

State and Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals

SIGNIFICANT POINTS

- Local government employs more than three times as many service workers than does State government; most are firefighters and law enforcement workers.
- The attacks of September 11, 2001, will increase demand for police, firefighters, and other emergency personnel; however, budgetary constraints may force spending cuts in other areas, slowing overall employment growth.
- Employer-provided benefits are more common among State and local government employees than among workers in the private sector.

Nature of the Industry

State and local governments provide their constituents with vital services, such as transportation, public safety, healthcare, education, utilities, and courts. Excluding education and hospitals, State and local governments employ about 7.9 million workers, placing them among the largest employers in the economy. Around two-thirds of these employees work for local governments, such as counties, cities, special districts, and towns. (State and local government hospitals are included in the health services industry and public education is a major part of educational services, both of which are discussed elsewhere in the *Career Guide*.)

In addition to the 50 State governments, there are about 87,500 local governments, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. These include about 3,000 county governments; 19,400 municipal governments; 16,500 townships; 13,500 school districts; and 35,100 special districts. Illinois had the most local government units, with more than 6,900; Hawaii had the fewest, with 20.

In many areas of the country, citizens are served by more than one local government unit. For example, most States have *counties*, which may contain various municipalities such as cities or towns, but which also often include unincorporated rural areas. *Townships*, which do not exist in some States, may or may not contain municipalities and often consist of suburban or rural areas. Supplementing these forms of local government, *special district* government bodies are independent, limited purpose governmental units that usually perform a single function or activity. For example, a large percentage of special districts manage the use of natural resources. Some provide drainage and flood control, irrigation, and soil and water conservation services.

The Council of State Governments reports that State and local governments' responsibilities were augmented in the 1990s through "devolution," the practice through which the Federal Government turns over to State and local governments the development, implementation, and management of programs. Welfare reform typifies devolution in practice, with States receiving considerable leeway to devise programs that meet their needs as a result of the 1996 Congressional reform act that provided block grants to States. As the relationship between levels of government continues to change in the coming decade, so will the nature of services provided by State and local governments.

Working Conditions

Working conditions vary by occupation and, in some instances, by size and location of the State or local government. For example, chief executives in very small jurisdictions may work less than 20 hours a week; in larger jurisdictions, they often work more than 40 hours per week. Chief executives in large jurisdictions work full time year round, as do most county and city managers. Most State legislators work full time only when in session, usually for a few months a year, and work part time the rest of the year. Local elected officials in some small jurisdictions work part time.

Most professional, financial operations, and office and administrative support workers in State and local government work a standard 40-hour week in an office environment. However, workers in some of the most visible local government jobs have very different working conditions and schedules. Firefighters' hours are longer and vary more widely than those of most workers. Many professional firefighters are on duty for several days in a row, working over 50 hours a week, because some must be on duty at all times to respond to emergencies. They often eat and sleep at the fire station. Following this long shift, they are then off for several days in a row or for the entire next week. In addition to irregular hours, firefighting can involve the risk of death or injury. Some local fire districts also use the services of volunteer firefighters, who tend to work shorter, regularly scheduled shifts.

Law enforcement work also is potentially dangerous. The injury and fatality rates among law officers are higher than in many occupations, reflecting risks taken in apprehending suspected criminals and responding to various emergency situations such as traffic accidents. Most police and detectives work 40 hours a week, with paid overtime when they testify in court or work on an investigation. Because police protection must be provided around the clock, some officers work weekends, holidays, and nights. Many officers are subject to call any time their services are needed and are expected to intervene whenever they observe a crime, even if they are off duty.

Most driver/operator jobs in public transit systems are stressful and fatiguing because they involve dealing with passengers, tight schedules, and heavy traffic. Bus drivers with regular routes and subway operators generally have consistent weekly work

schedules. Those who do not have regular schedules may be on call and must be prepared to report for work on short notice. To accommodate commuters, many operators work split shifts, such as 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., with time off in between.

A number of other State and local government jobs also require weekend or night work. Because electricity, gas, and water are used continuously throughout each day, split, weekend, and night shifts are common for utility workers.

Employment

State and local governments, excluding education and hospitals, employed about 7.9 million people in 2002. Two out of every three of these workers were employed in local government (table 1).

Table 1. Wage and salary employment in state and local government, except education and health, 2002
(Employment in thousands)

Jurisdiction	Employment	Percent
State and local	7,851	100.0
Local	5,415	69.0
State	2,436	31.0

Local government employs more than three times as many service workers than does State government; most are firefighters and law enforcement workers (chart 1).

Occupations in the Industry

Service occupations made up the largest share of employment in State and local governments, accounting for 31 percent of all jobs (table 2). Of these, *police and sheriff's patrol officers, bailiffs, correctional officers and jailers, and firefighters* were the largest occupations. Professional and related occupations accounted for 21 percent of employment; office and administrative

support occupations accounted for 20 percent; and management, business, and financial occupations constituted 11 percent.

State and local governments employ people in occupations found in nearly every industry in the economy, including chief executives, managers, engineers, computer occupations, secretaries, and health technicians. Certain occupations, however, are mainly or exclusively found in these governments, such as legislators; tax examiners, collectors, and revenue agents; urban and regional planners; judges, magistrates, and other judicial workers; police and sheriff's patrol officers; and correctional officers and jailers.

Chief executives, general and operations managers, and legislators establish government policy and develop laws, rules, and regulations. They are elected or appointed officials who either preside over units of government or make laws. Chief executives include governors, lieutenant governors, mayors, and city managers. General and operations managers include district managers and revenue directors. Legislators include State senators and representatives, county commissioners, and city council members.

Tax examiners, collectors, and revenue agents determine tax liability and collect past-due taxes from individuals or businesses. *Urban and regional planners* draft plans and recommend programs for the development and use of resources such as land and water. They also propose construction of physical facilities, such as schools and roads, under the authority of cities, counties, and metropolitan areas. Planners devise strategies outlining the best use of community land and identify the places in which residential, commercial, recreational, and other types of development should be located.

Judges arbitrate, advise, and administer justice in a court of law. They oversee legal processes in courts and apply the law to resolve civil disputes and determine guilt in criminal cases. *Magistrates* resolve criminal cases not involving penitentiary sentences, as well as civil cases involving damages below a sum specified by State law.

Social workers counsel and assess the needs of clients, refer them to the appropriate sources of help, and monitor their progress. *Eligibility interviewers, government programs* interview and investigate applicants and recipients to determine eligibility to receive, or continue receiving, welfare and other types of social assistance. *Social and human service assistants'* duties vary with specific job titles. These workers include social service technicians, case management aides, social work assistants, residential counselors, alcoholism or drug abuse counseling aides, child abuse workers, community outreach workers, and gerontology aides. *Probation officers and correctional treatment specialists* assist in rehabilitation of law offenders in custody or on probation or parole.

Court, municipal, and license clerks perform a variety of State and local government administrative tasks. *Court clerks* prepare dockets of cases to be called, secure information for judges, and contact witnesses, lawyers, and attorneys to obtain information for the court. *Municipal clerks* draft agendas for town or city councils, record minutes of council meetings, answer official correspondence, keep fiscal records and accounts, and prepare reports on civic needs. *License clerks* keep records and help the public obtain motor vehicle ownership titles, operator permits,

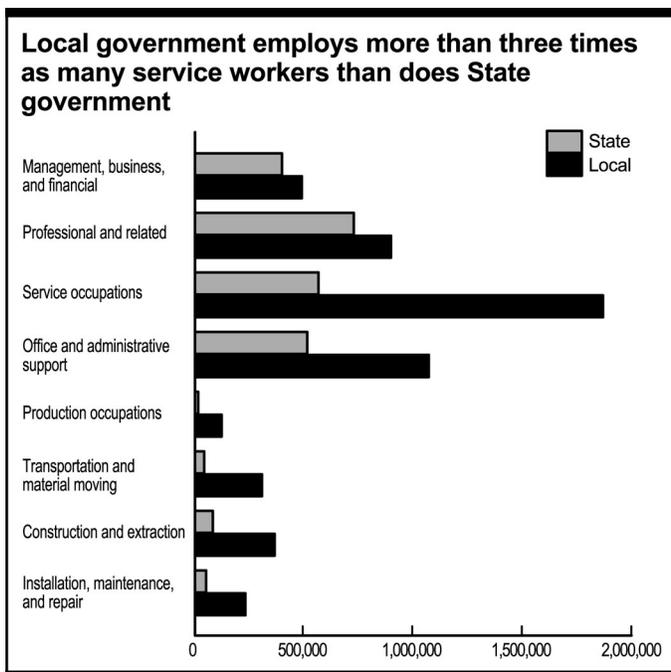


Table 2. Employment of wage and salary workers in state and local government, excluding education and hospitals, by occupation, 2002 and projected change, 2002-12
(Employment in thousands)

Occupation	Employment, 2002		Percent change, 2002-12
	Number	Percent	
All occupations	7,851	100.0	9.7
Management, business, and financial occupations	891	11.3	9.1
General and operations managers	75	0.9	6.4
Legislators	66	0.8	1.1
Professional and related occupations	1,624	20.7	12.1
Computer specialists	126	1.6	16.5
Engineers	91	1.2	11.8
Social workers	159	2.0	7.7
Probation officers and correctional treatment specialists	81	1.0	13.9
Social and human service assistants	80	1.0	4.4
Registered nurses	92	1.2	5.7
Service occupations	2,434	31.0	16.7
First-line supervisors/managers, law enforcement workers	134	1.7	15.4
Fire fighters	262	3.3	21.2
Bailiffs, correctional officers, and jailers	410	5.2	22.1
Detectives and criminal investigators	70	0.9	15.7
Police and sheriff's patrol officers	588	7.5	24.4
Janitors and cleaners, except maids and housekeeping cleaners ...	102	1.3	7.7
Recreation workers	114	1.4	10.6
Office and administrative support occupations	1,586	20.2	-1.6
Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks	106	1.3	-1.4
Court, municipal, and license clerks	101	1.3	12.3
Eligibility interviewers, government programs	88	1.1	-12.9
Police, fire, and ambulance dispatchers	84	1.1	10.5
Secretaries and administrative assistants	304	3.9	-4.9
Word processors and typists	69	0.9	-44.5
Office clerks, general	303	3.9	4.6
Construction and extraction occupations	448	5.7	10.7
Highway maintenance workers	143	1.8	9.7
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	286	3.6	8.9
Maintenance and repair workers, general	114	1.5	10.0
Production occupations	144	1.8	9.0
Water and liquid waste treatment plant and system operators	78	1.0	9.9
Transportation and material moving occupations	352	4.5	2.6
Bus drivers, transit and intercity	107	1.4	4.7

NOTE: May not add to totals due to omission of occupations with small employment.

and a variety of other permits and licenses. State and local governments also employ many *secretaries and administrative assistants* and *general office clerks*.

Firefighters control and extinguish fires, assist with emergency medical treatment, and help with the recovery from natural disasters such as earthquakes and tornadoes. *Fire inspectors* inspect public buildings for conditions that might present a fire hazard. *Emergency medical technicians and paramedics* assess injuries, administer emergency medical care, and extricate trapped individuals. They transport injured or sick persons to medical facilities.

Police and sheriff's patrol officers and *detectives and criminal investigators* have duties that range from controlling traffic to preventing and investigating crimes. They maintain order; enforce laws and ordinances; issue traffic summonses; investigate accidents; give evidence in court; serve legal documents for the court system; and apprehend, arrest, and process prisoners. State and local *correctional officers* guard inmates in jails, prisons, or juvenile detention institutions. *Bailiffs* keep order in courts.

Highway maintenance workers maintain highways, municipal and rural roads, airport runways, and rights-of-way. They patch broken or eroded pavement, repair guard rails and highway markers, plow snow, and mow or clear brush from along roads. *Bus drivers* pick up and deliver passengers at prearranged stops throughout their assigned routes. Operators may collect fares, answer questions about schedules and transfer points, and announce stops.

Training and Advancement

The education level and experience needed by workers in State and local government varies by occupation. Voters elect most chief executives and legislators, so local support is very important. Taking part in volunteer work and helping to provide community services are valuable ways in which to establish vital community support. Those elected to chief executive and legislator positions come from a variety of backgrounds, but must conform to age, residency, and citizenship regulations regarding the positions that they seek. Advancement opportunities for most elected public officials are limited to other offices in the jurisdictions in which they live. For example, a local council member may run for mayor or for a position in State government, and State legislators may decide to run for State governor or for the U.S. Congress.

A master's degree in public administration is widely recommended, but not required, for city managers. They may gain experience as management analysts or assistants in government departments, working with councils and mayors. After several years, they may be hired to manage a town or a small city and eventually become manager of larger cities.

For most professional jobs, a college degree is required. To obtain an entry-level urban or regional planning position, most State and local government agencies require 2 years of graduate study in urban and regional planning or the equivalent in work experience. To become a judge, particularly a State trial or appellate court judge, one usually is required to be a lawyer. About half of all State judges are appointed, and the other half are elected in partisan or nonpartisan elections. Most State and local judges

serve fixed terms, ranging from 4 or 6 years for limited jurisdiction judges to 14 years for some appellate court judges.

Most applicants for firefighting jobs must have a high school education or its equivalent and pass a civil service examination. In addition, they need to pass a medical examination and tests of strength, physical stamina, coordination, and agility. Experience as a volunteer firefighter or as a firefighter in the Armed Forces is helpful, as is completion of community college courses in fire science. Recruits study firefighting techniques, fire prevention, local building codes, emergency procedures, and the proper use of rescue equipment. Firefighters may be promoted depending on written examination results and job performance.

Bus drivers must comply with Federal regulations that require drivers who operate vehicles designed to transport 16 or more passengers to obtain a commercial driver's license from the State in which they live. To qualify for a commercial driver's license, applicants must pass a written test on rules and regulations and demonstrate that they can operate a commercial vehicle safely. For subway and streetcar operator jobs, applicants with at least a high school education have the best chance. In some cities, prospective subway operators are required to work as bus drivers for a specified period. Successful applicants generally are in good health, possess good communication skills, and are able to make quick, sound judgments. Because bus drivers and subway operators deal with passengers, they need an even temperament and emotional stability. Driving in heavy, fast-moving, or stop-and-go traffic and dealing with passengers can be stressful.

Police departments in most areas require applicants to be U.S. citizens of good character, at least 20 years old, and able to meet rigorous physical and mental standards. Police departments increasingly encourage applicants to take college courses, and some require a college degree. Many community and junior colleges, as well as colleges and universities, offer programs in law enforcement or criminal justice. Officers usually attend a local or regional police academy that includes classroom instruction in constitutional law, civil rights, and State and local law. They also receive training in patrol, accident investigation traffic control, using firearms, self-defense, first aid, and emergency management. Promotions for police officers are highly influenced by scores on a written civil service examination and subsequent performance evaluations by their superiors.

Earnings

Earnings vary by occupation, size of the State or locality, and region of the country. As in most industries, professionals and managers earn more than other workers. Earnings in the occupations having the largest employment in State and local government appear in table 3.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) reported the 2002 median annual salaries of selected executive and managerial occupations in local government shown in table 4.

Employer-provided benefits—including health and life insurance and retirement benefits—are more common among State and local government employees than among workers in the private sector.

Table 3. Median hourly earnings of the largest occupations in state and local government, except education and health, 2002

Occupation	Local government	State government	All industries
Police and sheriff's patrol officers	\$20.20	\$22.64	\$20.32
Fire fighters	17.92	13.58	17.42
Bus drivers, transit and intercity	16.95	—	14.22
Water and liquid waste treatment plant and system operators	15.97	—	16.05
Correctional officers and jailers	15.08	15.99	15.71
Maintenance and repair workers, general	14.83	13.73	14.12
Court, municipal, and license clerks	12.90	14.34	13.12
Office clerks, general	12.03	12.56	10.71
Janitors and cleaners, except maids and housekeeping cleaners	10.95	11.25	8.77
Recreation workers	8.98	15.95	8.69

Outlook

Wage and salary employment in State and local government is projected to increase about 10 percent during the 2002-12 period, slower than the 16-percent growth projected for all sectors of the economy combined. Job growth will stem from the rising demand for services at the State and local levels. An increasing population and State and local government assumption of responsibility for some services previously provided by the Federal Government are fueling the growth of these services. Despite the increased demand for the services of State and local governments, employment growth will be dampened by budgetary constraints due to a slower growing economy, reductions in

Table 4. Median annual salary for selected executive and managerial occupations in local government, 2002

Occupation	Salary
City manager	\$85,000
Assistant chief administrative officer	74,486
Engineer	70,011
Chief financial officer	67,688
Information services director	67,248
Chief administrative officer	66,950
Fire chief	64,141
Economic development director	63,847
Chief law enforcement official	62,005
Human resources director	61,156
Public works director	60,570
Parks and recreation director	56,000
Human services director	55,684
Health officer	55,209
Purchasing director	52,728
Chief librarian	48,000
Treasurer	46,200
Clerk	44,071
Chief elected officials	11,300

SOURCE: International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

Federal aid, especially at the county level, and resistance from citizens to tax increases. When economic times are good, many State and local governments increase spending on programs and employment.

Professional and service occupations accounted for over half of all jobs in State and local government. Most new jobs will stem from steady demand for community and social services, health services, and protective services. For example, increased demand for services for the elderly, the mentally impaired, and children will result in steady growth in the numbers of social workers, registered nurses, and recreation workers. Job growth in protective service occupations will be stimulated by rising demand for law enforcement officers due to population increase and the events surrounding September 11, 2001, specifically the creation of the Federal Department of Homeland Security. This new department will work with local and State law enforcement to ensure the safety of the Nation and our borders. Correctional officers will be in demand to oversee the increasing population of convicted offenders.

Employment of management, business, and financial occupations is projected to grow more slowly than employment in State and local government overall. The number of chief executives and general managers should remain fairly stable. Employment change occurs in rare situations, such as when a small town switches from a volunteer chief executive to a manager or paid mayor. Employment in office and administrative support occupations in State and local government is expected to decline, as the increasing use of personal computers by professionals and managers continues to reduce the need for secretaries and word processors and typists.

Sources of Additional Information

Individuals interested in working for State or local government agencies should contact the appropriate agencies. City, county, and State personnel and human resources departments, and local offices of State employment services have applications and additional information.

Other information about careers in government is available from:

- The Council of State Governments, P.O. Box 11910, Lexington, KY 40578-1910.
Internet: <http://www.csg.org>
- International City Management Association (ICMA), 777 North Capital St. NE., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20002.
Internet: <http://www.icma.org>
- International Public Management Association for Human Resources, 1617 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314.
Internet: <http://www.ipma-hr.org>
- National Association of Counties, 440 First St. NW., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20001.
Internet: <http://www.naco.org>
- National Association of State Personnel Executives, P.O. Box 11910, Lexington, KY 40578-1910.
Internet: <http://www.naspe.net>
- National League of Cities, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave., NW., Suite 550, Washington, DC 20004-1763.
Internet: <http://www.nlc.org>

Information on many occupations commonly employed by State and local governments may be found in the 2004-05 *Occupational Outlook Handbook*:

- Bus drivers
- Correctional officers
- Court reporters
- Firefighting occupations
- Judges, magistrates, and other judicial workers
- Lawyers
- Police and detectives
- Probation officers and correctional treatment specialists
- Social and human service assistants
- Social workers
- Tax examiners, collectors, and revenue agents
- Top executives
- Urban and regional planners