

State of Local and State Government Workers' Engagement in the U.S.



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– JIM CLIFTON, CHAIRMAN AND CEO, GALLUP

THE MAJORITY OF AMERICANS FEEL GOOD about the governments in their states — 70% trust their local government and 58% trust their state government to handle the problems they face. But the demands on these governments are only going to get tougher as fiscal pressures mount.

One of the biggest opportunities that state and local government leaders have is to invest in the engagement of their employees. In fact, they can't afford not to. Employee disengagement costs the U.S. economy roughly half a trillion dollars a year. Local governments' annual budgets from Lincoln, Nebraska, to New York City total about \$2.0 trillion, while state governments annually spend an estimated \$1.7 trillion. Combined, state and local governments contribute 11% to U.S. GDP*. Considering the size of their workforce and budgets, disengagement is costing state and local governments, conservatively, up to \$100 billion — more than the entire spending budgets of most U.S. states.

Today, on average, 29% of full-time state and local government employees are engaged at work. This includes police officers, firefighters, teachers and city and state government officials. These workers drive innovation and move their workplaces forward. The problem is that 71% of state and local government employees aren't in jobs like this.

There are pockets of excellence. In Mississippi, engaged state and local government workers outnumber actively disengaged workers by nearly 3-to-1. On the other hand, New York and Illinois have about one actively disengaged employee to every one engaged employee. But all three merit further study to better understand what makes a great workforce deliver on a local or state government's mission.

The single biggest way to turn employee engagement around is with a great manager. Seventy percent of the variance in employee engagement across teams is just who you name manager. There might be a number of ways to boost employee morale, but getting the head coach right is critical.

This report shows the current state of employee engagement and disengagement for the state and local governments for 43 U.S. states, and illustrates the need for state and local governments to find strategies to help curb disengagement. Leaders have the chance to more effectively help every single government employee understand how he or she fits into the government's mission and what he or she can do to help the government achieve that mission faster.

Jon Clifton, Managing Partner, Gallup



*Government spending is not identical to its GDP contribution.

About This Report

U.S. WORKFORCE

NONGOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

82.7%

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

11.3%

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

4.4%

THE STATE OF LOCAL AND STATE Government Workers' Engagement in the U.S. report is based on the results from Gallup's measurement of employee engagement among more than 400,000 full-time workers in the U.S., including nearly 61,000 full-time employees of state or local governments in 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. Gallup aggregated results from its Daily tracking surveys between 2009 and 2015 to ensure sufficient sample sizes at the individual state level for state and local government employees.

Nongovernment employees make up the bulk of the U.S. workforce, accounting for 82.7%, while a total of 11.3% of the workforce are state and local government workers and 4.4% are federal workers.

To ensure results for each state are representative, Gallup reports individual state-level results if a state has a minimum sample size of 300 state and local government employees. Forty-three states meet this criterion. Gallup determines whether adults are employed for the state and local government by first asking them if they currently work for the federal, state or local government, and then asks those who answer affirmatively to name the branch they work for.

Gallup measures employee engagement based on workers' responses to its Q¹² survey, which consists of actionable workplace elements with proven links to performance outcomes. To identify these elements, Gallup spent years conducting thousands of interviews at every level of various organizations, in most industries and in many countries. Since Gallup finalized the Q¹² question wording in the late 1990s, the survey has been administered to more than 31 million employees in 198 different countries and 72 languages.

Based on employees' responses to the items, Gallup groups them into one of three categories: engaged, not engaged and actively disengaged.

Engaged

employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organization forward.

Not Engaged

employees are essentially “checked out.” They’re sleepwalking through their workday, putting time — but not energy or passion — into their work.

Actively Disengaged

employees aren’t just unhappy at work; they’re busy acting out their unhappiness. Every day, these workers undermine what their engaged coworkers accomplish.

Engaged Employees

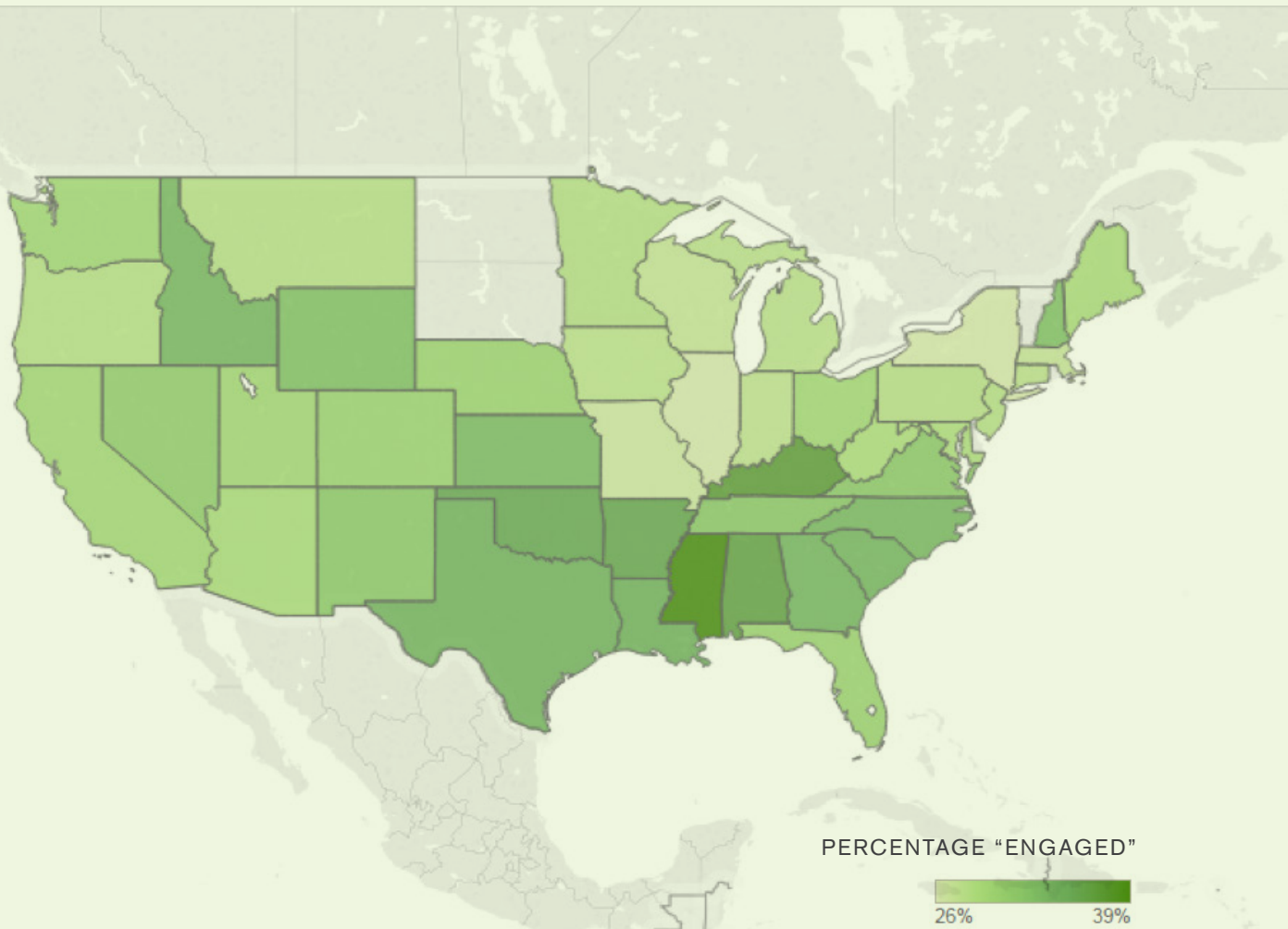
ENGAGED EMPLOYEES ARE GREAT COLLEAGUES. They cooperate to build an organization, institution or agency, and they are behind many of the positive things that happen there. These employees are involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to their work. They know the scope of their jobs and look for new and better ways to achieve outcomes. They are fully psychologically committed to their work.

Median engagement for state and local government workers across all 50 states and District of Columbia is 29%, in line with the median for federal employees (29%) and slightly trailing the median among nongovernment workers (31%). Gallup finds engagement among state and local government workers varies state by state. The percentage of engaged state and local government employees ranges from 39% in Mississippi to 26% in Missouri, Illinois and New York.

States at the higher end of the engagement spectrum — where at least one in three state and local employees are engaged — are predominantly in the South. Kentucky, Alabama, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Texas, South Carolina, Georgia and North Carolina all have state and local government employee engagement rates that are 33% or higher. Idaho and Kansas are also toward the top of the list.

Meanwhile, the percentage of engaged employees among state and local government workers is lowest in Northeastern and Midwestern states, such as New York, Illinois, Missouri, Massachusetts, Wisconsin and Indiana — each with employee engagement rates of 26% or 27%.

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKER ENGAGEMENT LEVELS, STATE BY STATE



Scores not reported for states where n sizes dropped below 300
2009-2015

Actively Disengaged Employees

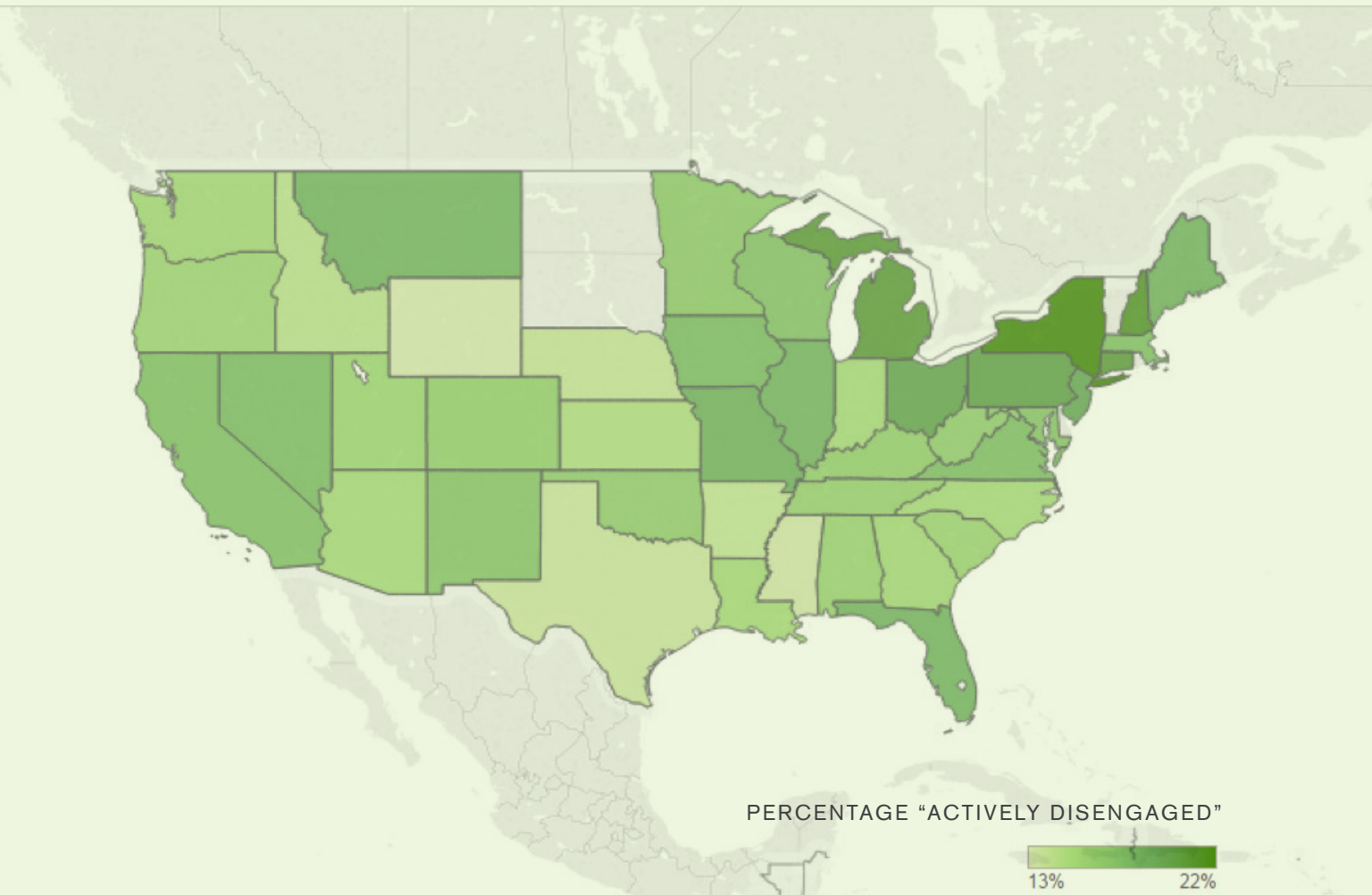
ACTIVELY DISENGAGED EMPLOYEES ARE MORE or less out to cause problems at their workplace. They often monopolize managers' time; have more on-the-job accidents; account for more quality defects; contribute to “shrinkage” (theft); call in sick and miss more days; and quit at a higher rate than engaged employees do. Whatever the engaged do — such as solving problems, innovating and creating new customers — the actively disengaged try to undo.

Gallup found that at the opposite end of the engagement spectrum, the median percentage of actively disengaged state and local government workers across all 50 states and District of Columbia is 17%. This is in line with the median among federal (17%) and nongovernment workers (18%).

The percentage of actively disengaged workers is highest, with one in five or more state and local government employees actively disengaged, in seven states in the Midwest and Northeast — New York, New Hampshire, Michigan, Connecticut, Ohio, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Actively disengaged state and local government employees are least common, at 13% and 14%, in six states — Wyoming, Nebraska, Idaho, Texas, Arkansas and Mississippi.

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKER ENGAGEMENT LEVELS, STATE BY STATE



Scores not reported for states where n sizes dropped below 300
2009-2015

Ratio of Engaged to Actively Disengaged

CURRENTLY, A MEDIAN OF 29% of the state and local government employee workforce is engaged in their work and a median of 17% is actively disengaged, making the ratio of engaged to actively disengaged employees nearly 2-to-1. This means that the vast majority of state and local government workers are not reaching their full potential — a problem that has significant implications for the economy and the individual performance of state and local governments across the country.

Gallup's research shows that employee engagement remains flat when left unmanaged. However, there are pockets of private organizations in the U.S. that have made engaging employees a strategic priority, and some are reaping the benefits of having 14 engaged employees for every one actively disengaged employee. State and local governments could stand to benefit from higher engagement levels as well.

Fourteen states have engaged-to-actively-disengaged ratios that are 2-to-1 or better. In Mississippi, this ratio among state and local government workers is nearly 3-to-1 — slightly better than the ratio for federal employees and the working population in general. Most of the states with the highest engaged-to-actively-disengaged ratios are located in the South. States in other regions, such as Kansas, Wyoming and Idaho, also top the list.

State and local governments make up a sizable share of a state's workforce. As of 2014, employees of state and local governments made up as few as 8% of the full-time working population in the states of Nevada, Wisconsin, North Dakota and Minnesota, and as much as 16% of the full-time working population of Mississippi.

STATES WITH HIGHEST RATIOS OF ENGAGED TO ACTIVELY DISENGAGED
STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

	ENGAGED	ACTIVELY DISENGAGED	RATIO
Mississippi	39%	14%	2.8-to-1
Arkansas	35%	14%	2.5-to-1
Wyoming	32%	13%	2.5-to-1
Texas	34%	14%	2.4-to-1
Idaho	33%	14%	2.4-to-1
Alabama	36%	16%	2.3-to-1
Kentucky	37%	16%	2.3-to-1
Louisiana	34%	15%	2.3-to-1
Kansas	33%	15%	2.2-to-1
North Carolina	33%	15%	2.2-to-1
Georgia	34%	16%	2.1-to-1
Nebraska	30%	14%	2.1-to-1
Oklahoma	35%	17%	2.1-to-1
South Carolina	34%	16%	2.1-to-1

Based on Gallup surveys between 2009 and 2015

Conclusion

GALLUP'S RESEARCH PROVIDES STATE AND local governments with a snapshot of the engagement levels of the workers on their payrolls.

State and local governments represent about a third of total U.S. tax collections , and the services they deliver are the proof of what taxpayers get in return for their money — a compelling reason why government employers should pay attention to what the lack of engaged employees is costing them.

Unfortunately, actively disengaged employees cost state and local governments a great deal. But many government employers are not aware of how many of them are within their ranks. This study gives them the opportunity they need to analyze how many employees are dutifully working toward the government's mission and how many could be interfering with that goal.

Though engagement is higher in certain areas than others, there is room for improvement in all 50 states. Nationally, less than a third of state and local government employees are engaged. Meanwhile, about one in six state and local government employees are actively disengaged, which could be detrimental to a state or local government. The findings could be startling to big- and small-government advocates alike — for every two engaged employees who are fully committed to their work, there is one actively disengaged employee who seeks to cause problems in his or her workplace.

Government agencies are not powerless to change this ratio of actively disengaged to engaged workers, but they need to take deliberate steps to create workplaces that promote engagement:

- They need to strategically prioritize employee engagement in their organizations.
- They need to implement a measurement process that monitors the state of and progress on engagement-building efforts.
- They need to create change management strategies to act on the results and make the necessary changes at the leadership, local and individual levels to maximize employees' potential.

METHODOLOGY

The data in this report came from Gallup Daily tracking surveys conducted between 2009 and 2015 with random samples of more than 400,000 full-time workers in the U.S., including nearly 61,000 full-time employees of state or local governments in 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error is ± 0.7 percentage points for the entire U.S., and ranges from ± 2.2 to ± 8.0 points across states.

GALLUP DAILY TRACKING

Gallup Daily tracking methodology relies on live interviewers and dual-frame telephone sampling (which includes listed landline and random-digit-dial cellular phone sampling to reach those in cellphone-only households) and uses a multi-call design to reach respondents not contacted on the initial attempt. Gallup interviewers employ a “most recent birthday” selection method for choosing adult respondents within a landline household. Gallup Daily tracking includes Spanish-language interviews for Spanish-speaking respondents, and interviews in Alaska and Hawaii.

Gallup weights the data daily by number of adults in the landline household to adjust for any disproportion in selection probabilities and by the respondents' reliance on cellphones. Next, Gallup weights the data to compensate for nonrandom nonresponse, using targets from the U.S. Census Bureau for age, region, gender, education, ethnicity and race. The resulting sample represents an estimated 95% of all U.S. households.

Gallup weights data summarized at the state, congressional district and Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) level twice per year (for states) or once per year (for congressional districts and MSAs) to ensure that samples are representative of these areas.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AMONG U.S. STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKERS, BY STATE

	ENGAGED	NOT ENGAGED	ACTIVELY DISENGAGED
Mississippi	39%	48%	14%
Kentucky	37%	47%	16%
Alabama	36%	48%	16%
Arkansas	35%	50%	14%
Oklahoma	35%	48%	17%
Louisiana	34%	50%	15%
Texas	34%	52%	14%
South Carolina	34%	50%	16%
Georgia	34%	51%	16%
Idaho	33%	52%	14%
North Carolina	33%	51%	15%
Kansas	33%	52%	15%
New Hampshire	32%	46%	21%
Wyoming	32%	54%	13%
Tennessee	31%	52%	16%
New Mexico	31%	51%	17%
Virginia	31%	51%	18%
Nevada	31%	51%	18%
Florida	30%	51%	19%
Colorado	30%	54%	16%
Nebraska	30%	56%	14%
Utah	29%	55%	16%
Washington	29%	55%	16%
Ohio	29%	51%	20%
California	29%	53%	18%

	ENGAGED	NOT ENGAGED	ACTIVELY DISENGAGED
Arizona	29%	56%	15%
Maine	29%	52%	19%
West Virginia	28%	55%	17%
Maryland	28%	54%	17%
Minnesota	28%	55%	17%
Oregon	28%	56%	16%
New Jersey	28%	53%	20%
Montana	28%	54%	19%
Pennsylvania	28%	52%	20%
Michigan	28%	52%	21%
Connecticut	28%	52%	21%
Iowa	28%	54%	18%
Indiana	27%	57%	15%
Wisconsin	27%	56%	17%
Massachusetts	27%	55%	18%
Missouri	26%	55%	19%
New York	26%	52%	22%
Illinois	26%	56%	19%

Based on Gallup surveys between 2009 and 2015

Scores not reported for states where n sizes dropped below 300

Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding

ABOUT GALLUP

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.

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