



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Interim Report

Office of Inspector General Access Survey Results

Report No. 09-P-0079

January 13, 2009



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

This information was collected in support of an Agency-wide evaluation of impediments to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) audits and evaluations.

Background

We sponsored an Agency-wide survey to assess EPA employees' perceptions of their relationships with OIG staff with regard to access to personnel and information.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional, Public Affairs and Management at (202) 588-2391.

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2009/20090113-09-P-0079.pdf

Office of Inspector General Access Survey Results

What We Found

The results of our survey disclosed significant lack of knowledge about the Agency's policies with regard to interaction with the OIG, and numerous requests for training in this area by survey respondents. Our analysis showed that 83 percent of respondents were either not aware, or did not know, of any policy or procedures governing interaction with the OIG. Further, 18 percent of respondents did not believe that they can provide documentation or written responses to the OIG without permission from a supervisor. An additional 34 percent of the respondents did not know if this is allowed.

There were also some troubling perceptions among the Agency staff about management's attitudes toward staff who talked to OIG staff without permission. Survey results showed that 45 percent of respondents either agreed or did not know whether they may face retribution if they provided information or documentation in response to an OIG request without the approval from their program manager or supervisor.

This is an interim report for information only and does not represent any final conclusions or recommendations by the OIG.



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL

January 13, 2009

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Interim Report: Office of Inspector General Access Survey Results
Report No. 09-P-0079

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wade T. Najjum".

FROM: Wade T. Najjum
Assistant Inspector General for Program Evaluation
Office of Inspector General

TO: Marcus Peacock
Deputy Administrator

This memorandum report is to provide you with the results of an Agency-wide survey conducted by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in December 2008. The purpose of the survey was to assess the perception of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) employees concerning their relationship with OIG staff with regard to OIG access to Agency personnel and information. The survey results disclosed significant lack of knowledge about the Agency's policies with regard to interaction with OIG. There were also some troubling perceptions among the Agency staff about management's attitudes toward staff who talked to OIG staff without permission.

The OIG has not completed its analysis of the results or drawn any final conclusions. However, given that the survey responses indicate potentially significant problems, we are providing you the results for your information. We make no recommendations in this interim report and no response is necessary.

Should you have any questions, please contact Eric Lewis, Director, Special Reviews, at lewis.eric@epa.gov or 202-566-2664.

Purpose of Review

This information was collected in support of an Agency-wide evaluation of impediments to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) audits and evaluations. In July 2008, the OIG became aware that EPA pollution enforcement officials within the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance had formally instructed managers not to talk with the Government Accountability Office or the Agency's own OIG. This evidence, coupled with other documented impediments to OIG access to Agency information relative to EPA programs and operations, prompted this review. The objective of this Agency-wide survey was to assess the perception of EPA employees concerning their relationship with OIG staff with regard to OIG access to Agency personnel and information.

This is an interim report for information purposes only and does not represent any final conclusions by the OIG.

Background

The concept of accountability for public resources is key in the Nation's governing process and critical for a healthy democracy. To help ensure this accountability, Congress passed the *Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S. Code Appendix)*. Under authority provided by this Act, each Inspector General, is authorized under Section 6:

- To have access to all records, reports, audits, reviews, documents, papers, recommendations, or other material available to the applicable establishment which relate to programs and operations with respect to that which the Inspector General has responsibilities under this Act; and
- Whenever information or assistance requested under the above section is, in the judgment of an Inspector General, unreasonably refused or not provided, the Inspector General shall report the circumstances to the head of the establishment involved without delay.

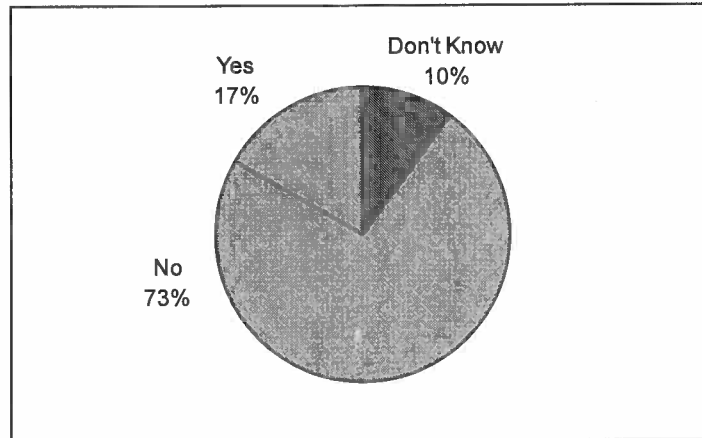
Scope and Methodology

As a part of our overall evaluation, we sponsored an Agency-wide survey December 15-19, 2008, using the Agency's mass-mailer system. Survey respondents were asked to respond to questions about their interaction(s) with the OIG and their knowledge and understanding of existing policies and procedures in their programs governing interaction with the OIG. The survey instrument was completed by 1,019 EPA employees and 31 others (such as contractor employees) during the 5-day period, for a total of 1,050 respondents. From these completed surveys we tallied the responses for each question.

Survey Results

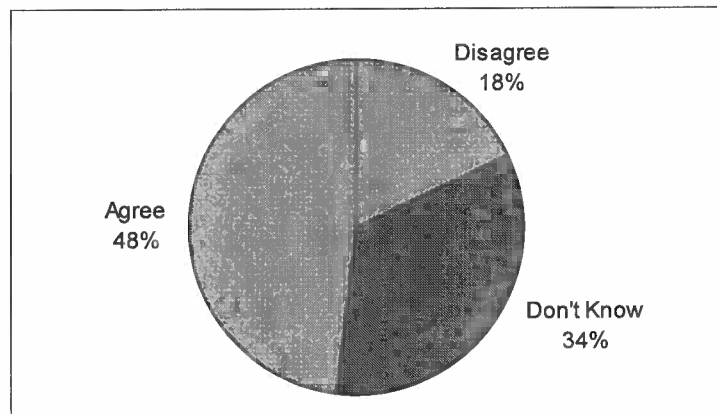
Complete survey results are provided in charts in Appendix A. Further, we believe that senior leadership should be aware of the responses we received for particular questions. The OIG found these employee perceptions to be problematic. These questions are:

Question 28: Are you aware of any policies or procedures regarding how you may interact with the OIG during an audit, evaluation, or investigation?



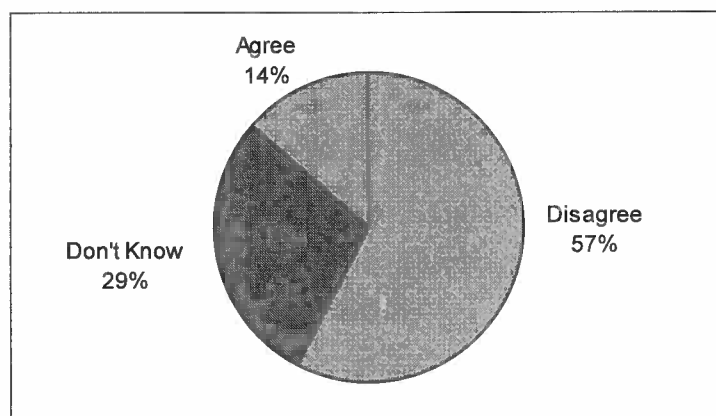
Issue: 83 percent of 1,050 respondents either are not aware or do not know of any policy or procedures governing interaction with the OIG. Numerous survey respondents also expressed the need for training in this area.

Question 29F: I may provide any kind of documents or written answers to questions or surveys to the OIG without asking permission from a supervisor (excluding documents that require specific security clearance(s)).



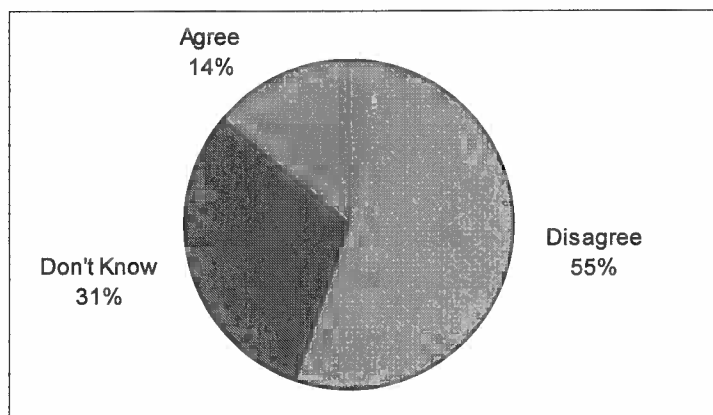
Issue: 18 percent of 1,050 respondents do not believe that they can provide documentation or written responses to the OIG without permission from supervisor. An additional 34 percent of the respondents do not know if this is allowed.

Question 29J: If I talk to OIG audit, evaluation or investigation without my supervisor's permission I may face retribution or negative personnel consequences.



Issue: 14 percent of 1,050 respondents believe they may face retribution if they talk to the OIG without permission from a supervisor. An additional 29 percent of the respondents do not know whether they will face retribution if they talk to the OIG without permission.

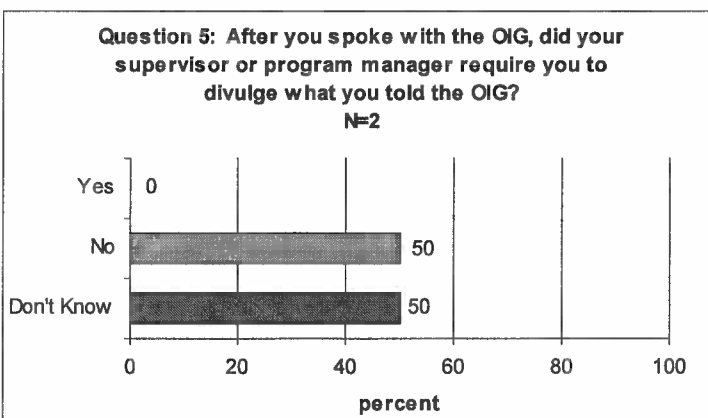
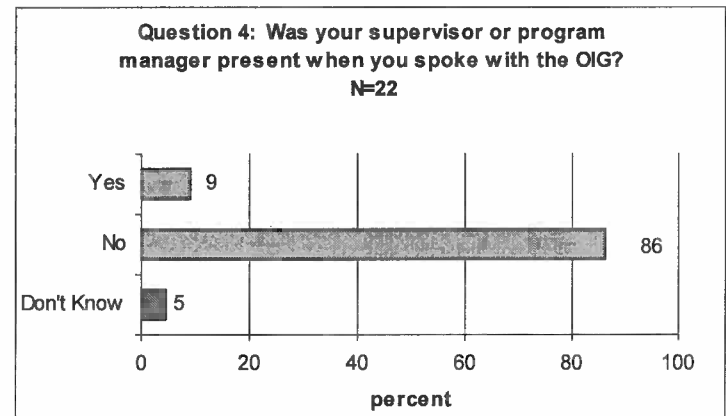
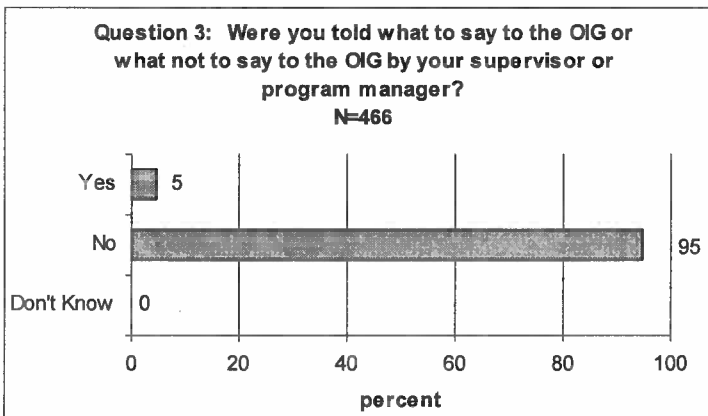
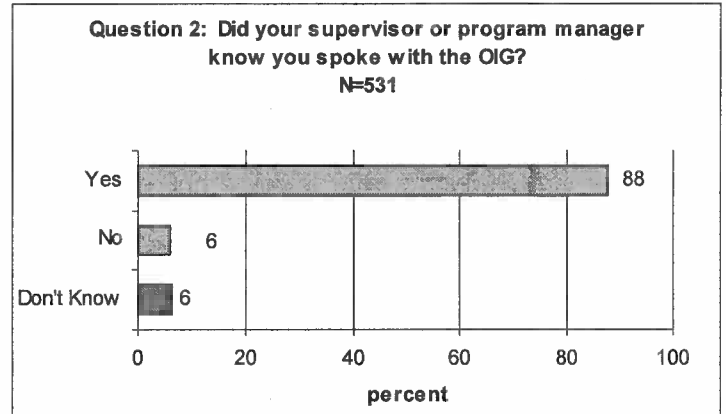
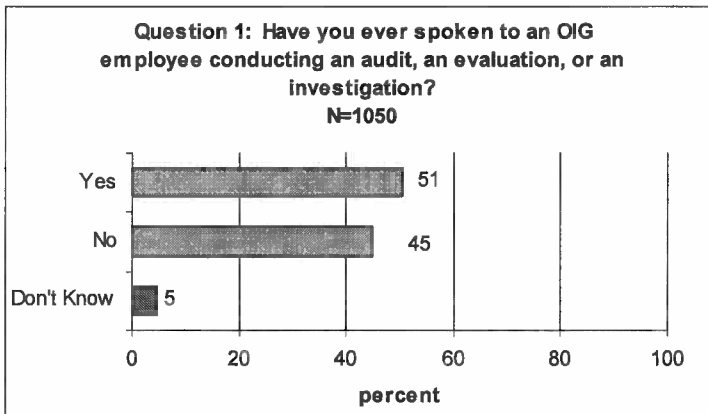
Question 29K: If I provide information or documents to an OIG audit, evaluation or investigation without my supervisor's permission I may face retribution or negative personnel consequences.

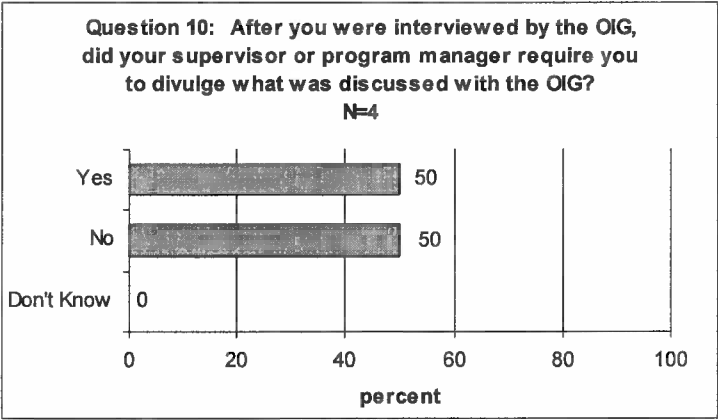
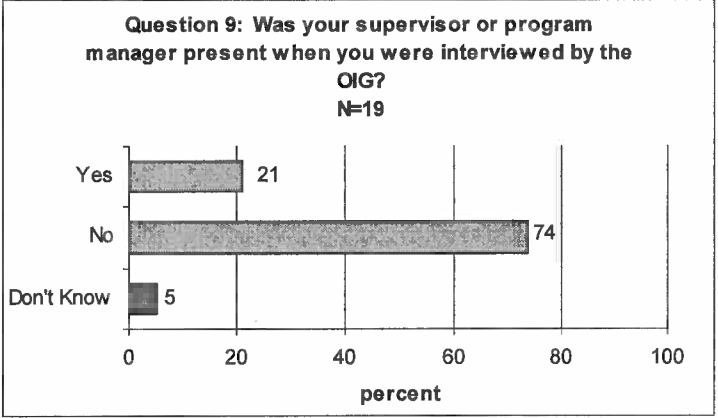
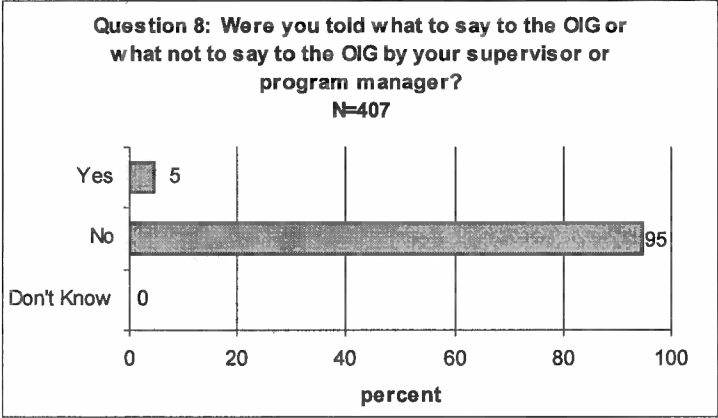
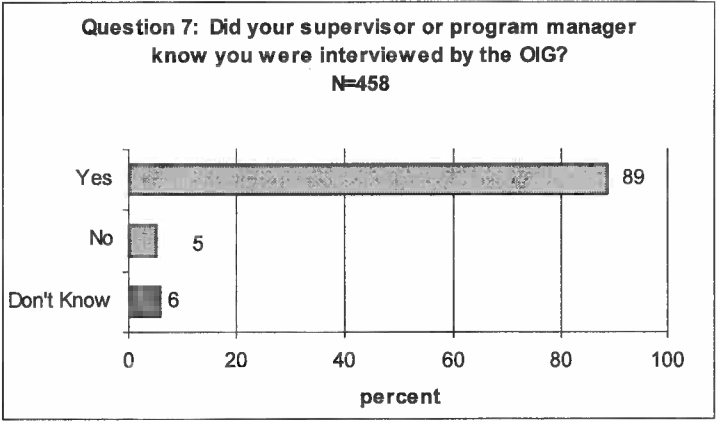
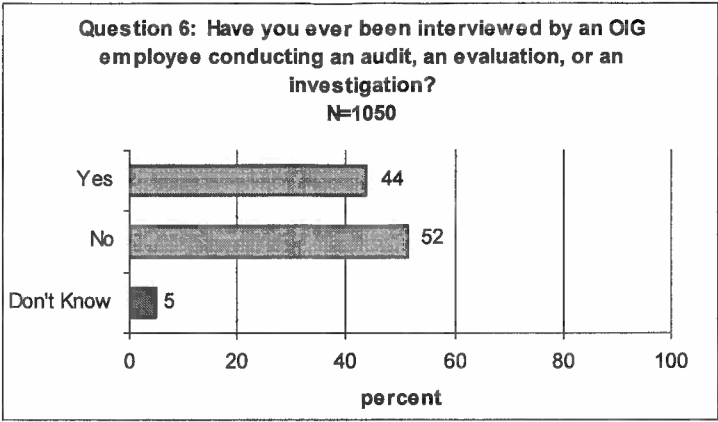


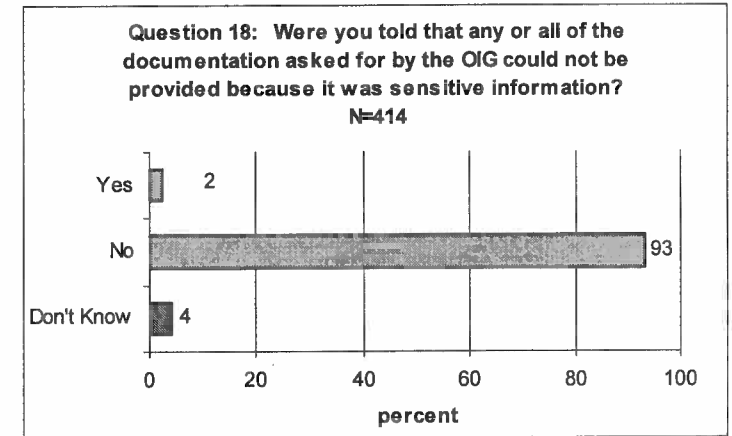
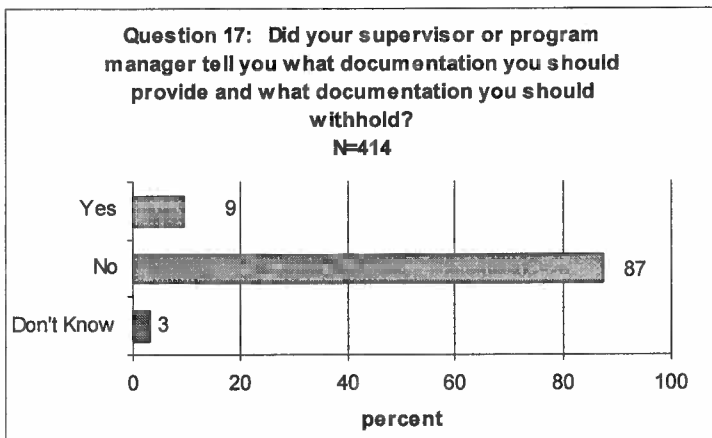
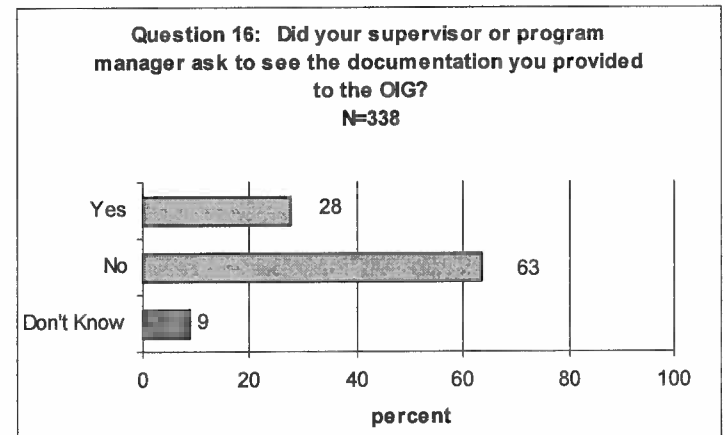
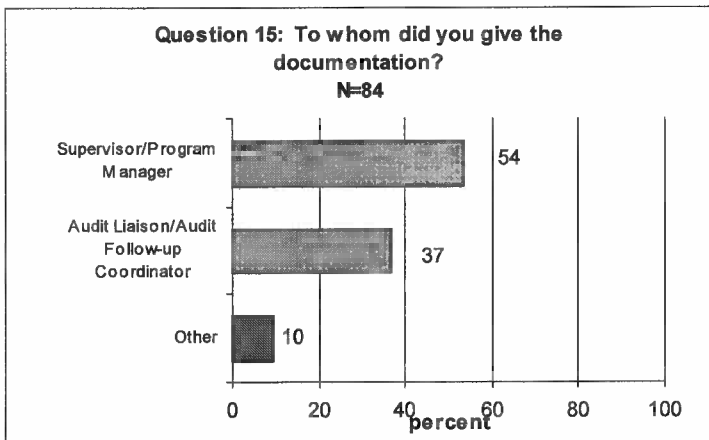
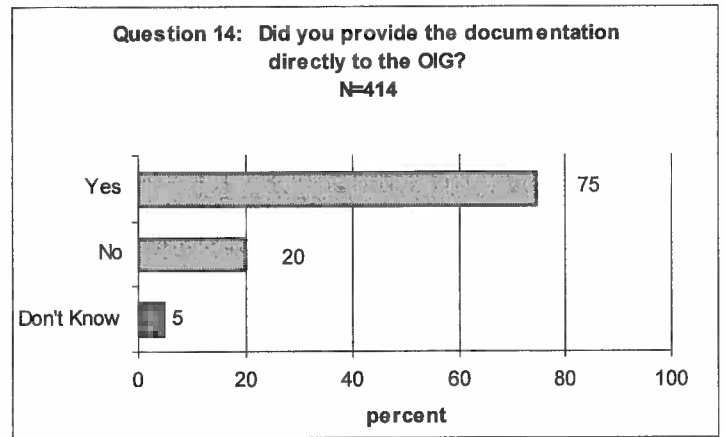
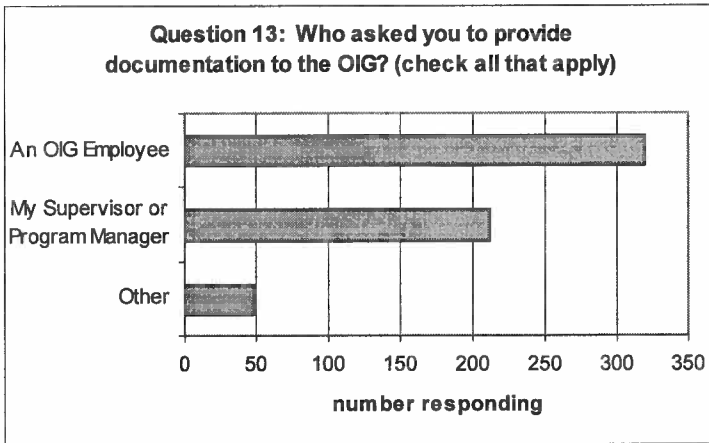
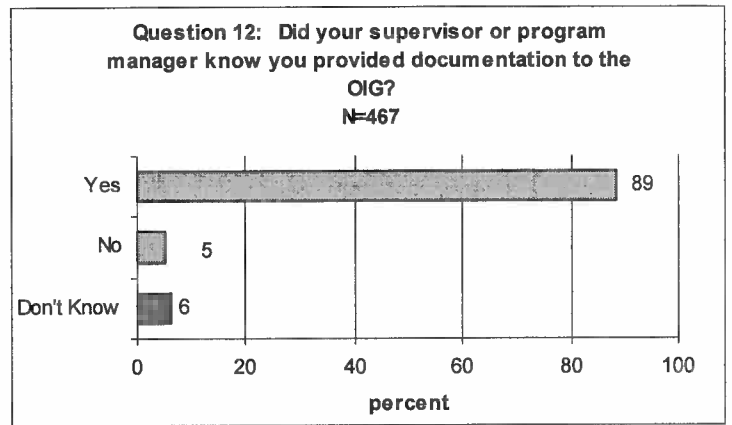
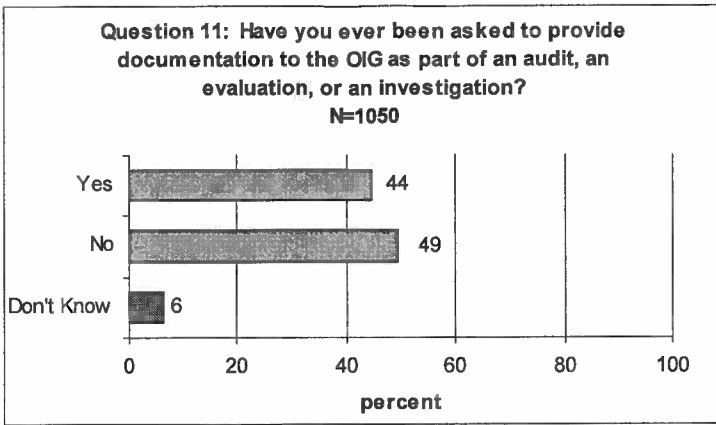
Issue: 14 percent of 1,050 respondents believe they may face retribution if they provide information or documents to the OIG without permission from a supervisor. An additional 31 percent of the respondents do not know whether they will face retribution if they provide documents or information to the OIG without permission.

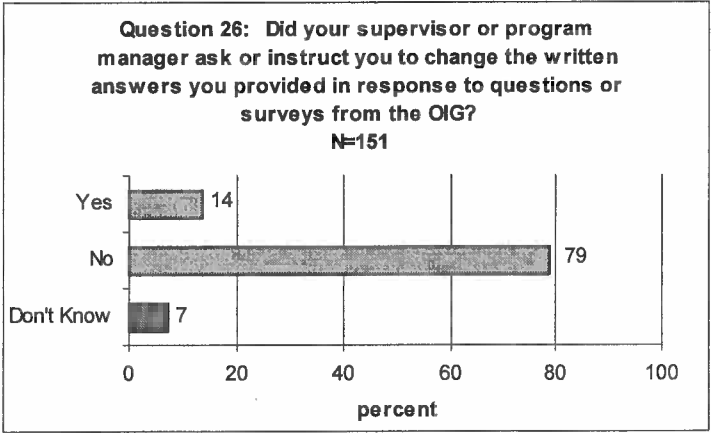
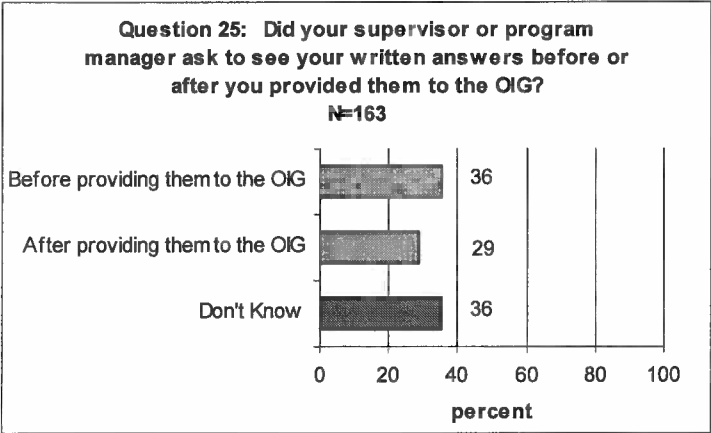
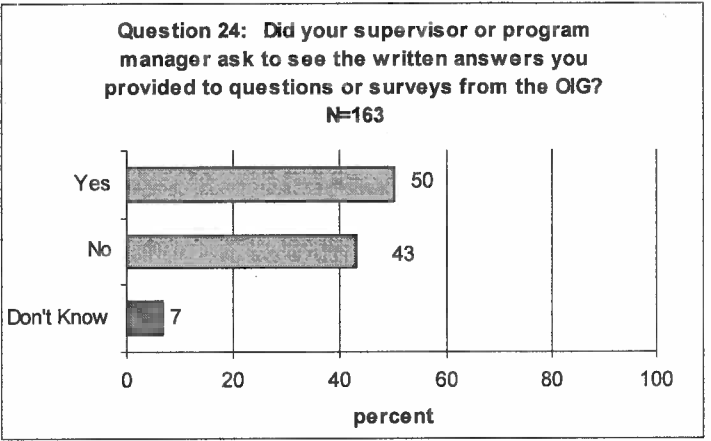
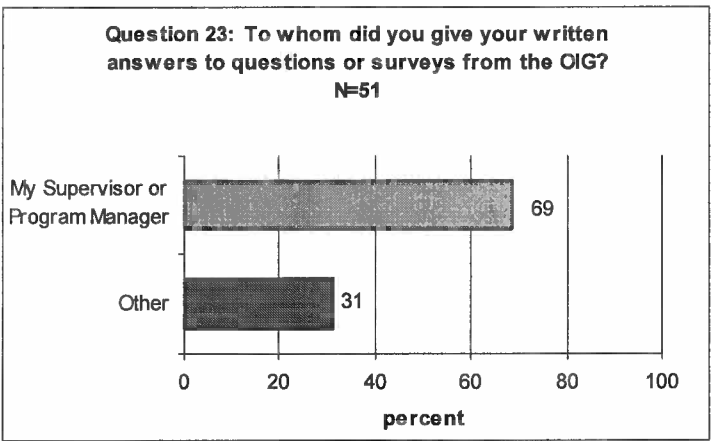
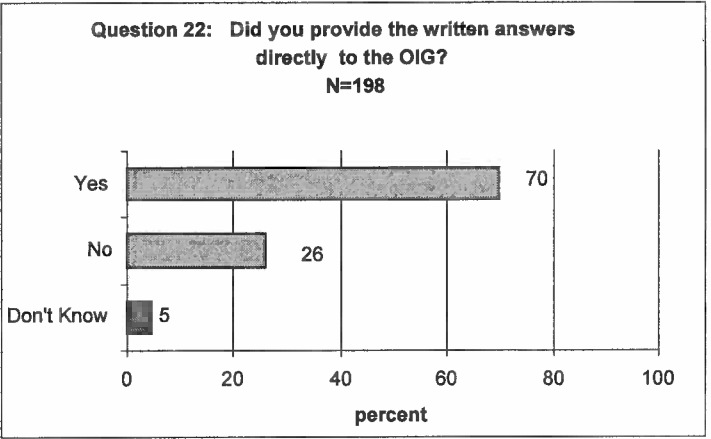
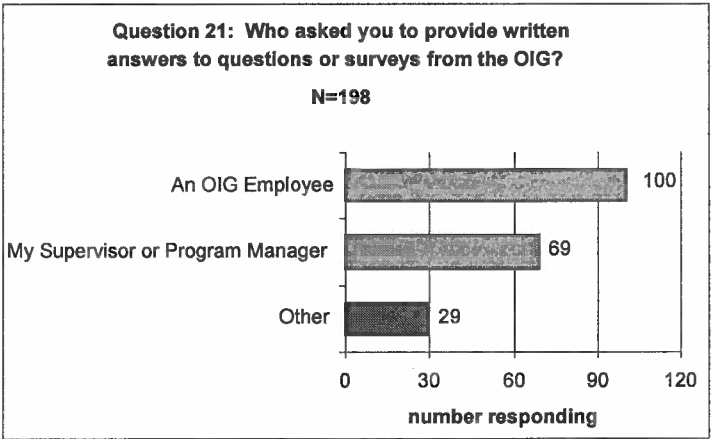
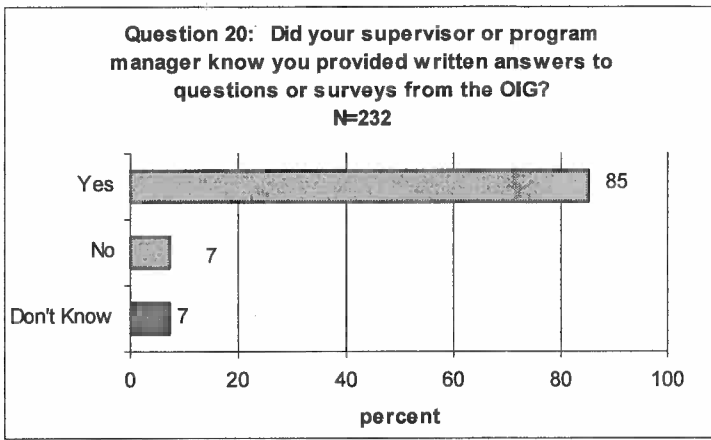
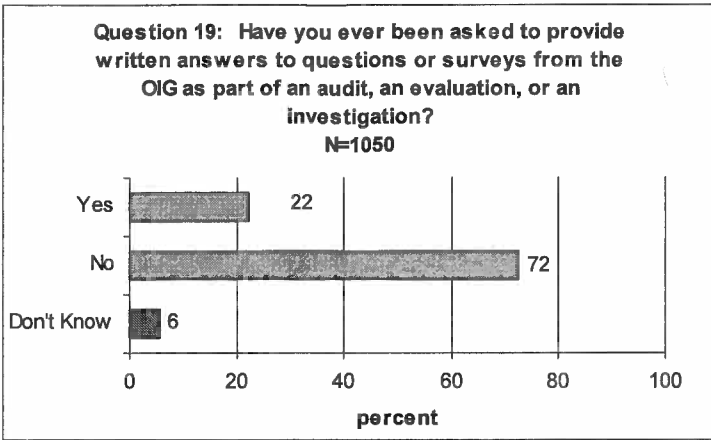
Responses to the OIG Survey on Access

- This survey was available to all EPA employees December 15-19, 2008.
- 1,050 employees completed the survey; participation was voluntary.
- “N” indicates the number of respondents to each question; percentages have been rounded.



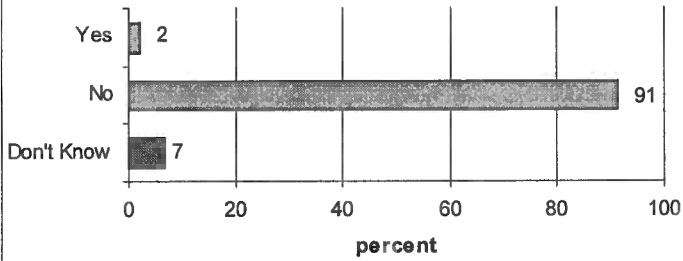






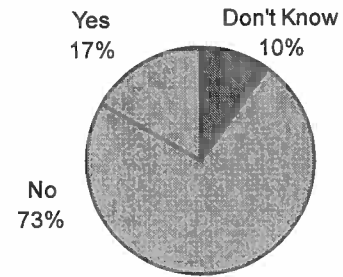
Question 27: Were you told that any of your written answers to questions or surveys from the OIG needed to be changed because they conveyed sensitive information?

N=150



Question 28: Are you aware of any policies or procedures regarding how you may interact with the OIG during an audit, evaluation, or investigation?

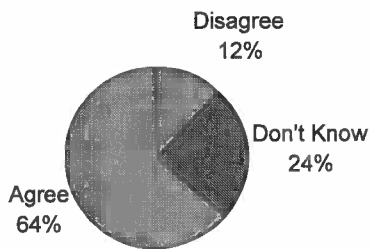
N=1050



Question 29: Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:

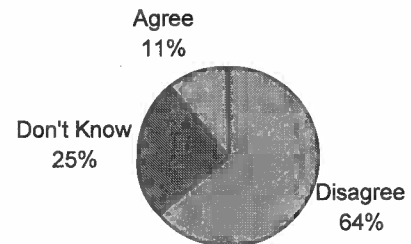
Question 29A: I do not need to ask a supervisor's permission to talk to the OIG .

N=1050



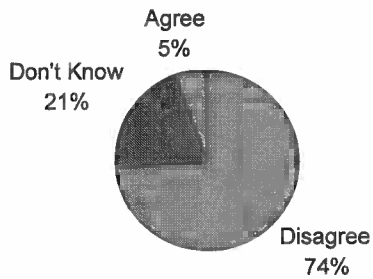
Question 29B: I must ask permission before I talk to the OIG.

N=1050



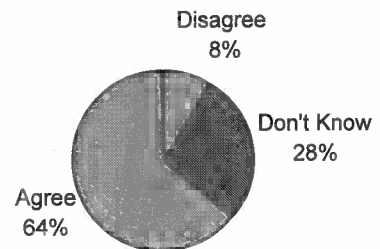
Question 29C: I should never talk directly to the OIG.

N=1050



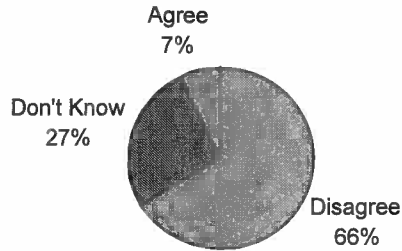
Question 29D: I may meet with the OIG alone.

N=1050



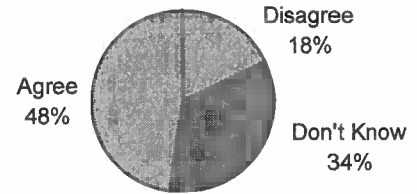
Question 29E: I may meet with the OIG only if my supervisor, program manager, audit liaison, or other Agency representative is present.

N=1050



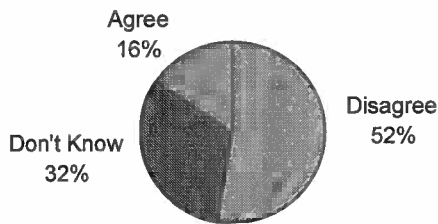
Question 29F: I may provide any kind of documents or written answers to questions or surveys to the OIG without asking permission from a supervisor (excluding documents that require specific security clearance(s)).

N=1050



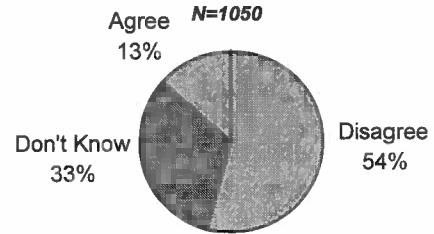
Question 29G: I must ask my supervisor before providing the OIG with any documents or written answers to questions or surveys (excluding documents that require specific security clearance(s)).

N=1050



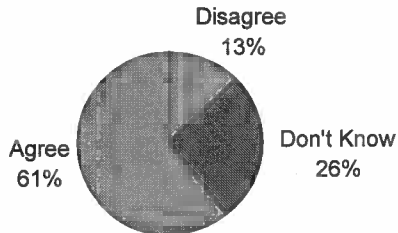
Question 29H: I must give all documents or written answers to questions or surveys to my supervisor, program manager, audit liaison, or other Agency representative and that person will give them to the OIG.

N=1050



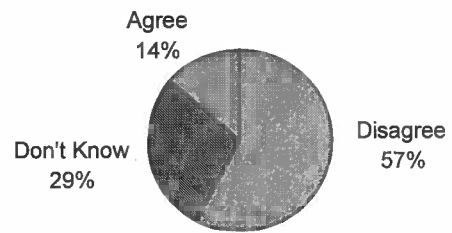
Question 29I: I may talk or provide information to an OIG audit, evaluation or investigation without my supervisor's permission and not fear retribution or negative personnel action.

N=1050



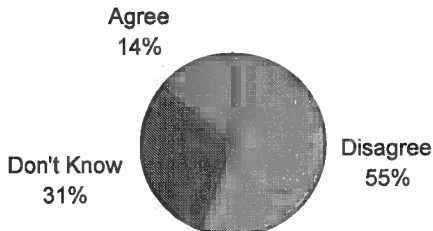
Question 29J: If I talk to OIG audit, evaluation or investigation without my supervisor's permission I may face retribution or negative personnel consequences.

N=1050



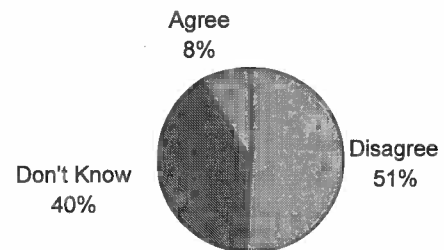
Question 29K: If I provide information or documents to an OIG audit, evaluation or investigation without my supervisor's permission I may face retribution or negative personnel consequences.

N=1050



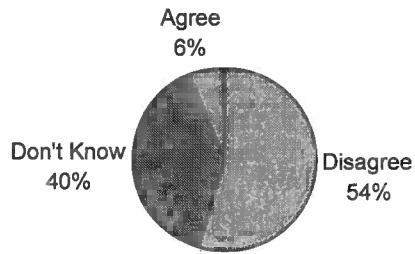
Question 29L: Management limits or delays information requested by OIG.

N=1050



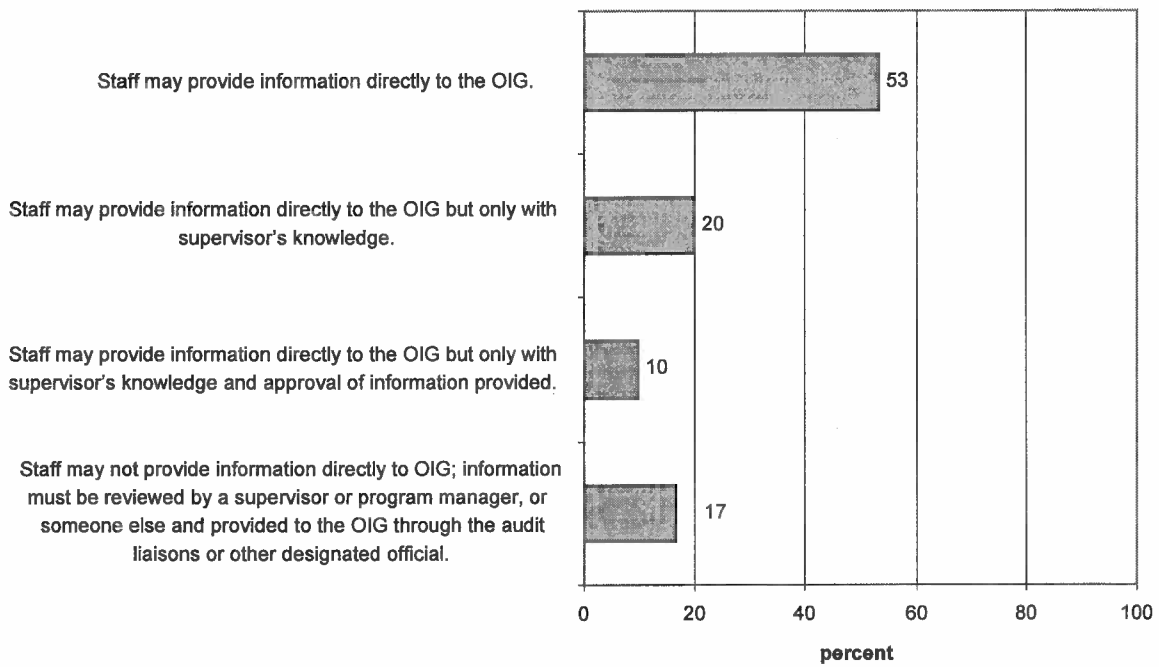
Question 29M: Management knowingly hinders OIG access to information.

N=1050



Question 30: Which statement best describes your organization's attitude towards the OIG (choose only one)?

N=1050



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