

2017 Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey Key Messages



What do the results tell us about the Civil Service in 2017 compared to 2015?

1. The overall results of the 2017 Civil Service survey are very positive:

The results of the survey are very positive overall and reflect the impact of the interventions implemented by the Civil Service Renewal Programme, the Civil Service Management Board and departmental action plans. All scores have increased across the 24 themes, with the exception of Competence and Well-being.

These results show the value of regularly surveying staff followed by acting on their feedback.

2. Civil Servants continue to feel highly engaged:

A key aim of this survey was to measure levels of engagement. Engagement levels across the Civil Service continue to be high (Engagement: 72%) and show that civil servants have a strong sense of connection with their work. Staff also feel that their work has value, meaning and purpose. The increase in response rate from 39% in 2015 to 56% in 2017 is an indicator of the increase in engagement by civil servants and an appreciation of the value of consultation and subsequent action.

3. Staff feel an increased level of support from their organisations:

Increases are most evident in organisational areas for example improvements in Organisational Support, Manager Career Support, Career Development and Mobility, Leadership and Learning and Development. These improvements reflect the initiatives which have taken place across the Civil Service since the 2015 Survey. Despite the increase in scores across these themes, there is evidence that further action is required. In addition, although staff are positive about the level of support provided by their organisation, they do not experience a sense of commitment to their organisation.

4. Themes which had lower scores in 2015 have experienced the highest increases:

Themes with lower scores in the 2015 Employee Engagement Survey generally saw the largest increases. The improvements in these challenging areas are evidence of ongoing measures and initiatives made across Departments/Organisations following the 2015 Survey.

5. Civil servants continue to feel more positive about their own work and areas over which they have individual control:

The results show that civil servants continue to feel more positive about their own work and areas over which they have individual control, for example Competence, Employee Engagement and Autonomy. Civil servants are highly resilient and are able to deal with work related challenges, they have a belief in their own ability to carry out the work required for their role and they feel they have the right skills for their role.

6. Staff still feel less positive about their organisations than their own individual areas of work:

While the results suggest that civil servants are confident about their own area of work, they are still markedly less positive about their organisational domain. They have concerns about the management of underperformance and climates of involvement and innovation in their organisations. These findings, whilst showing improvements since 2015, contrast with civil servants' positive view of their own work and their immediate working environment.

7. Staff continue to feel that there is not a sufficient culture of involvement:

The result for Involvement Climate is the joint lowest result in the 2017 CSEES. This measures the extent to which civil servants feel that they are involved openly in decision making in their organisation. The result shows that only a minority of civil servants feel openly involved in decision making in their Department or Office, particularly those at lower grades.

8. Staff still feel that the public does not value their contribution:

Although staff are increasingly aware of the impact of their work on the general public, despite some improvement, they feel that this contribution is not valued by the wider public. There is evidence of a disparity in relation to the extent to which civil servants feel that their work has an impact on the public and their perception of the value placed by the public on their work. This challenging finding is also in stark contrast to the results of the Civil Service Customer Service Survey 2017 and previous iterations which consistently showed that citizens are satisfied with the Civil Service.

9. Staff at lower grades feel less positive than those at higher grades:

There are significant differences of perceptions between grades across some of the themes, e.g. Commitment to the Organisation, Autonomy and Meaningfulness. In general, the higher the grade the more positive the result which may reflect a higher level of autonomy at more senior levels and a hierarchical culture in the Civil Service.

10. Staff still do not feel their organisation supports a culture of innovation:

The result shows that staff do not believe that ideas are readily accepted in their organisation. They believe that their organisations are not quick to spot the need to do things differently and are not sufficiently searching for new ways of solving problems. There is a disparity across the grades with higher results at senior grades, decreasing to lower results at lower grades which may indicate that staff at higher grades feel they have more freedom and space to be innovative.

11. Staff do not see any meaningful improvements in the management of poor performance:

This result is one of the lowest in the survey and one of the more challenging results to emerge. The majority of staff continue to feel that poor performance is not being effectively addressed throughout their departments. There is a disparity across age profiles with younger staff having significantly more positive views with regard to how performance is managed.

12. Internationally, the Irish Civil Service compares favourably in some areas but not in all:

Internationally, the Irish Civil Service compares favourably in some areas but not in all. The results for Engagement, Citizen Impact and Commitment to Civil Service Renewal compare favourably with international civil service survey results. For some themes a direct international comparison is unavailable. However there are a number of areas where the score is less favourable than our international counterparts for example Organisational Support, Manager Career Support, Career Development and Mobility and Job Skills Match. These are important areas that require further attention and focus going forward.