

Comparison By Age

With a federal workforce older than the national average—47 years old in the federal government versus 41.7 years old nationally—and [high attrition among younger employees](#), federal leaders are concerned about variations in Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey responses among different age groups. We examined responses by age range, comparing the 2022 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey with private sector employee data provided by Mercer. Results showed that older employees generally gave more positive responses than younger employees in both the private sector and federal government.

A closer examination showed that this age gap was significantly larger in the federal government than the private sector on questions related to employee recognition and job satisfaction. However, when employees were asked about their supervisor's support of their professional development, the age gap for federal employees was smaller than that of private sector employees.

The gap between young and old

Historically, data by age group follows a trend in both the [overall Best Places to Work in the Federal Government® engagement and satisfaction score](#), and in the scores in the [workplace categories we use to measure different aspects of the employee experience](#). Scores are at their lowest point among those aged 30-39 or 40-49 and go back up among those 50 or older. This generally held true in 2022, in both the private and public responses. Federal employees aged 30-39 or 40-49 had the lowest score of all age groups in 11 of the 12 questions, and private sector employees in those age ranges had the lowest score in eight of the 12 questions.

In both sectors, there was a clear age gap on many questions between those aged 30-39 and those aged 60 and older, so we examined the data more closely to see where differences may lie.

This age gap was significantly larger among federal responses in four questions. Two of them—how satisfied employees are with their organization and if they would recommend it as a good place to work—are part of our [Best Places to Work Engagement and Satisfaction score](#). The other two questions are used to create our [Recognition category](#), which measures the extent to which employees feel they are recognized for their performance and innovative contributions to their workplace.

Scores in these areas that are lower for younger federal workers than those of their public sector peers should be a concern for leaders. [Past observations](#) have connected higher levels of employee engagement and satisfaction with better employee performance and retention. Recognition is also a key driver that influences employees' Best Places to Work engagement and satisfaction scores.

A positive note for age equity in government

In the notable exception, the scores related to supervisors supporting professional development, federal employee responses were similar at all ages, while private sector scores for this question fell

as employees got older. This shows that supervisors in the federal government are doing more to prioritize professional development for employees at all age levels, while private sector supervisors are less likely to invest in supporting such opportunities for older employees.

Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey question	Private Sector Age Gap (30 to 39 - 60+)	Gov't Age Gap (30 to 39 - 60+)
I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my organization.	-3	-3.1
My workload is reasonable.	-8	-10.4
I am held accountable for the quality of work I produce.	-5	-7.5
Employees are recognized for providing high quality products and services.	1	10.2
I recommend my organization as a good place to work.	4	9.2
I believe the results of this survey will be used to make my agency a better place to work.	-12	-10.7
Supervisors in my work unit support employee development.	-4	2.5
My supervisor holds me accountable for achieving results.	-5	-5
My supervisor provides me with constructive suggestions to improve my job performance.	1	-1.1
How satisfied are you with the information you receive from management on what's going on in your organization?	1	10.5
Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your organization?	7	12.9
I am comfortable expressing opinions that are different from other employees in my work unit.	-1	0.1

*A positive age gap means employees aged 60+ had a higher score than those 30-39