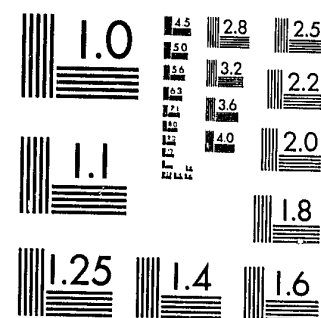


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**PHASE VIII
ANALYSIS OF THE
EMPLOYEE
EXIT INTERVIEW
QUESTIONNAIRE**

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Virginia Department of Corrections
Division of Program Development and Evaluation
Research and Reporting Unit

October 1981
Report # 81103

This report was prepared by Michael Jones, Research Analyst.
Inquiries concerning the report should be directed to the
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Thomas R. Foster, Manager
Research and Reporting Unit

Introduction

In 1976, the Department of Corrections instituted a procedure for obtaining information from persons terminating employment with the Department (Form P-17, Exit Interview Questionnaire). Since that time seven analyses have been conducted by the Research and Reporting Unit. This report is a numerical summary of the information gathered from terminating employees for the period July 1, 1980 to June 30, 1981. It is the third report that covers an entire fiscal year. In addition to summarizing the results for this time period, comparisons of summary measures will be made between FY80 (Phase VII) and FY81 (Phase VIII).

METHOD

The Exit Interview Questionnaire was designed to reflect terminating employees' opinions concerning their employment with the Department of Corrections. In addition to assessing the factors involved in an employee's decision to leave the Department, it asks employees to rate various dimensions of their work environment including: supervision, communication, salary and benefits, training, physical work conditions, morale and chances for career advancement.

Ideally the instrument is made available to every employee at the time of termination. The number of questionnaires

actually completed and returned to the Department's Employee Relations Unit has traditionally been a small percentage of the actual number of terminating employees. The size and geographical dispersion of personnel has made monitoring of the interview process difficult.

As a result, the data may have been collected in several ways. The information may be obtained in a personal interview setting with the employee and his/her supervisor or a representative of the agency's personnel section. At other times the employee may fill out the questionnaire, approximating a questionnaire form of data collection. A discussion of the responses may follow the completion of the questionnaire, combining a questionnaire and interview format. While each method may have unique advantages for the individual agency, each contains a unique set of methodological problems for any analysis of the aggregate data.*

The exit interview is voluntary. The data presented in this report reflects the attitudes of those employees who completed the questionnaire when they terminated their employment with the Department. It does not reflect the feelings of the terminating employees from whom a completed questionnaire was not received, nor does it reflect

* effective 10-26-81 terminating employees are being provided with a stamped envelope and asked to forward the completed questionnaire directly to the Employee Relations Unit.

the attitudes of those employees presently working for the Department of Corrections.

SAMPLE

A total of 1182 persons left the Department of Corrections during the period July 1, 1980 to June 30, 1981. Two hundred fifty eight (258) persons completed the written exit interview form. This 21.8% response rate is significantly less than the 43.2% rate of response from last year (Phase VII). Institutional Services contributed 141 people (54.9%) to the sample, followed by Community and Prevention Services with 37%. Capital Outlay and Maintenance personnel make up 3.5% of the total. The Division of Finance and the Office of the Director contributed 1.9% each, and employees from the Division of Program Development and Evaluation make up .8% of the total sample.

A breakdown of the sample by agency reveals that the following agencies or institutions contributed at least 4% of the total sample:

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Court Service Units (Aggregated)	61	23.6
Probation and Parole (Aggregated)	30	11.6
Powhatan Annex I	21	8.1
Southampton Annex I	15	5.8
Bon Air	14	5.4
Bland	11	4.3
Field Units	15	5.8
Total	167	64.6

Other agencies or institutions contributed less than 4% of the total sample or 35.4% of the total (see Appendix A).

Across divisions, the positions representing approximately 85% of all positions for persons completing the questionnaire are as follows:

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Correctional Officers	81	31.5
Probation Counselors	30	11.6
Clerk Stenographers	27	10.5
Training School Project Supervisors	25	9.8
Probation and Parole Officers	21	8.2
Clerk Typists	20	7.7
Medical Personnel	7	2.8
Institutional Rehabilitation Counselors	6	2.3
Total	217	84.4

A breakdown of the sample by agency or institution, and the percentage of occupational positions responding to the questionnaire are presented graphically in Chart 1 and Chart 2.

MONTHS EMPLOYED

Of the 258 terminating employees responding to the Exit Interview Questionnaire, 28% were employed with the Department for less than one year, half the respondents (53.9%) were employed for two years or less, 71.3% were employed for three years or less, and approximately 80% were employed for five years or less. Thirteen persons (5.2%) were employed for ten years or more. Of the total number of

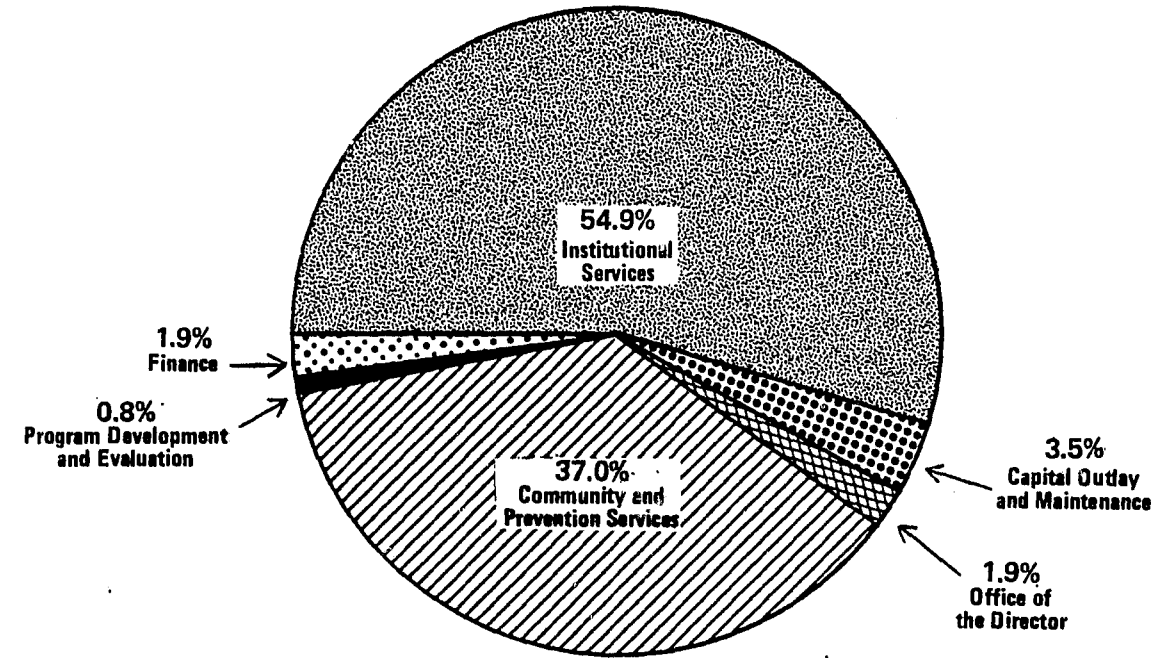


Chart 1 - Rate of Response to Exit Interview Questionnaire by Division

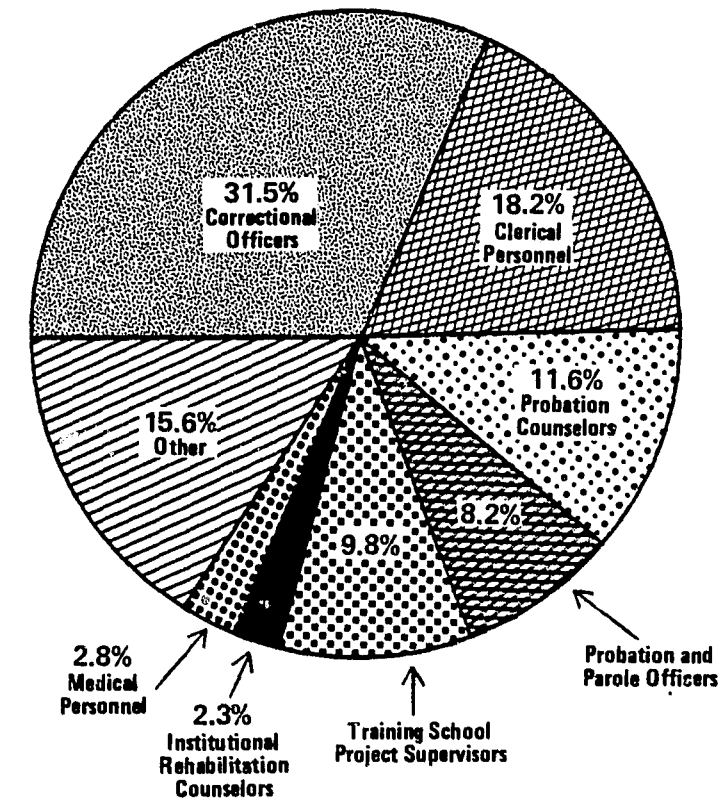


Chart 2 - Rate of Response to Exit Interview Questionnaire by Job Category

persons leaving after less than one year of employment, 52% were correctional officers (approximately 32% of all correctional officers responding).

Consistent with Phase VII, the average length of time employed was 37 months. The average time in the position at the time of termination was 30 months. This figure represents an increase of six months from FY80.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Employees were asked to rate their overall working conditions in their agency or work unit. Approximately 65% felt that conditions were either "excellent" or "good", while 26% rated working conditions as "fair" and 9% rated them as "poor". These figures remain consistent when controls are made for divisional and occupational group variables.

REASON FOR LEAVING

Respondents were asked to indicate their reasons for leaving the Department. The following table summarizes the factors cited and shows comparisons over eight phases. The most commonly cited reasons for leaving the Department were "better job opportunity", "salary", and "lack of advancement opportunity". As seen in the table that follows, these factors have remained stable over time. When the respondent's job category is considered, the factors cited for leaving the Department remain consistent with only slight variations.

Reason for Leaving	Percentage of Responses (%)							
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII
Better job opportunity	40	38	41	41	47	45	45.4	47.7
Salary	21	23	29	30	36	35	36.1	39.7
Lack of advancement opportunity	27	25	29	27	37	30	31.8	34.2
Family circumstances	27	29	26	25	20	16	21.3	22.5
Type of work	22	21	16	18	18	15	15.7	21.6
Supervision	16	16	18	18	22	18	16.4	22.1
Return to school	13	14	14	13	12	14	14.1	10.3
Commuting distance	10	14	12	11	16	10	13.6	15.5
Illness-physical condition	11	8	11	9	10	6	6.9	7.4
Self-employment	2	3	3	3	5	6	5.6	7.3
Terminated or asked to resign	3	3	3	3	1	3	8.0	8.3
Retired	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.2
Other	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21.6

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Employees were asked to rate the jobs that they were leaving on five dimensions of work environment. The responses have been collapsed into "favorable" (excellent and good) and "unfavorable" (fair and poor) categories. The "No Opinion" category and missing cases are omitted from this table and from tables that follow.

The dimension receiving the highest favorable rating was friendliness and cooperation of fellow employees, followed by cooperation with other departments and on-the-job training. Consistent with the findings from Phase VII, "equipment provided" received the greatest percentage of unfavorable responses.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT	Response Percentage (%)	
	Favorable	Unfavorable
Friendliness and cooperation of fellow employees	74.6 (84.8)**	25.4 (15.2)
Cooperation with other departments	65.5 (73.5)	34.5 (26.5)
On-the-job training	64.5 (69.7)	35.6 (30.3)
Cooperation within the Department of Corrections	61.9 (67.1)	38.2 (32.9)
Equipment provided	60.5 (64.6)	39.5 (35.4)

** figures in parentheses are responses from Phase VII (FY80)

There is an overall decrease in the number of favorable responses on all dimensions of work environment. Correctional officers contributed significantly to the increase in unfavorable responses to on-the-job training, cooperation within the Department of Corrections and equipment provided, with approximately 50% of the 81 officers giving unfavorable ratings to these dimensions.

RATE OF PAY AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Consistent with previous reports, "rate of pay" received the greatest number of unfavorable responses. Approximately 29% of the terminating employees rated their pay as

"poor". Annual leave and sick leave received the highest percentage of favorable responses with 35% of the respondents rating these benefits as "excellent".

An examination of variation of responses by occupational position reveals a consistent pattern of attitudes towards pay and benefits. The only deviation was in the frequency of unfavorable responses from probation and parole officers on "rate of pay" where 77% of these terminating employees viewed their pay as "unfavorable".

PAY AND BENEFITS

	Response Percentage (%)	
	Favorable	Unfavorable
Sick Leave	86.5	13.5
Annual Leave	89.0	11.0
Paid Holidays	84.8	15.2
Life Insurance	85.3	14.6
Health Insurance	85.9	14.1
Tuition Reimbursement	75.5	24.6
Retirement Plan	74.1	26.0
Rate of Pay	36.1	63.8

COMMUNICATION

Responses to questions regarding the quality of communication are illustrated in the table that follows. As seen in the table, the area of communication which had the highest percentage of unfavorable responses was "policies, procedures and guidelines". The area of communication which was viewed

most favorably by terminating employees concerned "specific knowledge of the job".

<u>COMMUNICATION</u>	Response Percentage (%)	
	Favorable	Unfavorable
Specific knowledge of the job	74.3 (77.8)**	25.7 (22.2)
Communications with supervisor	71.8 (75.9)	28.2 (24.1)
Orientation to the Department	68.8 (70.6)	31.2 (29.4)
Policies, procedures and guidelines	62.9 (69.2)	37.1 (30.8)

** responses from FY80

Responses to this set of questions were generally consistent across job categories. While separated employees seem to continue to be satisfied with the level of communication within the Department, there is an average 5% decrease in the frequency of favorable responses and an average 4% increase in unfavorable responses when compared with the ratings of last year.

SUPERVISION

Respondents were asked to rate their supervisors on five aspects of supervision. A summary of the responses are illustrated in the following table.

SUPERVISION	Response Percentage (%)	
	Favorable	Unfavorable
Fair and equal treatment	74.6 (77.6)**	25.3 (22.3)
Communicates with subordinates	68.2 (76.5)	31.8 (23.5)
Provides recognition	60.0 --	40.0 --
Follows policies and practices	84.2 (84.1)	15.8 (15.9)
Resolves grievances and problems	66.5 (72.0)	33.5 (28.0)

**figures in parentheses are responses from Phase VII (FY80)

As seen in the table, terminating employees rated their supervisors highest on "follows policies and practices" followed by "fair and equal treatment". Supervision was rated most favorably in the area of "providing recognition to subordinates. Ratings on all dimensions of supervision were somewhat less favorable than the ratings given in FY80, with the exception of the "follows policies and practices" category. Clerical personnel and probation and parole officers rated their supervisors very high on this category, with approximately 95% of these employees responding favorably. Correctional officers were responsible for half of the unfavorable responses on "providing recognition on the job".

WORKLOAD, MORALE AND
CHANCES FOR ADVANCEMENT

Approximately 64% of the respondents felt that their workload was "about right", and 29.2% stated that their workload was "too great". The remaining 7% stated that the workload "varied". Of the terminating employees responding to the question on morale, 8% stated that morale in their unit or institution was excellent; 36.1% rated morale as "good"; 26.9% "fair"; 29% felt that morale in the work setting was poor. Approximately 42% of all responding correctional officers categorized the morale in their institution as poor (56% of the total sample).

Respondents tended to be evenly divided in their perception of chances for career advancement with 60.3% stating that they felt opportunities for advancement were excellent to fair. Approximately 45% of the clerical personnel and probation counselors felt opportunities were poor, and 58.8% of the terminating probation and parole officers viewed their chances for advancement as poor. Correctional officers, on the other hand, tended to perceive their opportunities more favorably with only 37% rating advancement as poor.

EVALUATION OF POSITION

Most of the terminating employees stated that their work with the Department of Corrections was challenging,

interesting and made adequate use of their education and experience. Approximately 81% felt that the job was interesting and 74.9% felt that it was a challenge. Sixty-three percent felt that there was proper and adequate utilization of their personal education and experience.

Respondents were asked if they had experienced unfair treatment, harassment, favoritism of other employees, or unfair promotional practices while working in the Department of Corrections:

	Yes	No
Harassment	25.0%	75.0%
Favoritism of other employees	36.4%	63.6%
Unfair promotional practices	26.3%	73.7%
Unfair treatment	28.6%	71.4%

Correctional officers accounted for 60% of the "yes" responses in this section, where an average of 40% of the officers responded "yes" to the above questions. Probation counselors, as an occupational group, reported the fewest occurrences of those experiences. It should be pointed out, however, that it is entirely possible that correctional officers included what they perceived as harassment and unfair treatment from inmates as criteria for responding to these questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKING FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Most employees stated that they would recommend working for the Department of Corrections, with 39% reporting that they would definitely recommend working for the Department and 46.2% would recommend the Department of Corrections as good place to work with some reservations. Those who would not recommend working for the Department represented 14.6% of the total sample. Clerical staff had the highest percentage of those who would definitely recommend the Department (60.5%) followed by Probation Counselors (43.5%).

CONCLUSIONS

1. Only 258 (21.8%) of the 1182 terminating employees in FY81 completed the Exit Interview Questionnaire. This response rate is significantly less than the 43.2% rate of response of last year.
2. There was an increase of six months in the average time in the position at the time of termination.
3. Rate of pay was viewed as the most unfavorable aspect of employee benefits.
4. The most predominant factors cited for terminating employment with the Department were (a) better job opportunity (b) salary and (c) lack of advancement opportunity.
5. Approximately 28% of the terminating employees stated that they had experienced unfair treatment, harassment, favoritism of other employees, or unfair promotional

practices while in the Department.

6. While the attitudes of terminating employees completing the questionnaire continue to reflect favorably on the Department of Corrections, there was an overall decrease in favorable responses across all categories of working environment, level of communication and supervision.
7. The majority of employees stated that their work was interesting (81%), challenging (74.9%), and made proper use of their education and experience (63.2%).

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION BY AGENCY

CATEGORY	ABSOLUTE FREQUENCY	% RELATIVE FREQUENCY	% CUMULATIVE FREQUENCY
Court Services	61	23.6	23.6
Probation and Parole	30	11.6	35.2
Powhatan Annex I	21	8.1	43.3
Field Units	15	5.8	49.1
Southampton Annex I	15	5.8	54.9
Bon Air	14	5.4	60.3
Bland	11	4.3	64.6
Va. Correctional Center for Women	8	3.1	67.7
Appalachian	6	2.3	70.0
Staunton	6	2.3	72.3
St. Brides	6	2.3	74.6
Reception and Diagnostic	5	1.9	71.9
Powhatan R&D Center	5	1.9	73.8
Hanover	4	1.6	75.4
Mecklenburg	3	1.2	76.6
Natural Bridge	3	1.2	77.8
Barrett	2	0.8	78.6
Beamont	2	0.8	79.4
Community Youth Homes	2	0.8	80.2
Southampton R&C Center	2	0.8	81.0
Others	37	14.4	100.0
Total	258	100.0	100.0

APPENDIX B

CORRECTIONS EXIT

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

(Responses in Percentage Form)

In our efforts to reduce turnover in our Department and correct situations which contribute to it, we ask your cooperation in helping us determine what some of those situations might be. The responses to this questionnaire will remain completely anonymous. You do not have to identify yourself unless you wish to. Please be as honest as possible. When you have completed the questionnaire, please give it to your personnel contact in your unit.

Date of interview _____

1. In what institution or work unit were you employed? _____

2. How long have you worked for the Department of Corrections? _____

3. How long have you been in your present position? _____

4. What is your full job title? _____

5. Briefly describe your job duties _____

6. How were the physical working conditions in your department?

Excellent (16.5%) Good (48.2%) Fair (26.5%) Poor (8.8%)

With what specific working conditions in the department, if any, were you dissatisfied? _____

7. Was your job explained to you clearly before you were employed?

Yes (81.5%)

No (18.5%)

Explain _____

8. How would you rate communications in the following area:

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>
Policies, Procedures and Guidelines	14.8	47.6	22.4	14.4	0.8
General Orientation to the Department	16.4	51.6	22.4	8.4	1.2
Specific Knowledge of Your Job	22.4	51.6	18.4	7.2	0.4
Between You and Your Supervisor	37.1	38.9	14.3	13.5	1.6

9. How did you feel about your rate of pay and the employee benefits by the Department of Corrections?

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>No Opinion</u>
Rate of Pay for Your Job	5.6	30.3	35.5	27.9	0.8
Paid Holidays	33.7	49.4	11.3	3.6	2.0
Annual Leave	32.8	54.8	8.8	2.0	1.6
Retirement Plan	23.0	49.6	16.5	8.9	2.0
Tuition Reimbursement	20.2	35.2	9.4	8.6	26.6
Life Insurance	29.9	48.8	11.5	2.0	7.8
Health Insurance	32.9	48.8	10.6	2.8	4.9
Sick Leave	34.8	51.0	7.7	5.7	0.8

10. How would you rate your supervisor in the following areas:

	<u>Almost Always</u>	<u>Usually</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
Demonstrates Fair & Equal Treatment	48.9	25.7	20.7	4.6
Follows Policies & Practices	52.1	32.1	12.9	2.9
Communicates Well With Subordinates	40.2	28.0	24.3	7.5
Resolves Complaints, Grievances and Problems	40.6	25.9	24.3	9.2
Provides Recognition On the Job	35.7	24.3	27.4	12.6

11. Was your decision to leave the Department of Corrections influenced by any of the following? (Please check all those applicable)

Illness/Physical Condition	8.1%	Type of Work	21.6%
Family Circumstances	20.5%	Return to School	10.3%
Better Job Opportunity	47.7%	Commuting Distance	15.5%
Lack Opportunity Advancement	34.2%	Retired	5.2%
Self Employment	7.3%	Terminate/Asked to Resign	8.3%
Salary	39.7%	Other	21.6%
Supervision	22.1%		

12. How would you rate the following in your job or department?

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>No Opinior</u>
On-The-Job Training	24.6	39.0	24.1	11.0	1.3
Equipment Provided	15.7	42.4	23.6	14.4	3.9
Friendliness and Cooperation of Fellow Employees	34.9	39.3	15.7	9.6	0.4
Cooperation Within the Department	16.8	44.2	24.3	13.3	1.3
Cooperation With Other Departments	14.8	42.2	23.3	6.7	13.0

Comments: _____

13. Was your workload usually:

Too Great (28.9%) About Right (64.5%) Too Light (6.6%)

14. Would you want your job back if certain conditions were changed? What conditions? _____

15. How would you rate morale in your unit or institution?

Excellent (8.3%) Good (36.1%) Fair (26.9%) Poor (28.7%)

16. Do you feel that your chances for advancement were:

Excellent (7.5%) Good (23.8%) Fair (29.0%) Poor (39.7%)

17. If you are going to another job will you be doing the same type of work?

Yes (27.1%) No (62.2%)

If "no", what type of work will you be doing? _____

18. What does your new job offer that your job with the Department of Corrections did not? _____

19. Evaluate the position you are leaving:

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Did it make proper (adequate) use of your education and experience?	63.2%	36.8%
Was it still interesting work?	81.8%	18.2%
Was it challenging?	74.9%	25.1%

20. Are you leaving for any reason which would appear to be discriminatory on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, or handicaps?

Yes (10.6%) No (89.4%)

If yes, explain: _____

Did you attempt to remedy the situation? Yes (66.7%)

Explain: _____

21. Did you experience any of the following while working in this department?

	Yes	No
Harassment	25.0%	75%
Favoritism of other employees	36.4%	63.6%
Unfair promotional practices	26.3%	73.7%
Unfair treatment	28.6%	71.4%

If yes, explain: _____

22. Rate the level of supervision:

Too Much (11.9%) About Right (70.8%) Too Little (17.3%)

23. What changes or improvements would have made your job easier to perform? _____

24. What did you like most about your job and the Department of Corrections? _____

And what did you like least? _____

25. Would you recommend the Department of Corrections to a friend as a place to work?

Yes, definitely (40.2%) Yes, with reservations (45.3%)

No (14.5%)

26. Additional comments about your job or the department.

END