Life in Congress:

Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff

*A Joint Research Report by the Congressional Management Foundation
and the Society for Human Resource Management*

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FOUNDATION**

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About the Congressional Management Foundation

Founded in 1977, the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to helping Congress and its Members meet the evolving needs and expectations of an engaged and informed 21st century citizenry. CMF's work focuses on improving congressional operations and enhancing citizen engagement through research, publications, training, and management services. For more information, visit http://CongressFoundation.org.

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About SHRM

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world's largest association devoted to human resource management. Representing more than 250,000 members in over 140 countries, the Society serves the needs of HR professionals and advances the interests of the HR profession. Founded in 1948, SHRM has more than 575 affiliated chapters within the United States and subsidiary offices in China and India. Visit SHRM Online at www.shrm.org.

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About this Research Project

Most Americans don't look at Congress as a workplace environment and usually are mystified by what Members of Congress and their employees actually do on a daily basis. There is almost no reporting outside of Washington of congressional staff duties and activity, and what is portrayed in fictional media about the work world of Members of Congress is usually hyperbolic, negative, and inaccurate. And yet, there are tangible benefits to Capitol Hill employees, legislators, and the public at large if Congress can improve its effectiveness and efficiency by addressing its workplace challenges.

For these reasons, the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) undertook the "Life in Congress" research series. First, for Members of Congress, senior managers and their staff, we sought to identify the factors that motivate employees in the Washington, D.C., and district/state offices. By determining what staff members feel is most important to their job satisfaction and engagement, we can offer guidance to improve congressional operations. This analysis could help managers identify ways to retain top talent longer, reduce the burden of frequently hiring and training employees, and enhance services provided to constituents.

Second, we sought to shed some light on Congress as a workplace. What is it like to work for a Member of Congress? What is it like to be a Member of Congress? How does Congress, as a workplace, compare to the private sector? In our experience, the inner workings of individual congressional offices, as well as the job duties of Members and their staff, are typically misunderstood. This project attempts to offer insight into the challenges faced by congressional staff and Members. As such, this research is a novel approach to examining work-life and workplace satisfaction issues in the U.S. Congress.

> By determining what staff members feel is most important to their job satisfaction and engagement, we can offer guidance to improve congressional operations.

To achieve these objectives, CMF and SHRM surveyed a random sample of Members of the House of Representatives and surveyed all House and Senate personal office staff members. More than 1,400 staff members and 25 Members of Congress participated in the research. The resulting data has been published in three reports:

1. "Life in Congress: Aligning Work and Life in the U.S. House and Senate" (October 2012), focuses on the work-life issues of House and Senate staff. It offers an inside look at the workloads of staff and their struggles in managing the multiple demands of work, family, and personal responsibilities.

2. "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective" (March 2013), discusses the job of Members of the House of Representatives from the legislator's perspective. It offers the first view of the challenges lawmakers face in managing the demands of constituents, interacting with colleagues, overseeing a staff, and still having a home life.

3. "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff" (September 2013), reveals the job satisfaction of House and Senate staff and what they value most about their workplace.

In some respects, life in Congress is similar to other workplaces. Every congressional office operates likes an independent small business, with each of the 535 Members and six Delegates setting his or her own HR policies and employment practices. As with any workforce, employees commute to work, drop their kids at child care, pay their bills, visit their elderly parents, and occasionally have dinner with their loved ones. Unlike many other workforces, duties consist of locating lost Social Security checks for seniors, writing speeches heard by thousands, meeting with heads of state from other nations, and drafting public policy that could affect millions of people. On top of that, they face grueling hours, demanding and often frustrated constituents, and the occasional terrorist threat.

Members of Congress and their staffs face unique pressures. Congress, as an institution, is not held in high esteem in our society, especially in recent years. In the past, stating one worked as Legislative Assistant or even Staff Assistant for a Member of the House of Representatives was a point of honor in any community; now it is often a point of contention at Thanksgiving dinner back home. Respondents to our survey volunteered that this additional layer of stress contributes to the challenges of their jobs.

The authors of this research thought such an unusual workplace, combined with the crucial role legislators and staff play in our democratic process, was worthy of study and support. We hope this research achieves both, offering citizens a better understanding of their democratic institutions, and providing Congress some guidance for improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and morale in their operations.

Every congressional office operates likes an independent small business, with each of the 535 Members and six Delegates setting his or her own HR policies and employment practices.

Executive Summary

It has been two decades since CMF collected data on the satisfaction congressional staff have with their jobs. The 1995 report "Working in Congress: The Staff Perspective" described a workforce on Capitol Hill comprised of individuals who generally liked their jobs and were satisfied with most aspects of their work, despite a range of factors that made employment in congressional offices particularly challenging. As that report described in its introduction:

> "At first glance, Congress is not an attractive place to work. Staff typically work exceedingly long, unpredictable hours that leave little time for outside activities; receive lower pay than both private sector and federal executive branch staff; work in cramped quarters with no privacy; exercise minimal control over their work schedules; and have virtually no job security."[1]

In two decades, much in the world has changed, but the fundamental challenges described back then still exist. Add to them the post-9/11 security concerns, increased volume of constituent communication,[2] and the Internet-driven 24-hour news cycle. That translates to the same conclusion as 1995: Congress continues to be a very interesting, but very challenging place to work.

Our research for this report, "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," indicates that despite these challenges, congressional staff remain generally satisfied with, and are engaged in, their jobs. They repeatedly cite their dedication to public service and the meaningfulness of their work. However, the research also raises questions as to whether these altruistic motives are enough to overcome the inherent issues to working in Congress.

Congressional staff repeatedly cite their dedication to public service, but is it enough to overcome the inherent issues to working in Congress?

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[1] Congressional Management Foundation, *Working in Congress: The Staff Perspective*, 1995.

[2] CMF estimates that most congressional offices have experienced a 200-1,000% increase in constituent communications in the last decade as a result of email and the Internet. Source: Congressional Management Foundation, *Communicating with Congress: How Citizen Advocacy Is Changing Mail Operations on Capitol Hill*, 2011.

Top Contributors to Congressional Staff Job Satisfaction

This research found that 80% of congressional staff reported overall satisfaction with their current jobs, including 40% who are very satisfied. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of congressional staff also indicated overall satisfaction with their current offices, including 44% who are very satisfied.

Specifically, congressional staff were surveyed on 43 aspects relating to their work environment, their relationship with management, their career development, and compensation and benefits. For each aspect, staffers were first asked to rate *how important the aspect is* to their overall job satisfaction. They were then asked to rate their *overall satisfaction* with that aspect at their current job. Comparing differences in *importance* and *satisfaction* in employee attitudes identifies gaps where offices can address concerns or seek improvement.

Of the aspects that congressional staff rated as most important to their job satisfaction, most related to their work environment and the value and meaning they find in their work. The percentage of respondents who rated those work aspects as "very important" are noted as follows:

- Overall office culture (79%);

- Meaningfulness of their jobs (75%);

- The work itself (75%);

- Opportunities to use their skills and abilities in their work (72%);

- Communication between employees and senior management (70%);

- Vision and goals of the Senator or Representative (70%);

- The contribution their work has on the overall goals of the office (70%);

- Relationship with immediate supervisor (70%);

- Relationships with co-workers (70%); and

- Health care/medical benefits (66%).

The most important aspects for congressional staffers' job satisfaction also were examined by several key demographics: gender, chamber, generation, location, and position category. Some notable demographic differences included the importance of compensation and benefits between district/state staff and Washington, D.C., staff as well as between male and female employees such as:

- While 70% of district/state staffers considered retirement and savings plans to be very important, about half (49%) of D.C. staffers felt the same.

The job aspects most important to congressional staff relate to their work environment and the value and meaning they get from their work.

- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of district/state staffers considered work-life flexibility to be very important, compared to less than half (43%) of D.C. staffers.

- More than two-thirds (69%) of women considered the overall benefits package to be very important, compared to about half (48%) of men.

- Similarly, the flexibility to balance life and work issues was very important to 63% of female employees and 43% of male employees.

Congressional staff were generally satisfied with the aspects of their jobs that they considered most important. For all of these factors, at least half of staffers indicated they were somewhat or very satisfied. However, further scrutiny of staffers who were *very satisfied* with these aspects shows that considerable gaps existed between importance and satisfaction. In particular, the largest gaps were for:

- Communication between employees and senior management (e.g., Chief of Staff, District/State Director, Legislative Director) (70% very important, 22% very satisfied);

- Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work (72% very important, 32% very satisfied);

- Overall office culture (79% very important, 41% very satisfied);

- The work itself (75% very important, 37% very satisfied);

- The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office (70% very important, 34% very satisfied); and

- Meaningfulness of job (75% very important, 43% very satisfied).

Top Contributors to Congressional Staff Engagement

While congressional staff report being satisfied with their jobs, does this mean they are engaged? Employee engagement differs from job satisfaction in that it relates to employees' connection and commitment to their work and organization—what and who is motivating employees to work harder. This issue is of particular concern to congressional managers because they are in a constant struggle to obtain the greatest possible productivity and value from their staffs. Understanding what makes employees satisfied with their jobs is critical, but to get the most out of staffers, managers must also know what keeps staffers engaged and performing at their peak. The top aspects contributing to congressional staff engagement in 2011 were:

- 97% of congressional staff agreed that they are determined to accomplish their work goals and confident they can meet them.

- 86% said that they are highly motivated by their work goals.

- 83% reported that they enjoy taking on or seeking out new projects or work assignments beyond their job requirements.

Communication between employees and senior management—with a gap of 48 percentage points—is the largest gap of any aspect of congressional staff's job satisfaction, across all categories.

- 81% agreed their work gives them a sense of personal accomplishment.

- 80% said that their offices never give up.

- 79% agreed they have passion and excitement about their work.

- 75% reported that, in their offices, employees are encouraged to be proactive in their work.

- 74% considered their colleagues adaptive to challenging or crisis situations.

When compared to U.S. employees, a much higher percentage of congressional staff responded that they *strongly agree* with many of the engagement opinion statements, especially those regarding their work goals:

- 63% of congressional staff strongly agreed that they are determined to accomplish their work goals and confident they can meet them, compared to 34% of U.S. employees.

- 51% of congressional staff strongly agreed that they are highly motivated by their work goals, compared to 25% of U.S. employees.

Top Contributors to Congressional Staff Retention and Turnover

Although congressional staff reported being generally satisfied with and engaged in their jobs, when employees were asked whether they would, by choice, look for a job outside of their current office in the next 12 months, almost half (46%) of congressional staff were likely or very likely to do so. When breaking out responses by location, stark differences emerge, with almost two-thirds (63%) of Washington, D.C., staff indicating they would look for new jobs, compared to about one-third (36%) of district/state staff. When U.S. employees were asked this question, 37% responded that they were likely or very likely to seek new employment.

When congressional staff were asked why they stay in their jobs, their top reasons largely related to the value of the work they do:

- 94% of congressional staff said they stay because they believe what they're doing is meaningful.

- 92% cited their desire to help people.

- 91% reported that they get a sense of accomplishment from their work.

- 90% said they stay out of dedication to public service.

- 90% responded that they enjoy working for their Representative or Senator and with their colleagues.

- 72% reported that their benefits influence their decision to stay, but only 38% said compensation was a significant factor.

63% of congressional staff strongly agreed that they are determined to accomplish their work goals and confident they can meet them, compared to 34% of U.S. employees.

Almost two-thirds of D.C. staff indicated they were likely to look for a job outside of their current office in the next 12 months, compared to about one-third of district/state staff.

Compensation was not a significant factor in congressional staff's decision to stay in their jobs, nor did they consider it as important to their job satisfaction relative to the other factors surveyed. Overall compensation/pay ranked 22nd in importance of the 43 aspects considered by congressional staff.

Though compensation plays a limited role in congressional staff's decision to *stay* where they are, it was the top reason cited in their decision to *leave* employment:

- 51% of congressional staff cited the desire to earn more money as a significant factor in their decision to leave their current job or office.

- 45% of congressional staff also said increasing their income was a significant factor in their decision to leave Congress altogether.

Other top reasons congressional staff had for leaving their current job or current office include:

- Inadequate opportunities for professional development (48%);

- Frustrations with the management of your office (48%);

- Desire for a job that will make better use of your skills and abilities (47%); and

- Unsatisfactory relationship with supervisor(s) (47%).

As for leaving Congress altogether, in addition to the desire to earn more money, staffers also cite the following factors:

- Desire to pursue a different type of work (42%);

- To seek a better balance between your work and your personal life (38%);

- Disillusionment with the political process (36%); and

- To obtain private sector experience (33%).

Recommendations for Congressional Offices

1. **Set a Clear Direction for the Office.** Operating a congressional office is like running a small business, with the Member of Congress serving as CEO. In the best-managed offices, the Member is the *leader* of the office, responsible for setting the overall direction of the office, while the senior management staff (e.g., Chief of Staff, District or State Director, Legislative Director) are the *managers* responsible for the day-to-day operations and carrying out this direction. Together, they must set goals and priorities so that both the Member and staff can make informed, strategic choices about what they will and will not do. Unfortunately, many Members are unable to set priorities and balance their aspirations with their resources (i.e., budget and staff), which has considerable consequences for an office. They overburden themselves and their staffs,

> Congressional staff cited the desire to earn more money, inadequate opportunities for professional development, and frustrations with their management as top reasons to leave their current job or office.

> Setting a clear direction, fostering a positive office culture, and investing wholeheartedly in staff development are ways managers can retain top talent for longer.

wreak havoc on the systems and morale of the office, and don't make the hard trade-offs necessary to be more effective. Despite their efforts and ambition, they often find they have accomplished little because they are spread so thin. Drafting a mission statement, developing strategic goals, and implementing these goals as a team are crucial steps to achieve long-term accomplishments.

2. **Foster a Positive Organizational Culture.** In Congress, the Member's political ideals, personal values, and professional ambitions are the basis of the office's culture. Consequently, it is critical that Members of Congress (and their Chiefs of Staff) take time to consciously think about the type of culture they want to create for their offices and how they intend to create it. Those who bestow a genuine sense of trust, respect, and appreciation on their staffs are more likely to enjoy the incalculable benefit of loyal, committed, and motivated staffs. Those who do not, tend to experience high staff turnover, loss of office productivity, insufficient institutional memory, and a lack of office continuity and teamwork. These Members and Chiefs of Staff essentially forfeit the opportunity to create a positive culture and an effective office.

3. **Institute a Performance Management System**. Most congressional offices use a haphazard approach to managing staff, intervening only when personnel issues arise. Managers do little proactively to reduce staff performance problems, to help turn good staff into great staff, or to ensure that great staff don't become bored and look for new opportunities elsewhere. Instead, by investing wholeheartedly in the development of staff, Members and managers can create more productive, effective, and loyal employees and build a better office. While this annual and ongoing approach requires discipline and might seem labor-intensive, it will take far less time than many offices spend on the range of personnel problems that routinely crop up throughout the year, such as dealing with under-performing staff or high turnover.

Methodology

For this research, 10,983 employees in House and Senate personal offices were contacted to participate in the survey. A total of 1,432 responses were received, yielding a response rate of 15%. Of these respondents: 72% were employed in the U.S. House of Representatives and 28% worked in the U.S. Senate; 55% were employed by Democrats, 43% worked for Republicans, and 2% worked for Independents. Data collection for the congressional staff survey took place August 8 – October 4, 2011.

Members who genuinely trust, respect, and appreciate their staffs are more likely to enjoy the incalculable benefit of loyal, committed, and motivated employees.

More than 1,400 staff from the U.S. House and Senate responded to this survey.

Introduction

Congressional offices are difficult enterprises to lead and manage. As this report will show, congressional staff are an extraordinarily dedicated and hardworking workforce, motivated by a sense of public service and loyalty to their Member of Congress. Yet, Capitol Hill is also a work environment that places great demands on its employees and is constantly asking workers to do more with less.

To understand where to concentrate limited time and resources that will yield the greatest improvement in employee satisfaction and engagement, organizations must identify what aspects of their jobs are most important to their employees. Once the priorities are established, organizations must understand the interplay among these factors. How satisfied are employees with each of the factors, particularly those they consider most important to their satisfaction? Are there differences in priorities among key demographics? How do these factors and others contribute to employee engagement and retention?

This report seeks to answer these questions for the unique congressional workforce and provide Members of Congress and senior managers with information they can use to target their efforts towards motivating and engaging their employees. In the report, we present the results of our survey of more than 1,400 congressional staff. Our sample included a cross-section of staffers—from the House and Senate, from both political parties, and from the Washington, D.C. and the district or state offices. Additionally, researchers compared congressional staff survey results to data collected by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) on U.S. employees.

The research results are broken down into three sections:

1. **Congressional Staff Job Satisfaction,** in which we provide information about the importance to congressional staff of 43 job aspects related to their work environment, relationship with management, career develop-

Congressional staff are an extraordinarily dedicated and hardworking workforce, motivated by a sense of public service and loyalty to their Member of Congress.

ment, and compensation and benefits. We also examined the importance placed on these job aspects by specific demographic segments:[3]

- **Location:** Washington, D.C., office, district or state office, and those staff who split time evenly between both locations.

- **Chamber:** U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate.

- **Gender:** Male and female.

- **Generation/Age:** Millennials (born after 1980), Generation X (born 1965 – 1980), Baby Boomers (born 1945 – 1964), and Traditionalists (born before 1945).

- **Position category:** Management, Policy/Legislative/Research, Press/ Communications, Administrative/Support, and District/State (job titles within each category are outlined on page 79).

For location, gender, age, and position category, we highlight some of the most noteworthy differences among these segments, particularly when large differences exist (at least 10% or more). We did not find any meaningful differences by congressional chamber, nor have we reported on data for Traditionalists (staff born before 1945) and staff who split time evenly between Washington, D.C., and the district/state because their sample sizes were too low. These demographic differences are presented to help congressional managers determine what factors may motivate certain staffers more than others.

Next we examine congressional staff's satisfaction with the 43 job aspects, and look at the gaps between importance and satisfaction. The greater the gaps among the most important factors, the more indication that congressional offices should focus on improvement in these areas. Finally, we compare congressional staff's priorities with those of U.S. employees for the same year (2011), using data collected by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). (See page 12 for more information about this comparative data.)

2. **Congressional Staff Engagement,** in which we discuss congressional staff's responses to a range of questions about how engaged they feel with their jobs and define those factors that appear to have the greatest overall impact on congressional staff's engagement. Again, the results are compared to data on U.S. employees.

3. **Congressional Staff Retention and Turnover,** in which we examine congressional staff's overall satisfaction with their current jobs and current offices, and the reasons staff give for choosing to stay in their jobs, their offices, and in Congress. Data is also presented on the likelihood of congressional staff leaving their jobs, as well as the factors they cite as

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[3] The distributions of survey respondents in each demographic segment (location, gender, age, and position category) are included on pages 79–80.

significant reasons in their decisions to leave their jobs, their offices, or Congress altogether.

Based on these survey results, recommendations are presented on three strategies managers can utilize to improve staff's job satisfaction. These specific recommendations were identified as having the greatest positive impact for employees. They are:

1. Set a clear direction for the office;

2. Foster a positive organizational culture; and

3. Institute a performance management system.

Finally, this report draws on a large amount of data. In addition to the figures in the body, appendices provide more detailed data to supplement and sometimes summarize the text, including further detail by location, gender, age, and position category.

About the "U.S. Employees" Comparative Data

Since 2002, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) has conducted annual job satisfaction surveys of U.S. employees, and in 2011, engagement questions were added. CMF and SHRM adapted the questionnaire to the congressional environment, so congressional data could be compared to data from SHRM's nationwide employee survey.

The data on U.S. employees used for comparison throughout this report were collected by SHRM in 2011 (the same year the congressional data were collected). A total of 600 individuals completed the online survey, representing a cross-section of various industries, organization sizes, job levels, tenures, gender, and ages:

- **Organization staff size categories:** small (1 to 99 employees), medium (100 to 499 employees), and large (500 or more employees).

- **Employee job tenure categories, or total years with the company:** two years or less, three to five years, six to 10 years, 11 to 15 years, and 16 years or more.

- **Employee job level:** nonmanagement (e.g., assistant, coordinator, specialist), professional nonmanagement (e.g., analyst, nurse, engineer), middle management (e.g., manager, supervisor, director) and executive level (e.g., CEO, CFO).

- **Employee age categories:** Millennials (born after 1980), Generation X (born 1965-1980), Baby Boomers (born 1945-1964), and Veterans/ Traditionalists (born before 1945).

- **Organization industry:** educational services; health care and social assistance; manufacturing; professional, scientific and technical services; administrative and support and waste management and remediation services; retail trade; information; public administration; construction; transportation and warehousing; repair and maintenance; finance and insurance; accommodation and food services; religious, grantmaking, civic, professional and similar organizations; agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting; utilities; wholesale trade; real estate and rental and leasing; mining; and management of companies and enterprises.

Survey results were published in the SHRM report, "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy."

Research Results

"Working for Congress is a way for me to serve my country. Congress needs smart and principled individuals who are willing to sacrifice some part of their lives, whether that be a personal life, a large salary, family considerations, or something else entirely, to make our country work better, and I'm proud to be a part of that."

—House Legislative Director

"To me, working in Congress means assisting the Congressman in communicating his vision to the people of the District, making sure they, in turn, are able to communicate their issues to the Congressman's office and overall helping constituents who have issues with federal entities."

—House Field Representative

"I enjoy having the ability to help people improve their lives, either individually through casework or collectively through legislation."

—Senate Chief of Staff

"It [working in Congress] means being a public servant, being held to a higher standard and working hard. It's an honor and a privilege that shouldn't be taken lightly."

—Senate Correspondence Manager/Mailroom Supervisor

"I enjoy working to create change from within the system. Though the public sentiment about working in Congress is low at this time, I think it gives my life purpose and relevance."

—House Field Representative

"Public service is important to me and Capitol Hill has been a long term career for me. I enjoy most of the people working on the Hill and I have been proud of my career."

—Senate Office Manager

"Working in Congress means serving the American people. Trying to make a difference in a very complicated, confusing, combative process."

—House Chief of Staff

"Working in Congress means sacrificing many of the perks of the private/not-for-profit world (compensation, travel, work hours) to contribute to something greater than myself."

—House Legislative Assistant

"After 23 years in the military, working in Congress means continuing my service to others."

—House Field Representative

"I have been given an opportunity to work for the most amazing country in the world and to represent the people of the United States of America. I am able to experience, first hand, how our country operates."

—House Staff Assistant

"Working in Congress means being a part of something much, much bigger than myself and the Member."

—Senate Casework Supervisor/Director of Constituent Services

"Working in Congress means that I'm one of the few Americans who has the privilege to work in a place that has a profound significance to our country's culture and economy (and much of the world's), not to mention a very powerful and historical place. Working here is an adventure every day, but unfortunately, lately that adventure has become depressing. You must accept that as a congressional staffer, many Americans see you as an entitled, out-of-touch enemy, which is exactly the opposite of how we see ourselves. To me, being a staffer means you must be content to serve the public quietly or being vilified while you're doing it, and often for lesser pay than other federal employees. Between the nasty political rancor, sometimes round-the-clock hours, and low pay, you have to *really* want to be a public servant. That's why so many of us only last a few years here, and why my office is such a spectacular one in which to work."

—Senate Deputy Communications Director

Congressional Staff Job Satisfaction

Congressional staff were surveyed on 43 aspects relating to their overall job satisfaction. For each aspect, staffers were first asked to rate *how important the aspect* is to their overall job satisfaction (with 5 being "very important" and 1 being "very unimportant"). They were then asked to rate their *overall satisfaction* with that aspect at their current job (with 5 being "very satisfied" and 1 being "very dissatisfied"). Comparing *importance* to *satisfaction* in employee attitudes is essential to identifying gaps where offices can address concerns or seek improvement. The resulting data—the importance congressional staff attach to each of the 43 aspects and their level of satisfaction with these aspects—are presented in the following four categories:

1. **Work environment**, which includes job security, schedules, physical working conditions, and staffers' perceptions of their jobs;

2. **Relationship with management**, including communication with, and recognition by management;

3. **Career development**, or the opportunities for staffers to gain skills and network to advance their careers; and

4. **Compensation and benefits**, such as base salary, cost of living adjustments, paid time off, health care, retirement, etc.

For each of these categories, select differences in importance by location, gender, age, and staff position category are also presented, particularly when large differences (at least 10% or more) exist.

> "Every day I have an opportunity to make our communities and our country better, and I get to work with smart, interesting people who are passionate about what they do. I love my job in large part because it is always changing, challenging, and rewarding."
>
> —Senate Communications Director

Work Environment

Importance of Work Environment Factors

The factors that contribute to their work environment were rated high in importance to overall job satisfaction by congressional staffers (see Figure 1). In fact, of the 15 work environment factors surveyed on, six were identified by congressional staff as top contributors to their overall job satisfaction. These job aspects were:

- Overall office culture (79% of staffers rated this very important);

- Meaningfulness of the job (75%);

- The work itself (75%);

- The vision and goals of the Senator/Representative (70%);

- The contribution their work has on the overall goals of the office (70%); and

- Relationships with co-workers (70%).

"Working in Congress means being able to help communicate the goals/vision of the representative/senator to their state and the country, as well as help shape the policies that are affecting everyone in my state and in the country."

—Senate Staff Assistant

Figure 1	Importance of Work Environment Factors	
Aspect of Work Environment	**Very Important**
Overall office culture	79%
Meaningfulness of job	75%
The work itself	75%
Vision and goals of Senator/Representative	70%
The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	70%
Relationships with co-workers	70%
The variety of your work	62%
Job security	61%
Feeling safe in your work environment	55%
Managing the amount of work-related stress	46%
Physical working conditions	46%
Office's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	42%
Predictability of weekly schedule	34%
Predictability of daily work hours	34%
Number of hours worked per week	32%

(n = 1058-1140)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

When congressional staff are compared with U.S. employees, most aspects of the work environment are much more important to congressional staff (see Figure 2). Only the aspects of job security and feeling safe in your work environment were of comparable importance to both workforces.

Figure 2 | Importance of Work Environment to Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

Aspect	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
Overall office culture	79%	46%
Meaningfulness of job	75%	35%
The work itself	75%	53%
The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	70%	33%
Relationships with co-workers	70%	38%
The variety of your work	62%	32%
Job security	61%	63%
Feeling safe in your work environment	55%	48%
Office's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	42%	22%

■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees

(Congressional Staff n = 1058-1140, U.S. Employees n = 584-593)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important," with job aspects sorted in descending order of importance to congressional staff. The predictability of daily work hours, predictability of weekly work schedule, number of hours worked per week, managing the amount of work-related stress, vision and goals of Senator/Representative, and physical working conditions were not asked of U.S. employees so no comparison data is available.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

Within Congress, some demographic differences[4] existed for a number of the work environment factors. For example, staffers in district and state offices were generally more concerned about aspects of their work environment than staffers in Washington, D.C., offices:

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[4] The distributions of survey respondents in each demographic segment (location, gender, age, and position category) are included on pages 79–80.

- District/state staff were far more likely than their D.C. counterparts to consider the office's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce as very important (50% vs. 30%).

- Physical working conditions were also of greater concern to district and state staffers than to D.C. staffers (53% vs. 34% rated very important), as were job security (66% vs. 52% rated very important) and predictability of daily work hours (40% vs. 24% rated very important).

Female employees considered almost all aspects of the work environment to be more important to their job satisfaction than their male counterparts did, and some of the gaps between men and women are considerable:

- Nearly two-thirds of female employees (65%) indicated that feeling safe in their work environment is very important, compared to 38% of male employees who felt the same.

- More than half of women (53%) felt managing the amount of work-related stress is very important, compared to 36% of men.

- Female employees also considered their physical working conditions to be more important than their male counterparts did (53% vs. 36% rated very important).

Generation	Birth Year
Millennial	Born after 1980
Generation X	1965-1980
Baby Boomer	1945-1964

Age differences were also noted among staffers. Many work environment factors are more important to Baby Boomers than to Generation Xers and Millennials. The aspects with the widest gaps between Baby Boomers and the younger generations were:

- The office's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce. While 57% of Baby Boomers considered this aspect to be very important, only 32% of Generation X staffers and 33% of Millennials did.

- Physical working conditions. This aspect was also very important to more Baby Boomers (60%) than Generation Xers (37%) and Millennials (39%).

- The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office. This aspect was among the highest in importance for Baby Boomers, with 80% rating it as very important, compared to 61% of Generation X staffers and 66% of Millennials.

- The variety of your work. Almost three-quarters (72%) of Baby Boomers said this aspect was very important, compared to 54% of Generation Xers and 58% of Millennials.

"I love my job! I enjoy my office, office staff, and the vision of my representative. This is the best job that I have ever had."

—House Casework Supervisor/ Director of Constituent Services

- Feeling safe in your work environment. While 65% of Baby Boomers rated this aspect as very important to them, 46% of Generation Xers and 51% of Millennials considered it to be very important.

Work environment aspects saw some differences among staffers in different positions,[5] with the largest differences between management and policy/legislative/research staffers. Many aspects were much more important to managers than to policy/legislative/research staff, such as:

- Variety of your work, which was very important to three-quarters (75%) of managers, compared to 54% of policy/legislative/research staffers.

- Contributions your work has on the overall goals of the office, with 78% of managers and 60% of policy/legislative/research staffers indicating this was very important.

- The office's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce, which nearly half (48%) of managers felt was very important, compared to less than one-quarter (24%) of policy/legislative/research staffers who felt the same.

Satisfaction with Work Environment Factors

As Figure 3 shows, congressional staff are generally satisfied with the various aspects of their work environment. More than three-quarters reported being somewhat or very satisfied with their relationships with co-workers (78%) and feeling safe in their work environment (76%). Nearly as many reported satisfaction with the meaningfulness of their jobs (74%); the contributions their work has on the overall goals of the office (72%); the overall office culture (71%); and physical working conditions (71%).

The aspect of their work environment with which congressional staff were least satisfied was managing the amount of work-related stress, with less than half (49%) reporting they were somewhat or very satisfied.

When comparing congressional staff's satisfaction with aspects of their work environment to U.S. employees, only one considerable difference emerged (see Figure 4). While 41% of congressional staff were very satisfied with their overall office culture, only 27% of U.S. employees were very satisfied with this aspect.

"I have a large role in shaping policy. It's tough work, but I think what I'm doing is important and I enjoy it."

—House Senior Legislative Assistant

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5   In this analysis, staff positions were grouped into five categories: Management; Policy/Legislative/Research; Press/Communications; Administrative/Support; and District/State. Page 79 lists the staff positions included in each category.

Figure 3 | Congressional Staff Satisfaction with Aspects of Their Work Environment

Aspect	Overall Satisfaction	Neutral	Overall Dissatisfaction
Relationships with co-workers	78%	14%	8%
Feeling safe in your work environment	76%	16%	9%
Meaningfulness of job	74%	16%	11%
The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	72%	17%	11%
Overall office culture	71%	13%	15%
Physical working conditions	71%	15%	13%
Vision and goals of Senator/Representative	70%	14%	16%
The work itself	70%	17%	13%
The variety of your work	66%	21%	13%
Job security	65%	21%	14%
Predictability of weekly schedule	64%	22%	14%
Office's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	64%	26%	10%
Number of hours worked per week	60%	24%	16%
Predictability of daily work hours	58%	25%	17%
Managing the amount of work-related stress	49%	26%	25%

■ Overall Satisfaction | ■ Neutral | ■ Overall Dissatisfaction

(n = 1039-1124)
Note: "Overall satisfaction" includes "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied" responses, while "overall dissatisfaction" includes "very dissatisfied" and "somewhat dissatisfied" responses. "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 4 | Satisfaction with Work Environment of Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

Job Aspect	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
Overall office culture	41%	27%
Meaningfulness of job	43%	37%
The work itself	37%	41%
The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	34%	32%
Relationships with co-workers	44%	39%
The variety of your work	36%	33%
Job security	28%	28%
Feeling safe in your work environment	44%	45%
Office's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	35%	27%

■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees

(Congressional Staff n = 1039-1124, U.S. Employees n = 459-576)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very satisfied," with job aspects sorted in descending order by importance to congressional staff.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

Though congressional staff are generally satisfied with their work environment, there are some areas in which improvements can be made. As Figure 5 shows, of the job aspects that relate to their work environment, those that seem most important for congressional managers to focus on are: overall office culture (gap of 38 percentage points); the work itself (gap of 38 percentage points); and the contributions an employee's work has on the overall goals of the office (gap of 36 percentage points).

Figure 5 | Congressional Staff's Level of Satisfaction with the Aspects of Work Environment

Aspect of Work Environment	Very Important	Very Satisfied	Gap
Overall office culture	79%	41%	38%
Meaningfulness of job	75%	43%	32%
The work itself	75%	37%	38%
Vision and goals of Senator/Representative	70%	43%	27%
The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	70%	34%	36%
Relationships with co-workers	70%	44%	26%
The variety of your work	62%	36%	26%
Job security	61%	28%	33%
Feeling safe in your work environment	55%	44%	11%
Managing the amount of work-related stress	46%	18%	28%
Physical working conditions	46%	41%	5%
Office's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	42%	35%	7%
Predictability of weekly schedule	34%	31%	3%
Predictability of daily work hours	34%	28%	6%
Number of hours worked per week	32%	29%	3%

(n = 1039-1140)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Relationship with Management

Importance of Relationship with Management

The relationship an employee has with managers and supervisors is central to his or her connection to the organization, and it has been argued that many employee behaviors are largely a function of the way they are managed.[6] One of the components of a good relationship is effective communication. When there are open lines of communication, managers can respond more effectively to the needs and problems of their employees. Effective communication from senior managers, such as the Chief of Staff, District/State Director, and Legislative Director, can provide the office with direction. In addition, management's recognition of employees' performance through praise (private or public), awards, and incentives is a

"After working in two different offices for two different districts, I've seen the significance of excellent management and leadership by the Chief of Staff. His/her leadership is key in a good office."

—House Scheduler

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[6] Many staff positions in a congressional office can have managerial and supervisory responsibilities, depending on how each office chooses to structure and staff its operations. Both the organizational structure and breakdown of staff duties are determined by each individual office. Typically, these positions include, but are not limited to, the Chief of Staff, District/State Director, Legislative Director, Deputy Chief of Staff/Administrative Director, Communications Director, and Office Manager.

cost-effective way to increase employee morale, productivity, and engagement.

Two aspects of their relationship with management were considered among congressional staff's most important factors for job satisfaction: communication between employees and senior management (70% of staffers rated very important) and relationship with immediate supervisor (70% rated very important) (see Figure 6).

Figure 6 | Importance of Aspects of Relationship with Management

Aspect of Relationship with Management	Very Important
Communication between employees and senior management	70%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	70%
Recognition by management about your job performance	58%
Autonomy and independence to make decisions	57%
Clarity about your role and responsibilities	56%

(n = 1183-1201)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

When compared to U.S. employees, two aspects of their relationship with management were considerably more important to congressional staff (see Figure 7):

- More than two-thirds (70%) of congressional staff considered communication between employees and senior management to be very important, compared to 53% of U.S. employees.

- More than two-thirds (70%) of congressional staff also considered their relationship with their immediate supervisor to be very important, compared to 55% of U.S. employees.

When reviewing the factors relating to relationship with management by demographic, no considerable differences emerged between Washington, D.C., and district/state staff. Few differences existed by gender, with slightly higher percentages of female employees than male employees reporting that the following aspects were more important to them:

- Recognition by management about their job performance, which 63% of women rated as very important compared to 51% of men.

- Communication between employees and senior management, considered by 75% of female employees to be very important, compared to 64% of male employees.

- Clarity about their roles and responsibilities, rated by 59% of women as very important compared to 48% of men.

"Mentoring and managing other staff is one of the most rewarding parts of my job."

—Senate Communications Director

Figure 7 | Importance of Relationship with Management to Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

Aspect	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
Communication between employees and senior management	70%	53%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	70%	55%
Recognition by management about your job performance	58%	49%
Autonomy and independence to make decisions	57%	52%

■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees

(Congressional Staff n = 1183-1201, U.S. Employees n = 595-598)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important," with job aspects sorted in descending order of importance to congressional staff. Clarity about your role and responsibilities was not asked of U.S. employees so no comparative data is available.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

A couple of generational differences existed among congressional staff as well:

- Nearly two-thirds (65%) of Baby Boomers considered autonomy and independence to make decisions very important compared to 50% of Millennial staffers.

- More Baby Boomers also considered the relationship with their immediate supervisor to be more important than Millennials did, with 76% of Baby Boomers and 66% of Millennials rating this aspect as very important.

When staffers holding different positions were compared, very few differences relating to their relationship with management were found. Of the aspects in which differences existed:

- The largest difference was for relationship with immediate supervisor, which 78% of managers rated as very important, compared to 62% of policy/legislative/research staffers.

- Similarly, 65% of managers felt autonomy and independence to make decisions was very important, compared to 51% of policy/legislative/research staffers who felt the same.

Satisfaction with Relationship with Management

Figure 8 illustrates that, of the various aspects of their relationship with management, congressional staff were most satisfied with relationships with their immediate supervisor. More than two-thirds (68%) indicated

they were somewhat or very satisfied with these relationships. Nearly two-thirds (64%) were also satisfied with their autonomy and independence to make decisions. Only about half of staffers were satisfied with communication between employees and senior management (52%), clarity about their roles and responsibilities (50%), and recognition by management about their job performance (47%).

Notable percentages of staffers were actually dissatisfied with these aspects of their relationship with management. In particular, 29% of congressional staff were somewhat or very dissatisfied with communication between employees and senior management, which was one of the most important factors for congressional staffers' job satisfaction. Similarly, while more than half of congressional staff felt that recognition by management about job performance and clarity about their roles and responsibilities were very important, almost one-third (32%) of staffers were dissatisfied with the recognition they received from management, and 27% were dissatisfied with the clarity they have about their roles and responsibilities.

As shown in Figure 9, congressional staff's overall satisfaction with their relationship with management was comparable to U.S. employees' satisfaction.

> "An office work environment is directly tied to the personality of the Member and the Chief of Staff. Fortunately, I have a very nice Member and a tremendous Chief of Staff. This was not the career I originally sought, but I found this office to be such a great fit that I've been here 14 years and I have no interest in leaving."
>
> —House Office Manager

Figure 8 | Congressional Staff Satisfaction with Aspects of Their Relationship with Management

	Overall Satisfaction	Neutral	Overall Dissatisfaction
Relationships with immediate supervisor	68%	16%	17%
Autonomy and independence to make decision	64%	17%	20%
Communication between employees and senior management	52%	19%	29%
Clarity about your role and responsibilities	50%	22%	27%
Recognition by management about your job performance	47%	20%	32%

(n = 1159-1176)

Note: "Overall satisfaction" includes "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied" responses, while "overall dissatisfaction" includes "very dissatisfied" and "somewhat dissatisfied" responses. "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.

Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 9 | Satisfaction with Relationship with Management of Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

Aspect	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
Communication between employees and senior management	22%	26%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	41%	39%
Recognition by management about your job performance	22%	24%
Autonomy and independence to make decisions	31%	34%

■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees

(Congressional Staff n = 1159-1176, U.S. Employees n = 459-576)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very satisfied," with job aspects sorted in descending order by importance to congressional staff. Clarity about your role and responsibilities was not asked of U.S. employees so no comparative data is available.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

When examining the gaps between the importance congressional staff place on the various aspects of relationship with management and their satisfaction with these aspects, it is clear that communication between employees and senior management—with a gap of 48 percentage points—is an area where there is room for improvement (see Figure 10). In fact, this is the largest gap of any aspect of congressional staff's job satisfaction, across all categories. Recognition by management about staffers' job performance, which has a gap of 36 percentage points, and providing clarity about staffers' roles and responsibilities (gap of 34 percentage points) are also areas on which congressional managers could focus their efforts.

Figure 10 | Congressional Staff's Level of Satisfaction with the Aspects of Relationship with Management

Aspect of Relationship with Management	Very Important	Very Satisfied	Gap
Communication between employees and senior management	70%	22%	48%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	70%	41%	29%
Recognition by management about your job performance	58%	22%	36%
Autonomy and independence to make decisions	57%	31%	26%
Clarity about your role and responsibilities	56%	22%	34%

(n = 1159-1201)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Career Development

Importance of Career Development

Career development relates to the on-the-job opportunities employees have to improve and gain new skills, take on greater responsibility, improve their status, and earn promotions and a higher income. For congressional staff, only one aspect of career development ranked among their top priorities for job satisfaction. Nearly three-quarters (72%) consider opportunities to use their skills and abilities in their work to be very important. For the other aspects of career development, about half of congressional staff consider the office's overall commitment to professional development (53%), career development opportunities for learning and professional growth (47%), and opportunities to network with others (47%) to be very important to their job satisfaction (see Figure 11).

Though most aspects of career development are not among congressional staff's highest priorities, they view several of them as considerably more important to their job satisfaction than U.S. employees do (see Figure 12):

- Opportunities to use their skills and abilities in their work were very important to 72% of congressional staff compared to 62% of U.S. employees.

- The office's overall commitment to professional development was very important to 53% of congressional staff compared to only 36% of U.S. employees.

- Career development opportunities for learning and professional growth were considered very important to 47% of congressional staff compared to only 33% of U.S. employees.

- An even greater gap exists for opportunities to network with others. Almost half (47%) of congressional staff consider networking as very important to their job satisfaction, compared to only 26% of U.S. employees.

> "I learn something new all the time. I get to assist people with problems with federal agencies which also allows me to learn."
>
> —Senate Office Manager

Figure 11 | Importance of Career Development Aspects

Aspect of Career Development	Very Important
Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	72%
The office's overall commitment to professional development	53%
Career development opportunities for learning and professional growth	47%
Opportunities to network with others (within or outside the office) to help in advancing your career	47%
Career advancement opportunities within the office	39%
Job-specific training	37%
General training	32%

(n = 1189-1242)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 12 | Importance of Career Development to Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

Category	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	72%	62%
The office's overall commitment to professional development	53%	36%
Career development opportunities for learning and professional growth	47%	33%
Opportunities to network with others (within or outside the office) to help in advancing your career	47%	26%
Career advancement opportunities within the office	39%	36%
Job-specific training	37%	33%
General training	32%	24%

■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees

(Congressional Staff n = 1189-1242, U.S. Employees n = 555-596)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important," with job aspects sorted in descending order of importance to congressional staff.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

Some demographic differences existed within Congress on the importance of career development factors. Congressional staffers' office location made a difference to how they felt about various aspects of career development:

- Nearly half (46%) of Washington, D.C., staffers considered career advancement opportunities within the office very important, compared to only one-third (33%) of the district/state staffers who did.

- However, job-specific training was very important to a higher percentage of district/state staffers (41%) than D.C. staffers (30%).

- The office's overall commitment to professional development was also very important to more district/state staffers (57%) than to D.C. staffers (47%).

Female employees were generally more likely than male employees to consider career development to be very important:

- The largest gap by gender was with job-specific training, where 42% of women, compared to 26% of men, consider it very important.

> "After many years in the private sector, I accepted this position as District Director. In the private sector, I achieved high levels of professional success and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to give back to my community and make real differences in the lives of the constituents of this district."
>
> —House District Director

- More female employees also considered general training to be more important than male employees, with 35% of women and 24% of men saying it was very important.

- Finally, career development opportunities for learning and professional growth saw a 10-percentage point gap, as it was very important to 50% of female employees and 40% of male employees.

There were age differences in staffers' perceptions of career development as well:

- Interest in career advancement opportunities within the office appeared to dwindle with age, with 59% of Millennials considering this aspect to be very important, compared to 33% of Generation Xers and 23% of Baby Boomers.

- Similarly, career development opportunities for learning and professional growth were also more important to Millennials, with 58% rating this aspect as very important, compared to 46% of Generation X staffers and 37% of Baby Boomers.

Differences were apparent among staff positions for certain aspects of career development as well:

- Policy/legislative/research staffers and administrative/support staffers considered in-office advancement opportunities more important than their colleagues. Almost half (49%) of staffers in these categories indicated this aspect was very important to them, while only 33% of managers, 34% of district/state staffers, and 37% of press/communications staffers did.

- Job-specific training was very important to a higher percentage of district/state (43%) and administrative/support (40%) staffers than to policy/legislative/research staffers (30%) and managers (26%).

- Press/communications staffers considered opportunities to network with others more important than their colleagues did. More than half (55%) of the press/communications staffers felt networking opportunities were very important, compared to 40% of policy/legislative/research staffers and 39% of managers.

Satisfaction with Career Development

Overall, congressional staff were moderately satisfied with the various aspects of career development (see Figure 13). Interestingly, the aspect with which they are most satisfied is the one that matters most to them. Almost two-thirds (64%) were satisfied with the opportunities they have to use their skills and abilities in their work, including 32% who were very satisfied.

"Very little room for professional development or advancement. Seems like management could really benefit from organizational development and a focus on better functioning human systems—otherwise, makes for a tough work environment under the pressures of the political realm."

—House Deputy Communications Director

Figure 13 | Congressional Staff Satisfaction with Aspects of Career Development

Aspect	Overall Satisfaction	Neutral	Overall Dissatisfaction
Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	64%	17%	19%
Opportunities to network with others (within or outside the office) to help in advancing your career	56%	26%	18%
The office's overall commitment to professional development	49%	21%	30%
Job-specific training	43%	32%	25%
Career development opportunities for learning and professional growth	43%	28%	29%
Career advancement opportunities within the office	41%	31%	29%
General training	38%	30%	32%

■ Overall Satisfaction | ■ Neutral | ■ Overall Dissatisfaction

(n = 1156-1193)
Note: "Overall satisfaction" includes "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied" responses, while "overall dissatisfaction" includes "very dissatisfied" and "somewhat dissatisfied" responses. "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

As shown in Figure 14, congressional staff's satisfaction with the various aspects of career development was comparable to U.S. employees' satisfaction.

Though congressional staff are more satisfied with the opportunities they have to use their skills and abilities in their work than they are with any other aspect of career development, a large gap exists between its importance to them and their satisfaction with it (see Figure 15). With a gap of 40 percentage points, this is the second-largest gap among all of the most important factors for congressional staff's job satisfaction.

Figure 14 | Satisfaction with Career Development of Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

Aspect	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	32%	40%
The office's overall commitment to professional development	21%	23%
Career development opportunities for learning and professional growth	16%	19%
Opportunities to network with others (within or outside the office) to help in advancing your career	25%	23%
Career advancement opportunities within the office	18%	16%
Job-specific training	17%	19%
General training	12%	18%

■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees

(Congressional Staff n = 1156-1193, U.S. Employees n= 459-576)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very satisfied," with job aspects sorted in descending order by importance to congressional staff.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

Figure 15 | Congressional Staff's Level of Satisfaction with the Aspects of Career Development

Aspect of Career Development	Very Important	Very Satisfied	Gap
Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	72%	32%	40%
The office's overall commitment to professional development	53%	21%	32%
Career development opportunities for learning and professional growth	47%	16%	31%
Opportunities to network with others (within or outside the office) to help in advancing your career	47%	25%	22%
Career advancement opportunities within the office	39%	18%	21%
Job-specific training	37%	17%	20%
General training	32%	12%	20%

(n = 1156-1242)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Compensation and Benefits

Importance of Compensation and Benefits

Compensation and benefits are the tangible, quantifiable things organizations offer to attract and retain employees, such as: wages, paid time off, bonuses, and privileges. Effective compensation and benefits programs are competitive with those of organizations in their area and in their industry. For congressional offices, compensation and benefits packages must take into account the locale of the office (Washington, D.C., or the district/state where the staffers work), as well as the trends in other Senate or House offices.[7]

Only one aspect of compensation and benefits is among staffers' top priorities for job satisfaction: health care/medical benefits. Two-thirds (66%) of staffers rated health care/medical benefits as very important. As Figure 16 shows, other aspects of compensation and benefits considered very important by more than half of the staffers were: retirement and savings plans (61%), the overall benefits package (60%), paid time off (60%), flexibility to balance life and work issues (55%), overall compensation/pay (52%), and the student loan repayment program (51%).

Although none of the compensation aspects were among congressional staff's highest priorities for their job satisfaction, for the most part they consider them about as important as U.S. employees do (see Figure 17). The only aspect of compensation more important to congressional staff than to U.S. employees was opportunities for variable pay (41% very important vs. 32%).

Congressional staff were more likely than U.S. employees to have received a bonus in the past year (see Figure 18). While 54% of congressional staff reported having received a bonus, only 35% of U.S. employees did.[8] Comparable percentages of each workforce reported receiving a raise in the past year.

> "The Member is a great family man and that has translated into a great deal of flexibility in permitting staff time off to attend to various family needs (doctor's appointments, school events, sporting events, emergencies). That is very much appreciated."
>
> —House District Director

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[7] From 1990 to 2004, CMF conducted numerous studies of congressional compensation and benefits, which included data comparing congressional staff to the executive branch and the private sector. Generally, our research found that congressional staff are paid 20-40% less than their executive branch or private sector counterparts.

[8] This survey was conducted in 2011, prior to Congress imposing budget cuts on offices in 2011, 2012, and 2013. Recent CMF research indicates that many congressional offices are forgoing bonuses as a result of these budget cuts.

Figure 16 | Importance of Compensation and Benefits Aspects

	Very Important
Compensation	
Compensation/pay, overall	52%
Being paid competitively with other offices	49%
Base rate of pay (salary)	48%
Annual cost of living adjustments	46%
Opportunities for variable pay	41%
Amount of variable pay (bonuses)	36%
Benefits	
Health care/medical benefits	66%
Retirement and savings plans	61%
Overall benefits package	60%
Paid time off	60%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	55%
Student loan repayment program	51%
Mass transit/parking benefits	43%
Family-friendly benefits	37%
Onsite fitness centers/discounted gym membership	29%
Employee assistance and wellness programs	22%

(n = 696-1179)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 17 | Importance of Compensation to Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
Compensation/pay, overall	52%	54%
Being paid competitively with other offices	49%	51%
Base rate of pay (salary)	48%	48%
Opportunities for variable pay	41%	32%

■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees
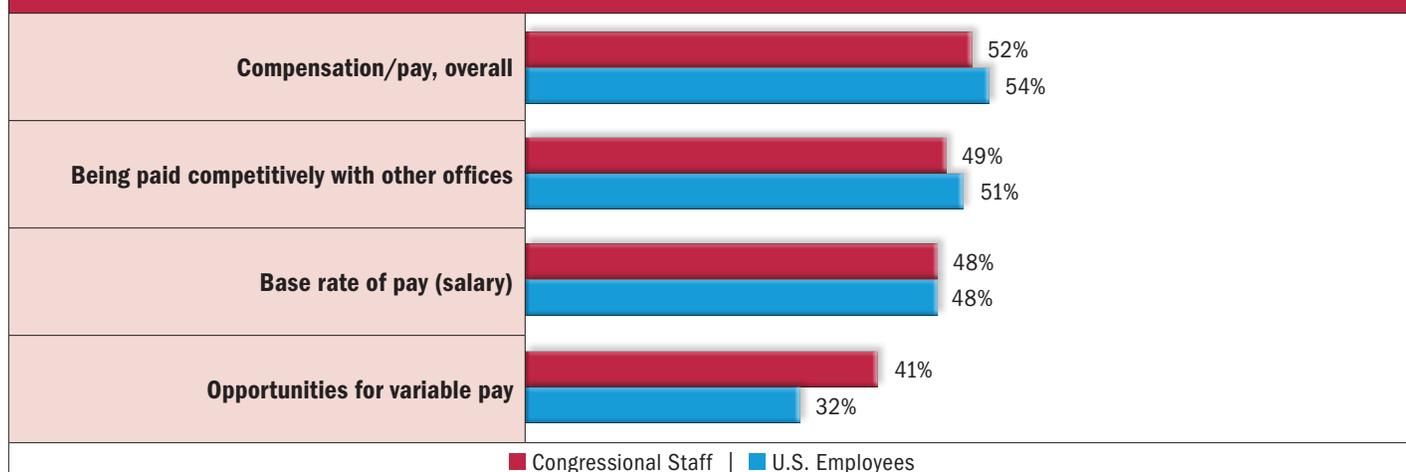
(Congressional Staff n = 1132-1179, U.S. Employees n = 539-577)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important," with job aspects sorted in descending order of importance to congressional staff. Amount of variable pay and annual cost of living adjustments were not asked of U.S. employees so no comparison data is available.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

Figure 18 | Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees Who Reported Receiving a Raise or Bonus in the Past Year

Raise	Bonus

■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees
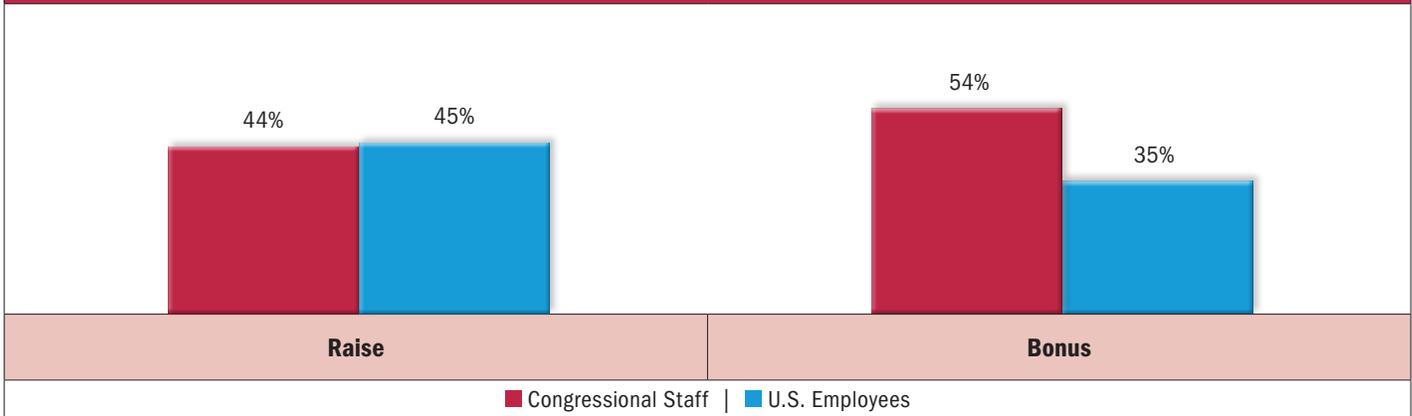
(Congressional Staff n = 839-841, U.S. Employees n = 467-501)
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

Comparatively, congressional staff generally considered benefits to be as important as, or more important than, U.S. employees did (see Figure 19):

• While 61% of congressional staff considered retirement and savings plans to be very important to their job satisfaction, 41% of U.S. employees did.

• Congressional staff also placed a much higher importance on work-life flexibility. More than half (55%) of congressional staff rated this aspect as very important, compared to only 38% of U.S. employees.

• Family-friendly benefits also were more important to congressional staff, with 37% rating them as very important, compared to 25% of U.S. employees who did.

Figure 19 | Importance of Benefits to Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

Benefit	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
Health care/medical benefits	66%	64%
Retirement and savings plans	61%	41%
Overall benefits package	60%	53%
Paid time off	60%	53%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	55%	38%
Family-friendly benefits	37%	25%

■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees

(Congressional Staff n = 824-1151, U.S. Employees n = 511-559)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important," with job aspects sorted in descending order of importance to congressional staff. The student loan repayment plan, mass transit/parking benefits, onsite fitness centers/discounted gym membership, and employee assistance and wellness programs were not asked of U.S. employees so no comparison data is available.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

Though location had very little impact on congressional staffers' opinions about the aspects of compensation, it had considerable impact on their opinions about benefits (see Figure 20). Some of the most considerable differences are for retirement and savings plans, work-life flexibility, and mass transit/parking benefits:

- While 70% of staffers in district and state offices considered retirement and savings plans to be very important, about half (49%) of D.C. staffers felt the same.

- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of district/state staffers considered work-life flexibility to be very important, compared to less than half (43%) of D.C. staffers.

- Mass transit/parking benefits are more important to staffers in Washington, D.C., than to staffers in the district/state (51% vs. 32%).

Figure 20 | Importance of Select Benefits by Office Location

Benefit	Staff in Washington, D.C.	Staff in the District/State
Health care/medical benefits	58%	73%
Retirement and savings plans	49%	70%
Overall benefits package	51%	67%
Paid time off	52%	65%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	43%	64%
Mass transit/parking benefits	51%	32%
Family-friendly benefits	29%	40%
Employee assistance and wellness programs	17%	27%
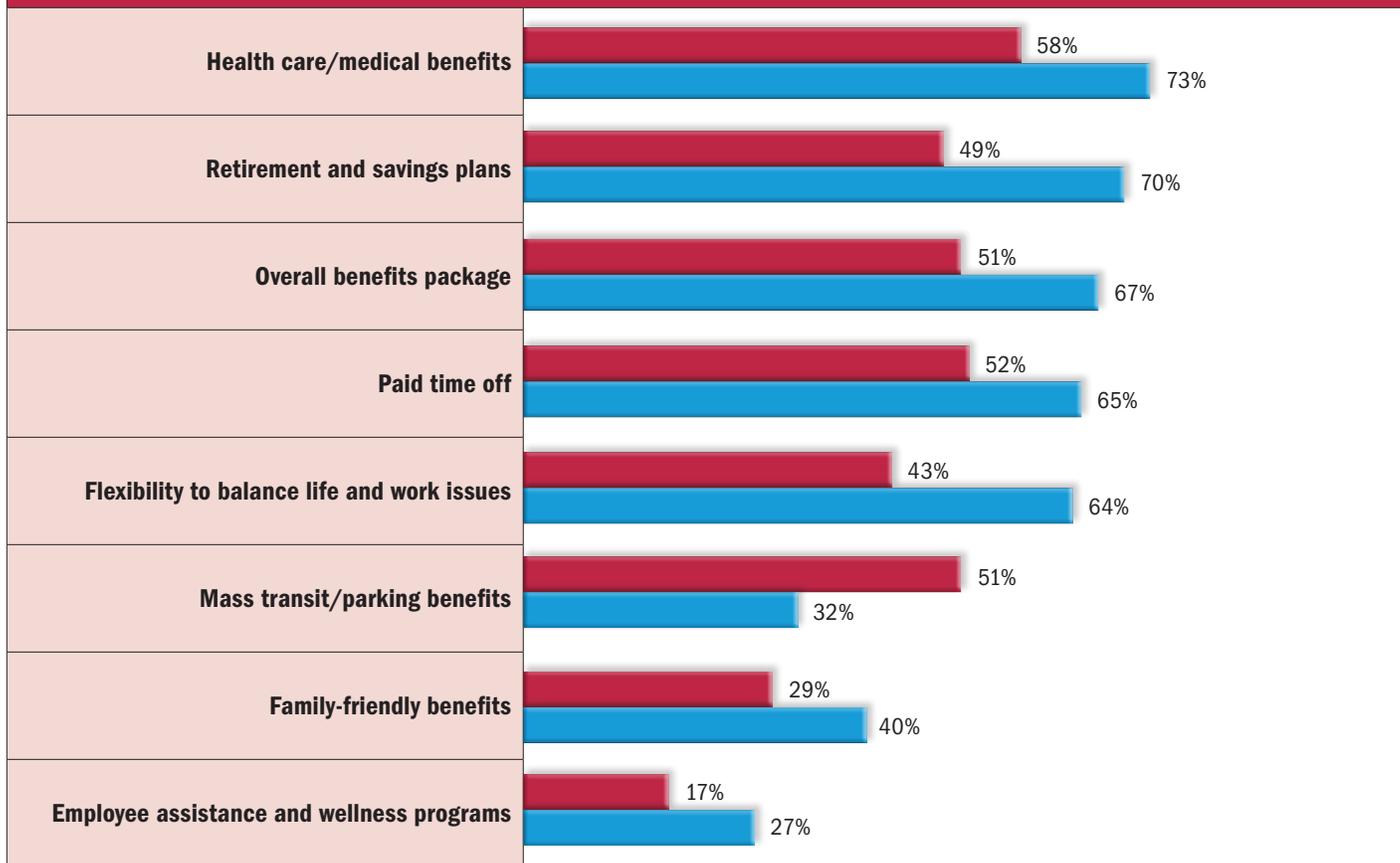
■ Staff in Washington, D.C. | ■ Staff in the District/State

(Washington, D.C., Staff n = 263-391, District/State Staff n = 339-619)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important," with job aspects sorted in descending order of importance to all congressional staff.
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Gender also had an impact on staffers' opinions of compensation and benefits (see Figure 21). Female employees considered many aspects to be much more important than their male counterparts did. The widest gaps were for the overall benefits package, paid time off, and flexibility to balance life and work issues:

• More than two-thirds (69%) of women considered the overall benefits package to be very important, compared to about half (48%) of men.

• Similarly, 68% of women and 48% of men indicated that paid time off was very important to them.

• Flexibility to balance life and work issues was very important to 63% of women and 43% of men.

Figure 21 | Importance of Select Compensation and Benefits by Gender

Benefit	Women	Men
Health care/medical benefits	73%	57%
Overall benefits package	69%	48%
Paid time off	68%	48%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	63%	43%
Compensation/pay, overall	58%	45%
Student loan repayment program	58%	44%
Being paid competitively with other offices	55%	39%
Base rate of pay (salary)	53%	42%
Mass transit/parking benefits	47%	33%
Opportunities for variable pay	45%	32%
Family-friendly benefits	42%	29%
Amount of variable pay (bonuses)	40%	30%
Employee assistance and wellness programs	28%	15%

■ Women | ■ Men

(Women n = 342-594, Men n = 243-378)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important," with job aspects sorted in descending order of importance to all congressional staff.
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

As might be expected, there are generational differences in staffers' perceptions of their benefits as well (see Figure 22):

- Retirement and savings plans were most important to Baby Boomers, 78% of whom rated this very important, compared to 59% of Generation Xers, and 47% of Millennials.

- While 71% of Baby Boomers considered their overall benefits package to be very important to their job satisfaction, only 56% of Generation X staffers and 54% of Millennials felt the same.

- Similarly, 77% of Baby Boomers rated health care/medical benefits as very important, compared to 64% of Generation Xers and 57% of Millennials.

- Work-life flexibility was considered very important to only 46% of Millennials, compared to 58% of Generation X staffers and 60% of Baby Boomers.

- The student loan repayment program was more important to the younger generations, with 61% of Millennials and 54% of Generation Xers saying this was very important, compared to 31% of Baby Boomers.

- Similarly, Millennials considered mass transit/parking benefits much more important than their colleagues. More than half (52%) of Millennials rated this very important, compared to 35% of Generation Xers and 38% of Baby Boomers.

"My office is very flexible with allowing staff to pursue higher education while working—this is a major bonus."

—Senate Special Advisor

Figure 22 | Importance of Select Compensation and Benefits by Age

Aspect	Millennials	Generation X	Baby Boomers
Health care/medical benefits	57%	64%	77%
Retirement and savings plans	47%	59%	78%
Overall benefits package	54%	56%	71%
Paid time off	56%	58%	66%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	46%	58%	60%
Student loan repayment program	61%	54%	31%
Mass transit/parking benefits	52%	35%	38%
Opportunities for variable pay	39%	37%	45%
Family-friendly benefits	29%	43%	39%
Amount of variable pay (bonuses)	33%	34%	41%

(Millennials n = 251-414, Generation X n = 213-340, Baby Boomers n = 167-377)
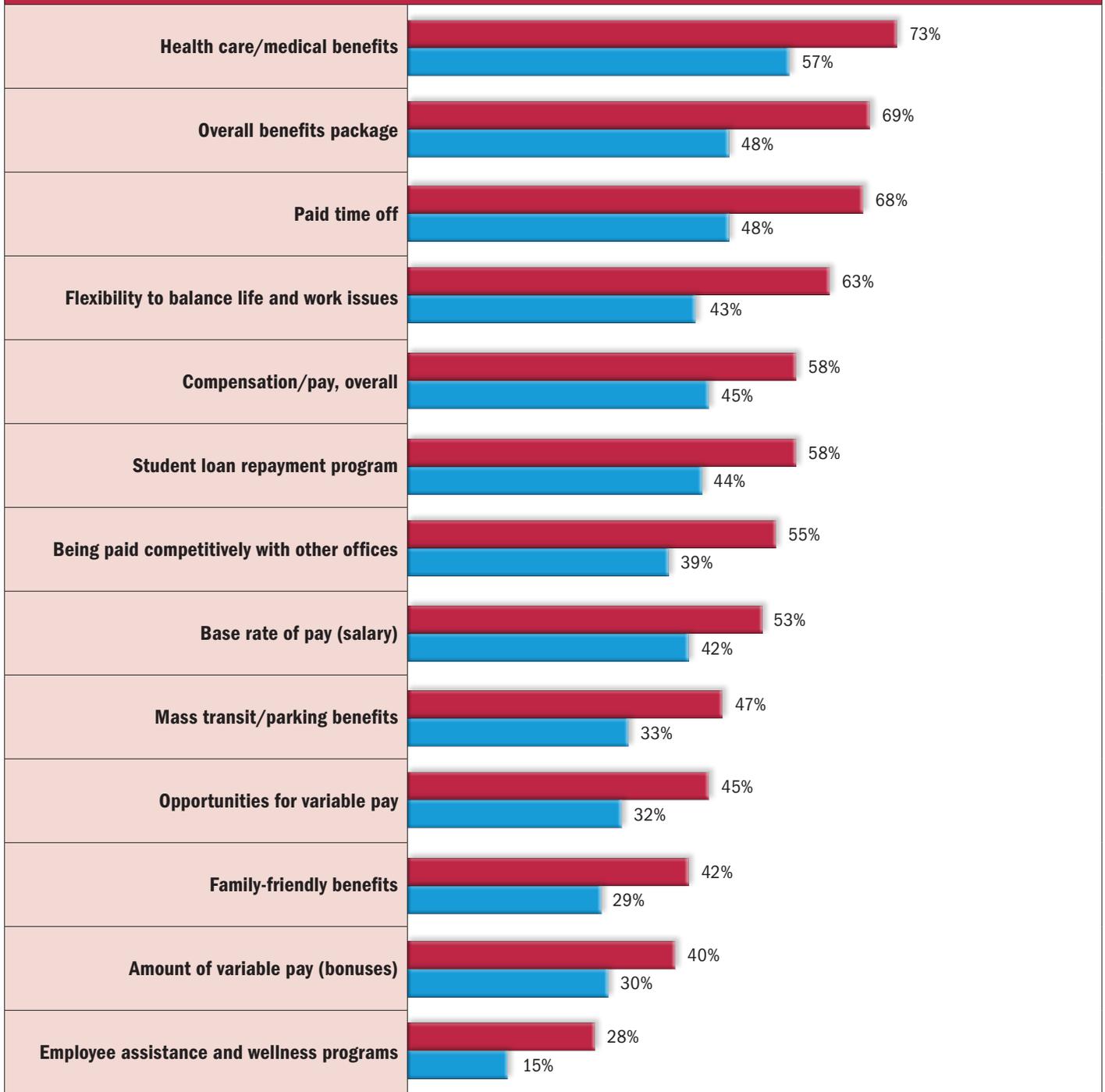Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important," with job aspects sorted in descending order of importance to all congressional staff. Data for the Traditionalist generation (staff born before 1945) are not shown because the sample size is too small.
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

A staffer's position in the office also had an impact on his or her opinion of many aspects of compensation and benefits (see Figure 23):

- More than half (52%) of managers rated opportunities for variable pay very important, while only 33% of policy/legislative/research staffers did.

- Amount of variable pay was also very important to 48% of managers, compared to 26% of policy/legislative/research staffers.

- More than half (54%) of administrative/support staffers and 50% of managers considered annual cost of living adjustments very important, while only 36% of policy/legislative/research staffers did.

- Health care/medical benefits were rated very important by 73% of managers and 72% of district/state staffers, but by only 51% of policy/legislative/research staff.

- Higher numbers of managers (70%), district/state staff (69%), and administrative/support staff (63%) considered retirement and savings plans very important, compared to policy/legislative/research staff (44%) and press/communications staff (46%).

- Work-life flexibility was very important to 59% of managers and 63% of district/state staff, but only 39% of policy/legislative/research staff considered this very important.

Figure 23 | Importance of Select Compensation and Benefits by Position Category

Aspect	Management Positions	Policy/Legislative/ Research Positions	Press/ Communications Positions	Administrative/ Support Positions	District/State Positions
Health care/medical benefits	73%	51%	56%	67%	72%
Retirement and savings plans	70%	44%	46%	63%	69%
Overall benefits package	65%	48%	48%	63%	65%
Paid time off	59%	49%	61%	60%	65%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	59%	39%	49%	48%	63%
Compensation/pay, overall	63%	46%	54%	59%	51%
Student loan repayment program	52%	53%	57%	63%	46%
Base rate of pay (salary)	56%	39%	50%	52%	48%
Annual cost of living adjustments	50%	36%	46%	54%	47%
Mass transit/parking benefits	48%	45%	54%	57%	33%
Opportunities for variable pay	52%	33%	40%	43%	41%
Amount of variable pay (bonuses)	48%	26%	30%	41%	38%

(Management n = 56-110, Policy/Legislative/Research n = 164-249, Press/Communications n = 42-76, Administrative/Support n = 88-128, District/State n = 346-617)

Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important," with job aspects sorted in descending order of importance to all congressional staff.

Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Satisfaction with Compensation and Benefits

Staffers were much more satisfied with their benefits than their compensation (see Figure 24). More than three-quarters (77%) of congressional staff were somewhat or very satisfied with their health care/medical benefits, which was cited by staff as one of the 10 most important job aspects. Other benefits with very high levels of overall satisfaction include: retirement and savings plans (82%), overall benefits package (79%), and paid time off (75%).

With regards to their satisfaction with aspects of their compensation, congressional staff rated annual cost of living adjustments (COLAs) as the lowest of all factors across all categories. Overall, 43% of staffers indicated they were dissatisfied with their annual COLAs while only 28% were satisfied. Base rate of pay (salary) came next, with 38% of staffers saying they were dissatisfied and 40% saying they were satisfied. While congressional staff noted higher levels of dissatisfaction with compensation, none of these aspects were rated among their most important factors.

Although congressional staff were more dissatisfied with the aspects of compensation than the aspects of any other category, their opinions were not considerably different than those of U.S. employees (see Figure 25). A somewhat smaller percentage of congressional staff than U.S. employees were very satisfied with their overall compensation/pay, base rate of pay (salary), and being paid competitively with other offices. Congressional staff's satisfaction with their benefits is also not far out of line with U.S. employees' satisfaction, except for two aspects. Congressional staff are more satisfied than U.S. employees with their health care/medical benefits (40% very satisfied vs. 30%) and with their retirement and savings plans (44% very satisfied vs. 24%).

Congressional staff generally indicated greater satisfaction with aspects related to benefits than compensation. In addition, the gaps between importance and satisfaction generally are greater for the aspects of compensation than for benefits (see Figure 26).

> "We have a revolving door for a very simple reason. We should not force public servants to sell their expertise to the highest bidder just to make a reasonable living or to raise a family. Members can do a better job of reminding the public just what public service is about and how difficult it is to do a good job on Capitol Hill and ensure that there is pay and benefits adequate to retain talented and experienced personnel."
>
> —House Legislative Assistant

Figure 24 | Congressional Staff Satisfaction with Aspects of Compensation and Benefits

Aspect	Overall Satisfaction	Neutral	Overall Dissatisfaction
Retirement and savings plans	82%	14%	4%
Overall benefits package	79%	14%	7%
Health care/medical benefits	77%	15%	8%
Paid time off	75%	13%	12%
Mass transit/parking benefits	69%	24%	7%
Student loan repayment program	60%	29%	11%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	51%	22%	26%
Family-friendly benefits	46%	41%	14%
Compensation/pay, overall	42%	21%	37%
Base rate of pay (salary)	40%	22%	38%
Being paid competitively with other offices	39%	26%	35%
Opportunities for variable pay	36%	28%	36%
Amount of variable pay (bonuses)	36%	29%	35%
Onsite fitness centers/discounted gym membership	31%	40%	29%
Employee assistance and wellness programs	31%	49%	20%
Annual cost of living adjustments	28%	30%	43%

■ Overall Satisfaction | ■ Neutral | ■ Overall Dissatisfaction

(n = 683-1151)

Note: "Overall satisfaction" includes "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied" responses, while "overall dissatisfaction" includes "very dissatisfied" and "somewhat dissatisfied" responses. "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.

Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 25 | Satisfaction with Compensation and Benefits of Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

Job Aspect	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
Health care/medical benefits	40%	30%
Retirement and savings plan	44%	24%
Overall benefits package	36%	28%
Paid time off	44%	41%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	26%	33%
Compensation/pay, overall	15%	22%
Being paid competitively with other offices	18%	24%
Base rate of pay (salary)	14%	23%
Opportunities for variable pay	18%	17%
Family-friendly benefits	25%	20%
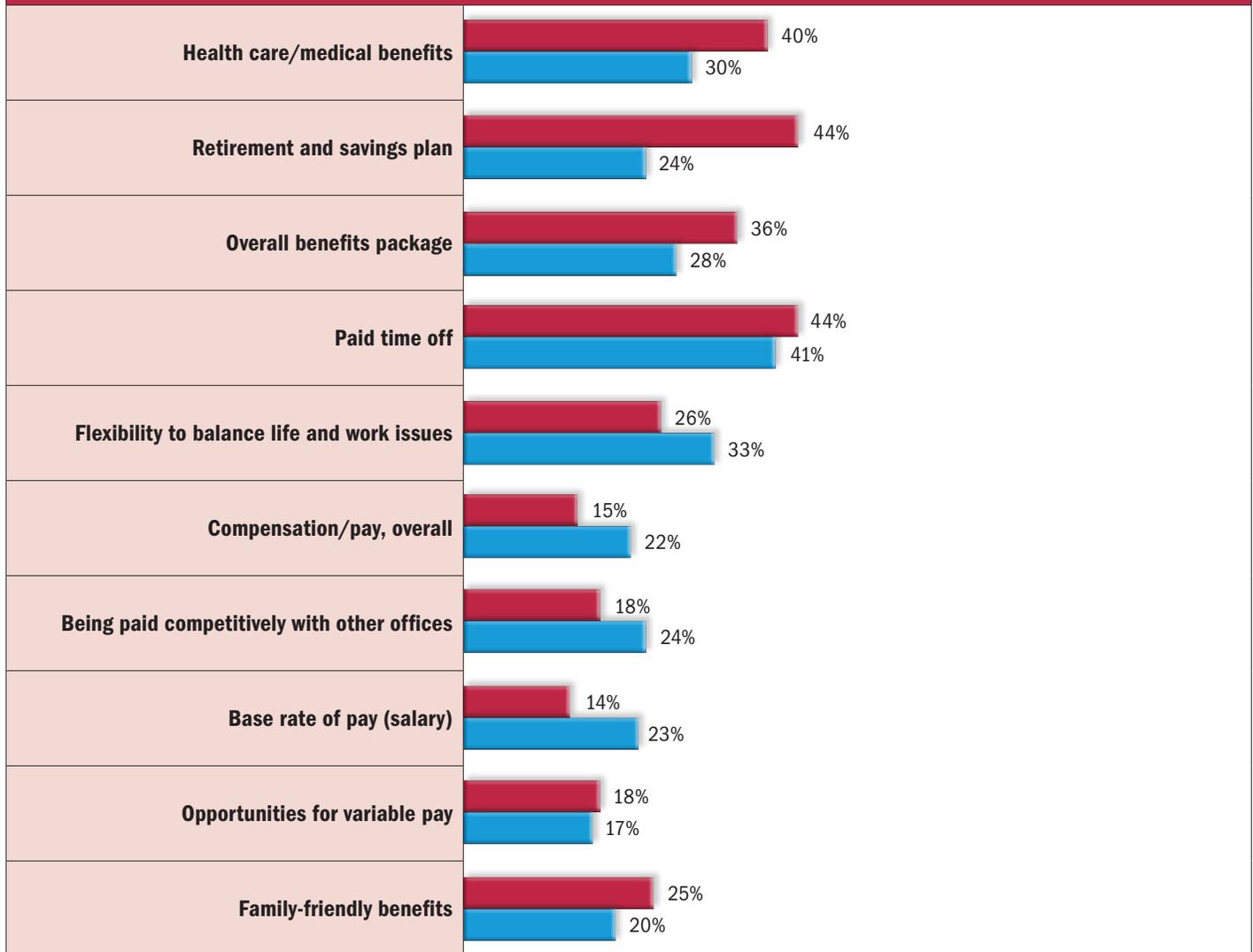
■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees

(Congressional Staff n = 760-1151, U.S. Employees n = 441-576)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very satisfied," with job aspects sorted in descending order by importance to congressional staff.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

Figure 26 | Congressional Staff's Level of Satisfaction with Aspects of Compensation and Benefits

	Very Important	Very Satisfied	Gap
Compensation			
Compensation/pay, overall	52%	15%	37%
Being paid competitively with other offices	49%	18%	31%
Base rate of pay (salary)	48%	14%	34%
Annual cost of living adjustments	46%	11%	35%
Opportunities for variable pay	41%	18%	23%
Amount of variable pay (bonuses)	36%	17%	19%
Benefits			
Health care/medical benefits	66%	40%	26%
Retirement and savings plans	61%	44%	17%
Overall benefits package	60%	36%	24%
Paid time off	60%	44%	16%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	55%	26%	29%
Student loan repayment program	51%	46%	5%
Mass transit/parking benefits	43%	47%	-4%
Family-friendly benefits	37%	25%	12%
Onsite fitness centers/discounted gym membership	29%	18%	11%
Employee assistance and wellness programs	22%	15%	7%

(n = 683-1179)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Congressional Staff Engagement

To improve staff performance, and to retain the best performers, organizations must engage their employees. Engagement differs from job satisfaction in that it relates to employees' connection and commitment to their work. Job satisfaction refers to how employees feel about their compensation, benefits, work environment, career development, and relationship with management. Employee engagement is about understanding what and who is motivating employees to work harder.

Organizations and congressional offices should be concerned with employee engagement because engagement may be linked to employee performance, customer satisfaction, productivity, absenteeism, turnover, and general support for an organization. This is of particular concern to congressional managers because they are in a constant struggle to obtain the greatest possible productivity and value from their staffs, especially with recent cuts to their office budgets. Understanding what makes staffers satisfied with their jobs is critical, but to get the most out of staffers, managers must also know what keeps staffers engaged and performing at their peak. In this section, we discuss three facets of employee engagement:

1. **Engagement opinions**, which refers to employees' personal sense of their own engagement and their feelings of urgency, focus, enthusiasm, and intensity for their work;

2. **Engagement behaviors**, or employees' sense of the impact their behaviors, and those of their colleagues, have on the organization's success; and

3. **Engagement conditions**, which are the conditions under which employee engagement can be maximized, and they are a subset of the aspects of employee job satisfaction discussed earlier in this report.

Engagement Opinions

Engagement opinions assess employees' personal engagement—the degree to which they bring feelings of urgency, focus, enthusiasm, and intensity to their work. Our findings indicate that congressional staff feel urgency and intensity in their work. As Figure 27 shows, almost all of the staffers (97%)

> "I have already spent many years working in the private sector, and being in management. I want now to give back—and as a caseworker I can do just that. It certainly does not hurt that I have a high opinion of our system of government and have great admiration for the Senator that I work for."
>
> —Senate Caseworker/Constituent Services Representative

agreed—and 63% strongly agreed—that they are determined to accomplish their work goals and confident they can meet them. Furthermore, 86% agreed—and 51% strongly agreed—that they are highly motivated by their work goals. Additionally, 83% of congressional staff agreed they enjoy taking on or seeking out new projects or work assignments beyond their job requirements; 81% reported that their work gives them a sense of personal accomplishment; and 79% said they have passion and excitement about their work. In fact, the only opinion statement with which fewer than half (48%) of congressional staff agreed was that they have adequate time for their personal lives.

When compared to U.S. employees, a considerably higher percentage of congressional staff responded that they strongly agree with many of the engagement opinion statements. As Figure 28 shows, 63% of congressional staff strongly agreed that they are determined to accomplish their work goals and confident they can meet them, compared to 34% of U.S. employees. More than half (51%) of congressional staff strongly agreed that they are highly motivated by their work goals, compared to one-quarter (25%) of U.S. employees.

> "It is a privilege to have the opportunity to be a public servant, provide assistance to a member of Congress, and hopefully, make a positive difference in the district and in the country (as small as it may be)."
>
> —House District Scheduler

Figure 27 | Congressional Staff Agreement with Engagement Opinion Statements

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree
I am determined to accomplish my work goals and confident I can meet them.	63%	34%
I am highly motivated by my work goals.	51%	35%
I enjoy taking on or seeking out new projects or work assignments beyond my job requirements.	42%	41%
I have passion and excitement about my work.	42%	37%
My work gives me a sense of personal accomplishment.	40%	41%
I am often so wrapped up in my work that hours go by like minutes.	37%	39%
I frequently feel like I'm putting all my effort into my work.	32%	48%
The goals of my office are clear to me.	27%	37%
While at work I'm almost always completely focused on my work projects.	22%	48%
I feel completely plugged in at work, like I'm always on full power.	16%	39%
I have adequate time for my personal life.	14%	34%

■ Strongly Agree | ■ Agree

(n = 1077-1086)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 28 | Responses to Engagement Opinion Statements by Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

Statement	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
I am determined to accomplish my work goals and confident I can meet them.	63%	34%
I am highly motivated by my work goals.	51%	25%
I enjoy taking on or seeking out new projects or work assignments beyond my job requirements.	42%	20%
I have passion and excitement about my work.	42%	27%
I am often so wrapped up in my work that hours go by like minutes.	37%	25%
I frequently feel like I'm putting all my effort into my work.	32%	29%
While at work I'm almost always completely focused on my work projects.	22%	24%
I feel completely plugged in at work, like I'm always on full power.	16%	18%

■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees

(Congressional Staff n = 1077-1086, U.S. Employees n = 591-594)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "strongly agree." Some engagement opinion statements were not asked of U.S. employees so no comparative data are available.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

Engagement Behaviors

Engagement in an organization also can be measured by employee behaviors that have a positive impact on the success of the organization. While engagement *opinions* measure personal engagement, engagement *behaviors* are about groups or teams of employees in an organization. Survey questions posed to staff help determine the level of dedication to the organization's mission, employees' commitment to their work, and their overall attitude about their job. Employee behavior, as it relates to employee engagement, is a significant factor in determining the productivity, outcomes, and morale of an employee.

Congressional staff generally felt positively about the engagement behaviors of their offices (see Figure 29). A majority of staffers agreed that their offices never give up (80%) and that, in their offices, employees are encouraged to be proactive in their work (75%). Almost as many (74%) consider

"Our management team works very hard at providing direction, goals, mission focused workplace. We all know we play a crucial role in pursuing excellence in our endeavors."

—House Field Representative

their colleagues adaptive to challenging or crisis situations. More than two-thirds feel their offices are constantly looking to the next challenge (69%), that management values their input (69%), and that employees in their offices deal very well with unpredictable or changing work situations (67%). The only statement with which the majority of congressional staff did not agree was that salary increases in their offices are awarded on the basis of merit. Only 29% of staffers agreed with this statement, while 43% disagreed.

Figure 29 | Congressional Staff Responses to Engagement Behavior Statements

Statement	Overall Agreement	Neutral	Overall Disagreement
My office never gives up.	80%	13%	7%
In my office, employees are encourages to take action when they see a problem or opportunity.	75%	13%	12%
My colleagues quickly adapt to challenging or crisis situations.	74%	14%	12%
In my office we are constantly looking out to see what challenge is coming next.	69%	19%	12%
My input is valued by the management in my office.	69%	16%	15%
Employees in my office deal very well with unpredictable or changing work situations.	67%	19%	14%
Overall, my office is well managed.	63%	16%	21%
The managers in my office are good at dealing with the staff.	59%	15%	26%
The people in my office are always flexible in expanding the scope of their work.	57%	24%	19%
Others in my office view unexpected responsibilities as an opportunity to succeed at something new.	55%	27%	19%
Other people in my office often take on or seek out new projects or work assignments.	54%	27%	19%
I usually have enough time to get everything done.	54%	13%	33%
My office effectively communicates and coordinates.	50%	23%	27%
My office deals effectively with personnel problems.	49%	20%	31%
In my office, salary increases are awarded on the basis of merit.	29%	28%	43%

■ Overall Agreement | ■ Neutral | ■ Overall Disagreement

(n = 884-1070)
Note: "Overall agreement" includes "strongly agree" and "agree" responses, while "overall disagreement" includes "strongly disagree" and "disagree" responses. "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.
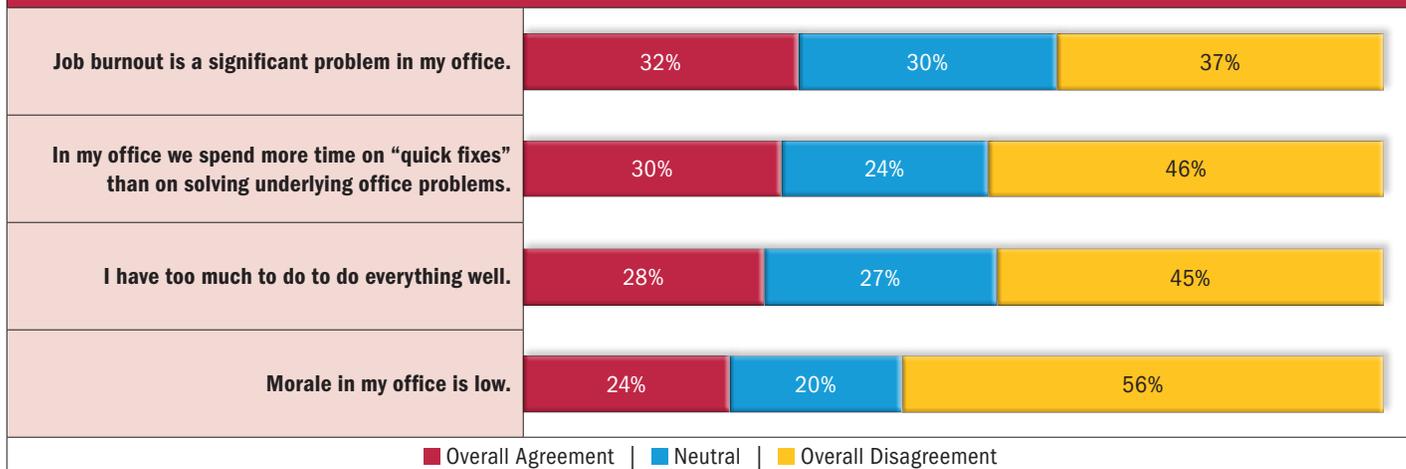Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Questions also were asked about common challenges in the congressional work environment that could affect employee engagement. While the negative statements did not represent a majority of responses in the questions posed, they are noteworthy of attention by managers (see Figure 30). Nearly one-third of congressional staff (30%) agreed that their office spends more time focusing on "quick fixes" than on solving underlying problems (46% disagreed). Nearly one-third (32%) of staffers agreed that job burnout is a significant problem in their offices (37% disagreed). And 28% of staffers agreed they have too much to do to do everything well (45% disagreed).

When compared to U.S. employees, as in Figure 31, congressional staff's responses about engagement behaviors are considerably more positive. The percentage of congressional staff who strongly agreed that their office never gives up was more than twice that of U.S. employees: 37% versus 16%. Similarly, when asked, "In my office, employees are encouraged to take action when they see a problem or opportunity," more than one-third (34%) of congressional staff strongly agreed with this statement, compared to 19% of U.S. employees.

> "If I'm going to be this frustrated at work, I feel I might as well get paid to be this stressed out in the private sector."
>
> —House Communications Director

Figure 30 | Congressional Staff Responses to Negative Engagement Behavior Statements

Statement	Overall Agreement	Neutral	Overall Disagreement
Job burnout is a significant problem in my office.	32%	30%	37%
In my office we spend more time on "quick fixes" than on solving underlying office problems.	30%	24%	46%
I have too much to do to do everything well.	28%	27%	45%
Morale in my office is low.	24%	20%	56%

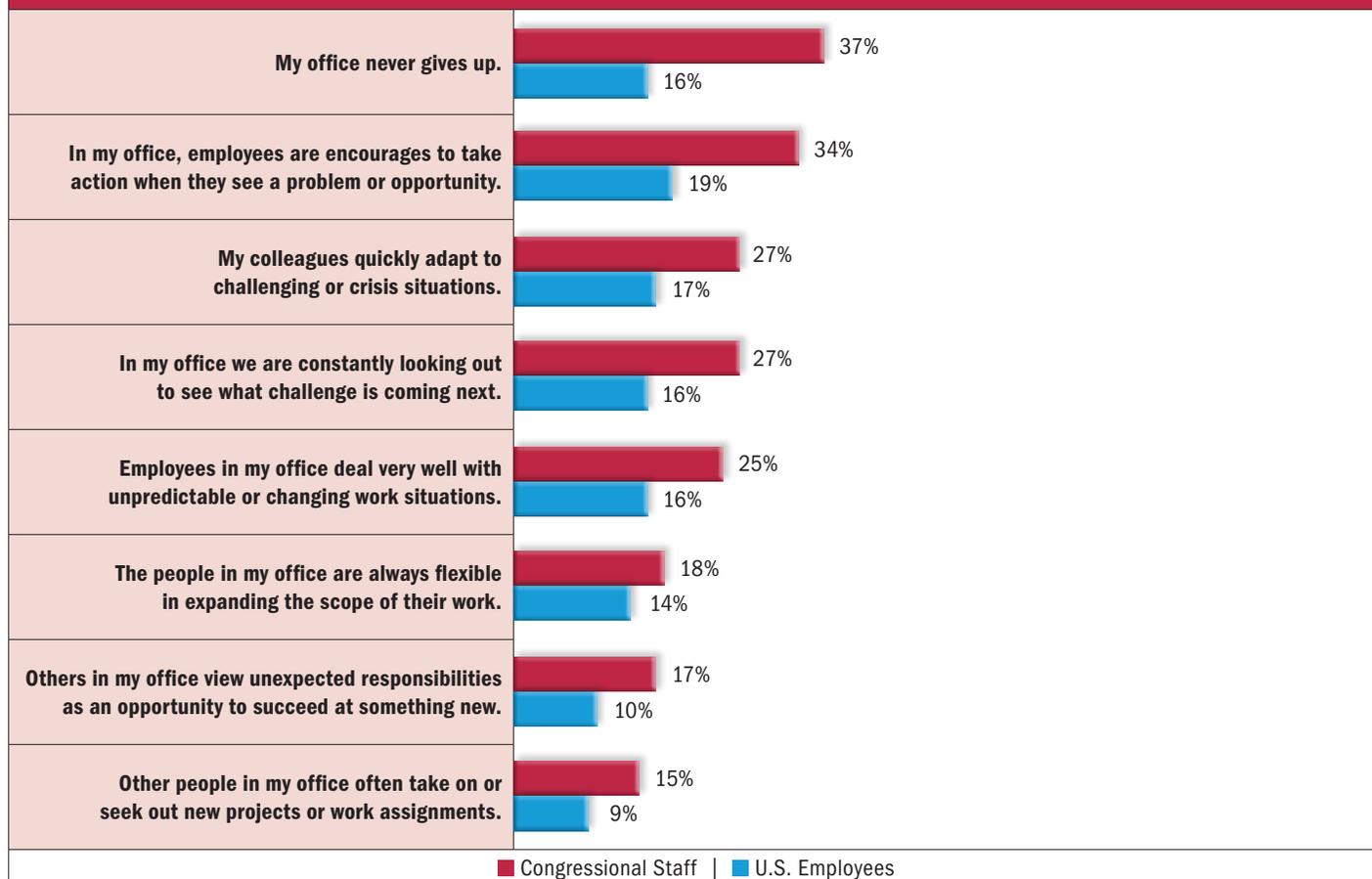■ Overall Agreement | ■ Neutral | ■ Overall Disagreement

(n = 1035-1054)
Note: "Overall agreement" includes "strongly agree" and "agree" responses, while "overall disagreement" includes "strongly disagree" and "disagree" responses. "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 31 | Responses to Engagement Behavior Statements by Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

Statement	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
My office never gives up.	37%	16%
In my office, employees are encourages to take action when they see a problem or opportunity.	34%	19%
My colleagues quickly adapt to challenging or crisis situations.	27%	17%
In my office we are constantly looking out to see what challenge is coming next.	27%	16%
Employees in my office deal very well with unpredictable or changing work situations.	25%	16%
The people in my office are always flexible in expanding the scope of their work.	18%	14%
Others in my office view unexpected responsibilities as an opportunity to succeed at something new.	17%	10%
Other people in my office often take on or seek out new projects or work assignments.	15%	9%

■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees

(Congressional Staff n = 1041-1070, U.S. Employees n = 586-591)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "strongly agree."
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

Conditions for Engagement

Conditions for engagement refer to the conditions under which employee engagement can be maximized, and they are a subset of the aspects of employee job satisfaction discussed earlier in this report. There are certain conditions under which employee engagement is more likely to occur. Employees need the capacity to engage, reasons to engage, and the feeling that they are free to engage. Figure 32 lists the conditions for maximizing employee engagement, along with congressional staff's satisfaction with them.

Congressional staff positively viewed *most of the reasons* to engage in their work. More than seven in 10 staffers were satisfied with: their relationship with co-workers (78%); the meaningfulness of their jobs (74%); the contribution their work has on the overall goals of the office (72%); and the overall office culture (71%). Two-thirds or more were also satisfied with:

"It is amazing to be able to (in a small way) help to shape policy, public opinion and generally have an effect on our country's government. After working in the private sector for years, this feels more meaningful. I get to speak to constituents every day and I hear the issues that affect the "average" person's life. It is interesting to me."
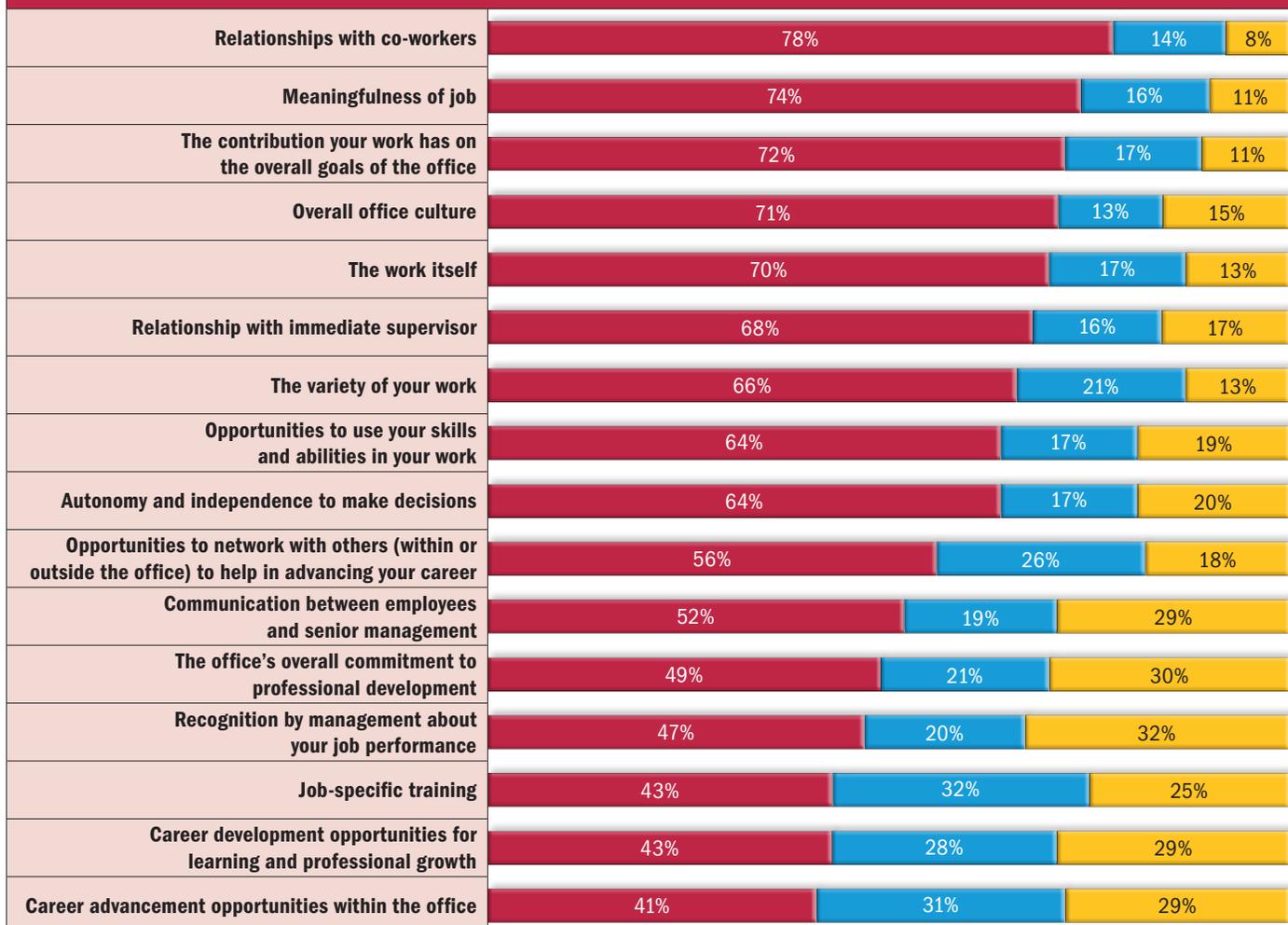
—House Caseworker/Constituent Services Representative

the work itself (70%); their relationship with their immediate supervisor (68%); and the variety of their work (66%).

However, congressional staff's *capacity to engage* in their offices was low. Only slightly more than 40% of staffers were satisfied with: job-specific training (43%); their career development opportunities (43%); and their career advancement opportunities within the office (41%).

The disparity between why congressional staff engage in their work (e.g., they find meaning in it), and how their offices engage them (such as by providing training and professional development), suggests that while staff are bringing high levels of energy and enthusiasm to their work, they feel they are in an environment that doesn't necessarily facilitate engagement

Figure 32 | Congressional Staff Satisfaction with Engagement Conditions

	Overall Satisfaction	Neutral	Overall Dissatisfaction
Relationships with co-workers	78%	14%	8%
Meaningfulness of job	74%	16%	11%
The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	72%	17%	11%
Overall office culture	71%	13%	15%
The work itself	70%	17%	13%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	68%	16%	17%
The variety of your work	66%	21%	13%
Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	64%	17%	19%
Autonomy and independence to make decisions	64%	17%	20%
Opportunities to network with others (within or outside the office) to help in advancing your career	56%	26%	18%
Communication between employees and senior management	52%	19%	29%
The office's overall commitment to professional development	49%	21%	30%
Recognition by management about your job performance	47%	20%	32%
Job-specific training	43%	32%	25%
Career development opportunities for learning and professional growth	43%	28%	29%
Career advancement opportunities within the office	41%	31%	29%

■ Overall Satisfaction | ■ Neutral | ■ Overall Dissatisfaction

(n = 1093-1193)
Note: "Overall satisfaction" includes "very satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied" responses, while "overall dissatisfaction" includes "very dissatisfied" and "somewhat dissatisfied" responses. "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM
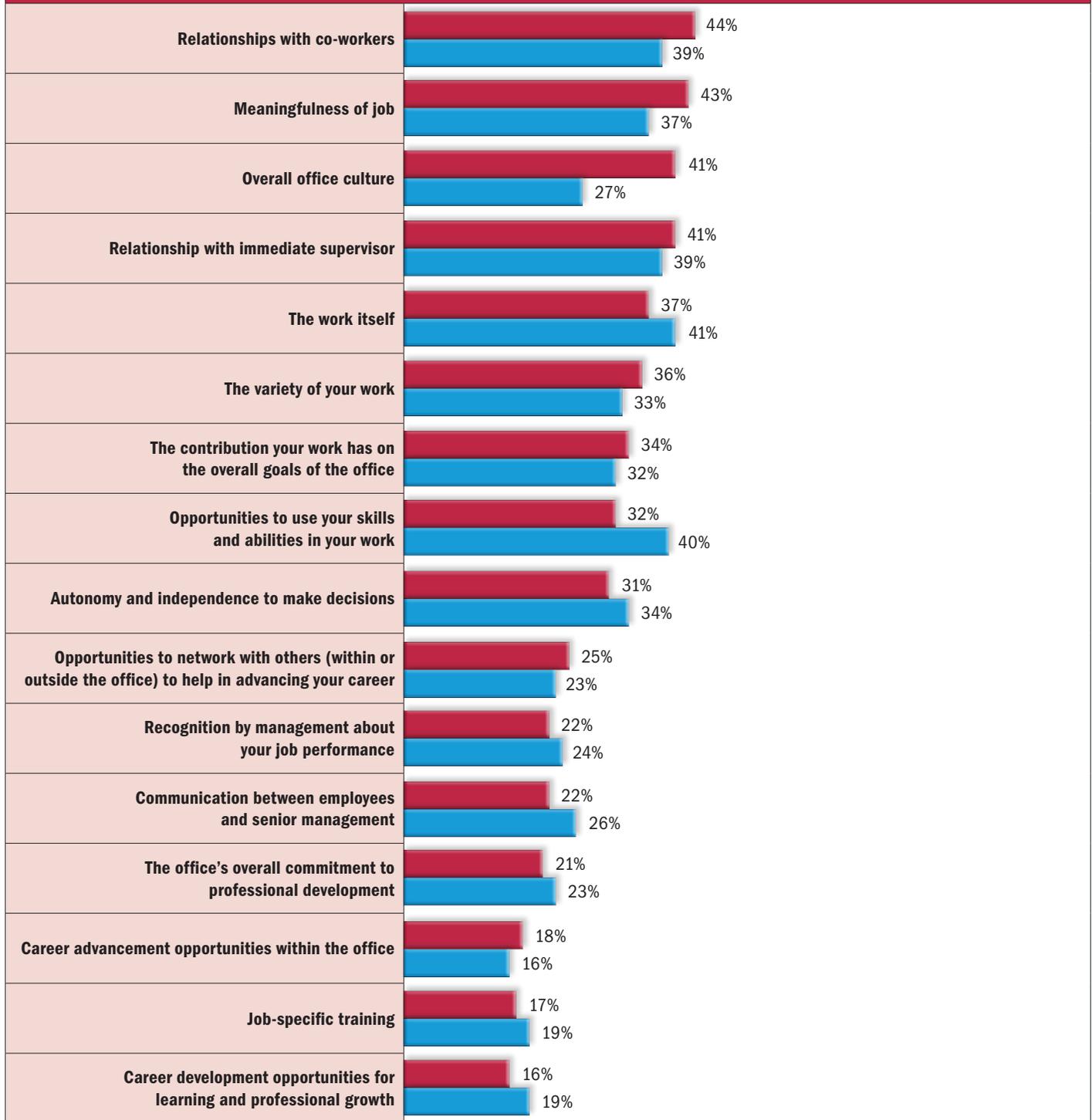
and encourage high morale. This, in turn, can lessen staffers' commitment to their work and can increase turnover as staff seek opportunities elsewhere to advance their growth and development.[9]

Interestingly, congressional staff's opinions of the conditions for engagement align with those of U.S. employees (see Figure 33). The only condition where they differ considerably is their opinion of their workplace cultures, with 41% congressional staff responding that they very satisfied, compared to only 27% of U.S. employees who were.

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[9] See page 69 for more information on the importance of investing in staff development, and how to institute a performance management system that can create more productive, effective, and loyal employees.

Figure 33 | Satisfaction with Engagement Conditions by Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
Relationships with co-workers	44%	39%
Meaningfulness of job	43%	37%
Overall office culture	41%	27%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	41%	39%
The work itself	37%	41%
The variety of your work	36%	33%
The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	34%	32%
Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	32%	40%
Autonomy and independence to make decisions	31%	34%
Opportunities to network with others (within or outside the office) to help in advancing your career	25%	23%
Recognition by management about your job performance	22%	24%
Communication between employees and senior management	22%	26%
The office's overall commitment to professional development	21%	23%
Career advancement opportunities within the office	18%	16%
Job-specific training	17%	19%
Career development opportunities for learning and professional growth	16%	19%

■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees

(Congressional Staff n = 1093-1193, U.S. Employees n = 459-576)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very satisfied."
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.
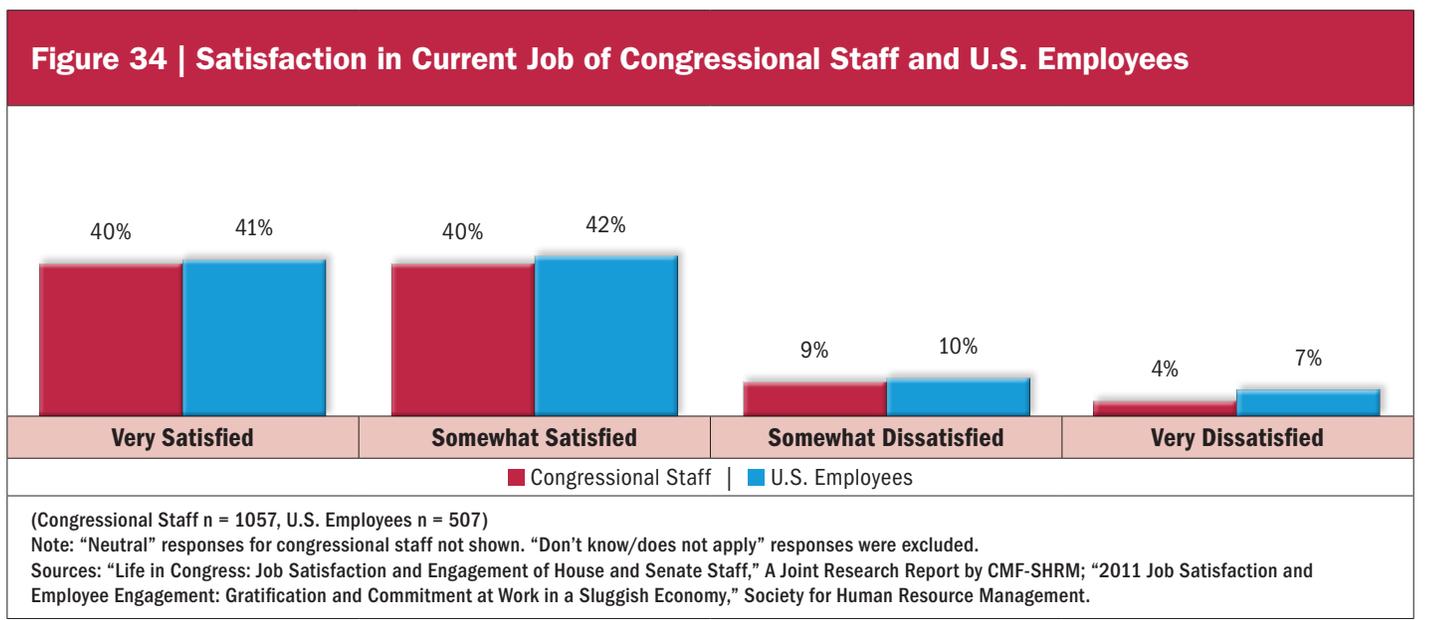
Congressional Staff Retention and Turnover

Another important element in understanding how to maximize employee engagement and job satisfaction is to understand the factors that influence staff retention and turnover. Congressional staff were asked about their satisfaction with their current job and with their current office, and the likelihood they would look for a new job. Staffers were also asked why they choose to remain in employment and what factors would influence their decision to leave their jobs, leave their offices, or leave Congress altogether.

Overall, congressional staff were satisfied with their current jobs, with 40% being very satisfied and another 40% being somewhat satisfied. As Figure 34 shows, this is in line with the sentiments of U.S. employees.

"By working in Congress, I am serving my country and constituents. I love public service and the impact it has on an individual or group. To give back is the ultimate reward for me."
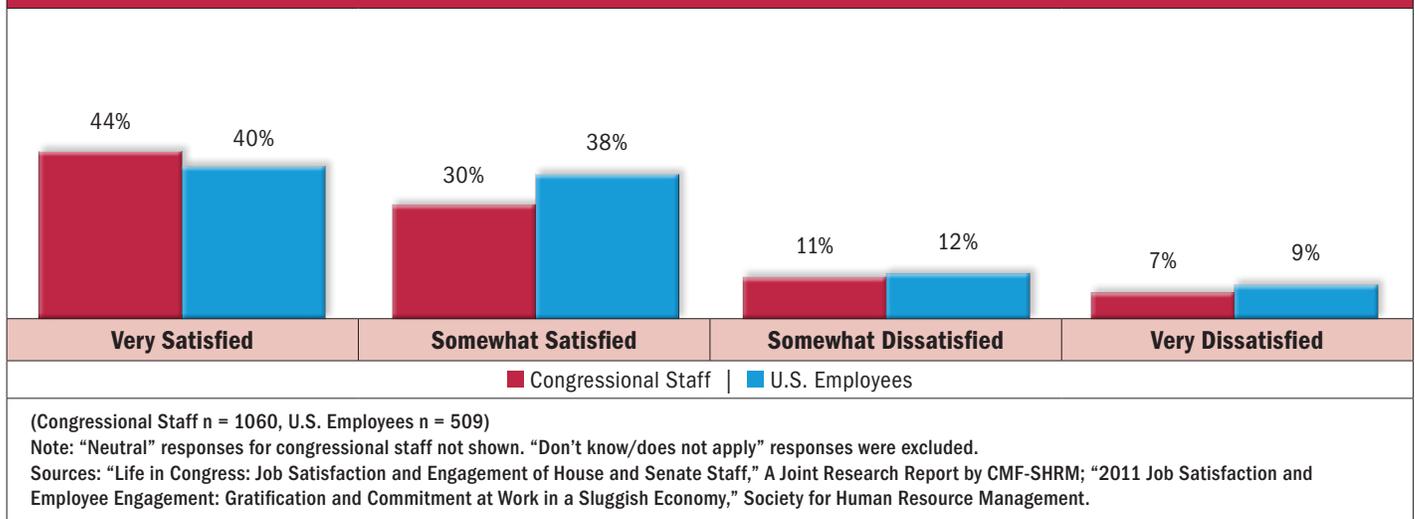
—House Casework Supervisor/
Director of Constituent Services

Figure 34 | Satisfaction in Current Job of Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Congressional Staff	40%	40%	9%	4%
U.S. Employees	41%	42%	10%	7%

(Congressional Staff n = 1057, U.S. Employees n = 507)
Note: "Neutral" responses for congressional staff not shown. "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.
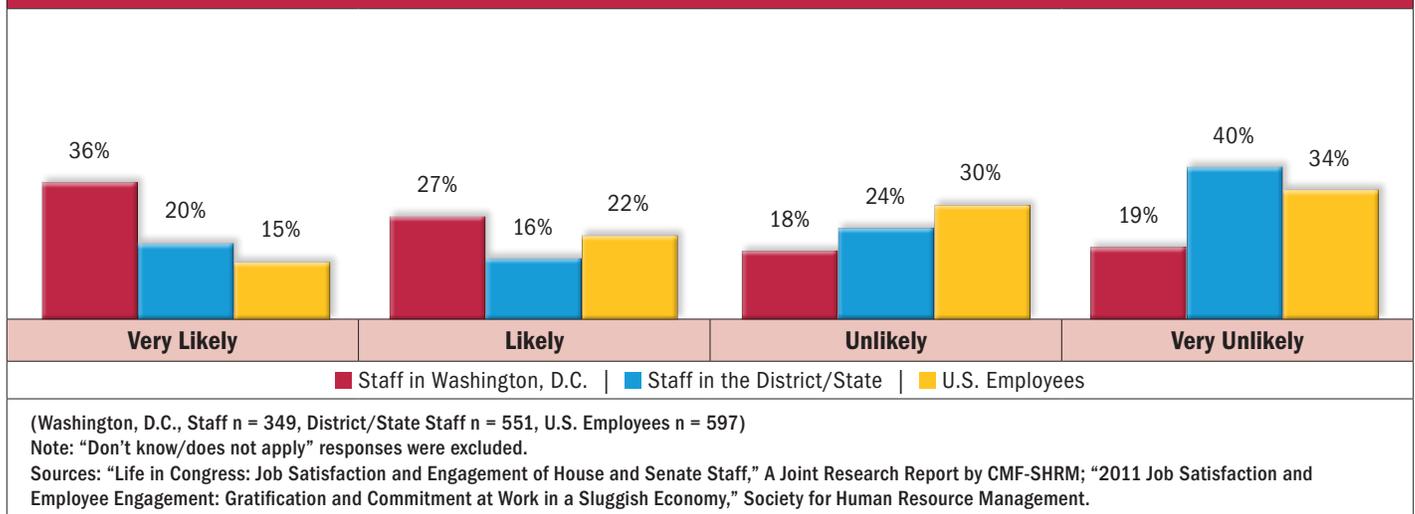
Congressional staff were also satisfied with their current offices, with 44% being very satisfied and 30% being somewhat satisfied. This also aligns with U.S. employees' opinions, as Figure 35 shows.

When employees were asked whether they would, by choice, look for a job outside of their current office in the next 12 months, almost half (46%) of congressional staff were likely or very likely to do so. When breaking out responses by location, stark differences emerge, with almost two-thirds (63%) of Washington, D.C., staff indicating they would look for new jobs, compared to about one-third (36%) of district/state staff (see Figure 36). When U.S. employees were asked this question, 37% responded that they were likely or very likely to seek new employment.
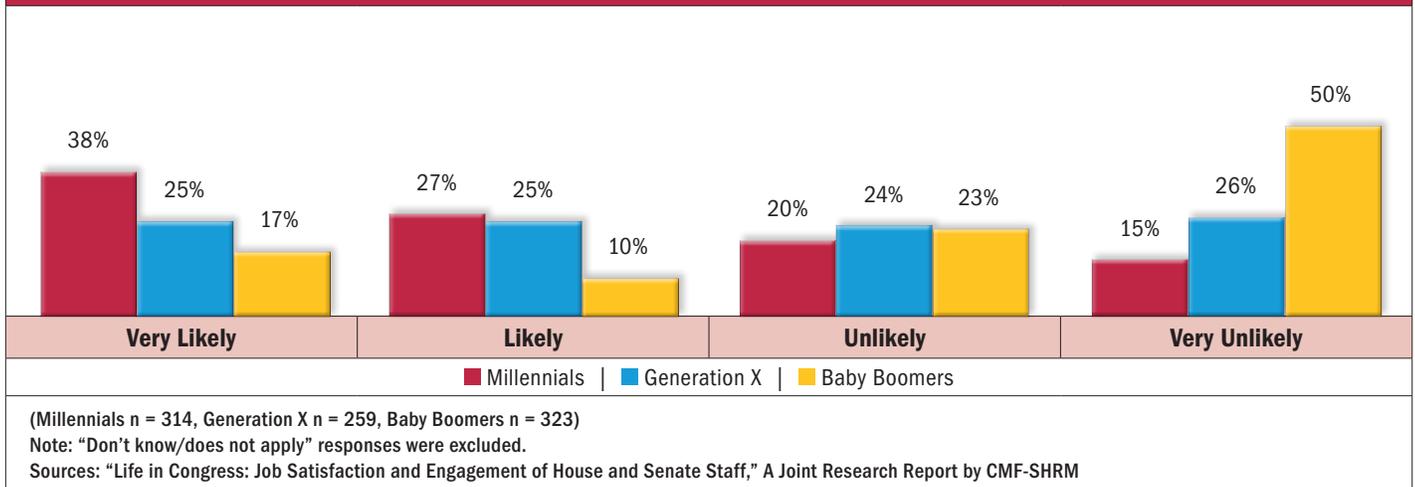
Figure 35 | Satisfaction in Current Office of Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees

	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
Very Satisfied	44%	40%
Somewhat Satisfied	30%	38%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	11%	12%
Very Dissatisfied	7%	9%

■ Congressional Staff | ■ U.S. Employees

(Congressional Staff n = 1060, U.S. Employees n = 509)
Note: "Neutral" responses for congressional staff not shown. "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

Figure 36 | Likelihood of Congressional Staff and U.S. Employees to Seek New Jobs

	Staff in Washington, D.C.	Staff in the District/State	U.S. Employees
Very Likely	36%	20%	15%
Likely	27%	16%	22%
Unlikely	18%	24%	30%
Very Unlikely	19%	40%	34%

■ Staff in Washington, D.C. | ■ Staff in the District/State | ■ U.S. Employees

(Washington, D.C., Staff n = 349, District/State Staff n = 551, U.S. Employees n = 597)
Note: "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

Figure 37 | Likelihood of Congressional Staff to Seek New Jobs by Age

	Very Likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
Millennials	38%	27%	20%	15%
Generation X	25%	25%	24%	26%
Baby Boomers	17%	10%	23%	50%

■ Millennials | ■ Generation X | ■ Baby Boomers

(Millennials n = 314, Generation X n = 259, Baby Boomers n = 323)
Note: "Don't know/does not apply" responses were excluded.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Younger staff also were more likely than their older colleagues to seek new employment in the next year (see Figure 37). Almost two-thirds (65%) of Millennials stated they were likely or very likely to look for a job outside their office, compared to 50% of Generation Xers and 27% of Baby Boomers.

When congressional staff were asked why they stay in their jobs, their top reasons largely related to the value of the work they do (see Figure 38). More than nine out of 10 staffers said they stay because they believe what they're doing is meaningful (94%), they desire to help people (92%), and they get a sense of accomplishment from their work (91%). Nearly as many (90%) also said they stay out of dedication to public service and because they enjoy working for their Representative or Senator and with their colleagues. While 72% report that their benefits factor into their decision to stay, only 38% said they stay because of compensation.

Interestingly, though compensation plays a limited role in congressional staff's decision to stay where they are, it plays a significant role in their decision to leave employment. Figure 39 shows the factors congressional staff cite as significant reasons in their decisions to leave their current job or office, and to leave Congress altogether. The desire to earn more money was the top reason staffers (51%) cited as a significant factor in their decision to leave their job or office. It was also one of the most significant factors staffers would have for leaving Congress, with 45% of staffers citing it.

Other top reasons congressional staff had for leaving their current job or current office include: inadequate opportunities for professional development (48%); frustrations with the management of your office (48%); desire for a job that will make better use of your skills and abilities (47%); and unsatisfactory relationship with supervisor(s) (47%).

"These days we just work, work, work ... in terribly crowded and inadequate facilities with no privacy, for extremely long hours, and not knowing whether or not we can count on Congress being in session or not for Thanksgiving or Christmas holidays. These jobs are very hard on family life, and frankly, I'm getting tired of it."

—House Counsel

As for leaving Congress altogether, in addition to the desire to earn more money, staffers also cite the following: desire to pursue a different type of work (42%); to seek a better balance between your work and your personal life (38%); disillusionment with the political process (36%); and to obtain private sector experience (33%).
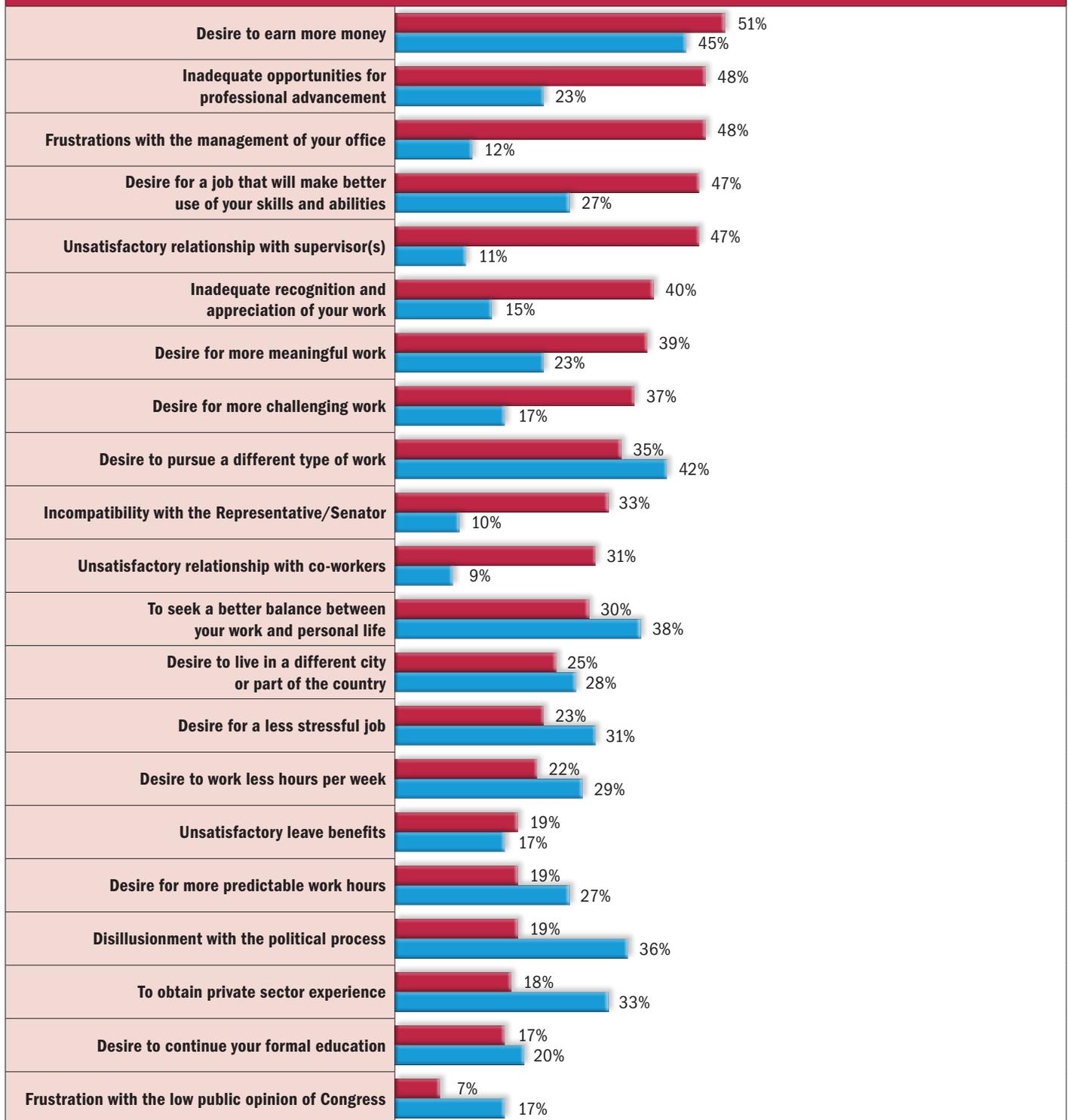
"This is a wonderful opportunity to serve my district. It is not about the salary, hours, promotion or prestige. It is about serving constituents."

—House Field Representative

Figure 38 | Factors Cited by Congressional Staff as Significant Reasons for Staying in Their Current Job, Office and/or Congress	
I believe what I'm doing is meaningful	94%
Desire to help people	92%
I get a sense of accomplishment from my work	91%
Dedication to public service	90%
I enjoy working for my Representative/Senator and with my colleagues	90%
My work is challenging and interesting	89%
I enjoy the varied/fast-paced work	88%
I strongly believe in my Representative's/Senator's vision	87%
Desire to serve my state/district	82%
I like being able to influence public policy	74%
I like the prestige of working for a Member of Congress/Senator	74%
I think it will be good for my career path/resume	74%
Benefits	72%
Compensation (salary and bonuses)	38%

(n = 1020-1037)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "Yes, a significant factor in my decision to stay." Percentages do not total 100% because multiple response options were allowed.
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 39 | Factors Cited by Congressional Staff as Significant Reasons for Leaving Their Current Job/Office and Congress

Factor	Leaving Current Job/Office	Leaving Congress
Desire to earn more money	51%	45%
Inadequate opportunities for professional advancement	48%	23%
Frustrations with the management of your office	48%	12%
Desire for a job that will make better use of your skills and abilities	47%	27%
Unsatisfactory relationship with supervisor(s)	47%	11%
Inadequate recognition and appreciation of your work	40%	15%
Desire for more meaningful work	39%	23%
Desire for more challenging work	37%	17%
Desire to pursue a different type of work	35%	42%
Incompatibility with the Representative/Senator	33%	10%
Unsatisfactory relationship with co-workers	31%	9%
To seek a better balance between your work and personal life	30%	38%
Desire to live in a different city or part of the country	25%	28%
Desire for a less stressful job	23%	31%
Desire to work less hours per week	22%	29%
Unsatisfactory leave benefits	19%	17%
Desire for more predictable work hours	19%	27%
Disillusionment with the political process	19%	36%
To obtain private sector experience	18%	33%
Desire to continue your formal education	17%	20%
Frustration with the low public opinion of Congress	7%	17%

■ Significant Factor in Leaving Current Job/Office | ■ Significant Factor in Leaving Congress

(n = 72-792)
Note: Percentages do not total 100% because multiple response options were allowed.
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Implications of this Research

"It is a dream come true to serve one's state and country if only for a brief time. To be a part of the history and the fast pace, ever changing exciting things. The life of a congressional staffer is not one that I could do for a long period of time due to health (physical and mental) and personal relationships that are affected."

—House Scheduler

"Despite the long hours and demands it imposes on both me and my family, I consider this opportunity to serve as a rare and special privilege."

—Senate Legislative Assistant

"The biggest challenges for keeping staff in Congress today are the toxic political atmosphere which breeds hostility towards public service. That makes the jobs much more stressful."

—House Deputy Chief of Staff/Administrative Director

"Serving the American public is an amazing honor. Working in Congress has allowed me to personally assist thousands of constituents. The simple act of helping to rescue a dolphin to the more complex of helping immigrants become U.S. citizens. This service is necessary and very meaningful."

—Senate Caseworker/Constituent Services Representative

"To work in Congress is the opportunity of a lifetime, but also a sacrifice of similar proportions. In my experience on the Hill, any work-life balance is generally unattainable; promotion, pay or receiving simple credit for good work are rarely merit-based; and the low salaries of congressional staff combined with the ever-increasing cost of living in Washington D.C., pretty much guarantee you will come out of it with a significant amount of personal debt. In my opinion, being a congressional staffer should not require this amount of personal sacrifice."

—**House Legislative Assistant**

"While I enjoy working in my particular office, the general political environment is very demoralizing."

—**House Systems Administrator**

"Working in the Congress affords me an opportunity to leave the world a better place than I found it; it gives me an opportunity to give back to the nation and the public; it allows me to be a small part in the effort to bend the curve of history toward a more just and sustainable world. Unfortunately, it also means working impossibly long hours with inadequate resources and an endless parade of junior staffers that have not been given the time, training or skills to effectively do their jobs. The "sink or swim" approach to staff development doesn't serve the Members or the nation."

—**Senate Projects/Grants Director**

"I am seriously concerned that salary stagnation in House offices is leading to a lower quality workforce. In my five years on the Hill, I am seeing people leave more often and more quickly than ever before. Cuts to the MRAs are leading to a less educated, less experienced, less knowledgeable, less expert, less intelligent workforce that is responsible for advising Congress. Staff are the only experts available to the House of Representatives that work on behalf of the American people, not lobbyists or special interests. Unless the House wants to rely entirely on the advice of lobbyists and Washington insiders, it is imperative that that degradation in salaries is halted and reversed."

—**House Senior Legislative Assistant**

"We work for demanding bosses. The best and brightest will not continue to do this work without better pay. I am paid a somewhat comfortable salary, but combined with the high cost of living in D.C., I'll never be able to buy a house or feel like I can really save money. I want to be a part of Congress, but public service satisfaction only goes so far."

—**House Communications Director**

"I love it! I feel fulfilled and very proud to serve the public in this manner."

—**House Office Manager**

Recommendations for Congressional Offices

Knowing what congressional staff value most about their work is essential to attracting and retaining high-quality staffers. By determining the job aspects that are most important to staffers, and identifying those aspects with which staffers are dissatisfied, we can then offer targeted guidance on improving these aspects. Doing so will help Members of Congress and senior managers enhance their staff's engagement, reduce turnover, and increase productivity.

The job aspects that are most important to congressional staff, along with their levels of satisfaction with these aspects, are shown in Figure 40. Interestingly, many of the job aspects listed are largely determined by the actions of congressional managers, Senators, and Representatives. With the exception of "health care/medical benefits," we believe that staff's dissatisfaction with these top aspects can largely be addressed through the following three recommendations:

1. Set a clear direction for the office.

2. Foster a positive organizational culture.

3. Institute a performance management system.

Each recommendation, and how it can improve staff's satisfaction with the job aspects most important to them, is summarized on the following pages.[10] While these strategies require a time investment and a commitment by senior managers, they also produce considerable gains in staff engagement, morale, and retention—ultimately benefiting the Member and the constituents of the district or state.

> "With an office that is not managed well, talent leaves or is frustrated and Member generally doesn't bother with day-to-day matters. This is the biggest problem I see when confronting how an office "works." Efficient and happy offices are generally run by Chiefs of Staff and Members that value people, their skills, and manage fairly and reasonably."
>
> —House Legislative Director

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[10] In-depth guidance on each of these recommendations can be found in CMF's signature publication, *Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide*, http://congressfoundation.org/publications/setting-course.

Figure 40 | Congressional Staff's Level of Satisfaction with Aspects They Find Most Important to Job Satisfaction

Aspect	Very Important	Very Satisfied	Gap
Overall office culture	79%	41%	38%
Meaningfulness of job	75%	43%	32%
The work itself	75%	37%	38%
Opportunities to use skills and abilities in your work	72%	32%	40%
Communication between employees and senior management	70%	22%	48%
Vision and goals of Senator/Representative	70%	43%	27%
The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	70%	34%	36%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	70%	41%	29%
Relationships with co-workers	70%	44%	26%
Health care/medical benefits	66%	40%	26%

(n = 1059-1242)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Set a Clear Direction for the Office

The most common problem CMF encounters in our work in Congress is the inability of Members to set priorities and balance their aspirations with their resources (i.e., budget and staff). Consequently, they overburden themselves and their staffs, wreak havoc on the systems and morale of the office, and don't make the hard trade-offs necessary to be more effective. Consequently, they find that despite their efforts they have accomplished little because they are spread so thin.[11]

Elected officials at every level want to satisfy their constituents by serving them well. However, to be effective Members and run effective offices, they must also accept that there is no way they can do everything they want to do in Congress. Members must set goals and priorities so that they and their staff can make informed, strategic choices about what they will and will not do.

This section will guide Members and managers through the process of: deciding where you want to go; how to articulate this direction to the staff so they are excited about their jobs and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities; and developing the general strategy or plan for how to achieve your goals.

Draft a Mission Statement

Congressional office planning often centers on surveying the political landscape for opportunities to serve constituent needs, meet the Member's political objectives, and affect public policy. However, a strategic plan must also reflect the Member's values, political ambitions, and personal interests. If the Member has no clear sense of mission, short-term objectives are less likely to contribute to any long-term accomplishments. Productivity in diverse areas over many years doesn't necessarily add up to any clear sense of solid achievement.

> 70% of congressional staff rated the Member's vision and goals as very important, yet only 43% were very satisfied with this aspect.

[11] The work challenges of Members and staff are documented in the two previous reports in this series: *Life in Congress: Aligning Work and Life in the U.S. House and Senate* and *Life in Congress: The Member Perspective.*

To maximize the chances of making significant long-term accomplishments, we recommend that the Member prepare a written mission statement. The themes addressed in a mission statement can focus on broad legislative, constituent service, or political goals. Unfortunately, many Members offer vague statements that offer little guidance to staff as to what vision drives the Member (and should drive the staff), or how this mission differs from those of virtually every other Member of Congress. (See examples of poor and good mission statements in the table below.)

Posing the following questions to the Member should help provide some clarity:

- Why did you run for Congress? What specifically did you hope to achieve if elected?

- What would you like to be remembered for at the end of your tenure in Congress?

- What Members of Congress do you most respect and why?

- What is your vision of America's future?

- What values or characteristics should define the way your staff works and the office operates?

The more focused the mission statement, the more direction it provides the entire staff. It should embody no more than four main themes, but preferably just one or two. Too many themes means the Member has yet to make the difficult decisions needed to define their priorities. An office can't successfully pursue more than a few long-term goals at any one time without spreading its resources too thinly.

Examples of Mission Statements	
Poor examples	**Good examples**
To make a difference.	To become a leading advocate of educational reform in Congress.
To get re-elected.	To play a lead role in my state's economic development.
To give my constituents the best representation possible.	To get elected to the Senate in this decade.

Develop Strategic Goals

Once the office has a broad mission statement that spells out the Member's long-term vision, short-term vehicles should be developed for pursuing these broad themes. These goals should relate directly to the mission statement and should be concrete, realistic, meaningful, and achievable. Staff should prepare for the goal-setting process by answering questions such as:

> "I love being part of the public process and feel extremely loyal to my boss and his vision. However, I feel like the public doesn't understand or appreciate what I do, which I find increasingly frustrating."
>
> —House Legislative Director

> Almost 1 in 5 congressional staff (19%) disagreed that the goals of their office were clear to them.

1. What are the main themes of the Member's mission statement?

2. What key issues is Congress likely to deal with in the next two years?

3. Which, if any, key issues or trends would interest the Member or would significantly affect constituents?

4. What issues are likely to dominate the district's or state's political/economic agenda in the next two years?

5. Which issues do constituents currently feel most strongly about?

6. What campaign promises did the Member make that constituents now expect to see fulfilled?

With all of this analysis, staffers should have a good sense of the important factors, events, and trends necessary in developing office goals and be ready to begin the process of defining the goals through a brainstorming exercise. A good brainstorming session should generate an impressive list of potential goals.

Then, you must single out the goals that are most important, most feasible, and most consistent with the office's mission statement. CMF recommends an office should keep its list of short-term goals to a minimum—no more than six, but preferably only three to five.

A simple way to evaluate goals is to determine their impact (high/low) and the office's ability to achieve them (high/low). A more comprehensive method would be to develop criteria or standards to measure each goal against. In addition to impact and achievability, each goal could be rated on criteria such as: its consistency with the Member's mission; the resources required to complete it; and the degree to which it draws on the office's strengths.

Translate Goals into Action Plans

After establishing your goals, the next step is to devise action plans for accomplishing each goal. The action plan lists the specific actions and tasks that must be taken to achieve a goal. To be effective, the action plan should also list the person(s)—including the Member—responsible for each task and the deadline for completing each action. In other words, *who* will do *what* by *when*?

Assigning responsibilities in the action plan pulls together the staff as a team. It also prevents task redundancy and provides an opportunity for staff to use their specific skills and talents. Knowing the agreed-upon deadlines improves the likelihood that staff will accomplish tasks on time and can lead to increased accountability among the team. Without them, staff may not understand which tasks are most important.

By formulating an action plan, an office gets a written document that coordinates the activities of different staff (even those working out of separate

> "I am able to make a significant impact on my community through my work. I believe in my boss, and trust he makes the right choices for my state. I can go home at the end of the week and really feel like I am having a positive impact on people and their lives."
>
> **—Senate Field Representative**

> 72% of congressional staff rated the opportunities to use their skills and abilities in their work as very important, yet only 32% were very satisfied with this aspect.

offices); creates a clear strategy instead of an unrelated series of steps; and increases Member and staff accountability by ensuring that everyone is aware of their responsibilities and deadlines.

Implement Plans

The culmination of all this effort will be a written plan distributed to the whole office—staff in both the Washington, D.C., and district/state offices. The plan should summarize the office's strategy for the next two years (or longer) and outline the steps that will be necessary for that strategy to be effective. It will contain the Member's mission statement, the supporting short-term goals, and the action plan needed to accomplish each goal.

However, the planning process does not end there. To be effective, the office must develop a method for continuously updating the plan and keeping the Member and the staff focused. There are two reasons why implementing the plan can be the biggest challenge of the planning process.

First, it's natural for staff to revert to an old and comfortable routine by reacting to the matters immediately at hand, and chronically feeling like they can't afford the time to begin the new initiatives described in the strategic plan. Instead, offices can create new routines using weekly or monthly progress reports, monthly strategic planning meetings, quarterly senior management meetings, and timelines.

Second, attractive new issues and possible initiatives will almost always arise. The problem is that frequently the new issues are not more important, more advantageous to the Member, or more achievable than the goals in the plan they replace. Before embarking on any new and major initiatives, Members and staff alike need to collectively ask two critical questions:

1. Is this initiative sufficiently attractive that it warrants supplanting another strategic goal or action item in our plan?

2. If so, which goal or actions will be sacrificed to make room for working on this new initiative?

If the plan is regularly reviewed and revised when necessary, it will provide a way to rationally integrate shifts in the Member's interests and the policy terrain. It will also keep the office focused on its priorities while allowing for intelligent trade-offs based on a strategic view of your options.

"No management. No coordination. No concrete goals or follow-through. No hope."

—House Deputy Communications Director

When asked whether their office effectively communicates and coordinates, 50% of congressional staff agreed while 27% disagreed.

Foster a Positive Organizational Culture

Defining "Organizational Culture"

Every organization has a culture: a set of rules (formal and informal), values (positive or negative), practices or norms (prescribed and implicit), and taboos that define the organization and the way it works. Some cultures enhance the effectiveness of an organization, while others undermine it.

Most leaders tend to focus on clarifying and reinforcing the formal rules, the stated principles, and the prescribed practices. They fail to realize that they communicate powerful messages to their staffs through indirect means, such as spontaneous comments and actions, not just those in writing or orally.

Employees pay great attention to the daily behavior of their boss. Over time staff interpret from their experiences and observations the real ground rules by which they should operate: What angers or pleases the Member? Which work habits are valued and which are disliked? Which issues excite her and which bore her? On what basis does the boss judge others?

The answers to these and many other questions create an organizational culture that reflects the preferences, values, and work style of the leader. Employees then conform their behavior to meet the expectations and rewards of the culture. In addition, the culture transmits the informal ground rules to new staff. Cultural values become self-enforcing. This is the power of organizational culture. Once established, the culture tends to continue to shape the behavior of the staff even if management tries to change the way the organization functions.

Why Organizational Culture Is So Important in Congress

There are few organizations in which the leader has a greater opportunity to define the culture of his or her organization than in a congressional office. Staff serve as "at-will" employees of their individual Senator or Representative, and most like it that way. They work for someone in whom

79% of congressional staff rated their overall office culture as very important, making it the most important aspect of their job satisfaction. However, only 41% are very satisfied with their office's culture.

"For me, working in Congress is specific to working for my Senator. I wouldn't work for any other member, I am here because of the work he does. I am honored to serve him."

—Senate Deputy Communications Director

they believe, and with like-minded colleagues, in a place where convictions and initiative are as important as expertise and experience.

In Congress, the Member's political ideals, personal values, and professional ambitions are the basis of the office's culture. Consequently, it is critical that Members of Congress take time to consciously think about the type of culture they want to create for their offices and how they intend to create it.

Characteristics of Positive Office Cultures

Through research, training, and one-on-one work with congressional offices, CMF has found that the most productive offices in Congress tend to have Members who share the following overriding characteristics:

1. The Member has a clear mission and goals, about both what the office should do and how it should do it, which the staff understand and admire.

2. The Member operates day-to-day, in public and private, according to consistent personal values that the staff respect.

3. The Member treats the staff with trust and respect, clearly conveying that they are the Member's most important asset.

These Member practices almost always create a culture within which staff adopt the Member's values and work style, commit themselves to achieving the Member's goals, and work effectively as a team committed to common ends and common values. Congressional staff are highly motivated by Members they admire. They will make significant personal sacrifices if they believe that what they are doing is important. Rarely will staff do the same for a boss whose values and goals they do not respect.

In the best offices, the leaders understand that their staffs are their most important resource and treat them accordingly. Specifically, the best Members (and Chiefs of Staff):

1. **Openly share information with their staffs.** Discussing the challenging issues facing the Member is exciting for many staffers. It creates staff ownership in the office and offers great opportunities to learn the process and how the Member thinks, and demonstrates that the Member trusts staff and respects their opinions.

2. **Seek staff input whenever possible.** Such behavior conveys that the Member values staff ideas and analytic abilities, even from staff whose daily duties do not primarily involve conceptual thinking. It also promotes a diversity of ideas, which frequently leads to interesting and worthwhile discussions that improve decision-making and problem-solving skills.

70% of congressional staff rated communication between employees and senior managers as very important, yet only 22% are very satisfied with this aspect.

"I feel blessed to have the opportunity to work for a Member of Congress who holds the same values as I do, and want to share that vision with both constituents and the rest of the country."

—House Legislative Correspondent

3. **Provide regular feedback, both positive and negative, to staff.** Highly motivated staff want to know when they have succeeded and how they can perform their jobs better. Through constructive, honest feedback, well-managed offices build staff confidence, job satisfaction, and enthusiasm as well as greater understanding of the Member's style and preferences.

4. **Take a personal interest in the professional development of staff.** Congressional staff tend to be driven and hard-working. Though they find great meaning in their work, they also seek to develop their professional skills and to advance their career.

5. **Empower their staff.** Give staff the authority to solve problems, make decisions, take on difficult assignments, and generate projects or initiatives. This challenges staff to grow in their jobs, expand their skills, and enhance the quality of their work.

6. **Recognize accomplishments.** Because events move so quickly in Congress, it can be difficult to take time out to enjoy the successes. But a nice note, merit pay, lunch with a staffer, or public acknowledgment of their work are ways that managers can show their appreciation of valued staff. It also helps carry staff through the more arduous and frustrating periods of congressional work.

The Members who genuinely trust, respect, and appreciate their staffs are more likely to enjoy the incalculable benefit of loyal, committed, and motivated employees. The Members who do not, tend to experience high staff turnover, loss of office productivity, insufficient institutional memory, and a lack of office continuity and teamwork. These Members (and Chiefs of Staff) essentially forfeit the opportunity to create a positive culture and an effective office.

"There is a culture on the Hill that says that you should be grateful to work here and if you are unhappy there are many people waiting to take your place."

—House Deputy Chief of Staff/
Administrative Director

Institute a Performance Management System

Of all the skills required for running a congressional office, managing staff has proven to be the biggest challenge for most. When staff are not well-managed, this leads to inefficient operations, missed opportunities, added stress, and debilitating rates of employee turnover. This section lays out a coherent process for managing all the staff in your office—a process that will improve staff productivity and morale, as well as the overall effectiveness of your office.

Why Performance Management Is Important

Performance management is based on the premise that by investing whole-heartedly in the development of staff, managers can create more productive, effective, and loyal employees and build a better office. This is both an annual and an ongoing process for continually improving the performance of staff. While this approach requires discipline and takes time, research suggests it also pays large dividends to organizations that employ it.

In contrast to this process, most Hill offices use a much more haphazard approach to managing staff, intervening only when performance problems arise. Managers do little proactively to reduce staff performance problems, to help turn good staff into great staff, or to ensure that great staff don't become bored and look for new opportunities elsewhere.

Some offices employ elements of the performance management process, but lack a sustained commitment to "growing" better staff. Consequently, the results tend to be minimal. Employing all five of these steps may seem too labor-intensive to most managers in Congress. However, this proactive process will take far less time than many offices spend on the range of personnel problems that routinely crop up throughout the year, such as dealing with under-performing or disenchanted staff, or with high turnover.

5 Steps of a Performance Management System

Step 1: Establish performance goals for each staffer.

Each manager must sit down with each staff person he or she supervises to set goals and expectations for the year. People perform best when they understand what is expected of them and how their performance will be evaluated. In fact, according to our research, while more than half of staffers (56%) considered clarity about their role and responsibilities to be very important to their job satisfaction, less than one-quarter (22%) were satisfied with this aspect—a gap of 34 percentage points.

An excellent starting place for this goal-setting process is developing job descriptions. Committing to paper primary and secondary responsibilities will help the staff and their supervisors understand individual responsibilities and determine annual performance goals.

Individual performance goals must reflect the overall strategic goals of the office by incorporating how the staffer should be involved with and contributing to these office goals. They can also include a staffer's personal goals, such as becoming a better public speaker or taking a course on event planning. All performance goals should be viewed by staff as reasonable and attainable. The purpose is neither to create undue staff anxiety, nor force staff to become overachieving workaholics.

Regardless of how goals and expectations are established, they should be in writing so both staff and supervisors can refer to them throughout the year. The staff must understand that these goals will be the basis for how they are judged and recognized during the year and at the year-end.

Step 2: Monitor progress and provide feedback on staff performance throughout the year.

After establishing clear goals, determine how best to support each staffer in meeting his or her goals. For staff who remain focused, this may mean managers periodically asking how their work is going or checking in with them over lunch. For staff who have a tendency to lose sight of their goals, this may mean meeting monthly to review progress, or having those staff develop action plans outlining how they intend to accomplish their goals. Even well-intentioned, highly motivated staff can get off track, especially when they take on too much work.

Feedback is the act of evaluating performance with the intention of influencing an employee's behavior in a constructive way. The key to effective feedback is to provide it soon after an activity is completed in an objective manner that clearly identifies the specific behavior you seek to reinforce or improve.

If staff are not incorporating feedback into their work, the manager must figure out why and then help that person do so. When staff lack the skills

"Getting to influence public policy is a very exciting and humbling experience. It's great to get to work on issues that you're passionate about and have regular contact with constituents to alert you to new problems or ideas for legislation."

—House Legislative Assistant

49% of congressional staff are satisfied and 29% are dissatisfied with their office's overall commitment to professional development.

or knowledge necessary to improve, professional development options include: sending them to training programs; reading relevant materials; reviewing examples that exhibit the kind of work product sought; or providing one-on-one coaching, a more labor-intensive, but often more successful approach in which a supervisor or someone designated by the supervisor works with the staff person regularly.

For improvement efforts to work, a trusting relationship must exist between managers and staff. If trust exists, staff will feel comfortable admitting that they need to improve a skill or change an attitude. They will be able to candidly discuss the anxieties they feel when asked to change their behavior. If trust does not exist—i.e., if staff suspect that their supervisor doesn't really care about their growth, or is interested in taking credit for staff successes—they are unlikely to enter into a constructive improvement process.

While this monitoring, feedback, training, and coaching work can happen informally, managers should document these activities in a personnel file. It is only fair to make sure there is some record that reflects the staffer's overall performance over the course of time. This data is critical in determining performance goals for next year and salary increases. Alternatively, documentation is vital should managers need to take steps to improve performance or begin disciplinary action.

Step 3: Conduct formal staff evaluations.

Formal evaluations are the primary vehicles through which staff will be held accountable for their performance, and should be conducted once or twice a year.[12] The principal purpose of the evaluation session is to help staff improve performance in the future, not simply review the past. Everything, from the topics selected to the tone of the meeting, should support that forward- looking goal.

Since staff should have been receiving feedback all along, the review should not hold any surprises. An evaluation that surprises staff is an indication of a manager's failure to provide adequate feedback and coaching throughout the year. It means that managers have deprived staff of valuable information that could have helped them perform better during the year.

To begin, the manager should set a positive tone and state the purpose and structure of the meeting. Ask the staffer to begin and let him or her do much of the work. This review should be an opportunity to nurture their growth and learning, not a chance to demand or dictate change. It should be a dialogue, not a top-down lecture. The staff person should explain why he or she did or did not meet performance expectations. The manager should facilitate useful discussion, clearly state the core message, and focus

> "Staff must be given an opportunity to attend training sessions that provide information about best practices as it relates to the job."
>
> —House District Director

> 70% of congressional staff rated their relationship with their immediate supervisor as very important, yet only 41% are very satisfied with this aspect.

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[12] CMF recommends an evaluation process that includes a self-assessment by staff. Sample forms as well as step-by-step guidance on how managers should prepare for the evaluation can be found online at http://www.congressfoundation.org/congressional-operations/resources-by-topic/managing-staff. Additionally, there are many resources on performance management on the SHRM website, www.shrm.org.

constructively on how to use this review to improve performance in the future. For underperforming staff, the manager might identify areas of weakness, explore factors that might be inhibiting the staffer's productivity, and discuss ways the staffer might improve in these areas. For the solid and star performers, the manager might identify their strengths, cite specific contributions they have made to the office, express appreciation for their efforts, and encourage staff to continue to leverage their strengths for successful outcomes.

The session should end with the manager repeating his or her core message and developing an understanding on the next steps for the coming months. For star performers who want to expand their skills and responsibilities, ideas on development opportunities and new duties should be discussed. If the employee is not meeting expectations, the manager needs to discuss why and how the employee should improve. The manager should draft a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) that describes the specific steps the staffer will take to remedy the problems identified, as well as the steps the office will take to assist the employee in his or her efforts. A PIP should include performance goals, how the supervisor will measure progress, and dates for formally assessing progress (i.e., weekly, monthly).

There is one forbidden subject during this discussion—money. Obviously, most offices link pay to office performance. However, if staff believe that an objective of the meeting is to determine how large a salary increase or bonus they should receive, they will, understandably, be reluctant to reflect openly on how they can improve. Instead, they will probably focus on how they can make the best case for the most money. Consequently, managers must de-link these meetings from actual compensation decisions and make it clear that these decisions will be made weeks, if not months, after the session. They could even decide and announce compensation decisions before the staff evaluation meetings.

Step 4: Follow through on the evaluation and prepare for the upcoming year.

After the session, managers need to make sure that the process that has been initiated does not get placed on the backburner and forgotten. No task is more important to managers than devoting time to improving staff performance and enhancing their contribution to the office. Supervisors and staff should develop specific written products as a follow-up to the performance evaluation session within a few days or weeks.

Staff who received good or great evaluations should be asked to draft a new set of performance goals for the coming year. Those who received poor evaluations should be given a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) by their manager.

In both cases, managers should ensure that these documents are consistent with what was discussed at the evaluation meeting. In some cases, a short

> "Upward mobility is nearly non-existent in the district office. I felt my management waited far too long to promote or recognize my work."
>
> —House Caseworker

> 47% of congressional staff are satisfied and 32% are dissatisfied with the recognition by management about their job performance.

follow-up meeting may be necessary to clarify, or even renegotiate, goals, timelines, or the actions expected from staff or the office.

Step 5: Recognize high-performing staff.

Just as under-performing staff need to be made aware of how they are falling short, high-performing staff need to be recognized and appreciated for the caliber of their work. CMF recommends that offices reward staff who achieve their goals through monetary and non-monetary means.[13]

In an effective performance management system, pay is tied to performance—staff who best achieve their established performance goals are most highly compensated (ideally through a combination of salary increases and bonus pay). Salary decisions are typically made at the end of the year, which often means that a staffer is rewarded months after performing outstanding work. Opportunities to receive bonuses, preferably soon after a project is completed, are generally a more effective staff motivator and morale builder and afford managers greater budgetary flexibility.

Non-monetary rewards for high-performing staff might include: providing opportunities to work more closely with the Member; expanding their job responsibilities or providing more development opportunities; or providing time off or a more flexible work schedule. Congressional offices too often neglect these non-monetary rewards and the value staff place upon them. The non-monetary rewards can be discussed in a job evaluation session because they are part of the "next steps," but money should never be discussed during the performance review.

"Working in Congress fulfills my calling to public service and allows me to put all of my skills and abilities to use in a dynamic work environment."

—Senate Casework Supervisor/ Director of Constituent Services

When asked whether salary increases in their office were awarded on merit, only 29% of congressional staff agreed while 43% disagreed.

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[13] Research on emerging trends and best practices in employee recognition programs can be found in the *SHRM/Globoforce Survey: Employee Recognition Programs, Fall 2012,* available online at http://www.shrm.org/Research/SurveyFindings/Articles/Pages/SHRMGloboforceSurvey-Employee-Recognition-Programs-Fall2012.aspx.

Conclusion to the "Life in Congress" Series

The "Life in Congress" series has been a novel effort to examine the workplace of Congress. More than 1,400 congressional staff and 25 Members of Congress participated in the research, opening a new window into this challenging and vital work environment.

In the first report, "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," we learned that Congress is populated by a dynamic workforce—but many congressional staff would leave their jobs to seek more flexibility in managing their work and personal lives. In "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective," researchers showed how legislators spend their time and assess their priorities—but also how they displayed an unusual work ethic (working 70 hours a week in Washington, D.C.). This latest study, "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," showed a level of dedication to the office's goals far beyond employees in other workforces.

But what are the broader conclusions one can draw from this research? What are the implications to managers and staff, Members of Congress, and the constituents they serve?

For staff and managers, this series confirms some things they probably knew intuitively. Employees strongly believe in the work they do and the democratic processes they support. While some congressional staff report being disillusioned by the stream of constant public and media criticism, the overwhelming majority report a sense of dedication to public service, loyalty to their bosses and the causes they champion, and pride in the opportunity to serve their constituents, the Congress, and their country.

But the benefit of having a highly motivated workforce comes with a cost: these employees need *more* than typical employees, not in terms of money, but in the investment that managers and Members make to the professional well-being of their staffs. Managers and Members need to focus on enhancing their office's overall culture, ensuring they've created a

> "Job satisfaction is hard to gauge. When the public hates everything you do, it is hard to be satisfied with the work you do. Compensation and benefits are not enough when I can return to the private sector, make significantly more, and don't receive daily doses of public hatred. These are not problems created by poor management, but the public we serve."
>
> —House Field Representative

positive work environment that cultivates committed and motivated staff. They need to establish clear internal communications systems, providing consistent and constructive feedback on employee performance. And office leaders—especially Members—need clear strategic goals, offering a vision and direction that their teams will follow.

For Members, this research series should give them a degree of pause. It's no secret that the approval rating of Congress is at an historically low point. And yet, the research found that Members of Congress report being motivated by exactly what we would want in an ideal public servant: concern with staying in touch with constituents and seeking to play a constructive role in our democracy. So, that raises a question: If this "workforce" of Congress is made up of people with good intentions, working incredibly long hours, but still comes up with a work product that is not acceptable to their employers (constituents), what does that say about Congress as an institution?

Members, as the leaders of their offices, should also take away from this research that they could better align work and life priorities, for themselves and their staff. Office leaders now have guidance on how to adjust policies to better reflect best practices for a flexible work environment. And Members were given a comparison of colleagues' opinions about their jobs, hopefully offering a path to enhancing both their efficiency and satisfaction at work.

Finally, for citizens who read these three reports, they undoubtedly must be puzzled. How could independent researchers looking at Congress come to conclusions so at odds with the popular media portrayal of this institution? The answers lie in a few places. First, the researchers for this series had access to Congress far beyond that of any reporter or entertainment producer, and have had the benefit of working closely with Congress for decades—providing a framework to compare the survey's findings. Also, perceptions can be deceiving, especially those driven by ideology, prejudice, or financial gain. This research dealt with the reality of the mundane, day-to-day, world of Congress—a world rarely examined by the popular media.

Citizens also may ask how this research should influence their interactions with elected officials. If Members of Congress reported their top priority in their job was staying in touch with constituents, what responsibility do citizens have for staying in touch with lawmakers? The democratic dialogue is a two-way street, and this research suggests that on one side of the conversation (Congress) is a dedicated group of public servants, both Members and staff, seeking the best ways to integrate constituent interests and opinion into the public policy process.

This research might cause some citizens to reassess their perceptions of Congress. This is not to suggest that Americans should be happy with the recent performance of Congress to resolve great questions facing this nation. This research dealt mostly with legislators' and staff work *ethic*,

> If this "workforce" of Congress is made up of people with good intentions, working incredibly long hours, but still comes up with a work product that is not acceptable to their employers (constituents), what does that say about Congress as an institution?

not their work *product*. Yet, especially through the extensive open-ended survey answers, the "Life in Congress" project team saw the extent to which public opinion affects the morale, performance, and even the employment retention of Members and staff in Congress. It is possible to conclude constituent appreciation could actually have a positive effect on Congress' performance, much in the same way a manager's approval enhances the productivity of his or her employees. So, perhaps the citizen should view this assessment through the lens of an employer: separate the activity from the level of achievement, and recognize the effort, dedication, and motivation of their employees—the United States Congress.

About the Research

Methodology

Congressional Staff: 10,983 employees in House and Senate personal offices were contacted to participate in the congressional staff survey. A total of 1,432 responses were received, yielding a response rate of 15%. Of these respondents, 72% were employed in the U.S. House of Representatives; 28% worked in the U.S. Senate; 55% were employed by Democrats; 43% worked for Republicans; 2% worked for Independents. Data for the congressional staff survey was collected August 8 – October 4, 2011.

Notations

Analysis: For this report, data were examined by the following demographic segments:

- Location: Washington, D.C., office, district or state office, and those staff who split time evenly between both locations.

- Chamber: U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate.

- Gender: Male and female.

- Generation/Age: Millennials (born after 1980), Generation X (born 1965 – 1980), Baby Boomers (born 1945 – 1964), and Traditionalists (born before 1945).

- Position category: Management, Policy/Legislative/Research, Press/Communications, Administrative/Support, and District/State (job titles within each category are outlined on page 79).

For location, gender, age, and position category, some of the most noteworthy differences were discussed, particularly when large differences existed (at least 10% or more). We did not find any meaningful differences by congressional chamber, nor have we reported data for Traditionalists (staff born before 1945) and staff who split time evenly between Washington,

D.C., and the district/state because their sample sizes were too low. Additionally, when reporting on smaller sample sizes, such as within the demographic segments, the response of one participant can affect the overall results considerably; this should be noted when making interpretations of the data, particularly when interpreting small percentage differences.

Figures: Unless otherwise noted in a specific figure, the following are applicable to data depicted throughout this report.

• Percentages for a question may not total 100% due to rounding.

• Percentages for a question may not total 100% if some answers are excluded.

Generalization of Results: As with any research, readers should exercise caution when generalizing results and take individual circumstances and experiences into consideration when making decisions based on these data.

While we are confident in this research, it is prudent to understand that the results presented in this survey report are only truly representative of the survey respondents.

Number of Respondents: The number of respondents (indicated by "n" in figures) varies from figure to figure because some respondents did not answer all of the questions. Individuals may not have responded to a question on the survey because the question or some of its parts were not applicable or because the requested data were unavailable. This also accounts for the varying number of responses within each figure.

Confidence Level and Margin of Error: A confidence level and margin of error give readers some measure of how much they can rely on survey responses to represent all congressional staff. Given the level of response to the survey, SHRM Research is 95% confident that responses given by participating congressional staff can be applied to all congressional staff, in general, with a margin of error of approximately 2%. For example, 79% of the responding congressional staff reported that overall office culture was very important for congressional staff's job satisfaction. With a 2% margin of error, the reader can be 95% certain that between 77% and 81% of congressional staff believe that overall office culture is very important to congressional staff job satisfaction. It is important to know that as the sample size decreases, the margin of error increases. Additionally, this confidence level and margin of error are calculated for the overall congressional staff results and do not apply to the demographic breakouts outlined on the previous page.

About the Respondents

Position Category (with job titles below each category)	
Management Positions	**9%**
Chief of Staff	4%
Deputy Chief of Staff/Administrative Director	2%
Office Manager	3%
Policy/Legislative/Research Positions	**23%**
Legislative Director	4%
Counsel (Chief/General/Legislative)	1%
Senior Legislative Assistant	4%
Legislative Assistant	9%
Legislative Correspondent	4%
Special Advisor	1%
Press/Communications Positions	**7%**
Communications Director	3%
Press Secretary	2%
Deputy Communications Director/Deputy Press Secretary	2%
Administrative/Support Positions	**11%**
Executive Assistant	2%
Scheduler	3%
Systems Administrator	1%
Correspondence Manager/Mailroom Supervisor	1%
Receptionist/Staff Assistant	4%
District/State Positions	**50%**
State Director	1%
District Director	5%
Regional Director	2%
State/District Scheduler	1%
Caseworker Supervisor/Constituent Services Director	8%
Caseworker/Constituent Services Representative	15%
Field Representative	11%
State/District Office Manager	1%
Projects/Grants Director	2%
State/District Receptionist/Staff Assistant	2%

(n = 1432)
Note: Job titles with no responses were removed from this table.

Years in Current Position	
0 to 2	53%
3 to 5	19%
6 to 10	12%
11 to 15	5%
16 to 20	2%
21 to 25	1%
26+	8%

(n = 1358)

Years in Congress	
0 to 2	36%
3 to 5	21%
6 to 10	17%
11 to 15	9%
16 to 20	4%
21 to 25	2%
26+	10%

(n = 1351)

Age	
Millennials (born after 1980)	37%
Generation X (born 1965-1980)	30%
Baby Boomers (born 1945-1964)	30%
Traditionalists (born before 1945)	4%

(n = 1337)

Race/Ethnicity	
Native American	0%
Asian or Asian-American	1%
Black/African-American	7%
Hispanic or Latino	6%
Middle Eastern	0%
White	80%
Mixed Race/Ethnicity	2%
Other	2%

(n = 1030)

Gender

Male	39%
Female	61%
(n = 980)	

Marital Status

Married, living with spouse	49%
Widowed	2%
Divorced	8%
Separated	1%
Single, never married	38%
Domestic partnership	2%
(n = 994)	

Care Giving Responsibilities

None	64%
Childcare responsibilities for child (children)	19%
Eldercare responsibilities for individual(s)	7%
Childcare and eldercare responsibilities	5%
Other care giving responsibilities	5%
(n = 1023)	

Chamber of Congress

House of Representatives	72%
Senate	28%
(n = 1033)	

Office Location

Washington, D.C., office	38%
District or State office	61%
Split time evenly between both locations	1%
(n = 1034)	

Primary Office

Representative's/Senator's personal office	92%
Full committee	1%
Subcommittee	0%
Leadership	0%
Institutional Support (e.g., Sergeant at Arms, CAO, Legislative Counsel)	0%
Legislative Branch Support (e.g., CBO, LOC, AOC)	0%
Other	7%
(n = 1038)	

Employment Status

Full-time employee	95%
Part-time employee	4%
Temporary employee	0%
Shared employee	0%
(n = 962)	

Political Party of Member/Senator

Democrat	55%
Republican	43%
Independent	2%
(n = 942)	

Gender of Member/Senator

Male	81%
Female	19%
(n = 938)	

Most Recent Election Margin of Member/Senator

1% or lower	2%
2%	2%
3%	2%
4%	3%
5% or higher	74%
Don't know	16%
Not applicable	2%
(n = 944)	

Number of People You Supervise

None	47%
1 to 3	28%
4 to 10	17%
11 to 22	7%
23 or more	1%
(n = 1026)	

Annual Salary

Less than $10,000	0%
$10,000 - $19,000	2%
$20,000 - $29,000	5%
$30,000 - $39,000	22%
$40,000 - $49,000	22%
$50,000 - $59,000	14%
$60,000 - $69,000	8%
$70,000 - $79,000	6%
$80,000 - $89,000	6%
$90,000 - $99,000	4%
$100,000 - $109,000	4%
$110,000 - $119,000	2%
$120,000 - $129,000	1%
$130,000 - $139,000	1%
$140,000 - $149,000	1%
$150,000 - $159,000	1%
$160,000 or more	2%
(n = 1022)	

Educational Attainment

High School Diploma or less	2%
Some college	11%
Associate's degree	4%
Bachelor's degree	54%
Master's degree	22%
Law degree	6%
Doctorate degree	1%
(n = 1029)	

Appendix

"Working for Congress is an opportunity to improve my personal professional skills every day. I regularly have opportunities to challenge myself and participate in work that I feel is meaningful. I leave work with a sense of accomplishment that I didn't have when working the private sector. I enjoy knowing that I am contributing to something that improves or is valuable in others' lives."

—House Legislative Assistant

"It means being having the opportunity to be part of the policy-making process, as well as effectively communicating and informing constituents about what leaders are doing—or trying to do—in Washington to improve their lives and our nation."

—Senate Deputy Communications Director

"Regular office budget cuts severely impact Congress' ability to work effectively, and to help Americans."

—House Chief of Staff

"Working in Congress is a golden opportunity to assist people in need with federal related issues as well as empowering communities and citizens."

—Senate Projects/Grants Director

"To me, working in Congress means long hours, low pay, little gratitude … but a feeling of being part of something meaningful."

—House Legislative Assistant

"Working in Congress signifies working on behalf of the constituents whom my Senator represents. It means working to improve their lives, to promulgate justice, security, and peace for both the state and the country. It also means working on behalf of the otherwise powerless and voiceless in the country—the marginalized, the weak, the poor—and remembering them in legislation and in our daily work."

—Senate Executive Assistant

"I am employed by the constituents whom I serve. My goal is to do what is best for them within the boundaries of the law."

—House Caseworker/Constituent Services Representative

"This opportunity has been life changing. I am very satisfied with my role, how it serves this country. I have a genuine respect for my co-workers and their positive outlook in our ability to make a change."

—House Office Manager

"Working in Congress is a way for me to serve my country while obtaining valuable contacts with members of the media in order to pursue my ultimate desired career path. For me it is a stepping stone to the next part of my career and I doubt that I will make a career out of being a congressional staffer."

—Senate Deputy Communications Director

"To me, working in Congress means actively participating in democracy, gaining valuable first-hand experience by being part of the process."

—House Staff Assistant

"As a former state representative and mayor of my community, it is a chance to integrate policies and practices up the line."

—Senate Field Representative

"For three generations, my family has a strong Capitol Hill legacy. I am honored to follow in those footsteps."

—House Systems Administrator

"What working in Congress means to me is the opportunity to represent something that can create change for the greater good of American citizens and my home state."

—Senate Staff Assistant

"Every day is different. I am never bored. This is my last job before I retire and I feel very lucky to do this kind of work in my last years in the workforce. I have learned a lot and been able to use my skills as a social worker to the benefit of constituents and for the Member of Congress."

—House Caseworker/Constituent Services Representative

Figure 41 | Importance of All Job Aspects to Congressional Staff

Aspect	Very Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Very Important
Overall office culture	0%	0%	1%	19%	79%
Meaningfulness of job	0%	1%	3%	21%	75%
The work itself	0%	0%	2%	22%	75%
Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	0%	0%	4%	23%	72%
Communication between employees and senior management	0%	0%	3%	27%	70%
Vision and goals of Senator/Representative	0%	0%	4%	26%	70%
The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	0%	0%	2%	27%	70%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	0%	1%	4%	25%	70%
Relationships with co-workers	0%	0%	4%	26%	70%
Health care/medical benefits	1%	1%	8%	25%	66%
The variety of your work	0%	0%	7%	30%	62%
Retirement and savings plans	1%	2%	8%	28%	61%
Job security	1%	1%	8%	30%	61%
Benefits, the overall package	0%	1%	7%	32%	60%
Paid time off	1%	1%	8%	30%	60%
Recognition by management about your job performance	1%	1%	9%	32%	58%
Autonomy and independence to make decisions	0%	0%	6%	37%	57%
Clarity about your role and responsibilities	1%	2%	10%	32%	56%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	1%	2%	11%	32%	55%
Feeling safe in your work environment	2%	3%	13%	28%	55%
The office's overall commitment to professional development	1%	1%	9%	35%	53%
Compensation/pay, overall	1%	1%	10%	36%	52%
Student loan repayment program	9%	4%	21%	16%	51%
Being paid competitively with other offices	2%	3%	16%	31%	49%
Base rate of pay (salary)	1%	1%	12%	39%	48%
Career development opportunities for learning and professional growth	2%	3%	13%	36%	47%
Opportunities to network with others (within or outside the office) to help in advancing your career	2%	4%	15%	32%	47%
Physical working conditions	1%	3%	12%	38%	46%
Managing the amount of work-related stress	1%	3%	14%	35%	46%
Annual cost of living adjustments	3%	3%	16%	32%	46%
Mass transit/parking benefits	6%	4%	20%	27%	43%
Office's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	5%	6%	21%	27%	42%
Opportunities for variable pay	3%	4%	18%	35%	41%
Career advancement opportunities within the office	6%	4%	18%	32%	39%
Job-specific training	3%	6%	20%	34%	37%
Family-friendly benefits	9%	9%	28%	17%	37%
Amount of variable pay (bonuses)	3%	4%	25%	32%	36%
Predictability of weekly schedule	3%	5%	20%	38%	34%
Predictability of daily work hours	4%	7%	22%	33%	34%
General training	2%	5%	20%	41%	32%
Number of hours worked per week	3%	5%	24%	36%	32%
Onsite fitness centers/discounted gym membership	9%	9%	30%	24%	29%
Employee assistance and wellness programs	9%	9%	36%	24%	22%

(n = 696-1242)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 42 | Congressional Staff Satisfaction with All Job Aspects

Aspect	Very Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Mass transit/parking benefits	5%	3%	24%	22%	47%
Student loan repayment program	6%	5%	29%	14%	46%
Paid time off	4%	8%	13%	31%	44%
Relationships with co-workers	2%	6%	14%	34%	44%
Retirement and savings plans	1%	3%	14%	39%	44%
Feeling safe in your work environment	2%	7%	16%	32%	44%
Vision and goals of Senator/Representative	5%	11%	14%	27%	43%
Meaningfulness of job	4%	6%	16%	31%	43%
Overall office culture	6%	9%	13%	30%	41%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	7%	9%	16%	27%	41%
Physical working conditions	4%	9%	15%	30%	41%
Health care/medical benefits	2%	6%	15%	37%	40%
The work itself	4%	9%	17%	33%	37%
The variety of your work	4%	9%	21%	30%	36%
Benefits, the overall package	1%	6%	14%	43%	36%
Office's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	5%	6%	26%	28%	35%
The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	3%	8%	17%	38%	34%
Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	7%	12%	17%	33%	32%
Predictability of weekly schedule	5%	9%	22%	33%	31%
Autonomy and independence to make decisions	7%	13%	17%	33%	31%
Number of hours worked per week	5%	12%	24%	31%	29%
Job security	4%	10%	21%	37%	28%
Predictability of daily work hours	7%	10%	25%	30%	28%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	12%	15%	22%	25%	26%
Family-friendly benefits	6%	7%	41%	21%	25%
Opportunities to network with others (within or outside the office) to help in advancing your career	6%	12%	26%	31%	25%
Recognition by management about your job performance	16%	17%	20%	25%	22%
Clarity about your role and responsibilities	11%	16%	22%	28%	22%
Communication between employees and senior management	13%	17%	19%	30%	22%
The office's overall commitment to professional development	12%	17%	21%	28%	21%
Career advancement opportunities within the office	12%	17%	31%	23%	18%
Being paid competitively with other offices	17%	18%	26%	21%	18%
Onsite fitness centers/discounted gym membership	20%	9%	40%	13%	18%
Managing the amount of work-related stress	8%	17%	26%	31%	18%
Opportunities for variable pay	18%	18%	28%	18%	18%
Job-specific training	8%	18%	32%	26%	17%
Amount of variable pay (bonuses)	18%	17%	29%	19%	17%
Career development opportunities for learning and professional growth	9%	20%	28%	27%	16%
Employee assistance and wellness programs	11%	10%	49%	16%	15%
Compensation/pay, overall	14%	23%	21%	27%	15%
Base rate of pay (salary)	15%	24%	22%	25%	14%
General training	11%	21%	30%	26%	12%
Annual cost of living adjustments	25%	18%	30%	17%	11%

(n = 683-1193)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 43 | Gaps Between Importance of and Satisfaction with Aspects of Congressional Staff Job Satisfaction

Aspect	Very Important	Very Satisfied	Gap
Communication between employees and senior management	70%	22%	48%
Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	72%	32%	40%
Overall office culture	79%	41%	38%
The work itself	75%	37%	38%
Compensation/pay, overall	52%	15%	37%
The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	70%	34%	36%
Recognition by management about your job performance	58%	22%	36%
Annual cost of living adjustments	46%	11%	35%
Clarity about your role and responsibilities	56%	22%	34%
Base rate of pay (salary)	48%	14%	34%
Job security	61%	28%	33%
Meaningfulness of job	75%	43%	32%
The office's overall commitment to professional development	53%	21%	32%
Being paid competitively with other offices	49%	18%	31%
Career development opportunities for learning and professional growth	47%	16%	31%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	70%	41%	29%
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	55%	26%	29%
Managing the amount of work-related stress	46%	18%	28%
Vision and goals of Senator/Representative	70%	43%	27%
Relationships with co-workers	70%	44%	26%
Health care/medical benefits	66%	40%	26%
The variety of your work	62%	36%	26%
Autonomy and independence to make decisions	57%	31%	26%
Benefits, the overall package	60%	36%	24%
Opportunities for variable pay	41%	18%	23%
Opportunities to network with others (within or outside the office) to help in advancing your career	47%	25%	22%
Career advancement opportunities within the office	39%	18%	21%
Job-specific training	37%	17%	20%
General training	32%	12%	20%
Amount of variable pay (bonuses)	36%	17%	19%
Retirement and savings plans	61%	44%	17%
Paid time off	60%	44%	16%
Family-friendly benefits	37%	25%	12%
Feeling safe in your work environment	55%	44%	11%
Onsite fitness centers/discounted gym membership	29%	18%	11%
Office's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	42%	35%	7%
Employee assistance and wellness programs	22%	15%	7%
Predictability of daily work hours	34%	28%	6%
Student loan repayment program	51%	46%	5%
Physical working conditions	46%	41%	5%
Mass transit/parking benefits	43%	47%	4%
Predictability of weekly schedule	34%	31%	3%
Number of hours worked per week	32%	29%	3%

(n = 683-1242)
Note: Aspects are sorted by the "gap" column. Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" or "very dissatisfied" and 5 = "very important" or "very satisfied."
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 44 | Importance of Job Aspects—Select Demographic Differences

Aspect	Overall	Differences by Office Location	Differences by Gender	Differences by Age	Differences by Position Category
Communication between employees and senior management	70%	–	Female (75%) Male (64%)	–	–
The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	70%	–	–	Baby Boomers (80%) Millennials (66%) Generation X (61%)	Management (78%) Policy/Legislative/Research (60%)
Relationship with immediate supervisor	70%	–	–	Baby Boomers (76%) Millennials (66%)	Management (78%) Policy/Legislative/Research (62%)
Health care/medical benefits	66%	–	–	Baby Boomers (77%) Generation X (64%) Millennials (57%)	Management (73%) District/State (72%) Policy/Legislative/Research (51%)
The variety of your work	62%	–	–	Baby Boomers (72%) Millennials (58%) Generation X (54%)	Management (75%) District/State (65%) Administrative/Support (58%) Press/Communications (56%) Policy/Legislative/Research (54%)
Retirement and savings plans	61%	District/State (70%) Washington, D.C. (49%)	–	Baby Boomers (78%) Generation X (59%) Millennials (47%)	Management (70%) District/State (69%) Administrative/Support (63%) Press/Communications (46%) Policy/Legislative/Research (44%)
Job security	61%	District/State (66%) Washington, D.C. (52%)	–	–	–
Benefits, the overall package	60%	–	Female (69%) Male (48%)	Baby Boomers (71%) Generation X (56%) Millennials (54%)	–
Paid time off	60%	–	Female (68%) Male (48%)	–	–
Recognition by management about your job performance	58%	–	Female (63%) Male (51%)	–	–
Autonomy and independence to make decisions	57%	–	–	Baby Boomers (65%) Generation X (54%) Millennials (50%)	Management (65%) Policy/Legislative/Research (51%)
Clarity about your role and responsibilities	56%	–	Female (59%) Male (48%)	–	–
Flexibility to balance life and work issues	55%	District/State (64%) Washington, D.C. (43%)	Female (63%) Male (43%)	Baby Boomers (60%) Generation X (58%) Millennials (46%)	District/State (63%) Management (59%) Policy/Legislative/Research (39%)
Feeling safe in the work environment	55%	–	Female (65%) Male (38%)	Baby Boomers (65%) Millennials (51%) Generation X (46%)	–
The office's overall commitment to professional development	53%	District/State (57%) Washington, D.C. (47%)	–	–	–

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Figure 44 | Importance of Job Aspects—Select Demographic Differences (continued)

Aspect	Overall	Differences by Office Location	Differences by Gender	Differences by Age	Differences by Position Category
Student loan repayment program	51%	–	–	Millennials (61%) Generation X (54%) Baby Boomers (31%)	–
Career development opportunities	47%	–	Female (50%) Male (40%)	Millennials (58%) Generation X (46%) Baby Boomers (37%)	–
Opportunities to network with others	47%	–	–	–	Press/Communications (55%) Policy/Legislative/Research (40%) Management (39%)
Physical working conditions	46%	District/State (53%) Washington, D.C. (34%)	Female (53%) Male (36%)	Baby Boomers (60%) Millennials (39%) Generation X (37%)	–
Managing the amount of work-related stress	46%	–	Female (53%) Male (36%)	–	–
Annual cost of living adjustments	46%	–	–	–	Administrative/Support (54%) Management (50%) Policy/Legislative/Research (36%)
Mass transit/parking benefits	43%	Washington, D.C. (51%) District/State (32%)	–	Millennials (52%) Baby Boomers (38%) Generation X (35%)	–
Office's commitment to a diverse and inclusive workforce	42%	District/State (50%) Washington, D.C. (30%)	–	Baby Boomers (57%) Millennials (33%) Generation X (32%)	District/State (49%) Management (48%) Administrative/Support (46%) Policy/Legislative/Research (24%) Press/Communications (21%)
Opportunities for variable pay	41%	–	–	–	Management (52%) Policy/Legislative/Research (33%)
Career advancement opportunities within the office	39%	Washington, D.C. (46%) District/State (33%)	–	Millennials (59%) Generation X (33%) Baby Boomers (23%)	Policy/Legislative/Research (49%) Administrative/Support (49%) Press/Communications (37%) District/State (34%) Management (33%)
Job-specific training	37%	District/State (41%) Washington, D.C. (30%)	Female (42%) Male (26%)	–	District/State (43%) Administrative/Support (40%) Policy/Legislative/Research (30%) Management (26%)
Amount of variable pay	36%	–	–	–	Management (48%) Policy/Legislative/Research (26%)
Predictability of daily work hours	34%	District/State (40%) Washington, D.C. (24%)	–	–	–

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Figure 44 | Importance of Job Aspects—Select Demographic Differences (continued)

Aspect	Overall	Differences by Office Location	Differences by Gender	Differences by Age	Differences by Position Category
General training	32%	–	Female (35%) Male (24%)	–	–

Note: Figure represents select differences (10% or greater) among those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 5 = "very important." A dash (—) indicates that there were no meaningful differences in this category.
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 45 | Top Five Very Important Aspects of Job Satisfaction by Office Location

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Washington, D.C.	Overall office culture	The work itself	Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	Meaningfulness of job	Communication between employees and senior management
	76%	75%	72%	71%	69%
District/State	Overall office culture	Meaningfulness of job	The work itself	Vision and goals of Senator/Representative	Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work
	82%	78%	74%	74%	74%

(Washington, D.C., Staff n = 388-394, District/State Staff n = 617-624)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 5 = "very important." Data for staff who split time evenly between both locations are not shown because the sample size is too small.
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 46 | Top Five Very Important Aspects of Job Satisfaction by Gender

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Women	Overall office culture	The work itself	Meaningfulness of job	Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	Communication between employees and senior management
	84%	78%	77%	75%	75%
Men	Meaningfulness of job	Overall office culture	The work itself	Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	Vision and goals of Senator/Representative
	74%	74%	71%	70%	68%

(Women n = 589-593, Men n = 376-380)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 5 = "very important."
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 47 | Top Five Very Important Aspects of Job Satisfaction by Age

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Millennials	The work itself	Overall office culture	Meaningfulness of job	Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	Relationships with co-workers
	77%	77%	73%	71%	68%
Generation X	Overall office culture	Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	Meaningfulness of job	Communication between employees and senior management	The work itself
	75%	71%	70%	69%	68%
Baby Boomers	Overall office culture	Meaningfulness of job	The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	Retirement and savings plans	The work itself
	86%	80%	80%	78%	78%

(Millennials n = 382-448, Generation X n = 314-357, Baby Boomers n = 366-372)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 5 = "very important." Data for the Traditionalist generation (staff born before 1945) are not shown because the sample size is too small.
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 48 | Top Five Very Important Aspects of Job Satisfaction by Position Category

	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth
Management Positions	Overall office culture	The work itself	Relationship with immediate supervisor	The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office	Communication between employees and senior management
	84%	79%	78%	78%	75%
Policy/Legislative/Research Positions	The work itself	Overall office culture	Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	Meaningfulness of job	Communication between employees and senior management
	77%	72%	71%	70%	66%
Press/Communications Positions	Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work	The work itself	Overall office culture	Communication between employees and senior management	Meaningfulness of job
	80%	75%	75%	75%	74%
Administrative/Support Positions	Overall office culture	Relationship with immediate supervisor	Communication between employees and senior management	Relationships with co-workers	Meaningfulness of job
	80%	73%	71%	71%	70%
District/State Positions	Overall office culture	Meaningfulness of job	The work itself	Vision and goals of Senator/Representative	Opportunities to use your skills and abilities in your work
	82%	78%	75%	74%	74%

(Management n = 104-110, Policy/Legislative/Research n = 225-267, Press/Communications n = 65-79, Administrative/Support n = 125-132, District/State n = 582-642)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 5 = "very important."
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 49 | Job Aspects Most Important to Congressional Staff Compared to U.S. Employees

Aspect	Congressional Staff	U.S. Employees
Overall office/organizational culture	79%	46%
Meaningfulness of job	75%	35%
The work itself	75%	53%
Opportunities to use skills and abilities	72%	62%
Communication between employees and senior management	70%	53%
Vision and goals of Senator/Representative	70%	—
The contribution your work has on the overall goals of the office/organization's business goals	70%	33%
Relationship with immediate supervisor	70%	55%
Relationships with co-workers	70%	38%
Health care/medical benefits	66%	64%

(Congressional Staff n = 1083-1242, U.S. Employees n = 511-595)
Note: Figure represents those who answered "very important." Percentages are based on a scale where 1 = "very unimportant" and 5 = "very important." A dash (—) indicates that U.S. employees were not asked about this aspect.
Sources: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM; "2011 Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement: Gratification and Commitment at Work in a Sluggish Economy," Society for Human Resource Management.

Figure 50 | Breakdown of Congressional Staff Responses to Engagement Opinion Statements

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am determined to accomplish my work goals and confident I can meet them.	0%	1%	3%	34%	63%
I am highly motivated by my work goals.	0%	3%	10%	35%	51%
I enjoy taking on or seeking out new projects or work assignments beyond my job requirements.	1%	3%	13%	41%	42%
I have passion and excitement about my work.	2%	5%	14%	37%	42%
My work gives me a sense of personal accomplishment.	2%	7%	11%	41%	40%
I am often so wrapped up in my work that hours go by like minutes.	1%	7%	16%	39%	37%
I frequently feel like I'm putting all my effort into my work.	1%	6%	14%	48%	32%
The goals of my office are clear to me.	7%	12%	17%	37%	27%
While at work I'm almost always completely focused on my work projects.	1%	10%	19%	48%	22%
I feel completely plugged in at work, like I'm always on full power.	2%	15%	28%	39%	16%
I have adequate time for my personal life.	10%	22%	19%	34%	14%

(n = 1077-1086)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

Figure 51 | Breakdown of Congressional Staff Responses to Engagement Behavior Statements

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My office never gives up.	1%	6%	13%	43%	37%
In my office, employees are encouraged to take action when they see a problem or opportunity.	4%	8%	13%	41%	34%
My colleagues quickly adapt to challenging or crisis situations.	2%	9%	14%	47%	27%
In my office we are constantly looking out to see what challenge is coming next.	3%	9%	19%	43%	27%
The managers in my office are good at dealing with the staff.	11%	15%	15%	32%	27%
Employees in my office deal very well with unpredictable or changing work situations.	3%	11%	19%	42%	25%
My input is valued by the management in my office.	6%	9%	16%	44%	25%
Overall, my office is well managed.	9%	12%	16%	39%	24%
My office deals effectively with personnel problems.	14%	17%	20%	29%	20%
The people in my office are always flexible in expanding the scope of their work.	4%	16%	24%	39%	18%
Others in my office view unexpected responsibilities as an opportunity to succeed at something new.	4%	15%	27%	37%	17%
Other people in my office often take on or seek out new projects or work assignments.	3%	16%	27%	39%	15%
My office effectively communicates and coordinates.	10%	17%	23%	37%	12%
I usually have enough time to get everything done.	7%	26%	13%	43%	11%
Job burnout is a significant problem in my office.	9%	29%	30%	22%	11%
In my office we spend more time on "quick fixes" than on solving underlying office problems.	13%	33%	24%	20%	10%
Morale in my office is low.	23%	33%	20%	16%	9%
I have too much to do to do everything well.	7%	38%	27%	20%	9%
In my office, salary increases are awarded on the basis of merit.	23%	20%	28%	22%	7%

(n = 884-1070)
Source: "Life in Congress: Job Satisfaction and Engagement of House and Senate Staff," A Joint Research Report by CMF-SHRM

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