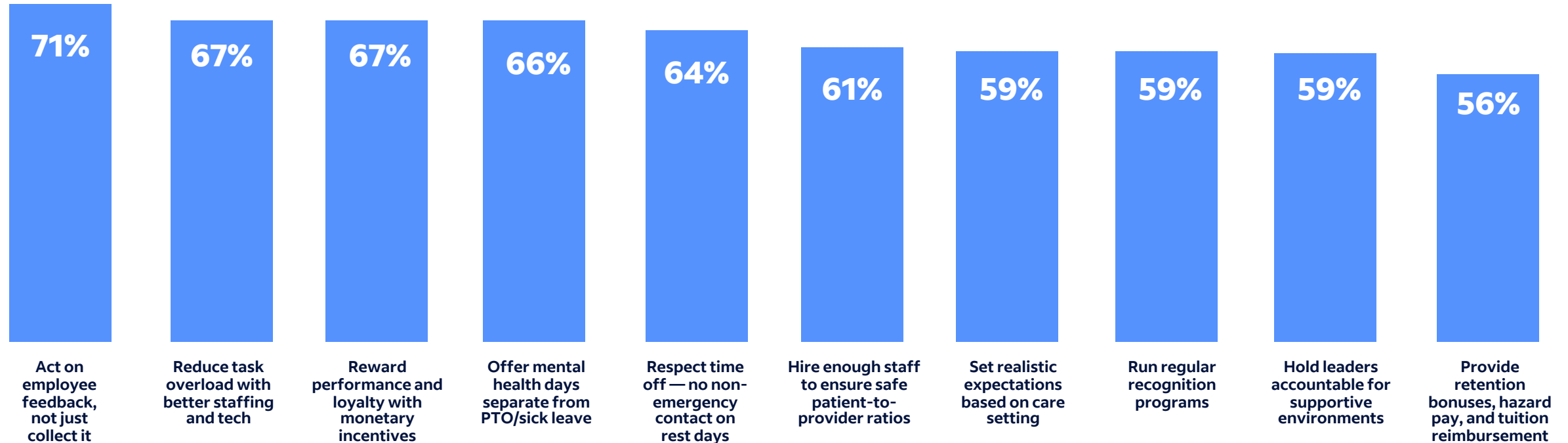
A large, bold, orange number '2' is positioned on the left side of the slide. It is set against a dark blue background with a subtle, lighter blue curved shape behind it. The entire content is enclosed in a thin orange rectangular border.

Breaking the
cycle is possible

— but only with real leadership buy-in.

Top 10 solutions to improve the workplace.

Healthcare workers report that if their employer were to implement **even one** of the following initiatives, this would improve their working conditions.



Being valued goes a long way.

Satisfaction doesn't always require major investments. Many of the one in three workers who are content in their jobs credit a supportive team. Yet healthcare workers report **feeling underappreciated by senior leadership 37% of the time** and **by their direct manager 29% of the time**.

► Top recognition initiatives to improve workplace conditions

59%

Recurring recognition programs, such as 'Employee of the Month' status, are the most impactful initiative for fostering appreciation

51%

Company points that can be used to buy things

49%

Ability to provide real-time feedback on coworkers

40%

Celebration events outside of work hours



Leadership that listens and acts.

Regular leadership check-ins build trust, drive proactive problem-solving, and address challenges before they escalate — especially when leaders act on feedback. **More than 80% of employees say these touchpoints impact their well-being, yet 69% say they rarely take part.**

Beyond one-on-one conversations, **employees say leadership should be accountable for creating supportive work environments.** They want managers trained to address burnout, grief, and conflict with empathy, and value promotion from within to ensure leaders have firsthand understanding of frontline challenges.

► Most effective leadership efforts to improve workplace conditions

59%

Hold leadership accountable for creating supportive work environments

54%

Educate managers on how to respond to burnout, grief, and conflict

52%

Promote from within to ensure leaders understand frontline challenges

Mental health solutions can play a critical role in sustaining a workforce strained by stress and exhaustion.

66%

say mental health days outside of PTO/sick leave would improve conditions.

52%

report that free or subsidized counseling, therapy, and burnout recovery programs would help — rising to 63% among mental health practitioners.

41%

cite on-the-job initiatives such as quiet rooms and peer support groups available during scheduled shifts.



Adequate staffing is critical and impacts nearly every aspect of employee satisfaction.

67%

say reducing task overload through proper staffing and technology would give them more time with patients, improving both care and job satisfaction.

64%

of employees say respecting their time off is essential — but this is only possible when staffing levels are sufficient.

61%

emphasize the need to hire enough staff to maintain safe patient-to-provider ratios.



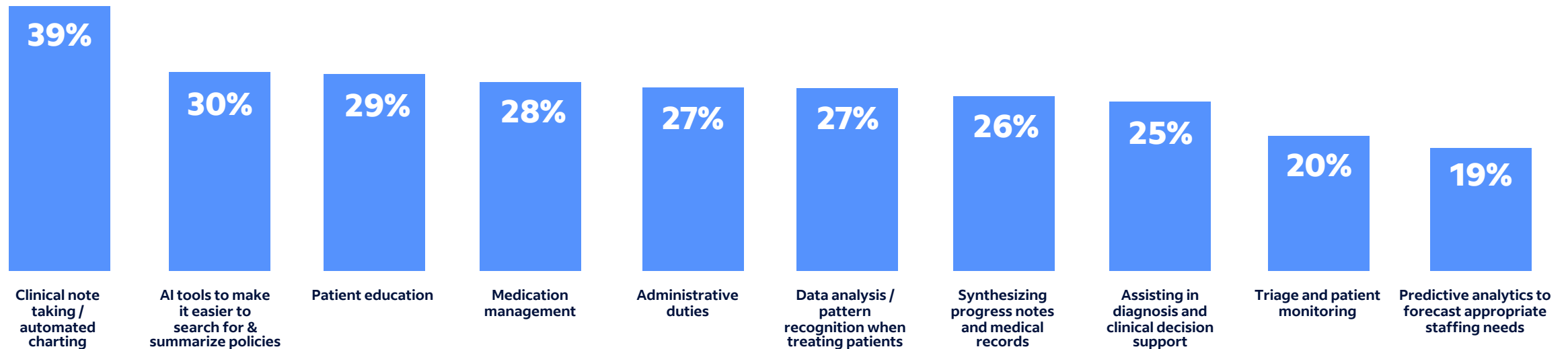
3

AI stands on the precipice of reshaping healthcare work.

AI is already being used by 60% of healthcare organizations.

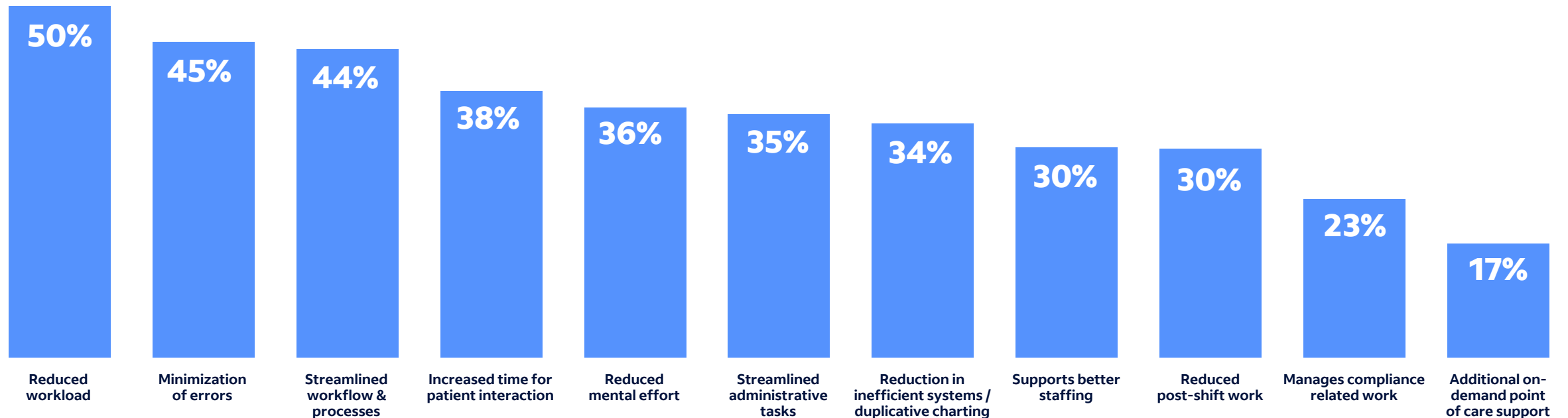
Healthcare organizations are turning to AI for everyday support — from note-taking and search to patient education and data analysis. By easing the administrative burden, **which affects 40% of shifts and is cited as the top threat to well-being**, these tools free workers to focus more on care.

► How current employers are using AI



50% of healthcare workers expect AI to reduce their workload — the single biggest benefit they associate with the technology.

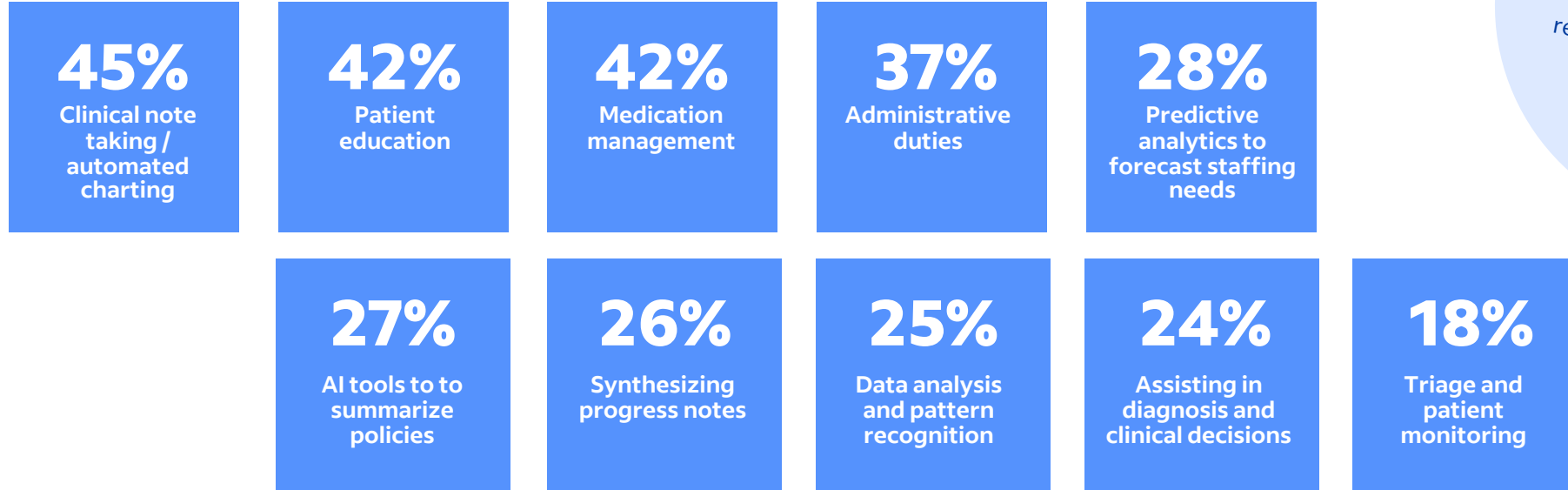
► Expected benefits of employer AI use



Non-users primarily want AI for admin duties, patient education, and medication management.

More than 50% of healthcare workers said the AI tool most likely to improve their working conditions was **clinical documentation technology** that streamlines **recording patient encounters** and **writing clinical notes**.

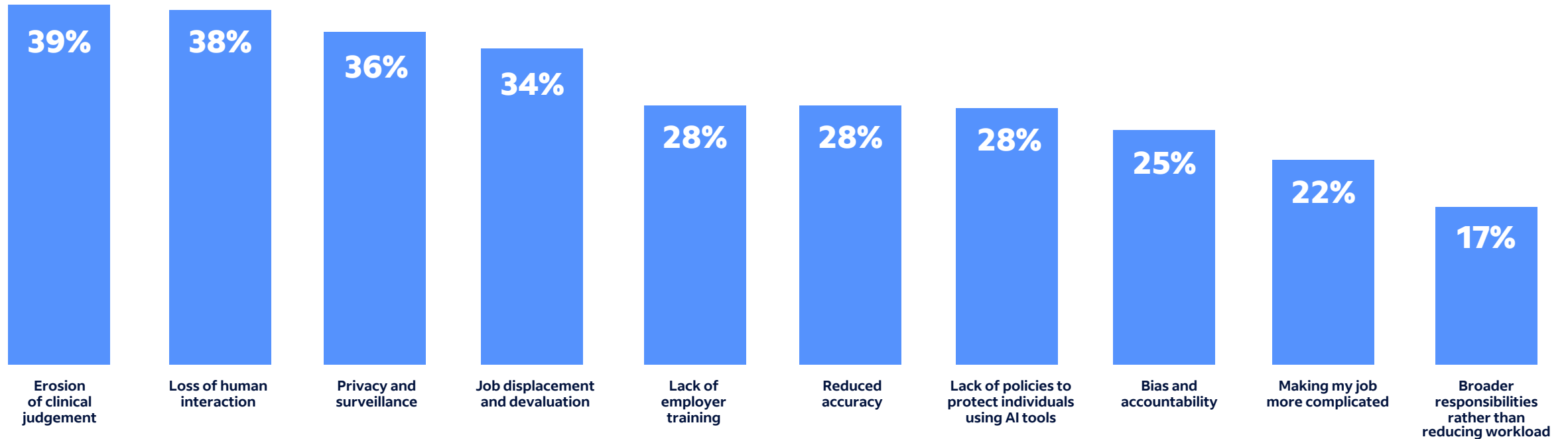
► Top AI tools employees most wish their employers used

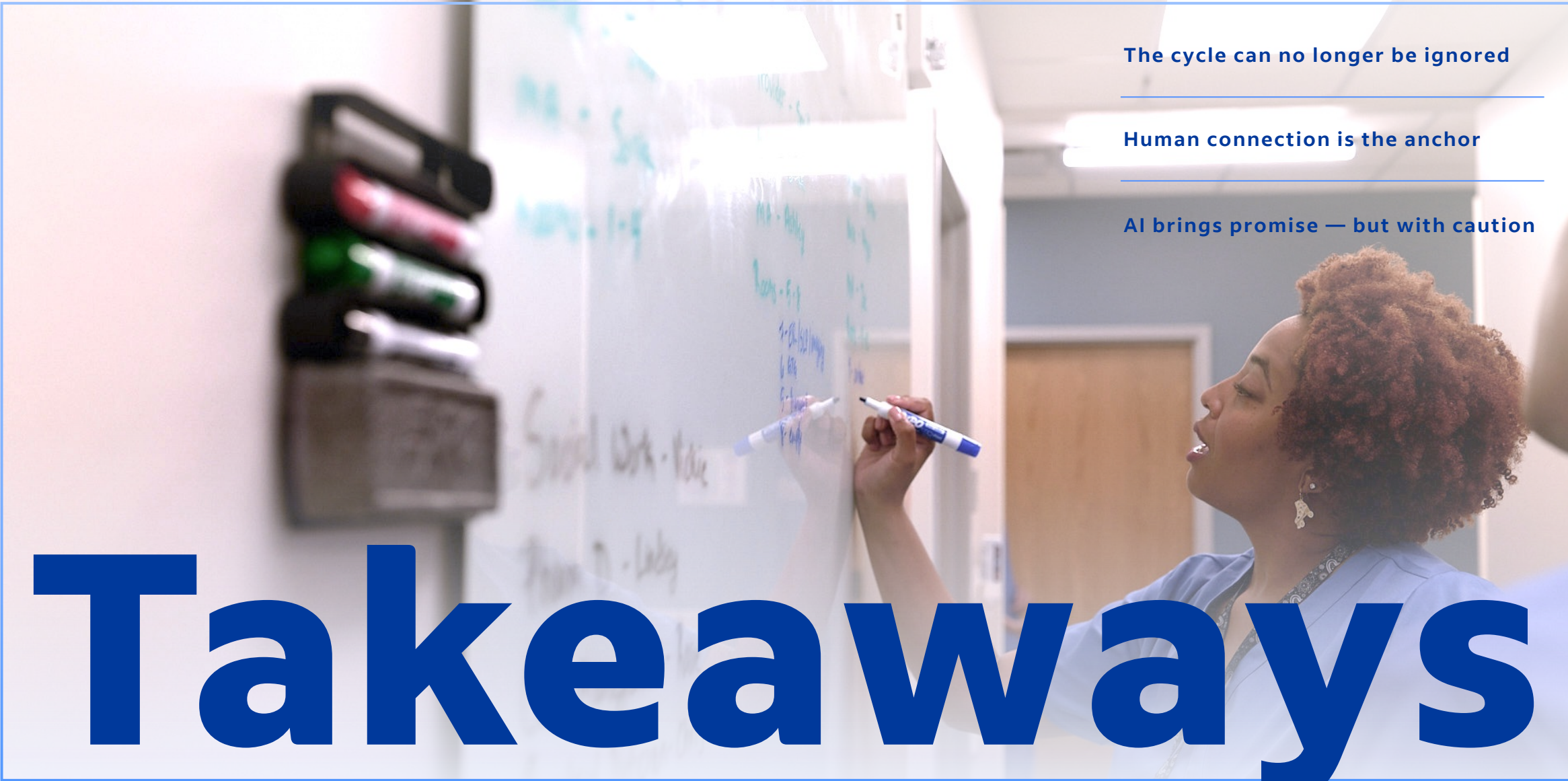


53%
say clinical documentation tools that streamline recording patient encounters and writing clinical notes would have the greatest impact on their work.

Despite AI optimism, healthcare workers flag serious concerns that must be addressed.

► Top concerns employees have about workplace use of AI



A woman with curly hair is writing on a whiteboard in a meeting room. The whiteboard has some text on it, including "Social Work - Note" and "Page 11 - Lady". There are markers on a tray to the left of the whiteboard.

The cycle can no longer be ignored

Human connection is the anchor

AI brings promise — but with caution

Takeaways

Takeaways

The cycle can no longer be ignored.

The workforce sustainability crisis in healthcare is deeply cyclical: understaffing creates stress, which drives workers out, worsening shortages and compounding administrative burdens. Its constant, looming nature makes it tempting for leaders to defer action or apply band-aid solutions, but the industry can no longer afford to do so. Nearly 60% of workers are already looking for new jobs — and many are considering leaving the field altogether. Employers must act decisively to break the pattern before the workforce crisis deepens.



Takeaways

Human connection is the anchor.

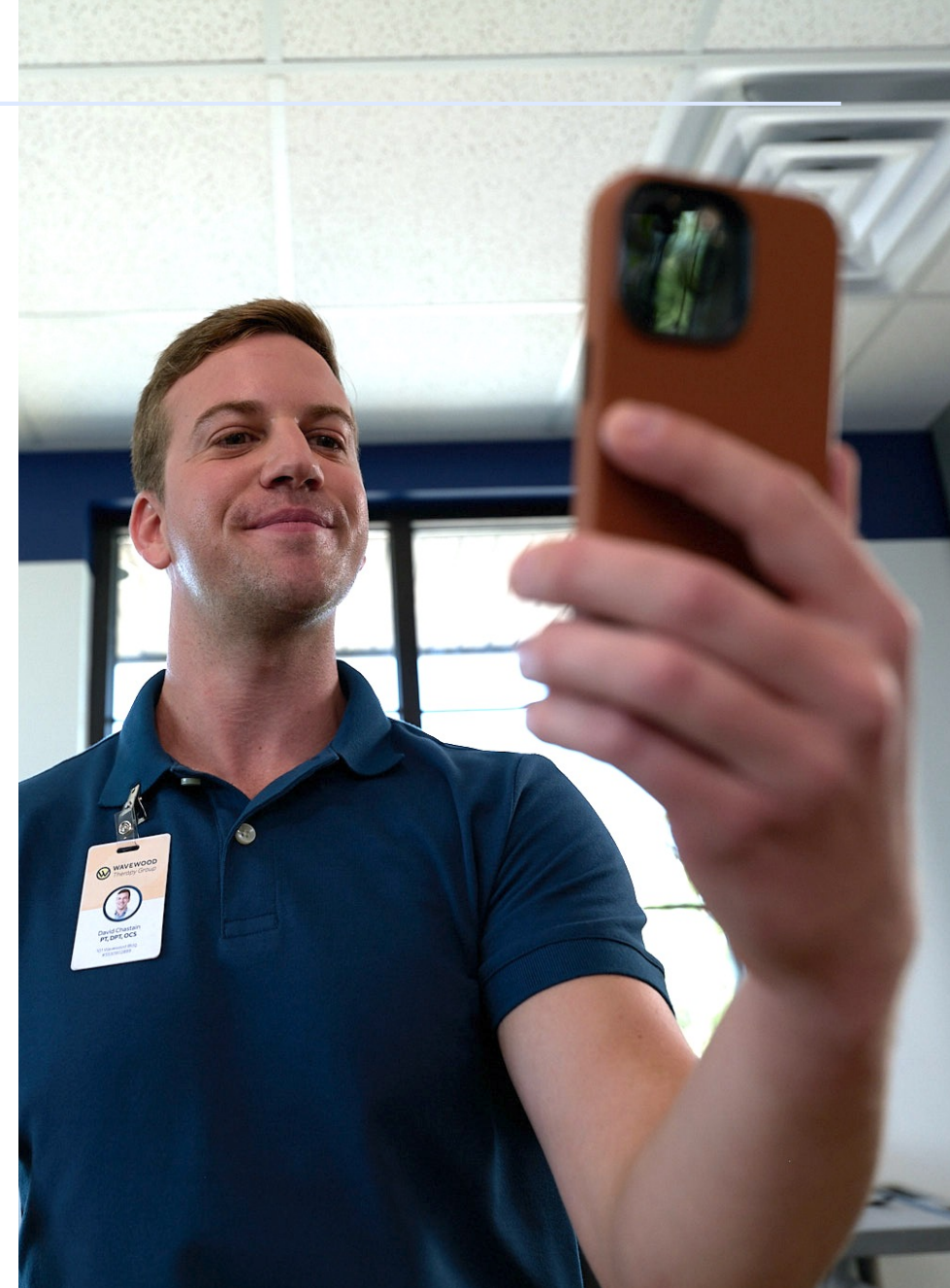
Healthcare workers consistently cite relationships — with patients, managers, and coworkers — as their strongest source of fulfillment, along with the value of work-life balance that allows time for family and friends. While pay and clear career paths matter greatly, workers emphasize that strong relationships and balance are what make the day-to-day sustainable. The takeaway for employers is clear: foster supportive environments and protect time for both patient care and personal life to sustain the workforce.

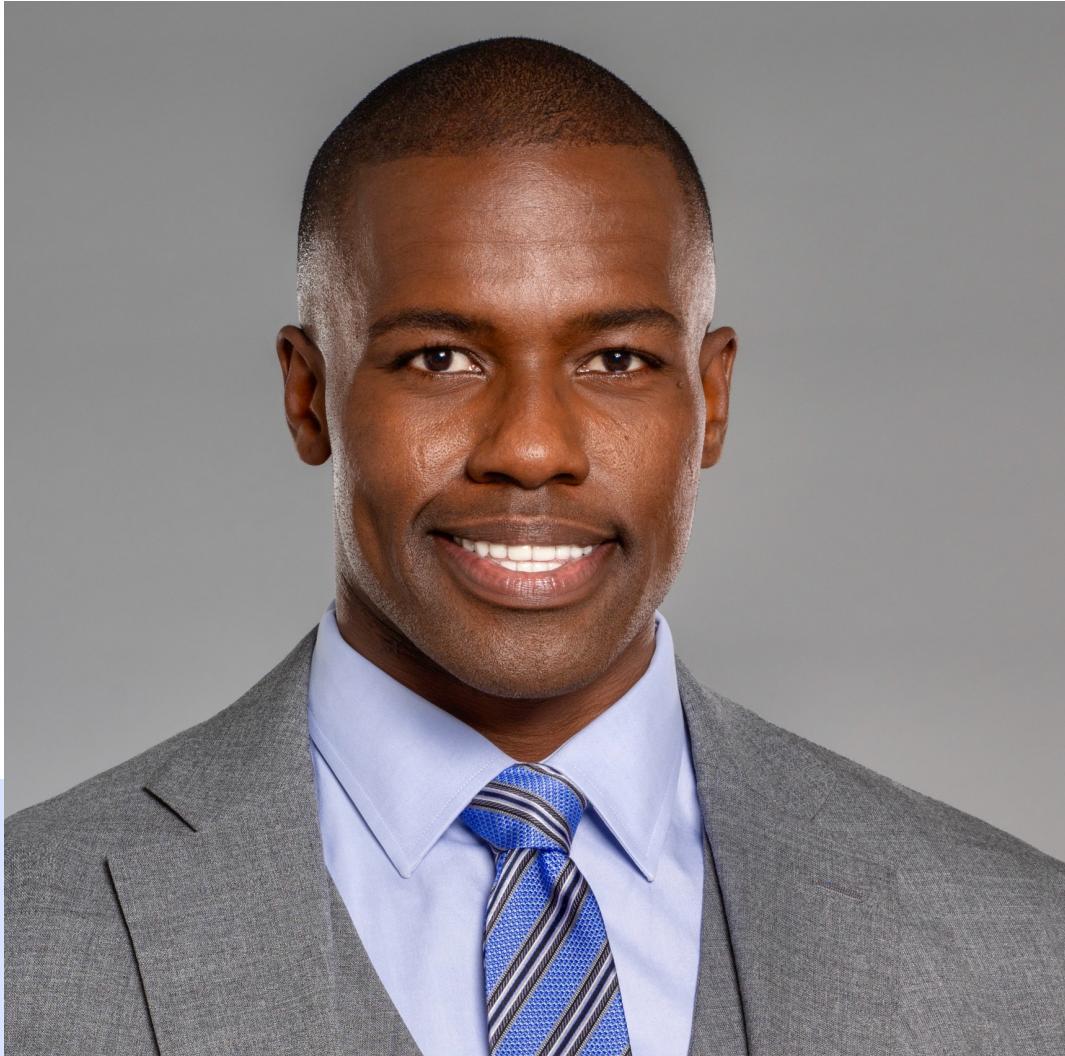


Takeaways

AI brings promise — but with caution.

Healthcare workers are optimistic about AI's potential, but they need reassurance about how it will be implemented. Employers must communicate and build trust, showing that AI will streamline workflows rather than add new burdens — a concern raised by nearly 20% of workers. If introduced thoughtfully, AI can protect the human side of care by freeing up time for patient interactions while improving efficiency across the organization. Still, concerns about privacy, clinical judgment, and the erosion of human connection remain real and must be addressed for adoption to succeed.





“As an emergency physician, I see every day how deeply this workforce crisis touches both patients and providers. The system only works when the people within it feel supported, seen, and valued.

The data in this report reflects what many of us on the front lines already know - burnout isn't just about long hours, it's about feeling unheard.

As a medical correspondent, I've covered countless innovations in healthcare, but the most impactful solutions still start with listening. If we want a future where both patients and professionals can thrive, we have to design systems that not only care for our patients, but for the caregivers too.”

Dr. Darien Sutton

*Board Certified Emergency Medicine Physician
and ABC News Medical Correspondent*



20-minute

robust online quantitative survey | Fielded: July 23 – August 6, 2025

To qualify, respondents had to be US-based healthcare professionals aged 18–65 with at least a high school diploma or higher education. Participants were a mix of Indeed and non-Indeed users, employed full-time or part-time and identified as either active job seekers—those taking steps to find new employment — or passive job seekers — those open to new opportunities. Respondents work in healthcare occupations that Indeed classifies as the most supply-constrained, where employer demand significantly exceeds the number of active job seekers.

1. Registered Nurses (N=75)

5. Licensed Practical Nurses (N=54)

2. Dentists (N=64)

6. Dental Hygienists (N=74)

3. Therapists (N=60)

Physical Therapists
Occupational Therapists
Speech-Language Pathologists

7. Prescribing Providers (N=197)

Nurse Practitioners
Physicians
Physician Assistants

4. Imaging (N=63)

Radiologic Technologists
Nuclear Medicine Technologists
Sonographers
Medical Imaging Technicians
MRI Technologists

8. Mental Health Practitioners (N=57)

Certified Behavior Analysts	School Psychologists
Psychologists	School Therapists &
Psychiatrists	School Based Clinicians
Clinical Social Workers	Therapists & Counselors
Marriage & Family Therapists & Counselors	

9. Other (N=280)

N=924 US Healthcare Workers



Thank you.

Questions? Please reach out to us at: us_pr@indeed.com

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