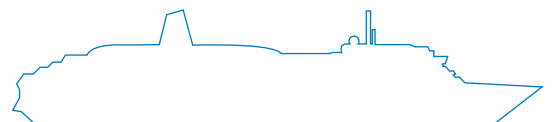


# Richmond Events - UK Business Panel

Workplace Happiness research  
August 2011



**Workplace Happiness – Research into the happiness of individuals within organisations**

**Undertaken by Richmond Events, July 2011.**

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## 1. Background

We launched the UK Business Panel in January 2007. Our intention was to create the most informed and reliable specialist research audiences available in the UK. Our customers are, exclusively, senior budget-holders across a range of disciplines from major companies and public sector organisations.

We've recruited a panel of over **1,200** directors, heads of departments and senior managers who have agreed to answer our questionnaires. The first questionnaire in February 2007 was on the topic of **Leadership**. Since then we have completed over a dozen surveys on topics as diverse as **Social media** to views on **the Coalition**. A full list of topics can be found at the end of this report.

This report focuses on the subject of **Workplace happiness**.

A more detailed breakdown of the panel follows:

Gender		Age		Job Title		Job function	
Male	77%	25 to 30	1%	Director	26%	IT	25%
Female	23%	31 to 37	13%	Head of Function	33%	Communications	3%
		38 to 45	25%	Board Director	22%	Financial Services (PIMS)	13%
		46 to 55	45%	Senior Manager	13%	Human Resources	16%
		56 to 65	16%	General Manager	3%	Catering	8%
		66+	1%	Public Sector Equivalent	3%	Finance	10%
				Other	2%	Marketing	10%
						IT in Financial Services	4%
						Logistics	10%
						Property	1%
						Other	1%

Our panel members control personal budgets of up to £200m each and come from organisations with turnovers up to and beyond £1bn.

287 people completed the online questionnaire. Their responses were both entirely confidential and strictly anonymous. This report analyses the results and comments where appropriate.

**We'd like to thank everyone who took time to complete the questionnaire.**

## 2. **Headline findings**

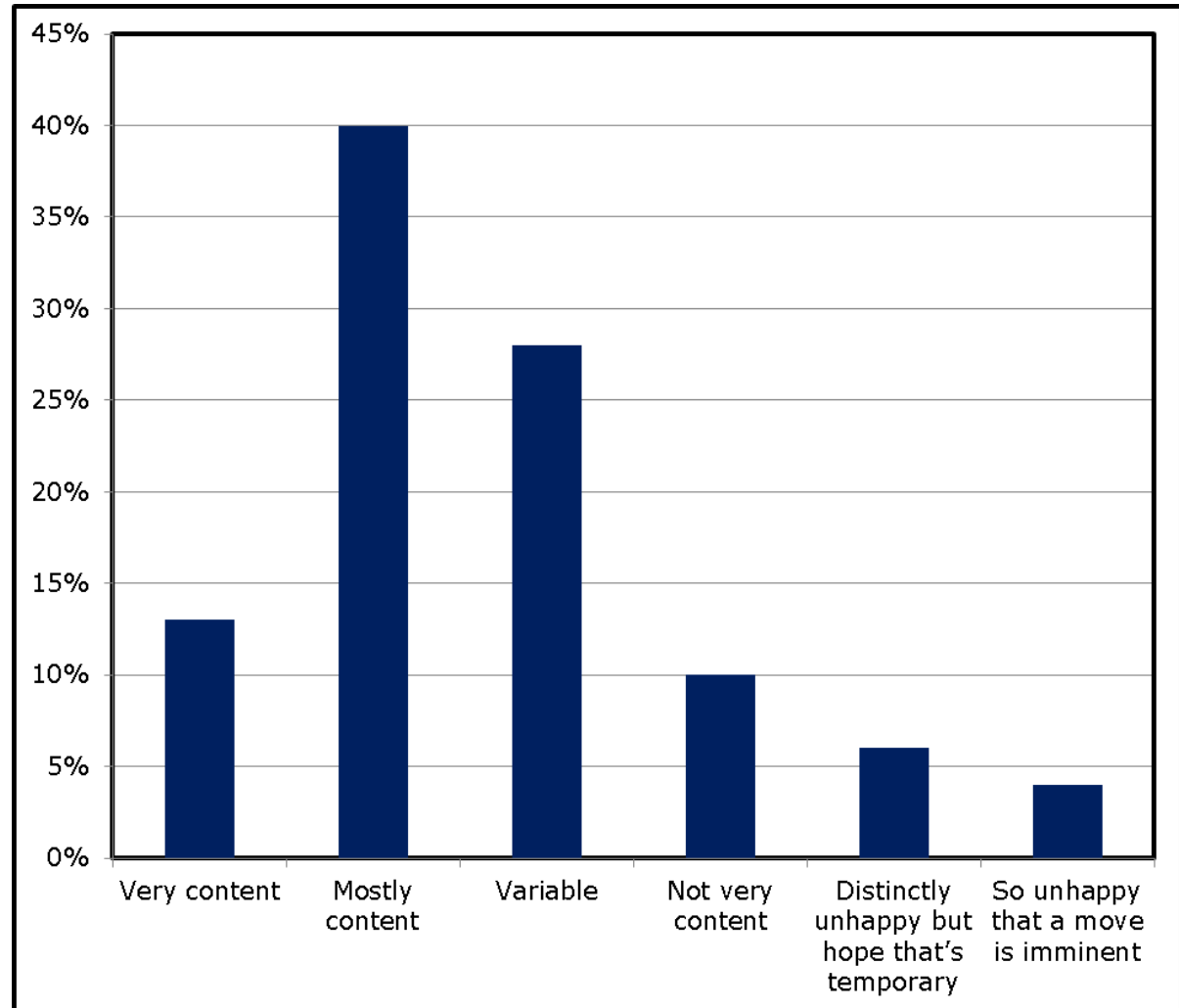
- Whilst just over ½ the panel claim to be content in their present position, this means 47% are not.
- 63% of the panel say their workplace happiness has reduced or remained static over the past year. 37% say it has improved.
- Unsurprisingly the current economic situation has left its mark on the panel. Only 31% say it hasn't affected their workplace happiness whilst 37% say it remains difficult but they've had to learn to adapt.
- Figures are similar for organisations as a whole with all but 19% being affected; 14% admitting it remains a difficult time for their organisation.
- The top two areas that give the panel most workplace satisfaction (excluding promotion & a pay rise) are helping their organisation improve its competitive position & helping the team reach peak performance. The panel say they receive little satisfaction from proving a superior wrong or getting rid of a troublesome team member. Of course they don't..
- The top two reasons the panel are likely to experience periods of discontent at work are slow / poor decision-making and actions of colleagues.
- If the panel are asked to take on extra work (without additional resource or remuneration) the highest proportion are likely to view it favourably, believing it confirms the confidence their superiors have in them. Only ¼ feel they are being taken advantage of.
- The two departments to give the panel most grief on a regular basis are Operations and Finance.
- Asked about their families' happiness the top three areas for concern are; the high levels of debt their children will take on to fund university, the ever increasing cost of living and how their children will get on the property ladder.

The full results follow.

### 3. Workplace happiness - results

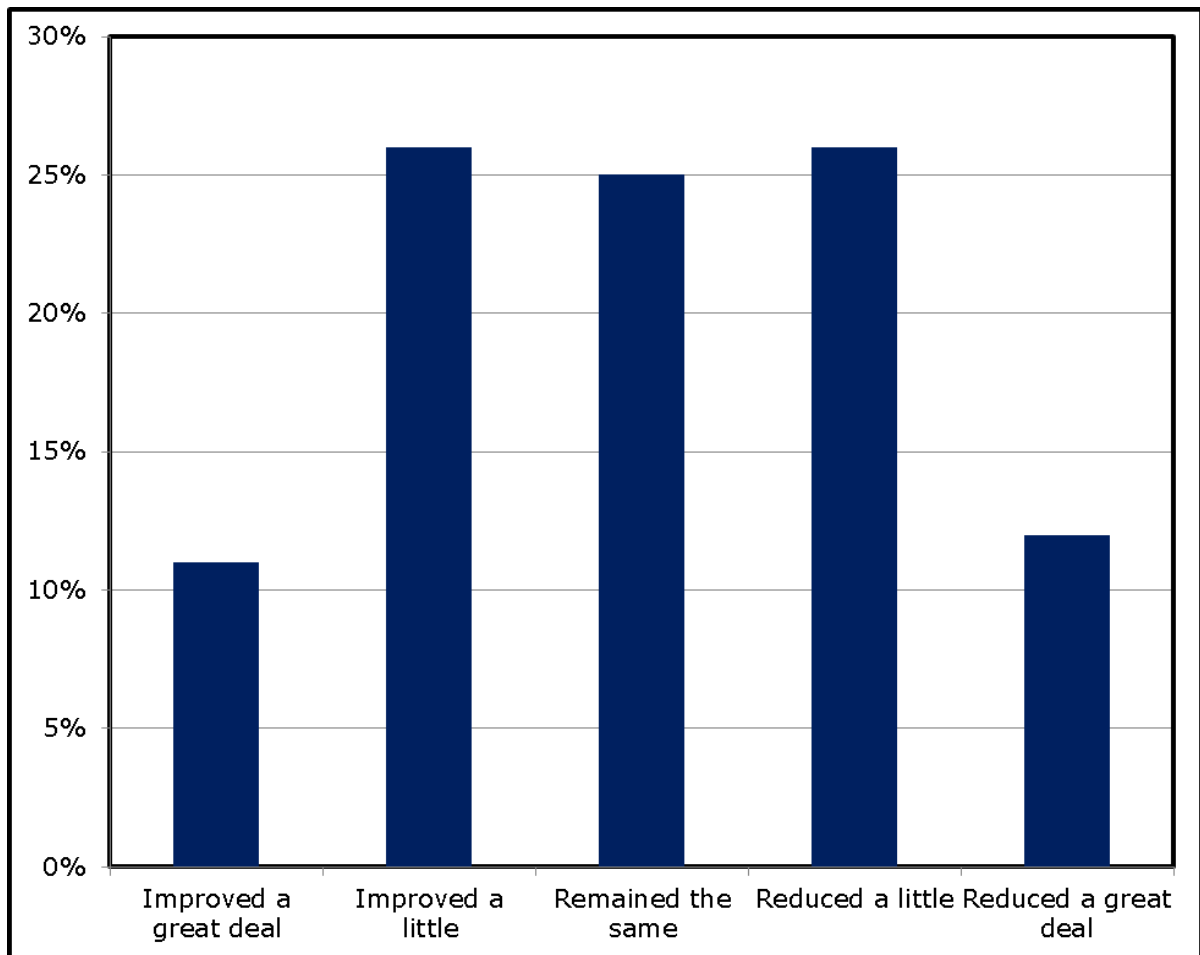
#### 3.1. Personal contentment levels.

The panel was asked how they rate their personal contentment levels within their present position.



#### Comment

- The graph shows a wide array of responses in terms of happiness! Thankfully, over ½ admit to being content in their present position; 13% very and 40% mostly.
- The next highest proportion, just over ¼, say their contentment levels are variable though why, or depending on what, we're unsure.
- The remaining 19% claim not to be happy. Of these 9% are not very content, 6% are distinctly unhappy but hope it's only temporary, whereas the remaining 4% are so unhappy that a move is imminent.
- Next we asked the panel whether their workplace happiness has changed over the last 12 months.



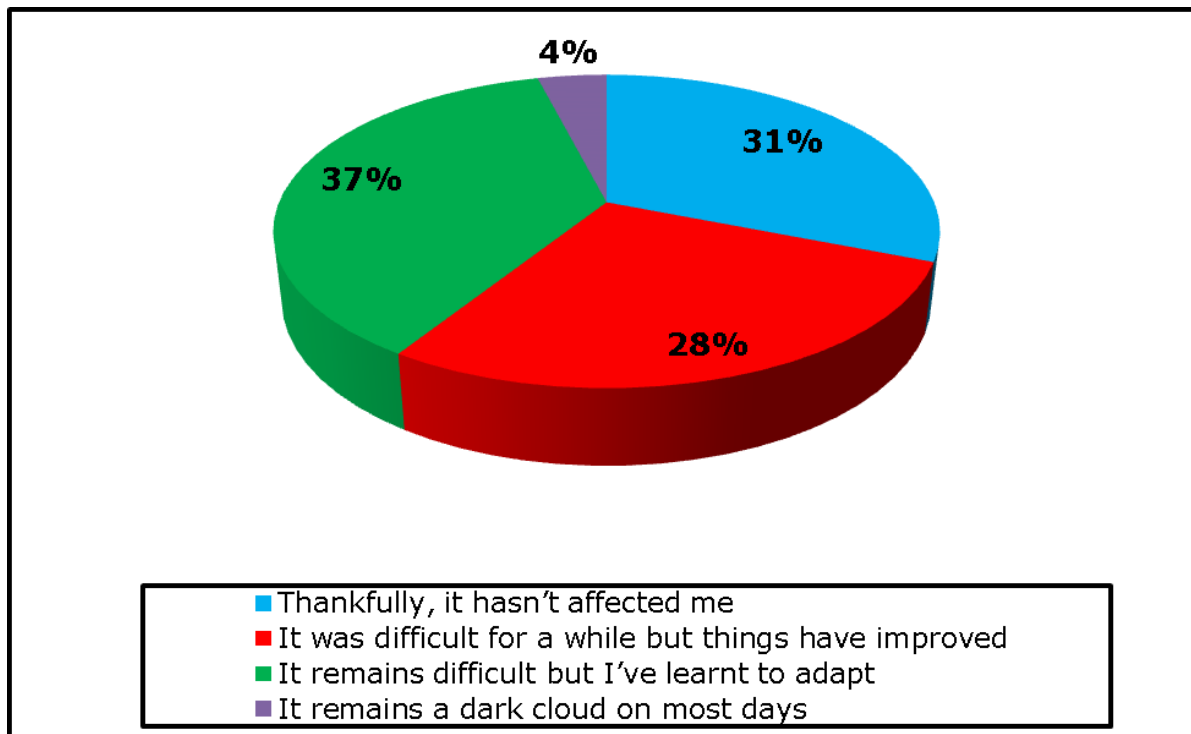
**Comment**

- If you take out the ¼ of 'neutrals' whose happiness hasn't changed over the last 12 months, then the rest of the panel are pretty much split down the middle in terms of improving or reducing happiness.
- 37% say their happiness has improved over the last year, 11% a great deal and 26% a little.
- 38% say it has reduced, 26% a little and 12% a great deal.
- The following table shows the results to the above question split by job title.

	<b>Improved</b>	<b>Static</b>	<b>Reduced</b>
Human Resources	26%	16%	58%
IT	25%	26%	49%
Catering	45%	20%	35%
Communications	29%	43%	29%
Financial Services (PIMS)	58%	30%	12%
Marketing	56%	16%	28%
Logistics	30%	30%	41%
Finance	44%	22%	33%
Retail	53%	33%	14%

**3.2. The Economic environment & workplace happiness.**

Next, the panel was asked how the economic situation of the past few years (and on-going) has affected their personal workplace happiness.

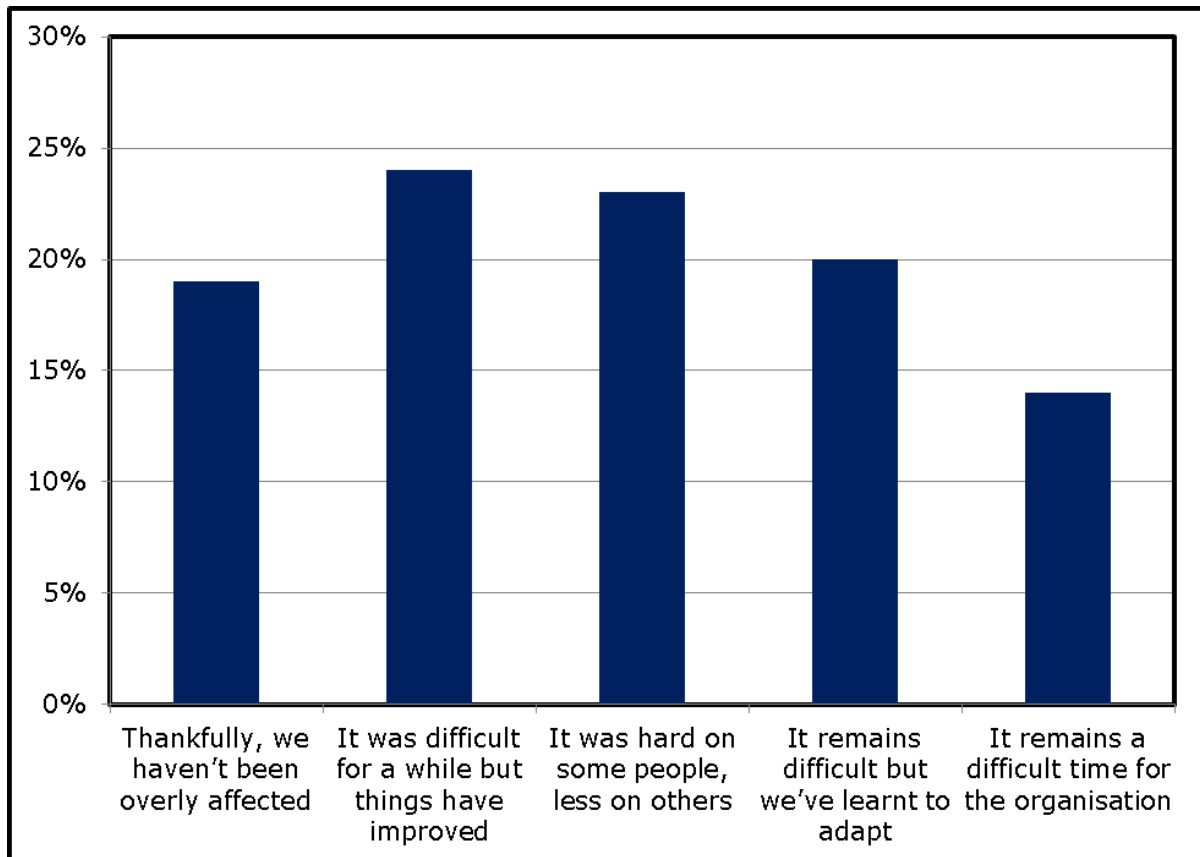


**Comment**

- The highest proportion of the panel admits that the current economic situation means things remain difficult, although they've learnt to adapt.
- This is closely followed by the lucky ones who say they have not been affected and 28% who feel that, whilst it's been difficult, things have improved.
- The final 4% say the current economic situation remains a dark cloud on most days.
- Again we have analysed the results by job title.

	<b>Hasn't affected me</b>	<b>It was difficult, things have improved</b>	<b>It remains difficult but I've learnt to adapt</b>	<b>It remains a dark cloud on most days</b>
Human Resources	30%	16%	49%	5%
IT	29%	23%	42%	6%
Catering	35%	20%	40%	5%
Communications	57%	14%	14%	14%
Financial Services (PIMS)	29%	56%	15%	0%
Marketing	28%	24%	44%	4%
Logistics	30%	33%	37%	0%
Finance	31%	35%	27%	8%
Retail	47%	27%	27%	0%

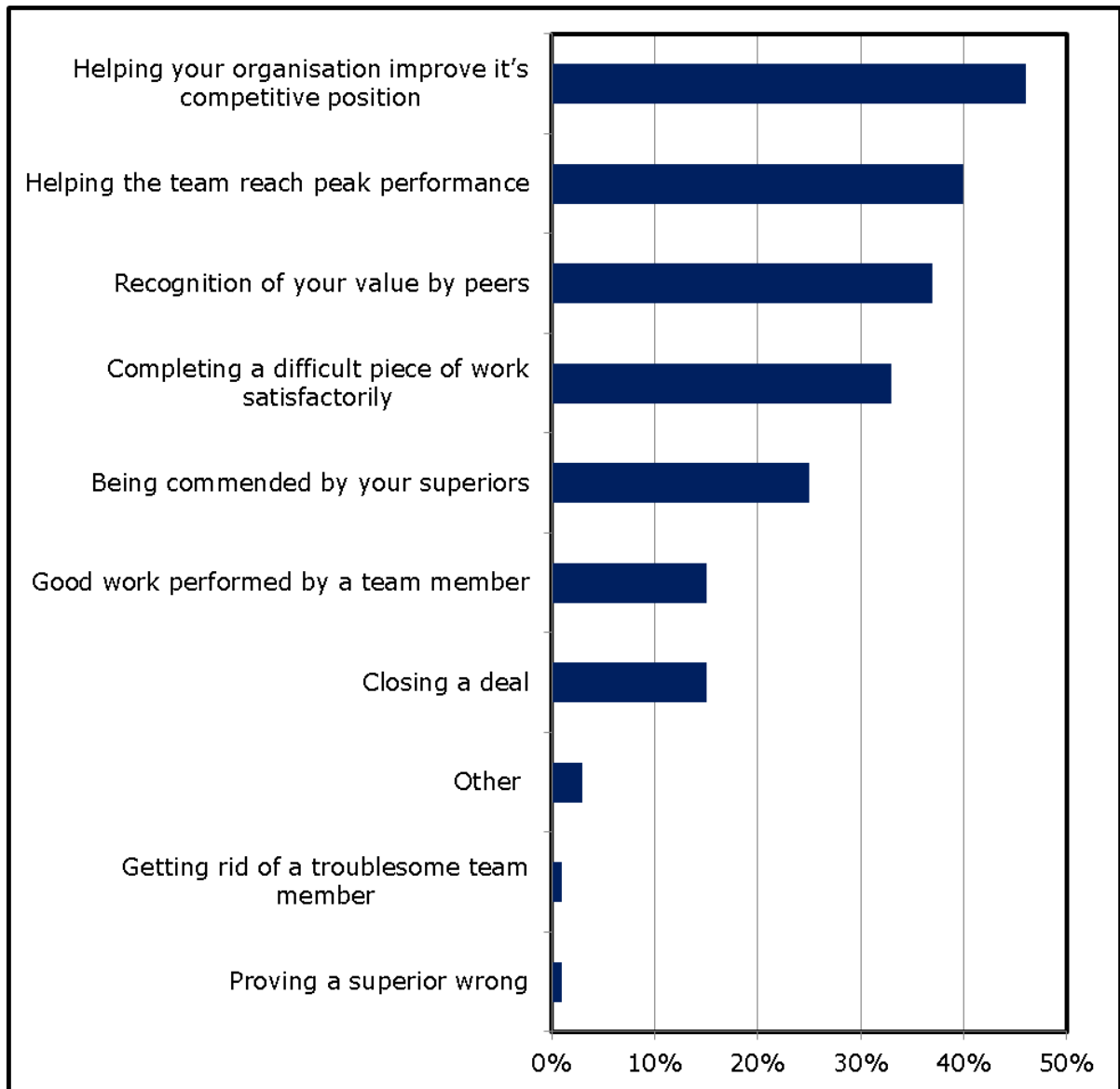
- We then asked the same question but in terms of affecting the workplace happiness of the organisation as a whole.



- The graph shows that 81% of the panel's organisations have seen their workplace happiness affected by the present economic situation.
- Of those, 24% say whilst it's been difficult things are starting to improve whilst 23% admit it was harder on some people than others.
- 20% have had to learn to adapt, whilst 14% say it remains a difficult time for their organisation.
- Interestingly, 19% feel their organisation happiness has not been affected, a much smaller number than the 31% (previous chart) who feel they personally have not been affected.

**3.3. Achieving satisfaction from the workplace.**

Next we asked, leaving aside promotion or a pay rise, which of the following scenarios gives the most satisfaction. The panel was asked to indicate their top two preferences.

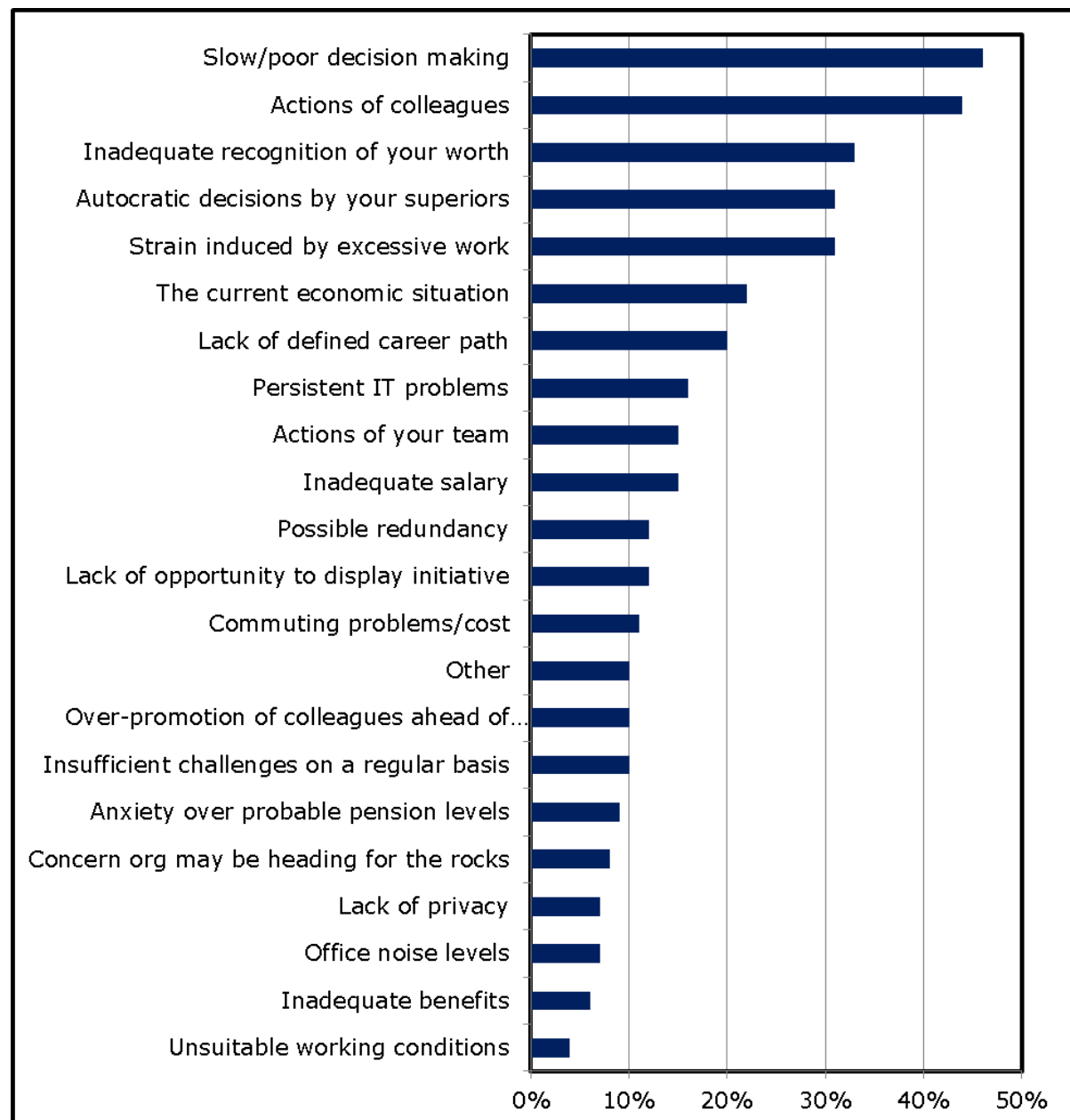


**Comment**

- Helping their organisation improve its competitive position is the top area giving the panel most satisfaction, and reaffirms the pride most employees have in their organisation.
- In second place is helping their teams reach maximum performance followed by recognition of 'your' value by peers.
- At the lower end of the scale the panel say they receive little satisfaction from proving a superior wrong or getting rid of a troublesome team member. Of course they don't.....

### 3.4. Discontentment at work.

Next we asked the panel what are the main reasons for experiencing periods of discontent at work.

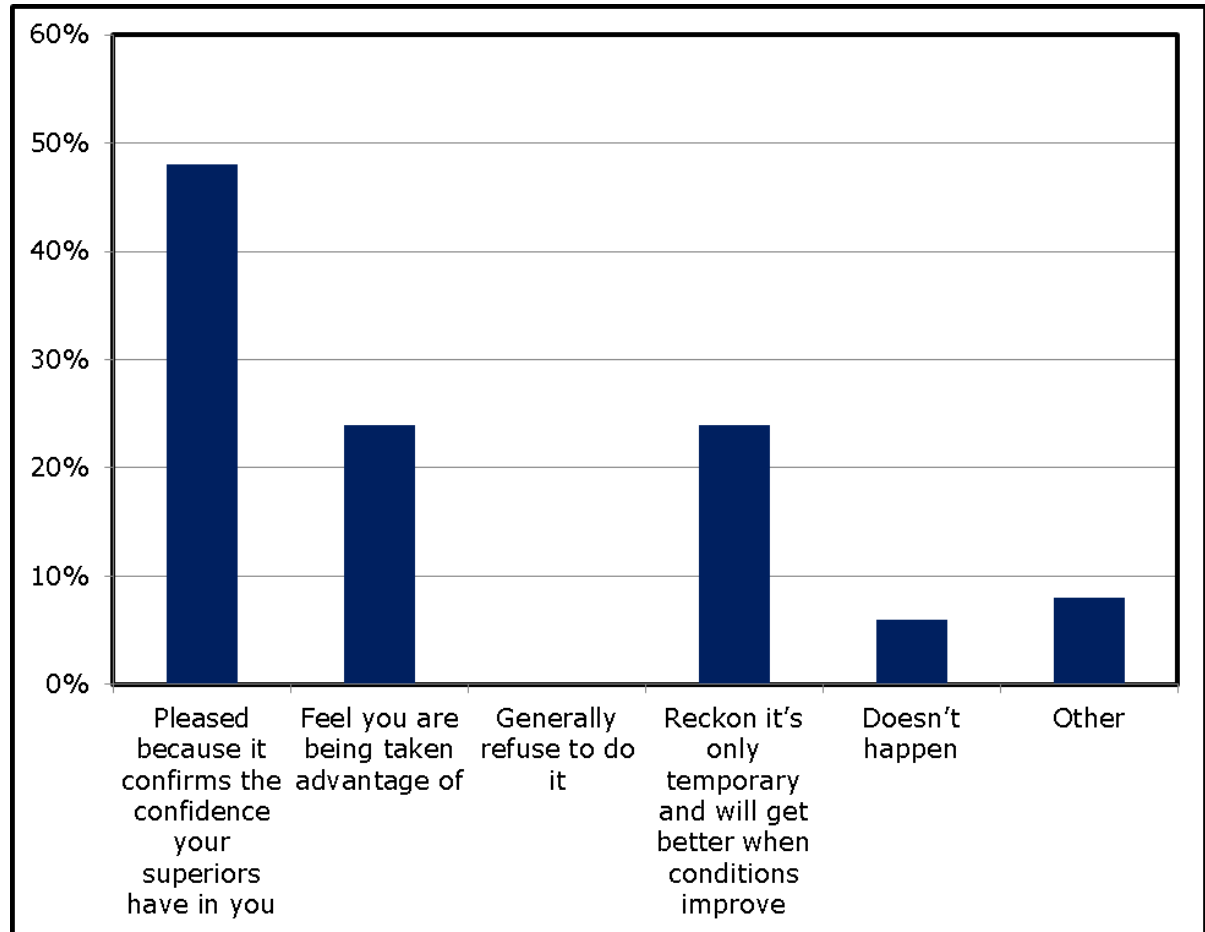


#### Comment

- The number one reason for discontentment at work is slow / poor decision-making, closely followed by the actions of colleagues. We didn't probe into exactly what these actions were, interesting reading no doubt!
- We've already seen that the panel likes to be recognised for their work, so it's no surprise that their hackles are raised when they feel there's inadequate recognition of their worth: third on the graph.
- At the other end of the scale there's no dissatisfaction with unsuitable working conditions; though in the days of air con, iPads and flexible working it would be a worry if there were, whilst inadequate benefits also cause little concern, an area which is probably less contentious in this time of austerity.

### 3.5. Increasing workload.

The panel was asked how they feel if they are asked to take on extra work, without additional resources or remuneration.

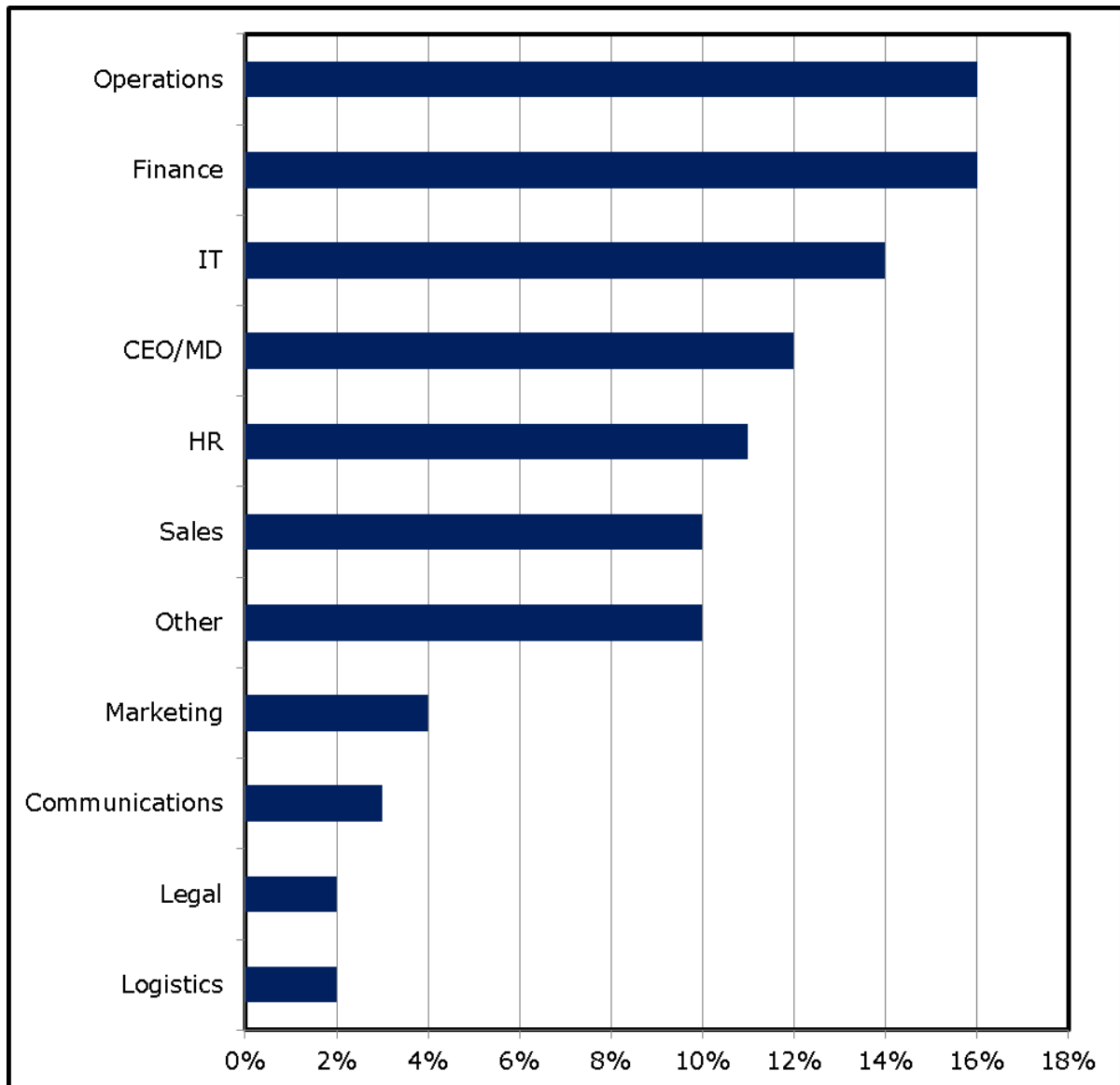


#### Comment

- The highest proportion, almost half the panel are pleased when they're asked to take on extra work, as they feel it confirms the confidence their superiors have in them. This is double the number who have the opposite view and feel they're being taken advantage of.
- A further ¼ reckon it's only temporary and will change for the better when conditions improve.
- No one refuses to do it.

### 3.6. Relationships with other departments.

Next we asked the panel, which department gives them most grief on a regular basis.

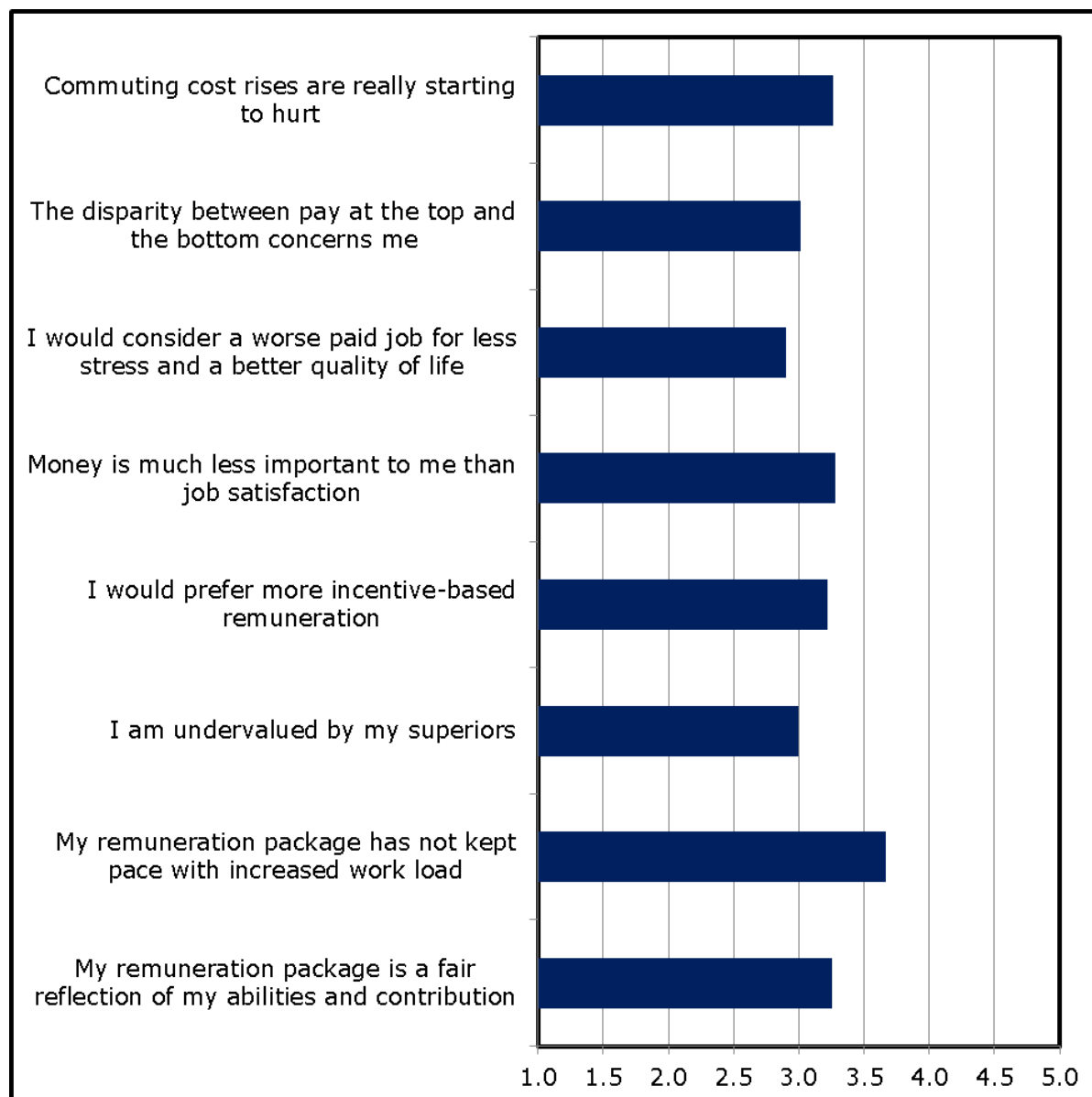


#### Comment

- Joint winners! The Operations and Finance departments can both claim to be the ones who give the panel most grief.
- They are closely followed by IT and the CEO, though doubtless not many people are in a hurry to tell the latter.
- Those who cause the panel least grief are the Logistics and Legal departments.

### 3.7. Salary & remuneration.

Based on the assumption that salary and workplace happiness are often intertwined, we asked the panel to give their agreement levels to the following statements. The graph shows mean scores with 5 being strongly agree, 3 neither and 1 strongly disagree.



#### Comment

- There is no one statement that receives a particularly high or low agreement level with all of them roughly within the same ballpark.
- The statement with the highest agreement level (3.7), is that 'my' remuneration package has not kept pace with my increased workload. This is despite many of the panel stressing previously that they didn't mind extra workload as it showed their superiors' confidence in them.
- This is followed by commuting costs starting to hurt, money is less important than job satisfaction (surely contradicting the above) and my remuneration package is fair. However these are all scoring just above 3.0, equating to neither agree nor

disagree, which suggest either there's apathy towards them or that the panel is equally split down the middle, with the result being neutral.

- The area with the lowest agreement level is 'I would consider a worse paid job for less stress and a better quality of life', though again it barely achieves a negative average.

**3.8. Family happiness.**

Finally the panel was given a series of statements concerning the family and asked for their agreement levels. The graph again shows mean scores with 5 being strongly agree, 3 neither and 1 strongly disagree.



**Comment**

- This time there are greater differences between the statements, with several scoring much higher towards agreement.
- The area with the highest agreement level is concerning university education and the panel (unsurprisingly) not being happy that their children will take on such high levels of debt.

- This is followed by being greatly concerned with the ever increasing cost of living, how their children will get on the property ladder and how the panel are going to fund their retirement. All joyful stuff!
- The area with the lowest agreement level is 'my work takes me away from home more than I like'. One presumes the panel disagree because they don't go away that much rather than they don't go away as much as they would like.....

#### **4. Further Information**

We are always looking to build our panel with senior professionals from UK businesses. If you wish to join or would like to recommend someone else, please see the contact details below. Further criteria for participation can be found on page 2.

This research is produced by Richmond Events, who would like to express their gratitude to all those who took part.

Previous research titles undertaken by the UK Business panel:

- Leadership
- Change management
- Career planning
- Economic outlook (08, 09, 10 & 11)
- Recruitment & Retention
- Tax
- Transport
- The Environment
- Culture Change
- The Internet
- Personal development
- People management
- Training
- The future
- Attitudes towards the Coalition
- New Government priorities
- Business Personality
- Social media
- The workings of organisations

For details of other research available please contact:

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