

Local Health Department Job Losses and Program Cuts: Findings from the 2013 Profile Study

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS REMAIN CHALLENGED TO RECOVER FROM RECESSION

During 2012, nearly one-half (48%) of all local health departments (LHDs) reduced or eliminated services in at least one program area (Figure 1). Immunization, maternal and child health (MCH), and emergency preparedness (EP) services were most frequently affected. Twenty percent of LHDs reported cuts in immunization services, followed by 15 percent for both MCH and EP. In the six economic surveillance studies NACCHO has conducted since 2009, MCH has been among the top three most frequently reduced programs. EP services was one of the top three most frequently reduced programs in four of the six surveys.

FIGURE 1. Percentage of LHDs that Reduced or Eliminated Programs, Overall and by Program Area (2012 and 2011)

Program Area	Percentage of LHDs in 2012	Percentage of LHDs in 2011
At least one program area	48%	57%
Immunization	20%	19%
Maternal and Child Health Services	15%	21%
Emergency Preparedness	15%	23%
Population-based Primary Prevention	13%	19%
Chronic Disease Screening and/or Treatment	12%	16%
Clinical Health Services	11%	23%
Environmental Health	11%	17%
Communicable Disease Screening and/or Treatment	9%	10%
Epidemiology and Surveillance	7%	9%
Food Safety	7%	10%

n=1,743–1,866

For every program area except immunization, the percentage of LHDs reporting a reduction in the services they provided was smaller in 2012 than it was in 2011. However, given that many LHDs were operating their programs at diminished capacity, LHDs will only be able to better serve their communities by expanding programs, not merely avoiding further cuts.

WORKFORCE LOSSES LESSENING: CAPACITY LOSS REMAINS

Workforce losses and gains were roughly equal in 2012, with LHDs collectively adding 4,000 positions and reducing 4,300 positions (Figure 2). LHDs eliminated 1,700 positions through layoff and 2,600 by attrition. Staff joining LHDs to fill new positions (3,500) vastly outnumbered those who were hired due to a lift of a previous hiring freeze (500). Since 2008, LHDs shed nearly 44,000 jobs.

FIGURE 2. Estimated Number of LHD Job Losses (2008–2012) and Job Losses and Additions (2012)

Job Losses and Gains (2012)	
Layoffs	1,700
<u>Attrition</u>	<u>2,600</u>
Total	4,300
New Positions	3,500
Vacancies Filled Due to <u>Lift of Hiring Freeze</u>	<u>500</u>
Total	4,000
Job Losses (Layoffs and Attrition) (2008–2012)	
2008	7,000
2009	16,000
2010	6,000
2011	10,600
<u>2012</u>	<u>4,300</u>
Total	43,900

In total, 41 percent of LHDs nationwide experienced some type of reduction in workforce capacity. More than one-third (36%) of all LHDs lost at least one staff person due to layoffs or attrition last year, with 12 percent reporting at least one layoff (Figure 3). Staff operated at a diminished capacity at 13 percent of all LHDs, either because their hours were reduced or because they were furloughed.

FIGURE 3. Percentage of LHDs Losing Workforce Capacity, Overall and by Type (2012)

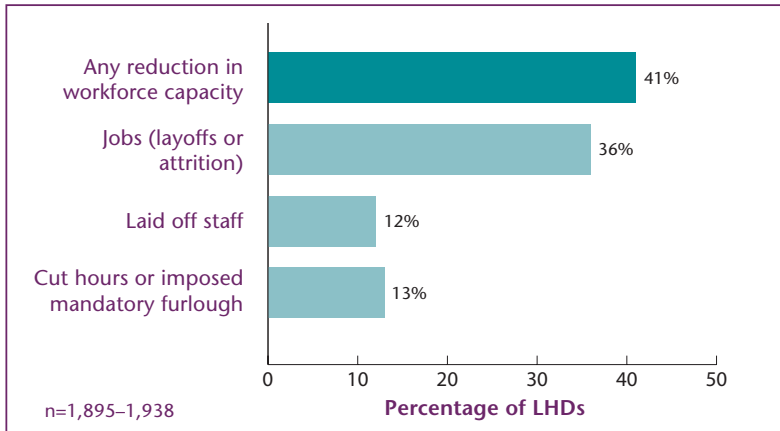
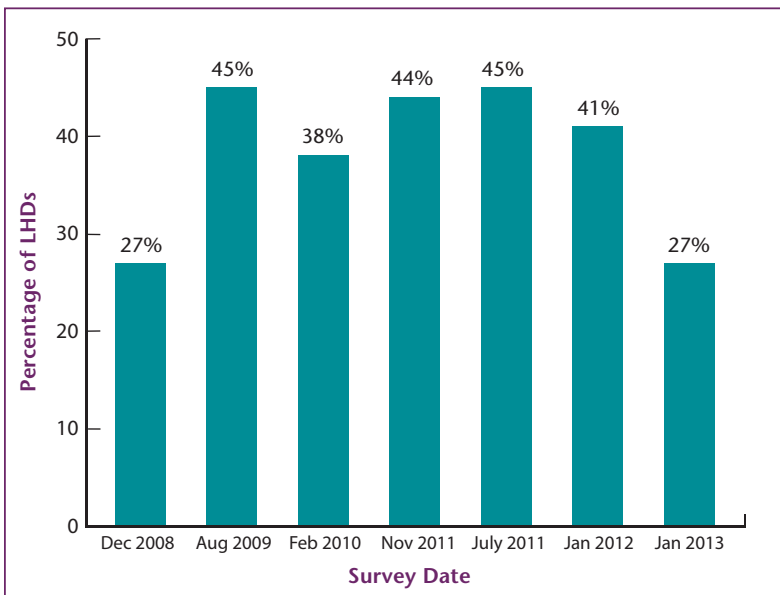


FIGURE 4. LHDs with Budget Cuts (2008–2013)

Percentage of LHDs Reporting Lower Budgets in the Current Fiscal Year than in the Prior Fiscal Year



LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS STILL MORE LIKELY TO CUT THAN EXPAND BUDGETS

When asked in early 2013, more than one-quarter (27%) of LHDs nationwide reported a lower budget in the current fiscal year compared to the prior year, continuing the trend of substantial percentages of LHDs experiencing budget cuts over the past five years (Figure 4). Although this is a sizeable drop compared to the percentage reporting budget cuts in the last several waves of the study, the percentage of LHDs reporting cuts still exceeds the percentage of LHDs reporting budget increases (23%) (not shown). Looking ahead, 31 percent of all LHDs anticipate cuts in the upcoming fiscal year (not shown).

METHODOLOGY

NACCHO administered the National Profile of Local Health Department Survey to all LHDs (n=2,532) in the United States from January to March 2013. The survey included questions about budget, staffing, and program cuts during 2012. A total of 2,000 LHDs completed the survey (a response rate of 79%). Data were weighted to adjust for non-response. All data were self-reported; NACCHO did not independently verify the data provided by LHDs. State-level estimates are posted on NACCHO's website at www.naccho.org/lhdbudget.

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