



Whitburn Center for
Governance and Policy Research

Whitburn Center Local Government Human Resource Survey

Preliminary Results

March 3, 2023

The survey results contained in this report are from the first phase of a project exploring the state of the public sector workforce in Wisconsin. All surveys were distributed via email to municipal executives serving Wisconsin Cities and Villages. The first wave of surveys yielded 99 usable responses, which is a 20% response rate. 47.5% of respondents serve cities, while 52.5% serve villages. City executives had a higher response rate (29.7%) than Village executives (15.2%). The least likely to respond were Village executives with few, if any, staff members.

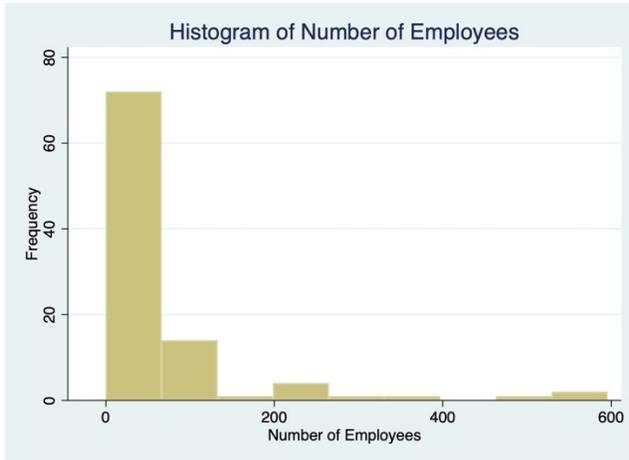
The second phase of the research began on Feb. 24th when a mail survey was sent to all non-respondents, and all executives without an available email address. Those responses will be incorporated into the final results. The third phase of the research will begin in April, when we interview 12 municipal executives.

Funding for this research was generously provided by the Tommy G. Thompson Center on Public Leadership.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

1. How many people (full time equivalent) are employed by your municipality?

- Average of 63.45.



2. How many vacant positions (full time equivalent) are there in your municipal government?

- Average of 2.7.
- On average municipalities report 3.7% of their positions are vacant.
- The range of percentage of vacant positions is from 0% to 28.5%.

3. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (1=Strong disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree)

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Over the last two years it has become more difficult to attract employees	4.20
Over the last two years it has become more difficult to retain employees	3.52
I have the necessary resources to do my job well	3.41
I have the opportunity to “reward” employees that I supervise when they do an outstanding job	2.65

4. To what extent do you agree the following are barriers to attracting new employees?
(1=Strong disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree)

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>
A lack of qualified candidates	4.01
Competition from other public sector employers	4.07
Competition from private sector employers	4.30
Wages	4.36
Organizational culture	2.81
Work/life balance	2.95
Undesirable location	2.31
Low representation of diverse personnel in current workforce	2.58
Political divisiveness	2.65

5. To what extent do you agree the following are barriers to retaining existing employees?
(1=Strong disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree)

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Employee quality	2.85
Absence of retention incentives	3.56
A lack of advancement opportunities	3.67
Competition from other public sector employers	3.94
Competition from private sector employers	3.96
Wages	4.19
Organizational culture	2.74
Work/life balance	2.86
Undesirable location	2.13
Low representation of diverse personnel in current workforce	2.47
Political divisiveness	2.62
Employee Morale	2.90

6. Has your municipality adopted any of the following reforms/made any of the following changes in the past two years? (Pct. Indicates the percentage of respondents who adopted a reform).

<i>Reform</i>	<i>Pct.</i>
Employee performance pay	29.3%
Employee signing bonuses	6.1%
Employee layoffs	2.0%
Contracting out previously in-house services	25.3%
Tuition remission for employee education	17.2%
Telework, remote, or hybrid options	24.2%
Flexible work schedules	46.5%
Additional healthcare benefits	26.3%
Equitable Hiring Practices	6.1%
Diversity Recruitment Strategies	5.1%
Relocation package for new employees	10.1%

7. What percentage of your workforce has turned over in the past two years?

- Less than 10 percent: 49.5%
- 10 to 25 percent: 38.1%
- 26 to 50 percent: 7.2%
- 51 to 75 percent: 2.1%
- Greater than 75 percent: 3.1%

8. What are the top reasons for employee turnover? Please rank from 1 to 7.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Average Rank</i>
Retirements	1.86
Employees leaving for other public sector jobs	2.8
Employees leaving the public sector	3.15
Personal reasons (e.g. health issues)	4.66
Involuntary separation	4.72
Family/caregiving responsibilities	5.05
Political divisiveness	6.43

9. Wisconsin 2011 Act 10 limited the scope of collective bargaining for public employees in Wisconsin (Excluding Police and Fire). The following item seeks to measure the lasting impact of those changes on management and finances in your municipality. To the best of your ability, please state your level of agreement with each of the following statements. Wisconsin Act 10 has: (1=Strong disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree)

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Strengthened the financial health of my municipality	3.12
Increased the morale of my municipality's workforce	2.28
Led to cost savings for my municipality that are UNRELATED to increased employee pension and health insurance contributions	2.72
Resulted in cost savings that sufficiently offset reductions in shared revenue	2.03
Made my job easier as a municipal executive	2.80
Made it easier to attract high quality employees	2.60
Made it easier to retain high quality employees	2.62

10. Do you currently employ a full-time Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) coordinator?

- Yes: 0%
- No: 100%

11. Do you have plans to hire a full-time Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) coordinator?

- Yes: 0%
- No: 100%

12. Please state your level of agreement with the following statements regarding Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives and attitudes in your municipality. (1=Strong disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree)

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Our municipality is currently in the process of adopting DEI-related initiatives	2.47
Staff generally buy into the need for DEI initiatives	2.82
Community members generally buy into the need for DEI initiatives	2.62
DEI initiatives improve government performance	3.05
DEI initiatives improve staff recruitment and retention efforts	2.92
DEI initiatives are a distraction from the core duties of government	2.66
DEI initiatives are likely a temporary response to recent events	2.74

13. What is your gender identity?

- 55% Female
- 45% Male

14. What is your Age?

- Average: 49.56
- Range: 27 to 76

15. Open-ended question: What are the largest barriers to attracting employees?

- We have no issues getting, or retaining, quality personnel aside from the Police Department, where we have major issues.
- Opportunities for Spouse
- Lack of Benefits (Time Off, Health Insurance, Dental, Vision, etc)
- High cost and limited housing availability.
- Lack of Respect for Public Servants
- Increased public welfare benefits and programs (Social Security disability, unemployment, SNAP, energy assistance, tax credits, free health care) and increased taxes
- Background Check
- lack of affordable housing
- population 1,441 not enough work for an extra person
- Inability to secure affordable housing
- Unmotivated people not willing to do hard work.
- Lack of housing/affordable housing
- People don't want to work.

16. Open-ended question: What else should we know about the state of the public sector workforce in your municipality?

- The general impression of today's workforce is that they all want to make a six figure salary by sitting at a computer for 20 hours a week when it's convenient for them. Entry level workers with no skill or experience deserve entry level pay. Pay should be based on the amount of work experience and skill that you possess, as well as the difficulty of the task to be performed. The job hopping mentality of today's workforce just starting to be recognized as a problem and will get worse.
- We are in northern Wisconsin and we don't do DEI here.
- Our biggest issue is with the law enforcement. We have several races employed here our issue is not being able to compete with the larger communities. We can't pay them as much so they work here for 6-12 months to get the experience and training then leave for more money!!!
- Believe there are much more important issues with in the State of Wisconsin and the United State than this! Sorry that is how I feel. Let's concentrate on those issue first.

- I listed political divisiveness as an issue, but it is not repub/dem. Our elected officials don't have parties. But they are divisive and can behave unprofessionally/unethically. They do not know how government should operate and they don't want to learn. They are micromanagers and can be belligerent toward staff. We are in the midst of a change in our community from quaint and old to needing to become new and modern and that change is very difficult for some to accept or process. Unfortunately, staff catches the brunt of that frustration and we have lost employees because of it.
- Primary personnel related issues were wages (until the recent wage study was undertaken and adopted by Council). A close secondary issue concerns elected City Officials who are acting outside of their role to establish policy and are attempting to direct staff even after several interventions to stop such behavior. Majority of City Council voted to adopt a new code of ethics for elected officials but have yet to use it to gain compliance from rogue officials.
- My area is 98% white, so diversity is very low on the radar for most people around here.
- I feel Act 10's largest harm was the demonization of public employees. Who now wants to teach, work in local municipalities, or run for local office.
- We have lost momentum to create long term civil servants.
- I believe there were cost savings from Act 10 initially but as time has progressed and public sector employment is not differentiated in terms of total compensation from other employers we are no in a place where we are forced to compete for talent (wages, benefits, etc.) and our revenues are unable to keep up.
- As far as diversity, we are not against it, just no opportunity for it in our area. We give every applicant a fair shot and hold them all to the same standard of qualifications. We hire the best person for our open position without consideration for their race, gender or any other demographic that has no bearing on one's ability to perform a job. That said, the applicants we get are not very diverse.
- We are a very small municipality with five core full-time staff. The three longest term staff members are very dedicated to their position and community and plan to work here until they each retire. I've found that our younger, newer staff would rather have more time off. The board recently increased vacation time to help alleviate this issue. We also have seasonal staff. The one DPW seasonal staff is dedicated and has been returning for many years. We've always been able to find enough area young people to staff our pool with no problems until last year. We only had one lifeguard application last year and had to contract with a YMCA. This year we only had 1 managing lifeguard applicant (a 38-year-old teacher) and 2 (14 yr olds) apply for basket attendant positions. Our wages are higher than other area pools, but we are a smaller community.
- Federal government policies are removing incentives for Americans to participate in the workforce. If you punish people who work hard and reward people who don't work, it's pretty easy to figure out why Americans are dropping out of the labor force. Giving away money for nothing is a losing proposition (e.g., student loan forgiveness).

- With respect to DEI programs, they are divisive and bigoted. They make sweeping generalizations about people because of immutable characteristics. DEI programs have been going on in one way or another for my entire lifetime, and all they do is divide us. There's no evidence they improve organizational success, and in fact, all evidence suggests they do the opposite. DEI programs are also highly hypocritical because the people who promote them are typically the most intolerant people I've ever met. They actively oppose including people who think differently or look differently. The people who push DEI are also logically inconsistent. They complain about race and gender disparities in some areas, while ignoring them in other areas (e.g., professional and collegiate sports). They also ignore the most basic principle in statistics that correlation is not causation. And before you dismiss my remarks as those of a "straight cis male," I'm a member of the LGBTQ community.
- We are in a very rural area with very limited applicants. I'm not worried about DEI, there have been times I just need a live body.