

Civil Service Survey Insights Overview

*Survey sent from the
State Universities Civil Service
Advisory Committee
in November / December of 2025*

State Universities Civil Service Employee Advisory Committee

Civil Service Survey Winter2025

This report summarizes employee feedback gathered across Illinois State Universities through a five-question survey designed to inform the Merit Board of employee perspectives. The survey findings highlight key trends in workforce satisfaction, retention drivers, transparency, and communication. The insights gathered reflect the voices of civil service staff employees from diverse institutions, providing a unified look at shared challenges and institution-specific trends. This report aims to support collaborative efforts to enhance the employee experience across Illinois' public higher-education system.

Q1 – Factors Influencing Employee Retention

Employees ranked (1–5) the elements most critical in their decision to remain at their institution, including benefits, compensation, development opportunities, mobility, and work-option flexibility.

Q2 – Effects of Staffing Reductions on Duties

Respondents indicated whether staff reductions resulted in changes to their job responsibilities, either within or outside their classification.

Q3 – Awareness of Civil Service Governance Resources

Employees reported their awareness of:

- Their campus Employee Advisory Committee Representative
- The State Universities Civil Service System (SUCSS) webpage
- Local Civil Service Council or Staff Senate representatives

Q4 – Transparency of Employment Opportunities

Using a 1–5 scale, employees assessed how transparent their university is regarding job postings and advancement pathways.

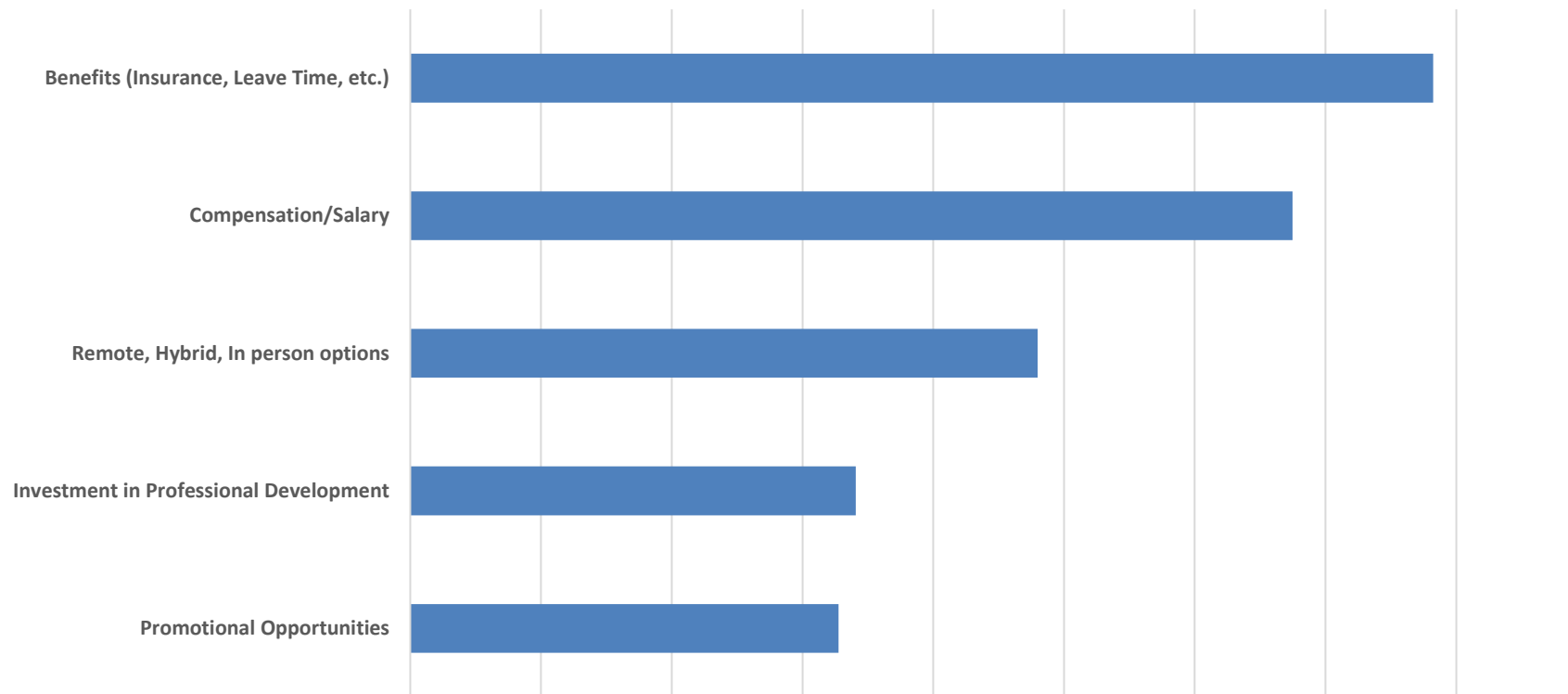
Q5 – Workplace Priorities

Staff ranked what matters most in their workplace (1 = highest priority), including compensation/benefits, job security, culture, recognition, and work-life balance.

**This data was gathered as part of a constituent survey conducted by the State Universities Civil Service Employee Advisory Committee in late 2025 to identify communication gaps and prepare concerns for the Merit Board.*

Survey Question #1- Retention Factors

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 highest, 5 lowest), respondents ranked the factors that play the biggest role in encouraging staff to remain at their university, factors included



Benefits (Insurance, Leave Time, etc.)	Compensation/Salary	Remote, Hybrid, In person options	Investment in Professional Development	Promotional Opportunities
1st Choice: 52%	1st Choice: 28%	1st Choice: 13%	1st Choice: 5%	1st Choice: 3%
2nd Choice: 30%	2nd Choice: 32%	2nd Choice: 18%	2nd Choice: 10%	2nd Choice: 10%
3rd Choice: 9%	3rd Choice: 19%	3rd Choice: 22%	3rd Choice: 25%	3rd Choice: 26%
4th Choice: 5%	4th Choice: 10%	4th Choice: 15%	4th Choice: 35%	4th Choice: 36%
5th Choice: 4%	5th Choice: 11%	5th Choice: 33%	5th Choice: 26%	5th Choice: 26%

Critical Insights

Benefits outrank salary as an immediate retention lever—employees notice and value insurance/leave packages even more than base pay when deciding to stay. Flexibility isn't universally valued—it attracts some (13% 1st) but a sizeable group deprioritizes it (32% 5th), so messaging should target segments rather than assume it's a universal win. Career growth & development matter, but more as supporting factors than primary retention drivers in this dataset.

Retention Factors Influencing Staff Decisions

Benefits as Top Retention Driver

Benefits like insurance and paid leave are valued more than base compensation for employee retention.

Workplace Flexibility Impact

Flexibility options such as remote and hybrid work are valued variably, appealing to some but not all staff members.

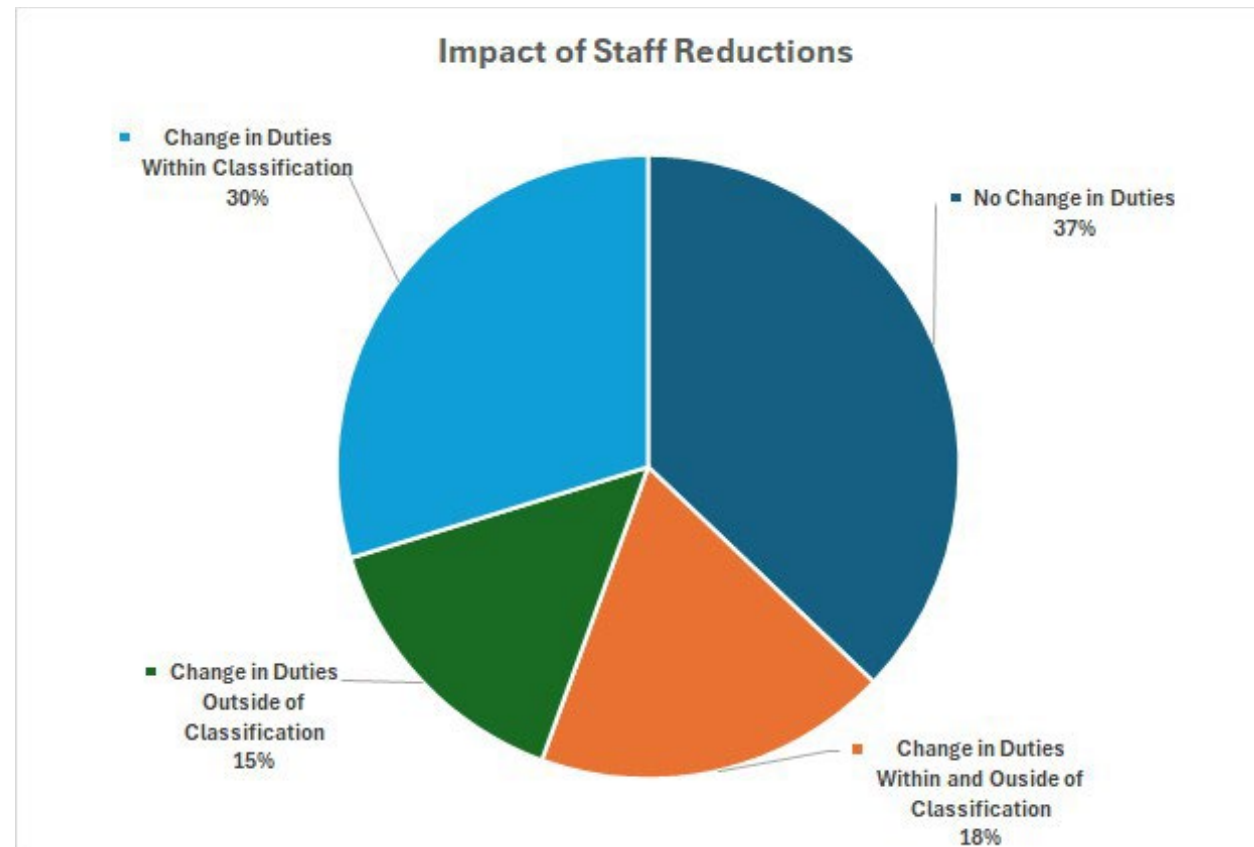
Professional Development and Promotion

Opportunities for growth and promotion contribute to satisfaction but are secondary to benefits and compensation.

Survey Question 2- Impact of Staff Reductions

Has a reduction in staff affected your daily responsibilities?

Respondents indicated whether their duties:



Key Takeaways:

Increased Workload/Responsibility: Employees facing changes "outside" of classification likely indicate staff taking on higher-level tasks or duties belonging to eliminated positions.

Role Redefinition: Employees with changes "within" classification suggest a reorganization or shuffling of responsibilities without necessarily changing the job level.

Stability for Some: About 37% of the workforce saw no change in duties, indicating the reduction was targeted rather than uniform across all departments.

Effects of Staffing Reductions on Job Responsibilities

Expanded Job Responsibilities

33% of employees took on higher-level tasks or absorbed duties from eliminated roles, increasing workload pressure.

Internal Restructuring Impact

44% reported changes within their job classification, indicating internal role adjustments without hierarchical shifts.

Workload Sustainability Concerns

Operational pressure from workload changes may contribute to burnout and job dissatisfaction over time.

Uneven Impact Across Staff

37% reported no changes, showing some roles remained unaffected by staffing reductions and restructuring.

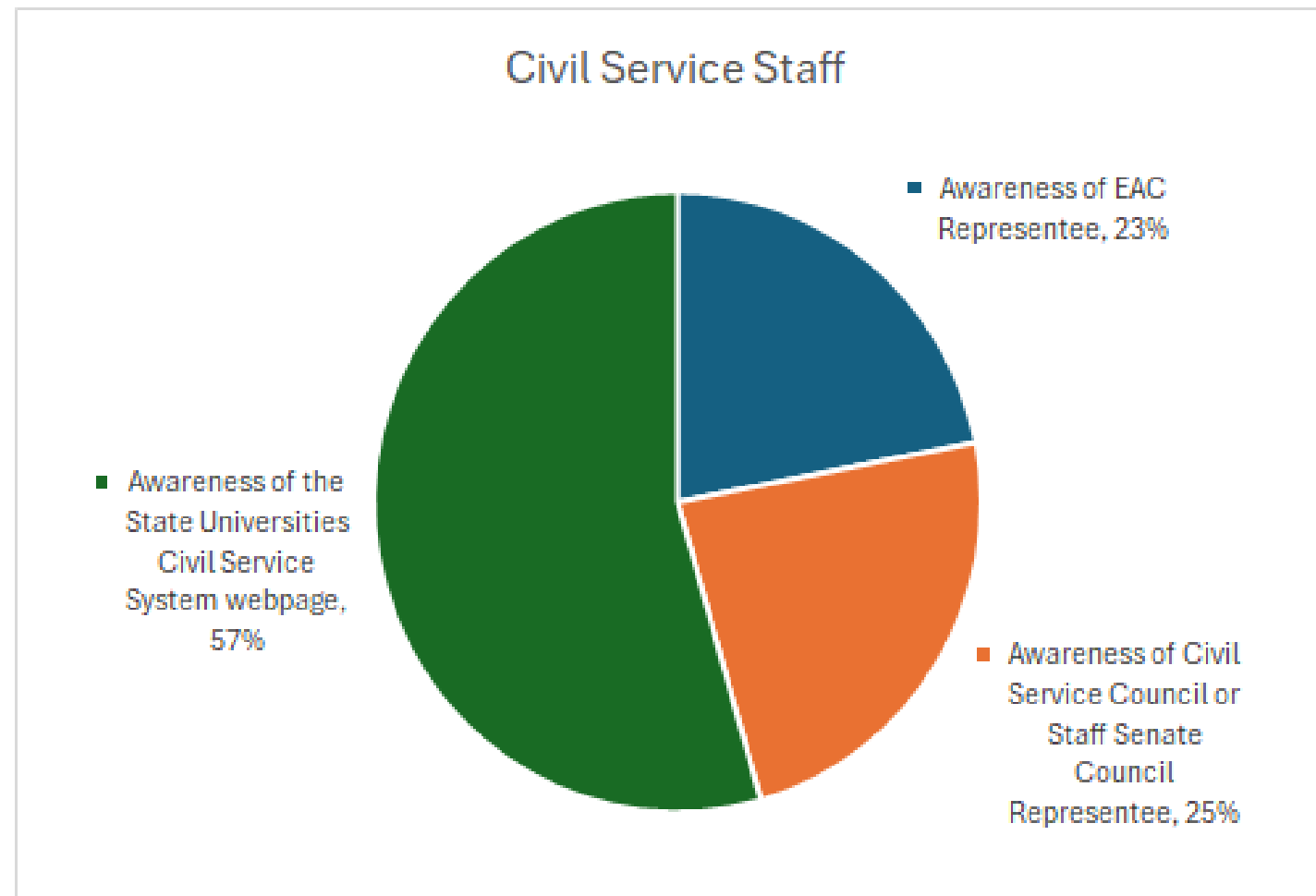
Survey Question 3-Awareness of University Resources

Respondents were asked whether they know:

Their campus State Universities Civil Service Employee Advisory Committee Representative

How to access the State Universities Civil Service System (SUCSS) webpage

Their Civil Service Council or Staff Senate Council representatives



Quick take

SUCSS webpage awareness is high—more than half of employees know it.

Representative awareness is much lower—only ~1 in 4 know their State University Civil Service Advisory Committee representative, and ~1 in 4 know their Civil Service Council representative.

The SUCSS webpage has a higher digital engagement, indicating it is currently a more effective, or more utilized, tool for communication and information dissemination than direct representation awareness.

Employee Awareness of Representation and Resources

Digital Resource Awareness

More than half of employees are aware of the SUCSS webpage, showing strong digital engagement.

Low Representative Awareness

Only about one in four employees know their advisory committee or council representatives, indicating low interpersonal visibility.

Communication Challenges

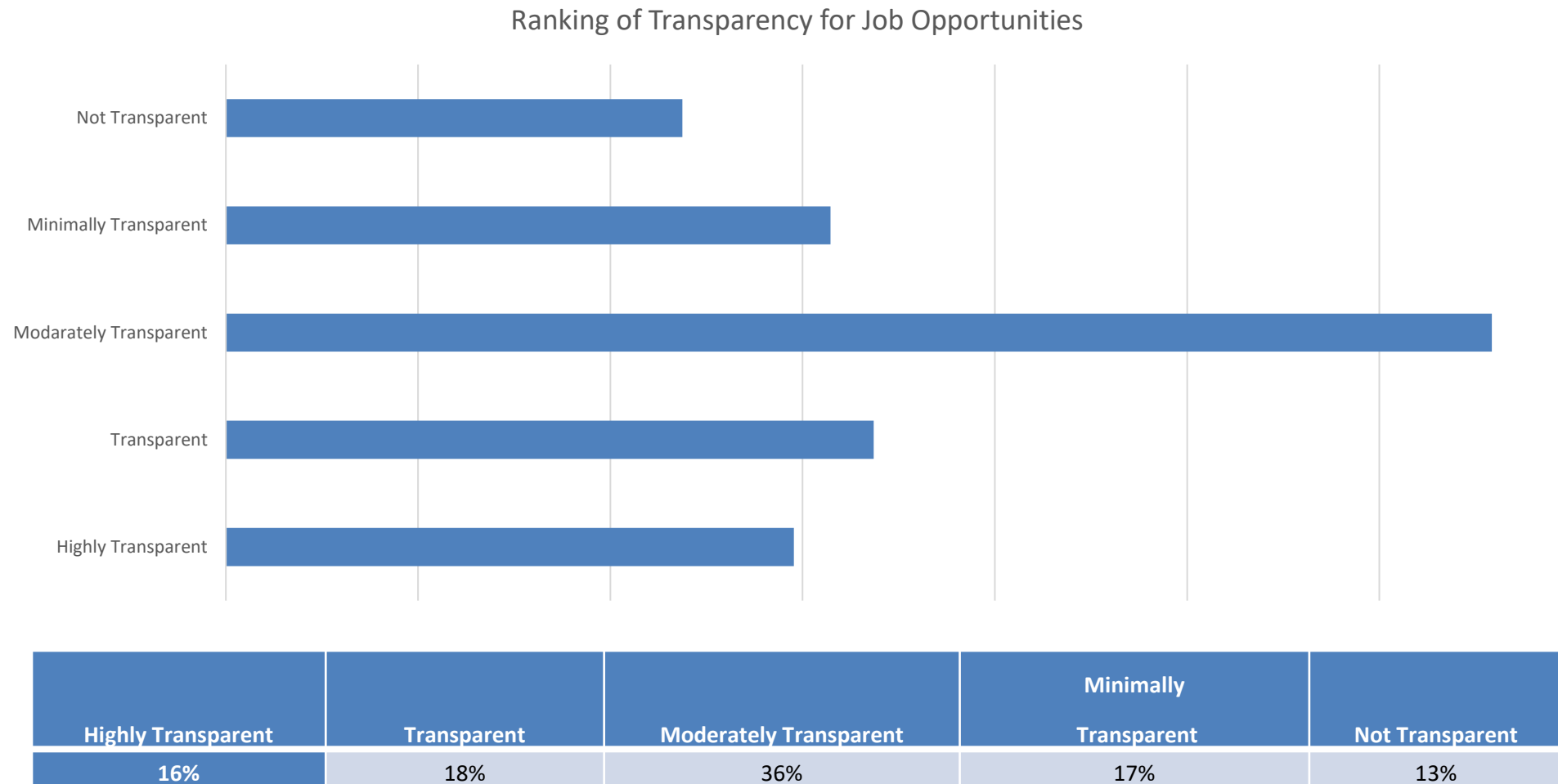
Limited awareness of representatives may hinder shared governance and effective staff-administration communication.

Improving Visibility Strategies

Targeted messaging and onboarding can enhance awareness and engagement with institutional representatives.

Survey Question 4- Transparency of Employment Opportunities

Using a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = most transparent, 5 = least transparent), how transparent is your university regarding employment opportunities?



Critical Insights from Polling Results

Dominant Neutrality: The largest single group of respondents (36%) viewed their university as only "Moderately Transparent" (a score of 3 on the scale). This suggests that while information is available, it may not be easily accessible or fully clear to the average employee.

Positive vs. Negative Split:

Total Transparent (Top 2): 34% of employees feel their university is transparent (16% highly transparent + 18% transparent).

Total Non-Transparent (Bottom 2): 30% of employees feel their university lacks transparency (17% minimally transparent + 13% not transparent).

Communication Breakdown: The nearly even split between those who find the process transparent and those who do not—combined with the large "moderate" middle—indicates that transparency varies significantly by institution or that current communication methods are inconsistent.

Employee Perceptions of Transparency in Job Opportunities

Varied Employee Perceptions

Employees report mixed perceptions of transparency in job opportunities ranging from highly transparent to not transparent.

Communication Inconsistencies

Differences in departmental communication and managerial transparency contribute to inconsistent access to job information.

Importance of Transparency

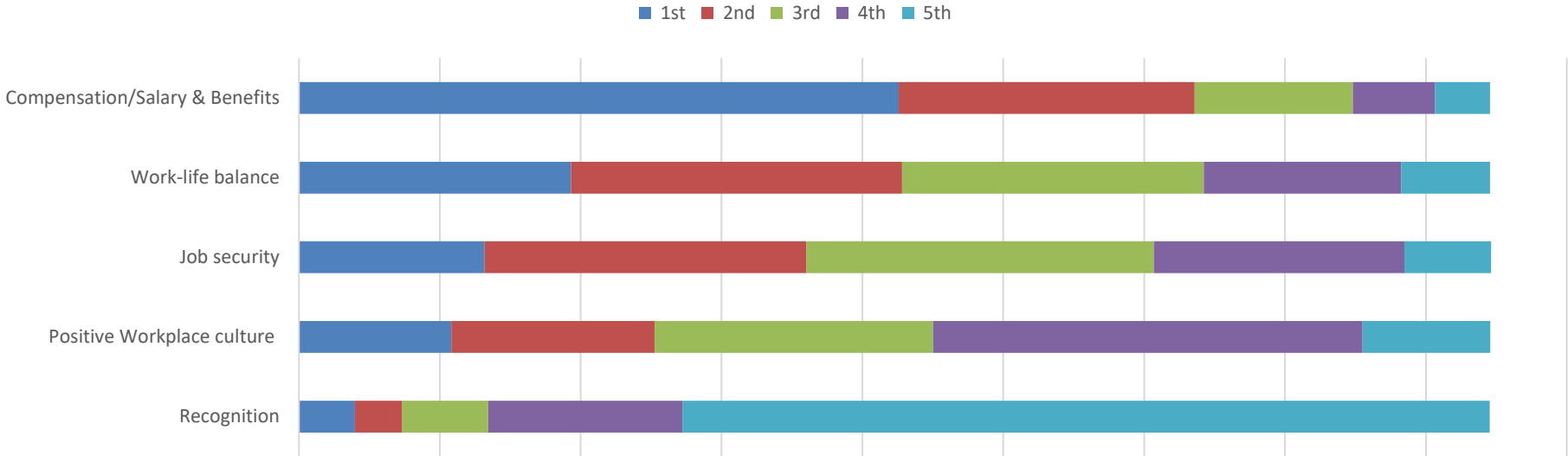
Transparent hiring and career development foster trust, fairness, and higher employee engagement in advancement opportunities.

Strategies for Improvement

Clarifying policies, centralizing communications, and increasing outreach can enhance transparency and trust across departments.

Survey Question 5-Workplace Priorities

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 highest, 5 lowest), respondents ranked what is most important to them in the workplace. Categories included:



Compensation/Salary & Benefits	Job security	Positive Workplace culture	Recognition	Work-life balance
1st Choice: 47%	1st Choice: 15%	1st Choice: 12%	1st Choice: 4%	1st Choice: 21%
2nd Choice: 25%	2nd Choice: 27%	2nd Choice: 17%	2nd Choice: 4%	2nd Choice: 28%
3rd Choice: 14%	3rd Choice: 30%	3rd Choice: 24%	3rd Choice: 7%	3rd Choice: 26%
4th Choice: 7%	4th Choice: 22%	4th Choice: 37%	4th Choice: 17%	4th Choice: 17%
5th Choice: 5%	5th Choice: 7%	5th Choice: 11%	5th Choice: 69%	5th Choice: 8%

Key Critical Insights:

Compensation is most important: Nearly half of all staff (47%) consider compensation their top priority, and it remains a top-three factor for the vast majority, indicating it is the most critical driver for retention and satisfaction .

Balance & Security Core Pillars: Work-life balance (21% 1st, 28% 2nd) and Job Security (15% 1st, 27% 2nd) are nearly equally critical as secondary priorities. Together with pay, these three factors form the foundation of staff needs.

Culture is Secondary: While important, a positive workplace culture is generally viewed as a 3rd or 4th priority, suggesting it cannot override deficiencies in pay or security.

Recognition is Lowest Priority: "Recognition" is overwhelmingly ranked last (69% 5th choice). While nice to have, it is not a primary driver of job satisfaction, and investing heavily in formal recognition programs may not yield high satisfaction returns compared to increasing salary or work-life balance initiatives.

Workplace Priorities and What Employees Value Most

Compensation as Top Priority

Compensation and benefits lead employee priorities, crucial for attracting, retaining talented staff.

Work-Life Balance Importance

Work-life balance is a close secondary priority, vital for employee satisfaction and stability.

Job Security Value

Job security ranks high and, paired with compensation and balance, forms a stability-driven triad.

Recognition Less Influential

Recognition is least prioritized, less impactful on retention compared to financial and structural benefits.