STIVEN CATALYST

THIRD SERIES · NOVEMBER 2026

# MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Management without theatre.




PEOPLE

## SOMEONE TO TALK TO: CONNECTION AT WORK

One employee in five lonely on any given day, 148 studies of relationships and survival, the difference between people around you and people who support you, a study of loneliness and leaving, three questions, and a card.

**22%** of employees worldwide felt lonely during a lot of the previous day, in Gallup's 2025 survey.

GALLUP, 2026

INSIDE

COVER STORY
One in five, every day
PAGE 03

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS
Lonely, then gone
PAGE 06

TOOL OF THE ISSUE
The connection card
PAGE 08

NO. 104 · PEOPLE

# In this issue

Work is where many adults spend most of their waking hours with other people, and also where some spend them alone: on a night shift, at a remote desk, as the only one of their trade. Who a person can turn to rarely appears in a KPI. This issue asks what that costs in health and in people who leave.

Gallup finds 22% of employees lonely on a given day, more among those working remotely. Across 148 studies, people with stronger relationships had 50% higher odds of survival. Being among people and being supported are not the same, and Gallup's data hint at what helps. In Japan, lonelier employees were more likely to have left six months later. Three questions and a card close the issue.

*Stiven Janaqi* EDITOR · STIVEN CATALYST


**03** COVER STORY
One in five, every day

**04** THE NUMBERS
148 studies, one direction

**05** THE MODEL
Around people, or held by them

**06** WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS
Lonely, then gone

**07** HOW IT IS MEASURED
Three questions

**08** TOOL OF THE ISSUE
The connection card

**09** SOURCES
Sources and method


## HOW TO READ THIS ISSUE

**Figure**
Every figure has its source and year at the foot of its page.

**Our reading**
Where the editor interprets rather than the research, it says so.

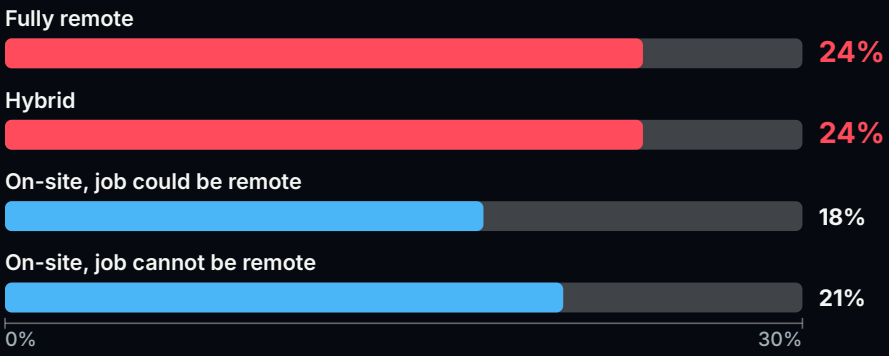
**Practice**
The steps and the card are proposals to try, not research results.

COVER STORY

# One in five, every day

Each year Gallup's World Poll asks employed adults whether they felt certain emotions during a lot of the day before. For 2025, with 141,444 employed respondents, 22% said they had felt lonely, as in 2024 and up from 20% in 2023. Where people work made the clearest difference.

EMPLOYEES WHO FELT LONELY A LOT OF THE PREVIOUS DAY, BY PLACE OF WORK, WORLD (2025 DATA)




Age, sex and rank mattered little: 23% of managers and 21% of other employees. Regions differed more, from 28% in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa to 13% in Europe.

OUR READING

Managers were not spared. The person who checks on the team may be the one nobody checks on.

Source: Gallup, 2026

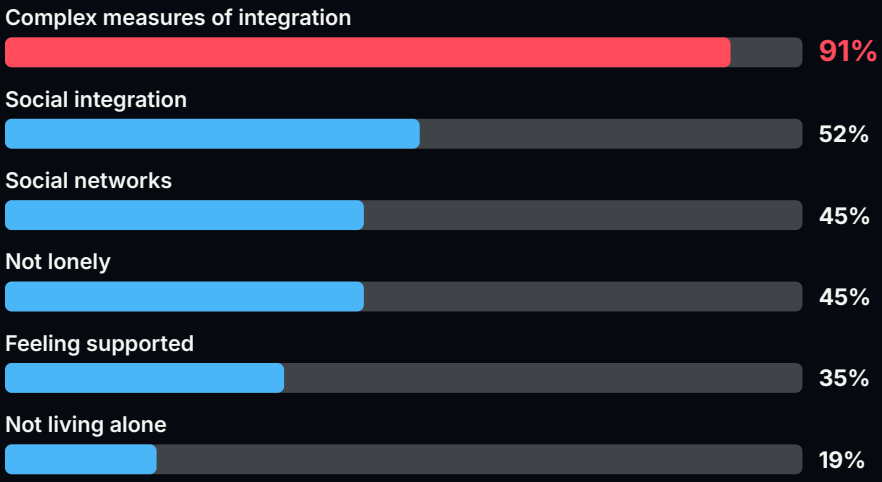
Gallup, State of the Global Workplace 2026, global data summary, read in full: adults aged 15 and over in employment, surveyed in 2025 by phone or in person. Self-report about one day; hybrid and remote may differ in jobs as well as in place.

THE NUMBERS

# 148 studies, one direction

Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Timothy Smith and Bradley Layton pooled 148 studies with 308,849 people, followed for 7.5 years on average. Those with stronger social relationships had 50% higher odds of being alive at the end, across age, sex, initial health and cause of death.

HIGHER ODDS OF SURVIVAL, BY HOW RELATIONSHIPS WERE MEASURED (2010)




OUR READING

The simplest measure, living with someone, said least. How embedded a person is said most.

Source: Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Timothy B. Smith & J. Bradley Layton, PLOS Medicine 7(7), 2010

Holt-Lunstad et al. (2010), PLOS Medicine, read in full; bars are odds ratios from its Table 4 written as percent higher odds. For living alone the interval includes no effect. Observational studies, not trials; the authors call it comparable with quitting smoking. Mental health at work is No. 75.

THE MODEL

# Around people, or held by them

The review separates two sides of relationships. Structural: how many people a person is connected to and takes part with. Functional: the support received and the support a person believes is there. The two correlate only moderately, typically 0.20 to 0.30.

| Structural: who is around | Functional: who would help |
|---|---|
| Size of the network | Support a person receives |
| Taking part with others | Support a person believes is there |
| At work: a crew, a shift, a team | At work: someone to ask, someone who notices |

In a US study reported in 2024, Gallup found employees with a best friend at work 21% less likely to be lonely, and engaged employees 64% less likely. Only about two in ten US employees report such a friend. Worldwide, actively disengaged workers were lonely almost as often as the unemployed: 31% against 32%.

OUR READING

Putting people in one room builds the left column. The right one grows from work done together and help that comes.

Sources: Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Timothy B. Smith & J. Bradley Layton, PLOS Medicine 7(7), 2010; Ryan Pendell, Gallup, 2024; Alok Patel & Stephanie Plowman, Gallup, 2022

Columns: Holt-Lunstad et al. (2010); the work examples are the editors'. Gallup figures: Pendell (2024), whose 31% and 32% are from the 2024 world report, and Patel & Plowman (2022); associations, not effects. Engagement is No. 9, onboarding and buddies No. 24.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

# Lonely, then gone

Natsu Sasaki and colleagues at the University of Tokyo measured loneliness at work among 706 full-time employees in February 2024 and asked again in August. Within those six months, 47 had left their job or moved to another employer. Before, studies had linked such loneliness only to the wish to leave.

**6.7%**
of the 706 had left within six months

**1.46**
odds of leaving per standard deviation more loneliness, three-question scale

**1.42**
the same on a 16-item scale; 1.31 on a single question

All three measures pointed the same way, after adjusting for sex, age, marital status, occupation and contract. Loneliness went with changing employer, not with ending up unemployed, though only 12 had. The link held when those near retirement age were left out.

OUR READING

The lonely did not drop out of work. They took their work somewhere else.

Source: Natsu Sasaki, Kanami Tsuno, Reiko Kuroda, Kotaro Imamura, Hisashi Eguchi, Akihito Shimazu & Norito Kawakami, Journal of Occupational Health 67(1), 2025

Sasaki et al. (2025), Journal of Occupational Health, read in full in PubMed Central. An online panel in Japan, more graduates than average, only 47 leavers, turnover self-reported; workplace support and personality were not controlled. Why people leave in general is No. 14.

HOW IT IS MEASURED

# Three questions

The shortest scale in the Tokyo study took three items from a standard loneliness scale and added “in your workplace or at work” to each. Each is answered hardly ever (1), some of the time (2) or often (3), so the total runs from 3 to 9.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | **At work, how often do you feel…** | …that you lack companionship? |
| 02 | **At work, how often do you feel…** | …left out? |
| 03 | **At work, how often do you feel…** | …isolated from others? |

In the study the average was 4.6. Those who stayed scored 4.59 at the start, those who later left 5.36. Gallup's one question works for a day: did you feel lonely during a lot of yesterday?

OUR READING

Ask without names and report only a team's total. A lonely person will not say so to a form that names them.

Sources: Natsu Sasaki, Kanami Tsuno, Reiko Kuroda, Kotaro Imamura, Hisashi Eguchi, Akihito Shimazu & Norito Kawakami, Journal of Occupational Health 67(1), 2025; Gallup, 2026

Items from Sasaki et al. (2025), who adapted a short form of the UCLA Loneliness Scale; the authors say this three-item version is not fully validated. The callout's advice is the editors'. Speaking up without fear is No. 4, incivility No. 79.

TOOL OF THE ISSUE

# The connection card

One card per team, reviewed monthly. What a leader decides to do about it goes into the routine in Leader Standard Work, so it is checked off like any other task and not left to the quiet weeks.

**01 Who works alone** nights, remote, the only one of a trade, the newest

**02 Who each one asks when stuck** a name for every person; a blank is the finding

**03 Work done together** a task each person shares with someone, not only a shared room

**04 The three questions** anonymous, team total from 3 to 9 per person, compared with last time

**05 Who left, and who they talked to** in the exit talk: whom they could turn to, and when that stopped

**06 This month's step** one change, written into the leader's routine

Sources: Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Timothy B. Smith & J. Bradley Layton, PLOS Medicine 7(7), 2010; Gallup, 2026; Natsu Sasaki, Kanami Tsuno, Reiko Kuroda, Kotaro Imamura, Hisashi Eguchi, Akihito Shimazu & Norito Kawakami, Journal of Occupational Health 67(1), 2025

The card is the editors' proposal, built on the review's two sides of relationships, Gallup's data and the Tokyo study; it is not a tested instrument, and it shows only whether a team is connected, not why.

Open the tool: Leader Standard Work stivencatalyst.com/tools/leader-standard-work/

SOURCES AND METHOD

# Every figure has a source.

The figures in this issue come from the sources below. The year shows how recent each one is.

**State of the Global Workplace: 2026 global data summary**
Gallup, 2026
https://www.gallup.com/workplace/697904/state-of-the-global-workplace-global-data.aspx

**Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-analytic Review**
Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Timothy B. Smith & J. Bradley Layton, PLOS Medicine 7(7), 2010
https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316

**1 in 5 Employees Worldwide Feel Lonely**
Ryan Pendell, Gallup, 2024
https://www.gallup.com/workplace/645566/employees-worldwide-feel-lonely.aspx

**The Increasing Importance of a Best Friend at Work**
Alok Patel & Stephanie Plowman, Gallup, 2022
https://www.gallup.com/workplace/397058/increasing-importance-best-friend-work.aspx

**Workplace loneliness and job turnover: a 6-month prospective study**
Natsu Sasaki, Kanami Tsuno, Reiko Kuroda, Kotaro Imamura, Hisashi Eguchi, Akihito Shimazu & Norito Kawakami, Journal of Occupational Health 67(1), 2025
https://doi.org/10.1093/joccuh/uiaf009

EDITORIAL METHOD

Each figure was checked for its year, its publisher and what it measures, in the full text where it could be opened. A source read only in a summary, an abstract or excerpts is marked “via”. A figure not confirmed in what was read is marked so on its page, or left out. The editor's interpretation is marked “Our reading”.



# MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Management without theatre.

Every issue, one management question, checked against the best research.

## ALL ISSUES

stivencatalyst.com/magazine/management-review.html

Management Review · No. 104 · November 2026 · Stiven Catalyst
Edited by Stiven Janaqi, who answers for it; “the editors” in this publication means him. Its texts, translations, layout and the checking of figures against their sources are done in working sessions with Claude, an AI model by Anthropic.
stivencatalyst.com/how-this-is-made.html