

Our Survey Says...

Millions spent on surveys finding that
more than 20,000 civil servants think
government is badly run

May 2009

Research & Analysis of Government Staff Surveys
by Grant Shapps MP

Summary

- Government spending on staff opinions surveys has increased by 73% since 2006/7 and now exceeds £1.5 million for the three year period.
- Analysis of the results from the surveys of 13 government departments shows that:
 - On average, 62%, equivalent to nearly **22,000 civil servants**, do not think their departments are well managed
 - **Two-thirds**, do not think their department manages change effectively
 - **Nearly 8,000** civil servants in central government admit to being unclear about their personal duties and responsibilities
 - **28%** of civil servants fail to understand the aims or objectives of the department
 - **40%** of civil servants do not feel proud to work for their department.
- The surveys also show how:
 - Less than half of managers at the Department with responsibility for *Skills* think their own staff have the right *skills* with which to do their jobs.
 - A third of staff at the Department for *Innovation* do not believe the Department for Innovation encourages staff to think of '*innovative* solutions to work related problems'.
 - Only 43% of staff at the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills understand the value of creating the department
 - 5% (160) at the Department for Schools claim to have been bullied at work because of their educational background
 - A quarter of staff at the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform do not understand the role of the dept as a 'voice for business within govt'

Introduction

This report is based on parliamentary answers provided to the author by individual government departments and provides, for the first time ever, a collective summary of the opinions of civil servants from right across Whitehall.

It shows how the people employed to implement government policies are growing increasingly dissatisfied with the ministers at the head of their departments and outlines a worrying state of affairs where civil servants are unaware of their department's objectives and despair at the inability within the organisations to deal with change.

The comprehensive picture of the staff opinion has been collated after first obtaining from a range of sources, the results of individual staff surveys from 13 central government departments. These range in size from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, with 460 employees, to the Department for Work and Pensions with nearly 10,000.

In compiling this report, the most recently available staff surveys from the following government departments have been analysed:

- Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform
- Cabinet Office
- Children, Schools and Families
- Communities and Local Government
- Culture, Media and Sport
- Foreign Office
- Health
- Home Office
- Innovation, Universities and Skills
- International Development
- Transport
- HM Treasury
- Work and Pensions

Between them, these departments employ 36,990 civil servants.¹

¹ *Civil Service Statistics 2008 First Release*, 20 January 2009, <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/cs0109.pdf>

Costs

In the last three years more than £1.5 million has been spent by the Government on staff opinion surveys.

The 2008/9 total² of almost £600,000 represents a rise of 73% compared with 2006/7.

All government departments were asked for details of its spending. Of those that replied, the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Revenue and Customs each spent more than £275,000 in the three years to 2008/9.

The true total is likely to be far higher than the amount disclosed in this report because ministers refused to provide details for two of the largest government departments.

The Ministry of Defence cited 'disproportionate cost' as its reason while the Treasury, oddly, claimed that it could not provide details for reasons of 'commercial confidentiality'.

Treasury minister, Angela Eagle said that because its contract was 'still current' the information would be prejudicial to the supplier of the service, Towers-Perrin ISR.

However, Towers Perrin-ISR also hold contracts with two other government departments, the Ministry of Justice and the Cabinet Office, both of whom willingly supplied details of the contracts.³

In total just eight companies were used to carry out the surveys and analyse the findings.

² *Hansard*, 9 March 2009, col. 103W

³ *Hansard*, 4 March 2009, col. 1703W; *Hansard*, 3 March 2009, col. 1447-8W

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	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	Firm/s
<u>Departments</u>				
Foreign Office	£35,004	£40,500		ORC
Justice		£35,250	£212,459.70	Towers Perrin-ISR, ORC
Northern Ireland Office	-	-		NI Statistics & Research Agency
Environment, Food & Rural Affairs	"Not possible"	£89,000	£31,000	ORC
Transport		£35,805		ORC
Cabinet Office	£15,505	£25,000	£13,226	ORC, Towers Perrin-ISR
Communities & Local Govt	£11,000	£19,411		ORC
Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform	£21,017.78	£23,751.78	£22,204.67	ORC, Maven
International Development	-	-	£34,000	Robertson Cooper Ltd
Culture, Media & Sport	£21,540	£2,056		ORC, Clarion
Health	£24,346	£63,563	£30,373	Amey Performance Measurment
Women and Equality			£12,955	ORC
Children, Schools & Families	£42,137	£36,540		ORC
Innovation, Universities & Skills			£19,515	ORC
Work & Pensions	£47,041	£114,535	£115,245	ORC
HM Treasury	"Commercially sensitive"			Towers Perrin-ISR
Defence	"Disproportionate Cost"			
<u>NDPBs</u>				
HMRC	£103,984	£73,586	£107,475	BMRB, ORC
FCO Services	£24,613	£25,553		ORC, GfK NOP
<u>Total</u>	£346,188	£584,550	£598,454	1,529,192

Managing Government

Eleven of the thirteen departments for which we have obtained survey results asked their staff if they thought the department was, on the whole, well managed.

Astonishingly, on average, only 37.5% of civil servants felt that their department was indeed well managed.

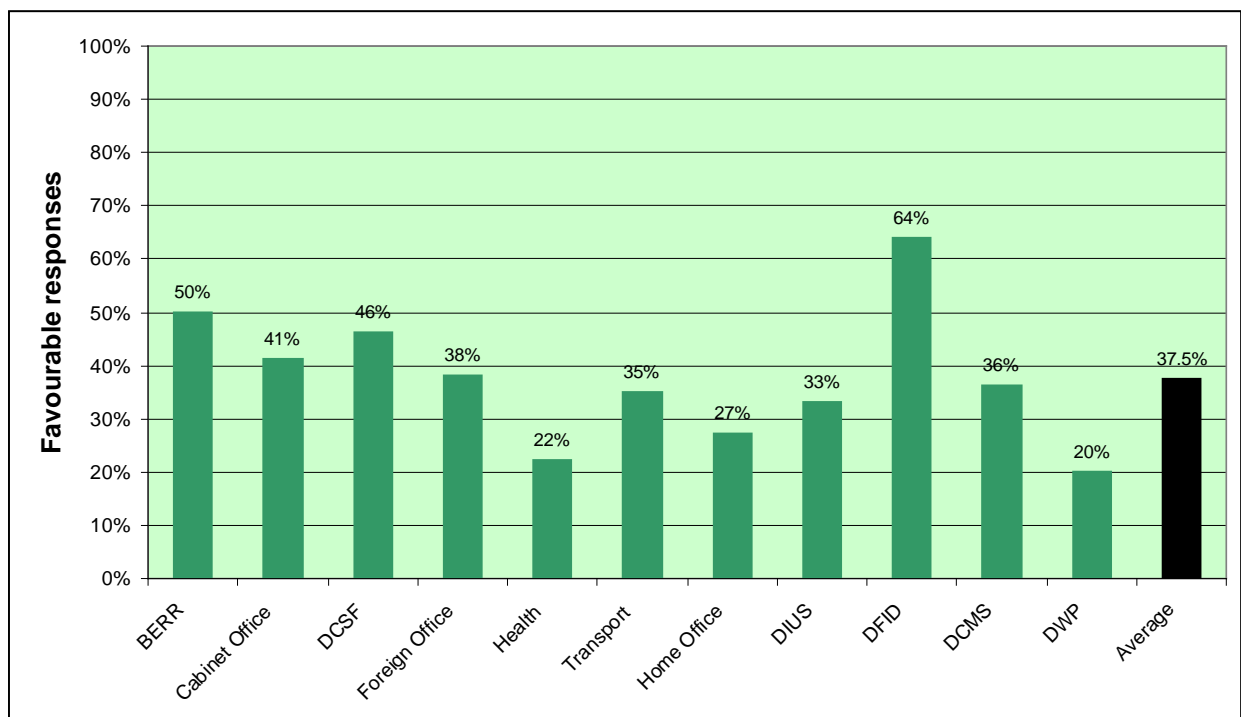
Staff at the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department of Health and the Home Office gave the most negative assessment of the running of those departments.

At the DWP, as few as 1 in 5 believe the management of their department is up to scratch.

Even the Department for International Development, which received the highest level of endorsement from its staff still had more than a third of its civil servants offering a differing opinion.

The Treasury was the only department not to ask its staff a comparable question on the effectiveness of the department's management.

Percentage of staff who thought their department was well managed



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Based on the numbers of people employed in each department, and the percentages in the above table, an estimated 21,793 across 11 departments, were unable to say they are satisfied with the management of their department.⁴

⁴ This has been calculated individually for each department using the number of Full-Time Equivalent employees employed by each government department as set out in the most recent figures, *Civil Service Statistics 2008 First Release*, 20 January 2009, <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/cs0109.pdf>

Dealing with change

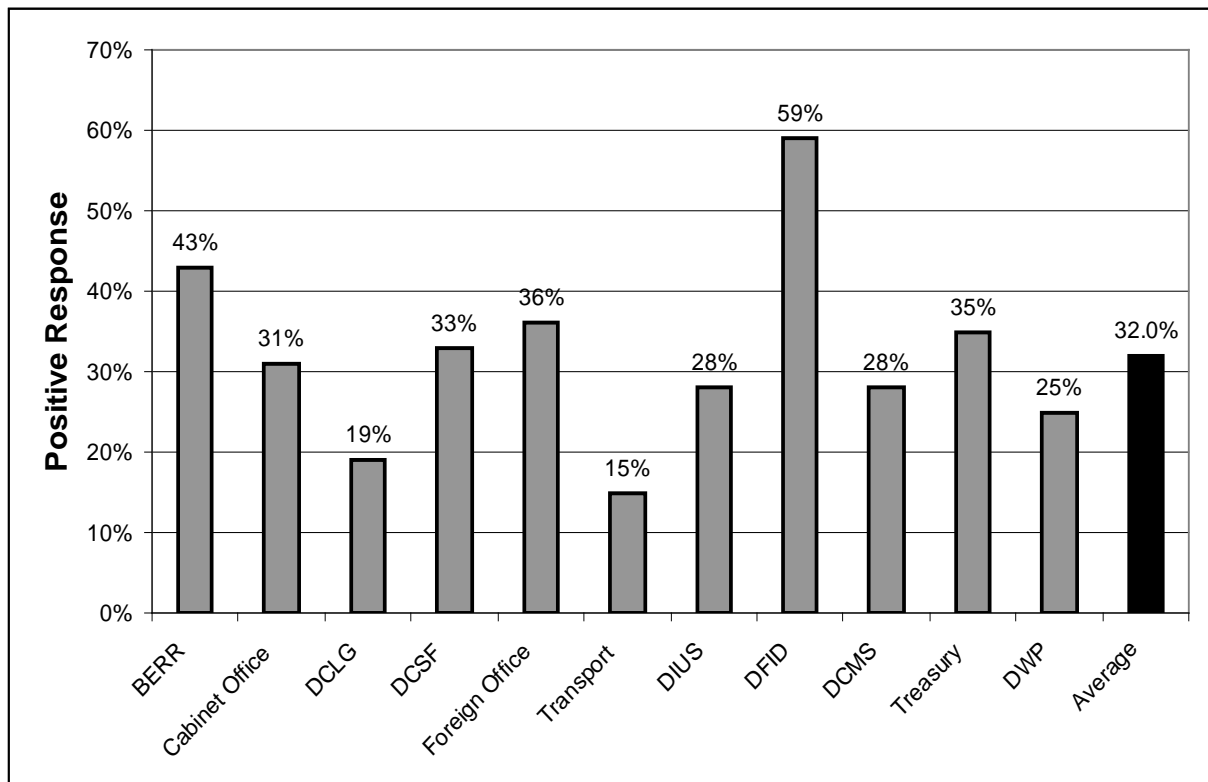
When Gordon Brown became Prime Minister in June 2007, he declared, "Let the work of change begin".

The government's fondness for talking of 'change' and then failing to deliver has been a universal theme of Labour's 12 years in power and the results of these staff surveys provide proof that Labour ministers are unable to execute the reforms needed to deal with the challenges facing the country.

Results from ten government departments point to an extremely worrying picture. Across government, an average of just 33.3% civil servants believe that their department to be effective at managing change.

Based on the relative sizes of just those 10 departments, almost 25,000 of the people responsible for implementing government policies feel that government itself is incapable of change.

Staff who thought change was managed well in their departments



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The Department for Transport, where fewer than 1 in 6 believe the department is capable of dealing with change, came out worst amongst the 10 departments which asked for the opinion of staff on how well they believed the department was set up to cope with change.

An entrenched resistance to change was also reported in the Department responsible for regeneration and housing policies, the Department for Communities and Local Government, where more than 80% of respondents chose not to agree with the statement 'I feel that change is well managed in the Department'.

Potentially more worryingly however, were the results for the DWP, the department responsible for welfare reform policy. Three-quarters of staff did not believe the department itself was capable of dealing with change.

Even at the department with 'reform' in its name, the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform fewer than half felt that the organisation was capable of implementing change.

Understanding personal responsibilities and awareness of the department's objectives

In 11 of the 13 surveys, staff were asked how well they understood their own personal duties and responsibilities. A different combination of 11 departments asked civil servants how familiar they were with the objectives, aims or role of the department for which they are employed.

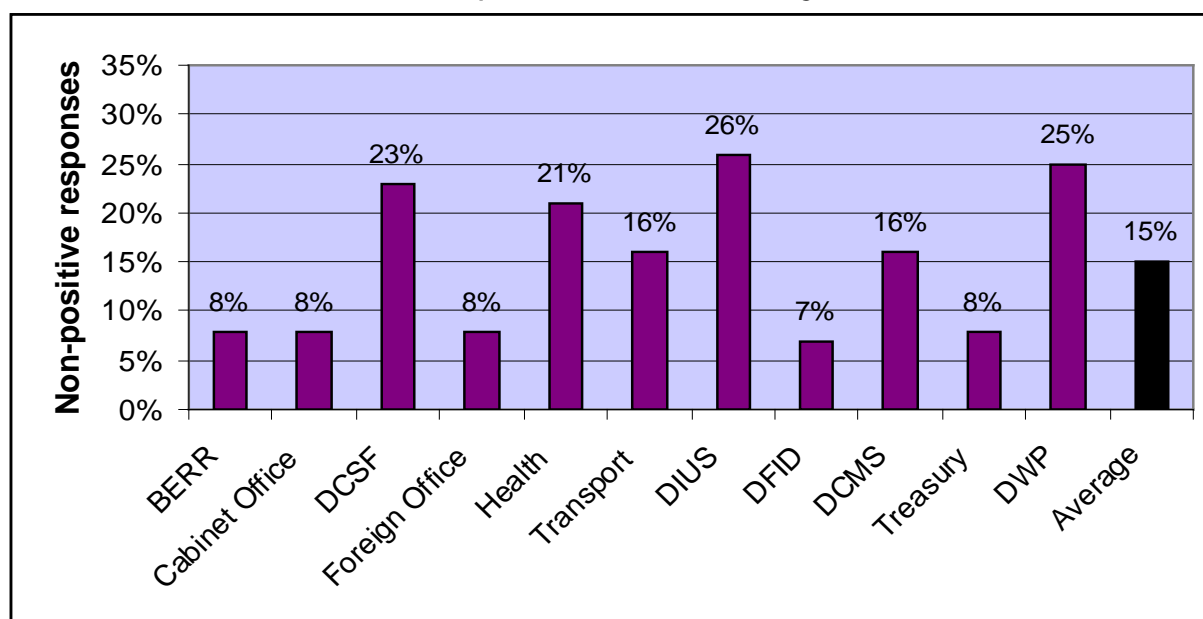
Unsurprisingly, more civil servants said they fully understood the responsibilities and duties of their own job but a surprising number stated that they were not altogether clear on exactly what was required of them in the role.

In fact, an incredible 7,898 admitted to having doubts about what was expected of them in their job.

Amongst the DWP's 9,590 employees, for instance, 25% were not 'clear about what is expected of [them] within [their] job'. Surprisingly, the company responsible for the survey, ORC, in its analysis of this particular set of answers deemed these proportions 'Acceptable'.

Meanwhile, the 2008 survey of staff at the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills found that more than a quarter were not 'clear about what is expected of [them] in [their] job'.

Percentage of staff with non-positive responses to questions on their own/Directorate's roles, responsibilities and objectives

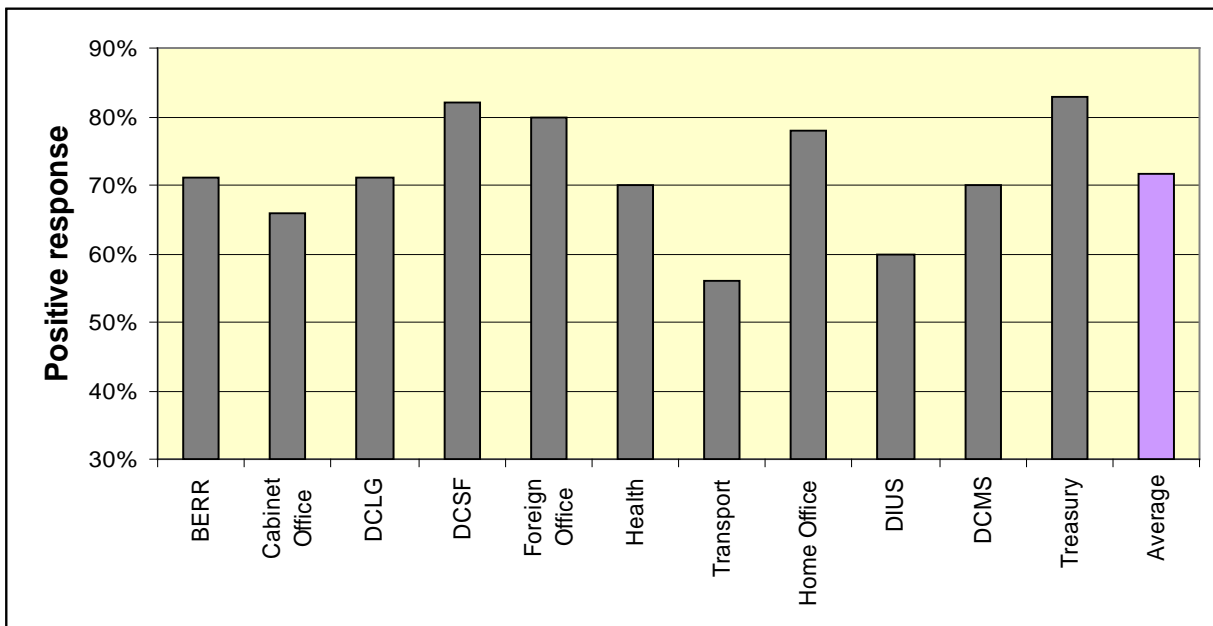


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Ten departments asked civil servants about their awareness of the department's role or aims. On average, 28.5% of staff admitted they were unable to understand or explain the objectives.

While a greater proportion understood the department's aims, only 43% of civil servants at DIUS could even 'explain the added value of creating [the department]'.

Proportion of staff who understood the department's aims or objectives



What have you done today to make you feel proud?

All thirteen of the departments asked their staff if they felt proud to work for their department.

While an impressive 92% of employees felt proud to be employed by DFID, only 27% of DIUS civil servants felt the same way.

A disappointing average of less than 60% felt proud to work in the departments they are employed by

Positive responses to questions about pride in working for department

DIUS	27%
DWP	32%
DCLG	41%
Transport	46%
Health	50%
BERR	54%
DCSF	58%
DCMS	68%
Home Office	68%
Cabinet Office	72%
Foreign Office	79%
Treasury	80%
DFID	92%
Average	59.0%

Improvement

Three of the surveys asked staff if they believed the departments to be improving.

The results will make extremely disappointing reading for Ed Balls, Alan Johnson and Geoff Hoon.

On average, less than a third of staff at DCSF, the Department of Health and the Department for Transport acknowledged improvements within the department.

Percentage who thought their department was improving

Transport	26%
Health	33%
Children, Schools and Families	37%
Average	32%

Conclusion and comment

The results of this analysis should be extremely concerning for ministers. It reveals that civil servants working for government are reaching the same conclusions about this Government that most people in the country have felt for some time.

At a time when record numbers of people are being made unemployed and face losing their homes, it is thoroughly depressing to find out that even those responsible for implementing the Government's policies.

The Government's failure to implement many of the initiatives and schemes announced as a means of dealing with the recession is partly explained by the opinions civil servants have of their departments.

When the country needs bold policies and effective government, it is extremely worrying that civil servants believe departments are poorly managed and incapable of dealing with changes. This unwelcome inertia appears to permeate throughout government, with its embodiment occupying 10 Downing Street.

Further comment from Grant Shapps MP:

"After the way Labour has run the country for the last 12 years, it's unsurprising that even civil servants are completely fed up with this increasingly desperate Government.

"At a time of great upheaval we need a Government that can provide the civil service with leadership.

"Rather than just asking civil servants for their views, Gordon Brown should call an election and let us all tell him what we think of his Government"

Appendix

Surveys

The surveys were sourced from a variety of places. Of those placed in the House of Commons Library, the references are:

- DCSF: 26 March 2009, paper no. DEP-2009-0977
- DCLG, 1 April 2009, paper no. DEP-2009-1053
- DCMS: 19 March 2009, paper no. DEP-2009-0905
- DIUS: 16 March 2009, paper no. DEP-2009-0873
- DH: 16 March 2009, paper no. DEP-2009-0835
- DFID: 16 March 2009, paper no. DEP-2009-0827

The DWP 2008 survey is available via the resource centre on the departmental website, www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/dwp-survey-results-2008.pdf

The most recent returns for the DfT, DBERR, HM Treasury and the Foreign Office are available in the Statistics section of the Civil Service website, <http://beta.civilservice.gov.uk/about/who/statistics/staff-surveys.aspx>

Parliamentary Questions

Grant Shapps: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was spent by his Department on staff surveys in 2008; and which companies were contracted to carry out the surveys.

Answers

Angela Eagle: HM Treasury conducts an annual staff survey at the end of every calendar year. This is contracted out to Towers Perrin-ISR. HM Treasury also conducts exit surveys of staff who leave the Department and new starter surveys. These surveys are contracted out to Talent Drain. The breakdown of costs is not available as the contracts are still current so this information is commercially sensitive.

(Hansard, 9 March 2009, col. 103W)

Mr. Wills: There has been one staff survey for the Ministry of Justice since its creation on 9 May 2007. This was a Staff Engagement Survey held in September 2008.

In 2007-08 £30,000 (£35,250 inc. VAT) was spent on preparatory work. The cost incurred in 2008-09 was £186,184.70 (£212,459.70 inc. VAT).

Towers Perrin-ISR conducted the survey and ORC International provided the analysis and reporting outputs.

(Hansard, 4 March 2009, col. 1703W)

Mr. Bradshaw: The Department has run annual staff surveys, in each of the last five years, all of which have been administered by Amey Performance Measurement Group.

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£	
2008-09	30,373
2007-08	34,780
2006-07	24,346
2005-06	18,835
2004-05	(1) —
(1) Cost unavailable. To establish this would incur disproportionate cost.	

In addition during February 2008, the Department carried out a one-off, specific, staff Health and Well-being survey, administered by Robertson Cooper. The cost of this survey was £28,783.

(Hansard, 9 March 2009, col.137-138W)

Huw Irranca-Davies: The Department [for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs] commissioned ORC International Ltd to run staff surveys in 2005, 2007 and 2008. The Department is currently participating with 10 other departments in a pilot Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey which is also being run by ORC International Ltd.

Approximately £89,000 was spent in 2007-08, and approximately £31,000 has been spent or identified for spend in 2008-09 to date. It is not possible to identify expenditure in previous years.

The first full Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey, covering over half a million civil servants, is planned for autumn 2009, and it is expected that this will deliver an overall saving for the Exchequer compared with the costs of departments carrying out surveys unilaterally.

(Hansard, 17 March 2009, col. 1007W)

Maria Eagle: The Government Equalities Office is presently undertaking its first annual staff survey at a cost of £11,265 excluding VAT and has contracted with ORC International.

(Hansard, 16 March 2009, col. 822-3W)

Mr. McFadden: The information requested [for DBERR] is contained in the following table.

	<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Cost (£)</i>
2004-05	Maven Management Ltd.	40,543.78
2005-06	Maven Management Ltd.	23,770.00
2006-07	ORC International Ltd.	21,017.78
2007-08	ORC International Ltd.	23,751.78
2008-09	ORC International Ltd.	22,204.67

(Hansard, 24 March 2009, col.348W)

Jonathan Shaw: The costs for DWP surveys in the last five years are as follows:

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	£
2004-05	⁽¹⁾ 110,000
2005-06	⁽¹⁾ 99,595
2006-07	⁽²⁾ 47,041
2007-08	⁽¹⁾ 114,535
2008-09	⁽¹⁾ 115,245
⁽¹⁾ Full census.	
⁽²⁾ 20 per cent. sample.	

The survey supplier for all these surveys was ORC International.

(Hansard, 11 March 2009, col. 534-5W)

Mr. Michael Foster: Since 2004-05, the Department for International Development (DFID) has carried out six staff surveys. Details are shown in the following table.

	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Provider</i>	<i>Cost (£)</i>
2004-05	Better Balance Audit	Robertson Cooper Ltd.	25,850
2005-06	Management Survey	Internally delivered	n/a
2006-07	Management Survey	Internally delivered	n/a
2007-08	Management Survey	Internally delivered	n/a
2008-09	Better Balance Audit	Robertson Cooper Ltd.	27,000
2008-09	Pulse Survey (under way)	Oxford Policy Management	⁽¹⁾ 7,000
⁽¹⁾ Budget.			

(Hansard, 4 March 2009, col. 1653W)

Mr. Simon: The Department [DIUS] was created on 28 June 2007. Since it was established, the Department has conducted one full staff survey in October 2008. The survey was delivered in house and the results were analysed by ORC International Ltd.

The cost of the staff survey was £19,515 inc. VAT.

(Hansard, 5 March 2009, col.1734W)

Mr. Khan: I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to the hon. Member for Upper Bann (David Simpson) on 26 June 2007, *Official Report*, column 631W, to the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Hoban) on 29 November 2007, *Official Report*, column 681W and to the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs. May) on 8 July 2008, *Official Report*, column 1500W. In addition, Ipsos MORI have been paid £16,520 plus VAT to date for the CLG Pulse Survey 2008. ORC International is currently undertaking a second pilot employee engagement survey as part of a wider survey being led by the Cabinet Office. No payments have been made to date. Cost information for the 2005 and 2006 ODPM surveys, which were also undertaken by ORC International, is not held in the format requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

(Hansard, 11 March 2009, col.481W)

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Gillian Merron: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has conducted the following staff surveys over the last five years.

2004 staff survey conducted by 'NOP'. The contract value was £19,220. The actual spend information for this survey was not transferred successfully to the new FCO management information system. Answering this question by examining stored paper invoices would incur disproportionate cost.

2006 staff survey and two "mini" wave surveys conducted by ORC International. Actual spend was £36,320.

2007 staff survey conducted by ORC International. The actual spend was £35,004.

2008 staff survey conducted by ORC International. The actual spend to date is £25,373. The contract value is £40,500.

FCO Services (which became an Executive agency in April 2006 and acquired full trading fund status in April 2008) has conducted the following staff surveys over the last five years.

	<i>Type of survey</i>	<i>Company</i>	<i>Spend (£)</i>
2005	FCO Services staff survey	ORC International	19,000
2007	FCO Services staff survey	GfK NOP	24,613.00
2008	FCO Services staff survey	ORC International	25,553.00

(Hansard, 12 March 2009, col. 625-6W)

Paul Goggins: In the last five years the Northern Ireland Office (excluding agencies and executive non-departmental public bodies) has conducted two staff surveys, one in 2004 and the other in 2006. These were delivered internally but the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency were paid £2,891 in 2004 and £3,107 in 2006 to analyse the responses from the surveys.

(Hansard, 12 March 2009, col. 611-2W)

Mr. Sutcliffe: DCMS has spent the following on staff surveys in the last five years:

	<i>Survey</i>	<i>Company</i>	<i>Cost (£)</i>
2005	Staff Opinion Survey	ORC	20,000
2007	Staff Opinion Survey	ORC	21,540
2008	Stress Audit	Clarion	2,056

In addition, the Department undertakes limited scope follow-up pulse surveys on a quarterly basis to a representative sample of staff. These surveys are internally delivered, using an online survey tool resource.

(Hansard, 6 March 2009, col.1892-3W)

Ann McKechin: The Scotland Office ran one internally delivered staff survey during 2007 at no additional cost to the office. No staff survey was undertaken in 2008.

(Hansard, 9 March 2009, col. 3W)

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Mr. Paul Murphy: During 2008 the Wales Office participated in one staff opinion survey undertaken by the Ministry of Justice.

There was no cost to the Wales Office.

(Hansard, 9 March 2009, col. 55W)

Mr. Hoon: The Department [for Transport] spent £35,805 on its annual staff survey in 2008. ORC were contracted to carry out the survey.

(Hansard, 10 March 2009, col. 362W)

Mr. Kevan Jones: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Outside contractors are employed to conduct staff surveys only where the necessary work cannot be undertaken in house and where there is a clear value for money benefit for the MOD.

(Hansard, 10 March 2009, col. 235W)

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: In the last five years the Department [for Children, Schools and Families] (and the former Department for Education and Skills) has spent £94,363 on staff surveys. All surveys in the period were delivered by ORC International Ltd.

	<i>Cost (£)</i>
2005-06	15,686
2006-07	⁽¹⁾ 0
2007-08	42,137
2008-09	36,540
⁽¹⁾ No staff survey held.	

(Hansard, 11 March 2009, col. 549-550W)

Mr. Watson: The following table sets out Cabinet Office's contracted price on staff surveys in each of the last five years and which company were contracted to conduct each survey:

<i>£</i>		
	<i>Spent on survey</i>	<i>Company contracted</i>
2008-09	13,226	ORC International
2007-08	25,000	Towers Perrin ISR
2006-07	15,505	ORC International
2005-06	15,120	ORC International
2004-05	15,810	ORC International

The additional costs for the contract in 2007-08 reflected a change in methodology to provide more in-depth employee engagement analysis for the first time.

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In 2008-09, the Cabinet Office is participating in a pilot of a single civil service survey, alongside nine other Departments, resulting in significantly reduced costs for the Department.

(Hansard, 3 March 2009, col. 1447-8W)

Mr. Timms: HM Revenue and Customs has conducted eight surveys following its creation.

The cost breakdown by financial year excluding VAT is:

	£
2005-06	36,325
2006-07	88,497
2007-08	62,626
2008-09	92,452

From 2005-06 to 2007-08 the surveys were conducted twice yearly by HMRC. A sample of staff were surveyed in-house with an external research agency (BMRB) contracted to deliver the analysis and reporting of the survey.

In late 2008, ORC were appointed by the Cabinet Office as the external provider to deliver a civil service wide pilot survey across nine Government Departments which involved a census of HMRC staff.

(Hansard, 24 March 2009, 337-8W)