

# Toward an employee value proposition (EVP) in the healthcare sector

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# **Executive summary**

Healthcare faces a difficult recruiting and retention environment. Consistent with current turnover experience, 21% of full-time hospital and healthcare system employees are at risk of turnover within the next two years.

A well-crafted employee value proposition (EVP) can be an important element in a recruitment and retention strategy. An EVP conveys the mix of tangible and intangible rewards and benefits that make working for an organization particularly attractive. While reflecting an organization's comparative advantages as an employer, it should also respond to the needs and expectations of the organization's workforce.

What do healthcare employees want in exchange for the work they do? What do they prioritize? This report answers these questions by examining how employees prioritize the importance of a range of job features and employee benefits and how priorities vary across employees. It also examines the extent to which some specific job issues are problematic for healthcare employees.

Salary is the job feature that healthcare employees most often rate among the three most important to them; nonetheless, almost one-third do not rate it among their top three. Benefits and work-life balance are the next features most often rated among employees' three most important (45% and 44%, respectively).

Regarding specific benefits, healthcare employees most often rate paid time off (PTO), health insurance and a retirement savings plan among the three most important. No other benefit is remotely close.

There is very little difference in the relative ratings of job features and benefits between healthcare employees at risk of turnover and those not at risk. There are, however, noteworthy differences across employees at different life stages.

- Older employees are more likely than younger ones to rate benefits among the three job features most important to them. It's not that younger employees tend to view benefits as unimportant—36% of those under age 40 rate benefits among the three job features most important to them—but there are other items they more often rate in their top three compared with older employees.
- Work-life balance is a top-three most important item for one-half of employees under age 40, but for only 38% of those 60 and older.
- Advancement opportunities matter more among more younger employees compared with their older peers—20% of those under 40 rate it among their three most important job features. The same is true for professional development.
- While younger employees most often rate PTO, health insurance and a retirement savings plan among the three benefits most important to them, they are more likely than their older peers to rank other benefits in their top three.
- Parental leave tends to matter more among more employees under age 40—18% rate it among the three benefits most important to them, significantly more than their older peers. Likewise, childcare benefits tend to matter more among more of those under 40.
- Mental health resources are another benefit that tends to matter more among more employees under age 40—13% rate it among their three most important benefits.
- Eldercare benefits appear to matter more among more older employees. While very few employees across age groups rate it among their three most important benefits, those age 50 and older are significantly less likely than their younger peers to rate it among the three benefits least important to them.

## Introduction

As with many sectors in the post pandemic economy, healthcare faces a difficult recruiting and retention environment. This reflects, but also predates, the ramifications of COVID-19. The pandemic fundamentally altered many employees' views of work—particularly how they prioritize well-being and work-life balance. However, as noted in a recent post by the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy, "concern about how an aging population and a rise in chronic diseases are affecting turnover rates in health care has been the topic of conversation in hospital and clinical board rooms for several years."

According to the 2023 NSI National Health Care Retention and RN Staffing Report, the hospital employee turnover rate increased from 19% in 2018 to 23% in 2022, with turnover among registered nurses (RNs) increasing from 17% to 23%. In fact, the national RN vacancy rate doubled from 8% in 2019 to 16% in 2022, and the norm period to recruit an experienced RN is now over 90 days.<sup>2</sup>

The TIAA Institute launched a research initiative in 2022 to help the higher education sector more successfully recruit and retain talent by deepening understanding of what employees want, need and prioritize in return for the work they do. This report draws from the 2023 *TIAA Institute Healthcare Workforce Survey* to extend that research to the healthcare sector. The survey examines the experience of full-time employees—RNs, physicians and surgeons, other medical professionals, office and administrative staff, and nonmedical professionals—in hospitals, healthcare systems and medical practices that are part of a system.<sup>3</sup> It includes a set of questions covering employee prioritization of a range of job features and employee benefits, in addition to job change expectations and problematic issues at work.

Armed with such knowledge, organizations can communicate with greater impact the tangible and intangible rewards and benefits they offer to prospective and current employees. In the corporate sector, this is often done through an employee value proposition (EVP). The research findings can also help healthcare leaders identify gaps in the employment offer or experience.<sup>4</sup>



- 1 "Turnover in Health Care: Why Health Care Worker Satisfaction Matters," University of Southern California Sol Price School of Public Policy. Nov. 17, 2023. https://healthadministrationdegree.usc.edu/blog/turnover-in-health-care
- 2 2023 NSI National Health Care Retention & RN Staffing Report. NSI Nursing Solutions, Inc. March 2023. https://www.nsinursingsolutions.com/Documents/Library/NSI\_National\_Health\_Care\_Retention\_Report.pdf
- 3 1,516 individuals employed full-time across five occupation groups in hospitals, healthcare systems and medical practices that are part of a system were surveyed online from October 6 to October 20, 2023. They included registered nurses (404), physicians and surgeons (300), other medical professionals (301), office and administrative staff (307), and nonmedical professionals (204). "Nonmedical professionals" refers to those in management, community and social service, business and financial operations, and computer operations. The sample was acquired through Dynata, an online panel provider. Responses were weighted based on data from Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (May 2022), U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- 4 M. Mortensen and A. C. Edmondson, "Rethink Your Employee Value Proposition." Harvard Business Review, January/February 2023. https://hbr.org/2023/01/rethink-your-employee-value-proposition

## Turnover risk in the healthcare workforce

Twenty-one percent of full-time healthcare employees are at risk of turnover within the next two years. This includes 18% who do not want to be working for their current employer two years from now and 14% who think that they will not be working for their current employer two years from now. Ten percent of hospital and healthcare system employees are in both groups (Figure 1).

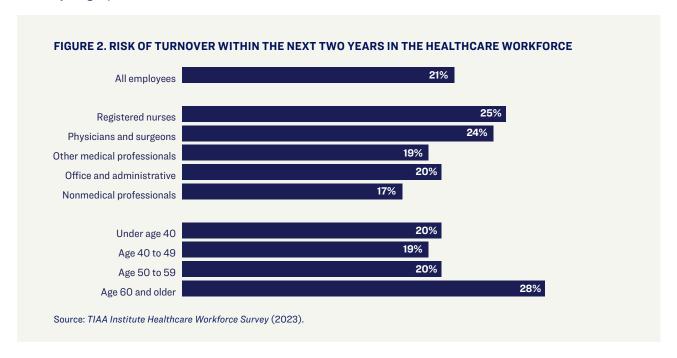
#### FIGURE 1. RISK OF TURNOVER WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS IN THE HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE

21% of employees are a turnover risk

	% of healthcare employees
Do not want to be and do not expect to be working for current employer in 2 years	10%
Do not want be working for current employer in 2 years, but expect to be	8%
Want be working for current employer in 2 years, but do not expect to be	3%
Want to be and expect to be working for current employer in 2 years	79%

Source: TIAA Institute Healthcare Workforce Survey (2023).

The likelihood of departure within the next two years is somewhat greater among RNs, as well as physicians and surgeons; one-quarter of each group is at risk of turnover (Figure 2). Turnover is also a greater possibility among those age 60 and older compared with their younger peers, but this is driven by potential retirements in addition to job changes. Among RNs, 37% of those age 60 and older are at risk of turnover compared with 22% of their younger peers.



So, how can hospitals and healthcare systems more effectively recruit and retain the talent they need?

<sup>5</sup> Of current healthcare employees, 4% expect to retire within the next two years. The 28% figure among those 60 and older drops to 17% when those who expect to retire in this timeframe are excluded

## Toward a healthcare sector EVP

A well-crafted EVP can be an important element in recruitment and retention strategic planning. An EVP clearly conveys to both prospective and current employees the mix of tangible and intangible rewards and benefits that make working for an organization particularly attractive. An EVP is holistic: It should not only reflect an organization's particular strengths and characteristics as an employer but also respond to the needs and expectations—both financial and nonfinancial—of the organization's workforce. What do employees want in exchange for the work they do? What do they prioritize?

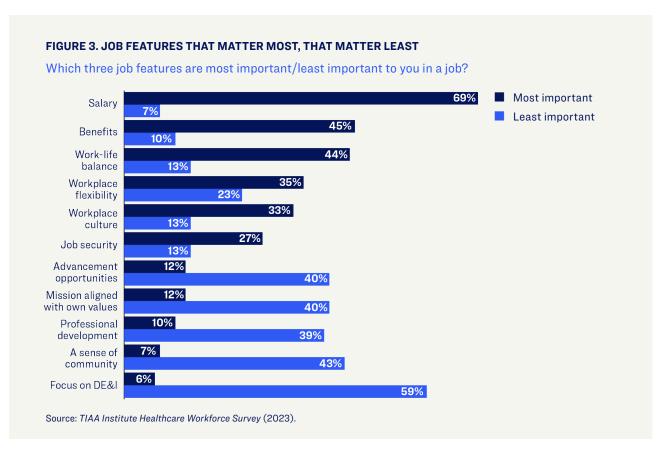
Priorities will certainly vary across members of an organization's workforce. So, it's important to think in terms of workforce segments, particularly those defined by life stage. An organization cannot provide every employee with everything they want, but it should think in terms of providing every employee with things they prioritize. Some priorities will be common across the workforce (the most obvious being competitive pay); others will not. Thinking this way is especially important if an organization is challenged in the recruitment and retention of a particular workforce segment.

The research discussed here provides this type of nuanced understanding of hospital and healthcare system employees. It examines how they prioritize the importance of a range of job features and employee benefits and how priorities vary across employees. It also examines the extent to which some specific job issues are problematic among the healthcare workforce.

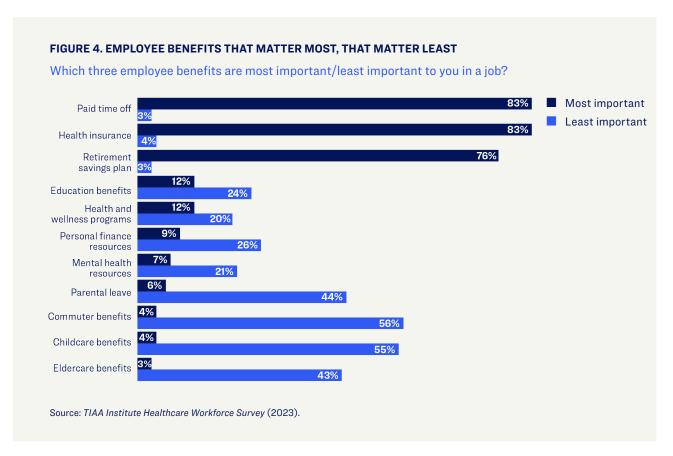
## What do employees value in a job?

Survey respondents were asked to consider 11 job features and identify the three most important to them in a job and the three least important. Likewise, they were asked to do the same with 11 specific employee benefits.

Salary is the job feature that healthcare employees most often rate among the three most important to them; nonetheless, almost one-third do not rate it among their top three (Figure 3). Benefits and work-life balance are the next features most often rated among employees' three most important (45% and 44%, respectively). One-third of healthcare employees rate workplace flexibility (e.g., in days/hours of work, in work location, remote work) and a positive workplace culture among the three job features most important to them.

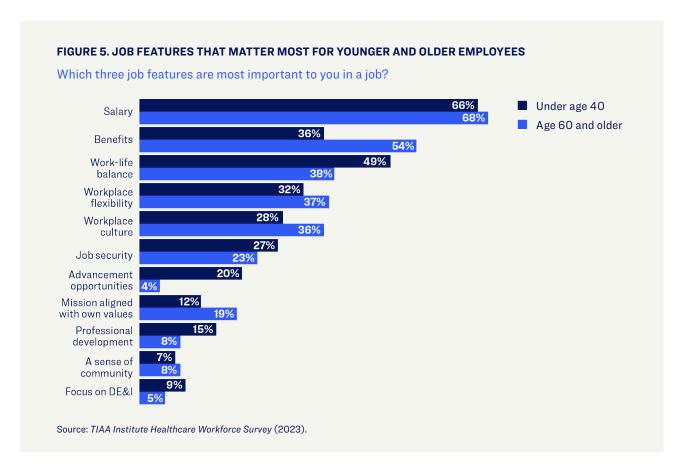


Regarding specific employee benefits, healthcare employees most often rate paid time off (PTO), health insurance and a retirement savings plan among their three most important (Figure 4). No other benefit is remotely close.



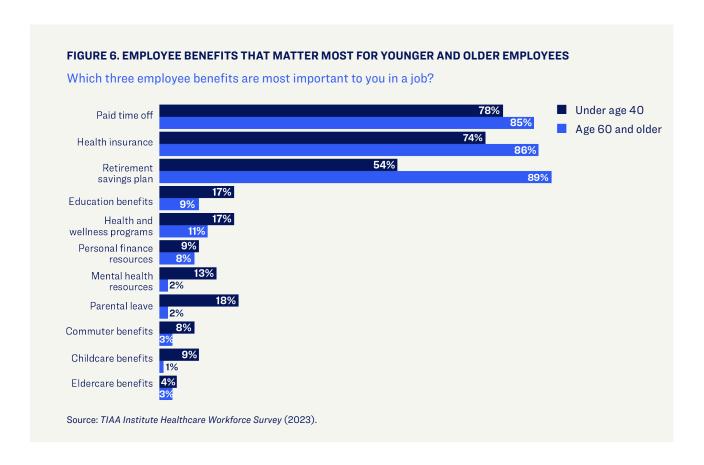
There is very little difference in the relative ratings of either job features or benefits between employees at risk of turnover within the next two years and those not at risk. While there is little difference across age groups in the percentage rating salary among their three most important job features, differences are apparent regarding other items (Figure 5, Figure A1).

- Older employees are more likely than younger ones to rate benefits among the three job features most important to them. It's not that younger employees tend to view benefits as unimportant—36% of those under age 40 rate benefits among the three job features most important to them, and only 10% rate benefits among the three least important to them—but there are other items they more often rate in their top three compared with older employees.
- Work-life balance is a top-three most important item for one-half of employees under age 40 and a comparable share of those age 40–59, but only 38% of those age 60 or older rate it among their three most important.
- Advancement opportunities matter more among more younger employees—20% of those under 40 rate it a topthree most important job feature (significantly more than their older peers), while only 23% rate it among their three least important (significantly less than their older peers). Analogously, professional development is more often a top-three most important job feature for younger employees than for their older peers.
- Mission tends to matter more among employees age 60-plus, and workplace culture more among more of those age 50-plus.



PTO, health insurance and a retirement savings plan are most often rated among the three most important employee benefits by each age group. That said, there are differences in the percentage of each group doing so (Figure 6, Figure A2). Just as younger employees are less likely than older ones to rate benefits among their three most important job features, they less often rate "traditional benefits" (i.e., health insurance and a retirement savings plan) among the three benefits most important to them. Again, it's not that they view these benefits as unimportant—74% and 54% of those under age 40 rate health insurance and a retirement savings plan, respectively, among the three benefits most important to them; only 7% rate each among the three least important to them. But there are other benefits they more often rate in their top three compared with older employees.

- Not surprisingly, parental leave tends to matter more among more employees under age 40—18% rate it among the three benefits most important to them (significantly more than their older peers) and only 29% rate it among their three least important benefits (significantly less than their older peers). Likewise, childcare benefits tend to matter more among more of those under 40, as well as those age 40–49.
- Mental health resources are another benefit that tends to matter more among more employees under age 40—13% rate it among their three most important benefits (significantly more than their older peers). While those under 40 more often rate health and wellness programs among the three benefits most important to them (17%), they are also more likely (30%) to rate it among the three benefits least important to them.
- Education benefits (e.g., tuition reimbursement) are somewhat more important among more younger employees—17% of those under 40 and 14% of those age 40–49 rate it among their three most important. But they are also just as likely as their older peers to rate it among their three least important as well.
- Also not surprisingly, eldercare benefits appear to matter more among more older employees. While very few employees across age groups rate it among their three most important benefits, those age 50 and older are significantly less likely than their younger peers to rate it among their three least important benefits (33% of those age 60-plus and 40% of those age 50-59).

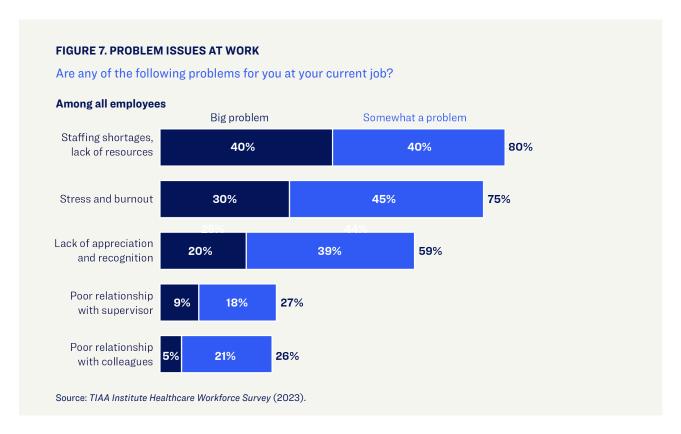


Appendix Figures A3 and A4 present analogous data regarding relative ratings of job features and employee benefits across occupation groups. Figures A5 and A6 do so across age groups among RNs.

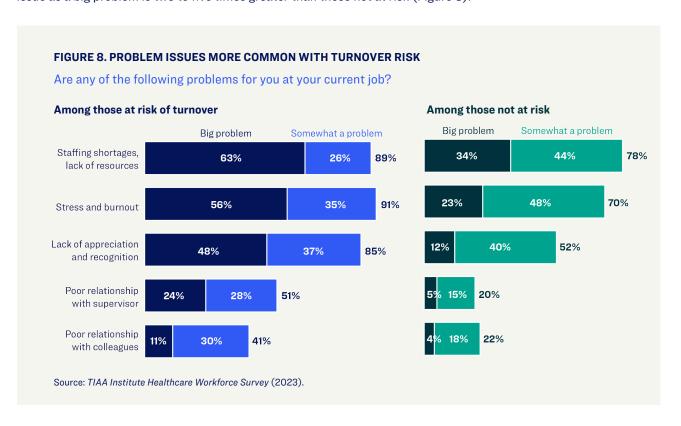
## Other turnover triggers?

Various job issues clearly have ramifications for turnover in healthcare as well as other sectors. Identifying the existence and extent of specific gaps in the employee experience will be valuable in the process of developing a well-crafted EVP. The *TIAA Institute Healthcare Workforce Survey* focused on five potential issues, with respondents reporting whether each was a problem for them at their current job.

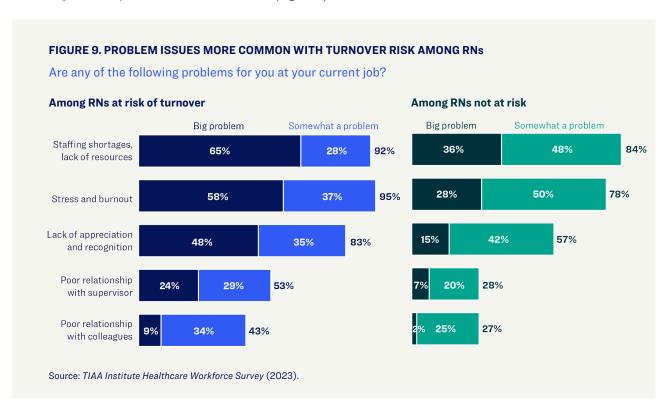
Staffing and resource shortages, stress and burnout, and lack of appreciation and recognition are problematic job issues for most hospital and healthcare system employees (Figure 7). Eighty percent of these employees report that staffing and resource shortages are at least somewhat problematic for them, with 40% saying they are a big problem. The analogous figures for stress and burnout are 75% and 30%, respectively. Well over one-half do not feel appreciated, with 20% saying this is a big problem for them.



The situation is amplified among those at risk of turnover within the next two years—the percentage viewing each issue as a big problem is two to five times greater than those not at risk (Figure 8).



The same dynamics are reflected in the findings specific to RNs. Staffing and resource shortages, stress and burnout, and lack of appreciation and recognition are again problematic job issues for the majority of RNs. In addition, the percentage viewing each issue as a big problem is greater among those at risk of turnover within the next two years compared with those not at risk (Figure 9).



# **Discussion**

Leveraging data from the *TIAA Institute Healthcare Workforce Survey*, this report examines how full-time hospital and healthcare system employees prioritize the importance of a range of job features and employee benefits. It identifies priorities shared among these employees as well as priorities that differ in relative importance across workforce segments, particularly by life stage. The report also examines the extent to which some specific job issues are problematic among healthcare employees.

Salary is the job feature that healthcare employees most often rate among the three most important to them; this holds across age groups and occupations. Nonetheless, almost one-third do not rate salary among their three most important. Regarding the relative importance of other job features, differences across life stages are apparent. For example, younger employees are less likely than older ones to rate benefits among the three job features most important to them. It's not that they tend to view benefits as unimportant, but there are other items—such as work-life balance, advancement opportunities and professional development—that they more often rate in their top three compared with older employees.

Regarding specific employee benefits, all age groups most often rate PTO, health insurance and a retirement savings plan among their three most important, with no other benefit remotely close. Nonetheless, differences across life stages are again evident. Younger employees are less likely than older ones to rate "traditional benefits" (i.e., health insurance and a retirement savings plan) among the three benefits

most important to them. It's not that they view these benefits as unimportant—74% and 54% of those under age 40 rate health insurance and a retirement savings plan, respectively, among the three benefits most important to them—but there are other benefits they more often rate in their top three compared with older employees. Specifically, parental leave, childcare benefits and mental health resources tend to matter more among more employees under age 40.

Such knowledge of what employees want and value in exchange for the work they do enables organizations to better recruit and retain necessary talent by developing, refining and leveraging their EVPs. A well-crafted EVP conveys the mix of tangible and intangible rewards and benefits that make working for an organization particularly attractive. While showcasing an organization's comparative advantages as an employer, an EVP also should respond to what matters most to employees.

An EVP is primarily a communication tool, but the strategic exercise of developing or updating an EVP can also help identify gaps in the employment offer or experience. It is important to think in terms of workforce segments. An organization cannot provide every employee with everything they want, but it should aim to provide every employee with what they prioritize. The importance of thinking in terms of workforce segments is heightened if an organization is challenged in the recruitment or retention of a particular employee group.

## **Appendix**

### FIGURE A1. JOB FEATURES THAT MATTER MOST, THAT MATTER LEAST BY LIFE STAGE

Which three job features are most important/least important to you in a job?

		Most im	portant		Least important					
	Under age 40	Age 40 - 49	Age 50 - 59	Age 60 and older	Under age 40	Age 40 - 49	Age 50 – 59	Age 60 and older		
Salary	66%	69%	72%	68%	9%	6%	6%	6%		
Benefits	36%	43%	47%	54%	10%	10%	10%	9%		
Work-life balance	49%	46%	44%	38%	13%	10%	13%	16%		
Workplace flexibility	32%	39%	30%	37%	18%	21%	28%	23%		
Positive workplace culture	28%	30%	36%	36%	19%	13%	10%	10%		
Job security	27%	26%	30%	23%	18%	12%	10%	14%		
Advancement opportunities	20%	14%	11%	4%	23%	37%	45%	54%		
Mission aligned with own values	12%	10%	9%	19%	51%	45%	38%	28%		
Professional development	15%	11%	7%	8%	36%	39%	39%	42%		
A sense of community	7%	5%	8%	8%	47%	46%	41%	38%		
Focus on diversity, equity and inclusion	9%	6%	5%	5%	55%	61%	59%	61%		

Source: TIAA Institute Healthcare Workforce Survey (2023).

## FIGURE A2. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS THAT MATTER MOST, THAT MATTER LEAST BY LIFE STAGE

Which three employee benefits are most important/least important to you in a job?

		Most im	portant		Least important					
	Under age 40	Age 40 - 49	Age 50 – 59	Age 60 and older	Under age 40	Age 40 - 49	Age 50 – 59	Age 60 and older		
Paid time off	78%	81%	85%	85%	7%	4%	2%	1%		
Health insurance	74%	80%	88%	86%	7%	4%	1%	3%		
Retirement savings plan	54%	75%	84%	89%	7%	4%	2%	2%		
Education benefits	17%	14%	10%	9%	27%	24%	24%	22%		
Health and wellness programs	17%	12%	10%	11%	30%	21%	14%	16%		
Personal finance resources	9%	11%	8%	8%	34%	32%	21%	20%		
Mental health resources	13%	8%	5%	2%	21%	24%	19%	22%		
Parental leave	18%	5%	3%	2%	29%	40%	48%	58%		
Commuter benefits	8%	5%	2%	3%	45%	54%	64%	56%		
Childcare benefits	9%	6%	2%	1%	39%	47%	66%	67%		
Eldercare benefits	4%	4%	2%	3%	54%	47%	40%	33%		

## FIGURE A3. JOB FEATURES THAT MATTER MOST, THAT MATTER LEAST BY OCCUPATION

Which three job features are most important/least important to you in a job?

		Mo	ost importa	ınt		Least important						
	Registered nurses	Physicians and surgeons	Other medical pros	Office and admin	Nonmedical pros	Registered nurses	Physicians and surgeons	Other medical pros	Office and admin	Nonmedical pros		
Salary	73%	70%	70%	66%	60%	5%	7%	6%	6%	11%		
Benefits	51%	34%	50%	40%	38%	8%	13%	8%	13%	11%		
Work-life balance	42%	57%	49%	43%	31%	14%	8%	11%	13%	16%		
Workplace flexibility	40%	34%	32%	30%	36%	18%	20%	21%	31%	29%		
Workplace culture	34%	32%	36%	31%	25%	10%	13%	10%	16%	20%		
Job security	25%	22%	27%	31%	29%	16%	14%	11%	12%	14%		
Advancement opportunities	9%	11%	8%	20%	20%	46%	46%	45%	28%	33%		
Mission aligned with own values	10%	14%	10%	12%	20%	40%	35%	44%	40%	38%		
Professional development	8%	12%	6%	13%	17%	43%	36%	42%	34%	34%		
A sense of community	6%	7%	8%	7%	7%	40%	41%	44%	46%	45%		
Focus on diversity, equity and inclusion	3%	6%	5%	6%	16%	59%	68%	60%	61%	50%		

## FIGURE A4. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS THAT MATTER MOST, THAT MATTER LEAST BY OCCUPATION

Which three employee benefits are most important/least important to you in a job?

		Mo	ost importa	ant		Least important					
	Registered nurses	Physicians and surgeons	Other medical pros	Office and admin	Nonmedical pros	Registered nurses	Physicians and surgeons	Other medical pros	Office and admin	Nonmedical pros	
Paid time off	87%	69%	87%	83%	72%	2%	5%	1%	3%	8%	
Health insurance	82%	83%	87%	86%	68%	4%	3%	3%	3%	8%	
Retirement savings plan	80%	82%	78%	77%	57%	1%	4%	3%	4%	8%	
Education benefits	12%	17%	13%	11%	13%	24%	22%	24%	23%	28%	
Health and wellness programs	11%	13%	9%	14%	20%	15%	25%	22%	21%	20%	
Personal finance resources	8%	17%	7%	6%	18%	26%	24%	27%	25%	29%	
Mental health resources	6%	3%	5%	6%	17%	19%	32%	22%	21%	20%	
Parental leave	6%	6%	5%	6%	10%	49%	41%	42%	42%	44%	
Commuter benefits	3%	4%	3%	5%	9%	55%	54%	60%	59%	43%	
Childcare benefits	4%	4%	3%	5%	6%	61%	50%	54%	53%	51%	
Eldercare benefits	3%	2%	2%	3%	10%	44%	40%	43%	45%	40%	

### FIGURE A5. JOB FEATURES THAT MATTER MOST, THAT MATTER LEAST BY LIFE STAGE AMONG RNs

Which three job features are most important/least important to you in a job?

		Most im	portant		Least important					
	Under age 40	Age 40 - 49	Age 50 – 59	Age 60 and older	Under age 40	Age 40 - 49	Age 50 - 59	Age 60 and older		
Salary	68%	76%	77%	68%	8%	2%	7%	4%		
Benefits	35%	59%	53%	53%	11%	6%	8%	8%		
Work-life balance	52%	43%	37%	40%	11%	12%	18%	16%		
Workplace flexibility	40%	38%	43%	36%	19%	17%	19%	19%		
Positive workplace culture	31%	27%	36%	42%	13%	12%	6%	12%		
Job security	25%	20%	31%	21%	25%	17%	11%	11%		
Advancement opportunities	15%	13%	6%	2%	29%	44%	52%	56%		
Mission aligned with own values	12%	5%	6%	21%	41%	45%	40%	32%		
Professional development	9%	10%	5%	8%	42%	40%	43%	47%		
A sense of community	7%	6%	4%	8%	47%	38%	43%	33%		
Focus on diversity, equity and inclusion	6%	4%	2%	2%	54%	66%	55%	62%		

Source: TIAA Institute Healthcare Workforce Survey (2023).

### FIGURE A6. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS THAT MATTER MOST, THAT MATTER LEAST BY LIFE STAGE AMONG RNs

Which three employee benefits are most important/least important to you in a job?

		Most im	portant		Least important					
	Under age 40	Age 40 - 49	Age 50 – 59	Age 60 and older	Under age 40	Age 40 - 49	Age 50 – 59	Age 60 and older		
Paid time off	76%	86%	90%	92%	8%	1%	0%	1%		
Health insurance	73%	83%	90%	77%	11%	4%	0%	3%		
Retirement savings plan	56%	83%	84%	95%	4%	2%	0%	0%		
Education benefits	16%	13%	10%	8%	31%	26%	22%	16%		
Health and wellness programs	19%	8%	10%	11%	25%	17%	10%	12%		
Personal finance resources	6%	11%	6%	9%	33%	32%	19%	23%		
Mental health resources	13%	7%	3%	1%	22%	22%	12%	20%		
Parental leave	19%	4%	2%	0%	32%	40%	55%	65%		
Commuter benefits	6%	2%	2%	2%	44%	53%	65%	57%		
Childcare benefits	11%	4%	1%	1%	39%	48%	77%	74%		
Eldercare benefits	5%	2%	1%	4%	53%	55%	41%	29%		

## About the author

**Paul Yakoboski** is a senior economist with the TIAA Institute, where his research focus is lifetime financial security, including issues related to financial literacy and financial wellness, longevity literacy, retirement saving and investing, and asset management during retirement. In addition, he researches workforce issues in the higher education and healthcare sectors. He is director of the Institute's Fellows Program. Prior to joining the TIAA Institute, Yakoboski held positions with the American Council of Life Insurers, the Employee Benefit Research Institute, and the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Yakoboski earned his PhD and MA in economics from the University of Rochester and his BS in economics from Virginia Tech.

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