

Key Points

- 2/3 of physicians surveyed are considering leaving the state
- Clinical shortages have worsened in New Mexico
- Medical malpractice is cited as the largest reason physicians are considering leaving the state
- Physicians who left New Mexico reported leaving due to compensation, quality of life, and medical malpractice
- Most physicians leaving New Mexico are staying in the region

Physician Survey to Address Shortages

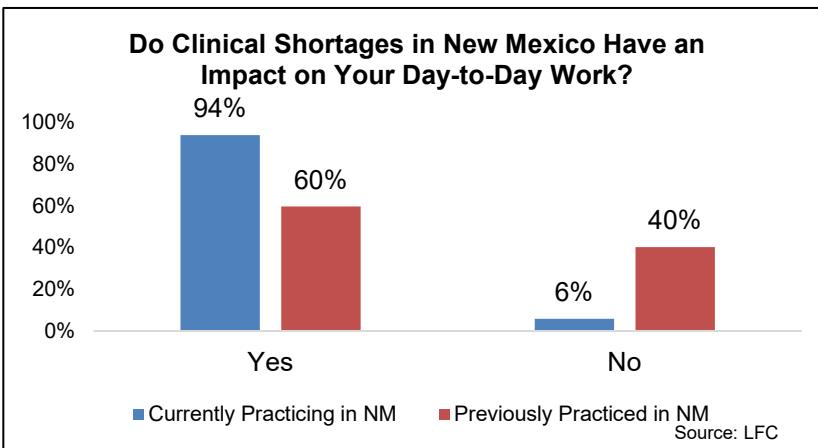
New Mexico continues to face a critical, chronic shortage of health professionals across the disciplines, particularly in rural areas. Thirty-two of 33 New Mexico counties are designated as health professional shortage areas (HPSAs) in primary care, behavioral health, and/or dental health. On average, New Mexico needs at least an additional 5,000 healthcare workers to address current shortages. In December 2025, according to the Workforce Solutions Department, 69 percent of online job postings were for health and personal care and 15 percent of those were postings for physicians. With assistance from the New Mexico Medical Board, LFC staff launched a survey interviewing physicians who currently practiced or once practiced in New Mexico to understand why physicians are considering leaving or have left the state and potential mitigation strategies.

Survey Results

LFC staff conducted a survey between December 4, 2025, and December 18, 2025. In total, 17,897 potential participants were identified if they were physicians with current licenses in New Mexico, and 1,215 respondents participated. With the response rate, the survey is considered to have a representative sample, with a 3.5 percent margin of error and a confidence level of 99—indicating high confidence in the results. Each participant was placed into one of three categories: (1) a physician currently practicing in New Mexico, (2) a physician who previously practiced in New Mexico and is now practicing elsewhere, or (3) a retired physician who practiced in New Mexico. See online appendix for further details.

There are five key takeaways from the survey LFC staff fielded, focused primarily on why physicians might leave and what is known about physicians who left. See the online appendix for survey methodology and additional information.

1. Of physicians surveyed who are currently practicing in New Mexico, 94 percent say that provider shortages have an impact on their day-to-day work. This is in comparison to about 60 percent of physicians who left the state reporting that provider shortages impacted their day-to-day work in New Mexico—demonstrating that the problem has likely worsened.

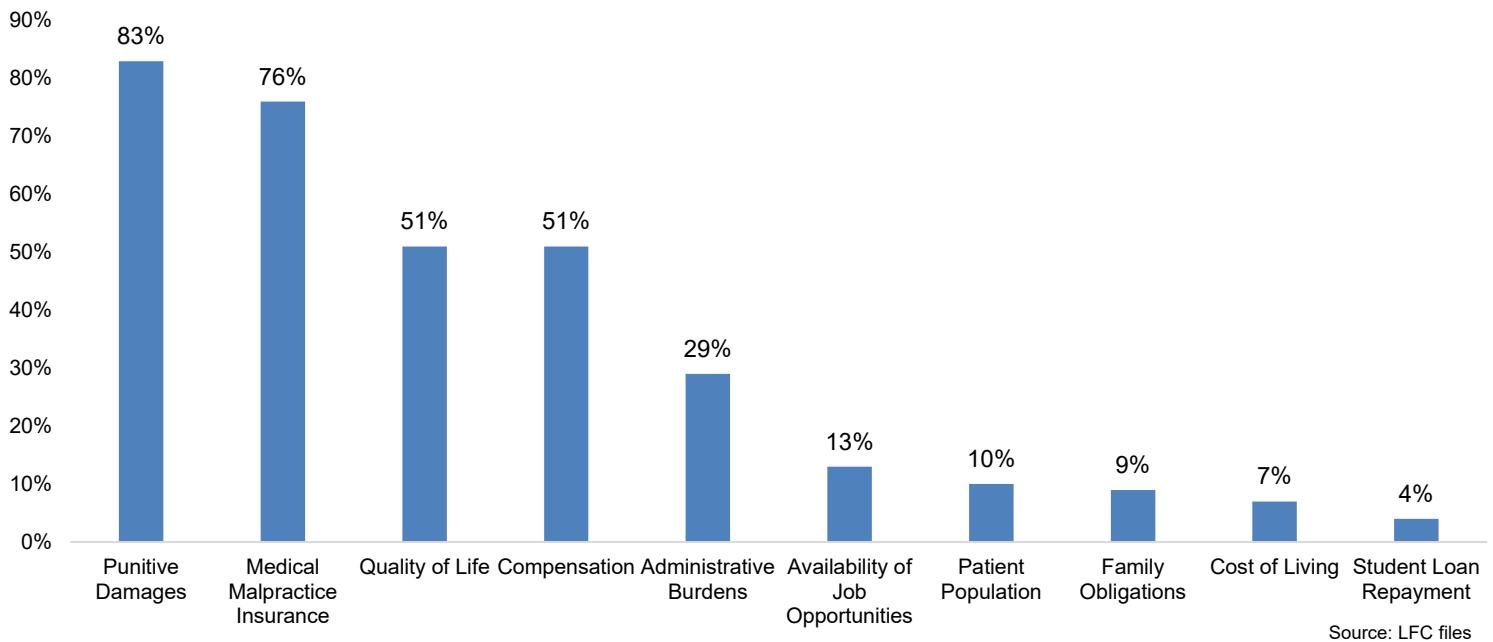




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2. Sixty-five percent of New Mexico physicians surveyed are currently considering leaving the state to practice elsewhere.
3. Of New Mexican physicians who are considering leaving the state, 83 percent reported the cause as punitive damages associated with medical malpractice. New Mexico one of a few states that does not place a cap on punitive damages.

Reasons Providers Currently Practicing in NM are Thinking about Relocating



Source: LFC files

Most Common Words Associated with Leaving New Mexico



Most Common Words Associated with Moving to New Mexico



4. Physicians who left New Mexico reported leaving for three main reasons.
 - First, physicians stated that compensation was too low. However, as the [online LFC physician wage dashboard](#) indicates, physician wages in New Mexico have largely caught up or exceed salaries compared to other states within the region.
 - Second, physicians were concerned about the potential risk of punitive damages.
 - Third, physicians left because of quality of life (including schools and crime).
5. Most physicians migrated to states within the region or California and Florida. The top figure on the left-hand side indicates the main reasons why physicians indicated they chose to leave New Mexico. Of the physicians who are in New Mexico, 69 percent previously practiced elsewhere. The main reasons cited for staying in New Mexico was family ties and cultural preferences—as seen in the bottom figure on the left-hand side.