

Personnel System Under Stress: Results of the 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service*

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Media outlets present the casual reader with an incomplete picture of the performance of the public sector workforce. They do not publish headlines declaring *Thousands of planes land safely today*, *Billions of pieces of mail delivered on time again*, and *National parks clean and safe yet again* despite the fact that these unused headlines are true (Kettl 2015, 334). Journalists do not cover these stories and editors do not publish them because they would not increase newspaper readership or attract television viewers. As a result, public perception of the federal workforce is based upon anecdotes, and often disappointing anecdotes about scandal or failure. Public sector scandals and failures are newsworthy but arguably unrepresentative of public sector performance. An accurate understanding of public sector performance requires systematic data rather than anecdote to determine both what is working well and what is not.

An accurate and holistic understanding of the state of the public service is important since policymaking in response to specific scandals or failures can be reactive and focused on the idiosyncratic details of the particular case. Policies designed to remedy a specific scandal or failure are often applied generally to agencies where no problem exists. For example, poor behavior by General Services Administration (GSA) executives resulted in restricted travel and conference attendance across the executive branch (Katz 2015). The blanket response to the GSA scandal made it difficult for employees across the government to get important training (Rein 2015). There are significant ongoing efforts to reform the public service and these efforts should be motivated and informed by hard data rather than anecdote.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of good systematic data on public sector performance.¹ While existing government-generated data provide an important source of information about human capital for policymakers and scholars alike, these resources have notable limitations. For

¹ For details on the primary existing government sources see U.S. OPM 2015 a,b.

example, the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey has asked the same questions for many years, thereby creating a panel data set with impressive coverage across both time and the executive branch. However, critics charge that many of the items are of limited use (Fernandez et al. 2015, 388).² The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is increasingly providing external parties access to important data on the careers of federal employees but privacy concerns limit who has access to the data, and OPM itself has limited analytic capacity. Overall, this prevents scholars and policymakers from making full use of this data.³

Scholars have conducted excellent surveys of federal employees but these surveys often focus on topics other than human capital (e.g., Golden 2000; Maranto 1993a,b; 2005; Maranto and Hult 2004; Meier and Nigro 1976; see, however, Aberbach and Rockman 2000).⁴ Surveys are also labor intensive, expensive, and often actively resisted by agencies themselves. These factors limit the ability of scholars to get samples large or representative enough to reveal meaningful variation across agencies.⁵ These factors also constrain the number of questions that scholars can ask.

In August 2014, we fielded the *Survey on the Future of Government Service* (SFGS) with the help of a collection of academic, non-governmental, and government partners, in an effort to

² The federal government is prohibited from asking some types of sensitive questions and surveys fielded by an employer inhibit free and frank revelation of private opinions (Morrel-Samuels 2002).

³ Privacy concerns limit OPM's ability to connect career data to government surveys. Limited analytic capacity prevents OPM from making full use of other data such as resume data coming through USA Jobs.

⁴ Other important surveys focus on dynamics between appointees and careerists (Maranto 1993a,b, 2005; Maranto and Hult 2004), representative democracy (Meier and Nigro 1976), or who has policy influence (Golden 2000).

⁵ Aberbach and Rockman (2000) use interviews conducted in 1970 (126 executives), 1986-89 (199 executives), and 1991-92 (151 executives) for a total of 476 executives, and Maranto and Hult 2004 and Maranto 2005 use a combination of 2 surveys (one from 1987-1988, one from 1993-1994) for a total of a little over 1,100 respondents.

provide government-wide data that could inform policymakers about the health of the public sector workforce in the United States. The survey targeted a population of 14,698 appointed and career federal executives and 3,551 responded (24%).⁶ The survey, available on-line and on paper, included questions about the overall state of the workforce in respondents' agencies, and then drilled deeper to focus on four pillars of the merit system: recruitment, retention, promotion, and dismissal. The survey was designed to generate responses that are comparable across agencies, and to have sufficient sample sizes at the agency level to reveal variation across agencies.

In this article, we report the key findings from the survey, focusing on top-line results from the most important questions. We begin by describing the survey methodology, including unique design features that make the instrument particularly useful for assessing the public service. We then turn to reporting overall perceptions of agency competence, followed by more detailed explorations of recruitment, retention, promotion, and dismissal. We limit attention to the descriptive statistics and key findings rather than evaluating possible causal relationships. We also compare the self-reported of workforce competence to external assessments using outside evaluations of the skill of agency workforces. We conclude with implications of the findings for current debates about the reform of the public service. In appendices, we provide further details about survey methodology and agency average responses to key questions. Agency-level responses to survey questions about federal human capital are available for download online.

Overall, federal executives reported that the federal workforce is capable but under stress. Federal executives testified to the difficulty of recruiting and retaining the best employees. They

⁶ Full details about survey methodology, including sample selection, survey design, and weighting are included in Appendix A.

reported that merit is often not sufficiently incorporated into decisions about promotions and, especially, dismissals. Importantly, the data also reveal substantial variation among agencies; some agencies have high capacity workforces while others struggle to accomplish their core tasks successfully. Inter-agency variation lights a path forward. The federal government should invest more in research to illuminate such variation, determine why it exists, and share best practices across agencies. Variation across the executive establishment also illustrates the need for reforms that take a big-picture look at the entire human capital system, from recruitment to development and retention. We believe that this approach will identify how best to reform the civil service to meet the nation's challenges.

Survey Methodology

The target population for the survey was executives from non-advisory federal agencies, including seven agencies from the Executive Office of the President, the 15 executive departments, and 66 independent agencies. This includes all political appointees, career members of the Senior Executive Service (and comparable managers in agencies without the Senior Executive Service), U.S.-based members of the Senior Foreign Service, and other high level career executives (e.g., at the GS-14 or GS-15 level) that ran agencies and programs. The *Federal Yellow Book*, a directory published by Leadership Directories, Inc., was the source of contact information for the population (i.e., mail address, email address, and telephone number).

The Princeton Survey Research Center (PSRC) fielded the survey from August 14, 2014 to December 15, 2014. The survey took about 15-20 minutes to complete. The PSRC sent respondents invitations to take the survey by regular mail and email (where email addresses were available). They subsequently contacted non-respondents via a series of email reminders,

telephone calls, paper surveys, and postcard reminders. The response rate was 24% (3,551 of 14,698) overall, 18% for appointees, and 25% for careerists.⁷ Responses reported in this article, excluding agency-level responses, are weighted to reduce non-response and non-coverage bias.⁸ The margin of error varies depending upon whether the whole sample got the question or only part of the sample. The overall margin of error is +/- 1.8% for the entire sample and +/- 2.6% for random half samples.

The survey includes three unique features. First, it was designed to eliminate uncertainty over what agency respondents are thinking of when they answer questions. Often organizational surveys in the public and private sectors ask respondents questions about “workplaces,” “work units,” or “organizational leaders,” and respondents who work in the same agency may answer the same question differently because they have different “workplaces” in their head. For example, suppose an individual works in the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). A survey that asks about recruitment in a respondent’s “workplace” could be referring to the BEA, the Department of Commerce (where the BEA is located), or the federal government more generally. Similarly, it is unclear how a respondent interprets questions about promotions in “your agency” in such a context. To remedy this problem, we asked respondents to identify their workplace

⁷ One potential concern is that executives themselves did not fill out the surveys. This concern is mitigated by the fact that the survey was easy to ignore and respondents were instructed to log-in and, if they did not want to take the survey, to indicate this preference in response to the consent question.

⁸ Post-stratification weights were created using a process referred to as sample-balance or raking. The population constructed from the online database was used as the target population. The three characteristics used for weighting were: whether a respondent worked in the DC area (defined as the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia); appointee status defined as presidential appointee with Senate confirmation, presidential appointee without Senate confirmation, Schedule C appointee, noncareer member of the SES, career member of the SES, member of the Senior Foreign Service, and career civil servant; and respondents’ workplaces defined as each executive department, and each agency outside the executive departments.

from a drop-down menu and then substituted that organization name into every question where the respondent was asked about their agency.⁹ So, for example, respondents were asked about recruitment in the “Bureau of Economic Analysis” rather than “your agency.” This ensures consistency in question responses among federal executives.

Second, the survey included questions about management borrowed from worldwide surveys of private sector executives. A series of questions about the role of merit in promotions and dismissals in the private sector were borrowed from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Management and Organizational Practices Survey (Buffington et al. 2016). The use of identical questions provides a means of directly comparing the responses of federal executives to the responses of similarly situated private sector executives. This allows readers to assess the degree to which management environments in large public agencies differ from those of large private sector organizations.

Finally, the survey took advantage of the large sample size by randomly assigning half the sample to answer certain blocks of questions, thereby allowing us to ask a significantly larger number of questions than other non-governmental surveys without inducing excessive survey fatigue among respondents. In addition to administrative and demographic questions, the survey included more than 50 questions about the competence of the workforce in agencies across the executive establishment.¹⁰

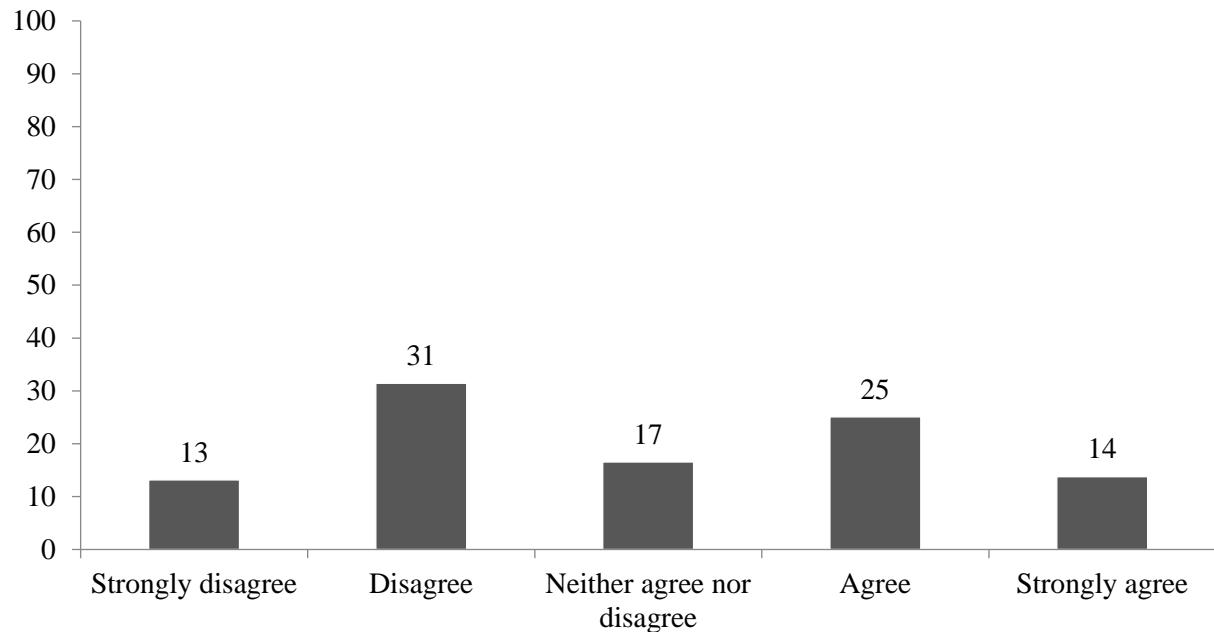
⁹ In the paper survey, however, this was not possible and respondents were asked about “your agency.” Similarly, respondents who selected “Other” because their agency was not listed in the drop-down menu or who did not respond to the question were also asked about “your agency.” Respondents who selected an Office of the Secretary where asked about the executive department as a whole, excluding the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). Respondents in the OSD were asked about the OSD because of the unique structure the DOD: OSD is not above the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force in the DOD hierarchy.

¹⁰ The top-line results document will include only 28 questions but many numbered entries include multiple questions (e.g., How important are the following job attributes to you?).

Competence of the Federal Workforce

The survey's first set of questions asked respondents about their perceptions of the overall competence of their agency's workforce, including how the skill of the workforce affects the agency's ability to fulfill its core mission and how skills have changed across time. Specifically, we asked the extent to which respondents (strongly) agree or (strongly) disagree with the statement, "An inadequately skilled workforce is a significant obstacle to [my agency] fulfilling its core mission" (Figure 1). Thirty-nine percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and 45% disagreed or strongly disagreed. (Totals of percentages from multiple response categories may differ from percentages reported for individual response categories due to rounding.) A large proportion of federal executives, then, expressed concern

Figure 1. An inadequately skilled workforce is a significant obstacle to [my agency] fulfilling its core mission



Source: 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service. N=1,674; MoE=±2.6%.

that a lack of human capital at their agency will prevent the agency from fulfilling its core mission.

To get a sense of how large the gap is between the skills an agency has and the skills it needs, we also asked respondents, “Does [your agency] have the skills necessary to implement effectively the core tasks given it by Congress and the president?” On the one hand, 90% of respondents reported that their agency has “Most”, “Almost all”, or “All” of the skills necessary to fulfill their core tasks. On the other hand, only 68% reported “Almost all” or “All”. Whether these percentages are high or low is a matter of judgement. The question does not address whether the agency has the skills necessary to fulfill other important agency tasks that may not be a core task, such as financial management or responding to congressional requests for information. In addition, an agency’s core tasks may include jobs with little room for error, such as national security, landing airplanes, drug approval, or building rockets, and it is worth asking whether having “most” of the necessary skills is sufficient. Beneath the government-wide average, there is substantial inter-agency variation in workforce skill. In the Department of Housing and Urban Development, for example, 39% of respondents reported having almost all or all of the skills necessary compared to 78% of respondents in the Department of Defense. Readers interested in how all agencies responded are encouraged to see the appendix accompanying the working paper.

This same variation among agencies appears in responses to questions about whether the skills of agency workforces have “worsened, improved, or stayed the same” during respondents’ time in their agency. Fifty percent of respondents reported that the skills at their agency have gotten “Better” or “Much better” during their tenure but this proportion varies from only 35% in an agency like the Department of Energy to 52% in Treasury. Additionally, 19%, nearly one-

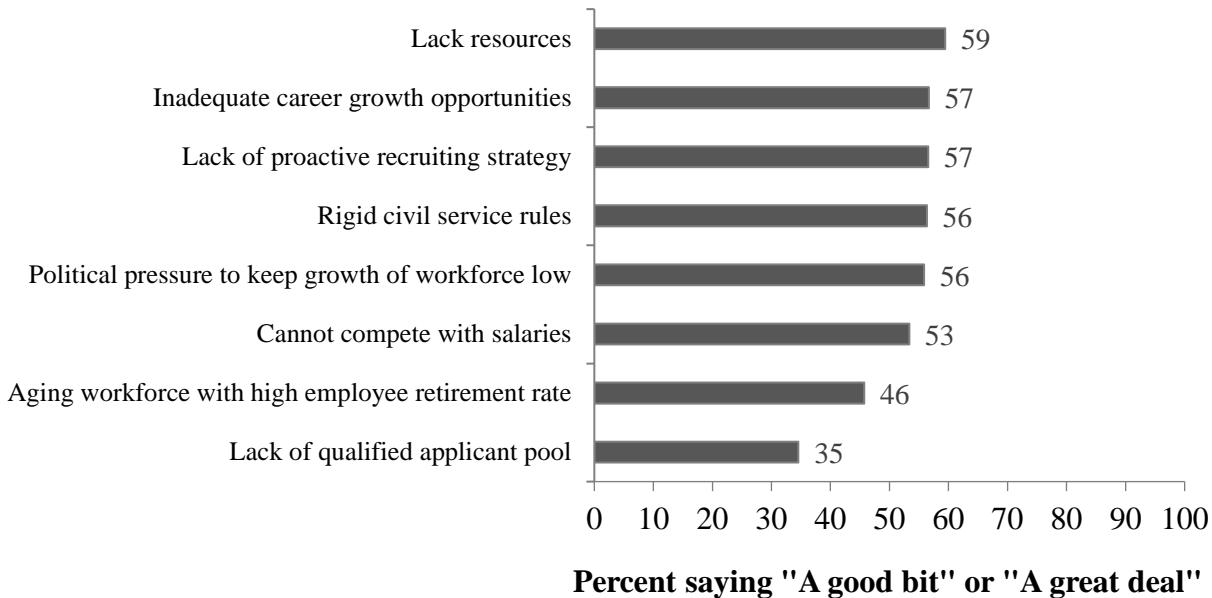
fifth, reported that skills have gotten “Worse” or “Much worse.” In a final question about the overall level of human capital in their agency, 81% of respondents reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I am confident in [my agency’s] ability to successfully fulfill its core mission.” Again, this means that nearly one-fifth of respondents did not agree. Of course, the respondents are the executives responsible for improving human capital and ensuring their agency fulfills its core mission. Therefore, they may be reluctant to admit where problems exist. It follows that their survey responses need to be validated by assessments of workforce skills from outside the agency (see below).

In sum, federal executives reported that the workforce is capable but under stress, and particularly stressed in some agencies. Half of respondents reported human capital is improving and a larger majority stated that they were confident in their agencies’ ability to successfully fulfill its core mission; however, a troubling number of respondents worried that their agencies lack sufficient human capital. Furthermore, nearly one-fifth of respondents reported that human capital is declining and that they lack confidence in their agency’s ability to fulfill its core mission. Next, we analyze questions about recruitment, retention, promotion, and dismissal in order to identify which of these areas is contributing to executives’ concerns about human capital at their agencies.

Recruitment

Among those respondents with concerns about maintaining a skilled workforce, recruitment was a key issue (Figure 2). Respondents who indicated that an inadequately skilled workforce was a significant obstacle to their agency fulfilling its core mission were asked the

Figure 2. To what extent do the following factors contribute to the difficulty [your agency] has in maintaining a skilled workforce?



Source: 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service. Only respondents who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “[a]n inadequately skilled workforce is a significant obstacle to [my agency] fulfilling its core mission” were asked these questions. Range of N is 639 to 642; MoE=±4.2%.

following question, “To what extent do the following factors contribute to the difficulty [your agency] has maintaining a skilled workforce?”¹¹ Importantly, respondents revealed that difficulties maintaining a skilled workforce have *little* to do with the lack of a qualified applicant pool. One respondent shared the following via email:

Here in the [omitted], we have a vast pool of entry-level (and more advanced) talent, but the federal government’s arcane procedures make it almost impossible to reach these wonderful candidates. An example of this is the most user-unfriendly place on the planet to look for and the only way to apply for a GS-level job in our agency: the USAjobs website. It’s a nightmare, everyone finds it

¹¹ Response options were Not at all, Little, Some, A good bit, A great deal, and Don’t know.

difficult to use, and even those familiar with job openings cannot readily refer someone to the right place to apply.¹²

Rather than unqualified applicants, most respondents reported that difficulty maintaining a skilled workforces is attributable to deficiencies in recruitment (e.g. lack of a proactive recruiting strategy) as well as a competitive labor market (e.g., cannot compete with salaries of other employers). Talented individuals want to work for the government, but agencies often struggle to recruit them.

When we asked respondents directly about recruitment, they confirm the conclusion from above. Specifically, we asked respondents the extent to which they agreed with the following statement, “[My agency] is unable to recruit the best employees” (Figure 3).¹³ Forty-two percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and 37% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The fact that more respondents agreed than disagreed with this statement, suggests some real concern about bringing in new talent. This corroborates the anecdotal comment above.

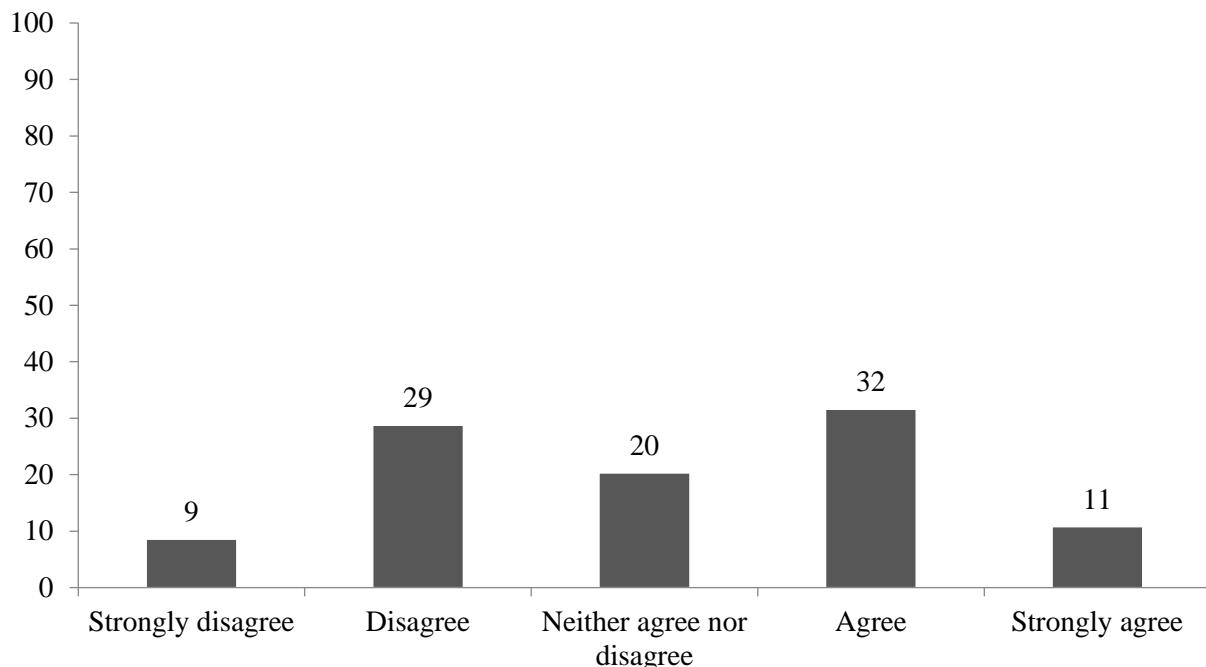
Interestingly, components of the Department of Veterans Affairs were among the agencies reporting the most difficulty recruiting talent (see Appendix B for full list). Revelations about the falsified waitlists at VA hospitals emerged in 2014 and were the subject of congressional hearings during the summer of 2014. It is reasonable to connect this scandal to difficulties with recruitment, although the VA had difficulty with recruitment prior to the

¹² The respondent continued, “We recently posted an opening on USAJobs for several entry-level [omitted] openings. Within a few days, over 1,000 applicants survived the USAjobs application process, but here at [omitted], we received a list of 8 applicants from that process, reflecting veterans preference. We interviewed all 8, were keen to hire 4 of the 8, but are precluded from reaching any of the remaining 992 applicants unless we make offers to all 8!”

¹³ To avoid the appearance of any bias in question wording and to create an attention check, the survey paired this with a question with an opposite wording: “[My agency] is able to retain its best employees.”

revelations about hospital waitlists. Respondents in agencies such as the Federal Trade Commission and Office of Management and Budget were the least likely to report difficulty recruiting the best employees. This variation in success recruiting highlights the importance of looking beyond government-wide data and pursuing explanations for variation among agencies.

Figure 3. [My agency] is unable to recruit the best employees



Source: 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service. N=1,681; MoE=±2.6%.

Difficulties with recruitment also extend to the higher levels of civil service management, namely the Senior Executive Service (SES). Among eligible career managers, only 55% indicated that they were interested in becoming a member of the Senior Executive Service or a Senior Professional.¹⁴ The percentages were lowest among the older career managers. These

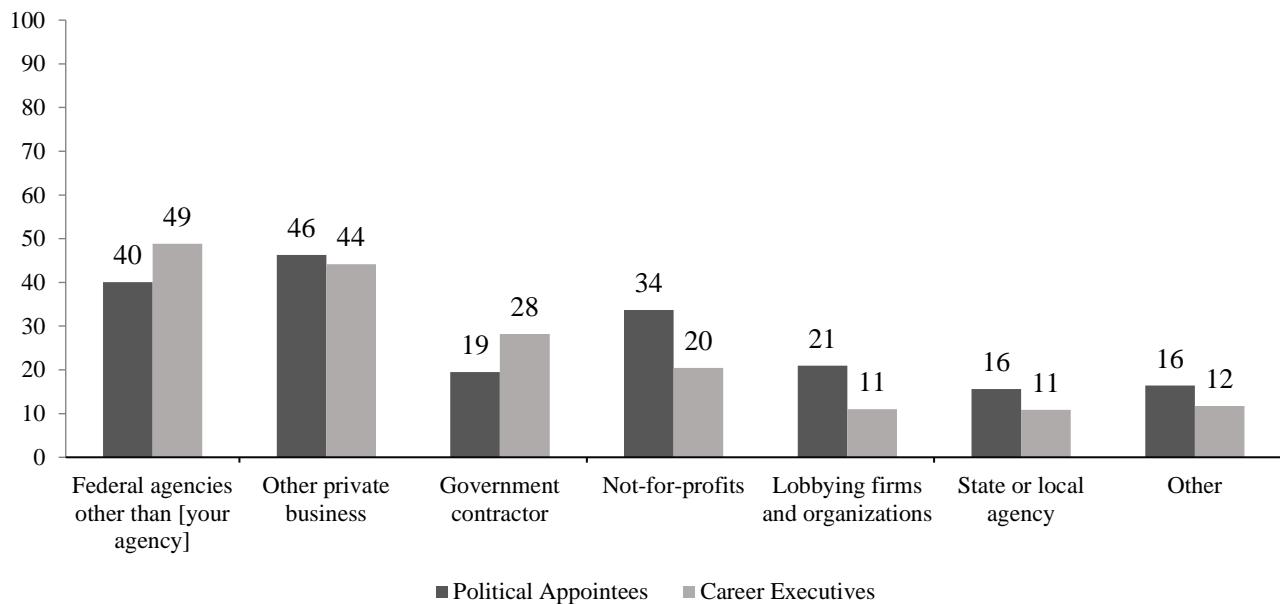
¹⁴ “I am interested in becoming a member of the Senior Executive Service or a Senior Professional” [Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree, Not applicable]. N=772.

findings seem to confirm an abundance of anecdotal evidence about the SES, including that many of the most talented managers do not want to join the SES (Davenport 2014). Groups representing members of the SES suggest that a lack of respect for senior executives and problems with the SES pay-for-performance system make the SES less attractive (Senior Executives Association 2014). They point to recent efforts to cut senior executive bonuses and freeze pay. The Senior Executives Association reported that almost one quarter of GS-15 employees earn more than members of the SES (Davenport 2014). Not only is there a problem getting the best employees into public service, but there is also a problem recruiting the best executives for senior positions within the public service.

Retention

Bringing in talented employees on the front end is important but so is keeping the best of them in the public service. A significant number of respondents reported an intention to leave their agency and many executives reported difficulty retaining their best employees. Thirty-six percent of political appointees and 24% of career executives reported that it was “likely” or “very likely” that they would leave their agency within 12 months of when they took the survey. While there is often a gap between turnover intention and actual departure (see, e.g., Cho and Lewis 2012, Jung 2010), it tends to be small when survey questions ask about time periods less than one year. Even if these percentages are slightly inflated, they are large. It is almost twice the rate at which private sector CEOs are removed or depart in any given year (strategy& 2015). This kind of turnover among executives makes it difficult for agencies to engage in long term planning, conduct high-level inter-agency cooperation, and effectively direct agencies and programs (for reviews see Call et al. 2014; Dess and Shaw 2001; Hur 2013; Hausknecht and

Figure 4. Have you been approached about a job outside your agency since July 1, 2013? If so, by what type of organization? [check all that apply]



Source: 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service. Career Executives: N=574; MoE=±4.6%; Political Appointees: N=79; MoE=±11.8%.

Holwerda 2013). To fully grasp this finding, consider for a moment whether the Federal Employee Thrift Retirement system would invest in Apple Computer if they knew one quarter of Apple's top executives were leaving in the next year. How might this influence the rollout of a new operating system or the development of new and innovative products?

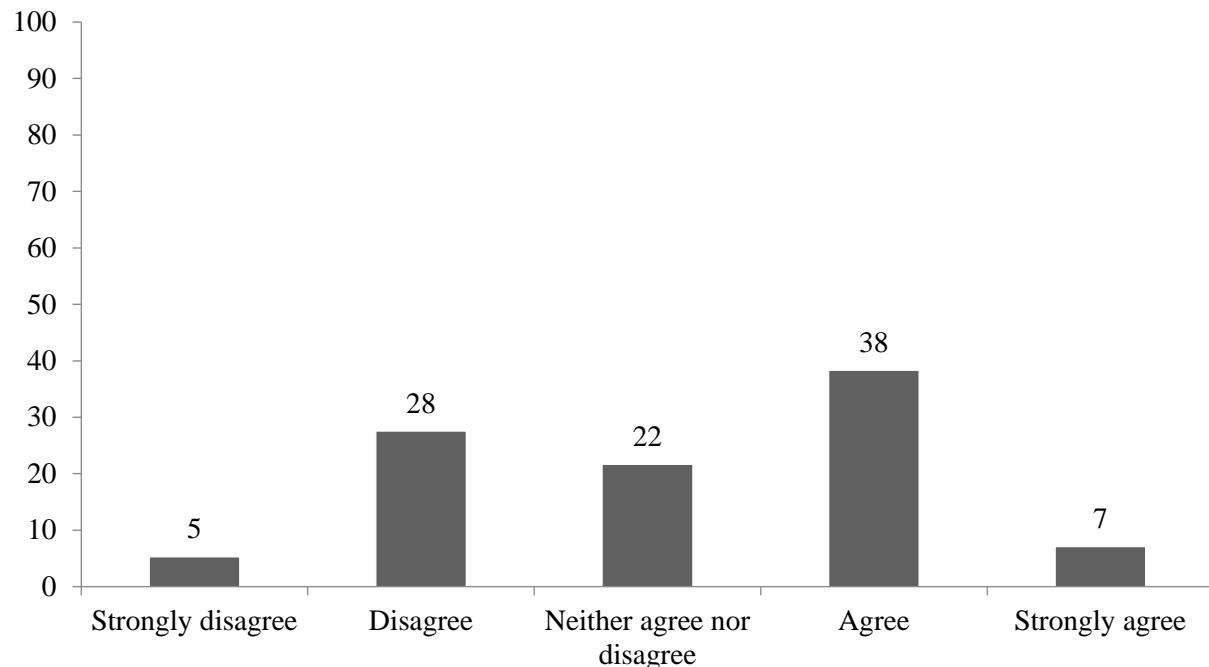
Between those executives eligible to retire and those being sought after actively by outside employers, it is no surprise that our respondents report their intention to leave. Among our sample, 43% of career civil servants were eligible to retire and close to 40% of career and appointed respondents reported that they had been approached about a job outside their agency in the last year. The survey did not ask respondents about whether they had *sought* a job but whether they had been *approached*. Thus, a significant percentage of federal executives report that they are pursued by outside employers. Among executives that were approached, we

followed up by asking, “If so, by what type of organization? [check all that apply]” The largest category of competitors, apart from private sector firms (i.e., contractors or other private business), was other federal agencies. Nearly half of those approached indicated that another federal agency pursued them.

Concerns about departure extend beyond the corps of top career executives. When we asked respondents, who are the very employees responsible for recruitment and retention, whether they agreed with the statement, “[My agency] is able to retain its best employees,” less than half agreed or strongly agreed (Figure 5). Fully one third of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Again, responses varied significantly across the government. Only 18% of respondents in the Department of Veterans Affairs agreed that they were able to retain their best employees compared to 59% in the Department of State. Among the agencies that reported success retaining their best employees are the State Department bureaus in Political Affairs, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Among the agencies reporting the most difficulty with retaining their best employees were the Administration for Children and Families (HHS), National Archives and Records Administration, and Veterans Health Administration (Appendix C). Several components of the Veterans Administration reported difficulties with retention similar to their difficulties with recruitment.

It is clear that a significant number of respondents worry about both recruitment and retention. The degree of concern varies across agencies, and agencies that reported concerns about recruitment tended to report concerns about retention. These agencies also rank poorly on the Partnership for Public Service’s Best Places to Work ratings (Figure 6). These findings suggest that agencies face both internal and external challenges. Internally, many executives who

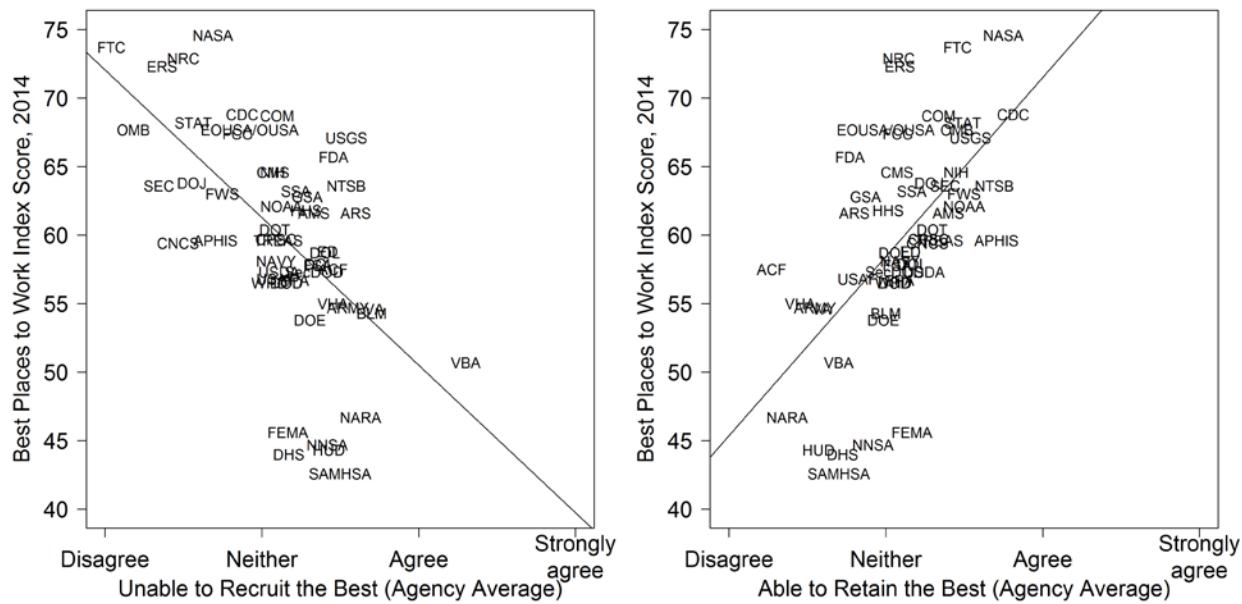
Figure 5. [My agency] is able to retain its best employees



Source: 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service. N=1,681; MoE=±2.6%.

were concerned about inadequate skills at their agency reported lack of a proactive recruiting strategy and inadequate career growth opportunities (Figure 2). Externally, these respondents reported that their agency cannot compete with salaries offered by other employees. Additionally, these respondents also identified a lack of resources and rigid civil service rules as contributing to difficulty maintaining a skilled workforce, which could cause both internal and external problems developing human capital. Any reform of the civil service system must be mindful of both internal and external challenges, and how these challenges vary across agencies. Reform must take advantage of what agencies are doing well to identify opportunities for sharing best practices, while also being sensitive to variation in the labor markets where agencies compete for talent (Partnership for Public Service 2014).

Figure 6. Agency Average Responses to Questions about Abilities to Recruit and Retain Best Employees and Best Places to Work Ratings, 2014



Source: 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service; The 2014 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government; The Unable to Recruit the Best figure lists agency average responses to the question “[My agency] is *unable* to recruit the best employees” where responses are Strongly disagree (0), Disagree (1), Neither agree nor disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly agree (4). Lower values indicate the ability to recruit the best. The Able to Retain the Best figure lists agency average responses to the question “[My agency] is *able* to retain the best employees” where responses are Strongly disagree (0), Disagree (1), Neither agree nor disagree (2), Agree (3), and Strongly agree (4). Higher values indicate the ability to retain the best. Agency averages are unweighted. We limit agencies to those with at least ten respondents to the question and 30 potential respondents in the target population. Plots included a fitted line from an Ordinary Least Squares bivariate regression. The Best Places to Work scores combine the Executive Office for United States Attorneys and the Office of the United States Attorneys. We do the same to create a comparable mean and label it “EOUSA/OUSA.”

Promotion

The promotion of talent within an agency is fundamental to growing human capital.

Agencies vary in their ability to successfully develop new leaders, from their onboarding into the agency to training and promotion. At many agencies, management focuses on programs rather than people. Indeed, one feature that distinguishes the military services from most domestic agencies is their focus on developing individual leaders as much as programmatic management (Oh and Lewis 2008). In successful organizations, merit, more than connections or tenure, determines promotion. This ensures that the highest performing individuals occupy the most

important jobs, and it creates incentives for other employees to perform well. When the most meritorious individuals secure promotions, this communicates that the merit system is working and identifies the type of work that senior management will reward. Merit-based promotions incentivize employees to spend time accomplishing agency goals rather than playing agency politics. Furthermore, if employees perceive employment decisions are fair, they are more likely to support pay-for-performance plans and other agency initiatives.

To evaluate the basis for promotion, the survey included questions from the U.S. Census Bureau's Management and Organizational Practices Survey, which also provide a direct comparison between the public and private sectors. Executives in the federal government were asked the following question about managers and non-managers:

People often compare public sector managers and managers in other sectors, most often the private sector. The following questions help us gather evidence to make informed comparisons.

What is the primary way that [non-]managers are promoted at [your agency]? The response options were: Promotions are based solely on performance and ability; Promotions are based partly on performance and ability, and partly on other factors (for example, tenure or personal connections); Promotions are based mainly on factors other than performance and ability (for example, tenure or personal connections); and [Non-]managers are not normally promoted.¹⁵

¹⁵ Source: 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service; N=1,656; MoE: +/-2.6%; 2013 Management and Organizational Practices Survey, U.S. Census Bureau: N=37,177. There is a slight difference in the public and private sector versions of the response options. The private sector survey provides response options that say "...other factors (for example, tenure or family connections)" rather than "...other factors (for example, tenure or personal connections)."

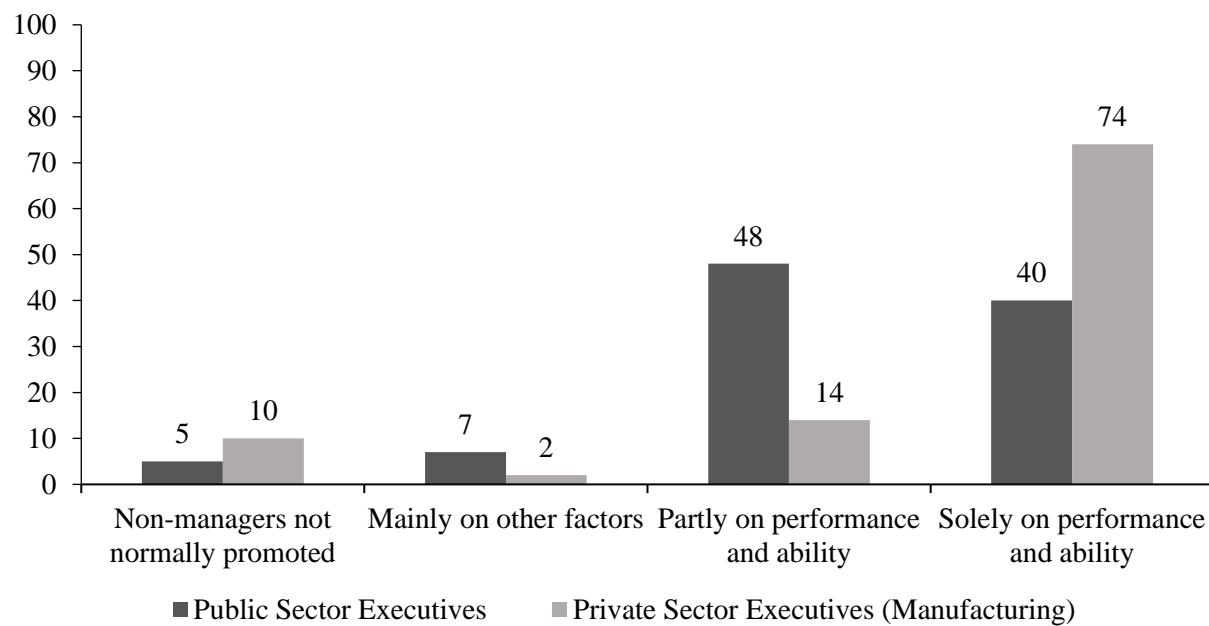
Figure 7 compares responses among public and private sector executives. Seventy-four percent of private sector executives in manufacturing reported that non-managers are promoted solely on performance and ability compared to 40% of federal public sector executives. Clearly, factors other than performance and ability are more likely to influence promotions in the public sector. These factors might include tenure and personal connections, as suggested by the question, but could also include political considerations or other goals of the merit system, such as veterans' preference. The basis for promotions also varies substantially by agency. Fewer than 10% of federal executives reported that non-managers are promoted solely based on performance and ability in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, compared to 55% in the Department of Commerce. Again, this inter-agency variation offers an opportunity for learning and sharing best practices.

Additional analysis reveals that variation in knowledge of civil service rules helps explain some of the differences in promotion practices. Federal executives who reported that they understand key statutes (e.g., the Merit System Principles and Prohibited Personnel Practices) were significantly more likely to report that promotions are based solely on performance and ability.¹⁶ Among respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that they "have a good understanding of statutes related to managing the career civil service," 44% percent reported that promotions were based solely on performance and ability. Among respondents with less familiarity with the system, only 23% reported that promotions at their agency were based solely on performance and ability. It is possible that respondents familiar with the civil service system

¹⁶ Respondents were provided the statement, "I have a good understanding of key statutes related to managing the career civil service (e.g., the Merit System Principles and Prohibited Personnel Practices)." They could strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, or strongly disagree with the statement.

were more likely to report that their agency promotes employees solely on the basis of merit because they know what the “right” answer is for their agency. On the other hand, most executives probably understand the “right” answer without encyclopedic knowledge of Title 5 of the United States Code.

Figure 7. What is the primary way that non-managers are promoted at [your agency]?



Source: 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service: N=1,656, MoE: +/-2.6%. 2013 Management and Organizational Practices Survey, U.S. Census Bureau: N=37,177.

Importantly, those executives who reported that promotions are based solely on performance and ability were also the most likely to recommend that young people work in government. The survey asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “I recommend that a young person work in public service today.” (Response options were strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree.) Only 48% of respondents who reported that promotions were based “mainly on other factors” were likely to recommend public service, compared to 73% and 78% of those who reported that promotions

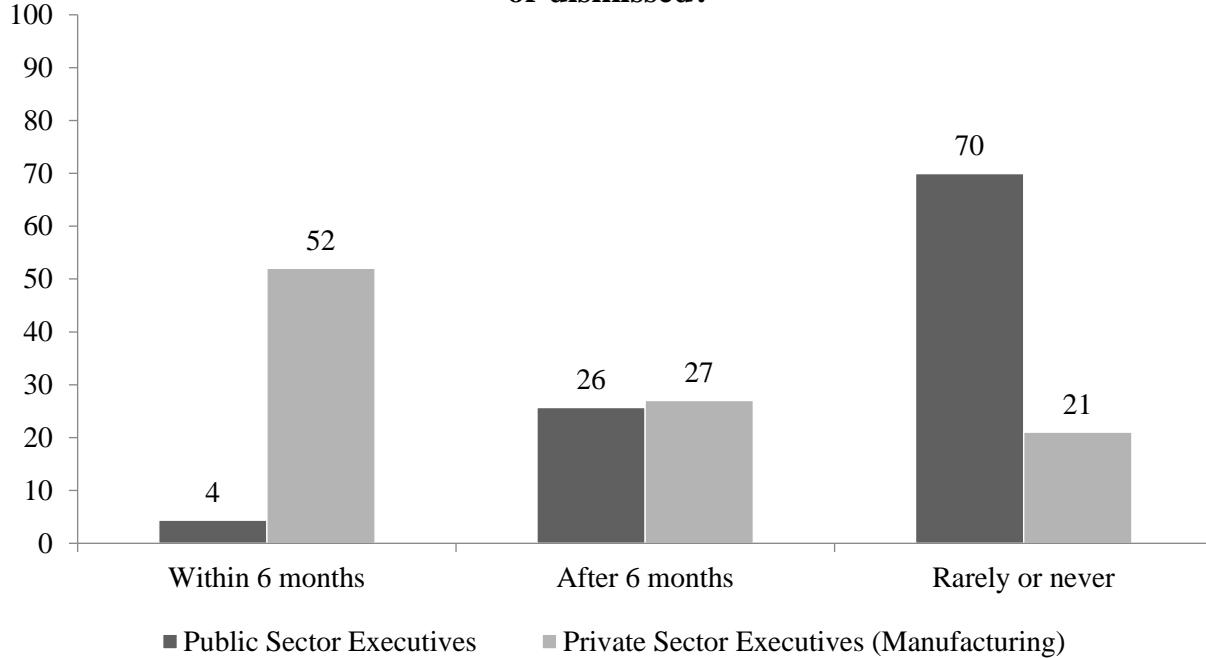
were based “partly on performance and ability” or “solely on performance and ability,” respectively. These responses suggest that one factor that contributes to the difference in promotion decisions between the private and public sectors is a lack of knowledge of civil service laws and rules. Those executives that know the law were more likely to report that promotions in their agency are based upon merit rather than other factors. Merit-based promotion matters. Those that believe merit leads to promotions in the public service are more likely to recommend the public service as a career.

Dismissal

One of the most controversial aspects of the civil service system is the perceived infrequency of dismissals for poor performance. Critics of existing laws and rules charge that firing poor-performers is too rare and too difficult. For example, in 2014 federal employee firings hit a record low and critics charged that an overly burdensome personnel system was to blame (Medici 2015; U.S. Government Accountability Office 2015).¹⁷ The survey included questions to assess this problem systematically across the government and compare the ability to address poor performance in the public and private sectors. It asked respondents, “When is an under-performing non-manager [manager] reassigned or dismissed?” This question also came from the Management and Organizational Practices Survey fielded by the U.S. Census Bureau. The response options were: “Within 6 months,” “After 6 months,” and “Rarely or never.” Given

¹⁷ “Red Tape Keeps Some Bad Gov’t Workers from Being Fired.” *CBS News*, March 2, 2015 (<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/civil-servant-protection-system-could-keep-problematic-government-employees-from-being-fired/>), accessed August 11, 2016).

Figure 8. When is an under-performing non-manager reassigned or dismissed?



Source: 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service: N=1,631, MoE=±2.6%. 2010 Management and Organizational Practices Survey, U.S. Census Bureau, 2013: N=37,177.

the length of probationary periods at federal agencies and the content of civil service rules, one might expect dismissals to take longer in the public sector than in the private sector. In this data, this could result in most private sector executives choosing “Within 6 months” and most public sector executives choosing “After 6 months.” Nonetheless, if managers at federal agencies effectively address poor performance, then considering civil service rules, we would expect executives to report that under-performing non-managers would be reassigned “after 6 months” rather than “rarely or never.” This is not what the survey reveals. Seventy percent of public sector executives reported that under-performing non-managers are rarely or never reassigned or dismissed while only 21% of private sector executives gave the same response. The difference between the private and public sector executives is striking. Poor performing employees are dramatically more likely to keep their jobs in the public sector.

There is some variation among agencies in response to this question but there are no agencies that overwhelmingly report removal or reassignment of poor performers. In the executive department with the *lowest* percentage of “rarely or never” responses, 60% of respondents reported that under-performers are rarely or never reassigned or dismissed. Agencies that successfully recruit and develop talented employees should need to reassign or dismiss fewer employees overall. It is important to note, however, that the question does not ask how many employees are reassigned or dismissed. Rather, it asks how *quickly* poor performance is remedied. The fact that executives reported that reassignments and removals are rare across the executive establishment suggests that failure to remedy poor performance is a government-wide concern of federal executives.

As with promotions, those respondents who reported that they have little knowledge of key statutes related to managing the career civil service were the most likely to report that poor performers are “rarely or never” reassigned or dismissed. Sixty-three percent of respondents who strongly agreed with the statement, “I have a good understanding of key statutes related to managing the career civil service,” reported that under-performers are rarely or never reassigned or dismissed, compared to 84% of those who reported not having a good understanding of key statutes. This finding reinforces the importance of the appropriate use of existing legal authority to manage civil servants, which is a point that both the Office of Personnel Management and Merit Systems Protection Board emphasize. Those managers that understand the system seem to use it more effectively to recruit, develop, and retain a high capacity workforce.

Validation

One of the key findings is how much responses vary across agencies. Some agencies are performing well and others are struggling. One concern with respondents assessing their own agencies, however, is whether they see their workforce the way others do. That is, do agencies that are struggling always know that they are struggling? In addition, are executives responsible for the workforce reluctant to reveal their true assessment when problems exist, particularly problems that suggest they have performed poorly?¹⁸ One way to validate what executives are reporting about their own agencies is to ask federal executives outside the agency to also evaluate the agency. In other words, do executives outside an agency agree with executives managing the agency about the competence of the workforce?

To characterize the relative skillfulness of agencies, we asked respondents, “In your view, how skilled are the workforces of the following agencies?” Respondents were asked to rate the skill level of 5-8 agencies on a one-to-five scale from “Not at all skilled” to “Very skilled.” The survey asked all respondents to rate the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management to create a common context for assessment because most federal executives have experience with these two agencies. Prior to this question, the survey asked respondents to select the three federal agencies that they work with the most. These three agencies were then included in the list of agencies the respondent was asked to evaluate.¹⁹

¹⁸ Importantly, concern about executives who are unwilling to reveal that their agency is not doing well (i.e., social desirability bias) is limited by the large proportions of respondents who say just that. Many executives report concerns about the skills of their agencies’ workforces.

¹⁹ In the online survey, respondents that work within an executive department were also provided two randomly selected agencies from within the same executive department and one randomly selected agency from a list of independent agencies and the executive departments overall. Respondents that work in independent agencies or who did not select a workplace were provided three randomly selected agencies from the list of independent agencies and the executive departments overall. If the respondent provided less than three agencies with which they work,

Additionally, respondents could not assess their own agency, excluding respondents in OMB and OPM. These answers were used to calculate a workforce skills score using an estimation method that identifies the common component of respondents' assessments while accounting for important differences in respondents' perceptions of workforce skill.²⁰ According to federal executives, the agencies with the most skilled workforces are the Federal Reserve, Council of Economic Advisers, National Science Foundation, and National Institutes of Health. Among the least skilled are the General Services Administration, Office of Personnel Management, and Department of Veterans Affairs (Appendix D).

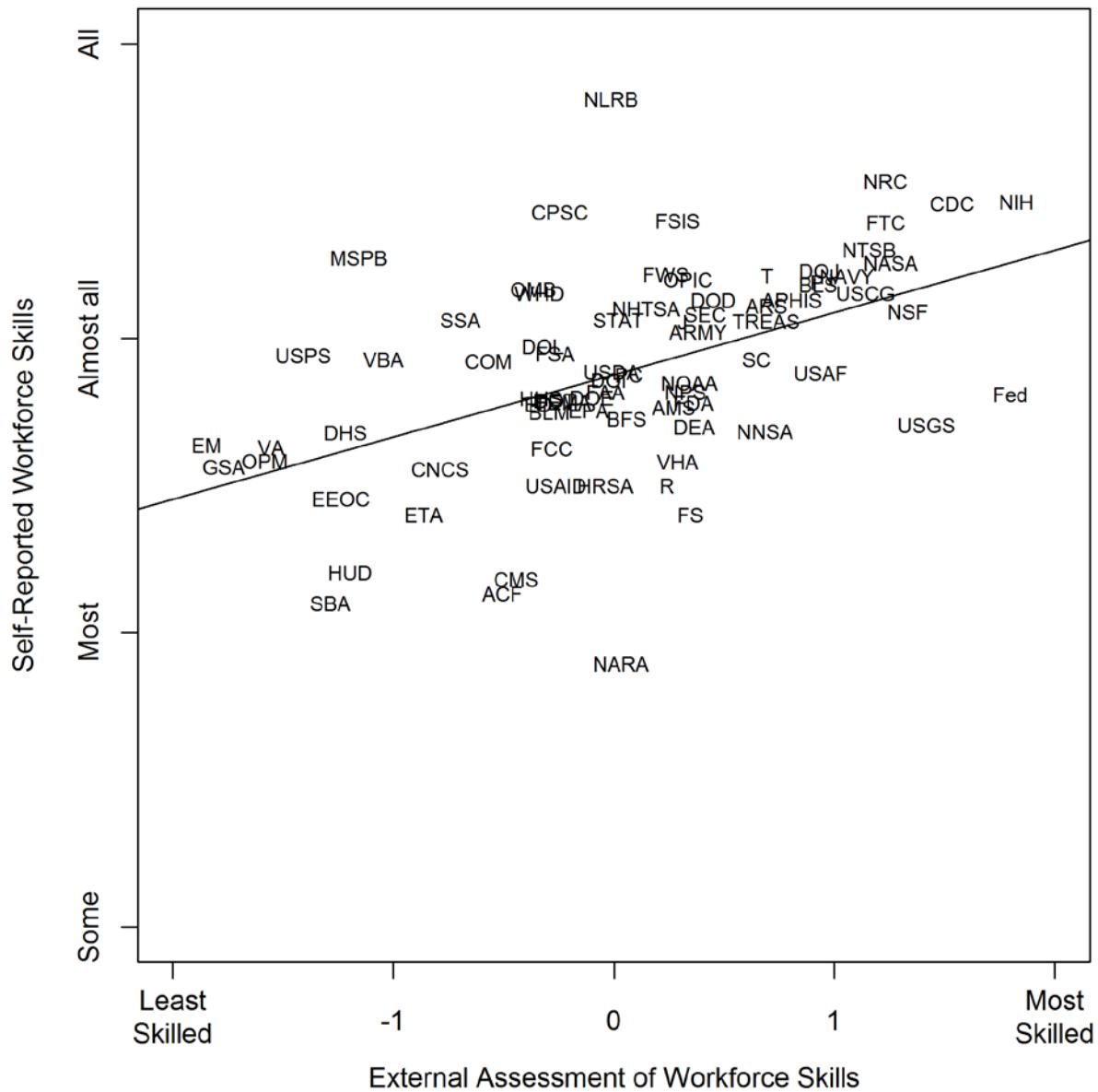
Figure 9 compares the workforce skills estimates based upon the assessments of outsiders with respondents' assessment of the adequacy of the skills of their own agency. Specifically, the figure uses average responses to the question, "Does [your agency] have the skills necessary to implement effectively the core tasks given it by Congress and the president?" There is a positive correlation between the assessments ($\rho = 0.50$), suggesting that respondents and outsiders are assessing the agencies in similar ways. Interestingly, however, some agencies with high outside

an additional randomly selected agency from the list of independent agencies and the executive departments overall replaced each omission. Respondents to the paper survey were asked to rate the Office of Management and Budget, the Office of Personnel Management, and the three agencies they work with the most using the integers one to five. Except for respondents in OMB and OPM, respondents did not rate their own agency.

²⁰ The estimates were generated using a Bayesian multi-rater item response model with informed priors. To account for variation in respondents' expertise, the estimation method gives more weight to the assessments of respondents that work with a given agency because they should be better able to assess the skills of that agency's workforce. Second, the method adjusts for differences in how respondents use the rating scale. Theoretically, each respondent observes the "true" skill of each agency's workforce and then uses that observation to rate that agency on the scale we provide in the question text. Two respondents that have the same perception of a given agency's workforce skill may assign that agency different ratings on the survey because they use the scale differently. For example, both respondents perceive OMB to be "very skilled," but one respondent assigns OMB a "4" on the survey scale and the other assigns it a "4.75." The estimation method allows each respondent to have a unique function that maps her observation to the provided scale to account for such differences.

evaluations, such as the Federal Reserve, still report that they do not have all the skills necessary to carry out their core tasks. Others, such as the National Labor Relations Board, reported that they have all the skills necessary but outsiders rate the agency as only moderately skilled

Figure 9. Respondent Evaluations of the Workforce Skills of Other Agencies Compared with Self-Reports



Source: 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service. Agency averages are unweighted. We limit agencies to those with at least ten respondents to the question and 30 potential respondents in the target population. Workforce skills estimates are scaled to be distributed $N(0,1)$.

compared to other agencies. One should expect some differences between self-reports and outside evaluations since the questions differ. The first question deals with skills relative to core tasks and the second deals with skills in an absolute sense. An agency may be highly skilled but still need more expertise. In addition, some government work does not require a high level of expertise to complete it successfully.

In total, these questions provide different but related lenses through which to evaluate the competence of the public-sector workforce. Now that the differences in workforce skills among agencies are apparent, analysts and policymakers can assess why those differences exist and direct resources to agencies that need help.

Conclusion

The Survey on the Future of Government Service gathered the views of more than 3,500 federal executives from across the executive branch. It provides a nice counterpoint to the regular depiction of the public sector as a collection of failures and scandals. On the contrary, public sector executives reported that the federal personnel system is capable but under stress. Many agencies struggle to recruit and retain talented employees. Promotions are too often based on factors other than merit and poor performing employees are rarely dismissed. Yet, some agencies cultivate a workforce that successfully accomplishes the tasks set before them by Congress and the president.

Two implications emerge from this analysis. First, the federal government can do more to invest in diagnosis of and remedies for problems building human capital at federal agencies. The inter-agency variation in responses to questions about recruitment, retention, promotion, and dismissal reveals a pressing need to invest in understanding why these differences exist and share

best practices across government. The federal government has very little existing capacity to collect and analyze data on the federal workforce. What data it does collect is often agency-specific, ill-suited for inference, or goes unused because there is little research capacity inside the Office of Personnel Management to analyze it. The Government Accountability Office and Merit Systems Protection Board do important work but are limited by budgets, externally set agendas, and statutory mandates to focus on specific topics. Improving data quality and analytic capacity is an area ripe for better academic-government partnerships or not-for-profit-government partnerships.

Relieving the stress on the federal personnel system must begin with a holistic look at the system and learning from the experiences of executives across the government. The survey has used their experiences to assess the level of human capital in the federal civil service and identify targets for reform. However, this is not sufficient. Now academia, non-profits, and government agencies should work together to understand why some agencies are able to develop the human capital they need and others fall short. Such partnerships are a priority of organizations like the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, the Partnership for Public Service, and the Volcker Alliance. These partnerships can create the knowledge we need to build a public service that can meet the challenges of the coming century.

A second implication of this research is that reform efforts need to view the personnel system as a cohesive enterprise targeted toward meeting the needs of modern government. As scholars often point out, a defining feature of the public service in the United States is that it was designed to prevent abuse rather than empower high performance (Van Riper 1958). The federal government does not have a human resources system designed to meet the needs of modern government (Partnership for Public Service 2014). High functioning private sector organizations

identify the human capital necessary to accomplish key tasks and develop strategies for recruiting, developing, and retaining it. The federal personnel system is designed to ensure equity and regularity of personnel decisions and to prevent abuses—e.g., fraud, nepotism, or politically-motivated employment decisions. When a personnel system is not designed to create human capital, it should be no surprise that it does not do so consistently.

Whatever shape reform takes, it should free up managers to reward merit, recruit top quality talent, and retain high performing employees. The recent plan put forward by the Partnership for Public Service is an example of such an effort (Partnership for Public Service 2014). This plan will not satisfy everyone, but it is an example of a reform proposal that emphasizes easing the processes of hiring, promoting, and keeping the most qualified employees. It encourages focusing on people and their development rather than programs. The plan also highlights the importance of a compensation system that is occupation specific and sensitive to variations in labor markets. It advocates for flexible career paths and promotion systems that reward performance rather than tenure. The plan avoids the pitfall of recommending policy in response to anecdote and tries to take a clear-eyed look at what is working well and poorly. It proposes systemic remedies that take into account variation across contexts within the executive establishment. This plan or one like it would be a good start to important public sector reform.

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Appendix A. Survey Methodology

Sample Construction

We obtained contact information for the target population (i.e., mailing address, email address, and telephone number) from the *Federal Yellow Book Federal Government Premium* database, an online directory published by Leadership Directories, Inc. The Princeton Survey Research Center fielded the survey from August 14, 2014 to December 15, 2014. Respondents were sent invitations to take the survey by regular mail and email when available. Email addresses were obtained for 79 percent of the target population. The database was also used to identify appointee status – presidential appointee with Senate confirmation, appointee without Senate confirmation, non-career member of the Senior Executive Service, career member of the Senior Executive Service, Schedule C appointee, member of the Senior Foreign Service, or career civil servant. We define “careerists” as career members of the Senior Executive Service, members of the Senior Foreign Service, and career civil servants. Others are labeled “appointees.”

We targeted instrumentalities of the United States government that were headed by Senate-confirmed appointees and whose functions were not exclusively advisory in nature. This includes bureaus and offices within the fifteen executive departments, seven agencies within the Executive Office of the President, and 66 federal agencies outside the executive departments. We used the *Sourcebook of United States Executive Agencies* to create our list of workplaces.¹ Agencies in the Executive Office of the President were identified using Table 1. We excluded the Executive Residence, Office of Administration, and White House Office. Prominent bureaus and agencies within executive departments were identified using Table 2. The research team made

¹ See URL: <https://www.acus.gov/publication/sourcebook-united-states-executive-agencies>

limited adjustments to this list based on which agencies and bureaus the team wanted to be able to analyze separately from the executive department as a whole. Importantly, individuals who met the criteria described in the next two paragraphs and who worked in an executive department were not excluded from the target population because they did not work in one of the agencies or bureaus listed in Table 2 in the *Sourcebook*. Agencies outside the executive departments were identified using Table 5. Scholarship agencies, regional agencies, and non-profits and cooperatives were excluded because they do not play a prominent role in policymaking.

Our target population is political appointees (appointees with Senate confirmation, appointees without Senate confirmation, non-career members of the Senior Executive Service, and Schedule C appointees), career members of the Senior Executive Service, U.S.-based members of the Senior Foreign Service, and other high level career executives (e.g., at the GS-14 or GS-15 level) that ran agencies and programs. The Senior Executive Service is a layer of managers right below Senate-confirmed presidential appointees that is a mix of career and non-career executives. Up to 10 percent may be drawn from outside the civil service, but it is comprised primarily of career executives that have applied for it.

Using the *Federal Government Premium* database we selected all political appointees, career members of the Senior Executive Service, and U.S.-based members of the Senior Foreign Service listed in the database. We used “job functions” defined by Leadership Directories to target other high-level executives. We selected all individuals identified as “Federal Administrators” defined by Leadership Directories as “... key government officials who are leaders of the departments and independent agencies, as well as their large sub-agencies. This tag is also applied to the department of agency’s Chief of Staff, [Chief Financial Officer], [Chief Information Officer], Inspector General, and General Counsel.” To capture high-level federal

executives not identified by the criteria above, we selected persons in the database with a job title that contained the word “Director” and that had one or more of the following job functions listed in Table A1. These criteria were used to target career executives at the GS-15 or GS-14 level with policymaking and management authority while keeping the target population of sufficient size that the survey could be completed within budget. We randomly selected 300 Assistant U.S. Attorneys from the database to include in our sample. Members of federal advisory boards that are presidential appointees were excluded because they are generally part-time employees whose primary occupation is not public service; therefore, they are not part of the target population of the survey. Individuals with a mailing address not in the United States were excluded. Our sample can be considered a census of individuals that meet these criteria.

Table A1: Job Functions

Budget	Government Affairs, Lobbying
Government Regulation, Regulatory Oversight, Enforcement	Grants
Policy, Planning	Public Policy
Purchasing, Procurement	Regulatory Affairs, Compliance

This initial sample was then stratified by the bureaus and agencies we targeted. Additions were made to any targeted bureau or agency with less than 40 individuals by selecting senior individuals in the relevant organization charts listed in the online database. This was done to increase the sample size for these agencies and bureaus to improve our ability to make valid statistical inferences and to correct for any cases for which the senior management of an entity is not well represented by our initial sampling procedure.

Response Rate, Timeline, and Calculation of Survey Weights

The response rate was 24% (3,551 of 14,698). The response rate among appointees was 18% percent (429 of 2,444) compared to 25% percent among careerists (3,122 of 12,254). The survey was offered online and on paper. Of the 3,551 respondents, 586 chose the paper survey.²

For the questions that we analyze in this paper, we looked for systematic differences between the responses of individuals who took the online version and the paper version of the survey. We used two tests: a χ^2 test of independence to look for differences in the distribution of responses and a difference-of-means test assuming equal variance to look for differences in mean responses. The distributions of responses and mean responses were generally not statistically distinguishable. For certain questions, the distributions of responses, mean responses, or both were statistically distinguishable; however, these differences were only substantively significant in one case. (Appointee respondents to the paper survey were much more likely to be approached about a job at a non-profit than appointee respondents to the online survey.) Often only one test identified a statistically distinguishable difference. Most importantly, the statistically significant differences across questions did not create a systematic pattern. It is not the case, for example, that respondents to the paper survey are systematically more likely to give a negative assessment of human capital at their agency than respondents to the online survey. Overall, we conclude that there is no reason for concern about response bias due to the instrument chosen by respondents.

Survey Timeline:

1. August 14 – Initial invitation letter mailed.
2. August 27 – Invitation email sent.
3. September 21 – Reminder postcard mailed to those with valid mailing address, but no email address.
4. September 23 – Addition made to target population, invitation letter mailed with invitation email following ten days later.

² Nineteen respondents submitted both the online and paper surveys. We took the earlier completed response in these cases. These cases are not counted in the 590 respondents that chose the paper survey.

5. September 30 – Email reminder sent.
6. October 6-17 – Telephone campaign to encourage participation.
7. October 22 – Paper surveys mailed to people that had not yet responded.
8. October 31 – Reminder postcards mailed.
9. November 17 – Reminder email sent.
10. November 18 – Email message targeting people that had started but not completed the online survey.
11. December 5 – Final email reminder sent.
12. December 15 – Field period ends.

All statistical estimates we report are weighted to reduce non-response and non-coverage bias. Post-stratification weights were created using a process referred to as sample balancing or raking. The population we constructed from the online database was used as the target population. The characteristics used for weighting were:

1. Whether a respondent worked in the DC area (defined as the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia).
2. Appointee status defined as presidential appointee with Senate confirmation, presidential appointee without Senate confirmation, Schedule C appointee, non-career member of the SES, career member of the SES, member of the Senior Foreign Service, and career civil servant.
3. Workplace by each executive department and each agency outside the executive departments.

Weights were examined for excessive size to prevent any single response from unduly influencing the results. Fifty-one individuals in our sample drawn from the online directory, including four respondents to the survey, did not have a mailing address and therefore have no state listed. Our weighted sample excludes these individuals. The weighted margin of error for the full sample is $\pm 1.8\%$. The weighted margin of error for both random half samples is $\pm 2.6\%$.

We use the following formulae to calculate the weighted margin of error. The composite design effect for a sample of size n with each case having a weight, w_i is:

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

Then the weighted margin of error is:

$$\pm \left(\sqrt{deff} \times 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{n}} \right), \text{ where we set } \hat{p} = 0.5.$$

Checking for Partisan Selection Bias

We provided a private firm contact information for the target population to identify their partisanship. Of the 14,698 individuals in the target population, 6,855 (47%) were determined to be Republican, Democrat, or unaffiliated (i.e., independent). The firm labeled individuals as “Inferred Democrat” if they voted more times in a Democratic primary than a Republican primary between 2000 and 2013. If no primary voting history exists, individuals are labeled an “Inferred Democrat” if they donated to Democratic or liberal organizations, including groups that are pro-choice or support the Affordable Care Act (commonly called “Obamacare”). Anyone who donated to a Republican or conservative group is excluded. Individuals are labeled “Inferred Republican” if they voted more times in a Republican primary than a Democratic primary between 2000 and 2013. If no primary voting history exists, individuals are labeled an “Inferred Republican” if they donated to Republican or conservative organizations, including groups that are pro-life, oppose the Affordable Care Act, or oppose gun control. Anyone who donated to a Democratic or liberal group is excluded.

Table A2: Self-Reported Partisanship versus Private Firm's Categorization

Self-Reported	Private Firm					Total
	Dem.	Inferred Dem.	Ind.	Inferred Rep.	Rep.	
Democrat	499	184	66	31	13	793
Column Pct.	82.89	66.43	23.24	19.25	12.38	55.49
Lean Democrat	39	32	70	8	4	153
	6.48	11.55	24.65	4.97	3.81	10.71
Independent	26	32	77	34	14	183
	4.32	11.55	27.11	21.12	13.33	12.81
Lean Republican	10	9	24	23	14	80
	1.66	3.25	8.45	14.29	13.33	5.60
Republican	14	12	36	61	59	
	2.33	4.33	12.68	37.89	56.19	12.74
Don't Know	14	8	11	4	1	38
	2.33	2.89	3.87	2.48	0.95	2.66
Total	602	277	284	161	105	1,429

Table A2 contains the frequency of each categorization by the private firm and the self-reported party identification of survey respondents with percentages for each column. Eighty-nine percent of respondents identified as Democrat by the private firm self-identify as a Democrat or leaning Democrat. Similarly, 78 percent of the respondents identified as “Inferred Democrat” by the private firm self-identify as a Democrat or leaning Democrat. Identification of Republicans is less accurate. Seventy percent of the respondents identified as Republican by the private firm self-identify as a Republican or leaning Republican. However, only 52 percent of the respondents identified as “Inferred Republican” by the private firm self-identify as a Republican or leaning Republican. Independents, as identified by the private firm, are more likely to identify as partisan, particularly as a Democrat or leaning Democrat, than independent.

Table A3 contains the response rate for each category identified by the private firm. The proportions of Democrats, Republicans, and Inferred Republicans differ only slightly among respondents and non-respondents while Inferred Democrats are slightly overrepresented and Independents are slightly underrepresented among respondents. While these difference are

sufficient to make the distributions of partisanship among respondents and non-respondents statistically distinguishable using a χ^2 test of independence ($\Pr(\chi^2 > \hat{\chi}^2) < 0.01$), it is difficult to draw a conclusion about what this difference means for partisan selection into the survey given the large proportion of “Independents” that self-identify as Democrat or leaning Democrat in Table A2. Due to the high classification error rate among independents, we also analyzed the distribution of partisanship excluding independents. As shown in the right half of Table A3, there is little substantive difference in the distribution of partisanship among respondents and the target population. Nonetheless, omitting the problematic category of independents does not materially reduce the confidence that the distribution of partisanship is statistically distinguishable among respondents and non-respondents ($\Pr(\chi^2 > \hat{\chi}^2) = 0.02$). If independents are omitted and “inferred” partisans are combined with partisans ($\Pr(\chi^2 > \hat{\chi}^2) = 0.44$) or “inferred” partisans are also omitted ($\Pr(\chi^2 > \hat{\chi}^2) = 0.90$), the distributions are not statistically distinguishable.

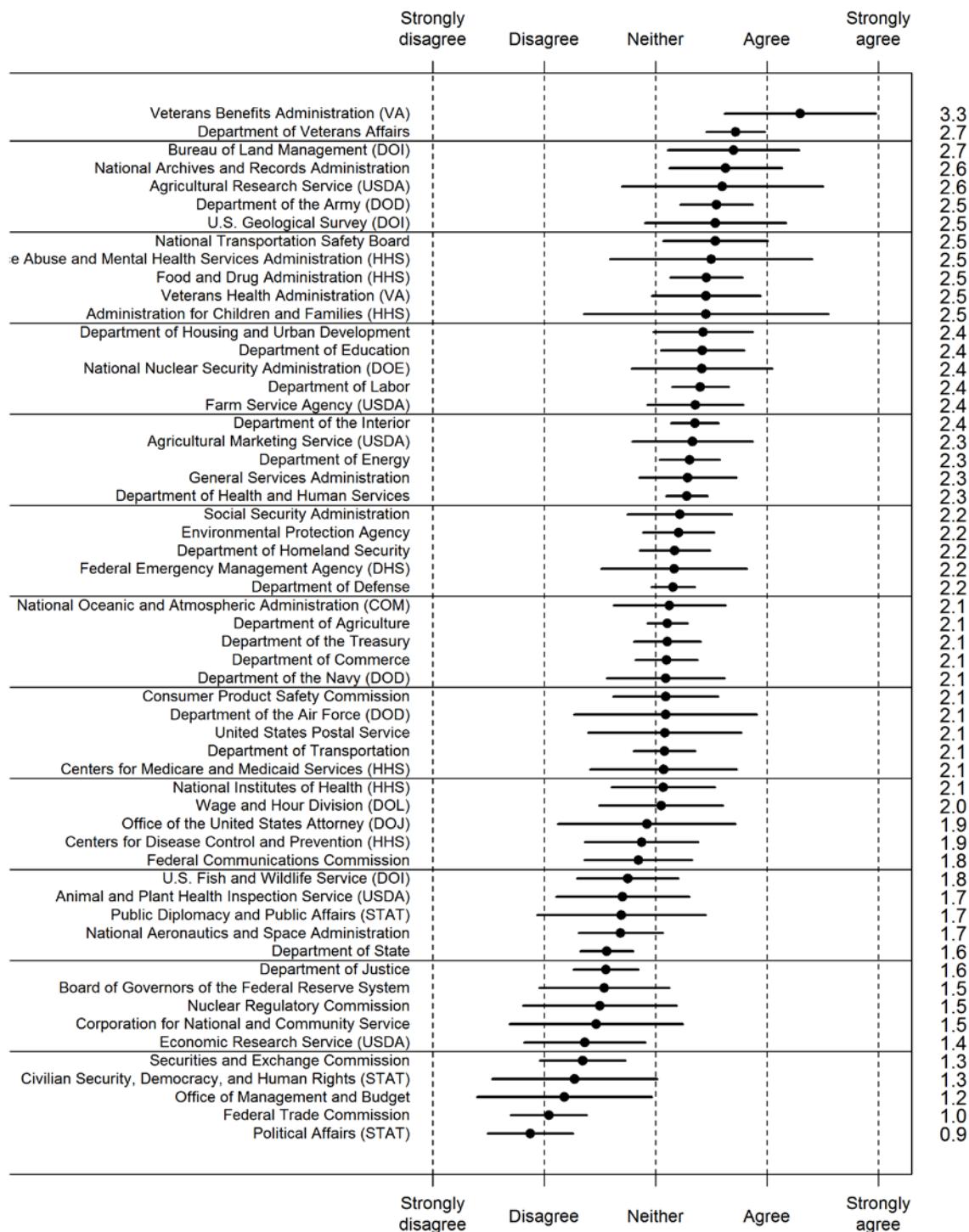
Table A3: Response Rate by Partisanship

Partisanship	Responded			Responded		
	No	Yes	Total	No	Yes	Total
Democrat	2,138	711	2,849	2,138	711	2,849
Column Pct.	41.52	41.68	41.56	54.2	52.01	53.63
Inferred Dem.	809	327	1,136	809	327	1,136
	15.71	19.17	16.57	20.51	23.92	21.39
Independent	1,204	339	1,543			
	23.38	19.87	22.51			
Inferred Rep.	595	197	792	595	197	792
	11.56	11.55	11.55	15.08	14.41	14.91
Republican	403	132	535	403	132	535
	7.83	7.74	7.8	10.22	9.66	10.07
Total	5,149	1,706	6,855	3,945	1,367	5,312

In sum, the distributions of partisanship among respondents and the target population are not substantively different. If there is a partisan selection effect, the statistical evidence suggests

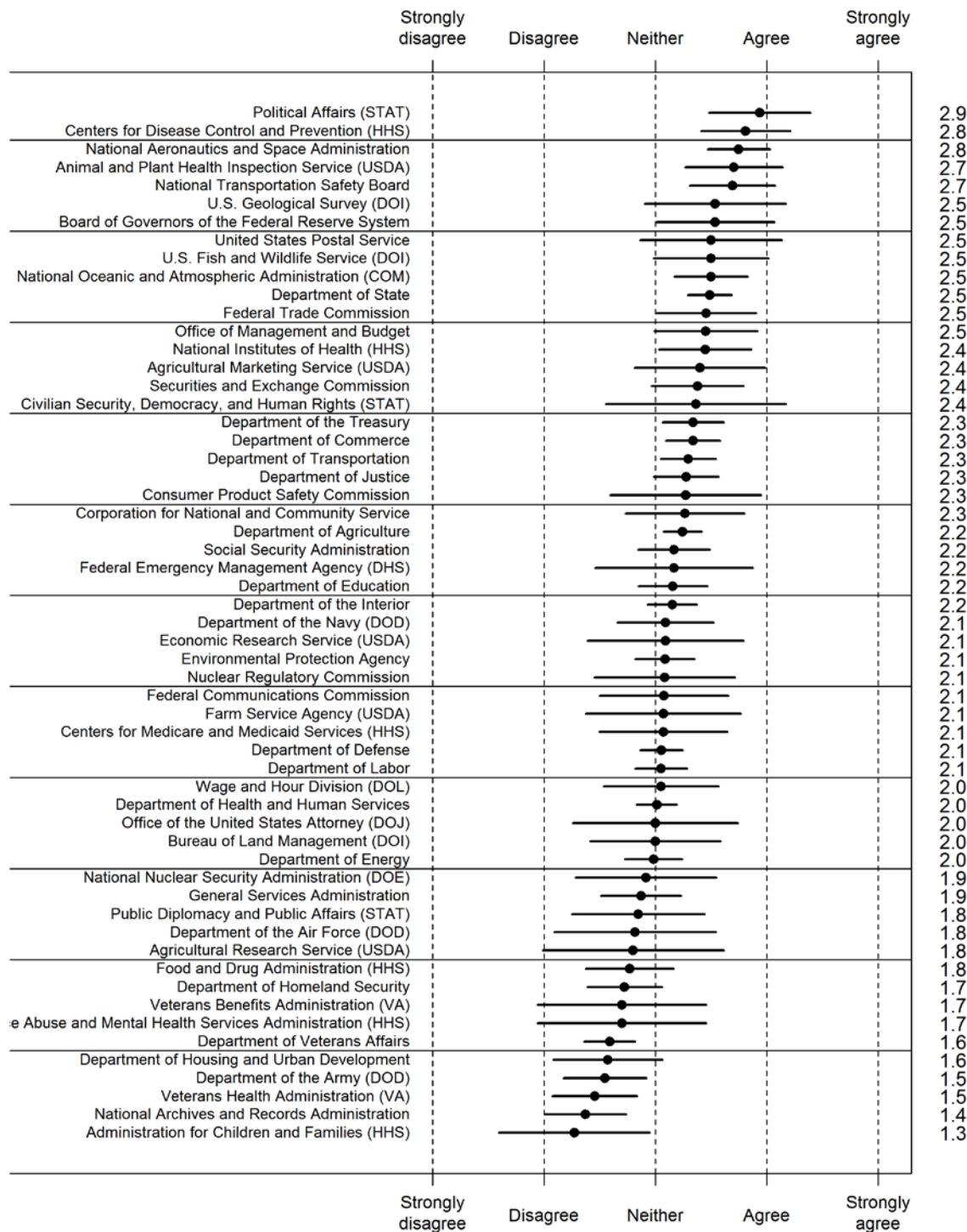
it is Democrats who are overrepresented among survey respondents. Therefore, it is unlikely that overrepresentation of Republicans, who may hold a negative view of a Democratic presidential administration, positively biases the proportions of respondents in our sample who hold negative views of human capital at their agencies.

Appendix B. Agency Average Responses to Recruitment, 2014



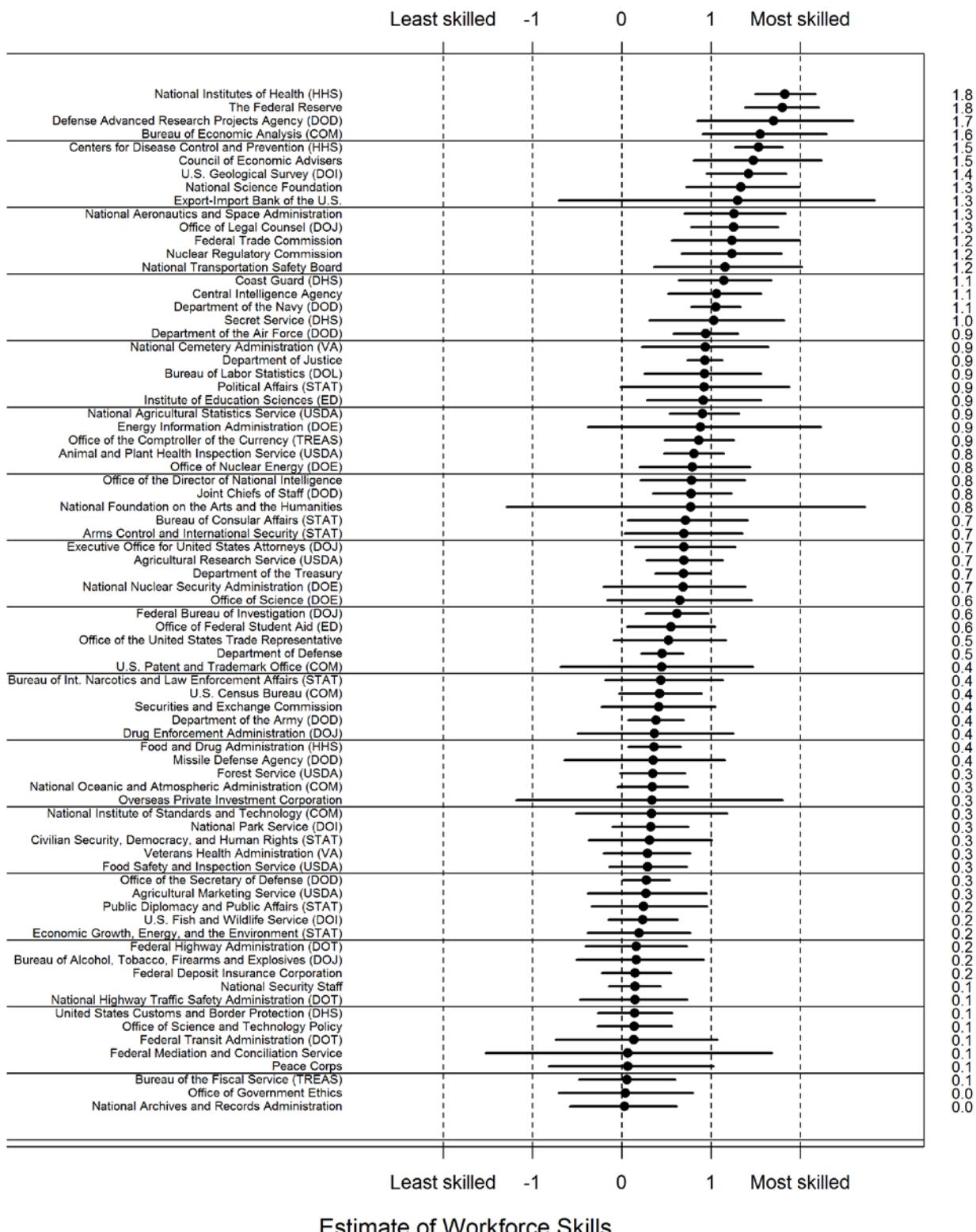
Source: 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service. Numbers on the right margin are unweighted agency averages, limited to cases with at least 10 respondents and at least 30 potential respondents. Horizontal lines denote 95% confidence intervals. Responses are coded zero (0) to four (4) with zero indicating "Strongly disagree" and 4 indicating "Strongly agree."

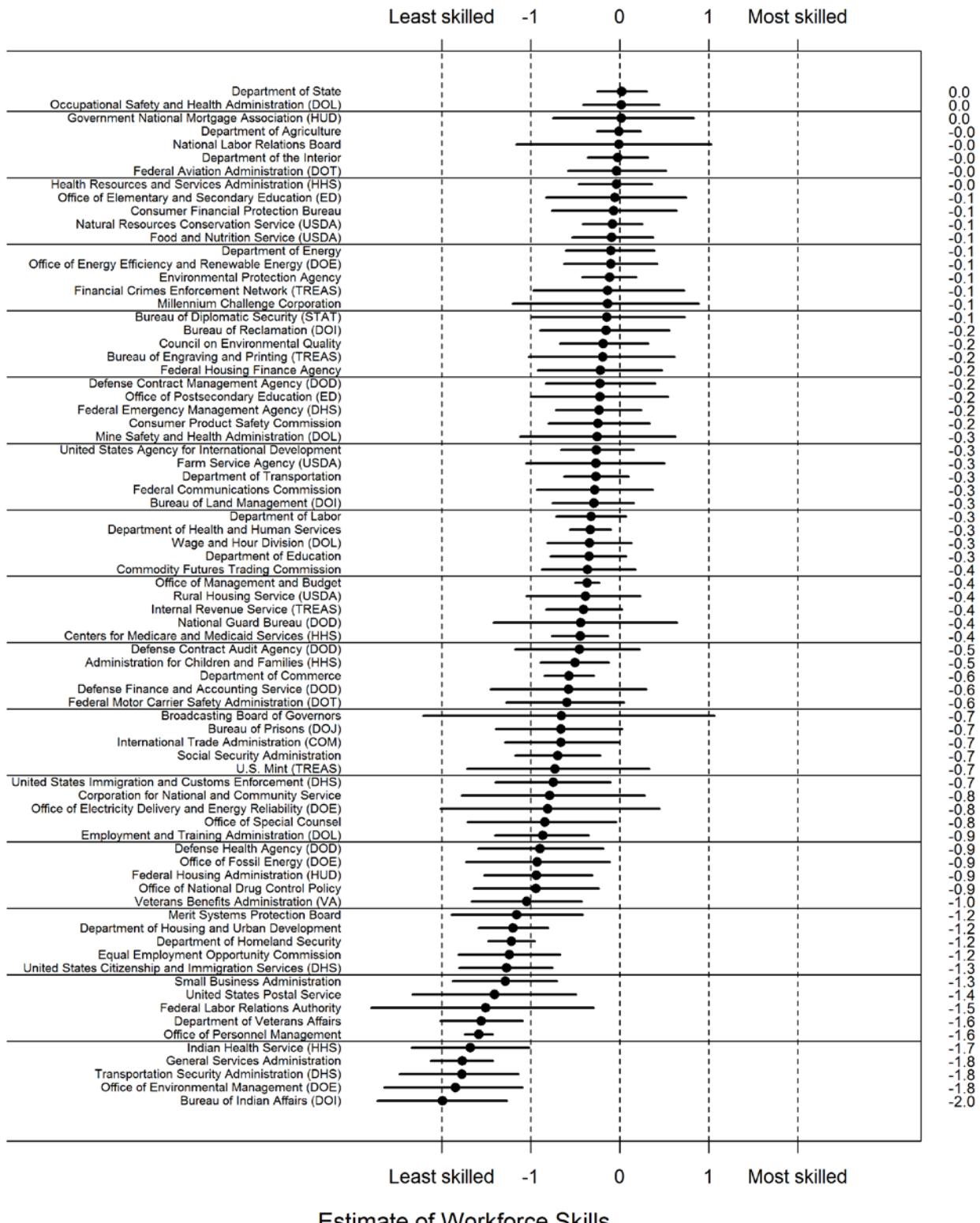
Appendix C. Agency Average Responses to Retention, 2014



Source: 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service. Numbers on the right margin are unweighted agency averages, limited to cases with at least 10 respondents and at least 30 potential respondents. Horizontal lines denote 95% confidence intervals. Responses are coded zero (0) to four (4) with zero indicating "Strongly disagree" and 4 indicating "Strongly agree."

Appendix D. Workforce Skills Score: Respondent Evaluations of the Workforce Skills of Other Agencies





Estimate of Workforce Skills

Source: 2014 Survey on the Future of Government Service. Horizontal lines denote the 95% region of highest posterior density. We omit five agencies that have a workforce skills score that is estimated with excessive uncertainty. Workforce skills scores are scaled to be distributed $N(0,1)$.