Federal Hiring

As a result of the 2008–2009 economic downturn and increased budget constraints, federal hiring has been on the decline. With fewer opportunities to bring on new employees, it is critical for agencies to focus on hiring the most highly qualified individuals to meet the nation’s needs. Who did government hire in 2013 and how has the profile of this hiring class evolved from previous years? Where are these new employees located and in which agencies do they serve? To answer these questions, the Partnership for Public Service analyzed recent hiring data for full-time, nonseasonal, permanent civilian employees hired in fiscal 2013 in executive branch agencies, excluding the U.S. Postal Service.

**SIZE OF THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE**

- **2010**
- **2000**
- **1990**
- **1980**
- **1970**
- **1960**
- **1950**
- **1940**

2013 FEDERAL WORKFORCE 2.1 MILLION
FULL-TIME, NONSEASONAL, PERMANENT EMPLOYEES 1.8 MILLION

**RECENT HIRING AND SEPARATION TRENDS**

While about the same number of individuals left federal service in fiscal 2012 and 2013, the number of new employees hired by the government dropped last year by more than 13,000. In most cases, the new employees filled jobs held by those who left federal service.

2013 NEW EMPLOYEES GOVERNMENT-WIDE 76,735
PERCENT OF THE TOTAL FEDERAL WORKFORCE 4.2%
PERCENT DECREASE IN NEW HIRES SINCE 2009 46.4%

**PERCENT OF TOTAL NEW EMPLOYEES BY AGENCY**

- VETERANS AFFAIRS 33.3%
- ARMY 12.5%
- NAVY 9.7%
- AIR FORCE 9.0%
- JUSTICE 5.2%
- HOMELAND SECURITY 5.1%
- DEFENSE 5.0%
- HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES 4.7%
- TREASURY 1.8%
- AGRICULTURE 1.7%
- OTHER 12.0%

The Department of Veterans Affairs hired the most new employees in government during fiscal 2013—25,566—and brought on slightly more employees last year than in 2012. Out of all 40 large and mid-size agencies (those employing 1,000 or more employees), 12 agencies hired more new employees in 2013 than in 2012.

88.0% OF NEW EMPLOYEES WERE HIRED BY TEN AGENCIES
79.8% OF NEW EMPLOYEES WERE HIRED BY DEFENSE AND SECURITY-RELATED AGENCIES
36.2% OF NEW EMPLOYEES WERE HIRED BY DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AGENCIES
Knowing the demographics, education level, gender and other characteristics of the employees agencies are hiring is valuable information for potential jobseekers. This analysis looks at the major characteristics of new full-time, nonseasonal, permanent federal employees hired in fiscal 2013.

More than 50 percent of new employees hired by the federal government in fiscal 2013 were under the age of 40. Employees under 30 accounted for 24.2 percent of all new employees hired in 2013, which stands in contrast to the 7.1 percent of the total federal workforce made up of employees under 30.

Individuals working in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM) fields made up 39.1 percent of all new employees hired in fiscal 2013. The percentage of new employees hired in STEMM fields has risen steadily, increasing by about 10 percentage points since 2009.

Data Sources: Unless otherwise noted below, all data are from FedScope (fedscope.opm.gov) for all full-time, nonseasonal, permanent employees who were hired in fiscal 2013.

Education Level: Partnership for Public Service analysis of the Central Personnel Data File (now called the EHRI-SDM) for full-time, nonseasonal, permanent employees who were hired in fiscal 2013.

Race and Ethnicity: U.S. Office of Personnel Management analysis for full-time, nonseasonal, permanent employees who were hired in fiscal 2013.


VETERAN HIRING TRENDS

The percentage of veterans among the new employees hired by government has steadily increased since 2008.

EDUCATION LEVEL

Of all new employees hired in fiscal 2013, 38,717 or 50.7 percent had at least a four-year college degree. This represents an increase of 1.6 percentage points over 2012.

NEW EMPLOYEES

TOTAL FEDERAL WORKFORCE
In analyzing federal hiring data, the Partnership finds:

- Hiring in the federal government has declined 46.4 percent during the past four years.
- The gender breakdown of the federal workforce does not reflect the composition of the U.S. population, where women make up just over half of the population. The government’s class of newly hired employees in fiscal 2013 reinforced the gap between men and women in the federal workforce, where men outnumber women by 14.6 percent.
- The percentage of employees hired for STEMM occupations has continued to increase during the past few years, underscoring the government’s need for individuals with high levels of education and professional skills.
- Employees under 30 make up only 7.1 percent of the federal workforce, compared to 23.0 percent in the private sector. In fiscal 2013, 24.2 percent of all new employees hired were under age 30, but from 2005 to 2009, employees under 30 accounted for more than 30 percent of new federal workers. The federal government needs to develop a strategy to recruit and retain a greater percentage of younger workers to build a pipeline for the future.

As government brings on board fewer new employees each year, it becomes increasingly important for agencies to identify and hire the best talent. Ideally, hiring presents agency staff with the opportunity to meet its current and future needs, although this task is often challenging given the constraints imposed by the outdated civil service system. Providing a wider range of hiring flexibilities will help agencies secure the talent they need to meet the nation’s growing and evolving challenges.

For further information on best hiring practices, see “What’s My Role: A Step-by-Step Hiring Guide for Federal Managers,” and for more information on the federal workforce, see the Partnership’s “Federal Workforce” Fed Figures. The Partnership’s proposal to reform the civil service system, including the way the government hires new employees, is outlined in “Building the Enterprise: A New Civil Service Framework.” All are 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.