

Press release

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ACEVO Pay & Equalities 2025 survey finds pay gap narrows but inequalities remain

The ACEVO Pay and Equalities 2025 survey has once again highlighted that key inequalities in charity leadership remain largely unchanged. Despite job satisfaction and commitment amongst our sector's leaders, this year's findings reveal persistent inequalities in pay equity and career development, as well as challenges in diversity and wellbeing across the sector.

The survey, which gathered responses from **703 charity CEOs**, found that **median CEO salaries have declined slightly to £59,850**, reflecting a larger proportion of small charities in the sample. Whilst **76% of CEOs received a salary increase in their current role**, up from 68% last year, **the gender pay gap remains in double figures at 10.6%**, with **male CEOs earning a median of £64,067** and **female CEOs £57,250**.

Flexible working remains the most common benefit, reported by **71% of charity leaders**, but **access to mental health support (38%) and wellness programmes (25%)** has dropped, highlighting gaps in support for leaders' wellbeing.

The report once more highlights the ongoing diversity problem in our sector. Only **6% of CEOs identify as Asian or Minoritised Ethnic** and **no Black CEOs** responded to the survey this year. Furthermore, the number of respondents who identify as having a disability, learning difference or health condition dropped to **17%** from 20% last year. Satisfaction with **board ethnic diversity** is low, with just a third of CEOs expressing contentment. Disability is the area with the **lowest board diversity satisfaction (31%)**.

Whilst **82% of leaders feel clear about their role and board expectations**, fewer than half report having a current performance appraisal, set objectives or statement of authorities delegated to them. **The gap remains wide on job clarity documents between CEOs at small charities and those leading larger organisations**. The proportion of CEOs **satisfied with the amount of time they were able to spend on personal learning and development has declined** (38% from 41%).

75% of CEOs' time is still spent on solving day-to-day, immediate problems whilst 25% is spent on more strategic thinking and planning. Less than a third (31%) reported they were satisfied with balance. **Overall job satisfaction remains high (79%) and most CEOs feel empowered to make important decisions without being second guessed (82%)**.

However, **less than half (49%) are satisfied with board support for their wellbeing and only 53% are satisfied with their work-life balance**. Across both measures, lower satisfaction was reported among CEOs of small charities but tends to rise with organisational income band, revealing the need for greater support in this part of our sector.

Despite challenges, **69% of CEOs feel it is likely they will still be working in the charity sector in five years' time**.

This year's survey highlights the remarkable dedication of charity leaders, but it also shows where the sector must do more. There is a need for greater support, especially for those leading smaller charities, to ensure pay equity, diversity, personal development and wellbeing across the sector.

Jane Ide, chief executive, ACEVO said:

"Each year I make no secret of the fact that I find the lack of real shift in the areas that matter most deeply frustrating, and sadly this year is no different.

At ACEVO, we see it as our responsibility to act on these insights. This means working with boards, policymakers and funders to close the gaps in pay, equity, diversity, development and wellbeing. It means challenging the assumption that leaders of small charities should have fewer opportunities than their peers at larger organisations. It means holding ourselves collectively accountable for building the conditions in which leadership can truly thrive.

Our sector is built on the conviction that we achieve more together than alone. The findings in this year's report make clear that if we want charities to remain strong, effective and transformative, we must do better at supporting those who lead them. We cannot afford to ignore the evidence and it is long overdue that we see real shifts in the right direction. If we fail to act, we risk weakening the very fabric of civil society. But if we succeed, we will unleash the full potential of our sector's leaders."

Richard Litchfield, CEO of Eastside People, main sponsors of the report, said:

"One of the main driving forces behind our support of the ACEVO Pay & Equalities Survey for 2025 was to help spread the word about the importance of fair and better pay, as well as equity, diversity and on-going development within the sector.

The lack of growth in CEO pay, not just this year, but over the past decade, is appalling and deeply concerning. It undermines a healthy civil society and devalues leadership roles that should be supported and nurtured. Our more than 20 years of work within the industry has taught us that it is only by strengthening and developing opportunities for leaders will broaden capacity, impact and sustainability goals be achieved.

This report is a call to action: to challenge assumptions, close gaps, and create the conditions where every leader can thrive, regardless of the size of their organisation."

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About ACEVO

ACEVO's vision is for civil leaders to make the biggest possible impact. Together with our network of over 1,700 members, we inspire and support civil society leaders through connection, skills, and influence. Our members drive positive change in their organisations and in their communities, and our peer-to-peer network supports and encourages them at every step of their career. We offer our members networking and learning events; exclusive access to personal development opportunities and mentoring tailored to senior leadership roles; helplines for immediate expert advice; discounted professional services delivered by our partners, and advice and support when it is needed the most. Through our influencing work we help to shape the agenda on issues that matter to our members, and ensure their voices are heard by those who have the power to effect change. Membership is open to leaders of civil society organisations.

Find out more at www.acevo.org.uk or by emailing info@acevo.org.uk

About Eastside People

Eastside People is an award-winning consultancy and recruiter dedicated to strengthening the charity and wider not-for-profit sector.

They provide flexible leadership resources on a permanent, interim, board and consultancy basis. Dedicated to supporting charities and social enterprises, they connect organisations with the

best people at a senior level, thereby strengthening leadership teams and enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of the sector, enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of the social sector.

Eastside People is proud to have:

- Delivered over 3,000 projects that drive change
- Supported 1,250 charities and not for profits with advice and expertise
- Successfully delivered more than 550 recruitment projects
- Achieved an outstanding 9.2 out of 10 rating for skills and know how.

www.eastsidepeople.org

Notes to editor

- The annual Pay and Equalities Survey 2025 is sponsored by Eastside People.
- The survey is delivered with [CAF](#), [Charity Leadership Scotland](#) and [CO3](#) and ran from 6 May until 9 June 2025, and received responses from 703 charity CEOs.
- The annual pay survey, a valuable benchmarking tool for salaries across the sector, covers England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- The Pay and Equalities Survey is the only survey that looks at the pay, benefits, diversity, leadership and governance of CEOs of charities of all sizes across the UK.
- Alongside the full report is one shorter briefing looking at Pay and Equalities in Scotland. The volume of responses from CEOs in Northern Ireland was too low this year to be able to produce a separate report.
- The publication will be available from 10 November 2025 on <https://www.acevo.org.uk/publications/pay-and-equalities-survey-2025/>.
- The publication costs £45 for ACEVO members and £75 for non-members. Everyone who responded to the survey will receive a free copy.