



INSTITUTE  
OF PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION

# ENGAGEMENT BAROMETER

Fourth national survey  
on the attitudes of civil servants

Sofia, 2022

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of civil servants*

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Institute of Public Administration

**Engagement** manifests itself through achievement motivation, initiative, willingness to accept challenges, adaptability, persistence, and perseverance to achieve organizational goals.

**Engaged employees** perform better and achieve higher results because their motivation is intrinsic. They find personal meaning in what they do, are more innovative, and have high internal standards that don't allow them to settle for mediocre performance - either from themselves or from colleagues.

**Engaged employees** work hard and feel deeply connected to their organization. They achieve personal fulfillment through their work. They are good professionals and know that they can best show others their strengths through the results of their professional activities.

**An engaged employee** believes in and identifies with the organization. They don't need someone to control them to work hard. They work constantly at the top of their abilities for themselves, their colleagues, and their supervisors.

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## 1. Introduction

**The Engagement Barometer** is a national survey of the attitudes of civil servants, which is being conducted for the fourth consecutive year. The Barometer is a tool to assess the satisfaction and engagement of civil servants. Research shows that staff motivation is essential to the effectiveness of any organization and that it drives almost 30% of financial performance<sup>1</sup>. Engagement is not only important for companies but also for public administration. Although there is no imperative for government to be competitive in the marketplace, it must spend taxpayers' money efficiently and achieve more at a lower cost. Improving efficiency requires competent and committed civil servants. Research shows that:

- Engaged employees are more motivated, more effective, and achieve higher results. They are 43% more productive than non-engaged employees<sup>2</sup>. IES/WorkFoundation estimates that if companies can increase average employee engagement by 10%, it will increase profits by \$1,500 per employee<sup>3</sup>.
- Engaged employees are more creative and innovative<sup>4</sup>. Given the serious challenges ahead for the Bulgarian administration (digital transformation, quality management, etc.), it needs employees who seek and know how to find new solutions more than ever.
- Employee engagement directly affects customer satisfaction. Evidence of this link is abundant and comes from both businesses and the public sector<sup>5</sup>.

The fourth survey on the attitudes of civil servants was conducted **from 13 to 27 June 2022** by a team from the Institute of Public Administration. The Civil Service People Survey<sup>6</sup> model was again used as with all previous national surveys. The methodology was originally developed by the Boston Consulting Group and has been used for years to assess engagement in the US public administration. Since 2010, the survey has been administered annually in the UK. In 2019, for the first time, the UK version of the questionnaire was translated, adapted, and used to assess the engagement of Bulgarian civil servants. There are two reasons for choosing this tool: 1) the questionnaire is based on a repeatedly tested and well-validated scientific theory and 2) its use in the Bulgarian administration provides an appropriate frame of reference for benchmarking with the British public administration.

A total of **8610 employees** participated in the 2022 survey in Bulgaria, which is 38.8% more than last year. The conditions for participation in the survey are identical to those of previous years. The choice of demographic and organizational-administrative variables took into account the need to ensure the anonymity of participants, as this is essential for obtaining reliable and unmanipulated data. That is why only three demographic characteristics - age, gender, and years of experience in the civil service - are included in the survey. Three categories were formed for the age variable: up to 35 years, between 35 and 50 years, and over 50 years.

The organizational attributes in the study are five. Four of them: type of administration; administrative area in which the administrative structure operates; the position of the respondent and type of administration - have been used in all previous surveys, while the employee seniority variable has been used since 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> Hay Group (2001). *Engage employees and boost performance*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>3</sup> IES/Work Foundation report (2008). *People and the Bottom Line*.

<sup>4</sup> Cabinet Office (2018). *Civil Service People Survey: Technical Guide*. London

<sup>5</sup> Gallup (2017). *State of the Global Workplace*. New York: Gallup Press

<sup>6</sup> Cabinet Office (2018). *Civil Service People Survey: Technical Guide*. London

The type of administration reflects the statutory classification of administrative structures into ministries, state agencies, administrations of state commissions, executive agencies, administrations established by statutory instruments, specialized territorial administrations, regional administrations, and municipal administrations.

The positions of the respondents are classified into the categories defined according to the Civil Servant Act: senior civil servants, management officials, experts with analytical and/or control functions, experts with support functions, and technical officials. There are two categories of "type of administration" - general and specialized administration. Administrative regions are all 28 administrative regions in the country. The variable 'experience in public administration' is structured into four categories: employees with up to 5 years of experience, between 5 and 15 years, between 15 and 25 years, and employees with more than 25 years of experience in the civil service. The content of the questionnaire in terms of engagement and its determinants has not changed over the years and is identical to the initial version of the 2018 questionnaire. This has ensured that the results are comparable to previous years and to the UK administration. Traditionally, the second part of the questionnaire has been designed to explore staff attitudes to current policies and issues.

Gallup surveys conducted over the years in thousands of organizations around the world show that in the most innovative and prosperous companies, the ratio of engaged to actively disengaged employees is 14:1.

- A separate section includes questions related to employee attitudes toward teleworking. This section was created in 2020 about the exceptional circumstances created by COVID-19 and the need to work remotely from home. It has been used again this year.
- For the first time, a brief assessment of subjective well-being was included in the supplementary section of the questionnaire. This section was added last year in the original Civil Service People Survey and is now part of the Bulgarian version.
- Every year, administrations are allowed to request a separate report with the survey results of their employees. A total of 67 administrations have submitted requests, but only 44 of them meet the minimum number of participants and will receive such reports.

The 2022 Government Employee Engagement Survey is representative of all demographic and organizational-administrative variables. A detailed description of the distribution of participants across these indicators is provided in *Appendix 1*.

## 2. Methodology and sample

### 2.1. Theoretical model

Engagement is a specific attitude of employees towards their work and its results. According to the level of commitment, the following groups of employees are distinguished:

- **Highly engaged employees** put their heart into their work. They strive for exceptional performance and high results because they enjoy their work and feel attached to what they do and to their organization. For them, work is a source of meaning and personal satisfaction.
- **Moderately engaged employees** are motivated, disciplined, and responsible. Work is a significant part of their lives, but not the most significant one. Around the world, in both the public and private sectors, moderately engaged, conscientious and fair-minded employees predominate.
- **Disengaged employees** are extrinsically motivated. They are not attached to their work but do it because they need income and security.
- The negative pole of engagement is formed by actively disengaged employees. They dislike or even hate their job, but feel they cannot risk changing them. Actively disengaged employees are one of the main causes of the low performance of organizations and poor quality of service.

In the model adopted in the study, engagement is measured by the following six statements:

1. I feel pride when I say where I work.
2. I would recommend my administration as a very good place to work.
3. I am committed to the administration where I work.
4. I refer to my administration by saying “we” rather than “they”.
5. I have built friendly relationships with colleagues in my administration.
6. My administration motivates me to do my best.

These statements reflect different aspects of employees' commitment to their work and organization. Commitment is not a personality trait. People are not born engaged and disengaged, but instead, develop these attitudes as a result of several driving factors. The most important of these is leadership in organizations. Leaders are the ones who set challenging and inspiring goals, manage change and encourage employees to achieve more. Moreover, strategic leadership carries much more weight than operational-level leadership, as it provides genuinely challenging and meaningful goals. Other drivers of employee engagement are the nature of the work, relationships with their supervisor and co-workers, stress, job availability of necessary resources, work-life balance, learning and development opportunities, and fair compensation. These drivers of engagement, and the whole model on which the survey is based, are drawn from the UK Civil Service People Survey. The drivers of engagement can be described as follows:

- **Leadership and change management** - the subjective perceptions of employees associated with perceptions of the correctness of their judgments and decisions, their ability to manage change, and set meaningful and inspiring goals.
- **My job** - respondents' subjective perceptions related to their work and working life - how much employees enjoy their work and are motivated to achieve high performance in it.
- **Organizational goals** - the extent to which the administration's and structural unit's goals are clear and the degree to which employees see a link between their work (role) and the achievement of these goals.
- **My supervisor** - employees' subjective perception of their line manager as motivating, supportive, concerned about their development, and giving timely feedback.
- **Teamwork** - employees' subjective perceptions of the quality of interpersonal and working relationships within their team and the extent to which colleagues are perceived as helpful,

supportive, and collaborative.

- **Learning and development** - respondents' subjective perceptions of the availability of career and professional development opportunities at work, and perceptions of their administration as stimulating learning and supportive of the development of professional competencies.
- **Resources and workload** - employees' subjective perceptions of workload and stress, the availability of resources and information to complete work tasks, and the ability to achieve work-life balance.
- **Compensations** - employees' subjective perceptions of the fairness of compensation and satisfaction with the compensation they receive.

## 2.2. Questionnaire

The questionnaire measuring engagement contains 41 statements. These are given in Appendix 2. In addition to the six statements on engagement shown above, the questionnaire contains between four and six statements designed to assess each of its drivers (determinants). The statements are rated on a five-point Likert scale that includes the following responses:

- Agree
- Rather agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Rather disagree
- Disagree

Calculation of global index scores and factors	Agree	Rather agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Rather disagree	Disagree
<b>Statements</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>0%</b>
My job is interesting.	√				
My job stimulates me to develop professionally.		√			
I believe I am included in the decision-making process related to my job.			√		
I am committed to the administration where I work.				√	
I have enough freedom to decide how to perform my duties.					√
<b>Result: <i>My job</i></b>		<b><math>(100 + 75 + 50 + 25 + 0)/5 = 50\%</math></b>			



The statements represent an operationalization of the theoretical model presented in the previous section. The report containing the results of the first implementation of the Attitude Barometer in 2019 presented convincing evidence that the Bulgarian version of the questionnaire is conceptually and functionally equivalent to the original instrument. This pertains to both the questionnaire structure and the scales' reliability. Therefore, the interested reader is referred to Appendixes 4 and 5 of the 2019 Report, which presents the factor analysis results and internal consistency checks of the scales. At this point, we would like to remind you that similar reliability and validity checks have been made, as we are using UK benchmarking data, and comparisons will not be correct if the Bulgarian version of the questionnaire is not equivalent to the original survey. The validity and reliability data we refer to show unequivocally that the Bulgarian version of the questionnaire is psychometrically equivalent to the original questionnaire.

How do you measure engagement and impact factors? First, “agree” responses are assigned a weight of 100%, “somewhat agree” responses are assigned a weight of 75%, and “neither agree nor disagree” responses a weight of 50%, “rather disagree” responses a weight of 25% and “disagree” responses a weight of 0%. The averages of the factors and the global “engagement” index are then calculated. The same scoring algorithm was used in the Civil Service People Survey.

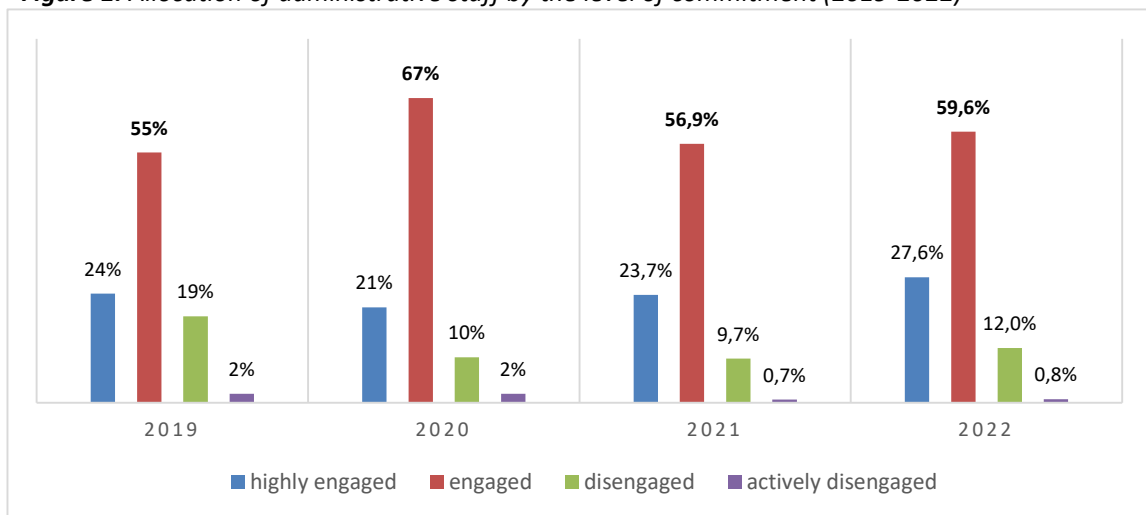
The results for the Bulgarian administration and the different types of administrations represent the averages of the respondents from these administrations. A new section with eight statements was added to the main questionnaire for the 2020 Engagement Barometer survey to assess employee attitudes toward teleworking. This is a common practice, both for the Civil Service People Survey and for many related surveys, which include an assessment of employee attitudes on various “hot topics” relevant to the year in which the survey is conducted. The results of the additional section are not included in the calculation of the Civil Service Employee Engagement Index. These are analyzed in section 4 of this report. The statements from the additional Wellbeing and Telework sections are given in *Appendix 2*.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Evaluation of the engagement

Employee engagement in the civil service is the central theme of the survey. Based on the results obtained and following the methodology described above, respondents were divided into four main groups: 'highly engaged', 'engaged', 'disengaged' and 'actively disengaged'. Figure 1 presents the percentages of respondents falling into each of these groups actively disengaged

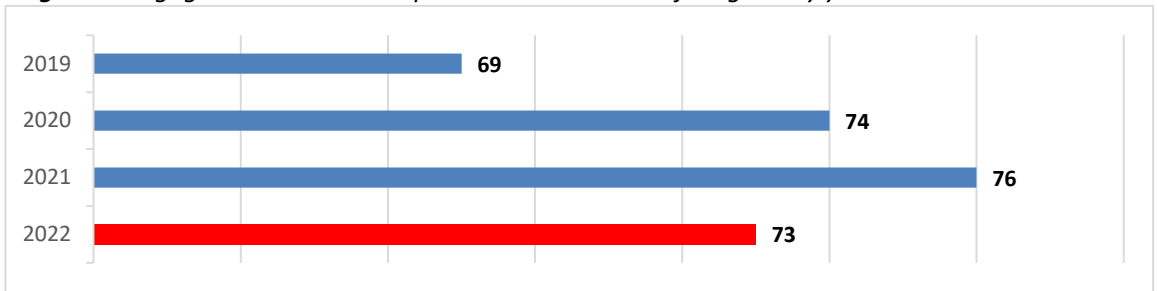
**Figure 1.** Allocation of administrative staff by the level of commitment (2019-2022)



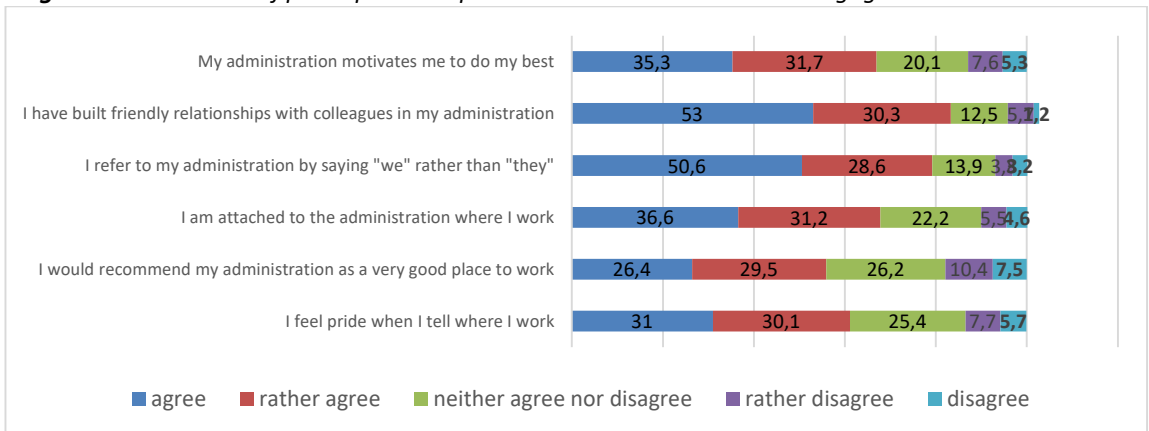
Comparing the data over the years, the first thing that makes an impression is the relative stability in the engagement levels of civil servants. This year's survey comes after a year of tumultuous political change, two interim governments, three parliamentary votes, and the formation of a new governing coalition. However, this has not led to any significant changes in engagement. There has been some polarization, as the share of both highly engaged and disengaged staff has increased, but there is neither a 'burst of engagement' nor a sharp decline in civil service motivation. The share of the actively disengaged remains consistently low, the disengaged have increased, but their share remains closer to their 2020 and 2021 shares than their 2019 share. The share of engaged employees has increased slightly compared to 2021 but is lower than in 2020. The most significant change is the 3-4 percent increase in the highly engaged employees compared to previous years, which is a very good sign, given that this category of individuals is responsible for the increased efficiency and quality of services of administrations. The ratio of highly engaged to actively disengaged staff remains stable at over 14, which Gallup believes indicates a highly functioning people organization.

Figure 2 presents the global engagement index data for 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. There is a slight decline compared to 2021, but the level of engagement remains approximately at the 2020 level and higher than the level of engagement of civil servants in 2019. It is gratifying that against the backdrop of the health and economic crisis, the war in Ukraine, and the political instability in the country, employees remain sufficiently motivated and committed.

**Figure 2.** Engagement index in the public administration of Bulgaria by year



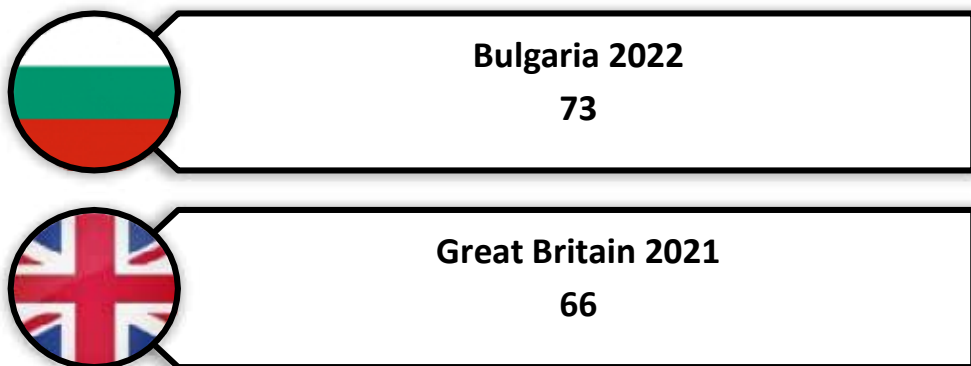
**Figure 3.** Distribution of participants' responses to statements related to engagement



The results presented in Figure 3 are a breakdown of participants' responses to the six statements measuring engagement. The detailed data show that a significant portion of civil service employees' engagement is due to their identification with the institution which they work for, as well as the personal relationships that respondents have formed with their colleagues. More than half of the respondents indicated that they felt fully integrated into the work, accepted by their colleagues and that they were part of the team where they worked. This gives reassurance that in times of stress or tension, they can count on help or emotional support. Respondents gave the lowest average score to the question: "I would recommend my administration as a great place to work". About 26% of respondents would do so, and another 29% would rather do so, which is a good result in principle, but it represents a drop of about 4-5% from last year's results. This shows that despite the overall positive picture, the civil service is not as good a place to work as it used to be last year.

The use of the Civil Service People Survey model further allows benchmarking between the performance of the Bulgarian civil service and that of the UK civil service. This is permissible as the Bulgarian adaptation of the survey is conceptually and functionally equivalent to the original questionnaire. A comparison is presented in Figure 4. The UK data is from the engagement survey conducted at the end of 2021.

**Figure 4.** Comparison between Bulgaria and the UK on the engagement index



This year, as in all previous years, the level of engagement of Bulgarian civil servants is significantly higher than their British counterparts. Further comparisons with the major US federal administrations show that only two of them - the National Aeronautics and Space Administration - NASA (index = 85) and the Ministry of Health (index = 74) - have shown higher scores than the Bulgarian civil service. This once again comes to show that employees in the Bulgarian administration are engaged and consider their administrations a good place to work. Moreover, in the USA as well as in Bulgaria there is also a slight decrease in the level of engagement of civil servants compared to the previous year's data.

The demographic and organizational-administrative variables embedded in the survey allow for a more detailed analysis of engagement across several various statistical and demographic indicators.

Figure 5 presents engagement data by type of administration. Statistically, significant differences are observed. Employees in municipal administrations have the highest engagement, followed by those in the administration of the National Assembly, executive agencies, ministries, and the administration of the Council of Ministers. Engagement is lower among regional administrations, state agencies, and state commission administrations.

**Figure 5. Engagement index by type of administration**

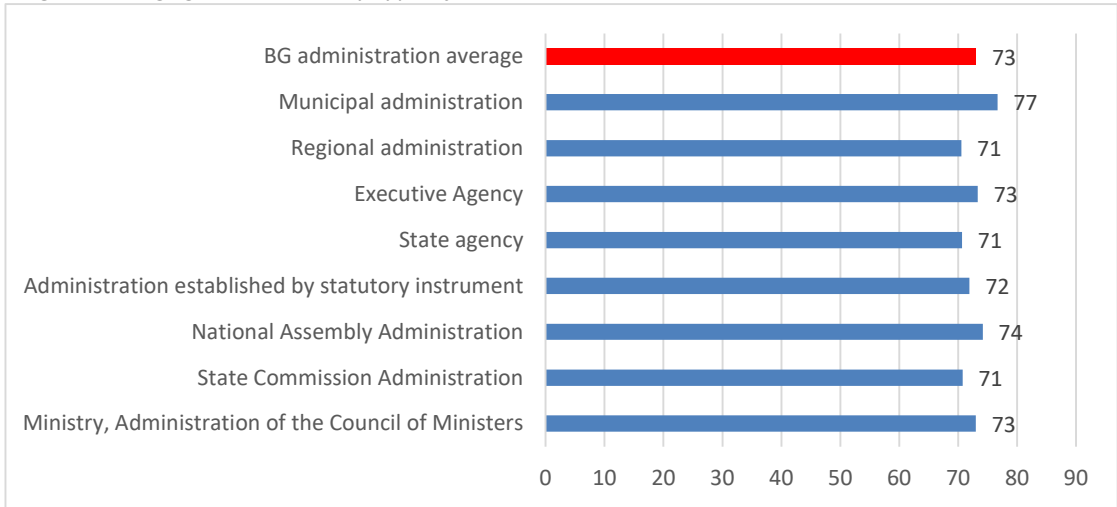


Figure 6 presents a comparison of employee engagement in different areas. Statistically, significant differences are observed. The highest levels of engagement are reported in Montana, Haskovo, and Silistra, but it is challenging to interpret these data. On the one hand, the differences can be attributed to variations in the population's average incomes across districts. One aspect of engagement is related to the remuneration received, and satisfaction depends on comparisons with compensation in the business and NGO sectors. There is a definite trend in the data presented in Figure 6 for lower-income districts to register higher satisfaction with the opportunity to work in government. In Sofia, Varna, Burgas, Plovdiv, and Veliko Tarnovo the engagement index is below the national average, further supporting the conclusion. On the other hand, however, the data in Figure 6 may be related to the previous findings and, to some extent, reflect the fact that employees in municipal administrations are the most highly engaged. The observed figures may be due to the combined influence of both factors. The observed disparities between municipal administrations themselves may support such a view. They show that the commitment of municipal employees is highest (index = 79) in small municipalities with up to 30 000 inhabitants and lowest in medium-sized municipalities with a population between 30 000 and 100 000 inhabitants (index = 72).

**Figure 6. Engagement index by district**

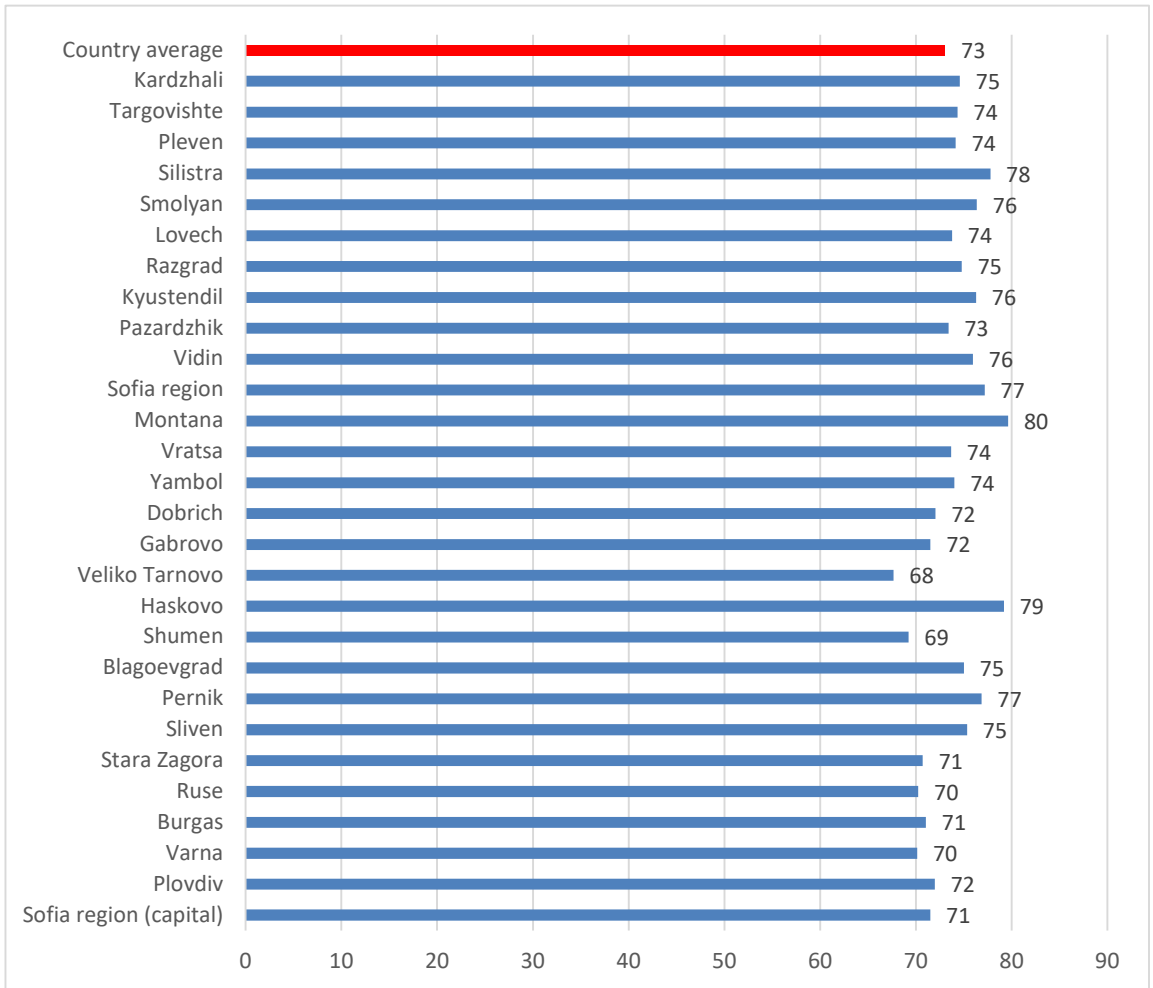
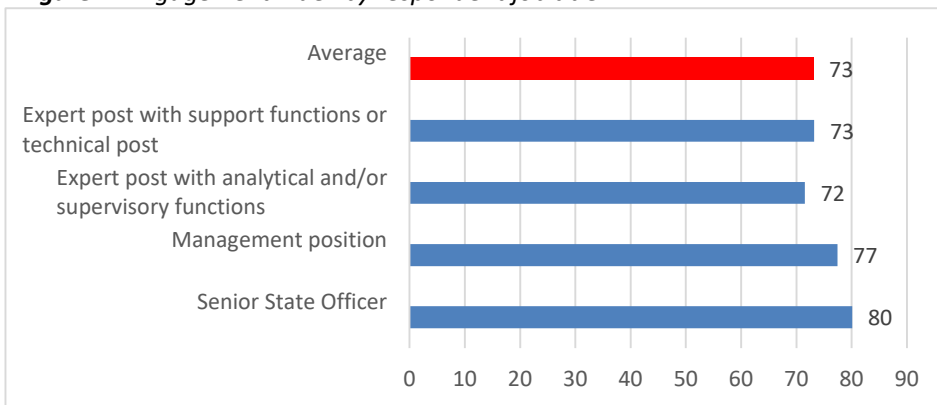


Figure 7 presents comparisons of employee engagement levels by job type.

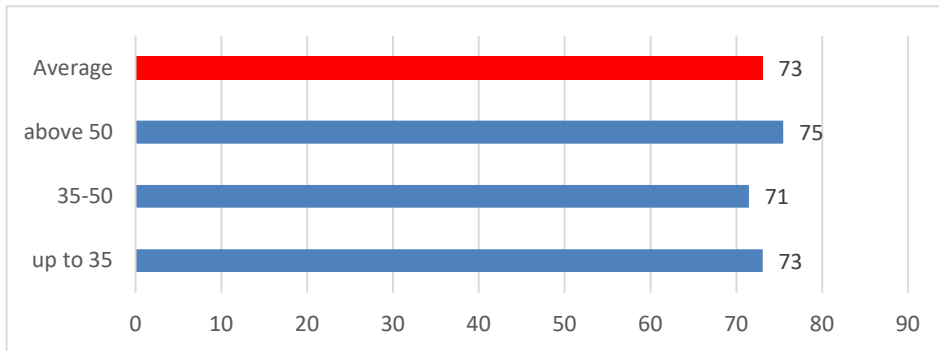
**Figure 7. Engagement index by respondent job title**



The observed differences are statistically significant. As expected, senior civil servants and employees in managerial positions are the most engaged. Similar results were found in all previous surveys. Senior civil servants and managers are more engaged than experts as they are more actively involved in decision-making processes and the management of the administrations themselves.

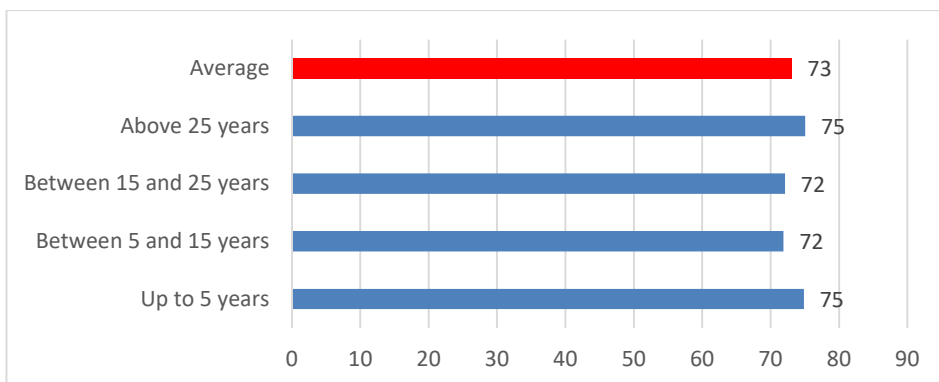
Statistically significant differences were also observed by age. Data are presented in Figure 8. The youngest and oldest employees are more engaged than middle-aged employees. This is a logical result that has been consistently replicated in all previous studies. The youngest employees are motivated because they are still in the establishment phase of their jobs. They strive to perform at their best in every task they are given and show that they can be relied upon. As they complete the process of becoming established, this motivation gradually diminishes and the 40s are often a period of 'plateau' in career motivation. Motivation increases again at the end of one's career. This happens because employees feel confident in their professional knowledge and skills and want to demonstrate it, as well as pass on their experience and knowledge to younger people. Moreover, by the mid-50s, children grow up and many people devote themselves entirely to their work, seeking in it their fulfillment.

**Figure 8.** Engagement index by age groups



The comparisons between groups by seniority shown in Figure 9 reflect the same dynamics. Again, we see that employees with the least and most seniority are the most engaged, which is related to the reasons just listed. It should be noted, however, that the effect of seniority is not simply a derivative of age, although the two variables are undoubtedly related. When a special two-factor variance model is constructed, it is apparent that the influence of both variables remains significant despite the high correlation between them.

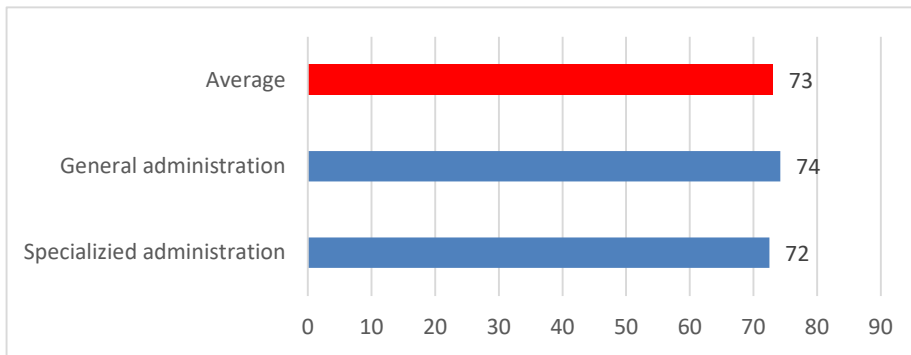
**Figure 9.** Engagement index by seniority



Data on differences in employee engagement by the type of administration they work in - general or specialized - are somewhat inconsistent. In two of the studies, no statistically significant differences were found, whereas, in the first and the present study, such differences were observed. Results are presented in Figure 10. The difference is only two points but is statistically significant. Interestingly, in all previous studies there is a tendency for general administration employees to be slightly more motivated, although as we have already pointed out, the difference is not always statistically significant.

Similar slight differences are observed by gender. In the present study, no statistically significant differences were found and the data are not presented in a separate graph, but as in previous studies, there is a tendency for women to be slightly more committed than men. The difference in motivation ranges between 1 and 2 points. Now it is only 1 point and not significant, but it has reached over 2 points in previous studies. Data are presented in Figure 10.

**Figure 10.** Engagement index by type of administration



### 3.2. Key factors analysis

Employee engagement is determined by several factors. The theoretical model incorporates the expectation that various aspects of the organizational context such as leadership, change management, the nature of the work, the team, the direct supervisor, organizational goals, learning and development opportunities, resource endowments, and rewards significantly influence the level of commitment. These assumptions were confirmed in all regression analyses, including the present one. In the 2022 regression analysis, no change was found in the order of importance of the individual determinants (see Table 1). Again, as in previous years, the two most important factors were leadership and intrinsic motivation (my job). Employees' engagement is mostly determined by their attitude towards the management of the administration, as well as whether they like their job (work tasks and professional activities they perform). *Team* is again the third strongest determinant. Resource endowment remains at the same level while the determinant power of remuneration decreases. Unlike in previous years, this year it is less of a determinant of employee motivation. Organizational goals, line manager, and learning and development opportunities remain weaker but significant factors.

**Table 1. Significance of factors determining engagement**

<b>Engagement factor</b>	<b>Standardized regression coefficient</b>			
	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Leadership</b>	0.34	0.32	0.33	0.34
<b>My job</b>	0.24	0.21	0.23	0.22
<b>My team</b>	0.14	0.17	0.21	0.17
<b>Compensation</b>	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.07
<b>Resources and workload</b>	0.10	0.10	0.09	0.10
<b>Learning and development</b>	0.10	0.10	0.07	0.08
<b>Organizational goals</b>	0.03	0.05	0.06	0.01
<b>Supervisor</b>	0.01	0.02	0.06	0.01

Table 2 presents the scores on the individual engagement factors obtained in 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. There are declines in scores on most factors, but they are relatively small, in the range of 1 or 2 points. The only major reduction is in compensation. Satisfaction fell by a full 11 points and is back to 2019 levels. Inflation has melted much of the positive effect of the 2020 and 2021 pay increases.

**Table 2. Engagement factors indexes by year**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Leadership</b>	67	74	74	73
<b>My job</b>	75	79	80	76
<b>Teamwork</b>	75	79	80	79
<b>Compensation</b>	37	45	49	38
<b>Resources and workload</b>	76	75	75	72
<b>Learning and development</b>	60	67	70	67
<b>Organizational goals</b>	90	92	92	92
<b>Supervisor</b>	74	78	79	78

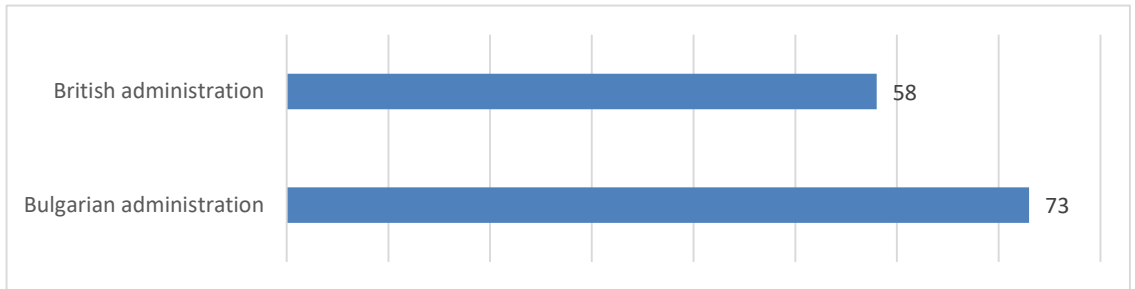
In the following sections of this chapter, we discuss in detail the results of the individual determinants of engagement in order of their significance, as determined by the weight of the regression coefficients in the model.



## Leadership and change management

Figure 11 compares Bulgarian and UK employees' ratings of the leadership of their administrations. Both the Bulgarian and UK surveys show an improvement, but the Bulgarian survey only shows an improvement in terms of the 2019 results.

**Figure 11. Results by factor "Leadership and Change Management"**



Leadership at the strategic level continues to be the factor where the biggest differences between Bulgarian and UK civil servants are observed and which contributes most to the higher engagement of Bulgarian civil servants.

**Figure 12. Distribution of responses to the Engagement Barometer on statements related to leadership and change management**

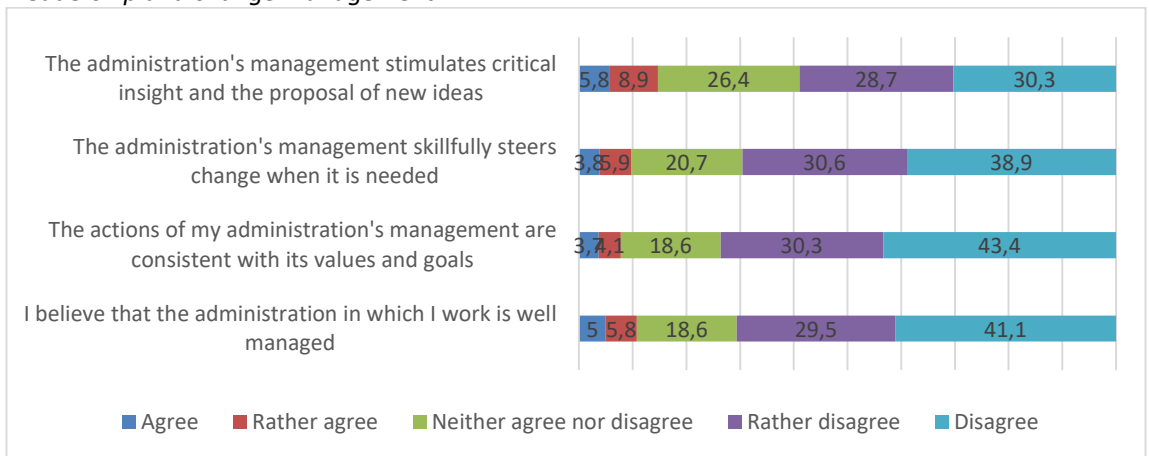
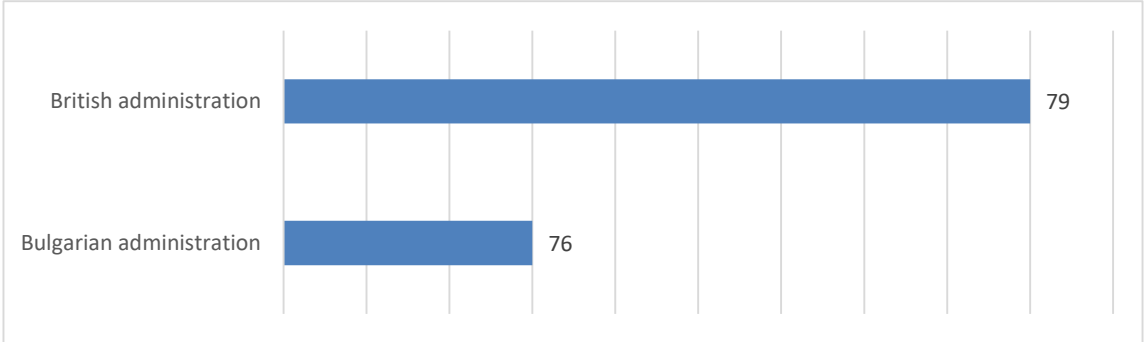


Figure 12 sets out the distribution of respondents' answers across the different statements. Positive assessments prevail - between 60 and 70 percent of Bulgarian employees believe that the heads of their administrations make the right decisions, manage change skillfully, have a vision, and lead their organizations well. A relative weakness of strategic leaders in the Bulgarian civil service remains that they do not stimulate enough critical thinking and innovative thinking, but here too there has been an improvement. In 2019, "agree" ratings were 24%, while this year they were 31%. Let's hope this trend continues, as analytics and innovative thinking are critical to digital transformation and the success of organizations in today's society.

## My job

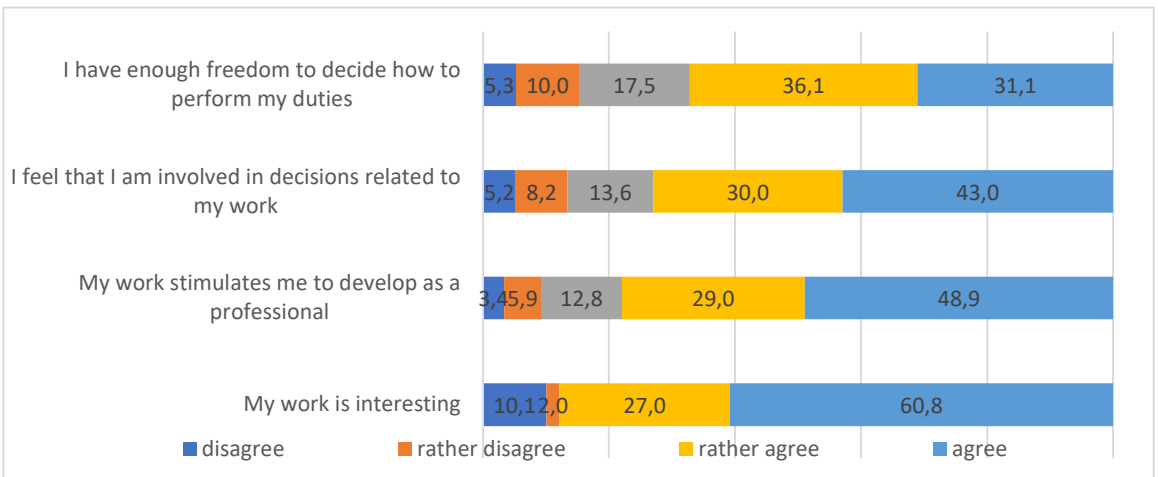
The second most important factor on which engagement depends is the content of the work activity or the very nature of the work performed. It is associated with a sense of professionalism and professional fulfillment. In the questionnaire, it was simply called 'My job'. Data are presented in Figure 13. The scores of civil servants in Bulgaria are lower than those of their counterparts in the UK and at the same time there is a decrease of 4 points compared to last year's data for Bulgaria.

**Figure 13.** Results by "My job" factor



The detailed distribution of responses presented in Figure 14 shows where the change is coming from.

**Figure 14.** Distribution of responses to the Engagement Barometer on statements related to leadership and change management

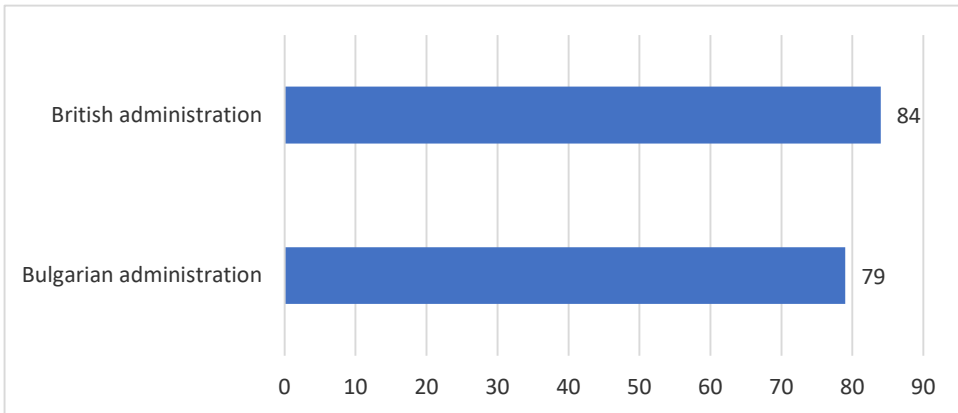


A very high proportion of our civil servants find their work interesting and also consider themselves involved in the decision-making process that affects their work. However, the proportion of employees who dislike their job has almost doubled. Whereas in 2021 it was 6%, it is now 10%. During the health crisis, many private sector and NGO workers have sought more secure employment in the civil service. Some of them did so forced by circumstances and without liking their new jobs. A corresponding decrease of 5% was observed in the responses to the question "My job stimulates me to develop as a professional". This data suggests that a return of employees from the public to the private sector can be expected once economic uncertainty is overcome.

## My team

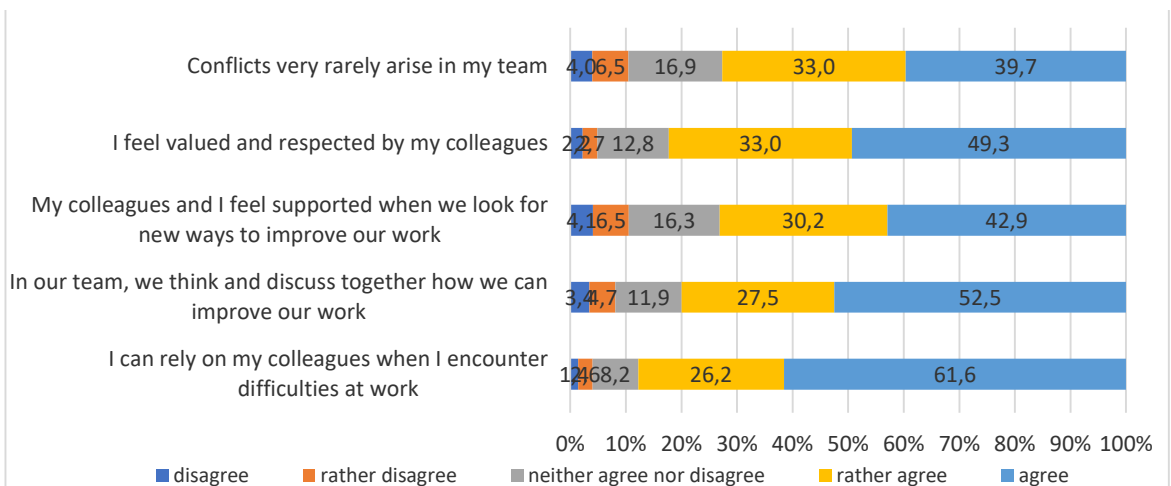
The second most important factor on which engagement depends is the content of the work activity or the very nature of the work performed. It is associated with a sense of professionalism and professional fulfillment. In the questionnaire, it was simply called 'My work'. Data are presented in Figure 13. The scores of civil servants in Bulgaria are lower than those of their counterparts in the UK and at the same time there is a decrease of 4 points compared to last year's data for Bulgaria.

**Figure 15.** Results by "My work" factor



The distribution of respondents' answers by a statement in Figure 16 suggests that one reason for the lower score is that managers still relatively rarely use their teams to look for innovative solutions and opportunities for improvement. On this indicator, the proportion agreeing (agree or rather agree) is 73%, compared with 79% in the UK. Another relevant area for improvement is conflict management. Although the proportion of respondents indicating that conflict is not rare in their administrations is around 10%, this is not negligible and should be addressed. Conflicts are inevitable, they always arise and are sometimes even productive. What is required for effective teamwork are good conflict management skills. These should be possessed by both employees and their managers.

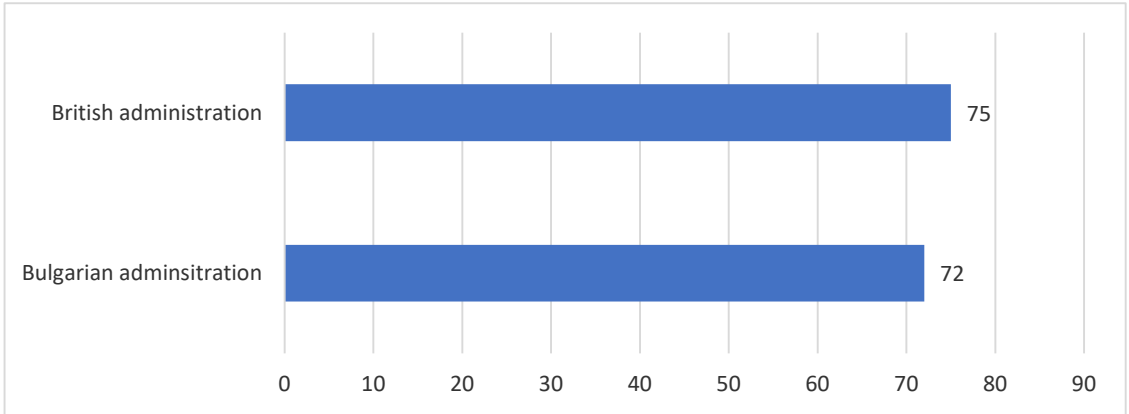
**Figure 16.** Distribution of responses to the Engagement Barometer on statements related to teamwork



## Recourses and workload

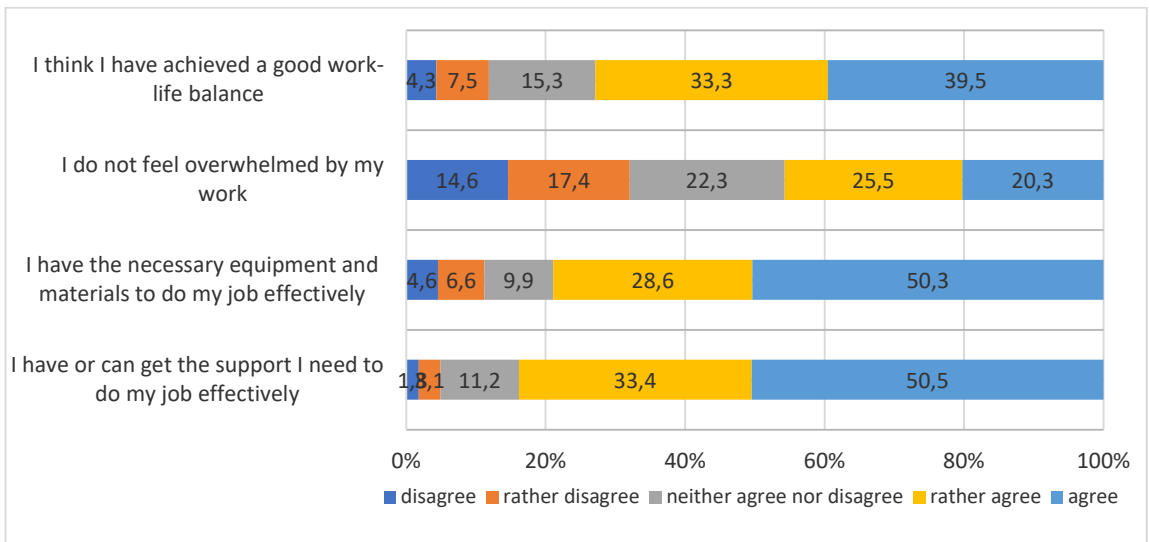
Resource availability and workload are related to job stress. This is one of the two engagement factors on which this year Bulgarian civil servants scored lower than their British counterparts. Data are presented in Figure 17.

**Figure 17.** "Resources and workload" factor results



Compared to the previous year's results in the UK, there was a slight increase, while in our country - a slight decrease. Figure 18 shows the distribution of responses by statements of this factor. The lowest scoring factor amongst these is perceptions of workload, with over a third of respondents in the UK saying they felt overworked. However, compared to last year, there is an improvement in this indicator, as then the share of overworked employees was over 45%. A significant decline was observed in terms of resourcing. If last year 85% thought that it was at a high level, this year the share has dropped to 78%. The recorded decline could be explained by increased technological requirements related to the digital transformation processes of the administration and still serious deficits in many administrations. For comparison, a significant drop in the results obtained this year compared to 2021 is also observed in the resourcing of teleworkers (see Fig. 29) which again comes to show that the digitalization of administration is lagging significantly behind.

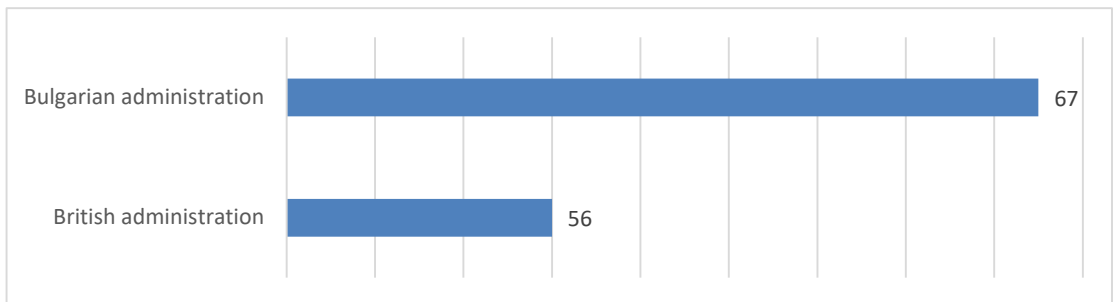
**Figure 18.** Distribution of responses to the Engagement Barometer on statements related to leadership and change management



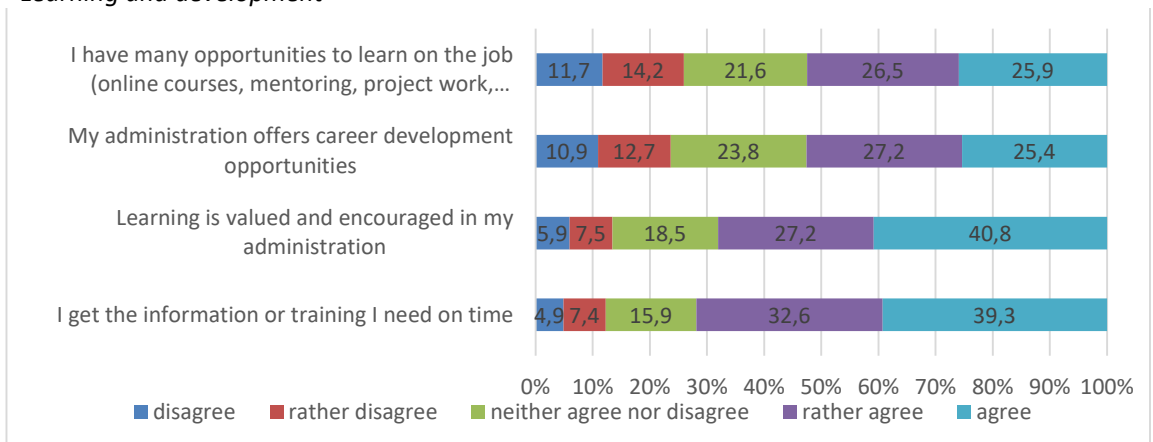
## Learning and development

In terms of learning and development, over the years since the survey has been conducted in Bulgaria, there have been consistently large differences between the ratings of Bulgarian and British civil servants. Bulgarian administrations seem to encourage their employees to attend various training courses. Video and online courses are becoming increasingly popular, enabling administrations to save considerable money on travel and subsistence. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, these forms of distance learning have become even more important, and for quite a long period were the only training option due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. However, the score on this factor this year is 3 points lower than the previous year. In recent years we have seen an increase in staff needs and expectations for more face-to-face training, with opportunities for face-to-face contact and exchange of experiences and ideas. Due to the constraints imposed, this could not happen. The digital training did not fully meet the needs of the employees due to a complex of factors - insufficient level of digital skills and self-organization skills; lack of sufficient time and conditions provided by the administration for effective participation of employees in online training; inadequate technical support. In addition, last year, in contrast to this year, a large number of training funded by European projects were offered free of charge to Bulgarian administrations. Perhaps the combination of fewer free training courses, the challenges of remote learning, and the sense of work overload among more than a third of respondents (see Fig. 18) generated the relatively lower score on the learning and development factor this year. Regarding career development opportunities, the scores of Bulgarian and UK employees are almost identical with around 50% of respondents believing that the administration offers career development, while just over 20% do not share such an opinion.

**Figure 19.** Results by "Learning and Development" factor



**Figure 20.** Distribution of responses to the Engagement Barometer on statements related to Learning and development

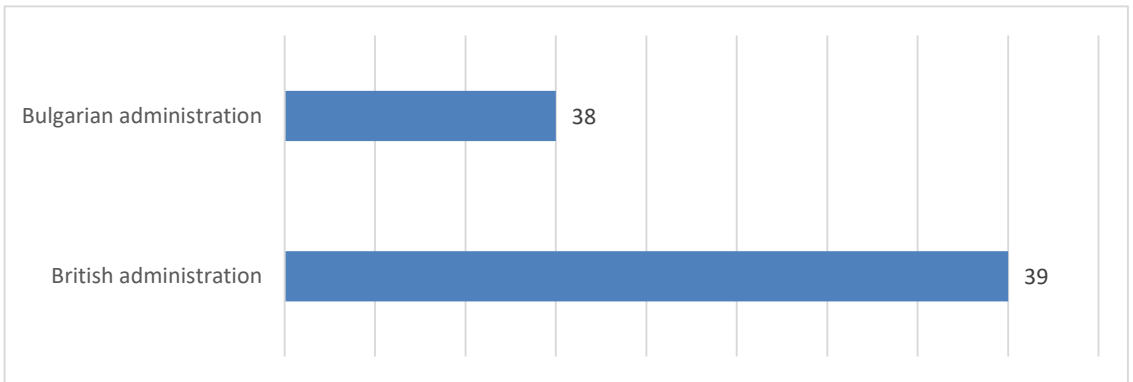


## Compensation

The survey results in 2020 and 2021 showed a significant increase in employee satisfaction with the compensation received, which was somewhat objective as it was associated with real salary increases in those years. In 2020 and 2021, this factor was largely responsible for the rise in the engagement index, and again this year it is the main reason for its fall. Inflation in 2022 literally "melted" the salary increases and returned salary satisfaction to 2019 levels.

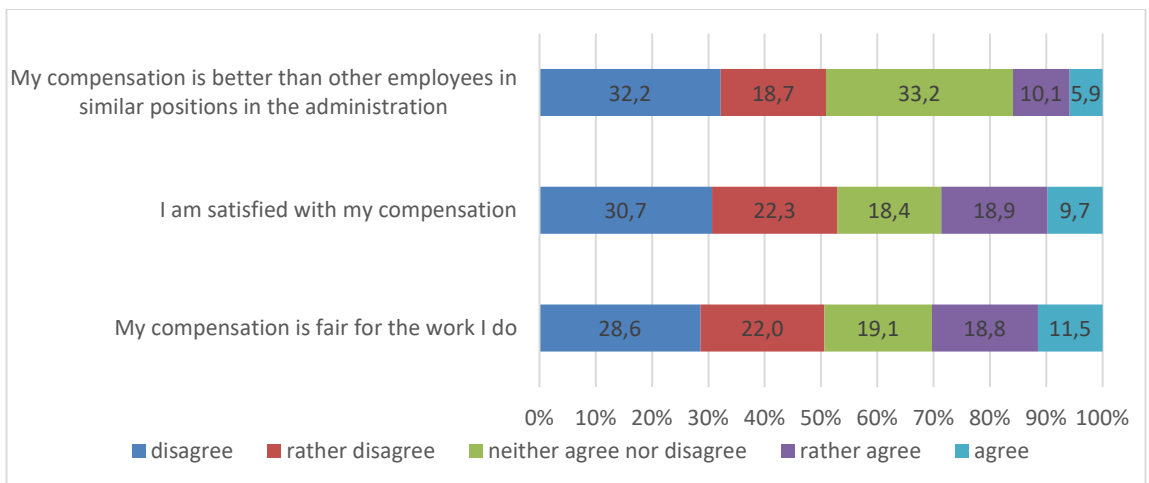
Wage satisfaction fluctuates not only in Bulgaria but also in the UK. Over 12 years it is a maximum of 40 points in 2020 and a minimum of 28 points in 2014. For the first time since the survey was conducted in Bulgaria, we report slightly higher satisfaction with salaries among British civil servants compared to their Bulgarian counterparts. The data is shown in Figure 21. The difference is half a point, but because of rounding it seems larger.

**Figure 21.** Results by "Compensation" factor



The following figure shows the score distribution for the three remuneration-related statements. While almost half of the respondents were satisfied with their salaries last year, the proportion has now dropped to just 25 percent. Less than a third of respondents think the compensation they receive is fair for the work they do.

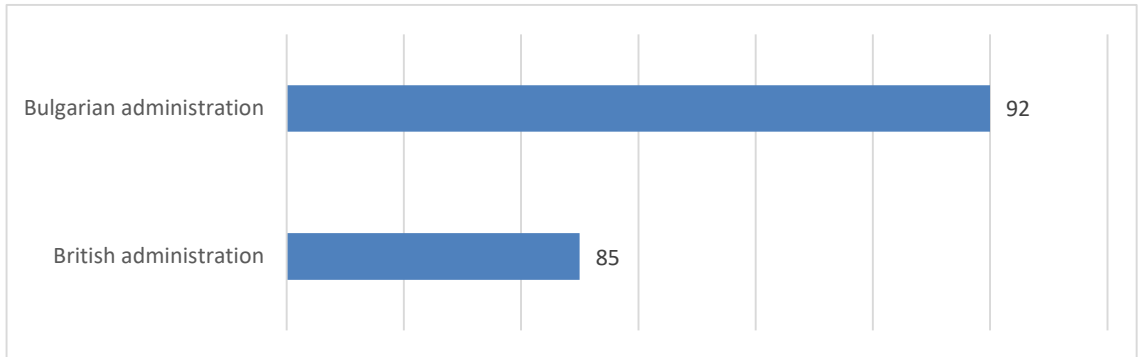
**Figure 22.** Distribution of responses to the Engagement Barometer on statements related to Compensation



## Organizational goals

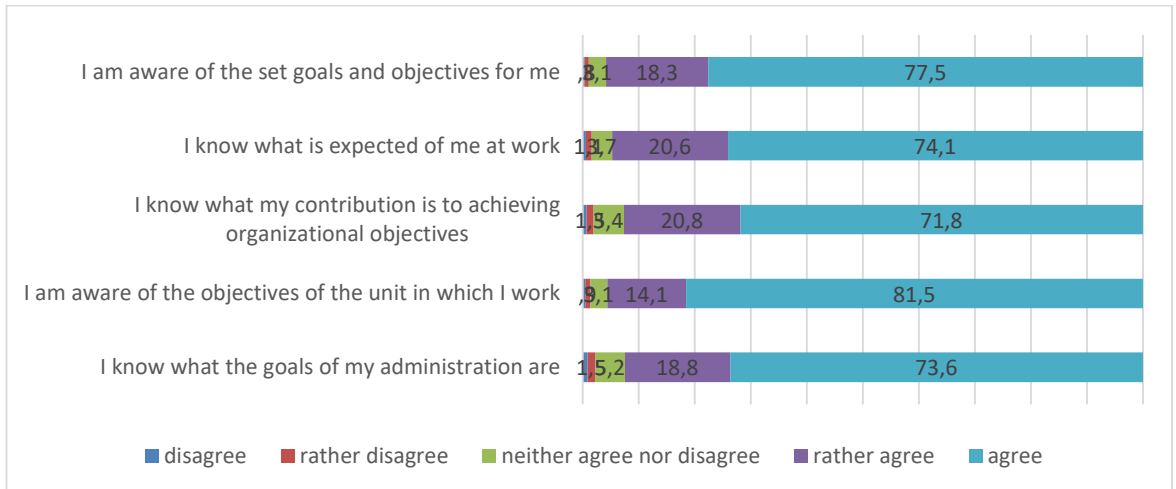
Clarity of objectives can be defined as the strength of the Bulgarian administration, as this is the factor with the highest score. Rarely, employees are not clear about their tasks and the objectives of their unit. In Figure 23, the data for Bulgaria are compared with the results of UK civil servants. Both scores are high, but those of the Bulgarian administrations are better.

**Figure 23.** Results by Organizational goals factor



High scores on this factor reflect employees' subjective judgment and perception that they are aware of what is expected of them. This may not be the case in all administrations, but at a global level, there does not seem to be a problem with goal setting and work organization in the Bulgarian civil service.

**Figure 24.** Distribution of responses to the Engagement Barometer on statements related to Organizational goals



## My supervisor

Once again, the factor with the lowest weight in the regression model of engagement is the direct supervisor. This seems strange in the face of other research showing that it is the line manager who is the main reason for employees leaving organizations. The explanation is that part of the determinant power of the direct supervisor is allocated to the leadership and another part to the team. Furthermore, the factors "Leadership" and "Team" show much greater variation in the data and are therefore among the most significant determinants of engagement. In terms of "Direct supervisor" - the variations are few. Dissatisfied employees rarely blame their immediate

supervisor for their dissatisfaction. They are more often critical of the administration's management, their colleagues, the lack of career development opportunities, and low salaries.

Figure 25 presents the benchmarking data on this factor between Bulgarian and UK civil servants. The scores of the British civil servants are good, but the scores of their Bulgarian counterparts are even better. There have been no significant changes in this indicator over the years.

**Figure 25. Results by My supervisor factor**

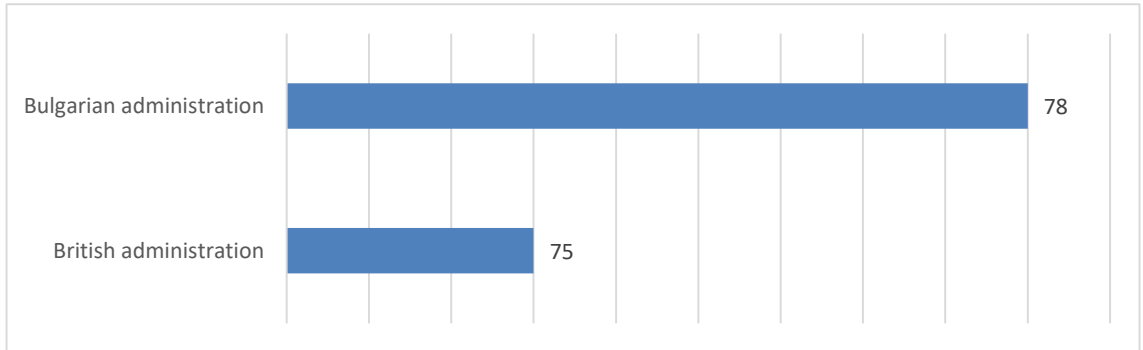
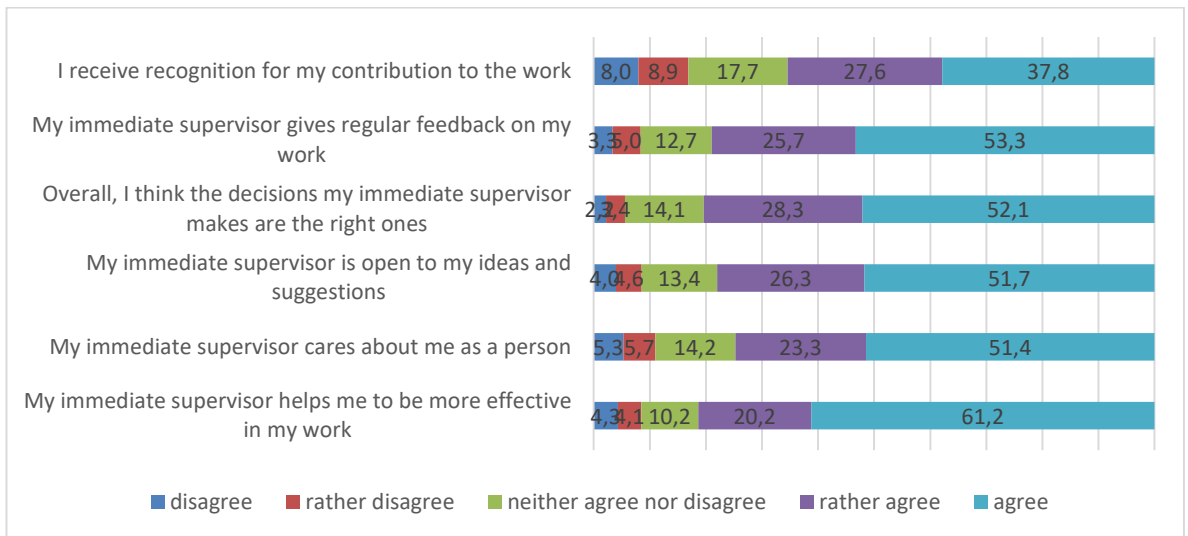


Figure 26 shows the distribution of participants' responses to the statements included in this factor. Only in terms of receiving recognition for the employee's contribution to the job did the proportion of 'agreeers' fall below 80% and was slightly down on last year. On all other statements, the results are very high and identical to last year.

**Figure 26. Distribution of responses to the Engagement Barometer on statements related to Supervisor behavior.**



#### 4. Additional indexes

Traditionally, each year the engagement survey is updated with different topics important for the strategic development of the administration or on which it is important to survey the opinion of employees. In the 2022 Attitudes Barometer, these topics are two:

1. The Wellbeing Index (PERMA Index)
2. Attitudes toward remote work



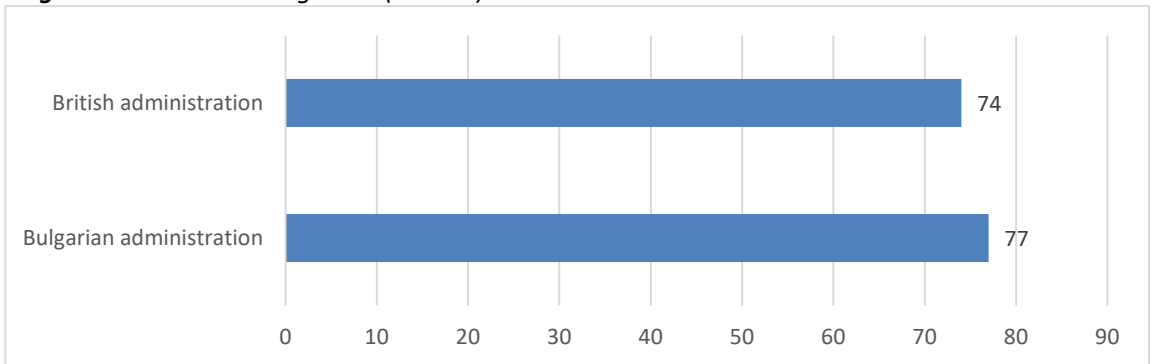
## 4.1 The Wellbeing Index

The COVID-19 pandemic and related anti-epidemic measures have put the well-being of organizations' employees in the spotlight. Dozens of studies and analyses have shown an increase in the incidence of anxiety, stress, and depression. At the same time, there are heightened expectations of employers and the way and extent to which they provide supportive working conditions and health support for their employees. The health phenomena of stress and well-being, their interconnectedness and impact on quality of life, employee satisfaction, and engagement will become increasingly important priorities for organizations in the face of uncertainty, frequent change, and crises in which it seems we will continue to live and work.

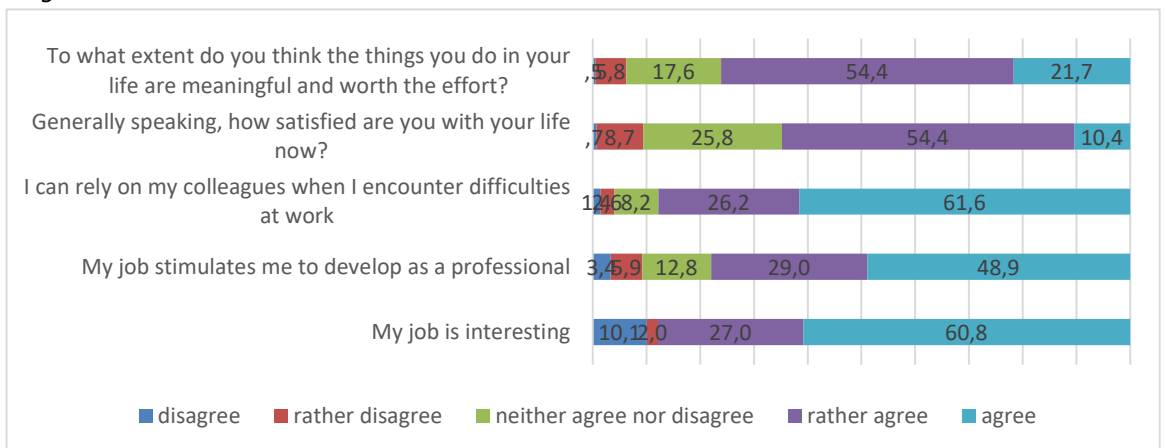
The Well-being Index was introduced in the 2012 British Survey at the insistence of the Office for National Statistics, which measures the subjective well-being of Britons. The idea is that when people feel engaged with their work, they feel happier and more satisfied with their lives in general. The index covers 5 different aspects of well-being, and its name PERMA is an acronym of the first letters in English of each of the aspects: P (positive emotions), E (engagement), R (relationships), M (meaning), and A (achievement).

Figure 27 presents a comparison between the subjective well-being index of Bulgarian and British civil servants. It shows that the sense of well-being of Bulgarian civil servants is slightly higher. The distribution of responses presented in Figure 29 answers the question of where the difference comes from.

**Figure 27.** The Well-being index (PERMA)



**Figure 28.** Distribution of responses to the Engagement Barometer on statements related to subjective well-being.



75% of employees in the Bulgarian public administration believe that the things they do in their lives are meaningful and worth the effort. Among British civil servants, 64% think so. In terms of overall life satisfaction, the results are reversed, but the difference is smaller. British civil servants are 69% satisfied with their lives, compared with 65% of Bulgarian civil servants. On the other three aspects of subjective well-being, the results are almost identical: 88% of Bulgarian and 90% of British civil servants find their work interesting; 77% of Bulgarian and 78% of British civil servants find their work stimulating, and 88% of Bulgarian and the same proportion of British civil servants say they can rely on their colleagues for help in difficult situations.

Identical results between Bulgarian and British civil servants were also observed on two of the three additional questions related to subjective well-being, but not included in the PERMA index. 61% of British and the same proportion of Bulgarian civil servants feel happy and again the same percentage - 35 in both samples - say they feel anxious. However, a significant difference was observed on the third additional question, relating to perceived mental and emotional health. 88% of Bulgarian, but only 71% of British civil servants rate their mental health as good or very good.

## **4.2 Remote work**

Technological progress inevitably changes the work process and the structure of work activities. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the proportion of civil servants working remotely has increased significantly. The demand for employees with teleworking experience is high and is expected to continue to grow even after the pandemic is over. In addition, more and more employees are seeking full or partial teleworking opportunities driven by a desire for more flexibility, autonomy, and a better work-life balance. The administration, as an employer, cannot afford to stand on the sidelines of these processes, as it thereby loses its competitive advantage over the private sector in attracting and retaining talented employees.

In 2020, a separate section was added to the Engagement Barometer survey with questions on employee attitudes toward teleworking. This additional section was created concerning the exceptional circumstances created by COVID-19, in which a large proportion of civil service employees had to work remotely from home. In the 2021 questionnaire, the section was retained, but two of the statements were replaced with questions assessing the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking. The statements were not changed in this year's questionnaire, only one of them was removed. The idea behind the change is to keep the content of the section as part of the survey but to update it given the dynamic changes related to teleworking issues.

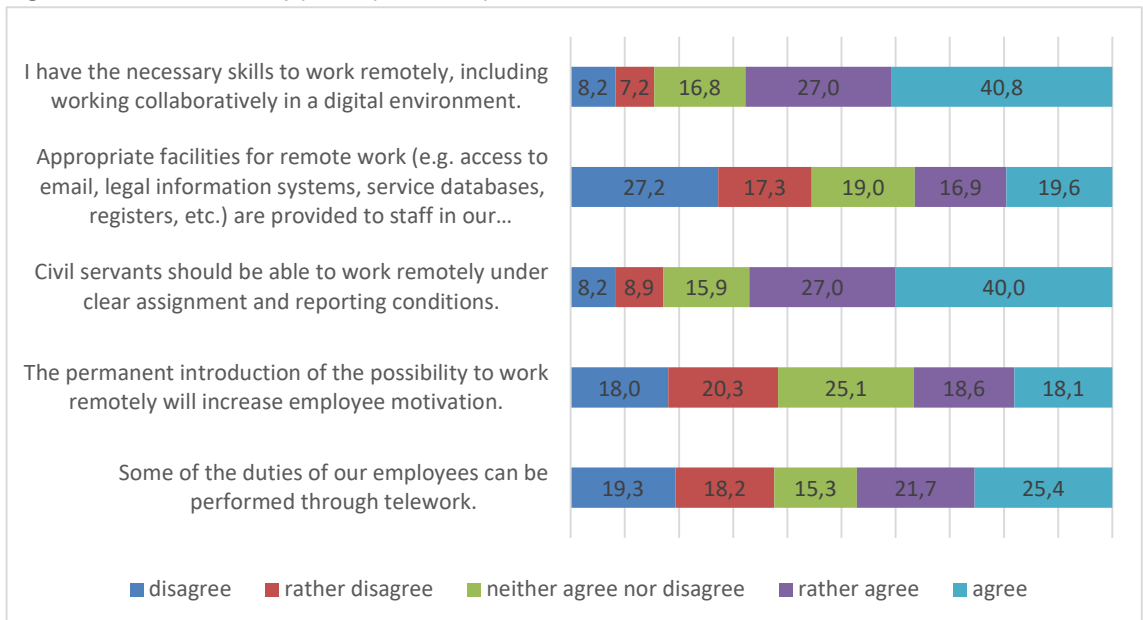
Telework continues to be a hot topic as the health crisis has not gone away. In the event of another major surge due to another coronavirus mutation, a new lockdown may follow and therefore once again the need to organize telework for civil servants. Moreover, working from home has outlived the pandemic. It was appreciated by business employees and remained a flexible form of work organization in many companies. This will undoubtedly affect the organization of work in the public sector. Even today, after the abolition of health care grounds for teleworking, some administrations have retained it as a form of work management for their employees.

The section questions measure both the attitudes of civil servants towards teleworking and the willingness of administrations to introduce it effectively without significantly affecting productivity. The percentage shares of respondents' answers to each of the statements in the telework section are shown in the next figure, and the change in attitudes from 2021 is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Comparison of the "agree" shares of statements related to teleworking

<b>Statement</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>Difference compared to 2021</b>
<i>Some of the duties of employees in our administration can be performed through telework.</i>	57%	58%	57%	-1
<i>The permanent introduction of remote working will increase employee motivation.</i>	44%	40%	37%	-3
<i>Civil servants should be able to work remotely under clear assignment and reporting conditions.</i>	80%	79%	67%	-12
<i>Employees in our administration are provided with appropriate facilities to work remotely (e.g. access to email, legal information systems, service databases, registers, etc.).</i>	66%	74%	38%	-36
<i>I have the necessary skills to work remotely, including working collaboratively in a digital environment.</i>	79%	91%	68%	-23

**Figure 29.** Distribution of participants' responses to statements related to telework



The results of the survey show big shifts in attitudes. What is consistent is that more than half of the respondents see opportunities for introducing telework into administration. That's 57-58% of respondents each year. However, as the need for teleworking passes, it is evident that the civil service is not prepared for this form of organization. If necessary, the public sector can work from home, but at the expense of efficiency. The key point here is that only 38% of those surveyed this year believe that the administration has provided adequate conditions for teleworking from home (e.g. access to email, legal-information systems, official databases, registers, etc.) This share is almost half of the employees who claimed to have such conditions in 2020 and 2021. And since conditions already in place are not being disrupted anywhere, the difference stems from the interpretation of "appropriate conditions". Some conditions for teleworking probably exist in 70% of administrations, but conditions that ensure effective working from home probably exist in only half of them.

## **5. Conclusions and recommendations**

The big surprise of the first national survey "Engagement Barometer" was the high share of engaged civil servants in Bulgaria. This was also observed in the next three editions of the Barometer. Civil servants overwhelmingly like their jobs and this is a prerequisite that should be used to improve the quality of administrative services and the effectiveness of government regulations and policies. Comparisons with the results of an identical survey on engagement among UK public administration employees strongly suggest that the average level of engagement of Bulgarian administration employees is higher. It is higher not only this year but in all the years since the survey on engagement in the Bulgarian civil service. This year, however, is different from previous years. For civil servants, it is heavier. For a few months, because of inflation, they have seen their incomes fall to the real purchasing power of a few years ago. There is also an increased shortage of resources. However, amidst the substantial drop in satisfaction with remuneration (11 index points), the drop in the overall engagement index was only 3 index points. Moreover, the proportion of highly engaged employees has increased again this year, while the proportion of actively disengaged employees has remained unchanged. This means that the ratio of engaged to actively disengaged employees, by which Gallup International identifies well-managed organizations, has also increased above last year's 14:1 to almost 20:1. So the first big takeaway from this year's survey is that the vast majority of employees in the Bulgarian administration continue to like their jobs and trust their administrative leadership. For them, the administration remains a good place for professional realization.

Strategic leadership, clear goals, and good team relations remain the two main factors behind the high commitment of the administration's employees. On the strategic leadership and change management factor in particular, satisfaction in 2022 is only a point lower than in 2021, and this result comes after three changes of government and strong political rhetoric about 'weeding out the mudslingers'. The result itself should be interpreted correctly. Political appointments of incompetent people without competitive processes are bad practices and must be fought irreconcilably. However, the constant talk about this in the media almost gives the impression that most senior civil servants are without the necessary professional qualities and that they are appointed only because of their political loyalty to a particular party. However, data collected from more than 8600 civil servants shows that this is far from the case and that senior civil servants in their vast majority have the necessary leadership qualities. In any event, the national survey data show that the leadership in Bulgarian public administration is better than in the UK, for example.

Last year and in 2020, when we discussed the results of the survey, we noted that the higher engagement seen over that period was almost entirely due to a marked increase in respondents'

satisfaction with the pay they received, and we predicted that this was not sustainable progress and that at some point things could turn around. This has been the case in the UK since 2009 and this has also affected the engagement index. In difficult economic times, the civil service becomes a more desirable place to work because it provides security, while in times of economic prosperity, its attractiveness as an employer declines. Remuneration and security may cause slight fluctuations in the engagement index, but they are not the strongest and most determining factors. More important than these for the sustainable development of the administration are leadership and a system of recruitment and career development based on professional competencies as well as good team relations.

Yet another year, one of the factors on which the Bulgarian civil service scores lower than the British administration is teamwork. Looking at the individual responses, the difference is not that interpersonal relations are poor or that the Bulgarian administration is not supportive, but that they rarely discuss problems together and that the teams themselves are not actively involved in decision-making and seeking opportunities for improvement. The Bulgarian administration in many cases continues to be too conservative and to wait for someone "outside" to point it in the right direction. Such conservatism has become part of the organizational culture and it is difficult to instantly change. In any case, over the past year, despite changes in political leadership, no visible change has been observed in the administration.

The present study is the first to be conducted in the post-COVID era, no matter how tentative it may be in principle to claim that the epidemic is completely over. No epidemic measures are in place, however, and the risk of closure appears small. Given this situation, it is clear that the Bulgarian administration is not yet ready to introduce telework en masse. There are individual administrations where this can be done without loss of efficiency, but in most places, working from home is not a meaningful alternative to normal office work. Technical means and information connectivity are lacking. Unless this problem is addressed, the civil service will continue to lose its attractiveness as an employer. It is not that it will not be able to attract job applicants in the near future, but that it will increasingly begin to attract job applicants who prefer to make minimal use of modern digital technology, and thus its already high conservatism will continue to increase.

Based on the results of the Engagement Barometer 2022, some recommendations can be made that will support a positive organizational culture and employee engagement in the Bulgarian civil service:

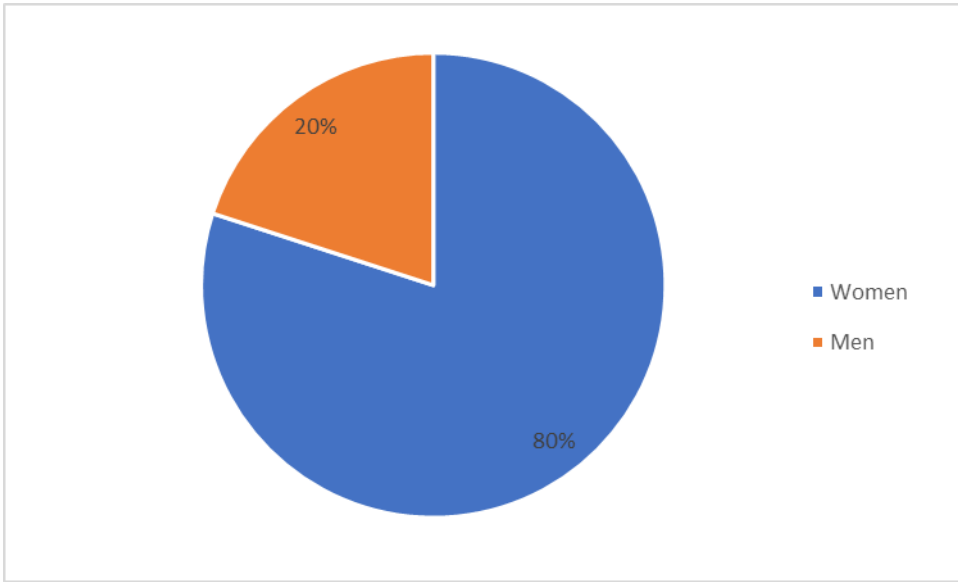
- Accelerated implementation of new information technologies in management, automation of work processes, and acceleration of digitalization. The slow-paced digitalization of the civil service not only prevents it from improving its efficiency but increasingly renders it an unattractive workplace for creative, innovative, and ambitious young people.
- Develop special measures to activate the potential of older civil servants. Barometer data show that they are committed, motivated, experienced and competent, but because of their weaker skills in handling new information technologies, they are a significant conservative factor. If these employees acquire the necessary skills, they will not perceive digitalization as something that threatens their job, formal or informal status, and will not resist its implementation.
- Stimulating critical thinking and the generation of new ideas by implementing a more flexible teamwork organization and involving staff more actively in solving issues of importance to the administration. Teams are the backbone of modern organizations. The work context is becoming more dynamic and complex to be able to rely only on good tools and work processes. The latter is important, but cannot replace open communication and direct interaction between employees. The European Commission is therefore introducing team organization and the project principle as a way of ensuring that objectives are achieved more quickly and efficiently.

- Developing the capacity of the administration to implement modern forms of work-based learning. Knowledge should be available immediately when it is needed, not months and years later. The vast opportunities for online training or information sharing need to be fully exploited, with the equipment, software, and skills to make them work.
- Improvement of working conditions through permanent regulation of the flexible workplace and flexible working time options (not only during an epidemic emergency). It is in the interest of both employees and the administration to organize work from home, as it saves time and costs on energy, facilities, and transport. Barometer data show that some administrations have created the necessary conditions for effective teleworking, but most have not. This could be a problem as businesses and certain administrations will be able to keep working from home without the introduction of an emergency, whereas most administrations will not be able to do so even if they wanted to.
- As of this year, in addition to engagement, the Barometer also monitors employees' subjective well-being. So far, the data is positive, but life is getting tighter and the situation could change in a negative direction. The introduction of tools for periodic assessment and timely identification of sources of workplace stress, as well as the active search for opportunities to improve the work-life balance of employees, should be established among the priorities for human resources development in administrations.
- The development of skills and management practices based on data and evidence, on periodic analyses and assessments not only of the current situation but also of possible future scenarios for dealing with crises and dynamic change.

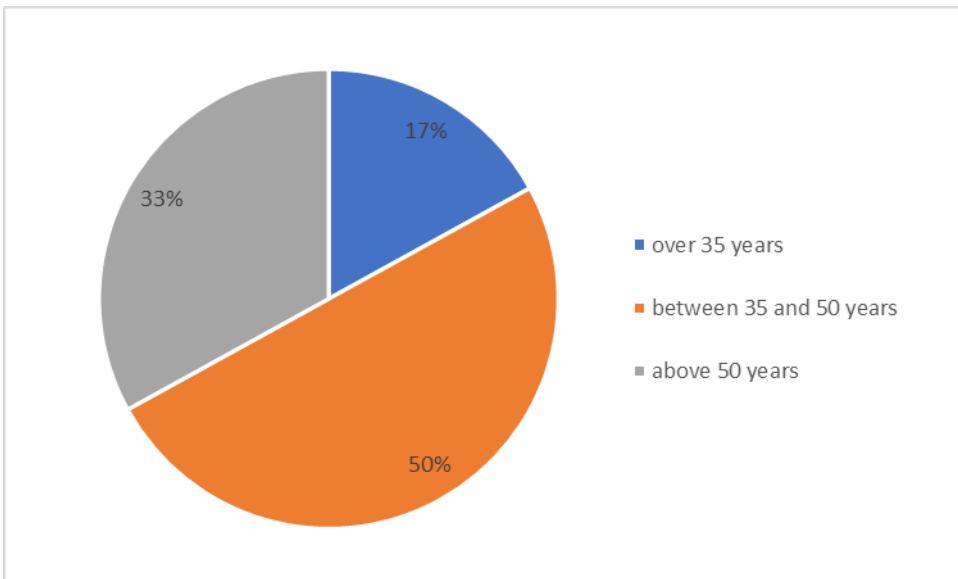
The Engagement Barometer survey is becoming increasingly established as an effective way of obtaining feedback from employees on work organization, leadership, and strategic development in the public sector. In 2021, key results from the survey are included among the indicators for monitoring the reform of the Bulgarian public administration for the period 2022-2030 in the area of "Organizational culture and expert capacity development". However, there is also a need for local administrations to take real action to address the problems reported by respondents. In this way, employees will be able to see that their voice matters and this will help both to improve performance and to further increase the commitment of civil servants.

## Appendix 1: Sample structure

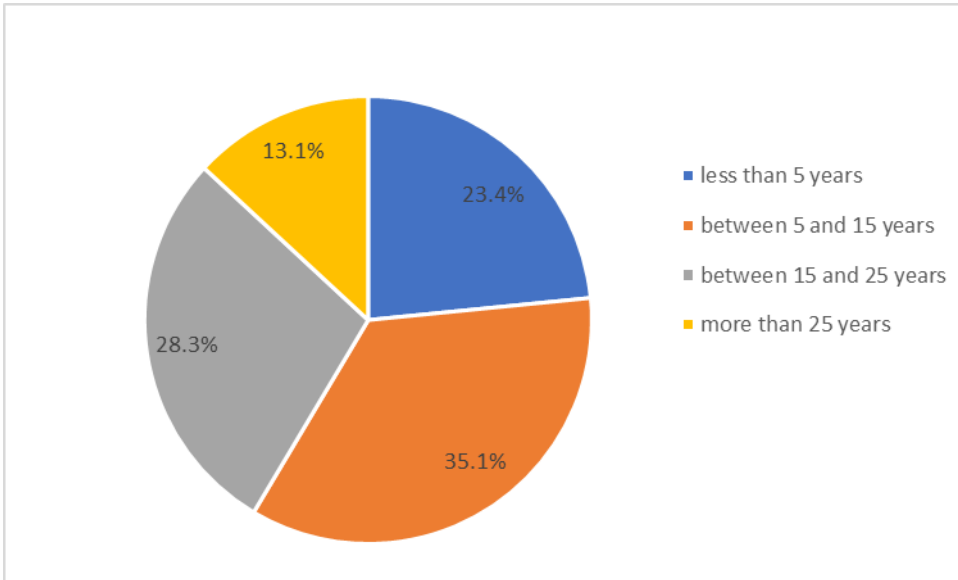
### Distribution by sex:



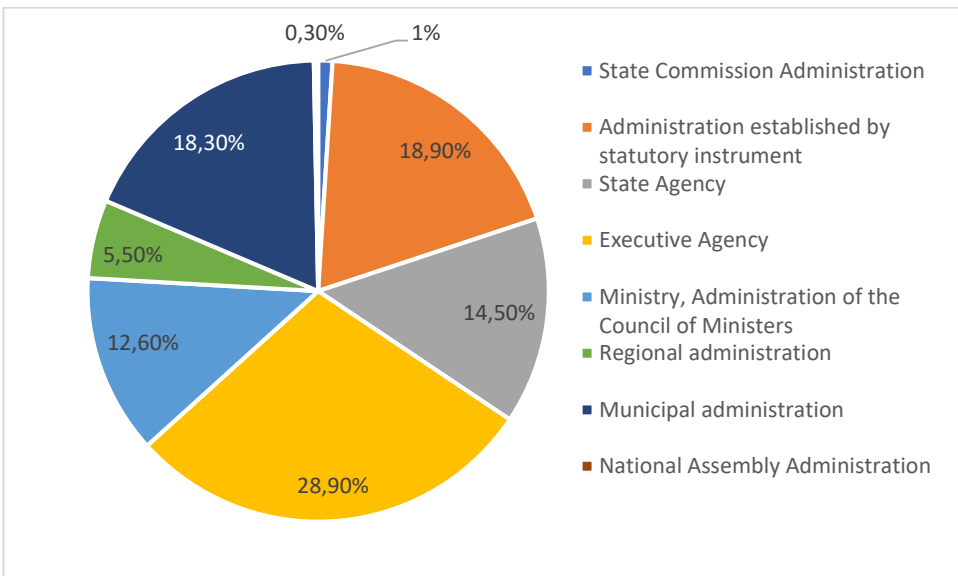
### Distribution by age:



### Distribution by seniority:

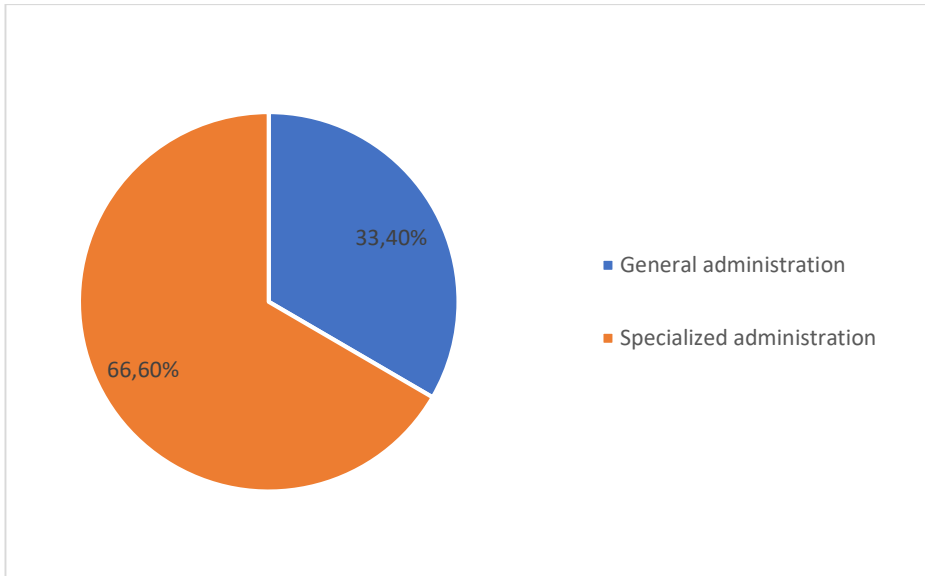


### Distribution by type of administration:

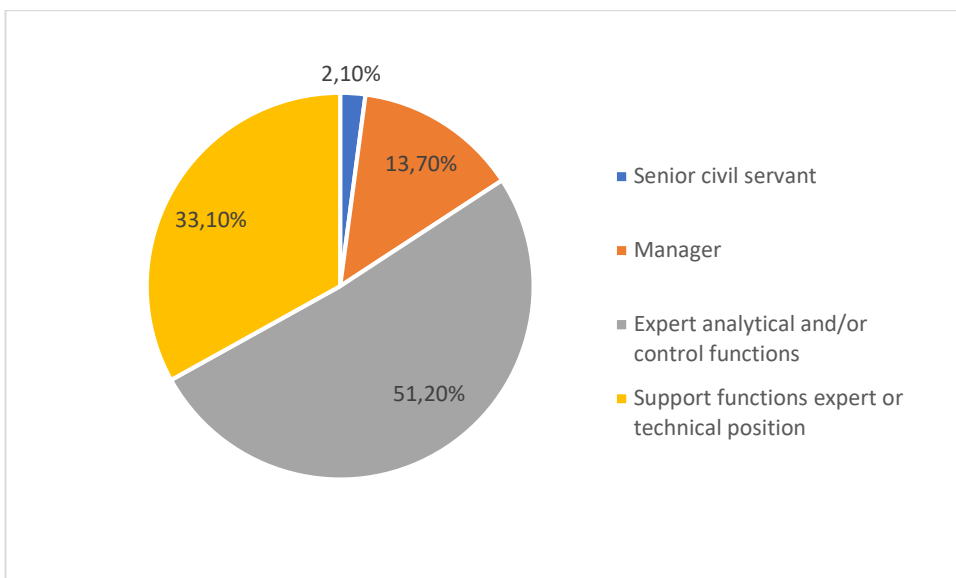




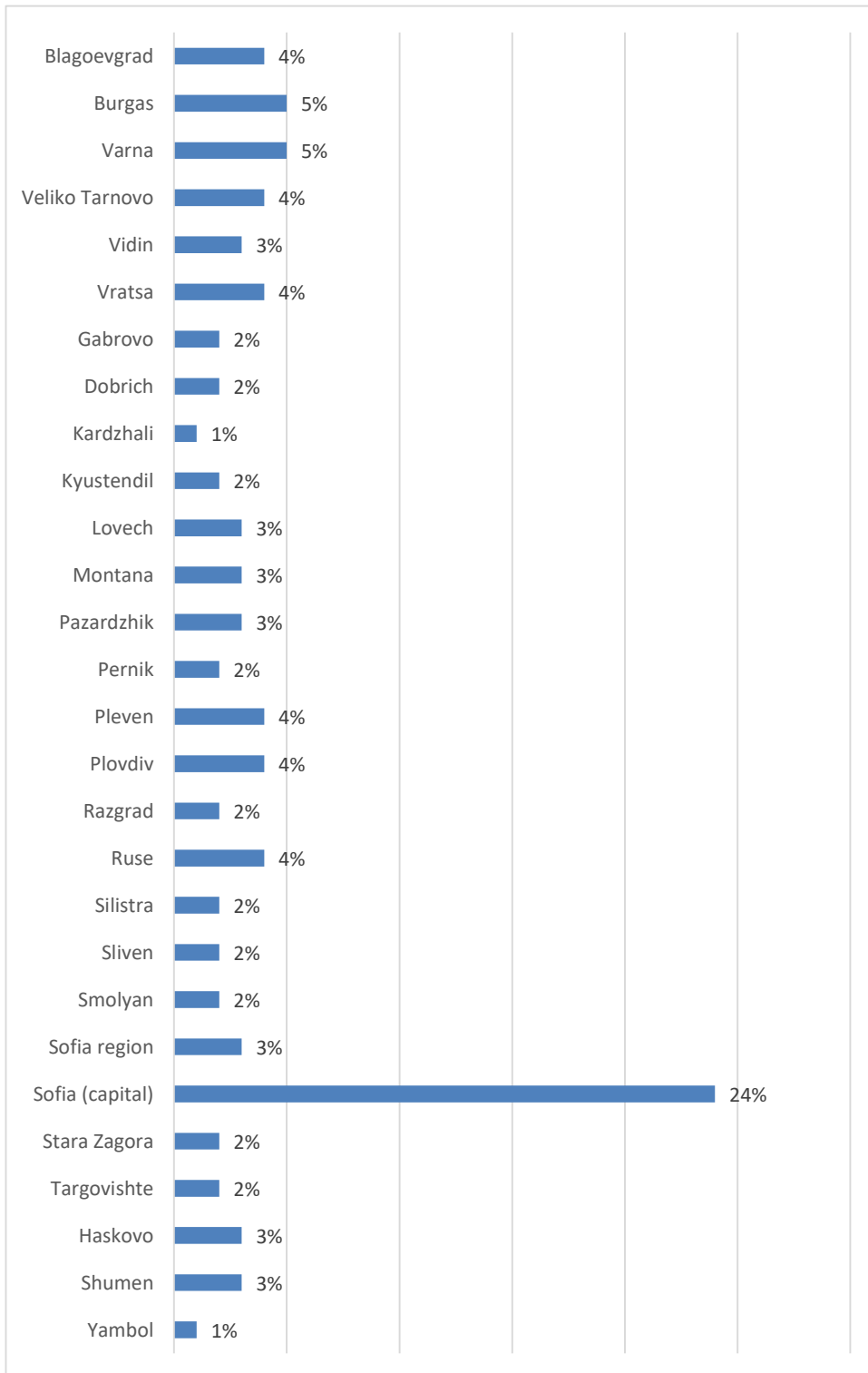
### Distribution by structural unit type:



### Distribution by position:



## Distribution by region:



## **Appendix 2: Questionnaire**

### **My job**

1. My job is interesting.
2. My job stimulates me to develop as a professional
3. I believe I am included in the decision-making process regarding my job.
4. I have sufficient freedom to decide how to perform.

### **Organizational goals**

1. I know what my administration's goals are.
2. I am aware of the objectives of the unit where I work.
3. I know what is my contribution to organizational goals.
4. I know what is expected of me at work.
5. I am aware of the goals and objectives set for me.

### **My supervisor**

1. My supervisor supports me to be more effective in my work.
2. My supervisor is interested in me as a person.
3. My supervisor is open to my ideas and suggestions.
4. Overall, I think the decisions my line manager makes are the right ones.
5. My supervisor provides regular feedback on my work.
6. I receive recognition for my contribution at work.

### **Teamwork**

1. I can rely on my colleagues when I encounter difficulties at work.
2. In our team, we think and discuss together how we can improve our work.
3. My teammates and I feel supported when we look for new ways to improve our work.
4. I feel valued and respected by my colleagues.
5. Conflicts very rarely arise in my team.

### **Learning and development**

1. I get the information or training I need on time.
2. In my administration, learning is valued and encouraged.
3. My administration offers career development opportunities.
4. I have many opportunities for work-based learning (online courses, mentoring, project work, coaching, etc.).

### **Recourses and workload**

1. I have or can get the support I need to do my job effectively.
2. I have the necessary equipment and materials to do my job effectively.
3. I do not feel overwhelmed by my work.
4. I think I have achieved a good work/life balance.

### **Compensation**

1. My compensation is fair for the work I do.
  2. I am satisfied with my salary.
  3. My compensation is better than that of other employees in similar administrative positions.
- Leadership and change management
4. I think the administration I work in is well managed.
  5. The actions and values of my administration are in line with its values and goals.
  6. The administration's leaders skillfully manage change when change is needed.
  7. The administration's leaders encourage critical thinking and new ideas.

### **Commitment**

1. I feel pride when I say where I work.
2. I would recommend my administration as a very good place to work.
3. I am attached to the administration where I work.
4. I refer to my administration by saying "we" rather than "they".
5. I have built friendly relationships with colleagues in my administration.
6. My administration motivates me to do my best.

### ***Health and well-being at work section***

1. Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with your life now?
2. To what extent do you feel that the things you are doing in your life are meaningful and worth the effort?
3. Generally speaking, how happy do you feel?
4. Generally speaking, how anxious do you feel?
5. Overall, how would you rate your mental health?
6. Overall, how would you rate your physical health?

### ***Remote Working Section***

1. Some of the duties of employees in our administration can be performed through telework.
2. The permanent introduction of remote working will increase employee motivation.
3. Civil servants should be able to work remotely under clear assignment and reporting conditions.
4. Employees in our administration are provided with appropriate facilities to work remotely (e.g. access to email, legal-information systems, service databases, registers, etc.).
5. I have the necessary skills to work remotely, including working collaboratively in a digital environment.

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