

Public Health Workforce Interests & Needs Survey



PH WINS (the Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey) collects data on workforce demographics and captures workers' perspectives on issues such as engagement and morale, training needs, and emerging concepts.

2021 Findings

Stress and Burnout

Findings revealed high levels of stress, burnout, and intent to leave among the governmental public health workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic. More than half of public health employees reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and **1 in 5 said their mental health is either fair or poor**. Many public health workers, especially executives, reported experiencing bullying, threats, and harassment.



About the Survey

Conducted by the de Beaumont Foundation and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, PH WINS is the only nationally representative source of data about the governmental public health workforce. It collects data on workforce demographics and captures individual public health workers' perspectives on issues such as engagement and morale, training needs, and emerging concepts in public health.

PH WINS 2021 was conducted between September 2021 and January 2022. The survey was distributed to 137,447 state and local governmental public health workers, representing 47 state health agencies, 29 big-city health departments, 159 medium (serving a population of 25,000-250,000) and large local health departments (serving a population of 250,000+) and, 100 small local health departments. ("Big-city health departments" refers to members of the Big Cities Health Coalition, composed of lead health officials from 29 of the largest U.S. cities. Responses from big-city departments are not included in the figures for "other medium to large local health departments.") The survey was completed by 44,732 individuals, for a 32.5% response rate.

Racism as a Public Health Crisis



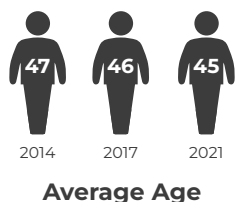
While **nearly three-quarters of employees (72%) believe that addressing racism as a public health crisis should be part of their work** within agencies, only about 4 in 10 employees (39%) reported being highly engaged in such efforts. Over half of the workforce (58%) believes they lack adequate funding to address racism, and respondents reported needing more **training, community engagement, and support from agency leadership** to do so.

Demographics

Most public health workers self-identified as **white (54%)**, as a **woman (79%)**, and as **age 40 or older (63%)**. While the workforce has become more diverse and now mirrors the U.S. population more closely, there is much less diversity at senior levels, with 66% of all executives identifying as white.



- White **54%**
- Hispanic or Latino **18%**
- Black or African American **15%**
- Asian **7%**



2021 Findings (cont.)

Job Roles

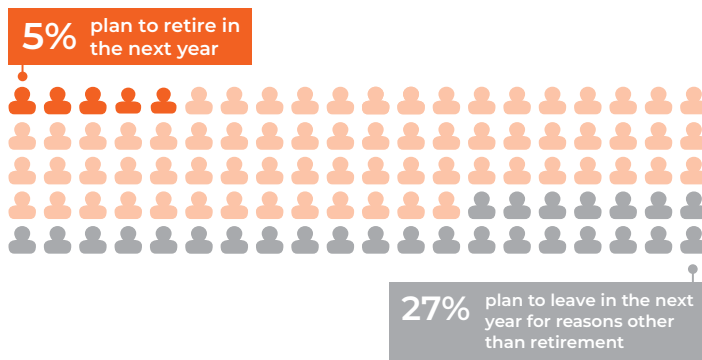
Nearly three in four public health employees (72%) participated in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in some way. Relative to 2017, the proportion of employees working in communicable disease tripled and the portion working in nearly all other job categories decreased. Staffing decreased the most in environmental health, assessment, and maternal and child health.



Turnover

Nearly one-third of state and local public health employees (32%) said they are considering leaving their organization in the next year – 5% to retire and 27% for another reason. Among those who said they're considering leaving, 39% said the pandemic has made them more likely to leave. Looking out further, 44% said they are considering leaving within the next five years.

An analysis of PH WINS data published in *Health Affairs* found that **46% of state and local public health employees left their organizations** between 2017 and 2021 – a number that rose to 74% among employees under age 35 and 77% among those with less than five years of experience. This exodus creates a critical lack of skills and experience that puts the health and safety of communities at risk.



Training Needs

Across seniority levels, **budgeting and financial management** are top areas of high day-to-day importance but low proficiency among public health professionals. More than in previous surveys, policy engagement and topics related to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion were identified as important areas of needed training, especially by senior staff and executives.



[PHWINS.org](https://phwins.org)

Explore the Data

Scan the QR code below to explore the full dataset online in an interactive dashboard, enabling aggregate and subgroup analyses of questions across topic areas, including trends over time.



For More Information

A special supplement of the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, featuring editorials, commentary, and original analyses of the data, was published in late 2022.

Coming Soon

PH WINS 2024 is currently under development and will be open to health departments in **U.S. states, localities, territories, and freely associated states**. If you are interested in participating or learning more, email phwins@debeaumont.org.