

## 35 and Under in the Public Sector

# Comparisons by Race and Ethnicity

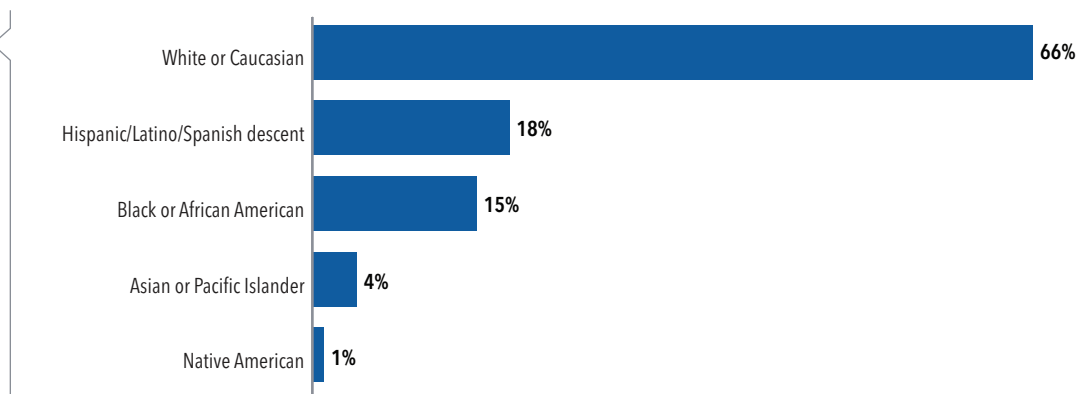
The data that follows is drawn from MissionSquare Research Institute’s nationally representative online survey of 1,004 state and local government employees aged 35 and under, conducted by Greenwald Research in March and April 2023. For overall results, see: [35 and Under in the Public Sector: Why Younger Workers Enter and Why They Stay \(or Don’t\)](#).

### Respondent Demographics

Figure 1 displays the breakdown of respondents by race/ethnicity. For a more comprehensive view of workforce demographics and participation by occupation, see [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Public Service Workforce](#).

Figure 1  
**Race/Ethnicity**

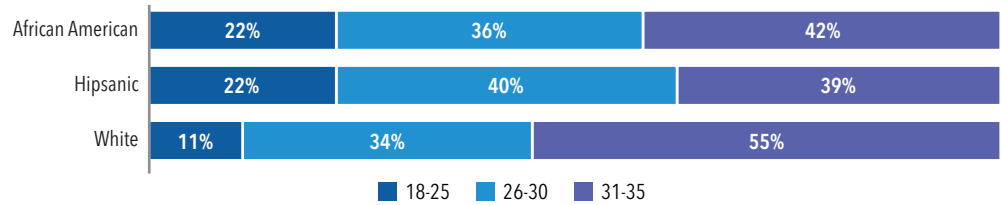
NOTE: Data sums to more than 100% due to respondents checking more than one response.



The small number of Asian or Pacific Islander and Native American respondents precluded including those categories in the breakouts below.

For consistency, the same three categories are shown in each of the graphs, tables, or notes below, regardless of the statistical significance of the differences between them.

Figure 2  
Age



As shown in Figure 2, a larger share of White respondents was older (55% age 31-35). Meanwhile, half as many White employees (11%) as African American or Hispanic employees (22%) were ages 18-25.

Breakouts by gender, marital status, and education are presented in Figures 3-5.

Figure 3  
Percentage Female

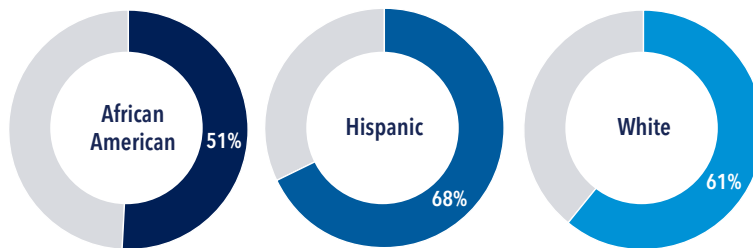


Figure 4  
Marital Status

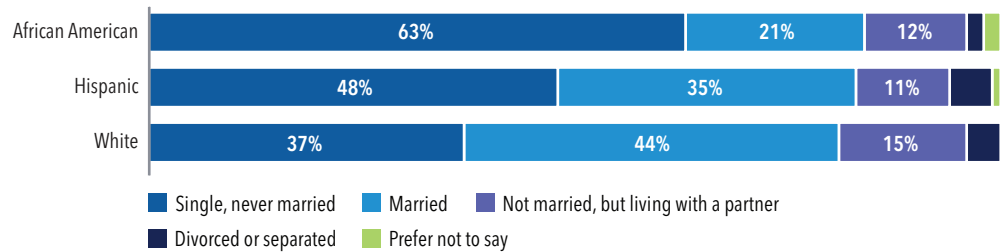
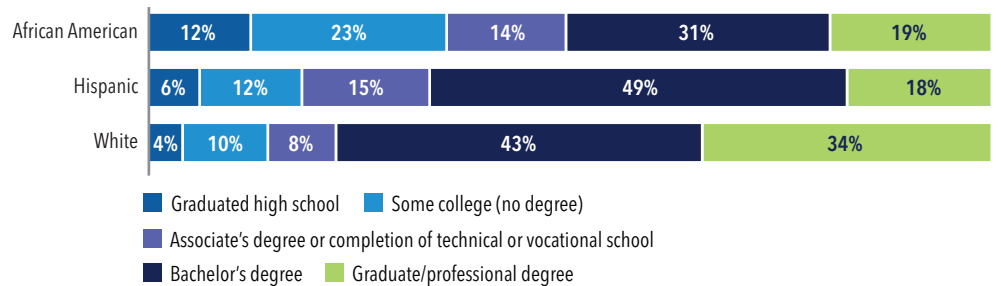


Figure 5  
Highest Level of Education Completed

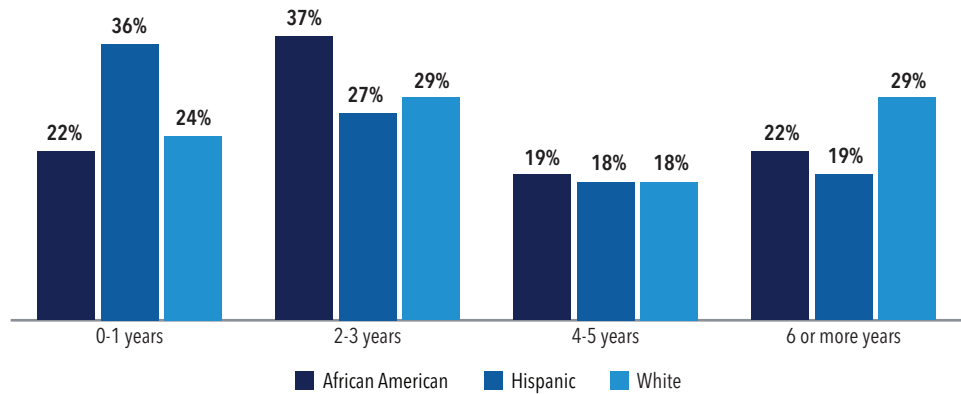


Hispanic or African American employees (17% and 15%, respectively) were **3x more** likely to have a salary less than \$25,000 compared to White employees (5%).

## Employment

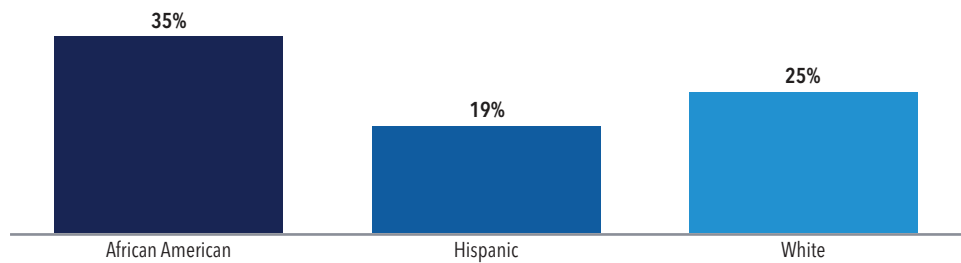
The most common job tenure length among Hispanic or African American employees was quite short (0-1 years or 2-3 years, respectively; see Figure 6). Among White employees, responses were evenly split between 2-3 years and 6 or more years (29% each).

Figure 6  
Years with Current Employer



Respondents' occupations did not differ significantly by race or ethnicity, except that Hispanic employees were more likely to work in health and human services (22%) than were African American or White employees (10% each). Regarding outside employment, African American individuals were far more likely to have a second job (35%) than were Hispanic employees (19%; see Figure 7).

Figure 7  
Are you also currently being paid for any secondary employment, either full-time or part-time?



### Prior Part-Time Or Temporary Work In State/Local Government

**21%** of African American employees had performed prior contractual or gig work, compared with less than 5% of Hispanic and White employees.

**More than 50%** of Hispanic and White employees reported no prior part-time or temporary roles, compared to 34% of African American employees.

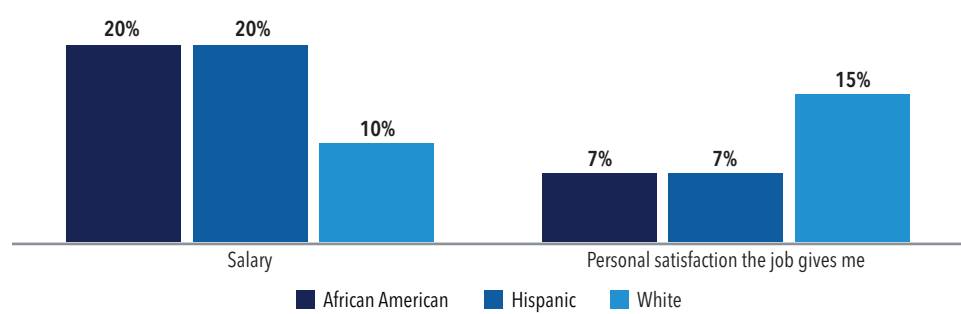
**2x more** White than African American employees came to their current job from **outside the public sector** (33% vs 16%)<sup>1</sup>.

### Motivation and Priorities

Respondents were asked what factors attracted them to the public sector in the first place, how they prioritized those factors, and how their priorities differed from their actual experience once on the job. For overall data on those questions, see the full report.

For the top factor that attracted people to the public sector, African American and Hispanic employees were more likely to identify salary (20%), while White employees were more likely to identify personal satisfaction (15%); see Figure 8).<sup>2</sup>

Figure 8  
**Top Factor that Attracted You to Work in the Public Sector in the First Place**

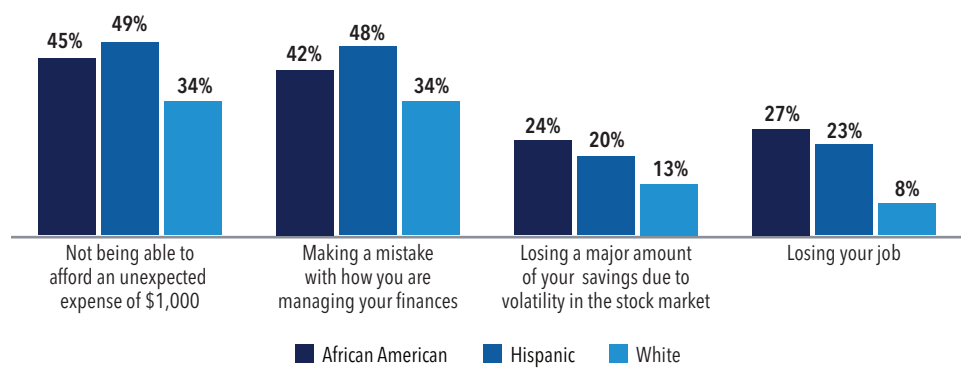


## Financial Concerns and Understanding

There were no significant differences by race/ethnicity in the percentage who identified debt as a major/minor problem (values ranged from 68% to 77%). Likewise, the percentages who feel very stressed does not vary significantly by race/ethnicity (values range from 30 to 39%). However, African American employees were more likely to respond that they are “not at all stressed” (10%) compared to Hispanic or White employees (1% and 3%, respectively).

Additional financial concerns or interests are shown in Figures 9 and 10.

Figure 9  
**How worried are you about the following?**  
 (extremely or very worried)



Some public sector employers have Benefits Advisory Committees, which are committees made up of employees and other stakeholders who review benefit offerings and make recommendations about potential changes to benefits. Figure 10 shows the differing levels of interest by race/ethnicity in participating in such a committee.

Figure 10  
**How interested would you be in participating in a Benefits Advisory Committee?**  
 (very or somewhat interested)

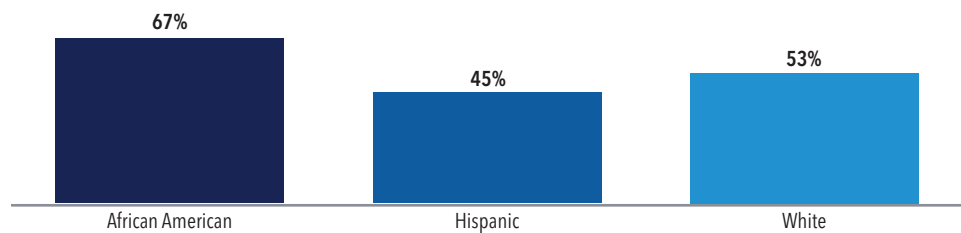
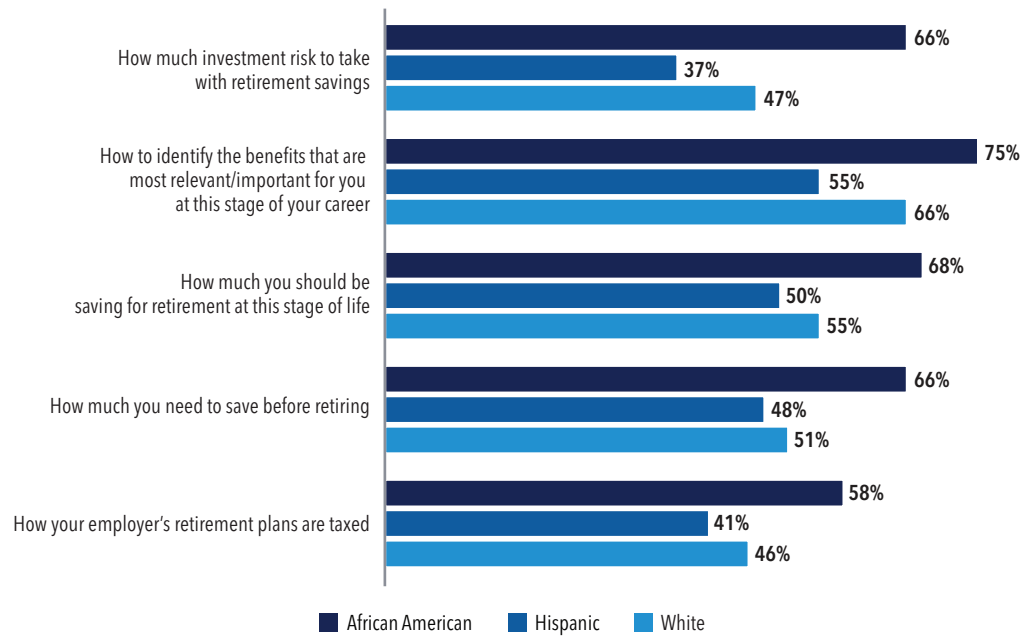


Figure 11  
**How well do you understand the following?** (excerpt; very/somewhat well)

NOTE: Graph is sorted with areas of greatest differences at the top and greatest agreement at the bottom.



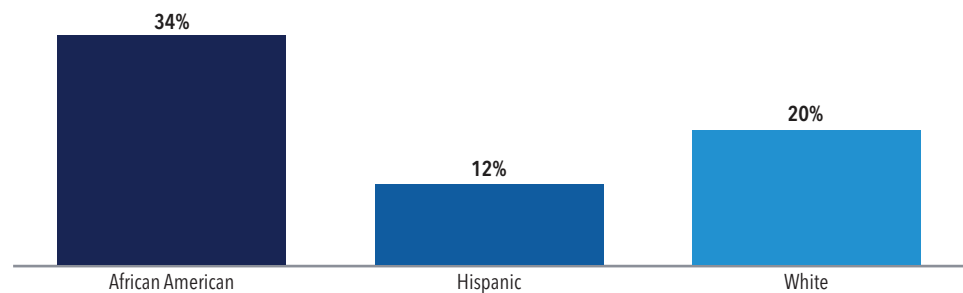
On 5 of 11 key retirement issues (as shown in Figure 11), African American employees are more likely to respond that they understand the subject very/somewhat well compared to Hispanic or White employees. On the remaining issues surveyed, there were no significant differences by race/ethnicity.

African American employees are also less likely to desire further information on certain retirement issues:

	% wanting more information		
	African American	Hispanic	White
How much you need to save before retiring	39%	48%	57%
How much investment risk to take with retirement savings	24%	34%	39%
How your employer's retirement plans are taxed	24%	32%	39%
How the defined benefit plan you are participating in works	4%	12%	13%

African American employees were significantly more likely to be working with a financial professional (see Figure 12).

Figure 12  
**Do you currently work with one or more financial professionals?**

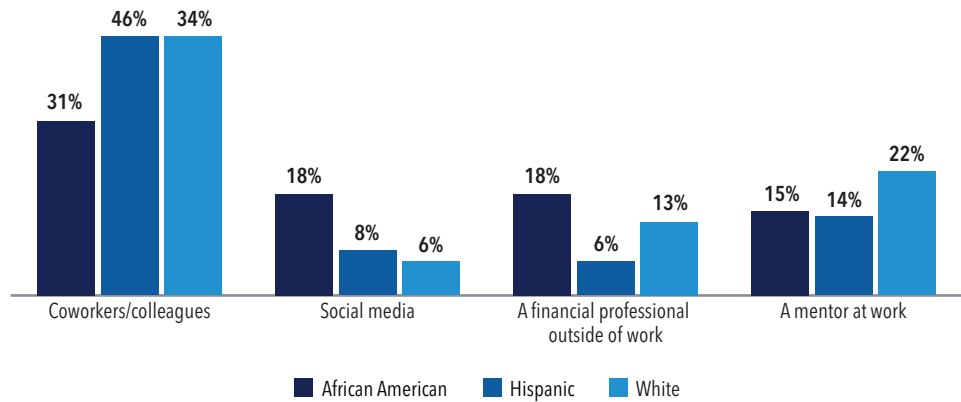


Hispanic and White employees were more likely to turn to coworkers for advice about benefits (see Figure 13).

Figure 13  
**Who, if anyone, do you turn to for advice about employee benefits?**

(select all that apply)

NOTE: Includes advice about which benefits are right for you, which options/choices to choose within benefits, and/or how to navigate the benefit system in general. This graph shows only those responses that vary significantly by race/ethnicity.

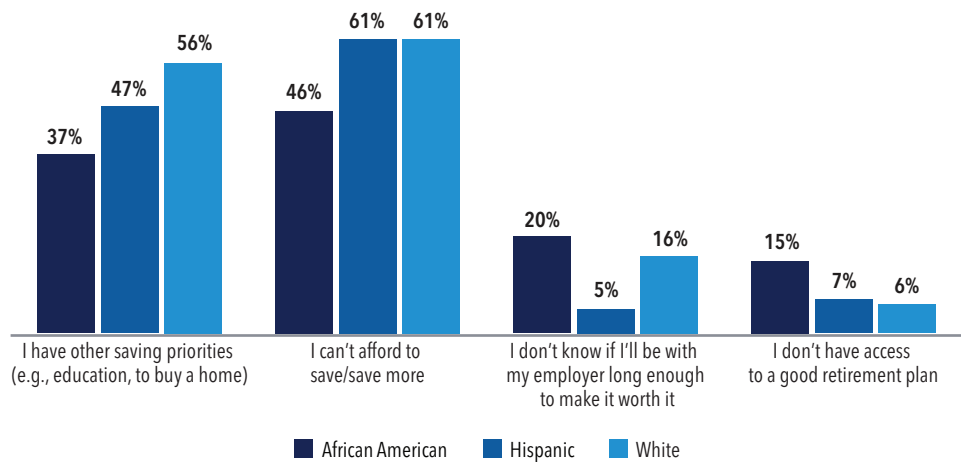


Regarding savings behavior, Hispanic and White employees were more likely to say that they could not afford to save more for retirement (both 61%) compared to African American employees (46%; see Figure 14).

Figure 14  
**Which of the following are reasons why you don't save more than you do for retirement?**

(select all that apply)

NOTE: Among those who responded they should be saving more. This graph shows only those responses that vary significantly by race/ethnicity.



**70%** of African American employees wish they had a **mentor at work** who could give advice about employee benefits and would likely seek out their help (compared to 63% of Hispanic employees and 53% of White employees)

**78%** of White employees reported **other financial priorities** ahead of saving for retirement (compared to 72% of African American employees and 64% of Hispanic employees)

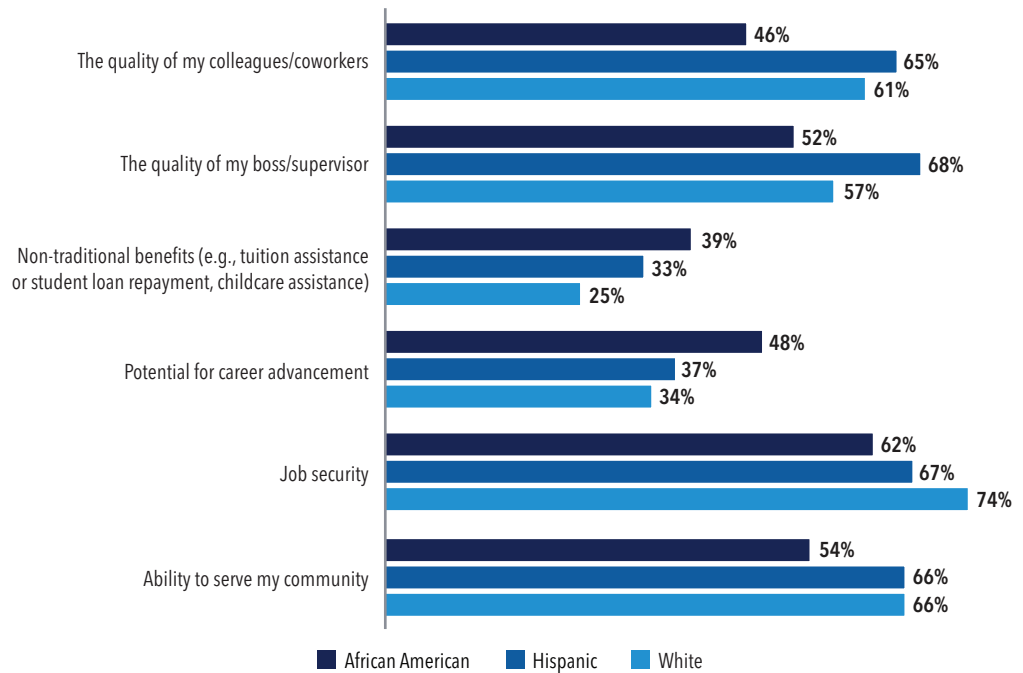
**20%** of White employees reported **negative morale** about work (compared to 12% of African American employees and 9% of Hispanic employees; somewhat or strongly negative)

Areas where job satisfaction varies widely by race or ethnicity are shown in Figure 15, with the greatest variation being on opinions of colleagues/coworkers, with 65% of Hispanic employees satisfied compared to 46% of African American employees.

Figure 15  
**To what extent are you satisfied with the following aspects of your job?**  
 (select all that apply)

NOTE: Percentage indicating very or extremely satisfied. On other priorities not shown (e.g., salary, 28% satisfied), responses did not vary significantly by race/ethnicity

Graph is sorted with areas of greatest differences at the top and greatest agreement at the bottom.



Among other workplace priorities, the greatest variation was on the importance of employer and employee values aligning, with 69% of White employees rating that as important compared to 49% of Hispanic employees (see Figure 16).

Figure 16  
**How important is it to you that the place you work...**  
 (somewhat/very important)

NOTE: Percentage indicating very or extremely satisfied. On other priorities not shown (e.g., is mindful of creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all identities, 63% somewhat/very important), responses did not vary significantly by race/ethnicity.

Graph is sorted with areas of greatest differences at the top and greatest agreement at the bottom.

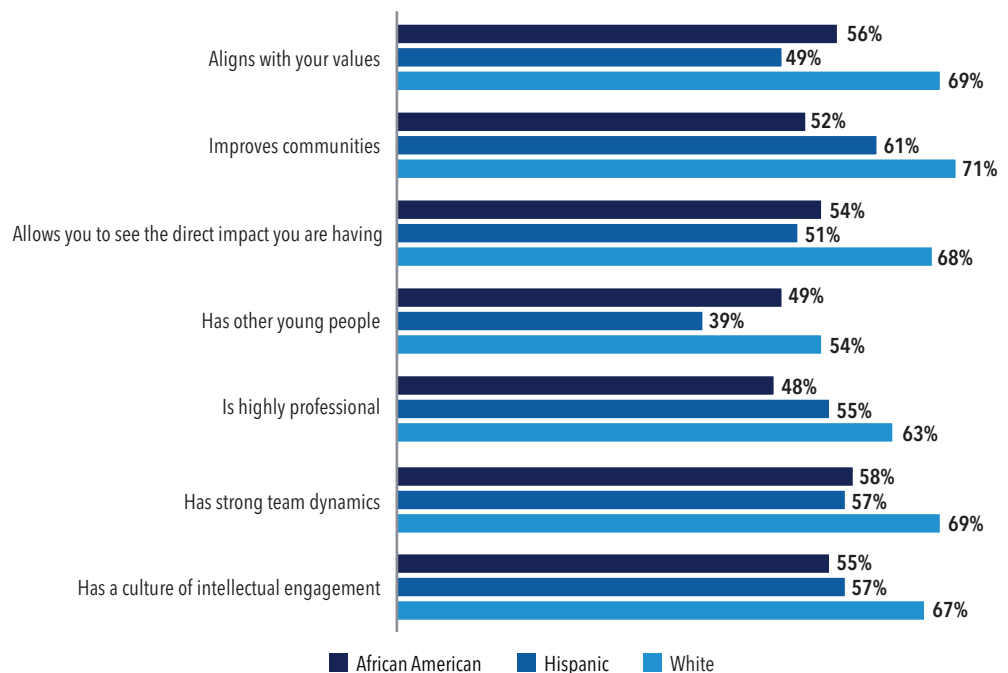
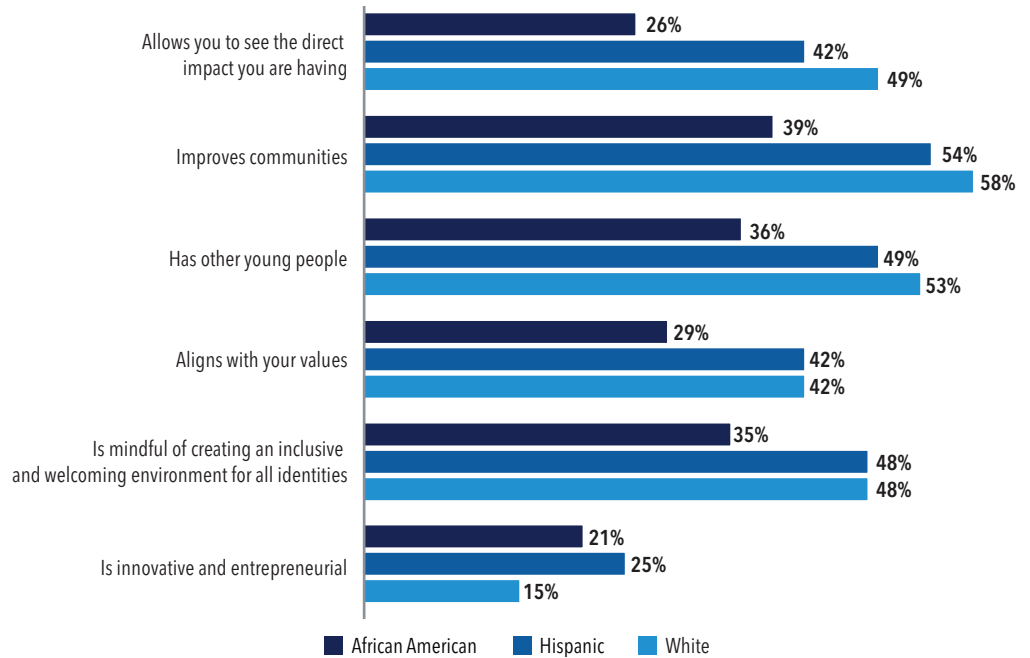




Figure 17  
**Of these same characteristics, which of the following do you believe is true of your current employer?**  
 (select all that apply)

NOTE: On other priorities not shown (e.g., has strong team dynamics, 46%), responses did not vary significantly by race/ethnicity.

Graph is sorted with areas of greatest differences at the top and greatest agreement at the bottom.



On that same topic, 42% of both Hispanic and White employees feel that their employer’s values actually do align with their own values (see Figure 17). The greatest variation was on whether working with their current employer allows them to see the direct impact they are having, with 49% of White employees agreeing compared to 26% of African American employees.

Figure 18 displays feelings about one’s place within the organization, with Hispanic employees most likely to say they feel valued (71%), compared to 51% of African American employees.

Figure 18  
**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?**  
 (strongly/somewhat agree)

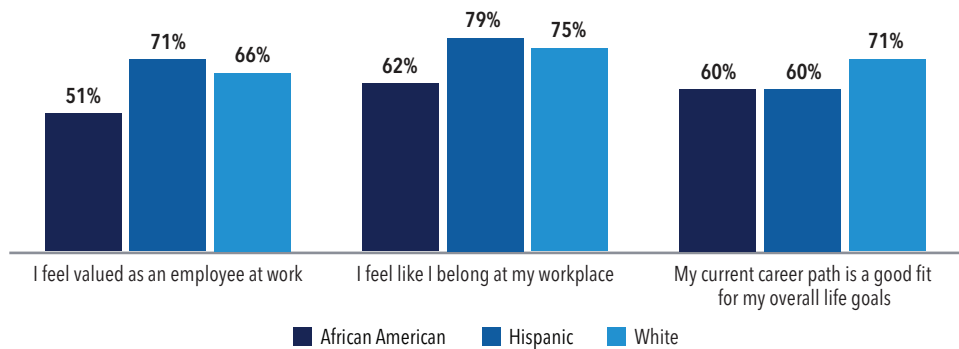
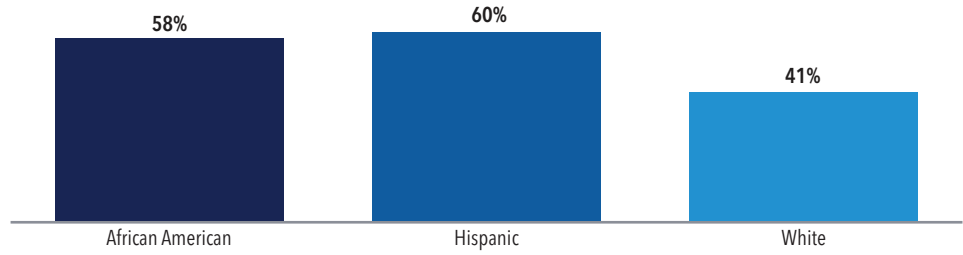


Figure 19  
**How likely would you be to recommend a career in public service to a friend or family member?**  
 (extremely/very likely)



African American (58%) and Hispanic employees (60%) are about equally likely to recommend a career in public service to a friend or family member, compared to just 41% of White employees (see Figure 19). This may be attributable to what they are looking for in an employer, their impressions of whether those ideals are being met, overall positive/negative morale, or other factors.

White employees were also least likely to say they would prefer to remain in the government sector (see Figure 20), and most likely to say they are burned out from the stress of the job (see Figure 21).

Figure 20  
**Of those considering changing jobs, which of the following best describes the type of job change you have in mind?**

NOTE: Graph is sorted with areas of greatest differences at the top and greatest agreement at the bottom.

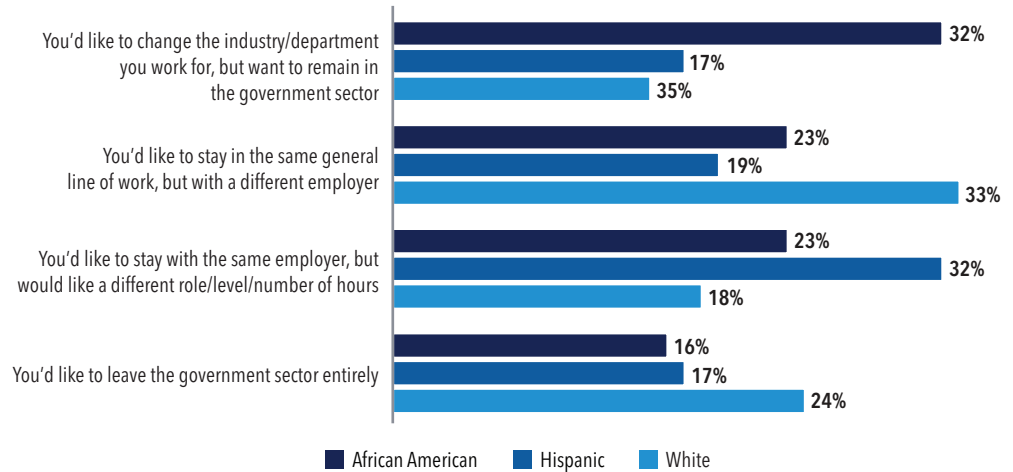
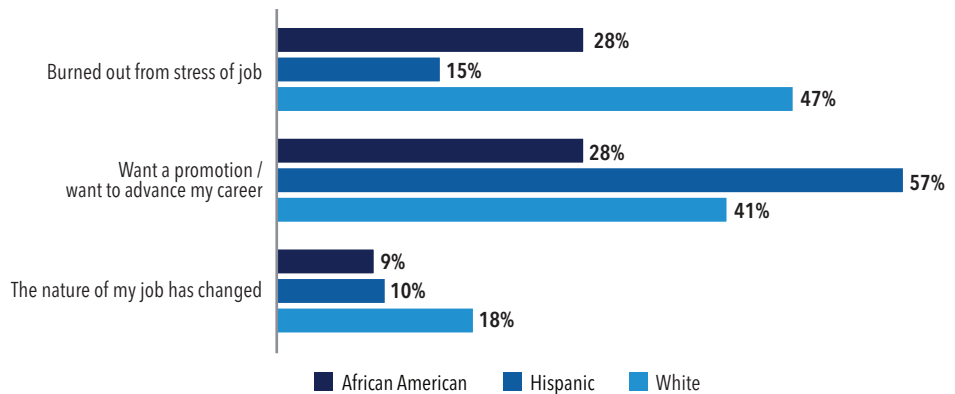


Figure 21  
**Why are you considering changing jobs?**  
 (select all that apply)

NOTE: On other reasons not shown (e.g., higher salary, 71%), responses did not vary significantly by race/ethnicity.

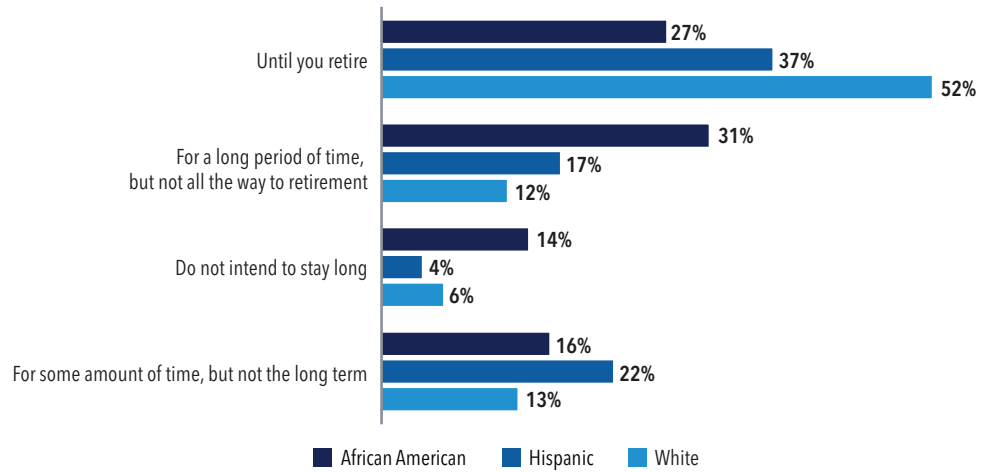
Graph is sorted with areas of greatest differences at the top and greatest agreement at the bottom.



Looking at a longer career horizon, whether or not they stay with their current employer, 52% of White employees indicate a desire to stay in the public sector until they retire, compared to 27% of African American employees (see Figure 22).

Figure 22  
**Whether or not you stay with your current employer, how long do you intend to stay in public service as a career?**

NOTE: Graph is sorted with areas of greatest differences at the top and greatest agreement at the bottom.



<sup>1</sup> By comparison, 30% of Hispanic employees came to their current job from outside the public sector.

<sup>2</sup> Given 19 choices for the top three factors that attracted you to work in the public sector in the first place, salary was the top factor among African American employees, with personal satisfaction tied for being the 6th-highest priority. Among Hispanic employees, salary was the top factor, with personal satisfaction tied for being the 5th-highest priority. Among White employees, personal satisfaction was the top factor, with salary tied for being the 3rd-highest priority.

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