

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE OF STATE LEGISLATURES

The Recruitment and Retention of
Millennial Generation State Legislative
Staff

Natalie O'Donnell Wood
Senior Policy Specialist
NCSL
303-856-1485
natalie.wood@ncsl.org



- What: a look at the recruitment and retention of state legislative staff in targeted states, with an emphasis on how it impacts Millennial generation employees.
- Why: concerns about the “graying,” and eventual retirement, of the state legislative workforce, coupled with concerns that young employees might not be attracted to, or retained in, these jobs.
- How: targeted six states (mix of full-time/part-time; region); phone interviews and questionnaire; mix of staff (Baby Boomers and Millennials, managers and non-managers, partisan and non-partisan, various job functions).





A LITTLE BACKGROUND - RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

- Employee motivation and retention.
 - Shared values, belief in culture, self-actualization, autonomy, trust, responsibility
- Recruitment.
 - Formal/informal
 - Socialization, exposure to culture/values, psychological contract
 - Importance of referral
- Challenges/positives for public sector.





A LITTLE BACKGROUND - GENERATIONAL THEORY

- Generational cohorts in the workplace.
 - Traditionals
 - Baby Boomers
 - Generation Xers
 - Millennials
 - Do they ultimately matter?
 - Recruitment and retention of Millennials in the public sector.
- State legislatures as unique public sector employers.





RESEARCH QUESTIONS

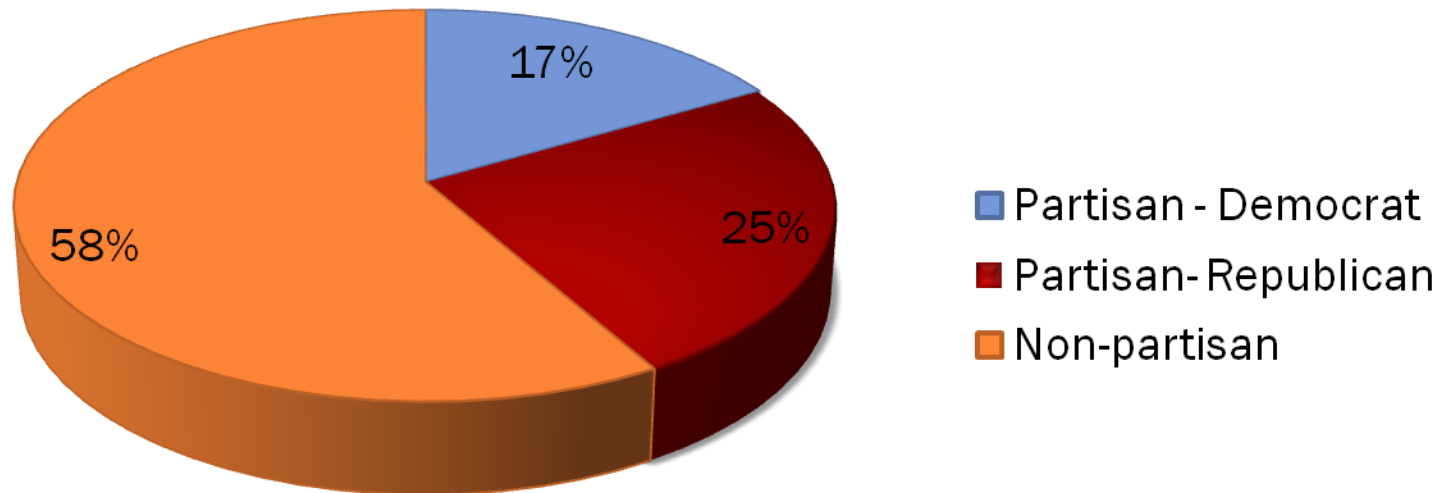
1. *Why do people come to work for state legislatures? Are there generational differences with respect to effective recruitment techniques?*
2. *What conditions or factors will retain them? What makes them leave? Are there generational differences?*
3. *Do legislative staff members experience a “generation gap” at work?*
4. *What workplace challenges do they see looming on the horizon? Do generational differences exist?*





DEMOGRAPHICS

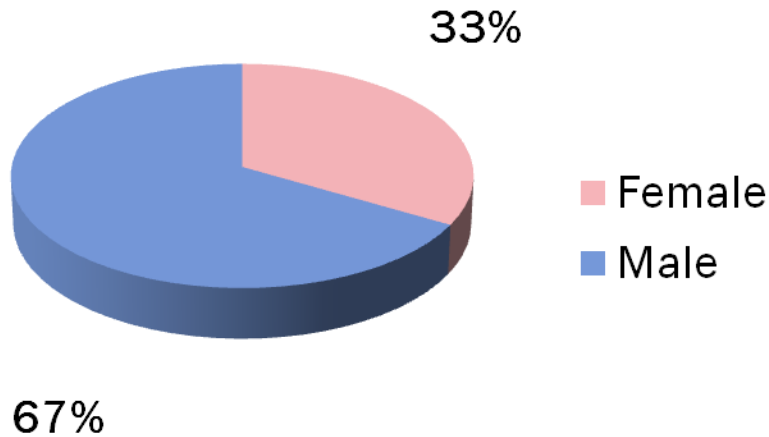
Partisan/Non-partisan Breakdown



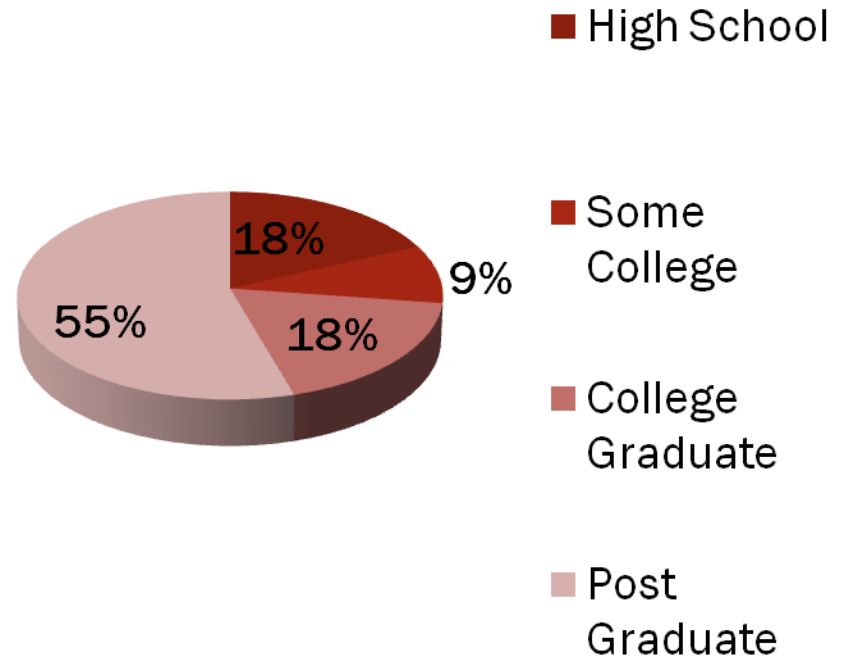


DEMOGRAPHICS

Interviewees, by Gender



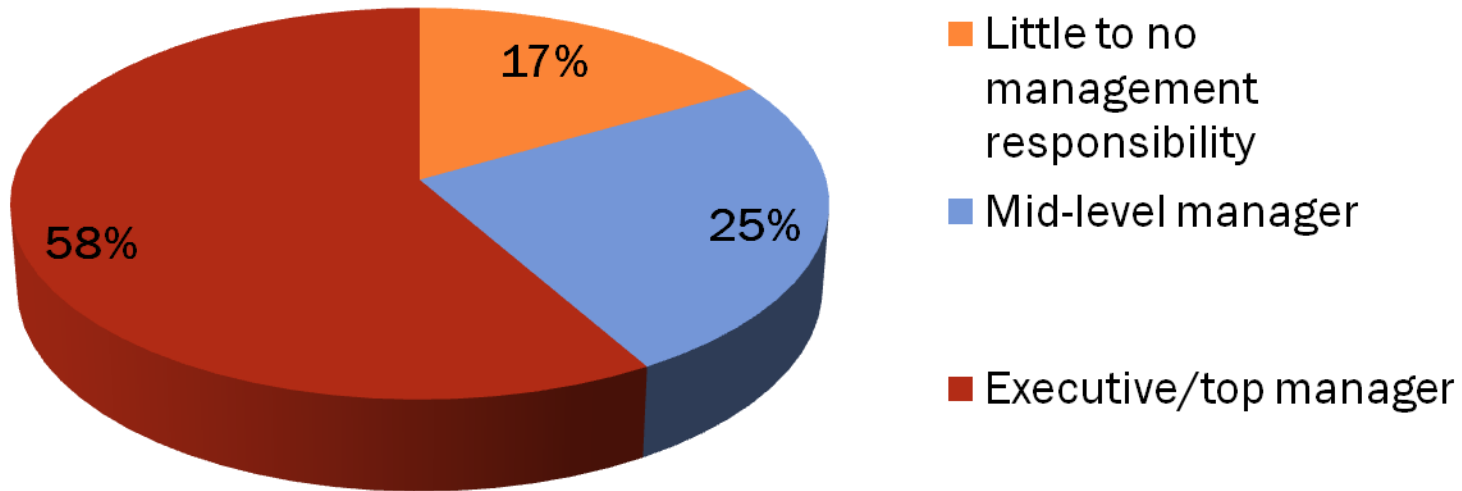
Level of Education





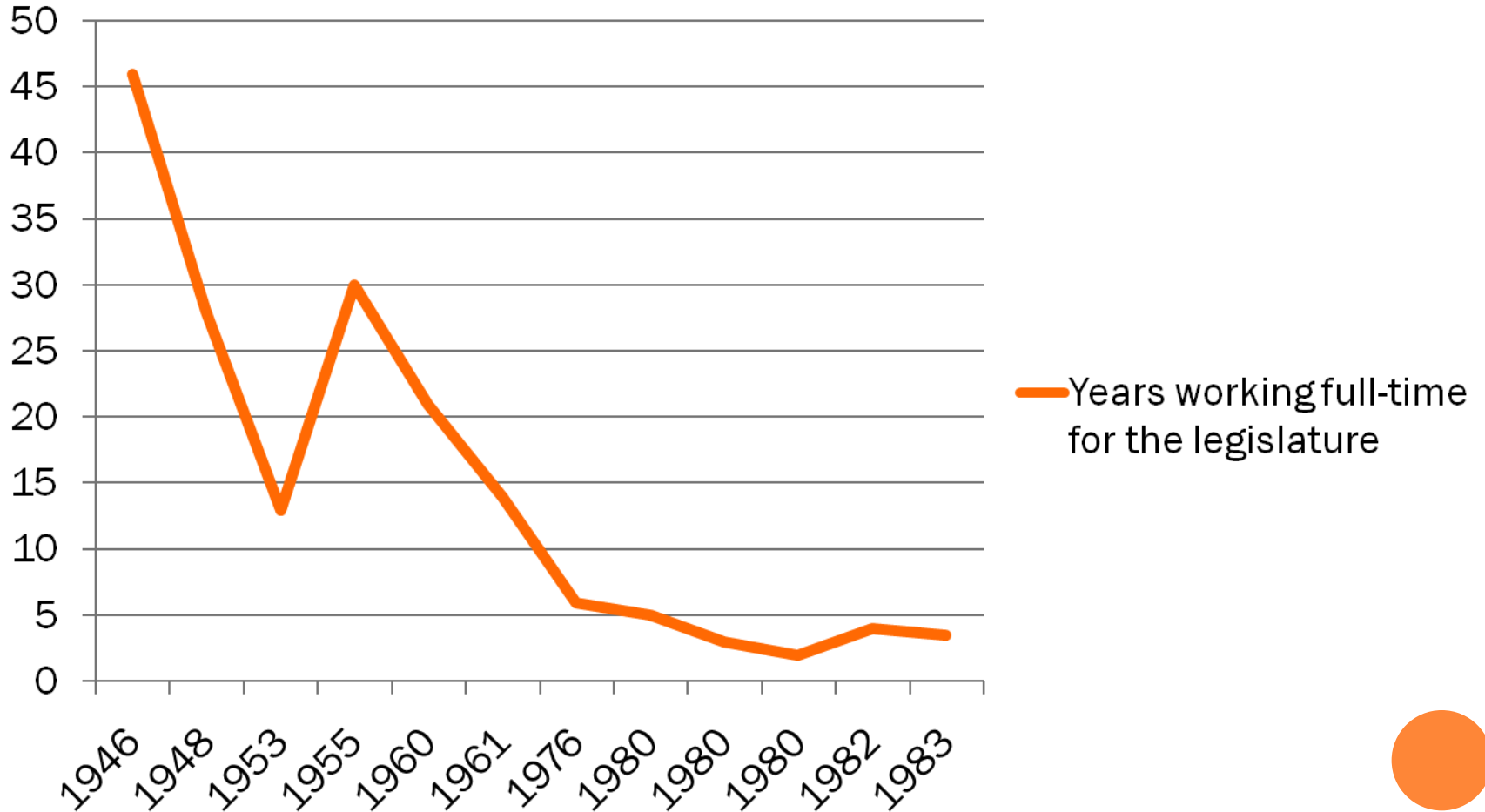
DEMOGRAPHICS

Management Responsibilities



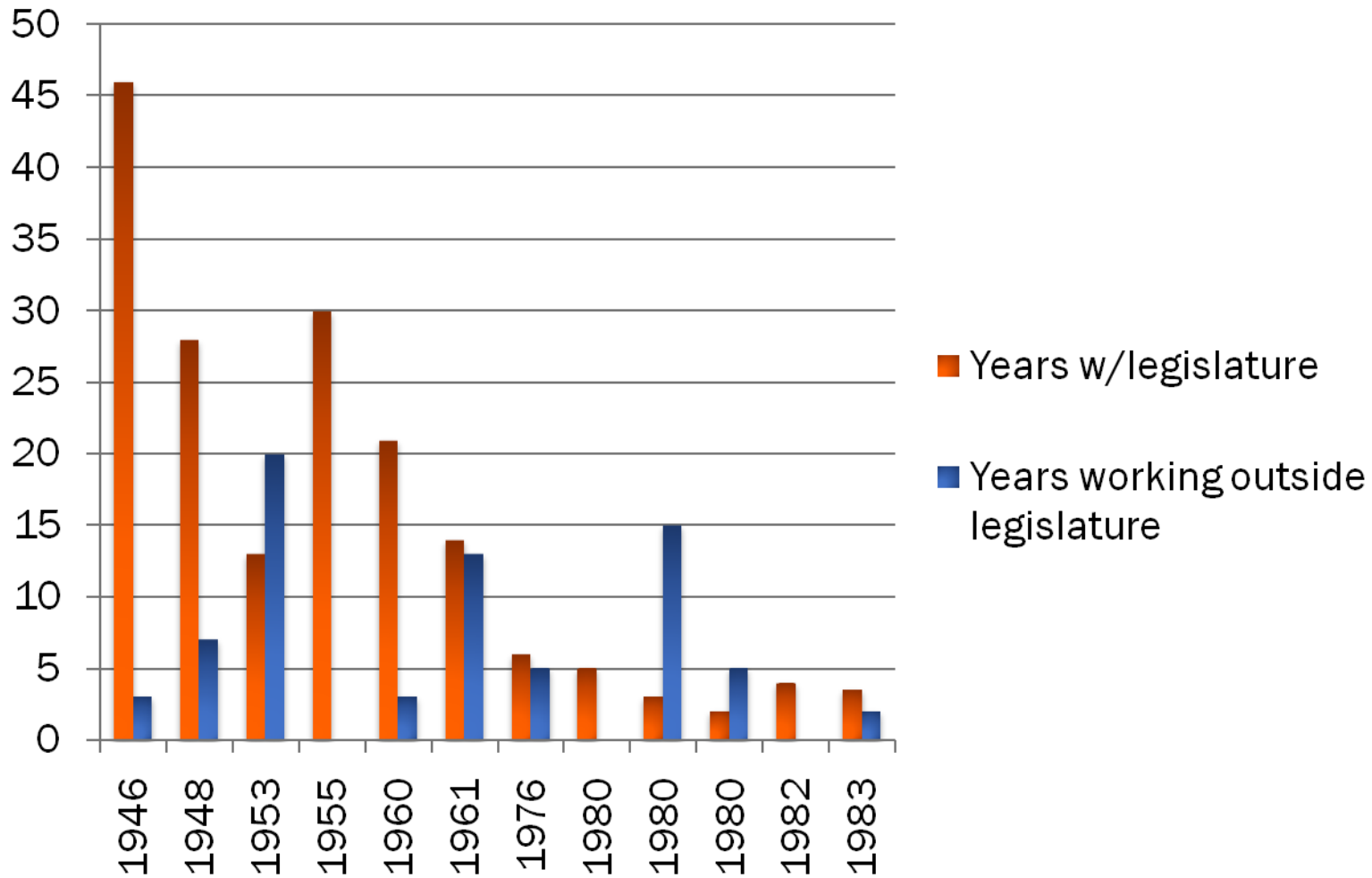


DEMOGRAPHICS





DEMOGRAPHICS





FINDINGS

1. Why do people come to work for state legislatures? Are there generational differences with respect to effective recruitment techniques?

- Personal connections.
- Internships, page programs, session only experience.
- Cross generational appeal of policy, process, politics, institution.
- Importance of security to Boomers.





FINDINGS

2. What conditions or factors will retain legislative employees? What makes them leave? Are there generational differences?

- Comp, benefits and promotional opportunities are standard.
- Training, professional development and education opportunities vary.
- No formal succession plans; occurring informally.
- Boomers will not leave; Millennials will “keep options open.”





FINDINGS



- Making a difference
- Special
- Unique
- Interesting
- Challenging
- Fulfilling
- Security/stability (B)
- Learning (M)
- Flexibility (M)



- Cynicism
- Negative and inaccurate perceptions of govt.
- Salary
- Partisan issues
- Long hours (B)
- Session length (B)
- Legislator-bosses (B)
- Limited advancement





FINDINGS

3. Do legislative staff experience a generation gap at work?

11 of 12: “YES”

- Technology
- Feedback
- Work ethic/career philosophy





FINDINGS

- *Generation Gap and Evaluations...*

Millennials “are thrilled to have a good job and want to make sure they’re doing it right.”

Boomers, etc...: “it’s more about ‘how am I doing’ than ‘what do I need to be doing.’”





FINDINGS

○ *Generation Gap and Work ethic...*

Millennials “want a place to start and not necessarily a place to have a career.”

Millennials “are all trying to get as far ahead as possible, so they can get to the point of wanting stability.”

Millennials “want to perform meaningful work and make an impact... (but they also) come in wanting increased responsibility presuming they have the tools to handle it (and they often don’t).”

Millennials work to see “what’s in it for me.” Boomers work for “the good of the whole.”

Millennials “want the flexibility, but I sense that everyone is starting to want that... everyone sees flexibility as part of compensation. That's not how it was when I started – the only reason you didn't come in (to work) was because you were dead.”



FINDINGS

- *Generation Gap and Work ethic (cont.)...*

Said a Millennial: "I'm personally very goal-oriented and focused on my advancement, goals, and education. I'm in a place where I want to see my career do better before seeing other factors do better. I feel this will make me a better employee – and if I'm a better employee it will make for a better workplace."

Said a Boomer: "(We) lack people willing to step up to the plate in absence of the retiring staff. People hesitate because they don't want to make a career of government work. Young people jump in and out of public service, and their level of dedication is not high. They have a different work ethic. (Millennials) say, 'I'm committed, as long as it works for me.'"





FINDINGS

3. Do legislative staff experience a generation gap at work?

1 of 12: “NO”

Stage of life, rather than generation, explains difference?





FINDINGS

4. What workplace challenges do legislative staff see looming on the horizon? Are there generational differences?

- Fiscal issues and the economy.
- Replacing retirees.
- Safeguarding and preserving the legislative institution.
- Technology.





RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider internship programs; publicize them externally; promote them internally.
- Pursue job enrichment strategies.
- Emphasize coaching and mentoring, pay attention to generational differences.





RECOMMENDATIONS

Future Research:

- Larger sample size.
- Comparison of work motivation and generational differences between partisan and nonpartisan staff.
- Post-retirement study.
- Longitudinal study.
- Effectiveness of informal succession planning.
- Effectiveness of internships on recruitment.
- Examination of “journey-level” staff.
- Intangibles that attract people to work for state legislatures

