SD Performance & Analytics

2023 & 2024

EMPLOYEE SENTIMENT WORKFORCE REPORT

Workforce Report 2023 & 2024

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Introduction

Each day, the mission of City of San Diego employees is to serve communities in ways that make San Diego **not just a *fine* city, but a *great* City**. Our vision as a City is to provide opportunity in every neighborhood and excellent service for every San Diegan. By gathering and understanding employee sentiment, City leadership is primed to support each employee as they interact with residents. Great service delivery begins in the workplace, and without understanding the people who make up our outstanding workforce, we would be unable to achieve any of the other goals laid out in our Citywide Strategic Plan.

At the City of San Diego, we value data and the insights it provides into the employee experience because we are actively trying to establish an outstanding employee culture**. Customer service** begins with designing policies and solutions that put employees first. We promote **empowerment and engagement** with our staff by giving them a direct voice in how they want to enact change in their day-to-day work. We support Citywide **equity and inclusion** efforts by conducting surveys that reach all employees and by expanding our survey portfolio to tackle important topics like race and equity. Finally, we honor our commitment to **trust and transparency** by communicating survey results to employees and residents, soliciting feedback, and making actionable change.

Putting people first starts with understanding what employees need, from competitive pay and upgraded facilities to compassionate leadership and inclusive policies. Without an understanding of employee sentiment, the City would be unable to address gaps in our employees' experiences. The City cannot support our people and our mission without first knowing where we are succeeding, and 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 and development, and exit) — as well as data related to vacancies and turnover. The two recommendations in this report provide a roadmap for moving the City forward as an employer and as a service provider to our residents.

Report Structure

This report is structured to follow the employee lifecycle. First, it describes how we measure employee sentiment and how our employees have participated in sentiment gathering throughout the last two years. Next, it reviews onboarding sentiment and lessons learned. Third, the report details the results of the employee sentiment surveys and covers the metrics of highest importance with detailed information regarding differences among employee groups, positions, and departments. This section will also include an analysis of each employee sentiment survey metric, categorized by theme — such as leadership, appreciation, and training.

Next, the report covers the final stage of the employee experience: leaving City employment. The report discusses Human Capital Management metrics such as vacancies and turnover. Vacancy and turnover data is examined at the department, bargaining unit, and position level.

Finally, the report closes with recommendations for the near future and how the City can best support its employees in the coming years. An annex includes detailed tables and other data not included in the full report.

How Do We Measure Employee Sentiment?

The City uses Medallia, a third-party employee and customer engagement tool, to conduct rapid, frequent, and highly analyzable surveys. These surveys are collectively known as the "Employee Engagement Program."[1] the Performance & Analytics Department launched quarterly Employee Sentiment Surveys in Medallia beginning in early January 2021. After employee and leadership feedback indicated that quarterly surveys were too frequent, the City switched to a semi-annual survey schedule starting in 2022. Presently, the Employee Sentiment Survey is open in April and October of each year.

The purpose of the Employee Engagement Program is to gauge employee sentiment and collect actionable feedback for managers, directors, and members of the Executive Team. Leadership is expected to use these insights to craft more relevant employee-focused policies, which drive meaningful change within the organization. Over time, these changes will be measured as increases in the likelihood that an employee would recommend the City as a place to work, overall employee satisfaction, and Citywide retention and vacancy rates. In time, we expect that a more engaged and empowered workforce will provide higher quality services to our residents.

Prior to adopting Medallia as the City's primary survey tool, two Employee Sentiment Surveys had been conducted via an independent survey firm. The two previous Employee Sentiment Surveys can be found on the Performance & Analytics department webpage.

Survey Participation

A survey's results are only as good as its participation rate. To encourage a high participation rate, the Employee Sentiment Survey is distributed to employees in two ways: feeded and feedless. Feeded surveys are delivered to an employee's inbox on the day of survey launch and include a personalized invitation message. Within Medallia, data from SAP is combined with an employee's responses, which allows for analysis by department and position without adding additional questions for the survey taker. For employees who do not frequently use their City email address, a "feedless" link is available on Citynet and through QR codes on flyers posted around City workspaces. The feedless survey links are always live and some surveys are submitted outside of the formal survey window. These surveys are analyzed in the quarter for which they were submitted. Any employee can use this link to participate in the survey. The feedless survey is not linked to SAP data and therefore some employee information is lost. For both

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[1] The Performance & Analytics Department also runs a Customer Experience program through Medallia, intended to gauge customer satisfaction with City services.

surveys, employees have the option to provide their job type (field, office, management, etc.), gender, age group, tenure, and veteran status.

The Onboarding and Exit Surveys are delivered directly to employee emails and are triggered automatically. The Onboarding Survey is delivered by email 14 days after the new employee's user account is created. The Exit Survey is triggered by an SAP process where the employee indicates that they intend to leave the City. Reminder emails are sent for both surveys to encourage participation.

Participation in the Employee Sentiment Survey has declined since its launch in early 2021. Beginning in 2022, there were fewer Internal Communication emails to employees regarding the surveys, likely resulting in reduced enthusiasm and general awareness of the survey's importance. In 2023, renewed emphasis on the importance of the survey has helped improve participation rates.

Despite lower participation, each survey round has provided enough responses for statistically significant representation at the Citywide level.[2] However, participation was not consistent across specific employee groups, including department, gender, race, ethnicity, or type of work. Given these inconsistencies, there are no statistically significant sample sizes for these types of employee groupings, and policy decision at these levels are not recommended.[3]
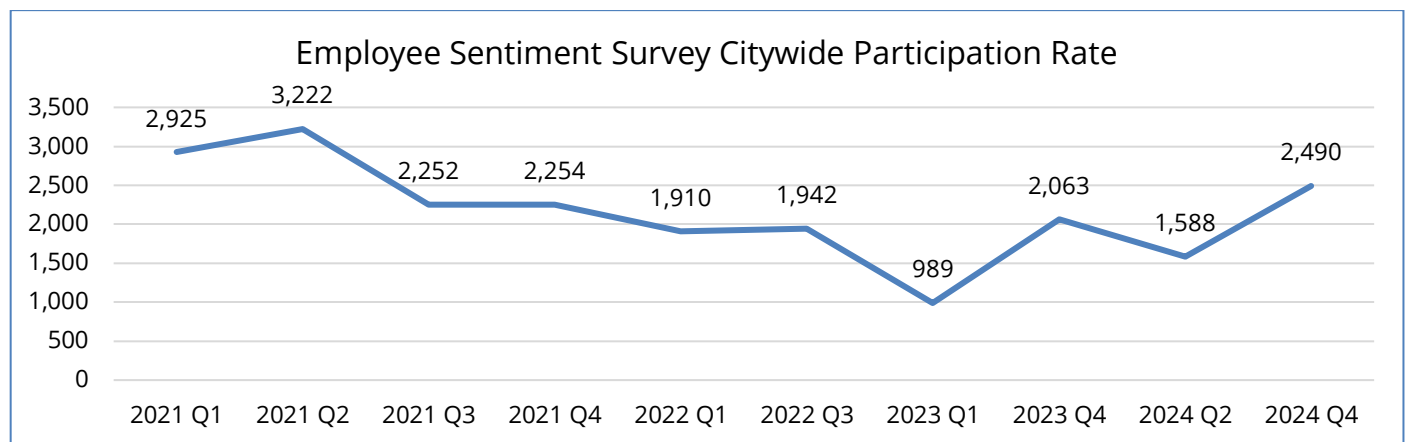
Figure 1: Citywide Participation Rate

The last set of questions in the Employee Sentiment Survey are the self-reported demographic questions: age range, race and ethnicity, veteran status, job type, and tenure at the City. All of these questions are voluntary. Many employees chose not to provide their gender and the percentage who opted out of

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[2] Statistical significance for each survey round was achieved at the 99% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, at a minimum.

[3] Because survey responses by job type are not proportional to the actual number of employees in those job types, responses may be skewed in ways that cannot be fully understood or corrected for. For example, field/front-line employees were underrepresented in survey responses; if a policy was created based on non-representative responses from the field workers, it may result in a policy that does not reflect the actual sentiment of most field workers.

providing a gender grew over the course of the year—either passively (by not selecting an option) or actively (by choosing to opt out).

As of January 2025, the percentage of women in the City workforce is 33.3 percent. In the Employee Sentiment Surveys, the percentage of female respondents varied from 36.2 percent to 40.8 percent, meaning women are slightly overrepresented in the survey response data. Male employees appear to be slightly underrepresented and/or more likely to be unwilling to report their gender in the survey: 66.5 percent of the City workforce is male, while the Employee Sentiment Survey receives between 46.6 percent and 48.8 percent of responses from men.

Additionally, between 9.4 percent and 9.9 percent of respondents opted to not provide their gender in the optional question. Given these large gaps in gender data, is not possible to determine the exact amount of over- or under-representation for either gender. Lastly, the Employee Sentiment Survey allows employees to describe their gender in their own terms. Between five and 10 employees chose to utilize the "Prefer to describe as:" option each quarter; less than 1 percent of City employees identify as non-binary.
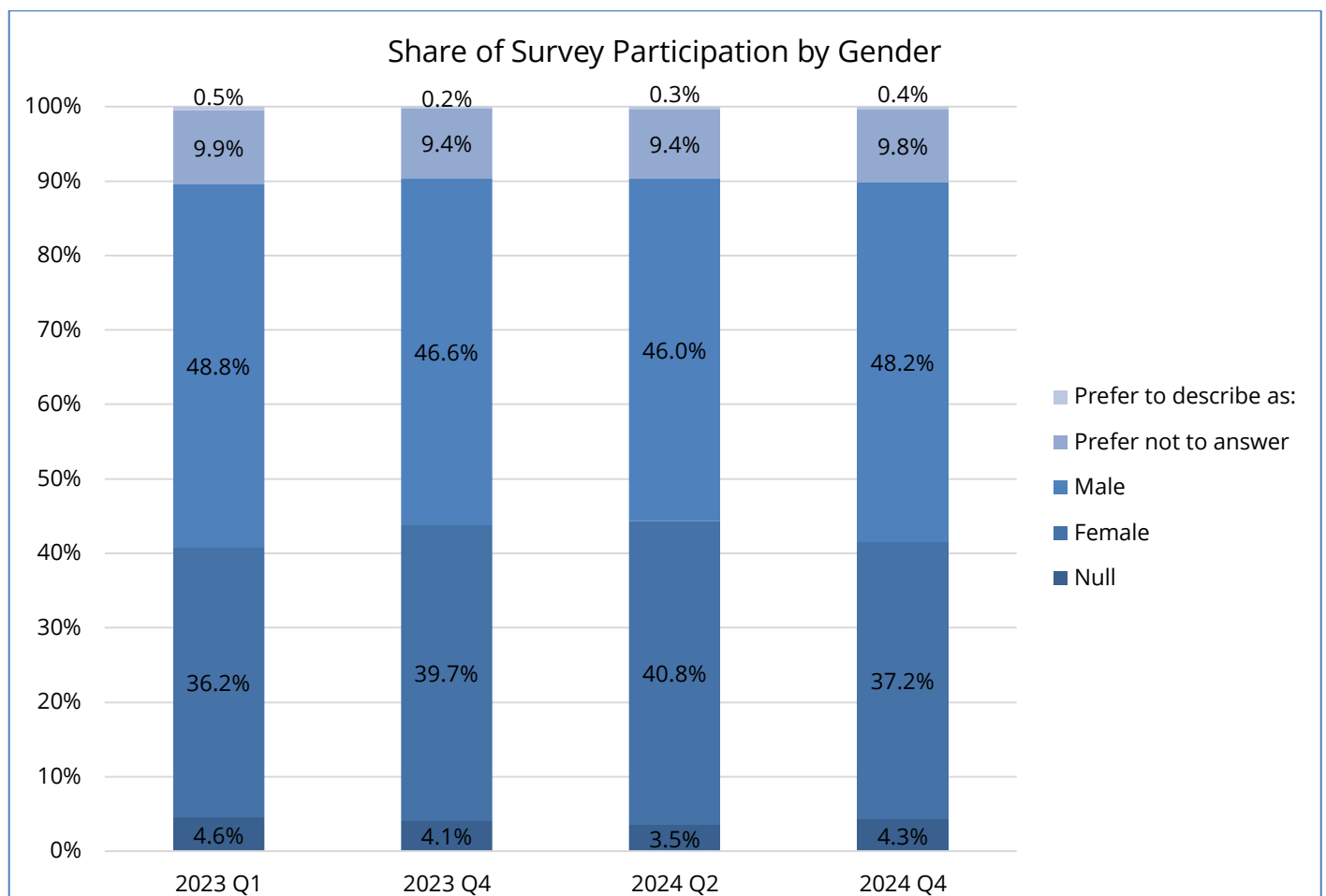
Figure 2: Survey Participation by Gender

Similarly, survey participation across racial and ethnic groups does not mirror the composition of the workforce. As of January 2025, 39.4 percent of the City workforce identifies as White or Caucasian, 33.8 percent as Hispanic or Latino, 10.4 percent as Black or African American, 11.1 percent as Asian, 4.5 percent as more than one race and/or ethnicity or another race, and less than 1.0 percent as Native American, Alaskan Native, Pacific Islander, or Native Hawaiian. When compared to the Employee Sentiment Survey responses, no group is represented at the same rates as the workforce totals. Additionally, the number of employees who opted to not provide a race or ethnicity was larger than the number of employees who opted not to provide a gender. Like the results for gender, the percentage of those opting out of providing race and ethnicity information has increased over the past two years.

Survey Participation by Race and Ethnicity

	2023 Q1	2023 Q4	2024 Q2	2024 Q4
	0.3%	0.6%	0.5%	0.6%
	1.1%	1.3%	1.4%	1.3%
	2.5%	2.1%	2.7%	2.5%
	3.2%	5.4%	4.5%	4.5%
	5.7%	4.7%	4.7%	5.8%
	8.6%	7.9%	7.8%	7.4%
	9.0%	8.5%	9.0%	9.1%
	16.1%	15.5%	15.4%	14.5%
	19.2%	18.9%	22.2%	21.5%
	34.3%	35.2%	31.8%	32.8%

Legend:
- White or Caucasian
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Prefer not to answer
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Null
- Two or More Races and/or Ethnicities
- Other
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Native American or Indigenous

Figure 3: Survey Participation by Race and Ethnicity

The Employee Sentiment Survey also asks employees to identify the type of work/role that they do: field, management, office, supervisor, or other. After matching those groups with the groups identified in the Civil Service Commission report, it is possible to estimate how well represented these groups are in the Employee Sentiment Survey. For example, based on Civil Service Report estimates from 2023, we should

expect to see about 45 percent of survey responses coming from field employees, but the Employee Sentiment Survey received only about 18 percent to 23 percent of responses from field workers.[4]

These estimates are not a precise measure, but anecdotal comments from Department leadership and field supervisors suggest that field employees may have a harder time participating in the survey because they access their City email account less frequently than office employees and may not have dedicated time in their day to complete the survey. It should be noted, however, that the share of field employees responding to the survey increased in 2023 and 2024 as compared to 2022 participation levels.

Like gender and race/ethnicity reporting, the number of employees opting not to provide their type of work increased throughout the course of the past two years. However, the percentage opting out of work type remains below that of gender. This continues to suggest the possibility of survey fatigue and/or concerns about anonymity.
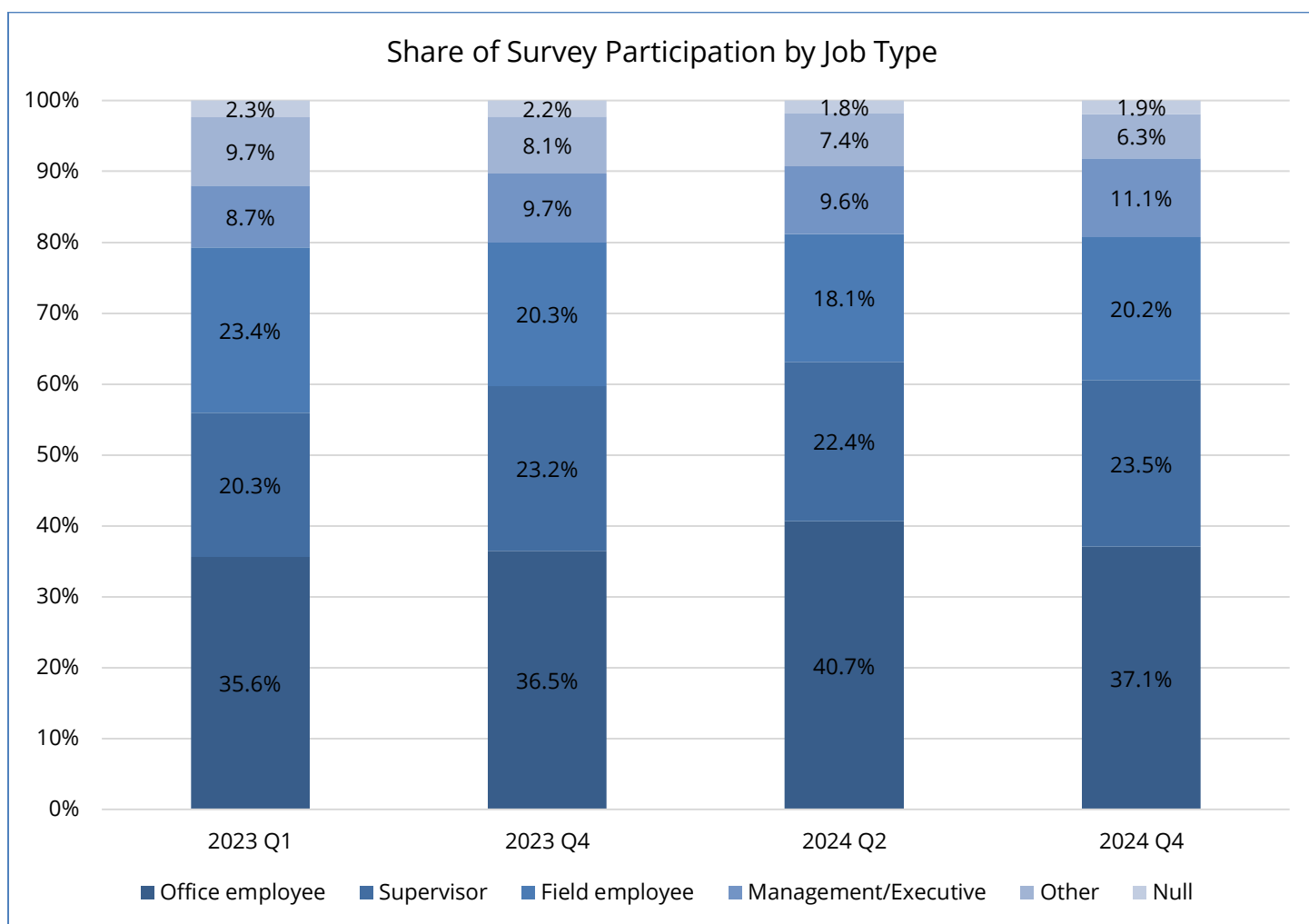
Figure 4: Survey Participation by Job Type

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[4] Personnel Department. "Equal Employment Opportunity Annual Report."

In addition to fear or survey fatigue, the low response rate for demographic data suggest that employees may not understand the analytic value of providing this information. As with much of the survey program, communication about the value of every response could be improved. It was a key priority of 2023 and 2024 to increase the amount and diversity of communication about the sentiment survey.

Specifically, over the last two years, the City addressed three key areas related to survey communication:

1. **Increased communication from leadership**
   More frequent and thorough communication by leadership to reiterate the importance of the survey and the commitment to addressing employee concerns. The Performance & Analytics Department developed email templates to make communication easier for Department Directors.
2. **Survey follow-up by Directors**
   Many department leadership teams engaged with the Performance & Analytics Department to better understand their survey results and ensure their employee's feedback was instrumental in shaping the department's goals and direction.
3. **Integration of Survey Metrics into Departmental Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**
   As part of the 2023 KPI Overhaul project, many departments chose to use metrics from the Employee Sentiment Survey (ESS) as data sources for new KPIs. Integrating survey metrics into the KPI and budget process shows a clear improvement in how many leaders are using ESS data to inform their short- and long-term strategic planning.

In addition to communication improvements, the City also added novel approaches to survey distribution and access, such as QR codes in the field and workplaces. By implementing these recommendations, the City reduced survey fatigue, built trust, and embedded employee sentiment into the surveying process.

Recruitment and Onboarding

"The people are what made my experience great with their understanding, welcoming attitude, and flexibility."

This section delves into two aspects that shape the organizational landscape of the City of San Diego: recruitment and onboarding. By exploring these interconnected elements, we hope to provide insights into the City's ability to attract and retain a workforce that reflects the diverse San Diego community.

Employee recruitment and onboarding plays a fundamental role in setting the foundation for a successful and gratifying career trajectory. With this in mind, the Performance & Analytics Department launched the City's first Onboarding Survey in early 2021. The survey covers topics related to recruitment (such as the ease of applying and the interview process) and onboarding (such as feeling welcomed and receiving all the information they need). The survey is delivered via email to all new employees 14 days after they begin

work. Across 2023 and 2024 calendar years, 363 new employees have taken the survey, which represents a 25 percent response rate. This response rate is higher than the response rate for the Employee Sentiment Survey.

Evaluating the City's desirability as a regional employer starts with understanding baseline levels of satisfaction. Sentiment around satisfaction is captured in all our Employee Sentiment Surveys using two industry-standard metrics: Net Promoter Score (NPS)[5] and Overall Satisfaction (OSAT). NPS measures the likelihood that an employee would recommend the City as a place to work. It is calculated by subtracting the percentage of employees who scored the question a 1 through 6 ("detractors") from the percentage of employees who scored the question a 9 or 10 ("promoters"). Overall Satisfaction asks employees to rate their overall satisfaction with their experience at the City. The metric is calculated by totaling the percentage of 9 and 10 scores reported by employees. For both NPS and OSAT, **a higher score indicates greater satisfaction**. The table below presents the average NPS and OSAT scores across 2023 and 2024 Onboarding Surveys:

Table 1: Onboarding NPS and Satisfaction

Net Promoter Score at Onboarding	Overall Satisfaction at Onboarding
73.7 −100 100	76.4 0 100

The Onboarding Survey is broken into two distinct sections: recruitment and onboarding. Along with overall satisfaction, the survey asks new employees about their specific satisfaction with the recruitment and onboarding processes. Both recruitment and onboarding have a set of key driver metrics aimed at assessing sentiment around the details of the recruitment and onboarding process.

Recruitment Metrics

Recruitment key drivers indicate that applicants felt that the interview process had good communication and was sufficient at clearing doubts and setting expectations. The previously lowest scoring metric*, "Ease of application and getting information about the position,"* has improved significantly throughout the last two years, indicating that communication at the beginning of the recruitment process has been improved. The two lowest scoring metrics (*"Knowledge of expectations at each recruitment stage,"* and *"Recruiter explained the details of the whole hiring process clearly"*) may be improved by making job bulletins more informative and improving communication between recruiters and applicants.

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[5] Reichheld, "The One Number You Need to Grow."
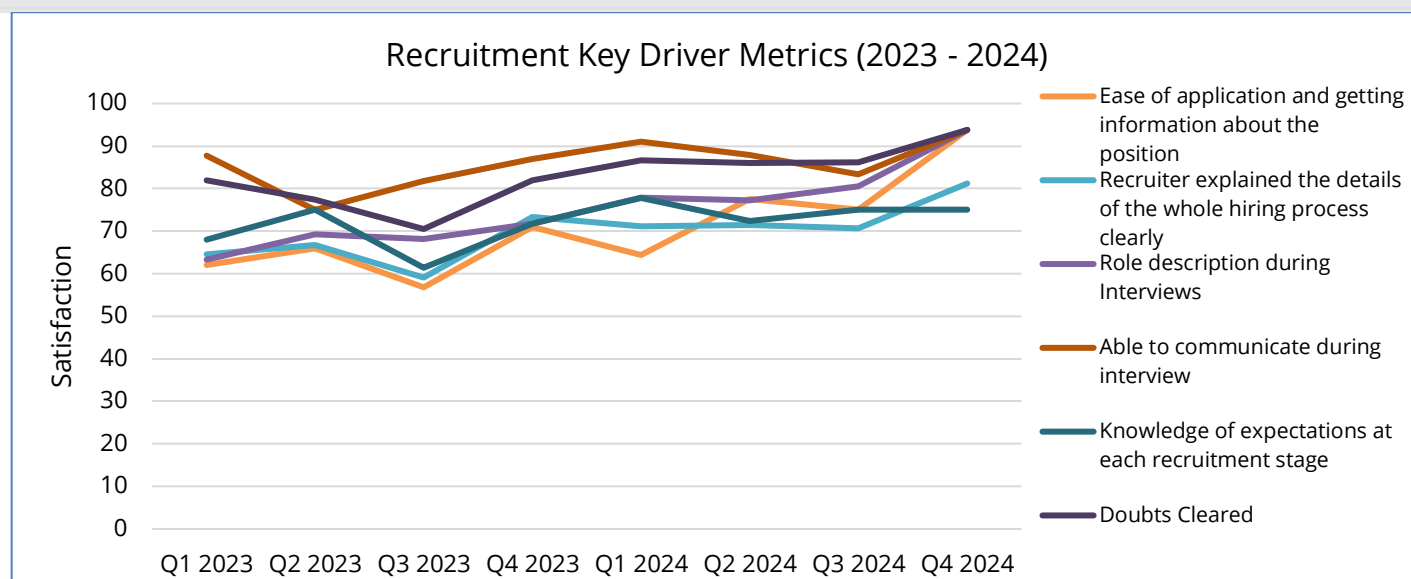
Figure 5: Recruitment Key Driver Metrics

Onboarding Metrics

"Increased communication would foster a sense of inclusion and trust, making employees feel more connected to the leadership and the City's mission."

At the onboarding stage, employees were overwhelmingly welcomed by their colleagues, received adequate onboarding training, and quickly integrated into their new team. This sentiment is consistent with other high-ranking key driver metrics in the Employee Sentiment Survey related to teamwork and supervisors. On the lowest end of the metrics, employees felt that information and support on the first day could be improved and that their supervisor could better explain the responsibilities of the role.
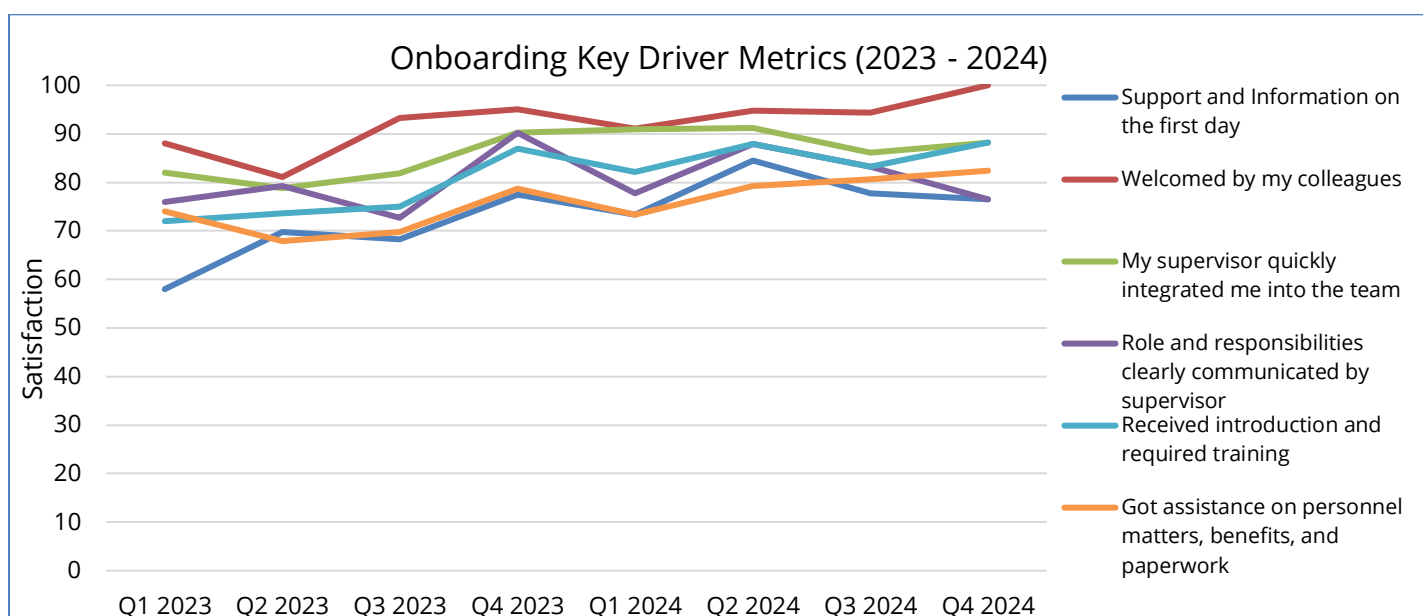
Figure 6: Onboarding Key Driver Metrics

Overall, these scores indicate high levels of satisfaction with both the recruitment and onboarding process. As a reminder, each metric measures the percent of respondents who scored the question a 9 or 10. Meaning, for even the lowest recruitment and onboarding metrics, more than 60 percent of new employees are responding with 9's and 10's. These scores are higher than what employees report in almost all of the Employee Sentiment Survey questions. In the next year, we hope to continue to increase onboarding and recruitment scores by making design improvements to job postings and increasing communication with new employees. The next section details the major changes that the City's Human Resources Department made in 2023 and 2024.

Recruitment and Onboarding Process Updates

The Human Resources (HR) Department's Talent Acquisitions team shapes the City's future through innovative recruitment and retention strategies. In the last two years, the team has shifted from traditional recruiting methods to a strategic, employee-focused model.

This transition began with the adoption of the Talent Acquisition Maturity Model, a framework that aims to position the City as a regional employer of choice. The goal is to attract a highly skilled and educated workforce, ready to meet the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

Launch of Recruitment and Onboarding Modules

HR recently soft-launched the Unclassified Applicant Tracking System, streamlining the hiring process for unclassified roles. This system maximizes SAP SuccessFactors' integrated features to support current employees and new hires. Key features include:

- Automated integration from SuccessFactors Recruitment and Onboarding modules to SAP, ensuring consistent and expeditious processing of candidates, as well as seamless workflow management.

- Full visibility into recruitment and onboarding processes at every stage.

- Simplified candidate profiles, direct resume sharing with hiring managers, and a faster interview process with self-scheduling and system-based rating tools.

Onboarding paperwork is now done electronically and prior to the new employee's first day, making the process faster, more efficient, and less prone to error.

Pivot from the "Post & Pray" Recruiting Strategy
Historically, the City relied on a passive approach to job recruitment; posting openings and waiting for candidates to apply. To modernize and expand outreach, Human Resources adopted LinkedIn Recruiter, making job postings more accessible and enhancing candidate engagement with a proactive, personalized approach.

Branding and Promotion

The HR Talent Acquisition team developed and deployed a new employee-centric campaign, **"Building Your Future,"** reflecting the City's commitment to professional development and progress. It is featured prominently across recruitment platforms, onboarding materials, training programs, and beyond, reinforcing our mission at every step.

As part of the City's recruitment efforts, the Talent Acquisition team introduced the New Employee Welcome Tote—a thoughtful and symbolic gesture for new employees. This initiative goes beyond being a gift; it embodies the City's dedication to fostering a workplace culture of growth, inclusion, and excellence. The tote is both practical and memorable, featuring City-branded essentials that enhance a sense of belonging and pride. Each tote is automatically distributed to hiring managers via Interoffice Mail, ensuring that new employees receive a warm and meaningful welcome on their first day.

As outlined in the previous Workforce Report, employee retention is a key priority for City leadership. Efforts by the HR Department are already delivering results:

- The City set a target for Average Daily Vacancy Rate of 13.5 percent from 14.10 percent in December 2023. We have exceeded that goal by bringing the vacancy rate to 11.3 percent in January 2025.

- As of February 28, 2025, 126 interns funded from the Employee & Empower program transitioned into full-time employment since the program launched on July 1, 2022.

The HR Department's recruitment and retention efforts exemplify the power of strategy, collaboration, and a shared commitment to excellence. The goal is not to just fill positions, but to build a community of employees who are engaged and supported throughout their career at the City.

Personnel Department Recruitment Efforts

The Personnel Department opens recruitments on a predictive or continuous basis for Classified job classifications with high vacancy rates to ensure there is always an eligible list for hiring departments to use to fill their vacancies. The reinstatement of the Recruiting Section and the increase in promotional advertising budget has allowed the Personnel Department to pay for advertising in community newspapers, increase its attendance at career fairs and community events, increase public access through employment information sessions held at libraries across all Council districts, and establish partnerships with various local organizations that serve veterans, minorities, refugees, and justice involved individuals. Due to the outreach efforts of the Personnel Department's Recruiting team, the number of events they attended doubled from calendar year 2023 to calendar year 2025.

In calendar year 2023 and 2024, the Personnel Department recommended to the Civil Service Commission revisions to Personnel Manual Index Code D-3, Career Advancement (Addendum), incorporating additional classifications in the City's career advancement program. These additions to the career advancement program, many of which were proposed by hiring departments, provided promotional opportunities for current City employees, and assisted with recruitment and retention efforts. **These changes help to attract applicants who may be lacking career experience to enter the City**, receive training, and get

assigned progressively more responsible and complex duties, and upon gaining the experience and skills required for advancement, are then eligible to promote to higher levels in the series until they reach the classified level of the position. These changes also expanded the promotional opportunities for current employees and provided Appointing Authorities additional options to fill their vacancies with entry-level or journey-level classifications based on their operational needs.

In addition, the Personnel Department has been working to improve the City's ability to hire and retain high quality candidates. Working with consultants from Partners in Public Innovation and other partners from operating departments, process improvements were identified, and the Personnel Department has begun to pilot expanded hiring support for departments in CY 2025, including revising workflows with the focus on eliminating steps that will result in streamlining the Classified hiring process, and better utilization of the current applicant tracking system to track the status of the hiring process. The reinstatement of the Personnel Department's Outstation Program in select departments has been instrumental in helping improve the candidate experience and in achieving the hiring departments' operational needs. The Outstation Personnel Analysts collaborate with each department's executive team to assist them in filling their priority vacancies in a timely and efficient manner from recruiting to hire.

Lastly, in 2024, the Personnel Department implemented an online New Hire/Rehire Personnel Change Request (PCR) approval workflow to streamline the entry of the new hire/rehire paperwork in the SAP system. With the online process, department Payroll Specialists can submit new hire/rehire paperwork through SAP's online portal and track the approval of the PCR at every step of the process, increasing transparency. The Personnel Department intends to include additional employment actions (e.g., promotions, transfers, separations, pay changes) to the online PCR approval process in the future.

How Are Current Employees Doing?

Overall Satisfaction

"I am able to make a tangible difference in my community which makes my work experience extremely satisfying."

Evaluating the City's desirability as a regional employer starts with understanding baseline levels of satisfaction. Like the Onboarding Survey, sentiment about satisfaction is captured in the Employee Sentiment Surveys using two industry-standard metrics: Net Promoter Score (NPS) and Overall Satisfaction (OSAT). NPS measures the likelihood that an employee would recommend the City as a place to work. It is calculated by subtracting the percentage of employees who scored the question a 1 through 6 ("detractors") from the percentage of employees who scored the question a 9 or 10 ("promoters"). Overall Satisfaction asks employees to rate their overall satisfaction with their experience at the City. The metric is calculated by totaling the percentage of 9 and 10 scores reported by employees.

For both NPS and OSAT, a higher score indicates greater satisfaction. As the chart below demonstrates, in the first quarter of 2023, a negative NPS score indicates that there were more employees who would *not*

recommend the City as a place to work than employees who *would* recommend the City to their friends and family. Once the score became positive in late 2023, the City can now say that more people *would* recommend the City as a place to work than people who *would not*.

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, some employees indicated that they now take pride in talking about their employment at the City.
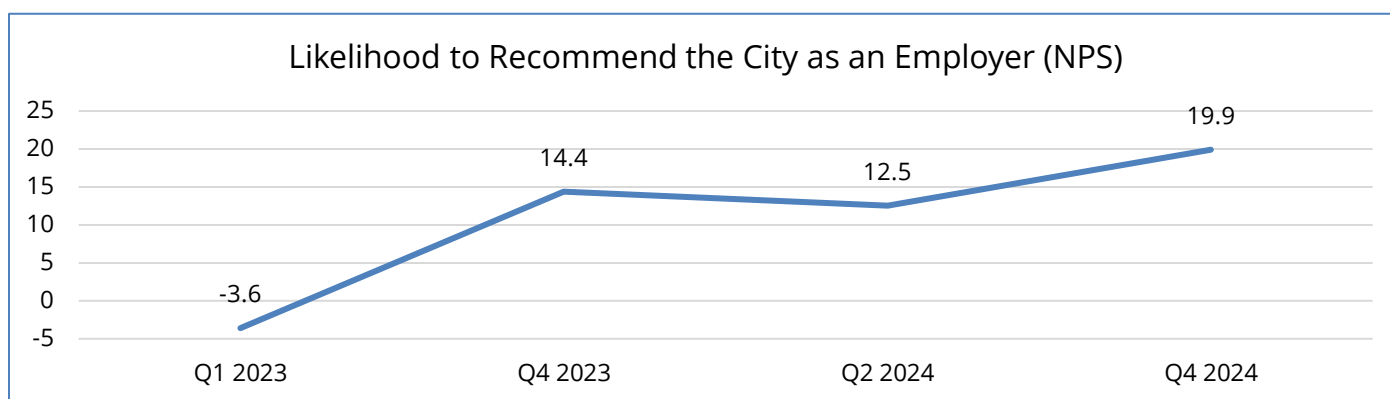
Figure 7: NPS

Overall satisfaction 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.
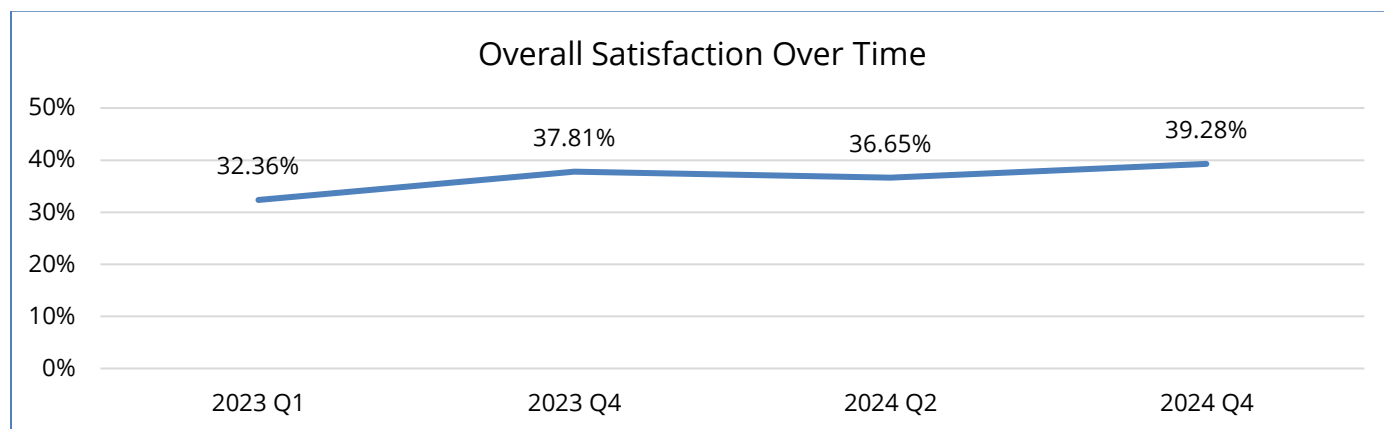
Figure 8: Overall Satisfaction

Tracking these broad measures is important because it helps City and department leadership understand the general trend of employee sentiment as new policies or programs are implemented. These broad measures allow City leadership to track progress over time and department leadership to compare their team's satisfaction to overall City sentiment.

Department Satisfaction

The graph below shows the average satisfaction score for departments across 2023 and 2024. As the chart illustrates, there is a wide range of satisfaction sentiment across City departments, from very low through very high satisfaction sentiment. Understanding the variation in department satisfaction is important because it highlights the different experiences that employee groups are having. **Leadership at the branch and director level should work to understand the root causes of satisfaction variation across their departments**. Department directors should work with branch leadership to determine lessons from highly satisfied departments and identify possible strategies to apply to less satisfied departments.[6]

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[6] Departments with fewer than 40 total survey responses (10 per quarter) were excluded from this analysis.

Department Satisfaction

Department	Satisfaction
Department of Information Technology	62.4%
Risk Management Department	62.4%
Human Resources Department	59.8%
Office of the City Treasurer	51.6%
Engineering and Capital Projects Department	48.2%
Department of General Services	47.3%
Performance and Analytics Department	47.2%
Development Services Department	46.8%
SDCERS	45.5%
Environmental Services Department	45.1%
Communications Department	41.9%
Transportation Department	40.2%
City Planning Department	40.1%
Parks and Recreation Department	38.4%
Department of Finance	38.3%
City Attorney's Office	37.9%
Purchasing and Contracting Department	37.7%
Library Department	37.5%
Personnel Department	37.0%
Compliance Department	36.0%
Stormwater Department	36.0%
Public Utilities Department	32.8%
City Council	32.7%
Office of the City Clerk	32.3%
Economic Development Department	31.1%
Department of Sustainability	31.0%
No Department Selected	22.7%
Police Department	21.2%
Fire-Rescue Department	19.8%

Figure 9: Department Satisfaction

Position Satisfaction

Satisfaction across positions is also varied in a similar manner to departments. This wide range of overall satisfaction reflects the diversity of sentiment, work conditions, and job types across the City. The table below shows the 10 top and bottom ranked positions by overall job satisfaction. While the positions ranked as least satisfied are almost all located within the lowest-ranked departments (Fire-Rescue and Police), the positions ranked as most satisfied come from across multiple City departments. Many of the most satisfied positions are entry-level roles, which is consistent with other analysis that shows employees with the shortest City employment tenure having the highest levels of satisfaction. The Program Coordinator and

Deputy Director positions are management-level role present in most City departments. Interns may also be placed in nearly any City department.

The gap between the most and least satisfied positions is over seventy percentage points—with more than 75 percent of Junior Civil Engineers reporting a 9 or 10 level of satisfaction, while Police Detectives reported just 3.6 percent overall job satisfaction.
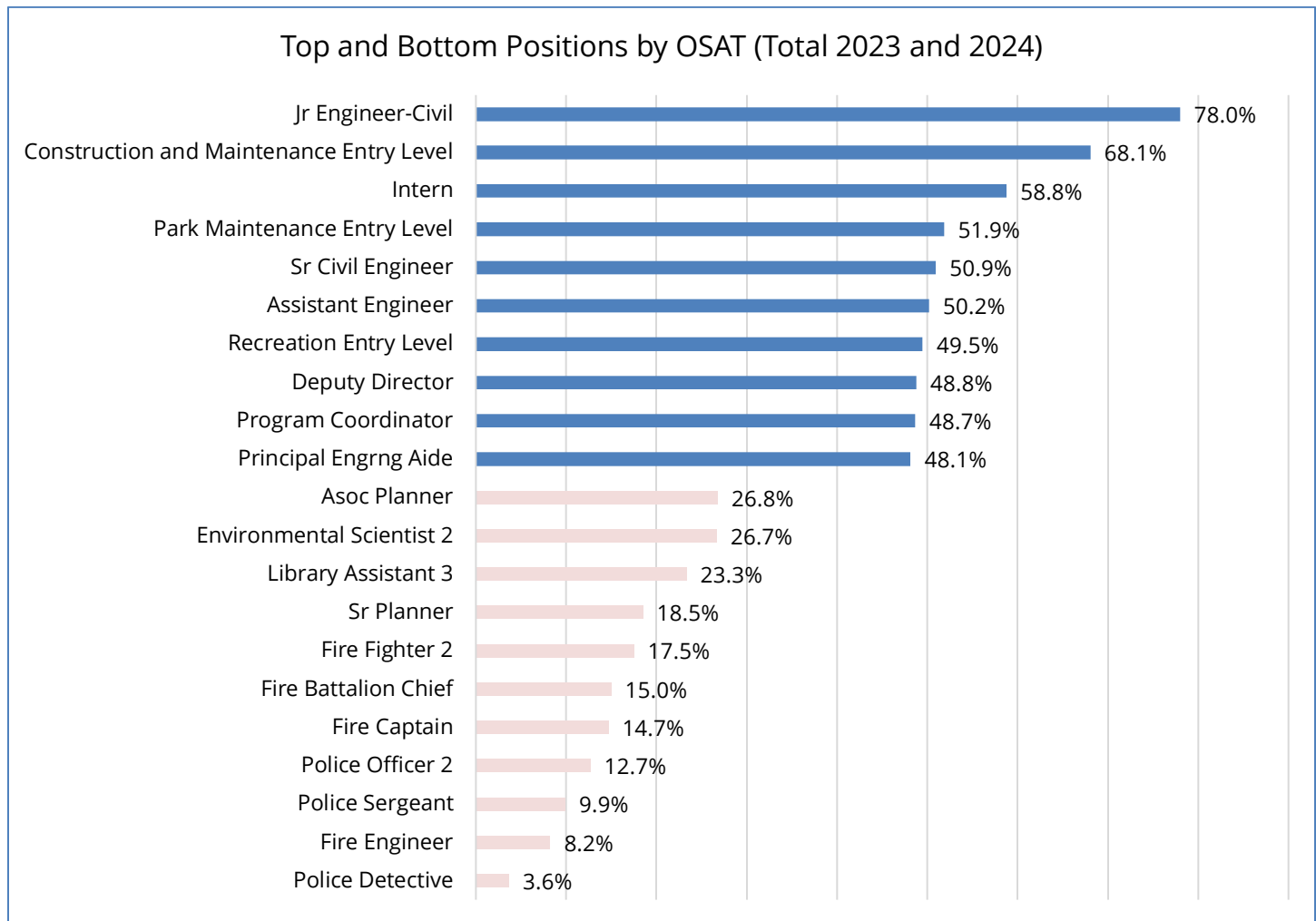
Figure 10: Position Satisfaction [7,8]

Maximizing employee satisfaction is a priority for City leadership because **our hypothesis is that overall employee satisfaction plays a key role in both the quality of services delivered to customers and the overall turnover rate among employees.** High quality, reliable and efficient service delivery is a key outcome for the City overall, and employee satisfaction is likely a large contributor to this goal. Additionally, employee turnover is costly to the City and lowers employee morale, as greater turnover increases reliance

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[7] Some similar position types were grouped together. Groupings available on request to PandA.
[8] Positions needed to have a minimum of 40 responses total (10 per survey) to be included in the ranking list.

on overtime and/or requires heavier workloads for remaining staff—which may also contribute to lower quality service delivery.

Satisfaction by Employee Groups

Tenure

"I just began my [20+] year of service with the City. My journey has taken me from laborer to equipment operator and now to supervisor. The City has shown me that opportunities are endless, and every department has valuable experiences to offer.[9]"

Across 2023 and 2024, analysis of the ESS finds that satisfaction among employees varies significantly depending on how long they have worked at the City. The Sentiment Survey asks employees to self-report how long they have worked at the City, from fewer than two years to 31 or more years. Across tenure groups, the most satisfied employees are the newest or longest tenured and the least satisfied employees have a tenure of 11-20 years.

Overall Satisfaction by Tenure

Tenure	2024	2023
Less than 2 years	54.5%	54.5%
2-5 years	40.6%	39.7%
6-10 years	35.0%	29.9%
11-20 years	29.2%	27.2%
21-30 years	30.3%	30.0%
31 years or more	40.0%	36.8%
Null	32.1%	21.9%
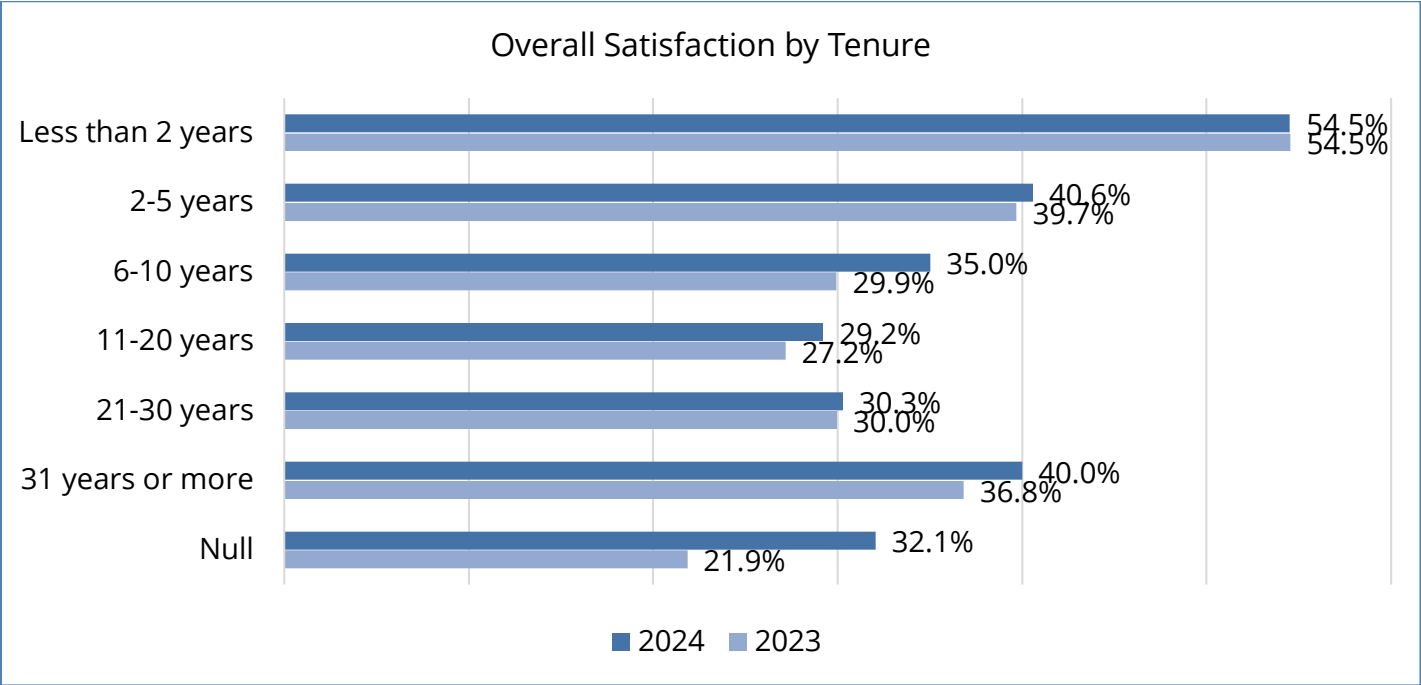
Figure 11: Satisfaction by Tenure

Since 2021, low sentiment around mid-career has been a consistent finding. These employees also report low levels of satisfaction related to training, development, and career growth—which may suggest from where their dissatisfaction stems. As a result of this data analysis, the City has focused on increasing

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[9] Tenure number changed to protect employee anonymity.

training opportunities and platforms for employees with the goal of meeting the career progression needs of all employees, but especially medium-tenure employees.

Job Type

Examining employee satisfaction by job type reveals that the most satisfied employees are at the Management/Executive level, at 46.2 percent satisfaction in 2024. These employees include most unclassified employees, including Program Coordinators and Program Managers. Field employees, office employees, and those responding "other" have similar levels of satisfaction, at about 40 percent satisfied. Supervisors and those who left the question blank report the lowest levels of satisfaction, at 31.7 percent and 28.4 percent, respectively. **All employee job types report increased satisfaction between 2023 and 2024.**

Overall Satisfaction by Job Type

Job Type	2024	2023
Management/Executive	46.2%	40.1%
Field employee	40.4%	37.8%
Office employee	40.3%	38.6%
Other	39.3%	37.3%
Supervisor	31.7%	29.2%
Null	28.4%	26.1%
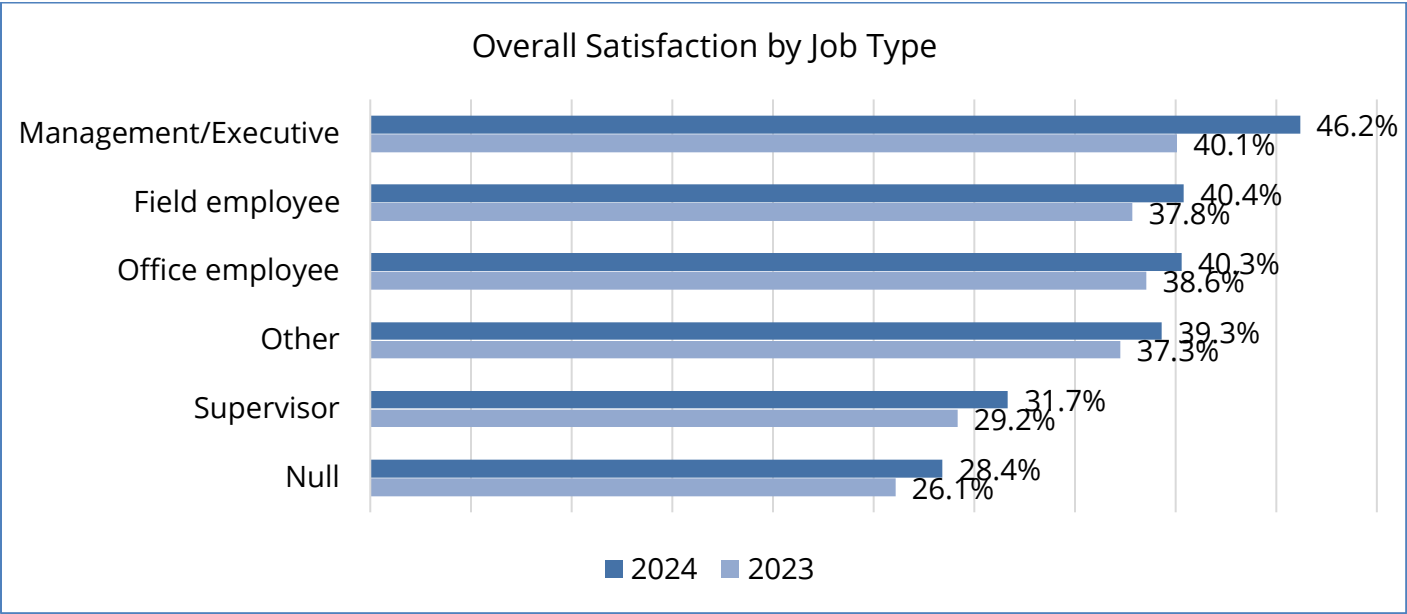
Figure 12: Satisfaction by Job Type

Employee Satisfaction Benchmarking

Using standard engagement measurements, like NPS and Overall Satisfaction, allows the City to compare itself to other employers in the region and other public service employers. For example, when compared to the Federal Employee Viewpoint survey (a measure of employee satisfaction across the whole Federal Government), the City of San Diego (CoSD) scores higher on overall satisfaction and likelihood to recommend.[10] **This is the first year since beginning the Employee Sentiment Survey that the City has scored higher than the Federal government.** The data for this federal comparison was collected in the summer of 2024.

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[10] A full description of the methodology used to compare surveys and the full list of compared metrics is available in the Annex.

Among employers in San Diego County, only one of the top ten largest employers publicly posts their employee satisfaction scores: UC San Diego. Compared to UCSD, employees at the City are very slightly less satisfied overall. UC San Diego does not publish a Net Promoter Score.

Table 2: NPS, OSAT Federal and UCSD Comparison

Metric	City of San Diego, 2024	Federal Viewpoint, 2024[11]	UC San Diego, 2024[12]
Overall Satisfaction (OSAT)/ *Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job?*	75[13]	68	75
Likelihood to Recommend (NPS)/ *I recommend my organization as a good place to work.*	72	67	n/a

Improving NPS and OSAT scores Citywide is a key goal for the Employee Engagement program. In 2022, a goal of the employee sentiment program was to consistently improve NPS and OSAT scores. Results from 2023 and 2024 have demonstrated that sustained improvements are possible. Therefore, the program goal for 2025 is to continue to improve these scores and to continue to look for opportunities to improve NPS and OSAT scores across each employee type.

As of June 2024, the City is the seventh largest employer in San Diego County. With 13,000+ employees, the City employs just over 1.8 percent of the regional population.

Table 3: Ten Largest Employers in SD County

2024 Ten Largest Employers in San Diego County[14]		
Employer	Number of Employees	Percentage of Total Employment
Naval Base San Diego	40,472	5.64
University of California, San Diego	39,688	5.53
Sharp Health Care	20,139	2.81
County of San Diego	18,936	2.64
San Diego Unified School District	17,226	2.40
Scripps Health	14,732	2.05
City of San Diego	**13,408**	**1.87**

[11] Office of Personnel Management, 2024
[12] UC San Diego. "Staff@Work™ Survey Results," 2024
[13] This number is calculated to match the methodology of the Federal Survey. See Annex for detailed explanation.
[14] Annual Comprehensive Financial Report." San Diego: Department of Finance

Qualcomm Inc	10,124	1.41
Kaiser Permanente	7,687	1.07
Northrop Grumman Corporation	6,639	0.93

Included in the City's Strategic Plan is a focus on the City as a regional employer. A priority outcome of the Plan is to promote a culture of leadership, diversity, appreciation, and growth. To reach this outcome, **the City aims to attract, hire, and retain a diverse workforce** that is representative of the community that it serves. The City believes that hiring and maintaining a workforce of dedicated, passionate people who want to serve their community will make the City one of the best places to work—and that employees who love their job will provide high quality services to residents, businesses, and visitors.

However, according to a Forbes and Statistica review of employee satisfaction, as of August 2024, **the City of San Diego is not among the top 100 best employers in California.** Other regional employers, including the County of San Diego (ranked 73 in the state), local universities (UC San Diego ranked 27) and a private San Diego business (General Atomics ranked 99) are on the list.[15] The cities of Los Angeles and San Francisco (ranked 51 and 57, respectively) also appear on the list. It is therefore an immediate goal that the City of San Diego works to become one of the top 100 employers in the state. Given these goals, Employee Sentiment Survey results are being examined through the lens of achieving these outcomes.

Key Drivers

> *"I have always been encouraged to do my best. Grateful to be part of my amazing team."*

After the top-level net promoter and overall satisfaction questions, the survey asks employees eleven "Key Driver" questions. These survey questions represent industry best practices in measuring and improving employee engagement. "Employee engagement" is the level of commitment, passion, and loyalty an employee has toward their work and the City as an employer. How engaged a workforce is largely depends on how well City leadership acts on what is most important to employees.[16] Employee sentiment surveys provide indicators of what is most important at given moment in time. Essentially, the **key driver metrics represent the core ingredients for a positive work experience.**

Research has shown that an employee's personal well-being and their overall job satisfaction are directly related to an employee's decision to stay in, or quit, their job. Employees are most likely to leave their current employment if both their personal well-being and job satisfaction are low.[17] Given this, these key

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[15] Rabkin Peachman, 2024
[16] Medallia, "What Is Employee Experience? - Medallia."
[17] Wright and Bonett, "Job Satisfaction and Psychological Well-Being as Nonadditive Predictors of Workplace Turnover."

driver metrics are designed capture many aspects of personal well-being, such as: potential for career advancement, receiving adequate pay, and working with high quality colleagues.

Key driver metrics are measured using the same "top two" percentage as the overall satisfaction score: the numbers presented represent the percentage of employees who responded to the question with a 9 or 10 score—indicating that they "very strongly" agree with the statement.[18] This is different than how Likert Scores are typically presented.

Key Drivers Ranked

The next section shows each key driver metric in order of how highly they score among employees. 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: the relationship between employees and supervisors is healthy; we provide exceptional services to our residents; and our teams are strong. **These top metrics have remained the same since we began the Employee Sentiment Survey in 2021.**

Between 2023 and 2024 there were minor changes in most key driver metrics. Most metrics stayed in the same ranking position as 2023; and all but one metric showed increases in scores. The only metric to not improve its score was *"My team cares about me as a person."* This decrease in sentiment is statistically significant. Continued monitoring of this sentiment is needed to better understand what may be happening within teams.

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[18] It is important to keep this measurement methodology in mind should you attempt to compare City results with other employer surveys.
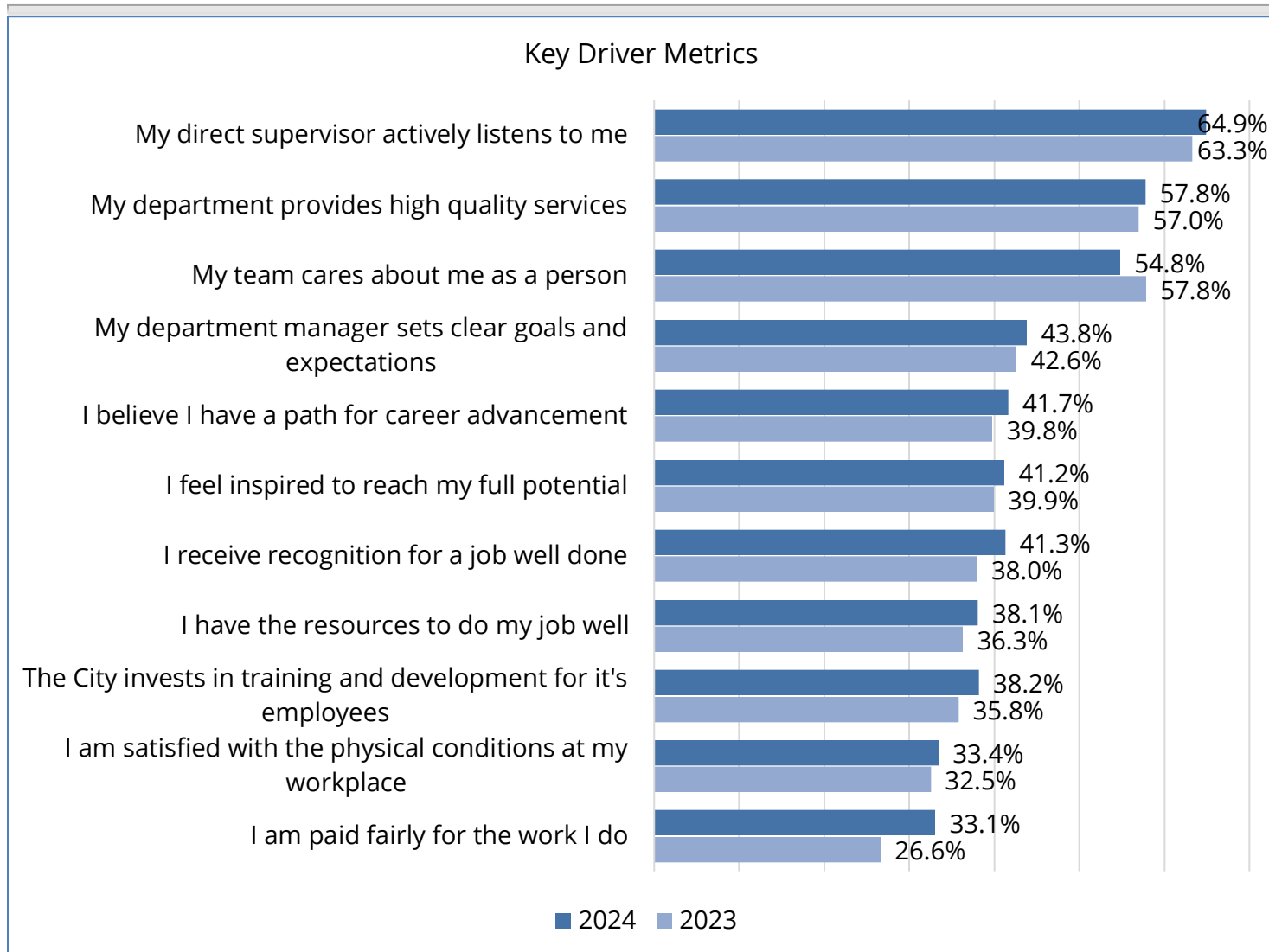
Key Driver Metrics

Figure 13: Key Driver Metrics

Compared to 2022, it is a strong, 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 scores increase over time is a positive signal that City policies aimed at improving the employee experience are beginning to work.

Key Drivers & Overall Satisfaction

A pure ranking of the key driver metrics is a simple and broad way to explain how employees feel about their experience at the City. But, digging deeper into the relationship between overall satisfaction and the key drivers can provide better insight into *how* the key driver metrics affect overall satisfaction. Essentially, **which levers do we need to pull to create real improvements in an employee's experience?**

To better understand which metrics have a stronger relationship to overall satisfaction, a method called *logistic regression* was used. Logistic regression is helpful because it allows understanding of how different

factors (for example, the topics in the key driver metrics) are connected to an employee being satisfied. Using the "Top Two Box" methodology, OSAT scores were grouped into two options: 9 and 10 scores (satisfied) and all other scores (unsatisfied). Using this tool, we can determine how the different key driver metrics are related to the likelihood of an employee being satisfied. The results are presented as *odds ratios* (OR)—which can be interpreted as: **for every one-unit increase in a key driver metric, the odds of an employee being satisfied changes by a given percent**.

The results of the analysis indicate that *"I feel inspired to reach my full potential," "I am paid fairly for the work I do,"* and *"I have the resources to do my job well"* have the strongest influence on the likelihood of an employee being satisfied.[19] The odds ratios can be interpreted as: for every one-point increase in an employee's *"Feel Inspired"* score, the odds of them being satisfied increases by 55.4 percent. Similarly, for every one point increase in an employee's sentiment about their job resources and tools (*"I have the resources to do my job well"*), the odds that they are satisfied increases by 20.6 percent.

Table 4: Key Driver Metrics

Key Driver Metrics[20]	Odds Ratio	P-Value	Std. Error	Significance
Path for Career Advancement	**1.169**	**0**	**.03**	*******
Feel Inspired to Reach my Potential	**1.554**	**0**	**.055**	*******
Receive Recognition[21]	1.012	.64	.026	
Paid Fairly	1.145	0	.023	***
My Team Cares About Me	1.133	0	.038	***
My Department Provides High Quality Services	1.117	.003	.041	***
My Direct Supervisor Actively Listens to Me[21]	.964	.257	.031	
My Department Manager Sets Clear Goals[24]	1.118	0	.035	***
Have The Resources to Do My Job Well	**1.206**	**0**	**.032**	*******
The City Invests In Training and Development	1.109	0	.028	***
Satisfied With The Physical Conditions of my Workplace	1.089	0	.019	***

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[20]Included in this model but excluded from this table are available observable demographics: gender, job type, tenure, age bracket, and year of survey. Full results are presented in the annex.
[21] Not a statistically significant result.

Logistic models and odds ratios are helpful to understand which metrics have a strong relationship with OSAT, but can pose difficulty when attempting to determine which metrics should be the focus of policy improvements.

The chart below provides a **visual representation of where efforts can be focused**.[22] Metrics landing in the **Improve** quadrant have the strongest relative relationship with OSAT and the lowest overall performance. The metric, *"Feel inspired to reach my full potential"* has the most impact on overall satisfaction and is just slightly under performing. It should be a goal to move this metric into the upper right **Leverage** category. Metrics in that category have a strong influence on OSAT and are high performing (meaning, employees are scoring that metric highly). **Improving this metric requires additional analysis on what types of workforce development are most impactful on inspiring employees.** More discussion of workforce development efforts (such as supervisor and management training) is included later in this report.

Additionally, the metric related to work resources falls in the **Improve** quadrant. This metric can mean different things to different employees; some employees may desire more advanced software tools, while others may consider "resources" to be something like time, training budget, or additional staff. Each department should work to determine which resources are most important to their teams.

Lastly, *"I have a path for career advancement"* has nearly crossed into the **Improve** category. Based on this analysis, **policies designed around helping employees reach their potential and having the appropriate tools to do their work would do the most to improve overall satisfaction.**

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[22] The chart was created by converting the key driver metric means and logit results into standardized z-scores and plotting the results. The x-axis is the z-score of the Key Driver metric (performance). Th y-axis is the z-score of the logit regression coefficient (importance).

Importance vs Performance: Overall Satisfaction
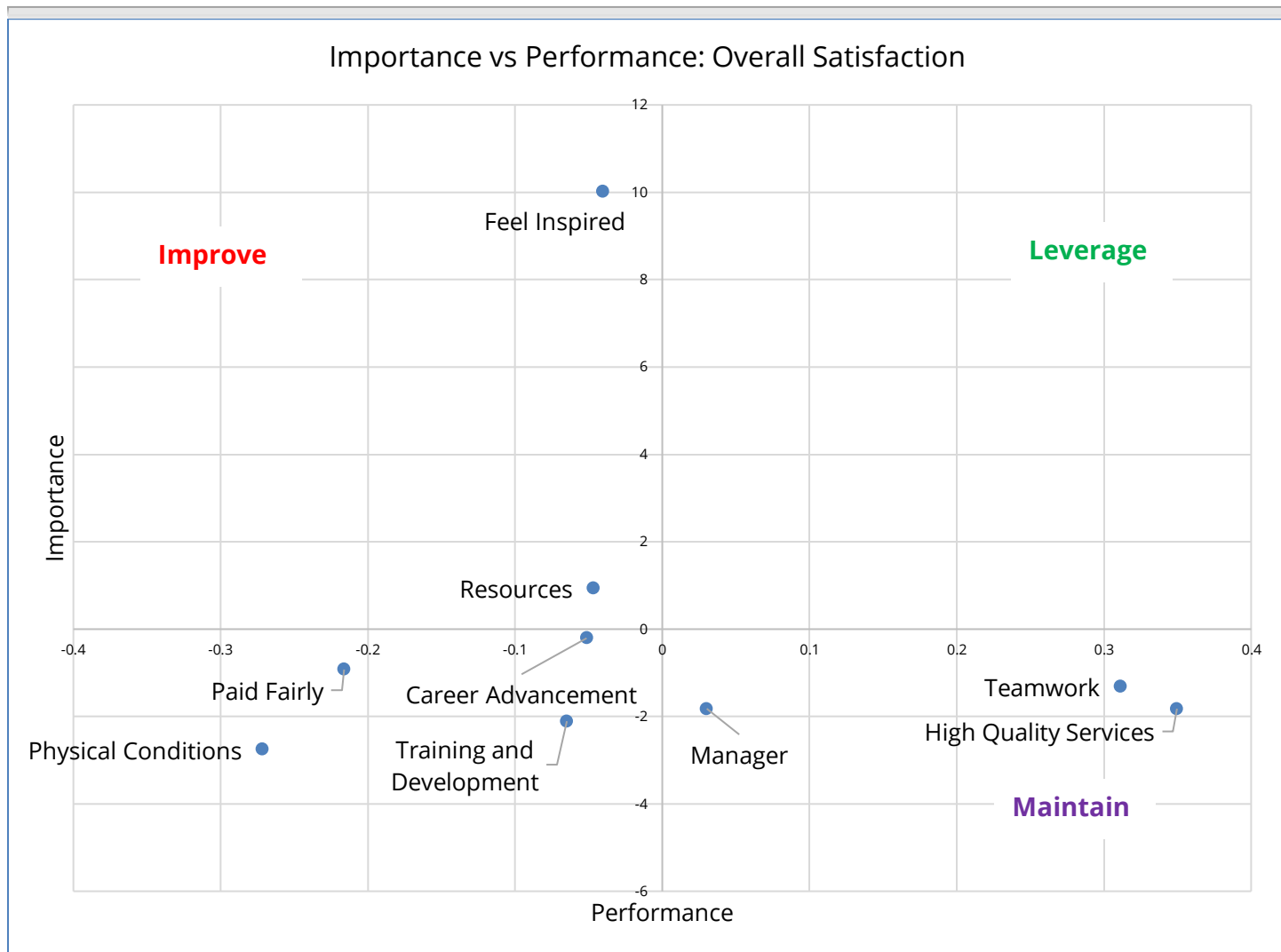
Figure 14: Importance vs. Performance Matrix

In the **Maintain** category, we find the metrics *"My team cares about me"* and *"My department provides high quality services."* These metrics' relationship with OSAT suggests that employees have strong, positive sentiment regarding these metrics, but the metrics *do not* have a strong relationship with overall satisfaction. However, these key driver metrics are very close to crossing into the **Leverage** category. This suggests that the City should focus on highlighting the high-quality teamwork that employees are providing for residents. **Sharing positive feedback from our customer experience surveys is one way to show employees how the public feels about their performance and how well teams work together to achieve service delivery goals.**

These rankings provide insight on how key drivers and OSAT work together. The most useful takeaway from this chart is that it provides a visual menu of priorities and where to focus to start making impactful change. The metrics at the top of this chart are related most strongly with overall satisfaction. **Making changes to inspire employees to reach their potential, providing adequate resources, and supporting career progression will provide the greatest impact in employee satisfaction**.

Aspects of the Employee Experience

This section of the report provides an overview of the remaining Employee Sentiment Survey questions. These questions dig further into aspects of the employee experience and are intended to move our understanding of sentiment beyond the Key Driver metrics. Each metric has been sorted into a thematic group: Leadership; Appreciation; Growth & Development; Meaningful Work; Resources & Work Life; and Diversity & Inclusion. The metrics are *not* grouped into these themes in the actual survey. Some key driver metrics are also included in these sections.

Leadership

> *"Leadership is an art - not a science - and there are many different ways to provide it."*

City employees deserve to work in a culture of great leadership. Great leadership means that employees have clear expectations for the quality of their work, they have coaching and guidance to do their job well, and they feel that their leadership is available to provide support. Broadly, **a culture of great leadership ensures that employees feel that they are in a position to succeed.**

The following metrics capture employee sentiment around leadership at the supervisor, department management, and executive levels:

+ My direct supervisor provides opportunities fairly to all employees in my work unit
+ My direct supervisor provides me with performance feedback throughout the year
+ My direct supervisor actively listens to me
+ I trust my DCOO to do what is right to support employees
+ My department manager sets clear goals and expectations
+ My department management is available for support when needed

Between 2023 and 2024, leadership scores remained nearly the same—with only slight, statistically insignificant increases in 2024. The most positive leadership sentiment was related to supervisors, suggesting that employees have a stronger relationship with their direct supervisors than their department management.

In October 2023, a question about executive leadership was added to the ESS: *"I trust my DCOO to do what is right to support employees."* This metric is the lowest scoring among the Leadership metric group, which may reflect low trust in executive leadership. However, some employees noted they were not certain who the Deputy Chief Operating Officer (DCOO) is for their department. This lack of knowledge may also be contributing to the low score of this metric.

Leadership Metrics

Figure 15: Leadership Metrics

Great leadership produces successful and confident employees. We expect that employees who feel successful and supported will choose to seek promotions within the City, and we expect that improving sentiment around leadership will result in increased retention. However, a significant change in the retention rate for City employees is expected to take some time to develop.

"Instead of noticing mistakes and shortcomings often, offer praise and help to promote and grow."

While the gap between direct supervisor and management scores is not surprising or unique to the City, the scores do suggest some areas of improvement for department management. Management training can help managers to become better communicators and more responsive to employee needs. Recent changes made to programs such as City Management Fellow (CMF) and Public Service Management Certificate (PSMC), as well as the Clifton Strengths program and new equity and inclusion management trainings may work to improve these metrics.

Appreciation

"I have worked many jobs where I didn't feel secure or appreciated, and there wasn't an opportunity for growth. Here in the City, I feel all of those things and am grateful."

Employees who feel appreciated, utilized, valued, and recognized for their work are more likely to enjoy their job and provide higher quality customer service. Appreciation goes beyond recognizing good work—it means **demonstrating that employees are valued for more than their productivity**. Leadership can

show appreciation by acknowledging the hard work of employees, listening to employee feedback, and promoting an environment that is open to sharing new ideas and learning from failures.

Employee sentiment about appreciation is measured through three key metrics:
+ I am paid for the work I do
+ I receive recognition for a job well done
+ I am treated as a valued member at work

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 efforts in CY2025 are 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. Updates to the rewards and recognition program made it faster and easier for supervisors to reward employees, which encouraged more formal acknowledgment for high-performing employees. These changes appear to have had a strong positive impact on employee sentiment about recognition.
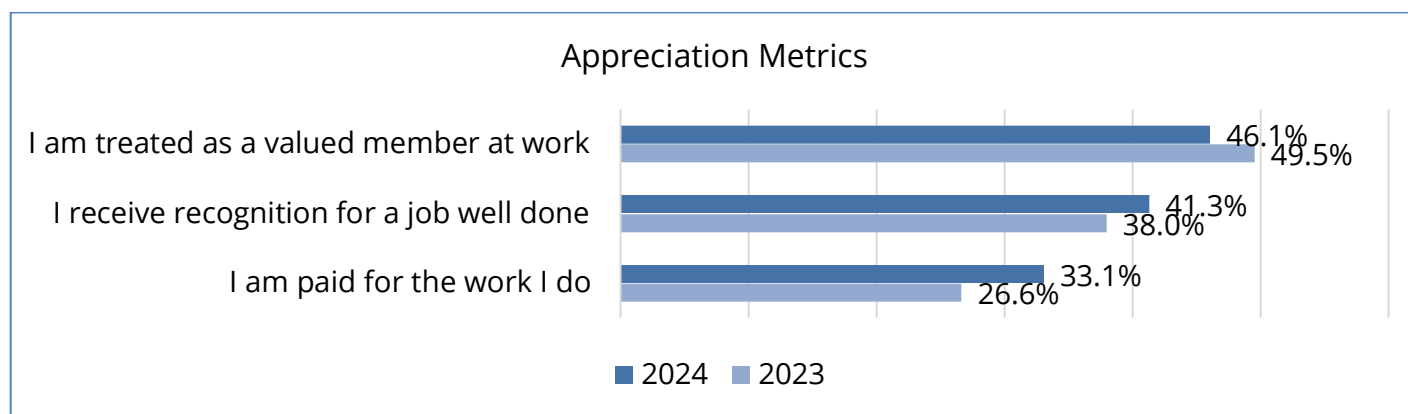
Figure 16: Appreciation Metrics

Along with changes made by Human Resources to update the formal recognition process, leadership should work to improve the culture of providing non-formal means of recognizing their staff. Many staff members have commented that words or notes of gratitude from their supervisors goes far in improving sentiment and feelings of appreciation.

Going into a tighter budget season, recognition does not necessarily need to be financial. **The Human Resources team should investigate the best practices around developing a culture of recognizing both exceptional and consistent good work from employees**.

Growth and Employee Development

"The collaborative environment and dedicated team have helped me navigate difficult times, and I've learned valuable skills that have made me more resilient."

A key component of the "City as an Employer" Strategic Plan pillar is providing employees with opportunities for learning, development, and growth. This strategy outlines that the City will provide a clear, unified pathway for employees to advance and develop in their careers. This strategy builds on recommendations from the City's Pay Equity Studies, which encouraged leadership to find ways to promote upward career mobility for women and employees of color.

Employee sentiment around growth and development is measured through five key metrics:
+ I am aware of the City's training opportunities
+ I believe I have a path for career advancement
+ I have opportunities to learn and grow at work
+ The City invests in training and development for its employees
+ Employees like me are given the support to succeed here

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.
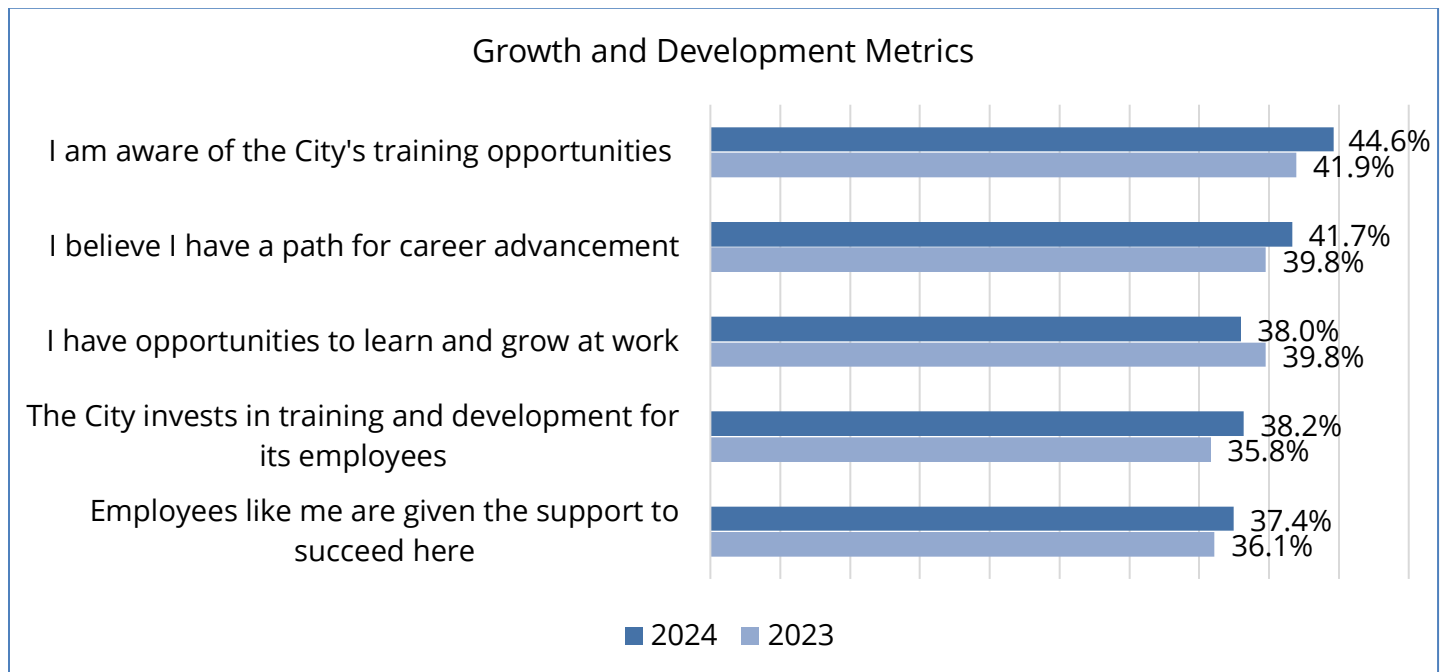
Figure 17: Growth and Development Metrics

The only decline was seen in the *"I have opportunities to learn and grow at work"* metric, which also declined in 2022. In January 2024, in response to the declining metric, the Human Resources Department conducted

a Citywide Learning and Development Survey to help assess learning needs and gaps in programmatic offerings. This additional research by the HR People & Organizational Development team identified barriers to training and development (by job type, position, and department). This information helped the City understand the specific methods needed to improve these metrics and increase training uptake.

The survey results revealed that time, cost, and workload were some of the biggest barriers to employees completing training on the job. Employees reported the most interest in obtaining training on leadership, project management, business software and tools, and career development. Finally, most **respondents said they want to learn on the job** in order to better themselves and be prepared for promotional opportunities.

The 2024 Learning & Development Survey data was also used to support a Request for Sponsorship from educational partners, in collaboration with the Economic Development Department's Corporate Partnership program. As a result, the City now has four educational partners to augment Citywide learning and development.

1. **UCSD Rady School of Management:** 10-15 percent tuition fellowships provided to up to five admitted MBA program attendees

2. **UCSD Division of Extended Studies:** 10-15 percent discount on most Certificate programs plus $10,000 in annual scholarship funds

3. **San Diego College of Continuing Education**: offering free classes to all residents for no-credit classes

4. **National University:** one full-ride all tuition paid scholarship for a Bachelor's degree plus $5,000 in additional scholarship funds

"Training is difficult without a training budget."

In the case for City employees, it appears that a lack of access to training and development is driving low overall satisfaction. Furthermore, **significantly more employees report being aware of training opportunities than feeling like the City invests in training.** These results—which are supported by the 2024 Learning and Development Survey responses—suggest that employees know about what is available to them, but they lack the time, resources, or support to take advantage of training.

Increases in training and development are strongly related to employee satisfaction, retention, and measures of organizational commitment (such as high attendance and improved work quality). Improved training is also linked with reduced stress and employees' ability to complete tasks more efficiently. Every increase in training is correlated with an increase in job satisfaction.[23] These research findings are consistent with what the Employee Sentiment Survey has revealed for City of San Diego

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[23] Rowden and Conine, "The Impact of Workplace Learning on Job Satisfaction in Small US Commercial Banks."; Nguyen and Duong, "Employee Retention: Do Training and Development, Job Satisfaction and Job Performance Matter?"

employees—overall satisfaction is strongly correlated with training and development (*"I feel inspired to reach my full potential"*).

Meaningful Work

> *"I value the sense of community and the commitment to public service that we share."*

Meaningful work is a critical driver of employee satisfaction, engagement, and overall performance. It connects individuals to a sense of purpose, making their contributions feel valuable and impactful. For public service employees, this connection is even more profound, as their work directly serves communities, supports Citywide and regional goals, and advances initiatives that improve lives. To better understand employees' perspectives on meaningful work, sentiment is assessed through four key metrics. These metrics provide insight into how employees perceive their roles, the broader impact of their contributions, and their personal sense of purpose within the organization.

+ My work contributes to the mission of the Department
+ My work contributes to the City's strategic plan
+ The work I do is meaningful
+ I feel inspired to reach my full potential

Between 2023 and 2024, nearly every metric related to meaningful work improved slightly. Improvements in both *"My work contributes to the mission of the Department"* and *"My work contributes to the City's strategic plan"* metrics suggest that more employees are now aware of the Citywide Strategic Plan and how their role fits into their department's overall goals. This may be a result of a project in 2023 that sought to update every department's set of Key Performance Indicators. This project required departments to look closely at their mission and vision, and design new outcome metrics to capture progress towards departmental operational goals. Developing and socializing these new metrics may have resulted in employees being more aware of how their department and position contributes to the City's larger mission.

A decline in the metric, "*The work I do is meaningful*" is concerning, as it has consistently been the highest ranking metric across the Employee Sentiment Survey questions and is the strongest predictor of employee satisfaction. A strong sense of purpose and connection to the broader mission is a hallmark of public service—where providing for the community and knowing that one's work makes a tangible difference are often key motivators for employment. A decline in this sentiment may signal that employees are feeling disconnected from their work's impact, which could have ripple effects on satisfaction and retention if not addressed.

Meaningful Work Metrics

	2024	2023
My work contributes to the mission of the Department	64.1%	61.8%
The work I do is meaningful	60.5%	64.1%
My work contributes to the City's Strategic Plan	49.2%	47.7%
I feel inspired to reach my full potential	41.2%	39.9%
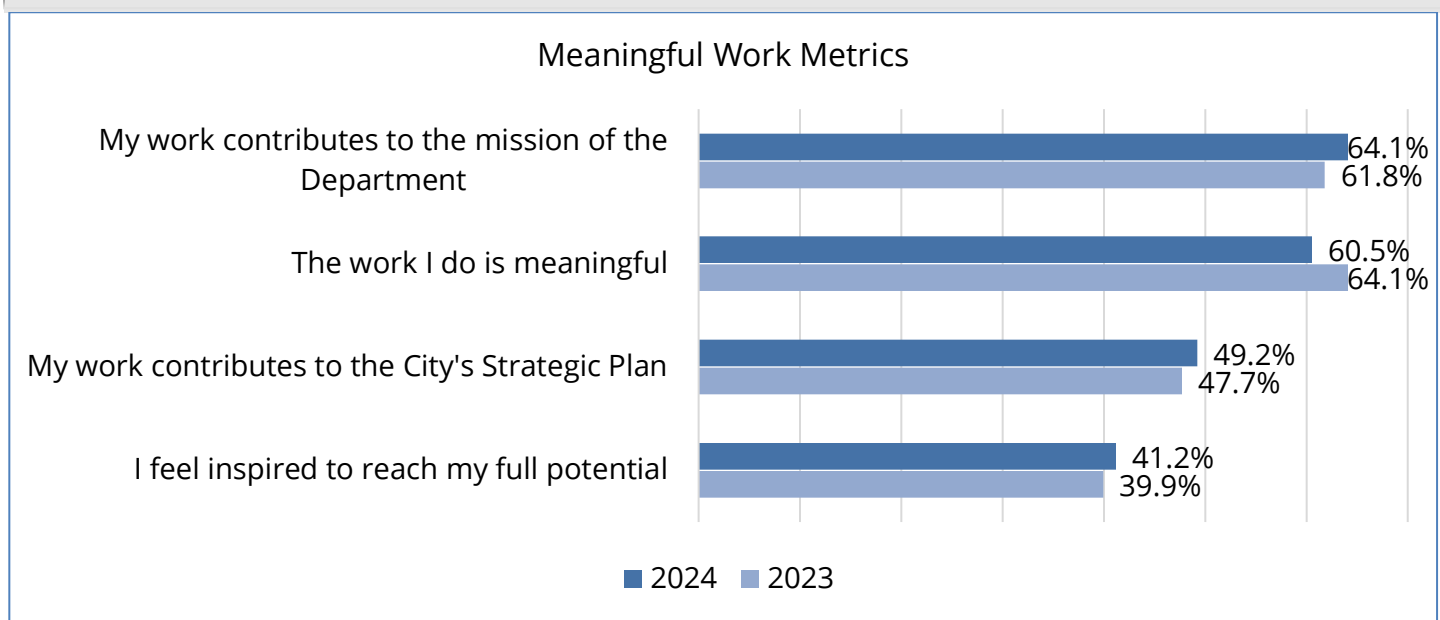
Figure 18: Meaningful Work Metrics

While meaningful work is a key driver of engagement, it is equally important to monitor factors that may indicate risks to employee well-being and retention. Burnout and turnover are critical challenges for organizations, as they can impact productivity, morale, and service delivery. To better understand these challenges, we introduced these two metrics in October 2023. With only one full year of data collection, we are just now starting to see baseline trends emerge and have yet to make judgments about the data or employee sentiment around burnout and turnover..

"Burnout is real!"

The following two metrics highlight employee sentiment on potential burnout and turnover risk:
+ I feel burned out from work
+ If I received an offer for another job with a similar salary, I would immediately accept it

Burnout and Turnover Risk Metrics

	2024	2023
I feel burned out from work	18.2%	20.2%
If I received an offer for another job with a similar salary, I would immediately accept it	18.5%	18.8%
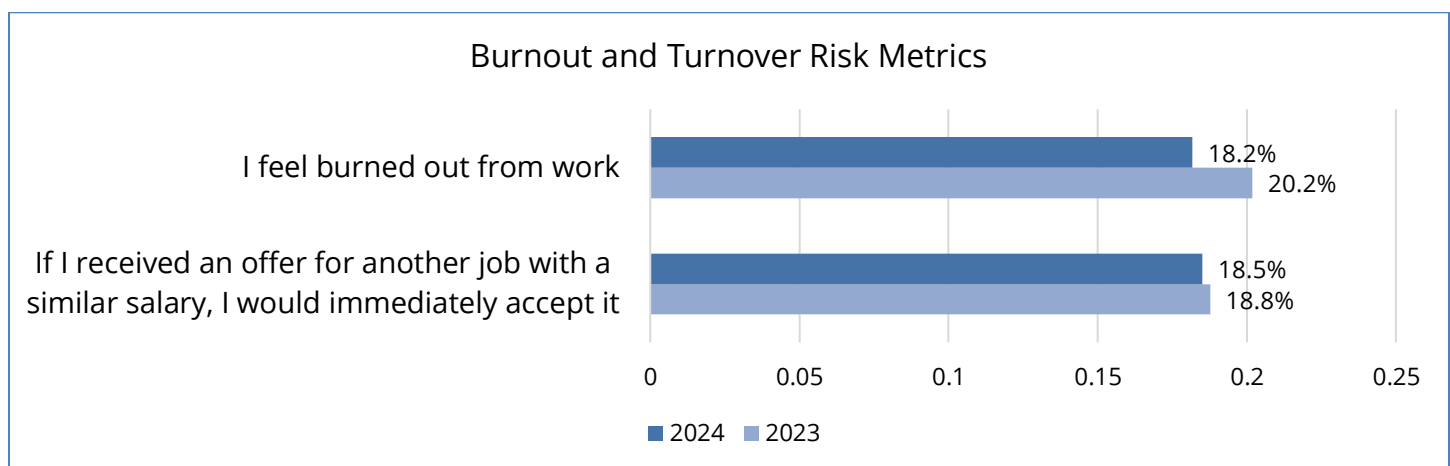
Figure 19: Burnout and Turnover Metrics

Insights from monitoring changes in these new metrics will provide a more balanced understanding of overall employee satisfaction and areas where improvements may be needed to maintain a healthy, motivated workforce. Additionally, exploring variation in burnout sentiment (for example: by job type, position, or tenure) may provide information about which employee groups need extra attention from policies aimed at reducing burnout and turnover risk.

Resources and Work Life

"Working remotely allows me to take back at least two hours per day which results in significant improvements to my mental health, reduces feelings of burnout, and makes me a more productive employee."

Resources and work-life balance are critical components of employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall well-being. Ensuring that employees have access to modern tools, supportive policies, and a healthy work environment allows them to perform at their best and feel valued within the organization. To better understand employees' perspectives on resources and work-life conditions, sentiment is assessed through four key metrics:

+ I am satisfied with my benefits (e.g., health insurance, pension, SPSH)
+ I am satisfied with the physical conditions at my workplace
+ The technology in my department is up to date
+ I would be willing to take a pay cut to work remotely

Between 2023 and 2024, results showed areas of both stability and slight decline. The data suggests that while most resources remain consistent, there is room to address technology concerns and further enhance workplace conditions to support employees in delivering their best work.

Resources and Work/Life Metrics

Metric	2024	2023
I am satisfied with my benefits (e.g. health insurance, pension, SPSH)	36.8%	37.2%
I am satisfied with the physical conditions at my workplace	33.4%	32.5%
The technology in my department is up to date	25.0%	27.3%
I would be willing to take a pay cut to work remotely	7.8%	7.7%
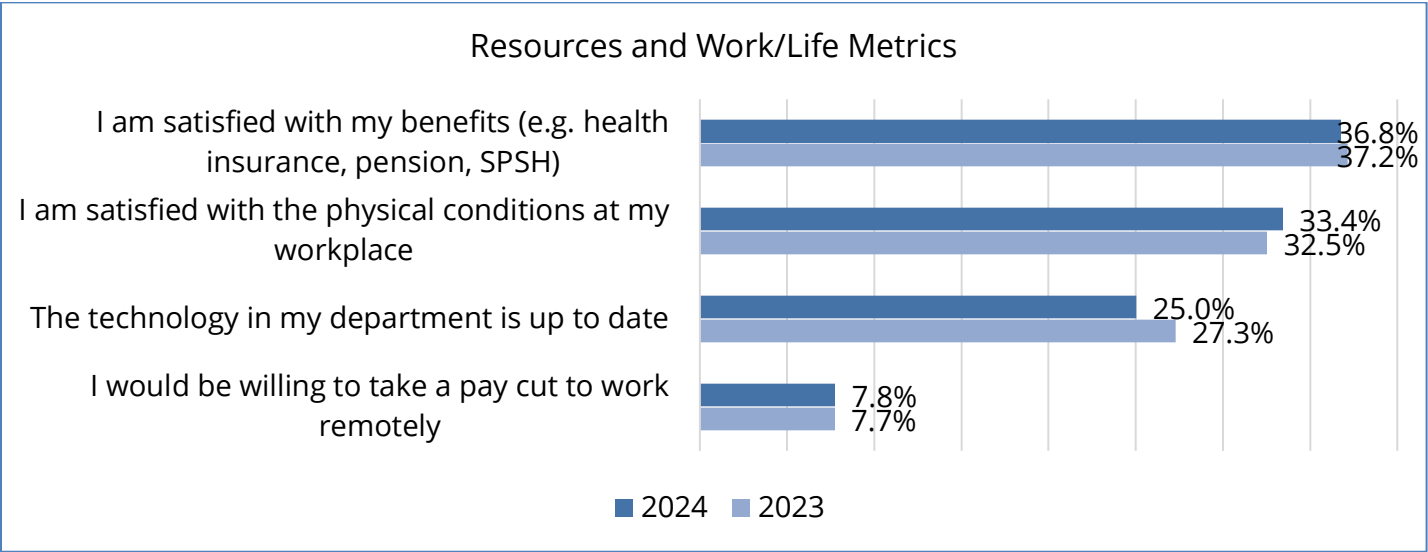
Figure 20: Resources and Work/Life Metrics

Of note from these metrics is the sentiment around working remotely. A consistent percentage of employees report that they would take a pay cut to work remotely. Presently, 7.8 percent of the City workforce represents about 1,000 employees. Given this sentiment, the City could explore offering small salary reductions to each employee who is eligible for full-time remote work which could result in significant annual cost savings.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

"I feel supported, but I would like to feel included"

The City of San Diego is committed to prioritizing equity for our residents, ensuring that all of our diverse communities have access to City services, and for our employees by continuing to be an organization that puts its people first. 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 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 address concerns that hinder inclusion and belonging.

Challenges in DEI Perceptions
Fostering a culture of DEI remains a priority for the City, and subset of our DEI metrics focus on aspects where lower scores are preferred. Two indicators capture discomfort or resistance to DEI conversations and feelings of exclusion, while the third measures sentiment around belonging. For each of these metrics, a lower score indicates that respondents do not agree with the statement.

Key baseline metrics include:
+ I am tired about hearing about diversity, equity and inclusion at the City
+ I am uncomfortable talking about diversity, equity and inclusion at work
+ When something bad happens, I feel that maybe I don't belong

Challenges in DEI Perceptions

Metric	2024	2023
I am tired about hearing about DEI at the City	21%	16%
I am uncomfortable talking about DEI at work	15%	14%
When something bad happens, I feel that maybe I don't belong	8%	9%

■ 2024 ■ 2023
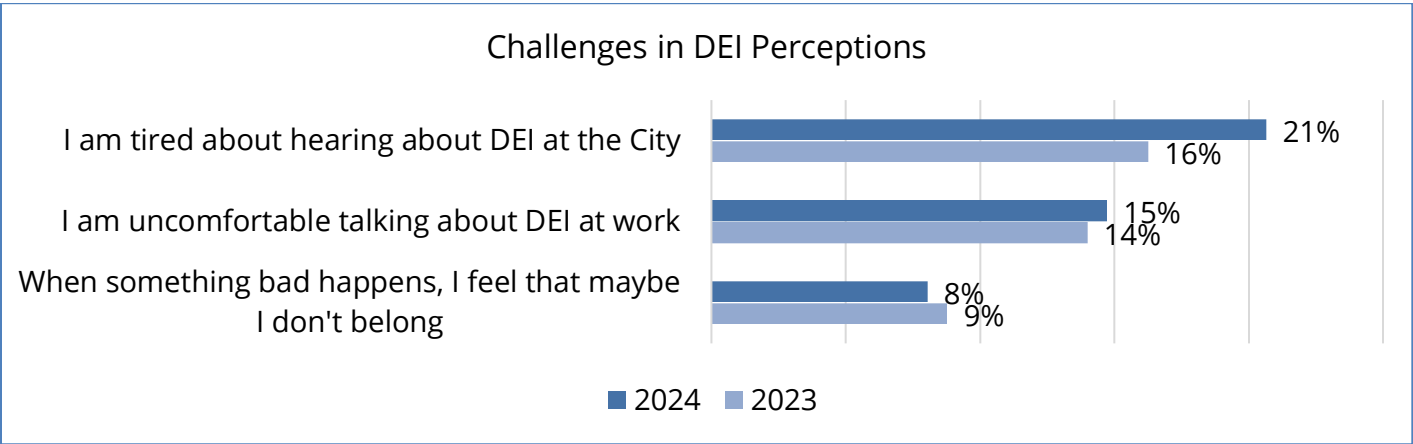
Figure 21: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Perceptions (Challenges)

With several of these metrics, such as "I am tired about hearing about DEI at the City", there has been a slight increase in respondents who agree from 2023 to 2024. This pattern mirrors national shifts in sentiment: research from the Pew Institute surveyed American workers and found that 21 percent of people surveyed in 2024 said focusing on increasing DEI at work is mainly a bad thing, up from 16 percent of people surveyed in February 2023.[24]

These results highlight that while discomfort remains relatively low, a small percentage of employees still report challenges engaging with DEI initiatives. Addressing these perceptions is critical to fostering a workplace where all employees feel included and supported.

Strengths in DEI Perceptions
Positive DEI metrics focus on fostering inclusion, equity, and support across the workforce. Higher scores on these indicators reflect employees' confidence in the City's ability to create an inclusive environment where diverse voices are valued.

> *"Promoting a culture of trust will not only encourage honest communication but also contribute to a more effective and positive work environment."*

Key baseline metrics include:
+ I am treated as a valued member at work
+ Employees of the City support racial equity and inclusion
+ Members of this team are able to bring up tough problems
+ Employees like me are given the support to succeed here
+ I can bring aspects of myself to work that my colleagues don't have in common with me
+ All employees are treated equally
+ The City should spend more on the budget supporting diversity, equity and inclusion

These metrics suggest a solid foundation for DEI efforts, with strong perceptions of being valued, supported, and able to bring one's authentic self to work. However, the data also highlights opportunities for improvement, particularly in perceptions of equal treatment and support for DEI initiatives.

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[24] Beshay (2024)
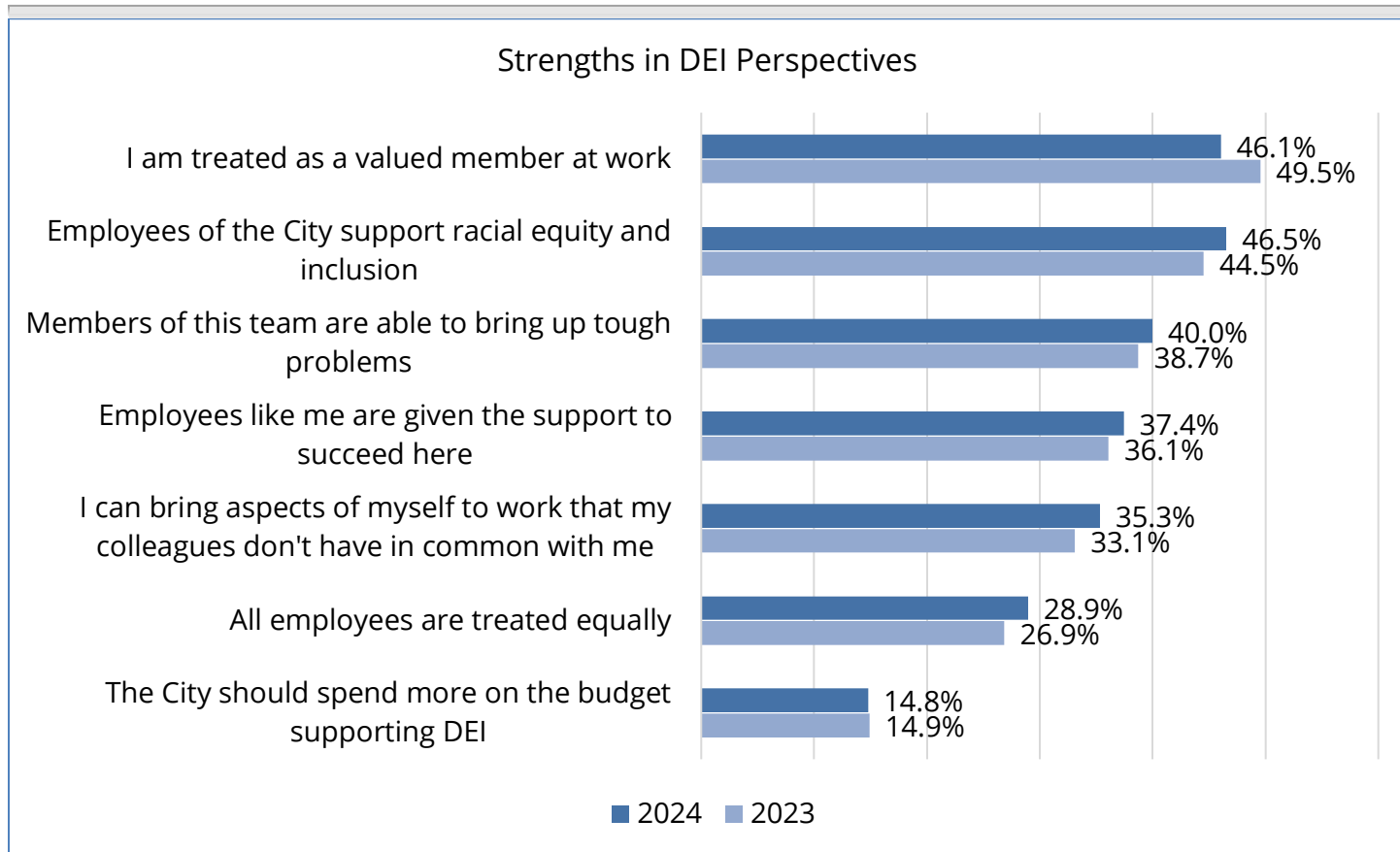
Figure 22: : Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Perceptions (Strengths)

As of February 2025, the Race & Equity team has been shifted into the Human Resources Department, where the team will continue to support City employees and departments through equity-centered coaching to address disparities. The team will continue designing and facilitating trainings, measuring and evaluating outcomes for success, and supporting organization-wide policy shifts.

Retention, Vacancies, and Turnover

This report's final analysis section focuses on three vital aspects influencing workforce dynamics within the City of San Diego: retention, vacancies, and turnover. By examining these factors, we aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of employee departures, vacancy management, and turnover rates. The insights gained from this analysis will enable the City to make informed decisions, develop effective strategies, and address workforce challenges to maintain operational efficiency and organizational effectiveness.

Exit surveys serve as valuable tools for organizations to gather feedback from departing employees and gain insights into their experiences and reasons for leaving. By analyzing the feedback obtained through exit surveys, the City can identify trends, address concerns, and implement measures to enhance employee satisfaction and retention. In late 2022, Performance & Analytics, Human Resources, and the Department

of IT collectively launched a new exit process. Employees electing to leave the City workforce can begin the process in the self-service section of SAP, which kicks off the separation process.

As part of this process, an Exit Survey is now triggered to the employee's City email prior to the employee's last day. Between 2023 and 2024, the City received 121 responses to the exit survey. This low response rate makes it hard to draw conclusions from the report, especially because many of the survey responses came from Employ & Empower interns. In 2025, the City plans to continue to promote the exit survey, such that its results will become relevant for policy action.

Retention Efforts

Retaining employees is a key priority for City leadership. Not only is hiring and training new staff costly and time consuming, but there is a significant, incalculable value that long-term employees bring to their role. Research has shown that institutional knowledge and strong colleague networks allow longer-tenured employees to be more productive overall.

The HR Department's People & Organization Development (POD) section offers programming to enhance employee retention. As a strengths-based leadership organization, the City is committed to offering strengths-based individual and team-based, internal training and facilitation from our four Gallup-certified CliftonStrengths coaches. For the City, being a strengths-based organization means we use information about individual's unique talents and abilities to work more effectively together and achieve greater engagement and outcomes.

From 2023-2024, more than 45 custom-designed and facilitated Strengths workshops were conducted with nearly every unclassified management team in almost all City departments. In these workshops, City facilitators use the CliftonStrengths assessment to help individuals and teams learn how their collective strengths and blind spots affect their team's performance and outcomes, and/or how they support the team's and City's strategic priorities. With most unclassified management employees having now completed Strengths-based leadership training, the Strengths-based philosophy and leadership culture should cascade down through the entire organization to enhance retention.

Strengths-based development is also offered as a component of the City's supervisor training program (Public Service Management Certificate); the City's leadership development program (City Management Fellowship); and to all participants in the Employee Mentoring Academy. All current or aspiring supervisors can sign up for PSMC with supervisor approval.

<div>

Retention Spotlight: Equipment Operator Training Pilot Program

Despite a reduction in vacancies department-wide, in 2024 the Transportation Department determined that they had a relatively high vacancy rate among Equipment Operators. Hiring was difficult; there was an inadequate supply of qualified candidates and qualified applicant lists were frequently exhausted. As the Department strives to deliver more infrastructure, even faster, having a staffed, capable workforce is a key priority.

In addition to external recruitment, the Transportation Department wanted to focus on developing promotional pathways and building capabilities for current employees. So, in 2024, the Transportation Department launched a pilot of its Equipment Operator Training Program.

The program consisted of eight, all-day sessions on Saturdays and was spread over four months. Thirty-two employees participated as equipment operator (EO) trainees, and seventeen employees participated as trainers. In addition to increasing the internal supply of qualified EOs, the program also sought to improve workplace safety and equipment longevity—well trained operators are more likely to operate safely and perform routine maintenance correctly, which reduces the risk of workplace injuries and costly repairs.

Transportation Department Roadways Superintendents and Supervisors drew on their previous experience with a Citywide training program from decades ago to launch the pilot.[1] A true group effort across City departments was needed to establish the content, promote the program, find a location to hold the training, and establish a way to provide EO certification without the formal operator test. The training was adjusted on the fly to address feedback from trainees after each class.

The pilot program proved to be successful in instilling employees (both trainees and trainers) with confidence and new skills, while providing clear opportunities for promotion. Twenty-seven employees completed the program, of which twenty employees passed the final skills test. As of November 2024, four employees have been promoted as a direct result of the program.

This effort is expected to improve employee satisfaction and retention, decrease costs, and increase institutional knowledge. Lessons from the pilot are being incorporated into the training curriculum and it is expected that this training will be held annually each spring. It is possible that this type of training could be scaled to other high vacancy rate job types.

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Highlight 1: Retention Case Study

In its role to support retention, the Personnel Department made significant changes in 2023 and 2024. The department broadened its criteria for what constitutes a turnover problem for Classified position salary studies beginning with the Fiscal Year 2024 salary review process. This update changed the criteria for what

constitutes a turnover problem by reducing the lookback period from five to three years with a pattern. Additionally, for the Fiscal Year 2025 salary review process, the Civil Service Commission approved special salary adjustments for 50 classifications due to recruitment and/or retention problems, changes in duties or responsibilities, and/or other special factors the Civil Service Commission deemed appropriate. The Civil Service Commission also approved the creation of five new classifications for Fiscal Year 2025 to help departments accomplish their operational goals.

Vacancies

Effective workforce planning relies on accurately assessing and managing vacancies within an organization. This section focuses on analyzing the City of San Diego's vacancies across time, department, and position type.

Vacancies Over Time

From its peak of 18 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.[25] **The City closed out 2024 with a daily vacancy rate of 10.59 percent —the lowest vacancy rate measured since June 2019**.
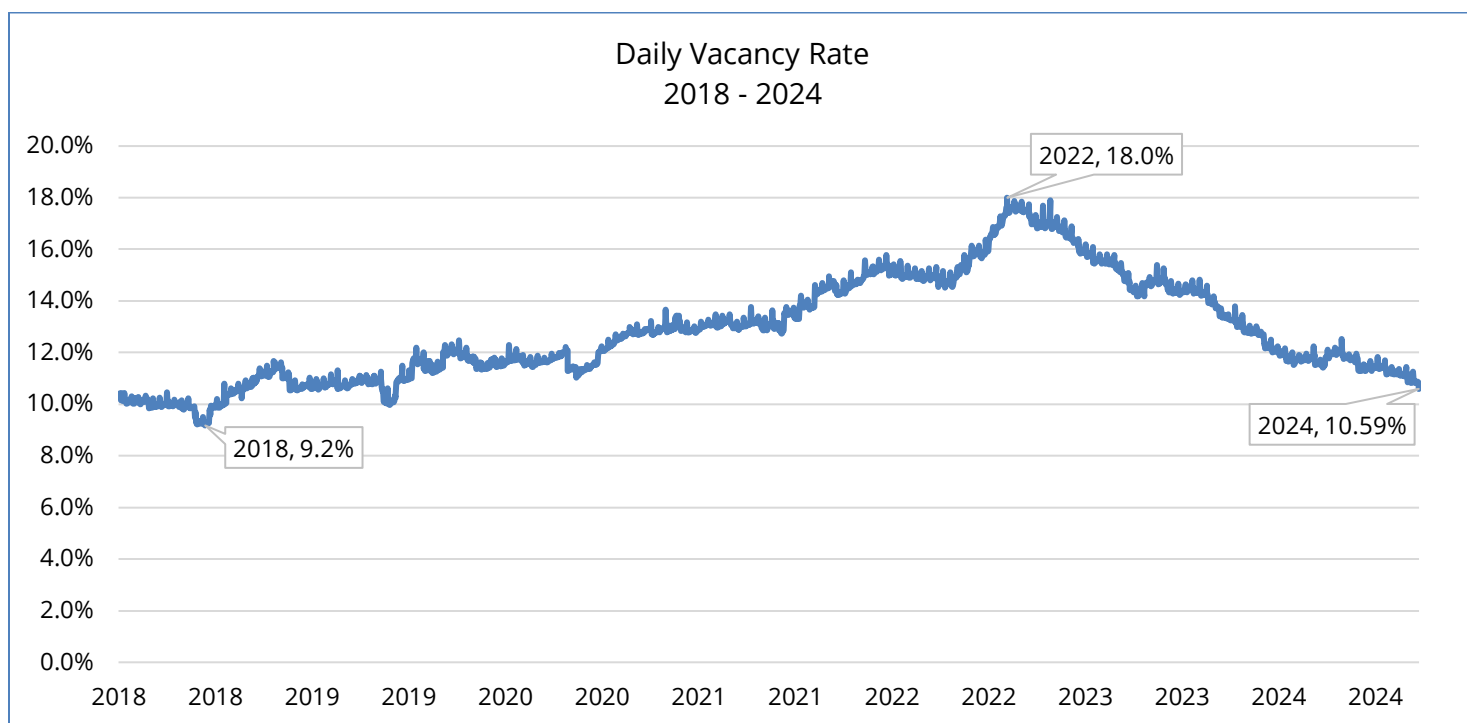
Figure 23: Daily Vacancy Rate 2018 - 2024

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[25] The daily vacancy rate is calculated as the citywide number of vacant positions divided by the number of full-time, budgeted positions on one specific day. The chart displays the daily vacancy rate plotted for each day between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2024.

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In 2022, in an effort to address the steady increase in the vacancy rate, the City began more proactive recruitment to attract quality candidates and implement improvements to increase the speed of the hiring process.

Over the course of calendar year 2024, significant pay raises were also granted for most employees, with some positions being granted additional special salary adjustments. These pay increases were intended to bring City compensation closer to market median (a goal set out by the City's Compensation Philosophy), which should increase the City's ability to hire and retain high quality candidates for the hardest to fill positions.

Table 5: Benefits Changes

Benefit Increase	Group	Increase	Effective Date
General wage increase	MEA	5 percent; 4 percent	January 1, 2024; July 1, 2024
	Local 127	5 percent; 4 percent	January 1, 2024; July 1, 2024
	DCAA	5 percent; 5 percent	January 1, 2024; July 1, 2024
	POA	4 percent	January 1, 2024
	Local 145	1.5 percent; 4 percent	January 1, 2024; July 1, 2024
	Local 911	4 percent	January 1, 2024
	Unrepresented/ Unclassified	5 percent; 4 percent	January 1, 2024; July 1, 2024
Flexible benefits	Multiple groups	3.3 percent; 7.1 percent	January 1, 2024

The sections below go into greater detail regarding vacancy rates among positions and departments.

Vacancies in 2023 and 2024

In 2022, the City had an average of 1,847 vacant positions per day among full-time employees and the average daily vacancy rate was 15.8 percent, based on an average of 11,678 budgeted full-time positions. As the chart below illustrates, the daily vacancy rate trended steadily downward over 2023 and 2024, after peaking at 18 percent in January 2023. The daily vacancy rate at the end of 2024 was just over 10 percent - a significant improvement from the vacancy rate in 2022.

Daily Vacancy Rate 2023 - 2024
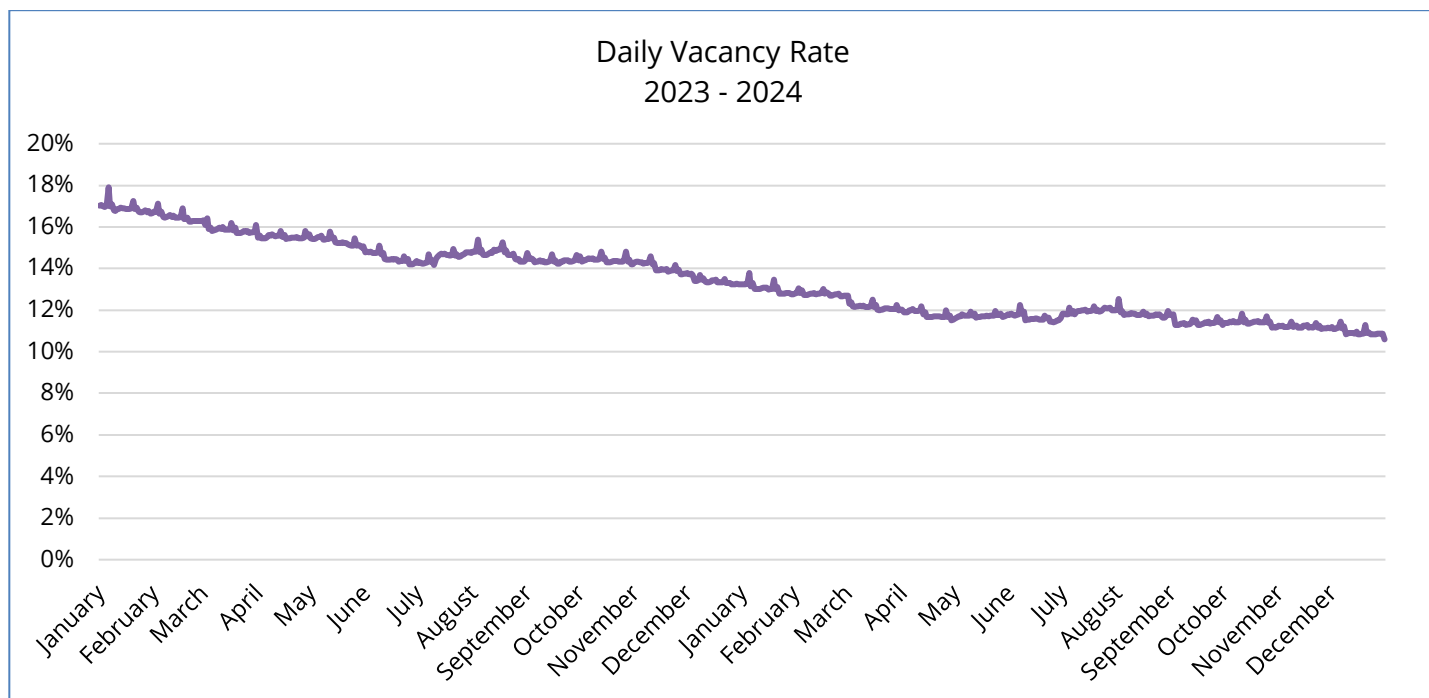
Figure 24: Daily Vacancy Rate 2023-2024

In early 2024, the City set a target for Average Daily Vacancy Rate of 13.5 percent.[26] This goal was based on the daily vacancy rate of 14.1 percent as of December 2023. **As of December 2024, the City has met this goal.** The average daily vacancy rate for 2023 was 15.0 percent and the rate for 2024 was 11.8 percent.

The chart below illustrates the sharp difference in daily vacancy rates between 2023 and 2024, with 2024 being consistently below the daily rates of 2023.

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[26] The Average Daily Vacancy Rate is the average of each daily vacancy rate over a set period of time.
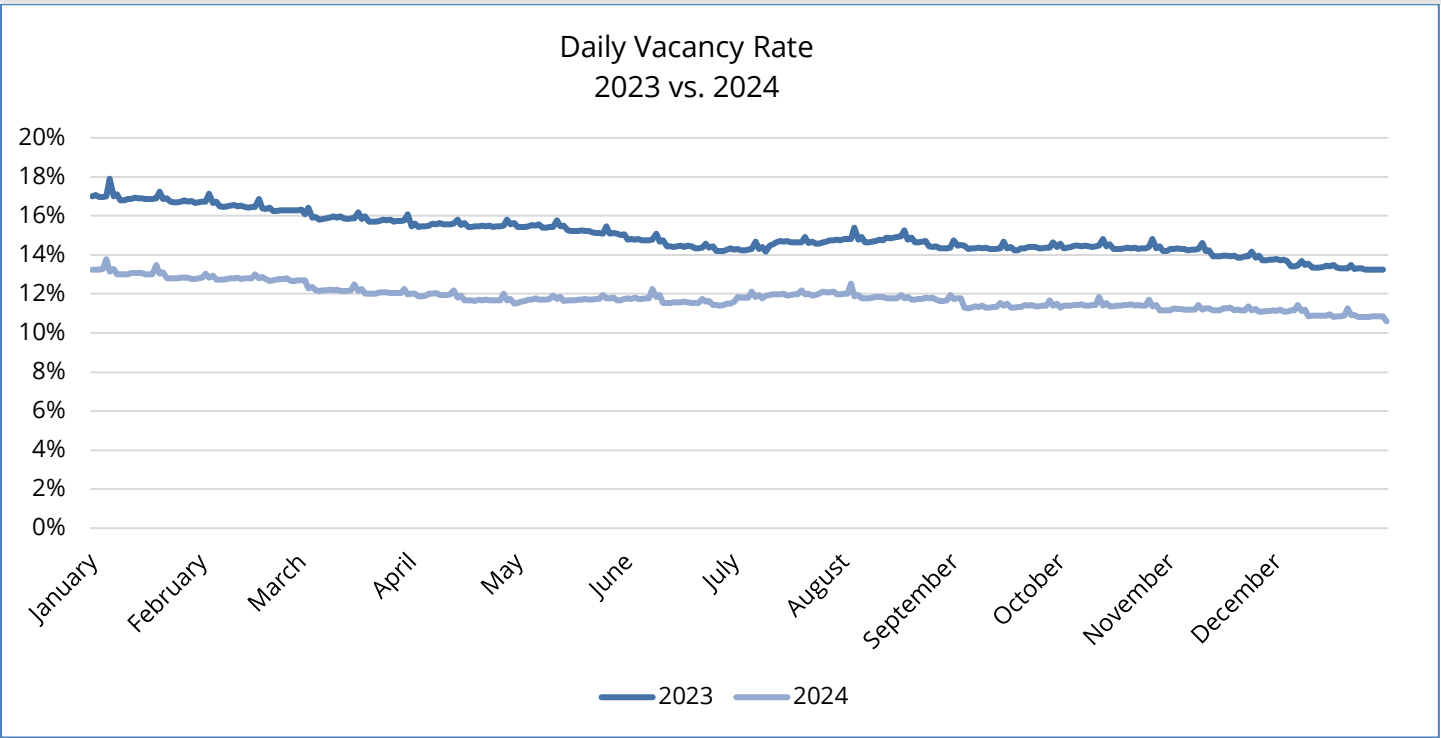
Figure 25: Daily Vacancy Rate 2023 vs 2024

Vacancies by Bargaining Group

Effective January 2025, State Law requires the City is required to report vacancy rates (and associated vacancy data) by bargaining group, should a bargaining group have a vacancy rate greater than 20 percent.[27] As of December 2024, no City bargaining group met this threshold, as presented in the table and chart below.

	Lcl 127	Unrep	MEA	Lcl 145	POA	Lcl 911
Vacancy Rate	14.08%	10.73%	10.68%	9.84%	7.00%	2.50%
Vacant Positions	338	153	597	107	142	3
Total FTEs	2,400	1,426	5,588	1,087	2,029	120
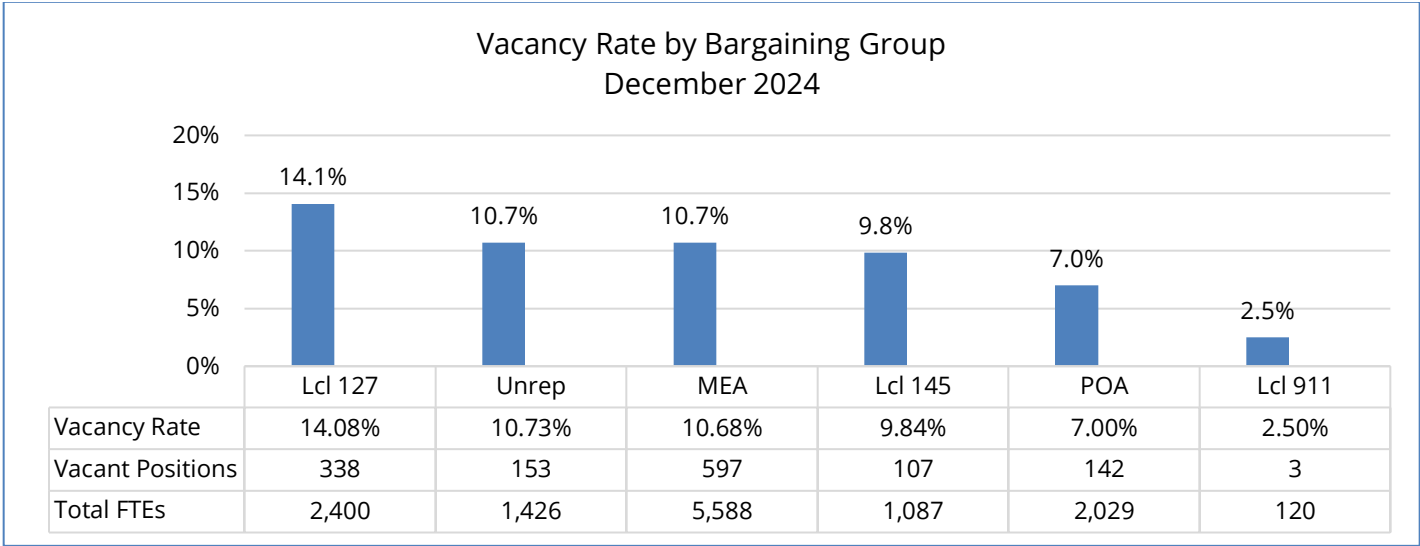
Figure 26: Vacancy Rate by Bargaining Group

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[27] *Bill Text - AB-2561 Local Public Employees: Vacant Positions.*, n.d.

Vacancies by Position

High vacancy rates can negatively impact the City by way of employee burnout, increased chance of workplace injury and worker's compensation/liability claim payout, and decreased employee morale. Fiscally, high vacancies contribute to a misrepresentative budget and an inability to right-size operations to meet customer demand. These factors combine to produce: slower response times for City services; decreased customer satisfaction; and, ultimately, a more negative perception by business owners and tourists, which could lead to reduced tax revenue generation.

Among budgeted full-time employee position types with 10 or more Position IDs assigned in the beginning of 2023 and the end of 2024, the top 10 positions with the highest vacancy rate across 2023 and 2024 is presented in the first chart below. **High vacancy rates and high number of vacancies can lead to many disadvantages to the City, such as overworking employees, over-budgeting, decreasing employee morale, and low customer satisfaction with City service delivery.**

Table 6: Top 10 Average Position Vacancy

Top 10 Average Position Vacancy	Average Daily Vacancy Rate	Average Number of Positions Vacant	Average Total FTEs
Pool Guard 2	80.70%	18.3	22.7
Swimming Pool Mgr 1	57.77%	8.5	14.7
Collections Invstgtr 1	49.96%	6.2	12.6
Equip Tech 1	48.24%	8.3	18.7
Property Agent	43.81%	5.8	12.9
Plant Tech 1	40.33%	12.0	29.2
Council Rep 1	39.37%	44.0	111.8
Parking Enfrc Ofcr 1	37.67%	24.5	65.0
Principal Survey Aide	36.37%	7.3	20.0
Sanitation Driver 3	36.11%	4.0	11.0

Position types that have made the most improvement and regression are in the chart below. For example, Instrumentation & Control Tech improved the most (daily vacancy rate decreased by 27.11 percent) while Equip Tech 1 declined the most (daily vacancy rate increased by 37.28 percent).

Table 7: Position Vacancy Rate 2024 Compared to 2023

Position Vacancy Rate 2024 Compared to 2023	Average Daily Vacancy Rate		Total Vacancies

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	2023	2024	Difference in Avg. Vacancy Rate from the Previous Year	Jan 2023	Dec 2024
Instrumentation & Control Tech	37.28%	10.17%	-27.11%	12	5
Property Agent	55.64%	32.02%	-23.62%	8	3
Field Rep	29.55%	7.92%	-21.63%	22	3
Project Ofcr 1	31.79%	10.67%	-21.12%	7	5
Sr Backflow & Cross Connection Spec	31.21%	12.42%	-18.79%	4	0
Traffic Signal Technician 2	36.54%	19.71%	-16.84%	11	1
Plant Tech 2	32.33%	15.66%	-16.67%	16	7
Account Clerk	26.62%	10.24%	-16.38%	16	4
Parking Enfrc Ofcr 1	45.21%	30.16%	-15.04%	28	18
Pool Guard 2	88.13%	73.28%	-14.84%	22	12
Fire Dispatcher	3.77%	16.91%	13.14%	1	10
Rec Cntr Dir 1	27.53%	41.07%	13.54%	0	6
Sr Engineering Aide	28.17%	42.42%	14.25%	5	4
Plan Review Spec 1	0.68%	15.00%	14.31%	0	4
Police Invstgtv Serv Ofcr 2	22.93%	38.03%	15.10%	1	7
Seven-Gang Mower Operator	16.16%	32.95%	16.78%	2	4
Bldg Maint Supv	0.00%	17.92%	17.92%	0	0
Council Rep 2 A	21.60%	42.69%	21.09%	0	5
Cmnty Dev Spec 4	2.03%	24.95%	22.92%	0	3
Equip Tech 1	29.57%	66.85%	37.28%	7	9

Vacancy Duration by Position

This section details the average length of vacancy by position type. Included in the analysis are positions with 10 or more vacancies throughout 2023 and 2024. Vacancy duration is calculated by counting the number of days a position is vacant before the position is filled or removed from the budget. Positions included in the calculation also include positions that are vacant and were still vacant as of December 31, 2024. A high vacancy duration can be the result of a slow hiring process, undesirable job or uncompetitive pay, poor candidate pool, a lack of rightsizing for department's needs, or lack of organizational depth to fill senior-level positions. Additionally, for budgetary reasons, some positions may be intentionally left vacant.

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The chart below displays the positions with the highest and lowest average vacancy duration across 2023 and 2024 among full time employees.

Table 8: Position Vacancy Duration

Position Vacancy Duration	Average Vacancy Duration	Number of Vacancies	Minimum Vacancy Duration	Maximum Vacancy Duration
Fire Battalion Chief	58	15	8	152
Fire Fighter 3	59	52	11	207
Lifeguard 2	60	34	7	224
Public Works Supv	61	10	9	168
Victim Services Coordinator	67	11	5	147
Police Lieutenant	68	33	3	151
Grounds Maint Mgr	76	15	0	250
Motor Sweeper Oper	77	10	22	209
Development Project Manager 2	87	16	7	268
Plan Review Spec 4	90	15	3	233
Principal Survey Aide	406	14	90	779
Council Rep 1	415	97	1	1,435
Carpenter	430	10	110	1,159
Bldg Service Tech	457	10	137	1,130
Pure Water Plant Operator	476	11	81	820
Info Sys Anlyst 4	479	13	98	1,643
Pool Guard 2	540	28	53	810
Safety Rep 2	553	10	70	1,426
Traffic Signal Technician 2	641	14	59	1,472
Police Detective	692	204	0	3,385

Given the large gap between the positions with the shortest average vacancy duration and the longest, the Performance & Analytics team will work with departments to better understand what is working best to fill vacancies quickly, then determine if those lessons can be applied to the positions with the longest average vacancy duration.

Vacancies by Departments

This section describes vacancies by department. It includes all departments that had at least 20 full-time employees at the beginning of 2023 and end of 2024. The top 10 departments with the highest average daily vacancy rate in 2023 and 2024 are shown in the chart below.

The criteria for being included in this analysis is the number budgeted, full-time employees at the start of 2023 and the end of 2024. For example: if a department had 18 FTEs at the beginning of 2023, then had 30 FTEs at the end of 2024, this department would be excluded because adding 12 new positions would skew the data to have a higher vacancy rate as the department works to fill its new positions.

Table 9: Highest Vacancy Rate Departments

Top 10 Highest Vacancy Rate Departments	Average Daily Vacancy Rate	Average Number of Positions Vacant	Total FTEs at the End of 2024
Purchasing & Contracting	29.47%	25.22	87
Real Estate & Airport Mgmt[28]	28.04%	10.96	40
Retirement	19.72%	11.55	53
Human Resources	18.73%	8.73	50
Public Utilities	17.91%	338.96	1,949
City Treasurer	17.84%	23.81	133
Facilities Services	17.76%	31.72	182
Compliance	17.72%	6.47	41
Economic Development	15.97%	8.91	57
Parks & Recreation	15.80%	162.67	1,059

Departments that have made the most improvement and regression are in the chart below. For example, the Department of Real Estate & Airport Management Department improved the most by decreasing their vacancy rate by 17.37 percentage points while Economic Development declined the most by increasing their daily vacancy rate by 5.06 percentage points.[29]

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[28] The Department of Real Estate and Airport Management has already been organizationally moved effective 11/10/23; however, the accounting and budgetary restructure for this section will not occur until FY26. They are being presented separately in this report.

[29] The Department of Real Estate and Airport Management has already been organizationally moved effective 11/10/23; however, the accounting and budgetary restructure for this section will not occur until FY26. They are being presented separately in this report. Performance & Analytics examined the vacancy rate data for these merged departments and determined that the changes in vacancy rates were not due to the merger.

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Table 10: Department Vacancy Rate Difference from 2022

Department Vacancy Rate Difference from 2022	Average Daily Vacancy Rate		Difference in Avg. Vacancy Rate from Previous Year	Total Vacant Positions	
	2023	2024		January 2023	December 2024
Real Estate & Airport Mgmt	36.73%	19.36%	-17.37%	15	6
Human Resources	23.07%	14.40%	-8.67%	12	9
Communications	11.45%	2.93%	-8.51%	5	1
Development Services	15.95%	7.93%	-8.02%	184	32
Purchasing & Contracting	33.15%	25.80%	-7.35%	28	22
Library	8.39%	8.01%	-0.37%	26	37
Office of the Mayor	7.36%	7.12%	-0.24%	1	1
City Clerk	13.23%	13.77%	0.54%	7	6
Sustainability & Mobility	8.27%	11.98%	3.71%	5	7
Economic Development	13.43%	18.49%	5.06%	8	11

Vacancy Duration by Departments

The chart below looks at the 2023 and 2024 departments with the highest average vacancy duration. Vacancy duration is calculated by counting the number of days a position is vacant before the position is filled or removed from the budget. Positions included in the calculation also include positions that were still vacant as of December 31, 2024.

Table 11: Top 10 Departments by Vacancy Duration

Top 10 Departments by Vacancy Duration	Average Vacancy Duration	Number of Vacancies	Minimum Vacancy Duration	Maximum Vacancy Duration
Department of Finance	108	50	10	402
City Planning	121	26	8	470
Sustainability & Mobility	160	29	14	439
City Attorney	160	177	3	1,116
Stormwater	163	221	9	633
City Treasurer	273	72	2	869

Real Estate & Airport Mgmt	284	34	39	824
Police	311	1,001	0	3,385
Purchasing & Contracting	397	62	9	1,529
Information Technology	399	66	0	1,564

Turnover and Separations

Measuring turnover is a complement to the vacancy rate, as it measures how often a position becomes vacant over a defined period of time. It is possible for an organization to maintain a low vacancy rate and still suffer from high turnover. Employee turnover poses significant challenges for organizations, affecting morale, productivity, and continuity. This section examines turnover rates within City departments and positions. Minimizing turnover will foster a stable and engaged workforce, driving organizational success.

Turnover is not inherently bad; many job types are intended to be filled for a relatively short amount of time before the employee is promoted. For example, recruit positions within public safety frequently turn over, as graduating recruits are promoted into Police Officer 1 or Fire Fighter 1 positions. Similar entry-level or training roles, such as Management Trainee, are intentionally designed for employees to learn quickly and then move into new responsibilities. However, outside of these training positions, high turnover is typically a negative for teams and departments. Frequently, vacant positions are a source of strain among current employees. Empty positions—even briefly—add workload to other staff and, in some position types, increase the use of voluntary and mandatory overtime.

The City's average monthly turnover rate in 2023 was 2.45 percent and decreased to 1.73 percent in 2024. The turnover rate is calculated by dividing the average number of employees by the number of employees that left their position the given month. For example, there are 40 Laboratory Technician employees in the beginning of February and 38 Laboratory Technician employees at the end of February. The average number of Laboratory Technicians in February is 39. Because two employees left their position in February, the turnover rate for that month is 5.13 percent.

For comparison, an average monthly turnover rate of 1.73 percent is just slightly above the nationwide measure of separations from state and local government employment.[30] In December 2024, the Bureau for Labor Statistics calculated an annual, seasonally adjusted separations rate for state and local government of 1.5 percent (preliminary estimate). Between 2014 and 2024, total government separations

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[30] Per the Bureau of Labor Statistics, separations (turnover) are defined as: "Total separations include quits, layoffs and discharges, and other separations. Quits are generally voluntary separations initiated by the employee. The quits rate can serve as a measure of workers' willingness or ability to leave jobs. Layoffs and discharges are involuntary separations initiated by the employer. Other separations include separations due to retirement, death, disability, and transfers to other locations of the same firm."

(including federal government positions) varied between 1.2 percent and 2.5 percent each month, with the largest spike occurring in October 2020 and lowest rate occurring in January 2021.[31]

In the private sector, the turnover rate in December 2024 was 3.6 percent for all private, non-farm industries. Between 2014 and 2024 the separations rate for private, non-farm firms with more than 5,000 employees varied between 1.2 percent and 3.0 percent.[32]

The City has set a turnover rate target of 1.8 percent. This target was selected based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics turnover rate average for state and local government agencies in August 2022.[33] 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.
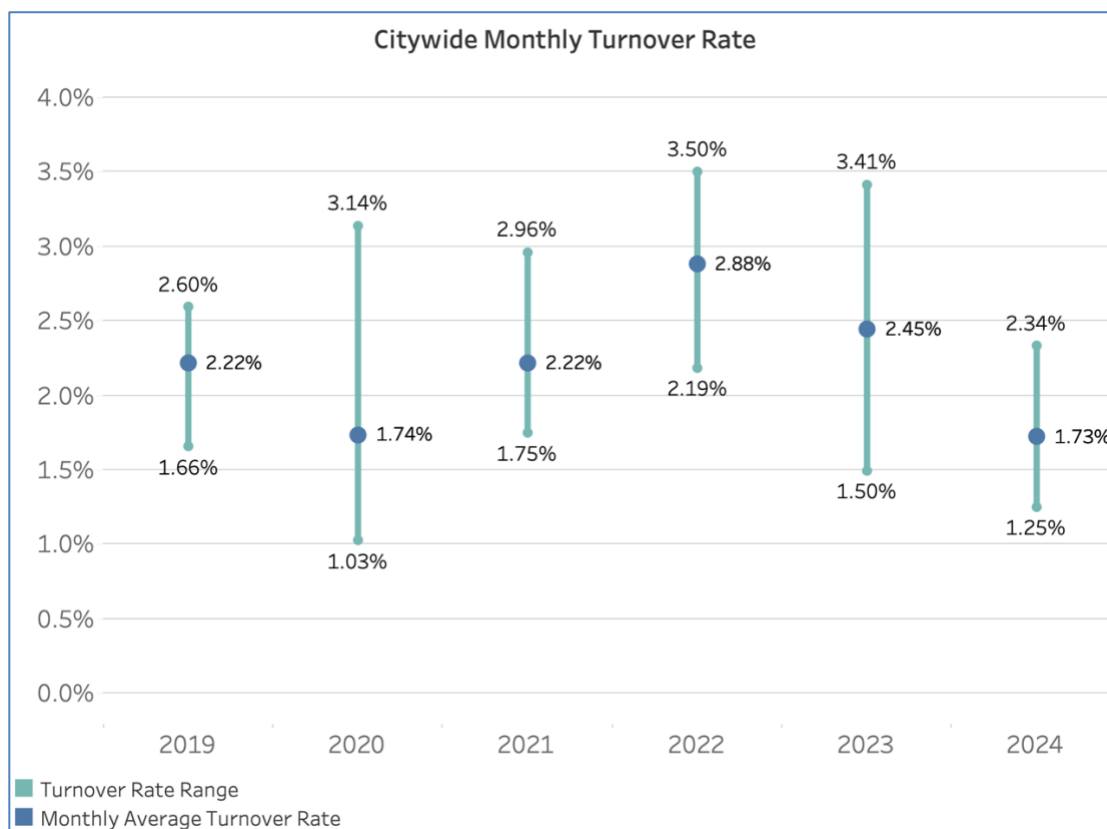
Figure 27: Citywide Monthly Average Turnover Rate

Turnover by Positions

This section details turnover by position. Only positions with a monthly average of 10 or more employed budgeted, full-time employees were included in the analysis. The top half of the chart shows the top 10 positions with the lowest average monthly turnover rate. The bottom half of the chart shows the positions

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[31] "Job Openings, Hires, and Separations Rates, Seasonally Adjusted."
[32] *Table a. Job Openings, Hires, and Total Separations by Industry, Seasonally Adjusted - 2024 M12 Results*, n.d.
[33] August 2022 was the month that the BLS separations data was first accessed for the CY2022 Workforce Report.

with the highest average monthly turnover rate. With this analysis, it is not possible to determine if these employees left the City workforce, left their position to take another position elsewhere in the City, or were promoted.

Table 12: Positions with the Lowest and Highest Monthly Average Turnover Rate

Top 10 Positions with the Lowest and Highest Monthly Average Turnover Rate	Monthly Turnover Rate	Monthly Average Number of Employees	Number of Employees that Left Position between 2023 and 2024
Sr Pers Anlyst	0.00%	10.00	0.00
Land Survyng Asoc	0.00%	15.81	0.00
HVACR Technician	0.00%	10.83	0.00
Commctn Tech	0.00%	11.85	0.00
Principal Accountant	0.23%	20.25	1.00
Sr Traffic Engineer	0.27%	15.54	1.00
Asoc Pers Anlyst	0.29%	19.25	1.00
Criminalist 2	0.30%	17.31	1.00
Fire Fighter 1	0.30%	63.88	5.00
Fire Prevention Inspctr 2	0.36%	34.75	3.00
Equip Tech 1	9.95%	10.38	18.00
Court Support Clrk 1	7.03%	10.25	15.00
Disposal Site Rep	6.74%	11.42	18.00
Plan Review Spec 3	6.72%	11.27	19.00
Plant Tech 1	5.97%	17.06	25.00
Dispatcher 1	5.69%	10.58	11.00
Public Info Clerk	4.91%	31.54	36.00
Sr Engineering Aide	4.59%	11.75	13.00
Water Plant Operator	3.95%	15.81	13.00
Library Assistant 1	3.95%	10.19	10.00

In the 2022, the monthly average turnover rate for the top 10 highest turnover departments was 6.7 percent. Across 2023 and 2024, this average dropped to 5.95 percent.

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The overall downward trend in position turnover rates is a positive finding. However, the turnover rates for these 10 positions are significantly above both the average for state government, local government, and the private sector. Given these results, the City will investigate any unique characteristics of these positions to determine potential sources for above-average turnover. The analysis will include looking at workload, promotion pathways, and other elements of employee sentiment.

Turnover by Departments

This section details turnover by department. Only departments with a monthly average of ten or more employed, budgeted, full-time employees were included in the analysis. The chart shows the top 10 departments with the lowest and highest average monthly turnover rate between 2023 and 2024.

Table 13: Top 10 Departments by Lowest and Highest Turnover Rate

Top 10 Departments by Lowest and Highest Turnover Rate	Monthly Turnover Rate	Monthly Average Number of Employees	Number of Employees that Left Department between 2023 and 2024
Council Administration	0.00%	12.75	0
Personnel	0.69%	78.21	13
Office of the COO	0.77%	15.88	3
Office of the City Auditor	0.79%	22.19	4
Emergency Medical Services	0.86%	16.92	3
Independent Budget Analyst	0.86%	10.50	2
Office of Emergency Services	0.97%	13.79	3
Library	1.15%	259.40	71
Police	1.19%	2,336.60	666
Department of Finance	1.20%	126.69	35
Real Estate & Airport Mgmt	3.04%	28.31	19
Council District 3	3.02%	11.54	8
City Clerk	2.51%	43.42	26
Stormwater	2.50%	257.71	153
Economic Development	2.41%	46.83	27
Council District 9	2.36%	10.79	6
Retirement	2.29%	45.98	25

General Services	2.10%	188.50	94
Compliance	2.07%	29.90	15
Parks & Recreation	2.03%	867.63	423

In 2022, the average turnover rate for the top 10 highest turnover departments was 3.50 percent; and between 2023 and 2024, this number dropped to 2.43 percent. The October 2023 Employee Sentiment survey are two new questions aimed at quantifying burnout and identifying turnover risk.[34] These new metrics have served to help Directors and City leadership determine the departments and position types with the highest burnout and turnover risks

Separations

The number of employees who separate annually from City employment has gradually grown over the past decade, peaking at 1,222 employees in calendar year 2022. Actions taken by City leadership to establish the City as the regional employer of choice -- investing in employees and improving the employee experience -- have led to a sharp decline in attrition over the past two years. In calendar year 2024, the City had 879 separations for an average workforce of 12,600, reaching its lowest separation rate as a percentage of the workforce (7%) since 2014 (8%). When broken out by reason for separation, voluntary separations are also on a decline, diminishing from a 5-year high of 730 in 2022 to a 5-year low of 475 in 2024, as shown in the chart.
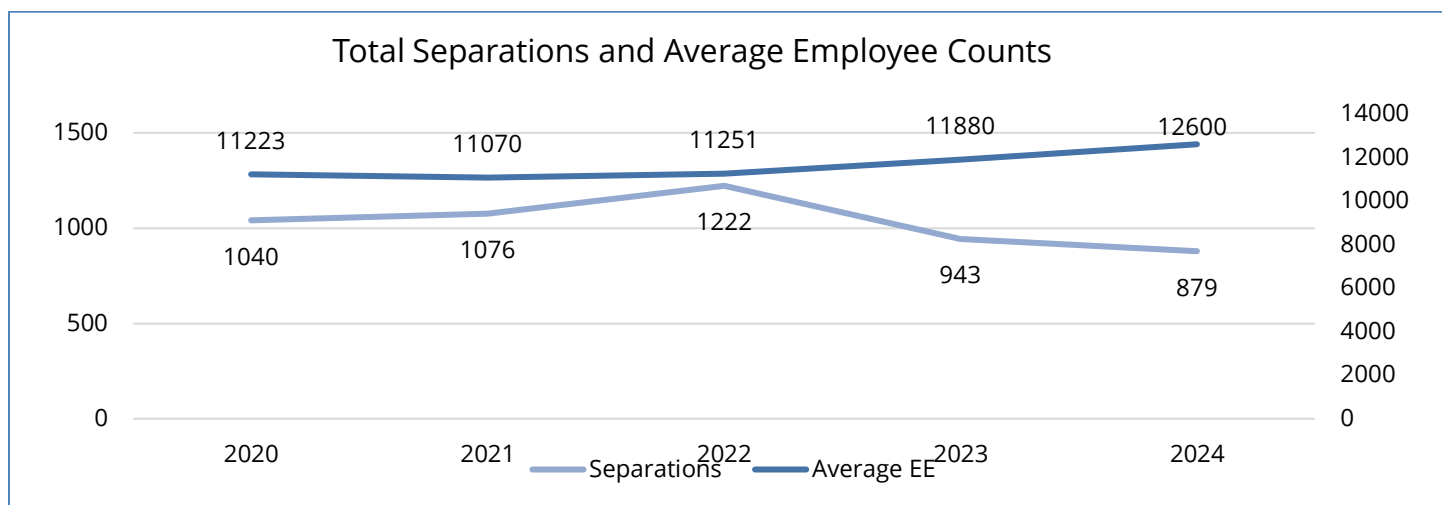
Figure 28: Total Separations

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[34] The two new questions are: "I feel burned out at work," and "If I received an offer for another job with a similar salary and benefits, I would immediately accept it."

Separations by Reason
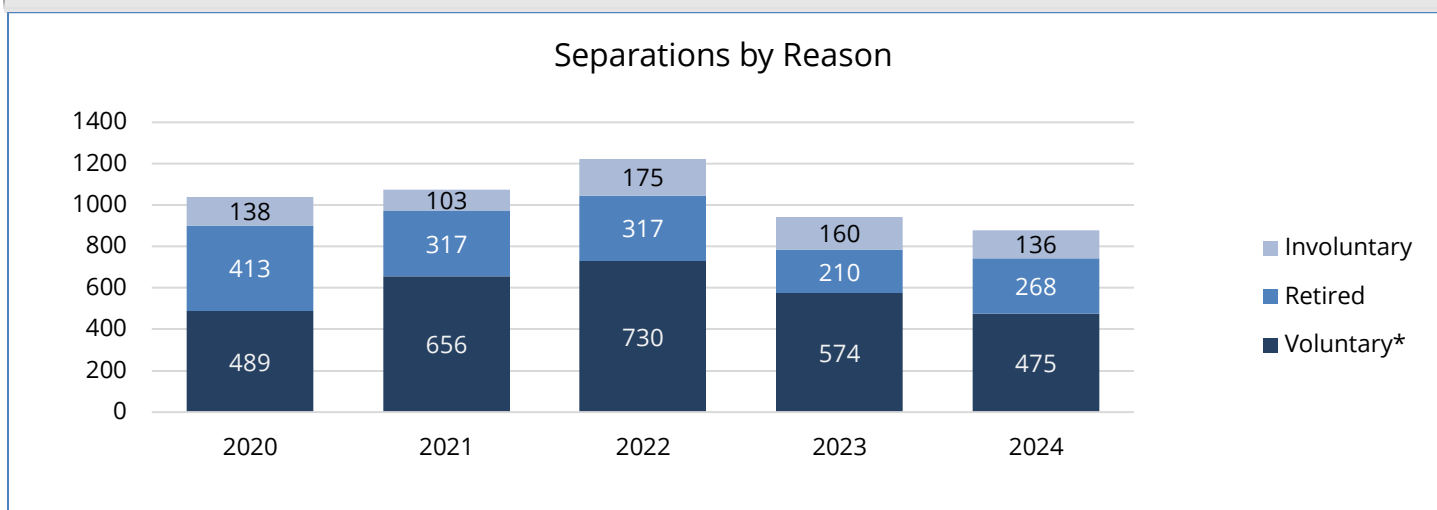
Figure 29: Separations by Reason [35]

Next, an analysis by Performance & Analytics will seek to understand the correlation between burnout, turnover risk, and employee sentiment metrics. This combined analysis will allow for the development of policy interventions for employee groups most in need of additional support. For example, sentiment around investment in training may be closely related to feeling burned out or at risk of leaving City employment. Given this information, the HR Department could design a targeted training program for burnt-out employees.

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[35] Includes 77 employees deceased during the 2020 to 2024 period

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Focus on Resources

The analysis of key driver metrics indicates that employees do not feel they have enough resources to do their job well (score: 38.1), yet this metric is highly correlated with employee satisfaction. Given this, improving resource availability should be a key priority for leadership in the next year. However, in FY26, the City faces a significant budget shortfall, which will likely require reductions to critical resources such as external training, software tools, and physical assets like vehicles and office upgrades. **Balancing the need to maintain or enhance employee resources with the fiscal realities of a constrained budget will require creative problem solving and thoughtful prioritization.**

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.

First, the City should focus on areas where resources can be shared between departments. For example, the Department of Information Technology is already underway in determining savings from enterprise licenses for software tools. Similarly, departments should explore a more centralized approach to managing physical resources like trucks and equipment. Better coordination of these resources can ensure that each team has what they need to complete their work quickly and safely, while reducing the need for equipment rentals. Budgets for equipment rentals is expected to be significantly reduced in the next year, making the need for better resource sharing even more critical.

Second, in 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 People and Organization Development (POD) team. Employees have previously reported that they lack the dedicated time for training, and this sentiment may increase while filling vacancies is delayed during the hiring freeze. Despite growing workloads, department leadership should still work with supervisors to ensure that employees have sufficient time for training and professional development. Enrollment in in-person trainings provided by the City may work to help employees set aside uninterrupted time.

Lastly, the City should focus on identifying areas for process improvements as they relate to employees' resources. For example, innovative pilots like the Equipment Operator training program could be adapted to other job types, as evaluated by a recent City Management Fellowship team. These internal trainings serve to help employees grow in their career, for both the trainees and trainers. Additionally, the City should explore lower cost tools that help departments better manage their limited resources. For example, Performance & Analytics and the Transportation Department are working with a research team to develop a tool for detecting and predicting potholes around the City. This tool is expected to help Transportation

better allocate their time, staff, and resources – while working to repair streets in a more equitable manner. In the next year, departments, Performance & Analytics, Personnel, and HR should collaborate to look for additional areas for training and resource allocation innovations.

Recommendation 2: Focus on Maintaining Progress

Throughout 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. 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 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 should focus on the following strategies:

- **Strengthening Internal Mobility:** The City should encourage career development within the organization by making it easier for employees to take on new roles and responsibilities where needed. This focus is also reflected in the first recommendation, where the City will focus on ensuring that employees maintain adequate access to training and professional growth. It is important that employees feel like they have a path for promotion and career growth.

- **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. This effort should solicit input from employees, who are often better situated to recognize inefficient processes. The Rewards & Recognition program can be used for employees who help identify cost or resource savings for their department or the City overall.

- **Enhancing Communication & Recognition:** Ensuring the people feel heard, valued, and informed is critical for maintaining trust among employees, especially in a period of uncertainty. In the last three years, the City has made an effort to help employees feel recognized for their work through increased communication, an improved rewards system, and pay raises. These efforts have been positively reflected in the continuously improving employee sentiment. During the next year, it will be even more important to acknowledge the work of every employee—but especially the work of public facing employees, who may experience an increase in negative interactions with residents or visitors. More communication and recognition from City leadership is an affordable and effective way to maintain the progress made in employee satisfaction.

Employees are the City's greatest asset and continuing to focus on their well-being is a key priority for the City. By focusing on **mobility, efficiency, and employee engagement**, the City aims to preserve the positive trends of recent years while adapting to current fiscal realities.

Annex:

Satisfaction and Participation

The following tables provide details on NPS, OSAT and participation, by calendar year. The "Overall" column represents the total score for 2023 and 2024.

Overall Satisfaction by Calendar Year	2023	2024	Overall
Net Promoter Score	8.6	16.9	14.8
Overall Satisfaction	36.1	38.2	37.7

Participation by Calendar Year	2023	2024	Overall
Number of Responses	3,053	4,083	7,136[36]

Key Drivers

The following tables provide details on Key Driver metric, by quarter. The "Overall" column represents the total score for 2023 and 2024.

Key Drivers by Calendar Year	% Responses Scored 9 or 10		
	2023	2024	Overall
Path for Career Advancement	39.8	41.7	40.8
Feel Inspired to Reach My Full Potential	39.9	41.2	40.7
Receive Recognition	38.0	41.3	39.9
Paid Fairly for The Work I Do	26.6	33.1	30.3
My Team Cares About Me	57.8	54.8	56.1
My Department Provides High Quality Services	57.0	57.9	57.4
My Direct Supervisor Actively Listens to Me	63.3	65.0	64.2

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[36] In the Medallia dashboard, the total number of surveys across 2023 and 2024 will show 8,530. This total includes 1,394 surveys collected in January 2024 as part of the Learning and Development special topic survey.

My Department Management Sets Clear Goals and Expectations	42.6	43.9	43.3
I Have the Resources to Do My Job Well	36.3	38.1	37.3
The City Invests in Training and Development	35.8	38.2	37.2
Satisfied with The Physical Conditions at Workplace	32.5	33.5	33.1

Top Motivators for Working at the City

Employees were asked to select their top three motivators for working at the City. The average NPS and OSAT for those who selected each motivation is available, as well. These NPS and OSAT scores show that those who selected these motivations are, on average, more likely to recommend the City as a place to work and are more satisfied overall. Employees who chose *Work/life balance* report some of the highest NPS and OSAT scores in the City.

Motivation	Number of selections
Job stability	4,554
Work/life balance	2,469
Health care benefits	2,377
Pay	2,204
Career Growth	2,132

Job Type Alignment with Civil Service Categories

The following tables details the number of employees who fall into each category of the ESS job type categories and their alignment with the Civil Service Commission job type categories.[37]

Occupational Category	Field	Management/ Executive/ PM/ PC	Office	Supervisor	Other
Officials and Managers		668			
Professionals			3,265		
Technicians	355				
Administrative Support Workers			1,668		
Craft Workers	840				
Operatives	342				
Laborers and Helpers	1,300				
1ST-Line Supvs/Mgrs of Fire FT & Prev				277	
1ST-Line Supvs/Mgrs of Law Enforce Wrkrs				383	
Detectives and Criminal Investigators	235				
Police Officers	1,269				
Other Prot Service Wrkrs	650				
Service Workers					549
Exempt					296
Firefighting & Prevention Wrkrs	731				
Total	5,722 (45%)	668 (5%)	4,933 (38%)	660 (5%)	845 (7%)

Miscellaneous Extra Charts and Data

Federal Comparison

The following table compares the overlapping Human Capital Management Metrics from the City of San Diego Employee Sentiment Survey to the Federal Employee Viewpoint survey[38]. The federal survey is conducted once a year and was completed between May 20 and July 5, 2024. The entire 2023 and 2024 ESS results are being used for the comparison.

A change in the calculation of the Employee Sentiment Survey responses was necessary to compare with the Federal results. The ESS data is collected on an 10-point Likert scale and the data is presented as a measure of the "Top Two Box" – which is calculated as the percentage of respondents who scored the question a 9 or 10. The Employee Viewpoint uses a 5-point Likert scale and reports the percentage of employees who score the question a 4 or 5. The ESS data presented below has been converted into a 5-point scale and calculated as the percentage of 4 and 5 scores. Conversion into a 5-point scale means that all 7 and 8 scores were recorded as a 4, and all 9 and 10 scores were recorded as a 5.

The Metric names vary slightly between the ESS and the Employee Viewpoint surveys. The first text is the CoSD metric in the ESS and the italicized text following the forward slash is the Employee Viewpoint metric.

Metric	CoSD	Federal
Overall Satisfaction / *Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job?*	75	68
Likelihood to Recommend / *I recommend my organization as a good place to work.*	72	67
The work I do is meaningful / *It is important to me that my work contribute to the common good.*	87	92
My Department Management Sets Clear Goals and Expectations / *I know what is expected of me on the job.*	71	82
I Know How My Work Relates to City's Strategic Plan / *I know how my work relates to the agency's goals.*	75	86
I Have the Resources to do My Job Well / *My work unit has the job-relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals.*	67	81
My Supervisor Listens to Me / *My supervisor listens to what I have to say.*	82	83
Work Relates to Department's Mission / *Managers communicate the goals of the organization.*	87	68

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[38] Office of Personnel Management, 2024

I Receive Recognition / *How satisfied are you with the recognition you receive for doing a good job?*	65	57
I am Paid Fairly for the Work I Do / *Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your pay?*	62	59
The City Invests in Training and Development *I receive the training I need to do my job well.*	66	67

Sentiment Survey Descriptive Statistics

Bureau of Labor Statistics Data

Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey
Original Data Value

Series Id:	JTS900000000000000TSR
Seasonally adjusted	
Industry:	Government
State/Region:	Total US
Area:	All areas
Data Element:	Total separations
Size Class:	All size classes
Rate/Level:	Rate
Years:	2014 to 2024

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2014	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.4
2015	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.6
2016	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.8	1.3	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.4
2017	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6
2018	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.5
2019	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.6
2020	1.5	1.5	2.3	2.3	2.1	2.1	1.8	1.7	1.9	2.5	1.9	1.5
2021	1.3	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.7
2022	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.8	1.4	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.7
2023	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.6
2024	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.4

Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey

Original Data Value

Series Id:	JTS100000000000006TSR
Seasonally adjusted	
Industry:	Total private
State/Region:	Total US

Workforce Report 2023 & 2024

Area:	All areas
Data Element:	Total separations
Size Class:	5,000 or more employees
Rate/Level:	Rate
Years:	2014 to 2024

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2014	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.4
2015	1.5	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8
2016	2.1	2.0	1.5	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4
2017	1.8	1.6	1.8	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6
2018	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.4	1.9	1.8
2019	1.7	1.8	1.8	2.1	1.9	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.9
2020	1.8	1.8	2.5	2.9	1.5	1.7	2.1	1.7	2.1	3.0	1.6	1.6
2021	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.7	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.0
2022	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.9	1.6	1.7	1.6
2023	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.9	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.2	1.4	1.3
2024	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.7

Chi Square Goodness of Fit Results

Group: Gender	Observed Counts (Proportions)	95% CI1	Expected Counts (Proportions)	Z Value	P Value	Direction
Female	927 (0.39)	0.37, 0.41	794 (0.33)	5.80	<0.001	↑
Male	1201 (0.50)	0.48, 0.52	1585 (0.67)	-16.65	<0.001	↓
Non-Binary	10 (0.00)	0.00, 0.01	14 (0.01)	-1.14	0.254	—
Prefer not say	245 (0.10)	0.09, 0.12	2 (0.00)	157.24	<0.001	↑

Chi-square test: 24817.86; Degree of freedom: 3; P-value: <0.001.

Group: Race & Ethnicity	Observed Counts (Proportions)	95% CI1	Expected Counts (Proportions)	Z Value	P Value	Direction
Null/Prefer not to answer	505 (0.20)	0.19, 0.22	0 (0.00)	1013.62	<0.001	↑
Native American	15 (0.01)	0.00, 0.01	10 (0.00)	1.52	0.129	—
Asian	226 (0.09)	0.08, 0.10	275 (0.11)	-3.15	0.002	↓
Black or African American	185 (0.07)	0.06, 0.08	259 (0.10)	-4.84	<0.001	↓
Hispanic or Latino/a	536 (0.22)	0.20, 0.23	838 (0.34)	-12.84	<0.001	↓
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	32 (0.01)	0.01, 0.02	21 (0.01)	2.53	0.012	↑
Two or More Races and/or Ethnicities	165 (0.07)	0.06, 0.08	101 (0.04)	6.54	<0.001	↑
White or Caucasian	816 (0.33)	0.31, 0.35	976 (0.39)	-6.59	<0.001	↓

Chi-square test: 1027531.83; Degree of freedom: 7; P-value: <0.001.

Regression Results

Logit Regression: Overall Satisfaction and Key Driver Metrics

osattop2	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
PathforCareerAdvan~t	.156	.025	6.13	0	.106	.206	***
FeelInspiredtoReac~P	.441	.035	12.50	0	.372	.51	***
ReceiveRecognition	.012	.025	0.47	.64	-.038	.061	
PaidFairlyForTheWo~o	.136	.02	6.86	0	.097	.174	***
MyTeamCaresAboutMe	.125	.034	3.68	0	.058	.191	***
MyDepartmentProvid~l	.111	.037	3.00	.003	.038	.183	***
MyDirectSupervisor~i	-.037	.032	-1.13	.257	-.1	.027	
MyDepartmentManage~l	.111	.031	3.57	0	.05	.172	***

HaveTheResourcesto~b	.188	.026	7.10	0	.136	.239	***
TheCityInvestsInTr~d	.103	.026	4.02	0	.053	.154	***
SatisfiedWithThePh~d	.085	.017	4.95	0	.051	.119	***
Year	.026	.076	0.34	.731	-.123	.175	
Which Best Describ~	0	.	.	.	.	.	
24-38 years old	.607	.251	2.42	.016	.114	1.099	**
39-51 years old	.735	.253	2.91	.004	.24	1.231	***
52-56 years old	.694	.263	2.64	.008	.179	1.209	***
57-70 years old	.85	.26	3.27	.001	.34	1.359	***
71+ years old	.906	.424	2.13	.033	.074	1.738	**
gender2	-.219	.079	-2.78	.005	-.374	-.065	***
Number of Years Be~y	0	.	.	.	.	.	
2-5 years	.159	.136	1.17	.241	-.107	.426	
21-30 years	.242	.135	1.79	.074	-.024	.507	*
31 years or more	.231	.196	1.18	.239	-.154	.616	
6-10 years	.032	.128	0.25	.804	-.219	.282	
Less than 2 years	.236	.133	1.78	.075	-.024	.497	*
Which Role Best De~W	0	.	.	.	.	.	
Management/Ex..g. ~e	-.26	.147	-1.77	.077	-.548	.028	*
Office employee	-.077	.111	-0.70	.487	-.295	.141	
Other	-.105	.167	-0.63	.532	-.433	.223	
Supervisor	-.269	.125	-2.15	.032	-.515	-.023	**
Constant	-65.262	153.62	-0.42	.671	-366.351	235.827	

Mean dependent var	0.405	SD dependent var		0.491
Pseudo r-squared	0.430	Number of obs		5800
Chi-square	3364.125	Prob > chi2		0.000
Akaike crit. (AIC)	4521.724	Bayesian crit. (BIC)		4708.362

*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1

Descriptive Statistics: Key driver metrics, OSAT and LTR

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
PathforCareerAdvan~t	7109	7.116	2.838	1	10
FeelInspiredtoReac~P	7124	7.146	2.805	1	10
ReceiveRecognition	7123	6.994	2.917	1	10
PaidFairlyForTheWo~o	7130	6.674	2.783	1	10
MyTeamCaresAboutMe	7119	8.089	2.351	1	10
MyDepartmentProvid~l	7118	8.192	2.259	1	10

MyDirectSupervisor~i	7131	8.269	2.492	1	10
MyDepartmentManage~l	7117	7.335	2.74	1	10
HaveTheResourcesto~b	7132	7.128	2.674	1	10
TheCityInvestsInTr~d	7132	7.08	2.692	1	10
SatisfiedWithThePh~d	7120	6.525	3.006	1	10
ltr2	8532	2.148	.824	1	3
osattop2	8532	.378	.485	0	1