The public administration sector consists of establishments of federal, state, and local government agencies that administer, oversee, and manage public programs and have executive, legislative, or judicial authority over other institutions within a given area. These agencies also set policy, create laws, adjudicate civil and criminal legal cases, and provide for public safety and national defense. In general, government establishments in the public administration sector oversee governmental programs and activities that are not performed by private establishments. The administration of governmental programs is classified as public administration, while the operation of that same governmental program is classified in the same industry as private-sector establishments engaged in similar activities. Exhibit 1 shows that public administration is the only sector made up entirely of government employment. Nevertheless, government employment is spread across many other industries. In fact, in 2012 more government employees worked in educational services (68,716) than in public administration (62,071), with public schools making up most of the establishments. Public-sector workers accounted for 88.6 percent of all educational services employment. Other examples of government-provided goods and services that are classified in other sectors include: hospitals (health care and social assistance), establishments operating transportation facilities (transportation and warehousing), and the operation of utilities (utilities).

In September 2013, government employment accounted for 23.1 percent of New Mexico’s total covered employment, with government employment in public administration accounting for 7.6 percent. New Mexico’s concentrations of government employment and public administration employment were higher than all other neighboring states. Within government, New Mexico had the highest concentration of employment at the federal (3.8 percent), state (6.1 percent), and local (13.2 percent) levels, individually. Within public administration, New Mexico had the highest concentration of federal employment (2.4 percent) and the second highest concentration of employment in state (1.8 percent) and local (3.5 percent) government. Oklahoma and Colorado had the highest concentrations of state (2.1 percent) and local (3.6 percent) government public administration employment, respectively. See Exhibit 2 for further neighboring state comparisons.

Employment Trends

The trend in public administration employment over the last decade has remained relatively constant in comparison to total covered employment. In January 2003, there were 23,311 jobs in local government public administration; aside from seasonality, this grew steadily until
In 2012, there were 17,451 jobs in federal government public administration. Federal employment temporarily spiked in the summer jobs in federal government public administration. To-September period. In January 2003, there were 17,451 jobs in federal government public administration. Between January 2003 and January 2009, state government public administration added 1,270 jobs and peaked at 16,707 jobs. Since that time, employment has fallen steadily and, as of September 2013, employment stood at 14,017, indicating an annual average growth rate of negative 0.8 percent over the 10-year September-to-September period. In January 2003, there were 17,451 jobs in federal government public administration. Federal employment temporarily spiked in the summer of 2010 (peaking at 25,378), which was likely at least partially due to the large-scale recruitment of data workers during the decennial census collection period. Federal employment was 18,717 in September 2013, indicating an annual average growth rate of just 0.4 percent between September 2003 and September 2013. Nevertheless, though growth was slow, public administration showed more resilience during the recent recession than average employment across all industries, especially within local government.

Exhibit 4 shows the annual average percentage of the workforce employed within the public administration sector for 2012, broken out by level of government and county. Catron and Hidalgo counties had the highest concentration of public administration employment, especially within federal government (14.7 and 18.3 percent, respectively). This is unsurprising given that both counties have small populations, and Catron County also contains a large amount of federal land. Rio Arriba and Cibola counties each reported high local government public administration employment concentrations (20.9 and 11.9 percent, respectively). As with that of McKinley and San Juan counties, much of this was likely related to tribal government. As anticipated, given it is the seat of government for New Mexico, Santa Fe had the highest concentration of state government public administration (12.1 percent).

Exhibit 5 displays the detailed subsectors within public administration with the highest concentrations of employment, as of 2012. The subsector with the highest concentration of employment was police protection, which made up 15.0 percent of public administration employment. Tribal government had the next highest share, with 10.6 percent of all local government public administration in New Mexico and 10.6 percent of all public administration. National security constituted 32.3 percent of all federal government public administration and 10.3 percent of public administration as a whole. Other general government support made up 9.0 percent of public administration. Administration of
conservation programs made up 23.8 percent of federal government public administration and 8.7 percent of the public administration sector, in general. The other subsector with over 5 percent of public administration employment was correctional institutions, which made up 6.4 percent of total employment.

Exhibit 6 shows how the broad public administration subsectors were distributed across each level of government in 2012. At the federal level, national security and international affairs made up almost one third of employment (32.5 percent) and environmental programs constituted almost another quarter (23.8 percent). At the state level, justice, public order, and safety accounted for almost one half of all jobs (47.7 percent) and human resource programs and economic programs, together, made up an additional 30.6 percent. At the local level, the executive, legislative, and general subsector constituted 42.2 percent of employment, with justice, public order, and safety making up another 38.3 percent. All other subsectors each made up less than 10 percent of employment.

Occupations Profile

Exhibit 7 shows the occupational groups with the highest concentrations of employment within public administration. Office and administrative support occupations made up the largest share of employment, accounting for 17.2 percent of total employment. Protective service occupations followed, with an employment share amounting to 16.3 percent. Business and financial operations constituted a further 9.2 percent of total employment. The remaining occupational groups each made up less than 7 percent of employment within the sector.

Exhibit 8 shows changes in employment within public administration disaggregated by subsectors and government level to reveal the impact of the recession and subsequent recovery. Between 2007 and 2009, each government level within public administration expanded. Federal government employment grew by 8.8 percent (1,601 jobs), local government by 4.6 percent (1,214 jobs), and state government by 0.8 percent (126 jobs). The growth subsectors in federal government public administration were justice, public order, and safety activities (which grew by 22.8 percent, or 583 jobs) and administration of economic programs (which grew by 20.4 percent or 378 jobs). Within state government, the executive, legislative, and general government subsector grew the most (by 4.9 percent) between 2007 and 2009. The hardest hit subsector was administration of economic programs, which contracted by 3.9 percent. Within local government, the subsectors that grew the most between 2007 and 2009 were administration of environmental programs (93.4 percent) and community and housing program administration (63.8 percent).
In the years following the official recession period, public administration fared less well than in the previous three years. Between 2009 and 2012, total federal government employment within public administration contracted by 0.8 percent, with the largest losses occurring in the administration of economic programs subsector (which lost 412 jobs, or 18.5 percent). Within state government, public administration contracted by 12.2 percent. The subsectors that sustained the greatest losses were administration of economic programs (a loss of 15.5 percent) and executive, legislative, and general government (a loss of 21.4 percent). Finally, within local government, public administration grew by 2.9 percent between 2009 and 2012, with the largest gains occurring within the administration of human resources programs subsector (though much of this increase was due to changes in reported data that didn't necessarily represent a real gain in jobs).

Who Works in Public Administration?

Exhibit 9 shows the age distribution in public administration compared with the all-industry distribution. In the second quarter of 2013, public administration had considerably fewer workers under 25 years old (6.6 percent) compared to the same age range across all industries (13.7 percent). This contrasts with the fact that workers between 35 and 64 years old made up 68.5 percent of the workforce within public administration, but only 59.0 percent of the workforce across all industries. During the same period, more men than women worked in public administration. About 52.8 percent of public administration employees were male compared to 49.7 percent across all industries.