

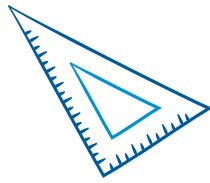
2021 Updated Survey Results

K-12 public school employee views on finances, employment outlook, and safety concerns due to COVID-19

Report prepared by MissionSquare Research Institute

formerly the Center for State and Local Government Excellence at ICMA-RC

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This report was prepared by Rivka Liss-Levinson, PhD (MissionSquare Research Institute) and describes results of a survey conducted with Greenwald Research.

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Executive summary

This report presents the results for a subset of 493 K-12 public school employees who participated in a May 2021 national online survey of 1,203 state and local government employees. The survey was conducted by MissionSquare Research Institute (formerly the Center for State and Local Government Excellence at ICMA-RC) and Greenwald Research, and assessed public sector employee views on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on their employment outlook, general concerns about

COVID-19, vaccine views, perceptions of their finances, and general satisfaction with their employer and their benefits.

Where applicable, comparisons are made between the 493 K-12 employee survey respondents and the 710 other government employees who participated in the May 2021 survey.



Top 10 takeaways

1

The vast majority (**90%**) of K-12 employees are **concerned about students in their school falling behind** as a result of the pandemic; 65% are extremely or very concerned.

2

While the majority of both K-12 and other government employees say the pandemic has impacted the nature of their jobs, **K-12 employees were nearly twice as likely as other government workers to report difficulty in adjusting to these changes** (42% and 22%, respectively).

3

As of May 2021, **69% of K-12 employees were working fully in person**, a significantly higher percentage than the 50% of other government employees who reported no remote work. Prior to the start of the pandemic, only 18% of K-12 employees were engaged in any remote work.

4

K-12 employees were significantly more likely to perceive themselves to be at high risk of exposure to COVID at work, with **47% of K-12 employees feeling that in-person work is very or extremely risky**, as compared with 32% of other government employees.

5

Half of K-12 survey respondents reported that they and their family have been negatively impacted financially by the COVID-19 pandemic, with 10% reporting that they have been negatively impacted significantly. Far fewer other government employees (35%) reported a negative financial impact.

6

K-12 employees were significantly more likely than other government employees to be **very or extremely concerned about being able to retire when they want** (44% and 36%, respectively).

7

K-12 employees **most commonly reported feeling stressed (52%), burnt out/fatigued (52%), and/or anxious (34%)** about COVID-19 while at work, and were significantly more likely than other government employees to report feeling stressed, burnt out/fatigued, and/or afraid.

8

K-12 employees were significantly more likely than other government employees to **feel that the pandemic has made the public more aware of the importance of what they do** (61% vs. 37%). However, they were also significantly more likely to report that the risks they are taking during the pandemic are not on par with their compensation, and that working during the pandemic has made them consider changing jobs.

9

Three in four K-12 employees (75%) were fully vaccinated as of May 2021, and another 2% were partially vaccinated. Among other government employees, 67% were fully vaccinated, with another 9% partially vaccinated.

10

Asked to describe what one or two realistic actions their employer could take that would be most impactful in making their workplace a better place to work, **K-12 employees most often recommended promoting safety** by following CDC guidelines and providing/enforcing the use of PPE (**22%**), **the issuing of bonuses or raises (21%)**, and **allowing work from home/remote work and flexible hours (13%)**.

Introduction

As K-12 public schools across the country begin the 2021-2022 school year, the return to normalcy that many had been anticipating has been hampered by the emergence and spread of the delta variant of COVID-19. The patchwork of bans and mandates among states and localities regarding teachers and students receiving vaccines and wearing masks, the changing guidance by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the wait for approval of vaccines for those under the age of 12 have only exacerbated the challenges that public schools have been facing as they have dealt with COVID-19 over the past 18 months.

The education sector of the state and local government workforce is comprised of approximately 9.8 million individuals, more than half of the total state and local government workforce. Between March of 2020 and March of 2021, almost 1.3 million state and local government workers lost their jobs. Of those jobs lost, nearly 1 million were from the education sector.¹ These job losses and the associated impacts have the potential for long-term effects on recruitment and retention of talented public school teachers and staff, and in turn, the academic achievements and health and well-being of the students they teach.

In May 2020, MissionSquare Research Institute (formerly the Center for State and Local Government Excellence at ICMA-RC) and Greenwald Research conducted an online survey of 1,008 full-time state and local government employees, assessing their views on the COVID-19 pandemic's financial impacts, job impacts, and other related issues. The results of that survey were released in a June 2020 report, and key findings were also developed into three infographics (see [Additional Resources](#)).

In October 2020, a follow-up survey was conducted with 1,205 full-time state and local government employees to understand how these perceptions had changed. These results were also developed into several reports, including one focused on the K-12 workforce, and corresponding infographics (see [Additional Resources](#)).

In May 2021, a third round of COVID-19 survey research was conducted to assess state and local government employees' views on the COVID-19 vaccine, general concerns about COVID-19, perceptions of financial and job impacts, and satisfaction with their employer and benefits. A report and accompanying infographics contain the results of this online survey of 1,203 state and local government employees (see [Additional Resources](#)).

Over the course of the past 18 months, the K-12 sector in particular has had to make a myriad of adjustments – and make them quickly. While some of the impacts of COVID-19 are universal across the state and local government workforce, other elements are unique to the K-12 workforce and those they serve.

This report presents the results of a sub-sample of 493 K-12 public school employees who participated in the May 2021 MissionSquare Research Institute/Greenwald Research survey on the impact of COVID-19. After reviewing the demographics of these K-12 employees, the report discusses K-12 employees' views on the return to school, vaccines, the impact of COVID-19 on their job, general COVID-19 concerns and morale, their financial outlook, and satisfaction with their employer and benefits. When applicable, results of the 493 K-12 employees are compared with the responses of the other 710 state and local government employees who completed the May 2021 survey.

Survey results

Sample demographics

The demographic characteristics of the 493 K-12 employee survey respondents are displayed in Table 1. Most survey respondents were female, white or Caucasian; working for local government; married or living with a partner; had children/stepchildren; were well educated; had a total annual personal income of less than \$75,000; and were in teaching roles. Just over half (51%) of respondents lived in a suburban area, nearly half (49%) were between the ages of 40 and 59, 46% lived in the South, and 45% worked at an elementary school. There

was more variation in respondents' total annual household income, number of years working for their employer, and area population size.

The demographic characteristics of the K-12 employees sampled generally align with the overall workforce profile of the approximately 7.8 million state and local government employees who work in elementary or secondary education.² As of 2017-2018, about 76% of public school teachers were female,

Table 1 **Sample demographics**

Gender		Marital status		Type of school employer		Total annual household income		
Male	23%	Married	59%	Elementary school	45%	Less than \$25,000	5%	
Female	77%	Single, never married	21%	Middle school	22%	\$25,000 to \$49,999	20%	
Prefer to self-describe	0%	Divorced or separated	11%	High school	37%	\$50,000 to \$74,999	25%	
Age		Living with a partner	6%	Another type of school	1%	\$75,000 to \$99,999	19%	
	Under 40	37%	Widowed	2%	Work in K-12 education but not at an actual school		\$100,000 to \$124,999	15%
	40-59	49%	Prefer not to say	<0.5%			\$125,000 to \$149,999	8%
	60 or older	14%	Children/stepchildren		Teaching role?		\$150,000 or more	8%
Education		Yes, under 18	36%	Yes	75%	Don't know	<0.5%	
	Less than a high school diploma	0%	Yes, 18 or older	37%	No	25%	Area population size	
	Graduated high school	4%	No children/stepchildren	34%	Number of years working with current employer		Less than 10,000	12%
Some college (no degree)	5%	Prefer not to answer	<0.5%			10,000 to 24,999	12%	
Race/ethnicity		Region		Less than 1 year	9%	25,000 to 49,999	11%	
	Associate's degree or completion of technical or vocational school	9%	South	46%	1 to 5 years	30%	50,000 to 99,999	15%
	Bachelor's degree	40%	Northeast	19%	6 to 10 years	18%	100,000 to 199,999	13%
	Graduate/professional degree	42%	Midwest	18%	11 to 15 years	14%	200,000 to 499,999	9%
		West	16%	16-20 years	12%	500,000 to 999,999	4%	
		Area type		21+ years	18%	1,000,000 or more	7%	
	White or Caucasian	73%	Urban	25%	Total annual personal income		Don't know	16%
Black or African American	10%	Suburban	51%	Less than \$25,000	9%			
Hispanic/Latino/Spanish descent	14%	Small town	12%	\$25,000 to \$49,999	35%			
Asian or Pacific Islander	3%	Rural	12%	\$50,000 to \$74,999	27%			
Native American	<0.5%	Employer		\$75,000 to \$99,999	17%			
Other	<0.5%	State government	9%	\$100,000 to \$124,999	5%			
		Local government	91%	\$125,000 to \$149,999	3%			
				\$150,000 or more	3%			
				Don't know	<0.5%			

Note: n=493; some figures throughout the report may not total to 100% due to rounding or due to multiple applicable responses.

about 79% were white, 58% had a post-baccalaureate degree, 23% had over 20 years of teaching experience, and the average base salary was \$57,900.³

The demographic characteristics of the entire sample of 1,203 (493 K-12 and 710 other government employees) surveyed are described in more detail in the July 2021 report, **2021 Updated Survey Results: Public Sector Employee Views on Finances and Employment Outlook Due to COVID-19**. Compared with other government survey respondents, K-12 employees were significantly more likely to be female, white or Caucasian, married, have children/stepchildren, work for local government, have a graduate/professional degree, live in the South, and have been working for their employer for less than one year.

Return to school

Among K-12 employees working at a school in May 2021, 59% reported that their schools were holding classes via a hybrid of in-person and online/remote learning, and about one in three (32%) reported that classes were being held fully in person. Only 8% of schools were holding classes fully online/through remote learning only (Figure 1).⁴

About four in ten K-12 employees (39%) reported that they are working more hours (either officially or unofficially) than they were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 4% reported working fewer hours (Figure 2).

Figure 1 **How school is currently holding classes, May 2021** (n=493)

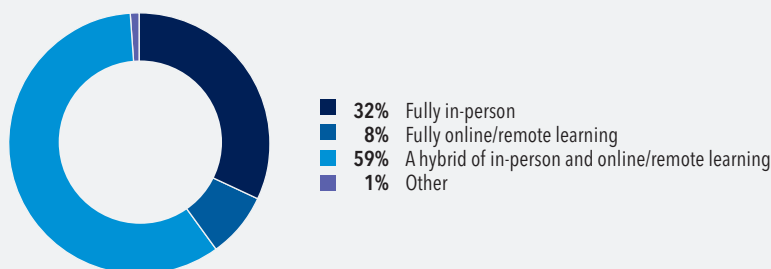
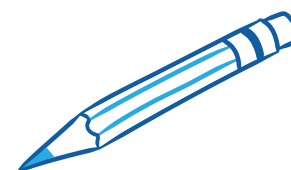
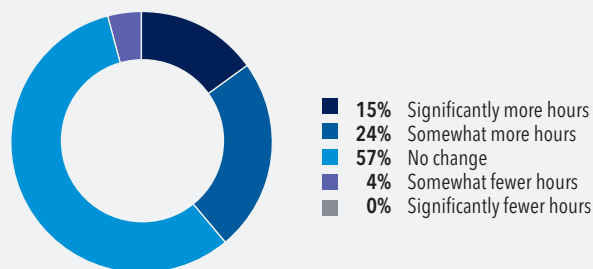


Figure 2 **Working more or fewer hours than prior to pandemic, May 2021** (n=493)



Key Stat

39% reported that they are working more hours (either officially or unofficially) than they were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When asked why they are working more hours (officially or unofficially), by far the most common response was the extra work that online/remote work entails (73%), followed by social distancing protocols/limitations on class size making everything take longer, and an increased number of parent or student (42%) or work (41%) meetings and communications (see Figure 3).

K-12 employees who work at schools were also asked to what extent technology has been an issue for their school and students during the pandemic. As shown in Figure 4, more than three in four surveyed (77%) indicated that internet access or internet speed for students learning from home has been an issue, with 28% characterizing it as a significant issue. Slightly fewer (69%) identified school technology capabilities as an issue, with 19% indicating that it is a significant issue.

Figure 3 **Why working more hours, May 2021** (n=192)

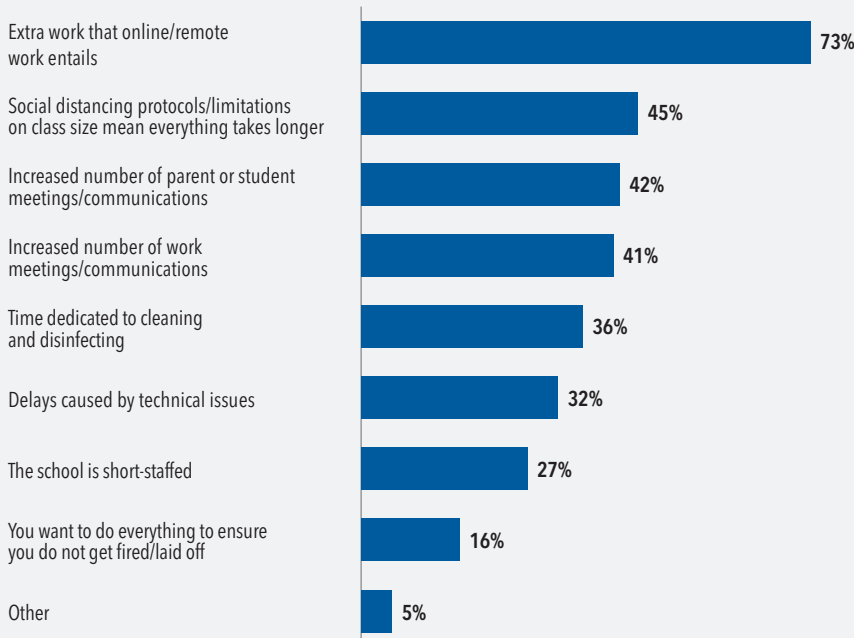
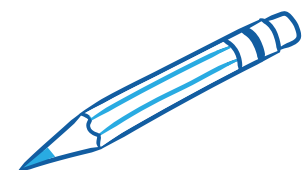
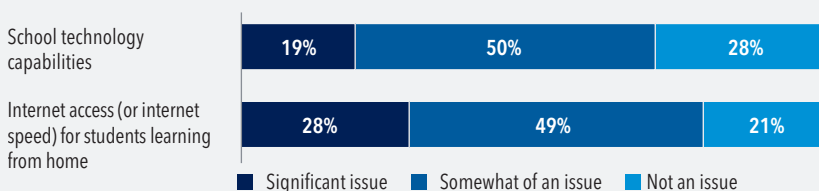


Figure 4 **Issues for school during pandemic, May 2021** (n=475)



Key Stat

77% indicated that internet access or internet speed for students learning from home has been an issue.

Asked how concerned they are about students in their school falling behind as a result of the pandemic, the vast majority (90%) of K-12 employees working at a school were at least somewhat concerned about this, with 65% extremely or very concerned (Figure 5).

Job impact

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the nature of most respondents' jobs (e.g., what they do, where they work, how they go about the tasks required). As shown in Figure 6, 81% of K-12 employees and 71% of other government employees say the pandemic has impacted the nature of their jobs. For K-12 employees in particular, this impact has been significant (37% for K-12 employees vs. 28% for other government employees).

K-12 employees were also significantly more likely to report difficulty in adjusting to the changes to their job as a result of the pandemic. While 22% of other government employees rated the adjustment as extremely or very difficult, nearly twice as many K-12 employees did (42%). In contrast, while 44% of other government workers rated the adjustment as not too difficult or not at all difficult, only 23% of K-12 employees did (Figure 7).

Figure 5 **Concern about students falling behind, May 2021** (n=475)

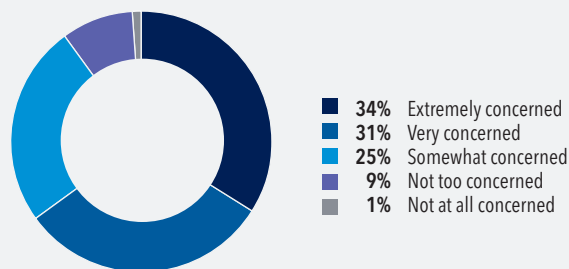


Figure 6 **Extent to which COVID has impacted nature of job, May 2021**

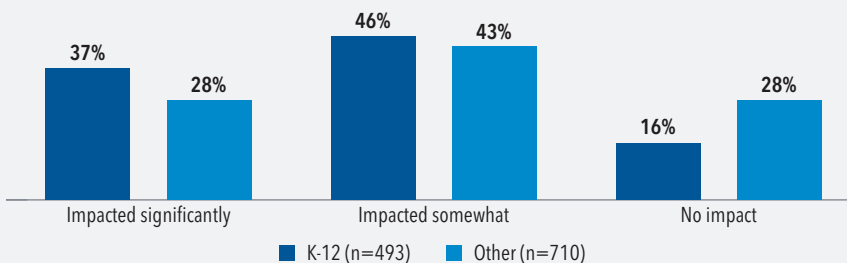
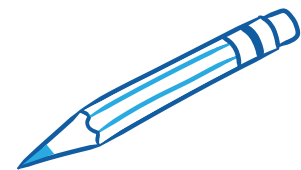
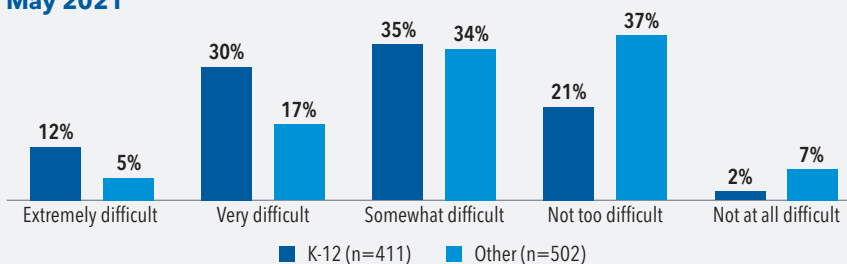


Figure 7 **Difficulty adjusting to changes to job as a result of pandemic, May 2021**



Key Stat

K-12 employees were significantly more likely to report difficulty in adjusting to the changes to their job as a result of the pandemic.

As of May 2021, more than two in three (69%) K-12 employees were working fully in person, a significantly higher percentage than the 50% of other government employees who reported working fully in person. Accordingly, other government employees were significantly more likely to report working fully or mostly remotely than were K-12 employees (Figure 8).

Prior to the start of the pandemic, far fewer K-12 employees (18%) and other government employees (26%) were engaged in any remote work (Figure 9).

For most K-12 and other government employees, they did not feel like they had a choice on whether or not they would work in person during the past six months of the pandemic. As shown in Figure 10, 71% of K-12 employees and 62% of other government employees reported that their employer did not give them a choice, with an additional 13% of K-12 employees (and 11% of other government employees) indicating that they did not have a choice because of factors outside of work.

Figure 8 **Working remotely? May 2021**

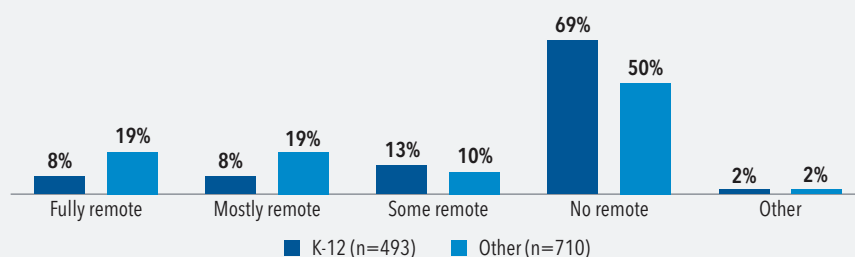


Figure 9 **Working remotely prior to the pandemic, May 2021**

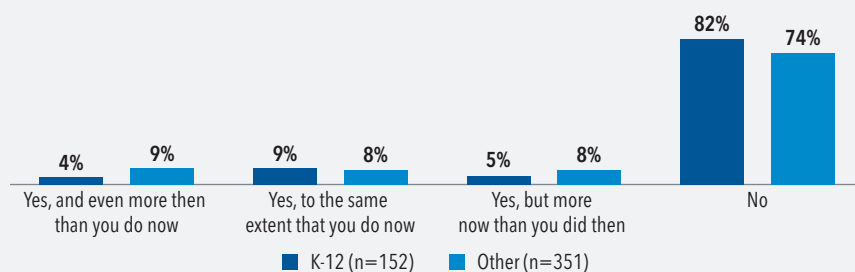
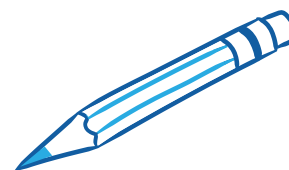
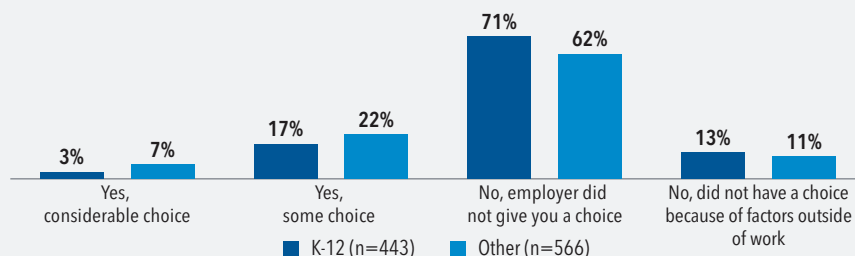


Figure 10 **Had choice about in-person work in the past six months? May 2021**



Key Stat

As of May 2021, more than two in three (69%) K-12 employees were working fully in person.

One area of difficulty for employees has been the challenges they have faced in balancing work and homelife demands. Three in ten K-12 employees have found it extremely or very difficult to balance these demands, significantly more than the 21% of other government workers who have found this difficult (Figure 11). In contrast, only 34% of K-12 employees (as compared with 52% of other government employees) have found the adjustment to be not too difficult or not at all difficult. Non-K-12 government employees may be more likely to have the ability to conduct project-focused work and take breaks as needed to deal with at-home interruptions, whereas teachers conducting synchronous instruction have more limited flexibility while their virtual classroom is in session.

Nearly four in five K-12 employees (78%) who are parents of children under the age of 18 have had to work from home while also taking care of their children (whether during school or day care closures or when they have been participating in virtual schooling), while 64% of other government employees have had to do so (Figure 12). K-12 employees were significantly more likely to report having had to take care of their children for a brief period of time than were other government employees (45% vs. 25%). This may in part relate to earlier returns to in-person work by K-12 employees than by other government employees.

Figure 11 **Difficulty balancing work and homelife demands in past six months, May 2021**

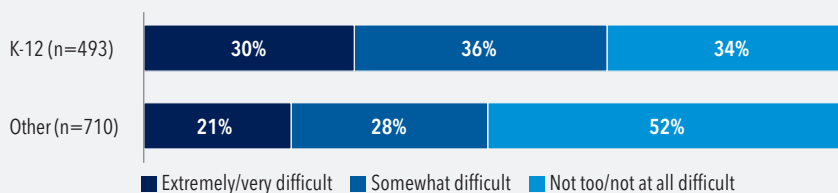
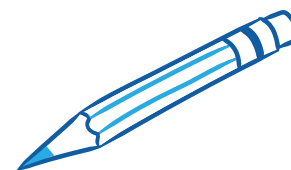
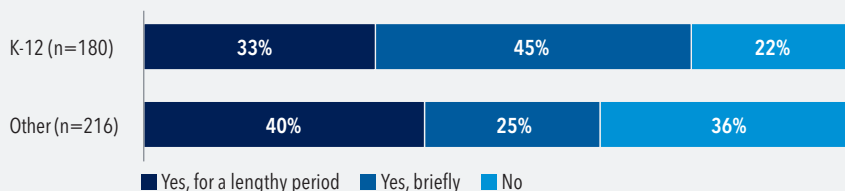


Figure 12 **Work from home while taking care of kids past six months, May 2021**



Key Stat

Nearly four in five K-12 employees (78%) who are parents of children under the age of 18 have had to work from home while also taking care of their children.

Asked whether they think there will be more or less of an opportunity for them to work remotely once the pandemic is over, only 16% of K-12 employees thought there would be significantly or somewhat more opportunity than there was prior to the pandemic, while 46% thought there would be significantly or somewhat less opportunity. More than twice as many other government employees (33%) thought there would be more opportunity for them to work remotely post-pandemic, with only 22% believing there would be less opportunity (Figure 13).

When it comes to concern about risk of exposure to COVID-19 at work, K-12 employees were significantly more likely to perceive themselves to be at high risk than were other government employees. While the majority of both K-12 and other government employees believed in-person work is at least somewhat risky (85% of K-12 and 64% of other government employees), 47% of K-12 employees felt that it is very or extremely risky, as compared with 32% of other government employees (Figure 14).

Figure 13 **Opportunity for remote work post-pandemic? May 2021**

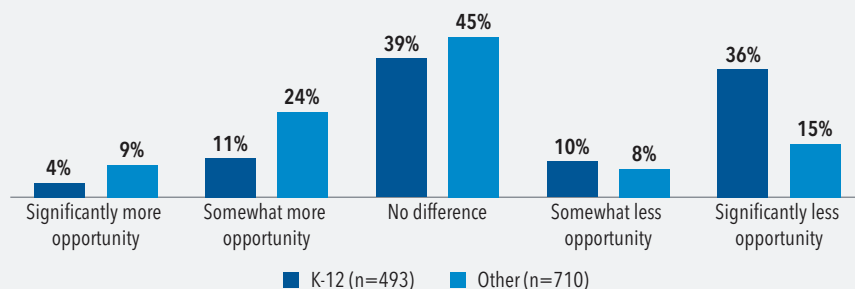
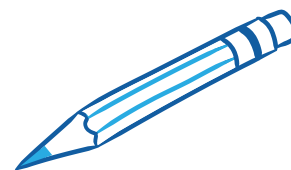
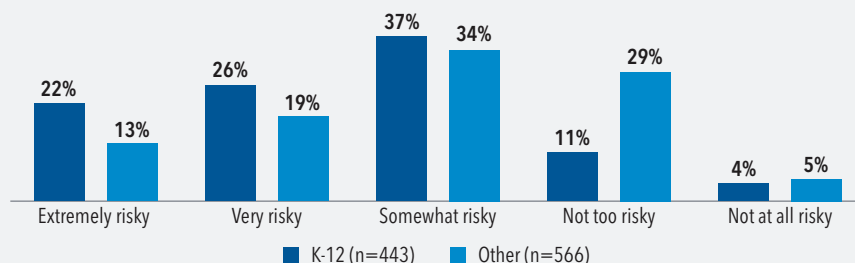


Figure 14 **Perceived risk of exposure to COVID-19 at work, May 2021**



Key Stat

K-12 employees were significantly more likely to perceive themselves to be at high risk of exposure to COVID-19 at work than were other government employees.

Financial impact

Half of K-12 survey respondents reported that they and their family have been negatively impacted financially by the COVID-19 pandemic, with 10% reporting that they have been negatively impacted significantly. Significantly fewer other government employees (35%) reported a negative financial impact (Figure 15). In contrast, other government employees were significantly more likely to report a positive financial impact (16%) than were K-12 employees (11%).

For 57% of K-12 employees and 52% of other government workers, debt (e.g., mortgage, car loan, student loans, credit card debt, medical debt) was a major or minor problem for them and their family (Figure 16).

Since the start of the pandemic, more than one in three K-12 employees (35%) and 28% of other government employees have had to take on more debt (Figure 17).

Figure 15 **Financial impact of COVID, May 2021**

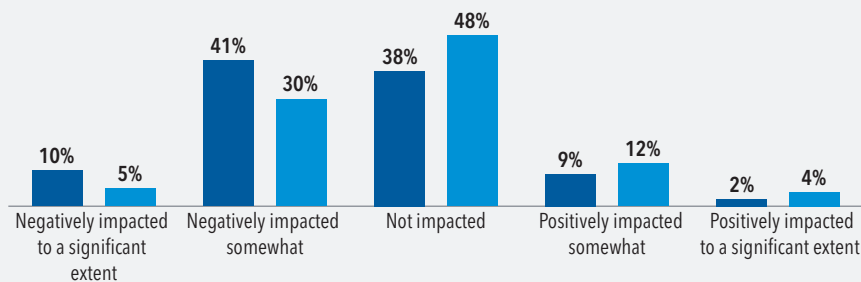


Figure 16 **Extent to which debt is currently a problem, May 2021**

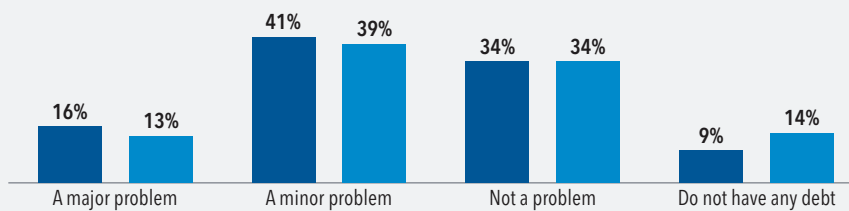
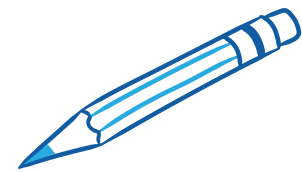
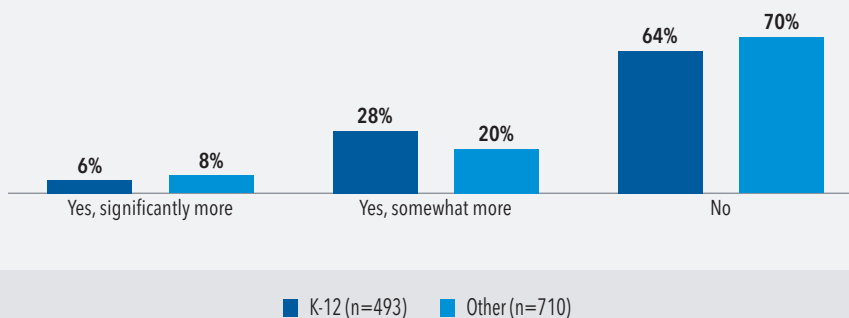


Figure 17 **Had to take on more debt since start of pandemic? May 2021**



Key Stat

Half of K-12 survey respondents reported that they and their family have been negatively impacted financially by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, only three in ten K-12 and other government employees had a fully funded emergency fund. Another 41% of both K-12 and other government employees had one that they were in the process of building up (Figure 18).

Among those with an emergency fund, 43% of K-12 employees and 34% of other government employees have had to spend down some or all of the fund since the start of the pandemic to make ends meet (Figure 19). Significantly more K-12 employees than other government employees have had to spend down some of their funds (34% and 26%, respectively).

Since the start of the pandemic, 27% of K-12 employees and 21% of other government employees have somewhat or significantly reduced the amount they are saving for retirement (Figure 20). Meanwhile, 13% of K-12 employees and 16% of other government employees have increased the amount they are saving for retirement. The majority of respondents have not made any changes to their retirement savings since the start of the pandemic.

Figure 18 **Emergency fund prior to pandemic? May 2021**

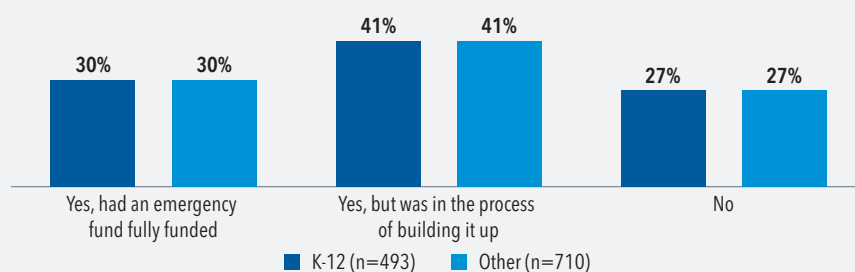


Figure 19 **Had to spend money from emergency fund? May 2021**

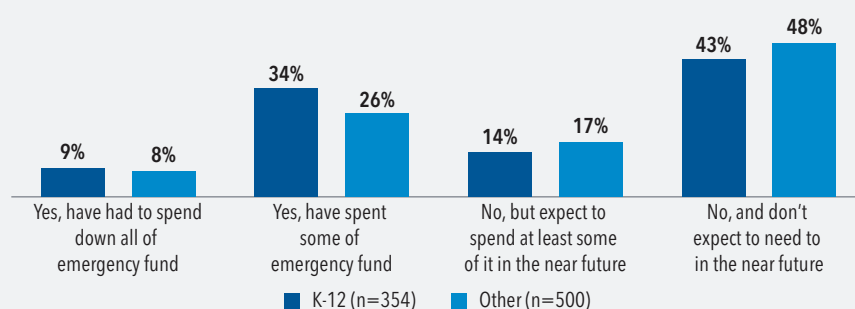
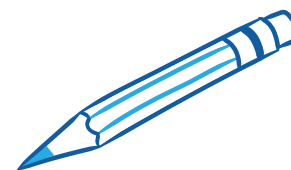
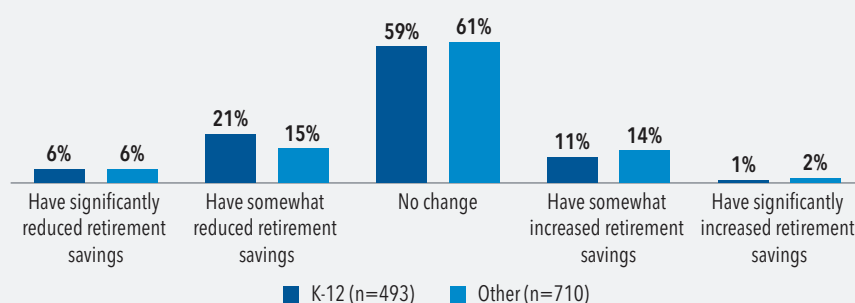


Figure 20 **Change in amount saving for retirement? May 2021**



Key Stat

Since the start of the pandemic, 27% of K-12 employees and 21% of other government employees have reduced the amount they are saving for retirement.

When it comes to the amount they are saving in general or for things other than retirement, K-12 employees were significantly more likely than other government employees to have reduced the amount they are saving since the start of the pandemic (38% and 29%, respectively). In contrast, about one in four (23% of K-12 employees and 26% of other government employees) have increased this amount (Figure 21).

Many state and local government employees have also reduced their spending since the start of the pandemic. As can be seen in Figure 22, 46% of K-12 employees and 38% of other government employees have reduced the amount they are spending (on either essential or non-essential expenses) in comparison to what it would have been had the pandemic not occurred. About one in four respondents (27% of K-12 employees and 23% of other government employees) have spent more than they would have normally.

Throughout the last year there has been a great deal of media coverage of new and emerging investing trends, such as the rise in popularity of NFTs, Bitcoin and other crypto-currencies, and activist online investing such as with WallStreetBets and GameStop. Respondents were asked about their level of interest in these topics. Among K-12 respondents, 19% were very or extremely interested in these investments, while 51% were not too interested or not at all interested (Figure 23). Similar percentages were observed for other government employees.

Figure 21 **Change in amount saving in general? May 2021**

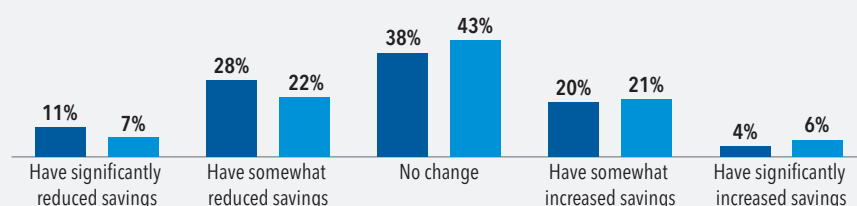


Figure 22 **Change in spending? May 2021**

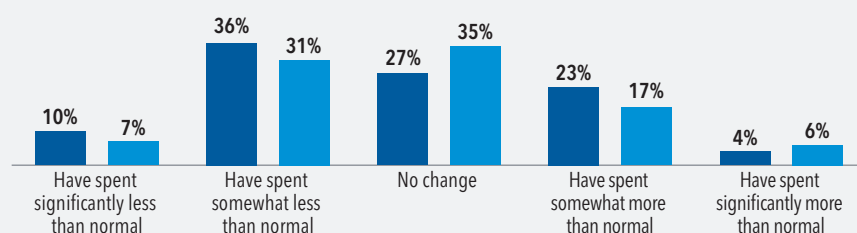
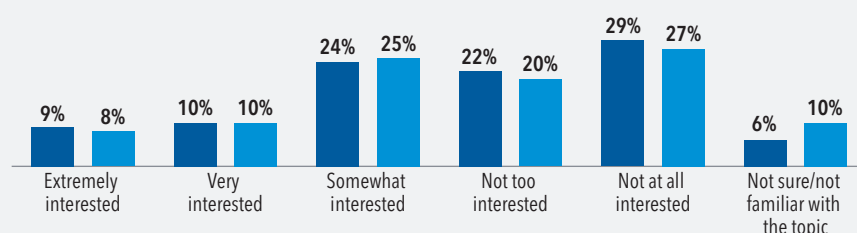
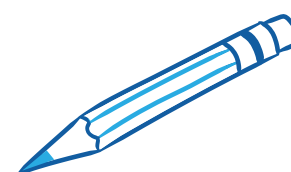


Figure 23 **Interest in new and emerging investment trends, May 2021**



■ K-12 (n=493) ■ Other (n=710)



Key Stat

46% of K-12 employees and 38% of other government employees have reduced the amount they are spending (on either essential or non-essential expenses).

Respondents were also asked how concerned they are that the COVID-19 pandemic and the related economic crisis will impact their ability to retire when they want, and their ability to save enough to be financially secure throughout retirement. Results are displayed in Figures 24 and 25. K-12 employees were significantly more likely than other government employees to be very or extremely concerned about being able to retire when they want (44% and 36%, respectively). They were also more likely than other government employees to be very or extremely concerned about being able to save enough to be financially secure throughout retirement (48% and 40%, respectively).

General COVID concerns and morale

Respondents were asked to assess their current morale regarding work. As shown in Figure 26, similar percentages of K-12 employees (55%) and other government employees (57%) rated their morale as somewhat or very positive. About one in four (24%) of K-12 employees, on the other hand, reported somewhat or strongly negative morale, as did 19% of other government employees.

Figure 24 **Concern about being able to retire when want due to pandemic, May 2021**

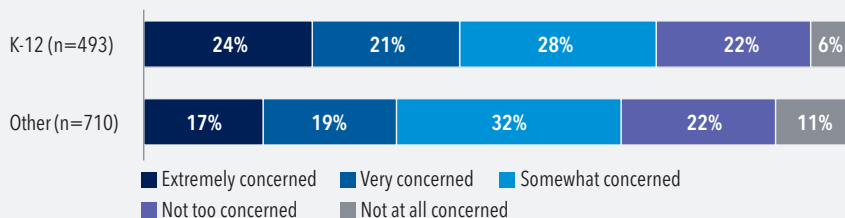


Figure 25 **Concern about being able to save enough to be financially secure throughout retirement due to pandemic, May 2021**

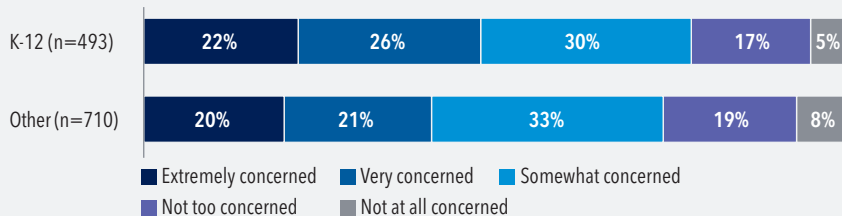
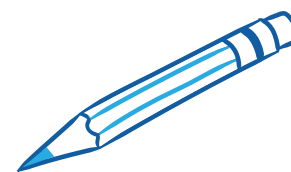
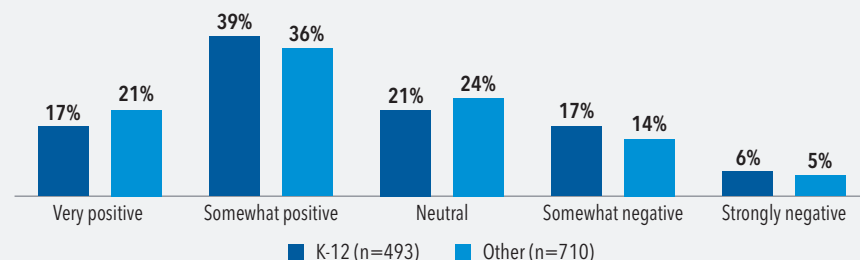


Figure 26 **Current morale regarding work, May 2021**

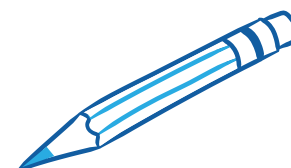
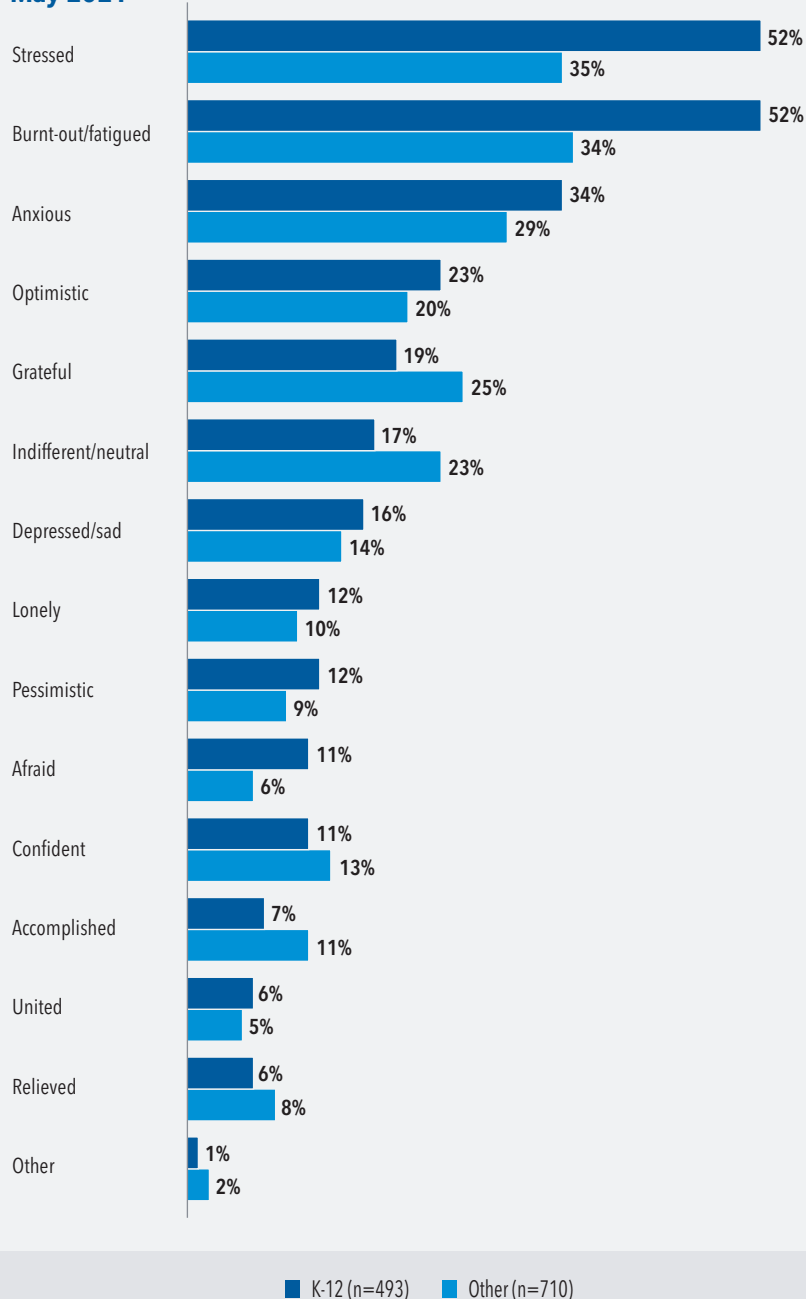


Key Stat

55% of K-12 employees and 57% of other government employees rated their current morale regarding work as somewhat or very positive.

Respondents were also asked what emotions they are feeling about the COVID-19 pandemic while at work. Results are displayed in Figure 27, with K-12 employees most commonly reporting feeling stressed, burnt out/fatigued, and/or anxious. Compared to other government employees, K-12 employees were significantly more likely to report feeling stressed (52% for K-12 vs. 35% for other), and/or burnt out/fatigued (52% for K-12 vs. 34% for other). In contrast, K-12 employees were significantly less likely than other government employees to report feeling indifferent/neutral (17% for K-12 vs. 23% for other). These differences may relate to the greater incidence of fully in-person work for K-12 employees, and concerns about their students' and their own safety and well-being at work.

Figure 27 **Emotions felt while at work about the COVID-19 pandemic, May 2021**



Key Stat

When asked what emotions they are feeling about the COVID-19 pandemic while at work, K-12 employees most commonly reporting feeling stressed, burnt out/fatigued, and/or anxious.

Asked about concerns about their job going forward, K-12 employees were most likely to be concerned about keeping their family safe from contracting COVID-19, staying protected from contracting the virus at work (or once they return to the workplace), and having their employee benefits package reduced in some way (Figure 28). Comparing these concerns to those of non-K-12 government employees, K-12 employees were more likely to be very or extremely concerned about all issues, particularly staying protected from contracting the virus at work (37% of K-12 employees were very or extremely concerned vs. 31% of other government employees).

Regarding employee views on working in the public sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, 62% of K-12 employees and 59% of other government employees reported that they value serving their community during this difficult time, while 43% of K-12 employees and 37% of other government employees indicated that the pandemic has made their work feel more meaningful (Figure 29).

K-12 employees were significantly more likely than other government employees to feel that the pandemic has made the public more aware of the importance of what they do (61% for K-12 vs. 37% for other government employees). However, K-12 employees were also significantly more likely than other government employees to report that

Figure 28 **Concerns about job going forward, May 2021** (% very/extremely concerned)

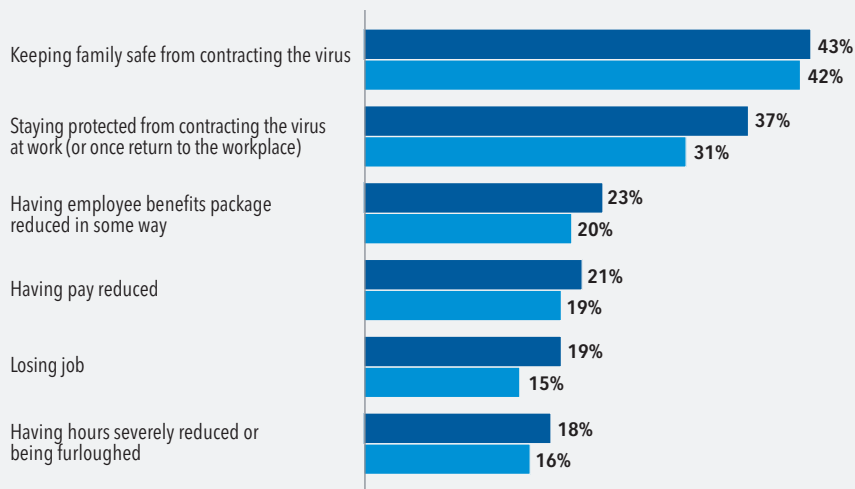
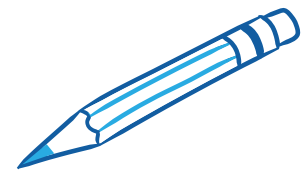
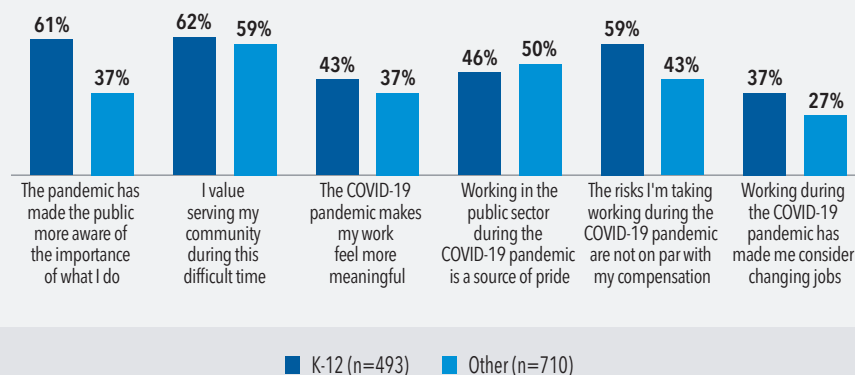


Figure 29 **Employee views on working in the public sector during COVID, May 2021** (% somewhat/strongly agree)



Key Stat

K-12 employees were significantly more likely than other government employees to feel that the pandemic has made the public more aware of the importance of what they do.

the risks they are taking during the pandemic are not on par with their compensation (59% of K-12 vs. 43% of other government employees), and that working during the pandemic has made them consider changing jobs (37% of K-12 vs. 27% of other government employees).

Respondents who indicated that the pandemic has made them consider changing jobs were asked about the type of job change they had in mind. Respondents were split in terms of what type of job change they were considering, with more than one in four K-12 employees (26%) indicating that they would like to leave the government sector entirely (Figure 30). Another 23% would like to stay with the same employer but have a different role/level/number of hours, 16% would like to stay in the government sector but change the industry or department they work for, and 15% wanted to stay in the same line of work, but with a different employer. Other government employees were significantly more likely than K-12 employees to be considering changing industry/department but remaining in the government sector (23% for other government employees vs. 16% for K-12 employees).

Both K-12 education and other government employees expressed moderate levels of trust in state and local government leaders to make appropriate decisions regarding employee safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, with about half of respondents reporting a fair amount or great deal of trust (Figure 31). K-12 employees' trust in government leaders at all levels of government was slightly lower than trust felt by other government employees.

Figure 30 **Type of job change considering, May 2021**

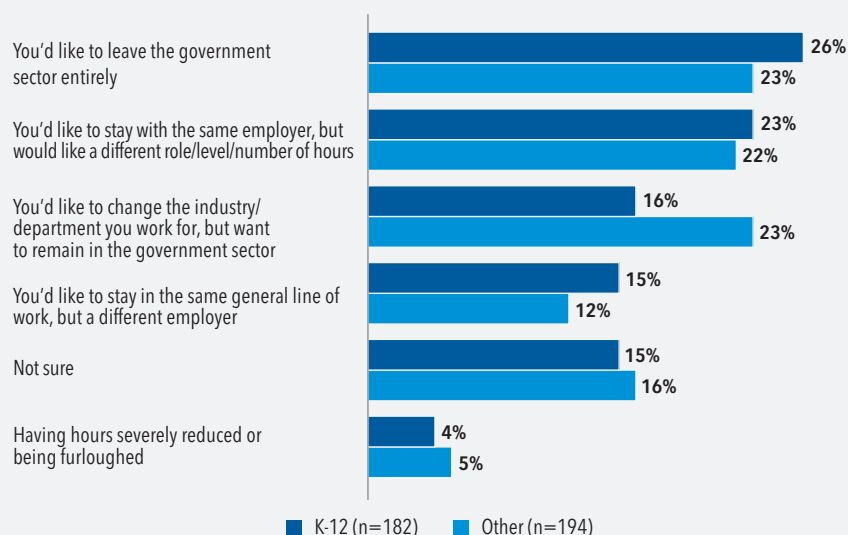
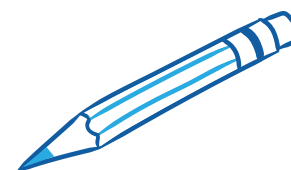
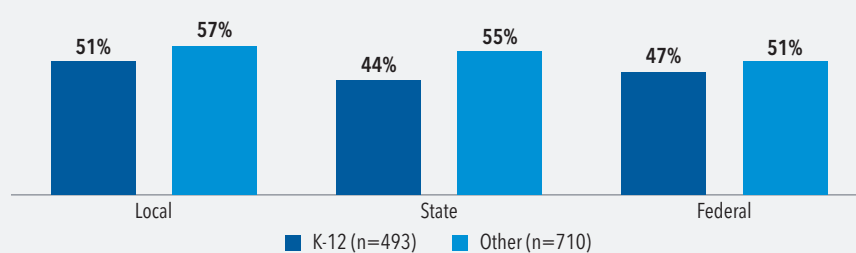


Figure 31 **Trust in government leaders, May 2021**

(% with fair amount/great deal of trust)



Key Stat

Among K-12 respondents who indicated that the pandemic has made them consider changing jobs, 26% would like to leave the government sector entirely.

Vaccine views

Three in four K-12 employees (75%) were fully vaccinated as of May 2021, with another 2% partially vaccinated (e.g., they have received the first of two doses or it has been less than two weeks since their final dose). Among other government employees, 67% were fully vaccinated, with another 9% partially vaccinated (see Figure 32). The significantly higher percentage of K-12 employees who were fully vaccinated may be at least partially explained by the early access that many K-12 employees had to vaccines relative to some other state and local government employees.

When asked to indicate the three factors that were most influential in their decision to get the COVID vaccine, K-12 education employees were most likely to report that they got vaccinated to ensure their own personal health (63%), to ensure the health of their friends and family (58%), and to have the freedom to travel without worry (27%). These were the same top three reasons cited by other state and local government employees, and by nearly identical percentages of respondents (Figure 33).

Figure 32 **Vaccination status, May 2021**

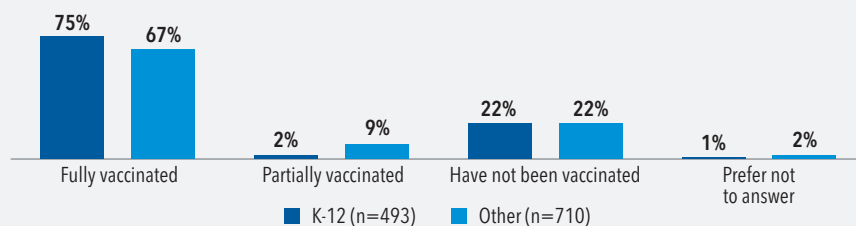
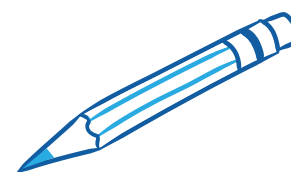
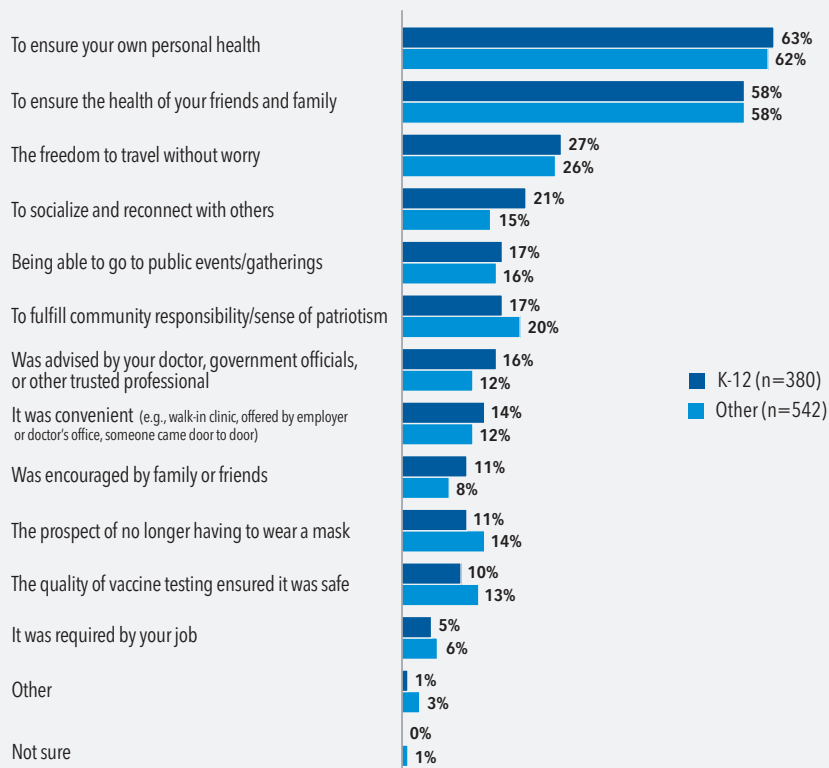


Figure 33 **Top reasons why they got vaccinated, May 2021**

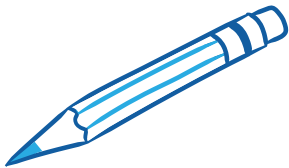


Key Stat

Three in four K-12 employees (75%) were fully vaccinated as of May 2021, with another 2% partially vaccinated.

Among K-12 employees who have not received the COVID-19 vaccine, 16% reported that they will definitely or likely get the vaccine at some point. This was 27% for other government employees (Figure 34). Nearly half of unvaccinated K-12 employees (46%), on the other hand, said that they will definitely not or likely not get the vaccine; this was 50% for other government employees. Nearly four in ten (39%) unvaccinated K-12 employees are undecided, a significantly higher percentage than for other government employees (21%). One potential explanation for this discrepancy may relate to concerns about insufficient information about the vaccine, and is described further below.

Among those K-12 workers who are undecided or will not get the vaccine, the main reasons cited were a concern about the side effects of the vaccine (61%), that they require more information about how well the vaccine works (49%), and lack of trust in the government (38%). While these were the same top three concerns



Key Stat

Nearly half of unvaccinated K-12 employees (46%) said that they will definitely not or likely not get the vaccine; this was 50% for other government employees.

Figure 34 Will get COVID-19 vaccine at some point? May 2021

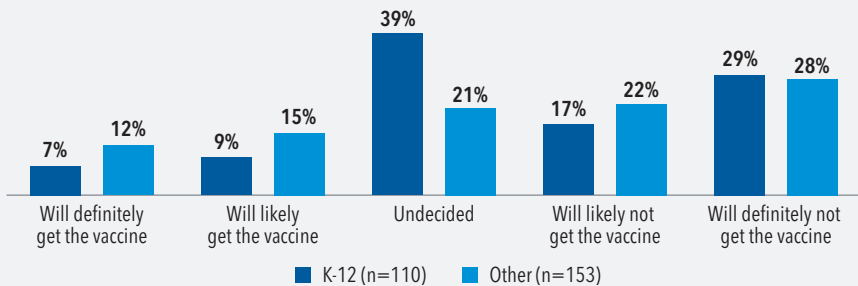
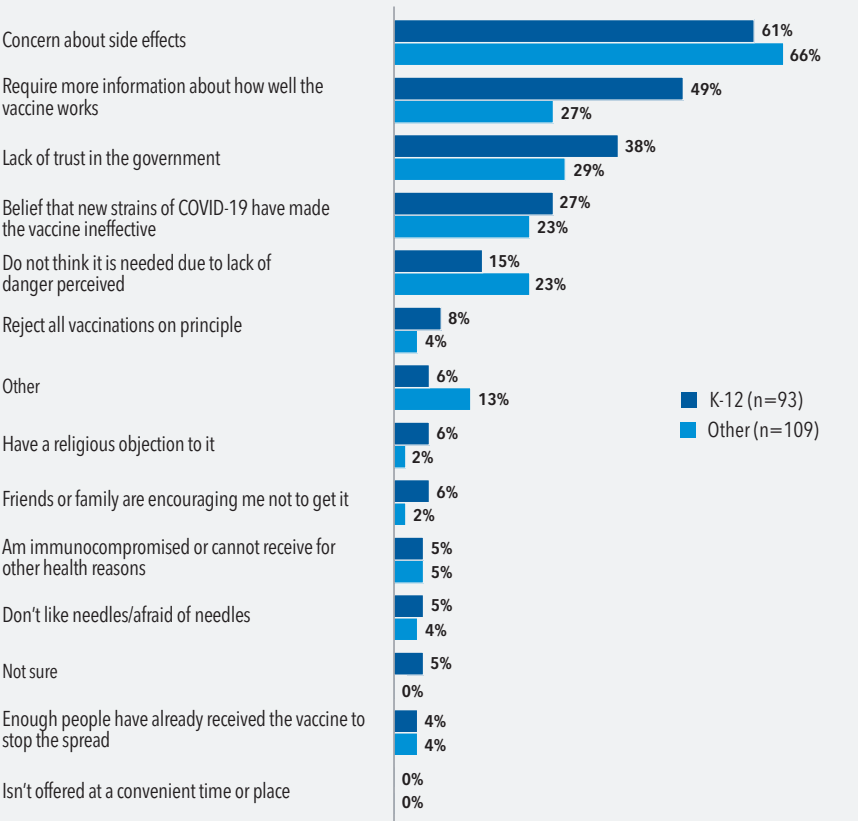


Figure 35 Top reasons undecided/will not get vaccinated, May 2021



cited by other government employees, the significantly higher percentage of K-12 workers who indicated that they require more information about how the vaccine works (49% for K-12 vs. 27% for other government) may at least partially explain the greater percentage of K-12 workers who are undecided about getting the vaccine.

Respondents were also asked about their employer's stance on the COVID-19 vaccine, in terms of whether their employer encouraged it and whether they have been accommodating for those getting it (e.g., providing a financial or other incentive for getting it, allowing paid time off for getting the vaccine and for the possible side effects after). Results are displayed in Figure 36.

Nearly three in four K-12 employees (73%) reported that their employer has been somewhat or strongly encouraging of the vaccine, while 18% indicated that their employer has been neutral on it. Only 5% reported that their employer had provided incentives for receiving the vaccine, and even fewer (4%) reported that their employer had mandated it. Notably, no K-12 employees reported that their employer had discouraged receiving the vaccine.

When comparing these results to responses of other government employees, other government employers were significantly more likely to have offered incentives than were K-12 employers (11% vs. 5%).

Respondents were then asked about their own views on the COVID-19 vaccine. As can be seen in Figure 37, more than half of K-12 employees (59%) believe that the vaccine will only be effective if everyone receives it. Meanwhile, 43% were concerned about whether or not their coworkers will get the vaccine and 42% indicated that government employers should mandate that their employees get vaccinated against COVID-19. The percentage of other government employees who agreed with each

Figure 36 **Employer stance on vaccine, May 2021**

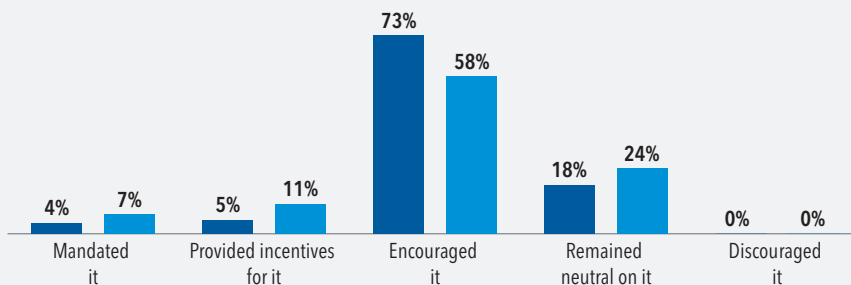
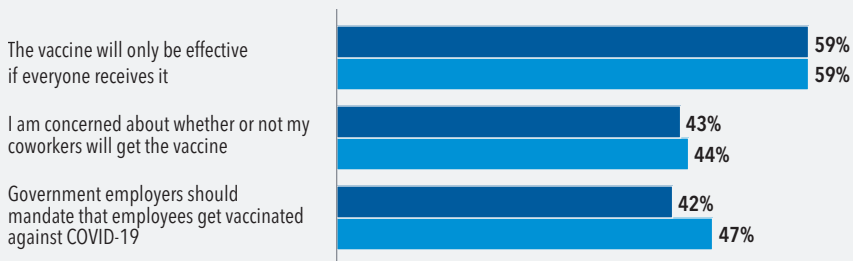
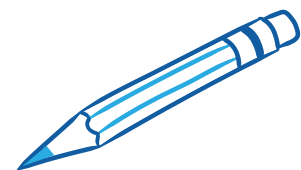


Figure 37 **Views on vaccines, May 2021** (% strongly/somewhat agree)



■ K-12 (n=493) ■ Other (n=710)



Key Stat

42% indicated that government employers should mandate that their employees get vaccinated against COVID-19.

of these statements was quite similar, with a higher percentage of other government employees (47%) saying that government employers should mandate that employees get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Satisfaction with employer and benefits

Just over half of K-12 employees (52%) and other government employees (51%) reported in May 2021 that they are very or extremely satisfied with their employer. In contrast, only 11% of K-12 employees and 13% of other government employees said they were not too satisfied or not at all satisfied (Figure 38).

Asked what elements of their job they were most satisfied with, K-12 employees were most likely to report satisfaction with the quality of their colleagues/coworkers, their job security, and the quality of their boss/supervisor. For other government employees, on the other hand, the top three elements cited were their leave benefits, their job security, and their health and retirement benefits (Figure 39).

Figure 38 **Satisfaction with current employer, May 2021**

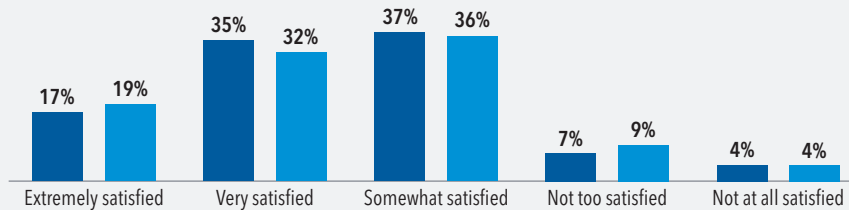
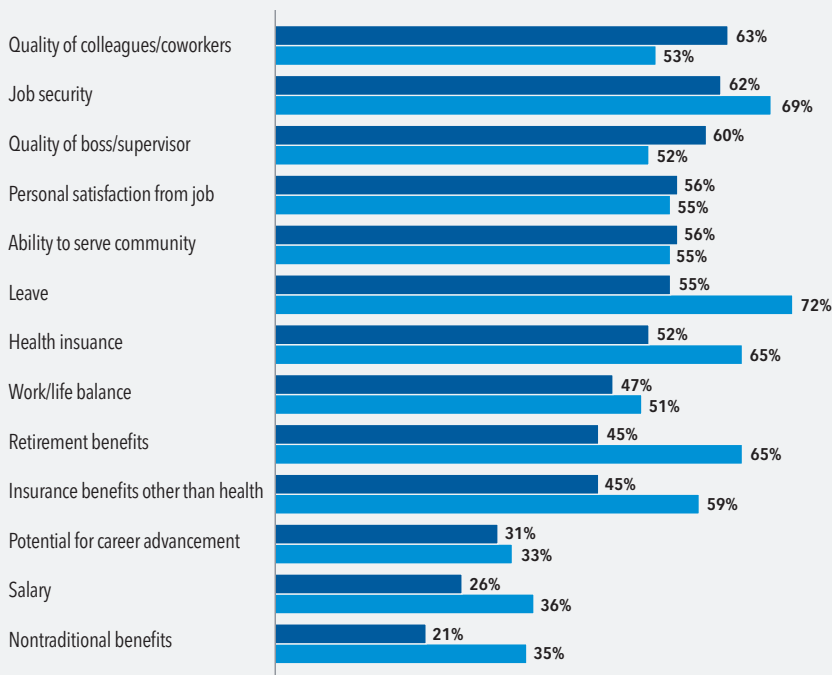
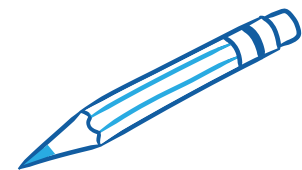


Figure 39 **Satisfaction with job elements, May 2021** (% very/extremely satisfied)



■ K-12 (n=493) ■ Other (n=710)



Key Stat

K-12 employees were most likely to report satisfaction with the quality of their colleagues/coworkers, their job security, and the quality of their boss/supervisor.

Compared with other government employees, K-12 employees were significantly more likely to be very or extremely satisfied with the quality of their colleagues/coworkers. In contrast, K-12 employees were significantly less likely than other government employees to be satisfied with their job security, leave benefits, health insurance, retirement benefits, other insurance benefits, salary, and non-traditional benefits (e.g., tuition assistance or student loan repayment, employee assistance programs, childcare assistance).

Finally, with the pandemic creating many challenges for government workers over the past year, respondents were asked to describe in their own words what one or two realistic actions their employer could take that would be most impactful in making their workplace a better place to work. Responses were coded and are displayed in Figure 40. K-12 employees were most likely to recommend promoting safety by following CDC guidelines and providing/enforcing the use of PPE (22%), the issuing of bonuses or raises (21%), and allowing work from home/remote work and flexible hours (13%).

These were the top three recommendations of other government employees, though other government employees were significantly more likely to recommend allowing work from home, while K-12 employees were significantly more likely to recommend promoting safety by following CDC guidelines and providing/enforcing PPE. These differences may reflect how realistic it is for K-12 employees vs. other government employees to work from home given the nature of their job and their potential interaction with those who may be unvaccinated.

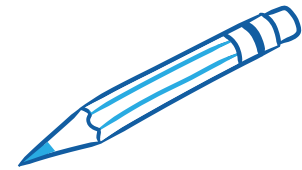
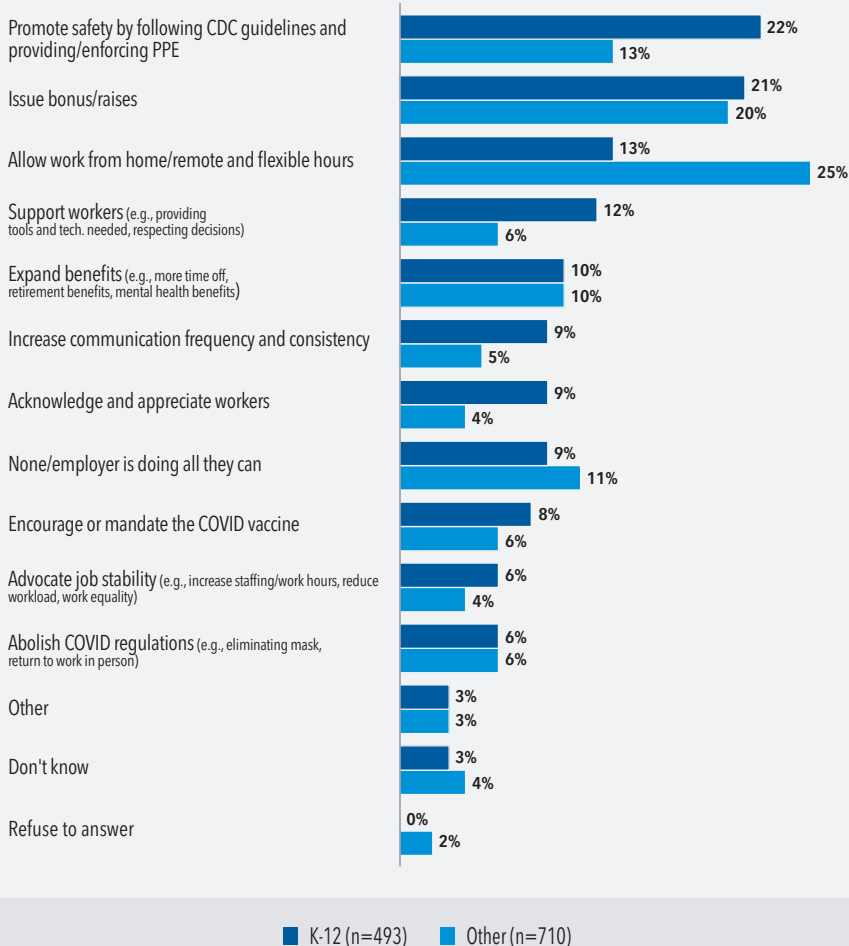


Figure 40 **Realistic actions employer could take to improve workplace, May 2021**



Key Stat

K-12 employees were most likely to recommend promoting safety (22%), the issuing of bonuses or raises (21%), and allowing work from home/remote work and flexible hours (13%).

Conclusion

This report describes the results for 493 K-12 public school employees who participated in a May 2021 online survey of state and local government employees assessing their views on the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on their employment and finances, general concerns about COVID-19, and satisfaction with their employer and their benefits. Where applicable, comparisons are made between these K-12 employees and the 710 other government employees that responded to the survey.

Results indicate that many K-12 public school employees have already been fully vaccinated, and that they have significant concerns about how the challenges of learning during the pandemic have impacted their students. Many are working longer hours, having difficulty adjusting to changes in the nature of their jobs, and are worried about keeping their family safe from contracting COVID-19. They have faced negative financial impacts from the pandemic and are concerned about their retirement security.

While they are feeling stressed, burnt out, and anxious, they also feel that the pandemic has made the public more aware of the importance of what they do, and they value serving their community during this difficult time. Many K-12 employees are satisfied with their colleagues and coworkers. However, they also feel that the risks they are taking during the pandemic are not on par with their compensation, and nearly four in ten reported that working during the pandemic has made them consider changing jobs.

As school districts across the country continue to navigate the challenging road ahead, they are faced with difficult decisions. They must balance the importance of in-person learning and student academic and social development with public safety and community health. At the same time, they need to account for the impacts – short-, medium-, and long-term – that the pandemic is having on recruitment and retention of talented K-12 public school employees.

While there are no easy answers, some ideas can be drawn from respondents' recommendations on how their employer can make their workplace a better place to work. Employers that work to address their employees' health and safety concerns, improve financial wellness, provide mental health support, and offer flexible scheduling options are likely to have a competitive advantage.

MissionSquare Research Institute will continue to track the impact of COVID-19 on state and local government workers, and their views on vaccines, job outlook, financial impacts, and health and safety concerns. This will be critical to ensuring that states and localities have the information and tools that they need to be employers of choice in today's tight labor market and in the years to come.



Methods

Information for this report was collected from a 12-minute survey with 1,203 full-time state and local government employees, including 493 K-12 public school employees. The online survey was fielded by Greenwald Research from May 12 through May 28, 2021. The final data was weighted by gender, age, income, and industry type to reflect the distribution of the state and local government workforce as found in the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey and the U.S. Census of Governments.

Additional resources



Reports

K-12 Public School Employee Views on Job and Benefits
(June 2020)

Public Sector Employee Views on Finances and Employment Outlook Due to COVID-19 (June 2020)

Update on Public Sector Employee Views on Finances and Employment Outlook Due to COVID-19: May vs. October 2020
(January 2021)

K-12 Public School Employee Views on Finances, Employment Outlook, and Safety Concerns Due to COVID-19 (February 2021)

2021 Updated Survey Results: Public Sector Employee Views on Finances and Employment Outlook Due to COVID-19 (July 2021)



Infographics

K-12 Public Workforce Profile (September 2019)

Public Sector Employee Views on COVID-19 (June 2020)

K-12 Education Employee Views on COVID-19 (August 2020)

African American State and Local Employee Views on COVID-19 (September 2020)

Public Sector Employee Views on COVID-19: May 2020 vs. October 2020 (December 2020)

K-12 Education Employee Views on COVID-19: March 2020 vs. October 2020 (December 2020)

Career Stage Differences in Public Sector Employee Concerns about COVID-19 (March 2021)

COVID-19 Vaccines: Public Sector Worker Vaccination Status and Views (June 2021)

COVID-19 One Year Later: The Evolving Impact of the Pandemic on Public Sector Employees (July 2021)

Impact of COVID-19 on the K-12 Education Workforce: One Year Later (August 2021)

Endnotes

1. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment, Hours, and Earnings from the Current Employment Statistics survey (National)," <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/dsrv?ce>
2. U.S. Census Bureau, "2020 Government Employment and Payroll Tables," available at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/apes/data/datasetstables/2020.html>
3. National Center for Education Statistics, "Characteristics of Public School Teachers," May 2020, available at https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_clr.asp
4. While difficult to compare these percentages with the United States overall given the fast-changing nature of school openings and closures, state- and local-level information on school openings and closures as of May 2021 can be found at <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/map-where-are-schools-closed/2020/07>.

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