

# 2025 QSR Workforce Snapshot

The quick-service restaurant (QSR) sector remains one of the largest U.S. employers, and one of the most dynamic labor markets. 2025 brings **rising wage expectations**, **persistent turnover**, and a **new emphasis on technology**, fairness, and flexibility. This snapshot combines recent industry benchmarks with worker insights to illustrate how QSRs can build stability, speed, and engagement in an era of constant churn.

## Labor Snapshot

The restaurant economy is expanding again, but staffing challenges remain. Strong sales growth and record employment levels are paired with high quits and wage inflation, especially across limited-service brands.

**\$1.5**  
trillion

**projected total U.S. restaurant sales** for 2025, employing 15.9 million workers nationwide.

[National Restaurant Association, 2025](#)

**\$22.90**  
per hour

**average hourly earnings** in the Leisure & Hospitality sector (Aug 2025), a record high for QSR employers.

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025](#)

**\$3.7%**  
quits rate

**still the highest** of any major U.S. industry (Accommodation & Food Services, Aug 2025).

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025](#)

**74%**  
of hourly workers

**prefer AI-driven interviews**, citing faster response times, less bias, and ~40% quicker hiring cycles.

[Fountain Frontline Report, 2025](#)

## Turnover Reality

**Turnover remains the defining operational pressure in QSR.** While retention has improved slightly since pandemic peaks, replacement costs and early attrition continue to erode margins.

**135% average annual hourly turnover** in limited-service restaurants (Q3 2024); down from ~173% in 2022 but still among the nation's highest.

**55% yearly manager turnover** highlighting persistent leadership churn in high-volume units. (Black Box Intelligence, 2024)

**\$2.3 k average replacement cost** for one hourly employee (recruiting, onboarding, training; excludes productivity loss). (Black Box Intelligence, 2024)

**\$16.8 k manager replacement cost** for a single general manager, reflecting training and vacancy losses. (Black Box Intelligence, 2024)

**43% of hires leave within 90 days** with each replacement averaging \$7k — early attrition is now the largest driver of labor-cost inflation.

Sources: [Black Box Intelligence](#), [Fountain Frontline Report 2025](#)

## Candidate Profile & Behavior

The QSR talent pool is young, fast-moving, and highly sensitive to hiring speed. Gen Z dominates applications, and the best-performing teams win by responding quickly, automating follow-ups, and reducing friction at every step.

**70% of applicants** report higher stress due to unpredictable scheduling; burnout rises sharply where shifts change last-minute.

**6 days** median time-to-hire for team members, and **8 days for managers**.

**36%** of rejected applicants drop out due to unresponsiveness follow-ups and automated texts raise completion rates.

**3 days** is how fast top performers hire, compared with 13 days for the slowest teams, who fill fewer roles.

Source: [Fountain Fast Food Report 2024](#)