

# Statistical Brief

## Bureaucrats Are Beyond the Beltway

*To many, the term "bureaucrat" suggests a white collar employee at a desk in a large building somewhere in Washington, DC. But most public employees are "beyond the beltway," at work for a local agency. The Census Bureau collects and provides data on public employers and employees, and this Brief features findings from selected reports.*

### Most Public Employees Are Local

Local governments are our dominant public employer. In 1991, there were over 18.5 million full- and part-time government employees in the United States. Nearly 11 million of these worked for local government agencies. Local employees:

- Account for nearly 60 percent of all public employees in the U.S. today.
- Have been a majority of all public employees in each of the past 31 years.

Local governments are diverse. They include counties, municipalities, townships, school districts, and special districts. School districts are the largest employers, with over 5 million employees, followed by municipalities, with over 2.6 million.



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### State Workers Hold Second Place

State governments are our second largest public employer and have been for nearly two decades. In 1991, there were more than 4.5 million State employees, and about three State workers for every two Federal employees.

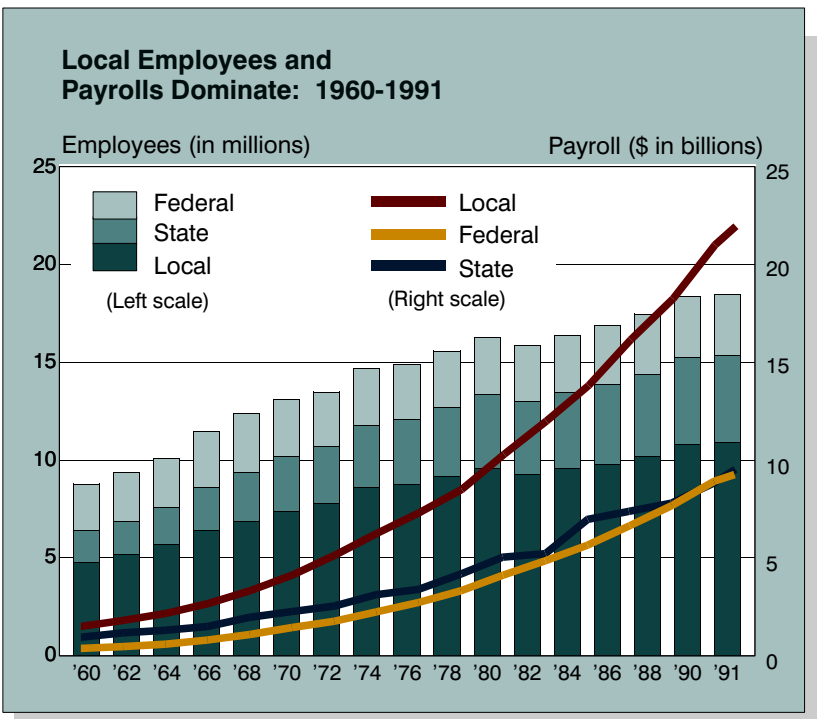
State employees first outnumbered Federal employees in 1972, and States have outpaced Federal employment each year since then. In 1960, there were only two State workers for every three Federal employees.

### Employees Have Different Functions

Employees of each government work in different programs. Under

our Constitution, Federal, State, and local governments have different responsibilities and public employment reflects these differences. For example, in 1991:

- Exclusively State and local programs (such as elementary education, fire protection, and utilities) employed nearly 50 percent of all public employees.
- Primarily State and local programs (such as police, highways, welfare, and libraries) accounted for nearly 20 percent of the total.
- Exclusively Federal programs (such as defense, foreign relations, and the postal service) accounted for 10 percent of public employment.



- Only 20 percent of all public employees worked in areas of shared responsibility, such as hospital and health services, financial management, and natural resources.

Education has been a “growth industry” for three decades. In 1991, 52 percent of all State and local employees worked in education programs, up from 46 percent in 1960. During this period, local school employees increased from 1.7 to 4.3 million.

**Populations Influence Employment Levels**

The number of public employees is strongly influenced by an area’s population size, and the services they receive. For example, California, New York, and Texas are our most populous States and had the most full-time public employees in 1991. Vermont is our second smallest State and had the fewest public employees.

Per capita measures provide a different perspective. In 1991, there were an average of 523 State and local employees for every 10,000 residents in the United States, but averages by State varied considerably. For example:

- The District of Columbia (an “urban State”) was top-ranked with 927 non-Federal public employees.
- Next were Wyoming, Alaska, New Mexico, and Montana, with 778 to 644 each.
- Lowest-ranked were Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, California, and Connecticut, with 406 to 473 each.

Contrary to some expectations, most Federal employees do not work in the Washington, DC area. In 1991, this three-State area had only about one-sixth of the 3.1 million Federal employees.

**October Payrolls Exceed \$40 Billion**

Nearly 1 in every 6 U.S. civilian employees is a public employee, and combined Federal, State, and local employee payrolls exceed \$40 billion. Local payrolls totaled \$22 billion, Federal civilians received nearly \$10 billion, and States paid over \$9 billion.

Salaries of public employees vary by individual skill, duties perform-

ed, level of government, and other factors. In October 1991, Federal full-time employees averaged nearly \$3,340 each in pretax monthly pay; State workers averaged \$2,565, and local employees \$2,445.

*This is one of a series of occasional reports from the Census Bureau that provide timely information about our people and economy. The data come from an annual survey of government employment, are subject to sampling and nonsampling errors, and have been tested and found to meet applicable standards. See appendices of the data sources below for a description of statistical methods, quality, and limitations.*

**Data Sources**

- Public Employment: 1991
- City Government Employment: 1991
- County Government Employment: 1991

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