

A SPECIAL STUDY

AD-A233 947

DTIC FILE COPY

2

# THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE

Views of Former Federal Executives

DTIC  
MAR 23 1981

U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD  
1000 ...  
...



A Report to the President  
and the Congress of the United States  
by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

91 3 28 011

THE CHAIRMAN



U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD  
1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20419

October 1989

**Sirs:**

In accordance with the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, it is my honor to submit this U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) report titled "The Senior Executive Service: Views of Former Federal Executives." This report presents the results of the largest survey ever conducted of former members of the Senior Executive Service (SES).

Former executives who left the SES between January 1983 and July 1988 were asked for their views on the operation of the SES and for their reasons for leaving. Their responses reveal that substantial majorities of the respondents feel positively about the Government's success in achieving some major statutory objectives governing the operation of the SES, but that substantial majorities also indicate dissatisfaction with SES pay and bonus programs. The former executives' most frequently cited reason for leaving was inadequate executive compensation. However, job dissatisfaction also played an important role in their decisions to leave the Service.

I think you will find the views of these former executives useful as you consider issues concerning the SES.

Respectfully,

Daniel R. Levinson.

Daniel R. Levinson

**The President**  
**The President of the Senate**  
**The Speaker of the House of Representatives**

**Washington, DC**

Dist. A per telecon Ms. Ligaya Fernandez  
Merit Protection Safety Board  
1120 Vermont Ave; NW  
Wash, D.C 20419  
CG 3/28/91

3/28/91



The Bicentennial of the U S Constitution 1787 1987

A-1

# THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE VIEWS OF FORMER FEDERAL EXECUTIVES



**A Report to the President  
and the Congress of the United States  
by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board**

# **U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board**

---

**DANIEL R. LEVINSON, Chairman**

**MARIA L. JOHNSON, Vice Chairman**

**SAMUEL W. BOGLEY, Member**

**Lucretia F. Myers, Executive Director**

**Office of Policy and Evaluation**

**Evangeline W. Swift, Director**

**Project Director**

**Bruce Mayor**

**Project Analyst**

**Jamie J. Carlyle, Ph.D.**

# Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	1
Introduction .....	3
Turnover in the SES .....	5
Reasons for Leaving .....	9
Opinions of the Service .....	13
Is the Service being administered in accordance with law? .....	13
Is the compensation adequate? .....	15
Is the bonus system effective? .....	17
Has the mixture of political and career senior executives proven effective? ..	19
Conclusion and Recommendations .....	23

## Tables

Table 1.	Do former executives think career executives are competent? ..	16
Table 2.	How former career executives rate noncareer executives .....	20
Table 3.	How former noncareer executives rate noncareer executives ....	20
Table 4.	How former executives rate career executives .....	21
Table 5.	The effect of being supervised by a noncareer executive .....	21

## Figures

Figure 1.	Separation From SES .....	5
Figure 2.	Average Salary of Former Executives .....	6
Figure 3.	Salary Distribution of Former Executives .....	7
Figure 4.	The Dozen Most Frequently Reported Reasons for Leaving .....	10
Figure 5.	Is the SES a Success? Selected Statutory Objectives .....	14
Figure 6.	SES 1979 and 1989 Salaries.....	16
Figure 7.	What Former Executives Think of the Bonus Programs .....	18

## Appendix

Appendix 1.	Survey of Former Senior Executive Service Members.....	27
Appendix 2.	Tabulation of Responses to Selected Survey Questions.....	29

# Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the largest survey ever conducted of former members of the Senior Executive Service (SES or Service).

It begins by examining the reasons those executives gave for leaving the Federal Government. Inadequate executive compensation was the most frequently cited reason given for leaving Federal service. However, job dissatisfaction also played an important role in the former executives' decisions to leave the Government's most rewarding and challenging jobs. Forty-six percent reported that they left the Service, in part, because they did not enjoy the work any more and 42 percent reported that they left, in part, because their skills had not been used appropriately.

This report also presents the views of the former senior executives regarding the operation of the SES. There is dissatisfaction with SES pay and with the operation of SES bonus programs. Seventy percent of the former executives believe that the Government has not established, as the law provides, a compensation system designed to attract and retain highly competent executives.

However, many of the respondents also feel that the Government is failing to achieve important nonmonetary statutory objectives governing the operation of the SES.

More than 40 percent believe that objectives as central to the operation of the SES as those aimed at ensuring against improper political

inference and arbitrary and capricious actions are not being met. Substantial majorities of the respondents, however, do feel positively about the Government's success in achieving other major objectives which are aimed at ensuring senior executive accountability for the effectiveness and productivity of subordinate employees and at ensuring recognition of exceptional service.

Former senior executives expressed concerns about the partially political nature of the SES. Up to 10 percent of SES positions can by law be filled by political appointees in order to balance the need for program continuity with effective policy implementation. This report contains the views of former Federal executives regarding both career and politically appointed senior executives. Readers should bear in mind that attitudinal data of this type are not measurements of actual abilities but are perceptions which can be influenced by many factors such as demographic differences between career and non-career executives.

Former senior executives hold the nonpolitical skills and abilities of politically-appointed senior executives in low regard. Fewer than a quarter of the former career executives believe that non-career executives bring valuable experience, good managerial skills, or leadership qualities to their positions. Moreover, career executives who worked for noncareer senior executives and political appointees more frequently listed the following concerns as reasons for leaving the

## A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

---

Service than did executives not supervised by noncareer and political executives: (1) the lack of competence of their immediate supervisor; (2) the politicization of their agencies; and (3) the ethics of higher management in their agencies.

The report concludes with suggestions for agency actions aimed at alleviating nonmonetary causes of SES dissatisfaction. The emphasis on nonmonetary issues is not intended to minimize the importance of compensation issues. It merely recognizes that compensation battles will only be resolved in the political arena which is already well aware that most present and former senior executives are dissatisfied with the levels of SES compensation.

Eliminating nonmonetary causes of SES dissatisfaction should be a goal of each agency's

administration of the SES. Agencies should supplement the efforts of the Office of Personnel Management to familiarize senior executives, as well as executive level appointees responsible for administering the Service, with the history and laudable purposes of the SES. By increasing the understanding of the Service's importance, by increasing awareness of the specific statutory objectives governing its operation, and by working to increase career satisfaction for SES members, agencies can help themselves and the Nation. Their actions can make it more likely for the Senior Executive Service to be—as the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 envisioned—a corps of top management leaders providing the Government with the most highly motivated and highly competent Federal service leadership possible.

# Introduction

The Senior Executive Service (SES) was created 10 years ago. One of the major innovations contained in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, the SES was created so there would be a corps of top management leaders who would provide the Government with the most highly motivated and highly competent Federal service leadership possible.

In order to make it possible to attract, retain, and encourage the best performance from this new cadre of employees, special provisions were enacted into law. Senior executives were eligible for performance bonuses of up to 20 percent of their salaries. They were eligible for rank awards of up to \$20,000. And, to act as a check against politicization of this new Service, the law provided that no more than 10 percent of the SES positions could be filled by political appointees, who are known as noncareer senior executives. In addition, to guard against SES members becoming victims of arbitrary actions, a rating system involving peer evaluations was created; and a new and more protective standard was crafted against which to judge charges of senior executive misconduct. Moreover, career senior executives were provided with guaranteed "fall-back" rights to grade 15 positions if they were ever removed from the SES for performance-based reasons.

The Reform Act also articulated a set of goals which were to govern the operation of the Service in order to ensure that the executive management of the Government would be of the

highest quality and would be responsive to the needs, policies, and goals of the Nation. These principles called for the new Service to be administered in ways that ensured that executives would be fairly judged and fairly paid; that executives would be held responsible for the effectiveness and productivity of their subordinate employees; and that executives would be guided by the public interest and spared from improper political influence.

During the 10 years of existence of the SES, the agencies charged by Congress with responsibility for monitoring and overseeing the Civil Service—the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), and the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO)—have surveyed current or former members of the Service on a number of occasions. In addition, the Board and the other two agencies have issued numerous reports describing the Service's operation during its first decade and detailing the views of senior executives regarding various aspects of the Service. The present report is based upon the Board's most recent SES survey, which sought the views of those senior executives, both career and noncareer, who had left the Service within the past 5 years.

In August 1988, the Board mailed a questionnaire survey (see appendix 1) to all senior executives who had left the Service between January 1, 1983 (the ending date of the last period for which the Board had previously



## A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

---

surveyed former executives), and June 30, 1988. A representative sample of 53 percent responded to the survey. The survey sought the views of former executives on such issues as whether the Reform Act's goals for the SES were being met, and why they chose to leave the SES. A tabulation of their responses to those specific questions, as well as to other selected questions, appears in appendix 2.

The results of this survey reveal a continuation of disturbing trends, many of which have been described in previous studies. For example, substantial percentages of the Nation's former senior executives continue to believe that the SES is not being operated consistently with its legislatively mandated goals. Significant numbers of former senior executives continue to believe that the SES is not being operated free from political interference. And, as with every survey of the SES conducted over the past 10 years, the results of this survey show that one of the most significant areas of senior executive dissatisfaction relates to compensation. Overwhelmingly, former members of the SES believe that SES'ers are inadequately paid and that the SES bonus system is inadequately funded and unfairly administered. In addition, concerns over continued salary ceilings and possible adverse changes to the civil service retirement system were frequently cited by former members of the SES as important reasons for leaving the Service.

The results of this survey also reveal the existence of surprising or disturbing views on topics that have been alluded to but not addressed in depth in other studies. For example,

many former career executives believe that the noncareer members of the SES fail to bring valuable experience, leadership qualities, or managerial skills to their SES positions. Also, large numbers of former executives did not enjoy their work in the Government and felt that their talents were not properly used.

OPM periodically reports SES statistical data and it last did so in April 1988 when it published "A Profile of the Senior Executive Service." In this report, unless otherwise noted, all data about the SES in general come from that OPM profile. Moreover, where data from that profile has been used, it has been checked against OPM's as yet unreported but more current data to ensure the continued validity of the information reported.

On average, nearly 9 percent of the career senior executives leave the Service each year, primarily through retirements and resignations. Most of that turnover, it is generally believed, results from widespread SES dissatisfaction, particularly over matters relating to compensation. And, such a brain drain, it is thought, adversely affects the Government's ability to govern.

This report will begin by examining SES turnover. It will then examine the reasons former SES members gave for leaving the Service; how they feel about the way in which the Service is being administered; and why they are dissatisfied with the operation of the Service. The report will conclude with recommendations about what can be done by the executive branch to reduce the causes of SES dissatisfaction and, possibly, the rate of SES turnover.

# Turnover of Career Members of the SES

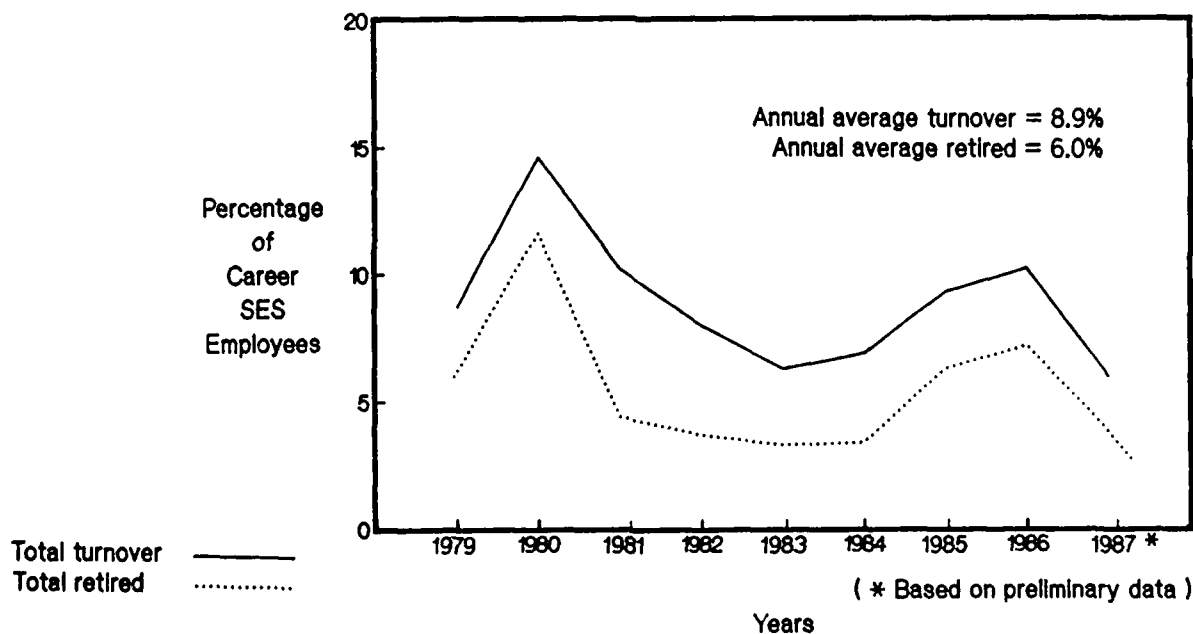
The Senior Executive Service has averaged 6,200 career members since its inception. On the average, 8.9 percent of these senior executives left the Service each year from 1979 to 1987, the last year for which data are available.

Figure 1 shows the attrition pattern of career senior executives during 1979-87. It depicts the overall turnover rate for career members of the SES who left the Service as a result of resignations, retirements, demotions, reductions in

force, and death, and the annual turnover rate caused solely by retirements.

As the chart reveals, in 1987 an estimated 6 percent of career SES members left the Service. In comparison, a recent Board study titled "Who is Leaving the Federal Government? An Analysis of Employee Turnover," reports that just over 9 percent of the employees in full-time, permanent, white-collar positions left the Federal Government in 1987—a rate which is, for all

Figure 1.  
Separation From SES



## A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

practical purposes, identical with the yearly average SES turnover rate, although higher than the 1987 turnover rate in the SES.

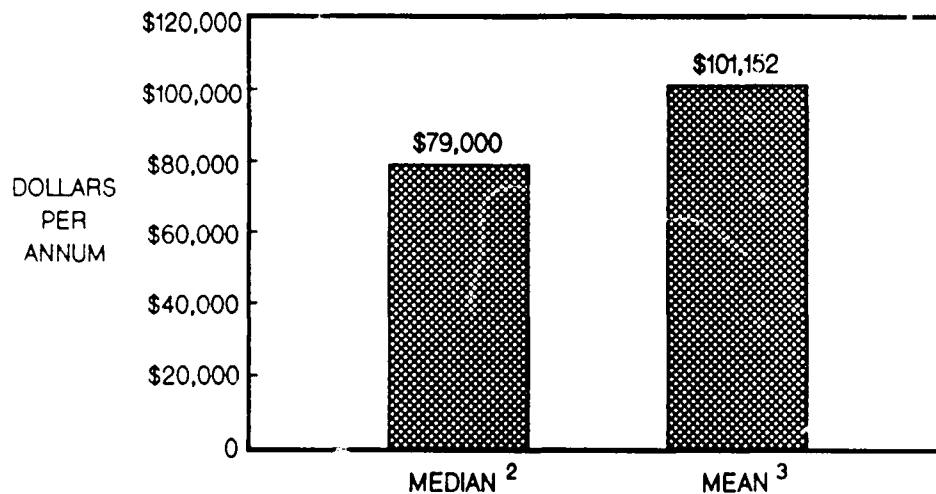
Figure 1 reveals that, on the average, 6 percent of the career executives retired each year. Clearly, therefore, retirement accounts for most of the turnover in the SES. It also accounts for most of the turnover for employees over 50 years of age, for employees with more than 20 years of Federal service, and for Grade 13 to Grade 15 Performance Management Recognition System employees, according to the Board's recently released turnover study.

Figure 1 also reveals in 1987 the career SES retirement rate dropped to 4 percent. This lower rate could have resulted from the inaccurate but

widespread belief that there would be a significant increase in SES compensation. Had that expected increase been forthcoming, career executives who postponed retiring would have received significantly higher retirement benefits.

The fact that retirement drives the turnover rate among senior executives is not surprising given that their average age is 50.1 years and their average service totals 21.1 years. It is interesting, however, that the overall turnover rate for SES members is not even higher since senior executives should be extremely attractive candidates for high-paying non-Government positions. They have held the most demanding supervisory and managerial positions in the Federal Government and, in addition, they are very well-educated. More than 93 percent of the

Figure 2.  
Salaries of Former Executives<sup>1</sup>



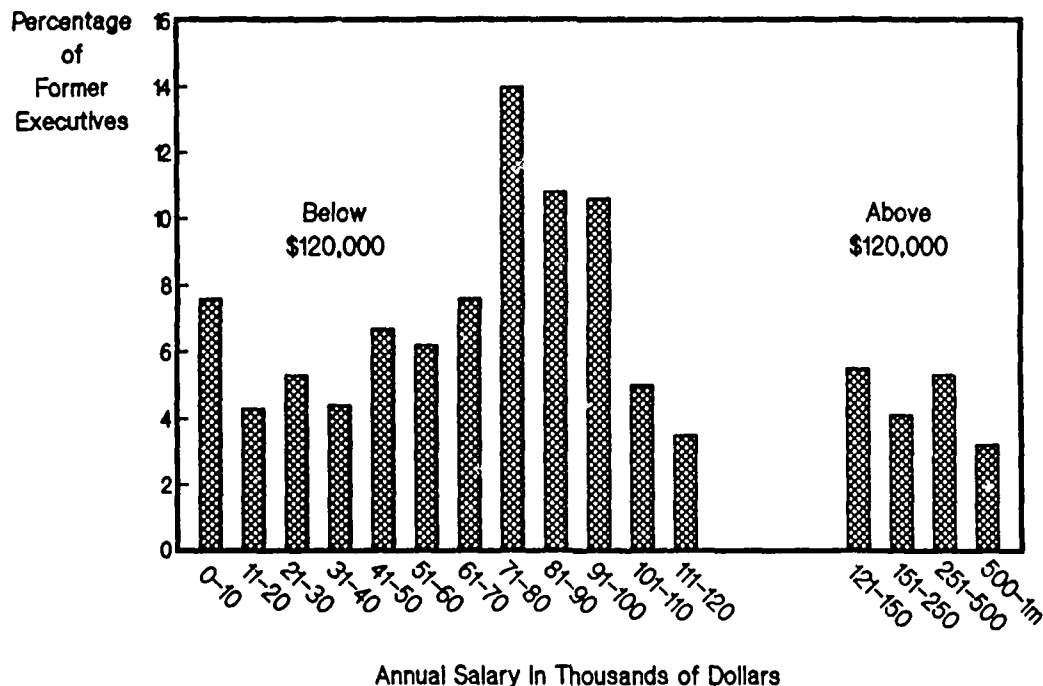
<sup>1</sup> The salary figures are for all respondents who continued to work, either part-time or full time.

<sup>2</sup> Median salary is the amount above and below which half the respondents' salaries fall.

<sup>3</sup> Mean salary is the amount computed by adding all respondents' salaries and dividing by the total number of respondents who continued to work.

## The Senior Executive Service Views of Former Federal Executives

Figure 3.  
Salary Distribution of Former Executives



career executives are college graduates, and nearly 65 percent of them have received additional advanced degrees. Their ability to obtain high-paying positions outside Government is borne out by the fact that the median salary for all respondents to this survey who left the Government and who continued to work, either part-time or full-time, exceeded the maximum SES salary at the time this survey was conducted. And, that median income would be even greater if the annuity compensation of retired executives is taken into account.

Figure 2 depicts the average salaries of former SES members and figure 3, the salary distribution for those respondents who left the Government and continued to work.

Despite their attractiveness to outside employers, nearly 1,000 career senior executives (16 percent of the career appointees) who could retire and draw immediate pensions have not yet elected to leave their Government positions. The

Government's ability to retain the services of these SES members will depend partly on how well the executive branch addresses the causes of SES dissatisfaction which are within its control to correct.

# Reasons for Leaving

Even if the executive branch eliminated all correctable causes of SES dissatisfaction which are within its control, many career and noncareer senior executives would still leave Government service. The questionnaire asked former executives to list their reasons for leaving the Service. Multiple responses were possible. While most of the senior executives who retired did not list a desire to retire and relax as one of their reasons for leaving, approximately one-third of the responding senior executives, including 42 percent of those who retired, did report that a desire to relax was one of their reasons for leaving. Similarly, one-third of the respondents, including 66 percent of those who resigned, reported that an opportunity for a higher paying job was an important factor in their decision to leave. In fact, a monetary reason—dissatisfaction over the possible continuation of an SES pay cap—was the single most often cited reason for leaving the Federal service. It was cited by 57 percent of the respondents and the percentage citing that reason did not vary significantly between those retired and those who resigned.

Many senior executives, however, reported reasons for leaving which were unrelated to compensation. More than one-third said they left, in part, because they wanted a more interesting job. Thirty-eight percent reported that the perceived incompetence of their immediate supervisor was one of their reasons for leaving. Forty-six percent said they simply didn't enjoy their jobs anymore. And, 42 percent of the executives reported that one factor in their

decision to leave was that their knowledge and skills were not being used appropriately.

In deciding to leave their jobs, the responding executives weighed many factors. They each listed, on the average, six reasons for choosing to resign or retire. For example, 47 percent considered the high level of recent criticism of Federal workers and 43 percent considered possibility of changes to the retirement system when they made their decision, while 57 percent considered the possibility of a continued ceiling on their salaries. The reasons listed least frequently were the opportunity for better fringe benefits outside of Government (9 percent), the chance to take advantage of cost-of-living retirement increases (11 percent), personal or family health (13 percent), the possibility of being given an unwanted geographic reassignment (14 percent), and the chance of having a greater impact on public affairs from a position in the private sector (17 percent).

Generally, the percentages for each of the reasons for leaving did not vary based upon the year in which the executive retired or resigned. However, with regard to the possibility of a continued salary ceiling, the percentage is increasing significantly. While the possibility of a continued ceiling was a factor for half of the respondents who left the Service in 1985 and 1986, it was a factor for nearly three-fourths (71 percent) of the former executives who retired or resigned in 1988.

## A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

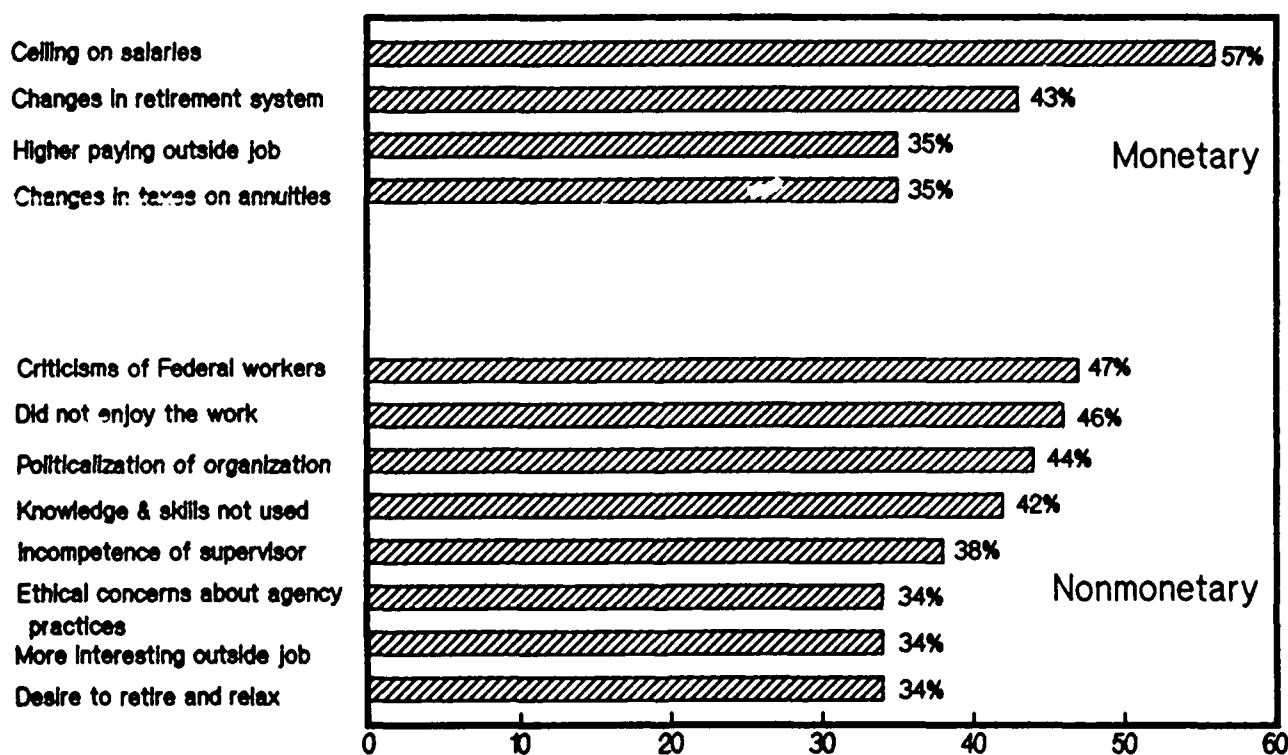
The percentages for most of the reasons for leaving did not vary for former executives who resigned rather than retired. However, retirees more frequently listed retirement related considerations and those who resigned more frequently listed factors related to outside employment as reasons for leaving the Service. For example, concern over possible changes in the retirement system was a factor for one-half of the retirees but only one-sixth of those who resigned. Conversely, the greater opportunity to receive performance bonuses in the private sector was a factor for approximately half of those who resigned but only one-quarter of the retirees.

Comparable similarities and differences existed between the responses given by former career and noncareer executives because most of the career respondents left the Service by retir-

ing while 79 percent of the former noncareer respondents resigned. There were, however, other variations between the responses of the career and noncareer former executives. Criticism of Federal workers—a factor for nearly half (49 percent) of the former career executives—was a factor for only 9 percent of the former noncareer executives. In addition, the percentages of career executives who included politicalization of their agencies and ethical concerns about practices in their agencies among their reasons for leaving were approximately twice as great as the percentages of former noncareer executives who listed those factors.

Figure 4 presents the most frequently reported reasons given by respondents. A complete tabulation of the reasons and the responses they gave is in appendix 2.

Figure 4.  
The Dozen Most Frequently Reported Reasons for Leaving



## The Senior Executive Service Views of Former Federal Executives

---

As figure 4 reveals, many of the reasons senior executives leave the Federal service are outside the control of agency officials. Because many senior executives are older than the work force in general and are eligible to retire, some will always leave in order to retire and relax. Others may leave for reasons of health. Moreover, so long as limits that are seen as unreasonable exist on the pay of competent experienced executives, some will leave for the lure of better paying positions, or from frustration over matters relating to compensation and benefits.

However, the fact that many executives left because their jobs were no longer interesting or because their talents were not being fully used is a serious matter worth addressing. The Nation pays an unnecessary price when so many individuals occupying the Government's most demanding and rewarding jobs report that job dissatisfaction played an important role in their decisions to leave the Senior Executive Service.

# Opinions of the Service

## **Is the Service being administered in accordance with law?**

The law sets forth 14 objectives for the administration of the Senior Executive Service. (These objectives are codified at 5 U.S.C. 3131.) One of them states that senior executives should be protected from arbitrary and capricious actions. A plurality of the respondents (40 percent) believe this goal is not being realized. Another of the objectives is for the Service to be operated under a merit system which is free from prohibited personnel practices—such as unlawful favoritism or discrimination. Only a third of the respondents believe this objective is being met, and more than a third of them believe it is not. Moreover, over two-fifths of the respondents find that objectives as central to the mission of the SES as those promising fair pay, fair evaluations, and freedom from improper political interference, are not being achieved.

However, the respondents feel more positively about the Government's success in achieving other major objectives of the law. Therefore, more of the former executives believe that senior executives are, as the law intended, being held accountable for the effectiveness and productivity of subordinate employees (49 percent to 30 percent). Similarly, half of the respondents feel that exceptional SES service is being recognized, while only one-third feel that it is not.

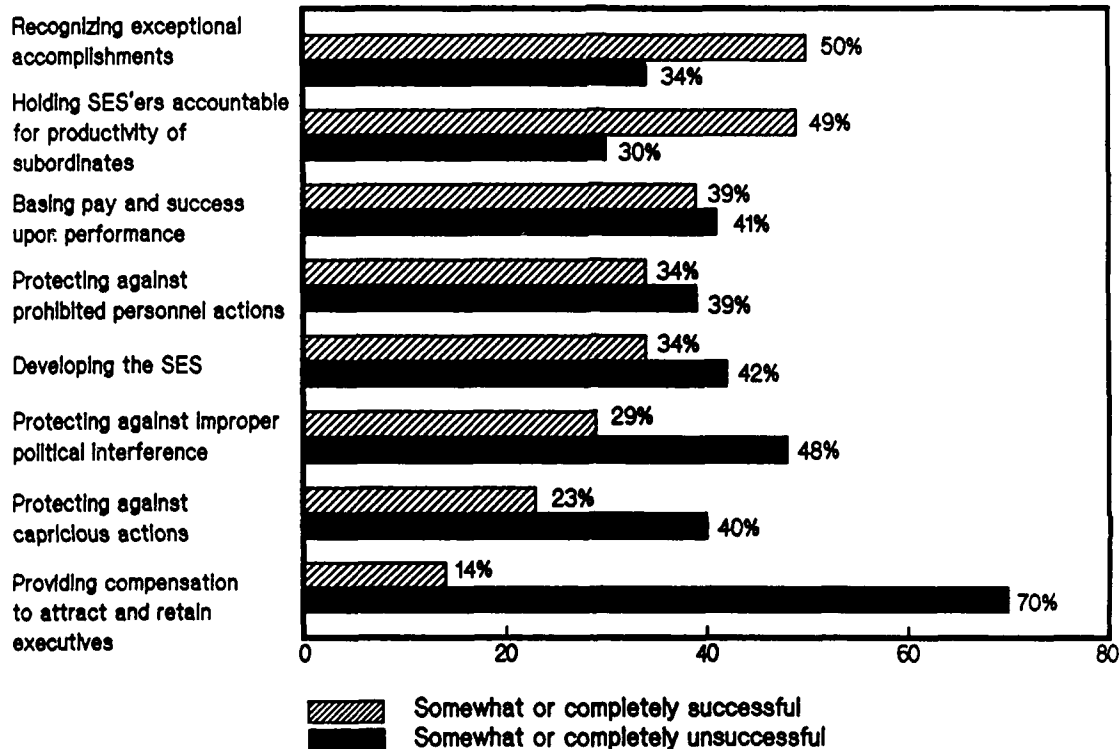
The respondents were asked to describe how successful the Government had been in meeting the law's objectives. Figure 5 depicts their views with regard to eight important objectives. A complete tabulation of responses to this question is in appendix 2.



## A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

Figure 5.  
Is the SES a Success?  
Selected Statutory Objectives

In administering the SES, how successful has the Government been in meeting the following statutory objectives:



The Board last surveyed the attitudes of senior executives regarding the law's objectives in 1986, when it included that inquiry in its merit principles survey of current employees. The percentages of former executives who believe that the Government is not succeeding in meeting the law's objectives is higher for 10 of the 11 objectives included on both questionnaires than the percentages were on the 1986 survey of current executives. The percentages dissatisfied with the Government's efforts to compensate senior executives adequately—the remaining objective—were virtually identical on both surveys and exceptionally high.

On the other hand, a comparison of the attitudes of the respondents to this survey with the

attitudes expressed in the Board's previous survey of former executives reveals that there are more former executives today who believe that the law's objectives are being met than there were 5 years ago. In 1984, the Board conducted a survey of career executives who left the Service between July 1, 1980, and June 30, 1983, receiving responses from more than half of the former career SES members who left the Service during that period. Noncareer executives were not included in that survey although they were included in the present survey.

Former executives surveyed in 1984 were asked for their opinions regarding the Government's success in achieving 9 of the 14 statutory objectives. There are some striking differences

## The Senior Executive Service Views of Former Federal Executives

---

between the responses to both surveys which reflect an increase in positive feeling about the Government's administration of the Service. For example, only 16 percent of the 1984 respondents, as opposed to 39 percent of the respondents (37 percent of the former career respondents) to this survey, believed that SES compensation was being based upon performance. Comparably, only 26 percent of the respondents to that earlier survey of former executives believed that exceptional performance was being recognized in the SES while 50 percent of the respondents (49 percent of the former career respondents) to this survey report that objective is being met.

However, there was significantly less improvement in the attitudes of former executives with regard to some of the other objectives. For example, only 14 percent of former career executives who were surveyed in 1984 felt that the Government was paying senior executives an adequate compensation. Fewer, 13 percent, of the career respondents to this survey feel that objective is now being met. Only 20 percent of the executives surveyed in 1984 felt that the Government was protecting senior executives from arbitrary actions. Slightly more, but still only 22 percent, of the former career executives who responded to this survey report that objective is now being met.

Therefore, while greater percentages of the former executives who responded to this survey generally believe that the Service is being administered consistently with law, high percentages of former executives still believe that the Government is not yet achieving many of the law's objectives. In that regard, more than 25 percent of the respondents to this survey believe that the Government is not achieving at least 12 of the law's 14 objectives. For example, 29 percent believe that there is not sufficient accountability for honest, economical, and efficient Government (36 percent believe there is sufficient accountability); 27 percent believe that

the right balance between policy advocacy and the needs for program continuity is not being maintained (42 percent believe the right balance is being maintained); and 26 percent believe that the related objective of appointing as many career executives as practicable, consistent with policy needs, is not being achieved either (50 percent believe it is being achieved).

### Is the compensation adequate?

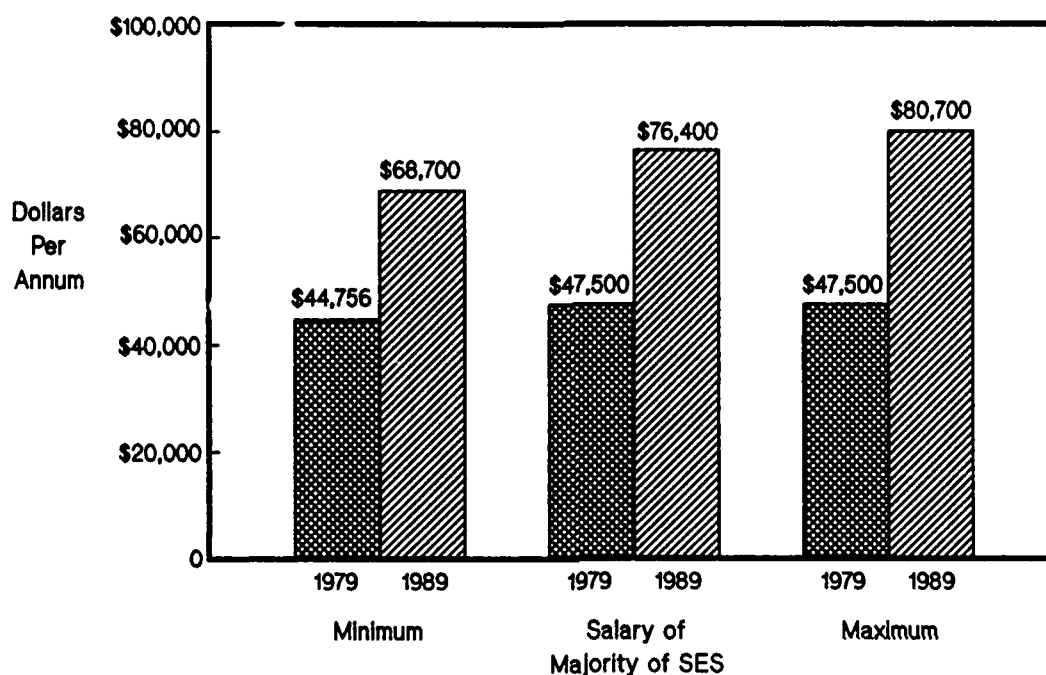
The Board surveyed former senior executives in 1983 and 1988. It also surveyed senior executives working for the Government in 1981 and 1986. Each time, 70 percent or more of the respondents said the Government had failed to create, as the law required, an SES compensation system which would attract and retain highly competent senior executives.

This percentage has remained consistently high despite the fact that there have been increases in SES pay. Figure 6 compares the current minimum and maximum SES salaries with those paid when the Service was created. The chart also compares the salaries earned by a majority of the executives. When the Service was created in 1979, the maximum pay for a senior executive was only \$47,500. Today, it is \$80,700, an increase of 70 percent. Similarly, the minimum pay has increased by 53 percent. Today, most senior executives earn a salary of \$76,400, nearly \$29,000 more than a majority of the senior executives earned 10 years ago. However, these figures have not been adjusted for inflation. Had they been, the increases would disappear since the rate of inflation, reported by the Department of Labor in the Consumer Price Index of All Urban Consumers, has been 77 percent for the period from January 1979 to January 1989.

While the higher salaries now being paid are still seen by most former career and noncareer executives as too low to attract and retain com-

## A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

**Figure 6.**  
**SES 1979 and 1989 Salaries**



petent executives, overwhelming majorities of the respondents actually hold the abilities of current career executives in high regard. More than 90 percent of the former executives said career executives bring valuable experience to their jobs. Fewer than 15 percent of the respondents think career executives are poor managers. Nearly two-thirds of the former executives believe, instead, that career executives possess good management skills. Comparable percentages believe that career executives exhibit good leadership qualities, use their positions to make improvements to Government service, support the merit system, and work hard to carry out administration initiatives and priorities.

The views of former career and noncareer executives concerning career members of the Service are summarized in table 1. Complete responses to the inquiry seeking the respondents' views on the abilities of career and political appointees to the Service are set forth in appendix 2.

**Table 1.**  
**Do former executives think  
career executives are competent?**

	Yes Percent	No
Do career executives bring valuable experience to their jobs?	91	3
Do they work hard to carry out administration priorities?	77	7
Do they use positions to make improvements to Government service?	73	11
Do they uphold merit principles?	72	12
Do they have good leadership qualities?	67	10
Do they have good management skills?	63	12

## The Senior Executive Service Views of Former Federal Executives

---

SES compensation has increased over the last 10 years and career members of the Service are held in high regard by members of the SES. Despite that, very few senior executives think that the current level of SES compensation is high enough to retain competent senior executives. This is probably because they find that Government salaries are not comparable to salaries paid in private industry. How serious a problem this is was emphasized by a finding in the July 1988 GAO survey, "Senior Executive Service, Executives' Perspectives on Their Federal Service." That study asked current executives who were not yet eligible to retire how long they intended to remain in the Service after they became eligible to retire. More than half of the responding executives reported that, once eligible, they would retire within 1 year.

Moreover, the obvious solution to the problems caused by SES salaries being too low to attract or retain competent executives—enacting an adequate compensation system for the SES—will not be easy to effect. The maximum allowable pay for senior executives is tied by law to the salary paid to individuals in Executive Level IV positions; such as some commission members and assistant secretaries. Therefore, salary increases for SES members depend upon the enactment of salary increases for senior appointees in the executive branch. Those salaries are set through the Commission on Executive, Legislative and Judicial Salaries (Quadrennial Commission) process.

That Commission was established in 1967 in order to create a different process for setting executive, legislative, and judicial salaries. The difficulties surrounding earlier efforts to enact salary increases are described in "Fairness For Our Public Servants, The Report of the 1989 Commission on Executive, Legislative and Judicial Salaries." The Commission was created to help insulate future salary deliberations for public officials from political considerations. Under the Quadrennial Commission process, every 4 years, a bipartisan commission recommends salary increases for the Government's top executive, legislative, and judicial positions. The

President then proposes some or all of those increases to Congress, and, unless Congress votes against them within 30 days, the President's salary proposals become law.

Early in 1989, the President, consistent with the Commission's recommendations, proposed salary increases of approximately 50 percent for the top officials in the three branches of Government. The Commission had described these increases as essential to the Government's ability to continue to attract competent individuals to serve in the country's top executive, legislative, and judicial positions. However, after significant public opposition, most of which focused on the proposed increases to congressional pay, Congress rejected the President's proposal, an action which left Executive Level salaries unchanged.

An additional consequence of that rejection was that the existing upper limit on SES compensation also remained unchanged. In this instance, the link between SES salaries and salaries set by the Quadrennial Commission process worked against raising senior executive compensation to more competitive levels. In a different year, the linkage—particularly with the salaries of judges—could possibly work in favor of increases to senior executives' compensation. However, without a change in the law, it is concern about the consequence of changing congressional or judicial pay rather than concern about the proper administration of the SES that will determine the levels of compensation for the Nation's senior executives.

### Is the bonus system effective?

To encourage excellence in performance, special bonus programs for career executives were included in the SES laws. Over the last 10 years, many executives have received these awards. For example, in 1987, the last year for which reported data are available, 2,006 career executives (33 percent of the career executives) received performance awards averaging nearly \$6,000. In addition, 267 executives received \$10,000 Meritorious Rank Awards, and 58

## A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

received Distinguished Rank Awards in the amount of \$20,000.

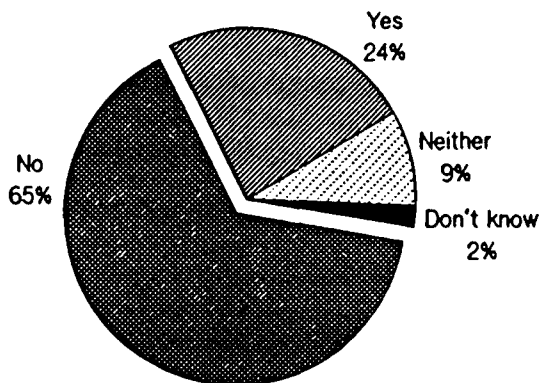
However, the respondents expressed broad dissatisfaction with the SES bonus system, as shown in figure 7. Nearly two-thirds of the former executives feel that performance was not the sole criterion at their agencies for selecting award recipients. Similarly, two-thirds believe that good performance does not lead to the receipt of awards because there simply are not enough awards to go around. And, three-fifths said the bonus programs do not operate as a strong performance incentive.

This level of dissatisfaction is probably a function of the fact that the bonus system pro-

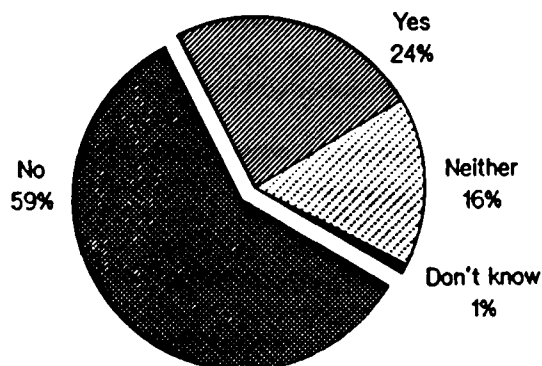
grams have at times been administered in a close-fisted fashion. For example, while in 1987 more than four-fifths of the allowable awards were distributed, as recently as 3 years ago, in 1986, fewer than half the total number of allowable rank awards were distributed. And, performance awards have had a similar history.

The original law allowed for half of the career executives to receive performance awards of 20 percent of their base salaries. However, in 1981, almost immediately after the National Aeronautics and Space Administration gave awards to nearly that percentage of executives in nearly those amounts, Congress reacted sharply by placing restrictions into the appropriations laws for 1982 and 1983.

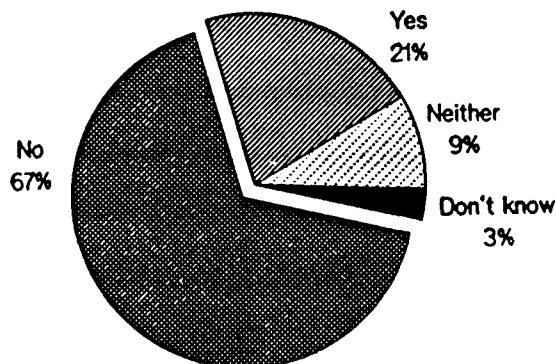
**Figure 7.**  
**What Former Executives Think of the Bonus Programs**  
**Performance Sole Criteria for Awards**



**Bonus Systems Strong Incentive**



**Enough Bonuses Available**



## The Senior Executive Service Views of Former Federal Executives

---

Those restrictions precluded agencies from giving performance awards to more than 20 percent of their career executives, rather than to the 50 percent authorized by the governing statute. Then, in 1984, when Congress dropped that restriction from the appropriations provisions, OPM placed a 30-percent limit on the proportion of career executives who could receive performance awards. OPM then kept a 35-percent limit on the awards until mid-1987. By then, Congress had amended the original statute in order to effectively, but differently, limit the size and amount of available performance awards.

As a result of this change enacted by Congress, there is no longer a limit on the number of career executives who can receive performance awards. However, the dollar amount of performance awards made by an agency cannot exceed 3 percent of the aggregate base salaries of that agency's career executives. These monetary limits effectively preclude an agency that would like to give its executives awards representing 20 percent of salary from making awards to more than 15 percent of them. (An alternate formula, applicable to agencies with fewer than 5 career executives, precludes those agencies from giving an award representing 20 percent of salary to any of its executives.) Operating under these formulas, for 1986 and for 1987—years in which more awards were distributed than ever before—a third of the career executives received awards averaging approximately 8 percent of their salaries.

Given that background, it is not surprising that every survey of the SES has found that the administration of the bonus system is a major cause of senior executive dissatisfaction. And, despite the fact that more than \$15 million in awards was distributed to senior executives in 1987, more than 60 percent of the respondents (including 53 percent of the career executives who did not leave the Service until 1988) believe the SES bonus system is not an important performance motivator.

### **Has the mixture of political and career senior executives proven effective?**

The President makes, and the Senate confirms, appointments to Executive Level positions. The incumbents of these approximately 500 appointments hold the most important political positions in Government. They include department secretaries and under secretaries, commission members, and comparable positions authorized by law.

The executive branch may, in addition, fill up to 10 percent of the authorized SES positions with noncareer political appointees. This statutory cap on political senior executives was established as a legal check against the politicization of the SES.

The approximately 700 political appointees to the SES have an important role to play in effectuating administration policies. Two statutory objectives for the SES recognize the need for the balance created by a primarily career, but partially political, Senior Executive Service. Those objectives provide that the Service should be administered to maximize policy advocacy and program continuity; and that while the executive branch should appoint career executives to the extent practicable, it should also do so consistently with the needs of policy implementation. A plurality (42 percent compared to 27 percent) of the responding former executives believe that the first of these objectives is being met. And, a majority (50 percent compared to 26 percent) feel that the latter is, too.

However, as shown in table 2, former career appointees hold the nonpolitical skills and abilities of the political senior executives in extremely low regard, even though they acknowledge that noncareer executives play an important policymaking role and work hard to carry out administration policies. Fewer than a quarter of the career respondents believe that political senior executives bring valuable experience to their jobs, or that they possess good leadership or managerial qualities, or that they support the merit principles. And, just over a

## A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

quarter of the career respondents think that political appointees use their positions to make positive long-term improvements to Government service.

The reader should be aware that attitudinal data of this type are not measurements of actual abilities but are perceptions which can be influenced by many factors including demographic variables. Therefore, the fact that politically appointed senior executives, who often supervise career executives, are younger and have far less Federal experience (9 years as compared to 22.4 years) than their career counterparts may have affected the opinions of the career respondents. Moreover, it can be argued that the attitudinal data reported herein are inconsistent with data in OPM's 1988 "Annual Report on the Status of the Senior Executive Service" which reports little difference between the performance appraisals of career and noncareer executives. In FY 1987, the average performance rating on a scale of 5 was 4.36 for career executives and 4.24 for noncareer senior executives. Complete combined responses of the former career and noncareer executives to the questions seeking their views on the abilities of career and political appointees to the Service are set forth in appendix 2.

**Table 2.**  
**How former career executives**  
**rate noncareer executives**

	Yes Percent	No
Do noncareer executives:		
a. Bring valuable experience to their jobs?	25	42
b. Have good leadership qualities?	18	41
c. Have good management skills?	15	44
d. View their jobs as an opportunity to make positive, long-term improvements to Government service?	27	42
e. Support and uphold merit principles?	15	45
f. Work hard to carry out administration initiatives and priorities?	71	5
g. Play an important role in the policy making of their agencies?	76	4

Conversely, political appointees have a markedly better view of their own abilities, as shown in table 3. By majorities of greater than 2 to 1, former noncareer executives believe noncareer members of the SES bring valuable experience as well as good management and leadership skills to their jobs, and that they support the merit principles and make positive improvements to Government service.

**Table 3.**  
**How former noncareer executives**  
**rate noncareer executives**

	Yes Percent	No
Do noncareer executives		
a. Bring valuable experience to their jobs?	62	12
b. Have good leadership qualities?	54	17
c. Have good management skills?	39	17
d. View their jobs as an opportunity to make positive, long-term improvements to Government service?	70	17
e. Support and uphold merit principles?	46	20
f. Work hard to carry out administration initiatives and priorities?	90	2
g. Play an important role in the policy making of their agencies?	88	3

Former political appointees also have a high opinion of the abilities of career executives, as do former career executives themselves. The views of both career and noncareer executives regarding the abilities of the career members of the SES are shown in table 4.

## The Senior Executive Service Views of Former Federal Executives

**Table 4.**  
**How former executives rate**  
**career executives**

	Career SES'ers Yes Percent	Noncareer SES'ers Yes Percent
Do career executives		
a. Bring valuable experience to their jobs?	92	83
b. Have good leadership qualities?	68	54
c. Have good management skills?	64	47
d. View their jobs as an opportunity to make positive, long-term improvements to Government service?	74	60
e. Support and uphold merit principles?	73	57
f. Work hard to carry out administration initiatives and priorities?	78	50
g. Play an important role in the policy making of their agencies?	59	78

Thus, noncareer SES members have more positive perceptions of career SES members than career members have of those who are non-career. And, in a similar vein, former members of the SES supervised by noncareer executives have less favorable views of their supervisors and organizations than those who were not supervised by political executives. As table 5 shows, career executives whose last supervisor was a political appointee (including noncareer members of the SES) listed concerns about the

level of competence of their immediate supervisors, about the politicization of their agencies, and about the ethics of higher management in their agencies as reasons for leaving the Service more often than career executives whose last supervisor was not a political appointee.

**Table 5.**  
**The effect of being supervised by**  
**a noncareer executive**

Reason for leaving	Percentage listing reason as important	
	Noncareer Supervisor	Other Supervisor
Incompetence of immediate supervisor	50	33
Politicization of organization or agency	63	37
Ethical concerns about practices at higher agency levels	46	30

This apparent relationship between the nature of the supervisor's appointment and causes for leaving the Service does not extend to other reasons for leaving. Therefore, while improving the relationship between career and political appointees may help to reduce these causes of SES dissatisfaction, it should be remembered that there are other serious causes of dissatisfaction—such as being underpaid or underutilized—which affect senior executives working for career appointees and those working for non-career appointees in equal percentages.



# Conclusion and Recommendations

This report has examined SES turnover, the reasons former SES members gave for leaving the Service, and how those former executives feel about the way in which the Service is being administered. The report has explored the extent and causes of dissatisfaction with the SES expressed by the respondents to our 1988 survey of former senior executives. It has highlighted the existence of disquieting views concerning the Service which tend to be underplayed because the emphasis in analyses of SES dissatisfaction is usually placed on compensation issues. The following are a representative sampling of the views on nonmonetary issues which have been highlighted in this report:

- Thirty-four percent of the executives left, in part, for more interesting jobs;
- Thirty-eight percent of the executives left, in part, because of the incompetence of their immediate supervisors;
- Forty-two percent of the executives left, in part, because their knowledge and skills had not been used appropriately;
- Forty-six percent of the executives left, in part, because they didn't enjoy what should be the most rewarding and challenging jobs in the public sector; and
- Twenty-five percent of the former executives believe the Government is failing to

achieve at least 12 of the 14 statutory objectives for the SES. For example,

- ◆ Forty-eight percent believe the Service is not being administered in a fashion which protects senior executives from improper political interference;
- ◆ Forty percent believe it is not being administered in a fashion which protects senior executives from arbitrary and capricious actions; and
- ◆ Thirty-nine percent believe it is not being administered in a fashion which keeps the Service free from prohibited personnel practices.

These nonmonetary issues have not been emphasized in this report in an attempt to minimize the compensation issues. The compensation issues cannot be minimized. Seventy percent of the executives believe that the promise contained in the Civil Service Reform Act—that compensation levels for senior executives will be established at a level necessary to attract and retain executive leadership of the highest quality in the Federal Government—has not been kept. Moreover, the most frequently reported reason for leaving Government service was a concern that existing salary ceilings would remain in effect.

Nor has this report emphasized areas of dissatisfaction in an attempt to minimize the

## A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

---

successes of the SES. Those successes cannot be minimized. The members of the SES are experienced, highly educated, and highly regarded by their co-workers and supervisors. In FY 1986 and FY 1987, career SES members were the recipients of a total of more than \$30 million in performance bonuses, rank awards and incentive awards.

This report has emphasized nonmonetary areas of dissatisfaction because decisions regarding whether or not to raise SES salaries are currently made as part of a process which only incidentally includes any consideration of the Service's needs or of the views of senior executives. SES compensation will continue to be set this way so long as the maximum level of senior executive pay remains a by-product of the establishment of congressional (as well as Executive Level and judicial) compensation.

The report has emphasized nonmonetary areas of dissatisfaction because they are causes of SES turnover over which OPM and agencies could exercise some influence. SES compensation should be increased. However, eliminating nonmonetary areas of dissatisfaction should also be a goal of each agency's administration of the Service. Employing agencies should not lose even one competent, experienced, educated senior executive because of job dissatisfaction, without at least attempting to eliminate those causes that are within the agency's control.

One of the correctable nonmonetary causes of dissatisfaction is the widespread belief that the Service is not being administered consistently with the statutory objectives. Many of those objectives relate to how the Service is administered at the agency level. (For example, were actions taken at an agency arbitrary? Were they capricious? Were they consistent with the merit principles?) Agency administration of the Service would improve if political executives (and executive level appointees responsible for administering the Service) received training in the history and purposes of the SES. Comparable training should also be provided to career mem-

bers of the SES. Increasing the understanding of the importance of the Service, and of the specific statutory objectives which govern its operation, should lead to a corresponding increase in the quality of each agency's administration of the Service.

Another major nonmonetary cause of dissatisfaction for career executives is the high level of criticism of Federal workers by the public, press and politicians. This was cited by nearly half of the respondents as an important reason for leaving Government service. Agencies cannot bring an end to demoralizing civil servant bashing by outsiders. However, agencies may be able to counter the effect of this cause of dissatisfaction by following OPM's and the President's lead and undertaking actions which will improve the public and self-image of senior executives as a distinct group of exceptional employees. OPM conducts special programs for senior executives, regularly publishes materials about the Service, and recently announced its intention to significantly increase the use of the SES emblem—all steps that should strengthen the perception of the SES as a cadre of special and talented public servants. And President Bush, by choosing to address the entire SES as his first official post-inaugural public appearance, took a significant step toward improving the image and morale of the Nation's senior executives. Agency leadership can take comparable steps to increase respect for their own senior executives.

An additional nonmonetary cause of dissatisfaction is the career executive view that non-career executives—who frequently supervise career executives—lack managerial skills, relevant prior experience, and leadership qualities; and that noncareer executives are not committed to improving the civil service or supporting merit principles. The head of each agency, after consultation with OPM, establishes qualification standards for all general SES positions in that agency. General SES positions, as opposed to career reserved SES positions, are the only positions which can be filled by noncareer senior executives. When selecting noncareer execu-

## The Senior Executive Service Views of Former Federal Executives

---

tives, agency heads are required to determine in writing that these noncareer executives meet the qualifications of the general positions to which they are appointed. Agency heads and OPM should ensure that appropriate qualifications for general positions are being established and that noncareer appointees are being selected who meet those standards. Moreover, without changing the method or reasons for selecting noncareer executives, agencies can take additional steps to reduce career executive dissatisfaction with noncareer executives. Employing agencies could arrange for appropriate agency-specific orientations for noncareer appointees in order to familiarize these appointees with the ways of a Government agency. They could also arrange for training programs in order to provide these appointees with the specific managerial, supervisory, and administrative skills they might not possess and that they will need in order to be effective in their new positions. Agencies should consider this approach because it makes sense to train appointees, who were selected for policy and political abilities, in the skills they might not have previously had a chance to acquire. Moreover, early training of this type is not uncommon. Similar types of training are available for, and routinely used by, new appointees to the Federal bench and newly elected members of Congress.

Job dissatisfaction is another major nonmonetary reason executives leave the Service. More than two-fifths of the respondents reported that they left the Service, in part, because they didn't enjoy their work and their skills were not being used appropriately. Agencies have tools, which they are not currently using, for making the careers of career executives more interesting and challenging.

For example, agencies are authorized by law to grant paid sabbaticals of up to 11 months' duration to career executives. The executives must not be eligible to retire and they must have 7 or more years of SES or equivalent civil service experience. In addition, sabbaticals must contribute to the executives' development and

effectiveness through work experiences or study. This sabbatical program, which was established by the Reform Act, has been all but unused. GAO reported in "Senior Executive Service, The Extent to Which SES Members Have Used the Sabbatical Program" that, from 1979 to 1987, only 22 executives were granted sabbaticals by their employing agencies. This situation should be remedied. Agencies should, as a matter of self-interest as well as to further executive development, encourage use of this program and they should assist executives in arranging for interesting and useful placements.

Similarly, agencies are also authorized to detail executives to international organizations; to State and local agencies, including universities; and to other Federal agencies. Use of details to afford career executives the opportunity to acquire new skills, experience new challenges, and obtain different perspectives would enhance executives' career enjoyment. If a wider use of such details also reduced SES turnover, then the use of those details would redound to the agencies' benefit as well.

Agencies expend considerable effort in selecting the most qualified candidates for career positions in the Senior Executive Service. They should expend more effort in attempting to retain them. In that regard, agencies might begin by revisualizing the meaning of original appointments to the SES. These appointments should truly, and not just in name, be seen as appointments to a new career—a career in the Senior Executive Service. To implement this approach, agencies should ensure that career plans are created for each executive. These plans should stress the development and growth, through training and assignments, of each executive. Moreover, the goal of these career plans should be to maximize an executive's interesting and challenging assignments; to ensure that an executive's knowledge and skills are constantly utilized to the fullest extent possible; and to help ensure that an executive will not abandon a career in the SES because the work is not interesting, enjoyable, or challenging enough.

## A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

---

Agencies cannot force the political process to establish adequate SES compensation. Nor can agencies prevent executives who have earned the right to retire from doing so. However, agencies can work to reduce SES turnover by attempting to alleviate nonmonetary causes of SES dissatisfaction. In this way they can help themselves and the Nation by increasing the likelihood that the SES will be, as the Reform Act of 1978 envisioned, a corps of top management leaders who will provide the Government with the most highly motivated and highly competent Federal service leadership possible.

# **Appendix 1**

## **Survey of Former Senior Executive Service Members**

# A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board



## U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD Washington, D.C. 20419

Dear Former Senior Executive:

The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), an independent Federal agency, is conducting a study of the attitudes of Senior Executives who left their positions during calendar years 1983 through 1988. The Board previously conducted a similar study of Senior Executives who left the Federal service before 1983.

The creation of the Senior Executive Service (SES) was one of the major reforms contained in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. The SES was created in order to ensure that the executive management of the Government of the United States would be responsive to the needs, policies, and goals of the Nation and that it would otherwise be of the highest quality.

It is of critical importance to the efficient and fair operation of the Federal service that the Senior Executive Service be wisely and appropriately administered. Therefore, as part of our responsibility to study the operation of the civil service system in order to report thereon to Congress and the President, MSPB is conducting this survey so we can ascertain your views on such issues as the adequacy of SES compensation and the adequacy of the protections enacted to protect Senior Executives from arbitrary actions.

MSPB appreciates the time and effort which you will expend in responding to the questions contained in this survey. **Please be assured that your answers will be kept strictly confidential,** and that all answers will be combined so that individual responses cannot be identified.

**Please return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed postpaid envelope within 5 days after you receive it.** I thank you, in advance, for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Evangeline W. Swift  
Director, Policy and Evaluation

NCS Mark Reflex EP-27666-001



**U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD**  
Washington, D.C. 20419

**Survey of Former Senior Executive Service (SES) Members.**

**MARKING INSTRUCTIONS**



- Do NOT use ink or ball point pens.
- Erase completely and cleanly any answer you wish to change.
- Do not make any stray marks in this booklet.

• CORRECT MARK: ○ ● ○ ○

• INCORRECT MARKS: ✗ ✓ ⊙ ⊕



**REPORT REQUEST ADDRESS**

If you would like a copy of the reports published as a result of this survey, address your request to:

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board  
Office of Policy and Evaluation  
1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20419

**PRIVACY ACT NOTICE**

Collection of the requested information is authorized by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-454). Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and none of the information you choose to supply will be associated with you individually.

# Survey of Former Senior Executive Service (SES) Members

## SECTION I — FORMER SES EMPLOYMENT

### 1. When did you leave the Federal Service?

- | Month left                     |                                 | Year left                  |                             |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> January  | <input type="radio"/> July      | <input type="radio"/> 1983 | <input type="radio"/> 1987  |
| <input type="radio"/> February | <input type="radio"/> August    | <input type="radio"/> 1984 | <input type="radio"/> 1988  |
| <input type="radio"/> March    | <input type="radio"/> September | <input type="radio"/> 1985 | <input type="radio"/> Other |
| <input type="radio"/> April    | <input type="radio"/> October   | <input type="radio"/> 1986 |                             |
| <input type="radio"/> May      | <input type="radio"/> November  |                            |                             |
| <input type="radio"/> June     | <input type="radio"/> December  |                            |                             |

### 2. I left Federal employment by:

- ☐ Retiring
- ☐ Resigning — Skip to Question 4

### 3. If you retired, what type of retirement did you take?

- ☐ Ordinary retirement
- ☐ "Early out" during a reduction in force (RIF)
- ☐ "Early out" not during a RIF
- ☐ Disability retirement
- ☐ Discontinued service

### 4. What was your SES level when you left the Federal Government?

- ☐ ES-1
- ☐ ES-2
- ☐ ES-3
- ☐ ES-4
- ☐ ES-5
- ☐ ES-6
- ☐ Not in an SES position when I left the Government

### 5. Which best describes where your last SES position was located?

- ☐ Agency headquarters within the Washington, DC metropolitan area
- ☐ Field or regional installation within the Washington, DC metropolitan area
- ☐ Agency headquarters outside the Washington, DC metropolitan area
- ☐ Field or regional installation outside the Washington, DC metropolitan area

### 6. Of the following types of work, which one best describes your last job with the Federal Government?

- ☐ Administrative or general managerial (e.g., public affairs, personnel, budget)
- ☐ Computer or information systems
- ☐ Biological, mathematical, or physical sciences
- ☐ Accounting or economics
- ☐ Medical or health
- ☐ Engineering or architectural
- ☐ Legal
- ☐ Program management or analysis
- ☐ Other

### 7. Which type of SES appointment did you have?

- ☐ Career
- ☐ Non-career
- ☐ Limited

### 8. In your last SES position, were you?

- ☐ A manager/supervisor
- ☐ A scientist or technical expert serving in a non-managerial capacity
- ☐ Other



9. Did you supervise SES employees in your last SES position?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

10. Which of the following best describes your last immediate supervisor?

- ☐ Military officer  
☐ Political appointee (including non-career SES)  
☐ Career senior executive  
☐ Other

11. What was your last job before joining the SES?

- ☐ Executive level position  
☐ Supergrade (Career appointment)  
☐ Supergrade (Non-career)  
☐ Supergrade (Schedule A)  
☐ Upgraded position equivalent to GS-16 or above  
☐ GS/GM-15 (or below) in the excepted service  
☐ GS/GM-15 (or below) in the competitive service  
☐ Private sector employment  
☐ Other

12. When did you first become a member of the SES?

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 1979 charter member       | <input type="radio"/> 1984 |
| <input type="radio"/> 1979 not a charter member | <input type="radio"/> 1985 |
| <input type="radio"/> 1980                      | <input type="radio"/> 1986 |
| <input type="radio"/> 1981                      | <input type="radio"/> 1987 |
| <input type="radio"/> 1982                      | <input type="radio"/> 1988 |
| <input type="radio"/> 1983                      |                            |

13a. Are you currently receiving Federal retirement?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

13b. If so, what is your current Federal retirement pay? (Write the retirement pay in the spaces provided and blacken the corresponding bubbles.)

		, 000
<input type="radio"/> 0	<input type="radio"/> 0	
<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 1	
<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 2	
<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 3	
<input type="radio"/> 4	<input type="radio"/> 4	
<input type="radio"/> 5	<input type="radio"/> 5	
<input type="radio"/> 6	<input type="radio"/> 6	
<input type="radio"/> 7	<input type="radio"/> 7	
<input type="radio"/> 8	<input type="radio"/> 8	
<input type="radio"/> 9	<input type="radio"/> 9	

## SECTION II — CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

14. Which one of the following statements best describes your current work situation?

(Please mark only one response.)

- ☐ Self employed either full-time or part-time  
☐ Employed part-time outside the Federal Government  
☐ Employed full-time outside the Federal Government  
☐ Employed part-time by the Federal Government (Skip to page 7, Section III)  
☐ Employed full-time by the Federal Government (Skip to page 7, Section III)  
☐ Not currently employed, but looking for work (Skip to page 7, Section III)  
☐ Not currently employed, and not looking for work (Skip to page 7, Section III)

15. Is your current job in the same line of work you did in your last SES position, or in a different line?

- ☐ Same line of work  
☐ Related or similar line of work  
☐ Different line of work

16. To the nearest thousand, what is your present salary? (Write the figures in the spaces and blacken the corresponding bubbles.)

a. Base salary

0	0	0
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5
6	6	6
7	7	7
8	8	8
9	9	9

, 000

b. Expected bonus/  
commission

0	0	0
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5
6	6	6
7	7	7
8	8	8
9	9	9

, 000

17. How would you rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of your current job as compared to your last SES position in the Federal Government?

Please mark one response for each job aspect and use the adjacent scale to rate your satisfaction with job aspects "a" thru "k".

- a. Authority to run your organization or organizational unit.....
- b. Being personally accountable for organizational accomplishment.....
- c. Probability of obtaining greater compensation based upon performance.....
- d. Extent to which the job makes good use of your abilities.....
- e. Perceived status or importance in the community.....
- f. Opportunity for advancement.....
- g. The importance of the work you do.....
- h. Retirement benefits.....
- i. Employee benefits excluding retirement (e.g., health insurance, life insurance, stock options, vacation).....
- j. Quality of work performed by your organization.....
- k. Job security.....

Much more satisfied in current job	Somewhat more satisfied in current job	About the same	Somewhat more satisfied in SES position	Much more satisfied in SES position	Don't know/can't decide
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

1. Are you covered by a retirement system with your current employer?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. If so, under what Federal system were you covered when you left the Federal service?

- ☐ CSRS
- ☐ FERS
- ☐ Other (e.g., foreign service)

3. If the answer to 18a. was yes, how does the total retirement package of your current employer compare to the Federal retirement system under which you were covered?

- ☐ Much better than Government
- ☐ Somewhat better than Government
- ☐ About the same as Government
- ☐ Somewhat worse than Government
- ☐ Much worse than Government

4. This question addresses the link between recognition and performance in your current job. If you perform better in your present job, how likely is it that you will receive any of the following types of recognition?

Please use the adjacent scale to rate the likelihood that you will receive any of these forms of recognition.

- a. Receive more pay (e.g., bonus, promotion, cash award)?.....
- b. Receive non-pay rewards (e.g., letter of commendation)?.....
- c. Receive informal recognition (e.g., being told that you do good work)?.....
- d. Receive other benefits (e.g., stock options, use of company financed car).....

Very likely	Somewhat likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely	No basis to judge
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## SECTION III — REASONS FOR LEAVING

Listed below are a number of possible reasons for leaving the Federal Government. Please indicate how important each of the following reasons was in influencing you to leave Federal Government.

REASONS FOR LEAVING	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Less Important	Not at all Important	Does Not Apply
20. Did not enjoy the work any more.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. Desire to retire and relax.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. Opportunity for more interesting job outside the Government.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. Opportunity for a higher paying job outside the Government.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. Financially beneficial to retire and take a job outside Government even though it pays less than your Government job.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. Opportunity for better fringe benefits outside of the Federal Sector (e.g., sick leave, annual leave, health or life insurance).....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. Greater opportunity in the private sector to receive bonuses for outstanding performance.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. Greater opportunity in the private sector to have an impact on public affairs.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. Possibility of a continued ceiling on executive salaries in the Federal Government.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. To take advantage of the cost-of-living retirement increases.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. Concern about possible changes in the retirement system.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. Possibility of being given a geographic reassignment you did not want.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. Knowledge and skills were not being used appropriately.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33. Personal or family health.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. Criticism of Federal workers by the public, the press, or by politicians.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. Incompetence of your immediate supervisor.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## REASONS FOR LEAVING

Politicalization of your organization or agency.

Ethical concerns about practices at higher agency levels.

Changes in the tax treatment of the retirement contribution portion of annuity payments.

Other reason(s). If there were other reasons, please darken the bubble that corresponds to the level of importance and write the reasons in the back of this book in the spaces left for narrative responses. Please write item number "39" next to your response.

Very Important	Somewhat Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Less Important	Not at all Important	Does Not Apply
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## SECTION IV — THE SES IN OPERATION

To what extent do the following statements reflect your opinions of senior executives in your agency? (Please mark ONE response for each statement about A., career executives, and ONE response for each statement about B., political executives.)

### STATEMENTS

- Bring valuable experience to their jobs.
- Have good leadership qualities.
- Have good management skills.
- View their jobs as an opportunity to make positive, long-term improvements to Government service.
- Support and uphold merit principles.
- Work hard to carry out administration initiatives and priorities.
- Play an important role in the policymaking of their agencies.
- Receive adequate training in understanding the administration's policies and programs.

#### A. Career Executives

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No basis to judge
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### B. Political Executives

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No basis to judge
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

41. To what extent do you agree with the following statement about the SES?

**STATEMENTS**

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>No basis to judge</i>
a. Performance was the sole criterion in my agency for awarding SES bonuses or selecting Presidential rank awards nominees.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. The SES bonus/rank award system was a strong incentive for me to do my best.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. There were enough SES bonuses available so that if I performed well I had a good chance of receiving one.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Scientists and technical experts should not be part of the current SES system, but rather should have their own compatible system.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. The SES performance appraisal process improved organizational effectiveness.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[illegible]

- [illegible]

43. While a member of the SES, did any of the following actions actually happen to you?  
Please darken the bubble which contains the number of the most accurate response concerning the action.

If you marked bubble 9, corresponding to the response "Some other reason", please explain, using the area in the back of this book for written responses. Please write the question number and letter (for example, 43a) next to the explanation.

**Responses:**

- 0. This did not happen to me
- 1. The "Buddy System"
- 2. Personality clashes
- 3. Partisan politics (Democratic or Republican Party)
- 4. I was performing poorly
- 5. They wanted to put in their own person
- 6. An attempt was made to restrict the number of high ratings
- 7. Distrust of career employees
- 8. Don't know/can't judge
- 9. Some other reason

**Actions:**

a. I was "shelved" by being detailed or reassigned to lower level duty/duties which were not SES in nature.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

b. An attempt was made to force me to resign by transferring me to an office in another location.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

c. My performance rating was arbitrarily lowered.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

d. An attempt was made to remove me using an artificially structured RIF.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

e. I was arbitrarily demoted.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



44. While a member of the SES, did you personally observe any of the following actions happening to another SES member in your former agency?

As in question 43, you have a choice of answers to each question. If you darken the number 9 bubble, please explain your answer in the back of the book.

**Responses:**

- 0. This did not happen to others
- 1. The "Buddy System"
- 2. Personality clashes
- 3. Partisan politics (Democratic or Republican Party)
- 4. The observed SES member was performing poorly
- 5. They wanted to put in their own person
- 6. An attempt was made to restrict the number of high ratings
- 7. Distrust of career employees
- 8. Don't know/can't judge
- 9. Some other reason

**Actions:**

- a. An SES executive was "shelved" by being detailed or reassigned to lower level duty/duties which were not SES in nature.  
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
- b. An attempt was made to force an SES executive to resign by transferring him or her to an office in another geographic location.  
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
- c. An SES executive's performance rating was arbitrarily lowered.  
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
- d. A RIF was artificially structured in order to remove a specific SES executive.  
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
- e. A career SES executive was arbitrarily demoted.  
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

45. How important was the SES bonus system as a motivator for you to work hard when you held your SES position?

- ☐ Not at all important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

46. If it had been possible for you to move into a GS 16-18 vacancy in your agency involving approximately the same kind of work, would you have seriously considered leaving the SES and moving to the GS 16-18 level?

- ☐ Definitely not
- ☐ Probably not
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Probably yes
- ☐ Definitely yes
- ☐ Don't know/can't judge

47. During the last 2 years of your tenure as a member of the SES, to what extent do you believe you were treated fairly in regard to the following areas?

- a. Promotions.....  
b. Awards.....  
c. Training.....  
d. Job assignments.....

To a very great extent	To a considerable extent	To some extent	To a little extent	To no extent	No basis to judge
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

48. What do you believe is the current image of Federal employees?

- ☐ Very positive  
☐ Somewhat positive  
☐ Neither positive nor negative  
☐ Somewhat negative  
☐ Very negative  
☐ Don't know/can't judge

## SECTION V — DEMOGRAPHICS

49. What was your last summary performance appraisal rating before you left the Federal Government?

- ☐ Outstanding, exceptional, or the equivalent (i.e., two steps above satisfactory)  
☐ Highly successful or the equivalent (i.e., one step above satisfactory)  
☐ Fully successful, satisfactory or the equivalent  
☐ Minimally successful or the equivalent  
☐ Unsatisfactory or the equivalent  
☐ Did not receive a performance appraisal rating

50. As a member of the SES, did you receive any of the following awards?

If you did, please indicate this by darkening the bubble next to the year or years in which you received the award. If you make a mistake, please erase cleanly.

- a. Performance Bonus Award

Years in which you received the award. (Mark all that apply)

- ☐ 1980    ☐ 1982    ☐ 1984    ☐ 1986    ☐ 1988  
☐ 1981    ☐ 1983    ☐ 1985    ☐ 1987

- b. Presidential Meritorious Rank Award

Years in which you received the award. (Mark all that apply)

- ☐ 1980    ☐ 1982    ☐ 1984    ☐ 1986    ☐ 1988  
☐ 1981    ☐ 1983    ☐ 1985    ☐ 1987

- c. Presidential Distinguished Rank Award

Years in which you received the award. (Mark all that apply)

- ☐ 1980    ☐ 1982    ☐ 1984    ☐ 1986    ☐ 1988  
☐ 1981    ☐ 1983    ☐ 1985    ☐ 1987

51. What was your age when you left your SES Government position?

- ☐ Under 40
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-54
- ☐ 55-59
- ☐ 60-64
- ☐ 65 or older

52. Are you?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

53. What is your highest educational level?

- ☐ Less than high school diploma
- ☐ High school diploma or Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED)
- ☐ High school diploma or GED plus some college or technical training
- ☐ College degree (B.A., B.S., or other Bachelor's degree)
- ☐ Some graduate school
- ☐ Graduate or professional degree

54. How many years had you been a Federal Government employee prior to leaving Federal Service (excluding military service)?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than 1 year | <input type="radio"/> 21-25 years      |
| <input type="radio"/> 1-5 years        | <input type="radio"/> 26-30 years      |
| <input type="radio"/> 6-10 years       | <input type="radio"/> 31-35 years      |
| <input type="radio"/> 11-15 years      | <input type="radio"/> 35 years or more |
| <input type="radio"/> 16-20 years      |  |

55. How many years of this employment were with your last Federal agency?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

56. In which Federal agency did you last work as a member of the SES?

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Agriculture    | <input type="radio"/> Justice                 |
| <input type="radio"/> Commerce       | <input type="radio"/> Labor                   |
| <input type="radio"/> <u>Defense</u> | <input type="radio"/> NASA                    |
| <input type="radio"/> Air Force      | <input type="radio"/> NLRB                    |
| <input type="radio"/> Army           | <input type="radio"/> NRC                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Navy           | <input type="radio"/> NSF                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Other DOD      | <input type="radio"/> OMB                     |
|                                      | <input type="radio"/> OPM                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Education      | <input type="radio"/> SBA                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Energy         | <input type="radio"/> State, AID              |
| <input type="radio"/> EPA            | <input type="radio"/> Transportation          |
| <input type="radio"/> GSA            | <input type="radio"/> Treasury                |
| <input type="radio"/> HHS            | <input type="radio"/> Veterans Administration |
| <input type="radio"/> HUD            | <input type="radio"/> Other                   |
| <input type="radio"/> Interior       |   |

57. Is there any change that the Government could have made in the way your agency operated that would have made you want to stay in Government service? If so, please describe that change.

58. Is there any change that could have been made in the Federal Civil Service System that would have made you want to stay? If so, please describe that change.

59. If two changes could be made in the SES, what changes would you recommend and why?



# Appendix 2

## Tabulation of Responses to Selected Survey Questions

The names and addresses of every senior executive who left the SES between January 1, 1984, and June 30, 1988, were supplied by OPM. Questionnaires, totalling 2,121, were sent to all of those individuals. A number of questionnaires were nondeliverable due to out-dated addresses (many of the home addresses had changed since the former executives left the Service) or, in some cases, due to death of the former senior executive. Of the 1,801 that could be delivered, 956 responded, representing a 53 percent response rate. Comparing profiles of the respondents with the total group of senior executives who left the Service, the two groups were found to be very similar. For example, the proportions of executives who left each year were similar in both groups and the proportions of those leaving by resignation versus leaving by retirement were also similar in both groups. Therefore, insofar as can be determined, the respondents are representative of the actual senior executives who left the Service between 1983 and 1988 and provide a valid sample for data analysis purposes.

Complete tabulated responses to the major survey questions referred to in this report are set forth below for the convenience of interested readers and future researchers.

### I. Reasons for Leaving (Survey Questions 20-38)

"Listed below are a number of possible reasons for leaving the Federal Government. Please indicate how important each of the following reasons was in influencing you to leave Federal Government."

Percent

<b>20. Did not enjoy the work any more.</b>	
Very Important .....	25.6
Somewhat Important .....	20.0
Neither Important nor Unimportant....	6.9
Less Important .....	7.5
Not at all Important .....	20.8
Does Not Apply .....	19.2
<b>21. Desire to retire and relax.</b>	
Very Important .....	15.1
Somewhat Important .....	18.4
Neither Important nor Unimportant....	6.8
Less Important .....	7.2
Not at all Important .....	29.0
Does Not Apply .....	23.4
<b>22. Opportunity for more interesting job outside the Government.</b>	
Very Important .....	16.3
Somewhat Important .....	17.3
Neither Important nor Unimportant....	12.3
Less Important .....	6.4
Not at all Important .....	19.4
Does Not Apply .....	28.3

## A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

---

### 23. Opportunity for a higher paying job outside the Government.

Very Important .....	22.2
Somewhat Important.....	13.2
Neither Important nor Unimportant ..	11.0
Less Important .....	5.7
Not at all Important .....	20.2
Does Not Apply .....	27.7

### 24. Financially beneficial to retire and take a job outside Government even though it pays less than your Government job.

Very Important .....	8.9
Somewhat Important.....	11.6
Neither Important nor Unimportant ..	6.8
Less Important .....	3.6
Not at all Important .....	18.9
Does Not Apply .....	50.3

### 25. Opportunity for better fringe benefits outside of the Federal Sector (e.g., sick leave, annual leave, health or life insurance).

Very Important .....	3.7
Somewhat Important.....	5.2
Neither Important nor Unimportant ..	12.0
Less Important .....	5.8
Not at all Important .....	33.8
Does Not Apply .....	39.5

### 26. Greater opportunity in the private sector to receive bonuses for outstanding performance.

Very Important .....	16.9
Somewhat Important.....	11.2
Neither Important nor Unimportant ..	9.7
Less Important .....	3.7
Not at all Important .....	24.6
Does Not Apply .....	33.9

### 27. Greater opportunity in the private sector to have an impact on public affairs.

Very Important .....	5.6
Somewhat Important .....	11.6
Neither Important nor Unimportant ....	13.8
Less Important .....	6.9
Not at all Important .....	27.4
Does Not Apply .....	34.7

### 28. Possibility of a continued ceiling on executive salaries in the Federal Government.

Very Important .....	27.5
Somewhat Important .....	29.3
Neither Important nor Unimportant ....	7.9
Less Important .....	6.5
Not at all Important .....	15.2
Does Not Apply .....	13.6

### 29. To take advantage of the cost-of-living retirement increases.

Very Important .....	3.2
Somewhat Important .....	7.6
Neither Important nor Unimportant ....	16.3
Less Important .....	6.3
Not at all Important .....	33.9
Does Not Apply .....	32.7

### 30. Concern about possible changes in the retirement system.

Very Important .....	20.8
Somewhat Important .....	21.8
Neither Important nor Unimportant ....	9.3
Less Important .....	6.6
Not at all Important .....	22.5
Does Not Apply .....	19.0

### 31. Possibility of being given a geographic reassignment you did not want.

Very Important .....	9.2
Somewhat Important .....	5.0
Neither Important nor Unimportant ....	9.3
Less Important .....	3.3
Not at all Important .....	32.0
Does Not Apply .....	41.2

## The Senior Executive Service Views of Former Federal Executives

<b>32. Knowledge and skills were not being used appropriately.</b>	
Very Important .....	21.7
Somewhat Important.....	20.1
Neither Important nor Unimportant ..	9.1
Less Important .....	3.9
Not at all Important .....	19.7
Does Not Apply .....	25.5

<b>33. Personal or family health.</b>	
Very Important .....	5.6
Somewhat Important.....	7.4
Neither Important nor Unimportant ..	6.8
Less Important .....	2.6
Not at all Important .....	32.0
Does Not Apply .....	45.6

<b>34. Criticism of Federal workers by the public, the press, or by politicians.</b>	
Very Important .....	18.6
Somewhat Important.....	28.3
Neither Important nor Unimportant ..	9.7
Less Important .....	8.9
Not at all Important .....	18.4
Does Not Apply .....	16.1

<b>35. Incompetence of your immediate supervisor.</b>	
Very Important .....	20.5
Somewhat Important.....	18.0
Neither Important nor Unimportant ..	9.1
Less Important .....	4.4
Not at all Important .....	16.9
Does Not Apply .....	31.1

<b>36. Politicalization of your organization or agency.</b>	
Very Important .....	22.7
Somewhat Important.....	21.4
Neither Important nor Unimportant ..	8.3
Less Important .....	5.0
Not at all Important .....	16.6
Does Not Apply .....	26.0

<b>37. Ethical concerns about practices at higher agency levels.</b>	
Very Important .....	17.9
Somewhat Important .....	16.0
Neither Important nor Unimportant ....	10.4
Less Important .....	4.5
Not at all Important .....	22.0
Does Not Apply .....	29.2

<b>38. Changes in the tax treatment of the retirement contribution portion of annuity payments.</b>	
Very Important .....	19.1
Somewhat Important .....	15.7
Neither Important nor Unimportant ....	8.9
Less Important .....	5.2
Not at all Important .....	24.1
Does Not Apply .....	27.0

### II. Opinions Regarding Career and Political Executives

(Questions 40A, a-h and 40B, a-h).

"To what extent do the following statements reflect your opinions of senior executives in your agency? (Please mark ONE response for each statement about A., career executives, and ONE response for each statement about B., political executives.)"

#### A. Career Executives

Percent

<b>40a. Bring Valuable experience to their jobs.</b>	
Strongly agree .....	50.4
Agree .....	41.0
Neither agree nor disagree .....	5.3
Disagree .....	1.9
Strongly disagree .....	1.1
No basis to judge.....	.3



## A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

### 40b. Have good leadership qualities.

Strongly agree .....	18.2
Agree .....	48.5
Neither agree nor disagree .....	23.4
Disagree .....	6.9
Strongly disagree .....	2.6
No basis to judge .....	.4

### 40c. Have good management skills.

Strongly agree .....	16.6
Agree .....	46.3
Neither agree nor disagree .....	24.3
Disagree .....	8.9
Strongly disagree .....	3.5
No basis to judge .....	.4

### 40d. View their jobs as an opportunity to make positive, long-term improvements to Government service.

Strongly agree .....	33.3
Agree .....	39.9
Neither agree nor disagree .....	15.5
Disagree .....	6.7
Strongly disagree .....	3.8
No basis to judge .....	.8

### 40e. Support and uphold merit principles.

Strongly agree .....	24.1
Agree .....	47.5
Neither agree nor disagree .....	16.0
Disagree .....	8.0
Strongly disagree .....	3.5
No basis to judge .....	.9

### 40f. Work hard to carry out administration initiatives and priorities.

Strongly agree .....	28.2
Agree .....	48.4
Neither agree nor disagree .....	15.6
Disagree .....	5.1
Strongly disagree .....	1.8
No basis to judge .....	.9

### 40g. Play an important role in the policymaking of their agencies.

Strongly agree .....	17.9
Agree .....	42.4
Neither agree nor disagree .....	17.3
Disagree .....	17.1
Strongly disagree .....	4.6
No basis to judge .....	.7

### 40h. Receive adequate training in understanding the administration's policies and programs.

Strongly agree .....	9.4
Agree .....	33.7
Neither agree nor disagree .....	23.0
Disagree .....	24.4
Strongly disagree .....	6.8
No basis to judge .....	2.7

## B. Political Executives

### 40a. Bring Valuable experience to their jobs.

Strongly agree .....	5.7
Agree .....	21.5
Neither agree nor disagree .....	22.0
Disagree .....	24.9
Strongly disagree .....	15.0
No basis to judge .....	10.9

### 40b. Have good leadership qualities

Strongly agree .....	3.8
Agree .....	16.8
Neither agree nor disagree .....	29.0
Disagree .....	24.7
Strongly disagree .....	14.7
No basis to judge .....	11.0

### 40c. Have good management skills.

Strongly agree .....	2.1
Agree .....	14.2
Neither agree nor disagree .....	30.2
Disagree .....	26.6
Strongly disagree .....	15.8
No basis to judge .....	11.1

## The Senior Executive Service Views of Former Federal Executives

### 40d. View their jobs as an opportunity to make positive, long-term improvements to Government service.

Strongly agree .....	6.8
Agree .....	23.1
Neither agree nor disagree .....	18.3
Disagree .....	21.2
Strongly disagree .....	18.8
No basis to judge .....	11.8

### 40e. Support and uphold merit principles.

Strongly agree .....	3.4
Agree .....	13.7
Neither agree nor disagree .....	27.4
Disagree .....	23.8
Strongly disagree .....	18.9
No basis to judge .....	12.8

### 40f. Work hard to carry out administration initiatives and priorities.

Strongly agree .....	31.9
Agree .....	40.1
Neither agree nor disagree .....	12.1
Disagree .....	2.9
Strongly disagree .....	2.1
No basis to judge .....	10.9

### 40g. Play an important role in the policymaking of their agencies.

Strongly agree .....	34.9
Agree .....	42.2
Neither agree nor disagree .....	8.2
Disagree .....	2.7
Strongly disagree .....	1.2
No basis to judge .....	10.8

### 40h. Receive adequate training in understanding the administration's policies and programs.

Strongly agree .....	7.8
Agree .....	22.5
Neither agree nor disagree .....	20.6
Disagree .....	19.6
Strongly disagree .....	9.5
No basis to judge .....	20.0

### III. Opinions Regarding SES Objectives (Questions 42a-n)

"The objectives for the Senior Executive Service listed below are taken directly from the law. How successful was the agency with which you last held an SES position in meeting these objectives?"

Percent

#### 42a. Basing compensation, retention, and tenure on executive success measured in terms of individual and organizational performance.

Completely Successful .....	3.8
Somewhat Successful .....	34.8
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful ..	18.5
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	24.2
Completely Unsuccessful .....	17.0
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	1.7

#### 42b. Assuring that senior executives are accountable and responsible for the effectiveness and productivity of employees under them.

Completely Successful .....	5.3
Somewhat Successful .....	43.9
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful ..	19.0
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	20.7
Completely Unsuccessful .....	9.6
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	1.5

#### 42c. Recognizing exceptional accomplishment.

Completely Successful .....	6.4
Somewhat Successful .....	43.6
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful ..	14.6
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	21.8
Completely Unsuccessful .....	12.8
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	.8

## A Report by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

---

### **42d. Enabling the head of an agency to reassign senior executives to best accomplish the agency's mission.**

Completely Successful .....	7.3
Somewhat Successful .....	24.1
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful..	24.5
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	18.7
Completely Unsuccessful .....	17.6
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	7.8

### **42e. Providing severance pay, early retirement, and placement assistance for senior executives who are removed from the SES for nondisciplinary reasons.**

Completely Successful .....	3.1
Somewhat Successful .....	12.0
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful..	16.6
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	5.8
Completely Unsuccessful .....	9.2
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	53.3

### **42f. Protecting senior executives from arbitrary or capricious actions.**

Completely Successful .....	4.9
Somewhat Successful .....	17.8
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful..	20.4
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	18.1
Completely Unsuccessful .....	22.2
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	16.6

### **42g. Providing for program continuity and policy advocacy in the management of public programs.**

Completely Successful .....	6.2
Somewhat Successful .....	35.8
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful..	23.1
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	17.2
Completely Unsuccessful .....	9.9
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	7.8

### **42h. Ensuring accountability for honest, economical, and efficient Government.**

Completely Successful .....	5.6
Somewhat Successful .....	30.8
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful ..	29.8
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	15.9
Completely Unsuccessful .....	13.0
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	4.9

### **42i. Providing for the initial and continuing systematic development of highly competent senior executives.**

Completely Successful .....	3.2
Somewhat Successful .....	30.4
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful ..	22.4
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	24.1
Completely Unsuccessful .....	17.6
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	2.3

### **42j. Providing for an executive system which is guided by the public interest and free from improper political interference.**

Completely Successful .....	5.9
Somewhat Successful .....	23.2
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful ..	18.1
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	23.8
Completely Unsuccessful .....	24.2
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	4.8

### **42k. Providing a compensation system designed to attract and retain highly competent senior executives.**

Completely Successful .....	1.5
Somewhat Successful .....	12.4
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful ..	14.8
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	27.4
Completely Unsuccessful .....	42.6
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	1.3

## The Senior Executive Service Views of Former Federal Executives

---

**42l. Maintaining a merit personnel system free of prohibited personnel practices.**

Completely Successful .....	6.0
Somewhat Successful .....	27.7
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful..	22.0
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	22.2
Completely Unsuccessful .....	16.6
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	5.5

**42m. Ensuring compliance with all applicable civil service rules and regulations, including those related to equal employment opportunity, political activity, and conflicts of interest.**

Completely Successful .....	9.9
Somewhat Successful .....	34.6
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful..	24.1
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	15.4
Completely Unsuccessful .....	9.3
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	6.7

**42n. Appointing career executives to fill SES positions to the extent practicable, consistent with the effective and efficient implementation of agency policies and responsibilities.**

Completely Successful .....	11.0
Somewhat Successful .....	39.1
Neither Successful nor Unsuccessful..	19.7
Somewhat Unsuccessful .....	16.1
Completely Unsuccessful .....	9.6
Don't Know/Can't Judge .....	4.5