

## Getting to Know Your Data

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### Why?

People – our skills, abilities, level of engagement, and how we all work together - drive results. Our employee survey gives us insight on our workforce management practices and the groups of people who answered the survey. With this insight, we can:

- Look at our business and talk with our workforce in new ways
- Find new approaches to success

### Averages and Percent Positive

It's useful to know not only the average score employees gave but also how much variation, or disagreement, there was around that score. Ultimately, for any given question, we'd like to have all employees giving close to the same rating (which tells us we're consistent) *and* have them giving a good rating.

- Averages: Average scores are reported on the Trend and Demographics tabs of your agency's survey report. The average is a way of identifying a "typical" response and can be used to monitor trends, put results in rank order, make comparisons between two groups, etc.
- Bar Chart: Your report also shows your agency's 2011 results as a bar chart on the Ratings tab. The bar chart shows the percent of employees who responded 5-Always, 4-Usually, 3-Sometimes, etc. It lets you see how much agreement or disagreement there was between the employees' ratings of the question.
- Percent Positive: The percent positive, also shown on the Ratings tab, is the sum of those who answered 5-Always or 4-Usually, the darkest part of the bar chart. The percent positive can also be used to monitor trends, put results in rank order, make comparisons between groups, etc. Increasing the percent positive in a question will also increase the average score of that question.
- Remember that behind the averages and percent positive are people who have their own viewpoints, values, and beliefs which may not match the "typical". Build flexibility for differences into your change efforts.

### Questions to ask

Getting to know your data usually involves asking some questions and seeing what answers the data gives you.

- Trends: Have my agency's results changed much over time? Have any questions changed enough that it looks like more than the normal ups and downs for that question (random

variation)? Have the process, organization, and climate changes I know about impacted the results?

- See your agency's survey report for the Trend of Averages overall and by question
- To assess the impact of climate changes on how employees responded to the survey as a whole, you can look at the 13 questions that were also in the 2009 survey:
  - If 10 or more of the 13 questions have gone down (or up), it's likely that there are climate changes impacting all questions. (It's like tossing a coin: there's less than a 5% chance you'll get 10 or more tails in 13 tosses of a coin.)
  - If 7 to 9 questions have gone down (or up) it's more likely that the variation is random.
- Compared to others: How does my agency's data compare to other groups – agencies, statewide, and nationally? Do I see similar trends in agencies or groups that are like my agency? Our 2011 Washington State Employee Survey report ([hr.wa.gov/WorkforceDataAndPlanning/WorkforceDataTrends/StateEmployeeSurvey/Pages/SurveyResultsAnalysis.aspx](http://hr.wa.gov/WorkforceDataAndPlanning/WorkforceDataTrends/StateEmployeeSurvey/Pages/SurveyResultsAnalysis.aspx)) shows:
  - results by agency
  - data from the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and their private sector benchmark data

Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results by agency are also available on the web at [www.fedview.opm.gov/2011/Published/](http://www.fedview.opm.gov/2011/Published/), allowing you to tailor your benchmark data to organizations similar to yours.

- Compared to ourselves: How do different groups within my agency compare to each other? Are there clues that can help inform our action? How can we build on what's working well?
  - Your survey report shows drill-down by agency, area of the state where employees work, gender, supervisor/non-supervisor, and age. Your agency may also have included questions to allow drill-down by division or program.
  - When comparing two groups, if one group has higher (or lower) ratings in 11 or more of the 16 questions, you can be fairly sure there are climate or cultural differences impacting how the employees in the two groups respond to all the questions. Differences based on the question topic alone would tend to be more random, with some higher in one group and some higher in the other. Using the coin toss test, there's only a 7% chance of randomly getting 11 heads in 16 tosses of a coin. For 12 or more questions, the chance that it's random gets even smaller.
- Other information: What other data do we have that, along with the survey results, will add to the picture of our employees' frustrations and enthusiasms with work?
  - Your agency's HR Management Report (for agencies with more than 100 employees) shows data over time, such as for turnover, % current individual development plans, diversity profile, grievances, etc., that may add additional perspective to the employee survey topics
  - What you learn by talking with employees can also provide useful context
- Focus: Which results do we believe are of particular importance for the performance of our agency? What can we celebrate? What do we need to work on? What do our employees think is top priority?
  - For questions you decide to act on, ask your employees what "good" looks like.

**For Example**

Question:	Finding:
Have the statewide results changed much over time?	Each question has maintained fairly stable ranking over time. If a question scored high (or low) in past surveys, it remained high (or low) in this survey.
Have the process, organization, and climate changes I know about impacted the results?	Thirteen of the 16 survey questions can be compared to previous surveys. Statewide, all 13 of those questions had lower average scores than in the last survey. That’s like getting 13 tails in 13 tosses of a coin. This indicates there were factors impacting this survey as a whole.
How does the statewide data compare to Federal and private sector results?	<p>Our top questions (using the percent positive data) also tended to be the highest Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) scores. Our lowest questions were also among the lowest FEVS scores. The FEVS private sector benchmarks showed similar patterns. This suggests similarities between all three groups at some general level that goes beyond the details of our processes.</p> <p>Several exceptions to note:</p> <p>For the innovation question (Q15), the private sector percent positive scores were 12% higher than Federal scores and 20% higher than WA State scores. Question wording was very similar, suggesting that these are actual differences in how we do business.</p> <p>In the tools and resources question (Q6), the Federal question spells out the types of resources, “people, materials, budget”, whereas the WA question doesn’t. This is likely a good example of how question wording can impact the response.</p> <p>The wording of the performance evaluation questions (Q10) are quite different, suggesting the gap between Federal and WA State may be based on the questions asked.</p>
Statewide, do we see some demographic groups answering differently, overall, than others?	<p>The 20-24 and the 65+ age groups have the highest average ratings on almost all questions. This is similar to results from the 2009 survey.</p> <p>The 30-34 age group average ratings of questions are typically among the lowest of all the age groups. A <a href="#">Generations of Talent study</a> performed by the Sloan Center on Aging and Work at Boston College, also found that US employees in the 30-39 age range on average were slightly less engaged than their older counterparts.</p> <p>Supervisors give a higher average rating regardless of question.</p> <p>Employees in the Greater Olympia Area also scored all 16 questions higher than their counterparts in other parts of the state.</p> <p>Employees in small agencies also tended to score questions higher than did those in larger agencies.</p>