Public Sector Employees Survey

Prepared for Triangle J Council of Governments

February 9, 2023

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Background

- A 2018-20 survey of local government staff in Los Angeles conducted by USC highlighted:
  - Stress, burnout, burdening bureaucracy, low wages, accelerated retirements, and public distrust driving high rates of vacancy in public sector and local government positions.
  - Emotional labor of working with constituents and accelerated pressure from the public during 2020
  - Greatest sense of being overworked and overwhelmed from women, workers of color, and LGBTQ employees.

What is the state of the public sector workforce in the Triangle region and what factors are affecting worker well-being?

Source: https://priceschool.usc.edu/news/research-local-government-burnout/

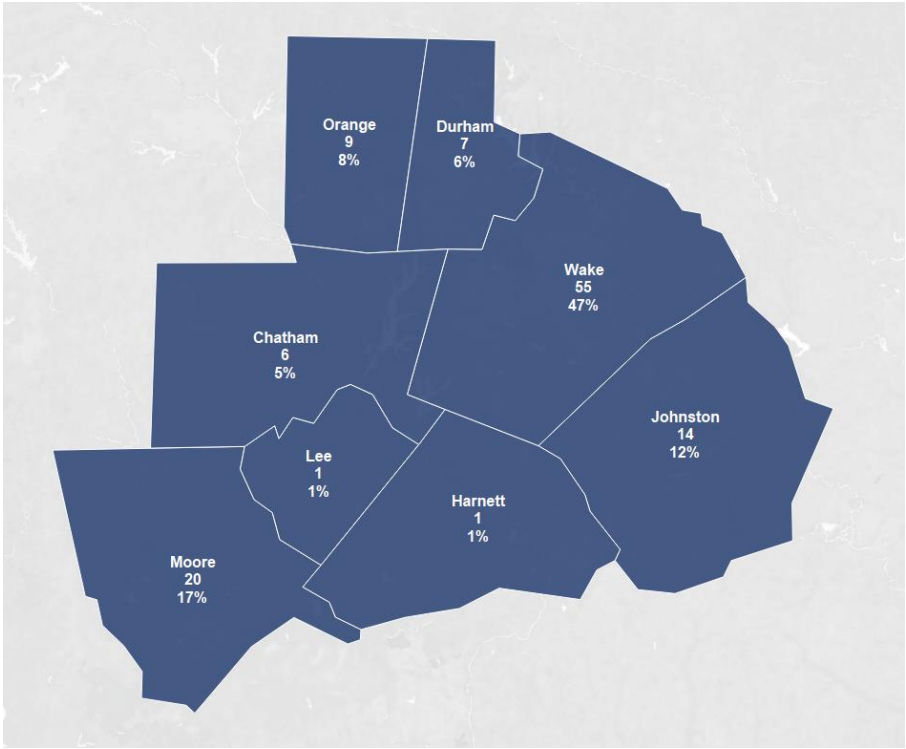
Survey

What is the state of the public sector workforce in the Triangle region and factors are affecting worker well-being?

Survey sent to 364 individual contacts across the TJCOG region from September 12 to October 14.

- **118** responses
  - 112 complete
  - 6 partial
- **31% complete**, 32% total response rate

Total Responses by County



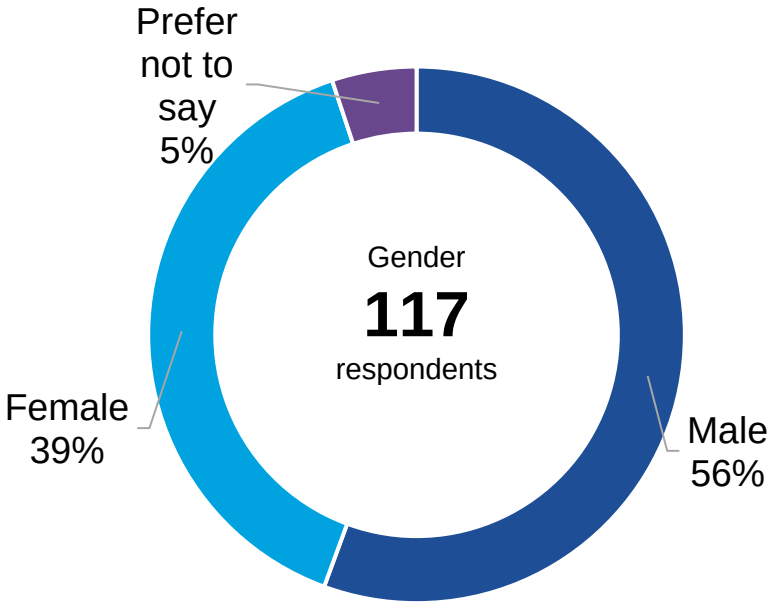
Source: RTI Survey

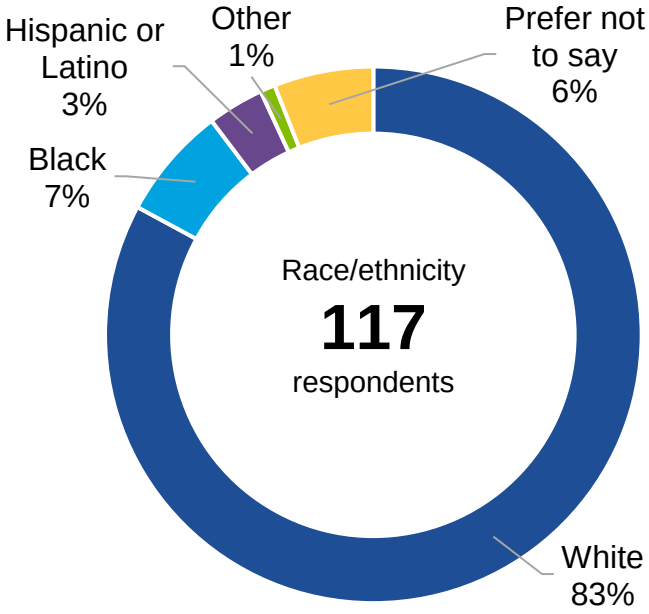
Data Considerations

- Survey participation was voluntary.
- Data represents a point in time and is not necessarily applicable to other places or contexts.
- Responses are indicative of how managers, supervisors, and HR professionals see the state of the workforce.
- Questions ask about workplace well-being, and not about personal mental health.

Respondents Profile

Gender, Race, and Ethnicity of Respondents (117 Responses)

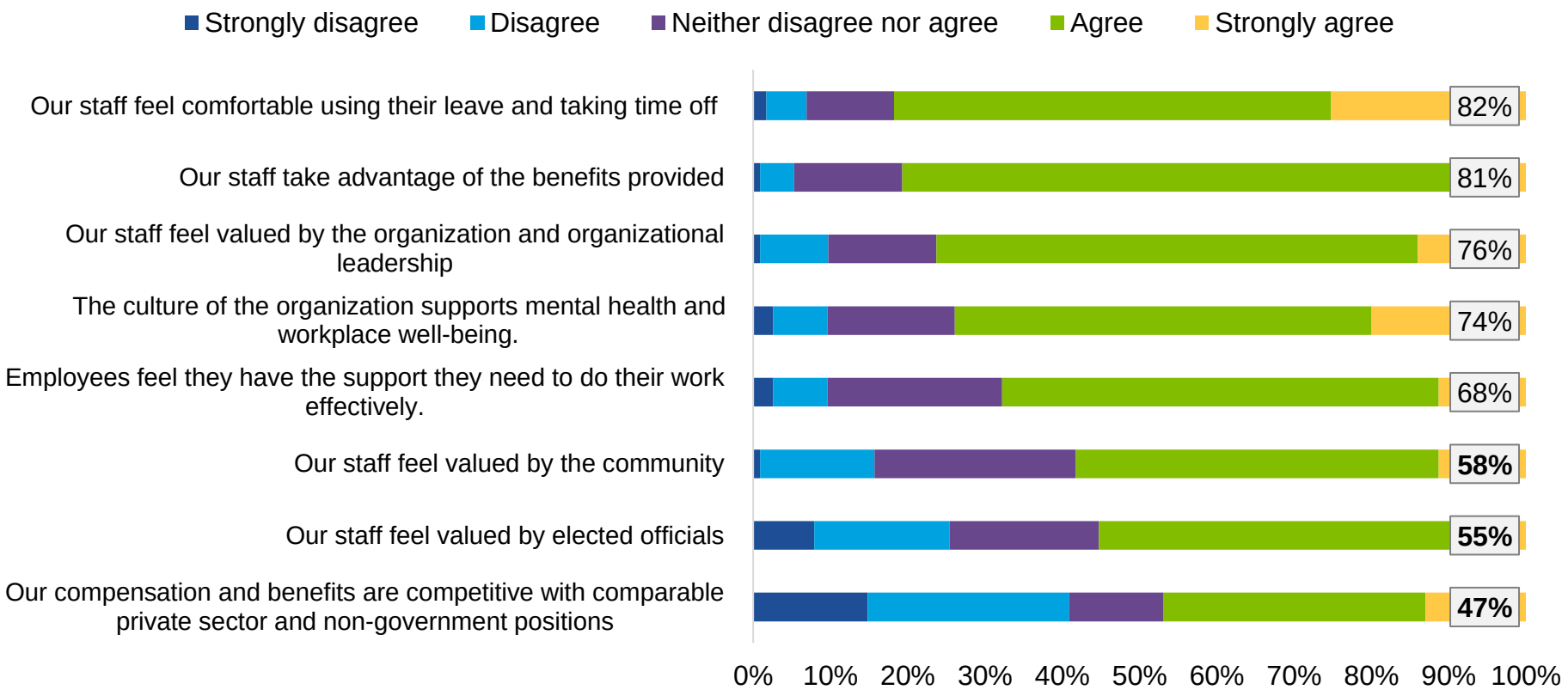




Source: RTI Survey

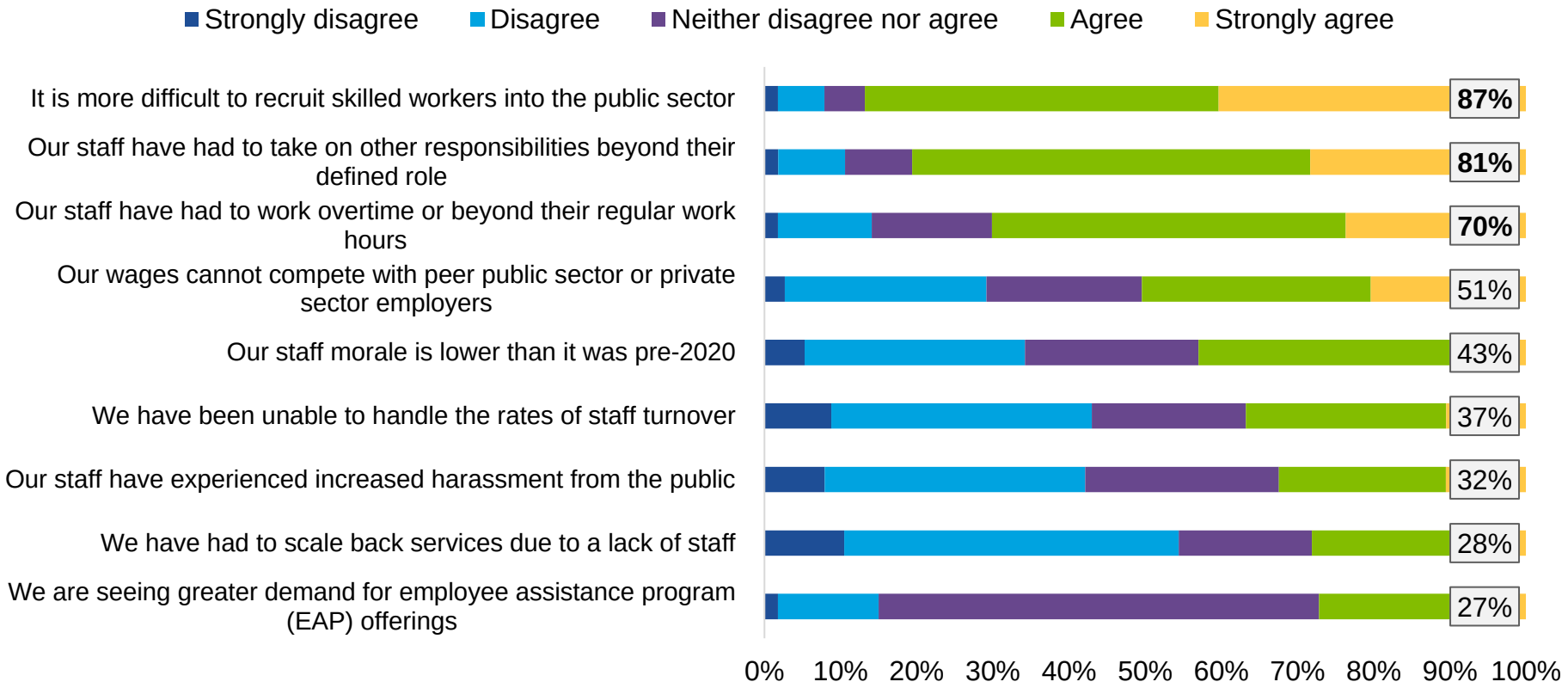
Survey Responses

Describe the current state of the workforce:



Source: RTI Survey

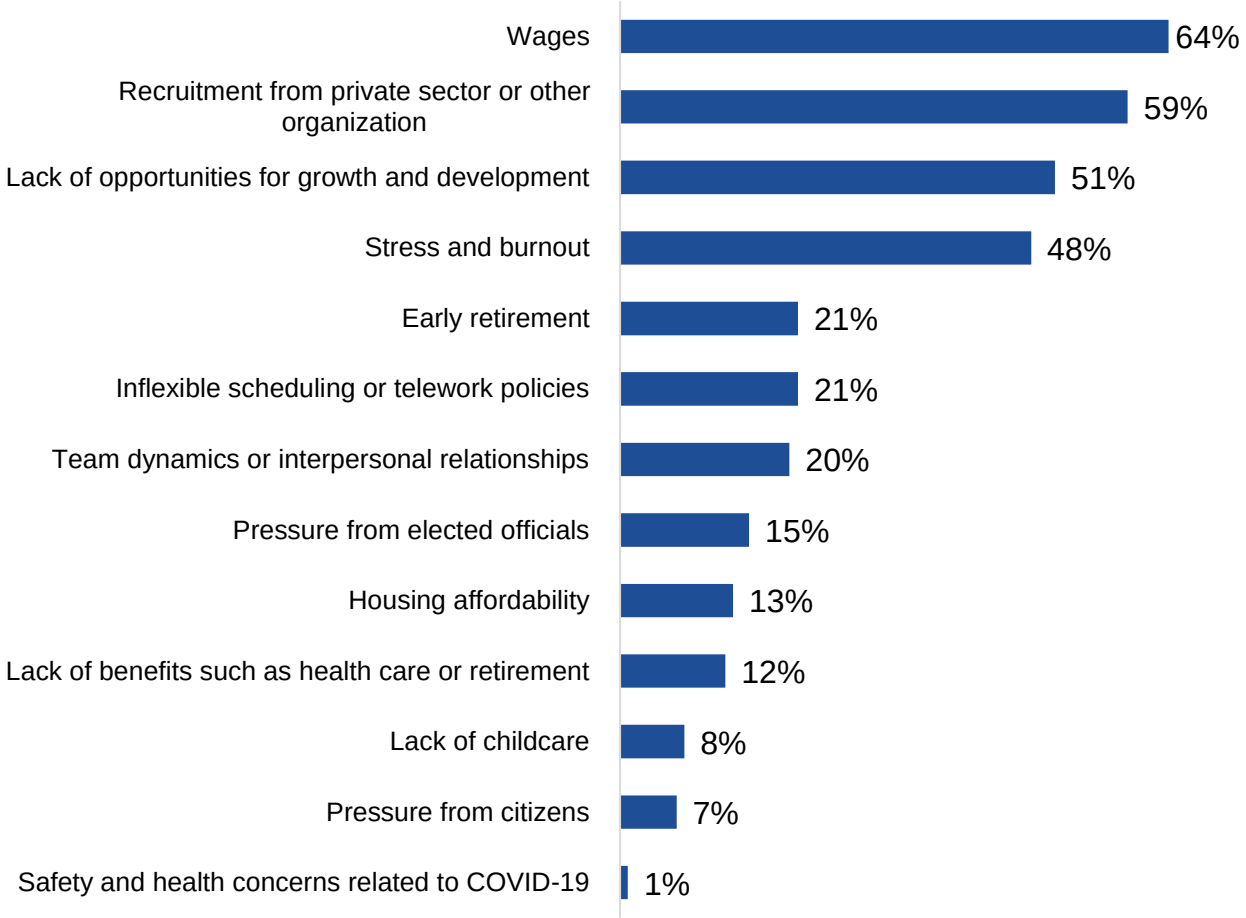
How has the workforce changed in the last two years?



Source: RTI Survey

Reasons for Leaving

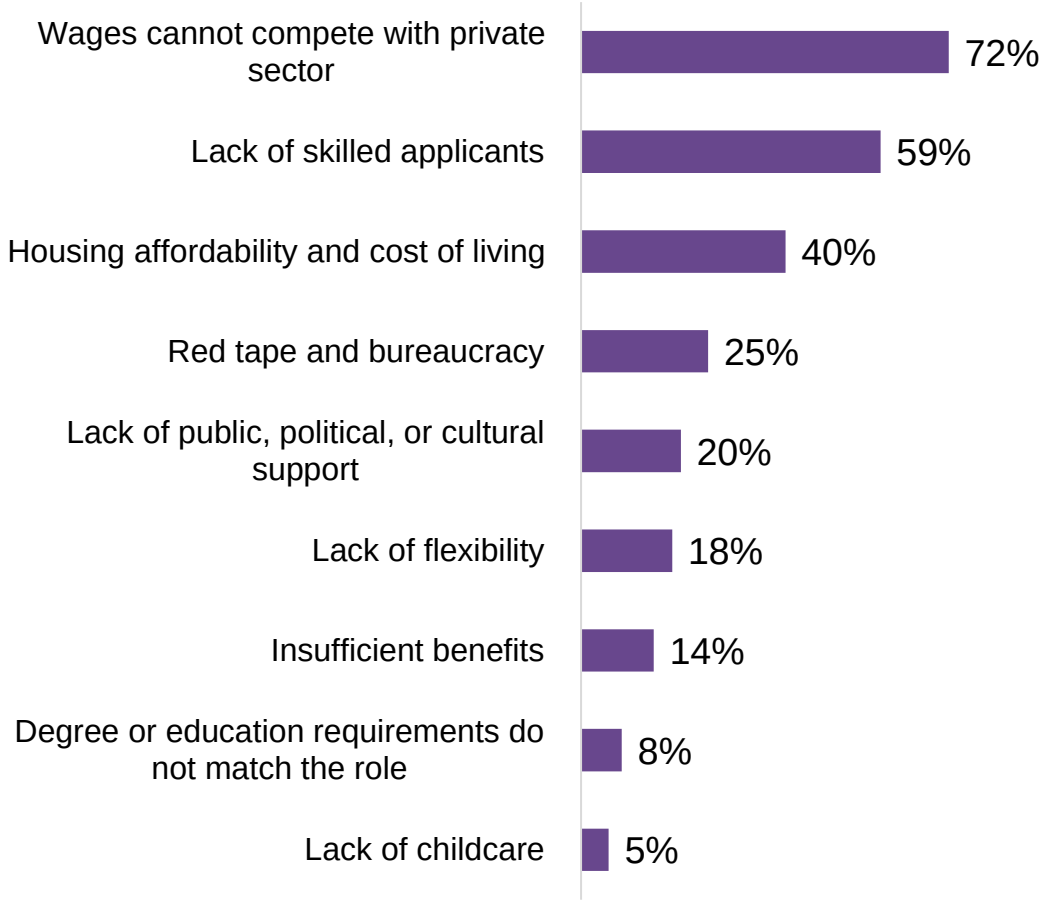
Q: What reasons do employees give when they consider leaving or leave your organization?



Source: RTI Survey

Primary Obstacles

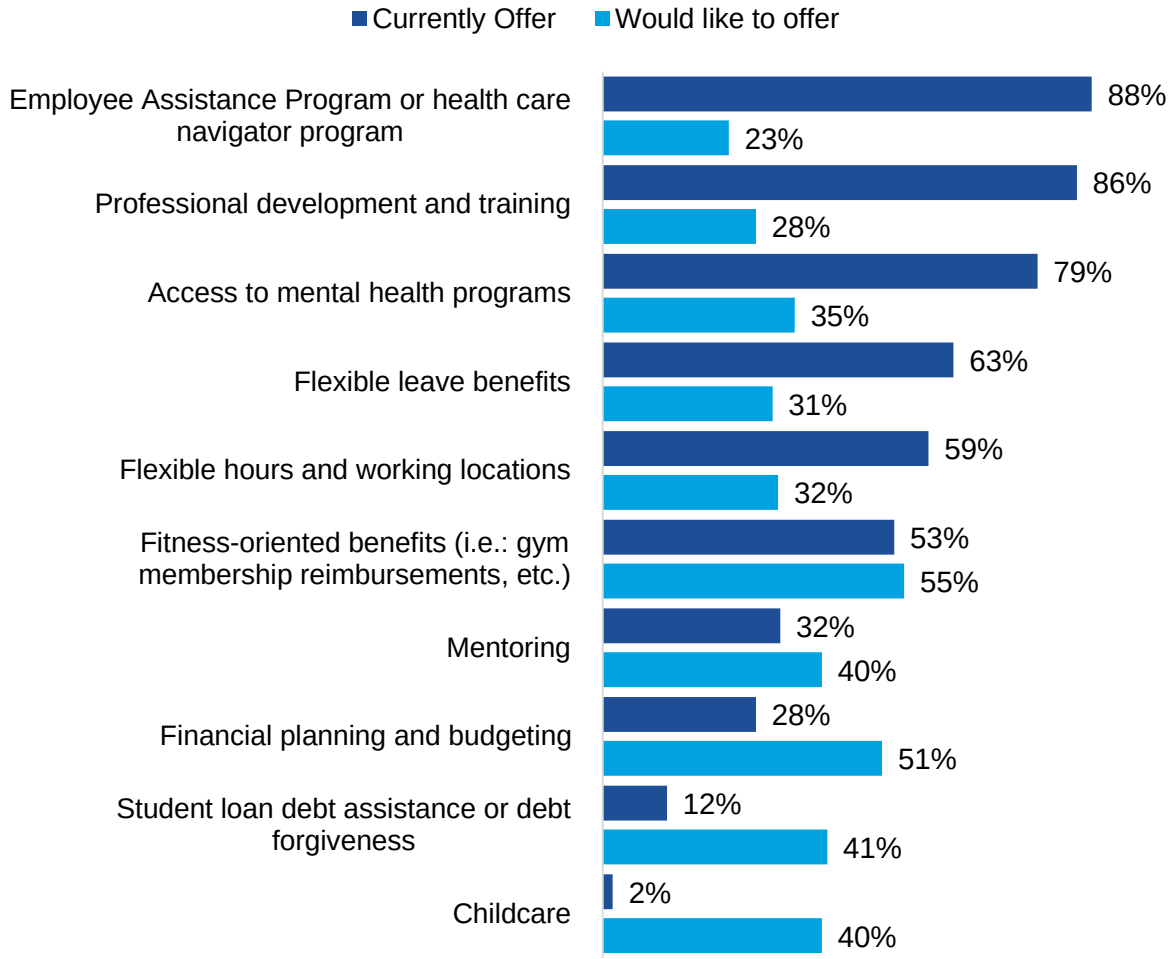
Q: What are the primary obstacles to recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce?



Source: RTI Survey

Resources for Staff

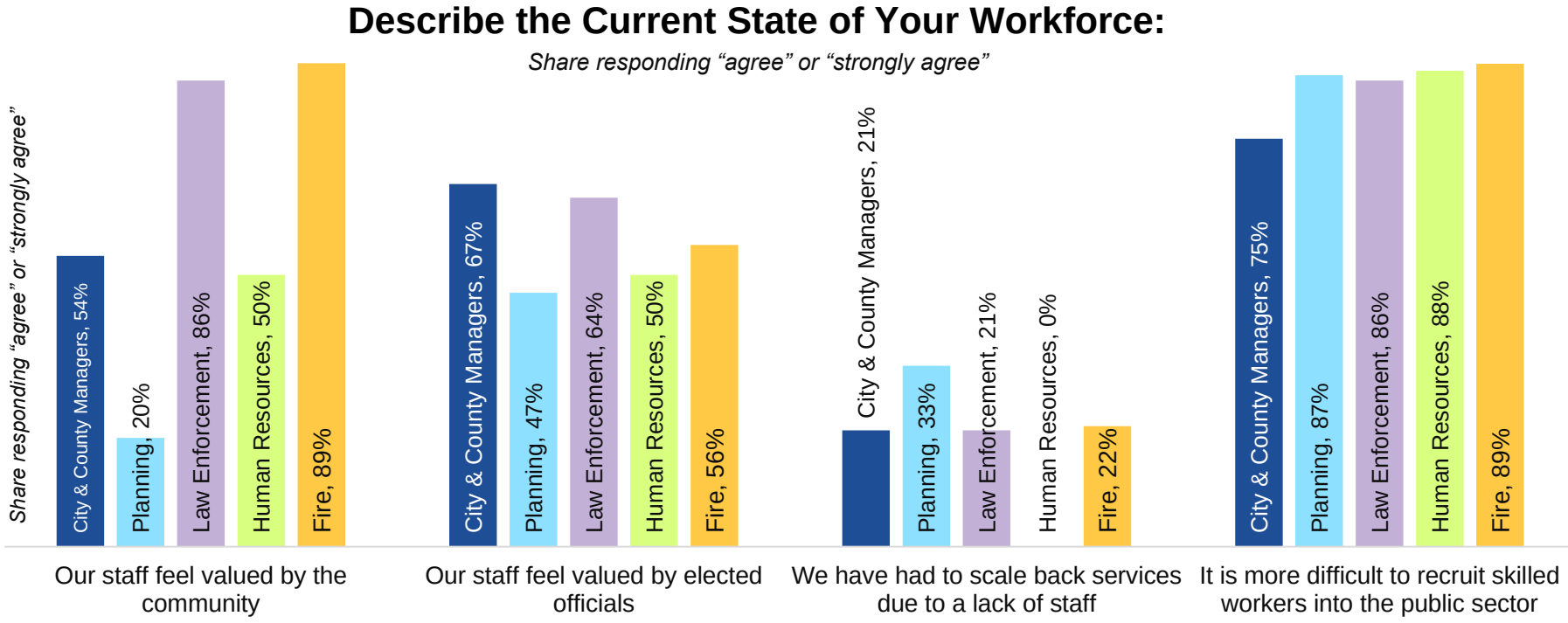
Q: What types of resources do you currently offer and what types of resources would you like to be made available to your staff?



Source: RTI Survey

State of the Workforce: By Department

Across all departments, respondents strongly agreed that it was difficult to recruit into the public sector, but few had to scale back services due to staff. Perception of value by the community varied widely, with public safety expressing the highest value by the community and public officials.



Source: RTI Survey

Themes and Takeaways

Wages are a driving factor

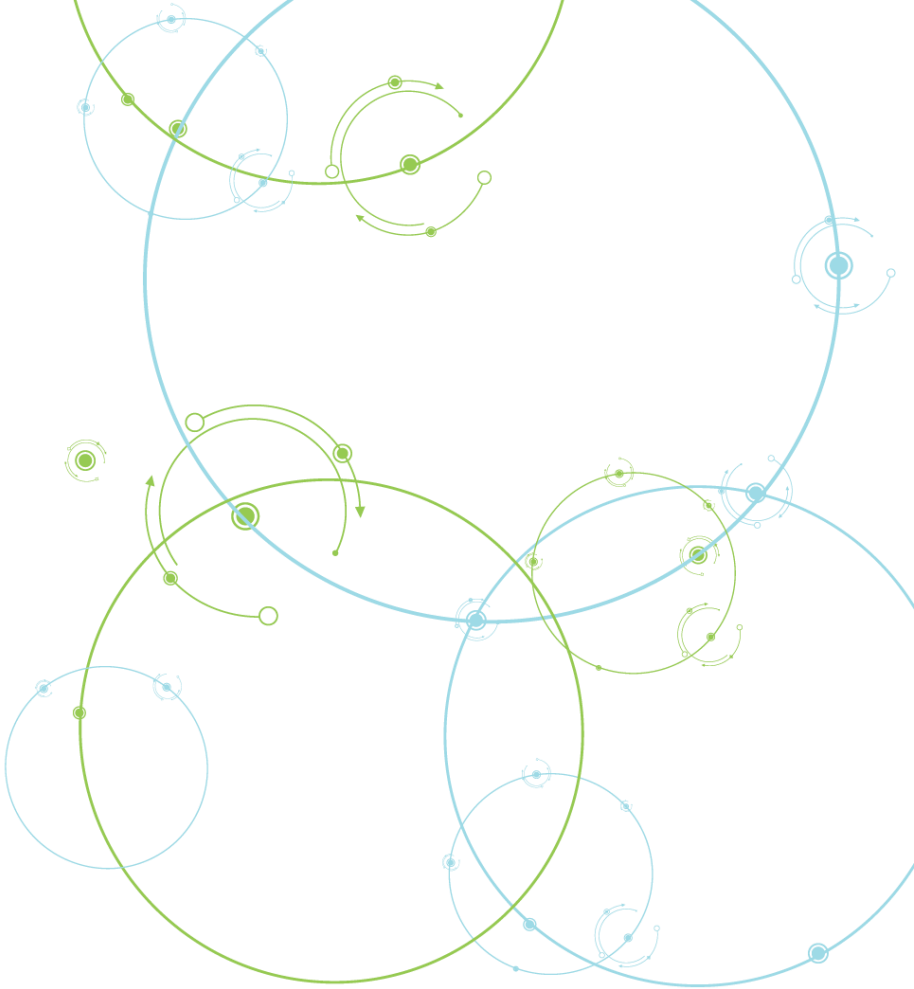
72% cite wages as an obstacle to recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce

64% cite wages as the reason employees leave.

Only 47% agree compensation and benefits can compete with the private sector.

In many cases, it simply comes down to an employee can make more money, sometimes a lot more money in the private sector than in the public sector. We've seen this especially true for those with CDLs…

-Survey Respondent



Source: RTI Survey

Staff are working beyond their normal hours and responsibilities

81% agreed that staff are working responsibilities beyond their current role, and **70%** agreed staff have had to work overtime or extended hours.

- *However, **fewer (28%)** respondents have had to cut back on services.*

At a time when so many public staff and managers have gone the extra mile for 2-3 years, this is now becoming the proverbial straw on the camel's back, especially when coupled with ever-increasing workloads vs desire to maintain only minimal staffing and ongoing recruitment/retention issues.

-Survey Respondent

Source: RTI Survey

Managers perceive their staff are not highly valued by constituents and elected officials.

Only **58%** of managers agree staff are valued by the community, and **55%** agree they are valued by elected officials (2nd and 3rd lowest share)

What has made for a more stressful work environment is an increasingly more hostile public especially during public meetings and in email communications to staff and elected officials.

Targeted presentations to elected officials (i.e. at Board meeting) on the burnout and stress staff is enduring, and the decline of those entering public service.

-Survey Respondents

Source: RTI Survey

Public Safety (law enforcement and fire) faces unique challenges.

Competition between law enforcement agencies for applicants is fierce. *The number of qualified candidates has decreased over recent years, and agencies are having to be creative to attract talent. As a profession, we need help to increase the candidate pool.*

Public safety professions are ***difficult to compare and/or compete with the private sector.*** *Practitioners work in dangerous conditions, have inflexible hours that include weekends, holidays and nights.*

At one point, the department was ***operating at staffing level of just 70%.*** *The agency continues to recover from staffing loss associated with various events in 2021, with current staffing levels rebounding to about 89%.*

-Public Safety Respondents

Managers recognize the need to invest in the well-being of the public sector workforce.

50% of managers cite lack of professional development and **48%** cite stress and burnout as a primary reason that employees leave.

Significant efforts in organizational culture, trust and communication training, and "people first" investments have allowed for a stable work environment that has not experienced the "great resignation" as reported by colleagues.

Survey Respondent

Source: RTI Survey

Thank you

Contact: Michael Hogan| email: mhogan@rti.org

Respondents Profile

Departments and divisions most represented include:

- Management & Planning
- Law Enforcement and Fire
- HR
- Public Works, Utilities, and Parks

Department/Division Represented	Responses
City & County Managers	**27**
Planning	**15**
Law Enforcement	**14**
Human Resources	**13**
Fire Chief	**11**
Public Works	7
Utilities	7
Parks & Recreation	6
Cooperative Extension	5
TJCOG Leadership	4
CIO	3
Transportation	2
Social Services	2
Health Director	1
Economic Development	1
Inspections	1
Grand Total	**119**

Source: RTI Survey

It is more difficult to recruit into the public sector

87% of survey respondents agreed it is more difficult to recruit into the public sector.

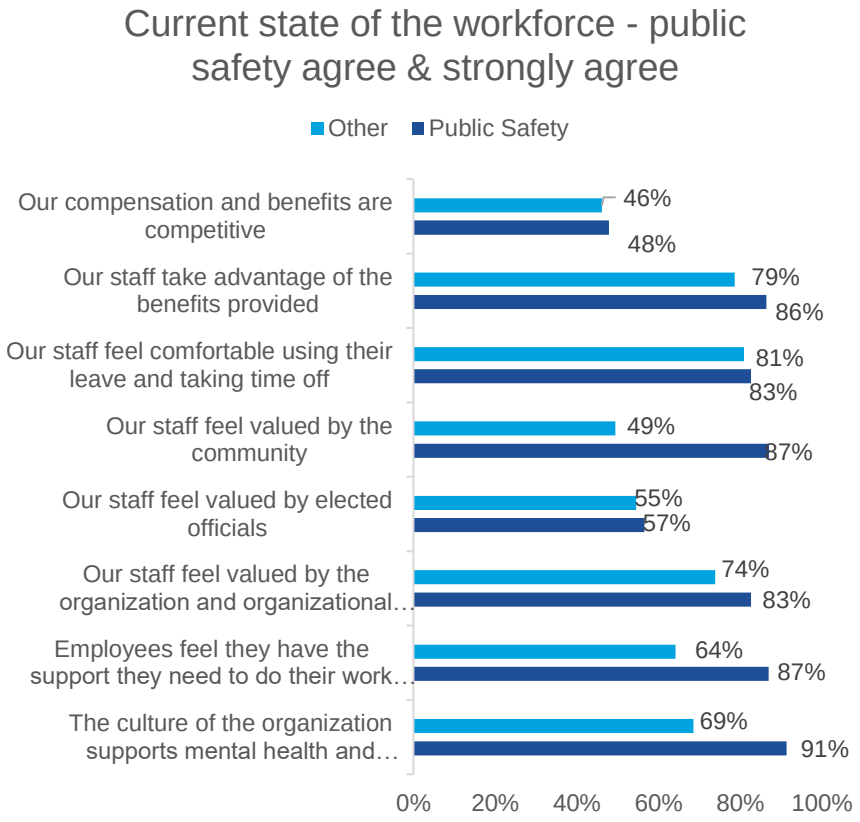
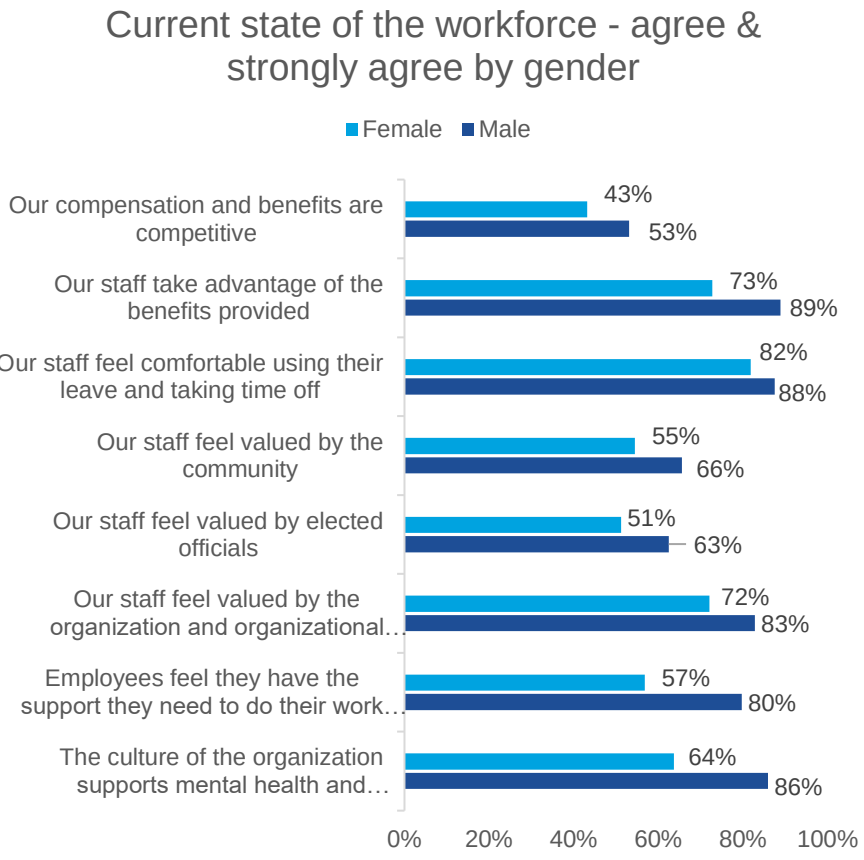
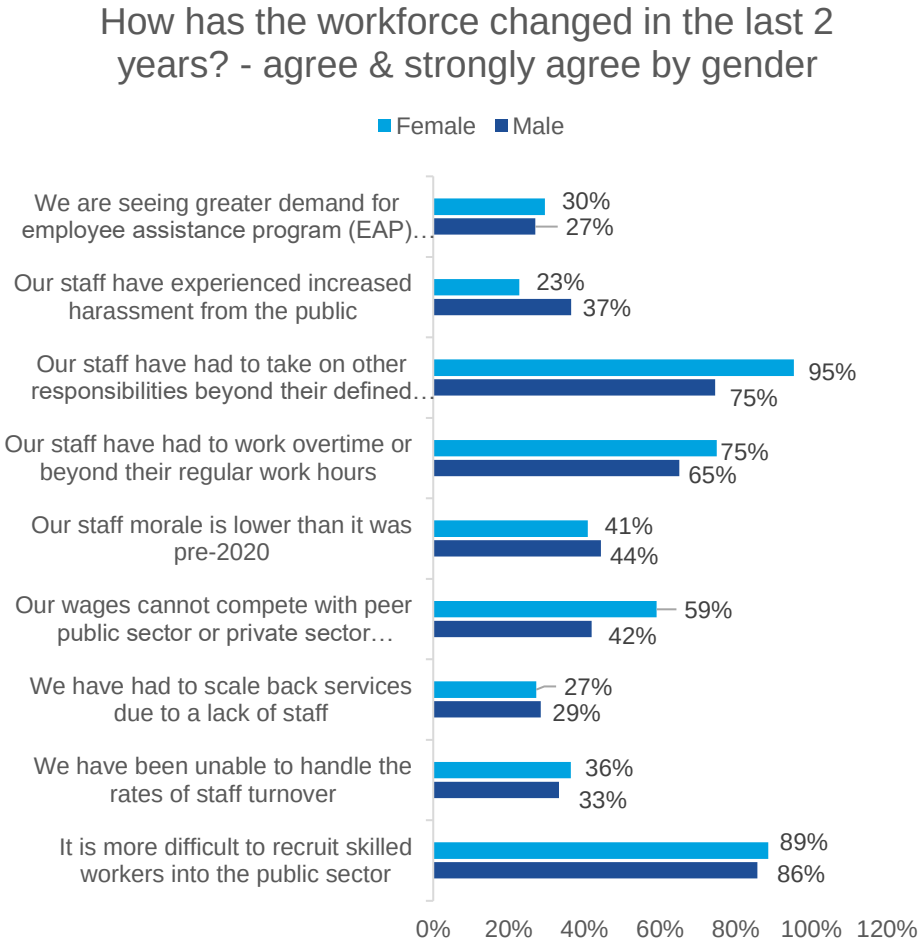
Competition from the private sector, wages, lack of skilled applicants, and housing affordability are among the reasons cited.

We get less than 10% of the applications we used to for comparable jobs. I feel like the good employees we do recruit and develop inevitably leave for higher paying jobs. We keep adding positions, but we don't do anything to keep the talented staff we have…

-Survey Respondent

Source: RTI Survey

Responses: Public Safety



Responses: Gender