



# The Long-Term Care Workforce Crisis: A 2022 Report

Results from biennial surveys of long-term care providers beginning in 2016 have exposed a caregiver workforce crisis. Data from the 2022 survey of 805 providers, together with information from other sources revealed:

An increase in caregiver vacancies from 23.8% in 2020 to 27.8% in 2022; including a 28.4% vacancy rate for certified nursing assistants (CNAs) and direct care workers.

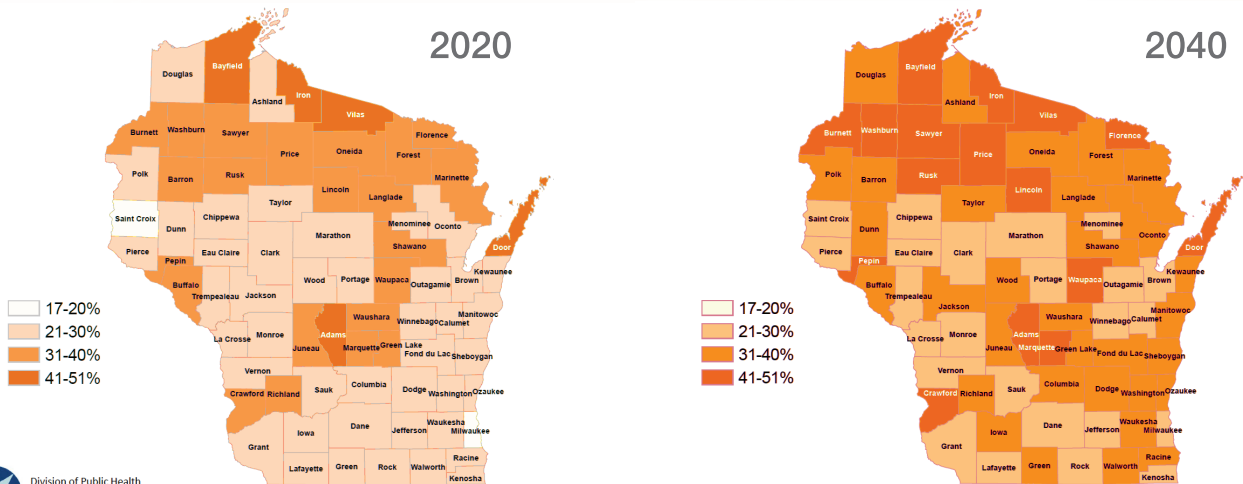
- Comparatively, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the national job market has a 7% vacancy rate and the health care sector has a 9.0% vacancy rate.
- The survey showed a caregiver vacancy rate of 33.2% in adult family homes, 31.2% in skilled nursing facilities, 27.1% in community based residential facilities (CBRFs) and 25.6% in residential care apartment complexes (RCACs).

18,482 individuals sought treatment from a long-term care provider but were denied or delayed services from a due to a lack of staff.

Respondents report significantly increasing wages, but still being challenged by having no applicants for open positions, no-call no-shows to interviews and shifts, and an inability to compete with non-healthcare providers.

# The Need for Long-Term Care is Growing as the Workforce is Shrinking.

## PERCENT OF THE PROJECTED POPULATION AGES 60 AND OLDER



Division of Public Health  
Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources  
P-01803 (09/2018)

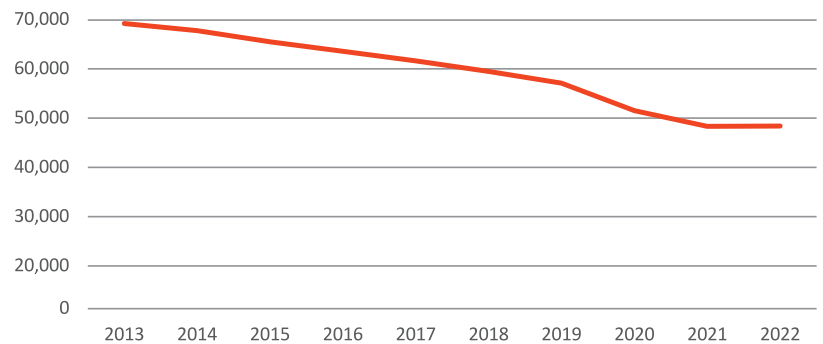
Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services, 2010-2040 Population Projections, Vintage 2013

The aging demographics of the state foreshadow a significant increasing need for long-term caregivers. A recent supply and demand forecast projected a gap of 19,800 registered nurses (RNs) by 2040.<sup>1</sup>

The waiver allowing for temporary and emergency nurse aide programs that were a lifeline during the pandemic has been withdrawn effective June 6, 2022, further exacerbating this crisis.

An additional 5,925 nurse aides currently working through the emergency training programs may be forced out of the profession as a result.

## NURSE AIDES ON REGISTRY



## Workforce by the numbers:

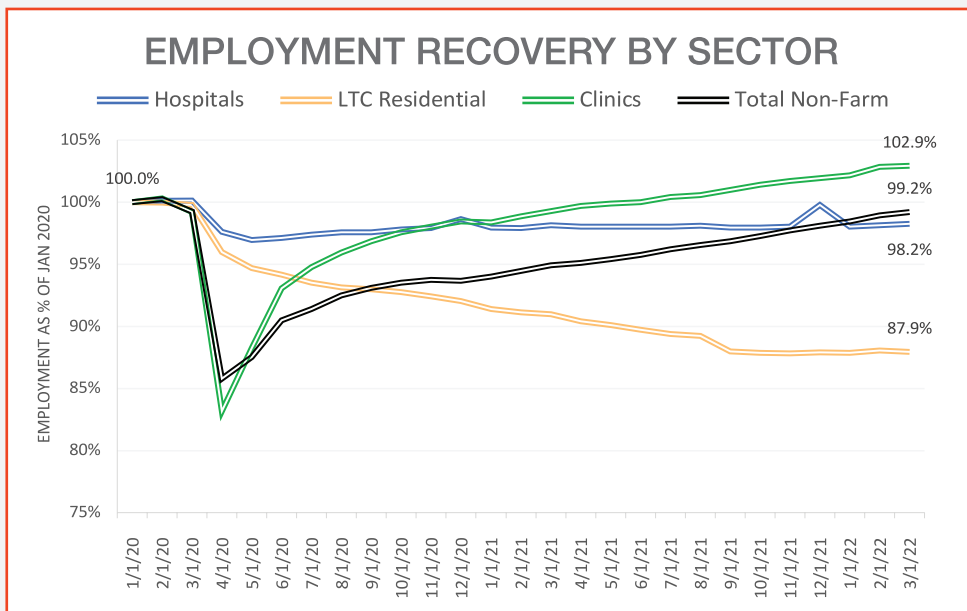
The crisis requires higher wages, but cannot be solved by wage increases alone:

- 112 organizations reported difficulty accessing CBRF and/or CNA training programs.
- There are **23,165** open caregiving positions but only 19,600 Wisconsinites not in the labor force who currently want a job and are available to work.<sup>2</sup>
- Inflation** is exacerbating the problem. In 2021, the consumer price index rose **7.5%** diminishing caregivers' purchasing power.<sup>3</sup>
- Provider associations began publishing these survey results as a caregiving crisis in 2016 with a reported vacancy rate of 12.9%. The 2022 vacancy rate is 27.8%, more than **double the 2016 vacancy rate.**

# Why Does the Crisis Continue?

The long-term care sector was especially hard hit by the pandemic and has not recovered to the extent of others.

***In March 2022, long-term care residential employment is down 12.1% from pre-pandemic levels.***

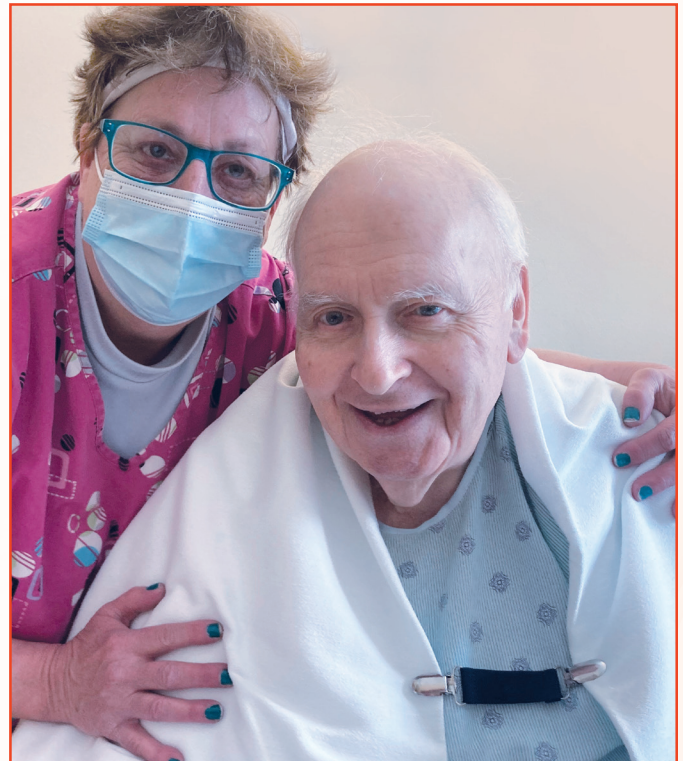


Employees in the long-term care sector can make more money and receive better benefits in other healthcare or non-healthcare settings.

***The median wage offered to non-healthcare employees is 24.7% higher than the starting wage offered to CNAs.***

Compared with non-healthcare settings, employees working at long-term care facilities are subject to the most stringent COVID-19 requirements such as wearing masks and gowns, routine testing, and vaccine mandates.

Publicly funded programs including Medicare and Medicaid (Family Care) are not able to be responsive to the rapidly changing economic environment to increase provider rates so that wages and benefits can be increased in line with inflation. Further, long-term care providers are unable to provide the same benefits as private industries due to low reimbursement rates.



***69.1% of survey respondents offered health insurance to full-time employees, whereas 12.7% could offer it to part-time employees.***

Even when offered, benefits are commonly too expensive for direct care workers to accept due to the high employee-paid share of costs. Many employees are accordingly eligible for public assistance.

Long-term care providers are unable to provide workplace flexibilities common in other industries, such as remote work. In dealing with shortages, providers may be forced to mandate overtime, making positions even less flexible and leading to additional vacancies. Competing with industries that offer remote work, daytime schedules, and no COVID requirements is increasingly impossible.

# Proposed Solutions

## ■ FUNDING SUSTAINABILITY

Systemic payment reform must commit to increasing and maintaining reimbursement relative to the actual costs of providing care.

Any funding geared towards increasing wages must be provided consistently throughout the year.

## ■ REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS

Caregivers enter the profession to help people, not to fill out unnecessary paperwork.

## ■ FLEXIBILITIES

Wisconsin needs a “no-holds-barred” approach to recruiting and retaining caregivers. This should include include permitting family caregivers and others to challenge certification exams (as is done in other states), allowing assisted living facilities to participate in nurse aide training programs, and stopping penalizing facilities by removing their ability to host training programs.

## ■ TECHNOLOGY

Investments in technology that alleviate burdens on workers must be prioritized and fully funded. Remote patient monitoring, telehealth, and other lifesaving flexibilities must be embraced.

## ■ EDUCATION

Regulatory reform must allow more nurse aides to be trained in Wisconsin. Job re-training and workforce growth strategies must be adopted to meet the need. Entry level positions must see growth opportunities in the field through a career ladder. Educational programs in middle and high schools must be created and implemented.

## ■ COMPASSION

Caregiving must be recognized as the vital and honorable work that it is. Caregivers should be revered, respected, and rewarded with fair wages and benefits.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE LONG-TERM CARE WORKFORCE CRISIS: A 2022 REPORT, CONTACT:

Disability Service Provider Network:

Lisa Davidson, (414) 403-1169, [ldavidson@dspn.org](mailto:ldavidson@dspn.org)

LeadingAge Wisconsin:

John Sauer, (608) 444-9295, [jsauer@leadingagewi.org](mailto:jsauer@leadingagewi.org)

Wisconsin Assisted Living Association:

Mike Pochowski, (414) 803-7415, [mpochowski@ewala.org](mailto:mpochowski@ewala.org)

Wisconsin Health Care Association/Wisconsin Center for Assisted Living:

Rick Abrams, (516) 241-2879, [rick@whcawical.org](mailto:rick@whcawical.org)



---

### Footnotes

- [https://jobcenterofwisconsin.com/wisconsin/wits\\_info/downloads/nurse-survey-reports/supply-nurse-reports/2020\\_WI%20RN%20Nurse%20Supply%20Demand%20Forecast%202020-2040.pdf](https://jobcenterofwisconsin.com/wisconsin/wits_info/downloads/nurse-survey-reports/supply-nurse-reports/2020_WI%20RN%20Nurse%20Supply%20Demand%20Forecast%202020-2040.pdf)
- Wisconsin DWD CPS data
- <https://www.bls.gov/ect/#tables>
- <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/jolts.t01.htm>