

CMA 2024 #249
IN CITY COUNCIL
November 18, 2024

To the Honorable, the City Council:

I am writing to provide an update on the employee engagement survey that we launched early this fall. We have received the results from our third-party vendor, and we are excited to share the topline findings with you in the attached report.

Intended only for permanent full- and part-time colleagues, the employee engagement survey was sent to 2,487 staff, and, over the past month, we implemented a comprehensive outreach strategy to encourage employee participation. Appreciating that this is the City's first time launching an employee survey, we tested a mix of outreach methods and aim to tweak our approach in future survey years based on what worked best. Applicable staff received at least five reminder emails from the vendor with links to participate. In addition, staff were mailed a postcard with a QR code and link to the employee survey. City leaders reinforced these messages in internal meetings, team check-ins, and in newsletters and other regular communications. We also distributed flyers with QR codes to several worksites, focusing on the departments where there are high concentrations of staff without physical workstations or access to email. As a result of this incredible, citywide effort, we're pleased to announce that we came very close to our participation goal of 40% in only the survey's first year, receiving 945 responses and a 38% response rate.

The data in the attached report are organized by eight facets of the employee experience. For each question, the survey reports the share of respondents that selected either of the two most positive response options (i.e., "excellent" or "good" and "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree") on a Likert scale. Looking at the data by the "percent positive" response rate, we're very pleased to see an overwhelming majority of colleagues have positive views regarding job satisfaction: 96% of employees indicated they plan on working here a year from now, for example, with 86% feeling positively about working for the City of Cambridge. Similarly, about 87% of respondents agreed that they gain satisfaction from current job responsibilities, and we're very proud to report that 86% would recommend working for the City to someone who asks.



While we're pleased with employee attitudes regarding the overall workplace climate, benchmark comparisons can help us identify areas to fine tune our efforts. While there are some limitations to the benchmark comparisons—the number of benchmarked communities varies by question, ranging from 13 to 76 depending on the question asked, for example, and much of this data was collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic—they can help us pinpoint nuanced issues to address going forward by indicating where the City's results are higher or lower compared to other municipalities.

Positive findings from the benchmarking analysis include:

- Supervisors received strong reviews, scoring higher than the national average in areas such as communicating information timely, encouraging innovative problem-solving, recognizing high performers, and managing low performers.
- Employees gave above-average ratings to the organization for attracting diverse talent: about 8 in 10 employees agreed that their work group, department, and the City overall have a diverse workforce.
- Several support services, including IT, desktop support, and fleet maintenance, exceeded benchmarks.

However, benchmarks also highlighted several areas for improvement:

- While employees felt positively about their supervisors' performance, senior leadership and elected officials received lower ratings compared to benchmarks.
- Employees gave less favorable ratings to the organization's clarity of staff roles and responsibilities, career development opportunities, and employee appreciation efforts.
- Despite strong overall ratings, some equity and inclusion items ranked below similar communities, including making employees feel welcome, integrating and connecting new employees, and applying policies and procedures equally to all employees.

These survey results echo issues that have been raised in other forums, such as employee working groups and in union negotiations. As we continue to analyze the data, including 350+ written comments, we are eager to explore these issues in greater depth. With over 100 questions asked, the survey captured incredible nuance, and it will take time to understand the relationships between different questions that speak to similar themes. Using this kind of more validated survey data that brings feedback from the whole organization is an important step toward a healthier and more responsive organization. We aim to present more detailed results, and an action plan and next steps in early 2025 and will hold employee forums to review together. We will also communicate with the City Council.

This survey provides valuable insights that will help us enhance the employee experience and strengthen our organization, and we thank you for your continued support and commitment to our workforce.



Yi-An Huang
City Manager

Cambridge, MA

The National Employee Survey

Report of Results

2024

Report by:



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National Research Center at Polco is a charter member of the AAPOR Transparency Initiative, providing clear disclosure of our sound and ethical survey research practices.

About The NES™

This report of The National Employee Survey™ (The NES™) for the City of Cambridge presents the opinions of employees regarding their job satisfaction, engagement and key characteristics of their work environment. The survey was developed by the experts from National Research Center at Polco. A periodic sounding of employee opinion on critical workplace issues offers management, staff and elected officials an opportunity to identify challenges, plan for and evaluate improvements and sustain organizational effectiveness for long-term success.

The NES report is about the work environment of the City of Cambridge. A quality work environment is a workplace that is not simply acceptable, but that is desirable. It is not only where people do work, but where the..

Great workplaces are partnerships of employees, management and the residents they serve. The NES captures employees' opinions within the aspects of organizational climate as well as community quality and city governance as well as ratings of City internal support services (such as human resources and finance), community quality, and City governance:

- Quality of Community
- Quality of Governance
- Employee Engagement
- Workplace essentials
- Organizational Climate
- Employee Development
- Equity and Inclusion
- Internal Support Services

A total of 945 completed surveys were obtained, providing an overall response rate of 38%. Because the survey was intended to be taken by all employees, no traditional margin of error was calculated. However, because not all employees responded, NRC recommends using plus or minus five percentage points as the "range of uncertainty" around any given percent reported for the organization as a whole. The full description of methods used to garner these opinions can be found in the Methods tab.

How the results are reported

For the most part, the percentages presented in the following tabs represent the "percent positive." The percent positive is the combination of the top two most positive response options (i.e., "excellent" and "good," "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree," etc.). On many of the questions in the survey respondents may answer "don't know." The proportion of respondents giving this reply is shown in the full set of responses included in the tab "Complete data." However, these responses have been removed from the analyses presented in most of the tabs. In other words, the tables and graphs display the responses from respondents who had an opinion about a specific item. When a table for a question that only permitted a single response does not total to exactly 100%, it is due to the customary practice of rounding percentages to the nearest whole number.

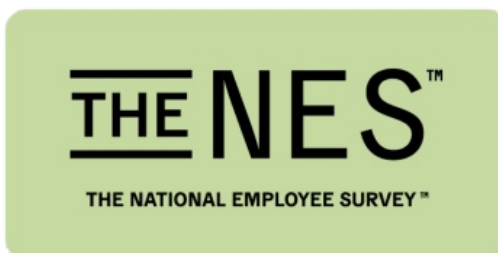
Comparisons to the benchmarks

This is Cambridge's first administration of The National Employee Survey. The survey was administered during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of challenge for many local governments. While we provide comparisons to national benchmarks, it is important to note that much of the benchmark data was collected prior to the pandemic, so the comparisons may not be entirely comparable for all of the data points.

NRC's database of comparative employee opinion comprises the perspectives of more than 25,000 employees



POWERED BY POLCO



gathered from employee surveys from local governments across the U.S. Those employees evaluated the organization in which they work and gave their opinion about job satisfaction, supervisor relationships and other aspects of the employee experience. The City of Cambridge was compared to the entire database. A benchmark comparison (the average percent positive from all the comparison organizations where a question was asked, excluding Cambridge's) has been provided when there were at least five organizations in which the question was asked. The percent positive response was created by combining the most favorable response options (i.e., "strong..

Where comparisons are available, two columns are provided in the table. The first column is Cambridge's percent positive. The second shows the comparison of Cambridge's rating to the benchmark, where Cambridge's results are noted as being "higher" than the benchmark, "lower" than the benchmark or "similar" to the benchmark. These labels come from a statistical comparison of Cambridge's rating to the benchmark where a rating is considered "similar" if it is within the margin of error (five percentage points or less) and "higher" or "lower" if the difference between Cambridge's rating and the benchmark is greater the margin of error (greater than five percentage points).

Methods



Survey Background

The City of Cambridge partnered with National Research Center (NRC) at Polco to conduct a City-wide employee survey. Employees were asked questions about their job satisfaction, work environment, compensation, supervisory relationships, organizational climate and communication. This was the first survey of Cambridge employees. The results can be used by the City to better understand employee experiences, address employee concerns and monitor perspectives over time.

The survey consisted of thematically similar statements grouped into question sets and all were asked on a four-point scale (e.g., strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree or excellent, good, fair, poor).

Selecting Survey Recipients

All City of Cambridge employees were eligible to complete the survey. The City provided NRC with a list of email addresses for all employees with City emails. The City also communicated with all employees about the survey so that employees without City emails were informed about and could participate in the survey.

Survey Administration and Response

The survey was administered on the Polco platform. Beginning September 23rd, 2024, employees were mailed a postcard to their homes with a link inviting them to complete the web-based survey on Polco. About a week later, City of Cambridge employees with email addresses received five email messages several days apart with a URL link to the survey.

The survey was available in English only. Data collection continued through October 28th, 2024. Of the 2,487 employees receiving an invitation to complete the survey, a total of 945 employees returned completed surveys, providing a response rate of 38%. The response rate was calculated using the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) response rate #2 for Internet surveys of named persons.¹

Because the survey was intended to be taken by all employees, no traditional margin of error was calculated. However, because not all employees responded, NRC recommends using plus or minus five percentage points as the “range of uncertainty” around any given percent reported for the organization as a whole. Additionally, no statistical weighting was performed.

Since the surveys were completed online, the data were automatically saved electronically. The survey dataset was analyzed through a combination of software programs including the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), R, Python, and Tableau. The anonymity of all employees was fully maintained as no names or other unique identifiers have been recorded.

Contact

The City of Cambridge funded this research. Please contact the Human Resources Department of the City of Cambridge at HumanResources@Cambridgema.gov if you have any questions about the survey.

1. See AAPOR's Standard Definitions for more information at <https://aapor.org/standards-and-ethics/standard-definitions/>

2. Pasek, J. (2014). ANES Weighting Algorithm. Retrieved from <https://surveyinsights.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Full-anesrake-paper.pdf>

Key Findings



Highest-performing areas:

- Supervisors received strong reviews and scored higher than the national average for:
 - Communicating information in a timely manner
 - Encouraging employees to come up with innovative solutions to problems
 - Recognizing high-performing employees
 - Managing low-performing employees
- Employees gave above-average ratings to the organization attracting employees from diverse backgrounds.
- Many respondents agreed they have good friends at work, gain satisfaction from their current job responsibilities, and plan on working for this organization a year from now.
- Several items related to support services exceeded the benchmark including:
 - General information technology (IT) function overall
 - Desktop/Help Desk services
 - Network operations
 - Fleet maintenance function overall
 - Radio Operations
 - Internal custodial cleaning function

Lowest-performing areas:

- While employees felt positively about their supervisor's performance, senior staff/leadership and council/elected officials were less positively rated and scored lower than the benchmarks.
- Employees gave less favorable ratings towards the organization's clarity of staff roles and responsibilities, opportunities to develop a career path, and showing employee appreciation.
- Despite strong ratings, items related to equity and inclusion ranked below other similar communities including:
 - Making all employees feel welcome
 - Helping new employees feel connected and integrated
 - Providing a safe and secure environment for employees of all backgrounds
 - Providing equal employment opportunities to employees of all backgrounds
 - Applying policies and procedures equally to all employees

Other Notable Results (Custom Questions)

- When asked to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree with the following statements, about 8 in 10 employees strongly or somewhat agree that their work group, department, and city has a diverse workforce.

Key Drivers

An organization of engaged employees is one where employees feel motivated to do their best possible work and where they hope to continue working in years to come. To impact employee engagement, an organization typically will want to see which of the other aspects of organizational climate were most influential on their engagement ratings.

For employees of the City of Cambridge, the key organizational characteristics found to be most closely correlated with employee ratings of engagement were:

- Work-life balance
- Opportunities to develop a career path
- The overall quality of the services provided by the City of Cambridge
- Providing a clear vision for our organization

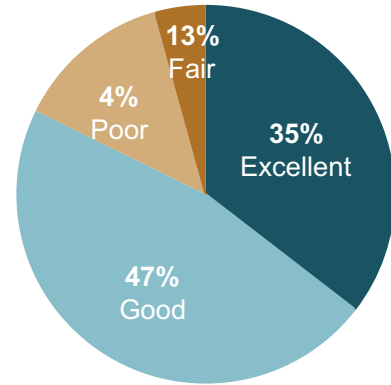
Of these, work-life balance, providing a clear vision for the organization, and the overall quality of the services provided by the City of Cambridge were on par with the national average. Opportunities to develop a career path was lower than the benchmark. To impact employee engagement, an organization typically will want to consider improvements to any key features that were not higher than the benchmark.



Quality of Governance

Employees want to be a part of a team that does high quality work that is well received by their community and well supported by the organization.

The overall quality of the services provided by the City of Cambridge



Please rate the following categories of Cambridge government performance.
(% excellent or good)

		vs. benchmark ⁴
The overall quality of the services provided by the City of Cambridge	82%	Similar
Generally acting in the best interest of the community	67%	Similar
The overall direction that Cambridge is taking	63%	Similar
Overall confidence in Cambridge government	57%	Similar

Please rate each of the following aspects of your WORK GROUP (immediate coworkers/people you work closest with).
(% excellent or good)

The quality of work being done in my work group	87%	Similar
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Please rate your overall level of confidence in the leadership of:
(% very or moderately confident)

Your direct supervisor	82%	Similar
Senior staff/Leadership (e.g., City Manager, Deputy City Manager, Assistant City Managers)	67%	Lower
Council/elected officials	41%	Lower

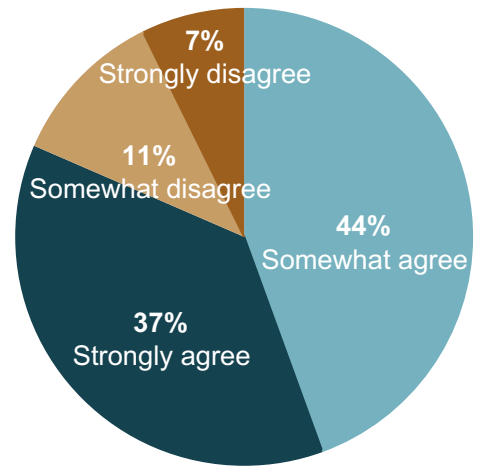
4. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.



Employee Engagement

An organization of engaged employees is one where employees feel motivated to do their best possible work and where they hope to continue working in years to come. To impact employee engagement, an organization typically will want to see which of the other aspects of organizational climate were most influential on their engagement ratings.

Overall, I am satisfied with my job



For employees of the City of Cambridge, the key organizational characteristics found to be most closely correlated⁵ with employee ratings of engagement were:

- Work-life balance
- Opportunities to develop a career path
- The overall quality of the services provided by the City of Cambridge
- Providing a clear vision for our organization

Of these, work-life balance, providing a clear vision for the organization, and the overall quality of the services provided by the City of Cambridge were on par with the national average. Opportunities to develop a career path was lower than the benchmark. To impact employee engagement, an organization typically will want to consider improvements to any key features that were not higher than the benchmark.

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your job working for the City of Cambridge.
 (% strongly or somewhat agree) vs. benchmark⁶

I plan on working for this organization a year from now	92%	Similar
I have good friends at work	88%	Similar
I gain satisfaction from my current job responsibilities	87%	Similar
Overall, I feel positive about working for the City of Cambridge	86%	Similar
My values match or fit with the values of this organization	85%	Similar
Overall, I am satisfied with my job	81%	Similar
I feel positively challenged in my current job	80%	Similar
I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day at work	79%	Similar
The mission and vision of the City of Cambridge make me feel my job is important	78%	Similar
I see a career path for me at City of Cambridge	74%	Similar

How likely or unlikely are you to recommend WORKING FOR the City of Cambridge to someone who asks?

(% very or somewhat likely)

How likely or unlikely are you to recommend WORKING FOR the City of Cambridge to someone who asks?

86%

Similar

5. A statistical technique called Key Driver Analysis was used to identify the key organizational characteristics most closely associated with employee ratings of job satisfaction and engagement. This technique is used widely in the private sector to help organizations prioritize which aspects of a service are more likely to influence loyalty and overall satisfaction. The Key Driver Analysis was based on both linear and multivariate modeling techniques using an index of employee engagement.
6. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Essentials

Foundational to employee engagement are having a safe work environment, the resources needed to do a good job, and receiving compensation commensurate with work accomplished.

As an employee of City of Cambridge, how would you rate the job the organization does at each of the following?
 (% excellent or good) vs. benchmark⁷

		vs. benchmark ⁷
Maintaining a work environment that is drug and alcohol free	93%	Similar
Maintaining a work environment that is free of violence or harassment	78%	Similar
Benefits overall (vacation, sick leave, health care, retirement plan, etc.)	77%	Similar
Protecting employees from health and safety hazards on the job	73%	Lower
Availability of necessary materials, resources and equipment to do the job effectively	69%	Similar
Work schedule flexibility	68%	Similar
Access to technology that helps employees do their job effectively	67%	Similar
Work-life balance	65%	Similar
Providing individual and group work spaces to do the job effectively	58%	Lower
Compensation (salary, benefits and incentives/bonuses) compared with similar opportunities	56%	Similar

7. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Organizational Climate



Organizational climate is a set of policies, strategies, and behaviors that form the primary colors that paint the everyday experience of employees in the workplace. From providing clear communications to encouraging innovation, the quality of these practices directly affects staff morale and engagement.

As an employee of City of Cambridge, how would you rate the job the organization does at each of the following?

(% excellent or good)

		vs. benchmark ⁸
Providing a clear vision for our organization	62%	Similar
Valuing creativity	56%	Similar
Openness to new ideas and initiatives	53%	Similar
Communicating information that helps employees understand the proble..	49%	Similar
Collaboration between departments	49%	Similar
Speed of response to important issues or change	41%	Lower

Please rate each of the following aspects of your WORK GROUP (immediate coworkers/people you work closest with).

(% excellent or good)

The working relationships in my work group	80%	Similar
Collaboration among all staff in my work group	76%	Similar
Communication among all staff in my work group	76%	Similar
Effectiveness of meetings in my work group	68%	Similar
Overall staff morale in my work group	64%	Similar

Please rate each of the following aspects of your SUPERVISOR'S performance.

(% excellent or good)

Encouraging employees to use their own judgment to get the job done	76%	Similar
Communicating information in a timely manner	74%	Higher
Encouraging employees to come up with innovative solutions to problems	73%	Higher
Encouraging an environment where employees feel comfortable to raise issues and concerns that are important to them	72%	Similar
Welcoming employee involvement in decision-making	71%	Similar

8. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Employee development

The development of human capital requires investment in performance evaluation and professional development as well as supporting employees as they seek to meet new challenges and career opportunities.



How would you rate the job the organization does at each of the following? (% excellent or good)		vs. benchmark ⁹
The overall skill set of staff	73%	Similar
Supporting continual learning and development	60%	Similar
Availability of opportunities for employees to develop knowledge and skills	58%	Similar
Clarity of staff roles and responsibilities	52%	Lower
Accuracy of performance evaluations	52%	Similar
Opportunities to develop a career path	47%	Lower
Showing employee appreciation	44%	Lower
Connection between compensation and performance	36%	Similar

Please rate each of the following aspects of your SUPERVISOR'S performance. (% excellent or good)

Providing opportunities for employees to learn and grow	68%	Lower
Communicating expectations of employees	67%	Similar
Providing specific, constructive feedback that helps improve employee performance	67%	Similar
Working together with employees to set goals	66%	Similar
Providing recognition for doing good work	64%	Similar
Coaching or mentoring employees	61%	Similar
Recognizing high-performing employees	61%	Higher
Applying discipline fairly and consistently	59%	Similar
Managing low-performing employees	47%	Higher

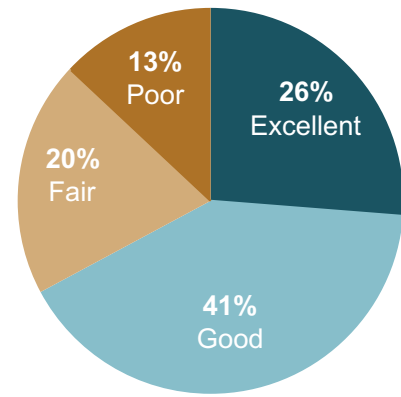
9. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.



Equity and inclusion

Inclusion and equity are a priority for local government organizations. Strategically building a more diverse workforce fosters relevance, innovation, and organizational effectiveness.

Making all employees feel welcome



As an employee of City of Cambridge, how would you rate the job the organization does at each of the following?

(% excellent or good)

vs. benchmark¹⁰

Category	Percentage	vs. benchmark ¹⁰
Fostering a respectful atmosphere	71%	Similar
Making all employees feel welcome	67%	Lower
Helping new employees feel connected and integrated	57%	Lower

How would you rate the job the organization does at each of the following?

(% excellent or good)

Category	Percentage	vs. benchmark ¹⁰
Demonstrating respect for employees of different cultures and belief systems	79%	Similar
Respecting individual cultural beliefs and values	79%	Similar
Providing a safe and secure environment for employees of all backgrounds	75%	Lower
Attracting employees from diverse backgrounds	74%	Higher
Promoting workplace diversity	74%	Similar
Providing equal employment opportunities to employees of all backgrounds	69%	Lower
Recruiting diverse people into positions of organizational leadership	65%	Similar
Applying policies and procedures equally to all employees	57%	Lower

Please rate each of the following aspects of your SUPERVISOR'S performance.

(% excellent or good)

Valuing employees from diverse backgrounds	84%	Similar
Treating employees with respect	80%	Similar
Promoting a positive working relationship among work group members	75%	Similar
Treating all employees fairly	72%	Similar
Fostering an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence	72%	Similar

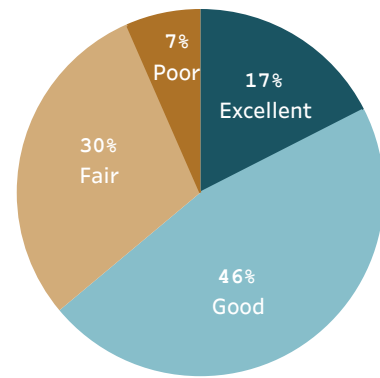
11. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.



Support services

There are many services that are essential to local government that most residents would never hear about. The "visible" services could not be performed without the support of internal groups that create the infrastructure to make external services possible.

Overall City internal services



Please rate the **QUALITY** of each of the following support services in the City of Cambridge. (% excellent or good) vs. benchmark¹¹

Service	Quality Rating	vs. benchmark ¹¹
General information technology (IT) function overall	84%	Higher
Desktop / Help Desk services	83%	Higher
Network operations	80%	Higher
Fleet maintenance function overall	80%	Higher
Radio operations	79%	Higher
Internal custodial cleaning function	77%	Higher
Telephone operations	74%	Similar
Application services	72%	Similar
Budget and finance overall	66%	Similar
Facilities management function overall	65%	Similar
Overall City internal services	64%	Similar
Internal maintenance and repair function	64%	Lower
Purchasing function overall	58%	Similar
Benefits administration	57%	Lower
Recruitment services	52%	Similar
Internal training function	50%	Lower
Human resources function overall	46%	Lower

11. Comparison to the national benchmark is shown. If no comparison is available, this is left blank.

Custom questions

Below are the complete set of responses to each custom question on the survey. By default, “don’t know” responses are excluded, but may be added to the table using the response filter below.

Include "don't know"
No

As an employee of City of Cambridge, how would you rate the job the organization does at each of the following?	Providing enough time off from work for vacation	Excellent		31%
		Good		40%
		Fair		19%
		Poor		10%
	Offering competitive health insurance benefits	Excellent		39%
		Good		40%
		Fair		15%
		Poor		6%
	Managing your retirement plan (i.e. pension)	Excellent		29%
		Good		43%
		Fair		20%
		Poor		8%
Please rate your overall level of confidence in the leadership of:	Your department head	Very confident		47%
		Moderately confident		24%
		Slightly confident		13%
		Not confident		15%
Please rate the QUALITY of each of the following support services in the City of Cambridge.	Municipal buildings and facilities	Excellent		21%
		Good		39%
		Fair		27%
		Poor		13%
Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:	The City's internal communications keep you informed about important organizational updates, policies, and initiatives	Strongly agree		29%
		Somewhat agree		46%
		Neither agree or disagree		17%
		Somewhat disagree		6%
		Strongly disagree		3%

