Career & Workplace

Nearly 4 in 10 women leaders in St. Louis have considered leaving the region for their careers





Nearly 4 in 10 St. Louis women professionals have considered leaving the region, according to a new study.

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- Women lacking clear advancement paths show 26% turnover intention versus 2% with visible opportunities.
- Tempo STL launched in September 2026 with 40 founding executive women from 31 organizations.

Nearly 4 in 10 women leaders surveyed in the St. Louis region have considered leaving the area to advance their careers, according to new research released by Tempo STL and Washington University's Olin Business School.

The study, "Voices of Women at Work: The St. Louis Experience," surveyed 120 women in mid-level, senior, executive and C-suite positions and found that a lack of visible career advancement opportunities is a major factor driving turnover intentions.

Among women who do not see a clear path to advancement within their organizations, 26% said they are currently considering leaving their employer. That compares with just 2% of women who believe a clear advancement path exists.

“This data tells us something simple: we can't [illegible]” Jennifer Dirk



The findings suggest that retaining female talent may be a growing challenge for St. Louis companies and for the region's broader economy.

The survey found that 39% of respondents have considered leaving the St. Louis area to further their careers. Written responses cited limited headquarters opportunities and long-standing professional networks that can restrict access to leadership positions and board appointments.

Women between the ages of 45 and 54, identified as the largest group surveyed, reported particularly high levels of dissatisfaction. Seventy-one percent said they had considered leaving their organization, while 27% said they are currently considering doing so.

Recognition and support also emerged as key issues. Eighty-eight percent of women who said they do not feel recognized at work reported considering leaving their employer. Meanwhile, 44% said they have held back from pursuing promotions because of barriers or a lack of support.



path forward, and just 38% said they have access to sponsors who advocate for their advancement.

The research also found that 62% of women believe they receive less managerial support, sponsorship, visibility or recognition than their male peers. Additionally, 89% said their gender has limited career opportunities at least some of the time.

Researchers identified compensation equity, leadership development, transparent promotion criteria and flexible work arrangements as the factors most likely to encourage advancement.

Gisele Marcus, professor of practice in organizational behavior at Olin Business School, said the findings will help inform both leadership development efforts and employer practices designed to increase opportunities for women in the workplace.

Tempo, a Milwaukee-based organization dedicated to advancing women leaders, expanded for the first time in September 2026 with the launch of Tempo St. Louis, a new chapter designed to connect and support executive women across the region.

Dirks said when the expansion was announced in September that the



opportunities for women, comparable market characteristics and established relationships between business leaders in both cities.

The inaugural St. Louis chapter includes 40 executive women representing 31 organizations from industries including financial services, technology, healthcare, higher education, law, professional services and nonprofit organizations. Founding members come from companies and institutions such as Microsoft, Edward Jones, Bayer North America, World Wide Technology, Commerce Trust, Northern Trust, Washington University, Maryville University and Husch Blackwell.

The St. Louis Business Journal will host its annual Bizwomen Mentoring Monday event, designed to connect women across all stages of their professional journeys, on Feb. 22, 2027. Whether you're just launching your career, navigating mid-level growth, or leading at the top, Mentoring Monday can offer insights, strategies and connections to help you move forward.

