THE REALIGN BURNOUT REPORT · 2026

More than nine in ten people looking for a way out of their job have burned out

What 7,321 people told us about burnout: what causes it, who it hits hardest, how long it lasts, and what they want instead.

7,321 respondents · May to September 2026 · Published September 25, 2026

94% have experienced burnout	**57%** name three or more causes
86% vs 34% blame management, very poor vs excellent manager	**74%** of burned-out professionals stuck for over a year

Key findings

94% **of adults exploring a career change have experienced burnout.**

6,875 people answered one plain question: "Have you ever experienced burnout?"

57% **name three or more causes. Burnout is rarely one thing.**

One in six (17%) named all five causes we asked about.

86% **of people with a very poor manager blame lack of management support.**

With an excellent manager it is 34%. The manager is the single biggest swing factor in our data.

60% **cite unclear or excessive expectations, more than cite a bad manager.**

Not knowing what "done" looks like wears people down as much as the volume of work.

91% **of people working fewer than 40 hours a week have still burned out.**

Hours matter: above 50 hours a week, 88% name workload as a cause. But short weeks do not protect anyone.

3.8x **Burned-out workers are four times as likely to say their career has hurt their well-being.**

45% against 12%. Of those affected, 79% say it happens often or very frequently.

99% **of nurses in our data have burned out. Only attorneys rank higher: every one of the 39 in our sample.**

92% of nurses name workload or long hours.

29% **of professionals seeking a career coach say burnout is why. It is the number one reason.**

They skew senior: 50% are executive level, against 29% of everyone else.

74% **of burned-out professionals have felt this way for more than a year.**

Burnout is not a bad month. People wait a long time before they act.

12% **of burned-out workers say pay is what their next job must have. Balance and fit come first.**

Work-life balance (25%) and fit with their personality (23%) lead.

1. How common burnout is

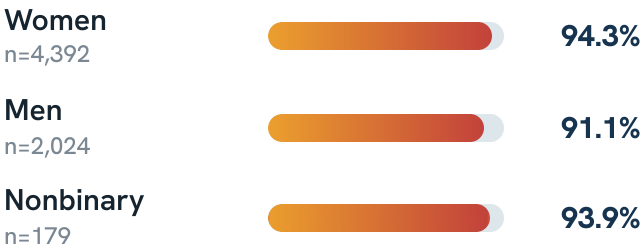
We asked 6,875 adults who came to Realign's career assessment a plain yes or no question: *"Have you ever experienced burnout?"* **93.5% said yes.**

These are not a random slice of the workforce. They are people actively looking at their career options, most often because they want to switch careers (47%) or feel lost about what to do next (40%). That is the point: among people trying to find a way out, burnout is close to universal. National surveys of all workers put current burnout lower, from 44% (SHRM) to 55% (Eagle Hill Consulting), with 67% reporting at least one burnout-linked symptom in the past month (APA).

Ever experienced burnout, by age



Ever experienced burnout, by gender



Burnout peaks between 25 and 39, when careers are building and responsibilities stack up. Women report it slightly more often than men.

2. What causes it

We asked everyone who had burned out to pick every cause that applied, from five options. Workload and work-life balance lead, but the third cause is the one employers most often miss: **60% cite unclear or excessive job expectations**, more than blame their manager.

Causes of burnout (burned-out respondents, n=6,075)



Burnout is rarely one thing. The average person named 2.9 causes, 57% named three or more, and the single most common combination was all five at once (17%).

Number of causes named

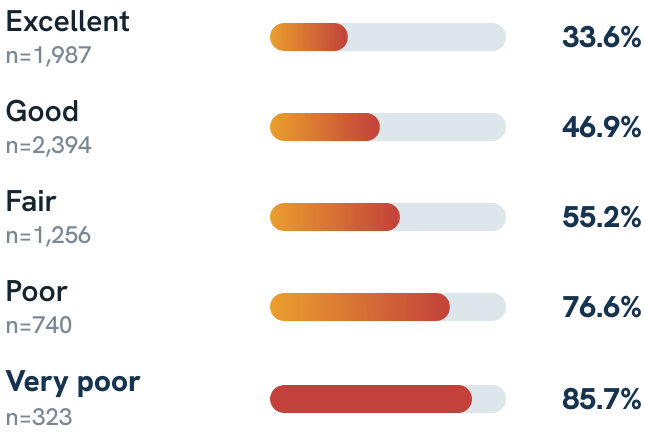


> **Burnout is rarely one thing: 57% of burned-out workers name three or more causes, and the most common combination is all five at once.**

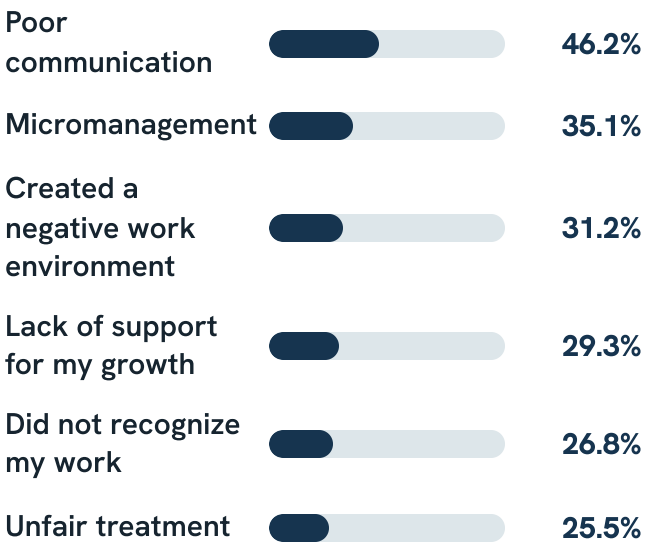
3. The manager effect

No factor in our data moves burnout like the relationship with a manager. People who rate their manager excellent still burn out (90%), but the cause shifts. With an excellent manager, 34% cite lack of management support. With a very poor one, **86%** do, and they name more causes overall.

Cite lack of management support, by manager relationship



What people disliked about their manager



Burned-out respondents, n=6,425. Poor communication leads by a distance.

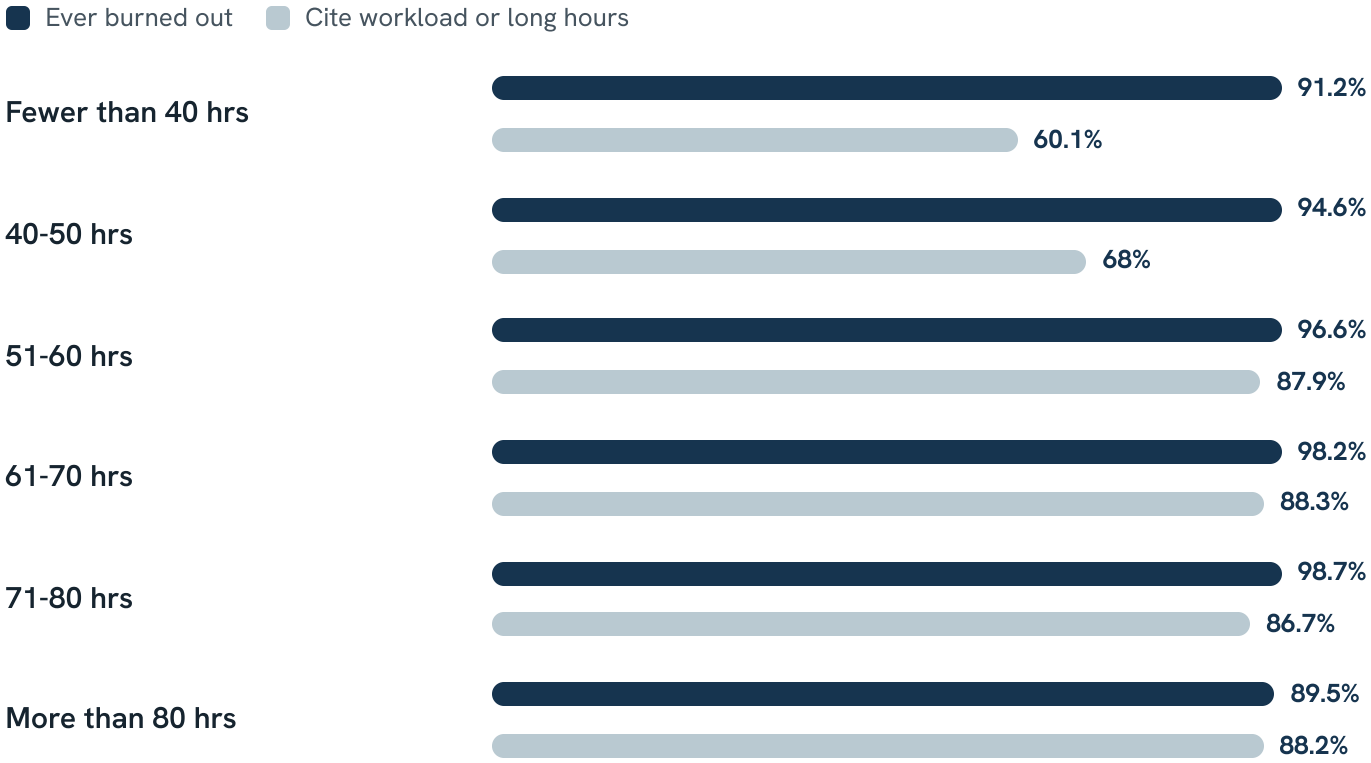
> **People with a very poor manager are 2.6 times as likely to blame lack of management support for their burnout as people with an excellent one.**

This matches Gallup's finding that employees who feel supported by their manager are about 70% less likely to burn out regularly. Gallup

4. Hours, and why they are not the whole story

Long weeks raise the risk. Above 50 hours, burnout reaches 98% and 88% name workload as a cause. But the surprise is at the other end: **91% of people working fewer than 40 hours a week have still burned out.** For them, workload matters less and expectations, balance and support matter more.

Burnout and workload as a cause, by weekly hours

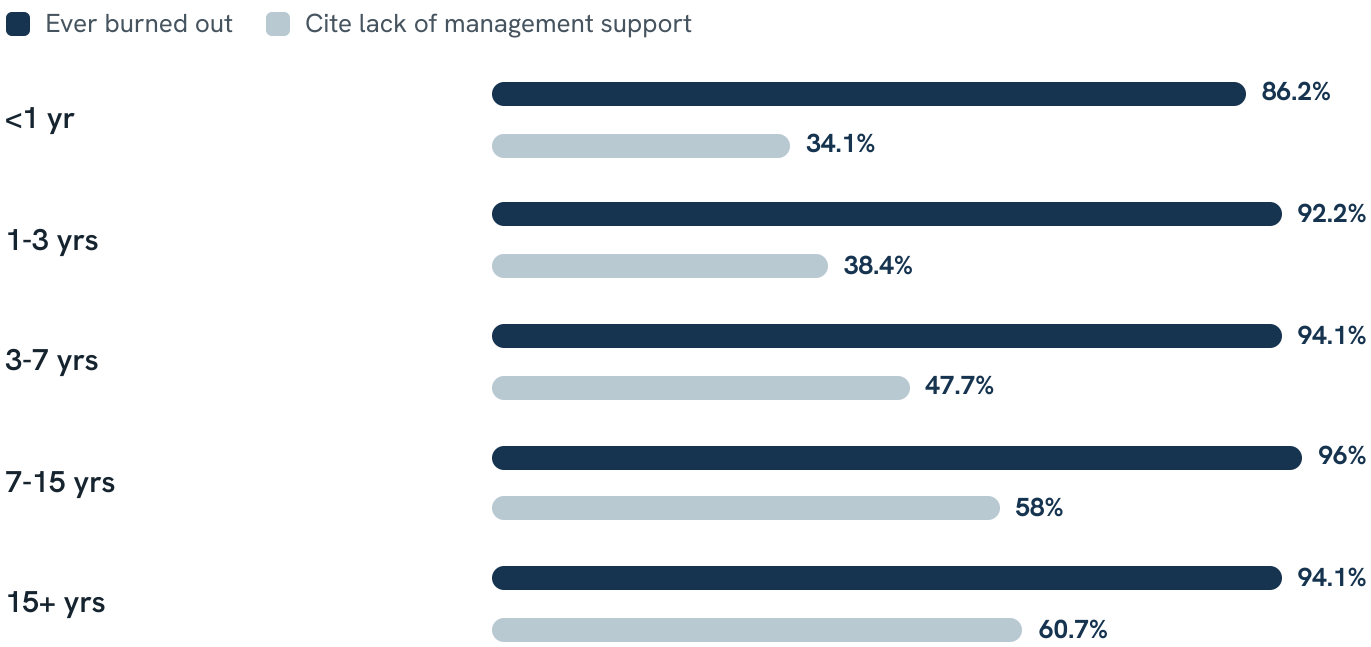


Groups of fewer than 30 people are not shown.

5. How burnout builds over a career

Burnout rises with experience, from 86% of people with under a year of work to 96% of those with 7 to 15 years. What changes most is the role of management: complaints about management support nearly double, from 34% to 61%.

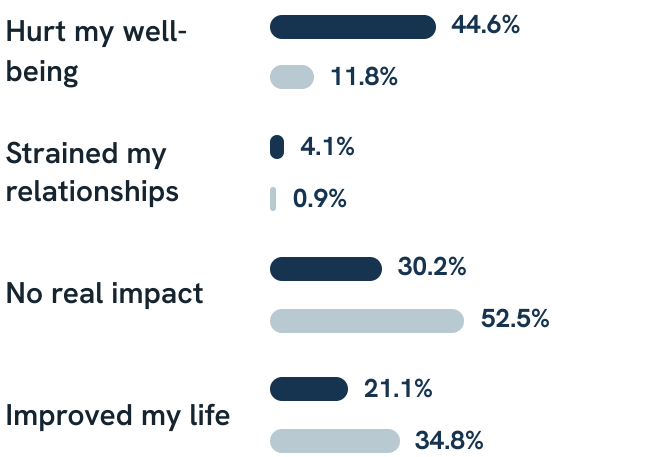
By years of work experience



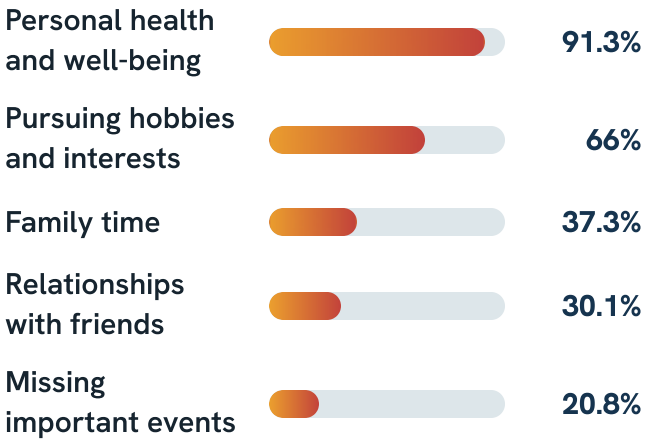
6. How it follows people home

Burnout does not stay at work. **45% of burned-out respondents say their career has hurt their well-being**, against 12% of those who have not burned out. Among those affected, 79% say it happens often or very frequently, and one in five has missed important events like birthdays and anniversaries.

How their career has affected their personal life



What it affected (burned out, career hurt their life)

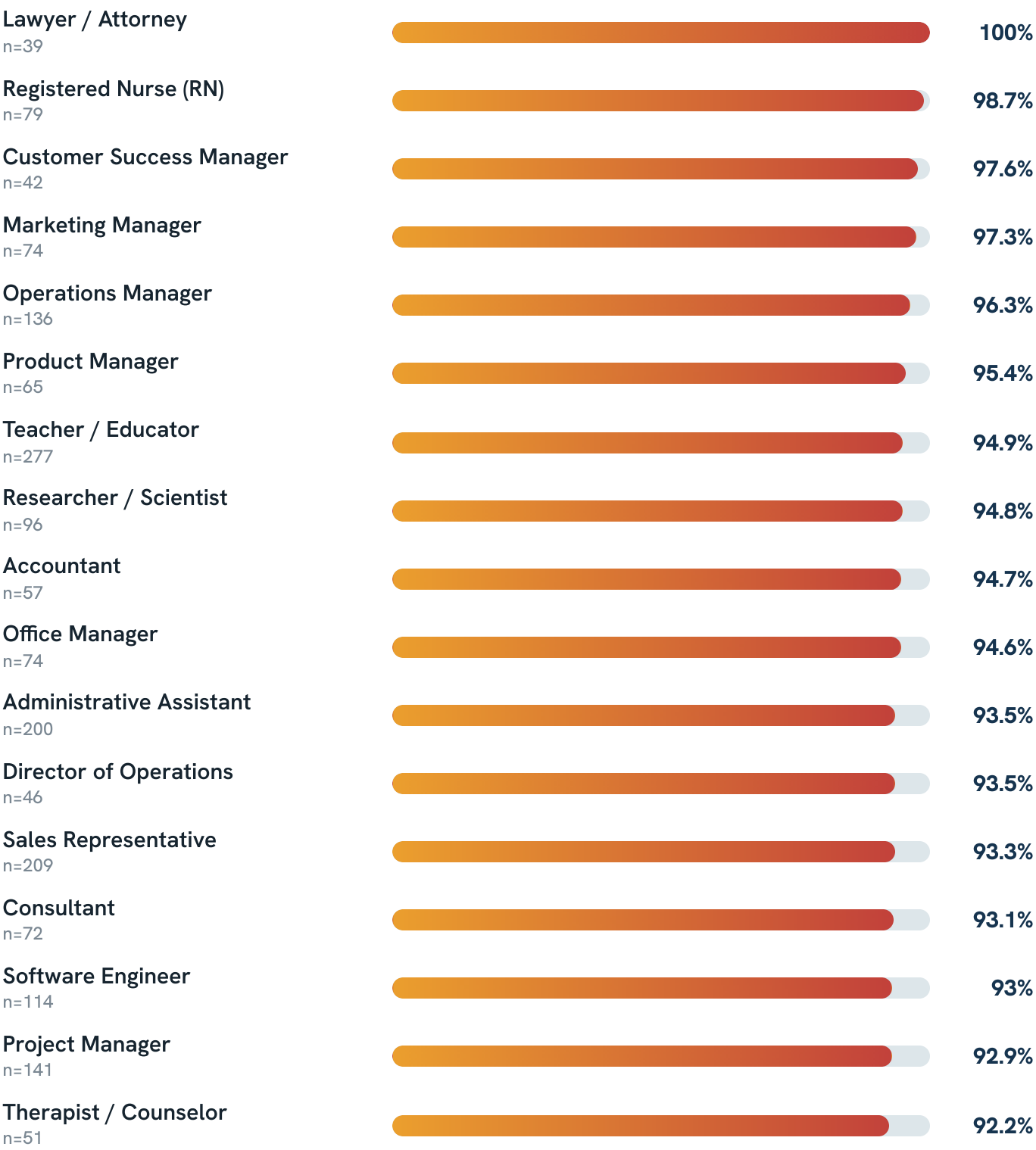


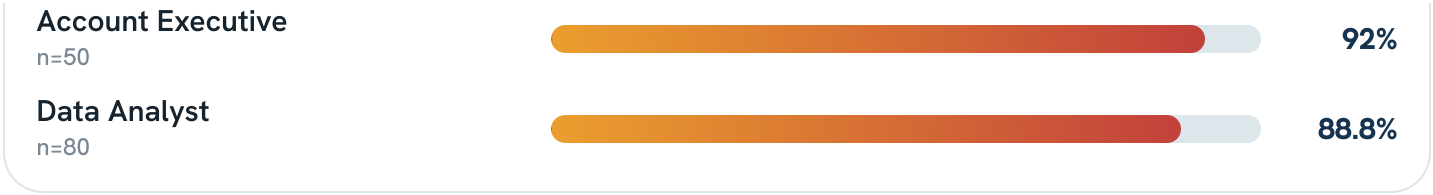
n=3,122

7. The hardest-hit jobs

Every job title with at least 30 respondents shows burnout above 88%. At the top: **nurses (98.7%), customer success managers (97.6%), marketing managers (97.3%) and operations managers (96.3%)**. Every attorney in our sample (39 people) said yes.

Ever experienced burnout, by job title





The causes differ by job, which is why generic advice misses:

92%
of nurses cite workload or long hours

77%
of product managers cite unclear or excessive expectations

85%
of customer success managers cite lack of balance

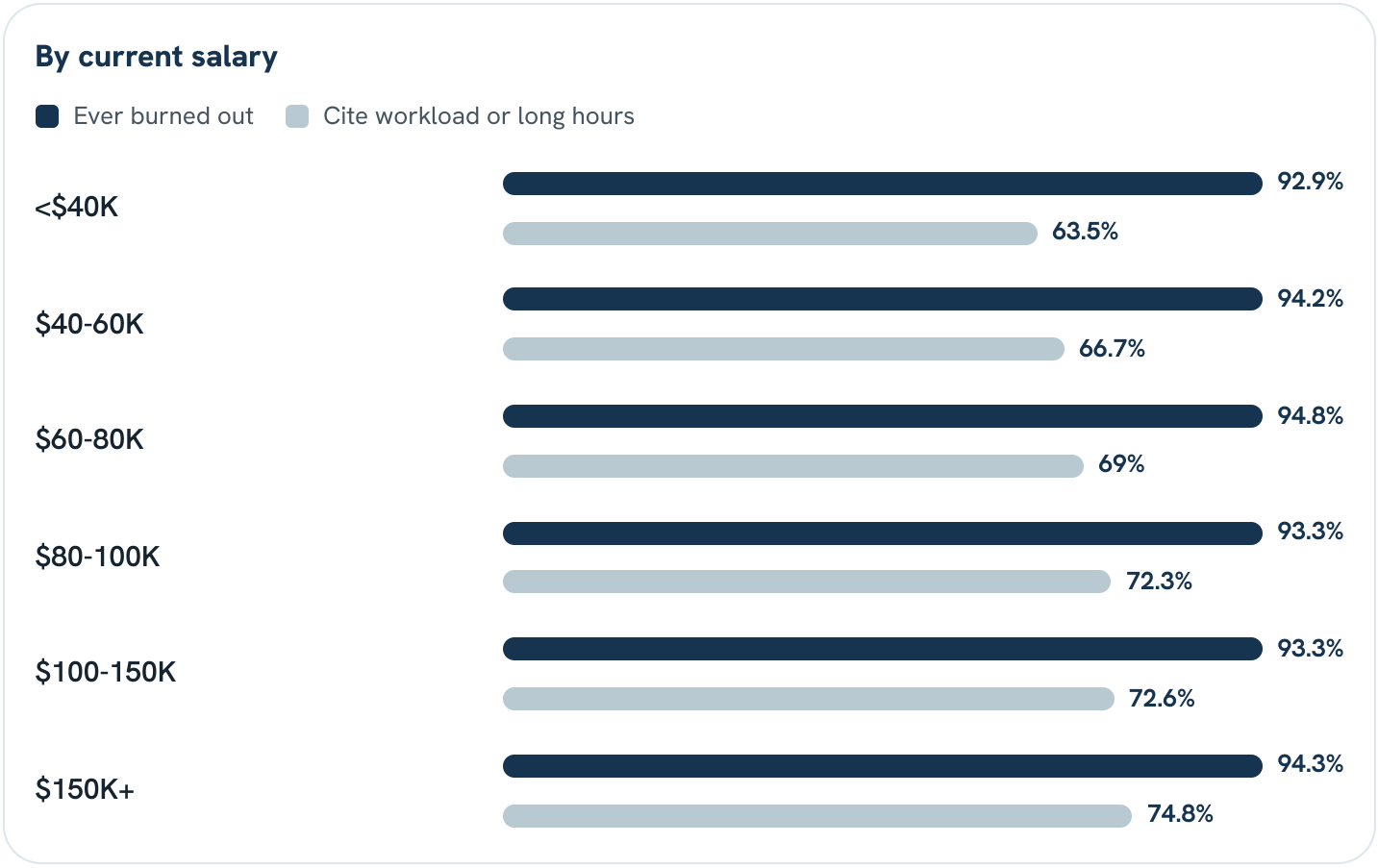
84%
of therapists and counselors cite workload

56%
of marketing managers cite lack of recognition

75%
of teachers cite lack of work-life balance

8. Why pay does not protect you

Burnout barely moves with salary: 93% to 95% across every pay band. What changes is the cause. Higher earners are more likely to blame the hours (75% at $150,000 and above against 64% under $40,000) and unclear expectations (68% against 54%).



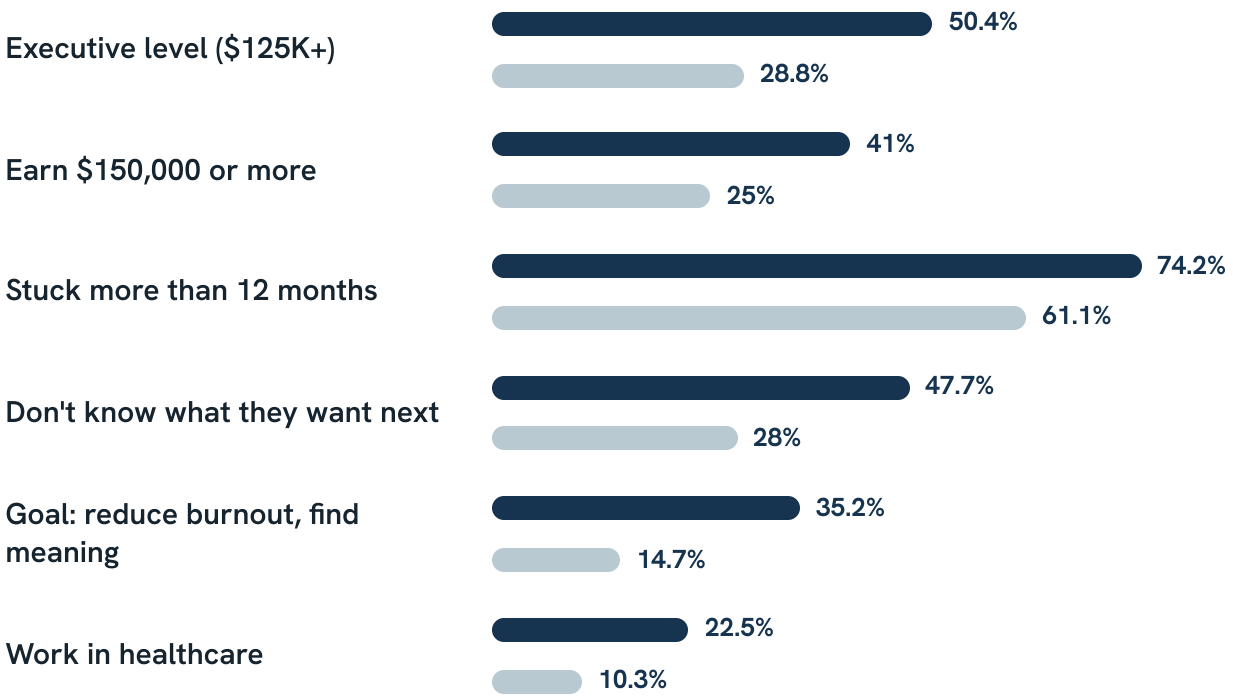
9. Burnout among senior professionals

Our second dataset comes from 446 professionals who took Realign's coaching-match quiz, a more senior group actively looking for a career coach. **Burnout was the number one reason they came: 29%**, ahead of wanting to change careers (25%) and being laid off (20%).



Burned-out professionals are more senior and better paid than the rest, and they have been stuck longer:

Burned-out professionals compared with other coaching seekers

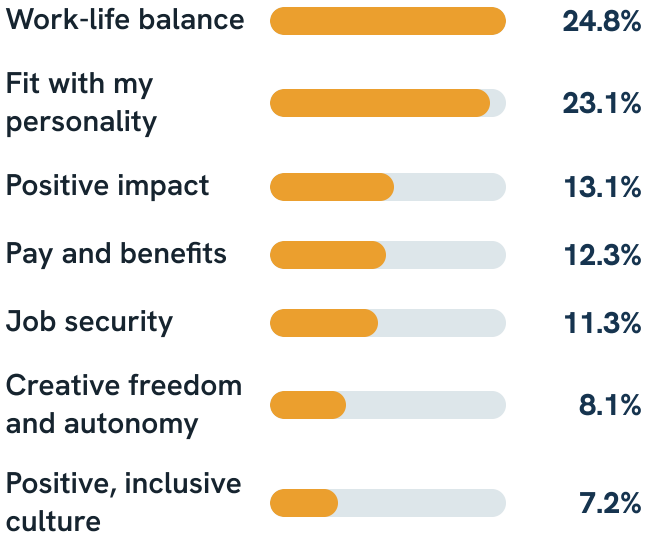


> **Burnout is the number one reason professionals look for a career coach, and burned-out professionals were 1.6 times as likely to go on to book a coaching session.**

10. What burned-out people want next

87% of burned-out respondents want to switch careers or feel lost about what to do. When asked what their next job must have, pay came fourth. **Work-life balance and a job that fits their personality lead.** Satisfaction beats money as a motivation (48% against 22%).

The one thing their next job must have



66%

are moderately or very concerned about AI's impact on their career

32%

are open to working with a career coach; another 42% are unsure

49%

say work-life balance means flexibility, not fewer hours

What helps

The World Health Organization defines burnout as "burnout is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed." It is about the job, which means the fix is too. The research points to four things:

Fix the causes, not just the symptoms

Burnout grows where workload, control, reward, support, fairness or values are out of balance. Our data shows most people face several at once, so rest alone rarely lasts.

Get clear on expectations

60% cite unclear or excessive expectations. Agreeing priorities in writing with a manager is one of the fastest, cheapest fixes available.

Protect real recovery

Mentally detaching from work during time off is the recovery habit most consistently linked to lower strain. Sonnentag & Fritz

Get support to make the change

In a randomized trial, professional coaching cut burnout among physicians by 17 percentage points while it rose in the control group. Dyrbye et al., JAMA Internal Medicine, 2019

Methodology

Career assessment sample (n=6,875). Adults aged 19 and over who completed an online career assessment run by Realign, Inc. between May 27 and September 25, 2026. Most arrived from US search ads for career tests and career change. Respondents skew early and mid career, and 64% are women. Burnout was measured with a single yes or no question ("Have you ever experienced burnout?"); causes with a select-all-that-apply follow-up of five options. Test submissions and respondents under 19 were excluded.

Coaching-match sample (n=446). People who took Realign's coaching-match quiz between June and September 2026 and chose the situation that best described them. This group is more senior and more likely to be looking for professional help.

Limits. Both samples are self-selected people exploring their careers, not a random sample of the workforce, so rates here are higher than in national surveys and should be read as describing people seeking change. All answers are self-reported. Percentages are of people who answered each question. Groups with fewer than 30 respondents are not reported. No personal information is published; all figures are aggregates.

Outside data is cited with a link to the original publisher, and was checked against the publisher's own page in September 2026.

For press

You are welcome to cite and chart these findings with a link to this page. For interviews, additional cuts of the data, or comment from Realign's coaches, contact press@realigncoaching.org.

How to cite

Realign Coaching. (2026). *The Realign Burnout Report 2026: What 7,321 People Told Us About Burnout.* realigncoaching.org/burnout/report

Headline figures

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86% vs 34% cite lack of management support with a very poor vs excellent manager.

60% blame unclear or excessive expectations.

91% of those working under 40 hours a week have burned out.

29% of professionals seeking a coach cite burnout, the top reason.

99% of nurses in the sample have burned out.