REDUCTION-IN-FORCE in the FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, 1981:

What Happened and Opportunities for Improvement

JUNE 1983

A REPORT OF THE U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
OFFICE OF MERIT SYSTEMS REVIEW AND STUDIES

MERIT PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE FEDERAL PERSONNEL SYSTEM

The Civil Service Reform Act (Pub.L. No. 95-454, 92 Stat. 111 (1978)) requires that Federal personnel management be implemented consistent with the following merit principles:

(1) Recruitment should be from qualified individuals from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a work force from all segments of society, and selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge, and skills, after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity.

(2) All employees and applicants for employment should receive fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of personnel management without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights.

(3) Equal pay should be provided for work of equal value, with appropriate consideration of both national and local rates paid by employers in the private sector, and appropriate incentives and recognition should be provided for excellence in performance.

(4) All employees should maintain high standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest.

(5) The Federal work force should be used efficiently and effectively.

(6) Employees should be retained on the basis of the adequacy of their performance, inadequate performance should be corrected, and employees should be separated who cannot or will not improve their performance to meet required standards.

(7) Employees should be provided effective education and training in cases in which such education and training would result in better organizational and individual performance.

(8) Employees should be--

(a) protected against arbitrary action, personal favoritism, or coercion for partisan political purposes, and
(b) prohibited from using their official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or a nomination for election.

(9) Employees should be protected against reprisal for the lawful disclosure of information which the employees reasonably believe evidences--

(a) a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or
(b) mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

It is a prohibited personnel practice to take or fail to take any personnel action when taking or failing to take the action results in the violation of any law, rule or regulation implementing or directly concerning these merit principles.

The Merit Systems Protection Board is directed by law to conduct special studies of the civil service and other Federal merit systems to determine whether these statutory mandates are being met; and to report to the Congress and the President on whether the public interest in a civil service free of prohibited personnel practices is being adequately protected.

These studies, of which this report is one, are conducted by the Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies.

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A REPORT OF THE U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
OFFICE OF MERIT SYSTEMS REVIEW AND STUDIES

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THE CHAIRMAN

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1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20419

June 1983

Sirs:

In accordance with Section 1205(a) (3) of Title 5 of the U.S. Code, it is my honor to submit the Merit Systems Protection Board's study of the 1981 Reductions-in-Force in the Federal Government.

Respectfully,

Herbert E. Ellingwood

Herbert E. Ellingwood

The President of the United States
The President of the Senate
The Speaker of the House of Representatives

Washington, D.C.

PREFACE

In the summer of 1981, the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) decided to conduct a study to determine whether 1981 reductions-in-force (RIFs) were being conducted in accordance with merit principles and the avoidance of prohibited personnel practices. This task was assigned to the Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies (MSRS) which has responsibility for the Board's statutory mandate to conduct special studies relating to the civil service and other merit systems in the executive branch.

In order to accomplish this task, MSRS assembled a staff research team composed of a program analyst, a personnel management specialist, and a survey statistician. This research team has undergone several personnel changes over the life of the study. In addition to those members of the research team listed on the back of the title page, the following former MSRS staff members also contributed to the work of the project: Francine Samuelson, Carl Schmitt, Daniel Wojcik, Gregory T. Diaz, and Kenneth Foran.

The MSRS research team first sought to frame the issues through discussions with individuals knowledgeable about the subject of RIF. Once the issues were established, a Personnelist questionnaire and a General questionnaire were developed to search out the answers from senior personnel officials charged with implementing RIFs and from employees affected by RIFs. The survey questionnaires were used to obtain as broad a range of responses as possible from across the Federal Government. Nearly 800 completed the Personnelist questionnaire for an 88% response rate and approximately 2,600 completed the General questionnaire for a 70% response rate. These high response rates greatly enhance the reliability of the survey findings.

This report identifies some of the strengths and weaknesses involved in the implementation of 1981 RIFs and inherent in the present RIF system, and proposes recommendations for corrective action. Although the report focuses on 1981 RIFs, the findings and recommendations have implications for the issues involving RIF which face the Federal community today.

Dennis L. Little
Director, Office of Merit Systems
Review and Studies

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

A. A NEW BEGINNING—THE GENESIS OF THE STUDY

The inauguration of a new Administration and the commencement of the 97th Congress in January 1981 brought anticipated changes in the size of the Federal civil service. In the last half of the 1970's the economy began to grow less rapidly than the programmatic elements of the Federal budget. In response to this, the Administration proposed and the Congress enacted an omnibus budget which reduced or curtailed many existing domestic programs and shifted funds to state and local levels. Donald J. Devine, Director of the Office of Personnel Management, described these reductions as "the largest Federal budget cuts in our history." 1/ The end result was expected to be a shrinking of the Federal work force, particularly in the non-Defense agencies.

Because of the separation of powers inherent in the Federal Government, the exact dimensions of these budget and program changes were unclear from the beginning. At least one newspaper article quoted predictions that as many as 35,000 Federal employees might lose their jobs. Attrition alone was not expected to bring about these reductions. Thus, in the early months of 1981 it became obvious to Federal employees and the local newspapers that these program shifts raised the prospect of large-scale involuntary personnel decreases or reductions-in-force (RIFs) in the Federal Government. 2/

B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF RIFS

Prior to the new Administration, large-scale cutbacks had not occurred in the Federal Government since the close of the Vietnam conflict in the early 1970's. In the past, the termination of wars, budget crises, voluntary separations, as well as RIFs have all played a role in shrinking Federal employment. The Department of Defense (DoD) experienced the bulk of Federal personnel declines at the end of both the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. Total DoD civilian employment was reduced after the Korean conflict by 153,000 or 11.4% from the war peak of 1,339,000 and after the Vietnam conflict by 300,000 or 22.3% from the war peak of 1,342,000. 3/ However, the 1981 cutbacks were for the most part centered on the non-Defense segment of the Federal Government.

1/ Statement of Donald J. Devine, Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, before the Subcommittee on Manpower and Housing of the Government Operations Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, January 27, 1982.

2/ Appendix A lists a glossary of selected RIF terms used in this report.

3/ Source: Department of Defense, Selected Manpower Statistics, Fiscal Year 1981, Table 3-6, pp. 169 - 170. For a more detailed look at the historical background of RIFs in the Federal Government, see Chapter 2.

C. THE STUDY'S OBJECTIVES:

Given the likelihood of Government-wide personnel reductions, the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) developed in the spring and summer of 1981 a long-range study of two phases. The purpose of the study was to review 1981 RIF practices and to determine whether or not the RIFs were conducted in accordance with merit principles and did not involve prohibited personnel practices. 4/

The first phase of the study involved the identification of critical issues through interviews and correspondence with those knowledgeable about the RIF process. This phase was conducted from July to September 1981. The second phase involved the development, administration, and data analysis of two questionnaire surveys on RIF. This phase was conducted from October 1981 through March 1983. This report provides an overview of the entire study and includes findings and recommendations.

The study was designed to address six major areas. These are:

(1) The extent to which the 1981 RIF complied with the RIF regulations promulgated by OPM and agencies.

(2) The extent to which the 1981 RIF complied with the merit principles and avoided the prohibited personnel practices contained in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978.

(3) The extent to which agencies were prepared to conduct the technical aspects of the 1981 RIF.

(4) The extent to which the 1981 RIF affected the efficiency and effectiveness of the Federal work force.

(5) The extent to which agencies took alternative actions to minimize the impact of the 1981 RIF.

(6) The extent to which the RIF system might be improved.

4/ The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 established the MSPB, and directed it, as part of its mandate, to conduct special studies from time to time to determine if the merit system is being adequately protected and to report its findings to the President and Congress. (See 5 U.S.C. Section 1205(a)(3).) The Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies (MSRS) has responsibility for performing these functions.

D. THE STUDY DESIGN

The first phase of the study involved interviews and correspondence with 49 individuals and groups who were knowledgeable about the RIF process. To obtain a cross-section of opinion on the subject of RIFs, interviews were conducted from July to September 1981, with personnel officials, managers, employees (including unions), and oversight agency representatives. Twenty of the interviews involved the identification of RIF issues, and the other twenty-nine were conducted on-site in Washington, D.C. and the field at agencies then expecting or undergoing RIFs. 5/

The second phase of the study involved two written questionnaire surveys. One (General Questionnaire) went to a stratified, random, Government-wide sample of approximately 3,800 employees, the other (Personnelist Questionnaire) went to a group of approximately 900 senior personnel officials who had volunteered to participate in surveys such as this one. 6/ The questionnaires were mailed out in late November and early December 1981. About 2,600 or 70% of the employees responded and nearly 800 or 88% of the senior personnel officials responded.

The two questionnaires were designed to elicit the opinions of the respondents on a number of topics. Some of the questions asked of both employees and senior personnel officials were identical and some of the questions were comparable in content. Other questions were only asked of the one group or the other. For example, both employees and senior personnel officials were asked identical questions of their views of the effect of RIF on morale and productivity, supervisory knowledge of agency plans, and RIF retention factors. Both groups were asked comparable questions on access to RIF-related documents and information and the fairness and equity of the RIF. Only employees were asked questions on the appeals process. Only senior personnel officials were asked about some of the more technical aspects of the RIF, such as the extent of their agencies' compliance with RIF regulations, the adequacy of RIF preparations, and the effectiveness of RIF alternatives.

Some questions in both questionnaires were directed only at respondents who had experience or knowledge of the issue being addressed. Most of these questions were directed toward those respondents who identified themselves as

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5/ Appendix B contains a more detailed list of these contacts.

6/ Appendix C summarizes the survey methodology. Appendix D contains the survey questionnaires. Senior personnel officials (SPO's) are members of the Personnelist RIF sample which consisted of personnel officials who were at GS-15 and above or equivalent in Washington, D.C. and at GS-13 and above or equivalent outside the Washington, D.C. area. Because the SPO's were not required to answer each question, the number of respondents for most questions in the Personnelist questionnaire varied from approximately 300 to 700. For the same reason, the number of employees who responded to most questions in the General questionnaire varied from approximately 300 to over 2,500.

working in agencies or immediate work groups that had or expected to have a RIF. The balance of the questions were to be answered by all respondents regardless of the RIF status of their agencies.

Because the study was designed before the actual RIF incidence was known, the study is based on the attitudes of employees and senior personnel officials toward both actual and anticipated RIFs. OPM administrative data on the number of employees affected by RIF through separations, downgrades, or lateral reassignments are presented in Chapter 3 for a perspective on the direct impact of the 1981 RIF.

Some conventions have been used throughout this report to aid the reader in interpreting the study data. First, we have tried to indicate where identical or comparable questions were asked of both group of respondents and where questions were asked of only one group. Second, we have used terms throughout the report to describe specific segments of respondents, such as employees and senior personnel officials in "RIF-affected agencies" and senior personnel officials "with operational responsibility." Explanations of these terms are found in Appendix A.

Third, unless otherwise noted, the number of respondents shown for each table and chart in this report is the absolute or unweighted number of respondents. All percentages shown in the text, tables, and charts for employees (respondents to the General questionnaire) are based on weighted data. The data were weighted to extrapolate from the sample results to the total Federal work force, i.e., to expand the sample size to equal the population from which it was drawn. All percentages shown in the text, tables, and charts for senior personnel officials (respondents to the Personnelist questionnaire) are based on unweighted data, i.e., the absolute number of respondents.

E. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

This report presents findings and recommendations based primarily on an analysis of the data from the questionnaires and OPM's administrative data on the number of RIFs, supplemented by information gathered from the interviews.[7/] The significant findings are:[8/]

- The 1981 RIFs directly affected through separations, downgrades, or lateral reassignments, a much smaller number of employees than was originally anticipated--12,594 or less than 1% of the full-time permanent work force. However, of the relatively small number

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7/ Selected relevant comments from these interviews were included in this report to help the reader understand the qualitative values and reasoning behind some of the statistical responses.

8/ The first finding listed below is based on OPM's administrative data. All of the other listed significant findings are derived from the questionnaire data which are based on the opinions of the survey respondents. Appendix E contains a complete listing of all the study findings.

affected, women and minorities statistically disproportionately bore the brunt of the actions. For example, 42% of all the 1981 actions involved women, although 37% of the total Federal work force were women. Thirty-seven percent of all the 1981 RIF actions involved minorities, while only 23% of the total Federal work force were minorities. The impact on women and minorities was even greater if one looks only at separations. Over half (51%) of those separated in the 1981 RIF were women and 40% of those separated were minorities. It should be noted, however, that these data were not analyzed by agency. It is possible that the agencies involved in the 1981 RIF employed disproportionately higher numbers of women and minorities that in other parts of the Federal Government.

- Agencies appeared to conduct the 1981 RIFs in compliance with RIF regulations, with some notable exceptions. For example, a potentially serious problem area that arose in this study concerned allegations from approximately one-fifth of the senior personnel officials that they were improperly pressured to violate RIF regulations. Additionally, the major structural problem that surfaced in the study was the failure of agencies to communicate sufficient RIF information and documents that were required or recommended to be provided to employees. Many employees reported that they were not able to review required RIF documents such as their retention registers, papers showing the outcome of the RIF, and their official personnel folders. The majority of employees also reported that they had not received as much required information as they needed on areas such as how the RIF might affect them personally and their rights to appeal and receive severance pay. In addition, employees and senior personnel officials felt that supervisors were not sufficiently knowledgeable about their agency RIF plans, despite the fact that the RIF regulations recommended that supervisors be involved in all phases of the RIF planning process.

- Respondents were relatively positive about the equity and fairness of the 1981 RIF. Allegations of prohibited personnel practices principally involved issues related to management favoritism, including the awarding of inflated performance appraisals.

- Those charged with implementing RIFs, the senior personnel officials, were reasonably satisfied with the policy guidance, technical assistance, and training on RIF procedures received from their agencies and OPM. However some problems were identified with regard to "hands on" technical assistance and policy guidance on "early out" retirement and RIF-related labor relations matters. Another structural problem surfaced in the study was that approximately one-third of the employees thought that their job descriptions were not accurate enough to be used as the basis for RIF decisions.

- Employees and senior personnel officials believed that RIF retention factors could be configured differently than they are presently. They felt that greater weight should be accorded to performance, but the majority (71%) of senior personnel officials did not think that performance appraisals were accurate enough to be used for RIF purposes. (Employees were not asked about the accuracy of performance appraisals.)

F. AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT AMONG QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

Although different questionnaires were administered to the employees and the senior personnel officials, the two questionnaires overlapped in some areas. In some of these areas, the opinions of the two surveyed groups differed markedly. These differences were not altogether unexpected. The employees were much more apprehensive about the quality of the technical implementation of the RIF than were the senior personnel officials who usually had lead responsibility for implementing the RIF. The following findings illustrate these areas of contention.

- Over 60% of senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that mandated RIF documents were made available by their personnel offices to employees. Their responses ranged from 91% who felt that employees were able to review their official personnel folders to 61% who felt that employees were able to review papers showing the outcome of the RIF. Fewer than one-third of the employees in RIF-affected agencies said that they had reviewed these documents. The employees' responses ranged from 27% who responded that they had reviewed their own official personnel folders to only 9% who responded that they had reviewed papers showing the outcome of the RIF.

- Approximately half the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that their personnel offices provided sufficient RIF information to employees. Their responses ranged from 52% who stated that their personnel offices had provided employees with as much information as they needed on their rights to appeal and receive severance pay to 48% who stated that employees had been provided with as much information as they needed on how the RIF might affect them personally. At most, 15% of employees in RIF-affected agencies said that they received as much RIF information as they needed. The employees' responses ranged from 15% who felt that they had received as much information as they needed on how the RIF process works to 11% who felt that they had received as much as they needed on how the RIF might affect them personally and 11% who felt they received as much as they needed on their rights to appeal and receive severance pay.

- Almost 70% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that their agencies would implement RIF actions in "good faith." In contrast, a little over 35% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies felt that their agencies would show "good faith" in implementing RIFs.

- Over 80% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies thought that current position descriptions in their agencies were accurate enough for RIF decisions. In contrast, only about 40% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies agreed that their own position descriptions were accurate enough to be used in RIF decisions.

G. COMPARISON WITH OTHER STUDIES

The overall study indicates that the 1981 RIF conformed reasonably well to existing RIF guidelines and procedures, with some exceptions. Insufficient communications about RIF plans, procedures, and documents as well as some allegations of prohibited personnel practices involving management favoritism were the principal problems surfaced in the study.

The study explored a variety of issues, only some of which were also studied by other organizations with oversight responsibility for RIF in the legislative and executive branches. Where the methodology was consistent, the study findings are similar to the findings previously reported by these other organizations in their studies of the 1981 RIFs. 9/ For example, OPM in its report dated June 1982, found that the failure to communicate RIF policies and procedures to employees led to more problems than any other facet of RIF.

In addition, the findings and recommendations of this study are not entirely dissimilar from the OPM proposed revisions to the RIF regulations published in the Federal Register on March 30, 1983. 10/ However, the MSPB study covers a wider range of issues than those addressed by the OPM proposed regulations. Specifically, the MSPB study:

- Supports the concept of giving increased emphasis to performance as a RIF retention factor, but it is critical of the ability of the performance appraisal process to adequately measure performance for RIF purposes. However, a MSPB study recommendation that proposes increasing emphasis on performance while preserving seniority within levels of performance is similar in concept to the revisions proposed by OPM.

9/ See Appendix E for a detailed comparison.

10/ These proposed revisions are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. These proposed revisions were subsequently withdrawn by OPM in late May 1983, until the Congress has the opportunity to review the entire subject area. Because we felt that these proposals had received high visibility in the Federal community and that the concepts would continue to be debated, we have included them in this analysis.

- Shows that a majority (81%) of the senior personnel officials thought that bumping rights should be retained. (Employees were not asked their opinions on bumping rights.) Since the senior personnel officials were not asked if they thought that these rights should be limited in any way, there is no way of knowing whether they would sanction OPM's proposed revision to limit bumping and retreat rights to one grade level lower.

H. OVERVIEW OF REPORT

This report is part of a continuing effort by the Merit Systems Protection Board to examine the "health" of the merit employment system in the Federal Government. The succeeding eight chapters of this report on 1981 RIFs are summarized below for the convenience of the reader.

Chapter 2: The Present RIF System

This chapter is composed of two sections. The first briefly describes the present RIF system and the second provides historical background on how the RIF system developed. The section on the present RIF system presents an overview of the system and then describes specific provisions, such as the scope of competition, retention standing, assignment rights, and outplacement. The section on the historical background of the RIF system traces the evolution of the RIF system from the Civil War up to the present. Changes in RIF procedures during that period are highlighted chronologically under the following subsections: prior to World War II, from World War II to the Korean Conflict, from the Korean conflict to 1960, from 1960 to 1978, and from 1978 to the present. Also included are highlights of OPM's proposed revisions to the RIF regulations that were published on March 30, 1983 in the Federal Register. [11]

Chapter 3: The 1981 RIF: A Statistical Perspective

In order to provide a context against which to study the 1981 RIF, this chapter presents statistical data obtained from the Office of Personnel Management on all RIF actions involving full-time permanent Federal employees in calendar year 1981. Subjects discussed include: (1) the impact of the 1981 RIF on the total work force in terms of the numbers of employees separated, downgraded, and laterally reassigned, and the direct and proportional relationships between these employees and the total Federal work force; (2) the impact of the 1981 RIF on career and career-conditional employment in terms of the total numbers affected by all RIF actions and by separations, and the direct and proportional relationships between career and career-conditional employees and the total Federal work force; and (3) the impact of the RIF on women and minorities in terms of the total number affected by all RIF actions and by separations, and the direct and proportional relationships between minorities and women and the total Federal work force.

11/ Ibid.

Chapter 4: Did the 1981 RIF Comply With Regulations?

This chapter focuses on the extent to which the 1981 RIF complied with the RIF regulations promulgated by OPM and the agencies. Subjects discussed include: (1) whether the 1981 RIF was thought to have been conducted in compliance with regulations and in "good faith"; (2) whether RIF-affected employees were provided RIF documents, such as retention registers, and RIF information on subjects such as employee RIF rights; (3) whether employees understood the RIF system; (4) whether supervisors were sufficiently informed about agency RIF plans and; (5) whether efforts were made to evaluate RIF activities.

On balance, the study found that the 1981 RIF appeared to comply with RIF regulations, with some notable exceptions. A potentially serious problem area that arose in this study concerned allegations from senior personnel officials that they were improperly pressured to violate RIF regulations. The most outstanding perceived structural problem that surfaced in the study involved the failure of agencies to adequately communicate RIF documents and information to employees on the RIF. Other problem areas surfaced in the study involved employees' concerns about the ability of their agencies to conduct RIFs in "good faith", and employees and senior personnel officials' reservations about the lack of supervisors' knowledge of agency RIF plans. The study also found that there were few RIF evaluation and compliance reviews undertaken by either OPM or the agencies during 1981.

Chapter 5: Did the 1981 RIF Comply with Merit Principles and Avoid Prohibited Personnel Practices?

This chapter addresses whether the implementation of the 1981 RIF complied with the merit principles and avoided personnel practices contained in the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act. Topics discussed include: (1) whether persons were saved from a RIF improperly; (2) whether the RIFs violated other prohibited personnel practices; (3) whether the RIF was used in lieu of acceptable procedures to punish poor performers; and (4) whether employees planned to file RIF appeals.

The study found that, for the most part, the 1981 RIF appeared to be conducted equitably and fairly. However, some instances of prohibited personnel practices were reported. These allegations principally involved issues related to management favoritism, including the awarding of inflated performance appraisals. The study also found that the large majority of RIF-affected employees did not plan to appeal their RIF, chiefly because they felt they had been treated fairly. Those who expected to file appeals more frequently cited procedural issues rather than prohibited personnel practices as the basis for their appeals.

Chapter 6: Were the agencies prepared to conduct the technical aspects of the 1981 RIF?

This chapter discusses the adequacy of agency technical preparations for the RIF. Topics covered include: (1) the adequacy of RIF policy guidance, technical assistance, and technical training provided to agency personnel officials by OPM and their respective agencies; (2) the sufficiency of RIF preparation time; and (3) the adequacy of performance appraisals and job descriptions used in the RIF process.

On balance, the study found that agencies appeared to be reasonably well-prepared to conduct the technical aspects of the RIF. However, not all of those charged with implementing the RIF, the senior personnel officials, felt that they had the resources--policy guidance, technical assistance, training and time--to implement the complex RIF system properly. The study also found widespread criticism that position descriptions and performance appraisals were not accurate enough to be used for RIF purposes.

Chapter 7: Did the 1981 RIF Have an Effect on Work Force Morale and Productivity?

This chapter discusses the effects of the 1981 RIF on the morale and productivity of the work force. Areas addressed were the effects of the RIF on: (1) general morale, (2) desire to work for the Federal Government, (3) desire to work for the Federal agency, (4) the quantity and quality of work, (5) time and attendance, and (6) the ability to work with others. Also discussed is whether retaliation, such as stealing or destroying Government property, occurred as a result of the 1981 RIF.

The study found that the 1981 RIF had a widespread negative effect on the general morale of those in agencies expecting or undergoing RIFs. The effect on productivity was reported to be much less severe than that on general morale. The study also found that the incidence of RIF-related retaliation was minimal.

Chapter 8: What alternative actions to RIF did agencies take to minimize the effects of the 1981 RIF?

This chapter addresses the possible alternative actions that agencies faced with large-scale personnel reductions took to avoid or minimize the effects of the 1981 RIF. RIF-alternatives examined were: (1) attrition, (2) personnel freezes, (3) furloughs, (4) outplacement, and (5) "early out" retirement.

The study found that both attrition and personnel freezes were considered to be effective in avoiding or lessening RIFs. Although furloughs had not been used widely at the time of the study, the concept of furloughs as an alternative to RIF was also endorsed by the study respondents. The study found mixed results in the area of outplacement. Although the majority of agencies appeared to offer at least some outplacement services, few employees

actually used these services. The services judged as being most helpful were the providing of training on how to look for other jobs and the granting of administrative leave to help in job searches. "Early out" retirement was found to have limited feasibility as a RIF-alternative, particularly for large personnel reductions.

Chapter 9: How might the RIF system be improved?

This chapter presents the opinions of the employees and senior personnel officials in the study on potential improvements to the RIF system. The issues addressed include: (1) the weight that retention factors (such as performance, seniority, and veterans preference) should receive during a RIF; (2) whether agencies should be required to rehire employees separated in a RIF; (3) whether employees should be permitted to volunteer to have their jobs abolished during a RIF to collect severance pay or retirement; and (4) whether "bumping" rights should be retained.

The study found that both groups of respondents felt that performance should be given greater emphasis as a RIF retention factor than it is presently. However, the senior personnel officials (the only ones asked about performance appraisals) were highly critical of the accuracy of current appraisals to measure performance for RIF purposes. All three RIF policies--mandatory rehiring of RIF-separated employees, permitting voluntary separations in a RIF, and retaining "bumping" rights-- were widely endorsed by the senior personnel officials. (Employees were not asked about these policies.)

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

The concepts relating to the recommendations identified here are also contained in the "Concluding Observations" section of each chapter on the study findings (Chapters 4 through 9). These chapters provide the documentation for these recommendations.

- OPM and agency heads should review and, as appropriate, revise the procedures by which RIF-related information and documents are conveyed to employees. At a minimum, agency heads must assure that mandated RIF information and documents are provided to all RIF-affected employees. (See Chapter 4.)

- OPM and agency heads should assess regular official communication channels for their effectiveness and make adjustments where appropriate. They should work within these channels, as well as with the media, to provide timely, clear, and continuing information on agency RIF plans to supervisors and employees. Clear and continuing information concerning RIF plans should be provided in the interest of minimizing the disruptions which uncertainty about the RIF can cause. (See Chapter 4.)

- OPM and agency heads should conduct compliance reviews both during and after the RIF and institute corrective actions where appropriate. These actions should be publicized to employees to help improve the perceived fairness of the RIF. At a minimum, these reviews should examine whether:

  (1) the implementation of the RIF has complied with RIF regulations (see Chapter 4);

  (2) timely, clear, and continuing information on RIF plans and employee rights to RIF-related documents and information have been provided (see Chapter 4);

  (3) senior personnel officials have received improper pressure to violate RIF regulations (see Chapter 4); and

  (4) prohibited personnel practices and violations of merit principles, such as management favoritism, have occurred. (See Chapter 5.)

- Decision-makers might consider giving more emphasis to performance as a retention factor in the RIF process. However, any change in the RIF system to increase the emphasis on performance should take into account the inaccuracy and subjectivity of the current performance appraisal process. Some steps which might be taken to minimize this problem include (see Chapter 9):

  (1) establishing bands or spectra of performance, within which other objective measures, such as seniority, determine relative rank;

  (2) "freezing" performance ratings at some point retroactive to the onset of RIF planning, to prevent manipulation of ratings to unjustifiably favor "favorites;" and

  (3) using the average of several years' performance ratings to minimize the possible manipulation of recent ratings to get rid of unwanted employees.

- Agency heads and personnel officials should ensure the accuracy of position descriptions and performance appraisals used for RIF purposes. Position descriptions should continue to be reviewed for accuracy, and, in addition, employee input requested and any employee exceptions noted. OPM should consider setting up periodic pilot programs to assist agencies in developing ways to more accurately implement the current performance appraisal system. (See Chapter 6.)

- OPM should continue to encourage agency heads to utilize RIF alternatives such as attrition, personnel freezes, furloughs, and "early out" retirements, where judged to be cost-effective. This will help to minimize the need for a formal RIF and thus minimize RIF-related disruptions to the work force, such as declines in morale and quantity of output. However, "early out" retirement should not be relied on to free up many positions when large-scale personnel reductions are indicated. (See Chapters 7 and 8).

- Agency heads should provide effective outplacement assistance to assist employees in looking for new employment before and after the RIF. Agencies could be more creative in setting up outplacement programs than simply enrolling employees in the two OPM-sponsored programs, the Voluntary Interagency Placement Program and the Displaced Employee Program. The most helpful forms of outplacement assistance appear to be (see Chapter 8):

  (1) training on how to look for other employment (including aid in resume and SF-171 preparation and interviewing techniques), and

  (2) granting administrative leave for job searches.

- OPM and agency heads should consider requiring the mandatory hiring of qualified RIF-separated employees over non-Federal applicants for employment. At a minimum, agencies should justify in writing non-selections from the agency reemployment priority lists and OPM's Displaced Employee Program. (See Chapter 9.)

- OPM and agency heads should explore the budgetary and operational feasibility of the senior personnel officials' recommendation to allow employees who wish to receive severance pay or retire to volunteer to be separated in a RIF. This policy could be useful to encourage attrition and minimize the impact of the RIF on vulnerable employees. (See Chapter 9.)

J. NEXT STEPS

This study is the first of an anticipated series of MSPB work on the subject of RIF. On-site reviews at selected agencies will be conducted over the next 18 months and a roundtable discussion of RIF sponsored by MSPB is planned for the summer of 1983. These projects will further analyze some of the problem areas encountered in the study of the 1981 RIF.

CHAPTER 2: THE PRESENT RIF SYSTEM

The Federal RIF system is a complex set of procedures founded in law and regulation that has been evolving for over a hundred years. This chapter sets forth a brief description of the present RIF system and then provides and overview of how the system developed. The reader who is familiar with existing procedures and their historical development may wish to skip this chapter and turn to Chapter 3.

A. Brief Description of the RIF System 1/

Changes in Administration priorities, lack of funds, decrease in work, or reorganization may require a Federal agency to have a reduction-in-force. While an action by the President or the Congress can trigger a reduction-in-force in a particular agency, the agency officials decide when a RIF will take place and what positions will be abolished. This is the discretionary stage of RIF. After agency reduction-in-force decisions are made, the prevailing Federal RIF system determines which employees will be affected by RIF actions and how they will be affected. This is the proforma or technical stage of RIF. The RIF process is specified in regulations issued by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). 2/

Regardless of how many rumors of projected job cutbacks are circulating in an agency, an employee is officially in a reduction-in-force only when he or she receives a specific RIF notice indicating demotion, reassignment, furlough for more than 30 days, or separation. Employees are entitled to written general notices at least 30 calendar days (which includes at least 5 days for the specific notice) in advance of a RIF action.

Under present regulations, a Federal RIF has three possible outcomes for employees affected by RIF: separation from the Federal service, lateral reassignment to another position at a similar grade, and downgrading to a lower graded position. Lateral reassignments and most downgradings allow RIF-affected employees to retain their previous pay levels. Separation involves the loss of one's job, but with provisions for severance pay, retirement pay, if eligible, and other benefits. RIF procedures are also used for furloughs (temporary layoffs) for more than 30 days.

All affected employees must receive advance notice of a RIF, and materials which involve their RIF status must be provided by their agencies. Most Federal employees may appeal their RIF to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) or under a negotiated grievance procedure, if applicable. Employees may appeal reduction-in-force actions to MSPB beginning with the effective date of the RIF action until not later than 20 days after the actual layoff or job change.

1/ Much of this information on the RIF process is excerpted and adapted from "A Relatively Simple Guide to RIF" by Efstathia F. Siegel, Management, Fall 1981, pp. 3-8.

2/ See 5 C.F.R. Chapter 351 and Chapter 351 of the Federal Personnel Manual.

Scope of Competition

Once a reduction-in-force is found necessary, an agency first sets the area within which employees will compete to retain their jobs. This **competitive area** may be described geographically or organizationally, or both. For example, a competitve area could cover an entire agency or simply one of the agency's major divisions or bureaus. However, it is usually confined to a reasonable commuting area. It is up to the agency to decide how broad or limited a competitive area will be. It is important for an employee to know his or her competitive area because that area determines with whom the employee will be competing for retention in a RIF.

Within each competitive area jobs similar in work and grade are grouped into **competitive levels.** The positions in a competitive level are so alike in qualification requirements, duties, responsibilities, pay schedule, and working conditions that an employee can move from one position to any other position without significant training and without interrupting the agency's work program.

Retention Standing

After assigning positions to appropriate competitive levels, the agency establishes a separate **retention register** for each competitive level that will be affected by the reduction-in-force. Retention standing of individuals in a competitive level is based on the four factors prescribed by law: tenure of employment, military preference, length of service, and performance rating.

Each competitive level's retention register is divided into three tenure groups:

Group I - Non-probationary career employees;

Group II - Career employees serving probation and career-conditional employees;

Group III - Indefinite, term, non status non temporary employees, and employees serving under temporary appointments pending the establishment of registers.

Each tenure group is divided into three Subgroups, based on military preference:

Subgroup AD - Veterans with compensable service-connected disability of 30 percent or more;

Subgroup A - All other preference eligible veterans;

Subgroup B - Non-veterans.

In each Subgroup employees are ranked by their length of service, with those having the longest service at the top and those with the least at the bottom. Extra service credit is given for performance ratings. An "out-

standing" rating is worth four years of service credit. Ratings between "fully satisfactory" or its equivalent and "outstanding" may receive from zero to less than four years additional service credit.

Employees are released from their competitive level from the bottom to the top: the employee in the lowest Subgroup with the least amount of creditable service would be released first. All employees in a lower Subgroup must be selected for RIF action before any employee in a higher Subgroup is reached.

Assignment Rights

Employees released because there is no one lower in their competitive level are entitled to a reasonable offer of assignment in another competitive level which they can take by **"bumping"** or **"retreat."** If the released employee declines the offered assignment or if there is no position to which he or she can bump or retreat, the employee may be separated. Agencies have the option to assign employees to vacant positions.

An employee can **bump** someone in a **lower Subgroup.** This means, for example, a IA (career veteran) can bump a IB (career non-veteran), or anyone in Group II or Group III, but cannot bump another IA. If qualified with essentially the same skills, a displaced employee could bump an employee in a lower Subgroup at the same or lower grade. Under no circumstances may an employee bump another who has a higher grade or rate.

In displacement by **retreat,** an employee displaces another within his or her **own Subgroup.** For example, an employee in Subgroup IA with ten years of service may retreat to a position held by another employee in Subgroup IA with eight years of service, provided the second employee is in (1) a lower graded position from or through which the first employee was promoted or (2) a position that is substantially the same as one from or through which the first employee was promoted.

Outplacement

Agencies and OPM are required to establish outplacement programs to help employees displaced from their jobs in a RIF find other employment. Affected employees are given priority consideration for vacancies under agency re-employment priority lists. They are given job referrals under agency positive placement programs, OPM's Displaced Employee Program (DEP), and OPM's Voluntary Interagency Placement Program (VIPP).

B. HISTORIC EVOLUTION OF THE RIF SYSTEM IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT 3/

The present RIF system has been evolving over one hundred years with origins reaching to the earliest years of the Federal Service. See Table 1 for an overview of notable events in the development of the present RIF system.

3/ This information is excerpted and adapted from, "How They Got Here from There" by Thomas A. Glennon, Management, Spring 1982, pp 14-16.

Table 1

Notable Events in the Development of the Federal RIF System

1876	First retention system for Federal employees was established.
1883	Civil Service Act was passed which established in law veterans preference as a RIF retention factor.
1912	Efficiency Rating Act was passed which introduced performance as a RIF retention factor.
1921	Executive Order Number 3567 was issued which gave priority in RIF to those with higher performance ratings and to veterans with "good ratings."
1925	First uniform RIF regulations were issued by the Personnel Classification Board (PCB).
1932	Civil Service Commission (CSC) assumed functions of the PCB.
1943	CSC increased the weight of seniority as a RIF retention factor.
1944	Veterans Preference Act was passed which established the present RIF system.
1944	CSC set up a RIF procedure which formed the basis for "bumping" rights.
1947	CSC issued RIF regulations which formed the basis for "retreat" rights.
1953	CSC issued RIF regulations that limited "bumping" and "retreat" rights to a single competitive area.
1960	CSC issued regulations to cover transfers of function under RIF procedures.
1961	CSC issued RIF regulations that allowed the filling of vacancies, changed the method of computing seniority and credit for performance, and introduced a five day period for specific notices.
1964	CSC issued RIF regulations which involved changing the veterans status of retired military employees.
1978	Civil Service Reform Act was passed which assigned RIF retention priority to 30% disabled veterans.
1979	Office of Personnel Management (OPM) assumed functions of the CSC.
1979-1980	OPM issued new RIF regulations to update and simplify existing material.
1983	OPM published proposed revisions to the RIF procedures in March which were withdrawn in May until the Congress has the opportunity to review the entire subject area.

Pre-World War II

As noted in Chapter 1, the concept of RIF is not new to the Federal Government. Prior to the Civil War, Federal employees had no retention rights to their jobs. The first retention system for Federal employees was established when Congress in 1876 mandated that each department retain discharged veterans over non-veterans in a reduction-in-force. This established veterans preference as the first RIF retention criterion. With the passage of the Civil Service Act in 1883, the principle of veterans preference, as well as that of competitive appointment, was established by law.

Until the early twentieth century, each executive department handled RIFs in its own way. In 1912 Congress enacted the Efficiency Rating Act to introduce efficiency (performance) ratings as a RIF retention factor. In 1921 an executive order established an efficiency rating system. This provided that employees having the lowest efficiency ratings would be the first to be affected in a RIF and gave preference to veterans with "good" ratings.

The first uniform RIF regulations were issued in 1925 by the Personnel Classification Board, and applied only to headquarters employees. These RIF regulations introduced absolute preference to veterans with "good" or higher efficiency ratings, competitive levels, and seniority and tenure as retention factors. In 1932 the Civil Service Commission (CSC) assumed the functions of the Personnel Classification Board. The RIF retention system was refined by the CSC periodically from 1933 to 1942. In 1943 the CSC increased the weight of seniority as a RIF retention factor.

World War II to the Korean Conflict

The present RIF system was established in law by the Veterans Preference Act of 1944. This act simply confirmed the practices and regulations in effect at that time. Under this law, the CSC's RIF regulations must consider four factors in releasing employees: (1) tenure of employment; (2) military (veterans) preference; (3) length of service; and (4) efficiency (performance) ratings. No weight or order of procedure is stated in the Act. In 1944, the Commission provided for a new RIF system with tenure as the primary factor and length of service as the least important factor.

During the next few years the CSC issued regulations which redefined competitive levels, introduced "assignment rights" between competitive levels, lessened the weight of efficiency ratings as a major retention factor, and increased the weight of seniority.

In 1944 the CSC set up a system of reassignment rights based upon subgroup seniority which formed the basis for employee "bumping" rights in use today. In 1947 regulations were issued which set up a limited form of bumping within the retention subgroup. This later became known as "retreat" rights.

The new reduction-in-force system was immediately tested as the Government scaled down the work force following World War II. By 1945 the Federal work force had increased to 3,786,000 employees, but by 1950 the number of employees had declined to 1,934,000.

From the late 1940's to the early 1950's the reduction-in-force procedures gradually underwent additional changes, particularly the provisions relating to reassignment rights, tenure groups, and outplacement efforts.

Korean Conflict to 1960

Other changes occurred during this period. In 1953, the CSC issued regulations that limited bumping and retreat rights to a single competitive area. The importance of veterans preference also increased as a retention factor, mainly because of the large numbers of returning veterans from World War II and the Korean conflict who went to work for the Federal Government. For example, in early 1945 approximately 12% of the Federal workforce were considered veterans for retention purposes. By 1948 approximately 40% were veterans; 50% in 1955, and 52% in 1960. (At present approximately 48% of the Federal workforce are veterans.)

The RIF regulations were used to scale down the Federal work force following the Korean conflict. During the Korean conflict the Federal service grew to 2,532,000 employees in 1953 and later shrank to 2,240,000 by 1960 following the post-war reductions of the middle 1950's.

1960 to 1978

The next major revisions to the RIF procedures came in the early 1960's. RIF procedures were extended to cover transfers of function, assignment provisions were broadened to allow the filling of vacant positions, the way seniority was computed was changed, additional seniority credit was given for outstanding performance appraisals, and the requirement to give five days for specific notices was introduced. From this time until 1978 the only significant change to the RIF system occurred in 1964 and involved the veteran's status of employees who were retired from the military.

Although the Federal work force increased by approximately 300,000 employees between 1960 and 1970, the reduction-in-force procedures were needed in the reorganization of the Department of Defense during the mid-1960's.

1978 to Present

The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 assigned RIF retention priority to veterans with a compensable service connected disability of 30% or more. During 1979 and 1980, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) (the successor agency to the CSC) issued new regulations to incorporate changes mandated by the Civil Service Reform Act and to update and simplify existing material. A revised Federal Personnel Manual (FPM) Chapter 351 was issued by OPM in 1981 in preparation for the anticipated large-scale RIFs of that year.

On March 30, 1983, OPM published proposed revisions to the RIF procedures. 4/ These proposals are subject to a 60 day comment period after which final regulations will be issued. The proposed changes would give increased weight to performance over seniority in determining retention standing which would change the current weighting from: tenure, veterans preference, seniority, performance, to: tenure, veterans preference, performance, and seniority. Another major revision would limit "bump and retreat" rights to just one grade and would allow an employee to retreat to a previously held position only if the position change had occurred within the past five years. Employees also would be required to be fully qualified (rather than minimally qualified) to do the job into which they bump or retreat.

Other proposed revisions would double the specific notice period from the current 5 days to 10 days, allow agencies to establish smaller competitive areas, permit agencies to set up broader competitive levels, remove reclassification due to change in duties from RIF procedures, limit appeal rights only to RIF actions involving separations and downgrades, modify the use of hearings by MSPB in RIF appeals, and broaden the definition of "disabled veterans."

C. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

This chapter described the operation of the present RIF system and how it evolved. The next seven chapters provide a detailed discussion of the study findings on the implementation of the RIFs in 1981. OPM administrative data on the number of employees affected by RIF through separations, downgrades, or lateral reassignments are presented in the next chapter (Chapter 3) for a perspective on the direct impact of the 1981 RIF.

4/ For the full text of these revisions, see U.S. Office of Personnel Management, "Reductions-in-Force (RIF) and Advanced Comments on Proposed RIF Regulations, Proposed Rules." Federal Register 48, no. 62, March 30, 1983, pp. 13368-13371. These proposed revisions were subsequently withdrawn by OPM in late May 1983 until the Congress has the opportunity to review the entire subject area. Because we felt that these proposals had received high visibility in the Federal community and that the concepts would continue to be debated, we have included them in this report.

CHAPTER 3: THE 1981 RIF: A STATISTICAL PERSPECTIVE

A. INTRODUCTION

As part of the overall study, the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) research team analyzed available data on the numbers of employees affected by the 1981 RIF. The available data were from the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Central Personnel Data File (CPDF) 1/ for all RIF actions involving full-time permanent Federal employees in calendar year 1981 (January through December 1981). Data were also obtained from OPM on total Federal employment for a comparable period.

Critical Questions

To obtain a statistical perspective on the 1981 RIF, this chapter addresses the following critical questions:

- How large a segment of the work force was adversely affected by the 1981 RIF?
- What was the impact of the 1981 RIF on career and career-conditional employees?
- What was the impact of the 1981 RIF on women and minorities?

Major Findings

The data obtained from OPM were analyzed in terms of the direct and proportional relationships between RIF-affected employees and the total Federal work force and among certain demographic groups, i.e., career and career conditional employees, 2/ women and men, and minorities and non-minorities. 3/ The rest of this chapter presents the specific analysis of these relationships.

1/ The CPDF, established in 1978, is an automated file covering most Federal employees. The file is based on and updated monthly with personnel action information submitted directly to OPM by Federal agency appointing offices. The standard Form 50, "Notification of Personnel Action," is the basic source of the CPDF.

2/ Career employees have more than three years creditable Federal service; career-conditional employees have less than three years creditable Federal service and have RIF retention rights subordinate to career employees. See Chapter 2 for a more detailed explanation of the RIF process.

3/ OPM defines minorities as those who are American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, or Hispanic. The term "non-minority" refers to those who are white and are not of Hispanic origin. This term is used widely among Federal agencies, including OPM, and it has been used in previous MSPB reports.

Based on this analysis, the major findings of this chapter can be summarized as follows:

- Over 99% of full-time permanent Federal employees were not affected by the 1981 reduction-in-force (RIF).
- Although the 1981 RIF affected 12,594 full-time permanent employees, 51% of these employees remained in the Federal service.
- Of the 12,594 RIF-affected employees, 49% were separated from the Federal service.
- Career employees constituted the majority of those impacted (separated, downgraded, or laterally reassigned) by the 1981 RIF; however, career-conditional employees were more likely than career employees to be separated.
- Men and non-minorities constituted the majority of those impacted by the 1981 RIF.
- Women and minorities were statistically disproportionately impacted by the 1981 RIF. 4/

B. STATISTICAL FINDINGS

This section examines these major findings under three subheadings: "Impact on the Total Work Force," "Impact on Career and Career-Conditional Employment," and "Impact on Women and Minorities." The major findings, additional data analysis, and relevant statistical tables are presented under the appropriate subheadings. The data on total RIF actions are shown for all employees, as well as for the demographic groups. Data on RIF lateral reassignments, downgrades, and separations are also provided for all employees, but only data on RIF separations are shown for the demographic groups.

4/ It is also possible that many of the agencies involved in the 1981 RIF employed disproportionately higher numbers of minorities and women than other parts of the Federal Government. Our study did not analyze the RIF statistics by agency. However, a 1981 Urban League report stated:

> * * * the rate of growth of black employment (during the 1970's in professional and managerial positions was concentrated in the public sector in social welfare work. . . This pattern of employment will present serious difficulties for the black middle class. . . For example, the Federal Government reductions-in-force are heavily targeted at social service agencies that employ large numbers of black workers. (Excerpted from Bernard E. Anderson, "Economic Patterns in Black America," The Status of Black America 1982, National Urban League, Inc., January 14, 1982, p. 7.)

Impact on the Total Work Force

The 1981 RIFs directly affected less than 1% of the total Federal work force. Over half of the RIF-affected employees remained in Government service through either lateral reassignments or downgrades. No loss in pay was incurred at the time by these employees because they received lateral assignments or retained their previous pay level while being downgraded.

However, 6,134 or 49% of the RIF-affected employees were separated from Government service as a result of the 1981 RIFs. They constituted one-third of 1% of the total Federal work force. These findings are discussed in greater detail below.

1. **Over 99% of full-time permanent Federal employees were not affected by the 1981 reduction-in-force (RIF).** With an estimated work force of 1,887,200 persons, the RIF did not affect 1,874,606 (99.33%). In contrast, a total of 12,594 (0.67%) full-time permanent employees were affected directly by the 1981 RIF through separations, downgrades, or lateral reassignments. Thus, less than 1% of the active work force was affected directly by the 1981 RIFs. (See Table 2.)

TABLE 2

Effect of the 1981 Federal Reduction-in-Force

RIF Effect	Number	Percent of Total
Total RIF-affected employees*/	12,594	0.67%
Total employees not affected by RIF	1,874,606	99.33%
Total Work Force **/	1,887,200	100.00%

*/ Source: OPM, "Separation and Reductions-in-Force Related Actions," dated June 4, 1982; figures for January through September 1981 are "seasoned" (100% complete) and those for October through December 1981 are "unseasoned" (90% complete). Both sets of figures are for full-time permanent civilian personnel, excluding the U.S. Postal Service, based on the OPM Central Personnel Data File (CPDF).

**/ Average of figures compiled by OPM as of November 1980 and September 30, 1981. Figures are for full-time civilian personnel, excluding the U.S. Postal Service, based principally on the OPM CPDF. There are some minor differences in the number of agencies used to compile these two sets of figures. Source: "Equal Employment Opportunity Statistics," November 1980 and "Distribution of Full-time Federal Civilian Employment," September 30, 1981.

2. **Although the 1981 RIF affected 12,594 full-time permanent employees, 51% of these employees remained in the Federal service.** Of the 12,594 affected employees, 6,460 remained in the Federal service. Of this number, some 3,414 received lateral reassignments (27%), while 3,046 were downgraded (24%).

The 3,414 employees who received lateral reassignments incurred no reduction in grade or pay. Further, all of the 3,046 downgraded employees retained their previous pay for an indefinite period of time and most retained their previous grade level for two years. For example, in the 1981 RIF, 2,681 of the 3,046 downgraded employees (21% of all RIF-affected employees) retained their previous grade and pay. The other 365 downgraded employees did not retain their previous grade but retained their pay. As a result, there was no immediate economic impact of the RIF on any of the downgraded employees.

In total, 6,460 of the 12,594 affected employees both remained in Federal service and retained the same pay as before the RIF (51%). (See Table 3.)

TABLE 3

Disposition of 1981 RIF-Affected Employees

RIF Actions */	Number	Percent of Total
Lateral Reassignments	3,414	27%
Downgrading Totals:	3,046	24%
Retained previous pay and grade	2,681	21%
Retained pay/did not retain grade	365	3%
(Subtotal: Remained in work force)	(6,460)	(51%)
Separations	6,134	49%
Total	12,594	100%

*/ Source: OPM, "Separation and Reductions-in-Force Related Actions," dated June 4, 1982; figures for January through September 1981 are "seasoned" (100% complete) and those for October through December 1981 are "unseasoned" (90% complete). Both sets of figures are for full-time permanent civilian personnel, excluding the U.S. Postal Service, based on the OPM CPDF.

3. **Of the 12,594 RIF-affected employees, 49% were separated from the Federal Service.** The 6,134 employees who were separated constitute, in total, 0.33% of the work force of 1,887,200, i.e., one-third of 1%. Separated employees may be eligible for severance pay, unemployment compensation, reemployment and/or outplacement services, i.e., career counseling and assistance with job search activities (See Table 3.)

Impact on Career and Career-Conditional Employment

The largest numeric impact of the 1981 RIF was incurred by career employees, although career-conditional employees were more likely than career employees to be separated. These findings are discussed in greater detail below.

4. **Career employees constituted the majority of those impacted by the 1981 RIF; however, career-conditional employees were more likely than career employees to be separated.** Among the full-time permanent employees affected by the 1981 RIF, 10,371 or 82% were career employees, while 2,205 or 18% were career conditional employees. (See Table 4.)

TABLE 4

Effect of the 1981 Federal Reductions-in-Force on Career and Career-Conditional Employees

RIF Effect	Number */	Percent of Total
Total RIF-affected career employees	10,371	82%
Total RIF-affected career-conditional employees	2,205	18%
Total RIF-affected employees	12,576	100%

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*/ Source: OPM, "Separation and Reductions-in-Force Related Actions," dated January 7, 1983; figures for January through December 1981 are all seasoned data. The figures are based on full-time permanent civilian personnel, excluding the U.S. Postal Service, from the OPM CPDF. These figures exclude 18 employees who are not classified according to career or career-conditional status.

Career-conditional employees were more likely to be separated in the 1981 RIF than were career employees. Although career-conditional employees comprise 20% of the Federal work force, 26% of those separated by a RIF in 1981 were career-conditional employees. (See Table 5.)

TABLE 5

Proportionate Impact of Separations in the 1981 RIF on Career and Career-Conditional Employees

	Total Federal Work Force*/		Separated Employees **/	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
Career employees	1,495,759	80%	4,507	74%
Career-conditional employees	362,690	20%	1,609	26%
	1,858,449	100%	6,116	100%

*/ Source: OPM, "Overview Report" as of September 30, 1981. Figures are based on permanent civilian employment, excluding the U.S. Postal Service, from the OPM CPDF.

**/ Source: OPM, "Separation and Reduction-in-Force Related Actions," dated January 7, 1973. Figures from January through December 1981 are all seasoned data. The figures are based on full-time permanent civilian personnel, excluding the U.S. Postal Service, from the OPM CPDF. These figures exclude 18 employees who are not classified according to career or career-conditional status.

These findings demonstrate that career employees, as intended by the RIF regulations, were less likely to be separated than were career-conditional employees, i.e., those with less than three years of creditable Federal service.

Impact on Women and Minorities

The 1981 RIF had the largest numeric impact on men and employees who were not members of minority groups. However, the largest percentage impact of the RIFs were incurred by women and minorities. Women comprised 42% of RIF-affected employees in total although they represented 37% of the total Federal work force. Minority group members comprised 37% of the RIF-affected employees while making up 23% of the total Federal work force.

Women and members of minority groups were also more likely to be separated than were other employees. Around half (51%) of those separated in the 1981 RIF were women and two-fifths (40%) of those separated were minorities. 5/ These findings are discussed in greater detail below.

5. **Men and non-minorities constituted the majority of those impacted by the 1981 RIF.** Of the 12,594 persons affected by the 1981 RIF, 7,329 were men

5/ See footnote 4 of this chapter.

(58%), while 5,240 were women (42%). 6/ Some 7,920 were non-minorities (63%), while 4,593 were minorities (37%). 7/ (See Table 6.)

6. **Women and minorities were statistically disproportionately impacted by the 1981 RIF.** Since women comprised 37% of the total Federal work force, the finding that 42% of RIF-affected employees were women indicates that women were disproportionately affected by the 1981 RIF. Since minorities comprised 23% of the total Federal work force, the finding that 37% of the RIF-affected employees were minorities indicates that they were disproportionately affected by the 1981 RIF. (See Table 6).

TABLE 6

Proportionate Impact of the 1981 RIF by Minority Status and Sex

	Total Federal Work Force*/		Total RIF-Affected Employees**/	
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
Men	1,182,736	63%	7,329	58%
Women	704,464	37%	5,240	42%
	1,887,200	100%	12,569	100%
Non-minority	1,449,686	77%	7,920	63%
Minority	437,514	23%	4,593	37%
	1,887,200	100%	12,513	100%

*/ Average of figures compiled by OPM as of November 1980 and September 30, 1981. Figures are for full-time civilian personnel, excluding the U.S. Postal Service, based principally on the OPM CPDF. There are some minor differences in the number of agencies used to compile these two sets of figures. Source: "Equal Employment Opportunity Statistics", November 1980 and "Distribution of Full-time Federal Civilian Employment", September 30, 1981.

**/ Source: OPM, "Separation and Reductions-in-Force Related Actions", dated June 4, 1982; figures for January through September 1981 are "seasoned" (100% complete) and those for October through December 1981 are "unseasoned" (90% complete). Both sets of figures are for full-time permanent civilian personnel, excluding the U.S. Postal Service, based on the OPM CPDF. Note: This figure excludes 81 employees for whom minority code was unspecified, and 25 for whom sex was unspecified.

6/ The sex of the remaining 25 persons was unknown.

7/ The minority status of the remaining 81 persons was unknown.

Women and minorities were more likely to be separated than were other employees. Although women comprised 37% of the Federal work force, 51% of those separated by a RIF in 1981 were women. Although minorities comprised 23% of the Federal work force, 40% of those separated by a RIF were minorities. (See Table 7.) [8]

TABLE 7

Proportionate Impact of Separations in the 1981 RIF by Minority Status and Sex

	Total Federal Work Force		Total Separated Employees	
	Number*/	Percent of Total	Number**/	Percent of Total
Men	1,182,736	63%	3,030	49%
Women	704,464	37%	3,094	51%
	1,887,200	100%	6,124	100%
Non-minority	1,449,686	77%	3,663	60%
Minority	437,514	23%	2,430	40%
	1,887,200	100%	6,093	100%

*/ Average of figures compiled by OPM as of November 1980 and September 30, 1981. Figures are for full-time civilian personnel, excluding the U.S. Postal Service, based principally on the OPM CPDF. There are some minor differences in the number of agencies used to compile these two sets of figures. Source: "Equal Employment Opportunity Statistics," November 1980 and "Distribution of Full-time Federal Civilian Employment," September 30, 1981.

**/ Source:OPM, "Separation and Reductions-in-Force Actions," dated June 4, 1982; figures for January through September 1981 are "seasoned" (100% complete) and those for October through December 1981 are "unseasoned" (90% complete). Both sets of figures are for full-time permanent civilian personnel, excluding the U.S. Postal Service, based on the OPM CPDF. Note: This figure excludes 41 employees for whom minority code was unspecified, and 10 for whom sex was unspecified.

A possible explanation for this disproportionate effect on women and minorities may be found in applicable law and regulation governing RIFs.[9] Under RIF procedures, those employees with greater seniority and veterans

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8/ See footnote 4 of this chapter.

9/ See Chapter 2 for a more detailed explanation of the RIF process.

preference (especially veterans with a 30% or greater service-connected disability), are more likely to be retained in a RIF. These procedures may have the unintentional effect of adversely affecting women and members of minority groups, since women and minorities have fewer average years of Federal service (seniority) and are less likely to be veterans.

Available data indicate that women have an average length of service of 11.6 years compared to men who have an average length of service of 16.0 years. Minorities have an average length of service of 13.2 years compared to non-minorities who have an average of 14.6 years. 10/ Based on available statistics, 50% of the non-minorities have veterans preference as compared to 39% of the minorities. In addition, 70% of the men have veterans preference as compared to 8% of the women. 11/

C. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Contrary to public predictions that as many as 35,000 Federal employees might lose their jobs in the 1981 RIF, a little over 6,000 employees actually were separated by RIF from January through December 1981. Another 6,500 received downgrades or lateral reassignments, but remained employed by the Government. However, of the approximately 12,500 who were directly affected by the 1981 RIFs, women and minorities received a statistically disproportionate share of the actions.

The following six chapters discuss the effects of the 1981 RIF on all those who were working in agencies that underwent RIFs in 1981, not just those who were actually separated, downgraded or reassigned.

10/ Source: OPM, "Current Status Report" as of December 1981. Figures are for all work schedules and tenures and all agencies excluding the U.S. Postal Service, based on the OPM CPDF.

11/ Figures based on data obtained from questions 51, 56, and 57 of the MSPB General RIF questionnaire. A copy of this questionnaire is in Appendix D.

CHAPTER 4: DID THE 1981 RIF COMPLY WITH REGULATIONS?

A. INTRODUCTION

The next six chapters in this report address the study objectives which were enumerated in Chapter 1. The substance of these chapters involves an analysis of the data from the two survey questionnaires.[1/] Selected relevant comments from the personal interviews are also included to help the reader understand the qualitative values and reasoning behind some of the statistical responses.

This chapter focuses on the extent to which the CY 1981 RIF complied with the RIF regulations promulgated by OPM and agencies. Subjects discussed are whether the 1981 RIF was thought to have been conducted in compliance with regulations and in "good faith", whether affected employees were provided information and documents about the RIF, whether employees understood the RIF system, whether supervisors were sufficiently informed about agency RIF plans, and whether efforts were made to evaluate RIF activities. The applicable OPM regulations are found in 5 C.F.R. Section 351 and Federal Personnel Manual Chapter 351. [2/]

Critical Questions

To determine whether the 1981 RIF complied with these regulations, this chapter addresses the following critical questions:

- Was the RIF seen as having been conducted in compliance with law and regulations?

1/ These data, as noted in Chapter 2, are based on the opinions of the survey respondents.

2/ These regulations provide that:

- Agencies must comply with RIF laws, regulations, and the terms of collective bargaining agreements.
- Agencies have discretion in implementing certain aspects involved in a RIF, such as determining the need for a RIF and determining the positions to be affected.
- Agencies are required to provide employees who receive RIF notices access to RIF documents, such as retention registers.
- Agencies are required to provide employees who receive RIF notices with information about how the RIF affects them personally and their rights to appeal the RIF and receive certain benefits, such as severance pay.
- Agencies are requested to maintain open lines of communication with all employees about the RIF to enhance understanding and acceptance of the RIF.
- Agencies are encouraged to bring operating officials into all phases of the RIF planning process.
- Agencies and OPM have discretionary authority to evaluate the RIF process.

- Were agencies viewed as being capable of implementing RIF actions in "good faith"?

- Did agencies provide employees with mandated documents and information regarding the RIF?

- Did employees affected by the RIF understand the RIF system as much as they wanted to understand it?

- Were supervisors sufficiently informed about agency plans to advise employees about RIFs?

- Did agencies and OPM conduct evaluations of the RIF process?

Major Findings

The research team analyzed the responses to questions in both the Personnelist and General questionnaires that were relevant to these critical questions. We often found that there was a difference between the way the senior personnel officials [3/] and employees viewed the RIF. Based on our analysis, the major findings, which are discussed in greater detail in the rest of the chapter, can be summarized as follows:

- Over three-quarters of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies stated that the RIF complied with the regulations of OPM and their agencies and that their personnel offices had done a good job of carrying out the RIF.

- Over 80% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies did not report any pressure on them to violate the RIF regulations. Those reporting pressure overwhelmingly attributed it to management officials.[4/]

- Almost 70% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that their agencies would implement RIF actions in "good faith". By contrast, a little over 35% of employees in RIF-affected agencies thought that their agencies would show "good faith" in implementing RIFs.

3/ Senior personnel officials (SPOs) are members of the Personnelist RIF sample which consisted of personnel officials who were at GS-15 and above or equivalent in Washington, D.C. and at GS-13 and above or equivalent outside the Washington, D.C. area. Approximately 900 were surveyed and the response rate was 88%. Because the SPOs were not required to answer each question, the number of respondents for most questions varied from approximately 300 to well over 700.

4/ Management officials include all categories of management who were not SPOs, the supervisors, or the co-workers of SPOs.

- Over 60% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that mandated RIF documents (personnel folders, regulations, retention registers, etc.) were made available by their personnel offices to employees. Fewer than one-third of the employees in RIF-affected agencies said that they had reviewed these documents. For example, only 27% said that they had reviewed their personnel folders and only 17% said that they had reviewed their retention registers.

- Approximately half of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that their personnel offices provided sufficient RIF information to employees on how the RIF process works, employee RIF rights, etc. Employees were much less likely to say that they received sufficient RIF information. For example, only 15% said that they had received as much information as they needed on how the RIF process works and only 11% said they received as much as they needed on their RIF rights.

- Over 80% of the employees affected by a RIF did not understand the RIF process as much as they wanted to understand it.

- Over 70% of the senior personnel officials and 50% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies maintained that supervisors were not sufficiently informed about agency RIF plans.

- Almost 75% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported no RIF evaluations by OPM and almost 70% reported no RIF evaluations by their agencies during 1981.

B. FINDINGS

This section is organized under three sub-headings: "General Compliance with Regulations", "Communication of RIF Documents and Information", and "Evaluation and Compliance Efforts." The major findings are discussed in greater detail under the appropriate sub-headings. Tables and charts depicting the range of responses by senior personnel officials and employees, as well as relevant comments from the interviews are also included. Where identical or comparable questions were asked of the senior personnel officials and employees, we have tried to distinguish between the findings of each. We have also tried to indicate where questions were asked of one group of respondents and not the other.

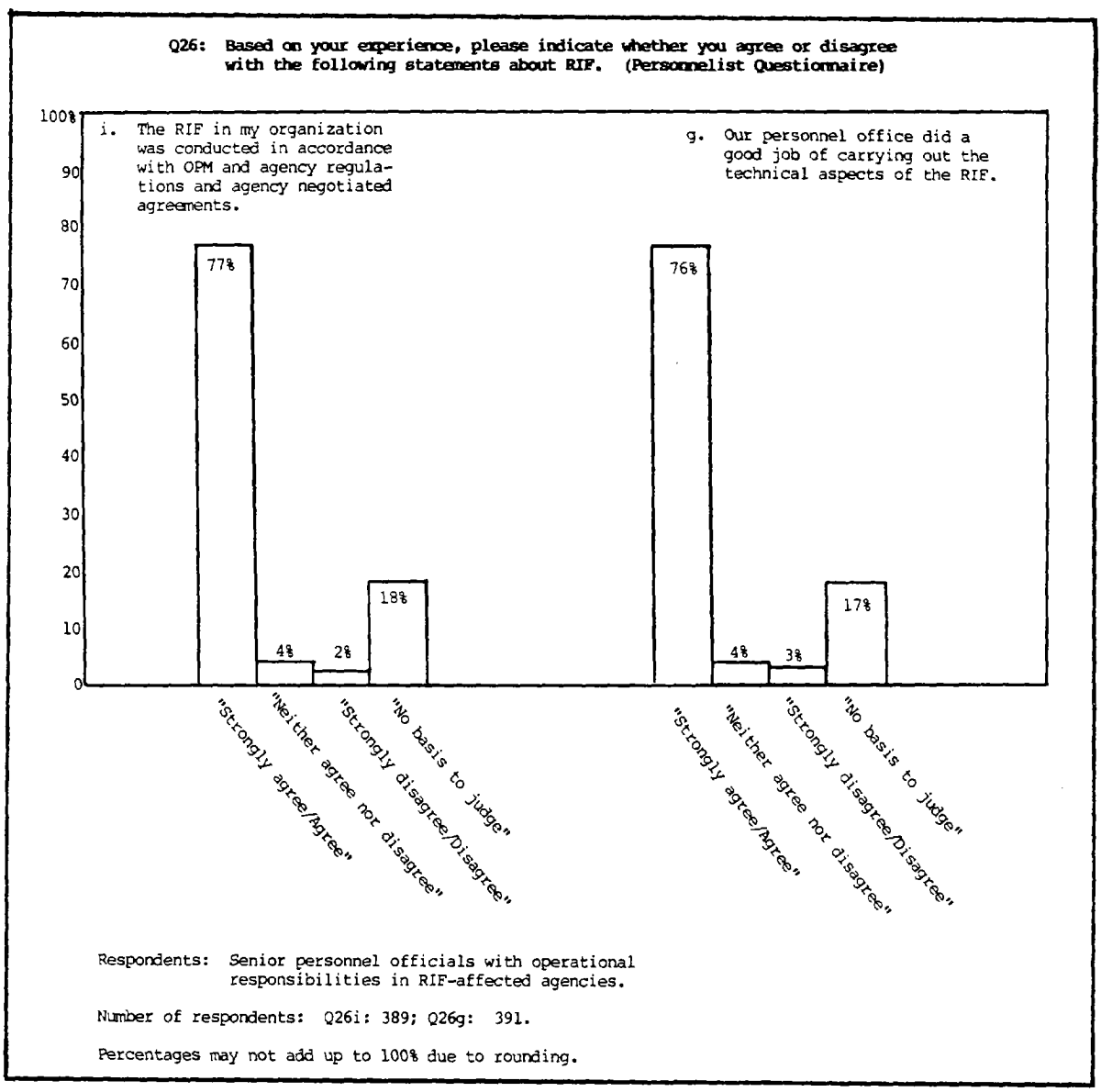
General Compliance with Regulations

In general, the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that the 1981 RIF was conducted in accordance with the RIF regulations and carried out in a technically correct manner. Most of these officials did not report being pressured to violate the RIF regulations, although around one-fifth did report being so pressured. (Employees were not asked these questions.) A majority of these senior personnel officials also thought that their agencies would conduct the RIFs in "good faith". In contrast, employees were less confident that their agencies would make "good faith" efforts. The specific results are given below.

1. **Over three-quarters of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies stated that the RIF complied with the regulations of OPM and their agencies and that their personnel offices had done a good job of carrying out the RIF.** Seventy-seven percent of the senior personnel officials with operational responsibility felt the 1981 RIF was conducted in accordance with regulations. Seventy-six percent of these officials felt their personnel office had done a good job in carrying out the technical aspects of the RIF. Employees were not asked these questions. (See Chart 1.)

CHART 1

Senior Personnel Officials' Opinions on the Conduct of the RIF in Their Agencies.



2. **Over 80% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies did not report any pressure on them to violate the RIF regulations. Those reporting pressure overwhelmingly attributed it to management officials.** Eighty-one percent of the senior personnel officials with operational responsibility said that no improper pressure was placed on them to act counter to the RIF regulations. However, 19%,or almost one-fifth of those responding, said they were so pressured. Employees were not asked this question.

Senior personnel officials who were pressured attributed this pressure to management officials more than to other persons. Of the 19% who were pressured, 85% attributed this to management officials, while another 22% cited their supervisor and 3% cited a co-worker. (Since multiple responses were permitted, the percentages add up to over 100%.) Thus, about 16% of the senior personnel officials reported improper pressure from management officials to violate the RIF regulations (85% of the 19% so pressured).

3. **Almost 70% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that their agencies would implement RIF actions in "good faith". By contrast, a little over 35% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies thought that their agencies would show "good faith" in implementing RIFs.** The regulations provide for agency discretion with respect to determining the need for a RIF and the positions to be abolished. Given this discretion, the survey asked whether agencies would implement RIF actions in "good faith", without intent to hurt or help anyone. Some 68% of the senior personnel officials with operational responsibility agreed with this statement. In contrast, only 37% of the employees agreed with this statement. The employees were almost as likely to disagree as agree that their agencies would implement the RIFs in "good faith." (See Chart 2)

This difference of opinion is illustrated by comments from interviews conducted during the study. As one management official stated:

> Because most personnel officials lack experience in RIF procedures, they will "play it by the book" rather than trying to manipulate the system.

A Director of Personnel cautioned:

> Employees are about as confident in RIF as they are in merit promotion. Many people never will think that the RIF was fair. It is extremely important to keep good communications open to try to combat this attitude.

Others, particularly employees and union officials, expressed a different view. An employee group commented:

> There is a 100 percent lack of confidence in agencies, except on the part of the personnelists.

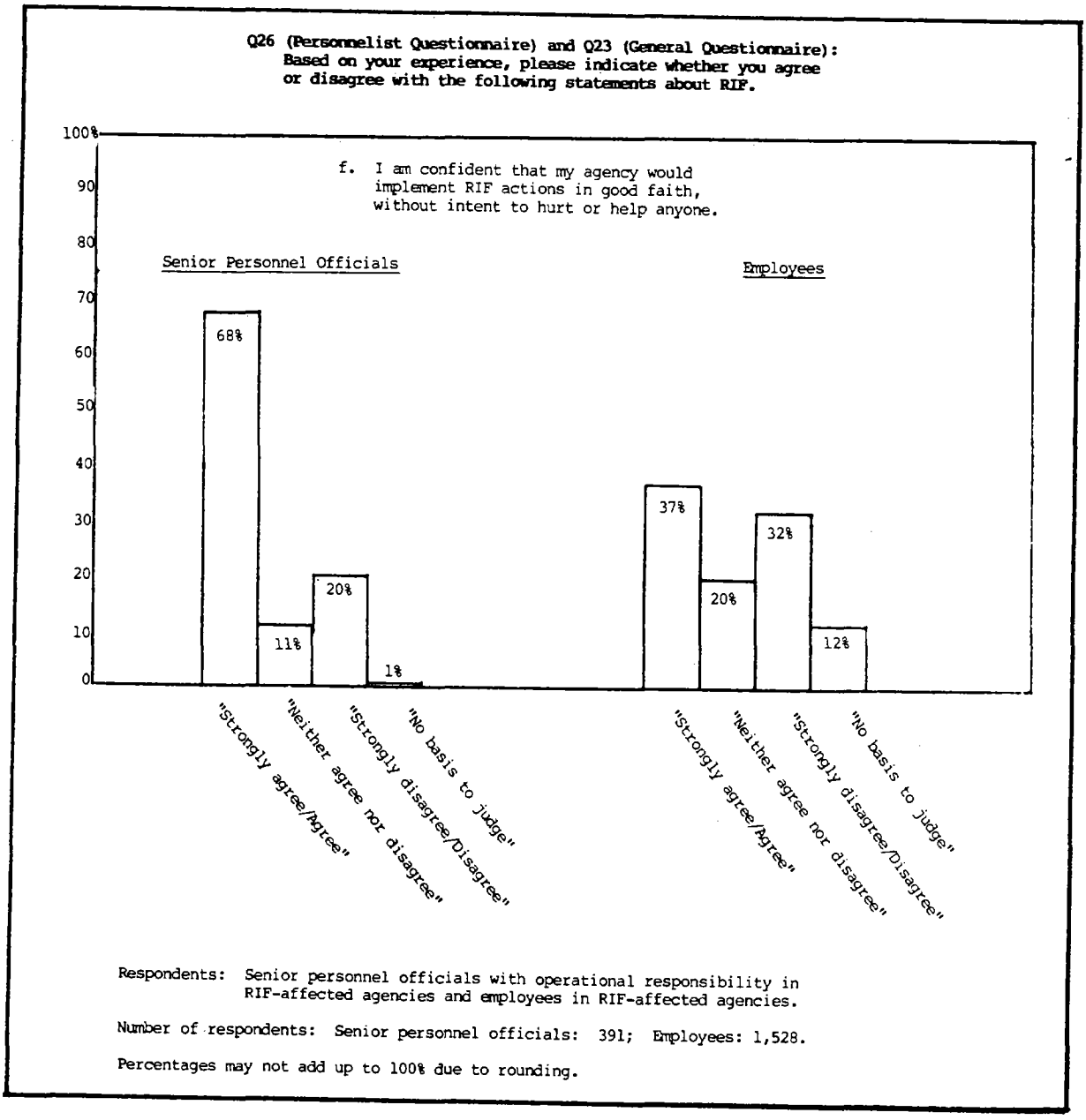
One union official stated:

> We unfortunately have found agency personnel staffs to be willing partners on any occasion where RIF procedures are used for any purposes contrary to merit principles. This

should not be interpreted as a condemnation of all personnel specialists. Rather it reflects only our observation that the personnel office is there to serve management.

CHART 2

Senior Personnel Officials' and Employees' Opinions of Their Agencies' Ability to Conduct a RIF in "Good Faith"



Communication of RIF Documents and Information

The difference in perception between senior personnel officials and employees was also demonstrated with regard to availability of RIF documents and information as required by regulation. The majority of senior personnel officials thought that sufficient documentation and information on the RIF had been provided to employees in their organizations. However, most employees, even those who had received specific notices, did not think that the documentation and information provided was sufficient.

Lack of information about RIF was also found in two other areas: understanding the RIF process and supervisory knowledge of agency RIF plans. The majority of employees reported that they did not understand the RIF process as much as they wished. Both senior personnel officials and employees felt that supervisors were not sufficiently knowledgeable about agency RIF plans. **This failure by agencies to provide adequate communication about the RIF was the most outstanding problem of structural non-compliance found by this study.** The findings on communication of RIF documents and information are discussed in greater detail below.

4. **Over 60% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that mandated RIF documents (personnel folders, regulations, retention registers, etc.) were made available by their personnel offices to employees. Fewer than one-third of the employees in RIF-affected agencies said that they had reviewed these documents.** Senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies and employees in RIF-affected agencies were both asked whether the following required RIF materials were available for employees to review:

- Employee's official personnel folders,
- OPM and agency RIF regulations,
- Employees' retention registers (a by name listing of employees' RIF status compared to other employees),
- Papers showing the outcome of the RIF (e.g., the outcome of downgradings).

The majority of senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies stated that their personnel offices had made these documents available to employees. For example, 91% said official personnel folders had been made available to employees to look at and 77% said that retention registers had been made available to employees. (See Table 8).

Employees in RIF-affected agencies indicated that they had not reviewed these documents relating to their personal RIF status. Only 27% of the employees stated that they had looked at their own personnel folders and 17% had looked at their retention registers. Half (51%) of the employees reported that their agencies had either not offered or not let them look at their retention registers. (See Table 9.)

These responses were analyzed further by the study team for those perceived to be the most motivated to review these documents, i.e., those who had both received specific notices and tried to access the documents. This analysis excluded the responses of those who were not interested, afraid to ask, or not sure what the documents were. It showed that although RIF regulations require that those who receive RIF notices be given access to their retention registers, 40% of the employees responded that they had not reviewed them. Additionally, 40% had not reviewed their personnel folders, 35% had not reviewed their agency's RIF regulations, 39% had not reviewed OPM's RIF regulations, and 78% had not reviewed papers showing the outcome of the RIF.

Further insight about availability of documents, particularly retention registers, was provided by the on-site interviews. Policy seemed to vary among the agencies. At one agency a personnel official stated:

> The retention register was contained on 3x5 cards which were not shown to employees; but if they asked they could see them. Most employees didn't know about the cards, so they didn't ask.

However, a personnel official at another agency stated:

> My agency showed the retention registers to employees and most wanted to see them. We posted them on the wall so that all employees could look at them.

TABLE 8

RIF Documents Made Available to Employees by Personnel Offices

Q24. The following are documents related to RIF status which employees serviced by your personnel office may have reviewed. Did your personnel office make these available for employees to look at? (Personnelist Questionnaire)

Document	Were Made Available*/	Were not made Available **/	Employees Not interested ***/	No basis judge
a. Employee's own official personnel folder	91%	2%	1%	5%
e. Your organization's regulations on RIF	82%	5%	3%	10%
d. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations on RIF	82%	5%	4%	9%
b. Employee's own retention register	77%	4%	4%	15%
c. Papers showing the outcome of the RIF (the effect of bumping and retreating)	61%	14%	4%	21%

Respondents: Senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies.
Number of respondents: 380 to 385, depending on the document reviewed.
Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

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*/ Response categories: "Yes, as much as they wanted," and "Yes, but our personnel office made it hard for employees to look at this."

**/ Response categories: "No, our personnel office did not offer this to employees" and "No, but our personnel office would not let employees look at this."

***/ Response categories: "No, however, employees were not interested in looking at this."

TABLE 9

RIF Documents Reviewed by Employees

Q18. Did you look at any of the following documents related to your personal RIF status? (General Questionnaire.)

Document	Had reviewed */	Had not reviewed **/	Afraid to ask for ***/	Not Interested ****/	Unsure what it is *****/
a. Your official personnel folder	27%	31%	2%	37%	3%
e. Your agency regulations on RIF	25%	42%	2%	21%	9%
d. OPM regulations on RIF	23%	44%	1%	23%	9%
b. Your retention register	17%	51%	2%	19%	10%
c. Papers showing the outcome of the RIF (the effect of downgradings as a result of the RIF process)	9%	50%	2%	23%	16%

Respondents: Employees in RIF-affected agencies.
Number of respondents: 1464 to 1509, depending on the document reviewed.
Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

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*/ Response category: "Yes, I was able to look at this as much as I wanted" and "Yes, but my agency made it hard for employees to look at this."

**/ Response category: "No, but my agency did not offer this to me" and "No, but my agency would not let me look at this."

***/ Response category: "No, I was afraid to ask for this."

****/ Response category: "No, however, I was not interested in looking at this."

*****/ Response category: "I am not sure what this is."

5. **Approximately half of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that their personnel offices provided sufficient RIF information to employees on how the RIF process works, employee RIF rights, etc. Employees were much less likely to say that they received sufficient RIF information.** Senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies and employees in RIF-affected agencies were both asked whether employees received the following information concerning the RIF:

- Information or training on how the RIF process works,
- Information on how the RIF may affect employees personally,
- Information or training on employee RIF rights.

The senior personnel officials responded as follows: 49% said their personnel offices had provided employees with as much information as they needed on the RIF process, 48% said employees were provided as much as the needed on how the RIF would personally affect them and 52% said employees were provided as much as they needed on employee RIF rights. In contrast, only 15% of the employees felt they received as much information as they needed on the RIF process, 11% felt they had received as much as they needed on how the RIF would personally affect them, and 11% felt they had received as much as they needed on their RIF rights. Employees were also more likely than senior personnel officials to say that they neither received nor requested any information. (See Tables 10 and 11.)

The contrast in perception between senior personnel officials and employees was found even under circumstances where RIF information is required to be provided, i.e., where specific notices have been issued. Among those employees who received specific RIF notices, only 15% felt that they had received as much information or training as they needed on how the RIF process works, 22% felt they had received as much as they needed on how the RIF affected them personally, and 28% felt that they had received as much as they needed on their RIF rights.

However, the majority of senior personnel officials in agencies that had issued specific notices felt that employees had received as much information as they needed. Sixty-one percent of these senior personnel officials thought that their personnel offices provided employees with as much information as they needed on the RIF process, 61% also thought that employees were provided as much as they needed on how the RIF affected employees personally, and 66% thought that employees were provided as much as they needed on their RIF rights.

The on-site interviews provided further insight into this difference of perception between employees and senior personnel officials on the quality and amount of RIF information provided. For example, an employee stated:

> The information received is 25% useful; the information is too technical and better guidelines are needed.

On the other hand, a personnel official remarked:

> Communications gaps are inevitable. The personnel office made as many attempts as possible to provide information. It was up to the employees to take advantage of the personal counseling sessions.

TABLE 10

Amount of RIF Information Provided to Employees by Personnel Offices

Q23: The following are types of information which employees may have received from your personnel office concerning the RIF. In your opinion, how much of each type of information, if any, did your personnel office provide to employees? (Personnelist Questionnaire.)

Type of information	As much as they needed	A lot/some but not enough */	None, though they asked **/	None, but they didn't ask ***/	No basis to judge
a. Information or training on how the RIF process works (including information on your organization's RIF policies)	49%	30%	4%	11%	7%
b. Information on how the RIF in your organization may affect employees personally	48%	30%	5%	11%	6%
c. Information or training on employee's RIF rights (including information on appeal rights, severance pay, etc.)	52%	29%	3%	11%	6%

Respondents: Senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies.
Number of respondents: 387 to 388, depending on the type of information.
Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

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*/ Response category: "A lot, but not as much as they needed" and "Some, but not as much as they needed."

**/ Response category: "None, even though they asked for it."

***/ Response category: "None, but they didn't ask for it."

TABLE 11

Amount of RIF Information Received by Employees

Q23: The following are types of information which you may have received from your agency concerning the RIF. How much of each type of information, if any, did you receive? (General Questionnaire)

Type of information	As much as I needed	A lot/some but not enough */	None, though I asked **/	None, but I didn't ask ***/
a. Information or training on how the RIF process works including information your organization's RIF policies)	15%	40%	7%	38%
b. Information on how the RIF in your agency may affect employees personally	11%	32%	13%	44%
c. Information or training on your RIF rights (including information on appeal rights, severance pay, etc.	11%	33%	9%	48%

Respondents: Employees in RIF-affected agencies.
Number of respondents: 1539 to 1552 depending on the type of information.
Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

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*/ Response category: "A lot, but not as much as I needed" and "Some, but not as much as I needed."

**/ Response category: "None, even though I asked for it."

***/ Response category: "None, but I didn't ask for it."

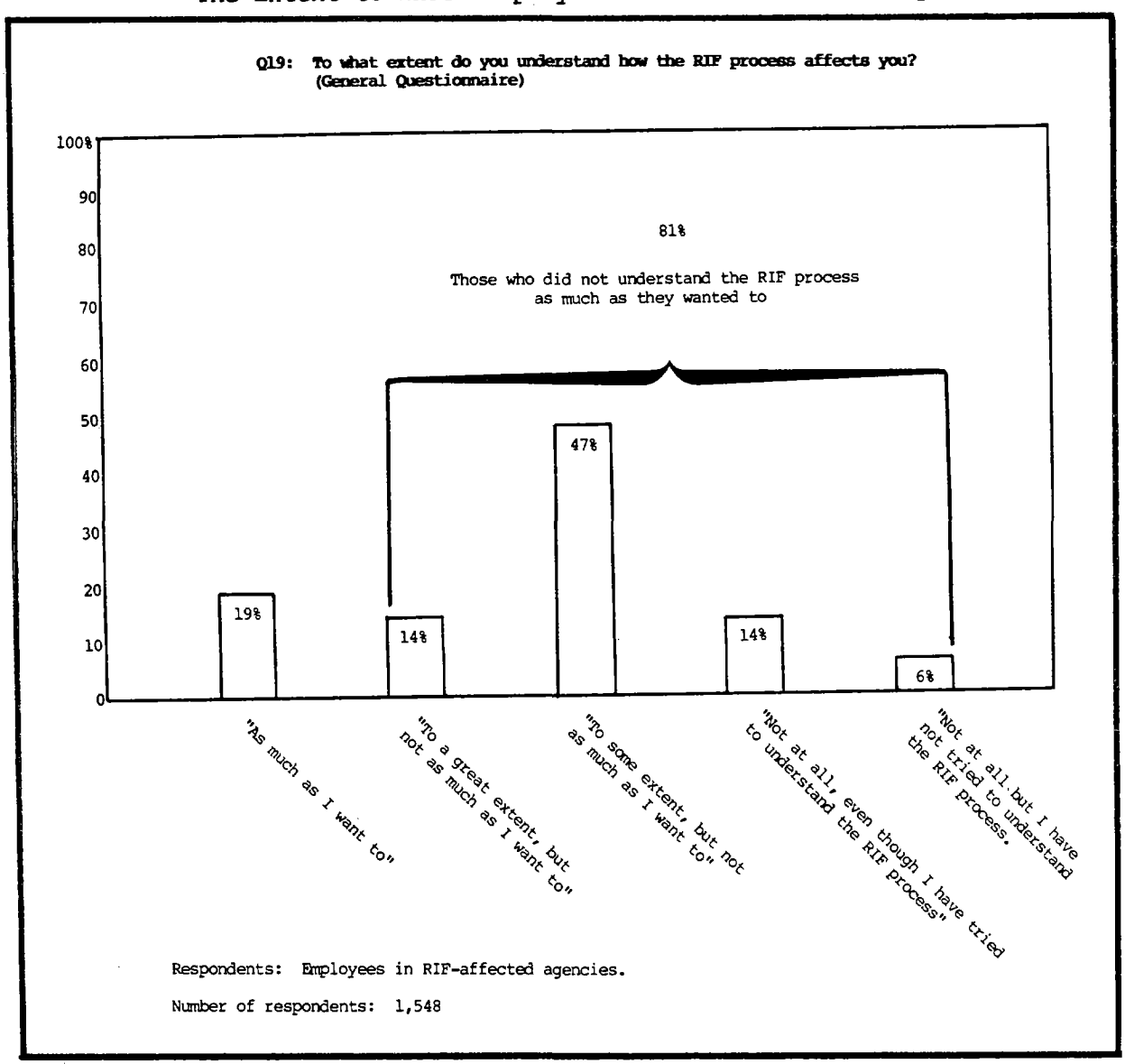
6. **Over 80% of the employees affected by a RIF did not understand the RIF process as much as they wanted to understand it.** Among employees in RIF-affected agencies, 81% said they understood the RIF process less than they wanted. Only 19% or about 1 in 5 stated that they understood the process as much as they wanted. Senior personnel officials were not asked about their understanding of the RIF process. (See Chart 3.)

Since the RIF process is complex (see Chapter 2), a failure to understand the process completely is not surprising. As one personnel official stated during the on-site interviews in reference to the RIF process:

> It is simply over the heads of most employees.

CHART 3

The Extent to Which Employees Understand the RIF System



7. **Over 70% of the senior personnel officials and 50% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies maintained that supervisors were not sufficiently informed about agency RIF plans.** Although the Federal Personnel Manual encourages "open lines" of communication during a RIF and encourages agencies to include operating officials in all phases of RIF planning, the study found evidence of "communications gap" at the supervisory level. Specifically, 50% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies and 71% of the senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies disagreed with the

statement that supervisors knew agency plans well enough to advise their employees about a RIF. The fact that half the affected employees thought that their supervisors were uninformed is worthy of attention. Since supervisors are the "first line of defense" in agency communications with employees, they are best positioned to dispel RIF rumors that can affect morale and productivity. (See Chart 4.)

The on-site interviews indicated that this lack of supervisory knowledge of agency plans may have been caused by such factors as uncertain budgets and the failure of top agency officials to communicate timely information about the RIF. For example, one manager in a sub-agency headquarters stated:

> From February 1981 until late spring was a period of uncertainty because the RIF plans were kept under wraps at the direction of the Department. Employees had gotten their information relatively late due to the secretive management philosophy, plus the agency did not know which programs would be abolished in the budget for fiscal 1982.

In a field location of an agency that was being abolished, a supervisor stated:

> In view of the apparent need to maintain the staff, lower-level employees thought that administrator delayed notices to prevent employees from finding other jobs. This caused a considerable amount of distrust. Others felt that managers knew little about what was going on with the RIF since phaseout directives were coming from D.C. Congress also hasn't made up its mind about appropriations. Newspaper information about the RIF is the most complete.

A regional director in another agency stated that his policy on providing information on the status of the RIF to supervisors was as follows:

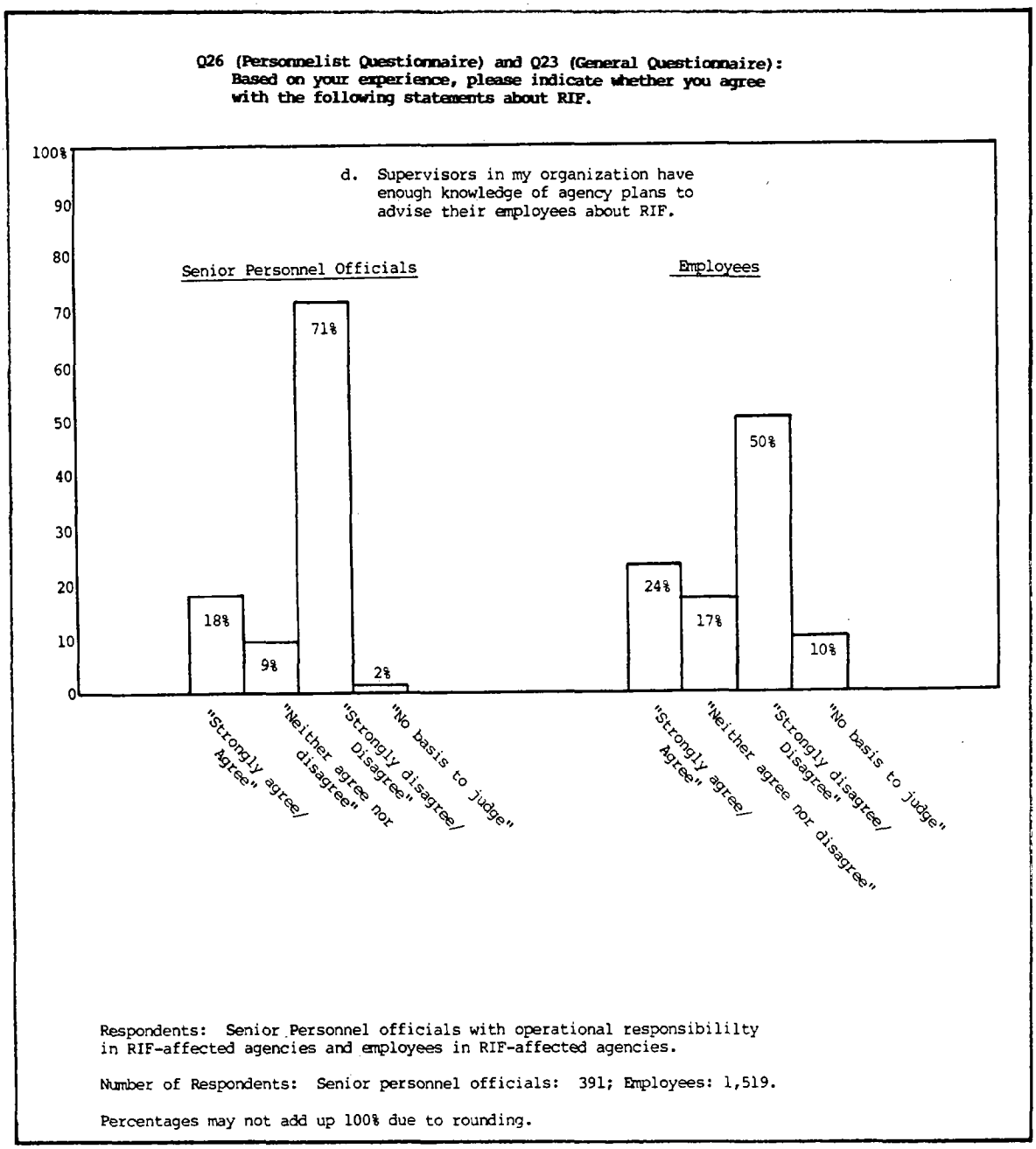
> I try to pass on as much information as will not be damaging to employee morale. If there was not a definitive statement of fact on the RIF, I would say nothing. This avoids adding to rumors.

However, a supervisor in the same office responded:

> Rumors are the best source of information since there is no official information from the regional director. I think (the regional director) knows more than he is telling.

CHART 4

Senior Personnel Officials' and Employees' Opinions on Supervisors' Knowledge of Agency RIF Plans



Respondents: Senior Personnel officials with operational responsibililty in RIF-affected agencies and employees in RIF-affected agencies.

Number of Respondents: Senior personnel officials: 391; Employees: 1,519.

Percentages may not add up 100% due to rounding.

Evaluation and Compliance Efforts

The study did not find evidence of OPM or agency efforts to evaluate the RIF during the period covered by the study (January to December 1981). This discretionary activity might have helped identify those instances of regulatory non-compliance which our study data suggests may have occurred in 1981. The findings on these activities are discussed in greater detail below.

8. **Almost 75% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported no RIF evaluations by OPM and almost 70% reported no RIF evaluations by their agencies during 1981.** OPM has discretionary authority to monitor agency actions at any stage in the RIF process, as well as a charter to assist agencies in conducting a RIF. Agencies are also encouraged to evaluate their implementation of the RIF.

Seventy-four percent of the senior personnel officials in agencies affected by RIF said that no RIF evaluations had been conducted in their organization by OPM from January 1, 1981 until the time of survey (November-December 1981). Only 9% said that OPM had conducted evaluations, with the rest responding "not applicable" or "no basis to judge". Actual evaluation activities reported by OPM in 1981 included: (1) 130 on-site visits to check or assist agency RIF preparations; (2) beginning a year-long special study of RIFs; and (3) investigations of allegations of improper RIF procedures and instituting corrective action, if necessary.[5/]

The study data indicates that agencies were slightly more likely than OPM to have conducted evaluations. Thirteen percent of the senior personnel officials responded that their agency's highest headquarters had conducted RIF evaluations, whereas sixty-seven percent said that their agencies had not conducted any evaluations. The remainder responded "not applicable" or "no basis to judge." Because of the technical nature of these questions, employees were not asked about RIF evaluation activities. The on-site interview data also sheds some light on the area of evaluation activities by OPM. Some personnel officials indicated that the less oversight of their activities the better. As one Director of Personnel stated:

> OPM should do no more in overseeing RIF than it does in anything else, that is, there is no need for special OPM oversight effort. Agencies are capable of doing their own oversight, particularly since OPM has lost its technical competence in the RIF area.

On the other hand, others thought that OPM could and should do more in the area of compliance. For example, one union official commented:

> OPM is not intervening to stop improper RIF actions. They are cutting down on their evaluation and compliance function. There is too little emphasis on compliance and OPM is claiming that there are too many RIFs going on at once to evaluate them. For example, at (agency) the employees tried to call in OPM to do a RIF oversight, but OPM refused.

5/ Testimony of Donald Devine, Director of OPM before the Subcommittee on Manpower and Housing of the Committee on Government Operations of the U.S. House of Representatives, January 27, 1982. See also OPM's report on on-site audits conducted at 12 agencies in 24 locations, "Reductions-in-Force in selected Federal agencies," June 1982.

C. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

On balance, agencies appeared to comply with applicable RIF guidance and regulations--at least in the opinion of the senior personnel officials surveyed. However, the data from employees indicate that there were some perceived regulatory problem areas in the 1981 RIF.

A potentially serious problem area that arose in this study concerns allegations from about one-fifth of the personnel officials that they were improperly pressured by management officials to violate RIF regulations. OPM and agencies should be made aware that personnel officials may be vulnerable to such pressure in order to take steps to guard against this behavior during any future RIFs.

The most outstanding perceived structural problem that surfaced involved the failure of agencies to adequately communicate documents and information on the RIF. Employees reported that they did not review required RIF documents, such as their retention registers and personnel folders. They also reported that they had not received required RIF information, such information on the RIF process and their rights to appeal the RIF and receive severance pay. The fact that the majority of the senior personnel officials believed that their personnel offices made these RIF documents and information available to employees indicates that there may be a "RIF communication gap" between personnel officials and employees.

Another example of a RIF communications problem concerns the lack of supervisory knowledge of agency RIF plans. Both the senior personnel officials and the employees feel that supervisors were not sufficiently informed of agency RIF plans. Since supervisors are usually in the best position to dispel rumors that can negatively affect staff morale and productivity, it is important to bring them into all phases of RIF planning.

OPM and agencies would be well advised to assess regular official channels for their effectiveness and, make adjustments where appropriate. They should then wo k within these channels, as well as with the media, to provide timely, clear, and continuing information on RIF plans and employee rights to RIF-related documents and information.

The study found that there were few RIF evaluation and compliance reviews undertaken by either OPM or the agencies during 1981. Such reviews, although discretionary, might have helped identify some of the problem areas and reported regulatory violations discussed in this chapter, as well as any incidents involving alleged prohibited personnel practices. Chapter 5 explores whether the implementation of the 1981 RIF involved prohibited personnel practices or violations of the merit principles.

CHAPTER 5: DID THE 1981 RIF COMPLY WITH MERIT PRINCIPLES AND AVOID PROHIBITED PERSONNEL PRACTICES?

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses whether the implementation of the 1981 RIF complied with the merit principles and avoided prohibited personnel practices contained in the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act. Subjects discussed include whether persons were saved from a RIF improperly, whether the RIFs violated other prohibited personnel practices, whether the RIF was used in lieu of acceptable procedures to punish poor performers, and whether employees planned to file RIF appeals.

The applicable merit principles, and prohibited personnel practices, that form the regulatory basis to this chapter are found in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (Pub. L. No. 95-454, 92 Stat. 111 (1978). Additional relevant OPM regulations are found in 5 CFR Section 351 and FPM Chapter 351.[1]/

Critical Questions

To determine whether the 1981 RIF complied with applicable law and regulation, this chapter addresses the following critical questions:

1/ The applicable merit principles and prohibited personnel practices state:

- All employees . . . should receive fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of personnel management.
- Employees should be protected against arbitrary action, personal favoritism, or coercion for partisan political purposes.
- Giving unauthorized preferential treatment to any employee or applicant is prohibited.
- Discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, handicapping condition, marital status or political affiliation is prohibited.
- Coercing the political activity of any person is prohibited.
- Nepotism is prohibited.
- Taking or failing to take a personnel action as a reprisal against a whistleblower is prohibited.
- Taking or failing to take a personnel action as a reprisal for the exercise of any appeal right is prohibited.

The applicable OPM regulations state:

- Agencies should use adverse action procedures, not RIF procedures, when taking action against an employee for poor performance.
- Employees who believe that RIF regulations have not been correctly applied may appeal the action.

- What was the perceived incidence of prohibited personnel practices in RIF-affected agencies:

  -- were employees saved from a RIF for improper reasons?
  -- were employees RIF'ed for improper reasons?

- Was the RIF process, rather than adverse action procedures, used as a mechanism for punishing poor performers?

- What was the projected volume of RIF appeals, grievances or complaints in the 1981 RIF?

- What were the reasons that employees articulated for filing or not filing RIF appeals, grievances or complaints?

Major Findings

The research team analyzed the responses to questions in both the Personnelist and General questionnaires that were relevant to these critical questions. Based on this analysis, the major findings, which are discussed in greater detail in the rest of the chapter, can be summarized as follows:

- Over 80% of both the senior personnel officials and the employees in RIF-affected agencies reported that employees were not saved from a RIF for improper reasons. The most frequently reported reasons for preferential treatment were inflated performance appraisals and personal friendship.

- Over 85% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported that they had not observed that employees had been RIF'ed for improper reasons. Those reporting improper RIF actions most frequently cited not being a management favorite as the reason.

- Ninety percent of the RIF-affected employees who received specific notices believed that they had not been RIF'ed for improper reasons. Those who felt that they had been RIF'ed improperly most frequently attributed it to not being a management favorite.

- A little over 15% of both the senior personnel officials and employees in RIF-affected agencies thought that the RIF process was used as a mechanism for punishing poor performers.

- Almost 90% of the RIF-affected employees who received specific notices did not plan to file a RIF appeal. Approximately half of the employees did not plan to appeal because they felt they had been treated fairly.

- Employees who expected to file RIF appeals more frequently cited procedural issues rather than prohibited personnel practices as the reason for their appeal.

B. FINDINGS

This section is organized under two subheadings: "Incidence of Prohibited Personnel Practices" and "RIF Appeals." The major findings, additional data analysis, tables and charts depicting the range or responses by the senior personnel officials and employees, and relevant comments from the interviews are presented under the appropriate subheadings. Where identical or comparable questions were asked of the senior personnel officials and employees, we have tried to distinguish between the findings of each. We have also tried to indicate where questions were asked of one group of respondents and not the other.

Incidence of Prohibited Personnel Practices

The majority of both the employees and senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies did not report prohibited personnel practices associated with the 1981 RIFs. The allegations of prohibited personnel practices principally involved issues related to management favoritism. These findings involving prohibited personnel practices are discussed in greater detail below.

Over 80% of both the senior personnel officials and employees in RIF-affected agencies reported that employees were not saved from a RIF for improper reasons. The most frequently reported reasons for preferential treatment were inflated performance appraisals and personal friendship. Both employees and senior personnel officials were asked if they had observed different types of unauthorized preferential treatment being given employees, i.e, "saving" a person from a RIF for improper reasons. The large majority of both senior personnel officials and employees denied observing such violations.

For example, 83% of both the senior personnel officials and employees who said that they had not observed any instances where employees were "saved" because of inflated performance appraisals. Ninety-eight percent of the senior personnel officials and 97% of the employees who reported that they had not observed any instances where employees had been "saved" because of family circumstances or financial need.

The types of unauthorized preferential treatment most frequently observed by both senior personnel officials and employees involved inflated performance appraisal ratings and personal friendships. Inflated performance appraisals were reported by 17% of both the senior personnel officials and employees and personal friendships were cited by 15% of the senior personnel officials and 16% of the employees. Other types of preferential treatment, including partisan political affiliation, were reported by 4% or less of the employees and senior personnel officials. These figures represent the "worst case" estimates of the prevalence of such practices since two or more respondents may have reported observing the same event. (See Table 12.)

TABLE 12

Reasons Senior Personnel Officials and Employees Believe Employees Were Saved from RIF.

Q38: Since January 1, 1981, have you personally observed anything which made you think that employees in your organization were saved from being RIF'd for any of the following reasons? (Personnelist Questionnaire)

Q38: Since January 1, 1981, have you personally observed anything which made you think that employees in your immediate work group were saved from being RIF'd for any of the following reasons? (General Questionnaire)

	Senior Personnel Officials		Employees	
Basis for Preferential Treatment	Yes, once or more */	No	Yes, once or more*/	No
e. Their inflated performance appraisals	17%	83%	17%	83%
b. Personal friendship	15%	85%	16%	84%
c. Their partisan political affiliation	4%	96%	4%	96%
a. A family relationship	3%	97%	4%	96%
d. Family circumstances or financial need	2%	98%	3%	97%

Respondents: Senior personnel officials and employees in RIF-affected agencies.
Number of respondents: Senior Personnel officials: 436 to 438, depending on the type of preferential treatment; Employees: 1395 to 1448, depending on the type of preferential treatment.

*/ Response category: "Yes, more than one instance" and "Yes, one instance."

The perception of inflated performance appraisal ratings and personal friendship was not unexpected. Other MSRS studies have shown that the "buddy system" is perceived to be operative in the Federal Government. 2/ An inflated performance appraisal rating was probably cited most frequently by the respondent because an "outstanding" rating can earn its recipient up to four(4) years seniority for RIF purposes. Complaints about general favoritism and the practice of awarding undeserved "outstanding" performance ratings to employees to protect them in the RIF process were heard from both managers and employees during the on-site interviews. One union representative reported:

> Management in one agency has been picking jobs for reassignment for favorites by not RIFing vacancies. Favorites get the good jobs and others get less desirable jobs. Favorites can be good performers, friends, or non-union members. Managers would rather employ steady non-boat rockers. Highly capable people are threatening to them.

A supervisor in a field office reported:

> There is a favoritism in performance appraisals. A top management official changed my performance rating from "highly satisfactory" to "fully meets qualifications" (a lower rating). I feel that this was improper. On the other hand, (another employee) had her performance appraisal upgraded before the RIF.

A top management official in another agency headquarters also acknowledged this problem:

> There have been phony performance appraisals at this agency. This practice is an abuse of the performance appraisal system and unfairly hurts employees whose appraisals are more in line with performance. However, it is difficult to control because of the subjective nature of the performance appraisal system.

However, incidents of favoritism are not always clear cut. As one director of personnel stated:

> When does a manager cross the line between a legitimate action and an abuse? It is hard to determine what is an abuse. Smart managers protect capable workers to try and keep the work force healthy. Is this protecting favorites or protecting the ability of the organization to function? Perceptions of abuse may not always reflect the facts.

2/ See MSRS Study, Breaking Trust: Prohibited Personnel Practices in the Federal Service, February, 1982.

2. **Over 85% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported that they had not observed that employees had been RIF'ed for improper reasons. Those reporting improper RIF actions most frequently cited not being a management favorite as the reason.** Senior personnel officials were provided a list of personnel practices that are prohibited under the Civil Service Reform Act. They were asked if during 1981 they had observed any of these practices in their organization in connection with a RIF. The large majority (over 85%) reported not observing these practices.

The responses ranged from 87% to 100%. Eighty-seven percent said that they had not observed any instances where employees were RIF'ed because they were not management favorites. Almost 100% of the senior personnel officials said they had not observed employees being RIF'ed because of their minority status, gender, partisan political affiliation, "whistleblowing" activity, union activity, religion, or handicap.

The most frequently reported prohibited personnel practices involved employees being RIF'ed because they were not management favorites (13%), i.e., 1 out of 8. Each of the other prohibited practices was reported by 4% or fewer of the senior personnel officers. Again, the reader is cautioned that multiple-reportings of the same observation can occur, so these are probably "worst-case" estimates of the prevalence of prohibited personnel practices during the 1981 RIFs. (See Table 13.)

3. **Ninety percent of the RIF-affected employees who received specific notices believed that they had not been RIF'ed for improper reasons. Those who felt that they had been RIF'ed improperly most frequently attributed it to not being a management favorite.** Rather than being asked if they had observed instances of prohibited personnel practices, RIF-affected agencies employees who had received specific notices were asked if they believed that they personally had been RIF'ed for improper reasons. The majority (90%) reported that this had not been the case. The remaining 10% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies who had received specific notices reported that they believed that they personally had been RIF'ed for improper reasons.

The 10% of the employees who indicated that they had been RIF'ed improperly were presented a list of prohibited personnel practices. They were asked whether they felt that any of these practices were the reason for their improper RIF. Since they were encouraged to indicate as many reasons as applied, the results exceed 100%.

The reasons for being RIF'ed most frequently endorsed by employees were: "not being a management favorite" (60%), "being a woman" (47%), and "being a member of a minority group" (45%). Only one percent or less of the employees cited partisan political affiliation, handicap, or health related problems as a reason for their improper RIF. (See Table 14.) Thus, about 6% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies reported being improperly RIF'ed because they were not management favorites (60% of the 10% improperly RIF'ed); about 5% reported being improperly RIF'ed because they were women (47% of 10% improperly RIF'ed); and 5% reported being improperly RIF'ed because they were minorities (45% of the 10% improperly RIF'ed).

TABLE 13

Incidents of Prohibited Personnel Practices Reported by Senior Personnel Officials

Q37: The following are prohibited personnel practices. We want to know whether you have personally observed any of the following in your organization in connection with RIF since January 1, 1981? (Personnelist Questionnaire)

Employees were RIF'ed because of: Prohibited Personnel Practices*/	Yes Once or More**/	No
b. Not being a management favorite	13%	87%
c. Filing a formal appeal or grievance	4%	96%
e. Alcohol, drugs, or other health-related problems	3%	97%
i. Being over age 40	3%	97%
h. Being a non-minority male	3%	97%

Respondents: Senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies.
Number of respondents: 440 to 444, depending on the type of prohibited personnel practice.

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*/ Percentages are not shown for practices that were reported by 1% or less of the respondents: being a minority, disclosing wrongful activity (whistle-blowing), engaging in union activity, being a woman, handicap, partisan political affiliation, and religion.

**/ Response category: "Yes, more than one instance" and "Yes, one instance."

TABLE 14

Reasons Employees Believe They Were RIF'ed Improperly

Q40: In your opinion, what were the improper reasons? (General Questionnaire)

Prohibited Personnel Practices*/	Yes
2. Not being a management favorite	60%
7. Being a woman	47%
6. Being a member of a minority group	45%
1. Disclosing some wrongful activity in the agency	11%
4. Engaging in lawful union activity	9%
3. Filing a formal appeal or grievance	8%
11. Religious affiliation	8%
8. Being a non-minority male	5%
9. Being over age 40	2%

Multiple response question.

Respondents: RIF-affected agencies' employees who received specific notices who claimed to be RIF'ed improperly.
Number of respondents: 88.

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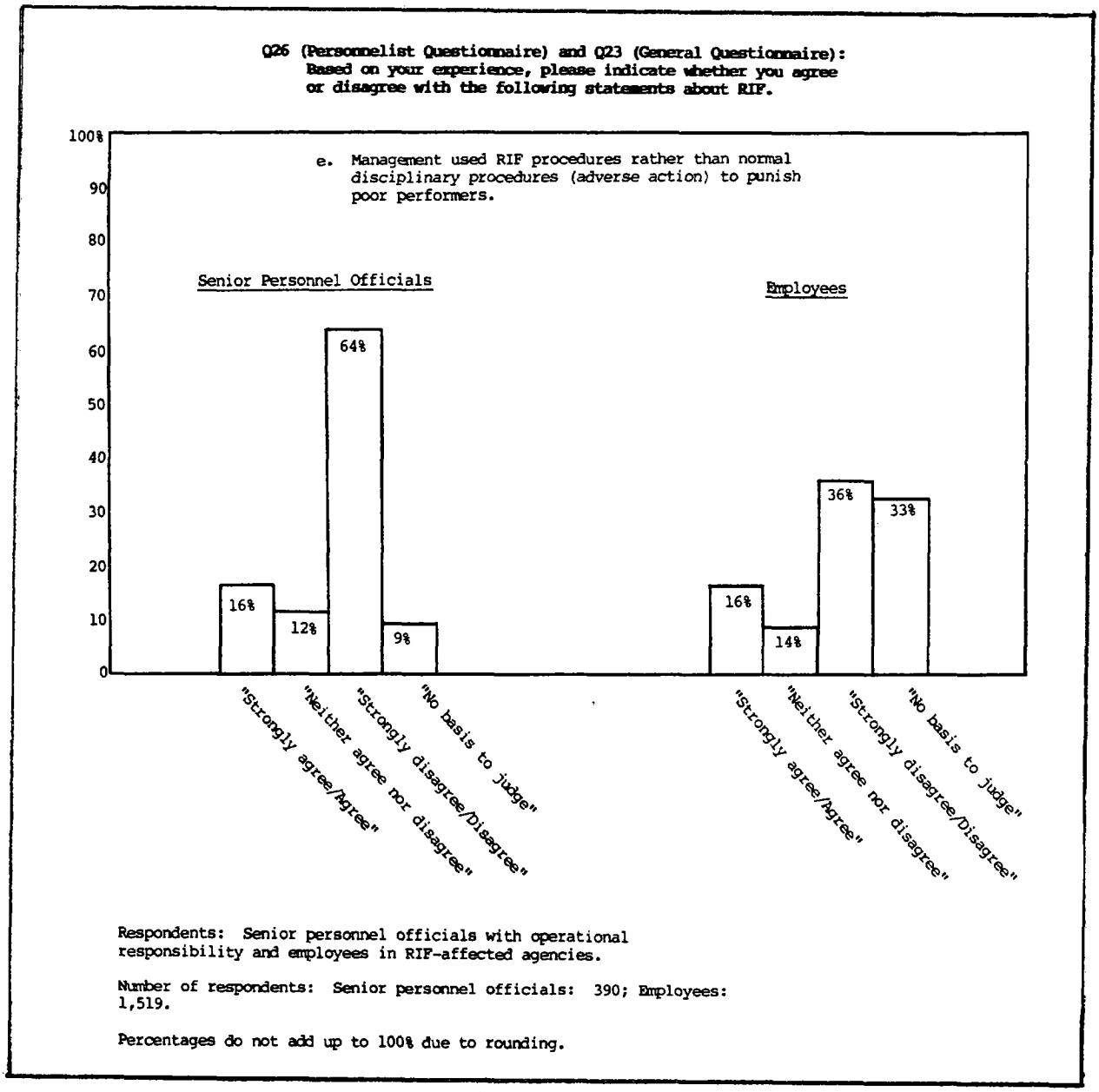
*/ Percentages are not shown for practices that were reported by 1% or less of the respondents: partisan political affiliation, handicap, and alcohol, drugs, or other health-related problems.

4. **A little over 15% of both the senior personnel officials and employees in RIF-affected agencies thought that the RIF process was used as a mechanism for punishing poor performers.** OPM has advised agencies that normal disciplinary procedures (adverse actions) rather than RIF procedures are to be employed to discipline or remove (punish) poor performers.

In this study 16% (1 out of 6) of both the senior personnel officials and employees in RIF-affected agencies "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that "management had used RIF procedures rather than normal disciplinary procedures to punish poor performers." Only 64% of the senior personnel officials and 36% of the employees disagreed with this statement. Nine percent of the senior personnel officials and 33% of the employees said they had no basis to judge. Employees presumably did not feel that they were as knowledgeable about management's actions as the senior personnel officials. (See Chart 5.)

CHART 5

Senior Personnel Officials' and Employees' Opinions on the Use of RIF to Punish Poor Performers



RIF Appeals

The large majority of the RIF-affected employees who received specific notices had not filed or did not plan to file appeals, grievances, or EEO complaints as a result of the RIF. Approximately half of the employees did not plan to appeal because they felt they had been treated fairly. The bases for RIF appeals were more oriented to RIF procedural issues than personal discrimination, a prohibited personnel practice. The reason most frequently given for appealing was "the competitive area was not correctly defined." These findings on RIF appeals are discussed in greater detail below.

5. **Almost 90% of the RIF-affected employees who received specific notices did not plan to file a RIF appeal. Approximately half of these employees did not plan to appeal because they felt they had been treated fairly.** The large majority (88%) of the employees in RIF-affected agencies who had received specific RIF notices said they had not or did not plan to file a RIF appeal, grievance, or EEO complaint. Only 12% said that they had filed or planned to appeal the 1981 RIF. (Senior personnel officials were not asked about appeals.)

An analysis of the questionnaire data related to the 12% who planned to file an appeal indicates that a large number of those appealing were from the Community Services Administration (CSA). A partial initial decision by the MSPB Administrative Law Judge supports the CSA employees' contention that the RIF was conducted improperly. 3/ However, the final disposition of the consolidated appeal from CSA employees is still pending before the Merit Systems Protection Board.

Employees in RIF-affected agencies did not plan to appeal the RIF were asked to cite their reasons for not appealing. About half (53%) of these employees said they did not plan to file a RIF appeal, grievance, or EEO complaint because they believed that they had been treated fairly. Multiple responses were permitted. However, around one-fourth (25%) of those who did not plan to appeal said that they did not have the evidence needed to prove a charge and 23% said they lacked confidence in the appeals, grievance and complaint channels. (See Chart 6.)

6. **Employees who expected to file RIF appeals more frequently cited procedural issues rather than prohibited personnel practices as the reason for their appeal.** The employees in RIF-affected agencies who had received specific notices indicated their reason(s) for filing a RIF appeal, grievance

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3/ Certain Former Community Services Administration Employees v. Department of Health and Human Services, MSPB partial initial decision dated August 20, 1982.

or EEO complaint. Multiple reasons were permitted. The most frequently cited reason was: "The competitive area was not correctly defined" (58%). Only 4% or less of the employees stated that they would appeal on the grounds of discrimination. (See Table 15.)

As noted previously in this chapter employees believed that not being a management favorite, being a woman, and being a minority were the principal reasons for their being improperly RIF'ed. However, the reasons for appealing RIFs most frequently cited by employees were more related to RIF procedures than to personal discrimination. This finding may indicate that some appellants who felt they had been discriminated against preferred to appeal the RIF on the basis of less controversial procedural issues rather than on discrimination.

CHART 6

Reasons for Not Filing RIF Appeals

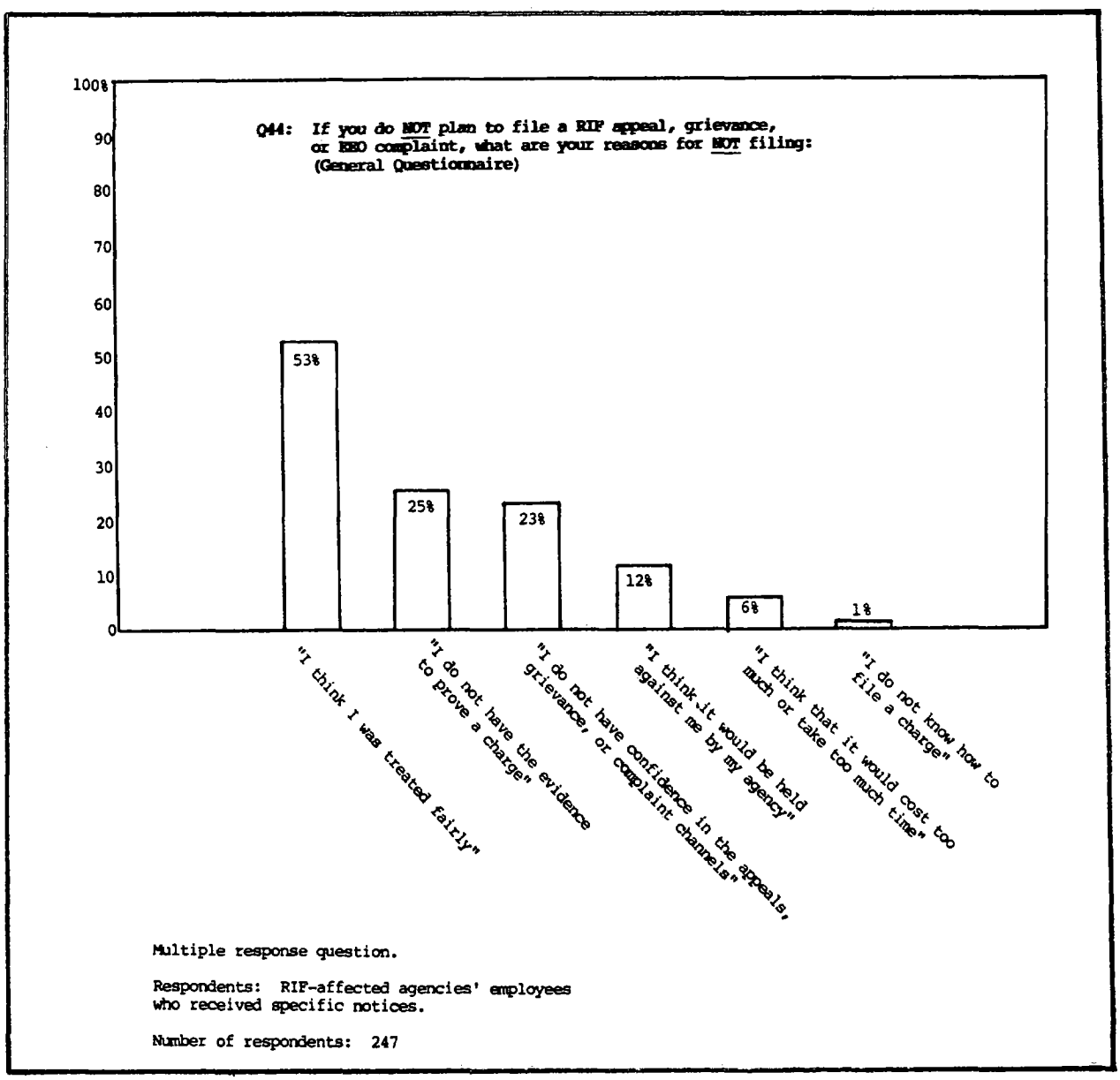

TABLE 15

Reasons for Filing RIF Appeals

Q43: What are or would be the reasons for filing your RIF appeal, grievance or EEO complaint? (General Questionnaire)

	Reasons for Filing RIF Appeal	Yes
	I. Procedural Reasons	
3.	The competitive area was not correctly defined	58%
13.	I lacked access to RIF documents	18%
11.	Mistakes were made in figuring out my RIF status or setting up my retention register	15%
2.	The competitive level was not correctly defined	10%
1.	The reason for the RIF was improper	7%
10.	My qualifications were not properly considered for placement in other jobs	6%
12.	My organization failed to give adequate notice of RIF	6%
	II. Discrimination	
5.	I was discriminated against because I am a member of a minority group	4%
8.	I was discriminated against because of my age	1%
7.	I was discriminated against because of my religion	1%
6.	I was discriminated against because I am a non-minority male	1%
9.	I was discriminated against because I am handicapped	*%
4.	I was discriminated against because I am a woman	*%
	III. Other reasons	
15.	Other reasons	16%
14.	I had nothing to lose by filing	12%

Multiple response question.
Respondents: RIF-affected agencies' employees who received specific notices.
Number of respondents: 81.

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* Less than 1%

C. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Both the senior personnel officials and the employees in RIF-affected agencies were relatively positive about the equity and fairness of the 1981 RIF. However, some instances of prohibited personnel practices were reported. These allegations principally involved issues of management favoritism, including the awarding of inflated performance appraisals. For example, 17% of both groups of respondents reported that inflated performance appraisals had been used to protect employees in their agencies from a RIF. Thirteen percent of the senior personnel officials reported that employees in their agencies had been RIF'ed because they were not management favorites. Ten percent of the employees felt that they personally had been improperly RIF'ed. The majority of these employees felt that this had occurred because they were not management favorites.

OPM and agency heads should be made aware that there were instances or at least perceptions of management favoritism in the 1981 RIF. Accordingly, steps should be taken to assure that merit principles are not violated during future RIFs and that these steps are publicized to employees.

Chapters 4 and 5 have addressed whether the conduct of the 1981 RIF complied with regulations and merit principles. Chapter 6 addresses the adequacy of agency preparations needed to conduct the 1981 RIF in compliance with these regulations and merit principles.

Chapter 6: WERE THE AGENCIES PREPARED TO CONDUCT THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE 1981 RIF?

A. INTRODUCTION

Since the agencies affected by the 1981 RIF had not conducted large-scale RIFs in many years, this chapter attempts to evaluate the adequacy of technical preparations for the RIF. Discussed are the adequacy of the RIF policy guidance, technical assistance, and technical training provided to agency personnel officials by OPM and their respective agencies. Also studied were the sufficiency of RIF preparation time, and the adequacy of performance appraisals and job descriptions used in the RIF process.

The OPM regulations that form the regulatory basis for this chapter are found in 5 C.F.R. Chapter 351 and FPM Chapter 351. [1]

Critical Questions

To assess whether agencies were adequately prepared to conduct the 1981 RIF, this chapter addresses the following critical questions:

- What was the quality of RIF policy guidance that agencies received?
- What was the quality of RIF technical assistance that agencies received?
- How much training did agencies receive on RIF procedures?
- What was the quality of the RIF training that agencies received?
- Did agencies have adequate time to prepare for the 1981 RIF?
- Are current position descriptions accurate enough to be used in making RIF decisions?
- Are performance appraisals accurate enough to be used in a RIF?

1/ The applicable regulations provide that:

- OPM, to the extent that facilities and personnel are available, offers guidance and consultation to agencies on personnel (RIF) policies and procedures.
- OPM is required to promote and coordinate interagency training conducted by and for agencies on personnel (RIF) policies and procedures.
- Agencies are required to set up competitive levels based on the duties and responsibilities stated in official position descriptions.
- In computing retention standing, agencies are required to give up to five years additional seniority to employees with performance ratings greater than "satisfactory."

Major Findings

The research team analyzed the questions in both the Personnelist and General questionnaires that were relevant to these critical questions. Because of their technical nature, most of the questions discussed in this chapter were only asked of the senior personnel officials. Based on this analysis, the major findings, which are discussed in greater detail in the rest of the chapter, can be summarized as follows:

- Over 55% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies thought that the quality of RIF policy guidance from OPM and their agencies on RIF regulations and retained grade and pay was good. Less favorable ratings were given to policy guidance on "early out" retirement and RIF-related labor relations matters.

- Over half of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies thought that the quality of RIF technical assistance from OPM and their agencies on formal (written) and informal (telephone) interpretations of RIF regulations was good. Approximately one-third of the senior personnel officials thought that "hands-on" technical assistance was poor.

- Almost 60% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies thought that personnel specialists in their agencies received RIF training from in-house sources and about half reported RIF training from OPM.

- Over 85% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that the RIF training received from in-house sources and OPM was adequate.

- Sixty percent of senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt they had adequate time to prepare for the 1981 RIFs.

- Almost 85% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies thought that current position descriptions in their agencies were accurate enough for RIF decisions. In contrast, only about 40% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies agreed that their own position descriptions were accurate enough to be used in RIF decisions.

- Over 70% of the senior personnel officials in all agencies did not think that current performance appraisals were accurate enough to be used in RIF decisions.

B. FINDINGS

This section is organized under four subheadings: "Adequacy of Policy Guidance and Technical Assistance", "Adequacy of RIF Training, "Adequacy of RIF Preparation Time", and "Adequacy of Position Descriptions and Performance Appraisals." The major findings, additional data analysis, tables and charts depicting the range of responses, and relevant comments from the interviews are presented under the appropriate subheadings. All of the questions discussed in this chapter except one were only asked of the senior personnel officials. A comparable question on the adequacy of position descriptions was asked of the employees as well as the senior personnel officials, and the findings for both are reported.

Adequacy of Policy Guidance and Technical Assistance

RIF policy guidance on RIF regulations and retained grade and pay, as well as technical assistance on formal (written) and informal (telephone) interpretations of RIF regulations from both OPM and the agencies were generally rated as being good. However, less favorable assessments were given to policy guidance on "early out" retirement and RIF-related labor relations matters. Approximately one-third of the senior personnel officials were critical of "hands on" technical assistance. These findings on the adequacy of policy guidance and technical assistance are discussed in greater detail below.

1. **Over 55% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies thought that the quality of RIF policy guidance from OPM and their agencies on RIF regulations and retained grade and pay was good.** Senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies were asked to rate the RIF policy guidance issued by their agencies' highest headquarters and OPM in the following areas:[2/]

- RIF regulations covering grades 1-15 and wage grades,
- Retained grade and pay,
- "Early out" retirement,
- Guidance on RIF-related labor relations matters.

The majority of the senior personnel officials responded that the quality of RIF policy guidance from their agency's highest headquarters had been "good" or "very good" with respect to RIF regulations (57%) and retained grade and pay (60%). Similarly, the majority of the senior personnel officials rated OPM's policy guidance on these matters as being "good" or "very good": RIF regulations (65%) and retained grade and pay (59%). Policy guidance on "early out" retirement and RIF-related labor relations matters was rated highly less frequently than the others. Fifty-three percent rated agency "early out" retirement guidance as being good and 50% rated OPM's "early out" guidance as good; while 49% rated agency labor relations guidance as being good and 41% rated OPM's labor relations guidance as good. These figures exclude those who responded "not applicable" or "no basis to judge". (See Table 16)

Many of the personnel officials interviewed during the on-site interviews indicated that OPM policy guidance had been adequate. For example, one personnel specialist stated:

> OPM policy guidance on RIF was okay and the mechanical process is spelled out adequately.

2/ These questions concerned the quality of information provided to personnel officials on RIF procedures, unlike the questions in Chapter 4 which concerned the availability of information to employees on RIF procedures.

However, some interviewed did criticize the present RIF regulations. For example, one personnel officer stated:

> The present regulations are too complicated and address general principles rather than "how to's." The regulations should be rewritten to be understandable. Now they are "weasel-worded" and open to interpretation.

TABLE 16

Quality of RIF Policy Guidance

Q34: Based on your experience, how would you rate the quality of the current policy guidance on RIF issued by your agency's highest headquarters, and by OPM? (Personnelist Questionnaire.)

	A. Quality of guidance from your agency's highest headquarters:			B. Quality of guidance from OPM		
Type of Policy Guidance	Very good/ Good	Fair	Very poor/ Poor	Very good/ Good	Fair	Very poor/ Poor
a. RIF regulations covering grades 1-15 and wage grades	57%	24%	19%	65%	24%	11%
b. Retained grade and pay	60%	22%	19%	59%	26%	16%
d. "Early-out" retirement	53%	22%	25%	50%	28%	22%
e. Guidance on RIF-related labor relations matters	49%	27%	24%	41%	35%	24%

Respondents: Senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies, excluding those who answered "Not applicable" or "No basis to judge."
Number of respondents: 337 to 427, depending on the type of policy guidance.
Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

2. Over half of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies thought that the quality of RIF technical assistance from OPM and their agencies on formal (written) and informal (telephone) interpretations of RIF regulations was good. Less favorable ratings were given to "hands-on" technical assistance. Senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies were asked to rate the following types of RIF technical assistance that their organizations had received from their agencies' highest headquarters and from OPM:

- Written interpretations of RIF regulations,
- Informal guidance on RIF regulations, such as telephone calls,
- Hands-on technical assistance from other agencies arranged for by staff.

Such technical assistance is considered particularly important because of the complex and voluminous nature of the regulations and associated personnel data system requirements inherent in a RIF.

Like their appraisals of RIF policy guidance, over half of the senior personnel officials said that the quality of RIF technical assistance from their agency's highest headquarters had been "good" or "very good". Fifty-one percent rated highly their agency's formal (written) interpretations of RIF regulations and 60% rated highly their agency's informal (telephone) guidance. Similarly, 52% of the senior personnel officials rated OPM's formal (written) interpretations of RIF regulations as being good and 57% rated OPM's informal (telephone) guidance as good.

"Hands-on" technical assistance either from OPM or agency staff or arranged for by OPM or agency staff was rated unfavorably by approximately one-third of the senior personnel officials. For example, only 37% of the senior personnel officials said that "hands-on" technical assistance arranged for by their agency staff was good; 38% thought that this assistance was "poor" or "very poor". Similarly, only 33% rated "hands-on" technical assistance arranged for by OPM's staff was good, whereas 37% thought that it was poor. These figures exclude those who answered "not applicable" or "no basis to judge." (See Table 17)

The scarcity of experienced RIF experts in either OPM or the agencies may explain why "hands-on" technical assistance was rated less favorably. The on-site interviews shed some light on this. For example, a personnel official in a headquarters agency reported:

> The OPM staff (at headquarters) has been cooperative and helpful and given good advisory services when the services were available. However, OPM is not devoting enough resources to RIF and the new people working on RIF do not have enough technical expertise to really be as helpful as they might be.

A personnel specialist in a subordinate agency stated:

> When we have a technical question, we don't go to OPM, we go to (our agency headquarters), except on matters of grade and pay retention.

The personnel officer in a field office stated:

> For detailed questions, OPM personnel (in the field) don't have any answers, however, they do attempt to help. The contact person at OPM in the field is not an expert on RIF. When I have questions, this person sometimes calls the central OPM office for information and then gets back to me.

TABLE 17

Quality of RIF Technical Assistance

Q35: How would you rate the technical assistance on RIF that your organization has received from your agency's highest headquarters and from OPM since January 1, 1981? (Personnelist Questionnaire.)

	A. Quality of technical assistance from your agency's highest headquarters:			B. Quality of technical assistance from OPM:		
Type of Technical Assistance	Very good/ Good	Fair	Very poor/ Poor	Very good/ Good	Fair	Very poor/ Poor
a. Written interpretations of of RIF regulations	51%	23%	25%	52%	30%	17%
b. Informal guidance on RIF regulations, such as telephone calls	60%	24%	17%	57%	24%	19%
c. Hands-on technical assistance from staff	41%	26%	33%	39%	29%	32%
d. Hands-on technical assistance from other agencies arranged for by staff	37%	25%	38%	33%	30%	37%

Respondents: Senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies, excluding those who answered "Not applicable" or "No basis to judge."
Number of respondents: 108 to 380, depending on the type of technical assistance.
Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Adequacy of RIF Training

RIF training was provided to personnel specialists most frequently by in-house sources and to a lesser extent by OPM. Over three-fourths of the senior personnel officials rated the training received as being adequate in meeting their organization's needs. These findings on RIF training are discussed in greater detail below.

3. **Almost 60% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported that personnel specialists in their agencies had received RIF training from in-house sources and about half reported RIF training from OPM.** Senior

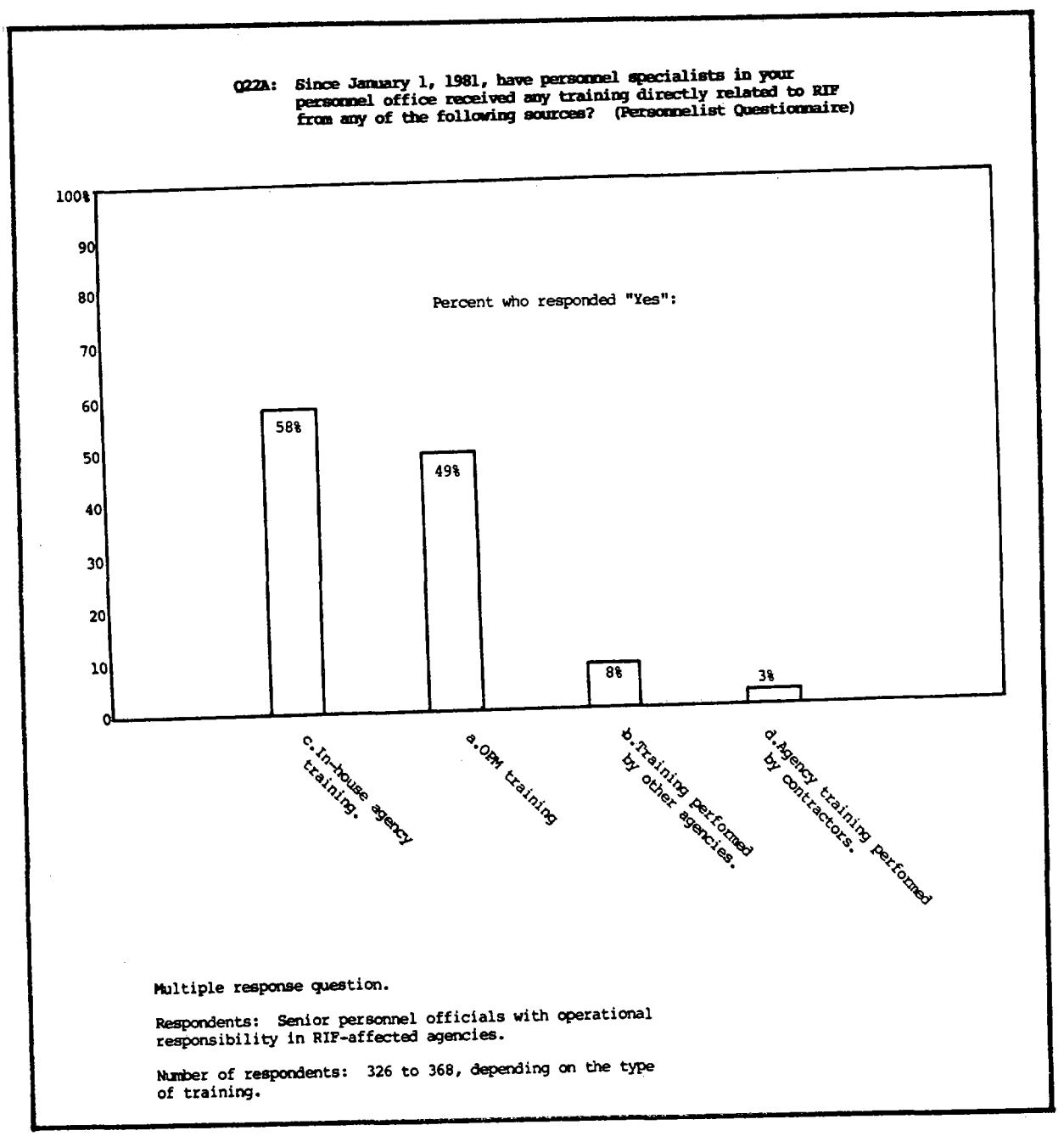
personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies were asked whether personnel specialists in their personnel office had received any of the following types of RIF-related training:

- OPM training,
- Training performed by other agencies,
- In-house agency training,
- Agency training performed by contractors.

In this study 58% of the senior personnel officials reported that the personnel specialists in their personnel offices received in-house training, 49% said they had received OPM training, 8% reported training from other agencies, and 3% reported training performed by contractors. Multiple responses were permitted. (See Chart 7)

CHART 7

Types of RIF Training Received by Personnel Specialists



4. **Over 85% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that the RIF training received from in-house sources or OPM was adequate.** As noted previously, in-house training and OPM training were the two most frequently provided sources of training. Eighty-seven percent of the senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies felt that in-house agency training had been "adequate" or "very adequate" in meeting their organization's current needs. Eighty-five percent felt that the OPM training had been adequate. The training most frequently rated as being adequate (91%) was performed by contractors. However, only a small percentage of the senior personnel officials (3%) reportedly used such contractor assistance. Training performed by other agencies was rated as being adequate by 78% of the respondents.

During the on-site interviews, questions were asked about the quality of RIF training. One personnel official stated:

> OPM has done a commendable job of providing training on RIF regulations to a large number of Federal employees within a short period of time.

Another personnel official stated:

> OPM has tried to build a cadre of experts, mostly from DoD (The Department of Defense). They have trained personnelists and the sessions have been well attended.

However, a union representative stated:

> The union feels that training is not being done well, particularly not for managers.

Adequacy of RIF Preparation Time

The majority of the senior personnel officials reported that their agencies had adequate time to prepare for the RIF. However, almost 1 in 4 indicated that the RIF planning time was insufficient. These findings on the adequacy of RIF preparation time are discussed in greater detail below.

5. **Sixty percent of senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt they had adequate time to prepare for the 1981 RIFs.** The majority (60%) of the senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies agreed with the statement "my organization had adequate time to prepare for the RIF." However, almost 1 in 4 (23%) disagreed with this statement. Twelve percent had "no basis to judge" and 6% "neither agreed nor disagreed."

It is somewhat surprising that a majority of the senior personnel officials thought that their organizations had adequate time to prepare for the RIF. In contrast, many of the personnel officials interviewed voiced concerns over the lack of RIF preparation time due to budget uncertainties and limited staff resources. For example, a personnel official in an agency headquarters stated:

> In order to get the notices out to effect the RIF in FY 1981, there was not time to send out general notices. No

> dry runs of the RIF were done. Therefore, there was no way to tell how smoothly the RIF implementation would be. As a result, I feet there will be many appeals.

A personnel specialist in another agency reported:

> There has been a tremendous strain on funds and staff from having to prepare for RIFs at the same time as implementing civil service reform activities and carrying on day-to-day personnel management functions.

A union official stated:

> While there is a wide variance among Federal agencies, we believe that the typical Federal activity is not well prepared or proficient (to conduct RIF's). The personnel specialists who are assigned to advise management on these technical points are very often not well trained themselves. We find that while management is aware that a RIF is coming for several months, the preparation of retention registers and other aspects of the RIF procedure are not begun until very shortly before the effective date. This procrastination followed by rushed preparation often leads to technical errors.

Adequacy of Position Descriptions and Performance Appraisals

Senior personnel officials and employees in RIF-affected agencies differed sharply as to the accuracy of job descriptions for RIF purposes. A large majority (84%) of the senior personnel officials though that job descriptions were accurate, whereas less than half that percentage (39%) of the employees felt that they were accurate. However, senior personnel officials did not think that performance appraisals were accurate enough to be used for RIF purposes. Employees were not asked their opinions on performance appraisals. These findings on the adequacy of position descriptions and performance appraisals are discussed in greater detail below.

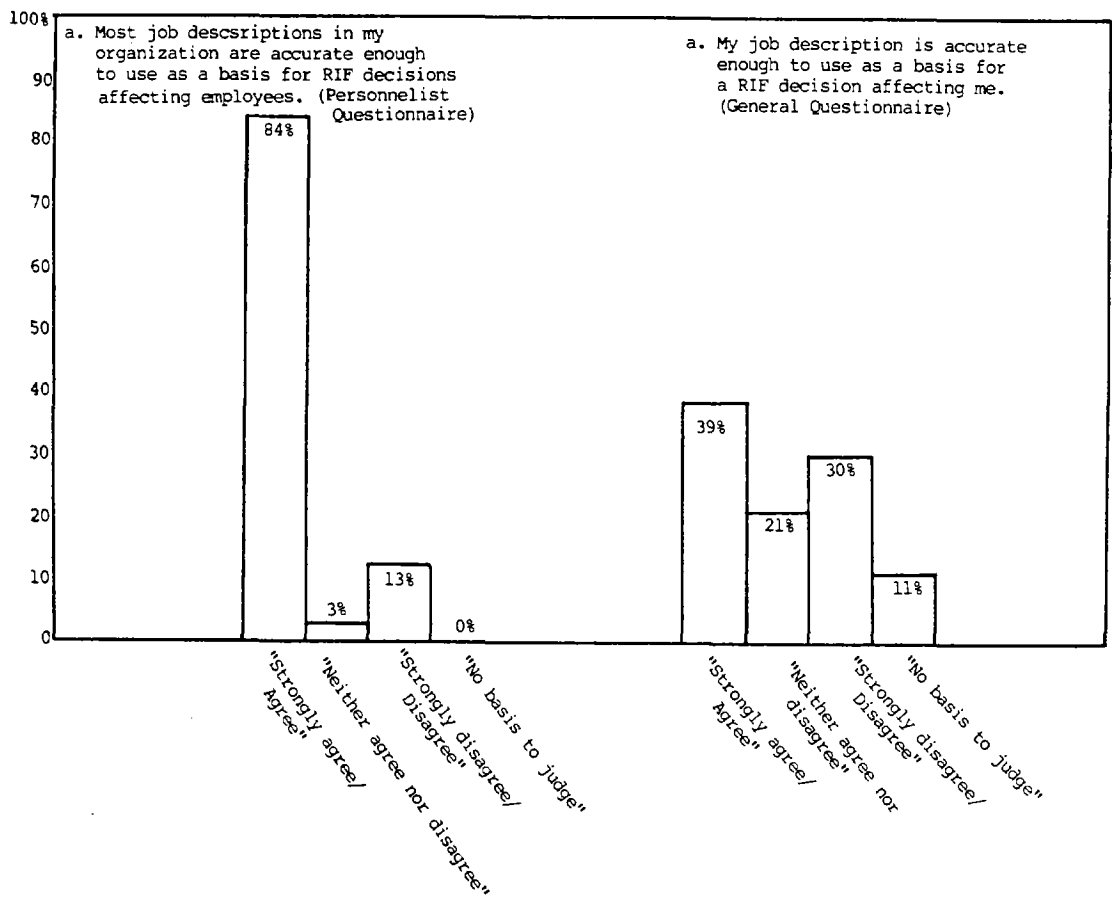
6. **Almost 85% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies thought that current position descriptions in their agencies were accurate enough for RIF decisions. In contrast, only about 40% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies agreed that their own position descriptions were accurate enough to be used in RIF decisions.** RIF decisions on establishing competitive levels, positions to abolish, and the qualifications for assignment rights (bumping and retreat rights) are based on duties and responsibilities described in position descriptions. Since these decisions are integral parts of the RIF process, it is very important to the integrity of the RIF process that position descriptions be accurate. In the survey, employees in RIF-affected agencies were asked whether they felt their job descriptions were accurate enough to use as a basis for a RIF decision affecting them. Senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies were asked whether the job descriptions in their organizations were accurate enough to be used as a basis for RIF decisions affecting employees.

Eighty-four percent of the senior personnel officials agreed that most job descriptions in their organizations were accurate enough to be used in a RIF. By contrast, 30% of the employees felt that their job description was inaccurate. Only 39% of the employees felt that their job description was accurate, with the rest neither agreeing nor disagreeing or having no basis to judge. (See Chart 8).

CHART 8

Senior Personnel Officials' and Employees' Opinions on the Accuracy of Position Descriptions Used for RIF Purposes

Q26. (Personnelist Questionnaire) and Q23. (General Questionnaire): Based on your experience, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about RIF.



Respondents: Senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies and employees in RIF-affected agencies.

Number of respondents: Senior personnel officials: 391; Employees: 1,515.

Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

7. **Over 70% of the senior personnel officials in all agencies did not think that current performance appraisals were accurate enough to be used in RIF decisions.** Employees can receive up to five additional years of seniority for performance appraisal ratings that are better than "satisfactory." Since seniority is a major factor in determining retention standing in a RIF, [3/] it is important to the integrity of the RIF process that performance appraisals be accurate.

Almost three-fourths (71%) of the senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies did not think that performance appraisals were accurate enough to be used in helping to determine whether employees kept their jobs during a RIF. Only 19% though that the performance appraisals were sufficiently accurate. Employees were not asked this question in the survey. (See Chart 9)

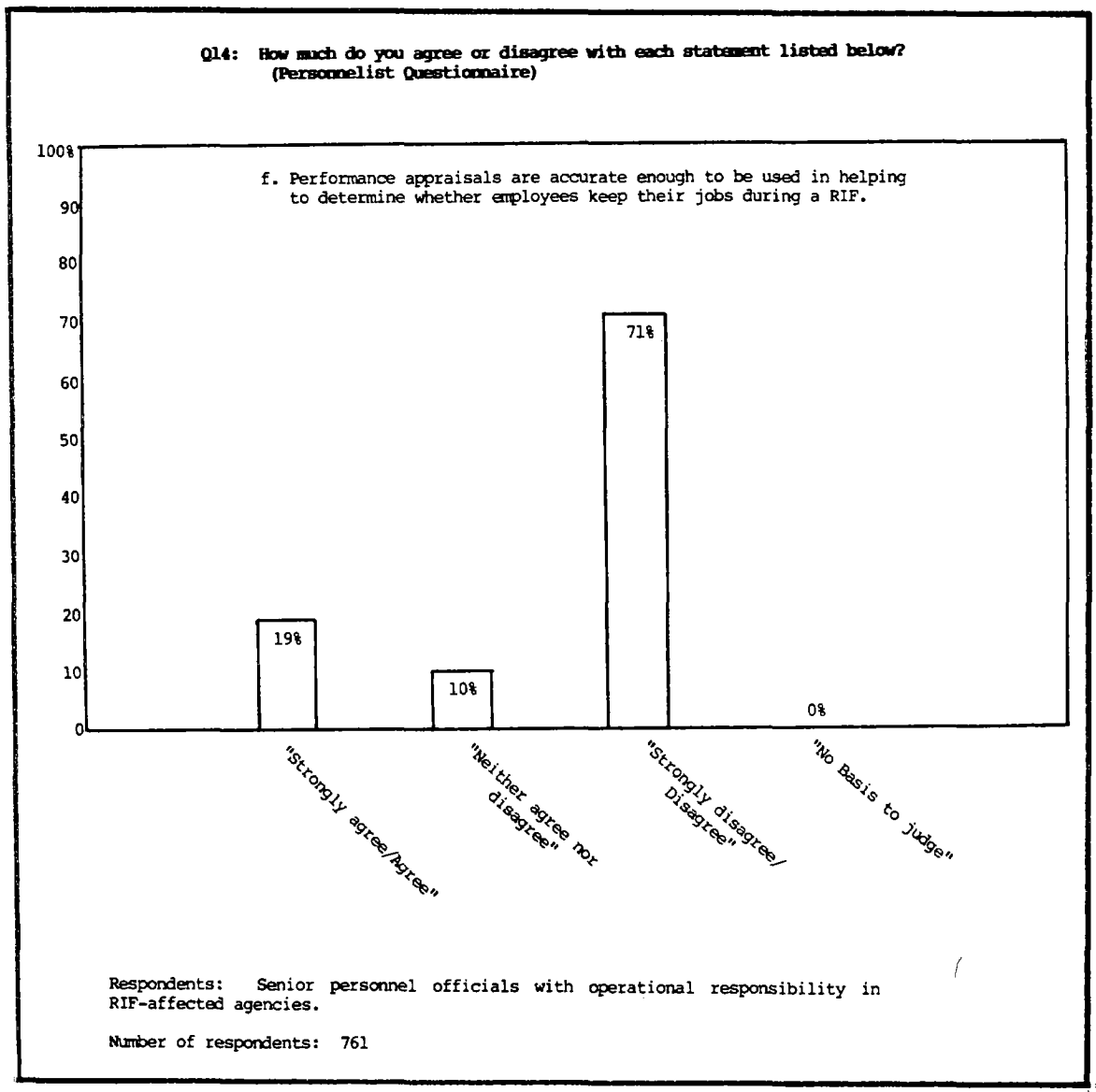
This negative view of performance appraisals is consistent with the finding in Chapter 5 that some respondents felt that performance appraisals were purposely inflated to help protect employees during a RIF. During the on-site interviews, a top management official who acknowledged this as a problem offered the following thoughts on making performance appraisals more accurate:

> There is so much bitterness because of misuse of the system. The reason performance evaluations break down is they're made by too many people; they should be made from a single perspective--not necessarily a single person--and general guidelines should limit the number of outstanding performance appraisals. Perhaps performance evaluations should be reviewed by a small group of senior officials, plus peer review. A test of proportionality should be applied so that only a certain proportion (of employees) are worthy of special recognition.

3/ See Chapter 2 for a more complete discussion of the RIF process.

CHART 9

Senior Personnel Officials Opinions on the Accuracy of Performance Appraisals Used for RIF Purposes



C. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

By its very nature the RIF process is complex and requires considerable expertise to implement properly. On balance, those charged with implementing the RIFs, the senior personnel officials, were reasonably satisfied with the policy guidance, technical assistance, and training on RIF procedures received from their agencies and OPM. However, particular areas, such as guidance on "early out" retirement, RIF-related labor relations matters, and "hands-on" technical assistance, were identified as being deficient.

When similarly queried about the amount of time allotted to prepare for the RIF, the majority of the senior personnel officials felt that it had been sufficient while a minority felt otherwise. Thus, not all senior personnel officials felt that they had the resources--policy guidance, technical assistance, training and time-- to implement the RIF properly.

Some of the resource problems surfaced in the study were undoubtedly due to the lack of experienced personnel and the relatively short time frames required to implement the RIFs. These problems may be rectified with time and experience. However, agency heads and OPM would be well advised to review and revise, as appropriate, their policy guidance, at least with respect to "early out" retirement and labor matters, and the resources devoted to providing "hands-on" technical assistance.

Excluding the initial planning phase which is subject to management discretion, the technical RIF process is essentially objective. However, the technical RIF process involves two documents that are subjective and lend themselves to possible abuse. These are position descriptions, which are used to determine competitive levels, and performance appraisals, which may contribute toward an employee's retention standing in a RIF.

In assessing the accuracy of position descriptions for RIF purposes, the senior personnel officials and employees differed sharply. The senior personnel officials overwhelming felt that they were accurate, whereas employees tended to think that they were not. However, the senior personnel officials voiced strong objections to the accuracy of performance appraisals for RIF purposes. Employees were not asked their opinions about performance appraisals.

Unlike job descriptions which are approved by personnel officials, performance appraisals are the responsibility of management and supervisory officials. This may help to explain the senior personnel official's difference of opinion toward these two documents. Thus, the data cast considerable doubt on the ability of these two documents--position descriptions and performance appraisals--as presently constructed to be used for RIF purposes. Accordingly, agency heads and personnel officials should be aware of these problems and take steps to ensure the accuracy of these documents for employees subject to the RIF process in the future. Position descriptions should continue to be reviewed for accuracy, and in addition, employee input requested, and any employee exceptions noted. In addition, OPM should consider setting up periodic pilot programs to assist agencies in developing ways to more accurately implement the current performance appraisal system.

We will now move from discussing the technical aspects of the RIF to discussing the more personal aspects--chapter 7 addresses the effects of the 1981 RIF on work force morale and productivity.

CHAPTER 7: DID THE 1981 RIF HAVE AN EFFECT ON WORK FORCE MORALE AND PRODUCTIVITY?

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses whether the employees and senior personnel officials perceived that the 1981 RIF affected their morale and productivity. Areas addressed include: the effects of the RIF on general morale, the desire to work for the Federal Government and their Federal agency, the quantity and quality of work, time and attendance, and the ability to work with others. Also discussed is whether retaliation, such as stealing or destroying Government property, occurred as a result of the 1981 RIF. The applicable law and regulations that form the regulatory basis for this chapter are found in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (Pub. L. No. 95-454, 92 Stat. 111 (1978) and FPM Chapter 351. 1/

Critical Questions

To assess the impact of the 1981 RIF on the morale and productivity of the work force, this chapter addresses the following critical questions:

- Did the discussion, threat, or fact of a RIF impact the morale and productivity of senior personnel officials and employees in RIF-affected agencies?

- Did employees try to retaliate against the Federal Government as a result of the RIF?

Major Findings

We analyzed the responses to questions in both the Personnelist and General questionnaires that were relevant to these critical questions. Based on this analysis, the major findings, which are discussed in greater detail in the rest of the chapter, can be summarized as follows:

- The discussion, threat, or fact of a RIF negatively affected the general morale of almost 65% of the employees and half of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies.

1/ Merit Principle Number 5 in the Civil Service Reform Act states:
- The Federal work force should be used efficiently and effectively.

Applicable OPM regulations provide that:
- Agencies should do whatever they can to show concern for RIF-affected employees in order to benefit morale and good employer-employee relationships.
- Agencies should minimize the disruption that often follows a RIF.

- Productivity was reported to be much less affected by the discussion, threat, or fact of a RIF than was morale in RIF-affected agencies.

- Over 95% of the RIF-affected senior personnel officials and employees did not observe RIF-related retaliation, such as stealing or destroying Government property.

B. FINDINGS

This section is organized under two subheadings "Effect of RIF on Morale and Productivity" and "Incidence of RIF-related Retaliation." The major findings, additional data analysis, charts depicting the range of responses from senior personnel officials and employees, and relevant comments from the interviews are presented under the appropriate subheadings. Since identical questions were asked of both groups of respondents, we have tried to distinguish between the findings of each. For comparison purposes, some questions in this chapter were asked of all respondents, not just those in RIF-affected agencies.

Effect of RIF on Morale and Productivity

The 1981 RIFs, both actual and threatened, had a negative effect on the morale, and to a lesser extent, on the productivity of both senior personnel officials and employees in RIF-affected agencies. Not surprisingly, adverse effects on morale and productivity caused by RIF were much more prevalent in RIF-affected agencies than in non RIF-affected agencies. However, some deterioration in morale due to RIF was reported even in those agencies where a RIF was not expected. These findings on the effects of RIF on morale and productivity are discussed in greater detail below.

1. **The discussion, threat, or fact of a RIF negatively affected the general morale of almost 65% of the employees and half of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies.** Both employees and senior personnel officials in RIF-affected and non RIF-affected agencies were asked what impact, if any, the discussion, threat, or fact of a RIF had on them with regard to the following indicators of morale:

- your general morale
- your desire to work for the Federal Government
- your desire to work for your Federal agency.

For both those employees and senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies, a noticeable decline in morale was reported. General morale was more affected than the desire to work for the Federal Government or the agency. Sixty-four percent of the employees and 53% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies stated that their general morale "became worse" or "much worse" as a result of the RIF. In addition, 46% of the employees and 52% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported that their desire to work for the Federal Government became worse because of the RIF; 41% of the employees and 45% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported that their desire to work for their Federal agency had become worse.

The bulk of the remainder of the respondents said that the RIF had "no effect" on their general morale, desire to work for the Federal Government or their desire to work for their Federal agency. For example, 35% of the employees and 46% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported that the RIF had no effect on their general morale. Four percent or less of both groups of respondents said that the RIF had a positive effect on any of these factors.

Not surprisingly, those in RIF-affected agencies were almost twice as likely to be negatively affected as were those in non RIF-affected agencies. However, thirty percent of the employees and 27% of the senior personnel officials in non RIF-affected agencies reported that even though they did not expect a RIF, their general morale became worse because of the discussion, threat, or fact of RIF, presumably in another agency.

Similarly, almost one-fourth of the employees and almost one-fifth of the senior personnel officials in non RIF-affected agencies reported declines in their desire to work for the Federal Government or their agencies. (See Charts 10 and 11). The most frequent response given by the employees and senior personnel officials in non RIF-affected agencies was that the RIF had no effect on their general morale, desire to work for the Federal Government, or desire to work for their Federal agency. For example, 69% of these employees and 73% of these senior personnel officials said that the RIF had no effect on their general morale.

The effects of RIF on morale were described during the on-site interviews. One manager expressed his feelings in this way:

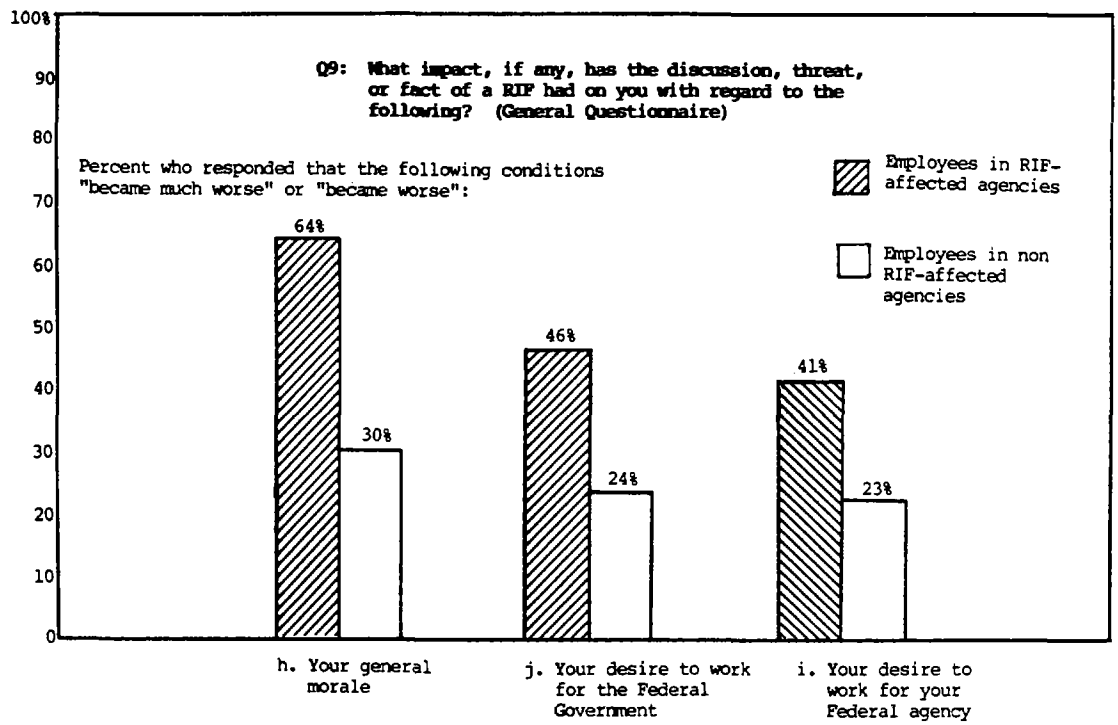
> The real morale problem occurs with people who take drastic downgrades or who are separated. Sometimes, people never get back to normal. Their RIF problem changes their whole personality. This is different from people who take and can adjust to reassignments or demotions of one grade.

During the interviews it was apparent that RIF affected the morale of the employee community as a whole, not just those directly involved. For example, one manager reported:

> In an organization undergoing a RIF, 100% of the people are affected, regardless of whether RIF action is taken against them. Employee attitudes will generally be negative regardless of whether they are <u>personally</u> affected by the RIF.

CHART 10

Negative Impact of RIF on Employees' Morale



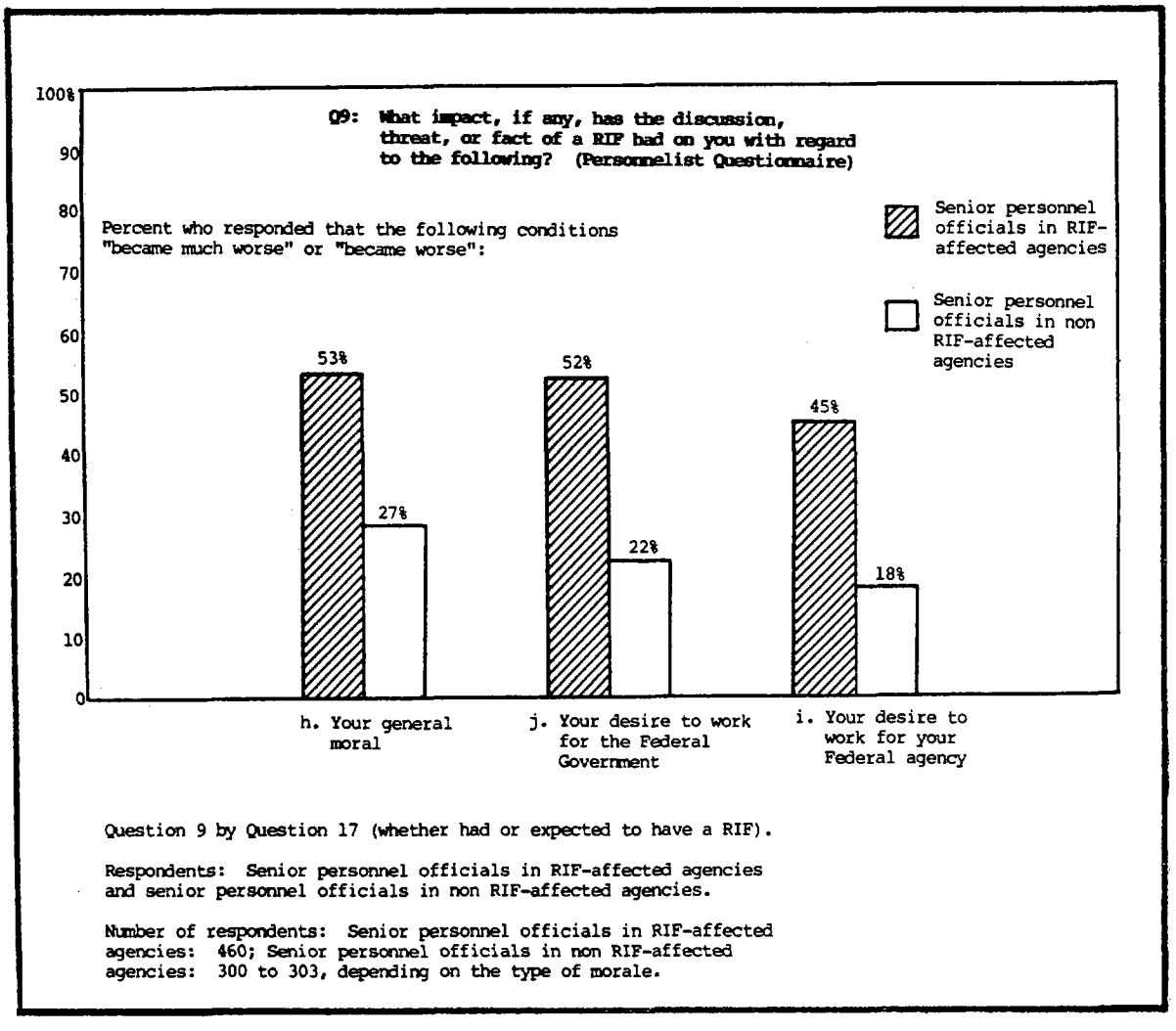
Question 9 by Question 14 (whether had or expected to have a RIF)

Respondents: Employees in RIF-affected agencies and employees in non RIF-affected agencies.

Number of respondents: Employees in RIF-affected agencies: 1,563 to 1,570, depending on type of morale; Employees not in RIF-affected agencies: 965.

Chart 11

Negative Impact of RIF on Senior Personnel Officials' Morale



2. **Productivity was reported to be much less affected by the discussion, threat or fact of a RIF than was morale in RIF-affected agencies.** Both senior personnel officials and employees in RIF-affected and non RIF-affected agencies were asked what impact, if any, the discussion, threat, or fact of a RIF had on them with regard to the following indicators of productivity:

- The quantity of work you do on the job,
- The quality of work you do on the job,
- Your time and attendance on the job,
- Your ability to work with others on the job.

The discussion, threat or fact of a RIF was reported to have an adverse effect on the productivity of a relatively small percentage of Federal senior personnel officials and employees in RIF-affected agencies. The impact on productivity was much less than that found for the impact on employee morale. Work quantity was more affected than work quality, time and attendance, or the ability to work with others.

Twenty-five percent of the employees and 24% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported that the quantity of work they did on the job became "worse" or "much worse" as a result of RIF. The quality of work became worse for 13% of the employees and 18% of the senior personnel officials, and the ability to work with others became worse for 16% of the employees and 13% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies. Least affected was time and attendance at work: 9% of the employees and 4% of the senior personnel officials reported that this had become worse as a result of RIF. (See Charts 12 and 13.)

The bulk (over 70%) of the remainder of both groups of respondents reported that the RIF had no effect on these measures of their productivity. Only five percent or less said that the RIF had had a positive effect on the quantity of work, quality of work, time and attendance, or the ability to work with others.

In contrast, those in non RIF-affected agencies were much less likely to think that their productivity had been negatively affected than were those in RIF-affected agencies. For example, 7% of the employees and 9% of the senior personnel officials in non RIF-affected agencies reported that the quantity of the work they did on the job "became worse" or "much worse", while only 3% of the employees and 2% of the senior personnel officials reported a decline in their time and attendance. (See Charts 12 and 13). Over 85% of the employees and over 90% of the senior personnel officials reported that these measures of productivity had not been affected by the discussion, threat, or fact of RIF.

However, the effects of the RIF on productivity may be greater than reported in this study. As a previous MSPB study has suggested, people do not tend to report unfavorably on their own productivity and performance. 2/

The effects of RIF on productivity were described during the on-site interviews. One personnel officer at a field installation stated:

> There have been delays in seeing clients, more employees are taking sick leave, and work is becoming sloppy.

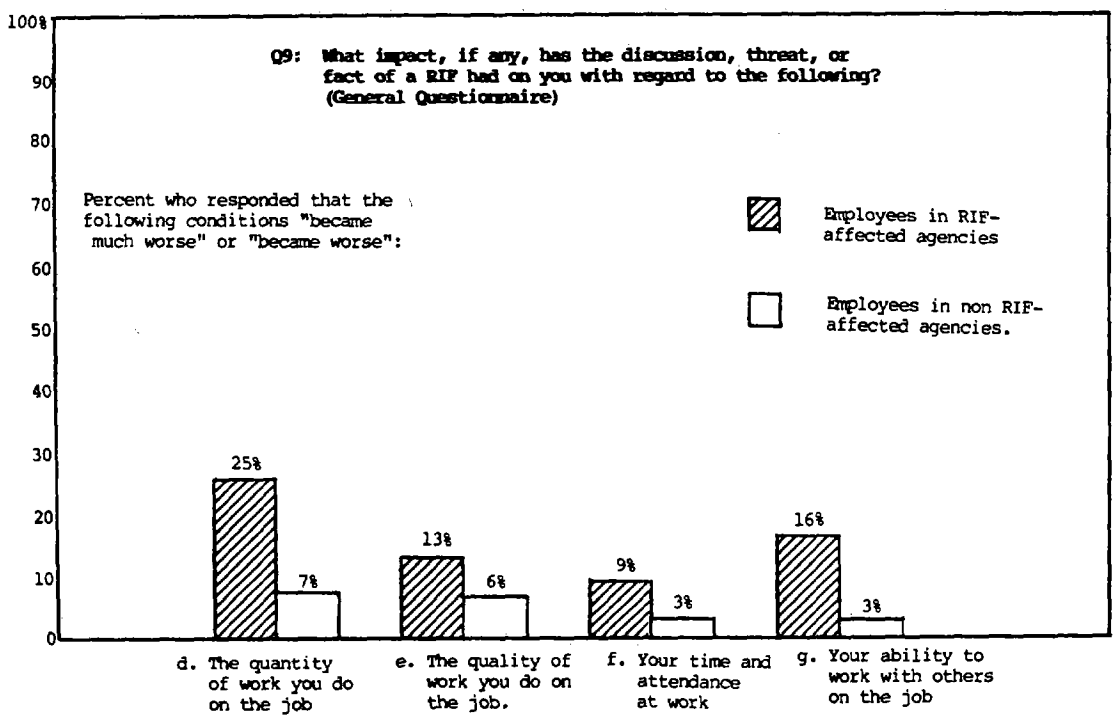
2/ See MSPB report, Sexual Harassment in the Federal Workplace: Is it a Problem? March 1981, pp. 83-84.

Some of those interviewed indicated that the greatest loss of productivity occurred between the time the RIF was first anticipated and the issuance of RIF notices. As one union official stated:

> The anticipation of RIF is the greatest problem--the uncertainty about whether a RIF will actually take place. There is a lot of productive time lost from people worrying--we call this "the anxiety of anticipation."

CHART 12

Negative Impact of RIF on Employees' Productivity



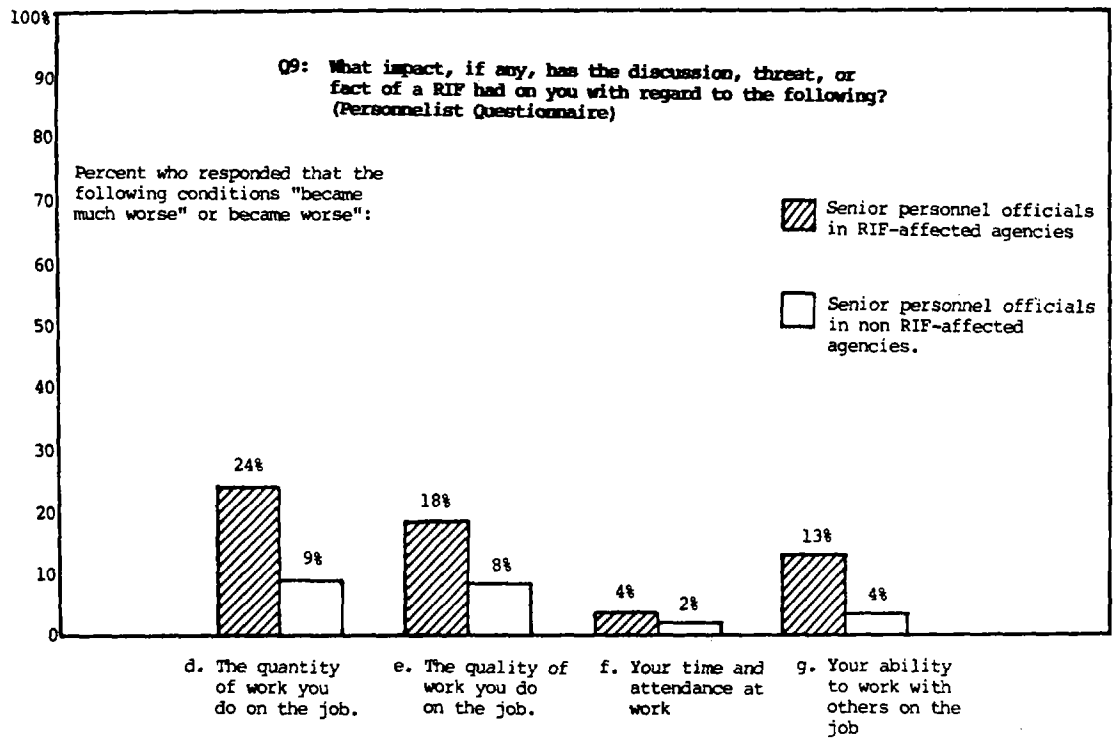
Questions 9 by Question 14 (whether had or expected to have a RIF).

Respondents: Employees in RIF-affected agencies and employees in non RIF-affected agencies.

Number of respondents: Employees in RIF-affected agencies: 1,544 to 1,563, depending on the type of productivity; Employees in non RIF-affected agencies: 960 to 965, depending on the type of productivity.

CHART 13

Negative Impact of RIF on Senior Personnel Officials' Productivity



Question 9 by Question 17 (whether had or expected to have a RIF).

Respondents: Senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies and senior personnel officials in non RIF-affected agencies.

Number of respondents: Senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies: 455 to 459, depending on the type of productivity; Senior personnel officials in non RIF-affected agencies: 302 to 303, depending on the type of productivity.

Incidence of RIF-related Retaliation

There were very few reported instances of employees either stealing or destroying Government property in retaliation for a RIF. This is discussed in greater detail below.

3. **Over 95% of the RIF-affected senior personnel officials and employees did not observe RIF-related retaliation, such as stealing or destroying Government property.** Both senior personnel officials and employees in RIF-affected agencies were asked if they observed or had evidence of anyone destroying or stealing Government property in retaliation for a RIF. Some 98% of the affected employees and 96% of the personnel officers did not observe such

behavior, or have evidence thereof. This indicates that incidents of retaliation reported during the on-site interviews were not widespread. For example, one blue-collar supervisor at a facility that was closing down stated:

> Much of the movable property (at this installation) will "walk," i.e., be stolen by employees. There will be nothing to prevent it because guard protection is inadequate.

These actions may have occurred because the employees were bitter about not only the loss of their jobs but the closing of the facility where they had spent their careers.

C. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The finding in this chapter that there was a widespread decline in the general morale of RIF-affected employees is not wholly unexpected. When employees face actual or potential threats to their job security, it is natural that declines in morale and other indicators of stress result. It is also possible that the uncertainty about the timing and extent of the RIFs further increased the stress on the work force.

The finding that the adverse effects caused by RIF appear to have been less severe on productivity than they were on morale also is not wholly unexpected. As noted in the chapter, there is some evidence that people do not tend to report unfavorably on their own productivity and performance.

However, the quantity of work was reported to be more affected by the RIF than were other indicators of productivity. Thus, the data indicated that RIFs can be very disruptive to organizations, at least with respect to work force morale and, to a lesser extent, to the quantity of work. OPM should continue to encourage agencies to minimize the disruptions caused by RIF as much as possible. Chapter 8 discusses alternatives to RIF that agencies can take to minimize the work force disruptions caused by RIF.

CHAPTER 8: WHAT ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS TO RIF DID AGENCIES TAKE TO MINIMIZE THE EFFECTS OF THE 1981 RIF?

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the possible alternative actions to RIF that agencies took to minimize the adverse effects of the 1981 RIF. OPM guidance and administrative memoranda specify the desirability for agencies to consider alternatives to a RIF, when faced with having to effect large-scale personnel reductions. The use and effectiveness of attrition, personnel freezes, furloughs, outplacement, and "early out" retirement as RIF alternatives in the 1981 RIF were evaluated in this chapter. The OPM regulations that form the regulatory basis for this chapter are found in 5 C.F.R. Chapter 351 and FPM Chapter 351. 1/

Critical Questions

To assess the effectiveness and acceptability of alternatives to RIF, this chapter addresses the following critical questions:

- What agency actions in the 1981 RIF were seen as being effective alternatives to RIF?
- Under what conditions would employees and senior personnel officials voluntarily accept a furlough?
- Did employees use outplacement services provided by their agencies during the 1981 RIF?
- Which outplacement services offered during the 1981 RIF were seen as being effective?
- What impact did "early out" retirement have on lessening the impact of the 1981 RIF?

1/ The applicable OPM regulations provide that:

- Agencies and departments should take steps to minimize the need for RIFs through RIF-alternatives such as personnel freezes, attrition, and furloughs.
- Agencies are required to maintain reemployment priority lists and establish a positive placement (outplacement) program for employees displaced from their jobs in a RIF
- OPM is required to establish a Displaced Employee Program and has developed other outplacement programs (such as the Voluntary Interagency Placement Program) for use by employees displaced from their jobs in a RIF.
- Upon approval from OPM, agencies may offer "early out" retirement to eligible employees as a means to minimize the need for a RIF.

Major Findings

The research team analyzed the responses to questions in both the Personnelist and General questionnaires that were relevant to these critical questions. Based on this analysis, the major findings, which are discussed in greater detail in the rest of the chapter, can be summarized as follows:

- Over three-quarters of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that attrition and personnel freezes had been used effectively by their agencies in lessening the 1981 RIF.

- Over 85% of the senior personnel officials and employees in all agencies endorsed the concept of furloughs under some circumstances as a RIF alternative.

- Over two thirds of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported that their agencies had offered OPM's Displaced Employee Program, OPM's Voluntary Interagency Placement Program, sending job applications to other agencies, and agency reemployment priority lists as outplacement services to their employees.

- Over 85% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies did not use the outplacement services provided by their agencies.

- Although outplacement services were not widely used, the services seen as being most helpful by their users and the senior personnel officials involved training on how to look for other employment and the granting of administrative leave to look for other jobs.

- The use of "early out" retirements as a RIF alternative had limited impact in the 1981 RIF.

B. FINDINGS

This section is organized under three subheadings: "Effectiveness of Attrition, Personnel Freezes, and Furloughs," Effectiveness of Outplacement Services", and "Use of "Early-out" Retirement." The major findings, additional data analysis, tables and charts depicting the range of responses from senior personnel officials and employees, and relevant comments from the interviews are presented under the appropriate subheadings.

Where identical or comparable questions were asked of the two groups of respondents, we have tried to distinguish between the findings of each. We have also noted where questions were asked of one group of respondents and not the other.

Effectiveness of Attrition, Personnel Freezes, and Furloughs

The RIF alternatives most widely endorsed by the senior personnel officials as being effective in lessening the 1981 RIF were attrition and personnel freezes. Employees were not asked their opinions of the effectiveness of these RIF alternatives used during the 1981 RIF. Although furloughs were not widely used during the 1981 RIF, both employees and senior personnel officials endorsed the concept of using furloughs as a RIF alternative. These findings on the effectiveness of attrition, personnel freezes, and furloughs are discussed in detail below.

1. Over three-quarters of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that attrition and personnel freezes had been used effectively by their agencies in lessening the 1981 RIF. Senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies were asked how effective they thought each of the following alternatives to RIF were in avoiding or lessening the RIF in their agencies:

- Freezing all outside hires, internal reassignments, and/or promotions,
- Furlough,
- Attrition, and
- Formal outplacement program.

The RIF alternatives deemed "very effective" or "effective" by the majority of senior personnel officials were attrition (86%) and freezes (76%). In contrast, 41% found outplacement programs to be effective and 6% found the use of furloughs (temporary layoffs) to be effective. The results suggest that outplacement and furloughs were less frequently endorsed because experience with their use was limited. For example, 33% of senior personnel officials said they did not know if outplacement was effective, and 77% said they did not know about the effectiveness of furloughs. Because of the technical nature of this question employees were not asked their opinions on the use of these RIF alternatives. (See Table 18)

Attrition can be used to effectively minimize the need to separate employees involuntarily. The Director of OPM termed attrition as the "natural and most humane" way to reduce the size of the work force. 2/ Personnel officials and managers interviewed for the study stated that their agencies had tried to encourage attrition during the 1981 RIF. However, some cited drawbacks to relying on attrition alone to reduce the size of the work force. One manager expressed concern that:

> Key people may leave the organization, which then places greater stresses on the remaining staff to get the work done.

2/ Testimony of Donald Devine, Director of OPM, before the Subcommittee on Manpower and Housing of the Committee on Government Operations of the U.S. House of Representatives, January 27, 1982. OPM also issued FPM Bulletin 351-32 on December 4, 1981, outlining RIF alternative actions.

Another manager stated:

> Agencies should not rely strictly on attrition since management has no control over who goes.

TABLE 18

Effectiveness of Alternatives to RIF

Q30: The following are a list of actions which your organization may have taken to reduce the impact of RIF on employees. For each action, how effective do you think each was in avoiding or lessening the RIF in your organization? (Personnelist Questionnaire.)

RIF Alternative Actions	Very effective/ Effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Very ineffective/ Ineffective	No basis to judge/ it varies among parts of the agency
c. Use attrition as much as possible to accomplish reductions	86%	3%	5%	6%
a. Freeze all outside hires, internal re-assignments and/or promotions	76%	6%	6%	12%
d. Establish a formal outplacement program	41%	15%	12%	33%
b. Furlough	6%	9%	9%	77%

Respondents: Senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies.
Number of respondents: 400 to 441, depending on the type of action.
Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

2. **Over 85% of the senior personnel officials and employees endorsed the concept of furloughs under some circumstances as a RIF alternative.** Both senior personnel officials and employees in all agencies were asked under what conditions they would voluntarily accept a furlough. The conditions were:

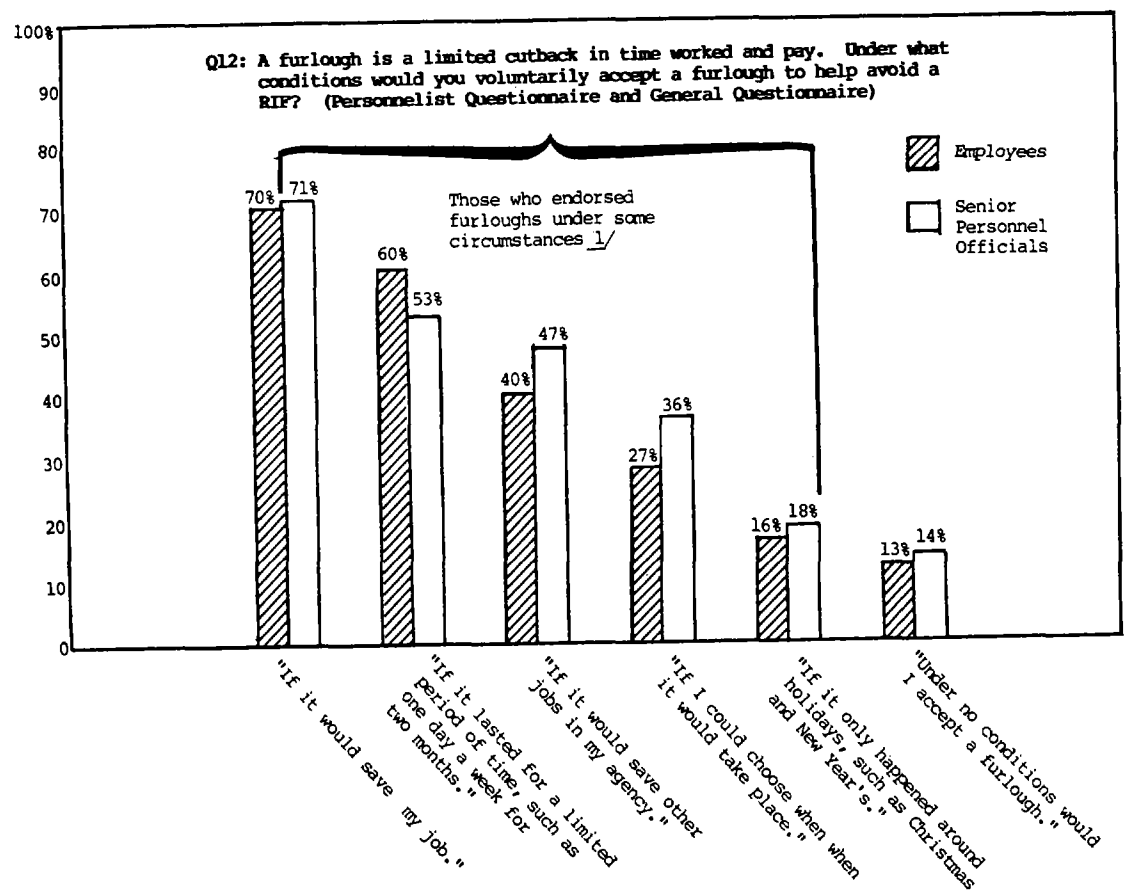
- If it would save my job,
- If it lasted for a limited period of time, such as one day a week for two months,
- If it would save other jobs in my agency,
- If I could choose when it would take place, and
- If it only happened around holidays, such as Christmas and New Year's.

Eighty-six percent of the senior personnel officials and 87% of the employees stated that they would accept a furlough under at least one of these conditions. Only 14% of the senior personnel officials and 13% of the employees said they would not accept a furlough under any conditions. The most frequently cited conditions under which both groups of respondents said they would accept a furlough were "if it would save my job" and "if it only lasted for a limited period of time, such as one day a week for two months". Since multiple responses were permitted, the responses add up to over 100%. (See Chart 14).

At the time of the survey, few agencies had initiated furloughs. The use of furloughs to avoid RIFs came into much greater use in 1982. Thus, the finding that employees and senior personnel officials would voluntarily accept a furlough, particularly if it meant saving their jobs, underscores the use of furloughs as an acceptable way to avoid RIFs.

CHART 14

Conditions Under Which Senior Personnel Officials and Employees Would Accept a Furlough



Multiple response question.

Respondents: Senior personnel officials and employees in all agencies.

Number of respondents: Senior personnel officials: 772; Employees: 2,593.

1/ Percent who did not respond "under no conditions would I accept a furlough": Senior personnel officials: 86%; Employees: 87%.

Effectiveness of Outplacement Services

According to the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies, the outplacement services most widely offered by agencies to employees were: OPM's Displaced Employee Program, OPM's Voluntary Interagency Placement Program, sending job applications to other agencies, and agency reemployment priority lists. Although employees were not asked which outplacement services were offered by their agencies, they were asked whether they used any outplacment services to try to find new jobs and how helpful these services had been. Senior personnel officials were also asked to rate how helpful the outplacment services had been to employees.

Few of the employees in RIF-affected agencies reported that they had used any of the outplacement services. However, some outplacement services were considered to be helpful by both those who used the services and the senior personnel officials. Training in how to look for another job and the granting of administrative leave to enable employees to seek other jobs were the most frequently endorsed services. These findings on the effectiveness of outplacement services are discussed in greater detail below.

3. **Over two-thirds of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported that their agencies had offered OPM's Displaced Employee Program, OPM's Voluntary Interagency Placement Program, sending job applications to other agencies, and agency reemployment priority lists as outplacement services to their employees.** As a means of encouraging attrition, as well as of helping employees displaced in a RIF find new positions, the Federal Government has long required or encouraged RIF outplacement services. Effective outplacement to other Federal agencies is one way of protecting the substantial investment that the Federal Government has made in training competent experienced workers.

Senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies were shown a listing of outplacement services and asked if any of these had been offered to employees in their agencies. Because of its technical nature, employees were not asked this question. Over two-thirds of these officials reported that their agencies had offered the two OPM-sponsored outplacement services--the Displaced Employees Program (DEP) (78%), the Voluntary Interagency Placement Program (VIPP) (75%), and two agency-based services--"sending SF-171's to other Federal Government agencies" (67%), and "rehiring employees from the reemployment priority list" (65%). Other services frequently reported were "providing individual career or job counseling" (57%), and "helping to set up job interviews at Federal agencies" (56%). The least frequently offered services were "training in new skills for other employment" (13%), and "using consultants to advise employees on how to get a job in the private sector" (12%). (See Table 19).

TABLE 19 Outplacement Services Offered by Agencies

Q27A: Based on your experience with RIF, please indicate whether your organization offered these outplacement services. (Personnelist Questionnaire.)

Outplacement Service	Yes	No	Don't Know
j. Participation in OPM's Displaced Employees Program.	78%	12%	10%
i. Participating in OPM's Voluntary Interagency Placement Program.	75%	14%	11%
e. Sending SF-171's to other Federal Government agencies.	67%	24%	10%
k. Rehiring of people on the re-employment priority list before hiring anyone from the outside.	65%	21%	14%
c. Providing individual career or job counseling.	57%	34%	9%
f. Helping to set up job interviews at Federal agencies.	56%	34%	10%
a. Training on how to look for other employment (including SF-171 or resume writing, interviewing techniques, etc.)	40%	52%	9%
h. Helping to set up job interviews for employees with private sector organization.	32%	53%	16%
g. Sending resumes to private sector organizations.	31%	54%	15%
l. Participation in the Department of Labor Nationwide Outplacement System.	25%	48%	28%
b. Providing administrative leave for employees to look for other jobs.	20%	67%	14%
d. Training in new skills for other employment.	13%	78%	9%
m. Using consultants to advise employees on how to get a job in private sector.	12%	78%	11%

Respondents: Senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies.
Number of respondents: 361 to 366, depending on the outplacement service.
Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

4. Over 85% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies did not use the outplacement services provided by their agencies. The study asked employees in RIF-affected agencies whether they used any of the outplacement services offered by their agency to try to find a new job. Since the question measured use of the services, senior personnel officials were not asked this question. The overwhelming majority (87%) of the RIF-affected employees said that they did not use any outplacement services. Only 13% said they had used any placement services.

Comments from the on-site interviews may help to shed some light on why employees did not use outplacement services. For example, an employee from a headquarters location stated:

> The outplacement office has had activities but most of my coworkers are waiting to see what happens rather than looking for other jobs now. I am afraid of being placed somewhere where I wouldn't be happy.

A manager at another agency headquarters commented:

> Outplacement efforts began in May 1981 but were not so successful because there were few Federal vacancies and most employees did not believe a RIF would take place.

A personnel official in a field location noted:

> Employees are concerned about receiving severance pay. They don't want to jeopardize this by finding other jobs before they are eligible to receive severance pay. This contributes to their lack of interest in looking for other employment at this time.

In a June 1982 report on the 1981 RIF, OPM noted [3]:

> It is important to give employees a realistic understanding of their need to find another job. Employees who wait until they receive their specific notice before they begin to look for a job have waited too long.

5. Although outplacement services were not widely used, the services seen as being most helpful by their users and the senior personnel officials involved training on how to look for other employment and the granting of administrative leave to look for other jobs. A GAO report which reviewed pre-1981 RIFs in the Federal Government reported that the Department of Defense (DoD), which

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3/ "Reduction-in-Force in Selected Federal Agencies", June 1982. U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Washington, D.C., June 1982, p. 7.

underwent large scale RIFs in the 1970's, operated the "most effective, efficient and most sophisticated program in the Federal Government." 4/ In contrast, GAO felt that the non-DoD agencies, which operated their outplacment programs largely independent of each other, could have achieved increased effectiveness through "greater uniformity and improved coordination among the agencies."5/

Problems with effectiveness appeared to still be a problem with 1981 outplacement efforts. During the 1981 RIF, which mostly affected non-DoD agencies, outplacement results were mixed. Some agencies took the initiative to apply outplacement concepts such as career counseling, job application preparation assistance, and job search assistance. OPM supported these activities through the Voluntary Interagency Placement Program (VIPP) and the Displaced Employees Program (DEP). 6/ The senior personnel officials with operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies were shown a listing of outplacement services offered by OPM and their agencies. They were asked to rate how helpful these services had been to employees in looking for other jobs. Those few employees in RIF-affected agencies who said that they had used outplacement services were shown a similar, although abbreviated, listing of outplacement services. They were asked how helpful they thought each service that they used was in looking for another job.

Both groups of respondents most frequently rated "training on how to look for other employment" and the granting of "administrative leave to look for another job" as being "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful." Eighty-eight percent of the senior personnel officials and 54% of the employees rated administrative leave as being helpful; 87% of the senior personnel officials and 58% of the employees rated training on how to look for other employment as being helpful.(See Tables 20 and 21.)

4/ "Assistance to Displaced Federal Civilian Employees--Avoiding Loss of Needed Trained Personnel," GAO Report FPCD-80-3, U.S. Government Accounting Office, Washington, D.C., October 16, 1979, p. 3.

5/ Ibid., p. 3

6/ The VIPP is a program established by OPM in 1981 that was designed to focus on surplus employees prior to the time they received RIF notices and used a computerized voluntary exchange of information on candidates and vacancies among agencies, the private sector, and OPM. In May 1982 OPM changed this program to the Interagency Placement Assistance Program. The DEP is an older OPM program that serves as a Government-wide referral system for workers who have received RIF notices and cannot be placed within their agencies. Unlike the VIPP, the DEP is only open to those employees who have been separated by a RIF.

For every outplacement service listed, senior personnel officials were more likely to think that the service had been helpful than the employees who actually received the service. For example, 87% of the senior personnel officials but only 26% of the employees thought that training in new skills for other employment was helpful. In fact, the majority of the senior personnel officials thought that most of the listed outplacement services had been helpful.

The only services that failed to receive an endorsement by the majority of the senior personnel officials were OPM's VIPP (45%), OPM's DEP (43%) and the Department of Labor's Nationwide Outplacement System (26%). 7/ Employees were not asked about their experiences with these services. Of note is the fact that the two OPM programs were reported to be the services most widely offered by the agencies, as discussed previously (see Table 19).

7/ This is a pilot program which utilizes a computerized nationwide job matching system for both private and public employees.

TABLE 20 Senior Personnel Officials' Opinions on the Helpfulness of Outplacement Services Offered by Their Agencies.

Q27B: In your opinion, how helpful do you feel these services were to employees in looking for other jobs? (Personnelist Questionnaire.)

Outplacement Service	Very helpful/ Somewhat helpful	Neither helpful nor unhelpful	Very unhelpful/Somewhat unhelpful	Too soon to tell
b. Providing administrative leave for employees to look for other jobs.	88%	6%	1%	4%
a. Training on how to look for other employment (including SF-171 or resume writing, interviewing techniques, etc.)	87%	4%	*	9%
d. Training in new skills for other employment.	87%	4%	2%	7%
f. Helping to set up job interviews at Federal agencies	80%	6%	6%	8%
c. Providing individual career or job counseling.	78%	10%	1%	11%
k. Rehiring of people on the reemployment priority list before hiring anyone from the outside.	73%	13%	1%	13%
h. Helping to set up job interviews with private sector organizations.	69%	17%	6%	9%
e. Sending SF-171's to other Federal Government agencies.	68%	17%	7%	9%
g. Sending resumes to private sector organizations.	64%	13%	9%	14%
m. Using outside consultants to advise employees on how to get a job in the private sector.	58%	8%	5%	30%
i. Participating in OPM's Voluntary Interagency Placement Program.	45%	31%	11%	13%
j. Participation in OPM's Displaced Employees Program.	43%	33%	12%	13%
l. Participation in the Department of Labor Nationwide Outplacement System.	26%	32%	15%	28%

* Less than 1%.
Respondents: Senior personnel officials and operational responsibility in RIF-affected agencies where these outplacement services were offered.
Number of respondents: 14 to 266, depending on the outplacement service.
Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

TABLE 21

Employees' Opinions on the Helpfulness of Agency Outplacement Services They Used.

Q25B: The following are outplacement services which you may have received from your agency. How helpful was each service to you in looking for another job? (General Questionnaire.)

Outplacement Service	Very helpful/ Somewhat helpful	Neither helpful nor unhelpful	Very unhelpful/ Somewhat unhelpful	Too soon to tell
a. Training on how to look for other employment (including SF-171 or resume writing, interviewing techniques, etc.)	58%	20%	19%	3%
b. Administrative leave to look for another job.	54%	18%	26%	3%
e. Sending SF-171's to other Federal Government agencies.	46%	10%	26%	18%
f. Helping to set up job interviews at Federal Government agencies.	40%	19%	39%	2%
g. Sending of my resume to private sector organizations.	31%	22%	35%	12%
h. Helping to set up job interviews at private sector organizations.	29%	36%	35%	1%
c. Individual career or job counseling.	29%	33%	38%	*
d. Training in new skills for other employment.	26%	26%	47%	*

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* Less than 1%

Respondents: Employees in RIF-affected agencies who indicated that they had received the listed outplacement service.
Number of respondents: 64 to 249, depending on the outplacement service.
Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Some of those we interviewed reported cases where agencies which were recruiting made no attempt to locate RIF-affected employees from other agencies for the vacancies and hired employees "off the street" rather than through outplacement mechanisms. For example, one agency outplacement coordinator in a social service-oriented agency reported that:

> Of sixty agencies I contacted, only two were willing to accept applications of RIF'd employees. The personnel officials at the other agencies said that they were afraid of being swamped by SF-171's from RIF-affected employees from all over the Government, but some would take applications from handicapped employees.

An outplacement official in another agency commented:

> The Department of Defense (DoD) "stopper list" is a model for the way priority placement programs should be operated.

Use of "Early-out" Retirement

"Early-out" retirement appears to have limited usefulness as a RIF alternative. Over 70% of the employees in agencies that had been granted "early out" retirement by OPM were ineligible for the retirement based on age and length of service. Of those who were eligible, only 16% said they would retire. The principal reason given for not retiring was not being able to afford to retire. Senior personnel officials were asked somewhat different questions about "early out" retirement that were not useful for this analysis. These findings on "early out" retirement are discussed in greater detail below.

6. **The use of "early out" retirements as a RIF alternative had limited impact in the 1981 RIF.** Agencies in a RIF situation can request OPM approval for "early out" retirement authority. In agencies where "early out" retirement authority is granted, employees become eligible to retire earlier than usual. To qualify, employees need only have at least 25 years of Federal service or be 50 years old with 20 years Federal service. "Early out" retirement can be used to reduce the numbers in the work force by allowing eligible employees to voluntarily retire, thus freeing up positions for junior employees. However, "early out" retirement may have the disadvantage of increasing costs to the Federal Government retirement system if a large number of employees retire earlier than normal.

At the time of the study, 23% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies stated that "early-out" retirement authority had been granted to their agencies. The responses of the employees whose agencies had been granted "early out" retirement were analyzed. This analysis indicated that the feasibility of using "early out" retirement as a RIF-alternative was limited in two respects. First, only 5% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies that had been granted "early-out" authority said they would exercise the option, while 89% said they would not. Six percent said they were not sure whether they would take "early out" retirement.

Second, 71% of the employees said they would not take "early out" retirement because they were ineligible. Another 25% said they could not afford

to retire although they were eligible and 3% said that they wanted to continue working although they were eligible.

Even when the responses of employees who were not eligible for "early out" retirement are excluded, the results are similar. Only 16% of the employees eligible for "early out" retirement said they would take the retirement, while 84% said they would not. Of those eligible employees who chose not to retire, over three-fourths (86%) said they would not retire because they could not afford it, 11% said they wanted to continue working, 1% said they were not given enough time to decide, and 2% cited other reasons. Thus, while "early out" retirement may have use in small reductions in employment, it has limited feasibility as a RIF-alternative for large personnel reductions.

C. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

This chapter indicated that RIF was not the only technique used to effect personnel reductions in the 1981 RIF. Both attrition and personnel freezes were shown to be effective in avoiding or lessening RIFs. Although at the time of the survey furloughs had not been widely used, both the senior personnel officials and the employees endorsed the concept of furloughs, particularly if it meant saving their jobs. This finding underscores the acceptability of using furloughs to avoid RIFs.

The study findings on the use and effectiveness of outplacement during the 1981 RIF were mixed. Only 13% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies availed themselves of any outplacement assistance. However, at least according to the senior personnel officials, the large majority of agencies offered at least some outplacement services. For example, over three-quarters of the senior personnel officials stated that their agencies had participated in OPM's VIPP and DEP outplacement programs. Although these two programs were the most widely offered, the senior personnel officials judged them to be among the least helpful in finding employees other jobs.

This indicates that agencies could be more creative in setting up outplacement programs than simply enrolling employees in the VIPP or DEP. Training on how to look for other employment, such as SF-171 or resume writing and interviewing techniques, and the granting of administrative leave to look for other jobs were the two services that both the employees who used the services and the senior personnel officials thought were most helpful.

In order to minimize the need for a formal RIF and thus minimize RIF-related disruptions, agencies facing personnel cutbacks should continue to utilize RIF alternatives such as attrition, personnel freezes, and furloughs and "early-out" retirements where judged to be cost effective. However, "early out" retirement should not be relied on to free up many positions when large-scale personnel reductions are indicated. Effective outplacement is needed to encourage attrition and to protect the substantial investment that the Federal Government has made in training competent experienced workers. One method to improve the effectiveness of outplacement programs--the required rehiring of employees separated in RIFs--is discussed in the next chapter. Chapter 9 also discusses other potential improvements to the RIF process, such as increasing the weight of performance as a retention factor.

CHAPTER 9: HOW MIGHT THE RIF SYSTEM BE IMPROVED?

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the opinions of the employees and senior personnel officials on potential improvements to the RIF system. One issue addressed was the weight that retention factors, such as performance, seniority, and veterans preference, should receive during a RIF. Other issues involved whether agencies should be required to rehire employees separated in a RIF, whether employees should be permitted to volunteer to have their jobs abolished during a RIF, and whether "bumping" rights should be retained.

The legal and regulatory bases for this chapter are found in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (Pub. L. No. 95-454, 92 Stat. 111 (1978)), 5 C.F.R. Chapter 351 and FPM Chapter 351. 1/

Critical Questions

To assess possible changes to the RIF system, this chapter addresses the following critical questions:

- How much relative weight should RIF retention factors be given?
- Should changes be made in aspects of the RIF process involving reemployment rights, "bumping and retreat" rights, and position abolishment?

1/ Merit Principle Number 6 of the Civil Service Reform Act states:

- Employees should be retained on the basis of the adequacy of their performance.

The applicable OPM regulations provide that:

- Retention standing of RIF-affected employees is required to be based on tenure of employment, military (veterans) preference, length of service (seniority), and performance.
- Agencies are required to give RIF-affected employees priority consideration for employment.
- Agency officials decide which positions to abolish in a RIF, although nothing in the regulations preclude agencies from allowing employees to volunteer to have their jobs abolished.
- Agencies are required to determine assignment rights of RIF-affected employees through procedures known as "bumping" and "retreating."

Major Findings

The research team analyzed the responses to questions in both the Personnelist and General questionnaires that were relevant to these critical questions. Based on this analysis, the major findings, which are discussed in greater detail in the rest of the chapter, can be summarized as follows:

- Employees and senior personnel officials believed that RIF retention factors could be configured differently than they are presently. Over 80% of both the employees and the senior personnel officials thought that job performance should be accorded a great amount of weight in determining RIF retention. Approximately three-quarters of both groups thought that seniority should receive a great amount of weight.

- Although the respondents thought that greater weight should be given to job performance than to other factors, the majority (71%) of the senior personnel officials did not think that performance appraisals were accurate enough to be used for RIF purposes.

- Over 70% of the senior personnel officials in all agencies supported policies for the required rehiring of employees separated in a RIF, permitting employees to volunteer to have their jobs abolished in a RIF, and the retention of "bumping rights."

B. FINDINGS

This section is organized under two subheadings: "Opinions on RIF Retention Factors" and "Opinions on Other Issues." The major findings, additional data analysis, charts depicting the range of responses from the senior personnel officials and employees, and relevant comments from the interviews are presented under the appropriate subheadings. Where identical or comparable questions were asked of the two groups of respondents, we have tried to distinguish between the findings of each. We have also indicated where questions were asked of one group of respondents and not the other.

Opinions on RIF Retention Factors

The study data indicates that both employees and senior personnel officials endorsed an increased emphasis on job performance in computing employee job retention rights during a RIF. However, a large majority of both groups of respondents also endorsed seniority as a RIF retention factor that should be given great weight. Fewer than half of the employees and one-fourth of the senior personnel officials thought that veterans preference should be given great weight. Even those having veterans preference more frequenctly endorsed job performance and seniority than they endorsed veterans preference.

Although job performance was the first choice among all groups of respondents, a large majority (71%) of the senior personnel officials expressed strong reservations about the ability of the performance appraisal process to accurately measure job performance. Employees were not asked their opinions about the performance appraisal process. These findings on RIF retention factors are discussed in greater detail below.

1. Employees and senior personnel officials believed that RIF retention factors could be configured differently than they are presently. Over 80% of both the employees and the senior personnel officials thought that job performance should be accorded a great amount of weight in determining RIF retention. Approximately three-quarters of both groups thought that seniority should receive a great amount of weight.

Senior personnel officials and employees in all agencies were asked to indicate their views on the amount of credit (weight) that the following factors should be given in deciding employees retention status in a RIF:

- years of Federal Government service (seniority),
- job performance,
- being a veteran (veterans preference),
- being a woman,
- being a member of a minority group.

Of these factors, veterans preference, seniority, and job performance (in that order) are given weight under current law governing RIFs.

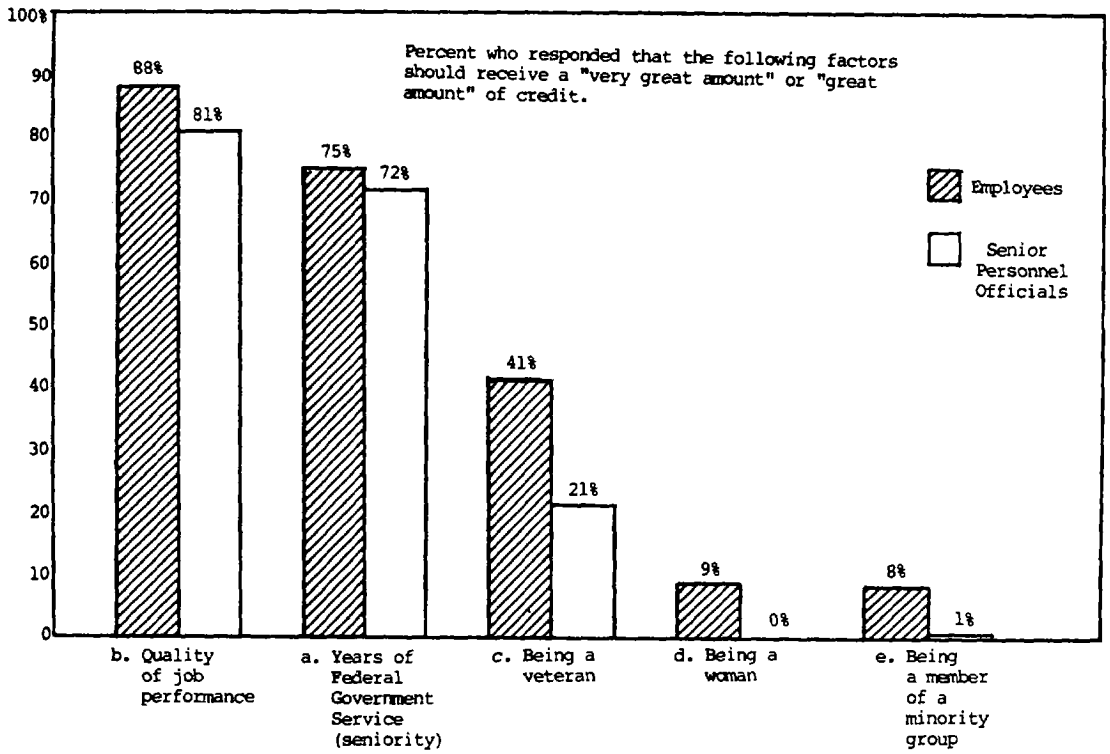
Both senior personnel officials and employees endorsed job performance as the factor most deserving of credit. Seniority was the factor next most frequently endorsed by both groups. Over 80% of the senior personnel officials (81%) and employees (88%) felt that job performance should be given a "great" or "very great" amount of weight. Further, 72% of the senior personnel officials, and 75% of the employees felt that seniority should also receive a "great" or "very great" amount of weight. (See Chart 15.)

An additional analysis was made to determine the relative preferences for these factors among three segments of employees: (1) those with veterans preference; (2) women, and (3) minorities. The results showed that job performance followed by seniority were the most preferred factors for all three segments. Those with veterans preference more frequently endorsed job performance and seniority than they endorsed veterans preference. Women and minorities more frequently endorsed the current factors, i.e., job performance, seniority, and veterans preference, than they endorsed giving themselves special preference.

CHART 15

Senior Personnel Officials' and Employees' Opinions on the Weight That RIF Retention Factors Should Receive

Q10. The following factors are now used or might be used to decide employee' RIF status (whether employees keep their jobs during a RIF). Please indicate how much credit you feel each of these factors should get. (Personnelist and General Questionnaires)



Respondents: Senior personnel officials and employees in all agencies.

Number of respondents: Senior personnel officials: 768 to 773, depending on the factor; Employees: 2,551 to 2,595, depending on the factor.

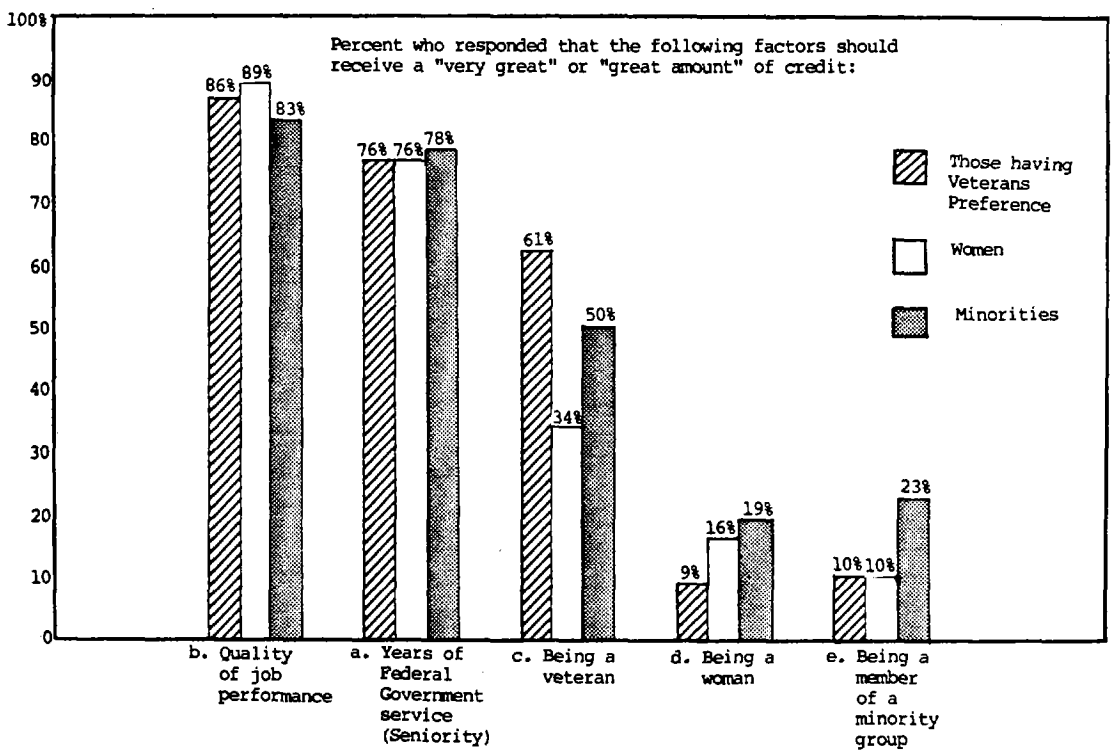
For example, 86% of those with veterans preference thought that job performance should be given a "great" or "very great" amount of weight, 76% thought that seniority should receive a great amount of weight, while 61% thought that being a veteran should receive a great amount of weight.

Women most frequently (89%) thought that job performance should receive a great amount of weight, followed by seniority (76%), and veterans preference (34%); only 16% thought that being a woman should entitle one to receive a great amount of weight in a RIF. Similarly, minorities most frequently endorsed job performance (83%), followed by seniority (78%) and veterans preference (50%); only 23% thought that minorities should be given a great amount of weight during a RIF (See Chart 16.)

Chart 16

The Opinions of Those Having Veterans Preference, Women, and Minorities on the Weight That RIF Retention Factors Should Receive

Q10. The following factors are now used or might be used to decide employees' RIF status (whether employees keep their jobs during a RIF). Please indicate how much credit you feel each of these factors should get. (General Questionnaire).



Question 10 by: Question 51 (veterans preference), Questions 56 (sex), and Question 57 (minority status).

Respondents: Employees having veterans preference, women, and minorities in all agencies.

Number of respondents: 1,710 to 1,751, depending on the factor.

The relative weight of RIF retention factors was discussed during the on-site interviews. Many of those interviewed wanted to see the current RIF system changed. For example, a Director of Personnel stated:

> The RIF system itself is not in conformance with the merit principles. When you come right down to it, merit in RIF means keeping the best people. Veterans preference and length of service do not equal merit, although using length of service as a criteria is okay up to a point. Real merit means excellence. If we appraise performance better than we do now, the RIF system should be performance-based.

A personnel official in an agency headquarters commented:

> Women and minorities will be helped by the elimination of veterans preference. Any method of selection is discriminatory, but tenure is one of the best methods. Giving four years for outstanding performance seems to be all right, but the performance appraisal system doesn't really measure performance.

An employee in an agency headquarters commented:

> The current system puts too much emphasis on seniority. For this reason the agency loses its young people. The stress should be on getting out the dead wood and preserving the functions of the agency.

In contrast, others saw no reason to change the present system. For example, one union president stated:

> The current RIF system is consistent with (merit) principles. Employees are credited with additional service based on their performance evaluations and those whose performance is considered unsatisfactory are the first to be released in a RIF. The current system both rewards good performance and protects the security of those employees with long-time service to the Government.

A manager in an agency headquarters stated:

> It is better not to change the RIF rules in the middle of the game. The system we have right now is all right.

2. Although both the employees and the senior personnel officials thought that greater weight should be given to job performance than to other factors, a large majority of the senior personnel officials did not think that performance appraisals were accurate enough to be used for RIF purposes. As discussed previously in Chapter 6, 71% of the senior personnel officials "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with the statement that "performance appraisals are accurate enough to be used in helping to determine whether

employees keep their jobs during a RIF." Since employees were not asked their opinions on performance appraisals, we do not know whether they would have voiced similar reservations.

Concerns about the accuracy of performance appraisals and the relative weight of RIF retention factors were also discussed during the on-site interviews. For example, a regional director in a field location commented:

> We should get away from the old system of seniority--only quality employees should remain after a RIF. However, management has to make performance evaluations mean something. The big distinction in a RIF is between "outstanding" and "satisfactory" ratings. There should be extra credit given for "commendable" ratings as well as "outstanding ratings. Giving this extra credit would be a real incentive for employees to perform.

An official from an oversight agency stated:

> Without the current regulatory restrictions, there would probably be more emphasis placed on performance. Veterans preference and seniority are objective criteria, but performance can be subjective. If performance became a major factor in RIF, the numbers of challenges to performance appraisals would dramatically increase. This would hurt the performance appraisal system.

Opinions on Other Issues

The study indicates that senior personnel officials endorsed RIF policies for the mandatory rehiring of qualified employees separated by RIF, the encouragement of voluntary separations or retirements to minimize the impact of a RIF, as well as the retention of current "bumping" rights. Because of their technical nature, employees were not asked their opinions of these RIF policies. The findings on these issues are discussed in greater detail below.

3. **Over 70% of the senior personnel officials in all agencies supported policies for the required rehiring of employees separated in a RIF, permitting employees to volunteer to have their job abolished in a RIF, and the retention of "bumping rights."** Senior personnel officials were asked their opinions of three RIF policy matters. (Because of their technical nature, employees were not asked these questions.) First, they were asked whether the rehiring of qualified RIF'ed employees should be required over non-Federal applicants. The current policy requires only priority consideration for RIF-affected employees. A recent GAO report stated that mandatory hiring is "needed to assure that best possible placement for separated employees." 2/

2/ See "Programs to Help Displaced Federal Civilian Employees Obtain Employment," GAO Report FPCD-82-75, U.S. Government Accounting Office, Washington, D.C., September 28, 1982, p. 9.

Second, senior personnel officials were asked if employees who wish to receive severance pay or to retire should be allowed to volunteer to have their jobs abolished, even though they might not otherwise be affected by a RIF. This policy is potentially useful in that it could serve as a RIF-alternative to encourage attrition and minimize the impact of the RIF. Finally, senior personnel officials were asked whether current "bumping" rights should be retained. Bumping is a procedure where one employee displaces another employee who is in a lower retention subgroup. 3/

In each case, over 70% of the senior personnel officials endorsed these three policies. Eighty-one percent endorsed both the priority rehiring of qualified RIF'ed employees and the retention of bumping rights and 71% endorsed voluntary paid separations and retirements. (See Chart 17.)

Comments on these RIF policy matters were received during the on-site interviews. Representative comments on mandatory hiring for employees separated by RIF include the statement by an employee in a field location:

> Federal agencies which are hiring should be obligated to hire qualified people who are RIF'ed. Employees facing RIF should receive priority consideration before the RIF as well as after. Now employees don't become priority candidates until they are off the payroll.

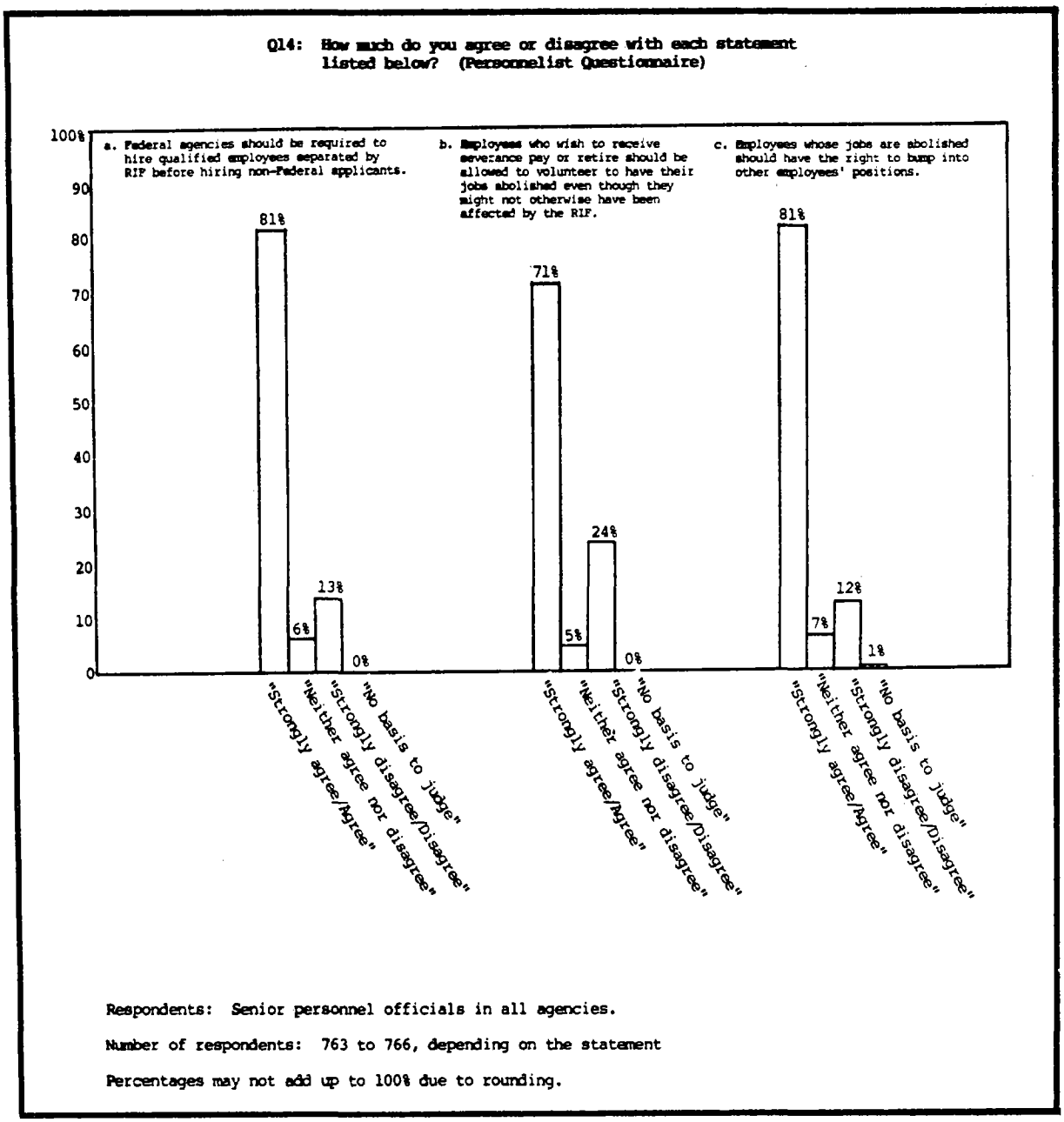
A representative from an employee group also noted:

> OPM's Displaced Employees Program should be more like the DoD stopper list. OPM should make agencies justify non-selections from the displaced employees list and agencies should be more willing to waive the qualifications of employees who were RIF'ed.

3/ See Chapter 2 for a more detailed description of this procedure in the RIF system.

Chart 17

Senior Personnel Officials' Opinions on Several Potential Improvements to the RIF System



Respondents: Senior personnel officials in all agencies.

Number of respondents: 763 to 766, depending on the statement

Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Comments were also received on the issue of permitting employees to volunteer to be separated in a RIF. For example, a manager in a field location said:

> I was not affected by the first round of RIF's because I am a veteran. I want to be RIFed so that I can receive severance pay since I am planning to quit anyway and go back to school.

A manager at a headquarters agency also noted:

> The system as it is constituted now is not fair since it doesn't allow volunteers to be separated or for people to volunteer to go part-time.

An employee who also serves as the union representative in a field location commented on the use of "bumping" rights:

> The RIF process should not have any bumping and retreating rights. Jobs should be abolished and those employees who lose their jobs should have reinstatement rights. Employees would react better to this system than (now) when they get offers below their ability.

C. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Based on the study data, the respondents think that the greatest priority among the current RIF retention factors studied should be given to performance and seniority. Some of those interviewed thought that such a ranking would be more consistent with Merit Principle Number 6 which states that "employees should be retained on the basis of the adequacy of their performance."

Currently the RIF system places the highest priority on tenure (which was not studied), veterans preference, followed by seniority, with performance a distant third. However, any change in the RIF system to increase the emphasis on performance should take into account the inaccuracy and subjectivity of the current performance appraisal process. The senior personnel officials in the study expressed grave doubts about the ability of the current performance appraisal process to accurately measure performance. (Employees were not asked their opinions on the performance appraisal process.)

No matter how fairly administered or how useful they may be in the context of other personnel management decisions, performance appraisals are relatively subjective means of differentiating among closely ranked competitors. Because of their subjective nature, performance appraisals are

also vulnerable to manipulation, as was discussed in Chapter 5. Some steps which might be taken to minimize the subjectivity of the performance appraisal process include:

(1) Establishing bands or spectra of performance, within which other objective measures, such as seniority, determine relative rank;

(2) "Freezing" performance ratings at some point retroactive to the onset of RIF planning, to prevent manipulation of ratings to unjustifiably favor "favorites."

(3) Using the average of several year's performance ratings to minimize the possible manipulation of recent ratings to get rid of unwanted employees.

As was discussed in Chapter 2, on March 30, 1983, OPM published proposed revisions to the RIF regulations which included provisions to increase the weight of job performance and decrease the weight of seniority in determining employee retention standing.[4/] Our suggestions are similar to OPM's proposed revisions to increase the emphasis on performance while preserving seniority within bands or spectra of performance. However, these proposed revisions should be examined very carefully to assure that they do not unduly subject the RIF system to potential violations of merit principles and prohibited personnel practices.

The senior personnel officials in the study strongly endorsed two other potential improvements to the RIF system and one that is currently part of the system. They supported revising the RIF system to require the mandatory hiring of qualified RIF-separated employees over non-Federal applicants. Currently OPM requires agencies to consider these employees, but does not require them to fill vacancies with these employees. As noted previously in this chapter, GAO came out in support of mandatory hiring restrictions in a recent report published in September 1982. Based on these findings, OPM and agency heads should consider requiring the mandatory hiring of qualified RIF-separated employees over non-Federal applicants for employment. At a minimum, agencies should justify in writing non-selections from the agency reemployment priority lists and OPM's Displaced Employee Program. In this way, these programs would operate more like the highly regarded Department of Defense outplacement program.

4/ These proposed revisions were subsequently withdrawn by OPM in late May 1983 until the Congress has the opportunity to review the entire subject area. Because we felt that these proposals had received high visibility in the Federal community and that the concepts would continue to be debated, we have included them in this analysis.

The senior personnel officials also supported revising the RIF system to encourage agency heads to offer severance pay or retirement to employees who volunteer to be separated in a RIF. Since this might be useful to encourage attrition and minimize the impact of the RIF on vulnerable employees, agency heads and OPM should explore the budgetary and operational feasibility of the senior personnel officials' recommendation.

Lastly, the senior personnel officials supported retaining "bumping" rights in a RIF. OPM's revisions to the RIF regulations have proposed limiting "bumping" and "retreat" rights to one grade level lower. (Currently there is no limit on the number of grade levels an employee can be "bumped.") Since the senior personnel officials were not asked if they thought "bumping" rights should be limited in any way, there is no way of knowing whether they would sanction this proposed change. Such a revision would minimize the disruptions usually caused by massive "bumping and retreating" under the present RIF policy, but severely limit the job security rights of RIF-affected employees. Accordingly, this proposed revision should be examined very carefully to assure that it does not unnecessarily subject the RIF system to potential violations of merit principles and prohibited personnel practices.

This chapter reviewed several possible improvements to the RIF system. These and other potential changes which were discussed in Chapters 4 through 8 and are summarized in Chapter 1 under the "Recommendations" section.

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF SELECTED RIF TERMS

GLOSSARY OF SELECTED RIF TERMS

- **Agency:** The major Federal organization for which employees work, such as the Department of Commerce, the Environmental Protection Agency, etc.

- **Bumping:** Procedure used in a RIF where one employee displaces another employee who is in a lower retention subgroup.

- **Competitive area:** The geographic and organizational area within which employees compete for retention during a reduction-in-force.

- **Competitive level:** A grouping of positions at the same grade or occupational level with essentially the same qualification requirements, duties, responsibilities, pay schedules, and working conditions. Competitive levels exist within competitive areas.

- **Employees in all agencies:** All respondents in the study who answered the questionnaire regardless of whether their agencies were undergoing RIFs.

- **Employees in non RIF-affected agencies:** Employees in the study who responded that their immediate work group had not had or did not expect a RIF in 1981.

- **Employees in RIF-affected agencies:** Employees in the study who responded that their immediate work groups had or expected to have a RIF in 1981.

- **General notice:** A written notice issued to employees that states that a RIF actions may be necessary, but does not state the specific RIF action to be taken in each employee's case. If an agency cannot specifically determine all individual RIF actions to be taken at the start of the 30 day notice period, it issues general notices which are supplemented by specific notices.

- **Immediate work group:** The people with whom employees in the study worked most closely on a day-to-day basis.

- **Outplacement:** Efforts made by Federal agencies and other parties to help employees who might be or have been affected by RIF find new jobs.

- **Reduction-in-force (RIF):** The use of formal regulations to downgrade, separate, or reassign employees because of budget, program, or ceiling cuts.

- **RIF action:** Actions, such as downgrades, separations or reassignments, taken against employees as a result of RIF.

- **RIF-affected agencies' employees who received specific notices:** Employees in the study who responded that they had received one or more specific notices.

- **RIF system (RIF process):** The system of actions taken to carry out a RIF according to RIF regulations and procedures.

- **Retention factors:** Factors (tenure, veterans preference, seniority and performance) used to determine an employees tenure group, subgroup, and service computation date.

- **Retention register:** A list of employees grouped by competitive levels and ranked within the competitive levels by tenure groups, subgroups, and service computation date. These lists are used to determine who will be affected by RIF.

- **Retention standing (RIF status):** An employee's relative position on a retention register based on his or her tenure group, subgroup, and service computation date. Retention standing is used to determine employees' assignment rights, i.e., which employees will be downgraded, separated, or reassigned as a result of RIF.

- **Retreating:** Procedure used in a RIF where one employee displaces another employee who has lower retention standing in the same subgroup. An employee has retreat rights only to a position he or she had previously been promoted from or through.

- **Senior personnel officials:** Members of the Personnelist RIF sample which consisted of personnel officials who were at GS-15 and above or equivalent in Washington, D.C. and at GS-13 and above or equivalent outside the Washington, D.C. area.

- **Senior personnel officials in all agencies:** All senior personnel officials in the study who answered the questionnaire regardless of whether their agencies were undergoing RIFs.

- **Senior personnel officials in agencies that issued specific notices:** Senior personnel officials in the study who responded that their agencies had issued one or more specific notices.

- **Senior personnel officials in non-RIF affected agencies:** Senior personnel officials in the study who responded that their immediate work group had not had or did not expect a RIF in 1981.

- **Senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies:** Senior personnel officials in the study who responded that their organizations had or expected to have a RIF in 1981.

- **Senior personnel officials with operational responsibility:** Senior personnel officials in the study who responded that they either were very familiar or somewhat familiar with the policies and operations of the RIF system in their organizations.

- **Service computation date:** An employee's official entry date into Government service. In determining RIF retention standing, the service computation date is used to compute seniority and credit for performance. For example, employees may have up to five years added on to their service computation dates for "outstanding" performance ratings.

- **Specific notice:** A written notice issued to employees that states specifically the RIF action to be taken against them, i.e., downgrade, separation, reassignment, or furlough for more than 30 days. An agency must provide employees with a written notice at least 30 calendar days in advance of a RIF action; this period must include at least 5 days for the specific notice.

- **Subgroup:** Grouping of employees by veterans preference status used in determining RIF retention standing. Subgroup AD are preference eligible veterans having a compensable service-connected disability of 30 percent or more; Subgroup A are employees who have veterans preference for RIF purposes other than those in Subgroup AD; Subgroup B are employees who do not have veterans preference.

- **Tenure Group:** Grouping of employees by tenure used in determining RIF retention standing. Group I are career employees who are not serving on probation; Group II are career employees who are serving probation and career-conditional employees; Group III are indefinite, term, non status non temporary employees, and employees serving under temporary appointments pending the establishment of registers.

APPENDIX B

LISTING OF INTERVIEW CONTACTS

LISTING OF INTERVIEW CONTACTS [1]
July - September, 1981

Type	Dates	Personnel	Management	Employee	Oversight	Total
Issue Identification	July/August, 1981					
Interviews		2	2	4	4	12
Oral or written comments		0	3	1	4	8
Contacted, but no response		(0	0	3	1	4)
Subtotal of Contacts		2	5	5	8	20
On-site Visits	August/September, 1981					
Agency A, headquarters	August 28, 1981	2	6	2	0	10
Agency B, field office	September 4, 1981	2	2	0	0	4
Agency C, headquarters	September 11, 1981	1	2	1	0	4
Agency D, field office	September 24, 1981	1	2	2	0	5
Agency C, field office	September 25, 1981	0	3	3	0	6
Subtotal of Contacts		6	15	8	0	29
Grand Total of Contacts		8	20	13	8	49

1/ Selected relevant comments from these interviews were included in this report to help the reader understand the qualitative values and reasoning behind some of the statistical responses.

APPENDIX C

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The following is a discussion of the methodology used to collect and analyze the survey data in this report.

Development of Questionnaires. Two questionnaires were developed for the MSPB study: a General questionnaire for employees and a Personnelist questionnaire for senior personnel officials. Senior personnel officials are defined in Appendix A.

The General questionnaire was 12 pages long and contained 58 questions. It contained three sections: (1) a general section on attitudes toward morale, productivity, desire to work for the Federal Government, and RIF policy matters; (2) a section on respondents' personal experiences with the 1981 RIF; and (3) a section on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. It was pre-tested fourteen times on intra- and inter-agency groups.

The Personnelist questionnaire was 12 pages long and contained 46 questions. Some of the questions were identical to those in the General questionnaire, some were comparable, and some were completely different. It contained three sections: (1) a general section of items from the General questionnaire supplemented with a few questions on RIF policy matters with which personnel officials are familiar; (2) a section on the respondents' professional opinions about the technical implementation of their RIF and the organizational practices associated therewith; and (3) a section on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The Personnelist questionnaire was pre-tested three times on inter-agency groups of senior personnel officials, in and out of Washington, D.C., some of whose agencies were undergoing RIFs.

Copies of the General questionnaire and the Personnelist questionnaire are in Appendix D.

Selection and Design of the Samples. Two samples of respondents were used: an Employee sample and a Personnelist sample.

The Employee sample was generated using a disproportionately stratified random sample of 3,808 permanent civilian employees in the Executive branch of the Federal Government who were listed in the July 1981 Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Central Personnel Data File (CPDF), with the exception of those who were:

- located at a work site outside the continental United States, Alaska, or Hawaii, since they were difficult to contact;
- employed by the FBI, the intelligence agencies such as CIA and NSA, or by quasi-independent agencies such as the Post Office, TVA, or Federal Reserve, since such agencies are outside the Board's mandate;

- Personnelists GS-15 and above in the Washington, D.C. area and GS-13 and above outside the Washington, D.C. area, since they comprised the Personnelist sample.

The sample was stratified on the basis of agency and projected density of RIFs. Agencies and sub-agencies were grouped into four major strata based on a June 1, 1981 estimated occurrence of RIF activity during calendar year 1981. The estimates were obtained from the personnel offices of the major agencies.

The four major strata were defined as follows:

- Agencies and sub-agencies not expected to undergo RIF during 1981, e.g., the Department of Defense in its entirety and the Veterans Administration.

- Non-RIF sub-agencies in agencies expecting RIFs during 1981, e.g., all of the Department of the Treasury excluding the Customs Service, the Savings Bond Division, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and the Bureau of the Mint, and all of the Department of Agriculture excluding the Federal Grain Inspection Service.

- Agencies and sub-agencies with a low projected occurrence of 1981 RIFs, i.e., fewer than 225 employees or less than 15% of the work force expected to be impacted by a RIF during 1981, such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Marshall Space Flight Center in the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

- Agencies and sub-agencies with a high projected occurrence of 1981 RIFs, i.e., at least 225 employees or 15% or more of the work force expected to be impacted by a RIF during 1981, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Federal Grain Inspection Service in the Department of Agriculture.

Attitudes were sought from employees in non RIF-affected agencies to provide contrasts and comparisons with responses from employees in RIF-affected agencies. The four major strata were further divided into substrata for ease in analysis. Some of the substrata are individual agencies or sub-agencies; some are groupings of individual agencies or sub-agencies. A total of seventeen substrata were established. [1]

1/ Readers interested in a detailed, quantitative description of the sampling plan, may obtain an overview by writing to:

David Chananie, Ph.D
Personnel Research Psychologist
Merit Systems Protection Board
Office of Merit Systems Review and Studies
1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Room 836
Washington, D.C. 20419

The Personnelist sample was a self-selected panel of what might be termed experienced observers. In late 1980, a study of senior personnel officials nationwide was conducted using a disproportionately stratified random sample. Over-half (886 or 52%) of the respondents in that study volunteered to join an MSRS panel and participate in future studies. In terms of their demographic characteristics, the volunteers were indistinguishable from the non-volunteers. The Personnelist RIF sample consists of this group of 886 volunteers who are:

- In job series 201, 212, 221, 230, 233, and 235, e.g., personnel management, personnel staffing, position classification, employee relations, labor relations, and employee development;
- At GS-15 and above or equivalent in Washington, D.C.; and
- AT GS-13 and above or equivalent outside the Washington, D.C. area.

This panel consists of personnel officers, personnel program heads, and senior personnel staff people who can speak knowledgeably about agency and OPM policy and program operations.

Administration of Questionnaires. The questionnaires were mailed to the Employee sample at the end of November and the beginning of December, 1981. Most of the questionnaires were mailed to the employees' office addresses. Some were mailed to employees' homes in cases where the employee had left the Federal Government and their home addresses were available. Due to the sensitive nature of this study and anticipated difficulties with respondents leaving their agencies or the Federal Government, all name and address information was verified by an outside contractor. Some remailing of returned questionnaries was required to trace and forward materials to respondents who had moved after the sample was taken from the CPDF.

Accompanying each questionnaire was a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, and a postcard which the respondent could return to request a copy of the report. These were used as incentives. To increase the response rate, reminder letters were sent to the entire sample approximately one week after the questionnaire mailing.

The administration of the Personnelist sample paralleled that of the Employee sample in time and procedures with the exception that the mailing was made to addresses the respondents had provided to MSRS when they initially volunteered to join the panel. Anonymity was guaranteed to respondents in each of the samples.

Returns. Excluding undeliverable questionnaires (70 and 4, respectively), the return rate for the Employees sample was 70% (2,632 returns out of 3,738 delivered quesionnaires), and for the Personnelist sample was 88% (774 returns out of 882 delivered questionnaires). The lowest substratum return rate in the Employee sample was 58% and the highest was 77%. The lowest substratum return rate in the Personnelist sample was 86%, and the highest was 88%.

Data Processing. A private sector marketing research firm, National Family Opinion, Inc. under the direction of Hay Associates, collected the responses and prepared a clean data tape that was delivered to MSPB for its analysis. The data from both samples were each verified twice; once by the private vendor who prepared the data tape and once by the MSPB research staff. Range checks, logic checks, and skip pattern checks were done each time.

The data from the Employee sample were weighted, while the Personnelist data were left unweighted. Respondents in the Employee sample were weighted by a proportion (STRATWGT) reflecting the ratio of the population size in each of the 17 substrata to the number of respondents for the respective substratum, i.e.,

$$\text{STRATWGT} = \frac{\text{Population size of substratum}}{\text{Number of respondents in substratum}}$$

Respondents in the Employee sample who did not identify their agency location were placed in a separate stratum (Number 18) and assigned a weight of one.

Most of the data analysis consisted of frequency distributions and two-way cross tabulations. In analyzing and presenting the data for this report, percentages and numbers were rounded in order to simplify the analysis.

APPENDIX D

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES AND COVER LETTERS

GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE

U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
Washington, D.C. 20419

How well does the Federal reduction-in-force (RIF) system work? Can it be improved? What have been the effects of large scale RIF's on the merit system?

The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, a Federal agency created by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, is conducting a study to answer these questions. The views which you and others express by means of the enclosed questionnaire are an essential part of our study and will be included in our report to the Congress, the President, and the public on the RIF system.

We want to know how the RIF system affects you and what impact it has on your workplace. It is extremely important that you complete and return this questionnaire if our recommendations are to be thorough and accurate. (Our report will be released in 1982. If you would like to have a copy, please mail back the enclosed postcard separately from the questionnaire.)

Your name was selected in a random sample of current and former Federal employees. The sample includes both persons who have experienced RIF and persons who have not. We have informed national union representatives and appropriate agency officials that we are conducting this survey.

We will keep your answers confidential. Please do **not** put your name anywhere on the questionnaire or ask anyone else to fill it out. We encourage you to complete this in private and to return it directly to us in the enclosed envelope within **five (5)** days after you receive it. All answers will be combined so that individual responses cannot be identified. The questionnaire will take you about 15 minutes to fill out, and you may not have to complete all sections of it.

Thank you for your help in this effort.

Sincerely,

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HOW IS THE CURRENT RIF SYSTEM OPERATING AND CAN IT BE IMPROVED?

This is a survey about your opinions on—as well as any experiences since January 1, 1981 you may have had with—reduction-in-force (RIF) in the Federal Government. The questionnaire has three sections which ask about:

- Your opinions about working for the Federal Government and about the Federal Government's current RIF system.
- Your personal experiences with RIF.
- Your work history and some general questions about you.

You may not have to answer every question in the survey. Instructions throughout the questionnaire will tell you what questions will not apply to you. For example, you will see statements such as "skip to Question 45" which will tell you which question you should answer next. Also, please use the last page of this questionnaire to write in any additional responses or comments you may wish to make.

In answering this questionnaire, please use the following definitions:

- **Reduction-in-force (RIF):** The use of formal regulations to reassign, downgrade, or separate employees because of budget, program, or ceiling cuts. For the purposes of this questionnaire, this definition also applies to transfers of function and reorganizations which result in RIF.
- **RIF status:** The position of an employee compared to others during a RIF, based on factors such as seniority, veteran's preference, and performance. RIF status is used to decide which employees are able to keep their jobs during a RIF.
- **RIF process:** Actions taken to carry out a RIF according to RIF regulations.
- **Agency:** The major Federal organization for which you work, such as the Department of Commerce, the Environmental Protection Agency, etc.
- **Immediate workgroup:** The people with whom you work most closely on a day-to-day basis.
- **Outplacement:** Efforts made by Federal agencies and other parties to help employees who might be affected by RIF find new jobs outside their agencies.

What you say in this questionnaire is confidential. Please do not sign your name anywhere on this questionnaire.

SECTION I

In this section, we ask your opinions about working for the Federal Government and about the Federal Government's reduction-in-force (RIF) system.

1. How would you describe the general state of your morale in recent weeks? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Completely high
2 ☐ Mostly high
3 ☐ More high than low
4 ☐ Neither high nor low
5 ☐ More low than high
6 ☐ Mostly low
7 ☐ Completely low

2. How likely is it that you will be actively looking for another job sometime within the next 12 months? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Definitely not
2 ☐ Very unlikely
3 ☐ Unlikely.
4 ☐ Could go either way
5 ☐ Likely
6 ☐ Very likely
7 ☐ Almost certain
8 ☐ I am already looking for another job.

Skip to Question 5.

3. If it is likely that you will be looking for another job within the next 12 months, which of the following best describe your reasons for looking? (Please put the number of your main reason in the first box, the number of your second reason in the second box, etc.)

A. ☐	B. ☐	C. ☐
Main Reason	**Second Reason** (If applicable)	**Third Reason** (If applicable)

1 Actual or threatened RIF action
2 Lack of long-term job security
3 Lack of promotion potential
4 Lack of training
5 Concern that being a Federal employee will hurt my future job prospects
6 Lack of interest or challenge in my work
7 Dissatisfaction with pay or benefits
8 Dissatisfaction with supervision
9 Disagreement with agency policies
10 Inadequate resources to do my work
11 Workload too heavy
12 Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

4. If it is likely that you will be looking for another job within the next 12 months, where do you expect to look? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Only **within** the Federal Government
2 ☐ Both inside and outside the Federal Government
3 ☐ Only **outside** the Federal Government

5. Suppose you gave notice today of your intention to quit your present Federal job. In your opinion, how easy or difficult would it be for you to get another job within your general line of work, at the same grade or pay, *within about three months?*

A. *Elsewhere within the Fed. Govt.* (Please check one box.)	**B. *Outside the Fed. Govt.*** (Please check one box.)
1 ☐ Very easy	1 ☐ Very easy
2 ☐ Easy	2 ☐ Easy
3 ☐ Unable to guess	3 ☐ Unable to guess
4 ☐ Difficult	4 ☐ Difficult
5 ☐ Very difficult	5 ☐ Very difficult

6. Suppose a local firm in private industry offered you a job doing about the same kind of work at a salary and benefits about equal to what you are now making. Do you think that you would leave the Federal Government for that job? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Definitely yes
2 ☐ Probably yes
3 ☐ Not sure
4 ☐ Probably not
5 ☐ Definitely not

7. What do you think is the chance, if any, that you might lose your current job—sometime within the next 12 months—as a result of RIF actions taken by your agency? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Unable to guess at this time
2 ☐ There is almost no chance of this happening (less than 5%).
3 ☐ About 25%
4 ☐ About 50%
5 ☐ About 75%
6 ☐ The chance of this happening appears almost certain (95% or higher).

8. How much, if at all, do you worry that you might lose your current job as a result of RIF actions which might be taken by your agency? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ A great deal
2 ☐ Quite a bit
3 ☐ Some
4 ☐ Very little
5 ☐ Not at all

9. What impact, if any, has the discussion, threat, or fact of a RIF had on you with regard to the following? (Please check one box for each item.)

	Became much better	Became better	No effect	Became worse	Became much worse
a. Your physical health	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
b. Your emotional well being	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Your family or personal life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. The quantity of work you do on the job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. The quality of work you do on the job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Your time and attendance at work	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
g. Your ability to work with others on the job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Your general morale	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Your desire to work for your Federal agency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Your desire to work for the Federal Government	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

10. The following factors *are* now used or *might* be used to decide employees' RIF status (whether employees keep their jobs during a RIF). Please indicate how much credit you feel each of these factors *should* get. (Please check one box for each factor.)

	A very great amount	A great amount	A moderate amount	A little amount	No amount	No basis to judge
a. Years of Federal Government service (seniority)	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
b. Quality of job performance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Being a veteran	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Being a woman	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Being a member of a minority group	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
f. Other factors (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. In your opinion, how important *would* it be to you to receive each of the following from your agency if it were conducting a RIF? (Please check one box for each item.)

	Very important	Somewhat important	Neither important nor unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Very unimportant	No basis to judge
a. Information or training on how the RIF process works (including information on your agency's RIF policies)	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
b. Information on how the RIF in your agency may affect you personally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Information or training on your RIF rights (including information on appeal rights, severance pay, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Training on how to look for other employment (including SF-171 or resume writing, interviewing techniques, etc.)	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
e. Administrative leave to look for another job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Individual career or job counseling	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Training in new skills for other employment	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6

12. A furlough is a limited cutback in time worked and pay. Under what conditions would you voluntarily accept a furlough to help avoid a RIF? (Please check as many boxes as apply.)

1 ☐ If it lasted for a limited period of time, such as one day a week for two months
2 ☐ If it only happened around holidays, such as Christmas and New Year's
3 ☐ If it would save my job
4 ☐ If it would save other jobs in my agency
5 ☐ If I could choose when it would take place
6 ☐ For some other reason (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)
7 ☐ Under **no** conditions would I accept a furlough.

13. To qualify for "early-out" retirement, you must have at least 25 years of Federal service or be at least 50 years old with 20 years of Federal service. If you are eligible, under what conditions would you accept an "early out" retirement? (Please check as many boxes as apply.)

1 ☐ I am not eligible for "early out" retirement.
2 ☐ If I had enough time to decide
3 ☐ If I could find work elsewhere
4 ☐ If I could afford to retire
5 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)
6 ☐ Under **no** conditions would I take "early out" retirement.

SECTION II

In this section, we ask about your personal experiences with reduction-in-force (RIF) since *January 1, 1981.*

14. Since January 1, 1981, has your immediate workgroup—the people with whom you work most closely on a day-to-day basis—had or expected to have a RIF? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No ⟶ **Skip to Question 45 on page 9 and continue with Section III.**

Please answer the questions in this section in terms of where you worked when the RIF was happening or was expected to happen.

15. Which of the following best describes the status of RIF in your immediate workgroup? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ We thought we might have a RIF, but it hasn't happened yet.
2 ☐ We were told by management that we would have a RIF, but it was cancelled.
3 ☐ We expect to have a RIF, but we haven't been told yet by management that we will have one for sure.
4 ☐ We have been told by management that we will have a RIF, but the effective date of the RIF has not occurred yet (the effective date is when reassignments, downgradings, and separations become final).
5 ☐ We have already completed a RIF, and we don't expect another one.
6 ☐ We already had a RIF, but we may have another one.

16. The following are types of information which you may have received from your agency concerning the RIF. How much of each type of information, if any, did you receive? (Please check one box for each item.)

	As much as I needed	A lot, but not as much as I needed	Some, but not as much as I needed	None, even though I asked for it	None, but I didn't ask for any
a. Information or training on how the RIF process works (including information on your agency's RIF policies)	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
b. Information on how the RIF in your agency may affect you personally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Information or training on your RIF rights (including information on appeal rights, severance pay, etc.)	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

17. The following are sources from which you may have received information about the RIF where you work. How much information, if any, did you receive from each source? (Please check one box for each source.)

	As much as I needed	A lot, but not as much as I needed	Some, but not as much as I needed	None, even though I asked for it	None, but I didn't ask for any	None, but I did not know that any was available from this source
a. Management officials	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
b. Your immediate supervisor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Personnel officials	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. EEO officials	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Union	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Employee group or special interest organization	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
g. Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

18. Did you look at any of the following documents related to your personal RIF status? (Please check one box for each document.)

	Yes, I was able to look at this as much as I wanted	Yes, but my agency made it hard for me to look at this	No, my agency did not offer this to me	No, however, I was not interested in looking at this	No, my agency would not let me look at this	No, I was afraid to ask for this	I am not sure what this is
a. Your official personnel folder	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐	7 ☐
b. Your retention register (the listing of employee names which shows your RIF status compared to other employees with similar grades and jobs)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Papers showing the outcome of the RIF (the effect of downgradings as a result of the RIF process)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations on RIF	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Agency regulations on RIF	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐	7 ☐
f. Other information (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

19. To what extent do you understand how the RIF process affects you? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ As much as I want to
2 ☐ To a great extent, but not as much as I want to
3 ☐ To some extent, but not as much as I want to
4 ☐ Not at all, even though I have tried to understand the RIF process
5 ☐ Not at all, but I have not tried to understand the RIF process

20. "Early-out" retirement is special RIF retirement for which you must have at least 25 years of Federal service or be at least 50 years old with 20 years Federal service. Has your immediate workgroup been granted "early-out" retirement? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No
3 ☐ Don't know

→ **Skip to Question 23.**

21. Did you or do you plan to take "early out" retirement? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes → **Skip to Question 23.**
2 ☐ No
3 ☐ Not sure

22. What is your major reason for NOT taking "early out" retirement? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ I am not eligible
2 ☐ I want to continue working
3 ☐ I can't afford to retire
4 ☐ I was not given enough time to decide
5 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

23. Based on your experience, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about RIF. (Please check the one box which best matches your opinion for each statement.)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No basis to judge
a. My job description is accurate enough to use as a basis for a RIF decision affecting me.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐
b. The uncertainty about when the RIF will take place makes me less productive in my work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Although the RIF was announced and planned, I didn't believe that it would actually take place.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Supervisors in my organization have enough knowledge of agency plans to advise their employees about RIF.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Management used RIF procedures rather than normal disciplinary procedures (adverse action) to punish poor performers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. I am confident that my agency would implement RIF actions in good faith, without intent to hurt or help anyone.	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	6 ☐

24. Did you use any outplacement services offered by your agency to try to find a new job? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No → **Skip to Question 26.**

25. The following are outplacement services which you may have received from your agency. How helpful was each service to you in looking for another job? (Please check one box for each service.)

A. I did not receive this service

B. I did receive this service and it was:

	A. I did not receive this service	B. Very helpful (1)	Somewhat helpful (2)	Neither helpful nor unhelpful (3)	Somewhat unhelpful (4)	Very unhelpful (5)	Too soon to tell (6)	(7)
a. Training on how to look for other employment (including SF-171 or resume writing, interviewing techniques, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Administrative leave to look for another job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Individual career or job counseling	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Training in new skills for other employment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Sending of my SF-171 to other Federal Government agencies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Help in setting up job interviews at Federal Government agencies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Sending of my resume to private sector organizations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Help in setting up job interviews at private sector organizations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

26. Did you leave a job as a result or threat of a RIF? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes, I was separated due to a RIF
2 ☐ Yes, I quit
3 ☐ Yes, I transferred
4 ☐ No → **Skip to Question 30.**

27. Are you presently employed? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No → **Skip to Question 30.**

28. Where do you presently work? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Federal Government
2 ☐ State or local government
3 ☐ Non-profit organization
4 ☐ Other private sector organization
5 ☐ Self-employed

29. Through which of the following did you obtain your new job? (Please check as many boxes as apply.)

1 ☐ My own efforts
2 ☐ The outplacement program at the agency where the RIF was taking place
3 ☐ The Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) outplacement programs
4 ☐ Department of Labor Nationwide Outplacement System
5 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

30. Once it was known that a RIF might take place, did your supervisor or any higher level management official put improper pressure on you to do any of the following? (Please check as many boxes as apply. If you check any item, please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

1 ☐ I did not receive any improper pressure

I received improper pressure to:

2 ☐ Retire
3 ☐ Take a downgrade
4 ☐ Relocate to another geographic area
5 ☐ Quit or leave my job
6 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

31. Since January 1, 1981, have you *personally observed* anything which made you think that employees in your immediate workgroup were *saved from being RIF'd* for any of the following reasons? (Please check one box for each item.)

	Yes, more than one instance	Yes, one instance	No
a. A family relationship	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
b. Personal friendship	☐	☐	☐
c. Their partisan political affiliation	☐	☐	☐
d. Family circumstances or financial need	☐	☐	☐
e. Their inflated performance appraisals	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
f. Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)	☐	☐	☐

32. Have you *personally observed* or *obtained direct evidence of anyone in your immediate workgroup* "getting back" at the Federal Government for the RIF (such as by destroying or stealing Government property)? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes, more than one instance
2 ☐ Yes, one instance
3 ☐ No

33. Have you received any of the following official notifications about RIF since January 1, 1981? (Please check one box for each item.)

	Yes, more than once	Yes, once	No
a. *General Notice*, personally addressed to you, advising that a RIF may be needed, but *not* containing information on how you personally will be affected	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
b. *Specific Notice*, personally addressed to you, containing information on how you will be affected by the RIF	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3 **Skip to Question 45 on page 9.**

34. Did you receive an offer of another job in your most recent specific notice of RIF? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No → **Skip to Question 38.**

35. Compared to your job before the RIF, was your job offer in your most recent specific notice: (Please check as many boxes as apply.)

1 ☐ In the same general career field
2 ☐ In the same commuting area
3 ☐ At the same grade
4 ☐ At one to three grade levels lower
5 ☐ At more than three grades lower

36. Did you accept the offer? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes → **Skip to Question 38.**
2 ☐ No

37. If you did not accept the offer, what were your reasons? (Please check as many boxes as apply.)

1 ☐ The grade level was too low
2 ☐ The job was too different from my old job
3 ☐ The offer was below my abilities
4 ☐ I did not want to relocate
5 ☐ The offer was cancelled
6 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

38. According to your most recent specific notice, what rights will you receive as a result of the RIF? (Please check as many boxes as apply.)

1 ☐ Retained *grade* for two years
2 ☐ Retained *pay* for two years
3 ☐ Travel and moving expenses for geographic relocation
4 ☐ Regular retirement
5 ☐ "Early-out" retirement
6 ☐ Refund of money paid into retirement fund
7 ☐ Severance pay
8 ☐ Lump-sum payment for annual leave
9 ☐ Unemployment compensation
10 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)
11 ☐ None of the above
12 ☐ Don't remember which rights I received.

39. Do you believe that you were RIF'd for improper reasons? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No → **Skip to Question 41.**

40. In your opinion, what were the improper reasons? (Please check as many boxes as apply.)

1 ☐ Disclosing some wrongful activity in the agency
2 ☐ Not being a management favorite
3 ☐ Filing a formal appeal or grievance
4 ☐ Engaging in lawful union activity
5 ☐ Alcohol, drug, or other health-related problems
6 ☐ Being a member of a minority group
7 ☐ Being a woman
8 ☐ Being a non-minority male
9 ☐ Being over age 40
10 ☐ Handicap unrelated to job requirements
11 ☐ Religious affiliation
12 ☐ Partisan political affiliation
13 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

41. Have you or do you expect to file a RIF appeal, grievance, or EEO complaint? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No → **Skip to Question 44.**

42. Through which channels have you filed—or do you plan to file—your RIF appeal, grievance, or EEO complaint? (Please check as many boxes as apply.)

1 ☐ With the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB)
2 ☐ With the Special Counsel of MSPB
3 ☐ Under the negotiated (union) grievance procedure
4 ☐ Under the discrimination complaint system
5 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

43. What are or would be the reasons for filing your RIF appeal, grievance or EEO complaint? (Please check all boxes that apply and *then skip to Question 45* on page 14.)

1 ☐ The reason for the RIF was improper.
2 ☐ The competitive level was not correctly defined.
3 ☐ The competitive area was not correctly defined.
4 ☐ I was discriminated against because I am a *woman.*
5 ☐ I was discriminated against because I am a *member of a minority group.*
6 ☐ I was discriminated against because I am a *non-minority male.*
7 ☐ I was discriminated against because of my *religion.*
8 ☐ I was discriminated against because of my *age.*
9 ☐ I was discriminated against because I am *handicapped.*
10 ☐ My qualifications were not properly considered for placement in other jobs.
11 ☐ Mistakes were made in figuring out my RIF status or setting up my retention register.
12 ☐ My organization failed to give adequate notice of RIF.
13 ☐ I lacked access to RIF documents.
14 ☐ I had nothing to lose by filing.
15 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

44. If you do NOT plan to file a RIF appeal, grievance, or EEO complaint, what are your reasons for NOT filing? (Please check as many boxes as apply.)

1 ☐ I think I was treated fairly.
2 ☐ I do not know how to file a charge.
3 ☐ I do not have the evidence to prove a charge.
4 ☐ I think that it would cost too much or take too much time.
5 ☐ I do not have confidence in the appeals, grievance, or complaint channels.
6 ☐ I think it would be held against me by my agency.
7 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

SECTION III

This last section asks for information about your work history and some general questions about you. This information will help us with the statistical analyses of the survey data. You will find that some of the questions ask for information as of *July 1, 1981.* This is for reasons which relate to the statistical structure of the survey.

45. Where was your job located as of *July 1, 1981?* (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Department, agency, or bureau headquarters office within Washington, D.C. area
2 ☐ Department, agency, or bureau headquarters office outside Washington, D.C. area
3 ☐ Regional or field office within Washington, D.C. area
4 ☐ Regional or field office outside Washington, D.C. area

46. What was your pay category or classification as of *July 1, 1981?* (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ General schedule and similar (GS, GG, GW, GM)
2 ☐ Wage System (WG, WS, WL, WD, WN, etc.)
3 ☐ Executive (ST, EX, ES, etc.)
4 ☐ Other

47. What was your pay grade as of *July 1, 1981?* (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ 1-4
2 ☐ 5-8
3 ☐ 9-12
4 ☐ 13-15
5 ☐ 16-18 or SES
6 ☐ Other

48. Were you a supervisor as of *July 1, 1981,* that is, someone who gives performance ratings to other employees? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No

49. Which of the following best described your job as of *July 1, 1981?* (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Administrative/Professional/Managerial
2 ☐ Para-professional/Technical
3 ☐ Office/Clerical
4 ☐ Manual worker (skilled and unskilled)/Service
5 ☐ Other

50. What was your work schedule as of *July 1, 1981?* (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Full-time
2 ☐ Part-time, regularly scheduled
3 ☐ Intermittent or "on-call"
4 ☐ Other

51. What was your veteran's preference status, if any, as of *July 1, 1981?* (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Service-connected disability of 30% or more
2 ☐ Other veteran's preference
3 ☐ No veteran's preference
4 ☐ Not sure

52. How long had you worked for the Federal Government as of *July 1, 1981* (total creditable service, military and civilian)? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Less than 1 year
2 ☐ Over 1 year but less than 3 years
3 ☐ Over 3 years but less than 10 years
4 ☐ Over 10 years but less than 20 years
5 ☐ Over 20 years but less than 25 years
6 ☐ More than 25 years

53. How long had you worked in your agency as of *July 1, 1981?* (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Less than 1 year
2 ☐ Over 1 year but less than 3 years
3 ☐ Over 3 years but less than 10 years
4 ☐ Over 10 years but less than 20 years
5 ☐ Over 20 years but less than 25 years
6 ☐ More than 25 years

54. What was your age as of *July 1, 1981?* (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Under 20
2 ☐ 20 to 29
3 ☐ 30 to 39
4 ☐ 40 to 49
5 ☐ 50 to 54
6 ☐ 55 or older

55. What was your educational level as of *July 1, 1981?* (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Less than a high school diploma
2 ☐ Graduated from high school or GED (Graduate Equivalency Degree)
3 ☐ High school diploma plus technical training or apprenticeship, some college, or A.A. degree
4 ☐ Graduated from college (B.A., B.S., or other Bachelor's degree)
5 ☐ Some graduate school
6 ☐ Graduate degree (Master's, LL.B., Ph.D., M.D., etc.)

56. Are you (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Male
2 ☐ Female

57. Are you (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
2 ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
3 ☐ Black, not of Hispanic origin
4 ☐ Hispanic
5 ☐ White, not of Hispanic origin
6 ☐ Other

58. Where did you work as of *July 1, 1981*, and where did you work when RIF happened or was threatened during 1981? (Please write one agency code in the box for July 1, 1981 and one agency code in the box for where you were during the RIF.)

1 The agency I worked in on **July 1, 1981** was: ☐☐

2 The agency I worked in **during 1981 when RIF happened or was threatened** was: ☐☐

(If this does not apply to you, write the number "76" in the box for "not applicable".)

Agency Code

Agriculture
01 ..... Federal Grain Inspection Service
02 ..... Other Agriculture

03 ..... **Civil Aeronautics Board**

Commerce
04 ..... Economic Development Administration
05 ..... Office of the Secretary
06 ..... NOAA
07 ..... Maritime Administration
08 ..... Census Bureau
09 ..... National Bureau of Standards
10 ..... Other Commerce (such as Patent and Trademark Office, International Trade Administration, etc.)

11 ..... **Community Services Administration**

12 ..... **Consumer Product Safety Commission**

Defense
13 ..... Army
14 ..... Navy
15 ..... Air Force
16 ..... Other Defense (such as Defense Mapping Agency, Defense Logistics Agency, etc.)

17 ..... **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

18 ..... **Education**

Energy
19 ..... Economic Regulatory Administration
20 ..... Other Energy (such as Energy Information Administration, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, etc.)

General Services Administration
21 ..... Automated Data & Telecommunications
22 ..... Archives and Records
23 ..... Transportation & Public Utilities
24 ..... Property Resources
25 ..... Office of Administration
26 ..... Other GSA (such as Federal Supply Service, Public Buildings Service, etc.)

Health and Human Services
27 ..... Asst. Secretary of Health
28 ..... ADAMHA
29 ..... Health Services Administration
30 ..... Health Resources Administration
31 ..... Human Development Services
32 ..... Food and Drug Administration
33 ..... Center for Disease Control
34 ..... Other HHS (such as Social Security Administration, National Institutes of Health, etc.)

Agency Code

35 ..... **Housing and Urban Development**

Interior
36 ..... Bureau of Indian Affairs
37 ..... Bureau of Reclamation
38 ..... Bureau of Mines
39 ..... Fish and Wildlife Service
40 ..... Office of Surface Mining
41 ..... Other Interior (such as National Park Service, Geological Survey, etc.)

Justice
42 ..... Offices, Boards and Divisions
43 ..... OJARS (formerly LEAA)
44 ..... Other Justice (such as U.S. Marshals Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service, etc.)

Labor
45 ..... OSHA
46 ..... Office of the Secretary
47 ..... Bureau of International Labor Affairs
48 ..... Employment Training Administration
49 ..... Employment Standards Administration
50 ..... Other Labor (such as Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor-Management Services Administration, etc.)

NASA
51 ..... Marshall Space Flight Center
52 ..... Other NASA (such as Goddard Space Flight Center, Langley Research Center, etc.)

Transportation
53 ..... Coast Guard
54 ..... Federal Railroad Administration
55 ..... Research and Special Projects Administration
56 ..... Office of the Secretary
57 ..... Federal Aviation Administration
58 ..... National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
59 ..... Federal Highway Administration
60 ..... St. Lawrence Seaway Administration
61 ..... Other Transportation (such as Urban Mass Transportation Administration)

Treasury
62 ..... Customs Service
63 ..... Savings Bonds Division
64 ..... Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
65 ..... Bureau of Engraving and Printing
66 ..... Bureau of the Mint
67 ..... Other Treasury (such as Internal Revenue Service, Secret Service, etc.)

68 ..... **Appalachian Regional Commission**

69 ..... **National Endowment of the Arts**

70 ..... **National Transportation Safety Board**

71 ..... **National Credit Union Administration**

72 ..... **Interstate Commerce Commission**

73 ..... **National Science Foundation**

74 ..... **Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service**

75 ..... **All Other Federal agencies**

76 ..... **Not Applicable**

Please use the space below to write in specific comments, referring to questions in which you have checked "other" as a response.

QUESTION NUMBER	YOUR COMMENTS

This completes the questionnaire. If you have any other comments, please write them here. If you need more space please continue on the next page. We appreciate your help in taking time to answer these questions. Please use the enclosed envelope to return your completed questionnaire.

The number that appears to the right does not identify you individually. It is a code that indicates to us the statistical group that you share with other individuals. We need this code to identify the number of responses that have been returned from each group in this study.

PERSONNELIST QUESTIONNAIRE

U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
Washington, D.C. 20419

Dear Colleague:

Several months ago, you participated in a questionnaire survey of senior Federal personnel professionals which dealt with the health of the merit system and the impact of the actions of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on the quality of that system. The Merit Systems Protection Board used the results of that survey in our first Annual Report to Congress and the President on the significant actions of OPM. The program and policy recommendations in that report were based to an important extent on the thoughts and opinions of you and your peers.

The Board is now conducting a study of reduction-in-force in the Federal workplace. Since you are among the almost 900 senior personnel officials who accepted our invitation to participate in additional mail surveys this year, we have sent you the enclosed questionnaire on RIF. We ask in this questionnaire about your views on the current RIF system and how it might be improved, as well as any recent experiences you may have had with RIF in your organization. We also ask about your professional opinions on certain technical aspects of RIF and on the guidance and support given by OPM to agencies on RIF matters.

We will keep your answers confidential. Please do **not** put your name anywhere on the questionnaire or ask anyone else to fill it out. We encourage you to complete this in privacy and to return it directly to us in the enclosed envelope within **five (5)** days after you receive it. The questionnaire will take you about 15 minutes to fill out, and you may not have to complete all sections of it.

The results of this questionnaire will be reported to the Congress and the President and made available to the public. You may obtain a copy of this report by mailing back the enclosed post card separately from the questionnaire.

Thank you for your help in improving the Federal merit system.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Mathis
Director, Merit Systems Review
and Studies

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board
Washington, D.C.

HOW IS THE CURRENT RIF SYSTEM OPERATING AND CAN IT BE IMPROVED?

This is a survey about your opinions on—as well as any experiences since January 1, 1981 you may have had with—reduction-in-force (RIF) in the Federal Government. The questionnaire has three sections which ask about:

- Your personal opinions about working for the Federal Government and about the Federal Government's current RIF system.
- Your professional opinions about RIF.
- Your work history and some general questions about you.

You may not have to answer every question in the survey. Instructions throughout the questionnaire will tell you what questions will not apply to you. For example, you will see statements such as "skip to Question 40" which will tell you which question you should answer next. Also, please use the last page of this questionnaire to write in any additional responses or comments you may wish to make.

In answering this questionnaire, please use the following definitions:

- **Reduction-in-force (RIF):** The use of formal regulations to reassign, downgrade, or separate employees because of budget, program, or ceiling cuts. For the purposes of this questionnaire, this definition also applies to transfers of function and reorganizations which result in RIF.
- **RIF status:** The position of an employee compared to others during a RIF, based on factors such as seniority, veteran's preference, and performance. RIF status is used to decide which employees are able to keep their jobs during a RIF.
- **RIF process:** Actions taken to carry out a RIF according to RIF regulations.
- **Agency:** The major Federal organization for which you work, such as the Department of Commerce, the Environmental Protection Agency, etc.
- **Outplacement:** Efforts made by Federal agencies and other parties to help employees who might be affected by RIF find new jobs outside their agencies.

What you say in this questionnaire is confidential. Please do not sign your name anywhere on this questionnaire.

MSPB Job No. 11800

SECTION I

In this section, we ask your personal opinions about working for the Federal Government and about the Federal Government's reduction-in-force (RIF) system.

1. How would you describe the general state of your morale in recent weeks? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Completely high
2 ☐ Mostly high
3 ☐ More high than low
4 ☐ Neither high nor low
5 ☐ More low than high
6 ☐ Mostly low
7 ☐ Completely low

2. How likely is it that you will be actively looking for another job sometime within the next 12 months? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Definitely not
2 ☐ Very unlikely
3 ☐ Unlikely
4 ☐ Could go either way
5 ☐ Likely
6 ☐ Very likely
7 ☐ Almost certain
8 ☐ I am already looking for another job.

Skip to Question 5.

3. If it is likely that you will be looking for another job within the next 12 months, which of the following best describe your reasons for looking? (Please put the number of your main reason in the first box, the number of your second reason in the second box, etc.)

A. ☐	B. ☐	C. ☐
Main Reason	**Second Reason** (If applicable)	**Third Reason** (If applicable)

1 Actual or threatened RIF action
2 Lack of long-term job security
3 Lack of promotion potential
4 Lack of training
5 Concern that being a Federal employee will hurt my future job prospects
6 Lack of interest or challenge in my work
7 Dissatisfaction with pay or benefits
8 Dissatisfaction with supervision
9 Disagreement with agency policies
10 Inadequate resources to do my work
11 Workload too heavy
12 Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

4. If it is likely that you will be looking for another job within the next 12 months, where do you expect to look? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Only **within** the Federal Government
2 ☐ Both inside and outside the Federal Government
3 ☐ Only **outside** the Federal Government

5. Suppose you gave notice today of your intention to quit your present Federal job. In your opinion, how easy or difficult would it be for you to get another job within your general line of work, at the same grade or pay, *within about three months?*

A. *Elsewhere within the Fed. Govt.* (Please check one box.)	**B. *Outside the Fed. Govt.*** (Please check one box.)
1 ☐ Very easy	1 ☐ Very easy
2 ☐ Easy	2 ☐ Easy
3 ☐ Unable to guess	3 ☐ Unable to guess
4 ☐ Difficult	4 ☐ Difficult
5 ☐ Very difficult	5 ☐ Very difficult

6. Suppose a local firm in private industry offered you a job doing about the same kind of work at a salary and benefits about equal to what you are now making. Do you think that you would leave the Federal Government for that job? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Definitely yes
2 ☐ Probably yes
3 ☐ Not sure
4 ☐ Probably not
5 ☐ Definitely not

7. What do you think is the chance, if any, that you might lose your current job—sometime within the next 12 months—as a result of RIF actions taken by your agency? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Unable to guess at this time
2 ☐ There is almost no chance of this happening (less than 5%).
3 ☐ About 25%
4 ☐ About 50%
5 ☐ About 75%
6 ☐ The chance of this happening appears almost certain (95% or higher).

8. How much, if at all, do you worry that you might lose your current job as a result of RIF actions which might be taken by your agency? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ A great deal
2 ☐ Quite a bit
3 ☐ Some
4 ☐ Very little
5 ☐ Not at all

9. What impact, if any, has the discussion, threat, or fact of a RIF had on you with regard to the following? (Please check one box for each item.)

	Became much better	Became better	No effect	Became worse	Became much worse
a. Your physical health	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
b. Your emotional well being	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Your family or personal life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. The quantity of work you do on the job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. The quality of work you do on the job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Your time and attendance at work	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5
g. Your ability to work with others on the job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Your general morale	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Your desire to work for your Federal agency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Your desire to work for the Federal Government	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

10. The following factors *are* now used or *might* be used to decide employees' RIF status (whether employees keep their jobs during a RIF). Please indicate how much credit you feel each of these factors *should* get. (Please check one box for each factor.)

	A very great amount	A great amount	A moderate amount	A little amount	No amount	No basis to judge
a. Years of Federal Government service (seniority)	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
b. Quality of job performance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Being a veteran	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Being a woman	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Being a member of a minority group	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
f. *Other factors* (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11. In your opinion, how important *would* it be to you to receive each of the following from your agency if it were conducting a RIF? (Please check one box for each item.)

	Very important	Somewhat important	Neither important nor unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Very unimportant	No basis to judge
a. Information or training on how the RIF process works (including information on your agency's RIF policies)	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
b. Information on how the RIF in your agency may affect you personally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Information or training on your RIF rights (including information on appeal rights, severance pay, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Training on how to look for other employment (including SF-171 or resume writing, interviewing techniques, etc.)	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
e. Administrative leave to look for another job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Individual career or job counseling	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Training in new skills for other employment	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6

12. A furlough is a limited cutback in time worked and pay. Under what conditions would you voluntarily accept a furlough to help avoid a RIF? (Please check as many boxes as apply.)

1 ☐ If it lasted for a limited period of time, such as one day a week for two months
2 ☐ If it only happened around holidays, such as Christmas and New Year's
3 ☐ If it would save my job
4 ☐ If it would save other jobs in my agency
5 ☐ If I could choose when it would take place
6 ☐ For some other reason (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)
7 ☐ Under **no** conditions would I accept a furlough.

13. To qualify for "early-out" retirement, you must have at least 25 years of Federal service or be at least 50 years old with 20 years of Federal service. If you are eligible, under what conditions would you accept an "early-out" retirement? (Please check as many boxes as apply.)

1 ☐ I am not eligible for "early-out" retirement
2 ☐ If I had enough time to decide
3 ☐ If I could find work elsewhere
4 ☐ If I could afford to retire
5 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)
6 ☐ Under **no** conditions would I take "early out" retirement.

14. How much do you agree or disagree with each statement listed below? (Please check the one box which best matches your opinion for each statement.)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No basis to judge
a. Federal agencies should be required to hire qualified employees separated by RIF before hiring non-Federal applicants.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
b. Employees who wish to receive severance pay or retire should be allowed to volunteer to have their jobs abolished even though they might not otherwise have been affected by the RIF.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Employees whose jobs are abolished should have the right to bump into other employees' positions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Federal officials often don't want to hire RIF'd employees from other agencies because they think they are unproductive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Employees know enough about the needs of organizations to help management decide which positions to abolish during a RIF.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Performance appraisals are accurate enough to be used in helping to determine whether employees keep their jobs during a RIF.	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6

SECTION II

In this section, we ask your professional opinions about reduction-in-force.

In this section, when we refer to "your organization" we mean the organizational unit in your agency for which you can best speak about RIF.

15. The organizational unit for which I can best speak about RIF is: (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Entire Department, independent agency, bureau, command, or administration
2 ☐ The headquarters office of my Department, independent agency, bureau, command, or administration
3 ☐ A regional office or field installation of my Department, independent agency, bureau, command, or administration

Through this section, whenever we refer to "your organization", please respond in terms of your answer to Question 15.

16. Which Office of Personnel Management (OPM) office are you most knowledgeable about? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Central office
2 ☐ Regional and/or area offices

Throughout this section, whenever we refer to OPM, please respond in terms of your answer to Question 16 above.

17. Since January 1, 1981, has your organization had or expected to have a RIF? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No → **Skip to Question 40 on page 10 and continue with Section III.**

Please answer the questions in this section in terms of where you worked when the RIF was happening or expected to happen since January 1,1981.

18. Which of the following best describes the status of RIF in your organization? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ We thought we might have a RIF but it hasn't happened yet.
2 ☐ We were told by management that we would have a RIF, but it was cancelled.
3 ☐ We expect to have a RIF, but we haven't been told yet by management that we will have one for sure.
4 ☐ We have been told by management that we will have a RIF, but the effective date of the RIF has not occurred yet (the effective date is when reassignments, downgradings and separations become final).
5 ☐ We have already completed a RIF, and we don't expect another one.
6 ☐ We have already had a RIF, but we may have another one.

19. Which statement best describes your familiarity with the policies and operation of the RIF system in your organization? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ I know too little about it to comment. → **Skip to Question 40 on page 10 and continue with Section III.**
2 ☐ It's not part of my job, but I am somewhat familiar with it.
3 ☐ It's part of my job, and I am very familiar with it.

20. What is the primary function of the office in which you worked on *July 1, 1981*? (Please check one box.) (The July 1, 1981 date is needed for analysis of the survey data.)

1 ☐ Staff personnel only; e.g., writing policy, providing guidance to other personnelists, evaluating programs, etc. → **Skip to Question 30 on page 8.**
2 ☐ Operating personnel only; e.g., providing day-to-day personnel services to an organization
3 ☐ Operating and staff personnel

In this section when we refer to "your personnel office," please respond in terms of your answer to Question 20 above.

21. Has your organization issued any of the following notifications about RIF since January 1, 1981? (Please check one box for each item.)

	Yes, more than once	Yes, once	No
a. *General Notice*, personally addressed to employees, advising that a RIF may be needed, but *not* containing information on how they personally will be affected	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
b. *Specific Notice*, personally addressed to employees, containing information on how they will be affected by the RIF	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3

22 A. Since January 1, 1981, have personnel specialists in your personnel office received any training directly related to RIF from any of the following sources? (Please check one box for each item.)

22 B. In your opinion, how adequate was the training from each source in meeting your organization's current needs? (Please check one box for each item.)

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Very adequate	Adequate	Neither adequate nor inadequate	Inadequate	Very inadequate	No basis to judge
a. OPM training	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
b. Training performed by other agencies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. In-house agency training	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Agency training performed by contractors	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

23. The following are types of information which employees may have received from your personnel office concerning the RIF. In your opinion, how much of each type of information, if any, did your personnel office provide to employees? (Please check one box for each item.)

	As much as they needed	A lot, but not as much as they needed	Some, but not as much as they needed	None, even though they asked for it	None, but they didn't ask for any	No basis to judge
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a. Information or training on how the RIF process works (including information on your organization's RIF policies)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Information on how the RIF in your organization may affect employees personally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Information or training on employees' RIF rights (including information on appeal rights, severance pay, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

24. The following are documents related to RIF status which employees serviced by your personnel office may have reviewed. Did your personnel office make these available for employees to look at? (Please check one box for each document.)

	Yes, as much as they wanted	Yes, but our personnel office made it hard for employees to look at this	No, our personnel office did not offer this to employees	No, however, employees were not interested in looking at this	No, but our personnel office would not let employees look at this	No basis to judge
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a. Employee's own official personnel folder	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Employee's own retention register	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Papers showing the outcome of the RIF (the effect of bumping and retreating)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations on RIF	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Your organization's regulations on RIF	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

25. In general, how much information about the RIF did your personnel office provide to employees? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ As much as they needed
2 ☐ A lot, but not as much as they needed
3 ☐ Some, but not as much as they needed
4 ☐ None, even though they asked for it
5 ☐ None, but they didn't ask for any
6 ☐ No basis to judge

26. Based on your experience, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about RIF. (Please check the one box which best matches your opinion for each statement.)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No basis to judge
	1	2	3	4	5	6
a. Most job descriptions in my organization are accurate enough to use as a basis for RIF decisions affecting employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. The uncertainty about when the RIF will take place makes me less productive in my work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Although the RIF was announced and planned, I didn't believe that it would actually take place.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Supervisors in my organization have enough knowledge of agency plans to advise their employees about RIF.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Management used RIF procedures rather than normal disciplinary procedures (adverse action) to punish poor performers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. I am confident that my agency would implement RIF actions in good faith, without intent to hurt or help anyone.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Our personnel office did a good job of carrying out the technical aspects of the RIF.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. My organization made a good faith effort to bargain with the union on RIF.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. The RIF in my organization was conducted in accordance with OPM and agency regulations and agency negotiated agreements.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. My organization had adequate time to prepare for the RIF.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. My organization is trying to continue its affirmative action efforts by rehiring separated minority and women employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

27. A. Based on your experience with RIF, please indicate whether your organization offered these outplacement services. (Please check one box for each item.)

27. B. In your opinion, how helpful do you feel these services were to employees in looking for other jobs? (Please check one box for each item.)

	Yes	No	Don't Know	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Neither helpful nor unhelpful	Somewhat unhelpful	Very unhelpful	Too soon to tell
a. Training on how to look for other employment (including SF-171 or resume writing, interviewing techniques, etc.)	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
b. Providing administrative leave for employees to look for other jobs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Providing individual career or job counseling	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Training in new skills for other employment	☐	☐	☐	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
e. Sending SF-171's to other Federal Government agencies	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Helping to set up job interviews at Federal agencies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Sending resumes to private sector organizations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Helping to set up job interviews for employees with private sector organizations	☐	☐	☐	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
i. Participating in OPM's Voluntary Interagency Placement Program	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Participation in OPM's Displaced Employees Program	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Rehiring of people on the reemployment priority list before hiring anyone from the outside	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Participation in the Department of Labor Nationwide Outplacement System	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Using outside consultants to advise employees on how to get a job in the private sector	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
n. Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

28. Since January 1, 1981, has anyone tried to put improper pressure on you to take actions that go against the RIF regulations? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes, more than one instance
2 ☐ Yes, one instance
3 ☐ No → **Skip to Question 30 on page 8.**

29. If anyone has tried to improperly pressure you, who was it? (Please check as many boxes as apply.)

1 ☐ Coworkers
2 ☐ My supervisors
3 ☐ Management officials
4 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

30. The following are a list of actions which your organization may have taken to reduce the impact of RIF on employees. For each action, how effective do you think each was in avoiding or lessening the RIF in your organization? (Please check one box for each action. If you check the *last* response for any item, please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

	Very effective	Effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Ineffective	Very ineffective	No basis to judge	It varies significantly among parts of the organization
a. Freeze all outside hires, internal reassignments, and/or promotions	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7
b. Furlough (temporary layoff)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Use attrition as much as possible to accomplish reductions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Establish a formal outplacement program	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7

31. Was your organization granted "early-out" retirement authority from OPM? (Please check one box. If you check the *last* box, please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No
3 ☐ Don't know
4 ☐ Authority varies significantly among parts of the organization

→ **Skip to Question 34.**

32. If "early-out" authority was granted to your organization, was it utilized by *all* eligible employees? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ Not sure
3 ☐ No

→ **Skip to Question 34.**

33. Why was "early-out" retirement not utilized by *all* eligible employees in your organization? (Please check all boxes that apply.)

1 ☐ Employees did not want to retire.
2 ☐ It was granted too close to the effective date of the RIF for employees to have time to make a decision.
3 ☐ It did not offer adequate coverage of those occupations where employees were eligible for it.
4 ☐ Not sure
5 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

---

34. Based on your experience, how would you rate the quality of the current policy guidance on RIF issued by your agency's highest headquarters, and by OPM? (Please check one box for each item.)

Policy Areas	A. Quality of guidance from your agency's highest headquarters: Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	Not applicable	No basis to judge	B. Quality of guidance from OPM: Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	No basis to judge
a. RIF regulations covering grades 1-15 and wage grades	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6
b. Retained grade and pay	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Outplacement programs, including Displaced Employees and Voluntary Interagency Placement Program (VIPP)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. "Early-out" retirement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Guidance on RIF-related labor relations matters	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6	☐ 7	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5	☐ 6

35. How would you rate the technical assistance on RIF that your organization has received from your agency's highest headquarters and from OPM since January 1, 1981? (Please check one box for each item.)

Types of Technical Assistance	A. Quality of technical assistance from your agency's highest headquarters:							B. Quality of technical assistance from OPM:					
	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	Not applicable	No basis to judge	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	No basis to judge
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6
a. Written interpretations of RIF regulations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Informal guidance on RIF regulations, such as telephone calls	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Hands-on technical assistance from staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Hands-on technical assistance from other agencies arranged for by staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Advice in establishing outplacement programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Job referrals for employees through outplacement programs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

36. Have your agency's highest headquarters and OPM made any evaluation and compliance efforts on RIF in your organization since January 1, 1981? (Please check one box for each item.)

A. Were there any evaluations by your agency's highest headquarters?

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No
3 ☐ Not applicable
4 ☐ No basis to judge

B. Were there any evaluations by OPM?

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No
3 ☐ No basis to judge

37. The following are prohibited personnel practices. We want to know whether you have *personally observed* any of the following in your organization in connection with RIF since January 1, 1981? (Please check one box for each item. If you answer "Yes" for any item, please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

Employees were RIF'd because of . . .	Yes, more than one instance	Yes, one instance	No
a. Disclosing some wrongful activity in the agency	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
b. Not being a management favorite	☐	☐	☐
c. Filing a formal appeal or grievance	☐	☐	☐
d. Engaging in lawful union activity	☐	☐	☐
e. Alcohol, drug, or other health-related problems	☐	☐	☐
f. Being a member of a minority group	☐	☐	☐
g. Being a woman	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
h. Being a non-minority male	☐	☐	☐
i. Being over age 40	☐	☐	☐
j. Handicap unrelated to job requirements	☐	☐	☐
k. Religious affiliation	☐	☐	☐
l. Partisan political affiliation	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
m. Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)	☐	☐	☐

38. Since January 1, 1981, have you *personally observed* anything which made you think that employees in your organization were *saved from being RIF'd* for any of the following reasons? (Please check one box for each item.)

	Yes, more than one instance	Yes, one instance	No
a. A family relationship	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
b. Personal friendship	☐	☐	☐
c. Their partisan political affiliation	☐	☐	☐
d. Family circumstances or financial need	☐	☐	☐
e. Their inflated performance appraisals	☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3
f. Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)	☐	☐	☐

39. Since January 1, 1981, have you *personally observed* or *obtained direct evidence* of employees in your organization "getting back" at the Federal Government for the RIF (such as by destroying or stealing Government property)? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Yes, more than one instance
2 ☐ Yes, one instance
3 ☐ No

SECTION III

This last section asks for information about your work history and some general questions about you. This information will help us with the statistical analyses of the survey data. You will find that some of the questions ask for information as of *July 1, 1981*. This is for reasons which relate to the statistical structure of the survey.

40. Where was your job located as of *July 1, 1981?* (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Department, agency, or bureau headquarters office within Washington, D.C. area
2 ☐ Department, agency, or bureau headquarters office outside Washington, D.C. area
3 ☐ Regional or field office within Washington, D.C. area
4 ☐ Regional or field office outside Washington, D.C. area

41. What was your veteran's preference status, if any, as of *July 1, 1981?* (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Service-connected disability of 30% or more
2 ☐ Other veteran's preference
3 ☐ No veteran's preference
4 ☐ Not sure

42. What were your areas of personnel expertise as of *July 1, 1981?* (Please check as many boxes as apply.)

1 ☐ Staffing
2 ☐ Classification and position management
3 ☐ Employee relations
4 ☐ Labor-management relations
5 ☐ Training and career development
6 ☐ Personnel program evaluation
7 ☐ Personnel officer
8 ☐ Other (Please explain on the last page of this questionnaire.)

43. How long had you worked for the Federal Government as of *July 1, 1981* (total creditable service, military and civilian)? (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Less than 1 year
2 ☐ Over 1 year but less than 3 years
3 ☐ Over 3 years but less than 10 years
4 ☐ Over 10 years but less than 20 years
5 ☐ Over 20 years but less than 25 years
6 ☐ More than 25 years

44. How long had you worked in your agency as of *July 1, 1981?* (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Less than 1 year
2 ☐ Over 1 year but less than 3 years
3 ☐ Over 3 years but less than 10 years
4 ☐ Over 10 years but less than 20 years
5 ☐ Over 20 years but less than 25 years
6 ☐ More than 25 years

45. Are you (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ Male
2 ☐ Female

46. Are you (Please check one box.)

1 ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
2 ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander
3 ☐ Black, not of Hispanic origin
4 ☐ Hispanic
5 ☐ White, not of Hispanic origin
6 ☐ Other

Please use the space below to write in specific comments, referring to questions in which you have checked "other" as a response.

QUESTION NUMBER	YOUR COMMENTS

This completes the questionnaire. If you have any other comments, please write them here. If you need more space, please continue on the next page. We appreciate your help in taking time to answer these questions. Please use the enclosed envelope to return your completed questionnaire.

The number that appears to the right does not identify you individually. It is a code that indicates to us the statistical group that you share with other individuals. We need this code to identify the number of responses that have been returned from each group in this study.

APPENDIX E

Comparison of MSPB Major Study Findings with Other Studies on RIF in the Federal Government

COMPARISON OF MSPB MAJOR STUDY FINDINGS WITH OTHER STUDIES ON RIF IN THE FEDERAL GOVENMENT

This appendix consists of two sections, the first entitled "Listing of Other Studies on RIFs in the Federal Government", is a listing of studies on RIF prepared by other organizations with oversight responsibility for RIF in the legislative and executive branches. The second section, "Comparison of MSPB 1981 RIF Study With Other 1981 RIF Studies," is a chapter by chapter comparison of findings of the MSPB RIF study with those of the other studies covering 1981 RIFs.

Listing of Other Studies on RIFS in the Federal Government

This listing covers studies on RIF published between October 1979 and March 1983 by the following organizations: (1) the Federal Government Service Task Force, (2) the Federal Personnel Compensation Division of the General Accounting Office, and (3) the Office of Personnel Management. Those studies that reference the 1981 RIFs have been annotated. The code numbers are used to identify the studies that will be compared with the MSPB report in the next section.

Code	Study
1	Federal Government Service Task Force. "RIF Report: Analysis of Impact on Women and Minorities (FY 1981)," Washington, D.C., December 30, 1981. An analysis of the number of separations, downgradings, and lateral reassignments connected to RIFs in FY 1981, and the resulting impact on women and minorities. Data was collected by the Task Force from 47 agencies reporting RIFs.
2	Federal Government Service Task Force. "Summary of Task Force RIF Survey: Q1, Q2, Fy '82 (ending 3/31/82)," Washington, D.C., August 19, 1982. An analysis of the numbers of separations, downgradings, lateral reassignments, and retirements connected to RIFs in the first and second quarters of FY 1982, and the resulting impact on women and minorities. Data was collected by the Task Force from 32 agencies reporting RIFs.
	Federal Government Service Task Force. "Reduction in Force Survey--Third Quarter, Fiscal Year 1982," Washington, D.C., December, 1982.
	U.S. General Accounting Office. "Assistance to Displaced Federal Civilian Employees--Avoiding Loss of Needed Trained Personnel (FPCD-80-3)", Washington, D.C., October 16, 1979.

3 U.S. General Accounting Office. "Department of Energy's Fiscal Year 1981 Reduction-in-Force (FPCD-83-33)," Washington, D.C., March 8, 1982.
A study on whether the FY 1981 RIFs in several offices in the Department of Energy were conducted in accordance with RIF laws and regulations, as well as an analysis of other related issues. The report was based on on-site interviews, records reviews, and a reconstruction of relevant RIF actions.

4 U.S. General Accounting Office. "Programs to Help Displaced Federal Civilian Employees Obtain Employment (GAO/FPCD-82-75)," Washington, D.C., September 28, 1982.
A study of Federal employees affected by RIFS in FY 1981 to determine the placement assistance received and the effects of RIFs on their morale and productivity. The study was based on the responses to a written questionnaire sent to a statistically valid sample of Federal employees who received specific notices in FY 1981.

U.S. General Accounting Office. "Follow-up to Report Entitled--Programs to Help Displaced Federal Civilian Employees Obtain Employment (GAO/FPCD-82-75)", Washington, D.C., January 11, 1983.
An analysis of RIF separation and hiring actions of full-time competitive service employees for calendar year 1981, with focus on whether agencies had hired new employees to fill jobs similar to those that RIF'ed employees had been performing. Although the report does not draw conclusions for its analysis, it implies that more RIF'ed employees could have been rehired.

U.S. General Accounting Office. "Savings from 1981 and 1982 Personnel Ceiling Reductions (FPCD-82-23)," Washington, D.C., January 15,1982.
A critical analysis that challenges OMB's figures for estimated savings resulting from reduced personnel ceilings in Federal agencies. The report documents specific RIF costs and reduced tax revenues to support their conclusion that short term savings for personnel ceiling reductions would be significantly less than OMB's estimates.

5 U.S. General Accounting Office. "Staff Reductions in the Office of Solicitor, Department of Interior (FPCD-82-3)," Washington, D.C., January 29, 1982.
A study conducted in the Office of the Solicitor in the Department of the Interior to determine the reasons for the 1981 RIF, the consideration given to alternatives, and the procedures followed in conducting the RIF. The report was based on on-site interviews, reviews of relevant documents, and estimated rates of attrition.

U.S. Office of Personnel Management. "Reductions in Force in Selected Federal Agencies, Washington, D.C., June 1982. A study of 1981 and 1982 RIFs in selected agencies to determine the extent to which the agencies were conducting RIFs in compliance with laws, regulations, and their own policies; and to determine what steps agencies were taking to minimize the disruptions caused by RIFs. The study was based on on-site audits at 12 agencies at 24 locations where RIFs were either planned or in progress during December 1981 and January 1982.

Comparison of MSPB 1981 RIF Study With Other 1981 RIF Studies

The following chart compares the major findings in the MSPB RIF study with the findings in other studies on the 1981 RIF conducted by GAO, OPM, and the Federal Government Service Task Force. Only those studies which discussed at least one issue that was also covered by the MSPB report are included in this comparison. This chart is organized according to the major findings reported in each chapter on the study results (Chapters 3 through 9) in the MSPB RIF report. As noted above, each of the other RIF studies is identified by a study code number. A "rating" is listed under each study code number for each of the MSPB major findings. A "rating" of "S" indicates that the finding in the other study was similar to the MSPB finding; a rating of "D" indicates that the finding was dissimilar; and a rating of "N" indicates that the issue discussed by the MSPB finding was not covered in the other study.

CHAPTER 3: The 1981 RIF: A Statistical Perspective

MSPB Major Findings	Study Code Number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Over 99% of full-time permanent Federal employees were not affected by the 1981 reduction-in-force (RIF).	S	S	N	N	N	N
Although the 1981 RIF affected 12,594 full-time permanent employees, 51% of these employees remained in the Federal service.	S	S	N	N	N	N
Of the 12,594 RIF-affected employees, 49% were separated from the Federal service.	S	S	N	N	N	N
Career employees constituted the majority of those impacted (separated, downgraded, or laterally reassigned) by the 1981 RIF; however, career-conditional employees were more likely than career employees to be separated.	N	N	N	N	N	N
Men and non-minorities constituted the majority of those impacted by the 1981 RIF.	S	D1/	N	N	N	N
Women and minorities were statistically disproportionately impacted by the 1981 RIF.	S	S	N	N	N	N

Ratings: S-other study finding was similar to the MSPB major findings;
D-other study finding was dissimilar to the MSPB major findings;
N-issue discussed by the MSPB major finding was not covered in the other study.

1/ This report covers an additional three-month period of time than that covered by the MSPB report. During that additional period, women were impacted by RIF to a greater degree than were men, thus increasing the overall negative impact on women for the period.

CHAPTER 4: DID THE 1981 RIF COMPLY WITH REGULATIONS?

MSPB Major Findings	Study Code Number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Over three-quarters of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies stated that the RIF complied with the regulations of OPM and their agencies and that their personnel offices had done a good job of carrying out the RIF.	N	N	S	N	S	S
Over 80% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies did not report any pressure on them to violate the RIF regulations. Those reporting pressure overwhelmingly attributed it to management officials.	N	N	N	N	N	N
Almost 70% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that their agencies would implement RIF actions in "good faith". By contrast, a little over 35% of employees in RIF-affected agencies thought that their agencies would show "good faith" in implementing RIFs.	N	N	N	N	N	N
Over 60% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that mandated RIF documents (personnel folders, regulations, retention registers, etc.) were made available by their personnel offices to employees. Fewer than one-third of the employees in RIF-affected agencies said that they had reviewed these documents. For example, only 27% said that they had reviewed their personnel folders and only 17% said that they had reviewed their retention registers.	N	N	N	N	N	S
Approximately half of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that their personnel offices provided sufficient RIF information to employees on how the RIF process works, employee RIF rights, etc. Employees were much less likely to say that they received sufficient RIF information. For example, only 15% said that they had received as much information as they needed on how the RIF process works and only 11% said they received as much as they needed on their RIF rights.	N	N	N	N	N	S
Over 80% of the employees affected by a RIF did not understand the RIF process as much as they wanted to understand it.	N	N	N	N	N	S
Over 70% of the senior personnel officials and 50% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies maintained that supervisors were not sufficiently informed about agency RIF plans.	N	N	N	N	N	S
Almost 75% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported no RIF evaluations by OPM and almost 70% reported no RIF evaluations by their agencies during 1981.	N	N	N	N	N	S2/

2/ This OPM report was the result of an OPM audit conducted at 12 agencies at 12 locations; However, the OPM report did not address agency audits of RIF procedures.

CHAPTER 5: Did The 1981 RIF Comply With Merit Principles and Avoid Prohibited Personnel Practices?

MSPB Major Findings	Study Code Number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Over 80% of both the senior personnel officials and the employees in RIF-affected agencies reported that employees were not saved from a RIF for improper reasons. The most frequently reported reasons for preferential treatment were inflated performance appraisals and personal friendship.	N	N	N	N	N	N
Over 85% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported that they had not observed that employees had been RIF'ed for improper reasons. Those reporting improper RIF actions most frequently cited not being a management favorite as the reason.	N	N	N	N	N	N
Ninety percent of the RIF-affected employees who received specific notices believed that they had not been RIF'ed for improper reasons. Those who felt that they had been RIF'ed improperly most frequently attributed it to not being a management favorite.	N	N	N	N	N	N
A little over 15% of both the senior personnel officials and employees in RIF-affected agencies thought that the RIF process was used as a mechanism for punishing poor performers.	N	N	N	N	N	N
Almost 90% of the RIF-affected employees who received specific notices did not plan to file a RIF appeal. Approximately half of the employees did not plan to appeal because they felt they had been treated fairly.	N	N	N	N	N	N
Employees who expected to file RIF appeals more frequently cited procedural issues rather than prohibited personnel practices as the reason for their appeal.	N	N	N	N	N	N

CHAPTER 6: Were The Agencies Prepared to Conduct The Technical Aspects of the 1981 RIF?

MSPB Major Findings	Study Code Number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Over 55% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies thought that the quality of RIF policy guidance from OPM and their agencies on RIF regulations and retained grade and pay was good. Less favorable ratings were given to policy guidance on "early out" retirement and RIF-related labor relations matters.	N	N	N	N	N	S
Over half of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies thought that the quality of RIF technical assistance from OPM and their agencies on formal (written) and informal (telephone) interpretations of RIF regulations was good. Approximately one-third of the senior personnel officials thought that "hands-on" technical assistance was poor.	N	N	N	N	N	S
Almost 60% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies thought that personnel specialists in their agencies received RIF training from in-house sources and about half reported RIF training from OPM.	N	N	N	N	N	S
Over 85% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that the RIF training received from in-house sources and OPM was adequate.	N	N	N	N	N	S
Sixty percent of senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt they had adequate time to prepare for the 1981 RIFs.	N	N	N	N	N	S3/
Almost 85% of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies thought that current position descriptions in their agencies were accurate enough for RIF decisions. In contrast, only about 40% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies agreed that their own position descriptions were accurate enough to be used in RIF decisions.	N	N	4/	N	N	N
Over 70% of the senior personnel officials in all agencies did not think that current performance appraisals were accurate enough to be used in RIF decisions.	N	N	5/	N	N	N

3/ OPM found that agencies were often unprepared for the burden that RIFs placed on the personnel offices.

4/ GAO found in its review of two Department of Energy offices that position descriptions and performance appraisal met regulatory requirements. However, the GAO report did not address whether meeting regulatory requirements was an adequate enough basis for making RIF decisions.

5/ Ibid.

CHAPTER 7: Did The 1981 RIF Have An Effect On Work Force Morale and Activity?

MSPB Major Findings	Study Code Number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
The discussion, threat or fact of a RIF negatively affected the general morale of almost 65% of the employees and half of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies.	N	N	N	S	N	S
Productivity was reported to be much less affected by the discussion, threat, or fact of a RIF than was morale in RIF-affected agencies.	N	N	N	S	N	S
Over 95% of the RIF-affected senior personnel officials and employees did not observe RIF-related retaliation, such as stealing or destroying Government property.	N	N	N	N	N	N

CHAPTER 8: What Alternative Actions To RIF Did Agencies Take to Minimize The Effects of the RIF?

MSPB Major Findings	Study Code Number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Over three-quarters of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies felt that attrition and personnel freezes had been used effectively by their agencies in lessening the 1981 RIF.	N	N	N	N	S	S
Over 85% of the senior personnel officials and employees in all agencies endorsed the concept of furloughs under some circumstances as a RIF alternative.	N	N	N	N	N	N
Over two thirds of the senior personnel officials in RIF-affected agencies reported that their agencies had offered OPM's Displaced Employee Program, OPM's Voluntary Interagency Placement Program, sending job applications to other agencies, and agency reemployment priority lists as outplacement services to their employees.	N	N	N	6/	N	N
Over 85% of the employees in RIF-affected agencies did not use the outplacement services provided by their agencies.	N	N	N	S7/	N	N
Although outplacement services were not widely used, the services seen as being most helpful by their users and the senior personnel officials involved training on how to look for other employment and the granting of administrative leave to look for other jobs.	N	N	N	8/	N	S
The use of "early out" retirements as a RIF alternative had limited impact in the 1981 RIF.	N	N	N	N	N	S

6/ This GAO report focuses on the results of Federal outplacement programs, unlike the MSPB report which focuses more on the implementation of Federal outplacement programs. GAO was particularly critical of the limited success of Federal outplacement programs in finding other jobs for RIF-affected employees. The MSPB report doe not address this issue.

7/ The percentages in this GAO report differed from those in the MSPB report, but the thrust of the findings were similar.

8/ See footnote 6.

MSPB Major Findings	Study Code Number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Employees and senior personnel officials believed that RIF retention factors could be configured differently than they are presently. Over 80% of both the employees and the senior personnel officials thought that job performance should be accorded a great amount of weight in determining RIF retention. Approximately three-quarters of both groups thought that seniority should receive a great amount of weight.	N	N	N	N	N	N
Although the respondents thought that greater weight should be given to job performance than to other factors, the majority (71%) of the senior personnel officials did not think that performance appraisals were accurate enough to be used for RIF purposes.	N	N	N	N	N	N
Over 70% of the senior personnel officials in all agencies supported policies for the required rehiring of employees separated in a RIF, permitting employees to volunteer to have their jobs abolished in a RIF, and the retention of "bumping rights."	N	N	N	S9/	N	N

9/ GAO recommends that OPM institute a requirement for agencies to hire RIF-separated employees.

PROHIBITED PERSONNEL PRACTICES

The Civil Service Reform Act (Pub. L. No. 95-454, 92 Stat. 111 (1978)) forbids personnel actions based on the following eleven practices:

1) Discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, handicapping condition, marital status or political affiliation;

2) Soliciting or considering employment recommendations not based on the individual's work performance, ability, aptitude, general qualifications, suitability, character, or loyalty;

3) Coercing the political activity of any person;

4) Deceiving or willfully obstructing anyone from competing for employment;

5) Influencing anyone to withdraw from competition for any position, whether to help or hurt anyone else's employment prospects;

6) Giving unauthorized preferential treatment to any employee or applicant;

7) Nepotism;

8) Taking or failing to take a personnel action as a reprisal against a whistleblower;

9) Taking or failing to take a personnel action as a reprisal for the exercise of any appeal right;

10) Discriminating on the basis of personal conduct which does not adversely affect the performance of any employee or applicant or the performance of others, except in case of criminal conviction for the conduct; and

11) Taking or failing to take any other personnel action if that would violate any law, rule, or regulation implementing or directly concerning the merit system principles.

For original text see 5 U.S.C. Section 2302(b).

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