

EMPLOYEE SENTIMENT WORKFORCE REPORT

2023 & 2024 | Executive Summary

PERFORMANCE & ANALYTICS DEPT.

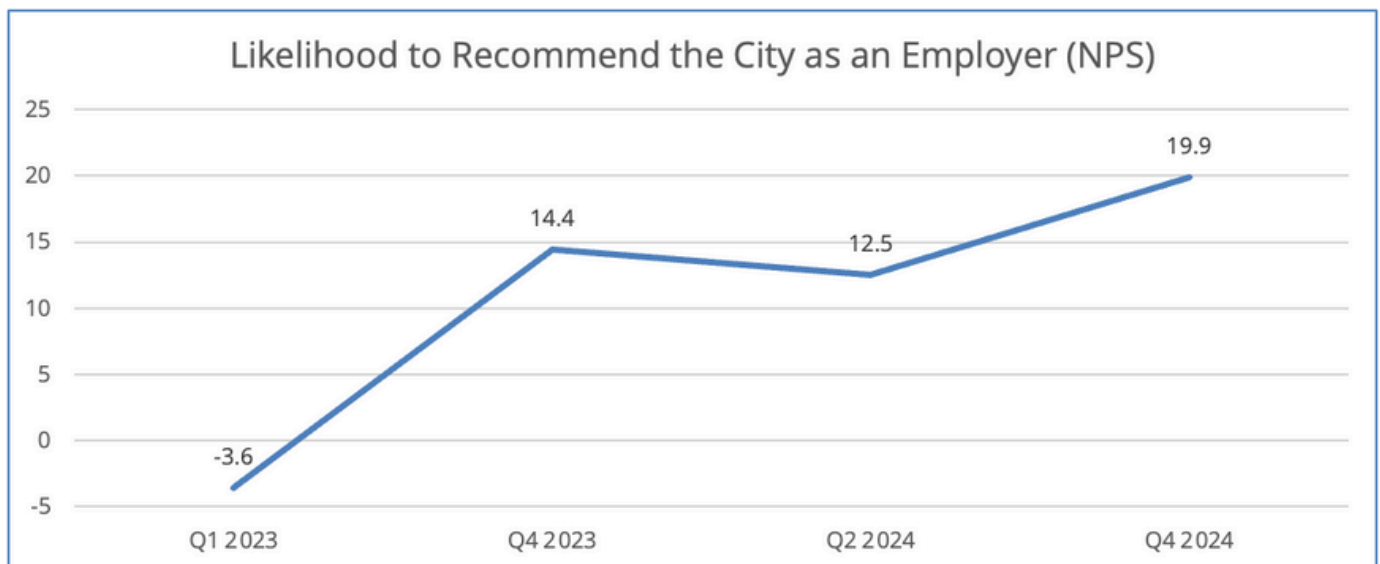


Overview

Putting people first starts with understanding what employees need. Without an understanding of employee sentiment, the City of San Diego would be unable to address gaps in our employees' experiences. The City cannot support our people and our mission without first knowing both where we are succeeding, but also where we are falling short as an employer of more than 13,000 people.

This report brings together insights from two full years of employee sentiment data - spanning four different employee lifecycle surveys (onboarding, sentiment, learning/development, and exit) - as well as data related to vacancies and turnover. The recommendations in this report provide a guide for moving the City forward as both an employer and as a service provider

Over the past two years, employee survey results have shown consistent improvements across nearly every metric, reflecting the City's ongoing efforts to strengthen workplace culture, employee recognition, and operational effectiveness.

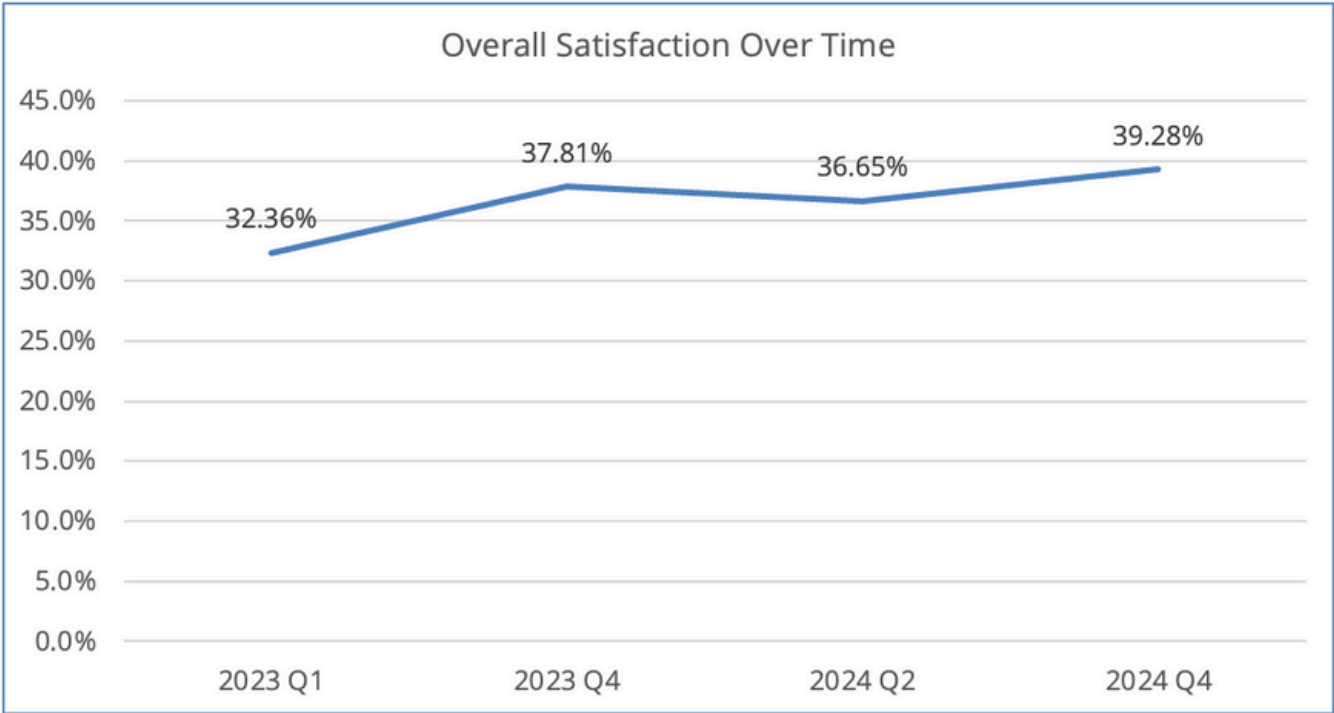


"Although I have to say that I would not have recommended to work for the City in past years, I'm pleased to see that monetary compensation and work conditions have greatly improved!"

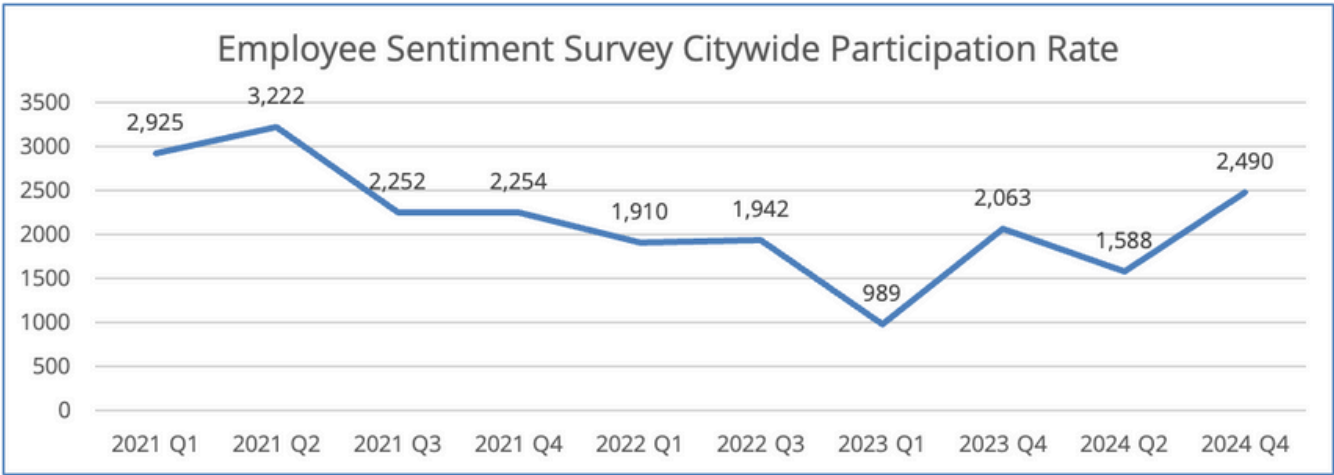
The City's NPS have been slowly trending upwards since January of 2023. As of October 2023, the City's Likelihood to Recommend score has been consistently positive—indicating that employees are feeling more positive about their overall work experience. In the written comments, many employees indicated that they now take pride in talking about their employment at the City.

Employee Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction (OSAT) scores remained fairly constant throughout 2023 and 2024, while continuing to trend upwards. Maintaining increases in satisfaction quarter after quarter is a positive sign that recent City policies are working to improve the overall employee experience. While this broad satisfaction metric cannot point specifically to which policy (or policies) has had the greatest impact, the steady upwards trend is encouraging overall.



Survey Participation



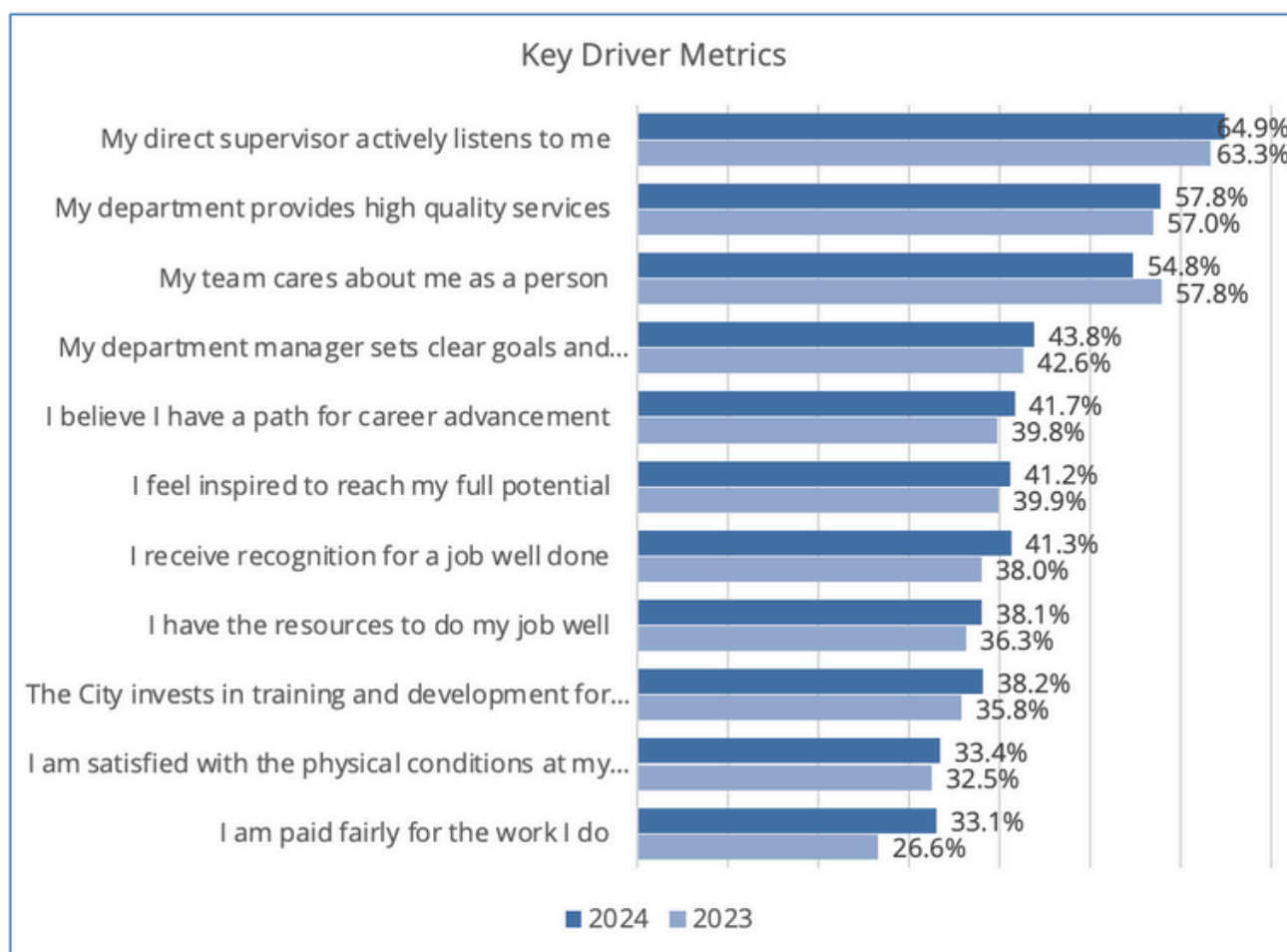
Participation in the Employee Sentiment Survey has declined since its launch in early 2021. Beginning in 2022, less frequent communication to employees regarding the surveys likely resulting in reduced enthusiasm and general awareness of the survey’s importance. In 2023, renewed emphasis on communication about the survey has helped improve participation rates.

However, participation is not consistent across employee groups, including department, gender, race, ethnicity, or type of work. Given these inconsistencies, policy decisions at these levels are not recommended.

Key Drivers

After the top-level net promoter and overall satisfaction questions, the survey asks employees 11 “Key Driver” questions. The top ranked metrics demonstrate where we are succeeding as an employer; and these three metrics speak to the best parts of the employee experience at the City: (1) the relationships between employees and supervisors are healthy; (2) we provide exceptional services to our residents; (3) and our teams are strong. These top metrics have remained the same since we began the Employee Sentiment Survey in 2021.

Compared to 2022, it is a positive outcome that almost every metric has improved through 2024. In the previous workforce report, nearly every key driver metric had a decrease in scores when compared to 2021. Seeing these scores increase over time is a signal that City policies aimed at improving the employee experience are beginning to work.

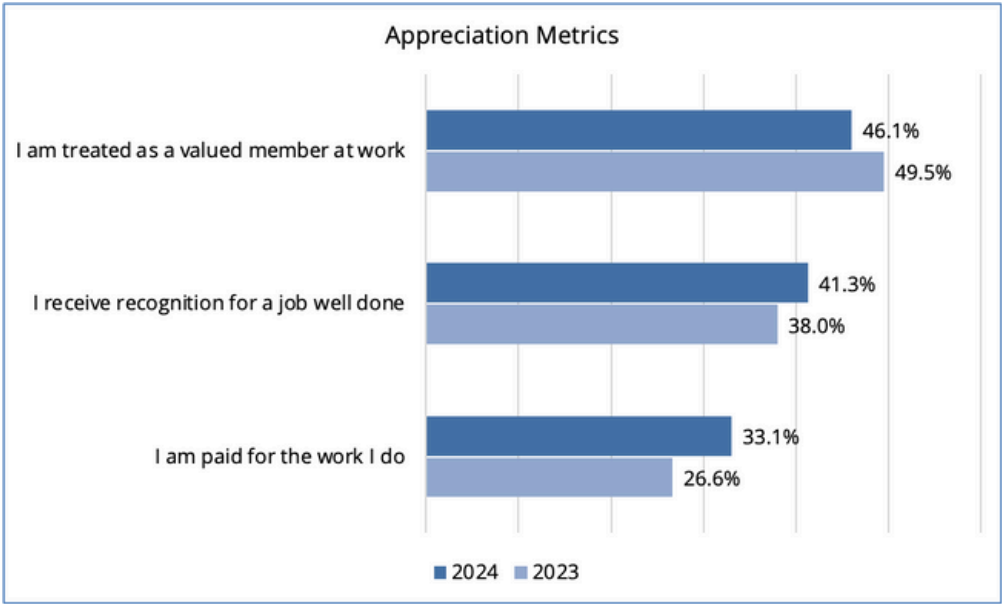


Appreciation

Between 2023 and 2024, there was a decrease in sentiment related to feeling like a valued member at work. Employees who feel underutilized or undervalued are likely to feel unsatisfied in their day-to-day tasks and may look for an employer who better appreciates their contributions. More investigation and monitoring in 2025 is needed to determine exactly why this metric declined. Positively, there were large improvements in sentiment regarding receiving recognition and being paid fairly.

Based on the results from the 2021 Workforce Report, the City made it a priority to:

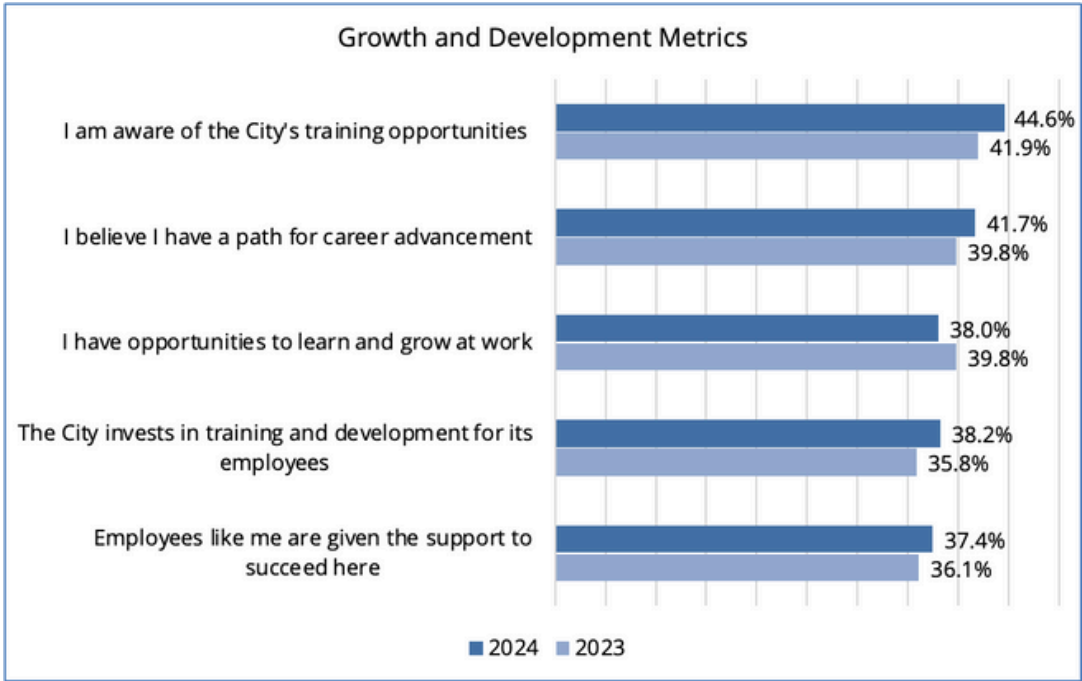
- (1) simplify the process to formally recognize employees for good work, and
- (2) increase pay for all employees, with some special salary adjustments for positions well below their industry benchmark.



These changes appear to have had a strong positive impact on employee sentiment about recognition.

Growth & Development

Between 2023 and 2024, nearly every growth and development metric improved. Most notably, it is encouraging to see increases in sentiment around both awareness of training opportunities and feeling like the City invests in training and development.

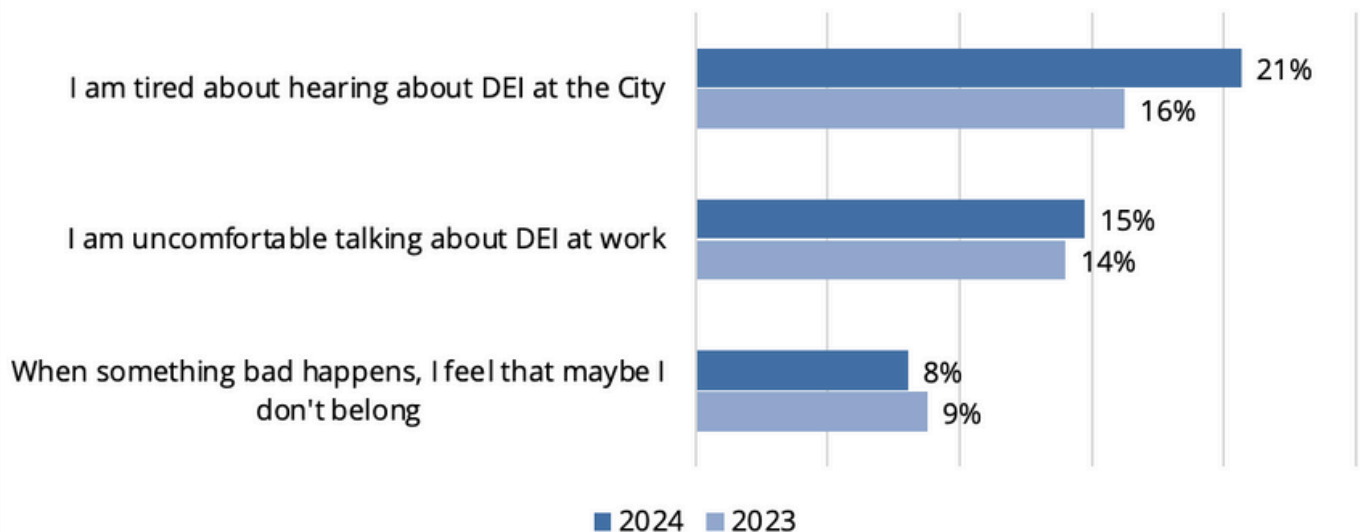


The only decline was seen in the “I have opportunities to learn and grow at work” metric, which also declined in 2022. In response to the declining metric, in January 2024 the Human Resources department conducted a Citywide Learning & Development Survey to help assess learning needs and gaps in programmatic offerings.

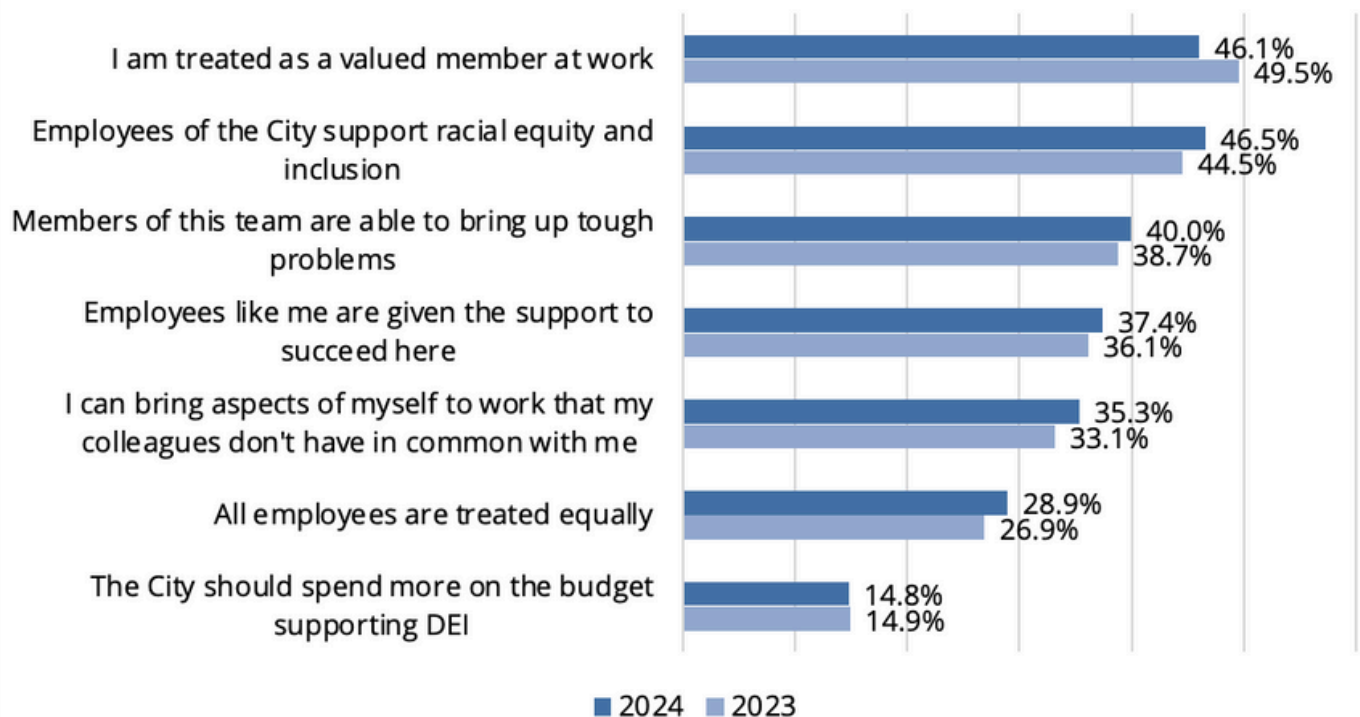
Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

To measure the City's effectiveness in its equity commitment, the Employee Sentiment Survey introduced a number of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) metrics. These metrics, first introduced to the survey in October 2023, are intended to capture how employees perceive the culture of inclusion, fairness, and support in their workplace. By measuring both positive and challenging aspects of DEI, the organization can identify areas to build upon and address concerns that hinder inclusion and belonging.

Challenges in DEI Perceptions

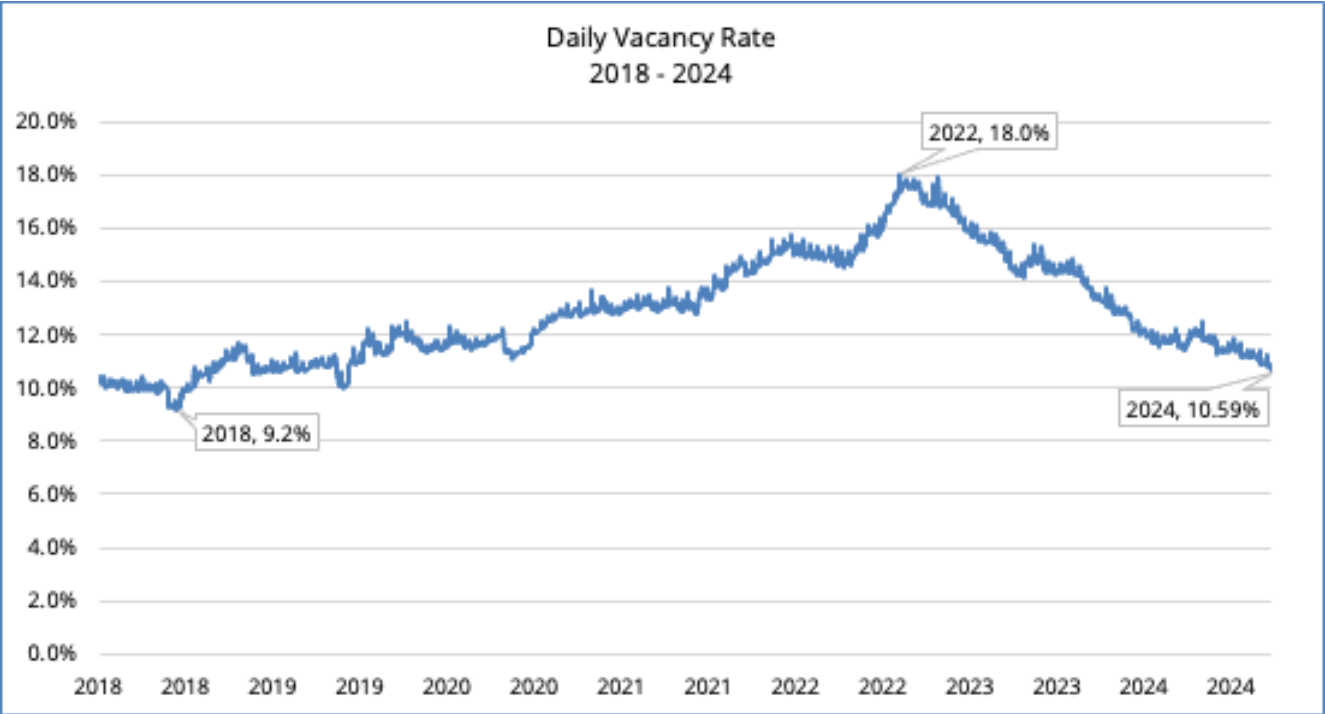


Strengths in DEI Perspectives

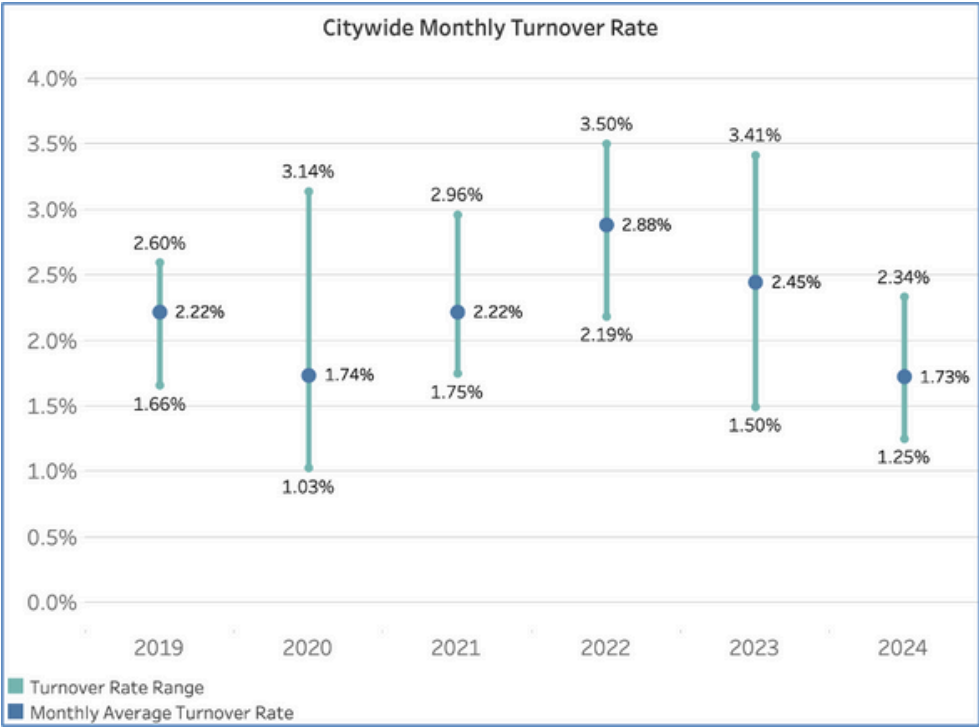


Vacancies & Turnover

From its peak of 18.0 percent in October 2022, the daily vacancy rate among budgeted, full-time employees (80- and 112-hour work schedules) has decreased over the last two years. The City closed out 2024 with a vacancy rate of 10.59 percent—the lowest vacancy rate measured since June 2019.



The City has set a turnover rate target of 1.8%. This target was selected based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) turnover rate average for state and local government agencies in August 2022. As of December 2024, the City has met this target and is on track to be lower than the BLS average for 2024 by the end of 2025.



Recommendation 1: Focus on Resources

The analysis of key driver metrics indicates that employees do not feel like they have enough resources to do their job well (score: 38.1), yet this metric is highly correlated with employee satisfaction. Given this, improving this metric should be a key priority for leadership in the next year.

However, in FY26, the City faces a significant budget shortfall that will likely result in budget cuts to resources like external training and conferences, software tools, and physical resources like vehicles and upgraded office space. Managing this gap will require creative problem solving. Going forward, the City can focus on three areas to better manage resources and maintain or improve employee sentiment regarding having the tools they need for their work.

- The City should focus on areas where resources can be shared between departments. For example, DoIT is already underway in determining savings from enterprise licenses for software tool.
- With regard to training and professional development, the City should focus on maximizing training resources that are already in place, such as LinkedIn Learning and the HR Department's POD team.
- The City should focus on identifying areas for process improvements as they relate to employees' resources and explore lower cost tools that help departments better manage their limited resources.

Recommendation 2: Focus on Maintaining Progress

Over the past two years, employee survey results have shown consistent improvements across all key metrics, reflecting the City's ongoing efforts to strengthen workplace culture, employee recognition, and operational effectiveness. As the City enters a tight budget year, it is essential to maintain the momentum and protect the gains made in employee sentiment.

A primary challenge in the coming year will be the anticipated hiring freeze, which is expected to impact vacancy rates and increase workload pressures for existing staff. To navigate this period while preserving progress, the City will focus on the following strategies:

- **Strengthening Internal Mobility:** The City should focus on encouraging career development within the organization by making it easier for employees to take on new roles and responsibilities where needed.
- **Maximizing Efficiency:** As of early 2025, the City is already underway in working to identify areas where technology and process improvements can help offset the impacts of hiring constraints and budget reductions.
- **Enhancing Communication & Recognition:** Ensuring the people feel heard, valued, and informed is critical for maintaining trust among employees, especially in a period of uncertainty.