



May 21, 2024

The FTC's Bogus Spin on Its Employees' Satisfaction

By Paul Steidler

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is touting that it is one of the ten best places in the federal government to work, as seen in the tweet below from Friday and a similar LinkedIn post. But it is not, and the claim is both misleading and disturbing, especially for an agency whose decisions should be based on data.

Morale at the FTC has plummeted since Lina Khan became Chair in 2021, and while it has modestly recovered, employees still have far less job satisfaction than in 2020.

Things got so bad regarding employee morale at the FTC that the House Judiciary Committee investigated the matter and issued an [in-depth report](#) on February 22. It found that "In 2020, the last year of the Trump Administration, 83% of FTC employees said they had a high level of respect for senior leaders. That fell under Ms. Khan to 49% in 2021 and 44% in 2022, before rebounding to 53% in 2023."

Every year, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) conducts a [Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey](#), which is described as "an opportunity for Federal employees to share their opinions and perceptions about their work experiences." The Partnership for Public Service and the Boston Consulting Group then use an index rating to determine its lists of the Best Place to Work in the federal government.

For 2023, the FTC had an index score of 75.4, down from [96.4 percent](#) for 2020.

Reading the "fine print" on the FTC's tweet below (after clicking the link) also shows that it is in the top 10 for Midsize Agencies, a small category with only 26 organizations. In fact, the FTC is in a three-way tie (positions 9, 10, and 11 all had a rating of 75.4). Perhaps if the numbers had included a few more decimal places, the FTC would not be in the top 10 for that category.

Part of what has likely improved FTC employee morale is that so many employees can still work from home. [During testimony](#) to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government on May 15, Chair Lina Khan testified that the FTC has a headquarters occupancy rate of 22-23 percent compared with the 25 percent average for headquarters occupancy average for the federal government.

Indeed, the ability of so many FTC employees to work at home is likely a key factor in the growth in worker satisfaction. As [Federal News Network reported](#) on May 20, “In the 2023 Best Places to Work, employees who teleworked full-time had the highest engagement and satisfaction scores, at an average of 74.6 out of 100. By comparison, employees who work in headquarters offices and at field offices scored 69.2 and 61.7 on the same scale, respectively.”

Even though many FTC employees work at home, it is seeking \$32 million in its [Fiscal Year 2025 budget request](#) “for new office construction costs related to the FTC’s move from Constitution Center.”

This raises two fundamental questions.

How has having such a large workforce at home impacted FTC worker productivity, if at all?

If productivity has truly not been affected, can the new headquarters be scrapped, saving taxpayers significant funds?

As an agency that is supposed to do economic analysis and rely on statistical information before making litigation and other enforcement decisions, it is distressing that the FTC is so cavalier with this fundamental statistic about the agency and its budget request.

<https://x.com/FTC/status/1791480261860880738>



About the Author: Paul Steidler is a Senior Fellow with the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank in Arlington, VA.