



WORKPLACE DYNAMICS IN NEW ZEALAND PUBLIC SERVICES

A survey report prepared for the Public Service Association (PSA)
Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi

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Further information

Download a copy of the report www.victoria.ac.nz/som/industrial-relations-centre/irc-publications

or

www.psa.org.nz/Newsroom/MediaReleases.aspx

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Finally, we would like to thank all the PSA members who participated in this research.

Foreword



Brenda Pilott
PSA National Secretary

The PSA is pleased to have supported this report which provides valuable insight into the workplaces of those who work in public and community sector agencies.

The survey shows that these workers have a high level of commitment to the work they do and are driven by the desire to make a difference.

Public and community sector agencies are under pressure to be more innovative and flexible while the expectations of ministers and the public rise and budgets shrink. The government has recently passed changes to state sector legislation that it hopes will achieve the step change needed. The PSA is of the view that this cannot happen without significant change to workplace culture. This report provides evidence of the strengths and opportunities for effective change and the barriers that need to be overcome.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. Pilott".



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Method

This survey invited members of the PSA to give their views on a diverse range of issues relating both to their working lives and the organisations where they worked. Based on existing national and international survey work, this survey explored workers' experiences and views around the following topics:

- Job demands, such as flexibility of working arrangements around other life commitments and the difficulty involved in work tasks.
- Resources available to workers to do their jobs, including decision-making power, access to information, employee rewards and knowledge enhancement.
- The psychological outcomes of workers' job experiences, such as satisfaction, commitment, motivation and job security.
- Drivers of good management practices, such as whether managers are trusted, responsive and create a good working climate.
- Drivers of good work processes, such as clarity of goals and intra-organisational collaboration.
- Drivers of organisational efficiency, innovation and performance.

The survey was developed by researchers from the School of Management's IRC and hosted online by the PSA. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Pipitea Human Ethics Committee at Victoria University of Wellington.

Survey distribution

An email was sent to 49,611 members of the PSA inviting them to participate in this survey. Further invitations to participate were included in PSA newsletters and other union communications. Participation in this survey was voluntary. Members without email access were offered alternative ways to participate.

The online survey was open for completion for three weeks, from 3–24 April 2013. A total of 15,762 responses were received, representing a response rate of 32%.

The anonymity of respondents was ensured through the removal of identifying information from individual responses. Two follow-up reminders were sent to members with unique, coded URL links.

Analysis

While 15,762 respondents completed the survey, the response rate to each survey item varied. This variation was due to either PSA members' non-responses to items or to the filtering of responses through some questions.

The data was analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics Version 19 software package. Findings from those analyses are presented in this report. All statements made about relationships between multiple variables are statistically significant at a minimum of $p < .05$.

Robustness tests were conducted. Five-point Likert scales were used (for example, 1 = strongly disagree through to 5 = strongly agree) and are reliable. Generally, participants who rated their jobs as core to the primary service of the organisation were either not significantly different, or slightly less positive, than those who rated their jobs as more of a support role.

Rationale for the study

The PSA aims to 'transform members' workplaces to provide good jobs and improved services in a high trust, high performance workplace culture' (PSA, 2012). To transform implies a need to effect change in workplaces, and therefore we need to know what needs to change and how. With this in mind we explored the conundrum of what makes the difference between well-managed, successful state-sector organisations and those that are not. This has important implications for workers. Both poorly designed and implemented change and poorly managed organisations let down the public and leave workers to pick up the pieces – in bad pay and conditions, pressured and inflexible work, and dissatisfying cultures.

Public service workplaces face a gap between the demands being made of them and the supply of capability (Andrews & Boyne, 2010). Public service work environments are squeezed between funding shortfalls, rising and more complex demands, a less certain and stable environment, and more diverse stakeholders. The hierarchy and control that has dominated New Public Management may be insufficient to meet future needs.

Although there are central government initiatives to reconcile the pressures outlined above, it is not clear what form they will take, how comprehensively they will be implemented, or if organisations will default back to established patterns that do not meet emerging needs and provide little voice to workers.

Overview: The New Zealand state sector

From an industrial relations and human resource perspective, there are several constants regarding the workplace that have been explored by many researchers in many countries over the years. Such themes or indicators have been researched by development and use of a range of standard measures where high scores are known to signal high-performance, well-organised and well-managed workplaces. Employment conditions, worker autonomy, motivation and satisfaction, management competence, clarity of work roles and responsibilities, discrimination, performance and pay are some of these explored in this survey. The results provide a snapshot of workplace conditions and dynamics in the New Zealand state sector in the first half of 2013 as perceived by the almost 16,000 PSA members who participated in the survey. Insofar as government has sought to be a model employer and an employer of first choice, it might be expected that public sector organisations in New Zealand would score well on many of the workplace measures.

Assessment of public sector workplaces should be periodically conducted anyway but the timing of this survey is particularly significant. The report of the Better Public Services Advisory Group (BPS) in 2012 flagged several shortcomings in the functioning and performance of state sector agencies, as have the on-going Performance Improvement Framework reviews. Following BPS, as defined in the revised State Sector and Public Finance Amendment Acts of 2013, agencies will be required to improve, amongst other things, their results-oriented management, strategic leadership and human resource capability. In all they are expected to make a 'step change' in their focus and performance at achieving government goals and objectives. It would be hoped therefore that the New Zealand state sector would be well-placed to strike out on these new pathways, as signalled by high scores on the conventional indicators of high performing, flexible and innovative workplaces.

The following report paints a picture of a public sector that is adequate and even good in some respects but not in others. What can be said in general is that few of the responses indicated consistently high-quality, high-performance, well-managed states of affairs inside agencies. It is also surprising to see a large percentage of responses on some critical matters where participants gave a 'neutral' or 'don't agree' response – revealing patterns of 'pervasive ambivalence' that raise more questions than answers. If the New Zealand state sector is a good place of work, it might be expected that the average scores across many of the questions asked in this survey would be significantly higher and less equivocal. It is therefore clear that, despite some strengths, there is much yet to be done to improve the workplace – particularly if the goals of the BPS initiative are to be achieved in coming months and years.

Snapshot: What the research tells us

New Zealand public sector workers ...

... are a committed and motivated workforce

New Zealand state sector workers are mature, well-educated and often do professional or managerial work. They are motivated and committed to making a difference in society. They often have caregiving responsibilities to others such as children or aging parents. They are involved in their communities, with many serving the public by way of voluntary work through sporting and cultural groups and educational activities.

... do pressured but decent work

Some state sector workers are pressured with too much work, and many do considerable amounts of unpaid work for their employers. They must also solve unforeseen problems around tight deadlines, but have reasonable flexibility about how they do their jobs. Most are focussed on demands from people outside their organisation. Most workers have reasonable influence over how to do their jobs. They have the power to make decisions, and the information and knowledge with which to do them well. They do not, however, see themselves as fairly appraised or well rewarded for good performance.

... experience organisational systems and processes that are more clear, aligned and directive than they are relevant, innovative and receptive

Although organisational goals are clear, the systems and processes to achieve them are weak. Despite clear goals and tight quality standards, success and failure are hard to measure. Downward communication about objectives and expectations is reasonable but upward communication about issues is not so good. Workers lack voice about needed changes to improve both organisational and worker outcomes.

... work in organisations that are poor in innovation and co-operation

Organisations are relatively poor at innovation, and seem particularly poor at learning from mistakes and handling change. They are not seen as improving in the last year. Cooperation between work units is also poor.

... work for managers with limited capabilities who are seen as risk averse and not overly trustworthy

Workers rate their managers in the mid-range of neutral. They appear to see them as generally empathetic to other demands on workers' lives, but are not always regarded as honest or as promise keepers. Managers are generally seen as poor at creating the right social climate for performance. They are seen to base decisions on politics rather than evidence, to be unwilling or unable to take prudent risks, and to be weak at developing their subordinates. Upward communication is poor. Workers are not encouraged by their managers to challenge poor practices.

... do not rate their organisations as being efficient or particularly flexible

Workers overall do not rate their organisations as performing or as achieving their potential. They rate their organisations as slightly more efficient than effective. They do not regard them as particularly capable of exploring new activities or responding to shifts in stakeholder requirements. The organisations with higher scores on these measures tend to be those outside the core of the state sector, such as district health boards.

... carry the consequences of poor organisational situations such as weak cooperation and low innovation.

Although most workers are satisfied with their jobs, a proportion experience bullying, discrimination and job insecurity. They are, however, committed to making a difference.

The participants

This section provides a demographic profile of PSA members who participated in the study. Respondents were asked a series of questions about their age, ethnicity, qualifications, marital status, household structure and caring responsibilities. In addition, information about respondents' current working context and other family and community responsibilities was gathered.

Key findings

Profile of the respondents

- Female
- 48 years of age
- New Zealand European Pākehā
- works full-time in a clerical or administrative capacity
- more highly educated than the national average
- paid above the New Zealand wage and salary average
- heterosexual
- married
- involved in community life through voluntary work in the areas of sport, education, health and social support, or religious and spiritual activities.

Despite this profile of a 'typical' PSA respondent, participants in this study were quite diverse. Respondents were employed by 349 employers, earned from less than \$25,000 to \$200,000 per year, ranged in age from 19 to 80 years, identified with a range of ethnicities, were from varied educational backgrounds, and were just as likely to have primary caring responsibilities of children or other adults than not.

Age

The largest group of participants was aged 45–54 years with an average age of 48 years, well above the average working age of 38 for all New Zealanders and the average working age of 45 for public service employees in particular (State Services Commission [SSC], 2012). This survey finding, taken alongside the

increasing number of workers in the 25-to-34 and 35-to-44 year age groups, respectively, indicates an ageing workforce in New Zealand’s public service. This trend was also reflected within the Human Resource Capability or HRC Survey (SSC, 2012), which reported that the average age of the public service workforce was increasing by six months annually.

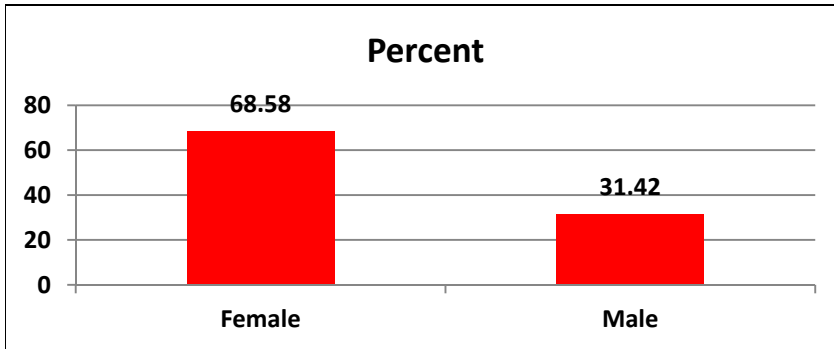
Table 1.1 Age of participants

Age groups	N	%
18-24	216	1.4
25-34	1909	12.1
35-44	2951	18.8
45-54	4342	27.6
55-64	3638	23.1
65+	880	5.6
Total	15,239	100

Gender

Participants in this study were more than two-thirds female (see Figure 1.1). This reflects total employment in New Zealand’s state sector having become more female during the early 1990s. This trend has continued over the past two decades. At present, about 57% of the state sector workforce in New Zealand is female (SSC, 2012).

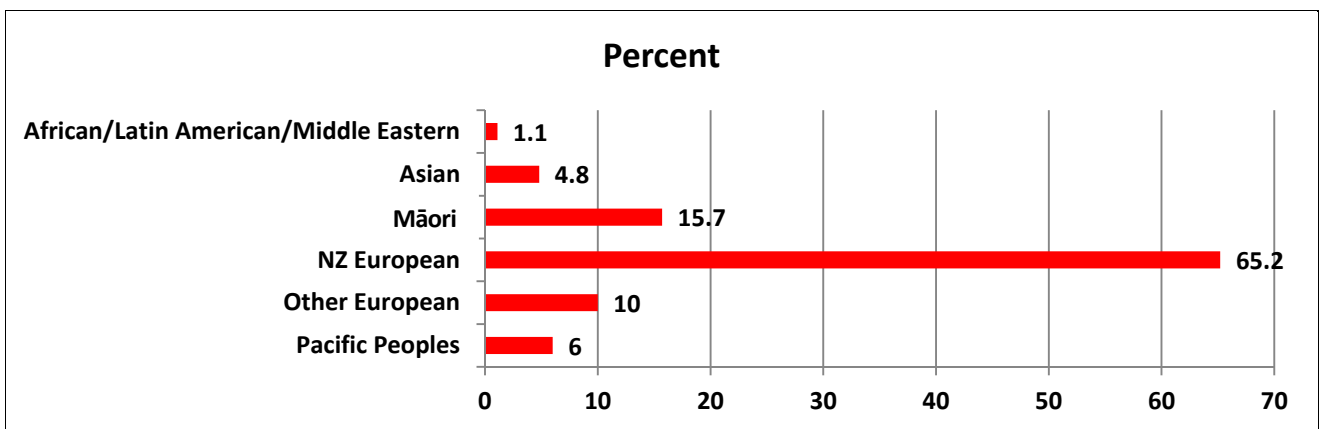
Figure 1.1 Gender of PSA survey participants



Ethnicity

The majority of respondents identified as New Zealand European Pākehā. Just over 30% of respondents identified with at least one other ethnic group. The ethnic composition of survey participants broadly matched that of the New Zealand population with some slight differences. For example, 15.7% of participants identified as Māori, representing a larger proportion than in the New Zealand population at large (14.6%). Further, a smaller percentage (4.8%) of PSA survey participants identified as Asian than the national average (9.2%). Note that the ethnic categories presented in Figure 1.2 are not mutually exclusive, therefore the total exceeds 100%.

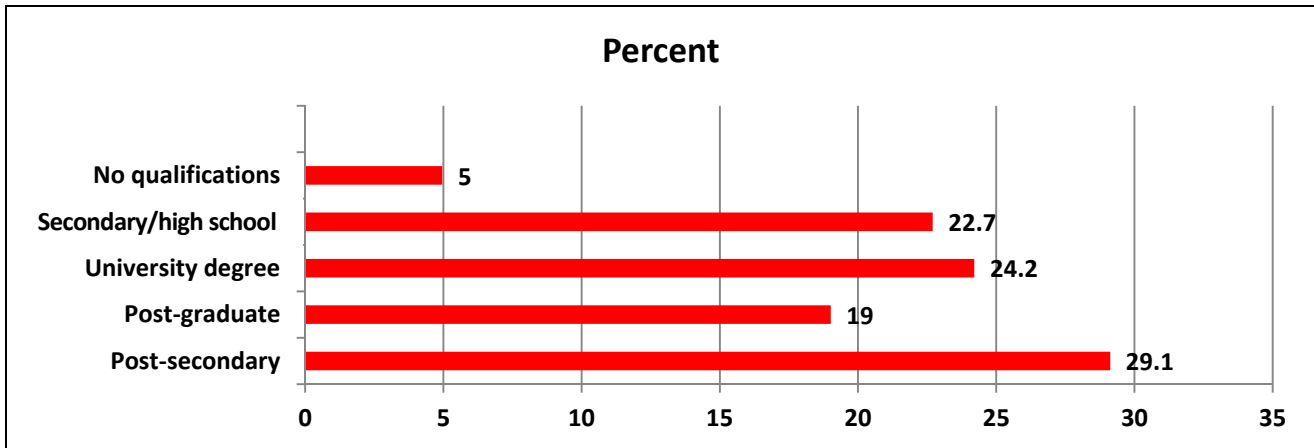
Figure 1.2 Ethnicity of PSA survey participants



Education

The PSA survey participants had a higher than average educational level. The vast majority (>70%) of respondents had a post-high school certificate or higher, and 43.2% had obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher, twice the figure for the New Zealand working population as a whole in 2012.

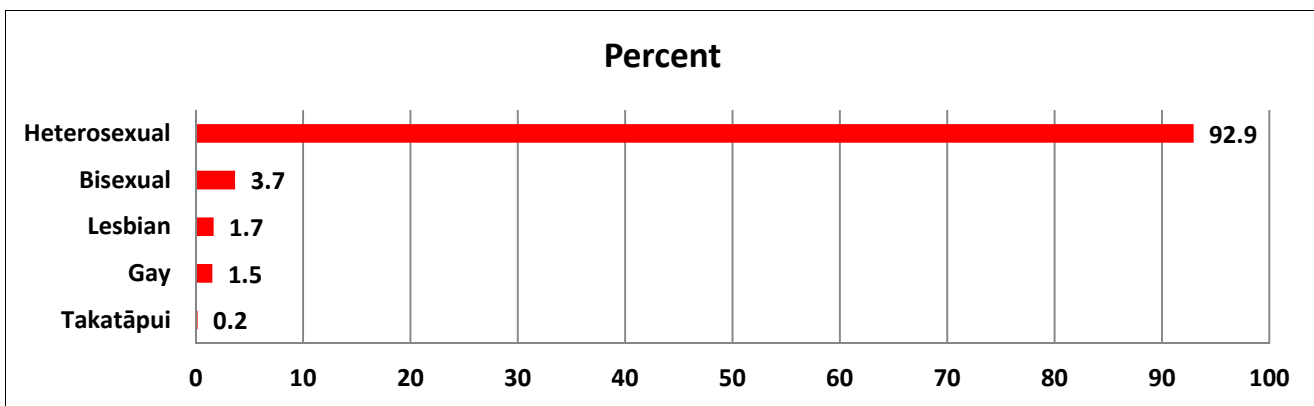
Figure 1.3 Education and qualifications of PSA survey participants



Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation of participants in this study is shown in Figure 1.4. The data indicates that 92.9% of respondents to the PSA survey identified themselves as heterosexual, 3.7% identified as being bisexual, 1.7% with being lesbian, and 1.5% identified as gay.

Figure 1.4 Sexual orientation of PSA survey participants



Caring responsibilities

Less than half (45.8%) of the PSA members who participated in the survey indicated that they had primary caring responsibilities. Such caring responsibilities included children or grandchildren, a partner, parents or spouses’ parents, and wider caring responsibilities for friends or whānau. Of those participants who were involved in a caring role, the majority cared for at least one child under 18 years of age, which is a comparable amount to both the national average and the PSA women’s survey from 2011 (Proctor-Thomson, Donnelly & Plimmer, 2011). The second largest group of dependents reported by participants was that of parents or spouses’ parents (6.8%), a percentage that further reflects an ageing workforce in the state services. Additional information in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Caring responsibilities

PSA members caring for...	N	%
... children under 18 years old	4852	30.9
... disabled or sick children over 18 years old	239	1.5
... disabled or sick partner	292	1.9
... parents or spouses’ parents	1072	6.8
... grandchildren	329	2.1
... wider whānau	349	2.2
... disabled or sick friends.	69	0.4
Total	7202	45.8

Volunteering and community involvement

PSA survey participants expressed a large degree of community and voluntary involvement. The majority of respondents occasionally or regularly volunteered their time to cultural and sporting activities (38.3%), educational activities (32.7%), health or social support activities (28.3%) and religious or spiritual activities (22%). Around one in five respondents (21.6%) indicated that they had volunteered their time at least once during the last 12 months to trade union activities.

The participants' work

This section describes aspects of the respondents' employment. It considers employer, occupation, employment status, annual earnings and length of time the respondents have worked for their employers.

Key findings

- Although public service agencies are the largest single employer group, over half of the participants work for the health sector, state sector agencies, local government or community public service organisations.
- Most are in workplaces with 50 or more colleagues.
- Over 45% are in professional, registered service worker, manager or scientist positions. Just over a quarter are in clerical and administrative work, with the remainder spread over a range of jobs.
- Although most are in non-management roles, about 20% are in team leader or management positions.
- The majority of workers earn between \$40,000 and \$60,000 per annum and have been with their employers for over five years. Almost all are on permanent employment agreements.

Employment sectors

The survey participants worked for over 340 organisations represented by the PSA. These workplaces included government departments, the health sector, crown agencies, state-owned enterprises and community and government-funded agencies. The breakdown of respondents per sector was as follows:

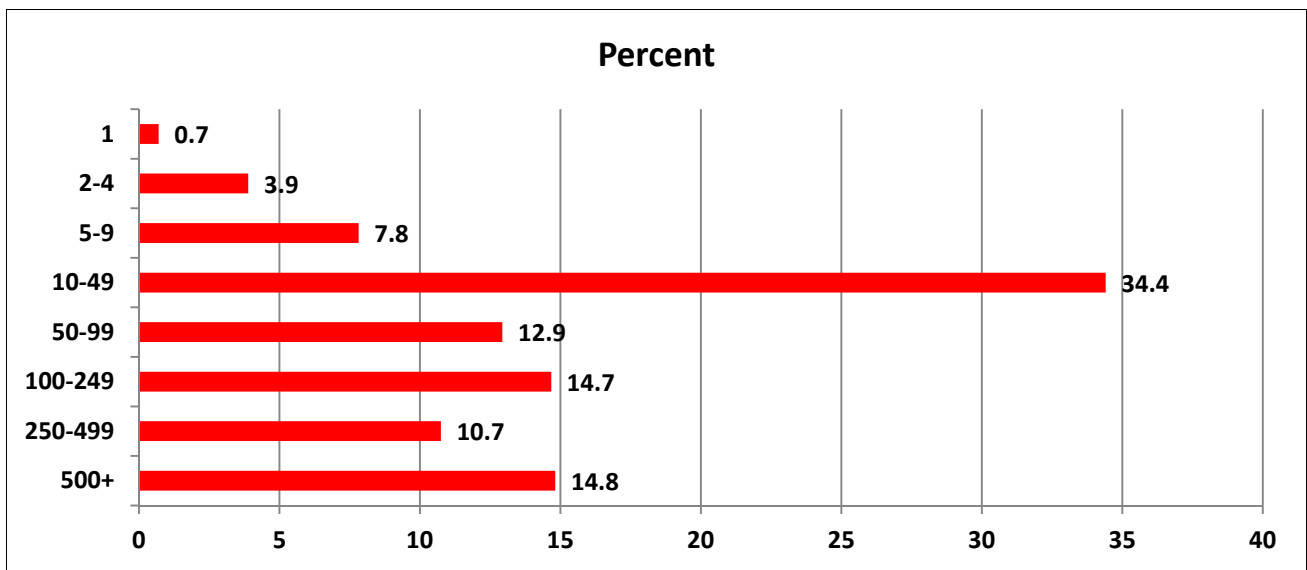
- 44.8% of respondents were employed by public service agencies (N = 6452)
- 25.7% of employees worked with district health boards (N = 3702)
- 12.3% of respondents were employed by state sector agencies (N = 1778)
- 12.1% of respondents were employed by local government bodies (N = 1741)

- 5.1% of employees worked with a variety of community public service organisations (N = 729)

Workplace size

PSA survey participants reported working within a range of workplace sizes that varied from one to over 500 employees. However, as depicted in Figure 2.1, more than one in three workers surveyed was employed in a workplace with between 10 and 49 workers.

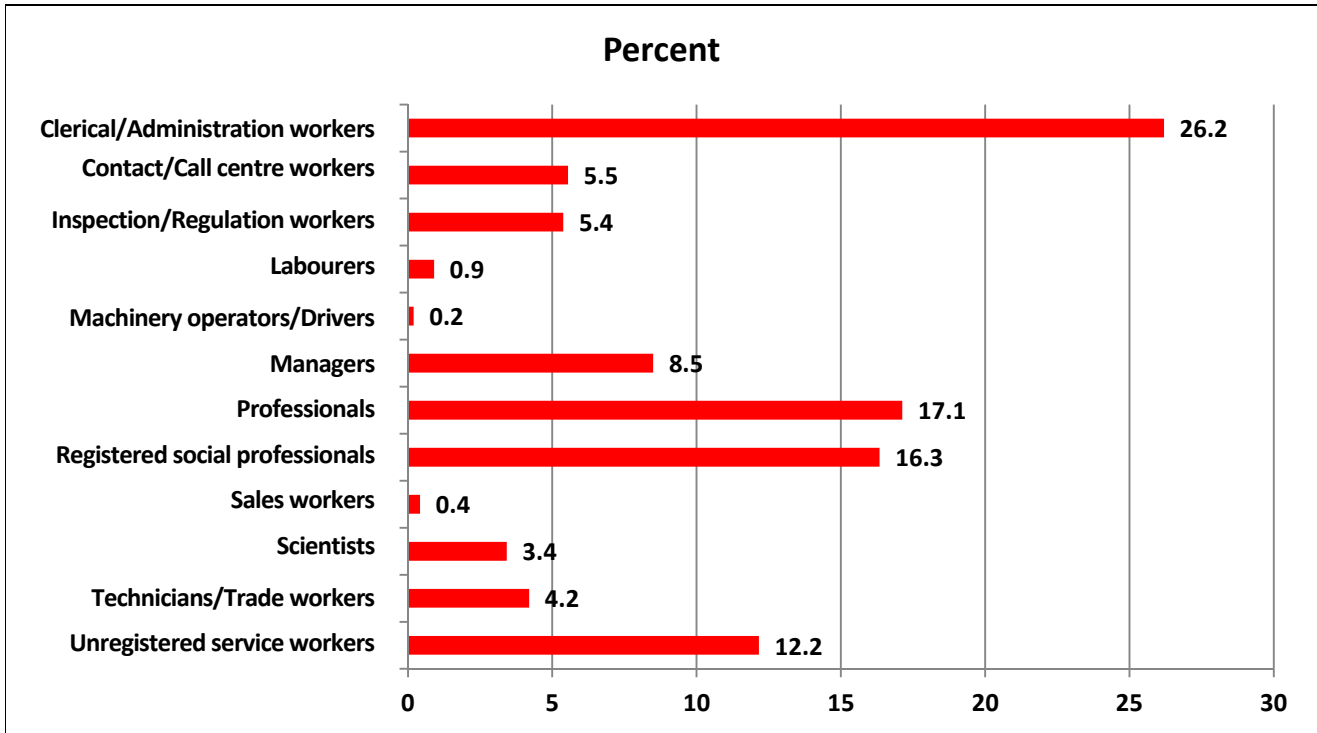
Figure 2.1 Workplace size



Occupational categories

The respondents represented a range of occupations. As shown in Figure 2.2, the biggest group was clerical and administrative workers. Nevertheless, while more than one in four participants worked in a clerical or administrative role, nearly one in three worked in a professional capacity.

Figure 2.2 Occupational categories of PSA survey participants¹

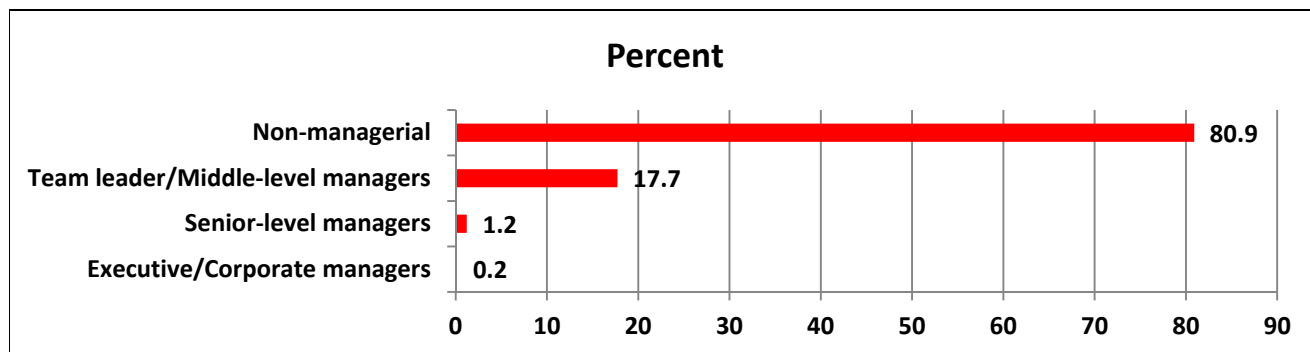


Managerial level

More than four out of five survey participants defined their jobs as non-managerial. Just over 1% were senior-level managers. Twenty-three of the 15,726 respondents identified themselves as an executive or senior-level manager within their organisation.

¹ Clerical or administration workers include receptionists and programme administrators; contact or call centre workers include customer service representatives; inspection or regulation workers include customs and immigration officers; machinery operators or drivers include plant operators; managers include team leaders; professionals include legal, finance, IT and policy professionals; registered social professionals include nurses and social workers; sales workers include sales support workers; scientists include agriculture and forestry consultants; technicians or trades workers include ICT technicians and telecommunication trades workers; unregistered service workers include case managers and parole officers.

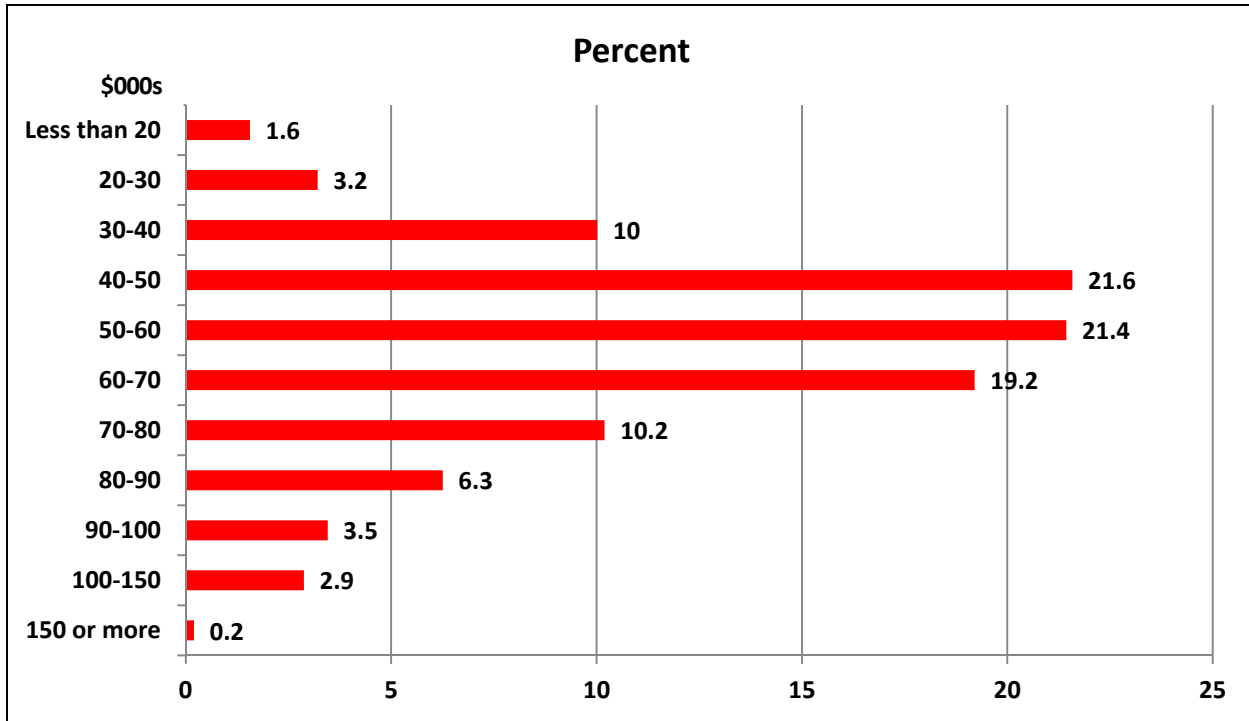
Figure 2.3 Managerial level of PSA survey participants



Earnings

The majority of participants earned a gross annual salary of between \$40,000 and \$60,000. The median and mode salary range was between \$50,000 and \$60,000. Some 22% of the respondents earned \$60,000 or more (gross) per year. A total 39.2% of respondents earned between \$60,000 and \$100,000 (gross) per year, and 3.1% earned over \$100,000. A gender comparison indicated that the average pay band for men was between \$60,000 and \$70,000 and between \$50,000 and \$60,000 for women. These figures are comparable to those reported by the SSC (2012): the average salary in 2012 for men was \$73,066 and \$63,033 for women, producing a current gender pay gap of 13.7%.

Figure 2.4 Gross annual salaries of PSA survey participants



Employment length

Over half of the PSA members who participated in the survey had been working in their organisation for five years or more (66%), with 35.4% of respondents having worked with the same employer for at least 11 years. Around one in four of the participants had been working in their organisation between one and five years (27.4%). This data mirrored the employment length trends reported by the Human Resource Capability Survey (SSC, 2012), in which the average length of service for public service employees was 9.2 years.

Table 2.1 Employment length

Length of time	N	%
Less than 1 year	1027	6.6
1 to 5 years	4288	27.4
5 to 10 years	4784	30.6
11 years or more	5536	35.4
Total	15,635	100

Types of employment agreements

The majority of PSA members surveyed were employed in permanent work, with only 3% working on either a fixed-term, temporary or contractual basis. Some 90% of participants worked full-time and the remaining 10% worked part-time.

Table 2.2 Employment agreements

Type of employment agreement	N	%
Permanent	14,958	96.9
Casual, fixed-term	445	2.9
Self-employed or contractors	16	0.1
Hired through an agency	11	0.1
Total	15,430	100

Job demands

This section examines the demands on PSA members at work, including the extent to which they can manage work-family conflicts, workload, and the pace and cognitive demands of work. High job demands create the risk of burnout, absenteeism and harmful stress responses, when resources are insufficient to match those demands (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Van Rhenen, 2009).

For some topics, such as workload and job clarity, the means and standard deviations are provided for sets of questions that are best combined to measure a topic (variable). These statistics give good overall readings. For added insight, information at the item level is also provided.

Key findings

- Most PSA members have some interest in accessing flexible work agreements (FWAs), although the strength of that interest varies.
- Most members enjoy some degree of control over their working hours, but are restrained because of time pressures and workloads.
- Demand for FWAs is likely to increase in the future, in particular with regard to start-finish times and compressed work-weeks. Parental responsibilities are only one of several drivers for FWAs.
- Just over half of respondents report working more than their contracted working hours, and most cannot bank those extra hours.
- Although members report working unpaid overtime, they see their workloads as reasonable.
- Jobs seem demanding in cognitive complexity but most workers have reasonable influence over their pace and method of work. Demands from people outside organisations exert the greatest influence on workflow.
- Although most participants know what they are supposed to do in their jobs, evaluating success or failure is often difficult.

Workplace flexibility

Access to FWAs helps workers better organise their lives, and estimating future demand for flexible work helps it to be planned for and arranged. People seek FWAs for various reasons. For younger workers, FWAs may allow more time with family members. For older workers, FWAs can act as a transition towards retirement. For others, however, there is often no interest in accessing FWAs, given their caring responsibilities, life stages and the demands of their work.

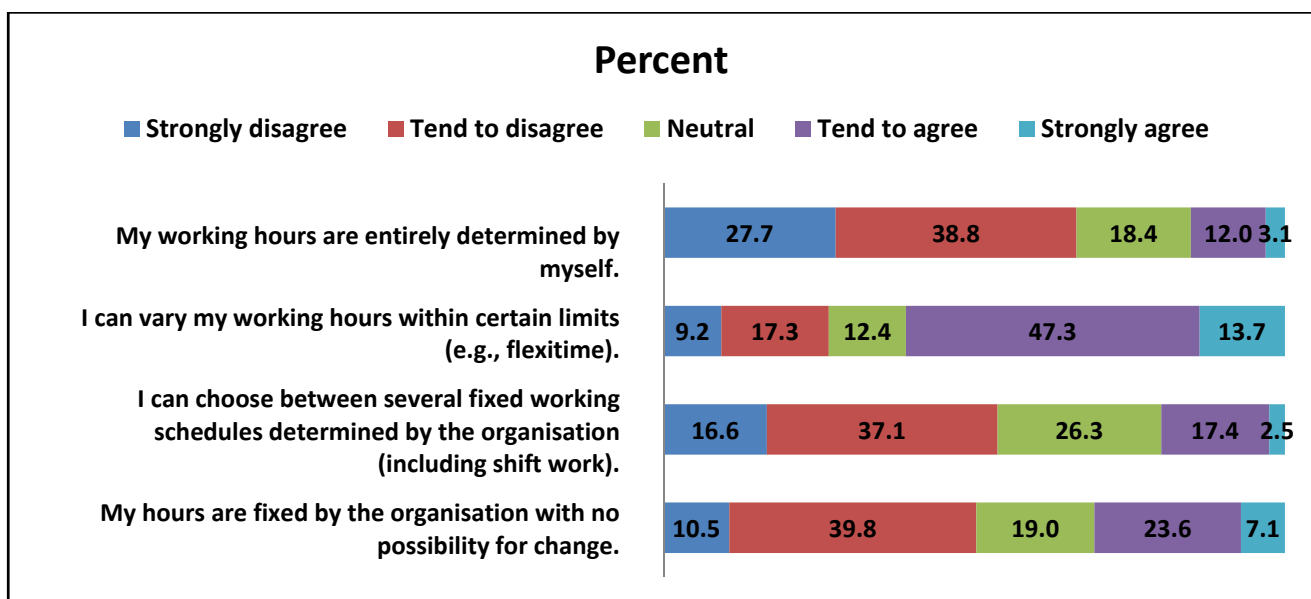
Current demand for FWAs

Respondents were asked a series of questions around their interest in accessing FWAs. About one fifth of PSA members reported that they were not currently interested in seeking FWAs. In contrast, over half (53.5%) of participants reported that they were. This suggests that, in general, workers are interested in accessing FWAs offered by their employers.

Access to FWAs

PSA members were asked how much influence they had over the structure of their work hours. Over half of those who responded indicated an ability to adjust their work hours within certain limits. In contrast, almost half indicated that their hours were fixed with no ability to change. This suggests that, in general, PSA members have some, but limited, influence on working time arrangements with their employers. Some 20–30% of respondents appear to be in jobs with very limited or no flexibility. These respondents tended to be women: for example, 72% of women compared to 29% of men strongly disagreed that their working hours were determined entirely by themselves.

Figure 3.1 Access to work flexibility



Comparisons between this PSA survey and the 2011 women's survey report show PSA members' working time arrangements have generally become less restrained: when controlling for gender, the current survey found more choice around working schedules, a higher degree of variable working hours (for example, flexitime) and more autonomy in determining working hours than in the 2011 survey (Proctor-Thomson, 2011).

However, gender comparisons of PSA respondents' access to FWAs in the current survey found significant differences. Women reported having less choice between various fixed working-schedules options than men and, as was previously mentioned, were also less likely to determine their own working hours. Men also reported more flexibility with working hours (such as flexitime) than women. Some of these differences may be due to caring responsibilities, as a higher percentage of women reported various caring responsibilities than men (for example, 67.8% of women reported primary caring responsibilities for children aged 18 or younger compared to 32.2% of men). Occupational differences between genders may also relate to FWAs: higher frequencies of men worked as technicians and trade workers, labourers, and inspection or regulation workers. It is possible that these types of occupations offer greater work flexibility.

Barriers to FWAs

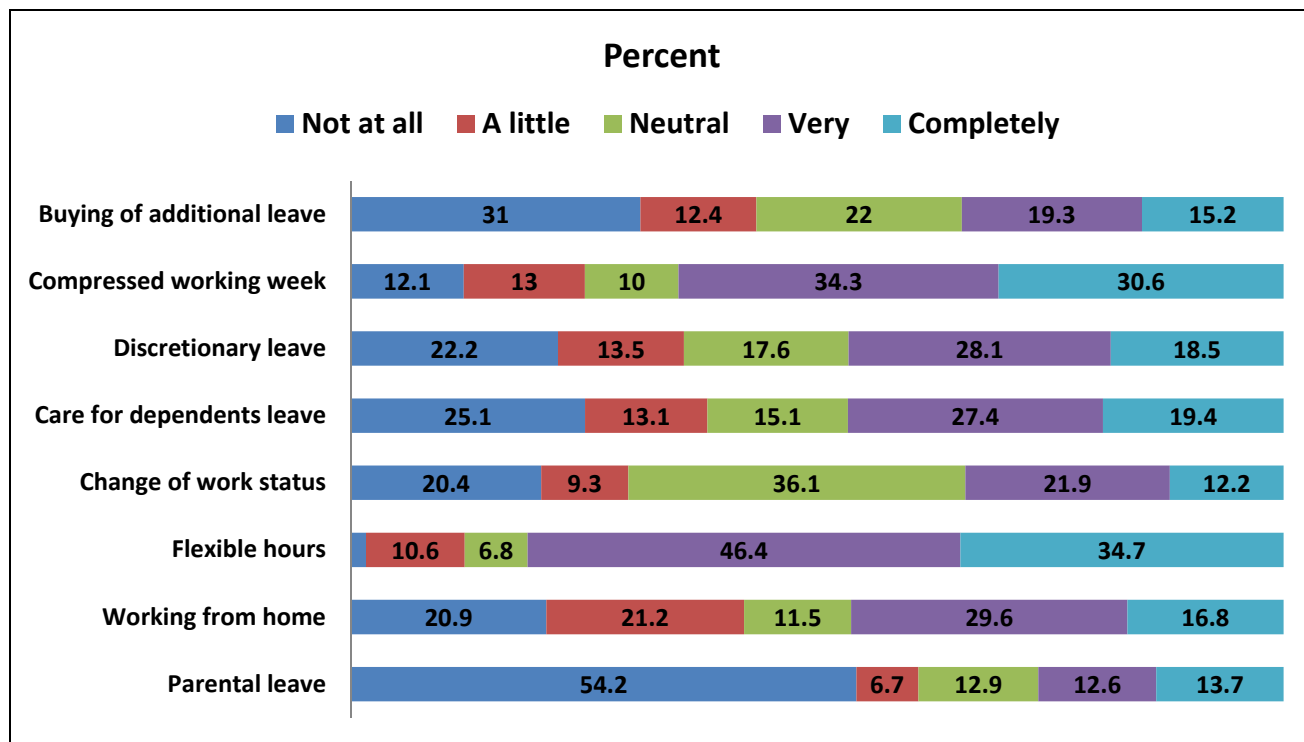
Time pressures and workloads were the greatest obstacles to members accessing FWAs (57.9%). This result is similar to the earlier 2011 survey of women PSA members. Other factors that prevent workers from seeking FWAs included concerns with burdening work colleagues (46.7%), systemic pressures from budget rounds and reports (36.2%), organisational funding or budgetary constraints (33.7%), and anxiety about future job security (36.4%).

Future demand for FWAs

Demand for FWAs in New Zealand is likely to grow. Two-thirds of respondents (66.1%) reported interest in accessing FWAs in the future. In contrast, 21.8% of members indicated no future interest in accessing FWAs.

Varieties of future FWAs were explored. Greater flexibility around working hours (for example, flexible start and finish times) was rated by PSA members as the most appealing future FWA option (81.1%). Interest in a compressed work week was also high. A quarter of respondents were interested in accessing parental leave. In sum, and similar to findings concerning current demand for FWAs, PSA workers were interested in accessing future flexibility around when and where they work. This is an important consideration for organisations, as a more flexible work culture can positively influence work-family balance, which in turn affects a number of outcomes such as job and life satisfaction, organisational commitment and psychological wellbeing (Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000).

Figure 3.2 Future demand for FWAs



Working overtime

This survey found that slightly more than half of PSA members work more than their contracted working hours, with most working an average of six (SD = 7.73) additional hours per week. These figures are very similar to those reported in the 2011 women’s survey report, where 51.5% of PSA women reported working more hours than their contracted working hours.

Table 3.1 Overtime working hours

Do you work more than your contract hours?	N	%
Yes	7810	51.3
No	7429	48.7
Total	15,239	100

Of the 7,810 workers in the current survey who reported working overtime, 83% noted that they were not compensated for their additional hours of work, and one in every two workers who worked additional hours were unable to ‘bank’ those hours for use at a later stage. These findings suggest that contractual working arrangements between employers and employees be addressed, as unpaid working conditions have been known to poorly influence both the health and psychological wellbeing of workers (Robone, Jones, & Rice, 2011).

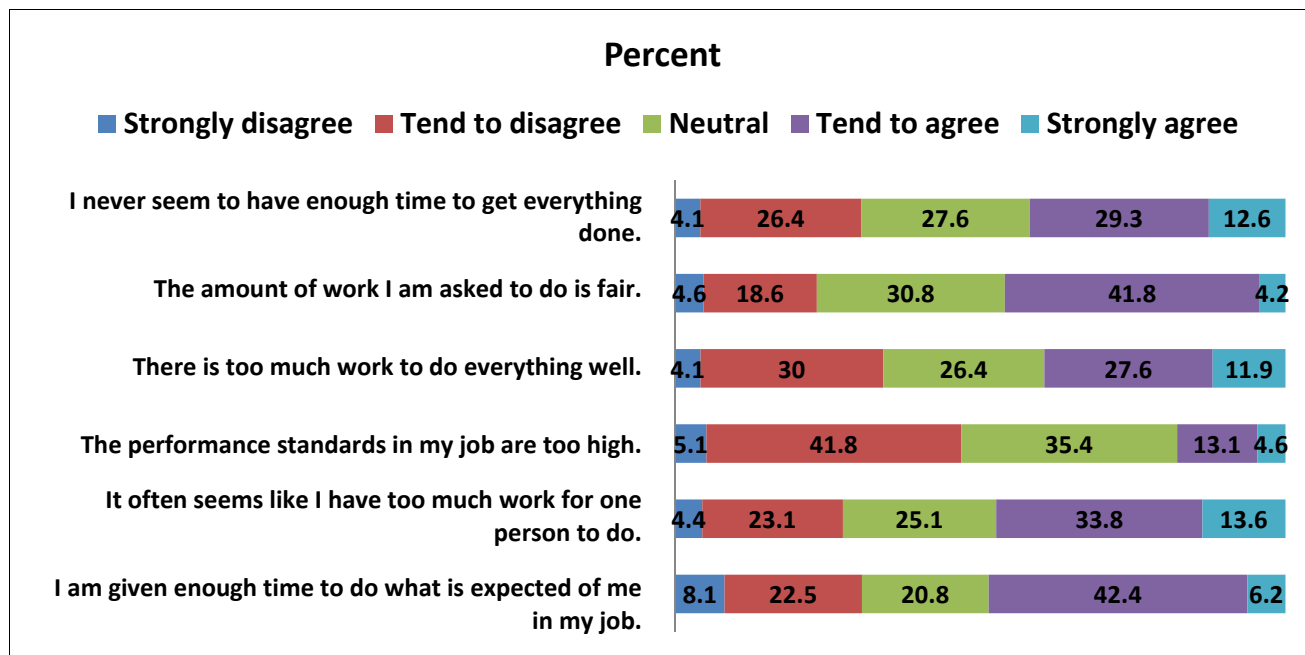
Table 3.2 Compensation for overtime work

Do you receive compensation for extra hours?	N	%
Yes	1340	17.3
No	6385	82.6
Total	7725	100

Workload

Although respondents reported frequently having to work overtime, they also reported reasonable levels of workload (Mean or M = 3.01, Standard Deviation or SD = .78). In general, they agreed that performance standards set by their respective organisations were reasonable and considered the amount of work they were asked to do to be fair. Around 42% of PSA members reported that they ‘never seem to have enough time to get everything done’ and 47.2% indicated that they had ‘too much work for one person to do’.

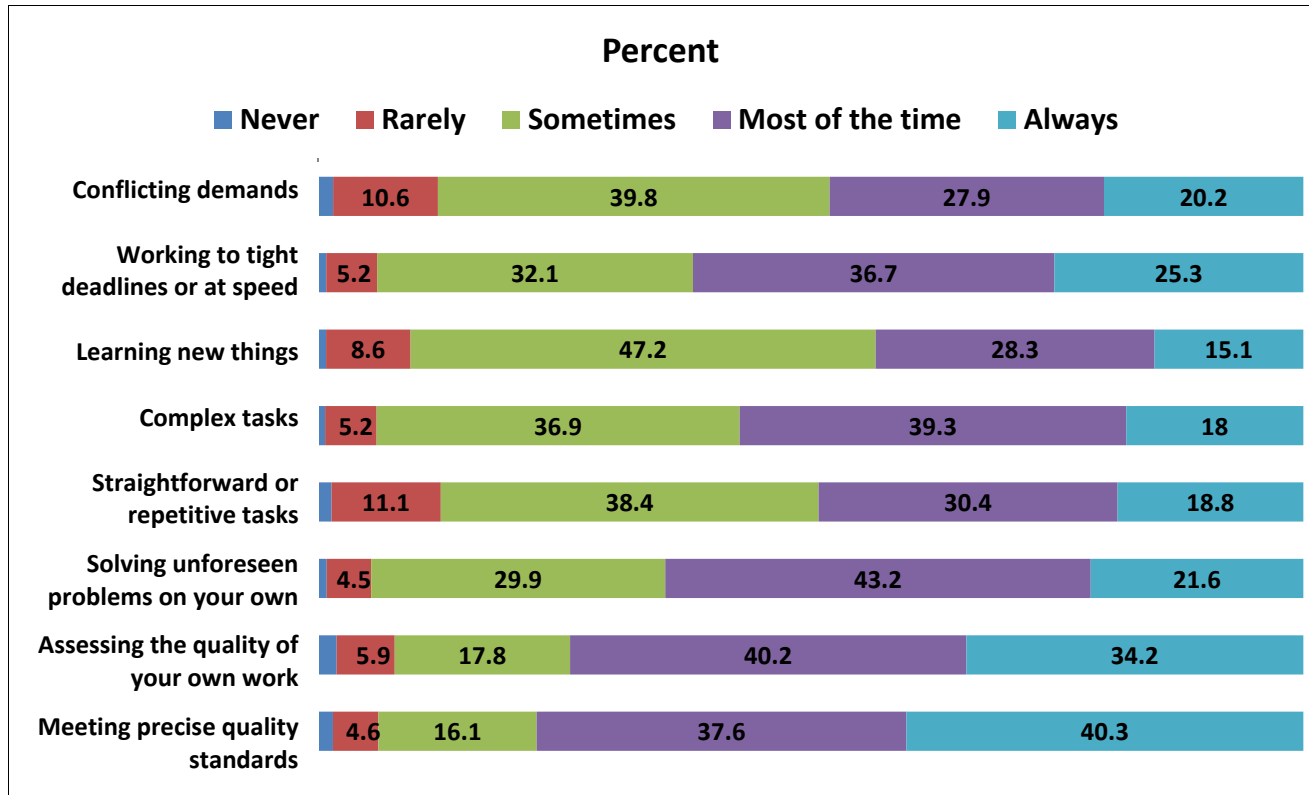
Figure 3.3 Work overload



Job characteristics

Findings generally indicated members’ jobs were cognitively demanding. Most respondents reported that their jobs most often or always involved meeting precise quality standards, assessing the quality of their work, and solving unforeseen problems on their own. Conversely, around half of respondents also indicated that their work roles involved repetitive tasks. These results generally indicate that PSA members find their work to be intellectually demanding, despite a significant number of straightforward or repetitive tasks that their jobs entail.

Figure 3.4 Job characteristics

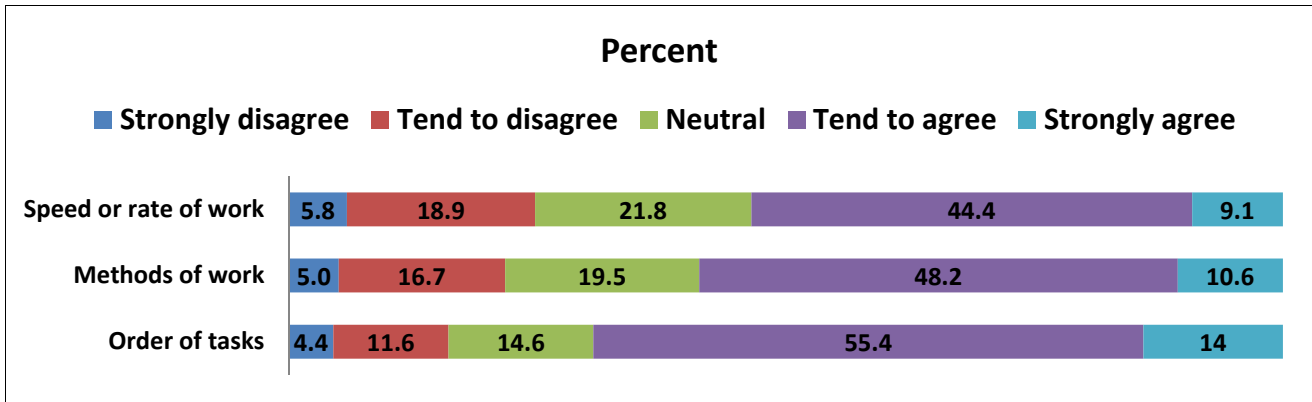


Job influence and job pace

Job autonomy is an important determinant of wellbeing at work. It concerns how much influence workers have over their work processes as well as the degree to which workers are able to control the methods, speed or order of tasks in their work.

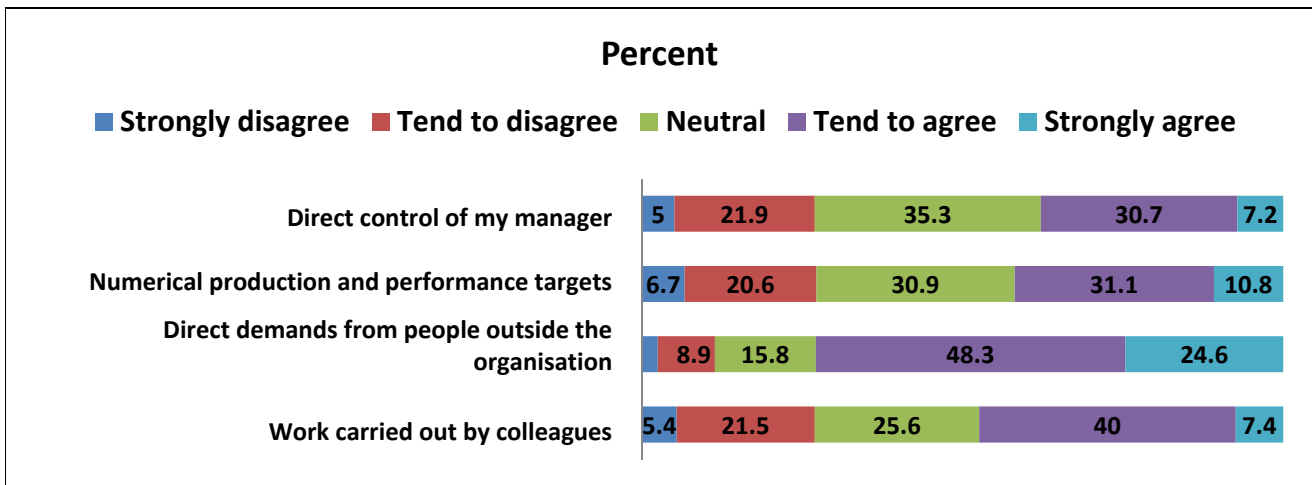
The majority of respondents reported a substantial amount of influence over their ability to change tasks, their work methods and their rate or speed of work. These findings are encouraging, as research generally shows that workers in roles with low job autonomy lack a healthy amount of challenge and are thus at risk of elevated levels of frustration and lower work motivation (Eurofound, 2012).

Figure 3.5 Job influence



Demands from people outside of the organisation exerted the greatest influence over the pace of PSA members’ workflow (‘The pace of my work is dependent on ...’, Figure 3.6). The work carried out by colleagues, numerical production and performance targets, and direct control by managers also meaningfully influenced work pace.

Figure 3.6 Job pace

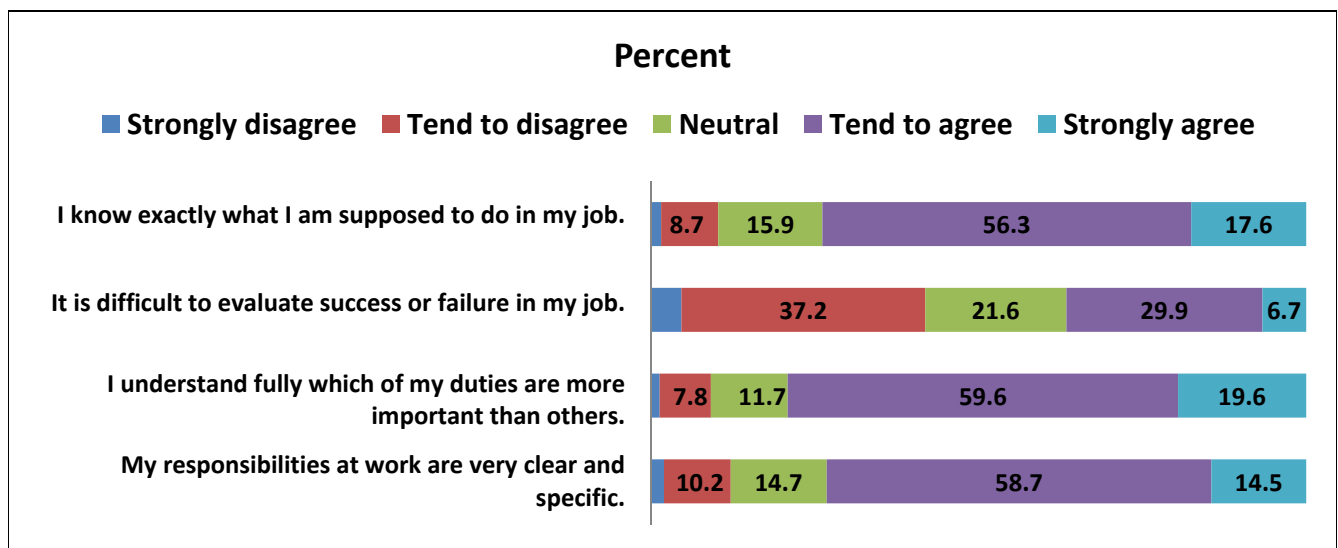


Job clarity

Research on job or work clarity has shown that conflicting or ambiguous work goals can negatively influence workers’ attitudes and motivation towards work (Wright, 2004). In contrast, clear expectations and responsibilities can help focus effort and allow workers a better understanding of the relationship between their efforts, work performance and rewards, such as promotions or pay increases.

In general, respondents reported a high degree of clarity around the expectations and responsibilities of their job (M= 3.61, SD =.70). This is shown in Figure 3.7. A total of 79.2% of respondents reported an ability to prioritise their duties, 73.9% agreed that they knew what they were required to do in their job and 73.2% noted that their work responsibilities were clear and specific. Less clarity for PSA members existed around the evaluation of success and failure within jobs: 36.6% of respondents reported difficulty in evaluating success or failure in their work roles.

Figure 3.7 Job clarity



Worker outcomes

This section reports PSA members' workplace experiences and general attitudes towards their jobs. Outcomes for respondents were measured in terms of motivation, satisfaction, commitment and employment security. Bullying and discrimination were also treated here as outcomes for workers.

Means and standard deviations are provided for sets of questions that combine to measure job satisfaction, motivation and organisational commitment. Responses to individual questions are also provided in order to be consistent with the rest of this report and because of the added insight such analysis provides.

Key findings

- Participants are generally satisfied and motivated in their jobs. Their commitment is broad but is mostly focussed on making a difference to society.
- Most participants feel secure in their job but around 20% do not. Of those feeling job insecure, most rated their chances of getting a job at a similar salary as poor.
- Rates of bullying are relatively high, with around 30% reporting that they have experienced workplace bullying in the last six months.
- Rates of discrimination were higher than that for bullying, with employment status, age, ethnicity and gender being the most prominent causes.

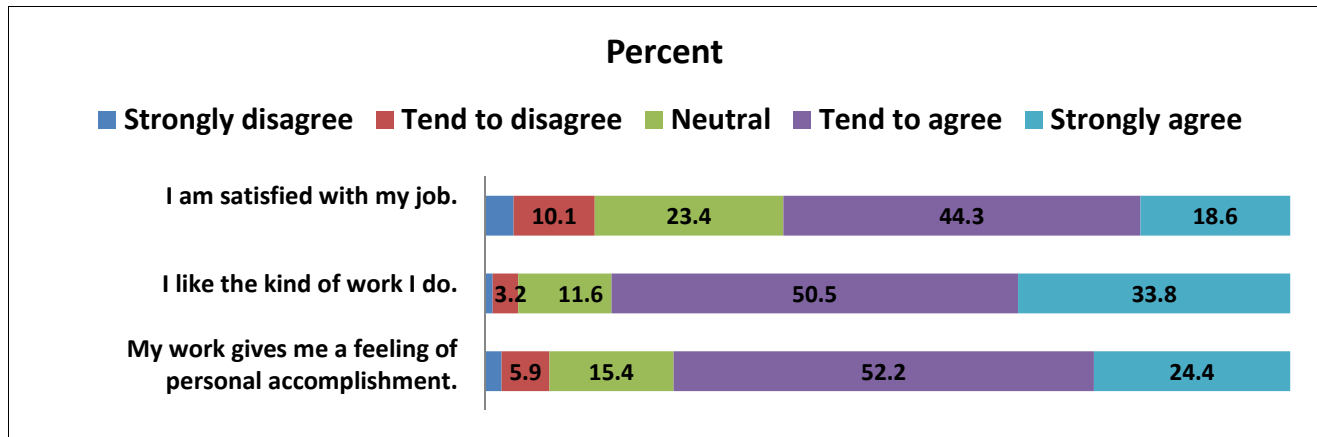
Job satisfaction

Workers differ in the degree to which they derive satisfaction from their jobs. The significant amount of time most people spend at work means that job satisfaction – or dissatisfaction – plays an important role in workers' overall quality of life. Job satisfaction also has implications at an organisational level for turnover, absenteeism and productivity (Eurofound, 2012). Respondents were asked three questions concerning job satisfaction. In particular, PSA members reported on whether or not their work gave them a sense of personal accomplishment, and if they liked and were satisfied by their job.

Findings from the current survey were encouraging. Overall job satisfaction of PSA members was moderate ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .78$). Most workers agreed that they liked the type of work they did (84%), and

most agreed that their work gave them a sense of accomplishment (76%). Fewer respondents agreed or strongly agreed (63%) that they were satisfied with their jobs, which may suggest the influence of other issues (for example, salary or work climate). Figure 4.1 shows a breakdown of responses.

Figure 4.1 Job satisfaction

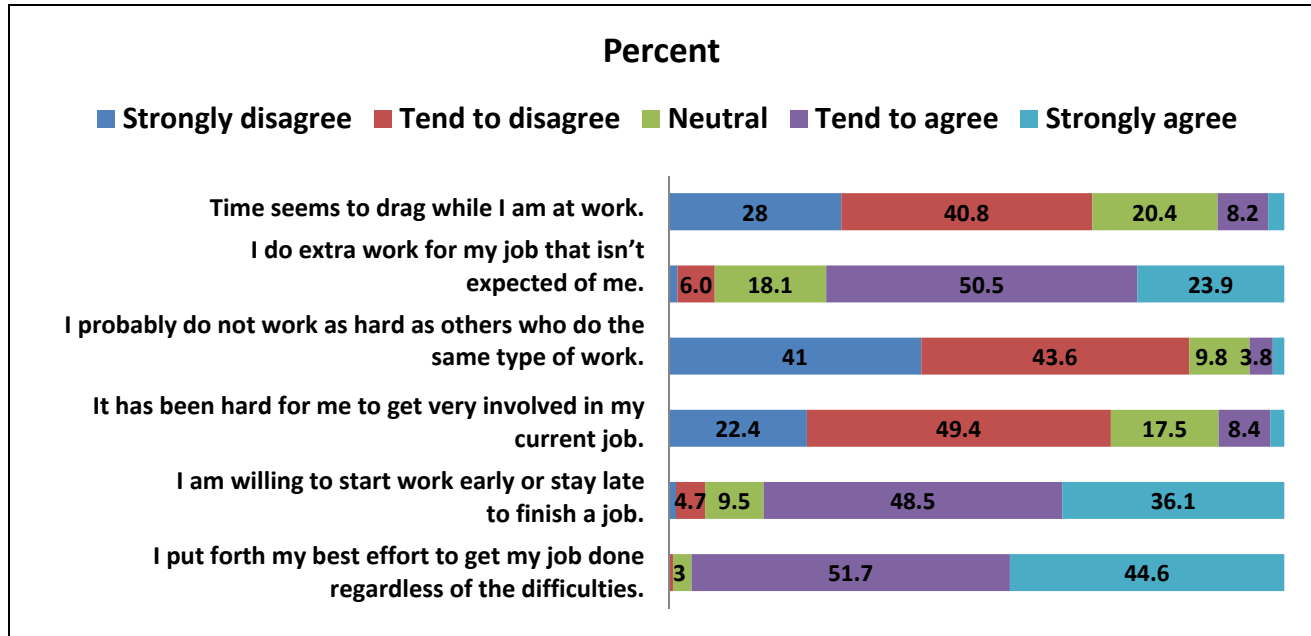


Workplace motivation

Workplace motivation – the intrinsic rewards an individual feels they gain from their work – relates strongly to the amount of satisfaction workers feel in their workplaces. To investigate the degree of motivation PSA members report having towards their work, a series of questions were posed regarding the amount of effort respondents put forth in their jobs, their willingness to work longer hours in order to finish a task, and how involved they felt in their current role.

The majority of respondents reported being motivated within their respective jobs (M = 4.04, SD = .54). Almost all of the participants agreed or strongly agreed (96%) that they put forth their best effort to get their work done ‘regardless of the difficulties’. Less than 11% of workers agreed or strongly agreed that time went slowly while at work and their jobs were difficult to become involved in, and less than 6% agreed or strongly agreed that they did not work as hard as others in a similar role. Overall, these results are encouraging. Low employee motivation has been linked to low quality work and little effort expenditure, whereas workers with higher levels of motivation toward their work are more persistent and produce higher quality work that is willingly undertaken (Amabile, 1993).

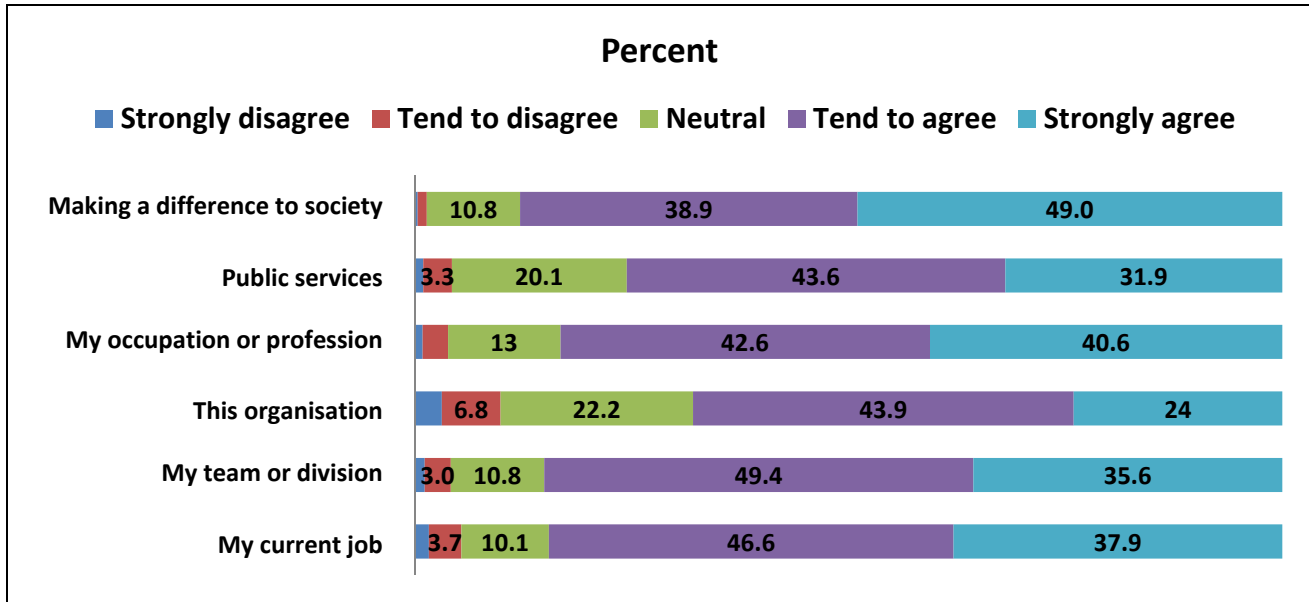
Figure 4.2 Workplace motivation



Commitment

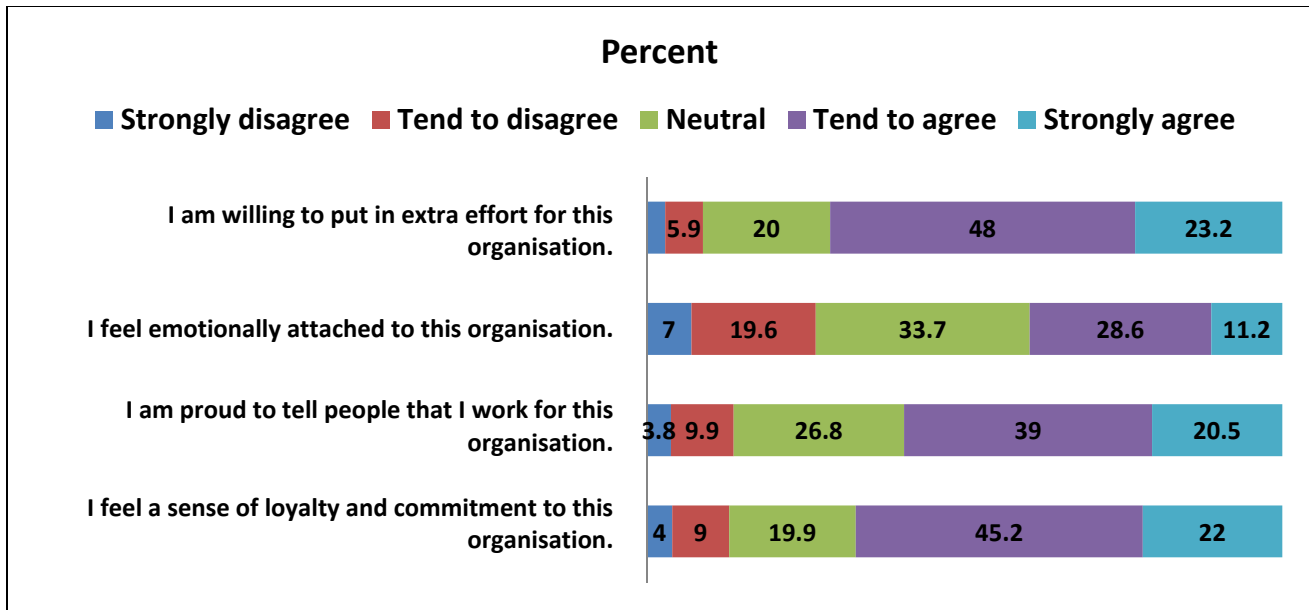
Two commitment constructs were included in the survey. The first (Figure 4.3) was a measure of general commitment ('I am committed to ...'), and concerned what the participant was committed to: the job, division, organisation, profession, public services or to making a difference to society. Overall, participants reported high general commitment across these different targets of commitment ($M = 4.11, SD = .63$) but most were committed to making a difference to society. They were least committed to their organisations (67.9%).

Figure 4.3 General commitment



Participants were also asked specifically about their level of commitment to their organisation (Figure 4.4). Members were relatively committed ($M = 3.59$, $SD = .88$). Although the majority of PSA members were willing to put in extra effort for their employers, their emotional attachment was moderate. Lower levels of emotional commitment can affect workers’ involvement and willingness to pursue organisational goals. It may also reciprocate lower commitment levels of the organisation toward employees or reflect low organisational rewards, poor managerial support or personal characteristics of employees (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). These responses confirm the well-recognised view that public officials are generally motivated by their desire to ‘make a difference to society’, whether or not they happen to be employed in organisations they regard as well or poorly organised and managed.

Figure 4.4 Organisational commitment

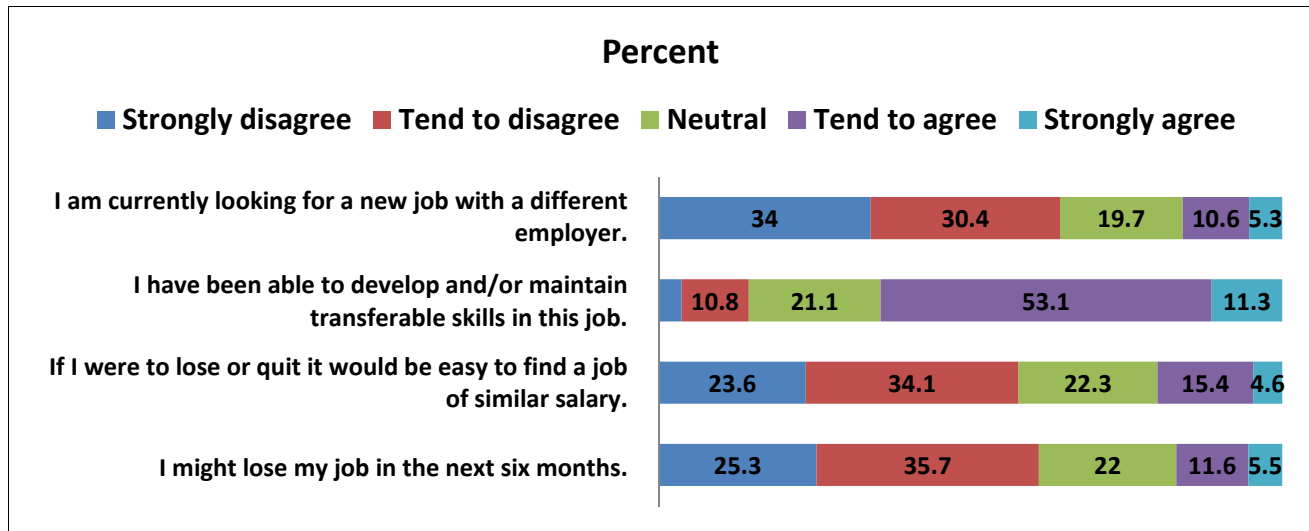


Workplace security

Workplace insecurity is harmful to worker wellbeing. A series of propositions concerned the likelihood of PSA members’ losing their jobs, the ease of obtaining another job on a similar pay band, transferable skills workers felt they had obtained, and whether or not respondents were currently searching for new employment opportunities with a different employer.

Although respondents’ ratings were in the mid-range ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .65$), indicating that most PSA members feel secure in their jobs, a meaningful proportion did not (17%). Furthermore, respondents reported having developed transferrable skills but did not rate getting a similar job as easy. Only 16% of workers indicated that they were currently searching for a new job with a different employer.

Figure 4.5 Workplace security



Subsequent analyses provided additional information about the 17% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that they might lose their positions in the near future. Of these PSA members, the majority rated their chances of getting another job of similar salary poorly (approximately 67%), and one in three (31%) were actively searching for a position with another organisation.

Workplace bullying

Bullying, a severe form of anti-social behaviour that involves negative acts such as verbal abuse, has become an issue for workers, their employers, unions and government agencies (O'Driscoll et al., 2011). International research shows that the public sector work environment seems prone to bullying. The 2010 State Services Commission Integrity and Conduct Survey (SSC, 2010) found that 38% of staff had witnessed abusive or intimidating behaviour toward other staff, improper use of the internet or email or lying to other employees in the last year. Previous research by the PSA and IRC also identified bullying as an issue in New Zealand.

The extent to which bullying is reported in surveys is dependent upon how questions around the topic are posed. For this survey, respondents were provided with a definition of bullying and then asked if they had experienced it within the last six months:

Workplace bullying refers to situations where a person is (a) repeatedly and over a period of time exposed to negative acts or mistreatment from colleagues, superiors or subordinates, and (b) has difficulty defending themselves against this mistreatment. With this definition in mind, do you feel you have experienced bullying in your workplace within the last six months?

Almost a third of respondents reported being bullied in the last six months, with 6.2% experiencing bullying frequently. In other New Zealand research using the same method, 12.4% of respondents reported having been bullied ‘now and then’, compared to 26.2% in the current survey (O’Driscoll et al., 2011). Bullying still seems to be relatively prevalent in the state sector.

Table 4.1 Workplace bullying

Do you feel you have experienced workplace bullying in your workplace within the last six months?	N	%
No, never	9281	67.6
Yes, now and then	3595	26.2
Yes, monthly	222	1.6
Yes, weekly	333	2.4
Yes, almost daily	306	2.2
Total	13,737	100

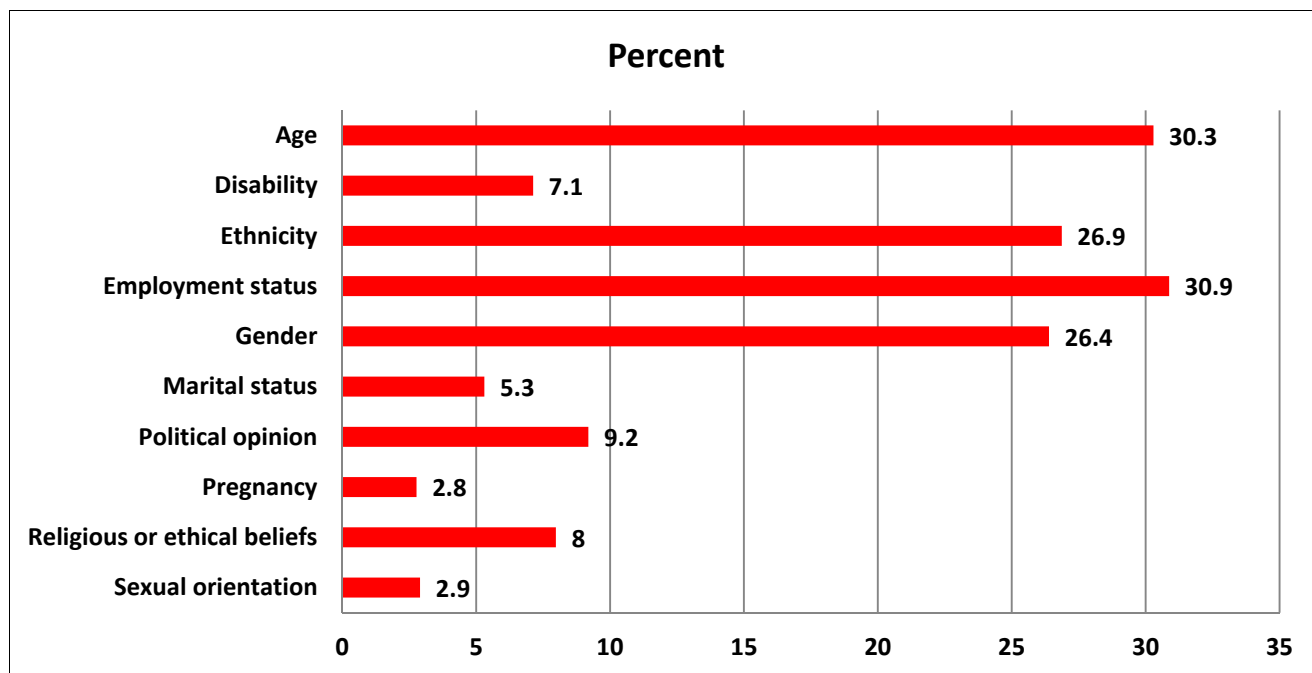
Discrimination

According to the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, discrimination occurs when someone is treated unfavourably or less favourably than another person in the same or similar circumstances due to certain personal characteristics such as age, gender or ethnicity. Respondents were provided with this definition and asked the following question: ‘In your opinion, was this treatment because of (mark all that apply)?’ Almost one in three respondents felt they were discriminated against in their present workplace (Figure 4.6). Employment status (for example, part-time, casual or permanent employee status) was cited as the largest cause, followed by age, ethnicity and gender. Marital status, religious or political beliefs, disability, pregnancy and sexual orientation were the least cited bases for discrimination.

The PSA members’ reported rate of discrimination (31.9%) was higher than that reported in the 2010 New Zealand General Social Survey, in which 10.4% of people aged 15 years and over reported that they had experienced some form of discrimination. The reported average of discrimination experienced by PSA members was also higher than that reported in the 2009 European Commission survey, where 16% of respondents reported unlawful discrimination due to grounds such as gender, ethnic origin, religion, age, disability and sexual orientation. Differences in these figures could be due to how questions around discrimination were asked.

As a form of harassment, discrimination creates an unhealthy workplace culture, limits people’s opportunities to fully participate in their work environments, and negatively affects employee productivity and wellbeing (EEO, 2013; MSD, 2010). Any amount of discrimination in the workplace can be harmful to employees.

Figure 4.6 Workplace discrimination



Workplace processes

This section examines whether PSA members were supported in doing their jobs well. This included whether they could make the decisions they needed to in order to do their jobs, that they knew what was expected, that they were rewarded, and that they had the training and skills to do their jobs well. These matters related to the performance and wellbeing not just of individuals, but also of teams and organisations. Whether purported management practices such as 'empowerment' or pay-for-performance are real, credible, fair and effective depends on how workers experience them (Boxall & Macky, 2009). The effectiveness of human resource practices and other management actions is shaped by how workers experience them.

Experiences of workplace processes were therefore measured using the PIRK model, which stands for power, information, rewards and knowledge (Lawler III, 1986).

Four aspects of workplace processes were measured:

- *Power* concerns the extent to which workers have the authority to do their jobs and participate in wider decisions. Responses were sought to prompts including: 'I have enough input in deciding how to accomplish my work' and 'I have sufficient authority to fulfill my job responsibilities' (M = 3.57, SD = .79).
- *Information* concerns the extent to which workers are informed of goals, policies and procedures, and the reasons behind decisions. It also concerns the extent to which managers are informed of issues, opinions, needs and feelings about what is happening amongst workers. Responses were sought to: 'Management takes time to explain to employees the reasoning behind critical decisions that are made' and 'Management is adequately informed of the important issues in my work area' (M = 3, SD = .79).
- *Rewards* concern how well performance is linked to rewards and recognition. An example prompt was: 'Generally, I feel this organisation rewards employees who make an extra effort' (M = 2.64, SD = .90).
- *Knowledge* is concerned with whether workers have access to the training and development that they need to do their jobs well. An example prompt was: 'The training and educational activities I have received enable me to perform my job more effectively' (M = 3.16, SD = .70).

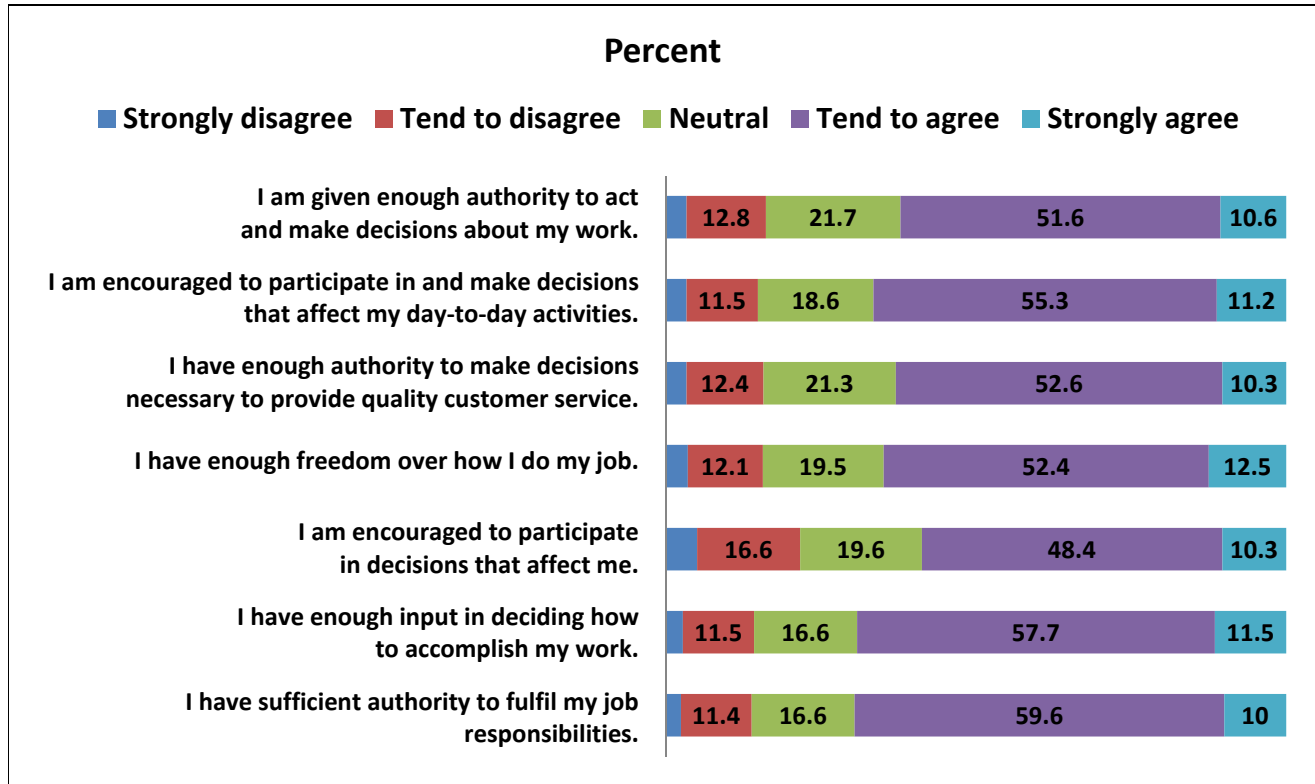
Key findings

- Overall, responses cluster around the middle of the range (neutral, coded as a 3). Participants are ambivalent about the extent to which work and employment practices help them do their job.
- Participants commonly report sufficient power to do their jobs well, although less so when asked about participation in decisions that affect them.
- Information flows in organisations are seen less positively. Information flows about policies, procedures, changes and the reasons behind changes are regarded as particularly weak. The upward flow of information about employee needs, opinions and feelings is also poor. The message is that managers need to listen and attend to concerns more.
- Performance appraisal and reward processes lack credibility. Incentives to work well are weak.
- Access to knowledge, for instance through training and development, are rated more positively. More participants agree than disagree with positive statements, although there is some concern with the quality of training.

Power

Overall, most members saw themselves as having the power they needed to do their jobs well. However, when asked about participation in decisions that affected them, they indicated they did not have the power they needed.

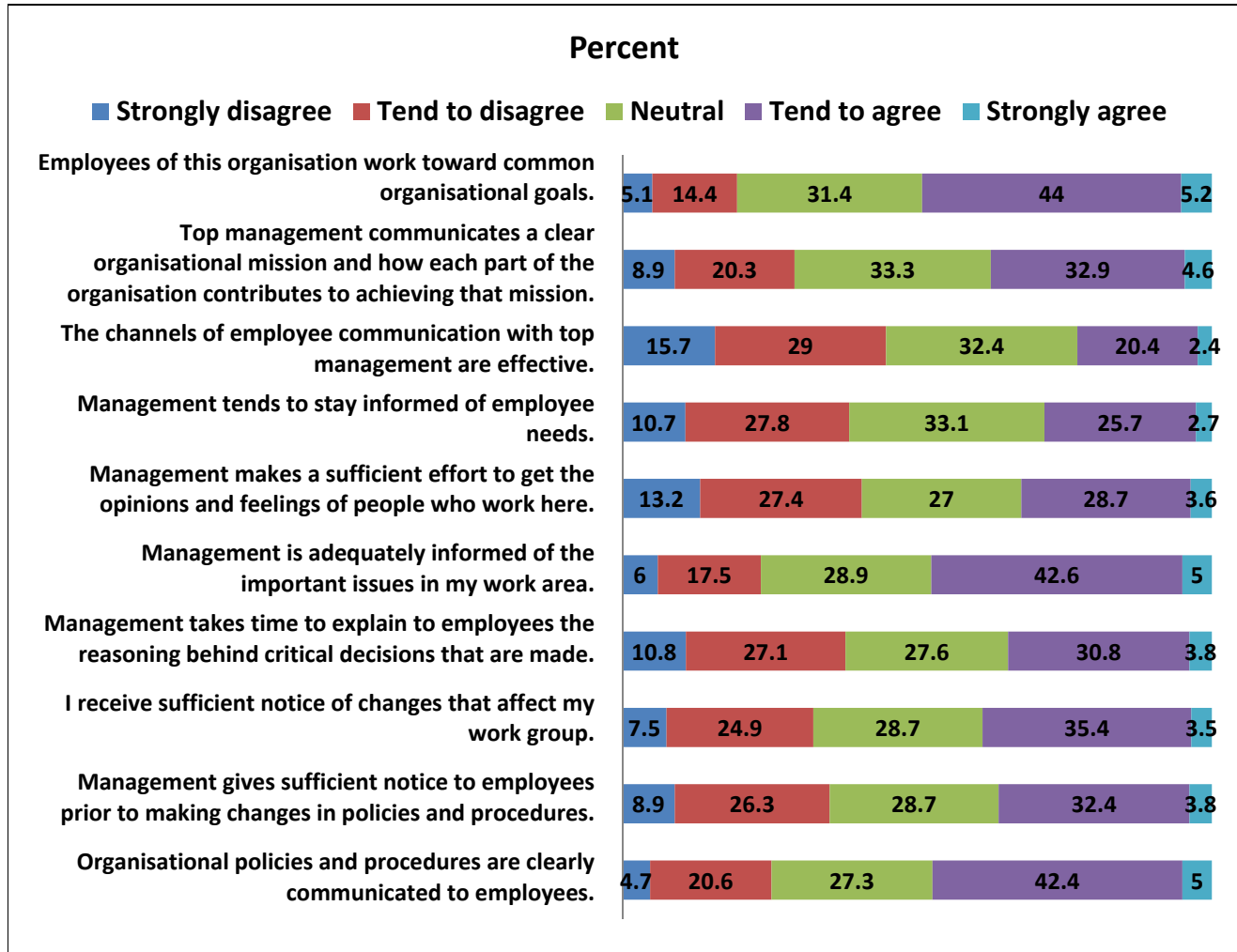
Figure 5.1 Power



Information

Participants were less clear that they had the information they needed to do their jobs well. Generally, fewer than half agreed that they were informed by managers of reasons behind critical decisions. Upward feedback, or the extent to which managers were concerned with and listened to employee needs, opinions and feelings were particularly weak with 40.6% of respondents either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. It is also worth noting the degree of ‘pervasive ambivalence’ in responses to this and some other questions. Roughly one-third of respondents in effect indicated that they did not know whether communication was adequate in the organisation, which does not speak highly of the organisation or its management.

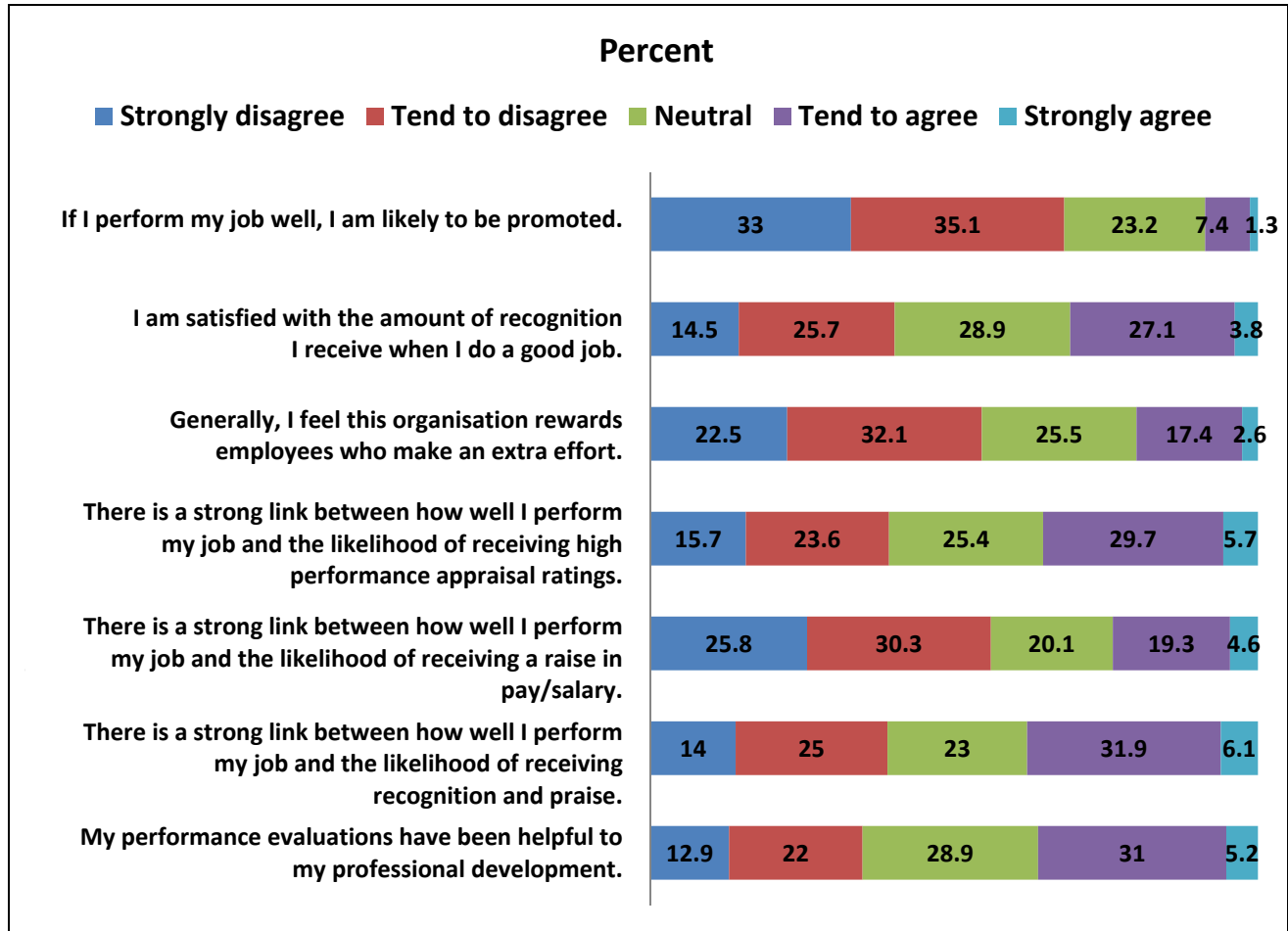
Figure 5.2 Information



Rewards

Linkages between effort, performance, performance appraisal and rewards were seen as weak. Although over a third of respondents saw performance evaluations as helpful to professional development, perceived linkages between actual performance and performance appraisals were poor, as were links between appraisals and wage rises. Only 20% of staff agreed with statements that employees who made an extra effort were rewarded.

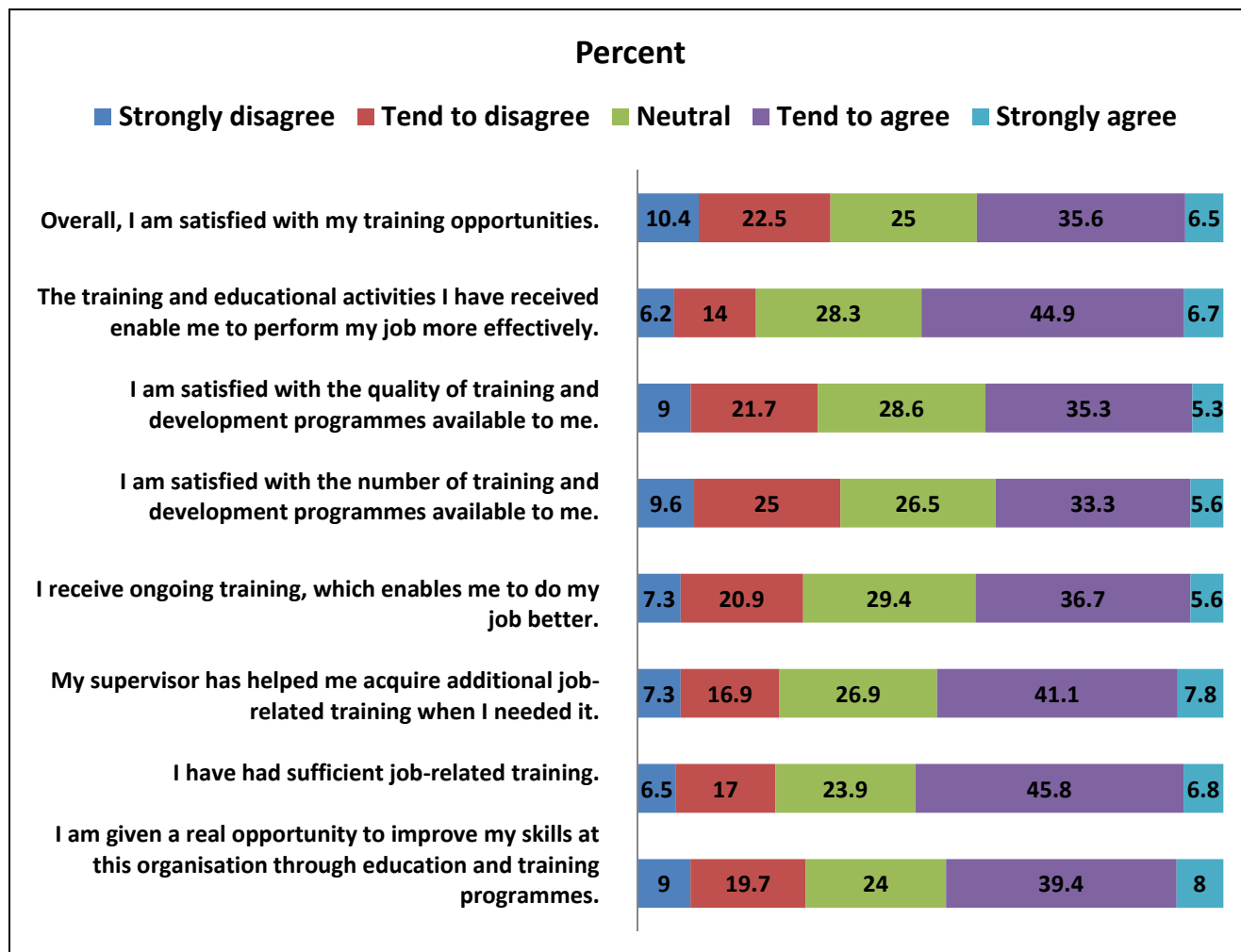
Figure 5.3 Rewards



Knowledge: training and development

Just over half of PSA survey participants agreed that they had sufficient job-related training and educational activities that helped them do their jobs better. The quality of training and development seemed to be a particular area of dissatisfaction. Overall, however, there was more agreement than disagreement with these questions concerning training and development.

Figure 5.4 Knowledge: training and development



Organisational systems and climate

In this section, we report on PSA members' perceptions of organisational systems and climate that influence cooperation, innovation and thus the ability to do the job and contribute to others' jobs. Four types of organisational systems were explored: workplace cooperation, workplace innovation, organisational processes and organisational goals.

Workplace cooperation, workplace innovation and organisational processes were measured using a scale developed by Langford (2009). A measure published by Wright (2004) was used to examine organisational goals. These are each reported on in turn below.

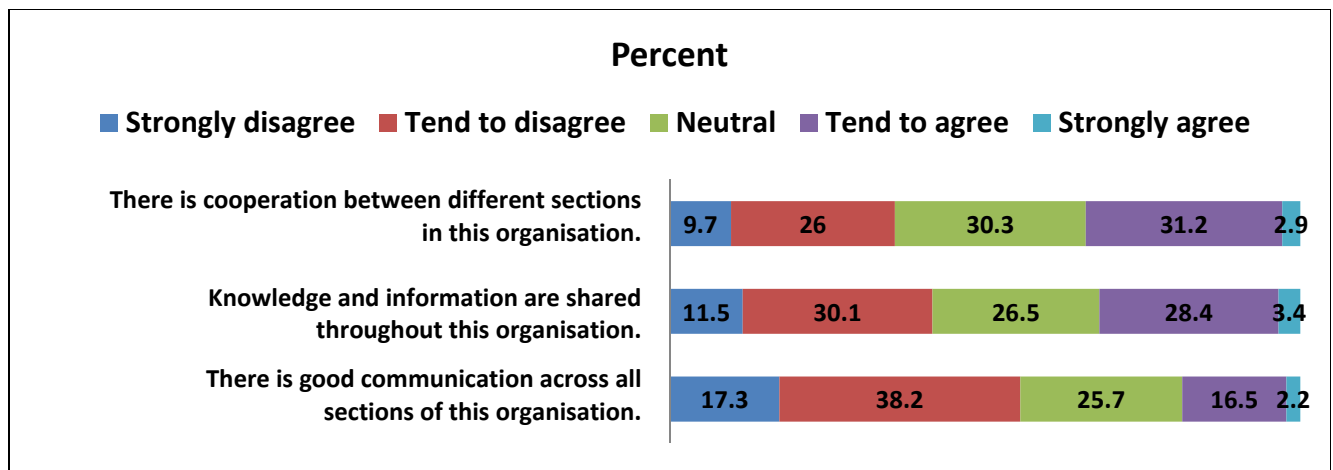
Key findings

- Communication and cooperation between different sections of organisations is not good. One-half to three-quarters of participants report poor communication, knowledge sharing and cooperation. This should be of concern to organisations as it may inhibit performance, achievement of organisational goals and continuous improvement.
- Organisations are generally not seen as good at change and improvement, but a third of participants feel their organisations are innovative. Viewed in combination with the preceding cooperation results, it is possible workplaces are innovative but are not able to change and capitalise on this across different sections of the organisation.
- Work policies and procedures are clear, as are responsibilities, according to half to two-thirds of participants. The efficiency of procedures is not seen as positively.
- The overwhelming majority of participants report that organisational objectives and priorities are clear and well defined.

Workplace communication and cooperation

One set of propositions explored workplace communication and cooperation (M = 2.73, SD = .92). Aggregate responses indicated that most people did not think there was good communication across all sections of their organisation (55.6% disagreed, 25.7% neutral and only 18.7% agreed communication was good). A similar profile emerged in views on whether knowledge and information were shared throughout the organisation, with 41.6% disagreeing, 26.5% neutral and 31.8% agreeing that these were shared. The third prompt in this set referred to cooperation between different sections within the organisation and views were evenly spread: 35.7% disagreed, 30.3% neutral and 34.1% agreed that there was cooperation.

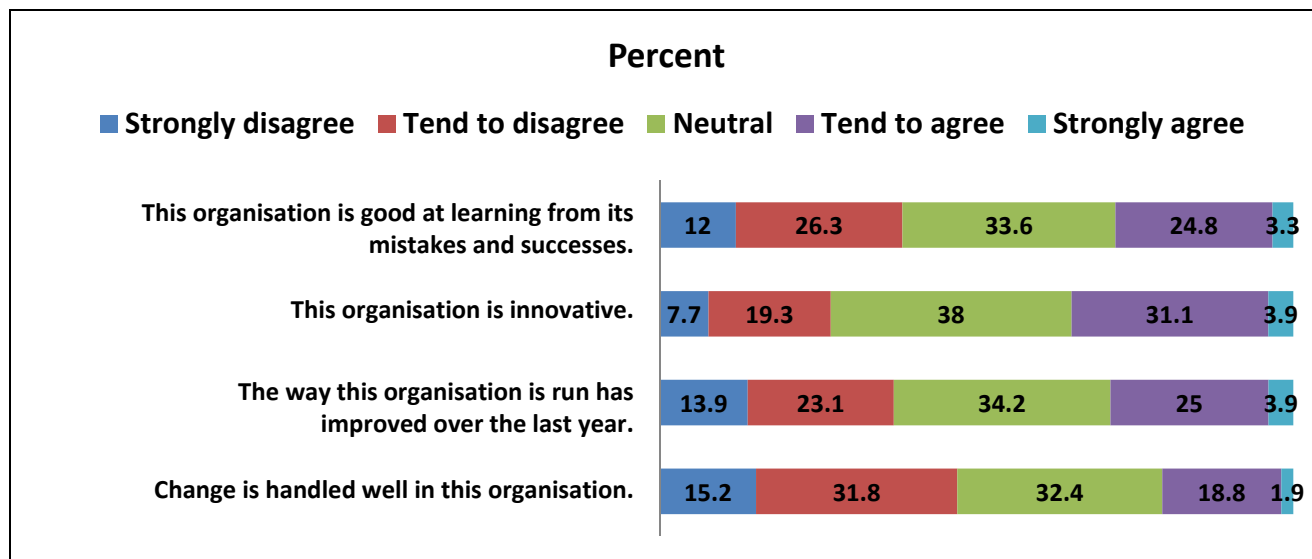
Figure 6.1 Workplace communication and cooperation



Workplace innovation

Workplace innovation was examined through four propositions (M = 2.81, SD = .86). The first concerned whether change was handled well in the organisation. Most considered it was not well handled or were neutral (47% and 32.4% respectively), while only 20.7 % agreed it was well handled. In a related vein participants were asked if the way the organisation was run had improved over the last year: 37% disagreed, 34% were neutral and 28.7% agreed it had improved. Neither of these propositions revealed ringing endorsements of change and improvement. However, the third prompt queried if the organisation was innovative, and only 27% disagreed, 38% were neutral and 35.2% agreed. The fourth prompt in this set enquired if the organisation was good at learning from its mistakes and successes: 38.3 % disagreed, 33.6% were neutral and 28.1% agreed. Thus, at this aggregate level a picture emerges of organisations perceived as reasonably innovative but not as positively regarded in terms of learning and change.

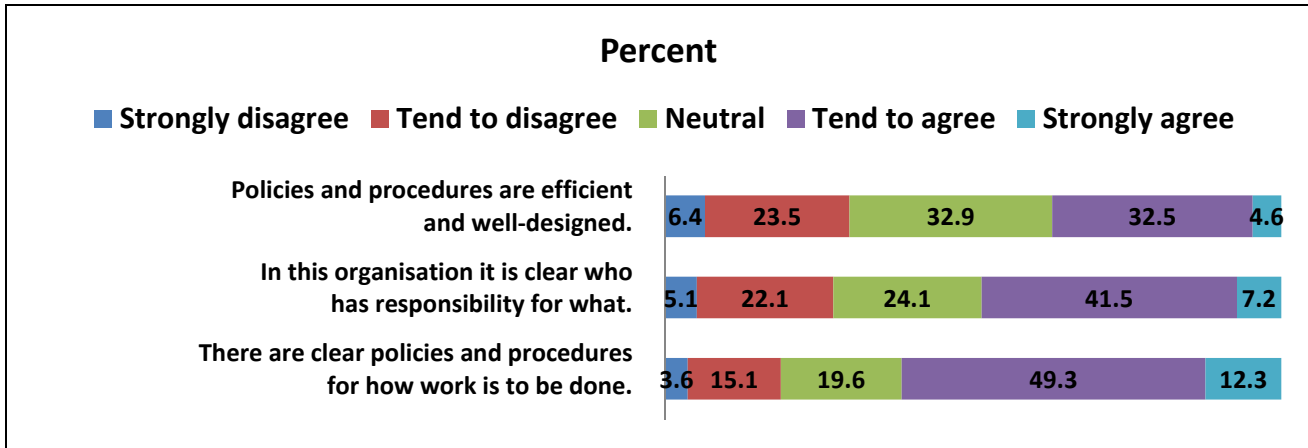
Figure 6.2 Workplace innovation



Organisational processes

Three propositions explored whether procedures were clear in the organisation (M = 3.27, SD = .87). These prompts, by and large, yielded positive endorsements from participants. The first enquired whether there were clear policies and procedures for how work was to be done, and 61.6% agreed there were, 19.6% were neutral and only 18.7% disagreed. The second queried whether it was clear who had responsibility for what, and 48.7% agreed it was clear, 24.1% neutral and 27.2% disagreed. The third prompt queried if policies and procedures were efficient and well-designed. Most agreed or were neutral (37.1% and 32.9% respectively), with 29.9% disagreeing.

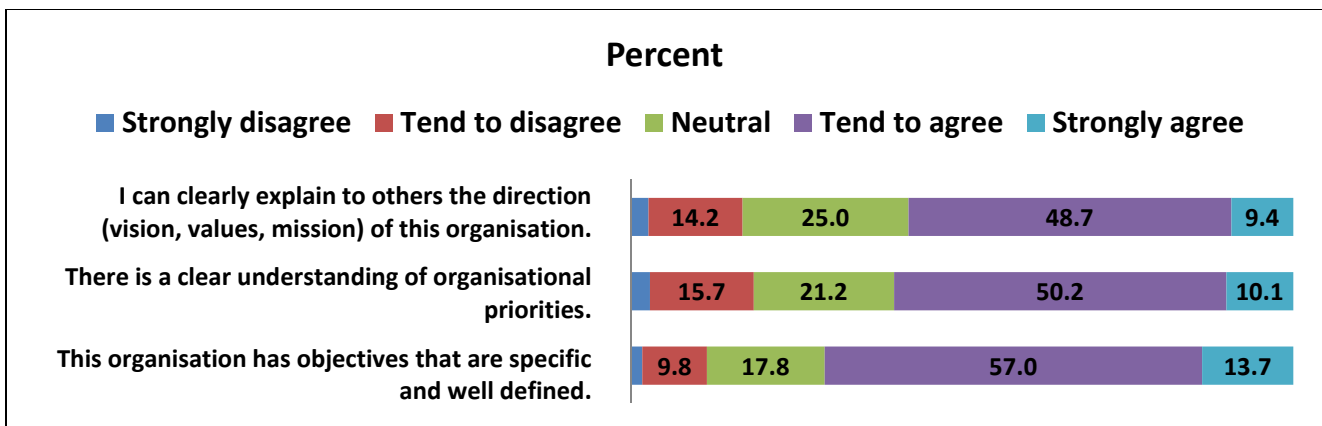
Figure 6.3 Organisational processes



Organisational goals

We combined the view of whether procedures were clear with the following responses to three other propositions regarding whether organisational goals as a whole were clear (M = 3.56, SD = .81). Certainly participants reported far greater clarity at the goal level: 70.7% agreed that the organisation had objectives that were specific and well defined, with only 11.6% disagreeing and 17.8% neutral. Similarly 60.3% agreed there was a clear understanding of organisational priorities, with only 21.2% neutral and 18.6% disagreeing. When prompted, 58.1% of participants agreed they could clearly explain to others the direction (vision, values, mission) of the organisation, 25% were neutral and only 16.9% disagreed.

Figure 6.4 Organisational goals



Thus, overall it appears that high level goals and objectives are clear to most staff, and that organisations are reasonably innovative. Similarly, policies and procedures are clear, but communication and cooperation across organisations is not good, nor is the organisational capacity to learn and change.

Perceptions of management

This section reports PSA members' views of how managers treat employees and how managers manage. Employees' perceptions of management are an important consideration, as they influence workers' motivation and ability to do their jobs well and to contribute to others' productivity. The survey included five questions ($M = 3.12$, $SD = .95$) from the Workplace Employment Relations Survey that explored views of managerial responsiveness (for further information see Chaplin, 2005) and seven questions ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .81$) that probed views of management performance in a social context (that is, how managers manage) (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004). In order to put responses to these questions in context, it is important to note that they were overwhelmingly staff members' views: the majority of survey respondents indicated that they did not manage anyone in their organisation (80.9%). Team or mid-level managers were the next largest group (17.7%), followed by senior managers and executives, who represented only 1.4% of survey participants.

Key findings

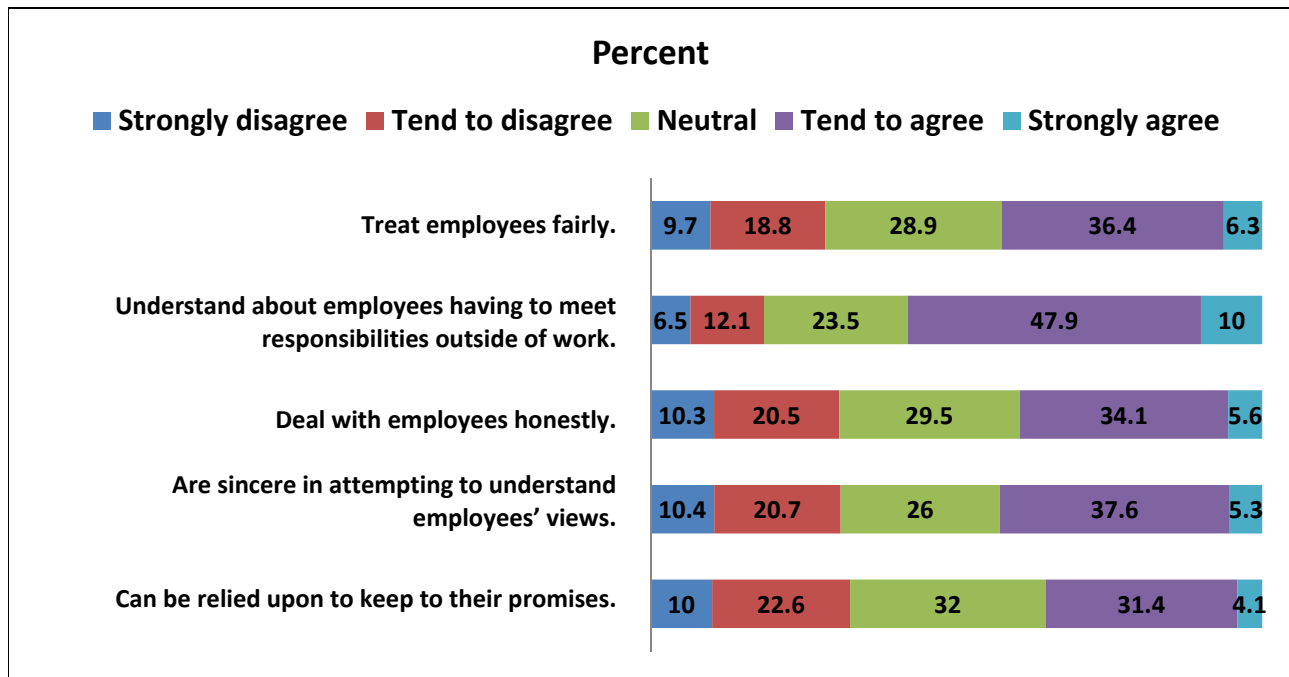
- The most positively viewed aspect of managerial responsiveness involves managers understanding that their subordinates must meet responsibilities outside of work.
- Managerial fair treatment, honesty, promise keeping and understanding employee views present a much more mixed response. Overall, it might be expected that managers in the public sector would score higher on these scales and with much less ambivalence amongst their staff.
- A third of participants do not think their managers base decisions on facts and analysis, and believe that managers do not devote considerable effort to developing subordinates.

Managerial trust and responsiveness

PSA survey respondents' opinions of managers at their respective organisations are illustrated in Figure 7.1 ('Managers at this organisation ...'). Mixed views emerged of whether managers can be relied upon to keep their promises, with just over a third agreeing that they could. The picture was slightly more positive regarding whether managers were sincere in attempting to understand employees' views.

Participants were also ambivalent about whether managers deal honestly with employees, but were more positive about whether managers treat employees fairly. Endorsements of managers' understanding that employees must meet responsibilities outside of work were more positive. Thus it appears that managers were generally considered to be empathetic to external demands on the lives of employees, but were not always regarded as honest or promise keepers.

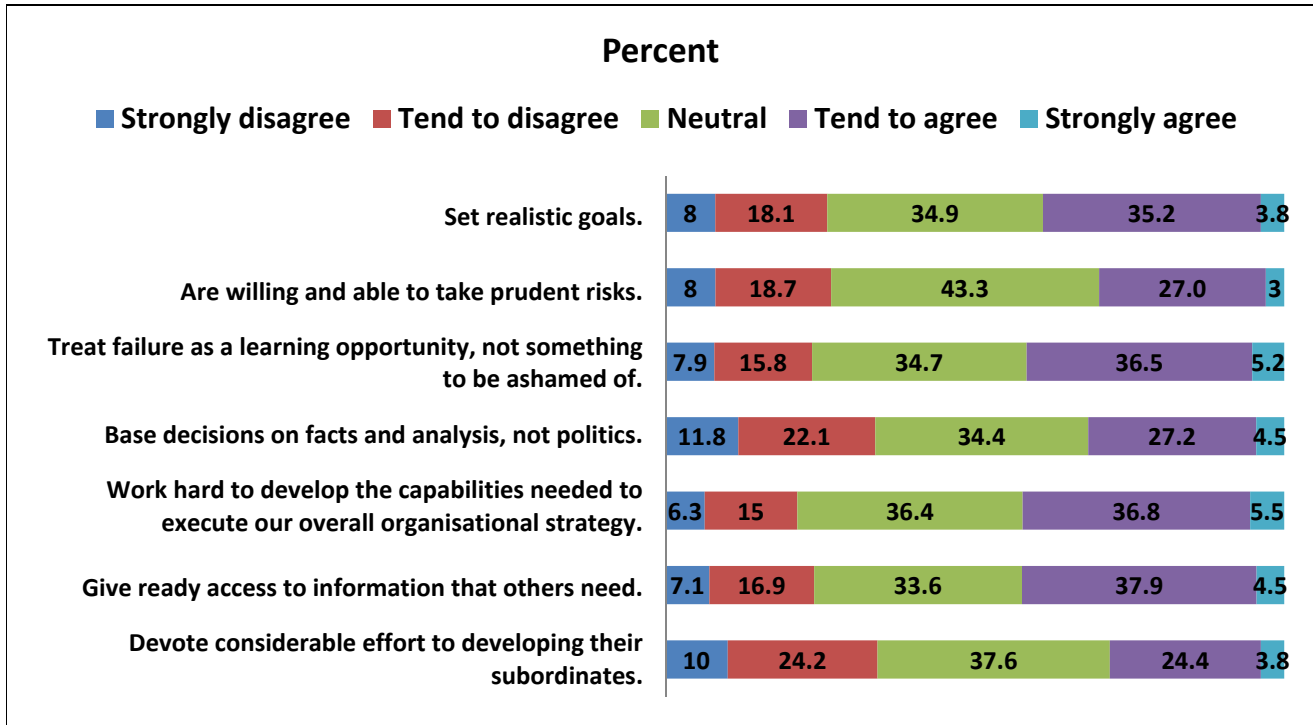
Figure 7.1 Managerial trust and responsiveness



Creating the right social context

Social context refers to the extent to which managers as a group develop the support and trust needed for high performance and good work environments. In response to the prompt 'Managers at this organisation ...', less than half of respondents rated their managers as creating the right social context for high performance in their organisations. Particular weaknesses concerned the basing of decisions on politics rather than facts and not developing subordinates. Responses overall indicated that many workplaces were very risk averse, political and poor at organisational learning. This reflected a very mixed picture of perceptions of management performance.

Figure 7.2 Managers' development of social context



Organisational performance

This section examines organisational performance through the perceptions of PSA members working within those organisations. The following aspects of organisational performance were investigated:

- *Perceptions* of overall organisational performance (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004) was measured using four items ($M = 2.79$, $SD = .81$). An example item was: 'This organisation is achieving its full potential.'
- *Adaptability* (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004) concerns whether the organisation responds to changing circumstances or new opportunities. An example item was: 'The management systems in this organisation are flexible enough to respond quickly to changes' ($M = 2.90$, $SD = .88$).
- *Alignment* (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004) involves how efficient organisational systems are, or whether organisations are wasteful and working at cross-purposes with each other. An example item was: 'My organisation wastes resources on unproductive activities' ($M = 3.04$, $SD = .79$).

When organisations are both adaptable and aligned, they can be described as 'ambidextrous', or able to be both efficiently well organised and flexible. Ambidexterity is particularly important to state sector workers because of the converging pressures of budget constraints and rising expectations for more sophisticated, innovative and customised services.

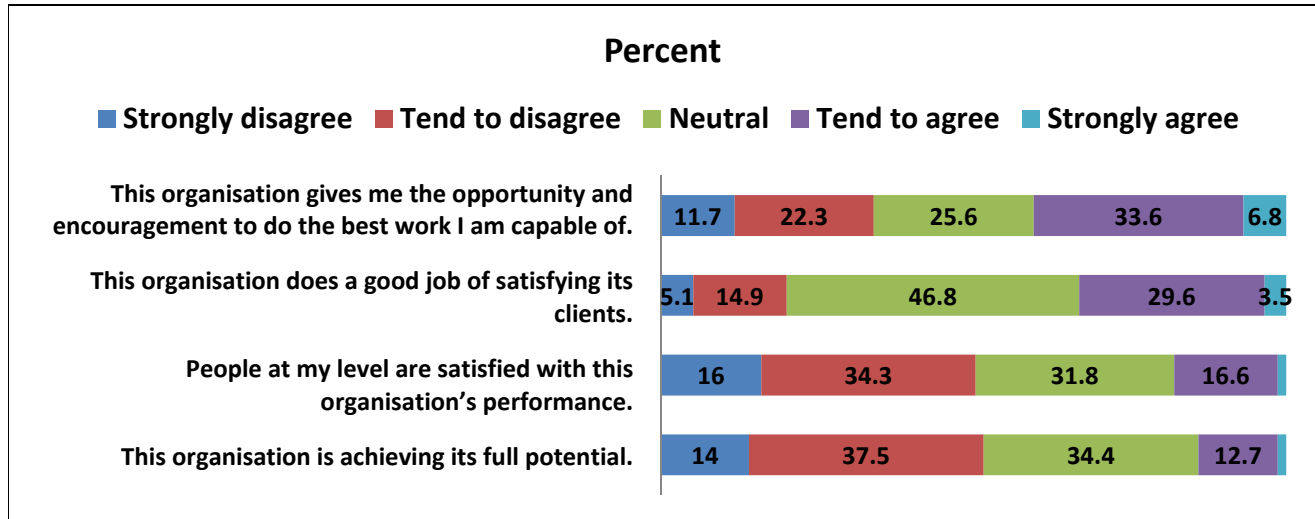
Key findings

- Overall, organisational performance is not rated highly, with slightly below midpoint average ratings. The lowest ratings concern the extent to which organisations are fulfilling their potential.
- Overall, organisations are not rated as adaptable, with relatively few staff agreeing that their organisations encourage people to challenge poor practices, or are flexible and responsive to shifts in business priorities.
- Organisations are, however, rated slightly more positively as 'aligned' with systems and processes supporting each other.
- Few organisations are rated as ambidextrous – both adaptable and aligned – although the variation between agencies is small, with results clustering around the middle. An analysis of large employers shows that the most ambidextrous tend to be district health boards. The least tended to be large central government departments.

Overall performance

Organisational performance was not rated highly, with average ratings of slightly below the midpoint of the scale. One question about receiving opportunities and encouragement to do good work was rated slightly positively. A question concerning the extent to which the organisation lived up to its potential received the lowest ratings.

Figure 8.1 Organizational performance



Ambidexterity

Organisations were rated as more aligned (efficient) than they were rated as adaptable (responsive to new opportunities or changed conditions). Overall, however, the average scores for both concepts show weak agreement with propositions that employers were adaptable or aligned. Results clustered around the midpoint of three (neutral) in the five-item scales used.

Adaptability

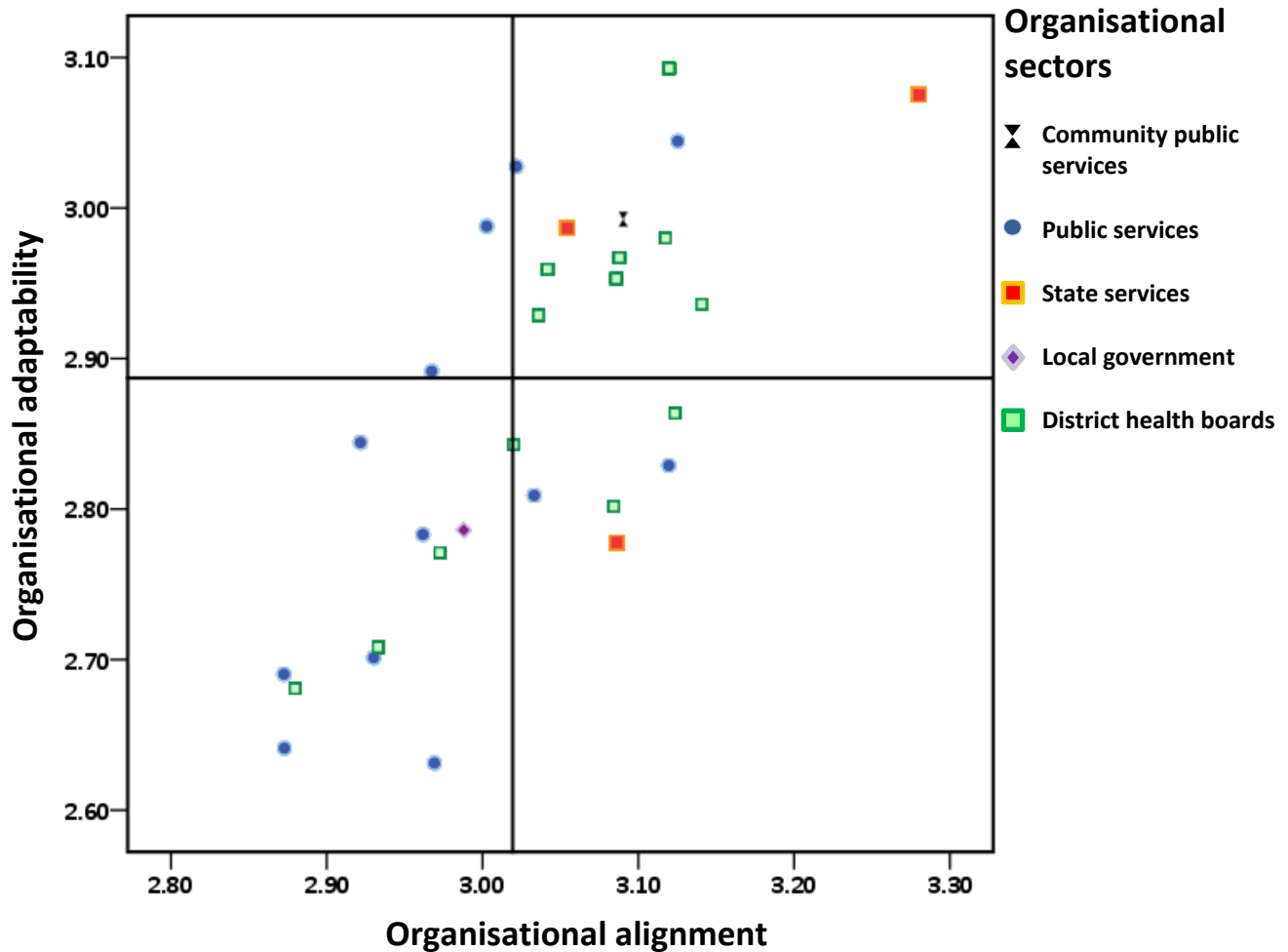
Most members did not rate their organisations as encouraging people to challenge poor practices, as having management systems flexible enough to respond quickly to changes, or as evolving rapidly in response to changed business priorities.

Alignment

Members were slightly more positive about the extent to which their employers' activities were aligned. A total of 55% of respondents rated their organisation as working coherently to support the overall objectives of the organisation. However, ratings were less positive in response to negatively worded items concerning resources being wasted on unproductive activities, and people working at cross purposes because of conflicting objectives.

Organisational results clustered around a narrow range, as depicted in the chart below of organisations from which over 100 responses were received.

Figure 8.2 Organisational ambidexterity



The most ambidextrous organisations tended to be district health boards. The least ambidextrous organisations tended to be large, central government agencies. Although the range of responses was small, the highest and lowest performing organisations did differ in some significant ways. These differences may be attributed to the nature of the operations or variations within their workforces.

Table 8.1 Organisational ambidexterity comparisons

The most ambidextrous organisations:	The least ambidextrous organisations:
Are district health boards	Are large, central government agencies
Have clearer organisational goals	Have relatively poor Performance Improvement Framework evaluations
Have clearer processes	Have experienced frequent restructurings in recent years
Report greater cross-unit cooperation	Report more work overload
Report more clarity with employees' job objectives	Report less employment security
Report higher levels of commitment.	Report greater instances of bullying.

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