State of Public Workforce

NCSL Legislative Summit 2022

Joshua Franzel, PhD
Managing Director
MissionSquare Research Institute
State Government - Employment Levels

- February 2020 marked (all-time) peak employment and the declaration of the public health emergency
- Since February 2020, state employment has been reduced by 57,000 positions or -1.1%

Source: BLS Current Employment Statistics (May and June data is preliminary)
Local Government - Employment Levels

- February 2020 marked (all-time) peak employment and the declaration of the public health emergency
- Since February 2020, local employment has been reduced by 599,000 positions or -4.1%

Source: BLS Current Employment Statistics (May and June data is preliminary)
Employment Changes for Specific Government Industries, since February 2020

- **State Government**
  - Education: +16,900 or +0.6%
  - Hospitals: +11,100 or +2.8%
  - General Administration: -57,000 or -3.1%

- **Local Government**
  - Education: -329,800 or -4.1%
  - Utilities: -3,300 or -1.3%
  - Transportation: -19,600 or -6.7%
  - Hospitals: -20,400 or -3.0%
  - General Administration: -112,000 or -2.6%

Source: BLS Current Employment Statistics (Most recent May data is preliminary)
Openings and Turnover

- From December 2021 to May 2022, the state and local government job opening rate remained at its highest level in over 20 years. Hiring rates have stayed at highs since June 2021.

- Quit rates spiked to recent historic highs in mid-2020 and again in late 2021/early 2022. The other separations rate, which includes retirements, was at a 20-year high in the summer of 2020 - almost twice the typical rate.

- In 2022, 53% of state and local HR directors reported that retirement-eligible employees are accelerating their retirements, up from 12% in 2009 in the wake of the Great Recession.

Sources: BLS Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey (Most recent May data is preliminary); MSQ Research Institute/IPMA-HR/NASPE ‘State and Local Government Workforce 2022’
Looking Ahead - Employment Projections 2020-2030

- State Government: -2.8%
- Local Government: +5.6%

- Examples of occupations with notable changes…
  - Medical and Health Science Managers: +30.0% (local level)
  - Management Analysts: +19.5% (state level)
  - Forensic Science Technicians: +19.2% (local level)
  - Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers: +14.5% (state level)
  - Parking Enforcement Workers: -35.0% (local level)
  - Word Processors and Typists: -40.2% (state level)
  - Switchboard Operators: -24.2% (local level)
  - Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants: -25.3% (state level)

Survey Findings
State and Local Workforce 2022

June 2022
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>

NOTE: Some figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
## 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>2015</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health care: Nursing</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policing</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispatch</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building permitting and inspections</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrections/jails</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled trades (all types)</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care: Mental health professionals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving/equipment operation (with commercial licenses)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automotive maintenance</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation (including transit)</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care: Physicians</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human and social services</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued on next page
Smaller governments are more likely to report difficulty recruiting.
Figure 9  Number of applicants this past year compared to the number of positions available (n = 94 to 222)

- Registered nurses: 94% Fewer qualified applicants than available positions, 4% 0-50% more qualified applicants than available positions
- Engineers: 94% Fewer qualified applicants than available positions, 4% 0-50% more qualified applicants than available positions
- Police: 77% Fewer qualified applicants than available positions, 18% 50-100% more qualified applicants than available positions
- Information technology employees: 73% Fewer qualified applicants than available positions, 23% 50-100% more qualified applicants than available positions
- Maintenance workers: 72% Fewer qualified applicants than available positions, 20% 50-100% more qualified applicants than available positions

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flexible Work Practice</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular hybrid scheduling for eligible positions</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible schedule (e.g., 4 days, 10 hours ea.)</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible work hours (e.g., around rush hour, personal appointments)</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No flexible work practices</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular full-time telework for eligible positions</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job sharing within the organization</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job sharing with other government agencies</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hybrid work replaces regular telework as the top strategy.
Figure 17  **Over the past year, what changes, if any, have your retirement-eligible employees made regarding their plans for retirement? (Check all that apply) (n =264)**

- Accelerated their retirement date: 53%
- No changes: 26%
- Postponed their retirement date: 17%
Figure 17b  *Over the past year, what changes, if any, have your retirement-eligible employees made regarding their plans for retirement?* (Detail, 2009-2022)

**NOTE:** Responses sum to more than 100% because some jurisdictions reported more than one type of action taken. This survey was not conducted in 2010.
Figure 18  How would you characterize the impact on your government of the departure of retirement-age baby boomer employees from the workforce? (n =264)

- **41%** The largest anticipated number of potential retirements will take place over the next few years
- **22%** The largest anticipated number of potential retirements is taking place right now
- **16%** The largest anticipated number of potential retirements has already taken place
- **13%** No significant wave of retirements has happened or is anticipated over the next few years
- **9%** Don’t know
Figure 21  Do you feel the wage compensation you offer your employees is competitive with the labor market? (n = 252)

- 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)

- 85% Yes
- 10% No
- 5% Don't know
Survey Results

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

Report prepared by MissionSquare Research Institute
Figure 13  **Satisfaction with Job Elements** (% extremely or very satisfied)

- **Job security**: Oct/Nov 2020 (n=1,205) - 62%, May 2021 (n=1,203) - 64%, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100) - 64%
- **Leave (vacation days, sick days, PTO, family/medical leave)**: Oct/Nov 2020 (n=1,205) - 62%, May 2021 (n=1,203) - 65%, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100) - 60%
- **Health insurance**: Oct/Nov 2020 (n=1,205) - 59%, May 2021 (n=1,203) - 60%, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100) - 59%
- **Ability to serve my community**: Oct/Nov 2020 (n=1,205) - 57%, May 2021 (n=1,203) - 54%, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100) - 55%
- **Insurance benefits other than health (e.g., life insurance, dental, vision, disability)**: Oct/Nov 2020 (n=1,205) - 54%, May 2021 (n=1,203) - 53%, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100) - 53%
- **The quality of my colleagues/coworkers**: Oct/Nov 2020 (n=1,205) - 54%, May 2021 (n=1,203) - 54%, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100) - 54%
- **The quality of my boss/supervisor**: Oct/Nov 2020 (n=1,205) - 51%, May 2021 (n=1,203) - 55%, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100) - 53%
- **Retirement benefits**: Oct/Nov 2020 (n=1,205) - 52%, May 2021 (n=1,203) - 58%, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100) - 58%
- **Personal satisfaction the job gives me**: Oct/Nov 2020 (n=1,205) - 51%, May 2021 (n=1,203) - 52%, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100) - 55%
- **Work/life balance**: Oct/Nov 2020 (n=1,205) - 45%, May 2021 (n=1,203) - 49%, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100) - 49%
- **Salary**: Oct/Nov 2020 (n=1,205) - 32%, May 2021 (n=1,203) - 32%, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100) - 31%
- **Nontraditional benefits**: Oct/Nov 2020 (n=1,205) - 25%, May 2021 (n=1,203) - 29%, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100) - 30%
- **Potential for career advancement**: Oct/Nov 2020 (n=1,205) - 29%, May 2021 (n=1,203) - 29%, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100) - 33%
Figure 14  Realistic Actions Employer Could Take that Would Reduce Employee Stress, November/December 2021 (n=1,100)

- Provide salary increases 24%
- Hire more staff or reduce workload 15%
- Provide emotional support (e.g., respect, acknowledgment, encouragement) 13%
- Allow remote work 11%
- Increase COVID protocols (e.g., mandate vaccine, provide PPE, reduce class size) 10%
- Offer more days off or breaks 9%
- Provide resources and actions required to work effectively (e.g., provide tools, defend workers, offer training, enforce rules) 9%
- Increase benefits/incentives (e.g., food, gym memberships) 8%
- Permit flexible work hours/schedules 6%
- Give autonomy over work functions 4%
- Improve communication 4%
- Decrease COVID protocols (e.g., remove mask or vaccine mandates) 2%
- Other 3%
- Not sure 4%
- Nothing/They are already doing all they can 6%
- Decline to respond 0%
Figure 22  **Feelings about Working in the Public Sector During COVID-19**  
(% strongly or somewhat agree)

- I value serving my community during this difficult time
- The risks I’m taking working during the COVID-19 pandemic are not on par with my compensation
- The pandemic has made the public more aware of the importance of what I do
- Working in the public sector during the COVID-19 pandemic is a source of pride
- The COVID-19 pandemic makes my work feel more meaningful
- Working during the COVID-19 pandemic has made me consider changing jobs
Figure 23  Type of Job Change Have in Mind

- **You’d like to leave the government sector entirely**: 25% (May 2021), 25% (Nov/Dec 2021)
- **You’d like to stay in the same general line of work, but a different employer**: 13% (May 2021), 21% (Nov/Dec 2021)
- **You’d like to stay with the same employer, but would like a different role/level/number of hours**: 22% (May 2021), 19% (Nov/Dec 2021)
- **You’d like to change the industry/department you work for, but want to remain in the government sector**: 20% (May 2021), 18% (Nov/Dec 2021)
- **Other**: 4% (May 2021), 3% (Nov/Dec 2021)
- **Not sure**: 15% (May 2021), 14% (Nov/Dec 2021)

Figure 24  Why Considering Changing Jobs, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=362)

- **Want a higher salary or a better benefits package**: 52%
- **Burned out from stress of job during pandemic**: 47%
- **Need better work-life balance**: 36%
- **Want a job that allows me to work remotely more**: 32%
- **I am not happy with how my employer has handled the COVID-19 pandemic**: 26%
- **Want a job that brings me more satisfaction/meaning**: 26%
- **Extra work I have had to take on from organization being short-staffed**: 26%
- **The tension I have faced working with the public**: 26%
- **The nature of my job has changed**: 20%
- **I do not want to go back into the office**: 11%
- **It is a good job market for job seekers**: 10%
- **Want more time or flexibility for childcare**: 10%
- **Other**: 3%
- **Not sure**: 1%
Figure 25  Working During Pandemic Has Made Me Consider Retiring, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100)

- 12% Strongly agree
- 20% Somewhat agree
- 19% Neither agree nor disagree
- 18% Somewhat disagree
- 31% Strongly disagree

Figure 26  Working During the Pandemic Has Made Me Consider Leaving the Workforce Entirely for the Foreseeable Future, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=1,100)

- 11% Strongly agree
- 17% Somewhat agree
- 19% Neither agree nor disagree
- 19% Somewhat disagree
- 34% Strongly disagree
Figure 27  Why Considering Retiring or Leaving Workforce, Nov/Dec 2021 (n=461)

- Burned out from stress of job during pandemic: 42%
- Want time to do things that bring me joy: 37%
- The tension I have faced working with the public/students’ parents: 26%
- The nature of my job has changed: 25%
- Want to take some time to re-think my life plans in general: 24%
- I am not satisfied with my job: 24%
- Want to be able to travel more: 22%
- Extra work I have had to take on from organization being short-staffed: 21%
- I am not happy with how my employer has handled the COVID-19 pandemic: 19%
- I have health concerns that make it necessary: 15%
- I do not want to go back into the office: 15%
- Want more time or flexibility for childcare: 12%
- I am in a financial position to do so now: 11%
- Need to provide caregiving for adult family members: 6%
- Other: 6%
- Not sure: 2%
Practitioner Workforce Priorities: Identified in Institute Surveys and Focus Groups

• Reassessment of compensation and benefits packages

• Enhanced employee recognition, with emphasis on employee impact on the community

• Provision and expansion of financial wellness programs

• Prioritization of employee safety and mental health

• Reevaluation of how and where work is conducted

• Update recruitment and retentions processes to reflect real job requirements, strategically plan for staff transitions, expand outreach to candidates, and focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion
Stay Connected with MissionSquare Research Institute

- Website: mission-sq.org/researchinstitute
- Email: research@missionsq.org
- Twitter: @MSQInstitute
- LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/missionsquareresearchinstitute