

Mining's talent shortage is real, so the response needs to come from organisational leadership.

Our recent survey of 217 Australian mining professionals found that pay and perks are well down the scale behind leadership and culture, as major motivators for changing jobs. Two thirds of movers want better leadership and culture, not cash, our survey finds.

At a glance: The concerning numbers you need to know

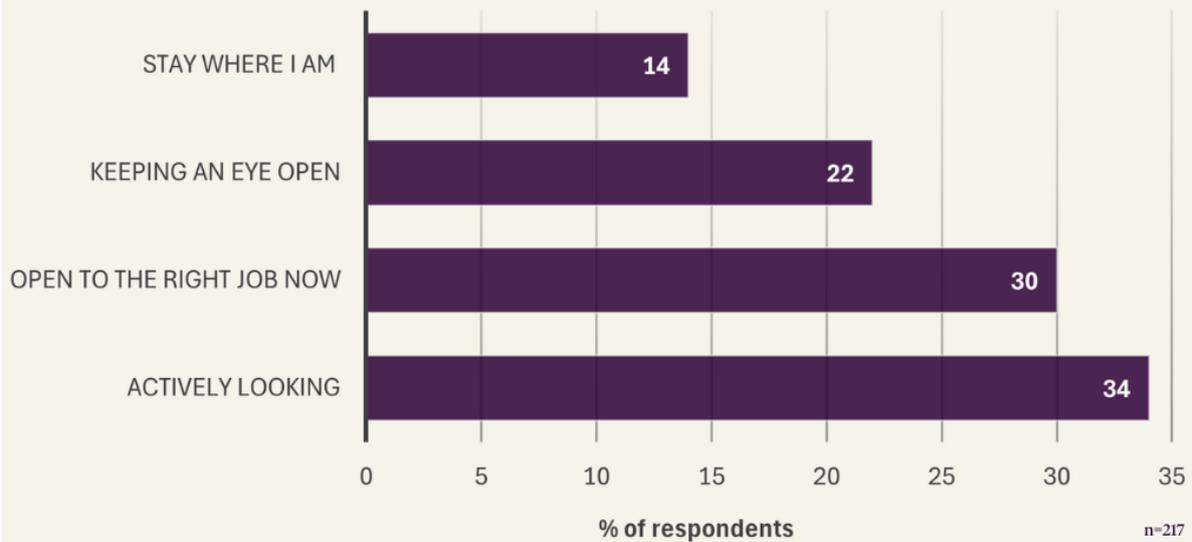
- 86% of Australia's mining workers are movable
- 14% plan to stay
- 66% prioritise leadership and culture
- Just 6% care most about pay

Your organisation's best response to the talent shortage is leadership people believe in

With vacancies everywhere and projects slipping, we all go to that convenient scapegoat, "talent shortages." However, our latest poll of 217 mining industry employees tells a different story.

- Only **14%** emphatically plan to stay put in 2026.
- The remaining **86% are** movable. Either keeping an eye open, open to the right job now, or actively looking.

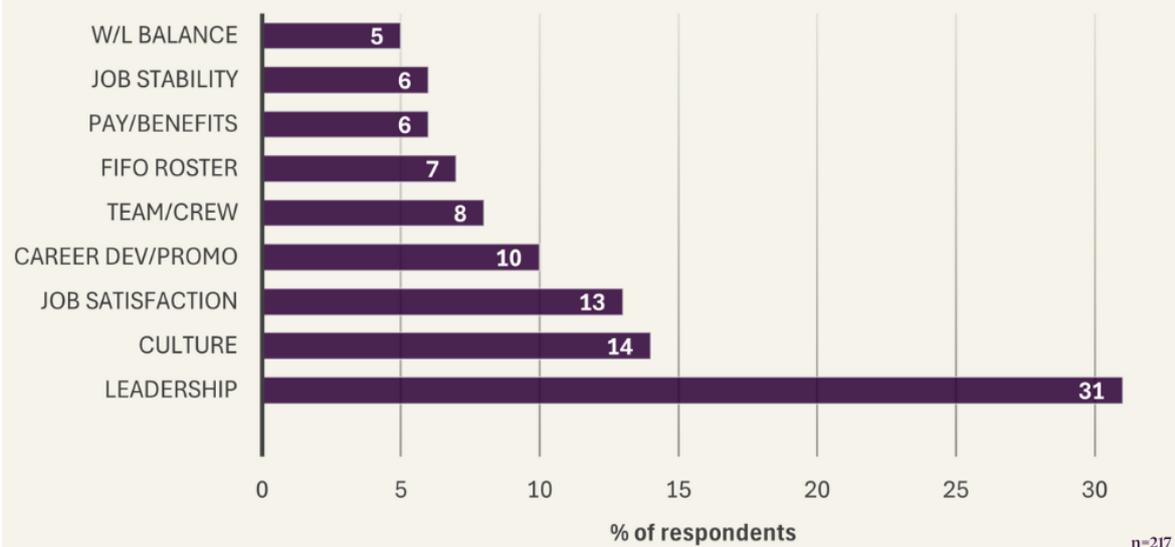
What are your career plans for 2026?



With good talent scarce and in a market this mobile, an employer's response should put a laser like focus on what matters most to people

Our 2nd question provides some clues.

What's most important when considering a move?



When we bundle **leadership, culture, team, and job satisfaction**, it accounts for ~66% of priorities. **Pay and job stability** combine to just 12%. **FIFO roster and work-life balance** together are ~12%.

Money matters. Rosters matter. But what people are really voting for (and against) is how they're led.

Trust gets attendance. Belief earns commitment

Let's name the real issue here: While the mining industry is short of top technical talent, individual organisations need not be. If they are, it is more likely to be a **belief** crisis, where leadership keeps trying to buy **trust** instead of earning **belief**.

Trust is transactional and rational. To you and me, it says, *"I trust my job is secure. I trust my manager has my back. I trust my wages will be in my bank account every month."*

Trust is hygiene. It's necessary, but replaceable. Belief, on the other hand, is emotional and identity-level.

It says, *"I believe my work matters. I believe I'm building something worthwhile. I believe my work serves the world better."* Belief is what keeps people going through the harder times and what produces discretionary effort when plans go sideways.

Our poll respondents didn't mince their words when asked to comment about why they are looking and what they are looking for next. Many responses summarised the tone:

- "A decent boss who's fair, rather than somebody pandering to the cameras to look good."
- "A @#\$% free zone."
- "Leadership integrity (values aren't just words on a wall) ... mining is too easily held back by its "we've always done it this way" and a fear of setting precedent."

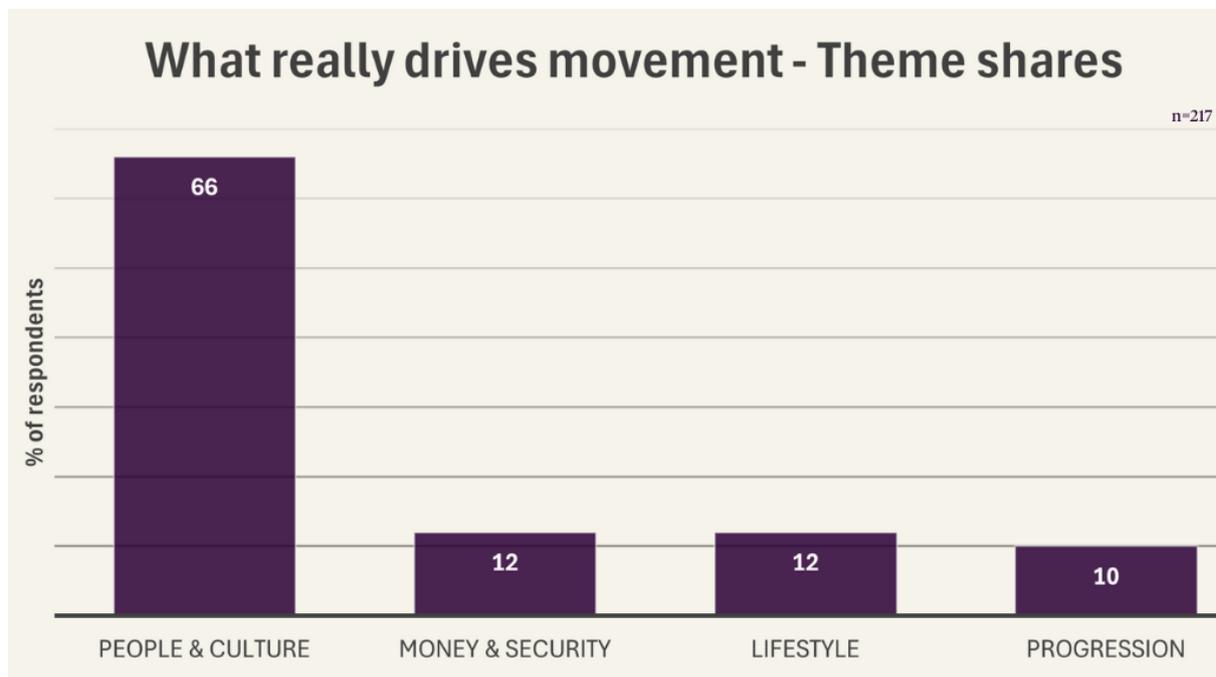
These aren't demands for higher allowances. They're demands for believable leadership.

In other words, managers who are fair, values that aren't performative, cultures that don't tolerate high-performing sycophants, and decision making that isn't paralysed by "this is how we've always done it."

Look again at the numbers.

If compensation was the primary lever, **pay + job stability** wouldn't be sitting at ~**12%** of priorities. If rosters were the primary lever, **FIFO + Work-Life Balance** wouldn't also total ~**12%**.

The market is telling leaders that **people and culture** are the decisive edge.



This is where many executives will retreat to a defensive claim: “But our people can trust our leaders.”

Maybe.

You can trust a leader and still not believe in them. Trust says they'll run the meeting on time, approve leave, and follow the policy.

Belief says they'll tell the truth when it's hard, live the values they preach, coach with intent, and invite you into a story bigger than your to-do list.

The first gets compliance. The second earns commitment.

Stop buying trust. Start earning belief

So, what manufactures belief?

Our own work internally, references the Human Synergistics Leadership Style Index (LSI), which seeks to focus on enhancing constructive styles of leadership. Some of the things these styles translate to in practical terms include:

1. **Visible integrity.** Values match lived reality. No one is above the safety rules, the expense policy, or the behavioural code, especially the stars.
2. **Manager quality.** You promote and develop leaders for their ability to lead teams, not just for technical excellence.
3. **Team norms.** You create a “no sycophants” culture. Performance never excuses toxicity.
4. **Clarity of direction.** People know why their work matters and where the site, the asset, and the company are heading.
5. **Timely decisions.** You don't let decisions sit for months in approval limbo, then blame “the market” when people walk.

Notice none of these are expensive. They are, however, hard.

They demand courage, consistency, and the willingness to be held to account. Especially, by a company's senior leadership who set the day-to-day tone in a mine's most critical crews.

Let's be blunt: If you fund **trust** but not **belief**, your best people remain **permanently poachable**.

And our poll suggests they are poachable this year. **86%** are movable. That's a once-in-a-cycle opportunity for great leaders, and an existential risk for those hoping a few extra dollars will keep the gates shut.

What should CEOs and boards do today?

- **Stop over-focussing on pay and perks** as your primary retention strategy.
- **Double down on manager quality.** Audit who leads crews and teams; train and support them like the critical infrastructure they are.
- **Codify “no sycophants.”** High performance never excuses corrosive behaviour. Put teeth behind that sentence.
- **Make the story real.** Explain what you’re building, why it matters, and where each team fits. Do it every month, not once a year.
- **Fix decision latency.** Candidates won’t wait. Speed, clarity and respect close vacancies faster and earn belief.

Final thoughts: Trust vs Belief

The market keeps giving leaders an easy way out. Our data removes that excuse.

Build belief and you won’t need to outspend your competitors.

You’ll outlead them.

Survey size: 217 people between January 14th and January 28th 2026

Respondents: Mining professionals (anonymously)

Geographic spread: Australia-wide

Method: Anonymous online survey

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