About this report
This report was prepared by Rivka Liss-Levinson, PhD (Center for State and Local Government Excellence) and describes results of a survey conducted with Greenwald & Associates. SLGE is grateful to ICMA-RC for their guidance and support of this project. Thank you to Anne Phelan for copy editing this report and the ICMA-RC Marketing Design team.
Executive Summary

This report presents the results of a 2020 national online survey conducted by the Center for State and Local Government Excellence (SLGE) and Greenwald & Associates of 1,008 state and local government employees, assessing their views on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on perceptions of their finances and short- and medium-term employment outlook. Key survey findings are as follows:

Financial Impact

- 56 percent of respondents report that they and their family have been negatively impacted financially by the COVID-19 pandemic, and 47 percent expect the financial impact to be worse over the course of the next year.
- 57 percent say debt is currently a problem for them and their family, and 25 percent expect they will take on more debt than they have now over the course of the next year.
- Prior to the pandemic, only 29 percent of respondents had an emergency fund fully funded. Over the course of the next year, 43 percent of those with an emergency fund expect they will have to dip into it to make ends meet.
- Over the course of the next year, 26 percent expect they will reduce the amount they are saving for retirement, 30 percent expect they will reduce the amount they are saving in general, and 59 percent expect they will spend less than normal in comparison to what they would have spent without the pandemic.
- 65 percent are concerned that the pandemic and the related economic crisis will impact being able to retire when they want, and 74 percent are concerned it will impact being able to save enough to be financially secure throughout retirement.

Job Impact

- 85 percent of respondents report that the pandemic has impacted the nature of their job (e.g., what they do, where they work, how they go about the tasks required). Among those reporting an impact, 63 percent report that it has been difficult adjusting to these changes.
- 74 percent report at least some remote work currently; of those, only 18 percent were working remotely before the pandemic.
- Among those working remotely for the first time or more than before, 55 percent report that it has been difficult adjusting to remote work.
- 70 percent consider their job at least somewhat risky in terms of their potential exposure to people who may have COVID-19.
- Respondents are most likely to think that maintained social distancing (70 percent) and an increase of health precautions (66 percent) are the practices and policies that will change at their workplace going forward this year.
- 61 percent agree that they value serving their community during this difficult time, 48 percent feel that the pandemic has made the public more aware of the importance of what they do, and 45 percent report that working in the public sector during the pandemic is a source of pride.
- Going forward, respondents are most worried about keeping their family safe from contracting the virus (83 percent) and staying protected from contracting the virus at work (80 percent).
Spouse Job Impact

- Among those with a spouse or partner, 70 percent indicated that their spouse/partner is employed for pay full time or part time.
- 22 percent report that their spouse/partner’s employment status has changed as a result of the pandemic (e.g., layoff, reduced hours, or having to get a job or increase their hours).
- About 56 percent of those with a spouse/partner working report that they are concerned about the possibility of the spouse/partner’s job being negatively impacted by the pandemic (e.g., job loss, reduced hours or pay, furlough).

Other Issues

- Respondents are most likely to report pandemic-related feelings of stress (44 percent), anxiety (43 percent), and/or gratitude (33 percent) while at work.
- 74 percent are currently consuming a fair amount or a great deal of news/media about the pandemic.
- Respondents have substantially more trust in both state and local government leaders to make appropriate decisions regarding employee safety during the pandemic (both 67 percent) than they have in federal government leaders (39 percent).
- 57 percent say they have received just enough information regarding COVID-19 from their employer.
- Most report that the information they have received from their employer about employee safety (78 percent) and about changes to their job (72 percent) during the pandemic has been consistent with what they have heard from other government sources.

Financial Profile

- 65 percent are very or extremely confident about making financial decisions on their own in general, while 53 percent are very or extremely confident about making financial decisions on their own during the pandemic and related economic crisis.
- 23 percent of respondents currently work with one or more financial professionals.
- 53 percent agree that they have been able to get the help, information, and resources they need to make smart financial decisions during the pandemic and related economic crisis.
Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a pandemic. Since then, the United States and countries throughout the world have seen cases of COVID-19 soar. As of June 15, 2020, nearly 8 million cases and 435,000 deaths have been recorded around the world, with the United States accounting for more than 2 million cases and 115,000 deaths. During this time, the crucial role that state and local government workers play in everyday activities has been more visible than usual. From emergency medical technicians and nurses to teachers, public safety personnel, and public health professionals, the more than 19 million state and local government workers have been integral to keeping the country running.

As states and localities across the nation begin to reopen businesses and relax physical distancing restrictions, they also face significant public health and economic challenges, from anxiety about an anticipated second wave of COVID-19 cases to a need to balance agency budgets within the context of severe revenue shortfalls. In order to ensure that state and local governments have a resilient workforce that can respond to these challenges, it is important to first understand the public sector workforce’s perceptions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, how their jobs and personal finances have already been affected, and what they anticipate to be the short- and medium-term impacts of the pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis.

This report assesses state and local government employees’ views on the COVID-19 pandemic’s impacts on their finances, job, debt profile, and related issues. It presents the results of an online survey of 1,008 state and local government employees conducted by SLGE and Greenwald & Associates May 4-20, 2020.
**Survey Results**

**Sample Demographics**

The demographic characteristics of the 1,008 survey respondents are displayed in Table 1. Survey respondents are majority female, white or Caucasian, working for state government, and have total annual personal and household incomes of less than $75,000. Respondents have a median age of 45 and tend to be well educated (69 percent have received their bachelor’s or a graduate/professional degree). There is more variation in respondents’ marital status, whether they have children/stepchildren, geographic region, industry, and number of years working for their employer.

The demographic characteristics of the survey sample generally align with the overall state and local government workforce profile. Of the approximately 19.6 million state and local government employees working across the United States in 2018, 11.2 million work in education and nearly 1 million are in police protection, with the rest filling all other state and local positions (e.g., fire/EMS, public works, transportation, hospitals). As of 2018, state and local workers have an average age of 44.5 years; 60 percent are female; and 55 percent have a bachelor’s, advanced, or professional degree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White or Caucasian</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino/Spanish descent</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration and Finance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Human Services</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Safety</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Works/Utilities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Annual Personal Income</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $25,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 to $49,999</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 to $74,999</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 to $99,999</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 to $124,999</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$125,000 to $149,999</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 or more</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Annual Household Income</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $25,000</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 to $49,999</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 to $74,999</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 to $99,999</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 to $124,999</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$125,000 to $149,999</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 or more</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years Working with Current Employer</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5 years</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15 years</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20 years</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ years</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Annual Household Income</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $25,000</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,000 to $49,999</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 to $74,999</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 to $99,999</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 to $124,999</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$125,000 to $149,999</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 or more</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State government</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n=1,008; some figures may not total to 100% due to rounding or to dual racial/ethnic identification.
Financial Impact

More than half (56 percent) of state and local government employees surveyed report that they and their family have been negatively impacted financially by the COVID-19 pandemic; 10 percent report that they have been negatively impacted financially to a significant extent (Figure 1).

When asked how they expect the pandemic will impact them financially over the course of the next year versus where they are now, 47 percent of respondents reported that they expect the financial impact to be somewhat or significantly worse, while 38 percent expect no change. Very few (9 percent) expect the financial impact to be better (Figure 2).
Respondents were asked to what extent debt (e.g., a mortgage, car loan, student loans, credit card debt, medical debt) is currently a problem for them and their family. As can be seen in Figure 3, 57 percent report that debt is either a major or a minor problem for them and their family, while 31 percent indicate that it is not a problem. Only 12 percent report not having any debt. Over the course of the next year, 1 in 4 respondents expect they will take on more debt than they currently have (Figure 4).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 2 out of 3 surveyed (68 percent) reported that they and their family had an emergency fund set up to help pay for major unexpected expenses or to cover necessities if they lost their main source of income (Figure 5). Among those with an emergency fund, 43 percent expect that they will have to dip into their emergency fund over the course of the next year to make ends meet; an additional 16 percent are unsure of whether or not they will have to do so (Figure 6).

When asked whether they expect that they will change the amount they are currently saving for retirement in the next year, 26 percent report that they will reduce their retirement savings. Fewer (15 percent) expect that they will increase their retirement savings. Half of respondents anticipate no change to their retirement savings in the next year (Figure 7).
When it comes to saving in general or for things other than retirement, a similar percentage of respondents expect that they will reduce the amount they are currently saving over the course of the next year (30 percent) as expect that they will increase the amount they are saving (27 percent). Compared with the 50 percent who expect no change in the amount they contribute toward their retirement savings over the next year (see Figure 7), fewer respondents (36 percent) expect no change to the amount they are saving in general over the next year (Figure 8).

Respondents were also asked how concerned they are that the COVID-19 pandemic and the related economic crisis will impact being able to retire when they want and being able to save enough to be financially secure throughout retirement. Results are displayed in Figure 9. Respondents show a good deal of variation in the extent to which they are concerned about being able to retire when they want. While 38 percent are very or extremely concerned about this, 35 percent are not too concerned or not at all concerned. Concerns are somewhat greater for ability to be financially secure throughout retirement. While 41 percent of respondents are very or extremely concerned about their ability to save enough to be financially secure throughout retirement, fewer (26 percent) are not too concerned or not at all concerned.
Job Impact

The vast majority of respondents (85 percent) report that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the nature of their job (e.g., what they do, where they work, how they go about the tasks required), with 41 percent indicating that it has impacted the nature of their job significantly (Figure 10).

Among those reporting some impact, respondents are relatively split in terms of how difficult it has been to adjust to those changes. While 26 percent report that it has been very or extremely difficult adjusting to the changes to their job as a result of the pandemic, 38 percent report that it has been somewhat difficult and 37 percent report that it has been not too difficult or not at all difficult (Figure 11).

To better understand how the nature of their job has changed, respondents were asked about their current work location. As displayed in Figure 12, while 42 percent are currently working remotely full-time (i.e., they do not go into a workplace or interact in-person with other people), another 29 percent are working mostly or somewhat remotely. Meanwhile, 1 in 4 respondents (26 percent) are not working remotely— their job requires them to go into a workplace and/or interact in-person or with other people.

---

**Figure 10.** Extent to Which COVID-19 Has Impacted Nature of Job (n=989)

- Impacted significantly: 41%
- Impacted somewhat: 13%
- No impact: 1%
- Not sure: 13%

---

**Figure 11.** Difficulty Adjusting to Changes in Nature of Job Due to COVID-19 (n=815)

- Extremely difficult: 8%
- Very difficult: 18%
- Somewhat difficult: 38%
- Not too difficult: 31%
- Not at all difficult: 6%

---

**Figure 12.** Current Work Situation (n=989)

- Working fully remotely and do not go into a workplace or interact in-person with other people: 42%
- Working mostly remotely and do occasionally have to go into a workplace and/or interact in-person with other people: 26%
- Working remotely some of the week, but regularly go into a workplace and/or interact in-person with other people: 8%
- Not working remotely — job requires going into a workplace and/or interacting in-person with other people: 3%
- Other: 21%
Among those engaging in any remote work currently, only 18 percent had been working remotely prior to the pandemic (Figure 13).

For those working remotely for the first time or more than before due to COVID-19, 22 percent have found it very or extremely difficult to adjust to remote work. About twice as many (45 percent) report that this adjustment has been not too difficult or not been difficult at all; the remaining 33 percent characterize the adjustment as somewhat difficult (Figure 14).

The majority of respondents (70 percent) who are engaged in remote work now or prior to the pandemic perceive their exposure at their job to people who may have COVID-19 as at least somewhat risky; 40 percent believe that it is very or extremely risky (Figure 15).
Respondents were also asked to rate their concern about several elements of their job going forward. Results are displayed in Figure 16. Respondents were most concerned about keeping their family safe from contracting the virus (83 percent were at least somewhat concerned) and staying protected from contracting the virus at work or once they return to the workplace (80 percent were at least somewhat concerned). Approximately half of respondents indicated concerns about having their pay reduced (52 percent), having their employee benefits package reduced in some way (50 percent), or having their hours severely reduced or being furloughed (49 percent). Slightly fewer (40 percent) were at least somewhat concerned with losing their job.

When asked their views on how they expect work practices, policies, and/or the work environment to change at their workplace going forward this year, respondents were most likely to think that there will be maintained social distancing (70 percent) and/or an increase in health protections, such as wearing masks and gloves (66 percent). Far fewer (14 percent) thought that there would be an increase to sick leave or PTO provided, and only 4 percent did not think that any of these changes would occur going forward this year (Figure 17).

Respondents were also asked about how they are feeling about working in the public sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. As displayed in Figure 18, they were most likely to value serving their community during this difficult time (61 percent), to feel that the pandemic has made the public more aware of the importance of what they do (48 percent), and to report that working in the public sector during the pandemic is a source of pride (45 percent). Only 1 in 5 respondents indicated that working during the pandemic has made them consider changing jobs.

**Figure 16. Concerns about Job Going Forward (n=1,008)**

- **Keeping family safe from contracting the virus**: 26% extremely concerned, 29% very concerned, 28% somewhat concerned, 12% not too concerned, 5% not at all concerned.
- **Staying protected from contracting the virus at work (or once return to the workplace)**: 25% extremely concerned, 25% very concerned, 30% somewhat concerned, 15% not too concerned, 5% not at all concerned.
- **Having pay reduced (n=989)**: 14% extremely concerned, 13% very concerned, 25% somewhat concerned, 26% not too concerned, 23% not at all concerned.
- **Having employee benefits package reduced in some way**: 11% extremely concerned, 17% very concerned, 22% somewhat concerned, 26% not too concerned, 23% not at all concerned.
- **Having hours severely reduced or being furloughed (n=989)**: 12% extremely concerned, 14% very concerned, 23% somewhat concerned, 27% not too concerned, 24% not at all concerned.
- **Losing job**: 8% extremely concerned, 11% very concerned, 21% somewhat concerned, 35% not too concerned, 25% not at all concerned.
**Figure 17.** Perceptions of How Work and Workplace Environment Will Change Going Forward This Year (n=1,008)

- **Maintained social distancing:** 70%
- **An increase of health precautions, such as wearing masks and gloves:** 66%
- **Some employees will remain remote (at least to some extent):** 49%
- **Health checks before going to work, such as checking for a fever:** 46%
- **Office/workplace will be redesigned with health/safety in mind:** 45%
- **An increased reliance on tele-conferencing platforms and technology:** 44%
- **Less travel, either domestic or international:** 32%
- **An increase to sick leave or PTO time provided:** 14%
- **None of the above:** 4%
- **Other:** 2%

**Figure 18.** Feelings about Working in Public Sector During COVID-19 (n=989)

- **I value serving my community during this difficult time:**
  - Strongly agree: 22%
  - Somewhat agree: 39%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 32%
  - Somewhat disagree: 5%
  - Strongly disagree: 2%
- **The pandemic has made the public more aware of the importance of what I do:**
  - Strongly agree: 19%
  - Somewhat agree: 29%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 30%
  - Somewhat disagree: 12%
  - Strongly disagree: 10%
- **Working in the public sector during the coronavirus pandemic is a source of pride:**
  - Strongly agree: 15%
  - Somewhat agree: 30%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 42%
  - Somewhat disagree: 8%
  - Strongly disagree: 5%
- **The coronavirus pandemic makes my work feel more meaningful:**
  - Strongly agree: 13%
  - Somewhat agree: 26%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 39%
  - Somewhat disagree: 13%
  - Strongly disagree: 10%
- **The risks I’m taking working during the coronavirus pandemic are not on par with my compensation:**
  - Strongly agree: 14%
  - Somewhat agree: 18%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 39%
  - Somewhat disagree: 17%
  - Strongly disagree: 12%
- **Working during the coronavirus pandemic has made me consider changing jobs:**
  - Strongly agree: 7%
  - Somewhat agree: 13%
  - Neither agree nor disagree: 19%
  - Somewhat disagree: 20%
  - Strongly disagree: 42%
Spouse Job Impact

To obtain a more complete picture of how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting state and local government workers, respondents with a spouse or partner were asked a series of questions to assess how the pandemic is impacting their spouse/partner’s job.

Among those with a spouse/partner, 70 percent report that their spouse/partner is employed either full-time or part-time, while 30 percent report that their spouse/partner is not employed for pay (Figure 19).

For most of these respondents (78 percent), their spouse/partner’s employment status has not changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 20). When it has changed, it generally is because the spouse/partner was laid off or had their hours reduced.

Those with a spouse/partner working report varying levels of concern about the spouse/partner’s job being negatively impacted by the pandemic (Figure 21). While 28 percent are very or extremely concerned about this, 43 percent are not too concerned or not at all concerned; the remaining 28 percent are somewhat concerned.
Other Issues

When asked what emotions they are feeling while at work about the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents were most likely to report feeling stressed (44 percent), anxious (43 percent), and/or grateful (33 percent). Unsurprisingly, as can be seen in Figure 22, respondents were generally more likely to endorse feeling negative rather than positive emotions while at work about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 22. Emotions Feeling at Work about COVID-19 (n=989)
Respondents’ self-reported consumption of news/media about the COVID-19 pandemic was varied, with nearly equal percentages consuming a great deal of news/media (25 percent) as not very much media (24 percent). About half of respondents (49 percent) indicated that they are consuming a fair amount of news/media, and only 2 percent reported no current news/media consumption about the pandemic (Figure 23).

Respondents were also asked how much trust they have in government leaders to make appropriate decisions regarding employee safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. About 2 in 3 respondents reported a fair amount or a great deal of trust in state government leaders (67 percent) and/or in local government leaders (67 percent). Trust in federal government leaders was much lower, with only 39 percent reporting a fair amount or a great deal of trust in federal government leaders’ ability to make appropriate decisions about employee safety (Figure 24).

When it comes to the amount of information respondents have received from their employer regarding COVID-19, more than half (57 percent) report that they have received just enough information, while 13 percent believe they have received too much information, and 22 percent believe they have received too little information (Figure 25).
Respondents were also asked to what extent the information they have received from their employer about employee safety and about changes to their job (e.g., changes to procedures and policies, hours, nature of job) during the pandemic has been consistent with what they have heard from other government sources (e.g., federal or state). As displayed in Figure 26, respondents reported fairly similar, high levels of consistency on both of these issues, with 78 percent believing that information about employee safety has been consistent, and 72 percent believing that information about changes to their job has been consistent.

### Financial Profile

Respondents were asked how confident they are about making financial decisions on their own, both in general and during the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic crisis. Results are displayed in Figure 27. While 65 percent of respondents reported being very or extremely confident about making financial decisions on their own in general, fewer (53 percent) indicated that they are very or extremely confident during the pandemic.
This confidence in making financial decisions on their own aligns with the finding that only 23 percent of respondents report that they are currently working with one or more financial professionals (Figure 28).

Finally, respondents were asked to what extent they have been able to get the help, information, and resources they need to make smart financial decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic crisis. As can be seen in Figure 29, just over half of respondents (53 percent) agree that they have been able to get the help, information, and resources needed; only 9 percent report that they have not been able to get this help.
Conclusion

This survey assessed state and local government employees’ views on the COVID-19 pandemic’s impacts on their finances, job, debt profile, and other related issues. The survey results indicate that many state and local government workers and their families have already been negatively impacted financially by the COVID-19 pandemic and expect the financial impact to be worse over the course of the next year. They are concerned that the pandemic and the related economic crisis will impact their ability to retire when they want and to save enough to be financially secure throughout retirement. The pandemic has impacted the nature of their job (e.g., what they do, where they work, how they go about the tasks required), and many have had difficulty adjusting to these changes, especially remote work.

While state and local government workers are worried about keeping their family safe from contracting the virus and staying protected from contracting the virus at work, they also value serving their community during this difficult time, believe that the pandemic has made the public more aware of the importance of what they do, and feel that working in the public sector during the pandemic is source of pride. Few indicate that working during the pandemic has made them consider changing jobs.

The road ahead due to the COVID-19 pandemic for state and local governments is not going to be easy. Cities, towns, and villages are projecting a $360-billion revenue shortfall between 2020 and 2022, some states are planning for tax revenue declines of over 20 percent, and state and local governments have already shed nearly 1.5 million jobs from February 2020 to May 2020.

However, by assessing how state and local government workers are feeling about the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact that it has already had—and will have—on their finances and job, state and local government leaders, retirement plan sponsors, human resources directors, city and county managers, and other stakeholders can help ensure that states and localities are able to respond to the challenges ahead, with a resilient workforce that can continue to perform the critical services that they provide in states and localities across the country.
Methods

Information for this report was collected from a 10-minute survey with 1,008 full-time state and local government employees. The online survey was fielded by Greenwald & Associates from May 4 through May 20, 2020. The final data were weighted by gender, age, household income, and industry type to reflect the distribution of the state and local government workforce as found in the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey.

Endnotes


2 Johns Hopkins University, “COVID-19 Dashboard by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University.” Available at: https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html

3 While 58 percent of respondents in the current sample self-identify as working in state government, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports a total of approximately 5,199,000 individuals working in state government, and approximately 14,679,000 individuals working in local government as of February 2020 (See U.S. Census Bureau, “The Employment Situation – April 2020,” available at: https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf). One likely explanation for the large discrepancy between the survey sample and general population distribution for state vs. local employer is that some respondents in the current sample, particularly those in the education industry, may have misclassified their employer based on having a statewide retirement plan (e.g., they work for a local school district within a state but are part of the state retirement system, and so categorize themselves as state employees). Relatedly, some in the education industry may not readily identify as “local government,” but rather, as working for a school district. Without that answer available on the survey, they may have considered their employer as being rolled up into state government rather than local government.

4 The mean age of respondents (45.13) is nearly identical to the median.

5 U.S. Census Bureau, “2018 Government Employment and Payroll Tables.” Available at: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/apes/data/datasetstables/annual-apes.html


Board Of Directors

Robert J. O’Neill, Jr., Chair
Fellow, Joseph P Riley, Jr. Center for Livable Communities, College of Charleston; former executive director, ICMA

Robert P. Schultze, Vice Chair
Former president and CEO, ICMA-RC; former director, Virginia Retirement System

Donald J. Borut
Former executive director, National League of Cities

Jeffrey L. Esser
Executive Director Emeritus, Government Finance Officers Association

The Honorable William D. Euille
Founder, Principal, and CEO, The Euille Group; former mayor, City of Alexandria, Virginia

Lynne R. Ford
CEO and President, ICMA-RC

Alex H. Hannah
Managing Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer, ICMA-RC

Peter A. Harkness
Founder and Publisher Emeritus, Governing Magazine

Marc A. Ott
Executive Director, ICMA

Scott D. Pattison
Deputy Executive Director of the Multistate Tax Commission; former executive director, National Governors Association

William T. Pound
Former executive director, National Conference of State Legislatures

Antoinette A. Samuel
Former deputy executive director, National League of Cities

Raymond C. Scheppach, Ph.D.
Professor, University of Virginia, Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy; former executive director, National Governors Association

SLGE STAFF

President/CEO
Joshua M. Franzel, Ph.D.

Director of Research
Rivka Liss-Levinson, Ph.D.

Senior Research Associate
Gerald W. Young

Operations Manager
Bonnie J. Faulk

The Center gratefully acknowledges the financial support from ICMA-RC to undertake this research project.
About the Center for State and Local Government Excellence

The Center for State and Local Government Excellence (SLGE) helps local and state governments become knowledgeable and competitive employers so they can attract and retain a talented and committed workforce. SLGE identifies leading practices and conducts research on public retirement plans, health and wellness benefits, workforce demographics and skill set needs, and labor force development. SLGE brings state and local leaders together with respected researchers. Access all SLGE publications and sign up for its newsletter at slge.org and follow @4govtexcellence on Twitter.

About ICMA-RC

Founded in 1972 through the assistance of a Ford Foundation grant, ICMA-RC’s mission is to help public sector employees build retirement security. It all began when the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) had the vision to create an organization dedicated to the retirement needs of public sector employees, and thus ICMA-RC was formed. ICMA-RC was founded to provide portable retirement benefits for city and county managers, enabling accumulated retirement assets to be transferred between employers. Today, ICMA-RC serves more than a million participant accounts and about 9,000 plans across the country. Visit icmarc.org to learn more.