



Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Survey

Summary of results



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Introduction

The MRS Employee Engagement and Satisfaction Survey (EESS) is part of the on-going MRS People and Talent initiative

The aim of the Survey is to help businesses better understand their individual workforces and to be able to benchmark their performance with other similar businesses across the sector.

The EESS has been designed to cover the key elements of Employee Engagement including Culture, Management, Development & Career, Inclusion & Diversity and Remuneration. The Survey has been designed by MRS using best practice from employee research in consultation with research experts in this field.

For participating organisations the benefits include:

- An opportunity to benchmark their performance to that of the sector, helping businesses to identify what they are doing well, and also identify areas of improvement.
- Measuring the key metrics for businesses in the research sector.
- Helping organisations monitor their performance and highlight priorities for improvement that will have real impact on employee engagement and motivation.

- Releasing staff time and resource from undertaking their own in-house staff surveys.
- Saving costs by participating in the cost-effective MRS survey rather than creating in-house surveys.
- Providing evidence for award recognition, e.g., the MRS Research Live Best Place to Work award.

MRS expects to repeat the Survey at regular intervals (annually or bi-annually) to capture trends over time.

For this first pilot phase, ten research organisations took part. Each participating company was provided with its own customised weblink to the Survey, hosted on Survey Monkey. A weblink ID and participant ID was automatically assigned to each participant by the system to maximise anonymity and confidentiality.

The Survey pilot was launched on 26 February 2024 and held open until 15 April 2024.

Reflecting on the first MRS Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Survey

Pam Armstrong

Partner

Daughters of Sailors

Co-Chair

MRS Agency Leadership and Culture Talent workstream

All in all, reviewing the results from the first MRS Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Survey, it's clearly a positive picture and suggests that those companies who took part are getting a lot of things right. It's worth noting, however, that there is a wide range between the scores across employers on a broad range of the metrics included. Additionally, whilst the results are very encouraging, there are some areas where improvements could be made which would drive up overall levels of satisfaction, notably around career development, where perceptions of having opportunities to grow and access to resources that facilitate individual career growth don't score as well as other metrics.

On the most positive side, what particularly stands out are the proportion of employees who enjoy their job and would recommend their current employer – eight out of ten surveyed in both cases. Alongside this, perceptions of management

– both immediate line managers and senior management – were particularly upbeat. Given that poor management is often cited as a key reason for leaving an employer, this is particularly good news for those focused on the retention of good employees. This also matters as having confidence in management and been able to identify strong role models contribute to overall levels of employee satisfaction and engagement.

In respect to the overall working culture, this is generally viewed as strong and employers are clearly doing a good job communicating the objectives of their business and employees are responding by saying they understand how their own role and work contribute to the overall direction of the company.

The one area where greater emphasis could be placed is on seeking and listening to employee feedback. Interestingly, this emerged as one of the key themes from the original qualitative work¹.

¹ MRS Report: Retention and Recruitment in the Research and Insight Sector: Understanding our Shortages of Talent: <https://www.mrs.org.uk/pdf/Talent%20in%20the%20Research%20Sector%20Report.pdf>

What particularly stands out is the importance of the 'softer' elements of an employee's experience and how well many of those organisations taking part in the study perform on these areas.

Many believed that listening and responding to some of the 'smaller' issues would make a big difference to everyday working lives. Worth remembering that employees understand that not everything can be addressed, but sometimes small changes have a big impact.

It's good news for DEI with a strong set of scores across the questions included to capture employees' perceptions of their company in this regard. Most encouraging was the view that the organisation respects individual differences – a half of those taking part agreed strongly with this, with no evidence of any significant disagreement.

There is some evidence of issues with work-life balance for some, but good news to see that seven out of ten agree they achieve a good balance between work and their private life. Again, reflecting back on the qualitative work undertaken a few years ago, this feels like an area where progress has been made.

Analysing the data to uncover what's important to employees and what drives a high level of overall satisfaction, it's clear that employers shouldn't underestimate the importance of creating a sense of belonging and making sure employees know they are valued. These trump salary and fair rewards as drivers of overall satisfaction. Fortunately, these are two areas that score relatively well, but there is scope to improve (they only just sit in the 'Keep it Up' quadrant) and whilst achieving a strong score on these metrics is good news, they are aspects that need to be nurtured and developed over time.

It's no surprise to see that perceptions of salary are less positive compared with other metrics, but what's interesting to see is that salary and rewards is not a key driver of satisfaction – coming tenth out of the top ten drivers. In many ways this chimes with what we see from a recruitment perspective. Yes, salary is a key consideration, but candidates will often want to ask about the culture of an

organisation and be confident with the overall sense they gain throughout the recruitment process.

Reflecting on the overall picture that is emerging from the first MRS Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Survey, it's really encouraging to see the levels of employee positivity across many aspects that drive overall satisfaction. What particularly stands out is the importance of the 'softer' elements of an employee's experience and how well many of those organisations taking part in the study perform on these areas.

Looking forward, I hope that the positive experiences of those organisations taking part encourages other companies to commit and roll out the EESS amongst their employees. It's often been said that the success of our sector is our people and it would be a real step forward to have a single and consistent measure of the levels of engagement and satisfaction amongst our people, and one that can be tracked over time.

Highlights from the Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Survey

Debrah Harding
Managing Director
MRS

Co-Chair
MRS Agency Leadership and
Culture Talent workstream

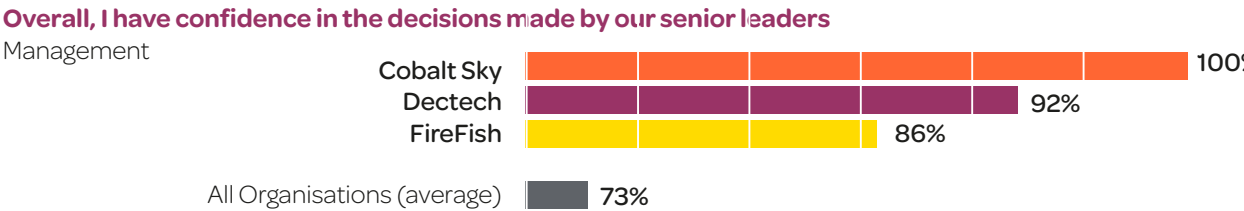
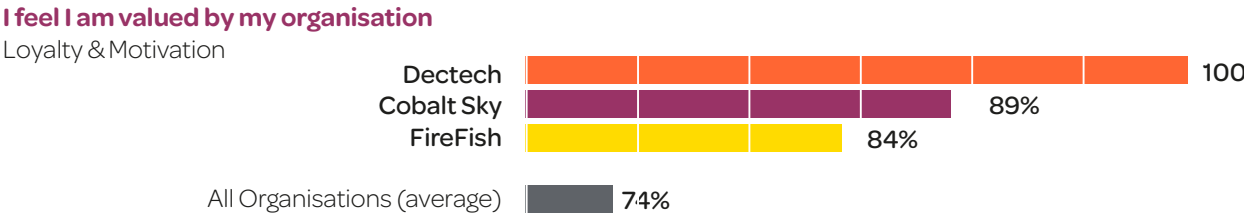
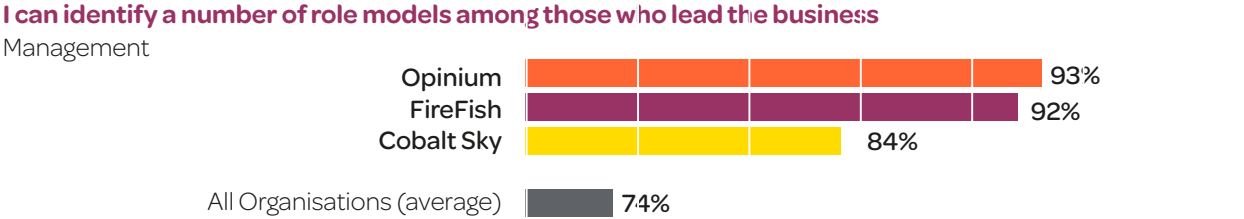
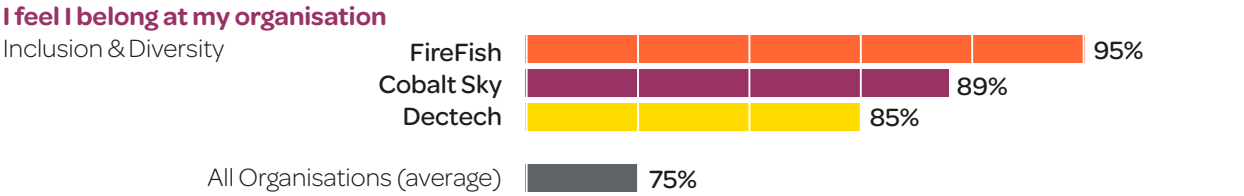
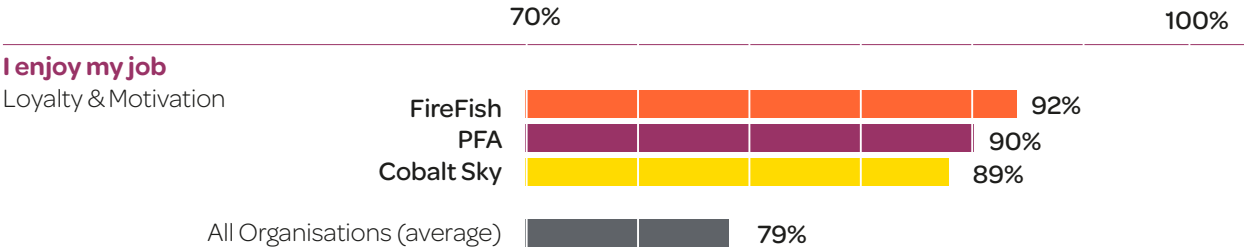
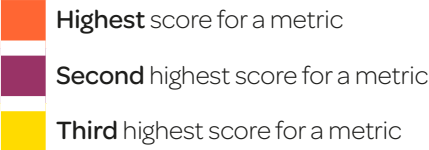
When MRS launched the Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Survey, we planned to publish a selection of 'Top 5' performers from a selection of the metrics gathered for the survey. In the pilot year ten companies took part, and as a result we have decided to publish a small selection of 'Top 3' performers (see page 7). The metrics we have selected focus on the five key drivers identified as being the most important influencing overall employee engagement and satisfaction within the research sector:

1. I enjoy my job
2. I feel I belong at my organisation
3. I can identify a number of role models among those who lead the business
4. I feel I am valued by my organisation
5. Overall, I have confidence in the decisions made by our senior leaders

Congratulations to those companies who performed well in these metrics. I would also like to thank all the companies who took part in the Survey. Without your participation in this launch year, we would not have been able to undertake the survey.

I hope your commitment to measuring and understanding your staff will encourage others to support the survey in the future.

A selection of the top three performers



The metric scores are based upon the 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' percents for each metric.

Methodology

The MRS Employee Engagement Survey's rationale, questionnaire content and analysis procedures were adapted in part from the Civil Service People Survey (CSPS), which has been running each year since 2009.

Questionnaire

The core of the Survey was 31 measures describing employee engagement/satisfaction, rated on 5-point scales – Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

14 measures were derived from the CSPS while the additional 17 measures were developed by the MRS Agency Culture and Leadership Talent workstream. The 31 measures and their rank ordering in terms of participants' agreement with them are shown on page 16.

Response Rate and Base Size for Analysis

10 organisations took part in the Survey: 5 Full Service agencies; 4 Consultancies; and 1 Data Prep/ Analysis firm.

A total of **516** employees across the 10 participating organisations were invited to take part in the Survey and responses from **388** (75%) were received and analysed. Response rates per organisation ranged from 67% to 95%.

Analysing the Responses

The quality and methodology report for the 2023 CSPS reiterates that:

"there is no single definition of employee engagement or standard set of questions. In the Civil Service People Survey we use five questions measuring pride, advocacy, attachment, inspiration and motivation."¹

PRIDE

I am proud when I tell others I am part of my organisation

ADVOCACY

I would recommend my organisation as a great place to work

ATTACHMENT

I feel a strong personal attachment to my organisation

INSPIRATION

My organisation inspires me to do the best in my job

MOTIVATION

My organisation motivates me to help it achieve its objectives

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-people-survey-2023-results/quality-and-methodology-information-for-the-civil-service-people-survey-2023>

...the CSPS used a combination of Factor Analysis and the insights gained from previous studies has been used to group the 31 measures into six 'themes'.

We have used the same questions/measures as the CSPS for the MRS Employee Engagement Survey to yield an overall score or 'Index' of Employee Engagement, as follows:

% who 'Strongly Agree'
x 1.00

% who 'Agree'
x 0.75

% who 'Neither Agree Nor Disagree'
x 0.50

% who 'Disagree'
x 0.25

% who 'Strongly Disagree'
x 0.00²

In addition to this overall Index of Employee Engagement, the CSPS used a combination of Factor Analysis and the insights gained

from previous studies has been used to group the 31 measures into six 'themes'.

- Loyalty & Motivation
- Culture
- Management
- Development & Career
- Inclusion & Diversity
- Remuneration

For each theme we have applied the same weighted scoring as for the overall index to derive an index for that theme.

EES Indexes can range from 0% (where employees rate their engagement with their organisation by 'strongly disagreeing' with all measures) to a score of 100% (where employees 'strongly agree' with all measures).

In addition to the Indexes for the 31 measures, we also show the '% positive' (i.e. percentage 'strongly agree' + percent 'agree') in preference to the more customary mean score calculation (1 to 5; +2 to -2 etc).

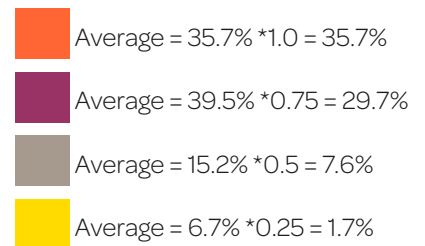
² For the purposes of calculating the Index, 'Strongly Disagree' scores are ignored

Principal findings

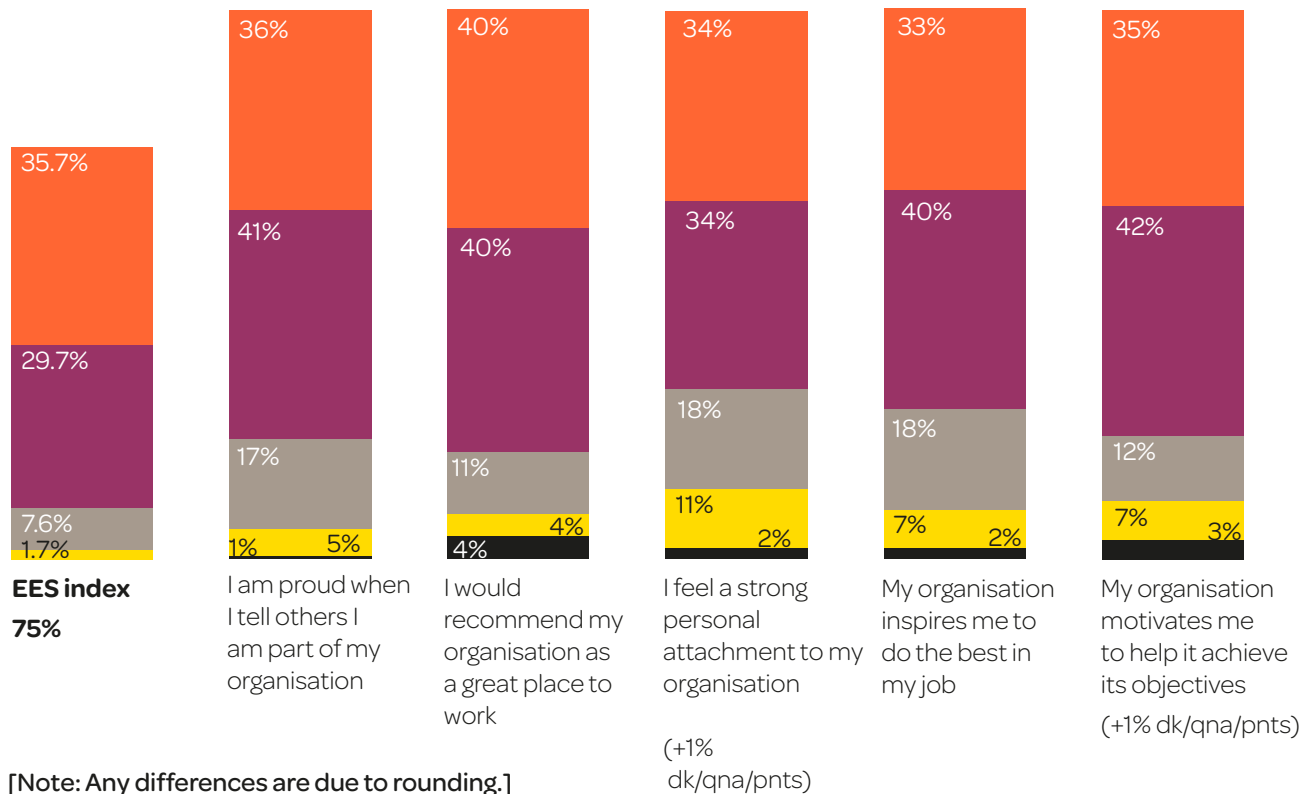
MRS Sector Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Overall Score / Index

Following the scoring described on page 9, the average Employee Engagement & Satisfaction (EES) Index for the 10 participating organisations in this Survey was **75%**. Individual organisations' EES Indexes ranged from 52% to 86%.

As for the extent of positive agreement with the 5 core measures, the average was **75%** too, and individual organisations' average positive agreement scores for the 5 measures ranged from 41% to 91%.



Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Index Average for the 10 Participant Organisations



The most influential Driver is 'I feel I belong at my organisation'. People who agree with this measure tend to have a high overall EES Score.

| | %Positive 'Strongly Agree' +'Agree' | Index** | Min-max by org |
|-----------------------|---|---------|-------------------|
| Employee engagement | | 75 | 52 - 86 |
| Inclusion & diversity | 79 | 77 | 61 - 88 |
| Management | 78 | 76 | 57 - 91 |
| Loyalty & motivation | 76 | 74 | 52 - 85 |
| Culture | 75 | 74 | 54 - 83 |
| Development & career | 71 | 70 | 43 - 83 |
| Remuneration | 49 | 53 | 31 - 70 |

The overall goodness of fit of the ensuing model was very strong - the ten Key Drivers listed overleaf together explain 81% of the variance in overall EES. The Key Drivers are drawn from all of the six Themes of the Survey ('Loyalty & Motivation', 'Culture', 'Development & Career', 'Management', 'Inclusion & Diversity', and 'Remuneration').

The most influential Driver is **'I feel I belong at my organisation'**.

People who agree with this measure tend to have a high overall EES Score. Its relative importance of **0.26** means that it is twice as influential on overall EES as the 5th Driver **'I can identify a number of role models among those who lead the business'** which has a relative importance of **0.13**, and it is more than three times as influential as **'I have access to opportunities to develop and progress within my organisation'** which has a relative importance of **0.07**.

The Driver **'I think my salary and rewards are fair for the work I am undertaking'** is ranked 10th with importance of 0.06 and is the least influential of the Key Drivers, but it still contributes significantly to the model and has significant influence on overall EES.

**Index Scoring

% who Strongly Agree x1.00

% who Agree x0.75

% who Neither Agree nor Disagree x0.50

% who Disagree x0.25

% who Strongly Disagree x0.00

The Six Thematic Indexes

It is evident that the two measures associated with 'Remuneration' attract by far the least engagement/satisfaction. Otherwise, there is broad positive agreement (60% or more) with each of the measures (see page 16 for full list).

Key Driver Analysis

Regression analysis was carried out to identify the questions in the questionnaire which, together, have the most influence on Employee Engagement & Satisfaction (EES).

| Rank | Thematic | Driver | Relative Importance | % Positive ('Strongly Agree'+ 'Agree') |
|------|-----------------------|---|---------------------|--|
| 1 | Inclusion & Diversity | I feel I belong at my organisation | 0.26 | 75% |
| 2 | Loyalty & Motivation | I feel I am valued by my organisation | 0.22 | 72% |
| 3 | Management | Overall, I have confidence in the decisions made by our senior leaders | 0.15 | 72% |
| 4 | Loyalty & Motivation | I enjoy my job | 0.14 | 79% |
| 5 | Management | I can identify a number of role models among those who lead the business | 0.13 | 75% |
| 6 | Inclusion & Diversity | My organisation cares about my wellbeing | 0.12 | 81% |
| 7 | Culture | I have a clear understanding of our organisational objectives | 0.09 | 81% |
| 8 | Development | I have access to opportunities to develop and progress within my organisation | 0.07 | 69% |
| 9 | Culture | I am able to be myself when I am at work | 0.06 | 85% |
| 10 | Remuneration | I think my salary and rewards are fair for the work I am undertaking | 0.06 | 51% |

Key Driver Analysis 1.

This analysis was carried out for all 388 participants.



AVERAGE EES by Employee Type

EES does vary across role – with management/director/board having the highest levels of engagement (average EES 87%) while marketing/business development employees reported the lowest average EES levels (68%). Similarly, across level / grade; directors had the highest average engagement (86%) and researchers the lowest (69%).

Average EES by Gender / Age

Two thirds of those self-classifying as either female or male specified female, while 53% were aged under 35.

Females and males returned very similar average EES scores, whereas older age groups were much more likely than younger ones to return a favourable average EES score.

| Total Respondents = 388 | Valid base | Average EES |
|-------------------------|------------|-------------|
|-------------------------|------------|-------------|

What is your role in your organisation?

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Management / Director / Board | 80 | 87% |
| Finance / HR | 19 | 81% |
| Research Asst. / Exec. / Manager | 143 | 72% |
| Operations | 64 | 70% |
| Marketing / Business Development | 13 | 68% |
| Other | 38 | 71% |
| Prefer not to say | 31 | |

What level / grade are you?

| | | |
|-----------------------|----|-----|
| Director | 86 | 86% |
| Manager | 86 | 78% |
| Interviewer / Support | 38 | 76% |
| Assistant | 29 | 71% |
| Researcher | 95 | 69% |
| Prefer not to say | 54 | |

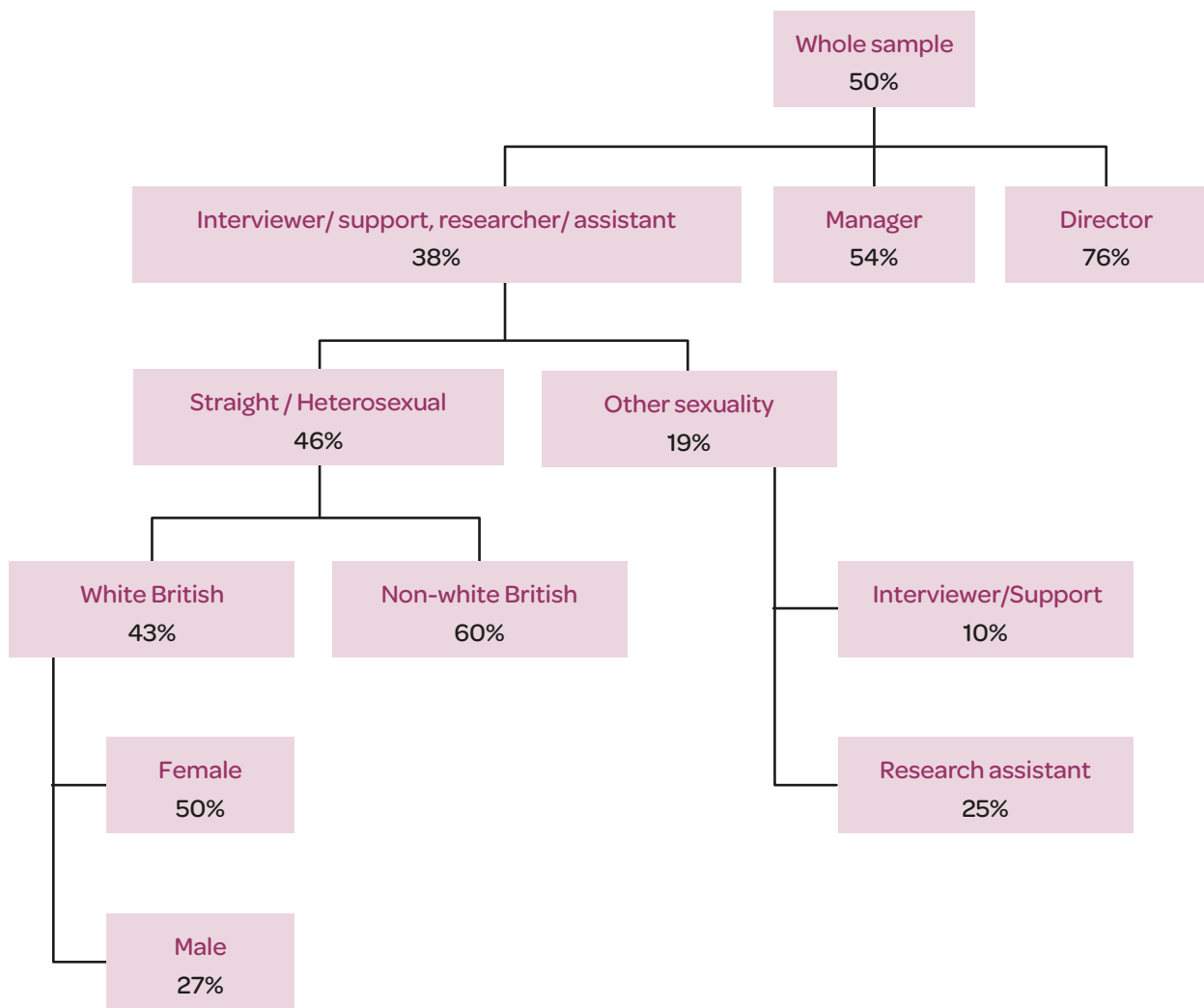
| Total Respondents = 388 | Valid base | Average EES |
|-------------------------|------------|-------------|
|-------------------------|------------|-------------|

What is your gender?

| | | |
|--------|-----|-----|
| Female | 244 | 76% |
| Male | 120 | 75% |

What is your age ?

| | | |
|-------|-----|-----|
| 16-24 | 35 | 68% |
| 25-34 | 145 | 73% |
| 35-44 | 78 | 79% |
| 45-54 | 45 | 84% |
| 55-64 | 29 | 84% |
| 65+ | 9 | 90% |



CHAID Analysis

CHAID Analysis¹ was deployed to indicate which combination of employee subgroups have the highest and lowest EES. The analysis was restricted to the sixty percent of participants with an average EES of greater than 80% (i.e. gave a high rating across the 5 overall EES metrics).

¹ Chi-square Automatic Interaction Detection

The analysis examines the patterns of responses across all profile factors (age, gender, role, level, full vs part time etc) to identify which subgroup combinations have the greatest influence on EES.

The most important profile factor is employment level with those in Director roles having the greatest proportion with high EES (seventy six percent reporting an average EES greater than 80%). Among

the non-Director subgroup, those employees who describe themselves as having a sexuality other than straight/heterosexual reported lower EES, with just 19% reporting an average EES greater than 80%.

Another group who reported lower EES scores are those in research/ support roles who are straight/ heterosexual, white British and male – in this subgroup only 27% have a high average EES of above 80%.

Employee Engagement and Satisfaction in research is generally strong and certainly much higher than in the Civil Service.

Civil Service People Survey

356,715 civil servants from 103 organisations responded to the 2023 CSPS, yielding an overall response rate of 65%. The CSPS thus offers a useful benchmark for comparison, albeit it describes a group of large public sector corporate bodies rather than the smaller enterprises responding to the MRS Survey.

Overall, the average proportion who responded positively (i.e., 'Strongly Agree or 'Agree') to the 14 common metrics between CSPS and the research sector was significantly higher for the research sector (75% vs. 61%), suggesting that Employee Engagement and Satisfaction in research is generally strong and certainly much higher than in the Civil Service.

It is particularly noteworthy that most of the biggest CSPS – research sector gaps occur on those metrics which the Civil Service itself has determined to be the core drivers of Employee Engagement.

| | Civil Service People Survey 2023 | MRS Survey | Diff | Rank |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|------|
| Employee Engagement Index | 61% | 75% | 14% | |
| Core Metrics | %'Strongly Agree'+%'Agree' | %'Strongly Agree'+%'Agree' | | |
| I am proud when I tell others I am part of my organisation. | 58% | 77% | 19% | 7 |
| I would recommend my organisation as a great place to work. | 57% | 80% | 23% | 3 |
| I feel a strong personal attachment to my organisation. | 48% | 68% | 20% | 6 |
| My organisation inspires me to do the best in my job. | 50% | 73% | 23% | 4 |
| My organisation motivates me to help it achieve its objectives.. | 48% | 77% | 29% | 1 |

The '% Positives' range from the near full agreement with 'I understand how my work contributes to my organisation's objectives' (89% Strongly Agree / Agree), and 'I think my organisation respects individual

differences' (88%), to the much lower agreement with 'I think my salary and rewards are fair for the work I am undertaking' (54%), and 43% concurring with 'My salary and rewards are fair and consistent with other employees'.

| | Civil service people survey 2023 | MRS survey | Difference |
|--|--|------------|------------|
| | Index | Index | |
| Employee Engagement Index (5 Core metrics as indicated below with a dot - •) | 61% | 75% | 14% |

| Loyalty & Motivation | %'Strongly Agree '+'Agree' | %'Strongly Agree' '+'Agree' | Ranking | Difference | Ranking |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|------------|---------|
| I am proud when I tell others I am part of my organisation • | 58% | 77% | 11 | 19% | 7 |
| I would recommend my organisation as a great place to work • | 57% | 80% | 9 | 23% | 3 |
| I feel a strong personal attachment to my organisation • | 48% | 68% | 26 | 20% | 6 |
| My organisation inspires me to do the best in my job • | 50% | 73% | 21 | 23% | 4 |
| My organisation motivates me to help it achieve its objectives • | 48% | 77% | 12 | 29% | 1 |
| I enjoy my job. | | 79% | 10 | | |
| I feel I am valued by my organisation. | | 74% | 18 | | |

Culture

| | | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|----|-----|----|
| I have a clear understanding of our organisational objectives. | 80% | 81% | 7 | 1% | 11 |
| I understand how my work contributes to my organisation's objectives. | 84% | 89% | 1 | 5% | 10 |
| I have the opportunity to contribute my views before decisions are made that affect me. | 35% | 63% | 28 | 28% | 2 |
| I feel I have enough time to do my job properly. | | 63% | 29 | | |
| I am able to be myself when I am at work. | | 86% | 3 | | |
| I believe my feedback and input is sought and acted upon. | | 68% | 27 | | |

| | Civil service people survey 2023 | MRS survey | Difference | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------|------------|-----|-----------------------|
| | Index | Index | | | |
| Management | '%Strongly Agree +%Agree' | '%Strongly Agree' +%Agree' | Ranking | | Difference Ranking |
| I believe the actions of our senior team are consistent with my organisation's values. | 61% | 75% | 15 | 14% | 8 |
| Overall, I have confidence in the decisions made by our senior leaders. [my organisation's senior managers] | 51% | 73% | 20 | 22% | 5 |
| I believe the actions of my line manager are consistent with my organisation's values. | | 84% | 4 | | |
| I receive clear and frequent communication about the business. | | 81% | 8 | | |
| I can identify a number of role models among those who lead the business. | | 74% | 19 | | |
| Development & Career | | | | | |
| I receive regular feedback on my performance. | 72% | 70% | 24 | -2% | 13 |
| I have access to opportunities to develop and progress within my organisation. | | 69% | 25 | | |
| I have access to appropriate resources to enable me to develop my knowledge and skills. | | 71% | 23 | | |
| My strengths are valued by my organisation. | | 75% | 17 | | |

| | Civil service people survey 2023 | MRS survey | Difference | | |
|---|--|--------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|
| | Index | Index | | | |
| Inclusion & Diversity | %'Strongly Agree '+'Agree' | %'Strongly Agree' '+'Agree' | Ranking | | Difference Ranking |
| My organisation cares about my wellbeing. | | 82% | 6 | | |
| I achieve a good balance between my work life and my private life. | 73% | 73% | 22 | 0% | 12 |
| I think my organisation respects individual differences. (e.g. cultures, working styles, backgrounds, ideas etc) | 78% | 88% | 2 | 10% | 9 |
| My organisation is committed to creating a diverse workplace. | 78% | 75% | 14 | -3% | 14 |
| My organisation is committed to creating an inclusive workplace. | | 83% | 5 | | |
| I can choose where and how I undertake my role in a way that works best for me. | | 77% | 13 | | |
| I feel I belong at my organisation. | | 75% | 16 | | |
| Remuneration | | | | | |
| I think my salary and rewards are fair for the work I am undertaking. | | 54% | 30 | | |
| My salary and rewards are fair and consistent with other employees. | | 43% | 31 | | |
| AVERAGE % POSITIVE for the 14 metrics in common to both Surveys | 62% | 76% | | 14% | |

Annex A:

About the Employee Engagement & Satisfaction Questionnaire

The survey is split into seven sections covering the following themes:

Me & my employer

There are questions about employees' working arrangements – Part Time/Full Time etc, type of company the work for. How they feel about their role within their organisation, their perceived value, their recommendation as an employer.

Culture

There are questions about organisational objectives, being able to contribute views, time to complete jobs, being yourself and obtaining feedback.

The management at your organisation

There are questions about senior team/line managers actions being in line with organisational values, clear & frequent communications and role models within the business.

Your development

There are questions about feedback on performance, development opportunities, access to resources, recognition of strengths and frequency of development needs/goals.

Inclusion and diversity

There are questions about wellbeing, work life balance, respect for different cultures, commitment to a diverse/inclusive workplace and opportunity for change to improve life at the organisation.

Your remuneration

There are questions about employees view on salary/rewards in relation to their role, fair and consistent with fellow employees.

About you

There are questions about employees' roles within organisations, contract types, management responsibilities, levels within organisations, inclusion & diversity, demographics.

Acknowledgments

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