



CIPD

**Summary report
and practical guidance
June 2023**

**CIPD Good
Work Index 2023**

The CIPD has been championing better work and working lives for over 100 years. It helps organisations thrive by focusing on their people, supporting our economies and societies. It's the professional body for HR, L&D, OD and all people professionals – experts in people, work and change. With almost 160,000 members globally – and a growing community using its research, insights and learning – it gives trusted advice and offers independent thought leadership. It's a leading voice in the call for good work that creates value for everyone.

Summary report and practical guidance

CIPD Good Work Index 2023

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1 Introduction

Good work undoubtedly looks different in 2023 and has been impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, widespread discontent of public sector workers, and prevailing geopolitical tensions. A lot of uncertainty remains and employers have a growing responsibility to support their people.

Work can, and should, be a force for good. However, we know that there is more to be done in the UK to make good work accessible for everyone. While the employment rate is still relatively high in the UK (75.7%), there is a strong case to look at the quality of jobs too.

The CIPD Good Work Index (now in its sixth year) is an annual benchmark of good work, or job quality, in the UK. It measures a wide range of aspects of job quality, including employment essentials, such as contractual arrangements, the day-to-day realities of work as experienced by workers themselves, and the impacts on people's health and wellbeing.

This report is an abridged version of the CIPD Good Work Index 2023 survey report that distils the key findings in summary form. This report also provides clear practical guidance for employers, people professionals and people managers to take forward in their organisations and to improve job quality among their staff.

Last year's Good Work Index report explored the fallout of COVID-19's impact on job quality and revealed that work-life balance, health and wellbeing, job security and the rising cost of living were key issues. Our evidence suggested that there was still work to be done to support career development and improve line manager capability to improve staff retention. However, the 'great resignation' or 'great rethink' had been somewhat overstated.

This year, our Good Work Index research finds that the cost-of-living crisis has catapulted concerns over financial wellbeing to the top of many people's minds at work. Also clear is discontent among public sector workers around pay and non-pay-related issues. As well as these areas, this report shares insights from more than 5,000 UK workers' responses and provides recommendations for practice on key issues such as:

- designing jobs to create an engaged and motivated workforce
- better opportunities for career development and advancement
- the importance of work-life balance and flexible working
- the role of managers in strong interpersonal relationships and employee voice.

2 What is good work?

At the CIPD, we believe that good work:

- is fairly rewarded and gives people the means to securely make a living
- allows for work-life balance
- gives opportunities to develop, and ideally a sense of fulfilment
- provides a supportive environment with constructive relationships

- gives employees the voice and choice they need to shape their working lives
- is physically and mentally healthy for people.

Importantly, good work should be accessible for all, regardless of job type or someone's background. It may not be realistic to make all jobs great in all ways, but employers should ensure that they are thinking creatively about how they can improve job quality with job design and HR practices.

The seven dimensions of job quality (see 'About the CIPD Good Work Index' box below) cover important subjective and objective aspects of work. Despite changes in the world of work, the fundamentals of good work remain constant. People professionals need to focus on getting the basics right as well as tackling emerging issues that shift how or where work is done.

About the CIPD Good Work Index

The data in this summary report comes from the CIPD/YouGov UK Working Lives survey. This report is based on data from 5,139 UK workers, collected between 9 January and 9 February 2023. The figures are weighted and representative of UK working adults. We also refer to longitudinal data from previous years of the CIPD Good Work Index.

You can find further information about the CIPD Good Work Index below:

- The CIPD Good Work Index 2023 survey report, written by Ian Brinkley, explores the data in more detail.
- Our archive of [CIPD Good Work Index](#) reports since 2018 includes data from previous years and details on how the survey was developed (please note, as the report was formerly known as UK Working Lives, the 2018 and 2019 report titles reflect this).
- The CIPD reports [Understanding and measuring job quality](#) and [The road to good work](#) informed the development of the Good Work Index.

3 What does good work look like in 2023?

- Employees have remained resilient at work, despite several years of uncertainty.
- Most people feel positively towards their work, but large minorities report issues with some major aspects of job quality.
- Rather than a large drop-off, we see the beginnings of a slide into mediocrity, with enriching jobs becoming less prevalent.
- Nevertheless, other aspects of job quality, such as skills and career development, job security and flexible working opportunities, remain strong in 2023.

Good work in 2023 has been shaped by various events of the last five years, including Brexit, COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis, all of which have made uncertainty in the world of work feel endemic. And yet, the resilience in the UK labour market during this period is reflected in the workplace experience. Despite this disruption, employees generally feel positively towards their job and relationships at work in 2023. Our UK Working Lives (UKWL) survey highlights that most people like their work, find it satisfying and have good relationships with both line managers and colleagues.

However, large minorities – around 20–30% – report negatively on some major aspects of work. Taking our sample of more than 5,000 workers as representative of the UK population, we can estimate that around 6–9 million of a workforce of 32 million people have a poor experience of work in some respects.

The slide into mediocrity

Many UKWL indicators show no significant improvement in 2023 compared with previous years, and, in some ways, job quality has regressed. Compared with 2019, UK workers are now more likely to view work as purely transactional – simply for the money. Viewed on its own, this drop could be seen as a positive, but combined with other trends, it appears to signal a wider malaise. Workers are less likely to work harder than they need to in order to help their organisation, are less enthused about work, and less likely to perceive their work as useful (an important aspect of meaningful work). These responses, alongside work affecting our mental health in more middling and negative ways, point to a slow slide into mediocrity, away from enriched jobs and ultimately towards demotivation, lack of commitment and poorer productivity.

Not all doom and gloom

2023 has nevertheless seen some improvements in job quality, notably in human capital development, with UK employees reporting better opportunities for both skills and career development. As noted earlier, relationships at work remain strong. In addition, people are more confident they could find another job as good as their current one. Finally, flexible working opportunities continue to increase, albeit almost entirely driven by the shift towards homeworking following the COVID-19 pandemic.

4 The cost-of-living crisis

With inflation having hit record levels in 2022 and into 2023, it was imperative to explore how the recent crisis has impacted not only living standards but also working lives.

Just under half of respondents are keeping up with bills and commitments without any difficulties, down from 2022. The number of respondents keeping up with bills and commitments but struggling from time to time has increased from 2022. Those signalling severe financial distress made up 16%, up from

14% in 2022, with 12% describing keeping up with bills as a constant struggle, 3% falling behind with bills and commitments, and 1% indicating real financial problems. Nearly one in six reporting serious financial trouble translates to more than 5 million people in work.

These figures become more stark for those in lower-income households and those in less skilled work. Just 21% of those with a household income of £20,000 or less are able to meet bills and commitments without difficulty, compared with 38% indicating real difficulty doing so. Likewise, nearly a quarter of those in lower social classes (C2DE, categorised as those in lower-paid and lower-skilled jobs) report difficulty keeping up with bills in 2023. This figure is 28% for respondents with a disability, compared with just 33% keeping up with bills without any difficulties.

Table 1: Cost-of-living crisis for those in work in 2022–2023 (%)

Dimension	All in work (n=6,262)	All in work (n=5,139)	Household income £20k or less (n=339)	C2DE (n=1,197)	Disability (n=855)
	2022	2023	2023	2023	2023
I am keeping up with all bills and commitments without any difficulties	55	48	21	39	33
I am keeping up with all bills and commitments, but it is a struggle from time to time	29	33	39	34	38
I am keeping up with all bills and commitments, but it is a constant struggle	11	12	25	17	20
I am falling behind with some bills or credit commitments	2	3	9	5	6
I am having real financial problems and have fallen behind with many bills or credit commitments	1	1	4	2	2
NA/Don't know	3	2	3	3	2

Notes: NA are those who said they had no bills or commitments. C2DE are semi-skilled and less skilled manual and non-manual workers.

Source: UK Working Lives survey 2023.

Recommendations for practice

Anyone can face financial difficulties at some point in their lives, but people professionals ought to recognise that lower-paid, lower-skilled workers are especially at risk. There are clear moral and business implications for prioritising financial wellbeing at work. Financial distress is evidently linked to poorer mental health, which in turn is more likely to lead to absence from work. Moreover, those who do attend work despite dealing with stress and financial worries are likely to struggle to perform to their usual standards. Our *Financial wellbeing evidence review* highlights the following key recommendations for people professionals:

- ✓ Recognise the implications of financial distress for both employee wellbeing and performance.
- ✓ Integrate a financial wellbeing strategy into your wider health and wellbeing strategy.

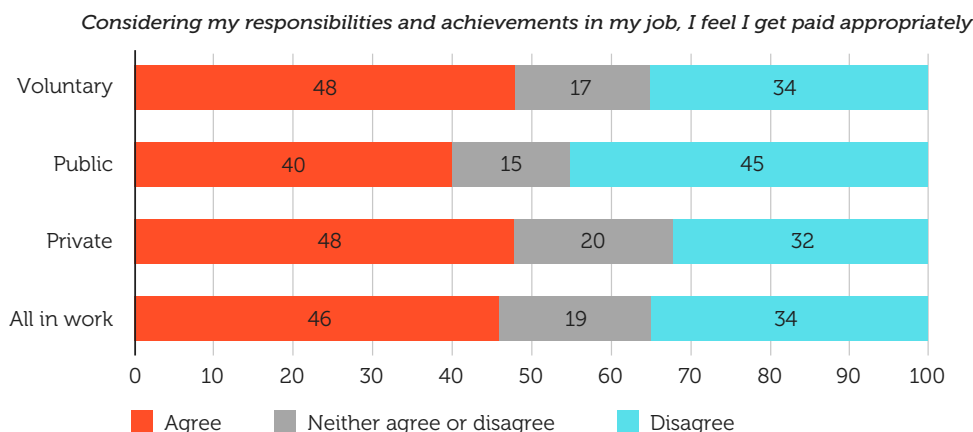
- ✓ Develop a financial wellness programme that helps protect employees from financial shocks. This can include several strands, such as:
 - giving employees more control of their finances through hardship loans or earned salary access
 - employee benefits that reduce living costs
 - financial education that develops ‘soft skills’ of attitude, judgements, and behaviour – for example, making people be more inclined to plan or save for the future
 - debt counselling for those who need it, in conjunction with other support.
- ✓ Communicate about financial wellbeing regularly through a range of channels, both to promote available support and to encourage open discussion about financial issues.
- ✓ Assess employee financial wellbeing, using tried-and-tested measures, to inform or prioritise action.

5 Discontent in the public sector

The discontent we’ve seen in the public sector in recent years – striking, unresolved pay disputes and lack of support for employees – has important consequences for job quality in the UK in 2023. Our survey allows us to explore several indicators where the experience of public sector workers falls behind that of those in the private sector.

First, nearly half of public sector workers feel their pay does not reflect their responsibilities and achievements in their job, compared with around a third of private sector workers.

Figure 1: Pay satisfaction, by work sector (%)



Base: all (n=5,139); private sector (n=4,010); public sector (n=809); voluntary sector (n=289).

Moving away from pay, public sector workers say they're unhappy with a number of workplace issues. First, public sector workers are more likely to feel the negative effects of work on their mental health than those in the private sector. More specifically, they are more likely to feel exhausted and feel under greater pressure than their private sector counterparts.

Unsurprisingly, public sector workers are more likely to perceive their workload as excessive, and more often feel they don't have enough time to get work done within their allotted hours than private sector employees.

Finally, discretionary effort is a key measure of work centrality – how central an employee feels their work is to their life. This year, just over half of respondents said they would be willing to work harder than needed in order to help their employer or organisation, but this was less likely for public sector workers.

Table 2: Non-pay-related issues, by sector (%)

	All in work	Private	Public	Voluntary
I have strong bargaining power (disagree)	45	42	58	48
In a normal week, workload is too much	31	29	42	36
Negative impact of work on mental health	27	25	35	25
Negative impact of work on physical health	26	25	30	22
At work I feel exhausted (always/often)	24	23	30	20
Under excessive pressure (always/often)	21	21	25	17
Enough time to do work (disagree)	19	18	26	23
I am willing to work harder than I need (agree)	51	52	44	57

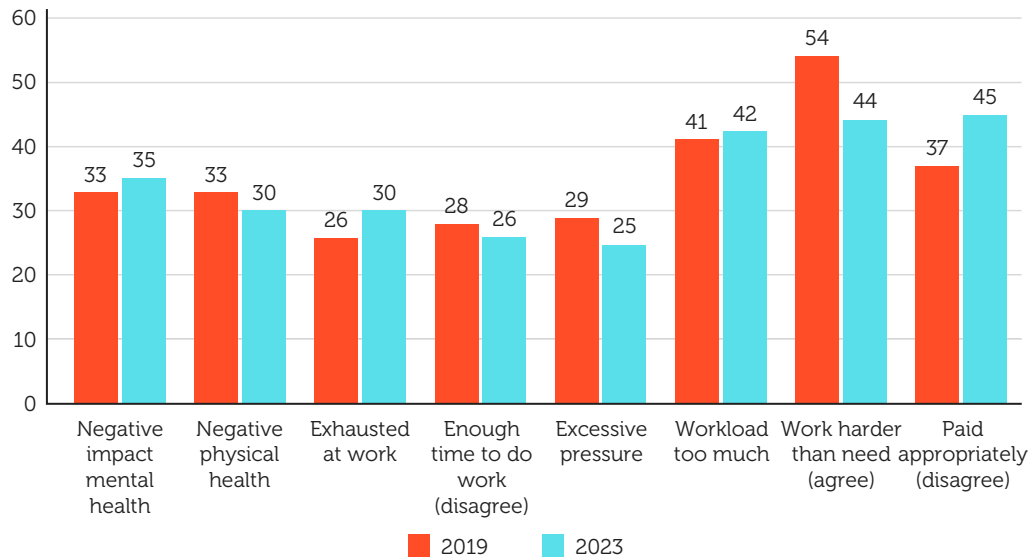
Base: all (n=5,139); private sector (n=4010); public sector (n=809); voluntary sector (n=289)

How have things changed?

Comparing 2023 with pre-pandemic 2019 paints a mixed picture, with some indicators improving, some worsening and some staying the same.

Public sector workers are more dissatisfied with their pay in 2023, with the number of respondents who feel their pay fails to match their job responsibilities increasing from 2019. There is little change in the private and voluntary sectors. Employees in the public sector have also shown less discretionary effort, or 'going the extra mile', since 2019, with 10% fewer respondents saying they'd work harder than needed to help their organisation. More public sector workers either feel they are working hard enough already and are unwilling to do more or are sufficiently discontented not to make the extra effort.

More positively, the share of public sector workers reporting negative effects of work on mental health has decreased slightly, as has the number reporting excessive pressure and not enough time to do their work. Workload has remained unchanged.

Figure 2: Indicators of public sector discontent, 2019 and 2023 (%)

Base: public sector 2023 (n=809); public sector 2019 (n=718).

The positive side of public sector work

Many public sector workers do feel positively about other aspects of their work – for some, more so than those in the private sector. Unsurprisingly, they are much more likely to feel they do useful work for society and are more highly motivated by the core purpose of their organisations. While the public sector clearly faces challenges in some areas of job quality, it would be unwise to suggest that work in the public sector is entirely worse than in the private sector.

6 Job design and the nature of work

Broadly, we are concerned about how people *feel* about work and their jobs. What's important here is to consider whether the ways in which jobs are designed facilitate positive feelings for employees. Here, we explore whether people feel part of their organisation, find meaning in their work, are engaged and motivated to work hard, and are able to assert control over *how* they work.

Overall, most people feel positively about the way their job provides them with a means of achieving satisfaction in their working life, but many also feel indifferent and some harbour more negative feelings.

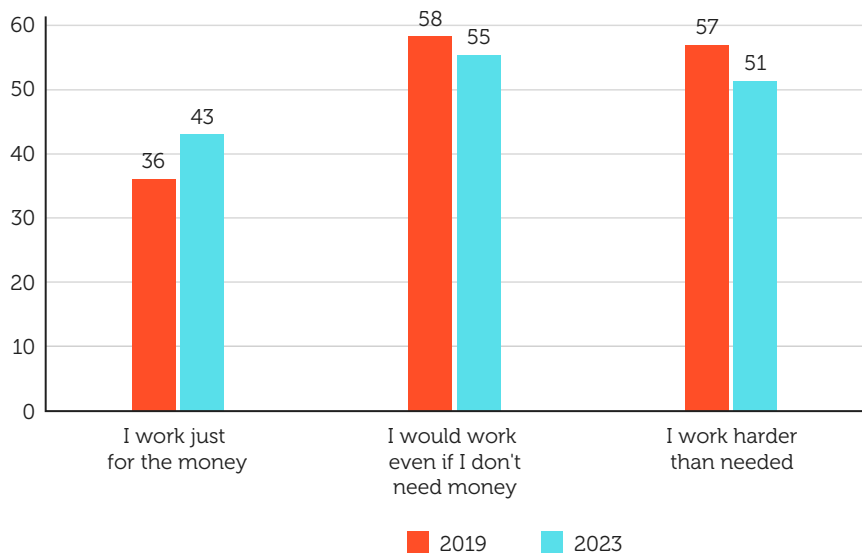
Work appears to be less central to people's lives

In 2023, respondents feel mixed on how they view their work. Positively, more than half of the sample would enjoy having a paid job even if they didn't need the money, and a similar number are willing to work harder than needed to help their organisation. This notion of extra effort is highlighted further,

with more than half reporting they do things not formally required by the job and make innovative suggestions to improve the quality of their team or department, and more than two-thirds stating they help others when their workload increases.

However, employees are split on whether they feel a job is purely transactional – just a way of earning money, and nothing more. Forty-three per cent feel it is, 20% are in the middle, and 37% disagree. More worrying is the fact that those viewing work as transactional has increased from 36% in 2019, while the number of respondents who feel they would work even if they didn't need the money, and work harder than needed to help the organisation, has dropped.

Figure 3: Work centrality attitudes, 2019 and 2023 (% agreeing)



Base: 2023 (n=4,566); 2019 (n=4,465).

Employees find meaning in their work

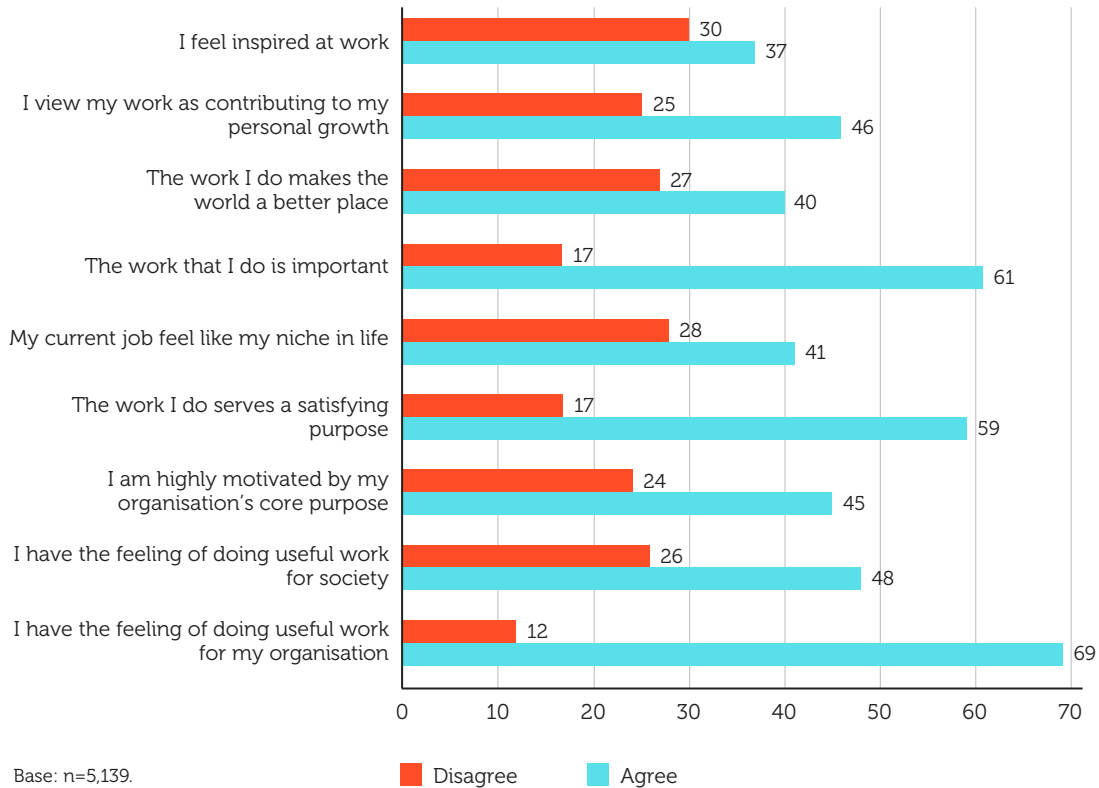
In 2023, staff generally feel positive about their jobs not only serving a positive purpose, but providing intrinsic fulfilment.

More than two-thirds of employees feel their work is useful for their organisation, and almost as many view their work as important. Less than half, however, agree they are motivated by the core purpose of the organisation, with a quarter disagreeing.

There was less support for the notion of doing useful work for society, with just less than half agreeing. Similarly, only 40% of respondents feel their work makes the world a better place. But these are lofty, ambitious questions and it is still positive to see around half of respondents reporting positively on these, with just a quarter feeling negatively.

In terms of personal fulfilment, nearly two-thirds of respondents think their work serves a satisfying purpose, just less than half feel their work contributes to personal growth, and around 40% think their current job feels like their niche in life. Fewer people feel inspired by their work – 37% agreed and 30% disagreed.

Figure 4: Meaningfulness of work (%)



Most of the workforce is engaged and motivated

Employees generally feel engaged and motivated at work, with half saying that time flies at work and that they are enthusiastic about and feel immersed in their job. However, only around a quarter of workers feel full of energy at work. Positively, relatively few respondents feel lonely, bored or miserable at work, but they are more likely to feel under excessive pressure.

Employees have autonomy over much of their work environment

We know that feelings of autonomy in how we work are key to experiencing positive outcomes at work, notably positive mental health. Data from 2023 suggests workers are being afforded a good level of autonomy at work, which is positive.

Large majorities of employees feel they are able to use their personal initiative or judgement in carrying out their work, are allowed to make decisions about what methods they use to complete the work, are allowed to decide on their own how to go about their work, have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how they work, and have autonomy in making decisions.

Table 3: Employee autonomy at work (%)

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
My job gives me a chance to use my personal initiative or judgement in carrying out work	76	14	8
I am allowed to make decisions about what methods I use to complete my work	71	16	11
I am allowed to decide on my own how to go about doing my work	70	17	10
My job allows me to make a lot of decisions on my own	69	17	9
I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I work	65	20	6
My job provides me with significant autonomy in making decisions	59	23	15

Base: n=5,139.

Somewhat less positive are employee perceptions of the influence they have over aspects of their job. Regarding how they do their work, more employees feel they have a lot of influence, but a third feel they have some, and a quarter little or none. Regarding the pace at which they work, employees are extremely mixed, with a similar share feeling they have a lot, some or little to no influence. Perceptions of the tasks they do in their job and start and end of a work day are more negative, with just a quarter of respondents feeling they have a lot of influence.

Table 4: Employee autonomy at work, 2019 and 2023 (%)

In general, how much influence do you have over...	A lot		Some		Little or none	
	2019	2023	2019	2023	2019	2023
How you do your work	45	42	31	33	23	24
The pace at which you work	37	33	31	34	31	31
The tasks you do in your job	25	24	34	36	39	39
Start and end of day	25	26	22	26	52	47

Base: all who are self-employed in 2019 (n=4,546); all who are self employed in 2023 (n=4,634).

Recommendations for practice

Designing jobs in a way that benefits employees is hugely important, not least because we know that a job that is interesting, meaningful and gives employees autonomy can lead to them feeling more engaged and motivated at work, more committed to their organisation and more closely aligned to the values and goals of the business. Our *Employee engagement evidence review* highlights the outcomes of an engaged and motivated workforce, notably greater job satisfaction, improved wellbeing, and an upturn in performance.

Facilitating feelings of engagement, commitment and motivation is not the responsibility of people professionals alone; rather, it requires positive behaviour from managers at all levels of the organisation and from each employee. Several aspects of people management consistently crop up as key drivers of engagement and related constructs:

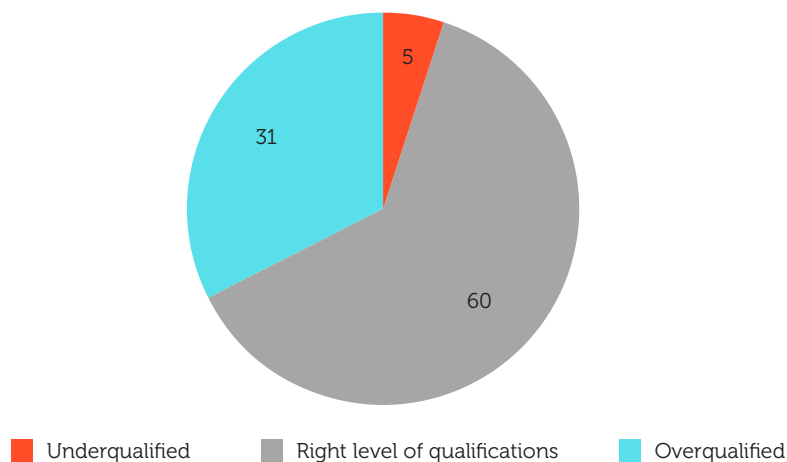
- ✓ Workers must feel properly supported by their managers and colleagues and should receive good-quality and timely feedback.
- ✓ Being empowered in one's job is very important. This includes having work autonomy – for example, being able to make decisions about how and at what pace one works – and having the right skills and the confidence to do a good job.
- ✓ Employees must not feel overwhelmed by the demands of their job.
- ✓ Employees' motivations are shaped by individual factors. These include how we identify as people, personally and professionally, and our ability to 'self-regulate' or manage our behaviour and not be distracted from our goals.

7 Skills, qualifications and knowledge

This year's survey considers the extent to which people feel they have the skills and qualifications to do their job, and whether their job facilitates further development.

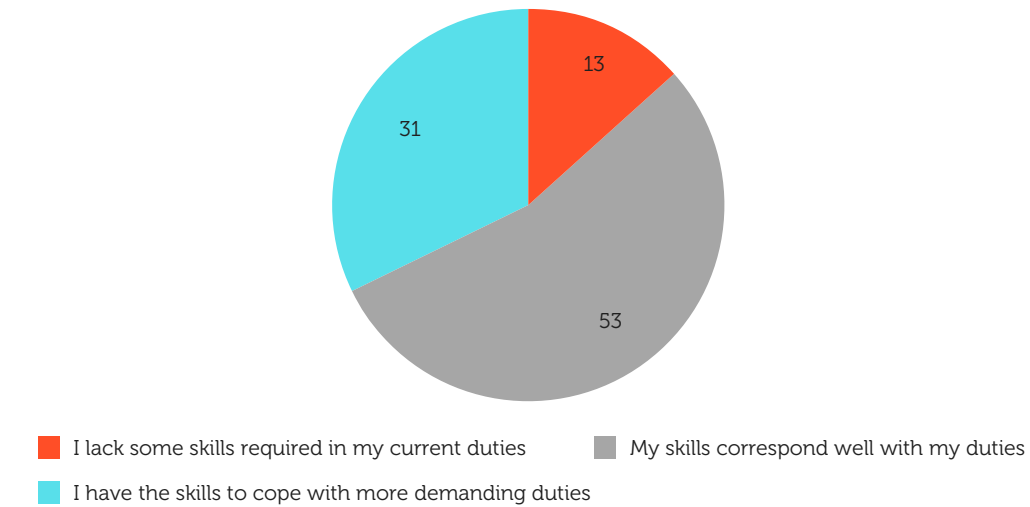
Nearly two-thirds of workers feel they have the right level of qualifications for their job, but nearly a third think they are overqualified. This corresponds with their perceived level of skills in their work; while more than half feel their skills align with their tasks, nearly a third feel they could cope with more demanding duties at work. These responses suggest that jobs sometimes fail to make the full use of the skills and qualifications people have.

Figure 5: Perceived level of qualification (%)



Base: n=5,139.

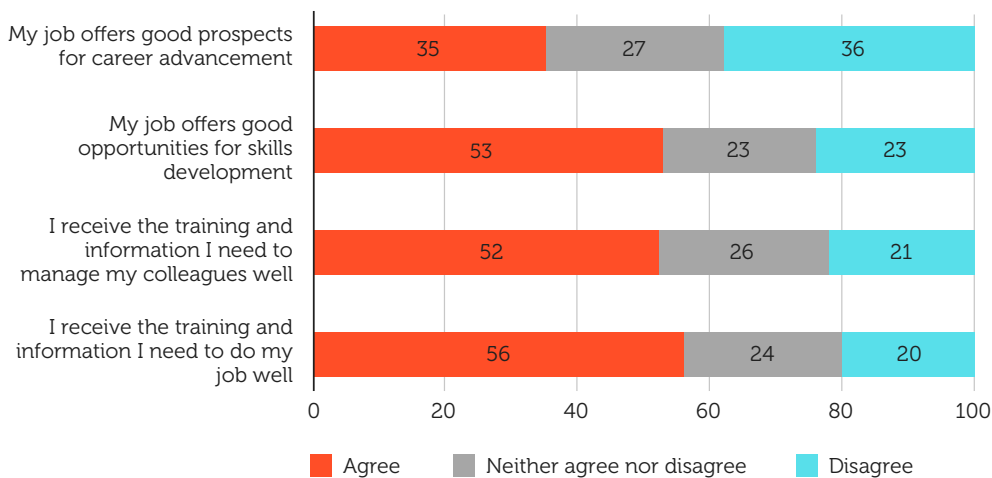
Figure 6: Perceived level of skill (%)



Base: n=5,139.

Employees report mixed feelings when it comes to being given the right tools to work productively. While more than half agree that they receive the training and information needed to both do their job well and to manage colleagues, around a fifth disagree, and a quarter feel indifferent. Similarly, thinking about skill development, more than half agree that their job offers good opportunities to facilitate this, but the rest either feel indifferently or negatively towards this notion. Even more worrying are perceptions of career advancement. A third of workers agree that their job offers good prospects for advancement, but the same number disagree, and a quarter feel neither here nor there.

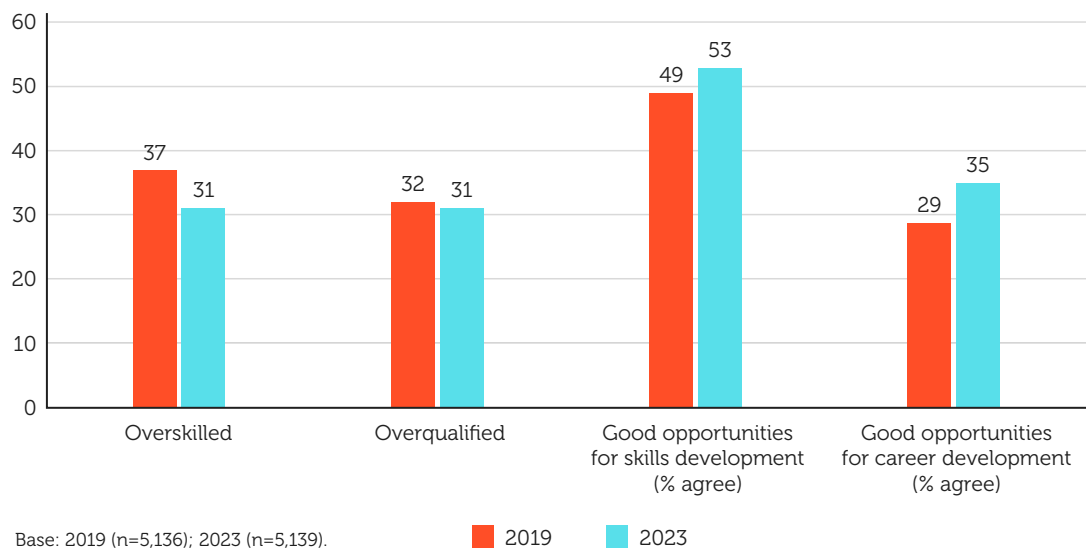
Figure 7: Opportunities for development (%)



Base: n=5,139.

Since 2019, perceptions of qualifications have not changed. However, the number of employees who feel they have the skills to cope with more demanding work has dropped in 2023, and the perception of having the right level of skill has increased. More people now feel their job provides opportunity to develop those skills, and more also see good opportunities for career advancement at work.

Figure 8: Skills and career development, 2019 and 2023 (%)



Recommendations for practice

Our report, *Over-skilled and underused: Investigating the untapped potential of UK skills*, highlights the key consequences of mismatched skills, one of the key issues facing UK organisations. When employees either have the skills to cope with more demanding duties or lack some of the skills needed to perform their job effectively, they are more likely to suffer from psychological distress, lower job satisfaction and greater desire to quit their role. Conversely, when people are able to use their skills fully, organisations benefit from improved retention of workers, a more engaged workforce and better management–employee relationships.

Employers and managers should take a number of specific actions to reduce skills mismatches and improve development opportunities at work:

- ✓ Conduct a skills audit: knowing and understanding the skills of the workforce is key to making better use of those skills, particularly in high demand areas.
- ✓ Review how jobs are designed and team structures to identify areas where the use of skills can be optimised.
- ✓ Rethink recruitment practices: if certain qualifications are irrelevant for the role in question, remove them from the job criteria.
- ✓ Invest in deliberate and well-thought-out training and skills development that explores a variety of interventions.

8 Work–life balance and flexible working

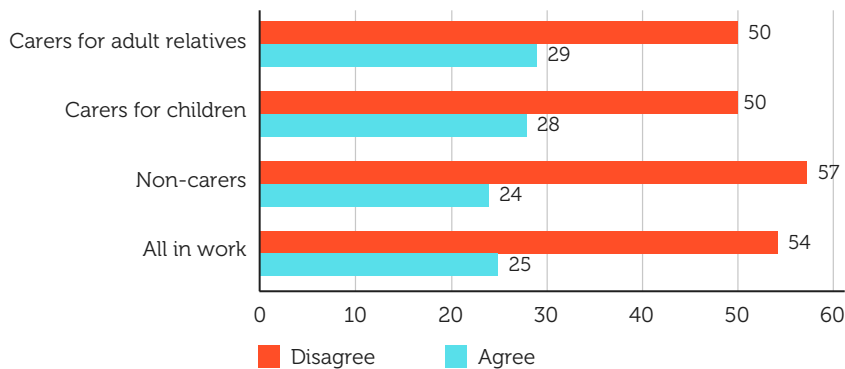
Most people have a good work–life balance, but carers face more barriers

In 2023, most people report having a reasonable work–life balance. Most people don't find their work affects their personal life too strongly, but some do. A quarter of UK employees find it difficult to meet commitments in their personal life due to time spent at work, while over half don't find it difficult.

Similarly, a quarter of workers find it hard to relax in their personal time because of their job, and over half don't find this. Looking at work–life balance from the opposite lens, very few employees find their home life affecting their job negatively, with just 9% of respondents reporting difficulty doing their job due to outside commitments, and more than three-quarters failing to experience this.

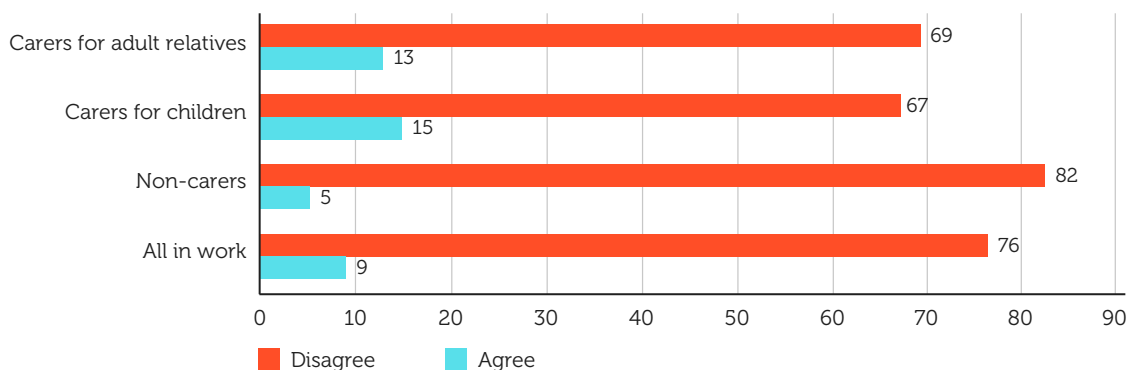
Those with caring responsibilities, who make up more than 40% of our sample (24% caring for children, 16% for related adults and 2% other adults), face greater difficulty achieving a positive work–life balance. They are more likely to experience difficulty in fulfilling outside commitments due to work, and vice versa, than non-carers. Nevertheless, most are able to find a good work–life balance.

Figure 9: Difficulty fulfilling commitments outside of work because of my job (%)



Base: all (n=5,139); non-carers (n=3,176); carers for children (n=1,246); carers for adult relatives (n=790).

Figure 10: Difficulty doing my job because of commitments outside of work (%)

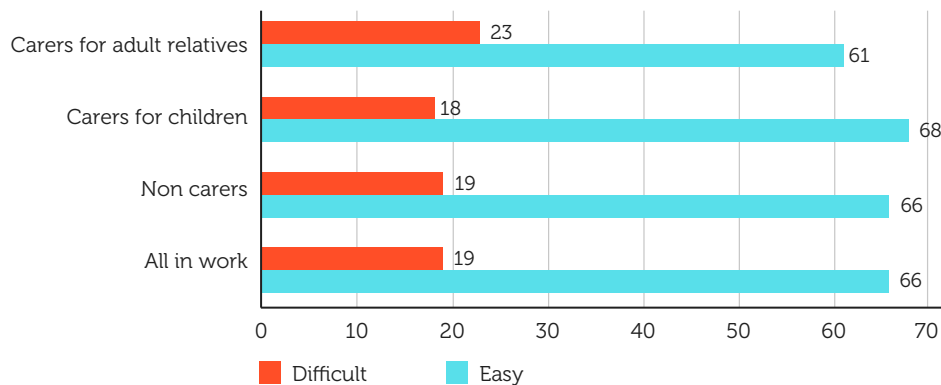


Base: all (n=5,139); non-carers (n=3,176); carers for children (n=1,246); carers for adult relatives (n=790).

Informal flexibility is afforded to most employees

Working flexibly in an ad hoc and informal way is rated as relatively easy in 2023, showing little change from previous years. Two-thirds of staff perceive taking an hour or two from work to deal with personal or care matters as easy. Those with childcare responsibilities actually find this slightly easier than all those in work, but those caring for adult relatives are likely to find it more difficult.

Figure 11: Informal flexibility (%)



Base: all (n=5,139); non-carers (n=3,176); carers for children (n=1,246); carers for adult relatives (n=790).

Formal flexible working is not always used, even when available

This year, working from home (49%) and flexitime (37%) are by far the most common forms of flexible working. Compressed hours, reduced hours, working only during school term times and job-sharing are much less commonly used. In fact, just 5% of workers have not taken the opportunity to work from home when it has been available to them. However, large shares of the workforce report that these forms of flexible working are not available to them. Nearly half of respondents have no opportunity to work from home or to use flexitime. These numbers increase for the other forms of flexible working.

Table 5: Availability and take-up of flexible working opportunities (%)

Flexible working opportunities in last 12 months	Available and used	Available, not used	Not available
Working at home	49	5	44
Flexitime	37	13	46
Compressed working	12	20	60
Reduced hours	11	29	50
Term-time working	4	12	74
Job-shares	2	13	75

Base: n=4,636.

Recommendations for practice

With the availability of flexible working arrangements (FWAs) steadily increasing over the last decade and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important that employers support their staff who wish to work flexibly moving forward.

Our *Flexible working, teleworking and diversity evidence review* shows that FWAs not only lead to more satisfied staff, but help them cope with work and family roles and reduce any conflict between the two. Job satisfaction is particularly high for women who have FWAs made available to them, regardless of whether or not they use them. This suggests that the perception of an organisation as being family-supportive is perhaps more important in development of positive job attitudes than actually using FWAs.

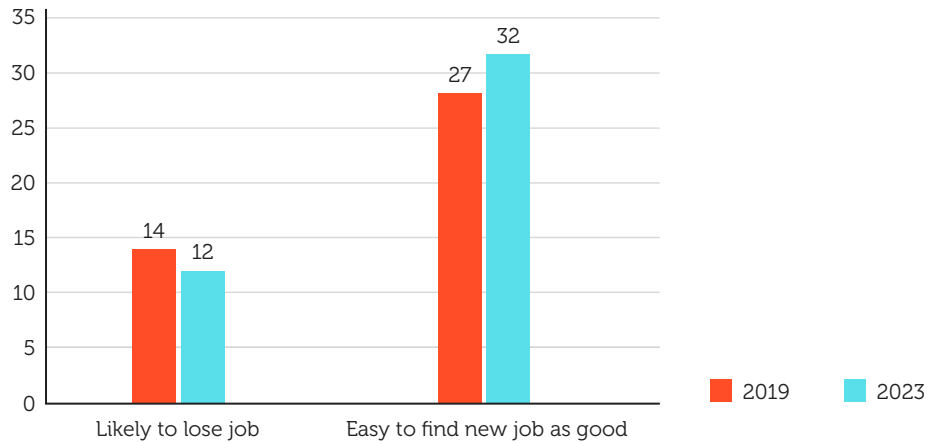
Nevertheless, simply allowing parents more time with their children is not enough; only when parents have autonomy over how their time is distributed are the favourable effects of FWAs felt. Similarly, our *Mental wellbeing and digital work evidence review* finds that giving staff autonomy to control their work environment is key to prevent those working virtually from feeling a pressure to be 'always on' and struggling to switch off from work.

Our new report, *Flexible and hybrid working practices: Employer and employee perspectives*, highlights the importance of providing flexible working opportunities and provides key practical recommendations for employers to:

- ✓ Implement policies that allow staff to request flexible working from day one of employment.
- ✓ Raise awareness of the different forms of flexible working and explore how they can be effective in roles that are traditionally seen as non-flexible.
- ✓ Consult and collaborate with staff when designing hybrid working practices to give them autonomy over how they work.
- ✓ Provide managers with training on how to manage flexible and hybrid teams effectively.

9 Job insecurity and job mobility

People appear to feel secure in their jobs, with just 12% reporting that losing their job in the next 12 months is likely. This has decreased from 14% in 2019. By contrast, two-thirds see it as unlikely. Confidence in finding another job as good as their current one is mixed, with a third saying they would find it easy, and slightly more saying it would be difficult. Nonetheless, the share of respondents who would find it easy is up from a quarter in 2019.

Figure 12: Job security and confidence finding a new job, 2019 and 2023 (%)

Base: 2019 (n=5,136); 2023 (n=5,139).

Nearly a fifth of respondents in 2023 say they'll quit their job in the next 12 months. For those who suggested this was likely, the most common reasons for quitting were to receive better pay and benefits, to increase job satisfaction and to gain a better work–life balance. These reasons align closely with why people left their previous role. In particular, better pay and benefits and better work–life balance were cited as the most popular reasons for leaving previous jobs.

Table 6: Reasons for leaving job (%)

Reasons people likely to quit		Reasons why people did quit	
Better pay and conditions	34	Better pay and conditions	29
Increase job satisfaction	27	Better work–life balance	22
Better work–life balance	23	Senior management	21
Different type of work	22	Different type of work	18
Senior management	21	Increase job satisfaction	18
Opportunities for promotion	13	Made redundant	15
More flexible working hours	10	More flexible hours	12
Dislike line manager or colleagues	9	Conflict with managers or colleagues	10
Increased job security	8	Opportunities for promotion	9
Better training and development	8	Increased job security	7
Discrimination/harassment/bullying	3	Discrimination/harassment/bullying	6
Ethical or green employer	3	Better training and development	6
COVID has changed my career path	2	More remote working	3
Some other reason	25	Pandemic changed career path	2
Don't know	1	Other	15
		Don't know	2

Base: all likely to quit in next 12 months (n=922); all who were employed by a different organisation directly before starting their current job (n=3,272).

Unfortunately, this year's survey shows that many workers would like to move jobs but feel unable to. More than a third would find it difficult to leave their organisation even if they wanted to, while just less than a third would like to leave but find their options too limited. Of these respondents, more than two-thirds are likely to be dissatisfied at work. It appears that many organisations have large numbers of somewhat disoriented workers who feel they cannot easily move elsewhere.

Table 7: Quitting job and satisfaction (%)

How likely are you to quit your job in the next 12 months	All	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Likely	18	11	51
Neither likely nor unlikely	17	14	31
Unlikely	60	72	27
Don't know	5	3	6
It's difficult to quit even if I wanted to	All	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Agree	39	36	51
Neither agree nor disagree	21	20	16
Disagree	38	41	32
Don't know	3	3	2
I'd like to quit but I have too few options to leave	All	Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Agree	31	19	67
Neither agree nor disagree	20	18	16
Disagree	47	62	17
Don't know	2	2	2

Base: n=5,139.

Recommendations for practice

Our *Resourcing and talent planning report* outlines several ways in which organisations can not only create an engaged workforce and retain their most valued people, but can make themselves more attractive to those looking for a new job:

- ✓ Review what is possible when it comes to pay, but also take into consideration any changes that might be helpful to your overall benefits package. Think about pay transparency when advertising roles and be realistic about what is positioned as a benefit.
- ✓ Raise awareness of the importance of maintaining a healthy work–life balance and taking advantage of flexible working arrangements.
- ✓ Take a proactive approach to widening your talent pools. Vary your recruitment outreach approach and channels, and ensure your employer brand is attractive and communicated well to a diverse group of candidates.
- ✓ Engage candidates throughout the recruitment process and help them perform at their best. Remove barriers to work for prospective candidates by adopting inclusive recruitment and selection practices, such as advertising and making jobs flexible, removing unnecessary qualifications from job adverts, and providing financial support and adjustments for candidates that need them during the recruitment process.

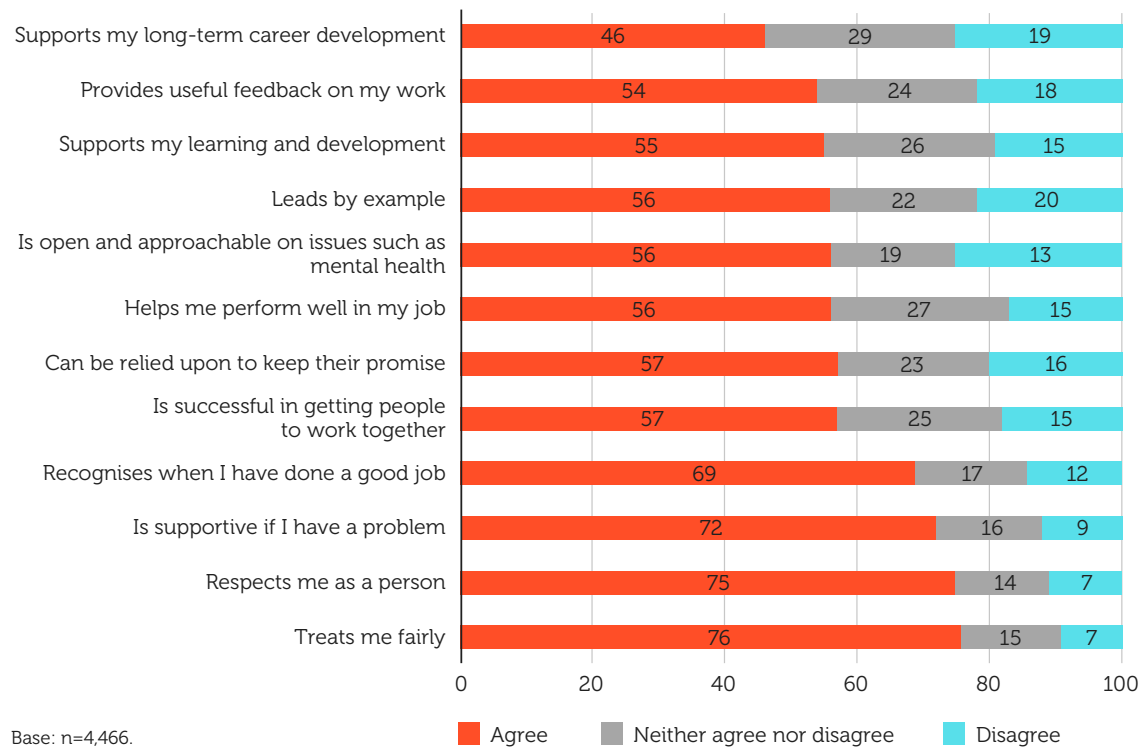
10

Relationships at work

While relationships with line managers or supervisors are generally perceived as good, a persistent minority of between a sixth and a fifth of respondents identify some shortcomings.

Line managers and supervisors are most often commended for treating their staff fairly, respecting them as people, supporting them with problems and recognising good work. Less positive are ratings of supporting long-term career development, providing useful feedback and supporting learning and development. Nevertheless, even the least successful indicators are positive overall. Most of these indicators are more positive in 2023 than they were in 2019, but have only made small improvements.

Figure 13: Perception of managers/supervisors (%)



Relationships with others are also perceived as very positive in 2023. Relationships with other managers, line reports, colleagues in their team, other colleagues, customers and clients, and suppliers were all rated as good by at least three-quarters of employees.

Table 8: Relationships at work (%)

How would you describe your relations at work with...	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor
Your line manager or supervisor	80	13	7
Other managers at your workplace	75	18	7
Staff who you manage	88	9	3
Colleagues in your team	88	10	2
Other colleagues at your workplace	81	15	4
Customers, clients, service users	83	14	3
Suppliers	77	21	3

Base: all (n=5,139); all with a line manager (n=4,446); all who are managers themselves (n=2,206).

Recommendations for practice

Developing strong interpersonal relationships through establishing trust, psychological safety and cohesion between colleagues is key to creating high-performing teams.

Managers and people professionals should:

- ✓ Understand that social cohesion is not a stable trait and is likely to change over time. Check in with the team to understand how they are feeling towards one another and whether strategies to boost cohesion are needed.
- ✓ Build trust and psychological safety through developing bonds and familiarity among team members, for example through teambuilding activities.
- ✓ Build cohesion by ensuring team members feel a sense of belonging and recognise what they contribute to the team with their unique skills and personalities.

11

Voice in the workplace

In 2023, the most commonly available channels through which employees can express their views to senior managers are one-to-one meetings, team meetings and employee surveys. These are also the channels highlighted by respondents who report having no channels available to them (20% of employees) as those they would most commonly use if they were available. However, more than half of this group say they would not use any of the listed channels.

Table 9: Voice channels available/channels I'd like to have if none are available (%)

Available		Would like to have if none available	
One-to-one meetings	56	One-to-one meetings	22
Team meetings	46	Team meetings	16
Employee survey	43	Employee survey	16
Department/organisation meeting	24	Department/organisation meeting	6
Trade union	17	Trade union	7
Online forum	15	Online forum	3
Employee focus group	11	Employee focus group	3
Staff association	4	Staff association	2
Other	1	Other	2
No channel available	20	None of the above	53

Base: all (n=4,634); all with no voice channel (n=860).

Of those who use the voice channels, one-to-one meetings, team meetings and employee focus groups are rated as the most effective for expressing their views. Non-union staff associations, trade unions and online forums are rated as the least effective.

Table 10: Employee ratings of channels to senior management (%)

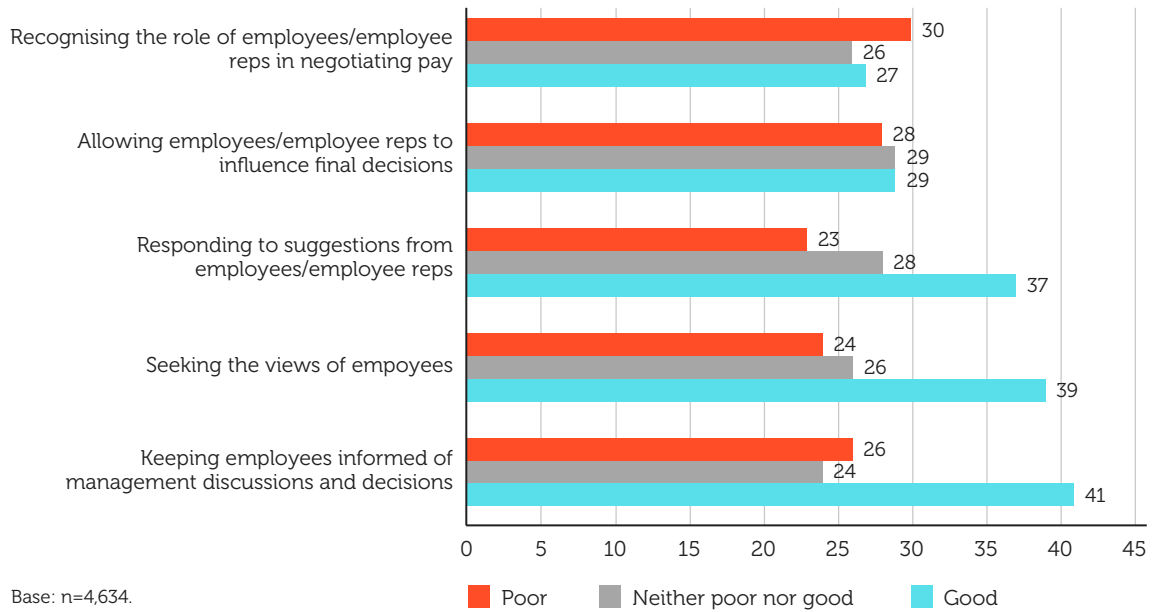
	Sample number	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Don't know
One-to-one meetings	2,676	73	16	9	2
Team meetings	2,270	66	20	11	2
Employee focus group	537	54	22	12	12
Department/organisation meeting	1,169	49	27	24	5
Employee survey	2,068	44	26	25	4
Online forum	755	43	27	19	11
Trade union	839	39	22	18	21
Staff association	202	34	38	17	11

Base: n=4,634.

Perceptions of managers' role in enabling voice are mixed

Respondents have mixed to positive feelings about how managers enable and encourage employee voice at work. Nearly half feel managers are good at keeping employees informed of management discussions and decisions, while slightly fewer feel they effectively seek the views of employees. However, opinions on how managers allow staff or their representatives to influence final decisions or negotiate pay are much more mixed. Around the same amount of people feel they are good, neither good nor poor, or poor.

Figure 14: Perceptions of managers' ability to enable employee voice (%)



The reasons workers don't join unions are different depending on the sector

Given the volume of employees who express unhappiness with pay and non-pay-related aspects of work, it is reasonable to question why workers do not join unions in much greater numbers.

In 2023, reasons for not joining a union vary dramatically in the public and private sectors. In the public sector, the cost of joining and the perception that membership would bring no benefits are cited as key reasons. In the private sector, the lack of a trade union or staff association, either in the workplace or for their type of work, is the most common reason not to join. It should be noted that in both sectors, around a quarter of respondents report none of the listed options as reasons for not joining a union, so it is possible there are more reasons not covered in the survey, or the issue has never come up.

Table 11: Why workers say they don't join a trade union (%)

Most important reason (all not in a union)	All in work	Private	Public
No union or staff association at my workplace	36	40	8
No union or staff association for my work	18	19	5
It would not bring me any advantages	10	10	18
Makes no difference in a workplace like mine	9	10	6
I get all the benefits anyway	7	7	10
I disagree with them in principle	12	12	14
Would only cause trouble at my workplace	3	3	4
Would damage my job prospects	2	2	4
It costs too much	10	8	31
Management disapproves of them	3	4	2
None of the above	24	23	31

Base: all (n=4,155); private sector (n=3,481); public sector (n=423).

Recommendations for practice

Having a meaningful voice at work is a primary way in which employees influence matters that affect them at work. Our report *Talking about voice* highlights the positive benefits of voice to the organisation, notably higher innovation, a more engaged workforce and lower absenteeism.

This research highlights the role of leaders in encouraging voice through both diffusing tensions and enabling employees to raise concerns and issues (individual voice) and drawing out ideas for enhancing practice (organisational voice). These types of voice are much less likely to occur if leadership fails to encourage it.

- ✓ Employers should provide managers with training to build understanding of how their attitudes, behaviours and leadership style can influence employees' confidence to raise both personal and work-related issues.
- ✓ Managers should create a psychologically safe environment, in which employees feel comfortable speaking up and sharing with others, to provide a bedrock for voice.
- ✓ Employers should develop an open and supportive organisational climate, where individuals feel empowered and motivated to take risks. This could include communicating a clear message that innovation is important and valued, and offering reward and recognition for employees who devise and apply new insights.

12 Conclusion

Overall, the Good Work Index 2023 shows that most employees in the UK continue to be satisfied in their jobs, with little change over the past few years. However, taking such a broad view of job quality could undermine some of the nuances which are key to understanding and improving good work. For example, work now appears to be less central to people's lives than it was in previous years, with employees more likely to see work as purely a way of making money, and less likely to put in extra effort to help their employer.

These changes are particularly stark among public sector workers, who show real dissatisfaction with both pay and non-pay-related workplace issues. More widely, a significant minority of workers are aware of the negative effect of work on their mental and physical health.

Things aren't all bad – relationships at work continue to be strong, people feel secure in their jobs and they are able to achieve a good work–life balance through being given flexibility and autonomy in their roles.

Nevertheless, our 2023 survey shows that there has been a lack of significant progress on raising job quality since the UK Government's Good Work Plan was established in 2018, with large minorities of people continuing to have a poor experience of work. Continuing to assess job quality is vital because, as well as the benefits to individual employees, improving working lives can support efforts to boost labour market participation and help address skill and labour shortages, making good work more accessible to all.



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