

What a blast to work at NASA. Space agency is sky-high again in latest survey of federal employees

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The NASA moon rocket rolls back to the Vehicle Assembly Building at the Kennedy Space Center Sept. 27, 2022, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. In Washington, a city that revolves around the federal government, the annual Best Places to Work survey is a closely-watched annual event worthy of bragging rights, provided you're one of the agencies like NASA or the Government Accountability Office who topped the survey. The survey, released Monday, May 20, 2024, uses

information from the Office of Personnel Management's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. Credit: AP Photo/John Raoux, File

Exploring the cosmos makes for happy employees, federal workers like to work from home like everyone else, and an agency that has struggled with low morale is showing improvement.

Those are some of the highlights of [a survey released Monday](#) of more than a million federal workers.

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The survey uses information from the Office of Personnel Management's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and is produced by the Partnership for Public Service and the Boston Consulting Group.

It covers 532 [federal agencies](#) including 17 large agencies, 26 midsize agencies, 30 small agencies and 459 subcomponents. The rankings first came out in 2003, and agencies that do well are known to post the results on their websites.

NASA has held the top spot for 12 years, a fact that the agency touted on its website as the agency's administrator, [Bill Nelson, praised the staff](#) as a "team of wizards."

NASA topped the list of large agencies, while the Government Accountability Office—often called the "congressional watchdog" because they examine how government money is spent—topped the list

of mid-size agencies. The National Indian Gaming Commission, making its first appearance on the survey, was first among small agencies.



The Theodore Roosevelt Building, location of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, is pictured on Feb. 13, 2024, in Washington. In a city that revolves around the federal government, the annual Best Places to Work survey is a closely-watched annual event worthy of bragging rights, provided you're one of the agencies like NASA or the Government Accountability Office who topped the survey. The survey, released Monday, May 20, uses information from the Office of Personnel Management's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. Credit: AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein, File

On the opposite end of the scale, the Social Security Administration

remained in last place among the 17 large agencies. Scores for the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development declined for the second year in a row putting them near the bottom in their respective categories. The Export-Import Bank of the United States was at the bottom of the small agencies category while the Federal Bureau of Prisons, with a score of 38.1 out 100, was at the bottom of the subcomponents list.

The survey measures [job satisfaction](#) and engagement on a scale of zero to 100. The survey found that overall job satisfaction and engagement across the federal workforce ticked up a bit to 65.7; that's a 2.3-point increase over 2022's figures.

Among large agencies, the Department of Homeland Security saw the most improvement. The department is the third largest in the federal government with roughly 260,000 employees who do everything from respond to natural disasters to patrol the border with Mexico. Created in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attack, it's often struggled with morale problems.

The [survey](#) didn't specify what the agency had done to climb in the rankings but one answer could be found on the Reddit subgroup for federal employees. The agency's leader, Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, may go down in history as only the second Cabinet member to be impeached over Republican anger at his role in immigration but among the agency's vast workforce he's sometimes referred to as St. Mayorkas for his liberal time-off policies. Under his watch, the frontline workforce at the Transportation Security Administration has also received significant pay raises.

The secretary praised the workforce in a statement Monday and said the department has been focused on engaging with its workforce to figure out what their needs are.

"The impact of this line of effort is real. I am very proud that, for the second consecutive year, our Department has shown significant improvement in its [employee](#) well-being and satisfaction," the secretary said.

In a key post-pandemic development, telework is proving to be as popular with federal government workers as it is among the private sector. Federal employees who teleworked fulltime registered the highest scores—74.6 out of 100—compared to others who worked at headquarters or field offices. The data shows that nearly 54% of federal employees have a hybrid work schedule while 14% telework fulltime. About 32% go into their job site daily. Those figures are largely the same as in 2022.

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