

In France, 60% of those who have resigned claim they were better before

France, and more generally Western countries, are witnessing a wave of resignations. In France, more than 520,000 people left their jobs between late 2021 and the start of 2022. But among those who have done it, 60% regret their decision.

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"The number of resignations has reached a historically high level. This is the observation of La Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques (Dares) which recorded 520,000 resignations between the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022. The previous record dates from the first quarter of 2008, during the last financial crisis, where 510,000 people left their jobs. "After two years of the pandemic, many people have reflected on the meaning of their work. They also wanted to be closer to their family and be able to devote more time to their private life", suggests Rémi Malenfant, director of HR innovation at, UKG, a company specialising in Human Resources, which conducted a survey on this subject.

The French regret their resignations more than the others

But what is most interesting in this study are the people who decided to return to their former employer. This is called the “boomerang effect”. The survey focused on the United States, Mexico, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and France. The results show that, on average, 40% of those who resigned regretted their choice.

A phenomenon is even more noticeable in France, where 60% of employees who resigned think that they were better off before. “The big difference between the UK and France, for example, is that Anglo-Saxons tend, when they leave a job, to change jobs. In France, employees will rather leave their employer but remain in the same profession,” says Rémi Malenfant. Often out of reluctance, but also because the job market in France is very focused on diplomas and, without retraining, it is not necessarily easy to change profession.

The boomerang effect, rare in France

But if the French are those who regret their choice the most, they are also the least likely to return to their former employer. According to the UKG survey, the boomerang effect happens with 1 in 5 resignations worldwide. And it is in France that this rate is the lowest at 13%. In particular because managers in France are the least likely to be inclined to reintegrate their former employees who have resigned. “There is a cultural explanation for this. Often, resignation is seen as a break. And for managers, there is also the idea that the person is simply no longer motivated,” explains the director of HR innovation. There is of course the red tape and the onerous bureaucracy which makes resignations and recruitment less flexible in France than in Anglo-Saxon countries.

However, the opportunity is real for employers, who are having more and more difficulty recruiting. According to a study by Pôle Emploi, they anticipate 3 million new hires in 2022, or 12% more than in 2021. And almost all sectors of activity are suffering from a lack of personnel. Drawing on resources that have previously been employed by the company can therefore be a solution. Especially since, according to the UKG survey, 65% of French employees who resigned expressed a desire to return to their former employer if the opportunity arose.

