

Helping LeadingAge Members Address Workforce Challenges

A National Workforce Crisis

SURVEY
REPORT

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HELPING LEADINGAGE MEMBERS ADDRESS WORKFORCE CHALLENGES:
A National Workforce Crisis

Report Author

Natasha Bryant, MA
Senior Research Associate & Managing Director
LeadingAge LTSS Center @UMass Boston

The LeadingAge LTSS Center @UMass Boston, a collaboration of LeadingAge and the University of Massachusetts Boston, conducts research aimed at transforming the way long-term services and supports (LTSS) are financed, delivered, and experienced by older adults and their families. The LTSS Center, which has offices in Washington, DC and Boston, MA, combines the expertise of applied and academic researchers with the unique perspectives of LTSS providers and consumers. Researchers work closely with the Center for Consumer Engagement in Health Innovation at Community Catalyst, a policy center focused on consumer needs.

Visit www.LeadingAge.org/Center-applied-research to learn more about the Center's work.

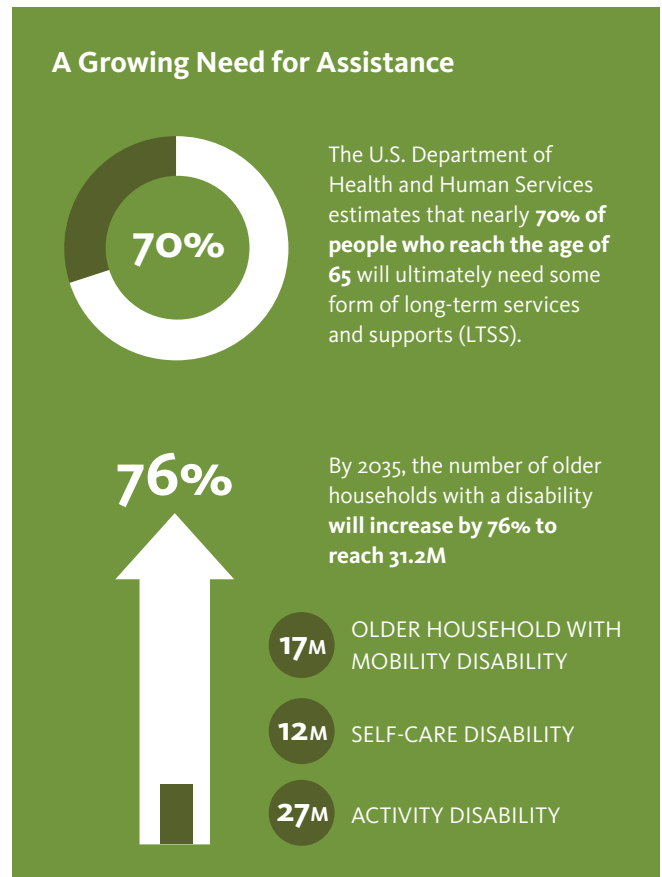
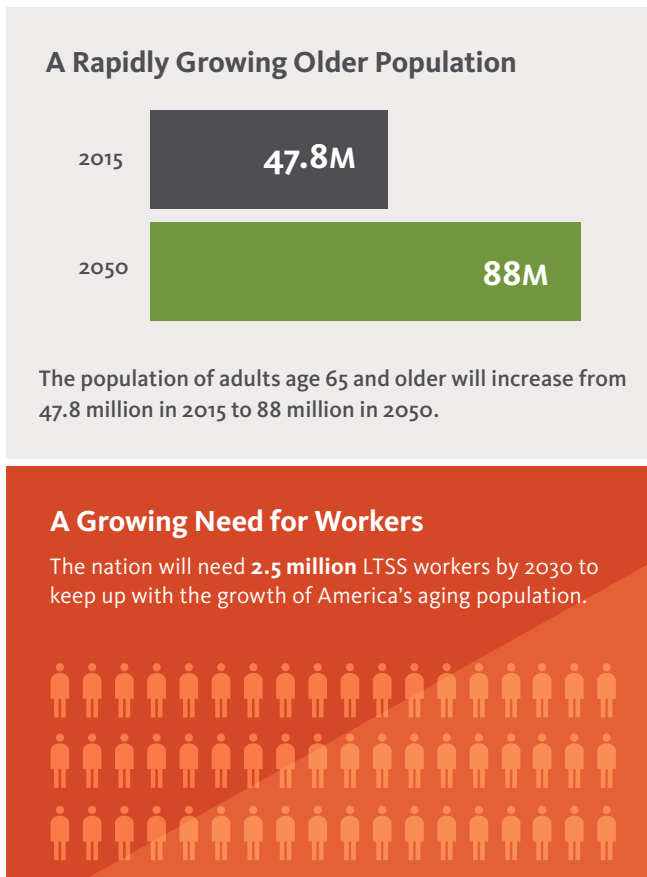
Overview

The United States is experiencing a significant shortage of, and a growing demand for, competent workers who are capable of managing, supervising, and providing high-quality services and supports for older adults. LeadingAge conducted a 2017 workforce survey to gather baseline information about the workforce challenges that its provider members face. The new LeadingAge Center for Workforce Solutions will use findings from this and future surveys to better understand workforce-related challenges and help members develop strategies to address those challenges.

A National Workforce Crisis

The United States is experiencing a significant shortage of, and a growing demand for, qualified workers who are capable of managing, supervising, and providing high-quality long-term services and supports (LTSS) for older adults. Several trends are fueling this national workforce crisis:

- **A rapidly growing older population:** The population of adults age 65 and older will increase from 47.8 million in 2015 to 88 million in 2050.¹
- **A growing need for assistance:** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that nearly 70% of people who reach the age of 65 will ultimately need some form of LTSS.²
- **A growing need for workers:** By 2030, job openings in the LTSS field are expected to grow substantially, particularly for counselors, social workers, community and social service workers, home health aides, and personal care aides. The nation will need 2.5 million LTSS workers by 2030 to keep up with the growth of America's aging population.³ Yet, more workers are currently leaving the LTSS sector than are entering it.⁴ As a result, provider organizations are experiencing high turnover, vacancies, and difficulty attracting new employees.



The projected percentage increase in the number of positions employed in long-term services and supports between 2010 and 2030 are the following:



What Does an Unstable Workforce Mean for Providers?

The instability of the LTSS workforce has contributed to:



1. High provider costs. It's expensive to continuously recruit and train new workers and to use temporary, contract staff.



2. Concerns about access and quality. A shortage of workers means that consumers have more problems accessing services. Worker shortages can also compromise quality of care and quality of life for LTSS consumers.



3. Poor working conditions. Staff shortages often cause hardships for workers who remain on the job. These hardships include extreme workloads for both nurses and direct care worker staff, inadequate supervision, lost time as new workers learn their jobs, and high accident and injury rates. More workers are currently leaving the LTSS sector than are entering it.⁵

Surveying LeadingAge Members

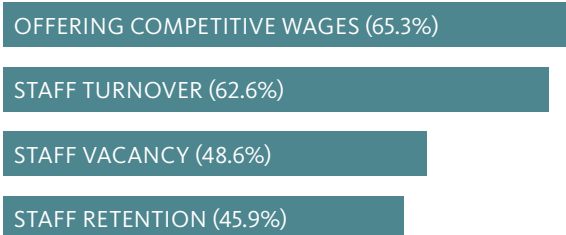
Nonprofit providers of aging services face serious challenges as they strive to provide high-quality services and supports to older adults in nursing homes, assisted living/personal care communities, and through agencies that provide home and community-based services.

LeadingAge conducted a 2017 workforce survey to gather baseline information about the workforce challenges that its provider members face. About 17% (470) of the 2,778 survey recipients completed the LeadingAge Workforce Survey. Midwestern providers were over-represented among the survey sample.

LeadingAge plans to conduct follow-up surveys to gather additional data about the specific workforce issues identified by members in their responses to the following questions:

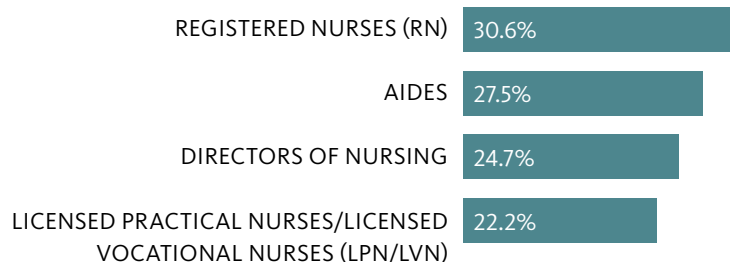
What are the top workforce challenges?

Not having a pipeline of workers is the most significant barrier facing LeadingAge members (83.5%). These challenges contribute to other organizational concerns, including high staff workloads, overuse of temporary staff, and low staff morale. LeadingAge members also report these workforce challenges:



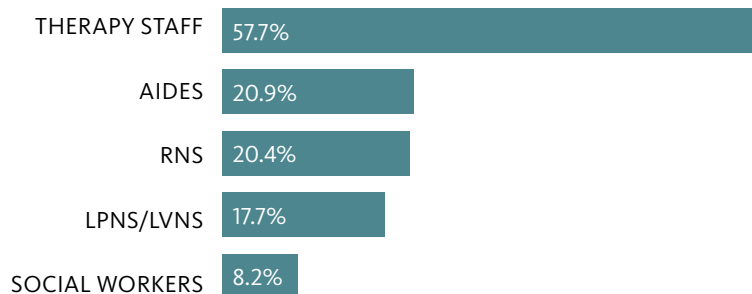
What are the most difficult positions to fill?

A portion of survey respondents said they find it very difficult to fill these nursing and frontline staffing positions:



How prevalent are contract staff?

Survey respondents reported that most of their staff members are direct employees of the organization. Providers primarily hire contract staff to fill therapy positions. Less than one-quarter of nursing and social work positions are filled by contract staff. A portion of members reported contracting out for:



Consequences of Workforce Shortages

Survey respondents identified many consequences that organizations experience when they have difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified workers. These consequences include:

Consequences for Staffing:

- Increased workloads (64.1%)
- Increased voluntary overtime (51.2%)
- Low staff morale (45.4%)
- Increased staff turnover (41.2%)
- Increased absenteeism (25.8%)
- Increased use of temporary staff (19.4%)

Consequences for Wages:

- Increased wages to recruit and retain staff (26.5%)

Consequences for Service Provision:

- Difficulty completing documentation on time (18.5%)
- Inability to expand services (16%)
- Increased resident and staff complaints (14.7%)
- Delays in providing care (13.4%)
- Increased number of incident reports (11.4%)
- Delays in admissions (10%)

Staffing issues are the top consequence of workforce shortages.



> Increased workloads (64.1%)

> Increased voluntary overtime (51.2%)

> Low staff morale (45.4%)

Common Recruitment and Retention Strategies

How do LeadingAge members recruit workers?

LeadingAge members rely on several methods to recruit workers. These methods include:

- Online ads (93.5%)
- Frontline staff involvement in recruitment efforts (62.5%)
- Job fairs (57.4%)
- Bonuses for recruiting other staff (57.1%)
- Partnering with colleges and universities or other educational organizations (42.9%)
- Building relationships with public and private human service organizations (37.9%)
- Hosting internship programs (21.7%)

RECRUITMENT + RETENTION

Online ads are the top way members recruit workers.

Members use financial incentives to retain staff.

How do LeadingAge members retain staff?

Financial incentives are a popular way to retain staff among LeadingAge members. Less than one-third of providers use on-boarding or peer mentoring programs, professional development and career advancement, or self-managed work teams. The most popular retention strategies include:

- Tuition reimbursement or direct payment for employees (52%)
- Competitive wages and benefits (48.7%)
- Direct care staff empowerment (46.4%)
- Employee recognition programs (42.6%)
- Cross-training of staff (41.7%)

More than two-thirds of providers (67.6%) conduct employee satisfaction surveys. Organizations use survey findings to:

- Focus on top identified needs and make targeted improvements (45%)
- Develop action plans for the organization or individual departments (28.9%)
- Develop new programs (6.6%)
- Evaluate employee benefits (5.2%)
- Develop training and professional development programs (3.3%)

The LeadingAge Center for Workforce Solutions

LeadingAge understands that workforce issues are a significant concern for our members and can affect an organization's ability to provide a positive workplace environment and deliver quality care.

To address these workforce issues, LeadingAge launched the Center for Workforce Solutions in June 2017. The center is designed to serve as a platform that LeadingAge members and state affiliates can use to engage in ongoing, collaborative problem-solving around workforce issues. The center will:

- Collect and disseminate promising practices around recruitment and retention;
- Collaborate with partners, including community colleges and businesses, to find practical solutions to workforce challenges; and
- Develop messages to portray the aging services workforce as a valuable and critical profession.

For more information about the LeadingAge Center for Workforce Solutions, contact Susan Hildebrandt at shildebrant@leadingage.org.

1 Espinoza, R. February 2017. 8 Signs the shortage of paid caregivers is getting worse. PHI: Bronx, NY.

2 Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. (2015). Projections and implications for housing a growing population: Older households 2015-2035.

3 Spetz, Joanne, et al. "Future demand for long-term care workers will be influenced by demographic and utilization changes." *Health Affairs* 34.6 (2015): 936-945.

4 Frogner, B., & Spetz, J. (2015). Entry and exist of workers in long-term care. University of California San Francisco Health Workforce Research Center on Long-Term Care: San Francisco, CA.

5 Spetz, J., L. Trupin, T. Bates, and J.M. Coffman. 2015. Future Demand for Long-term Care Workers Will Be Influenced by Demographic and Utilization Changes. *Health Affairs (Millwood)*, 34 (6): 936-945

6 The Institute for the Future of Aging Services. (2007). The long-term care workforce: Can the crisis be fixed? Retrieved from http://www.leadingage.org/sites/default/files/LTC_Workforce_Commission_Report.pdf.