

2011

STAFF SURVEY REPORT



Survey Areas of Focus

The Electoral Office for NI (EONI) commissioned this report to conduct an annual survey of core and casual staff. The purpose of the survey was to gather views about employee's jobs, EONI as an employer and other work related matters. Particular areas of focus of this report are to:

- Measure employee perceptions of the work environment
- Identify job satisfaction levels
- Identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement

The survey gathered information about employee satisfaction in ten main areas:

- Employee Statistics
- Job satisfaction
- Communications/Priorities
- Engagement
- Teamwork/Colleagues
- Organisational objectives and purpose of work
- Management & leadership
- Learning and Development
- Inclusion and Fair Treatment
- Resources and Workload

Response Rate

The overall response rate was 58%. The sample is large enough to provide an accurate proxy for EONI as a whole. The data collection for this research has been carried out over a two month period and the data reported came from questionnaire surveys, this was related to research evidence particularly in relation to the following indicators:

- Meaningfulness of work
- Engagement
- Senior Management and Supervisory Support
- Voice; being able to feed your views upwards

The survey was distributed to both permanent and a proportion of casual staff in all grade roles with an option not to state current grade within EONI. Employees were encouraged to participate in the engagement survey and asked to complete the

questionnaires within four weeks. EONI would like to take the opportunity to thank all respondents and participants for their time and dedication in completing the questionnaires.

Methodology and Data Analysis

Two types of items were used in the survey. The first type of item asked respondents how they think or feels about an issue. Each of these items followed the same format using a 'Likert scale'. This gives respondents the opportunity to choose one outcome from a range of five. For example:

Q:

*Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:
'My line manager is an effective leader'*

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

The second requested information was about the individual respondent which is summarised as 'Employee Statistics' and, where appropriate, used to correlate views or opinions against age, grade or gender.

Data Analysis

Mean comparisons are used to segment a dataset so that differences between subgroups can be identified and examined. For example the levels of engagement or satisfaction for men as compared with women, or for Administrative Officer grades compared with Staff Officer grades. The data was then examined to see whether the differences between each group were statistically significant. The mean comparisons were arrived at using a scoring system whereby each of the Likert answers were scored, this allowed the levels of overall satisfaction to be measured.

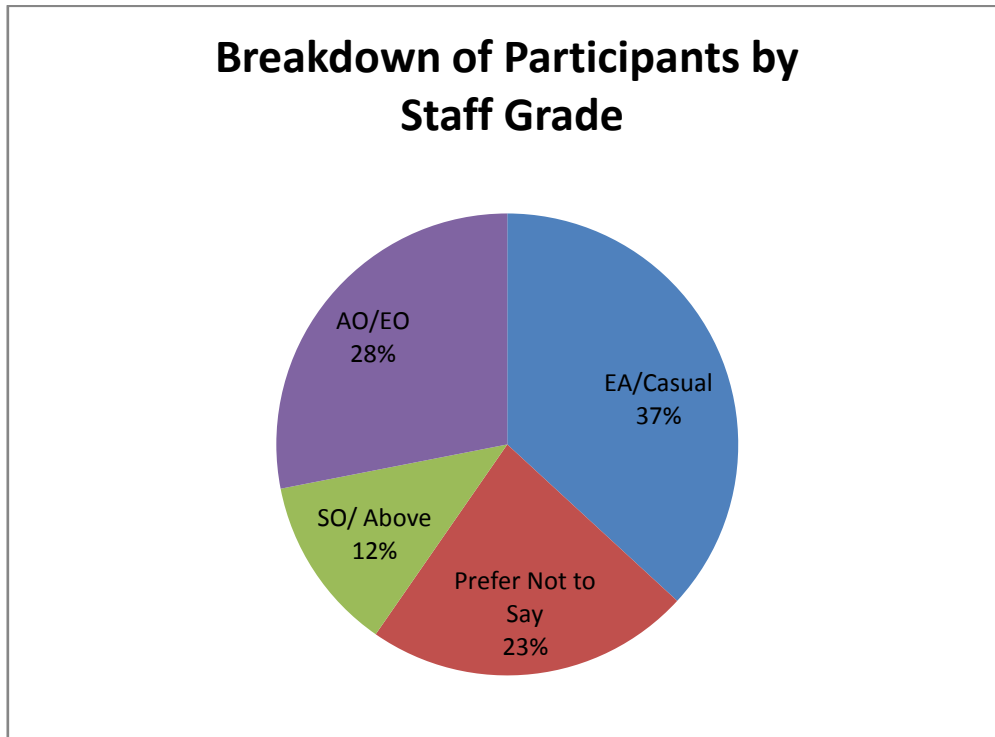
Correlation Analysis

Correlation analyses were used to examine the strength and direction of association between two variables. For example, Grade and Leadership are significantly and

positively associated – higher confidence in leadership increased with higher graded employees. This was achieved through correlating datasets or by correlating the score for satisfaction, agreement or disagreement between two or more variables.

This allows us to draw out possible relationships between datasets.

Employee Statistics



Grades:

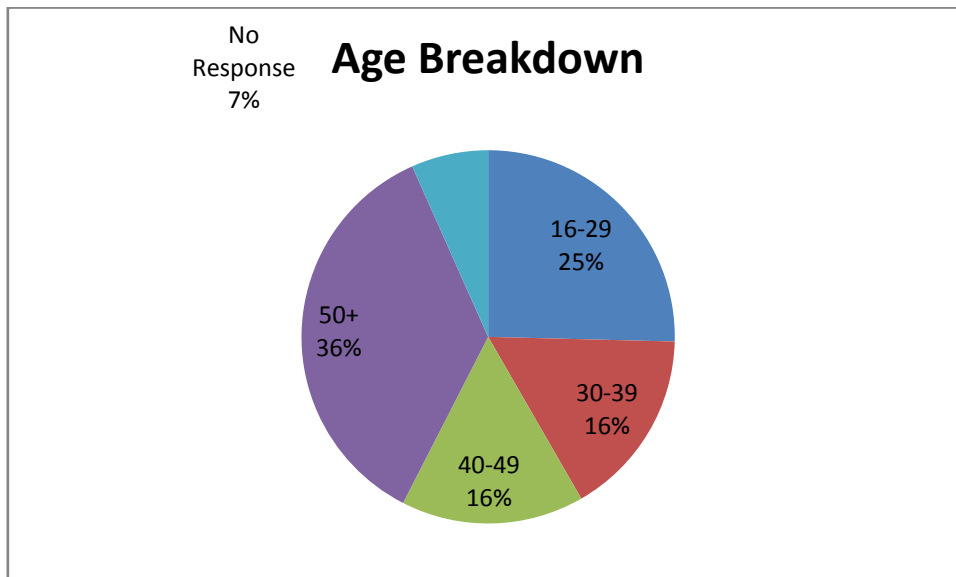
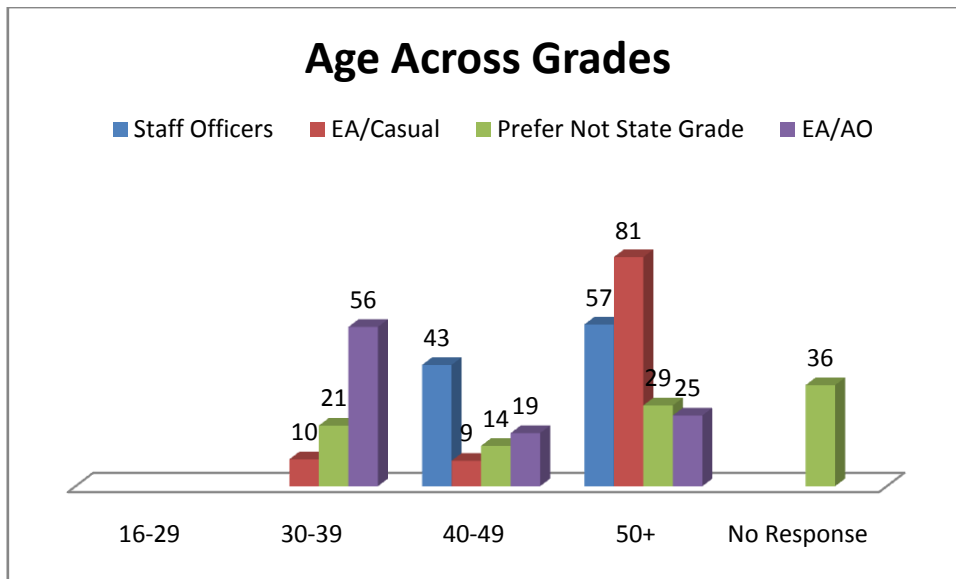
EA – Casual Electoral Assistants

AO – Administrative Officer

EO – Executive Officer I and II

SO/Above – Staff Officer, Deputy Principal and Grade 7.

As we can see the majority of respondents were EA/Casual staff members, however we had 23% respondents who chose not to state their grade and who may have been from permanent grades which would assume a 63% core staff respondent rate. There were slightly fewer Staff Officer/above respondents but this is in line with fewer employees at this higher management grade. Therefore we feel respondent levels across grades was proportionate and offers the validity in responses accordingly.



What we see here is characteristic with an ageing population across the UK, however the percentage of the EONI's workforce is particularly low in the 16-29 category. This may be two-fold. During the process of RPA, with cut-backs and restructuring new posts are being filled increasingly with existing staff through internal trawls. This may be a contributing factor for younger new entrants. Additionally, as a consequence of funding cuts, lower grade entry level jobs are not being advertised.

Disability

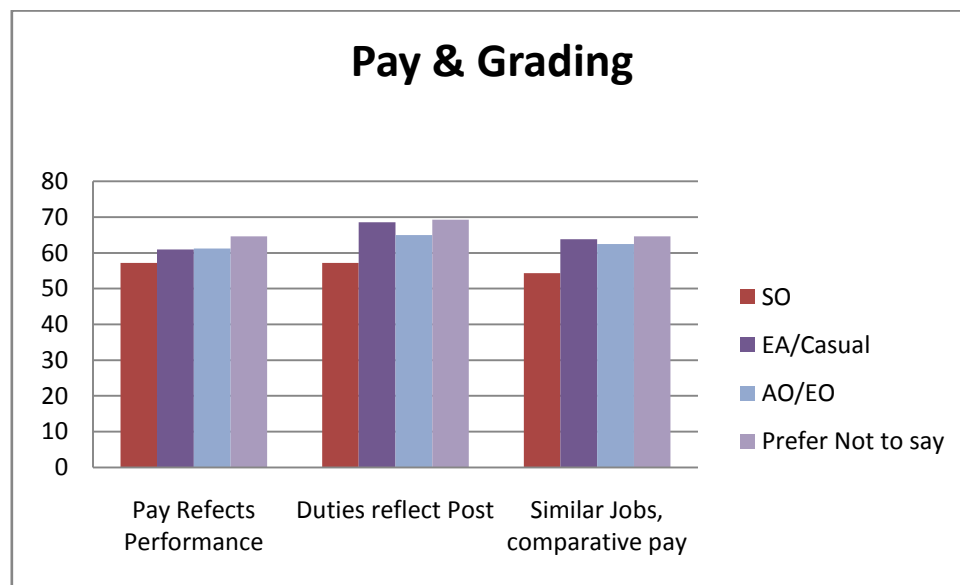
Currently no employees would categorise themselves as living with a Disability. This would not correspond with the recent statistics that 1 in 10 citizens in Northern Ireland are currently living with a disability. As stated in the EONI's 'Equality

Scheme For the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland, 2003' and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995:

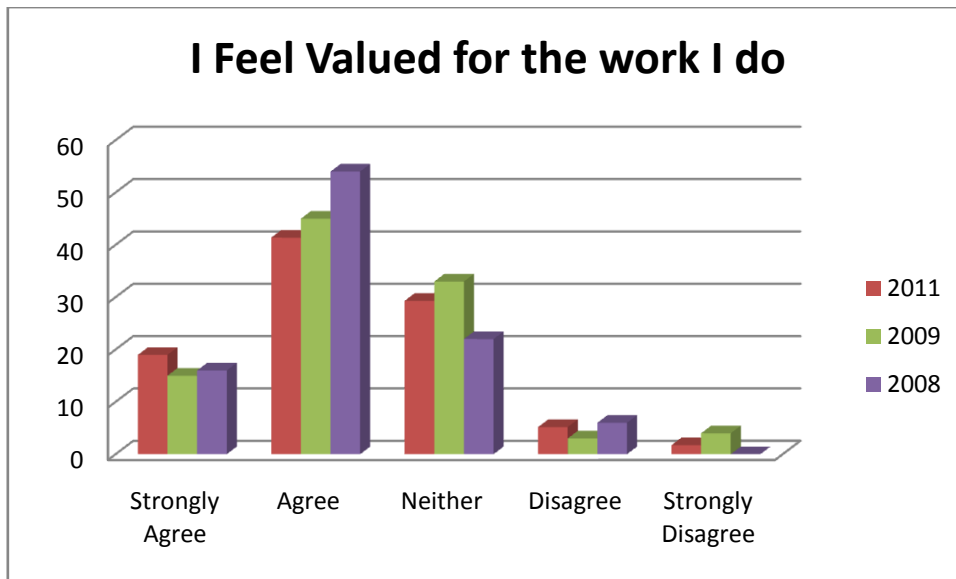
'Statutory Duty requires Public Authorities to promote equality of opportunity, rather than just to avoid discrimination'.

Where affirmative action is being considered to ensure equality of opportunity in recruitment perhaps this action can be extended to other Section 75 groups where quantitative data suggests low participation or representation.

Job Satisfaction

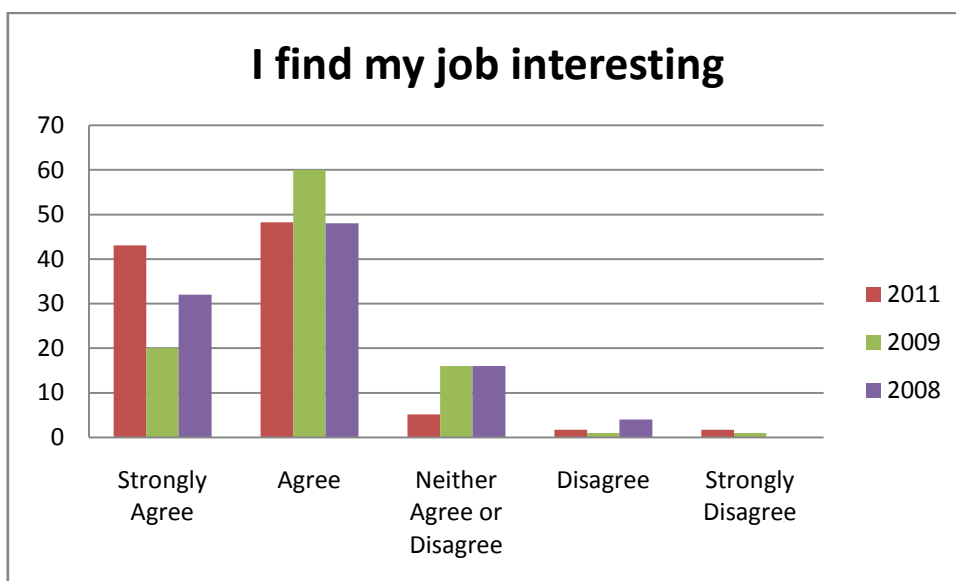


Just under half of all Staff Officers feel their pay and duties do not reflect their post. The same amount also feel their job is not comparative to similar grade posts in other organisations. 60-70% of posts with no management duties in EONI feel their pay reflects their performance and that their duties reflect their post, these figures show a low majority, with approximately 1/3 of the non-managerial staff members feeling their post is not pay consummate.



In 2011 between 50%-60% of staff either strongly agree or agree that they feel valued for the work they do. There has been a slight drop in agreement and a slight increase in disagreement since 2008 illustrating an overall decrease in staff feeling valued since 2008. This is however in line with other industries both in the public and private sector due to financial pressures and less resources to physically demonstrate and organisations value for staff. Where other organisation have tried to address this, is with initiatives like bonus days off instead of financial rewards or asking managers to communicate appreciation more verbally with praise, recognition and thanks.

What is encouraging is that the decrease in staff feeling valued hasn't affected their interest in their work, or their sense of personal accomplishment, as seen in the following charts.

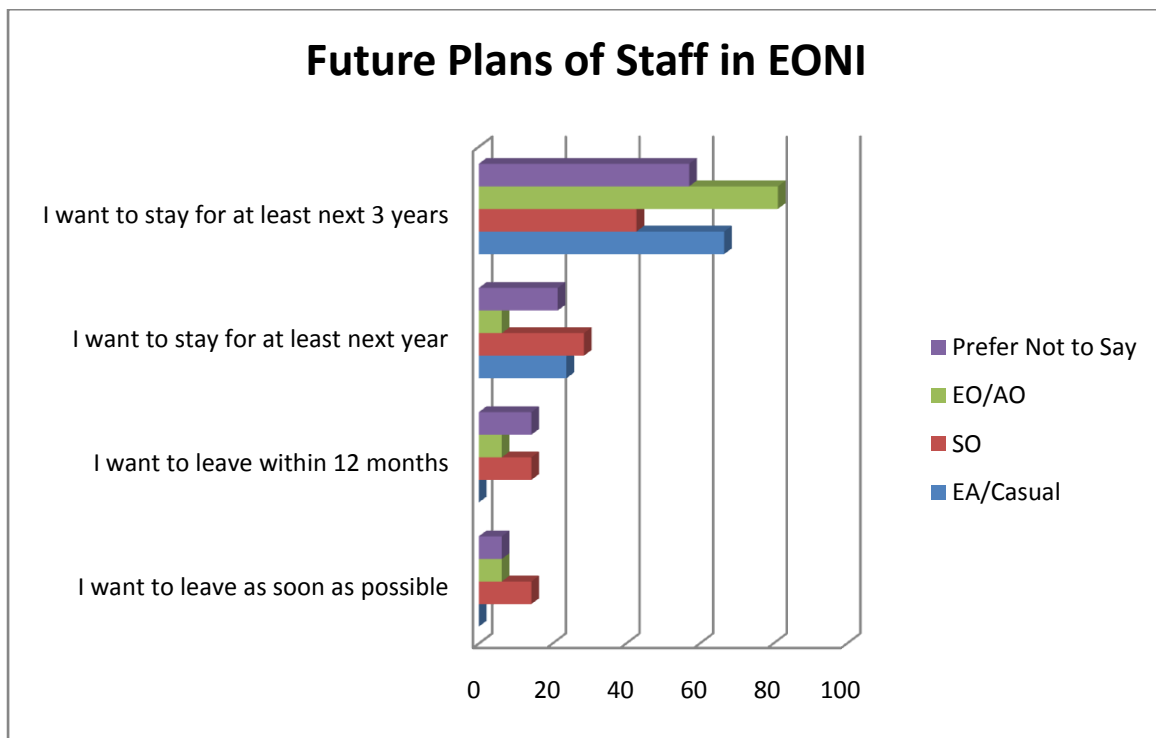


We see an almost 10% increase in agreement in 2011 from 2009 in employees finding their work interesting.



We see here the results from 2009 and 2011 almost even out in agreement with the level of satisfaction EONI staff have with their sense of personal accomplishment from their work. Therefore we don't see any negative correlation between personal satisfaction levels and the overall decrease in feeling valued.

One of the most important ways to engage both job satisfaction and engagement in employees is to ascertain their commitment or plans for their future employment.



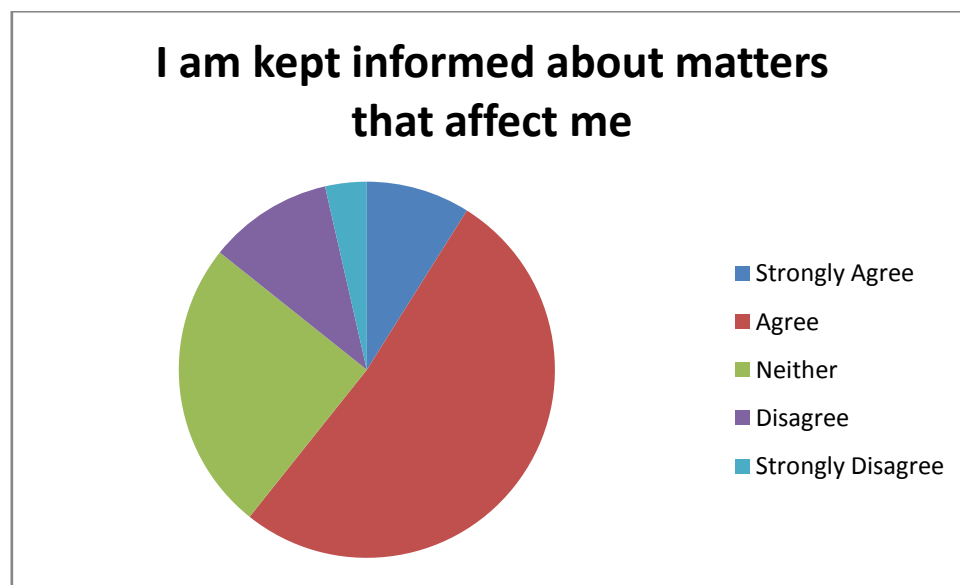
Research points to a correlation between staff engagement through the overall treatment of staff. There are three main challenges facing public service providers currently in this area:

- Maintaining morale and engagement at the time of financial challenges and staffing reduction
- Getting support from all levels of management
- Communicating with dispersed workforces

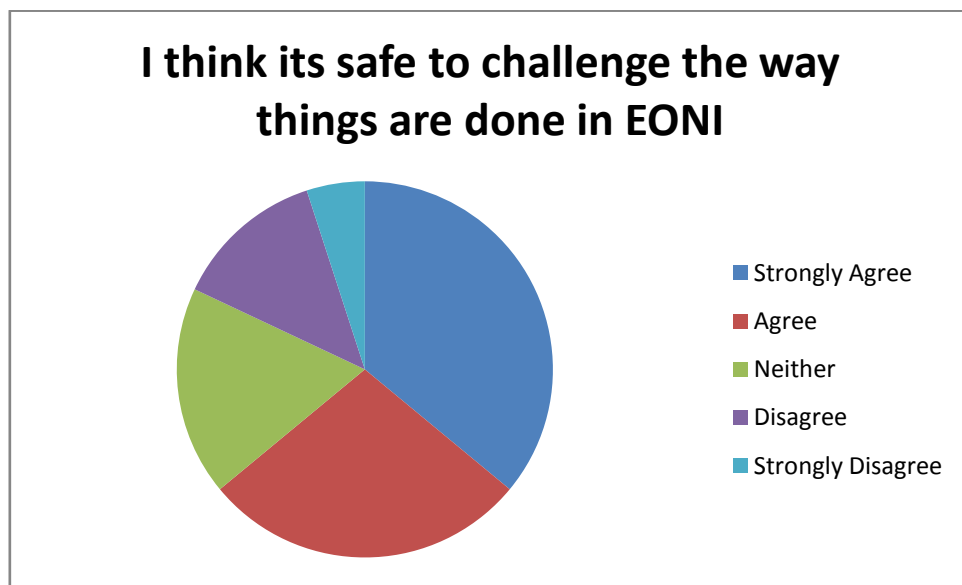
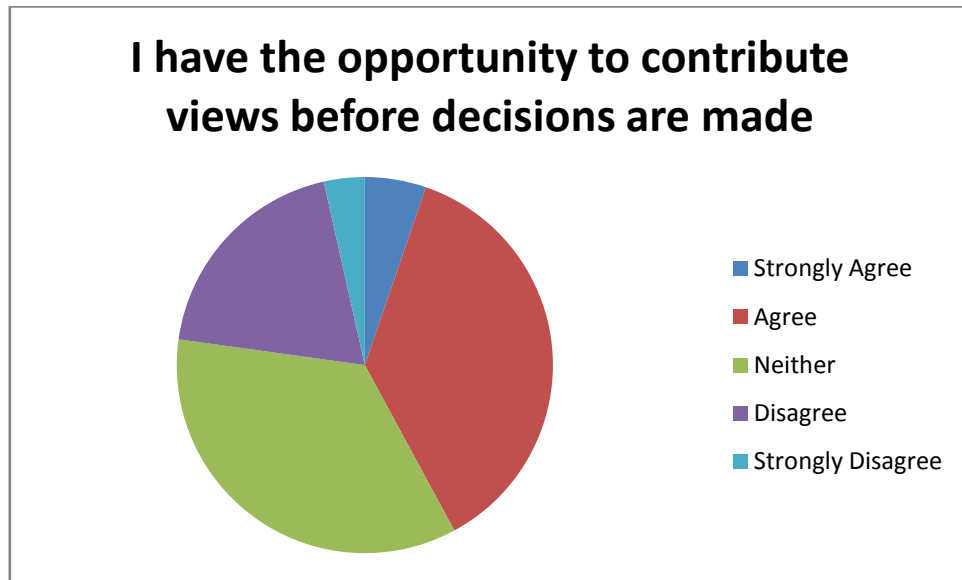
Department of Health (15116) 2010

Communication

The next set of questions focused on managing change within the organisation and focused on communication flows. Over half the staff felt they were well informed about changes and matters that affected internal staff, however only approx 1/3 of staff felt they contributed to decisions or change. Communication flows, horizontally and vertically throughout an organisation are critical in establishing engagement and job satisfaction as a desire to make things better and the importance of both listening and acting on the voices of staff.



In relation to communication and contribution of staff, further evidence suggests the importance of the organisational approach to communication and involvement of staff. This highlights methods of engagement, with successful methods such as face-to-face communication and engagement events increasing staff morale and engagement levels.



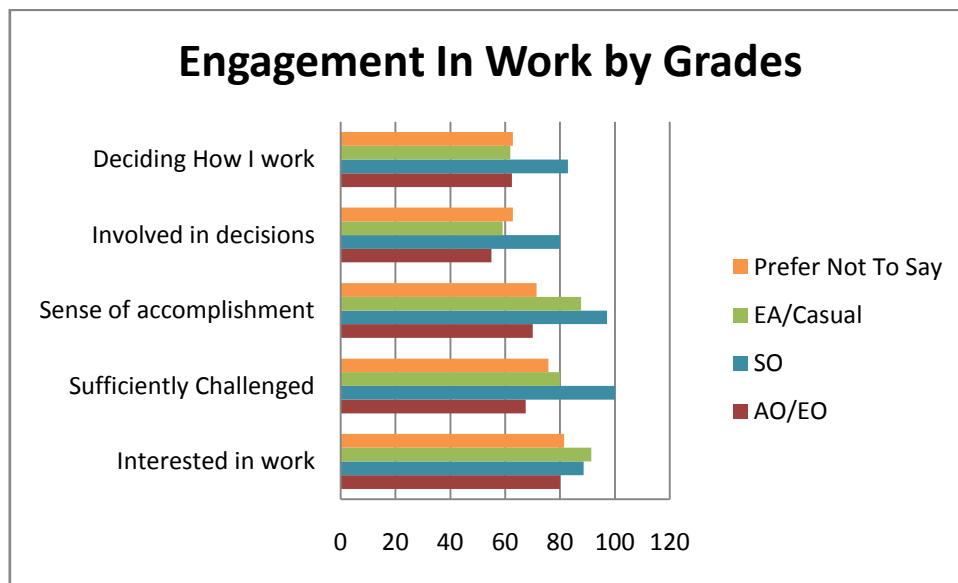
The majority of staff feel comfortable challenging EONI's current procedures or actions.

Engagement

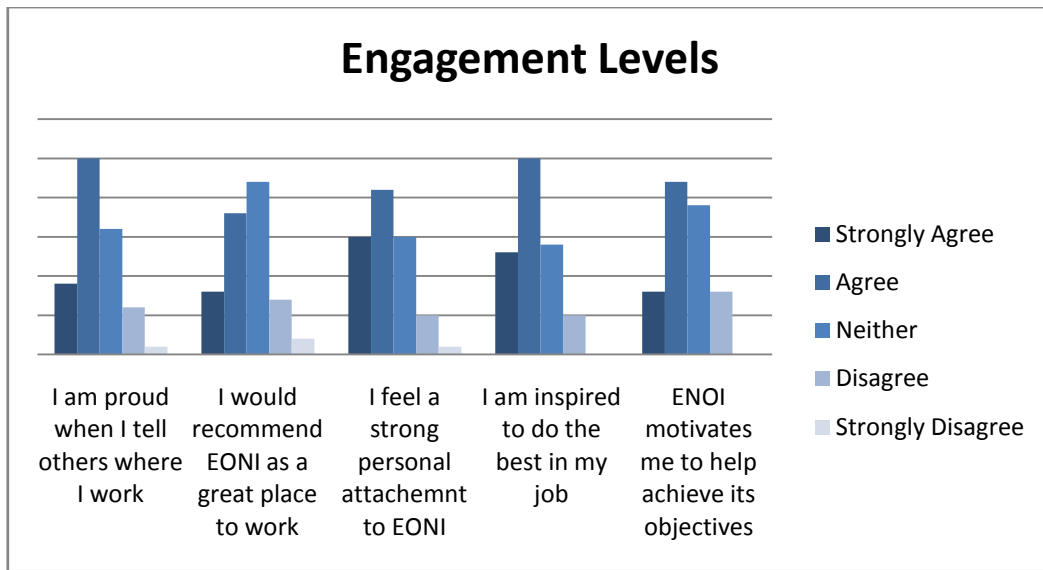
Staff engagement cuts across communication, training, involvement in decision-making. Engaged staff members feel they have a voice within the organisation.

The table below shows that Staff Officers/Above feel very much engaged within EONI, however at management level, they are naturally more involved in decision-making processes and having a voice. AO/EO grades however are overall about 15-20% less engaged in decision-making, both in relation to the work of EONI and personal work methods and approaches.

All grades are 80% satisfied and interested in their work.

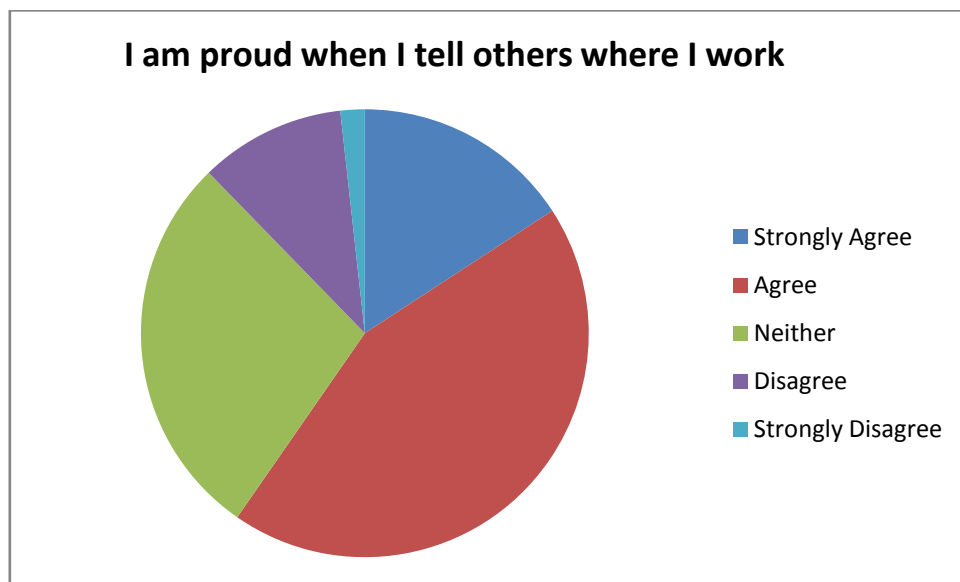


A large contributing factor to engagement is general job satisfaction and a personal connection or pride to work for EONI.



The results indicate a high percentage of staff feel a strong personal attachment to EONI, however, motivation scored average amongst all grades.

Just over ½ of all respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they are proud to tell others where they work. This indicates a strong personal attachment to the workplace. This benefits EONI's awareness with the public



Teamwork / Colleagues

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Team members help me | 45% | 41% | 10% | 2% | 2% |
| The team work together | 34% | 48% | 14% | 2% | 2% |
| The team are encouraged to find new solutions | 26% | 41% | 24% | 7% | 2% |

EONI has a strong teamwork ethos, with colleagues feeling they can rely upon and get help, working together, to meet objectives. Over 80% of employees either agree or strongly agree that team members help each other and work together. This percentage drops to 67% in relation to finding new solutions or better ways to deal with problems, perhaps highlighting that there is room for new approaches or again highlighting that administrative, non-managerial grades do not feel as integral to the decision-making process.

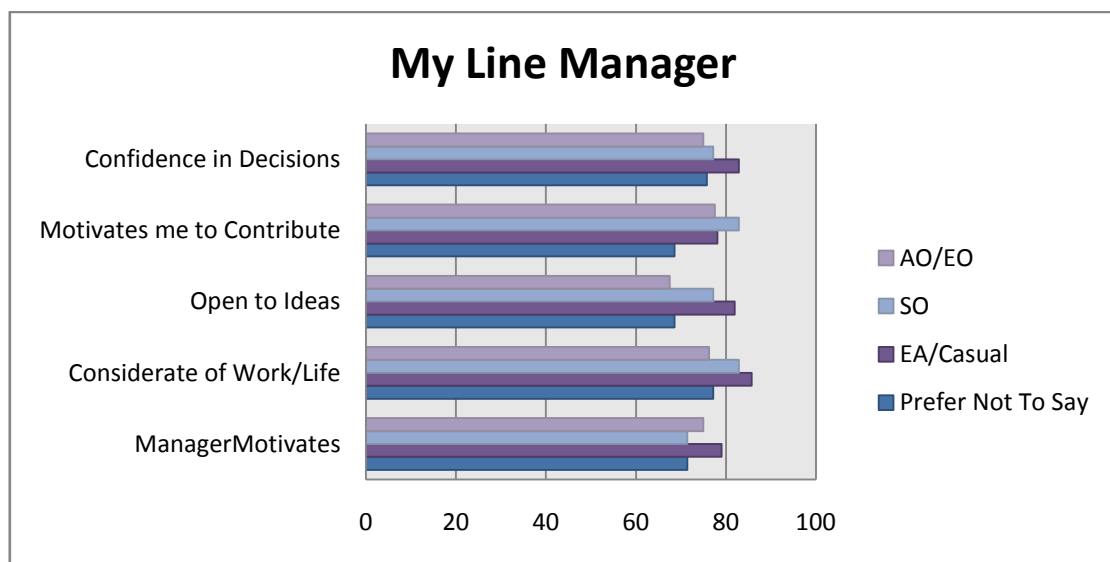
Organisational objectives and purpose of work



| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| I have a clear understanding of EONI's purpose | 17% | 28% | 26% | 24% | 3% |
| I have a clear understanding of EONI's objectives | 33% | 57% | 7% | 3% | 0% |
| I understand how my work contributes to EONI's objectives | 34% | 45% | 17% | 3% | 0% |

In relation to the understanding of EONI's aims and objectives and how employees contribute to these we see 45% of staff understand EONI's purpose. We also see between 80%-90% of staff in 2011 having a clear understanding of objectives and how their work contributes to objectives.

Management and Leadership



The highest confidence in management and leadership is within the EA/Casual bands. This is the largest employee sector under management and so illustrates effective management strategies across the areas of decision-making and motivation. All grades of staff have over 65% confidence and engagement in decision-making processes within EONI.

In relation to work/life balance within EONI the results indicate that all grades have over 70% score their managers consideration of Work/Life balance as satisfactory.

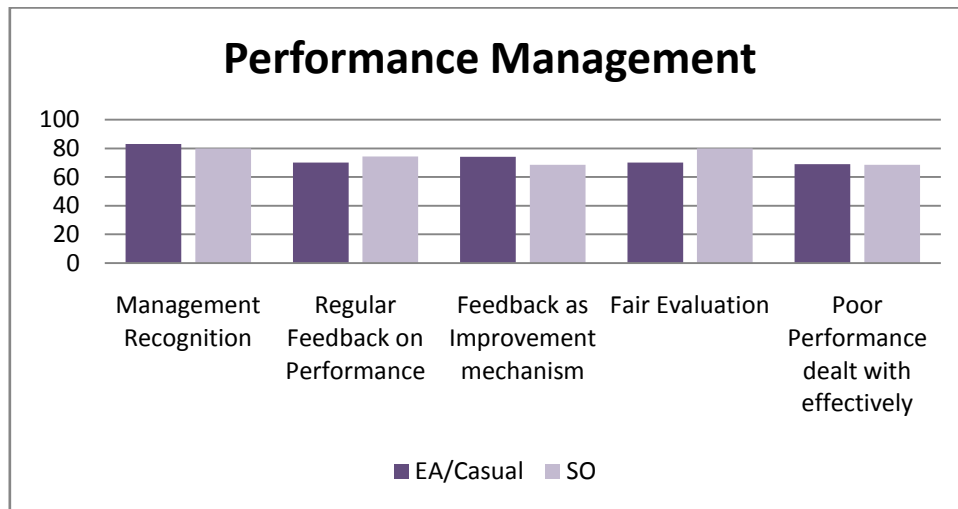
Across management and leadership staff have scored managers just below 70% satisfactory in their openness to ideas and openness to contribution.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| My manager motivates me to be more effective | 36% | 50% | 10% | 2% | 2% |
| My manager is considerate of work/life balance | 28% | 43% | 12% | 14% | 3% |
| Manager open to my ideas | 34% | 14% | 7% | 2% | 3% |
| My manager motivates me to contribute to EONI's objectives | 29% | 36% | 22% | 9% | 2% |
| I have confidence in my manager | 26% | 40% | 22% | 10% | 2% |
| My Manager recognises my performance | 34% | 40% | 12% | 10% | 3% |
| I get regular feedback on my performance | 34 | 33 | 21 | 10 | 0 |
| The feedback I receive helps me to improve | 21% | 36% | 29% | 12% | 2% |
| My performance is evaluated fairly | 24% | 34% | 26% | 12% | 0% |
| Poor team performance is dealt with | 22% | 38% | 28% | 7% | 3% |

What is interesting about Management & Leadership is that 86% of staff questioned feel that Managers recognise when staff have done their job well. This figure is considerably higher than the 58% of staff who feel valued for the work they do. So although the recognition levels are high, there is a slight decrease in the value staff feel.

Opinion is slightly more split in relation to evaluation of performance and feedback and this could possibly indicate that although performance is recognised, feedback

or the value added job satisfaction is perhaps lower due to communication methods or regular feedback systems to staff.



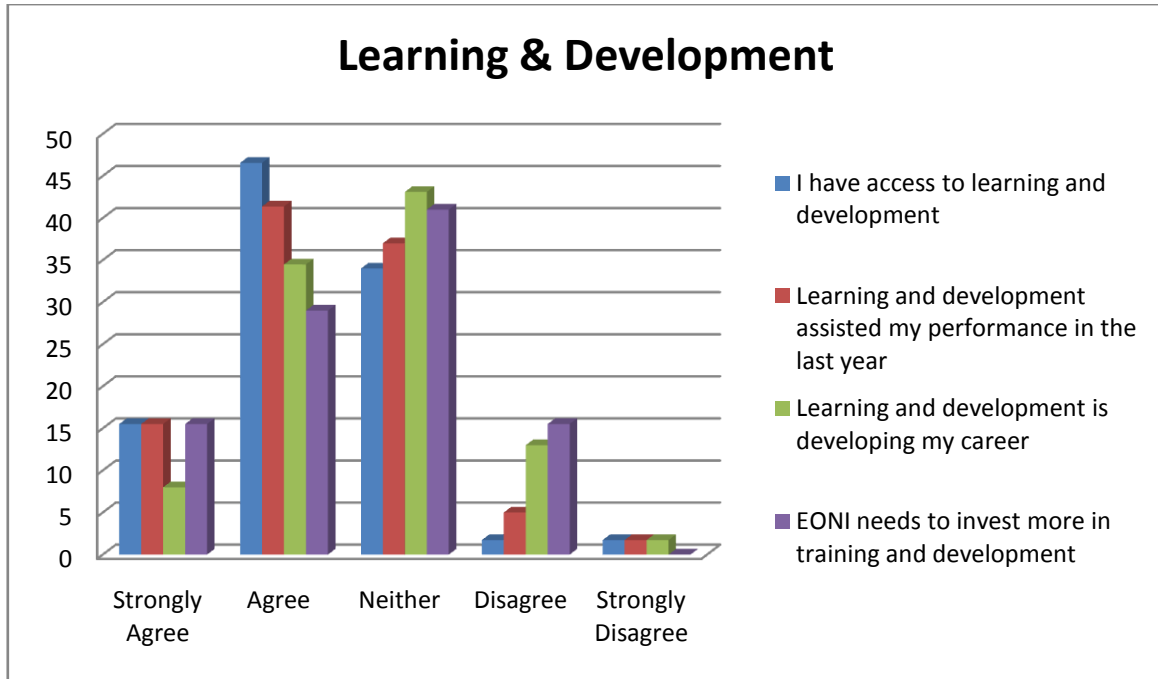
Performance evaluation and feedback systems however do not differ dramatically between grades and this proposes that line managers, at all levels are similar in their approaches, methods and procedures.

Learning and Development

Learning and development is another area that across both the public and private sectors has been impacted by financial cuts and staff reduction and retention. It is however important for organisations recruiting internally to ensure staff promotions or expansion of post duties is accompanied by support, training, learning and development. This again benefits the overall sense of engagement and job satisfaction overall. An important aspect of investment in learning and development for EONI is also to realise the skills and maximise on skills and experience of staff, often the most effective way of doing this is through learning and development which assists organisations in identifying the strengths, skills and experiences within the organisation.

86-88% of permanent staff have participated in training and development within the last 12 months. This figure lowers to 62% for Temporary or Casual Staff.

EONI does demonstrate high participation in training and development, this also reflects good staff engagement.



Although 43% of staff believe EONI needs to invest more in training and development, the majority of staff believe learning and development assists with performance (55%) and career development (41%). This allows EONI to retain skills and training within the organisation and therefore doesn't lose the cost of training to competitor organisations.

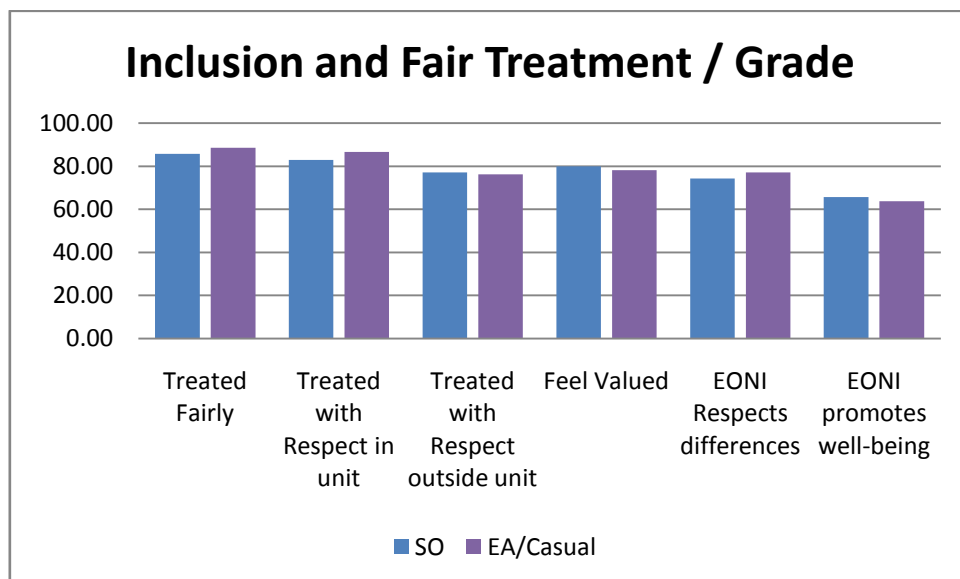
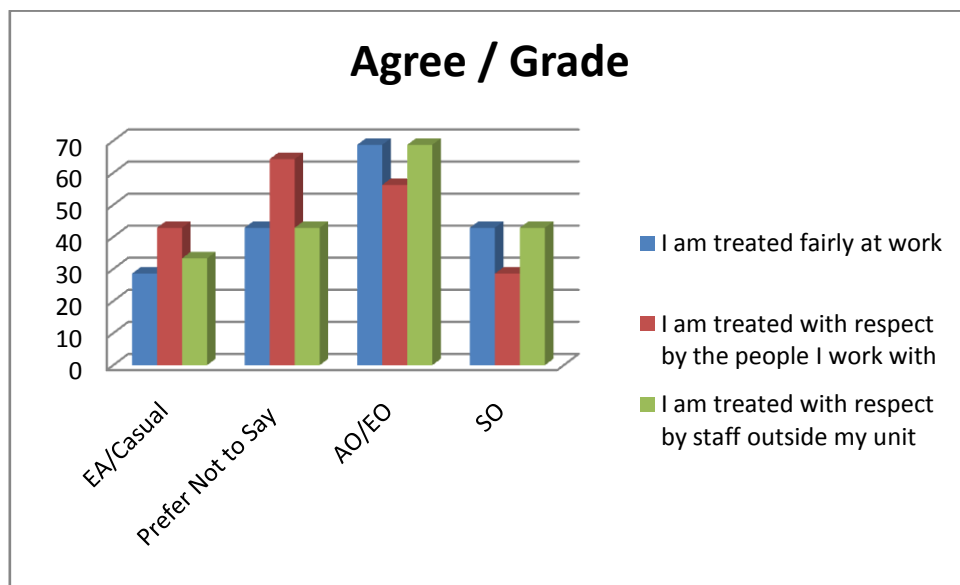
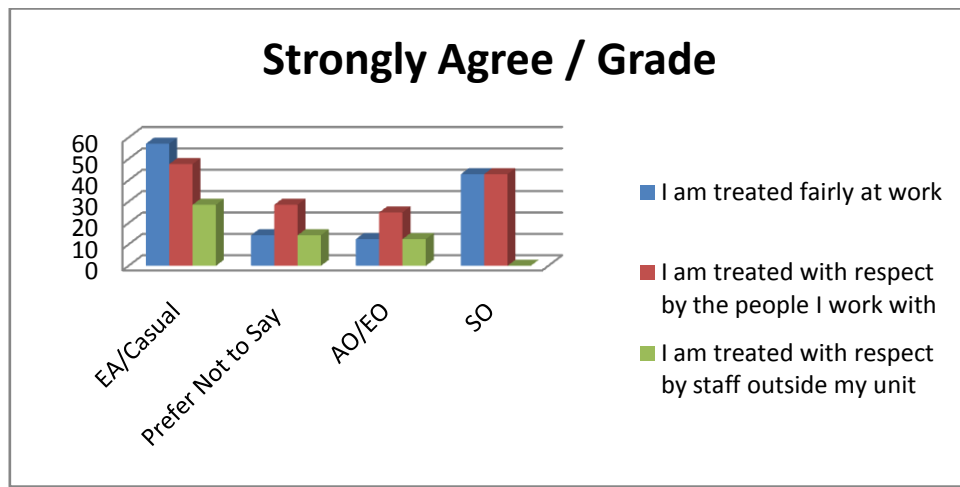
This factor contrasts with the previous percentage of 1/3 of non-managerial staff who do not feel their pay reflects similar posts in other organisations. Despite this, staff develop their skills and use these skills to progress within EONI, again demonstrating good staff engagement, reinforced by training and development.

Inclusion & Fair Treatment

Being treated fairly for the work internally and externally is an important aspect of overall job satisfaction.

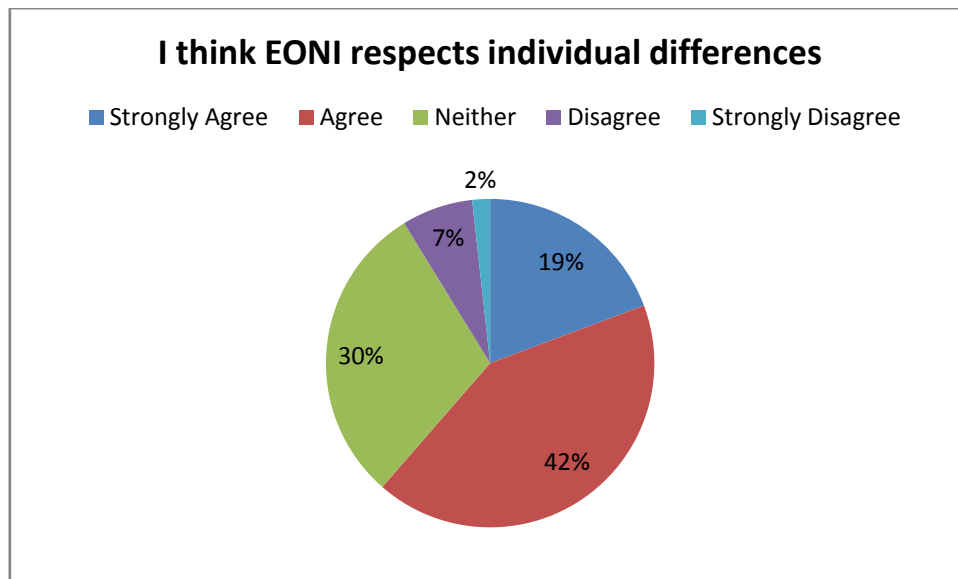
Casual and managerial staff have the highest score for fair treatment at work within their specified department, however, there is perhaps room for encouraging communication and respect between departments, another issue that was drawn out

of additional comments is that staff in local offices felt unfairly treated compared to staff in head office.

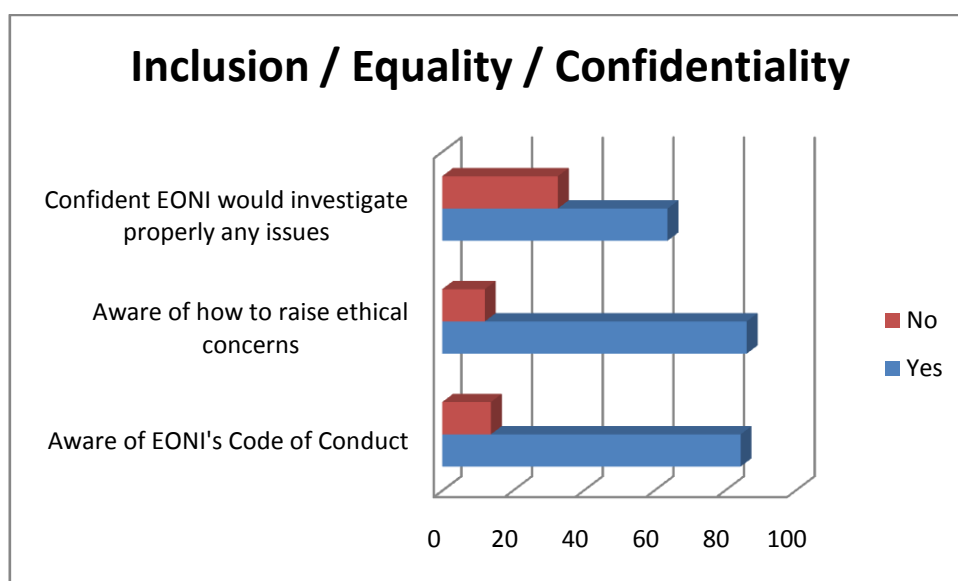


This table illustrates that permanent and temporary staff have almost the same positive response (65%-87%) to feeling included and treated fairly within EONI.

Almost all respondents felt valued and respected both by colleagues inside and outside the unit. It was also felt by almost 2/3 of respondents that EONI promotes well-being in the workplace.

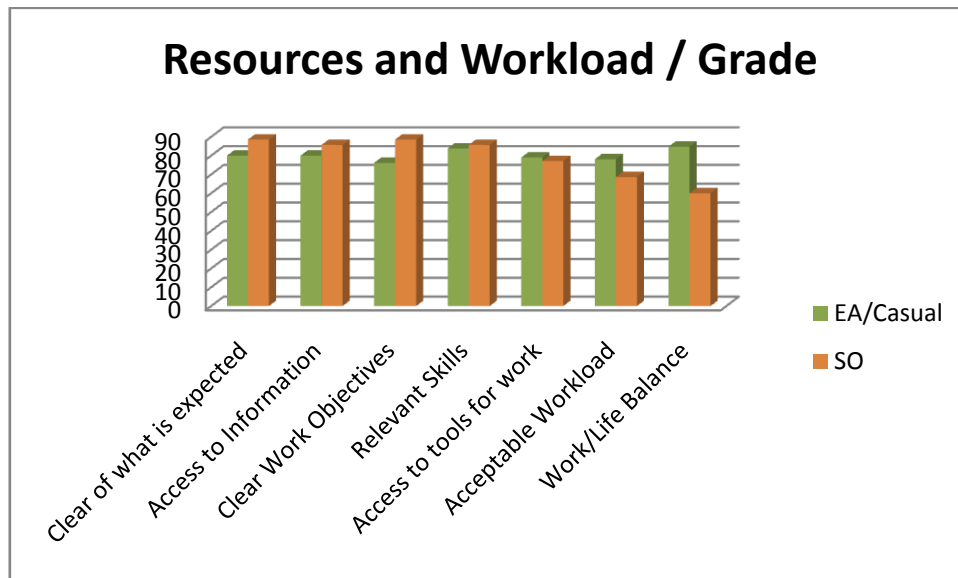


Reassuringly, the majority of the workforce (80%) are aware of EONI's code of conduct, with 81% aware of how to raise ethical concerns.



Resources and Workload

Between 70-90% of SO grades and EA grades felt their resources and workload were appropriate for their post. There are two areas where management positions scoring was lower, work/life balance and acceptable workload.



Conclusion

Key Findings:

Many strengths of the EONI workforce were identified including the following:

- The highest scoring statement in the survey was associated with employees showing very strong agreement that people are expected to treat each other respectfully. Similarly, a significant majority of employees reported that they are actively encouraged to behave in an ethical manner. There was also a strong understanding of what staff needed to achieve in their workplace.
- A large majority of employees believed that they make an important contribution to achieving workplace and organisational outcomes.
- There was substantial agreement that employees are committed to EONI and their role and contribution is taken seriously. There was also strong belief that employees behave ethically, professionally and fairly.
- Almost all of employees believed their workplaces are free of harassment and bullying.

Key Opportunities for improvement

Overall, the results obtained from the EONI Employee Survey 2011 are similar in many respects to survey results and research from other large public sector organisations.

Indeed, there are some areas where the EONI results are better than those from similar surveys and there are opportunities for improvement in the following areas:

- Human Resource management and staff recruitment issues. There were some concerns expressed regarding employment being based on merit and ensuring people with the right knowledge, skills and abilities are selected.
- Staff training for casual/temporary employers was low scoring.
- Quite a large % of respondents do not have a clear understanding of EONI's purpose. Strategic aim and mission is often communicated, consulted and decided on at senior management level, however, this impacts greatly on staff engagement and motivation.
- There were some concerns regarding results in communication and lower grade staff not feeling they had a voice in decision-making.
- All non-management grades did not feel as involved in decisions affecting the way they worked and organisational level decision-making.