MissionSquare Research Institute

Promote excellence in state and local government and other public service organizations so they can attract and retain talented public servants
State and Local Workforce Survey Series

- Initial survey in 2009 on state/local workforce and the recession
- Larger trends in recruitment, retention, benefits, and other key workforce issues
Figure 1  State and local employment since February 2020

Figure 4b  **Percentage reporting workforce changes 2018-2022**

Many workforce changes spiked in 2021

NOTE: None of the responses were 0. Where data are not shown in a prior year, the question had not yet been added to the survey.
### Figure 5  
**Regarding changes in the size of your government’s workforce in the past year... (n = 293)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Higher than in 2020</th>
<th>Same as in 2020</th>
<th>Lower than in 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quits (voluntary, non-retirement separations) were:</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirements were:</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time employees hired were:</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employees hired were:</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layoffs (excluding terminations for cause or during probationary periods) were:</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hiring is up, but so are quits and retirements**
Figure 6  Please indicate how, if at all, the size of your full-time workforce changed over the last year (n = 316)

![Chart showing workforce changes: 38% increased, 33% no change, 27% decreased, 3% don’t know.]

NOTE: Some figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Full-time workforce has grown since 2021

Figure 7  What portion of your organization’s workload would you estimate is being met via the gig economy?

![Chart showing gig economy workload distribution: 5% more than 5%, 19% 1-5%, 21% less than 1%, 45% none, 10% don’t know.]

Gig hiring in government is still limited
Figure 4  Which of the following workforce changes has your government implemented over the past year? (Check all that apply) (n = 318)

- Hired employees: 81%
- Broad-based pay increases: 38%
- Hired temporary or contract employees: 37%
- Updated job specs for minimum education/skills: 31%
- Permanent/long-term telework options: 25%
- Travel or training restrictions: 25%
- Re-hired (at least part-time) staff that retired from your government: 25%
- Narrow, position-specific pay increases: 21%
- Offered hiring bonuses (position-specific, e.g., public safety/health): 19%
- Reduced or restructured services to match available workforce: 11%
- Hired staff to work exclusively off-site: 7%
- Hiring freezes: 7%
- Furloughed staff returned to active employment: 6%
- Offered hiring bonuses (general): 6%
- Early retirement incentives: 5%
- None of the above: 5%
- Furloughs: 4%
- Layoffs: 4%
- Pay freezes: 3%
- Pay cuts: 1%

19% started targeted hiring bonuses
Figure 8  **Over the past year, what positions, if any, has the organization had a hard time filling? (Select all that apply) (n = 228)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health care: Nursing</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policing</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispatch</td>
<td></td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building permitting and inspections</td>
<td></td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrections/jails</td>
<td></td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled trades (all types)</td>
<td></td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care: Mental health professionals</td>
<td></td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving/equipment operation (with commercial licenses)</td>
<td></td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive maintenance</td>
<td></td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation (including transit)</td>
<td></td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care: Physicians</td>
<td></td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human and social services</td>
<td></td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 9  **Number of applicants this past year compared to the number of positions available (n = 94 to 222)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Fewer qualified applicants than available positions</th>
<th>0-50% more qualified applicants than available positions</th>
<th>50-100% more qualified applicants than available positions</th>
<th>More than twice as many qualified applicants as available positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered nurses</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineers</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology employees</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance workers</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Fewer qualified applicants than available positions
- 0-50% more qualified applicants than available positions
- 50-100% more qualified applicants than available positions
- More than twice as many qualified applicants as available positions
Impacts of Technology

• **30%** prioritize retraining staff
• **18%** foresee modifying or eliminating jobs

• Fields susceptible to automation include:
  • Customer service  
  • Clerical  
  • Transportation  
  • Management/Supervision

• Other occupations expected to change: Corrections: ↓**10% by 2030**
Figure 10  **Looking broadly at your workforce, what generalizable skill sets are most needed in new hires? (Check all that apply) (n = 270)**

- Analytical/critical thinking: 78%
- Interpersonal: 64%
- Management: 53%
- Technology: 52%
- Written communications: 42%
- Data management/data analysis: 36%
- Finance: 19%
- Other: 18%
- Public speaking/presentations: 11%
- Social media: 7%
- Language (other than English): 4%

Soft skills/interpersonal are most sought
Figure 11  What recruitment practices are most successful in reaching qualified candidates? (Check all that apply) (n = 261)

- Social media: 59%
- Advertising: Government websites: 57%
- Employee referrals: 56%
- Advertising: Profession-specific media: 45%
- Advertising: Commercial websites: 41%
- College outreach/partnerships: 27%
- Job fairs: 22%
- Internships/apprenticeships: 17%
- Building a communications campaign around public service: 14%
- Outreach to specific neighborhoods or demographics: 11%
- Hiring bonuses: 11%
- Outreach to veterans or military family members: 10%
- Video campaigns: 8%
- Other: 7%
- K-12 outreach/civics curriculum: 6%
- Cooperative recruitment efforts with other governments: 5%
- Artificial intelligence (for application screening or video interviews): 4%

Technology and personal outreach facilitate recruitment success
Impacts of Workforce Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

**Greater inclusion** of women in public sector leadership is positively correlated to economic development results.

Staff diversity has been shown to have a positive impact on **productivity, quality decision making, and financial success.**

Source: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Public Service Workforce
MissionSquare Research Institute

Figure 12  **What flexible work practices does your organization offer? (Check all that apply) (n = 270)**

- Regular hybrid scheduling for eligible positions: 54%
- Flexible schedule (e.g., 4 days, 10 hours ea.): 51%
- Flexible work hours (e.g., around rush hour, personal appointments): 38%
- No flexible work practices: 25%
- Regular full-time telework for eligible positions: 22%
- Job sharing within the organization: 4%
- Job sharing with other government agencies: 1%

**Hybrid work replaces regular telework as the top strategy**
Figure 16  **Over the past year, what changes, if any, has your government made to the retirement benefits for new hires? (n = 248)**

- No actions taken: 77%
- Increased employer contribution to pension plans: 9%
- Increased employee contribution to pension plans: 7%
- Decreased employer contributions to defined contribution plans: 4%
- Reduced/eliminated cost-of-living adjustments: 3%

**Few structural changes to retirement or health insurance plans**
What changes, if any, have your retirement-eligible employees made regarding retirement plans?

Source: State and Local Workforce 2022
Largest anticipated wave of retirements?

- Already taken place: 8%
- Taking place now: 17%
- In the next few years: 52%

Still in the future, but coming soon.
Employees are feeling the stress and additional workload

Source: Continued Impact of COVID-19 on Public Sector Employee Job and Financial Outlook, Satisfaction, and Retention

Figure 17  Strain on Workload Due to Increase in Number of People Leaving Voluntarily? Nov/Dec 2021 (n=664)

- 39% Yes, a significant strain
- 39% Yes, somewhat of a strain
- 22% No
Retirement readiness continues to lag

**Figure 19** Do you feel your employees are prepared financially for their retirement? (n = 256)

- **41%** Yes
- **59%** No

**Employees interested in financial education**

- **3 in 10** have been offered a financial literacy/education program by their employer
- **7 in 10** would participate in an employer financial literacy/education program if offered one

Source: [Financial Wellness Programs Infographic, 2019](#)
Competitive compensation?

Figure 21  Do you feel the wage compensation you offer your employees is competitive with the labor market? (n = 252)

Wages: 44%

- 44% Yes
- 54% No
- 2% Don’t know

Figure 22  Do you feel the benefits compensation you offer your employees is competitive with the labor market? (n = 252)

Benefits: 85%

- 85% Yes
- 10% No
- 5% Don’t know
**Employee Priorities**

**Figure 18** What Organization Could Do to Retain More Employees, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100)

- Improve salaries: 62%
- Offer/increase bonuses: 50%
- Show more appreciation and recognition of employees and the work they do: 38%
- Improve benefit package: 32%
- Increase amount of leave allowed (vacation days, sick days, etc.): 30%
- Offer more flexible work schedules: 27%
- Offer more opportunities to work remotely: 25%
- Create a better organizational culture: 21%
- Offer stress management and/or mental health program/classes: 21%
- Establish better protocols for ensuring a safe and healthy workplace: 20%
- Offer paid family leave: 19%

Source: [Continued Impact of COVID-19 on Public Sector Employee Job and Financial Outlook, Satisfaction, and Retention](#)
Figure 23  **Which of the following programs does your organization currently use to encourage employee retention and development? (Check all that apply) (n = 254)**

- **Employee assistance programs (EAPs)/mental health support**: 90%
- **Exit interviews**: 83%
- **Employee development: Funds/reimbursements for training/tuition**: 72%
- **Leave benefits: Sick leave banking/donations**: 67%
- **Employee development: In-house training**: 62%
- **Wellness programs: Informational**: 61%
- **Recognition program**: 56%
- **Leave benefits: COVID-related quarantine/isolation leave**: 55%
- **Employee development: Leadership development**: 52%
- **Voluntary benefits (e.g., employee-paid legal, pet insurance)**: 46%
- **Workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion training**: 44%
- **Employee development: Career paths/career ladders**: 40%
- **Employee development: Cross-training**: 40%
- **Employee satisfaction surveys**: 39%
- **Leave benefits: Paid family leave**: 37%
- **Leave benefits: Consolidated annual/personal/sick leave**: 37%
- **Wellness programs: Reimbursement (e.g., gym membership, smoking cessation programs)**: 31%
Figure 23  **Which of the following programs does your organization currently use to encourage employee retention and development? (Check all that apply) (n = 254)**

- Onboarding program (beyond first week orientation) 30%
- Wellness programs: On-site fitness facilities 29%
- Financial literacy/financial wellness training 27%
- Wellness programs: On-site clinics 25%
- Other 18%
- Bonuses (other than at hiring) 16%
- Community engagement (support for volunteer involvement, matching donations) 15%
- Employee skills assessments/personality inventories 13%
- Collaborative/distributed leadership 12%
- Stay interviews 11%
- Transit benefits 9%
- Employee affinity/resource groups (e.g., for underrepresented demographics) 9%
- Financial assistance with student loan repayment 7%
- Mentoring/intergenerational engagement 7%
- Financial assistance with home purchases 2%
- Job rotations 2%
Figure 24  **In exit interviews with departing employees, which of the following have been cited as among the top three reasons for leaving? (n = 199)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compensation not competitive</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of internal advancement opportunities</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancement with another public employer</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction with supervisors</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advancement with a private employer</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/family priorities</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of career</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload/burnout</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relocation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction with the organization</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical/mental health</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-related health/safety concerns</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuing further education</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction with co-workers</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
States and Other Large Governments: Other Changes

- 38% have performance management systems applicable to remote work
- 28% decreased office space (vs. 12% that increased it)
- 18% allow work outside the primary metro location or state
- 12% conduct remote mentoring
Figure 28  **How important are the following workforce issues to your organization? (n = 251)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competitive compensation package</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee morale</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee engagement</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee development: General</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee development: Leadership</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity: Workforce diversity, equity, and inclusion</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health in the workplace</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce succession planning</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to manage workload when current staff is at their limit and new staff cannot be hired</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity: Racial and social justice (in service delivery and society)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing employee health care costs</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>