

Minnesota's State Government Workforce is Aging

Minnesota state employees are getting older. The median age of all state workers rose from 38 in 1984 to 42 in 1994 and 45 in 2000. Among benefit-eligible employees, more than half are now between the ages of 40 and 54.

The median retirement age among state employees is now about 60. Since one-third of current workers will have passed that milestone within this decade, the state can expect a wave of retirements during the next 10 to 15 years. State managers will face many challenges as they try to recruit new workers and update the skills of

current ones. If Minnesota's labor market remains tight, as it is expected to do, there will be stiff competition for workers with desirable skills and training.

In November of 2000, there were 39,955 benefit-eligible workers employed by the state, excluding academics. Several thousand more were working on a casual or temporary basis. Slightly more than half of state workers were women, seven percent were nonwhite or Hispanic, and seven percent had a disability.

The Department of Human Services had the largest number of employees, 6,577. Four state agencies – Human Services, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, Transportation, and Corrections – accounted for more than half of the total work force.

About 16 percent of workers were in the office administration career family. Human services and development (9 percent), undesignated careers (6 percent) and transportation operation and regulation (6 percent) were the other most common career families.

Workers in the Department of Economic Security and in economic security careers

are older than workers in other agencies and careers. The managers career class also has a large proportion of older workers. Workers who have special early retirement plans, such as prison guards and members of the Highway Patrol, are younger than average.

About 9 percent of the work force left state service each year in the 1998 to 2000 period. This rate has not been calculated before, so it is not clear if termination rates are rising or falling. Voluntary departure, not retirement, is the most common reason for leaving. Younger workers, women and minority employees have higher rates of employee-initiated turnover.

Turnover rates were very low for workers in the 40- to 54-year-old age group, and then rose over age 55, when retirement begins to be a major factor. Among career families, education and teaching, human services and undesignated careers had some of the highest termination rates, while natural resources and transportation careers had some of the lowest. Though many believe the state has a particular problem retaining information technology workers, turnover rates for this career family as a whole were slightly below average.

Published by the State Demographic Center at Minnesota Planning. This issue of *PopBites* summarizes findings from "Minnesota's State Government Work Force," a working paper by Martha McMurry based on the SEMA4 database maintained by the Department of Employee Relations. The paper describes some of the demographic characteristics of the state work force and looks at some variations among agencies and career families. To receive a copy of the working paper, call the helpline at 651-296-2557. Upon request, *PopBites* will be made available in alternate formats, such as Braille, large print or audio tape. For TTY, contact Minnesota Relay Service at 800-627-3529 and ask for Minnesota Planning. For more information contact:



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The majority of state workers are in a small number of agencies

