


How General Schedule (GS) Differs from Federal Wage System (FWS)

	General Schedule (GS)	Federal Wage System (FWS)
Coverage	1,500,000 Employees	220,000 Employees
Occupations	Covers most White-Collar positions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There are five broad occupational groups collectively referred to as “PATCO” categories: Professional (P), Administrative (A), Technical (T), Clerical (C), and Officer (O) 	Covers most Blue-Collar positions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trade, craft, or other skilled mechanical craft, or in an unskilled, semiskilled, or skilled manual labor occupation
Pay Schedule	55 total pay schedules each with 15 grades and 10 steps	1,650 total pay schedules each with 15 grades and 5 steps
Lead and Supervisor Pay	Lead and supervisors are paid from the same GS pay schedule	Each FWS schedule has a designated schedule for lead and supervisor, Wage Lead (WL) and Wage Supervisor (WS) for Appropriated Fund and Nonappropriated Fund Lead (NL) and Nonappropriated Fund Supervisor (NS) for Nonappropriated Fund
Wage Rate Measurement	Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) measures nationwide changes in the cost of wages and salaries of private industry workers; BLS uses a random sampling method to select private industry jobs for leveling based on four factors: knowledge, job controls and complexity, contacts, and physical environment	Federal Wage System (FWS) measures the local prevailing rate in 130 Appropriated Fund and 118 Nonappropriated wage areas by surveying private industry based on specific criteria; surveying specific benchmark jobs based on job descriptions and wage information on those comparable benchmark jobs
Scope	An across the board increase for all GS employees is given based on National Employment Cost Index (ECI) data to the base GS rates	A market adjustment increase based on local wage survey data is given to all FWS employees within the wage area
Locality Pay	54 GS locality pay areas are defined by the President’s Pay Agent (Secretary of Labor and Directors of the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management) when BLS data show significant disparities between Federal and Non-Federal pay. The BLS salary surveys used for this purpose are from the National Compensation Survey (NCS) program and the Occupational Employment Statistics survey program (OES)	GS localities are the basis for the pay parameters that are applied to FWS schedule increases

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Adjustment Period	Usually adjusted in January (The ECI used for the default GS adjustment under FEPCA is the October amount published by BLS from the previous year)	Adjusted on the effective date of the wage area. Effective dates vary by wage area. (45 day after the survey is ordered to begin)
Minimum Wage	Is not required by law to comply with local and state minimum wages	Is required by law to comply with the highest local, state, and Federal minimum wage in the applicable wage area
Governing Law	<i>Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act (FEPCA) of 1990</i>	<i>Public Law 92-392</i>

For more information, please visit: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-systems/>