

SLGE is now



SURVEY FINDINGS

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

About this report

This report was prepared by Rivka Liss-Levinson, PhD (Center for State and Local Government Excellence at ICMA-RC) and describes the results of a survey conducted with Greenwald Research. Thank you to Anne Phelan for copy editing this report and Rob Maguire Designs.

Executive Summary

This report presents the results of an October 2020 national online survey conducted by the Center for State and Local Government Excellence (SLGE) at ICMA-RC and Greenwald Research of 1,205 state and local government employees, assessing their views on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on their employment outlook, general concerns about COVID-19, perceptions of their finances, and general satisfaction with their employer and their benefits. Where applicable, comparisons are made between this survey and an earlier (May 2020) SLGE/Greenwald Research survey of 1,008 state and local government employees. Key survey findings are as follows:

Job Impact

- In October, the vast majority of respondents (82 percent) reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the nature of their job. This is quite similar to the 85 percent who reported that the nature of their job had changed in May.
- At both time points, about 1 in 3 surveyed indicated that it has been very or extremely difficult adjusting to these changes.
- 1 in 4 respondents in October said it has been very or extremely difficult to balance the demands of work and homelife since the start of the pandemic.
- Among the 51 percent of respondents engaging in any remote work in October, only 22 percent had worked remotely prior to the pandemic.
- For 72 percent of those working in-person in October, they did not have a choice as to whether or not to do so.
- There has been a significant shift in remote work from May to October, with the prevalence of full-time remote work decreasing from 42 percent in May to 16 percent in October.
- A key challenge for many has been childcare, with 78 percent of those with children or stepchildren under the age of 18 having had to work from home while also taking care of their children.
- In October, 76 percent considered their job at least somewhat risky in terms of their potential exposure to people who may have COVID-19; this is up from 70 percent in May.
- Among those working remotely for the first time in October or more than before due to COVID-19, more than half (58 percent) found it at least somewhat difficult to adjust.

General Concerns about COVID

- In October, 41 percent rated their current morale regarding work as somewhat or very positive, slightly more than the 36 percent that rated their coworkers' morale as positive.
- Respondents in October were most likely to feel stressed (52 percent), burnt out/fatigued (47 percent), or anxious (44 percent). Fear and stress both increased from May to October and burn-out/fatigue jumped from 27 percent in May to 47 percent in October.
- Similar to the results from May, respondents in October were most concerned about keeping their family safe from contracting the virus (81 percent) and staying protected from contracting the virus at work (78 percent).
- Larger decreases from May to October were seen for concern about having pay reduced (44 percent in October vs. 52 percent in May) and having their hours severely reduced or being furloughed (39 percent in October vs. 49 percent in May).
- In both May and October, respondents were most likely to think that maintained social distancing and an increase in health precautions are the practices and policies that will change at their workplace going forward.
- Respondents' feelings that the risks they are taking during the pandemic are not on par with their compensation jumped from 32 percent in May to 48 in October. Similarly, their feelings that working during the pandemic has made them consider changing jobs increased from 20 percent in May to 31 percent in October.

General Concerns about COVID (CONT)

- Trust in all levels of government decreased from May to October. While 67 percent reported a fair amount or a great deal of trust in state and/or in local government leaders in May, this fell to 54 percent for local leaders and 50 percent for state leaders in October. Only 29 percent indicated a fair amount or a great deal of trust in federal leaders in October (down from 39 percent in May).
 - Just under half (48 percent) agreed in October that they have been able to get the help, information, and resources needed to make smart financial decisions during the pandemic, a decrease from 53 percent in May.
-

Financial Impact

- More than half of respondents reported that they and their family have been negatively impacted financially by the pandemic in October (54 percent) and in May (56 percent).
 - In October, 37 percent expected the financial impact to be worse in the next year, a decrease of 10 percentage points since May.
 - In October, 60 percent said debt is a problem for them and their family (up from 57 percent in May). Since the start of the pandemic, 31 percent have had to take on more debt.
 - Nearly half (46 percent) have spent less than normal since the start of the pandemic.
 - Among the 72 percent who reported a partially or fully funded emergency fund in October, 40 percent had to spend money from the fund since the start of the pandemic to make ends meet.
 - Since the start of the pandemic, 26 percent have reduced their retirement savings, and 40 percent have reduced their general savings. Far fewer have increased their retirement savings (9 percent) or their general savings (19 percent).
 - Concern about being able to retire when they want remained fairly steady from May (38 percent) to October (40 percent), as has being able to save enough to be financially secure throughout retirement (41 percent in May vs. 43 percent in October).
-

Satisfaction with Employer and Benefits

- Overall, less than half of respondents (46 percent) were very or extremely satisfied with their employer in October, while 17 percent are not too satisfied or not at all satisfied.
 - The elements of their job that they were most satisfied with are job security, their leave benefits (both 62 percent), and their health insurance (59 percent). In contrast, only 25 percent were very or extremely satisfied with their non-traditional benefits.
 - The most appealing non-traditional benefits to respondents were flexible work scheduling (70 percent), along with physical wellness programs and employee assistance programs (both 41 percent).
 - 58 percent agreed that people who retire from jobs in state and local government are generally able to live comfortably in retirement and 56 percent agreed that they are knowledgeable about the retirement options available to them.
-

Introduction

Even as distribution of a coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine begins to roll out across the United States and several other countries, many parts of the world are experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. As of January 20, 2021, nearly 100 million cases and more than 2 million deaths have been recorded around the world, with the United States accounting for more than 24 million cases and 400,000 deaths.¹

As implementation of a second stimulus package to help the many Americans affected by the pandemic and corresponding economic crisis commences and as “pandemic fatigue” sets in, the crucial role that state and local government workers play in everyday activities has never been more important. From medical professionals and educators to public safety and public health personnel, the approximately 18.6 million individuals who are employed by state and local government continue to make integral activities and services available to their communities.

With general aid to states and localities to help cover revenue losses not included in the second stimulus package, states and localities across the nation continue to face significant public health and economic challenges, with surges in cases overwhelming hospitals and tighter restrictions on businesses hampering a quick economic recovery. To ensure that state and local governments have a resilient workforce that can respond to the current challenges and those that may lie ahead, it is imperative to understand how the public sector workforce perceives the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their jobs and finances, and their expectations of the short- and medium-term impacts of the pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis.

In May of 2020, SLGE and Greenwald Research conducted an online survey of 1,008 state and local government employees, assessing their views on the COVID-19 pandemic’s financial impacts, job impacts, debt profile, and other related issues. The results of that survey were released in the June 2020 report, [Survey Results: Public Sector Employee Views on Finances and Employment Outlook Due to COVID-19](#). Key findings were also developed into three infographics: [Public Sector Employee Views on COVID-19](#), [K-12 Education Employee Views on COVID-19](#), and [African American State and Local Employee Views on COVID-19](#).

This report provides the results of a follow-up survey to the May 2020 survey and assesses state and local government employees’ views on the COVID-19 pandemic’s job impacts, general concerns about COVID-19, financial impacts, and satisfaction with their employer and benefits. It presents the results of an online survey of 1,205 state and local government employees conducted by SLGE and Greenwald Research October 14 – November 2, 2020. Where applicable, comparisons are made between this survey and the May 2020 SLGE/Greenwald Research survey.

Survey Results

Sample Demographics

The demographic characteristics of the 1,205 survey respondents are displayed in Table 1. The majority of survey respondents are female, white or Caucasian, working for state government,² have children/stepchildren, and have total annual personal and household incomes of less than \$75,000. Respondents have a median age of 45³ and tend to be well educated (72 percent have received their bachelor's or a graduate/professional degree). Half of respondents are married and just over half (53 percent) work in education. There is more variation in respondents' geographic region and number of years working for their employer.

The demographic characteristics of the survey sample generally align with the overall state and local government workforce profile. Of the approximately 19.7 million state and local government employees who worked across the United States in 2019, 11.2 million worked in education and nearly one million were in police protection, with the rest filling all other state and local positions (e.g., general administration, utilities, transportation, hospitals).⁴ As of 2020, state and local workers have an average age of 44.4 years; 61 percent are female; and 58 percent have a bachelor's, advanced, or professional degree.⁵

Table 1. Sample Demographics

Gender	%
Male	36
Female	64
Prefer to self-describe	<0.5

Age	%
Under 40	38
40-59	48
60 or older	14

Education	%
Less than a high school diploma	0
Graduated high school	6
Some college (no degree)	12
Associate’s degree or completion of technical or vocational school	10
Bachelor’s degree	39
Graduate/professional degree	33

Race/Ethnicity	%
White or Caucasian	69
Black or African American	14
Hispanic/Latino/Spanish descent	14
Asian or Pacific Islander	5
Native American	<0.5
Other (specify)	<0.5

Marital Status	%
Married	50
Single, never married	27
Divorced or separated	15
Living with a partner	6
Widowed	2
Prefer not to say	1

Industry	%
Administration and Finance	4
Education	53
Health & Human Services	13
Public Safety	16
Parks & Recreation	1
Public Works/Utilities	4
Transportation	5
All Other	3

Employer	%
State government	60
Local government	40

Number of Years Working with Current Employer	%
Less than 1 year	1
1 to 5 years	34
6 to 10 years	20
11 to 15 years	13
16-20 years	14
21+ years	18

Region	%
South	38
Midwest	23
West	21
Northeast	18

Children/Stepchildren	%
Yes, under 18	27
Yes, 18 or older	36
No children/stepchildren	42
Prefer not to answer	1

Total Annual Personal Income	%
Less than \$25,000	5
\$25,000 to \$49,999	40
\$50,000 to \$74,999	24
\$75,000 to \$99,999	19
\$100,000 to \$124,999	4
\$125,000 to \$149,999	3
\$150,000 or more	4
Don't know	<0.5

Total Annual Household Income	%
Less than \$25,000	4
\$25,000 to \$49,999	29
\$50,000 to \$74,999	22
\$75,000 to \$99,999	21
\$100,000 to \$124,999	10
\$125,000 to \$149,999	7
\$150,000 or more	7
Don’t know	1

Note: n=1,205; some figures may not total to 100% due to rounding or to “select all that apply” option for racial/ethnic identification and children/stepchildren status.

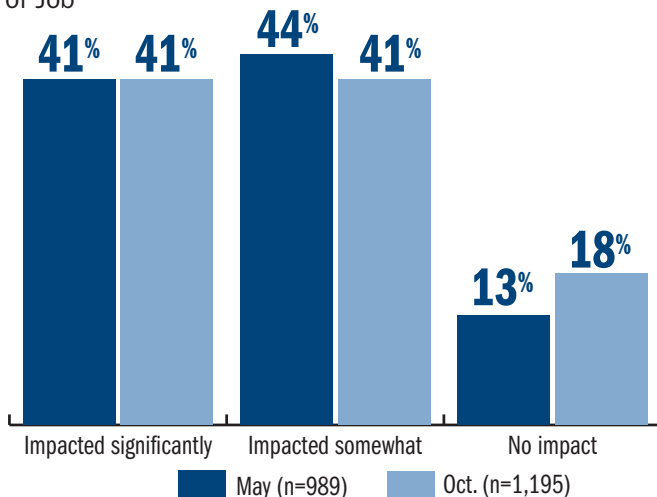
Note: n=1,205; some figures may not total to 100% due to rounding or to “select all that apply” option for racial/ethnic identification and children/stepchildren status.

Job Impact

In October, the vast majority of respondents (82 percent) reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the nature of their job (e.g., what they do, where they work, how they go about the tasks required). This is quite similar to the 85 percent who reported in May that the nature of their job had changed. In both May and October, 41 percent indicated that the pandemic has impacted the nature of their job significantly (Figure 1).

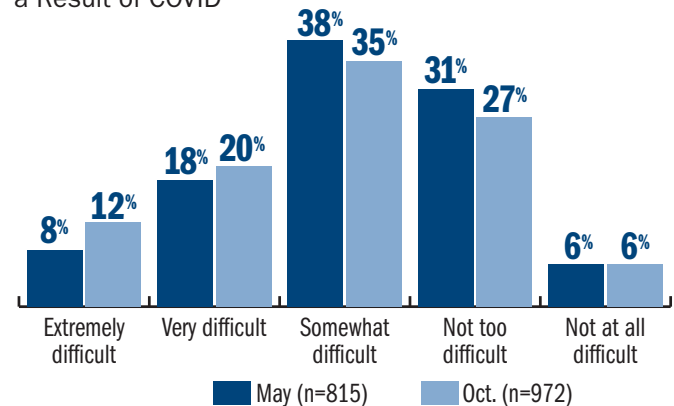
Among those reporting some impact, respondents were relatively split in both May and October in terms of how difficult it has been to adjust to those changes. While 32 percent reported in October that it had been very or extremely difficult adjusting to the changes to their job as a result of the pandemic, 35 percent reported that it had been somewhat difficult, and 33 percent reported that it had been not too difficult or not at all difficult (Figure 2). The percentage reporting in October that it had been extremely difficult (12 percent) represents a 50 percent increase over May, when 8 percent described the adjustment as extremely difficult.

Figure 1. Extent to which COVID has Impacted Nature of Job



Note: Percentages may not equal 100% due to excluding responses for "Not sure" from figure.

Figure 2. Difficulty Adjusting to Changes to Job as a Result of COVID



To better understand how the nature of their job has changed, respondents were asked about their current work location. As displayed in Figure 3, there has been a significant shift in the prevalence of remote work from May to October. Full-time remote work (i.e., not going into a workplace or interacting in person with other people) substantially decreased from May (42 percent) to October (16 percent). In contrast, no remote work (i.e., job requires going into a workplace and/or interacting in-person or with other people) nearly doubled from 26 percent in May to 49 percent in October.

Figure 3. Working Remotely?

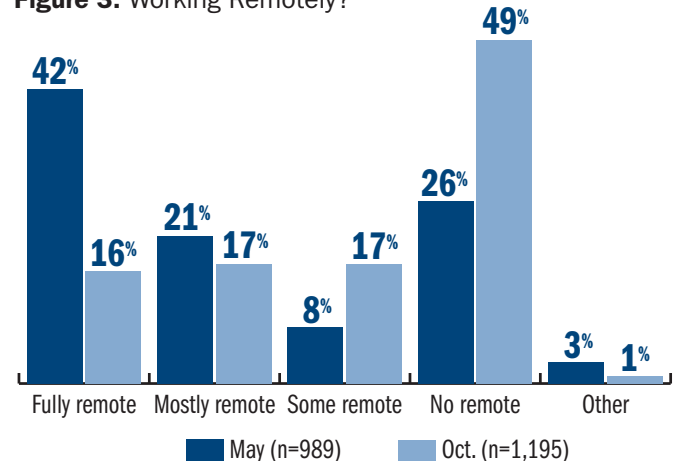
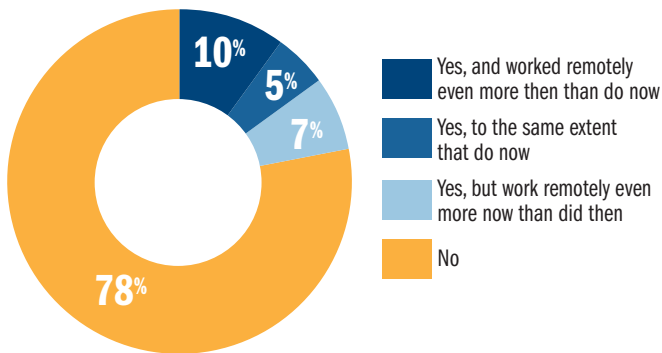
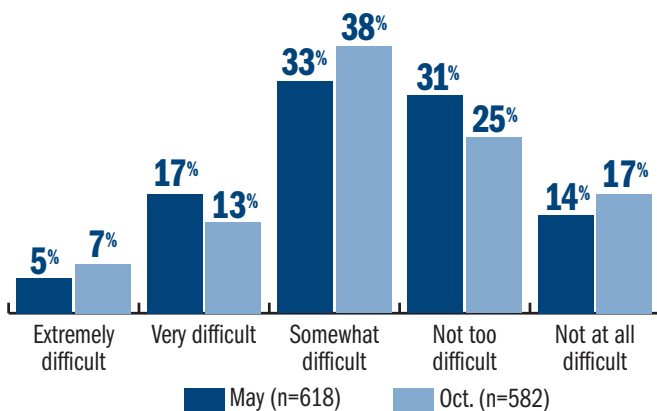
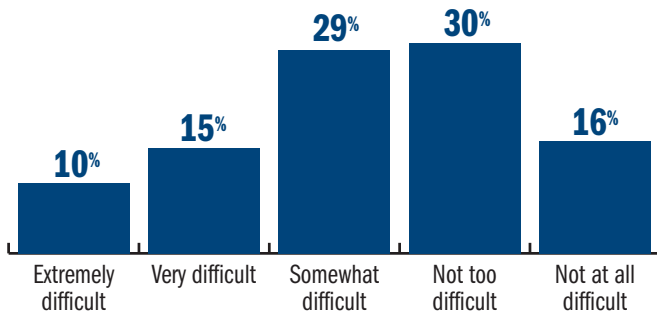


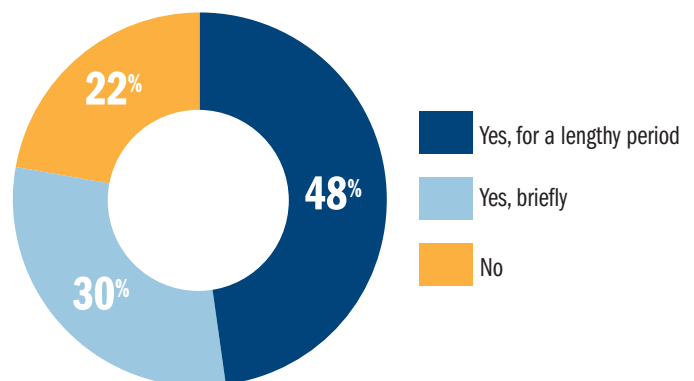
Figure 4. Working Remotely Pre-COVID? (n=639)**Figure 5.** Difficulty Adjusting to Remote Work**Figure 6.** Difficulty Balancing Work and Homelife Demands Since Start of Pandemic (n=1,195)

Among those currently engaging in any remote work, only 22 percent had worked remotely prior to the pandemic (Figure 4).

More than half of those working remotely for the first time or more than before due to COVID-19 have found it at least somewhat difficult to adjust to remote work in both October (58 percent) and May (55 percent); see Figure 5.

Given the many competing work and homelife demands that individuals have faced as the pandemic has worn on, respondents were asked how difficult it has been to balance the two since the start of the pandemic. While nearly half (46 percent) reported that it has been not too difficult or not at all difficult, 1 in 4 said that it has been very or extremely difficult (Figure 6).

Balancing these demands may be particularly challenging for those who have needed to take care of their children during the workday over the course of the pandemic. Among those with children or stepchildren under the age of 18, the majority (78 percent) 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); 48 percent reported having had to do so for a lengthy period (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Had to Work from Home While Also Taking Care of Your Children During Pandemic? (n=294)

The majority of respondents (76 percent) engaged in any in-person work in October or prior to the pandemic considered it at least somewhat risky, in terms of their potential exposure to people who may have COVID (up from 70 percent in May). In October, 47 percent believed that in-person work is very or extremely risky—a rise from 40 percent in May (Figure 8).

Most of those working in-person in October did not have a choice as to whether or not to do so; 58 percent reported that their employer did not give them the choice, while 14 percent indicated that this was due to a factor outside of work (Figure 9).

General Concerns about COVID

When asked to describe their current morale regarding work, 41 percent of respondents rated themselves as having somewhat or very positive morale. This is slightly higher than the percentage that rated their coworkers as having positive morale about work in general. Meanwhile, while 27 percent said they had somewhat or strongly negative morale, 35 percent rated their coworkers' morale regarding work as negative (Figure 10).

Asked about the specific emotions they are feeling about the pandemic while at work, respondents were most likely to report feeling stressed (52 percent), burnt

Figure 8. Perceived Risk of Exposure to COVID at Work

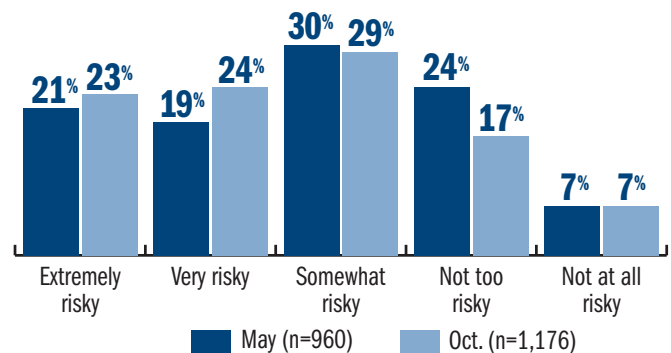


Figure 9. Had a Choice about Returning to Work in Person Since Start of Pandemic? (n=946)

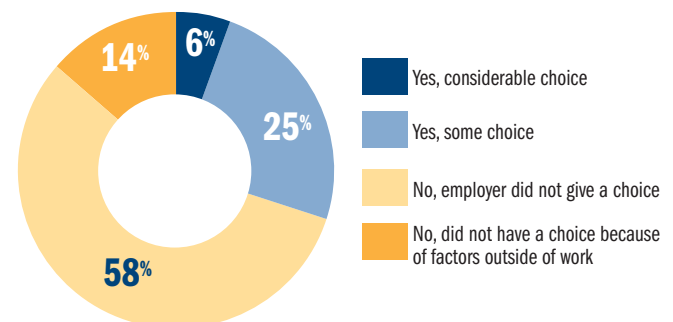
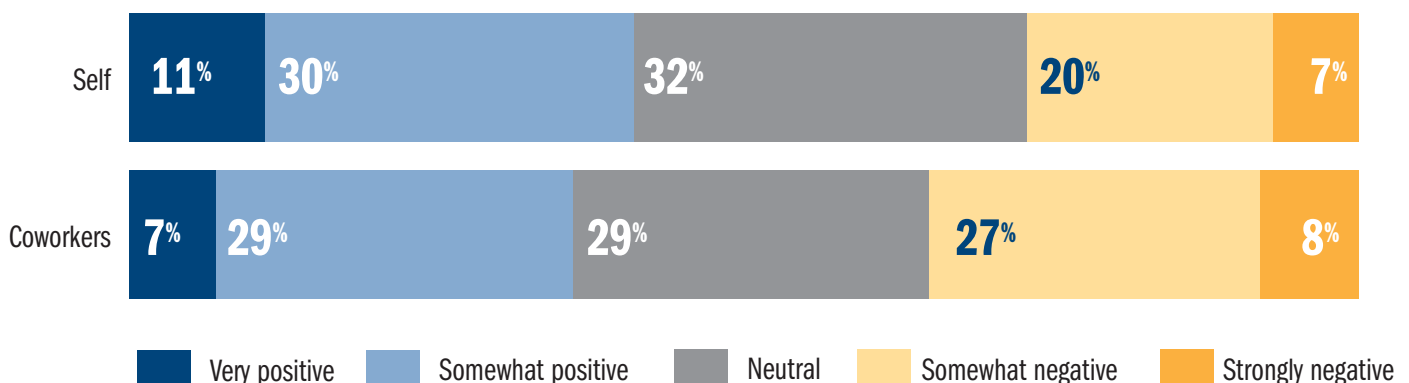


Figure 10. Current Morale Regarding Work (n=1,195)



out/fatigued (47 percent), and/or anxious (44 percent). As displayed in Figure 11, there are several notable changes in emotions felt from May to October. While fewer respondents felt lonely in October (16 percent) than in May (22 percent), fewer also felt grateful in October than in May (25 percent and 33 percent, respectively). At the same time, feelings of fear and stress both showed modest increases from May to October, and burn-out/fatigue rose substantially, from 27 percent in May to 47 percent in October.

When it comes to their concerns about their job going forward, respondents were most concerned about keeping their family safe from contracting the virus (81 percent were at least somewhat concerned) and staying protected from contracting the virus at work or once they return to the workplace (78 percent were at least somewhat concerned). These numbers, along with concern for having their benefits package reduced in some way and losing their job, were all down slightly from May (see Figure 12). Larger decreases from May to October were observed for concern about having pay reduced (52 percent in May vs. 44 percent in October) and having their hours severely reduced or being furloughed (49 percent in May vs. 39 percent in October). One potential explanation for these larger decreases is that having survived initial layoffs has made employees more optimistic.

In terms of how they expect work practices, policies, and/or the work environment to change at their workplace going forward, respondents were most likely to think that there will be maintained social distancing (70 percent) and/or an increase in health precautions, such as wearing masks and gloves (68 percent). Respondents were more likely in October than in May to anticipate health checks before going to work (e.g., checking for a fever), an increased reliance on teleconferencing platforms

Figure 11. Emotions Feeling about the Pandemic While at Work

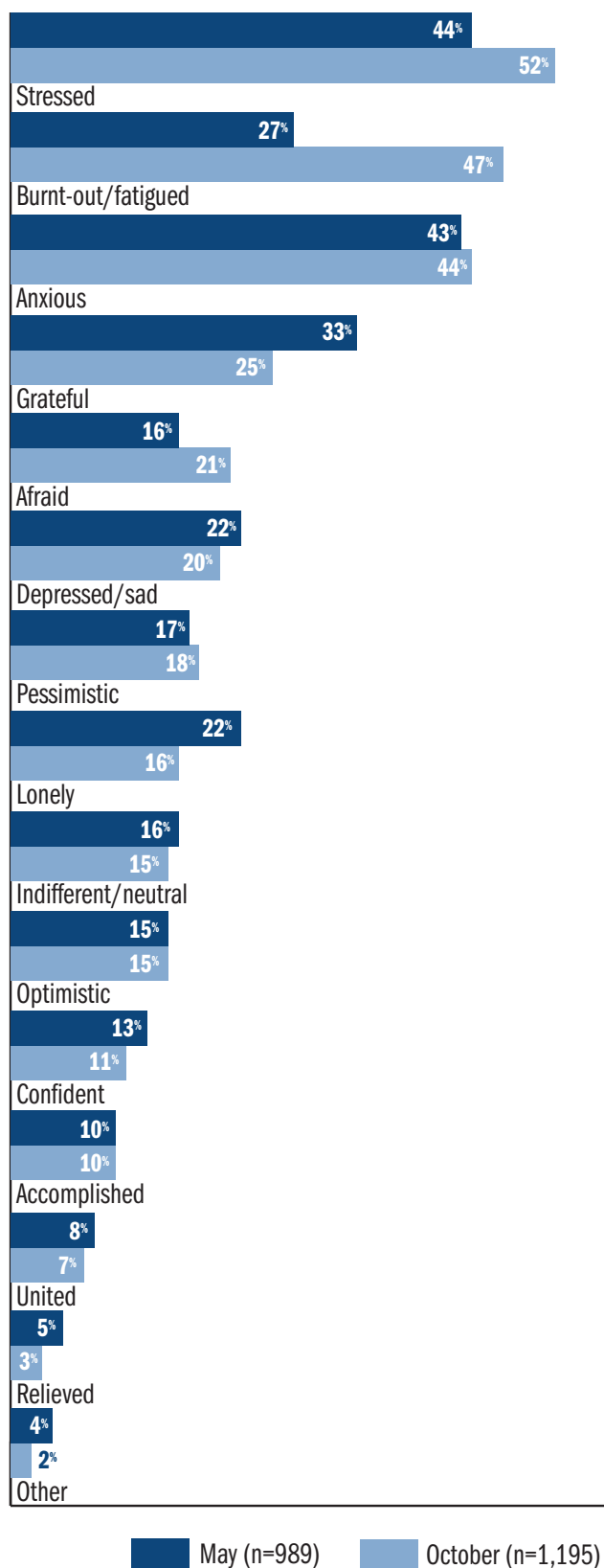
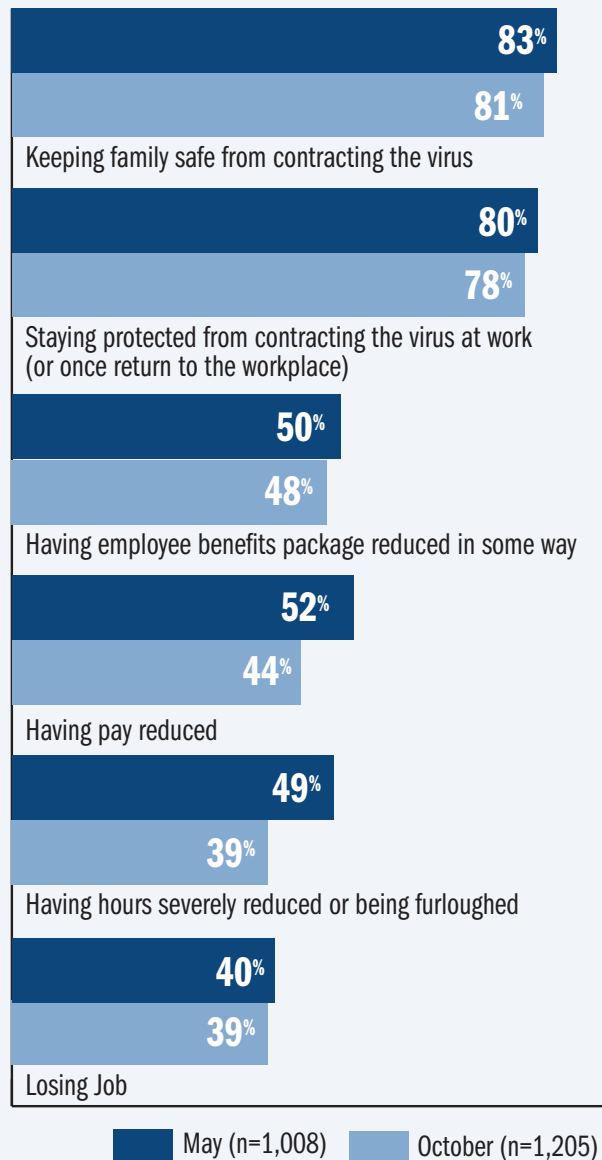
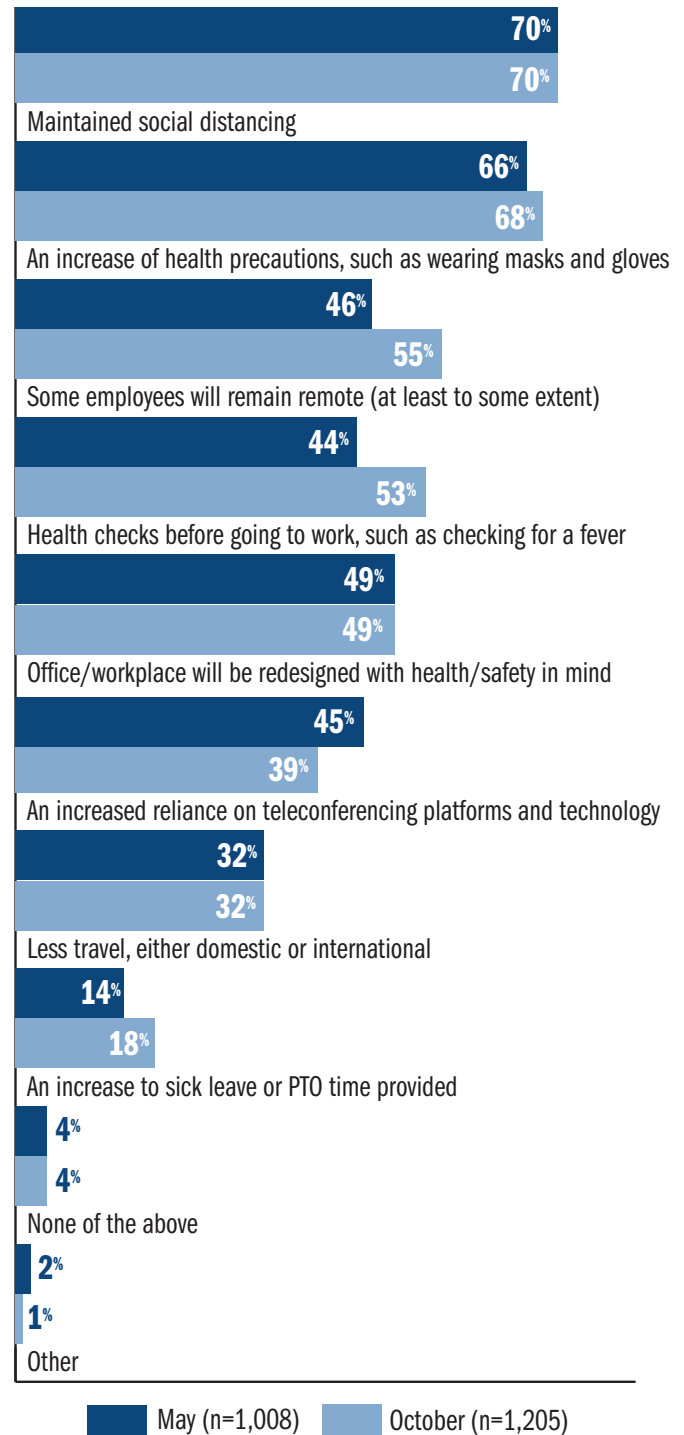


Figure 12. Concerns about Job Going Forward
(% Very/Extremely/Somewhat Concerned)



and technology, and an increase in sick leave or paid time off (PTO) provided. Conversely, they were less likely to anticipate that their office or workplace will be designed with health and safety in mind in October than they were in May (Figure 13).

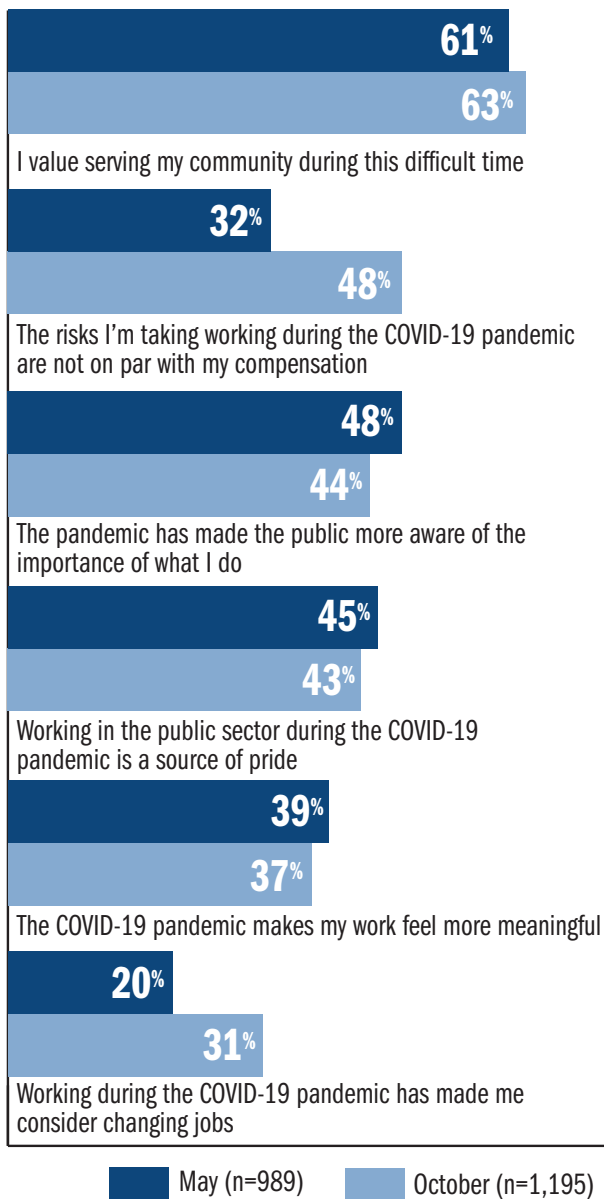
Figure 13. Perceptions of How Work and Workplace Will Change Going Forward This Year



Respondents' feelings about working in the public sector during the COVID-19 pandemic have generally gotten more negative, as can be seen in Figure 14. While those indicating the value of serving their community during this difficult time rose slightly from 61 percent in May to 63 percent in October,

Figure 14. Feelings about Working in the Public Sector During COVID

(% somewhat or strongly agree)



all other positive feelings surveyed (that the pandemic has made the public more aware of the importance of what they do, that working in the public sector during the pandemic is a source of pride, and that the pandemic makes their work feel more meaningful) showed decreases from May to October.

In contrast, feeling that the risks they are taking during the pandemic are not on par with their compensation jumped from 32 percent in May to 48 percent in October. Another large increase was observed for feeling that working during the pandemic has made them consider changing jobs, which grew from 20 percent in May to 31 percent in October.

Respondents were also asked how much trust they have in government leaders to make appropriate decisions regarding employee safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. Trust in all levels of government decreased from May to October. While about 2 in 3 respondents reported a fair amount or a great deal of trust in state government leaders and/or in local government leaders in May (both 67 percent), trust decreased to 54 percent for local leaders and 50 percent for state leaders in October. Trust in federal government leaders was even lower. While only 39 percent reported a fair amount or great deal of trust in federal leaders in May, this dropped to 29 percent in October (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Trust in Government Leaders to Make Appropriate Decisions Regarding Employee Safety During COVID

(% with Fair Amount/Great Deal of Trust)

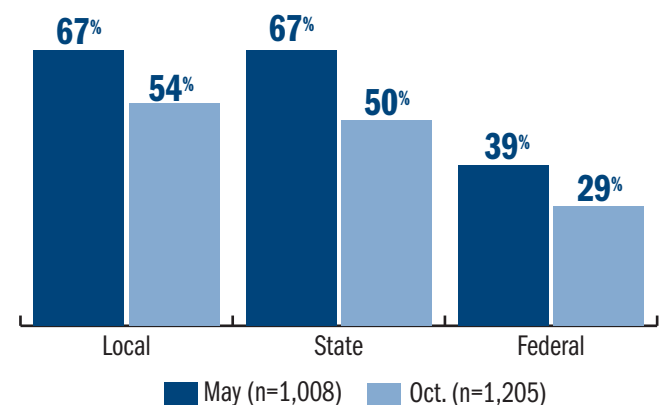
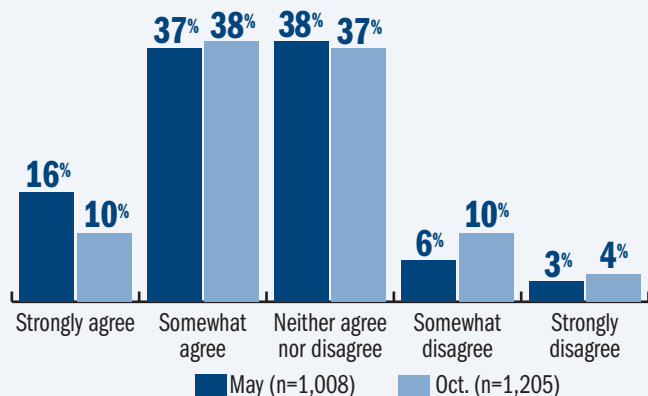


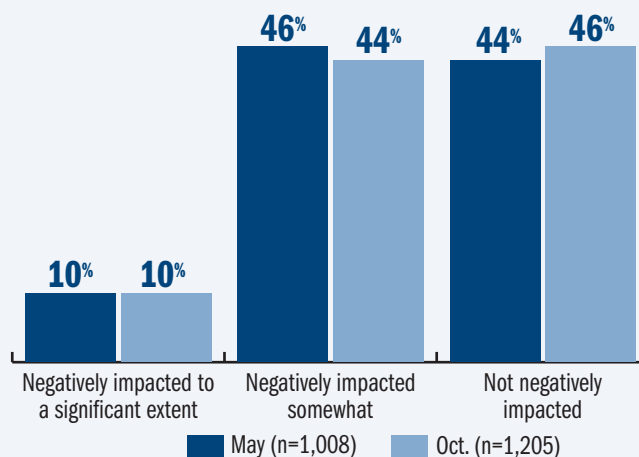
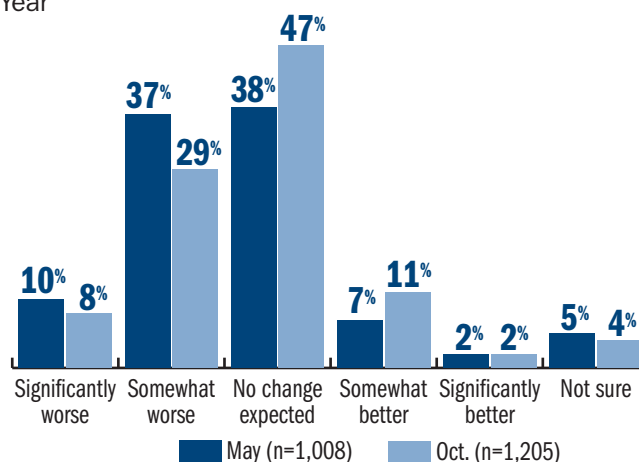
Figure 16. Can Get Help Needed to Make Smart Financial Decisions during the Pandemic

When it comes getting the help, information, and resources they need to make smart financial decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic crisis, just under half (48 percent) agreed that they have been able to get the help, information, and resources needed. This is down from 53 percent in May (see Figure 16). Meanwhile, only 14 percent reported that they have not been able to get this help, a slight increase from the 9 percent reporting this in May.

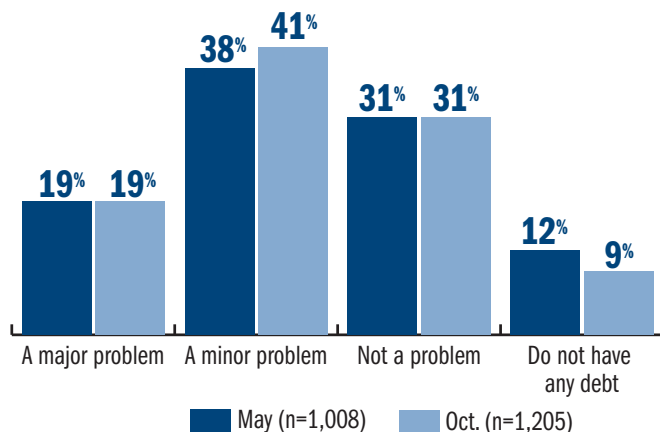
Financial Impact

In October, more than half (54 percent) of state and local government employees surveyed reported that they and their family have been negatively impacted financially by the COVID-19 pandemic; 10 percent reported that they have been negatively impacted financially to a significant extent. This is nearly identical to the percentages for May (Figure 17).

When asked in October how they expect the pandemic will impact them financially over the course of the next year versus where they are now, 37 percent of respondents reported that they expect the financial impact to be somewhat or significantly worse, a decrease of 10 percentage points since May (Figure 18). This may be a function of those

Figure 17. Financial Impact of COVID**Figure 18.** Expected Financial Impact of COVID in Next Year

most severely impacted financially (i.e., being laid off) not being resurveyed in October, and/or that those whose jobs remain feel more confident because they were not impacted by those earlier cuts. In October, slightly more expected the financial impact over the next year to be better than they did in May (13 percent vs. 9 percent, respectively). Respondents were asked in October to what extent debt (e.g., a mortgage, car loan, student loans, credit card debt, medical debt) is a problem for them and their family. As shown in Figure 19, the percentage reporting that debt is either a major

Figure 19. Extent to which Debt is Currently a Problem

or a minor problem for them and their family did not change substantially from May (57 percent) to October (60 percent).

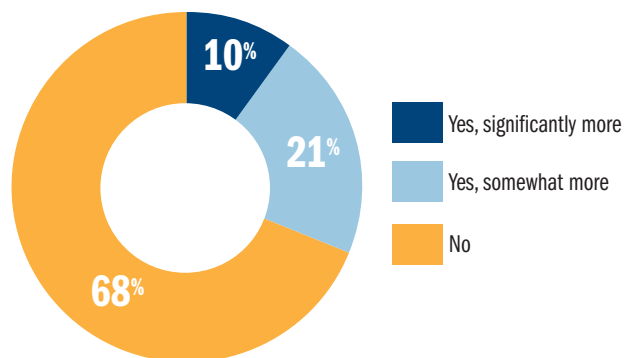
Since the start of the COVID pandemic, 31 percent have had to take on more debt (Figure 20). This is slightly higher than the 25 percent who anticipated in May that they would have to take on more debt over the course of the next year.

Nearly 3 in 4 (72 percent) reported that, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, they and their family had an emergency fund set up to help pay for major unexpected expenses or to cover necessities if they lost their main source of income (Figure 21).

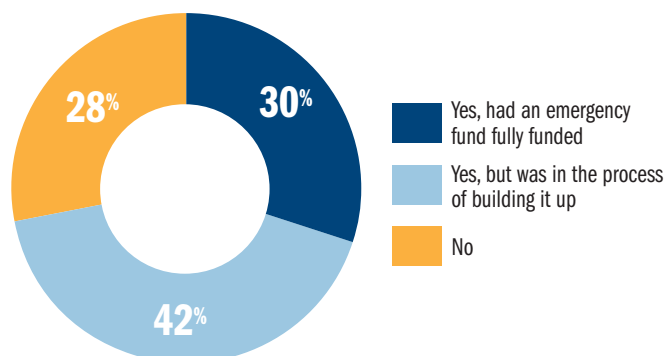
Among those with an emergency fund partially or fully funded, 40 percent have had to spend money from it since the start of the pandemic to make ends meet (Figure 22).

When asked whether they have changed the amount they are saving since the start of the pandemic, 26 percent report that they have reduced their retirement savings, and 40 percent have reduced the amount they are saving in general or for things other than retirement. Far fewer have increased their retirement savings (9 percent) or their saving in general (19 percent; see Figure 23).

In addition to many respondents saving more, many have also spent less since the start of the pandemic. As

Figure 20. Had to Take on More Debt Since Start of Pandemic? (n=1,205)

Note: Percentages may not equal 100% due to excluding responses for "Not sure" from figure.

Figure 21. Emergency Fund Prior to Pandemic? (n=1,205)

Note: Percentages may not equal 100% due to excluding responses for "Not sure" from figure.

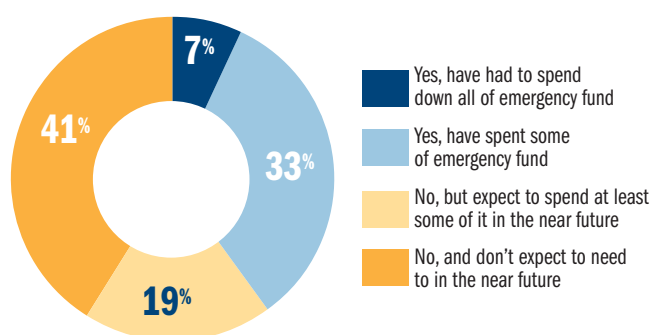
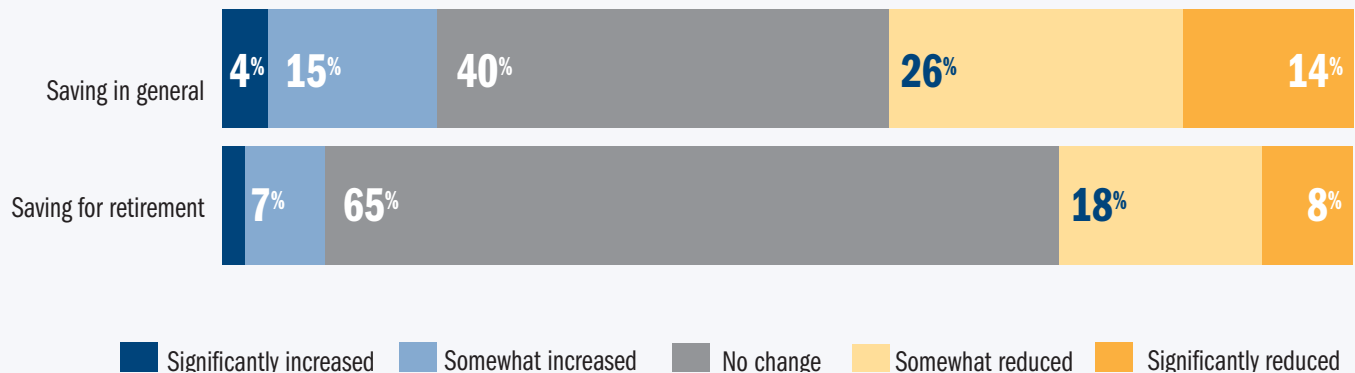
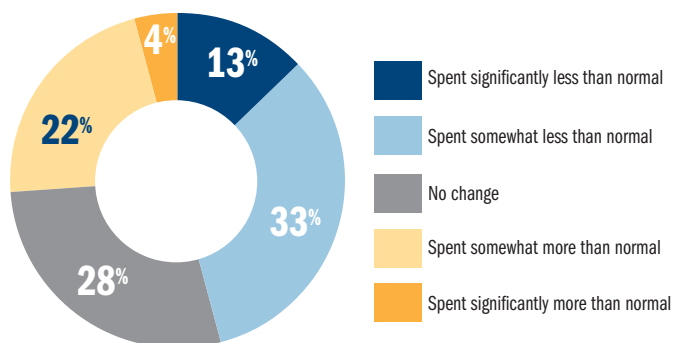
Figure 22. Had to Spend Money from Emergency Fund to Make Ends Meet? (n=873)

Figure 23. Change in Savings (n=1,205)**Figure 24.** Change in Spending Since Start of Pandemic? (n=1,205)

shown in Figure 24, nearly half (46 percent) have spent significantly or somewhat less than normal since the start of the pandemic.

Respondents were also asked how concerned they are that the COVID-19 pandemic and the related economic crisis will impact being able to retire when they want and being able to save enough to be financially secure throughout retirement. As shown in Figure 25, respondents' concern about being able to retire when they want remained fairly steady from May (38 percent very or extremely concerned) to October (40 percent very or extremely concerned). A similar trend can be seen in Figure 26 for being able to save enough to be financially secure throughout retirement. While 41 percent were very or extremely concerned about this in May, 43 percent reported being very or extremely concerned in October.

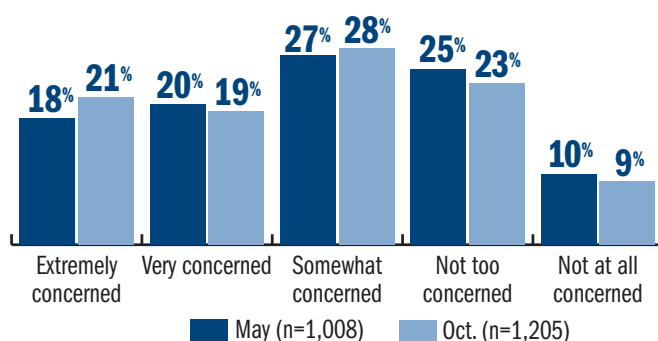
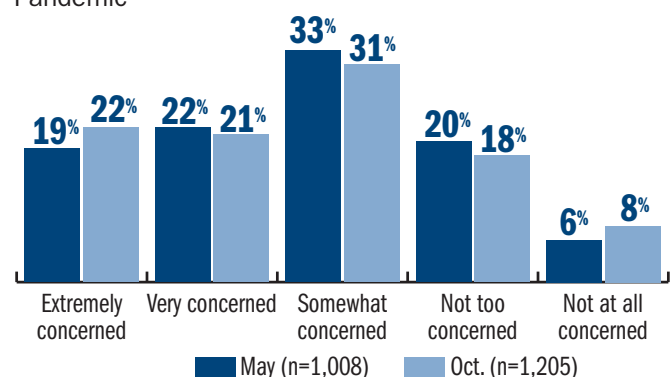
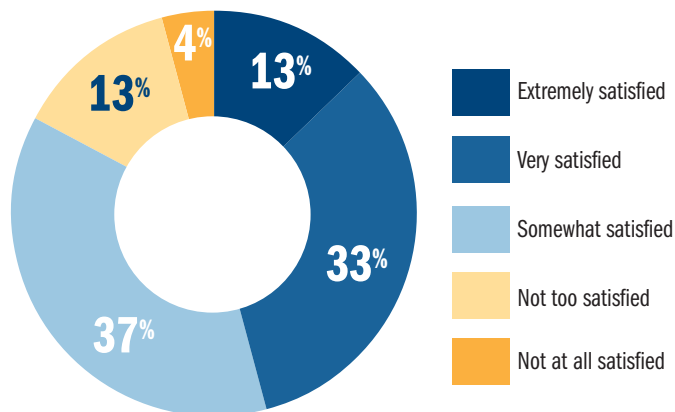
Figure 25. Concern about Being Able to Retire When Want Due to Pandemic**Figure 26.** Concern about Being Able to Save Enough to Be Financially Secure Throughout Retirement Due to Pandemic

Figure 27. General Satisfaction with Current Employer (n=1,205)

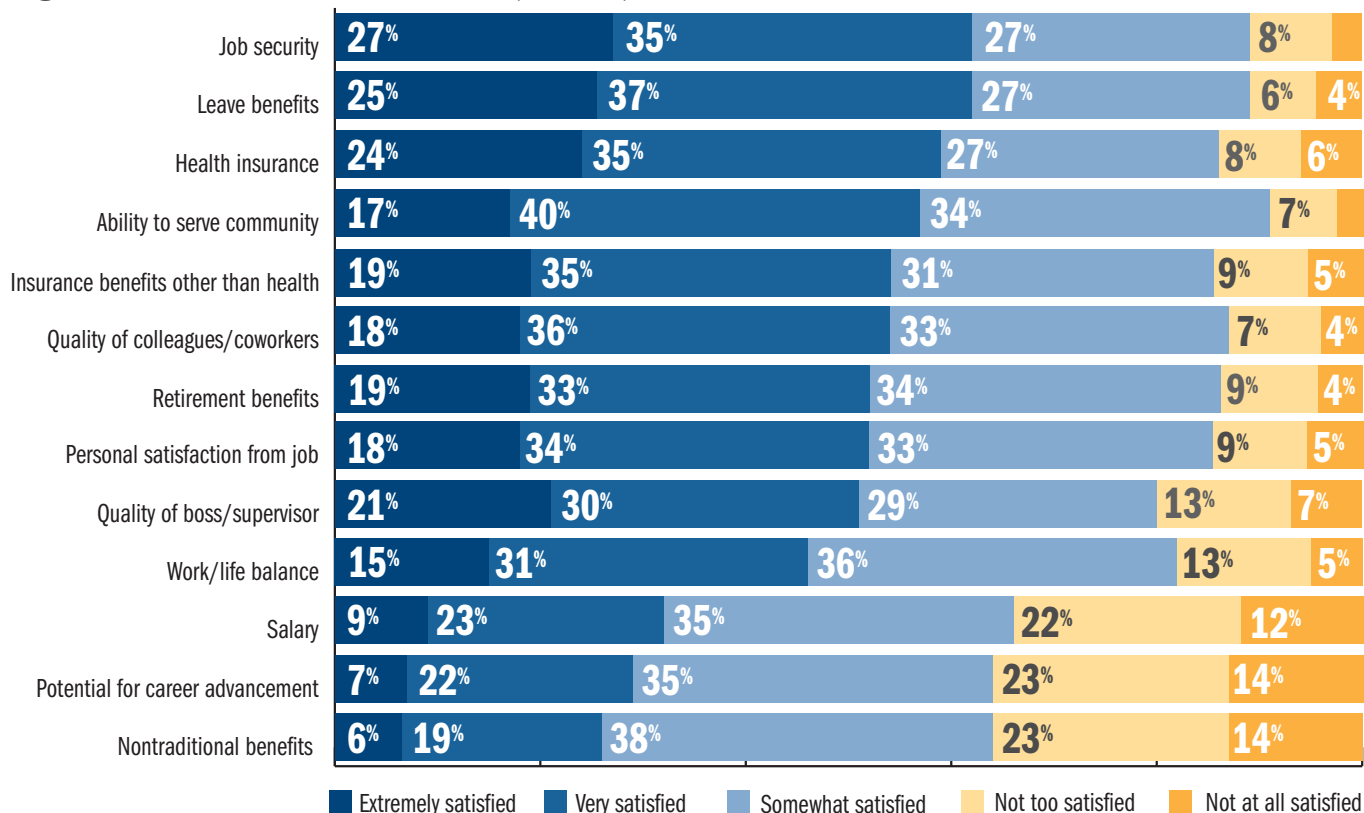


Satisfaction with Employer and Benefits

Overall, less than half of respondents (46 percent) reported in October that they are very or extremely satisfied with their employer, while 17 percent were not too satisfied or not at all satisfied (Figure 27).

As shown in Figure 28, the elements of their job that they were most satisfied with are job security, their leave benefits (e.g., vacation days, sick days, PTO, family/medical leave)—for both, 62 percent were very or extremely satisfied—and their health insurance (59 percent were very or extremely satisfied). In contrast, only 25 percent were very or extremely satisfied with their nontraditional benefits (e.g., tuition assistance or student loan repayment, employee assistance programs, child care assistance).

Figure 28. Satisfaction with Job Elements (n=1,205)



When asked what nontraditional benefits are most appealing to them, respondents overwhelmingly preferred flexible work scheduling (70 percent), along with physical wellness programs and employee assistance programs, which would provide confidential support for issues like stress, substance abuse, depression, and anxiety (both 41 percent; see Figure 29).

Finally, respondents were asked about their perceptions regarding their benefits and retirement. As shown in Figure 30 below, those surveyed were most likely to agree that people who retire from jobs in state and local government are generally able to live comfortably in retirement (58 percent somewhat or strongly agreed). More than half (56 percent) also somewhat or strongly agreed that they are knowledgeable about the retirement options available to them. Only 1 in 4 indicated that they are overwhelmed by the retirement options available to them.

Figure 29. Most Appealing Nontraditional Benefits (n=1,205)

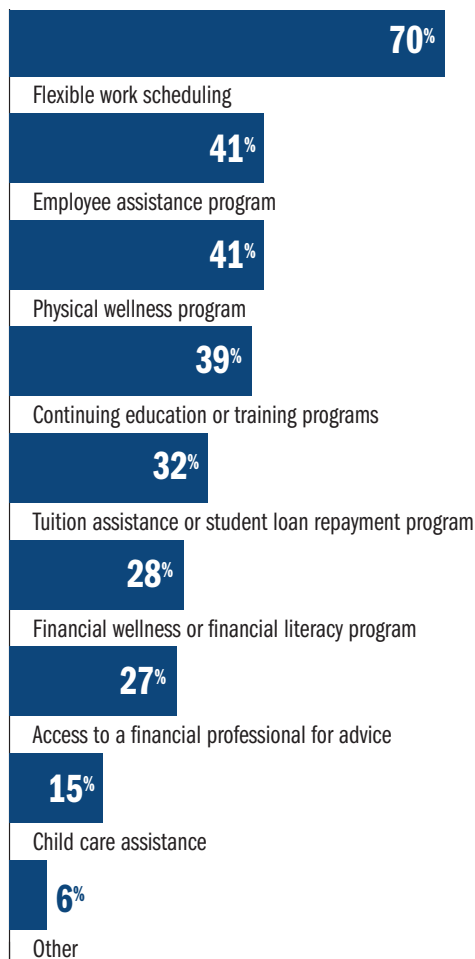
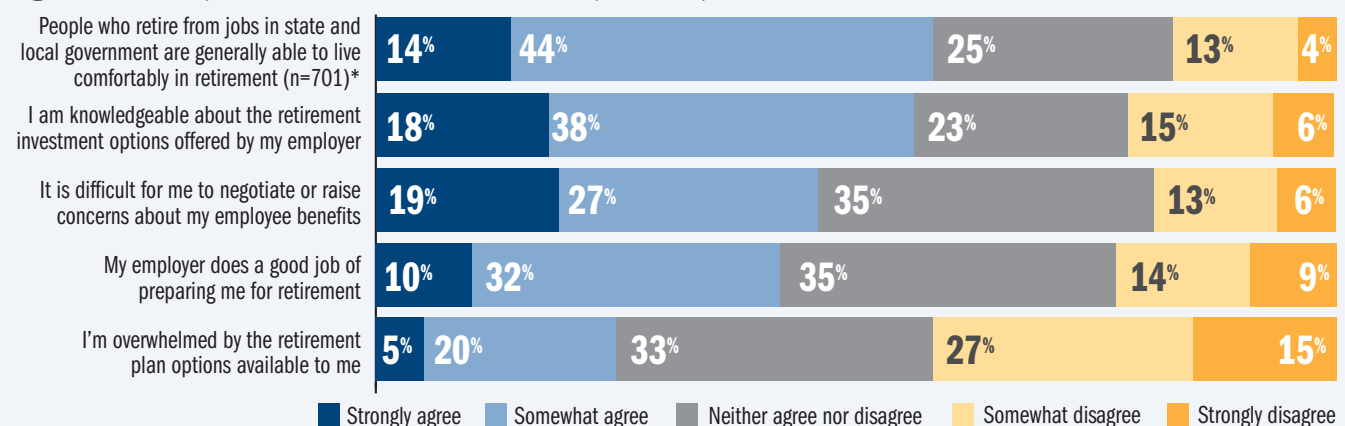


Figure 30. Perception of Benefits and Retirement (n=1,205)



*K-12 education employees received a different question asking specifically about retiring from jobs in K-12 education, resulting in an n of 701 for this item.

Conclusion

This report describes the results of a survey of state and local government employees that assessed their views on the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on their employment outlook, general concerns about COVID-19, perceptions of their finances, and satisfaction with their employer and their benefits. Where applicable, comparisons are made between this survey and a May 2020 survey.

Results indicate that many state and local government workers continue to be negatively impacted financially by the pandemic, that it has been difficult for many to adjust to needed changes due to the pandemic, and that low morale and negative feelings about working in the public sector are particular areas of challenge. State and local government employees continue to be worried about keeping their family safe from contracting the virus and staying protected from contracting the virus at work, with nearly 1 in 3 indicating that working during the pandemic has made them consider changing jobs.

These worries reflect many of the very real challenges that states and localities, and the individuals who work for them, are facing. Despite the promise of vaccines, there is still a difficult road ahead for state and local governments and their employees. Moody's Analytics currently estimates state and local government budget shortfalls of between \$172 billion and \$308 billion between now and 2022.⁶ State and local governments have already shed more than 1.3 million jobs from November 2019 to November 2020.⁷

SLGE will be continuing this survey series in the spring of 2021 to further document changes over time in state and local government workers' perceptions of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as how employers plan to adapt to the challenges presented by a return to work after the pandemic. Looking at these trends will help state and local government leaders, retirement plan sponsors, human resources directors, city and county managers, and other stakeholders to attract and retain a talented, resilient, and diverse workforce that can continue to provide critical services and programs to their communities.

Methods

Information for this report was collected from a 12-minute survey with 1,205 full-time state and local government employees. The online survey was fielded by Greenwald Research from October 14 through November 2, 2020. Where appropriate, data was compared with a 10-minute SLGE/Greenwald Research survey of 1,008 full-time state and local government employees conducted from May 4 through May 20, 2020. The final data for both surveys were 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

Report

[Survey Results: Public Sector Employee Views on Finances and Employment Outlook Due to COVID-19](#) (June 2020)

Infographics

[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)

Endnotes

- 1 "Coronavirus Dashboard," Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University, available at <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>
- 2 While 60 percent of respondents in the current sample self-identify as working in state government, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a total of approximately 4,921,000 individuals working in state government, and approximately 13,749,000 individuals working in local government as of September 2020 (See U.S. Census Bureau, "The Employment Situation – April 2020," available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf>). One likely explanation for the large discrepancy between the survey sample and general population distribution for state vs. local employer is that some respondents in the current sample, particularly those in the education industry, may have misclassified their employer based on having a statewide retirement plan (e.g., they work for a local school district within a state but are part of the state retirement system, and so categorize themselves as state employees). Relatedly, some in the education industry may not readily identify as "local government," but rather, as working for a school district. Without that answer available on the survey, they may have considered their employer as being rolled up into state government rather than local government.
- 3 The mean (average) age of respondents (45.3) is nearly identical to the median.
- 4 U.S. Census Bureau, "2019 Government Employment and Payroll Tables," available at <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/2019/econ/apes/annual-apes.html>
- 5 Author analysis of IPUMS-CPS. See IPUMS-CPS, "Current Population Survey," at <https://cps.ipums.org/cps/sda.shtml>
- 6 Tami Luhby, "Congress leaves state and local governments facing gaping budget holes," CNN, December 19, 2020, available at <https://www.cnn.com/2020/12/19/politics/state-local-government-congress-relief/index.html>
- 7 Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, "The Employment Situation – November 2020," news release, December 4, 2020, available at <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf>

SLGE is now



The Center for State and Local Government Excellence (SLGE) at ICMA-RC

The Center for State and Local Government Excellence (SLGE) was founded in 2007 by ICMA-RC, and in 2021 the two organizations formally joined forces to form The Center for State and Local Government Excellence at ICMA-RC. SLGE at ICMA-RC helps local and state governments become knowledgeable and competitive employers so they can attract and retain a talented and committed workforce. SLGE at ICMA-RC identifies leading practices and conducts research on public retirement plans, health and wellness benefits, workforce demographics and skill set needs, labor force development, as well as topics facing the not-for-profit industry and the education sectors. Additionally, SLGE at ICMA-RC brings state and local leaders together with respected researchers. For more information, access to all research and publications, and to sign up for the SLGE at ICMA-RC newsletter, visit slge.org and follow [@4GovtExcellence](https://twitter.com/4GovtExcellence) on Twitter.