



Resolve Lab Staff Shortages

April 25, 2024

Objectives

- Discuss statistics regarding laboratory staffing shortages in the United States
- Identify key challenges regarding laboratory staffing shortages
- Recognize strategies to mitigate staffing shortages due to retirement
- Describe ways to reduce staff burnout and frustration



- In your opinion, what is the main reason labs are facing staffing turnover issues?
 - Pay
 - Lack of training
 - Lack of resources to do job
 - Other

Laboratory Staffing Challenges

- **Workforce shortage**

- Closure of educational programs
- Retirement
- Compensation not commensurate
- Burnout & Staff Frustration
 - Unreasonable expectations
 - Excessive workload
 - Lack of career advancement
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 - Supply chain shortages
 - Inability to work at top of license



Workforce Shortage

- **US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020)**
 - 335,500 jobs for MLS/MLT combined
 - 11% Projected increase by 2030
- **Dept of Health and Human Services (2020)**
 - 22% Projected increase by 2025
- **Forbes (2022)**
 - 7-11% job vacancy rates in many areas
 - Up to 25% vacancy rates in select areas
- **ASCP (2022)**
 - 7-11% job vacancy rates in many areas
 - 72-82% of laboratories report problems hiring evening and night shift



Workforce Shortage – International Recruiting

Pros and Cons

Pros

- Candidate qualifications
- Long-term commitment
- Providing an actual solution

Cons

- Legal requirements
- Time
- Cost



Workforce Shortage – International Recruiting

Eligibility

1. Education: must have at least a bachelor's degree.
2. Certification: must be certified by a national certifying agency
3. Education Equivalency Certificate
4. Visa Screen Certificate
5. English Language Proficiency



Workforce Shortage – International Recruiting

Obtaining H1B Visa – 4 steps

1. File a Labor Condition Application with the Dept of Labor.
2. File the H1B petition with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.
3. Ensure that the medical technologist attends a consular interview and provides any additional documentation required.
4. Upon approval of the visa, facilitate travel to the US to begin work.



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Approximately 240 Medical Laboratory Technologist and Scientist programs in the US

- Approximately 4,000 graduates per year
- 7% decrease since 2000
- US population has increased by 20%
- some programs have reduced their clinical rotations from 22 weeks to 12 weeks
- Some states have no training programs
- State to state licensure requirements differ



Title VII Student Loans - Expansion

Eligibility:

- Must meet the federal student aid eligibility
- Must demonstrate financial need.
- Must be enrolled full-time in one of the following programs:
 - Doctor of Dentistry
 - Bachelor or Doctor of Science in Pharmacy
 - Doctor of Podiatric Medicine
 - Doctor of Optometry
 - Doctor of Veterinary Medicine
 - **Proposed – MLS and MLT?**



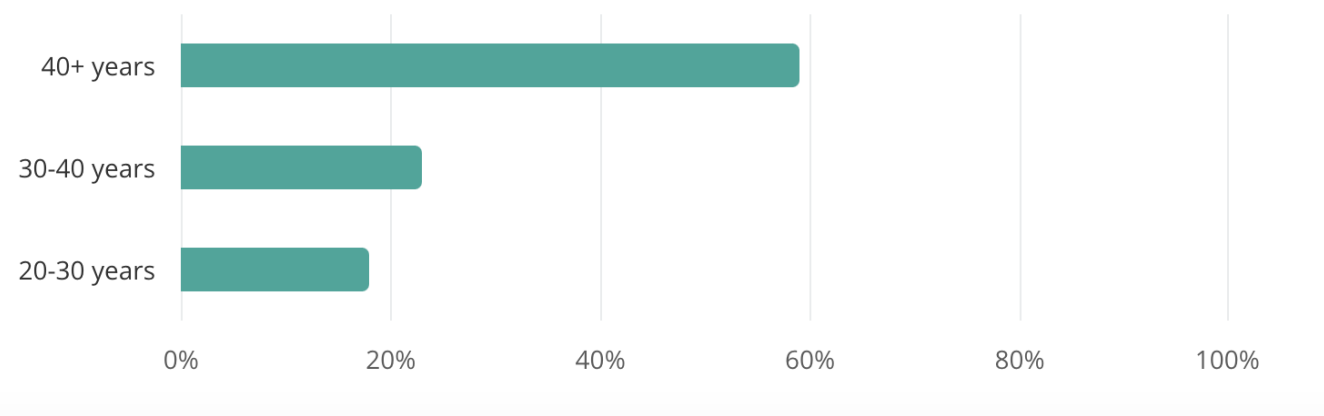
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ASCP 2020 National Vacancy Survey showed up to **17.9% 5-year retirement rate**

Laboratory personnel aging **78% faster** than entire US labor market



Laboratory Technician Age Breakdown

The average age of laboratory technicians is 40+ years years old, representing 59% of the laboratory technician population.

Succession Planning – Best Practice

- Start early
- Focus on diversity and inclusion..
- Regularly review and update the plan. Communicate transparently.
- Measure succession planning effectiveness. Prepare for contingencies.
- Celebrate successes.



Succession Planning – Basic Planning

- Identify key positions.
- Assess current talent.
- Develop a talent pipeline.
- Create succession plans for key roles.
- Monitor and adjust.



Free examples:



<https://www.smartsheet.com/succession-planning-templates>



<https://www.indeed.com/hire/c/info/succession-planning-template>



<https://www.sigmaassessmentsystems.com/succession/succession-planning-template-library/>



<https://clickup.com/blog/succession-planning-templates/>

Succession Planning – Templates

- Evaluating current talent
- Identifying potential successors
- Creating development plans
- Establishing timelines
- Addressing contingency scenarios

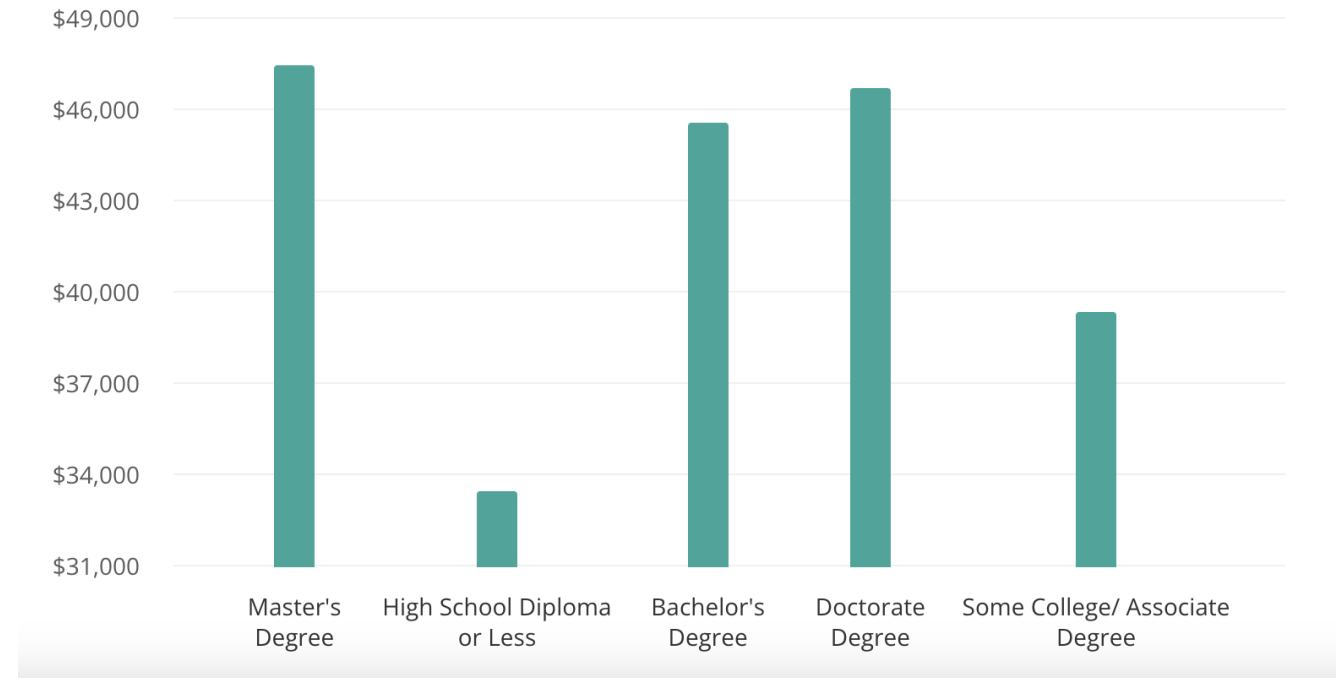
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Compensation not commensurate

- Medical lab professionals paid **40-60% less** than nurses, physical therapists, or pharmacists.
- Based on the 2021 US BLS, the annual median wage for a MLS/MLT is \$57,800.
- Registered Nurse median salary \$81,220
- Respiratory Therapist median salary \$84,400



How much does a traveling Lab Technologist make?.

The highest paying states for travel medical lab techs are California, with the average salary at **\$80,500**, followed by Rhode Island, Alaska, Connecticut and Massachusetts

Compensation not commensurate

Sign On Bonuses



**Core Lab - Medical Lab Technician,
Night, PT \$2,500 Sign-On Bonus**

Medical Laboratory Technician / Full-Time / \$7,500 Sign-On Bonus!

Competitive sign-on bonus up to \$10K :

- New graduates eligible
- Experiential bonus commensurate with experience

**Sign-on bonuses
up to \$15,000**

[Apply Today](#)

- Due to employee shortages, many institutions are offering sign on bonuses for lab staff. Is your institution offering sign on bonuses and how much?
 - Not offering any bonuses
 - Yes, offering \$1000.00 to \$3000.00 bonus
 - Yes, offering \$3000.00 to \$5000.00 bonus
 - Yes, offering \$10,000.00 to \$15,000.00 bonus
 - Yes, offering \$20,000.00 bonus
 - Yes, offering more than \$20,000.00 bonus

Laboratory Staffing Challenges

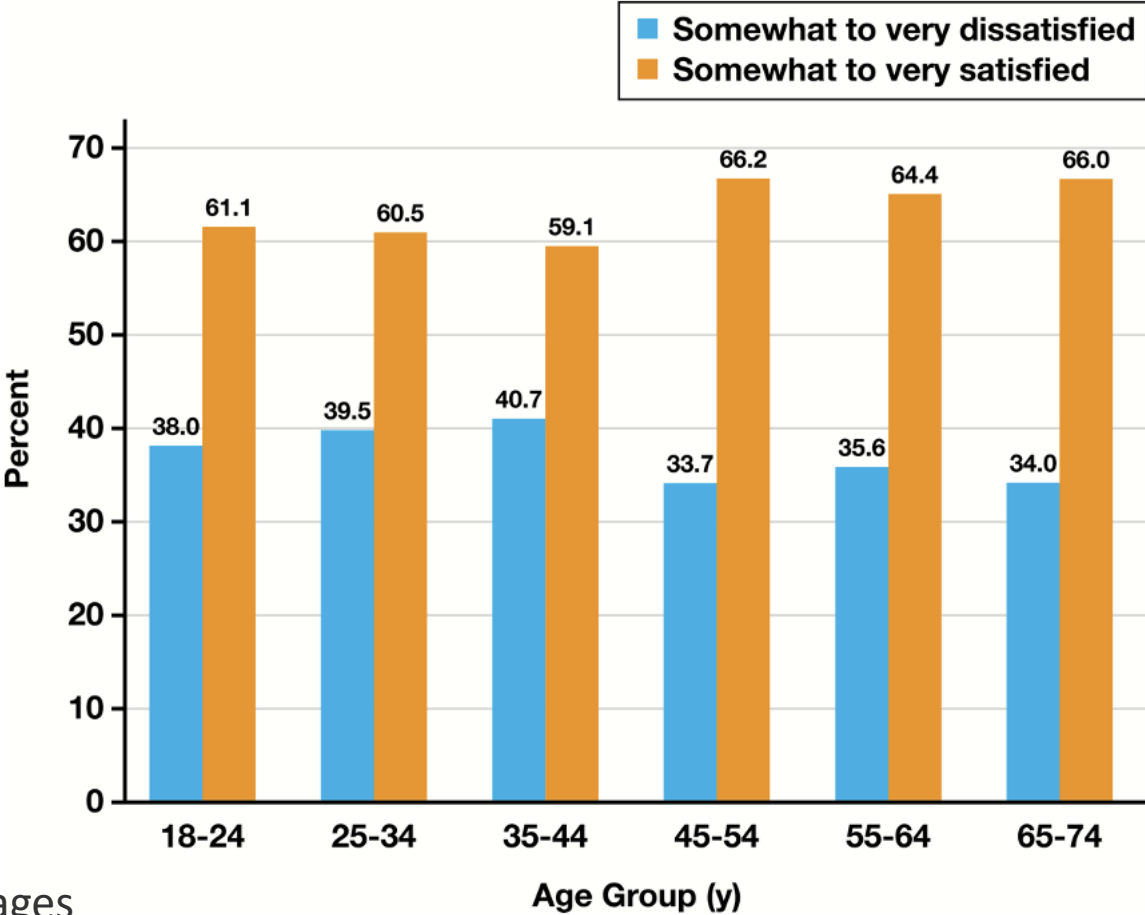
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Burnout & Staff Frustration



85.3%
Of laboratory professionals
experience a degree of burnout
during their career



Am J Clin Pathol, Volume 153, Issue 4, April 2020, Pages 470–486, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcp/aqaa008>.

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Excessive Workload

“As a rule **tests should be asked for when there is some definite indication** for them or when an actively functioning cerebral cortex believes they might be of value.”

If routine orders are given for a large number of tests the laboratory will be **overwhelmed by a mass of work** which is of little practical value to the patient.”

Laboratorians “**should not be expected to make so many tests**” as “**automatons** or as technicians simply because they are requested to do so.”

FP McNamara MD, 1922



Excessive Workload

"I believe that some focus is going to need to happen at the institutional level on how we how we order lab tests, and is it truly an unlimited shopping list or an all you can eat buffet? Or do we now need to have some guidance around appropriateness, because **there's no way the lab can continue in this marathon with 25% of the staff missing.**"

Christine Nielsen, CEO of the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science



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Inability to work at top of license

- Some tasks can be performed by non-technical staff such as lab assistants or clerical staff
- Technology solutions
 - Instrument Automation
 - LIS
 - Flexible electronic documentation systems



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Inability to work at top of license

Flexible electronic documentation systems



Inability to work at top of license

Flexible electronic documentation systems

- Training
- Competency assessment
- Policy and procedure manual
- Proficiency testing
- Instrument records, maintenance and function checks
- Temperature records
- Safety
- Document integrity
- Document control
- Inspection preparation



- Do you feel that laboratory compliance should be an integral part of staff training?
 - Strongly agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Don't feel it's necessary
 - Not sure

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A multi-faceted approach

- **Technology solutions** that address staff shortages, relieve burnout and improve patient care.
- **Administrative solutions** that target job satisfaction, diversity, flexible hours, professional recognition, etc.
- **Recruiting solutions**
- **Legislative solutions**



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Thank You