Fiscal Year 2021

Statewide Human Resources Management Strategy Roll-up Report

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Executive Summary

Background

Executive branch agencies with more than 100 employees must submit an annual agency human resource management report. We encourage agencies to use the [workforce performance measures data file](#) that State HR produces to complete their agency report analysis. The workforce performance measures data report includes data on all executive branch agencies, including those with fewer than 100 employees.

Agencies submitted HR management reports using an online survey. The survey asked 78 questions related to the following topics:

- Workforce challenges and strategies
- Workforce representation
- Job seeker and candidate experience
- Employee development and performance evaluation
- Employee experience and retention
- Employee turnover

Statewide HR Management Strategy Roll-up Report

Our Statewide HR Management Strategy Roll-up Report uses a combination of agency HR management report survey responses and workforce performance measure data to analyze the workforce and summarize agency and enterprise strategies.

This report pertains to the executive branch only. It does not include higher education institutions or the legislative and judicial branches. The following 38 agencies, representing 98.1% of the state workforce, submitted reports for fiscal year 2021:

Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals	Deaf and Hard of Hearing Youth
Department of Agriculture	Department of Children, Youth & Families
Department of Commerce	Department of Corrections
Department of Ecology	Department of Enterprise Services
Department of Financial Institutions	Department of Fish & Wildlife
Department of Health	Department of Labor & Industries
Department of Licensing	Department of Natural Resources
Department of Retirement Systems	Department of Revenue
Department of Social & Health Services	Department of Transportation
Department of Veterans Affairs	Employment Security Department
Liquor and Cannabis Board	Military Department
Office of Administrative Hearings	Office of Financial Management
Office of the State Auditor	Office of the Attorney General

Office of The Secretary of State
State Investment Board
State Parks & Recreation Commission
Student Achievement Council
Utilities & Transportation Commission
Washington State Patrol

State Health Care Authority
State Lottery Commission
State School for the Blind
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Washington State Gambling Commission
Washington Technology Solutions

Strategy briefing highlights

State HR staff analyzed data and agency survey responses, compiling the results to summarize agency and enterprise priorities and strategies.

Here are the key highlights:

- The top three agency priorities are:

    1. Recruitment and retention
    2. Diversity, equity and inclusion
    3. Pandemic-related burnout, isolation and an increase in workload

- The state workforce remained stable during the Great Resignation, a phenomenon that describes record numbers of people reprioritizing their lives and leaving their jobs.

- Internships are the most common employment strategy that transitioning service members use to find jobs after they leave military service.

- The percentage of people with disabilities in the executive branch workforce has increased over the past two fiscal years.

- Agencies continue to make progress in LGBTQ+-related matters such as gender-affirming restroom language.

- Agencies state that communication is the most mentioned strategy to create a positive experience for job seekers and candidates.

- Many agencies host internal employee resource groups and affinity groups (these are groups based on an employee's personal interests) to support the business and personal interests of their employees.

- Agencies report progress with developing succession plans to identify and develop future leaders.

- Increased remote work has accelerated a trend toward more frequent feedback and greater focus on career development.

- Although COVID-19 continues to pose unique challenges, the 2021 employee engagement survey results indicate that employees show continued resilience and adaptation to the "new normal."

- Record numbers of state employees continue to work remotely full time. Many agencies are exploring how to continue supporting these substantial telework rates while planning to safely reopen the workplace with hybrid work models.

- Tuition reimbursement programs are a valuable recruitment and retention tool.

- Many agencies include complaint filing procedures within their diversity, equity and inclusion policies.

- The best employee retention strategies directly connect to employee feedback and preferences.

- The statewide exit survey helps agencies learn why employees leave.

- Total turnover has decreased more than 1 percentage point over the past five fiscal years.

For questions about the Statewide HR Management Strategy Roll-up Report, contact SHRPlanning@ofm.wa.gov.
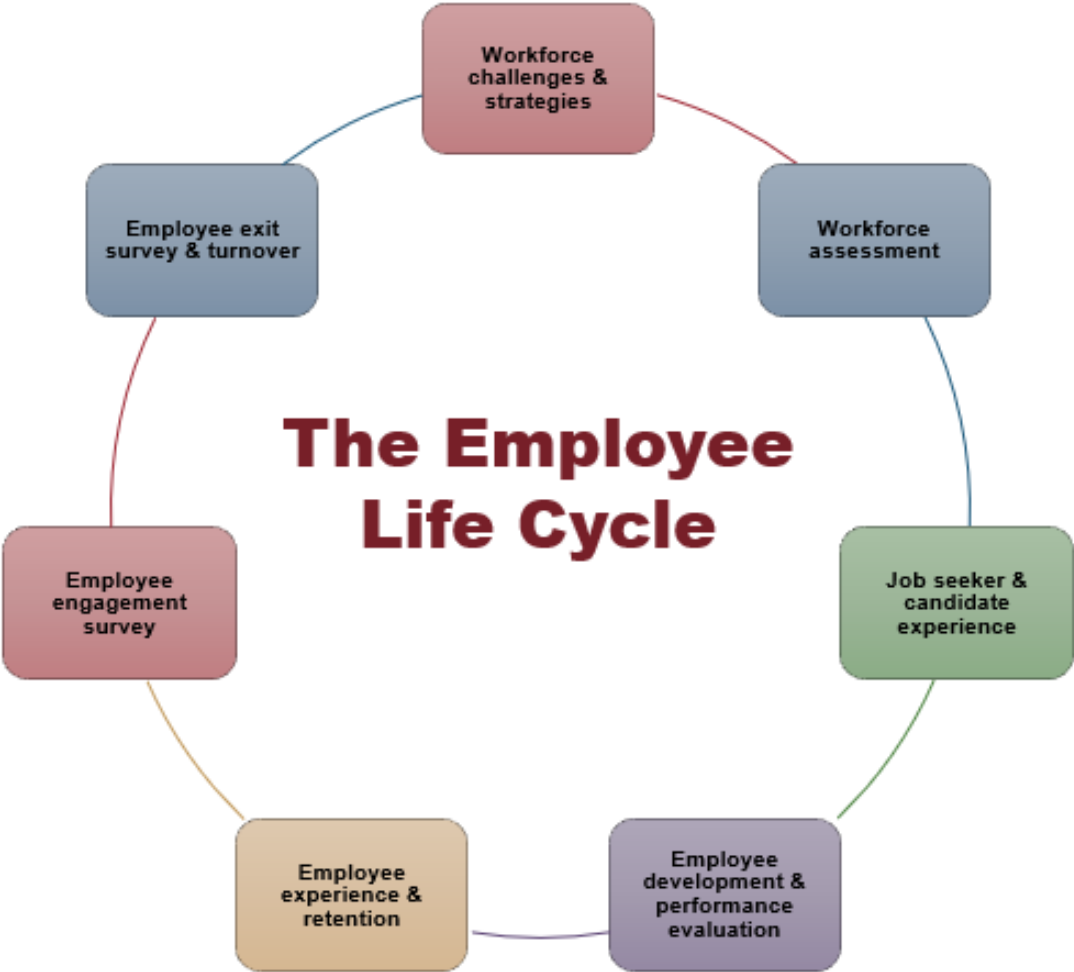
The employee life cycle

We've restructured the report this year to follow the employee life cycle. The employee life cycle covers the entire relationship between an employee and the employer.

We begin by assessing key **workforce challenges and strategies.**

Next, we complete a **workforce assessment** to prepare for future staffing needs.

By taking the time to evaluate the employee life cycle and understand our current metrics, we can make data-driven decisions and meaningful change to create a workplace that's more enjoyable, engaging and productive.

After the workforce assessment, we analyze the **job seeker and candidate experience**; **employee development and performance evaluation**; **employee experience and retention**; **employee engagement;** and, finally, **employee turnover**.

The Employee Life Cycle

- Workforce challenges & strategies
- Workforce assessment
- Job seeker & candidate experience
- Employee development & performance evaluation
- Employee experience & retention
- Employee engagement survey
- Employee exit survey & turnover
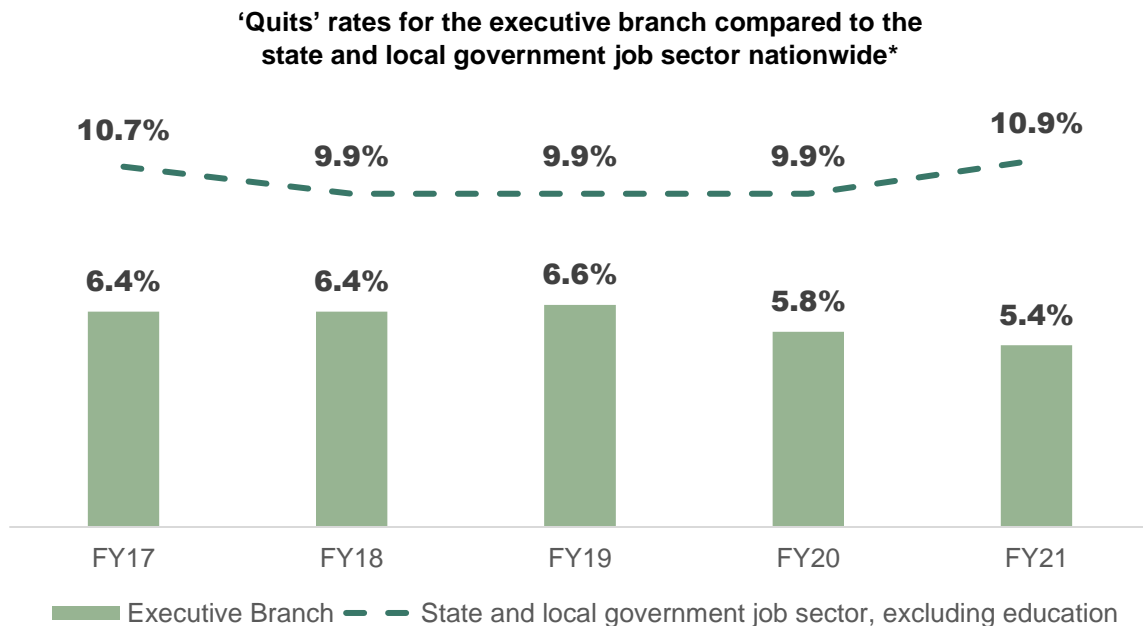
Workforce challenges and strategies

HR management report survey responses revealed the following most mentioned agency priorities:

1. Recruitment and retention (23 of 38 agencies reporting)
2. Diversity, equity and inclusion (10 of 38 agencies reporting)
3. Pandemic-related burnout, isolation and an increase in workload (8 of 38 agencies reporting)

> *The state workforce has remained stable during the Great Resignation, a phenomenon that describes record numbers of people reprioritizing their lives and leaving their jobs.*

Recruitment and retention

The state workforce has remained stable during the Great Resignation, a phenomenon that describes record numbers of people reprioritizing their lives and leaving their jobs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 'quits' (employees who voluntary separate), increased nationwide from 9.9% in fiscal year 2020 to 10.9% in fiscal year 2021. This was for the state and local government job sector. During this same time, 'executive branch quits' (someone resigns or moves to another agency) decreased from 5.8% to 5.4%. Even though 'quits' decreased slightly for the executive branch workforce, agencies overwhelmingly report that recruitment and retention was their greatest challenge.

'Quits' rates for the executive branch compared to the state and local government job sector nationwide*

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
State and local government job sector	10.7%	9.9%	9.9%	9.9%	10.9%
Executive Branch	6.4%	6.4%	6.6%	5.8%	5.4%

Legend: Executive Branch — State and local government job sector, excluding education

*'Quits' are employees who left voluntarily, includes resignations and movement to another agency for permanent and intent to become permanent employees. It does **not** include retirements, layoffs, dismissals or transfers to another agency.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, not seasonally adjusted. Total U.S. state and local government job sector, excluding education.

With the increase of remote work and virtual interviews, job seekers and employees have more employment options and increasingly seek better opportunities.

Here's what State HR recommends:

- **Communicate what workers want.** Job seekers want flexibility, well-being and purpose as well as competitive pay, good working conditions and skills development. Recruiters need to communicate how the state will meet these expectations.
- **Promote the benefits of flexibility and work culture**. Most agencies provide flexible work hours and telecommuting options. Promoting these benefits will increase retention.
- **Promote the benefits of working for the state**. This means focusing on the many other benefits of working for the state: health insurance; retirement; vacation and sick leave; paid holidays; paid leave for jury or other civil duties; leave for military service; newborn, adoptive and emergency childcare leave; leadership opportunities; and learning and professional growth.
- **Promote the benefits of living in Washington**. Washington is a great place to live. Promote the culture, recreation, economic diversity, no state income tax and strong education.
- **Promote diversity in the workforce**. Diversity, equity and inclusion is a top priority for agencies. The goal is to recruit a diverse workforce that reflects the people we serve.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

Building respectful, supportive and inclusive work environments requires intentional effort on multiple fronts. Agencies must create environments that engage, motivate and support staff as they do their best work. Agencies must also address problems that stand in the way of respectful work environments and promote diversity, equity and inclusion in the services they provide.

> *Diversity, equity and inclusion must be incorporated into all stages of the employee life cycle.*

Agencies report diversity, equity and inclusion as a top priority. Specifically, they expect the workforce to reflect the diversity of the customers they serve.

- Representation of people of color and people with disabilities in the workforce continues to lag. These populations are also underrepresented in management positions across state government. While we've made progress to close these gaps, we have more work to do as a state.
- As the state's population becomes more diverse, agencies must continue to implement strategies to increase diversity.
- The state recognizes there are opportunities to improve our data collection and recruitment and retention strategies that could remove barriers to employment for underrepresented and historically marginalized groups.

What agencies are doing

- The Department of Transportation established diversity advisory groups that support diversity efforts throughout the agency. The agency currently has eight groups. Each facilitates diversity discussions and challenges within their area and the groups meet once a month. The goal is to sustain a work environment that values diversity by integrating the principles of respect and inclusion
- Washington Technology Solutions implemented a WIRED initiative (WaTech Inclusion, Respect, Equity, Diversity). The WIRED team creates awareness, educates and instills values that promote a more inclusive and respectful workplace by hosting sessions that include guest speakers and discussion. Employees may attend the live event or watch a recording. Each session invites employees to suggest topics for future discussion, volunteer to lead or participate in panel conversations and/or join the WIRED team.
- The Department of Ecology established a DEI respect design team to help create a culture of belonging for all employees.

What State HR recommends

- State HR will work closely with the statewide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council to help agencies create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce through strategy recommendations and best practices.
- State HR will continue to support statewide business resource groups that support diverse employees.

Pandemic-related stress, isolation and increased workloads

It has been a busy year for HR staff who continue to deal with pandemic-related workplace challenges. Several agencies report that employees feel isolated while teleworking and many report feeling stressed by increased workloads. Agencies continue to deal with COVID-19 challenges such as screening employees, reporting symptoms and mitigating outbreaks. Staffing shortages also created heavier workloads.

Agencies must make sure their employees are engaged, connected and appreciated while working remotely and prepare them to return to the workplace.

Many agencies reported creative solutions to keep employees connected.

What agencies are doing

- The Department of Retirement Systems hosted a drive-thru lunch event to boost employee engagement. Team members drove through and picked up their pre-ordered lunch. The event was well-attended and provided much needed interaction.
- The Employment Security Department provides staff with a wellness website and related resources. The department also limits the amount of overtime it allows.

- The Gambling Commission encourages employees to pick up the phone or make a video call as an alternative to sending another e-mail.
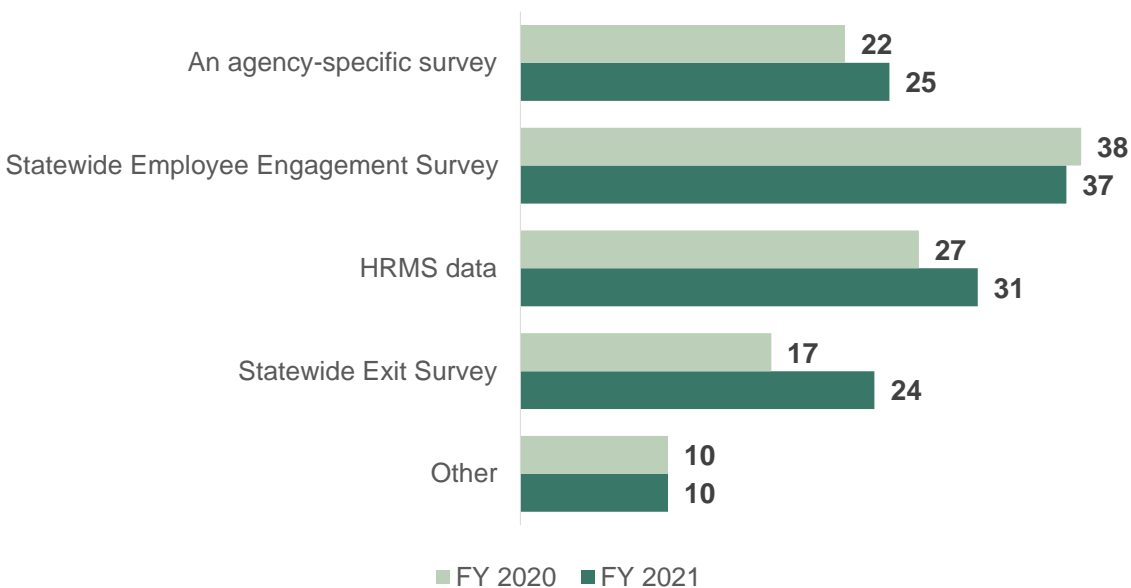
What State HR recommends

- **Stay connected while teleworking.** State HR heard that some employees find it difficult to maintain social connections in a virtual environment. (The employee engagement survey results support this.) Many multiagency telework committees are working on best practices and will release guidance soon.
- **Encourage the he Employee Assistance Program.** Remind your employees about the [Employee Assistance Program](). It's a free, confidential program created to promote the health, safety and well-being of public employees.

How we can measure success

It is important that we give employees the chance to provide feedback. Surveys remain the most used barometers to measure employee engagement and monitor progress toward agency goals. Fiscal year 2021 saw an increase from last year in agency-specific surveys, the statewide exit survey and HRMS data to measure success. Other resources we can use to measure success include the online recruiting system and direct employee feedback.

Tools we can use to measure success

Tool	FY 2020	FY 2021
An agency-specific survey	22	25
Statewide Employee Engagement Survey	38	37
HRMS data	27	31
Statewide Exit Survey	17	24
Other	10	10

Agencies use some of these tools to separate data into different groups. Many of the data sets include age, gender identity, LGBTQ+ status, race and ethnicity, supervisor status, county, disability status, veteran status and job classification. State HR analyzes differences between these groups to

look for possible inequities. We can then work with agencies to redirect resources or investment. In this way, we can create a workforce that includes and welcomes all employees.

What agencies are doing

- The Military Department conducts new employee surveys and 'stay' interviews to determine employee satisfaction and find ways to improve the work environment.
- The Department of Health surveys job applicants using the online recruiting system. It plans to use data to improve the candidate experience.
- The State School for the Blind uses exit interview data to make improvements.

What State HR recommends

- **Use employee engagement survey data to develop strategies.** For more information, visit the employee engagement survey website.
- **Conduct 'stay' interviews instead of exit interviews.** 'Stay' interviews focus on what the agency can do to help employees remain with the agency. Find out why your employees leave, where they go and build relationships with those who work there.
- **The virtual workforce data center.** Connect to several workforce data dashboards available on OFM's website. Use the data to help develop targeted strategies and inform workforce planning decisions.
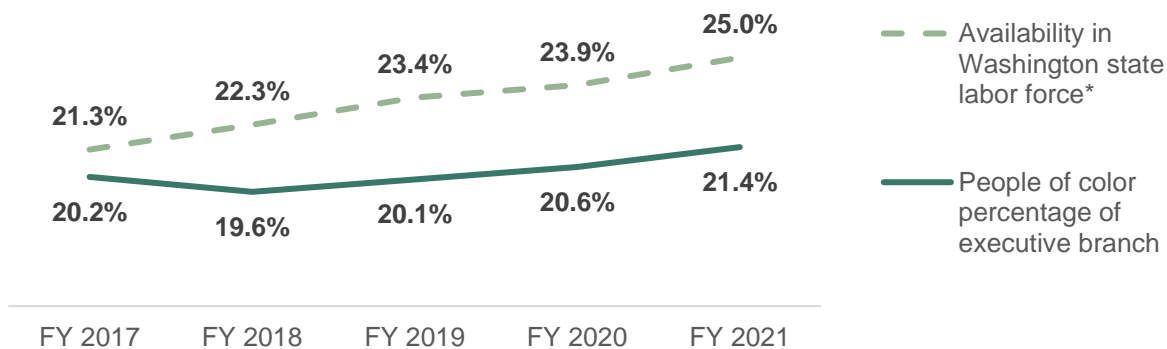
Workforce representation

Executive branch agencies must develop an annual affirmative action plan to address the underrepresentation of women, people of color, people with disabilities and veterans in the workforce. (Executive Order 12-02, 16-04, 17-01).

As the state's population becomes more diverse, agencies must keep implementing strategies to increase diversity.

People of color

People of color comprise 25% of Washington's labor force yet make up only 21.4% of the executive branch workforce. Even though this is a 1.2 percentage point improvement from fiscal year 2017, the gap is widening.

The people of color percentage employed by the executive branch remains below the available labor force

- – – Availability in Washington state labor force*

——— People of color percentage of executive branch

	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Availability	21.3%	22.3%	23.4%	23.9%	25.0%
People of color	20.2%	19.6%	20.1%	20.6%	21.4%

*American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates (Table ID: S2301). U.S. Census Bureau. Includes people of color in Washington's civilian labor force.

What agencies are doing

- The Department of Financial Institutions conducts an in-depth affirmative action review of all recruitments to look for trends and notifies leadership of their findings.
- The Employment Security Department participates in WorkSource events in places with diverse population.
- The State Parks and Recreation Commission is reviewing 2020 Census data to understand population demographics near 124 state parks – which is where most of their employees work.

What State HR recommends

- State HR will continue to provide agencies with semi-annual affirmative action utilization reports. This report highlights affirmative action data that we can use to assess the available workforce. State HR will also provide regular training, coaching and strategy consultation.
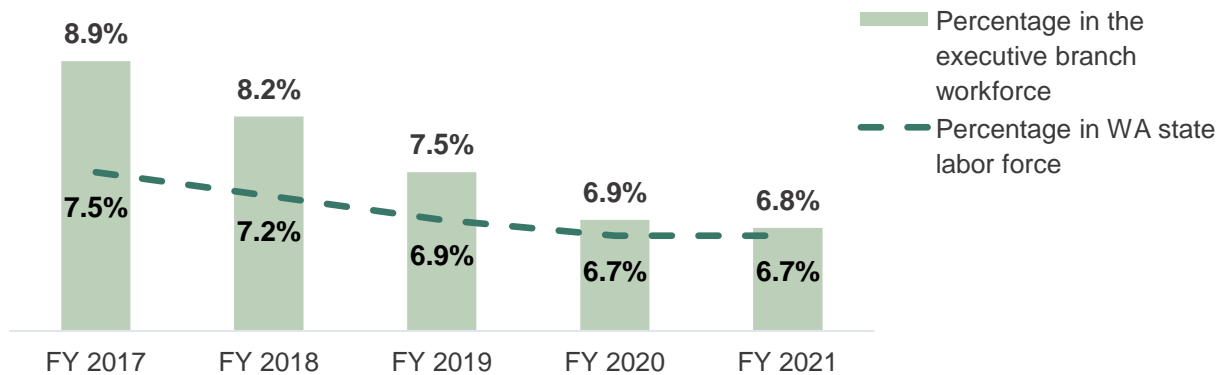
- We undertook a significant data improvement effort in 2019 to update our demographic data collection form and the Human Resources Management System data fields to be more accurate and inclusive. The launch of the My Demographics self-service tile within the statewide MyPortal pay and leave application was the final product to increase the accuracy and security of state employee demographic data. We completed Phase one of the MyPortal upgrades October 2020, with Phase two completed in spring 2021.
- State HR is partnering with DES to establish a way to regularly report our collected statewide demographic data for applicants and candidates. This will enhance the state's ability to identify barriers to inclusion and employment with the state.

Veterans, National Guard and reserve members

In 2019, Inslee signed an executive order that requires agencies to develop employment plans that include veterans, reservists, National Guard members and military spouses.

Internships are the most common employment strategy that transitioning service members can use to find jobs after they leave military service.

The percentage of veterans in the executive branch remains higher than those available in the state's labor force

Legend:
- Percentage in the executive branch workforce
- Percentage in WA state labor force

	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Executive branch workforce	8.9%	8.2%	7.5%	6.9%	6.8%
WA state labor force	7.5%	7.2%	6.9%	6.7%	6.7%

*American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata. U.S. Census Bureau. Includes all veterans in Washington's civilian labor force.

Veterans represent 6.8% of the workforce. This exceeds the available labor force. The percentage of veterans represented in the state workforce has decreased during the last five years and continues to trend downward.

Many agencies developed mechanisms to track employment opportunities to help transitioning service members find jobs (17 of 37 agencies reporting). Similarly, 17 agencies have strategies to attract National Guard and reserve members.

What agencies are doing

- The Department of Ecology, through the Veteran Conservation Corps, enabled 13 veterans and active-duty reservists to continue serving their communities by gaining new skills, certifications and experience in the environmental field. While serving in the program, participants earn a living allowance and an AmeriCorps scholarship.
- The Department of Social and Health Services developed temporary staffing services that hired 21 transitioning military members during the year.
- The Employment Security Department changed the minimum qualifications for entry-level unemployment insurance specialists by encouraging and recognizing an applicant's experience in the National Guard or Reserve.
- The State Lottery Commission highlights that it supports flexible schedules to meet weekend or training obligations that are crucially important for National Guard and reserve members.
- The State Health Care Authority participates in Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve hiring and networking events.
- The Utilities and Transportation Commission provides resources to hiring managers to translate the skills and experience of veterans to the commission's work.

What State HR recommends

- State HR will continue to promote the Society for Human Resource Management Foundation [Veterans at Work certification](#), a training course to learn about and better understand employment circumstances and challenges for transitioning military members, veterans and military spouses.
- State HR will continue to advise and support the Veterans Employee Resource Group to increase the veteran and military spouse representation in the state workforce and recognize employee military service.
- We encourage agencies to begin or improve how they document employment opportunities and craft specific strategies to attract and retain National Guard and reserve members.
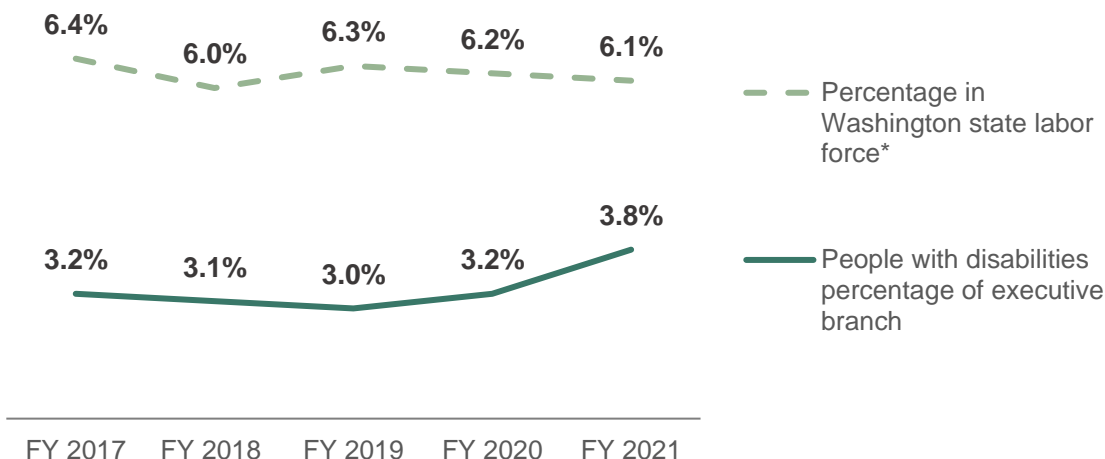
Hire more people with disabilities

The governor signed a formal order that requires executive branch agencies to develop an annual employment plan to address the underrepresentation of people with disabilities ([Executive Order 13-02](#)). Agencies submit annual plans to State HR but continue to fall short of the 5% target.

The percentage of people with disabilities in the workforce increased in fiscal year 2021.

The percentage of people with disabilities in our workforce is 3.8%. This is an increase of more than half a percentage point from the previous fiscal year. While this is a positive trend, the workforce is still below the 6% available in Washington's labor force and below the 5% target that the executive order sets.

The percentage of people with disabilities employed by the state compared to the percentage in the labor force

6.4%   6.0%   6.3%   6.2%   6.1%

- - Percentage in Washington state labor force*

3.8%

3.2%   3.1%   3.0%   3.2%

—— People with disabilities percentage of executive branch

FY 2017   FY 2018   FY 2019   FY 2020   FY 2021

*American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates (Table ID: S2301). U.S. Census Bureau. Includes Washington civilian labor force.

People with disabilities are closer to aging out of the workforce as a group, with a median age of 52, when compared to the entire executive branch (median age of 46). People with disabilities are also retiring at twice the rate of those without a disability (4.1% retirement rate compared to 2.7%).

Agency strategies to encourage disability disclosure include reminding employees to use the My Portal application to update demographics, share workforce data with employees and let them know how we use the data to inform business decisions.

Involve the Supported Employment program

The Supported Employment program provides competitive, paid employment opportunities for individuals with developmental and other significant disabilities.

Number of agencies participating in the Supported Employment Program

No   19

Yes   19

■ Number of agencies reporting
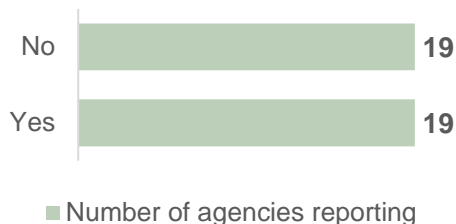
What agencies are doing

- The Employment Security Department modified job announcements to be more inviting and affirming for people with disabilities. It also shares information during new employee orientation about their disability employee resource group and reasonable accommodations.
- The Department of Revenue encouraged employees to self-disclose demographic data, especially their disability status through My Portal. As a result, the department increased the percentage of people with disabilities from 2.8% in fiscal year 2019 to 4.9% in fiscal year 2021. The goal is to reach or exceed the 5% statewide target.
- The Department of Corrections tells employees how they use demographic data to make informed business decisions. They believe that complete and accurate data will help the agency make more equitable choices.
- The Department of Natural Resources works with leaders to provide American Sign Language interpreters in all staff meetings and at public engagement events.

What State HR recommends

- Participate in the Supported Employment Program.

- Provide or find training for hiring managers and supervisors to remove barriers in the hiring process (now required by State HR Directive 20-02) and analyze current position description language and required job qualifications.

- Provide training for managers and supervisors on reasonable accommodations.

- Establish stronger relationships with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Services for the Blind to obtain resources for recruitment and retention.

- Re-survey employees to improve the integrity of disability representation data.

- Increase engagement in agency employee resource groups and the enterprise Disability Inclusion Network business resource group.

LGBTQ+ community

LGBTQ Inclusion and Safe Places Initiative, Directive 16-11, charges Washington state cabinet and small-cabinet agencies to support an LGBTQ+ employee resource group, a best practices committee, and Safe Place Program development. The Safe Place Program identifies safe and secure spaces where LGBTQ+ community members can wait for police assistance.

Sexual orientation and gender identity data is exempt from public disclosure requests on an individually identifiable level.

Agencies began measuring X/non-binary and LGBTQ+ representation in the workforce in 2020. In fiscal year 2021, 1.7% of the workforce identified as LGBTQ+, while .14% identified as Gender X.

Agencies continue to make progress on LGBTQ+-related matters such as gender-affirming restroom language in their policies. The number of agencies reporting such policies increased from eight in fiscal year 2020 to 12 in fiscal year 2021.

Number of agencies with policies related to inclusion of LGBTQ+ employees

No: 30 (FY 2020), 26 (FY 2021)
Yes: 8 (FY 2020), 12 (FY 2021)

■ FY 2020 ■ FY 2021
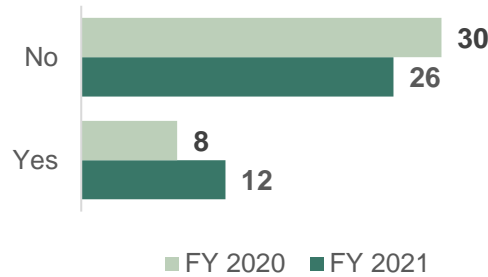
What agencies are doing

- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently registered and was recognized by the Olympia Police Department in the Safe Olympia Program, which educates residents and visitors that hate- and bias-based crimes will not be tolerated in the workplace and VA facilities.

- The Department of Health changed all multiple-person restrooms to gender affirming restrooms and all single-occupancy restrooms to gender neutral restrooms.

- The Military Department replaced gender specific signs in some of their restrooms.

- The Attorney General's Office's DEI policy specifically addresses principles of respect and support for each employee's gender identity. This includes a statement that all employees and members of the public are welcome to use any room or space that corresponds with their gender identity.

- The Utilities and Transportation Commission provides "inclusive communication and gender pronouns" training.

What State HR recommends

- State HR will continue to advise and support the Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network as they work with agencies to identify best practices to provide safe and inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ employees. This includes facilitating panel format training and publishing inclusive LGBTQ+ guidelines.

- State HR recommends that agencies use best practices guides to improve inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ employees. These include: Use of Pronouns in External Communication and Recommendation: Including a Gender X Option on Forms.

Job seeker and candidate experience

Agencies should build trust with job seekers and candidates by designing a hiring process that maximizes human connection.

Agencies reported the following strategies to make sure job seekers and candidates have a positive experience during the hiring process:

Communication is the most mentioned strategy to create a positive experience for job seekers and candidates.

- Communicate with candidates (25 of 38 agencies reporting)
- Train employees (9 of 38 agencies reporting)
- Improve job announcements and job descriptions (7 of 38 agencies reporting)

Practice communication skills

Communication is the most mentioned strategy that can create a positive experience for job seekers and candidates. It is important to communicate the recruitment timeline, the job, the interview process, sample questions, what to expect and how to prepare. Don't forget to personally notify candidates who are not selected. Many agencies use social media to communicate with diverse candidates: LinkedIn, Twitter and websites such as Indeed, Handshake and YouTube.
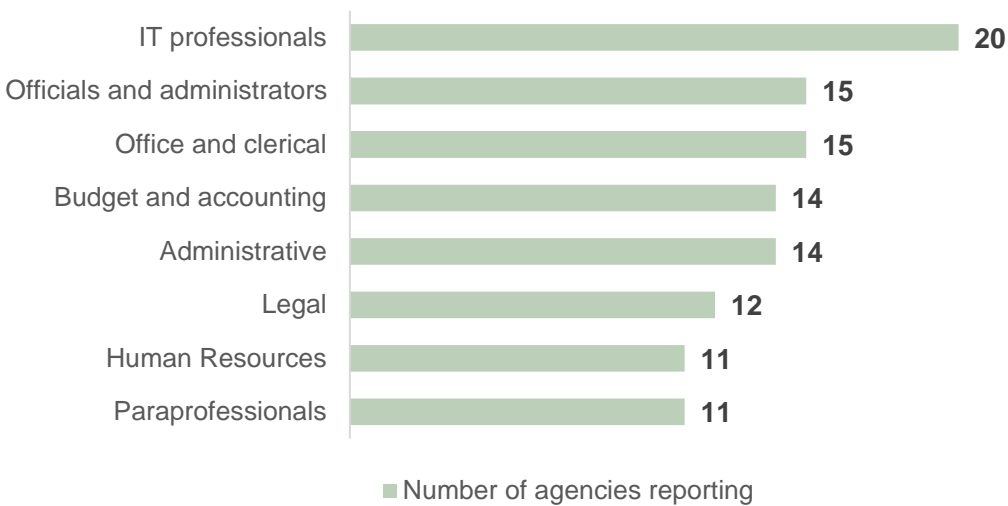
Recruit candidates from historically marginalized populations

Agencies use a variety of methods to recruit candidates from historically marginalized populations. For the most part, agency recruitment methods do not differ based on the diverse group. However, a majority stated that their outreach has targeted specific groups such as ethnic communities, veterans and college students. Agencies use statewide business resource groups (23 of 38 agencies responding) for outreach. Telework and virtual interview options have helped agencies expand recruitment efforts statewide and reach diverse communities across Washington.

'Difficult to fill' job groups

Many agencies report difficulties filling positions in the healthcare, information technology and environmental career fields, among others. Some of the most common perceived difficulties were high educational and experience requirements, salary competition from the private sector and where a job is geographically located. Information technology, officials and administrators, and office and clerical job groups were the hardest to fill.

Recruitment and retention efforts focus on these job groups

Job Group	Number of agencies reporting
IT professionals	20
Officials and administrators	15
Office and clerical	15
Budget and accounting	14
Administrative	14
Legal	12
Human Resources	11
Paraprofessionals	11

■ Number of agencies reporting

What agencies are doing

- The Department of Revenue created a training, "How to Get Hired by the State" for veterans and military family members. The department also created a two-minute video encouraging employees to recruit talent by using their social networks to promote the agency. Their philosophy is that 1,200 recruiters are better than three recruiters.

- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Youth provides a pre-interview tour of their campus as well as information about pay, leave and benefits.

- The State Lottery Commission meets with candidates before the interview to make sure there won't be technology glitches during the interview.

- The Department of Licensing keeps applications of viable candidates who were not selected and invites them to apply for other job openings.

- The Washington State Patrol created recruiting videos and attends public safety events to promote job openings.

- The Office of the State Auditor has an internship program that employs around 40 interns per year. This gives a diverse group of students the chance to learn more about agency career opportunities.

- The Department of Fish and Wildlife published a Wild Washington Program career connections event video. The event explored careers in natural resources.

- Other strategies include requiring diverse hiring panels, developing recruiter training and using the data collected from online recruiting system candidate surveys to improve the hiring process.

What State HR recommends

- **Leverage recruitment tools outside of Careers.Wa.Gov.** Casting a wider net using resources such as LinkedIn, career fairs and other job hosting sites can increase the visibility of openings and bring a greater quantity and diversity of applicant pools.
- **Evaluate how to increase occupational flexibility**. What opportunities exist relating to remote or hybrid work?
- **Rethink how you approach recruitments**. Employ strategies to reach unexplored talent pools. The "set it and forget it" style of posting a position and doing no further outreach is not optimal. Work with your communication leads to create persuasive, engaging job postings.
- As employee mobility options increase in the private sector, **agencies must articulate the benefits of state employment**.
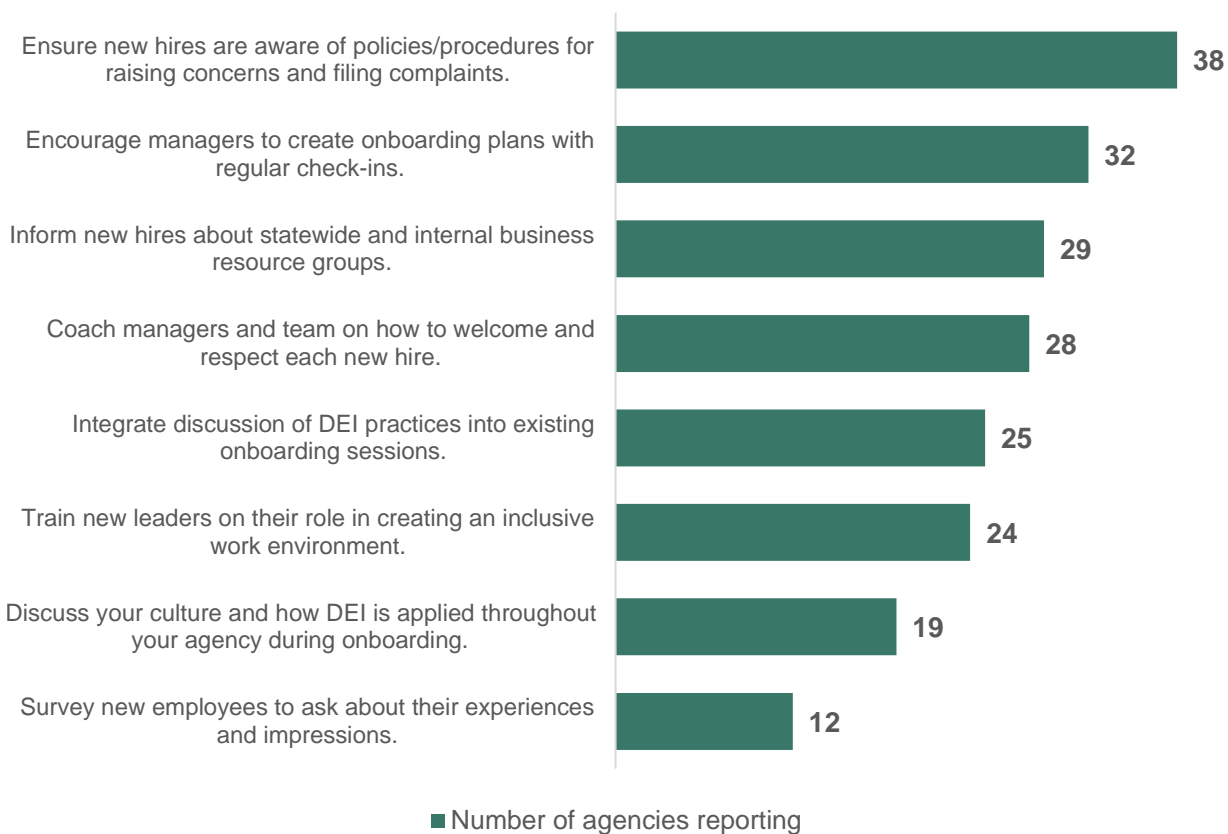
Onboard new employees

An employee's first day of work can be exciting, overwhelming and stressful. That's one reason why it's a team effort to make sure employees get off to a successful start. Hiring managers and HR must collaborate to get an employee onboarded and trained as efficiently as possible while also instilling agency values and connecting them with colleagues.

Making sure employees get off to a successful start is a team effort.

The top three strategies that agencies incorporated in the onboarding process were:

- Make sure new hires know the policies and procedures for raising concerns and filing complaints about their work environment (38 of 38 agencies reporting).
- Encourage managers to create onboarding plans with regular check-ins (32 of 38 agencies reporting).
- Inform new hires about internal and statewide business resource groups (29 of 38 agencies reporting).

Strategies that agencies incorporate into the onboarding process

Strategy	Number of agencies reporting
Ensure new hires are aware of policies/procedures for raising concerns and filing complaints.	38
Encourage managers to create onboarding plans with regular check-ins.	32
Inform new hires about statewide and internal business resource groups.	29
Coach managers and team on how to welcome and respect each new hire.	28
Integrate discussion of DEI practices into existing onboarding sessions.	25
Train new leaders on their role in creating an inclusive work environment.	24
Discuss your culture and how DEI is applied throughout your agency during onboarding.	19
Survey new employees to ask about their experiences and impressions.	12

■ Number of agencies reporting

What agencies are doing

- The Employment Security Department assigns each new employee a buddy (an experienced employee volunteer). Then, the department adds a cohort of new employees and buddies to a Microsoft Teams channel. For the first three months after new employee orientation, each cohort receives weekly assignments through their Teams channel. The assignments are voluntary and focus on either creating connections with teammates or on improving skills and knowledge about the agency. For example, one assignment talks about how to properly use pronouns.

- The Student Achievement Council has a new employee ambassador program. The ambassadors check in with new employees at 30-, 60- and 90-day intervals.

- The Office of The Secretary of State uses a messaging tool called Around the Office. They send new employee welcome messages to all staff through this tool. The messages include a professional and personal biography as well as a photo.

Internal employee resource groups and affinity groups

Employee resource and affinity groups (these are groups based on employee's personal interests) improve employee engagement and enhance diversity, equity and inclusion practices in the workplace.

Seventeen agencies formed internal employee resource groups or affinity groups to support the varied interests of their employees.

The common theme among agencies for welcoming people from historically marginalized groups is to promote the statewide business resource groups, employee resource groups and affinity groups. Many introduce and encourage new employees to join the groups during new employee orientation.
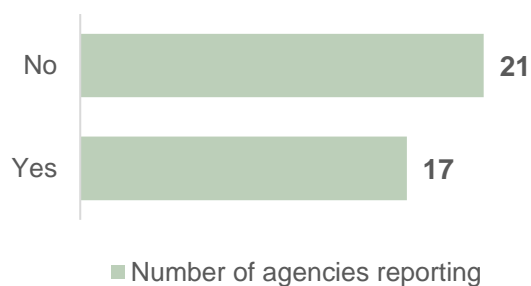
- Support statewide business resource groups (24 of 38 agencies reporting)
- Encourage employee participation in statewide business resource groups during new employee orientations (12 of 38 agencies reporting)
- Encourage employee participation in internal employee resource groups (11 of 38 agencies reporting)

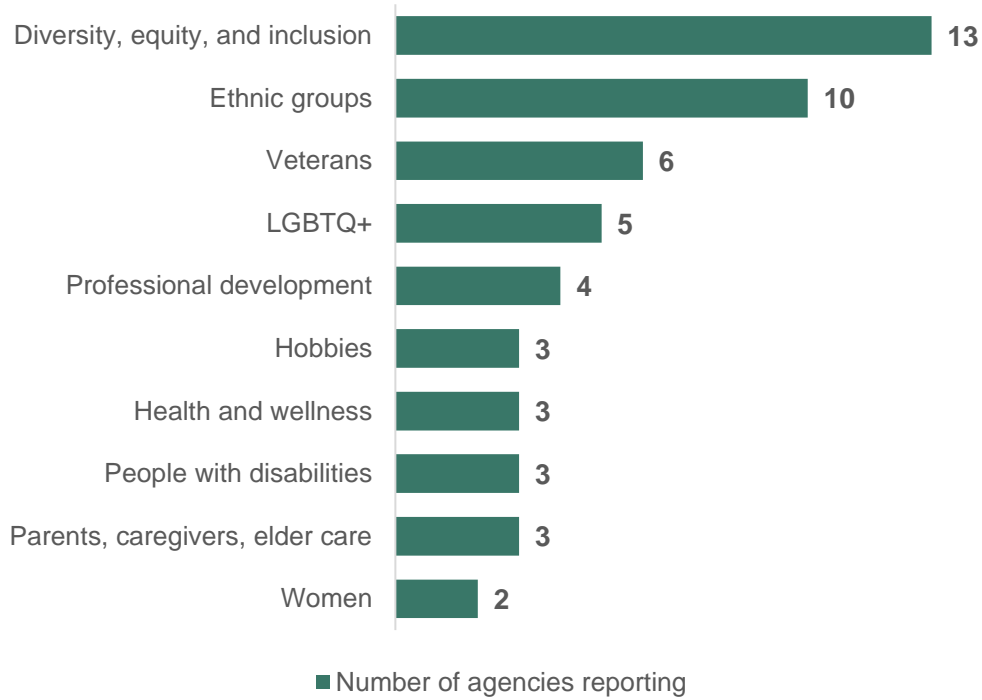The state of Washington has six business resource groups statewide:

- Blacks United in Leadership and Diversity (BUILD)
- Disability Inclusion Network (DIN)
- Latino Leadership Network (LLN)
- Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion network (RAIN)
- Veteran's Employee Resource Group (VERG)
- Washington Immigrant Network (WIN)

Seventeen agencies formed or continued to host internal groups such as these to support the interests of their employees. The groups can be as unique and varied as the workforce. They include DEI, veterans, LGBTQ+, specific ethnic groups, disabilities, caregivers of children with special needs, health and wellness, hobbies and professional development.

Number of agencies with internal employee resource groups or affinity groups

No	21
Yes	17

■ Number of agencies reporting

Types of internal employee resource groups and affinity groups

Type	Number of agencies reporting
Diversity, equity, and inclusion	13
Ethnic groups	10
Veterans	6
LGBTQ+	5
Professional development	4
Hobbies	3
Health and wellness	3
People with disabilities	3
Parents, caregivers, elder care	3
Women	2

■ Number of agencies reporting

What State HR recommends

- State HR will continue to support agencies as they form and host internal employee resource groups.

- State HR will continue to educate agencies about the distinction among business resource groups, employee resource groups and affinity groups and their function within the agency.

# Employee development and performance evaluation

Succession planning

State HR launched a [Succession Planning Toolkit](#) in 2020 to help agencies develop succession plans to support employees to improve their skills and get promoted. Succession plans typically include individual development plans, mentoring programs, developmental job assignments and training programs.

While some employees are happy to stay in their role for many years, others are motivated to improve their skills and promote.

State HR published a [succession planning dashboard](#) that provides agency workforce data to help identify, assess and develop agency succession plans. The dashboard focuses on age and tenure groups related to succession planning indicators.

Several agencies report that they are creating succession plans (9 of 38 agencies reporting).

Number of agencies with a succession planning process

29 No
9 Yes

■ Number of agencies reporting
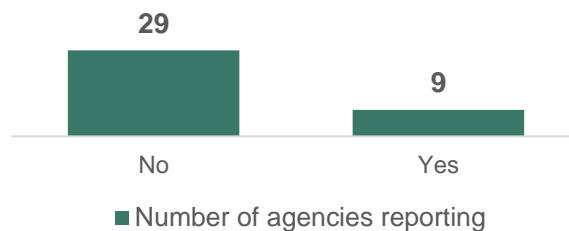
What agencies are doing

- After participating in the State HR succession planning pilot program, the Department of Labor and Industries used 'lessons learned' and best practices from research and other state and local government agencies to develop a succession plan.

- The Department of Social and Health Services launched an employer of choice project team that will collect and analyze workforce data and then develop a succession plan.

- The Department of Ecology created succession planning tools for guidance, discussion and use.

- The Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals posted their succession planning process on the intranet. It includes steps employees may take to become a more competitive candidate. The agency also offers information sessions to encourage employees to apply.

- The Liquor and Cannabis Board provides training, regular performance evaluations and promotes discussions between supervisors and employees on career development goals.

- State HR will continue to improve the [Succession Planning Toolkit](#) to help agencies align their staffing and leadership needs with their goals.

Performance management

Supervisors manage their employees' performance development plans, or PDPs. These documents help the employee measure their competencies and expectations in the job. A state law requires supervisors to give classified employees performance feedback at least annually (WAC 357-37). Many agencies also provide employee reviews for exempt and management service employees.

Increased remote work has accelerated a trend toward more frequent feedback and greater focus on career development.

Agencies report that most employees have current evaluations, expectations and position descriptions

Performance evaluations	74.7%
Performance expectations	75.4%
Position descriptions	87.6%

% current/complete
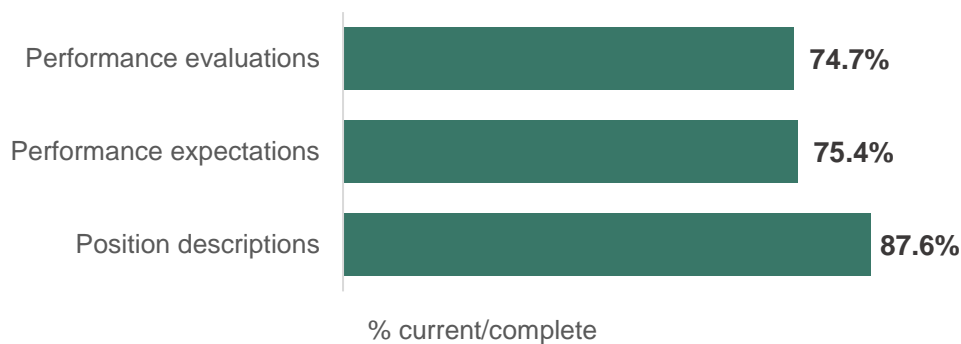
What agencies are doing

- Increase emphasis on coaching and ongoing feedback to help employees improve and grow.
- Solicit feedback from multiple sources.
- Use employee skill sets, recognize their successes and encourage them where they falter.
- Accurately assess performance and make sure it's strategically aligned with an employee's job description.

What State HR recommends

- Investigate and collaborate with other stakeholders to develop an automated performance management tool.
- State HR and multiple agencies continue to use insights from the employee engagement survey to improve the employee development and evaluation process.
- Continue marketing the [Choice Performance Confirmation Program](#) to increase participation.
- Continue to provide performance management resources.

Required training

Employees are required to participate in required training and development (WAC 357-34 and Executive Order 12-02):

- Diversity, inclusion and equal employment opportunity
- Sexual harassment awareness and prevention
- Supervisor and management development
- Recognizing and mitigating implicit bias

In addition to employee development, staff are required to participate in several required trainings.

Most agencies follow the guidelines for the frequency of mandatory training. Some agencies, however, require that employees complete the trainings on a more frequent basis.

Agencies used various methods to measure the trainings' impact. Methods include collecting feedback, attendance, rate of completion, complaint/grievance data, engagement survey data and employee productivity.

Number of agencies with a training policy

■ Number of agencies reporting
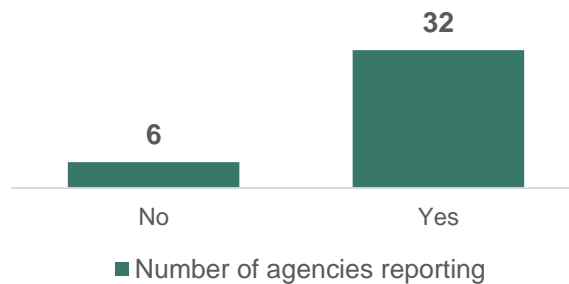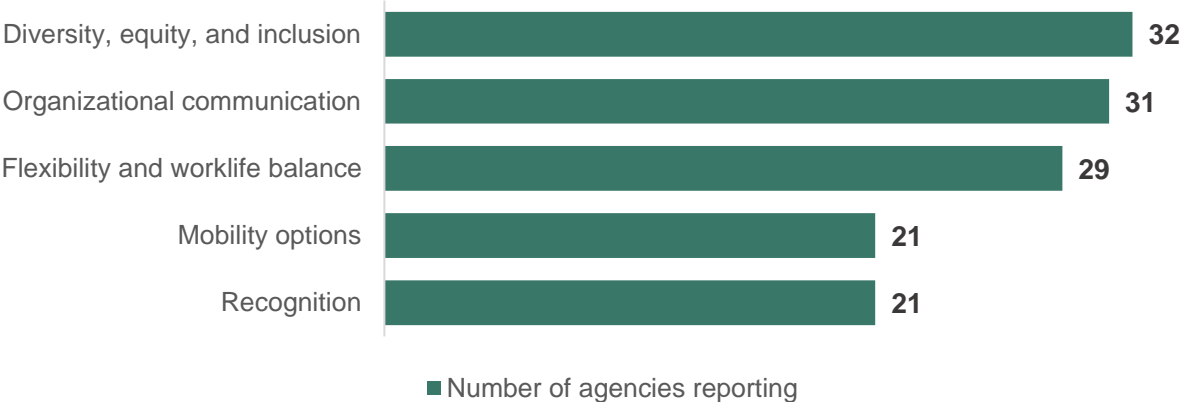
Employee experience and retention

Employee engagement survey

Since 2006, Washington has conducted an employee engagement survey to collect vital information on its perceived status as an employer. The survey has become a key tool for decision makers. About 66% of the workforce (44,726 state employees), representing 77 agencies, participated in the 2021 employee engagement survey.

Although COVID-19 continues to pose unique challenges, the employee engagement survey results indicate that state workers are showing continued resilience in adapting to the "new normal."

Employees continue to experience impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many continue to work remotely (65% of those surveyed) while others provide critical on-site services. Agencies continue to adapt to hybrid work models and assess new ways to collect employee feedback, recognize employees and develop methods for helping employees find meaningful ways to stay connected.

Agencies chose to focus improvement efforts on these survey questions

Survey question	Number of agencies reporting
Diversity, equity, and inclusion	32
Organizational communication	31
Flexibility and worklife balance	29
Mobility options	21
Recognition	21

■ Number of agencies reporting

Survey highlights:

Highest scoring

- 88% of respondents felt their supervisors treat them with dignity and respect.
- 84% of respondents indicated they know what is expected of them at work.
- 76% of respondents identified that they find meaning in their work.
- 76% of respondents felt their supervisor gives helpful feedback.

Areas for improvement

- 61% of respondents indicated they would recommend their agency to others.
- 69% of respondents are satisfied with their job.
- 53% of employees indicated they know how their agency measures success.
- 54% of employees said their agencies help them navigate change.

Agencies identified inequities among employee engagement responses related to race/ethnicity, LGBTQ+, disability status, age and tenure. Hybrid work models continue to create challenges for employees to connect in meaningful ways.

What agencies are doing

- The Department of Labor and Industries publishes agency survey results on their Workforce Culture Dashboard. The dashboard is a user-friendly, interactive tool that shows results that include filters by division, program area, region and office. This tool motivates employees to look for ways to improve the work environment.

- The Department of Financial Institutions created a staff recognition policy. The policy created several employee recognition awards including a division award, an employee of the month award and a leadership award.

- Many agencies created listening sessions to gather employee feedback and enhance organizational communication.

- Agencies emphasize the importance of maintaining employee recognition during the pandemic on a weekly, monthly and annual basis.

What State HR recommends

- State HR will partner with agencies to review and analyze engagement data through a DEI lens. Adding voluntary demographic questions provides an unprecedented visibility into the experiences of diverse groups within our workforce. These may differ from the experiences of the majority.

- State HR will continue to use the [RAMP: A Model of Intrinsic Motivation](#) model to encourage agencies to incorporate intrinsic motivation when they craft engagement strategies.

- State HR will continue to collaborate with agencies to develop a rotating question for 2022 to address and test new ideas or areas of concern.

Additional resources

- State HR's website provides background and resources pertaining to the [State Employee Engagement Survey](#).

Modern Work Environment

Gov. Jay Inslee directs Washington's modern workplace strategy initiative ([Executive Order 16-07)](https://). Led by State HR, the initiative helps agencies identify, experiment with and adopt innovative ways to support business performance by modernizing the physical environment, providing greater workplace flexibility and enabling a more mobile workforce. State HR began collecting eligibility and participation data for telework, flexible schedules and compressed workweeks in 2017.

Agencies are supporting substantial rates of telework while planning to safely reopen the workplace with hybrid work models.

In March 2020, the [Stay Home, Stay Healthy](https://) proclamation directed all Washingtonians to stay home unless they were performing essential work. State agencies were required to rapidly shift in-office workers who *could* work from home *to work* from home so we could reduce COVID-19 risk. The quick pivot to remote work for so many quickly highlighted serious technology gaps and resource shortages that state agencies labored to address through spring and summer 2020.

Record numbers of state employees continue to work remotely full time. Many agencies are exploring how to continue supporting these substantial rates of telework while planning to safely reopen the workplace with hybrid work models.
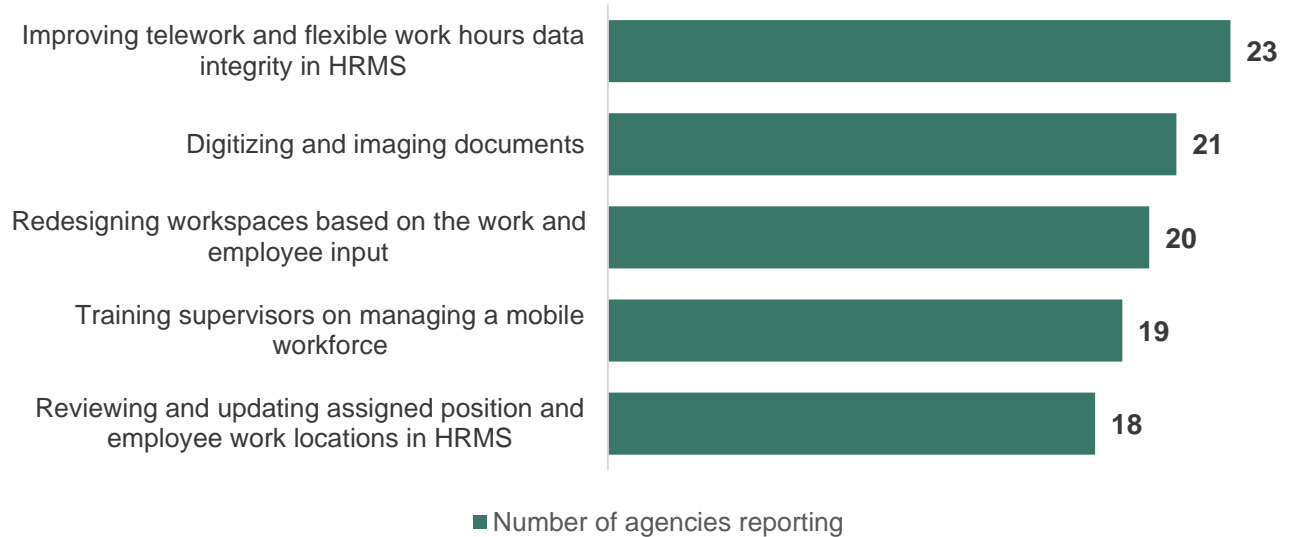
With such a monumental change in the work environment, agencies implemented many strategies. The two most common strategies were encouraging employees to participate in the Commute Trip Reduction program and marketing modern work strategies when recruiting new employees.

Top six accomplished strategies

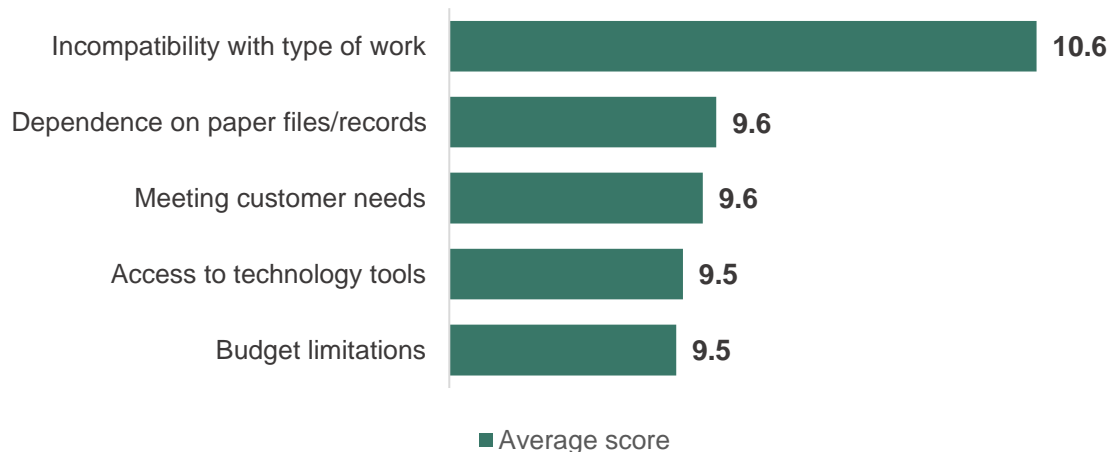| Strategy	Number of agencies reporting
Participating in the Commute Trip Reduction program	31
Marketing modern work strategies when recruiting	26
Infants in the workplace program	23
Increasing position eligilbility in telework, flex time, and compressed workweeks	22
Updating internal policies on flextime and/or alternative schedules	19
Updating internal policies on telework and mobile work and participation targets	19

■ Number of agencies reporting

Agencies also identified the strategies they are currently implementing. The most common one is to improve telework data integrity in the Human Resource Management System.

Top five strategies in the process of implementation

Strategy	Number of agencies reporting
Improving telework and flexible work hours data integrity in HRMS	23
Digitizing and imaging documents	21
Redesigning workspaces based on the work and employee input	20
Training supervisors on managing a mobile workforce	19
Reviewing and updating assigned position and employee work locations in HRMS	18

■ Number of agencies reporting

There are still some barriers for agencies to support a modern work environment. The most frequently mentioned barriers were the type of work, dependence on paper files and meeting customer needs. Other barriers include access to high-speed internet, ergonomic working spaces at home and building cohesive teams.

Top five barriers to implementing a modern work environment

Barrier	Average score
Incompatibility with type of work	10.6
Dependence on paper files/records	9.6
Meeting customer needs	9.6
Access to technology tools	9.5
Budget limitations	9.5

■ Average score

What agencies are doing

- The Department of Agriculture is transitioning from strictly cash and check payments to accepting credit card payments. This is better for customers and employees who no longer need to be on-site to accept payment.

- The Department of Commerce implemented DocuSign to support the transition from paper to digital records.

- The Office of Financial Management saw an increase in engagement and productivity throughout the pandemic due in large part to supporting and training supervisors on how to lead and assess performance virtually.

- The Department of Transportation enhanced its remote access technical capabilities to improve employee's telework experience. Improvements include AlwaysOn VPN, AnyConnect VPN, Citrix and Remote Desktop Gateway.

- The Superintendent of Public Instruction updated their expectations for childcare while teleworking.

What State HR recommends

- State HR started the Statewide Telework Advisory Team. This volunteer team of HR professionals from across state government produces guidance and recommendations for telework policy challenges.

- State HR published a [Modern Work Environment dashboard](#) that reports employee participation and eligibility rates for telework, flextime and compressed workweeks by agency, county, job class and fiscal year. The data from this dashboard comes from the Human Resources Management System.

- You can find additional resources related to state employee telework on the [OFM Emergency Telework](#) webpage.

Tuition reimbursement program

Offering a tuition reimbursement program shows employees that you value their education and willingness to improve their skill sets. Relevant coursework can sharpen workers' skills and know-how, strengthening the agency and the state workforce.

Agencies develop their own tuition reimbursement policy. Programs include a budget, policy and reimbursement procedure. They may include partnerships with affiliate schools for discounts. Each agency has unique funding thresholds, restraints, approved degree types and reimbursement requirements. Thirty-five agencies (89%) provide tuition reimbursement programs.

Number of agencies with a tuition reimbursement program

■ Number of agencies reporting
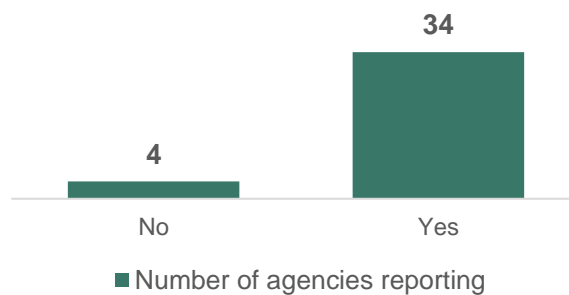
What agencies are doing

- The Department of Licensing does not require employees to pay for courses in advance. This enables more employees to participate in the program.
- The State Healthcare Authority works with affiliate schools to leverage discounted tuition. The affiliated schools are invited to events to discuss their programs.

What State HR recommends

- State HR will continue to collaborate with agencies to gain insight on how to mitigate program administration challenges.

Complaints and investigations

Agencies that handle complaint and investigation processes in a consistent, fair and thorough way help foster a work environment where employees feel heard, valued and respected.

Many agencies include complaint filing procedures within their DEI policies.

Agencies use investigations to gather facts and learn about the gravity of an observed or reported workplace issue. Information from an investigation can help employers determine gaps in policies, training or workplace practices.

It's important that agencies know about reported issues to develop effective strategies that improve workplace culture and reduce instances of misconduct, conflict and harassment.

- Most agencies report that complaint data is not collected for issues handled at the supervisory level (32 of 38 agencies reporting).
- Most agencies provide internal and external complaint filing instructions (29 of 38 agencies reporting).
- Most agencies review investigation data and trends randomly or on an as-needed basis (25 of 38 agencies reporting).
- Some agencies report they have a low number of cases so they don't need a routine analysis (17 of 38 agencies reporting).
- Some agencies report no barriers to reviewing investigation data and trends (16 of 38 agencies reporting).

Challenges tracking supervisory-level issues

Many agencies have taken the initiative to train supervisors on ways to resolve low-level issues. However, this sometimes means there is no record of the types of unique or recurring issues that are resolved this way.
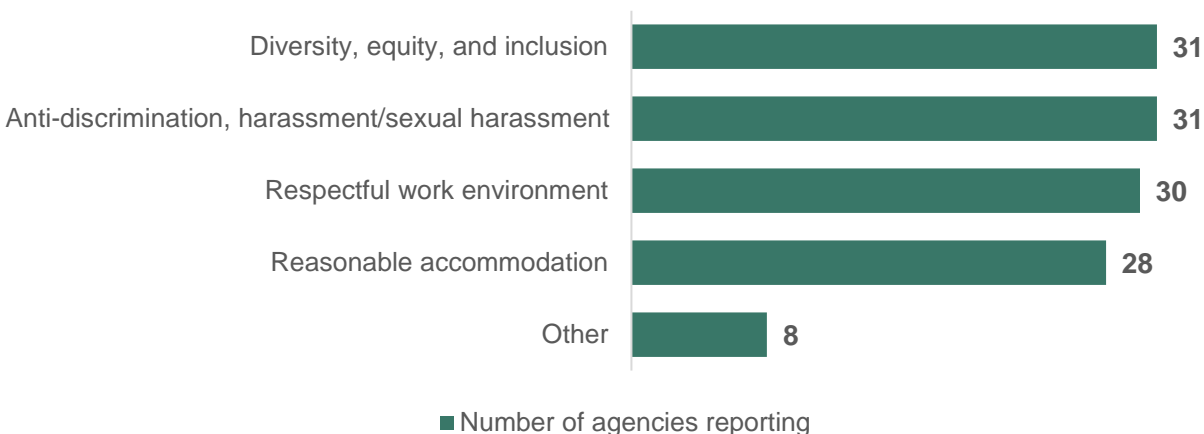
Most agencies do not track supervisory-level complaint data. Supervisors, however, are trained to document complaints in a supervisory file and identify which complaints they need to report to HR. Reported challenges include a lack of tools to track complaints and time constraints for supervisors.

Employee notification

Many state employees have indicated they are unaware of internal procedures to file a complaint. This can lead to tremendous frustration. Employers should take every opportunity to find out about workplace issues and take appropriate action.

Most agencies notify employees of the complaint filing process, policy, or procedure during new employee orientation, posts on the intranet, annual trainings, through e-mail, or through supervisors.

Number of DEI-related policies updated or established since July 2020

Category	Number of agencies reporting
Diversity, equity, and inclusion	31
Anti-discrimination, harassment/sexual harassment	31
Respectful work environment	30
Reasonable accommodation	28
Other	8

■ Number of agencies reporting

What agencies are doing

- The Office of Administrative Hearings established electronic supervisor files. HR staff, the supervisor and the supervisor's chain of command can access these. Supervisors document concerns and conversations in the file.

- The Department of Enterprise Services has a policy page on the intranet with links to the complaint filing process.

- The Department of Children, Youth & Families includes the process of how to file a complaint during new employee orientation. The department also includes this info in the required annual policy review training.
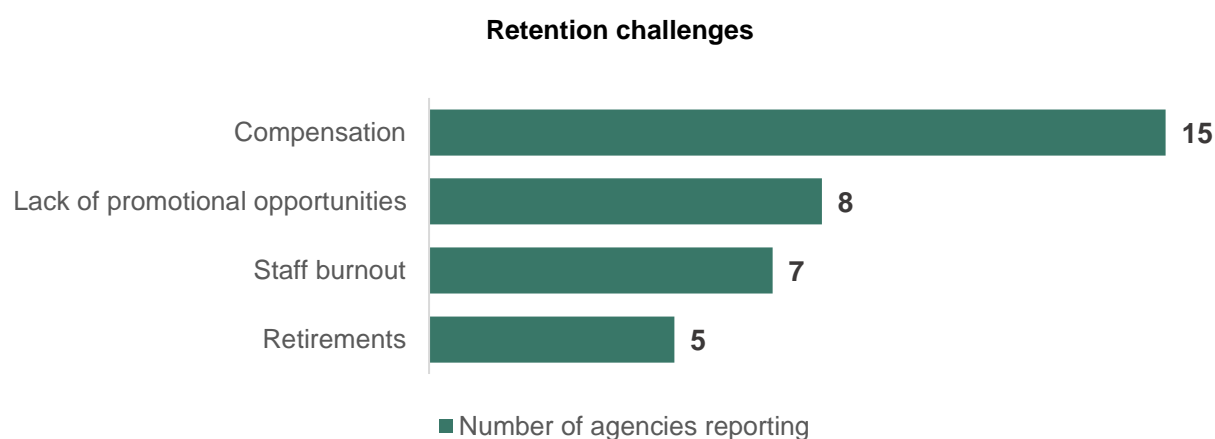
What State HR recommends

- In collaboration with interagency workgroups, State HR will develop a change management approach to collecting, tracking and analyzing workplace complaints.

- State HR is working to create a complaint reporting system. We've scheduled a test model to be completed in 2022.

Retention challenges

Employees leaving the workplace is natural. However, agencies can take more steps to retain their employees. This includes listening to their suggestions, empowering them to improve, keeping them engaged and ensuring they are comfortable in their daily routine.

The best employee retention strategies directly connect to employee feedback and preferences.

When we asked agencies about retention challenges, they reported several issues. Compensation is a top challenge for retaining employees, especially for information technology jobs. Smaller agencies reported a lack of promotional opportunities. Agencies also mentioned employee burnout, especially within the healthcare and social service professions.

Retention challenges

Challenge	Number of agencies reporting
Compensation	15
Lack of promotional opportunities	8
Staff burnout	7
Retirements	5

■ Number of agencies reporting

What agencies are doing

- Agencies continue to collaborate with State HR on compensation strategies.
- Several agencies are implementing mentorship programs (5 out of 38).
- Many agencies promote wellness programs, flexible work schedules and ergonomics.
- Many agencies promote flexibility (11 of 38 agencies reporting).
- The Department of Social and Health Services implemented an employer of choice program that reviewed exit survey data to better understand retention issues.
- The Washington State Patrol provides wellness tools to employees to ensure they are cared for physically and mentally.

What State HR recommends

- State HR will continue to help agencies make data-driven decisions by making data easy to access with the virtual workforce data center.
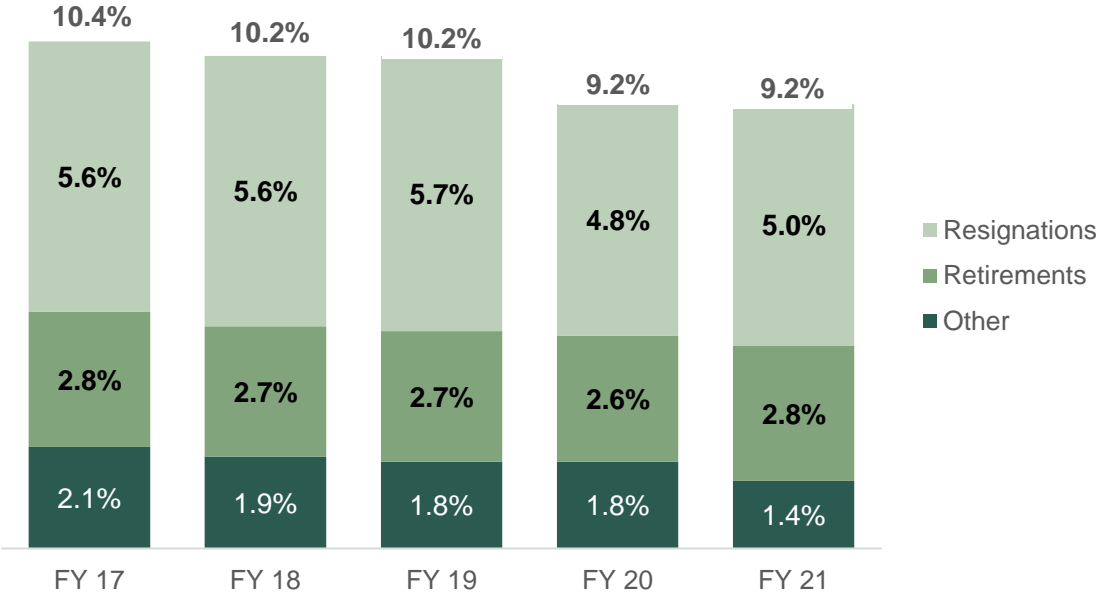
Employee exit survey and turnover

Turnover

Total turnover has decreased more than 1 percentage point over the past five fiscal years. Total turnover remained unchanged (9.2%) in fiscal year 2021 when we compared it to last fiscal year. Both resignations and retirements increased slightly since 2020, while other turnover decreased.

Most agencies identified at least one job class with a higher turnover rate than for other jobs at their agency.

Nearly all agencies identified at least one job class with a higher turnover rate than for other jobs at their agency (34 of 38 agencies responding).

Executive branch turnover rates

	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21
Total	10.4%	10.2%	10.2%	9.2%	9.2%
Resignations	5.6%	5.6%	5.7%	4.8%	5.0%
Retirements	2.8%	2.7%	2.7%	2.6%	2.8%
Other	2.1%	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%	1.4%

Total turnover rates include permanent and intent to become permanent employees only. Data is from HRMS. Other turnover includes dismissals, layoffs, disability, death and other miscellaneous actions.

Exit survey

The exit survey helps agencies learn about why employees leave. State HR manages the survey, collects data and analyzes responses. Agency contacts distribute this survey link and can use the data to make improvements for their employees.

Make sure you take the time to understand why your employee is leaving and get honest feedback on what you can do to make the agency a better place to work in the future.

Currently, the exit survey has 29 standard questions. Fifty-nine agencies add agency-specific questions. The most common agency-added question is about job classification. The survey takes about six minutes to complete.

Of the 38 agencies that answered the HR Management Report survey, 63% use the statewide exit survey (up from 42% in fiscal year 2020).

State HR is continuing to partner with agency contacts to make sure the survey is accessible and useful for all agencies.

The statewide exit survey will:

- **Create an adaptive and innovated state government.** Organizations must learn from employees themselves — why they stay, why they leave and how the work environment needs to change.

- **Consolidate statewide data collection.** State HR will collect exit survey data which will ensure data integrity and comparability.

- **Compare and report on statewide data.** State HR will be able to compare data from the engagement survey to the statewide exit survey to HRMS. This will provide more actionable data and analysis for agencies, the Legislature and other stakeholders.

What State HR recommends

- The statewide exit survey webpage launched fall 2019. This central location allows the public to access dashboards, reports, response rates and other information.

- Just like the engagement survey, agencies can add questions. Agency contacts can also request their own dashboards to interact with and view their data in a timely and accessible way.

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