

House of Representatives Staff Levels, 1977-2023

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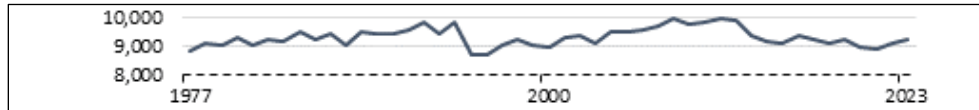
November 28, 2023

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House of Representatives Staff Levels, 1977-2023

This report provides staffing levels in House Member, committee, leadership, and other offices since 1977. Between 1977 and 2023, the number of House staff grew from 8,831 to 9,247, or 4.71%.



These changes were characterized in part by increases in the number of staff working in chamber leadership offices, and larger increases in the staffing of chamber officers and officials. House staff working for Members have shifted from committee settings to the personal offices of Members. Some of these changes may be indicative of the change and evolution of the House as an institution, as the manner in which staff are deployed within an organization may reflect the mission and priorities of that organization.

This report is one of several CRS products focusing on congressional staff. Links to others may be found in CRS Report R44688, *Congressional Staff: CRS Products*.

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The manner in which staff are deployed within an organization may reflect the mission and priorities of that organization.

In the House of Representatives, employing authorities hire staff to carry out duties in Member office, committee, leadership, and other settings. The extent to which staff in those settings change may lend insight into the work of the House over time. Some of the insights that might be taken from staff levels include

- an understanding of the division of congressional work between Members working individually through their personal offices, or collectively, through committee activities; and
- the relationship between committee leaders and chamber leaders, which could have implications for the development and consideration of legislation or the use of congressional oversight; and the extent to which specialized chamber administrative operations have grown over time.

This report provides staffing levels in House Member,¹ committee, leadership, and other offices since 1977. No House source appears to officially and authoritatively track the actual number of staff working in the chambers by office or entity. Data presented here between 1977 and 2019 are based on staff listed by chamber entity (offices of Members, committees, leaders, officers, officials, and other entities) in telephone directories published by the House. Data for 2020-2023 are taken from the House Telephone Directory website available to Members of the House and their staff.

Table 1 in the “Data Tables” section below provides data for staff listed in House directories through 2023.

Like most sources of data, telephone directory listings have potential benefits and potential drawbacks. Telephone directories were chosen for a number of reasons, including the following:

- telephone directories published by the House are an official source of information about that institution, and are widely available; and
- presumably, the number of directory listings closely approximates the number of staff working for the House.²

At the same time, data presented below should be interpreted with care for a number of reasons, including the following:

- There is no way to determine whether all staff working for the House were listed in the chamber’s telephone directories or are included in the online House Telephone Directory. If some staff are not listed, relying on telephone directories is likely to lead to an undercount of staff.
- It is not possible to determine if those staff who are listed were actually employed by the House at the time the directories were published or data were

¹ Throughout this report, the terms “Member office,” “personal office,” and “House Member’s office” refer to the office held by a Member of the House upon election to Congress. They do not refer to the number of facilities in which that work is carried out. Discussions of how many staff are based in Washington, DC, and congressional district facilities distinguish only between locations in Washington, DC, or in the congressional district. The report does not provide an office-by-office accounting of staff working in multiple district facilities.

² The actual moment printed telephone directories capture is the deadline that was set for the final collection of listings prior to publication. The exact date for each year is not known but publication dates for the House directories were generally in the spring of each year. Data taken from the online House Telephone Directory were collected on September 15, 2020, and during June 2021, 2022, and 2023.

collected from the House Telephone Directory. If the directories list individuals who are no longer employed by the House, then relying on them is likely to lead to an overcount of staff.

- The extent to which the criteria for inclusion in the directories for the House have changed over time cannot be fully determined. Some editions of the House's directories do not always list staff in various entities the same way.³
- Some House staff may have more than one telephone number, or be listed in the directory under more than one entity. Consequently, in data covering 1977-2019, they might be counted more than once.⁴
- Chamber directories may reflect different organizational arrangements over time for some entities. This could lead to counting staff doing similar work in different years in different categories,⁵ or in different offices.⁶

House Staffing

House Data Collection

House staff data covering the period 1977-2019 were developed based on an estimate of staff working in Member offices, and a full count of staff listed in all non-Member congressional offices listed in each House telephone directory.⁷ In some years, the House published two directories. When that was the case, data were taken from the earlier publication.

A full count of House Member offices would have exceeded available resources, and would have been unlikely to yield a significantly different result than that which would result from a count of staff working in a random sampling of Members' offices. Since 1975, the House has limited the number of full-time staff working in a Member's office to 18 permanent employees; in 1979 up to four employees who may work part time or other, limited circumstance, were authorized.⁸ As a consequence, among all congressional entities, House Member office staffing is the least likely to show a high degree of variability. For each year, 1977-2019, a random sample of 45 Member offices was drawn in proportion to the distribution of Member offices in the Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn House office buildings in 2014.⁹ Staff telephone data from those offices were

³ In some instances, a listing for a House entity would not list staff. In other instances, there were significant changes in the number of staff from year to year, and it could not be determined whether that was a consequence of changing organizational practices, or differences in the way staff were included in the directory.

⁴ Some staff may work on a part-time basis for more than one Member, or for a Member and a committee. In the online version of the House Telephone Directory, some are listed as staff for a committee and one or more joint committees. In circumstances where staff were identified in multiple Member offices, committees, or leadership settings, they were counted once. This resulted in a reduction of approximately 250 staff per year after 2020.

⁵ In 1977, House Information Systems (HIS) staff were listed with staff from the Committee on House Administration (CHA). In 2009, House Information Resources, the successor entity to HIS, was listed as a component of the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer. In this instance, HIS staff listed under CHA are counted as Officer and Officials staff regardless of their initial listing.

⁶ For example, several administrative activities now carried out by staff of the Chief Administrative Officer were previously overseen by the Committee on House Administration, House Clerk, or Sergeant at Arms.

⁷ Entities and staff that are not a part of the House, but were listed in the directory (including the Senate, other legislative branch entities, executive branch agencies, and vendors) are excluded from these data.

⁸ 2 U.S.C. §5321.

⁹ Since 2014, the Cannon House Office Building has been undergoing a substantial renewal project that has displaced some Member offices. Due to these dislocations, the proportion of Member offices sampled 2015-2019 may not be directly comparable to samples collected 1977-2014.

counted and assumed to be in Washington, DC, if they were listed as working in the Cannon, Longworth, or Rayburn buildings, and outside of Washington, DC, if they were not. The average number of staff working in Washington, DC, and in district offices was computed. Those data were multiplied by the number of Member offices¹⁰ to derive an estimate of the number of staff employed in personal offices who work in House Member offices. **Table 2** in the “Data Tables” section below provides the computed averages from the sample data and the estimated House Member staff working in Washington, DC, and district offices.

Member office data for 2020-2023 are based on a full count of all offices listed in the online House Telephone Directory.

Committee data are based on a full count of all printed telephone directory listings for House standing, special, and select committees as described in individual directory listings for 1977-2019, and in the online House Telephone Directory for 2020-2023. The data also include associate staff of the Committees on the Budget, Rules, and Ways and Means where applicable. **Table 3** provides staff levels in various House committees, 2014-2023.¹¹

Data for leadership offices include a full count of staff working for Members in leadership positions. In 2023, these listings included the following: Speaker, Majority Leader, Majority Whip, Minority Leader, Minority Whip, and Democratic and Republican Cloakrooms. Other leadership positions included House Republican Conference, House Republican Policy Committee, House Republican Study Committee, and House Democratic Caucus. Data for chamber officers and other House officials include a full count of staff working for House officers and officials. In 2023, House officers included the Clerk, Sergeant at Arms, Chief Administrative Officer, and Chaplain. Officials included staff in the offices of Parliamentarian, Interparliamentary Affairs, Law Revision Counsel, Legislative Counsel, General Counsel, Inspector General, and House Historian.

Commissions data comprise the smallest category of House data, and are based on a full count of those entities. In 2023, commissions data included staff working for the House Communications Standards Commission (HCSC; listed in the House Telephone Directory as the Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards and sometimes known as the Franking Commission); the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (typically referred to as the Helsinki Commission); the Congressional-Executive Commission on the People’s Republic of China; and the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.

House Staff Data

Between 1977 and 2023, the number of House staff overall grew from 8,831 to 9,247, or by 4.71%. Since 2014, the number of staff working in the House has been flat with growth of 0.78%. The number of House staff across all categories has grown by an average of 9 individuals annually,¹² or 0.15%.

Figure 1 displays staff levels in five categories since 1977. These categories include staff working in the offices of

- Members,
- committees,

¹⁰ House Member offices includes Representatives, Delegates, and the Resident Commissioner. The number of House Member offices was 439 in 1977-1978, 440 in 1979-2008, and 441 in 2009-present.

¹¹ Individual committee data since 1977 are available to congressional staff upon request.

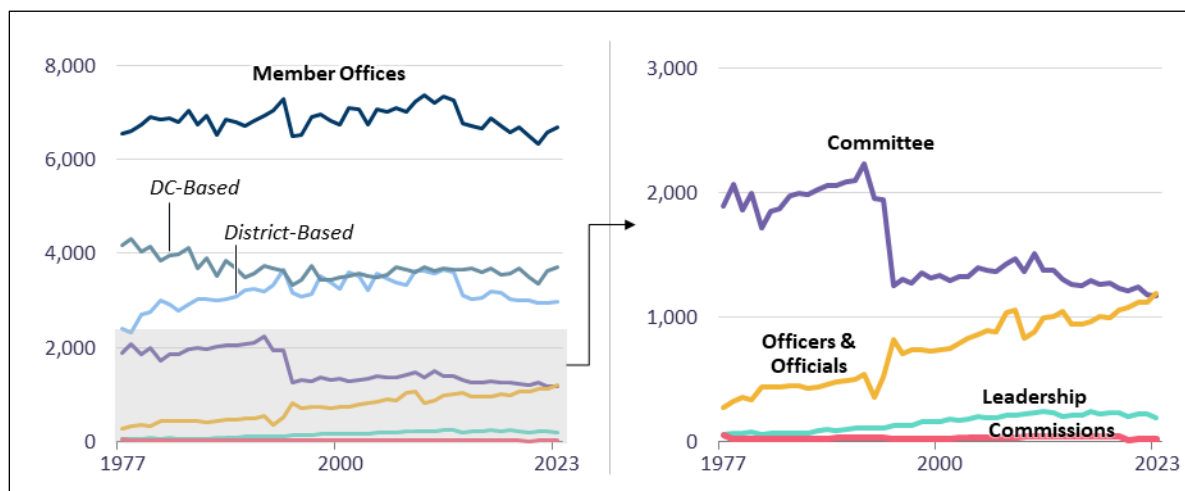
¹² Rounded to reflect a whole number.

- leadership,
- officers and officials, and
- commissions.

Figure 1 also provides the distribution of Congress staff by category in 2023.

Table 1, in the “Data Tables” section below, provides detailed staff levels in those categories.

Figure 1. House Staff Levels by Category, 1977-2023



Source: Annual House telephone directories, online House Telephone Directory, CRS estimates and calculations.

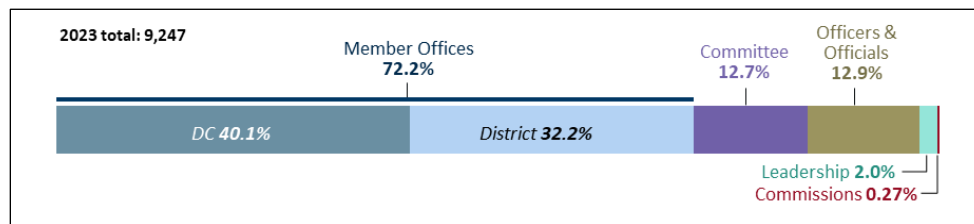
Notes: House Member office data are estimates developed from a sample of 45 Member offices for each year, 1977-2019, multiplied by the number of Member offices. Member office data for 2020-2023, and all other categories, 1977-2023, are based on a full count of directory listings.

House Member Offices

Staff levels in House Member offices have increased slightly from 6,556 in 1977 to 6,680 in 2023, or 1.89%. Since 2014, staff in Member offices have declined 0.49%, and they have declined 5.38% since 2004.

Figure 2 displays the distribution of House Member staff between Washington, DC, and district offices for selected years since 1977. Since 2013, Member staff growth has been relatively flat, and the average number of staff per Member office has held steady at 15.¹³ **Table 2** in the “Data Tables” section below provides the estimated House Member staff working in Washington, DC, and district offices for selected years since 1977.

¹³ Staff data are rounded to whole numbers.

Figure 2. Distribution of House Member Office Staff, 2023

Source: Online House Telephone Directory, and CRS calculations.

Committees

Committee staff levels have shown the greatest decline among House staff categories, decreasing 38.13% since 1977. Since 2014, committee staff levels have fallen by 7.29%. **Table 3** provides House committee data for 2014-2023.

Leadership Offices

The actual number of staff in House leadership offices grew from 62 in 1977 to 177 in 2023. This growth was relatively steady over time. As a proportion of House staff, leadership employees comprised 0.70% in 1977, and 1.92% in 2023.

Officers and Officials

Staff working in the offices of House officers and officials has grown 339.11% since 1977. Staff levels grew steadily from 1977 to 1991, and then showed a one-year drop of 33.15%, from 537 in 1992 to 359 in 1993. In 1994, staff levels returned to a level similar to 1992, and increased again in 1995 to 818, a one-year increase of 57.01%. After dropping to 704 in 1996, levels began a steady increase to a peak of 1,056 in 2008, an increase of 50.00%, before falling 8.96% to 946 in 2015. Since 2016, growth has been steady and peaked in 2022 at 1,178.

As a proportion of House staff, officers and officials comprise 12.88% of staff in 2023.

Commissions

Congressional commission staff levels are essentially flat, and have ranged from a high of 51 in 1977 to a low of 19 in a number of years, most recently in 2023. Congressional commissions have consistently comprised less than one-half of 1% of all House staff.

Discussion

Since 1977, the number of staff working for the House has grown. There have been increases in the number of staff working in chamber leadership offices, and larger increases in the staffing of chamber officers and officials. Staff have shifted from committee settings to leadership settings or the personal offices of Members. Some of these changes may be indicative of the growth of the House as an institution, increased reliance on centrally provided technical services (including information technology, legislative drafting, and physical and digital security), or the value the chamber places on its various activities.

The distribution of staff working directly for Members has shifted from committee settings to personal office settings. House committee staff has decreased. This may represent a shift from collective congressional activities typically carried out in committees (including legislative,

oversight, and investigative work) to individualized activities typically carried out in Members' personal offices (including direct representational activities, constituent service and education, and political activity).

Data Tables

Table 1. House of Representatives Staff Levels by Category, 1977-2023

Year	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
House Member Office	6,556	6,614	6,737	6,913	6,844	6,884	6,786	7,050	6,737	6,942
Committee	1,891	2,067	1,861	1,991	1,720	1,851	1,867	1,974	1,997	1,980
Leadership	62	69	65	79	58	71	64	65	66	63
Officers and Officials	271	329	357	337	434	437	436	444	445	424
Commissions	51	23	25	21	19	22	23	23	22	19
Totals	8,831	9,102	9,045	9,341	9,075	9,265	9,176	9,556	9,267	9,428
Year	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
House Member Office	6,512	6,864	6,786	6,717	6,825	6,932	7,040	7,284	6,502	6,532
Committee	2,025	2,062	2,062	2,088	2,098	2,233	1,950	1,947	1,258	1,306
Leadership	93	95	88	101	107	106	107	112	125	128
Officers and Officials	434	457	475	495	501	537	359	521	818	704
Commissions	19	22	36	35	29	28	28	27	21	22
Totals	9,083	9,500	9,447	9,436	9,560	9,836	9,484	9,891	8,724	8,692
Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
House Member Office	6,893	6,972	6,835	6,737	7,108	7,079	6,737	7,060	7,020	7,089
Committee	1,277	1,361	1,311	1,334	1,295	1,321	1,328	1,399	1,379	1,370
Leadership	132	160	159	165	177	173	179	203	192	190
Officers and Officials	733	737	723	738	750	787	832	861	896	884
Commissions	21	21	22	20	19	29	36	33	34	35
Totals	9,056	9,251	9,050	8,994	9,349	9,389	9,112	9,556	9,521	9,568

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
House Member Office	7,011	7,226	7,360	7,213	7,330	7,272	6,782	6,713	6,674	6,880
Committee	1,426	1,472	1,362	1,508	1,380	1,381	1,309	1,262	1,255	1,298
Leadership	207	214	219	228	241	236	205	214	212	239
Officers and Officials	1,040	1,056	828	878	993	1,002	1,052	949	946	962
Commissions	34	36	39	40	41	41	38	37	40	41
Totals	9,718	10,004	9,808	9,867	9,985	9,932	9,386	9,175	9,127	9,420
Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023			
House Member Office	6,713	6,586	6,675	6,491	6,329	6,585	6,680			
Committee	1,263	1,269	1,229	1,290	1,320	1,178	1,170			
Leadership	224	236	230	223	238	221	188			
Officers and Officials	1,007	997	1,057	1,085	1,122	1,122	1,190			
Commissions	40	38	38	24	25	22	19			
Totals	9,247	9,126	9,229	9,113	9,034	9,128	9,247			

Source: House telephone directories, CRS estimates and calculations.

Notes: House Member office data, 1977-2019, are estimates developed from a sample of 45 Member offices for each year, multiplied by the number of Member offices. Member office data for 2020-2023, and all other categories, 1977-2023, are based on a full count of directory listings.

Table 2. Staff Working in House Member Offices, Selected Years Since 1977

Estimated, 1977-2019; Full Count, 2020-2023

Year	Average Per Office				Member Staff		
	DC Staff	District Staff	Member Staff	Member Offices	DC Staff	District Staff	All Member Staff
1977	9.49	5.44	14.93	439	4,166	2,390	6,556
1984	9.36	6.67	16.02	440	4,116	2,933	7,050
1994	8.24	8.31	16.56	440	3,628	3,657	7,284
2004	7.93	8.11	16.04	440	3,491	3,569	7,060
Most Recent 10 Years							
2014	8.38	6.84	15.22	441	3,695	3,018	6,713
2015	8.18	6.96	15.13	441	3,606	3,067	6,674
2016	8.38	7.22	15.60	441	3,695	3,185	6,880
2017	8.07	7.16	15.22	441	3,557	3,156	6,713
2018	8.09	6.84	14.93	441	3,567	3,018	6,586
2019	8.34	6.80	15.14	441	3,678	2,997	6,675
2020	7.93	6.79	14.72	441	3,495	2,996	6,491
2021	7.64	6.71	14.35	441	3,368	2,961	6,329
2022	8.23	6.70	14.93	441	3,631	2,954	6,585
2023	8.41	6.74	15.15	441	3,707	2,973	6,680

Source: House telephone directories, various years, CRS calculations.

Notes: Data for 1977-2019 are based on a random sample of 45 Member offices drawn in proportion to the distribution of Member offices in the Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn House Office Buildings. Staff telephone data from those offices were counted and assumed to be in Washington, DC, if they were listed as working in the Cannon, Longworth, or Rayburn Buildings, and outside of Washington, DC, if they were not. Averages data were multiplied by the number of Member offices to derive an estimate of the number of staff employed in personal offices. Data for 2020-2023 are based on a full count of the online House Telephone Directory. Due to rounding, rows might not sum.

Table 3. House Committee Staff, 2014-2023

Committee	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Agriculture	34	37	37	37	40	39	44	40	39	40
Appropriations	118	125	119	123	115	132	136	139	128	137
Armed Services	58	61	59	43	34	37	63	63	65	56
Budget	43	36	44	59	62	55	33	35	36	33
Education and Labor	58	58	63	60	62	66	66	65	60	56
Energy and Commerce	96	92	109	93	103	58	93	100	92	88
Ethics	24	25	27	24	27	27	27	21	23	25
Financial Services	55	54	57	72	65	55	60	63	49	65
Foreign Affairs	67	72	72	29	35	42	71	78	78	71
Homeland Security	62	56	59	60	57	50	50	61	59	63
House Administration	32	37	37	36	37	35	37	44	40	45
Judiciary	65	65	59	57	60	63	67	62	62	70
Natural Resources	57	60	60	57	61	58	67	60	59	50
Oversight and Reform	98	83	88	82	82	58	82	93	99	85
Rules	32	34	22	22	22	24	25	24	20	23
Science and Technology	48	52	51	51	35	54	43	44	44	44
Small Business	24	21	21	23	24	23	25	23	24	19
Transportation and Infrastructure	64	69	71	72	65	51	66	67	74	63
Veterans' Affairs	26	27	33	26	34	33	39	33	34	33
Ways and Means	69	68	60	68	64	77	77	80	74	63
Intelligence	31	24	26	29	35	42	39	32	32	35
Energy Independence & Global Warming				51	-	35	-	-	-	-
Benghazi	-	-	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Climate Crisis	-	-	-	-	-	11	11	13	-	-
Modernization	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-

Source: House telephone directories.

Notes: Committees are listed by names used in the 118th Congress, or most recent year in which the committee existed. “-” indicates that no staff were listed for that year. In some instances, this was because the committee did not exist. In other instances, a directory listing for a panel was identified but did not list any staff.

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