



2026 Employee Engagement Risk Report

Table of Contents



- INTRODUCTION
- KEY TAKEAWAYS: THE HIGHS AND LOWS
- OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT BY POSITION
- CONCLUSION
- HOW WE CAN HELP

Introduction

Over the last several years, the rental housing industry has demonstrated a clear commitment to employee engagement and retention, even amid persistent operational pressure, staffing constraints, and economic uncertainty. That commitment continues to matter, and it continues to show results.

Overall employee engagement indicators remain relatively stable as we enter 2026, with sustained strength across relationship-based measures such as teamwork, respect, and trust in leadership. These foundational elements support employee satisfaction and loyalty, reinforcing the idea that culture and connection remain competitive advantages in a challenging labor environment.

At the same time, this year's data reveal a more nuanced story. While engagement has not deteriorated broadly, forward-looking confidence has softened and several long-present friction points have become more pronounced. Concerns related to workload, clarity, and adequate communication represent meaningful risk factors, particularly for organizations focused on long-term employee retention and leadership continuity.

This report highlights:

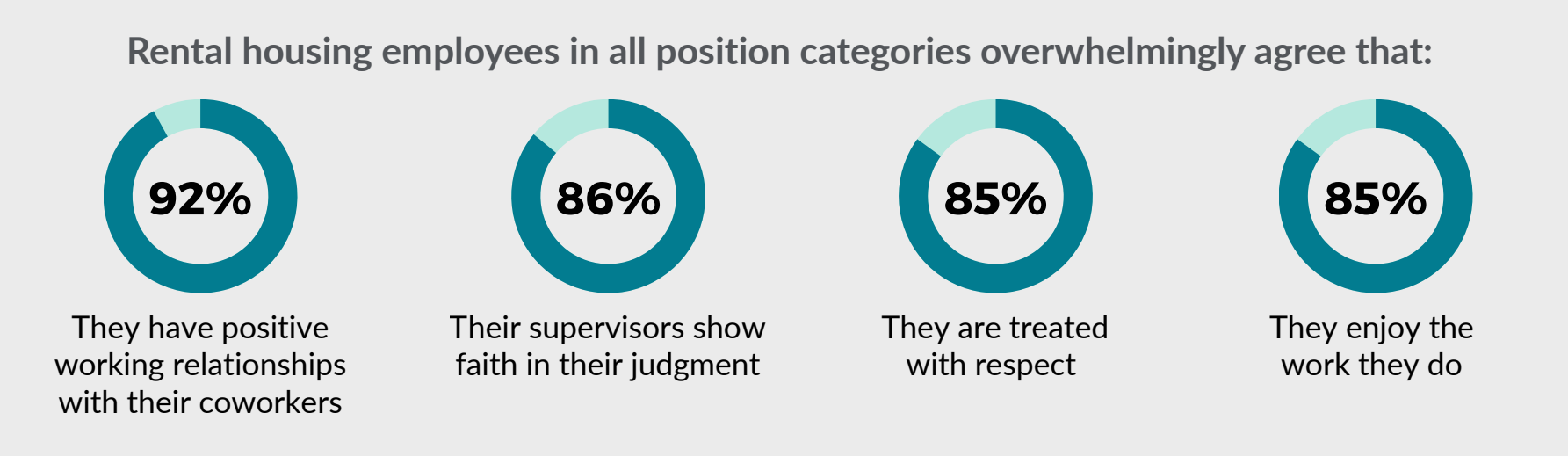
- **What continues to work well for employees in various position categories**
- **What employees say matters most for their satisfaction and effectiveness**
- **Where risk of dissatisfaction and turnover is increasing**
- **And, how leaders can take practical action to protect engagement, performance, and employee retention in 2026 and beyond**



Key Takeaways: The Highs and Lows

What Employees Continue to Find Rewarding

Rental housing employees report the strongest levels of agreement in areas tied to **human connection** and **interpersonal trust**. These indicators have remained consistently high across the last five years and continue to serve as the emotional backbone of the employee experience.



Leadership Takeaway

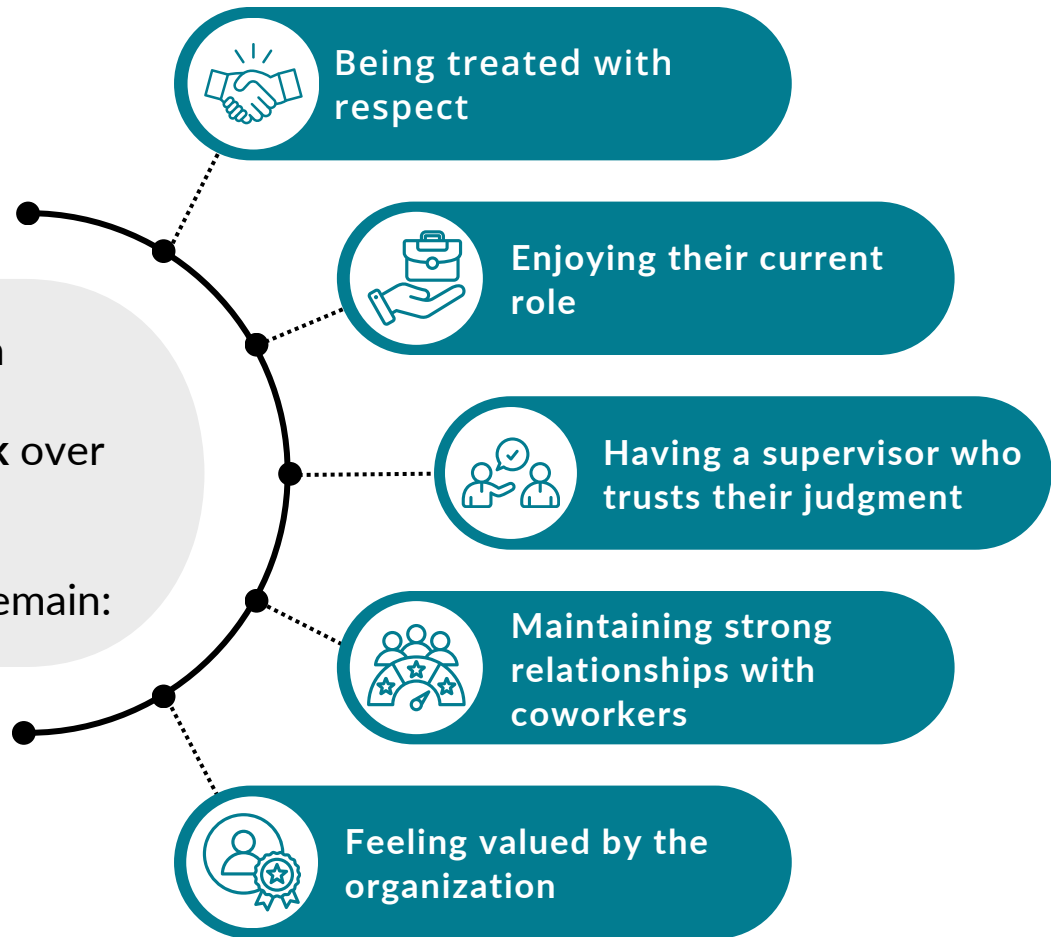
People stay in organizations where they feel respected, trusted, and supported, even when the work is demanding.

Organizations that protect these relational strengths through visible leadership, transparent communication, and consistent follow-through are better positioned to weather operational stress without an erosion of morale.

What Employees Indicate is Most Important

When asked to identify what matters most in evaluating their jobs, employees continue to prioritize **respect**, **trust**, and **meaningful work** over transactional benefits alone.

The most important drivers of engagement remain:



While these priorities are not new, this year's data suggest a growing gap between importance and experience for some employee groups — particularly where communication is inconsistent or career pathways are unclear. If left unaddressed, this gap represents a growing risk to employee engagement and retention.

Compensation Frustration: A Persistent but Stabilizing Pressure

Compensation and benefits continue to generate dissatisfaction for a meaningful segment of the workforce. However, this year's data indicate that frustration has largely stabilized, rather than escalated, compared to prior years.

Frustration with compensation increasingly appears to function as a stress amplifier, rather than a standalone driver of disengagement. Employees who already feel overextended, undervalued, or uncertain about growth are far more likely to cite pay and benefits as a primary concern.



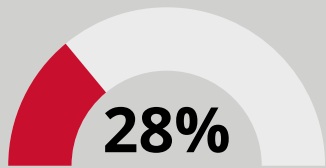
Leadership Takeaway

Competitive compensation matters, but clarity, recognition, and a manageable workload significantly influence how compensation is perceived.

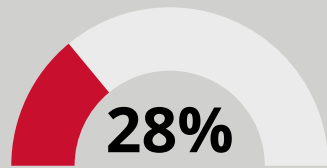
Emerging Risk: The Confidence and Capacity Gap

One of the most important insights from this year's data is the expansion of what can best be described as a Confidence and Capacity Gap.

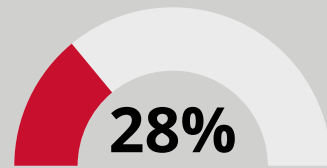
A growing portion of the rental housing workforce reports that they:



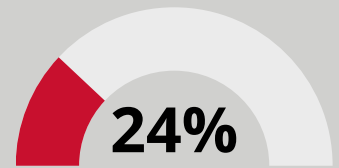
Are not always fully staffed



Are unable to complete their work in the time allowed



Do not receive timely feedback



Lack the training and development to successfully perform their role

Importantly, this is not a reflection of employee capability. Rather, it reflects systems under strain.

When employees lack a fully staffed team, consistent feedback loops, and clear education and development opportunities, confidence begins to erode, even among experienced and high-performing team members. Over time, this erosion contributes directly to burnout, disengagement, and early exit decisions.



What You Can Do

Organizations seeing success in this area are intentionally:

- Protecting time for training and one-on-one conversations
- Reducing reactive workload where possible
- Reinforcing expectations through frequent, informal feedback
- Recognizing employees' effort as well as outcomes

Confidence grows when employees know what they are supposed to do, how they are supposed to do it, and receive timely feedback that not only helps them to improve but also validates their work.

Opportunities for Improvement by Position



WHILE MANY ENGAGEMENT DRIVERS ARE UNIVERSAL, THIS YEAR'S DATA CONTINUE TO SHOW ROLE-SPECIFIC PRESSURE POINTS THAT LEADERS CAN DIRECTLY INFLUENCE.

On-Site Leasing

30% are unclear about their career or promotion path

29% don't receive adequate company communication

26% don't agree the company values its employees

Leasing professionals remain disproportionately impacted by:

- Unclear career and promotion paths
- Inconsistent internal communication
- Feeling undervalued despite their frontline visibility

Because leasing team members serve as ambassadors for both residents and prospects, disengagement in this group carries significant reputational risk for their employer.

What You Can Do

Increase visibility, personalize recognition, and initiate regular career path conversations, even when promotions are not immediately available. Regular one-on-one meetings can be used to both validate current performance and gain understanding of employees' personal goals and ambitions. Supervisors can show recognition and support by recommending team members for growth opportunities such as becoming a mentor, attending a certification program, or participating in a company task force. These smaller opportunities can turn into larger ones over time.



On-Site Maintenance

26% are not usually fully staffed

24% say their benefits don't match their needs

21% are unable to complete their work in the time allowed

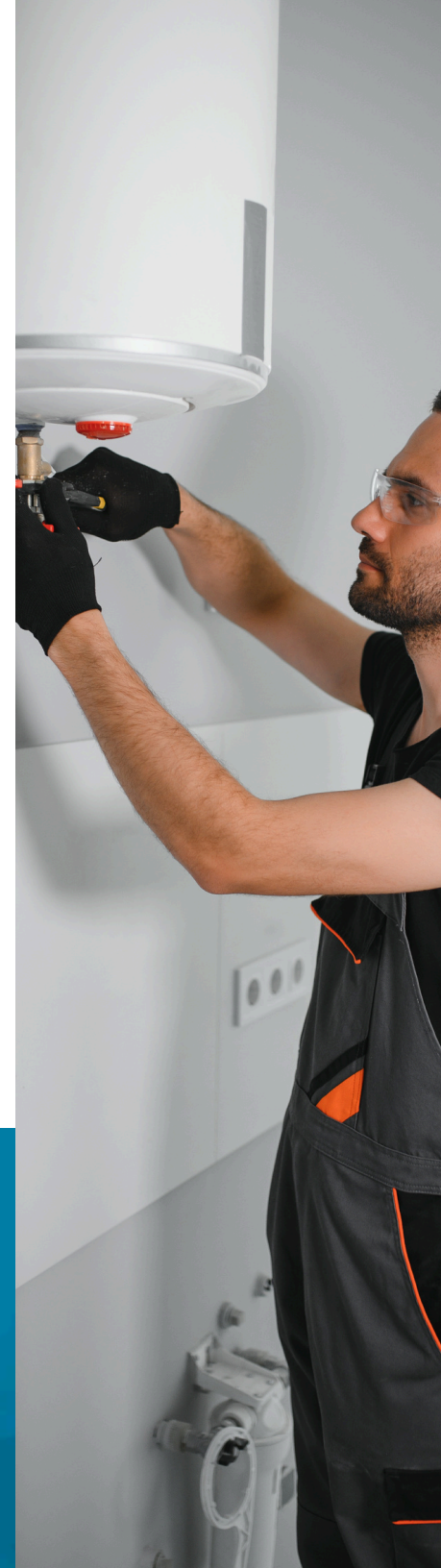
Maintenance professionals continue to report challenges related to:

- Lack of fully staffed teams
- Benefits not matching their needs
- Unable to complete their work in the time allowed

Despite their critical impact on resident satisfaction and renewals, many maintenance team members continue to feel overworked and under-supported.

What You Can Do

Prioritize recruiting, hiring, and training new team members to reduce the workload pressure that results from short staffing. In addition, review the participation in company benefits and consider an internal marketing campaign to ensure team members are well-informed about the variety of benefits the company provides. Evaluate the accessibility and cost of your most popular benefits such as health insurance. Insurance premiums are often less affordable for employees with lower wages. If you discover that few employees are taking advantage of a benefit, consider reducing the cost to team members, if possible, and improve your communication to boost participation.

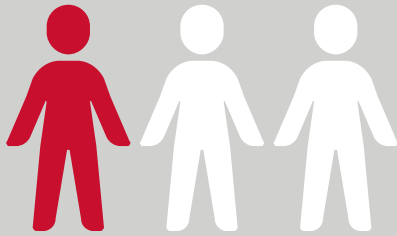


On-Site Management

On-Site Managers report rising strain related to:

- Workload volume
- Communication gaps
- Lack of feedback on work performance

This group sits at the intersection of strategy and execution, making sustained disengagement particularly costly to their employer.



1 in 3

On-Site Managers say:

- **They are unable** to complete their work in the time allowed
- **They don't** receive adequate company communication
- **They don't** receive timely feedback on their work performance

What You Can Do

Create structured forums for sharing feedback, solving challenges, and facilitating peer connection to improve the flow of information and increase the sharing of best practices. Create the expectation and format for supervisors at all levels to have regular, recurring one-on-one meetings with their direct reports to review goals, prioritize tasks, provide support and coaching, and give recognition.



Regional Operations

50% are unable to complete their work in the time allowed

42% indicate that policies are not consistently enforced

36% don't receive adequate company communication

Regional leaders continue to walk a demanding tightrope between execution, reporting, and change management. In 2026, workload intensity, policy consistency, and insufficient communication remain significant concerns.

Because the Regional leader's impact on the assets and team is far-reaching, even modest increases in uncertainty or inconsistency at this level can have portfolio-wide consequences.

What You Can Do

Clear and consistent communication is critical for Regional leaders to be able to support and guide their teams. Reduce stress and burnout among Regional leaders by ensuring the organization's leadership provides a steady flow of ongoing updates, clear expectations, and appropriate resources to support the delivery of those expectations. One example of providing appropriate resources is to regularly review and update policies for relevance and feasibility.



Corporate Support

Corporate Support team members play a critical role in enabling on-site and regional teams, yet this year's data indicate growing strain related to clarity, consistency, and career visibility.

Corporate Support employees are increasingly likely to express frustration with:

- Inconsistent enforcement of policies and procedures
- Insufficient internal communication
- A lack of understanding around career growth and promotion pathways

Historically, Corporate Support roles have been associated with possessing valued institutional knowledge and displaying strong loyalty to the organization. However, the persistence of these challenges suggests an emerging risk: employees who are essential to the company's success but who feel they are not adequately invested in or valued.

When policies are applied inconsistently or communication lacks clear ownership, Corporate Support teams often absorb the confusion — fielding questions, correcting errors, and managing downstream impact without authority to resolve root causes. Over time, this dynamic erodes confidence and engagement.

40% indicate that policies are not consistently enforced

37% don't receive adequate company communication

39% are unclear about career or promotion path

What You Can Do

Rethink the levels of communication that are required to have an informed workforce. Strategize the consistent delivery of company-wide messaging, peer and interdisciplinary information sharing, and one-on-one conversations. This layered wave of communication clarifies direction, specifies ownership, and equips leaders to hold effective goal-oriented and developmental conversations.



Corporate Operations

Corporate Operations teams are responsible for systems, processes, and structure, and for 2026 the data points to operational friction as a primary engagement risk for this group.

Employees in Corporate Operations are more likely to report:

- Frustration with inconsistently applied policies
- Difficulty completing work within the time allotted due to competing demands or shifting priorities
- Dissatisfaction with performance feedback or development opportunities

Unlike Corporate Support roles, which often serve as connectors, Corporate Operations roles are deeply impacted by process breakdowns and misalignment. When role expectations continue to increase or accountability is unclear, operational efficiency suffers, and so does employee confidence.

Lack of clarity is the enemy of productivity. When clarity is absent, employees spend more time navigating ambiguity than executing meaningful work, which increases stress and reduces satisfaction.

What You Can Do

- Identify and address the specific policies or processes causing the greatest friction
- Involve team members from different departments in candid discussions about operational breakdowns
- Commit to timely one-on-one touchpoints to ensure clarity, coaching, and congratulations on performance.

These challenges are solvable, but only when organizations are willing to slow down long enough to clarify, simplify, and act. Clear procedures and expectations support confident employees, and confident employees drive sustainable performance.

34% indicate that policies are not consistently enforced

34% are unable to complete their work in the time allowed

30% don't receive timely feedback on their work performance

30% disagree that training enables them to be successful in their role



Conclusion



THE RENTAL HOUSING INDUSTRY ENTERS 2026 WITH STRONG CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS BUT ALSO WITH CLEAR WARNING SIGNS. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT HAS NOT COLLAPSED, YET CONFIDENCE, CLARITY, AND CAPACITY ARE UNDER INCREASING PRESSURE.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT CONTINUE TO LISTEN INTENTIONALLY, ACT VISIBLY ON FEEDBACK, AND INVEST IN LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT WILL BE BEST POSITIONED TO RETAIN TALENT, SUSTAIN PERFORMANCE, AND NAVIGATE CONTINUED UNCERTAINTY.

THE RISK IS NOT IN HEARING THE FEEDBACK, BUT IN FAILING TO RESPOND.




How We Can Help

Swift Bunny offers a suite of multifamily-specific feedback and workflow solutions. Ingage by Swift Bunny™ is the apartment industry's first employee lifecycle feedback system. The solution pairs meaningful data with personalized insights and planning, empowering multifamily leaders to take specific action to solve their greatest workplace challenges. Inquire by Swift Bunny™ is a flexible and user-friendly custom survey solution for collecting opinions and feedback from both employees and residents. And, Introduce by Swift Bunny™ is a hire-to-retain workflow manager. Uncovering honest feedback from both employees and customers can help organizations to identify priorities, reduce employee and resident turnover, and improve the bottom line.

Learn more:

 swiftbunny.com

 contact@swiftbunny.com

 888.896.2933

