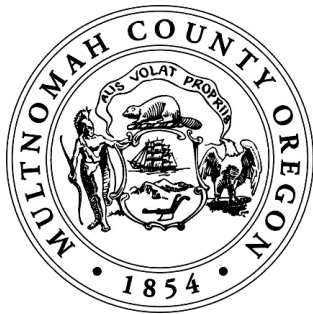


# Ethical Culture Survey

Employees find the county's culture strong,  
but want more accountability from  
managers

June 2023



Multnomah County Auditor's Office  
Jennifer McGuirk, Multnomah County Auditor

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## Report Highlights

### What We Found

Based on survey responses, employees found that the county's ethical culture aligns with ethical expectations. Employees generally agreed that people demonstrate a high standard of ethical behavior. Survey results also showed that:

- Employees at all levels of the county demonstrate ethical conduct
- Expectations are communicated well

However, there are still areas in need of improvement. Our key findings from the survey show that many employees feel:

- Lack of trust that management holds higher-level employees accountable
- Concern about a lack of transparency and inconsistency in the complaint process
- Uncertainty about the value of speaking out, and worry about retaliation
- If there is pressure to bend or break rules, those working closely with employees are usually the sources of pressure
- A lack of accountability from managers may worsen racial inequity

Themes of management accountability and lack of transparency and inconsistency in the complaint process relate to longstanding issues. We wrote about these issues in our office's 2016 ethical culture survey report, 2017 report on our audit of the county's human resource system, and our 2018 ethical culture survey report. They are also discussed in the county's 2018 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP) and the 2021-22 WESP annual report. We are now seven years out from our office's initial ethical culture survey.

The fact that employees continue to report the same concerns around accountability, transparency, and the complaint process indicate that management needs to do more to shift the county's culture and practices in these areas. We urge management to use this report to learn about employees' continuing concerns and to improve the county's culture. Similarly, we hope employees can use the survey results to help push for positive change. Publishing this report is one way our office strives to elevate employee voices, as well as validate employee concerns.

## Introduction

### Survey purpose and description

The mission of the Auditor's Office is to ensure that Multnomah County government is efficient, effective, equitable, transparent, and fully accountable to all who live in our county. 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 board members, county leadership, and staff with information on our collective understanding of the county's ethical culture.

In 2022, the Auditor's Office conducted our third survey of the county's ethical culture, six years after our first survey in 2016. We also conducted the survey in 2018 and originally intended to conduct the survey every two years. But, we did not conduct the survey in 2020, instead conducting a survey focused on employee needs and county functions during the COVID-19 pandemic. We made some changes to the survey in 2022 to better align with the survey's purpose of assessing ethical culture at the county. Like the 2018 ethical culture survey, this one did not ask questions about workforce equity, but we did identify comments that reflect employee concerns related to equity and ethics.

### Thank you to participants

We received responses from 3,001 employees, about 46% of the county workforce. This compares to 2,417 responses in 2018, which was about 40% of the county workforce. We read and analyzed all 1,774 comments from employees, which was 500 more comments than people provided in the 2018 survey. We have incorporated selected comments throughout the report to highlight findings and provide insights into employee perceptions.

### How we analyzed responses to the survey questions

We evaluated the responses to each question, considered the results from prior ethical culture surveys, and compared against some benchmark data from the Ethics Compliance Initiative, an international ethics research organization that provides best practice guidance about ethical culture. To better analyze the survey and develop findings, we placed questions and responses into one of four categories.

**Awareness and Effectiveness:** Questions in this category surveyed employees' ability to identify and respond to difficult situations in the workplace. A lack of awareness of the formal ethics and compliance program can indicate management's insufficient investment in the program, ineffective communication from management about the program, or a program that is "paper" only and not integrated into the everyday work environment.

**Accountability:** Employees are constantly watching leaders for cues about ethical behavior. Questions in this category surveyed county employees about the “tone at the top.” Questions in this category also surveyed county employees on their perceptions of consequences for violating workplace ethics standards, and the extent to which employees at varying levels of the organization are perceived to be held to the same standards.

**Speak-up Culture:** Questions in this category helped assess the presence of a “speak-up culture,” where employees feel comfortable speaking up about unethical behavior. Concern about retaliation or a lack of confidence in reporting observed misconduct are indicators of a deficient speak-up culture.

**Pressure:** Questions in this category surveyed county employees on the pressure they feel to violate workplace ethical standards. Pressure to compromise standards is a warning sign of future workplace misconduct.

When available, we used benchmarks that generally represent the average or “typical” response to a question, and provide us with a comparison point when evaluating the responses in our survey. We used research from the Ethics Compliance Initiative to develop the survey questions. We created benchmarks based on typical responses to ethics questions from Ethics Compliance Initiative surveys.

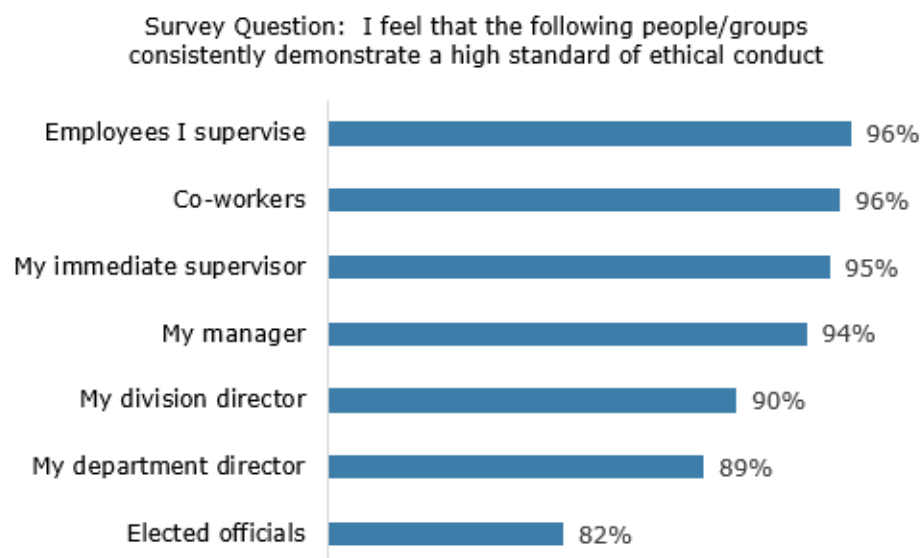
## Results of the Ethical Culture Survey

### Accountability: Employees perceived high standards of ethical conduct, but are concerned the rules aren't the same for everyone

In the Accountability section of the survey, we asked employees about their perceptions of ethical conduct at the county, and how they perceive the county's willingness to fully and fairly investigate ethical concerns.

We asked employees to share their feelings on whether employees at various levels of the county demonstrate a high standard of ethical conduct. Employees who took the survey indicated general agreement that county employees demonstrate high standards of ethical conduct. Employees had very positive perceptions about the ethical conduct of co-workers, employees they supervise, immediate supervisors, and their managers. Agreement on the ethical conduct of these groups was at 94% and above, based on the survey results. There was somewhat lesser — but still relatively high — agreement about the ethical standards of employees toward the top of the organization.

Employees said that Multnomah County employees demonstrated high standards of ethical conduct



Source: Multnomah County Auditor's Ethical Culture Survey issued 2022. Respondents who answered N/A are not depicted in the graph. 2,638 people answered the question.

## Employees continued to perceive that county rules do not apply to everyone equally

While there was a positive perception about the overall standards of ethical conduct at the county, the survey results also indicate that employees are concerned about whether rules are applied fairly. We asked about perceptions of the consequences for violating workplace ethics standards, and the extent to which employees at varying levels of the organization are perceived to be held to the same standards. Based on the survey results in this section, there is a perception among employees that the rules do not apply equally to everyone.

Distrust in management to hold employees accountable is a theme from previous surveys. For example, in the report on the 2018 ethical culture survey, we found that some employees were frustrated about the county not holding managers accountable. Other county efforts have emphasized the value of accountability. The 2018 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP) emphasized three values: “Safety, Trust, and Belonging” and defined trust as related to transparency and accountability. A 2018 study that informed the first WESP also found that employees found leadership accountability a top priority.

Only one in three employees perceived that the rules apply to everyone equally



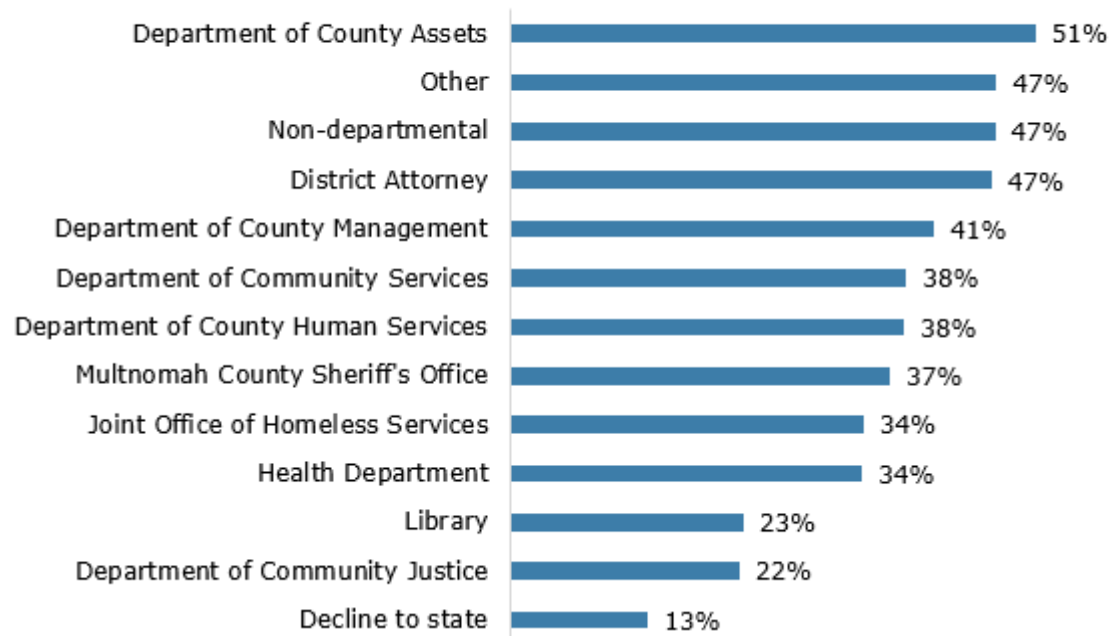
Source: Multnomah County Auditor’s Ethical Culture Survey issued 2022. Respective to the order of the results above, 2,643, 2,639, and 2,639 people answered the questions. Some results may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Only 46% agreed that disciplinary actions are taken when individuals engage in unethical behavior or misconduct at Multnomah County. Employees in the Department of Community Justice (DCJ) indicated the lowest agreement (36%) among all departments. Agreement was also very low (37%) among employees in the Joint Office of Homeless Services (JOHS).

Only 34% of employees who responded indicated agreement to the question, “I believe the rules and associated disciplinary actions for unethical behavior or misconduct are the same for every employee.” From a department perspective, DCJ employees that responded again indicated the least agreement (22%). Library employees had similar levels of agreement (23%) as DCJ employees.

Department of Community Justice and Library employees indicated strikingly low agreement that the rules are the same for every employee

Survey Question: I believe the rules and associated disciplinary actions for unethical behavior or misconduct are the same for every employee



Source: Multnomah County Auditor's Ethical Culture Survey issued 2022. 2,639 people answered the question.

Overall, employees were slightly more positive in their confidence that the county will fully investigate concerns about unethical behavior or misconduct. Fifty-three percent of employees responding to the question, "If I raise a concern about unethical behavior or misconduct, I believe the County will fully investigate," agreed or strongly agreed. Of departments, agreement was again lowest among DCJ employees (43%), followed by Library employees (44%).

We found that those who identify as Black or African American were less likely to agree that the county's accountability efforts are effective and equitable

Based on employee survey comments, we conducted statistical data analysis to learn if there was a relationship between survey takers' stated race and ethnicity and survey results for certain questions. Conducting this kind of analysis includes comparing the responses of smaller demographic groups to the largest group. At the county, white employees make up the largest racial/ethnic group. We found that employees who identified as Black or African American were 6% less likely to agree than their white counterparts that disciplinary actions are taken when individuals engage in unethical behavior or misconduct. Employees who declined to state their race or ethnicity or left that response blank were 12% less likely to agree than white



employees that disciplinary actions are taken. We found these differences to be statistically significant, meaning they were not likely due to chance.

Employees who identified as Black or African American were 8% less likely to agree that the rules apply to everyone equally. Employees who declined to state their race or ethnicity or left that response blank were 19% less likely to agree that disciplinary actions are taken. Again, we found these differences to be statistically significant, meaning they were not likely due to chance.

Once again, employees who identified as Black or African American were 6% less likely to agree the county will fully investigate concerns about unethical behavior or misconduct. Employees who declined to state their race or ethnicity or left that response blank were 15% less likely to agree. We found these differences to be statistically significant, meaning they were not likely due to chance.

### Need for transparency and consistency from the top

We received 185 comments on the survey related to concerns about management accountability, and employees noted that some communication and behavior from the top negatively impacted ethical culture. Some themes that emerged were about needs for more transparency and for behaviors to align consistently with county values. Some employees also noted the negative impact of power dynamics between frontline and represented employees and their supervisors/higher level management.

“Department heads and other managers can act in a way that is technically ethical but that isn't transparent and goes against what is best for the community.”

“Low level employees regularly feel they cannot assert their rights because they will be retaliated against by HR or management. I have never observed such a frightened workforce.”

“I would like to see more transparency from upper levels of leadership. When big decisions are made (such as the ONE system) it is behind closed doors, top down, from state to county, and without regard or input from people who do the work and understand how to best serve our clients. Times are changing and particularly younger employees demand a more collaborative workplace with principles of servant leadership.”

The theme of power dynamics negatively impacting work environments was also noted in the 2018 WESP:

“... dominant culture norms often dictate our daily interactions and can have negative unintended impacts for our workforce, particularly for employees of color and employees who do not reflect dominant culture.

Examples of dominant cultural norms include:

- Hierarchy and top-down decision-making without sufficient transparency or inclusion
- Expectation of communication style that defers to and reinforces management authority
- Lack of mutual accountability and expectations between managers and staff

When these cultural norms are not acknowledged and mitigated, they can erode employee trust.”

### Racial inequity worsened by power dynamics’ influence on investigations

Fifty-two employee commented that power dynamics influenced investigations and worsened racial inequity. Some observed that the power dynamics between management and lower level employees may compound issues of inequity among employees. Themes that emerged from comments revealed that inconsistencies in how ethical concerns are investigated may exacerbate employee experiences of racial inequity. These comments were a key reason we conducted the statistical analyses described earlier in this report.

“I have brought inequitable policies to the attention of commission and chair, HR, the administrating office, the office of diversity and inclusion, the office of equity and inclusion, to my own manger, and to the union and it was not addressed until the union folded it into an aspect of bargaining YEARS later. This is completely unacceptable and enraging. It is indicative of a culture that reinforces a hierarchical power dynamic, where equity is only given lip service, is not investigated and is not taken seriously unless it is overt and the transgressions are made between low-level employees who can be easily disposed of.”

“The history of how the county has investigated misconduct and how the reporter(s) of the misconduct are treated is poor. If you are a person of color who reports or investigated looks differently. Data doesn't show when managers make excuses for misconduct or deem the misconduct as not serious.”

“I've seen people of color held accountable differently than our white employees and leaders. Black staff are scrutinized and white staff are given more leniency.”

“In the past, when raising issues of racial microaggressions by management or leadership, my manager and their supervisor and HR never took action stating they weren't sure how to interpret our policies, and ultimately I was punished for raising the issues.”

“I believe Black employees are overdisciplined especially in comparison to white employees”

The 2018 WESP asserted that “safety and belonging are fundamental to the ability to thrive and foundational to what employees need.” Employee comments to our survey about inequity in ethical culture demonstrate that some experienced a lack of psychological safety and lack of belonging. Based on our findings, inequities in safety and belonging disproportionately impact Black and African American employees.

### Perception of unfair consequences and lack of transparency

More than 100 comments noted perceptions that management employees are held to a different and lower standard of ethics, with fewer consequences or uneven consequences due to their positions of power. This could impact employees’ willingness to raise concerns with their supervisors and their trust that the county upholds an ethical culture. Transparency about consequences may improve employee perceptions about accountability because more open communication from management can improve trust that managers are held accountable. The following quotes represent the theme of accountability:

“I feel like there is a lot of unethical behavior in upper management/executive level. These people stick together and protect each other. They are completely out of touch with lower level staff and the way they are perceived.”

“I have been involved in many investigations for both line staff and management. It is clear there is a different standard for management.”

“The County may communicate ethics in policy, but both management and Human Resources do not hold employees accountable!”

“There is a clear code of ethics, however it is enforced unfairly and only applies to those management doesn't like. Some people can do whatever they want. So no, there is no ethics when you apply it unfairly.”

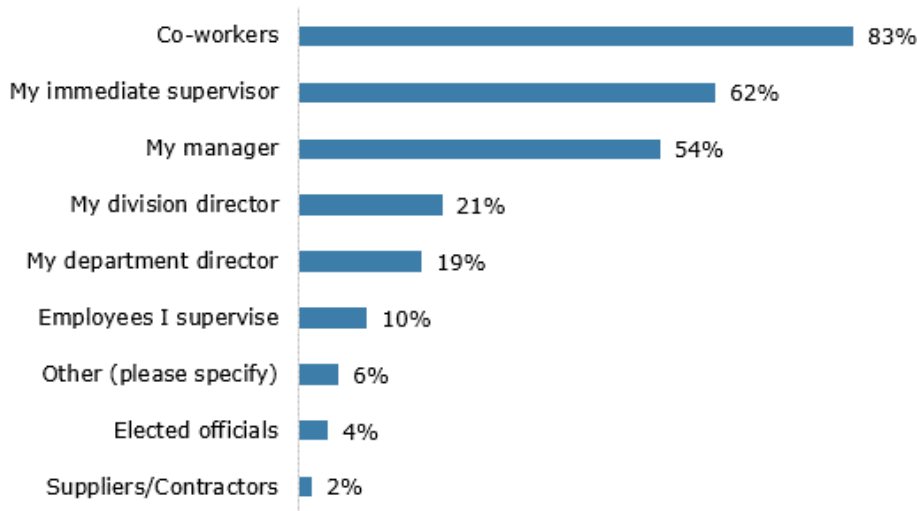
## Speak-up Culture: Employees expressed uncertainty about the value of speaking up and worry about retaliation

Based on the employee responses in the survey’s Speak-up Culture section, it appears there is both cynicism about reporting and fear of the consequences of reporting. There is also skepticism about the reporting process being anonymous. Despite these issues, the overwhelming majority of employees who responded reported having someone at work with whom they could discuss ethical dilemmas.

A great majority of employees who took the survey, 87%, work with one or more trusted people they can discuss ethical dilemmas with. This is very similar to the result in the 2018 report (84%). People who reported having people to discuss ethical dilemmas with were most willing to talk with people they are at the same level with or their supervisor. About 10% of survey takers disagreed that they had someone with whom to discuss ethical dilemmas at work.

### Employees were most comfortable discussing ethical dilemmas with people at or near their same level in the organization

Survey Question: The trusted people with whom I can discuss ethical dilemmas are (select all that apply):



Source: Multnomah County Auditor’s Ethical Culture Survey issued 2022. 2,249 people answered the question.

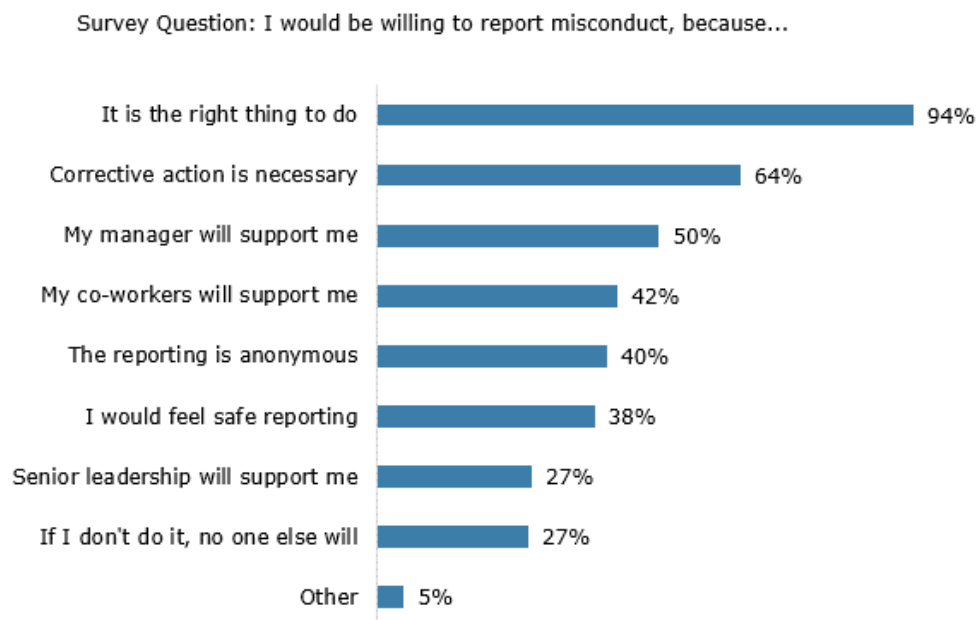
In order to have a positive speak-up culture, people have to feel empowered and safe speaking up. As to employees’ comfort in reporting misconduct, there were mixed results. For the question, “If I were to observe misconduct, I would be willing to report it,” 70% of people who took the survey said they would be willing to report misconduct, with 21% saying they were unsure, and 4% saying they would not report misconduct. This figure falls below the Ethics

Compliance Initiative’s benchmark of 86% of employees who would report “every” or “some of the behavior” they observed, indicating county employees would be less likely to report observed misconduct than the average organization in the Ethics Compliance Initiative’s research.

Seventy percent agreement in this year’s survey seems low considering general expectations we would have about county employees’ comfort in speaking up. Employees who declined to state their race or ethnicity or left that response blank were 10% less likely to agree that disciplinary actions are taken. We found this difference to be statistically significant, meaning it was not likely due to chance.

Positive ethics appears to be the overwhelming factor in willingness to report misconduct: People who answered yes to this question said they would report it primarily because it is the right thing to do. But it appears there is skepticism about reporting and the risks involved. There was low agreement for the following statements: “I would feel safe reporting,” “reporting is anonymous,” and “senior leadership will support me.”

Positive ethics appeared to be the overwhelming factor in being willing to report misconduct

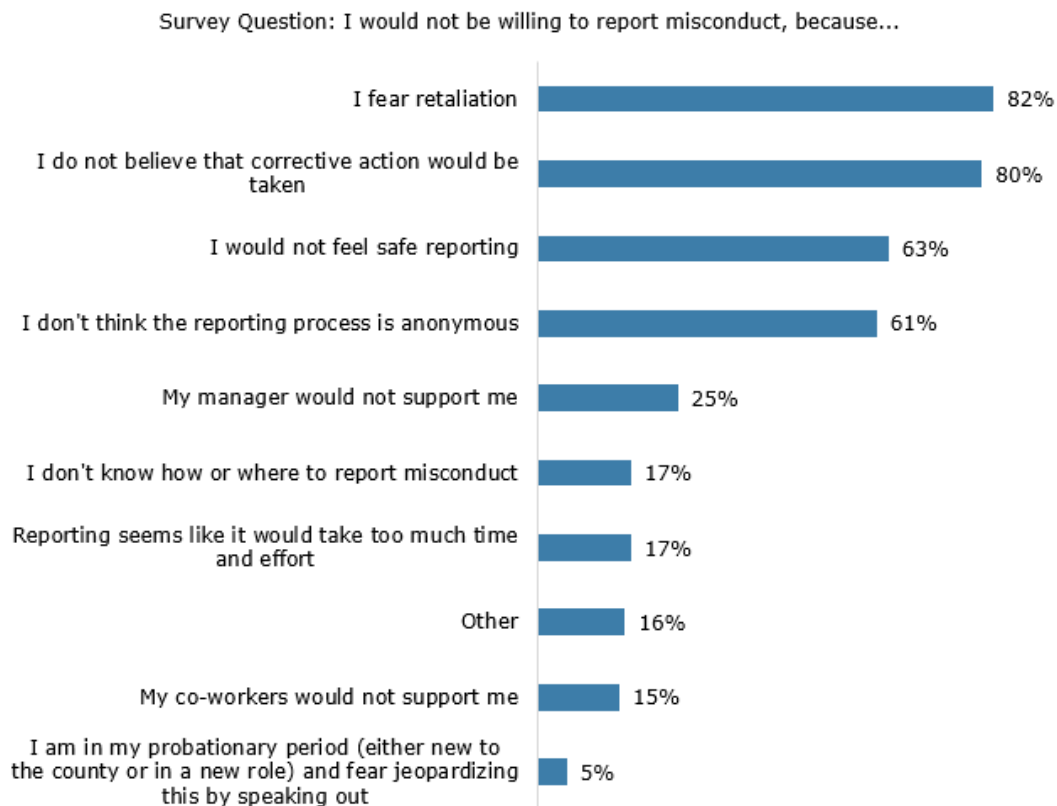


Source: Multnomah County Auditor’s Ethical Culture Survey issued 2022. 1,782 people answered the question

As to the question of why people would not be willing to report misconduct, it is important to note that only 4% of overall survey takers said they would not be willing to report. Of that subset of people, by far the two highest responses were: I fear retaliation (82%), and I don't

believe corrective action will be taken (80%). The responses indicate both cynicism about reporting and fear of the consequences of reporting. It appears there is also skepticism about the reporting process being anonymous (61%) and worry about retaliation – “I would not feel safe reporting (63%).”

Survey takers who said they would not be willing to report misconduct indicated they didn’t think corrective action would be taken and that they feared retaliation



Source: Multnomah County Auditor’s Ethical Culture Survey issued 2022. 95 people answered the question.

Employees’ worry about speaking up was also a theme from our 2016 ethical culture survey. The report on that survey noted that “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.”

### Employees still fear retaliation

One hundred employees commented that they fear retaliation or commented that they avoid reporting due to fear of retaliation. Even if management has reduced incidents of retaliation, if

employees still fear it, they may avoid reporting. Employees need to trust the complaint process in order to come forward.

“I know how to report ethical concerns but the critical question is, do I feel confident I won't be fired/retaliated against/performance identified as not being up to standards afterwards?”

“employees that point out unethical behavior by leadership are often gaslighted, excluded, and subsequently denied acknowledgement for their work/contributions. Past complaints via the CIU [Complaints Investigation Unit] resulted in no actions against leadership involved, past investigations by county auditors ignored clear ethical violations related to the COVID-19 response and instead focused solely on narrow issues which ignored larger structurally problems and egregious leadership missteps”

“The County's policy is rather weak as it puts the onus on the employee when misconduct occurs, creating a potential scenario where the complaining employee (who has been potentially victimized) could be openly retaliated against by their employer with relative impunity. This does not create a culture of transparency, and certainly could stifle reporting harassment, etc.”

“sometimes it is really difficult to talk to managers about issues with supervisors because of they will turn it onto the employee. Bringing concerns about supervisors can be reflected back in a way that makes it the employees' problem”

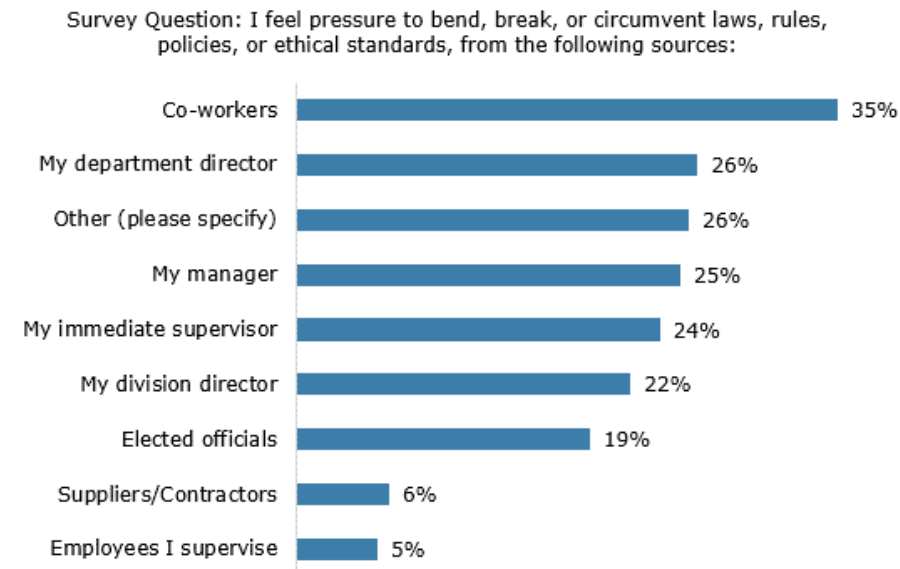
“Multnomah county has a complaint investigation unit that claims it is non-departmental but it sits in the HR classification. This is unethical and not the way civil rights violations or any other complaints are handled. HR has a vested interest to protect Multnomah county, not employees. The complaint investigation unit and positions within the unit should be an independent body that is contracted by the county to reduce unethical interference and gain trust by employees.”

## Pressure: Overall, employees did not feel pressure to bend or break laws, rules, policies, or ethical standards

In the survey, we asked employees about the pressure they feel to bend or break laws, rules, policies, or ethical standards at the county, and whether they have observed misconduct. Eleven percent of survey takers indicated they felt pressure to bend, break, or circumvent laws, rules, policies, or ethical standards. Compared to the Ethics Compliance Initiative's benchmark of

30%, this does not seem overly concerning. For those who did report feeling pressure, the pressure was greatest from co-workers, by a fairly large margin.

### Survey takers who said they felt pressure appeared to feel it from co-workers



Source: Multnomah County Auditor's Ethical Culture Survey issued 2022. 526 people answered the question.

While 11% of survey takers reported feeling pressure, just 8% reported being asked to bend, break, or circumvent laws, rules, policies, or ethical standards during the last 12 months by someone at the county. However, 27% of survey takers reported that they observed unethical behavior or misconduct at the county over the prior 12 months. This is positive compared to the Ethics Compliance Initiative's benchmark of 49%, but enough to be cause for concern.

### Workplace environments caused pressure for some

We received 162 comments related to this theme that revealed work environments that made consistently ethical behavior more challenging:

"There is a lot of distrust among the county directors, management and co-workers. It is a toxic environment"

"They continue to pile more and more on employees to the point people are forced to cut corners."

"Policies and culture have dictated an environment that makes me not care."



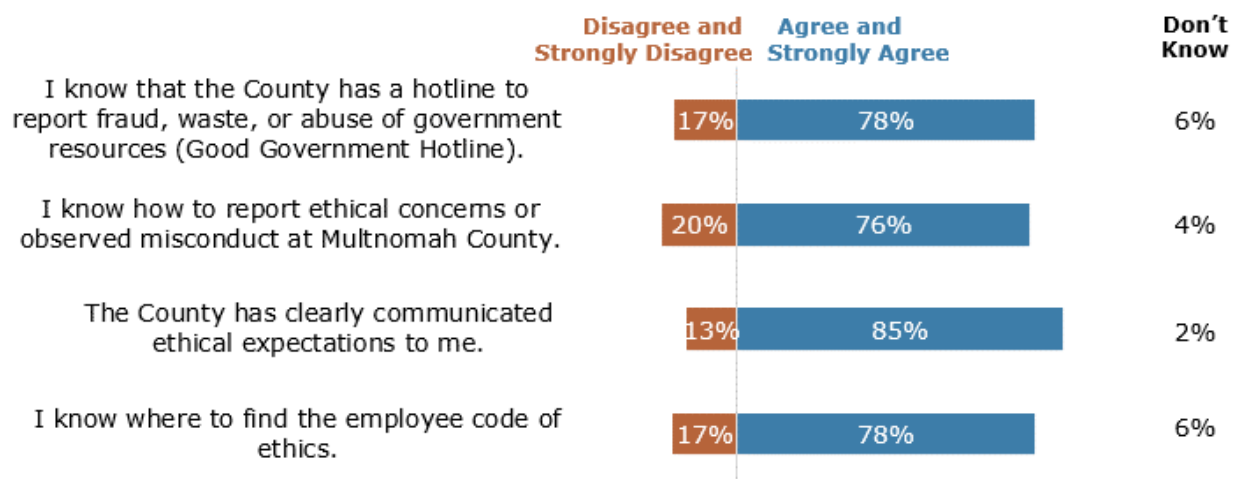
“There are organizational pressures, associated with work-load and a lack of resources, that might lead a department to unethical handling of business to, sort of "get it out of the way". I hesitate to lay that at the feet of any specific people.”

“I believe the unethical conduct I have witnessed has been the result of a lack of experience in public service as well as a pressure to get fast results in a slow and impractical system rather than malice or corruption”

## Awareness and Effectiveness: The county has communicated ethical expectations, but employees need more awareness of resources

Based on responses in the survey’s Awareness and Effectiveness section, employees generally reported that the county has communicated ethical expectations. However, awareness of where to find the code of ethics, the hotline, and how to report concerns seems lower than optimal. The rate of agreement is similar to the results of the 2018 ethical culture survey.

Employees reported that the county has clearly communicated ethical expectations to them, but need more direction and communication on how to report issues



Multnomah County Auditor’s Ethical Culture Survey issued 2022. Respective to the order of the results above, 2,989, 2,980, 2,987, and 2,992 people answered the questions.

## Information is available but does not address concerns about the reporting process

In 102 comments, some employees noted barriers to accessing information they needed to understand and to reporting ethical concerns in a way that protected them from negative

repercussions. A representative quote clarifies that the information is available but power dynamics with supervisors pose risks to ethical culture:

“I know how to report ethical concerns but since the union, and supervisors are a part of that reporting structure it can set up a losing situation if the parties engaged in problem behavior are union officers or supervisors themselves. Power dynamics. This has happened a number of times in different county departments and it makes it feel like it's more effective to "move" away from bad actors than to complain”

## Next steps

We plan to administer the next Ethical Culture survey in 2024 based on our current schedule of sending it out every two years. It is our hope that by the 2024 ethical culture survey, we see improvements across all areas of ethical culture, and in particular improved trust that management holds higher-level employees accountable, improved transparency and consistency in the complaint process, less fear of retaliation, and more accountability among managers to improve racial equity for employees.

## Staff

Marc Rose, MBA, CFE, Principal Management Auditor

Rosalie Roberts, PhD, Senior Management Auditor

## Appendix A: 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 Navex, Ethics and Compliance Initiative, among others. To contextualize the survey results, we read the 2016 and 2018 survey report as well as the 2017 HR Audit, 2018 WESP, and 2021-22 WESP. We requested feedback on the survey from members of the Department of County Management's Evaluation and Research Unit's Survey Advisory Group to improve the survey's effectiveness and inclusiveness.

We issued the survey to all county employees on November 29, 2022 using SurveyMonkey. We downloaded survey responses from SurveyMonkey 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 closed the survey at the end of the day on December 16, 2022.

As part of qualitative analysis of the survey results, the auditor team analyzed every comment and from comments, identified themes.

The survey included demographic questions based on those adopted by the DCM Evaluation and Research Unit's Survey Advisory Group. We analyzed representation from various departments and the overall response rate by comparing them to reports from Workday. Due to an error by County Auditor McGuirk, a demographic question was not brought into the final survey for people to indicate if they identify as having a disability. Auditor McGuirk apologizes for this error.

Based on employee survey comments, we conducted statistical data analysis to learn if there was a relationship between survey takers' stated race and ethnicity and survey results for certain questions. We conducted these tests to find out if there were differences in group perceptions that were statistically significant. Where there were statistically significant differences, we included them in the report.

## Appendix B: Results for Ethical Culture Survey Statements by Department

Perception of county ethical culture is generally positive; more work should be done to communicate how to report misconduct

Ethical Culture Survey Questions	Percent of respondents answering "Strongly Agree" or "Agree"											
	Library	DCJ	MCSO	Health	DCS	DA	DCHS	JOHS	DCA	Non-D	DCM	Overall
I know where to find the employee code of ethics.	77%	83%	79%	76%	84%	77%	73%	83%	82%	88%	86%	<b>78%</b>
The County has clearly communicated ethical expectations to me.	85%	83%	85%	83%	86%	83%	87%	86%	91%	94%	93%	<b>85%</b>
I know how to report ethical concerns or observed misconduct at Multnomah County.	74%	71%	87%	73%	76%	74%	75%	71%	85%	86%	89%	<b>76%</b>
I know that the County has a hotline to report fraud, waste, or abuse of government resources (Good Government Hotline).	81%	78%	76%	80%	77%	56%	82%	77%	85%	84%	83%	<b>78%</b>
I feel that the following people/groups consistently demonstrate a high standard of ethical conduct (please select once choice for each row):												
Elected Officials	81%	79%	67%	83%	80%	92%	86%	100%	92%	93%	88%	<b>82%</b>
My Department Director	69%	90%	84%	88%	94%	95%	96%	100%	97%	98%	99%	<b>89%</b>
My Division Director	82%	90%	85%	90%	91%	98%	95%	100%	95%	97%	97%	<b>90%</b>
My Manager	95%	92%	93%	91%	92%	95%	96%	100%	97%	100%	100%	<b>94%</b>
My Immediate Supervisor	95%	95%	97%	93%	93%	96%	97%	97%	97%	100%	100%	<b>95%</b>
Supervise	96%	93%	95%	96%	92%	100%	100%	100%	98%	95%	100%	<b>96%</b>
Co-Workers	97%	91%	92%	95%	94%	99%	97%	100%	98%	98%	99%	<b>96%</b>
more trusted people with whom I can discuss ethical dilemmas.	88%	87%	89%	87%	86%	86%	87%	86%	89%	90%	92%	<b>87%</b>
If I were to observe misconduct, I would be willing to report it.	62%	68%	74%	69%	68%	83%	75%	83%	80%	75%	74%	<b>70%</b>

Source: Auditor analysis of survey data. Some results may not add to 100% due to rounding. Each question in the survey had a unique number of respondents. Decline to Answer, Other, and Blank removed from Appendix charts for ease of viewing.

Pressure to bend or break rules and observed misconduct are relatively low across the county, but some departments have concerning rates of observed misconduct

Percent of respondents answering "Yes," "Frequently" or "Occasionally"

Ethical Culture Survey Questions	Library	DCJ	MCSO	Health	DCS	DA	DCHS	JOHS	DCA	Non-D	DCM	Overall
I feel pressure to bend, break, or circumvent laws, rules, policies, or ethical standards.	9%	8%	10%	15%	13%	4%	10%	11%	6%	4%	7%	11%
I feel pressure to bend, break, or circumvent laws, rules, policies, or ethical standards, from the following sources (please select all that apply):												
Elected officials	17%	6%	22%	18%	33%	0%	17%	25%	0%	50%	27%	19%
My department director	57%	29%	39%	40%	53%	0%	17%	25%	9%	50%	27%	34%
My division director	37%	47%	39%	29%	47%	0%	24%	25%	27%	0%	27%	32%
My manager	20%	41%	72%	35%	33%	0%	36%	25%	45%	50%	36%	35%
My immediate supervisor	27%	29%	56%	35%	53%	33%	33%	25%	36%	50%	9%	33%
Employees I supervise	3%	12%	0%	4%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%
Co-workers	40%	53%	22%	26%	33%	0%	45%	0%	64%	0%	27%	34%
Suppliers/Contractors	3%	12%	0%	2%	0%	0%	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%
break, or circumvent laws, rules, policies, or ethical standards during the last 12 months by someone at the county.	6%	7%	11%	11%	9%	0%	7%	0%	4%	4%	7%	8%
Over the past 12 months, I have observed unethical behavior or misconduct at the county.	31%	33%	33%	28%	31%	13%	22%	31%	17%	20%	16%	27%

Source: Auditor analysis of survey data. Some results may not add to 100% due to rounding. Each question in the survey had a unique number of respondents. Decline to Answer, Other, and Blank removed from Appendix charts for ease of viewing.

## Employees perceived that the rules are not always enforced and that the rules do not apply to everyone equally

Percent of respondents answering "Strongly Agree" or "Agree"

Ethical Culture Survey Questions	Library	DCJ	MCSO	Health	DCS	DA	DCHS	JOHS	DCA	Non-D	DCM	Overall
I believe disciplinary actions are taken when individuals engage in unethical behavior or misconduct at Multnomah County.	41%	36%	60%	43%	47%	45%	46%	37%	59%	65%	53%	46%
I believe the rules and associated disciplinary actions for unethical behavior or misconduct are the same for every employee.	23%	22%	37%	34%	38%	47%	38%	34%	52%	47%	41%	34%
If I raise a concern about unethical behavior or misconduct, I believe the County will fully investigate.	44%	43%	57%	49%	51%	58%	59%	63%	66%	75%	71%	53%

Source: Auditor analysis of survey data. Some results may not add to 100% due to rounding. Each question in the survey had a unique number of respondents. Decline to Answer, Other, and Blank removed from Appendix charts for ease of viewing.

## Employees identified co-workers as the people with whom they would be most comfortable discussing ethical dilemmas

Ethical Culture Survey Questions	Library	DCJ	MCSO	Health	DCS	DA	DCHS	JOHS	DCA	Non-D	DCM	Overall
with whom I can discuss ethical dilemmas are (select all that apply):												
Elected officials	2%	2%	4%	2%	5%	18%	3%	3%	4%	25%	7%	4%
My department director	8%	9%	13%	13%	26%	17%	18%	29%	26%	39%	22%	16%
My division director	9%	12%	15%	18%	30%	21%	23%	26%	25%	16%	29%	19%
My manager	36%	42%	40%	48%	47%	43%	48%	66%	62%	55%	66%	47%
My immediate supervisor	55%	37%	56%	58%	42%	61%	61%	74%	52%	41%	59%	54%
Employees I supervise	6%	4%	11%	8%	17%	10%	7%	14%	11%	18%	18%	9%
Co-workers	82%	72%	76%	68%	71%	71%	69%	74%	74%	69%	76%	72%
Suppliers/Contractors	0%	1%	1%	2%	5%	3%	1%	14%	4%	2%	1%	2%

Source: Auditor analysis of survey data. Some results may not add to 100% due to rounding. Each question in the survey had a unique number of respondents. Decline to Answer, Other, and Blank removed from Appendix charts for ease of viewing.

Employees overwhelmingly agreed the primary reason to report misconduct was because it was the right thing to do

Ethical Culture Survey Questions	Library	DCJ	MCSO	Health	DCS	DA	DCHS	JOHS	DCA	Non-D	DCM	Overall
I would be willing to report the misconduct for the following reason(s). (Please select all that apply.)												
It is the right thing to do	97%	96%	95%	93%	95%	97%	93%	93%	97%	97%	96%	94%
Corrective action is necessary	68%	71%	63%	58%	67%	70%	65%	79%	64%	68%	69%	64%
Senior leadership will support me	15%	18%	27%	26%	30%	31%	31%	41%	33%	34%	35%	27%
My manager will support me	47%	37%	45%	48%	52%	47%	53%	69%	62%	50%	59%	50%
My co-workers will support me	51%	35%	38%	43%	43%	38%	38%	62%	50%	42%	42%	42%
The reporting is anonymous	49%	34%	25%	43%	41%	33%	42%	62%	34%	55%	47%	40%
If I don't do it, no one else will	30%	24%	24%	26%	29%	28%	31%	31%	18%	26%	24%	27%
I would feel safe reporting	35%	34%	31%	34%	47%	38%	43%	62%	44%	45%	47%	38%

Source: Auditor analysis of survey data. Some results may not add to 100% due to rounding. Each question in the survey had a unique number of respondents. Decline to Answer, Other, and Blank removed from Appendix charts for ease of viewing.



## Employees identified fear of retaliation as the primary reason they would NOT report misconduct

Ethical Culture Survey Questions	Library	DCJ	MCSO	Health	DCS	DA	DCHS	JOHS	DCA	Non-D	DCM	Overall
I would NOT be willing to report misconduct for the following reason(s): (Please select all that apply.)												
I fear retaliation	100%	75%	89%	80%	75%	NA	82%	50%	100%	100%	100%	82%
I don't think the reporting process is anonymous	80%	50%	67%	64%	75%	NA	64%	50%	67%	100%	0%	61%
Reporting seems like it would take too much time and effort	30%	0%	33%	4%	0%	NA	18%	0%	44%	100%	0%	17%
I do not believe that corrective action would be taken	100%	88%	78%	80%	100%	NA	73%	50%	89%	0%	0%	80%
I would not feel safe reporting	100%	75%	56%	48%	75%	NA	64%	50%	67%	0%	0%	63%
I don't know how or where to report misconduct	30%	0%	22%	12%	25%	NA	18%	0%	11%	100%	0%	17%
My manager would not support me	50%	13%	33%	12%	50%	NA	27%	0%	44%	0%	0%	25%
My co-workers would not support me	10%	0%	56%	4%	50%	NA	18%	0%	22%	0%	0%	15%
I am in my probationary period (either new to the county or in a new role) and fear jeopardizing this by speaking out	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	NA	27%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%

Source: Auditor analysis of survey data. Some results may not add to 100% due to rounding. Each question in the survey had a unique number of respondents. Decline to Answer, Other, and Blank removed from Appendix charts for ease of viewing.

## Appendix C: Survey Instrument, Auditor's Letter, & FAQ

The Multnomah County Auditor's Office is conducting this survey to better understand our County's ethical culture. Strong ethical cultures prioritize employee rights, fair procedures, and equity in pay and promotion. These cultures also promote tolerance, compassion, loyalty, and honesty in how employees and the people we serve are treated.

We will use this information to report to all employees on the status of the county's ethical culture. We will publish survey results on the Auditor's website, and provide them to the Board of County Commissioners, DA, and Sheriff. Your feedback will also help us determine which county operations we need to audit, in order to support a strong ethical culture at the county.

We hope you will take the time to participate, because your perspective matters. The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete. Instructions will be given at the start of each section.

Please complete the survey before December 16, 2022.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. This survey is not mandatory and you can withdraw from participation at any time. You can also complete the survey on county time, during your work hours.

Responses to this survey are anonymous, meaning that no one will be able to identify that you participated in the survey. Your responses will be kept confidential, meaning that we will not share individual identifying information of participants. We will report the results of this survey at a high level, using broad categories, to protect individuals. Survey data will be retained by the Auditor's Office. County voters elect the Auditor; the Auditor and Auditor's Office staff do not report to the Board of County Commissioners, DA, or Sheriff.

If you have any questions or comments related to the survey, please email the County Auditor at [mult.auditor@multco.us](mailto:mult.auditor@multco.us) or contact our office at 503.988.3320.

Thank you for your participation,  
Jennifer McGuirk, County Auditor

**Awareness and Effectiveness of the County's Ethical Culture Efforts**

We will only report aggregated results. Your answers are anonymous. Please choose the response that most closely matches your experience.

Ethical standards are based on well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. The term misconduct, for the purposes of this survey, includes to bend, break, or circumvent laws, rules, or county policies.

1. I know where to find the employee code of ethics.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

Don't know

2. The County has clearly communicated ethical expectations to me.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

Don't know

3. I know how to report ethical concerns or observed misconduct at Multnomah County.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

Don't know

4. I know that the County has a hotline to report employee concerns and fraud, waste, or abuse of government resources (Good Government Hotline).

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

Don't know

5. Do you have any comments about this section or any of the questions above?

**Tone at the Top and Accountability**

We will only report aggregated results. Your answers are anonymous. Please choose the response that most closely matches your experience.

Ethical standards are based on well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society,

fairness, or specific virtues. The term misconduct, for the purposes of this survey, includes to bend, break, or circumvent laws, rules, or county policies.

6. I feel that the following people/groups demonstrate a high standard of ethical conduct:

Elected officials

My department director

My division director

My manager

My immediate supervisor

Employees I supervise

Co-workers

Suppliers/Contractors

Other (Please specify)

7. I believe disciplinary actions are taken when individuals engage in unethical behavior or misconduct at Multnomah County.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

Don't know

8. I believe the rules and associated disciplinary actions for unethical behavior or misconduct are the same for every employee.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

Don't know

9. If I raise a concern about unethical behavior or misconduct, I believe the County will fully investigate.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

Don't know

10. Do you have any comments about this section or any of the questions above?

**Pressure**

We will only report aggregated results. Your answers are anonymous. Please choose the response that most closely matches your experience.

Ethical standards are based on well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society,

fairness, or specific virtues. The term misconduct, for the purposes of this survey, includes to bend, break, or circumvent laws, rules, or county policies.

11. I feel pressure to bend, break, or circumvent laws, rules, policies, or ethical standards.

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never
- Decline to Answer

12. I feel this pressure from the following sources:

- Elected officials
- My department director
- My division director
- My manager
- My immediate supervisor
- Employees I supervise
- Co-workers
- Suppliers/Contractors
- Other (Please specify)

13. I work with one or more trusted people with whom I can discuss ethical dilemmas.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Don't know

14. The trusted people with whom I can discuss ethical dilemmas are (select all that apply):

- Elected officials
- My department director
- My division director
- My manager
- My immediate supervisor
- Employees I supervise
- Co-workers
- Suppliers/Contractors
- Other (Please specify)

15. Do you have any comments about this section or any of the questions above?

### **Misconduct and Reporting**

We will only report aggregated results. Your answers are anonymous. Please choose the response that most closely matches your experience.

Ethical standards are based on well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society,

fairness, or specific virtues. The term misconduct, for the purposes of this survey, includes to bend, break, or circumvent laws, rules, or county policies.

16. I was asked to bend, break, or circumvent laws, rules, policies, or ethical standards during the last 12 months by someone at the county.

Yes

No

Unsure/Decline to Answer

17. Over the past 12 months, I have observed unethical behavior or misconduct at the county.

Yes

No

Unsure/Decline to Answer

18. If I were to observe misconduct, I would be willing to report it.

Yes

No

19. I would be willing to report the misconduct for the following reason(s). (Please select all that apply.)

It is the right thing to do

Corrective action is necessary

Senior leadership will support me

My manager will support me

My co-workers will support me

The reporting is anonymous

If I don't do it, no one else will

Other reasons (Please specify):

20. I would NOT be willing to report misconduct for the following reason(s): (Please select all that apply.)

I fear retaliation

I don't think the reporting process is anonymous

I do not believe that corrective would be taken

I am not concerned

I am not sure whom to contact

Other reasons (Please specify):

21. Do you have any comments about this section or any of the questions above?

### **Demographic Questions**

Now we would like to ask you a few questions that give us a general idea of the backgrounds and identities of people who have completed this survey.

Please note that your responses are anonymous - we do not collect your name, employee number, or IP address. The information you put here will only be used for survey analyses,

and will be kept confidential. You do not have to answer questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. Summary/aggregate data will not be released for groups that are too small to protect individual confidentiality, and individuals' raw data will only be viewed by Auditor's Office staff.

Demographic categories in the demographic questions reflect recommendations from the Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE) and the Gender Identity, Equity and Data Governance Project, and were selected to allow for comparing trends both over time and to other County data.

22. What is your department?

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  
Health Department  
JOHS – Joint Office of Homeless Services  
Library  
MCSO - Multnomah County Sheriff's Office  
Non-departmental  
Don't know  
Decline to answer

23. Division

Please note that we will not analyze or present results for any division where the number of respondents is too small to protect individual confidentiality.  
(write-in)

24. What is your employee type?

Elected Official  
Elected Official Staff  
Limited Duration  
On-Call  
Other (Intern, Volunteer, Contractor)  
Regular Non-Represented  
Regular Represented  
Seasonal  
Temporary (with or without benefits)  
Don't know  
Decline to state

25. If you are represented, to which union do you belong? If your position is not represented, please select 'Not union represented.'

AFSCME Local 88  
Physicians (AFSCME 88-2)  
Dentists (AFSCME 88-5)

Corrections Deputies (MCCDA)  
Deputy Sheriffs (MCDSA)  
Electrical Workers (IBEW 48)  
Juvenile Custody Services (AFSCME 86)  
Oregon Nurses Association (ONA)  
Operating Engineers (Loc. 701)  
Painters (Loc. 1094)  
Parole & Probation Officers (FOPPO)  
Prosecuting Attorneys (MCPAA)  
Not union represented  
Don't know  
Decline to state

26. Are you in a sworn position (e.g., Corrections Deputy, Deputy Sheriff, Sergeant, Sworn Community Justice Manager)?

Yes  
No  
Don't know  
Decline to state

27. What is your job level?

Non-supervisory/ Frontline staff (Anyone who does not supervise other employees; for example, Office Assistant, Library Clerk, Maintenance Specialist, Case Manager, Economist, etc.)  
Frontline Supervisor (Operations Supervisor, Library Supervisor, Nursing Supervisor, Lieutenant Captain, etc.)  
Middle/ Program Manager (Community Justice Manager, Finance Manager, Health Center/ Clinic Manager, Captain's Chief Deputy, etc.)  
Senior Manager (Deputy Director, Division Director, Chief DDA, Director of Nursing Practice, Undersheriff, Chief Deputy, etc.)  
Department Executive Team, Director, or Elected Official  
Don't know  
Decline to answer  
Additional Category (not listed above - please write in)

28. Number of years with Multnomah County

less than 1  
1 to 5  
6 to 10  
11 to 15  
16 to 20  
21 to 25  
26 to 30  
31 to 35  
36 to 40  
over 40  
Don't know



Decline to state

29. We will analyze differences in experience based on generation, using categories from the Pew Research Center. Please select your generation below.

The Silent Generation (born 1928-1945)

Baby Boomer (born 1946-1964)

Generation X (born 1965-1980)

Millennial (born 1981-1996)

Generation Z (born 1997 and later)

Don't know

Decline to answer

30. Have you ever served, or are you currently serving, in the U.S. military? Please include reserves and both peacetime and wartime service.

Yes

No

Don't know

Decline to state

31. Anticipated years to retirement

1 year

2 years

3 - 5 years

6 - 10 years

over 10 years

Don't know

Decline to state

32. How do you identify your race or ethnicity? Please select all that apply.

African

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Latino or Hispanic

Middle Eastern

Multiracial

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Slavic

White

Don't know

Decline to state

Additional Category (not listed above - please write in)

33. In order to protect confidentiality while analyzing results, we may need to aggregate race/ethnicity responses into broader categories. Which group most closely describes your race or ethnicity?

African

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian  
Black or African American  
Latino or Hispanic  
Middle Eastern  
Multiracial  
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander  
Slavic  
White  
Don't know  
Decline to state

34. Which group most closely describes your gender?

Woman  
Gender expansive (Non-binary, Genderqueer, Gender Fluid, etc.)  
Man  
Questioning  
Two Spirit  
Don't know  
Decline to state  
Additional Category (not listed above - please write in)

35. Do you identify as transgender?

Yes  
No  
Don't know  
Decline to state

36. Which group most closely describes your sexual orientation?

Asexual  
Bisexual  
Gay  
Heterosexual  
Lesbian  
Pansexual  
Queer  
Don't know  
Decline to state  
Additional Category (not listed above - please write in)

37. Are you an immigrant or refugee/asylee?

Yes  
No  
Don't know  
Decline to state

38. Do you speak or use a language other than English fluently?

Yes  
No

Don't know  
Decline to state

39. Please select the languages (other than English) that you speak or use fluently. Select all that apply.

Arabic  
ASL  
Chinese  
French  
German  
Hindi  
Italian  
Japanese  
Korean  
Portuguese  
Romanian  
Russian  
Spanish  
Swahili  
Tagalog  
Ukrainian  
Vietnamese  
Additional language, please write in

40. What is your current telework status?

On-site/Not teleworking  
Hybrid work schedule  
Full-time/Routine telework  
Don't know  
Decline to state

41. What additional concerns or comments would you like to share?  
As a reminder, your responses are anonymous.

Thank you for participating in the survey, your perspective matters.

If you have any questions or comments related to the survey, or would like to share additional information related to the topics in the survey, please call 503.988.3320 to leave a message or email the County Auditor: [mult.auditor@multco.us](mailto:mult.auditor@multco.us)

## Letter from the Auditor

### **A message from the County Auditor: Take the ethical culture survey**

Yesterday, Nov. 29, I invited you to participate in a survey about the county's ethical culture. I hope you will take the time to participate, because your perspective matters. You can participate in the survey between now and December 16. Completing the survey should take about 10-15 minutes.

The Multnomah County Auditor's Office is conducting this survey to better understand our County's ethical culture. The survey provides a way to identify and measure awareness of county ethical culture efforts, assess the perception of the ethical tone at the top, and identify opportunities to strengthen workplace culture. A strong ethical culture helps promote compassion, loyalty, and honesty in how we treat our employees, and the people they serve.

My office will use this information to report to all employees on the status of the county's ethical culture. We will publish survey results on the Auditor's website. Your feedback will also help us determine which county operations we need to audit.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. You can complete the survey on county time, during your work hours. Responses to this survey are anonymous, meaning that no one will be able to identify that you participated in the survey.

If you have any questions or comments related to the survey, please check out our FAQ or email the County Auditor at [mult.auditor@multco.us](mailto:mult.auditor@multco.us).

Thank you for your participation,  
Jennifer McGuirk, County Auditor

## County Ethical Culture Survey - FAQ

A message from Auditor McGuirk:

### **Why is the Auditor conducting a survey?**

The Multnomah County Auditor's Office is conducting this survey to better understand our county's ethical culture. The survey serves as a way to identify and measure awareness of county ethical culture efforts, assess the perception of the ethical tone at the top, and identify opportunities to strengthen workplace culture. A strong ethical culture helps promote compassion, loyalty, and honesty in how we treat our employees, and the people they serve.

### **What makes this different from other surveys at the county?**

This is the only survey conducted of the county's ethical culture. This survey is also different because:

1. The County Auditor is independently elected and outside the county's management hierarchy. The County Auditor offers an outside perspective on areas for improvement and accountability, which is different from county management's perspective. Because we are independent, I hope that employees will feel free to express concerns honestly without fear of retribution.
2. Reports from our office are always public. We commit to publishing survey results on our webpage and making public recommendations for change, based on the results.
3. We will look at the whole county. We will be able to compare departments, to learn from departments that are doing well and identify ones that need improvement.

### **Is participation in the survey voluntary?**

Yes. But a survey's reliability and accuracy is dependent upon how many people participate. We hope as many employees will participate as possible so our survey report can accurately reflect what you are experiencing.

### **Is the survey anonymous?**

Yes, the survey is anonymous. No one will know if you took the survey (or did not take it). We hope you will take it. The survey will be sent to you via Survey Monkey. Your response will not be linked to your email address, name, employee ID, IP address, or any other identifying information.

### **How do you keep survey data anonymous when tracking demographic data?**

The survey does include a number of demographic questions. This information helps us provide you with information about how different demographic groups are experiencing the county's ethical culture. In theory, someone accessing the entirety of this information might be

able to identify an individual. My staff adhere to strict professional ethical standards and will not attempt to identify any individual respondents and will not share personally identifying information. To further protect employee identities, we will not release survey data about any group that is less than 30 people. We encourage you to complete the demographic section, but responding to demographic questions is voluntary.

**Will you share my data?**

We will not share any personally identifiable data with anyone outside of our office, and this includes with anyone in county management or with any county elected officials. Results will be reported at a high level, in broad categories. In our reporting, we may include people's answers to open-ended questions as examples, but we will not include quotes that include personally identifying information.

**How did you design the survey?**

We based the survey on our 2016 and 2018 surveys of the county's ethical culture. We updated the survey to align with emerging best practices for surveys of ethical cultures. We used demographic categories that the Evaluation and Research Unit uses, and that have been vetted through their Survey Advisory Group.

**How were employees involved in creating the survey?**

Members of the Evaluation and Research Unit and their Survey Advisory Group generously shared their expertise and provided valuable feedback on our survey during development. Members of this group includes representation from county ERGs and equity committees from departments across the county. We are very grateful for their contributions.

**How will you report on the survey results?**

We will report on survey results in two ways. We will present survey results in a report that we make available online to all county employees. We will use survey results to inform our audit choices.

**What are the risks to taking the survey?**

Taking the survey is low risk. Some potential risks are the opportunity cost of the time you use taking the survey, potential to be upset by a question, and a slight risk of loss of confidentiality due to a data breach. As noted above, there are multiple protections to your data and anonymity, and this risk is low.