



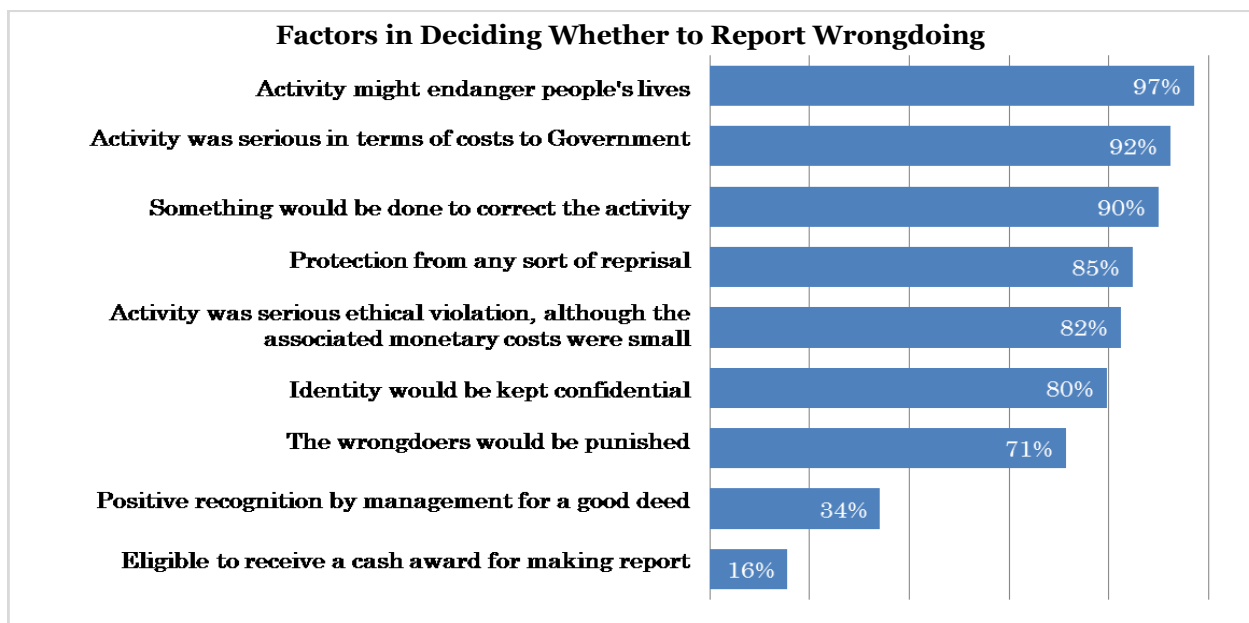
# Blowing the Whistle: Barriers to Federal Employees Making Disclosures

*For nearly 35 years, civil service law has encouraged Federal employees to report violations of any law, rule, or regulation; gross mismanagement; a gross waste of funds; abuse of authority; or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.*

*This November 2011 report explores the extent to which Federal employees observe and report perceived wrongdoing in Federal agencies and the factors that influence an employee's decision to blow the whistle or remain silent.*

In this study, MSPB compared responses from Governmentwide surveys in 1992 and 2010. Since 1992, the percentage of employees who perceived wrongdoing has decreased. Yet perceptions of retaliation against whistleblowers remain a serious concern, despite provisions of the NoFEAR Act requiring that Federal agencies train employees on rights and remedies under whistleblower protection laws. In both 1992 and 2010, approximately one-third of employees who believed that they had been identified as the reporter of wrongdoing indicated that they had

subsequently experienced or been threatened with reprisal. As shown below, the most important factors for Federal employees in deciding whether to report wrongdoing were not personal consequences, but rather the seriousness of the wrongdoing and the likelihood of the agency's acting positively on a report. Thus, agencies have the power to influence employees' decisions about reporting wrongdoing. The most important step that agencies can take to prevent wrongdoing may be to foster a culture that supports whistleblowing.



When asked whether their agency had educated them about the rights of whistleblowers, over 50 percent of 2010 survey respondents agreed—but 21 percent gave a neutral response and 24 percent disagreed. The report discusses agencies' obligations under the No Fear Act to train employees in this area and the importance of providing such training.

*For the full report, including detailed survey results, please visit [www.mspb.gov/studies](http://www.mspb.gov/studies).*