

***THE CORE VALUES AND ETHICAL  
ENVIRONMENT IN***  
**THE UNITED STATES FOREIGN SERVICE**

A report to the Institute for Global Ethics

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## Executive Summary

Between April 19 and May 8, 2013, over 1300 people in the United States Foreign Service took part in a survey regarding the beliefs, attitudes, and values that they associate with ethical decision making in their profession, diplomatic service.

The survey questionnaire was available online at [www.hostedsurvey.com](http://www.hostedsurvey.com) and included items designed to measure

- (1) the relative importance of 14 values in respondents' lives;
- (2) the extent to which respondents believe that others around them in their jobs share their values;
- (3) the sources from which respondents learn the ethics of the Foreign Service;
- (4) the "ethical environment" in the Foreign Service, that is, the extent to which respondents perceive pressure on themselves and on others to compromise their values to accomplish personal or organizational goals; and
- (5) respondents' confidence that they know how ethically others in the Foreign Service are behaving. Other items asked respondents to identify their status in the Foreign Service, the approximate date they entered the Foreign Service, their sex, and some particulars about their current assignment.

### **Key findings include:**

- A. There is a core of four values that is widely shared among all respondents, regardless of their status or service: Honesty, Responsibility, Fairness and Respect.
- B. There is a fairly high level of awareness that this core of values is shared by others in the Foreign Service, particularly by those closest to the respondent (e.g., one's immediate manager or most important client).
- C. When told of core values in documents published by the Department of State and the FSO Presidential Commission, the overwhelming majority of respondents was unaware of these and found them hard to understand.
- D. When asked to rank the importance of the sources from which they learned the ethics of a Foreign Service professional, most respondents consider their personal lives and experience more important than such sources as mentors or professional training.
- E. When asked to rank the prevalence of conflicting interests of various kinds, respondents ranked conflicts between (a) boss's demands and stated rules and (b) interests of those in Washington, D.C. and those in the field equally most prevalent, and conflicts between their employer's needs and the ethical standards of the Foreign Service or US government as least prevalent.
- F. Respondents describe a generally good ethical environment, with moderately low perception of specific violations of ethics.
- G. Over 70% of respondents support developing a code of ethics for the Foreign Service, particularly to clarify the expectations of FS personnel.

*NB: The editors of the report have boldfaced especially important conclusions as well as adding comments about particularly meaningful data.*

# THE CORE VALUES AND ETHICAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE UNITED STATES FOREIGN SERVICE

Between April 19 and May 8, 2013, more than 1300 people in the United States Foreign Service took part in a survey regarding the beliefs, attitudes, and values that they associate with ethical decision making in their diplomatic service profession. The survey questionnaire was available online at [www.hostedsurvey.com](http://www.hostedsurvey.com) and included items designed to measure (1) the relative importance of 14 values in respondents’ lives; (2) the extent to which respondents believe that others around them in their jobs share their values; (3) the sources from which respondents learn the ethics of the Foreign Service; (4) the “ethical environment” in the Foreign Service, that is, the extent to which respondents perceive pressure on themselves and on others to compromise their values to accomplish personal or organizational goals; and (5) respondents’ confidence that they know how ethically others in the Foreign Service are behaving. Other items asked respondents to identify their status in the Foreign Service, the approximate date they entered the Foreign Service, their sex, and some particulars about their current assignment.

## The Respondents

In all, 1371 people submitted at least some responses, over 90% of whom indicate the US State Department as their home agency. About 280 people did not complete enough of the questionnaire to report details such as their gender or current position in the Foreign Service, thus the picture painted below is composed of responses from a large majority of respondents, but not quite all.

Sixty-one percent of the respondents are men (although 20% of respondents declined to identify their gender). Tables 1-9 report the responses to items that ask respondents to describe themselves and their status in the Foreign Service.

Table 1: Status in the Foreign Service (N = 1093)

<i>Status</i>	<i>N</i>
<i>Active Duty FSO</i>	623
<i>Active Duty FSS</i>	188
<i>Retired FSO</i>	256
<i>Other</i>	25

Table 2: Home agency (N = 1087)

<b>Home Agency</b>	
<i>Department of State</i>	1016
<i>DOC/FS</i>	20
<i>USDA/FCS</i>	9
<i>USAID</i>	27
<i>IBB</i>	1
<i>Other</i>	14

Table 3: DOS FS Cone (N = 800)

<b>DOS FS Cone</b>	
<i>Consular</i>	131
<i>Economics</i>	130
<i>Management</i>	225
<i>Political</i>	188
<i>Public Diplomacy</i>	126

Table 4: FSS Category (N = 288)

<b>FSS Category</b>	
<i>Administration</i>	71
<i>Construction Engineering</i>	6
<i>Facility Management</i>	13
<i>Information Technology</i>	55
<i>International Information</i>	11
<i>Medical and Health</i>	10
<i>Office Management</i>	51
<i>Security</i>	71

Table 5: Current Assignment (if in Washington, DC) (N = 283)

<b>Current DC Assignment</b>	
<i>Department of State</i>	237
<i>DOC</i>	2
<i>USDA</i>	2
<i>Long Term Training</i>	15
<i>FSI</i>	14
<i>Another Agency</i>	13

Table 6: Current Foreign Assignment (N = 510)

<b><i>Current Foreign Assignment</i></b>	
<i>Bilateral Mission</i>	439
<i>Regional Center</i>	38
<i>Multilateral Mission</i>	29
<i>Seconded to Another Government</i>	2
<i>Seconded to NGO</i>	2

Table 7: Foreign Region (N = 612)

<b><i>Foreign Region</i></b>	
<i>Western Hemisphere, non-U.S.</i>	124
<i>Africa</i>	80
<i>Europe</i>	169
<i>China/SE Asia</i>	67
<i>Turkey/Israel/Middle East</i>	100
<i>India/SW Asia</i>	50
<i>Japan/Korea</i>	11
<i>Australia/New Zealand/Pac. Isles</i>	11

Table 8: Highest level of education (N = 1092)

<b><i>Education</i></b>	
<i>High School</i>	17
<i>Junior College</i>	28
<i>Technical College</i>	24
<i>BA/BS</i>	317
<i>MA</i>	407
<i>Professional Degree</i>	235
<i>Ph.D.</i>	57
<i>MD</i>	7

Table 9: Year entered Foreign Service by level (N = 1091)

<i>Year Entered FS</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Entry Level</i>	<i>Middle Level</i>	<i>Senior Level</i>	<i>SFS Member</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Before 1981</i>		8	26	43	122	199
<i>1981-1985</i>		1	23	29	40	93
<i>1986-1990</i>		3	30	35	41	109
<i>1991-1995</i>		0	43	39	15	97
<i>1996-2000</i>		1	78	35	4	118
<i>2001-2005</i>		4	216	8	1	229
<i>2006-2010</i>		43	137	1	0	181
<i>After 2010</i>		50	13	2	0	65
<i>Total</i>		110	566	192	223	1091

## Values

### Core Values

Respondents were presented with a list of thirteen values that people consider helpful when they make decisions, plus a space to enter another value if they chose. They were asked to choose the five values they consider most important in their daily life. Table 10 reports the results of the answers to these items.

Four values are chosen much more frequently, and in all status categories, than all the others: **Honesty, Responsibility, Fairness, and Respect**. These comprise a core of values that these respondents recognize as relatively more important, which is to say that the other values are not unimportant, merely not as important as the core.

How do the core values stand out? (1) They are the only values chosen by more than half of the respondents among the five most important—in fact each is chosen by more than two-thirds of all respondents, and (2) no category of FS employee, taken on its own, would produce a different result. While FS employee category is chosen to be the comparison factor in this table, further analysis showed that any of the other factors reported in tables 1-9 would have produced the same results.

One might wonder if there is a distinct core of values among those who chose none of these as the five most important values. In fact, there is only one such person among all the respondents. Only 43 respondents chose neither of the two most frequently chosen values.



Table 10: The relative importance of values

<i>Values</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Active Duty FSO Chosen (%)</i>	<i>Active Duty FSS Chosen (%)</i>	<i>Retired FSO Chosen (%)</i>	<i>Other Chosen (%)</i>	<i>Total Chosen (%)</i>
<i>Compassion</i>		257 (41%)	68 (36%)	112 (44%)	12 (48%)	449 (41%)
<i>Fairness</i>		487 (78%)	138 (73%)	214 (83%)	14 (56%)	<b>853</b> <b>(78%)</b>
<i>Freedom</i>		138 (22%)	50 (27%)	52 (20%)	8 (32%)	248 (23%)
<i>Generosity</i>		70 (11%)	10 (5%)	30 (12%)	2 (8%)	112 (10%)
<i>Honesty</i>		518 (83%)	170 (90%)	222 (86%)	20 (80%)	<b>930</b> <b>(85%)</b>
<i>Honor</i>		197 (32%)	83 (44%)	93 (36%)	12 (48%)	385 (35%)
<i>Humility</i>		144 (23%)	33 (18%)	40 (16%)	5 (20%)	222 (20%)
<i>Preservation of Nature</i>		50 (8%)	11 (6%)	20 (8%)	2 (8%)	83 (8%)
<i>Respect</i>		447 (72%)	145 (77%)	135 (53%)	21 (84%)	<b>748</b> <b>(68%)</b>
<i>Respect for Elders</i>		10 (2%)	5 (3%)	6 (2%)	2 (8%)	23 (2%)
<i>Responsibility</i>		485 (78%)	149 (79%)	207 (81%)	19 (76%)	<b>860</b> <b>(79%)</b>
<i>Social Harmony</i>		35 (6%)	14 (7%)	13 (5%)	3 (12%)	65 (6%)
<i>Tolerance</i>		226 (36%)	48 (26%)	120 (47%)	2 (8%)	396 (36%)
<i>Other</i>		51 (8%)	16 (9%)	21 (8%)	3 (12%)	91 (8%)
<i>Total</i>		110	566	192	223	1091

There are two advantages to knowing the core values of a community or an institution. One is that it discourages the notion that values are highly personal and can't serve to unite people behind a common standard, and the other is that the core values offer bases for evaluating behavior and policy that most people will recognize and accept. The more clearly core values are reflected in the daily life in the Foreign Service, the more likely the people there are to be satisfied that they and their colleagues are behaving well.

Later in the questionnaire, respondents were asked to pick the five most important values "in a Foreign Service Code of Ethics." Table 11 reports the results.

Table 11: The five values that would be most important in a Foreign Service Code of Ethics.

<i>Values</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Active Duty FSO Chosen (%)</i>	<i>Active Duty FSS Chosen (%)</i>	<i>Retired FSO Chosen (%)</i>	<i>Other Chosen (%)</i>	<i>Total Chosen (%)</i>
<i>Compassion</i>		152 (24%)	42 (22%)	66 (26%)	6 (24%)	266 (24%)
<i>Fairness</i>		507 (81%)	141 (75%)	235 (92%)	16 (64%)	<b>899</b> <b>(82%)</b>
<i>Freedom</i>		87 (14%)	32 (17%)	24 (9%)	4 (16%)	147 (14%)
<i>Generosity</i>		24 (4%)	7 (4%)	12 (5%)	2 (8%)	45 (4%)
<i>Honesty</i>		541 (87%)	172 (92%)	238 (93%)	22 (88%)	<b>973</b> <b>(89%)</b>
<i>Honor</i>		267 (43%)	90 (48%)	107 (42%)	14 (56%)	478 (44%)
<i>Humility</i>		120 (19%)	21 (11%)	30 (12%)	5 (20%)	176 (16%)
<i>Preservation of Nature</i>		28 (5%)	6 (3%)	9 (4%)	2 (8%)	45 (4%)
<i>Respect</i>		487 (78%)	160 (85%)	161 (63%)	21 (84%)	<b>829</b> <b>(76%)</b>
<i>Respect for Elders</i>		7 (1%)	2 (1%)	4 (2%)	1 (4%)	14 (1%)
<i>Responsibility</i>		547 (88%)	160 (85%)	224 (88%)	19 (76%)	<b>950</b> <b>(87%)</b>
<i>Social Harmony</i>		23 (4%)	20 (11%)	13 (5%)	3 (12%)	59 (5%)
<i>Tolerance</i>		247 (40%)	68 (36%)	126 (49%)	7 (28%)	448 (41%)
<i>Other</i>		78 (13%)	19 (10%)	31 (12%)	3 (12%)	131 (12%)
<b>Total</b>		110	566	192	223	1091

The core values of these respondents in their personal life prove to be even more central to their expectations of a Foreign Service Code of Ethics. *Each* core value is chosen more frequently for the code than when the reference was to one's daily life. The present analysis reaffirms the initial report on core values that this population can be appealed to based on the principles of Fairness, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility.

## Shared Values

Once they identified the values they felt were most important, respondents were asked how often they felt others use the values they chose to guide decisions they make at work. Table 12 reports responses to these items.

Table 12: Perceptions of shared values.

“Glance again at the five values you selected. How often do you think the people below use the same values you selected to guide their decision making at work?”

<i>Status</i>	<i>Active Duty FSO Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Active Duty FSS Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Retired FSO Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Other Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>All Avg. (sd)</i>
<i>Others</i>					
<i>Other Foreign Service personnel within your department or agency (N=1028)</i>	3.79 (.88)	3.52 (.99)	4.14 (.86)	3.95 (1.07)	3.82 (.92)
<i>Your immediate manager (N=972)</i>	4.00 (1.07)	3.94 (1.16)	4.11 (1.00)	3.91 (1.38)	4.01 (1.08)
<i>Your boss's boss (N=893)</i>	3.82 (1.13)	3.78 (1.07)	3.78 (1.14)	3.70 (1.22)	3.81 (1.12)
<i>The most senior person of your organization (N=831)</i>	3.82 (1.13)	3.48 (1.22)	3.88 (1.13)	3.90 (1.41)	3.77 (1.16)
<i>Foreign Service personnel representing other countries (N=810)</i>	3.44 (.85)	3.29 (.91)	3.62 (.92)	3.95 (1.03)	3.47 (.89)
<i>The most important person you serve (N=891)</i>	4.00 (.93)	3.88 (1.09)	4.14 (.97)	4.00 (1.14)	4.00 (.98)

Note: Statistics are the mean score on a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often), and standard deviation.

On a scale from 1 to 5 such as this, 3 is the midpoint. Across all status categories, every average is above 3. There is a perception among the respondents that others share their values, and as the Institute for Global Ethics has observed in other populations there is a slight tendency to perceive shared values among people closer to the respondent, such as

one's immediate manager or most important client. Since we know that, in fact, there is a core of widely shared values, these perceptions are accurate.

Further analysis reveals that there is a tendency for higher average agreement scores the longer one has served in the Foreign Service and the more senior their level in the organization. It could be that those who remain in the Foreign Service longest share common values, and come to recognize this in one another. If that's the case, the current junior cohort of respondents will come to share their elders' perspective in the course of time. However, since we know that there is no significant difference in the values chosen by young and old, the fact that their values are in fact widely shared in the US Foreign Service could be pointed out to the younger members, perhaps hastening their arrival at this realization.

There were no other differences between respondents concerning their perceptions of shared values.

### ***Existing Foreign Service Core Values***

There are core values published by the Department of State in its annual financial and performance report, and the FSO Presidential Commission (FSO/PC) cites three key values. Awareness of these published values and their role in respondents' professional lives was explored.

Asked if they were aware of the DOS core values of Loyalty, Character, Service, Accountability, Community, and Diversity, only 20.5% claimed they were. The FSO/PC named core values of Integrity, Prudence, and Ability were recognized by only 13% of respondents. **Awareness of these values' existence did not appear to be connected to any rank, category or experience in the Foreign Service.** Those who know about them are pretty evenly distributed across the service.

Once having been made aware of these values, respondents were asked how they use them in their professional lives. Table 13 reports responses to these questions.

So many respondents were seeing these values for the first time that their low level of agreement with these items is understandable to some extent. However, what is most **striking is that even when asked if the values are easily understood, the average score is below the scale's midpoint.** As difficult as it might be to confidently assess one's application of values in one's life, values themselves—especially core values—should be easily understood. **It is also worth noting that the lowest average score is for the item asking if the core values are rewarded by the Foreign Service.**

Table 13: Use of existing core values. (N = 1117)

	<i>Avg. (sd)</i>
<i>I use the DOS and FSO/PC values frequently to guide decisions at work.</i>	2.67 (1.50)
<i>The DOS and FSO/PC values help me manage important job-related problems.</i>	2.49 (1.38)
<i>The DOS and FSO/PC values clearly establish a level of professional behavior.</i>	2.61 (1.36)
<i>The DOS and FSO/PC values are easily understood.</i>	2.86 (1.27)
<i>The DOS and FSO/PC values are easy to apply professionally</i>	2.79 (1.20)
<i>The DOS and FSO/PC values are rewarded by the FS</i>	2.28 (1.09)

Note: Statistics are mean scores on a scale from 1 (Disagree strongly) to 5 (Agree strongly), and standard deviations.

## Learning about the Profession’s Ethics

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of a variety of sources in terms of their importance in helping them develop their sense of professional ethics. A combination of personal sources (such as one’s family) and professional sources (such as mentors) was included. As the figures in Table 14 show, and as many previous IGE surveys in diverse populations have found, people consider personal sources more important than professional sources, and impersonal sources such as formal documents and—especially—mass media to be of least importance in their understanding of professional ethics.

The responses regarding the relative importance of these sources of ethical instruction need not be interpreted to mean that professional training and documents cannot meaningfully add to one’s understanding of ethics. A more helpful interpretation, consistent with IGE’s experience, is **that professional ethics training should be consistent with one’s general, personal ethical foundation. Professionals face unique applications of their core values that training can help prepare them to recognize and resolve. It’s unhelpful to imply that what is special about a profession is that it demands a completely new ethical education.**

Table 14: Importance of sources of ethical development.

<i>Sources of ethics training</i>	<i>Median Rank</i>
<i>Friends and family (N = 1332)</i>	1
<i>Personal experience (N = 1346)</i>	2
<i>Formal education (N = 1219)</i>	4
<i>Religion (N = 1216)</i>	4
<i>Professional training (N = 1229)</i>	5
<i>Mentors (N = 1221)</i>	5
<i>Peers (N = 1190)</i>	5
<i>Organization documents about ethics (N = 1134)</i>	7
<i>Mass media portrayals of the Foreign Service (N = 1110)</i>	9

Note: The choices above are ranked from 1 (highest) to 9 (lowest).

There were few differences among types of respondents in the importance they cited for the various sources of ethical lessons. **Respondents at higher ranks considered mentors more important than others did.** Higher education was associated with less importance for organizational documents and mass media. Women overall considered peers less important than men considered their peers, but compared to other responses, women’s responses regarding peers were much more dispersed (i.e., a high standard deviation); **there’s less agreement among women about the importance of peers than there is about any other source of ethical instruction.**

## The Ethical Environment

A variety of items on the questionnaire explored respondents' perceptions of the nature and frequency of ethical issues they and their colleagues encounter. These are among the most pointed questions in an IGE questionnaire, since they tend to ask about increasingly specific behaviors that can reflect badly on the respondent or the organization. Overall, responses can indicate perceptions across the organization of the role ethics plays in the decisions made day to day.

### Conflicting Interests

In professionals' lives, among the most common ethical dilemmas are those associated with conflicting interests. Respondents were asked about the prevalence of a variety of conflicts that they and their colleagues confront. First they were asked to rank the *seriousness* of these types of conflicts, then to rank the *frequency* of these conflicts. Table 15 reports the results of these items.

Table 15: Seriousness and frequency of conflicting interests.

<i>Conflicting Interests</i>	<i>Seriousness</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
<i>Between the needs of the employee and demands of one's boss</i>	3	3
<i>Between the demands of a superior and the stated rules and regulations</i>	2	3
<i>Among FS and other personnel over the interpretation of a policy</i>	3	3
<i>Caused by a difference between a Washington-based policy and the reality of a situation in the field</i>	2	2
<i>Between the needs of an employer and the unstated-but-understood ethical standards of the Foreign Service</i>	4	5

Note: Seriousness and Frequency are median ranks from 1 (most serious or most frequent) to 5 (least serious or least frequent)

There is no overall consensus that one single conflict is the most serious or frequent, but a fairly widespread consensus that conflict between the employer and unstated ethical standards are the least serious and frequent of those on this list.

**To the extent that there are significant differences among respondents about the seriousness and frequency of these conflicts, those differences tend to involve the conflicts that are overall considered the most serious and frequent—i.e., conflicts between superiors' demands and stated rules, and conflicts between Washington and the field.** Specifically:

1. Those respondents whose DOS FS Cone was in Management ranked the seriousness and frequency of conflicts between superiors' demands and stated rules a bit higher than others, while the Political Cone ranked those conflicts a bit less seriously and less frequent.
2. Conversely, the Management cone ranked conflicts between Washington and the field less serious and less frequent, and the Political Cone ranked those conflicts as a bit more serious and more frequent than others.
3. Women ranked conflicts between superiors' demands and stated rules a bit more serious (but not more frequent) than men did; that was the only difference between the sexes.
4. The higher one's education and FS Level, the less frequent conflicts between superiors' demands and stated rules were perceived to be.

5. Those with more years of service perceive less frequent conflicts between Washington and the field. The higher one's FS rank, the more frequent conflicts between Washington and field were perceived to be.

Although these differences are highly significant statistically, they do not place different groups at polar extremes. For instance, even though the Management FS Cone generally gave a rank for the demand/rules closer to 3 and the Political Cone generally ranked it closer to 2, they do not live in different worlds—they might only be having different conversations about the world they share.

### ***Perceived Pressures in the Ethical Environment***

A number of items based on work IGE has done in diverse populations sought to measure respondents' perceptions of how frequently they and their colleagues feel pressure or incentives to compromise their professional ethics. Table 16 reports responses to these items.

With the exception of the last item in Table 16, these are questions about behavior one would hope is infrequent, thus lower scores would indicate better behavior. I removed italics from the positive item to call attention to its different interpretation. **The midpoint on the scale is 3, and never is the overall average (the far right column in Table 16) on the "wrong" side of that scale.**

**The relatively high score from Active Duty FSS personnel to the item that superiors "look the other way" when others behave unethically is significantly higher than the other groups**, as is the relatively low score from the "Other" status category for the final (positive) item about superiors as role models. In both cases, respondents in those categories perceive a less ethical environment than the other groups. There were no other notable differences between respondents of various kinds (e.g., by years of service, sex, etc.)



Table 16: Frequency of pressure felt to compromise values.

<i>Items</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Active Duty FSO Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Active Duty FSS Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Retired FSO Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Other Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>All Avg. (sd)</i>
<i>Do you ever feel pressured by managers or other employees to compromise your organization's standards of ethical conduct in order to achieve your organization's objectives (such as national policy)? (N=1184)</i>		2.31 (.95)	2.42 (1.02)	2.34 (.86)	2.08 (1.10)	2.33 (.94)
<i>Do people at your level in your Department/Agency ever feel pressured by managers or other employees to compromise your organization's standards of ethical conduct in order to achieve your organization's objectives? (N=1134)</i>		2.66 (.95)	2.81 (1.02)	2.65 (.83)	2.22 (.95)	2.66 (.94)
<i>Does your boss ever feel pressured by managers or other employees to compromise your organization's standards of ethical conduct in order to achieve your organizational objectives? (N=961)</i>		2.39 (.96)	2.65 (1.05)	2.59 (.85)	2.11 (.99)	2.47 (.96)
<i>Do you believe that people above your level "look the other way" and ignore unethical conduct by employees to meet professional objectives? (N=1137)</i>		2.72 (1.04)	3.16 (1.06)	2.73 (.89)	2.52 (1.34)	2.79 (1.02)
<i>Do people above your level model accountability for their decisions and actions? (N=1128)</i>		3.52 (.97)	3.08 (1.02)	3.43 (.91)	2.91 (1.23)	3.42 (.98)

Note: Statistics are mean scores on a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (All the time), and standard deviation.

## Specific Behaviors

Another difficult series of items asked about some particular instances of positive and negative behaviors, again measuring how often respondents perceive these things to happen around them. Table 17 reports responses to these items. Note that while responses to these items are still on a 5-point scale similar to Table 16, there is a greater variety of positive and negative items in Table 17. **Items where a high score would be positive are in plain text, negative items in italics.**

The general pattern of replies favors good behavior, with positive items scoring above the midpoint and most negative responses below—the exception being the first item, which might be a little ambiguous. Use of classified data is particularly perceived as appropriate. (*Ed. The most negative perceived behaviors are disparaging and offensive remarks, inaccuracy of records and reports, and misrepresented limitations on ability to provide services.*)

Table 17: Frequency of specific positive and negative behaviors. Positive items are in plain text, negative items in italics.

<i>Items</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Active Duty FSO Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Active Duty FSS Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Retired FSO Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Other Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>All Avg. (sd)</i>
<i>People at my level in my organization make recommendations to each other based on personal considerations. (N=1102)</i>		3.18 (1.05)	3.49 (1.08)	2.84 (.95)	3.20 (1.15)	3.15 (1.06)
<b>People at my level in my organization provide honest responses to inquiries and requests from the people we serve. (N=1134)</b>		4.02 (.91)	3.80 (.99)	4.12 (.96)	4.19 (.93)	4.02 (.94)
<i>People at my level in my organization misrepresent or conceal limitations in their ability to provide services to the people we serve externally. (N=1109)</i>		2.59 (1.01)	2.78 (1.05)	2.44 (.94)	2.16 (.77)	2.57 (1.00)
<b>People at my level in my organization provide honest responses to inquiries and requests from peers. (N=1137)</b>		4.07 (.90)	3.98 (.94)	4.14 (.90)	4.00 (.95)	4.06 (.91)
<b>People at my level in the organization take personal responsibility for their decisions and actions. (N=1172)</b>		3.59 (1.04)	3.39 (1.06)	3.84 (1.02)	3.70 (1.30)	3.63 (1.05)
<i>Inaccuracy of records or reports at my organization has adversely affected a person we serve or another stakeholder. (N = 947)</i>		2.60 (1.05)	2.86 (1.05)	2.71 (1.09)	2.28 (1.27)	2.65 (1.06)
<b>People at my level in my organization make recommendations based on the needs of those we serve rather than personal conviction. (N = 1099)</b>		3.51 (.93)	3.34 (.95)	3.40 (.96)	3.45 (1.18)	3.44 (.95)
<i>People at my level in my organization make disparaging, offensive, or insensitive remarks about peers, managers, mission, policies, or host country officials. (N = 1166)</i>		2.79 (1.15)	2.95 (1.23)	2.74 (1.08)	2.10 (1.04)	2.79 (1.15)
<i>People at my level in my organization make decisions based on the needs of those we serve even if it conflicts with regulations or law. (N = 1096)</i>		2.20 (1.00)	2.39 (1.02)	2.17 (.88)	2.00 (1.03)	2.23 (.98)
<b>My organization maintains an ethical relationship with those outside the Department/Agency with whom we engage. (N = 1092)</b>		4.11 (.91)	3.93 (.98)	4.07 (.97)	4.26 (.81)	4.09 (.93)
<b>People at my level in the organization use classified information appropriately. (N = 1129)</b>		4.63 (.76)	4.55 (.84)	4.45 (.86)	4.40 (1.14)	4.57 (.81)
<b>In my organization people work hard to maintain the trust of their colleagues. (N = 1173)</b>		3.99 (.99)	3.77 (1.06)	4.12 (1.03)	3.86 (1.28)	3.99 (1.01)
<i>People at my level in my organization ignore ethical misconduct by others. (N = 1128)</i>		2.46 (1.03)	2.69 (1.09)	2.33 (.95)	2.47 (1.46)	2.45 (1.03)

Note: Statistics are mean scores on a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often), and standard deviation.

People at higher levels in the Foreign Service perceived more frequent honest responses to people they serve (the second item in Table 17) and more work to maintain trust among colleagues (the next-to-last item). Senior officials, both in terms of rank and years of service, perceived particularly high levels of proper use of classified data.

### ***Perceptions of the Organization's Ethics***

Two items asked about how people inside and outside might perceive the role of ethics in the respondents' organizations. One item was a general question about how others believe they are treated by the organization. Table 18 reports responses to this item.

Table 18: Perception of ethical treatment by others.

<i>Items</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Active Duty</i>	<i>Active Duty</i>	<i>Retired</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>All</i>
	<i>FSO</i>	<i>FSO</i>	<i>FSS</i>	<i>FSO</i>	<i>FSO</i>	<i>All</i>
	<i>Avg.</i>	<i>Avg.</i>	<i>Avg.</i>	<i>Avg.</i>	<i>Avg.</i>	<i>Avg.</i>
	<i>(sd)</i>	<i>(sd)</i>	<i>(sd)</i>	<i>(sd)</i>	<i>(sd)</i>	<i>(sd)</i>
<i>Think about the point of view of the people you serve, internal and external. If they were asked, would they say they are treated ethically by your organization? (N = 1152)</i>	4.02	3.94	4.01	3.88	4.00	
	(.70)	(.77)	(.71)	(1.26)	(.73)	

Note: Statistics are mean scores on a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (All the time), and standard deviation.

Responses to this item were high across the board. No subgroup of respondents deviated significantly from the average score of 4 on a 5 point scale.

The other item was more complex:

"If you think your organization believes ethical conduct is important but doesn't demonstrate ethical conduct, which of the following statements do you think best explains the reason? Select the last response if you believe that your organization does demonstrate ethical behavior."

This is meant to explore respondents' beliefs about why there might be a gap between talking the talk and walking the walk, if such a gap is perceived at all. Three possible explanations were offered:

1. Ethical behavior is not easily observed, so I don't get the opportunity to see my colleagues demonstrating ethical conduct.
2. My colleagues generally don't behave ethically.

3. The ethical issues discussed publicly at the organization bear little resemblance to the ethical problems actually faced by me and my colleagues.

There were 1199 responses to this item, and 53% of respondents didn't perceive any gap in the ethical beliefs and behaviors in their organization. Of the available explanations for those who did perceive a gap, the only one that received more than 10% of responses was #3: that **discussions of ethics don't account for the actual problems respondents confront, chosen by 30%.**

Among the DOS FS Cones, Management was particularly more likely than other cones to select this explanation. Women chose this explanation slightly more often than men. But those were the only significant relationships between groups of respondents and answers to this question. In other words, **nearly one-third of respondents perceive a gap between the discussions about ethics in the Foreign Service and the particular issues they confront, and those people are scattered throughout the FS.**

## Codes of Ethics

Respondents' beliefs regarding the contribution a Code of Ethics could make to the Foreign Service were probed in a variety of ways, beginning with a basic question: Do you think the Foreign Service would benefit from a professional code of ethics for Foreign Service Personnel? Just over 75% answered "yes" to that idea, and support was not particularly concentrated in any part of the Service.

With that basic issue on the table, respondents who answered yes to the idea of a code of ethics were asked to rate the importance of various reasons for adopting such a code. Table 19 reports responses to those items.

**Overall, the most important rationale for a code is to clarify what is expected of Foreign Service personnel,** although for those who support a code at all each of the reasons was at least fairly important.

Active Duty FSS personnel, those in the Management DOS Cone, women, and those with less formal education, rated an environment of equality particularly high compared to others. Women rated help with tough professional decisions and clarifying expectations more important than men. Longer years of service was associated with greater importance for minimum standards of behavior. No other differences were noted.

Table 19: Importance of reasons to adopt a code of ethics. (Responses from those supporting a code for the Foreign Service. N = 850)

<i>Items</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Active Duty FSO</i>	<i>Active Duty FSS</i>	<i>Retired FSO</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>All</i>
		<i>Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Avg. (sd)</i>
<i>Help better define the Foreign Service profession.</i>		3.97 (1.06)	3.93 (1.00)	4.07 (1.12)	3.76 (1.22)	3.98 (1.07)
<i>Create a minimum standard of behavior for Foreign Service personnel at work.</i>		4.28 (.87)	4.48 (.69)	4.21 (.95)	4.29 (1.10)	4.29 (.88)
<i>Help Foreign Service personnel make tough professional decisions.</i>		4.01 (1.00)	4.15 (.86)	4.16 (.95)	4.00 (1.14)	4.07 (.97)
<i>Clarify expectations of all FS personnel.</i>		4.44 (.76)	4.47 (.63)	4.45 (.79)	4.33 (1.02)	4.44 (.75)
<i>Create an environment in which the favorite, the "squeaky wheel," and the answer shopper are treated the same as everyone else.</i>		3.71 (1.25)	4.21 (1.02)	3.74 (1.27)	4.05 (1.12)	3.80 (1.24)

Note: Statistics are mean scores on a scale from 1 (Unimportant) to 5 (Very important), and standard deviation.

Whether or not respondents supported a code of ethics, all were asked who should be covered by such a code. **Somewhat surprisingly, there is significant support for excluding major populations from a Foreign Service code, even when those who don't support a code are excluded.** Table 20 reports answers to these items.

Table 20: Who should be covered by a FS code of ethics? (N = 1092)

<i>Who should be covered?</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Active Duty FSO</i>	<i>Active Duty FSS</i>	<i>Retired FSO</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>All</i>
		<i>Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Avg. (sd)</i>
<i>FSOs: Yes</i>		23%	23%	29%	28%	24%
<i>No</i>		77%	77%	71%	72%	76%
<i>FSSs: Yes</i>		20%	22%	29%	28%	24%
<i>No</i>		80%	78%	71%	72%	76%
<i>All FS Personnel: Yes</i>		44%	49%	60%	52%	49%
<i>No</i>		56%	51%	40%	48%	51%
<i>AFSA Members: Yes</i>		14%	17%	18%	20%	15%
<i>No</i>		86%	83%	82%	80%	85%
<i>All DOS: Yes</i>		62%	77%	62%	56%	64%
<i>No</i>		38%	23%	38%	44%	36%

Even among those who support a code, substantial majorities don't believe it should cover the select groups in Table 20. Among those who oppose a code in general, **a majority does support such a code applying to the Department of State entirely.** When asked simply if the groups in Table 20 should be held to the same ethical standards (with no mention of a code), 96% of all respondents say yes.

Finally, respondents were told the following about any code of ethics developed for the Foreign Service:

"One aim of the code of ethics process is to make the code relevant and applicable worldwide. (It might be helpful to show the people we serve, internal or external, the code, to help them understand how FS personnel are expected to operate.) Listed below are some ideas that might help to achieve this goal. How important do you think it is that the FS adopt the ideas below?"

All respondents, whether they support a code in general or not, were invited to reply to these items. Table 21 reports responses to these items.

Table 21: Steps to make a code of ethics relevant and applicable worldwide. (N = 1117)

<i>Items</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Active Duty FSO Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Active Duty FSS Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Retired FSO Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>Other Avg. (sd)</i>	<i>All Avg. (sd)</i>
<i>Multiple-language translations of the code of ethics.</i>		3.97 (1.06)	3.93 (1.00)	4.07 (1.12)	3.76 (1.22)	3.04 (1.48)
<i>Explanations of each prohibited behavior.</i>		4.28 (.87)	4.48 (.69)	4.21 (.95)	4.29 (1.10)	3.85 (1.24)
<i>Examples and scenarios that illuminate the ethics.</i>		4.01 (1.00)	4.15 (.86)	4.16 (.95)	4.00 (1.14)	4.03 (1.10)
<i>Designated personnel charged with explaining code of ethics provisions and answering code questions.</i>		4.44 (.76)	4.47 (.63)	4.45 (.79)	4.33 (1.02)	3.40 (1.25)
<i>Professional education focused on the meaning, history, and importance of the code of ethics.</i>		3.71 (1.25)	4.21 (1.02)	3.74 (1.27)	4.05 (1.12)	3.46 (1.28)

Note: Statistics are mean scores on a scale from 1 (Unimportant) to 5 (Very important), and standard deviation.

**Translating the code and specifying prohibited behavior is more important to those in the Management DOS FS Cone, and both are significantly less important to the Political Cone. (The other cones fall in between on those two items.)** The Management Cone also considers designating personnel to explain the code, while the Economics Cone is less interested in this. Those serving in the Australia/New Zealand/Pacific Island service were much more supportive of translations than any of the

other areas, one of the very few times that responses to these questions were associated strongly with service in a particular part of the world. **Women considered translating the code more important than men did, and considered all uses of the code at least slightly more important than men.**

## Conclusion

Respondents to this questionnaire don't describe a Foreign Service that confronts a specific ethical crisis. However, **there is a noticeable lack of clarity about the role current policies and documents about ethics plays in the expectations of members of the Foreign Service.**

Note, for instance, the considerable agreement about the core of values that guides respondents in their personal lives, and how the same core gathers even greater support as the basis for a Foreign Service Code of Professional Ethics. There is considerable potential there to provide the clarity of expectations that so many respondents hope a code of ethics would provide to them.

**A sizeable majority of respondents wants a code of ethics.** The 25% who do not support a code cannot possibly be made up of people who do not recognize the core values reported in Table 10; too few respondents don't share those values. While there is no guarantee, **it is reasonable to suppose that people presented with a code of ethics that is based on the values they hold dear will be less skeptical than people presented with a code based on values they don't understand and don't feel they share with their colleagues.** The results of this questionnaire offer the Foreign Service an opportunity to develop a code of ethics based on very widely shared values, and to develop policies that emphasize practices clearly consistent with those values.

There is no evidence in these results that there are pockets of resistance to such a code, or places and units in the Foreign Service where problems are perceived to be much worse than in other places. On the whole, a conversation among the people represented by these respondents that is based on these findings should be welcomed broadly, and would be worth pursuing.