



# IMPACT OF PROPOSED CUTS TO FEDERAL WORKFORCE

## on LGBTQ Employees

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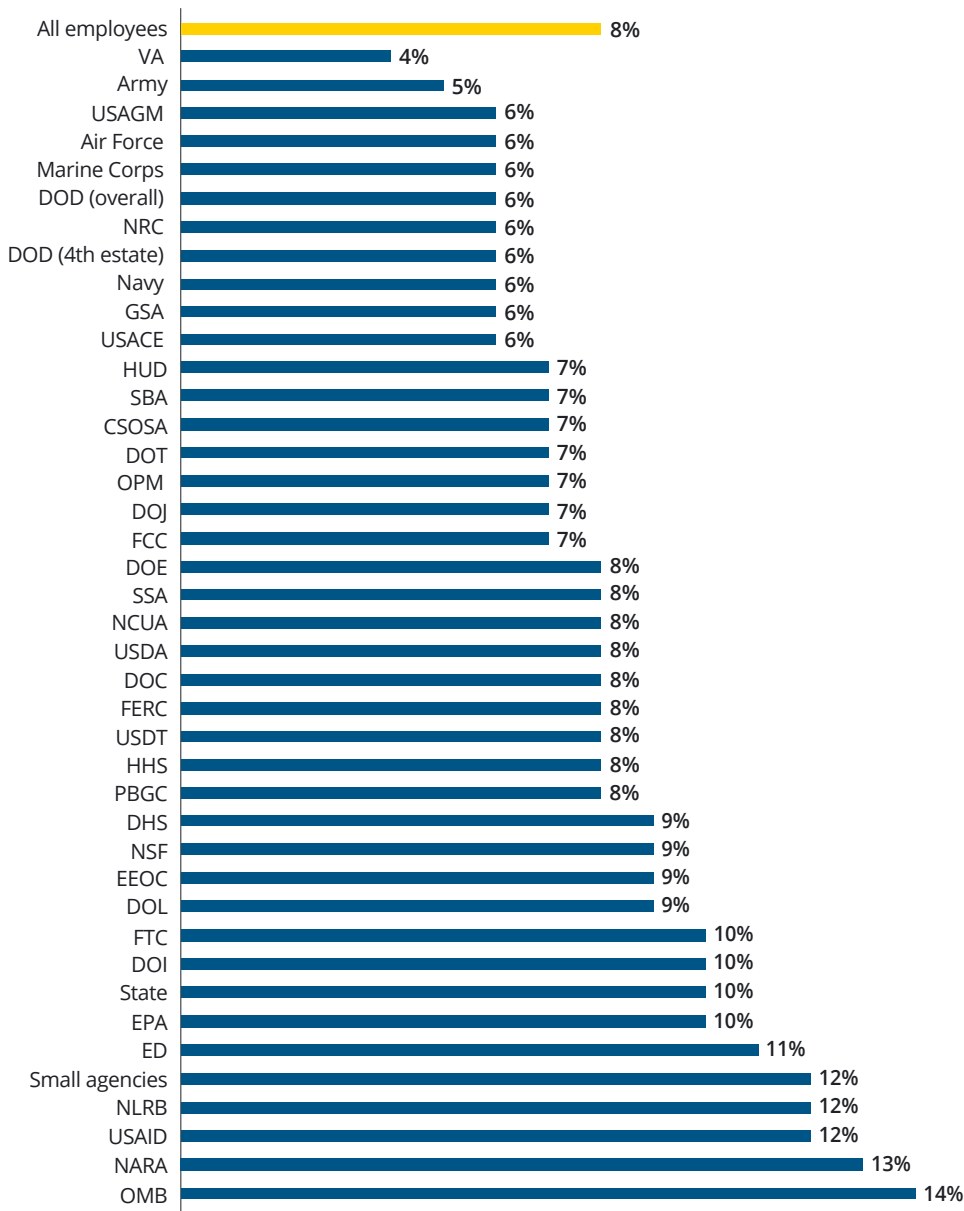
The Williams Institute has published a series of reports exploring the workplace experiences of LGBTQ public sector employees, including federal government employees.<sup>1</sup> Over one in ten LGBTQ adults in the workforce are employed in the public sector. The public sector is a particularly important source of employment for LGBTQ cisgender and transgender women, younger LGBTQ workers, and those with college degrees.<sup>2</sup> Proposed cuts to the federal workforce and spending could impact as many as 314,000 LGBTQ employees of the federal government, federal contractors, and the United States Postal Service (USPS).

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<sup>1</sup> Brad Sears et al., Williams Inst., Workplace Experiences of LGBTQ Public Sector Employees (2025), <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/public-sector-workplace-discrim/>

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

Figure 1. Percentage of Respondents identifying as LGBTQ on the 2023 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey



Sources: Office of Personnel Management’s Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (unweighted) 2023 and Veterans Affairs 2023.<sup>3</sup> †Army results do not include U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Navy results do not include U.S. Marine Corps.

<sup>3</sup> Data for all agencies except the VA are from U.S Office of Personnel Mgmt., 2023 Report on Demographic Questions by Agency (Unweighted) 6-7, <https://www.opm.gov/fevs/reports/data-reports/data-reports/report-on-demographic-questions-by-agency/2023/2023-unweighted-demographics-report.xlsx> (last visited Jan. 6, 2025); Data for the VA are from U.S. Dep’t of Veterans Affairs, VA Workforce Diversity: FY 2023, [https://www.va.gov/ORMDI/docs/Infographic\\_FY23\\_EOY\\_Flyer.jpg](https://www.va.gov/ORMDI/docs/Infographic_FY23_EOY_Flyer.jpg) (last visited Jan. 5, 2025). The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey asks respondents separately if they are transgender and if they are gay or lesbian, straight, bisexual, or something else. Most (82.4%) transgender people are sexual minorities. See., e.g. Sari L. Reisner et al., Sexual Orientation in Transgender Adults in the United States, 23 BMC Public Health 1799 (2023). Accordingly, to avoid double counting transgender people, we added 17.6% of the percentage of transgender respondents (straight transgender respondents) to the percentage of respondents for each agency (transgender and cisgender) who identify as gay or lesbian, bisexual, or something else. Analysis on file with authors.

## PROPOSED CUTS TO FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT AND SPENDING

Starting with a series of day-one executive orders, the Trump Administration has set in motion plans for a drastic reduction to the federal workforce and budget that he announced as a candidate and President-Elect. These orders, issued on January 20, 2025, include the following:

- **Creation of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).** President Trump issued an executive order to establish DOGE and “implement the DOGE agenda.”<sup>4</sup> Additional orders give DOGE a role in creating plans to reduce the size of the federal workforce<sup>5</sup> and create a new federal hiring plan.<sup>6</sup> Leaders of DOGE have indicated that their goal is to make deep cuts to the federal budget and workforce. DOGE leader Elon Musk has suggested that DOGE will cut \$2 trillion, or approximately 30%, of the \$6.8 trillion federal budget.<sup>7</sup> Although no longer part of DOGE,<sup>8</sup> former DOGE leader Vivek Ramaswamy proposed to cut the federal workforce by 75% during his presidential campaign.<sup>9</sup>
- **Hiring freeze and reduction of federal workforce.** Another executive order implements an immediate hiring freeze for most federal civilian positions. The hiring freeze does not apply to 1) military personnel, 2) positions related to immigration enforcement, national security, or public safety, 3) positions that, if left vacant, would adversely impact Social Security, Medicare, or Veterans’ benefits, 4) or other positions as determined by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).<sup>10</sup> The order further requires that within 90 days, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), in consultation with the DOGE, submit a plan to reduce the size of the federal government’s workforce “through efficiency improvements and attrition.” While the freeze for most of the federal government will end with the submission of this plan, it will remain in effect for the Internal Revenue Service until “it is in the national interest to lift the freeze.”<sup>11</sup> The president’s stated goal for these executive orders is to “drain the Swamp ... freeze bureaucrat hiring except in essential areas to end the onslaught of useless and overpaid DEI activists buried into the federal workforce.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Executive Order, *Establishing and Implementing the President’s “Department of Government Efficiency,”* The White House, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/establishing-and-implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency/>.

<sup>5</sup> Executive Order, *Hiring Freeze*, The White House, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/hiring-freeze/>

<sup>6</sup> Executive Order, *Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service*, The White House, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/reforming-the-federal-hiring-process-and-restoring-merit-to-government-service/>.

<sup>7</sup> Piper Hudspeth Blackburn et al., *Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy Will Lead New ‘Department of Government Efficiency’ in Trump Administration*, CNN.com, Nov. 12, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/11/12/politics/elon-musk-vivek-ramaswamy-department-of-government-efficiency-trump/index.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Beaumont and Jonathan J. Cooper, *Ramaswamy Won’t Serve on Trump’s Government Efficiency Commission as He Mulls Run for Ohio Governor*, APnews.com, January 21, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/vivek-ramaswamy-doge-ohio-governor-musk-trump-328400a5cc47adde8dd97eb628d18164>.

<sup>9</sup> *Vivek Ramaswamy: Trump, Conservatism, Nationalism, Immigration, and War*, Lex Fridman Podcast (Sept. 25, 2024), [https://lexfridman.com/vivek-ramaswamy-transcript/#chapter4\\_bureaucracy](https://lexfridman.com/vivek-ramaswamy-transcript/#chapter4_bureaucracy).

<sup>10</sup> Executive Order, *Hiring Freeze*, The White House, January 20, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/hiring-freeze/>.

<sup>11</sup> Executive Order, *Hiring Freeze*, The White House – Presidential Actions, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/hiring-freeze/>.

<sup>12</sup> *President Trump’s America First Priorities*, The White House – Briefings & Statements, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2025/01/president-trumps-america-first-priorities/>

- **New federal hiring plans and requirements.** Another executive order requires the creation of a “Federal Hiring Plan” within 120 days with the participation of DOGE. Among other goals, these plans focus hiring on those committed to “improving the efficiency of the federal government,” and who are “passionate about the ideals of our American republic” and calls for the rejection of those “unwilling to defend the Constitution or to faithfully serve the Executive Branch.”<sup>13</sup> To the extent this order imposes new civil service tests or requirements, they could also limit applicants and hiring.<sup>14</sup>
- **Making federal employees easier to terminate.** President Trump issued two executive orders that would make certain classes of federal employees easier to terminate. One executive order applies to “Schedule Policy/Career” or “Schedule F” positions, restoring Executive Order 13957 from President Trump’s first term in office.<sup>15</sup> Although the new executive order contains a set of specific amendments to the prior order,<sup>16</sup> the impact of making hundreds of thousands of federal employees easier to terminate, including if they are perceived not to be “faithful to serving the Executive Branch,” remains the same.<sup>17</sup> It also asks agencies to consider additional categories of positions to be reclassified as “Schedule Policy/Career” positions, making those positions easier to terminate.<sup>18</sup> A second executive order has the purpose of making Career Senior Executive Service (SES) officials easier to terminate so that they “serve at the pleasure of the President.”<sup>19</sup>
- **Return to in-person work.** On January 20, President Trump also issued an executive order requiring the termination of all “remote work arrangements” and requiring “employees to return to work in-person at their respective duty stations on a full-time basis.”<sup>20</sup> These measures have been previously identified as ways to pressure federal employees to resign.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Executive Order, *Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service*, The White House – Presidential Actions, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/reforming-the-federal-hiring-process-and-restoring-merit-to-government-service/>.

<sup>14</sup> Jory Heckman, *Here’s What a Second Trump Term Might Look Like for Federal Employees*, *FederalNewsNetwork.com*, Oct. 21, 2024, <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/management/2024/10/heres-what-a-second-trump-term-might-look-like-for-federal-employees/>.

<sup>15</sup> Executive Order, *Restoring Accountability to Policy Influencing Positions with the Federal Workforce*, The White House – Presidential Actions, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/restoring-accountability-to-policy-influencing-positions-within-the-federal-workforce/>.

<sup>16</sup> Executive Order, *Restoring Accountability to Policy Influencing Positions with the Federal Workforce*, The White House – Presidential Actions, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/restoring-accountability-to-policy-influencing-positions-within-the-federal-workforce/>.

<sup>17</sup> Ralph R. Smith, *Schedule F is Back*, *FedSmith.com*, January 21, 2025, <https://www.fedsmith.com/2025/01/20/schedule-f-is-back/>.

<sup>18</sup> Executive Order, *Restoring Accountability to Policy Influencing Positions with the Federal Workforce*, The White House – Presidential Actions, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/restoring-accountability-for-career-senior-executives/>.

<sup>19</sup> Executive Order, *Restoring Accountability for Career Senior Executives*, The White House – Presidential Actions, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/restoring-accountability-for-career-senior-executives/>.

<sup>20</sup> Executive Order, *Return to In Person Work*, The White House – Presidential Actions, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/return-to-in-person-work/>.

<sup>21</sup> Rene Marsh, Kristen Holmes & Tami Luhby, *Remote Work Crackdown: How Trump’s DOGE Could Push Federal Workers to Quit*, *CNN.com*, Nov 20, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/11/20/politics/doge-remote-work-federal-employees/index.html>.

- **Elimination of DEI-related positions and programs.** Another executive order requires federal agencies within 60 days to “terminate, to the maximum extent allowed by law, all DEI, DEIA, and ‘environmental justice’ offices and positions,” all equity action plans, actions, initiatives, or programs; and all “equity-related” grants or contracts.<sup>22</sup>

Although not explicitly addressed in President Trump’s day one executive orders, other ways that President Trump and DOGE leadership have suggested for cutting the federal workforce include slashing regulations and the need for federal employees to implement them, eliminating entire federal agencies, privatizing the United States Postal Service,<sup>23</sup> and pressuring federal employees to resign by moving agencies out of Washington, D.C.<sup>24</sup>

During his second week in office, President Trump continued to implement these initiatives, including by ending the employment of over 240 specific federal employees, attempting to freeze most federal grants and loans (in an order that was rescinded a day later), and by offering federal employees a quickly expiring offer to resign and receive pay through September 2025 to further his goal of dramatically reducing the number of federal employees.<sup>25</sup> As stated in the memo: “the majority of federal agencies are likely to be downsized through restructurings, realignments, and reductions in force. These actions are likely to include the use of furloughs and the reclassification to at-will status for a substantial number of federal employees.”<sup>26</sup>

## POTENTIAL IMPACT OF CUTS ON LGBTQ WORKERS

These proposed cuts and federal policy changes threaten the jobs of over 314,000 LGBTQ employees of the federal government, USPS, and federal contractors.

- **Federal employees.** There are almost 2.3 million (2,278,730) federal government employees, not including uniformed military personnel, USPS employees, employees of federal contractors, and employees of federal grants.<sup>27</sup> According to the 2023 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, 7.3% of federal employees identified as LGBQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or another identity other than straight), and less than 1% (0.6%) identified as transgender.<sup>28</sup> In other words, there are over 166,000 LGBQ federal employees and almost 14,000

<sup>22</sup> Executive Order, *Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing*, The White House -Presidential Actions, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferencing/>.

<sup>23</sup> Jory Heckman, *Here’s What a Second Trump Term Might Look Like for Federal Employees*, [FederalNewsNetwork.com](https://federalnewsnetwork.com/management/2024/10/heres-what-a-second-trump-term-might-look-like-for-federal-employees/), Oct. 21, 2024, <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/management/2024/10/heres-what-a-second-trump-term-might-look-like-for-federal-employees/>.

<sup>24</sup> Rene Marsh, Kristen Holmes & Tami Luhby, *Remote Work Crackdown: How Trump’s DOGE Could Push Federal Workers to Quit*, CNN.com, Nov 20, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/11/20/politics/doge-remote-work-federal-employees/index.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Meg Kinard, *Firings, Freezes, and Layoffs: A Look at Trump’s Moves Against Federal Employees and Programs*, MSM.COM (Jan. 28, 2025), <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/politics/firings-freezes-and-layoffs-a-look-at-trump-s-moves-against-federal-employees-and-programs/ar-AA1y1anf?ocid=BingNewsSerp>; Sahil Kapur, Peter Alexander & Kate Santaliz, *Trump Administration Rescinds Order Attempting to Freeze Federal Aid Spending*, NBCNEWS.COM (Jan. 29, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/trump-administration-rescinds-order-attempting-freeze-federal-aid-spen-rcna189852>.

<sup>26</sup> Memorandum, U.S. Office of Personnel Mgmt., *Fork in the Road*, OPM.GOV (Jan. 28, 2025), <https://www.opm.gov/fork>.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Mgmt., *Federal Workforce Database – Employment – Current Month*, United States Office of Personnel Management, <https://www.fedscope.opm.gov>.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Mgmt., *FY2023 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Summary - Results for OPM Only*, United States Office of Personnel Management, <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/data-analysis-documentation/employee-surveys/results/fy2023->

transgender federal employees. Because most transgender people are also LGBQ, when combined, there are an estimated 169,000 LGBTQ federal employees.<sup>29</sup>

- **Employees of federal contractors.** While there are no federal government data on the number of employees working on federal contracts, recent executive orders requiring paid sick leave and setting a minimum wage for employees of federal contracts have estimated that those orders impact 1.7 million<sup>30</sup> and 1.8 million workers,<sup>31</sup> respectively. A recent report by the Williams Institute estimates that 5.9% of the overall adult workforce in the United States is LGBT.<sup>32</sup> Since federal contractors include employers in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors, we assume that the percentage of LGBT employees of federal contractors is similar to the percentage in the workforce overall. We estimate that there are over 106,000 LGBT employees of federal contractors.<sup>33</sup>
- **United States Postal Service employees.** The United States Postal Service is a quasi-government agency whose employees are not included in the counts of federal government employees.<sup>34</sup> In 2023, there were 525,469 USPS employees.<sup>35</sup> Assuming that the USPS has a similar percentage of LGBTQ employees as the overall federal workforce, there are over 38,000 LGBQ USPS employees and over 3,000 transgender USPS employees. Because most transgender people are also LGBQ, when combined, we estimate that there are a total of 39,000 LGBTQ USPS employees.<sup>36</sup>

Just six agencies employ two-thirds of federal workers: Veterans Affairs (21.4%), Homeland Security (9.8%), the Army (9.7%), Navy (9.5%), Air Force (7.4%), and the Department of Defense (6.9%).<sup>37</sup> The percentage of employees identifying as LGBTQ at these agencies ranges from 4% to 9%.<sup>38</sup> Given the exceptions created for the hiring freeze

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[federal-employee-viewpoint-survey-summary/](#) (last visited Jan. 6, 2025).

<sup>29</sup> Transgender people can have any sexual orientation. Most (82.4%) transgender people are sexual minorities. See., e.g. Reisner et al., *supra* note 3. Accordingly, we added 17.6% of the percentage of transgender respondents (straight transgender respondents) to the percentage of respondents for each agency (transgender and cisgender) who identify as LGBQ. Total LGBTQ estimated = LGBQ (2,278,300\*.073) + Transgender people who are not LGBQ [(2,278,300\*.006) \*.176]

<sup>30</sup> Establishing Paid Sick Leave for Federal Contractors, 29 C.F.R. § 13 (2016).

<sup>31</sup> Establishing a Minimum Wage for Contractors, 29 C.F.R. § 10 (2014). Increasing the Minimum Wage for Federal Contractors, 29 C.F.R. § 23 (2021).

<sup>32</sup> Brad Sears, Christy Mallory & Winston Luhur. Williams Inst., Public and Private Sector Employees' Perceptions of Discrimination Against LGBTQ People (2021), <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Employee-Perceptions-Discrimination-Apr-2021.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> Total LGBTQ = 1,800,000 \* .059

<sup>34</sup> Nancy Segal, Ever Thought About Working for the US Postal Service?, *FEDweek.com*, Jan. 23, 2024, <https://www.fedweek.com/careers/ever-thought-about-working-for-the-us-postal-service/>.

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Postal Scvs., Number of Postal Employees Since 1926, (Feb. 2024), <https://about.usps.com/who/profile/history/employees-since-1926.htm>.

<sup>36</sup> Transgender people can have any sexual orientation. Most (82.4%) transgender people are sexual minorities. See., e.g. Reisner et al., *supra* note 3. Accordingly, we added 17.6% of the percentage of transgender respondents (straight transgender respondents) to the percentage of respondents for each agency (transgender and cisgender) who identify as LGBQ. Total LGBTQ estimated = LGBQ (525,469\*.073) + Transgender people who are not LGBQ [(525,469\*.006) \*.176]

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Mgmt., Federal Workforce Database – Employment – Current Month, United States Office of Personnel Management, <https://www.fedscope.opm.gov>.

<sup>38</sup> U.S Office of Personnel Mgmt., 2023 Report on Demographic Questions by Agency (Unweighted) 6-7, <https://www.opm.gov/fevs/reports/data-reports/data-reports/report-on-demographic-questions-by-agency/2023/2023-unweighted-demographics-report.xlsx> (last



for positions related to veteran's benefits, immigration enforcement, national security, and public safety, federal workers, including LGBTQ workers, may be less vulnerable in these agencies. However, the fact that positions in these agencies may be exempt from the hiring freeze and federal workforce reductions may increase the vulnerability of workers who work for other agencies. On average, these agencies have a higher percentage of LGBTQ workers (6%-14%) than those likely to be the focus of the listed exemptions.

In terms of location, the jurisdictions with the largest number of federal employees are Washington D.C., California, Virginia, Maryland, Texas, Florida, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Washington, Ohio, and New York.<sup>39</sup> These jurisdictions include some with the highest unemployment rates in the country, such as Washington D.C., California, Washington, and New York,<sup>40</sup> as well as states that lack state statutes that explicitly prohibit sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination, such as Texas, Florida, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky.<sup>41</sup>

If employment patterns for federal employees are similar to those for the public sector more broadly, reductions in federal employment are most likely to impact LGBTQ women and younger LGBTQ employees disproportionately working in the public sector.<sup>42</sup> Further, the fact that LGBTQ public sector employees are more likely to have a college degree than LGBTQ private sector employees also means that there will be a loss of jobs with higher earnings potential and career stability.<sup>43</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Reducing the number of federal employees could impact as many as 314,000 LGBTQ employees of the federal government, USPS, and federal contractors. Among LGBTQ employees, a cut in the federal workforce will disproportionately impact LGBTQ women, younger LGBTQ people, and those with a college degree. In short, a reduction in federal workers will mean the loss of good jobs for members of the LGBTQ community who already face additional challenges in the workforce because of their multiple marginalized identities.

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visited Jan. 6, 2025); U.S. Dep't of Veterans Affairs, VA Workforce Diversity: FY 2023, [https://www.va.gov/ORMDI/docs/Infographic\\_FY23\\_EOY\\_Flyer.jpg](https://www.va.gov/ORMDI/docs/Infographic_FY23_EOY_Flyer.jpg) (last visited Jan. 5, 2025).

<sup>39</sup> Ben Leubsdorf & Carol Wilson, Cong. Res. Scvs., Current Federal Civilian Employment by State and Congressional District (Dec. 20, 2024), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47716>.

<sup>40</sup> United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (Dec. 20, 2024), <https://www.bls.gov/web/laus/laumstrk.htm>.

<sup>41</sup> Movement Advancement Project, Equality Maps: Employment Nondiscrimination Laws, [https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality\\_maps/employment\\_non\\_discrimination\\_laws](https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality_maps/employment_non_discrimination_laws) (last visited Jan. 6, 2024).

<sup>42</sup> Brad Sears et al., Williams Inst., Workplace Experiences of LGBTQ Public Sector Employees (2025), <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/public-sector-workplace-discrim/>

<sup>43</sup> Brad Sears et al., Williams Inst., Workplace Experiences of LGBTQ Public Sector Employees (2025), <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/public-sector-workplace-discrim/>

