

2012 Smithsonian Employee Perspective Survey
Office of Policy and Analysis
Smithsonian Institution
December 2012

1. Survey Background

The first Smithsonian Institution-wide employee survey was administered in 2000 followed by surveys in 2004, and 2007 through 2012. The 2000 and 2002 surveys used paper questionnaires although an email questionnaire was administered to employees of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO) in 2002. Since 2007, surveys have been primarily web-based surveys with supplemental paper questionnaires for the small number of employees who do not have Smithsonian emails.

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2004 mandated that all federal government agencies administer an annual survey of federal employee opinions with questions prescribed by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) (5 CFR Part 250). Every two years, in even years between 2002 and 2008, OPM administered the Federal Human Capital Survey (FHCS) to a sample of federal employees. Beginning in 2010, OPM declared that a single survey, the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS) would be administered every year.

While the Smithsonian Institution is a federal trust entity, it complies with provisions of federal law in working on budget and personnel matters with the Office of Management and the Budget (OMB) and OPM. The Smithsonian chose in 2000, when the first Smithsonian Employee Survey (SEPS) was administered, to include Institutional trust employees as well as federal employees. The 2012 Smithsonian Employee Perspective Survey (2011 SEPS) included employees of Smithsonian Enterprises (SE) and Tropical Research Institute (STRI) employees in Panama, as in previous surveys.

Since the 2012 EVS results have not been reported yet, 2011 EVS results are used in this report as benchmarks to compare Smithsonian federal employee perspectives with those of federal employees working elsewhere.

Interpretation of results of the 2011 SEPS is based on favorable responses to survey questions. The “Favorable Score” is the combined percentage of responding Smithsonian employees who responded that they “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” with a survey item. Employees who indicated that they did not agree or disagree were combined with those who disagreed in computing the favorable score.

2. Employee cooperation rate

Of the 5842 Smithsonian employees invited to participate in the 2011 SEPS, 3714 answered the survey. Thus, the final cooperation rate was 64 percent, substantially higher than the 55 percent cooperation rate in 2011, 49 percent in 2010, 40 percent cooperation

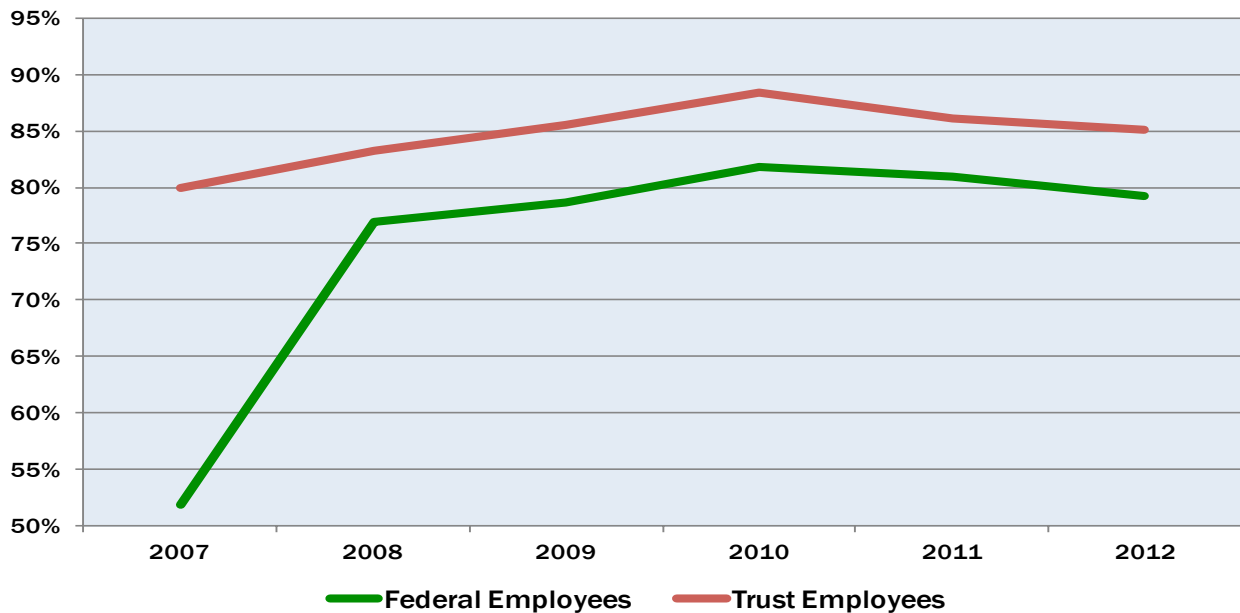
in 2009, and 45 percent in 2008. By way of comparison, the 2012 Smithsonian employee cooperation rate greatly exceeded the overall federal employee cooperation rate of 46 percent. The mean length of time spent taking the survey was 26.8 minutes with a median time of 24.0 minutes.

Reminder messages, and supporting messages from Senior Leaders and unit Directors, increased the number of responses. Statistically, the participation rate was very good. By Unit, participation varied from a high of 100 percent of employees (several units) to 44 percent (Office of Protection Services (OPS)). OPS is the second largest workforce in the Smithsonian, and it has substantially increased its cooperation rate over the last three years from 30 percent in 2010 to 37 percent in 2011 and this year's 44 percent. The largest unit is the Office of Facilities Management and Reliability (OFMR); it increased its cooperation rate to 61 percent from 54 percent in 2011. These two units employ roughly 30 percent of all Smithsonian employees, so their increases in employee cooperation played a significant role in the higher Institution-wide cooperation rate.

3. Employee satisfaction

Overall employee job satisfaction, is measured by responses to the survey question, "Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job?" Overall job satisfaction, across all Smithsonian employees, again remained very high with 81 percent of the survey respondents giving a "favorable response." Figure 1 shows how Smithsonian federal and Trust employee responses have remained high since 2008, after increasing significantly between 2007 and 2008 (at the time of a turnover in Senior leadership). There has been a small decrease from the high in 2010.

Figure 1
Job Satisfaction: Smithsonian Federal and Trust Employees
2007 to 2012



According to calculations by the Partnership for Public Service (PPS), the Smithsonian tied for third as the Best Place To Work among medium sized “federal” agencies after ranking fourth among all large “federal” agencies in 2011.¹ PPS first calculated “Best Places to Work” (BPTW) ranks for federal agencies in 2009 using the 2008 FHCS scores² in which the Smithsonian did not participate. PPS based its ranks on three questions: (a) I recommend my organization as a good place to work; (b) Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your job; and (c) Considering everything, how satisfied are you with your organization?

4. Interpretation of Results

The Appendix Table, “2012 Smithsonian Employee Perspective Survey Results by Smithsonian Workforce Components,” presents the questions and scores for each of the survey questions in the 2012 SEPS³ broken into the several Smithsonian workforce components (Federal, Trust, Smithsonian Enterprises, and Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) employed under Panamanian law. It also provides comparisons with the 2011 and 2010 SEPS and 2011 federal EVS.

Areas of Strong Scores in the 2012 SEPS

Twenty six 2012 SEPS questions achieved favorable scores with at least 80 percent of responding employees clicking on “Strongly Agree” or “Agree.” These most favorable questions are presented below in order of favorable scores:

1. When needed, I am willing to put in the extra effort to get a job done.
2. I am always looking for ways to do my job better.
3. The work I do is important to the Smithsonian.
4. I know what is expected of me on the job.
5. I like the kind of work I do.
6. The overall quality of work done by my immediate work unit is very good.
7. In the last six months, my supervisor has talked with me about my performance.
8. In my Unit, employees are protected from health and safety hazards on the job.
9. I know how my work relates to the Smithsonian's goals and priorities.

¹ BPTW ranks in 2012 were calculated for full- and part-time, permanent, federal employees only. If Trust and other employees had been included, the Smithsonian’s score may have been slightly higher but not its rank. The three federal agencies that ranked higher were the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Government Accountability Office (GAO), and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). In 2012, these three agencies were moved to the medium category. FDIC was first in 2012 with a score of 83.4. GAO was second at 75.7, 0.2 points ahead of NRC and the Smithsonian at 75.5.

² The Smithsonian did not participate in 2009.

³ The 2012 SEPS questions generally had five degrees of agreement (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Disagree nor Agree, Agree, and Strongly Agree). “Do Not Know” and “Not Applicable” were excluded from the base N used to calculate the favorable score in 2011. The results for all questions are presented in the Appendix Table, “2012 Smithsonian Employee Perspective Survey Results by Smithsonian Workforce Components.”

10. My immediate work unit has the job-relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals.
11. OCIO Information Technology staff is responsive in handling my service concerns regarding information technology or computers that I use in my work.
12. My supervisor treats me with respect.
13. I am encouraged to achieve positive results.
14. I have enough information to do my job well.
15. The people in my immediate work unit cooperate to get the job done.
16. In my most recent performance appraisal, I understood what I had to do to be rated at different performance levels.
17. I am fully satisfied with my opportunity to participate in preparing my annual performance plan.
18. My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues.
19. My supervisor works well with employees of diverse backgrounds.
20. I have a basic understanding of the Smithsonian brand.
21. I am satisfied with Smithsonian occupational health and wellness programs.
22. My supervisor recognizes and acknowledges my positive work contributions.
23. Overall, I am satisfied with my job.
24. My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.
25. Employees in my immediate work unit share job knowledge with each other.
26. My supervisor listens to what I have to say.

Two other questions, with smaller numbers of respondents who actually participated in the programs, fell into this highly favorable range: “I am satisfied with Smithsonian child care programs” and “I am satisfied with Alternative Work Schedules (AWS) programs in my unit.”

The year-to-year comparison of this list with the top questions in the 2011 SEPS shows that every one of last year’s most favorable questions is included in this year’s list. A quick perusal of the 2012 list shows that the overall Smithsonian workforce is committed to the Institution, feels supported by Smithsonian’s work environment, has a good relationship with supervisors, and is generally satisfied with working at the Smithsonian.

Areas of Weak Scores in the 2012 SEPS

2012 SEPS questions with the least favorable scores, that is, the lowest percentages answering “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” are presented below in order from the least favorable score (all below 60%):⁴

1. I am satisfied with my opportunity to get a better job in the Smithsonian.
2. Individual pay raises depend on how well individual employees perform their jobs.
3. Grade promotions in my Unit are based on merit.

⁴ An additional question asked of a very small subset of Smithsonian managers also fell below 60 percent, “The Office of Advancement is responsive to my concerns and needs regarding fund raising and development.”

4. In my Unit, positive and negative individual performances are recognized in a meaningful way.
5. My Unit's employees who provide high quality services and products to customers are rewarded in meaningful ways.
6. Creativity and innovation are generally rewarded in my Unit.
7. Recognition and awards in my Unit depend on how well employees perform their jobs.
8. Smithsonian leaders and managers support implementation of new ideas and approaches. (new question in the 2012 SEPS)
9. Overall, I am satisfied with my compensation.
10. Smithsonian leaders and managers promote communication and cooperation across units in the Smithsonian.
11. I have sufficient resources to get my job done.
12. My Unit's employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes.
13. I believe that the results of this survey will be used to make the Smithsonian a better place to work.
14. My supervisor takes steps to address a poor performer who cannot or will not improve.

As with the most favorable scores, this set of questions almost entirely covers the least favorable questions in the 2011 SEPS. One question among the least favorable scores in 2011 had a favorable score above 60 percent in 2011, but its score in 2012 was higher than this cutting point in 2012: "Managers support collaboration across Smithsonian units to accomplish work objectives."

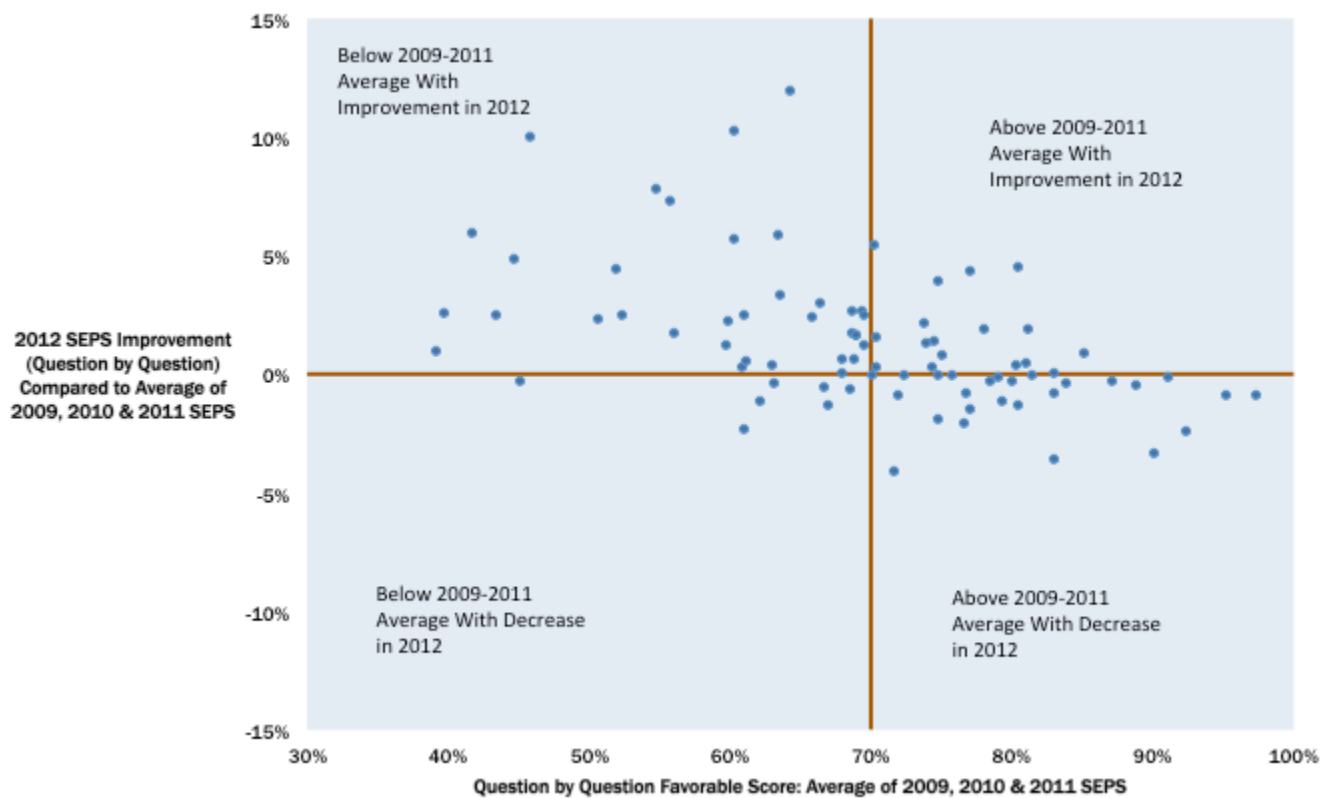
Improving scores in the areas of awards and compensation might be easier in a less fiscally constricted time; however, unit managers can find creative ways to recognize quality achievements with meaningful, non-cash rewards or cash bonuses when possible. In some cases, greater transparency in the distribution of rewards might increase the favorable scores. Disturbingly, several least favorable questions relate to "customer service," "creativity" and "innovation." Approaching the question of opportunities to get a better job at the Smithsonian Institution might require a pan Institutional approach due to the small size of and small turnover in many units, perhaps detailing employees to other units to provide career growth.

Improvement in 2012 Favorable Scores Compared with Past Surveys

At first glance, the fact that the sets of most-favorable questions and least-favorable questions in 2012 and 2012 may suggest that little is happening in the opinions of the Smithsonian workforce. In fact, the reality is that substantial changes have happened. Figure 2 illustrates this observation. For all SEPS questions that have been asked in each SEPS survey since 2009, Figure 2 shows the average favorable score across the 2009, 2010 and 2011 SEPS on the horizontal axis. The vertical axis shows improvement in the 2012 SEPS favorable score from the 2009-2011 average. That is the vertical axis shows the difference between the 2012 and the average for 2009 to 2011.

The vertical cutting line at 70 percent (the average favorable score over all questions) and the horizontal cutting line at zero percent divide Figure X into four quadrants: (1) Below the 2009-2011 average and improvement (positive change); (2) Below the 2009-2011 average and decrease (negative change); (3) Above the 2009-2011 average and decrease (negative change); and (4) Above the 2009-2011 average and improvement (positive change).

Figure 2
2012 Change From Average Federal Employee Favorable Score By SEPS Question



Quadrant 1, showing questions with improvement, is heavily populated with questions showing moderate to substantial improvement. For example, five increased by five percent or more: Smithsonian leaders and managers promote communication and cooperation across units in the Smithsonian (10% improvement); Managers support collaboration across Smithsonian units to accomplish work objectives (8% improvement); Managers in my Unit promote communication among different work units (7% improvement); My Unit’s employees who provide high quality services and products to customers are rewarded in meaningful ways (6% improvement); and Creativity and innovation are generally rewarded in my Unit (5% improvement). Six questions showed

improvements of two percent or more: My Unit's employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes (4%); I have sufficient resources to get my job done (3%); Grade promotions in my Unit are based on merit (3%); In my Unit, positive and negative individual performances are recognized in a meaningful way (2%); Recognition and awards in my Unit depend on how well employees perform their jobs (2%); and My supervisor takes steps to address a poor performer who cannot or will not improve (2%). Only two questions showed improvements of one percent or less: Individual pay raises depend on how well individual employees perform their jobs (1%) and I am satisfied with my opportunity to get a better job in the Smithsonian (a decline of less than 1%).

There were more declines among questions with above average favorable scores. Two of these represented attitudes towards jobs: My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment (4% decline) and I like the kind of work I do (3 % decline). One represented an opinion about the working environment, "Within the past twelve months, I have heard language, or witnessed behavior, in my workplace that I considered insensitive to my identity" (4% decline). Some of the declines may represent random variance in responses, the larger number of participating employees, or the coding rule of including "Neither agree nor disagree" with unfavorable responses.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement, an important predictor of employee satisfaction, is higher at the Smithsonian than in federal agencies generally. Four areas of employee engagement are related to questions in the 2012 SEPS:⁵

- ✓ *Employee development and training*—69 percent favorable, a trivial change from 2011 (70%) and 2010 (68%).⁶
- ✓ *Opportunity for employee initiative*—75 percent favorable, unchanged from 2011 (75%) and 2010 (74%).⁷
- ✓ *Lack of role clarity*—87 percent, essentially unchanged from 2011 (86%) and 2010

⁵ The Path to Employee Engagement (2010), Forum for People Performance Management and Measurement, Medill Integrated Marketing Communications, Northwestern University, http://performanceforum.org/associations/12672/files/Path_to_Employee_Engagement.pdf, accessed July 30, 2011. The specific questions used to calculate employee engagement are available from OP&A.

⁶ The four SEPS questions used to calculate the employee development score were: "My supervisor supports employee development.," "My supervisor provides employees with opportunities to demonstrate their leadership skills," "I am satisfied with my choices, and the quality, of Smithsonian provided training to improve my performance in my present job," and "My supervisor regularly evaluates my training needs for my present job."

⁷ The five SEPS questions in the opportunity for employee initiative score were: "I am satisfied with my involvement in decisions that affect my work," "I am always looking for ways to do my job better," "I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things," "My Unit's employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes," and "My supervisor recognizes and acknowledges my positive work contributions." A related question was not included in the calculation since it was only asked on SEPS, not the EVS: "I am fully satisfied with my opportunity to participate in preparing my annual performance plan."

(88%).⁸

- ✓ *Supervisor willingness to be influenced by employees*—77 percent favorable, again, unchanged from 2011 (78%) and 2010 (77%).⁹

Best Smithsonian Unit in Which to Work

The Partnership for Public Service annually gives awards to high scoring federal agencies as the “Best Places to Work in the Federal Government” based on employee responses to three questions in the employee surveys. Using three related questions regarding Smithsonian units, a score was calculated for units with 15 or more valid responses. The “Best Unit to Work in the Smithsonian Scores” (BUTW) is the average of the following variables: (1) I would recommend my Unit as a good place to work; (2) I would recommend my Unit as a good place to work; and (3) Overall, I am satisfied with my job. (See Figure 3)

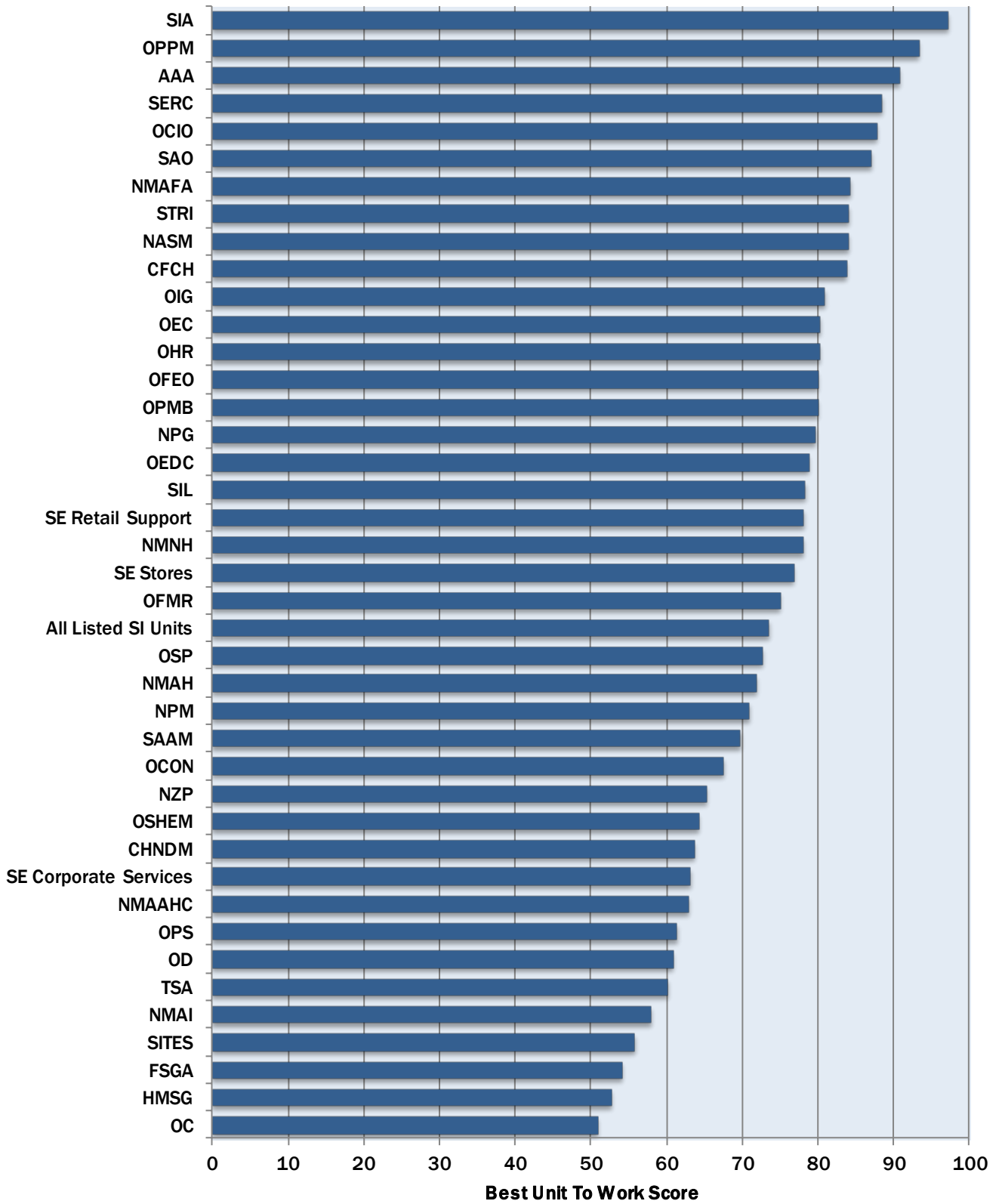
The BUTW scores for units (with more than 15 respondents) are shown in Figure 3. According to their employees, the six best Smithsonian units in which to work are:

- ✓ SIA
- ✓ OPPM
- ✓ AAA
- ✓ SERC
- ✓ OCIO
- ✓ SAO.

⁸ Lack of role clarity was calculated from two questions: “I know what is expected of me on the job,” and “I know how my work relates to the Smithsonian’s goals and priorities.”

⁹ Influence by employees was calculated from seven questions: “Overall, my immediate supervisor is an effective supervisor,” “My supervisor provides constructive suggestions to improve my job performance,” “I have trust and confidence in my supervisor,” “Discussions with my supervisor about my performance are worthwhile,” “My supervisor treats me with respect,” “My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues,” and “My supervisor listens to what I have to say.”

Figure 3
Best Smithsonian Units in Which to Work Scores



Smithsonian workforce characteristics

- Few Smithsonian employees use Smithsonian child care, telework regularly, or work Alternative Work Schedules:
- Child care—Two percent of Federal and Trust employees reported using Smithsonian child care, the same as in 2011 and 2010—98 percent favorable.
- Teleworking—26 percent reported teleworking at least infrequently, a substantial increase from 21 percent in 2011 and 2010—76 percent favorable, an improvement from 69 percent in 2011 and 62 percent in 2010.
- Alternative work schedules (AWS)—20 percent reported working an AWS, essentially the same as 2011 (19%) and 2010 (21%)—91 percent favorable, essentially unchanged from 2011 (92%).
 - Federal employees were more likely to say that they have a job where they must be physically present.
 - Trust employees were more likely to say that no manager had explained AWS to them or they chose not to use AWS.
 - Science white-collar employees were most likely to work an alternative work schedule.
 - Employees in the trade and labor occupations were least likely to work an AWS.
 - White-collar (Science and non-science) employees were more likely to say that they chose to not work an AWS.

About one in six federal or trust employees indicated that she or he expected to retire (3%) or leave the Smithsonian workforce within the next year (14%), slightly fewer than in 2011 (19%). One-quarter of employees under 30 years old (26%) indicated that they would be leaving within the year, fewer than in 2011 (32%). One-fifth of those between 30 and 45 indicated an intention to separate (23%), also less than in 2011 (26%). Conversely, the proportion of employees over 65 who indicated that they expected to retire within the next five years decreased to 44 percent from half in 2011 (54%). More than one-quarter of employees (28%) between 55 and 65 said that they would retire within the next five years compared to a third (35%) in 2011.

Alignment between employees and managers/supervisors

Smithsonian employees and Smithsonian executives, managers and supervisors answered many survey questions very differently. Twenty-one questions related to opinions about working conditions in their work units showed statistically significant differences in opinions when answers were dichotomized into favorable (Very satisfied and Satisfied) and unfavorable responses.¹⁰ The questions in each SEPS subsection, beginning with the least aligned responses are:

¹⁰ A significant chi square statistic was used to indicate that non-supervisory employee distribution of positive and negative scores is different from that for supervisors and above. It did not show which is more positive, or the degree of positive scores for either category.

- Personal Job Satisfaction
 - Overall, I am satisfied with my compensation.
 - I am satisfied with my opportunity to get a better job in the Smithsonian.
 - My job makes good use of my knowledge and abilities.
 - My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.
 - Overall, I am satisfied with my job.
 - Considering everything, I am satisfied with the Smithsonian.
 - The work I do is important to the Smithsonian.
 - I like the kind of work I do.

- Smithsonian-wide Work Environment
 - Prohibited personnel practices are not tolerated.
 - The Smithsonian's Secretary maintains high standards of honesty and integrity.
 - Arbitrary action, personal favoritism and coercion for partisan political purposes are not tolerated.
 - Senior leaders demonstrate support for work-life programs.
 - Smithsonian policies and programs promote diversity in the workplace.
 - I can disclose a suspected violation of any law, rule or regulation without fear of reprisal.
 - I am satisfied with Smithsonian Employee Assistance Programs.
 - I understand how my work will support the new Smithsonian Strategic Plan as it is implemented in the future
 - I know how my work relates to the Smithsonian's goals and priorities.
 - The Smithsonian's Secretary generates high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.
 - I have a basic understanding of the Smithsonian brand.

- Unit Level Work Environment
 - Grade promotions in my Unit are based on merit.
 - Individual pay raises depend on how well individual employees perform their jobs.
 - Recognition and awards in my Unit depend on how well employees perform their jobs.
 - Creativity and innovation are generally rewarded in my Unit.
 - Employees in my Unit actively engage in identifying opportunities and developing innovative ideas.
 - I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my Unit.
 - Differences among individuals are respected and valued by employees within my Unit.
 - My Unit's employees who provide high quality services and products to customers are rewarded in meaningful ways.

- In my Unit, positive and negative individual performances are recognized in a meaningful way.
 - My Unit successfully accomplishes its mission.
 - Managers in my Unit promote communication among different work units.
 - In my Unit, employees are protected from health and safety hazards on the job.
 - I would recommend my Unit as a good place to work.
 - Considering everything, I am satisfied with my Unit.
 - Generally, employees, supervisors, and managers in my unit are civil, respectful, and courteous in dealing with each other.
 - My Unit's employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes.
 - My Unit has prepared employees for potential security threats.
 - My Unit's Director maintains high standards of honesty and integrity.
 - Managers in my Unit support collaboration across work units to accomplish work objectives.
- Supervisor
 - My supervisor takes steps to address a poor performer who cannot or will not improve.
 - My supervisor provides employees with opportunities to demonstrate their leadership skills.
 - In the last six months, my supervisor has talked with me about my performance.
 - My supervisor regularly evaluates my training needs for my present job.
- Immediate Work Environment
 - I have sufficient resources to get my job done.
 - My workload is reasonable.
 - I am fully satisfied with my opportunity to participate in preparing my annual performance plan.
 - Employees in my immediate work unit share job knowledge with each other.
 - I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things.
 - I am encouraged to achieve positive results.
 - In my most recent performance appraisal, I understood what I had to do to be rated at different performance levels.
 - The skill level in my immediate work unit has improved in the last year.
 - My performance appraisal is a fair reflection of my performance.
 - Within the past twelve months, I have heard language, or witnessed behavior, in my workplace that I considered insensitive to my identity.
 - I am satisfied with my involvement in decisions that affect my work.

Significant Correlates of Job Satisfaction

Several questions in the 2012 SEPS directly related to job satisfaction, either within the Smithsonian overall or within the respondents' units. For each of these questions, other 2012 SEPS questions are significantly correlated with the job satisfaction questions. As such, raising the favorable scores across the correlated questions should also increase overall job satisfaction.

- ✓ Overall, I am satisfied with my job: (in order of significance)
 - My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.
 - Considering everything, I am satisfied with the Smithsonian.
 - Considering everything, I am satisfied with my Unit.
 - I like the kind of work I do.
 - opportunity for employee initiative score
 - I would recommend the Smithsonian as a good place to work.

- ✓ Considering everything, I am satisfied with the Smithsonian.
 - Considering everything, I am satisfied with my Unit.
 - My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.
 - The Smithsonian successfully accomplishes its mission.
 - I am satisfied with my opportunity to get a better job in the Smithsonian.
 - I am satisfied with the policies and practices enacted by the Smithsonian's senior leaders.
 - My job makes good use of my knowledge and abilities.
 - Overall, I am satisfied with my compensation.
 - The Smithsonian's Secretary maintains high standards of honesty and integrity.
 - I believe that the results of this survey will be used to make the Smithsonian a better place to work.

- ✓ I would recommend the Smithsonian as a good place to work.
 - I would recommend my Unit as a good place to work.
 - My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.
 - The Smithsonian successfully accomplishes its mission.
 - I am satisfied with the policies and practices enacted by the Smithsonian's senior leaders.
 - I am satisfied with my opportunity to get a better job in the Smithsonian.
 - My Unit's Director generates high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce.
 - Overall, I am satisfied with my compensation.
 - Employee lack of role clarity score
 - The work I do is important to the Smithsonian.

- ✓ Considering everything, I am satisfied with my Unit.
 - My Unit successfully accomplishes its mission.

- Generally, employees, supervisors, and managers in my unit are civil, respectful, and courteous in dealing with each other.
 - opportunity for employee initiative score
 - I have a high level of respect for my Unit's Director.
 - My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.
 - Overall, the manager directly above my immediate supervisor is an effective manager.
 - My work environment is civil and respectful.
 - I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my Unit.
 - Managers in my Unit support collaboration across work units to accomplish work objectives.
- ✓ Considering everything, I am satisfied with my Unit.
- ✓ My Unit successfully accomplishes its mission.
 - ✓ Generally, employees, supervisors, and managers in my unit are civil, respectful, and courteous in dealing with each other.
 - ✓ opportunity for employee initiative score
 - ✓ I have a high level of respect for my Unit's Director.
 - ✓ My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.
 - ✓ Overall, the manager directly above my immediate supervisor is an effective manager.
 - ✓ My work environment is civil and respectful.
 - ✓ I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my Unit.
 - ✓ Managers in my Unit support collaboration across work units to accomplish work objectives.
- ✓ I would recommend my Unit as a good place to work.
- My Unit successfully accomplishes its mission.
 - opportunity for employee initiative score
 - I have a high level of respect for my Unit's Director.
 - My work environment is civil and respectful.
 - Creativity and innovation are generally rewarded in my Unit.
 - Overall, the manager directly above my immediate supervisor is an effective manager.
 - Managers in my Unit support collaboration across work units to accomplish work objectives.
 - I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my Unit.
 - My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.
 - Differences among individuals are respected and valued by employees within my Unit.

Given these results, several conclusions stand out. First, attitudes towards working at the Smithsonian are correlated with opinions about working within a unit. A feeling of personal accomplishment and an opportunity for employee initiative regarding working decisions are important. Feeling that the Smithsonian or a Smithsonian unit is accomplishing its mission is correlated with satisfaction and willingness to recommend the Smithsonian or

unit as a place to work. Two issues mentioned earlier are correlated with satisfaction with the Smithsonian: opportunities to get a better job and compensation level. Within Smithsonian units, civility in the workplace, having respect for the unit director, real opportunities to improve work skills and support for collaboration across work units within units are correlated with satisfaction with working within units. These are the key factors in improving overall Smithsonian employee satisfaction.

As the Smithsonian continues to implement a new strategic plan emphasizing innovation, interdisciplinary work, and service, the Institution will benefit from a dedicated and energetic workforce. However, Smithsonian employees perceive a work environment in which they may not anticipate that they will earn full rewards and recognition for their efforts. And, there are significant gaps in the opinions of managers and non-management employees with managers having significantly more favorable opinions about working at the Smithsonian. Substantial improvements have been made across the Smithsonian through efforts of the Senior Smithsonian leadership and unit leadership that are reflected in the 2012 SEPS results.

5. How the survey was conducted:

The 2012 SEPS was administered online with web-based software to all Smithsonian employees with Smithsonian issued email accounts.

The online survey administered to all Smithsonian employees was bilingual with employees having an option to choose either English or Spanish wording. The human resources staff at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama translated English draft questions into Spanish.

A few Smithsonian employees do not have Institution- issued email accounts, including some STRI and SE retail staff. Links were provided so these employees could access the online, web survey via the Internet at training sites or home.

The survey period began on May 2, 2012, and ended on June 4, 2012, with non-respondents receiving up to three reminder messages.

6. Description of sample:

All federal, trust, and Smithsonian Enterprises employees who were employed as of the first pay period in March, 2012 were given an opportunity to participate in the 2012 survey (contractors, research associates, fellows, and other non-employees were not included). The results reported in this report do not include employees of the Friends of the National Zoo (FONZ), an independent non-profit organization that supports the Smithsonian National Zoo. Since the 2012 SEPS was a census of all employees, statistical sample statistics such as “margin of error” are not appropriate.

7. Survey items and response choices:

The survey questions are presented in the accompanying tables. Respondents could choose one of seven choices from the web survey: (1) Not applicable; (2) Strongly disagree; (3) Disagree; (4) Not sure whether to disagree or agree; (5) Agree; and (6) Strongly disagree, and (7) Do not know. Some respondents did not answer some questions. These responses were considered "Non responses." "Do not know," "Not applicable;" Non responses were excluded in calculating scores.

All respondents were asked three questions regarding Secretary Clough: (A) "I have a high level of respect for Secretary Clough," "The Secretary generates high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce," and The Secretary maintains high standards of honesty and integrity." The same three questions were asked in reference to the employee's unit director. Many Smithsonian Units report to an Under Secretary or another multi-unit leader responsible for several units. Employees were asked the same three questions about these leaders, with the appropriate leaders identified by name and position, based on Unit reporting relationships.

8. Response weighting:

Set of respondents displayed response biases when compared with a profile of all Smithsonian employees. Among those biases were proportionately fewer disadvantaged respondents, fewer males, fewer federal employees, and higher pay grade employees than reflected in the total profile. Consequently, the survey respondents were post-weighted so that the analysis data set accurately reflects the relative proportions of demographic categories. All percentages (except cooperation rates) were calculated using weighted data. All "counts" in the Appendix Table, "2012 Smithsonian Employee Perspective Survey Results by Smithsonian Workforce Components," present unweighted data.