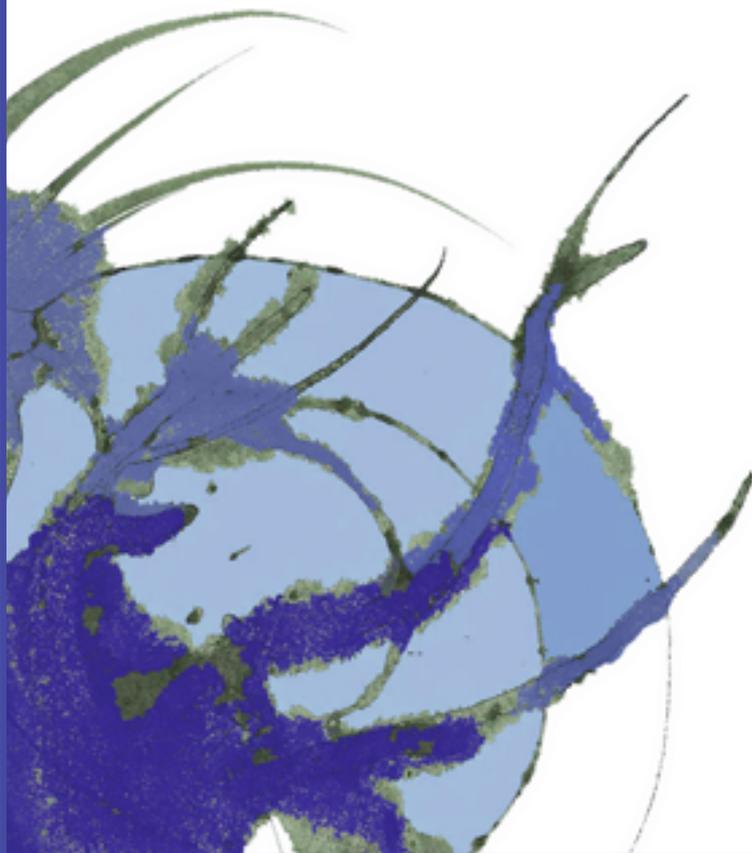


birdsong
charity consulting

**Third
Sector**

The calm between two storms

Charity Pulse 2016
Staff Survey Report



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Introduction

The twelve-months between the 2015 and 2016 *Charity Pulse* surveys were witness to some of the most turbulent times our sector has ever seen. The external scrutiny and shocking headlines will have touched everyone working for a charity and have undoubtedly diverted untold hours of leadership time and resources.

But what impact have these events had on how charity people feel about their jobs? Are they still proud to work for their charity and do they still have confidence in their leaders?

With the UK's vote to leave the EU fresh in our minds as we prepare this report, it feels like the twelve-month view of charity staff satisfaction covered by this analysis could well be *The calm between two storms*.

Ten years on

To celebrate the tenth annual *Charity Pulse* survey, we have also taken a longer-term view this year, to identify ten year trends in voluntary sector staff engagement and satisfaction. These findings are set out in a separate report *Ten years on* available for free download from our website: birdsong.co.uk.

About this report

This report is divided into the following sections:

- This year's *Charity Pulse* findings at a glance
- What has changed in 2016?
- What is unchanged in 2016?
- Feeling the strain?
- Comparison of manager and non-manager responses
- About *Charity Pulse*

In the charts that follow the percentage figures refer to the sum of the *Agree* and *Strongly agree* responses to each survey question, unless otherwise indicated.

This year's Charity Pulse findings at a glance

The story of UK charity staff satisfaction in 2016 is one of recovery from the dip we saw last year. In 2015 we saw drops in satisfaction in several important areas of the survey. In 2016, every one of these drops has been reversed, returning us to the more positive 2014 levels.

Across most areas of the survey, however, there have been no significant changes this year. Most surprisingly perhaps, after the scrutiny and criticism that the sector endured in 2015/16, we have seen *no significant drops* in charity staff satisfaction.

So what are these results telling us?

There are a number of possibilities:

- The hostile external climate is having little effect on charity people's day-to-day working experience
- Charity leaders are working hard to minimise the impact of external factors on their people
- We would be seeing a much healthier picture this year, were it not for our "*annus horribilis*"
- More pressing factors, such as job security and the quality of people management are more important contributors to job satisfaction

The reality, of course, will be different for each organisation and is likely to be a combination of these factors.

2016 headlines

Comparing the results of the 2016 *Charity Pulse* survey with those from 2015, the most significant changes are:

- Ten areas show improvement on 2015, including aspects of internal communications, people management and staff morale
- Responses to 36 out of 46 questions show no change over the twelve-month period
- There are no significant reductions in charity staff satisfaction in 2016
- There are signs, however, that increased workloads and increasing pressure to deliver results are having an impact

Ten-year headlines

As far as charity staff are concerned, the ten-year view is not a positive one:

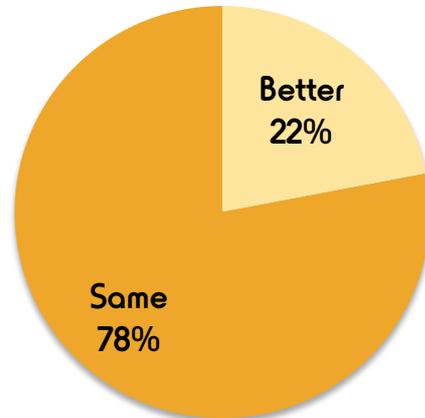
- It reveals charity staff satisfaction in long term decline since 2007
- Thirteen areas of the survey score significantly worse than in 2007, including satisfaction with workloads, training, pay and propensity to recommend employer
- 2012 was a particular low point
- There are no areas of the survey that score more positively than ten years ago

What has changed in 2016?

The survey results reveal no significant reductions in charity staff satisfaction in 2016.

Ten areas show significant improvement compared with 2015. Each of these improvements, however, is only reversing the decline seen last year.

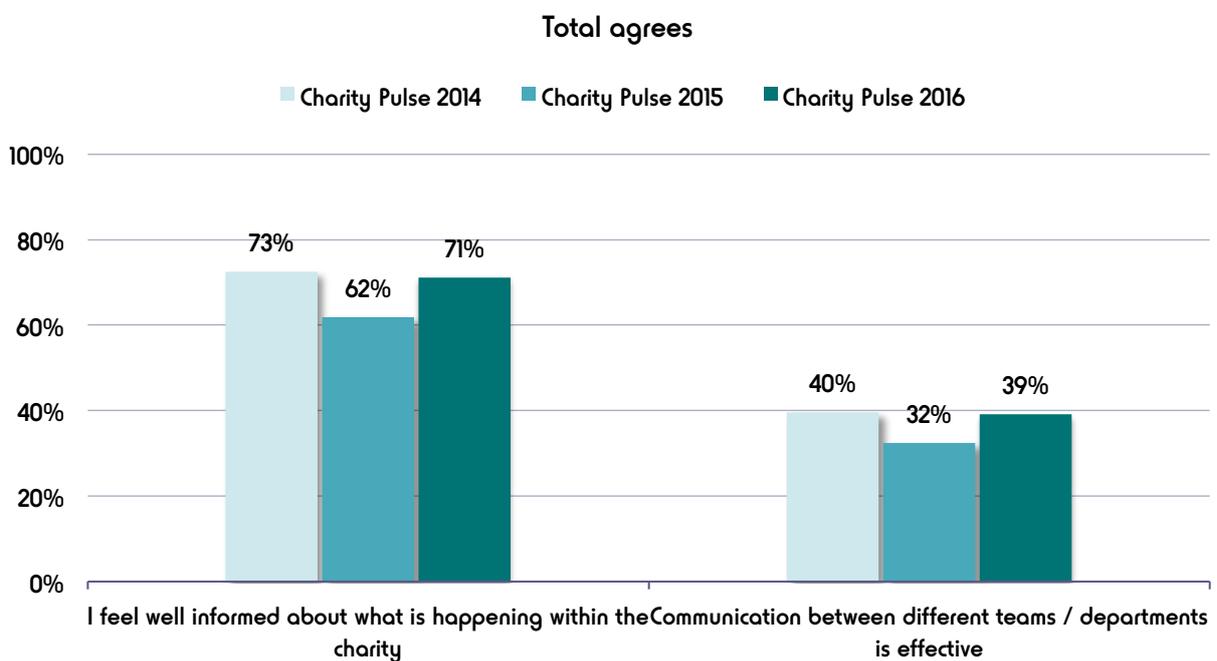
Responses to 36 out of 46 questions show no change over the 12 month period.



What has improved?

Internal Communications

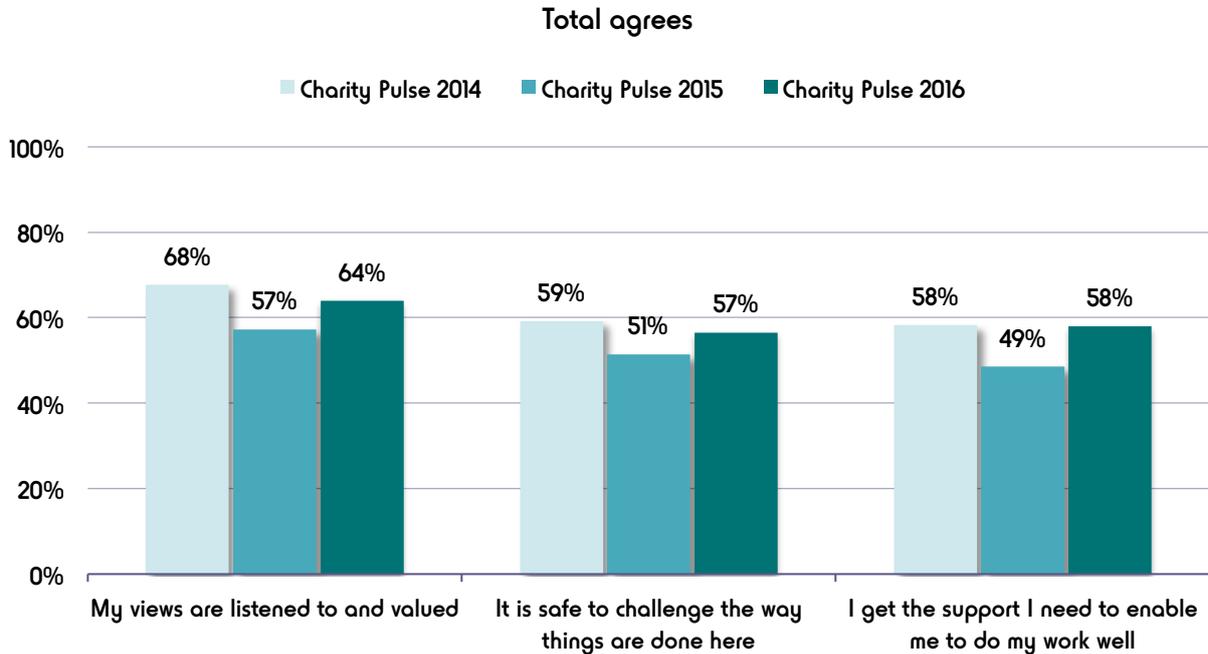
The first area to show improvement this year is internal communication. Staff are feeling better informed about what is going on at their charity and there has been some improvement in the effectiveness of communications between different teams and departments.



People Management

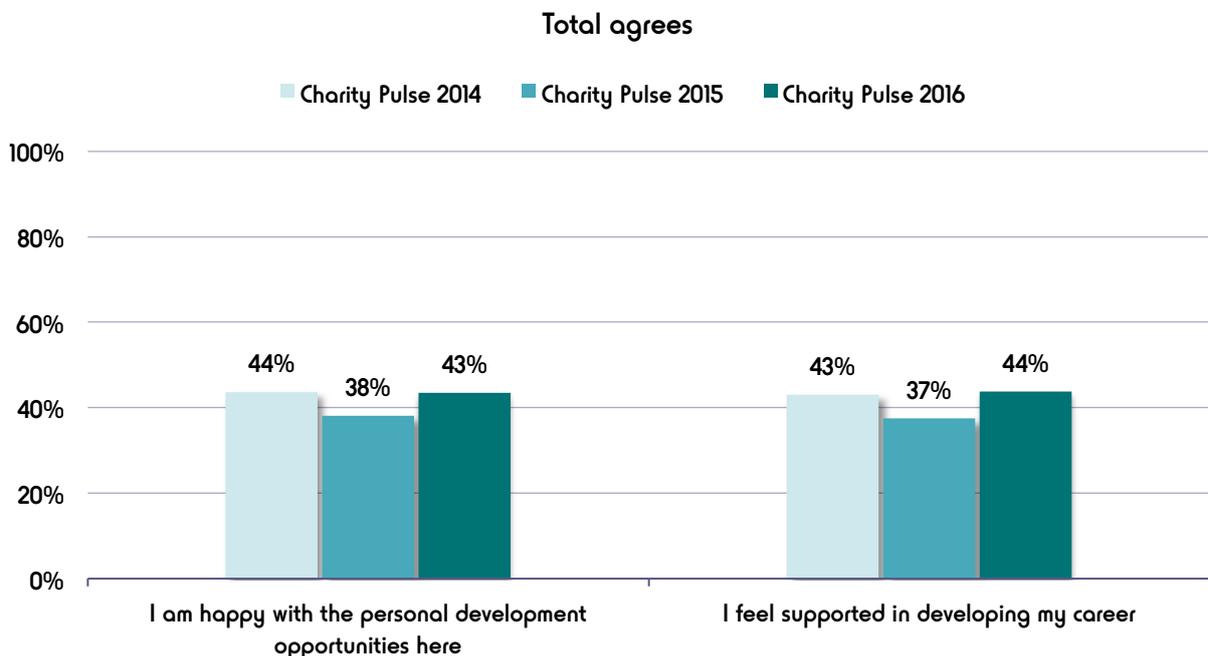
Survey questions concerning people management scored well this year, with three areas showing a significant uplift compared to a year ago.

Charity people are happier that their views are being listened to and valued, and feel safer to challenge the way things are done at their organisation. They are also more likely to be getting the support they need to do a good job that they were in 2015.



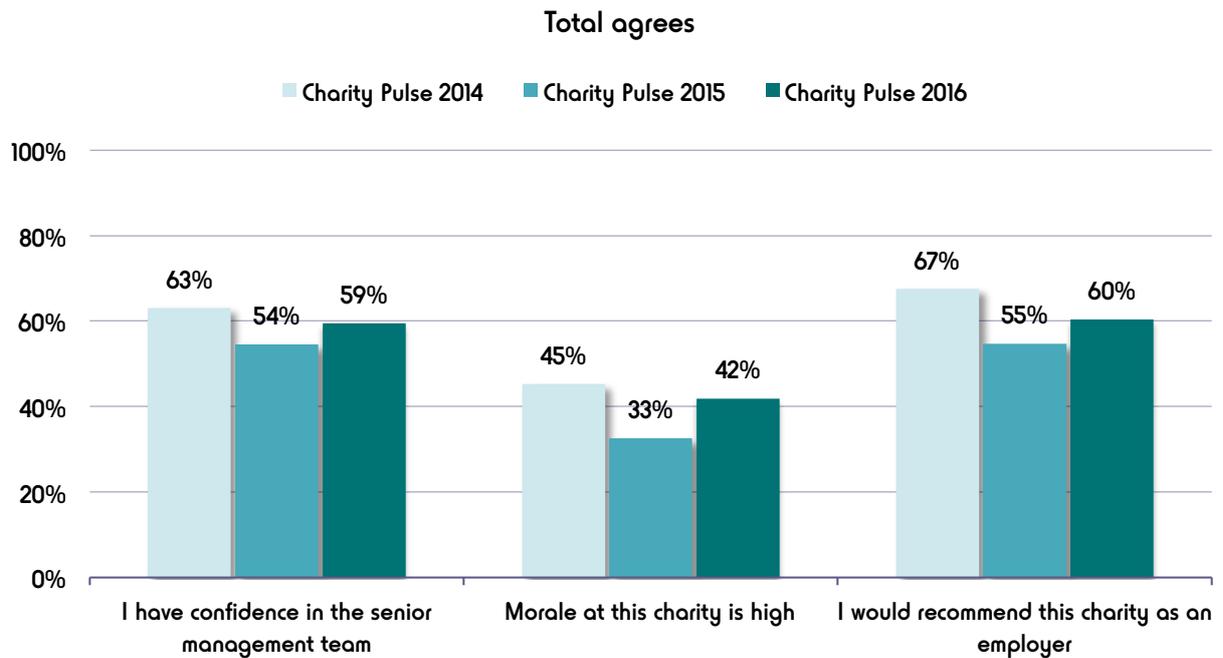
Personal Development

It is good to see opinions of staff development improving. Individuals are feeling more positive about the personal development opportunities available to them, and happier with the support they are receiving in developing their careers.



Overall

These upward trends are resulting in increased confidence in charities' senior management teams and improved morale among staff. There is also a welcome increase in the proportion of survey respondents who would recommend their charity as an employer.

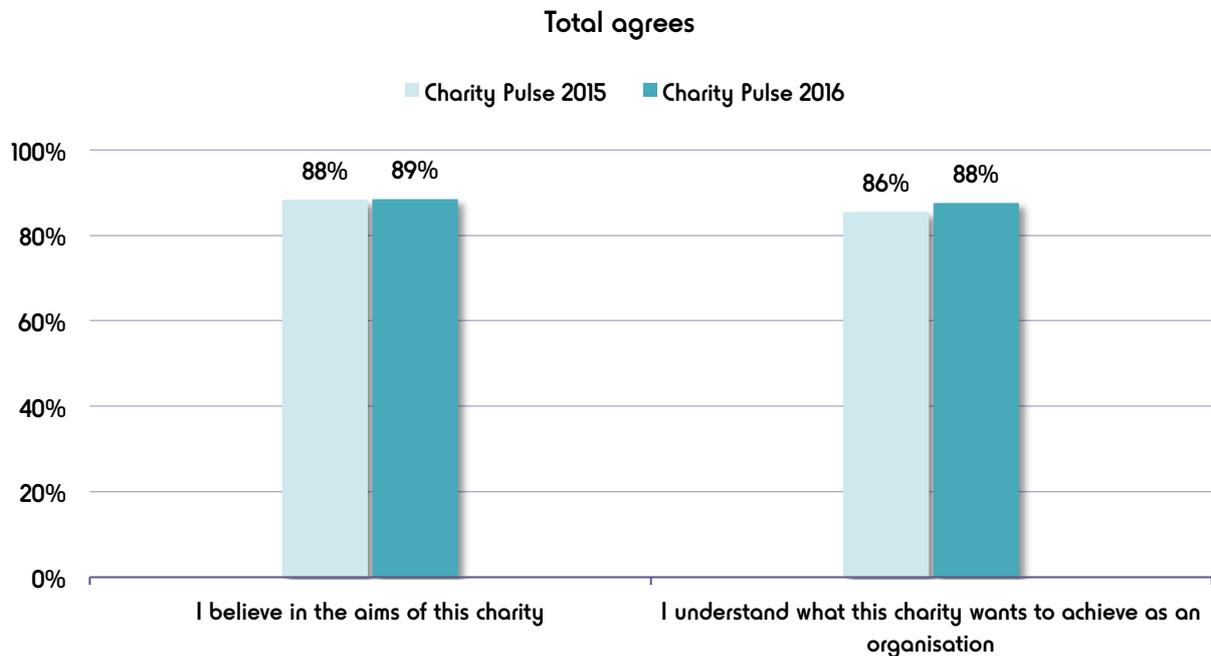


However, as can be clearly seen from these charts, the 2016 improvements are only getting us back to where we were in 2014. Or in some cases, not quite getting us there...

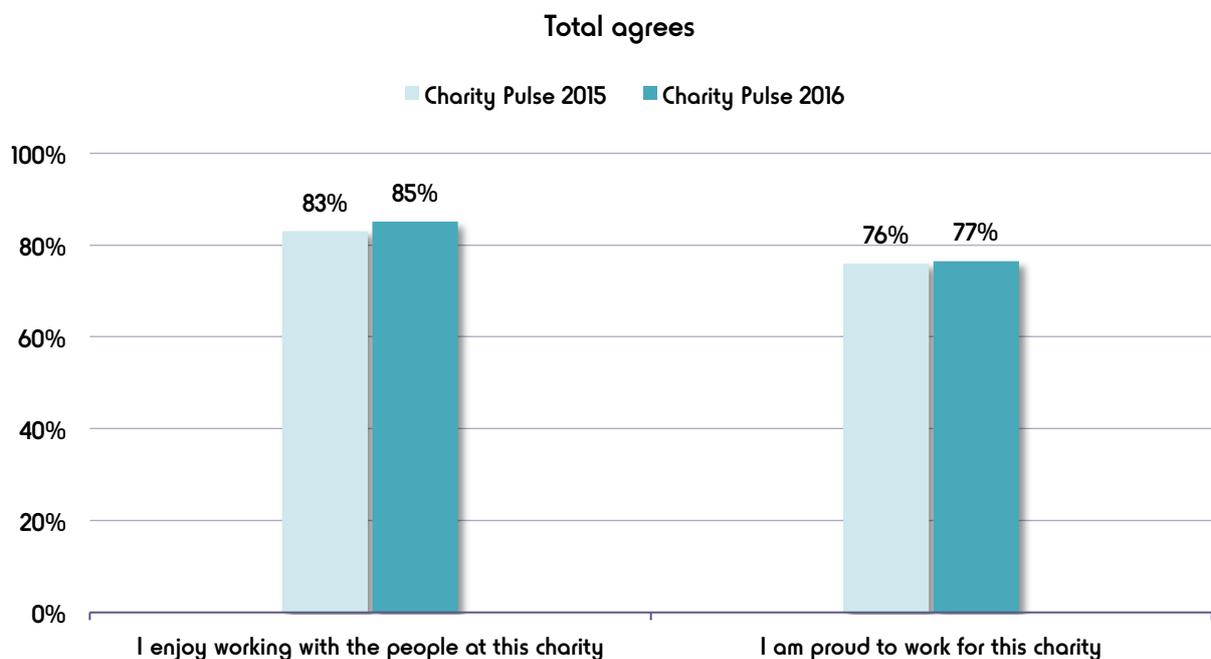
What is unchanged in 2016?

Some areas of the survey return consistently positive responses year in, year out, whatever appears to be going on in the outside world. This trend continues in 2016.

These consistently high scoring areas include the 89% of respondents who believe in the aims of their charity and the 88% who are clear what their charity is setting out to achieve.

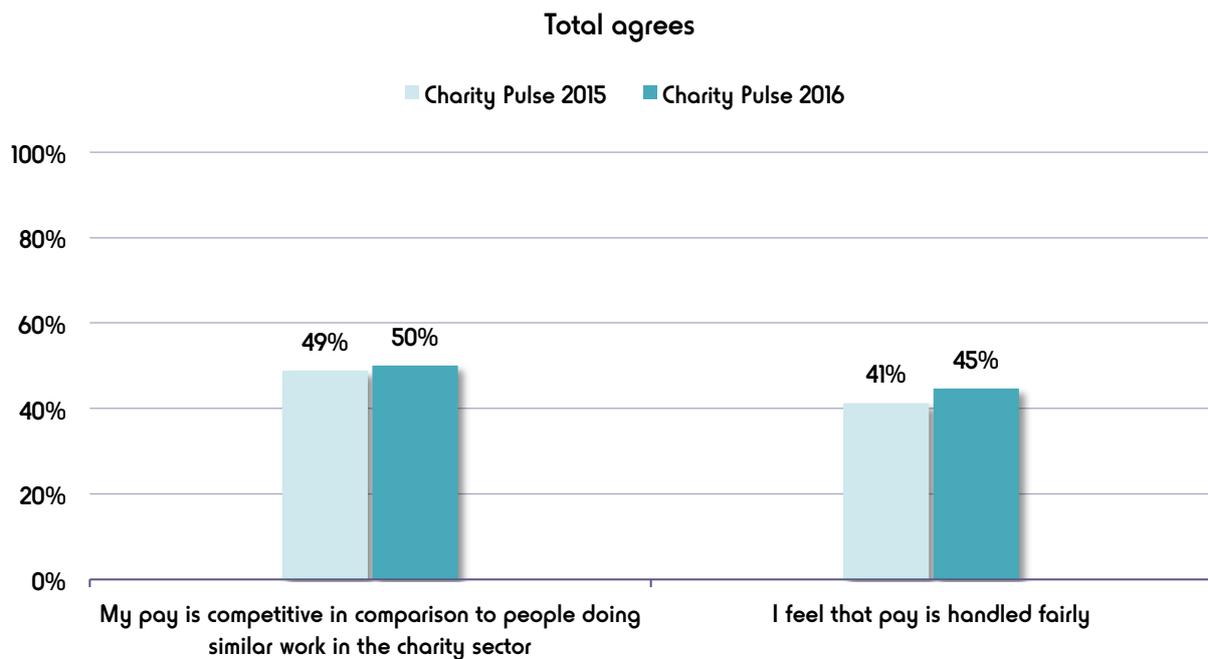
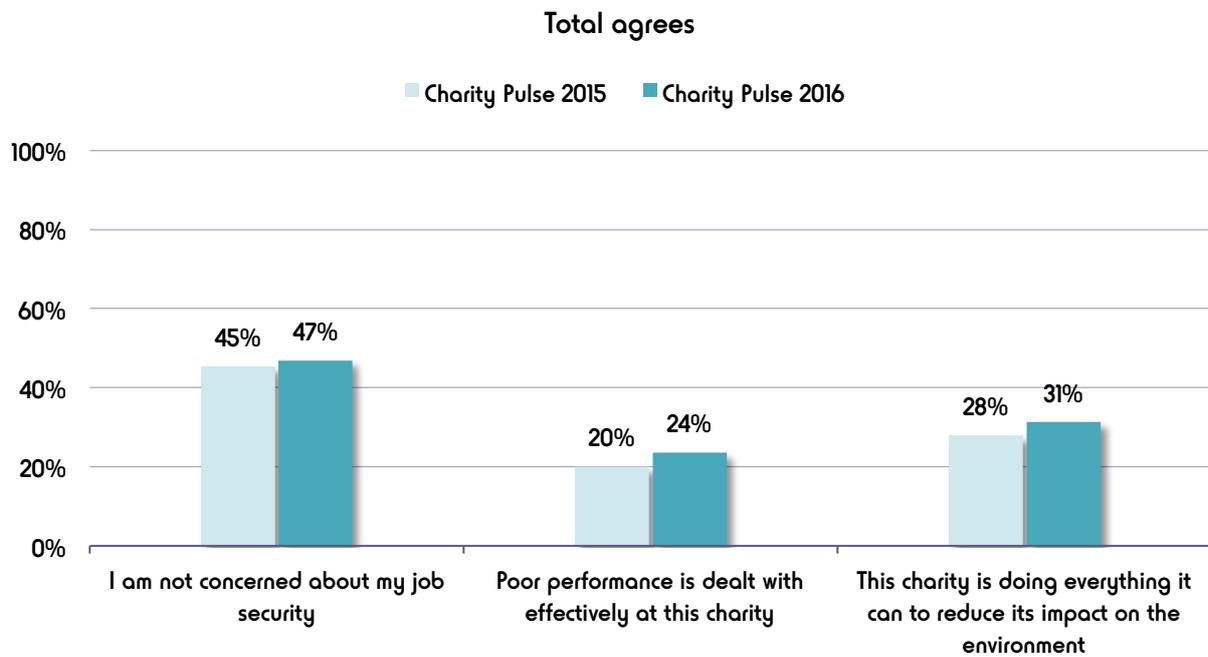


They also include the 85% of staff who enjoy working with their colleagues and the 77% who are proud to work for their charity.



On the other hand, other areas that have shown little change this year, reveal low scoring areas of satisfaction where charities have made slow - or no - progress in recent years.

These areas include job security, handling poor performance, reducing the charity's impact on the environment and the competitiveness and fairness of pay.

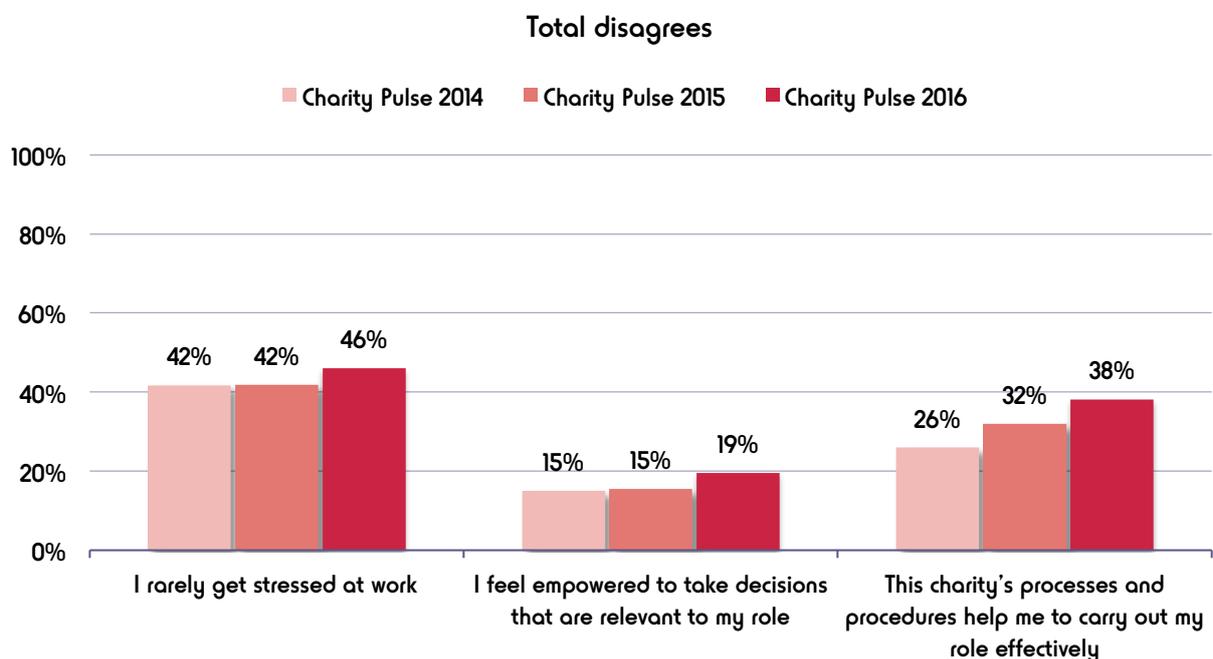
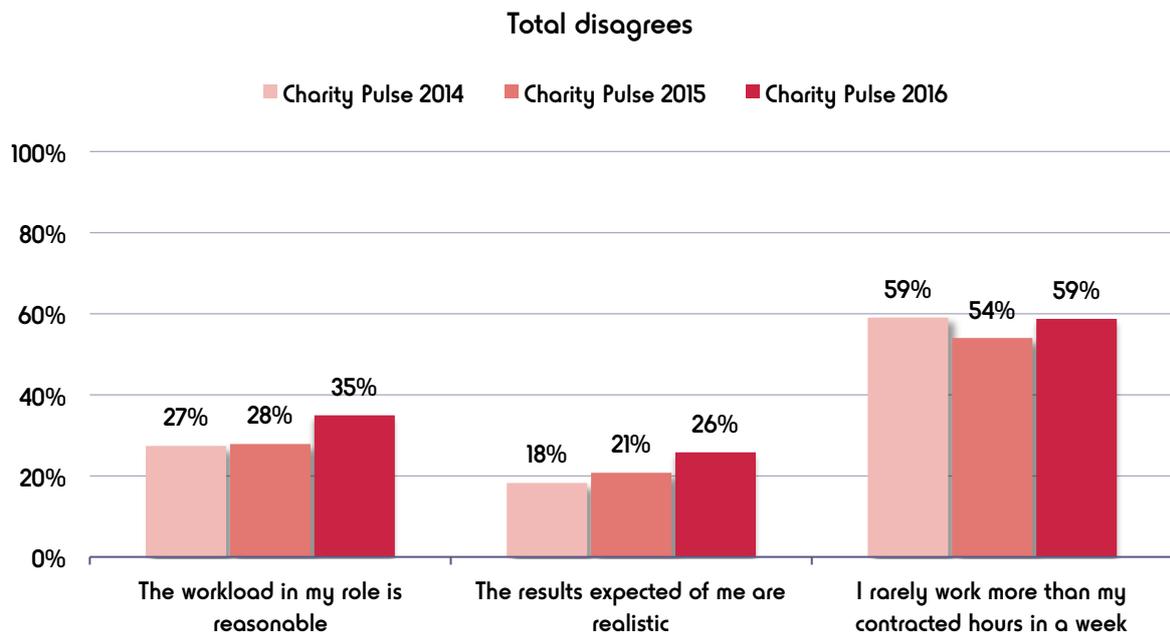


Feeling the strain?

Although there are no significant declines in charity staff satisfaction across this year's survey, looking at the *Disagree* responses to the survey, we can see that there are six areas showing increases in *dissatisfaction*.

Although these increases in the *Disagree* responses to the survey questions are small, taken together they are worthy of consideration. The proportion of people who do not agree that they rarely get stressed at work, suggest that increasing workloads and less realistic expectations of staff are taking their toll.

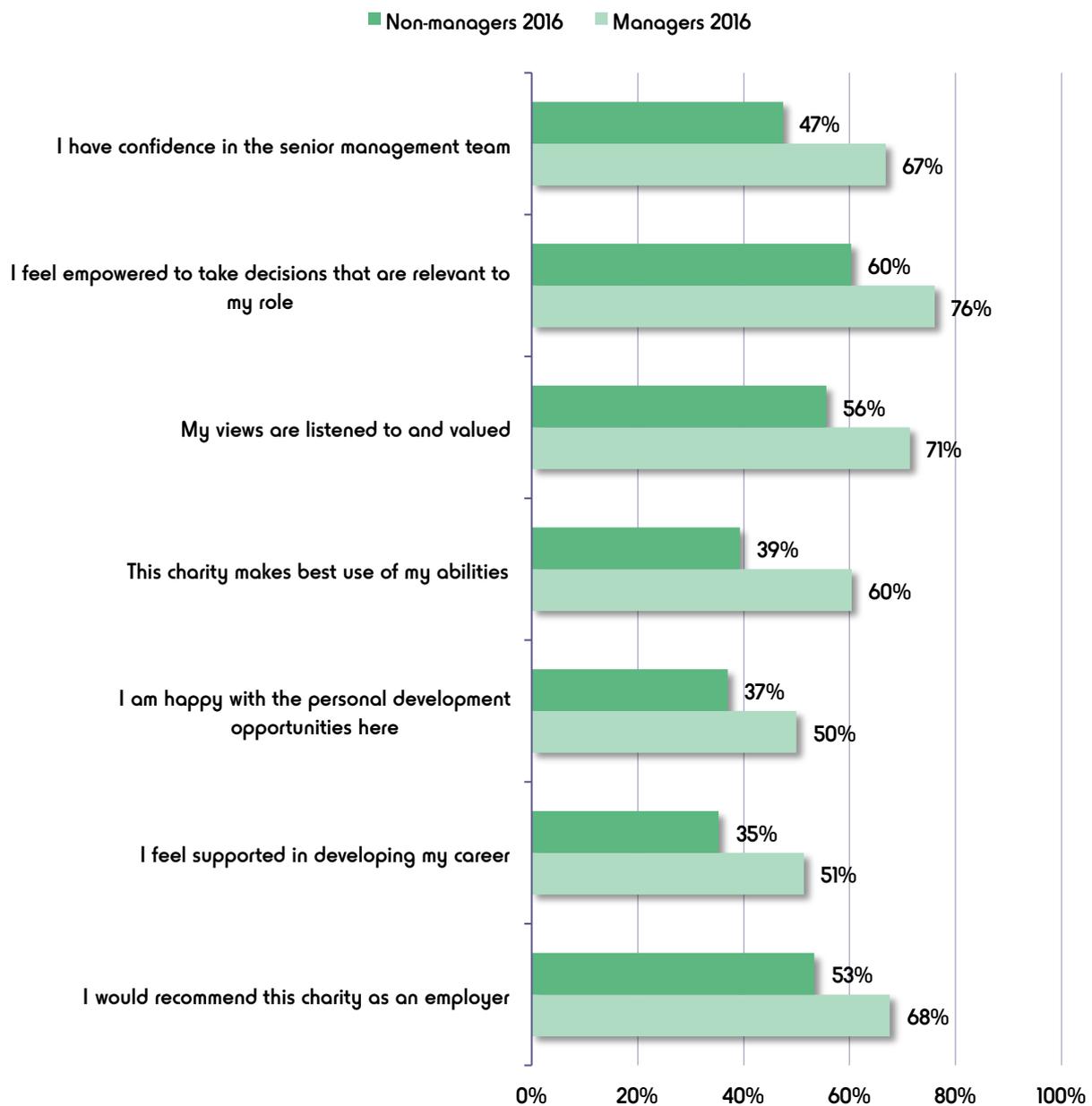
These figures also suggest that changes to processes and procedures and lower levels of staff empowerment could also be contributing to the increases in dissatisfaction.



Comparing managers and non-managers

As in 2015, this survey reveals that charity managers are more satisfied with their jobs than non-managers. Charity managers have more confidence in their senior management team, are more empowered to make decisions, and are more likely to feel that their views are listened to and valued. They feel that their charity makes better use of their abilities and provides them with better opportunities for personal and career development.

Overall they are much more likely to recommend their charity as an employer than non-managers.



Non-managers continue to feel less connected to their organisations and less valued. They are less happy with training and development provision and the pay they receive.

About Charity Pulse

Charity Pulse is an annual voluntary sector-wide staff satisfaction survey conducted by Birdsong Charity Consulting and *Third Sector* magazine. This year's survey ran during March and April 2016. This is the tenth year that we have run the survey.

Charity Pulse is a unique approach to measuring staff satisfaction in the sector, because it enables individuals working for any UK charity to take part. The aim of the research is to build up a picture of working life in charities and help to raise the standard of people management in the sector.

The survey asks charity workers 46 questions about working life at their charity exploring:

- the effectiveness of their management
- the quality of internal communications in their organisation
- their views on development, reward and loyalty
- their morale and well-being

It also provides the opportunity for charities to receive cost-effective benchmarked staff satisfaction data, by promoting the survey to their staff.

Many thanks to everyone who took Charity Pulse this year. 413 people took the survey, representing over 170 different UK charities.

Look out for Charity Pulse 2017!

The next survey will open in March 2017 with *Third Sector* magazine. The more charity people who take part, the more impact and relevance the results will have - so please join in!

If you would like to find out more about running a benchmarked *Charity Pulse* staff satisfaction survey for your charity at any time of year, visit: **birdsong.co.uk** or contact **Frances Hurst or Sam Attenborough at info@birdsong.co.uk**.

Birdsong Charity Consulting

People work best when they feel good about themselves, when they are enjoying their work, feeling motivated and appreciated. They don't work best when they feel over-stressed, over-worked and over-looked.

Birdsong exists to help charities work more effectively with their people. We help charities to become thriving, vibrant organisations where people love to work.

To find out more about Birdsong's work or to download *Charity Pulse* survey reports from previous years visit: **www.birdsong.co.uk**

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