



# THE HUMAN MARGIN

BUILDING FOUNDATIONS OF TRUST

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**OH NO**



# 2020

A doctor in a white coat holding a stethoscope, with a large white number 1,750,000 overlaid on a dark blue background.

# 1,750,000





57%

22%

# 2025

The background of the slide is a dark blue, semi-transparent image of a US dollar bill. The bill's intricate patterns, including the large number '1' and the circular seal of the Federal Reserve, are visible but muted. Centered over this background is the text 'NO MARGIN, NO MISSION' in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

**NO MARGIN,  
NO MISSION**



A large crowd of people, seen from behind, walking away on a path. They are wearing dark uniforms with light-colored aprons and caps. The path leads into the distance, flanked by a dense forest. The overall tone is somber and contemplative.

**NO HUMANS,  
NO MARGIN,  
NO MISSION**







# SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE



# DON'T GO



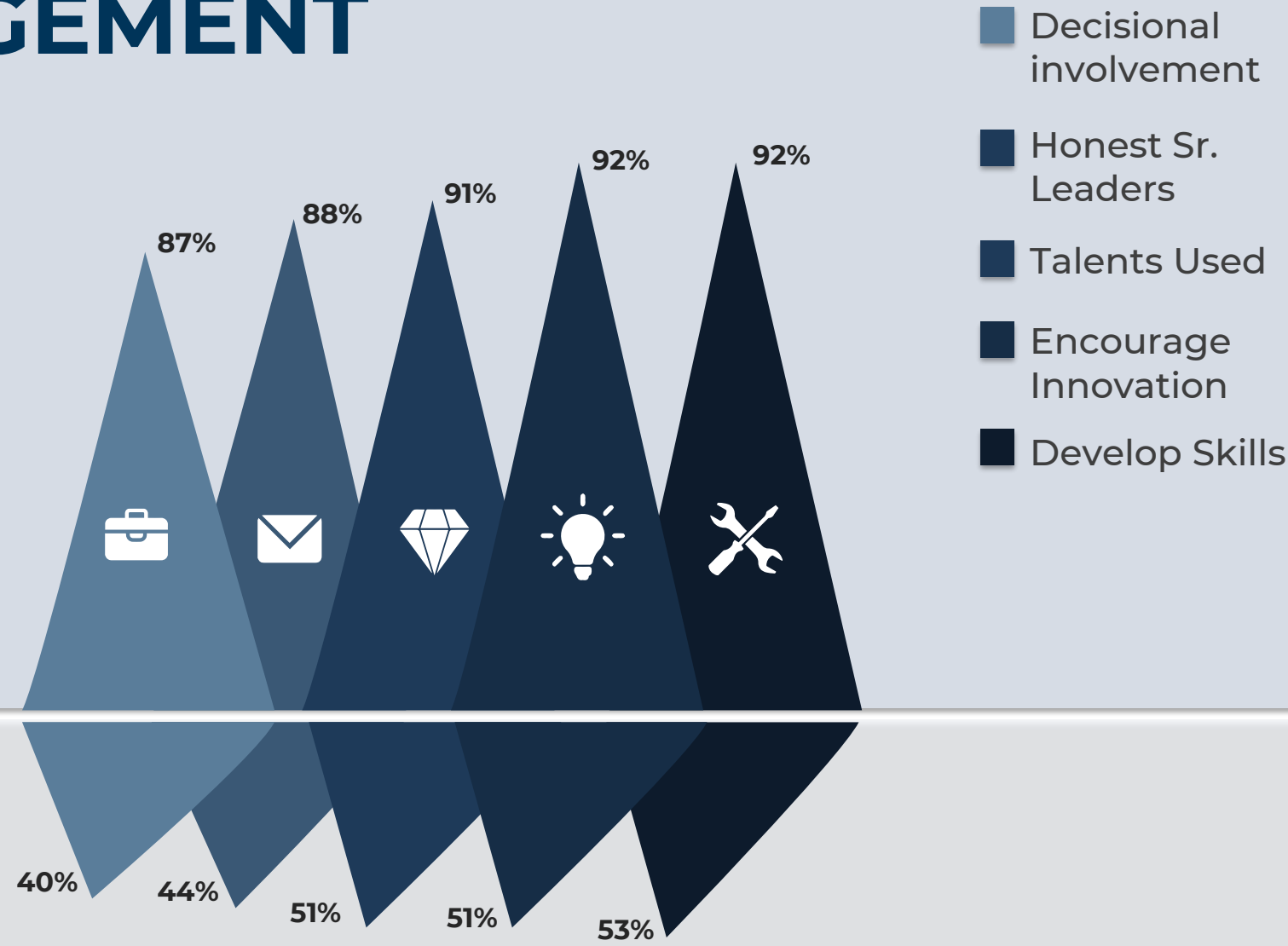
# TRUST & ENGAGEMENT

## Employee Engagement

Behaviors that shape VA Employee Engagement

Experiences of **Highly engaged** employees

Experiences of **mixed or low** engaged employees





# CULTURE

## Importance relative to compensation



Sull, Sull & Zweig, 2022

*To be valued as **HUMAN** and not just an employee, keeping the abandonment rate down.*

*-Administration*

*Squeezing more juice out of an already macerated fruit.*

*-Physician*

*Realizing that this hospital only cares about making money and they see [us] as dollar signs instead of people.*

*-Nurse*



**1. DO I TRUST YOU?**

**2. DO YOU CARE ABOUT ME?**

**3. IS THIS THE PLACE FOR ME?**

**4. DO I MATTER?**

**5. WILL IT GET BETTER?**



**DO I TRUST YOU?**

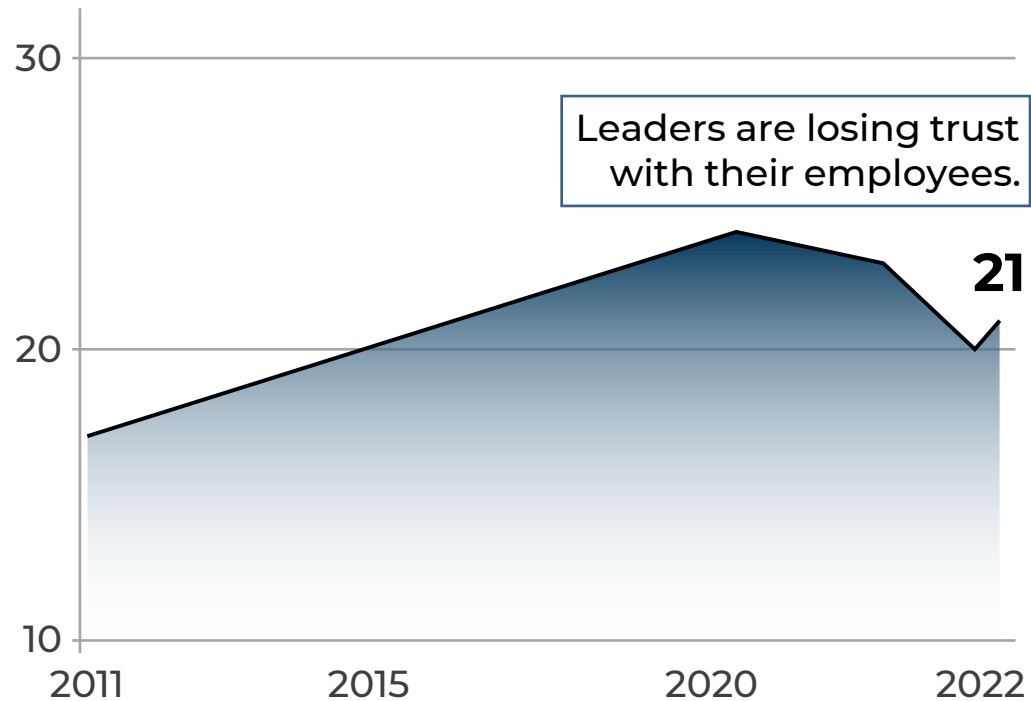


# TRUST

## Employee Trust in Organizational Leadership

I trust the leadership of this organization

— % Strongly agree



WHAT  
MATTERS  
TO ME IS  
SAFE WITH  
YOU





**TRUST GAP**

**SENIOR**

**MIDDLE**

**FRONTLINE**

# TRUST GAP



**12.7%**

Satisfaction with the job performed by the manager *above* their direct supervisor

**12.4%**

Manager communication of organizational goals

**10.5%**

Perception that work groups collaborate to accomplish shared objectives

When employees strongly agree that the leadership of their organization communicates effectively with the rest of the organization, they are



**73%**  
Less likely  
to feel burned  
out at work

Gallup

**2.8x**

Employees are 2.8 times more likely to be engaged when they speak with their manager regularly about their goals and progress



Only  
**7%**  
of US workers strongly agree that they get timely, accurate and open communication at work



A low-angle, upward-looking perspective of several tall, modern skyscrapers with glass facades. The buildings are arranged in a way that they converge towards the top center of the frame, creating a strong sense of height and scale. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The overall color palette is dominated by blues and greys, with the white text providing a sharp contrast.

# **BEWARE THE UNTOLD STORY**



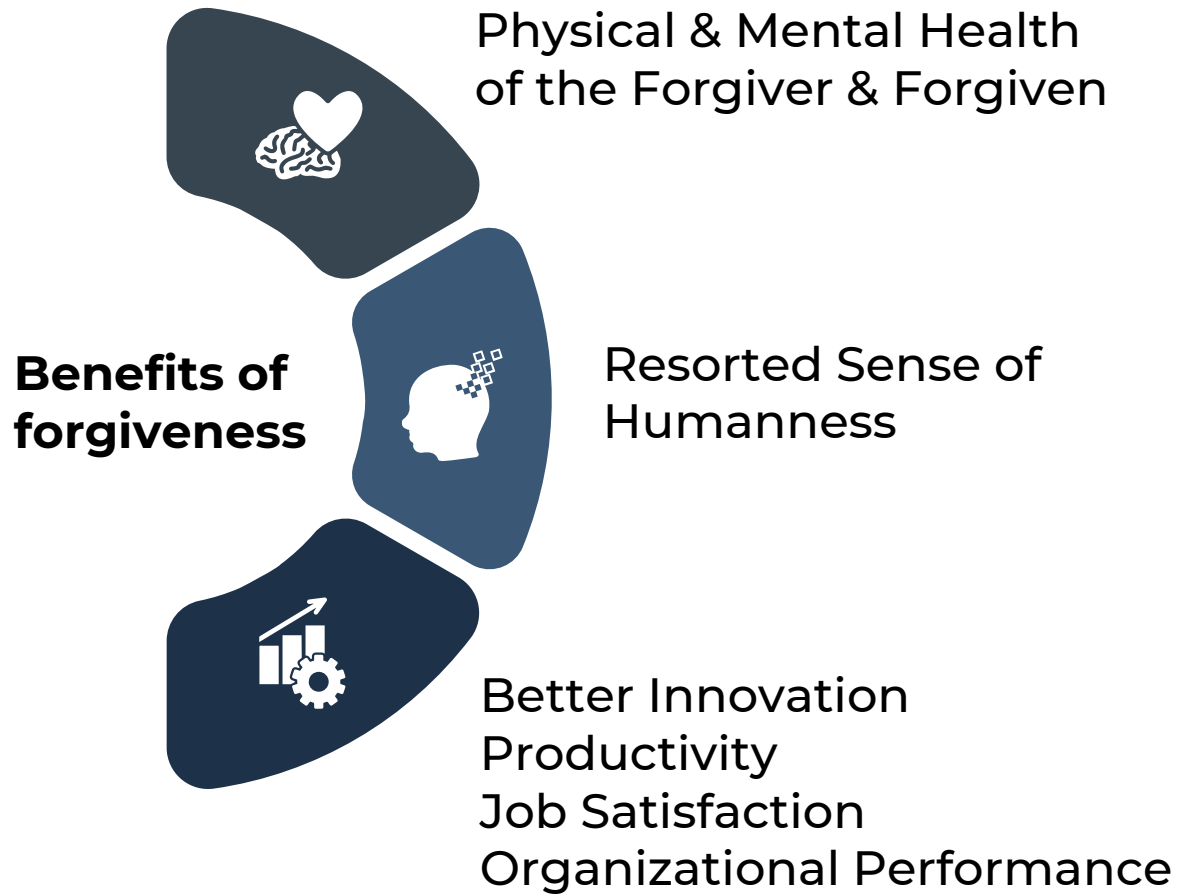
# TRANSPARENCY



*“The initial rollout was flawed, which is defensible. What is indefensible is that administration did not admit this and did not apologize.”- Physician 2021*

*“An apology by the (organization) as a whole at least saying we could have done better.” (2022)*

# FORGIVENESS





# FAIRNESS & Assumptions

## Inputs & Outputs



**Reducing inputs:**  
putting in less



**Trying to increase outputs:**  
getting back more



**Changing perceptions:**  
Making up a story for the differences



**Changing our comparison other:**  
Comparing ourselves to somebody else

4.6x

More likely to leave if they don't believe the organization values people from different backgrounds.

INPUTS

OUTPUTS

=

INPUTS

OUTPUTS



**DO YOU CARE ABOUT  
ME?**

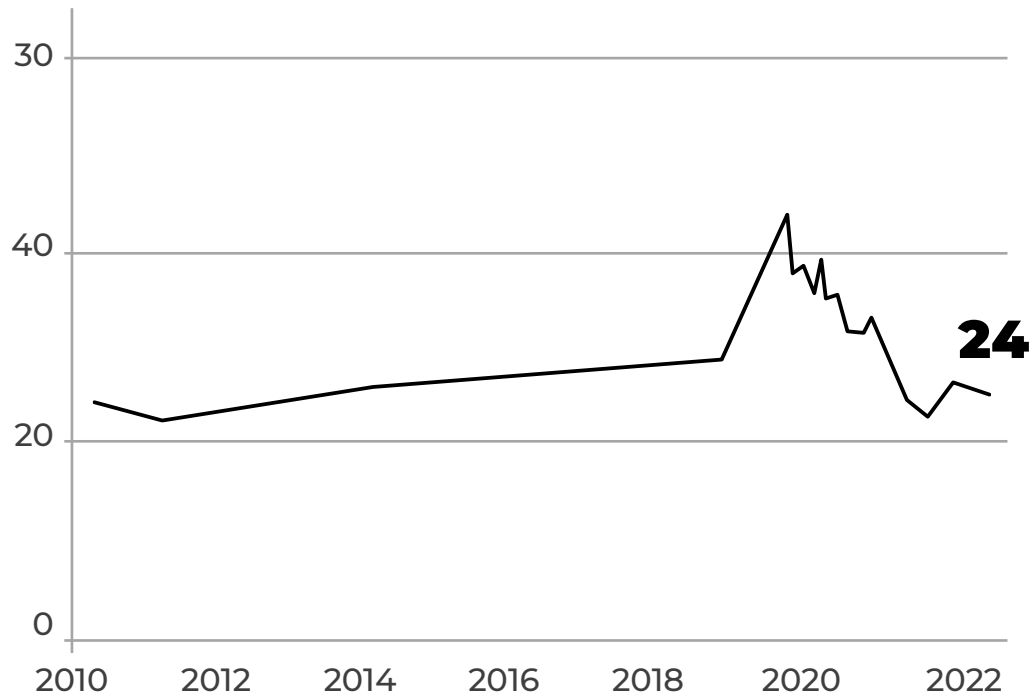


# PERFORMANCE BENEFITS OF CARING

## U.S. Employee Perceptions of Organizational Caring About Their Wellbeing

My organization cares about my overall wellbeing.

— % Strongly agree

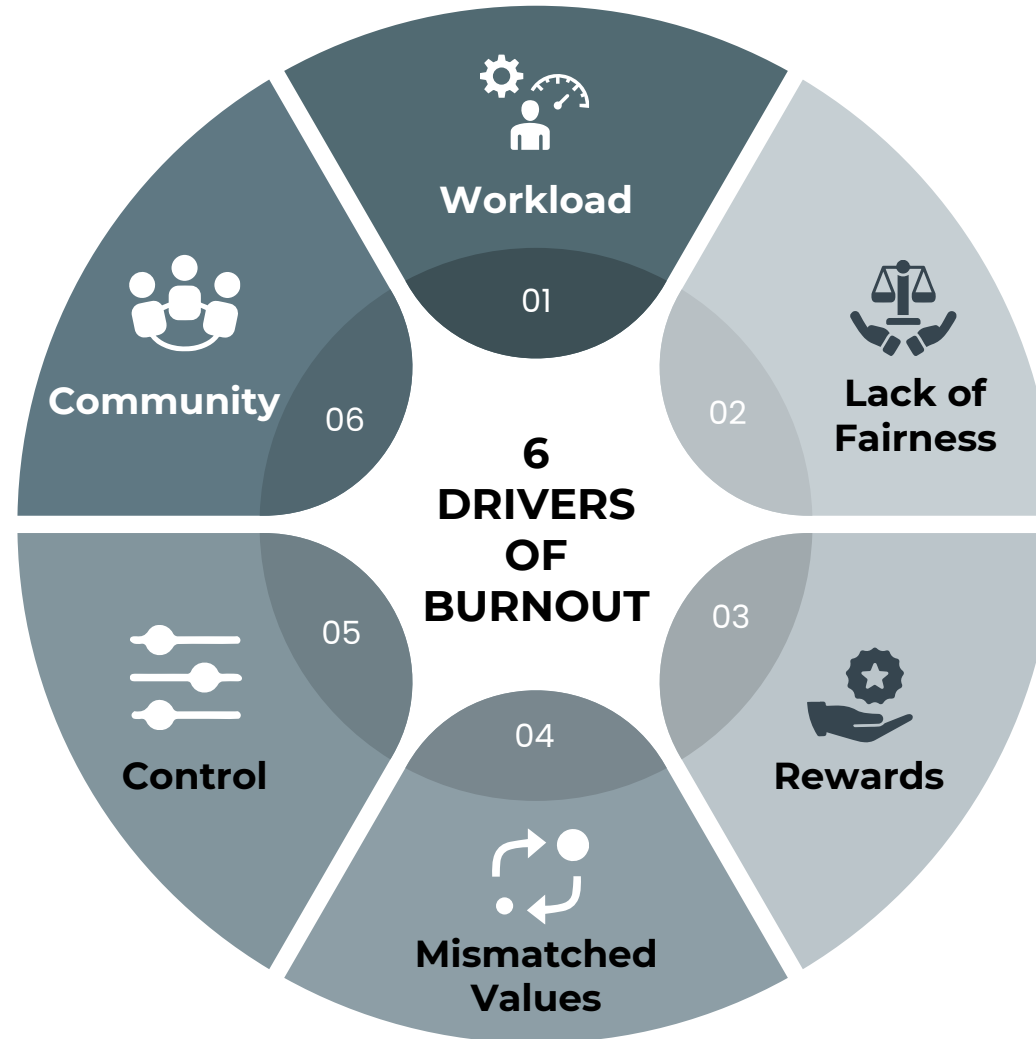


Employees who strongly agree that their employer cares about their overall wellbeing are:

- 3x more likely to be engaged at work
- 69% less likely to actively search for a new job
- 71% less likely to report experiencing a lot of burnout
- 5x more likely to strongly advocate for their company as a place to work
- 5x more likely to strongly agree that they trust the leadership of their organization
- 36% more likely to be thriving in their overall lives

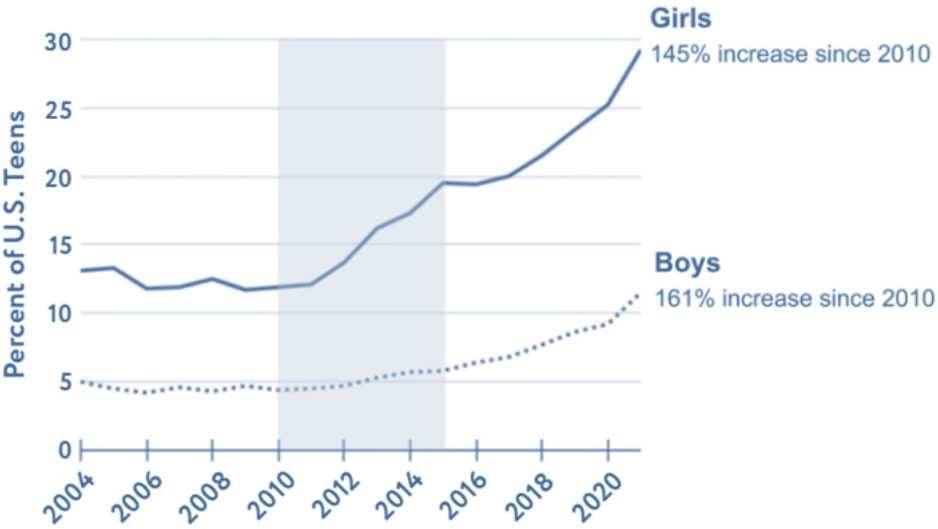
# BURNOUT

High emotional exhaustion, high depersonalization or cynicism, and a low sense of personal accomplishment from work.

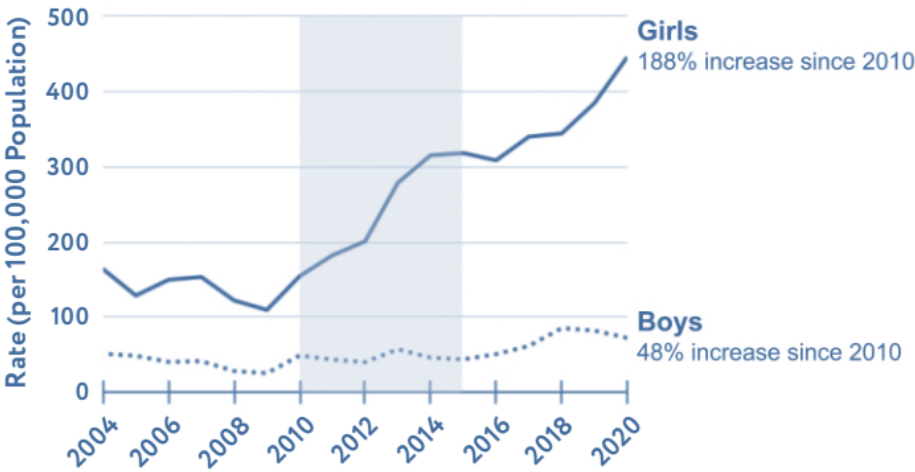




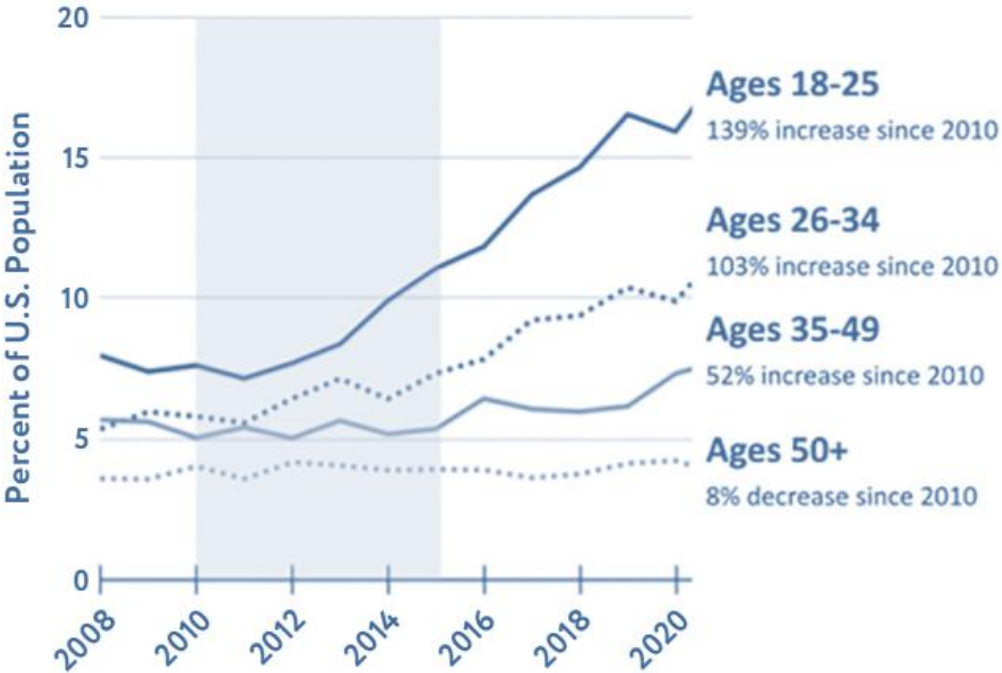
# MAJOR DEPRESSION AMONG U.S. TEENS



# EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS FOR SELF-HARM



# ANXIETY PREVALENCE BY AGE





# GROSS



**IS THIS THE PLACE  
FOR ME?**



# FIND A FRIEND

Those who report having a best friend at work are more likely to:



Engage customers and internal partners



Get more done in less time



Support a safe workplace with fewer accidents and reliability concerns



Innovate and share ideas



Have fun while at work



Recommend the employer



Intend to stay



Chronic loneliness is  
as bad for your health  
as smoking 15  
cigarettes per day



















**DO I MATTER?**



# CULTURE

## Importance relative to compensation



47%

SATISFIED WITH RECOGNITION

- "More frequent rounds by leadership to see our struggle"
- "Being rounded on up to executive leadership..."
- "Having our department recognized by senior leaders as contributing..."
- Just a **simple thank you** every now and then would suffice. (130 mentions)
- Just a **simple "good morning"** or "thank you" would be greatly appreciated



# MATTERING



## Your VOICE doesn't matter

- Failing to solicit input for decisions that affect them
- Openly criticizing ideas
- Dismissing suggestions with phrases like "that will never work."
- Interrupting or talking over others



## Your EXPERIENCE doesn't matter

- Diminishing training or lived experiences of team members, particularly in younger and older employees
- "You're too junior"
- "He's too old"
- It is cheaper to have lesser-trained people do your job



## Your TIME doesn't matter

- Allowing meetings to run late
- Expecting people to volunteer their free time for work-related events or training
- Demanding responsiveness during evenings, weekends, holidays or vacations



## You are invisible

- Failure to recognize contributions or achievements
- Not addressing people by name
- Not noticing when somebody is missing or absent
- Not saying hello, good morning, or thank you

# MYTHS OF RECOGNITION



- 1 WAITING FOR SOMETHING BIG
- 2 BEING SEEN, NOT SEEING
- 3 GROUP RECOGNITION REPLACES INDIVIDUAL
- 4 MUST COME FROM THE LEADER



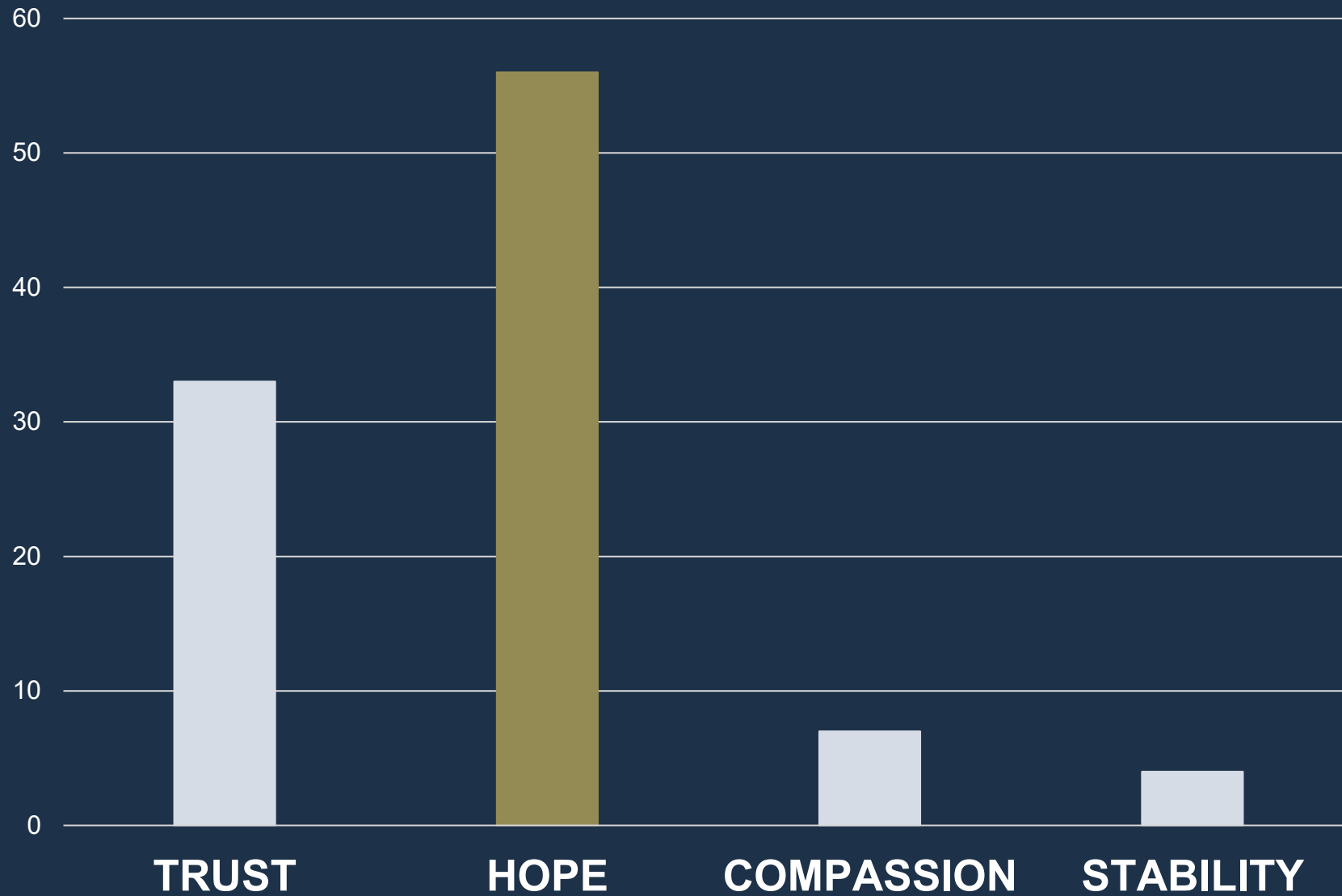
**WILL IT GET BETTER?**



**HOPE IS NOT A  
STRATEGY**



# GREATEST NEED FROM LEADERS



GALLUP

38%











**HOPE IS THE  
STRATEGY**









**Katherine A. Meese, PhD**

Using science to help leaders keep  
their people and keep them well

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