

# State by state, data shows where more Americans are quitting their jobs

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## FULL TEXT

Report adds to portrait of changing labor market as workers gain leverage

Kentucky, Idaho, South Dakota and Iowa reported the highest increases in the rates of workers who quit their jobs in August, according to a new glimpse of quit rates in the labor market released Friday.

The largest increase in the number of quitters happened in Georgia, where 35,000 more people left their jobs.

Overall, the states with the highest rates of workers quitting their jobs were Georgia, Kentucky and Idaho.

The report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics builds out a portrait of August's labor market, with historic levels of people leaving jobs and a near-record number of openings showing the leverage workers have in the new economy. It offers the first detailed insight into the state-by-state geography of this year's Great Resignation.

"It is a sign of health that there are many companies that are looking for work - that's a great sign," said Ben Ayers, senior economist at Nationwide. "The downside is there are many workers that won't come back in. And long term you can't sustain a labor market that's as tight as it is right now."

Nick Bunker, an economist at the online jobs platform Indeed, said it was notable that more-rural states had the highest quit rates.

"Service-sector jobs tend to be concentrated in more dense, urban parts of the country, so to see the quits rate pick up in other places was interesting," he said. That "may be a sign there's more competition in those parts of the country than other parts."

The data comes on top of another government snapshot showing that 4.3 million people quit jobs in August - about 2.9 percent of the workforce, a pandemic-era record.

The phenomenon is being driven in part by workers who are less willing to endure inconvenient hours and poor compensation, and are quitting to find better opportunities. There were 10.4 million job openings in the country at the end of August - down slightly from July's record high, which was adjusted up to 11.1 million, but still a tremendously large number. This gives workers enormous leverage as they look for a better fit.

Mary Kaylor is part of that groundswell. She left her job in early July after her employer began calling workers back to the office, saying they'd have to be at their desks at least four days a week. But her commute - 90 minutes each way, or worse with traffic, from where she lives north of Baltimore to her office in Alexandria, Va. - was no longer acceptable to her.

"It was affecting my health, and I couldn't get my work done," she said. "I decided, 'Why am I doing this?'"

So Kaylor resigned, even though she did not have another job lined up. It didn't take long for her to land on her feet, however.

Just a few weeks after she quit, a recruiter reached out to her on LinkedIn about a position at Robert Half, a San Ramon, Calif.-based consulting company. The job allowed her to work remotely, and she started in August.

"Everything that I had read about the jobs market being hot and opportunities being out there was absolutely 100 percent correct," she said.

Now she says she has a job she likes, with more balance at home and time to take care of herself.

"I've been able to get back to a regular workout and exercise routine - time to run in the morning and do yoga," she said.

Ramon Soto, 28, took advantage of the hot jobs market to look for a new position over the summer. He had been working in person at a law firm and said he got tired of the commute and constant negotiation about sick time amid covid-19 risks.

By the end of August, he had dueling job offers - one at a company in Texas and another as an intake specialist at another law firm, near his home in Long Branch, N.J., that would allow him to work remotely.

He started the intake specialist job the next month, and it came with a raise to boot.

"Working from home removes a lot of the stress of regular day-to-day office work," he said. "You prioritize what the most essential part of your job is and get stuff done quicker so you can take full advantage of your day."

He said that he felt he had some leverage in his job search but that the process was still extremely competitive - he interviewed three to four times at each of the companies that eventually made offers, and had applied to many others.

"I knew I had an advantage," he said. "People are realizing their worth. Many of the jobs you look at now, especially in Jersey - people can't afford the cost of living working 40 hours. So you have people working two jobs, possibly three. But the pandemic actually flipped the coin, and employees have more power when it comes to their pay now."

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