PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM IN IRELAND:
VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT SENIOR EXECUTIVES

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ABOUT COCOPS

The COCOPS project (Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future) seeks to comparatively and quantitatively assess the impact of New Public Management (NPM)-style reforms in European countries, drawing on a team of European public administration scholars from 11 universities in 10 countries. It analyses the impact of reforms in public management and public services that address citizens' service needs and social cohesion in Europe. Evaluating the extent and consequences of NPM's alleged fragmenting tendencies and the resulting need for coordination is a key part of assessing these impacts. It is funded under the European Union's 7th Framework Programme as a Small or Medium-Scale Focused Research Project (2011-2014). See http://www.cocops. eu/ for details.

ABOUT THIS PAPER

While Ireland is not one of the ten countries formally participating in the COCOPS project, discussion with the project team led to participation in the survey of senior public executives.

Ireland was the only country to undertake a survey of local government senior executives alongside the survey of central government executives. This report focuses on the responses of the local government executives. The report on central government executives attitudes can be downloaded from http://www.ipa.ie/research

Although other countries do not cover local government, this paper follows the format and style of the other country reports produced for the COCOPS project (http://www.cocops. eu/publications/research-reports), and the report for central government produced for Ireland in order to ensure a consistency of approach.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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1.

INTRODUCTION[1]

This report focuses on analysing the views of senior local government public executives (defined as county and city managers and the next tier down of directors of service/heads of division) on public sector reform.

The basis for the report is the Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future (COCOPS) project, one of the largest comparative public management research projects in Europe. The COCOPS project aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges facing the public sector in European countries and to systematically explore the impact of New Public Management (NPM) style reforms in Europe. The project brings together public administration scholars from eleven universities in ten countries[2] and is funded as part of the European Union's 7th Framework Programme between January 2011 and June 2014.[3] A cornerstone of the project is the COCOPS executive survey on public sector reform in Europe: an original, large-scale survey of public sector top executives, exploring executives' opinions and experiences with regards to public sector reforms in government. Ireland is the only country that surveyed both central and local government executives: in all other countries only the views of central government executives were obtained.

From a theoretical perspective the survey builds on the perception of three major reform paradigms (NPM, public governance and the neo-Weberian state) as described by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011). Focusing on top executives, it follows pioneering elite studies such as those of Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman (see Putnam 1976, Aberbach et al. 1981, and Aberbach and Rockman 2006), which lay the foundation for many other both national and cross-national executive surveys (e.g. Mayntz and Derlien 1988; Christensen and Laegreid 2007; Bertelli et al. 2007; Trondal 2010; Bauer et al. 2009; COBRA survey; UDITE survey). Methodologically it also draws inspiration from cross-national population surveys such as the European Social Science Survey, European Values Survey, the International Social Survey Program; as well as from experiences with cross-national surveys such as those of the survey research centre at the University of Michigan (2010).

The survey aims to explore public sector executives' perceptions, experiences and opinions with regards to their work context and administrative reforms, but also other factors such as values and identities and the impact of the fiscal crisis. The core survey implemented in all participating countries consists of 31 questions structured in four parts (a) general information; (b) management and work practice of your organisation; (c) public sector reform and the fiscal crisis; (d) attitudes, preferences and personal information. The survey is a result of the joint work of all the national research teams within the COCOPS project and under the leadership of a team of researchers at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. In addition, further institutes and universities from other European countries were included as strategic partners to replicate the survey in these countries.[4]

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[1] This introduction is based on Hammerschmid, Görnitz, Oprisor and Stimac (2013), and appears in broadly the same form in all COCOPS country reports

[2] Erasmus University Rotterdam, Hertie School of Governance Berlin, University of Bergen, Bocconi University, University of Cantabria, Cardiff University, CNRS Paris, Corvinus University Budapest, University of Exeter, KU Leuven, Tallinn University of Technology

[3] More information on the project is available at www.cocops.eu

[4] The Institute of Public Administration for Ireland, the Vienna University of Economics and Business for Austria, the Kaunas University of Technology for Lithuania, the Technical University of Lisbon for Portugal, Copenhagen Business School, the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence for Serbia and the University of Bern for Switzerland

With regard to the population definition, the research team targeted a group with relevant experience to assess overall developments and trends both on an organisational and policy field level. In general, top executives are viewed as such informants regarding the state of administration, given their privileged vantage point (Walker and Enticott 2004), but also, with the blurring of the classical boundaries between politicians and civil servants (Aberbach et al. 1981), due to their own role in policy-making and their influence on the choice and implementation of reforms (Christensen and Lægreid 1999; Ridder et al. 2006). A major critique raised against elite surveys however (see in particular Enticott et al. 2008) is that they usually focus on a limited selection of individuals at the top of the organisation. As these individuals are relatively disconnected from processes at lower levels in the organisations, and also due to issues of desirability, such an approach is bound to provide a biased image of the respective organisation(s). These are important points to take into consideration when interpreting the results.

In order to avoid random sampling and issues of representativeness, the COCOPS executive survey is based on a full census. It covers all high level public sector executives who in their respective positions can be expected to be involved in public administration reform processes. Moreover, the survey explicitly covers different units of analysis (see Pollitt 2011: 121, on units of analysis in comparative public administration research) to allow for multi-level analyses: policy field, organisation and individual experiences of the respondent. These are explored through the (self) perceptions of public sector executives, acknowledged in research as the closest channel into objective processes and developments within public organisations and, at least in the absence of stringent limitations, as reliable predictors of administrative behaviour (see Aberbach et al. 1981; Bauer et al. 2009).

The survey was implemented online. In Ireland, the survey was carried out in September and October 2013. For local government, 94 valid responses were received, giving a response rate of 45 per cent (see Table 1), compared to 435 valid responses at central government level and a response rate of 27 per cent[5]. This report summarises the findings for local government executives in Ireland, comparing the results with central government executives' views, and also the views of the wider COCOPS sample where relevant.

The report giving the results of the survey for central government can be downloaded from www.ipa.ie/research[6]. The COCOPS sample details can be accessed at http://www.cocops. eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/WP3-Comparative-Report.pdf.

TABLE 1 NUMBER OF INVITATIONS AND RESPONSE RATES OF THE COCOPS SURVEY

	Invitations sent	Survey completions	Response rate %
Ireland – local government	210	94	44.76
Ireland – central government	1620	435	26.90

[5] The central government survey population comprised the top three levels of management in government departments (secretary general, assistant secretary general and principal officer in government departments), and the chief executive and their management team in state agencies (normally comprising the top two or three levels of the organisation, encompassing director and heads of division). All government departments and non-commercial state agencies were surveyed

[6] Richard Boyle (2014): *Public Sector Reform in Ireland: Views and Experiences from Senior Executives*, State of the Public Service Series Research Report No. 13

2.

BACKGROUND: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM IN IRELAND

2.1   LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN IRELAND

Ireland has a number of distinguishing features in comparison with local government in many other countries. Two in particular are worth noting here in setting the context for responses received to the survey. One is the system of city and county management, described by Chubb (1983) as one of Ireland's major innovations in the field of government. The idea of city and county management was adapted from American cities (see Collins, 1987 and Sheehy, 2003). Central to the operation of city and county management is the distinction between reserved and executive functions. Reserved functions are those reserved for direct performance by the elected members. Sheehy (2003) states that reserved functions fall into five main categories: finance, legislation, political affairs, policy decisions and control of the executive branch. Executive functions, which are the preserve of the manager, cover day-to-day decisions based on established policy (Asquith and O'Halpin, 1998). Executive functions include issues such as the appointment and control of staff, granting of planning permission and letting of houses. This strong management role has been the focus of some discussion and debate concerning the respective roles and power of the manager and elected members. Some commentators have noted a belief that, in practice, the manager occupies the dominant position in local government (see, for example, Zimmerman, 1976)[7]. City and county managers are recruited and appointed through a centralised system, rather than the local authorities themselves choosing the officials selected.

A second distinguishing characteristic of local government in Ireland is the relatively limited range of functions undertaken by local authorities, including housing, roads, planning, environmental protection, and recreation and amenity. By way of comparison, many local authorities in other OECD countries have responsibility for a much broader range of social services, including primary and secondary education, health, social welfare, care of the elderly and childcare services, public transport, and policing (Callanan, 2003).

2.2   ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM PRIOR TO THE FISCAL CRISIS

As a small liberal market economy, Ireland has been very open to the ebb and flow of international markets. In terms of international reform trends, however, it was some years after New Zealand, Canada and the UK had embarked on their reform agendas before the effect of new public management (NPM) related initiatives came to be felt in Ireland. The launch of the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) in 1994 promised much by way of improving the efficiency, speed and coherence of government (Boyle and Humphreys, 2001, OECD 2008: 77). A coordinating group of secretaries general, the most senior administrative

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[7]   *Putting People First: Action Programme for Effective Local Government* (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012) proposed that the position of local authority manager be replaced by a chief executive post, to be combined with a strengthening of the statutory position of the elected council and the reserved functions of elected members. This was given statutory backing with the passing of the Local Government Act 2014.

grade in the Irish civil service, was charged with overseeing its implementation and were responsible for producing a specific plan for civil service reform titled *Delivering Better Government* (DBG) in 1996. For local government, *Better Local Government* (BLG) (Department of the Environment, 1996) set out an equivalent reform programme for local authorities aimed at enhancing local democracy and widening participation, serving the customer better, developing efficiency in local government, and providing proper resources to allow local government fulfil the role assigned to it (Boyle et. al. 2003).

Further public service modernisation initiatives took place until in 2008 the OECD published a landmark report on the Irish public service (OECD, 2008). It was the first time the OECD had ever attempted to benchmark a complete national public service against good international practice. Overall, their report, produced at a time prior to the economic and fiscal crisis, suggested that Ireland had been able to deliver public services relatively well in comparison with other countries. But their report also found considerable scope for improvement, suggesting that there were significant challenges that Irish public services had not yet tackled with sufficient rigour. In relation to local government, the OECD found that local government had limited local autonomy, with extensive control of central over local government.

Two of the most important issues for improvement identified by the OECD were better integration and coordination of public services, and the need for more of a focus on performance and value for money across government. The report also had much to say about the capacity of the public services. Some of their conclusions aligned with those identified through research carried out for an Institute of Public Administration publication *Ireland 2022 – Towards 100 Years of Self Government* (Callanan (ed.), 2008), including the limited political underpinning of public service reform, with the reform process seen as driven primarily by public servants.

2.3   ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM AFTER THE FISCAL CRISIS

Since the publication of the OECD report in 2008, the national and international financial and economic crisis has created a vastly different environment for reform of public administration. As the *National Recovery Plan* (2010) noted, in 2010 the level of GDP was some 11 per cent below, and GNP some 15 per cent below, their respective levels of 2007 in real terms. Employment had fallen by about 13 per cent from its peak of 2007 while the unemployment rate had risen from 4.6 per cent to 13.5 per cent. The *National Recovery Plan* (2010) went on to state: 'A downturn of this size is without precedent in Ireland's recorded economic history and has few modern parallels at an international level'.

At the end of 2010, in response to the crisis, the government signed a memorandum of understanding for the provision of €85 billion of financial support to Ireland by member states of the European Union through the European Financial Stability Fund and the European Financial Stability Mechanism; bilateral loans from the UK, Sweden and Denmark; and funding from the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Extended Fund Facility, on the basis of an agreed support programme. In essence this programme set out

the overall fiscal limits and framework within which the Irish government would operate over a three-year period. This constraint inevitably forced a reassessment of priorities with regard to the delivery of public services and programmes and the general operation of the system of public administration.

In response to the crisis, the government has reduced numbers and pay levels in the public service as part of the fiscal response required to address excessive levels of expenditure given available revenue streams. An agreement entitled the *Public Service Agreement* (2010) set out plans for numbers and pay reductions and changes to terms and conditions of employment. An extension of the *Public Service Agreement* was proposed by the government and published as the *Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2016 (The Haddington Road Agreement)* by the Labour Relations Commission (2013). The basis of this extension of the agreement was the need to achieve additional savings to the public service pay and pension bill of €1 billion by 2016, as identified as required by the government to achieve its fiscal targets for the period. Further pay cuts and changes to terms and conditions of employment were contained in the updated agreement.

Putting People First, the action programme for local government reform, sets out a number of key objectives in relation to local government (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012). These objectives include reorganisation of political and executive structures; alignment of community and enterprise functions with the local government system; greater impact and involvement in local economic and community development; service efficiencies; and revised funding arrangements. In addition, the recommendations contained in the *Report of the Local Government Efficiency Review Group* (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010) provide an important input and context to policy developments.

At the same time that the responsibilities, functions and roles of local government staff are changing, there are significant changes occurring in terms of local government personnel and demographics. Numbers are down by approximately a fifth between 2008 and 2013. There were approximately 27,500 local government employees at the end of 2013 (including management, administrative, technical, craft and general operative grades) compared with approximately 35,000 at the end of 2008 (Department of the Public Expenditure and Reform Databank, http://www.per.gov.ie/databank/). Local authorities have seen one of the biggest drops in numbers employed in the public service: over the same period numbers in the civil service have fallen by 7 per cent and in the education sector by 4 per cent (Boyle, 2014).

The moratorium on recruitment, while effective in reducing staff numbers, has been uneven in its effect as staffing reductions in local authorities and across grades and service areas have varied considerably. However, in many local authorities, because of the moratorium and early retirements, there are now significantly fewer employees both under the age of 30 and over 55. The diminishing cohort of senior experienced officials has limited opportunity for the transfer of knowledge to those who will succeed them. The restricted

level of recruitment of younger staff raises concerns for the age profile in the future. The moratorium on staff numbers is requiring management to rebalance and redeploy resources in line with service demands. And at the same time as public service numbers have been reducing, the population has been increasing (Boyle, 2014).

Looking beyond changes in numbers and pay, there has been considerable redeployment of staff in the context of reduced resources and numbers. Public bodies and individual public servants have had to increase their flexibility and mobility to work together across sectoral, organisational and professional boundaries. Shared services and mergers have been important features of local government reorganisation. In 2011 the government produced a document entitled *Public Service Reform* (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2011) that set out a plan for changes to the operation of the public service. The plan identified five priorities: customer service; maximising new and innovative service-delivery channels; radically reducing costs to drive better value for money; leading, organising and working in new ways; and a strong focus on implementation and delivery. Issues such as the development of shared services, procurement and outsourcing were emphasised. A review of progress (Boyle, 2013) suggests that most actions identified in the plan had been implemented to some degree, but that significant challenges still remain.

In January 2014 the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform announced a further reform initiative. The *Public Service Reform Plan 2014-2016* (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2014) identifies four main reform themes: delivery of improved outcomes, reform dividend (using savings to invest in new or improved services), digitalisation/open data, and openness and accountability.

3.

ORGANISATIONAL AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS

Before exploring respondents' opinions and attitudes towards their role and work in public administration, it is important to establish some of the key contextual features that set the organisational and socio-demographic background of the respondents.

Unless otherwise indicated, the following categories are used to interpret the results: if a scale ranging from 1 to 7 is used, 1 means 'strongly disagree' and 7 means 'strongly agree', the percentage shares for scale numbers 1, 2 and 3 (vs. 5, 6 and 7) are added and interpreted as 'rather disagree' (versus 'rather agree'). In other cases, the percentage shares for scale numbers 1 and 2 (versus 6 and 7) are calculated and interpreted as 'agree' vs. 'disagree'.

Organisation size (Figure 1). There is a wide spread of organisation sizes amongst Irish local government respondents. The largest share of respondents (36 per cent) work in local authorities of 500-999 people. Almost as many (31 per cent) work in organisations with between 100 and 499 employees. And a similar large percentage (29 per cent) works in local authorities of between 1000 and 5000 employees.

FIGURE 1   RESPONDENTS BACKGROUND: ORGANISATION SIZE

■ <99   ■ 100-499   ■ 500-999   ■ 1000-5000   ■ >5000
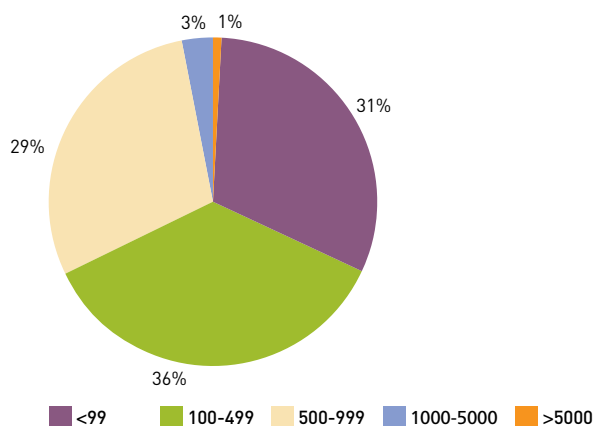
Gender (Figure 2). 80 per cent of local authority respondents are male and 20 per cent female. This compares with the central government survey sample where two-thirds of Irish respondents are male and a third female. Local government is more male dominated at the senior levels.

FIGURE 2   RESPONDENTS BACKGROUND: GENDER

20%

80%

■ Male   ■ Female
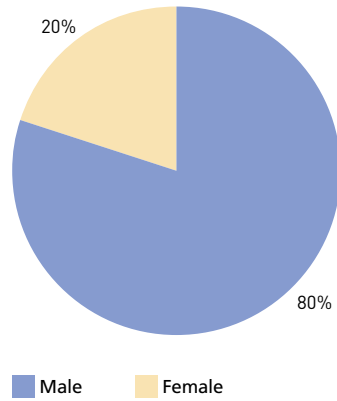
Age (Figure 3). Almost half of the Irish local government respondents (47 per cent) are in the 56 to 65 age range. A similar high percentage (46 per cent) is in the 46 to 55 age range. 93 per cent of the sample is aged over 45, and there are none under 35. In comparison to the central government sample, in local government there is an older age profile (for example only 29 per cent are over 56 in the central government sample compared to 47 per cent in the local government sample). And the Irish central government sample in turn had a higher age profile than the COCOPS sample. This situation reflects in part the changes that have been taking place in the Irish public service since the fiscal crisis in 2008. There has been a moratorium on recruitment into the public service and incentivised packages for early retirement, meaning relatively few younger people coming through the system, and some more senior experienced staff leaving the public service.

FIGURE 3   RESPONDENTS BACKGROUND: AGE

0%   7%

47%

46%

■ 35 or less   ■ 36–45   ■ 46–55   ■ 56–65
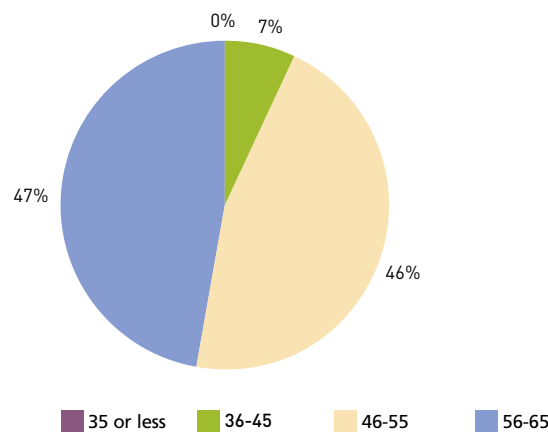
Hierarchical level (Figure 4). 39 per cent of Irish local government respondents describe themselves as at the top level of their organisation, and 59 per cent describe themselves as at the second level. Compared to the Irish central government sample there are a higher proportion of both top and second level managers (30 and 31 per cent respectively in the central government sample). But this is not surprising as these were the two levels targeted by the survey, whereas for central government the top three levels were targeted.

FIGURE 4   RESPONDENTS BACKGROUND: HIERARCHICAL LEVEL

- Top hierarchical level in organisation
- Second hierarchical level in organisation
- Third hierarchical level in organisation
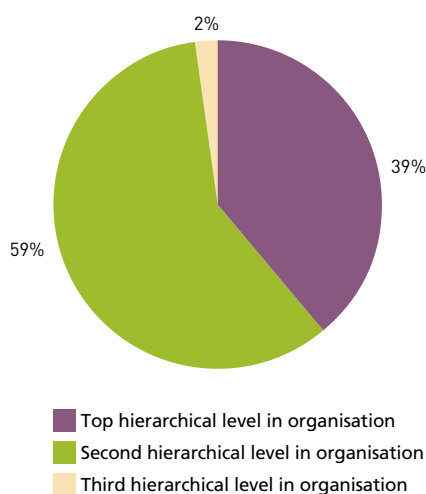
Education (Figure 5). 72 per cent of Irish local government respondents have a postgraduate degree at Masters level and 28 per cent a graduate degree. At central government level, the equivalent figures were 62 and 38 per cent.

FIGURE 5   RESPONDENTS BACKGROUND: EDUCATION

- Graduate degree (BA level)
- Postgraduate degree (MA level)
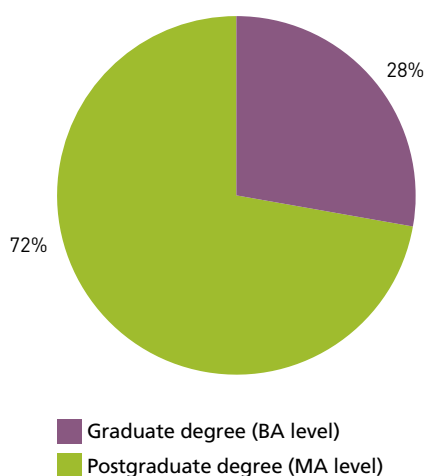
Disciplinary field of education (Figure 6). By far the highest proportion of Irish respondents (46 per cent) have an educational background in the field of business/management/ economics. Natural sciences and engineering is the next highest at 24 per cent, followed by political science/public administration at 17 per cent. Natural sciences and engineering is more important than it is for central government, reflecting the strong role of local government in infrastructural development.

FIGURE 6   EDUCATIONAL FIELDS (RESPONDENTS COULD CHECK MORE THAN ONE FIELD)
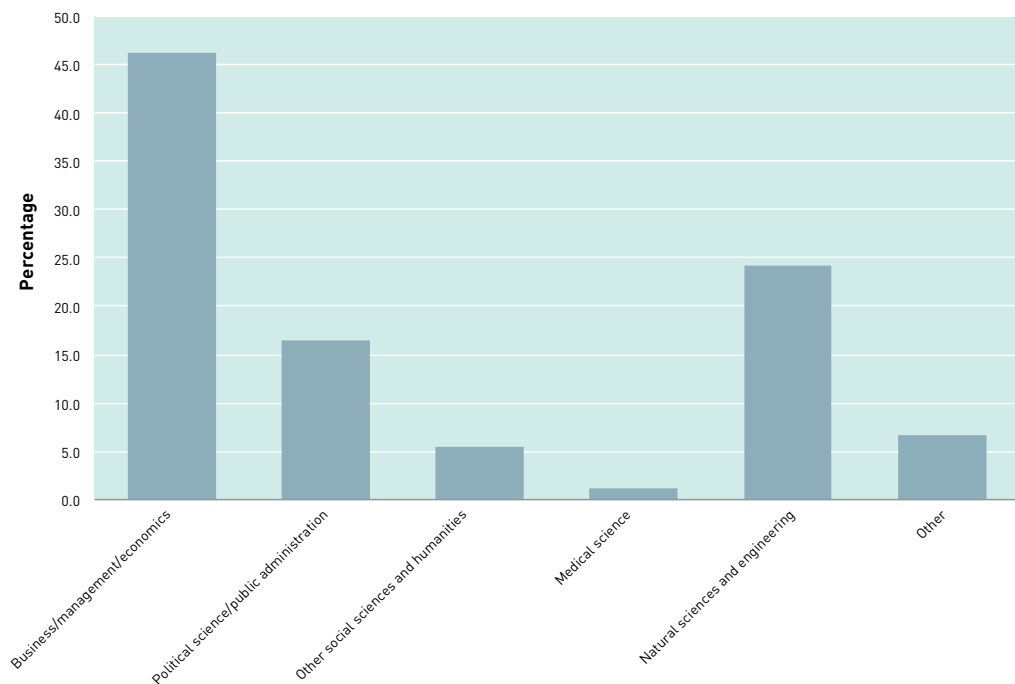
Tenure (Figure 7). The responses show that the majority of Irish local government respondents have spent a long time working in the public sector. Nearly all (99 per cent) of respondents have worked in the public sector for over 10 years, with 84 per cent having worked in the public sector over 20 years. This is higher than the central government sample, where 68 per cent have worked over 20 years in the public sector.

Relatively low mobility in the sector is shown by the fact that 70 per cent of respondents have worked in their current organisation for over 10 years. There has been more movement in position over time: 61 per cent have been in their current position less than 5 years.

With regard to respondents experience outside the public sector, quite a high proportion has some private sector experience. Two thirds of respondents have spent some time working in the private sector, with the majority of these having less than 5 years' experience in the private sector. Previous experience in the non-profit sector is less frequent, with three-quarters having no experience here, and those that have experience usually working there for less than 5 years.

FIGURE 7   TENURE OF RESPONDENTS
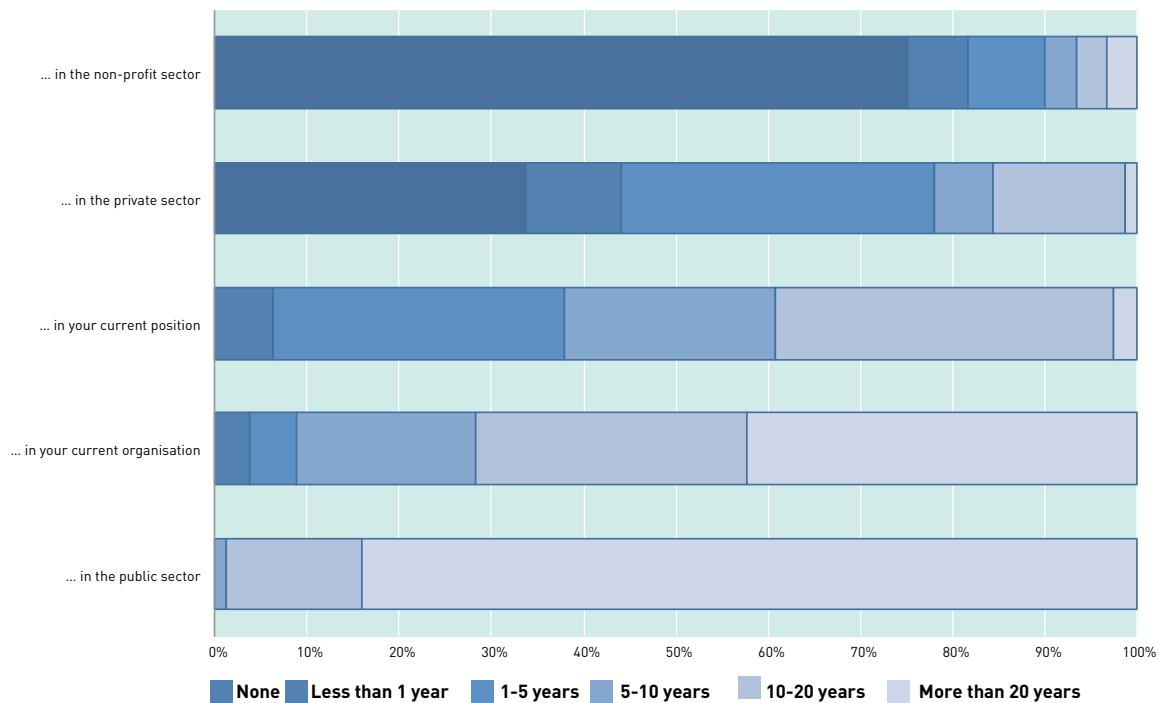
4.

VALUES AND ATTITUDES OF PUBLIC SECTOR EXECUTIVES

The following section presents data on how senior local government executives in Ireland perceive their role as executives, their motivation and social values and preferences.

Identity and role perception (Figure 8). When asked about their self-understanding as public sector executives, a clear majority of the respondents agree that ensuring efficient use of resources (89 per cent), achieving results (85 per cent), ensuring impartial implementation of laws and rules (82 per cent), and providing expertise and technical knowledge (62 per cent) are central to their role. More rather disagree that it is their role to provide a voice for societal interests than agree that they see this as part of their role.

FIGURE 8   ROLE AND SELF-UNDERSTANDING (Q: I MAINLY UNDERSTAND MY ROLE AS A PUBLIC SECTOR EXECUTIVE AS …) (N=85-94)
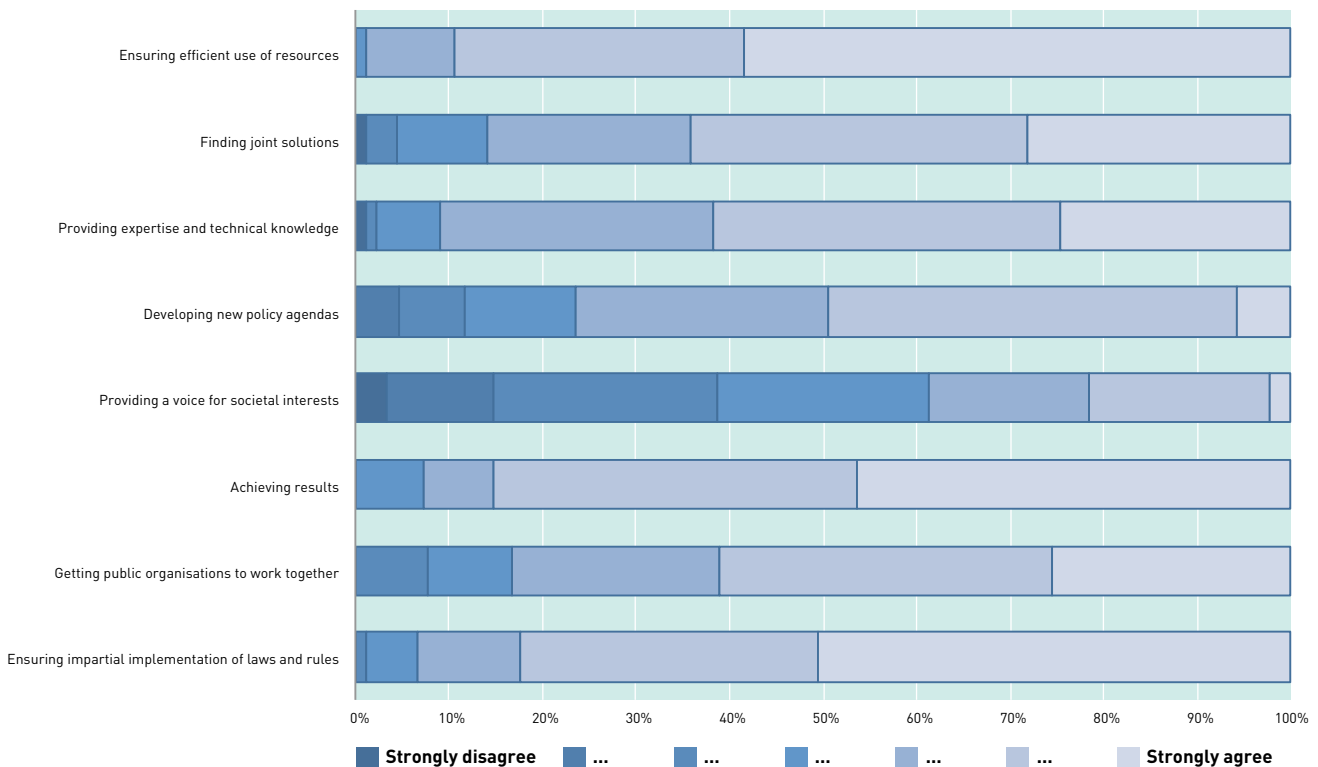

Value preferences for public sector priorities (Figure 9). Senior executives were asked about value preferences related to public administration. The question was designed in such a way as to let respondents choose between two opposing values on a 7 point Likert scale. For example, when balancing different priorities, would you position yourself more

towards tax financed services or towards user fees? The clearest value preference is in favour of achieving results as against following rules (67 per cent rather agreeing they favour achieving results). Next highest is in favour of user fees over tax financed services (58 per cent versus 15 per cent). Respondents tend also to broadly favour state provision over market provision (43 per cent versus 22 per cent), efficiency over quality (38 per cent versus 25 per cent) and equity over efficiency (43 per cent versus 31 per cent). Respondents tend to slightly favour a citizen orientation rather than a customer focus (42 per cent versus 29 per cent).

Compared to the central government sample, local government respondents show a higher preference for user fees, probably reflecting the greater role of user fees in financing local government activity (35 per cent of central government executives favour user fees over tax financed services compared to 58 per cent of local government executives). Local government executives are also somewhat more likely to favour efficiency over quality and a citizen orientation over customer focus.

FIGURE 9   PRIORITIES AS PUBLIC SERVANTS (Q: PUBLIC SERVICES OFTEN NEED TO BALANCE DIFFERENT PRIORITIES. WHERE WOULD YOU PLACE YOUR OWN POSITION?) (N=83-84)
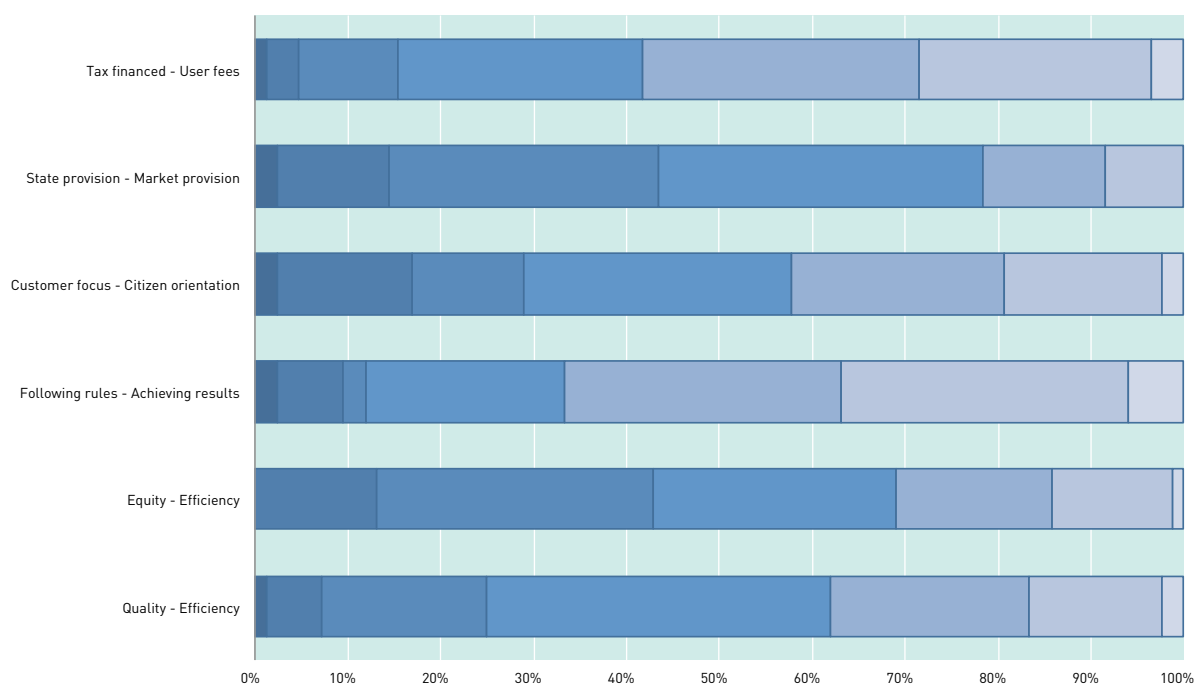

Motivation (Figure 10). In response to being questioned about what motivates them personally, all local government executives rather agree that interesting work is a motivating factor. Similarly very high percentages note opportunities for promotion (98 per cent), doing something useful for society (96 per cent), job security (89 per cent) and having room to make decisions (85 per cent) as important motivational factors. The two lowest motivators

from the list given are status (31 per cent rather agree it is an important motivator) and having flexible working hours (34 per cent). The results are broadly in line with those for central government executives.

FIGURE 10   MOTIVATION (Q: HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU PERSONALLY THINK IT IS IN A JOB TO HAVE ...) (N=82-84)
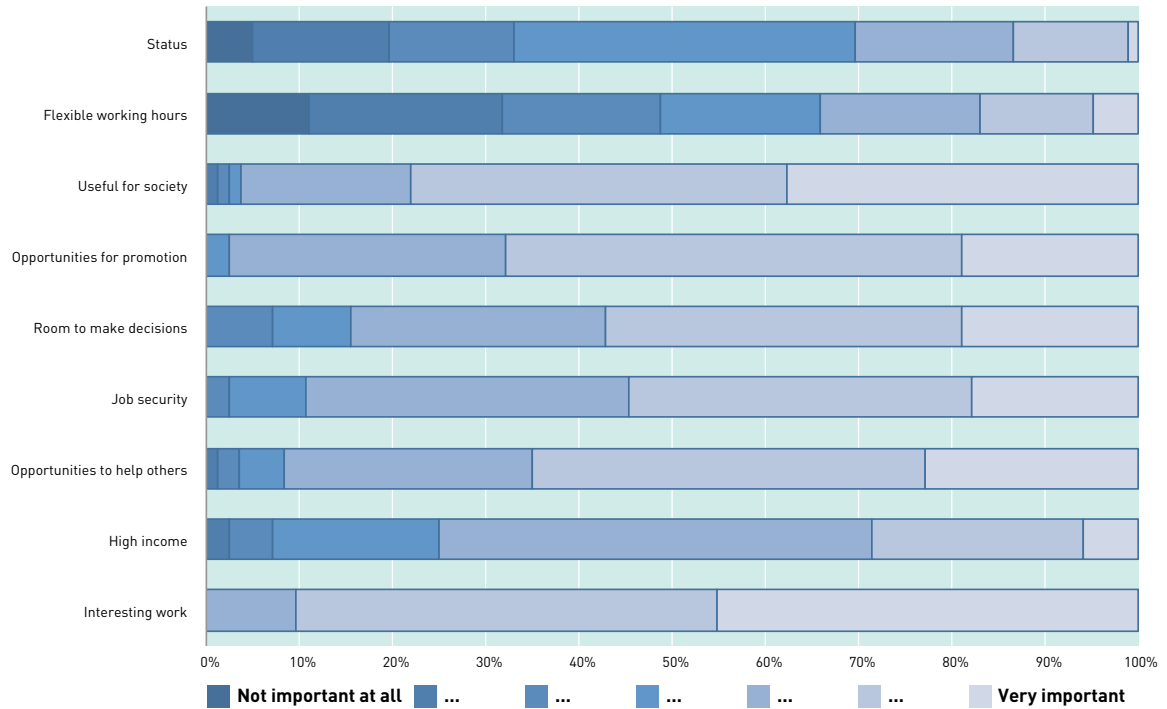
Social value preferences (Figure 11). In a further value oriented question officials were asked to what extent they agree, or disagree, with a number of statements that aim to assess their social value preferences. Local government executives are generally strongly in agreement with the statements as listed, apart from one – 'I avoid doing anything that might upset the status quo' (82 per cent rather disagree with this statement). The strongest preference is in response to the statement 'I like taking responsibility for making decisions' (94 per cent rather agreeing and 60 per cent strongly agreeing with this statement). Next strongest agreement is with the statement 'I make decisions and move on'. The results are broadly in line with the central government sample. They also contrast with the stereotypical view of the public servant as resistant to change, risk averse and unaccountable.

FIGURE 11   SOCIAL VALUE PREFERENCES (Q: PLEASE INDICATE HOW FAR YOU AGREE
OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS) (N=81–82)
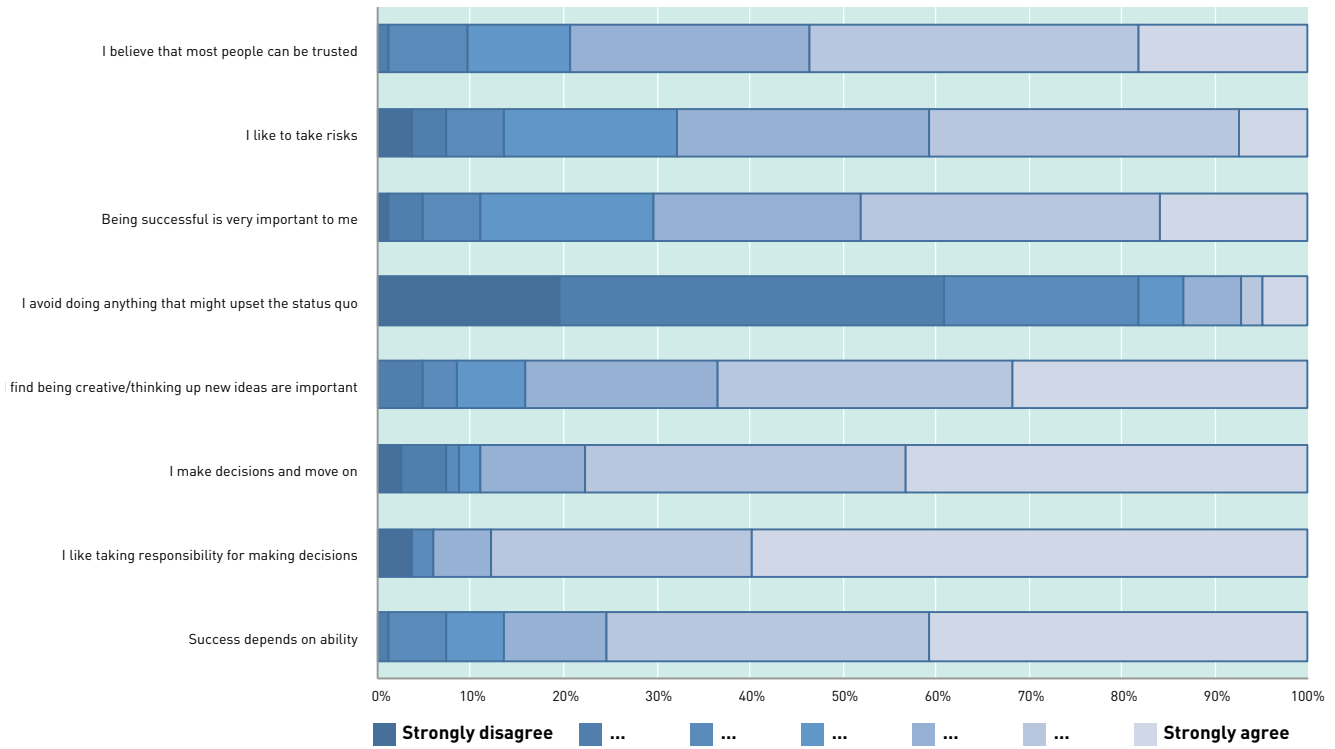
5.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORK CONTEXT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

This chapter analyses how local government executives perceive their work context and examines to what extent the results indicate that management practices can be incorporated successfully to public administration.

Goal ambiguity (Figure 12). Debates in the literature about goal ambiguity tend to emphasise that performance management is best implemented when goals are limited, clearly stated and communicated, and activities are easily observed and monitored. Local government respondents overall agree that their organisational goals are clearly stated and communicated to all staff (82 per cent and 74 per cent rather agree respectively). There are more mixed views when it comes to the number of goals for the organisation: 62 per cent rather agree they have a high number of goals and 21 per cent rather disagree. The majority disagree with the statement that it is easy to observe and measure their activities (24 per cent rather agree versus 44 per cent rather disagree).

FIGURE 12   GOAL AMBIGUITY (Q: TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS APPLY TO YOUR ORGANISATION?) (N=93-94)
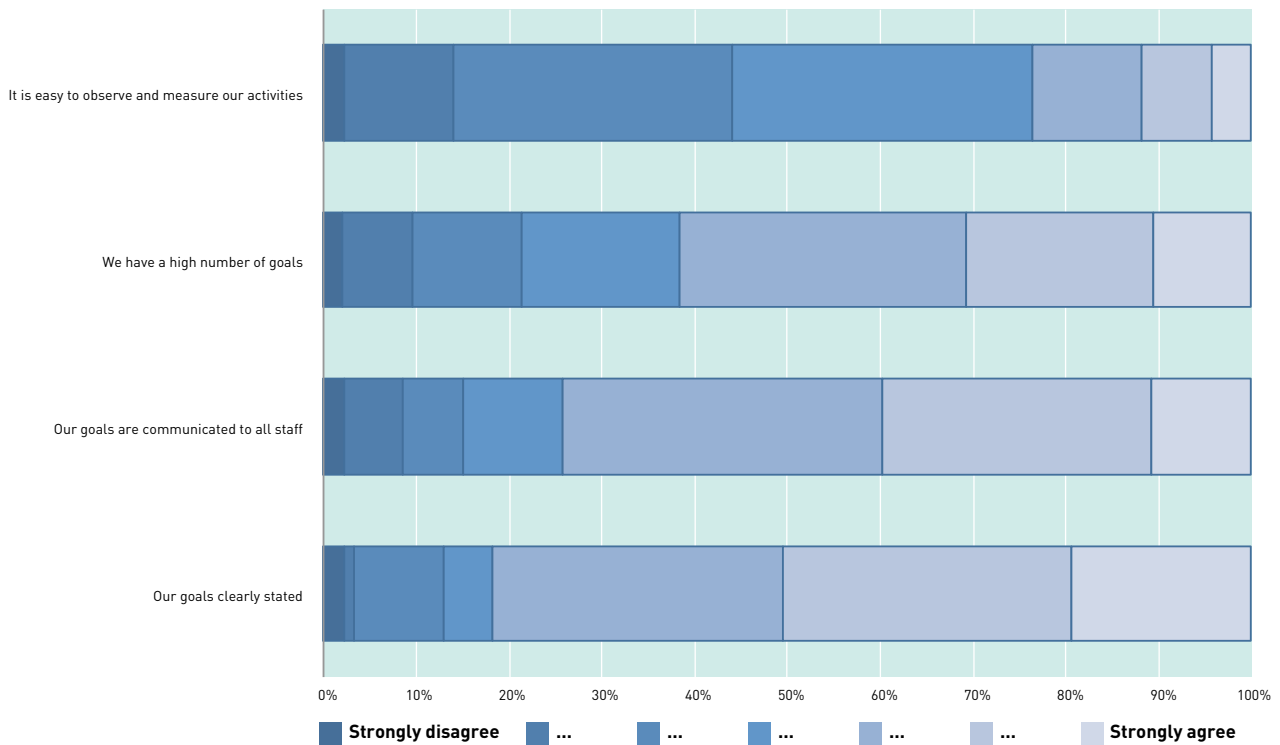
Management autonomy (Figure 13). The lowest degree of management autonomy is expressed with regard to hiring staff (77 per cent rather low autonomy), promoting staff (71 per cent rather low autonomy) and dismissing or removing staff (65 per cent rather low autonomy). A slight majority feel they have rather high autonomy with regard to changing the structure of the organisation and in policy choice and design (54 per cent and 50 per cent rather high autonomy respectively). The areas where most feel they have high autonomy are the fields of policy implementation (89 per cent rather agree), budget allocations (71 per cent rather agree they have high autonomy) and contracting out of services (68 per cent rather agree).

In general local authority respondents feel that have higher levels of management autonomy than the central government executive sample. The main differences are in relation to budget allocation (71 per cent expressing a rather high degree of autonomy compared with 39 per cent in the central government sample) and the contracting out of services (68 per cent versus 39 per cent). They feel they have slightly more autonomy in relation to promoting, dismissing or hiring staff.

FIGURE 13   DEGREE OF MANAGEMENT AUTONOMY (Q: IN MY POSITION, I HAVE THE FOLLOWING DEGREE OF DECISION AUTONOMY WITH REGARD TO …) (N=89-94)
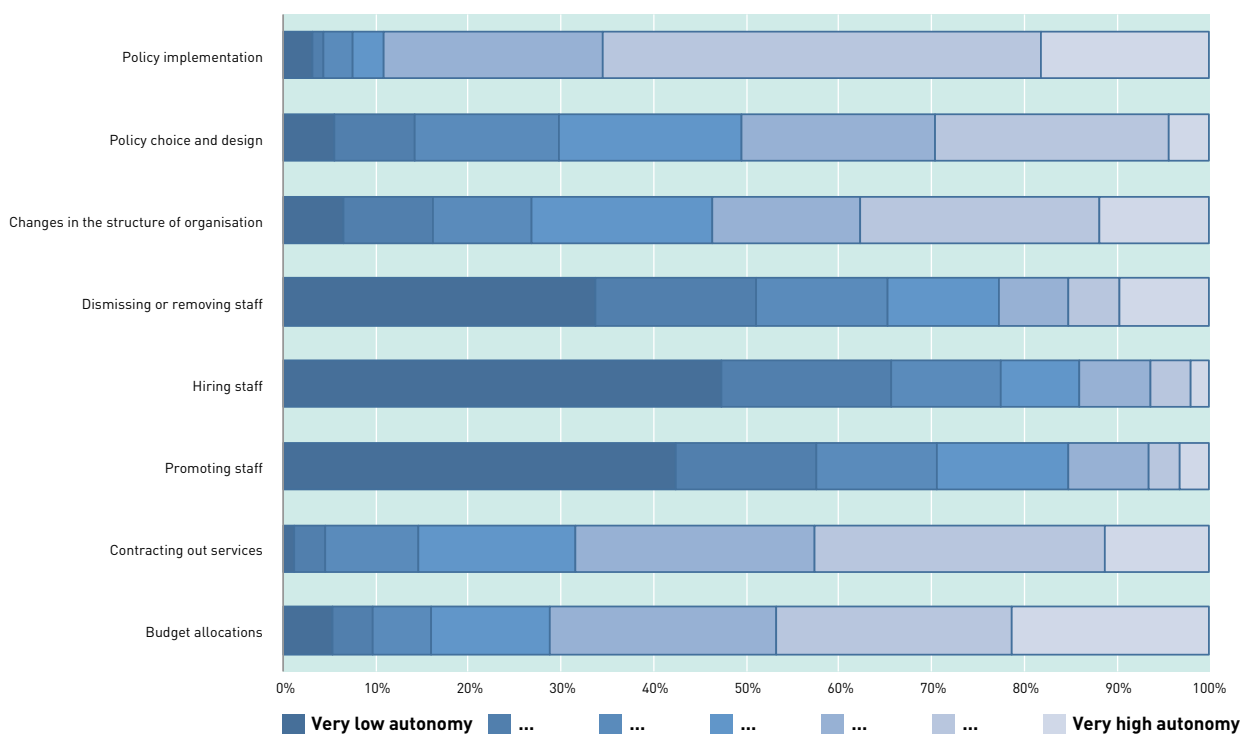
Interaction frequency (Figure 14). This question explores the degree to which senior public executives interact with different stakeholders. By far the highest level of interaction, as might be expected, is with their direct staff (86 per cent state they interact with their staff on a daily basis). The next highest level of interaction is also internal to the organisation: with administrative superiors (83 per cent at least weekly). This is followed by 'other politicians' with 80 per cent indicating they would interact at least weekly with politicians. This indicates the high degree of interaction senior local government officials have with councillors, and is a major contrast to the central government sample, where there is a limited degree of direct political engagement (where only 20 per cent say they meet their minister and 10 per cent say they meet other politicians at least weekly). There is also a reasonable degree of contact with other local and regional government officials, with 61 per cent interacting with other local or regional authorities weekly or daily and a further 26 per cent interacting on a monthly basis. Local government respondents are somewhat more likely to interact with the private sector than central government officials (82 per cent interact at least monthly compared to 59 per cent).

FIGURE 14   INTERACTION FREQUENCY (Q: PLEASE INDICATE HOW FREQUENTLY YOU TYPICALLY INTERACT WITH THE FOLLOWING ACTORS OR BODIES) (N=83-93)
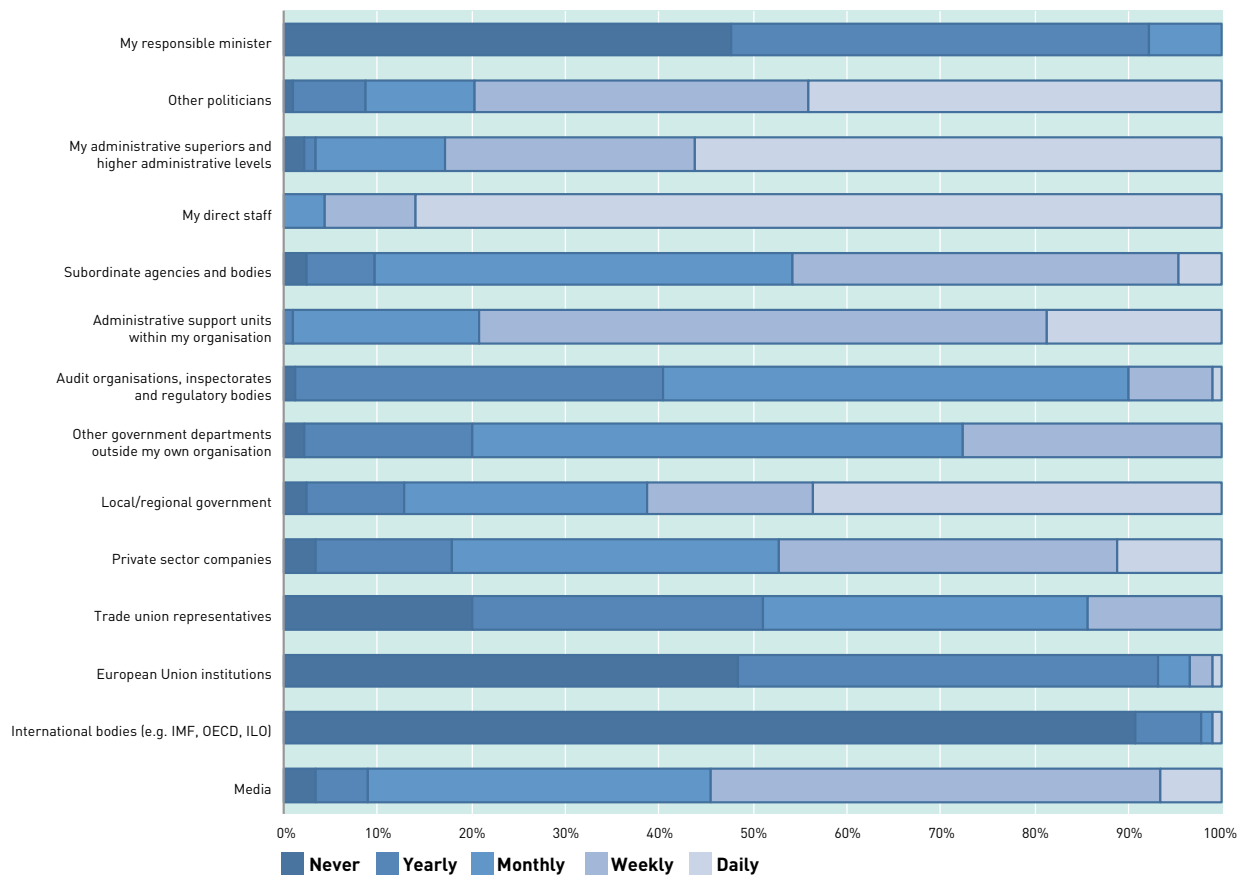
Coordination quality (Figure 15). It should first be noted that a significant proportion of respondents (between 5 and 25 per cent) did not feel able to assess the quality of coordination with other actors in their organisation's policy field. Of those who could answer, the highest level of coordination is seen as between national and local/regional government (61 per cent feel coordination is rather good). Over half (54 per cent) also feel that coordination is rather good between government bodies and private and voluntary stakeholders. The poorest level of coordination is seen as between national and international/supra-national organisations (73 per cent think coordination is rather poor) and between national government bodies from different policy areas (59 per cent think coordination is rather poor).

The main difference with the central government sample is the much more positive view taken by local government respondents on coordination between national and local and regional government. Only 18 per cent of the central government sample sees coordination with local and regional government as rather good compared to 61 per cent of local government respondents. This probably reflects the fact that most local government respondents would define their relationship with national government primarily as with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, with whom they have regular contact, rather than with national government bodies more generally. Whereas the central government sample comprised respondents from across government departments and agencies many of whom would have little contact with local government.

FIGURE 15   COORDINATION QUALITY (Q: HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERISE THE COORDINATION IN YOUR OWN POLICY FIELD BETWEEN ...) (N=66-89)
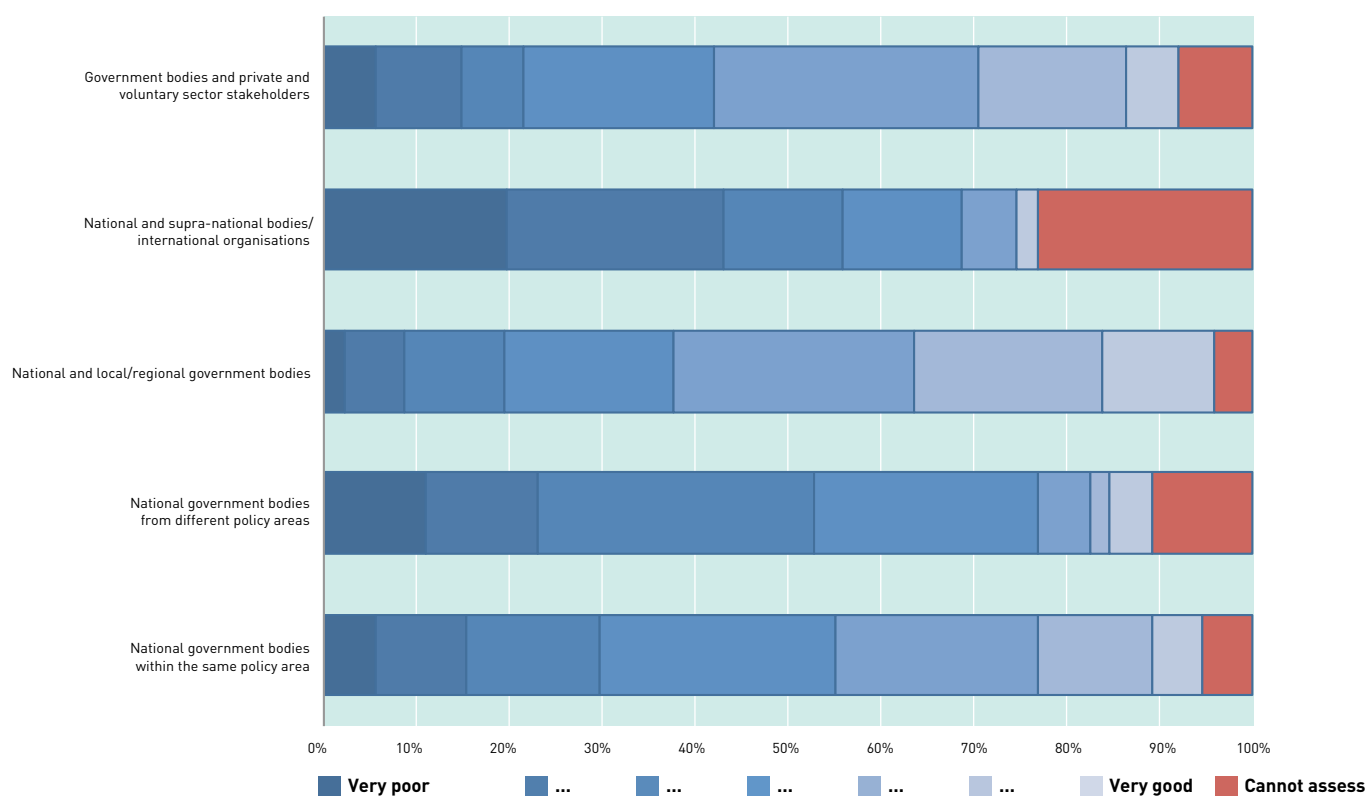
Degree of politicisation (Figure 16). Local government executives were asked about the degree of politicisation in their work, and the degree to which decisions are based on technical or political criteria. 55 per cent of respondents rather agree that removing issues and activities from the realms of politics produces better policies. At the same time, 67 per cent feel that politicians respect the technical expertise of the administration (as opposed to 22 per cent who rather disagree with this statement). A significant majority feel that the administration and not the political level initiate reforms or new policies (73 per cent rather agree with this statement).

Just over half of respondents feel that politicians interfere with routine activities. But there is a very strong view that politicians do not influence senior level appointments (88 per cent rather disagree with the statement that politicians regularly influence senior level appointments in my organisation).

FIGURE 16   DEGREE OF POLITICISATION (Q: WHAT IS YOUR VIEW ON THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS …) (N=84-88)
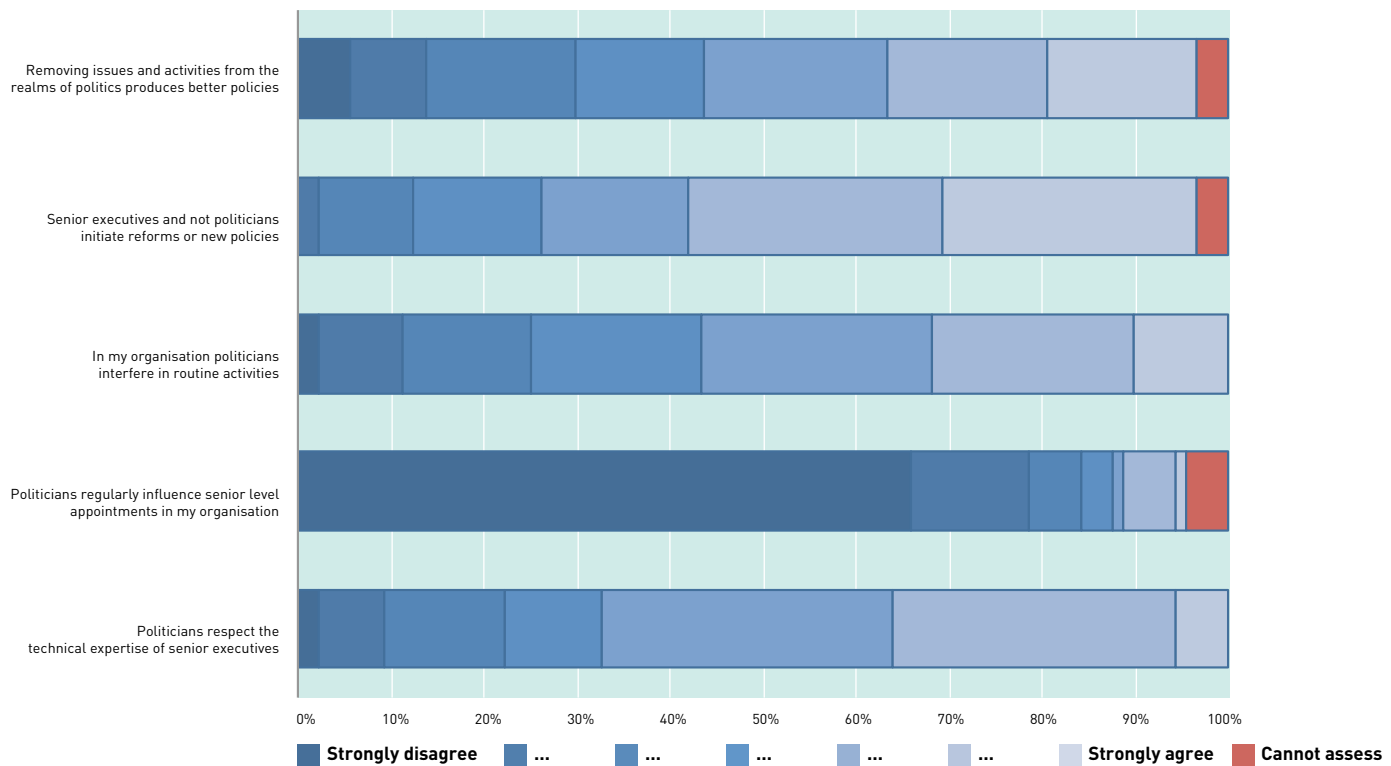
6.

RELEVANCE OF NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND POST NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORMS

This section provides information on the perceptions of local government executives with regard to the implementation of New Public Management (NPM) and post NPM reforms, the latter being characterised by a stronger emphasis on collaboration and network forms of governance. The respondents were asked to assess the type and character of reform trends in their policy field, their organisation and their own working practices.

6.1   POLICY FIELD LEVEL

Reform trends (Figure 17). Public sector reform trends can have very different characteristics. While what might be regarded as 'typical' NPM reforms include measures like performance management, contracting out, privatisation or more flexible employment, post NPM reforms have been characterised as adopting reforms such as enhancing transparency, partnership working, citizen participation or reducing bureaucracy. Overall, 88 per cent of local government officials believe that public sector downsizing has been an important reform. The next most important ranked reforms are focusing on outcomes and results (84 per cent), digital or e-government (82 per cent), and transparency and open government (77 per cent). The only reform that over half of the respondents thought was of limited importance was the creation of autonomous agencies (51 per cent regard this as not at all or only of limited importance).

These rankings are broadly as might be expected, given the emphasis on budget cuts and staffing reductions in recent years. In general, compared to the central government sample, respondents rate all the reforms listed as more important, though in most cases only slightly more important. The most notable differences are with regard to privatisation (38 per cent of local government respondents regard this as rather important compared to 16 per cent of central government respondents) and mergers of government organisations (73 per cent versus 49 per cent respectively regard this as rather important).

FIGURE 17 IMPORTANCE OF REFORM TRENDS (Q: HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE
FOLLOWING REFORM TRENDS IN YOUR POLICY AREA?) (N=82-85)
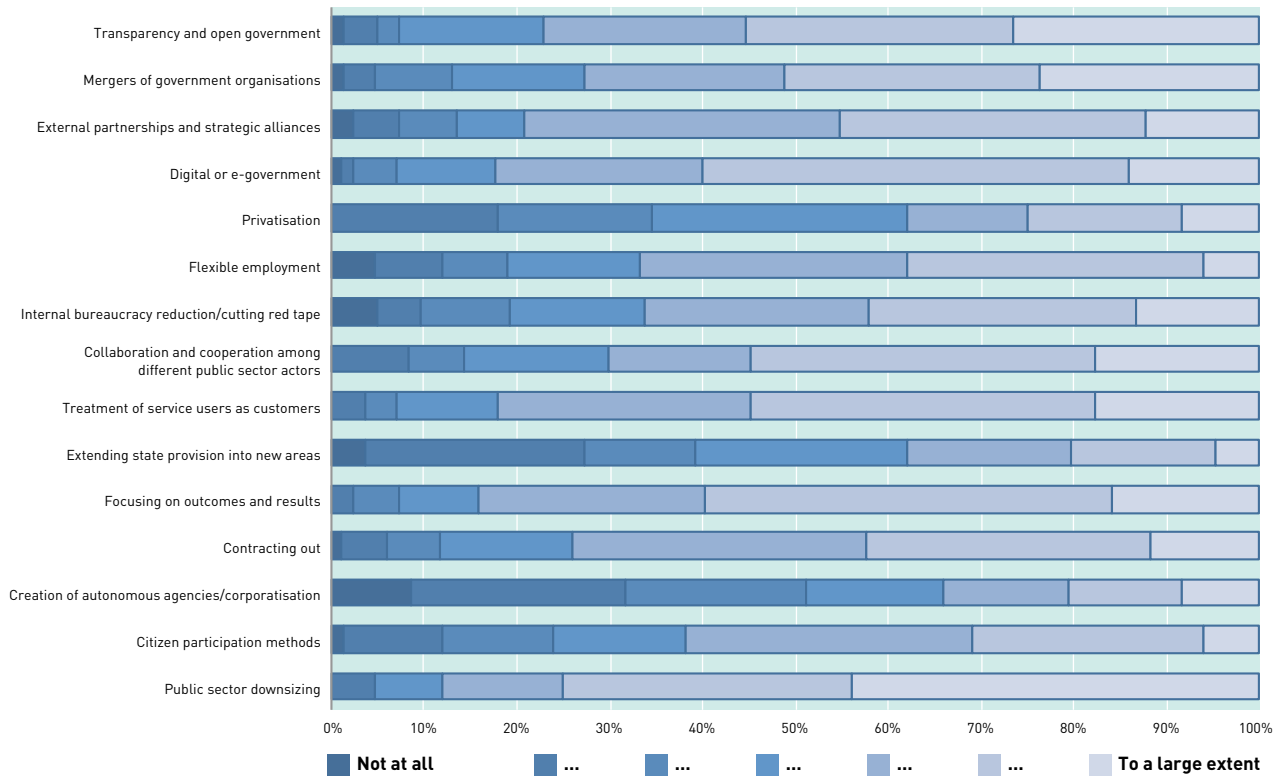
Dynamics of public sector reform (Figure 18). The vast majority of respondents (almost 90 per cent registering points 1-5 on the ten point scale) feel that the reforms have been more top down than bottom up, more about cost cutting than service improvement, and tend more towards no public involvement than high public involvement. Respondents are also more likely to see the reforms as crisis driven and contested by unions than planned and supported by unions. Respondents are somewhat more likely to see the reforms as driven by politicians than by senior executives, more unsuccessful than successful, and more partial than comprehensive.

The results are broadly similar to those obtained from the central government sample. Though local government respondents are somewhat more likely to see the reforms as crisis and incident driven (75 per cent versus 65 per cent for the central government sample), about cost cutting and savings (89 per cent versus 80 per cent), with limited or no public involvement (89 per cent versus 80 per cent), and unsuccessful (63 per cent versus 54 per cent).

FIGURE 18   DYNAMICS OF PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM (Q: PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS IN MY
POLICY AREA TEND TO BE ...) (N=82-84)
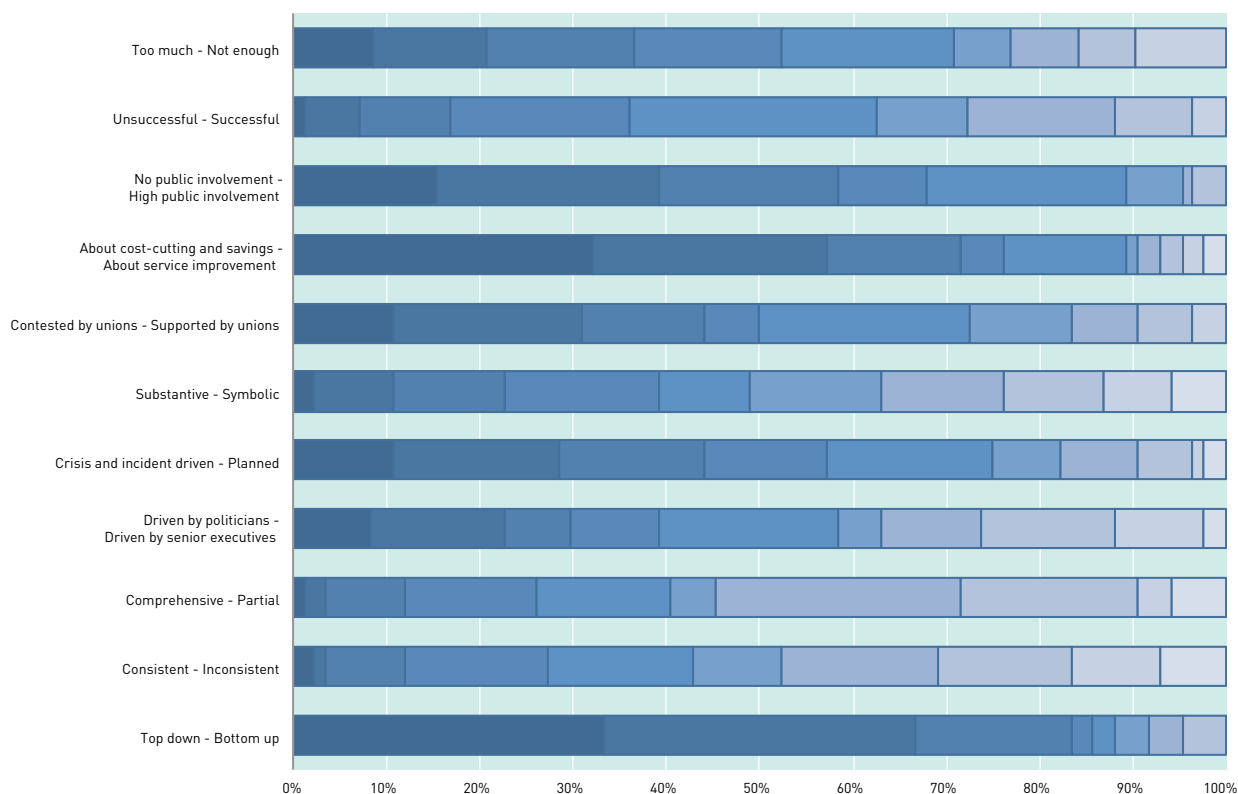
6.2   ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

Management instruments (Figure 19). Moving on to the organisational level, respondents were asked about the extent to which different management instruments are used in their organisation. The most commonly used instruments are business/strategic planning, codes of conduct, cost accounting systems, risk management, and management by objectives and results (the percentage that indicate they use these to a rather large extent being 84, 82, 80, 75, and 70 per cent respectively). Those management instruments less frequently used include decentralisation of staffing and financial decisions and customer/ user surveys (61 per cent, 38 per cent and 43 per cent respectively indicate they use these not at all or to a limited extent). The instrument by far least frequently used is performance related pay, with 81 per cent of respondents indicating it is not used at all, and nobody indicating it is used to a rather large extent. The one instrument many respondents (31 per cent) indicate they could not assess is internal steering by contract, suggesting that the concept is not a familiar one in the Irish public service. Of those that did respond to this question, the majority believe it is only used to a limited extent or not at all.

When compared to the central government sample, cost accounting systems are seen as much more important (80 per cent of local government respondents say they are used in their organisations to a rather large extent compared to 57 per cent of the central government respondents). Conversely, local government respondents view performance appraisal as of notably less relevance (57 per cent say it is used to a rather large extent compared to 80 per cent of central government respondents). They are also less likely to make use of customer/user surveys (32 per cent versus 50 per cent respectively).

FIGURE 19   RELEVANCE OF DIFFERENT MANAGEMENT INSTRUMENTS (Q: TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE FOLLOWING INSTRUMENTS USED IN YOUR ORGANISATION?) (N=89-93)
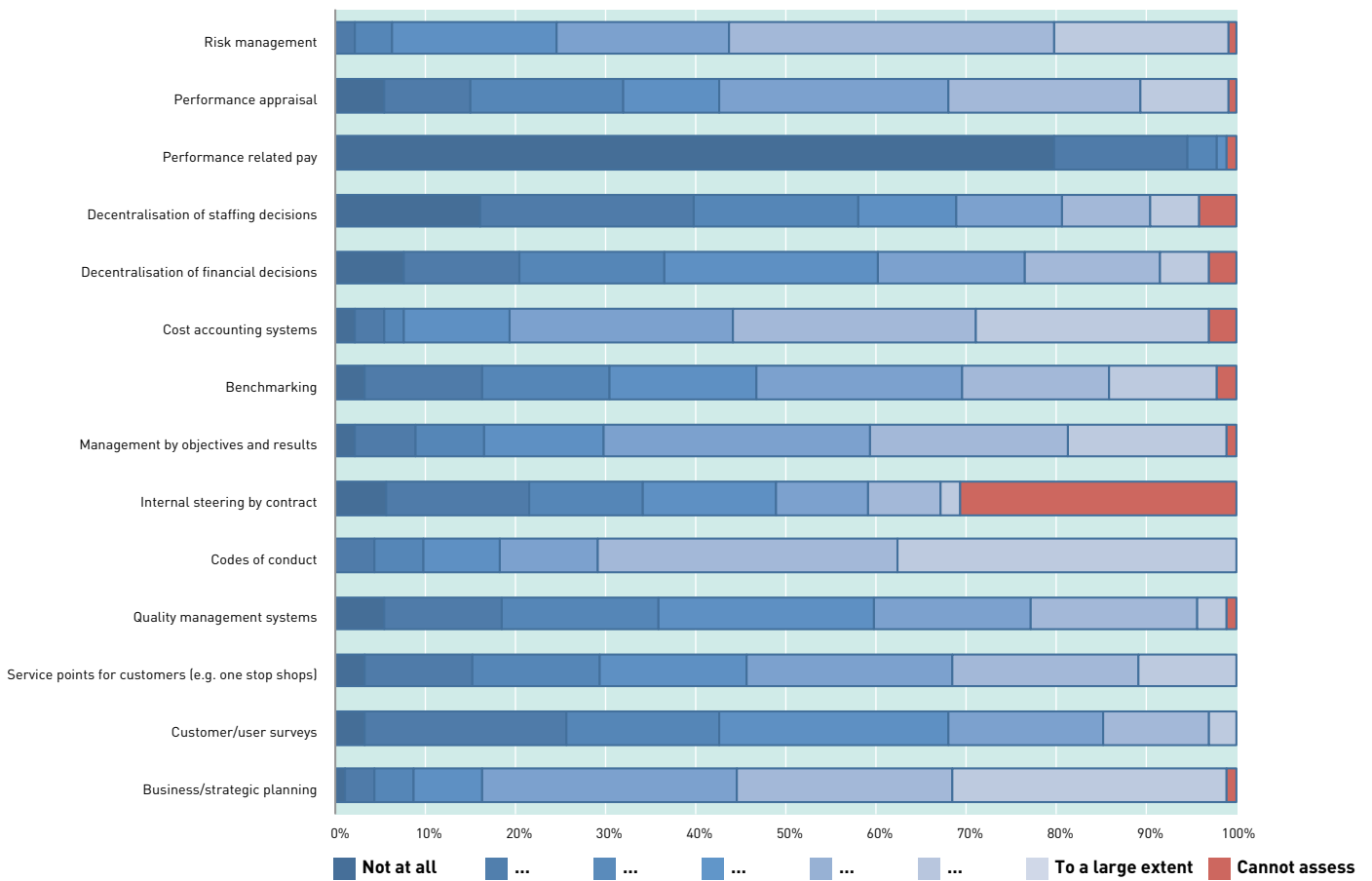
Relevance of performance management (Figure 20). Public executives were asked to indicate the relevance of performance management in their organisation. The strongest expressed reaction was to the statement 'we are rewarded for achieving our goals'. 43 per cent strongly disagree with this statement, and 87 per cent in all rather disagree. Respondents also feel that they would not face sanction for not achieving their goals (70 per cent rather disagree that they would face clear sanctions for not achieving their goals). A small majority also disagree with the statement that political leaders use indicators to monitor executive performance (52 per cent rather disagree with this statement, compared to 30 per cent who rather agree with it). Views are more mixed as to whether they mainly measure inputs and processes or outputs and outcomes (43 per cent rather agree they mainly measure inputs and processes as opposed to 29 per cent who disagree with this statement; 31 per cent rather agree they mainly measure outputs and outcomes as opposed to 36 per cent who rather disagree).

FIGURE 20   RELEVANCE OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT (Q: TO WHAT EXTENT DO
                   THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS APPLY TO YOUR ORGANISATION?) (N=90-94)
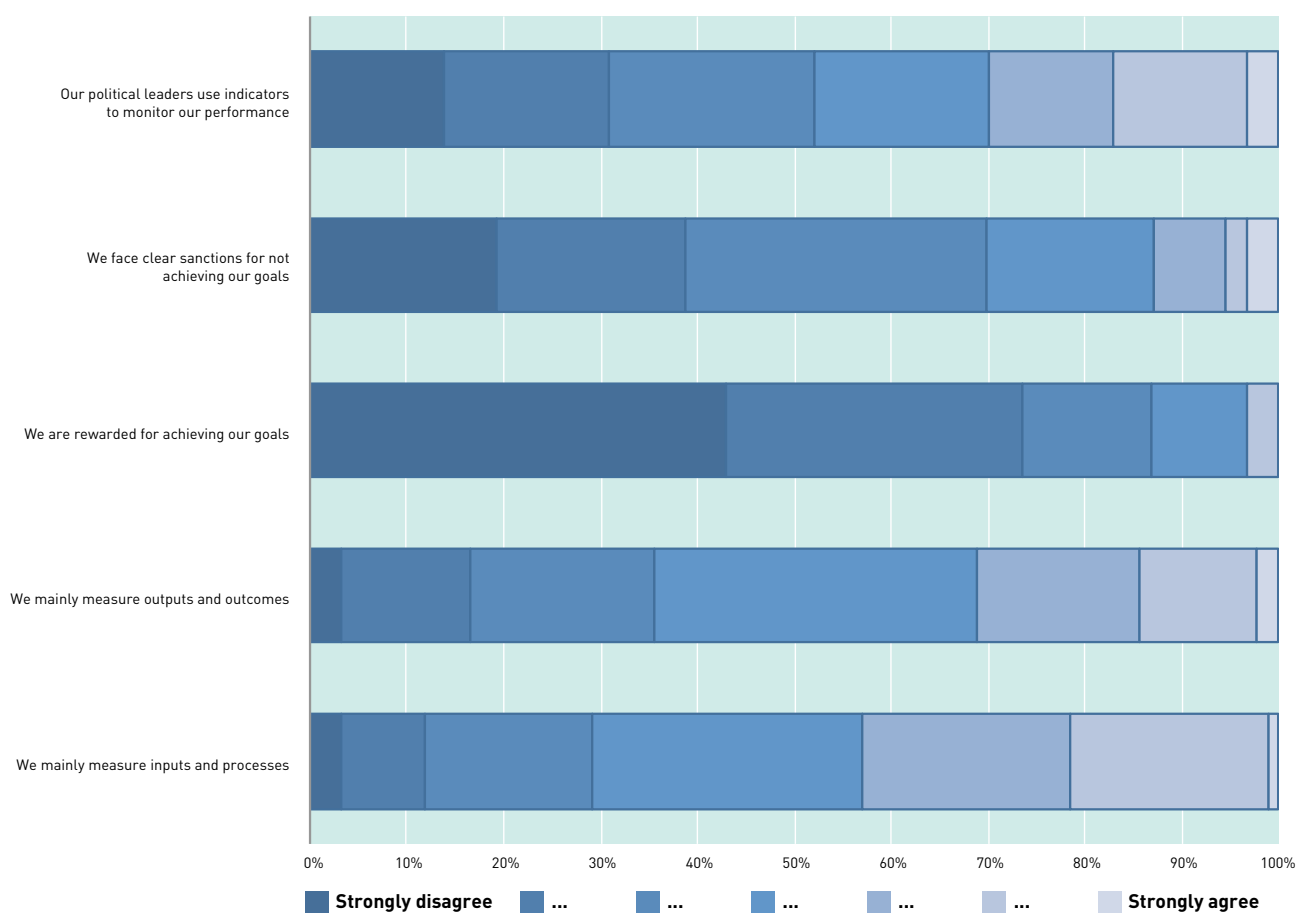
Coordination solutions (Figure 21). The question on coordination solutions is intended to capture the extent to which post NPM reforms, in the form of new coordination mechanisms and measures to counter fragmentation, have been implemented. When faced with coordination problems, Irish local government executives are most likely to set up a temporary cross-cutting work group (52 per cent rather agree) or refer the issue up the hierarchy. The least favoured option is setting up special purpose bodies (77 per cent rather disagree this would typically happen).

FIGURE 21   COORDINATION SOLUTIONS (Q: WHEN MY ORGANISATION'S RESPONSIBILITY OR INTERESTS CONFLICT OR OVERLAP WITH THAT OF OTHER ORGANISATIONS, MY ORGANISATION TYPICALLY ...) (N=81-86)
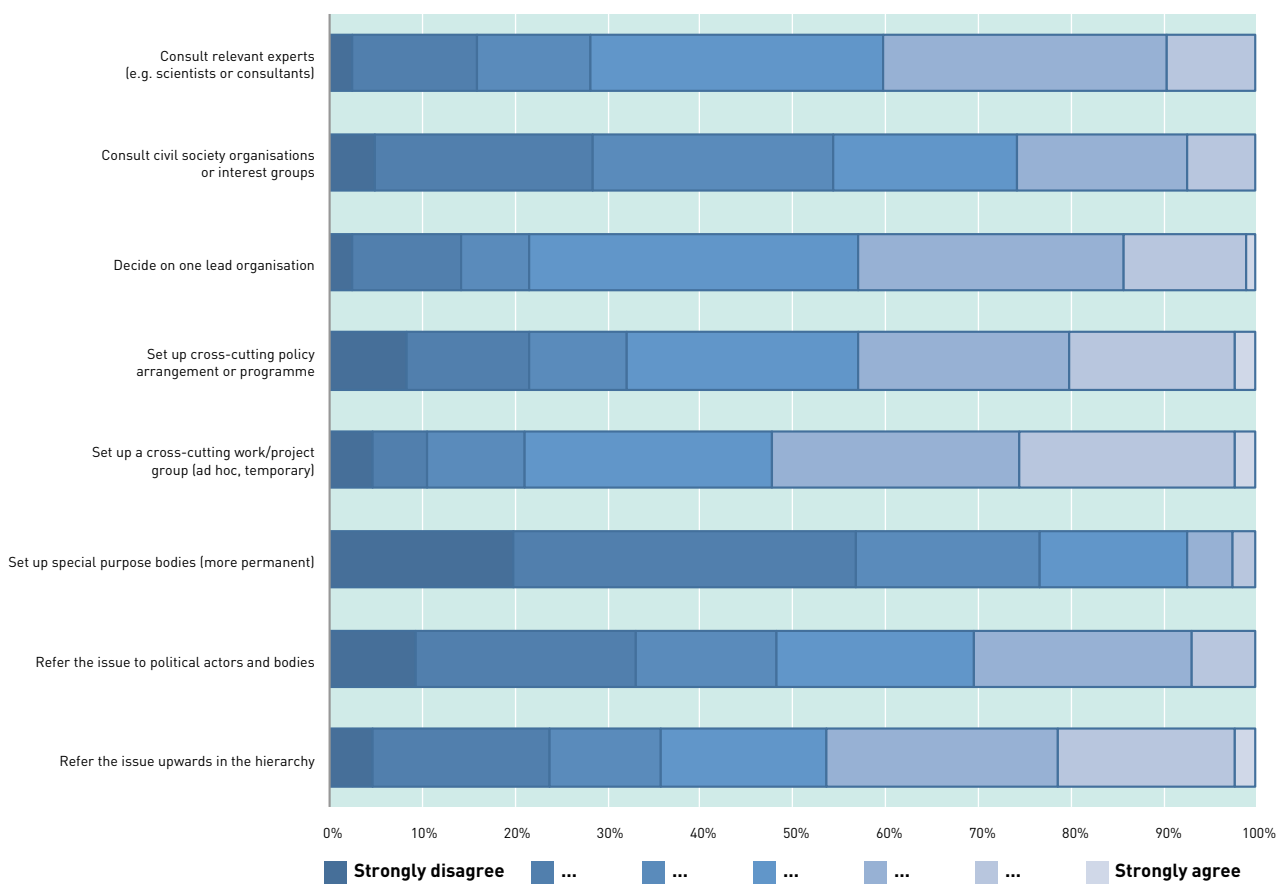
6.3   INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Use of performance indicators (Figure 22). At the individual level, most local government respondents note that they use performance indicators to identify problems that need attention, assess whether they reach their targets, and monitor the performance of their subordinates (74, 68 and 65 per cent respectively say they use them to a rather large extent). In all the categories listed more than half of respondents agree they used performance indicators to a rather large extent.

The findings are broadly in line with those for central government respondents. Generally, for all of the statements listed, Irish public executives say they use performance indicators to a rather large extent to a much higher degree than the COCOPS sample average. Irish respondents are much more likely to use performance indicators at the individual level. UK respondents also were more inclined to use performance indicators, suggesting a Westminster-style of government adoption of this element of management practice.

FIGURE 22   USE OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Q: IN MY WORK I USE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS TO …) (N=92-94)
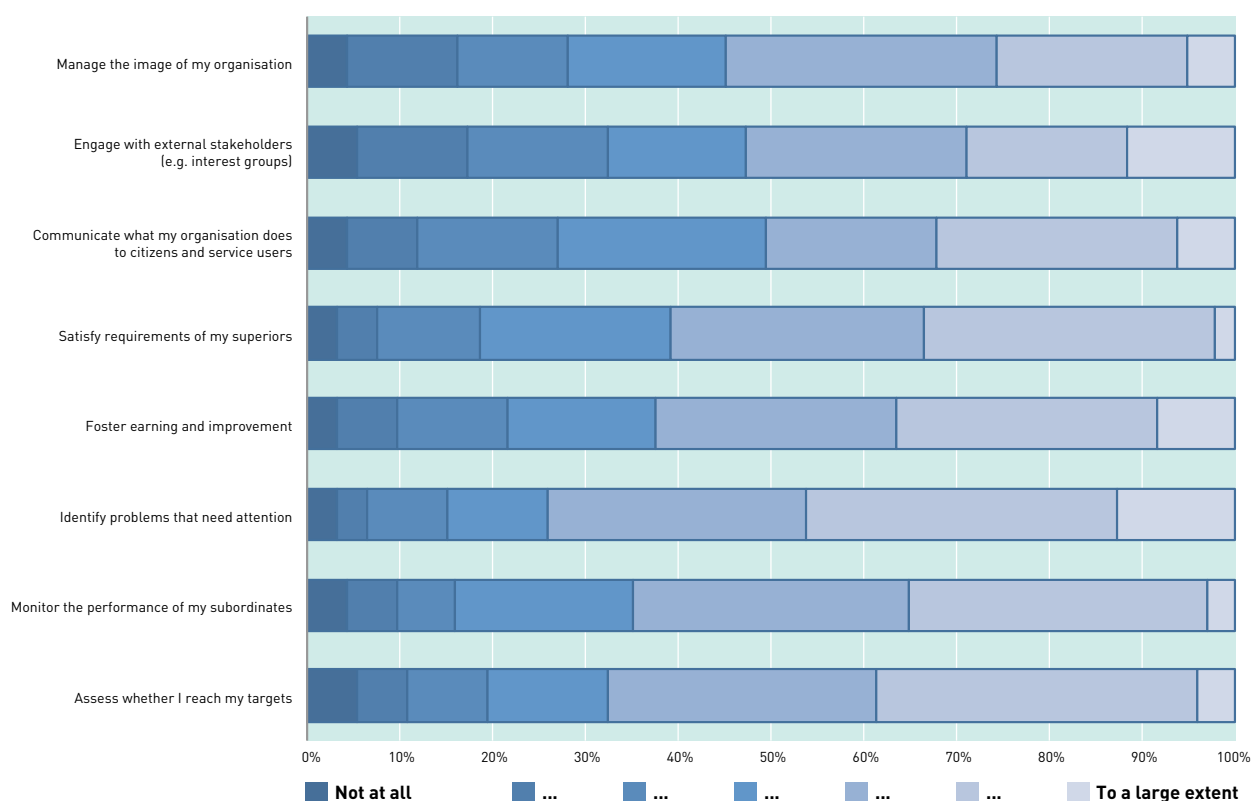
7.

IMPACT OF THE FISCAL CRISIS ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The international fiscal crisis combined with domestic challenges has had a profound impact on Ireland. As set out in section 2.2, in response to the crisis, the government has reduced numbers and pay levels in the public service as part of the fiscal response required to address excessive levels of expenditure given available revenue streams. The government has also embarked on an extensive programme of public service reform, with initiatives such as shared services, centralised procurement and e-government to the fore in an attempt to enhance efficiency while at the same time continuing to deliver effective public services.

Main saving strategies (Figure 23). Concerning the savings in specific policy areas, respondents are fairly evenly split in their views as to the approach taken to realising savings. 38 per cent indicate that they feel that targeted cuts have been the main savings approach used. 31 per cent state that proportional cuts across the board has been the main approach used. 30 per cent suggest that productivity and efficiency savings has been the main approach in their policy area.

FIGURE 23   CUTBACK MEASURES AT ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL (Q: IN RESPONSE TO THE FISCAL CRISIS, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE BROADER APPROACH TO REALISING SAVINGS IN YOUR POLICY AREA?) (N=84)

- Proportional cuts across-the-board over all area
- Productivity and efficiency savings
- Targeted cuts according to priorities
- None/no approach required
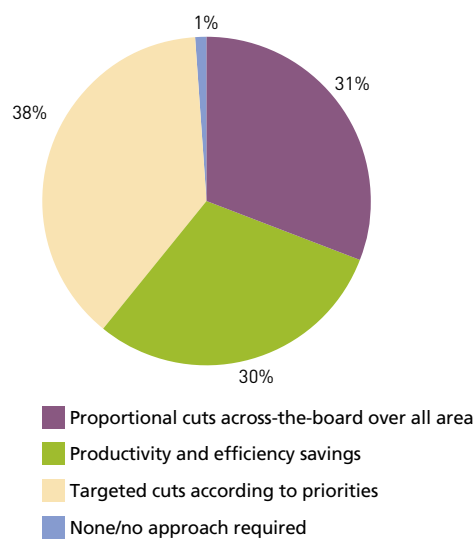
Cutback measures at organisational level (Figure 24). In the view of local government executives, the main cutback measures applied are pay cuts, pay freezes, hiring freezes and cuts to existing programmes (over 90 per cent agree to a rather large extent, with a significant majority strongly agreeing). This is to be expected given the government response to the fiscal crisis outlined in section 2.2. The least used measure is increased fees and charges for users (43 per cent feel this has been used to a rather large extent).

In comparison to the central government sample, staff layoffs have had a much more prominent role in local government (70 per cent of local government respondents feel that staff layoffs have been applied to a rather large extent, compared to 29 per cent of central government respondents). Similarly cuts to existing programmes, postponing or cancelling programmes, reducing front office presence and increased user fees and charges have been applied to a somewhat greater extent in local government than central government in the view of respondents.

FIGURE 24   CUTBACK MEASURES AT ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL (Q: IN RESPONSE TO THE FISCAL CRISIS, TO WHAT EXTENT HAS YOUR ORGANISATION APPLIED THE FOLLOWING CUTBACK MEASURES?) (N=79-83)
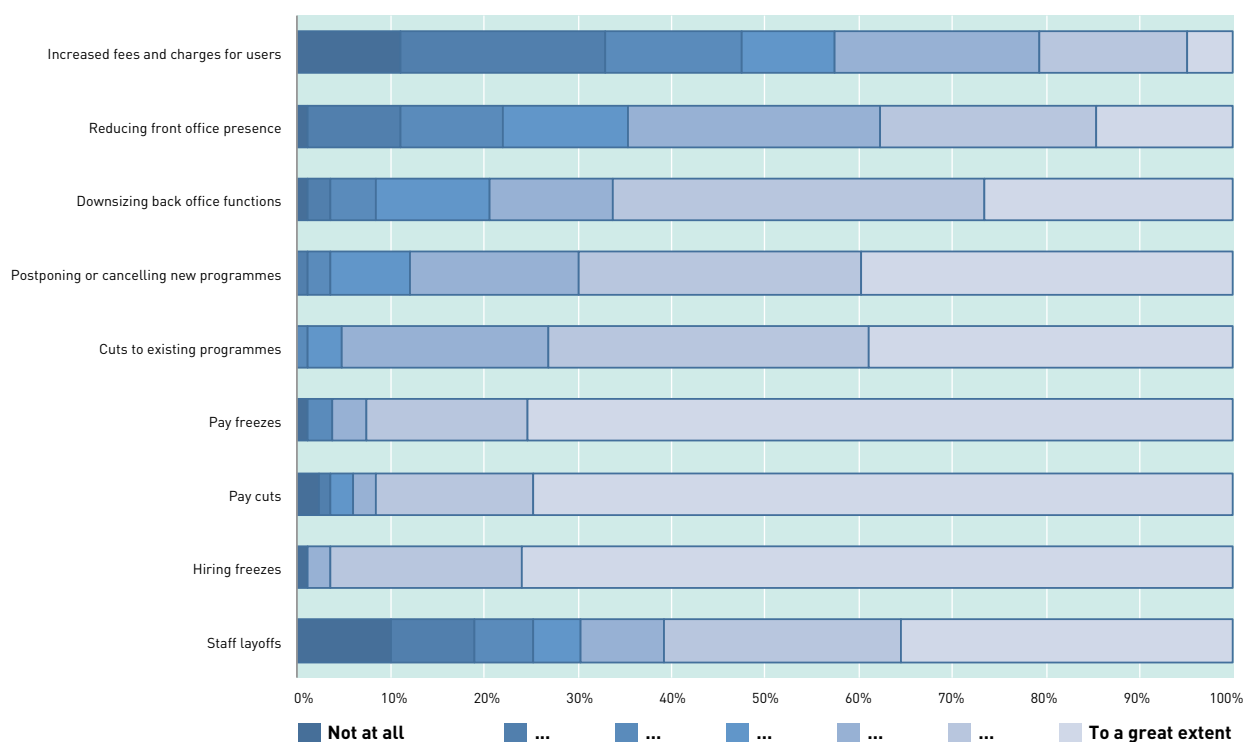
8.

IMPACT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

One of the main goals of the COCOPS study is to obtain systematic information on how senior public servants assess the impact of the various managerial reforms at a policy, organisational and individual levels. In this section, the results are presented with regard to these themes.

8.1   OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORMS

Overall assessment of public administration (Figure 25). Irish local government executives on the whole marginally feel that public administration has got better over the five years to the end of 2013: 52 per cent feel that it has got better, and 48 per cent feel that it has got worse. The majority of respondents (41 per cent marking boxes 7 or 8 on a 10 point scale) feel that public administration has got somewhat better. This finding needs to be interpreted in the context of the scale of cutbacks applied to the Irish public service over this period. It is somewhat less positive than the central government sample, where 62 per cent believe that public administration runs better now than five years ago.

FIGURE 25   OVERALL PA ASSESSMENT (Q: COMPARED WITH FIVE YEARS AGO, HOW WOULD YOU SAY THINGS HAVE DEVELOPED WHEN IT COMES TO THE WAY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION RUNS IN YOUR COUNTRY?) (N=72)

|								
Worse	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	**Better**
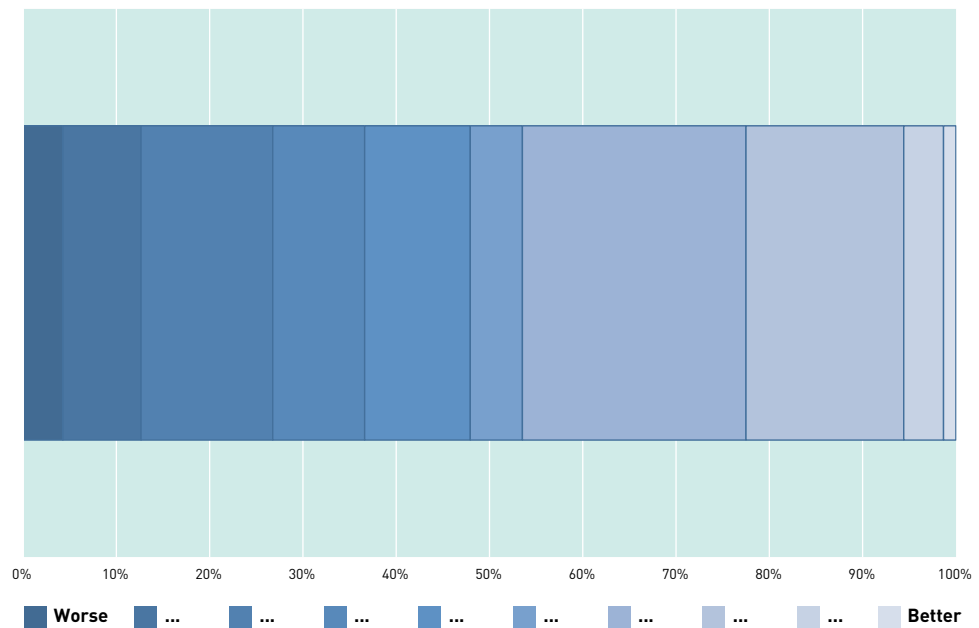
8.2 IMPACT WITHIN POLICY FIELDS

Developments in public administration (Figure 26). To complement the overall results, a more nuanced question was asked addressing a spectrum of different performance dimensions within the respondents' specific policy area. The dimensions where local government executives feel there has been the greatest improvement in performance over the last five years are in terms of cost and efficiency, ethical behaviour, and fair treatment of citizens (89, 82, and 72 per cent respectively rather agree that things have improved significantly). Dimensions where respondents feel that there has been the greatest deterioration are in terms of citizen trust in government, attractiveness of the public sector as an employer, and staff motivation (62, 62 and 56 per cent respectively rather feel that things have deteriorated significantly).

FIGURE 26   DIFFERENT PERFORMANCE DIMENSIONS (Q: THINKING ABOUT YOUR POLICY AREA OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE WAY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION HAS PERFORMED ON THE FOLLOWING DIMENSIONS?) (N=82-84)
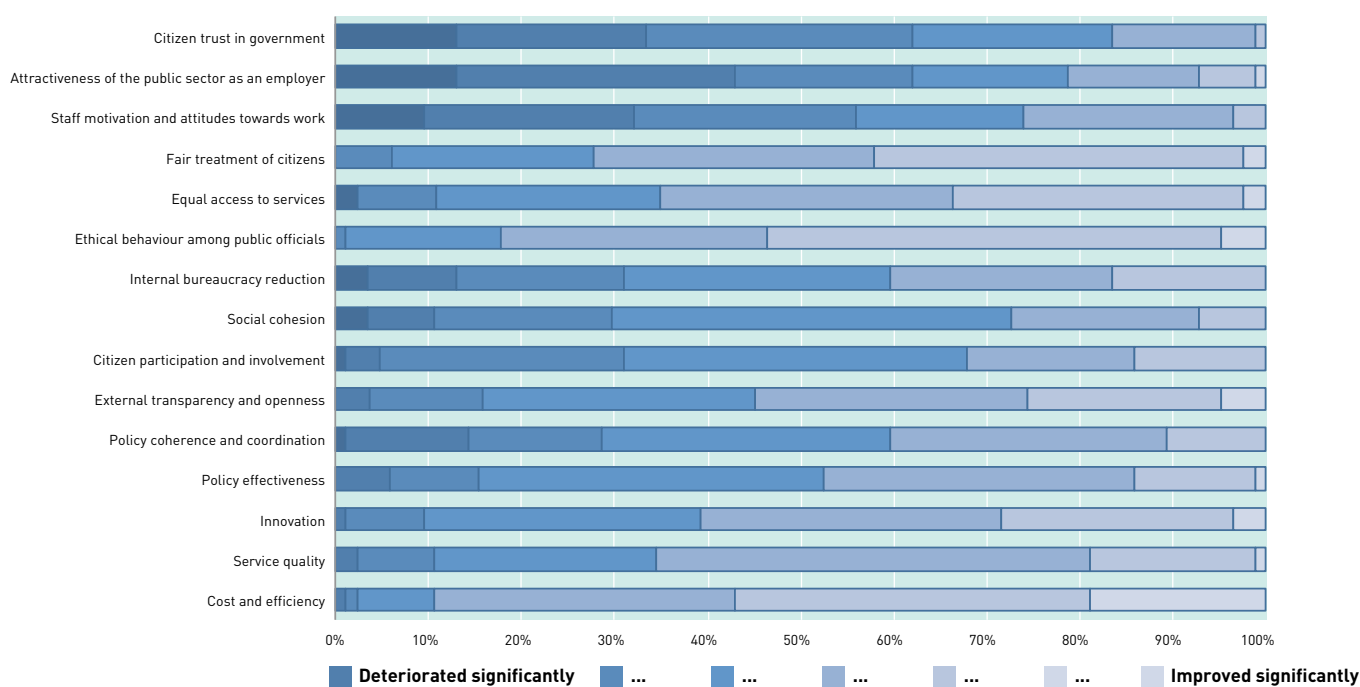
Social capital and trust (Figure 27). The survey aimed to assess the type of impact that public administration reform has had upon social capital, trust and social cohesion within organisations. Overall, local government executives tend to agree with all the statements listed. The largest share of respondents agree that people in their organisation are trustworthy (91 per cent rather agree), have confidence in one another (74 per cent), and willingly share information with one another (72 per cent). The aspect of social capital and trust that show the largest share of disagreement is in terms of viewing themselves as partners in charting the organisation's direction (29 per cent rather disagree). In all, the findings suggest that a notable majority of respondents feel they operate in organisations with high organisational social capital, meaning high levels of shared organisational value-sets, trust and pro-social behaviour among their employees. The results are in line with those obtained in the central government sample.

FIGURE 27   SOCIAL CAPITAL AND TRUST (Q: PEOPLE IN MY ORGANISATION …) (N=86-87)
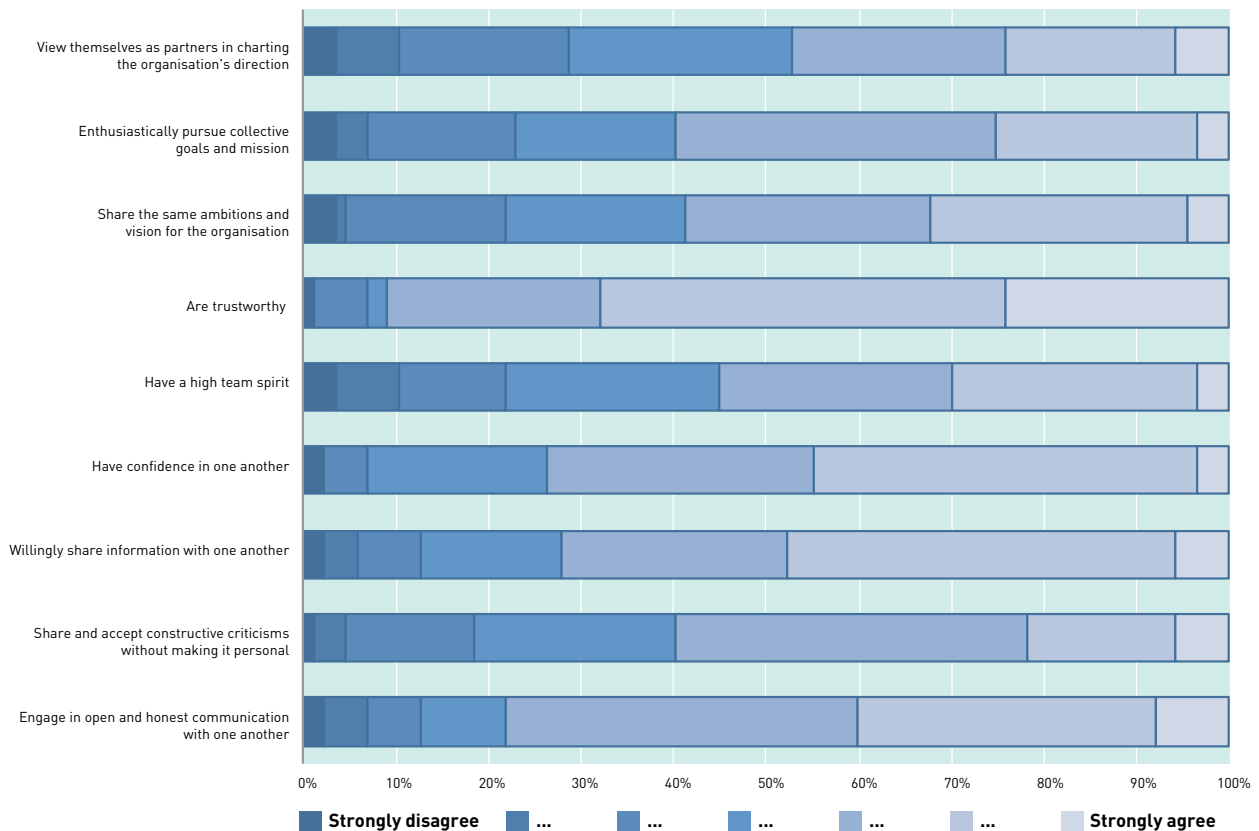
8.3   IMPACT AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Job satisfaction (Figure 28). Overall results are positive with regard to individual's perception of their job satisfaction. 95 per cent rather agree that they get a sense of satisfaction from their work. 72 per cent feel valued for the work they do. And 77 per cent would recommend their organisation as a good place to work. The only aspect where there is a more even split of views is in regard to the statement 'I regularly feel overloaded or unable to cope': 38 per cent rather agree with this statement and 45 per cent rather disagree. This suggests that the impact of the downsizing of the Irish public service may have put additional workload pressures on executives which have affected their views on being able to cope with the workload.

FIGURE 28   JOB SATISFACTION (Q: WHEN THINKING ABOUT MY WORK AND THE
                   ORGANISATION I WORK FOR …) (N=86-87)
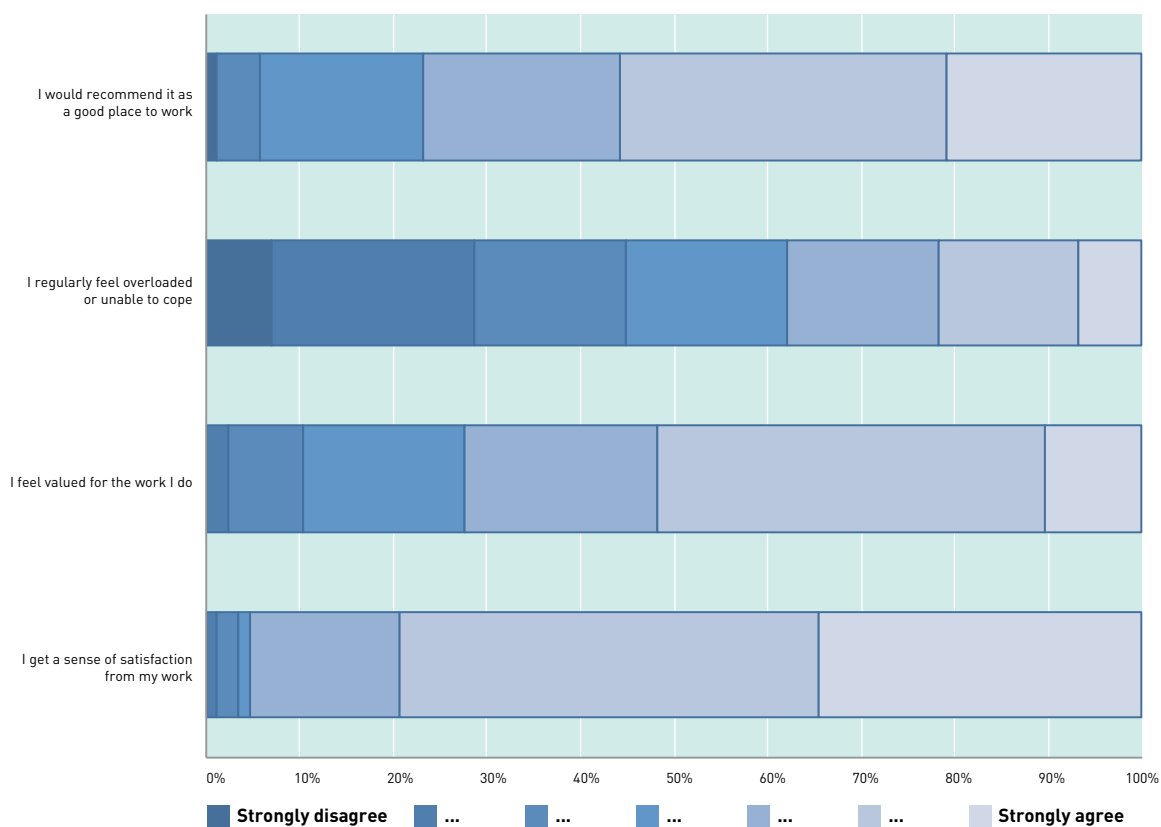
Organisational commitment (Figure 29). Respondents were asked to assess five statements with regard to the organisation they work for. Relatively few local government executives agree that things were better when people stayed with one organisation for most of their career (21 per cent rather agree). The respondents' loyalty to one organisation is moderately high (51 per cent rather agree they were taught to believe in the value of loyalty to one organisation). 77 per cent suggest they are rather happy to spend the rest of their career with the organisation. A majority feel it would be hard for them to leave their organisation right now and that they feel the organisation's problems as their own. The main difference with the central government sample is that local government respondents are more likely to believe in the value of staying loyal to one organisation and be happy to spend the rest of their career in one organisation.

FIGURE 29   ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT (Q: WHEN THINKING ABOUT MY WORK AND THE ORGANISATION I WORK FOR …) (N=85-87)
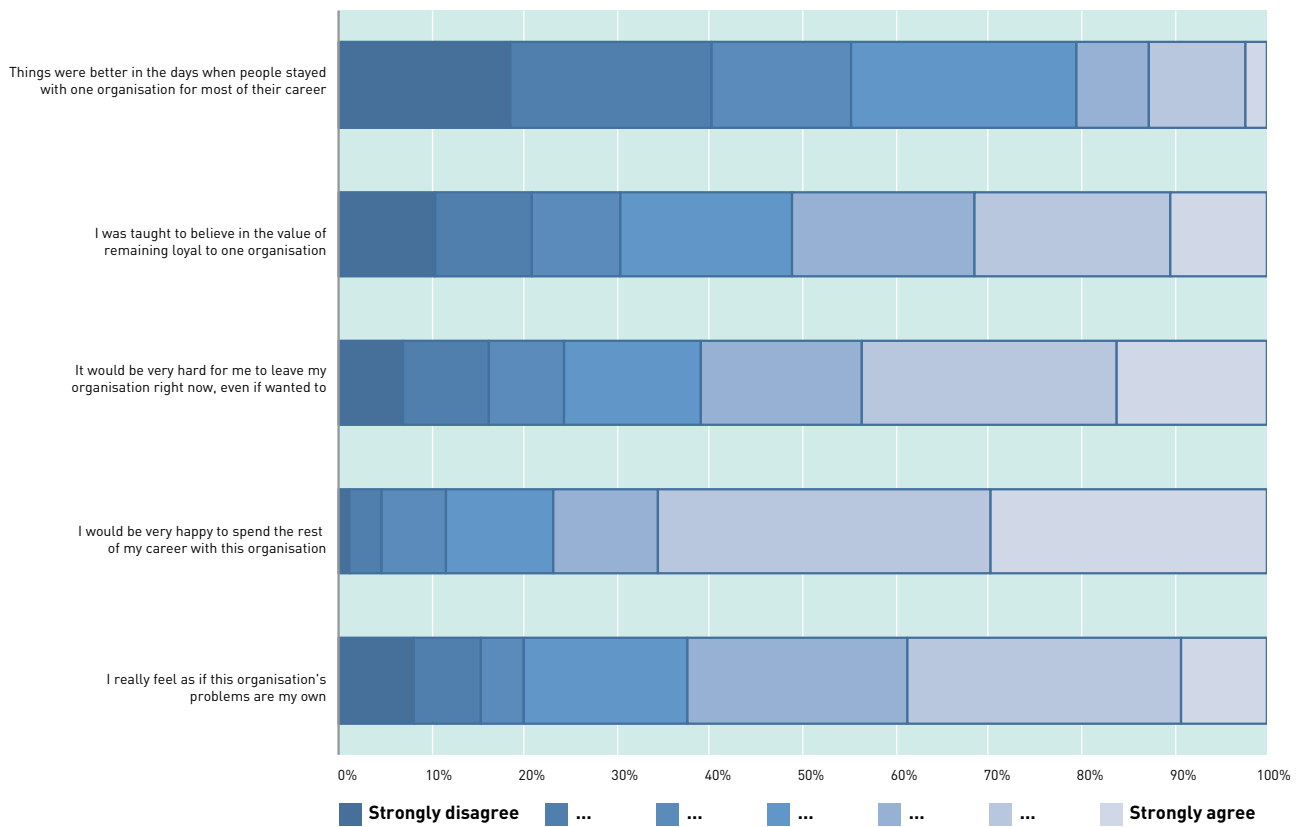
9.

MAIN FINDINGS

Profile of respondents

80 per cent of local government respondents are male and 20 per cent female. This compares with central government where two-thirds of respondents are male and a third female.

There is an older age profile amongst local government senior management than in central government. Over 90 per cent of the local government sample is aged over 45, and there are none under 35. The Irish central government sample in turn had a higher age profile than the COCOPS sample.

The majority of local government respondents have spent a long time working in the public sector. Nearly all respondents have worked in the public sector for over 10 years, and 84 per cent have worked in the public sector over 20 years. This is higher than central government, where two-thirds have worked over 20 years in the public sector.

Relatively low mobility in the sector is shown by the fact that 70 per cent of respondents have worked in their current organisation for over 10 years. There has been more movement in position over time: 61 per cent have been in their current position less than 5 years.

Two thirds of respondents have spent some time working in the private sector, with the majority of these having less than 5 years' experience in the private sector. Previous experience in the non-profit sector is less frequent.

Values and attitudes

Local government executives were asked about value preferences related to public administration. The question was designed in such a way as to let respondents choose between two opposing values when balancing different priorities. The clearest value preference is in favour of achieving results as against following rules. Next highest is in favour of user fees over tax financed services. Compared to central government executives, local government respondents show a higher preference for user fees.

In response to being questioned about what motivates them personally, all local government executives rather agree that interesting work is a motivating factor. Similarly very high percentages note opportunities for promotion, doing something useful for society, job security and having room to make decisions as important motivational factors. The two lowest motivators from the list are status and having flexible working hours.

In a further value oriented question officials were asked to what extent they agree, or disagree, with a number of statements that aims to assess their social value preferences. The strongest preference is in response to the statement 'I like taking responsibility for making decisions'. Next strongest agreement is with the statement 'I make decisions and move on'. The one statement a significant majority disagree with is 'I avoid doing anything that might upset the status quo'. The results are broadly in line with those from central government.

Three quarters of local government executives suggest they are rather happy to spend the rest of their career within the organisation. A majority feel it would be hard for them to leave their organisation right now and that they feel the organisation's problems as their own. The main difference with central government is that local government respondents are more likely to believe in the value of staying loyal to one organisation and be happy to spend the rest of their career in one organisation.

Work characteristics

Local government respondents generally agree that their organisational goals are clearly stated and communicated to all staff. Most feel they have a high number of goals. The majority disagree with the statement that it is easy to observe and measure their activities.

In general local authority respondents feel that they have higher levels of management autonomy than central government executives. They feel they have slightly more autonomy in relation to promoting, dismissing or hiring staff (but still feel they have low levels of autonomy in regard to these functions). They feel they have significantly more autonomy with relation to budget allocation and the contracting out of services.

One question explores the degree to which local government executives interact with different stakeholders. By far the highest level of interaction, as might be expected, is with their direct staff, with almost all interacting on a daily basis. The next highest level of interaction is with administrative superiors. Most (four fifths) say they would interact at least weekly with politicians. This indicates the high degree of interaction senior local government officials have with councillors, and is a major contrast to central government executives, where there is a more limited degree of direct political engagement.

Local government executives have a much more positive view on the level of coordination between national and local and regional government than central government executives. This probably reflects the fact that most local government respondents would define their relationship with national government primarily as with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, with whom they have regular contact. Whereas the central government sample comprised respondents from across government departments and agencies many of whom would have little contact with local government.

Local government executives were asked about the degree of politicisation in their work, and the degree to which decisions are based on technical or political criteria. Just over half rather agree that removing issues and activities from the realms of politics produces better

policies. At the same time, two-thirds feel that politicians respect the technical expertise of the administration. Three-quarters feel that the administration and not the political level initiate reforms or new policies. Just over half of respondents feel that politicians interfere with routine activities. But there is a very strong view that politicians do not influence senior level appointments (88 per cent rather disagree with the statement that politicians regularly influence senior level appointments in my organisation).

Results are positive with regard to individual's perception of their job satisfaction. Almost all respondents rather agree that they get a sense of satisfaction from their work. And a significant majority feel valued for the work they do and would recommend their organisation as a good place to work. The only aspect where there is a more even split of views is in regard to the statement 'I regularly feel overloaded or unable to cope'. This suggests that the impact of the downsizing of the Irish public service may have put additional workload pressures on executives which have affected their views on being able to cope with the workload.

Reform trends and the impact of the fiscal crisis

With regard to reform trends, the vast majority of local government executives believe that public sector downsizing has been an important reform. The next most important ranked reforms are focusing on outcomes and results, digital or e-government, and transparency and open government. These rankings are broadly as might be expected, given the emphasis on budget cuts and staffing reductions in recent years and the priorities set out in the public sector reform programme. Compared to central government executives, the most notable difference is with regard to rating of the importance of privatisation, which more local government respondents tend to rate as of higher importance.

The vast majority of respondents feel that the reforms have been more top down than bottom up, more about cost cutting than service improvement, and tend more towards no public involvement than high public involvement. Respondents are also more likely to see the reforms as crisis driven and contested by unions than planned and supported by unions. Respondents are somewhat more likely to see the reforms as driven by politicians than by senior executives, more unsuccessful than successful, and more partial than comprehensive.

Moving on to the organisational level, respondents were asked about the extent to which different management instruments are used in their organisation. The most commonly used instruments are business/strategic planning, codes of conduct, cost accounting systems, risk management, and management by objectives and results. Those management instruments less frequently used include decentralisation of staffing and financial decisions and customer/user surveys. The instrument by far least frequently used is performance related pay, with four-fifths of respondents indicating it is not used at all. Compared to central government, the use of cost accounting systems is seen as a much more important management instrument by local government respondents. Conversely, local government respondents view performance appraisal as of notably less relevance.

Local government executives were asked to indicate the relevance of performance management in their organisation. The strongest expressed reaction was to the statement 'we are rewarded for achieving our goals': almost half strongly disagree with this statement, and the vast majority rather disagree. Respondents also feel that they would not face sanction for not achieving their goals.

In the view of local government executives, the main cutback measures applied are pay cuts, pay freezes, hiring freezes and cuts to existing programmes. This is to be expected given the government response to the fiscal crisis. In comparison to central government, staff layoffs are seen as having a much more prominent role in local government. Similarly cuts to existing programmes, postponing or cancelling programmes, reducing front office presence and increased user fees and charges have been applied to a somewhat greater extent in local government than central government in the view of respondents.

Outcomes of public sector reform

A small majority of local government executives feel that public administration has got better over the five years to the end of 2013: 52 per cent feel that it has got better, and 48 per cent feel that it has got worse. This finding needs to be interpreted in the context of the scale of cutbacks applied to the Irish public service over this period. It is somewhat less positive than in central government, where 62 per cent believe that public administration runs better now than five years ago.

To complement this overall result, a more nuanced question was asked addressing a spectrum of different performance dimensions within the respondents' specific policy area. The dimensions where local government executives feel there has been the greatest improvement in performance over the last five years are in terms of cost and efficiency, ethical behaviour, and fair treatment of citizens. Dimensions where respondents feel that there has been the greatest deterioration are in terms of citizen trust in government, attractiveness of the public sector as an employer, and staff motivation.

The survey aimed to assess the type of impact that public administration reform has had upon social capital, trust and social cohesion within organisations. A significant majority of respondents agree that people in their organisation are trustworthy, have confidence in one another, and willingly share information with one another. The aspect of social capital and trust that show the largest share of disagreement is in terms of viewing themselves as partners in charting the organisation's direction (roughly a third rather disagree). In all, the findings suggest that a notable majority of local government respondents feel they operate in organisations with high organisational social capital, meaning high levels of shared organisational value-sets, trust and pro-social behaviour among their employees.

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