



The Field Data Collector Labor Force: Lessons from the Pandemic

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Agenda

- Understanding the Labor Market Context
- Recruitment & Retention Challenges
- Developing Responses

In-person data collection is often considered the gold standard

- In-person gaining cooperation skills are useful for hard-to-reach groups, complex surveys (Lynn 2020; Schober 2018)
- Maximizes response rates and measurement reliability (Daikeler et al., 2020; Davies et al., 2020; Neuman 2012)
- May impact data quality from interviewer effects (Olson et al., 2020; Sun, Conrad, & Kreuter, 2021)

But in-person data collection is increasingly tenuous

- Labor market trends, exacerbated by the pandemic, have made it difficult to:
 - Achieve project recruitment goals;
 - Retain experienced staff.
- Increased skepticism about in-person interactions
- Declining response rates, cooperation across modes
- Impacts project timelines, budgets

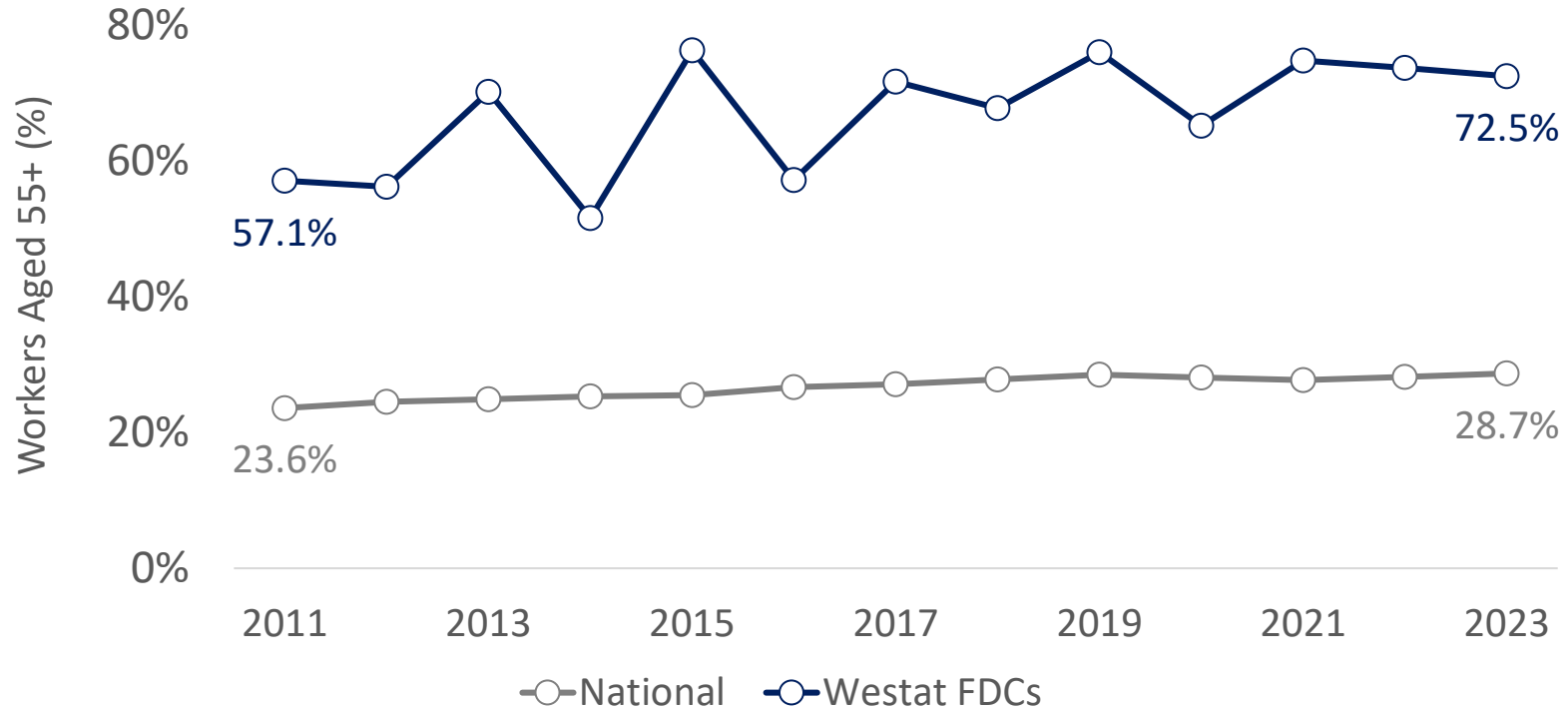
Uniqueness of the position is a hiring challenge

- Strong public-facing skills
- Technical skills across platforms
- Confident & highly motivated
- Local residence
- Nighttime & weekend work
- High school equivalency
- Driver's license & vehicle
- Regular internet access
- Part-time, limited term

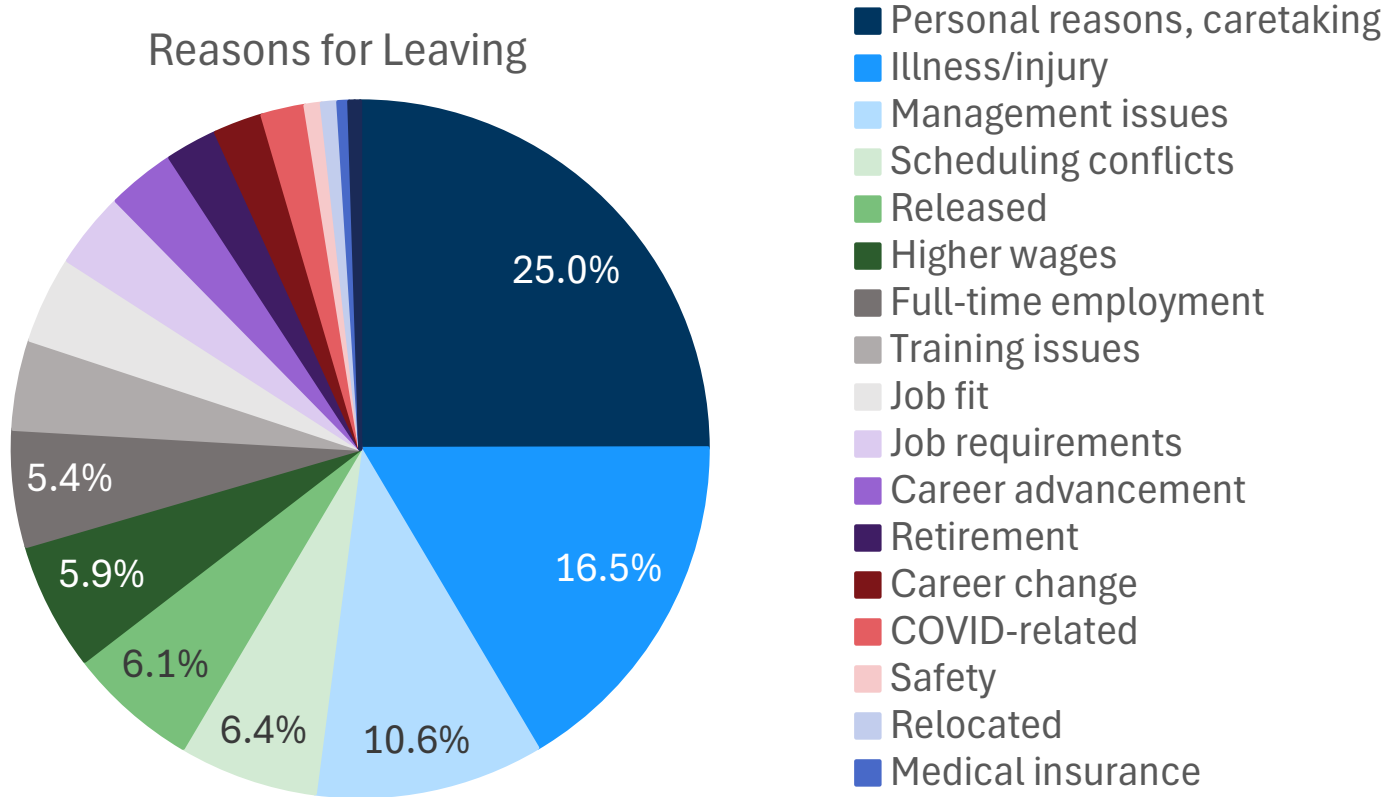
Changing labor market, pandemic exacerbated this challenge

- Misalignment of Skills for Available Positions
- Shift in Job Satisfaction & Interest
- Increasingly Flexible, Technical Landscape

Contracting, aging working age population reduces hiring pool



Reasons for Leaving



Developing Responses

- Improve recruitment
- Augment in-person data collection
- Rethink multimode
- Differentiate staff roles

Improve Recruitment

- Reduce time-to-hire with rolling recruitment and training
- Evaluate challenging hiring areas for extra attention
- Engage candidates and new hires before training
- Consider professionalizing the FDC role
- Travel experienced staff to difficult to hire areas

Augment in-person data collection

- Meet respondents where they are
 - Contact strategies tailored and responsive to respondent preferences
 - Data collection mode responsive to respondent preferences, e.g., CAVI
- Apply in-person data collection selectively
 - Focus on gaining cooperation
 - Focus on instruments that require in-person guidance
 - Focus on high-value cases: increase coverage, reduce bias, etc.
 - Offload straightforward content to self-administered
- Rethink incentives broadly and incrementally

Rethink what multimode means

- Incorporate adaptive, reactive designs rather than sequential approaches
- Use FDCs as data collection managers
 - Monitoring completion in different modes
 - Pushing to next mode
- Use hybrid work to extend the meaning of in-person work (CAVI)

Provide support, differentiate roles to retain staff

- Offer mentoring programs for new staff
- Provide differentiated roles
- Implement bonus programs for retention and performance
- Share field staff across projects to maintain hours with smaller, more targeted caseloads

Thank you

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