

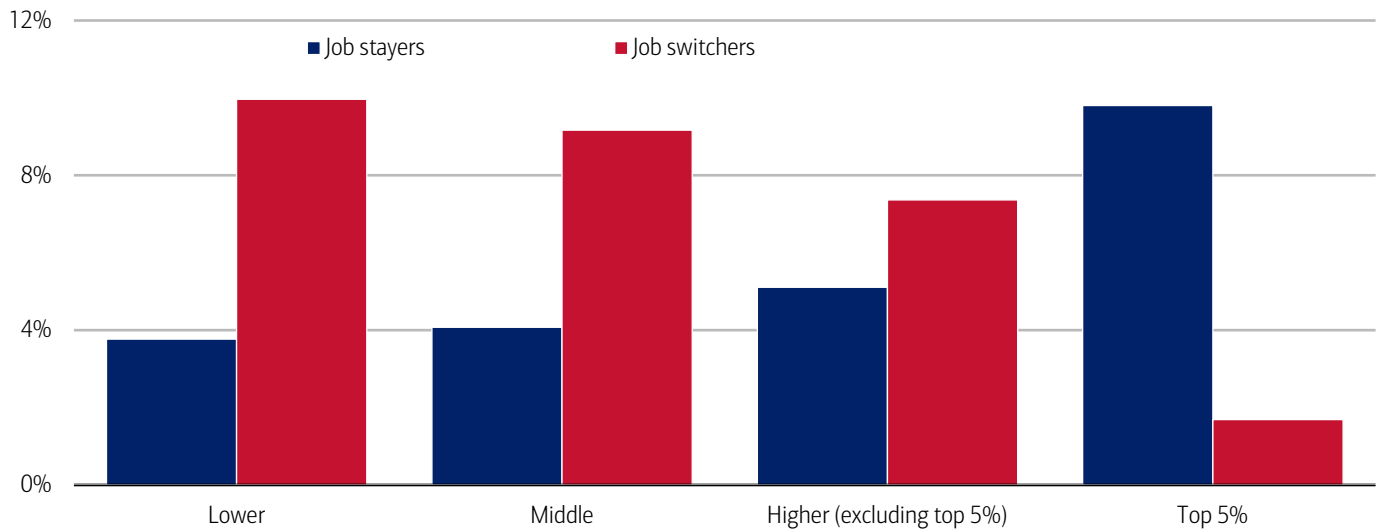
## Daily Insights

# For the top 5% of earners, job loyalty pays

26 May 2026

### Workers with the highest wages who stayed in their jobs got much larger pay increases than those who switched jobs

Median after-tax wage growth for those who stayed with their employer versus those who changed employers by income group (Q1 2026, YoY%)



Source: Bank of America internal data

BANK OF AMERICA INSTITUTE

In Q1 2026, job switching was more common for lower-income households than higher-income ones, with the rate of switching at 16% and 13%, respectively. Additionally, the highest earners (top 5% by income) have seen the largest decrease in job changes over the past few years. And there's a reason why: for this group, loyalty pays, with stayers seeing a 10% year-over-year (YoY) increase in average after-tax wage growth, compared to only 2% for those who made a change.

Read publication: [Should I stay or should I go? The pay tradeoff.](#)

## Methodology

Selected Bank of America transaction data is used to inform the macroeconomic views expressed in this report and should be considered in the context of other economic indicators and publicly available information. In certain instances, the data may provide directional and/or predictive value. The data used is not comprehensive; it is based on **aggregated and anonymized** selections of Bank of America data and may reflect a degree of selection bias and limitations on the data available.

Any payments data represents aggregated spend from US Retail, Preferred, Small Business and Wealth Management clients with a deposit account or credit card. Aggregated spend include total credit card, debit card, ACH, wires, bill pay, business/peer-to-peer, cash, and checks.

Any **Small Business** payments data represents aggregate spend from Small Business clients with a deposit account or a Small Business credit card. Payroll payments data include channels such as ACH (automated clearing house), bill pay, checks and wire. Bank of America per Small Business client data represents activity spending from active Small Business clients with a deposit account or a Small Business credit card and at least one transaction in each month. Small businesses in this report include business clients within Bank of America and generally defined as under \$5mm in annual sales revenue.

Unless otherwise stated, data is not adjusted for seasonality, processing days or portfolio changes, and may be subject to periodic revisions.

The differences between the total and per household card spending growth rate (if discussed) can be explained by the following reasons:

Overall total card spending growth is partially boosted by the growth in the number of active cardholders in our sample. This could be due to an increasing customer base or inactive customers using their cards more frequently.

Per household card spending growth only looks at households that complete at least five transactions with Bank of America cards in the month. Per household spending growth isolates impacts from a changing sample size, which could be unrelated to underlying economic momentum, and potential spending volatility from less active users.

Overall total card spending includes small business card spending while per household card spending does not.

Differences due to using processing dates (total card spending) versus transaction date (per household card spending).

Other differences including household formations due to young adults moving in and out of their parent's houses during COVID.

Any household consumer deposit data based on Bank of America internal data is derived by anonymizing and aggregating data from Bank of America consumer deposit accounts in the US and analyzing that data at a highly aggregated level. Whenever median household savings and checking balances are quoted, the data is based on a fixed cohort of households that had a consumer deposit account (checking and/or savings account) for all months from January 2019 through the most current month of data shown.

Bank of America aggregated credit/debit card spending per household includes spending from active US households only. Only consumer card holders making a minimum of five transactions a month are included in the dataset. Spending from corporate cards are excluded. Data regarding merchants who receive payments are identified and classified by the Merchant Categorization Code (MCC) defined by financial services companies. The data are mapped using proprietary methods from the MCCs to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), which is also used by the Census Bureau, in order to classify spending data by subsector. Spending data may also be classified by other proprietary methods not using MCCs.

We consider a measure of services necessity spending that includes but is not limited to childcare, rent, insurance, insurance, public transportation, and tax payments. Discretionary services includes but is not limited to charitable donations, leisure travel, entertainment, and professional/consumer services. Discretionary retail includes but is not limited to general merchandise, miscellaneous, clothing, electronics, furniture. It excludes categories like groceries and gasoline. Holiday spending is defined as items in which spending in the November-December period is usually at least 20% of total annual spending on the category. Value and premium grocers are determined judgmentally on a proprietary analysis of merchants by equity analysts.

Durables spending is defined as spending on electronics, building materials, auto and furniture. Premium durables spending is based on a selection of retailers who are judged to sell relatively higher value products. Conversely, value durables spending is based on a selection of retailers who are judged to sell relatively lower value products.

For analysis looking at higher value transactions (including durables), we consider a value per transaction threshold estimated with reference to the top 30% of transactions by value in 2024. The share of higher value transactions is then the number of transactions above this threshold as a percentage of total transactions over time.

Participant Pulse monitors plan participants' behavior in Bank of America clients' employee benefits programs, which comprise more than 4 million total participants with positive account balances as of March 31, 2026.

Lower, middle and higher household income cuts in Bank of America credit and debit card spending per household, and consumer deposit account data are based on quantitative estimates of each households' income. These quantitative estimates are bucketed according to terciles, with a third of households placed in each tercile periodically. The lowest tercile represents 'lower income', the middle tercile represents 'middle income' and the highest tercile 'higher income'. The income thresholds between these terciles will move over time, reflecting any number of factors that impact income, including general wage inflation, changes in social security payments and individual households' income. The income and tercile in which a household is categorised are periodically re-assessed.

Major grocery categories include sugar and sweets, juices and other non-alcoholic beverages, bakery products, processed fruits and vegetables, fresh fruit and vegetables, coffee and tea, fats and oils, milk, cereal and cereal products, other, cheese, and meats, poultry and fish, Other includes soups, snacks, frozen and freeze-dried prepared foods, and spices, seasonings, and condiments.

Generations, if discussed, are defined as follows: Gen Z, born after 1996; Younger Millennials: born between 1989-1995; Older Millennials: born between 1978-1988; Gen Xers: born between 1965-1977; Baby Boomers: 1946-1964; Traditionalists: pre-1946.

When comparing job switchers and job stayers, we are looking at a chained sample, where we compare wages in a fixed sample of people with a consistent paycheck. For each time period – defined here as a one year period from Q1 of one year to the next – the fixed sample is updated. Job switchers are defined as those that received a direct deposit from another company within that time period.

Any reference to card spending per household on gasoline includes all purchases at gasoline stations and might include purchases of non-gas items.

Additional information about the methodology used to aggregate the data is available upon request.

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# Disclosures

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