Surveying the Environmental Protection Agency

Scientist Voices under President Biden

200 out of 270 EPA scientists agreed: the agency adhered to its scientific integrity policy.

181 out of 288 EPA scientists felt they can openly express concerns about the mission-driven work of the agency without fear of retaliation.

156 out of 274 EPA scientists experienced burnout in the last two years (e.g., overwhelming stress and exhaustion).

150 out of 294 EPA scientists reported an increase in the effectiveness of the office/division they worked in, up substantially from under the Trump administration (22 out of 449).

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.
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.

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 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). UCS received survey responses from 296 EPA scientists and experts, for a total response rate of 3.58 percent. The results shed light on how EPA scientists and experts perceive their current working environment and the agency's ability for science to inform decisionmaking without political interference.

**Codifying Scientific Integrity Principles**

The EPA's science-informed decisions affect all our lives—for example, setting safe levels for clean air and water and cleaning up land polluted by hazardous waste or chemical disasters. So it is welcome news to find that EPA scientists felt the agency adhered to its strong scientific integrity policy, enabling them to be effective at their jobs. However, EPA scientists also felt burned out and reported a difficult time fulfilling their jobs due to limited staff capacity.

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.

Jacob Carter is the research director in the Center for Science and Democracy at UCS. Anita Desikan is the senior analyst in the Center for Science and Democracy at UCS.