

Young People & Federal Careers

There is a retirement wave hitting the federal workforce. By 2017, more than 30 percent of federal workers—nearly 600,000 employees—will be eligible to retire.

[GAO \(Report No. GAO-14-215\)](#)

Only 2 percent of college students said they planned on joining the federal government after graduation.

[Study for Partnership for Public Service & the National Association of Colleges & Employers](#)

Most kids say they would rather be a professional athlete than president.

[Penguin Young Readers Poll](#)

In order to compete in the future, our country needs to attract the best and the brightest. We need to restore the prestige to public service so more young people consider the federal government as a desirable career. The work of the government is too important to continually denigrate our federal employees.

Some facts:

- The federal government offers tremendous [opportunity](#) to do fascinating and vital work.
- Federal workers are law enforcement officers who protect our borders, nuclear scientists who safeguard nuclear power plants, bank examiners who keep our bank deposits safe, food inspectors and chemists who keep an eye on our food and medicines, conservationists who protect our natural environment, historians who preserve our national heritage and much more. Their work impacts every American.
- Federal employees are highly educated and highly skilled. More than half of the [federal workforce](#)—56 percent—work as lawyers, judges, scientists, engineers.
- In fact, 50 federal workers have won the [Nobel prize](#).
- About 21 percent of federal workers have a master's degree, professional degree or doctorate versus 9 percent in the private sector. Further, only one in five [federal employees](#) has not attended college; in the private sector, that number is 41 percent, about double that of the federal workforce.
- Parents have a tremendous influence on their kids' college and [career decisions](#). But if parents don't talk their children about federal service, there is less of a chance that your children will consider a federal career.
- NTEU surveyed 1,071 parents of children between ages 8 to 22. Parents reported that 38 percent of kids are interested in STEM careers; 13 percent are interested in creative or entertainment careers; 17 percent are interested in law enforcement or trade careers and 12 percent are interested in other professional careers such as teacher or lawyer.
- Parents report that their kids want to work for major businesses (27%), their own business (22%) or local businesses (17%). Only 8% say their kids want to work for the federal government and only 6% are interested in military service.
- Only 37 percent of parents say they have encouraged their kids to consider a career with the federal government, while 63 percent have not, according to the [NTEU survey](#). However, majorities of parents have a very favorable impression of federal jobs. They say that federal jobs are stable and well paid (74%), provide career growth (70%), provide important services to the public (76%), and are personally fulfilling (56%).

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Summary

NTEU has launched an online and social media campaign called “They Work for US” to change the conversation about federal employees and federal careers. Parents can go to theyworkforus.org to learn more about federal careers and the kinds of work federal employees do.

Citations

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