



2025

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 Cost Us All

State Agency Employees Respond to Low Pay, High Turnover, and Understaffing

INTRODUCTION

Texas' valuable state workforce is made up of our family, friends, and neighbors. State workers make sure our parks, highways, universities, hospitals, and public services run smoothly so that Texans of all backgrounds can prosper together. All Texans rely on state services to conduct business and take care of our families. The Texas Legislature's disinvestment in the state workforce has led to high turnover and staffing shortages, costing us all.

In 2023, Every Texan and the Texas State Employees Union (TSEU)-Communication Workers of America (CWA) surveyed state employees to better understand their experiences. The 2023 survey and linked report reveal that for many state employees, the love of their job, commitment to service, and confidence in their own expertise was not enough to keep them in positions with low pay and challenging working conditions.¹ The report spotlighted the voices of state workers who shared their experiences working during a global pandemic and unprecedented and historic staff turnover.

Since the 2023 report was released, the Texas Legislature passed a state budget that granted a 5% across-the-board raise and a paid parental leave benefit for all state agency employees. The Legislature's action and the untightening of the job market contributed to Texas' average state workforce turnover dropping from a peak of 22.7% in fiscal year 2022 to 16.5% in fiscal year 2024.² In 2024, Every Texan and TSEU conducted a new survey of the state workforce to assess whether experiences on the job have improved. To achieve a good survey sample, the project team spent considerable time on outreach to state employees; the result was 6,509 total respondents, a significant increase from the 277 respondents in 2023. For additional details on the research methodology underpinning this report, including the survey design, see Appendix 1: Research Methods.

The 2024 survey results indicate that understaffing and high turnover persist, undermining the high-quality public services Texas families rely on to achieve middle-class prosperity. Low pay, chronic underfunding, and high turnover lead to an overworked and understaffed workforce. This directly harms 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. The conditions state workers in our public agencies face largely determine the quality of goods and services these agencies can provide; **any efforts to improve Texas' public services must be grounded in the direct experience of the state workforce.**

¹ Every Texan and the Texas State Employees Union. "Low Pay and High Turnover In Texas State Agencies and Universities Cost Us All." 2023.

<https://everytexan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Low-Pay-High-Turnover-TSEU-Every-Texan-March2023.pdf>.

² Texas State Auditor's Office (SAO). "An Annual Report on Classified Employee Turnover for Fiscal Year 2024." December 2024. <https://sao.texas.gov/reports/main/25-705.pdf>.

The Texas Legislature's investments must continue into the next budget cycle in order to address a protracted pay gap between the state's workforce and the private sector. In 2023, the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts reported that the state workforce lags behind the private sector in pay by approximately 12%.³ In their 2024 "Biennial Report on the State's Position Classification Plan," the Texas State Auditor's Office (SAO) reported that while there was improvement to salary ranges after the 2023 pay raises, salaries still fall behind the market average by 7.4%, and, for many job titles, the private market lag is significantly higher than the average.⁴ Increased state worker salaries and staffing levels are critical steps to save and strengthen vital public services and ensure every Texan's shot at prosperity.

Executive Summary

This report spotlights the voices of state workers, who share their experiences navigating unprecedented and historic staff turnover. The report finds that:

- Low pay is the primary driver of high turnover and short staffing;
- Without the pay needed to attract and retain employees, existing employees are given increasingly heavy workloads and face challenging working conditions;
- In this context, state employees experience high levels of stress, low morale, and burnout;
- Short staffing leads to a decline in the quality of services provided to everyday Texans, many of whom are children.

Workers surveyed who have remained in their jobs do so because they are committed to their agencies' missions, despite the challenging conditions, but the burden placed upon them is heavy and unsound. **The annual cost of state agency turnover is conservatively estimated at approximately \$1.2 billion annually.**⁵ However, the findings in this report reveal that the human toll of high workforce turnover, driven by low pay, is a reality that state legislators should and must continue to act on.

The key statistics from the survey data that informed the principal findings outlined above include:

Chronic Low Pay is the Primary Driver of the Retention Crisis

- 67.1% of survey respondents indicated that they have considered leaving their position for reasons other than retirement in the past year;
- Of those that have considered leaving this year, 53.2% shared that their consideration to leave stems from low pay, while 23.7% selected that it was due to stress and an unmanageable workload;
- 74.3% of those that have considered leaving indicated that an increase in pay could convince them to stay;
- 28% of survey respondents indicated that the Texas Legislature's 2024-2025 budgeted 5% pay raise positively impacted their overall job satisfaction;
- 32.3% indicated they were grateful for the raise, but will most likely need to leave their job for a higher paying position.

³ Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. "A Report on the Texas State Employee Workforce." July 2023.
<https://comptroller.texas.gov/economy/fiscal-notes/archive/2023/jul/workforce.php>.

⁴ Texas State Auditor's Office. "A Biennial Report on the State's Position Classification Plan for the 2026-2027 Biennium." October 2024.
<https://sao.texas.gov/reports/main/25-701.pdf>.

⁵ Every Texan. How We Get the Texas We All Deserve: State Workforce Turnover Costs All of Us." 2023.
https://everytexan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/TTFCG_state-workforce-turnover_web-1.pdf. Pg. 6.

Prolonged Systemic Understaffing Contributes to High Turnover

- 76% of survey respondents indicated that their workload has increased in the last year despite a decrease in average turnover;
- 53.3% indicated that staffing levels have not improved in the last year;
- 55.4% stated that, historically, staffing levels in their department have not kept up with the workload.

High Turnover Negatively Affects The Quality of Services Received by Texas' Families

- 59.2% of survey respondents indicated that heavy workloads affected their ability to perform their job duties;
- 48.3% of Texas Health and Human Services Commission respondents indicated that heavy workloads affected their agency's ability to provide families with quality services; 15.6% selected the response 'I don't know.'

FINDINGS

"The only way to get a raise is to leave my job." — Program Specialist, Department of State Health Services

High Turnover Persists at Key State Agencies Serving Every Texan

Historically, high levels of staff turnover are a primary driver of low staffing and delayed public services across the Texas state government.⁶ SAO reported a fiscal year 2024 statewide average headcount for classified employees of 148,074.⁷ Every Texan analyzed SAO data over the last 30 years and found that the state's average workforce turnover peaked in 2022 at 22.7% and dropped to 16.5% in 2024.⁸ Until 2023, state workforce turnover had been on an upward trend since 1993. While 16.5% turnover is high and must be addressed, the decline in average turnover between 2022 and 2024 shows that the state legislature's pay raise was an effective solution.

Texas State Agency Workforce Average Turnover Fiscal Years 1993-2024

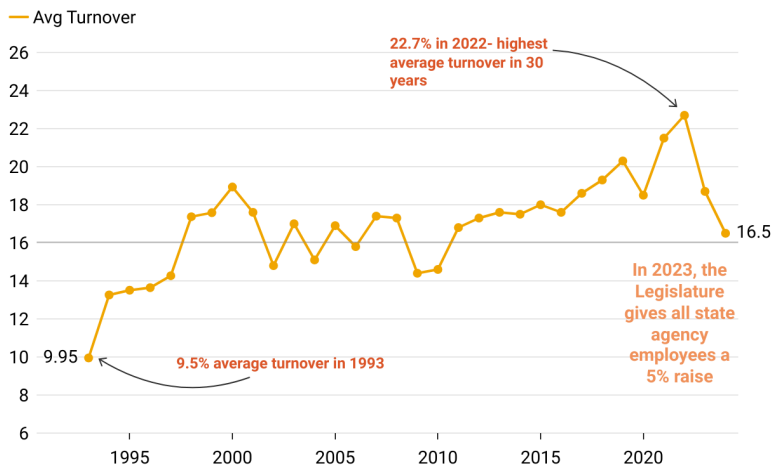


Chart: Every Texan
Source: Texas State Auditors Office



The state's average turnover rate decreased in fiscal years 2023 and 2024; however, several agencies with 1,000 or more employees experienced turnover rates above the statewide average of 16.5%. For reference, in fiscal year 2023, 21 agencies had turnover rates of over 17%.⁹ Several agencies that experienced above average turnover also employed the highest number of state employees, including the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, the Department of Family and Protective Services, and the Department of Criminal Justice. SAO found that of the agencies with 1,000 or more employees, only the Department of Family and Protective Services experienced an increase in average turnover from fiscal years 2023 to 2024.¹⁰

⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Op. Cit. SAO. "An Annual Report on Classified Employee Turnover for Fiscal Year 2024."
⁸ Op. Cit. Every Texan. How We Get the Texas We All Deserve." Pg 1.
⁹ Texas State Auditor's Office. "An Annual Report on Classified Employee Turnover for Fiscal Year 2023." January 2024. <https://sao.texas.gov/reports/main/24-702.pdf>
¹⁰ Op. Cit. SAO. "An Annual Report on Classified Employee Turnover for Fiscal Year 2024." Pg. 16.

State agencies with 1,000 (+) employees and a FY 24 turnover rate that exceeds the statewide average

Department	Turnover FY 24	▼ Turnover FY 23	Turnover FY 22	FY 24 Average Headcount
Juvenile Justice	44.2%	47.2%	45.8%	1,999
Department of Family and Protective Services	27.3%	26.0%	28.9%	12,572
Department of Criminal Justice	22.5%	25.9%	32.5%	34,223
Health and Human Services Commission	18.5%	21.5%	29.0%	38,571
Department of State Health Services	13.4%	18.9%	21.2%	3,786

Table: Every Texan

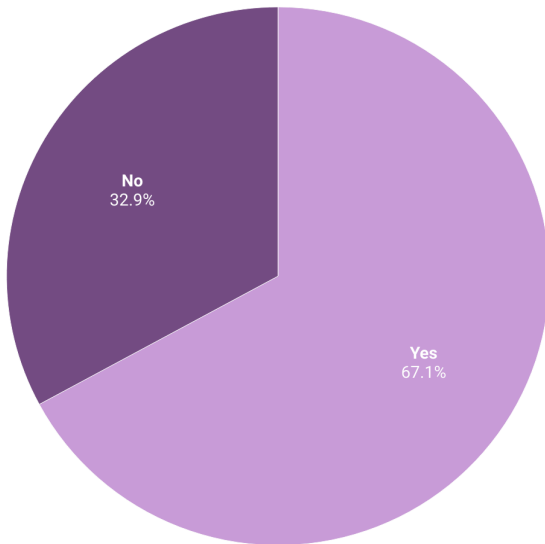
Source: Texas State Auditor's Office

Notes: The Department of State Health Services' FY 24 turnover rate fell below the statewide average in 2024, but exceeded the statewide average in 2023. The Department of Family and Protective Services is the only agency with 1K+ employees that experienced an increase in turnover from 2023.



In the past year, have you considered leaving your position for reasons other than retirement?

- Yes (67.1%)
- No (32.9%)



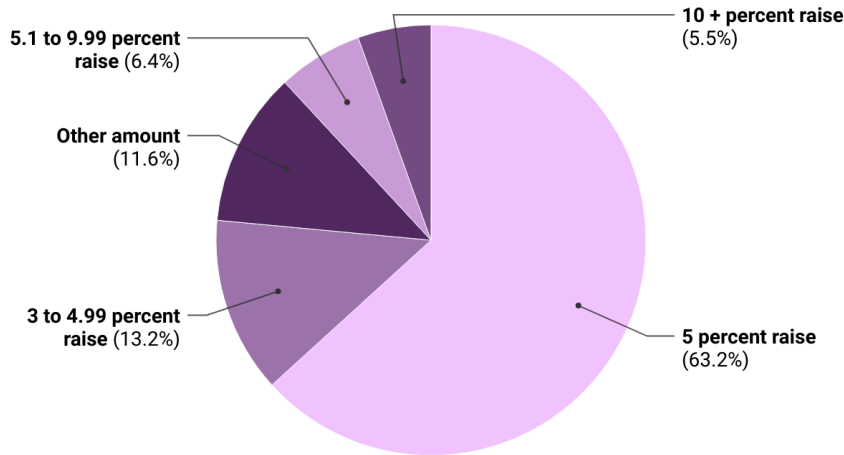
Notes: 6,313 total responses

Every Texan and TSEU asked survey respondents what concerns drive their colleagues' and their own decisions to leave: the majority of respondents selected low pay or a stressful/unmanageable workload. Over 3,400 survey respondents provided voluntary written responses to the question, and a majority cited low pay and stressful working conditions due to understaffing as the primary drivers of their colleagues' decisions to leave.

"I just recently changed departments. I previously worked as a nurse for 3 years with no pay raise until the legislature provided the 5% raise in September 2023. In my previous department there was no room for advancement or pay increases. The stress was unmanageable with a difficult manager, and an increase in travel. Due to turnover, I was always training new staff. I had to manage my own workload and the new hires' workloads. In order to complete tasks and meet deadlines, my coworkers and I would work off the clock, without pay or compensation." — Nurse, Health and Human Services Commission

The Texas State Legislature's 5% pay raise in the 2024-2025 budget was the first unilateral raise that state employees received since the 2013-2014 budget cycle. The survey asked state employees what percent raise they received in the last year; the majority of workers (63%) received a 5% raise only. **This illustrates that the majority of state workers would not have received a pay raise without the Legislature's action in 2023.**

What percent pay raise did you receive?

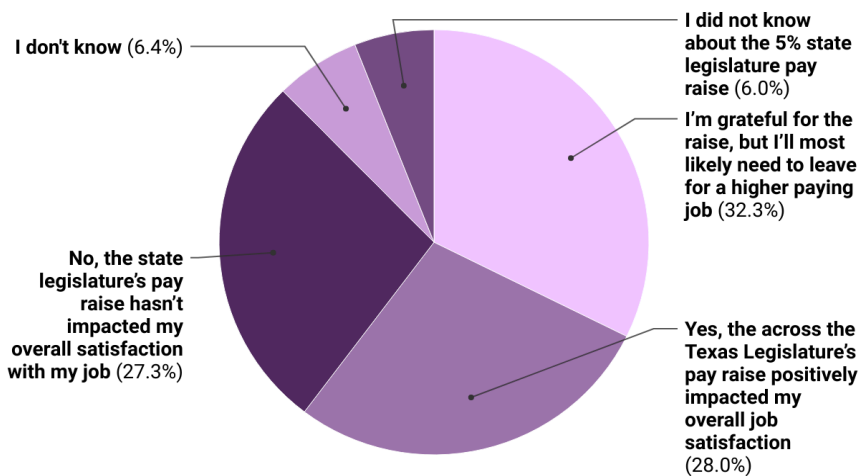


“Our nursing managers spend a great deal of their time on staffing and are unable to devote necessary time to other responsibilities. Managers have to work as staff nurses on occasion, to cover staffing needs in addition to their regular job duties. The much-appreciated pay increases helped us fill some positions, but we still are not competitive, given our geographic location in the DFW area.” — Nurse, HHSC

Source: TSEU and Every Texan Survey
Notes: 4,364 responses

While the Legislature's 5% pay raise in 2023 was a positive and long overdue step, it did not sufficiently adjust state workers' salaries for inflation or the years workers went without cost of living adjustments. The state legislature will need to regularly adjust state workers' wages in order to avoid systemic wage stagnation.

Did the State Legislature's 5% pay raise increase the likelihood of staying in your job?



Source: TSEU and Every Texan Survey
Notes: 6,192 responses

Low Pay Continues to Drive State Employees from their Jobs

“Although the 5% raise has helped me considerably, with the current inflation rate it is still difficult to cover my needs and the needs of my dependents. I believe that an annual or biannual cost of living adjustment is needed. I have worked for the state for almost 9 years, and of those years I have never seen a cost of living adjustment increase to deal with the ever changing financial world”. — Manager, HHSC

“We live in Galveston, Texas. The cost of living here has more than doubled since COVID-19, but the wages all stay the same. We may get paid about the same as others in our position around Texas, but we’re paying about 40% more in living expenses than the average Texas town. I personally have to move to the mainland due to this; I can no longer afford to live here and work at this park at the same time. So I’m choosing the park and leaving the island. It’s sad, this is my home.” — Parks & Wildlife Department, State Parks

Survey responses confirm low pay as the primary driver of state employees’ decision to leave the workforce. The Texas State Auditor’s Office found that state employees’ wages, on average, lagged behind the market by 7.4% since the state legislature made adjustments in 2023. The lag between state workers’ pay and the private sector is down from 11.7% in fiscal year 2022 according to SAO.¹¹

Despite a decrease in the state to private market pay comparison, many critical state job titles face wide pay gaps. The chart to the right shows job titles with high turnover rates housed in an agency with above statewide average turnover. These job titles also have a wider market comparison gap than the state average of 7.4% in 2023.¹²

State Job Titles with the Highest Turnover Rates and the Market Comparison Pay Gap

Agency	Job Title	Behind Market	Turnover Rate
HHSC	Texas Works Advisor II	12.8%	20.2%
HHSC	Food Service Worker II	13.1%	40.7%
HHSC	Direct Support Professional I	15.5%	40.1%
HHSC	Psychiatric Nursing Assistant I	11.7%	37.4%
Juvenile Justice Department	Juvenile Correctional Officer III	10%	72.3%
Juvenile Justice Department	Case Manager II	8.8%	31.7%
Department of Family and Protective Services	Administrative Assistant V	11%	40.9%
Department of Family and Protective Services	Adult Protective Services Specialist III	12.4%	33%
Department of Family and Protective Services	Child Protective Services Specialist III	12.4%	32.3%
Department of Family and Protective Services	Human Resources Assistant/Specialist III	12.1%	30.3%
Department of State Health Services	Inspector IV	12.6%	21.5%
Department of Criminal Justice	Correctional Officer	9.9%	31.4%
Department of Criminal Justice	Inventory and Store Specialist IV	8.6%	21.5%

Table: Every Texan

Source: State Auditor’s Office

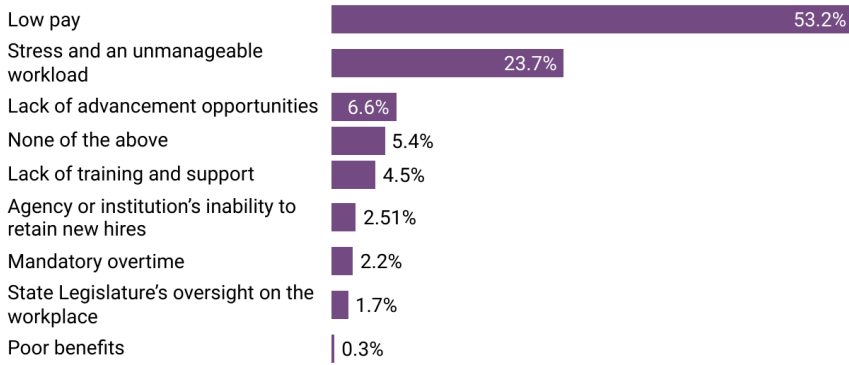
Notes: Every Texan sourced data from the Texas State Auditor’s Office October 2024 Biennial Report on the State’s Position Classification Plan. Every Texan selected agency’s with the highest average turnover rates with 1,000 employees are more.



¹¹ Op. Cit. Texas State Auditor’s Office. “State’s Position Classification Plan for the 2026-2027 Biennium.” Pgs 6-7.

¹² Ibid.

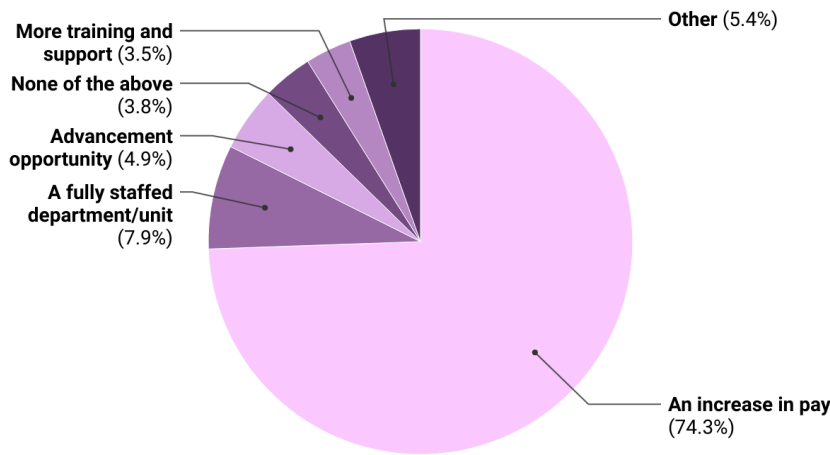
What is the top concern affecting your decision to leave?



Notes: 4,229 total responses

Of the 67.1% of survey respondents that indicated they have considered leaving their position in the last year, 53.2% indicated that low pay is their primary concern and 23.7% selected stress and an unmanageable workload.

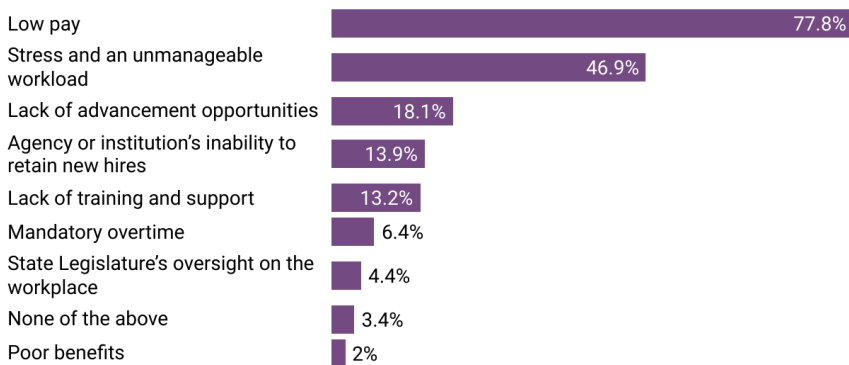
Would any of the following changes convince you to stay?



Notes: 4,229 total responses

When asked what changes would convince them to stay at their job, 74.3% indicated an increase in pay followed by a fully staffed department at 7.9%.

What do you think are the primary 2 reasons employees leave your workplace?



Notes: 6,505 total responses

The majority of survey respondents indicated that the two primary drivers behind their colleagues' decision to leave their jobs were also low pay and stress/unmanageable workloads.

Every Texan and TSEU asked survey respondents to voluntarily explain their top two choices and received 3,742 written responses.

Understaffing and Declining Average Headcounts Drive Turnover

“It is currently taking way too long to process applications from our clients. And there seems to be no plan to catch us up outside of mandatory overtime for the past 3 years.” — Supervisor, HHSC

“The workloads exceed the number of staff.” — Area Manager, HHSC

“We have more grants, more scrutiny, reviews that are extremely time consuming, more legislative assignments, and more work in general, but the same number of staff.” — Manager, Department of State Health Services

Texas’ population is growing rapidly and the state’s staffing levels are not keeping pace; this creates a significant gap in the quality and consistency of public services for everyday Texans and businesses that rely on them. Based on Every Texan’s analysis of SAO state employment data and changes to the state population, from 2004 to 2023, the population increased by 38% while the state’s average staffing headcount declined by 1%. Even when factoring in an increase in total average agency headcount from 142,865 in 2023 to 148,074 in 2024 — this still only puts the state workforce growth at 2% from 2004 to 2024.¹³

Population vs. State Agency Workforce Percent Growth Since 2004

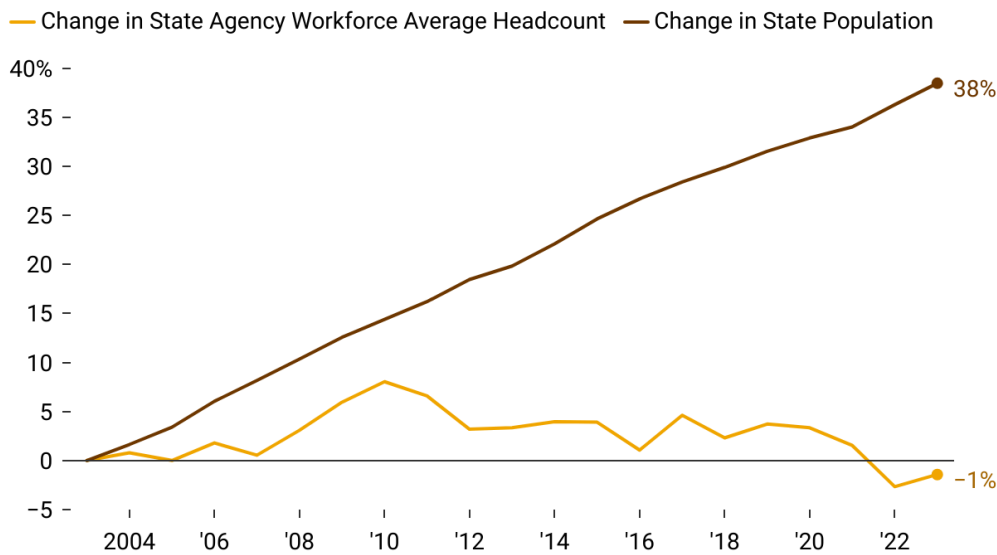


Chart: Every Texan

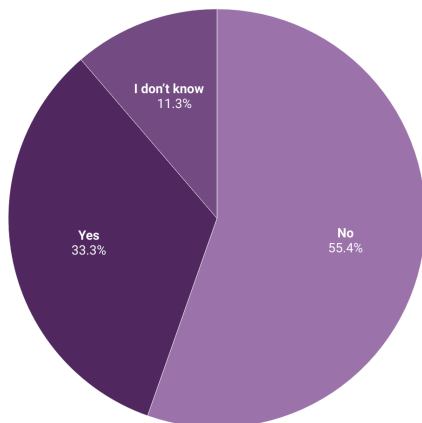
Notes: Population data is from the US Census. State workforce data is from the Texas State Auditors Office (SAO) and based on average annual state agency headcounts. Every Texan calculated the percent change since 2004 for each year.



¹³ Op. Cit. SAO. “An Annual Report on Classified Employee Turnover for Fiscal Year 2024.” Pg. 4.

Historically, have staffing levels in your department kept up with the workload?

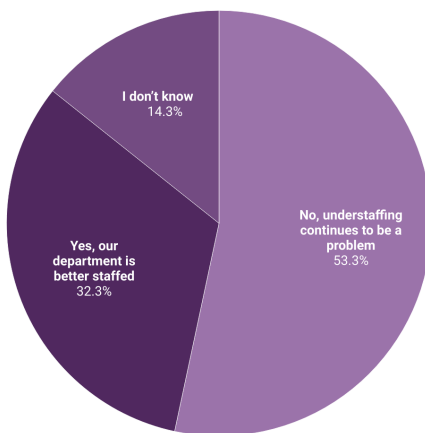
- No (55.4%)
- Yes (33.3%)
- I don't know (11.3%)



Notes: 6,509 total responses

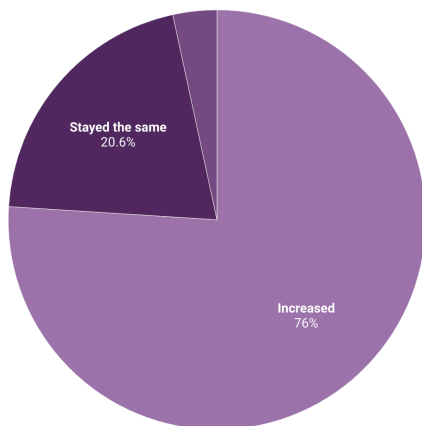
Have staffing levels in your department improved in the last year?

- No, understaffing continues to be a problem (53.3%)
- Yes, our department is better staffed (32.3%)
- I don't know (14.3%)



In the last year, has your workload:

- Increased (76%)
- Stayed the same (20.6%)
- Decreased (3.4%)



Notes: 6,508 total responses

Texas' lagging average headcount growth when compared to state population growth is validated in the survey results. About 55% of survey respondents report that staffing levels have historically not kept up with the workload.

While the state's average turnover rate dropped in fiscal year 2024, the majority of state employees who participated in the survey said that staffing levels have not improved in the last year. In fact, 53% responded that understaffing continues to be a problem and 14% indicated they did not know whether staffing levels have improved in the last year. State employees' responses indicate that an improvement in the average turnover rate does not necessarily correlate to improved staffing or workloads.

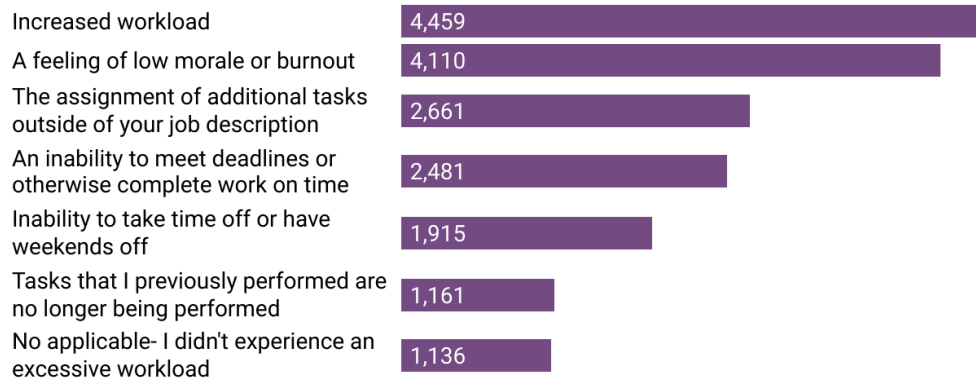
In 2024, 76% of survey respondents reported that their workload has increased in the last year.

When agencies are understaffed for long periods of time, the existing employees have to make up the difference by working more hours. Some classes of state workers accrue compensatory time when they work over 40 hours per week. Hundreds of survey respondents communicated issues with the state's compensatory time policy. State employee workloads are unmanageable. As a result, state employees cannot take compensatory hours earned nor their accrued vacation time.

"I have worked here for years and have never used my vacation time, because I have to use compensatory time before I lose it. We are expected to work like robots and are told that the expectations are that we should be keeping up with the workload without accumulating (comp) time. Every single one of my team members is behind... I started 3 years ago and honestly I love my job — it is my dream job, but I cannot keep up with the demands. We live in the upper part of Texas, but are required to go to El Paso because they have no one to help, sometimes without much notice. That means we are there for 4 days, drive for 2 days, then start back on the next work week. We travel constantly to help others who are also drowning." — Registered Nurse, HHSC

Survey respondents indicated that an increased workload and a feeling of low morale or burnout are the primary outcomes experienced as a result of understaffing.

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

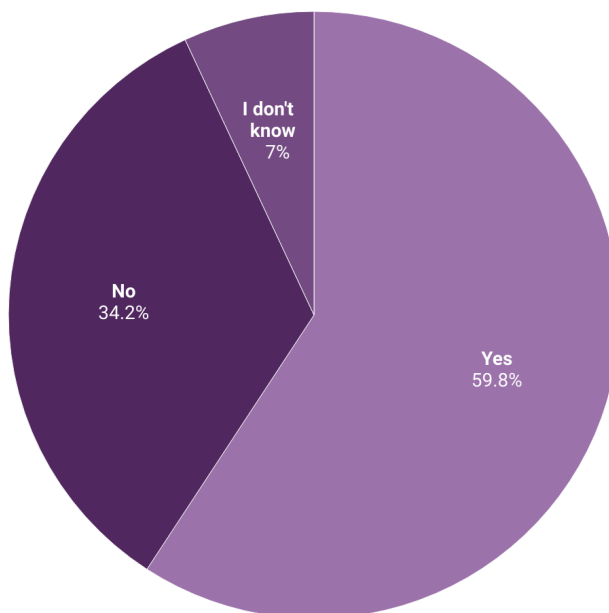


Source: TSEU and Every Texan 2024 Survey
Notes: 6,505 total respondents

The gap between growth in population and the decline in the average statewide headcount is concerning. State employees echoed this concern in their survey responses, communicating that they cannot keep up with their workloads even when average turnover has declined at their agency. When Every Texan and TSEU asked all survey respondents about their workloads in the past year, 59.8% responded that heavy workloads have affected their ability to perform job duties.

In the past year, have heavy workloads affected your ability to perform your job duties?

Yes (59.8%)
 No (34.2%)
 I don't know (7%)



Notes: 4,787 total responses

Everyday Texans Pay the Price

“It feels as if the citizens of Texas are just numbers and not people. While we are not social workers at this agency, we still have a duty to review their claims with as much care and concern as humanly possible while also keeping up with reasonable assignments.” — Disability Specialist, HHSC

“Agency workload is over 6 months behind which results in clients losing benefits for waiting so long.” — Works Advisor, HHSC

“We do not have time to deliver quality care, only do the paperwork that is expected. Everyone is in survival mode. I am sad for our residents that they do not receive good care anymore. Our geriatric and autistic population has suffered the most since all of our time, energy, and resources are poured into just one population, the forensic population.” — Behavior Analyst, HHSC

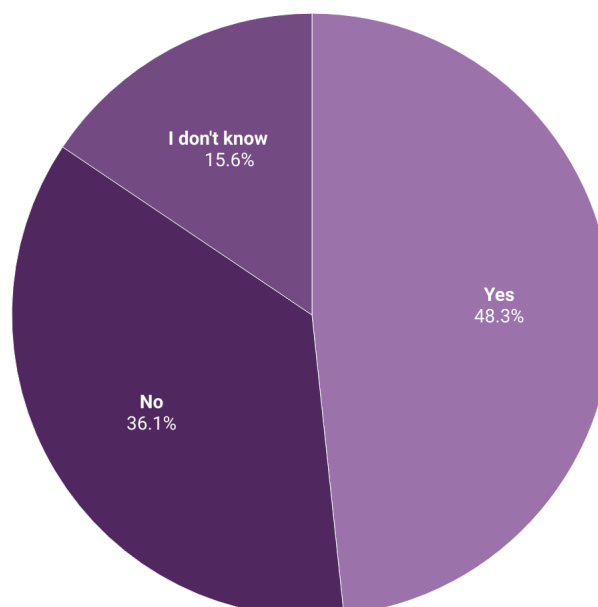
The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is one of the most public facing agencies in state government. The agency provides services to Texas’ aging adults, people with disabilities, hungry families, and uninsured children. HHSC faces heavy workloads due to turnover and understaffing that challenge the provision of public services: **48.3% of survey respondents agreed that heavy workloads affected HHSC’s ability to provide families with quality services**, and 15.6% indicated they did not know.

“Staff are tired and overworked. Being unable to give the quality of care individuals require leaves you feeling bad and sometimes using your own resources to meet the needs of the individual.” — Day Services, HHSC

Have heavy workloads affected your agency's ability to provide clients, applicants, and/or families with quality services?

Texas HHSC is the only agency surveyed on this question.

- Yes (48.3%)
- No (36.1%)
- I don't know (15.6%)



Notes: 2, 680 responses

The state's long-term understaffing of HHSC led to a crisis in November-December 2023. When the federal government unwound pandemic-era Medicaid policies, 1.7 million Texans were removed from their healthcare coverage.¹⁴ Texas' lengthy backlog of unprocessed applications, combined with the federal government halting pandemic-era automatic renewals, exposed Texas' underinvestment in application processing tools and sufficient staffing. The result was catastrophic for the 1.7 million Texans that lost healthcare coverage. Stacey Pogue, a long-time healthcare expert and former senior policy analyst for Every Texan, stated **"With gaps in coverage, that means kids can't pick up their inhalers at the pharmacy counter or can't go to their mental health checkups. Gaps in coverage, especially as long as our backlogs are right now in Texas, are not good for any of our kids. We want kids from Dallas to Del Rio to be able to go to a doctor when they're sick."**¹⁵

Texas Health and Human Services Commission Average Headcount by Fiscal Year (per 1,000 employees) 2018-2024

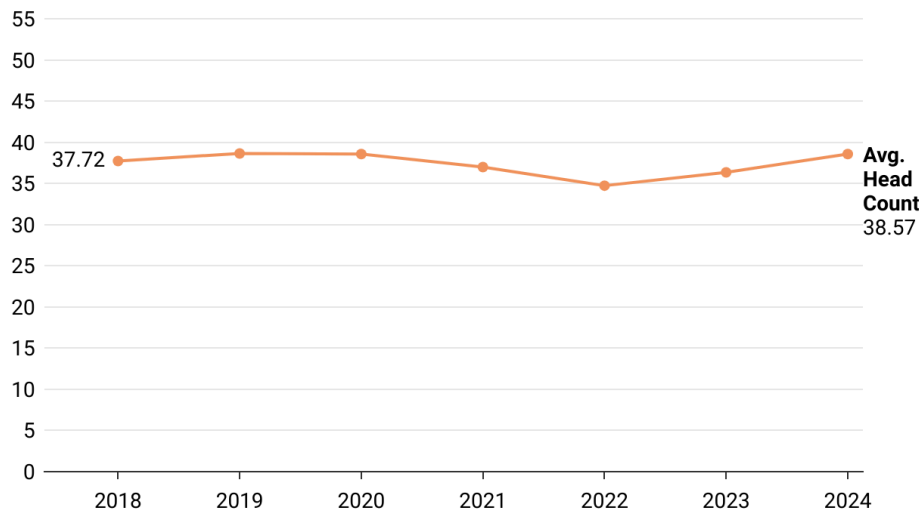


Chart: Every Texan
Source: State Auditors Office

Texas HHSC currently handles the excessive backlog primarily through mandatory overtime, which is an unsustainable solution for prolonged understaffing. The survey responses suggest that mandatory overtime contributes to employees' decisions to leave their jobs.¹⁶ Texas HHSC's ongoing struggle to provide basic services to everyday Texans must be addressed through an increase in the agency's average headcount. The agency has had a relatively stagnant average headcount since at least fiscal year 2018. Given that state employees report heavy historic workloads and mandatory overtime, HHSC should reevaluate how many full-time equivalent staff are needed to provide high-quality public services. Additionally, critical job titles with above average turnover, such as the Texas Works Advisor, Food Service Worker, Direct Support Professional, and Psychiatric Nursing Assistant, should be assessed for additional staffing.¹⁷

¹⁴ Rivera, Elena. KERA News. "Medicaid Unwinding Exposed a 'Crisis' in the System as 1.7 million Texans Lost Coverage." Dec 12, 2023. <https://www.keranews.org/health-wellness/2023-12-14/medicaid-unwinding-texas-crisis>. Bohra, Neelam. The Texas Tribune. "Nearly 1.7 Million Texans Lose Medicaid as State Nears End of "Unwinding." Dec 14, 2023. <https://www.texastribune.org/2023/12/14/texas-medicaid-unwinding/>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ 6.4% of respondents to the Every Texan/TSEU 2024 survey selected "mandatory overtime" as one of their top 2 reasons employees believe their colleagues leave the workplace.

¹⁷ Every Texan found these job titles to have the highest average turnover rates and average market pay gaps based on Op. Cit. Texas State Auditor's Office. "State's Position Classification Plan for the 2026-2027 Biennium." See https://www.datawrapper.de/_/YiZui/?v=3.

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 report are cause for widespread concern. Low pay and understaffing of the state's workforce undermine our shared values and cost every Texan.

Nearly 7,000 state agency workers participated in this survey, an increase from only 277 in 2023. The sharp increase in state workers' survey participation demonstrates their willingness to address the barriers to high-quality public services for Texan families and businesses.

State employees are concerned that the important missions and promises of their agencies go unfulfilled in the context of chronic short-staffing and persistent high turnover, driven by low pay and unmanageable workloads. The Legislature's decision to invest in the state workforce last session resulted in progress: primarily decreased turnover that benefits all Texans. **Texas' families and residents need the Legislature and highest elected officials' continued, consistent focus on improving state employees' salaries and increasing average agency headcounts.** When Texas appropriately funds and adequately staffs the state workforce, it can deliver the vital public services Texas' families need to achieve prosperity.

Solutions: How the Texas Legislature Can Take Action and Raise the Bar for All Texans

1. **Raise state employees' wages with a \$10,000 across-the-board pay raise that includes university workers.** State salaries lag behind the private market and have not kept pace with inflation, making state jobs uncompetitive. Coupled with unmanageable workloads, these uncompetitive salaries continue to drive high turnover that costs everyday Texans.
2. **Fully staff state agencies to meet Texas' potential.** Most agency average headcounts are far behind what is needed to adequately provide high quality public services to Texas' more than 30 million residents.
3. Treat retired state workers with the same dignity they provide to us through their public service. **Give retirees a Cost of Living Adjustment that begins to restore the buying power that has been lost due to inflation and a rising cost of living.**



Appendix 1: Research Methods

This report uses a mixed-methods approach to understand the key workforce challenges preventing Texas state employees from fulfilling their promise to all Texans. Researchers combined analysis of quantitative survey responses and qualitative survey data. Additional data from supplemental sources also informed the survey design and analysis — as well as secondary data sources documenting the challenges the Texas state workforce faces. These supplemental data sources informed the broader research and specific survey questions and were consulted in the analysis stage to substantiate findings from the survey.

Survey Design

Every Texan and CWA developed a survey instrument for distribution to the state agency workforces. The survey questions were designed to answer the following questions:

- Is high turnover a persistent problem?
- Is understaffing a persistent problem?
- What do state agency workers believe drives high turnover?
- How can high turnover be resolved?
- How does high turnover and understaffing impact service quality and delivery?

Specific survey questions were determined collaboratively by staff at Every Texan, TSEU, and CWA. Finalized survey questions were distributed using Alchemer, an online survey software tool. The agency workers' survey instrument consisted of 28 questions. Survey instructions included a note that the data would be analyzed for use in Every Texan and TSEU's legislative advocacy, reports, press releases and other communications. Researchers informed voluntary participants that individual responses will only be shared after personally identifiable data had been removed. Participants were also informed that their participation in the survey was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the survey at any time. A list of the survey questions is included in Appendix A of this report.

Survey Data Collection

Every Texan emailed the survey instrument to employees employed at a state agency with 1,000 or more employees, reaching approximately 119,000 or 83% of all state agency employees.¹⁸ In addition to these batch emails, TSEU emailed the survey instrument to their membership. Every Texan obtained state employees' email addresses through public information requests at each agency. Researchers received a total of 6,509 responses or a 5.5% response rate.

Responses by state agency:

- 2,791 respondents (42.9% of total respondents) work at Texas Health and Human Services (HHSC);

¹⁸ Every Texan disseminated the survey to employees at state agencies with an average headcount of 1,000 + according to the FY 2023 State Auditor's Office Turnover report. Agencies included: Health and Human Services Commission, Department of Criminal Justice, Department of Transportation, Department of Family and Protective Services, Texas Workforce Commission, Office of the Attorney General, Parks and Wildlife Department, Office of Comptroller of Public Accounts, Commission on Environmental Quality, Juvenile Justice Department, Texas Education Agency, Department of Insurance. In fiscal year 2023, state agencies total average headcount was 142, 865. Every Texan also emailed the survey to Texas House of Representatives and Texas Senate employees.

- 1,430 respondents (22.0% of total respondents) work at the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services;
- 618 respondents (9.5% of total respondents) work at the Texas Department of State Health Services;
- 418 respondents (7.4% of total respondents) work for the Texas Workforce Commission;
- 354 respondents (5.4%) work for the Texas Juvenile Justice Department;
- 184 respondents (2.8%) work for the Texas Commission on Environment Quality;
- 154 respondents (2.4%) work for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department;
- 97 respondents (1.5%) work for the Texas Department of Insurance;
- 63 respondents (1.0%) work for the Texas Education Agency;
- 21 respondents (.3%) work for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice;
- An additional 316 respondents (4.8% of total respondents) work for “other” state agencies, such as the Texas Department of Transportation, Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, Texas House of Representatives, Texas Senate, Office of Injured Employee Counsel, Texas Office of the Attorney General, and more.

Survey Participant Demographic Information:

- **Years of service:** less than 1 year: 8.4%; 1-4 years: 34.2%; 5-9 years: 20%, 10-14 years: 14.8%; 15-24 years: 16.4%, and 25+ years: 6.1%
- **Race:** 70.5% white; 23.6% Black or African American; 1.5% American Indian or Alaska Native; 3.7% Asian; 0.6% Other
- **Ethnicity:** 37.8% Caucasian-non-Hispanic; 32.3% Hispanic; 29.3% None of the above; 0.6% Middle Eastern or North African
- **Gender:** 73.6% Woman; 24% man; 2.4% prefer not to answer

Supplemental Data Sources

Every Texan and TSEU conducted a 2023 survey¹⁹ that informed the research questions for the 2024 state employee survey. Additionally, the authors gained an understanding of state employees’ working conditions from informal interviews with TSEU members. Secondary sources such as SAO’s turnover data, state budget documents, and published research studies were used in the research design phase of the project to inform the content and wording of survey questions. Authors used the same sources during the data analysis phase to provide further substantiation of key themes and patterns in the survey response data prior to determining the research findings. Relevant secondary data sources are cited throughout the report.

¹⁹ Op. Cit. Every Texan and TSEU. “Low Pay and High Turnover In Texas State Agencies and Universities Cost Us All.” 2023.



TEXAS STATE EMPLOYEES UNION-CWA

627 Radam Lane, Austin, TX 78745

(512) 448-4225

cwa-tseu.org

EVERY TEXAN | FORMERLY CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

7020 Easy Wind Drive, Suite 200, Austin, Texas 78752

(512) 320-0222

everytexan.org