
A New View on Nurse Turnover: How the COVID-19 Pandemic Shocked the System

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The Oregon Center for Nursing – About Us

OCN is a nonprofit organization created by nursing leaders in 2002. Recognized by the Oregon state legislature as a state advisor for nursing workforce issues, OCN fulfills its mission and objectives with help from its dedicated leadership, staff and community partners across Oregon.

OCN facilitates research and collaboration for Oregon's nursing workforce to support informed, well-prepared, diverse and exceptional nursing professionals.

- Conduct, analyze and disseminate research
- Encourage collaboration and build partnerships with diverse stakeholders to advance nursing
- Promote nursing and healthcare in all settings in which nurses practice

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Turnover is a Global Issue

Turnover among the nursing workforce is a global issue:

- Significant impact on the ability to deliver high-quality care.
- Impact on the financial performance of healthcare systems.
- Turnover is expensive and can cost up to \$88,000 per vacancy when all costs are included.

Roundeau, Williams, & Wagar (2009); Li & Jones (2013)

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Issues with Traditional Models

- Traditional models of turnover focus on job and pay satisfaction, and commitment to the organization.
- While these effects are statistically significant, others argue these effects are modest at best, as they account for only a small percent of turnover.
- Researchers began examining other models in an attempt to increase the predictive power of the models.

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Dimensions of Job Embeddedness

Because of the inability of traditional models to predict many forms of turnover, Mitchell et al., (2001) proposed a new construct they called, job embeddedness.

- **Fit** – the degree in which their job and community are similar to other aspects of their lives or how well they align with their personal philosophy.
- **Link** – the extent to which people have connections to other people and institutions.
- **Sacrifice** – the ease in which these links can be broken and what they would give up if they left.

All three dimensions relate to both their employer and their community.

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How Precipitating Events Cause Turnover

- Precipitating events, call shocks, are often the immediate cause of turnover.
- Shocks cause voluntary turnover more often than accumulated job dissatisfaction.
- Shocks impact job embeddedness by affecting one or more of the three dimensions of embeddedness.

Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Inderrieden (2005)

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How Shocks Affect Embeddedness

- Shocks can be expected or surprising, and can affect one's personal or professional life.
- Shocks can violate a person's image of their fit within an organization or community and lead to a reassessment of their perceived alignment.
- Shocks can also affect one's perceived linkages to their employer or community.
- Shocks influence the decision to leave a job because they can alter the perceived sacrifice of breaking existing links or alter their perceived philosophical alignment with an organization or community.

Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Inderrieden (2005)

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The COVID-19 Pandemic Acted as a Shock

- The COVID-19 pandemic can be thought of as a shock to the system.
- The pandemic is causing people to re-think the way they are embedded in their jobs.
- There is ample evidence people are quitting their job in high numbers.
- This phenomenon been termed the "Great Resignation."

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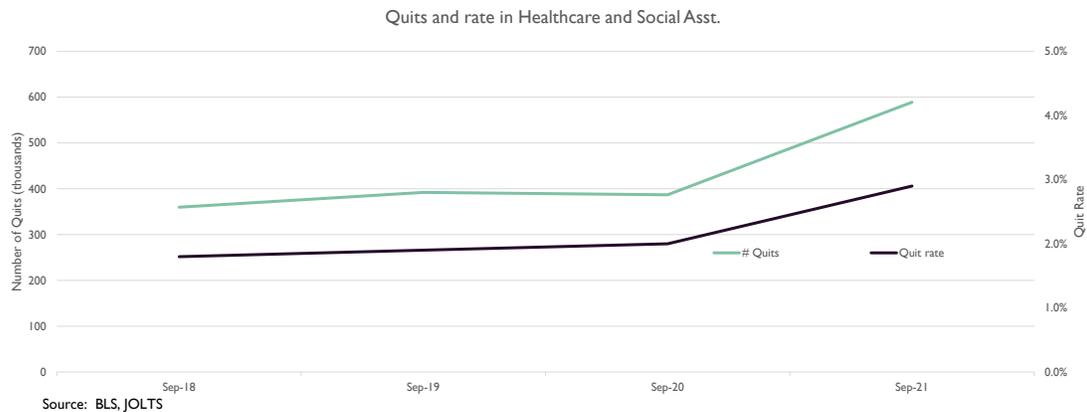
Evidence of the Great Resignation

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey:

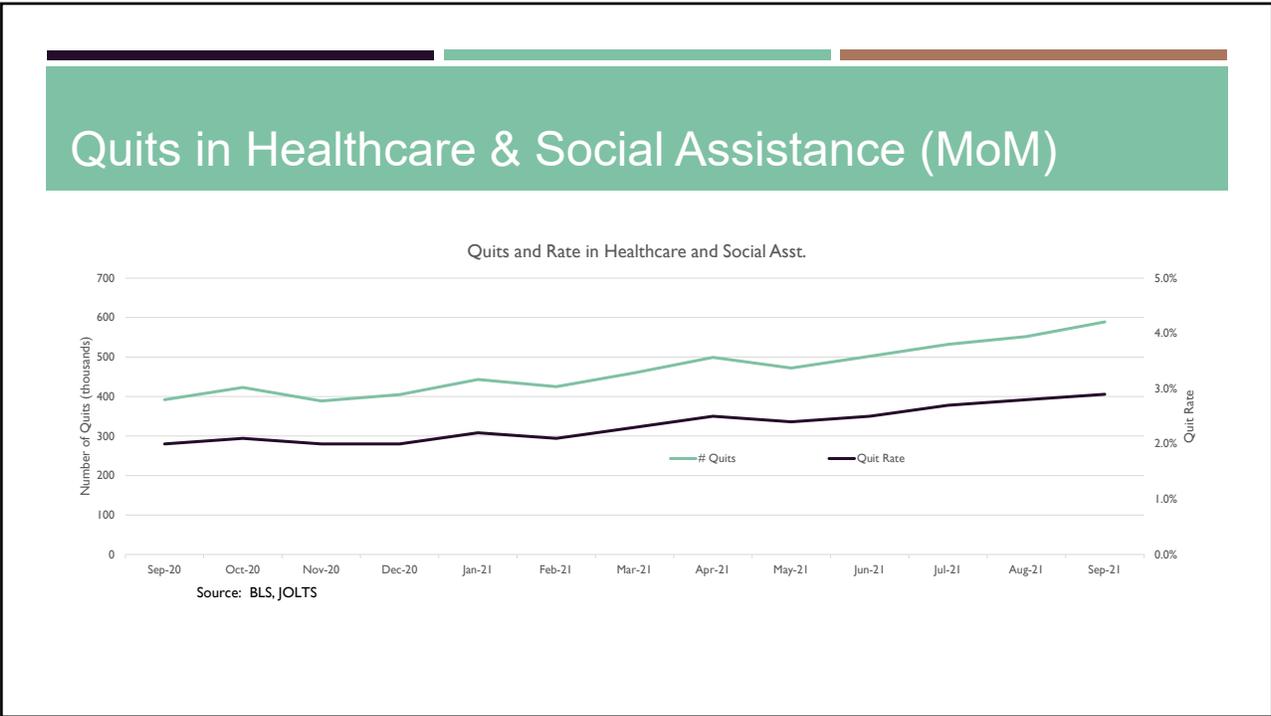
- In September 2021, 589,000 people quit their jobs in the healthcare and social assistance industry.
- This represents 2.9% of the healthcare and social assistance workforce.
- Across all industries, 4,434,000 people quit their jobs in September; representing 3% of total employment.

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Quits in Healthcare & Social Assistance (YoY)



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Evidence of COVID-19 Pandemic as a Shock Among Healthcare Workers

Polling by Morning Consult asked healthcare workers whether they left their jobs since the beginning of the pandemic.

- 18% said they have quit a job.
- 12% said they have been laid off or lost a job

Morning Consult poll conducted Sept 2-8, 2021, among 1,000 U.S. healthcare workers; margin or error +/-3%

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Evidence of COVID-19 Pandemic as a Shock Among Healthcare Workers

Among healthcare workers who have stayed in their jobs since mid-February 2020.

- 69% said they have not considered leaving their job.
- 19% said they have considered leaving their job and the healthcare industry.
- 12% have considered leaving their job for another role in healthcare.

Morning Consult poll conducted Sept 2-8, 2021, among 1,000 U.S. healthcare workers; margin of error +/-3%

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Employees are Looking for New Opportunities

- Gallup analysis finds that 48% of the American working population is actively job searching or passively looking for opportunities.
- Workers in all job categories are actively or passively job hunting at about the same rate.
- Gallup data shows it is not an industry, role, or pay issue. It's a workplace issue; and the highest quit rate is among workers who are not engaged.

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Pay and Engagement

“Gallup finds that it takes more than a 20% pay raise to lure most employees away from a manager who engages them, and next to nothing to poach most disengaged workers.”

Gallup, Inc. (2021). The ‘Great Resignation’ is really the ‘Great Discontent’. July 22, 2021

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Polling Data is Consistent with the Idea of Embeddedness

- Data from Gallup polls and analysis are consistent with the idea of embeddedness as it pertains to employee retention.
- These data also suggest the COVID-19 pandemic acted as a shock, and employees are reassessing their fit with their employers.
- Many employees are searching for employers who prioritize employee wellbeing.
- Employees do not appear to be satisfied with employers who treat wellbeing initiatives as perks or fringe benefits.

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Workplace Culture is Important

- Workplace culture appears to play a major role in maintaining perceived fit and links.
- Culture is within the control of management.
- Data from Gallup indicate employers can transform employee perception by focusing on business practices and the day-to-day experiences of nurses.
- Organizations should prioritize and define their workplace culture to strengthen employee engagement to retain their nursing workforce.

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People Want to be Embedded in Their Jobs

“Many talented workers are leaving for workplaces that align with their personal belief system and show an authentic concern for individual employee wellbeing. People want a good job and a life well-lived.”

Gallup Inc., *State of the Global Workplace*, 2021

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