



The State of Healthcare Employee Experience 2024

Lauren Beechly, Ph.D.





Introduction

Last year, Perceptyx [shared what were then our latest findings](#) related to the healthcare employee experience. Building on this foundation, our 2024 update provides new data-driven insights, derived from national healthcare benchmarks, Perceptyx customer data, and our recent healthcare panel study. Together, these sources offer a comprehensive view of current trends in healthcare employee engagement and experiences.

Some of the key developments we've observed over the past year:

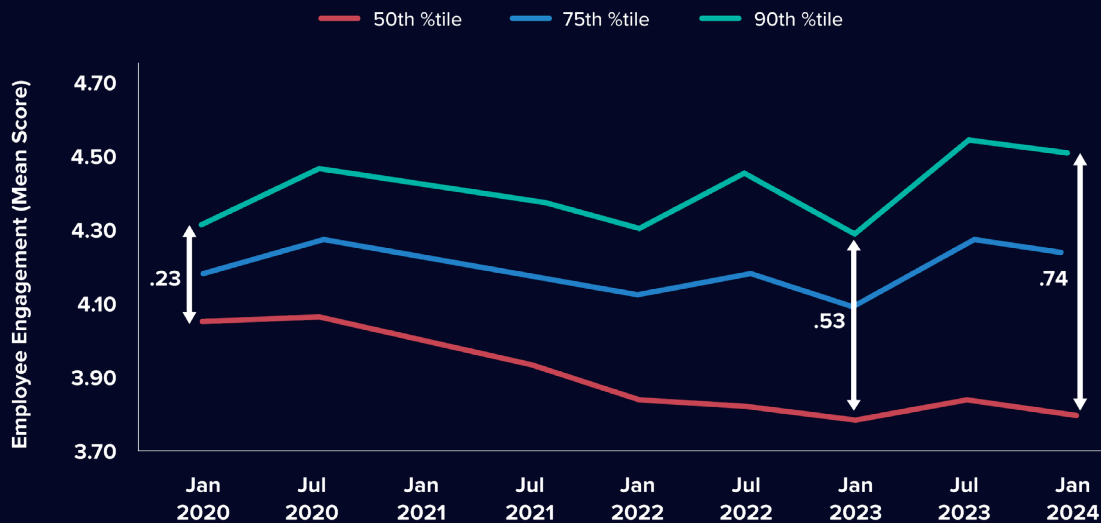
- **A Widening Gap in Employee Engagement:** The gap between the most engaged healthcare organizations and the rest continues to widen, suggesting urgent action is still needed by most healthcare systems to improve the healthcare worker experience and engagement.
- **Change Management Matters:** The approach healthcare leaders take to manage change is now the most crucial factor in driving employee engagement.
- **Stabilization of Employee Experience:** Overall, the broader employee experience is beginning to stabilize after previous periods of greater volatility.
- **Enhanced Support for Performance and Well-being:** Initiatives aimed at enabling performance and improving well-being are showing promising signs of progress.

In the sections that follow, I'll dive deeper into each of our findings, examining the data and implications of these developments. Each section will explore the factors contributing to these trends, complemented by insights from my colleagues across Perceptyx's team of Workforce Transformation Consultants, to help healthcare leaders foster a more engaged, supportive work environment.

A Widening Gap in Healthcare Worker Engagement

National Healthcare Benchmark

3.85 million healthcare workers from 532 systems



*Data based on National Healthcare Benchmark publish date including 1.5 years of data.

Employee engagement is commonly understood as the emotional and psychological attachment employees have towards their organization, and what they do as a result of that emotional attachment. Employee engagement is an outcome of a positive employee experience, resulting in workers giving extra effort that can translate into improved performance not only for themselves, but also for the organization overall.

Given its critical impact on healthcare business outcomes, including [safety metrics](#) and [patient advocacy](#), Perceptyx monitors engagement using a national healthcare database of more than 3.85 million healthcare workers. More specifically, we measure employee [engagement](#) through its four components — pride, motivation, commitment, and advocacy. Benchmark research like ours provides evidence-based context to help healthcare leaders better understand the current employee experience landscape at a scale unavailable when looking only within their own organization.



These 2024 insights highlight a concerning trend: a widening gap in healthcare worker engagement. This gap reflects varying degrees of success in how organizations manage their workforce, with the best-performing organizations pulling significantly ahead of the rest. Specifically, we see a significant rise from a 0.23 difference between the best and the rest in early 2020 to a 0.74 difference in 2024 — an increase of approximately 3.2x.

The trajectory shown in the graph (see page 3) points to increasingly divergent experiences for workers across different healthcare systems. Initially, the disparity between the most engaged organizations and the rest was minimal. However, this gap has consistently expanded, reaching its largest recorded difference by 2024. Such a trend suggests that while some healthcare systems have effectively invested in their employee experience strategies, most continue to struggle as engagement remains at record lows.

- **The Best:** For leading organizations, the ongoing investment in their workforce has evidently paid off, allowing them to significantly outpace their counterparts. This not only serves as a competitive advantage at a time when there continue to be staffing shortages for many critical roles but also reinforces the importance of sustained, strategic investment in employee engagement practices.
- **The Rest:** For the majority of healthcare systems, the growing engagement gap serves as a call for urgent and thoughtful action to enhance the employee experience. The link between employee engagement and patient experience cannot be understated: engaged employees are more likely to contribute positively to patient care and organizational success. Therefore, targeted actions are needed now to help most health systems improve the employee experience and boost engagement across their workforce.

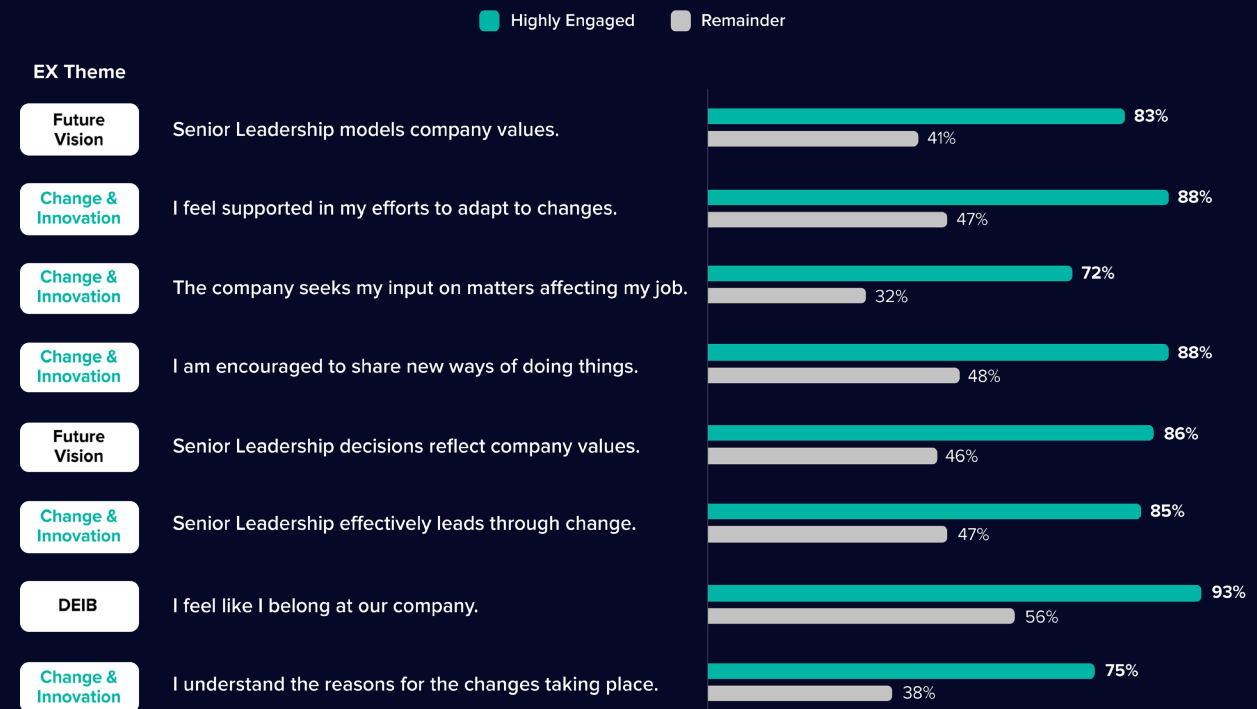
This raises several important questions: ***What are the best organizations doing differently to boost engagement? What are the biggest barriers getting in the way of many healthcare workers anticipating success and preventing high engagement? With limited resources for action, where should healthcare systems focus to have the greatest return on improving engagement across their workforce?***

Change Management Matters

To provide an evidence-based answer to this question, we analyzed over 160 different aspects of the employee experience from 1.6 million healthcare workers in organizations that partner with Perceptyx. As [distinguished from employee engagement](#) — that emotional and psychological attachment employees have toward their organization — employee experience broadly describes what it’s like to work in the organization and how employees feel about their experience within the organization. It encompasses the employee’s feelings about their relationship with their manager and co-workers, the physical environment of the workplace, their access to the resources needed to do their job, autonomy in their work, the development opportunities open to them, and more. Deficiencies in important areas of employee experience become barriers to employee engagement. With that in mind, which of these aspects of the employee experience are most impacting engagement?

Our data is clear: effective change management is the most critical driver of employee engagement in healthcare organizations. This comprehensive data underscores the importance of how healthcare leaders handle change and innovation within their organizations.

Top Barriers to Engaging Healthcare Workers



Historically, factors such as feeling valued, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for growth have been pivotal to drive employee engagement within healthcare. However, our latest research presents a new narrative: five of the top eight drivers of engagement now directly emphasize change and innovation. These include:

- Understanding the rationale behind organizational changes
- Effective leadership during times of change
- Support for employees as they navigate through changes
- Involvement of employees in change initiatives to identify better ways of doing things
- Solicitation of employee input on matters affecting their jobs

Two additional drivers also relate to how leadership manages change, with employees much more likely to be engaged when they believe the decisions leaders make are consistent with organizational values. This increased importance of change management mirrors **global trends** that emphasize the rising importance of adeptly managing change as workers face constant disruptions, both within and outside their organizations.

Given the impact change and innovation have on engagement today, our data shows a worrying trend where employees express a need for better clarity, support, and involvement during disruptions. Perhaps even more concerning is that when we examined the most notable declines in favorability scores across all 160 employee experiences measured, additional items within the Change & Innovation factor were among them.



During this time of significant disruption and change, employees need greater communication and clarity about the future vision of organizations. Unfortunately, clarity and confidence in the strategic direction appear to be waning, evidenced by several significant downturns in employee perceptions.



These steep declines in effective communication during times of increased change are even more troubling considering how important communication is for effective change management.

“My dissertation focus was on organizational change, and the findings of my research 6 years ago are consistent with what we see today in healthcare: communication is the foundation on which effective change implementation is built. My study went so far as to look at personality differences, and even individuals who are considered ‘change adverse’ in nature were significantly more likely to perceive an organizational change as beneficial and effective if they felt they received frequent, thorough, and trustworthy communication, compared to people who may be inclined to embrace change but were dissatisfied with the communication at their companies.”



Heather Sager, Ph.D.

Senior Workforce Transformation Consultant

With much of the communication around change coming, or expected to be coming, from senior leadership, it is no surprise that our research also highlights declines in trust and confidence in senior leaders who are at the forefront of leading systematic changes, with fewer employees believing that senior leader decisions reflect the company’s values. As leaders continue to make difficult decisions during times of change, employees are losing trust in these decisions and struggling to understand how these decisions align with organizational values. Specific point declines in favorability over the last year include:

-10 pts

Senior Leadership
decisions reflect company
values

-4 pts

Trust in Senior
Leadership

-4 pts

Senior Leadership models
company values

-4 pts

Confidence in
Senior Leadership

Additional insights from a Perceptyx research study of 1,000 healthcare workers conducted in spring 2024 confirm that during times of change, healthcare workers particularly value direct communication from system-level senior leaders, more so than from immediate supervisors, middle management, or site-level leadership.

As mentioned above, one aspect that differentiates highly engaged healthcare workers from others is the behavior of senior leaders, especially how they embody the organization's values through their decisions and actions during times of change. This alignment of leadership behavior with organizational values fosters an environment where employees feel genuinely valued and part of a collective future.

“A key takeaway from our research and other research I’ve reviewed is that healthcare employees value visible, accessible leadership across all levels of the organization. Specifically, employees want daily access to their immediate managers, reflecting the necessity for ongoing support and communication at the team level. This is critical as team leaders must oversee day-to-day operations and address immediate concerns.

Beyond that, the data shows a clear expectation for executive leadership to be more visible a few times a year, particularly during times of significant change. This need for visibility from higher-level leadership drives home the importance of strategic communication and reassurance during periods of transition or uncertainty. When changes are happening, or when the organization faces challenges such as understaffing, employees look to executive leaders for direction and confidence, reinforcing the organizational values and future vision.

We can say this with certainty: regular interactions with team leaders combined with strategic visibility from executive leadership can build trust, respect, and authenticity within organizations, which in turn increases employee confidence and engagement. Leaders can encourage the creation of environments where team members believe their voices matter and where they can voice concerns without backlash, which nurtures a culture of innovation and problem-solving.”



Stephanie Schloemer, Ph.D.

Senior Workforce Transformation Consultant

Overall, the data tells a clear story: **the best-performing healthcare organizations distinguish themselves through a proactive approach to change and innovation.** These organizations not only adapt to change, but do so in ways that involve and support their workforce, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and high engagement. For the rest, there is an urgent need to improve how change is managed. By foregrounding the role of senior leaders in driving these efforts and involving all employees in these transformations, healthcare organizations can significantly improve both employee engagement and overall business success.

“When organizations truly live their values, they become the lens through which all decisions, great or small, are made. When times are challenging, this becomes a litmus test for leaders. When decisions — such as cutting benefits or other perks — are at odds with organizational values and communications stating that the workforce is a ‘family’ or that leaders are committed to creating a delightful employee experience, it can lead to mistrust and a lack of confidence in leadership.”



Crystal Perel, M.A.
Senior Workforce
Transformation Consultant



Employee Engagement Has Stabilized

While our research highlights urgent opportunities to improve declining change and innovation perceptions, our findings also reveal several positive trends related to healthcare workers' employee experiences today. According to our data, there is a marked shift towards stabilization of employee engagement, despite ongoing disruptions and transformation in the healthcare sector overall. After several years of considerable fluctuations in engagement, and in spite of a widening gap between the best systems and the rest, engagement levels and the broader employee experience are beginning to show signs of greater consistency and reduced volatility.

Our analysis of engagement trends, particularly over the last six months, reveals that changes in employee engagement in the national healthcare benchmarks have been minimal, marking the smallest shifts since before 2020. This trend holds true across various groups within the healthcare workforce, from the median (50th percentile) to those in the top quartile and decile, with nearly flat engagement scores from July 2023 into 2024. Such flattening indicates less volatility and fewer dramatic swings in engagement across most health systems. In other words, the drastic improvements in engagement experienced by the best systems in early 2023 have been maintained while the rest stabilized at lower levels.



Similarly, aspects of the broader employee experience have also stabilized. When examining over 160 different aspects of the employee experience measured across the healthcare organizations that partner with Perceptyx, fewer year-over-year changes are observed:

- **35%** of employee experience metrics changed by less than **1 point** over the last year.
- **25%** showed improvements of more than **1 point**, while **40%** declined by more than **1 point**. This is a significant shift from the period between 2019 and 2021 when **69%** of these same survey items declined substantially. Fewer survey items are declining now.
- Only **13%** of the metrics experienced changes of **±5 points** over the last year, which is **3x** fewer than in 2021.

This data underscores a growing consistency in how healthcare workers perceive their roles and the effectiveness of the organizations for which they work, despite continued external pressures and internal transformation efforts.

A Sense of Purpose Motivates Top-Performing Healthcare Workforces

Another central element driving positive trends in healthcare employee experience stems from the workforce’s increasingly purpose-driven nature.

Mission and Role Clarity:

More than **90%** of healthcare workers have a clear understanding of their company’s mission and values and how their roles contribute to the organization’s success.

Patient Safety and Advocacy:

91% rate patient safety as a priority.
89% would recommend their organization as a place to receive safe care.
+4pts Would recommend the organization to family or friends.

One of the most notable areas of improvement has been in **performance enablement**, facilitated by better cross-team collaboration, staffing levels, and access to necessary resources.





These improvements align with other research findings related to enhanced staffing levels, [particularly among nurses](#), and better utilization of existing staff. This suggests that organizations experiencing improvement have undertaken a broader, sector-wide response to previous challenges, focusing their efforts on removing barriers that get in the way of performing efficiently, effectively, and safely.

Despite the challenges posed by constant changes and disruptions, the healthcare workforce remains highly motivated by a clear understanding of their mission-critical roles. Continued focus on the “why” behind the work will be essential to ensure connection to the mission is maintained. Additionally, organizations should maintain or increase efforts focused at enabling performance to not only support healthcare worker well-being and effectiveness, but also to ensure delivery of high-quality patient care.

Improvements in Well-being Across Healthcare Workforces

The focus on well-being within the healthcare sector [has intensified in recent years](#), with organizations increasingly recognizing the importance of supporting their employees' mental and physical health. Recent data suggests that these efforts are beginning to yield positive results, contributing to an overall improvement in workplace well-being.

Increased support for well-being is reflected in several key metrics:

- +2 pts** Manageable work stress
- +3 pts** Company support for work-life balance
- +5 pts** Managerial support for health and well-being
- +10 pts** Healthy work environment

These improvements are likely driven by a combination of enhanced performance enablement and targeted well-being initiatives aimed at not only providing well-being resources, but also systematically changing the broader work environment, which together help alleviate some of the common pressures faced by healthcare workers. This comprehensive approach to well-being demonstrates the importance of listening to and addressing the specific needs of healthcare workers, especially in a sector where [burnout](#) can be high.

“We’ve seen a significant shift towards prioritizing employee well-being within healthcare organizations. This change is not merely about implementing tone-deaf resiliency programs but about embedding a culture of support and understanding throughout the organization. Our findings indicate that when employees [feel genuinely supported by their organization and managers](#), particularly in managing work-life demands and stress at work, there is a marked improvement in their overall well-being.

This support not only helps to create a healthier work environment but affects the whole person through greater employee engagement and productivity. Effective well-being initiatives are those that are continuous, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving needs of the workforce.”

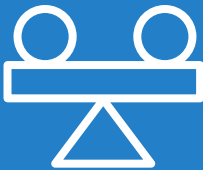


[Ellen Lovell, Ph.D.](#)

Senior Workforce Transformation Consultant

Trends & Predictions

To conclude, I want to summarize our key data-driven insights from the past year, and then draw on these insights to offer some predictions for 2025.



Stabilization of Employee Experiences:

Throughout 2024, we observed a notable stabilization in overall employee experiences across healthcare organizations. As discussed earlier, this trend reflects reduced volatility in engagement metrics, with minimal fluctuations observed across various groups from mid-2023 into 2024. This stabilization suggests that, in the aggregate, healthcare organizations are becoming more adept at managing the complexities of their operational environments, leading to a more consistent employee experience.



Widening Gap in Engagement:

Despite the overall stabilization, the gap in healthcare worker engagement between the best-in-class and the rest continues to widen. This trend illustrates the significant impact of effective change management on engagement levels. Organizations that excel in providing clarity, support, and involvement in change initiatives are seeing markedly better engagement outcomes than those that do not.



Enhanced Performance Enablement:

Another positive development in 2024 has been the improved ability of healthcare workers to perform their jobs, facilitated by better cross-team collaboration, optimal staffing levels, and greater resource accessibility. These improvements have contributed to a more enabled and effective workforce, capable of meeting the demands of their roles with increased efficiency and less strain.



Challenges in Future Vision Communication:

Communication and clarity of future vision have seen a decline and there is diminished confidence among health-care workers about the future. This decline is concerning as it impacts employee engagement and organizational loyalty, highlighting the need for clearer and more effective communication strategies from senior leadership and greater involvement of staff — especially during times of change.



Decline in Trust and Value Alignment with Senior Leaders:

There has been a noticeable decrease in employee perceptions of senior leaders' alignment with company values and their trust in these leaders. This trend could potentially have long-lasting effects on organizational culture and employee satisfaction, stressing the need for leaders to visibly embody and uphold the values they espouse.



Improvement in Workplace Well-Being:

On a positive note, workplace well-being has shown significant improvements, with increased support from organizations and immediate managers related to health and well-being. These enhancements are crucial for maintaining a healthy work environment and ensuring the long-term well-being of healthcare workers.

Looking ahead to 2025, I anticipate that the trends identified in 2024 will evolve further.



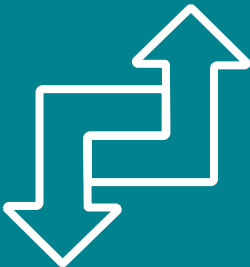
Continued Focus on Well-Being:

Organizations will likely increase their investment in **systematic, intentional well-being efforts**, recognizing the positive correlations between well-being, employee productivity, and patient outcomes. These efforts will continue to move beyond personal well-being resources to also address organizational culture and practice efficiencies, reducing friction in getting the work done and building cultures that support and value their team members.



Enhanced Leadership Communication:

The decline in senior leader confidence could drive a new wave of focused actions aimed at intentionally improving transparency and communication from the top. This could include more regular updates, open forums, and greater leader visibility on the front lines. Clear cascades of information throughout healthcare organizations and opportunities for more two-way communication can help bring clarity and demonstrate leaders are listening and acting upon feedback from their employees.



Adapting to Constant Change:

As the healthcare environment continues to experience rapid change, adaptability will become a core competency for successful healthcare organizations. Those who can quickly pivot and innovate in response to changing conditions will likely outperform their peers, especially when they involve and support staff in these transformations.

While challenges remain, the overall trends in healthcare employee experiences point to an innovative industry that continues to listen to its staff and invest in their engagement, well-being, and overall performance, recognizing that in order to deliver the best patient care we must first take care of our own employees. These factors, along with the investments made to address them, will continue to shape the strategic priorities of healthcare organizations in 2025 and beyond.

Survey Methodology

We measure employee engagement through a national healthcare database including 532 healthcare organizations and 3.85 million healthcare workers across the United States, with refreshed data every six months. Broader employee experience perceptions are measured through Perceptyx's healthcare database of 162 employee experiences across 1.64 million healthcare workers in North America from 2021-2023.



About the Author

[Lauren Beechly, Ph.D.](#) is a Director of Leader & Workforce Transformation at Perceptyx. By aligning listening strategy to business and talent priorities, Lauren helps organizations listen to employees on the topics that matter most and close the gap between insights and impact. While Lauren and her team partner with Fortune 500 organizations across all industries, they specialize in supporting large healthcare organizations and systems.

Lauren has worked in the employee experience space for 15 years, joining Perceptyx in 2018. Previously, she worked as a managing consultant for IBM, served as a director of employee experience for an advisory organization, and worked in the industry as a human resources consultant. As a thought leader, Lauren speaks at industry conferences, publishes original research, and writes articles related to employee experience transformation.

Lauren earned her master's and doctoral degrees in Industrial Organizational Psychology from the University of Oklahoma and is a member of the Society of Industrial Organizational Psychology (SIOP).

Perceptyx

About the Center for Workforce Transformation

The Center for Workforce Transformation, operated by Perceptyx, has a mission to educate and inspire executive leaders, managers, and employees through timely, relevant, and actionable insights about the modern work experience. Via original research, media, industry-focused Consortia, peer groups, and exclusive events, the Center is helping to amplify the practices of the world's leading organizations — driving leader and workforce transformation at speed, at scale, and in sustainable ways.

About Perceptyx

Perceptyx is the Employee Experience (EX) transformation company, providing enterprise-grade employee listening, analytics, and behavioral science that activates people and delivers business impact. More than 600 global enterprises, including one-third of the Fortune 100, use Perceptyx's multi-channel employee listening, AI-powered recommendations, and personalized coaching to close the loop between insights and action. With an unrivaled technology platform and an in-house team of EX Experts, Perceptyx makes it easy for managers, HR executives, and business leaders to align their key business and talent priorities and drive positive organizational change.

For more info, or to speak with a member of our team, visit www.perceptyx.com

