

2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Narrative Summary
U.S. Geological Survey
January 27, 2017

Note: *Annually, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administers the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) to full- and part-time permanent employees; USGS 2016 FEVS results are summarized below. Beginning in 2014, then USGS Deputy Director, William Werkheiser commissioned the surveying of the USGS temporary, term, seasonal, and intermittent (TTSI) employees in an effort to measure overall levels of satisfaction, commitment, and engagement at USGS. The USGS Office of Organizational and Employee Development (OED) replicated the FEVS and has administered it to the TTSI population annually since 2014. Some key results for this demographic will be mentioned alongside the USGS permanent population results in the summary below.*

Response Rates and Results

Participation rates across the government have declined from 2015, and the 2016 response rate is the lowest of the past seven survey cycles, with a 45.8 percent response rate across all surveyed agencies. Until this year, the Department of the Interior (DOI) has experienced increasing response rates since the 2013 survey, however DOI had a response rate of 50.1 percent in 2016, down from 57.4 percent in 2015. At the bureau level, USGS which had a response rate of 54 percent since the 2012 FEVS survey, decreased to 46.7 percent in 2016; 3,018 permanent employees responded to the survey. Forty percent (n = 595) of USGS-TTSI employees responded to the survey in 2016, which was a decline from the 52.5 percent that participated in 2015.

According to OPM, any item on the FEVS that receives 65 percent or greater positive response is considered a “strength.” Conversely, any item that receives 35 percent or greater negative responses is considered a “challenge.” Of the positive, neutral, negative questions on the survey, USGS identified 37 strengths and 2 challenges in 2016. The top 10 strengths and the 2 challenges are identified below. It is important to note that the challenges identified in USGS’s 2016 results are also the top challenges governmentwide. Governmentwide, Question 23, “In my work unit, steps are taken to deal with a poor performer who cannot or will not improve” and Question 33, “Pay raises depend on how well employees perform their jobs” received 43.6 percent and 50.7 percent negative responses, respectively.

Top 10 Strengths (items with 65% or greater positive responses)

- 96.9% When needed I am willing to put in the extra effort to get a job done. (Q.7)
- 92.5% I am constantly looking for ways to do my job better. (Q.8)
- 90.6% The work I do is important. (Q.13)
- 89.2% How would you rate the overall quality of work done by your work unit? (Q.28)
- 88.5% I like the kind of work I do. (Q.5)

- 85.8% In the last six months, my supervisor has talked with me about my performance.(Q.50)
- 85.0% My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues. (Q.42)
- 84.4% I am held accountable for achieving results. (Q.16)
- 83.8% My agency is successful at accomplishing its mission. (Q.39)
- 83.3% Employees are protected from health and safety hazards on the job. (Q.35)

Challenges (items with 35% or greater negative responses)

- 37.3% In my work unit, steps are taken to deal with a poor performer who cannot or will not improve. (Q.23)
- 36.9% Pay raises depend on how well employees perform their jobs. (Q. 33)

In 2016, 49 strengths and 1 challenge was identified through the USGS-TTSI report. The challenge for USGS-TTSI was “How satisfied are you with your opportunity to get a better job in your organization? (Q. 67).” This item received 40.2 percent negative responses.

Employee Engagement at USGS

Over the past few years, OPM has placed great emphasis on the topic of employee engagement, and the [2016 Governmentwide Report](#) is largely devoted to the topic. Research has proven that organizations with high levels of employee engagement experience increased productivity, less absenteeism, more innovation, higher retention, and higher customer service ratings, among other benefits. To measure employee engagement, OPM created an index which is comprised of 15 FEVS questions that measure conditions that can lead to engagement. These 15 questions are divided into 3 subfactors:

- Leaders Lead - reflects employee perceptions of the integrity of leadership, as well as leadership behaviors such as communication and workforce motivation.
- Supervisor - describes the interpersonal relationship between employee and supervisor, and explores the themes of trust, respect, and support.
- Intrinsic Work Experience - captures employee feelings of motivation and competency relating to their role in the workplace.

Scores for these three subfactors are calculated by averaging the unrounded percent positive of each of the five questions that make up those subfactors. Averaging the three unrounded subfactor scores creates the overall Employee Engagement Index (EEI) score.

Scores on the EEI have steadily increased over the past two years at USGS after a 2014 decline in levels of engagement following the 2013 governmentwide shutdown. In 2016, USGS earned an EEI score of 68, which exceeds both the Department of the Interior and

Governmentwide, whose scores were 63 and 65, respectively. In 2016, USGS-TTSI employees earned an EEI score of 76, which increased by 3 percentage points from the previous year.

Best Places to Work

Each December, the Partnership for Public Service releases the *Best Places to Work in the Federal Government* Rankings, which are based on the FEVS results. The index score, which is the basis for the rankings, is not a combined average of an agency's category scores. It is calculated using a proprietary weighted formula that looks at responses to three different questions in the FEVS. The more the question predicts intent to stay, the higher the weighting. The questions that make up the index are:

- I recommend my organization as a good place to work. (Q. 40)
- Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job? (Q. 69)
- Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your organization? (Q. 71)

For the fifth consecutive year, USGS has ranked in the top 25 percent of large agency subcomponents, and in 2016, earned its second highest Best Places to Work (BPTW) Index Score since the rankings began in [2003](#). For 2016, USGS ranked 76 of 305 large agency subcomponents and had an BPTW Index Score of 70.1, a 2.5-point increase from 2015. Within the Department, USGS is the highest-ranked bureau and the second-highest agency subcomponent overall; the Office of the Inspector General is the highest ranked agency subcomponent.

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