

An abstract graphic consisting of numerous vertical bars of various colors (purple, orange, blue, green, brown) and heights, some overlapping, creating a dynamic, totem-like background.

2023

STATE OF
Healthcare Training and
Staff Development Report

RELIAS



Executive Summary

The **2023 State of Healthcare Training and Staff Development Report** identifies shifts in the healthcare education and workforce environment over the two years since our 2021 report.

This year's survey gathered insights from 3,908 respondents, including leaders, learning and development (L&D) staff, and individual contributors.

Our five key findings indicate changes in direction — both positive and negative — that healthcare and human services professionals are navigating. Our takeaways offer strategies for driving further improvements via education and related workforce solutions.

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FINDING 1

Managers identified the most beneficial aspects of their staff development and training programs as increasing staff competencies, ensuring compliance, and improving staff performance outcomes.

TAKEAWAY

Leaders can do more to identify the payoffs from their staff development and training programs. Having data to show how education enhances employee engagement, encourages retention, saves money, and improves patient or client experiences can garner stronger support for L&D programs.



FINDING 2

Looking at organizational cultures in terms of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), about a third of participants said their organization's culture had improved in the last year (managers 33%, individual contributors 29%). Most said it had stayed about the same (managers 64%, individual contributors 68%), and only a small percentage said it had worsened (managers 3%, individual contributors 3%).

TAKEAWAY

Manager and employee education, ongoing conversations, and action on DEIB issues are important ways that leaders can support their employees in feeling a sense of belonging and promoting collaboration at work.



FINDING 3

Managers said they see need for improvements in staff development and training to ensure staff competency, improve care quality, and address staff retention.

TAKEAWAY

Individual contributors want more continuing education and professional development options, and managers want to improve competency. If the organization provides learning that supports enhanced competency, that serves both groups' goals. Employees can advance their skills and improve care quality, and ideally, more competent employees will want to stay with the organization longer.



FINDING 4

A majority of managers and individual contributors said their organization uses job skills assessments (62% of managers, 67% of individual contributors) and job knowledge assessments (58% of managers, 62% of individual contributors) during preemployment screening.

TAKEAWAY

These results indicate an opportunity for leaders to find more ways to link assessment data to training assignments so they can target areas ripe for improvement. Using an integrated learning management platform can make that process easier for L&D and management teams to ensure competency.



FINDING 5

The percentage of managers who said their organization uses a learning management platform or system rose slightly, coming in at 70% this year compared with 69% in our 2021 survey. Managers rated online courses (62%) and flexible scheduling (51%) as the most important aspects in choosing a learning management platform or system.

TAKEAWAY

As workload continues to be a challenge for healthcare professionals, easily accessible learning is important, as is streamlined administration. A learning management platform provides tools for organizations to more easily link training to assessments, provide 24/7 access to education, offer varied learning modalities, track completions, and ensure compliance in one integrated system.



Research Methodology

As in previous surveys, we sought insights from healthcare organization leaders, people managers, and L&D administrators.

This year we also included individual contributors to gain their views of the pros and cons of their training and staff development programs.

The survey was fielded in late May and early June 2023.

As an incentive for participation, respondents could opt in to a random drawing to win one of five \$150 Amazon gift cards.

We solicited participation via:

- Email campaigns to our prospective B2B clients
- Email campaigns to our current B2C clients
- Platform notifications to our B2B and B2C clients

Our qualified survey respondents totaled 3,908 (margin of error, or MOE, 1.56%), which included 1,459 leaders and people managers (MOE 2.56%) and 2,449 individual contributors (MOE 1.98%) working in health care and human services. They work across the healthcare continuum, and our results are broken out by acute and pre-acute care, community health, health and human services, post-acute care, and payers and insurers.

By comparison, our 2021 survey included data from 1,290 respondents, who were working in healthcare leadership, human resources, or L&D positions. That previous survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and reflected a healthcare landscape struggling to deal with related, multifaceted challenges.

In 2023, we conducted the survey and compiled this report in-house in the following manner:

- Project lead reviewed previous survey questions and revised for relevance.
- Internal subject matter experts in health care, human services, training and education solutions, marketing, and academic research collaborated to review questions and ensure they were relevant.
- Internal research team built, tested, and deployed the survey.
- Internal research, marketing, and product management teams analyzed the results.
- Internal marketing author wrote the report.

This 2023 survey provides new perspectives by surveying individual professionals as well as leaders about the state of training and staff development as healthcare professionals and organizations continue recovering from the pandemic's effects.

Demographics

Out of our **3,908** survey respondents, we had

37.3% people managers



62.7% individual contributors



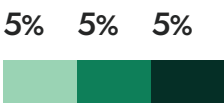
The following breakdown by healthcare sector provides further information on respondents.

Healthcare Sector and Level of Responsibility

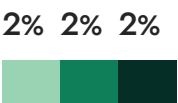
Acute and pre-acute care



Community health



Payers and insurers



Health and human services

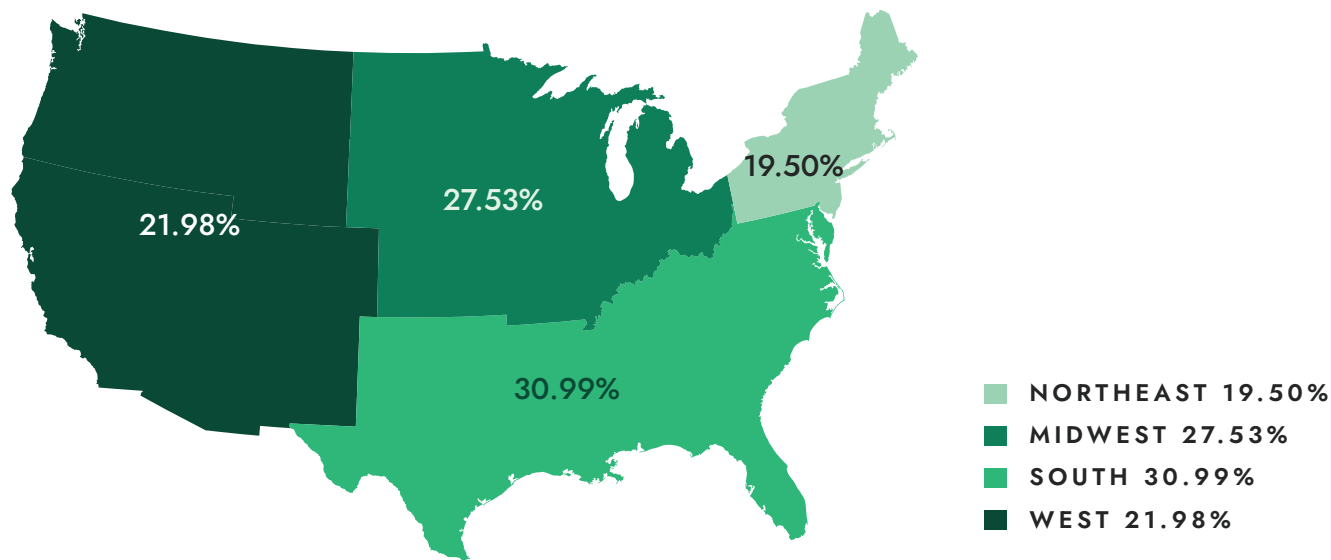


Post-acute care

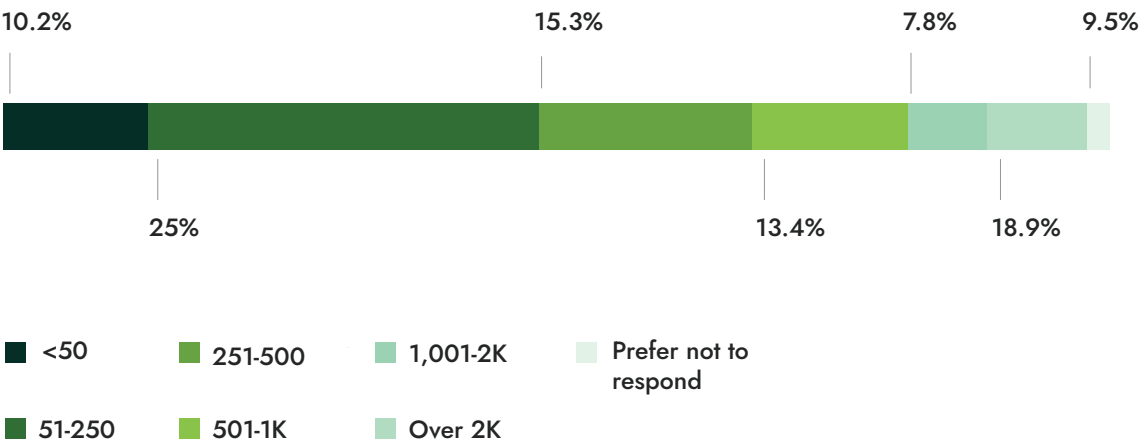


- PEOPLE MANAGERS (n = 1,459)
- INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS (n = 2,449)
- TOTAL (N = 3,908)

Respondents' Headquarters
by Geographical Region



Company Size by Employee Count



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.



FINDING 1

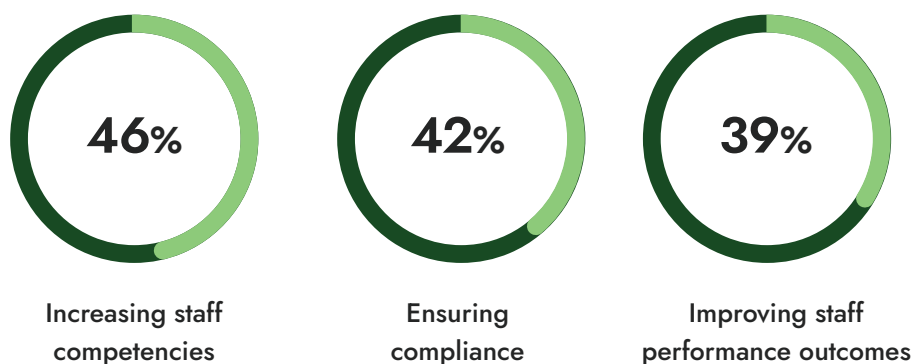
Benefits of staff education

Managers identified the **most beneficial aspects** of their staff development and training programs: increasing staff competencies, ensuring compliance, and improving staff performance outcomes.

FINDING 1

Different perspectives emerged when managers and individual participants identified the **most beneficial** aspects of their staff education program.

Managers' Top 3 Benefits of Staff Education



Individual Contributors' Top 3 Benefits of Staff Education



We know that staff competency is crucial to good care outcomes, and manager and individual respondent groups agreed that competency was the most beneficial aspect of staff education. Both groups also identified staff performance outcomes in the top three benefits of staff education, but to varying degrees.

Beyond those areas of agreement, some understandable differences arose among managers and individual contributors. Managers were more focused on the benefits of ensuring compliance, and individual contributors saw engaging employees with staff education as a stronger benefit.

“Thinking about the data strategically, we find that those two elements actually influence one another.

“If you have engaged, well-educated employees, they tend to stay longer. And educated and experienced employees are better prepared to support their organization’s regulatory compliance.”

— Vince Baiera, BSN, Partner in post-acute care solutions at Relias

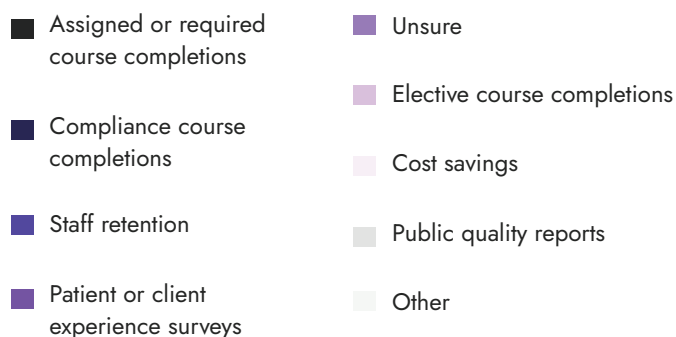
As we look at training’s perceived positive effects, it’s important to also examine how organizations are actually measuring the results of their staff education.

Impact of staff development and training

The most common way managers said their organizations **measure the impact** of staff development and training were course completions.

Staff retention and patient experience surveys were among the other factors noted. The links between training and cost savings are less commonly tracked.

Method of Tracking Training's Impact



TAKEAWAY

Leaders can do more to identify **the payoffs** from their staff development and training programs. Having data to show how education enhances employee engagement, encourages retention, saves money, and improves patient or client experiences can garner **stronger support** for L&D programs.

Healthcare leaders are constantly looking for ways to improve their financial results.

With that goal in mind, the low percentage of managers who said they measure the connection between staff development and cost savings (8%) is a missed opportunity.

If L&D teams can show the financial payoff of staff education, they can encourage stronger executive support for their budget needs.



FINDING 2

Organizational culture and DEIB

Looking at how diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) affect the work culture, about a third of participants said **their organization's culture had improved** in the last year (managers 33%, individual contributors 29%). Most said it had stayed about the same (managers 64%, individual contributors 68%), and only a small percentage said it had worsened (managers 3%, individual contributors 3%).

FINDING 2

At a time when social issues, work environments, and healthcare outcomes continue to be linked, respondents provided encouraging impressions by indicating that their organizational cultures have progressed or are at least holding ground.

Relationship of DEIB training and culture

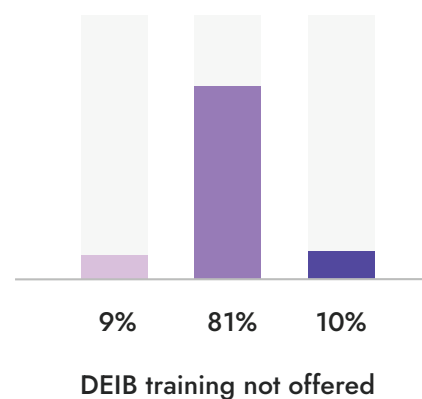
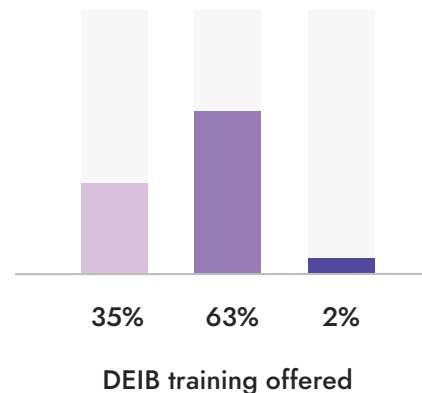
Our survey analysis found a significant relationship between organizations offering DEIB training and changes in their organization's culture.

Respondents who said their organization **offered DEIB training** were more likely to say their **culture improved** over the last year (35%) than those whose organizations did not offer DEIB training and said their culture improved (9%).

Those who said their organization **did not offer DEIB training** were more likely to say their **culture worsened** over the last year (10%) than those whose organizations offered DEIB training and said their culture worsened (2%).

Respondents who said their organizations **did not offer DEIB training** were also more likely to say the **culture stayed about the same** (81%) than those whose organizations offered DEIB training (63%).

Organizational Culture Change and DEIB Training



“With the current workforce crisis, many leaders have to contend with the reality that work culture improvements and opportunity for growth are major requirements to retain staff.

“For many healthcare workers, the two issues are inextricably linked. These findings reflect how DEIB can improve culture not only in terms of increasing communication and respect, but also in implementing policies that **support the growth of all staff.**”

— Rola Amar, PhD, who addresses behavioral health solutions at Relias

Prevalence of DEIB training

More than three-quarters of participants said **their organization offers** DEIB training for staff. That is up from 62% in our 2021 survey, which included only managers as respondents. Note that we changed the term in our 2023 survey to DEIB from diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in 2021.

Organization Offers DEIB Training

76%

Managers

76%

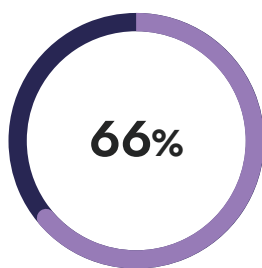
Individual contributors

Note that a higher percentage of respondents who use a learning management platform or system (82%) said their organization offers DEIB training than those who don't use such a system (61%). This data provides an opportunity for leaders to delve deeper into what actions they could take to support DEIB training in their organizations.

Our data shows a decrease in respondents who do not have DEIB training. In 2021, 19% of respondents said their organization **did not participate** in DEI initiatives. In our 2023 survey, only 15% of managers said their organization **did not offer** DEIB training.

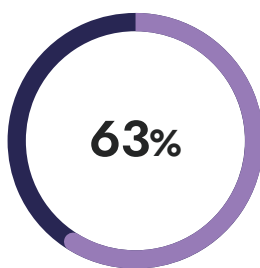
In organizations that have DEIB training, staff participation was not always mandatory. The percentage of managers who said their organization mandated staff training in DEIB decreased since 2021.

Mandatory Staff Training



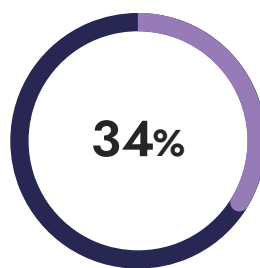
Managers

(79% in 2021)



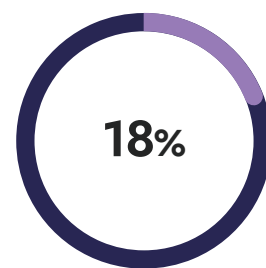
Individual contributors

Mandatory Manager Training



Managers

(40% in 2021)



Individual contributors

All participants said mandatory manager training in DEIB was less common than mandated staff training. The percentage of leaders who noted mandatory manager training also decreased compared with the 2021 survey.

Although reports of mandatory training have decreased, the increased prevalence of DEIB training overall is encouraging.

Aspects of culture change

As seen in this finding, almost a third of participants said their organization's culture had improved in the last year.

6% Manager
5% Individual

Acute care
culture worsened

Of note, the hospital and health system (acute care) sector had the highest percentage of managers (6%) and individual contributors (5%) who said their culture had **worsened** over the last year. The percentages are small, however.

36% Manager
33% Individual

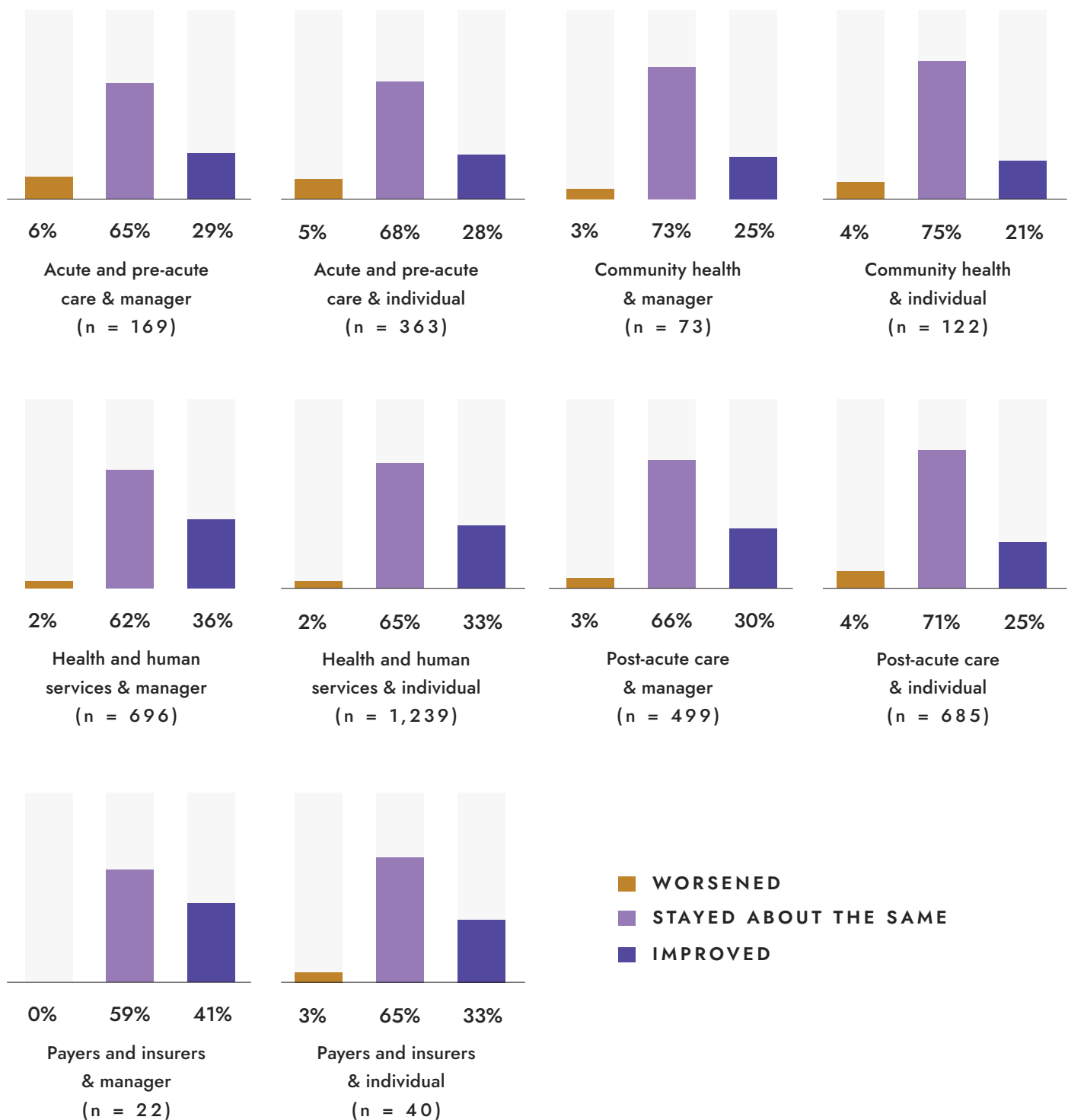
Health and human services
culture improved

The health and human services sector had the highest percentage of managers (36%) and individual contributors (33%) who said their culture had **improved**.

FINDING 2

DEIB and Organizational Culture Change by Sector

(N = 3,908)



If leaders are seeking specifics on how to improve their organizational cultures, insights from respondent comments may spark ideas. Many of the comments focused on enhanced diversity, education, awareness, and communication.

Highlights of How the Culture Improved


- Everyone aware and educated about what the standards are and how to treat one another
- Love seeing more people like me in my workspace — provides a sense of community
- Added trainings, promote growth for all
- Executive directors at our agency made clear how we are stronger with diversity
- Bring DEI issues to the forefront, improved conversations about it
- Better communication, more team atmosphere
- All staff informed about the intent to provide inclusive care and provided the tools to do so
- Accommodation of people with different ideas and cultures
- Having better understanding of minority populations and serving them in a way that is culturally relevant
- Expanded skills and training
- Added LGBTQ+ diversity classes
- Communication improved, and the shift to trauma-informed care improved employee policies
- Conversations more about culture and the use of the correct pronouns
- A lot more awareness and inclusivity
- Being kind and respectful

“These findings shine a light on a truth that proponents of DEIB have been promoting for years — that integrating DEIB initiatives helps leaders make more informed decisions about the needs and challenges of their organizations.

“And staff take notice and appreciate when these initiatives are put into place.”

— Rola Amar, PhD

Although the percentage who indicated their culture worsened is small, the comments that respondents shared about how their culture worsened could provide learning opportunities for leaders and staff. Communication and staff support issues frequently appeared in respondents' comments.



Highlights of How the Culture Worsened

- Lack of support for staff and clients, not addressing needs around culture, and poor communication from leadership around making changes
- Organization not supporting staff when patients disrespect/refuse staff care based on ethnicity
- Workers not communicating with each other with problems they have with one another, causing disturbances in the working environment
- More and more shortage of staff
- Intolerance and bullying of individuals in minority groups
- Worsening culture from being told that we are not allowed to speak in our language
- Morale at an all-time low, and leadership not investing time or resources to change
- Bilingual staff members not feeling supported and therefore left
- Breakdown in communication

As the comments show, support and communication are key factors in creating a culture of trust.

“DEIB initiatives help staff members know that they are seen and cared for as whole individuals. In turn, this provides staff with the sense of safety to ask for what they need to **succeed and grow**.”

“Ultimately, this means organizations that are a better culture fit for staff and staff that want to stay in their roles.”

— Rola Aamar, PhD



TAKEAWAY

Manager and employee education, ongoing conversations, and **action on DEIB** issues are important ways that leaders can support their employees in feeling a **sense of belonging** and promoting collaboration at work.



FINDING 3

Training improvements desired

Managers said they see **need for improvements** in staff development and training to ensure staff competency, improve care quality, and address staff retention.

Managers identified **competency** (43%) as the most desired area for staff development and training improvement. Individual contributors identified **continuing education** (39%) as the top area for improvement. These data points indicate a leadership focus on organizational outcomes and employee focus on professional growth. Improving each of these areas would support the other.

FINDING 3

Improving care quality came in second in manager responses (33%), but a lower percentage of individual contributors rated it as a strong need (17%). Individual contributors chose staff retention strategies as the second highest area of need (34%).

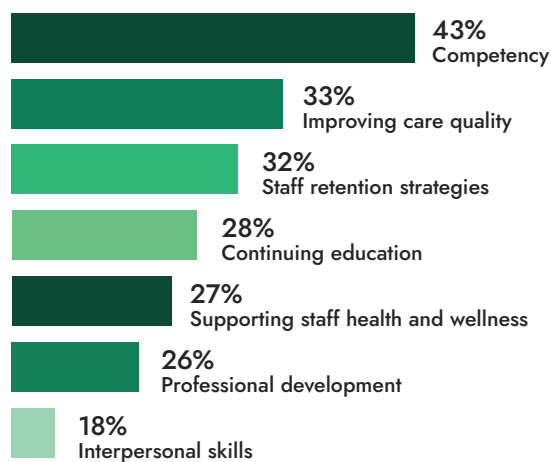
Both groups saw an opportunity to use staff development and training to support staff health and wellness. A higher percentage of managers (27%) than individual contributors (21%) identified that area of need. More individual contributors (21%) than managers (17%) identified leadership training as an area for improvement.

Managers can learn from the areas of importance that individual contributors identified. Staff members are yearning for improvement in continuing education offerings, staff retention strategies, and professional development options.

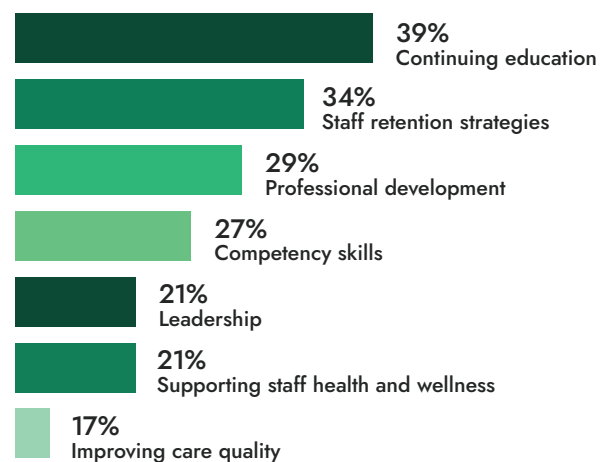
Managers expressed a stronger desire for improvements that affect organizational outcomes, and their roles require that business focus.


Top 7 Areas for Improvement

MANAGERS



INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS





"It's no surprise that competency, care quality, and staff retention are pressing concerns for leaders. Digging deeper to find how to make those improvements is vital. Conversations with staff and other leaders about what specific deficiencies they see is a good first step."

— Vince Baiera, BSN

Training's impact on business goals

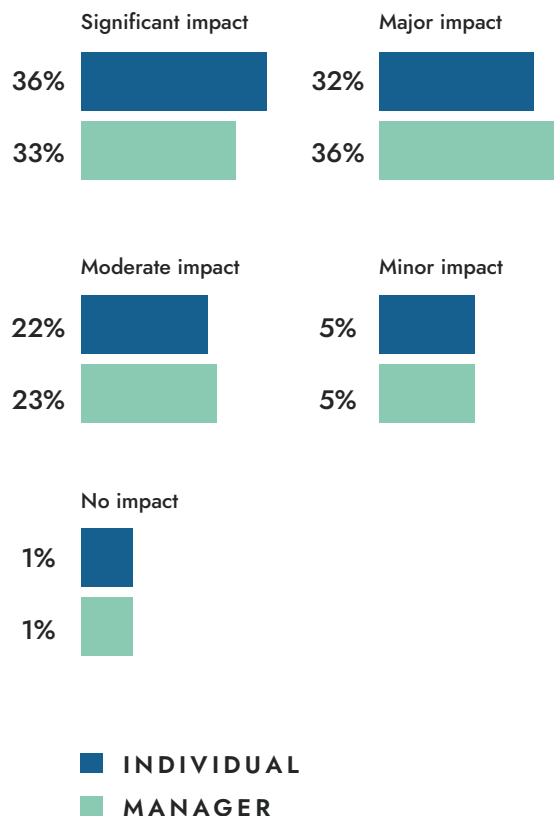
In another survey question, more than a third of individual contributors (36%) and managers (33%) said their staff development and training program had a “significant impact” on achieving their organization’s top business goals.

Combining the top choices — “significant impact” and “major impact” — we find that more than two-thirds of managers (69%) and individual contributors (68%) recognized the importance of staff development and training for achieving business goals.

To satisfy individual contributors’ desires for career growth and leaders’ aspirations to improve business outcomes, L&D teams can look at whether their systems are optimal for supporting training and staff development.

Does the organization:

- Provide varied training options to meet individual learning preferences?
- Use competency tracking tools?
- Offer assessment-based learning?
- Financially support continuing education for upskilling?
- Offer access to a learning management platform 24/7 at home or at work?



TAKEAWAY

Individual contributors want more continuing education and professional development options, and managers want to improve competency. If the organization provides learning that supports enhanced competency, that serves both groups’ goals. Employees can advance their skills and improve care quality, and ideally, more competent employees will want to stay with the organization longer.



FINDING 4

Using data to hire and retain staff

A majority of managers and individual contributors said their organization uses **job skills assessments** (62% of managers, 67% of individual contributors) and **job knowledge assessments** (58% of managers, 62% of individual contributors) during preemployment screening.

FINDING 4

As managers across the healthcare continuum continue to struggle with hiring and retaining staff, L&D teams can help by combining prehire and competency assessments with targeted learning. An integrated learning management platform can make it easier to coordinate meaningful learning that improves competence and confidence.

Many organizations already have assessments in place, but the training link appears to be missing. A majority of managers use preemployment assessments during screening of prospective new hires. More than half use skills assessments and checklists to measure staff competence.

18%

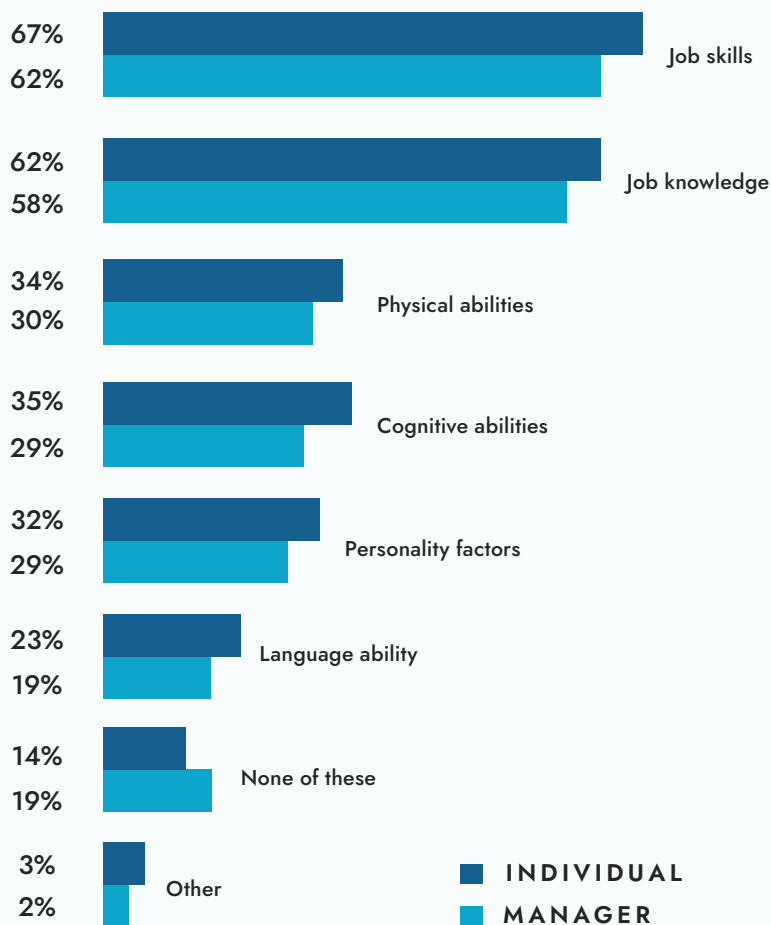
of managers were not sure how their organization used data and analytics to inform training. Closer links between assessments, competency, and training assignments could improve retention and organizational outcomes.

Use of preemployment assessments

Despite staff shortages in many sectors, a majority of managers are using job skills and job knowledge assessments during preemployment screening. These tools can ensure job fit and support retention.

However, when staff shortages are severe, weeding out applicants with preemployment assessments might not be a priority.

Types of Preemployment Assessments Used



Assessment Use by Sector

	Acute and pre-acute care	Community health	Health and human services	Post-acute care	Payers and insurers
Job knowledge	58%	63%	53%	63%	77%
Job skills	62%	62%	58%	67%	86%
Physical abilities	32%	27%	25%	37%	27%
Cognitive abilities	25%	21%	29%	29%	41%
Personality factors	26%	27%	29%	31%	32%
Language ability	12%	23%	21%	16%	36%
Other	2%	5%	3%	2%	0%
None of these	19%	14%	23%	15%	5%

Although adoption of preemployment assessments was not as strong among health and human services respondents, many organizations are finding them useful to support skills-based hiring, competency training, and retention.

Acute and pre-acute care organizations also are less likely to use preemployment assessments.

Whether or not an organization assesses candidates' knowledge and skills during the prehire phase, it is vital to assess employee competence on the job.

Measuring staff competence

Healthcare leaders in all sectors want to ensure they have the best fit for their job roles and recognize any skill gaps early in the onboarding period. Managers are using a multipronged approach to measuring and managing staff competence. The most frequently used measures are course completions, skills assessments and checklists, and observations by onsite evaluators, as shown in the responses. Strategic decisions hinge on this awareness.

Methods of Measuring Staff Competence

54%

Assigned or required
course completions

53%

Staff skills assessments
and checklists

49%

Compliance course
completions

38%

Onsite observation
by evaluator

31%

Clinical knowledge
assessments

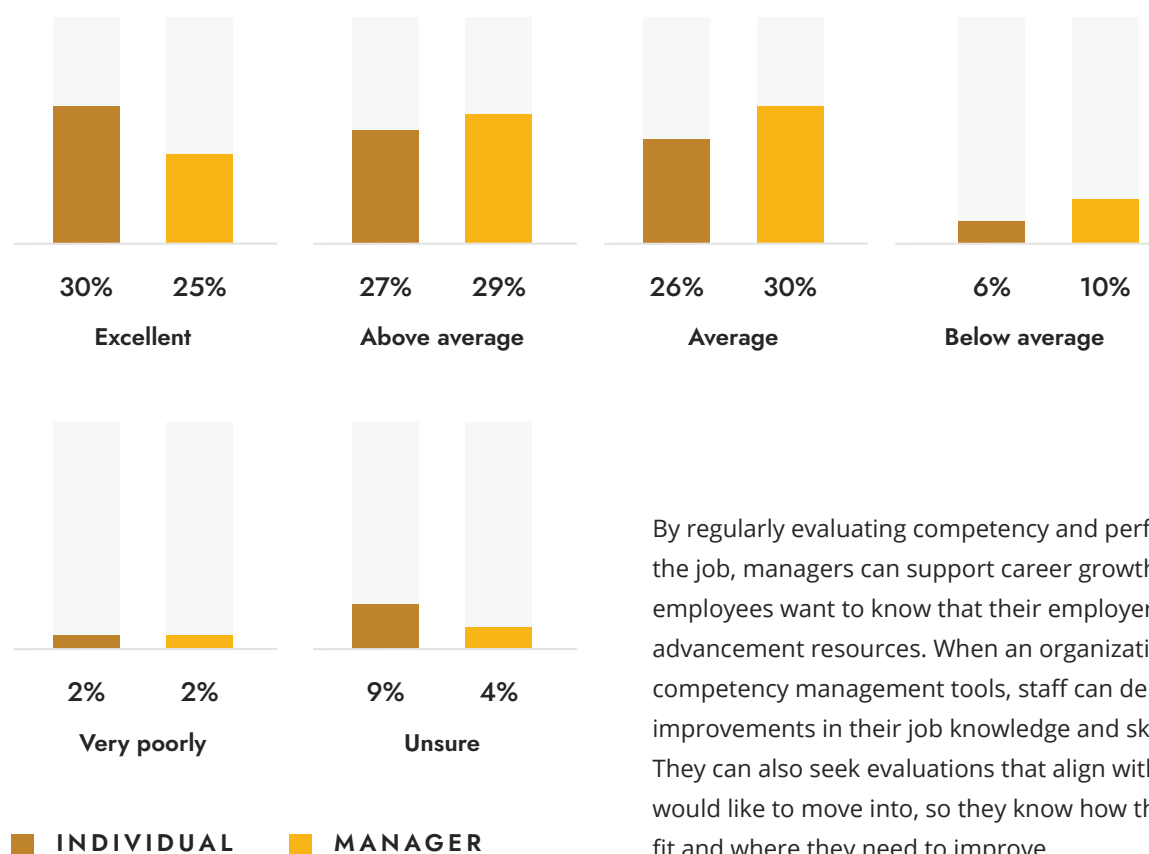
“To ensure quality care, it is important to know where your employees stand. Then you can place talented staff in high-impact job roles and upskill those who need a boost in certain areas.”

— Vince Baiera, BSN

Training's effectiveness on the job

More than half of respondents said their organization is excellent or above average at evaluating whether staff members use their training on the job.

Evaluation of Training Effectiveness on the Job



By regularly evaluating competency and performance on the job, managers can support career growth. For retention, employees want to know that their employer offers career advancement resources. When an organization uses competency management tools, staff can demonstrate improvements in their job knowledge and skills over time. They can also seek evaluations that align with a role they would like to move into, so they know how their strengths fit and where they need to improve.



TAKEAWAY

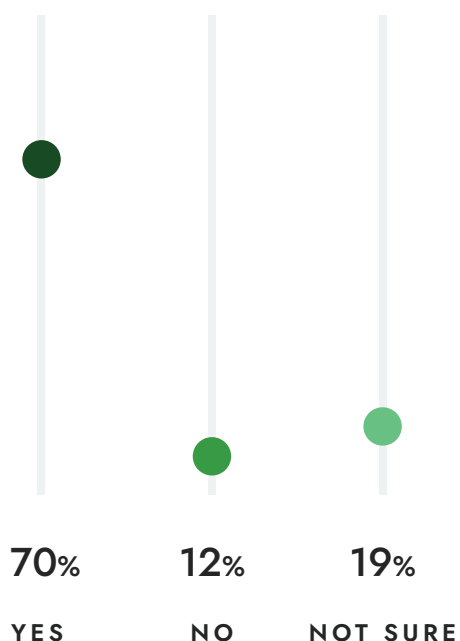
These results indicate an opportunity for leaders to find more ways to link assessment data to training assignments so they can target areas ripe for improvement. Using an integrated learning management platform can make that process easier for L&D and management teams to ensure competency.

FINDING 5

Insights into learning management platform usage

The percentage of managers who said their organization uses a **learning management platform or system** rose slightly, at 70% this year compared with 69% in our 2021 survey. Managers rated online courses (62%) and flexible scheduling (51%) as the most important aspects in choosing a learning management platform or system.

Learning Management Platform Use



More than two-thirds of managers said their organization uses a learning management platform or system. The percentage of managers who were not sure raises concerns. This result indicates opportunities for better communication about education tools available. Consistent, clear discussions about learning opportunities can boost staff expertise.

“Strong and effective communication is one of the primary indicators that your organization has a culture of learning.

“Knowledge sharing, a strong sense of community, and the ability to respond rapidly to challenges with innovative, successful solutions are critical to building a culture of learning excellence framework.”

— Felicia Sadler, MJ, BSN, RN, CPHQ, LSSBB,
Vice President of Quality and Partner at Relias

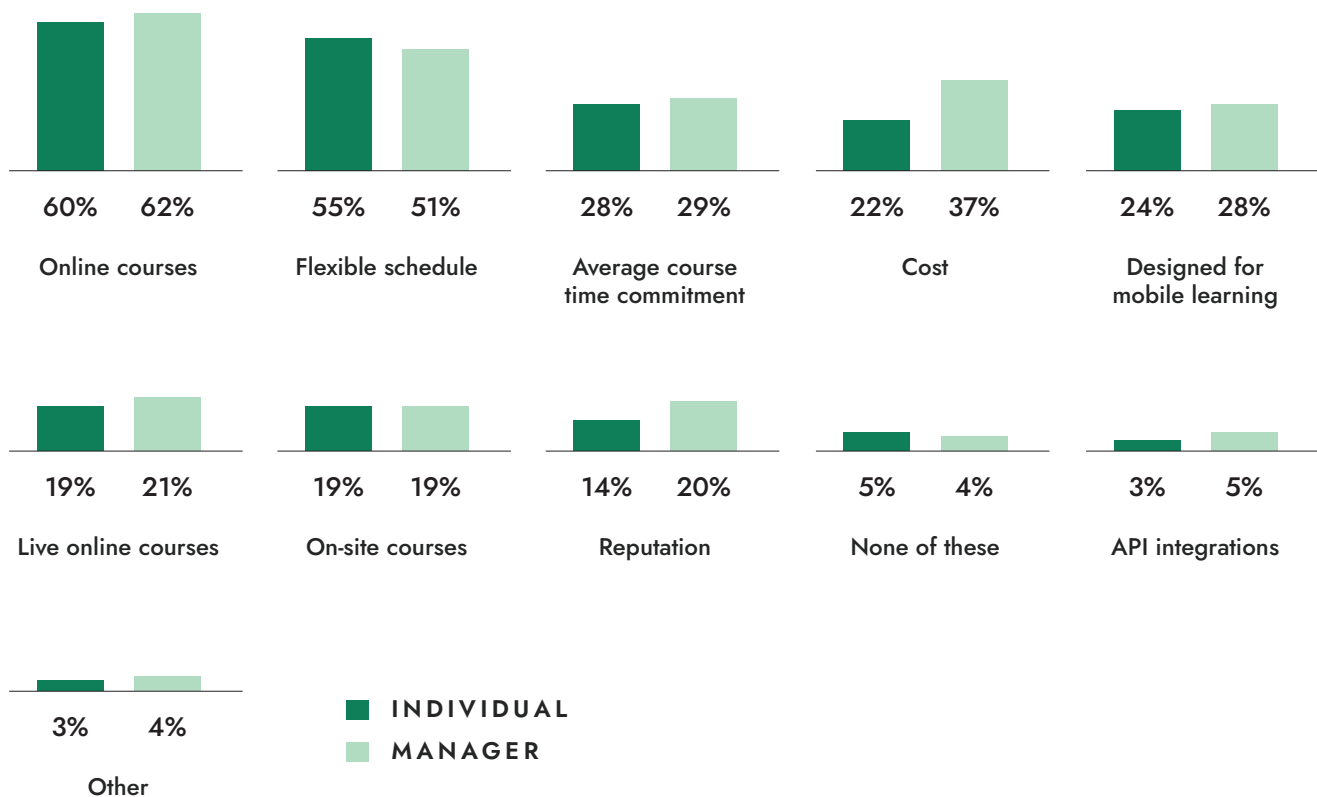
Most important factors in platform choice

Managers rated online courses (62%) and flexible scheduling (51%) as the most important aspects in choosing a learning management platform or system. Cost was the third most important factor (37%).

The quality of the online course content is important to ensuring competence, confidence, and compliance. Your training content must keep up with evidence-based practices and present the information in an engaging way.



Factors in Choosing a Learning Management Platform or System



FINDING 5

In a related question on the top strengths of staff development and training, self-paced learning topped the list (managers 19%, individual contributors 24%).

Next highest were 24/7 access (17% of each group) and topics tailored to the job role (16% of managers, 11% of individual contributors).

To ensure flexible scheduling and tailored education, your platform should allow managers to assign courses easily and employees to complete them at their convenience.

Top Strengths of Staff Development and Training

Self-paced learning



Topics tailored to the job role

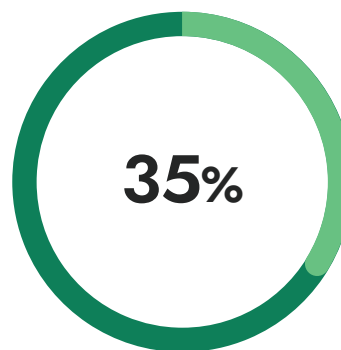


Tracking training completions

Almost a quarter of managers, 23%, said their organization still uses paper to track training completed by staff, and almost a third — 32% — said they use spreadsheets. Those percentages have declined since our 2021 survey, which found 28% using paper and 47% using spreadsheets.

Just over half of managers (53%) use a learning management platform or system for tracking training, and that percentage has dropped since our 2021 survey, when 57% used a learning management system for tracking training. More than a third (35%) said they use databases in 2023, compared with 29% in 2021.

For more insights into manager responses, we can see the methods of tracking training broken out by healthcare sector.



More than a third of managers said they use databases in 2023 compared with 29% in 2021.

Methods of Tracking Training Completed by Staff

	All Managers n = 1,459	Acute and pre-acute care n = 169	Community health n = 73	Health and human services n = 696	Post-acute care n = 499	Payers and insurers n = 22
Paper	23%	21%	21%	19%	29%	23%
Word files	8%	8%	8%	9%	8%	0%
Spreadsheets	32%	38%	44%	34%	30%	18%
Databases	35%	36%	25%	37%	32%	36%
Learning management platform or system	53%	56%	62%	54%	48%	50%
Mobile apps	7%	8%	3%	6%	9%	9%
Other	2%	1%	0%	3%	1%	0%
Don't know	10%	11%	7%	10%	9%	14%
None of these	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%	0%

To ease the L&D team's burden, it is helpful to have a learning platform that easily identifies training completed by staff and remaining education gaps. That data serves as an important tool to guide future learning.

Freeing up time spent manually tracking training could allow L&D staff to focus on providing more targeted education and respond to rapidly changing needs, such as new protocols, regulations, or patient populations.



TAKEAWAY

As workload continues to be a challenge for healthcare professionals, easily accessible learning is important, as is streamlined administration. A learning management platform provides tools for organizations to more easily link training to assessments, provide 24/7 access to education, offer varied learning modalities, track completions, and ensure compliance in one integrated system.



Conclusion: Driving forward

To make the most of your staff development and training, begin by analyzing this report's five key findings and takeaways.

Among the topics discussed, we explored:

- Benefiting from staff development and training
- Developing a culture of belonging
- Training staff to ensure competency
- Assessing for skills and knowledge
- Using a learning management platform that eases administration and accessibility

As you think about how successful your organization is in these areas, you can dig deeper into the ones that are most meaningful to your operations and care outcomes. By researching your organization's strengths and weaknesses further, you can map out improvements in the areas where you can make the most difference.

Education is just the beginning. A culture of learning puts you on a never-ending road to organizational improvement.



How Relias can help

Relias, the trusted education and workforce development partner to more than 11,000 healthcare organizations worldwide, has proven workforce solutions to drive your growth strategy forward.

Ongoing training in soft skills and management strategies can help you provide development options for your staff and leaders. Relias has diversity, equity, and inclusion training to ensure you're cultivating a culture that sustains staff health and wellness.

For staff hiring and retention, automated role-based assignments set up streamlined onboarding and training. That way, you ensure that everyone in your organization understands your culture and procedures from day one.

The Relias Platform helps you manage everything, with automated tracking, compliance reporting, and training plans for staff development. As your organization expands, you can continually look at your quality data and tailor training and staff development as new areas of need arise.

**Want to hear more about
how Relias can help you?**

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