Surveying the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Scientist Voices under President Biden

247 out of 317 CDC scientists agreed: the agency adhered to its scientific integrity policy.

128 out of 356 CDC scientists, more than any other agency surveyed, reported being asked to omit from their scientific work certain words viewed as politically contentious.

While most agreed, 86 out of 345 CDC scientists felt that the agency’s scientific work on COVID-19 has not consistently informed its policy decisions.

172 out of 324 CDC scientists disagreed that senior leaders with conflicts of interest inappropriately influenced agency decisions, more than under the Obama (176 out of 524) or Trump (349 out of 1,208) administrations.

See reverse for more information on this survey. For the purposes of this fact sheet, “Agree” includes both “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” response categories, and “Disagree” includes both “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree.” For detailed breakdowns of responses and exact survey questions, please visit www.ucsusa.org/resources/scientists-survey-2022.
In September and October of 2022, the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) and the University of New Hampshire Survey Center administered a survey to over 46,000 federal scientists across six government agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). UCS received survey responses from 378 CDC scientists and experts, for a total response rate of 3.2 percent. The results shed light on how CDC scientists and experts perceive their current working environment and the ability of science to inform agency decisionmaking without political interference.

**Codifying Scientific Integrity Principles**

As the COVID-19 pandemic has made clear, the CDC is a critical agency whose mission significantly affects the health of the public. CDC scientists surveyed in 2022 perceived progress on scientific integrity and evidence-based decisionmaking. They reported that their offices and divisions were more effective than was the case in prior surveys and agreed that the agency adhered to its scientific integrity policy. However, more than 120 scientists reported being asked to omit certain words from their scientific products, some CDC scientists reported political interference in the agency’s science-based decisions, and some CDC scientists felt that science did not inform CDC policies on the pandemic.

Congress should pass the Scientific Integrity Act to strengthen its scientific integrity protections. Agency leadership should remind management and staff of the definition of political interference and continue to train staff on processes for bringing forward scientific integrity allegations. The agency should strengthen its scientific integrity policy in accordance with guidance from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and its Scientific Integrity Taskforce.

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Our nation relies on government science and scientists to protect public health, public safety, and the environment. To that end, scientific integrity safeguards are necessary for ensuring that political, ideological, and financial interests do not undermine the use of science in federal decisionmaking, harming the public good in the process.