

Underpaid & Overworked

New Mexico State Workers
On How the Staffing Crisis Costs Us All

CWA
UNIDOS
LOCAL 7076

Underpaid and Overworked: New Mexico State Workers On How the Staffing Crisis Costs Us All

INTRODUCTION

New Mexico's valuable state workforce is made up of our family, friends, and neighbors. State workers provide critical services and oversight in transportation, healthcare, education, social service benefits, and more. All New Mexicans, including the over 21,000 employees in state agencies, need high-quality work environments, living wages, good benefits, functioning schools, healthcare systems, and social services. State employees love the work they do and are committed to serving their communities.

Unfortunately, these crucial state functions are imperiled by workforce vacancy and turnover rate that are at a historic high due to low pay and poor working conditions.

This report highlights the experience of members of the Communications Workers of America Local 7076 working in a range of positions across 13 state departments during a staffing crisis. The findings—based on interviews with members, 714 surveys, and evidence from state reports—reveal that low and unfair pay and lack of access to remote work exacerbate historically high vacancy and turnover. The result is that the state's mission to “serve the public and deliver essential services in order to advance the quality of life for all New Mexicans” cannot be fully realized.

As the state collectively bargains with employees and the New Mexico Legislature assesses how to spend the state budget, now is the time to make targeted investments in our valuable state workforce. The state of New Mexico is in a strong financial position to invest in workers and those they serve. In August of 2023 the state announced “the highest General Fund (GF) revenue forecast in New Mexico history with \$3.48 billion in ‘new money,’ a 3.5% increase in recurring revenue for FY25.” According to Governor Lujan Grisham: “The robust general fund proves that what we are doing in New Mexico's economy is working.”¹ If what state leadership is doing is working, it is time to invest record revenues in the people of New Mexico. Raising state workers' salaries and providing remote work options are two critical steps to saving and strengthening our vital public services and ensuring every New Mexican's well-being.

¹ New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration, “State presents the highest general fund revenue forecast in NM history,” August 2023, <https://www.nmdfa.state.nm.us/2023/08/29/state-presents-the-highest-general-fund-revenue-forecast-in-nm-history/>.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report spotlights the voices of 714 state workers, who share their experience working during an unprecedented staffing crisis. The perspectives provided by these workers shed light on the human impact of understaffing and how low pay, high vacancy and turnover, and poor working conditions at state agencies negatively impact the quality of services New Mexicans rely on. The report documents a long history of high turnover, historically high vacancy rates, and over-reliance on overtime that collectively cost the state over \$130 million a year. The report documents the serious consequences of a history of inconsistent cost-of-living raises, appropriations that neglect to fully fund fair compensation, and a lack of accountability in ensuring that union-negotiated agreements over pay and other policies are consistently implemented.

Survey data suggests that low pay and lack of remote work are the primary drivers of understaffing:

- 460 respondents (64%) selected low pay as the top driver of turnover. Open-ended responses indicate that increases in employee health care costs, and inconsistent cost-of-living raises exacerbate low annual salaries. Pay compression and inversion—when workers with decades of service earn close to or less than new employees—is an issue that is widely and deeply felt as unfair and contributing to low morale and short-staffed departments;
- 494 (69%) report considering leaving their job for another position. When asked what 3 changes would be necessary to convince them to stay, 327 (66%) respondents selected “Guaranteed annual cost-of-living raises linked to inflation,” 266 (54%) selected “remote work options,” and 202 (41%) selected “fair pay linked to years of service.”

Low staffing has resulted in precarious and concerning working conditions that impact the quality of services received by everyday New Mexicans:

- 446 respondents (63%) report that their department is currently understaffed;
- 438 (61%) share that low staffing has affected their agency’s ability to provide quality services.

Survey respondents report increased workloads as agencies struggle to recruit and retain workers. State employees share their concerns that rising workloads result in a decline in the quality of services. Of the 438 respondents that indicated that short staffing is affecting the quality of services:

- 154 respondents (35%) report that programs or services have been cut or significantly scaled back;
- 145 (33%) report that regulatory outcomes are compromised;
- 120 (27%) report that the state is losing revenue due to program cuts;
- 99 (23%) indicate that critical state services and benefits are delayed;
- 71 (16%) report that vulnerable populations (not including children) are in unsafe conditions;
- 65 (15%) report that natural resources are not being protected;

- 44 (10%) report that serious health conditions are left untreated, resulting in needless suffering and even death;
- 32 (7%) report that children are in unsafe conditions and/or are not receiving critical support.

An open-ended question asked survey respondents to share more about the effects of understaffing on their working conditions and service delivery. Their responses paint a picture of systemic failure across departments, including: unmanageable workloads, low morale and burnout, financial and contractual problems, including the loss of funding. Workers shared stories of service gaps and delays, reduced service quality, and even the compromised safety of those seeking state services, including patients, families, and children. State workers communicated that their work is often stressful and not worth the pay they receive. Workers who have remained in their jobs do so because they are committed to their agencies' missions despite the challenging conditions.

Fortunately, the findings in this report include a set of measures the state can take immediately to address the problems identified. This legislative session, the state can fully fund:

- Across-the-board cost-of-living increases based on inflation;
- A one-time appropriation to fix pay inequities caused by decades of inconsistent cost-of-living raises;
- Pay as bargained with the Unions and outlined in New Mexico Administrative Code, including ensuring equity and appropriate placement within pay bands;

In addition, state leaders from all branches of government must uphold the rights of labor unions to collectively bargain over:

- Pay classifications and appropriate placement of employee salaries;
- Policies to address retention, including: remote work options, better paid leave, and other benefits like retirement and the healthcare plan.

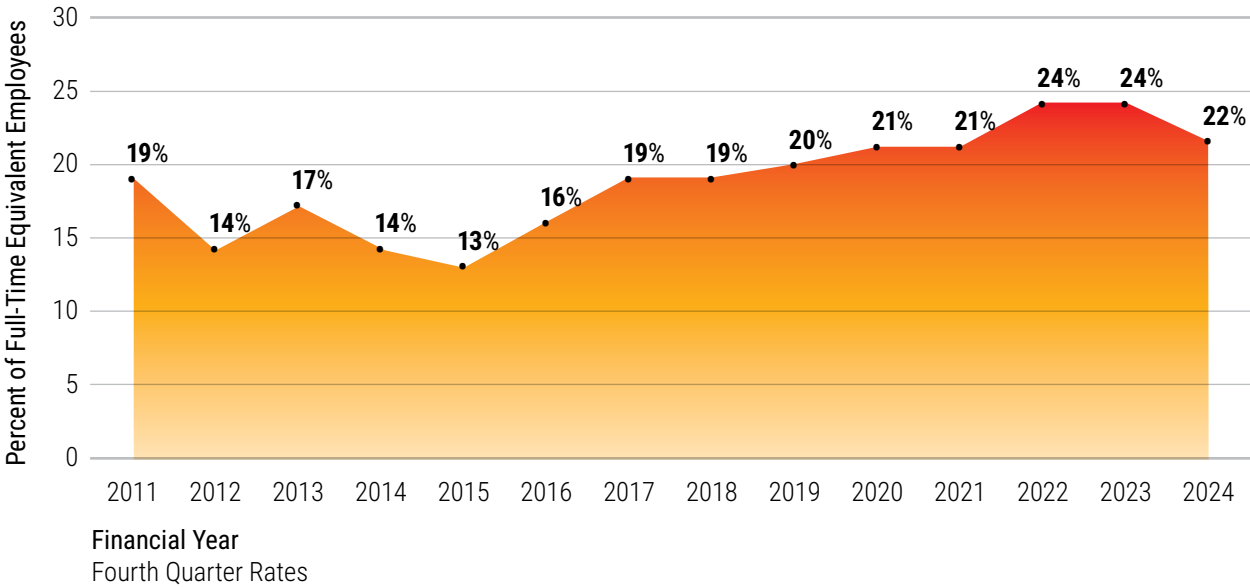
BACKGROUND

Persistent Vacancies and Turnover

21,930 full-time equivalent employees (FTE) worked in New Mexico State government in 2012 and a decade later, in 2022, FTE had gone down to 21,497, a nearly 2% decrease.² This staffing loss occurred alongside an overall population increase of 3%.

New Mexico’s shrinking state workforce is partially attributable to chronically high and growing vacancy rates. According to data provided in the State Personnel Office’s (SPO) Quarterly Workforce Reports and visualized in the chart below, vacancy rates have reached an all-time high in the last few years. According to SPO’s 2023 Quarter 4 report, in 2023 the average vacancy rate was 22.8%, and the average rate for 2024 was 22.7%. This was 70% higher than the FY 2015 rate of 13%. With around 21,000 FTE employees this means that the state is operating critical services with nearly a quarter of the workforce missing, or 4,700 jobs.³

New Mexico State Employee Vacancy Rates



² New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, Program Evaluation Unit, “Program Evaluation: State Personnel Compensation and Classification Plan and Human Resources Authority,” Report #22-03, August 17, 2022, pg. 5, bit.ly/3Xppcny.

³ New Mexico State Personnel Office, Compensation and Classification Reports, <https://www.spo.state.nm.us/compensation-and-classification/reports/> Data used is from Q4 of each year, found in Quarterly Workforce Reports between 2012-2024.

In 2022 the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee conducted an evaluation of the State Personnel Compensation and Classification Plan (hereafter 2022 LFC Report). The report found that:

Vacancy rates for the state have hovered between 12 percent and 21 percent since FY12. Despite an ongoing inability to reduce vacancy rates, agencies requested funding for an additional 2,200 FTE for FY23 (762 were authorized). However, few agencies provided any plans to address ongoing vacancies through reclassification, targeted pay increases, or other measures.⁴

The state's efforts to address its worker shortfall are made more challenging by turnover rates. The 2022 LFC Report looked closely at historic turnover trends and noted that:

Nearly half of all state employees leave within their first year, and turnover is higher than national benchmarks. In 2021, SPO reported 2,121 voluntary separations, or a 12 percent turnover rate—3 percent higher than the average government voluntary turnover rate of 9 percent reported by the Society for Human Resource Management. This high turnover rate is driven by low first-year retention rates.”⁵

In FY 2024, the voluntary turnover rate was 15% and 36% of new employees did not finish their first year of service.⁶

Turnover costs us all: in money, in time, and as the data from our survey reveals, in decreased quality of essential services. SPO calculates the cost of turnover per employee to be \$42,620. Using the 2021 turnover total of 2,121 employees, turnover cost the state over \$90 million dollars that year.

High vacancy rates and turnover often lead to the use of overtime. Over-reliance on overtime burdens workers, affects the quality of services, and drains critical public resources. In 2024 the state of New Mexico spent \$44.8 million on overtime.⁷ If we estimate the total cost of high turnover and overreliance on overtime to be about \$130 million a year (a low estimate), this is millions of taxpayer dollars that could be invested in recruitment and retention of the valuable state workforce.

The 2022 LFC Report made clear that state agencies need to address staffing problems “through reclassification, targeted pay measures, or other measures.”⁸ More than two years later, not only have their major recommendations not been implemented, but numerous additional problems with pay and classification, in particular, have been identified.

⁴ Op cit., New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, “Program Evaluation,” August 2022, pg. 5.

⁵ Ibid, pg. 6.

⁶ New Mexico, State Personnel Office Key Quarterly Performance Measures Report Quarter 4, Fiscal Year 2024, pg. 20, <https://www.spo.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/State-Personnel-Quarterly-Report-FY24-Q4.pdf>.

⁷ Ibid, pg. 13.

⁸ Op cit., New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, “Program Evaluation,” August 2022, pg. 5.

State Employees Denied Consistent Cost-of-Living Increases and Appropriate Placement on Pay Bands

State employees are dependent on annual appropriations from the Legislature to keep up with the rising cost of living, which almost always fall short. As the 2022 LFC Report details:

Though the cost of labor continually increases with inflation, the state does not regularly consider increases in the employment cost index in agency or executive budget requests. Instead, budgeting for compensation increases has generally been ad hoc and occurred on the legislative side, contingent on available revenues.⁹

While the state's 2022 decision to increase base pay to \$15/hour and adjust pay bands is commendable, the 2022 LFC Report detailed various problems with how adjustments were distributed. For instance, employees with a long tenure with the state who did not receive a raise when pay bands were adjusted might make less than new employees today. The report also found that employees on the low end of the occupational schedules, including nurses, IT administrators and Child Protective Services case workers, received relatively small percent increases, "despite the fact that occupational schedule roles often provide critical services directly to New Mexicans and are particularly hard to fill."¹⁰

Union analysis of August 2024 payroll data for CWA-represented members (provided by SPO) revealed the extent of pay inequities. Among employees with 20 or more years of continuous service with the state, 34% were compensated below the midpoint of their salary pay band. Sadly, employees who had not changed positions with the state during their tenure had the largest pay gaps. Sixty-two percent of employees with 20+ years of service in the same position were compensated below the midpoint for their salary, typically earning less than newly hired employees in the same position.

Incentivized by a tough labor market, the state has routinely needed to offer new employees higher and more competitive pay. While higher starting pay is good, union analysis reveals that the state has historically neglected to provide existing employees with consistent raises and ensure appropriate placement based on years of service. Not only is this system unfair, as it neglects to reward the state's most experienced and committed employees, it also incentivizes long-term employees to move between jobs at different agencies (which triggers a pay re-evaluation) or leave state service entirely. State law requires that appropriate pay and internal alignment be considered for annual salary adjustments for existing employees. However, lack of accountability and neglect has prevented this law from being effectively implemented and upheld.

⁹ Ibid, pg. 16.

¹⁰ Ibid, pg. 14.

SURVEY METHODS

This survey was developed by the Communications Workers of America Local 7076. Between May and July 2024, Local 7076 staff and members shared the survey with state employees. Seven hundred and fourteen state employees completed the survey:

- 268 (8%) work at the Department of Health;
- 134 (19%) work at the Environment Department;
- 105 (15%) work for the Department of Cultural Affairs;
- 51 (7%) work for the Public Education Department;
- 37 (5%) work for Human Services Department/Health Care Authority;
- 29 (4%) work for Workers' Compensation Administration;
- 23 (3%) work for the Miners' Colfax Medical Center;
- 23 (3%) work for the General Services Department;
- 17 (2%) work for the Commission for the Blind;
- 13 (2%) work for the Early Childhood Education and Care Department;
- 11 (1%) work for the Department of Information Technology;
- 3 (0.4%) work for the State Treasurer's Office.

Survey respondents represent a range of tenure in the state. Twenty-four percent of respondents have been with the state for 2 years or less; 26% have between 3-5 years of service; 23% have between 6-10 years of service; 21% have between 11 and 20 years of service; and, 7% have been with the state for 21 years or more. A quarter of respondents have at least a decade of tenure and provide a valuable perspective on the longer arc of employment in state agencies.

Employees surveyed represent 218 job titles and a range of work: from environmental experts to nurses and health educators on the front lines of caring for patients, to clerical and financial employees ensuring our state agencies run. The Departments and job titles with the highest response rates include the following:

- 82 Environmental Science Specialists and 19 Water Resource Professionals from the Environment Department;
- 32 Educational Admins from the Public Education Department;
- 26 Epidemiologists, 24 Office Clerks, 12 Healthcare Surveyors, and 11 Health Educators from the Department of Health;
- 30 Registered Nurses, including 19 from the Department of Health, 6 from Early Childhood Education, and 5 from the Miners' Colfax Medical Center;
- 30 Social and Community Service Coordinators across three departments: The Department of Health (12), Human Services (14), and Early Childhood Education (4);
- 26 Business Operations Specialists from 6 departments.

Survey respondents are diverse in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity.

- 465 respondents shared their gender data (66% of total survey respondents): 67% identify as Women, 29% as Men, and 2% as Nonbinary.

The demographic profile of the 445 workers that shared race/ethnicity data (63% of the total) breaks down as follows:

- 42% White, non-Hispanic;
- 41% White, Hispanic;
- 3% Black, non-Hispanic;
- 3% American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic;
- 3% Asian, non-Hispanic;
- 2% American Indian or Alaska Native, Hispanic;
- 2% Biracial or Multiracial, Hispanic;
- 2% Biracial or Multiracial, non-Hispanic;
- 1% Black, Hispanic;
- 3 respondents are Middle Eastern or North African.

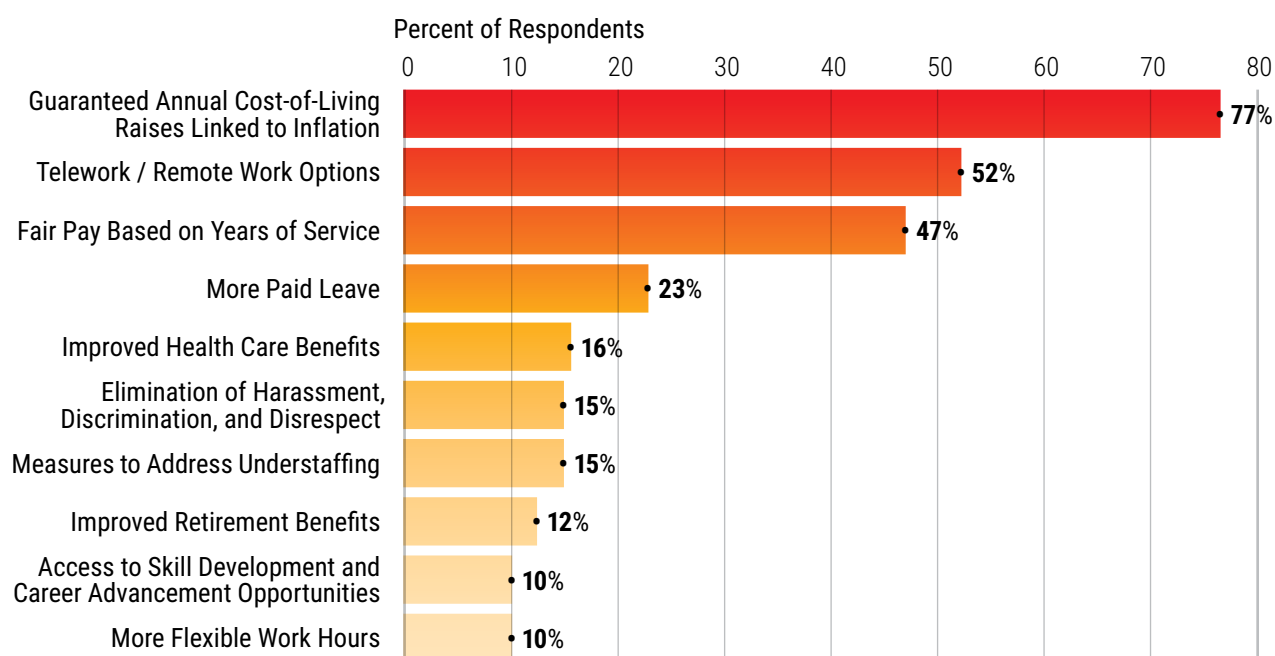
FINDINGS

State Employees Want Fair Pay and Remote Work Options

The survey asked respondents to pick their top 3 priorities for change in the workplace from a list of 14 choices. For 77% of survey respondents, guaranteed annual cost-of-living raises linked to inflation is a top priority. A majority of respondents (52%) put access to remote or telework options in their top three, and 47% selected “fair pay based on years of service.”

Other priorities for change include more paid time off (23%), improvements to the healthcare benefits (16%), effective measures to address understaffing (15%), and the elimination of harassment, discrimination, and/or disrespect (15%). Twelve percent of respondents selected improvement to retirement benefits as a top issue, and 10% placed the need for more flexible work hours and access to skill development and career advancement in their top 3.

Top Three Priorities for Workplace Change



An open-ended question asked survey respondents to add additional details about their top workplace concerns, 261 respondents answered the question and responses were coded and analyzed for themes. Most respondents provided additional detail on their top priorities for change at work, but the most prevalent theme is that workers see the low pay, inconsistent raises, lack of access to remote work, eroding healthcare and retirement benefits, and other poor working conditions as interconnected issues all leading to problems attracting and retaining employees. For instance, an employee at the Department of Cultural Affairs linked access to fair pay and remote work:

We need wages that reflect education and experience levels and would allow for a single individual to be able to live in the city they work in without needing to spend over half their paycheck each month on rent and groceries. Or we need the ability to telework to be able to live in a more affordable area.

During the pandemic New Mexico state employees, like many public servants around the country, illustrated that strong public services can be provided in a hybrid (partially remote) work context. A recent *Forbes* Business study found that 98% of workers in the U.S. want to work remotely at least some of the time.¹¹ When, in February 2023, remote work was no longer an option for state employees, there was a rise in turnover and a decrease in morale.¹² An employee in the Environment Department linked access to remote work to many other issues important to state employees and all New Mexicans:

Flexible and remote working is a fight for women to remain in the workplace and remain competitive, same can be said for rural workers, where commuting 4 or 5 days a week is not an option. We are a state that should be leading the charge because of how unique we are in that many people here have a 50 mile commute, one way, adding to traffic and air pollution. State employment could be a place where many more of our residents from historically marginalized or vulnerable populations could access good, higher-paying jobs, but remote options are key to making this a reality.

Open-ended survey responses reflect employee's specific experiences with low and unfair pay.

**Currently I am making entry level pay with 15 years of experience.
I am making the same salary as a newbie at 59 years of age.
– Department of Health Employee.**

**I am currently being offered positions outside the state that have better pay and benefits. The fact that we do not get pay raises in order to move up our pay scale is very discouraging and is forcing me to look outside of state employment in order to support my growing family. I love what I do and helping people, but unfortunately I can't use "thank you" or "we appreciate you" to pay the bills.
– Commission for the Blind Employee**

**Experience-based raises are paramount. We should not have to change jobs and kneecap our team just to make more money than the new guy with no experience.
– Department of Health Employee**

¹¹ *Forbes*, "Remote Work Statistics And Trends In 2024," June 12, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/remote-work-statistics/>.

¹² *Albuquerque Journal*, "As New Mexico mandates state workers go back to the office, some say they plan to leave," February 1, 2023, https://www.abqjournal.com/news/local/as-new-mexico-mandates-state-workers-go-back-to-the-office-some-say-they-plan/article_116b9c80-5271-5111-8601-21fd335e5055.html.

The state should pay employees a fair wage and provide raises that keep up with the cost of living. We need career ladders implemented to allow employees to continue to grow in roles they love and are good at.

– Department of Health Employee

I am leaving the state for an outside position in 2 weeks. My main reason for leaving is the state cannot match the salary offered by the private sector.

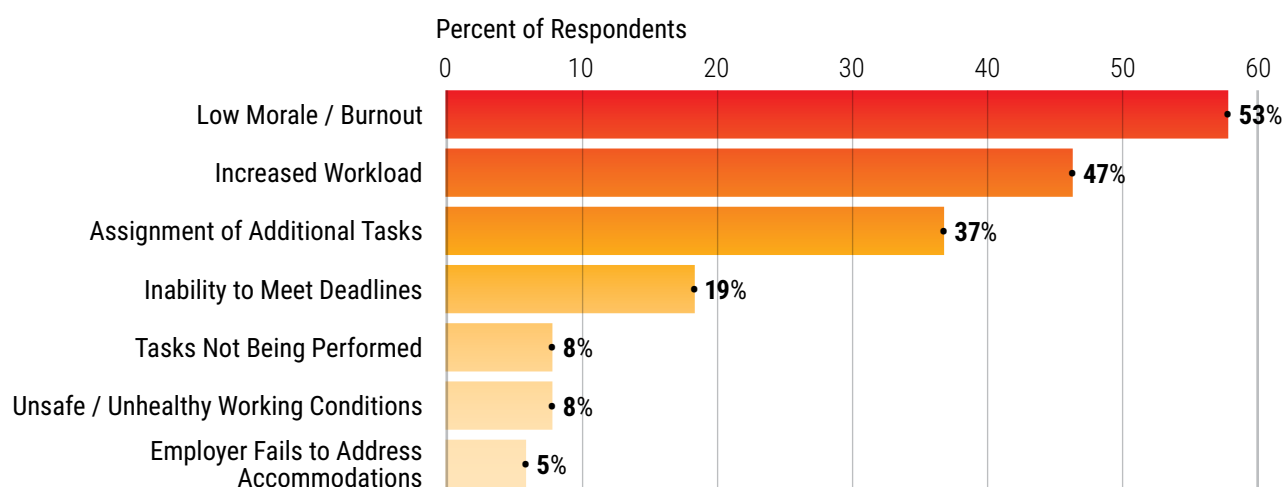
– Environment Department Employee

The Crisis of Understaffing

Sixty-three percent of survey respondents, 446 total respondents, report that their department is currently understaffed; 27% said they are not currently understaffed; and, 10% selected “I don’t know.” Of those that selected “I don’t know,” 30% are recent hires. In response to a question on how current staffing levels compare to staffing levels in the past, 270 respondents (38%) report that they are lower, 150 (21%) unchanged, 109 (15%) higher, and 185 (26%) selected that they don’t know.

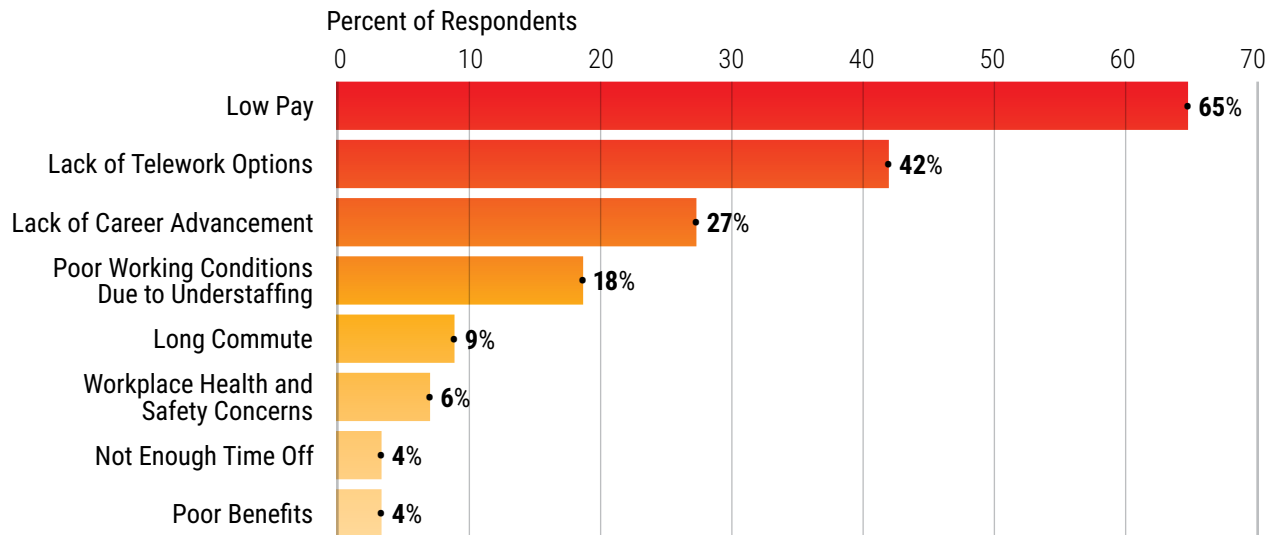
The 446 state workers who report understaffing were asked about the outcomes of understaffing and 58% selected “A feeling of low morale or burnout,” 47% selected “Increased workload,” 37% selected “The assignment of additional duties outside of my job description” and 19% selected “An inability to meet deadlines or otherwise complete work on time.” Eight percent of survey respondents report that understaffing has led to “Unsafe or unhealthy working conditions” and “Tasks that [they] previously performed are no longer being performed.”

Top Two Negative Outcomes of Understaffing



Survey respondents answered the question “What do you think are the primary (2) reasons employees leave your workplace?” The majority of respondents, 460 (65%) selected “low pay” and nearly half, 296 (42%), selected “lack of remote work options.” One hundred and twenty-nine respondents (18%) chose “poor working conditions due to understaffing” and 64 (9%) chose “long commutes”—an issue connected to lack of remote work.

Top Two Reasons for Leaving



An open-ended question asked survey respondents to share more about the effects of understaffing on their working conditions. Two hundred and forty-two responses provided in-depth examples and details about their lives at work. These answers were coded and analyzed to identify common trends. The responses as a whole paint a picture of systemic failure across departments. These conditions collectively hinder the ability of departments to meet their responsibilities, maintain service quality, manage resources effectively, and ensure employee and community well-being. More specifically, the following trends were widely reported by survey respondents:

- Unmanageable workloads;
- High turnover;
- Low morale and burnout negatively affect employees, their families, and the quality of work;
- Inadequate training and lack of career development opportunities;
- Financial and contractual problems, including the loss of funding;
- Compromised safety of those seeking state services;
- Service gaps;
- Reduced service quality.

Unmanageable Workloads and High Turnover

Employees report struggling to keep up with their tasks due to excessive workloads, the assignment of tasks outside of their training and expertise, and, as a result, incomplete or rushed work and reduced overall efficiency and quality. The direct quotes below are just a small sample illustrating this theme:

We experience burnout and low morale due to increased workloads and tasks that are usually out of the scope of normal job functions.

— General Services Department Employee

I am doing work for several other departments. This impacts my work as I am only able to do the bare minimum without the ability to fully invest my skills and growth toward my job duties.

– Department of Health Employee

Understaffing creates unreasonable workloads and the inability to meet performance standards set by the legislature.

– Environment Department Employee

A significant amount of additional tasks have been added to our workload. Nurses are burning out and unable to carry the impossible burdens that have been thrust upon us.

– Human Services Department/Health Care Authority Employee

Workloads are increased with pressure to meet unrealistic deadlines. We tend to be a revolving door and never seem to be at full capacity.

– Human Services Department/Health Care Authority Employee

Low Morale and Burnout

High workloads, and insufficient support are leading to staff burnout and deteriorating mental health. Workers report feeling overwhelmed, undervalued and unsupported,

My own health has declined; burnout has decreased my ability to offer high quality customer service, communication quality, problem solving, and resolution creation.

– Public Education Department Employee

Our regional public health nurses are critically understaffed and overworked, and cover huge geographic regions by themselves. The burnout is tangible and I'm always waiting for the next one to quit and the position to be vacant for an entire region again, leaving us in a crunch if there's a public health emergency in that region.

– Department of Health Employee

When a team is reduced from 5 members to 2.5, the remaining members face increased workloads, leading to stress and potential burnout. This reduces productivity and efficiency, and the overwork also lowers morale, negatively affecting engagement and the overall team dynamic, further deteriorating service quality.

– Public Education Department Employee

Financial and Contractual Problems

Across departments, but particularly in the Department of Health, employees report that understaffing leads to delays in processing contracts, handling approvals, and managing paperwork. These issues impact departments' ability to secure and manage vendor contracts, attract outside funding, and effectively manage projects. Workers share widespread instances of delayed payments, unfulfilled contracts, and even a few examples of returned grant funding.

Grant funding has been returned to the federal government due to not being able to spend it in a timely manner.

– Department of Health Employee

Understaffing in admin/finance/contracts has led to delays in getting provider agreements executed each fiscal year so people are not receiving timely cancer screening or diagnostic services. These delays have also led to federal grant funds not being fully expended during the fiscal year, with the unspent funds being reverted back to the feds.

– Department of Health Employee

We can't meet grant requirements, and the CDC keeps hounding us to complete requirements that we are literally incapable of completing.

– Department of Health Employee

It often takes months to get any contracts in place now which is leading to frustration among the partners we've worked with for years.

– Department of Health Employee

Contracts are taking so long to route and have internal signatures completed that it has significantly cut down the timeline of contracts. Year-long contracts literally have 4-5 months of actual working time. Money has been lost or inaccessible for our EPP partners in higher education that need the money to fund teacher professional development and teacher residency preparation programs.

– Public Education Department Employee

The Crisis in State Employment Puts the Public at Risk

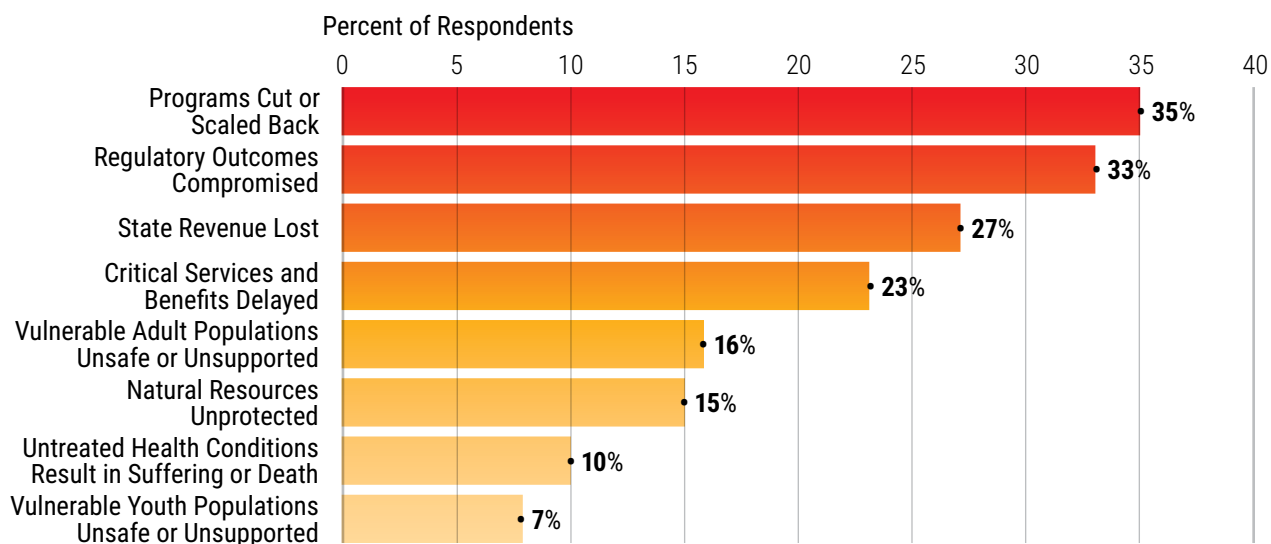
When the state is understaffed, the consequences for the public can be serious. Survey data reveal that the crisis in state employment limits departments' ability to fulfill their missions. Inspectors in the Environment Department are not able to conduct timely inspections on environmental hazards in workplaces and communities, rural communities are left without nurses, public health interventions have been cut, wait times for services are long, and the public's access to high-quality educational and cultural programs are limited.

438 survey respondents indicated that short staffing is affecting the quality of services they are able to provide.

- 154 respondents (35%) report that programs or services have been cut or significantly scaled back;
- 145 (33%) report that regulatory outcomes are compromised;
- 120 (27%) report that the state is losing revenue due to program cuts;
- 99 (23%) indicate that critical state services and benefits are delayed;
- 71 (16%) report that vulnerable populations (not including children) are in unsafe conditions;
- 65 (15%) report that natural resources are not being protected;

- 44 (10%) report that serious health conditions are left untreated, resulting in needless suffering and even death;
- 32 (7%) report that children are in unsafe conditions and/or are not receiving critical support.

How Understaffing Has Affected the Quality of Services



Asked to provide examples of how understaffing affects services, 240 respondents shared valuable insight into the serious consequences for the public when state offices are short staffed.

I am the only nurse in our office so if I'm sick or take vacation, test results are not noted, appointments are canceled, and there is simply no one to see or speak to clients.
 – Department of Health Employee

There have been times when we cannot open doors, due to understaffing. Turning clients away, or scheduling clients way out or with uncertainty of appointment dates and times.
 – Department of Health Employee

We have frequently been without a childhood lead poisoning prevention health educator which means case follow up is routinely delayed.
 – Department of Health Employee

Volunteer programs and camps are extremely affected by lack of staffing. They are huge educational components of our museum and they are not getting the attention they need.
 – Department of Cultural Affairs Employee

The Office of Oral Health does not have a dental hygienist and dental assistant in the Santa Fe office. We cannot provide dental sealants or fluoride varnish to underserved rural communities.
 – Department of Health Employee

The Public Education Department fails to hold districts accountable for many regulatory and statutory provisions in education.

– Department of Public Education Employee

We are unable to implement prevention efforts for New Mexico's youth, for instance by providing training on youth health literacy, resiliency, and youth employment and engagement. These prevention programs can decrease risk factors for youth suicide, substance use, depression, bullying, etc.

– Department of Health Employee

Serious health conditions are left untreated, resulting in needless suffering and even death.

– Environment Department Employee

Recently several staff have been hired however, with over 200 Assisted Living Facilities there remains a great need for an increase in staffing and presence in the facilities. With the limited manpower we have available to conduct surveys it is often the problematic facilities that are visited routinely over, and over. This leaves other facilities with limited or no oversight and puts the residents at risk of experiencing neglect, abuse, and exploitation.

– Human Services Department/Health Care Authority Employee

I work at an Adolescent Treatment Center. We have had multiple residents escape and commit crimes.

– Department of Health Employee

The Torrance County Public Health Office has been without any nurse or clerk for over 6 months now. This effectively halts all safety net services to the community.

– Department of Health Employee

Employees don't have enough time to study the hydrogeology of contaminated sites in New Mexico, leading to lax enforcement of environmental regulations.

– Department of Environment Employee

Having an inadequate number of staff puts more burden on those of us epidemiologists who respond to urgent calls received daily from the public. It also makes it virtually impossible for staff in the emerging infections program to devote any time to analyzing the data we collect.

– Department of Health Employee

CONCLUSION

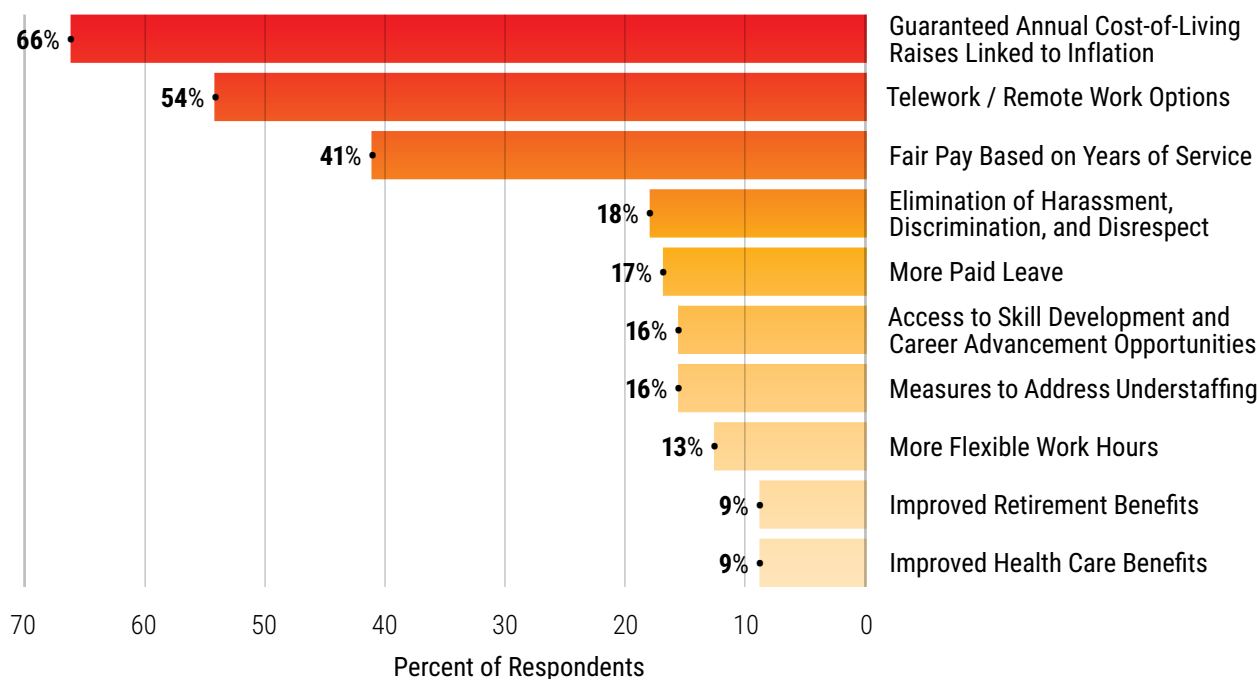
Whether using the interstate, visiting a museum, sending our children to public schools, enjoying clean and healthy workplaces and communities, or using a food and healthcare system in a time of crisis, every New Mexican needs a fully-funded and operational state government. The poor working conditions and compromised quality of care revealed in this report are cause for widespread concern. Fortunately, the findings in this report also suggest clear next steps for addressing problems.

Four hundred and ninety-four survey respondents, 69% of total respondents, said they have considered leaving their jobs for reasons outside of retirement in the last year. A follow-up question asked what changes (up to 3) could convince them to stay:

- 327 (66%) selected “Guaranteed annual cost-of-living raises linked to inflation;
- 266 (54%) selected “Remote work/telework options;”
- 202 (41%) selected “Fair pay based on years of service;
- 494 (91%) selected at least one of the three options above.

The data in the chart below illustrates the importance of addressing these issues and offers additional measures the state can take to support employees, including providing: more paid time off, improved healthcare and retirement benefits, career development and advancement opportunities.

Top Three Changes That Would Convince Workers to Stay



It should be the highest priority of the Legislature and Governor to address staffing—they may be appropriating funds to improve state services, but if there are not enough staff to do the work, nothing will change. Over the years, The Legislature, State Personnel Office and other officials

have passed laws, regulations and policies designed to address pay and chronic understaffing. Unfortunately, there has been a clear lack of accountability for effective implementation and oversight. The valuable state employees who do the day-to-day work know how to solve many of the problems detailed in this report and must be a more central part of finding solutions.

Specific measures the state can take immediately to invest in New Mexico's future are simple. The Governor and Legislature can fully fund:

- Across-the-board cost-of-living increases based on inflation;
- A one-time appropriation to fix pay inequities caused by decades of inconsistent cost-of-living raises;
- Pay as bargained with the Unions and outlined in New Mexico Administrative Code, including ensuring equity and appropriate placement within pay bands;

In addition, state leaders from all branches of government must uphold the rights of labor unions to collectively bargain over:

- Pay classifications and appropriate placement of employee salaries;
- Policies to address retention, including: remote work options, better paid leave, and other benefits like retirement and the healthcare plan.

New Mexico political leaders have an opportunity to invest historically high revenue in the public services on which New Mexicans depend and the public servants who are essential to the provision of those services.

CWA Local 7076

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