

A man in a light-colored work shirt and dark pants is working in a factory. He is wearing a large headset with a microphone and is looking towards the camera. He is wearing gloves and is reaching out towards a piece of machinery. The background is a blurred industrial setting with various pipes and structures.

# The State of the Hourly Worker

---



# Table of Contents

---

<b>03</b>	Introduction	<b>17</b>	How to Engage & Retain Hourly Workers
<b>04</b>	Profile of the Hourly Worker	<b>23</b>	Conclusion
<b>07</b>	Key Motivators of Hourly Workers	<b>25</b>	Survey Demographics & Methodology
<b>09</b>	What Matters Most to Hourly Workers	<b>27</b>	About Shiftboard & Lux Insights

# Introduction

---

The strongest U.S. labor market in 50 years has employers from nearly every industry struggling to find and, more importantly, retain hourly workers. With employee turnover rates and expenses rising, this challenge is a pressing and costly one for companies with hourly workers. Yet, despite years of effort to drive positive work experiences for employees, organizations are still struggling to solve this enduring human capital problem.

From our vantage point as a solutions provider in the workforce management field, we have observed a significant correlation between employee retention and an organization's scheduling practices. In an effort to help employers navigate the challenge of improving employee retention, we partnered with Lux Insights to conduct research to explore the factors that drive hourly worker satisfaction, including the work schedule.

The results from the survey confirm we are in a strong labor market with abundant job opportunities for hourly workers to leverage in

their present careers. In our sample, 69 percent of hourly workers said they are likely to seek a new position in the near future, compared to only 50 percent of non-hourly workers. It's no wonder job satisfaction is a key focus of workforce managers in nearly every sector of the U.S. economy.

Impacting employee retention in a strong labor market is not a simple matter. With this survey, we dove deep into the mindset of hourly workers to uncover previously unrealized aspects of worker motivation. What we discovered may surprise you. For example, we learned hourly workers value having control of their time more than they value their pay rate.

We believe this insight may provide the impetus to develop game-changing retention strategies for hourly workers in the U.S. With Shiftboard's new research in hand, organizations are better equipped than ever before to dramatically improve employee satisfaction and retention for years to come.

A woman with dark hair tied in a ponytail, wearing a white lab coat and a stethoscope, is smiling and looking down at a clipboard she is holding. The background is a blurred medical or office setting with papers and charts.

# Profile of the Hourly Worker

---

# Profile of the Hourly Worker

## Gender, Age, and Household Status

There are nearly 82 million hourly workers, who account for almost 60 percent of the U.S. workforce<sup>1</sup>. As we began analyzing the data from this survey, we first took a look at the demographic profile of our sample to uncover any distinctions within this vast group of hourly workers.

The hourly workforce is a 50/50 split between male and female workers. Most hourly workers are Generation X (Gen X). However, one in five is over 55 years of age, which reflects the overall trend of hourly working later in life. Fifty-eight percent of hourly workers are married. Nearly half, 48 percent, have children under the age of 18 in the home.

### Gender



**50%** Male



**50%** Female

### Age

**34.5%**  
18-34

**46.5%**  
35-54

**19%**  
55+



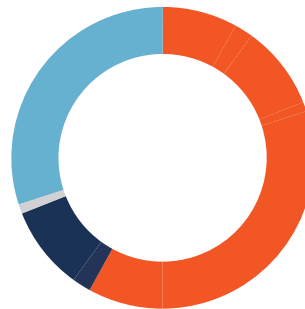
### Marital Status

**58%**  
Married

**30%**  
Single

**11%**  
Divorced/  
Separated

**1%**  
No response



*“Many of us assume that people work for hourly wages only because they have to, and that most American workers dream about having the status of being a salaried employee. But most hourly workers are well-educated, and many have great incomes, which busts an important myth about hourly workers and their social status.”*

Nika Kabiri, JD PhD  
VP Lux Insights

# Profile of the Hourly Worker

## Education and Income

Contrary to stereotypes, hourly workers are well-educated and have significant earning power. While 36 percent of hourly workers have graduated from two or four-year colleges, over a quarter of the hourly workforce has an advanced degree. Only 36 percent report having a high school diploma or less.

Over half of the hourly workers in our sample claim household incomes over \$60,000, with 25 percent reporting household incomes of \$100,000 or more. Still, 20.5 percent reported an annual income under \$30,000.

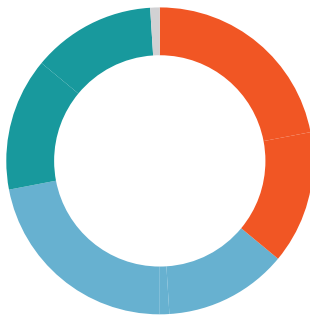
Education (highest degree earned)

**27%**  
Postgraduate/  
graduate school

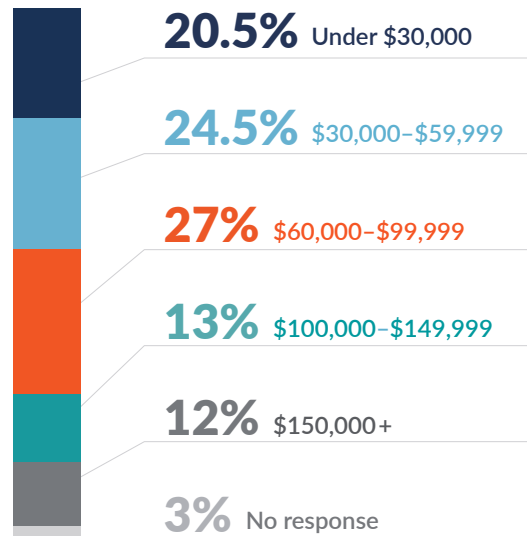
**36%**  
Graduated 2-year  
or 4-year college

**36%**  
High school or less


**1%**  
No response



Income (yearly household income)







# Key Motivators of Hourly Workers

---

# Key Motivators of Hourly Workers

## Finding Meaning in Work

There seems to be a myth that hourly workers are less invested in their jobs than non-hourly workers. Our research found the exact opposite to be true. The data shows hourly employees are more invested in their jobs and care more deeply about the work they perform than non-hourly workers.

Hourly workers want their jobs to make a difference, and 82 percent reported their on-the-job decisions had a direct impact on their organization. Only 74 percent of non-hourly workers felt this way.

Believe their on-the-job decisions have a significant impact on the organization

**82%** Hourly workers

**74%** Non-hourly workers

This insight is further bolstered by the fact that 87 percent of hourly workers believe making a significant contribution to the success of their company is important for job satisfaction. This compares to just 75 percent of non-hourly workers making this claim.

Believe making a significant contribution is important for job satisfaction

**87%** Hourly workers

**75%** Non-hourly workers

Other insights suggest hourly workers may be more ambitious than non-hourly workers. Within our hourly worker sample, 89 percent reported career growth opportunities were an important factor of job satisfaction, compared to only 75 percent of non-hourly workers.

Believe having career growth opportunities is important for job satisfaction

**89%** Hourly workers

**75%** Non-hourly workers

Hourly workers are highly conscientious about their jobs too. Not only do they want to receive joy from the work they do, they want to feel challenged by it as well. More hourly workers (87 percent) than non-hourly workers (74 percent) said feeling challenged by the work they do is a significant driver of job satisfaction.

Believe it's important to receive a lot of joy from work

**82%** Hourly workers

**75%** Non-hourly workers

Believe feeling challenged at work is important for job satisfaction

**87%** Hourly workers

**74%** Non-hourly workers





# What Matters Most to Hourly Workers

---

# What Matters Most to Hourly Workers

## Work-Life Balance

Through this research we discovered there are multitudes of factors that contribute to an hourly worker's positive view of their job. These range from pay to location to relationships with co-workers to just enjoying the task at hand. However, one of the most surprising insights was the high significance hourly workers place on having work-life balance, compared to other factors of job satisfaction.

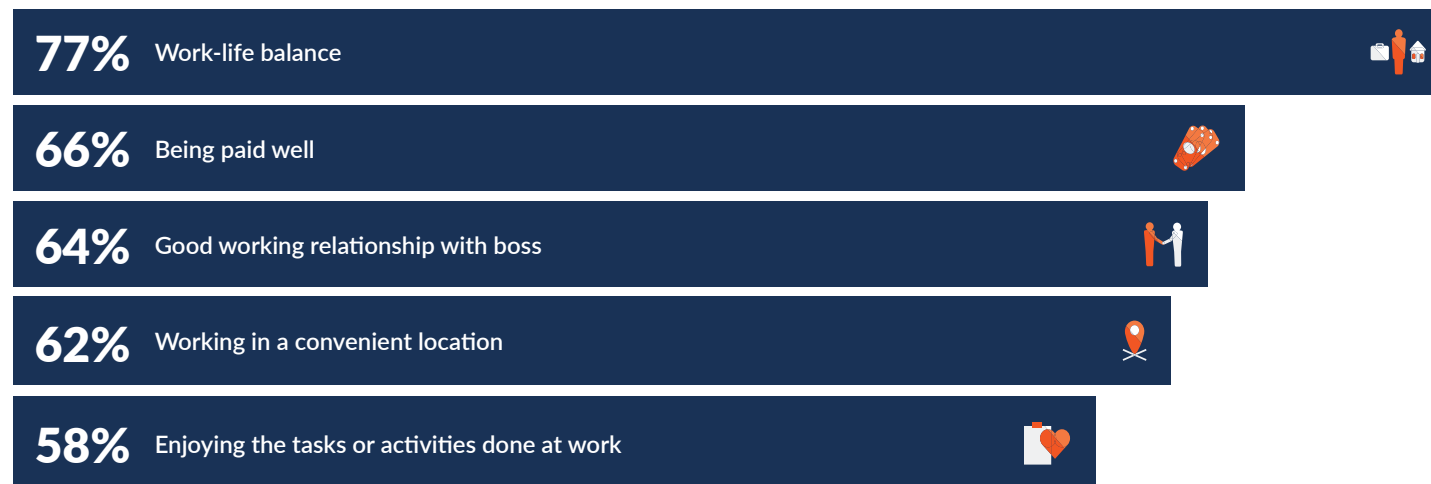
Of the hourly workers we polled, 77 percent ranked work-life balance as necessary for high job satisfaction. This is rather surprising when you consider work-life balance ranked even higher than being paid well (66 percent), having a good working relationship with your boss (64 percent), working in a convenient location (62 percent), or doing tasks or projects you enjoy (58 percent).

The findings strongly suggest the key to hourly employee job satisfaction is tied to the degree that workers feel empowered to balance work with life.

However we cut the data, work-life balance ranked very high as a necessary factor of job satisfaction. Both men and women view work-life balance as necessary for high job satisfaction, although, more women (72 percent) considered it to be necessary than men (65 percent) did.

There wasn't much difference in generational perceptions about work-life balance either. Younger workers were just as likely as Gen X to value it: 71 percent of those 18-34 said work-life balance was key to high job satisfaction, compared to 69 percent of those 35-54 years of age.

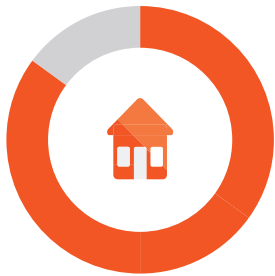
### Factors most important for job satisfaction



# What Matters Most to Hourly Workers

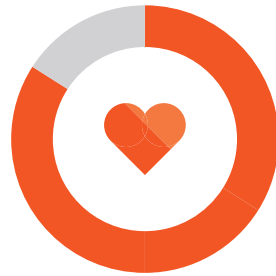
## The Work Schedule

Work schedules heavily influence hourly employee satisfaction and retention because they impact life more directly and more frequently than any other aspect of work. Childcare, parenting schedules, social lives, and quality of life are all directly affected by the work schedule. In other words, the work schedule directly affects work-life balance.



**85%**

Schedule has an impact on their ability to be there for their families



**84%**

Schedule impacts their ability to do things they love outside of work



**77%**

Schedule impacts their relationships with friends and family

# What Matters Most to Hourly Workers

## Quality of Life

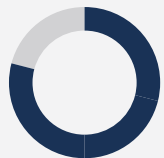
This research validates just how much work schedules impact an employee's quality of life. Hourly workers report their work schedules create as much strain as other, more apparent, sources of job stress, such as their commute time, their relationship with their boss, and even how much they are getting paid.

### Impact of work schedule



**81%**

Work schedule impacts their physical well-being



**79%**

Work schedule impacts their emotional and psychological well-being



**38%**

Ability to influence schedule causes some degree of stress

### Other work-related stress factors



**39%**

Commute time to work causes at least some amount of stress



**40%**

Relationship with their manager causes at least some amount of stress



**49%**

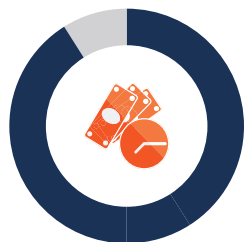
Pay rate or salary causes at least some amount of stress

# What Matters Most to Hourly Workers

## Scheduling Flexibility

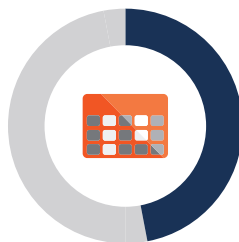
When it comes to scheduling, hourly workers want flexibility as well as the power to influence the days and times they work. They also want access to more work, but they want to choose when they work more.

We found 91 percent of hourly workers are willing to work more hours for more pay. And 93 percent are willing to work overtime, as long as it is optional. Just under 50 percent say they might quit their job if they didn't have access to more shifts. Nearly 90 percent want to work longer days to have more time off between shifts. Hourly workers want to work, but they need flexibility.



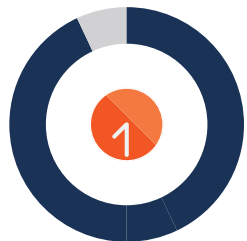
**91%**

Say they are willing to work more hours for more pay



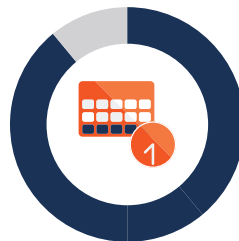
**47%**

Say they are at least somewhat likely to leave their current job if they had limited access to working extra shifts



**93%**

Say they are willing to work overtime, as long as it's optional



**89%**

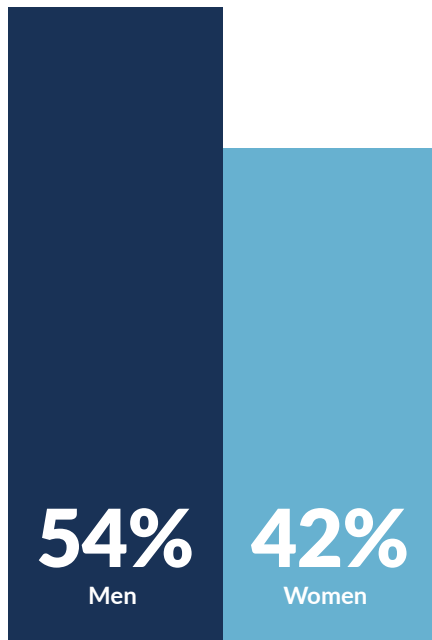
Say they are willing to work longer days to have more days off

# What Matters Most to Hourly Workers

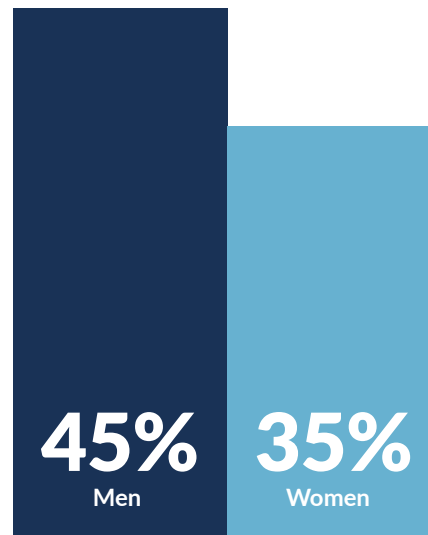
## Men and Women Have Differing Views of Flexibility

While all workers reported wanting flexible schedules, men reported needing more control over their time than women. Significantly more men (54 percent) than women (42 percent) said having the ability to work more hours for more pay is necessary for high job satisfaction. However, neither men nor women want those extra hours to be required. Both reported wanting to work a set number of hours without the requirement of overtime, although significantly more men (45 percent) valued this more than women did (35 percent).

Having the ability to work more hours for more pay



Working a set number of hours without the requirement to work overtime





# What Matters Most to Hourly Workers

## Scheduling Consistency

While flexibility and choice are essential to hourly workers, scheduling consistency is even more so. Over 90 percent of hourly workers said having consistency in the days and times they work is necessary or important for job satisfaction, and 85 percent say they prefer consistency over flexibility. Hourly workers view inconsistent scheduling as a motivator to look for other employment.

### Scheduling consistency impacts job satisfaction

**91%** Scheduling consistency in days and times worked is necessary or important for job satisfaction

**85%** Say they prefer consistency over flexibility

**61%** Say they're likely to leave job if they lacked consistency in the number of hours they worked each week

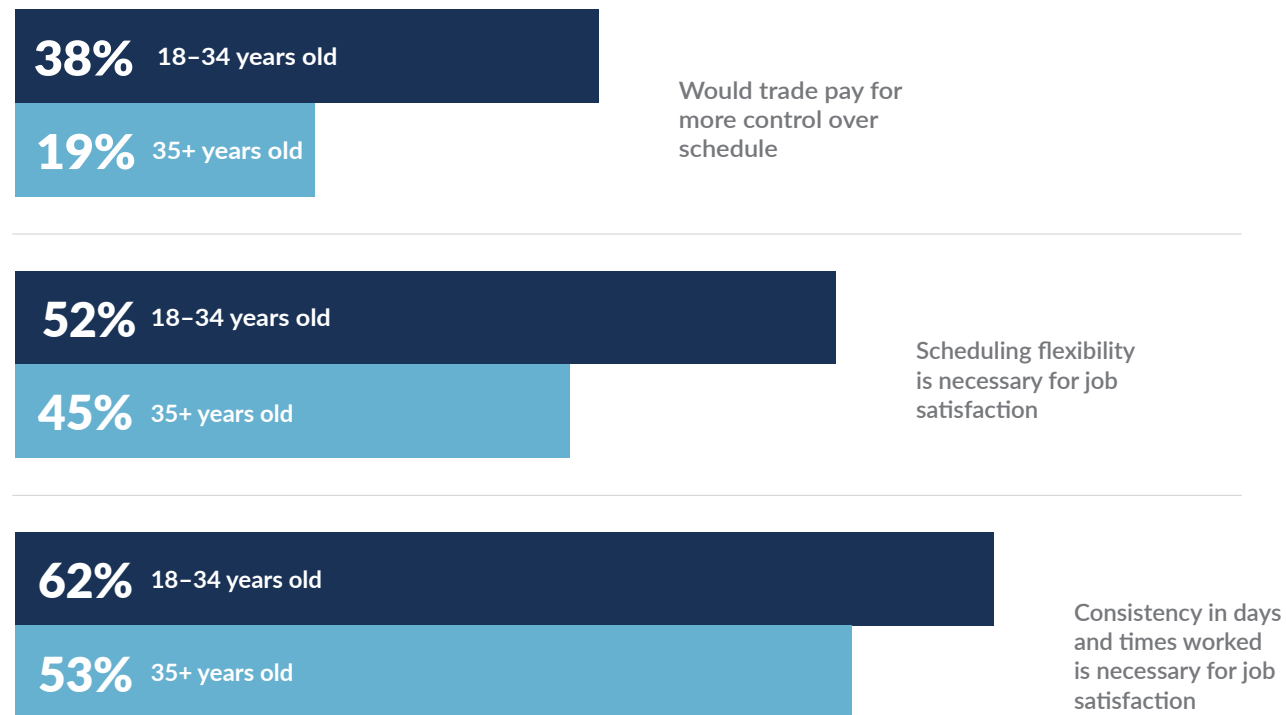
**58%** Say they're likely to leave job if they had daily uncertainty over frequent schedule changes

**53%** Say they're likely to leave job if they didn't have enough advance notice of their work schedule

# What Matters Most to Hourly Workers

## Generational Differences in Worker Needs

Younger workers reported wanting more flexibility in choosing when to work, and they valued consistency in scheduling more than their older colleagues. Perhaps more surprising is younger workers are more willing to trade pay to have more control over the days and times they work.



A background image of a construction worker wearing a white protective suit, a dark beanie, and a dark apron. The worker is smiling and looking down at their work. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

# How to Engage & Retain Hourly Workers

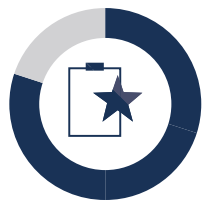
---

# How to Engage & Retain Hourly Workers

## Finding a Win-Win Strategy

Our research shows that when it comes to perceptions of job satisfaction, hourly workers value a lot more than paychecks and company benefits. They value having control over their time, having the flexibility to manage work with life, and finding meaning in their work. All of these aspects are directly influenced by the work schedule.

However, the influence of work schedules is not limited to the personal experience of the hourly worker. Good scheduling has a measurable impact on the company's bottom line as well because it improves workforce efficiency, quality of work, and productivity.



**80%**

Work schedule impacts the quality of work



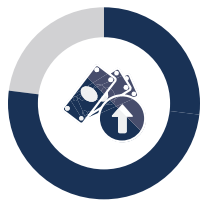
**80%**

Impacts productivity at work



**79%**

Impacts ability to do a good job



**77%**

Impacts ability to maximize income

Strategic employee scheduling leverages worker preferences while also addressing the business needs of the organization. This is the basis for a win-win approach to employee satisfaction, and why strategic employee scheduling is such a transformative initiative. Following are the top four strategies the research highlights that help organizations take a win-win approach to developing more effective employee satisfaction and retention initiatives.

*“After surveying hundreds of thousands of employees, CCG can confirm that employees are looking for more than just compensation. Employees want predictable schedules so they can enjoy their time off work.”*

Frank Pereira  
Managing Partner  
Coleman Consulting Group

# How to Engage & Retain Hourly Workers

## Strategy 1: Approach Scheduling From the Worker Perspective

Work schedules provide the foundation for the relationships between workers, their colleagues, and their managers, and play a central role in job satisfaction ratings. Eighty-five percent reported their work schedules impacted their happiness with their job. Hourly workers also said their work schedule profoundly impacts how they relate to their colleagues and their boss. It even affects whether they stay with their employer.

### Impact of the schedule

85%

Work schedule impacts their overall job satisfaction



80%

Work schedule impacts the likelihood they would seek other employment



74%

Work schedule impacts relationship with other employees



73%

Work schedule impacts relationship with their boss



*“To develop successful retention strategies and maximize productivity, employers first must understand their hourly workers' needs, while at the same time recognizing those needs will vary. Employers can now build in scheduling flexibility to handle a spectrum of common worker preferences while also addressing when the work must get done. This requires a new way of thinking -- of designing work, when possible, to be performed according to worker availability, instead of when the business has historically required it.”*

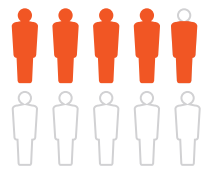
Rick Webb  
Director  
Grit Studios

# How to Engage & Retain Hourly Workers

## Strategy 2: Give Employees More Control Over Their Work Schedule

Hourly workers want to feel empowered to manage their job and personal life, and they are willing to make trade-offs to get there. Nearly 50 percent of hourly workers said they'd take a reasonable pay cut to have more control over their work schedule. Work schedules are almost as important as health benefits: 56 percent said they would consider taking a reasonable pay cut to have better health benefits.

Hourly workers are willing to trade pay for:



**49%**

Hourly workers are willing to take a pay cut for more control over work schedule



**56%**

Hourly workers are willing to take a pay cut for better health benefits

To give this even more perspective, 87 percent of hourly workers consider having control of their work schedules to be extremely important, and 55 percent said they would leave their job if they lacked control.

**87%**

It's extremely important to have control over their schedule

**55%**

Feel somewhat likely to leave job if they lack control over schedule



# How to Engage & Retain Hourly Workers

## Strategy 3: Empower Employees to Fit Their Work Schedules to Their Lives

What does "having control" mean? For hourly workers, it means having a say about how their schedules are determined. Eighty-nine percent want to select their shifts versus being assigned shifts, and 83 percent want the ability to trade shifts once they are assigned. Hourly workers want to feel empowered to adapt work to life. It should be no surprise that they would consider leaving their jobs if they were unable to influence their schedule, or if their hours were scheduled during a challenging time.

### The importance of schedule control

**89%** Want to select their shifts versus being assigned shifts

**83%** Highly value ability to trade shifts once assigned

**62%** Would leave job if shift hours were during a challenging time

**58%** Would leave job if unable to trade shifts

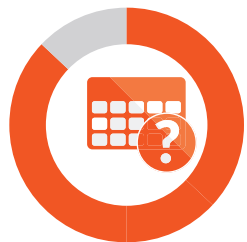
**52%** Feel likely to leave job if unable to influence their schedule

# How to Engage & Retain Hourly Workers

## Strategy 4: Provide Transparency Around the Scheduling Process

As we stated earlier, hourly workers want to do their part to contribute to the success of the organization. This includes working additional shifts or working odd hours. But hourly workers want to ensure the requests being made of them are fair and that everyone is contributing to the greater good, not just them.

Transparency in scheduling builds trust, which can be a huge motivator in many organizations where employees feel they are the only ones being asked to do more. This trust evolves from having ongoing visibility into the processes that affect work schedules, as well as having influence over the outcome of those processes.



**87%**

Say transparency into how their schedule is determined is important to them



**58%**

Would likely leave their employer if they sensed unfairness in how work schedules were determined

A woman with glasses and an apron is smiling while working on a wooden project in a workshop. The background is filled with various tools and materials, creating a sense of a busy, creative environment. The entire image has a blue tint.

# Conclusion

---

# Conclusion

---

What have we learned from this research? We've learned dated stereotypes do not reflect an accurate portrait of hourly workers in the U.S. today. While people may assume hourly workers are mainly in their teens and twenties, in truth, most hourly workers are 35+ years old, and one in five is 55+ years old. Many hourly workers are also married with families, and a significant number are college educated.

Hourly worker motivations have been misunderstood in recent years as well. The research shows these workers are not solely driven by obvious factors such as pay and company perks. In reality, hourly employees care deeply about the work they do. They want to find joy in their work and make a significant contribution to their organization.

Hourly workers want more control over their work lives, and part of this control means having visibility into processes that affect them, such as work scheduling. They want influence over the outcome of those processes too.

Empowering this ability may be the lynchpin to hourly worker retention: the study finds that hourly workers view the ability to manage work with life as an essential component of job satisfaction. It is so essential, they would consider taking a pay cut to realize it.

Shiftboard's research clearly points organizations to an emerging opportunity to transform their employee retention strategies by focusing on initiatives that empower workers to have more control over their time. The research suggests organizations can dramatically impact hourly worker satisfaction through better scheduling processes.

Improved employee satisfaction drives higher worker retention, lowers labor costs, and increases profitability for the company. It's a proven win-win strategy that can drive business transformation for companies with a high dependence on hourly worker resources.

A man in a dark polo shirt is pointing at a control panel of a machine in a workshop. Three other people, two men and one woman, are standing in a line, looking at the machine. The background shows a workshop with various equipment and a sign that says "DECIMAL EQUIVALENTS".

# Survey Demographics & Methodology

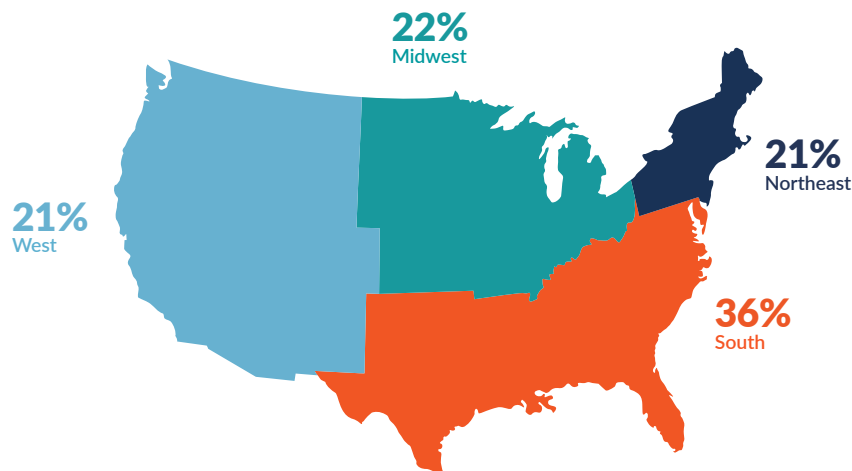
---

# Survey Demographics & Methodology

## Region, Gender, and Age

Our sample of more than 2,000 U.S. adults age 18 and over is representative of the U.S. population. There was a near-even split between men and women. Most survey takers were over 35 years old, and just over a third are from the South. Forty percent reported being paid on an hourly basis.

### Region



### Methodology

Shiftboard partnered with Lux Insights to conduct research on the perspectives of U.S. workers and how work scheduling influenced job satisfaction and worker retention. A sample of 2,150 U.S. adults age 18 and over were surveyed. The margin of error is  $\pm 2.1$ . Survey respondents self-identified as working in shifts, being paid hourly, or never having done shift work in the past.

### Gender

**45%**  
Male

**55%**  
Female

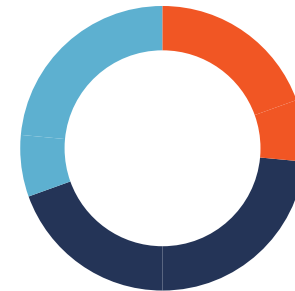


### Age

**26.5%**  
18-34

**43%**  
35-54

**30.5%**  
55+





# About Shiftboard & Lux Insights

## Shiftboard

Shiftboard is the leading provider of enterprise workforce scheduling software. Built around the hourly workforce, where scheduling, real-time communication, and change management are at the core of day-to-day operations, our solution helps organizations transform their businesses through automation. Thousands of customers choose Shiftboard to help lower labor costs, increase worker productivity, and decrease employee turnover. To date, Shiftboard has supported over 245 million scheduled shifts, providing the employment pipeline for over \$3 billion in wages earned.

*Learn more at [www.shiftboard.com](http://www.shiftboard.com).*

---

## Lux Insights

Lux Insights is an award-winning market research agency that specializes in studying the context of human interactions and consumer behavior. With offices in Seattle and Vancouver, BC, Lux works with companies across all industries, using compelling research to drive successful business strategy.

*Learn more at [www.luxinsights.com](http://www.luxinsights.com).*