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*charity consulting*

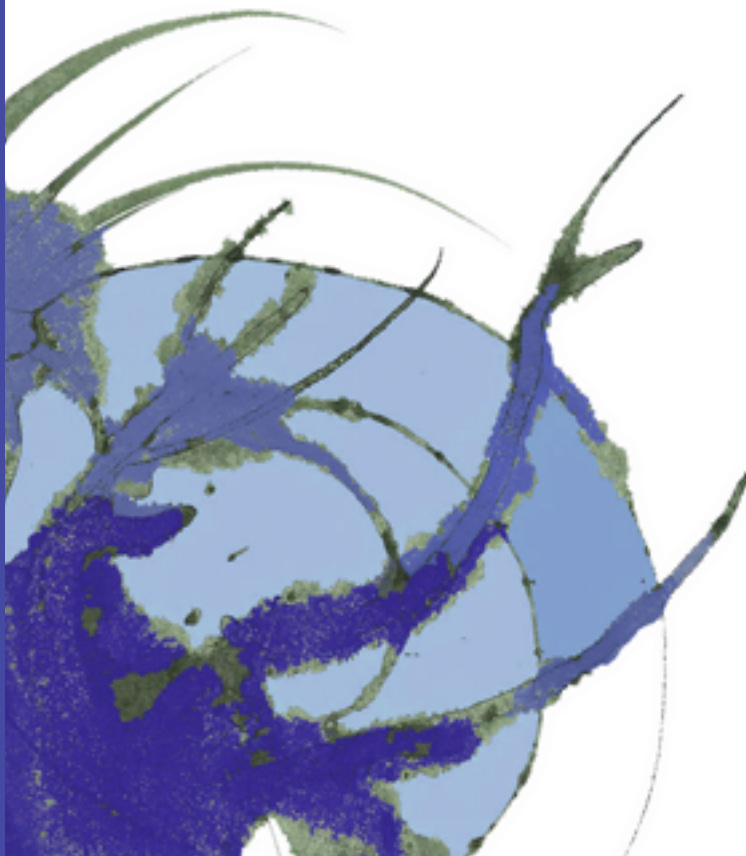


**Reasons to be cheerful**  
Charity Pulse 2014  
Sector-wide Staff Survey Report

**Frances Hurst and Sam Attenborough**

Birdsong Charity Consulting  
The Old Bakery  
Damask Green Road  
Weston  
Hitchin  
SG4 7BZ

01462 790439  
info@bird-song.co.uk  
www.bird-song.co.uk



## Introduction

Working for a charity can be the most rewarding of jobs, with voluntary sector staff frequently quoted as being among the most motivated and committed workers in the UK.

In recent years, however, the economic climate has taken its toll and our recent surveys have charted the decline of charity workers' job satisfaction and morale. We are, therefore, pleased to report that 2104 is the year in which voluntary sector staff morale recovered.

There are noteworthy improvements in staff perceptions across the survey, with some aspects of staff satisfaction already back to pre-downturn levels. Most encouragingly, perhaps, there are no significant decreases in staff satisfaction this year.

The survey paints a positive picture of working life in the sector with a sense of optimism returning, driven by improved job security and increased confidence in charities as employers.

In addition to the usual year-on-year trend reporting, this year's report focuses on the vital areas of staff retention and CEO performance. To provide more detail on the CEO findings, we have produced a second report: *Staff Perceptions of Chief Executives* which is available for free download from the resources section our website: [www.bird-song.co.uk/resources](http://www.bird-song.co.uk/resources).

## This year's Charity Pulse Survey findings at a glance

### Staff satisfaction

- Charity staff satisfaction with their job and employer has improved
- Staff pride and morale has increased
- Fewer charity people are being affected by redundancies
- Staff are still working longer hours than before the downturn

### Staff Retention

- Respect and appreciation are critical factors in building staff loyalty

### CEO Performance

- Two-thirds of charity people think their CEO is doing a good job – and is paid about the right amount

## The contents of this report

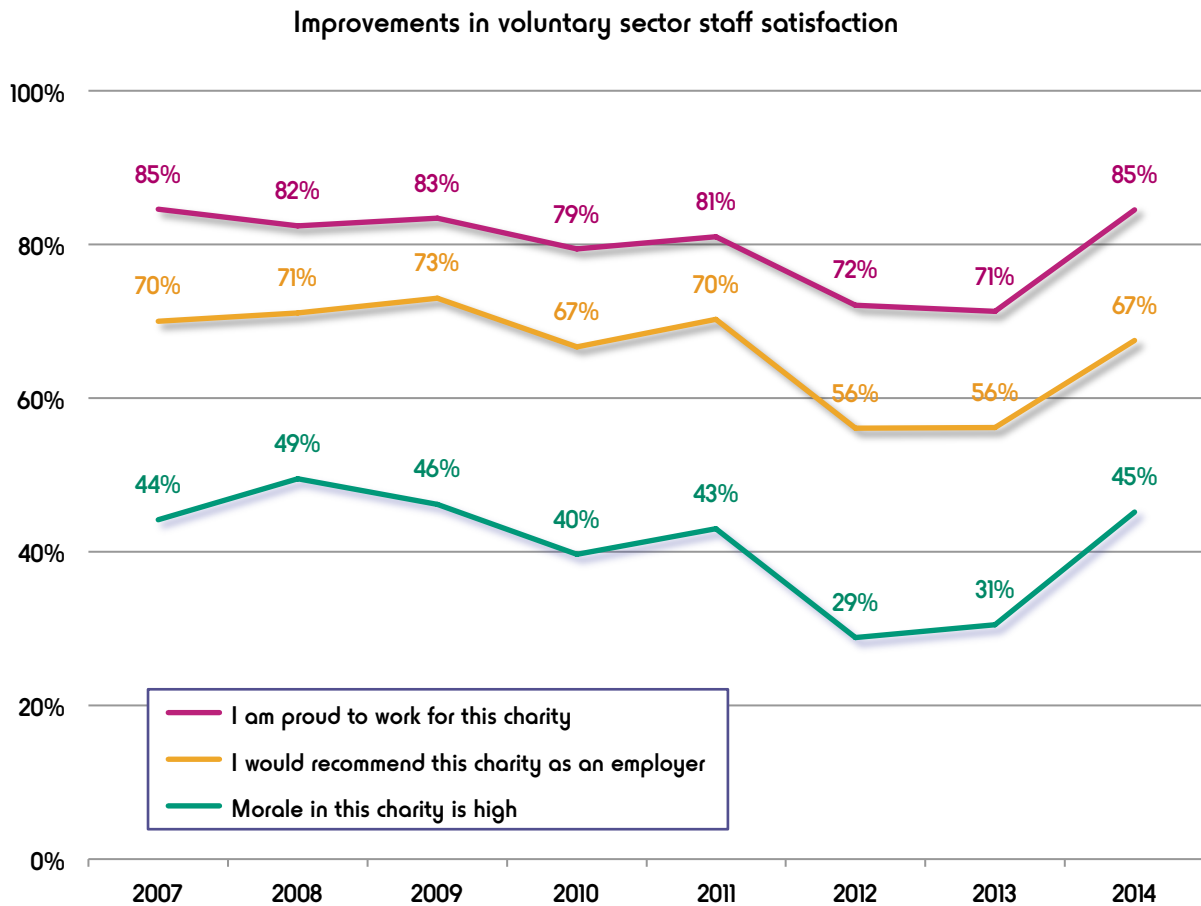
The results are divided into four sections:

- What's improving?
- What's not improving?
- What's driving staff retention?
- What do charity people think of their CEO?

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

## What's improving?

This year's *Charity Pulse* survey reveals that morale in the voluntary sector is on the up. The percentage of employees who think that morale in their charity is high has increased from 31% in 2013 to 45% this year. This is the most significant increase in morale since the survey began in 2007.



It is also great to see a similar recovery in charity workers' pride in their organisations. Pride has been restored to pre-downturn levels, with 85% agreeing that they are proud to work for their charity.

In addition, 67% of people would now recommend their charity as an employer – up from 56% last year and also on its way back to pre-downturn levels.

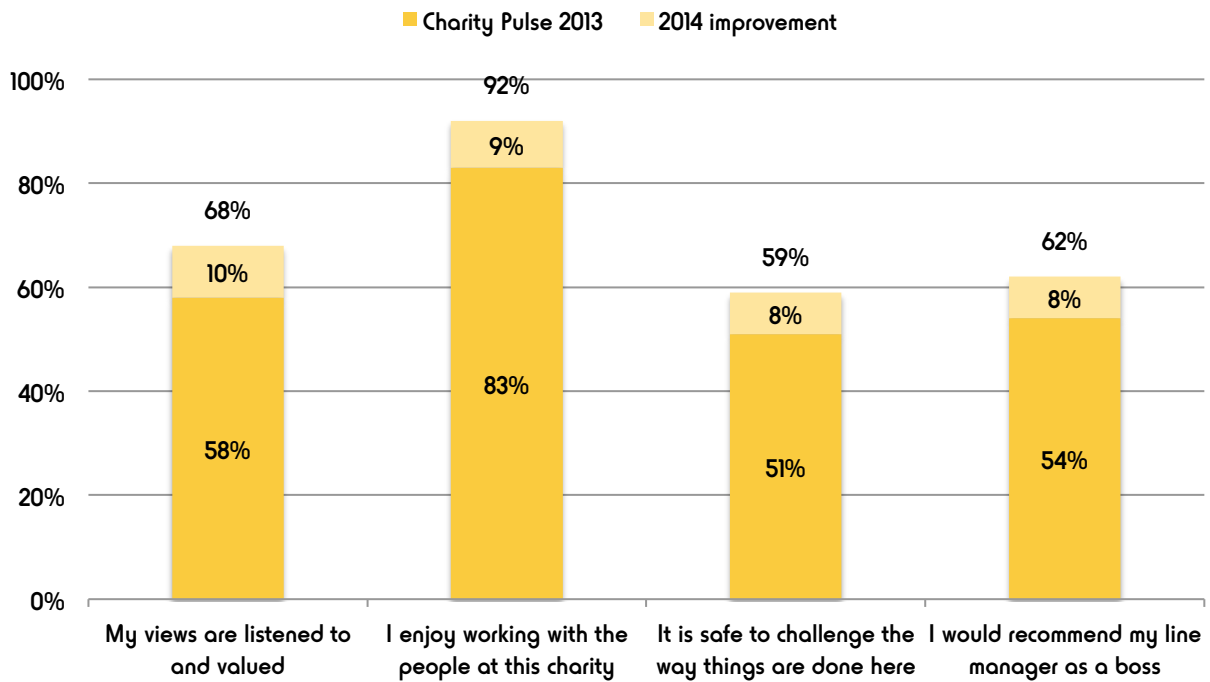
## Drivers of improvement

So what are the drivers behind these uplifts in staff satisfaction?

The factors that have improved most significantly this year centre around the way in which staff are managed and supported. The graph overleaf shows year-on-year uplifts of between 8% and 10% in these areas.

68% of survey respondents now feel that their views are listened to and valued and 92% say that they enjoy working with their colleagues – the highest percentage figure we have seen since *Charity Pulse* started.

### Drivers of improvement this year

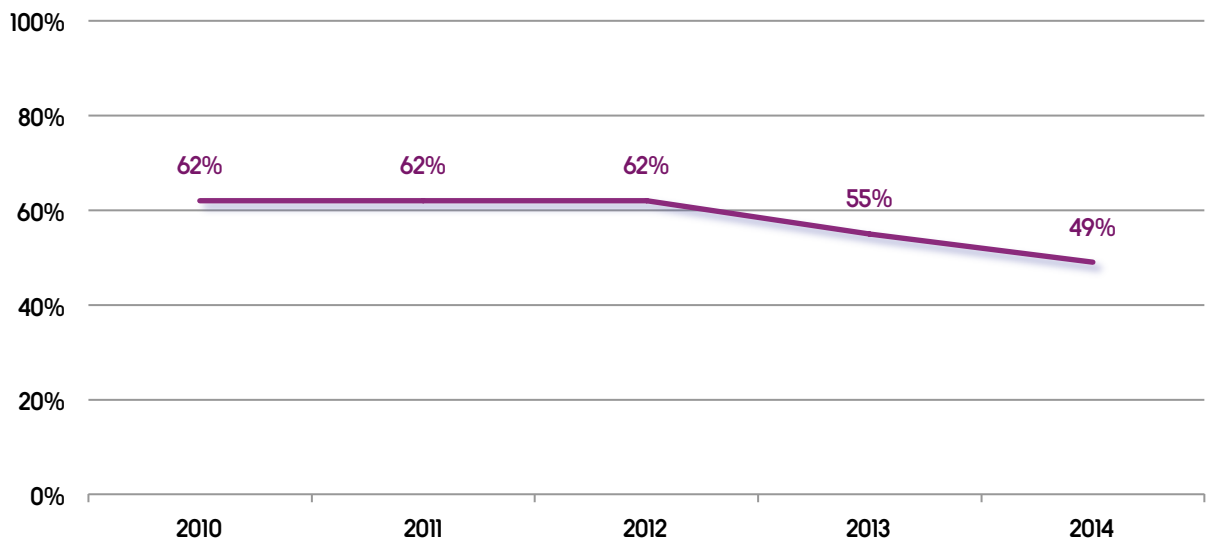


More staff are feeling safe to challenge the way things are done at their charity which, in our view, can be linked directly to the reduced threat of redundancy (see below). 59% agree that they feel safe to speak their minds, compared with 51% last year. When asked about their line manager, 62% would be happy to recommend them as a boss, up from 54%.

### Redundancies and job security

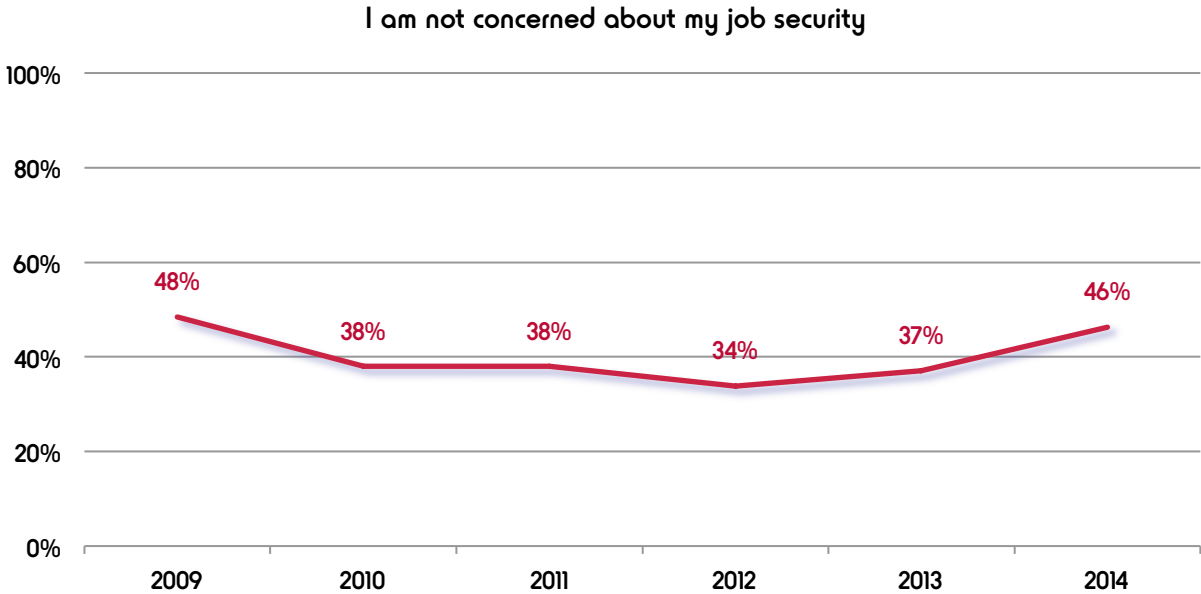
It is very encouraging to see a fall in the proportion of charity people who have experienced redundancies at their charity in the past twelve months. This will, in turn, be driving the improvement in feelings of job security.

Staff who have seen redundancies at their charity in the last 12 months



Fewer than 50% of charity staff have seen colleagues departing because of redundancy this year, the lowest figure in the past five years.

46% of charity people tell us that they are not concerned about their job security, up from 37% last year - and a low of just 34% in 2012.



## What's not improving?

There are no statistically significant drops in satisfaction across the whole survey this year, so this section focuses on areas that are showing no sign of improvement. We take a look at:

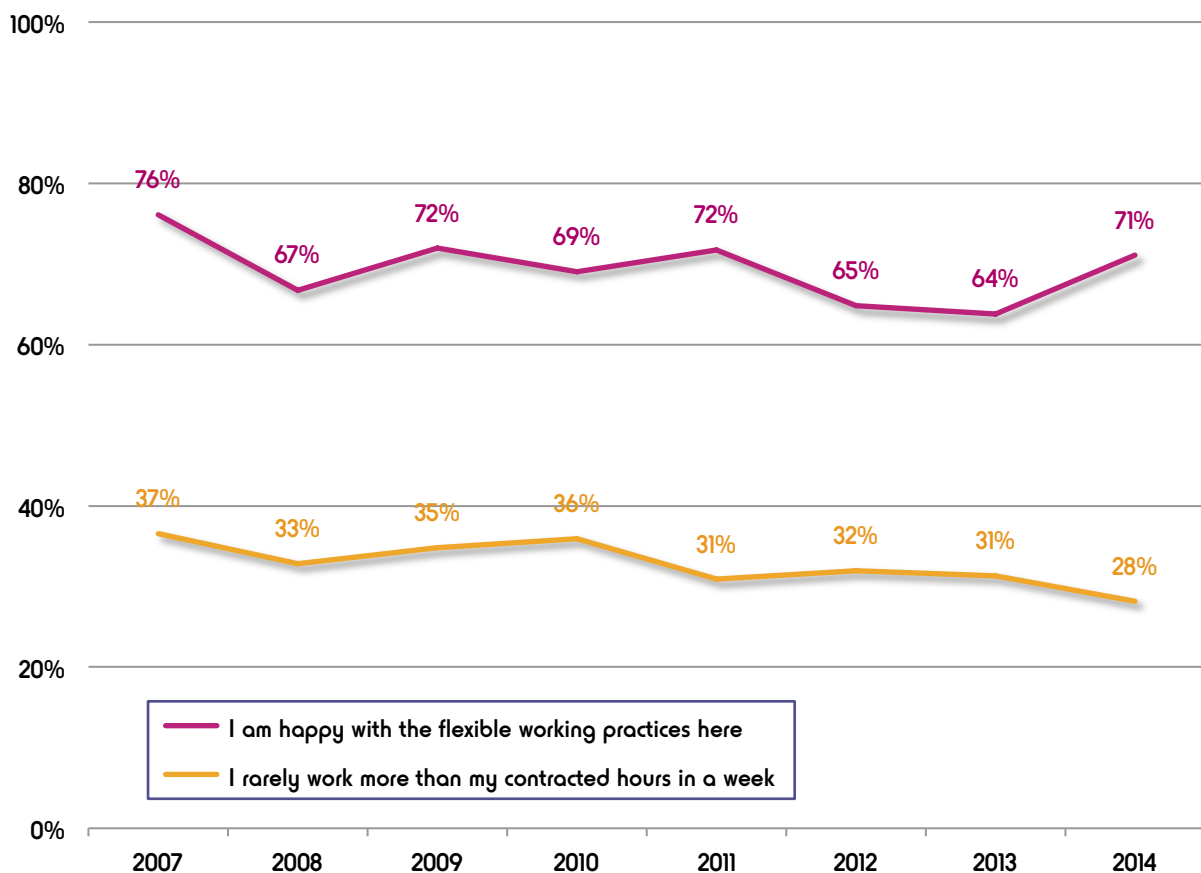
- Hours worked
- Handling poor performance
- Pay

### Hours worked

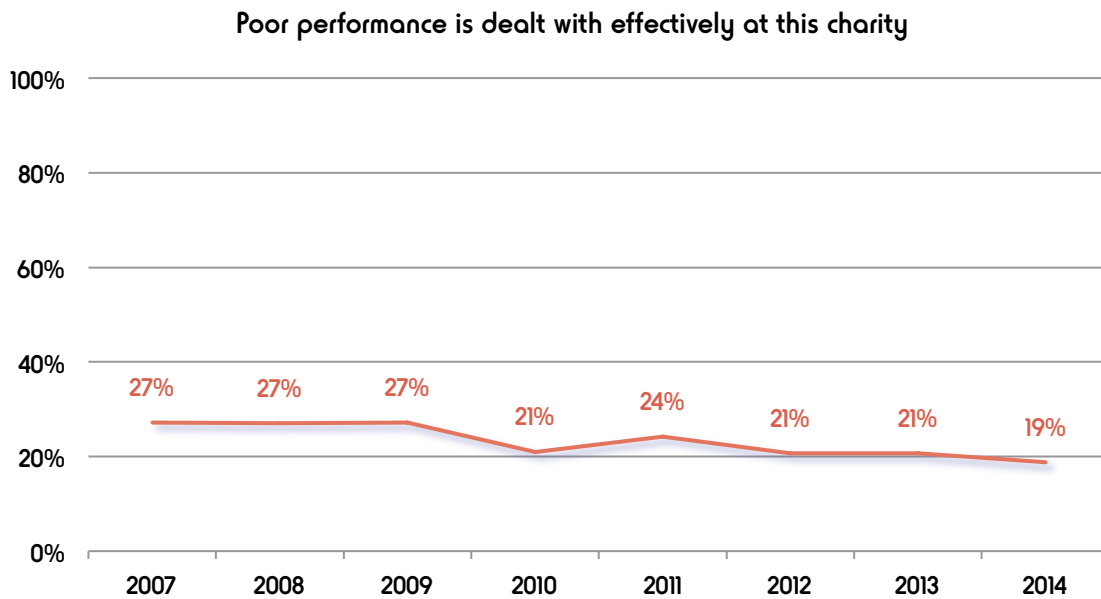
It is clear from the survey data that there has been no let up in the pressure placed on charity people, many of whom are continuing to work long hours. This year only 28% of survey respondents say that they rarely put in more than their contracted hours in a week – an aspect of charity working life that has been in slow decline since 2007.

One of the reasons that long hours are not having more of a negative impact on staff morale, could well be increased satisfaction with charities' flexible working policies. Flexible working is becoming more widespread across the sector - and staff satisfaction with it is up from 64% to 71% this year.

Hours worked and flexible working



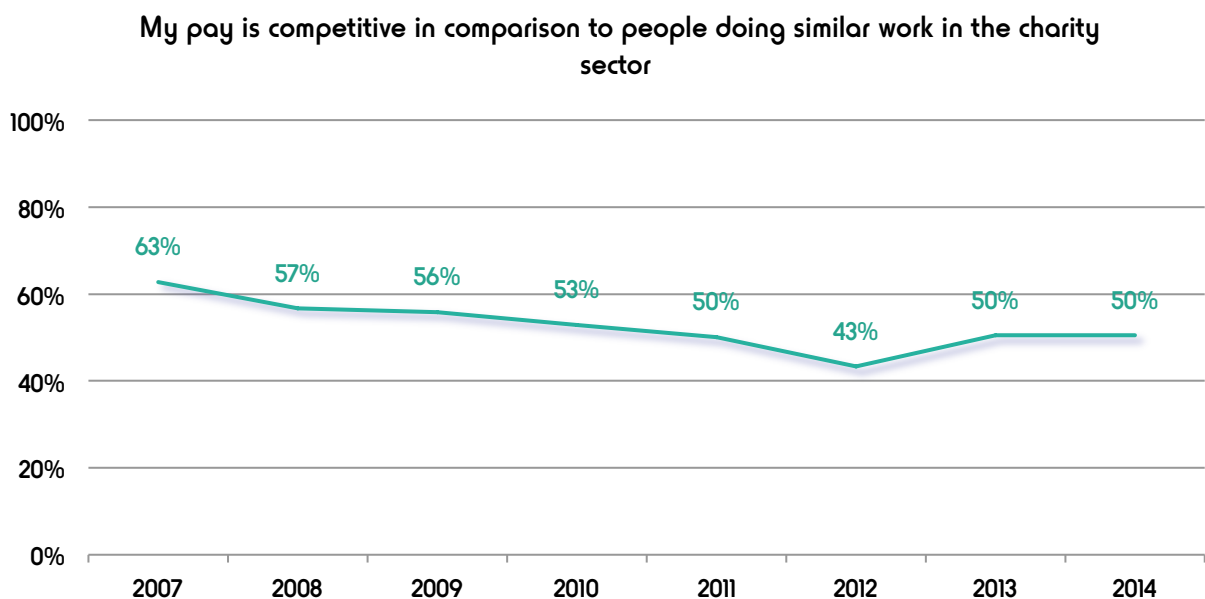
## Handling poor performance



Since the downturn, charity staff have become more concerned about this area and, despite tough decisions being taken across the sector on redundancies, budget cuts and pay freezes, the effective management of poor performance is still posing a challenge.

## Pay

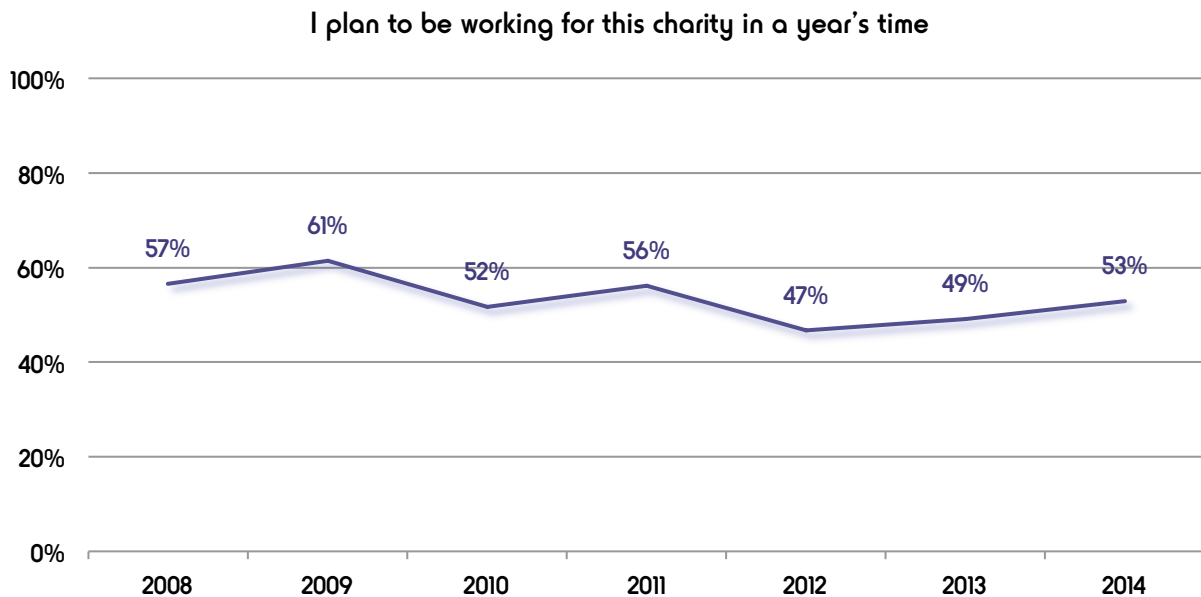
Finally, and perhaps predictably, we come to pay. 50% of charity people think that their pay is competitive this year, the same proportion as in 2013. Satisfaction with pay was one of the first areas to fall as the downturn hit - and it is looking like it will be one of the last areas to recover.



## What's driving staff retention?

To be successful, charities need to maximise the retention of motivated, engaged and committed employees. Of course some staff turnover is a good thing, bringing in new talent and fresh ideas, but no organisation wants to drive away good people because of negative internal factors.

In the *Charity Pulse* survey, the best indicator we have of future staff retention is staff intention to be working for their organisation in a year's time. However, over the seven years that we have asked this question, it has been one of the most difficult trends to interpret.



The peaks and troughs of opinion here (albeit shallow) do not follow the usual pattern through the downturn. So what is happening?

When we ask charity people what they would like to see improved at their charity to make it a better place to work, there are a wide range of opinions. Here is a flavour of what *Charity Pulse* respondents had to say this year:



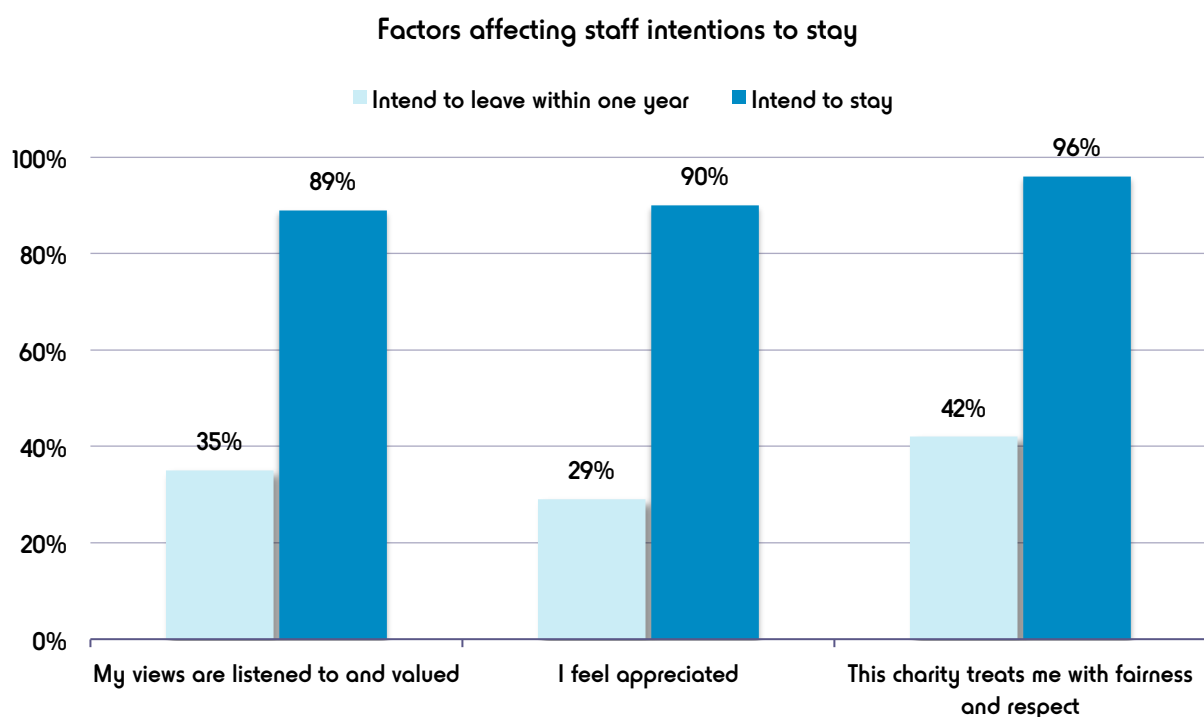


Staff retention is one of the trickiest areas to influence through HR policies and practices. Exit interviews usually reveal that there is a combination of internal and external factors in individuals' decisions to move on. But what are the most compelling internal factors that make a difference to an individual's decision to stay or go?

To try and answer this question, we decided to delve a little deeper into the *Charity Pulse* data of the past three years and see if there are any underlying factors that make a significant difference to staff intentions to stay with their charity.

In this analysis, we compared the responses of staff who indicated that they *are* planning to be working for their charity in a year's time – with those who *are not*. This research revealed three questions where the differences in satisfaction are the most significant.

The very different responses of these two staff groups to the three questions are set out in the graph below.



This data is from the 2014 survey, but these three questions showed the greatest variance in satisfaction in each of the last three years. These three areas matter.

Most people working in the sector could tell you that pay is not the main motivator for charity staff. Most people could also tell you that its not really about the hours worked or efficiency of processes – important though those things are. What this analysis suggests is that its something much more basic than that – something much more human that makes the difference. Really listening to staff when they tell you something important. Thanking people for a job well done. Treating them like an adult.

So don't worry quite so much about the size of your salary budget. Focus attention instead on developing an organisational culture based on trust and mutual respect.

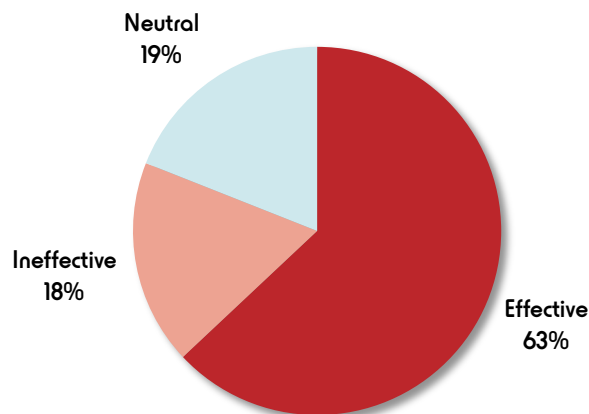
## What do charity people think of their CEO?

And finally, with charity chief executives never far from the media headlines in recent months, we turned the *Charity Pulse* spotlight on charity bosses this year to find out how staff rate them, what they want from them, and what they think about the size of their pay packets.

Charity workers don't often get the chance to tell their bosses what they think of them, so we gave them that opportunity, and here's what they said.

### Are they doing a good job?

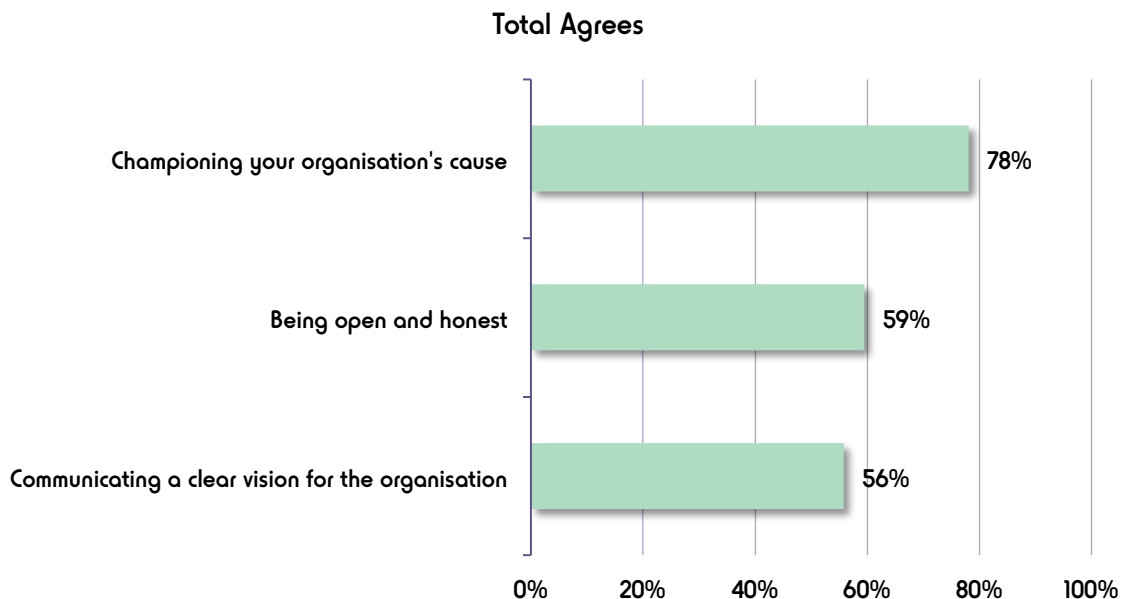
Overall, how would you rate the leader of your charity?



Overall 63% of charity staff think that their leader is effective. 18% think that they are ineffective.

### What are they best at?

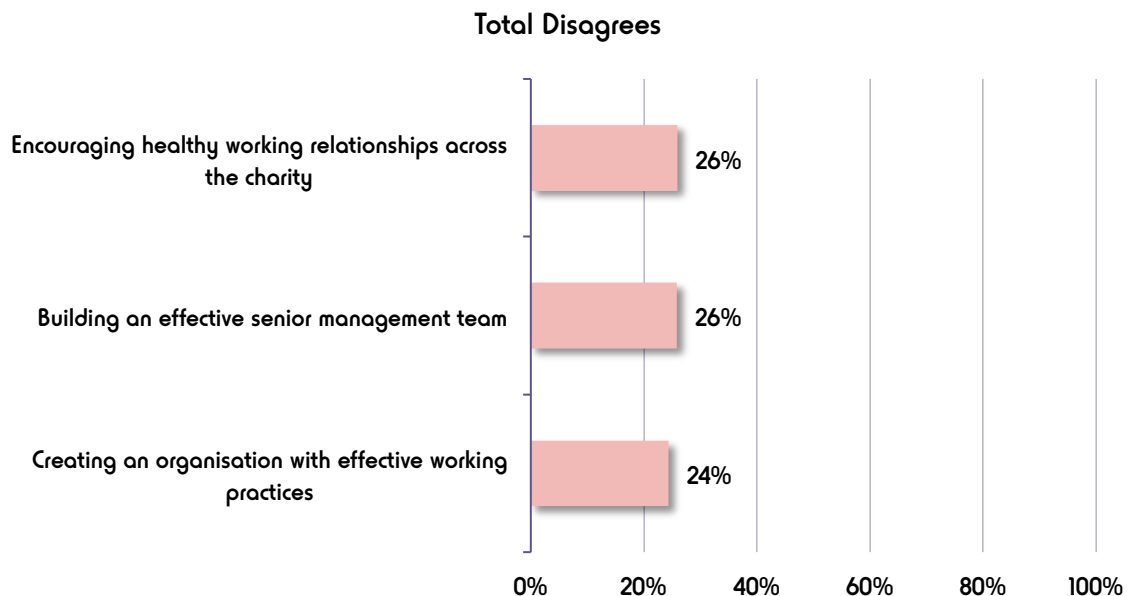
From nine key leadership roles, these were chosen as the top three.



- 78% think that their leader is effective at championing the organisation's cause. Only 5% disagree.
- 59% believe that their leader is open and honest. 19% don't believe that they are.
- 56% think their leader is good at communicating a clear vision for the organisation. 20% think they are not.

## What are they least effective at?

Of the nine key leadership roles, these were chosen as the bottom three.

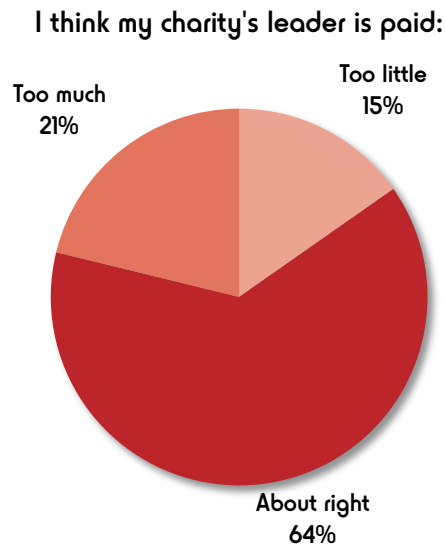


- 26% don't think that their leader is effective at encouraging healthy relationships across the charity. 46% think that they are.
- 26% don't think that their leader is good at building an effective senior management team. 50% think that they are.
- 24% don't think that their leader is good at creating an organisation with effective working practices. 44% think that they are.

## Are they paid too much?

Well, most charity people think not.

64% of respondents to this year's survey think that their leader's pay is about right. 21% thought it was too much and 15% felt it was not enough.



## Want to find out more?

To provide more details on these CEO findings, we have produced a second report: *Staff Perceptions of Chief Executives* which is available for free download from the resources section our website: [www.bird-song.co.uk/resources](http://www.bird-song.co.uk/resources).

## 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 2014. This is the eighth 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 work/life balance

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. 463 people took the survey, representing over 180 different UK charities.

## Look out for Charity Pulse 2015!

The next survey will open in March 2015 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 **[www.bird-song.co.uk](http://www.bird-song.co.uk)** or contact Frances Hurst or Sam Attenborough at **[info@bird-song.co.uk](mailto:info@bird-song.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.bird-song.co.uk](http://www.bird-song.co.uk)**

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