



Conferences  
for Women



2025 Conferences for Women Report

# Quiet Depletion & the Path to Re-Engagement

A second annual report based on a survey of  
the nation's largest network of women's conferences.

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# Executive Summary

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In 2024, the Conferences for Women, the nation's largest network of women's conferences surveyed its community to determine what issue was most important to them. The overwhelming #1 answer was health and wellbeing. A resounding 97.63% of respondents said they considered health and wellbeing in the workplace "extremely" or "very" important.

Recognizing that organizations that prioritize wellbeing see measurable gains in engagement, productivity, and retention, we again surveyed our community in the spring and summer of 2025. Our goal was to learn if there were significant changes over the past 12 months, what factors women saw as influencing wellbeing in the workplace, the consequences they saw as a result, and what they thought could help.

A total of 1,424 women responded to the survey. 47% of respondents identified as being in a formal leadership position, and an additional 30% identified as being in an informal leadership position.

## Here are some highlights of the challenges cited:

### Wellbeing

Roughly 40% of women said their wellbeing improved over the last year; roughly 40% said it declined. When asked to rate their wellbeing on a scale of 1–10, the average was 6.6%: not terrible, not thriving.

### Depletion

90% of women said they feel depleted at least some of the time. A significant one out of three report usually feel depleted.

### Impact on engagement, productivity and more

Respondents directly tied depletion to impacts in the workplace, with:

- 72% saying it causes lower engagement or morale
- 55% saying it decreases productivity and innovation.

### Direction

45% of women are unclear about their direction. They are questioning what they want (39%), held back by financial and personal obligations (36%), and see a lack of opportunities (35%).

### Workplace Challenges

Women said they experienced a variety of challenges in the workplace: feeling undervalued or overlooked (45%), unclear or shifting priorities (42%), and communication breakdowns (35%).

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## Highlights of the recommended solutions include:

**81% said they'd feel more engaged if their organization offered more support through CFW. Specifically, they pointed to what research shows are strong performance drivers, including:**

- Higher motivation (56.1%),
- Greater leadership and mentoring capacity (38%), and
- Increased loyalty and engagement (33.4%).

### Topics of greatest interest included:

- Leadership and influence (48%),
- Navigating uncertainty or change (42%),
- Setting boundaries and avoiding burnout (39%),
- Communication and presence (39%), and
- Career pivots or reinvention (39%).

### Among the most meaningful professional opportunities cited were:

- Skill-building (49%),
- Coaching or career guidance (46%), and Mentorship (42%).

# About the Conferences for Women

## Industry Leader in Leadership, Career Advancement & Wellbeing

**CFW is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization and industry leader** dedicated to accelerating leadership, career growth, and wellbeing across every career stage and industry. For over 25 years, individuals and organizations have turned to CFW for transformative learning experiences that drive success in a rapidly changing world.

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## Driving Impact at Scale

**Serving thousands of companies**, CFW helps strengthen retention, build organizational capacity, and foster workplace cultures where everyone can contribute fully. More than a million professionals have benefited from CFW's programs—gaining the skills, insights, and connections needed to grow and lead at every career stage.

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## How We Do It

CFW creates high-impact, transformative learning experiences through:

- **Flagship conferences** held annually in Austin, Boston, and Philadelphia—plus, a virtual national conference—that feature world-class speakers, networking, and skill-building sessions.
  - **A year-round resource hub** that offers continuous learning and support through the Career Connections Program, Women Amplified podcast, community building, and monthly expert tips and insights.
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## A Glimpse at the Numbers

- **More than 55,000 people attend** our annual in-person fall events in Austin, Boston, Philadelphia, and San Jose.
- **Thousands more participate** in our annual virtual National Conference in March.
- **Hundreds of thousands** more engage in our year-round offerings.

## What Sets Us Apart

<b>Accessibility</b>	A nonprofit offering affordable professional and personal development and connection opportunities.
<b>Community</b>	A nonpartisan organization welcoming professionals from all industries and career stages.
<b>Content Curation</b>	The most relevant, timely, and cutting-edge content, ensuring every session delivers the perfect mix of actionable takeaways and inspiration.
<b>Impact</b>	Attendees are twice as likely to receive a promotion within a year, according to a study published in the Harvard Business Review. Seven out of ten attendees reported being “more connected to others” after participating in a CFW conference, with social connection being the most significant predictor of success and happiness.
<b>Starpower and Substance</b>	Unparalleled keynote lineups and access to the nation’s top leadership, career, and wellbeing experts.

Whether you’re an individual seeking inspiration, actionable strategies, and meaningful connections or an organization committed to building organizational capacity and fostering cultures where everyone can contribute, CFW provides the inspiration, expert advice, and community to drive growth and success.

# Part I:

## Quiet Depletion

This survey asked women about how their wellbeing has changed over the past year, how they currently rate their overall wellbeing, how often they feel physically or emotionally depleted from work or life demands, what factors are contributing most to that stress or depletion, and how depletion shows up in their lives and organizations. It also explored how clear women feel about their next career step or direction and what factors are driving uncertainty about the future.

Here are some highlights, followed by detailed findings:

- **Roughly 40% said their wellbeing improved** compared to a year ago; roughly 40% said it declined.
- **On a scale of 1–10, the average wellbeing score was 6.6.** This indicates that respondents are not terrible, but not thriving.
- **90% of respondents** feel depleted at work at least some of the time. One-third usually feel depleted.
- Uncertainty about the future is the greatest driver of stress and depletion among respondents, topping work and family pressure.
- **94% of respondents** say depletion affects them in serious ways. Two-thirds say it affects their health, energy, motivation, creativity, or focus.
- **92% of respondents** said they see depletion or burnout as having a noticeable impact in the workplace through the following factors:
  - 72% noticed lower engagement or morale,
  - 55% noticed decreased productivity and innovation.
- **45% of respondents are unclear about their direction.** 39% are questioning what they want, 36% feel held back by financial or personal obligations, and 35% see a lack of opportunities.
- **43% cited feeling undervalued or overlooked** as their greatest current workplace challenge, 42% cited unclear or shifting priorities, and 35% cited communication breakdowns.

# Wellbeing Compared to 2024

Roughly 40% of women surveyed said their wellbeing improved compared to a year ago; roughly 40% said it declined.

**They were asked:**

“Compared to a year ago, how has your overall wellbeing or balance changed?”

Of the 1,423 who responded to this question:



Asked to rate their overall wellbeing on a scale of 1–10, the average rating among the 1,423 women who responded was 6.6, indicating that they are neither terrible nor thriving.

# Depletion at Work

90% of women surveyed feel depleted at work at least some of the time. One-third usually feel depleted.

**They were asked:**

“How often do you feel physically or emotionally depleted from work or life demands?”

Of the 1,423 who responded to this question:





## Drivers of Depletion

Uncertainty about the future was the greatest driver of stress and depletion among those surveyed. Personal or family responsibilities came in second, followed by financial pressure and workplace culture and dynamics.

### Specifically, when asked:

"Which of the following best describes what's currently contributing to stress or depletion in your life."

**59.52%** said Uncertainty about the future

**51.79%** said Personal or family responsibilities

**43.08%** said Financial pressure

**39.92%** said Workplace culture or dynamics

**37.88%** said Workload or unrealistic expectations

**20.17%** said Lack of control or autonomy

**12.72%** said Other, providing reasons such as politics, health issues, relationships, and uncertainty in the job market.

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## Impact of Depletion

94% of women surveyed say depletion affects them in serious ways. Two-thirds say it affects their health, energy, motivation, creativity, or focus.

### They were asked:

"How has this stress or depletion shown up in your life? (Select all that apply)"

### Of the 1,423 who responded to this question:

**67.39%** said Impact on health or energy

**63.32%** said Feeling less motivated or creative

**55.73%** said Difficulty focusing

**42.94%** said Feeling disconnected or isolated

**35.35%** said Considering a career change or break

**9.14%** said Other, noting affects such as exhaustion and overwhelm, anxiety, loss of fitness, impact on relationships, sleeplessness, depression, and other health issues

**5.41%** said No major impact

## Here's a sampling of what women surveyed had to say on the impact of depletion on their lives:

- "I have three young children and work full time. My company recently reverted my remote job to full time in office within one month's notice which has been extremely difficult for my family to adjust to the changes."
- "I am older, still working and helping to take care of my grandchildren. I am afraid to stop working due to finances and of course do not know what the future has in store."
- "It makes me want to take more time off, I end up logging into work later than I wanted to because I struggle to want to log in. I also feel like I am not as productive as I could/should be."
- "I was less focused, less motivated, angry at my job and myself. My job demanded me to be on site everyday and I had a long commute, had to pick up kids at the end of the day. I missed meetings that went beyond 5 PM and was always rushing. My work stress bled into my personal life and both suffered."
- "I find I have a lack of initiative for making improvements. I am less motivated to make changes and implement a long-term strategy because I don't see myself here long term. I can see how amazing we could make things and improve how things are run, but I just run into so many speed bumps that I am discouraged."

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### They were also asked:

"From your perspective, how does burnout or sustained stress among employees most affect your organization or team? (Select up to 2)"

### Of the 1,423 who responded to this question:

71.12% said Lower engagement or morale	22.91% said Difficulty attracting or retaining talent
55.31% said Decreased productivity or innovation	5.06% said Other, noting affects such as coworkers taking more leave, communication breakdowns, and irritability
40.62% said Strained team dynamics	4.50% said No noticeable impact
30.08% said Higher turnover or absenteeism	
7.66% said Not sure	

## Here's a sampling of what women surveyed had to say on the impact of burnout or stress on their workplace:

- "If there is low morale or low energy, employees don't want to stay in that area or work on that team. If people are not excited to come to work to hit their goals, they will call in sick more often and the day-to-day work will be put on another person who may already have a full plate of work."
- "Overwhelmed people care less about going the extra mile and only do the bare minimum to 'keep the lights on.' There is no extra energy or desire to do creative work on top of an overwhelming workload. My team needs the brain space and dedicated time to do work involving creativity in a reduced-stress environment. Burnout = pessimism, survival mode. Balance = optimism, innovation mode."
- "People at my workplace are highly dedicated but they are bitter about the current climate and pay. Changes for the better are often slow to be implemented."
- "Folks tend to lash out at the people closest to them; we spend 40 hours a week together."
- "We're in survival mode. This means we're at the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It means we don't give each other as much grace in times of stress, that we are more likely to misunderstand each other, and that we're only able to achieve the bare minimum. This is such a contrast from who we were as a team a year ago."

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## Respondents were asked if they would be willing to share a short story or moment that captures what navigating burnout or stress has looked like for them:

- "I have a reason to cry almost every day. I will cry on my way into work, uninspired by the people I'm about to interact with, the stress associated, and the lack of support I receive. I cry on my way home, reflecting from the day, the constant struggles with getting people to work with me and be a part of the solution. I cry in the middle of the day as the stress and lack of support continues."
- "Coming home from work and only having the energy to zone out in front of the television instead of doing something productive or creative. Forcing myself to dedicate quiet time to reading a book on turning off all the other "noise" and even taking on tiny creative projects helps more than you would think."
- "There have been a few days recently where I just went back to bed midday as I was exhausted and overwhelmed. What's helping me recover now is setting aside some time to get more exercise and be outdoors. I started taking a new dance class with a friend that I'm loving. Also reaching out to some friends I felt I was losing touch with and reprioritizing time with women I enjoy."

## Searching for Clarity

45% of women surveyed are unclear about their direction.

### They were asked:

"How clear are you about your next career step or direction?"

### Of the 1,306 who responded:

<b>17.92%</b> were Very clear	<b>36.98%</b> were Somewhat clear	<b>27.34%</b> were Unclear	<b>17.76%</b> were Feeling stuck or unsure of what's next
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39% are questioning what they want, 36% feel held back by financial or personal obligations, and 35% see a lack of opportunities.

### Women were also asked:

"What factors are contributing most to your sense of career uncertainty? (Select 1–2)"

### Of the 1,306 who responded:

<b>30.40%</b> said Desire to make a change, but unsure how	<b>35.83%</b> said Personal obligations or financial pressure
<b>34.92%</b> said Lack of internal opportunities	<b>22.28%</b> said Rapid change in my industry or role
<b>15.16%</b> said Limited feedback or unclear expectations	<b>15.31%</b> said Other, noting factors such as health, retirement, and uncertainty in the job market
<b>39.20%</b> said Questioning what I want from my career	

### Here's a sampling of what women surveyed had to say on their challenges with career advancement and direction:

- "Limited feedback because of working with a small team that is overloaded and has to keep moving and where time is not given to meaningful conversations. Questioning what I want from my career because I don't have a clear vision for myself or how to get a clearer vision of what fits my personality, work style and would bring growth and career progression."
- "There's a career path where I currently am, but it's not the direction I want to go in. I need to pivot, but unsure how to do it."
- "The biotech industry is in a downturn right now while at the same time needing to absorb all the laid off government workers as well as local companies laying off employees. While I have good severance, I still feel like I only have a certain amount of time to find a new job."

- “I am tired of being in careers where the motivation by the company itself seems less focused on the customer or product, and more on internal politics. And I have worked at enough different companies in different industries to say it is not unique to my profession.”
- “I’ve been “stuck” in the same position/group for 6 years. I have an intense desire to move to learn more and share knowledge across modalities, but I feel that I would not be accepted into a group where I do not have experience and am uncertain about leaving the group that I am most familiar with.”

## Difficult Work Environments

43% of women surveyed cited feeling undervalued or overlooked as their greatest current workplace challenge, 42% cited unclear or shifting priorities, and 35% cited communication breakdowns.

### They were asked:

“Which aspects of your current work environment feel most challenging right now? (Select up to 2)”

### Of the 1,306 who responded:

**34.76%** said Communication breakdowns

**25.11%** said Lack of recognition or feedback

**21.90%** said Conflict or tension among teams

**42.04%** said Unclear or shifting priorities

**42.65%** said Feeling undervalued or overlooked

**15.31%** said Other, noting aspects such as understaffing, high workload, anxiety over layoffs, raises not keeping up with inflation, and poor management.

**22.43%** said Isolation or lack of connection

### Here’s a sampling of what women surveyed had to say about their greatest workplace challenges:

- “There is too much information coming at me and I feel overwhelmed. I used to know what I received (even if I just glanced at it) but now I don’t see it all, and it’s very scary”
- “I work with very driven and motivated people who are smart and confident in their abilities. Sometimes I feel like I don’t belong.”
- “Cross-departmental communication is really hard to do well and there is almost always miscommunication that creates challenges for various teams. Lack of alignment on priorities creates a lot of churn and toil, and detracts from morale.”

- "I ask questions of my supervisors and they do not seem to know the answers to my questions or how to help me find the answer. Today, I was asked about being at a meeting in Teams and I had been there the whole time."
- "I feel my years of experience are overlooked. I am treated the same as new staff members who do not have any work experience. When I try to give my team advice or examples of how something worked, they brush me off."
- "I love fast-paced environments, but excessive scope and understaffing without support can make it stressful beyond a point that is reasonable."

## Part II:

# The Path to Reengagement

This survey asked women what would most help them feel recharged or supported in their work and careers; how additional support through CFW could impact their motivation, engagement, and leadership; what resources or opportunities would help them move forward with greater confidence; and what types of professional development they consider most valuable right now. It also explored whether women currently see themselves in leadership roles, formally or informally.

**Here are some highlights, followed by detailed findings:**

- **46%** of respondents said work that feels meaningful or aligned would help them overcome their depletion. They are also looking for opportunities to reset or reconnect through events or learning (**42%**) and more flexible work options (**39%**). Only 21% said stress management tools would be useful.
- **81%** of respondents said it would help if their organization offered more support through CFW. They said this would make them feel more motivated (**56.1%**), better able to lead and mentor others (**38%**), and make them more loyal or engaged (**33.4%**).
- In order to move forward in their careers with confidence, respondents are looking for skill-building opportunities (**49%**), coaching or career guidance (**46%**), and mentorship (**42%**).
- The forms of professional development respondents identified as most helpful were related to leadership and influence (**48%**) and navigating uncertainty or change (**42%**).

## What Would Help?

46% of women surveyed said work that feels meaningful or aligned would help them overcome their depletion. They are also looking for opportunities to reset or reconnect through events or learning (42%) and more flexible work options (39%). Only 21% said stress management tools would be useful.

### They were asked:

"What helps you feel most recharged or restored? (Select up to 3)"

### Of the 1,243 who responded:

71.20% said Time off or vacation	33.95% said Attending supportive professional development conferences
57.84% said Physical activity or movement	31.78% said Creative or spiritual practices
56.64% said Flexibility in schedule	3.14% said Other, suggesting better pay, time for hobbies, hybrid work, more sleep, and hitting the lottery.
51.49% said Connection with others	
47.39% said Quiet time or solitude	

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### They were also asked:

"Which of the following would most support your wellbeing moving forward? (Select up to 2)"

### Of the 1,243 who responded:

45.94% said Work that feels meaningful or aligned	21.40% said Peer support or shared experiences
42.32% said Opportunities to reset or reconnect through events or learning	20.60% said Skills or resources for managing stress and energy
39.10% said More flexible work options	5.15% said Other, suggesting a better work life balance, better pay, and recognition and realistic expectations from managers
35.40% said More support or empathy from leadership	
29.20% said Clearer boundaries or expectations	



Here's a sampling of what women surveyed had to say on **what would help them overcome their depletion and support their wellbeing in the future:**

- "Having a sense of fulfillment is important. Yes, I am being paid for any work I do even if leadership changes direction, but it feels like a waste if I constantly do work that's discarded."
  - "Meaning and clear purpose is what I most need right now"
  - "Right now my main issue within my workplace is poor leadership. Correcting that would make a world of difference"
  - "Just to learn new skills."
  - "I haven't had a professional development opportunity in several years, just nose to the project grindstone."
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## Support Through CFW

81% of women surveyed said it would help if their organization offered more support through CFW. They said this would make them feel more motivated (56.1%), better able to lead and mentor others (38%), and make them more loyal or engaged (33.4%).

### Women were asked:

"If your workplace offered more support for wellbeing and balance through CFW, how would that impact you? (Select all that apply)"

### Of the 1,243 who responded:

**56.07%** said I'd feel more motivated

**37.97%** said I'd be better able to lead or mentor others

**33.31%** said I'd feel more loyal or engaged

**20.27%** said I'd be more likely to stay

**19.39%** said It wouldn't make a difference

**8.61%** said Other, stating that they'd be better able to collaborate, find mentors, and feel supported

The following are quotes from women surveyed on the impact of CFW on their professional and personal lives:

- “I joined a CFW conference in the past and it felt like I found my tribe.”
  - “The content CFW has provided in the past year has influenced the way I work, mentor others, and view myself. Having access to that type of content on a more frequent basis would definitely improve my wellbeing and my work and management skills.”
  - “CFW offers a supportive network of like minded individuals. It is always helpful to learn how others manage challenging situations.”
  - “Every time I attend a leadership or development meeting I feel more energized and feel a larger connection to others. I have had that experience with CFW.”
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## Moving Forward with Confidence

In order to move forward in their careers with confidence, women surveyed are looking for skill-building opportunities (49%), coaching or career guidance (46%), and mentorship (42%).

### They were asked:

“What would most help you move forward with confidence in your career? (Select up to 2)”

### Of the 1,142 who responded:

**48.86%** said Skill-building opportunities

**45.80%** said Coaching or career guidance

**41.33%** said Mentorship or sponsorship

**36.60%** said Time or space to reflect and plan

**27.50%** said Network of peers who share goals

**24.87%** said Role models or relatable success stories

**4.82%** said Other, suggesting better job opportunities, more possibilities for advancement, or that they already have the confidence needed to advance in their career

The forms of professional development women surveyed identified as most helpful were related to leadership and influence (48%) and navigating uncertainty or change (42%).

**They were asked:**

"What types of professional development feel most valuable to you right now? (Select up to 3)"

**Of the 1,142 who responded:**

47.81% said Leadership and influence	25.31% said Conversations with industry leaders or change makers
41.94% said Navigating uncertainty or change	23.56% said Managing others or teams
39.14% said Setting boundaries and avoiding burnout	2.63% said Other, suggesting development of technology-related skills and more in-person events
38.79% said Communication and presence	
38.62% said Career pivots or reinvention	
26.09% said Financial or business skills	

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**Respondents were also asked:**

"If your organization supported your career development more actively, what would that allow you to do or become?"

**Here's a sampling of their responses:**

- "If I felt upward mobility was a possibility and I felt supported I would work harder and be a lot more motivated."
- "A really good effective leader and change agent."
- "It would allow me to step up and be used to my full potential."
- "Lead more effectively, communicate better and be more confident."
- "Take more courses online. Attend more career development seminars."
- "Assist the community more effectively."
- "Feel more accomplished and satisfied at work; more motivated rather than tired."
- "Expand my current knowledge base and expertise in related fields."
- "Anything I want!"

# Part III:

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this report reveals the extent and cost of depletion to both individuals and organizations, with 90% of women said they feel depleted at least some of the time, leading to lower:

- Engagement or morale
- Productivity and innovation.

**The good news is that the report also highlights what can help: targeted support through CFW, which respondents said would:**

- Increase motivation,
- Strengthen leadership capacity, and
- Boost loyalty and engagement.

**Respondents were especially interested in professional development opportunities that can help them improve their:**

- Leadership
- Navigation uncertainty and change,
- Capacity to avoid burnout, and
- Communication and presence skills.

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## CFW is committed to meeting these needs through its:

- Flagship **conferences held annually in Austin, Boston, Philadelphia, and Silicon Valley**—plus a national virtual conference—that feature world-class speakers, networking, and skill-building sessions.
- **A year-round resource hub** that offers continuous learning and support through the Career Connections Program, Women Amplified podcast, community building, and monthly expert tips and insights.

To learn more, contact Lisa Bennett, Director of Communications, at  
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