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# The View From Here

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Understanding the working lives, attitudes & experiences of the social services workforce





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# Contents

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P4 **The View From Here:** Foreword

P5 Survey creation & dissemination

P6 Welcome to The View From Here

01

P7-13

**WHO  
RESPONDED?**

02

P14-23

**WORKFORCE  
EXPERIENCES**

03

P24-26

**WHAT MAKES THE  
WORKFORCE FEEL VALUED?**

# The View From Here

## Foreword

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**Social services is one of the largest employment groups in Scotland, employing almost 200,000 people. These are people, who on a daily basis, undertake life changing work alongside individuals, families and communities to help them deal with issues in their lives. They work to ensure that people feel cared for, protected and valued, often giving them a voice that might not otherwise be heard. They are people who provide personal care and support with dignity, sensitivity and respect. This workforce is important to us all and hearing this voice is essential if we are to ensure the work it does is valued and supported.**

In recent years, there has been a lot of emphasis on understanding the perspectives of practitioners in social services and this survey should be viewed within this context. Organisations including Scottish Care, CCPS and the SSSC have undertaken valuable work in gathering the perspectives of workers in specific sectors within social services.

In this project Iriss, in association with the Guardian, has taken a new approach, seeking to look across these sectors to enable comparison and to understand the current reality of the workforce. It takes a fresh look at the views of people in the workforce and tries to understand and collate the perspectives across a range of sectors, organisations and job roles.

The survey, therefore, fits well with the implementation of the Social Services Vision and Strategy 2015-2020 which was launched earlier this year by the set of partners in the Social Work Services Strategic Forum. At the heart of this vision is a skilled and valued workforce.

It is, therefore, crucial that we hear from this workforce to understand what motivates them and also what challenges them in their day-to-day job. What is preventing them from delivering the high quality services that everyone deserves? This survey gives us a really strong start at understanding what people working in social services think about their jobs, the services they are delivering, the context in which they are working and the challenges they are experiencing. It has been a valuable exercise which I hope we can learn from and build on in future so that we can continue to hear 'The View from Here' and take account of it in what we do.

What I personally find most positive in these findings, and what I have found as part of the direct engagement I have with front line practitioners, is the clear and strong motivation of the people in this workforce. Making a difference to someone's life, helping individuals reach their highest potential, and enabling people to have the quality of life they deserve is at the core of this sector. To achieve this we must value and support our workforce. We must ensure the workforce feels that their voice is heard and understood. This survey has helped us to achieve this and has provided a useful approach from which to learn.

**ALAN BAIRD**  
Chief Social Work Adviser,  
Scottish Government

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# Survey creation & dissemination

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Following a discussion with Scottish Government, an in-house evaluator at IRISS and experts at The Guardian, a draft online questionnaire was created. This questionnaire was tested by four IRISS Champions, as well as other critical friends working within the social care sector. The final version of the survey was made available on 20 April 2015 and was closed on 30 June 2015.

How we maximised reach:

The survey was featured on the Guardian Social Care Network homepage and was continually promoted through their twitter and newsfeeds.

The survey was sent to 54 IRISS Champions for dissemination across their networks. IRISS Champions operate within each of the local authority areas in Scotland, in large third sector organisations and in some private sector organisations,

SSSC, Scottish Care, CCPS, SCIF, CELCIS, The Alliance, SCDC, Care Inspectorate, JIT, BASW, SCOPT, Chief Social Work officers, SRN Peer Support Network and practitioners involved in the qualitative part of the project, circulated the survey.

The questionnaire included 22 questions and 4 sections:

## SECTION 1 | ABOUT YOU

Included questions relating to length of time in profession, motivations to stay in profession and pay and workload.

## SECTION 2 | ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES

Included questions relating to how people feel in their role, the extent to which they can support outcomes being met, perceptions of how their organisation is performing in the current climate, and challenges and opportunities.

## SECTION 3 | WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU

Included questions on how people feel valued, how they engage with learning and how they can effect change.

## SECTION 4 | DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Included questions to enable an understanding of who had taken part in the survey: age, gender, role, location and type of work undertaken.

We hope these findings are useful, and welcome your feedback. Please contact us at IRISS for more information: [enquiries@iriss.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@iriss.org.uk)

# Welcome to The View From Here

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**The current climate poses both challenges and opportunities for the social services workforce. In 2015, Iriss wanted to hear from people working at all kinds of levels and in all kinds of roles about the real experience of delivering care and support. To do this, Iriss, in partnership with the Guardian Jobs, put together The View from Here survey.**

This is not the first time the workforce has been surveyed, and this work should be seen in a broader context. There is a wealth of information available, much of which is focused on specific sub-sections of the sector, those with specific job roles, or those within individual organisations. This project sought to embrace the whole workforce but our findings are based on a higher response rate from those in statutory provision than those in voluntary and private provision.

## LIMITATIONS OF THIS DATA

The survey questions needed to be broad enough to relate to the entire workforce, but specific enough to attain useful results. Some questions achieved this, but not others. We've tried to be honest about the limitations so that you can make the best use of these findings.

## PLEASE CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

The findings are not representative of the whole workforce. The response rate from the private sector is small (6%) when compared to the size of the sector in Scotland (the private sector currently employs around 82,510 people, 41% of the total social services workforce). The response rate from the statutory sector is large (69%) compared to the size of the sector in Scotland (the public sector currently employs around 62,600 people, 31% of the total social services workforce). Please see the 2014 SSSC workforce data report for more information.

1. This project attempted to understand the experiences of the social services workforce in Scotland. However the sample was predominantly

made up of social workers (32%). There are a variety of other job roles that are not well represented, particularly care staff (according to SSSC workforce categories).

2. The figures relating to zero hour contracts and the living wage likely to be lower than actual sector averages. The SSSC workforce data report estimates that approximately 10% of the workforce are on a zero hour contract. CCPS and Scottish Care have both highlighted the challenges of implementing a living wage in their recent reports see the CCPS Benchmarking report 2014
3. 23% of respondents did not complete the final section of the survey. This drop out rate made segmentation of the results difficult. As a result, we've been unable to make substantive comparisons across service type and geographical area.
4. Respondents were given the option to skip any question. This made it difficult to find significant differences or similarities for some of the questions. For example, we can't compare responses from people providing adult support and protection with those who work in residential care. We also can't compare one local authority area with another.

The survey did not ask respondents to identify the organisations that they work for and so it is not possible to say how many separate organisations were involved.

## Want to make use of this data?

We've included the data here without interpretation we hope that this prompts you to have conversations and ask questions. Interrogate away!

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# Who responded?

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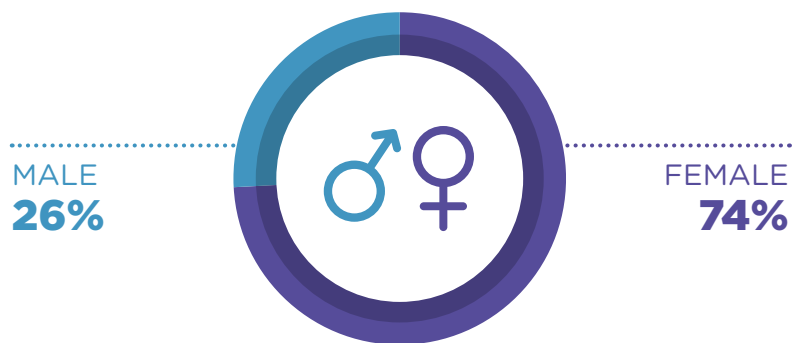
# SAMPLE: Demographics

## SAMPLE SIZE

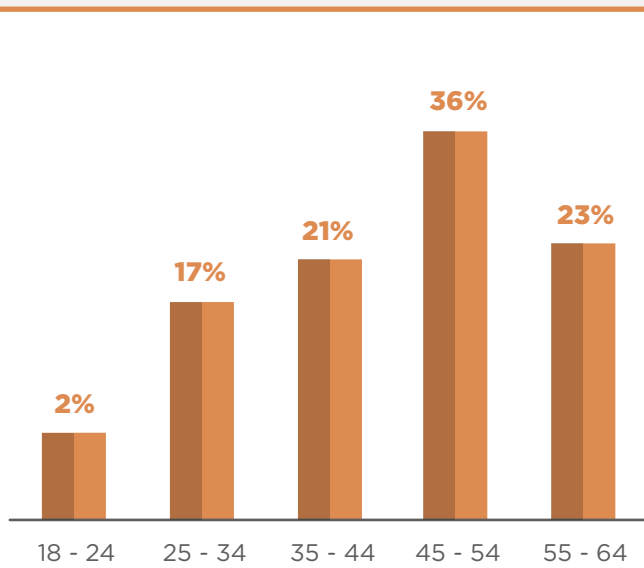
**2,167**  
RESPONSES

**1,678**  
COMPLETE  
RESPONSES

## GENDER

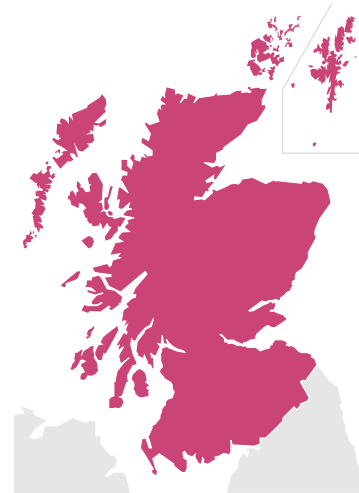


## AGE



The highest proportion of respondents were between the ages of **45 - 54**

## REGION



There were responses from those providing care and support in every local authority area in Scotland



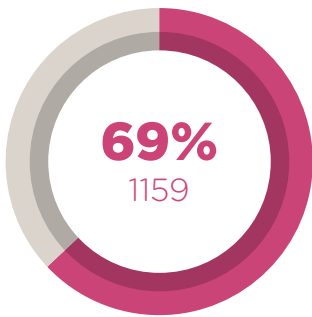
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# SAMPLE: Sector

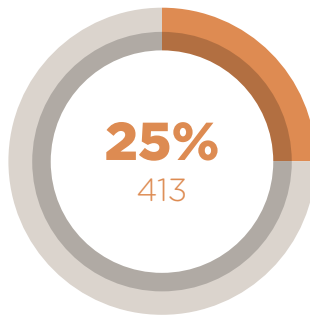
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## SECTOR

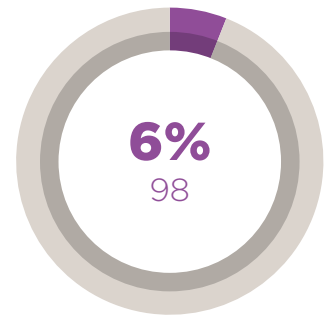
STATUTORY SECTOR



VOLUNTARY SECTOR

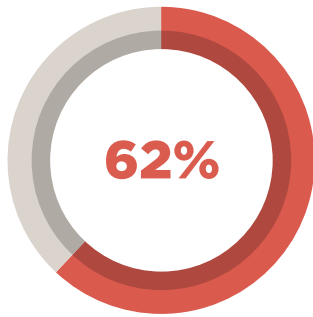


PRIVATE SECTOR



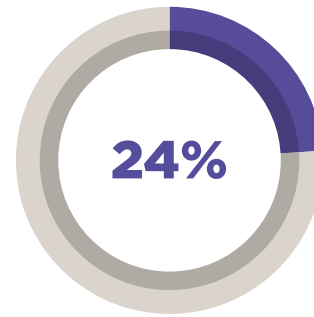
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### THOSE PROVIDING ADULT SERVICES



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### THOSE PROVIDING CHILDREN'S SERVICES



# Sample: Working conditions

Only



**4%** stated that they were paid under the living wage



**2%** were on zero hour contracts



**62%**

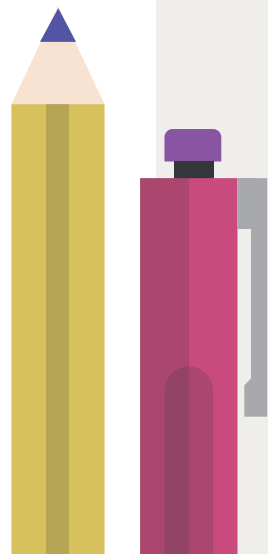
OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED DOING ADDITIONAL WORK MOST WEEKS



“Staff are pushed more and more and more.”

After restructure my team is going from full time members of staff and two part time members of staff to just three part time members of staff.

Despite this, our targets are up on the previous financial year.”



# People who work in social services are driven by a desire to make a difference

## 57%

OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEIR WORK **MATCHED THEIR PERSONAL VALUES**

THIS WAS MORE PRONOUNCED IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR WITH **65%** CITING THIS REASON

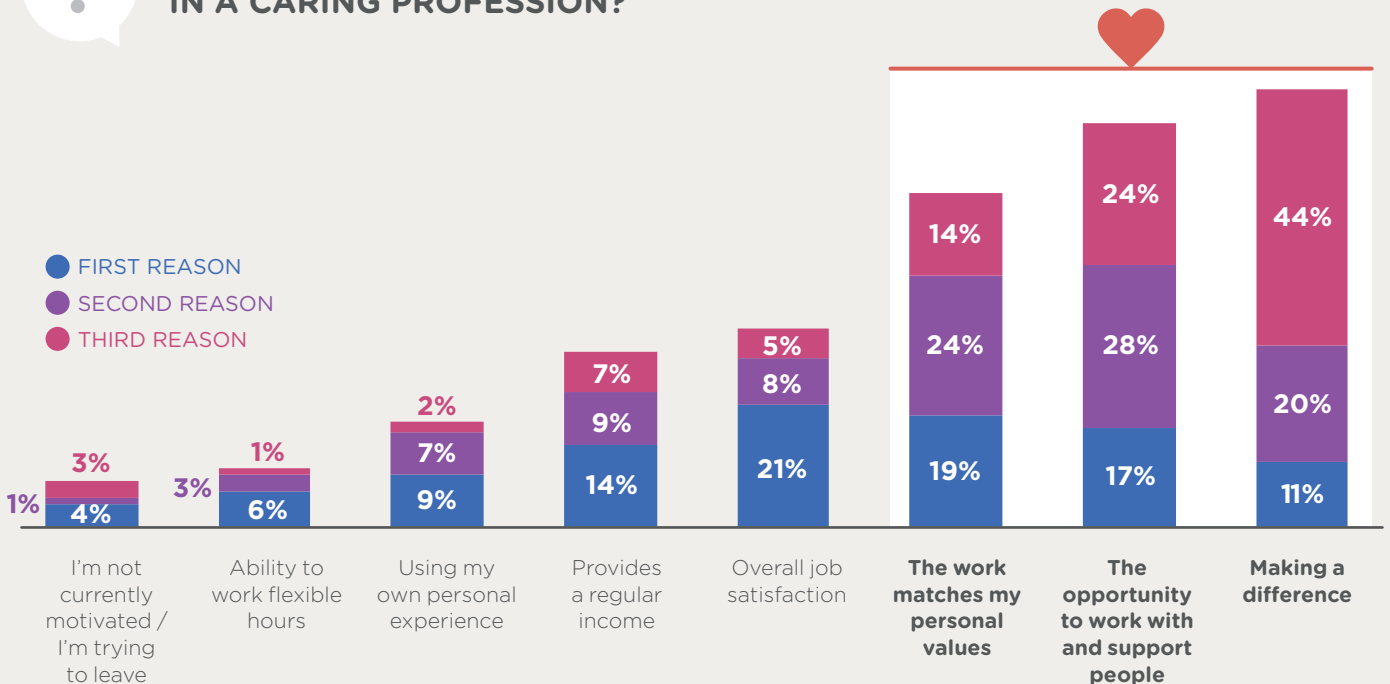
## 75%

OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY WERE **DRIVEN BY A DESIRE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

“It’s about social justice and empowerment and supporting people who often get left behind.”



### WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO REMAIN IN A CARING PROFESSION?



# Overall, **78%** of respondents said they were happy



“Although I have said that I am happy in my job this is more complex. I am happy in the sense that I thoroughly enjoy the essence of my job and working with clients. However, this is an extremely challenging time, in Health and Social Care.”

**86%**  
MANAGERS



**78%**  
CARE WORKERS



**71%**  
SOCIAL WORKERS



**36%**

OF THOSE WHO'D WORKED IN THE SECTOR FOR OVER 20 YEARS WERE MORE LIKELY TO STRONGLY AGREE THAT THEY ARE HAPPY.

**25%**

OF THOSE WHO SAID THEY'D WORKED IN THE SECTOR FOR 11-15 YEARS WERE LESS LIKELY TO SAY THEY ARE HAPPY.

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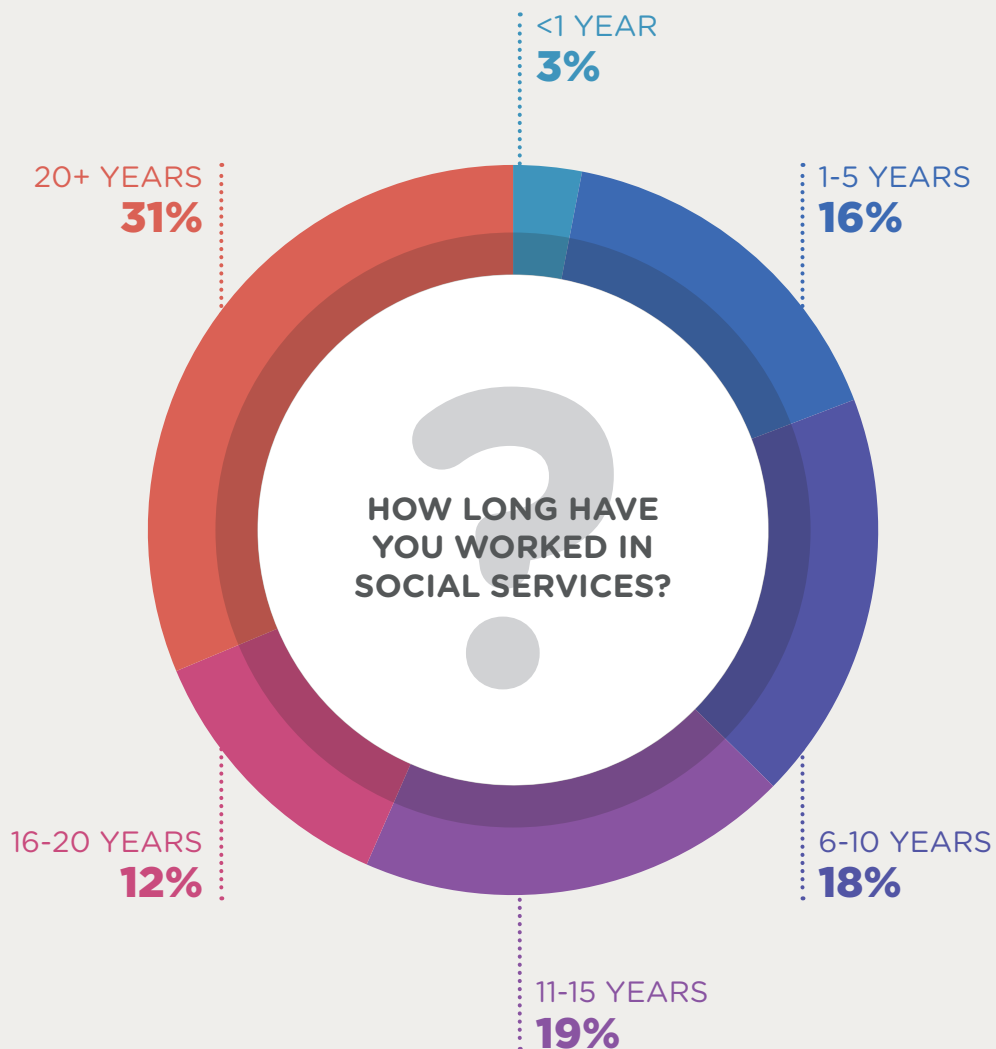
# And they are experienced...

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# 62%

HAVE WORKED IN THE SECTOR FOR **MORE THAN 10 YEARS**

48% OF THOSE WHO'D BEEN IN THE SECTOR LONGEST (16+ YEARS) HAD ONLY HAD 1 POST IN THE PAST 5 YEARS



02

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# Workforce experiences

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# Quality of care



THINKING ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION, TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE?



ACROSS SECTORS, 85% 'ALWAYS' OR 'OFTEN' PERCEIVED THAT THEIR ORGANISATION WAS ABLE TO PROVIDE PERSON-CENTRED SUPPORT

IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR THIS ROSE TO **95%**



Most respondents said that the quality of care in their organisation had **stayed the same** (50%)



Improvements in quality of care were reported **more often** in the voluntary (37%) and private sector (45%)



Statutory sector respondents were **less likely** to report improvements in the quality of care

# Improved outcomes for people

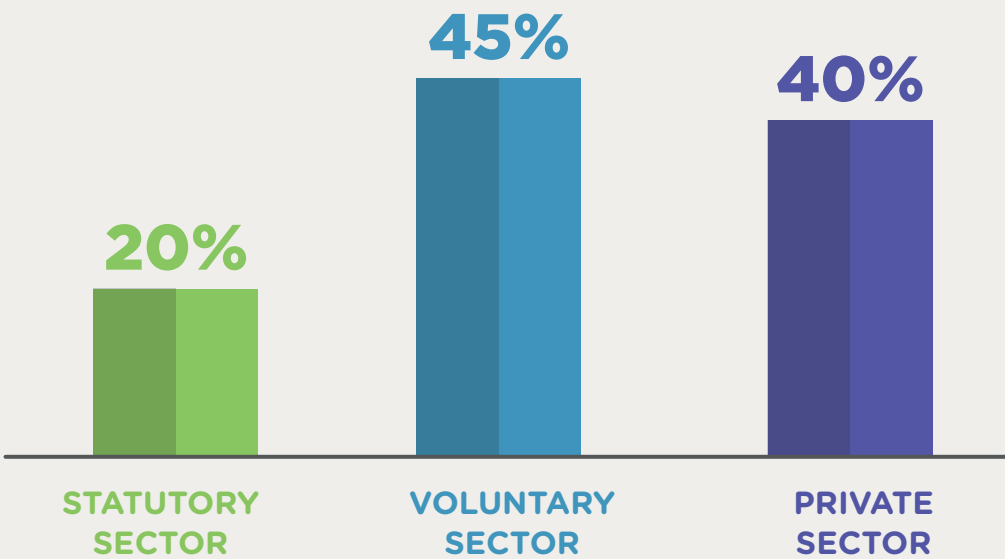


THINKING ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION, TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE?

**51%**

OF RESPONDENTS SAID THAT OVER THE PAST YEAR, CAPACITY TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES HAD **STAYED THE SAME**

Respondents reporting an increase in capacity to improve outcomes





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# Prevention

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THINKING ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION, TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE?

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**82%**

OF RESPONDENTS FROM THE **VOLUNTARY SECTOR** 'ALWAYS' OR 'OFTEN' AGREED THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO PROVIDE PREVENTATIVE SERVICES

**74%**

OF RESPONDENTS FROM THE **PRIVATE SECTOR** 'ALWAYS' OR 'OFTEN' AGREED THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO PROVIDE PREVENTATIVE SERVICES

**55%**

OF RESPONDENTS FROM THE **STATUTORY SECTOR** 'ALWAYS' OR 'OFTEN' AGREED THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO PROVIDE PREVENTATIVE SERVICES

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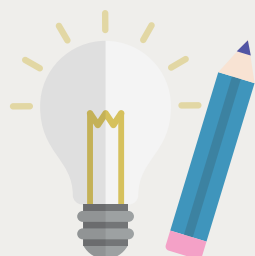


"I have 6 years to retirement and despair over the lack of resources. I've worked in a variety of roles and have seen many changes. I used to make a difference. Now, I firefight."

# Innovation and evidence



**THINKING ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION, TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE?**



**Creativity and innovation** is happening across the sectors, but is **more frequently reported in the voluntary (49%) and private sectors (42%)**, rather than the **statutory sector (29%)**.



**Managers were more likely to cite an increase in creativity and innovation (56%)**. Care staff reported that **things had stayed the same (50%)**.



People reported that they are **'often' able to be evidence informed (83%)** and are able to **actively seek good practice (74%)** in their organisations.

## Funding cuts are the biggest challenge faced by the sector as a whole (48%)



“Managers and staff are committed to working in a preventative and evidence based way, but the sheer scale and complexity of work against a backdrop of limited resources is a huge challenge.”

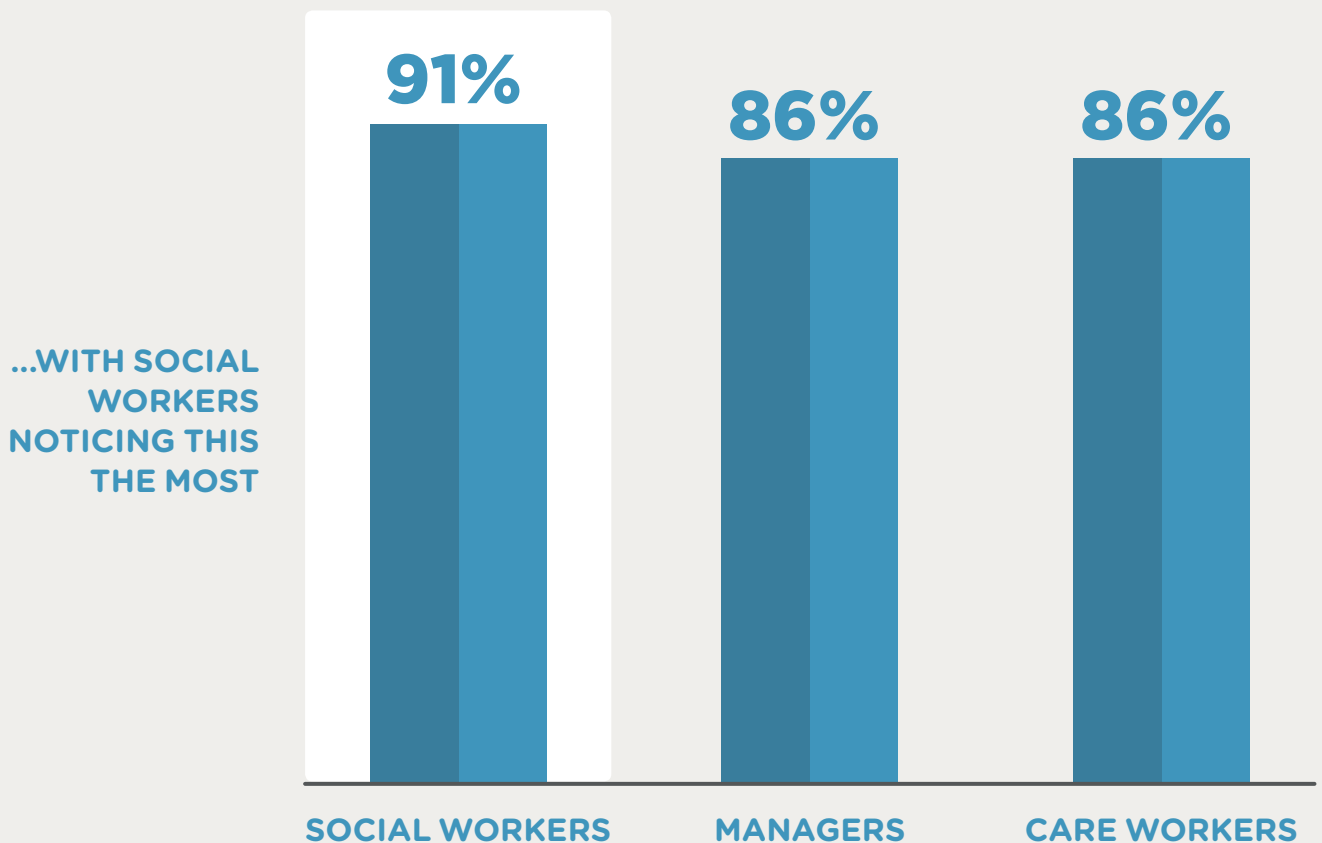
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WHEN ASKED ABOUT THEIR CURRENT ROLE

**87%** of all respondents reported that they'd seen a reduction in the availability of social services support for people...

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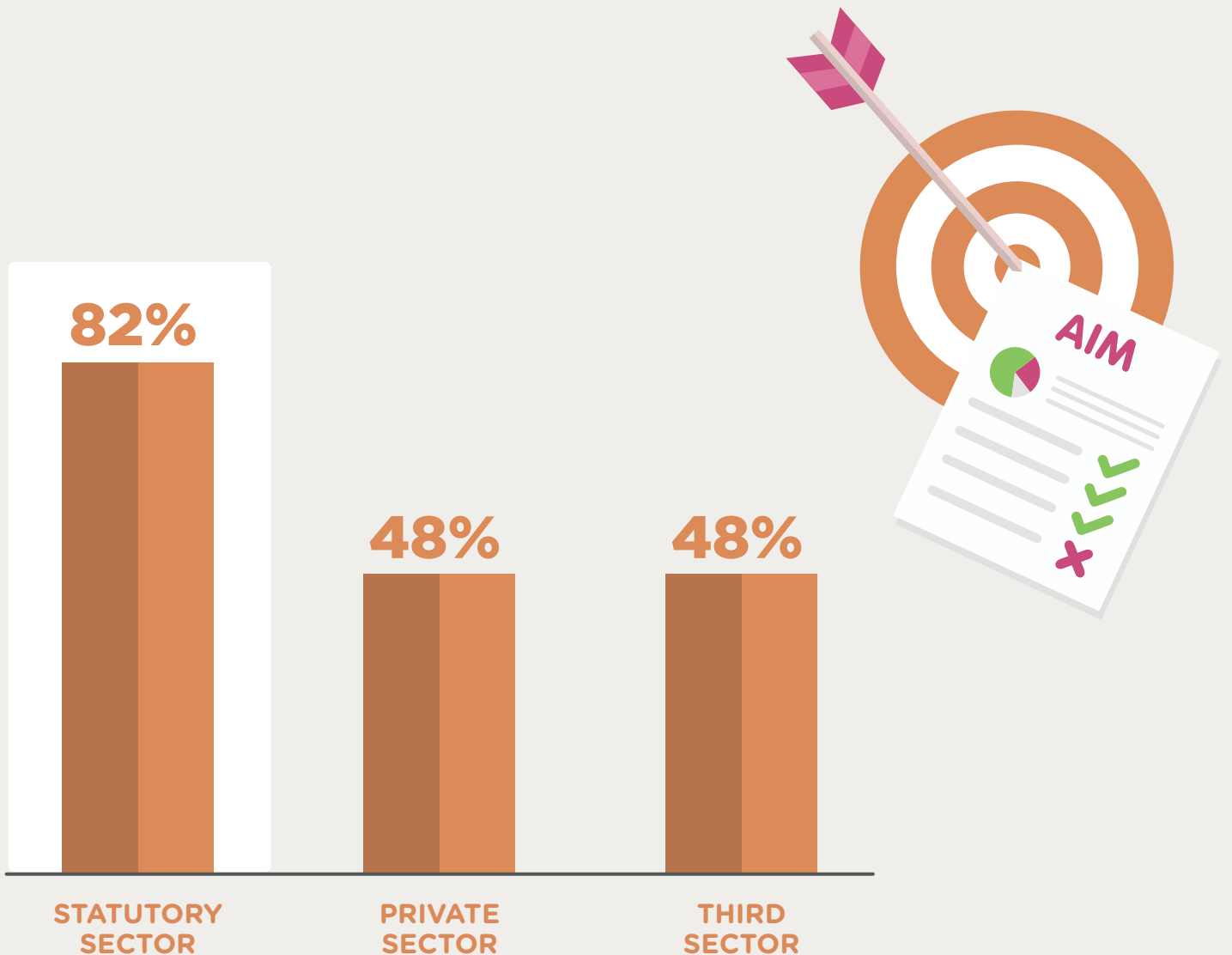
All those who agreed or strongly agreed that they'd seen a reduction in the availability of social services support for people in their current role



# Statutory sector organisations feel the most tension between what people want and what they can deliver



TO WHAT EXTENT WOULD YOU AGREE THAT THERE IS TENSION BETWEEN WHAT PEOPLE WE SUPPORT WANT AND WHAT MY ORGANISATION IS ABLE TO DELIVER?





High workloads (**49%**), funding cuts to services (**45%**) and bureaucracy and 'red tape' (**38%**) are the biggest challenges reported to be impacting on the statutory sector



Funding cuts (**61%**), high workloads (**44%**) and staff shortages (**40%**) are the biggest challenges reported to be impacting on the voluntary sector

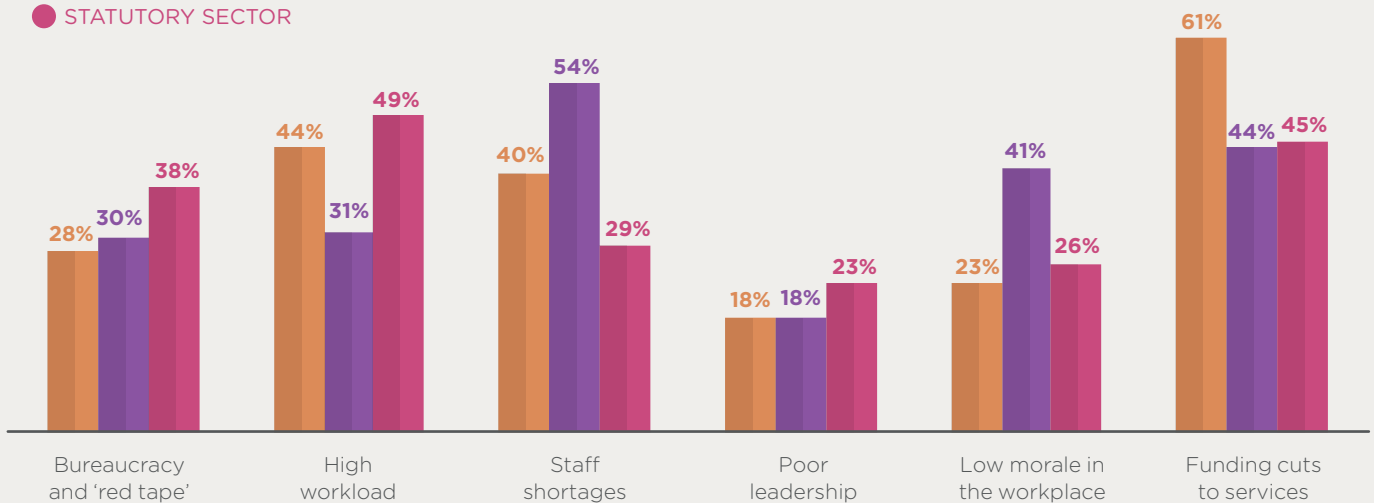


Staff shortages (**54%**), funding cuts (**44%**) and low morale (**41%**) are the biggest challenges reported to be impacting on the private sector



**IN THE PAST YEAR, WHICH OF THESE KNOWN CHALLENGES HAS HAD THE MOST IMPACT ON YOUR EVERYDAY WORK?**

- VOLUNTARY SECTOR
- PRIVATE SECTOR
- STATUTORY SECTOR



“These 3 answers are linked, funding cuts have increased workload due to the impact of other services being less available and demands of meeting funding objectives/targets vs. person centred outcomes is a challenge as they do not always marry.”

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# Service redesign

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THINKING ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION, IN THE PAST YEAR, HAVE YOU SEEN THE FOLLOWING INCREASE, DECREASE OR STAY THE SAME?



# 67%

Of respondents perceived an increase in service redesign.

This increase was reported most frequently by statutory services and group managers.

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# Community connections

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THINKING ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION, IN THE PAST YEAR, HAVE YOU SEEN THE FOLLOWING INCREASE, DECREASE OR STAY THE SAME?



The majority of respondents (**55%**) perceived that their organisation's ability to create community connections has stayed the same.

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# Partnership working

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THINKING ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION, IN THE PAST YEAR, HAVE YOU SEEN THE FOLLOWING INCREASE, DECREASE OR STAY THE SAME?



An **increase** in partnership working was reported more frequently by respondents in the statutory sector

Social workers and care staff providing direct support report partnership working to have **remained the same**

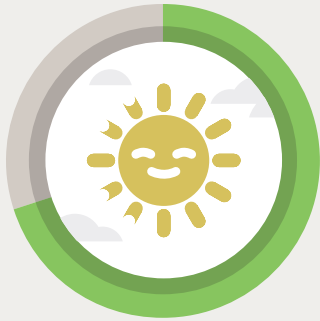


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# What makes the workforce feel valued?

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**70%**

OF RESPONDENTS SAY GOOD OUTCOMES FOR THE PEOPLE THEY SUPPORT MAKE THEM FEEL VALUED



**64%**

SAID THAT POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM PEOPLE SUPPORTED BY SERVICES MADE THEM FEEL VALUED



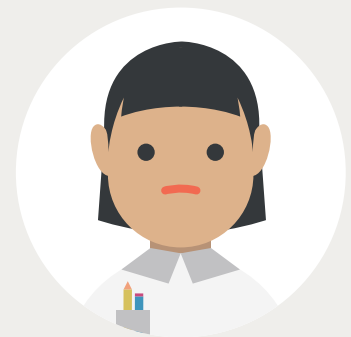
**77%**

OF RESPONDENTS PERCEIVED THAT THEY WERE 'ALWAYS' OR 'OFTEN' PROVIDED WITH EFFECTIVE SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION



“I know I’m part of a great team and I am trusted which gives me a foundation for doing my job well and achieving.”

“While I feel valued by my colleagues, management and service users, I do not feel valued in regards to pay, terms and conditions; for example a decrease in sickpay, not receiving days in lieu for working Christmas day, Boxing day, new year and so forth. I also feel that the increased paperwork now involved, as well as our daily duties, does not reflect in our wages.”



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# Learning and development

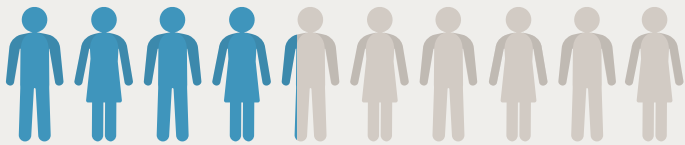
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**74%**

OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND TRAINING OF INTEREST TO THEM AND THAT SUPPORTS THEM IN THEIR WORK

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**42%**

MAKE TIME OUT OF WORK TO STUDY

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Respondents from the private sector are more likely to say that they were 'sent' on training (50%)



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**THE VIEW FROM HERE**

<http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/viewfromhere>

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