

State and Local Government Workforce Survey 2026

MissionSquare
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HR Association

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National Association of State Personnel Executives

HIGHLIGHTS BY FORM OF GOVERNMENT, YEAR, AND FTE COUNT

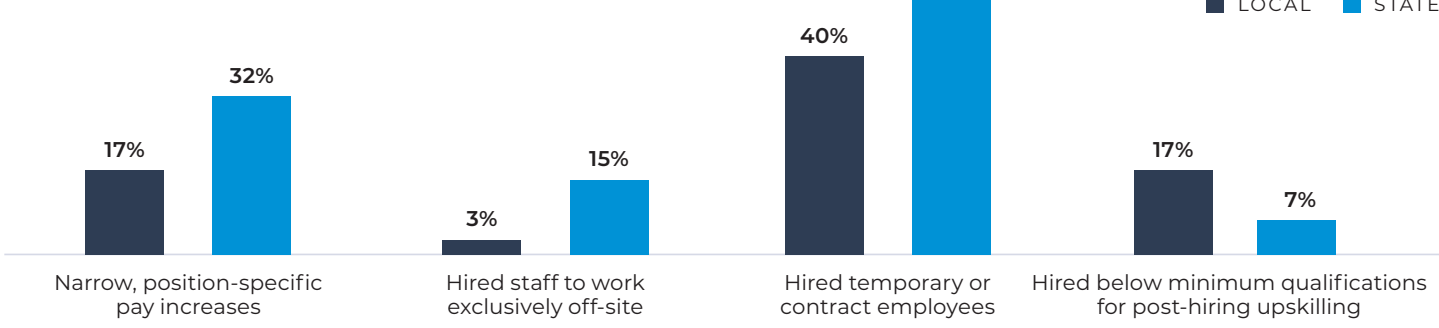
The full report on MissionSquare Research Institute's **2026 State and Local Government Workforce Survey** contains indicators on recruitment, retention, benefits, and organizational culture, as well as artificial intelligence, hiring bonuses, and shorter workweeks.¹

This infographic shows highlights by year, state vs. local government, and full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) where there were significant differences.

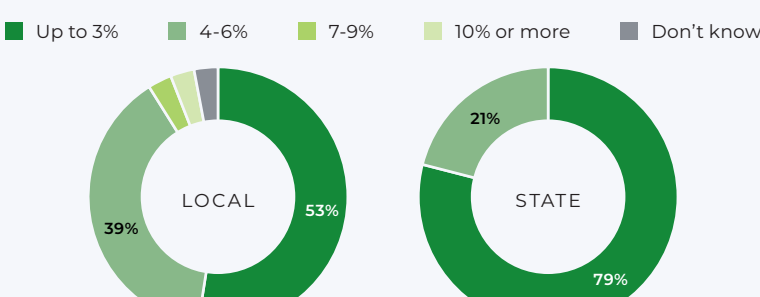
Workforce Actions

State governments were more likely to offer **narrow, position-specific pay increases**, but for broad-based pay increases, **local governments were more likely to report giving a higher percentage increase** (4-6%), while most state governments reported up to 3%.

WORKFORCE ACTIONS TAKEN DURING THE PAST YEAR



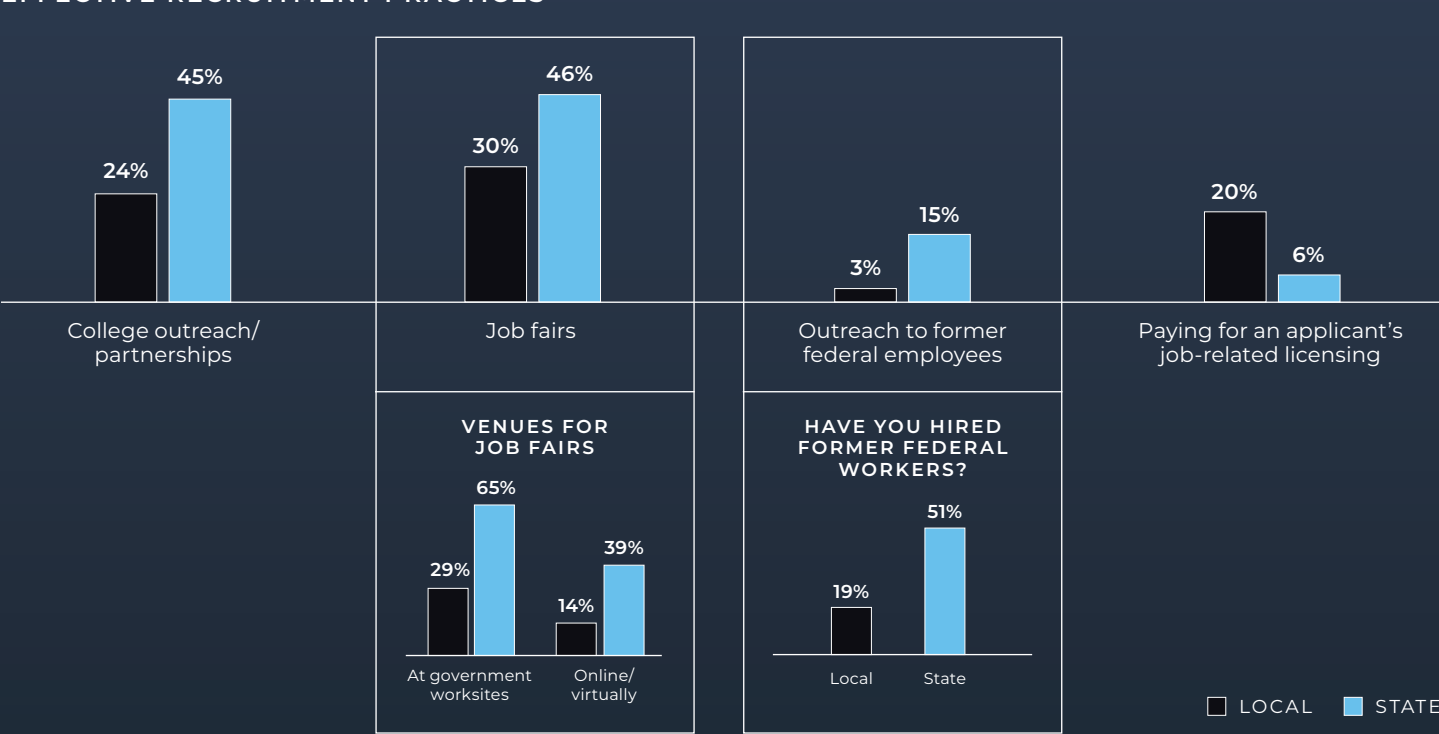
AVERAGE BROAD-BASED PAY INCREASES



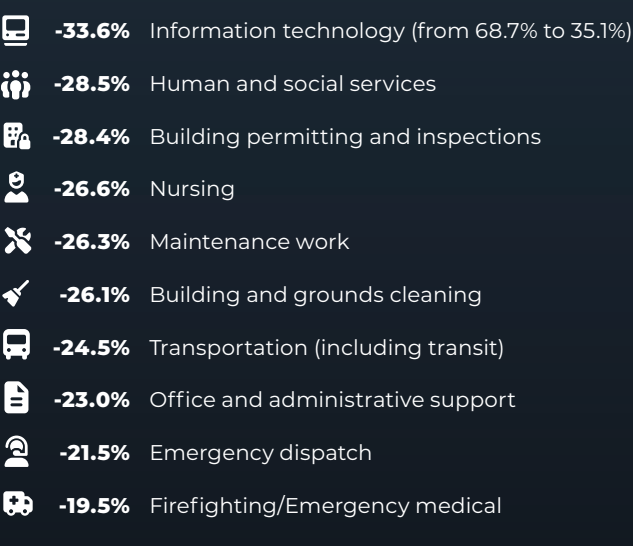
Recruitment

State governments reported both **job fairs and outreach to former federal employees as more effective recruitment tools** than did local governments. In the detail on each, they were also more likely to report certain job fair venues and federal employees hired.

EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

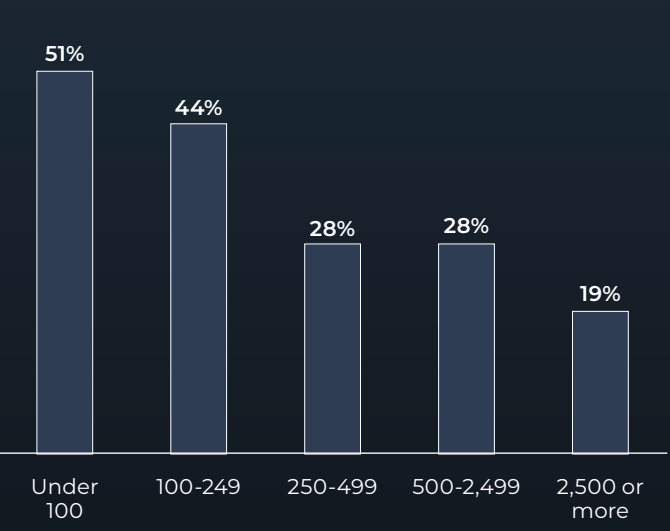


POSITIONS THAT SAW THE LARGEST DECREASE IN RESPONDENTS RATING THEM AS HARD-TO-FILL (2022-2026):



DID TIME TO HIRE INCREASE? (BY FTE COUNT)

More than half of the jurisdictions with under 100 full-time FTEs reported that their time to hire had increased.

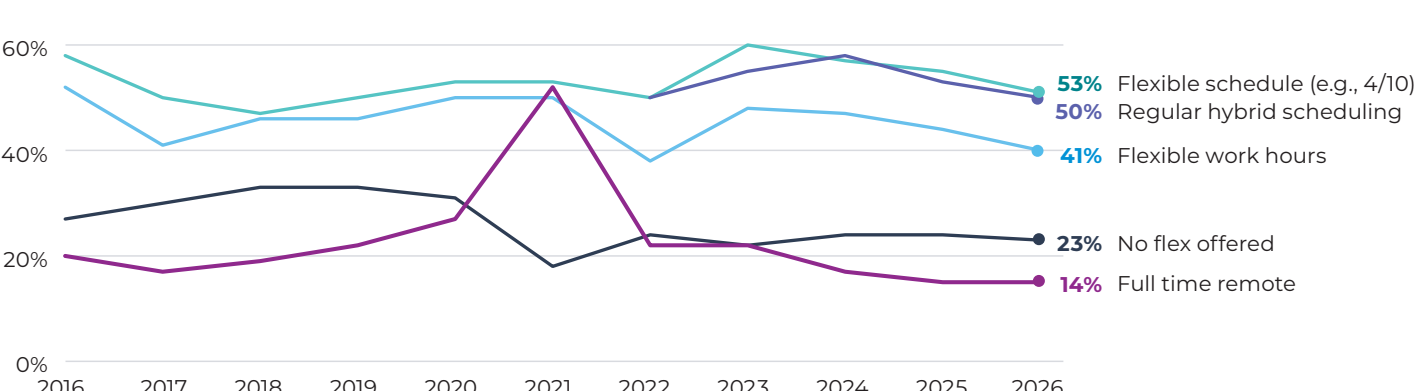


65% of local governments appealing to candidates' interest in public service do so through **individual job ads** vs. just 18% of state governments. Broader branding campaigns are both more common and much more evenly split between local and state agencies.

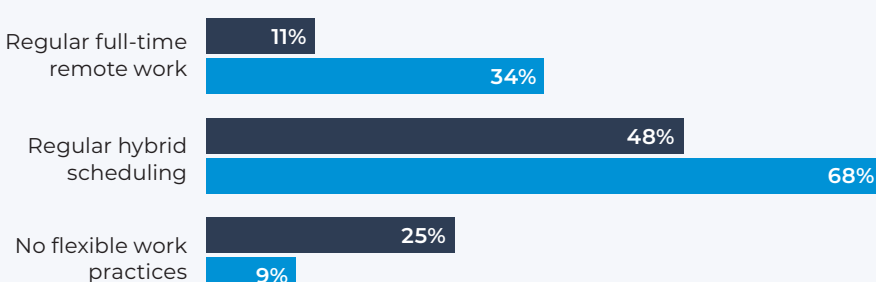
4% vs. 19% Governments with fewer than 250 employees are far less likely to report **agentic AI or chatbot assistance** to applicants or employees than governments with 2,500 or more employees.²

Flexible Work Practices

While full-time remote work has declined, hybrid work remains common, as do flexible schedules or hours.



More state respondents provided for full-time remote work, hybrid work, or both. However, states were also more likely to report that among the **top three reasons for leaving cited in exit interviews** was a desire for more remote work (27% state; 8% local).



The Retirement Wave

As older employees reach retirement age, 40% of employers feel there is either **no significant wave** of retirements ahead or that **such a wave has already taken place**.



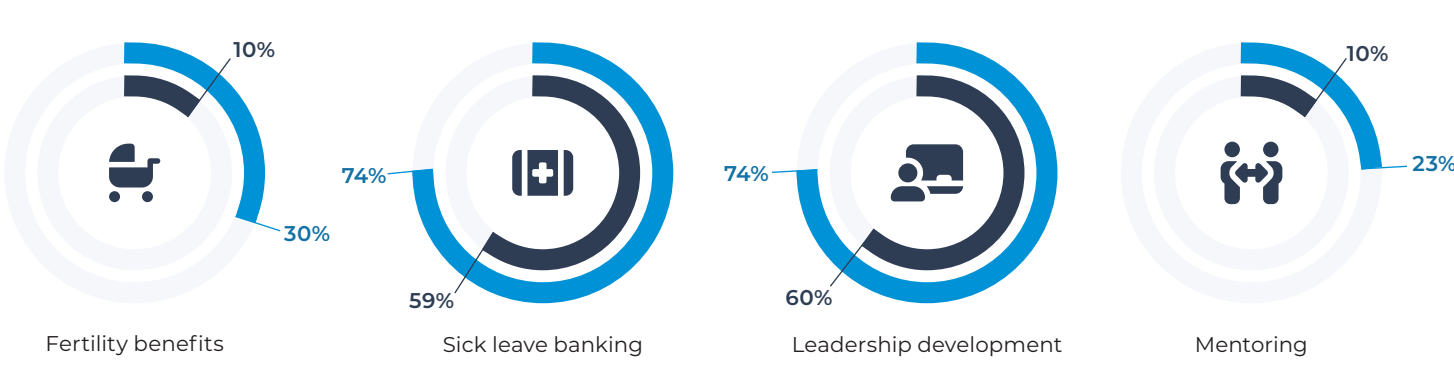
RETIREMENT READINESS

For 3 years in a row, more than 50% of employers feel their employees are prepared for retirement. (From 2013-2023, the total was always below 50%.)

Retention & Succession

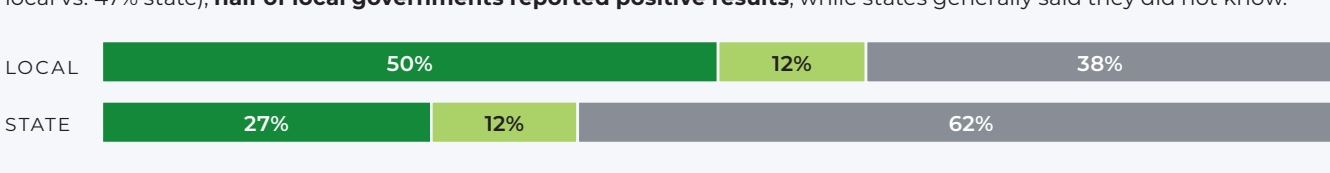
On several retention initiatives, states were more likely to report having adopted them.

RETENTION INITIATIVES ADOPTED



SUCCESSION PLAN RESULTS IN TERMS OF STAFF STABILITY OR KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER?

Although the state and local responses were fairly similar in reporting that succession planning was very important (51% local vs. 47% state), **half of local governments reported positive results**, while states generally said they did not know.



1. The 2026 survey was conducted from February 9 to March 20, with a total of 606 human resource managers responding, based on a partnership between MissionSquare Research Institute, the National Association of State Personnel Executives and the Public Sector HR Association. Figures in this infographic represent a sampling of responses where there was a significant difference across the categories shown. To see all responses, as well as response rates per question and additional year-to-year graphs, see the [full report](#).

2. These figures are specific to agentic AI/chatbots within a human resources context and do not include other uses, such as those in development permitting. A recent study by IDC and Salesforce reported 82% of governments using agentic AI, but this study included federal agencies as well. [Agentic Government: Government Leaders Outpace Private Sector in AI](#), Salesforce, March 26, 2026. See also the Research Institute's report on an employee survey: [Artificial Intelligence in the Workforce: A Survey of State and Local Employees](#), MissionSquare Research Institute, 2025.

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