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Doing More with Less: Sustainable Leave Management When Caseloads Won't Stop Growing

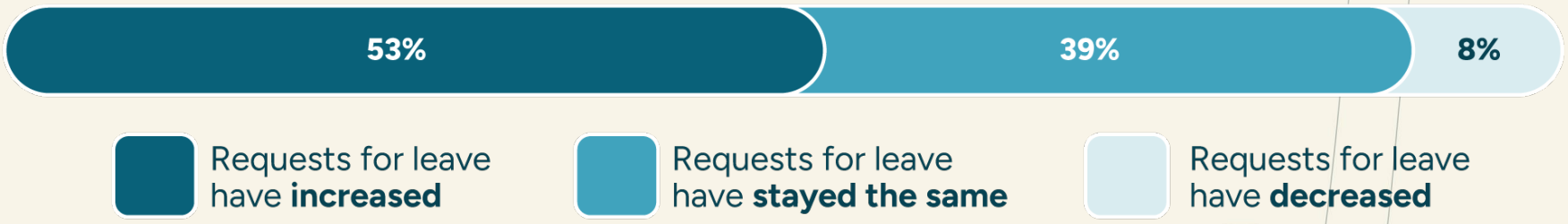
Seth Turner, Founder and Senior Advisor at AbsenceSoft

Briana Robinson, Senior Absence Management Analyst, Healthcare Organization

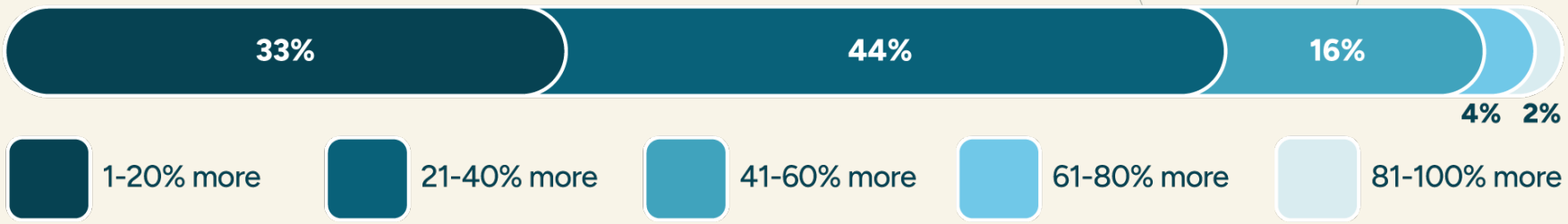


Leave Requests Keep Climbing

Has the number of requests for employee leaves of absence changed in the past year?

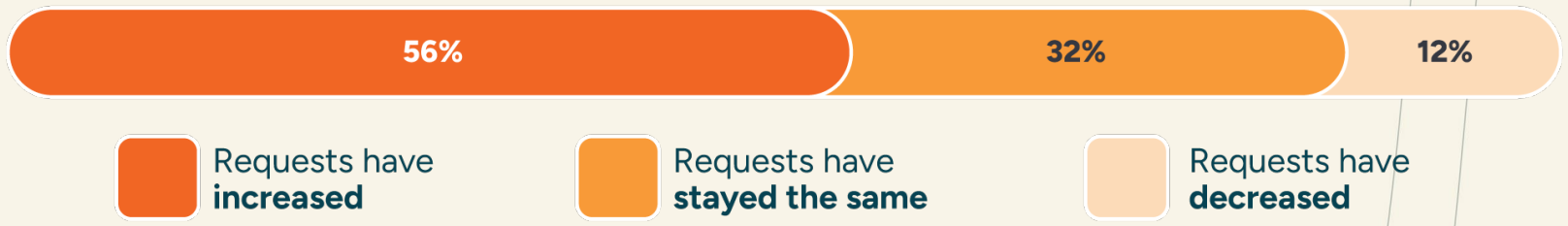


What increase in leave requests has your organization seen in the past year?

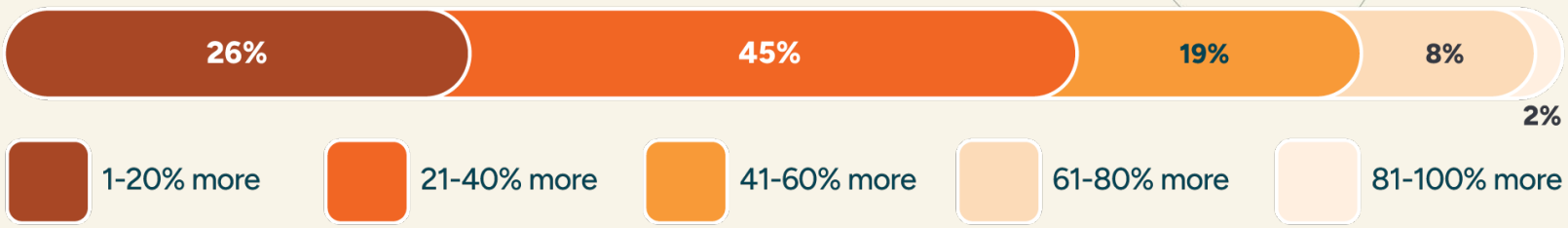


Accommodations Requests Keep Rising as Well

Has the number of employee requests for job accommodations changed during the past year?



What percentage increase of requests for job accommodations has your organization received in the past year (previous 12 months)?



Year Over Year Impact of Increasing Requests

3

years in a row a majority of HR leaders say leave and accommodations requests have increased

20%+

increases in the amount of requests reported by majority of HR leaders, each year for the last three years

120%

After three years of increases, some leave teams could be managing more than double the cases



Example Case Increase in Just a Year

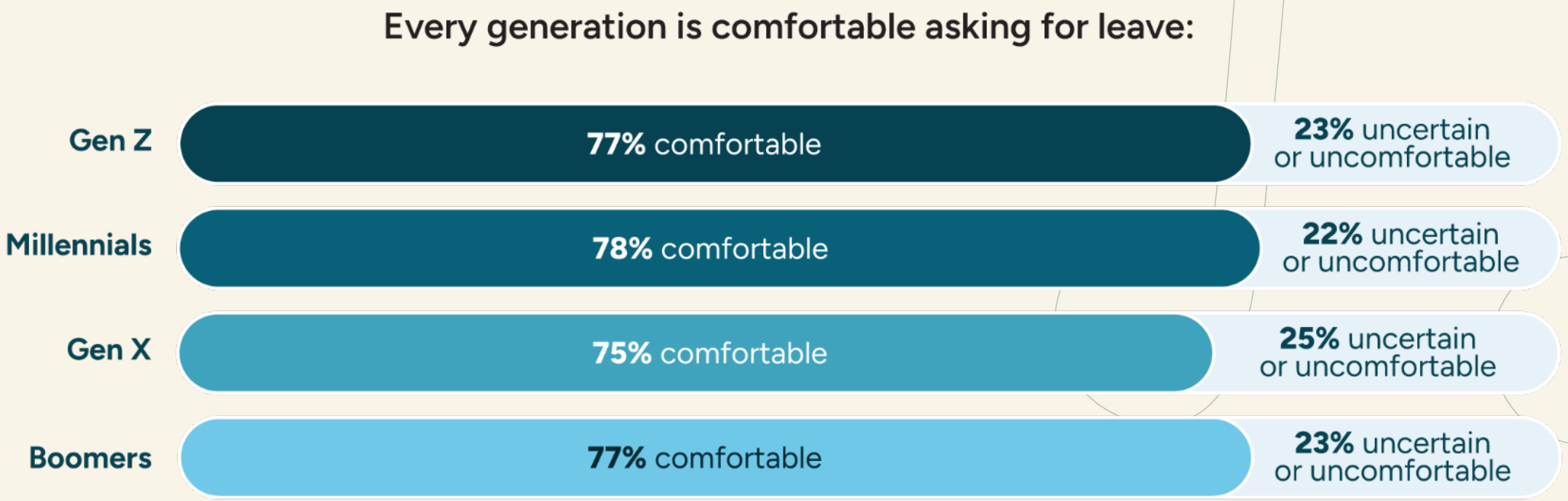
561

open FMLA cases at the end of 2025

774

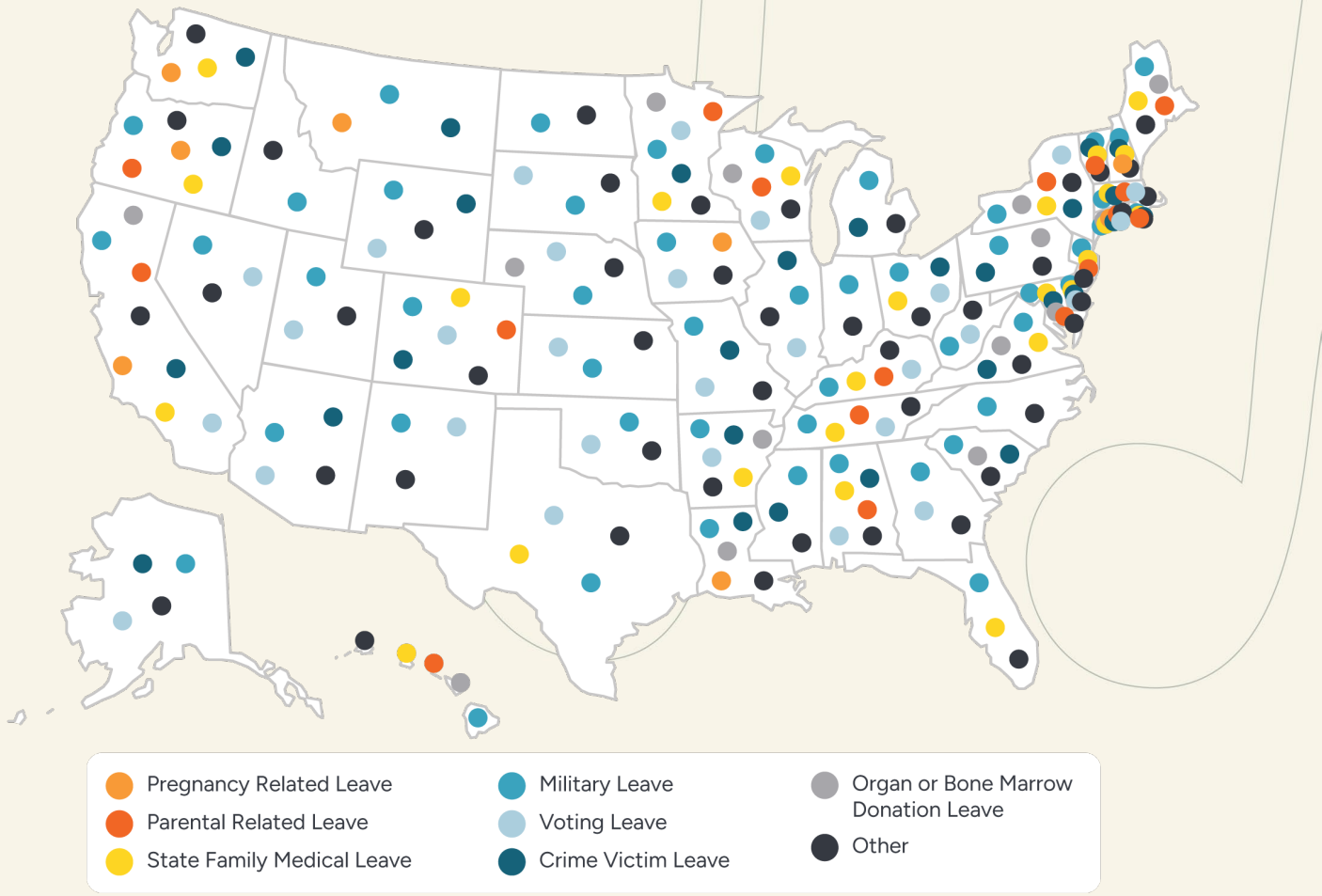
open FMLA cases in June 2026

Every Generation is Requesting Leave



The Growing State Leave Landscape

- Mandatory paid leave programs have been enacted in **14 states and the District of Columbia.**
- **Two states** have upcoming programs but are not yet effective (Maryland 1/2028, Virginia12/2028).
- An **additional nine states** have voluntary systems that provide paid family leave through private insurance.
- Most of these state laws provide parental and family caregiving leave.



How Leave is Managed Today

41%

of leave managers are managing state leave laws with manual processes

72%

don't manage leave with a dedicated leave of absence solution



Key Challenges in Leave Management

41%

say ensuring FMLA compliance is a top challenge

38%

face challenges managing intermittent leave and reduced schedules

35%

struggle with tracking and reporting on leave usage



HR Goals for Leave & Accommodations Programs

61%

want to support employee well-bring and work-life balance

55%

want to improve retention and reduce turnover

51%

want to improve employee experience and support



What HR Wants for Their Programs

37%

want better technology to manage leave and accommodations

37%

want less administrative work

30%

want accurate, easy pay calculations



Improving Programs to Drive Efficiency



Request Intake

92%

of leave requests come in via email, phone, or supervisor request, only 8% are self-service

Process Slowdowns

- Employees don't know where to start
- Managers field requests they're not equipped to handle
- Wrong entitlement requested
- Incomplete submissions
- Back and forth emails and calls



How to Improve Request Intake

- Designate a single point of contact for every leave request
- Offer self-service tools so employees can submit and track requests on their own
- Give employees a clear starting point so they know where to begin
- Collect the same information, the same way, every time
- Make the process accessible across multiple channels
- Train managers to recognize and respond to requests



Calculating Eligibility

41%

of HR leaders struggle with calculating eligibility for leave entitlements

Process Slowdowns

- Eligibility varies by state, employer, and leave type
- Overlapping laws create confusion
- Employee eligibility changes with every absence
- Errors can compound over time



How to Improve Eligibility Calculations

- Track intermittent leave accurately, because every hour counts toward eligibility
- Rely on a verified, up-to-date source for leave laws rather than a general internet search or ChatGPT
- Connect employee data directly to your eligibility calculations so nothing falls through the cracks
- Cheatsheets and flyers from government sources to help educate employees



Forms and Paperwork

47%

of employees reported struggling with the paperwork required for leave requests

Process Slowdowns

- Incomplete certifications
- Missing or wrong documentation at submission
- Lost or misfiled paperwork
- Delayed returns from medical providers



How to Improve Paperwork

- Streamline paperwork where possible to a single channel, identify ideal channel(s) for your workforce
- Educate on where paperwork is supposed to be returned
- Keep communications clear and manageable so employees aren't overwhelmed by what they receive
- Provide specific deadlines and step-by-step instructions so nothing is missed



Intermittent Leave

42%

of HR leaders cite managing intermittent leave and reduced schedules as a top challenge

Process Slowdowns

- Tracking each individual absence
- Recertification management for stable conditions
- Managers don't know how it works
- Coordinating coverage for unpredictable absences



How to Improve Intermittent Leave

- Maintain a reliable system of record for tracking intermittent leave usage in real time
- Centralize all reporting so there is one consistent view of every case
- Work with employees in advance to plan intermittent leave around their schedule where possible



Managers

30%

of HR leaders report not training their managers about leave and accommodations at all

Process Slowdowns

- Untrained managers field requests first
- Inconsistent responses create compliance risk
- Confidential information gets shared
- Return-to-work handoffs fall through



How to Work with Managers

- Train managers more than once, because leave laws change and refreshers matter
- Keep managers informed throughout the leave process, not just at the start
- Use self-service tools to ensure every request is routed to HR, even when a manager is the first point of contact
- Prepare managers ahead of an employee's return so nothing catches them off guard



Return to Work

81%

of employees report not being asked whether they needed an accommodation upon returning from leave

Process Slowdowns

- No standardized return-to-work protocol
- Fitness-for-duty documentation incomplete, missing, or delayed
- Accommodation needs not assessed at time of return
- HR, managers, and payroll out of sync



How to Improve Return to Work

- Begin return-to-work planning well before the employee's last day of leave
- Have a structured conversation about any restrictions, changes, or accommodations needed before they walk back in
- Notify IT and system owners in advance so access is ready on day one
- Check in with the employee after their return to make sure the transition is working



How HR Can Keep Up



Streamlined, repeatable, documented processes



Automation and AI to reduce administrative burden



Creating efficiencies where possible in case management



Building business cases to leaders for better resourcing



Questions?

