Federal Hiring

Sequestration, furloughs and pay freezes dominate the news and can affect government’s ability to hire and retain top talent. The federal government needs to maintain active, healthy hiring levels, if it is to preserve a world-class workforce. So how many people did the federal government hire last year, and how does that number compare to recent trends? Which government agencies are doing the most hiring? What is the profile of the 2012 hiring class compared to the federal workforce as a whole? The Partnership for Public Service analyzed recent federal hiring and employment data to answer these questions, and more.

SIZE OF THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE

The number of new employees each year does not represent the number of “new” jobs added to the federal government, as most new employees fill vacancies left by those leaving federal service.

RECENT HIRING AND SEPARATION TRENDS

While hiring is down from previous years, the federal government still hired almost 90 thousand people in fiscal 2012. Hiring levels varied across federal agencies: 26 out of the 39 medium and large agencies (those with 1,000 or more employees) hired fewer people in fiscal 2012 than they did in fiscal 2011, and the remaining 13 agencies increased hiring that year.

PERCENT OF TOTAL NEW EMPLOYEES BY AGENCY

86.8% of new employees were hired by ten agencies.

77.7% of new employees were hired by Defense and Security-related agencies.

40.8% of new employees were hired by Department of Defense agencies.
A profile of recent federal hires

Who is being hired is important to our nation’s millions of job seekers and to the hiring managers responsible for planning the federal workforce of tomorrow. This section profiles the major characteristics of fiscal 2012’s class of new employees and compares these characteristics to the composition of the total federal workforce.

### Top 10 Occupational Groups for New Federal Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>PERCENT OF TOTAL NEW EMPLOYEES</th>
<th>NEW EMPLOYEES</th>
<th>TOTAL EMPLOYEES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical, Hospital, Dental and Public Health</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>4,152</td>
<td>19,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Administrative, Clerical and Office Services</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>2,342</td>
<td>13,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>5,349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous Occupations</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>5,227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Age Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>NEW EMPLOYEES</th>
<th>TOTAL FEDERAL WORKFORCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 25</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 64</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Race and Ethnicity

- **White:** 66.9%
- **Black or African American:** 16.9%
- **Hispanic or Latino:** 8.1%
- **Asian:** 4.9%
- **American Indian or Alaska Native:** 1.4%
- **Mixed Race:** 1.2%
- **Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander:** 0.5%

### Gender

- **Female:** 59.2%
- **Male:** 40.8%

The percentage of new female employees in 2012 was 40.8 percent. This percentage has fluctuated slightly in the last five years, ranging from 38.5 percent in 2011 to 42.7 percent in 2008.

### Disability Status

- **Employees with Disabilities:** 11.6%
- **Employees without Disabilities:** 88.4%

**Data Sources:** Unless otherwise noted below, all data refer to non-seasonal, full-time, permanent federal civilian employees excluding USPS. FedScope Database (fedscope.opm.gov), U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Sept. 2012.


Race and Ethnicity, Disability Status, and Education Level: data refer to Partnership for Public Service analysis of the Central Personnel Data File (now called EHRI-SDM) for new hires in 2011.


Location/D.C. metro: Are federal workers underpaid? Hearing before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, 112th Cong., 2011.
In 2009, President Obama issued executive order #13518, calling for increased veterans hiring within the federal government.

The General Schedule (GS) is a 15-level, government-wide pay and classification system used for the majority of the federal workforce, and when combined with figures from the Senior Executive Service (SES), provide a helpful look into the seniority of government workers. The largest number of new employees were hired at the GS-5 level, at 12,990.

In fiscal 2011, the percentage of advanced degree holders among new employees exceeded the percentage of the total workforce with those degrees.

In comparison to the private sector, the federal government hires a greater percentage of veterans.

- Private-sector baseline: 1x
- Veterans: 3x
- Disabled veterans: 7x
- Severely injured veterans: 10x
In analyzing federal hiring data, the Partnership finds:

- In absolute numbers, the federal workforce shrunk last year.
- The majority of new hires are into professional positions (e.g., STEMM) where competition for highly skilled individuals is steep.
- Just four defense and security-related agencies (Defense, Justice, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security) accounted for more than three out of every four new hires.
- Though these differences are slight, the share of recent new hires held by females or individuals identifying as Hispanic or African American was smaller than their share of the total federal workforce. Veterans and individuals identifying as White or Asian had higher representation in the recent hiring class than in the total federal workforce.

It may be tempting to think that simply because hiring levels were so low last year, the quality and characteristics of new hires should receive less attention. Yet the present reduced-hiring climate may be here to stay, and the hired class of fiscal 2012 will be government’s future leaders. This means that in addition to immediate implications for citizen services, just who the federal government hires today will have long-term impact on our nation’s ability to meet its future challenges.

For further information on best hiring practices, see “What’s My Role: A Step-by-Step Hiring Guide for Federal Managers.” Available at ourpublicservice.org/publications.

The Partnership for Public Service is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works to revitalize our federal government by inspiring a new generation to serve and by transforming the way government works. For further information about the Partnership, visit ourpublicservice.org.