

County Ethical Culture Survey Results

Ethical culture is generally strong, but there is room for improvement

April 2017



Multnomah County Auditor's Office
Steve March, Multnomah County Auditor



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TO: Chair Kafoury; Commissioners Meieran, Smith, Vega Pederson, Stegmann; Sheriff Reese; District Attorney Underhill

From: County Auditor Steve March

Re: Ethical Culture Survey Results

The attached report covers the results of our survey of the County's Ethical Culture. In general the results indicate a strong ethical culture at Multnomah County, although there are areas in which we can improve. In some cases the results point to a desire to go beyond ethical guidelines that might represent the minimum under the law and to a higher sense of ideals. To that end we have made a number of recommendations in the report. I appreciate the strong response of the Chair, as well as the Sheriff who voluntarily responded to what he saw applicable to the Sheriff's Office.

The survey was conducted during the Fall of 2016. From some of the open-ended responses we received it is clear that some employees of the County have been affected by past conduct and resignations of elected officials. Since 2008 the County has had four Sheriffs and five Chairs, counting interims, so with three new Commissioners and a new Sheriff, now is great opportunity to not only connect with employees but demonstrate all of our commitment to continuing a strong ethical culture.

We at the Auditor's Office would like to thank all of the employees who participated in the survey and our follow up of ethical scenario questions. We also learned that we need to do more to publicize the Good Government Hotline and review our procedures related to it. We also intend to redo the survey in 2018. Fran Davison and Jennifer McGuirk were the auditors who carried out this effort.

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Report Highlights

What We Found

Results from our 2016 survey show that the County's ethical culture is generally strong. For example, most survey takers agree that County expectations for ethical behavior are clear and employees are expected to treat all members of the public equally. While overall results are positive, the County can do a better job of strengthening its ethical culture and addressing issues related to reporting ethical violations or concerns. Some employees commented on reporting-related concerns such as where and how to report as well as fear of reporting and concerns of backlash or retaliation.

Survey takers from some employee sub-groups such as people of color, and employees in DCJ and MCSO, were more likely to report negative perceptions on some questions, as were those who declined to state their department.

Why We Conducted the County Ethical Culture Survey

The mission of the Auditor's Office is to ensure that Multnomah County government is efficient, effective, equitable, transparent, and fully accountable to residents. One way we work toward this mission is by supporting an ethical culture. We conducted the survey to learn how County employees perceive the County's ethical culture. Our findings provide County leadership, staff, and new Board members with baseline information on our collective understanding of the County's ethical culture.

What We Recommend

Survey results suggest that the County could strengthen the ethical culture through efforts such as:

- County elected officials building connections with employees and helping create environments in which staff are comfortable raising ethical concerns;
- Supervisors taking steps to create environments where it is safe to discuss ethical issues;
- Carefully studying the current system for reporting ethical concerns, including ensuring retaliation will not be tolerated;
- The Auditor's Office working to increase awareness of the Good Government Hotline;
- Examining the County's current ethics training options for alignment with best practices; and
- Examining the Code of Ethics for gaps, and considering making the Code stronger than minimum state standards for ethical behavior.

We recommend the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners direct a work group of frontline staff and managers to study best practices for local government ethics programs and adjust the County's approach to ethics, including the Code of Ethics, as needed.

Results of the Ethical Culture Survey

In November 2016, the Auditor's Office conducted our first survey on the County's ethical culture.

Thank you participants

We received responses from 2,454 employees, or about 40% of the County workforce. There was fairly consistent participation across departments with participation of 30% or more of employees in each department. We analyzed results by department. Although we collected employee demographics so that we could assess whether we had collected a representative sample, we did not conduct in-depth analyses or report detailed results by employee characteristics, such as race, gender, or tenure. Please see the appendices for a copy of the survey, additional demographic information, and survey results by question.

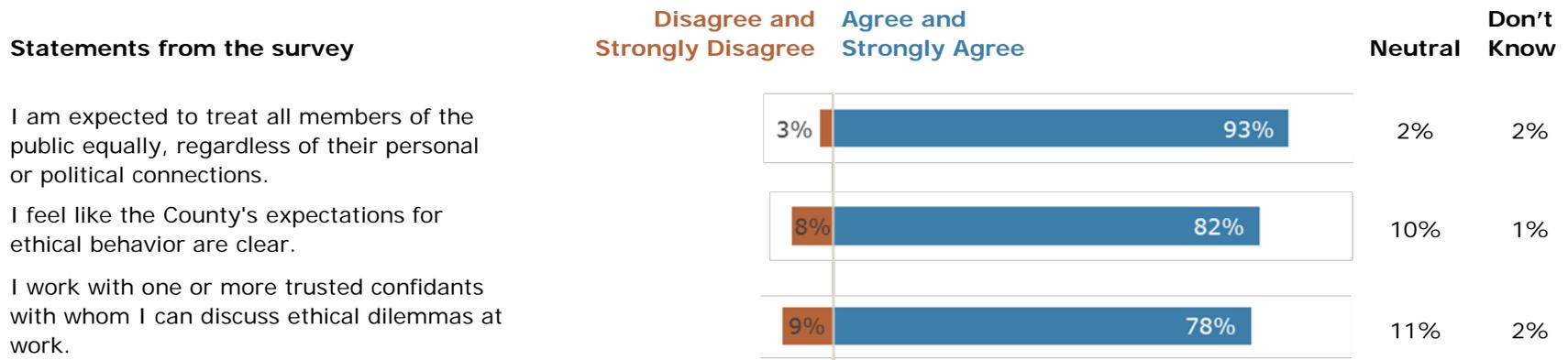
We provided opportunities for employee comments; comments were wide-ranging

We organized the survey into four sections with an optional comment box at the end of each section. About 17% of those who took the survey (422 people) chose to comment. Some employees made more than one comment for a total of 621 comments. We categorized each comment as positive, neutral and/or negative; many comments contained more than one type of response. Overall, employees who provided comments were more likely to leave neutral (264 employees) or negative (191 employees) comments than positive ones (43 employees).

We have incorporated selected comments throughout the report to highlight findings and provide insights into employee perceptions. In some cases, comments helped explain why people answered the way they did. We edited responses for clarity and to remove identifying references.

Our ethical culture is generally strong.

Nearly all employees **agree that treating members of the public equally is an expectation**—more employees selected **Strongly Agree** (72%) for this measure than for any other. Strong majorities of employees feel like the County’s expectations for behavior are clear and say they have colleagues they can trust.



Source: Multnomah County Auditor’s Ethical Culture Survey issued 2016. Some results may not add to 100% due to rounding.

But, results indicate some employees feel that expectations for ethical behavior could be clearer.

- Employees in DCJ were less likely to agree that expectations are for ethical behavior are clear (74%), compared to 82% agreement overall.
- In contrast, employees in DCA, the Library, and DCM were more likely to agree (91%, 88%, and 88% respectively).

For more detail, please refer to results by question in the Appendices.

Selected employee comments

Over the past several years, I have observed an improvement in the County of making a concerted effort to improve our standing in the community as an ethical agency.

... I am less familiar with county employees outside of my division. However, in general, I am impressed with the ethical sensibility of county employees I encounter - they seem to genuinely identify with the role of public servant and seriously reflect on the ethics that entails.

Are we all in agreement on what ethical behavior is and how we define it?

Surveys such as this give the impression that there may be serious problems among county staff regarding ethics. In reality, it's likely only a small number of staff people are violating ethics and they should be managed by their direct supervisors.

It would be nice to have a definition of ethical standards.

County elected officials have opportunities to strengthen our ethical culture.

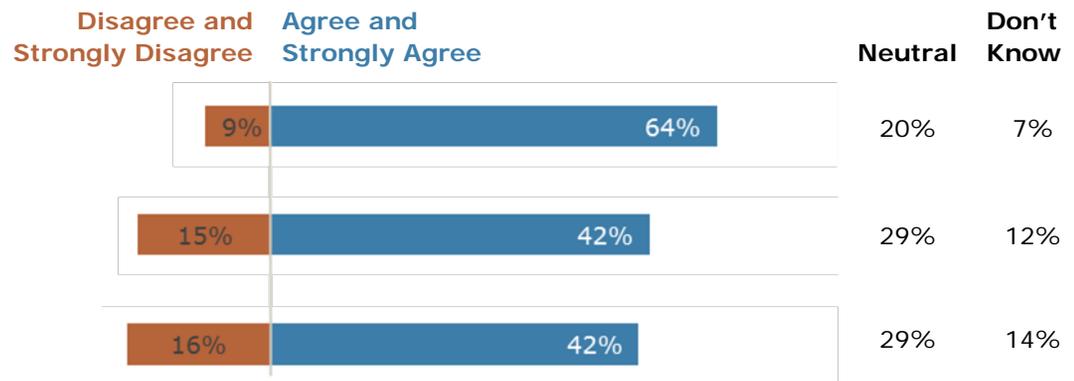
A majority (64%) of employees agreed that our County’s elected officials communicate their ethical expectations to us. However, less than half (42%) agreed that elected officials create environments conducive to raising ethical concerns or demonstrate high standards of conduct. Survey takers gave high levels of *Neutral* responses (29%) on these two measures and more than 10% of employees selected *Don’t Know*, indicating an area where employees are uncertain or have limited awareness of our elected officials. Results suggest that elected officials could be more connected to employees and could help create environments in which staff are comfortable raising ethical concerns.

Statements from the survey

Our elected County officials communicate to County employees that they expect us to uphold high standards of ethical conduct.

Our elected County officials create an environment in which staff are comfortable raising ethical concerns.

Our elected County officials demonstrate high standards of ethical conduct.



Source: Multnomah County Auditor’s Ethical Culture Survey issued 2016.

Some employees were much more likely to agree that elected officials hold high standards of ethical conduct.

- Employees who work in non-departmental positions or in the District Attorney’s Office were most likely to agree (63% and 60% respectively) compared to 42% agreement overall.
- Employees in MCSO were less likely to agree (35%).

Selected employee comments

We don't get a lot of contact w/ our elected County officials or know what their views are of ethical conduct or concerns.

I do not feel in tune with elected County officials expectations.

County leadership could strengthen the tone at the top.

We also heard from people who said they don't have enough information to say whether our elected officials were ethical. These comments, along with relatively high levels of *Don't know* and *Neutral* responses, suggest our elected officials have an opportunity to strengthen the tone at the top by serving as more visible models of ethical conduct. Our elected leaders can help the County strengthen our ethical culture by consistently demonstrating high standards of honesty, respect, transparency and trustworthiness—and infusing those values into our daily operations, how we work with each other, and how we serve the public.

I don't feel that ethics or integrity is really addressed by the elected officials; however, I don't feel that they act unethically.

I feel "tone at the top" is very important. The Commissioners could do a great deal to help create an environment where ethics are upheld as a core County value.

Most employees have little to no direct engagement with County officials so it is an assumption I am making, trusting them to be ethical.

Ethical lapses have a lasting impact.

Some employees commented on poor ethical choices that former elected County officials had made. And some employees said they would have agreed with the statements we posed if they were not considering former elected County officials. These comments are a good reminder that when any elected official acts in ways that appear unethical, it affects how people view them—and government in general—for a long time.

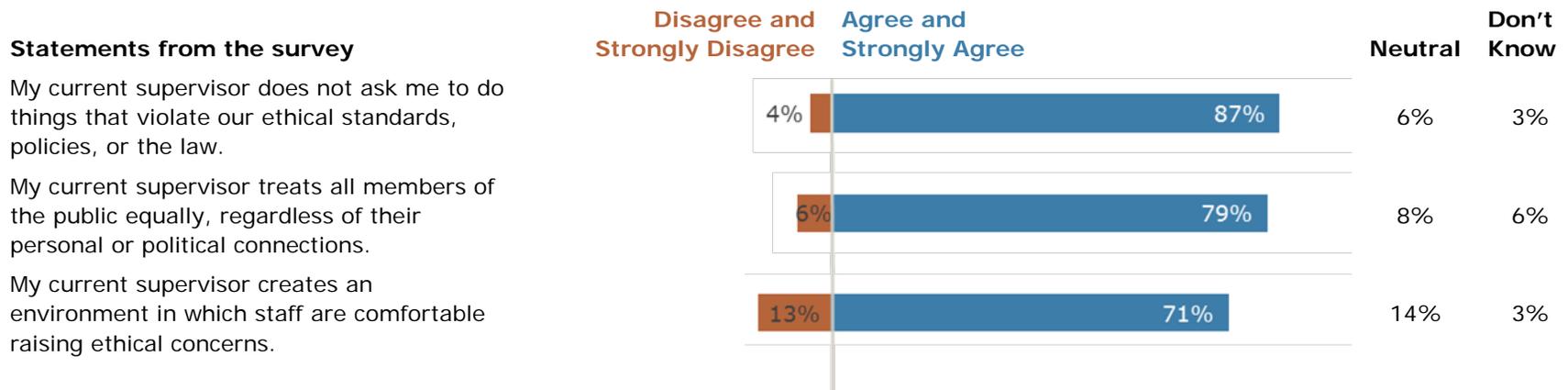
The current elected County officials seem to be demonstrating high standards of ethical conduct, but we have had others in the past who did not.

Strong disagreement on "demonstrating high standards" is based on former elected officials.

I would say that our current elected officials verbalize and hold themselves to high ethical standards. This has not been so in the past and those offenders have not been held accountable.

Employees generally agree that their direct supervisors are ethical, but supervisors need to create cultures where staff feel they can raise issues.

A majority of employees said their supervisors do not ask them to violate ethical standards (87%), and that supervisors treat all members of the public equally (79%). While a majority of employees said their supervisors create work environments in which staff are comfortable raising ethical concerns (71%), 13% of employees disagreed with this statement and 14% were neutral. These results suggest that supervisors need to take steps to improve County work environments in this area.



Source: Multnomah County Auditor's Ethical Culture Survey issued 2016.

Some employee groups were much more likely than others to agree that their supervisors create an environment in which staff are comfortable raising ethical concerns.

- Employees who work in DCM and DCA were more likely to agree with this statement (both 78%) compared to 71% overall.
- Employees in MCSO (63%) and DCJ (60%) were less likely to agree.

Selected employee comments

My current supervisor is very ethical though I've worked in other areas of the County where this wasn't the case as much.

I do not feel that I can raise issues about ethics to my supervisor because I believe they cross ethical boundaries in their daily interactions with supervisees.

I've chatted with some people who did not feel comfortable talking with their supervisor about anything.

Many supervisors don't hold all staff to the same ethical standards

Employees shared concerns about upper management too.

Although we did not ask specific questions about managers, we received a number of comments that included concerns about upper management, including managers and department directors.

Management will target individuals based on personal feelings towards staff. They are untrustworthy and I lack any confidence with them and our HR.

Electeds and Sr Mgmt don't know what's going on with first line supervisors and managers. Favoritism and targeted discrimination are alive and well in Multnomah County.

I'm very comfortable with my supervisor, not so much with a step or two higher up the food chain.

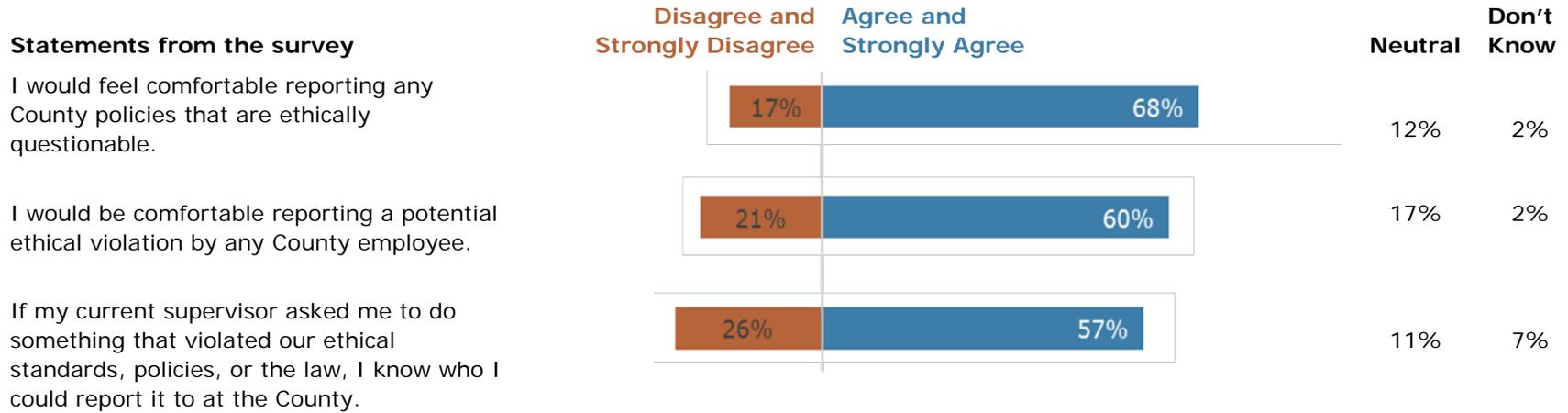
The county is very inconsistent with ethical standards. I have seen everything from the worst to the best. I worked with an extremely unethical but highly politically connected individual who enjoyed all kinds of protections from ethical and policy violations. I know of a variety of unethical leaders currently managing county business. Managers are protected at all costs.

Cronyism at the executive level creates an unethical environment where staff cannot raise concerns about certain people or management.

While my direct supervisor is ethical, I very much question the ethics of senior leadership in my unit. Specifically one manager in regards to their hiring practices.

The County could improve our culture related to reporting.

A majority of employees said they would be comfortable reporting ethical concerns or knew to whom they could report a supervisor-related ethical issue. However, the level of disagreement with these reporting-related statements—responses of *Disagree* and *Strongly Disagree*—ranged from 17% to 26% and *Neutral* responses ranged from 11% to 17%. This lack of agreement suggests that the County should take steps to improve our culture related to reporting.



Source: Multnomah County Auditor’s Ethical Culture Survey issued 2016.

Just over half of employees knew to whom they could report a supervisor-related ethical issue.

Nearly one-third of respondents (32%) disagreed with this statement or reported don’t know (26% and 7%, respectively) and another 11% were neutral, indicating that about 40% of respondents are uncertain to whom they would report a supervisor-related ethical concern.

Agreement varies by department

- Employees in DCHS and DCA were more likely to agree they know to whom they could report a supervisor-related violation (65% and 64% respectively) compared to 57% agreement overall.

The County needs to carefully study the current reporting system.

Reporting is not easy. We need to make sure everyone knows how to report and to provide resources to people who are grappling with ethical issues. We also need to acknowledge people's concerns about retaliation and take steps to ensure retaliation will not be tolerated.

Employees commented on issues related to reporting including a lack of trust in handling reports.

Reporting is a tricky subject. With small units and close ties, it would have to be a pretty big deal.

While I do not know who to report violations to, I know several coworkers who would help me to find out.

Although I work with ethical people, I do not think there are expectations in place for an ethical workplace or safety when reporting issues of non-ethical conduct.

I am not comfortable reporting unethical behavior. I quite honestly don't know who to go to - is it my supervisor but if the supervisor is the person to whom I am reporting (I have a great manager and it would not be him thankfully!) where do I go?

Reporting ethical issues usually get referred back to the HR office for that particular department which usually strongly lean to support the managers. It makes it difficult to report issues when you know that the investigation is not being done by an external, neutral, investigator.

[During the time I have worked for] the County, I have witnessed multiple serious ethical violations. I have seen nepotism, discrimination and retaliatory behavior and leadership does not address it.

Some fear backlash or retaliation.

Employees have been targeted as a result of speaking up and pointing out unfair practices.

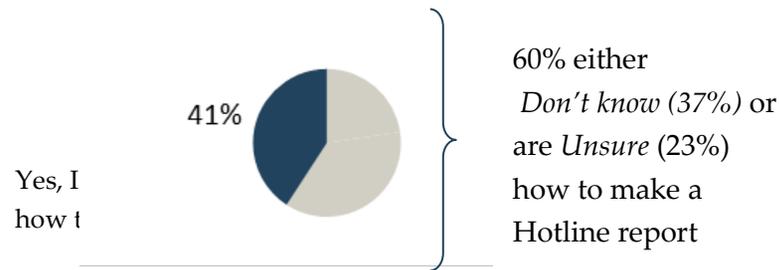
What is said and expected is not what happens. Those who do speak up are retaliated against. People work in constant fear and favoritism is excessive.

It's hard to know whom you can trust when your own supervisor does not hold the same standards and the next person of kin cannot help much because of the backlash one may receive for bringing things to attention

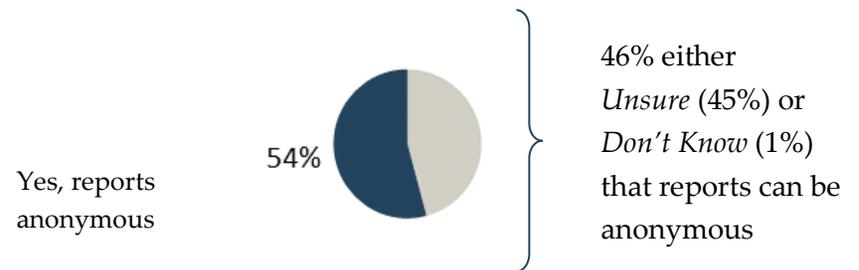
Survey takers are unclear about the Good Government Hotline.

Responses to questions about the Good Government Hotline show that a majority of employees were unsure of or didn't know how to make a report to the Hotline. About half of employees said correctly that reports can be anonymous, but nearly half are not sure.

Less than half of employees knew how to report to the Good Government Hotline.



Just over half knew reports can be anonymous.



Source: Multnomah County Auditor's Ethical Culture Survey issued 2016.

The Auditor's Office needs to increase awareness of the Good Government Hotline.

To address this lack of awareness, the Auditor's Office has recently published a Wednesday Wire article discussing how to report concerns of fraud, waste and abuse of County resources, placed a link to the Hotline in the Resources sidebar on MultCo Commons, and presented to department workgroups on the Hotline. We and plan to do additional outreach in the future.

Employee comments confirmed lack of awareness

I've never heard of the Good Government Hotline.

I was never told of the Good Government Hotline. I know of it, but I don't know how to access.

The Auditor's Office established the Good Government Hotline in 2007 as a way for employees and County residents to report fraud, abuse, and misuse of County resources. People can make anonymous reports to the Good Government Hotline online through links on the MultCo Website, MultCo Commons, or the Auditor's web page, or by calling 1-888-289-6839. There is a feature that allows reporters to communicate with those who investigate Hotline reports, while retaining anonymity.

More information on the Hotline and other resources can be found on the Auditor's web page: <https://multco.us/auditor>.

Responses to the survey's ethical dilemmas suggest that the County can support employees through education and by clarifying the Code of Ethics in some places.

Employees know how to comply with the Code of Ethics on straightforward issues.

The survey included six ethical dilemmas to explore how well employees knew the Code of Ethics. Most survey takers correctly answered three of the questions.

- 97% of survey takers correctly said that accepting a gift worth \$150 from a client did not comply with the Code;
- 96% correctly said you could have outside employment if you disclosed it and did not do that job while on County work time; and
- 83% correctly said it did not comply to use a personal rewards card when making purchases for the County.

These scenarios appeared to be more straightforward than the others, and the Code of Ethics seemed to have clear language related to these issues.

Some ethical dilemmas can be complicated, and the Code of Ethics may not clearly address them.

Employees were less sure of whether the next group of scenarios complied with the Code. Some people commented that they would need more information to know whether the scenarios complied.

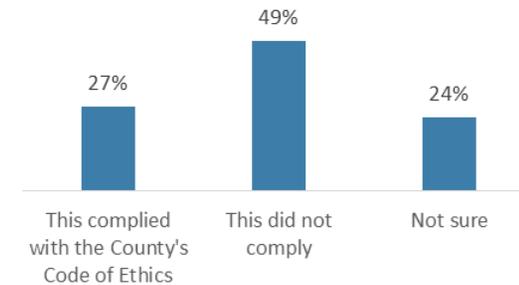
Can you represent the County at an event, participate in a raffle, and comply with the Code?

Survey statement: You represent the County at an event. You use your own money to buy a raffle ticket for a chance to win a Fitbit. You win the Fitbit and take it home.

49% of employees—less than half—correctly said that this did not comply.

Correct answer: This did not comply with the County’s Code of Ethics.

Why didn’t this comply? This did not comply because you attended the event as a representative of the County. You may not use your position to obtain any kind of financial gain, even though you paid for the raffle ticket with your own money.



Source: Multnomah County Auditor’s Ethical Culture Survey issued 2016

We received some comments asking for more information about this scenario, such as if the person in the scenario were on a break or if the Fitbit were worth less than \$50. The details of a situation can play a critical role in figuring out how we ought to respond. But in this scenario, the overriding factor is that you are serving as a County representative, and can’t use that position for any kind of financial benefit. This scenario offers a reminder that all County employees are public officials, and we need to consider how the public may perceive our actions to help us avoid perceptions of impropriety.

The comments we received, coupled with the low percentage of people who chose the correct answer for this scenario, suggest that it would be helpful for the County to provide more education about this aspect of the Code of Ethics.

Can you serve on a nonprofit board if you cannot affect County contracting decisions?

Survey statement: In your County job, you are not able to influence County contracting decisions. A nonprofit that receives County funding asks you to become a board member. You say yes.

Correct answer: This did comply with the County’s Code of Ethics.

Why did this comply? This complied because only officials and employees who are in a position to influence County contract decisions affecting nonprofit organizations may not serve on decision-making boards of contractors/service providers. In this scenario, serving on the board passes muster because you cannot affect contracting decisions.

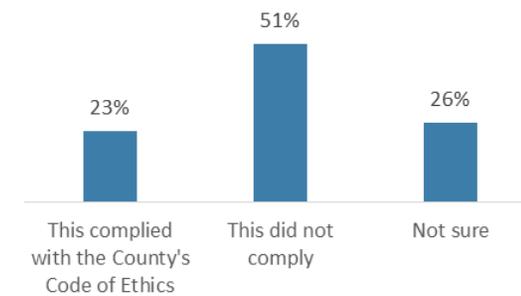
A majority of people said this scenario did not comply (51%) or were not sure what the answer should be (26%). This suggests that the County needs to provide more education about this aspect of the Code of Ethics. Most people who commented on this scenario did so to explain why they answered the way they did. We also received a couple of comments like this one:

Contracting is not the only type of influence an employee can exert so I believe the employee would need to disclose the relationship for management to decide.

The Code of Ethics does not require employees to disclose nonprofit board service unless they are in a position to influence County contract decisions. But the Code does not define influence or provide examples of what influence could look like. We asked the County Attorney’s Office what influence means, and they suggested employees interpret it broadly. It could be helpful to employees to clarify the Code’s discussion of influence.

It could also be helpful to make the language in the Code of Ethics on board service consistent with the language in the Code of Ethics Disclosure Form. We found that the County discussed nonprofit board service differently in the Code than in the Disclosure

While this did comply with the Code, 51% of employees said this did not and 26% weren’t sure.



Source: Multnomah County Auditor’s Ethical Culture Survey issued 2016

Form, and this could be confusing. For example, the Code does not require employees to disclose nonprofit board service unless they are in a position to influence contract decisions, but the Disclosure Form included a question that seemed to ask for disclosure of all nonprofit board service:

Do you have any relationship outside of your county employment with local service providers/contractors?

We found that the differences between the two documents could make it difficult to tell when to report nonprofit board service. We suggest requiring employees to disclose service on the board of any nonprofit organization with which the County does business.

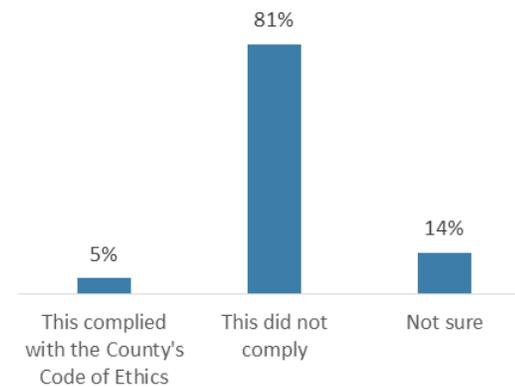
Can you hire a friend’s spouse and comply with the Code of Ethics?

Survey statement: You are a supervisor hiring for a new position that will report to you. Your best friend’s spouse has applied for the position. No one in your office knows that you know this job candidate, and you hire this person.

Correct answer: While technically this did comply, it could be unwise. Unwise actions do not necessarily violate the Code of Ethics, but can cause misunderstanding, lead to negative perceptions, harm your credibility, and/or damage the County’s reputation.

Five percent of employees said this did comply with the Code. But it is notable that 81% of employees said this did not comply. Along with employee comments about this scenario and about favoritism concerns, this suggests an opportunity to strengthen the Code related to favoritism.

While this scenario technically did comply with the Code, 81% of employees said it did not.



Source: Multnomah County Auditor’s Ethical Culture Survey issued 2016

We received a number of comments on this scenario, such as discussions of whether or not to disclose the supervisor’s relationship with the candidate. Many of the comments we received wanted to know if the candidate were the most qualified person:

There is nothing wrong with hiring the person you know as long as you did not give them preferential treatment over other candidates.

We also received a number of comments throughout the survey expressing concern that favoritism has taken place in County hiring and promotion. Providing preferential treatment to someone based on a personal relationship—or the perception that someone has received preferential treatment—does seem at odds with what one ought to do. The comments we received suggest that the County has an opportunity to support good hiring and promotion practices by educating hiring managers on how to avoid favoritism or its appearance.

The Code of Ethics does not discuss favoritism other than nepotism. It would be beneficial for the County to evaluate how it discusses nepotism in the Code and consider modifications, such as providing guidance on avoiding favoritism or its appearance.

The responses and comments on the scenarios suggest that:

- It could be beneficial for the County to provide more education to employees on how to navigate these topics in ways that comply with the Code of Ethics and County expectations; and
- There may be some opportunities to improve the County's Code of Ethics, particularly with regard to its discussion of service on nonprofit organization's decision-making boards and its discussion of favoritism.

Employees generally know how to apply the Code of Ethics.

Most employees (81%) said they know how to apply the Code of Ethics to their County jobs. A majority of employees said they read the entire Code of Ethics each year during the required annual review (71%) and know when they are required to fill out a Code of Ethics Disclosure Form (66%). We learned that MCSO and many DA employees are not required to do the annual review of the Code of Ethics due to other requirements and are not included in these figures.

The County has an opportunity to clarify where to find ethics help.

Around 40% of survey takers said *Not sure* or *No* when asked if they knew where to find assistance with ethical issues at the County. This is an opportunity to examine the County's resources for help with ethical issues.

Around 40% of survey takers said *Not sure* or *No* when asked if they knew where to find assistance with ethical issues.

Many employees report having taken ethics training in the last five years. Ongoing training could help bring the County into alignment with best practices.

A small majority of employees (58%) have received training in the last five years apart from the annual Code of Ethics review. Of those who received training in the last five years, most received training through new employee orientation (41%) and/or the County's eLearning on ethics (40%). Very few employees—only 2%—said they received ethics training from their supervisors.

58% of employees said they received ethics training in the last five years.

The County does not require ongoing ethics training. This contrasts with best practices for ethics programs, which advise that regular training is important to maintaining a high level of awareness of the ethical issues we face as public servants.

Training could take many forms, including discussions in work units, classroom trainings, eLearnings, and case study discussions in the Wednesday Wire. Training can help people maintain awareness of the Code of Ethics and how to apply it, provide an opportunity to meaningfully discuss ethical challenges we face, and support a strong ethical culture that encourages the open discussion of ethical questions.

We recommend the County Chair convene a group to study best practices for local government ethics programs and adjust the County's approach to ethics as needed.

Survey results suggest that the County has opportunities to strengthen our ethical culture through efforts such as:

- County elected officials building connections with employees and helping create environments in which staff are comfortable raising ethical concerns;
- Supervisors taking steps to improve County work environments;
- Carefully studying the current system for reporting ethical concerns, including acknowledging people's concerns about retaliation and take steps to ensure retaliation will not be tolerated;
- Examining the County's current ethics training options for alignment with best practices;
- Providing more education to employees on how to navigate ethical issues in ways that comply with the Code of Ethics and County expectations;
- Improving employee awareness of when they are required to fill out the Code of Ethics Disclosure Form;
- Improving employee awareness on how to access and use the Good Government Hotline
- Examining the County's resources for help with ethical issues; and
- Examining the Code of Ethics for gaps, such as regarding its discussion of service on nonprofit organization's decision-making boards and of favoritism, and considering making the Code stronger than minimum state standards for ethical behavior.

There is also an opportunity to evaluate the Code of Ethics for alignment with best practices for ethics in public service. These best practices suggest that organizations have values-based codes, as well as internal policies that prohibit unethical practices. Values-based codes of ethics focus on what to do, rather than a list of things not to do. Some of the comments we received about the Code of Ethics were concerns that it may be overly narrow due to a focus on legal and/or financial considerations:

It may be beneficial for the County to broaden its expectations of ethics and integrity, or focus on other examples in which ethical considerations are made. Some of these are in the personnel rules of a respectful workplace, etc. but it is best practice to incorporate this into the code of conduct or code of ethics, especially as part of a corporate compliance program.

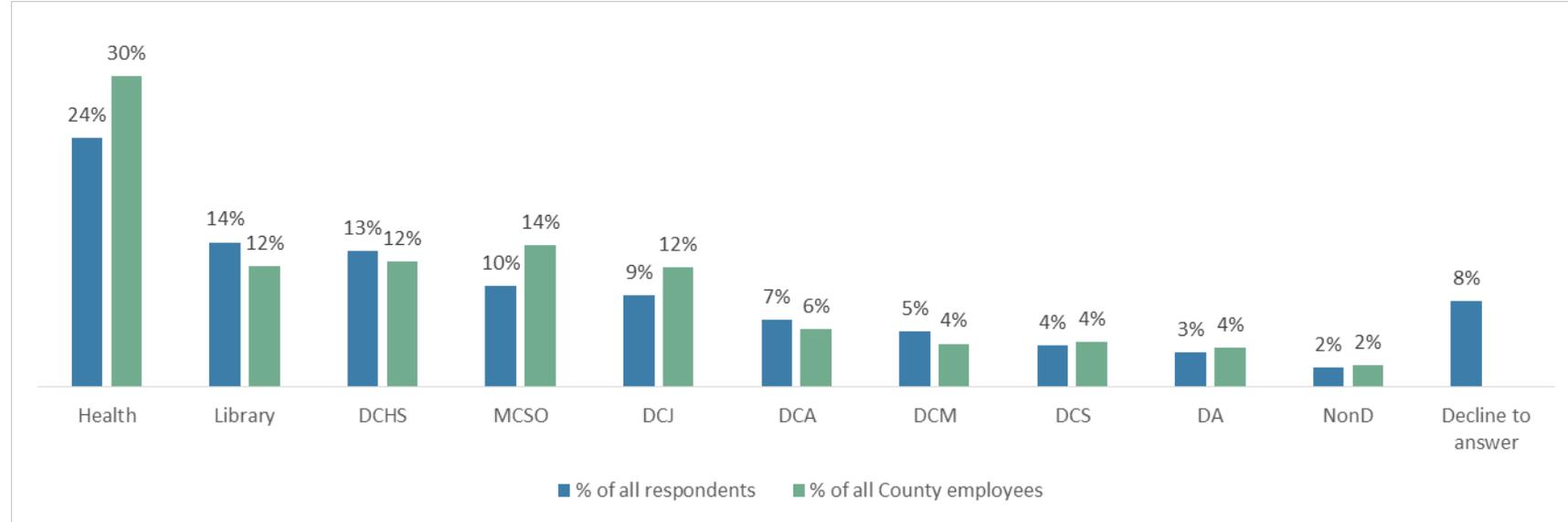
To address these various tasks, we recommend that the County Chair convene a work group to study best practices for local government ethics programs and adjust the County's approach to ethics, including the Code of Ethics, as needed. The work group should include a balance of frontline staff and managers.

Appendix A: Demographics & Methodology

Demographics

When we developed this survey, we included demographic questions because we wanted to find out if people in different demographic groups perceived the County’s ethical culture differently. As described in the report, we did find some notable differences. In this appendix, we provide an overview of demographic responses for informational purposes only.

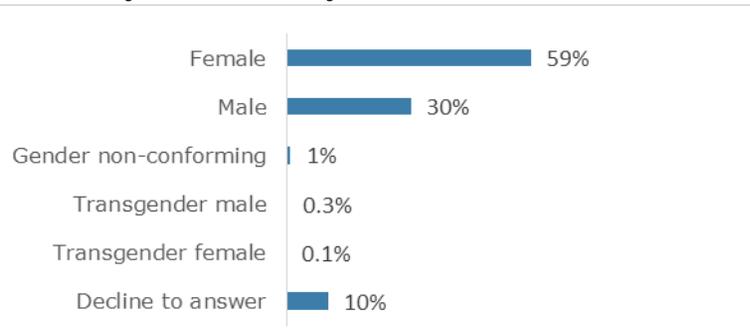
For each department, the percentage of employees who participated in the survey was generally similar to that department’s percentage of the County workforce.



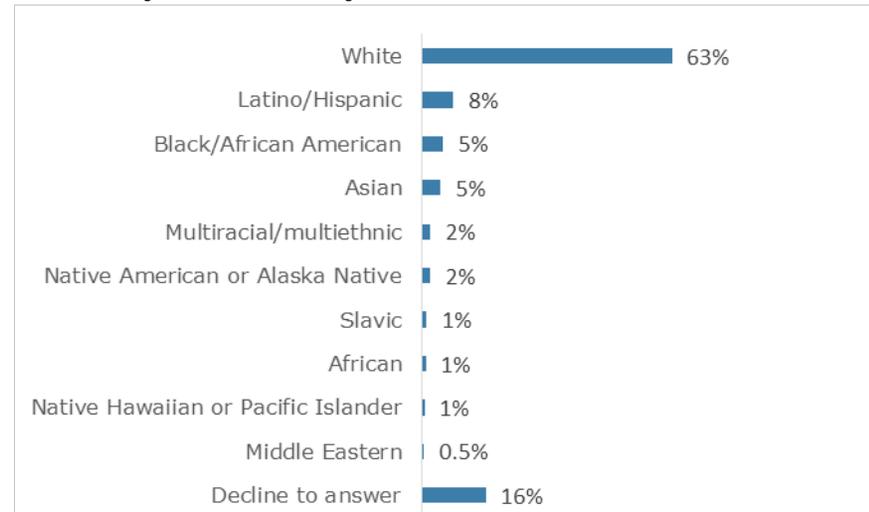
When we excluded those who declined to answer a particular demographic question, we found that the employee population that participated in the survey was also generally similar to the overall County workforce for gender identity, race/ethnicity, union status, tenure at the County, and age group.

SAP does not include the same categories for gender identity or race/ethnicity that we used in the survey. We included more categories, opting for the ones Central HR used in the most recent employee survey. But we found that people who participated in the survey selected categories that were in both the survey and in SAP at roughly similar rates. For example, people participating in the survey selected female or male as their gender identity at roughly the same percentage as those whose SAP gender identification is female or male.

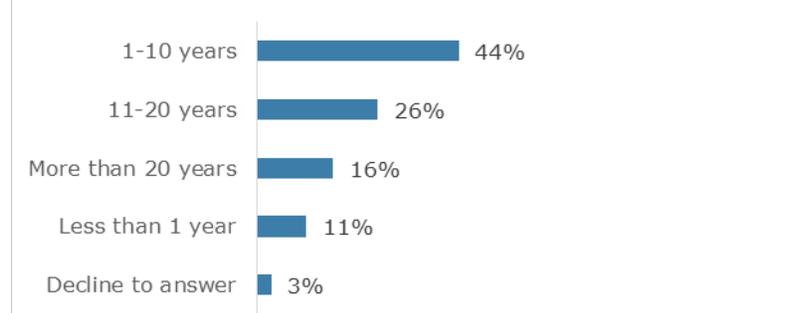
Most survey takers said they were female.



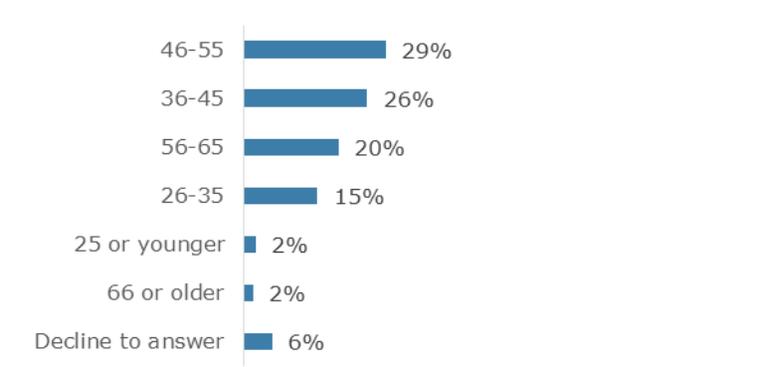
Most survey takers said they were white.



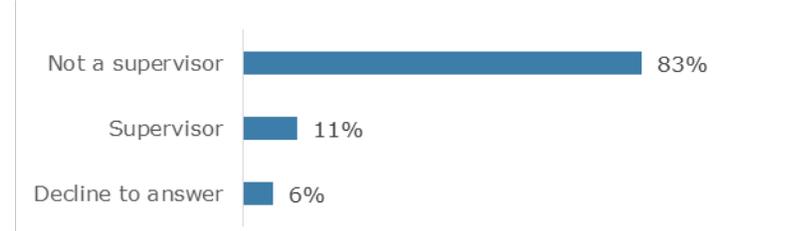
Most survey takers said they have worked at the County for 1-10 years.



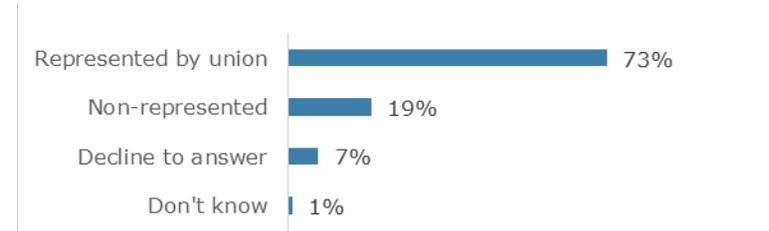
Most survey takers said they were aged 46-55.



Most survey takers said they were not supervisors.



Most survey takers said they were represented by a union.



Methodology

To obtain information on County employee perceptions of the County’s ethical culture, we developed a survey instrument based on well-established surveys from the Institute for Local Government and International City/County Management Association, among others. We also developed scenario questions based on the County’s ethics eLearning module. We reviewed the survey with the County Attorney’s office and tested the survey with County employees who work in different County departments and who work at different locations. We revised the survey based on feedback.

We issued the survey to all County employees on November 29, 2016 using Google Forms. Some employees in the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office told us they had trouble accessing the survey, and we worked with the MCSO IT Office to provide survey access. We downloaded survey responses from Google Forms for analysis, and conducted the majority of analyses in Excel. To encourage participation, we made the survey anonymous and did not obtain respondent emails. We also publicized the survey in the Wednesday Wire and sent out a reminder email to all County employees. We mitigated the risk that someone could take the survey more than once by carefully reviewing the survey data and aggregating data to minimize the risk of skewed results. We closed the survey at the end of the day on December 16, 2016.

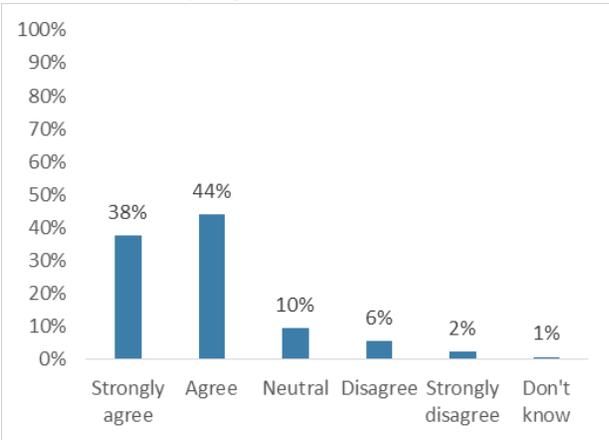
Where we compared the demographics of survey respondents to the County workforce, we used data from SAP reports for the day we issued the survey. Based on the annual review of SAP datasets by the County's external auditor, our office has determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

We conducted this project in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the project to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our objectives. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions.

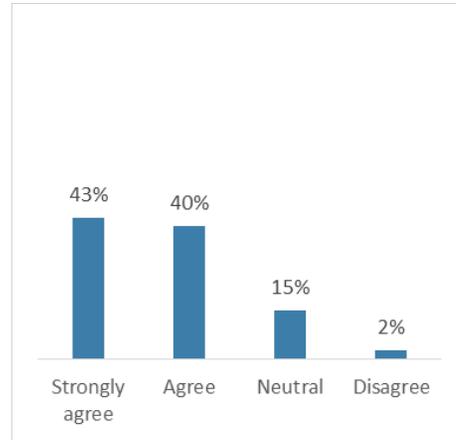
Appendix B: Results for Ethical Culture Survey Statements

I feel like the County's expectations for ethical behavior are clear.

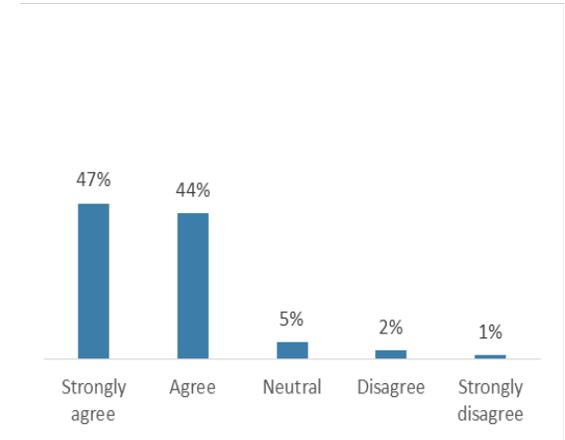
All employees



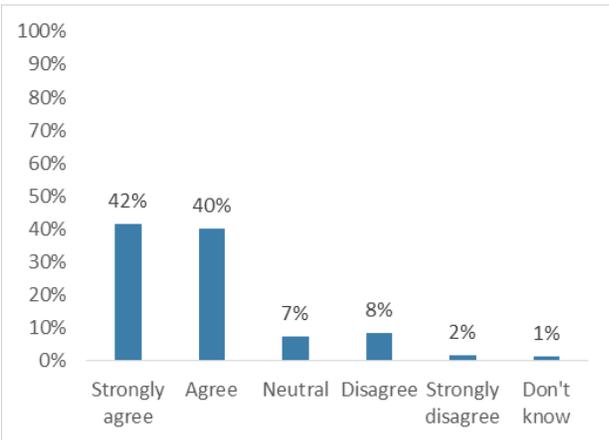
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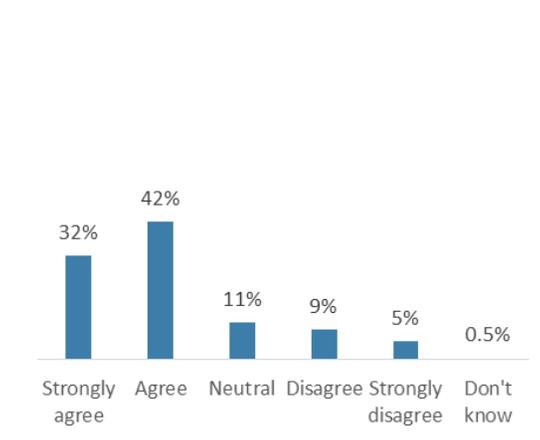
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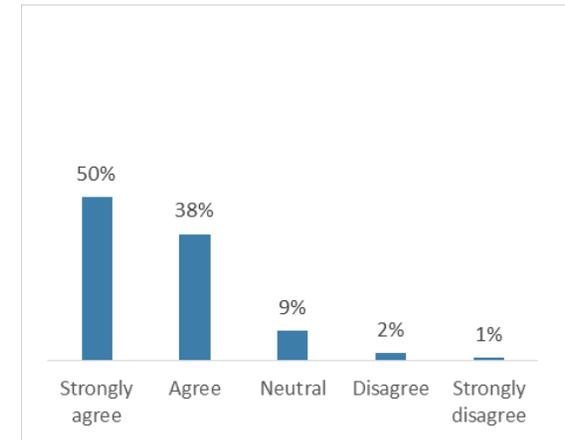
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DCJ

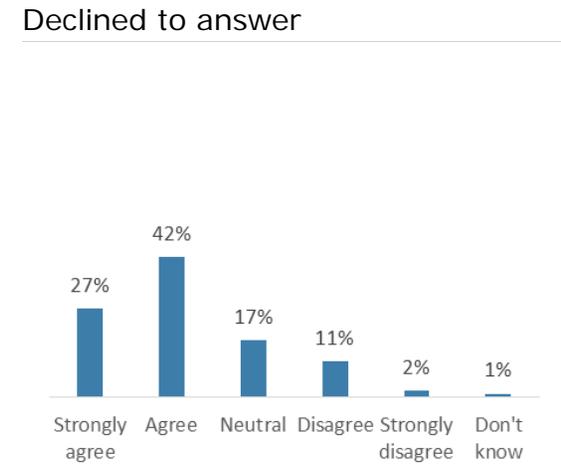
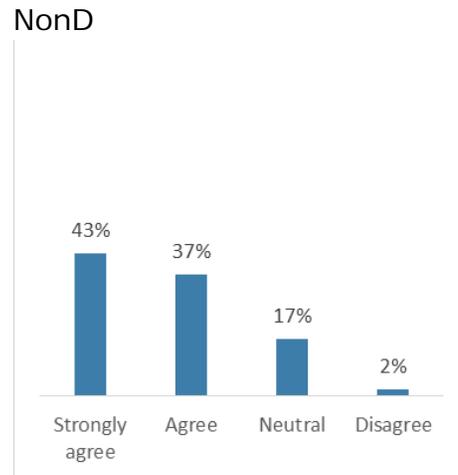
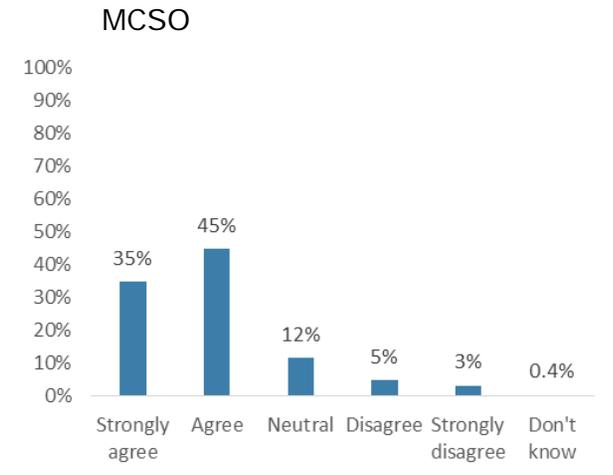
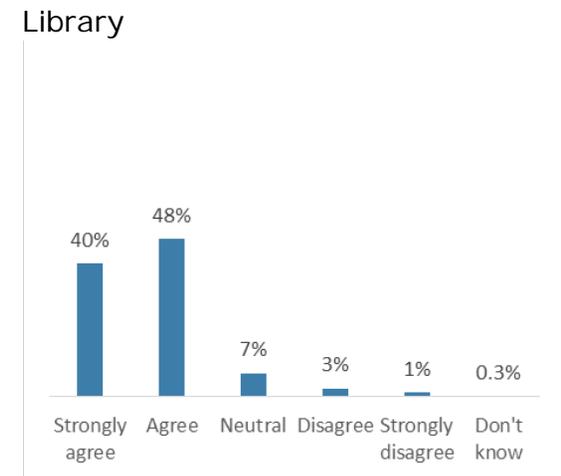
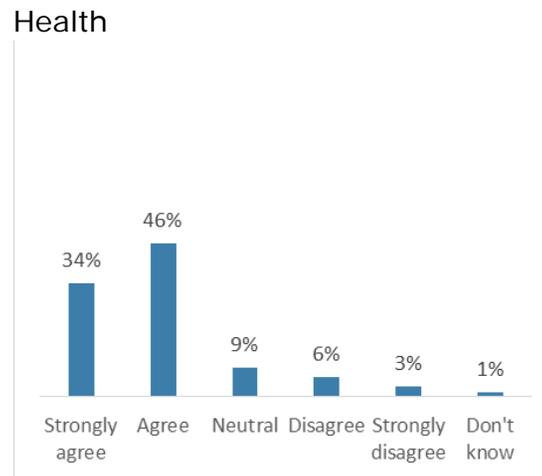
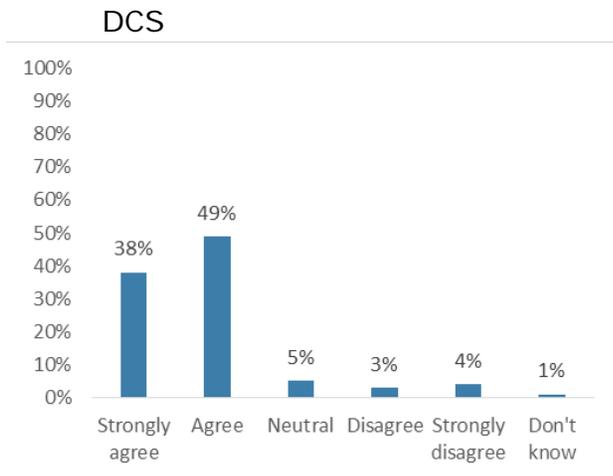


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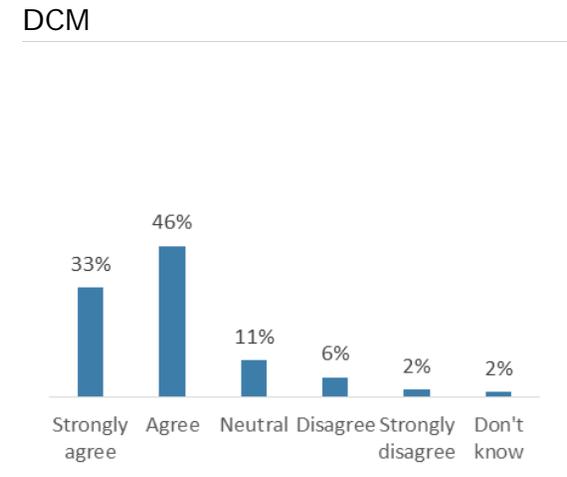
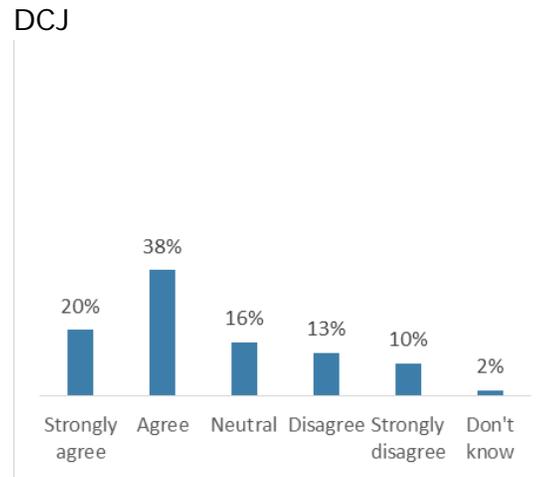
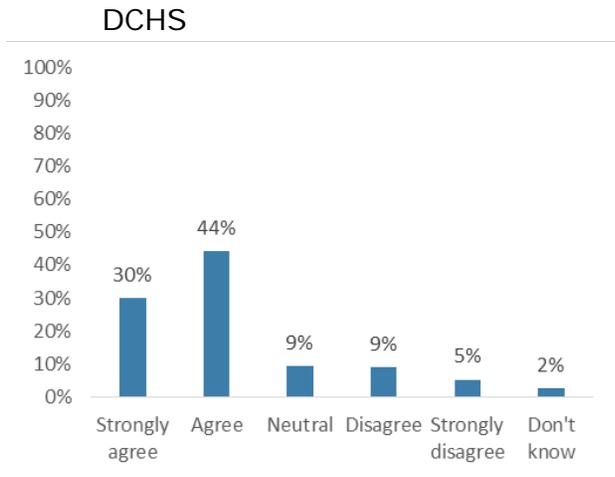
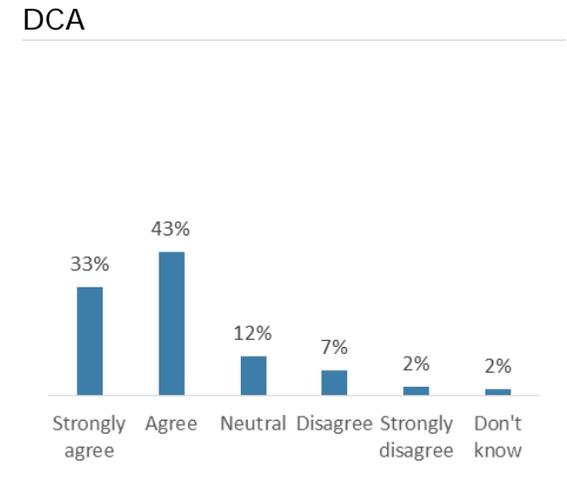
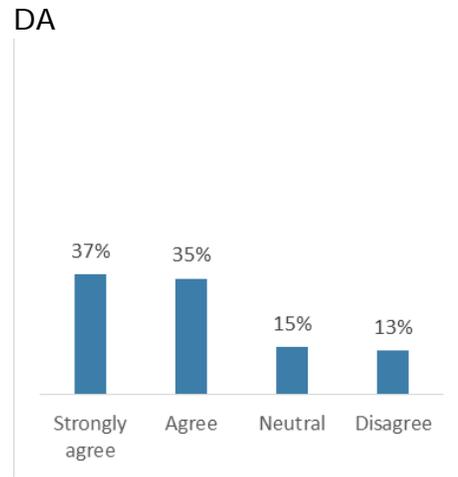
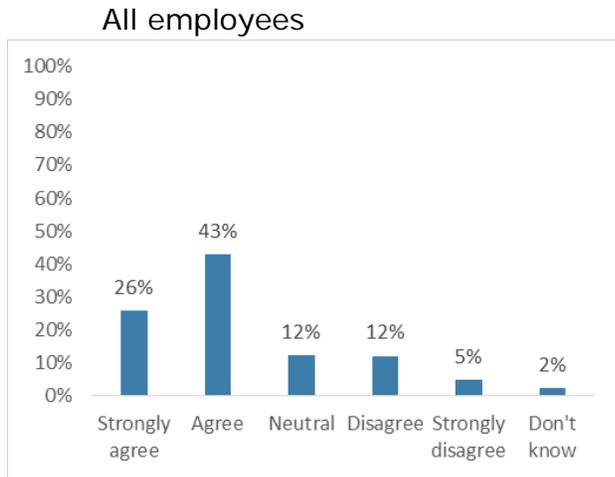
Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

I feel like the County's expectations for ethical behavior are clear.



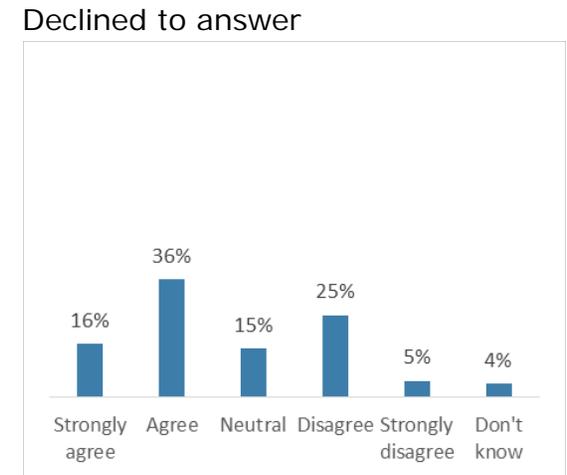
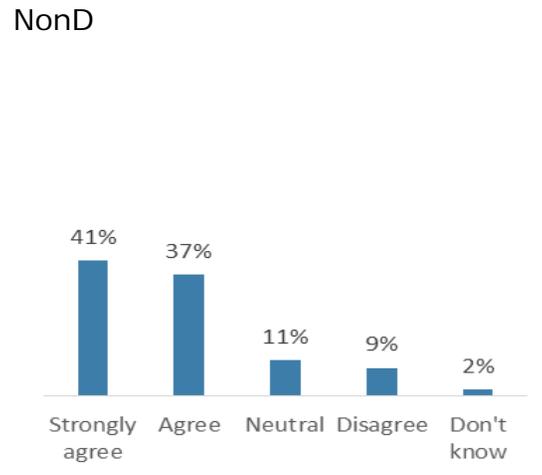
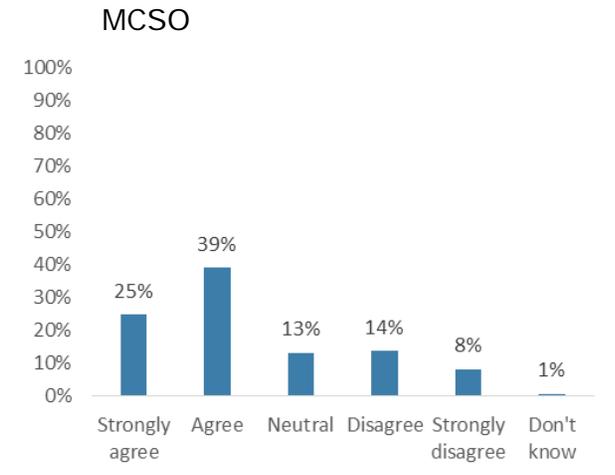
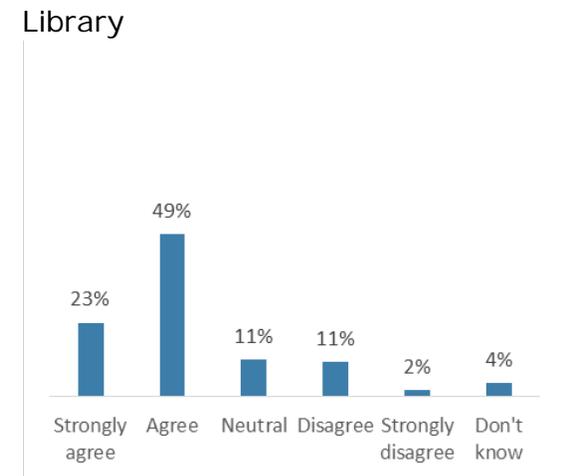
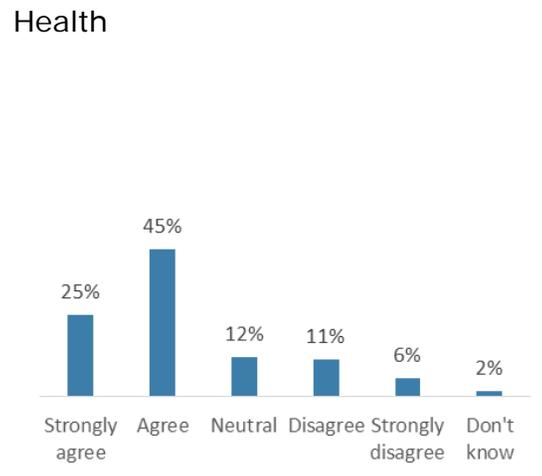
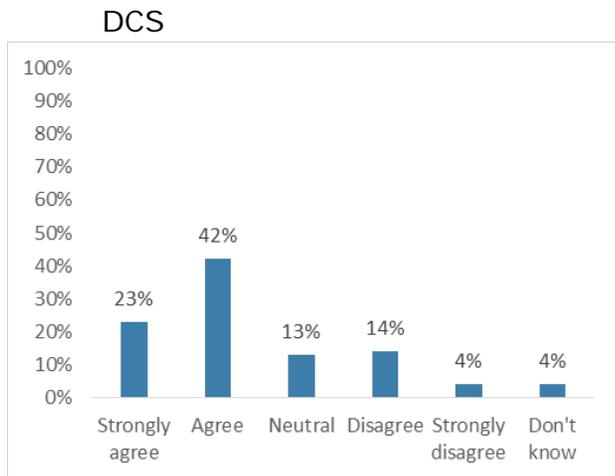
Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

I would feel comfortable reporting any County policies that are ethically questionable.



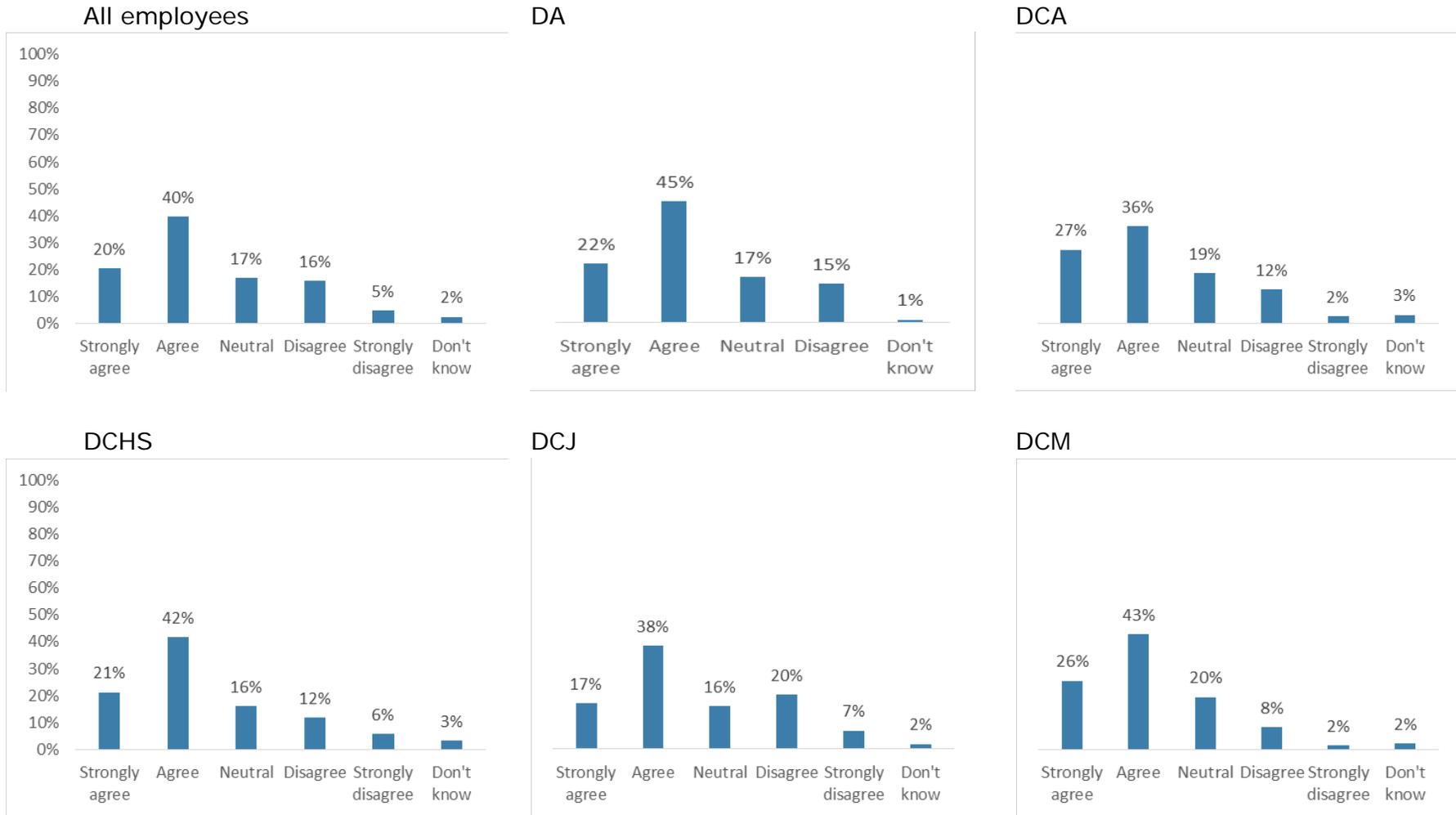
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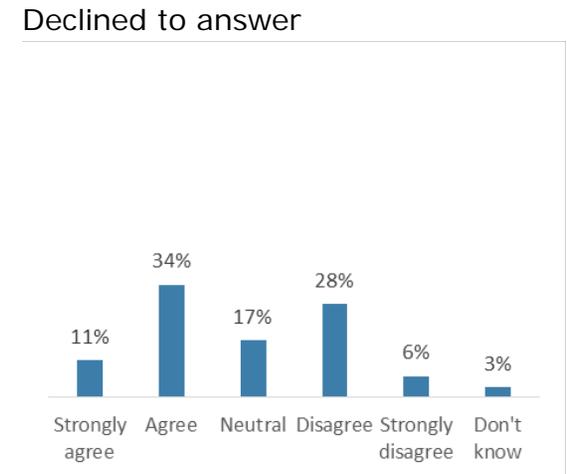
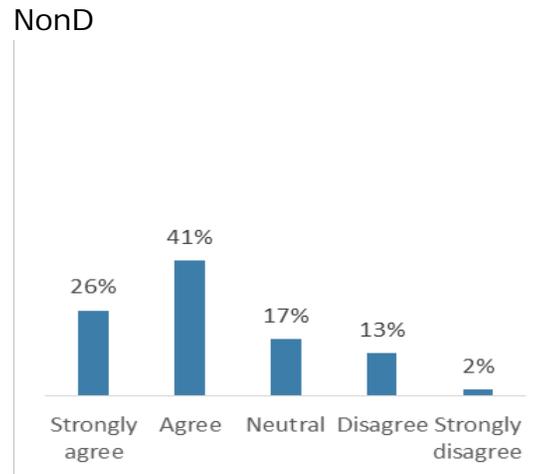
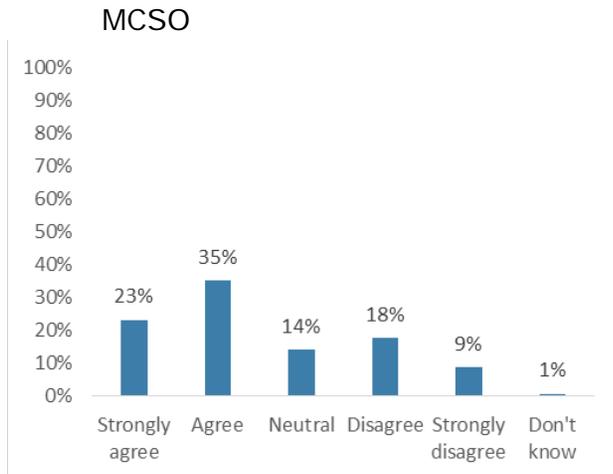
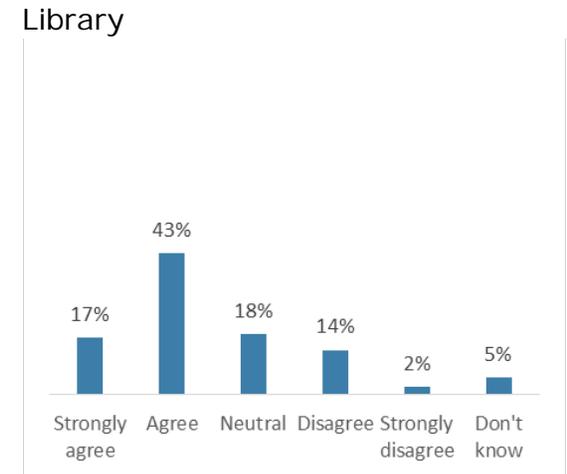
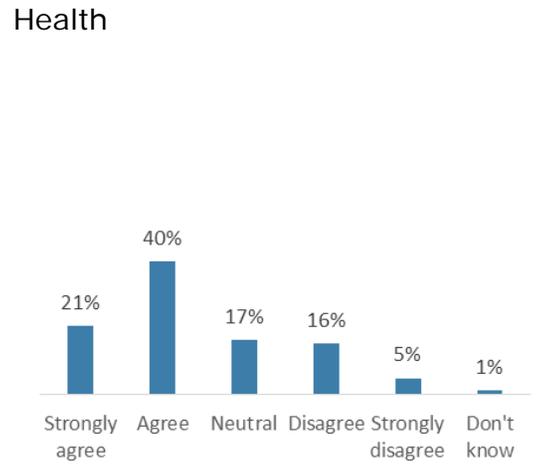
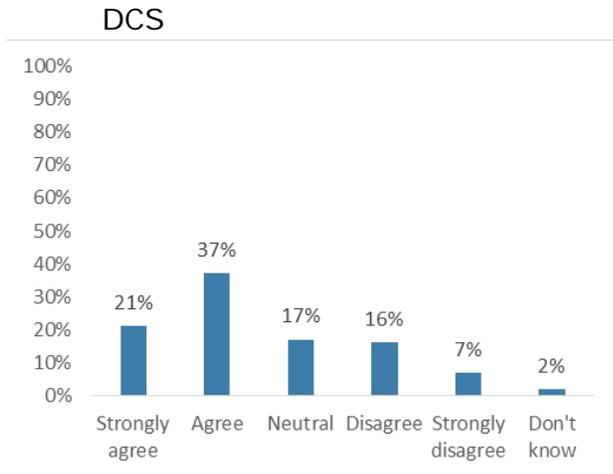
Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

I would be comfortable reporting a potential ethical violation by any County employee.



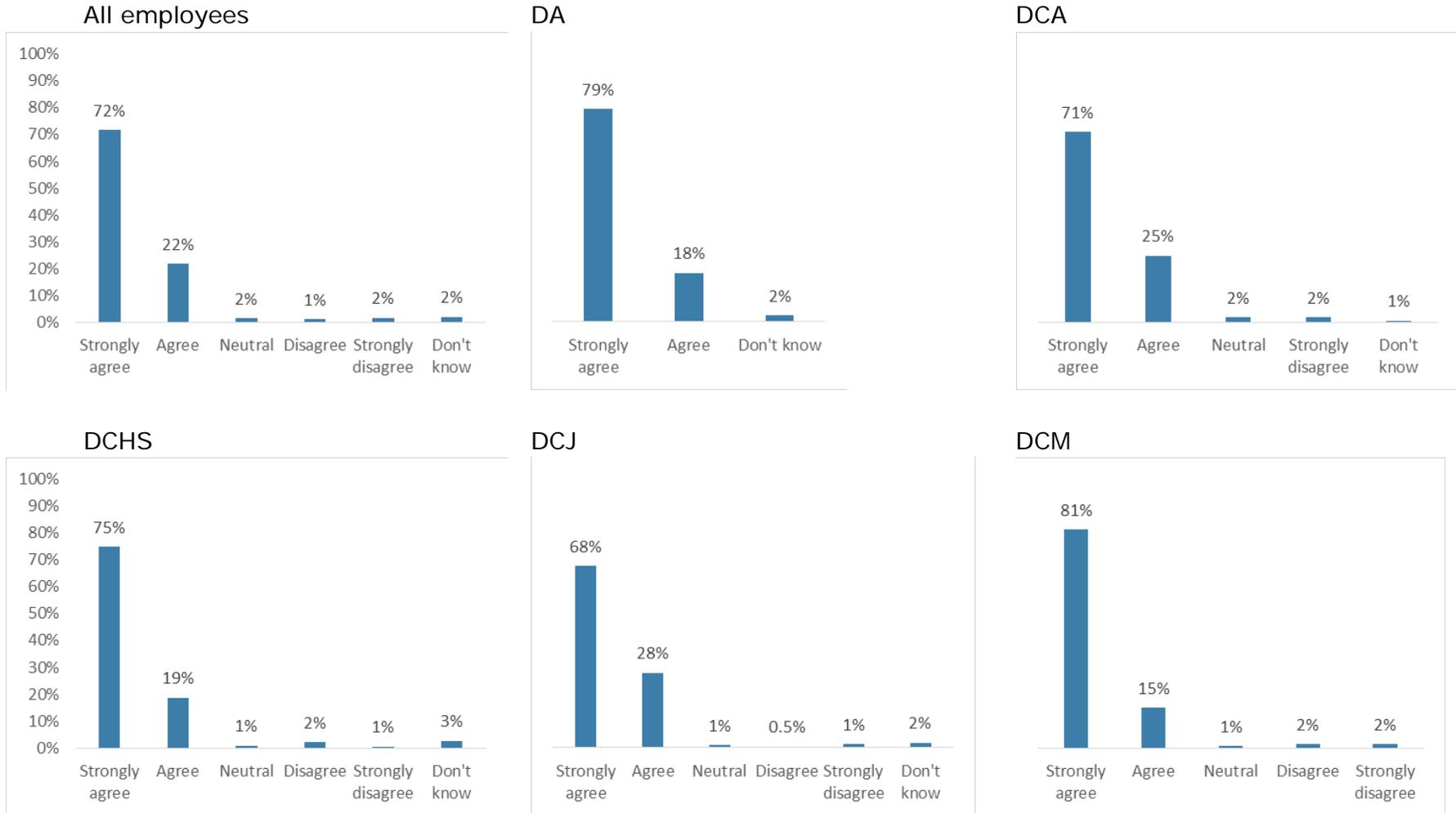
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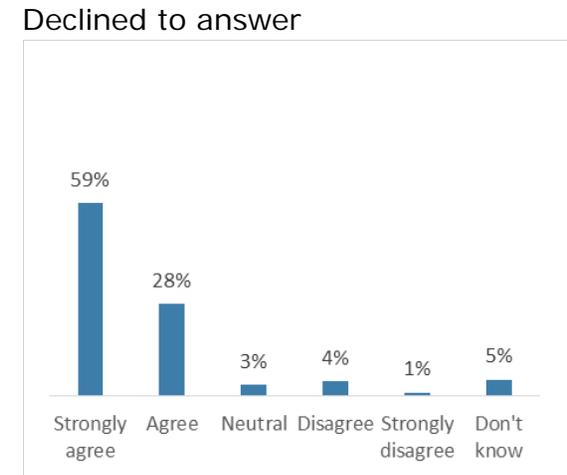
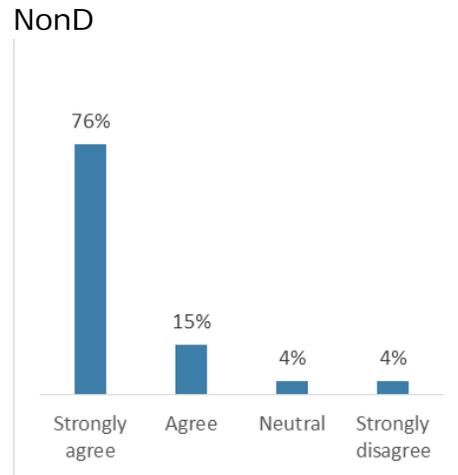
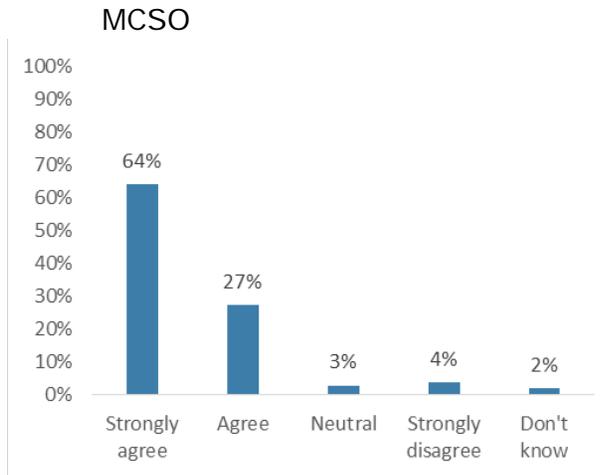
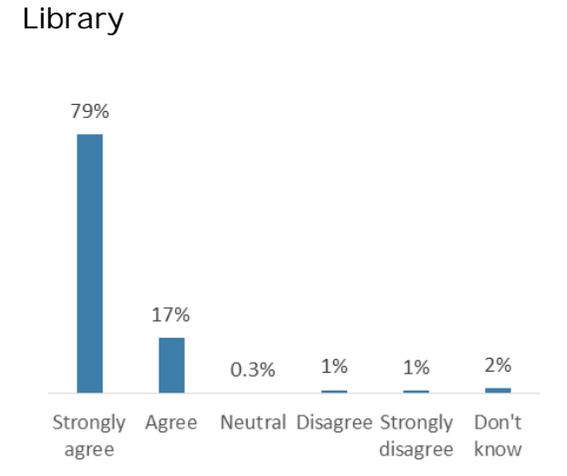
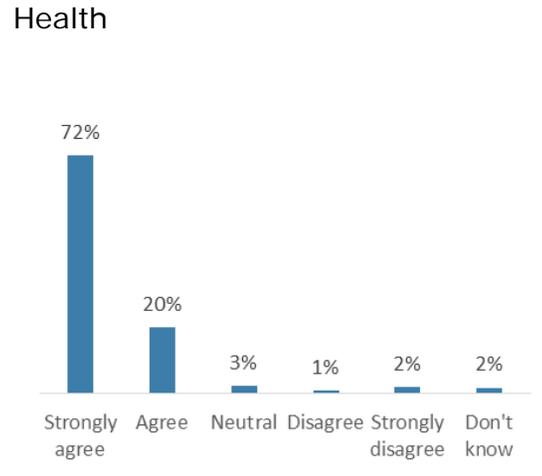
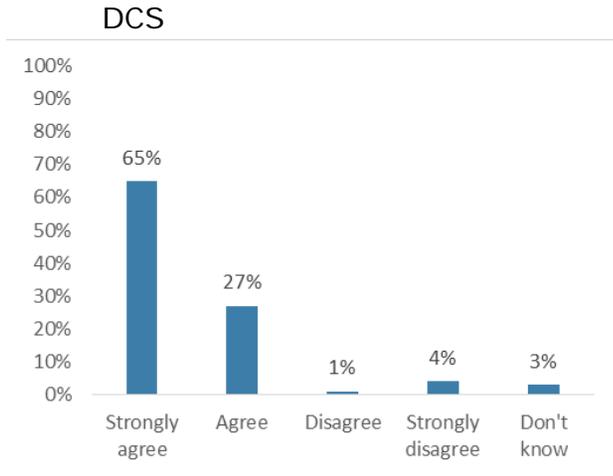
Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

I am expected to treat all members of the public equally, regardless of their personal or political connections.



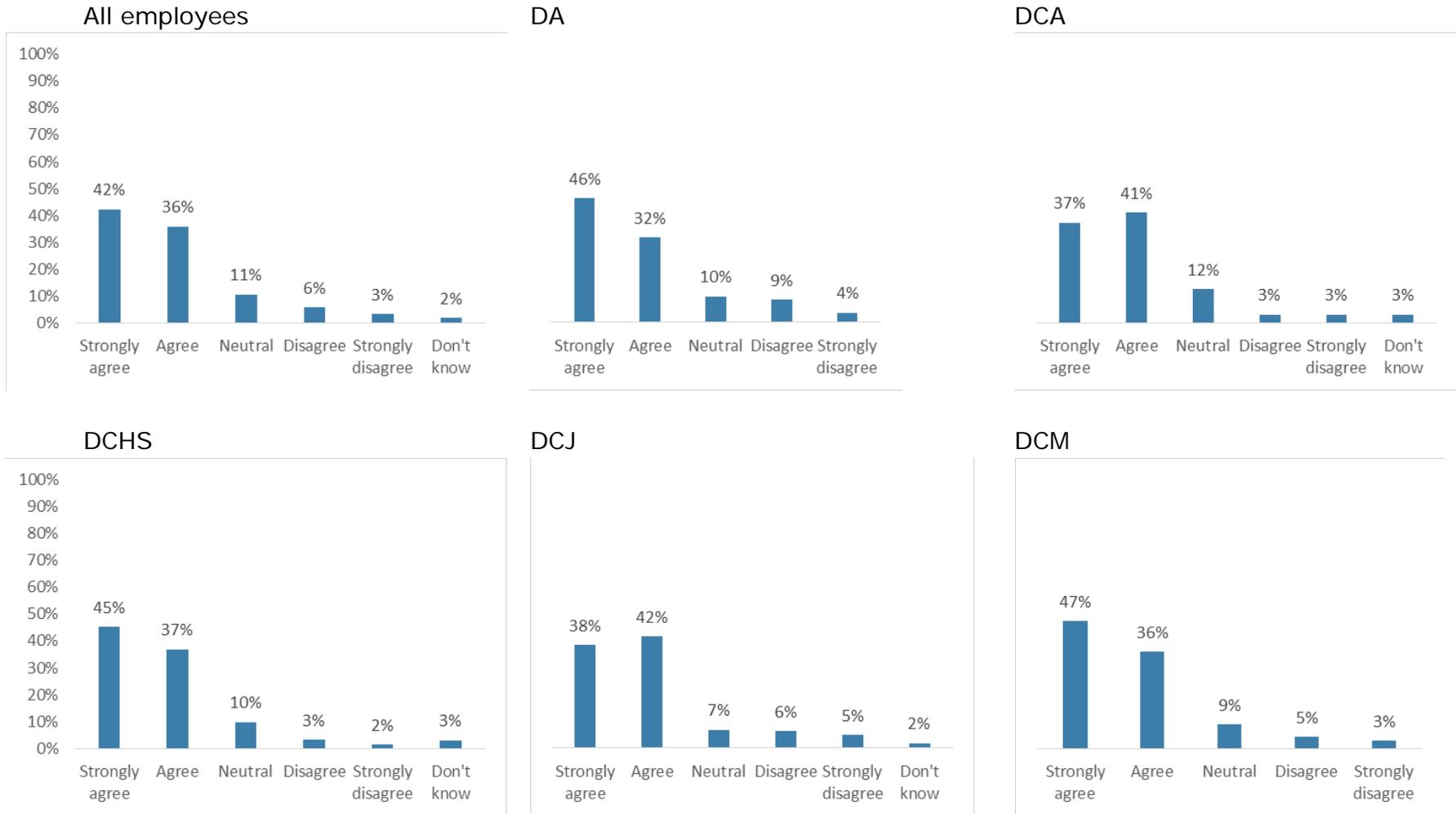
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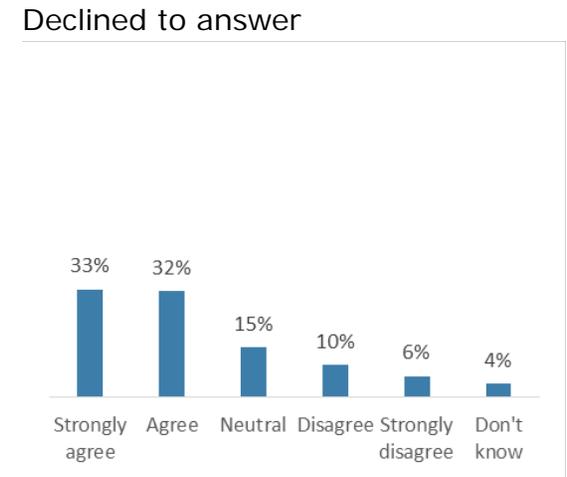
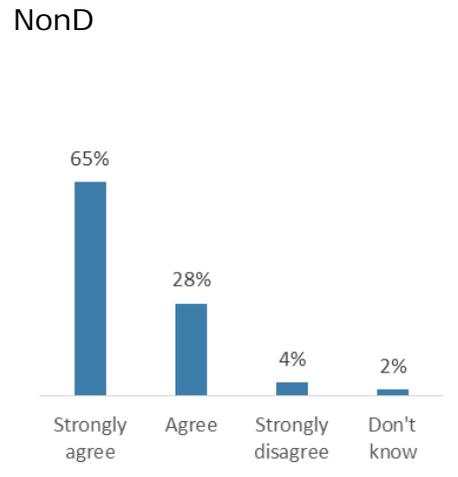
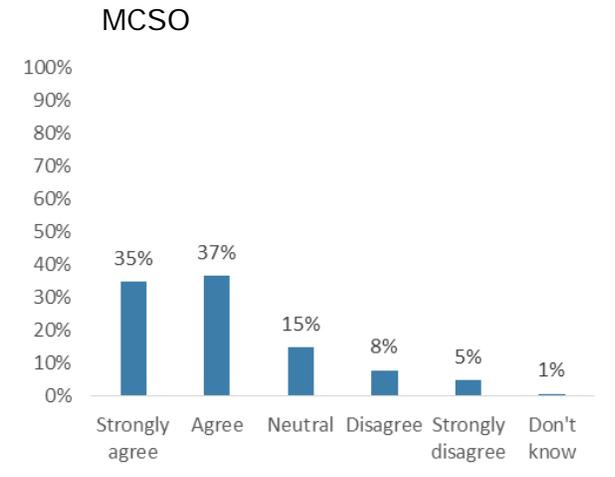
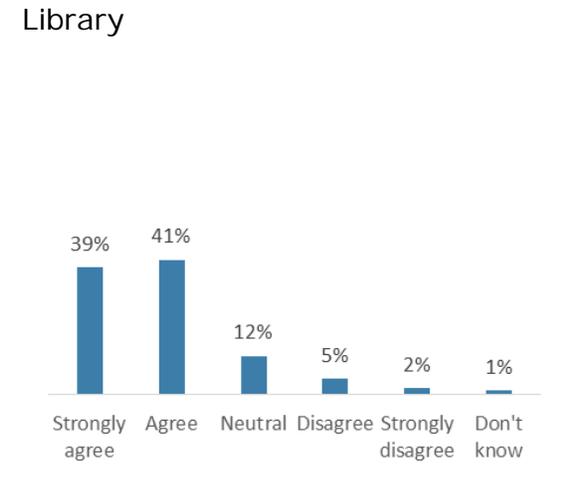
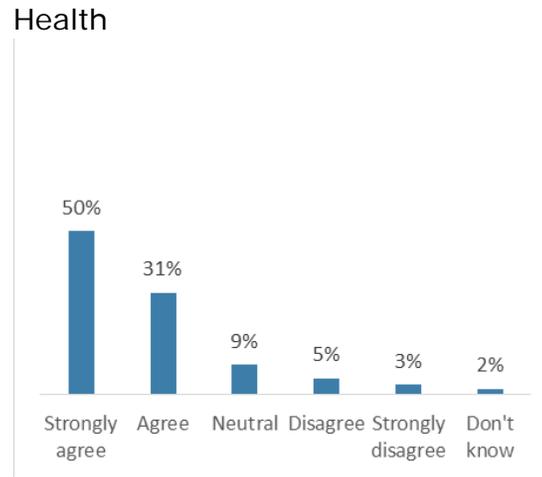
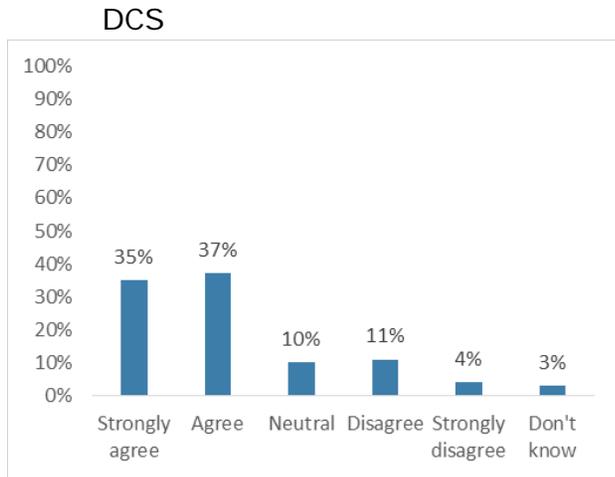
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I work with one or more trusted confidants with whom I can discuss ethical dilemmas at work.



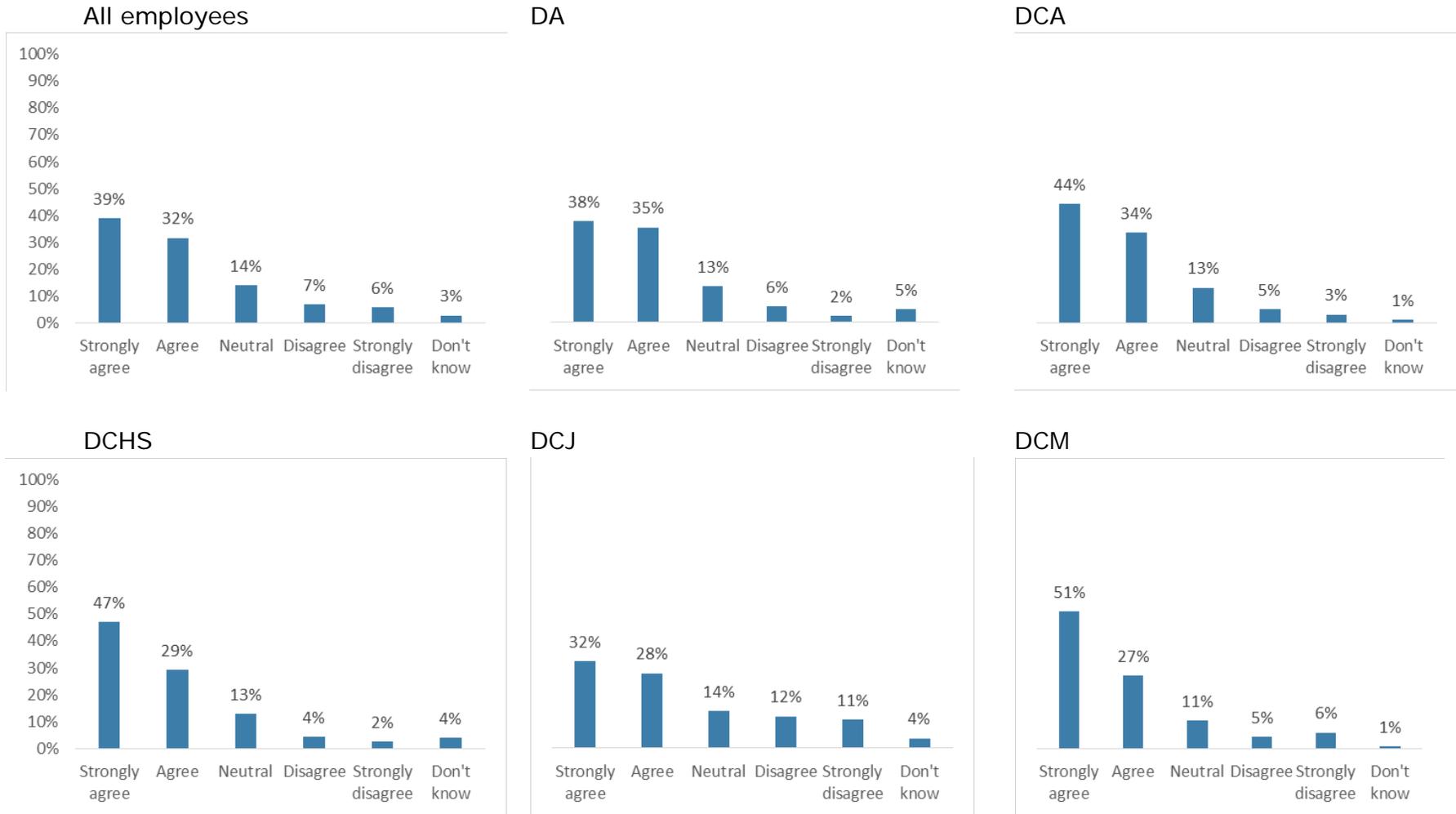
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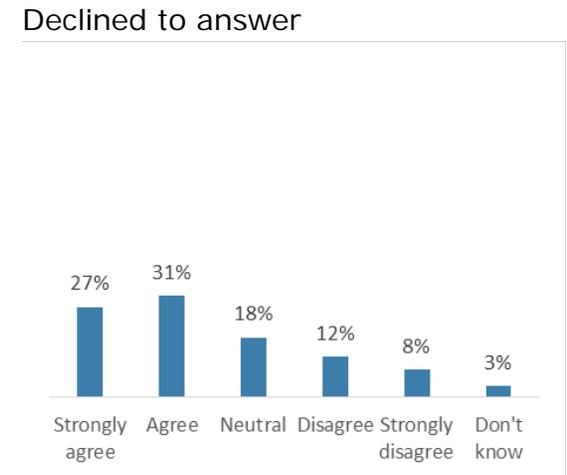
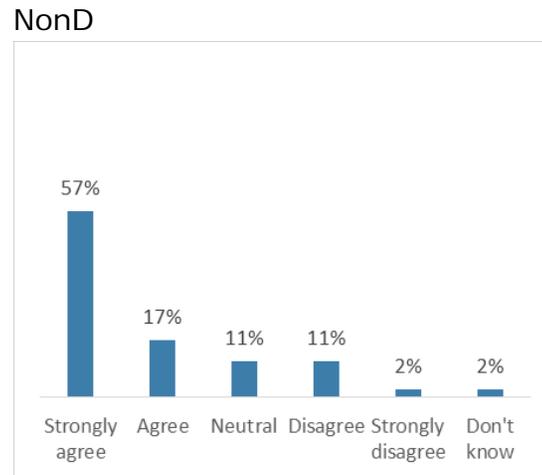
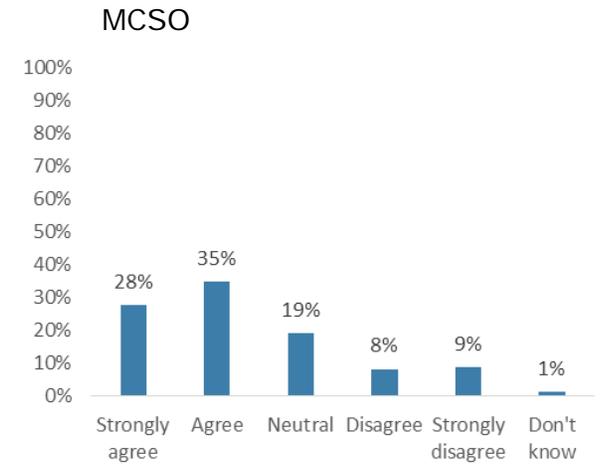
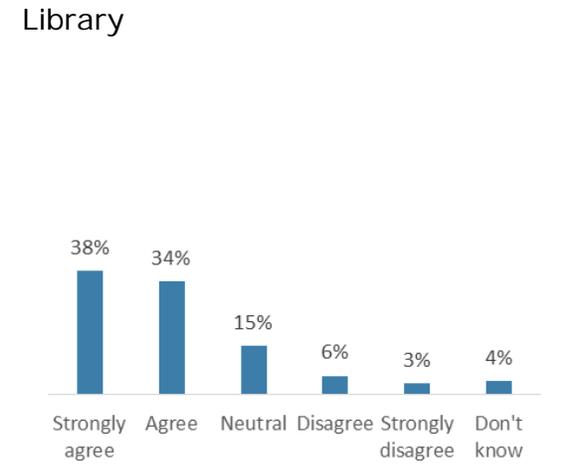
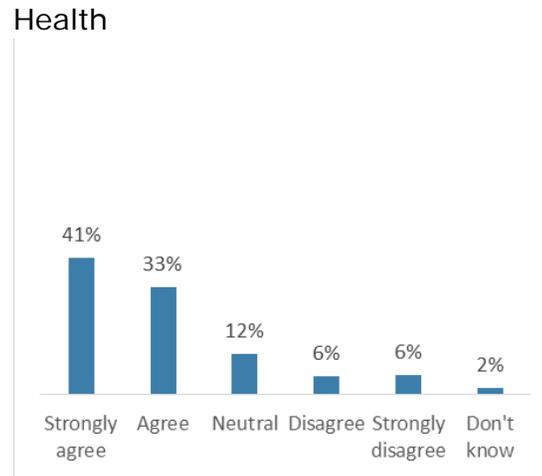
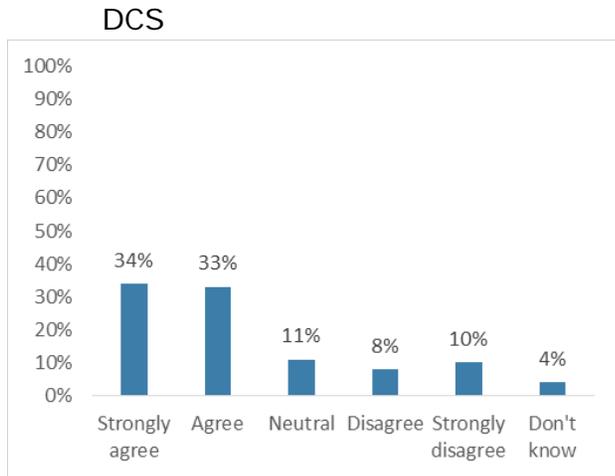
Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

My current supervisor creates an environment in which staff are comfortable raising ethical concerns.



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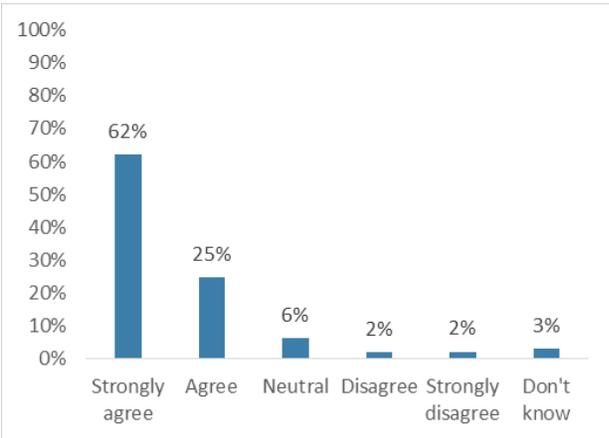
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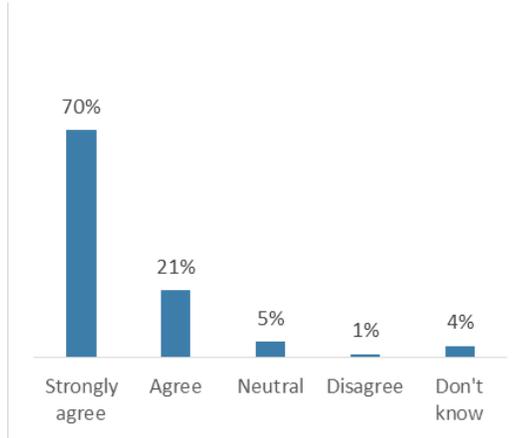
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My current supervisor does not ask me to do things that violate our ethical standards, policies, or the law.

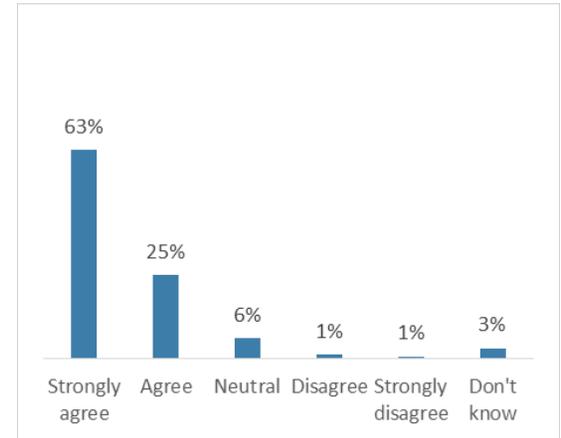
All employees



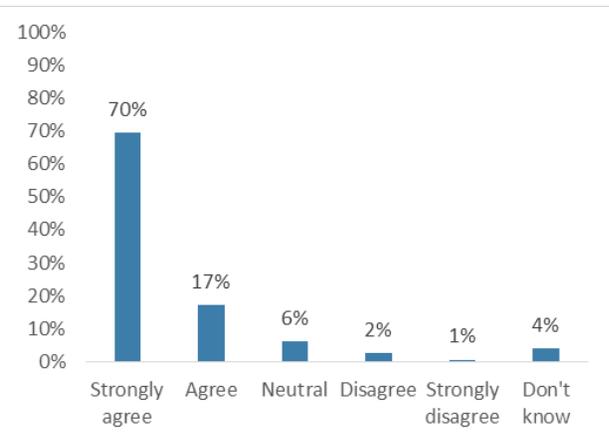
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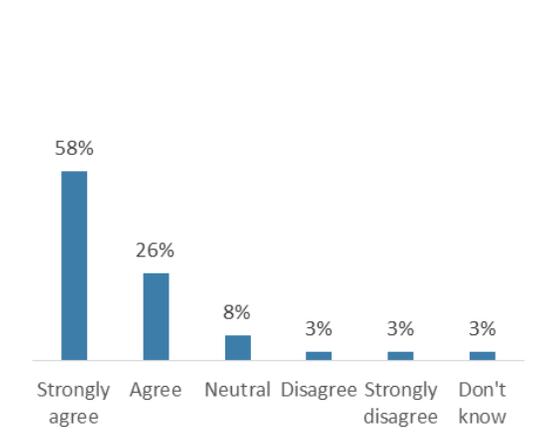
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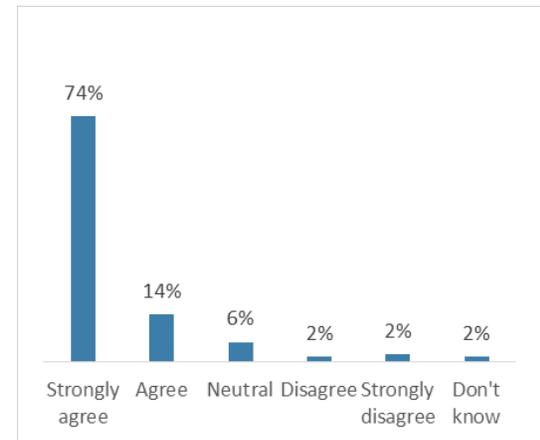
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DCJ

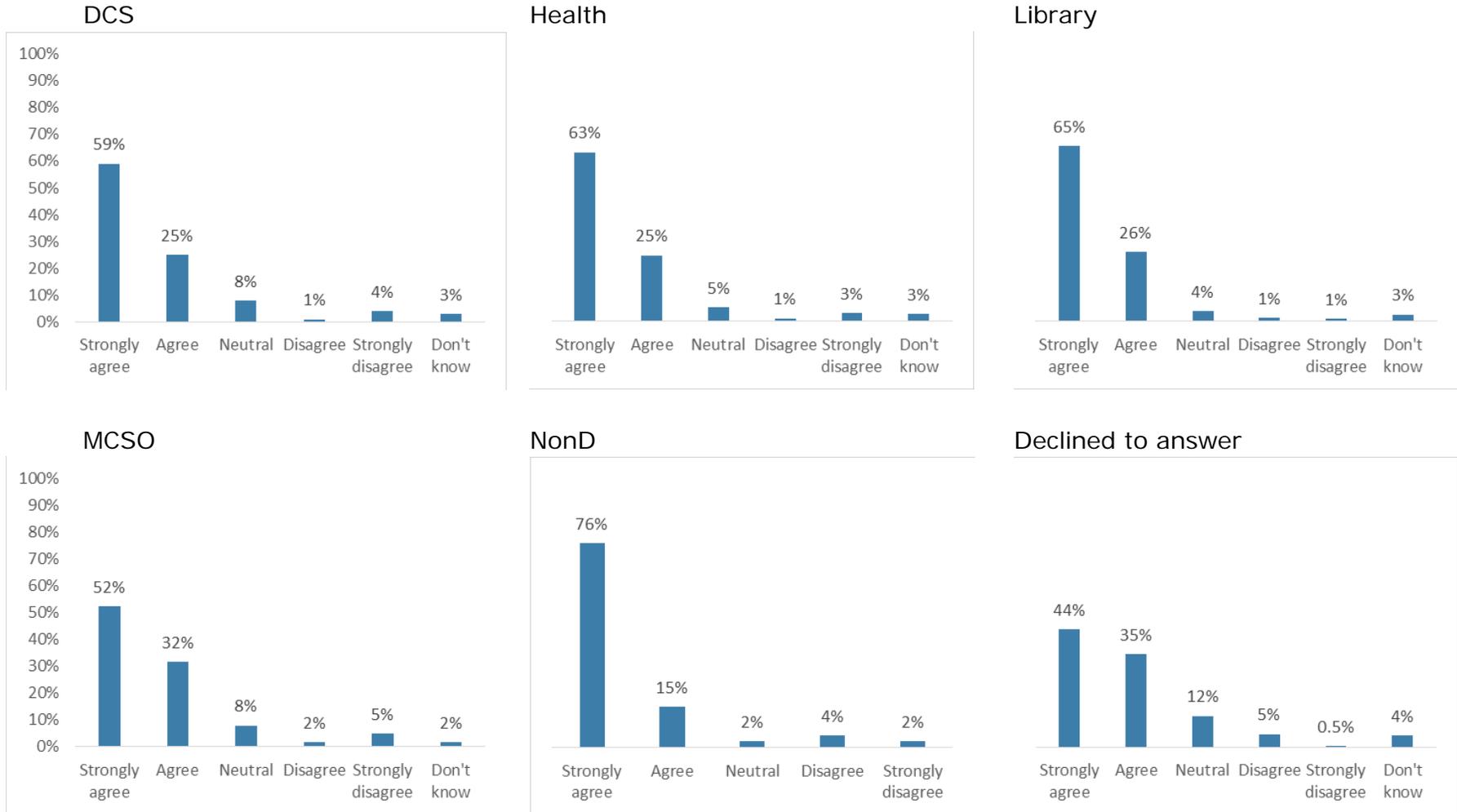


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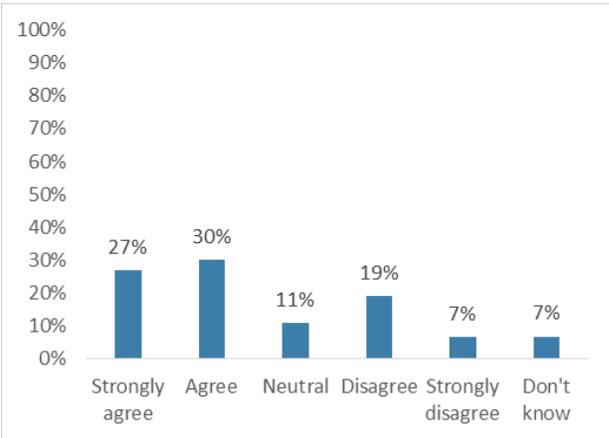
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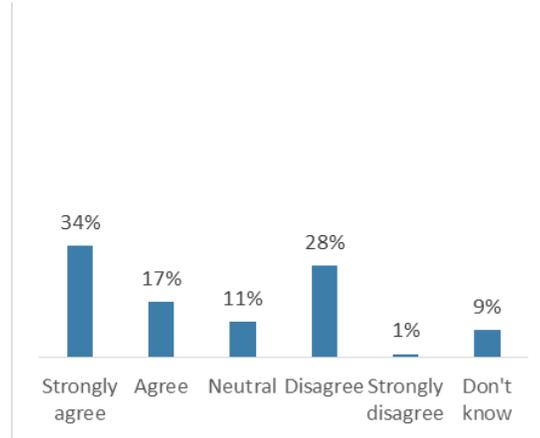
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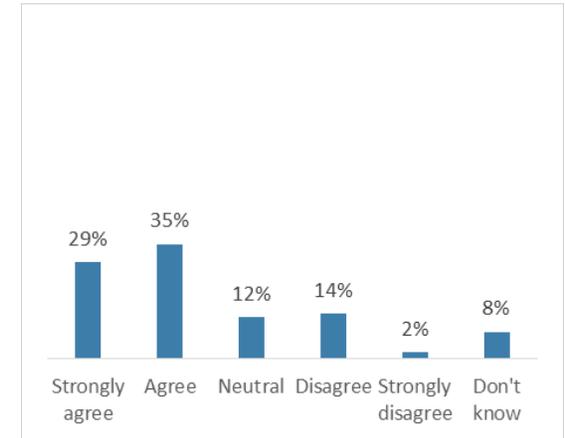
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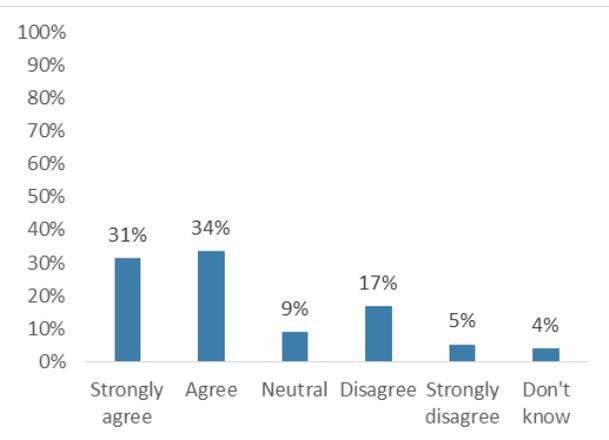
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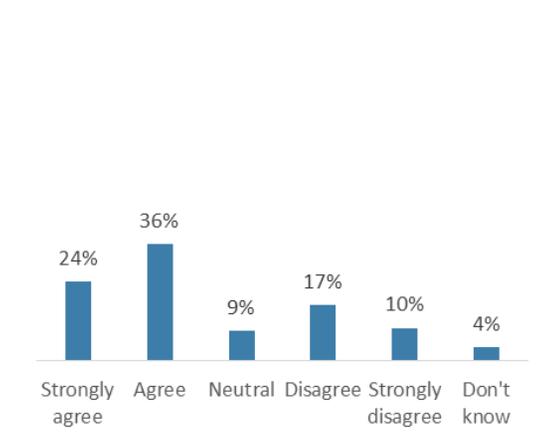
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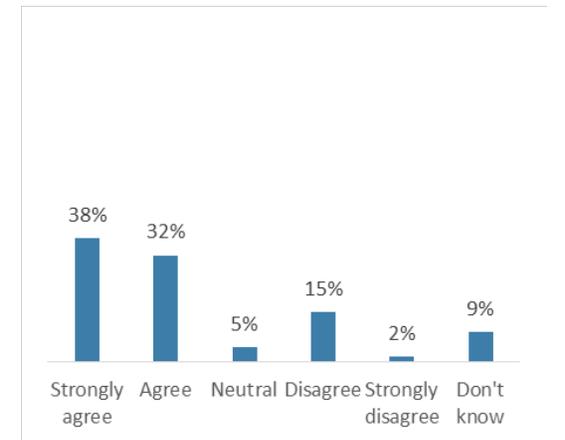
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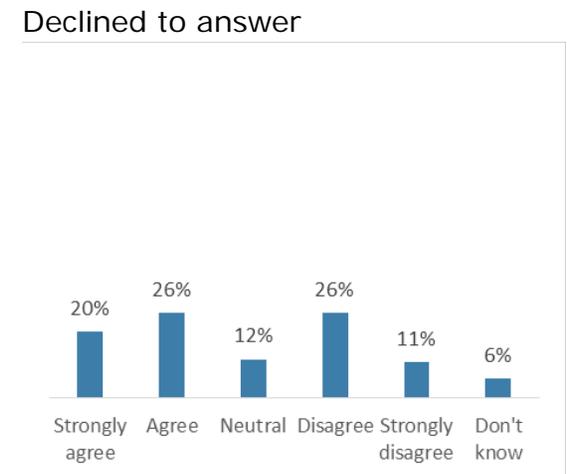
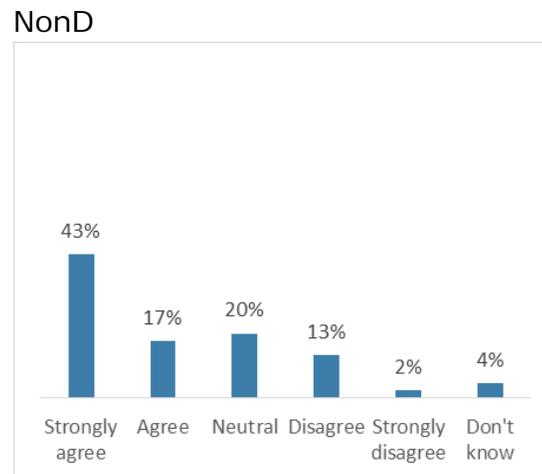
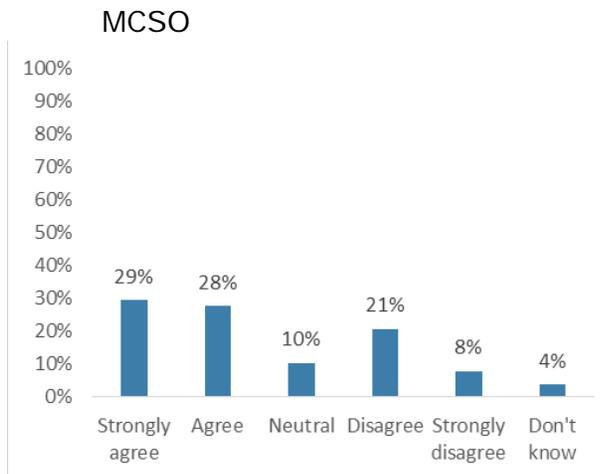
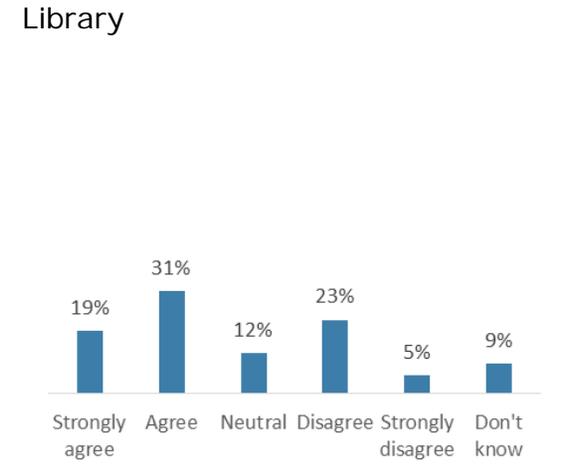
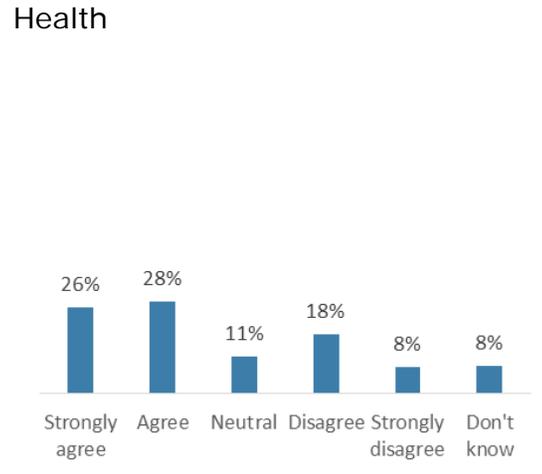
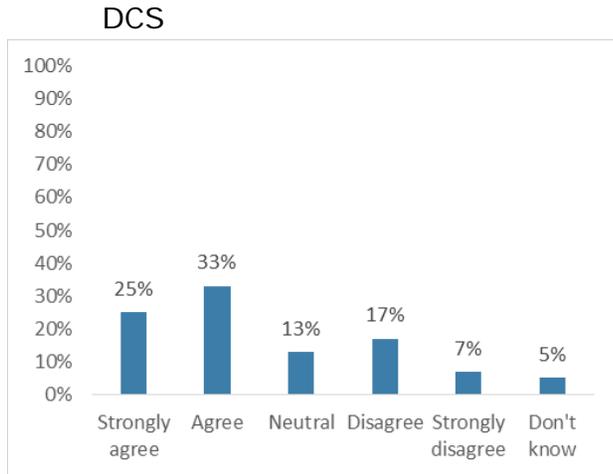


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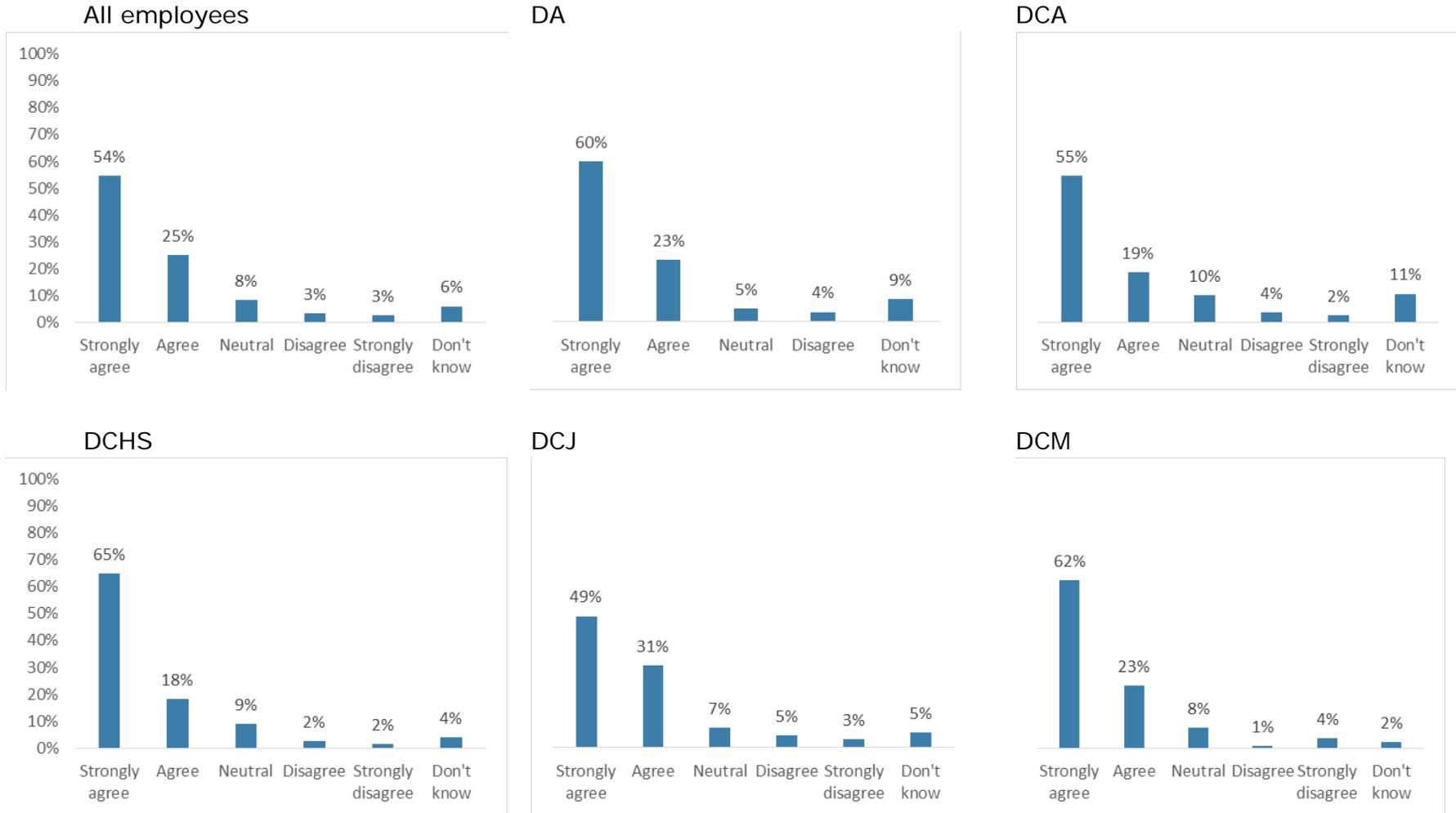
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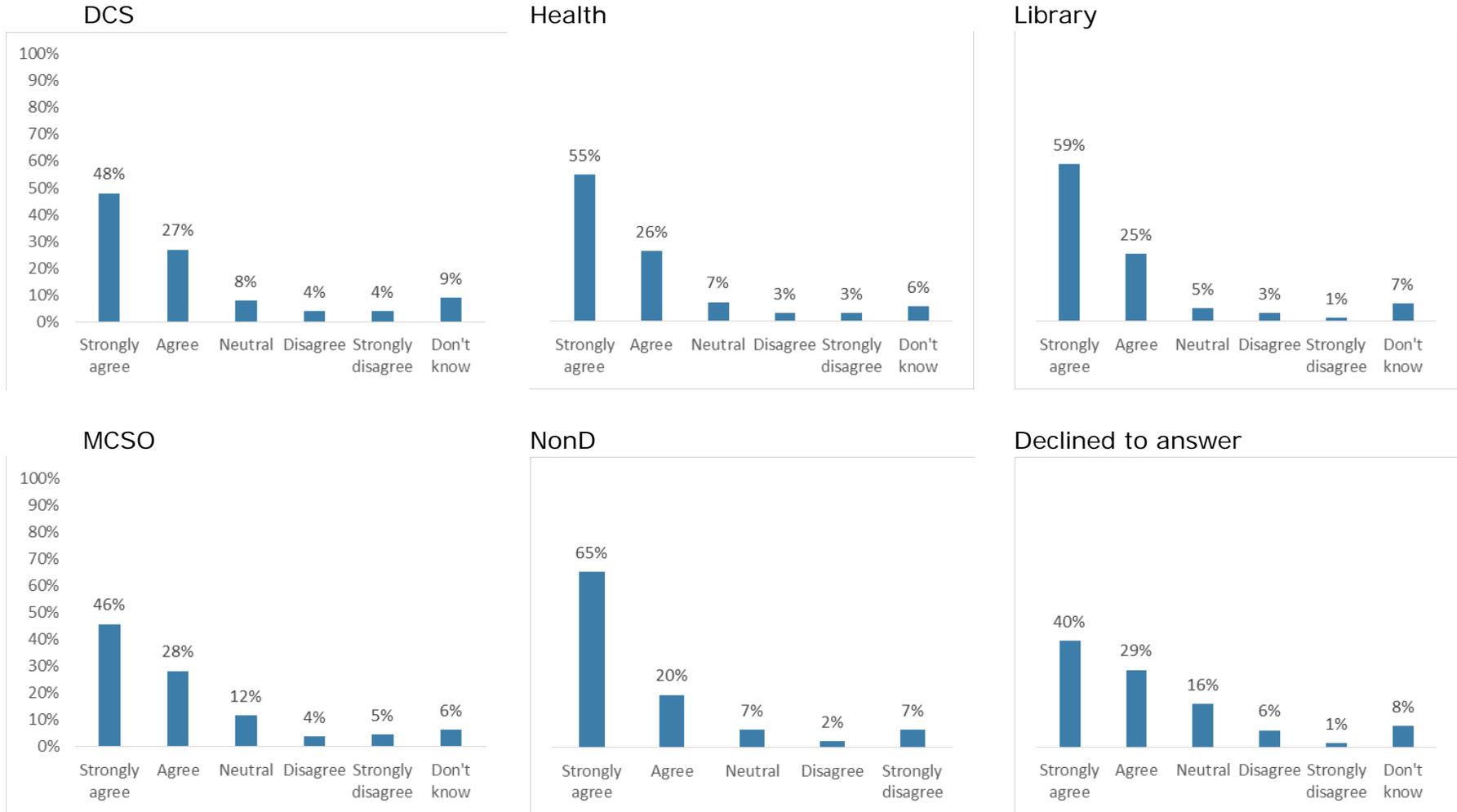
Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

My current supervisor treats all members of the public equally, regardless of their personal or political connections.



Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

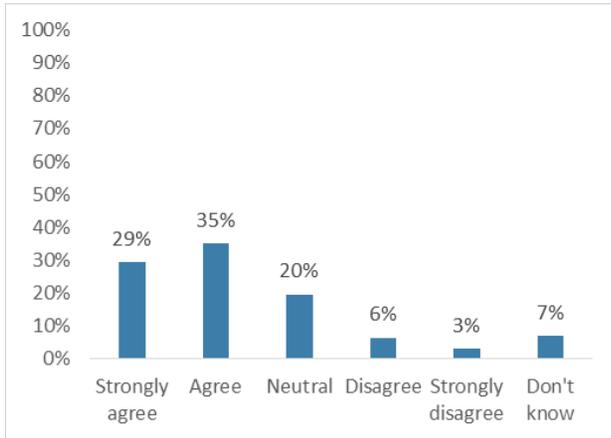
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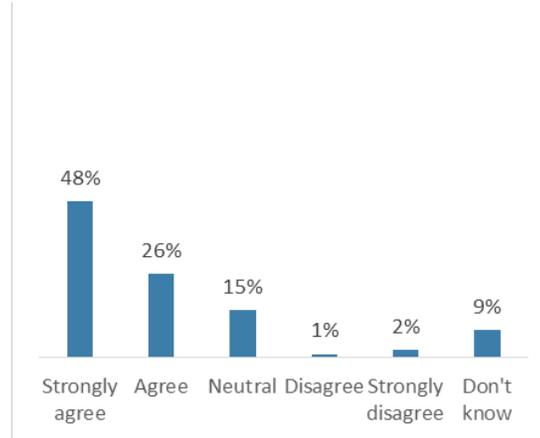
Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Our elected County officials communicate to County employees that they expect us to uphold high standards of ethical conduct.

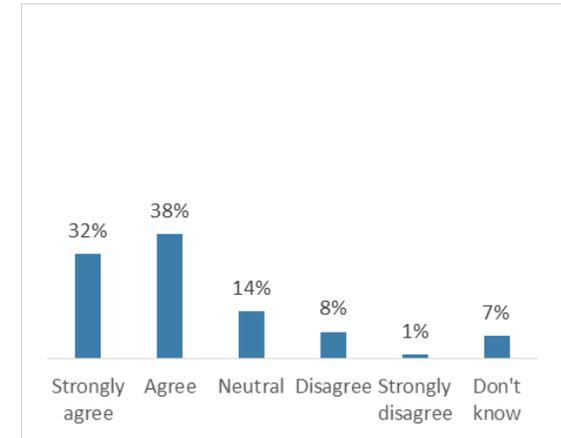
All employees



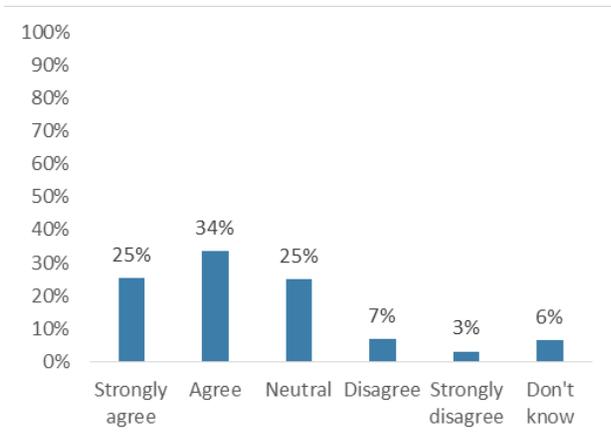
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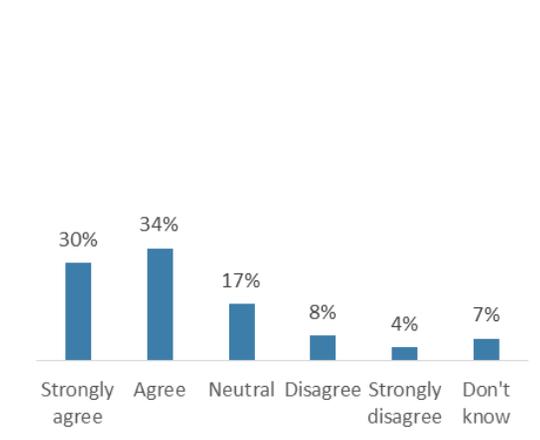
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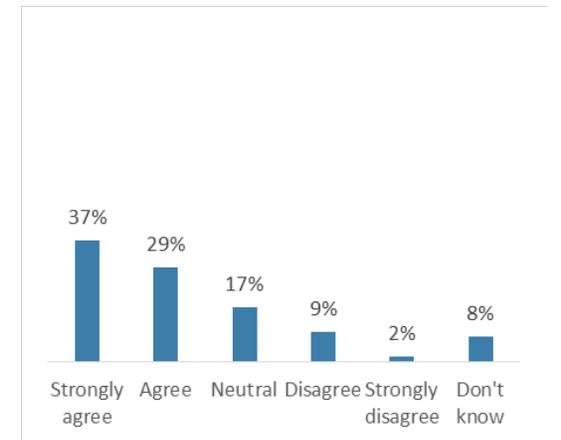
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DCJ

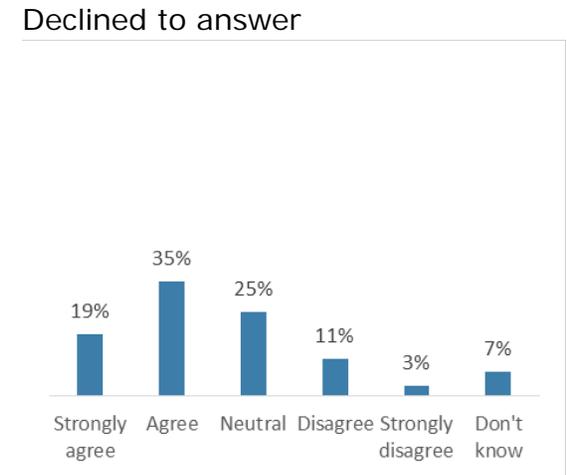
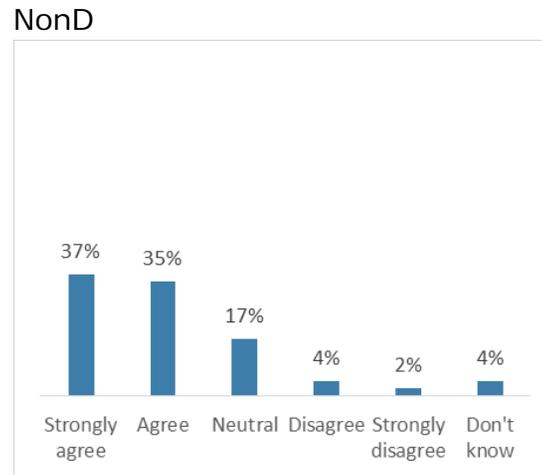
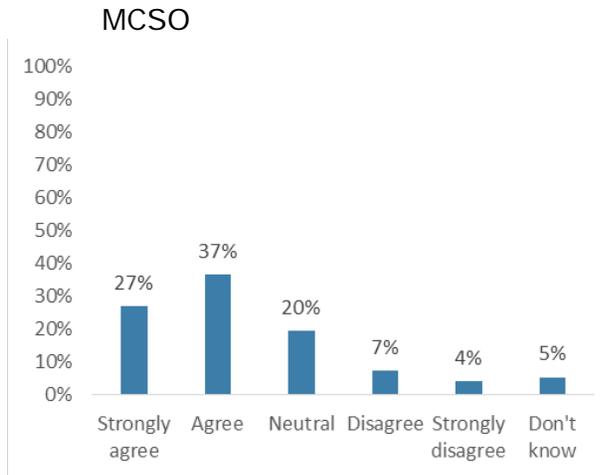
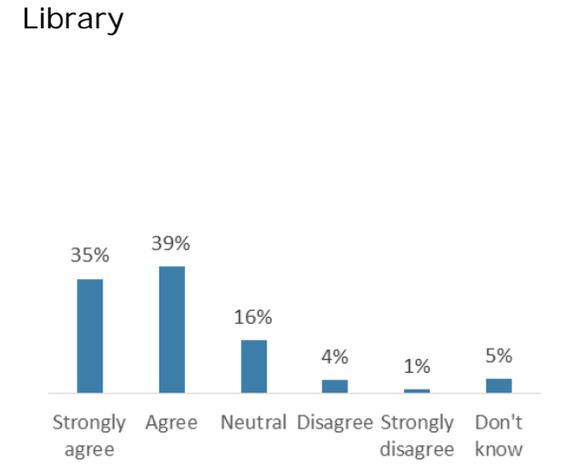
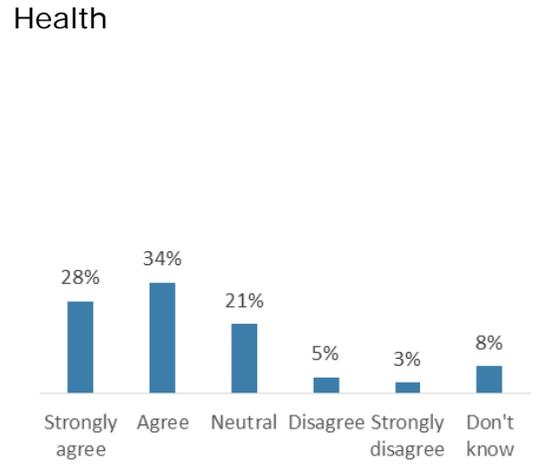
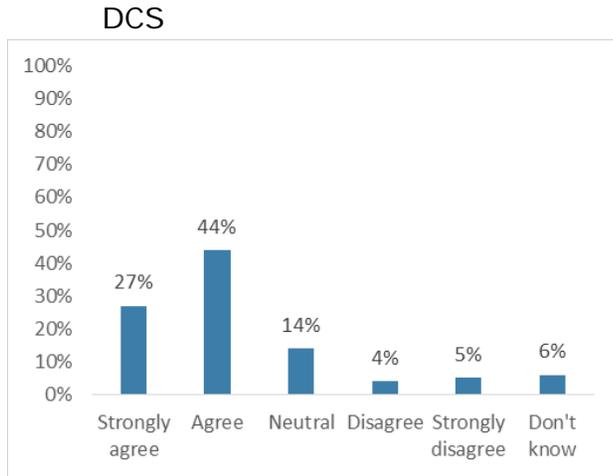


DCM



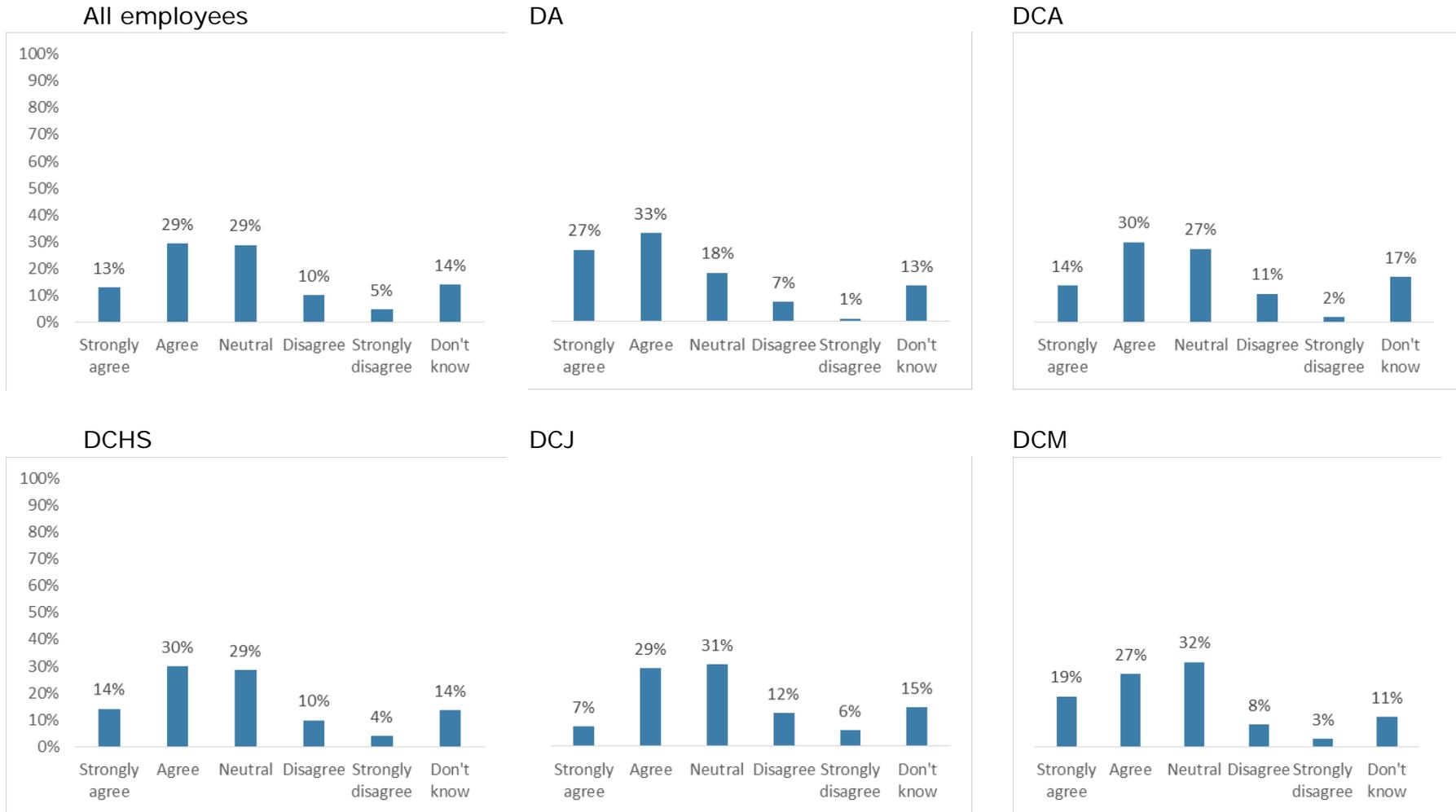
Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Our elected County officials communicate to County employees that they expect us to uphold high standards of ethical conduct.



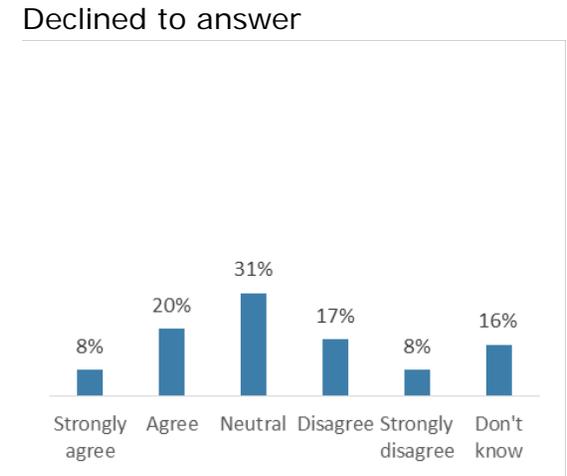
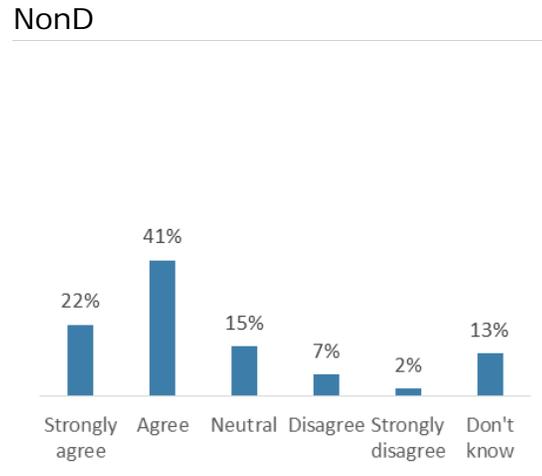
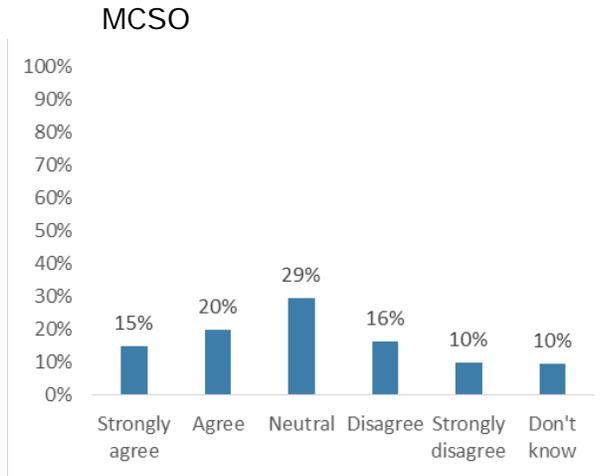
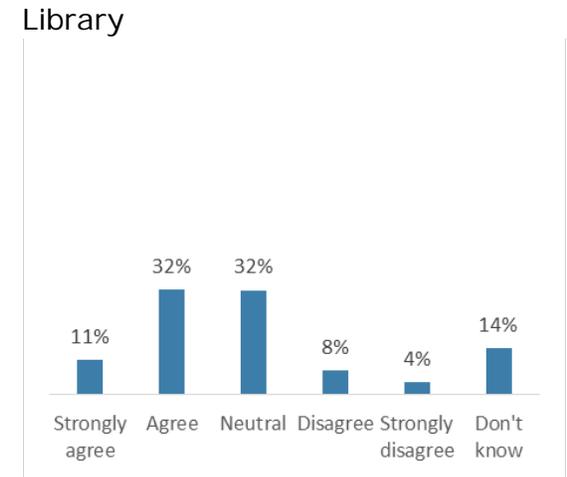
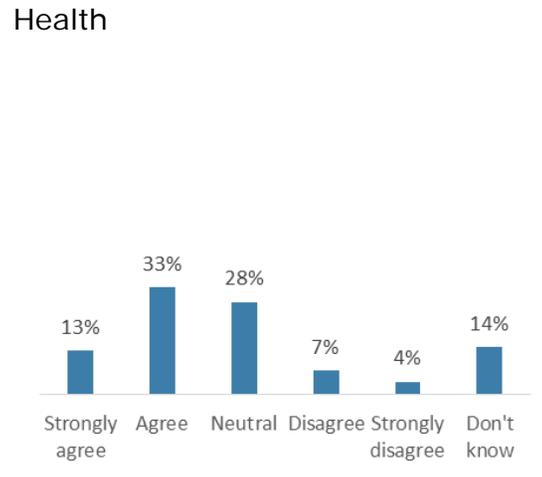
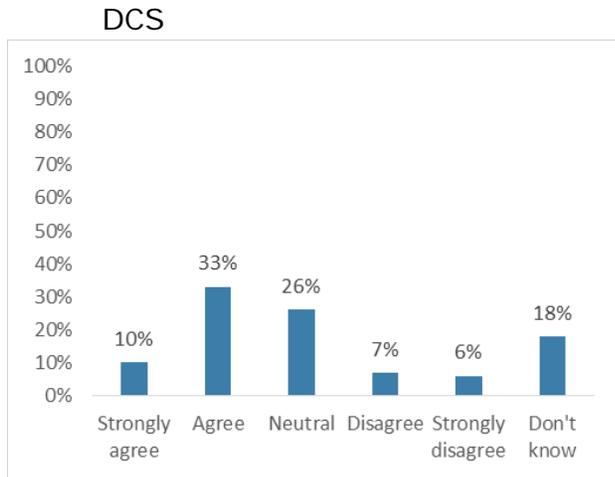
Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Our elected County officials demonstrate high standards of ethical conduct.



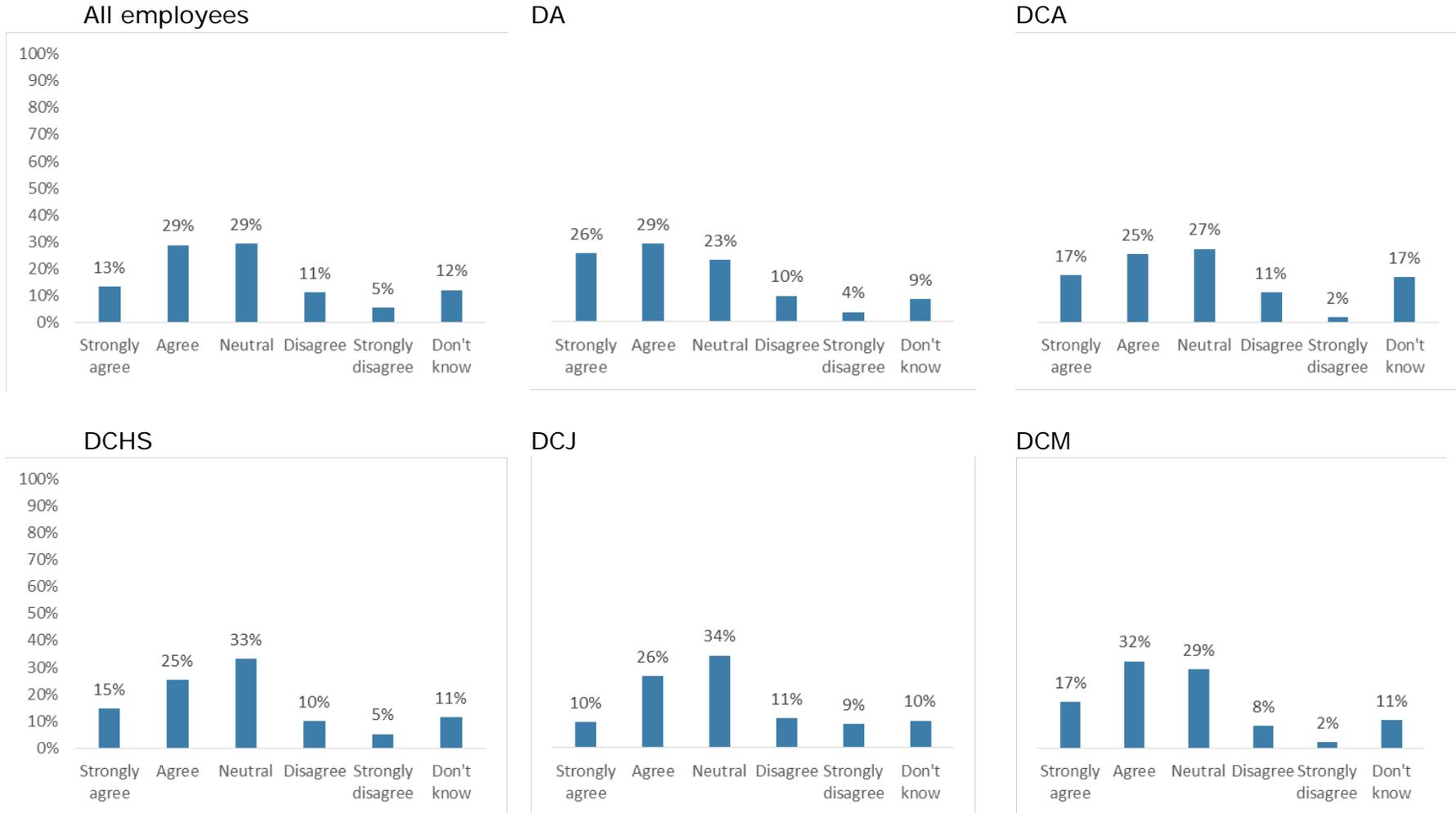
Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Our elected County officials demonstrate high standards of ethical conduct.



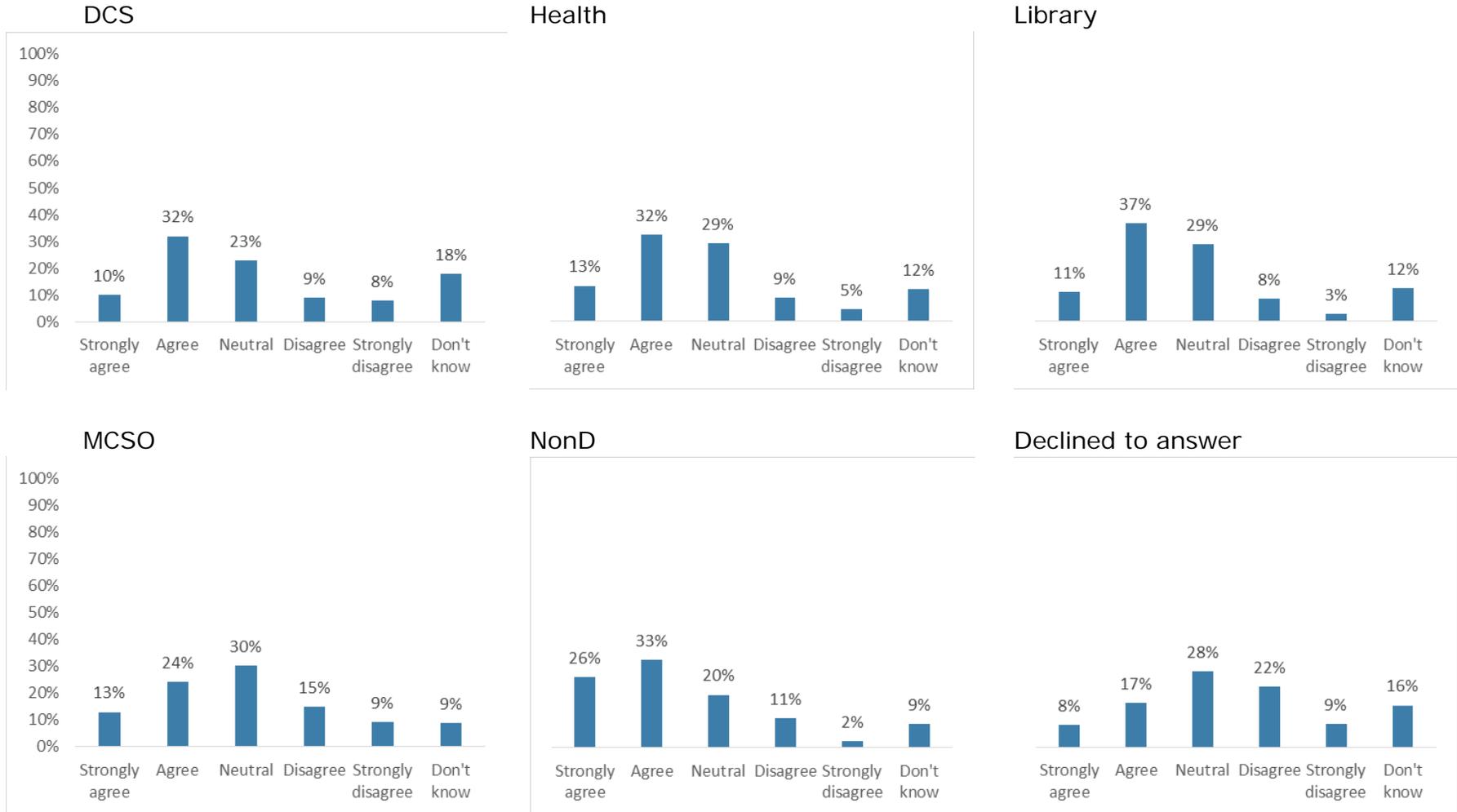
Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Our elected County officials create an environment in which staff are comfortable raising ethical concerns.



Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Our elected County officials create an environment in which staff are comfortable raising ethical concerns.



Note: Some individual tables may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Appendix C: Survey Instrument

Multnomah County Ethical Culture Survey

The Multnomah County Auditor's Office is conducting this survey to better understand our County's ethical culture.

We will use this information to report to the Board of County Commissioners on

- How County employees perceive our ethical culture
- Tools and support employees need to be better able to deal with ethical issues

We hope you will take the time to participate because your perspective matters.

The survey is anonymous. We are not collecting any identifying information when you respond. The results to this survey will be reported at a high level, using broad categories, to protect individuals. Survey data will be retained by the Auditor's Office.

The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. It is OK to complete this survey on County time, during your work hours.

Please contact our office at 503.988.3320 with any questions or comments.

County Auditor: mult.auditor@multco.us

Good Government Hotline: 888.289.6839, <https://multco.us/services/good-government-hotline>

Thank you,
Steve March, County Auditor

* Required

Skip to question 1.

County Culture Questions

We will only report aggregated results. Your answers are anonymous.

1. For each question, please choose the response that most closely matches your experience. *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
I feel like the County's expectations for ethical behavior are clear.	<input type="radio"/>					
I would feel comfortable reporting any County policies that are ethically questionable.	<input type="radio"/>					
I would be comfortable reporting a potential ethical violation by any County employee.	<input type="radio"/>					
I am expected to treat all members of the public equally, regardless of their personal or political connections.	<input type="radio"/>					
I work with one or more trusted confidants with whom I can discuss ethical dilemmas at work.	<input type="radio"/>					
My current supervisor creates an environment in which staff are comfortable raising ethical concerns.	<input type="radio"/>					
My current supervisor does not ask me to do things that violate our ethical standards, policies, or the law.	<input type="radio"/>					
If my current supervisor asked me to do something that violated our ethical standards, policies, or the law, I know who I could report it to at the County.	<input type="radio"/>					
My current supervisor treats all members of the public equally, regardless of their personal or political connections.	<input type="radio"/>					
Our elected County officials communicate to County employees that they expect us to uphold high standards of ethical conduct.	<input type="radio"/>					
Our elected County officials demonstrate high standards of ethical conduct.	<input type="radio"/>					
Our elected County officials create an environment in which staff are comfortable raising ethical concerns.	<input type="radio"/>					

2. Do you have any comments about this section?

Ethical Dilemma Scenarios

For the next few questions, we will ask about some ethical dilemmas you might face as a County employee. As a reminder, we are not collecting any identifying information. For each scenario, please choose the response that you think is the correct answer.

3. You represent the County at an event. You use your own money to buy a raffle ticket for a chance to win a Fitbit. You win the Fitbit and take it home. *

Mark only one oval.

- This complied with the County's Code of Ethics.
- This did not comply with the County's Code of Ethics.
- Not sure.

4. Your County job involves working with clients who are members of the public. One of them wants to give you tickets to a basketball game to thank you for your work. The tickets are worth \$150, and you accept them. *

Mark only one oval.

- This complied with the County's Code of Ethics.
- This did not comply with the County's Code of Ethics.
- Not sure.

5. In your County job, you are not able to influence County contracting decisions. A nonprofit that receives County funding asks you to become a board member. You say yes. *

Mark only one oval.

- This complied with the County's Code of Ethics.
- This did not comply with the County's Code of Ethics.
- Not sure.

6. You run your own business and have disclosed this outside employment on a County Code of Ethics Disclosure Form. You make sure you do not take care of your own business' needs when you are on County work time. *

Mark only one oval.

- This complied with the County's Code of Ethics.
- This did not comply with the County's Code of Ethics.
- Not sure.

7. You are a supervisor hiring for a new position that will report to you. Your best friend's spouse has applied for the position. No one in your office knows that you know this job candidate, and you hire this person. *

Mark only one oval.

- This complied with the County's Code of Ethics.
- This did not comply with the County's Code of Ethics.
- Not sure.

8. You are purchasing supplies for a County event at a local retail store. In order to get a discount, you use your personal rewards card when making this purchase for the County. *

Mark only one oval.

- This complied with the County's Code of Ethics.
- This did not comply with the County's Code of Ethics.
- Not sure.

9. Do you have any comments about this section?

Questions about Ethics Resources

10. I read the County's Code of Ethics each year when I do my annual required policy review. *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, I read the whole thing.
- I read part of it.
- No, I don't read any of it.

11. I know when I am required to fill out a County Code of Ethics Disclosure Form. *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

12. Apart from the annual review of the County's Code of Ethics, the County has provided me with training on County expectations for ethical behavior. *

Mark only one oval.

- In the last year
- In the last 5 years
- More than 5 years ago
- Never *Skip to question 15.*
- Not sure *Skip to question 15.*

13. Please indicate how you received this training. Check all that apply. *

Check all that apply.

- New employee orientation
- eLearning through Multco Leams
- Classroom training signed up for through the Countywide Training Calendar
- Training offered by my work unit
- My supervisor trained me
- Don't remember
- Other: _____

14. I would like additional training on County expectations for ethical behavior. *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

15. I know where I can find assistance with ethical issues at the County. *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

16. I understand how to apply the County's Code of Ethics to my role for the County. *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- Never

17. I know how to make a report to the Good Government Hotline. *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

18. Reports to the Good Government Hotline can be anonymous. *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

19. Do you have any comments about this section?

Demographic Questions

The results to this survey will be reported at a high level, using broad categories, to protect individuals. Survey data will be retained by the Auditor's Office.

20. Please indicate the number of years you have been employed with the County. *

Mark only one oval.

- Less than 1 year
- 1-10 years
- 11-20 years
- More than 20 years
- Decline to answer

21. Please indicate your age group. *

Mark only one oval.

- 25 or younger
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66 or older
- Decline to answer

22. Please indicate with which gender you most closely identify. **Mark only one oval.*

- Female
- Male
- Gender non-conforming
- Transgender male
- Transgender female
- Decline to answer

23. Please indicate your race/ethnicity. Select as many categories that apply. **Check all that apply.*

- African
- Asian
- Black/African American
- Latino/Hispanic
- Middle Eastern
- Native American or Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Slavic
- White
- Decline to answer

24. Are you a supervisor? **Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- Decline to answer

25. Please indicate whether your position is represented by a union or not represented. **Mark only one oval.*

- Represented by union
- Non-represented
- Don't know
- Decline to answer

26. Please indicate your department. *

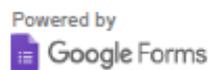
Mark only one oval.

- DA – District Attorney
- DCA – Department of County Assets
- DCHS – Department of County Human Services
- DCJ – Department of Community Justice
- DCM – Department of County Management
- DCS – Department of Community Services
- HD – Health
- LIB – Library
- MCSO – Multnomah County Sheriff's Office
- ND – Non-departmental
- Decline to answer

27. Do you have comments you want to make related to this survey? This could include comments about the ethical culture of the County, your department, your division, or about a specific situation.

Thank you for completing this survey. Please click submit to finish.

Please contact our office at 503.988.3320 with any questions or comments.
County Auditor: mult.auditor@multco.us
Good Government Hotline: 888.289.6839, <https://multco.us/services/good-government-hotline>



Response to Survey Results



Deborah Kafoury Multnomah County Chair

501 SE Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 600
Portland, Oregon 97214
Phone: (503) 988-3308
Email: mult.chair@multco.us

April 14, 2017

Auditor Steve March
501 SE Hawthorne Ave, Suite 600
Portland, OR 97214

Dear Auditor March,

Thank you for your office's work on the Multnomah County Ethical Culture Survey. As public officials, we are responsible to the people we serve. And the findings and recommendations of your work show that our employees take that responsibility seriously and provide clear guidance that will help us all at Multnomah County maintain the public's trust.

As the Chairwoman of the Board, I take very seriously my responsibility to set the tone at the top and act with the highest ethical standards. And I believe that when it comes to maintaining these standards, we should always be looking for opportunities for improvement.

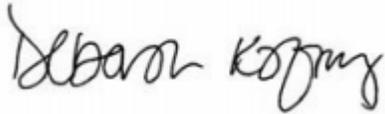
The findings in this survey are encouraging and demonstrate that the county's ethical culture is strong and expectations for employees are clear. These findings also outline clear steps to improve those expectations and enable employees to maintain our high ethical standards, including:

1. Setting a strong tone of transparency and ethical behavior at the leadership level of the organization and clearly communicating those values to all employees.
2. Ensuring a safe environment for reporting ethical concerns and violations.
3. Providing more information about the tools that are currently available for reporting violations and concerns.
4. Expanding training options at all levels of the organization, including managers and elected officials.

Unfortunately, Multnomah County elected officials have engaged in unethical behavior in the past and that has eroded trust and respect from employees and the public, which the survey showed can have a lasting impact. We must work hard to ensure those instances are not repeated.

I support the recommendations from your office and will begin looking at ways we can strengthen ethical standards at Multnomah County. I would welcome your partnership in taking action, particularly in improving training and reporting opportunities. I would also like to work with your office to convene a group to explore best practices and how we can continue to improve our ethical standards and continue to build trust with the people we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Kafoury". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deborah Kafoury



Multnomah County Sheriff's Office
501 SE HAWTHORNE BLVD., Suite 350 • Portland, OR 97214

MICHAEL REESE
SHERIFF

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503 988-4500 TTY
www.mcso.us

April 11, 2017

Multnomah County Auditor's Office
Attn: The Honorable Steve March
501 SE Hawthorne, #601
Portland, OR 97214

Dear Auditor March,

The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) is in receipt of the 2017 County Ethical Culture Survey Results.

As a newly elected Sheriff, I believe ethical culture furthers local governance that is efficient, effective, equitable, transparent and accountable to the public. Indeed, public safety is charged with providing services that adhere to this County-wide mission. As a result, I appreciate and respect the efforts of the Auditor's Office, to learn how MCSO members in particular perceive the County's ethical culture.

First and foremost, I accept and intend to implement the Survey Results recommendations; it was disconcerting to read that survey takers from some employee sub-groups, such as people of color and MCSO members, had negative perceptions on some survey questions. It is critical all employees trust their chain of command to ethically lead, to comprehend how ethics applies to their respective positions, and to feel comfortable reporting any concerns within the workplace.

As public employees, MCSO members are required to comply with ethics law, including state law, Human Resources Personnel Rules, and MCSO Policy and Procedure, and be mindful of even the appearance of impropriety. Because ethics law is detailed and nuanced, conduct that could appear dishonest to a reasonable observer will undermine public trust, even if the conduct is not prohibited.

Ethics is a foundational pillar of my efforts to reorient MCSO towards success. I have shared these Results with my Executive Team and will release the Results to my entire staff, in an effort to communicate the importance of ethics in our daily performance. As next steps, MCSO will be reviewing its ethics policy through its public, policy development process and will provide training to members upon enactment. Additionally, MCSO would appreciate being a part of any County-wide work group that may convene to study best practices for local government ethics programming and/or adjustments to our Code of Ethics.

Thank you again for this effort and for your professionalism; this feedback is valued and will inform our operations moving forward.

Respectfully,

Michael Reese
SHERIFF