

STATEWIDE EMPLOYEE EXIT SURVEY

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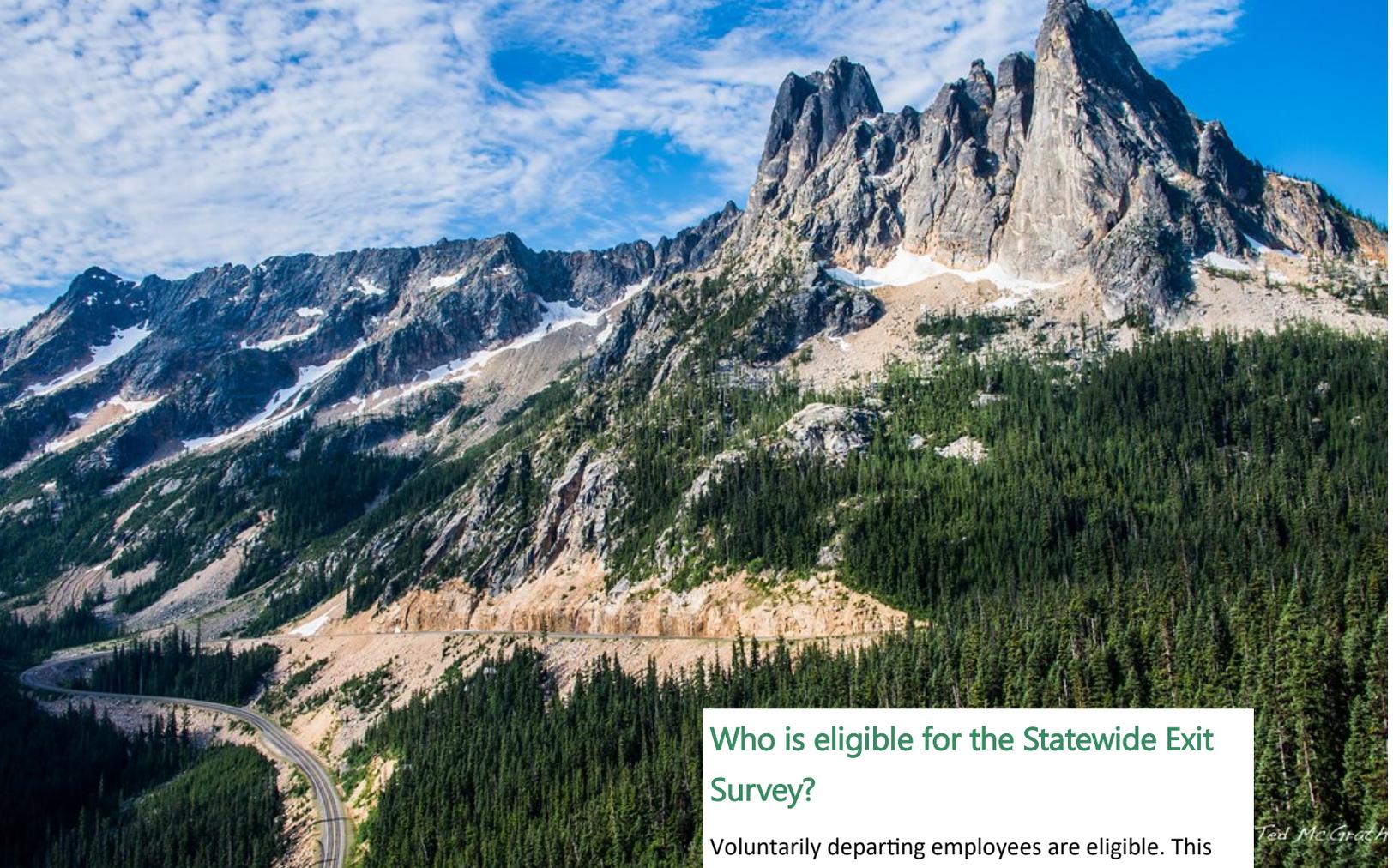
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Introduction

BACKGROUND

Skilled and engaged employees are the asset that drives organizational success. Retaining employees is essential, but figuring out why they leave is crucial. A thoughtful exit interview will provide critical feedback for workplace improvement.

Governor Christine Gregoire created the Statewide Exit Survey in 2012 to learn more about why employees choose to leave executive branch agencies. The exit survey allows agencies to develop retention strategies and improve workforce management.

The Office of Financial Management State Human Resources administers the survey and provides the link only to executive branch agencies (excluding higher education). Participating agencies provide the survey link to their voluntarily departing employees. This report uses responses from state fiscal year 2020 (July 2019 through June 2020).

Who is eligible for the Statewide Exit Survey?

Voluntarily departing employees are eligible. This includes those leaving state service or moving to another Washington state agency. Retirements, layoffs, dismissals and non-permanent separations are not included.

CHANGES TO THE 2020 EXIT SURVEY

Researchers continued the data cleaning methodology from 2019. They also cleaned and simplified the survey language, along with making the following changes:

- Added questions to determine survey eligibility
- Added “100% field work or telecommuting” as a location option
- Added reasons for leaving: health/safety, career change, and emotional burnout
- Updated reasons for leaving: expanded dissatisfaction with leadership to include management
- Updated engagement survey questions
- Updated demographics

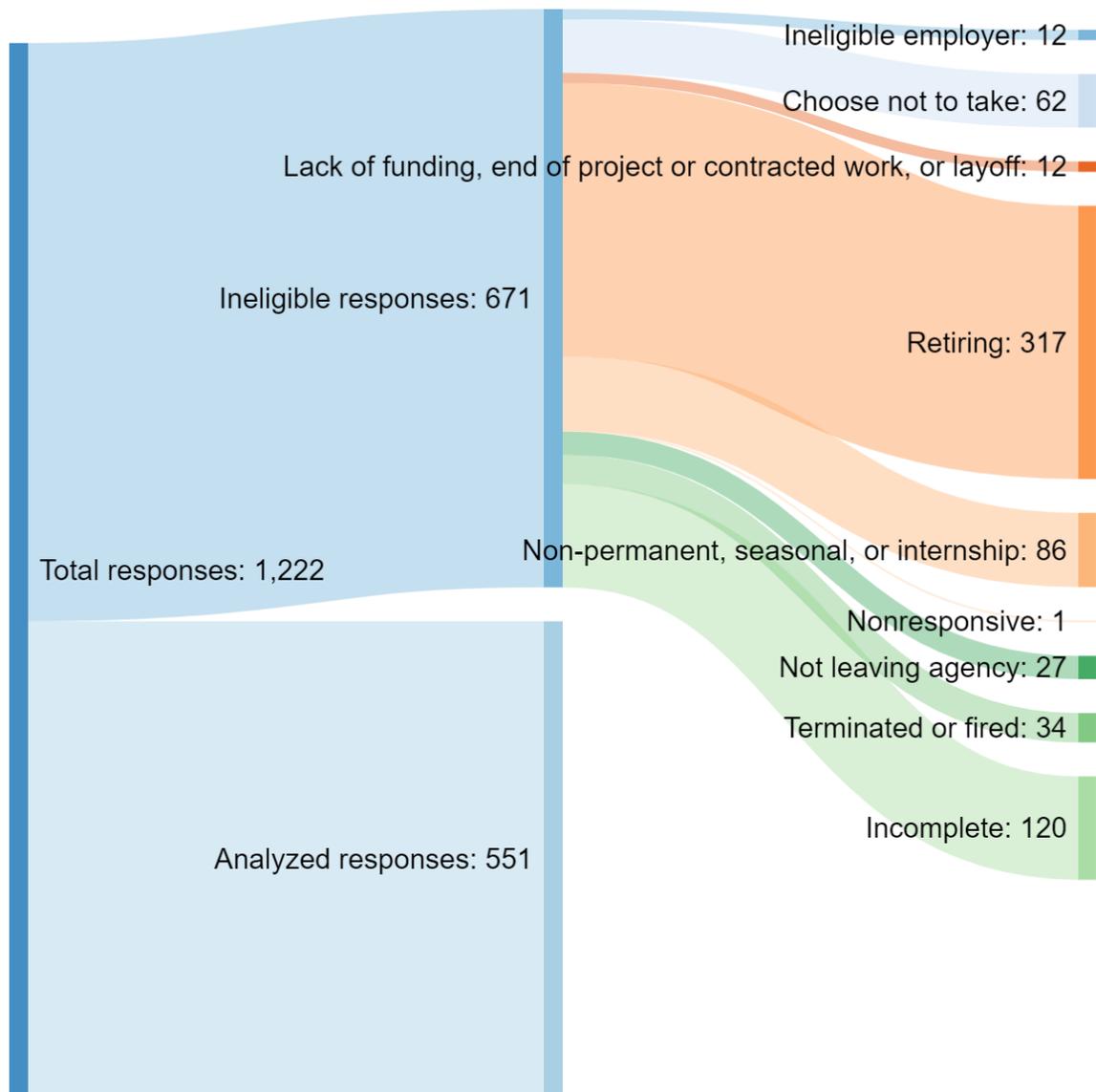
These updates put the data in line with data from HRMS and the Statewide Employee Engagement Survey to allow comparisons.

EXIT SURVEY PARTICIPATION

Researchers define agencies with at least one survey response as participating. In state fiscal year 2020, 62 executive branch agencies had employees leave and 38 of these agencies had at least one exit survey response. This results in an agency participation rate of 61%.

Response rates are lower for exit surveys when compared to other surveys. This may be because some employees feel uncomfortable responding. During this reporting period, 552 eligible departing employees completed the exit survey. The response rate is 18% for participating agencies. Twenty-four participating agencies had a response rate at or above the expected range for exit surveys, which is twenty percent.

Figure 1: Survey responses received, sorted by eligibility

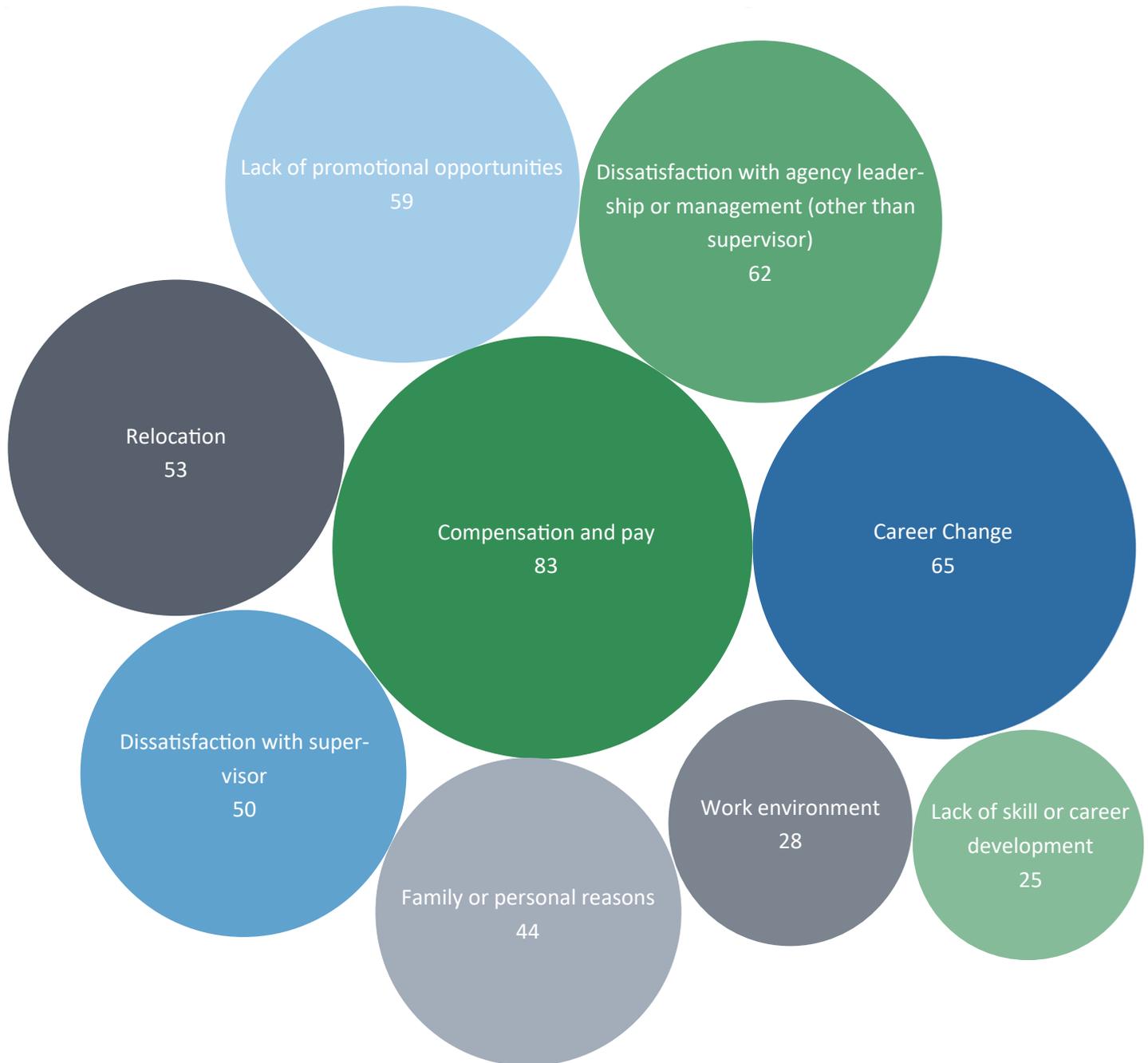


Analysis

WHY ARE THEY LEAVING?

Survey respondents rank their top three reasons for leaving. Compensation and pay was the most frequent first reason for leaving, followed by career change and dissatisfaction with agency leadership or management (other than supervisor). This differs from 2019, where lack of skill or career development was closely behind compensation and pay. Now it is one of the least-cited reasons. This suggests that agency action planning based on the engagement and exit surveys is paying off!

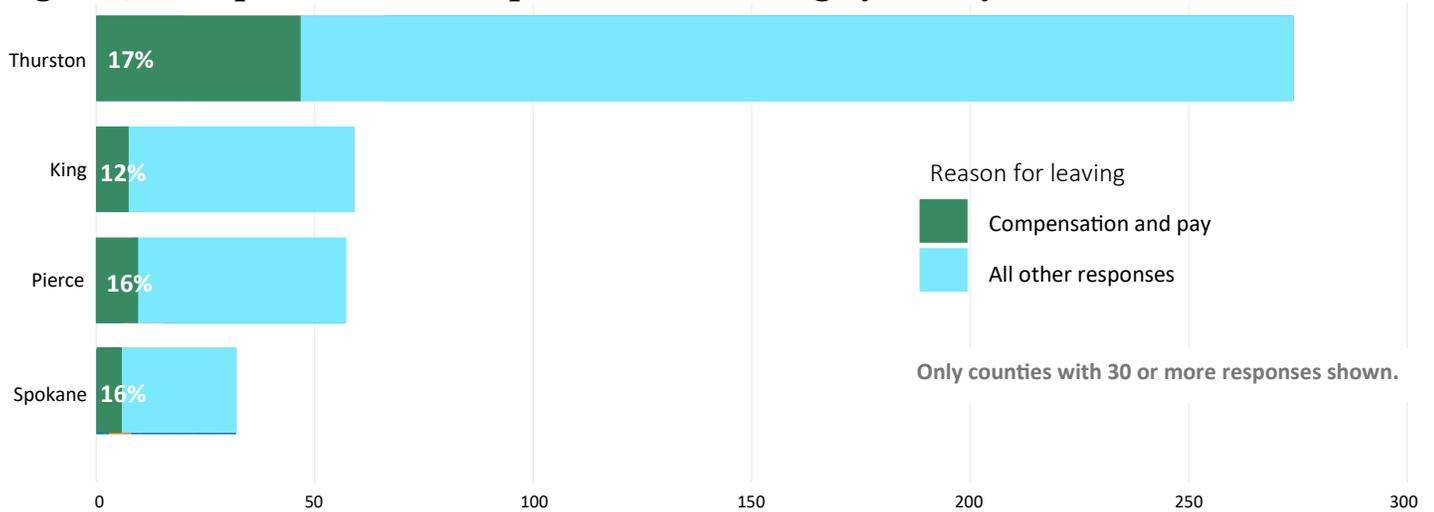
Figure 2: Top reasons for leaving



Excluded due to relatively low observations: Workload (N=19), Work flexibility (work/life balance) (N=16), Emotional burnout (N=13), Education (N=8), Health and/or safety (N=7), Commute (N=6), To Reduce Effects of Layoff (N=3).

The percentage of King County employees leaving due to compensation decreased from 27% in 2019 to 12% in 2020. The percentage of those leaving due to compensation and pay is consistent among counties with at least 30 responses. Most departing employees (73%) report their expected income to increase by at least 5% in their new position.

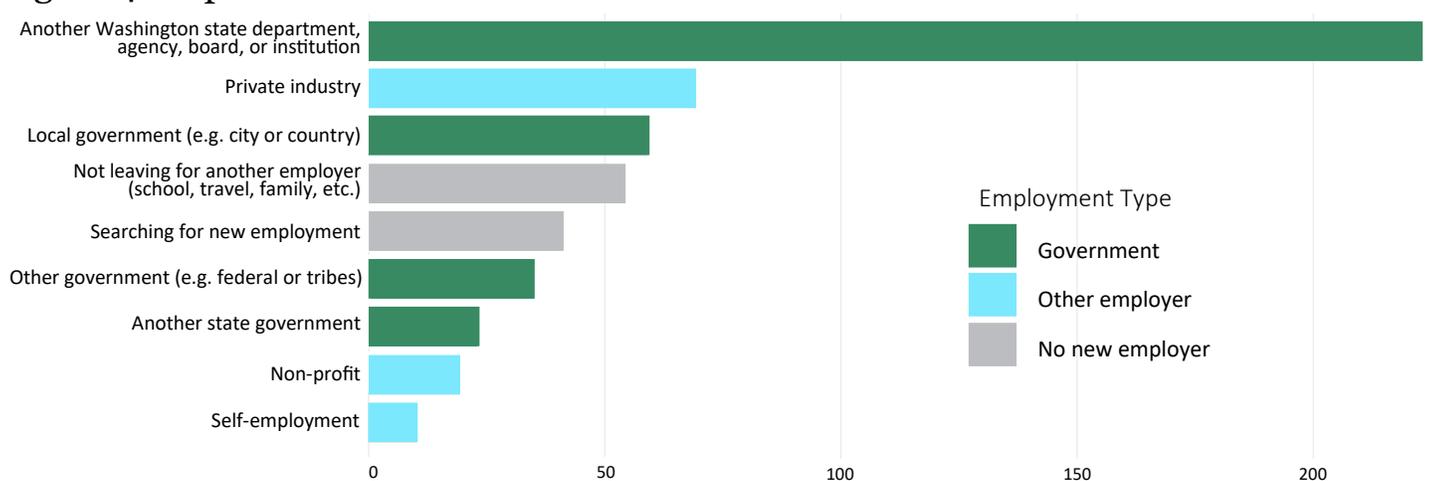
Figure 3: Compensation as a top reason for leaving by county



WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

Other Washington state agencies continue to be the most common destination for respondents. Compared to total departures, employees going to another agency were more likely to respond to the survey. Employees were more likely to leave for private industry than local government. The remaining 10% are not leaving for another employer.

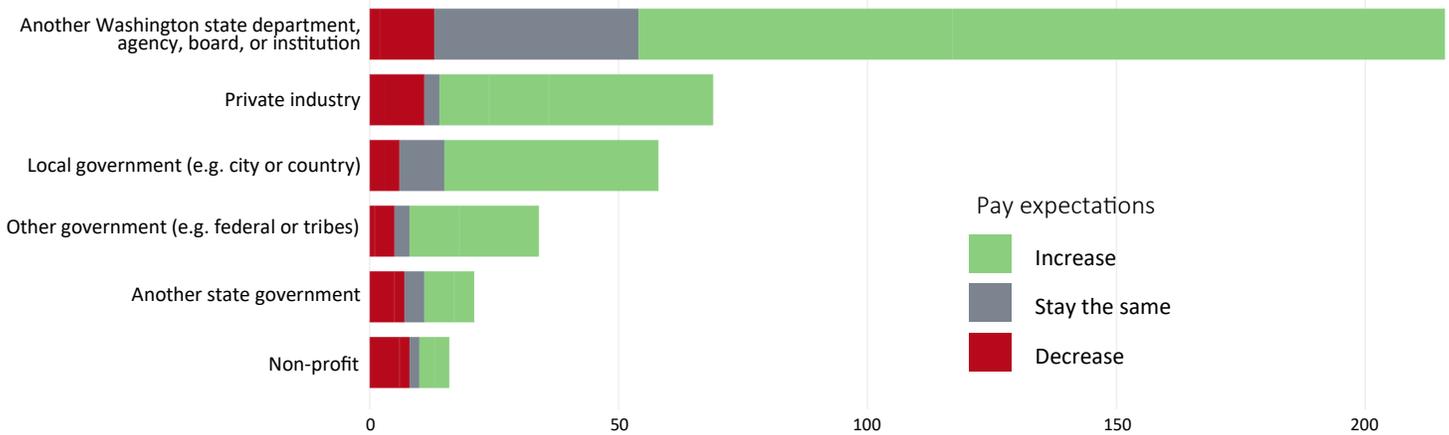
Figure 4: Departure destination



The statewide exit survey started due to concerns state employees were moving to local governments. While both local government and private industry tend to pay departing employees more, higher numbers of employees are going to private industry.

ADDED VALUE EMPLOYER

Figure 5: Pay expectation by departure destination



Retaining employees is not the only measure of a good employer. Developing the careers and skills of employees are also victories. Researchers summarize this as an “added value employer.” This is measured by fond memories of the employer, skill development that makes them a lucrative candidate or willingness to return to the agency after acquiring experience elsewhere.

Departing employees were split (43%) on their likeliness to recommend their former agency to a friend or colleague. Most employees (63%) do not see themselves

returning to the agency. A large portion, 36%, were actively recruited by their new employer. This may mean that Washington agencies are preparing competitive professionals that are highly valued in the job market.

Key Findings

- If employees are leaving, they will likely experience an increase in pay with their new job. However, many departing for another state agency may have the same level of compensation.
- Most people leave for the same or higher level of responsibilities. Both of these groups will likely experience an increase in pay.
- Most employees depart for another Washington state department, agency, board or institution.
- The private industry is a bigger competitor for Washington state executive branch agencies than local government.

Figure 6: Changes to responsibilities and compensation

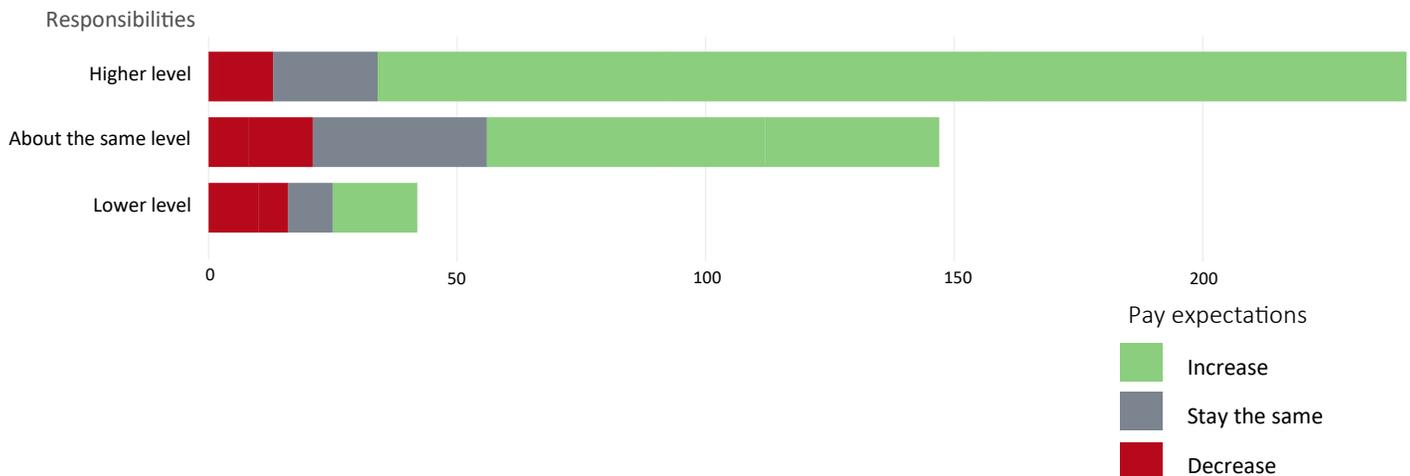
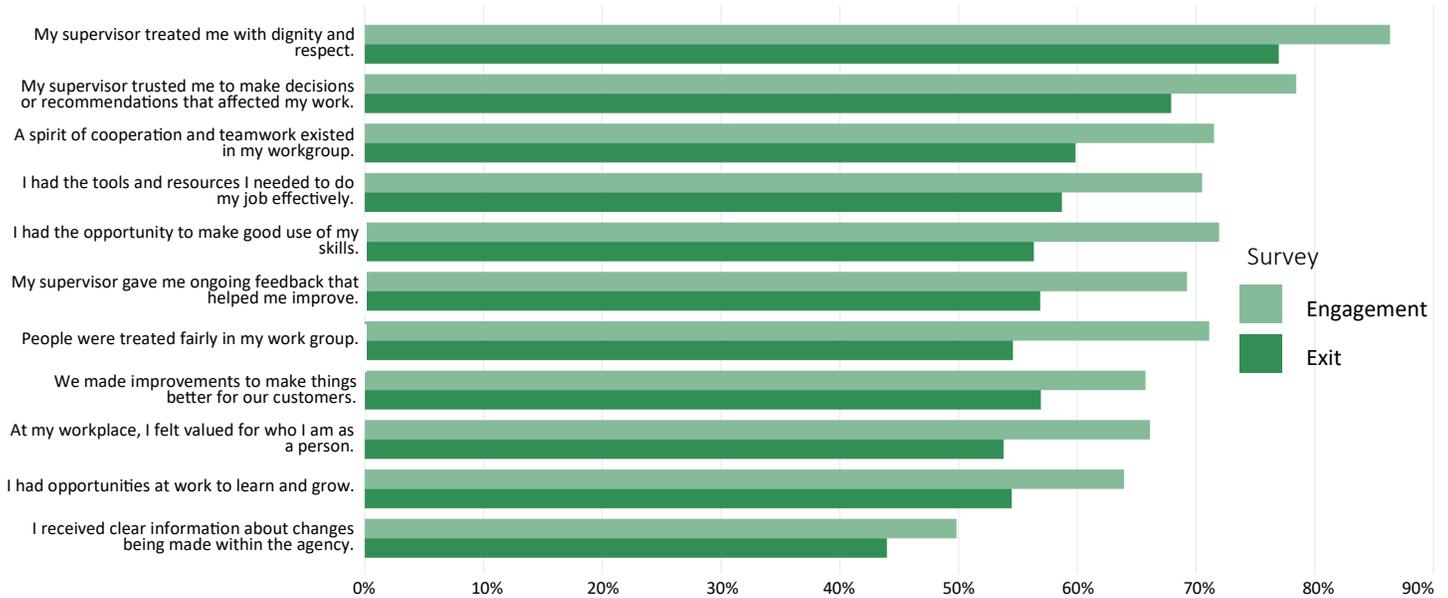


Figure 7: Significant differences between the Engagement Survey and Exit Survey



Engagement responses that are not pictured (not statistically significant at any level)

I know how my work contributed to the goals of my agency.
I received recognition for a job well done.

HOW DO EXIT SURVEY RESPONSES COMPARE TO THE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY?

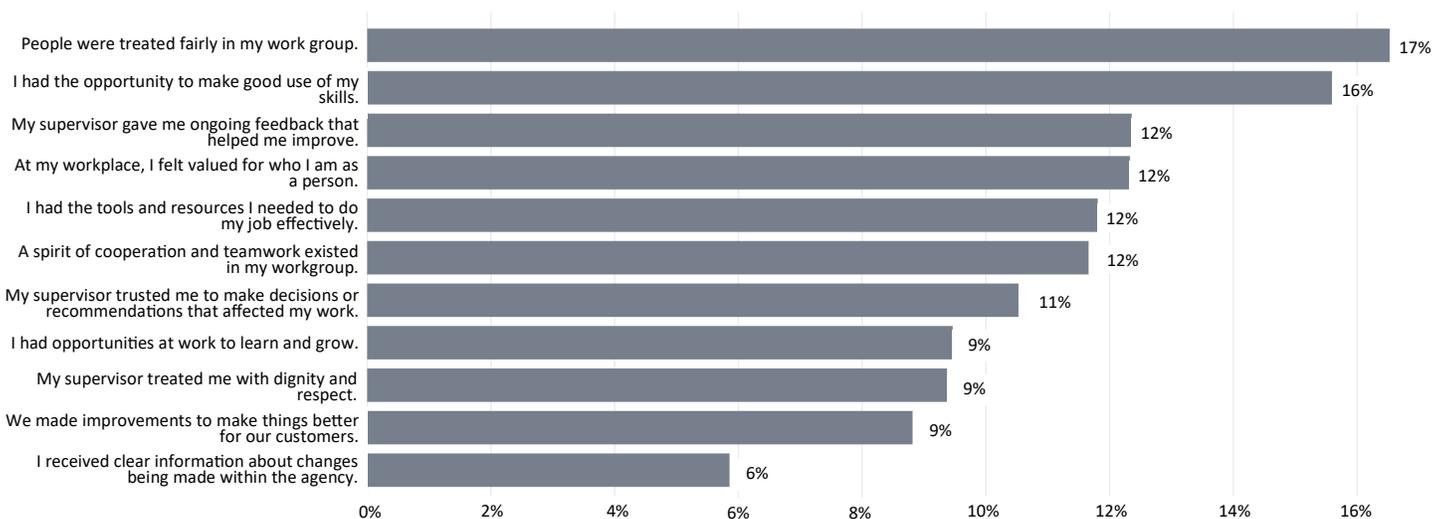
The exit survey contains several questions from the State Employee Engagement Survey. Responses to the [2019 State Employee Engagement Survey](#) were generally more positive than those from the exit survey.

The greatest difference was for fair treatment. There is a 17% difference between current and departing employees. However, the engagement survey shows that this area is not highly correlated with job satisfaction. The 2020 Employee Engagement Survey will study fair treatment further. The gap for good use of skills decreased from 19% in 2019 to 16% in 2020. This question is highly correlated with job satisfaction, according to the engagement survey.

Statewide Employee Engagement Survey

- Sent to all executive agency employees each October.
- Comparing results from these surveys may predict why employees to leave.
- To read more about the Engagement Survey: <https://www.ofm.wa.gov/state-human-resources/workforce-data-planning/state-employee-engagement-survey>

Figure 8: Largest significant differences between the Engagement Survey and Exit Survey



Conclusion

RECOMMENDATIONS

Promoting the exit survey is important! More responses result in better data, which means OFM will provide more data-driven recommendations and best practices to agencies.

- **Encourage employees to complete the statewide exit survey.** OFM SHR is here to help you promote the survey! If you currently self-administer an exit survey, consider collaborating with us.
- **Focus on the supervisor relationship.** Employees want to feel heard and respected. Two-way communication with leadership is vital. For an example, see the popular [DSHS Ideas Tour](#).
- **Promote internally.** Most departing employees leave for another state agency, where they likely experience an increase in pay and responsibilities. Are you valuing your employees as much as other agencies are?

And last of all, do not always view departing employees as a negative. If a departing, high-performing employee is leaving but was satisfied with their job, your agency played an important part in developing their career. This is something to celebrate!

UPCOMING CHANGES FOR NEXT YEAR

The Statewide Employee Exit Survey will look different in fiscal year 2021. State HR will make the following changes:

- Updated engagement survey questions
- Updated demographics to match the Engagement Survey
- Added questions for teleworking, commute and 24/7 institutions

These updates mirror changes to the Statewide Employee Engagement Survey, allowing State HR to compare exit survey data with these sources. It will also allow researchers to test anecdotal impacts on engagement.



Appendices

Appendix A: Satisfaction

	1-Low	2	3	4	5-High
Health insurance	2% (N=11)	3% (N=18)	13% (N=70)	30% (N=157)	51% (N=265)
Paid time off	2% (N=8)	3% (N=18)	10% (N=54)	31% (N=164)	54% (N=282)
Pension plan and retirement	2% (N=8)	3% (N=17)	14% (N=72)	32% (N=167)	50% (N=260)
Pay	12% (N=59)	16% (N=82)	30% (N=159)	26% (N=135)	17% (N=92)
Fair and reasonable workload	12% (N=63)	16% (N=85)	26% (N=138)	26% (N=137)	20% (N=103)
Coworkers	4% (N=22)	7% (N=39)	20% (N=105)	32% (N=167)	37% (N=195)
Quality of supervision	15% (N=78)	12% (N=64)	18% (N=94)	25% (N=130)	30% (N=160)
Quality of agency leadership	18% (N=94)	17% (N=89)	22% (N=118)	22% (N=118)	20% (N=107)
Work flexibility (work/life balance)	11% (N=56)	13% (N=68)	19% (N=99)	23% (N=120)	35% (N=183)
Training and development opportunities	14% (N=71)	17% (N=87)	25% (N=132)	25% (N=133)	19% (N=102)
Job security	4% (N=22)	4% (N=19)	12% (N=62)	33% (N=173)	48% (N=250)
Work environment	13% (N=68)	13% (N=76)	24% (N=124)	27% (N=142)	22% (N=116)
Safety	6% (N=34)	7% (N=38)	18% (N=96)	27% (N=139)	41% (N=217)

Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Appendix B: Respondent demographics (continued)

Figure 10: Age of respondents

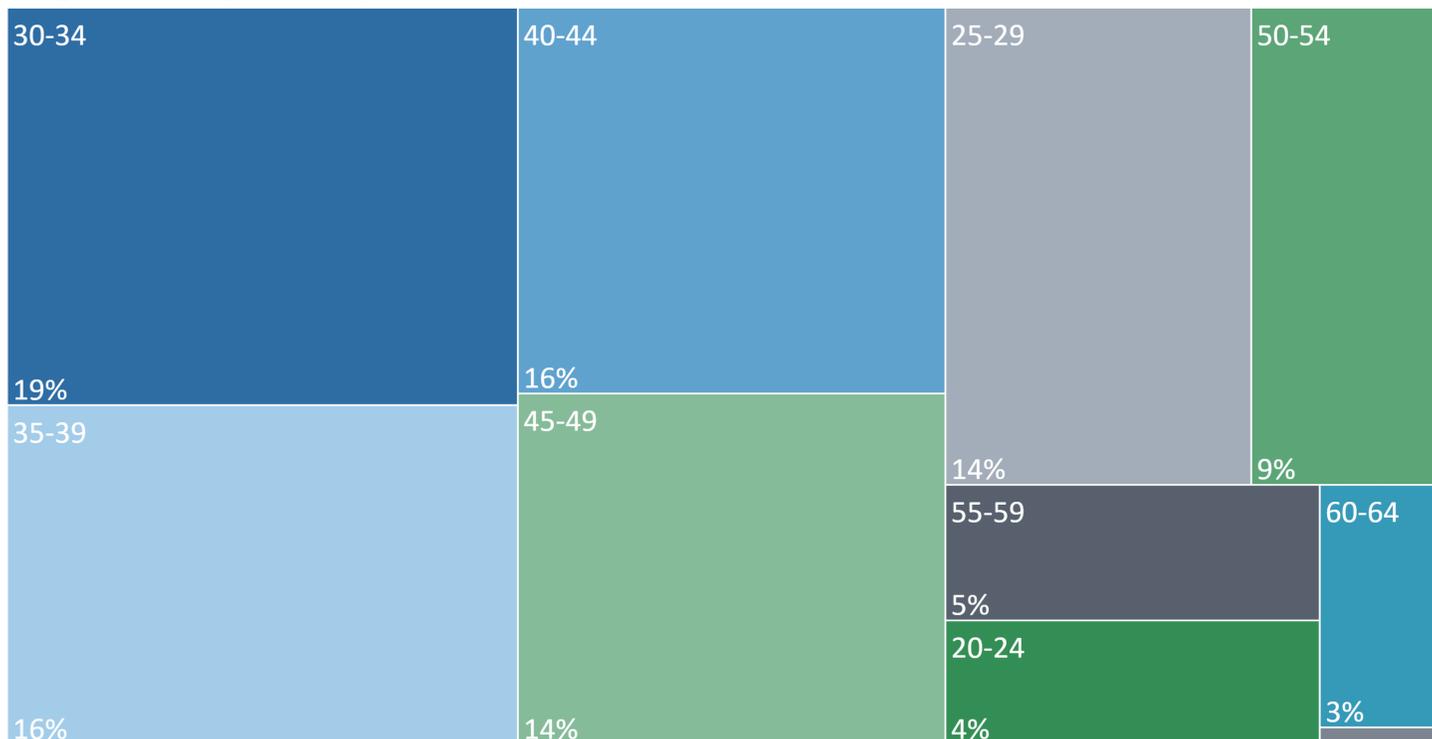
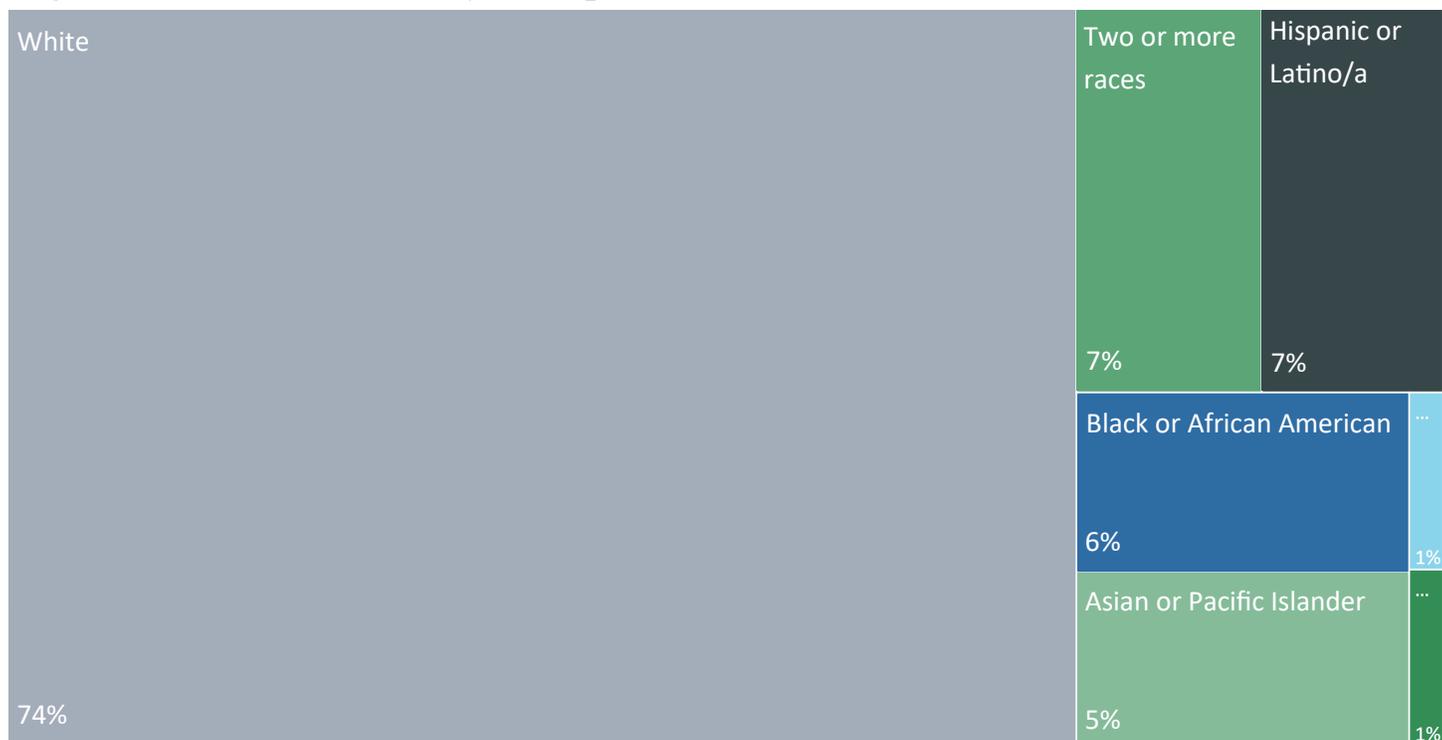


Figure 11: Race and ethnicity of respondents



American Indian or Alaska Native and Another race are both 1% of respondents.

Appendix B: Respondent demographics

Figure 12: Agency tenure of respondents

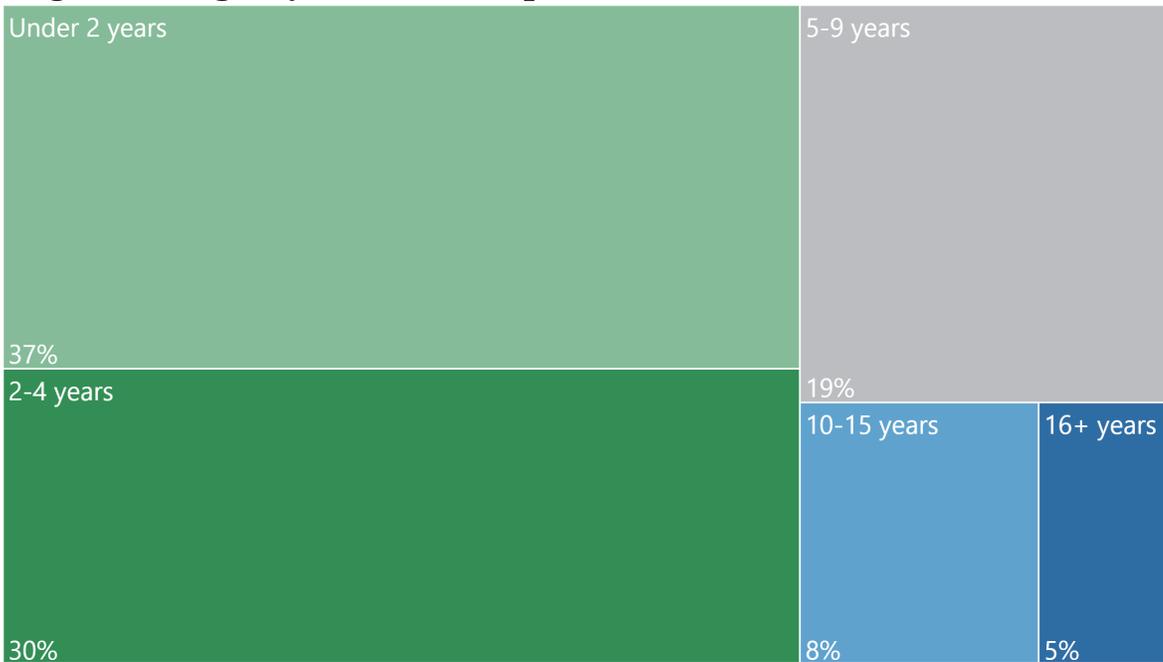


Figure 13: State tenure of respondents

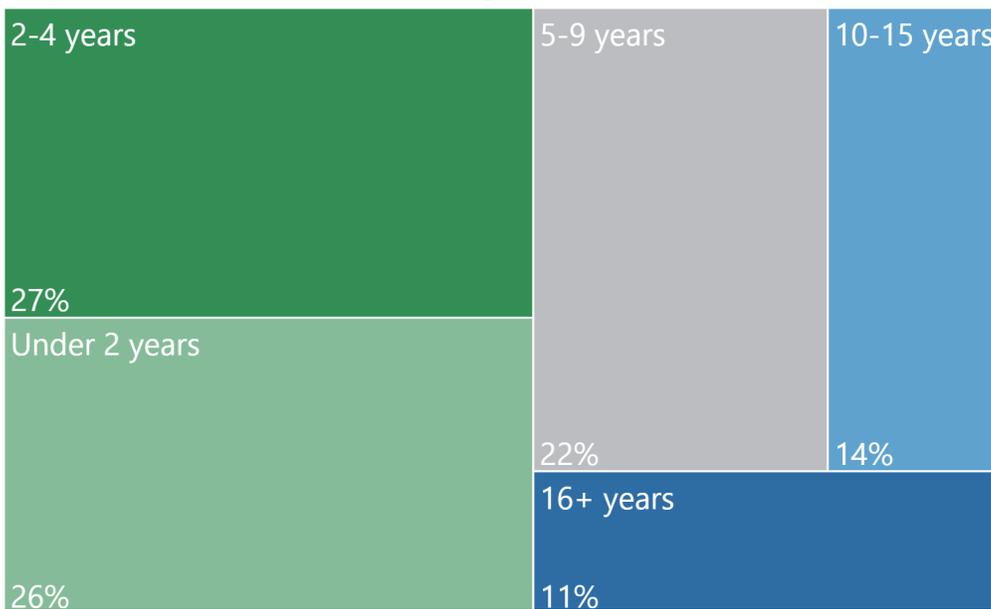


Figure 14: Respondents leaving supervisory positions

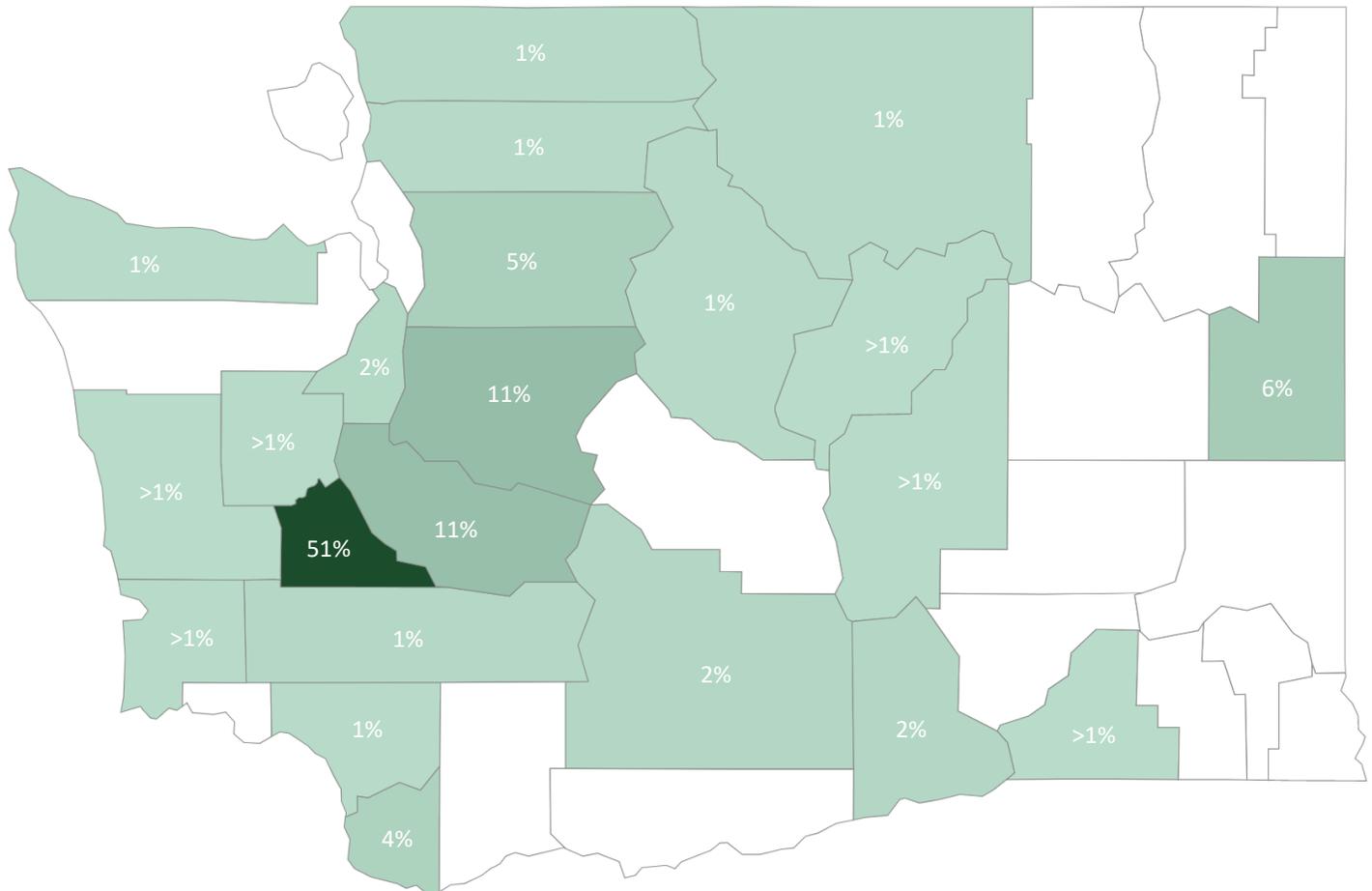


Appendix B: Respondent demographics (continued)

Figure 15: Respondents who are veterans



Figure 16: Respondents by location



Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.