Organization, Personnel and Effectiveness Committee

2026 Workplace Assessment

Item 6b

October 13, 2026

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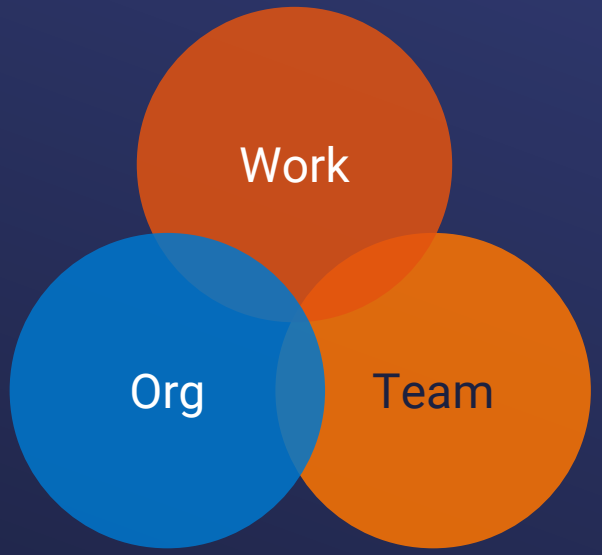
Item 6b
2026 Workplace Assessment

Subject
2026 Workplace Assessment

Purpose
Annual Report

UNDERSTANDING

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



Employee engagement is the strength of mental and emotional connection employees feel toward the work they do, their teams, and the overall organization.

Highly Engaged workplaces have:

- Lower absenteeism
- More productivity
- Lower turnover
- Higher customer satisfaction
- Greater employee satisfaction

Highly Engaged employees:

- Overachieve and help others
- Are proud to work for you
- Actively promote your organization
- Are committed to your overall goals
- Stay working for you in good and challenging times
- Feel inspired by their work

UNDERSTANDING

KEY INSIGHTS

Participation held steady while overall favorability increased significantly, with all questions improving in favorability:

- Just over 50% of employees participated this year, leaving a significant number of voices missing.
- Questions measuring wellbeing, leadership integrity, and team staffing saw the greatest improvement.

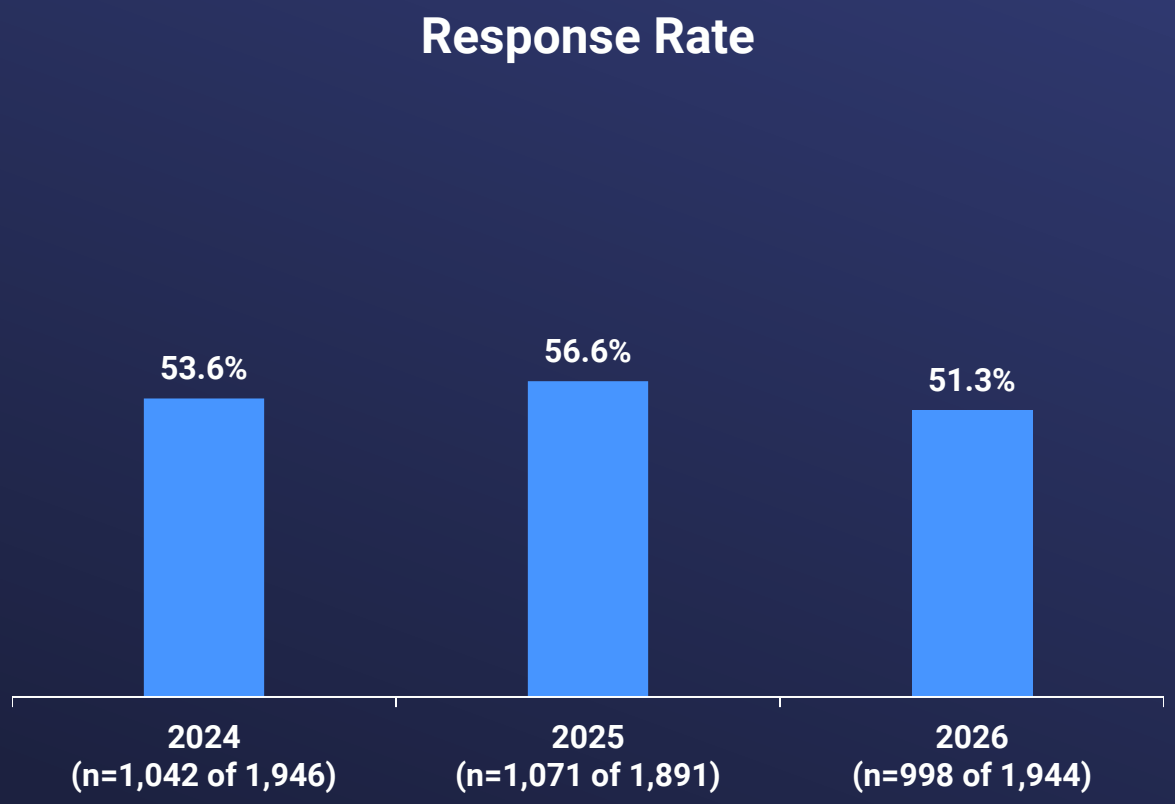
Core measurements of Engagement and Burnout continue to show improvement, especially among managers:

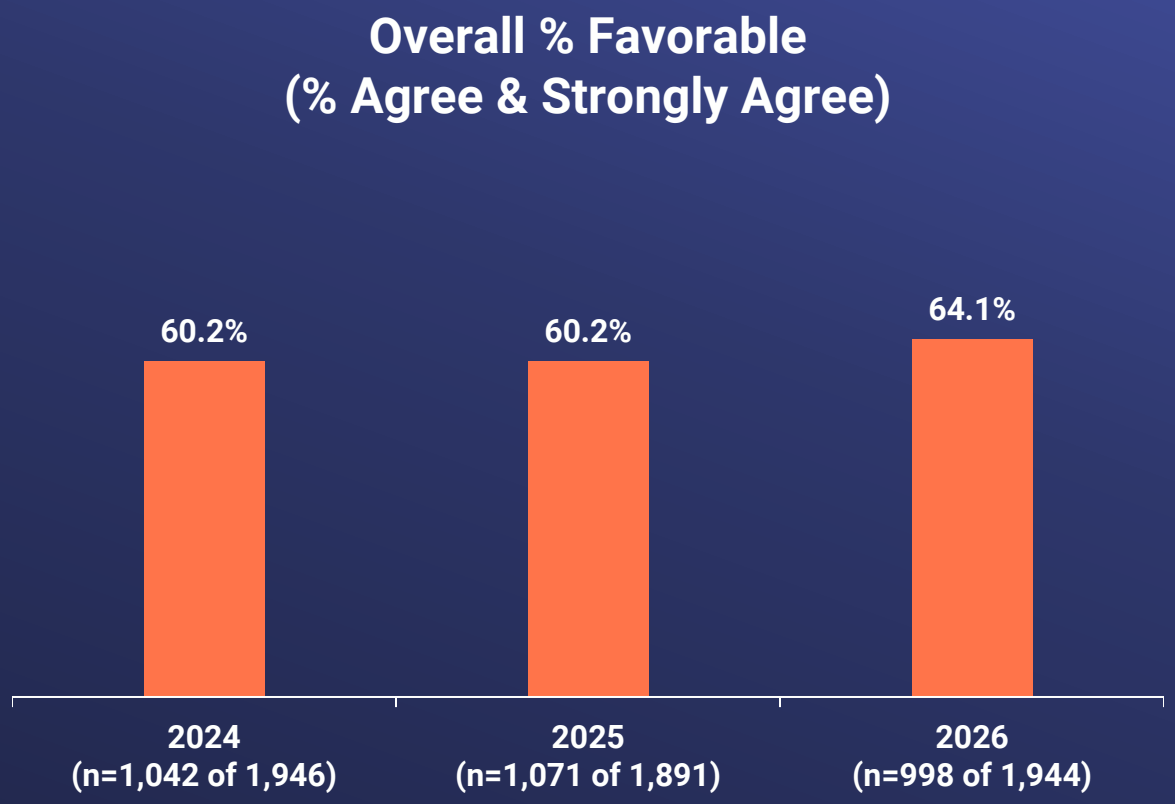
- Pride in the workplace and advocacy (i.e., willingness to recommend) have increased by roughly 10pts since the initial survey in 2024.
- Employees that report steady workload perceptions are the most engaged overall, significantly stronger than those completely overwhelmed or struggling.
- Burnout perceptions among managers have fallen by 10pts since 2025, with now less than one-third of managers reporting they are completely overwhelmed or struggling with their workload. They are also 14pts more likely to say their team is adequately staffed.

Despite the overall improvement, key opportunities continue to exist:

- Managers are still more likely than non-managers to report burnout, despite being more engaged overall. 42% of all employees believe teams are adequately staffed.
- Efficiency and change management perceptions are still among the lowest rated questions for both managers and non-managers (both falling below 30% favorable).
- Trust in executives and leaders has significantly improved but still has room for growth. Only 43% of respondents believe that executive leaders have the best interests of employees in mind when making decisions.

Overall Metrics:





Understanding

Survey Design

Engagement Outcomes

- Measure engagement
- Non-actionable
- Represent "goal state"

2

Types of SurveyQuestions

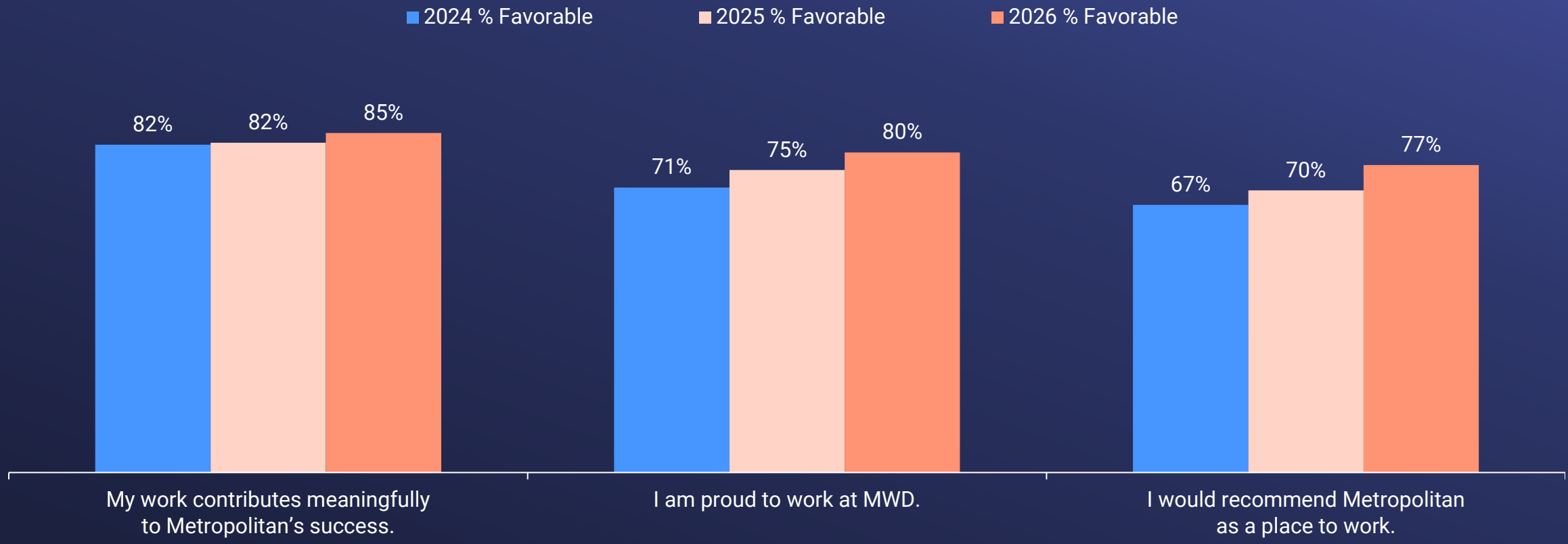
Engagement Impacts

- Measure factors that influence engagement
- Actionable
- "High Impact" suggest where to focus action

Sample 6-point scale

Engagement Outcomes:

Advocacy and pride in the workplace have both improved significantly since the last survey. These items help measure what it means to be engaged within the workplace.



Top Trends: 2026 vs. 2025

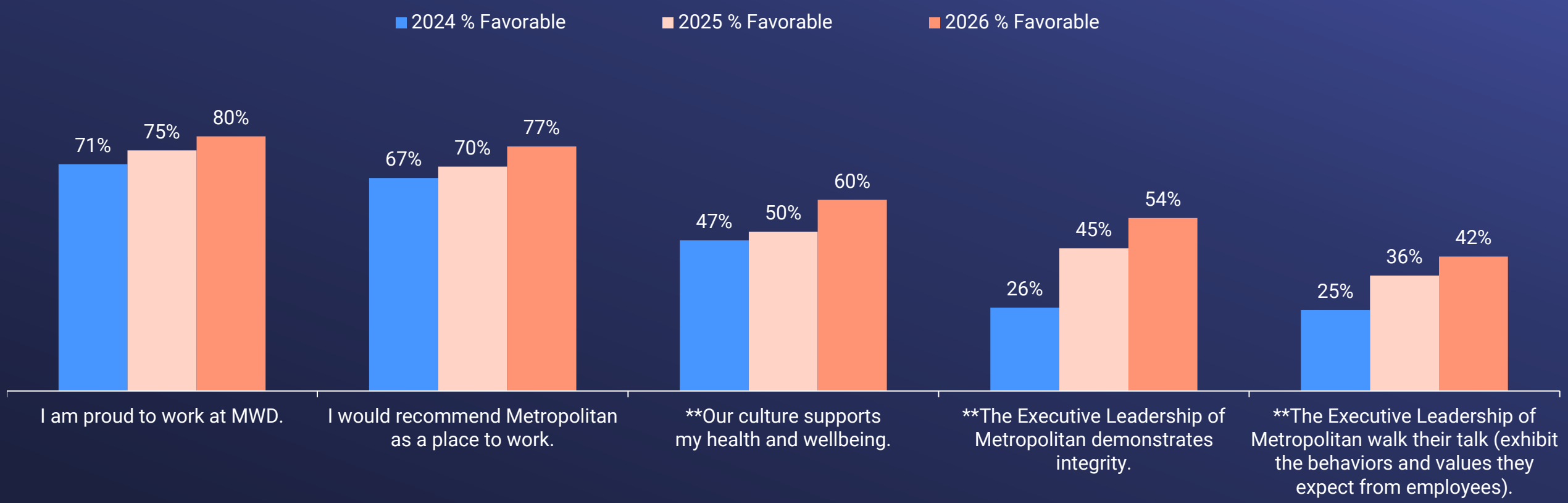
9 questions improved by at least 5pts, with questions measuring wellbeing and leadership integrity seeing the largest improvement.

Question	2026 % Favorable	vs. 2025
**Our culture supports my health and wellbeing.	60%	*10.0%*
**The Executive Leadership of Metropolitan demonstrates integrity.	54%	*9.5%*
My team is adequately staffed to accomplish the work expected of us.	42%	*8.9%*
**I trust that the Executive Leadership of Metropolitan has the best interest of Metropolitan's employees in mind.	43%	*8.0%*
**I can confidently connect my team's performance goals to the strategic initiatives of MWD.	61%	*6.9%*
I would recommend Metropolitan as a place to work.	77%	*6.3%*
The Executive Leadership of Metropolitan communicates effectively with the rest of the organization.	37%	*6.2%*
**The Executive Leadership of Metropolitan walk their talk (exhibit the behaviors and values they expect from employees).	42%	*6.0%*
I work on a collaborative team where members fully support each other.	70%	*5.0%*

****High Impact**

Continuous Improvement Since 2024…

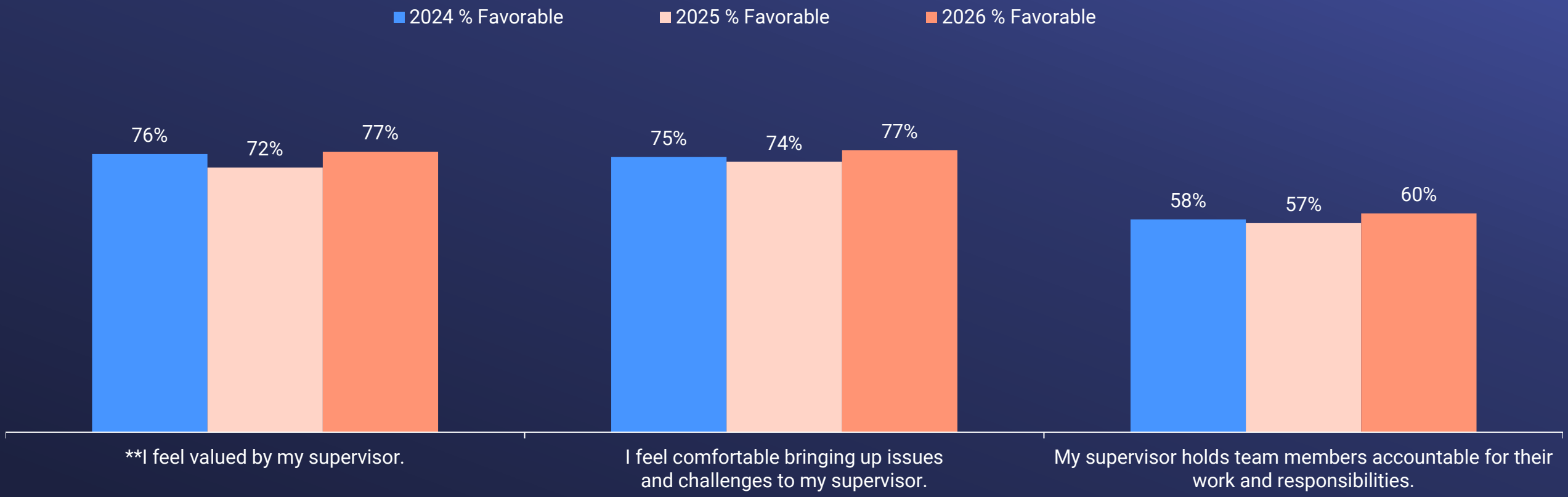
These five questions have consistently and significantly improved in favorability over the course of the last three engagement surveys. Employees have higher trust in executive leaders and feel more connected to the workplace.



****High Impact**

Key Supervisor Trends Since 2024…

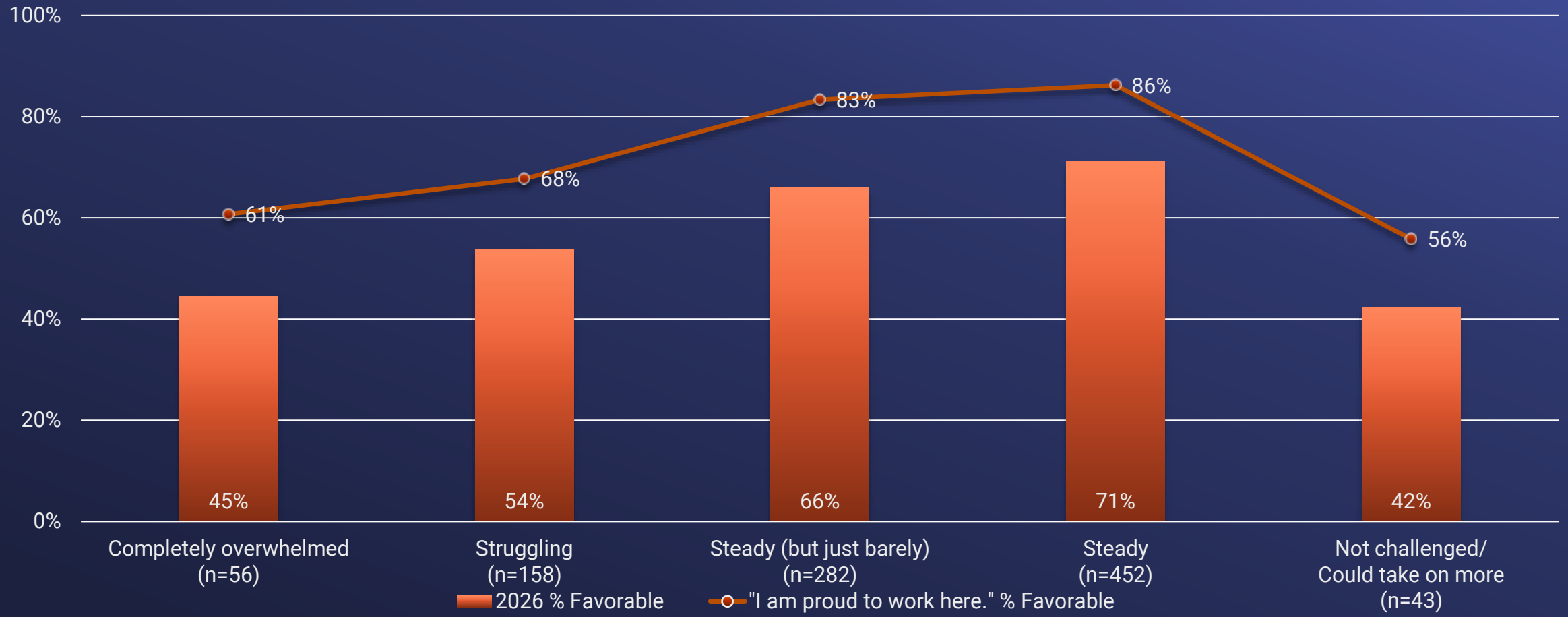
Perceptions measuring feeling valued and accountability have bounced back since 2025.



****High Impact**

Overall % Favorable by Current Workload Perceptions:

Employees that report a healthy workload are significantly more likely to report higher pride and engagement.
Those that are overwhelmed or not challenged at all right now have significantly lower engagement.



High Impact Results by Current Workload Perceptions:

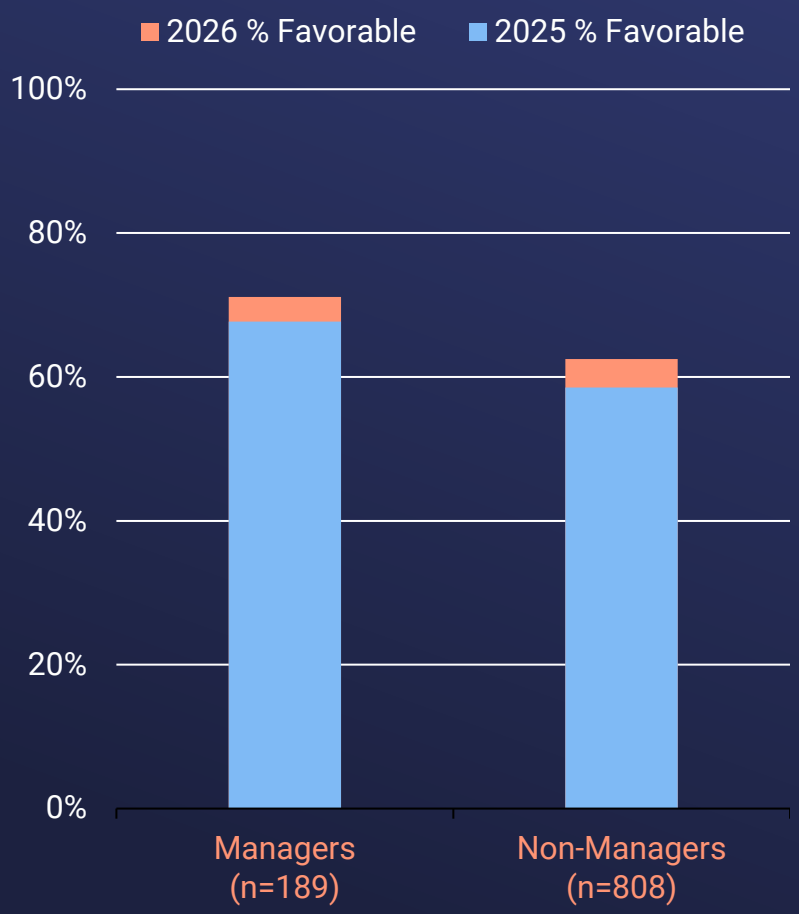
Less than one-third of employees that feel completely overwhelmed right now trust that executive leaders walk their talk or have the best interest of employees in mind.

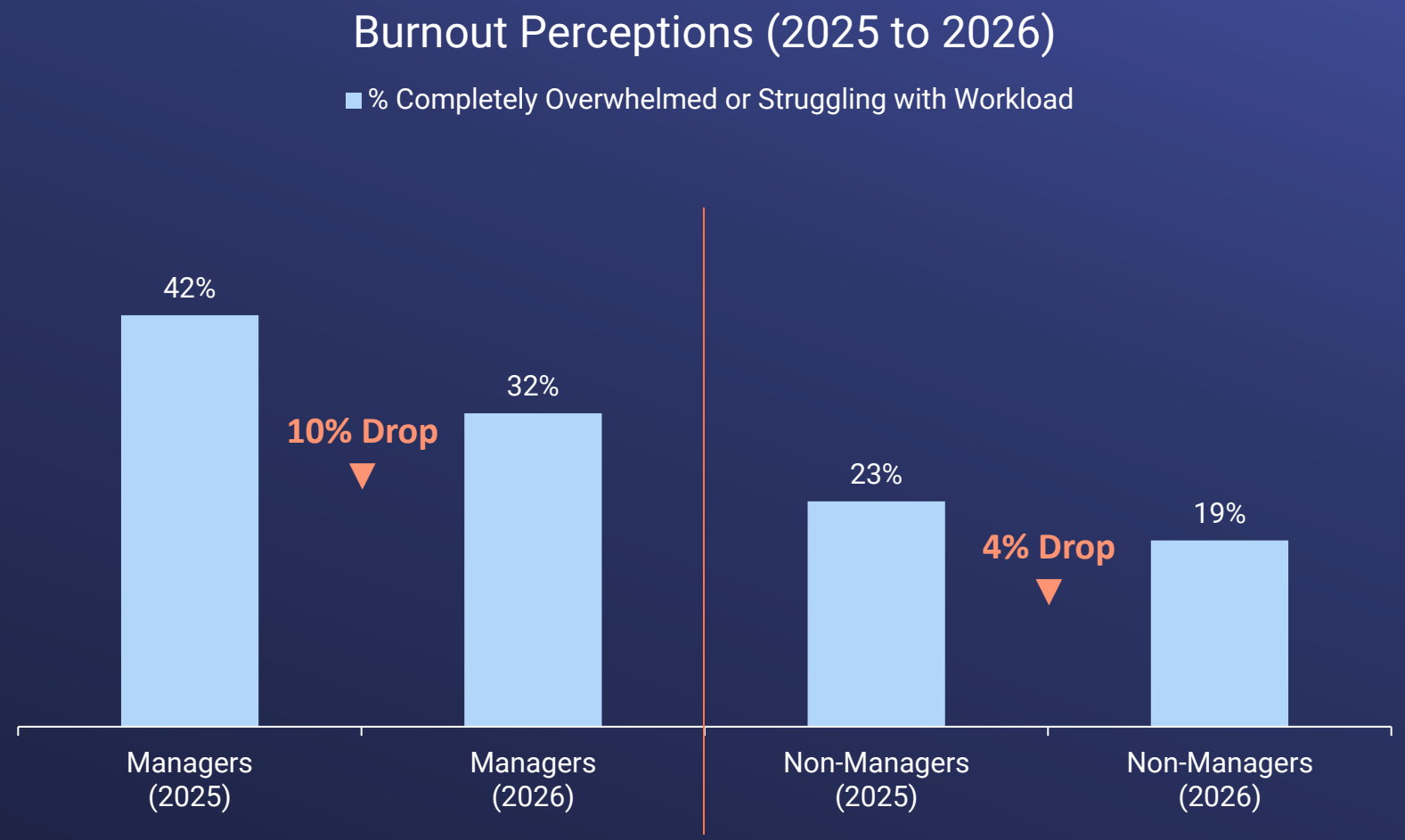
High Impact Questions	2026 % Favorable				
	Completely overwhelmed (n=56)	Struggling (n=158)	Steady (but just barely) (n=282)	Steady (n=452)	Not challenged/ Could take on more (n=43)
I feel comfortable sharing my ideas with my supervisor.	54%	72%	78%	84%	55%
I feel valued by my supervisor.	46%	71%	81%	83%	49%
My work is challenging in a positive way.	45%	49%	73%	72%	23%
I can confidently connect my team's performance goals to the strategic initiatives of MWD.	46%	50%	65%	65%	37%
Our culture supports my health and wellbeing.	33%	40%	60%	71%	47%
I feel that I am making progress in my career (getting opportunities to learn new skills and grow professionally).	31%	42%	60%	62%	19%
The Executive Leadership of Metropolitan demonstrates integrity.	36%	46%	56%	59%	43%
I have opportunities for advancement or promotion at MWD.	32%	37%	44%	51%	16%
I trust that the Executive Leadership of Metropolitan has the best interest of Metropolitan's employees in mind.	29%	32%	44%	50%	28%
The Executive Leadership of Metropolitan walk their talk (exhibit the behaviors and values they expect from employees).	29%	30%	45%	48%	26%

Key Demographic Results

Overall % Favorable and Workload Perceptions by Manager Status:

Both managers and non-managers saw improvement in their overall engagement since the last survey.
Burnout perceptions among managers fell significantly, improving by 10pts.





Top Trends for Managers: 2026 vs. 2025

Team staffing perceptions saw the most improvement among managers, likely contributing to the improvement in burnout perceptions shown previously.

Question	2026 % Favorable	vs. 2025
My team is adequately staffed to accomplish the work expected of us.	40%	*13.7%*
**Our culture supports my health and wellbeing.	62%	*9.6%*
My team meets regularly (at least once per month) to discuss our projects and workloads.	94%	*8.8%*
**The Executive Leadership of Metropolitan demonstrates integrity.	64%	*8.6%*
I receive the training I need to perform my job effectively.	72%	*8.3%*
When the organization makes changes, I understand why.	37%	*8.2%*
I have the materials and equipment I need to do my job.	77%	*8.1%*
I am aware of Metropolitan's overall strategic initiatives.	77%	*8.0%*
My team members and I share learnings and key takeaways from trainings we participate in.	60%	*-4.1%*
My peers/team members treat each other respectfully.	82%	*-3.9%*

****High Impact**

Top Trends for Non-Managers: 2026 vs. 2025

No questions declined in favorability since the last survey and perceptions of health and wellbeing saw the greatest improvement overall.

Question	2026 % Favorable	vs. 2025
**Our culture supports my health and wellbeing.	59%	*10.0%*
**The Executive Leadership of Metropolitan demonstrates integrity.	52%	*9.5%*
My team is adequately staffed to accomplish the work expected of us.	42%	*7.9%*
**I trust that the Executive Leadership of Metropolitan has the best interest of Metropolitan's employees in mind.	40%	*7.9%*
I would recommend Metropolitan as a place to work.	76%	*6.8%*
**The Executive Leadership of Metropolitan walk their talk (exhibit the behaviors and values they expect from employees).	40%	*6.5%*
**I can confidently connect my team's performance goals to the strategic initiatives of MWD.	57%	*6.5%*

****High Impact**

Bringing It All Together

- Key Initiatives Implemented
- Action: Next Steps

Key Initiatives Implemented After 2025 Survey

- **Employee Inspection Trips:** Trips sponsored by HR and supported by External Affairs continued this year and were modified to increase the variety of experiences and be more sensitive to employee needs and operational demands.
- **Desert Employee Appreciation:** Events were held April 15, 2025 at Gene Camp, April 22, 2026 at Iron Mountain, April 29, 2026 at Eagle Mountain and May 6, 2026 at Hinds.
- **New Hire Training:** Continued focus and enhancement to the onboarding process for newly hired or promoted employes, informed by employee feedback and Manager best practices. Immediately developing employee goals drives the initial training plan, reducing the focus of on-the-job training, increases focus on structured proactive training and helps address a core area of focus for employees.
- **Employee Communications:** Launched Inside MET, the regular and comprehensive newsletter available digitally and hard copy for all employees to learn about the new employees, celebrate those who are retiring, and plug-in to key priorities and accomplishments around the District.
- **Employee Wellness and Connection:** Quarterly step challenges were launched to encourage employees to be physically active, improve their nutrition by sharing healthy recipes, and connect with each other using the dedicated online platform. Over 200 employees participated in each challenge!
- **Recruitment:** The recruitment staff surge force was hired and trained resulting in increased capacity to source and onboard more candidates faster. The team also proactively began recruitments for the 79 Board approved positions with significant reductions in the vacancy rate projected for the end of 2026.
- **Performance Evaluation Form / Process Improvements:** The data entry process for the annual evaluations was streamlined allowing for uploading of data into the system, resulting in enhanced reporting and improved data integrity.

Action: Next Steps

- **Continue to Address Manager Burnout:**
  - While burnout has decreased for people managers, one-third of managers are feeling completely overwhelmed or struggling with workload.
  - In 1-on-1 conversations ask managers: “What’s one task that you could delegate, but haven’t yet?” Challenge them to move at least one meaningful task off their plate to their team within the next 30-60 days.
  - View training through the lens of employee growth and long-term development. Ensure employees understand how new opportunities tie to future career prospects.
  - Make space for managers to connect with one another, not only to discuss common opportunities but also to genuinely connect on challenges that people managers face daily. End these sessions with clear action opportunities and next steps (don’t just give them space to vent!).

- **Continue to Address Change Management and Trust in Leadership:**
  - Less than 30% of all respondents say they understand the reasons behind change. Trust in leadership integrity improved significantly since the last survey but still has significant room for growth.
  - Link leadership messaging and decisions to impact and progress when possible. Reinforce the major priorities while pointing to signals that the plan is working as intended.
  - Escalate upward to create two-way feedback. If teams need more reassurance or investment from upper-level leaders, consider inviting key leaders to team meetings or events to interact and hear directly from employees. Connections created in these environments can have a strong impact on future engagement.

Questions

THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
1928