



DATA REPORT

Security: What Americans want from a job

**For The Center for State and Local Government Excellence
By Princeton Survey Research Associates International**

December 2007



We know that state and local governments are facing a massive exodus of knowledge workers, one-third of whom will be eligible to retire in the next five to ten years. At the same time, most state and local governments have done little to prepare themselves for a highly competitive employment market.

To learn more about what benefits and characteristics are important to prospective employees, the Center for State and Local Government Excellence commissioned a public opinion poll of 1200 Americans. The findings reinforce the edge that state and local governments have in the areas of health insurance and retirement plans. At the same time, fiscal pressures require governments to be more creative than ever to attract, retain, and develop their work force while also maintaining high quality benefits.

The Center seeks to raise awareness of the opportunities individuals have to make a difference to society by working in state and local government. With financial support from the ICMA Retirement Corporation, the Center already has undertaken authoritative research on pressing issues related to financing pensions and retirement plans, retiree health care, and related benefit issues.

The results of this poll show that health insurance, job security, and retirement income are top priorities for job hunters today. Look for more information about the Center's latest research studies, best practices, and news on the its web site, <http://www.slge.org>.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth K. Kellar".

Elizabeth K. Kellar
Executive Director
Center for State and Local Government Excellence

Security: What Americans want from a job

FOR THE CENTER FOR STATE AND
LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXCELLENCE
BY PRINCETON SURVEY RESEARCH
ASSOCIATES INTERNATIONAL

Executive Summary

It is not (just) the money

When it comes to what's important in a job in America these days, money isn't everything. It is not even near the top of the list. But having a health insurance plan is. In fact, security and certainty in many forms are the consistent theme as Americans think about jobs in the 21st Century.

Whether that security comes from health insurance, job security, the promise of a retirement income or clear work policies, Americans want a lot more than just a paycheck from their employment. This is one of the findings from a new national survey for The Center for State and Local Government Excellence, examining attitudes toward employment and work in the early years of the 21st Century.

In another key set of findings, Americans say jobs in state and local government offer better benefits, better job security and a better chance to make a contribution to society than private jobs. Private jobs offer better opportunities for innovation, greater chances to work with the best people and better opportunities for promotion. The public is divided on which offers the best compensation.

These are among the findings from a new nationwide, representative survey of 1,200 adults age 18 and older in the continental United States, conducted by landline and cellular phone October 24, 2007–November 4, 2007, by Princeton Survey Research Associates International. For results based on total sample, the overall margin of sampling error is plus or minus three percentage points. A more detailed description of the survey methodology is included in the Appendix of this report.

The Results

Given a list of 15 benefits and characteristics that may be important in choosing a job, Americans put the health insurance plan offered with the job at the very top, with 84 percent saying it is very important. With the broad public discussion of rapidly rising health care costs and the burden of being uninsured, getting health insurance with the job is quite important. Job security and clarity in the rules at work are almost as important, each mentioned by 82 percent of all Americans.¹ Continuing with the top themes, the retirement or pension plan offered with the job came in fourth, named as very important by 76 percent of the public.

In what seems to be a contrast with the top themes, the fifth-ranked value for job is working in a *flexible, family-friendly workplace*, named by 71 percent. (Contrary to what some might argue, this is a value shared by men and women, although women do value it a bit more highly: 75 percent very important for women versus 67 percent for men.) What is especially interesting in this context is that this response is not just another way of way of saying one would like additional time-off: the *amount of vacation time* was ranked 15th out of 15 values, with only 46 percent saying it is very important.

Clustered next, with more than three in five saying the characteristic is very important, is a group of somewhat unrelated job characteristics. A total of 69 percent say *getting quick decisions on issues at work* is important, while 68 percent say it is *working with talented managers*. About two-thirds (66 percent) say *having the potential for promotions* is very important with the same number saying *being creative and intellectually stimulated* is.

And then comes money: *How much one is paid, the total compensation* comes in with 65 percent saying it is very important. That is almost the same as the 64 percent who say *making a contribution to society* is very important in the job.

Table 1: Importance of Job Characteristics

	Very Important %	Somewhat Important %	Not too/Not At All %	Don't know/Refused %
The health insurance plan	84	12	3	1
Having job security	82	14	3	1
Being in an environment with clear policies and procedures	82	15	2	1
The retirement or pension plan	76	19	3	1
A flexible, family-friendly workplace	71	22	5	2
Getting quick decisions on issues at work	69	26	4	2
Working with talented managers	68	25	5	2
Having the potential for promotions	66	29	5	1
Being creative and intellectually stimulated	66	29	4	2
How much one is paid, the total compensation	65	31	2	1
Making a contribution to society	64	31	5	1
Having a reasonable commute to work	63	30	5	2
Having independence and personal autonomy	57	34	4	4
Working with others from a diverse set of backgrounds	50	32	15	2
The amount of vacation time	46	43	11	1

Across these many job characteristics, there are differences among demographic groups, but fewer than one might expect. Health insurance (89 percent v. 78 percent) and a retirement plan (81 percent v. 72 percent) are more important to women than men, as is a family-friendly workplace, mentioned earlier.

Fully eight of the characteristics are more important to minority Americans than to white Americans and none are less important.

Across age groups, there are some differences and many are in the direction one would expect. For example, *having the potential for promotions* is very important to those in Gen X (74 percent of those ages 18–29), compared with only 58 percent of Baby Boomers (age 42–61) who see it that way. On the other hand, job security is also more important to the Gen X group (88 percent) than the Boomers (79 percent).

One demographic that does make a difference is who one currently works for. There are differences among those who now work for private business, for a non-profit or for government at some level. For example, the retirement plan at work is very important to 84 percent of government employees and to just 72 percent of those in private business and 73 percent of those who work for non-profits.

Table 2: Job Characteristic by Current Employer

% saying it is very important	Currently working for:		
	Private Business	Non-Profit	Government
The retirement or pension plan	72	73	84
Getting quick decisions on issues at work	75	56	63
How much one is paid, the total compensation	70	58	59
Making a contribution to society	58	71	74

Seventy-five percent of those who work for private business say *getting quick decisions on issues at work* is very important, compared with only 56 percent of those at non-profits and 63 percent of those in government posts.

Cash compensation is far more important to those in private business (70 percent) than those in government (59 percent) or non-profits (58 percent). Conversely, *making a contribution to society* is very important to 74 percent of government employees and 71 percent of those at non-profits, compared with only 58 percent to those in business.

Who's on first: business or government?

If Americans say various job characteristics have varying importance, how then do they compare jobs in the private sector versus jobs in state and local government on many of the same dimensions? And the answer is... a divided verdict.

In several key areas, Americans see state and local jobs as clearly offering a better option. For example, in terms of overall *job benefits*, a clear majority of the public (58 percent) says state and local government is better. Twenty-three percent see no difference and 14 percent say private jobs are better. The numbers are almost exactly the same for *job security*, where 58 percent say state and local careers are better.

From the public's view, jobs in private business are substantially better on two dimensions. First, 60 percent say private sector jobs offer better opportunities for encouraging innovation and creativity, while only 11 percent say the same for government jobs. Second, 52 percent say private jobs offer the opportunity to work with the best and brightest people, with only 12 percent saying that for government employment.

The split is less substantial on other aspects of work. In terms of opportunities for promotion, 40 percent say private business is best, but 25 percent say state and local government and 26 percent see no difference.

In terms of compensation, the basic paycheck, the division is narrow: 36 percent say private business is better, 33 percent see no difference and 26 percent say state and local government is better.

In terms of making a contribution to society, the split is again narrow, but tilted toward government. A total of 36 percent say state and local government careers are better for making a contribution to soci-

Table 3: Comparing Business Jobs versus Government Jobs

	State/ Local Govt. is Better %	Same/ No dif- ference %	Private Sector Better %	Don't know/ Refused %
Benefits	58	23	14	6
Job security	58	23	13	5
Opportunities for promotion	25	26	40	8
Compensation	26	33	36	5
Working with the best and brightest people	12	30	52	6
Encouraging innovation and creativity	11	23	60	6
Making a contribution to society	36	30	27	6

ety, while 30 percent see no difference. And almost as many, 27 percent, say private business is better on this front.

While some might argue these views reflect stereotypes, one analysis of the results suggests that is not the case. Looking at the results of these questions among workers by their current employers, the overall views of the relative benefits of different jobs are basically consistent across those actually holding such jobs. For example, on the question of which is better in terms of *benefits*, more than three in five of the private workers (62 percent) and government workers (63 percent) agree that government jobs are better on this dimension. In terms of *encouraging innovation and creativity*, a majority in all job categories say private business is better: private employees (66 percent), non-profit (77 percent) and government (56 percent).

APPENDICES

Facing the Future 2007: Final Topline

FOR THE CENTER FOR STATE AND
LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXCELLENCE
BY PRINCETON SURVEY RESEARCH
ASSOCIATES INTERNATIONAL

(November 19, 2007)

N = 1,202 adults 18 and older, including 202 cell phone users

Field period: October 24, 2007–November 4, 2007

Margin of Error: plus or minus 3 percentage points for results based on Total [n = 1,202]

Margin of Error: plus or minus 4 percentage points for results based on those who are employed [n = 680]

Job: #27065

Notes: Because percentages are rounded, they may not total 100%. An asterisk (*) indicates less than 1%.

Q6 Are you now employed full-time, part-time, retired, or are you not employed for pay?

%	
50	Employed full-time
10	Employed part-time
23	Retired
13	Not employed for pay
2	Disabled (VOL)
1	Student (VOL)
1	Other (VOL)
*	Refused

Q7 Are you employed by a private business, a non-profit organization, the federal government, the state government or the local government?

Based on those who are employed [N=680]

%	
65	Private business
9	Non-profit
5	Federal government
10	State government
7	Local government
5	Refused

Q9 Now, I'd like to ask what you think is important in a job. Whether or not you are employed, we would like to know what you think. When you think about a job, how important is... [INSERT ITEM. ASK a-c first. THEN ROTATE.] - very important, somewhat important, not too important or not important at all?

	Very %	Somewhat %	Not too %	Not at all %	Don't know/refused %
a. How much one is paid, the total compensation	65	31	2	*	1
b. The health insurance plan	84	12	2	1	1
c. The retirement or pension plan	76	19	2	1	1
d. The amount of vacation time	46	43	8	3	1
e. A flexible, family-friendly workplace	71	22	3	2	2
f. Having job security	82	14	2	1	1
g. Having the potential for promotions	66	29	4	1	1
h. Working with talented managers	68	25	4	1	2
i. Being in an environment with clear policies and procedures	82	15	1	1	1
j. Being creative and intellectually stimulated	66	29	3	1	2
k. Having independence and personal autonomy	57	34	3	1	4
l. Getting quick decisions on issues at work	69	26	3	1	2
m. Working with others from a diverse set of backgrounds	50	32	9	6	2
n. Having a reasonable commute to work	63	30	3	2	2
o. Making a contribution to society	64	31	3	2	1

Q17 Now I would like to ask you to compare careers with different employers. (First/Next,) in terms of [INSERT ITEM]... is a career in state and local government better; is a career in private businesses better, or are they both about the same?

	State/local gov't is better %	Same/(vol) No difference %	Private sector better %	Don't know/refused %
a. Compensation	26	33	36	5
b. Benefits	58	23	14	6
c. Job security	58	23	13	5
d. Opportunities for promotion	25	26	40	8
e. Making a contribution to society	36	30	27	6
f. Encouraging innovation and creativity	11	23	60	6
g. Working with the best and brightest people	12	30	52	6

Methodological Report: Facing the Future Survey

FOR THE CENTER FOR STATE AND
LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXCELLENCE
BY PRINCETON SURVEY RESEARCH
ASSOCIATES INTERNATIONAL

November 2007

Summary

The Facing the Future Survey, sponsored by the Center for State and Local Government Excellence, obtained telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 1,202 adults living in the continental United States. The survey was conducted by Princeton Survey Research International. The interviews were conducted in English by Princeton Data Source, LLC from October 24 to November 4, 2007. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is $\pm 3.2\%$.

Details on the design, execution and analysis of the survey are discussed below.

Design and Data Collection Procedures

Sample Design

A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in the continental United States who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) according to PSRAI specifications.

Numbers for the landline sample were selected with probabilities in proportion to their share of listed telephone households from active blocks (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained three or more residential directory listings. The cellular sample was not list-assisted, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from 1000-blocks dedicated to cellular service according to the Telcordia database.

Contact Procedures

Interviews were conducted from October 24 to November 4, 2007. As many as 10 attempts were made to

contact every sampled telephone number. Sample was released for interviewing in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger sample. Using replicates to control the release of sample ensures that complete call procedures are followed for the entire sample. Calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chance of making contact with potential respondents. Each household received at least one daytime call in an attempt to find someone at home.

For the landline sample, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest adult male currently at home. If no male was available, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest female at home. This systematic respondent selection technique has been shown to produce samples that closely mirror the population in terms of age and gender. For the cellular sample, interviews were conducted with the person who answered the phone. Interviewers verified that the person was an adult and in a safe place before administering the survey. Cellular sample respondents were offered a post-paid cash incentive for their participation.

Weighting and analysis

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for sample designs and patterns of non-response that might bias results. A two-stage weighting procedure was used to weight this dual-frame sample. A first-stage weight of 0.5 was applied to all dual-users to account for the fact that they were included in both sample frames.² All other cases were given a first-stage weight of 1. The second stage of weighting balanced sample demographics to population parameters. The sample was balanced—by form—to match national population parameters for sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region (U.S. Census definitions), population density and telephone usage. The basic weighting parameters came from a special analysis of the Census Bureau's 2006 Annual Social and Economic

Supplement (ASEC) that included all households in the continental United States that had a telephone. The cell phone usage parameter came from an analysis of the July-December 2006 National Health Interview Survey.

Weighting was accomplished using Sample Balancing, a special iterative sample weighting program that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables using a statistical technique called the *Deming Algorithm*. Weights were trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results. The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the national population. Table 1 compares weighted and unweighted sample distributions to population parameters.

Table 1: Sample Demographics

	Parameter	Unweighted	After First-stage	Weighted
Gender				
Male	48.2	45.7	46.0	47.3
Female	51.8	54.3	54.0	52.7
Age				
18–24	12.4	8.5	9.5	11.8
25–34	17.6	13.1	13.1	16.8
35–44	19.7	16.0	15.1	19.6
45–54	19.7	19.2	18.3	19.9
55–64	14.3	20.1	19.1	14.8
65+	16.3	23.1	24.8	17.2
Education				
Less than HS Graduate	14.5	8.1	9.7	12.4
HS Graduate	35.7	30.5	32.4	36.4
Some College	23.6	24.9	24.3	23.6
College Graduate	26.2	36.5	33.6	27.6
Race/Ethnicity				
White/not Hispanic	70.8	78.2	77.3	71.8
Black/not Hispanic	10.9	10.9	11.3	11.3
Hispanic	12.4	6.4	6.7	10.8
Other/not Hispanic	5.9	4.4	4.7	6.1
Region				
Northeast	18.6	19.1	19.1	19.0
Midwest	23.3	24.2	23.7	23.5
South	36.2	37.9	38.3	36.2
West	21.9	18.8	18.9	21.2

County Pop. Density				
1–Lowest	20.1	22.6	23.6	20.3
2	20.0	22.4	21.8	20.4
3	20.1	21.8	21.3	20.4
4	20.2	20.0	20.0	20.2
5 - Highest	19.6	13.2	13.3	18.8
Phone Use				
LL only	26.0	22.1	33.9	25.7
Dual	60.0	69.3	53.0	61.8
Cell only	14.0	8.6	13.2	12.5

Effects of Sample Design on Statistical Inference

Post-data collection statistical adjustments require analysis procedures that reflect departures from simple random sampling. PSRAI calculates the effects of these design features so that an appropriate adjustment can be incorporated into tests of statistical significance when using these data. The so-called “design effect” or *deff* represents the loss in statistical efficiency that results from systematic non-response. The total sample design effect for this survey is 1.29.

PSRAI calculates the composite design effect for a sample of size *n*, with each case having a weight, *w_i* as:

$$deff = \frac{n \sum_{i=1}^n w_i^2}{\left(\sum_{i=1}^n w_i \right)^2}$$

In a wide range of situations, the adjusted *standard error* of a statistic should be calculated by multiplying the usual formula by the square root of the design effect (\sqrt{deff}). Thus, the formula for computing the 95% confidence interval around a percentage is:

$$\hat{p} \pm \left(\sqrt{deff} \times 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{n}} \right)$$

where \hat{p} is the sample estimate and *n* is the unweighted number of sample cases in the group being considered.

The survey’s *margin of error* is the largest 95% confidence interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample—the one around 50%. For example, the margin of error for the entire sample is ± 3.2%. This means that in 95 out every 100 samples drawn

using the same methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 3.2 percentage points away from their true values in the population. The margin of error for estimates based on form 1 or form 2 respondents is $\pm 4.5\%$. It is important to remember that sampling fluctuations are only one possible source of error in a survey estimate. Other sources, such as respondent selection bias, questionnaire wording and reporting inaccuracy, may contribute additional error of greater or lesser magnitude.

Response Rate

Table 2 reports the disposition of all sampled telephone numbers ever dialed from the original telephone number samples. The response rate estimates the fraction of all eligible respondents in the sample that were ultimately interviewed. At PSRAI it is calculated by taking the product of three component rates:³

- Contact rate—the proportion of working numbers where a request for interview was made⁴
- Cooperation rate—the proportion of contacted numbers where a consent for interview was at least initially obtained, versus those refused
- Completion rate—the proportion of initially cooperating and eligible interviews that were completed

Thus the response rate for the land line sample was 19 percent. The response rate for the cellular sample was 23 percent.

Table 2: Sample Disposition

Landline	Cellphone	
14299	3300	Total Numbers Dialed
793	52	Business/Government/ Non-Residential
744	5	Fax/Modem
46	0	Cell phone
5209	1311	Other Not-Working
1178	61	Additional projected NW
6330	1871	Working numbers
44.3%	56.7%	Working Rate
352	12	No Answer
41	9	Busy
782	284	Answering Machine
84	27	Other Non-Contacts
5071	1540	Contacted numbers
80.1%	82.3%	Contact Rate
422	146	Callbacks
3372	869	Refusal—unknown eligibility
1277	525	Cooperating numbers
25.2%	34.1%	Cooperation Rate
203	76	Language Barrier
0	206	Screenouts/Child's Cell phone
1074	243	Eligible numbers
84.1%	46.3%	Eligibility Rate
74	41	Refusal 2—Refusal after case determined eligible
1000	202	Completes
93.1%	83.1%	Completion Rate
18.8%	23.3%	Response Rate

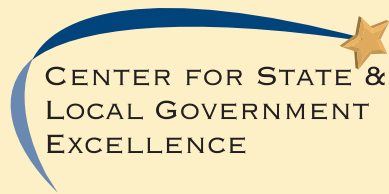
Endnotes

1 In general, differences between survey results are discussed if the differences are significant at the 95% confidence level. In this case, there is no significant difference between 84% and 82%.

2 Dual-users are defined as [a] landline respondents who have a working cell phone, or [b] cell phone respondents who have a regular land line phone where they currently live.

3 PSRAI's disposition codes and reporting are consistent with the American Association for Public Opinion Research standards.

4 PSRAI assumes that 75 percent of cases that result in a constant disposition of "No answer" or "Busy" are actually not working numbers.



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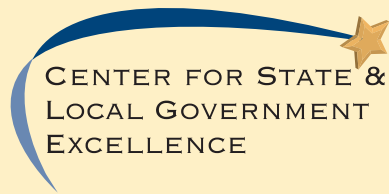
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Helping state and local governments become knowledgeable and competitive employers

About the Center for State and Local Government Excellence

The Center for State and Local Government Excellence helps state and local governments become knowledgeable and competitive employers so they can attract and retain a talented and committed workforce. The Center identifies best practices and conducts research on competitive employment practices, workforce development, pensions, retiree health security, and financial planning. The Center also brings state and local leaders together with respected researchers and features the latest demographic data on the aging work force, research studies, and news on health care, recruitment, and succession planning on its web site, www.slge.org.

The Center's five research priorities are:

- Retirement plans and savings
- Retiree health care
- Financial education for employees
- Talent strategies and innovative employment practices
- Workforce development