

THE APPEAL OF PUBLIC SERVICE: WHO... WHAT... AND HOW?

A Report by The Council for Excellence in Government

Powered by The Gallup Panel

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GALLUP



Despite generational differences in priorities, information sources, and modes of communication, a majority of Americans now say that a job in public service would be appealing. Yet, 60% of those under age thirty say they have never been asked to consider a job in government. However, if asked by their parents (33%) or the newly elected President in 2008 (29%), a significant share of Millennials say they would give such a request a great deal of consideration. In fact, the newly elected President in 2008 tops the list of motivators for those over thirty, with 30% saying they would give a great deal of consideration to this “ask.”

Note to Presidential Candidates: This is a great opportunity to attract the best and brightest to government at the very time large numbers of baby boomers are beginning to retire from federal, state and local government. During this election year, with change as a major theme, strong majorities of Millennials and their elders are paying attention to the campaigns and engaging in one or more political activities. Their top priorities for the next President’s attention are the economy (#1 priority for all ages), the situation in Iraq (equally high priority for Millennials), with health care and energy, including gas prices, high on the list for all ages.

There is a digital divide between Millennials – who get most of their information about government and politics from news websites and share their political opinions on social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace – and those over 30, most of whom get their information about government and politics from cable news and do not communicate through social networking sites.

These are just some of the highlights of a survey conducted by Gallup for the Council for Excellence in Government, in anticipation of Public Service Recognition Week and the many activities organized across the country during the first full week of May to honor our nation’s public servants. This research was made possible by a grant from Accenture, a global management consulting and technology services company.

Methodology:

On April 14-21, 2008, the Gallup Panel conducted an online survey to assess Americans’ perspectives on politics and public service in the United States. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based, nationally representative panel of over 48,000 American households who have agreed to participate in surveys being conducted by Gallup. A total of 2,000 Panel members between the ages of 18 and 29 (N=1000), and those ages 30+ who are not retirees (N=1000) were invited to participate in the survey, and a total of 895 responses were received, including 373 18-29 year olds and 522 non-retirees ages 30+, for a 45% response rate. The margin of error on survey estimates overall is +/-3.3%. For 18-29 year olds, it is +/-5.3% and for those ages 30+, it is +/-4.3%.

Key Findings:

High Levels of Attention and Activity in Election Year

There is little doubt that the 2008 Presidential election – and the news coverage surrounding the candidates and issues – has captured the attention of Americans regardless of age. Fully 90% of those polled are paying at least some attention to the campaign, including 38% of 18-29 year olds and 48% of those ages 30+ who are paying “a lot” of attention.

How much attention have you been able to pay to the 2008 presidential campaign – a lot, some, not much, or no attention so far?

Total	18-29	30+	
46%	38%	48%	A lot
44%	46%	44%	Some
9%	15%	7%	Not much
1%	1%	1%	No attention

A Generational Digital Divide

Young people are finding new ways to engage in the political process, with 28% saying they have shared their political opinions on an online social networking group such as Facebook or MySpace and 14% saying they have commented on a political blog or message board.

Please indicate whether or not you have done any of the following political activities in the past three months?

Total	18-29	30+	
64%	61%	65%	Watched a political debate
41%	50%	38%	Visited a candidate's Web site
14%	9%	16%	Contributed money to a candidate
12%	28%	7%	Shared your political opinions on an online social networking group, such as Facebook or MySpace
11%	14%	11%	Commented on a political blog or message board
6%	6%	6%	Volunteered for a political campaign

The generational differences continue, showing a strong gap between generations in how they get their news about politics and government. Young adults ages 18-29 are most likely to turn to news Web sites for their information (36%), whereas those ages 30+ are most likely to turn to cable news (30%), news Web sites (22%) and network news (19%).

Interestingly, while social networking sites and YouTube are becoming increasingly popular overall and gaining momentum as a means of sharing political views, they are not seen as

sources of news on politics and government (less than 1% mention these as sources of news). In what is perhaps another sign of the times, roughly the same number of 18-29 year olds get their information about politics and government from late night television shows (8%) as older respondents do from reading the newspaper (9%).

Where is the one place you turn for most of your information about politics and government?

Total	18-29	30+	
26%	14%	30%	Cable news
26%	36%	22%	News Web sites, such as CNN.com or FoxNews.com
18%	13%	19%	Network news
11%	9%	11%	Radio
9%	7%	9%	Newspaper
7%	13%	5%	Somewhere else
4%	8%	2%	Late night shows, such as The Daily Show or The Tonight Show
1%	0%	1%	YouTube
0%	1%	0%	Social Networking sites, such as Facebook or MySpace

It's the Economy, Again

Regardless of age, the top issue on the minds of Americans is the economy. More than twice as many said the economy is the most important issue for the next President to address than any of the 14 other issues tested, including 25% of those ages 18-29 and 37% of those ages 30+. Younger Americans were almost equally likely to say the war in Iraq should be the number one issue (20%), whereas just 14% of those ages 30+ said it should be the top issue.

What is the one issue that is most important for the next president to address?

Total	18-29	30+	
34%	25%	37%	The economy
16%	20%	14%	The situation in Iraq
10%	6%	11%	Health care
10%	9%	10%	Energy, including gas prices
6%	4%	6%	Illegal immigration
5%	4%	6%	Terrorism
5%	8%	3%	The environment, including global warming
4%	6%	3%	Moral values
3%	3%	2%	Corruption in government
3%	5%	3%	The federal budget deficit
2%	5%	1%	Education
2%	1%	2%	Taxes
1%	1%	1%	Social Security
1%	2%	1%	Some other issue
0%	1%	0%	Medicare

Not Asked, But... Attention Parents, Teachers and the Future President

Despite higher levels of engagement in the political process, 60% of those under age thirty say they have not been asked to consider a job in government. However, if asked by their parents (33%) or the newly elected President in 2008 (29%), a significant share of Millennials say they would give such a request a great deal of consideration. In addition, Millennials would also give a great deal of consideration to a job in government if asked by teachers or professors (27%) and other young people already working in government (22%).

How much consideration would you give to a request to enter government service if it came from each of the following?

	A great deal of consideration	Some consideration	Only a little consideration	No consideration at all
Your Parents	33%	41%	17%	10%
The newly elected President in 2008	29%	25%	25%	21%
A teacher or professor	27%	47%	18%	7%
Young people who are already working in government	22%	44%	24%	10%
An official in your church, synagogue, mosque, or other religious group	13%	26%	21%	40%
A musician, athlete, or actor whom you admire	3%	22%	33%	42%

This table has been ranked by the percentage of those age 18-29 who responded "A Great Deal of Consideration"

For America's older generations – 70% of whom say they have never been asked to consider a job in government –the newly elected President in 2008 tops the list of motivators for those over thirty, with 30% saying they would give a great deal of consideration to this “ask”.

The Appeal of Public Service

When asked how appealing a job in public service would be to them today, 70% of those 18-29 years old and 53% of those 30+ years old said Very or Fairly appealing. In addition, 28% of Millennials said that a job in public service would be very appealing, a higher percentage than when the Council has asked similar questions in the past.

The responses of both age groups reflect encouraging news for government agencies as they look to replace a large set of retirees in the coming years.

While levels of public service appeal are high, so too are the expectations. Both age cohorts report that the best motivators for them to consider a job in public service would be opportunities for growth and advancement based on performance (51%) and having a flexible schedule and the opportunity to telecommute (45%). In addition, Millennials also indicated that student loan forgiveness (27%) and continuing education benefits (26%) would be strong motivators for them.

Which two of the following would make you most interested in exploring a job in government?

Total	18-29	30+	
51%	52%	50%	Opportunities for growth and advancement based on performance
45%	41%	46%	Having a flexible schedule and the ability to tele-commute
17%	26%	14%	Continuing education benefits
16%	27%	13%	Student loan forgiveness
10%	7%	12%	A user-friendly, quick application process
9%	9%	9%	Having an internship opportunity

Looking For a Job in Public Service

When respondents were asked which of two similar jobs they would prefer, most gravitated towards the government job. For instance, more respondents would rather be a Secret Service Agent for a Presidential candidate (57%) than a security guard for a rock star (43%); a public relations representative from the State Department (54%) than a public relations representative from Toyota (46%); and Director of the National Institutes of Health (54%) than the Director of the Mayo Clinic (46%). The two exceptions were being the President of a major university (55%) rather than the Secretary of the US Department of Education (45%), and being a graphic designer for Hallmark (55%) rather than a stamp designer with USPS (45%).

When it comes to exploring jobs within the federal government, respondents said they would be most likely to turn to government Web sites (60%) as their primary source of information. Not surprisingly, generational differences show through in this area as well, with Millennials more likely to utilize search engines like Google, Yahoo, or MSN (11% vs. 6%) and School Career Centers (10% vs. 1%). Likewise, those 30+ are more likely to turn to employment or executive search services (9% vs. 1%).

Where would you be most likely to turn if you wanted to explore a job with the Federal government?

Total	18-29	30+	
60%	57%	61%	Government Web sites
10%	10%	10%	Somewhere else
8%	11%	6%	Search engines, such as Google, Yahoo, or MSN
7%	1%	9%	An employment service/executive search service
5%	5%	5%	Private job-search sites, such as Monster or HotJobs
4%	3%	4%	Job fairs
3%	3%	3%	Classified ads
3%	10%	1%	School career centers
0%	0%	0%	Online bulletin boards, like Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace

America's Favorite TV Public Servants

There may need to be some humor involved in inspiring the emerging workforce to consider public service, as young adults say that Major Joe Quimby from the Simpsons is their favorite television public servant. They are nearly three times as likely to choose Mayor Quimby as are those ages 30+ (10%). Their second choice (25%) is Detective Olivia Benson of Law and Order, SVU, who is also the first choice of those ages 30+ (31%). Looking at the results by gender, Federal Agent Jack Bauer of 24 is the top pick of males (25%), as opposed to Detective Benson for women (42%).



About Public Service Recognition Week



Since 1985, Public Service Recognition Week has provided a unique opportunity to celebrate, honor and thank public servants everywhere for their dedication and professionalism. On May 5-7, thousands of visitors will converge on the National Mall in Washington, DC to get an up-close and behind-the-scenes look at how government works from more than 100 military and civilian exhibits. In addition to the annual Mall celebration, citizens in cities and towns across the country will also gather to recognize the everyday work of public servants with a wide range of activities including festivals, parades, essay contests, community clean-up days, and charity fundraising events. For more information about this exciting event, please visit <http://www.excelgov.org/psrw>

About the Council for Excellence in Government

Founded in 1983, **The Council for Excellence in Government** (www.excelgov.org) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that works to improve government performance and citizen participation. The Public Employees Roundtable at the Council for Excellence in Government is a national coalition of nonprofit organizations who work to promote the Public Service Recognition Week events.

About Gallup

Gallup (www.gallup.com) is a world leader in the science of research. Since its founding in the 1930s, Gallup has been at the forefront in developing new research concepts and methodologies. Gallup provides opinion research and management consulting to both Government and industry. By incorporating both data and process-based consulting, Gallup delivers performance breakthroughs for civil agencies, the intelligence community, and the Department of Defense. Gallup leverages its deep understanding of human behavior to consult in the areas of human capital management, branding, and customer engagement. The Gallup Panel is Gallup's most dynamic research method to date, and is foremost in the field of market and social research. Built on Gallup's rich tradition as the world's leading public opinion pollster, The Gallup Panel gives true representation--and a collective voice--to the people while studying their behaviors, preferences, and attitudes.

About Accenture

Accenture (www.accenture.com) is a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company. Combining unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments.

