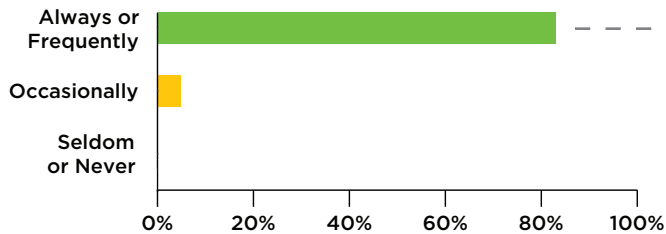
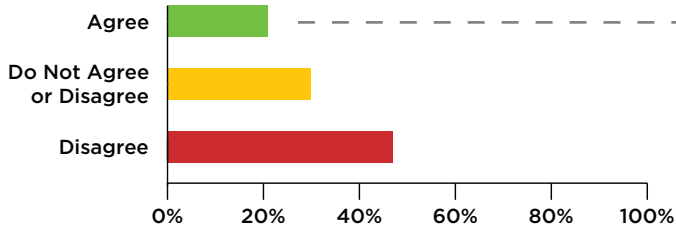


Surveying the US Food and Drug Administration

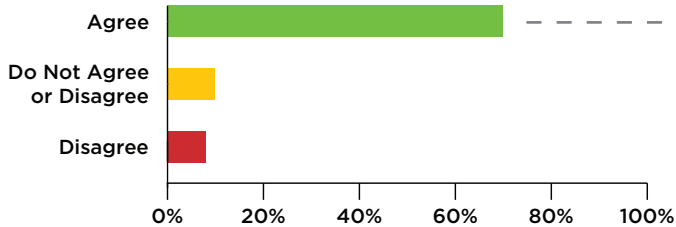
Scientist Voices under President Biden



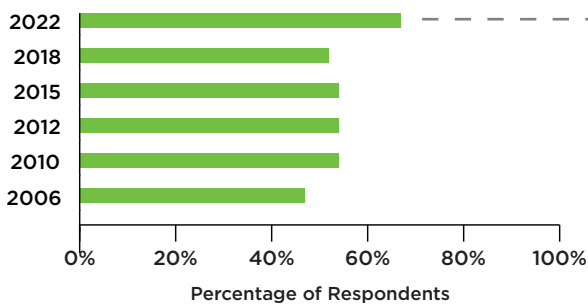
198 out of 239 FDA scientists agreed: the agency's actions were always or frequently consistent with its scientific findings.



While most disagreed, **50 out of 236 FDA scientists** felt that that senior leaders with conflicts of interest inappropriately influenced agency decisions.



177 out of 253 FDA scientists felt the agency's scientific work on COVID-19 consistently informed its policy decisions.



175 out of 261 FDA scientists, more than in any prior UCS survey, agreed: they can express concerns about the agency's work without fear of retaliation.

2018: 176 out of 337
2015: 873 out of 1,617
2012: 498 out of 928
2010: 281 out of 520
2006: 462 out of 982

See reverse for more information on this survey. For the purposes of this fact sheet, "Agree" includes both "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" response categories, and "Disagree" includes both "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree." For detailed breakdowns of responses and exact survey questions, please visit www.ucsusa.org/resources/scientists-survey-2022.

Our nation relies on government science and scientists to protect public health, public safety, and the environment. To that end, scientific integrity safeguards are necessary for ensuring that political, ideological, and financial interests do not undermine the use of science in federal decisionmaking, harming the public good in the process.

In September and October of 2022, the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) and the University of New Hampshire Survey

Center administered a survey to over 46,000 federal scientists across six government agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). UCS received survey responses from 276 FDA scientists and experts, for a total response rate of 2.11 percent. The results shed light on how FDA scientists and experts perceive their current working environment and the agency's ability for science to inform decisionmaking without political interference.

FDA Scientists Speak Out

Anonymous FDA survey respondents provided their views on scientific integrity, environmental justice efforts, and evidence-based decisionmaking.

"Policy changes instituted by the Biden administration have drastically created a condition where scientists at my agency feel protected; they do their work without worrying about political repercussions."

"Although there are whistleblower policies that are supposed to protect employees, it has been my experience that they are not often enforced adequately, and they do not shield the whistleblower from undue harm."

"Generally, I feel there are efforts, discussions, and some movements to address marginalized groups and communities. However, there still is resistance among majority populations which leads to obstacles and barriers preventing positive change from happening."

"The FDA holds up scientific integrity every day. We have entire Offices dedicated to identifying and rectifying fraud. Unfortunately, there are examples of us bending to political pressure, Sponsor pressure, or patient pressure in order to make bad decisions."

Codifying Scientific Integrity Principles

The work of FDA scientists helps ensure that the food we eat is free from contaminants and that the medicine we ingest or the medical devices we utilize are safe and effective. Although challenges exist, scientists surveyed at the FDA in 2022 had a positive perspective on scientific integrity and evidence-based decisionmaking. More than during the Obama or Trump administrations, FDA scientists said they had been adequately trained on the contents of FDA scientific integrity policies; more than during the past three administrations, FDA scientists reported feeling comfortable expressing concerns about the mission-driven work of the agency. However, one-fifth to one-fourth of FDA respondents in 2010, 2015, 2018, and 2022 reported that senior decisionmakers with conflicts of interest inappropriately influenced decisionmaking. It is concerning that a number of FDA scientists over the years felt that political and business interests inappropriately influenced agency decisionmaking.

Congress should pass the Scientific Integrity Act to strengthen its scientific integrity protections. Agency leadership should remind management and staff of the definition of political interference and continue to train staff on processes for bringing forward scientific integrity allegations. The agency should strengthen its scientific integrity policy in accordance with guidance from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and its Scientific Integrity Taskforce.

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

HEADQUARTERS

Two Brattle Square
Cambridge, MA 02138
617-547-5552

WASHINGTON, DC

1825 K St. NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20006
202-223-6133




WEST COAST

500 12th St., Suite 340
Oakland, CA 94607
510-843-1872

MIDWEST

One N. LaSalle St., Suite 1904
Chicago, IL 60602
312-578-1750

ONLINE

 @ucsusa
 @unionofconcernedscientists
 @unionofconcernedscientists