

2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service

Topline Results for Selected Questions

Total N=3,551 Federal executives

Margins of Error:

± 1.8 percentage points for results based on full sample [N=3,547]¹

± 2.6 percentage points for results based on random 50% sample asked block 2 [N=1,688]

± 2.6 percentage points for results based on random 50% sample asked block 3 [N=1,712]

Notes: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

An asterisk (*) indicates less than 0.5%.

Q1. Welcome to the 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service. Our nation faces many challenges and public servants play a critical role in addressing those challenges. Your participation in this survey will provide important insight into the current state of our federal executive branch agencies. Effective execution of public responsibilities and attracting the most talented among us to public service are paramount concerns. There is simply no better source of information about how to achieve these objectives than our current public servants. You have been specifically chosen to take this survey and will represent thousands of your colleagues. Your background, experiences, and policy views are essential to helping us understand the current state of government service and how best to make progress.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

Purpose of the research: This survey seeks to find out more about the backgrounds, career paths, policy views, and job experiences of our nation's federal executives. Your input will help us get a better understanding of the current and future state of the public service in the United States.

Study Procedures: The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete. It can be completed online or on paper.

Confidentiality: All records from this study will be kept confidential. The results of the survey will be reported as aggregate statistics so that the identities of individual survey respondents cannot be inferred. Research records will be stored securely in locked file cabinets and/or on encrypted, password-protected computers. The research team will be the only persons who will have access to the survey data.

Benefit and Risk: The main benefit of the study will be to provide evidence-based proposals for improving government performance. The only risks associated with participation in this study are consequences that might result from unauthorized use or theft of the survey responses. The research team conducting the study has taken all necessary precautions to minimize the risk of accidental disclosure or theft of confidential data.

Compensation: Participants in this survey will not receive any compensation.

Whom to contact with questions:

¹ Fifty-one individuals in our sample, including four respondents to the survey, did not have a mailing address and therefore have no state listed. Our weighted sample excludes these individuals because we use work location to construct post-stratification weights. See our methodological report for more information. Sample sizes were updated on 02/14/2017 to give the weighted sample. Samples sizes were reduced by one to four respondents depending on whether the question was asked of the full sample or a random subset. Reported percentages were based on the weighted sample and, therefore, are unaffected by the update.

1. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:

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2. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the Investigators, please contact the Institutional Review Board at:

Human Research Protection Program
Vanderbilt University
Phone: (866) 224-8273
Email: rita.hardison@vanderbilt.edu
Protocol #: 140905
Approval date: June 13, 2014

Institutional Review Board
Princeton University
Phone: (609) 258-0865
Email: irb@princeton.edu
Protocol #: 6855
Approved: August 13, 2014

I understand the information presented above and that:

- A. My participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time. My refusal to participate will not result in any penalty.
- B. By agreeing to participate, I do not waive any legal rights or release Princeton University, Vanderbilt University, their agents, or the principal investigators from liability for negligence.

Yes, I would like to participate.

No, I do not want to participate.

[Display Q2 if response to Q1 is “No, I do not want to participate.”]

- Q2. Your opinions are very important to us. We understand you’re asked to complete many online surveys and that your time is valuable. This confidential survey will provide us with vital information and your input will help us get a better understanding of the current and future state of the public service in the United States.

Okay, I’ll take the survey.

No, I do not want to participate.

[Text] Thank you for agreeing to participate in this important project. This survey is designed to be time efficient and will adapt to your answers; however, this results in a few instances where you cannot go back and change your answers.

Please use the navigation buttons at the bottom of the screen rather than your browser's forward or back buttons.

If at any point you stop in the middle of the survey, your answers will be saved and you can start again where you left off. Your progress is saved automatically. Simply close your browser to exit and use the same link or log-in information you used to begin the survey to continue.

Thank you, again!

Q3. Please select your workplace from the list below:

[Drop-down menu]

Workplaces selected here are inserted for [your agency] and [my agency] in subsequent questions. If the respondent did not provide a workplace or selected "Other" because his/her workplace was not listed, "your agency" or "my agency" was inserted for [your agency] or [my agency], respectively. Some questions required two versions so that the question remained grammatically correct after inserting a plural workplace into the question. Alternate wording is labeled "[Plural]."

Q4. The work of public managers involves working with other federal agencies. We are interested in which federal agencies you have worked with the most in the context of your current job. Please select the three agencies you have worked with the most in order of how often you work with them.

First:

[Drop-down menu]

Second:

[Drop-down menu]

Third:

[Drop-down menu]

Q5. Does your job deal *directly* with decisions about:

[Display order randomized]

	Yes	No
Setting overall priorities in [your agency] [N=3,388]	65	35
Developing Notices of Proposed Rulemaking, summarizing related comments, writing final rules [N=3,359]	33	67
Budget formulations/proposals [N=3,380]	72	28
Procurement and contract management [N=3,374]	45	55
Deciding what enforcement responsibilities to prioritize [N=3,359]	37	63
Grants to state or local governments, other organizations, or individuals [N=3,369]	28	72
Allocation of personnel to different jobs or offices [N=3,377]	68	32
Information management (e.g., Information Technology, Database Management) [N=3,367]	41	59
Managing completion of agency priorities once priorities are set] [N=3,404]	88	12

[Text] In the next portion of the survey, we turn to questions about your work experience.

[Block 1: Q6-Q7. Asked of a 2/3 random sample that included the random half sample that was given Block 2. Asked of all respondents to the paper version of the survey.]

- Q6. There has been a lot of discussion recently about the capacity of federal agencies to implement effectively the policies chosen by Congress and the president.

Does [your agency] have the skills necessary to implement the core tasks given it by congress and the president?

[Plural] There has been a lot of discussion recently about the capacity of federal agencies to implement effectively the policies chosen by Congress and the president.

Do [your agency] have the skills necessary to implement effectively the core tasks given them by Congress and the president?

Has none of the necessary skills	*
Has few of the necessary skills	1
Has some of the necessary skills	8
Has most of the necessary skills	22
Has almost all of the necessary skills	32
Has all of the necessary skills	35
Don't know	1
[N=2,451]	

- Q7. Have the skills of [your agency] worsened, improved, or stayed about the same during your time in [your agency]?

Much worse	2
Worse	17
About the same	29
Better	33
Much better	17
Don't know	2
[N=2,450]	

[Block 2: Q8-Q17. Asked of a random 1/2 half sample.]

- Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

[Display order randomized]

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am confident in the ability of [my agency] to successfully fulfill its core mission. [N=1,682]	2	7	10	49	32

An inadequately skilled workforce is a significant obstacle to [my agency] fulfilling its core mission. [N=1,674]

13 31 17 25 14

[Plural] An inadequately skilled workforce is a significant obstacle to [my agency] fulfilling their core missions.

I recommend that a young person work in public service today. [N=1,682]

3 9 14 43 31

[My agency] is able to retain its best employees. [N=1,681]

5 28 22 38 7

[Plural] [My agency] are able to retain their best employees.

[My agency] is unable to recruit the best employees. [N=1,681]

9 29 20 32 11

[Plural] [My agency] are unable to recruit the best employees.

[Display Q9 if response to “An inadequately skilled workforce is a significant obstacle to [my agency] fulfilling its core mission.” in Q8 is “Agree” or “Strongly agree.”]

Q9. To what extent do the following factors contribute to the difficulty [your agency] has in maintaining a skilled workforce?

[Plural] To what extent do the following factors contribute to the difficulty [your agency] have in maintaining a skilled workforce?

	Not at all	Little	Some	A good bit	A great deal	Don't know
Lack of resources [N=642]	4	10	27	26	34	*
Lack of proactive recruiting strategy [N=639]	5	14	23	27	30	1
Political pressure to keep growth of workforce low [N=641]	8	12	20	19	37	4
Lack of qualified applicant pool [N=639]	17	20	28	16	18	1
Aging workforce with high employee retirement rate [N=641]	7	22	23	23	23	2
Inadequate career growth opportunities for staff [N=642]	4	14	25	29	27	1

Rigid civil service rules [N=640]	7	14	20	16	41	3
Cannot compete with salaries offered by other employers [N=642]	5	13	27	21	33	2

[Text] People often compare public sector managers and managers in other sectors, most often the private sector. The following questions help us gather evidence to make informed comparisons.

Q10. What is the primary way that **non-managers** are promoted at [your agency]?

Promotions are based solely on performance and ability	40
Promotions are based partly on performance and ability, and partly on other factors (for example, tenure or personal connections)	48
Promotions are based mainly on factors other than performance and ability (for example, tenure or personal connections)	7
Non-managers are not normally promoted [N=1,656]	5

Q11. What is the primary way that **managers** are promoted at [your agency]?

Promotions are based solely on performance and ability	32
Promotions are based partly on performance and ability, and partly on other factors (for example, tenure or personal connections)	54
Promotions are based mainly on factors other than performance and ability (for example, tenure or personal connections)	10
Non-managers are not normally promoted [N=1,655]	4

Q12. When is an under-performing **non-manager** reassigned or dismissed?

Within 6 months of identifying non-manager under-performance	4
After 6 months of identifying non-manager under-performance	26
Rarely or never [N=1,631]	70

Q13. When is an under-performing **manager** reassigned or dismissed?

Within 6 months of identifying manager under-performance	6
After 6 months of identifying manager under-performance	30
Rarely or never [N=1,625]	64

[Display Q14 if respondent is a member of the Senior Executive Service.]

Q14. How satisfied were you with your onboarding experience into the Senior Executive Service?

Very dissatisfied	3
Dissatisfied	15
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	22
Satisfied	34
Very satisfied	16
Not applicable [N=677]	9

[Display Q15 if respondent is not a member of the Senior Executive Service, a political appointee, member of the Senior Foreign Service, and does not work in an Office of the United States Attorney.]

Q15. I am interested in becoming a member of the Senior Executive Service or a Senior Professional.

Strongly disagree	8
Disagree	12
Neither agree nor disagree	16
Agree	20
Strongly agree	24
Not applicable	20
[N=772]	

Q16. I have a good understanding of key statutes related to managing the career civil service (e.g., the Merit System Principles and Prohibited Personnel Practices).

Strongly disagree	2
Disagree	9
Neither agree nor disagree	12
Agree	50
Strongly agree	26
[N=1,666]	

Q17. I have received sufficient training and guidance on how to manage (e.g., hire, promote, reward, and discipline or dismiss) employees in the career civil service.

Strongly disagree	4
Disagree	14
Neither agree nor disagree	15
Agree	47
Strongly agree	21
[N=1,665]	

[Block 3: Q18-Q21. Asked of the random half sample that was not asked Block 2.]

Q18. Have you been approached about a job outside [your agency] since July 1, 2013?

Yes	39
No	61
[N=1,677]	

[Display Q19 if response to Q18 is "Yes."]

Q19. If so, by what type of organization? [check all that apply]

	Yes	No
Government contractor	27	73
Lobbying firms and organizations	13	87
Other private businesses	45	55
Federal agencies other than [your agency]	47	53
State or local agency	12	88

Not-for-profits	23	77
Other [text entry] [N=653]	13	87

Q20. We'd like to understand what you value about your job. How important are each of the following job attributes to you?

	Not at all impor- tant	Not too impor- tant	Some- what impor- tant	Impor- tant	Very impor- tant
Job security [N=1,694]	4	9	21	39	27
Salary and benefits [N=1,695]	2	6	22	48	23
Work-life balance [N=1,692]	1	8	18	40	33
Opportunities to influence public policies that are important to me [N=1,694]	2	6	14	30	47
Opportunities to support the mission of [your agency] [N=1,695]	*	1	6	26	67
[Plural] Opportunities to support the missions of [your agency]					
Opportunities to develop professional skills to move to a job in the private sector [N=1,694]	19	34	25	15	7
Opportunities to develop professional skills to move to a higher job in the federal government [N=1,697]	10	20	21	29	19

Q21. How many hours per week do you USUALLY work at your job at [your agency]?

Fewer than 20	*
20-29	*
30-39	1
40-49	38
50-59	41
60-69	17
70-79	3
80-89	1
90-99	*
More than 99 [N=1,659]	*

[Text] Almost finished! This last section asks a few basic demographic questions.

Q22. About how many years, in total, have you been employed in the following? Please include all positions and all time periods even if it has not been continuous (round to the nearest year).

	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30 or more
Current position at [your agency] [N=3,258]	58	24	9	3	2	1	3
All positions at [your agency] [N=3,031]	23	18	14	11	12	12	11
Federal government (including [your agency]) [N=2,779]	9	12	12	12	15	20	21
Private sector [N=3,171]	60	17	9	3	2	2	7
Not-for-profit sector [N=3,064]	80	6	3	1	1	*	9
Other public sector (e.g., state or local government) [N=2,996]	77	5	4	1	1	1	12

Q23. What is your salary?

Less than \$20,000	*
\$20,000 - \$29,999	*
\$40,000 - \$49,999	*
\$50,000 - \$59,999	*
\$60,000 - \$69,999	*
\$70,000 - \$79,999	*
\$80,000 - \$89,999	1
\$90,000 - \$99,999	1
\$100,000 - \$109,999	2
\$110,000 - \$119,999	2
\$120,000 - \$129,999	5
\$130,000 - \$139,999	7
\$140,000 - \$149,999	11
\$150,000 - \$159,999	23
\$160,000 - \$169,999	15
\$170,000 - \$179,999	16
\$180,000 - \$189,999	9
\$190,000 - \$199,999	1
\$200,000 - \$209,999	1
\$210,000 - \$219,999	1
\$220,000 - \$229,999	1

\$230,000 - \$239,999	1
\$240,000 - \$249,999	1
\$250,000 - \$259,999	1
\$260,000 - \$269,999	*
\$270,000 - \$279,999	*
\$280,000 or more	*
[N=3,063]	

[Display Q24 if respondent is a career civil servant including career members of the Senior Executive Service.]

Q24. Are you now or will you become eligible to retire in the next 12 months?

Yes	43
No	55
Don't know	1
[N=2,819]	

Q25. How likely is it that you will leave [your agency] in the next 12 months?

Very likely	13
Likely	13
Unlikely	29
Very unlikely	36
Not sure	9
[N=3,211]	

[Display Q26 if response to Q25 is "Likely" or "Very likely."]

Q26. If you plan to leave [your agency], would you be:

[Display order randomized, with "Other" always listed last]

Retiring	34
Becoming a government contractor or consultant	6
Taking a job other than government contractor or consultant in the private sector	23
Moving to another job within the federal government	23
Joining a state or local government	1
Other (please specify) [text entry]	13
[N=807]	

Q27. What is the highest level of education you completed in school?

High school degree or less	*
Some college	2
College graduate	13
Some post-graduate work	8
Graduate degree	78
[N=3,214]	

Q28. What is your age?

20-24	*
25-29	1
30-34	2
35-39	4
40-44	8
45-49	13
50-54	20
55-59	25
60-64	18
65 or more	10
[N=3,142]	