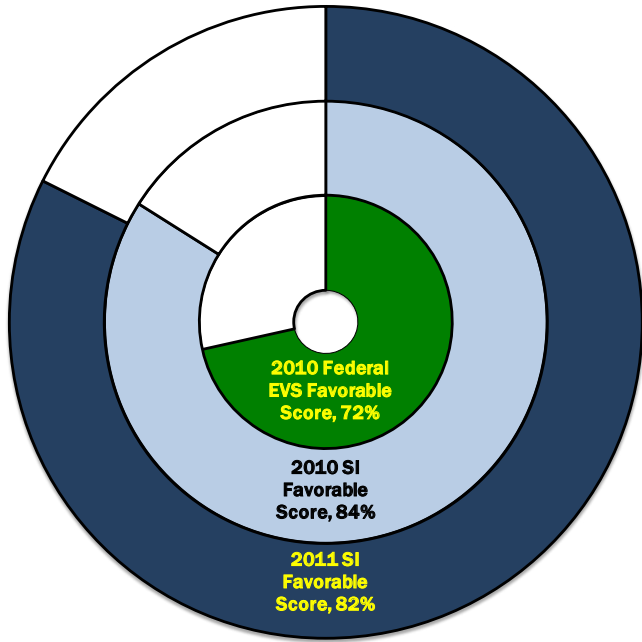


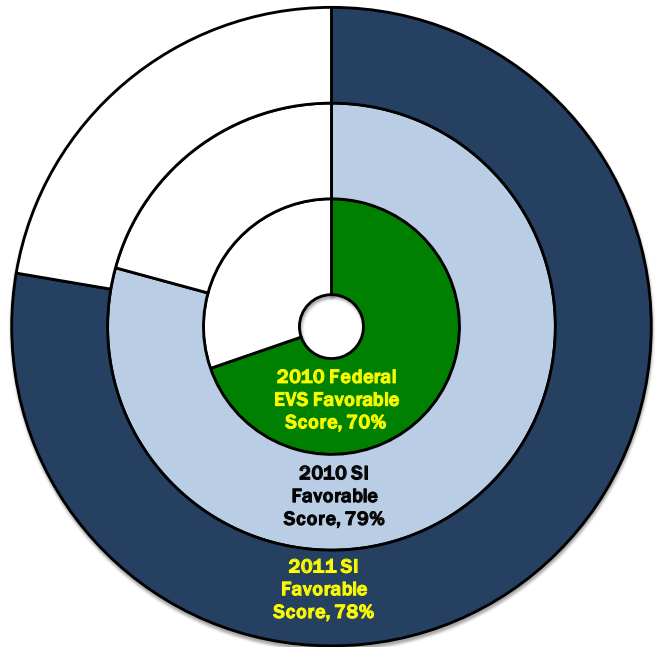
# 2011 Smithsonian Employee Perspective Survey

## Dashboard of Key Metrics

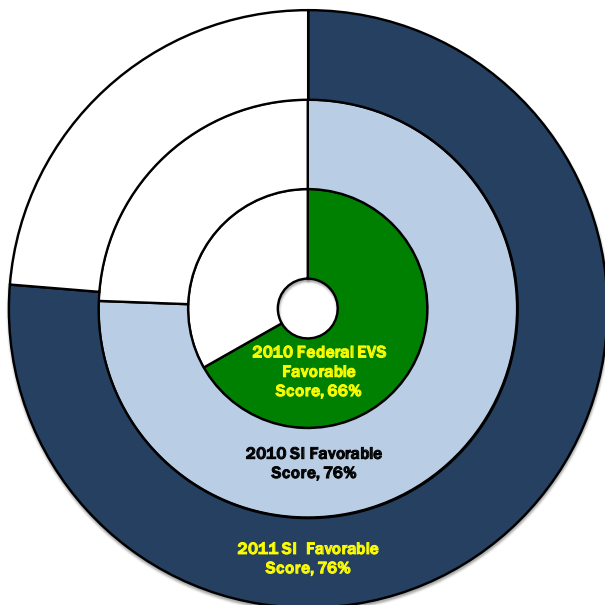
Satisfaction With Job



Willing to Recommend Working at the Smithsonian



Average Employee Engagement



Overall job satisfaction of Smithsonian employees, and willingness to recommend the Smithsonian as a good place to work remained high with marginal decreases from 2010.

The average employee engagement score was the same in 2011 as it was in 2010.

All scores exceeded the 2010 federal government-wide EVS scores.





# **2011 Smithsonian Employee Perspective Survey**

## **Office of Policy and Analysis**

### **Smithsonian Institution**

#### **August 2011**

## **1. Survey Background**

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2004 mandated that all federal government agencies administer an annual survey of federal employee

The Smithsonian Institution conducts an annual survey of employee perspectives on working for the Institution. It parallels the annual Employee Viewpoint Survey conducted by the U. S. Office of Personnel Management.

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 rather than a federal agency, 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 2011 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 2011 EVS results have not been reported yet, 2010 EVS results are used in this report as benchmarks to compare Smithsonian employee perspectives with those of federal employees working elsewhere.

According to calculations by the Partnership for Public Service (PPS), the Smithsonian ranked fourth as the Best Place To Work among all large



“federal” agencies in 2010.<sup>1</sup> PPS first calculated “Best Places to Work” (BPTW) ranks for federal agencies in 2009 using the 2008 FHCS scores 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?

In 2010, the Smithsonian ranked as the fourth Best Place To Work in the federal government.

Appendix Table 1 presents the questions and scores for each of the survey questions in the 2011 SEPS as well as comparisons with the 2010 and 2009 SEPS and 2010 federal EVS.

## 2. Interpretation of Results

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.<sup>2</sup>

Overall employee job satisfaction remained very high with a negligible decrease from the 2010 SEPS favorable score; and significantly above the government-wide level in 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> BPTW ranks are calculated for full-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, Government Accountability Office, and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation.

<sup>2</sup> The 2011 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 Appendix Table 1. The “Question Response Rate” is the percentage of respondents who gave a valid answer out of all respondents who saw the question.



## Areas of Strong Scores in the 2011 SEPS

The twenty 2011 SEPS questions achieving the highest favorable scores, all with at least 80 percent of responding employees clicking on “Strongly Agree” or “Agree,” are presented below in order of favorable scores:

- When needed, I am willing to put in the extra effort to get a job done (98% favorable)(also #1 in 2010).
  - I am constantly looking for ways to do my job better (96% favorable)(also #2 in 2010).
  - The work I do is important to the Smithsonian (92% favorable)(also #3 in 2010).
  - I like the kind of work I do (91% favorable)(also #4 in 2010).
  - I know what is expected of me on the job (90% favorable)(also #5 in 2010).
- The overall quality of work done by my immediate work unit is very good (89% favorable)(also #6 in 2010).
- I can easily explain the Smithsonian to people I meet (88% favorable)(Not asked in 2010).
- I know how my work relates to the Smithsonian’s goals and priorities (86% favorable)(also #8 in 2010).
- My supervisor treats me with respect (86% favorable)
- In the last six months, my supervisor has talked with me about my performance (85% favorable)(also #9 in 2010).
- My immediate work unit has the job-relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals (85% favorable)(also #10 in 2010).
- I am encouraged to achieve positive results (85% favorable)(also #14 in 2010).
- In my most recent performance appraisal, I understood what I had to do to be rated at different performance levels (84% favorable).
- The Smithsonian Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) Information Technology staff is responsive in handling my service concerns (84% favorable)(Not asked in 2010).

Smithsonian Employees report great commitment and enjoyment working at the Smithsonian and high levels of engagement. They also feel that they can explain the Smithsonian to others.



- The people in my immediate work unit cooperate to get the job done (84% favorable)(also #16 in 2010).
- My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment (83% favorable)(#15 in 2010).
- I have enough information to do my job well (83% favorable).
- My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues (83% favorable).
- In my unit, employees are protected from health and safety hazards on the job (83% favorable)(#15 in 2010).
- Overall, I am satisfied with my job (82% favorable)(#17 in 2010).

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” (94% favorable), and “I am satisfied with Alternative Work Schedules (AWS) programs in my unit” (91% favorable).

### **Areas of Weak Scores in the 2011 SEPS**

2011 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:

- Individual pay raises (excluding cost of living adjustments (COLA)) depend on how well individual employees perform their jobs (42%) (Also lowest in 2010).
  - I am satisfied with my opportunity to get a better job in the Smithsonian (42%) (3rd lowest in 2010).
  - Employees who provide high quality services and products to customers are rewarded in meaningful ways (43%) (2nd lowest in 2010).
  - Grade promotions in my Unit are based on

**Smithsonian Employees remain concerned about compensation, rewards and recognition for outstanding work, customer orientation, and communications but with some improvement from previous years.**



- merit (43%) (4th lowest in 2010).
- In my Unit, positive and negative individual performances are recognized in a meaningful way (45%) (5th lowest in 2010).
  - Creativity and innovation are generally rewarded in my Unit (47%) (9th lowest in 2010).
  - Recognition and awards (monetary or non-monetary) in my Unit depend on how well employees perform their jobs (52%) (10th lowest in 2010).
  - My Unit's employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes (54%) (11th lowest in 2010).
  - Smithsonian leaders and managers promote communication and cooperation across units in the Smithsonian (55%) (7th lowest in 2010).
  - Smithsonian Office of the Comptroller (OC) staff is responsive in handling my concerns (56%) (Not asked in 2010).
  - I believe that the results of this survey will be used to make the Smithsonian a better place to work (57%) (14th lowest in 2010).
  - I have sufficient resources to get my job done (for example, people, materials, budget, etc.) (59%) (13th lowest in 2010).
  - Overall, I am satisfied with my compensation (59%).
  - My supervisor takes steps to address a poor performer who cannot or will not improve (60%).
  - Managers support collaboration across Smithsonian units to accomplish work objectives (60%) (15th lowest in 2010).

As the Smithsonian continues to implement a new strategic plan emphasizing innovation, interdisciplinarity, and service, the Institution benefits from a dedicated, energetic, and creative workforce.

Seven out of ten (70%) Smithsonian employees felt that, "I understand how my work will support the new Smithsonian Strategic Plan as it is implemented in the future." Nearly nine out of ten (88%) believe that, "I can easily explain the Smithsonian to people I meet." Conversely,

**Smithsonian employees feel that they can explain the Smithsonian to other persons outside the Institution**



however, Smithsonian employees, perceives a work environment in which they do not anticipate that they will earn full rewards and recognition for their efforts.

### Smithsonian workforce characteristics

Few Smithsonian employees use Smithsonian child care, telework regularly, or work Alternative Work Schedules:

- Child care—Two percent of employees reported using Smithsonian child care, the same as in 2010—94 percent favorable.
- Teleworking—21 percent reported teleworking at least infrequently, essentially the same as in 2010—69 percent favorable, an improvement from 62 percent in 2010.
- Alternative work schedules (AWS)—19 percent reported working an AWS slightly lower than in 2010 (21%)—91 percent favorable.

Most Smithsonian employees find their workplaces to be safe and civil:

- Generally, employees, supervisors, and managers in my unit are civil, respectful, and courteous in dealing with each other—79 percent favorable.
- During the past year, an employee experienced language or behavior that the employee considered insensitive to their identity—75 percent favorable.

- My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues—83 percent favorable.

- In my Unit, employees are protected from health and safety hazards on the job—83 percent favorable.

Employee engagement, an important predictor of employee satisfaction, is higher at the

**One in five employees telework or work an Alternative Work Schedule regularly.**

**Employee engagement is fairly high.**

**Workplaces are civil and safe.**



Smithsonian than in federal agencies generally. Four areas of employee engagement are related to questions in the 2011 SEPS:<sup>3</sup>

- *Employee development and training*—70 percent favorable, a slight increase from 2010 (68%) and higher than the 2010 federal EVS (60%)<sup>4</sup>
- *Employee autonomy*—75 percent favorable, essentially unchanged from 2010 (74%) and higher than the 2010 federal EVS (61%)<sup>5</sup>
- *Role conflict*—86 percent favorable a slight decrease from 2010 (88%) and higher than the 2010 federal EVS (83%)<sup>6</sup>
- *Supervisor willingness to be influenced by employees*—78 percent favorable slightly changed from 2010 (77%) and higher than the 2010 federal EVS (70%)<sup>7</sup>

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3 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](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.

4 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.”

5 The five SEPS questions in the employee autonomy 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.”

6 Role conflict 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.”

7 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.”



About one in five federal or trust employees indicated that she or he expected to retire (4%) or leave the Smithsonian workforce within the next year (15%), roughly the same as in 2010. Employees intending to separate from the Smithsonian within the coming year were proportionately distributed over the major under-secretariats; however, one-third of employees under 30 years old (32%) indicated that they would be leaving within the year, and one-quarter of those between 30 and 45 indicated an intention to separate (23%). Conversely, half of employees over 65 (54%) and a third of employees between 55 and 65 (35%) plan to retire within the next five years. These employee turnover patterns are essentially the same between professional and technical job series.<sup>8</sup>

### Alignment between employees and managers/supervisors

Smithsonian employees and Smithsonian managers and supervisors

answered some 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.<sup>9</sup> The 21 questions, beginning with the least aligned responses are:

Smithsonian employee opinions are not aligned with, but significantly different from, those of managers and supervisors with respect to questions about work conditions such as rewards for performance.

- Grade promotions in my unit are based on merit.
- Individual pay raises (excluding cost of living adjustments (COLA)) depend on how well individual employees perform their jobs.
- In my unit, employees who provide high quality services and \_\_\_\_\_ products to customers are rewarded in meaningful ways.

<sup>8</sup> Employees who said that they were “uncertain” or “preferred not to answer” were excluded. Thus, the actual percentages may be slightly lower.

<sup>9</sup> 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, nor the degree of positive scores for either category.



- I am satisfied with Alternative Work Schedules (AWS) programs in my unit.
- Prohibited personnel practices are not tolerated.
- Creativity and innovation are generally rewarded in my unit.
- I can disclose a suspected violation of any law, rule or regulation without fear of reprisal.
- I am satisfied with Smithsonian Employee Assistance Programs.
- Arbitrary action, personal favoritism and coercion for partisan political purposes are not tolerated.
- My unit's employees have a feeling of personal empowerment with respect to work processes.
- In my unit, positive and negative individual performances are recognized in a meaningful way.
- Recognition and awards (monetary or non-monetary) in my unit depend on how well employees perform their jobs.
- Employees in my immediate work unit share job knowledge with each other.
- I am satisfied with telework programs in my unit.
- The people in my immediate work unit cooperate to get the job done.
- Staff in Smithsonian central financial units is responsive in handling my financial service concerns.
- I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things.
- Physical conditions allow employees to perform their jobs well.
- My job makes good use of my knowledge and abilities.
- Smithsonian policies and programs promote diversity in the workplace.
- I can easily explain the Smithsonian to people I meet.
- The skill level in my immediate work unit has improved in the last year.



Regarding more personal work conditions, rather than perceptions of unit level work conditions, Smithsonian employees and Smithsonian managers and supervisors responses to some survey questions varied greatly. The 16 questions, beginning with the least aligned responses are:

- Overall, I am satisfied with my compensation.
- 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.
- I am satisfied with my opportunity to get a better job in the Smithsonian.
- My supervisor provides employees with opportunities to demonstrate their leadership skills.
- I am always looking for ways to do my job better.
- My supervisor regularly evaluates my training needs for my present job.
- My supervisor takes steps to address a poor performer who cannot or will not improve.
- My performance appraisal is a fair reflection of my performance.
- My supervisor supports employee development.
- My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.
- I like the kind of work I do.
- I am encouraged to achieve positive results.
- The work I do is important to the Smithsonian.
- I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my unit.



## **2. How the survey was conducted:**

The 2010 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.

The 2011 Smithsonian Employee Perspective Survey was administered online to all Smithsonian employees, including Smithsonian Enterprises employees and Tropical Research Institute employees in Panama, in May, 2011.

Some 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 April 27, 2011, and ended on June 3, 2011, with non-respondents receiving up to three reminder messages.

## **3. Description of sample:**

All federal, trust, and Smithsonian Enterprises employees who were employed as of the first pay period in March, 2011 were given an opportunity to participate in the 2011 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 2011 SEPS was a census of all employees, statistical sample statistics such as “margin of error” are not appropriate.

## **4. 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, non responses and not applicable 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.

## 5. Employee cooperation rate:

Of the 6096 Smithsonian employees invited to participate in the 2011 SEPS, 3359 opened, or began the survey (55%). 103 employees answered fewer than 50 questions and were excluded from the analysis. Thus, the final cooperation rate was 55 percent, substantially higher than the 49 percent cooperation in 2010, 40 percent cooperation in 2009, and 45 percent in 2008. The mean length of time spent taking the survey was 25.9 minutes with a median time of 23 minutes.

The following figure shows that reminder messages, and supporting messages from Unit Directors, produced an increase in the number of responses. Statistically, the participation rate was very good. The 2011 SEPS had excellent participation by Smithsonian leaders (Secretary, Under Secretaries, and Unit Directors) with 48 Smithsonian executives responding. By Unit, participation varied from a high of 82 percent of employees (National Postal Museum) to 37 percent (Office of Protection Services)<sup>10</sup>.

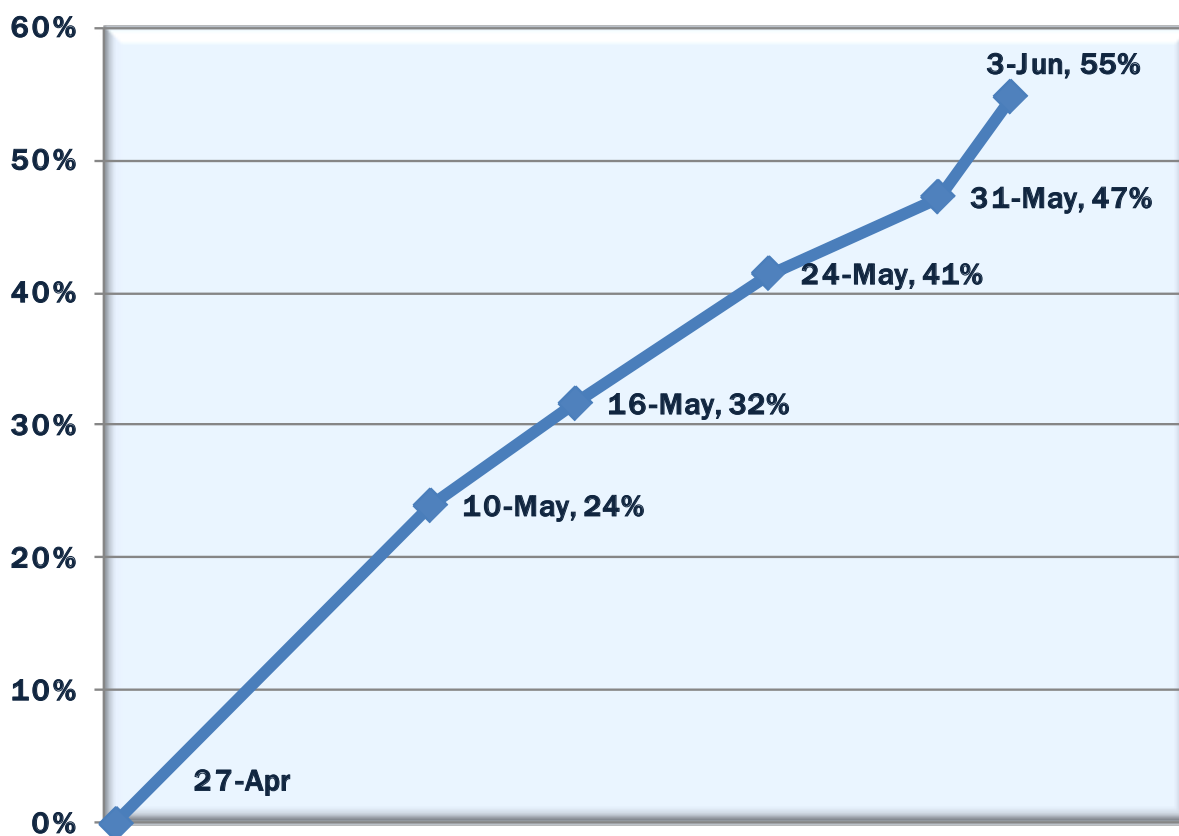
**55 percent of Smithsonian employees participated in the 2011 SEPS. The 2011 cooperation rate was higher than the cooperation rates in 2010, 2009, and 2008.**

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<sup>10</sup> The Office of Protection Services increased its cooperation rate from 30% in 2010. The largest Smithsonian unit, the Office of Facilities Maintenance and Reliability, had a cooperation rate of 54%.



## Survey Cooperation Rate by Date



### 6. Response weighting:

The 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 more 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 1 present unweighted data.

Survey data were weighted so that the set of respondents matched the demographics of all Smithsonian employees.