Scottish Executive Employee Survey 2005

Office of Chief Researcher and ORC International

This report presents the results of the Scottish Executive (SE) Employee and Secondee Surveys (combined results), which were issued in September 2005, covering all 7,376 staff and secondees in the Core Departments and 14 Agencies/Associated Departments. The development stages of the project and running of the survey were conducted in-house by the Office of the Chief Researcher (OCR), with ORC International working on the analysis and reporting elements of the project.

This year's survey received a response rate of 65%. Some questions that were not directly relevant were omitted in the Secondee survey – these questions are marked 'secondee not asked' in this report.

Key strengths about working in the Scottish Executive were:

Team working: respondents are confident that their team co-operates to get the work done, and two thirds feel that their line manager makes them feel an important part of the team.

Line management: results indicate positive line management relations.

Influence: most respondents feel that they can influence how they do their job and that their ideas and suggestions are given due consideration.

Treatment: respondents feel that they are treated with fairness and respect, and show satisfaction with the recognition they receive from their line manager. There is also confidence that the SE respects individual differences.

Objectives and understanding: there is high involvement in setting work objectives, and 81% understand how their work contributes to the objectives of the Scottish Executive.

Key areas for improvement were:

Communication between different parts of the organisation: just 24% of respondents feel that different parts of the organisation communicate effectively with one another, and 45% disagree.

Performance management: few respondents report being satisfied that they are appropriately rewarded for their performance in the organisation. Only 26% feel that poor performance is dealt with effectively where they work.

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Change management: there is a lack of confidence in how change is managed in the organisation (25% positive), or that changes are effectively communicated/explained before they are implemented.

Senior Management: results concerning senior management elicited high neutral scores, and a third of respondents disagree that senior managers are sufficiently visible in the organisation.

Finance in the Organisation: less than a third of respondents believe that the Scottish Executive makes good use of financial resources, or that the organisation has a culture of sound financial management.

The last survey: just 12% of respondents feel that positive action has taken place as a result of the last survey.

Employee Engagement

An engagement index has been created to measure respondents' attachment to the Scottish Executive (SE). Engagement goes beyond satisfaction and can be defined as employees' willingness and ability to invest their personal effort in the success of the organisation. Statistical analysis has shown that the SE has an average level of employee engagement.

The engagement index is calculated by grouping together questions that are closely linked to employee engagement. The questions that make up the engagement index are:

- Overall I think the Scottish Executive is a good organisation to work for (68% positive)

- I would recommend the Scottish Executive as a good place to work (59% positive)

- I am proud to work for the Scottish Executive (secondees not asked) (58% positive)

- Overall I am satisfied with my job (58% positive)

- One of the reasons I joined this organisation was to make a difference to the lives of the people of Scotland (secondees not asked) (41% positive)

- I feel I am making a difference to the lives of people in Scotland (39% positive)

These engagement index questions are relatively high level, and difficult to influence directly. However, statistical analysis reveals that performance on these engagement questions is influenced by performance in a number of critical areas, known as "key drivers". The key drivers that the SE is found to be performing least well on are detailed in Table 1. If work is done to improve employee perceptions in these areas, this will have the greatest impact on engagement and ultimately increase their willingness to invest personal effort in the success of the organisation.
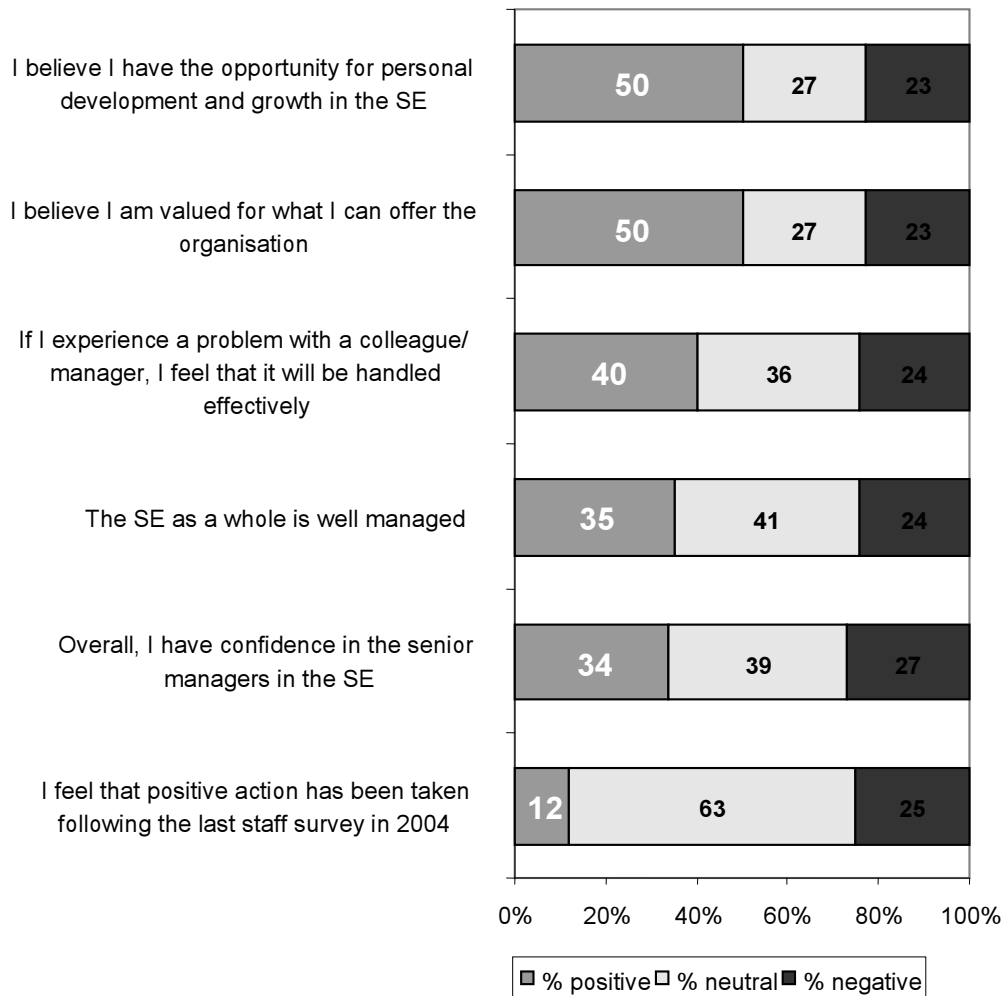
Key Messages

The key findings are presented below, with results compared, where possible, to the 2004 SE survey and the overall UK & Central Government benchmarks held by ORC International.

Me and My job

The Job

It is encouraging that 74% of respondents feel that their job makes good use of their skills and abilities. This is in line with the overall UK benchmark and the 2004 SE result, and 8 percentage points above the Central Government benchmark. However, considerably fewer report that their work gives them a feeling of personal accomplishment (57%), although this score is in line with the Central Government average. It is also noteworthy that there has been a considerable decline in the proportion of respondents who are satisfied with their job (58%), a score that had remained consistent in the SE between 2001 and 2003 at just over 75% positive and had risen to 82% in 2004. The 2005 result also falls below the UK benchmark (69%). This may be linked to the fact that fewer respondents than in 2004 feel appropriately rewarded for their performance in the organisation (26% compared with 54%).

Table 1. Employee Engagement - Key Drivers

	% positive	% neutral	% negative
I believe I have the opportunity for personal development and growth in the SE	50	27	23
I believe I am valued for what I can offer the organisation	50	27	23
If I experience a problem with a colleague/ manager, I feel that it will be handled effectively	40	36	24
The SE as a whole is well managed	35	41	24
Overall, I have confidence in the senior managers in the SE	34	39	27
I feel that positive action has been taken following the last staff survey in 2004	12	63	25

■ % positive □ % neutral ■ % negative

Three quarters of respondents feel that they can influence how they do their job, perhaps explaining the high satisfaction that the job makes good use of skills and abilities. Respondents also appear reasonably encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things.

For 41% of respondents (secondees not asked), one of the reasons they joined the organisation was to make a difference to the lives of people of Scotland, and 39% feel that they are doing so.

Work Life Balance
Perceptions of work life balance and workload are reasonable, with similar proportions of respondents compared to the UK benchmark feeling able to balance their work and home life (64% positive, compared to the external benchmark of 66%), and that their workload is reasonable (59% agree, in line with the external benchmark of 62%). However, over a quarter of respondents do feel that the level of stress in their job has a negative effect on their work, and there were several comments concerning this issue made in the free text responses.

My line manager

Line Manager Performance
Respondents view their line manager favourably. There is high satisfaction that line managers give recognition and acknowledgement for a job well done, and over 8 in 10 respondents agree that they have a good relationship with their line manager, suggesting a good working environment and atmosphere. Respondents are a little less confident in their line manager's ability to motivate and inspire them to be more effective in their job (54% positive, though the result is just in line with the UK benchmark).

There is satisfaction that line managers make staff feel that they are an important part of the team (68%), and that they actively encourage the team to work together to do a good job (62%). **My team and work area** includes more views on team working.

Linked to the above finding concerning the good working relationship respondents have with their line manager, three quarters of respondents agree that their line manager is open and honest with them. There is also confidence that line managers are communicating their views on important matters upwards (59% positive, in line with the UK benchmark of 55%).

Performance Management

The majority of respondents are fully involved in setting their own work objectives, which may explain why there is high agreement that they clearly set out what is expected of them in their job. Despite this, just 44% of respondents found that their last review helped them to further identify ways that they can develop.

Some respondents raised concerns about the issue of performance management, particularly around changes made to the appraisal system.

My team and work area

Team Work
Team working is a clear strength in the organisation: respondents are satisfied that their team co-operates to get the work done. It is also positive that 73% of respondents agree that their ideas and suggestions are given fair consideration, suggesting an open and supportive way of working. This may explain why two thirds of respondents agree that their team is proactive in looking for better ways of working with stakeholders.

Broader Objectives
Half of respondents indicate that they contribute to business planning in their area, with a quarter disagreeing. In line with the UK benchmark, respondents show a high understanding of how their work contributes to the objectives of the Scottish Executive, perhaps due to the fact that three quarters are involved in setting their objectives.

My development and career
50% of respondents believe that they have the opportunity for personal development and growth in the organisation (both below UK and Central Government benchmarks). This is a key driver of engagement, so is worth addressing, particularly as 24% of respondents are actively dissatisfied.

Forty-one percent of respondents believe that there are opportunities to progress their career in the organisation, which is in line with the benchmark of 40%. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that over a third of respondents disagree.

My working environment

Fifty two percent of respondents agree that their physical environment allows them to be productive in their job; with 19% disagreeing this is the case. When asked to indicate any concerns about their working environment, temperature and ventilation in the workplace and availability of meeting rooms were noted as of most concern to respondents.

Finance in our organisation

The questions about finance elicited relatively high neutral scores, perhaps because respondents lack experience to comment fully. This was supported by comments made by respondents which centred on suggestions for raising awareness and understanding of financial procedures in the organisation. However, less than a third of respondents feel the SE has a culture of sound financial management (28%), or that the SE makes good use of financial resources (27%).

Policy Development and Delivery

Half of respondents stated that they were involved in the design or delivery of policies. Of those respondents, there is reasonable confidence that the SE works effectively with external stakeholders in the development and delivery of policy (66%), and that internal colleagues with specialisms are involved at appropriate stages (64%).

In 2004 36% of respondents were satisfied that policy making was joined up. In 2005, a similar question was asked: people across policy areas work together in the development and delivery of policies, which was answered more positively (52%).

For the first time in 2005, respondents were asked whether the organisation effectively involves members of the public in the development and delivery of policy. There was a relatively low level of agreement (33%) and higher neutral score (40%). The comments made by respondents suggested that the SE could do more to 'further inform the public of the work the Executive does, and how this affects them'.

Communication in the organisation

Perceptions of communication in the SE are mixed. Whilst there is reasonable satisfaction that the information about what is going on in the organisation is relevant to their work, satisfaction with communication between departments is less favourable. There has been a considerable decline since 2004 in the proportion of respondents who feel that the SE does a good job of keeping employees informed about matters affecting them, down from 70% to 57%, though the result is in line with the overall UK benchmark.

Respondents lack confidence that change is managed or communicated well in the SE. There appears to be a feeling among respondents that the organisation could do more to engage, consult and involve staff.

Senior Management

In contrast to perceptions of line managers, perceptions of senior management are considerably less favourable. When investigating these scores, it is important to note that there are large neutral scores suggesting that senior management does not have sufficient visibility upon which respondents can formulate an opinion. This is supported by the finding that a third of respondents do not feel that senior managers are sufficiently visible; nevertheless the result is in line with the external benchmark, indicating this is a challenge facing other organisations.

The main comments about senior management concerned the need for managers to be 'leaders' and give staff 'direction and leadership', and that they risk being out of touch with the issues facing staff.

The Organisation

Fairness and respect
In line with other UK organisations, there is satisfaction that respondents are treated with fairness and respect (73%), and that individual differences are recognised (72%), though this latter result has fallen since 2004 when 81% responded positively.

Half of respondents believe that they are valued for what they can offer the organisation. Some respondents linked feeling valued to being trusted to do their job, and not overly burdening them with work.

Ten percent of respondents report experiencing bullying, discrimination, harassment or victimisation whilst working for the SE (compared with 6% in 2004). Of those 44% reported the incident, of whom 12% reported formally involving HR, and 31% involved management but not HR.

Poor performance and conflict
Just a quarter of respondents believe that poor performance is dealt with effectively where they work (below the external benchmark of 35%) and in fact over a third disagree that this is the case. Respondents appear unsure that if they have a problem with a colleague/manager that it will be handled effectively in the SE (48% positive, with 36% answering neutrally).

Perceptions of the Scottish Executive

Fifty eight percent of respondents are proud to work for the SE (secondees not asked), just in line with the external benchmark. A third of respondents answered neutrally possibly because they are waiting for the changes that are affecting the SE to settle down, or they don't have any strong feelings either way.

Perceptions of action taken from the Survey

Just 12% of respondents feel that positive action has taken place following the last survey in 2004; a considerable proportion (63%) selected a neutral response suggesting they are unsure what, if any, positive action took place. This was found to be a key driver of employee engagement, so it is important that the survey results are communicated clearly to all, and that visible improvements are made with direct links to the survey findings.

This document (and other Research Findings and Reports) and information about social research in the Scottish Executive may be viewed on the Internet at: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch

The site carries up-to-date information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Executive. Subjects covered include transport, housing, social inclusion, rural affairs, children and young people, education, social work, community care, local government, civil justice, crime and criminal justice, regeneration, planning and women's issues. The site also allows access to information about the Scottish Household Survey.