



**Public Interest  
Commissioner**  
*of Alberta*

# **Identifying Barriers to Reporting Workplace Wrongdoing**

**Results of Alberta Public Sector Employee Awareness Survey**

# Introduction



The Office of the Public Interest Commissioner investigates allegations of wrongdoing and complaints of reprisal made under the *Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act* (the Act).

The Act came into force in 2013 as a cornerstone for accountability and transparency.



This survey aimed to:

- 1) Assess the current level of awareness and perception of the Public Interest Commissioner's office; and
- 2) Assist chief officers in meeting the legislative requirement to communicate widely about the Act.



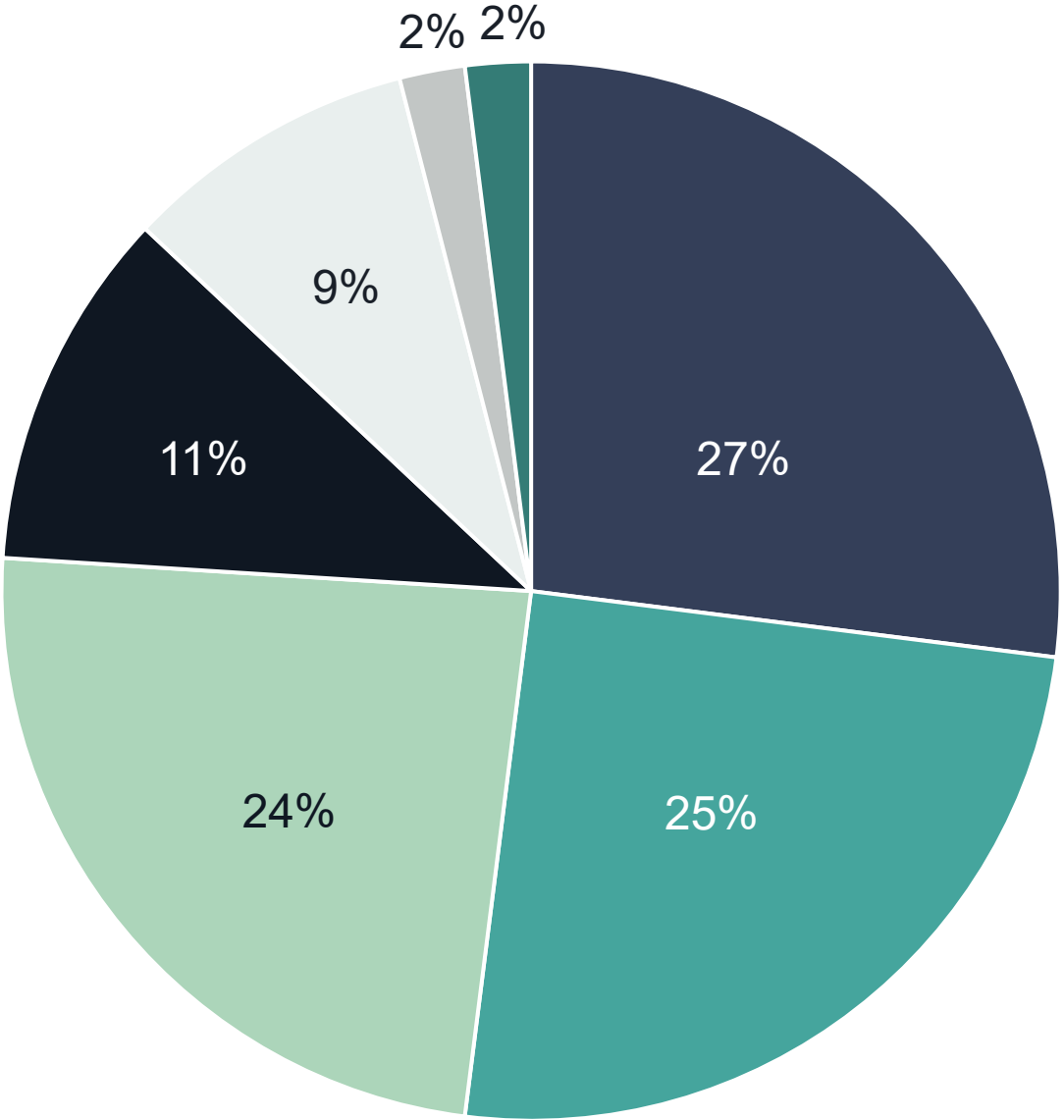
With the help of public sector organizations across Alberta, the Public Interest Commissioner's office conducted an anonymous survey aimed at reaching thousands of employees.

The survey was optional and intended for distribution to all public sector employees.



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# Response Rate Received by Sector



- Public Education Sector
- Health Sector
- Post-secondary Institutions
- Agencies, Boards and Commissions, Including Provincial Corporations
- Government Departments
- Charter Schools
- Private Schools



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# Overview

# Key Insights

## Low Awareness

The majority of public sector employees don't know about the Public Interest Commissioner or the process for reporting wrongdoing.

## Willingness to Report Wrongdoing

The majority indicated a willingness to report wrongdoing in the workplace; however, 34% remain unlikely to report.

## Barriers to Report Wrongdoing

Concerns about "protection from retaliation" and "confidentiality" are two of the largest barriers for reporting wrongdoing.

## The Need for Ongoing Education

The survey results highlighted the need to enhance employee awareness of whistleblower rights and protections.

# Likelihood to Report

If you saw wrongdoing in your organization, how likely would you be to take your complaint to your Designated Officer or The Public Interest Commissioner's office:



If you reported wrongdoing in your organization and felt you were being retaliated against, how likely would you be to take your complaint of reprisal to the Public Interest Commissioner's office?



● Very likely   ● Somewhat likely   ● Not very likely   ● Not at all likely

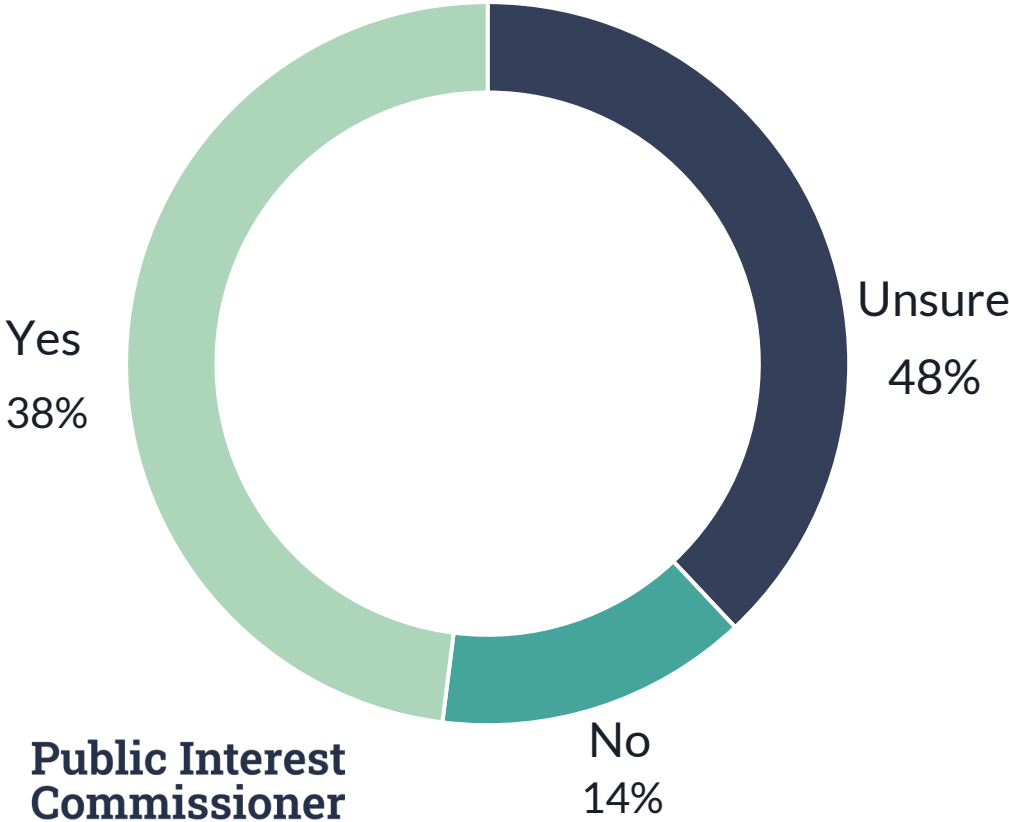


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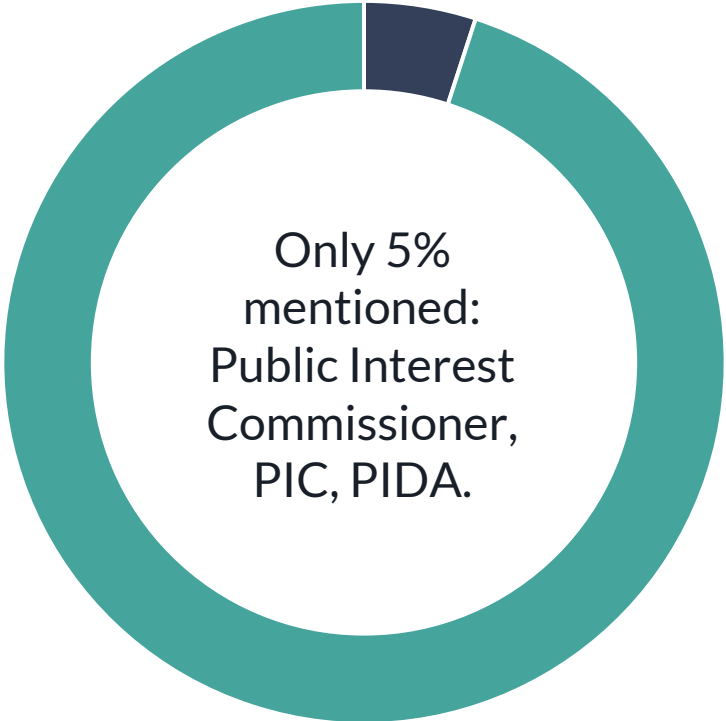
# **Awareness and Familiarity**

# Overall Awareness

Is there an organization in Alberta whose purpose is to investigate complaints made by public sector employees about wrongdoing or reprisal that has occurred in their workplace?



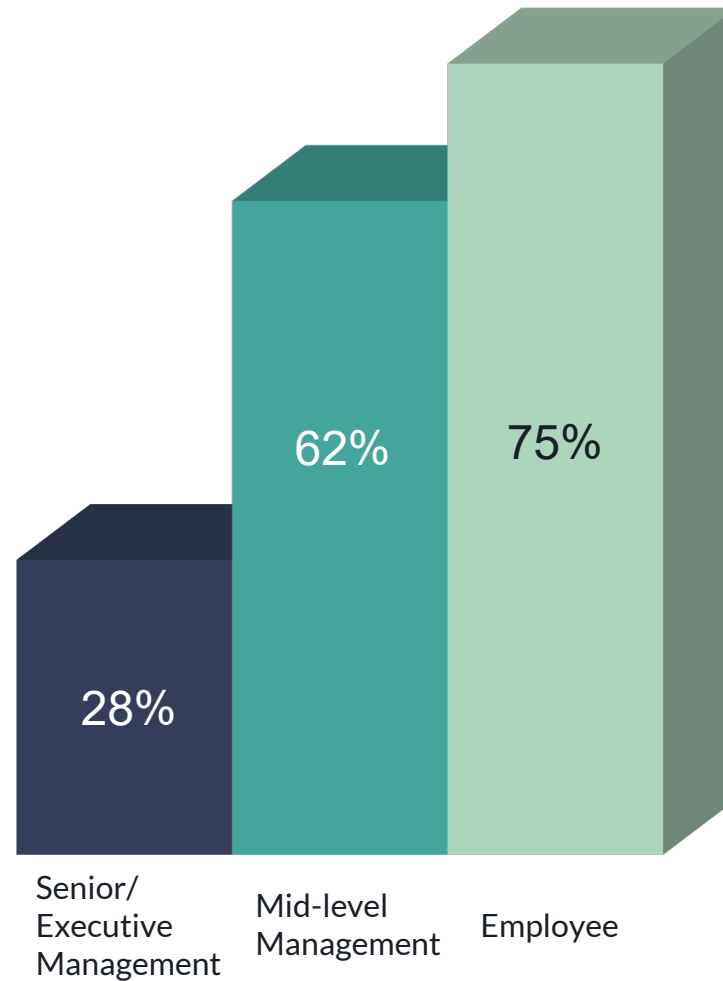
Respondents who believed an organization existed with the Public Interest Commissioner's mandate were asked if they knew the name of the organization.



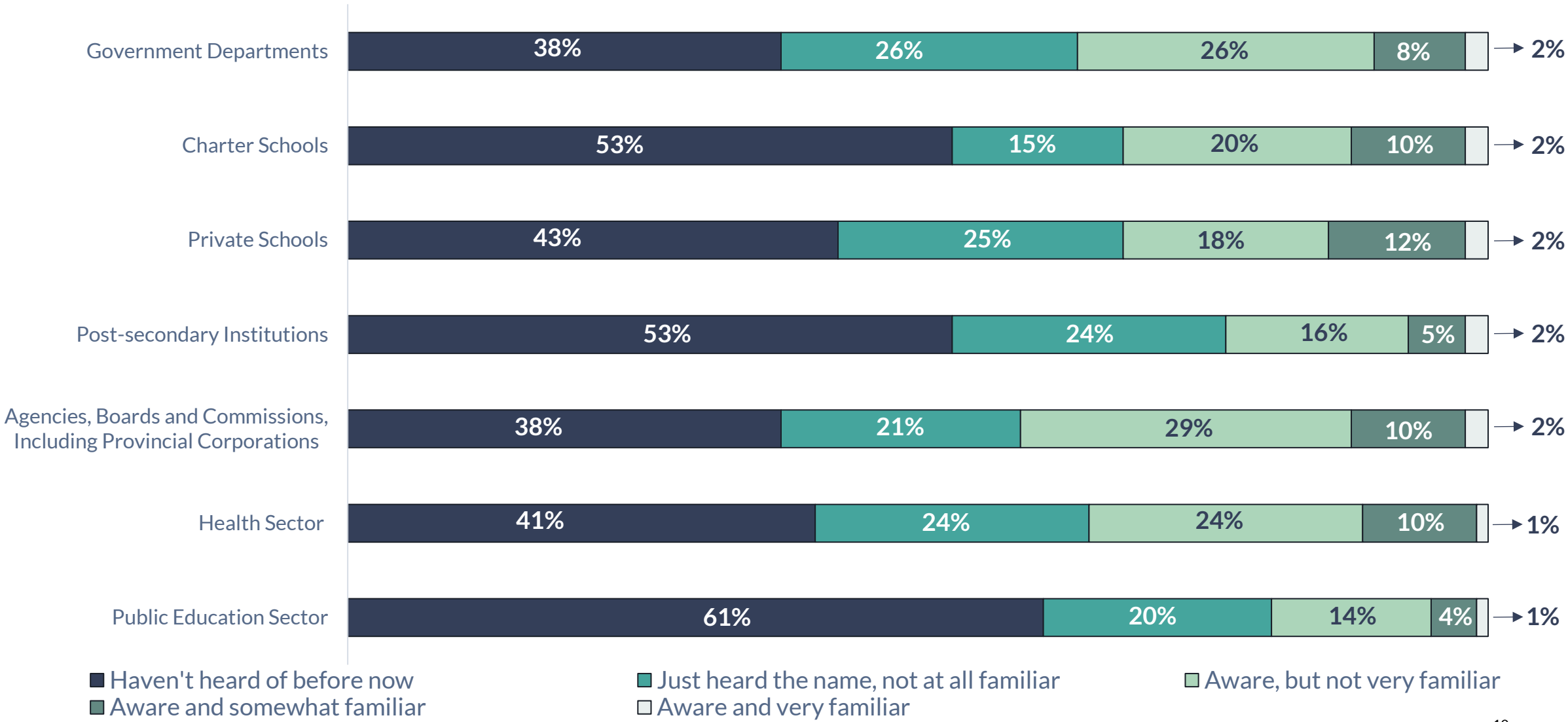


# Awareness by Position

The percentage of respondents who stated they were either not familiar with or had not heard of the Public Interest Commissioner's office, based on their organizational position.

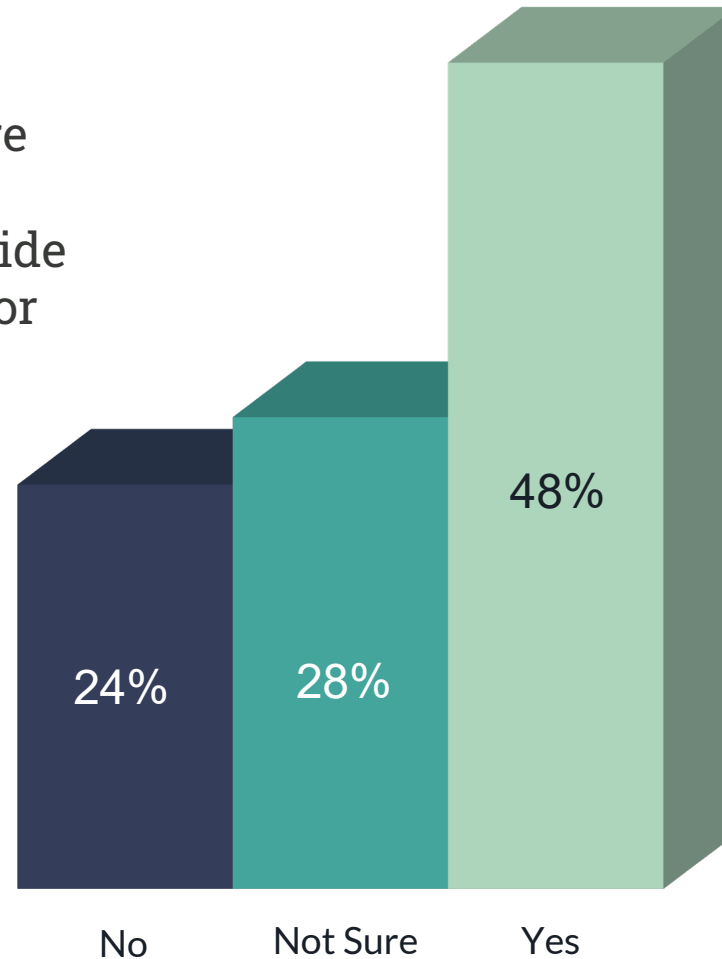


# Awareness of the Public Interest Commissioner's Office by Sector

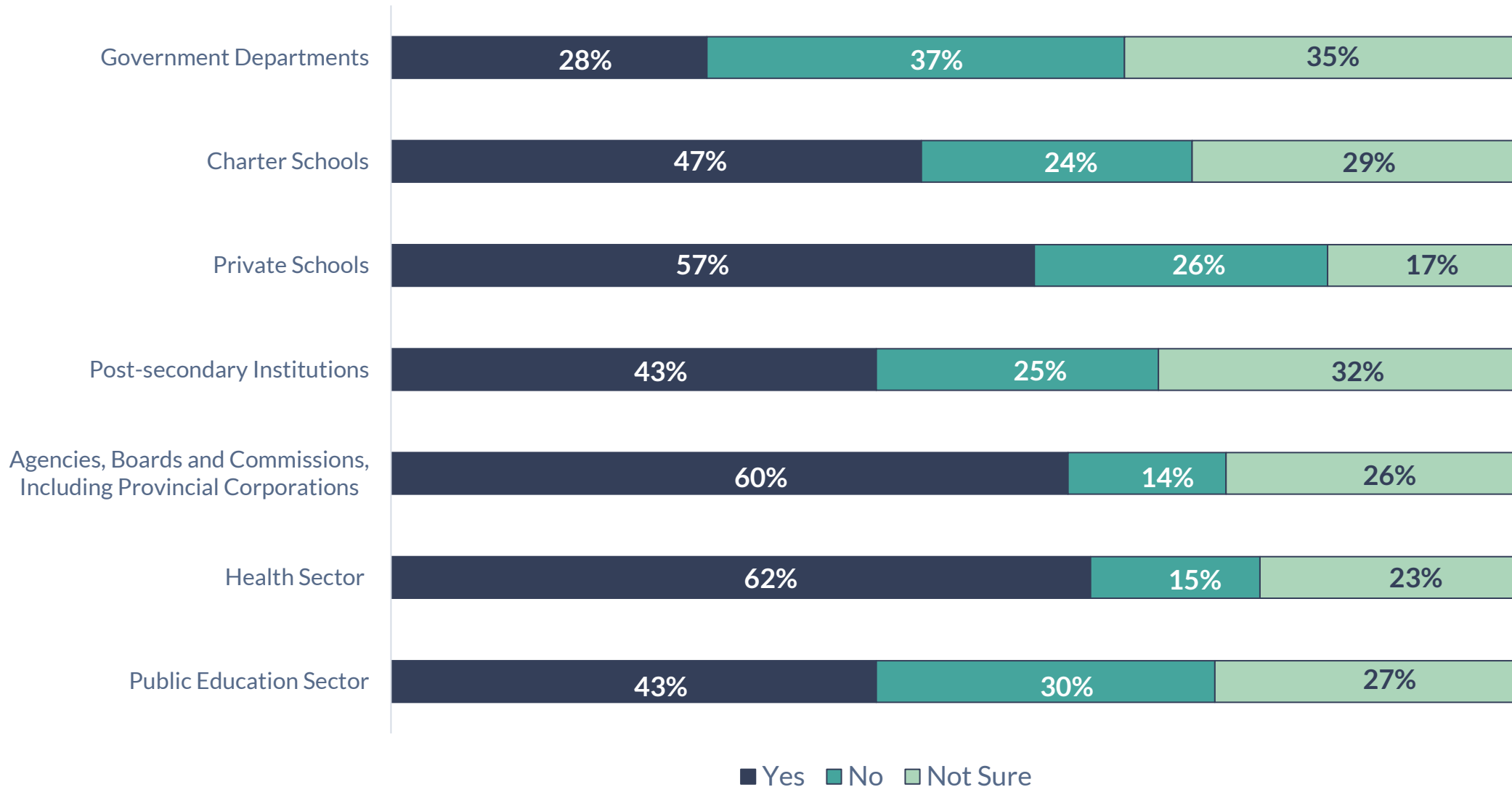


# Awareness of Internal Policies/Procedures

Respondents were asked if they were aware of any policies or procedures within their organizations that provide a process for reporting wrongdoing or reprisal.



# Awareness of Internal Policies/Procedures By Sector



# Top five factors employees said are very important to instilling confidence when reporting wrongdoing:

Protection from retaliation in my workplace

Ensuring confidentiality of my identity

Remedies if a reprisal occurs

Protection against civil liability

Protection from retaliation outside my workplace



# Top five barriers employees identified to reporting wrongdoing to the Public Interest Commissioner's office:

Fear I would be retaliated against

My identity would not remain protected

If wrongdoing was found, nothing would change

Unsure what the Public Interest Commissioner's office does

Unsure of where to start/how to make a complaint

