



The Council
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Representation in State Government Workforces: A 50-state Scan

CSG STATE EXCHANGE ON PUBLIC SERVANT
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

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Executive Summary

In the U.S., state governments employed 3,825,097 full-time workers in 2022, around 1.5% of the total population. This makes state governments one of the largest employers in the country. However, in recent years state government employment growth has lagged behind the growth seen in the private sector. By the end of 2022, state and local government employment was still 2.3% below pre-pandemic levels according to the Economic Policy Institute, driven largely by vacancies in public education and public health. Creating robust and diverse pipelines to state government careers is one way to fill these job shortages in the coming years.

Through legislation, executive orders and other actions/policies, states take a variety of approaches to recruiting and retaining public employees from different backgrounds, including the development of equal employment opportunity offices, creation of apprenticeship and internship programs, providing opportunities for veterans and individuals with disabilities, and removing barriers to employment. In this resource, CSG provides an overview of the research on representative bureaucracy and research on efforts to build robust pipelines to state government workforces. Finally, this document analyzes national data on state government workforces compared to the general population of the U.S. on several key dimensions, such as sex, race and ethnicity, wages, and educational attainment.

Method of Research

CSG conducted a 50-state scan of relevant state legislation using FiscalNote and reviewed resources from reputable organizations working in this space to find relevant legislation and executive orders that have been enacted. This scan was conducted by searching for bills and policies referencing topics such as "diversity," "DEI," "DEIA," "state government representation," "diversity and inclusion," and other relevant key words. Additionally, state departments of personnel and administration websites offered insights into current state DEI policies and initiatives. Note that this scan primarily focuses on states that are not participating in the 2023 State Exchange on Public Servant Recruitment and Retention, since those are outlined in more detail in the state two-page briefs.

The Benefits of a Representative Bureaucracy

Research suggests that a state workforce that has representation provides those living in the state with benefits, as well as those working for the state (The Concept of Representation, Pitkin 1972). However, representation can be defined in many ways. In a political context, researchers provide a broad conceptual framework for understanding representation, outlining three types: descriptive representation, symbolic representation, and substantive representation.

Descriptive representation is proportionality — essentially, a body (elected or otherwise) serves as a mirror of the population it is meant to represent (such as the citizens of a state). In other words, the representative body looks similar to what would be attained by random selection. With descriptive representation, there is an assumption that individuals' characteristics inform the actions they take. That is, we generally think

that descriptive representation affects substantive representation. Substantive representation is an individual, such as a member of Congress, would represent their district, acting as a representative on behalf of the public (Pitkin 1972). Finally, in symbolic representation, an individual serves as a symbol for a group or idea. For example, the President symbolically represents the entire United States.

The idea that a state government's workforce should roughly mirror the demographic composition of the general public of the state — that is, it should have high levels of descriptive representation — is called representative bureaucracy (Ricucci & Saidel, 1997). For example, if women make up 50% of the state's population, then women should also occupy roughly 50% of the state government's workforce, when representative bureaucracy is the goal.

When a state's bureaucracy is representative, the state's government will generally be viewed as being more responsive to citizens' demands, more legitimate, and will tend to make policies and programmatic decisions that are in line with the individuals living within that state (Lewis & Cho, 2010). The composition of a state government's workforce illustrates the level of openness to new ideas and to individuals and is an indicator of equality of opportunity for persons of all backgrounds to work in the bureaucracy (Ricucci & Saidel, 1997). Moreover, it promotes legitimacy of the government to diverse communities and provides symbolic value to have representation of diverse individuals within the government (Ricucci & Saidel, 1997).

Representation in state governments may be passive representation, such as numerical representation or active representation. Passive representation is the degree to which the state government workforce is representative of — or similar to — the population within the state, without considering things like access to power (e.g. occupying higher level positions) and behavior (that is, working on behalf of a group). Passive representation is simple to quantify, but incomplete. Active representation — individuals working on behalf of and work to advance the interests of groups with whom they share origin (Rosenthal & Bell, 2003) — is arguably more important, but more difficult to measure. For example, women and people of color are often

DESCRIPTIVE

REPRESENTATION – A body (elected or otherwise) serves as a mirror of the population it is meant to represent (such as the citizens of a state), so a representative body is proportional to a random selection of its population.

SUBSTANTIVE

REPRESENTATION – An individual, such as a member of Congress, represents their district, acting as a representative on behalf of the public.

SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION

– An individual, such as the President of the United States, serves as a symbol for a group or an idea.

REPRESENTATIVE

BUREAUCRACY – The idea that a state government's workforce should roughly mirror the demographic composition of the general public of the state.

not proportionately represented in the top positions within state government and tend to be employed in entry- or lower-level positions. Thus, their participation in the state government may appear to be proportional to the larger population of the state but does not translate into real power within the bureaucracy (Brudney et al., 2000). While research that examines active representation in the state and local government workforce is limited, the research that does exist suggests that there are an underrepresentation of women and people of color, especially at higher levels, within the state government workforce.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in State Government Workforces

One way of working toward representative bureaucracy is to recruit diverse job candidates and create workplaces that achieve inclusivity while striving for equity between employees. Diversity broadly defined includes racial and ethnic diversity, gender, age, veteran status, and disability status, religion, LGBTQIA+, national origin, and educational attainment. Whether one comes from an urban or rural environment, a tribal population, and/or one's political ideology might also be considered. According to MissionSquare Research, there are several challenges to diversifying state government employment. These challenges often include lack of diversity in key positions such as management and public safety, ongoing waves of retirement, overrepresentation of specific demographic groups in select industries and occupations, discrimination in the workplace environment, difficulties finding talented staff, and technological change impacting occupations and diversity within organization.

State governments are facing a looming retirement of a significant number of employees. States also face human resource issues including difficulties rewarding outstanding employees, filling key staff vacancies, recruitment procedures and retaining experienced staff. For example, in its 2022 workforce report, Arizona reported having the smallest state government in 25 years with a turnover of about 23%.

State governments have made progress towards eliminating racial and gender pay differences, more so than their private firm counterparts (Lewis et al., 2017). Research has shown that women and people of color are more likely to work for state governments. However, they are less likely to serve as managers than their white male counterparts (Hunt et al., 2019; Lewis et al., 2021). Women and people of color are not well represented in policy making positions in state government across the country (Ricucci & Saidel, 1997). They are overrepresented in certain departments such as housing, social services, sanitation and health care, while being underrepresented in financial administration, police and fire safety services. Differences in education levels, experience, veteran status and citizenship can all be subject to underrepresentation at the top levels. For example, veterans are more likely than non-veterans to work for state government when states offer preferences relative to private sector positions (Lewis & Pathak, 2014).

Programs that Help Representation

According to MissionSquare Research Institute, recruitment efforts to hire and retain a more diverse workforce include direct outreach to colleges, targeted neighborhood and demographic outreach, and outreach to veterans and military family members. The development of a civic curricula and K-12 partnerships is another way states have thought about the development of attitudes for public service workers. And those states that offer preference for or pay well relative to the private sector are more likely to employ veterans. Other recruitment efforts include reaching out to potential candidates via proactive recruitment efforts such as minority serving institutions (Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions), military liaison offices and specialty outlets, allowing virtual project teams, raising awareness of career opportunities, and emphasizing value and satisfaction of working in public service.

Programs that help with employee retention often include employee assistance programs, leadership development, workplace DEI training, cross-training, apprenticeships and mentoring. Within the past year, Mission Square Research Institute (2022) published a report that examines state government employees' general satisfaction with their employers and retention issues. More than 60% of respondents cited that their organization had experienced higher than average voluntary termination of employment resulting in increased workloads for those remaining. Many state employees cited low pay and stress in their increased workload work. To help retain employees, respondents recommended several actions to reduce employee stress. Providing salary increases, offering or increasing bonuses, hiring more staff or reducing workload, and providing respect, acknowledgement and encouragement were all suggested to help retain employees. In an effort to recruit and retain employees, Michigan and Nevada have implemented the use of hiring and retention bonuses.

State Summaries

States have taken many different approaches to the recruitment and retention of individuals applying for job vacancies within state government in hopes of creating a more representative governmental workforce. Some states approach the topic of representation directly, including Minnesota, Utah and Vermont, all of which promote that they are striving for representation within state government positions to include the perspectives of the diverse individuals who live in their state. States also commonly release executive orders that reaffirm their non-discrimination stance in government employment including their equal employment opportunity policies. For example, Arizona has several executive orders that have reaffirmed protecting equal opportunities while also prohibiting other practices such as race-based hair discrimination. In Wisconsin, Utah, Oklahoma and Idaho, executive orders and state policies have called for state employees at every level of government to engage in a community of respect. Wisconsin specifically mentions its equal employment opportunity and affirmative action programs as a way to recognize, respect and represent individuals from historically underrepresented and under-resourced communities. Using its affirmative action program, Wisconsin developed a plan to promote equity, inclusion and diversity within the state government workforce and reach diverse candidates.

States may often take a wide variety of approaches as they work to create a more representative state workforce. For example, an executive order in North Carolina seeks to broaden access to career opportunities in state government while eliminating barriers to employment. To do so, North Carolina is taking several approaches including:

- Implementing best recruiting practices for workers with disabilities.
- Eliminating questions about salary history.
- Removing criminal arrest history questions when possible.

To encourage the application of diverse candidates, many states have emphasized the substitution of experience in place of formal education and provided opportunities to gain experience through internships. Minnesota highlights its recruitment and outreach efforts as they form partnerships with several community organizations to assist workers with unusual barriers to employment. Pennsylvania has also adopted a policy that removes criminal arrest history questions in the first round of applications.

As many states may rely on their websites to recruit new prospective employees, states take a variety of approaches in what they highlight. To recruit new employees, states such as Delaware, Georgia, Minnesota, Ohio, Nebraska and Wyoming all highlight all of the benefits of working for state government, including health care, telecommuting options, and education credits. Other states such as Michigan provide career information and resources to help prospective employees as they search for state government positions.

In Washington, to increase the representation of its state government workforce, state agencies are required to create and maintain Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plans and procedures, train recruitment staff on mitigating bias in the job application process, set workforce diversity goals, and develop pathways and connections with higher education. Additionally, agencies must have policies to address diversity, equity and inclusion, a respectful work environment, anti-discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment policies and must have a policy for reasonable accommodation. In Washington, the development of an Equity Office was established to help promote equitable opportunities that reduce disparities and improve outcomes statewide.

Hawaii has sought to fill the vacancies within its state government workforce, and its human resources department has developed and established a working group to examine issues and opportunities for the improvement, recruitment and retention of public employees.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION & EEO OFFICES

Several states, including Alaska, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina and Virginia, have developed equal employment opportunity programs and affirmative action plans and policies. The program in Kansas seeks to prohibit discrimination and harassment in state employment. In Connecticut, recruitment strategies and engagement with organizations to recruit more diverse candidates is a priority.

In New Jersey, an executive order seeks to ensure that programs and policies that impact diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in state government are being effectively pursued and monitored.

Missouri and Rhode Island developed offices to address equal employment opportunities and diversity, equity and opportunity. In Ohio, as a part of its Office of Opportunity and Accessibility, the state has an equal employment opportunity coordinator. Within Missouri, executive order 10-24 established a state equal employment opportunity officer and a workforce diversity council. This council specifically seeks to recruit and retain diverse candidates within the state government workforce. In Alaska, Administrative Order 195, seeks to increase recruitment outreach, and each state agency must engage in active recruitment and outreach to reach a diverse segment of the population. In New Mexico, several state acts aimed at increasing and maintaining a diverse workforce include the Fair Pay for Women Act, which mandates women in government are paid equal salaries to that of their male counterparts. Alabama's Equal Pay Act and the establishment of its Office of Minority Affairs (available here: <https://aoma.alabama.gov/>) are efforts to help increase the number of minority workers within state government and to ensure that women and minorities receive equality in the workplace.

State EEO offices may also be charged with training for state agencies and new employees. For example, in Wisconsin, all state employees must attend mandatory equity and inclusion training while cabinet agencies must attend one DEI training per year.

APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

To increase the representation of individuals within state government workforces, some states, including Arkansas, Georgia, Michigan, Maryland, Idaho, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Montana and Wyoming, have developed and adopted apprenticeship programs. Texas authorized curriculum changes and graduation requirements to allow students to have extended practicums in local and state government work. While internship and apprenticeship policies vary across states, these programs allow high school, college and university students and other individuals to gain experience in state government work.

In Vermont, the implementation of "progressive employment" has individuals with disabilities experience short-term work experiences to develop skills and works to bring individuals with disabilities into state employment at a rate close to that of the general population of Vermont. States may also provide leadership and development opportunities for workers in their state governments. In Kentucky, the Governor's Minority Management Trainee program seeks to provide opportunities to minority employees and to assist with retainment and promotion.

AGING POLICIES

Massachusetts was designated an "age-friendly employer," recognizing the state as one of the best places for individuals over the age of 50 to work. In Illinois, the development of a committee of aging equity will examine long-term effects of demographic shifts on residents within state government. Mississippi also has a senior community service employment program to help individuals seeking state government employment.

VETERAN POLICIES

All states as well as the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories of Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands all provide veterans preference for public sector employment. However, states vary in terms of their recruitment efforts and information sharing on this topic.

In Maine, qualified veterans who apply for vacancies with the state government are guaranteed an interview. A state executive order mandates that those veterans who do not get hired for the state job in which they applied will receive guidance and information from the human resources department about alternative positions that are open that the individual would be qualified for.

Minnesota mandates that veterans who are not hired for a position that they applied for are notified in writing with reasons that they were not selected for the position.

POLICIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Several states, including Vermont, Maine, Utah, Connecticut, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Hawaii, Louisiana, South Carolina, Washington and Arizona, have developed unique programs to encourage and facilitate the employment of individuals with disabilities within their governmental workforce.

Minnesota utilizes an accessible applicant portal for its online job postings. In Vermont, a disability employment working group assists with making recommendations to increase access to state employment for individuals with disabilities. A Vermont executive order seeks to employ a representative number of qualified candidates with disabilities within state government. Maine state laws give individuals with disabilities a retention preference to protect these employees. In Minnesota, the Connect 700 program helps individuals with disabilities with a path to employment. The program allows individuals with disabilities to demonstrate their ability to perform for up to 700 hours on the job rather than requiring standard employment testing.

In Ohio, the governor established a disability inclusion program to help eliminate barriers to access, inclusion and employment as a part of the state's diversity, equity and inclusion plan for recruitment, retention, policy development and accessibility. Utah's Alternative State Application Program seeks to help with the recruitment and hiring process of individuals with disabilities.

National Data Analysis

EDUCATION: State government employees tend to be older and have more formal education compared to the national population. Just under 32% of state government employees have obtained a graduate or other professional degree as compared to 15.7% of the national population. The median age of state employees is 46, compared to 43 in the broader population.

WAGES: These higher levels of education and experience are likely a strong factor in state employees' slightly higher median wage of \$56,000 as compared to the national population's \$52,000. However, only 13% of state workers have a wage above \$100,000 as opposed to 18% of full-time workers, indicating a higher prevalence of higher paid positions within the broader national labor market — a pattern CSG observes in most of the states taking part in the 2023 CSG State Exchange on Public Servant Recruitment and Retention.

RACE: The state government workforce tends to have more white (62.9%), Black/African-American (14.64%), and Asian (6%) employees than we would expect compared to the overall population (which is 59.5% white, 12.1% Black/African-American, and 5.6% Asian, respectively). State employees are less likely to be Hispanic/Latino (11.6%) than the general population (18.4%).

GENDER: State government workers also tend to feature more women (58.2%) than the overall population (50.5%). Nationally, while state government workforces appear to have a lower percentage of those with a disability (8.7%) than the overall population (13.1%), we do not find a statistically significant difference between the groups, so we cannot say for certain whether people with disabilities are truly underrepresented among state government employees.

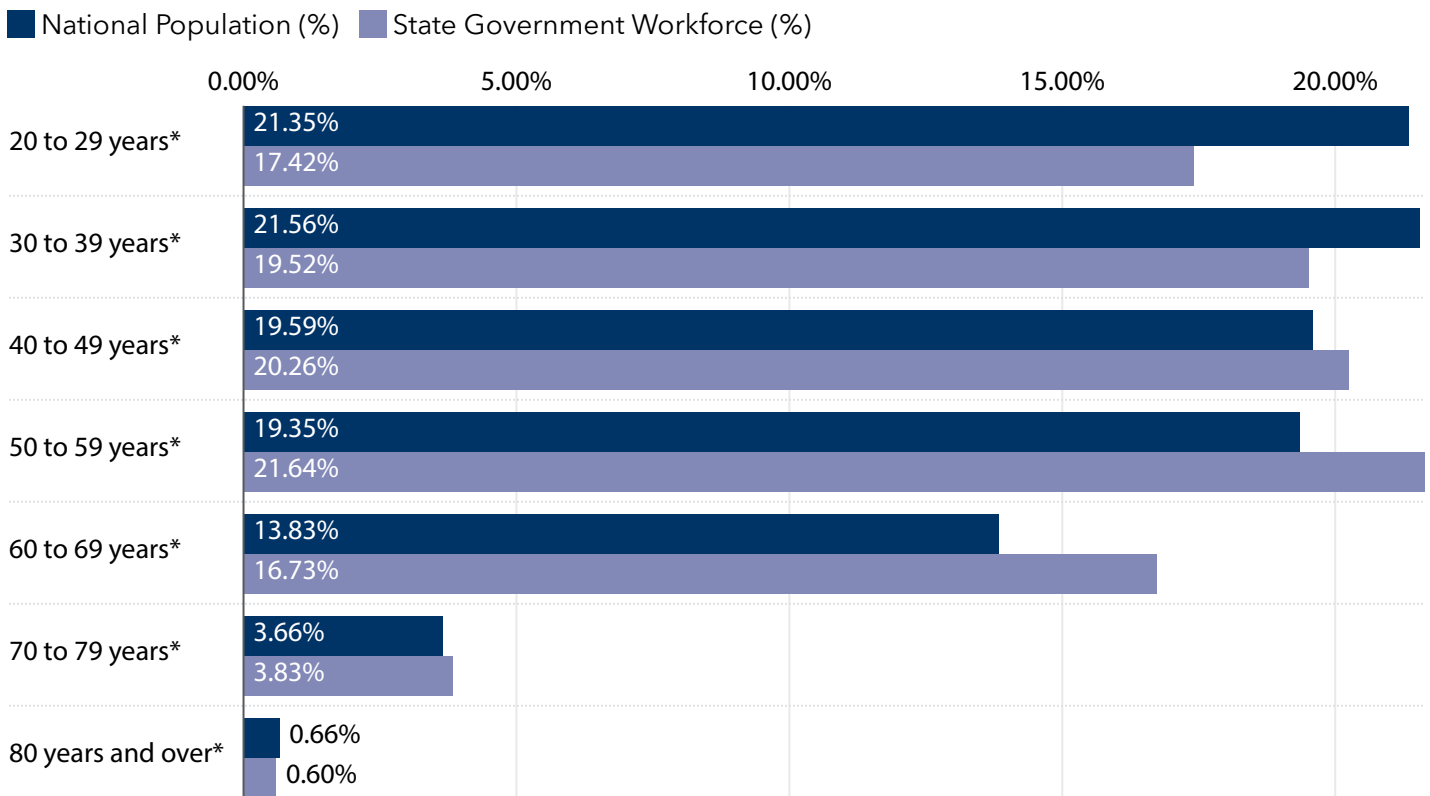
VETERAN STATUS: The state government workforce has a statistically higher proportion of people with veteran status than the general population (5.5% vs. 5.3%).

National Data Visualizations

Figure 1: Age

National - Age

Sample including individuals in the labor force and age 20 and older



*Asterisk indicates statistically significant demographic differences between the overall state population and the state government workforce at the 90% confidence level.

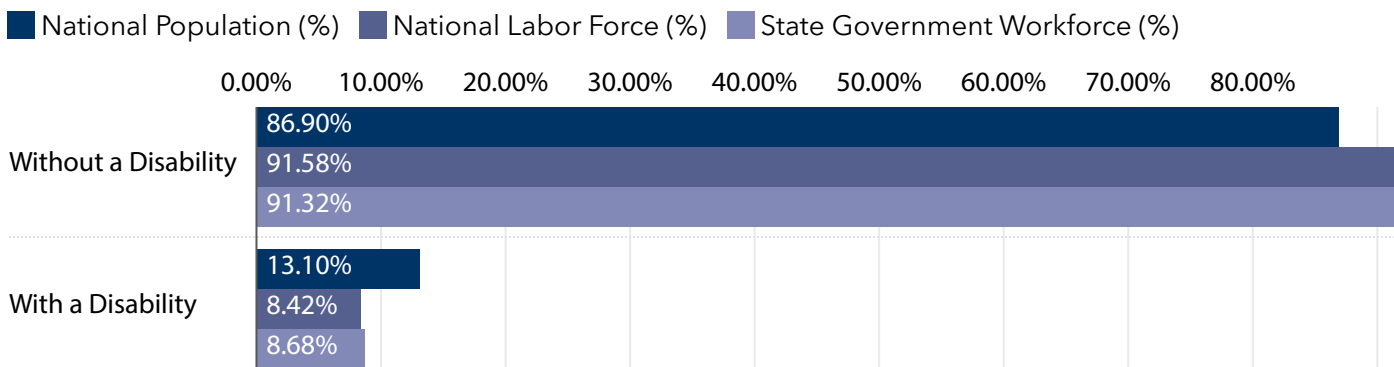
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year Data | Public Use Microdata Sample



Figure 2: Disability Status

National - Disability Status

Differences between overall state population, statewide labor force, and state government workforce



**Note that there is not a statistically significant difference between differences between the state labor force and the state government workforce at the 90% confidence level.*

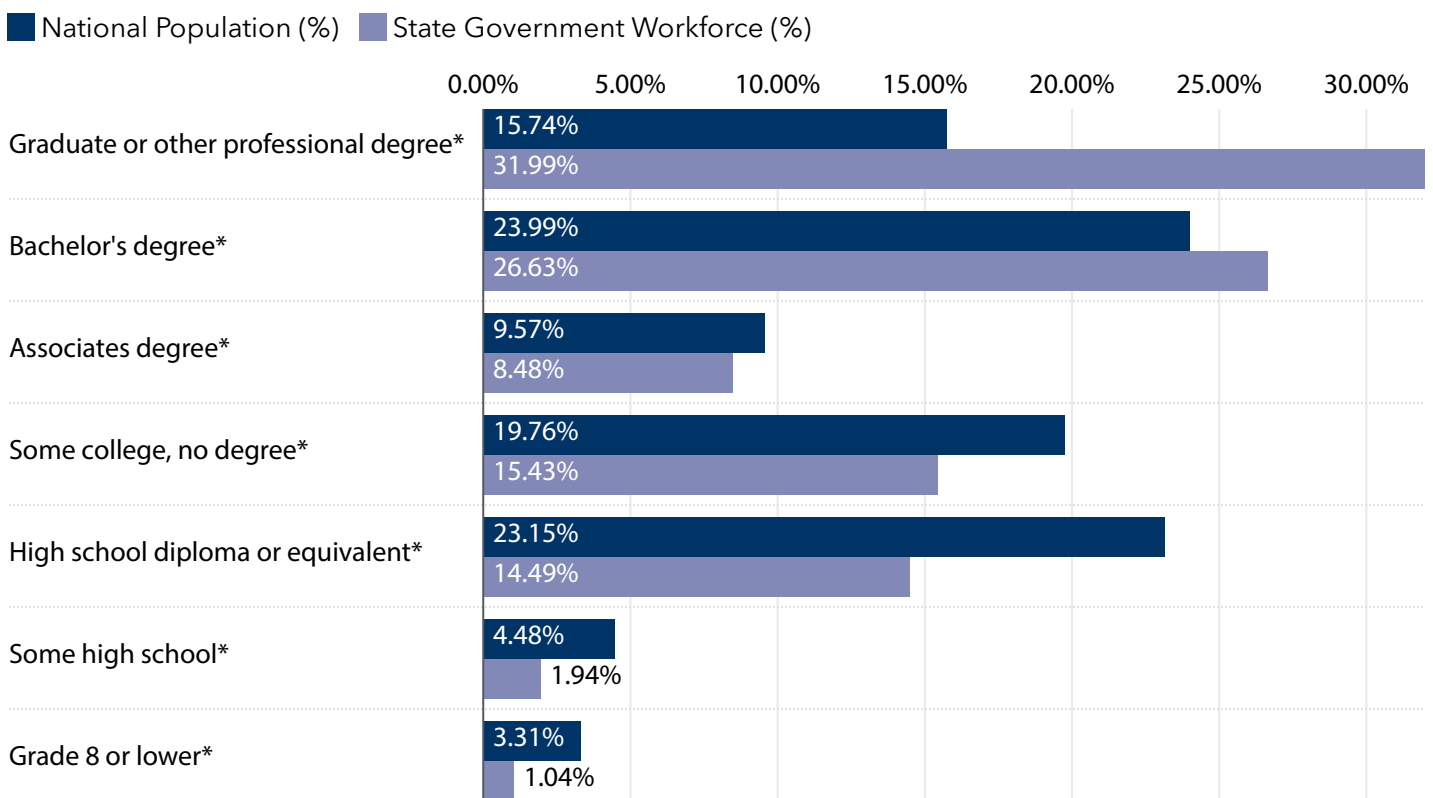
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year Data | Public Use Microdata Sample



Figure 3: Education

National - Education

For Civilian Employed, Full Time Workers, Above age 25



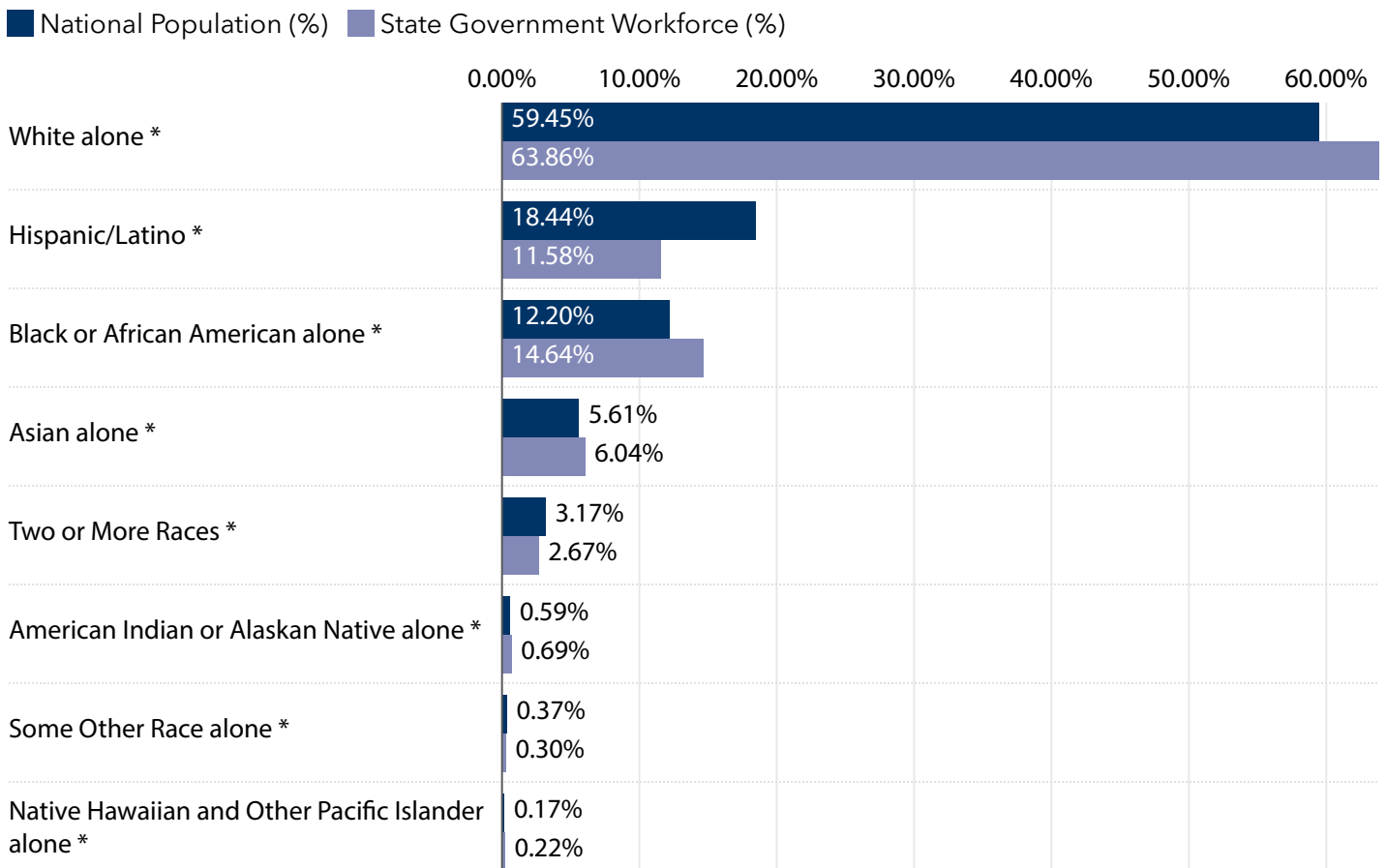
*Asterisk indicates statistically significant demographic differences between the overall state population and the state government workforce at the 90% confidence level.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year Data | Public Use Microdata Sample



Figure 4: Race and Ethnicity Representation

National - Race and Ethnicity



*Asterisk indicates statistically significant demographic differences between the overall state population and the state government workforce at the 90% confidence level.

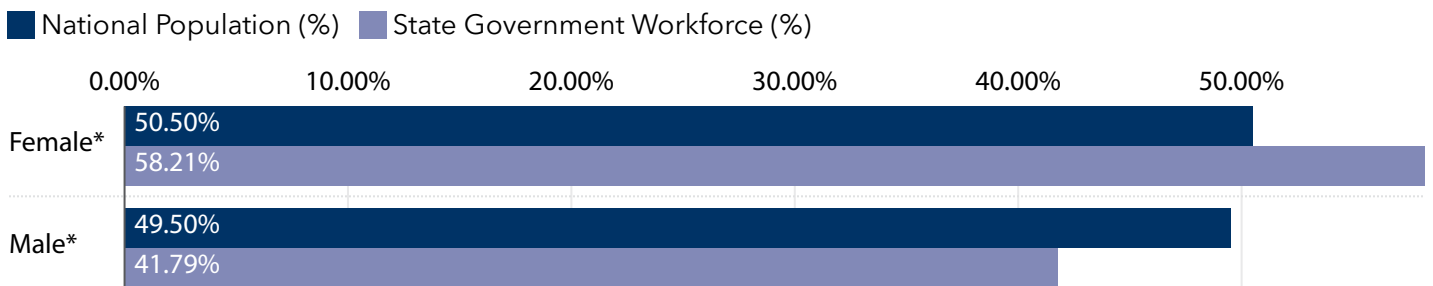
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year Data | Public Use Microdata Sample



Figure 5: Sex

National - Sex

Differences between overall statewide population and state government workforce



*Asterisk indicates statistically significant demographic differences between the overall state population and the state government workforce at the 90% confidence level.

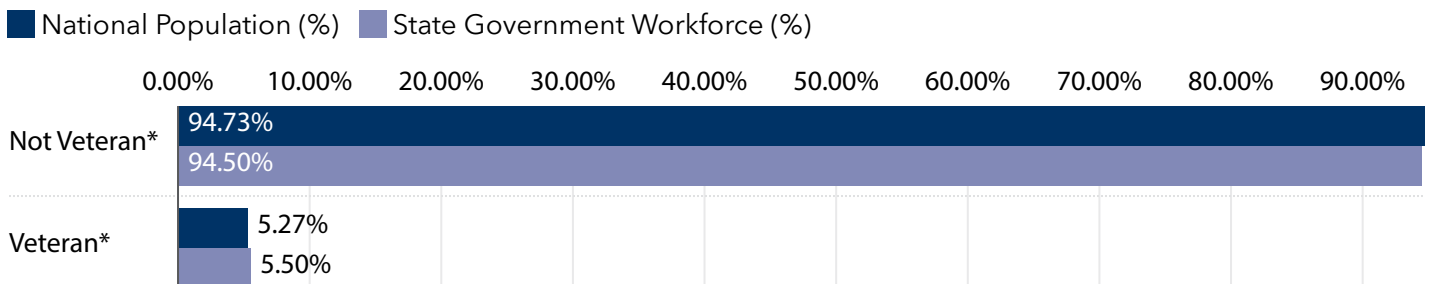
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year Data | Public Use Microdata Sample



Figure 6: Veteran Status

National - Veteran Status

Differences between overall statewide labor force and state government workforce



*Asterisk indicates statistically significant demographic differences between the overall state population and the state government workforce at the 90% confidence level.

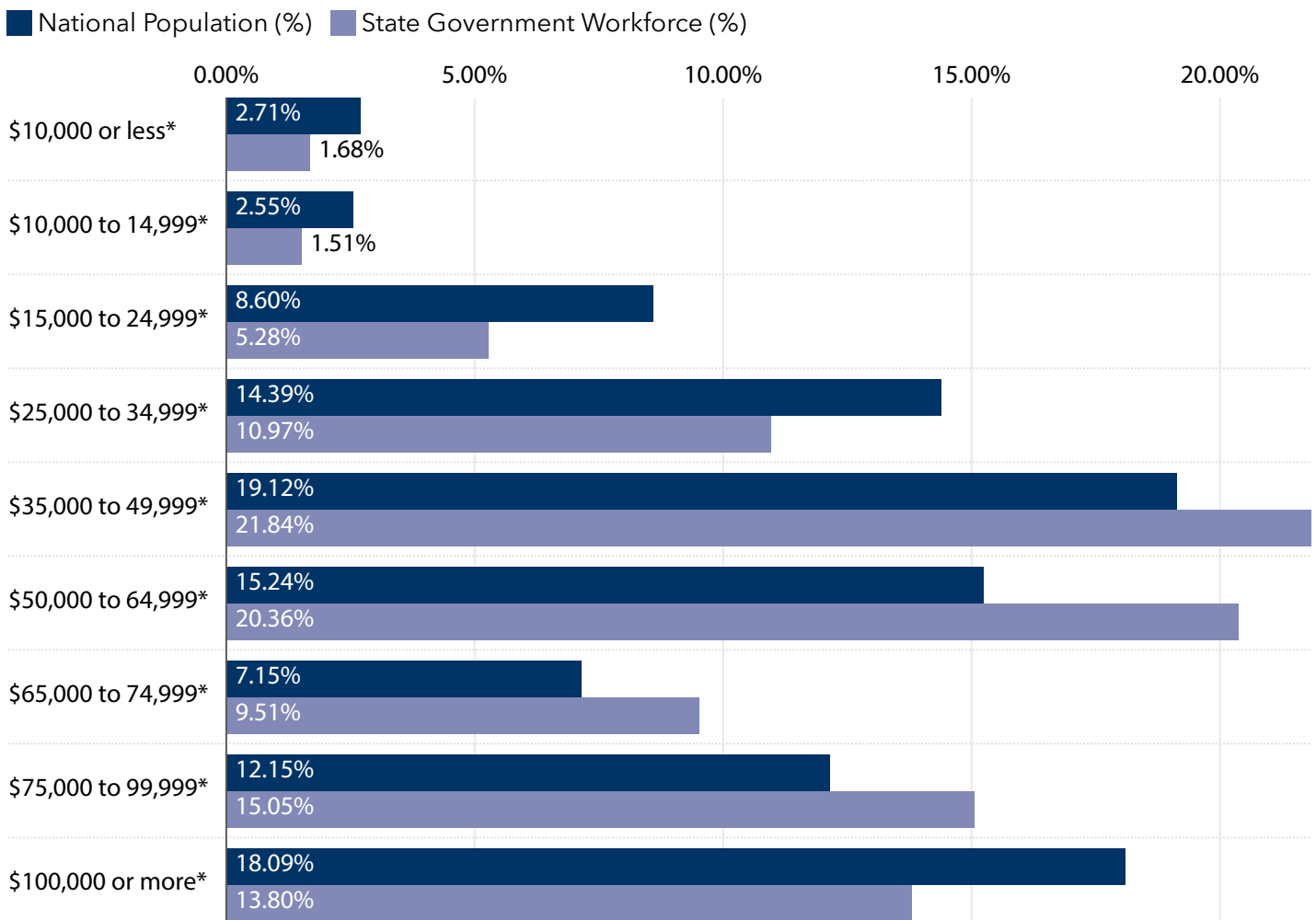
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year Data | Public Use Microdata Sample



Figure 7: Wage Brackets

National - Wage Brackets

For civilian employed, full time workers



*Asterisk Indicates statistically significant demographic differences between the overall state population and the state government workforce at the 90% confidence level.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017-2021 American Community Survey 5-year Data | Public Use Microdata Sample

