

14. STRENGTHENING THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE

“Our Nation’s future depends on ensuring our public servants have good jobs with competitive pay and benefits, along with the resources they need to accomplish their work. It also depends on the next generation of smart, dedicated people answering the call of public service and joining their ranks, helping deliver the promise of America to more of our citizens.” —President Biden, *Public Service Recognition Week Proclamation, 2023*

There are more than four million dedicated public servants, civilian and military, who serve in the Federal Government in almost every occupation and in duty stations across the Nation and around the world. Through their work, these public servants implement the laws and policies enacted by elected leaders and provide the critical connective tissue between the Nation’s democratic process and the lives of its residents.

This chapter describes the Administration’s continued commitment to secure an equitable, effective, and accountable Federal workforce to accomplish this critical task. It outlines the current state of the Federal workforce; provides historical and contemporary analysis on key workforce trends; and highlights growing investments and initiatives that are positioning the Federal Government as a competitive, model employer and aligning its assets to ensure excellent service delivery and strong performance.

The roadmap to realize this vision is the *President’s Management Agenda* (PMA). The initiatives advanced under the first priority of the PMA, Strengthening and Empowering the Federal Workforce, are bringing a new level of strategic focus and visibility to the workforce. The Administration’s workforce agenda emphasizes a whole of Government approach with cross-agency collaboration to meet common challenges and share leading practice. It marshals agencies’ significant workforce data to build evidence that advances its understanding of the current and future civil servants that Government will need to meet the mission today and into the future. Above all, it invests in people, in particular through new approaches to assess and fill urgent talent needs at all levels within agencies, as well as elevating innovative practices and scaling promising initiatives.

The Budget reflects the importance of this set of commitments, by making historic workforce investments to:

- Build and sustain professional, well-trained, and sufficiently resourced human resources (HR) functions within agencies and engage HR workforces as a strategic asset.
- Strengthen the Federal Government’s internship programs and career talent pipelines through regulatory changes, meeting students and jobseekers

where they are, utilizing the latest technologies, and leveraging the new centralized internship portal.

- Sustain a suite of workforce data tools and dashboards to equip Agency leaders with timely insights around bringing qualified applicants into Government more efficiently (especially in mission-critical occupations (MCOs) such as technology roles), addressing attrition and improving employee engagement levels, and improving diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA).
- Sustain the success of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA; Public Law 117-58) hiring surge and drive an ongoing Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cyber, and Tech Hiring Surge to supercharge capacity in critical, emerging talent needs through cross-agency collaboration and cross-agency hiring actions.
- Bring implementation of Federal management and Federal workforce priorities closer to the people through investment in Federal Executive Board (FEB) reforms, including a new FEB Fellowship program designed to enhance regional recruitment efforts by building new talent pipelines and serving as Federal ambassadors across the United States.

These investments are aligned with the following four key strategies in the PMA to strengthen and empower the Federal workforce. In addition to setting near-term milestones, these investments and initiatives lay the groundwork for longer term progress to position the workforce for the future.

Strategy 1: Attract and hire the most qualified employees, who reflect the diversity of our country, in the right roles across the Federal Government

Through collaboration under the banner of the PMA, agencies have developed and deployed a new suite of tools and practices to assess their capacity needs, attract the best talent, enable Agency missions and service delivery to the American public, and hire a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Nation. This comprehensive approach to hiring reform takes stock of the Federal Government’s assets, identifies areas for priority action, and launches new tools to empower agencies to collaborate to meet acute talent needs.

Assessing Government’s Talent Needs: The State of the Federal Workforce

The total Federal workforce is composed of approximately 4.3 million employees, with 2.2 million Federal civilian employees and 2.1 million military personnel. See Tables 14-1 and 14-2 for distribution across agen-

Table 14–1. FEDERAL CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH
(Civilian employment as measured by full-time equivalents (FTE) in thousands, excluding the Postal Service)

Agency	Actual		Estimate		Change: 2024 to 2025	
	2022	2023	2024	2025	FTE	Percent
Cabinet agencies						
Agriculture	85.0	88.0	92.5	93.9	1.4	1.6%
Commerce	41.0	41.3	44.6	45.4	0.8	1.9%
Defense--Military Programs	772.3	775.1	796.4	795.4	-0.9	-0.1%
Education	4.1	4.1	4.2	4.4	0.2	5.9%
Energy	14.8	15.7	16.3	17.5	1.1	7.0%
Health and Human Services	79.2	81.3	86.3	87.5	1.3	1.5%
Homeland Security	202.8	212.0	206.4	217.6	11.2	5.4%
Housing and Urban Development	8.1	8.4	8.8	9.0	0.2	2.6%
Interior	61.9	63.0	64.9	66.2	1.3	2.0%
Justice	115.0	114.6	119.7	123.2	3.5	2.9%
Labor	14.9	15.7	15.6	15.9	0.3	1.9%
State	30.0	29.9	30.6	30.9	0.3	0.8%
Transportation	53.1	54.2	55.6	58.1	2.5	4.6%
Treasury	94.4	98.7	99.1	106.8	7.8	7.8%
Veterans Affairs	411.6	433.7	458.2	448.2	-10.0	-2.2%
Other agencies -- excluding Postal Service						
Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9	0.1	4.3%
Corps of Engineers--Civil Works	23.0	24.9	24.7	24.7
Environmental Protection Agency	14.2	15.0	15.0	15.4	0.4	2.6%
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.2
Federal Communications Commission	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.6
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	5.9	6.3	7.1	7.2	0.1	1.8%
Federal Trade Commission	1.1	1.2	1.4	1.4	0.1	4.0%
General Services Administration	11.7	12.3	13.3	13.6	0.3	2.0%
International Assistance Programs	6.1	6.4	6.8	7.0	0.2	2.8%
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	17.7	17.8	17.9	17.1	-0.8	-4.6%
National Archives and Records Administration	2.7	2.7	3.0	3.0	*	0.1%
National Credit Union Administration	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.3	*	0.3%
National Labor Relations Board	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.3	*	4.0%
National Science Foundation	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6	*	2.1%
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	2.7	2.8	3.0	2.9	-*	-1.7%
Office of Personnel Management ¹	2.6	2.7	2.7	2.8	*	1.5%
Securities and Exchange Commission	4.5	4.7	5.0	5.2	0.2	3.0%
Small Business Administration	8.0	6.5	7.1	5.6	-1.5	-20.7%
Smithsonian Institution	4.7	4.7	5.0	5.0	*	*
Social Security Administration	58.2	58.8	58.0	59.7	1.7	3.0%
Tennessee Valley Authority	10.4	10.9	10.9	10.9
U.S. Agency for Global Media	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.7	-*	-1.5%
Other Defense--Civil Programs	1.1	1.0	1.2	1.2	-*	-0.1%
Total, Executive Branch civilian employment	2,185.8	2,238.0	2,306.1	2,327.9	21.8	0.9%

* 50 or less.

¹ Includes transfer of functions to the General Services Administration and to other agencies.

cies. Using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics on full-time, full-year employees, Table 14-3 breaks out all Federal and private sector jobs into 22 occupational groups to illustrate the compositional differences between the Federal and private workforces. Charts 14-4 and 14-5 present trends in educational levels for the Federal and private sector workforces over the past two decades, demonstrating a continuation in the advanced educational attainment of Federal employees. Chart 14-6 shows the

trends in average age in both the Federal and private sectors, reflecting the average age of Federal employees to be significantly higher than the average age of private sector employees. Charts 14-7 and 14-8 show the location of Federal employees in 1978 and again in 2023. Chart 14-9 reflects the changing nature of work, comparing the number of employees in each General Schedule grade in 1950 versus 2023, showing an almost complete shift from lower-grade to higher-grade types of work.

Table 14-2. TOTAL FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT
(As measured by Full-Time Equivalents)

Description	2023 Actual	2024 Estimate	2025 Estimate	Change: 2024 to 2025	
				FTE	PERCENT
Executive Branch Civilian:					
All Agencies, Except Postal Service	2,238,006	2,306,140	2,327,905	21,765	0.9%
Postal Service ¹	572,186	559,423	549,746	-9,677	-1.8%
Subtotal, Executive Branch Civilian	2,810,192	2,865,563	2,877,651	12,088	0.4%
Executive Branch Uniformed Military:					
Department of Defense ²	1,340,750	1,321,067	1,307,837	-13,230	-1.0%
Department of Homeland Security (USCG)	40,006	43,051	40,656	-2,395	-5.9%
Commissioned Corps (DOC, EPA, HHS)	9,939	10,012	10,112	100	1.0%
Subtotal, Uniformed Military	1,390,695	1,374,130	1,358,605	-15,525	-1.1%
Subtotal, Executive Branch	4,200,887	4,239,693	4,236,256	-3,437	-0.1%
Legislative Branch ³	33,251	35,575	36,017	442	1.2%
Judicial Branch	32,606	33,104	33,963	859	2.5%
Grand Total	4,266,744	4,308,372	4,306,236	-2,136	-*

* Less than 0.1%.

¹ Includes Postal Rate Commission.

² Includes activated Guard and Reserve members on active duty. Does not include Full-Time Support (Active Guard & Reserve (AGRSs)) paid from Reserve Component appropriations.

³ FTE data not available for the Senate (positions filled were used for actual year and extended at same level).

Americans continue to answer the call to serve by applying for Federal employment and engaging with Federal recruiters. In calendar year 2023, USAJOBS.gov hosted over 440,000 job announcements, facilitated over 1 billion job searches, and enabled individuals to begin more than 22.9 million applications for Federal jobs. Further, over one million jobseekers made their resumes searchable in the USAJOBS.gov Agency Talent Portal, and agencies created over 6,000 recruitment campaigns and posted over 850 recruitment events to attract jobseekers to their announcements.

With such a large workforce, spread across hundreds of Agency components and thousands of duty stations, deploying new tools to benchmark shared talent needs is a key success for the Workforce Priority. As part of the growing suite of workforce data tools, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) launched a *Mission-Critical Occupations (MCO) Dashboard* to provide the public and Agency leaders a new depth of insight into Government-wide and Agency-identified MCO hiring. The dashboard assesses progress on hiring for top priorities and provides illustration of opportunities for cross-agency collaboration to leverage pooled hiring, as discussed below.

Reaching Early Career Talent

A critical workforce priority for the Administration is recruiting and hiring the next generation of Federal leaders. As illustrated in Chart 14-6, the Federal workforce is significantly older on average than the private sector workforce, and building a deeper pipeline of workers at the beginning of their careers will ensure that the Government can meet its mission without interruption as workers retire. Reaching this population requires a specialized set of tools, and revitalizing Federal internship programs is one of the most impactful approaches

to strengthening this pipeline. OPM and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) are providing the President’s Management Council comparative data on internships across agencies to spur cross-agency learning and prioritize investment in growing the total number of Federal internships. In tandem, the Budget sustains investments under the PMA to develop new resources to help agencies enhance their internship programs and increase access for jobseekers.

In 2023, OPM’s USAJOBS team began developing a USAJOBS Career Explorer tool. Jobseekers, including interns, will be able to input their interests into the tool and receive results for the top ten Federal job series that align. A public-facing version with over 500 Federal occupations will launch in 2024, providing jobseekers with a practical lens to see themselves in public service.

After releasing early career talent hiring guidance in January 2023, OPM launched a new Federal Intern Experience Program in June 2023 to complement agencies’ existing intern programs with a standardized, high-quality professional development experience. The program features high-quality training, mentorship opportunities, executive speakers, showcases for intern work, and a hub for intern network building. Additionally, the OPM USAJOBS team is building a new Pathways Intern Conversion database to launch in 2024. This database will provide Pathways interns additional options to find full-time position opportunities if their Agency is unable to hire them directly.

These tools reflect the importance of building cross-agency collaboration around Federal internships as an entry point into public service overall. Leveraging platforms like the Recruitment and Outreach Community of Practice, agencies can coordinate the timing of their internship postings to <https://intern.usajobs.gov/> to

Table 14-3. OCCUPATIONS OF FEDERAL AND PRIVATE SECTOR WORKFORCES
(Grouped by Average Private Sector Salary)

Occupational Groups	Percent	
	Federal Workers	Private Sector Workers
Highest Paid Occupations Ranked by Private Sector Salary		
Lawyers and judges	2.2%	0.6%
Engineers	4.9%	2.2%
Scientists and social scientists	4.5%	0.9%
Managers	13.7%	15.3%
Pilots, conductors, and related mechanics	2.6%	0.5%
Doctors, nurses, psychologists, etc.	8.7%	6.9%
Miscellaneous professionals	16.8%	10.8%
Administrators, accountants, HR personnel	4.5%	1.5%
Inspectors	1.2%	0.4%
Total Percentage	59.0%	39.0%
Medium Paid Occupations Ranked by Private Sector Salary		
Sales including real estate, insurance agents	0.9%	5.5%
Other miscellaneous occupations	4.4%	5.5%
Automobile and other mechanics	2.0%	2.9%
Law enforcement and related occupations	8.3%	0.8%
Office workers	1.9%	5.3%
Social workers	1.6%	0.6%
Drivers of trucks and taxis	0.6%	3.2%
Laborers and construction workers	2.8%	9.9%
Clerks and administrative assistants	12.1%	9.5%
Manufacturing	2.4%	7.3%
Total Percentage	36.8%	50.3%
Lowest Paid Occupations Ranked by Private Sector Salary		
Other miscellaneous service workers	2.1%	5.2%
Janitors and housekeepers	1.3%	2.1%
Cooks, bartenders, bakers, and wait staff	0.8%	3.4%
Total Percentage	4.2%	10.6%

Source: 2018–2023 Current Population Survey, IPUMS-CPS, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

Notes: Federal workers exclude the military and Postal Service, but include all other Federal workers in the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches. However, the vast majority of these employees are civil servants in the Executive Branch. Private sector workers exclude the self-employed. Neither category includes State and local government workers. This analysis is limited to full-time, full-year workers, i.e. those with at least 1,500 annual hours of work.

provide candidates the widest possible array of options to explore Federal careers. Looking further ahead, there may be new opportunities to apply the proven approaches of pooled hiring and shared certificates to cross-agency internship pools so that intern applicants can apply to a single posting and be considered by multiple agencies.

Additionally, the Administration is working to make it easier for agencies to incorporate interns and recent graduates into their early career talent strategies through a substantial updating of the Pathways Program regulations. These updates, which are on track to be released by OPM in 2024, aim to make the programs more user-friendly for agencies and provide more streamlined options for Pathways interns, recent graduates, and Presidential Management Fellows (PMFs) to be hired permanently. In 2024, OPM will provide agencies an analysis of the business case for early career talent to support their increasing early career talent positions in strategic workforce plans.

Another investment in growing pipelines for early career talent is through Registered Apprenticeships. Federal agencies are working to identify occupations where vacancies can be filled through adoption of the proven Registered Apprenticeship model, leveraging lessons-learned from programs like the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship Program for Veterans, which is meeting acute talent needs at the Department of Veterans Affairs, while simultaneously building economic opportunities for veterans. Expanding the use of Registered Apprenticeships beyond their traditional application in the skilled trades is a unique opportunity for the Federal Government to grow its own skilled talent and support a critical nationwide skills development initiative.

The Administration continues to apply these tools in innovative ways to engage early career talent. To reach new pools of early career talent reflecting the Nation’s diversity, OPM partnered with Hampton University to pilot a series of career readiness events called “Level Up to

Public Service.” These one-day, hands-on convenings highlighted the value of public service and showcased Federal internship opportunities for college and high school students and helped participants build Federal resumes and USAJOBS profiles, while hearing reflections from current Federal employees. OPM plans to replicate the Level Up to Public Service program pilot at other minority serving institutions in 2024 and will provide agencies with technical assistance and resources to support their efforts to recruit diverse talent through the Talent Sourcing for America campaign.

Given the paramount importance of deepening early career talent pipelines to meet key workforce priorities, the Administration is continuing to work with agencies to ensure that they have the tools and resources they need to sustain investments in early career talent in a changing and challenging budgetary environment.

Strengthening Hiring Systems

It should be straightforward for the public to bring their talents to the Federal civil service, and agencies should have personnel systems that allow them to hire this talent effectively and expeditiously. The Administration is committed to making this a reality and addressing real concerns raised by applicants and hiring managers alike. OPM’s *Hiring Manager Satisfaction Dashboard*, a workforce data tool launched under the PMA, illustrates longstanding frustrations among hiring managers with the timeliness of the hiring process and the skills alignment of those referred for consideration. Under the banner of the PMA, the Administration has been driving a new level of collaboration and coordination between agencies to address this challenge and improve the hiring process for applicants and for agencies.

To support strategic coordination within agencies around hiring, the Budget sustains investments in Agency talent teams, which serve as hubs within agencies to leverage workforce data to meet talent needs and foreground applicant experience. All 24 Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Act agencies have stood up talent teams, and some of those agencies have also established talent teams at the sub-component/department level. A robust 250-member Talent Team community of practice, led by OPM, shares lessons learned and best practices to support the expansion of innovative hiring operations.

To provide additional centralized support, OPM established a new Hiring Experience (HX) Group to support agencies and their talent teams and to drive a significant reimagining of Federal hiring that emphasizes cross-agency collaboration and leverages the Federal Government’s size to unlock economies of scale. HX is centralizing hiring actions for mission-critical occupations, such as Information Technology (IT) Product Managers and Grants Management Specialists, which allow applicants to apply once for roles at many agencies and allow agencies to select qualified candidates from a single shared certificate. Some of these pooled actions leverage investments in rigorous assessments, such as the Subject Matter Expert-Qualifications Assessment (SME-QA) and other competency-based tools, and engage support from

subject matter experts and HR specialists in agencies to maximize value and distribute costs. Over 300 selections have been made from HX’s first six Government-wide actions, and HX will launch at least eight more actions in 2024.

Additionally, OPM’s new Talent Pools feature on the USAJOBS Agency Talent Portal provides a central hub for both OPM-led cross-Government actions and Agency-led shared certificates under the Competitive Service Act of 2015 (Public Law 114-137). In 2023, four agencies shared seven hiring actions, enabling another 93 pooled hiring selections to be made across nine agencies. To build on this proof of concept, HX is positioned to identify and elevate clusters of agencies with similar talent needs and provide them consultative support to dramatically scale cross-agency hiring. Work completed in 2023 is just the beginning of a significant reorientation in Federal hiring. HX will continue integrating feedback and lessons-learned from agencies to improve, scale, and institutionalize pooled hiring.

The Administration continues its work to improve how agencies vet their civilian, military, and contractor personnel. During 2023, the Administration launched new training standards for background investigators and adjudicators, authorized the expansion of continuous vetting beyond national security sensitive personnel, and continued to transition from legacy software to the eApp platform, a more user-friendly and integrated approach for individuals entering the personnel vetting process. The 2025 Budget provides support for agencies to drive further improvements as directed in the Trusted Workforce 2.0 Implementation Strategy. Among other goals, agencies will continue to enroll their non-sensitive personnel into continuous vetting, expand data collection for enhanced performance metrics, update training and internal processes to reflect reform progress, and adopt additional personnel vetting shared services.

There is still work ahead to continue to make Federal hiring more nimble, flexible, and user-friendly. One new opportunity is by easing conversion pathways for term employees. Term employees are current public servants engaged on fixed duration assignments, but agencies are generally unable to convert them to permanent positions. Instead, they must apply for competitive service roles with no additional status beyond the general public despite their experience and the investments agencies have made in their development. One model to address this is the Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act of 2015 (Public Law 114-47), which enabled agencies to more easily convert land management employees who were initially hired through competitive hiring processes and have strong performance assessments into permanent roles, securing a key tool to recruit and retain talent.

Reaching Talent in New Places

The Administration continues to identify new strategies to reach talent outside of traditional recruiting methods. One such example is the Administration’s ongoing work to reimagine the Federal Executive Board (FEB) program. The Budget secures resources to complete the

strategic shift, known as FEB Forward, that began with the 60th anniversary of the FEB program in 2021. These resources will build on key activities completed in 2023, including:

- establishing a tri-governance structure between OPM, OMB, and GSA to provide guidance for the program's rejuvenated vision, structure, and strategic objectives;
- transferring all FEB staff from an array of Agency sponsors into a single, coordinated program office at OPM with a stable, centralized funding model;
- onboarding an SES Executive Director to lead the program; and
- reorganizing FEBs into regions, each managed by a GS-15 Regional Director, ensuring comprehensive national coverage.

Expanding FEB coverage areas and resources will allow FEB members and staff to maintain essential engagement with local Federal agencies to assist in sharing talent needs and to channel these insights to the center of Government to inform workforce strategy. In support of this aim, FEB leaders are designing a professional development fellowship, modeled after the State Department's Diplomat in Residence Program, through which Federal employees can be detailed to a FEB office to drive strategic outreach to colleges and universities, build new talent pipelines, and serve as Federal ambassadors across the Nation.

Even as departments and agencies collaborate to broaden their recruitment through pooled hiring and shared certificates, the Federal Government also needs the flexibility to be targeted and tactical in filling jobs in a specific location. One fruitful opportunity is examining public notice requirements. Currently, Agencies are required to post job opportunities nationally, resulting in an applicant pool spread throughout the United States for a duty station in a specific geography. Candidates may overstate their willingness to relocate, which increases the costs and timeline to fill a vacancy. The planned 2024 updates to the Pathways Program regulations would allow Agencies to enhance targeted recruitment for internships and recent graduates by using a focused USAJOBS custom posting, and lessons from this change may serve to provide direction for broader adoption.

Further, the Government is reaching new pools of talent by embracing the economy-wide trend toward hiring on the basis of skills, which will allow Americans without traditional four-year degrees to demonstrate their qualification for Federal roles while also improving tightness of fit between new hires and their work. The Administration favors a flexible approach to add skills-based methods to Federal Government hiring alongside existing authorities. In September 2023, OPM released a [skills-based hiring handbook](#) to help agencies incorporate a skills lens into Federal hiring, drawing on surveys of 90,000 Federal

employees from more than 300 job series. OMB and OPM will work with agencies to target adoption of skills-based hiring in high-need occupational categories. Where agencies continue to use specific educational credentials in hiring, they must be thoughtful to avoid setting overly onerous or excessive requirements that do not clearly link to the work that the role requires.

Putting it all Together in Talent Surges

Over the last two years, the Administration coordinated among seven departments and agencies to drive surge hiring for more than 90 key occupations needed to implement the IIJA, including engineers, scientists, project managers, IT and HR specialists, and construction managers. The Federal Government hired 3,000 IIJA-targeted positions in fiscal year 2022, exceeded its fiscal year 2023 goal with over 3,400 selections, and has hired an additional 394 positions in the first quarter of fiscal year 2024—totaling 6,877 selections Government-wide to date.

Building on this experience and leveraging the suite of tools launched under the PMA, the Administration is launching an AI, Cyber, and Tech Hiring Surge. In August 2023, the Administration released its National Cyber Workforce and Education Strategy, which includes a pillar focused on strengthening Federal cyber capacity co-led by OMB and the Office of the National Cyber Director. Additionally, OPM has transmitted to the Congress for its consideration a package of legislative proposals, developed in concert with OMB and ONCD, to strengthen the personnel system for cyber professionals that includes a new classification and pay system, enhanced flexibility for agencies in selecting candidates for cyber positions, and other policies to increase the Federal Government's competitiveness as an employer. In October, the President signed Executive Order 14110, "Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence." Executive Order 14110 commits to rapidly hiring AI and AI-enabling talent through a whole-of-Government collaboration including OMB, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), the United States Digital Service (USDS), and OPM.

Agencies collaborating to advance these critical Administration priorities are deploying the practices launched under the PMA. Investments in human capital data tools—especially the MCO Dashboard and OPM's new authenticated Cyber Dashboard—are proving essential to assessing the scope of Government-wide hiring and identifying agencies with overlapping needs for proactive collaboration. The Tech-to-Gov initiative, a workstream of the Federal Cyber Workforce Working Group that is supporting Executive Order 14110, has held two virtual career fairs coinciding with OPM-led pooled hiring actions to attract technology professionals and channel them into jobs. To integrate lessons learned from engagement with jobseekers, agencies are developing shared plain-language, market-oriented position descriptions and titles to ensure that applicants can understand how their experience aligns with Federal needs.

Strategy 2: Make every Federal job a good job, where all employees are engaged, supported, heard, and empowered, with opportunities to learn, grow, join a union and have an effective voice in their workplaces through their union, and thrive throughout their careers

The Administration believes that a constructive employer-employee relationship is essential to sustaining a Federal workforce that delivers for Americans. From Day One, the Administration committed to rebuilding this relationship by making critical investments in its people and its workplaces.

These investments in recent years are paying dividends. The 2023 installment of OPM's annual Federal Employee Viewpoints Survey (FEVS) found that employee engagement tied a five-year high of 72 percent positive overall, and improvements continued across several key metrics. Employees' perception of the integrity of leadership (Leaders Lead) increased two percentage points to 61 percent. Employees' feelings of motivation and competency in the workplace (Intrinsic Work Experience) increased one percentage point to 74 percent. The factor measuring trust, respect, and support between employees and their supervisors remained at a high of 80 percent positive.

Led by OPM, agencies are retooling their approach to employee wellness programming including Employee Assistance Programs designed to support Federal employees through a wide range of wellbeing challenges.

As part of the growing culture of human capital data, in September 2023, OPM released a new FEVS Dashboard to CFO Act agencies to help them leverage the rich insights from the FEVS survey. The OPM FEVS Dashboard is a dynamic and user-friendly data visualization tool that allows Agency human capital professionals to review year-by-year trends and outliers, surface promising practices, and provide leadership with actionable insights on key indicators related to organizational health and performance. OPM will expand dashboard access to all FEVS participating agencies in 2024.

Pay and Benefits

The Budget reflects an average pay increase of 2.0 percent for civilian employees. This increase builds on the average pay increases of 5.2 percent for 2024, 4.6 percent for 2023, and 2.7 percent for 2022. It illustrates the Administration's continued strong commitment to the civil service, reflecting the need to attract the talent necessary to serve Americans and recognizing the fiscal constraints Federal agencies face.

In addition to year-to-year pay increases, the Administration is pursuing structural reforms to enhance the competitiveness of the Federal pay system. The Administration is committed to addressing the challenges caused by long-standing career Senior Executive Service and higher-graded General Schedule (GS) pay compression, as well as blue collar Federal Wage grade pay limitations. Addressing pay compression is a critical component of attracting and retaining experienced talent in roles with significant market competition. The

Administration has identified several potential responses, and looks forward to working with the Congress to advance them to ensure that the Federal Government has the targeted tools needed to secure a skilled workforce. These potential responses include: increasing Executive Schedule official rates (while maintaining the senior political appointee pay freeze), which are tethered to SES, GS, and other senior-level employee pay caps, and modifying how the rates are adjusted each year; removing current ceilings in the Federal Wage System (FWS) wage schedules and establishing a statutory minimum for annual pay rate adjustments; repealing the aggregate pay rate limitation that caps the total amount of Title 5 allowances, differentials, bonuses awards, and other similar payments an employee may receive in a calendar year; and raising the special rate limitation for certain categories of employees to provide competitive salaries, particularly for cyber, STEM, and healthcare professions. The Administration also continues to support targeted, strategic use of a variety of pay flexibilities, such as special salary rate requests and recruitment, relocation, and retention incentives, to meet talent goals. Several of these elements are reflected in the cyber workforce legislative proposal discussed above. Additionally, OPM will be working with agencies in 2024 on targeted pay flexibilities to support the Federal cyber and specialized technology workforce.

The Administration is continuing to carefully track Federal civilian pay and incentives in comparison to comparable roles in the private sector and will work to mitigate attrition risk within the existing workforce. For example, in 2023, OPM issued proposed regulations to provide agencies with access to higher payment limitations for recruitment and relocation incentives without requesting approval from OPM. Table 14-4 summarizes total pay and benefit costs. Chart 14-1 illustrates the long-term trends between the Federal and private sector pay rates. The differential between Federal civilian pay and private sector pay has expanded in the past three decades over this period, creating attrition risk within the existing workforce and reducing the competitiveness of Federal jobs.

The Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program offered 157 plan options in 2024 for 8.2 million Federal civilian employees, annuitants, and their families, as well as certain tribal employees and their families. OPM's Retirement Services processed almost 100,000 new retirement cases and about 27,000 survivor claims. Average processing time for new retirement cases dropped from 89 days in October 2022 to 69 days in November 2023. The new retirement case inventory in November 2023 (15,826) is the lowest it has been since December 2017.

Civil Service Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

Since the 2021 release of Executive Order 14035, "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accountability in the Federal Workforce," it has been the policy of the Administration that the Federal Government be a model

for DEIA where all employees are treated with dignity and respect. Throughout 2023, agencies have been driving implementation of strategic and customized Agency action plans to drive forward Executive Order 14035’s core goals, with coordination from the Chief Diversity Officers Executive Council, launched in 2022.

To track progress in this work, in 2022, OPM updated the FEVS to include a DEIA Index. In 2023, 71 percent of respondents reported positive perceptions of Agency practices related to DEIA, an increase of two percentage points from the DEIA score of 69 percent in baseline year 2022. All four distinct factors (DEIA) increased for 2023. OPM is leveraging this Index to further strengthen the growing suite of workforce data tools through a new DEIA Dashboard launched in April 2023. The DEIA Dashboard, available to all 24 CFO Act agencies, is helping agencies implement DEIA-focused programs, practices, and policies while improving data collection, use, and sharing.

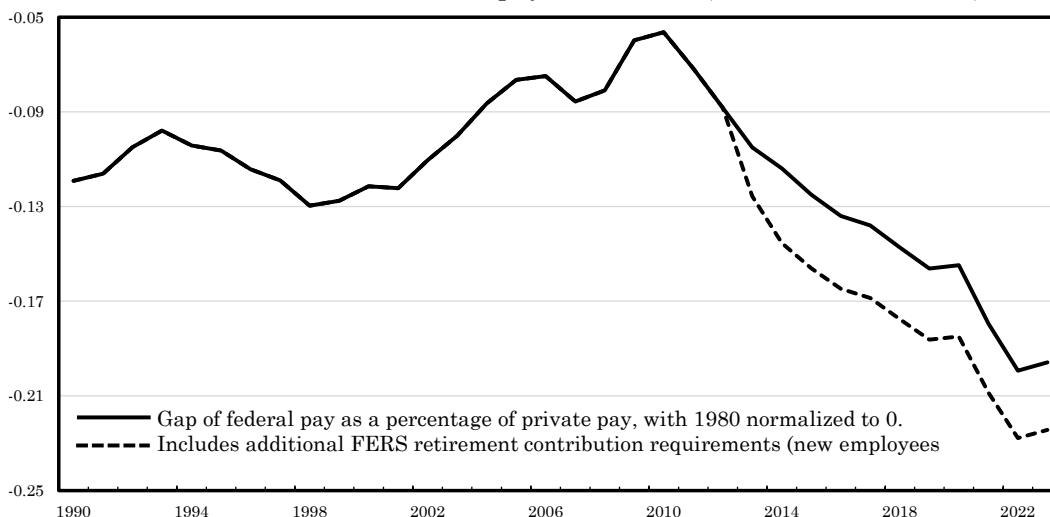
Looking ahead, OPM will continue to release the *DEIA Annual Report* to provide a recurring snapshot of the diversity of the Federal workforce and to highlight accomplishments aligned to the Government-wide Strategic Plan to Advance DEIA in the Federal Workforce. Additionally, to advance pay equity in Government-wide pay systems, in 2024, OPM issued final regulations that prohibit agencies from relying on a candidate’s non-Federal salary history when setting initial pay.

OPM data from September 2023 provides a snapshot of the Federal civilian workforce. Civilian employees self-identified as 59.5 percent White; 18.4 percent Black; 10.1

percent Hispanic of all races; 6.8 percent Asian/Pacific Islander; 1.6 percent Native American/Alaskan Native; and 2.2 percent more than one race. Men comprise 54.2 percent of all permanent Federal employees, and women represent 45.8 percent, which is up from 44.1 percent in September 2020. Veterans make up 28.5 percent of the Federal workforce, which is significantly higher than the percentage in the private sector non-agricultural workforce. One-fifth of all Federal employees self-identify as having a disability, which includes 2.2 percent who possess a “targeted disability,” such as blindness. See Table 14-5 for trends in these categories since 2016.

The Federal workforce has an average age of 47 years. Over 28 percent of employees are older than 55, while 8.7 percent of employees are younger than 30, a modest increase from 8.4 percent in September 2020. Chart 14-6 illustrates the Federal Government’s consistently higher average age than the private sector, and Chart 14-2 shows a widening gap between the older and younger worker cohorts at the 24 CFO Act agencies since 2007. This gap is especially pronounced in some career fields, such as information technology, as illustrated in Chart 14-3. The decline in the Federal workforce under the age of 30 became more acute after 2010, when Federal internships and hiring programs for recent graduates became subject to new restrictions. The Administration’s proposed updates to the Pathways Program regulations, discussed above in Strategy 1, seek to enhance the opportunities to bring early career talent into the Federal workforce.

Chart 14-1. Federal vs. Private pay differential (1980 normalized to 0)

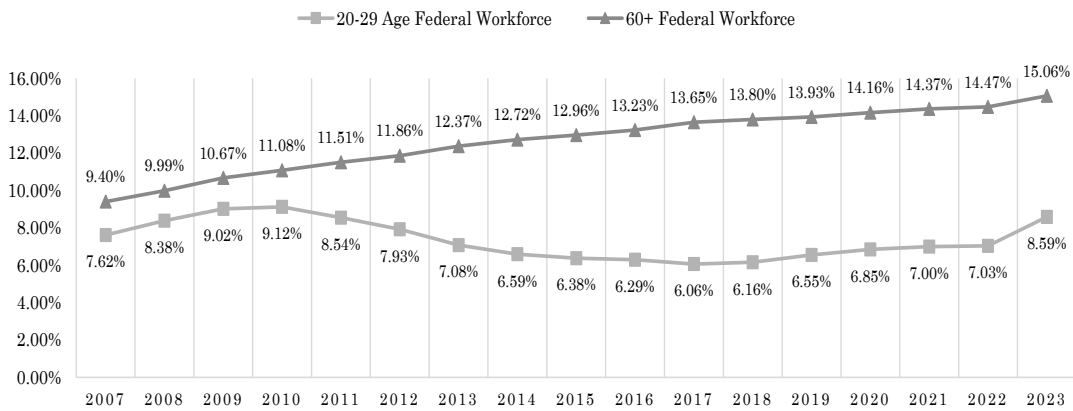


For newly hired federal employees, FERS contributions increased 2.3pp for employees hired in 2013 and an additional 1.3pp for employees hired in 2014 or after.

Sources: Public Laws, Executive Orders, Office of Personnel Management, OPM Memoranda from federal websites, Congressional Budget Office, and Bureau of Labor Statistics.

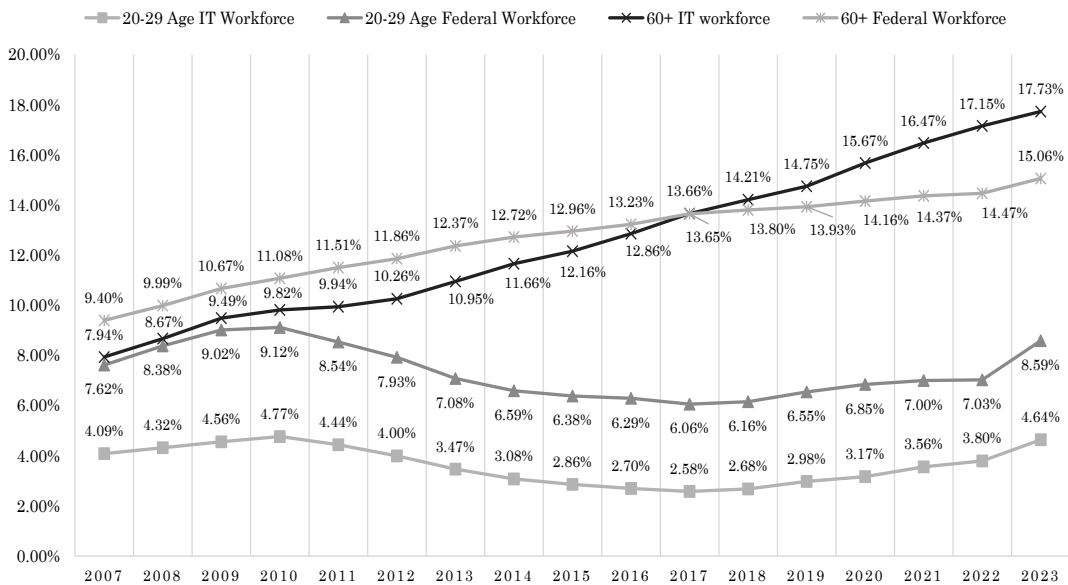
Notes: Federal pay is for civilians and includes base and locality pay. Private pay is measured by the Employment Cost Index wages and salaries, private industry workers series.

CHART 14-2. Potential Retirees to Younger than 30 Employees, Federal Workforce (CFO Act Agencies)



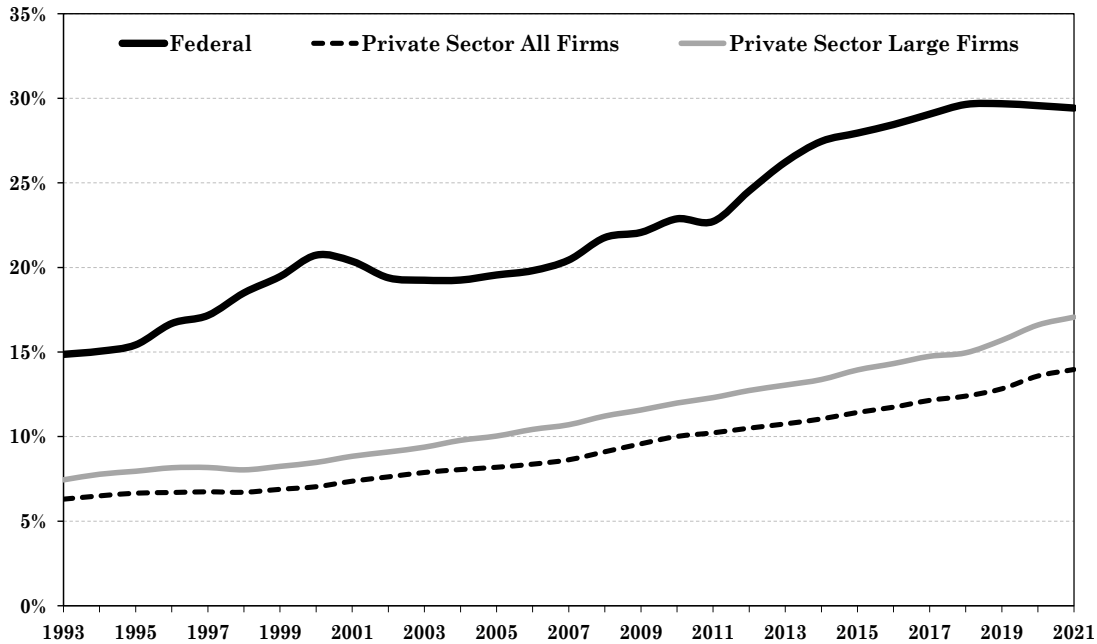
Source: FedScope FY 2007-2023 (Annual September Employment Cube)
 Data Filter: Job Series excludes nulls, Work Schedule includes only "F", Work status includes only Non-Season Full-Time Permanent, Age Cohort excludes less than 20 and unspecified, 24 CFO Act Agencies Only
 Data Range: FY 2007-2023, Age Cohorts 20-29, 60+

Chart 14-3. Potential Retirees to Younger than 30 Employees, Federal IT Workforce vs. Federal Workforce (24 CFO Act Agencies)



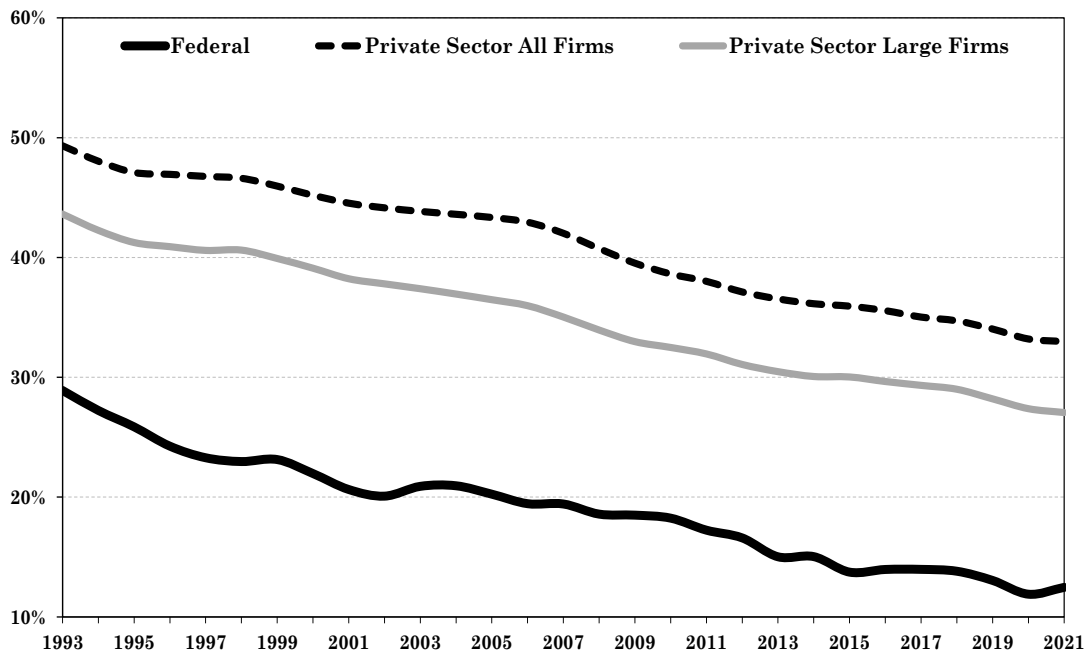
Source: FedScope FY 2007-2023 (Annual September Employment Cube)
 Data Filter: Job Series excludes nulls, Work Schedule includes only "F", Work status includes only Non-Season Full-Time Permanent, Age Cohort excludes less than 20 and unspecified, IT Workforce is 2210 occupational series, 24 CFO Act Agencies Only
 Data Range: FY 2007-2023, Age Cohorts 20-29, 60+

Chart 14-4. Masters Degree or Above By Year for Federal and Private Sectors



Source: 1992-2023 Current Population Survey, IPUMS-CPS, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.
Notes: Federal excludes the military and Postal Service, but includes all other Federal workers. Private Sector excludes the self-employed. Neither category includes State and local government workers. Large firms have at least 1,000 workers. This analysis is limited to full-time, full-year workers, i.e. those with at least 1,500 annual hours of work and presents three-year averages.

Chart 14-5. High School Graduate or Less By Year for Federal and Private Sectors



Source: 1992-2023 Current Population Survey, IPUMS-CPS, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.
Notes: Federal excludes the military and Postal Service, but includes all other Federal workers. Private Sector excludes the self-employed. Neither category includes State and local government workers. Large firms have at least 1,000 workers. This analysis is limited to full-time, full-year workers, i.e. those with at least 1,500 annual hours of work and presents three-year averages.

Table 14-4. PERSONNEL PAY AND BENEFITS
(In millions of dollars)

Description	2023 Actual	2024 Estimate	2025 Estimate	Change: 2024 to 2025	
				Dollars	Percent
Civilian Personnel Costs:					
Executive Branch (excluding Postal Service):					
Pay	242,139	264,136	275,123	10,987	4.2%
Benefits	116,817	120,092	127,869	7,777	6.5%
Subtotal	358,956	384,228	402,992	18,764	4.9%
Postal Service:					
Pay	43,309	43,878	44,434	556	1.3%
Benefits	15,674	17,256	17,595	339	2.0%
Subtotal	58,983	61,134	62,029	895	1.5%
Legislative Branch:					
Pay	2,840	3,045	3,271	226	7.4%
Benefits	1,091	1,186	1,303	117	9.9%
Subtotal	3,931	4,231	4,574	343	8.1%
Judicial Branch:					
Pay	3,736	4,223	4,431	208	4.9%
Benefits	1,388	1,486	1,515	29	2.0%
Subtotal	5,124	5,709	5,946	237	4.2%
Total, Civilian Personnel Costs	426,994	455,302	475,541	20,239	4.4%
Military Personnel Costs					
Department of Defense--Military Programs:					
Pay	118,168	123,447	129,616	6,169	5.0%
Benefits	62,314	70,892	70,104	-788	-1.1%
Subtotal	180,482	194,339	199,720	5,381	2.8%
All other Executive Branch uniform personnel:					
Pay	4,234	4,378	4,733	355	8.1%
Benefits	746	807	852	45	5.6%
Subtotal	4,980	5,185	5,585	400	7.7%
Total, Military Personnel Costs	185,462	199,524	205,305	5,781	2.9%
Grand total, personnel costs	612,456	654,826	680,846	26,020	4.0%
ADDENDUM					
Former Civilian Personnel:					
Pensions	106,353	112,392	116,763	4,371	3.9%
Health benefits	14,495	15,236	16,182	946	6.2%
Life insurance	43	43	44	1	2.3%
Subtotal	120,891	127,671	132,989	5,318	4.2%
Former Military Personnel:					
Pensions	76,240	79,390	82,045	2,655	3.3%
Health benefits	12,044	11,509	11,293	-216	-1.9%
Subtotal	88,284	90,899	93,338	2,439	2.7%
Total, Former Personnel	209,175	218,570	226,327	7,757	3.5%

Table 14-5. HIRING TRENDS SINCE 2016

Federal Civilian Workforce	SEPT 2016	SEPT 2017	SEPT 2018	SEPT 2019	SEPT 2020	SEPT 2021	SEPT 2022	SEPT 2023
Total Federal Workforce Count ¹	2,097,038	2,087,747	2,100,802	2,132,812	2,181,106	2,191,011	2,180,296	2,258,821
Average Age (in years)	47.1	47.2	47.1	47.1	47.0	47.0	47.0	46.9
Total Under 30	7.88%	7.55%	7.76%	8.07%	8.39%	8.33%	8.30%	8.74%
Total 55 and Over	28.16%	28.79%	28.99%	29.17%	29.11%	28.98%	28.70%	28.29%
Male	56.70%	56.60%	56.44%	56.27%	55.90%	55.56%	55.03%	54.19%
Female	43.29%	43.38%	43.52%	43.72%	44.10%	44.44%	44.97%	45.81%
All Disabilities	9.46%	10.49%	12.38%	13.89%	15.33%	17.01%	18.37%	20.45%
Targeted Disabilities ²	1.10%	2.69%	2.66%	2.61%	2.56%	2.52%	2.54%	2.21%
Veteran	29.33%	29.43%	29.34%	29.15%	28.78%	28.37%	29.35%	28.45%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.71%	1.69%	1.66%	1.63%	1.62%	1.62%	1.62%	1.57%
Asian	5.86%	5.99%	6.10%	6.01%	6.17%	6.49%	6.70%	6.80%
Black/African American	17.91%	18.15%	18.21%	18.02%	18.06%	18.19%	18.25%	18.44%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.49%	0.51%	0.52%	0.52%	0.54%	0.56%	0.57%	0.58%
More Than One Race	1.47%	1.60%	1.73%	1.82%	1.91%	2.01%	2.11%	2.24%
Hispanic/Latino (H/L)	8.46%	8.75%	9.08%	9.14%	9.33%	9.53%	9.75%	10.10%
White	64.04%	63.26%	62.63%	61.22%	60.86%	61.20%	60.53%	59.54%

Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management

¹ Total count varies slightly from other sources because of date and data collection method.

² These totals are included in the “All Disabilities” category.

Civil Service Protection

The Administration remains committed to protecting, empowering, and rebuilding the career Federal workforce that has served the Nation since the passage of the Pendleton Act in 1883. Shortly after inauguration, the President issued Executive Order 14003, “Protecting the Federal Workforce,” revoking the previous administration’s creation of a Schedule F excepted service category that undermined the foundation of a merit-based civil service and the core protections for career civil servants. The Administration has repeatedly supported codifying the protections provided by Executive Order 14003 in statute and will continue to work with the Congress on this proposal. Further, in 2024, OPM anticipates finalizing new regulations to reinforce and clarify longstanding civil service protections and merit systems principles. OPM’s proposed regulations would protect employees from involuntary loss of their earned civil service protections for reasons unrelated to poor performance or conduct. The regulations will interpret “confidential, policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating” and “confidential or policy-determining” to describe positions of the character generally excepted from civil service protections to mean noncareer, political appointments. They would set additional procedures for moving positions from the competitive to excepted service or within the excepted service in order to support good administration, add transparency, and provide employees with a right of appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board under certain circumstances. Americans deserve a Federal workforce selected and retained for its merit, skill, and experience not favoritism or political loyalties.

Strategy 3: Reimagine and build a roadmap to the future of Federal work informed by lessons from the pandemic and nationwide workforce and workplace trends

During the COVID-19 pandemic, hundreds of thousands of Federal employees worked countless hours, in-person and on-site, to continue delivering the vast Federal services that the American people count on despite the risk present in the community. Over the course of 2022 and 2023, agencies brought nearly all other employees back to their regular pre-pandemic duty stations, by carefully managing space, resources, mission needs, and public health guidance. As of January 2024, in excess of 80 percent of Federal work is performed in-person at employees’ assigned job sites, either at a Federal facility or at postings around the Nation as required to fulfill Agency missions.

In the wake of the pandemic, Federal agencies continue to evaluate their work environment policies and build toward a durable, long-term work environment posture that maintains a focus on delivering results for Americans and reflects new rhythms of work across the economy that have necessitated a thoughtful redesign of norms around hybrid work. In general, agencies are moving towards a posture whereby hybrid teams are working in-person at least half of the time, on average. This balanced approach recognizes the vital importance of in-person collaboration, while still ensuring flexibilities are in place so that the Government can attract and retain top talent. It engages with the vast diversity of occupations across the Federal Government, recognizing that work modality and duty station vary immensely across the workforce. The Budget assumes resources to complete this transition in a thoughtful, intentional, data-informed manner. It will build on current investments such as OPM’s free “Thriving in a Hybrid Work Environment” training that was completed by more than 25,000 Federal employees.

To ensure that agencies continue to improve organizational health and organizational performance in a post-pandemic work environment and sustain a singular focus on service delivery, OMB released OMB Memorandum M-23-15, *Measuring, Monitoring, and Improving Organizational Health and Organizational Performance in the Context of Evolving Agency Work Environments*, in April 2023. Memorandum M-23-15 included a call for agencies to “substantially increase meaningful in-person work at Federal offices, particularly at headquarters and equivalents” where hybrid work is mostly concentrated. Agencies were directed to develop updated Work Environment Plans over the summer 2023 that considered how best to accomplish this given the unique circumstances, missions, and customers of each Agency. OMB has continued to monitor Agency implementation and collaborate with agencies on areas of common concern in executing this shift, including commuter benefits, reopening cafeterias, modernizing workspaces, human capital data standards, and other implementation components.

Work environment is one component of organizational health and performance frameworks (explored further in Chapter 12, “Delivering a High-Performance Government,” of this volume), and the Administration continues to make investments to hone work environment policies using the same research and evidence-based approach that drives the broader framework. The Administration has engaged the National Academy of Public Administration to expand on its 2018 report, [Strengthening Organizational Health and Performance in Government](#). Additionally, OPM is conducting and disseminating three research studies on the future of work, assessing the effect of telework, remote work, and hybrid work on hiring, engagement, and retention, as well as a project to improve accessibility of organizational health and organizational performance data for Agency leaders through toolkits and dashboards.

The Administration has made critical investments to ensure that Federal employees have the tools to succeed in this new equilibrium. In March 2023, OPM released a [memorandum](#) on “Advancing Future of the Workforce Policies and Practices to Support Mission Delivery,” which outlined a strategic vision for the future of the Federal workforce that is inclusive, agile, and engaged, and possesses the right skills to enable mission delivery. It identifies five priority areas for which OPM will provide support to agencies to realize the future state: Policy and Resources, Research and Evaluation, Training and Technical Assistance, Data Analytics, and Stakeholder Engagement. To do this, OPM has detailed the key steps for the Agency action strategies into a Future of the Workforce Playbook, which provides implementation strategies for new innovations and existing authorities and practices that have not been fully utilized.

Additionally, the Administration is investing in innovative, next-generation workspaces to support agencies as they build toward durable norms informed by the lessons of the pandemic. In 2023, the General Services Administration (GSA) launched the Workplace Innovation Lab to share best practices and spur creative

thinking and cross-agency collaboration related to the workplace of the future. The lab offers a variety of workspaces, collaboration spaces, and conference rooms, with deeply integrated technology assets and modular flexibility, all in a Federal building equipped with an access control system and on-site security personnel. In its first nine months of operation, employees from 13 different agencies booked more than 22,000 hours of reservations. Through careful measurement of customers’ work patterns and regular customer surveying, GSA is using the lab to generate insights to inform the design of Federal workspaces throughout the Nation.

Further, GSA has launched six Federal coworking test sites in Tacoma, WA; San Francisco, CA; Denver, CO; Kansas City, MO; Chicago, IL; and Philadelphia, PA. These move-in ready spaces complement existing Agency office space, provide a venue for proactive cross-agency collaboration in regions, and illustrate opportunities for cost-savings. GSA also released an updated menu of contracts and solutions to support Agency planning for hybrid work. As GSA continues to test and assess design, technologies, and operations, it will diffuse leading practice and help position the Government as a competitive employer with a workplace model that ensures quality service delivery.

Additional information on the Administration’s efforts to inform workforce and workplace policies through advancing implementation of organizational health and organizational performance frameworks is discussed in the “Delivering a High-Performance Government” chapter of this volume.

Strategy 4: Build the personnel system and support required to sustain the Federal Government as a model employer able to effectively deliver on a broad range of agency missions

Strengthening the HR workforce is essential to unlocking the full value of PMA and other workforce initiatives. The Government’s 47,000 HR professionals are the “gateway to public service,” and a strong, effective, and strategically-oriented HR workforce is essential to meeting all other workforce goals. The Budget supports investments in the HR workforce and in OPM to realize this critical strategy to embed the work of the PMA across the Government for years to come.

Inattention to HR workforce development and resources is reflected in low satisfaction scores from HR customers. GSA’s annual Mission Support Customer Satisfaction survey consistently measures satisfaction with human capital services as ranking last among enabling functions (Financial Management, Acquisitions, and IT) from 2018 to 2022. Attrition and difficulty with hiring has compounding effects because the absence of HR staff adds time and complexity to the hiring process to backfill HR positions and other critical occupations. To reverse this trend, the Administration is making targeted investments to ensure that Agency HR workforces possess the technical acumen and strategic vision to deliver on urgent hiring and management needs.

To expand foundational HR training and work towards Government-wide certification standards, OPM has created an executive position to coordinate Federal workforce development efforts. OPM has provided new no-cost trainings to HR practitioners including technical assistance modules aimed at improving Delegated Examining certification pass rates and trainings to help practitioners implement skills-based hiring. OPM has begun to develop web-based career tools for HR practitioners including an HR career growth website. To expand the recruitment pipeline, the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council has developed intern and early career development program concepts focused on Federal human capital management processes and requirements. Agencies are coordinating on efforts to build career paths in the Federal HR workforce by drafting a new career pathing model and launching a career pathing pilot at nine agencies. Driven by data and evidence, this focus on the HR workforce is building momentum with Government-wide efforts to strengthen human capital results for the whole of Government.

The Administration is supporting investments in OPM to meet these human capital needs. In the fall of 2023, OPM renamed its former Employee Services division as Workforce Policy and Innovation to reflect the Agency's elevation of its Government-wide, strategic human capital role and to transform its Agency HR policy and operations support roles through improved customer engagement and increased awareness of critical Agency perspectives. This change aligns with OPM's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan (Strategy 4) and the 2021 National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) Report on "Elevating Human Capital: Reframing the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Leadership Imperative." This realignment brings together the newly established FEB Operations Center, the Hiring Experience (HX) group, and the planned Center for Innovation in Federal Talent designed to provide human capital management leadership to agencies through demonstration projects, pilots, and identification of leading practices across the Federal Government. Additionally, several human capital policy areas such as leadership development and training, workforce flexibilities, and workplace culture were re-mapped to best align with customer Agency needs and contemporary employer practices.

Now halfway through its Strategic Plan focused on transforming the Agency, OPM has continued to make marked progress in investing in its internal Agency enablers, like talent and skills, while also building new capabilities to better support the Federal workforce at large. OPM has created a stronger employee culture and experience, as evidenced through increased FEVS Employee Engagement results, while also on-boarding key senior executives to advance contemporary civil service talent practices. At the same time, OPM launched a Data Strategy and has delivered new customer experience enhancements from hiring innovations and products, new data dashboards, forward-leaning policy, and tools for employee and annuitant beneficiaries. OPM's transformation will continue to focus on growing OPM capabilities to

provide a more seamless customer experience and delivering on the next wave of modernization initiatives.

Looking Ahead

In addition to some of the near-term actions the PMA implementation team and agencies have begun to tackle across the PMA strategy areas, the PMA's designating the Federal Workforce as its number one priority has brought a heightened level of attention and investment to long-standing and long-term Federal workforce challenges. Even as the Administration works to embed the leading practices advanced under the PMA in Agency operations, this work has surfaced a further set of strategic questions for the future of the Federal workforce.

Opportunity: How does Government define work responsibilities?

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, workplaces were experiencing profound shifts in how work is defined and completed. Across the economy, barriers between traditional functions and divisions have eroded; workflow has become more collaborative and more integrated with technology; and new jobs are constantly appearing and rapidly becoming essential components of the enterprise. These changes are shaping expectations among employees, and employers are moving quickly to position themselves on the leading edge of their sectors. The COVID-19 pandemic served to accelerate some of these shifts and left many employers asking strategic questions around not only how work is defined but also employees' relationships to work and the workplace.

The Administration appreciates the need to respond nimbly and incorporate leading practices into workforce management. However, some of the broader shifts are incongruent with the Government's long-standing, traditional approach to classifying and describing work and occupations. OPM will launch a review, in coordination with agencies, that includes consideration of whether the General Schedule's formal classification of positions effectively and efficiently provides hiring managers and HR professionals with the ability to recruit and hire talent with the skills needed for the future. This level of responsiveness to future organizational needs is especially critical given the extreme diversity of roles in Federal service and the accelerating pace of changes in the private sector – including emerging roles in areas such as AI, post-quantum cryptography, virtual reality, and cybersecurity – and the need for the workforce to flex, adapt, and evolve around skills and taskings that will change over time. A sustained and strategic initiative will explore, identify, and incorporate skills-based competencies to create new or modify existing occupational series reflecting emerging needs.

In support of this shift, and in alignment with the broader skills-based objectives discussed above, the Administration will encourage agencies to advertise for jobs using plain language and market-relevant titles and position descriptions that connect with today's workforce without interpretation. This will provide greater clarity for jobseekers, allow the Government to compete directly with other sectors, and increase the accessibility of Federal

employment to jobseekers without personal or network connections to current Federal employment. It can help current civil servants, managers, and the HR workforce thoughtfully align individual employees' responsibilities with the core missions of their Agency.

To help drive this effort forward, agencies can coordinate action by creating and updating work and position descriptions, as well as desirable aptitudes and skills, for newly-emerging and rapidly-evolving roles, and sharing these with peers in other agencies. For example, Executive Order 14110 tasks OPM and OMB, including the USDS, to collaborate to develop position descriptions for a variety of emerging AI roles (as well as roles that enable integration of AI and other technological advances) to relieve individual agencies of that responsibility and to support strong cross-agency alignment. The Federal Cyber Workforce Working Group, implementing the Federal components of the National Cyber Workforce and Education Strategy, is driving a similar activity for critical cyber roles. Even roles outside the technologist domain, such as permitting project manager, benefit from consistent, cross-agency alignment on responsibilities and duties.

Alongside improving classification, in order to compete for talent in the marketplace, the Government must build capacity to assess candidate's skills and aptitudes in meaningful ways that are tightly mapped to how it defines work. As Federal agencies move away from using applicant self-assessments, they must develop and share validated assessment processes more quickly so they can be embedded into the hiring process. Quality assessments, like those used for SME-QA or the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity Talent Management System (CTMS), can be costly to develop and slow to validate, presenting a significant barrier to scale. Looking ahead, agencies must act in a coordinated manner to distribute costs and share effective assessments across hiring teams. Federal leaders should work collaboratively to explore opportunities to expand trusted assessment options, leverage leading practices from the broader marketplace, and build internal capacity to deploy them quickly. Further, Federal leaders may consider how to deploy automation or AI in the Federal HR arena, such as reviewing resumes or assessing skills, in coordination with broader policy and requirements. OMB is engaging across agencies implementing Executive Order 14110 to develop and socialize assessments for Federal AI roles as well as to explore automation with appropriate parameters and guardrails.

Federal agencies also must recognize that career development and advancement is an essential component of structuring work in an appealing and effective manner. In addition to support for professional development offerings in skills that are tightly aligned with Federal needs, Government must ensure that all Federal positions have thoughtful structural position management and career paths integrated into their workforce plans. As agencies develop new skills frameworks, for example, there are new opportunities to integrate skills maturity models and crosswalk with professional development investments to ensure that Federal employees have tools

and pathways to grow their skills and deepen their contributions throughout their careers.

Opportunity: How can Government build internal capacity for recruiting and hiring the talent Americans need in every Agency?

Many of the key approaches advancing under the PMA—such as pooled hiring or shared data tools—are centralized activities. Ensuring that the momentum built through this PMA is sustained and embedded deeply in Agency operations and culture will require adoption of its practices by a highly decentralized group of Federal leaders. The Budget's sustained investments in Agency talent teams are already providing a critical bulwark in agencies, but Government must consider how to ensure that every Agency and Agency component has the internal capacity to apply new tools discussed in this chapter, integrate these practices through thoughtful change management, and drive strategic human capital planning.

The Federal Government's HR function needs to be more strategic and engaged at a leadership level on Agency-wide strategy and decision-making. Over the last 20 years, the senior HR professionals in private corporations have increasingly been elevated into strategic leadership roles. Similarly, HR professionals across the Government must be equipped to serve as true strategic partners in achieving each Agency's mission. OPM's HR Workforce Development proposal, discussed above under PMA Workforce Priority Strategy Four, is an important launching point in this work, and will build a new HR workforce competency framework leveraging lessons from successful efforts to elevate the procurement function in the past decade. As the HR Workforce Development proposal advances, Federal leaders may consider whether the current classification standards for HR roles are aligned with this elevated lens. Recognizing the critical role that an empowered and adept HR workforce has in meeting all of Government's human capital needs, it will be essential to build strong pipelines and upward career mobility to ensure that investments in the HR workforce become self-reinforcing.

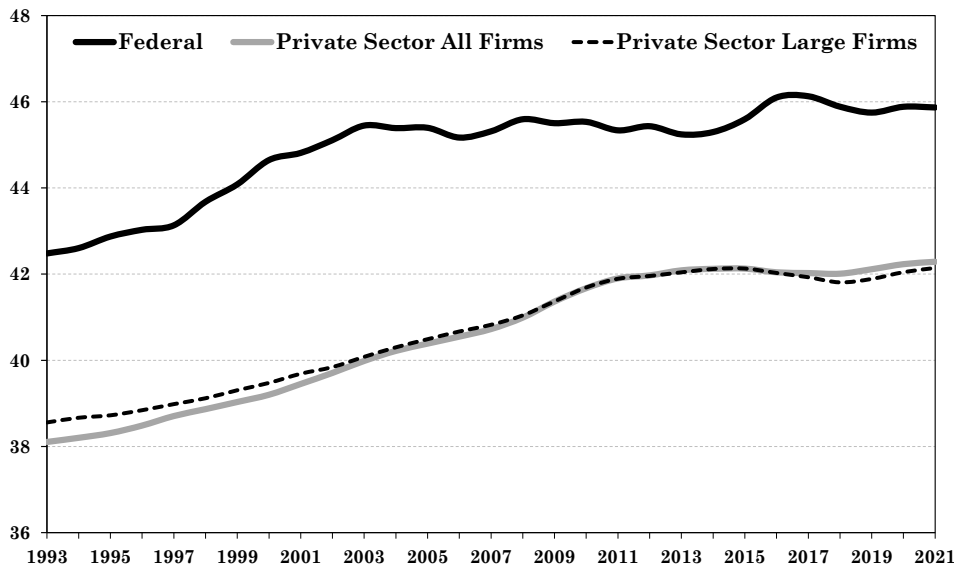
In supporting and elevating the frontline HR workforce, there will be a growing imperative to integrate a user-focused, customer-service mindset as OPM, GSA, and other agencies continue to develop new tools, templates, guidance, and authorities for Agency use. The Administration's work to socialize and drive adoption of the growing suite of human capital dashboards from OPM and GSA discussed in this chapter is a strong illustration of this approach. Looking ahead, all such tools—new hiring authorities, assessments, data, templates, and best practices—should be thoughtfully designed for easy application by the HR workforce at the component and subcomponent level, with accessible guidance on when and how they should be used by other management and workforce enablers and decision-makers. Adopting this mindset will reinforce a core related goal: ensuring that a user-focused orientation pervades applicant experience as well.

As leaders work to raise the profile of the HR function in Government, HR leaders must be on the lookout for

opportunities to integrate a strategic human capital lens into other functional domains. The CHCO Council is a crucial tool for cross-agency collaboration around workforce issues. Looking ahead, in addition to ensuring that CHCOs are partnering with other “C-suite” leaders in their agencies—such as Chief Information Officers, Chief Financial Officers, and Chief Data Officers—the CHCO

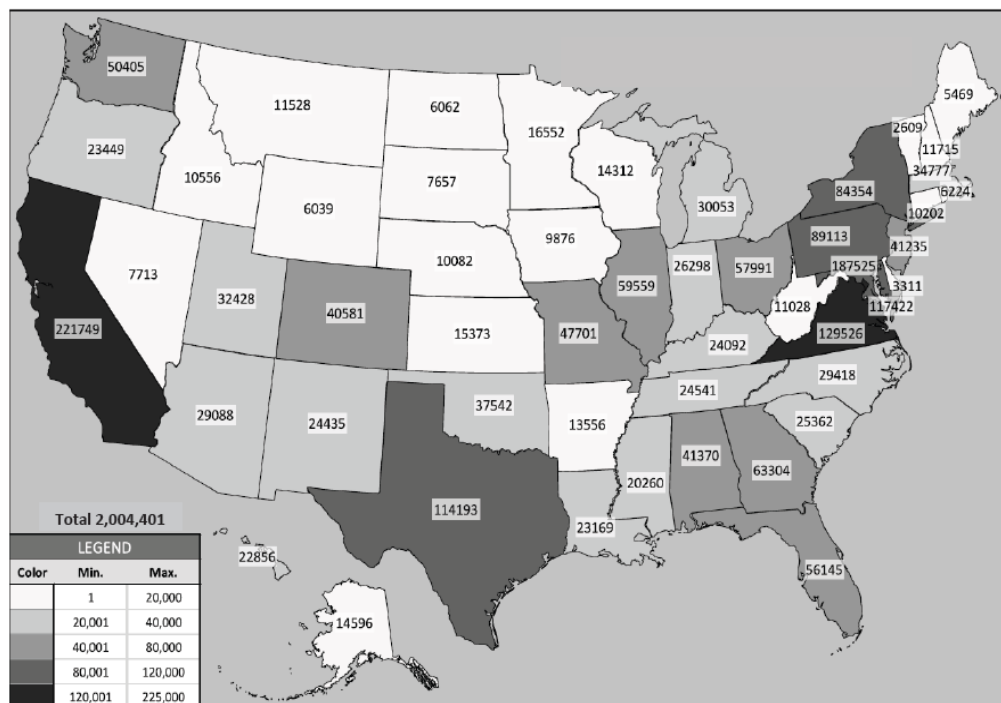
Council as a body can also explore new opportunities to support the human capital management dimensions of the other CXO councils serving these roles. There may also be opportunities to align recurrent review processes by leveraging the Human Capital Operating Plan review process, to reinforce and better inform OMB’s annual Strategic Reviews of Agency Strategic Plans.

Chart 14-6. Average Age by Year for Federal and Private Sectors



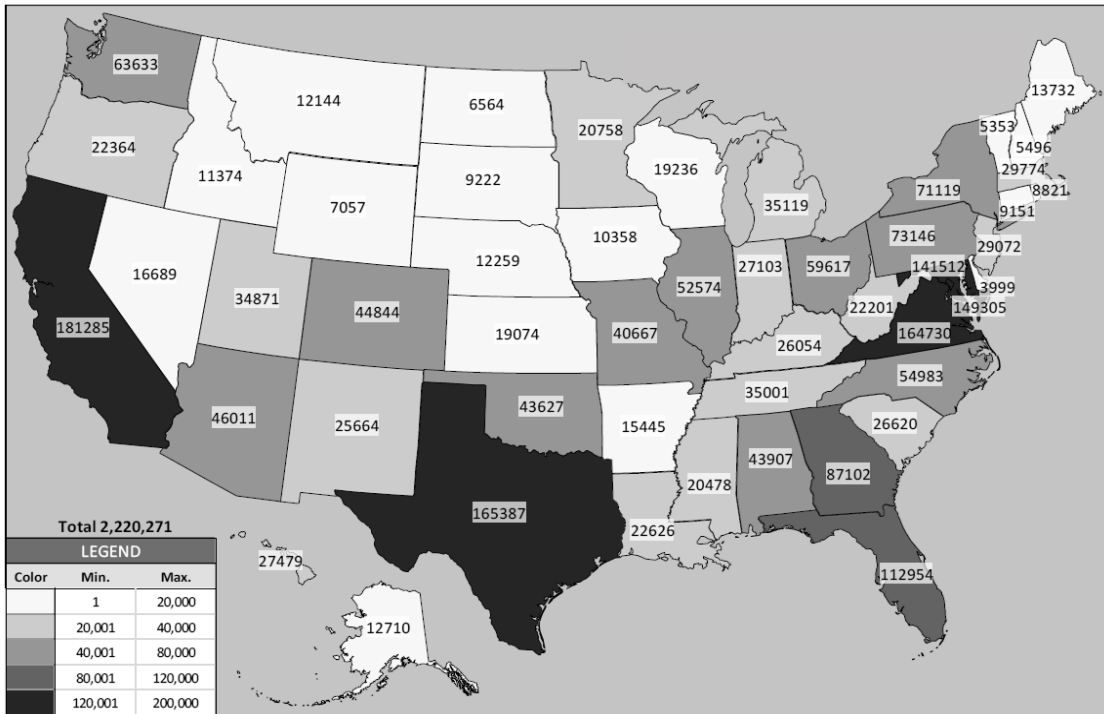
Source: 1992-2023 Current Population Survey, IPUMS-CPS, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.
 Notes: Federal excludes the military and Postal Service, but includes all other Federal workers. Private Sector excludes the self-employed. Neither category includes State and local government workers. Large firms have at least 1,000 workers. This analysis is limited to full-time, full-year workers, i.e. those with at least 1,500 annual hours of work and presents three-year averages.

Chart 14-7. Government-wide On-Board U.S. Distribution, October 1978



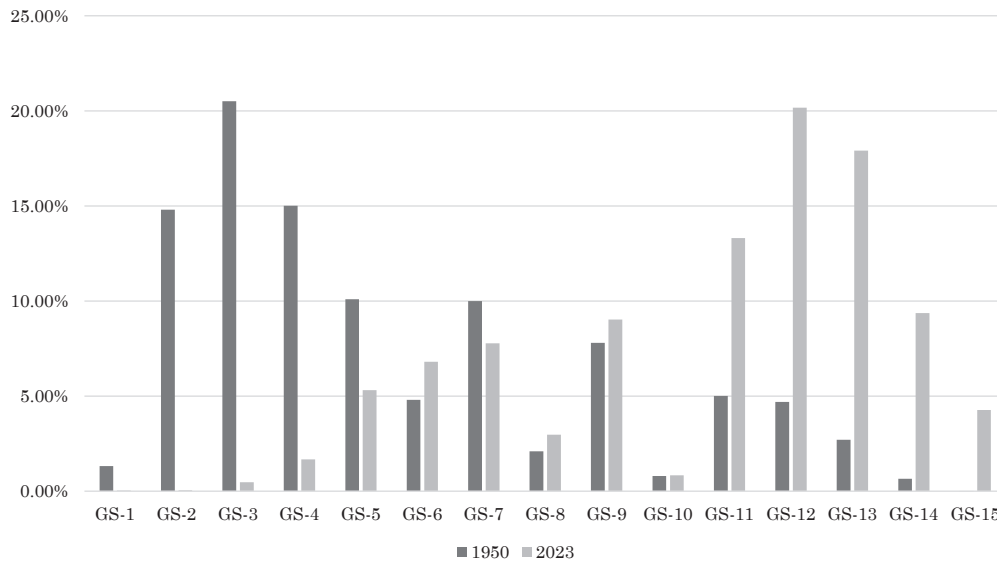
Source: Office of Personnel Management

Chart 14-8. Government-wide On-Board US Distribution, September 2023



Source: Office of Personnel Management

Chart 14-9. The Changing General Schedule Workforce



Source: Office of Personnel Management

