

2023

LOW PAY AND HIGH TURNOVER IN TEXAS STATE AGENCIES AND UNIVERSITIES COST US ALL



EVERY TEXAN



TEXANS TOGETHER
for our COMMON GOOD



Low Pay and High Turnover in Texas State Agencies and Universities Cost Us All

State Employees Respond to Historic Workforce Turnover

INTRODUCTION

Texas' valuable state workforce is made up of our family, friends, and neighbors. State workers ensure our parks, highways, universities, hospitals, and public services run smoothly so that Texans of all backgrounds can prosper together. All Texans, including the nearly 334,000 employees in state agencies and universities, need living wages, good benefits, high-quality work environments, functioning schools, healthcare systems, and social services.

Unfortunately, state workforce turnover is at a historic high due to low pay and poor working conditions. The root of the problem lies with Texas' most powerful elected officials who are intentionally starving our state government and workforce of critical funds that support the public services directly impacting our lives and families. Privatization, or the agenda to transfer vital public goods and services into the hands of nonprofits and billion-dollar corporations, has played a significant role in this trend toward reduced job standards and reductions in quality of services. Private companies that have taken on public services have cut wages and staffing levels and undermined the quality of services that Texans rely on. This ultimately costs us all.

This report highlights state employees' experience working at the agencies that provide services we all benefit from. The findings from the survey, combined with evidence from Every Texan's report "How We Get the Texas We All Deserve," and the Texas State Auditor's 2022 Turnover Report, reveal that low pay, chronic underfunding, and high turnover lead to an overworked and under-supported workforce. This undermines the health and well-being of employees and those they serve, educate, and care for. The experiences, challenges, and perspectives of state employees on their work and the critical services they provide to the people of Texas are too-often overlooked. State workers' voices are an essential source of information to understand how we can improve our public goods and services.

As the Texas Legislature assesses how to spend a historic state budget balance, now is the time to make long overdue, targeted investments in our valuable state workforce. Raising state workers' salaries is a critical step to saving and strengthening our vital public services and ensuring every Texan's future and shot at prosperity

Executive Summary

This report spotlights the voices of state workers, who share their experience working during unprecedented and historic staff turnover. The perspectives provided by these critical workers clearly illustrate the reasons state workforce attrition is at a historic high and how it impacts the quality of services everyday Texans need. Quantitative and qualitative responses in this report are derived from a state employee survey. The survey methods section highlights the methodology and the number of survey participants.

The findings section of the report and survey results document state employees' concerns over low pay as a primary driver of high turnover:

- 61% of survey respondents report not receiving a wage increase over the past year, despite historically high levels of inflation. The state of Texas has not provided an across the board pay increase to the entire state workforce since 2014;
- 56% of survey respondents report considering leaving their job for higher compensation.

High turnover has resulted in precarious and concerning working conditions that impact the quality of services received by everyday Texans:

- 73% of survey respondents report that staffing levels in their department over the past year have been historically low;
- 71% of survey respondents report that low staffing has affected their agency's ability to provide clients/facilities/families with quality services.

Survey respondents report increased workloads as agencies struggle to recruit and retain workers. State employees report their concerns that rising workloads result in a decline in the quality of services provided to everyday Texans, many of whom are children.

Many state workers communicate and recognize that the outsourcing of services to private sector companies has resulted in a stronger focus on case closure and completing services over upholding quality service provision that provides meaningful interventions and support to Texan families.

Finally, state workers communicated that their work is often stressful and not worth the pay they receive; state employees have endured emotional stress and in some cases physical harm. Workers who have remained in their jobs do so because they are committed to their agencies' missions despite the challenging conditions. The annual cost of state agency turnover is conservatively estimated at approximately \$1.2 billion annually.¹ However, the human toll of high workforce turnover, driven by low pay and an intentionally eroded public sector, is a reality that state legislators should and must act on.

¹ Every Texan. How We Get the Texas We All Deserve: State Workforce Turnover Costs All of Us." Pg. 6. January 2023. https://everytexan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/TTFCG_01192023_web.pdf.

Survey Methods

This survey was developed by Every Texan and the Texas State Employees Union. Between December 2022 and February 2023, TSEU staff and members shared the survey with union members. Two-hundred and seventeen total respondents completed the survey.

Thirty-seven survey respondents have supervisory duties, including directors, supervisors, or managers. Five are senior-level directors. The other 180 survey respondents are workers across various non-supervisory titles; ninety-three, over half of these 180 non-supervisory employees, carry a caseload. Fifty-six employees, 68% of the total respondents that carry a caseload, work at the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS).

- Eighty-two respondents (38% of total respondents) work at the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS);
- 75 respondents (35% of total respondents) work at Health and Human Services (HHSC);
- 29 respondents (13% of total respondents) work for public higher education institutions;
- 6 respondents (3% of total respondents) work for the Texas Workforce Commission;
- 5 respondents (2%) work for Criminal Justice Department, Parole;
- 5 respondents (2%) work for State Supported Living Centers;
- An additional 15 respondents (7% of total respondents) work for “other” state agencies, such as the Attorney General’s office, the Texas Legislative Council, the House of Representatives, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Texas Water Development Board, the Office of Injured Employee Counsel, the Austin State Hospital, and more.

Survey respondents represent employees with considerable years of service, providing valuable perspective on the longer arc of services and employment in state agencies. On average, tenure in state employment for survey respondents is 8.7 years.

- Five percent of respondents have been with their agency for less than a year;
- 22% have between 1-4 years of service;
- 24% have between 5-9 years of service;
- 23% have between 10-14 years of service;
- 14% have between 15-19 years years of service;
- 6% have between 20-24 years of service;
- 3% have between 25-29 years of service;
- and, 3% had over 30 years of service

FINDINGS

“I am grateful for the impact this job offers in society. If only the impact seen in the job could translate to employee wages.” —conservatorship specialist, DFPS

“I work with amazing, passionate, intelligent people, and I love the work that I do. But the workload and low pay are unsustainable. The more good employees we lose, the harder the workload gets because those of us who are left have to take on more.” —program specialist, Medicaid & CHIP Services, HHSC



Increasing Turnover Has Left State Staffings At Historically Low Levels

Seventy-three percent of survey respondents report that staffing levels have been lower this past year than they have in the past (see Chart 1).

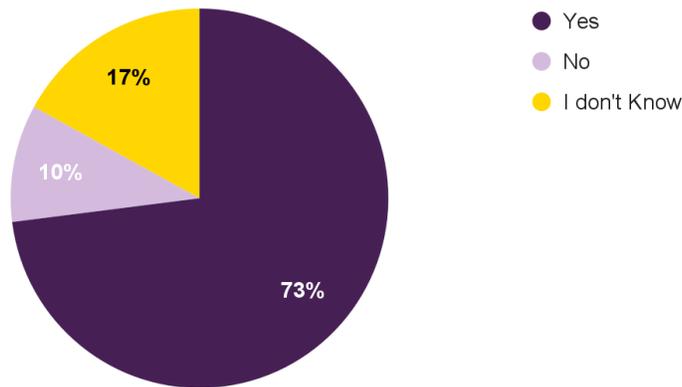
Historically high levels of staff turnover are a primary driver of low staffing across Texas state government. Every Texan reports that the 2022 Texas “state workforce turnover rate was the highest it’s been in 29 years. The state workforce turnover rate was 9.5% in 1993 and 22.7% in 2022, reflecting a 13.2% increase in turnover overall.”² The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Department of Family and Protective (DFPS) services experienced turn over rates exceeding the state average at 29% and 29% respectively.³

Eighty-five percent of total survey respondents say they have considered leaving their positions for reasons other than retirement in the last year. An additional 4%, selected “I don’t know.” Only 12% responded that they have not considered leaving in the last year.

² Every Texan. Pg 4.

³ Ibid.

Chart 1: Have staffing levels in your department been lower over the last year than they have historically?

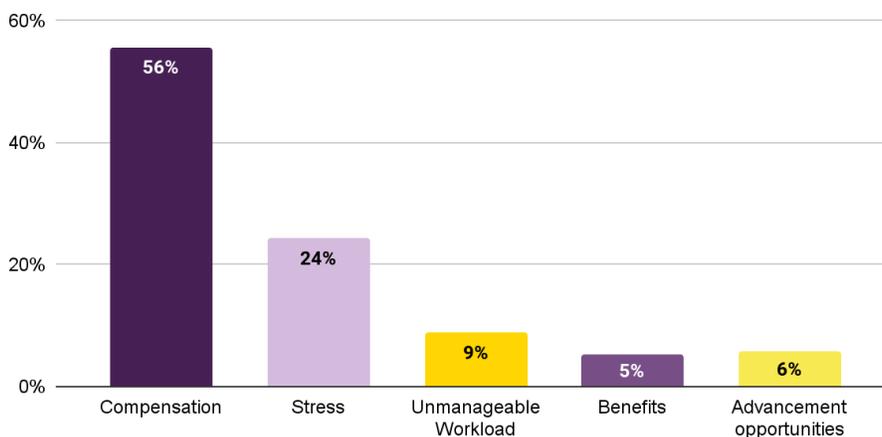


Low Pay Is The Primary Driver of State Employee Turnover

“The starting pay is less than a fast food job in some cases.” —library specialist, University of Houston Library

Survey responses confirm low pay as the primary driver of high state workforce turnover. When asked “what is the top concern affecting your decisions to leave?”, 56% of survey respondents indicated compensation as the top reason; the second reason was stress at 24% (see Chart 2). Eighty percent of respondents indicated an increase in pay may convince them to stay in their job.

Chart 2: What is the top concern affecting your decision to leave?



Departing state employees surveyed in 2022 reported pay as the number one reason for their departure according to the State Auditor’s Office.⁴ Every Texan reports a 10% increase in the number of employees reporting pay as the primary reason

⁴ Texas State Auditor’s Office. “An Annual Report on Classified Employee Turnover for Fiscal Year 2022.” January 2023. <https://sao.texas.gov/SAOReports/ReportNumber?id=23-703>.

for their departure from 2021 to 2022.⁵ Below market pay is a systemic issue across state agencies. The state agencies' median salaries are far below the median salaries for many of the metropolitan areas in which state employees reside. For example, at Texas HHSC, the median annual salary for the most commonly held position is \$40,634 while in the Austin-Round Rock metropolitan area the 2021 median annual salary is \$60,000, a nearly \$20,000 gap. See footnote for the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2021 median salary for specific Texas metropolitan areas across the state.⁶

An open-ended question asked survey respondents to add additional details about their desire to leave their current positions. A professor of practice at UT Austin noted: *“Educators create a skilled workforce for the future, and no economy runs well without a skilled workforce. Underfunding education creates a vicious cycle of less productivity and a less productive workforce. When the state fails, educators will go where they are valued.”*

An administrator at DFPS said: “Admins are described as the ‘backbone and support for the unit, program, and department.’ However, we are not compensated as such. We earn less than a living wage for the city of San Antonio. I believe that causes a lot of new hires to leave.” An assistant in Child Protective Investigations at DFPS said: “You can't pay a full-time state worker less than \$30,000 per year in Austin and expect anything positive to happen for our most vulnerable families. It is impossible to live on my salary and my position is a vital and needed position in DFPS.” *“The low pay in conjunction with the increased workloads and insufficient support is causing a mass exodus from [DFPS]; Quality people can go elsewhere for either the same money or more and do less stressful work,”* shared a manager in the Statewide Intake division of DFPS. Other DFPS employee responses reflect the same theme: low pay causes higher turnover resulting in high or unmanageable caseloads in an already-stressful work environment. Employees report that the stressful work is not worth the pay they receive. An adult protective services specialist at DFPS notes: “I believe that the primary reason employees leave the workplace is because their occupation is tough and they are underpaid; they can seek employment elsewhere in the same occupation and receive a higher level of pay.”

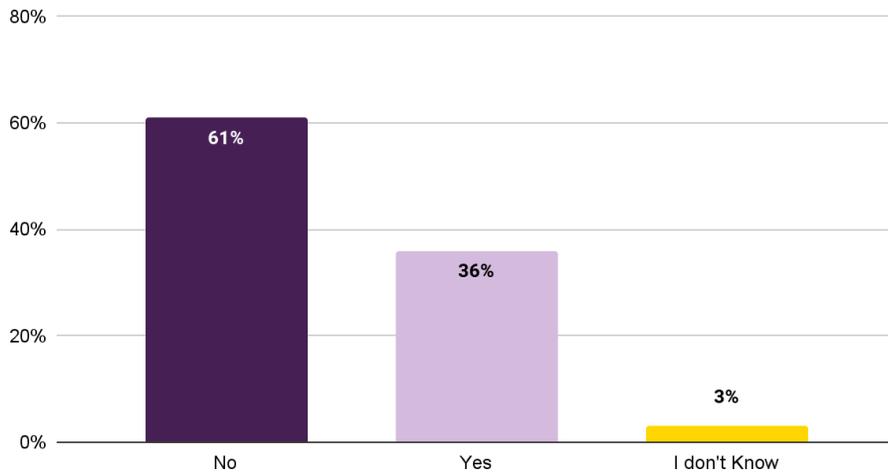
2022 Pay Raises Were Not Enough

The state of Texas has not provided a statewide pay increase to every state employee since 2014. Survey respondents answered the question: “Did you receive a pay raise in the last year?” Sixty-one percent of respondents did not receive a raise, 3% indicated that they did not know and only 36% of survey respondents indicated that they did get a raise (see Chart 3).

⁵ Every Texan. Pg. 15.

⁶ Amarillo: \$46,050; Austin/Round Rock Metro: \$60,000; Dallas/Fort Worth/Arlington Metro: \$58,020; El Paso: \$41,650; Houston/The Woodlands/Sugarland Metro: \$57,790; Laredo: \$40,520; San Antonio/New Braunfels: \$51,700; Waco Metro: \$47,179.

Chart 3: Have you received a pay raise in the last year?



Of the 36% of respondents that did receive a raise, most of them, 53%, received a less-than-5% raise and noted that the raise was inadequate (see Chart 4).

Survey responses demonstrated that, among those who received a pay increase, the improved wages were an important factor in their decision to remain with the Texas state government. Seventy-seven percent of the employees that received a pay raise said that they either would not have remained in their jobs, or they don't know whether they would have remained in their jobs, without this raise.

Survey respondents noted how long it had been since the last raise: "It did not improve my job satisfaction because it had been 13 years since the last real raise," shared an incident management coordinator at a State Supported Living Center. Given the current cost of living, some survey respondents noted that the smaller raises didn't mean much in real, material change. One admin assistant at HHSC reflected on this challenge: *"[The] pay raise helped, but inflation and grocery store prices, including eggs, just ate up the little raise."* For the 30% of respondents that received a raise of 9% or higher, a few respondents noted that it made a significant difference in their quality of life at work. One specialist in DFPS' Family-based Safety Services notes: "It has motivated me to continue working as hard as I do and provide the care needed to my families. It has allowed me to feel better about spending as much time working as I do."

Chart 3: Have you received a pay raise in the last year?

Raise Amount	% of Respondents
<1%-2.99%	29%
3%-4.99%	24%
5%-6.99%	9%

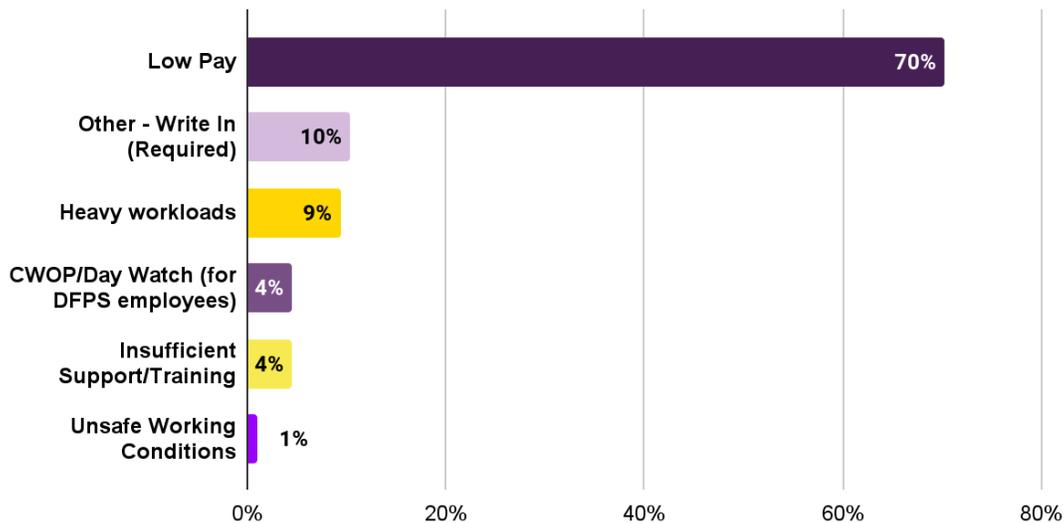
Raise Amount	% of Respondents
<1%-2.99%	29%
7%-8.99%	9%
>9%	30%

Turnover and Low Staffing Have Led to Increased Workloads

“Due to the current condition of the economy, and inflation, the amount of work will only increase as more Texans will need additional help.” —Texas works advisor II, Healthy Texas Women’s Medicaid, HHSC

Survey respondents were asked to select one response to the question: “What do you think is the primary reason employees leave your workplace?” (see Chart 5). Seventy percent selected low pay, 10% selected “other” and wrote in a response, and 9% selected heavy workloads. While only 9% of workers chose heavy workloads as the primary reason they think employees are leaving, workloads were also mentioned in 66% of the “other” responses, in combination with low pay and lack of support.

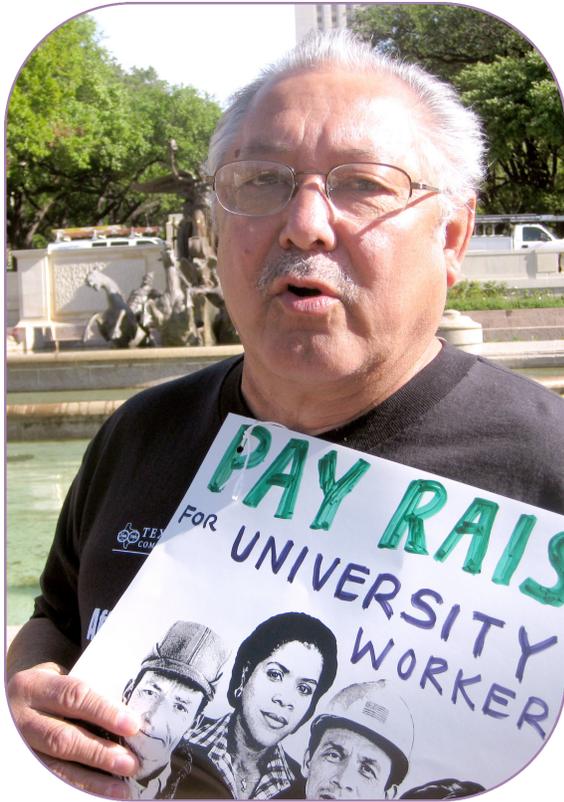
Chart 5: What do you think is the primary reason employees leave your workplace?



Survey comments on the interlinking issues with pay, turnover, and increasing work include the following: “no work life balance;” “mandatory overtime for 3 years non-stop;” “staff is overworked and underpaid;” “high expectations with little resources or support;” “workers are leaving the agency due to high caseload and low pay;” “new hires and tenured staff won’t stay because the pay is too low with a high work-volume and the cost of living continuing to rise.”

THE COST OF TURNOVER

“The staff are overwhelmed. They are unable to develop bonds with parents, children and/or caregivers. This has detrimental consequences on cases.” —conservatorship specialist supervisor, DFPS



Every Texan’s research estimates that turnover cost Texas \$1.2 billion in 2021.⁷ Survey results add evidence of the significant human and community costs related to turnover.

Thirty-eight percent of survey respondents are employees of the Texas DFPS, which is charged with protecting “children and vulnerable adults from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.”⁸ Survey respondents shared details of children in unsafe, potentially threatening environments, and without an adequately-trained advocate on their side. Thirty-five percent of survey respondents are employees of the Texas HHSC, which is responsible for administering hundreds of programs designed to help Texans lead healthier lives. For instance, HHSC employees ensure that Medicaid recipients receive the care they need to live. Other state employees surveyed, from higher education staff to employees in state hospitals, state-sponsored living centers, and the Texas workforce commission, provide critical services that

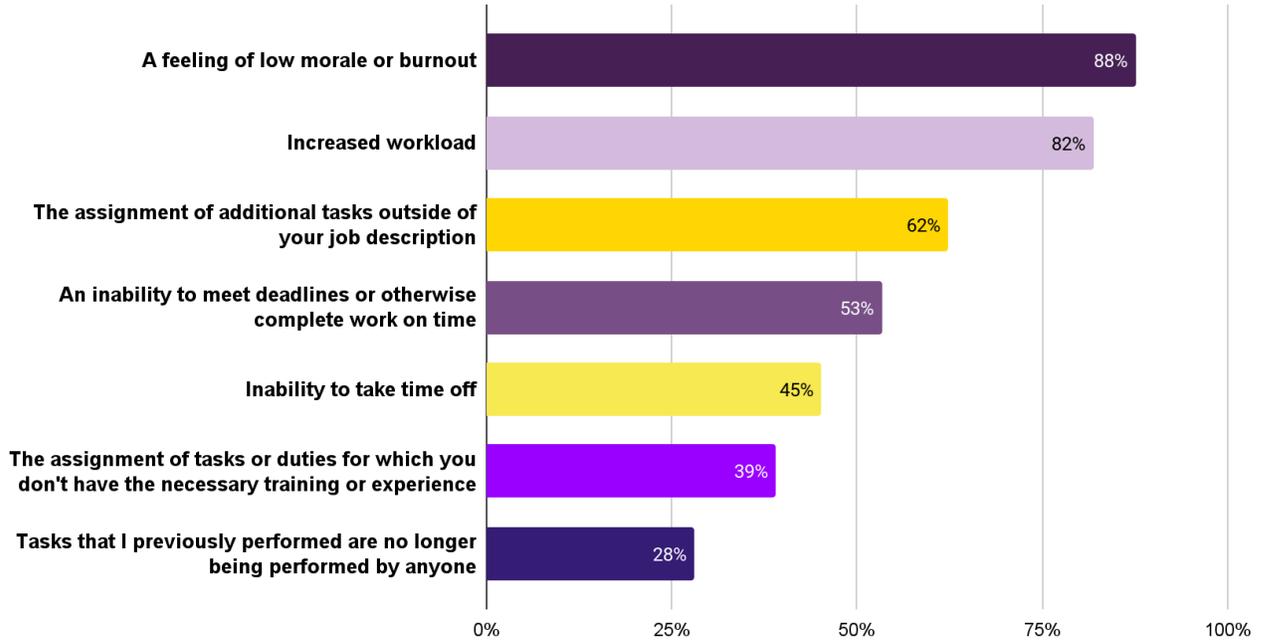
are the underpinning of a functioning, democratic society.

We asked survey respondents about the outcomes of short staffing in their department (see Chart 6). Eighty-eight percent of survey respondents selected “A feeling of low morale or burnout,” 82% selected “Increased workload,” 62% selected “The assignment of additional tasks outside of [their] job description,” and 53% selected “An inability to meet deadlines or otherwise complete work on time.” Thirty-nine percent of respondents indicated they have had to take on duties without the necessary training or experience to perform them.

⁷ Every Texan. Pg. 6.

⁸ Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. “About.” https://www.dfps.texas.gov/About_DFPS/default.asp. Accessed 3/8/2022.

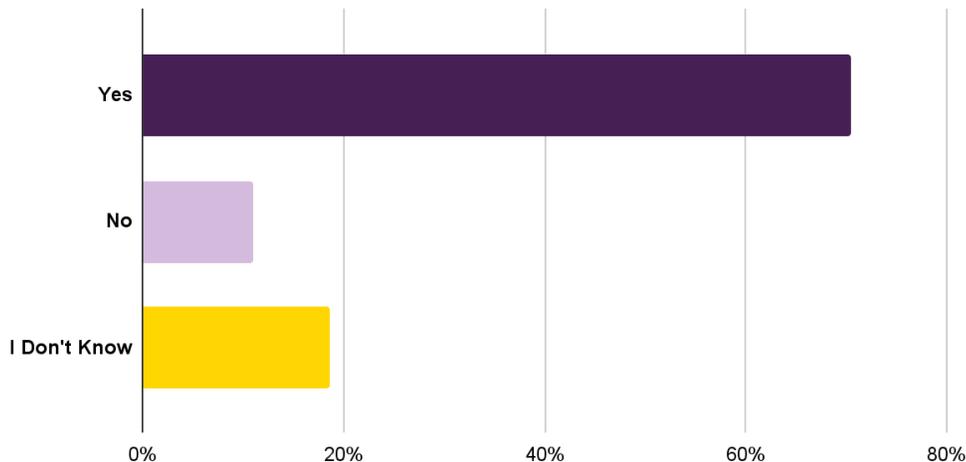
Chart 6: Have you experienced any of the following outcomes as a result of low staffing (select all that apply):



Low Staffing Levels Have Compromised Quality of Care

While low pay may be the primary driver of retention challenges in state agencies, over time, existing employees are overburdened and demoralized and, as a result, high-quality care and services may be compromised. We asked survey respondents: “Has low staffing affected your agency’s ability to provide clients/facilities/families with quality services?” Seventy-one percent of survey respondents selected Yes, 19% selected “I don’t Know,” and 11% said no (see Chart 7).

Chart 7: Has low staffing affected your agency’s ability to provide clients/facilities/families with quality services?



We offered survey respondents the opportunity to share additional details on their ability to provide quality services in an open-ended response. Respondents consistently communicated a concern for the quality of care and services they are able to provide to Texan families needing their support. Employees struggle to fulfill their department missions with low staffing. For instance, an investigator with Child Protective Services at DFPS shared: ***“This department was created to provide a voice for children. We are here to ensure their safety and provide families with education, resources, and ultimately a way to protect their children. With low staffing, it has become less important to help children and more important to close cases.”***

Survey responses reflect serious concerns that vary from long wait times to access Medicaid benefits, to children, families, and employees suffering without necessary care or in unsafe conditions. A corrections officer in the Juvenile Justice Division shared: “My current caseload ratio per policy should be 45/1, I currently sit at 67/1. There is no compensation for being over ratio and it is technically against policy.” A staff member in the Texas House of Representatives shared details that warn of the dangers to democracy when legislative offices are understaffed: ***“House offices are understaffed and do not have time to focus appropriately on policy analysis. As a result, entrenched interests have an upper hand in crafting legislation.”***

A university instructor noted that without adequate instructional faculty, departments have to cut courses, affecting the quality of education and even students’ ability to graduate on time. A nurse with over 15 years of service in HHSC’s Quality Monitoring Services program, charged with ensuring high-quality standards in Texas’ nursing homes, indicated that nursing facilities are underserved and quality may be compromised due to shortages. “We have several nurse field positions open with some having been open for an extended period of time. This does not allow us to serve as many facilities as in the past, and may impact the quality of care provided.”

Heavy workloads are the reality across most state agencies. In some agencies, like HHSC and DFPS, there have been mandatory overtime requirements since the start of the pandemic in 2020. Policies such as mandatory overtime may be seen as the solution to short staffing, but they can result in exhaustion and burnout, which can lead to increased staff turnover. A Texas works advisor at HHSC shared that: ***“Understaffing has created a backlog, which in turns creates larger caseloads that need to be worked within certain state/federal time limits. They want us to do so much more within the confines of a typical 8-hour day which has led to the agency mandating overtime for the past 2 YEARS without any end in sight. WORKERS BURN OUT!”*** An incident management coordinator at a state-supported living center wrote: “Low staffing means that we are only able to complete the most essential tasks and no one is able to rest or take time off. This leads to long-term burnout, stress, and low morale.”

Survey respondents share that the combination of heavy workloads, inadequate staffing levels, burnout, and stress means that work is often rushed. This has high stakes in all areas of work, but particularly for those on the frontlines of caring for vulnerable populations. A child safety specialist with over twenty-five years of service at DFPS wrote: ***“Families are not seen in a timely manner, and visits are only brief contacts. Quality work is not being done and safety is often not achieved.”***

One medical eligibility specialist employee at HHSC shares the serious consequences for those waiting for support on their applications for Medicaid-covered healthcare: ***“Casework is rushed and workers are expected to meet efficiency numbers that are essentially unattainable. Because casework is rushed to try to meet those goals, we have more errors on cases. Those errors turn into complaints that a supervisor has to fix and process to correct. The clients end up with increased processing time and loss of benefit months.”***

HHSC employees responding to the survey are especially concerned about what will happen in April, when Texas has to revise all Medicaid cases once the pandemic-era Medicaid expansion is unwound. One HHSC advisor explained their worries about the upcoming speed-up: “Texas Advisors are overloaded with cases that have to be done in a timely manner. The HHSC has implemented a quantity over quality outlook on the whole issue. In April, it will only get worse when the agency has to revise all Medicaid cases.”

Another major theme from the open-ended responses was long backlogs and wait times for clients, coworkers, and other agencies: “Hold times on phones are through the roof,” wrote a customer service representative at the Texas Workforce Commission. An epidemiologist in HHA wrote: “We usually send out reports to clinics and regional health departments but those quarterly reports are put on hold.” A Texas works advisor at HHSC shared that: “The effects of short staffing are higher processing times, longer wait times for clients, missed appointments, and missed opportunities for clients to qualify for services or exemptions due to misunderstood processing or agency error while processing.”

Privatization & Outsourcing Worsen Issues of Poor Service and Care

Respondents also raised concerns about the stakes of short staffing in a landscape of outsourced and privatized state services. An assistant in DFPS wrote: “My [former] job was cut due to the privatization of foster care. The state conveniently forgot to give any of the workers help finding suitable employment. It is dangerous to privatize everything in a democracy. It then serves only the board or the company, instead of serving the vulnerable kids and the workers.” A DFPS conservatorship specialist shared: “I have worked with parts of the state with privatized foster care and the quality is awful and there is no communication from the organizations regarding the clients they are supposed to be seeing.”

The state of Texas has spent the last two decades aggressively privatizing state work, particularly in the multi-billion dollar Medicaid managed care industry.⁹ The Purchased Contract Services division of DFPS is responsible for establishing contracts with medical professionals, group home providers, and an entire host of service provision organizations. One contract technician working for the Purchased Contract Services division noted: ***“Due to short staffing, we are unable to select uniquely qualified applicants as contractors due to the overflow and influx of providers desiring to make money off of the agency. Thoroughly intense screening is not being conducted and once a contract is awarded providers only provide mediocre services with a high demand for reimbursement.”***

⁹ See, for instance: The Claude Pepper Center. “Dallas Morning News ‘Pain and Profit’ Briefing.” August-December 2018. <https://claudepeppercenter.fsu.edu/side-posts/dallas-morning-news-pain-and-profit-briefing-by-the-claude-pepper-center/>.

State employees in our survey communicated their concerns over private organizations providing services to vulnerable Texans, including children. Overall, survey respondents communicated a need for consistency in service provision that the private sector is unable to deliver. A child protective services caseworker at DFPS shared: ***“Creating a profit incentive as opposed to a care incentive has created a broken foster care system. Having multiple private organizations prevents uniformity in standards and accountability. I have seen countless organizations closed for violations only to open in a new name. If we privatize other functions of Child Protective Services (CPS), there will be more of these issues. I think legislators who believe they will save money, will raise costs by having inadequate care and more social problems that are created by a privatized system.”***

Inadequate Staffing Increases Health and Safety Risks For Workers and The Public

Every worker deserves to be safe on the job. Many of the state employees surveyed report safety concerns and stress impacting their wellbeing and those of the people they serve. Employees report high turnover leads to overwork and stressful, sometimes unsafe, working conditions that undermine the agency’s missions.

DFPS survey respondents that carry a caseload, shared concerning examples of how low staffing puts workers and community members in unsafe conditions. A child safety specialist with over 25 years of experience notes that investigations into issues such as child abuse or child endangerment are not done on time: “Low staffing has led to serious safety issues going unaddressed: children are being placed in unsafe situations as investigations are not done on time.” An investigator with over 15 years of experience shared that: “When staffing is low, other workers get more cases, which causes them to work 10-14 hours a day and on the weekends. This leads to burnout, which could cause a worker to not effectively investigate cases, take longer to close a case, or miss something. When working with child safety, nothing can be missed.” Another investigator with over a decade of experience shared the same concern: ***“Workers are exhausted. When workers are exhausted but still in the field, they may miss something or not effectively handle a case. When dealing with the safety of children, we can’t afford to miss anything.”***

DFPS’ Family-Based Safety Services is charged with “maintaining children safely in their homes—or making it possible for children to return home—by strengthening the ability of families to protect their children and reducing threats to their safety. When a child’s safety can be reasonably assured, CPS provides in-home services to help stabilize the family and reduce the risk of future abuse or neglect.”¹⁰ A supervisor in the FBSS program with over 15 years of experience noted that: “Families are being left unseen for months, which has delayed the early intervention created to help mitigate safety concerns.”

Children Without Placement (CWOP) is DFPS Child Protective Services’ program to provide temporary, emergency care to children with severe behavioral issues until a licensed appropriate placement can be secured for them. DFPS describes the

¹⁰ Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. “What are Family-Based Safety Services (FBSS)?.” https://www.dfps.texas.gov/Child_Protection/Family_Support/FBSS.asp. Accessed 3/9/2023.

program as a “last resort” but notes in 2021 that there was a marked increase in the number of youth placed in CWOP.¹¹ In 2021, some children were placed in DFPS office buildings due to a culmination of issues around low staffing, COVID-19 restrictions, and a higher influx of youth cases. Since 2021, DFPS reports the number of youth referred to CWOP has decreased, yet March 2023 news coverage estimates that nearly 70 children under CWOP care are being housed in motel rooms.¹² ABC 8 interviewed former DFPS employees and reported on CWOP: “It’s a group of kids who have no parents, no foster family and no facility that will take them because their behavioral issues are too severe. [Former employees] said that, along with overworked caseworkers, it might be an office clerk, or a driver who transports children, who are tasked with looking after these children.”¹³ Advocates have called upon Governor Abbott and state legislators to increase funding for public-sector facilities staffed with dedicated, trained professionals for children that have no alternative placement options and to prioritize more funding for foster services.

State employees surveyed communicated ongoing challenges with CWOP workload and high turnover due to low pay, stress, and feeling unsafe or in danger while on the job. Sixteen percent of the DFPS survey respondents that carry a caseload selected CWOP as the primary reason employees are leaving their workplace. In open-ended responses DFPS employees communicated that the ongoing CWOP crisis exacerbates an already-challenging and, at times, unsafe work environment. A supervisor in Family-based Services shares that: “Staff are not being trained properly, which creates unsafe working conditions. “Then you add on CWOP duties, which is an additional task and unsafe conditions for staff.” A caseworker at CPS with over 10 years of experience shared that her coworkers are quitting in direct response to CWOP duties. She shares her own challenges working the CWOP shifts: *“I have been assaulted during a shift and it makes me anxious. I am not exempt, so I just work the shift though it gives me major anxiety issues. I know at least one person who has a similar experience like me—quit after many years of service. I am also contemplating quitting.”*

CONCLUSION

Texans of all backgrounds value our families and ability to prosper together. Whether applying for a driver’s license, enjoying a state park, or using a food and healthcare system in a time of crisis—every Texan needs a fully-funded and operational state government. The poor working conditions and compromised quality of care revealed in this survey are cause for widespread concern. State workforce turnover, driven by low pay, undermines our shared values and ultimately costs every Texan.

The state of Texas has not provided a statewide pay increase to every state employee since 2014. The result is severe wage stagnation in valuable public sector jobs providing services to everyday Texans. The consequence of these decisions is

¹¹ Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. “Children Without Placement.” September 2021.

https://www.dfps.texas.gov/About_DFPS/Reports_and_Presentations/CPS/documents/2021/2021-09-14-DFPS_CWOP_Report.pdf.

¹² WFAA, ABC 8. “Exclusive: Former Texas CPS employees say nearly 70 ‘children without placement’ are being housed in motel rooms paid for by state.” March 3, 2023.

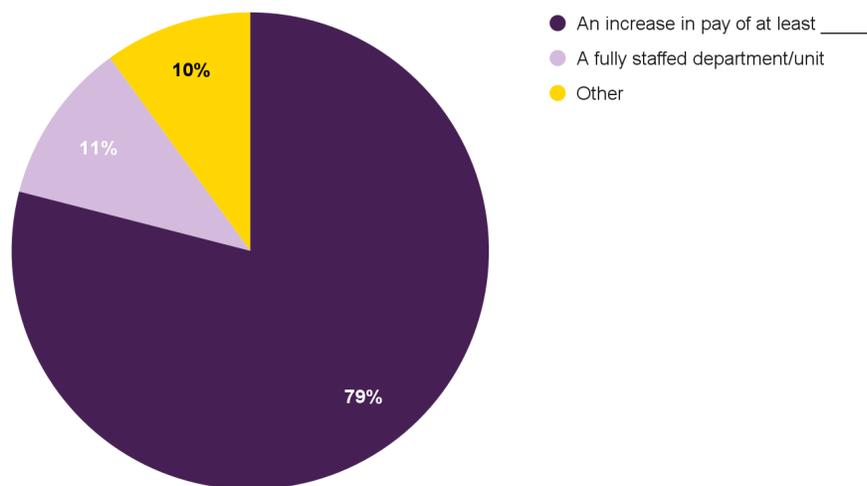
<https://www.wfaa.com/article/news/state/retired-texas-cps-employees-children-without-placement-house-in-motels/287-bd8042dc-2e55-4064-be64-be1b19c9a5e6>.

¹³ Ibid.

real: the Texas State Auditor's Office 2022 report shows that the majority of departing state employees left for a position that would pay at *least \$10,001* more than their current salary.¹⁴ **Our survey results indicate that significant pay raises that ensure that Texas state agency and university employees are compensated for the essential and difficult work they do every day would go a long way to fixing the systemic problems outlined in this report.**

Survey respondents were asked whether any of the following would convince them to stay: “An increase in pay of at least _____”, “a fully staffed department,” or “other,” with an option to write in a response (see Chart 8). Seventy-nine percent of respondents selected an increase in pay and wrote in the amount they’d need to receive to stay. Respondents indicated that they need, on average, a \$14,579 raise to remain in their positions. Ten percent of respondents noted that a fully-staffed department would convince them to stay and an additional 10% wrote in an “other” option. Fifty percent of respondents that selected “other” indicated that they would require full staffing *and* an increase in pay to stay in their jobs long-term.

Chart 8: Would any of the following convince you to stay?



Texas' most powerful elected officials have intentionally neglected our state employees' pay as part of their agenda to privatize public goods and allow their corporate friends in high places to profit off everyday Texans. Everyday Texans pay the price for Texas' most powerful elected officials' agenda. Vulnerable children do not get the care they need while state workers struggle to fulfill the essential commitments that the State has made to every Texan. Fortunately, there are solutions to Texas' unprecedented state workforce turnover.

The Texas Legislature has the opportunity to begin to address the low pay and systemic conditions that come with it detailed in this report. **During the 2023 session they can move to pass House Bill 202 to guarantee every state employee a salary increase that appropriately addresses decades-long wage stagnation coupled with current inflation. Additionally, addressing the state's stagnating retirement and pension program will be critical to workforce retention and building a strong pipeline of state services for the future. The state can pass HB 830 to provide an annual cost of**

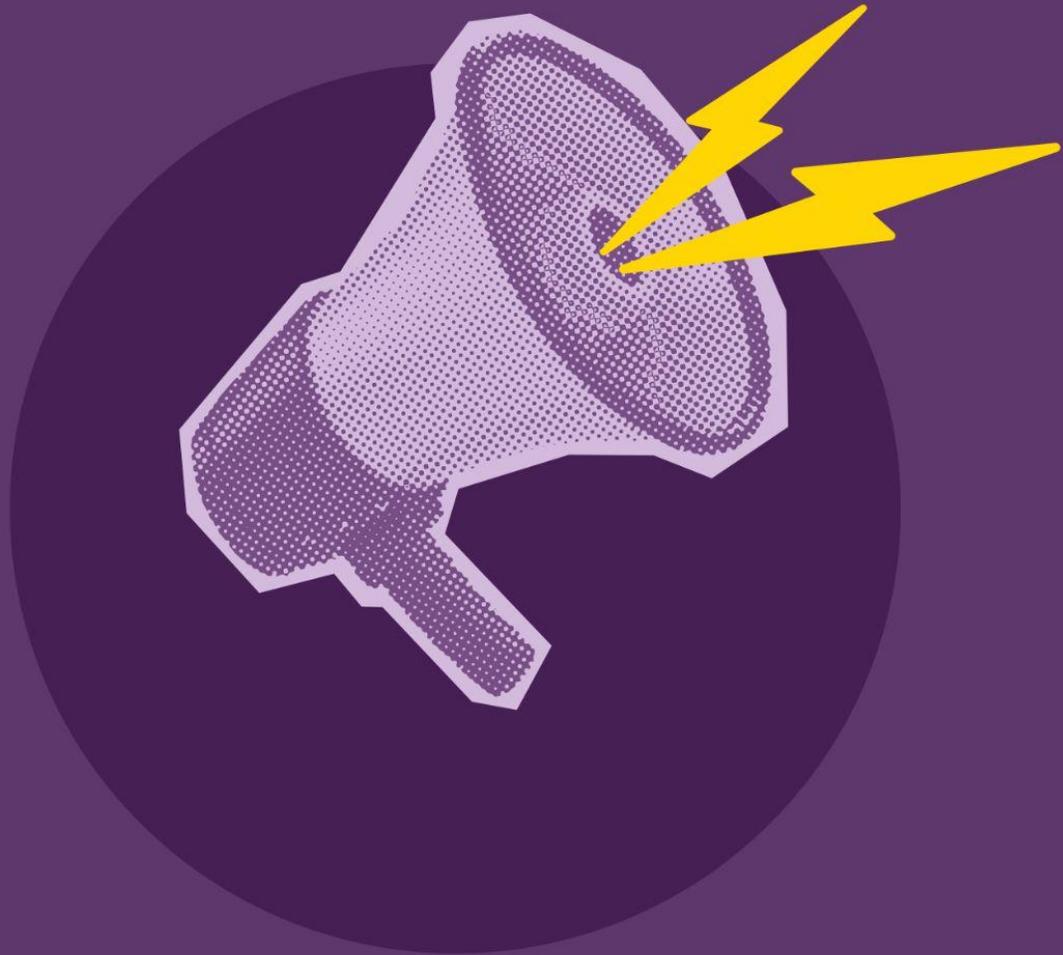
¹⁴ State Auditor's Office. Page 58.

living adjustment to the state pension program and ensure retirement benefits keep pace with current day costs.

Long-term, the state must significantly increase levels of funding to state agencies and universities to ensure fair pay, high-quality benefits, annual cost-of-living increases, and excellent facilities and services.

The State of Texas is at a crossroads and our political leaders must decide whether they will invest in the public services on which Texans depend and the public servants who are essential to the provision of those services. More short-sighted austerity will only exacerbate the issues highlighted in this report and further the deterioration of critical state functions. Now is the time to act.





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