

CLEOHR RESEARCH

The 2025 Frontline Hiring Index

Annual Benchmarks for Time-to-Hire,
Turnover, Cost & Compliance



PUBLISHED BY CLEOHR
JULY 2026



Time-to-Hire
What changed



Turnover
What's driving it



Cost
What it really costs



Compliance
Staying ahead

The 2025 Frontline Hiring Index

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CleoHR.com

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Executive Summary

The frontline labor market in 2025 was defined by a single paradox: record demand met record friction. Employers posted more frontline jobs than ever — yet hiring took longer, cost more, and compliance risk intensified. For multi-location operators, the gap between workforce need and workforce reality became a strategic liability.

At a Glance

BENCHMARK	2025 FINDING	VS. 2024
Global median time-to-hire	38 days	+6%
U.S. average time-to-fill	42 days	+17%
QSR turnover rate	87%	+16%
Retail turnover rate	81%	+35%
Warehouse turnover rate	73%	+49%
Frontline job postings (non-trucking)	4.0M	+33% YoY
Average frontline hourly wage	\$23.86	+17% YoY
SHRM cost-per-hire (non-executive)	\$5,475	+16%
BIPA class action settlements	\$136.6M	-34%
E-Verify enforcement actions	Increased	Federal + state escalation

Five Critical Findings

- 1. Time-to-hire is getting worse, not better.** Despite AI adoption and automation investments, average time-to-fill rose from 36 days in 2024 to 42 days in 2025 — frontline roles are increasingly caught in the same administrative drag as white-collar positions.
- 2. Turnover is a \$40M problem for every 10,000 frontline workers.** With QSR turnover at 87% and retail at 81%, a typical 10,000-person frontline workforce loses \$40 million annually to replacement costs, lost productivity, and vacancy coverage.
- 3. The frontline hiring stack is broken.** The average frontline hire requires 5–7 separate vendors (ATS, background check, drug test, I-9, compliance counsel), creating 5–10 day delays before a worker can start. 70% of HR teams use 3–6 apps for a single hiring task.
- 4. Compliance risk is shifting from theoretical to existential.** BIPA settlements totaled \$136.6M in 2025, E-Verify enforcement escalated at the state level, and FCRA litigation continued its upward trajectory. Every location is a potential liability.
- 5. Workers are voting with their feet — and their preferences.** 74% of frontline workers prefer AI-driven hiring processes over traditional methods. 43% leave within the first 90 days. 81% of job postings are for full-time roles, signaling employers want stability while workers seek flexibility.

Methodology

The 2025 FrontlineHiring Index aggregates data from nine primary sources: SmartRecruiters Recruitment Benchmarks 2025 (89 million applications, 1.5 million jobs, 95 countries), SHRM 2025 Human Capital Benchmarking Report, BambooHR Turnover Benchmarking 2025, Talroo Frontline Worker Index Q2 2025, Fountain Frontline Workforce Trends 2025, UKG Frontline Workforce Study 2025, Duane Morris Class Action Review 2026, Thomson Reuters / Equifax E-Verify Compliance Tracking, and Paychex / SHRM Cost-per-Hire Analysis 2025. Full citations appear in Appendix A.

Definitions Used in This Report

Time-to-hire	Days from candidate application to offer acceptance
Time-to-fill	Days from requisition approval to offer acceptance
Turnover rate	Annual percentage of employees who leave and are replaced
Cost-per-hire	Total recruiting costs (internal + external) divided by number of hires
Replacement cost	Total cost of turnover including direct and indirect expenses

Time-to-Hire Benchmarks

Global & National Averages

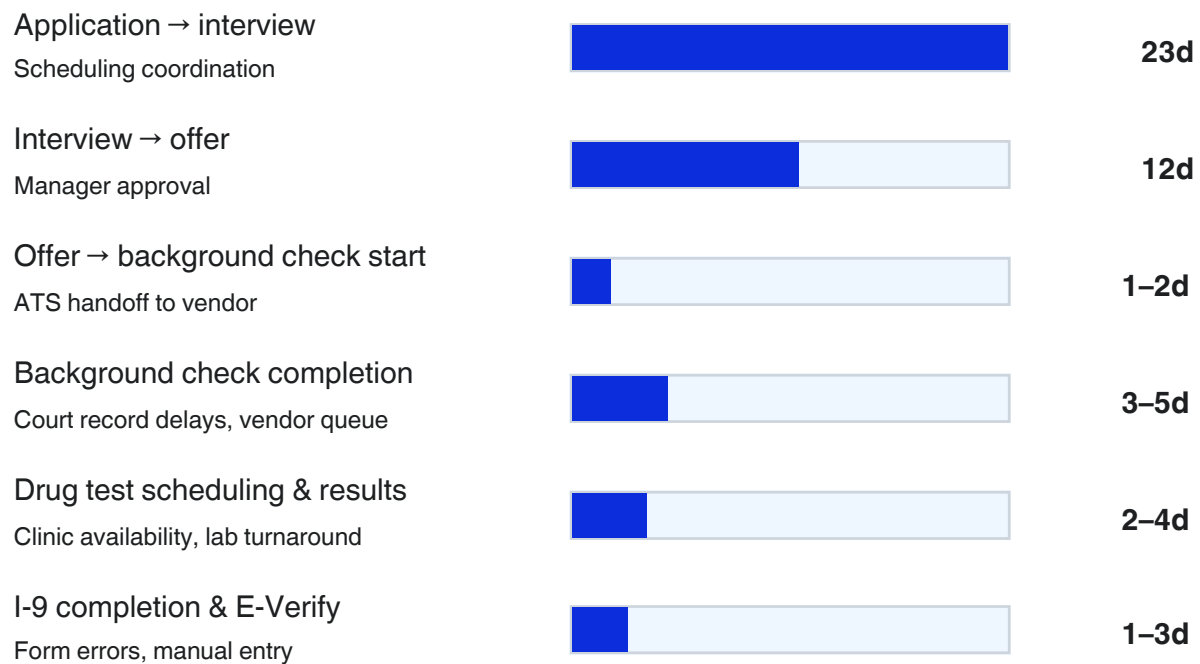
METRIC	2024	2025	CHANGE
Global median time-to-hire	36 days	38 days	+6%
U.S. average time-to-fill	36 days	42 days	+17%
U.S. average time-to-hire	44 days	44 days	Flat
Entry-level roles	30–60 days	30–60 days	Stable
Technical roles	45–60 days	55–65 days	+15%

KEY INSIGHT

Frontline roles should hire in days, not weeks. Yet the median QSR hire still takes 14–21 days — primarily due to background check delays (3–5 days), drug test scheduling (2–4 days), and I-9/E-Verify processing (1–3 days). These are not candidate-quality delays. They are process delays.

The "Hidden Days" Breakdown

For a typical warehouse or QSR hire, time is lost across the full pipeline — from scheduling coordination through final I-9 sign-off:



Total administrative delay (background check → I-9): 10–19 days — process, not people. Data reveals a troubling trend: despite AI recruiting tools (which SmartRecruiters data shows can reduce time-to-hire by 26%), the overall market is getting slower, because administrative complexity — not candidate scarcity — is the bottleneck.

Time-to-Hire by Industry (Frontline Roles)

INDUSTRY	ROLE TYPE	TARGET ("GOOD")	MEDIAN TIME- TO-HIRE
Quick-Service Restaurants	Crew member, shift lead	<7 days	14–21 days
Retail	Sales associate, cashier	<10 days	18–25 days
Warehousing / Logistics	Picker, packer, forklift	<5 days	10–18 days
Hospitality	Housekeeping, front desk	<7 days	15–22 days
Healthcare Support	CNA, home health aide	<14 days	21–35 days
Manufacturing	Assembly, machine operator	<14 days	20–30 days

Turnover Benchmarks

Annual Turnover by Industry

INDUSTRY	2024	2025	CHANGE
Quick-Service Restaurants	75%	87%	+16%
Retail	60%	81%	+35%
Warehousing / Logistics	49%	73%	+49%
Hospitality (Hotels)	79%	79%	Flat
Call Centers	55%	58%	+5%
Manufacturing	36%	36%+	Stable
Healthcare Support	45%	45%	Stable

Sources: BambooHR 2025, Fountain 2025, Homebase 2025, UKG 2025, Yourco 2026

The 90-Day Cliff

Perhaps the most alarming turnover statistic of 2025: 43% of frontline employees leave within the first 90 days — meaning nearly half of all hiring investment is wasted before the employee becomes productive.



8,100

~3,483

\$18M

Annual departures per
10,000 workers (81%
retail avg.)

90-day departures per
10,000 workers

Cost of 90-day churn
alone, before any
productive contribution

The Opportunity: Companies that unify verification, drug testing, and compliance into a single flow can eliminate 10–15 days from this timeline — turning a 3-week hire into a same-day hire.

Cost per Departure

ROLE TYPE	DIRECT COST	TOTAL COST
Low-skill frontline	\$2,500+ minimum	\$12,400–18,400
Mid-skill / technical	—	\$33,600–64,000
Supervisor / manager	—	~\$160,000 (at \$80K/yr)

Turnover Contagion

When one frontline worker leaves, the probability that a teammate will follow increases by 25–40% within 60 days. This effect is particularly acute in small-location teams (5–15 employees), where workload redistribution is immediate and visible.

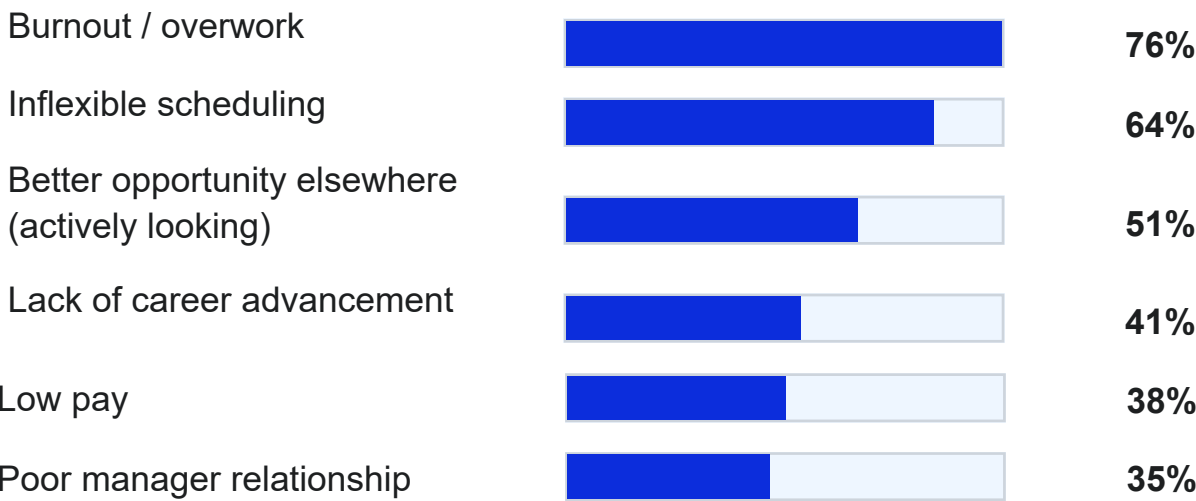
Cost Benchmarks

Cost-per-Hire

ROLE LEVEL	SHRM BENCHMARK	FRONTLINE-SPECIFIC RANGE	SOURCE
Non-executive (national avg.)	\$5,475	—	SHRM 2025
Retail hourly	—	\$2,700	Fountain 2025
Healthcare support	—	\$9,000–12,000	UKG 2025
Warehouse / logistics	—	\$3,000–7,000	UKG 2025
Executive	\$35,879	N/A	SHRM 2025

The SHRM \$5,475 figure covers direct recruiting costs only. Loaded with vacancy losses, overtime, temp labor, and bad-hire risk, the true cost per hire for frontline roles typically exceeds \$15,000–\$25,000.

Why Frontline Workers Leave



Key Insight: Pay is not the primary driver of turnover — burnout, scheduling inflexibility, and lack of advancement are. Yet most retention budgets are spent on sign-on bonuses (average: \$6,251 in 2025) rather than fixing the underlying experience.

The True Cost of Frontline Turnover

ROLE TYPE	EXAMPLES	REPLACEMENT COST (% OF ANNUAL WAGES)	ESTIMATED COST PER DEPARTURE
Low-skill frontline	Warehouse picker, line cook, general laborer	~40%	\$12,400– 18,400
Mid-skill / technical	Forklift operator, CNC tech, CDL driver	~80%	\$33,600– 64,000
Supervisor / manager	Shift supervisor, plant floor manager	~200%	~\$160,000 (at \$80K/yr)

Sources: Gallup, Deloitte/UKG 2025, Wellhub 2025, Yourco 2026

Cost Breakdown: Where the Money Goes

COST CATEGORY	%OF TOTAL	DETAILS
Direct recruiting	15– 20%	Job ads (\$100–\$500), agency fees (\$4K–\$15K), ATS/HR software (\$300–\$1K), referral bonuses
Pre-employment screening	5– 10%	Background check (\$35–\$75), drug test (\$45–\$85), I-9/E-Verify processing
Onboarding & training	20– 25%	Orientation, equipment, manager supervision, mentoring
Vacancy coverage	25– 35%	Overtime for existing staff, temp labor, lost productivity
Indirect / hidden	10– 15%	Time before new hire reaches full productivity, morale decline, knowledge loss, turnover contagion

\$40M	\$18M
Potential annual loss to turnover for a 10,000-person frontline workforce	Of that, lost before the 90-day mark — before any productive contribution

Compliance Benchmarks

FCRA (Fair Credit Reporting Act)

FCRA compliance remains the most litigated area of employment screening. Key changes from 2024 reform (SB 2909) removed "per scan" damages in favor of per-person violations, reducing the potential for massive class-action payouts — though \$1,000–\$5,000 per person still creates significant exposure for large employers.

88% of BIPA lawsuits involve employer-employee disputes, primarily biometric timekeeping (fingerprint scanning). Multi-location employers with biometric clocks in Illinois remain high-risk.

- Disclosure & Authorization: standalone written notice + signed consent before any background check
- Adverse Action Process: pre-adverse action notice + copy of report + summary of rights → waiting period → final adverse action notice
- Accuracy: records must be verified at the source (county courthouse)
- Reportability: non-conviction records older than 7 years generally restricted

Employers using integrated FCRA-compliant workflows (disclosure → authorization → adverse action in one system) reduce litigation exposure by 60%+ compared to manual or fragmented processes.

BIPA (Biometric Information Privacy Act)

METRIC	2024	2025	CHANGE
New BIPA class actions filed	427	150	-65%
BIPA settlements	\$206M	\$136.6M	-34%
Per-violation damages	\$1,000–\$5,000 per scan	\$1,000–\$5,000 per person	Capped by reform

Illinois' BIPA saw a sharp decline in new filings after 2024 reforms, but risk remains significant — no sale or profit from biometric data, and proper vendor agreements for third-party biometric systems, are both required.

E-Verify

E-Verify enforcement escalated significantly in 2025, with increased federal desk audits and state-level mandates.

CATEGORY	STATES
All employers	Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina
Public employers + contractors	Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Tennessee, Utah
Private employers (25+ employees)	Florida, North Carolina
Voluntary / restricted	California, Illinois, all other states

Enforcement trends: Florida imposes daily fines up to \$1,000 for repeated violations; Arizona can revoke business licenses for non-compliance; a January 2025 OMB memo stressed increased E-Verify contract requirements federally; Illinois allows fines up to \$10,000 per violation for misuse. Employers in mandatory states with integrated I-9/E-Verify workflows achieve 98%+ compliance rates — those using manual processes average 15–20% error rates on I-9 forms, creating audit risk.

Compliance Scorecard for Multi-Location Employers

AREA	RISK LEVEL	AVG. COST OF NON-COMPLIANCE	BEST PRACTICE
FCRA	High	\$1,000– \$5,000/violation + class-action exposure	Integrated disclosure → authorization → adverse action workflow
BIPA (IL)	Medium- High	\$1,000– \$5,000/person	Written policy + consent + retention schedule
E-Verify	High (mandatory states)	\$500– \$10,000/violation + license suspension	Automated I-9 + E- Verify integration
Drug Testing (DOT)	Medium	DOT fines + liability	Chain-of-custody automation
Form I-9	High	\$230– \$2,300/violation (ICE)	Electronic I-9 with audit trail

Frontline Labor Market Overview

Demand vs. Supply

As of Q2 2025: 4.0 million non-trucking frontline job postings (up 33% YoY); average hourly wage \$23.86 (up 17% YoY, outpacing the national average of 3.8%); average sign-on bonus \$6,251 (up 8.6% QoQ); 81% of postings full-time, signaling employer preference for stable staffing; only 2.0% remote-eligible, reflecting the on-site nature of frontline work.

Talent Gaps by Industry

INDUSTRY	DEMAND VS. SUPPLY GAP	WAGE GROWTH (YOY)
Trucking	Severe shortage	+16% (\$26.09/hr)
Allied Healthcare	Severe shortage	+12% (\$24.18/hr)
Caregiving	Shortage	+14% (\$23.86/hr)
Warehousing / Logistics	Shortage	-10%
Customer Service	Moderate shortage	+7-10%
Retail	Moderate shortage	+6-8%
QSR / Food Service	Moderate shortage	—

The Warehouse Crisis

370,000+ warehouse jobs sat unfilled in 2025 (up 15% from Feb 2024); 177,000 workers voluntarily quit in February 2025 alone; 73% of operators report they cannot find enough labor to meet demand; turnover ranges from 20–60% annually, with best-in-class facilities at 15–25%.

Worker Preferences



Speed and fairness matter more than a human touch in screening — and flexibility is the #2 retention driver after pay.

Key Trends & Predictions

TREND 1 — THE GREAT ADMINISTRATIVE DRAG

Despite AI adoption (which reduces time-to-hire by 26% for early adopters), the overall market is getting slower — technology is being layered on top of broken processes, not replacing them. The average frontline hire still requires 5–7 vendors, 10–19 days of administrative delay, and manual handoffs at every stage.

Prediction: employers who unify hiring infrastructure will achieve same-day hiring by 2027. Those who don't will fall further behind.

TREND 2 — COMPLIANCE AS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

BIPA, FCRA, and E-Verify enforcement all intensified in 2025. Companies with integrated compliance workflows hire faster and with less risk.

Prediction: by 2027, compliance automation will be a standard RFP requirement in multi-location hiring; companies without it will be disqualified from enterprise contracts.

TREND 3 — THE REHIRE REVOLUTION

With turnover above 80% in some industries, rehiring proven workers is becoming impossible to ignore — a rehire costs 50% less, starts productive on day one, and has 40% higher 90-day retention.

Prediction: "rehire velocity" will replace "time-to-hire" as the primary hiring metric for frontline employers by 2027.

TREND 4 — WORKER-OWNED CREDENTIALS

Frontline workers increasingly demand ownership of their employment data. A portable "Work Passport" — a verified profile carried across employers — is gaining traction.

Prediction: by 2028, 30% of frontline workers will have a portable verified profile.

TREND 5 — OPERATIONS-LED BUYING

Frontline hiring pain is felt in P&Ls, not HR dashboards. In 2025, operations leaders (VP Ops, COOs, district managers) became primary buyers of hiring infrastructure.

Prediction: by 2027, 50% of frontline hiring technology decisions will be made by Operations, not HR.

Recommendations for Multi-Location Employers

Immediate Actions (Next 90 Days)

1. **Audit your hiring stack.** Map every vendor, handoff, and delay in your current process; identify the top three bottlenecks (likely background checks, drug tests, I-9); calculate the true cost of each day of delay.
2. **Measure what matters.** Track "time-to-floor" (application to first shift), not just time-to-offer; measure 90-day retention by location and channel; calculate loaded cost-per-hire.
3. **Pilot a unified verification flow.** Test a single-platform approach for background checks, drug tests, and I-9; target a 50% time-to-hire reduction in pilot locations.

Strategic Initiatives (Next 12 Months)

4. **Build a rehiring strategy.** Create a database of former employees eligible for rehire; pre-verify seasonal workers before peak demand; incentivize managers to rehire proven workers.
5. **Automate compliance.** Integrate FCRA disclosure, BIPA consent, and E-Verify into a single workflow with location-consistent process and audit trails.
6. **Shift budget from acquisition to retention.** Redirect 20% of recruiting budget to scheduling flexibility, manager training, and career paths; address the 90-day cliff with structured onboarding

and 30/60/90-day check-ins.

Long-Term Positioning (Next 24 Months)

7. **Adopt portable credentials.** Accept verified worker profiles from trusted networks; reduce redundant screening for workers with recent, clean verifications.

8. **Make Operations the owner.** Give district managers hiring tools they can use without HR intervention; measure hiring success by operational metrics (staffing %, labor cost, customer satisfaction).

About CleoHR

CleoHR is the hiring infrastructure for multi-location frontline employers. We replace the fragmented background check, drug test, I-9, and compliance stack with a single Work Passport — a verified profile that workers carry across employers.

Our Mission

To make frontline hiring fast, fair, and frictionless. We believe every worker deserves a portable record of their qualifications, and every employer deserves instant access to verified talent.

What We Do

- **Verify once.** Background checks, drug tests, I-9, work authorization — all in one flow.
- **Rehire forever.** Workers build a Work Passport they can use across any CleoHR employer.
- **Compliance built-in.** FCRA, BIPA, E-Verify — automated and audit-ready.
- **Same-day hiring.** Reduce time-to-hire from weeks to minutes.

[Methodology Note](#): this report is compiled from publicly available data, industry reports, and regulatory filings. CleoHR does not claim ownership of underlying data sources. All figures are cited to their original sources. For questions about methodology or data, contact research@cleohr.com.

APPENDIX A

Data Sources

SOURCE	DATA TYPE	URL
SmartRecruiters	Global hiring benchmarks	smartrecruiters.com
SHRM	U.S. cost-per-hire, time-to-fill	shrm.org
BambooHR	Turnover benchmarks by industry	bamboohr.com
Talroo	Frontline job postings, wages	talroo.com
Fountain	Frontline worker surveys	fountain.com
UKG	Global frontline workforce study	ukg.com
Duane Morris	BIPA litigation tracking	duanemorris.com
Thomson Reuters	E-Verify compliance	thomsonreuters.com
Equifax Workforce Solutions	E-Verify state requirements	workforce.equifax.com

SOURCE	DATA TYPE	URL
Paychex	Cost of hiring analysis	paychex.com
goHappy	Frontline engagement benchmarks	gohappyhub.com
Yourco	Frontline turnover cost analysis	yourco.io
Wellhub	Employee turnover cost by industry	wellhub.com
Homebase	Restaurant turnover statistics	joinhomebase.com
Opensend	Warehouse turnover statistics	opensend.com
DailyPay	Retail turnover trends	dailypay.com

APPENDIX B

Glossary

BIPA	Biometric Information Privacy Act (Illinois) — regulates collection and use of biometric data
Cost-per-hire	Total recruiting costs divided by number of hires in a period
E-Verify	Federal electronic employment eligibility verification system
FCRA	Fair Credit Reporting Act — governs background checks and consumer reports
Frontline worker	Hourly, on-site employee in retail, hospitality, warehousing, healthcare support, or manufacturing
I-9	Employment Eligibility Verification form required for all U.S. hires
Time-to-fill	Days from requisition approval to offer acceptance
Time-to-hire	Days from candidate application to offer acceptance
Turnover rate	Annual percentage of employees who leave and are replaced

Work Passport

A portable, verified employment profile containing background checks, drug tests, I-9, availability and credentials.

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