

# Inside KP's Staffing Crisis

ALLIANCE STAFFING SOLIDARITY SURVEY RESULTS

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Between March and July 2023, the Alliance of Health Care Unions surveyed our members to understand the magnitude of the staffing crisis at Kaiser Permanente.

Short staffing is impacting healthcare systems all across the country. As the Alliance of Health Care Unions, we are uniquely positioned to address the staffing crisis through our Labor-Management Partnership. In the fall of 2022, we urged Kaiser Permanente leadership to work with us to address the staffing crisis at KP with sustainable working conditions. We plan to continue to sound the alarm until we address the #KPStaffingCrisis comprehensively.

## SHORT STAFFING IS UNIVERSAL ACROSS KP



**More than 90%**  
of members surveyed reported that their departments were short-staffed.

## KP STAFFING CRISIS NEGATIVELY IMPACTS PATIENT CARE & ACCESS



**95%** of members surveyed reported that the staffing crisis is affecting patient care and access.

Alliance member comments included:

*“The chronic, severe short staffing is soul-crushing. I’ve never been so burned out as I have been in the last 9 months, and I regularly fantasize about what other jobs I can do outside of healthcare because I don’t know how much longer I can take staying in healthcare.”*



**77%** of members surveyed agree the high number of travelers, agency staff, and outsourcing negatively affects patient care and service.



Alliance member comments included:

*“It’s embarrassing to have the same conversations with patients over and over again about how they won’t be able to be seen for months for a follow-up appointment.”*

*“The care at KP has suffered considerably. I engage in service recovery almost daily – mostly related to access and unavailability of staff.”*

Kaiser Permanente, like many hospital systems, turned to outside contractors to ease staffing shortages during the pandemic. As a result, nationally, contract labor expenses have risen more than 250% over the past three years, creating a wage imbalance between local permanent staff and travelers and agency staff.

## KP STAFFING CRISIS IS PUTTING OUR MENTAL HEALTH AT RISK



**88%** of members surveyed said the staffing crisis has increased their stress.



**89%** said the staffing crisis has negatively affected their mental health or their co-workers.

Alliance member comments included:

*“The staffing crisis has taken a toll on our mental health. I have never experienced depression before or anxiety attacks but I do now. I’ve never had to take medication for my mental health, but I do now. I cannot continue to work like this much longer.”*

Increased stress and strain on mental health lead to exhaustion and burnout. Employee burnout is a significant factor in the healthcare staffing shortage. The pandemic exacerbated the burnout of healthcare workers with burnout rates ranging from 40% to 70%.

Burnout also costs healthcare systems an additional price for trying to replace experienced staff nurses: The average turnover costs result in hospitals losing \$4.4 million to \$6.9 million each year.<sup>1</sup>

## KP STAFFING CRISIS HAS WORSENERD WORKING CONDITIONS

Working in a staffing crisis environment creates poor working conditions driving many to leave or consider leaving KP.



**74%** of members surveyed said their work/life balance has gotten worse in the past year.

Alliance member comments included:

*“My mental health has never been worse. My work-life balance has never been worse. I’ve worked for Kaiser for over 10 years and it’s what I’ve always wanted to do but am seriously considering leaving now.”*



<sup>1</sup> The Dangerous Impact of the National Nursing Shortage  
[https://unacuhcp.org/wp-content/uploads/UNACUHCP\\_Research\\_Nursing\\_Shortage\\_2022\\_final-003.pdf](https://unacuhcp.org/wp-content/uploads/UNACUHCP_Research_Nursing_Shortage_2022_final-003.pdf)



**60%** of members surveyed said that because of the staffing crisis, they and their co-workers have been forced to skip meals and breaks.

Alliance member comments included:

*“I have personally skipped many lunches and worked past my clocked-in time without any compensation. When I ask for overtime my emails go unanswered.”*

### STAFFING CRISIS IS TARNISHING KP’S MISSION & BRAND

Our Labor-Management Partnership with Kaiser Permanente is based on the shared values of delivering high-quality care and service, being the most affordable, and being the best place to work. However, the staffing crisis is negatively impacting that mission and tarnishing the KP brand.

**Less than half** of the members surveyed would recommend KP to friends and family as a good place to work.



**Only 51%** would recommend KP as a good place to receive care.

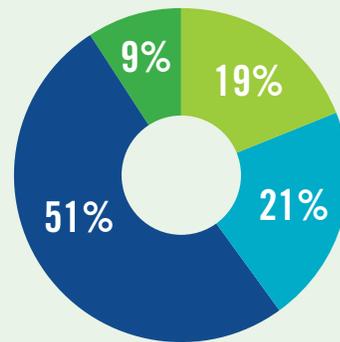
Alliance member comments included:

*“Your employees are part of the communities that your patients come from. I recently advised a neighbor of mine to choose insurance other than Kaiser because of the poor service she was receiving at Kaiser...As a Kaiser employee, it killed me to do this because my co-workers are amazing. There just aren’t enough of us.”*

### MANY HEALTHCARE WORKERS ARE CONSIDERING LEAVING KP BECAUSE OF SHORT STAFFING

**More than half** of the members surveyed have considered leaving the KP workforce because of short staffing.

**About half are considering leaving KP for an alternative healthcare employer.**



- Retiring earlier than I had planned
- Leaving the healthcare field
- Leaving for an alternative healthcare employer
- Other

## WE MUST ADDRESS THE KP STAFFING CRISIS WITH A COMPREHENSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE APPROACH

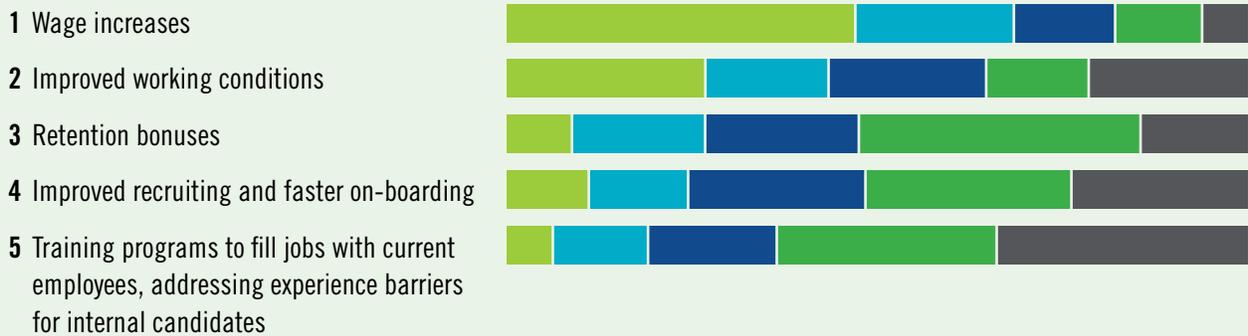
We need sustainable staffing and sustainable working conditions to attract, recruit, and retain high-quality employees to provide safe patient care and service.



We asked our members to rank potential solutions to the staffing crisis. The top two choices were wage increases and improved working conditions in recognition of the contributions and sacrifices Alliance members have made during the staffing crisis.

### Rank Options

First choice ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ Last choice



## JOIN US IN URGING KAISER PERMANENTE TO SOLVE THE STAFFING CRISIS NOW!

*“We cannot hire our way out of this crisis. We must fix the conditions causing people to quit. We have been calling on KP to work with us to get a better understanding of why people are leaving. To work on a comprehensive approach. KP leadership is not facing this crisis with the urgency it demands. And they are not facing the crisis in partnership.”*

— Hal Ruddick, Executive Director of Alliance of Health Care Unions



## APPENDIX A: ALLIANCE STAFFING SOLIDARITY SURVEY RESULTS

Please select if you agree or disagree with each statement below:	AGREE	DISAGREE
<b>My department is often short-staffed.</b>	90.6%	9.4%
<b>The staffing crisis is affecting patient care/access.</b>	94.8%	5.2%
<b>Because of the staffing crisis, I and/or my co-workers have been forced to skip meals and breaks.</b>	58.7%	41.3%
<b>My work/life balance has gotten worse in the last year.</b>	74.0%	26.0%
<b>The staffing crisis has increased my stress.</b>	88.2%	11.8%
<b>The staffing crisis has negatively affected the mental health of myself or co-workers.</b>	89.1%	10.9%
<b>I would recommend KP to friends and family as a good place to work.</b>	45.5%	54.6%
<b>I would recommend KP to friends and family as a good place to receive care.</b>	51.1%	48.9%

**NOTE:** Percentages based on 8,607 total survey responses to the above questions. The survey was conducted between March 2023 and July 2023.



## APPENDIX B: ALLIANCE UNIONS AND WHO WE REPRESENT

The Alliance of Health Care Unions is a union federation of 21 local unions representing over 52,000 Kaiser Permanente workers in various roles including registered nurses, lab technicians, environmental services technicians, healthcare professionals, call center staff, engineers, security officers, and many more, across California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, Mid-Atlantic States, Colorado, and Georgia.

### List of union locals that are part of the Alliance:

- » **Hawaii Nurses and Health Care Professionals (HNHP):** Registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and respiratory therapists employed by Kaiser Permanente in Hawaii.
- » **International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) Local 166:** More than 600 imaging techs and other healthcare workers in Southern California.
- » **International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 28:** Security guards in Kaiser Permanente Northwest.
- » **International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE), Locals 1 and 501:** Skilled Maintenance, building engineers, biomedical engineers and others in Colorado and Southern California.
- » **Kaiser Permanente Nurse Anesthetists Association (KPNAA):** Certified nurse anesthetists in Southern California.
- » **Oregon Federation of Nurses & Health Professionals (OFNHP) AFT Local 5017:** Registered nurses, dental hygienists, lab professionals and other healthcare professionals in the Northwest, Portland area.
- » **United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 7:** Registered nurses, psychologists, social workers, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals in Colorado.
- » **United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 3000:** Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, imaging and respiratory techs, clinical lab scientists and other healthcare professionals in Washington state.
- » **United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 27:** Registered nurses and healthcare professionals in the Mid-Atlantic States area.
- » **United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Locals 135, 324, 770, 1167, 1428, 1442:** Pharmacy clerks, technicians and clinical lab scientists in Southern California, including all Kaiser Permanente tech, service, clinical, and administrative workers in Kern County.
- » **United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 400:** Registered nurses and healthcare professionals in the Mid-Atlantic States area.
- » **United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1996:** Registered nurses, service, technical, professionals for all of KP Georgia.
- » **United Steelworkers Local 7600:** Service, technical, skilled maintenance and clerical workers in Southern California.
- » **United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals (UNAC/UHCP):** 24,000 nurses, midwives, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, rehab therapists, optometrists and other healthcare professionals in Southern and Northern California and Hawaii.
- » **UNITE HERE Local 5:** Service and technical workers in Hawaii.