

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

2017 SES Exit Report



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Executive Summary

In April 2013, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued a new exit survey for standard distribution by all agencies across the Federal Government to departing members of the Senior Executive Service (SES). The SES Exit Survey is designed to capture valuable information regarding the circumstances under which senior executives leave the Federal Government and offer an opportunity for executives to provide candid feedback about their work experiences. The data presented are intended to support agency and Governmentwide recruitment, engagement, retention, and succession planning efforts for current and future executives. This Governmentwide report focuses on the analysis of survey responses collected from August 2015 to July 2016, as well as trend data from previous SES Exit reports.

Key findings

- Retirement continues to be the most common reason SES are leaving their agencies. As in previous years, the majority of SES indicated they were leaving their agency due to retirement (61 percent).
- Executives are leaving with intent to continue working, in many cases for higher pay; an increasing number intend to work without any reduction in pay. A cross-year survey comparison of work schedule and salary expectations from Year 1 (2013-14) to Year 3 (2015-16) highlighted that an increasing percentage of departing SES intended to continue to work full-time without taking a cut in pay. And while the percentage of departing SES seeking an increase in pay has remained relatively stable between Year 1 and Year 3, the percentage expecting their pay to decrease has diminished by 8 percentage points.
- Agencies can influence whether or not an executive stays in the organization; however, factors may vary based on retirement eligibility status. Many executives who intend to keep working indicated they would stay for increased pay (39 percent), change in duties or responsibilities (28 percent), increased autonomy (27 percent), and better work-life balance (22 percent). Fewer retirement eligible executives indicated they would stay for these same factors. In addition, executives who leave their agencies to pursue opportunities that do not include retirement were more likely to indicate that the lack of advancement opportunities and recognition contributed greatly or very greatly to their decisions to leave (48 percent vs 34 percent), while executives who retired were more likely to attribute exit decisions to personal reasons (63 percent vs 54 percent).
- Work environment issues continue to be the highest contributing factors in an executive's decision to leave. Overall, work environment issues such as the "political environment" (42 percent), "organizational culture" (42 percent), and "senior leadership" (40 percent) contributed the most to executives' decisions to their leaving the agency.
- Formal succession planning is not the norm for senior-level roles. A majority of departing SES (61 percent) said their agencies had no formal succession planning efforts for executives, and more than half (56 percent) said their agency made no efforts to involve them in preparing their successor.

Background

OPM, in partnership with other agencies, designed the SES Exit Survey to capture valuable information regarding the circumstances under which senior executives leave the Federal Government and offer an opportunity for executives to provide candid feedback about their work experiences and their perspectives of their agencies. The information will enable Federal agencies to have increased awareness of their executives' work environments and to inform their continued efforts to successfully recruit, manage, and retain their senior leadership workforce. Specifically, this report provides insight on:

- SES separations trends
- Stay factors
- Factors influencing decisions to leave
- Succession management
- Performance management
- Compensation
- Executive perceptions of the Senior Executive Service and agency

Methodology

Data Sources and Response Rate

Data for the OPM SES Exit Survey were gathered via an online survey (see Appendix 5 for the SES Exit Survey). Each agency appoints an agency-wide Point of Contact (POC) who is responsible for distributing the common survey link to departing executives. The survey link is available on an ongoing basis for an indefinite period of time.

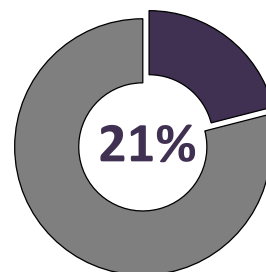
This Governmentwide report focuses on the analysis of survey responses collected from August 2015 to July 2016, as well as trend data from the previous reports, covering April 2013 to July 2014 and August 2014 to July 2015. Year-to-year comparisons of results are available in Appendix 2.

A total of 212 members of the SES who were in the process of leaving their agencies responded to the survey. The response rate is difficult to calculate because OPM does not directly distribute the individual surveys to departing executives. OPM conservatively calculated a response rate of 21 percent.¹ Since it may not be possible for every member of the SES who leaves an agency to receive the survey link, the actual response rate is expected to be higher than the approximated response rate provided in this report.

Collection Period
August 2015 - July 2016

Number of Participants
212

Response Rate



¹ The response rate calculation relies on agencies to voluntarily submit data on the number of SES who left the organization and the number of SES who were provided the Exit Survey link between August 2015 and July 2016. Any data that is not collected through the data call is filled in using EHRI separations data which covers the time period of the report.

Analysis

Most of the data collected through the SES Exit Survey consisted of categorical information. OPM used common statistical methods such as frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations to analyze these survey items. In some cases, results from previous surveys were used to assess changes over time. Additionally, as described below, OPM grouped some response categories to simplify presentations.

Agreement Items: These items requested the respondent to choose an answer on an “agreement” scale comprised of the following options: “Strongly Agree”; “Agree”; “Neither Agree nor Disagree”; “Disagree”; and “Strongly Disagree.” The results were then grouped into the categories displayed in the table below.

Response Option	Grouped Category
Strongly Agree	Positive
Agree	
Neither Agree nor Disagree	Neutral
Disagree	Negative
Strongly Disagree	

Extent Items: These items asked the respondent to choose an answer on an “extent” scale comprised of the following options: “Not at all”; “To a Small Extent”; “To a Moderate Extent”; “To a Great Extent”; and “To a Very Great Extent.” The results were then further grouped into the categories displayed in the table below. Graphs in this report reflect the grouped “To a Great Extent/To a Very Great Extent” category.

Response Option	Grouped Category
Not at all	Not at all/To a Small Extent
To a Small Extent	
To a Moderate Extent	To a Moderate Extent
To a Great Extent	To a Great Extent/To a Very Great Extent
To a Very Great Extent	

The SES Exit survey also included open-ended questions which gave SES the opportunity to provide candid feedback about their experiences. OPM analyzed open-ended survey responses using a systematic coding scheme to identify themes.

SES Separations Trends

Who participated?

A total of 212 members of the SES who were in the process of leaving their agencies responded to the survey. Respondents represented 23 agencies (see Appendix 3 for participation by agency). Participants tended to be older than 50 (79 percent), were career SES (95 percent), and a majority of the respondents indicated their race as White (79 percent). The majority of participants were appointed to their senior positions from a Federal service position (81 percent), and almost half had worked in the agency from which they were separating for more than 20 years (49 percent). Participant demographics are further summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Demographic Category	Percentage	Demographic Category	Percentage
Age (N=210)		Agency tenure (N=208)	
Under 30	1%	Less than one year	4%
30-39	3%	1-3 years	12%
40-49	17%	4-5 years	9%
50-59	17%	6-10 years	15%
60 or older	39%	11-20 years	11%
		More than 20 years	49%
Demographic Category	Percentage	Demographic Category	Percentage
Race/Ethnicity* (N=201)		Appointment type (N=209)	
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	Career	95%
Asian	3%	Non-Career	4%
Black or African American	17%	Limited Term	1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%	Limited Emergency	0%
White	79%		
Hispanic/Latino	10%		
Demographic Category	Percentage	Demographic Category	Percentage
Years in Senior Executive Service (N=186)		Appointed from... (N=197)	
Less than one year	10%	Federal service position	81%
1-3 years	18%	Private sector	7%
4-5 years	21%	State/local government	2%
6-10 years	30%	Military service	4%
11-20 years	17%	Academia	1%
More than 20 years	5%	Reinstatement	1%
		Other	7%
<i>*Respondents were able to select multiple categories</i>			

Why are they leaving?

Shown in [Figure 1](#), the majority of the executives indicated they were leaving to retire (61 percent), and almost all were doing so voluntarily (98 percent). These percentages have remained relatively stable across all three years of the SES Exit Survey (see Appendix 2 for year-over-year comparisons).

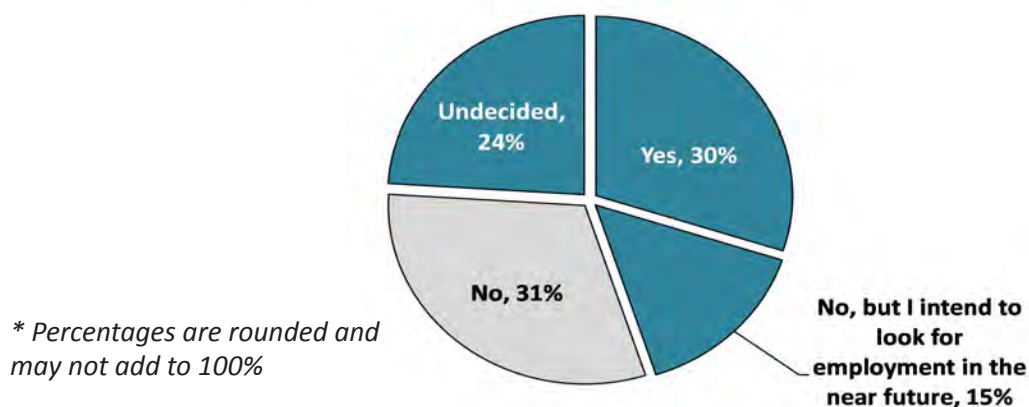
Figure 1. Circumstances Under which SES are Leaving
Retirement was the most commonly cited reason for SES departure



Where are they going?

More departing executives reported they are leaving the workforce permanently than in previous years. The number of members of the SES who indicated they would not be working for pay (31 percent) was higher this year than in previous administrations of the survey (27 percent in 2013-14 and 20 percent in 2014-15). In contrast, 30 percent of the members of the SES departing this year indicated they would be working for pay after leaving their agencies; 15 percent intended

Figure 2. SES Intentions to Work for Pay
A majority of departing SES were considering working for pay after leaving their agencies



to look for work in the near future; and 24 percent were undecided (see [Figure 2](#)).

The executives who intend to work in the future responded they are unlikely to pursue Federal employment, even though a large portion (69 percent) indicated they would be willing to work for their agencies in the future either full-time (26 percent) or part-time (20 percent). Thirty-five percent indicated they planned to work for the private sector (not Government contractors), 14 percent planned to work for themselves, and 14 percent planned to work in the not-for-profit sector (see Table 2).

Table 2

Organizations for Which Departing SES Intend to Work	Percentage of Departing SES
Private company, not a Government contractor	35%
Non-profit organization	14%
Self-employed	14%
Government contractor	7%
Not sure*	7%
State or local government	6%
Academia*	6%
Another Federal agency*	3%
Military*	1%
Work as a reemployed annuitant for a Federal agency	1%
Other	6%

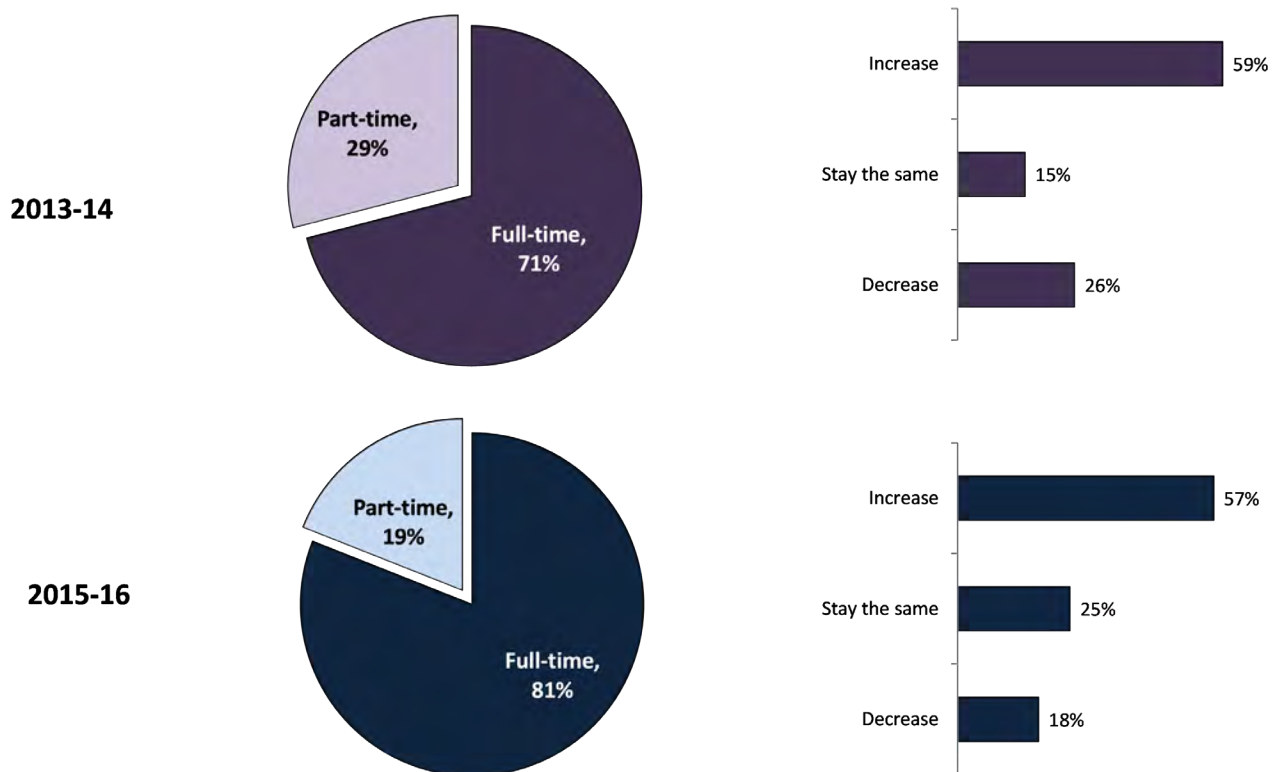
N=72; only includes those who indicated they would be working or would be looking for work

**Percentages were calculated from an analysis of written "Other" responses*

Work Intentions and Pay

Over half of the departing executives indicated they would be working for increased pay (57 percent), and, in comparison to previous years, more departing executives intend to work full-time (81 percent this year vs 71 percent in 2014-15) without decreasing their salary (18 percent this year vs 26 percent in 2014-15). [Figure 3](#) shows a cross-year comparison of work schedule and salary expectations among departing members of the SES who intended to seek work. While the percentage of departing members of the SES seeking an increase in pay through other opportunities has remained relatively stable from 2013-14 to 2015-16 (over half), those expecting their pay to stay the same has increased by 10 percentage points, and those expecting a decrease has declined by 8 percentage points.

Figure 3. Changes in SES Work Schedule and Salary Expectations Over Time
More departing SES intend to work full-time without taking a cut in pay



SES Retention Considerations

Federal agencies continue to have opportunities to better understand and find ways to retain their senior executives. As noted above, a majority of the departing senior executives indicated they were considering or definitely planning to work; only one-third definitively indicated they were not seeking employment (Figure 1). Agencies have less opportunity to persuade retiring members of the SES to stay. Literature on organizational withdrawal often considers separations due to retirement distinct from other types of voluntary turnover² -- retirees want to reduce their commitment to employment in general, and place more emphasis on other life roles.³ However, the other executives (non-retirees) are leaving with the intent to continue working, and it would benefit agencies to explore ways to retain those employees.

Stay Factors

As agencies explore ways to retain the members of the SES who intend to work after leaving, they should consider stay factors that are rated highly. Stay factors represent hypothetical changes in work-related circumstances that, if offered, might encourage an executive to stay in their current role. Overall, “increase in pay” was the most frequently endorsed stay factor (34 percent). Non-retirees indicated “change in duties or responsibilities” (28 percent), “increased autonomy” (27 percent), and “better work-life balance” (22 percent) as important stay factors. Retirees indicated “retention incentives” (25 percent) and “verbal encouragement to stay based on value to the organization” (22 percent) as top reasons they would have stayed. Considering that almost three-fourths of departing SES (71 percent) said no efforts were made to encourage them to stay, agencies should not underestimate the value of stay interviews as a first step in the process of retaining top executive talent. See [Figure 4](#) for additional comparison results.

However, agencies should not get frustrated if their efforts are not entirely successful because thirty-two percent of departing SES indicated that nothing would have encouraged them to stay, a higher percentage than the previous two years of the survey. Among members of the SES who selected this response option, 69 percent were retiring, 8 percent were resigning, 15 percent were transferring to another agency, and 3 percent were accepting a non-SES position within another Federal agency. These departing executives were also provided the opportunity to explain their answer, and a summary of response themes can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of Open Ended Responses – Reasons SES Said “Nothing Would Have Encouraged Them to Stay”	Number of Comments
Ready to retire	23
Pursuing other career interests	11
Work environment issues	4
Personal reasons	3
Poor leadership	3
Disrespectful treatment	2
Better compensation	2

² See, for example:

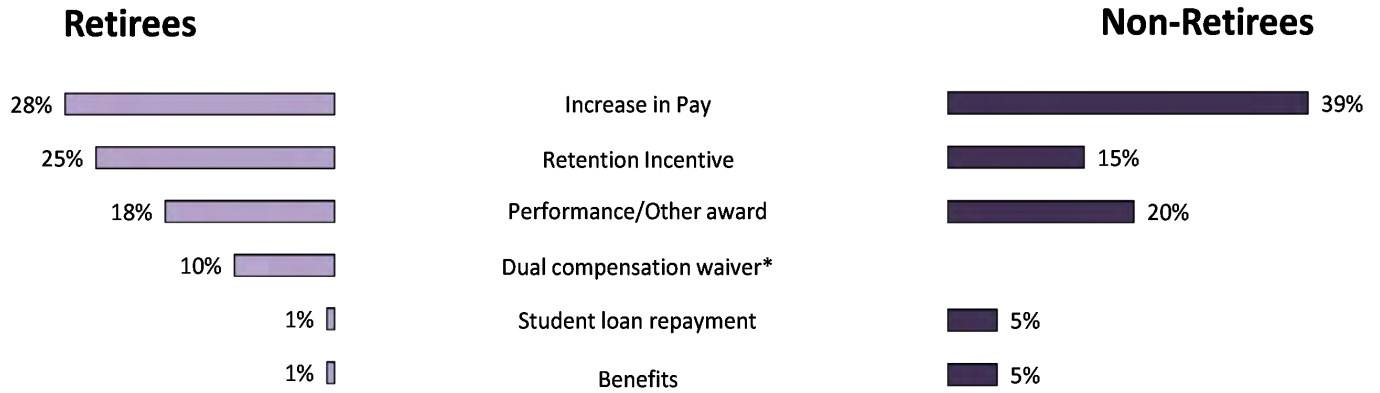
Cho, Y. J. and Lewis, G. B. 2012. “Turnover Intention and Turnover Behavior: Implications for Retaining Federal Employees.” *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 32: 4-23.

Partnership for Public Service & Booz Allen Hamilton. (2010). Beneath the Surface: Understanding Attrition at Your Agency and Why It Matters. Washington, DC: Partnership for Public Service

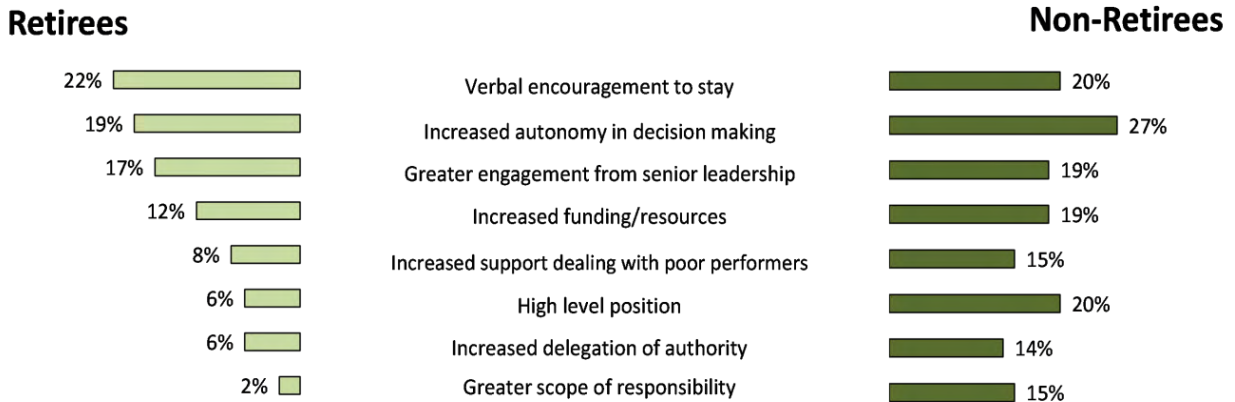
³ Schmidt, J. and Lee, K. 2008. “Voluntary Retirement and Organizational Turnover Intentions: The Differential Associations with Work and Non-Work Commitment Constructs.” *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 22: 297-309

Figure 4. Stay Factor Comparisons By Retirement Status

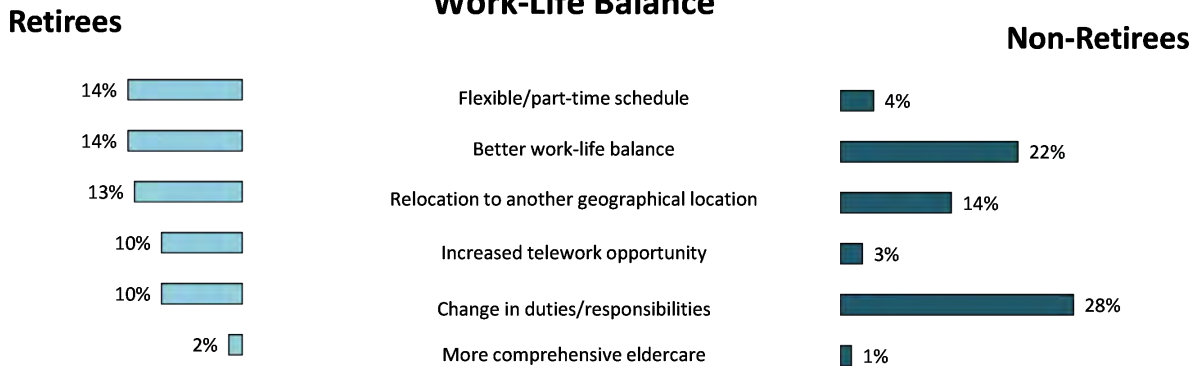
Compensation and Benefits



Increased Authority/Support



Work-Life Balance



Development Opportunities

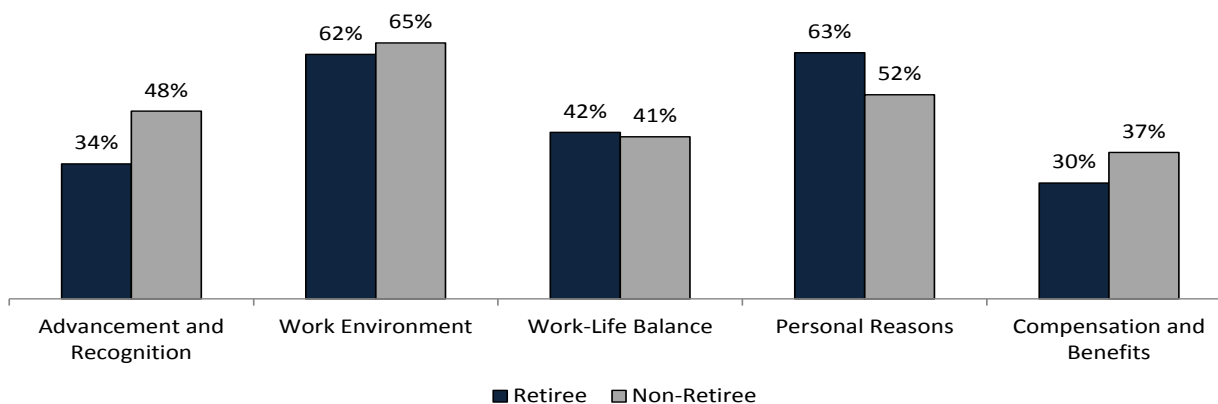


*Participants were able to select multiple responses

Factors Influencing Decisions to Leave

Work environment issues (e.g., political environment, organizational culture, senior leadership, lack of autonomy) continue to be the most influential reasons for leaving. Departing executives rated the extent to which various elements contributed to their reasons for leaving their agency, and regardless of retirement status, a majority of executives indicated at least one work environment element contributed to their decision to leave “to a great extent” or “to a very great extent” (see [Figure 5](#)). Other reasons for leaving tended to vary based on retirement status. Executives indicating they were going to continue to work (non-retirees) were generally more likely to rate advancement and recognition (48 percent vs 34 percent), and executives who intended not to work (retirees) generally rated personal reasons (63 percent vs 52 percent) as important factors.

Figure 5. Comparison of Reasons for Leaving Categories by Retirement Status



The results reinforce the importance of engaging in open and candid conversations with departing executives, as SES in different career stages appear to be leaving for different reasons. [Figure 6](#) provides a more detailed comparison of the factors that had the most impact on the two departing SES subgroups. The largest percentage point gaps were observed for the following reasons: “desire to live life without work commitments” (retirees – 41 percent, non-retirees – 1 percent), “more attractive job offer elsewhere” (non-retirees – 50 percent, retirees – 13 percent), “lack of opportunities for development” (non-retirees – 36 percent, retirees – 10 percent), and “desire to leave the workforce” (retirees – 22 percent, non-retirees – 1 percent).

Figure 6. Comparison of Reasons for Leaving by Retirement Status

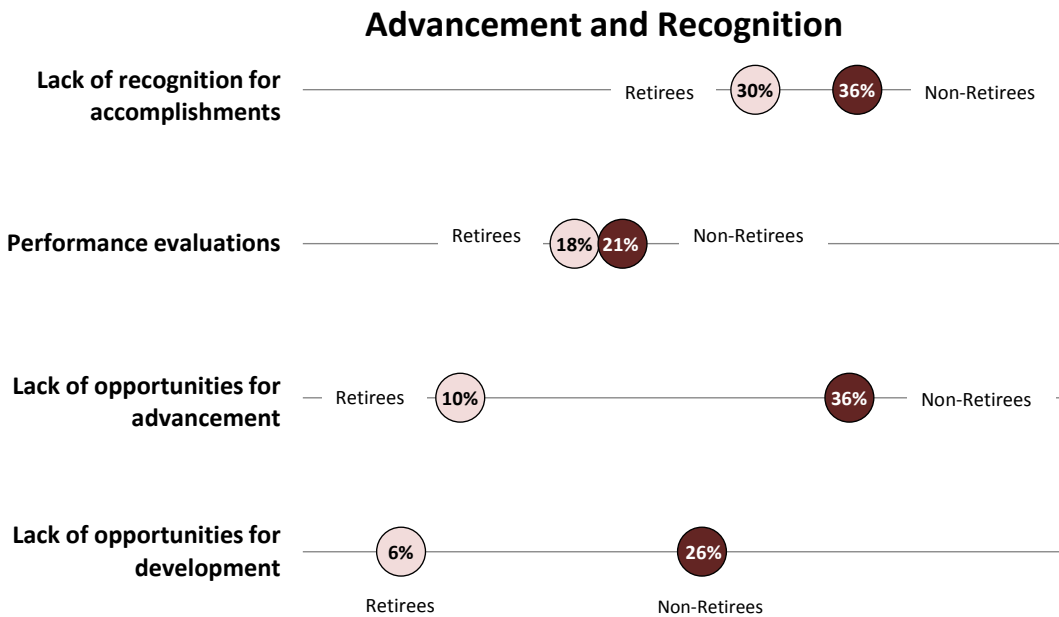
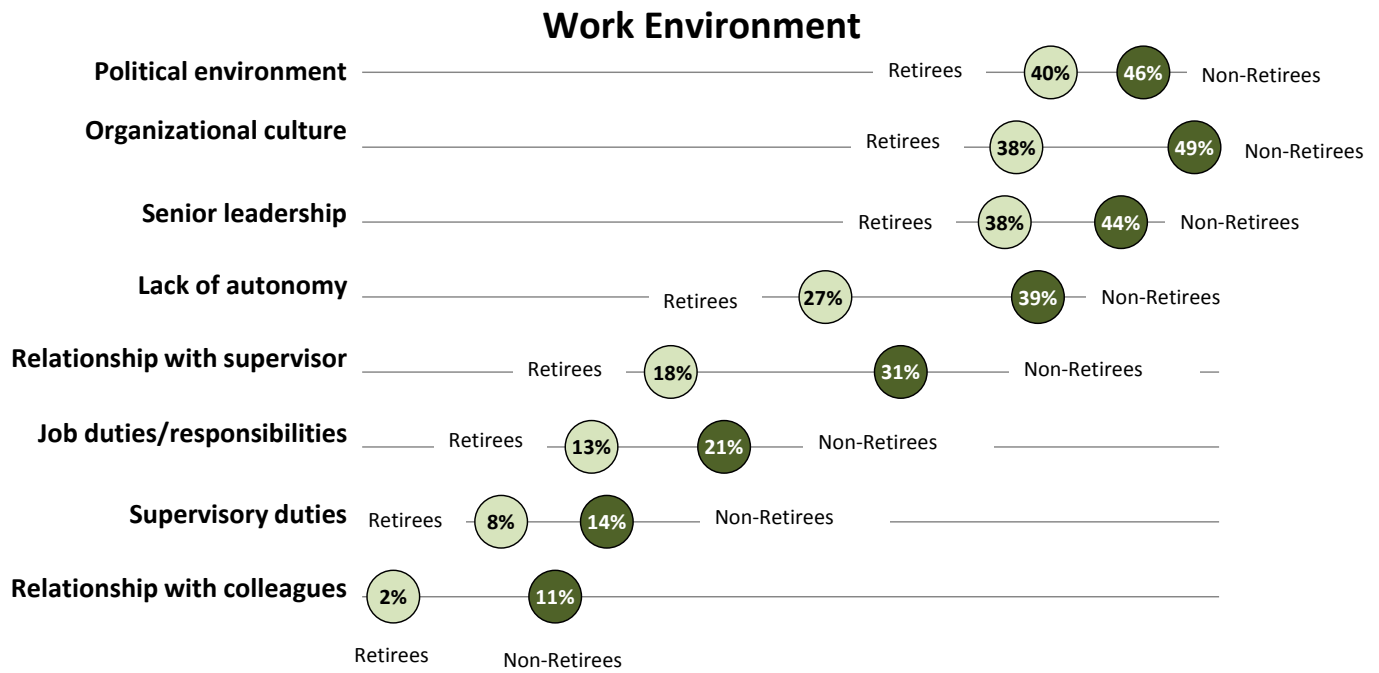
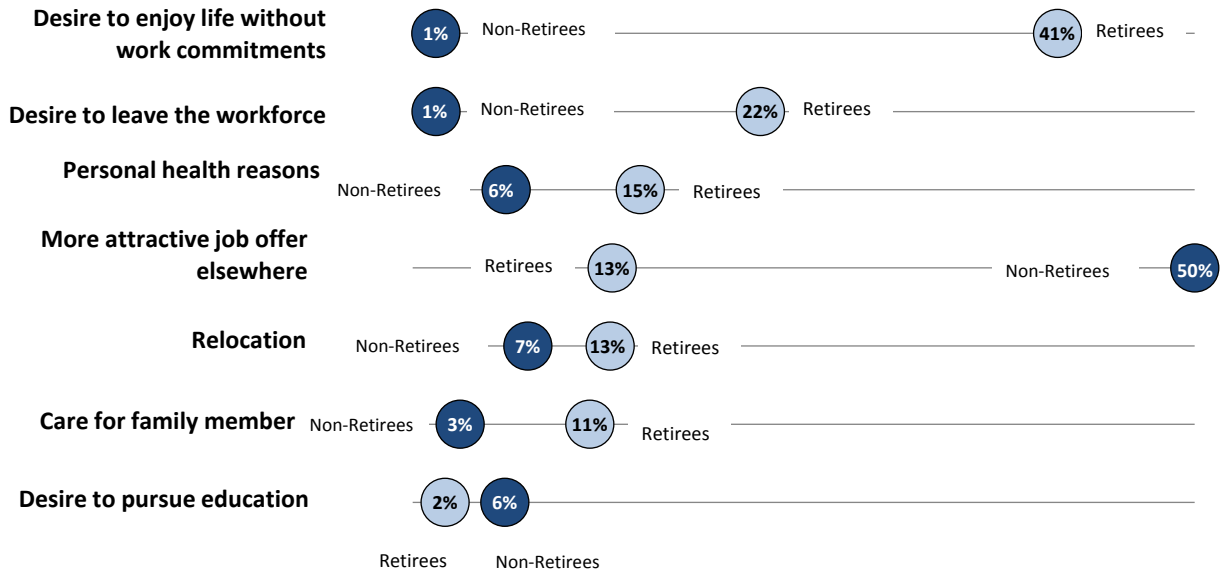
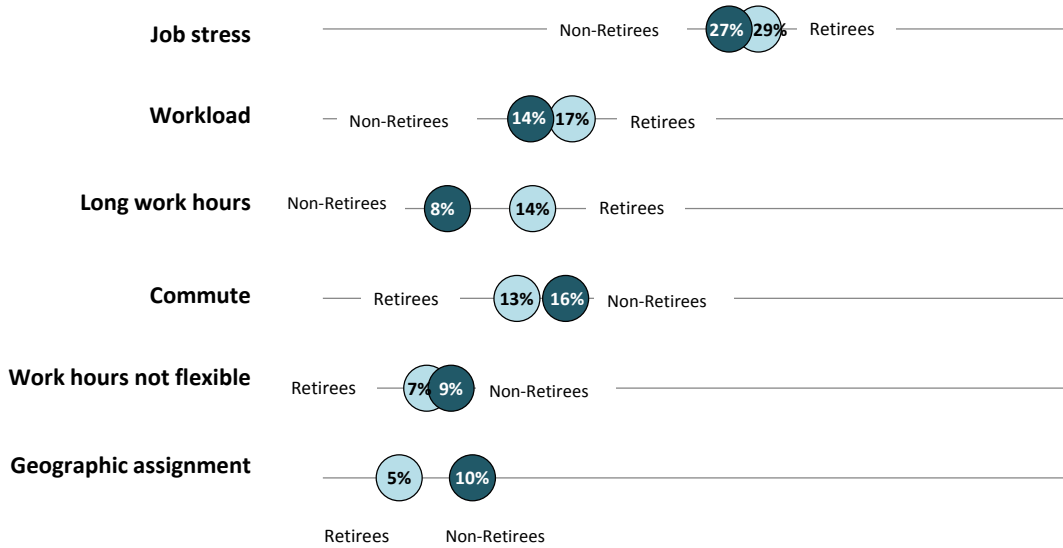


Figure 6 (continued)

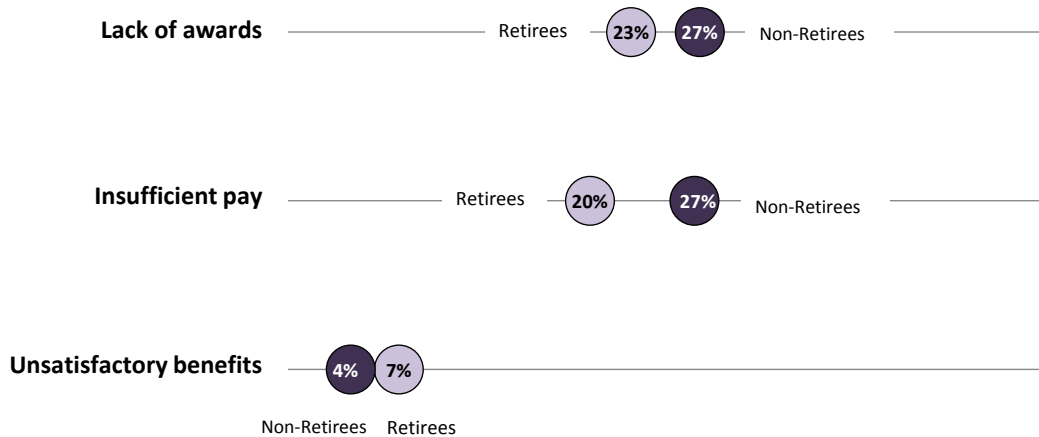
Personal Reasons



Work-Life Balance



Compensation/Benefits

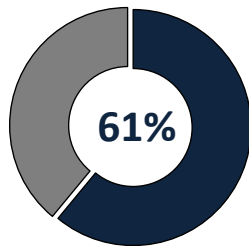


Succession Management

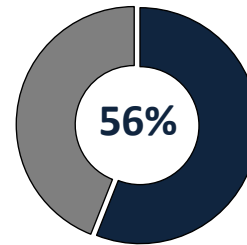
A majority of departing SES indicated their agencies have no formal succession planning efforts for executives (61 percent), and over half of departing members of the SES (56 percent) said their agencies made no efforts to involve them in preparing their successors (see [Figure 7](#)). Results for these items have been relatively stable across survey administrations (see Appendix 2). Succession management is critical to mission success and creates an effective process for recognizing, developing, and retaining top leadership talent. Agencies are required to develop a comprehensive management succession program to fill agency supervisory and managerial positions (5 CFR 412.101). The exit survey results indicate agencies should focus efforts to ensure smooth transitions in leadership.

Figure 7. SES Succession Planning Efforts
Departing SES reported that their agencies...

Had no formal succession planning efforts for executives



Made no efforts to involve them in preparing their successor



Performance Management

Executive performance is evaluated on a pay-for-performance system where senior executives are rated each year on a combination of demonstrated leadership through the five Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) as well as measurable results. A majority of executives (79 percent) indicated they were rated either “Outstanding” or “Exceeds Fully Successful” on their most recent performance appraisal (see Table 4).

Table 4

Departing SES Performance Ratings	Percentage of Departing SES
Outstanding	46%
Exceeds Fully Successful	33%
Fully Successful	16%
Minimally Satisfactory	0%
Unsatisfactory	0%
I did not receive a performance rating	5%
I prefer not to respond	-

Executive Perceptions of Senior Executive Service and Agency

In addition to capturing departing executives’ separation motivations and employment intentions, the Exit Survey provides members of the SES an opportunity to share their perceptions of general aspects of their employment experiences.

Ranking the Executive Core Qualifications

The Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) are leadership skills designated by OPM to evaluate individuals for entrance into the SES and to evaluate their performance. A chart summarizing each ECQ and its competencies can be found in Appendix 4. The survey asked executives to rank the ECQs in order of importance to achieve success in their position (5 = most important for success, 1 = least important for success). Table 5 shows that Leading People received the highest average ranking of the five ECQs, with an average ranking of 3.93. These ratings have remained stable across each iteration of the survey.

Table 5. Departing SES Rankings of Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs)

Executive Core Qualification (ECQ)	Average Ranking	ECQ Description
Leading People (1)	3.93	This core qualification involves the ability to lead people toward meeting the organization's vision, mission and goals. Inherent in this ECQ is the ability to provide an inclusive workplace that fosters the development of others, facilitates cooperation and teamwork and supports constructive resolution of conflicts
Results Driven (2)	3.26	This core qualification involves the ability to meet organizational goals and customer expectations. Inherent in this ECQ is the ability to make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying technical knowledge, analyzing problems and calculating risks.
Leading Change (3)	3.12	This core qualification involves the ability to bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organization, to meet organizational goals. Inherent in this ECQ is the ability to establish an organizational vision and to implement it in a continuously changing environment.
Building Coalitions (4)	2.62	This core qualification involves the ability to build coalitions internally and with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, nonprofit and private sector organizations, foreign governments, or international organizations to achieve common goals.
Business Acumen (5)	2.08	This core qualification involves the ability to manage human, financial and information resources strategically.

Executives Recommend the SES

A majority of departing members of the SES recommend employment in the SES (63 percent) (see graph below). Departing executives were given an opportunity to explain their opinions, and a sample of positive, neutral, and negative themes are provided in Table 6.

Perceptions of the Senior Executive Service



Table 6. Open Comment Themes

Positive Comment Themes	Neutral Comment Themes	Negative Comment Themes
Rewarding job	Rewarding, but under compensated	Toxic political environment
Opportunity to make a difference	Has pros and cons	Insufficient pay for workload/responsibilities
An honor to serve	Challenging and not for everyone	Unsupportive environment
Impactful work		Too bureaucratic

Executives Recommend Their Agency

A majority of departing members of the SES would recommend their agency as a good place to work (63 percent). Departing members of the SES were given an opportunity to explain their opinions, and a sample of positive, neutral, and negative themes are provided in Table 7.

Perceptions of the Agency



Table 7. Open Comment Themes

Positive Comment Themes	Neutral Comment Themes	Negative Comment Themes
Important/worthwhile mission	Growing tensions between career and political appointees	Too political
Dedicated employees	Good agency, limited resources	Unfair treatment
Great place to work		Lack of respect for SES
Rewarding work		Poor organizational culture

Departing members of the SES were also given the opportunity to describe what they liked best about working at their agency. Responses are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

Summary – Aspects departing SES liked most about their agencies	Number of comments
Mission	43
The employees	36
Positive impact of work	19
Colleagues	14
The work itself	12
Team-oriented environment	6
Supportive leadership	5
Sense of organizational commitment	4
Autonomy	3
Open communication	2
Work flexibility	2
Geographically dispersed workforce	1
Executive training	1
Agency size	1
Variety of work	1
Work-life balance	1
Opportunity to learn	1
Availability of resources	1

Conclusion

With SES retirement rates remaining high and steady, it is imperative for agencies to understand what they can do to engage and retain top-performing executives, while mitigating factors that cause executives to leave the Federal Government.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Figure Descriptions and Data

Figure 1. Circumstances Under which SES are Leaving

Retirement was the most commonly cited reason for SES departure

Reason for Leaving	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Retiring	59%	56%	61%
Resigning	11%	17%	10%
Transferring to another Federal agency	12%	16%	18%
Accepting non-SES position within a Federal agency	2%	5%	4%
Leaving involuntarily	1%	1%	1%
Other	14%	6%	5%
	<i>N</i> =217	<i>N</i> =224	<i>N</i> =210

Figure 2. SES Intentions to Work for Pay

A majority of departing SES were considering working for pay after leaving their agencies

Will you be working for pay after you leave your agency?	Percentage
Yes	30%
No, but I intend to look for employment in the near future	15%
No	31%
Undecided	24%

Figure 3. Changes in SES Work Schedule and Salary Expectations Over Time

More departing SES intend to work full-time without taking a cut in pay

Year	Work Schedule	Percentage
2013-14	Full-time	71%
	Part-time	29%
2015-16	Full-time	81%
	Part-time	19%

Year	Salary Change	Percentage
2013-14	Increase	59%
	Stay the same	15%
	Decrease	26%
2015-16	Increase	57%
	Stay the same	25%
	Decrease	18%

Figure 4. Stay Factor Comparisons By Retirement Status

Category	Stay Factors	Percentage of Retirees	Percentage of Non-Retirees
Compensation Benefits	Increase in Pay	28%	39%
	Performance/Other award	18%	20%
	Retention Incentive	25%	15%
	Dual compensation waiver (If retiring)	10%	
	Student loan repayment	1%	5%
	Benefits	1%	5%
Increased Authority/ Support	Greater engagement from senior leadership	17%	19%
	High level position	6%	20%
	Greater scope of responsibility	2%	15%
	Increased autonomy	19%	27%
	Increased delegation	6%	14%
	Increased funding/ resources	12%	19%
	Increased support dealing w/ poor performers	8%	15%
	Verbal encouragement to stay	22%	20%
Work-Life Balance	Relocation	13%	14%
	Increased telework opportunity	10%	3%
	Flexible/part-time schedule	14%	4%
	Change in duties/ responsibilities	10%	28%
	More comprehensive eldercare	2%	1%
	Better work-life balance	14%	22%
Developmental Opportunities	Mobility assignment	4%	5%
	Sabbatical	10%	4%
	Coaching	1%	3%
	Executive development training	5%	1%
	Reassignment to new job w/ in agency	10%	15%

Figure 5. Comparison of Reasons for Leaving Categories by Retirement Status

Category	Percentage of Retirees	Percentage of Non-Retirees
Work Environment	62%	65%
Advancement and Recognition	34%	48%
Personal Reasons	63%	52%
Work-Life Balance	42%	41%
Compensation and Benefits	30%	37%

Figure 6. Comparison of Reasons for Leaving by Retirement Status

Category	Reason for Leaving	Percentage of Retirees	Percentage of Non-Retirees
Work environment	Political environment	40%	46%
	Organizational culture	38%	49%
	Senior leadership	38%	44%
	Lack of autonomy	27%	39%
	Relationship w/ supervisor	18%	31%
	Job duties/responsibilities	13%	21%
	Supervisory duties	8%	14%
	Relationship w/ colleagues	2%	11%
Advancement/recognition	Lack of rec for accomplishments	30%	36%
	Performance evaluations	18%	21%
	Lack of opportunities for advancement	10%	36%
	Lack of opportunities for development	6%	26%
Personal reasons	Desire to enjoy life without work commitments	41%	1%
	Desire to leave workforce	22%	1%
	Personal reasons health	15%	6%
	More attractive job offer elsewhere	13%	50%
	Relocation	13%	7%
	Care for family member	11%	3%
	Desire to pursue education	2%	6%
W-L Balance	Job stress	29%	27%
	Workload	17%	14%
	Long work hours	14%	8%
	Commute	13%	16%
	Work hours not flexible	7%	9%
	Geographic assignment	5%	10%
Compensation/Benefits	Lack of awards	23%	27%
	Insufficient pay	20%	27%
	Unsatisfactory benefits	7%	4%

Figure 7. SES Succession Planning Efforts

Departing SES reported that...

Their agency had formal succession planning efforts for executives	Percentage
No	61%
Yes	39%

They were involved in preparing their successor	Percentage
No	56%
Yes	44%

Appendix 2: Governmentwide SES Exit Survey Results, Year-Over-Year Comparison

Which of the following best describes the circumstances under which you are leaving your agency?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
I am retiring	59%	56%	61%
I am resigning	11%	17%	10%
I am transferring to another Federal agency	12%	16%	18%
I am accepting a non-SES position within a Federal agency	2%	5%	4%
I am leaving involuntarily	1%	1%	1%
Other	14%	6%	5%
	N=217	N=224	N=210

I am retiring:	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Voluntarily	97%	93%	98%
Involuntarily (Mandatory Retirement)	2%	5%	1%
Involuntarily for reasons other than Mandatory Retirement	2%	2%	2%
	N=128	N=120	N=129

Will you be working for pay after you leave your agency?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Yes	35%	37%	30%
No, but I intend to look for employment in the near future	14%	19%	15%
No	27%	20%	31%
Undecided	24%	24%	24%
	N=169	N=160	N=158

Which of the following best describes the type of organization you will be working for after you leave your agency:	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Government contractor	10%	14%	7%
Private company, not a Government contractor	33%	33%	35%
Self-employed	21%	13%	14%
State or local government	6%	8%	6%
Non-profit organization	16%	11%	14%
Work as a reemployed annuitant for a Federal agency	5%	2%	1%
Other	9%	20%	24%
	N=81	N=86	N=72

Will you be working full-time or part-time?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Full-Time	71%	78%	81%
Part-Time	29%	22%	19%
	N=111	N=125	N=118

Will your compensation increase, decrease, or stay the same?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Increase	59%	60%	57%
Decrease	26%	18%	18%
Stay the same	15%	23%	25%
	<i>N=110</i>	<i>N=124</i>	<i>N=117</i>

If possible, would you work for this agency in the future as an employee or contractor?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Yes, part-time	19%	17%	20%
Yes, full-time	21%	29%	26%
Yes, for a short-term assignment	26%	17%	23%
No	35%	38%	32%
	<i>N=168</i>	<i>N=162</i>	<i>N=209</i>

Does your agency have any formal succession planning efforts for executives? (e.g., interviews/debriefs that took place prior to your departure to ensure smooth transition of your duties)	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Yes	40%	28%	39%
No	60%	72%	61%
	<i>N=158</i>	<i>N=146</i>	<i>N=195</i>

Have there been—or were there prior to your leaving—any efforts made to involve you in preparing for your successor?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Yes	53%	46%	44%
No	47%	54%	56%
	<i>N=162</i>	<i>N=144</i>	<i>N=201</i>

Was any effort made to encourage you to stay?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Yes	30%	29%	29%
No	67%	69%	67%
No, I was asked or encouraged to leave	3%	4%	4%
	<i>N=195</i>	<i>N=191</i>	<i>N=204</i>

Stay Factor Categories	Stay Factors	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Compensation/Benefits	Increase in Pay	37%	41%	34%
	Performance/Other award	24%	26%	19%
	Retention Incentive	20%	23%	22%
	Dual compensation waiver (if retiring)	10%	6%	7%
	Student loan repayment	2%	3%	3%
	Benefits	5%	4%	3%
Increased Authority/Support	Greater engagement from senior leadership	22%	28%	18%
	High level position	12%	14%	12%
	Greater scope of responsibility	12%	16%	7%
	Increased autonomy in decision making	21%	31%	23%
	Increased delegation of authority	14%	20%	9%
	Increased funding/resources	17%	16%	15%
	Increased support dealing with poor performers	10%	19%	11%
	Verbal encouragement to stay based on your value to the organization	24%	29%	22%
Work-Life Balance	Relocation to a geographical location of your choice	9%	11%	14%
	Increased telework opportunity	9%	9%	7%
	Flexible/part-time schedule	16%	15%	10%
	Change in duties/responsibilities	15%	17%	17%
	More comprehensive eldercare options	2%	2%	2%
	Better work-life balance	23%	24%	17%
Developmental Opportunities	Mobility assignment	9%	7%	5%
	Sabbatical	9%	8%	8%
	Coaching	6%	8%	2%
	Executive development training	5%	9%	6%
	Reassignment to new job within agency	10%	14%	12%
		N=173	N=167	N=191

Reasons for Leaving Categories	Reasons for Leaving	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Work environment	Political environment	42%	42%	42%
	Organizational culture	38%	37%	42%
	Senior leadership	38%	43%	40%
	Lack of autonomy in decision making	26%	33%	32%
	Relationship with supervisor	24%	25%	23%
	Job duties/responsibilities	16%	17%	16%
	Supervisory duties/responsibilities	14%	9%	10%
	Relationship with colleagues	5%	9%	6%
Advancement/recognition	Lack of recognition for accomplishments	34%	35%	32%
	Performance evaluations	20%	27%	19%
	Lack of opportunities for advancement	22%	26%	20%
	Lack of opportunities for development	15%	19%	14%
Work-Life Balance	Job stress	30%	31%	28%
	Workload	17%	20%	16%
	Long work hours	17%	14%	12%
	Commute	17%	13%	14%
	Work hours not flexible	12%	10%	8%
	Geographic assignment	11%	9%	7%
Personal reasons	Desire to enjoy life without work commitments	38%	24%	26%
	Desire to leave workforce	19%	13%	14%
	Personal reasons/health	9%	12%	11%
	More attractive job offer elsewhere	30%	34%	28%
	Relocation	20%	14%	11%
	Care for family member	13%	8%	8%
	Desire to pursue education	6%	1%	7%
Compensation/Benefits	Lack of awards	27%	25%	24%
	Insufficient pay	29%	21%	23%
	Unsatisfactory benefits	6%	5%	6%
		N=146-161	N=149-160	N=165-186

What performance rating (or equivalent) did you receive on your last performance appraisal?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Outstanding	45%	43%	46%
Exceeds Fully Successful	39%	34%	33%
Fully Successful	11%	13%	16%
Minimally Satisfactory	0%	2%	0%
Unsatisfactory	0%	1%	0%
I did not receive a performance rating	5%	7%	5%
I prefer not to respond	-	-	-
	N=179	N=175	N=212

To what extent do you agree or disagree that this rating was a reflection of your performance?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Strongly Agree	41%	43%	45%
Agree	33%	27%	28%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	9%	6%	8%
Disagree	9%	10%	9%
Strongly Disagree	8%	14%	10%
I prefer not to respond	-	-	-
	N=170	N=162	N=199

Please rank the following Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) in order of importance to achieve success in your position. (Ratings averaged; 5= most important, 1= least important)	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
	Leading Change	2.99	3.12
Leading People	3.82	3.81	3.93
Results Driven	3.38	3.26	3.26
Business Acumen	2.05	2.17	2.08
Building Coalitions	2.79	2.7	2.62
	N=169-171	N=163-165	N=198-201

I would recommend employment in the Senior Executive Service to others.	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Positive	62%	54%	63%
Neutral	25%	25%	24%
Negative	13%	21%	13%
	N=169	N=163	N=207

I would recommend this agency to others as a good place to work.	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Positive	63%	57%	63%
Neutral	15%	16%	11%
Negative	23%	27%	26%
	N=167	N=160	N=210

How long have you worked in this agency?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Less than one year	1%	3%	4%
1-3 years	13%	14%	12%
4-5 years	14%	16%	9%
6-10 years	12%	11%	15%
11-20 years	12%	14%	11%
More than 20 years	47%	44%	49%
	<i>N=164</i>	<i>N=161</i>	<i>N=208</i>

How long have you been a member of the Senior Executive Service?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Less than one year	11%	7%	10%
1-3 years	16%	24%	18%
4-5 years	13%	19%	21%
6-10 years	28%	31%	30%
11-20 years	23%	11%	17%
More than 20 years	9%	8%	5%
	<i>N=159</i>	<i>N=140</i>	<i>N=186</i>

What is your age group?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Under 30	2%	1%	1%
30-39	4%	8%	3%
40-49	9%	16%	17%
50-59	42%	34%	40%
60 or older	43%	42%	39%
	<i>N=166</i>	<i>N=159</i>	<i>N=210</i>

What type of appointment do you hold?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Career	88%	87%	95%
Non-Career	10%	10%	4%
Limited Term	3%	3%	1%
Limited Emergency	0%	0%	0%
	<i>N=168</i>	<i>N=156</i>	<i>N=209</i>

From where were you appointed to your senior position?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
From a Federal service position	83%	76%	81%
From the private sector	6%	9%	7%
From State or local government	1%	3%	2%
From military service	2%	6%	4%
From academia	3%	1%	1%
Reinstatement	1%	1%	1%
Other	6%	4%	7%
	<i>N=163</i>	<i>N=146</i>	<i>N=197</i>

Please select the racial category or categories with which you most closely identify *select all that apply	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	3%	2%
Asian	6%	7%	3%
Black or African American	12%	15%	17%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%	2%	1%
White	82%	79%	79%
	<i>N=162</i>	<i>N=158</i>	<i>N=201</i>

Are you Hispanic or Latino?	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Yes	7%	7%	10%
No	93%	94%	90%
	<i>N=162</i>	<i>N=154</i>	<i>N=201</i>

Appendix 3: Participation by Agency

Agency	Frequency	Percentage
Department of Agriculture	9	4%
Department of Commerce	0	0%
Department of Defense	14	7%
Department of Education	1	>1%
Department of Energy	12	6%
Department of Health and Human Services	3	1%
Department of Homeland Security	33	16%
Department of Housing and Urban Development	2	1%
Department of Justice	14	7%
Department of Labor	4	2%
Department of State	3	1%
Department of the Interior	7	3%
Department of the Treasury	18	8%
Department of Transportation	5	2%
Department of Veterans Affairs	35	17%
Broadcasting Board of Governors	0	0%
Environmental Protection Agency	4	2%
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	5	2%
Federal Communications Commission	3	1%
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	0	0%
Federal Trade Commission	0	0%
General Services Administration	8	4%
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	0	0%
National Archives and Records Administration	4	2%
National Labor Relations Board	0	0%
National Science Foundation	0	0%
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	11	5%
Office of Management and Budget	0	0%
Office of Personnel Management	1	>1%
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative	0	0%
Small Business Administration	1	>1%
Social Security Administration	0	0%
U.S. Agency for International Development	1	>1%
Railroad Retirement Board	0	0%
U.S. Office of Government Ethics	0	0%
National Transportation Safety Board	0	0%

N=212

Do you work in an Office of the Inspector General?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	10	5%
No	196	95%

Appendix 4: Executive Core Qualifications and Competencies

ECQ 1: Leading Change

Definition: This core qualification involves the ability to bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organization, to meet organizational goals. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to establish an organizational vision and to implement it in a continuously changing environment.

- **Creativity and Innovation** – Develops new insights into situations; questions conventional approaches; encourages new ideas and innovations; designs and implements new or cutting edge programs/processes.
- **External Awareness** – Understands and keeps up-to-date on local, national, and international policies and trends that affect the organization and shape stakeholders’ views; is aware of the organization’s impact on the external environment.
- **Flexibility** – Is open to change and new information; rapidly adapts to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.
- **Resilience** – Deals effectively with pressure; remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. Recovers quickly from setbacks.
- **Strategic Thinking** – Formulates objectives and priorities, and implements plans consistent with the long-term interests of the organization in a global environment. Capitalizes on opportunities and manages risks.
- **Vision** – Takes a long-term view and builds a shared vision with others; acts as a catalyst for organizational change. Influences others to translate vision into action.

ECQ 2: Leading People

Definition: This core qualification involves the ability to lead people toward meeting the organization’s vision, mission, and goals. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to provide an inclusive workplace that fosters the development of others, facilitates cooperation and teamwork, and supports constructive resolution of conflicts.

- **Conflict Management** – Encourages creative tension and differences of opinions. Anticipates and takes steps to prevent counter-productive confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.
- **Leveraging Diversity** – Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.
- **Developing Others** – Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing ongoing feedback and by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods.
- **Team Building** – Inspires and fosters team commitment, spirit, pride, and trust. Facilitates cooperation and motivates team members to accomplish group goals.

ECQ 3: Results Driven

Definition: This core qualification involves the ability to meet organizational goals and customer expectations. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying technical knowledge,

analyzing problems, and calculating risks.

- **Accountability** – Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, timely, and cost-effective results. Determines objectives, sets priorities, and delegates work. Accepts responsibility for mistakes. Complies with established control systems and rules.
- **Customer Service** – Anticipates and meets the needs of both internal and external customers. Delivers high-quality products and services; is committed to continuous improvement.
- **Decisiveness** – Makes well-informed, effective, and timely decisions, even when data are limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; perceives the impact and implications of decisions.
- **Entrepreneurship** – Positions the organization for future success by identifying new opportunities; builds the organization by developing or improving products or services. Takes calculated risks to accomplish organizational objectives.
- **Problem Solving** – Identifies and analyzes problems; weighs relevance and accuracy of information; generates and evaluates alternative solutions; makes recommendations.
- **Technical Credibility** – Understands and appropriately applies principles, procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise.

ECQ 4: Business Acumen

Definition: This core qualification involves the ability to manage human, financial, and information resources strategically.

- **Financial Management** – Understands the organization’s financial processes. Prepares, justifies, and administers the program budget. Oversees procurement and contracting to achieve desired results. Monitors expenditures and uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities.
- **Human Capital Management** – Builds and manages workforce based on organizational goals, budget considerations, and staffing needs. Ensures that employees are appropriately recruited, selected, appraised, and rewarded; takes action to address performance problems. Manages a multi-sector workforce and a variety of work situations.
- **Technology Management** – Keeps up-to-date on technological developments. Makes effective use of technology to achieve results. Ensures access to and security of technology systems.

ECQ 5: Building Coalitions

Definition: This core qualification involves the ability to build coalitions internally and with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, nonprofit and private sector organizations, foreign governments, or international organizations to achieve common goals.

- **Partnering** – Develops networks and builds alliances; collaborates across boundaries to build strategic relationships and achieve common goals.
- **Political Savvy** – Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Perceives organizational and political reality and acts accordingly.
- **Influencing/Negotiating** – Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals.

Appendix 5: SES Onboarding Survey Instrument

U.S. Office of Personnel Management

SES Exit Survey

Dear Executive,

OPM is conducting a Governmentwide exit survey for all departing SES members. The survey will be used to capture information regarding the circumstances under which you are choosing to leave your agency, and offer an opportunity for you to provide candid and confidential feedback about your work experience. This information will be used to support agency and governmentwide retention and succession planning efforts for current and future executives.

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary and your responses are anonymous. Only aggregated information will be reported.

Thank you for your participation. Your input is valued and appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact the OPM Training and Executive Development office at HRDLeadership@opm.gov.

This survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary and your responses are anonymous. Only aggregated information will be reported.

As you complete the survey, a bar at the bottom of each page will indicate your progress. When navigating through the survey, please use the buttons on the bottom of the survey pages and not your browser Back or Forward buttons.

If you have any questions, please contact the OPM Training and Executive Development office at HRDLeadership@opm.gov.

1. Which of the following best describes the circumstances under which you are leaving your agency?

- I am retiring. *If they choose this answer, the next 3 options are provided for them to answer*
 - Voluntarily
 - Involuntarily (Mandatory Retirement). —*branch to #8*
 - Involuntarily for reasons other than Mandatory Retirement. —*branch to #8*
- I am resigning.
- I am transferring to another Federal agency.—*branch to #4*
- I am accepting a non-SES position within a Federal agency.—*branch to #4*
- I am leaving involuntarily. —*branch to #8*
- Other. Please specify: _____

2. Will you be working for pay after you leave your agency?

- Yes
- No, but I intend to look for employment in the near future

- No—branch to #6
- Undecided—branch to #6

3. Which of the following best describes the type of organization you will be working for after you leave your agency:

- Government contractor
- Private company, not a Government contractor
- Self-employed
- State or local government
- Non-profit organization
- Work as a reemployed annuitant for a Federal agency. *If they choose this answer, the next 3 options are provided for them to answer*
 - With a dual compensation waiver
 - Without a dual compensation waiver
 - Under phased retirement options
- Other. Please specify: _____

4. Will you be working full-time or part-time?

- Full-Time
- Part-Time

5. Will your compensation increase, decrease, or stay the same?

- Increase
- Decrease
- Stay the same

6. Was any effort made to encourage you to stay?

- Yes. Please explain: _____
- No
- No, I was asked or encouraged to leave—branch to #8

7. What, if anything, would have encouraged you to stay? Select all that apply.

Work-Life Balance

- Relocation to a geographical location of your choice
- Increased telework opportunity
- Flexible or part-time schedule
- A change in job duties/responsibilities
- More comprehensive eldercare options
- Better work-life balance

Increased Authority/Support

- Greater engagement from senior leadership
- Higher level position
- Greater scope of responsibility
- Increased autonomy in decision making
- Increased delegation of authority
- Increased funding/resources
- Increased support in dealing with poor performers
- Verbal encouragement to stay based on your value to the organization

Developmental Opportunity

- Mobility assignment
- Sabbatical
- Coaching
- Executive development training
- Reassignment to a new job within the agency

Compensation and Benefits

- Increase in pay
- Performance or other award
- Retention incentive
- Dual compensation waiver (if retiring)
- Student loan repayment
- Benefits

- Other. Please specify: _____

- Nothing would have encouraged me to stay. Please explain: _____—*if selected, can't select anything else.*

8. To what extent did each of the following contribute to your reasons for leaving the agency?

- Scale:**
- 1 - Not at all**
 - 2 - To a Small Extent**
 - 3- To a Moderate Extent**
 - 4 - To a Great Extent**
 - 5 - To a Very Great Extent**
 - NA - Not Applicable**

Advancement and Recognition

- Lack of opportunities for development 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Lack of opportunities for advancement 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Lack of recognition for accomplishments 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Performance evaluations 1 2 3 4 5 NA

Work Environment

- Senior leadership 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Political environment 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Organizational culture 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Job duties/responsibilities 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Supervisory duties/responsibilities 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Relationship with supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Relationship with colleagues 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Lack of autonomy in decision making 1 2 3 4 5 NA

Work-Life Balance

- Geographic reassignment 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Long work hours 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Work hours not flexible 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Workload 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Job stress
- Commute 1 2 3 4 5 NA

Personal Reasons

- More attractive job offer elsewhere 1 2 3 4 5 NA
- Desire to pursue education 1 2 3 4 5 NA

<input type="radio"/> Relocation	1	2	3	4	5	NA
<input type="radio"/> Personal health reasons	1	2	3	4	5	NA
<input type="radio"/> Care for a family member	1	2	3	4	5	NA
<input type="radio"/> Desire to leave the workforce	1	2	3	4	5	NA
<input type="radio"/> Desire to enjoy life without work commitments	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Compensation and Benefits

<input type="radio"/> Insufficient pay	1	2	3	4	5	NA
<input type="radio"/> Unsatisfactory benefits	1	2	3	4	5	NA
<input type="radio"/> Lack of Awards	1	2	3	4	5	NA

9. Please describe your most important reason for leaving. _____

10. What performance rating (or equivalent) did you receive on your last performance appraisal?

- Outstanding
- Exceeds fully successful
- Fully successful
- Minimally satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory
- I did not receive a performance rating—*branch to #12*
- I prefer not to respond.

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this rating was a reflection of your performance?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- I prefer not to respond

12. Please rank the following Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) in order of importance to achieve success in your position? **1= Most Important for Success; 5 = Least Important for Success**

- Leading Change

- Leading People
- Results Driven
- Business Acumen
- Building Coalitions

13. I would recommend this agency to others as a good place to work.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

13a. Please explain your answer _____

14. I would recommend employment in the Senior Executive Service to others.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

14a. Please explain your answer _____

15. If possible, would you work for this agency in the future as an employee or contractor?

- Yes, part-time.
- Yes, full-time.
- Yes, for a short-term assignment.
- No.

The reporting of demographic information is optional and will only be reported to agencies in an aggregated format.

16. What type of agency do you work for? **(A list of agencies will be provided)**

- Cabinet Level Agency
 - [Please select your agency.](#)
- Independent Agency
 - Please select your agency.

16a. Do you work in an Office of the Inspector General?

- Yes
- No

16b. If you do not see your agency in the previous lists, please provide the name of your agency below. _____

17. How long have you worked in this agency?

- Less than one year
- 1-3 years
- 4-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- More than 20 years

18. How long have you been a member of the Senior Executive Service?

- Less than one year
- 1-3 years
- 4-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- More than 20 years

19. What is your age group?

- Under 30
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59

- 60 or older

20. What type of appointment do you hold?

- Career
- Non-Career
- Limited Term
- Limited Emergency

21. From where were you appointed to your senior position?

- From a Federal service position
- From the private sector
- From state or local government
- From military service
- From academia
- Reinstatement
- Other. Please specify: _____

22. Please select the racial category or categories with which you most closely identify (mark as many as apply).

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

23. Are you Hispanic or Latino?

- Yes
- No

24. Does your agency have any formal succession planning efforts for executives? (e.g., interviews/debriefs that took place prior to your departure to ensure smooth transition of your duties)

- Yes
- No

25. Have there been—or were there prior to your leaving—any efforts made to involve you in preparing your successor?

- Yes
- No

26. If given the opportunity, what would you have changed at your agency, in the Federal Government, or the SES?

27. What did you like best about working in your agency?

28. Please provide any other comments:

**** If you are interested in serving as a mentor after your departure from the organization, please contact OPM's Executive Resources office at 202-606-8046 or by email at HRDLeadership@opm.gov.**



U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Work-Life & Leadership and Executive Development

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