UK Working Lives

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CIPD

Championing better work and working lives

SURVEY REPORT | *2019*

UK Working Lives

The CIPD Job Quality Index

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The not-for-profit organisation champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. It has 150,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development.

Survey report

UK Working Lives

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Acknowledgements

This report was written by Dr Daniel Wheatley at the University of Birmingham and Jonny Gifford at the CIPD. The survey was designed by Jonny Gifford, with Ian Neale and Phil Newbold at YouGov. The international index was produced by Jon Boys at the CIPD. We thank YouGov for running the survey and Mark Beatson, Ian Brinkley and other colleagues at the CIPD for their feedback and advice on the research.

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1 Foreword

Access to and opportunity for good work and jobs is a vital part of a healthy society and economy, whatever people's background, skills and experience. This principle has been called out amongst the UN sustainability development goals for the world by 2030, and has been increasingly positioned within national and regional business and political manifestos over the last few years.

Today we are seeing almost record levels of employment in many countries, and the UK in particular has been praised for its 'jobs miracle', growing employment levels as it recovers from the global recession and with the uncertainty surrounding Brexit. But a simple view of employment or unemployment levels is not an adequate gauge of the health of a country's labour market, or the well-being of its workforce. Yes, these are crucial statistics, but beyond the number of people in work, we must also understand the quality of the jobs they do and find ways to improve this.

In this, our second *UK Working Lives* survey, we have again gone out to a large, representative sample of workers in all kinds of occupations and sectors, and asked them to consider the work and jobs they do against the various criteria of good work. We have also researched comparable data from other countries to be able to understand how the UK compares. Some of these comparisons have to cause some concern. For example, for work–life balance, our ranking puts the UK 24th out of 25 comparator economies.

Flexible working arrangements and practices are an obvious area to focus on to support better well-being and work–life balance, and in helping support more gender-balanced and diverse workforces. The CIPD is co-chairing the Government's Flexible Working Task Force, with the aim of understanding and promoting the broader take-up of flexible work in all its forms. This edition of the *UK Working Lives* survey focuses in depth on the area of work–life balance and flexible working. The findings are telling: flexible working arrangements are delivering for some workers but not for others. We see a lack of equality in access to flexible working and clear gender differences in their usage. These insights can help us address some of the cultural, behavioural and practical barriers to wider uptake.

Our survey also provides evidence on six other dimensions of good work: pay and benefits; contracts and the terms of employment; job design and the nature of work; relationships at work; voice and representation; and health and well-being. Each of these dimensions is a crucial area for investment. We shed light on what 'good' looks like in these areas, the current state of play in the UK, and drivers and outcomes.

The *UK Working Lives* survey is central to the CIPD's purpose, to champion better work and working lives by improving practices in people and organisation development for the benefit of individuals, the economy and society. We also see it as a major benchmark in the area of good work or job quality. Since launching in 2018, it has contributed to government thinking, informing recommendations[1] on its response to the 2017 *Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices*.

We hope that practitioners, policy-makers and academics will continue to make use of the *UK Working Lives* survey, both as a source of evidence on the broader condition of the UK labour market and, more importantly, for its insight into how we can improve and protect job quality in every organisation. As well as giving life to economies, work takes up a big part of our lives, and it can, and should, be a force for good for all.

Peter Cheese
Chief Executive
CIPD

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2 Introduction

This report presents the first findings from the CIPD's second annual *UK Working Lives* survey (UKWL). It gives an overview of the survey data, looking across the seven core dimensions we identify of good work.

What is good work?

The CIPD's purpose is to *champion better work and working lives* by improving practices in people and organisation development for the benefit of individuals, the economy and society. We believe that good work is fundamental to individual well-being, supports a strong, fair society and creates motivated workers, productive organisations and a strong economy. The CIPD describes good work as follows:

Good work is fairly rewarded.
Good work gives people the means to securely make a living.
Good work gives opportunities to develop skills and a career and ideally gives a sense of fulfilment.
Good work provides a supportive environment with constructive relationships.
Good work allows for work–life balance.
Good work is physically and mentally healthy.
Good work gives employees the voice and choice they need to shape their working lives.
Good work should be accessible to all.

Good work is affected by a range of factors, including HR practices, the quality of people management and by workers themselves. Across each of these areas of activity or influences, employers need to develop an effective people strategy that includes:

- values, culture and leadership
- workforce planning and organisational development
- employment relations
- people analytics and reporting.

Background to the UK Working Lives survey

Measuring job quality and what good work looks like is increasingly acknowledged in both policy and organisational spheres as being centrally important to assessing contemporary work and the employment relationship, understanding their impact on our lives and productivity, and making sure we improve them wherever we can.[2] In the UK context, the 2017 *Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices* identified several key concerns of relevance to job quality in the modern labour market. Meanwhile, *Thriving at Work: The Stevenson/Farmer review of mental health and employers*[3] heightened the profile of the importance of workplace well-being. The UK Government, in addition, set up the Flexible Working Taskforce in March 2018, co-chaired by the CIPD, which is currently undertaking a review of flexible working policies with the aim to widen the availability and take-up of flexible working.

A range of attempts have been made to identify the constituents of 'good work' and job quality, including through taxonomies developed by Karasek and Theorell,[4] Bartling,[5] Connell and Burgess,[6] Holman,[7] Overrell et al,[8] Rosso et al,[9] and Vidal.[10] Common to these taxonomies are dimensions of job quality which centre on pay (including relative income levels) and benefits, job prospects including opportunities for development and job security, the nature of work including skill, autonomy, and variety, and work–life balance.[11]

In 2017, as part of these recent debates, the CIPD embarked on a project to review the research on job quality and good work and develop a tool to measure the main dimensions

of job quality. To this end, it commissioned two reviews: first, from the perspectives of workers, on what constitutes good or poor job quality and what are the opportunities and pitfalls in measuring it;[12] and second, on the capacity workers have to influence their job quality and the shifting balance of power between employers and employees.[13] This survey is based on this body of work and further consultation with academics, HR experts and government officials. It builds on the *Employee Outlook*, the CIPD's previous survey of UK employees.

The *UK Working Lives* survey provides a key indicator of the current state of work in the UK, giving insight and reference points for those involved in research, policy and practice relating to good work. More specifically, it presents a regular, comprehensive and broadly representative survey of workers across job types, occupations and sectors, complementing other surveys of workers that are less regular (for example, the UK Skills and Employment Survey) or contain less detail on job quality and good work (for example, the Labour Force Survey).

The focus of UKWL: seven dimensions of good work

The *UK Working Lives* survey captures data on seven dimensions of good work, which are summarised in Table 1.[14]

The CIPD Good Work Index includes both objective and subjective measures. Objective measures capture aspects that in principle should be unbiased: for example, data on contract type and the amount people earn. Subjective measures, on the other hand, reflect an opinion, preference or feeling: for example, how meaningful people find their work, the quality of relationships at work and measures of satisfaction with job or life.

At the same time, we measure aspects of good work that are universal – what is good for one person will be good for anyone – and aspects that are relative – what's good for one person may not be for another. For example, no one would contest that more pay is better than less pay, but part-time work and irregular hours are far less clear as they are likely to vary with one's life stage. The same part-time job may be a poor deal for someone who is trying to feed a family or tie down their first mortgage, yet ideal for a student who cannot commit full-time, or an older worker who has paid off their mortgage and wants to wind down a little.

To give a full view of working life, we need to capture both universal and relative aspects of job quality and rely on both objective and subjective measures.

Table 1: Dimensions of good work

Dimension	Areas included
1 **Pay and benefits**	Pay as a percentile and in relation to the Living Wage, subjective feelings regarding pay, employer pension contributions and other employee benefits.
2 **Contracts**	The terms of employment. Contract type, underemployment and job security.
3 **Job design and the nature of work**	Workload or work intensity, autonomy or how empowered people are in their jobs, how well resourced they are to carry out their work, job complexity and how well this matches the person's skills and qualifications, how meaningful people find their work, and development opportunities provided.
4 **Work–life balance**	Overwork, commuting time, how much work encroaches on personal life and vice versa, and HR provision for flexible working.
5 **Relationships at work**	Social support and cohesion. The quality of relationships at work, psychological safety and the quality of people management.
6 **Voice and representation**	Channels for feeding views to senior management, cultural norms on voice and satisfaction with the opportunities for voice.
7 **Health and well-being**	Positive and negative impacts of work on physical and mental health. Often considered as an outcome of job quality.

*Source: adapted from Warhurst et al (2017) and Wright et al (2018).[15]

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Focus on work–life balance and flexible working
In this year's survey, we include an expanded focus on work–life balance and flexible working arrangements, a major current focus of UK government policy. As well as questions covered last year on hours worked, commuting time, work–life balance and flexible work arrangements, the 2019 survey collected additional data on patterns of flexible working and the demand for and the drivers and impacts of flexible work arrangements.

Equality, diversity and inclusion
In addition to the dimensions of job quality explored by the UKWL survey, we consider equality, diversity and inclusion characteristics. This relates to the *distribution* of job quality across societal groups – that is, who has better and who has worse jobs and in what ways. It gives us insight into the extent of opportunities and access to good work in the UK economy. In particular, we reflect on gender, age, presence of a disability and ethnicity.

Occupational groups
We also look at how job quality varies across occupational groups. The occupation in which someone is employed is undoubtedly a central explanatory factor with respect to the quality of work they encounter. We use occupational groupings based on the National Readership Survey (NRS) social grades:[16]

- **A** – Higher managerial, administrative and professional
- **B** – Intermediate managerial, administrative and professional
- **C1** – Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional
- **C2** – Skilled manual workers
- **D** – Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers
- **E** – State pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only.[17]

Research approach

Survey sample
The 2019 UKWL survey was conducted in January 2019. It drew on the same YouGov UK panel of approximately 350,000 adults in work as the 2018 survey, and gave a sample of 5,136 workers. To make the sample representative of the UK as a whole, quotas were used to target the sample and subsequent weights based on ONS figures were applied to the dataset. The sample is representative of the UK workforce in terms of gender, full- or part-time work status, organisation size within each sector and industry.

Trend data
The UKWL survey sets out to give a regular, comprehensive and representative view of contemporary work. It is designed to build trend data so as to map changes in good work over time. However, while we make some comparison with data from the 2018 UKWL, in large part we leave trend data for future years. As we would expect given the short time period, the data in most cases is highly consistent between 2018 and 2019.

Further detail of the survey approach and detail on the statistical analysis conducted is provided in the report Appendix available at **cipd.co.uk/workinglives**.

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Structure of this report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- The next section reports the 2019 focus on the work–life balance and flexible working dimension of job quality.
- The following six sections present the survey results on each of the other job quality dimensions.
- Section 10 looks across the job quality dimensions at their relative importance for key outcomes.
- In the final section we draw together our conclusions and identify areas for future research.

3 Work–life balance and flexible working

Key findings

Flexible working is delivering for some workers, but not for others. There is a lack of equality in access to flexible working arrangements and the impacts of different arrangements vary.

- Three in five UK employees work longer hours than they want. Almost one in four overworks by ten or more hours a week. In addition, UK workers commute on average for 3 hours 45 minutes per week.
- Formal flexible work arrangements are relatively common, especially flexi-time, reduced hours and working from home. However, there is an unmet demand for flexible working, in particular for flexi-time, compressed hours and working from home.
- The main drivers for flexible work arrangements are caring responsibilities (especially for women) and increasing leisure time (especially for men).
- Overall, flexible working arrangements contribute substantially to people's quality of life.
- The 'cost' of working flexibly to one's career is relatively uncommon; indeed, many workers see a benefit in their careers.
- Outcomes of flexible working vary with different arrangements. For example, reducing hours is more likely to hit one's career, while homeworkers are more likely to overwork.

In our contemporary world, the boundaries between work and the rest of our lives are often less clear cut than they have been in the past. The nature of paid work is evolving, as the pace and intensity of work has grown, and work is increasingly conducted with the aid of mobile technologies, resulting in a blurring between work and the rest of our lives.[18] In this context, it can be more challenging to achieve a reasonable balance and there is a risk of organisations developing 'always on' working cultures.[19]

As previous CIPD research has shown, incidence of some forms of flexible working has been '*broadly flat, or increasing very slowly, over the past 10 to 15 years*', but many employees use informal arrangements to work flexibly and there is an increase in the proportion of employees who work from home or remotely.[20]

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The 2019 *UK Working Lives* survey was expanded to have a greater focus on aspects of work–life balance and flexibility in paid work through a series of additional questions. This provides us with a unique insight into not only the factors influencing work–life balance and patterns of flexible work, but also the impacts of the use of flexible working arrangements on both the careers of those using these arrangements, and their overall quality of life.

The analysis presented here is part of a wider CIPD programme of research into flexible working. Separately, we have conducted further analysis of the UKWL survey data on this area, relating this to government policy;[21] and in-depth case study research on effective and innovative practices, providing guidance to employers on implementing flexible work arrangements.[22]

International comparisons on work–life balance

By international standards, the work–life balance of UK workers is very poor, based on a measure of how often job demands interfere with family life.[23] Our ranking puts the UK 24th out of 25 comparator economies, roughly at the same level as Australia, Belgium and Sweden. The best countries for work–life balance in this measure are Hungary, Estonia and Austria; and in the middle we find Norway, the Czech Republic and Mexico.

Table 2: Country rankings of an international index of work–life balance

Work–life balance rank	Country
1	Hungary
2	Estonia
3	Austria
4	Latvia
5	Lithuania
6	Israel
7	Chile
8	Japan
9	Slovenia
10	Iceland
11	Switzerland
12	Norway
13	Czech Republic
14	Mexico
15	Finland
16	United States
17	Denmark
18	Spain
19	Germany
20	France
21	New Zealand
22	Sweden
23	Belgium
24	United Kingdom
25	Australia

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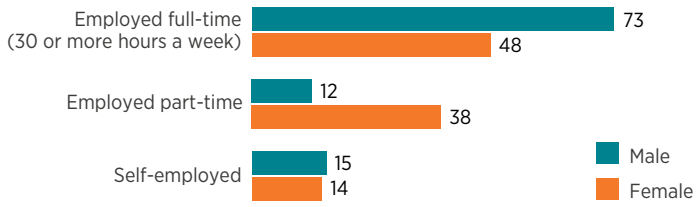
The UKWL survey gives us insight into a more detailed range of aspects of work–life balance. We now look at these in turn, considering working hours, commuting time, work–life balance and flexible working practices.

Working hours

The median hours per week spent working in the UKWL sample overall is 37.5 hours. This is consistent with the UK average reported in government statistics collected, for example, in the Labour Force Survey, which estimated usual hours per week at 37 hours for the quarter July–September 2018.[24]

Time spent in work remains highly gendered, reflecting differences in levels of part-time work between men and women. In line with UK estimates, our survey shows that more than two in five (45%) women employees work part-time compared with one in seven (14%) men (see section 5 for further discussion on contractual status). However, we do find consistency in what constitutes part-time or full-time work for men and for women: mean full-time hours are around 40 hours per week, and part-time hours are around 21 hours for both men and women.

Figure 1: Broad employment status, by gender (%)

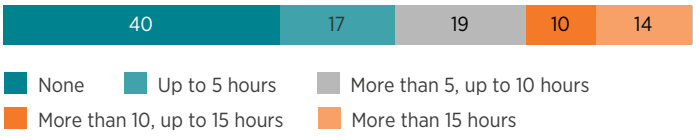


Base: all employees (n=2,707 male; 2,429 female)

Overwork

Presence of overwork is likely to impact negatively on how people balance work with the rest of their lives. Hours overworked is measured by the difference between reported usual hours of work and preferred hours of work 'taking into account the need to earn a living'. The average (median) worker reports around five hours of overwork per week. In total, approximately 60% of workers report that they work over their preferred hours per week, while almost a quarter work more than ten hours over their preferred hours (Figure 2). Managerial and professional workers (social grades A and B) report the longest hours of overwork, equating to 7.1 and 6.8 hours respectively on average per week. Overwork can also be measured with respect to whether individuals feel they have enough time to complete the tasks in their job, which we discuss in section 6.

Figure 2: Hours overworked per week (%)



Base: all workers (n=5,136)

The commute

Commuting represents a considerable additional burden on the time of many workers. While it can be used productively, it is also widely considered as one of the least appreciated work-related activities as it is associated with 'lost time' and uncertainty due to traffic and public transport reliability, and can act as a significant source of dissatisfaction and stress.[25] Consistent with our 2018 data, median total time spent travelling to and

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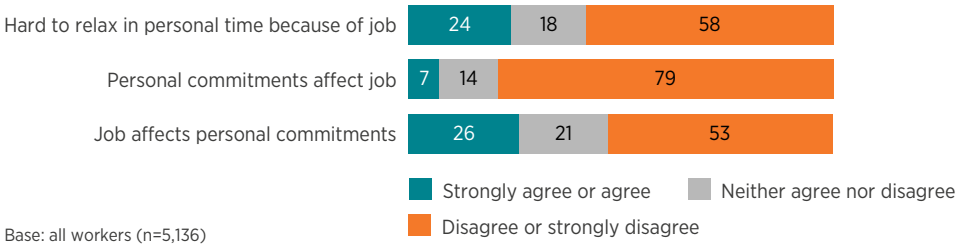
from work, that is, both journeys together, is 45 minutes (mean of 61 minutes), which is equivalent to an additional 3 hours 45 minutes per week of work-related time for a worker who commutes five days a week. Commutes are shorter, on average, for part-time workers (mean of 43 minutes) when compared with those working full-time (67 minutes). The additional work-related time spent commuting differs considerably by region, with workers in London (78 minutes), the east (65 minutes) and the south-east (65 minutes) reporting lengthier commutes. Jobs in higher social grades (A and B) also have longer commutes, averaging approximately 70 minutes, compared with commutes of around 50 and 46 minutes respectively in lower-grade semi-skilled, unskilled and casual (D and E) jobs. In addition, we find that commutes are, on average, shorter among women (55 minutes) compared with men (65 minutes), consistent with existing evidence.[26]

Balance

To offer insight into balance between work and life, we ask workers a series of questions regarding how they manage their work and personal life. In the UKWL sample, we find a notable proportion of workers (24%) report finding it difficult to relax in their personal time because of their job (Figure 3). This is indicative of the spillover of paid work into our personal lives, which can act as a source of work–life conflict and stress.[27] Just over a quarter of workers, meanwhile, report that work affects personal commitments. In contrast, only 7% of workers considered that their personal commitments affect their job.

Those in higher-level jobs report greater difficulties in relaxing in personal time (26% in social grade A and 28% in grade B). Similarly, around 28% of those in social grade A and B report that their job affects personal commitments compared with 23% of those in social grade D. Interestingly, significant differences are not found by gender, perhaps reflecting that methods have been employed by members of our sample to address work–life conflict such as the use of flexible working arrangements.

Figure 3: Balancing work and personal life (%)



Base: all workers (n=5,136)

Availability and use of flexible working arrangements

Flexible working arrangements provide a method of altering the timing or location of paid work. Data on the use of flexible working is collected in the UKWL survey through the question: 'In the last 12 months, have you made use of any of the following arrangements, and if not, are they available to you if you needed them?'[28]

We focus on six types of arrangement. Flexi-time (sometimes called flextime) and compressed hours are flexible working arrangements that focus on the arrangement, rather than reduction, of work time.[29] Reduced hours, job-sharing and term-time working are arrangements that focus on the reduction of work time. Finally, working from home or teleworking focuses on flexibility in work location. Some of these arrangements are more formal in nature, whereas others may take a more informal and occasional form, including for example some types of homeworking and flexi-time.

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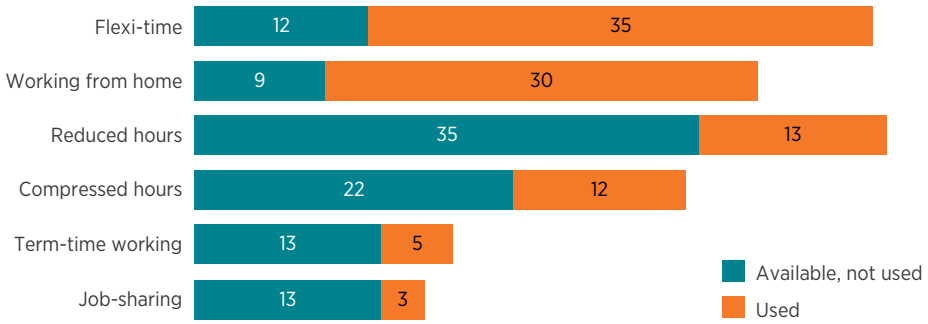
Despite expansion in the provision of flexible working arrangements in the last two decades, existing evidence has shown continued gaps between availability and use of flexible working arrangements, although this varies considerably between different arrangements.[30] In the UKWL survey we find similar patterns (Figure 4). The most commonly available options are flexi-time (available to 47% of employees), reduced hours (47%) and working from home (39%).

More than half of UK workers (54%) work flexibly in some way. The most commonly used flexible working arrangement is flexi-time (35%), which enables workers to choose the start and finish time of the working day, while often still maintaining full-time working hours. Working from home, which may involve a worker being based at/from home on a permanent basis or working from home on a more occasional basis, is used by almost a third of employees. This figure is somewhat larger than estimates from the Labour Force Survey; however, the Labour Force Survey uses a narrower definition focusing on those working at or from home on a more permanent basis.[31]

We find other flexible working arrangements are less common in use. Compressed hours, which involves working the same number of hours per week but over fewer days, is used by 12% of employees in our sample. A similar proportion of employees (13%) report a reduced hours flexible working arrangement. Other reduced hours flexible working arrangements are the least common in use. Job-sharing, in which one full-time job is shared between part-time workers, is only reported by 3% of employees. Meanwhile, working only during school term times is reported by 5% of employees.

Figure 4: Flexible working arrangements (%)

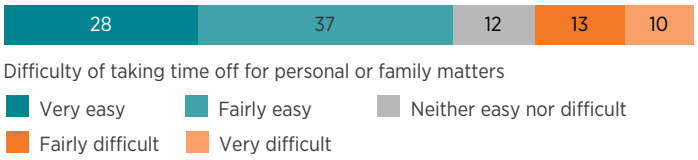


Base: all employees (n=4,546)

The most common responses among employees using a flexible working arrangement regarding how they started using the arrangement included, 'it was openly offered when I accepted the job' (27%), 'I requested it at some point after starting the job' (25%), and 'I just work this way, I didn't have to ask' (26%).

Employees clearly like having options to work flexibly. We see this not only in the uptake of flexible working but also in the evidence of unmet demand. Our survey finds that, excluding the self-employed, one in five employees (21%; n=4,546) has no flexible working arrangement available to them in their current job. But the unmet demand goes far wider than this: two thirds of UK employees (68%) report they would like to work flexibly in at least one form that is not currently available to them. For those who do not have the options, the most desirable arrangements are flexi-time (70% of those who cannot use this arrangement would like to do so), compressed hours (58%) and working from home (49%).

Figure 5: Informal flexiblity in working hours (%)



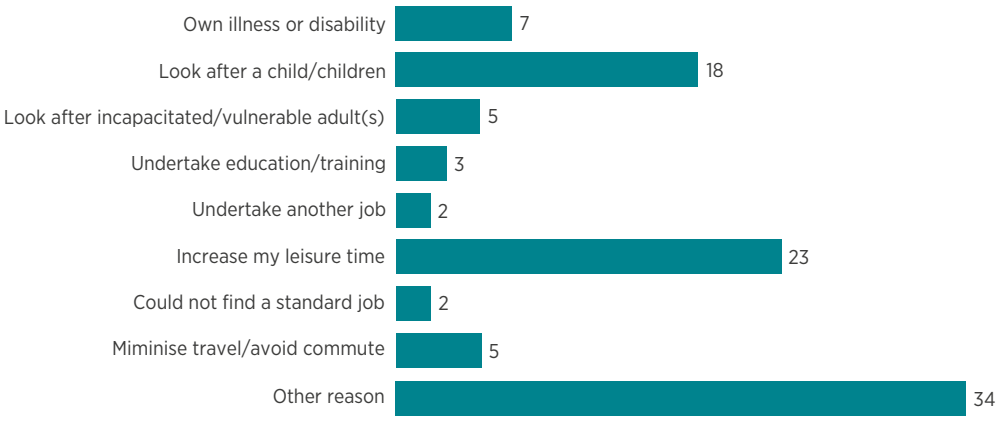
Base: all employees (n=4,546)

Informal flexibility, which can be considered a broader indicator of the culture of flexibility within organisations, is also often highly valued by employees.[32] Informal flexibility enables greater control over the way work interacts with the rest of our lives without requiring formal requests and approval (and associated changes to contractual status). In our sample the presence of informal flexibility, in the form of the ability to fairly or very easily take an hour or two off during working hours to take care of personal or family matters, is reported by around two-thirds (65%) of workers (Figure 5). At the same time, it should be noted that a lack of informal flexibility is present in a number of jobs, with 10% of workers indicating it would be very difficult for them to be flexible in their current jobs. This could in some cases reflect the practical realities of certain jobs, including for example those that are customer-facing and/or require physical presence in the workplace at specific times.

Drivers of flexible working

Aspects of care act as a considerable driver of the use of flexible working arrangements, with just under a quarter (23%) reporting this as the primary reason (Figure 6). It is most common in relation to looking after children (18%), but also looking after incapacitated or vulnerable adults (5%), with the latter offering some reflection of the impacts associated with the changing demography of the UK, which is increasing demand for elderly care.[33] Other drivers include increasing leisure time, which is also reported by around a quarter of flexible workers (23%), as well as to a lesser extent the presence of an illness or disability (7%). Reducing and/or avoiding the commute also acts as a rationale for the use of flexible working arrangements (5%), evidencing the negative impact of commuting on work–life balance.[34] In addition a notable proportion of respondents reported other reasons, which vary from productivity and broader work–life balance benefits to agile working, often as part of a company-wide policy.

Figure 6: Reasons for using flexible working arrangement (%)



Base: employees using flexible working arrangement (n=2,393)

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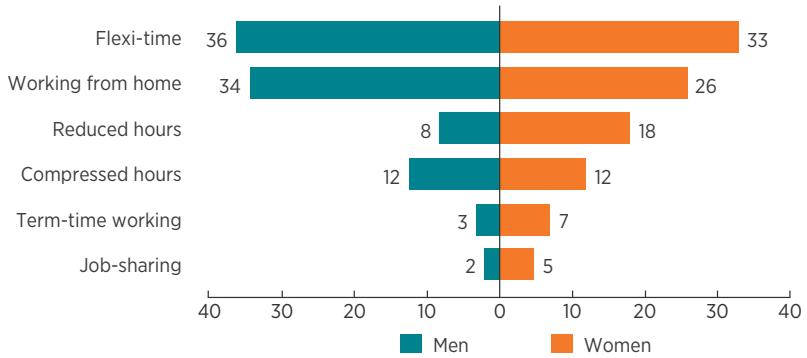
Children act as key drivers of the use of reduced hours arrangements, including job-sharing (26%) and term-time working (42%). Increased leisure time is the primary driver of the use of compressed hours (40%). Meanwhile, those working from home predominantly gave 'other reasons' (51%), with explanations including agile working or it simply being the nature of the job, although 12% of employees also reported avoiding or reducing the commute as the primary reason for use of this flexible working arrangement.

We also find heavily gendered reasons for the use of flexible working arrangements. Looking after children accounts for a quarter of the moves into flexible working among women, but only 13% for men. Meanwhile, 28% of men report increased leisure time as the primary driver, compared with 19% of women.

Characteristics of flexible workers

Patterns of use of flexible working arrangements vary considerably by gender and other demographics. Reduced hours arrangements, in particular, show significant gender differences, with the proportion of women reporting these arrangements more than double that of men (Figure 7). Reduced hours is reported by 18% of women but only 8% of men. Job-sharing is reported by 5% of women compared with 2% of men, while 7% of women report term-time working compared with 3% of men. Given the already identified link between use of reduced hours arrangements and caring responsibilities, the gendered nature of flexible working arrangement use is highly likely to reflect gendered patterns in the provision of care.[35]

Figure 7: Use of flexible working arrangements, by gender (%)



Base: all employees (n=4,546)

Somewhat unsurprisingly, and in line with these patterns, we find that almost two-thirds (63%) of women in the 35–44 age group report use of a flexible working arrangement, compared with around half of most other age groups. Meanwhile, greater proportions of men report use of arrangements that offer greater control over both the timing (flexi-time) and location (working from home) of paid work while usually enabling full-time hours to be retained.[36] Flexible working is more common among workers who have a disability, being reported by around two-thirds of these workers.

Higher-level jobs (social grade A and B) are those more likely to involve use of flexible working arrangements in general. Flexi-time and working from home are the most prominent forms of flexible working arrangement among higher-level jobs. Flexi-time is reported by just under half (47%) of workers in social grade A and 45% of social grade B, while homeworking is reported by 52% of those in social grade A. In comparison, flexi-time is only reported by 15% of those in grade D or E jobs and homeworking among just 7%. Reduced hours is more evenly spread, as around 15% of those in both grade A and C report this flexible form of work.

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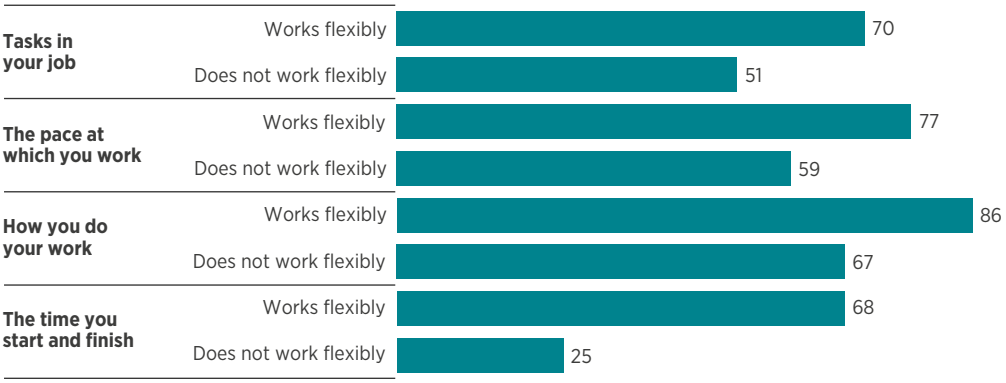
Characteristics of flexible jobs

Levels of autonomy present in jobs are generally higher among those who work flexibly. This is particularly pronounced with respect to the start and finish times of work as we would expect, as we find over two-thirds of flexible workers report this form of autonomy compared with around a quarter of those who do not work flexibly. Differences are also present in other forms of autonomy, including job tasks, pace of work and how work is done (Figure 8). This is likely to be a product of the relative levels of flexibility and autonomy available across occupations, as it has been identified in previous research that greater levels of autonomy are found in more highly skilled occupations[37] and it is in these jobs where greater flexibility is also present, as already noted. This reflects both practical limitations – customer-facing jobs may not lend themselves to workers using flexi-time or working from home – as well as employers in some cases not being supportive of flexibility because of concerns over the misuse of company time and resources.[38]

Figure 8: Reported presence of autonomy among flexible and non-flexible workers (%)



Base: employees (n=4,546, excludes those with job tenure under one year)

Additional indicators of the characteristics of flexible working provide initial insight into some of the impacts of these forms of work. We find that overwork is greatest among those reporting working flexibly from home. This shows that working flexibly, whether on a permanent or more occasional basis, may not always solve tensions between work and personal life and could even contribute to the blurring of boundaries between them.[39]

Across the UKWL sample, we find job satisfaction is higher among those reporting working flexibly. We find 86% of flexible workers report being satisfied with their job compared with 77% of those who do not work flexibly. Variations by different flexible working arrangement do not reveal considerable differences, with the exception of reduced hours, where marginally lower proportions (84%) report being satisfied with their job.

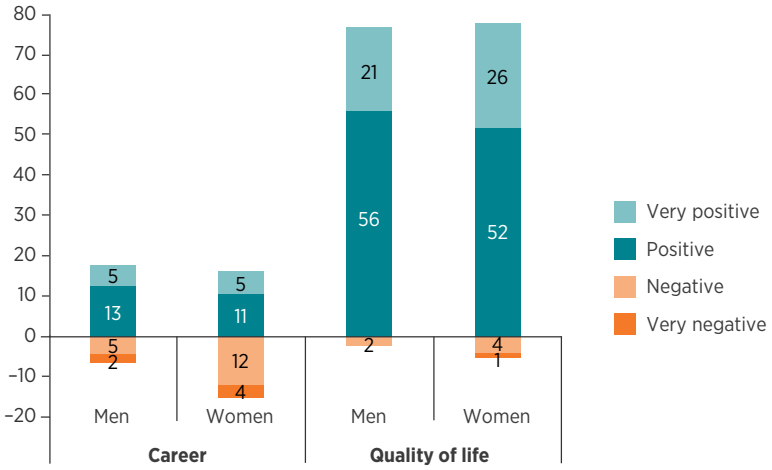
Career and quality of life impacts of flexible working

A contribution of the 2019 UKWL is in enhancing our understanding of the impact of flexible working arrangements. The survey included specific questions focusing on the impacts of the use of flexible working arrangements, using the question, 'In your opinion, what impact, if any, has working in a flexible working arrangement had on your...', with separate questions covering career prospects and quality of life.

We find that only a relatively small proportion (17%) of employees report positive impacts on their career from the use of a flexible working arrangement, while quality of life benefits are very clear and are reported by over three-quarters of flexible workers (78%). Impacts do vary to some extent by arrangement. Job-sharers report greater positive career impacts

(35%), as do term-time workers (28%). Unsurprisingly, it is employees using all forms of reduced hours arrangements who report the greatest negative career impacts: we know that part-time work is often lower quality and can be bad for people's pay and careers.[40] Negative career impacts are reported by 14% of job-sharers and 18% of term-time workers. Meanwhile, over a quarter of those using reduced hours (27%) report a negative impact on career from the use of this arrangement. Quality of life impacts do not vary as greatly between arrangements.

Figure 9: Impacts of flexible working, by gender (%)



Base: employees using flexible working arrangement (n=2,285)

Impacts are also highly gendered, consistent with overall patterns of flexible working. Double the proportion of women report negative career implications (15%) from use of a flexible working arrangement compared with men (Figure 9). While both men and women overwhelmingly report positive impacts with regard to the quality of life from flexible working, 5% of women report negative impacts on quality of life, compared with only 2% of men.

4 Pay and benefits

Key findings

Absolute levels of pay are important to our working lives, especially at lower income levels, but it is subjective views (perceptions of relative incomes and appropriateness of pay) that tell us more about the happiness of workers.

- Just under half of workers consider themselves to be paid appropriately, considering their responsibilities and achievements, and over a third do not. Those who are happier with their pay are also happier with their job overall.
- The Real Living Wage is a clear threshold in pay satisfaction. Only a third of those earning less are satisfied with their pay, whereas this jumps to nearly half for those earning between the Real Living Wage and double this rate.
- Satisfaction with pay is predictably higher among higher-level occupations, and lower in the public sector.
- Around seven in ten employees say they are saving for a pension. Most employees receive a contribution from their employer of 6% or less.
- A range of non-pension benefits are available to employees, with the most common being social, enhanced leave and food benefits.

Pay and benefits are an obviously important indicator of the quality of work. However, we should acknowledge at the outset that some jobs that are highly paid exhibit a number of qualities that we may consider bad. In particular, they may involve high workloads and work intensity, demand long hours that limit leisure time and involve greater levels of stress. Clearly such factors risk reducing happiness and well-being despite good pay. Pay is nevertheless relevant to our understanding of job quality.

International comparisons on pay

According to an OECD measure, the UK is slightly below average in 'earnings quality'. This index accounts for both the level of earnings and their distribution across the workforce.[41] The UK sits 15th out of 25 comparator countries, alongside the United States and New Zealand. The top countries for earnings quality are Switzerland, Norway and Denmark; and the bottom are Mexico, Chile and Estonia.

Table 3: Country rankings of an international index of pay (earnings quality)

Pay rank	Country
1	Switzerland
2	Norway
3	Denmark
4	Belgium
5	Germany
6	Austria
7	Iceland
8	Australia
9	Finland
10	France
11	Sweden
12=	Latvia*
12=	Lithuania*
14	United States
15	United Kingdom
16	New Zealand
17	Spain
18	Japan
19	Slovenia
20	Israel
21	Czech Republic
22	Hungary
23	Estonia
24	Chile
25	Mexico

*Due to absent data, population means are imputed for these figures. This maintains the ability to produce an overall ranking but makes the ranking of the country on this metric unreliable.

The UKWL survey allows us to consider remuneration in greater detail, in both its objective form – that is, the amount a worker earns (as well as any additional benefits they receive) – as well as the subjective feelings an individual has regarding their pay and its impact on their financial status.[42]

Objective measures of pay

Actual levels of pay relate to job quality and satisfaction with work, but we also view our pay in relation to what our peers earn. Relative pay has been shown to be significant in much existing research, whether that be workers' pay relative to national pay levels or the Living Wage, or their pay relative to colleagues and social connections.[43] In our analysis we consider pay levels relative to the National Living Wage and Real Living Wage.

The National Living Wage (NLW) at the time of the survey was £7.83 per hour for those aged 25 and over. The Real Living Wage was £9.00 across the UK, and £10.55 in London.[44] Median weekly pay in the UK in April 2018, according to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), equalled £569, an increase of 3.5% on the previous year.[45] The weekly median pay in our sample is notably lower at £488 (£25,350 per annum). It is also lower than the figure in the 2018 UKWL, which was £511, itself well under the previous ASHE estimate.

It should be noted that pay is complex and challenging to calculate accurately in a sample survey. In total a third of our sample chose not to provide objective pay details in their responses to the 2019 survey. This could be for a number of reasons, including difficulties in accurately reporting pay or simply preferences not to provide this information. The large number of non-responses may have been the primary cause of the bias in our data, evidencing the challenges of researching the relative role of objective pay in job quality. This limits the usefulness of the absolute values in our data. However, it is still possible to consider patterns in how pay is split across broad groups.

Across occupation groups we find stark variations. A little under half (45%) of higher-level managerial, administrative and professional occupations (NRS social grade A) report earning at least twice the Real Living Wage. In contrast, one in seven skilled manual workers report earning at least twice the Real Living Wage, while only 6% of those in social grade D or E jobs report this level of pay.

Subjective measures of pay

Given the limitations of our data on objective pay, we consider in greater detail subjective measures of pay. Research has highlighted the relevance of perceptions of wealth and financial status.[46] While subjective pay measures can be biased to some degree by workers overestimating their own value,[47] they can offer greater insight into pay relative to both individual and household costs of living. Cost of living is impacted by a range of factors, from region of residence and local housing markets to presence of dependent children and preferred living standards.[48] The UKWL survey explores subjective pay in relation to whether respondents consider the pay they receive to be appropriate.

Just under half of our sample agree that their pay is appropriate, considering their responsibilities and achievements, reflecting a reasonable degree of satisfaction with pay. As we would expect, higher levels of satisfaction with pay is moderately correlated with higher objectively measured pay (0.309).[49] Importantly, we find that the Real Living Wage appears to act as a threshold of sorts for levels of satisfaction with pay. Only around a third of those earning below the Real Living Wage report satisfaction with pay, but this increases to just under half (47%) of those earning at least the Real Living Wage (but less than twice the rate), and almost seven in ten of those earning at least twice the Real Living Wage. We also find a moderate positive correlation (0.384) overall between satisfaction with pay and general job satisfaction.[50]

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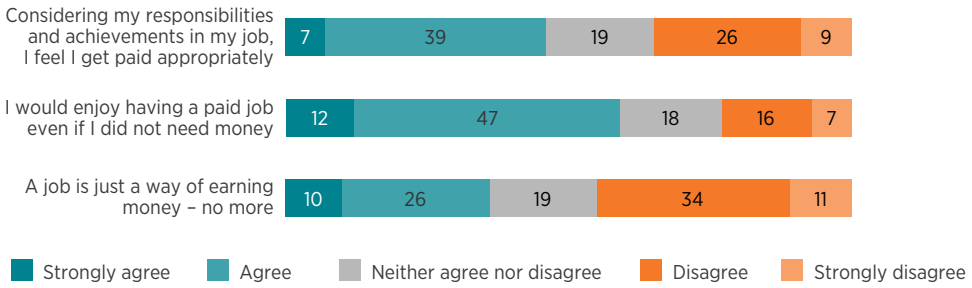
Figure 10: Subjective measures of pay and work centrality (%)



Base: all workers (n=5,136)

Satisfaction with pay differs considerably by different occupational groups. Well over half (57%) of those in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (grade A) feel their pay is appropriate. Relative levels of satisfaction with pay decrease as we move to lower NRS grades, with just under half of grade B workers feeling their pay is appropriate, 45% of grade C1, 39% of grade C2 and 37% of grades D and E.

Turning to contractual status, fewer of those running their own business are satisfied with their pay (40% satisfied) than those on other contract types who give more consistent responses (46% for permanent employees and 46% for temporary and non-standard contracts), while those working as freelancers or independent contractors are the most satisfied (54%) with their pay. Satisfaction with pay is also marginally lower among workers in the public sector, with 13% reporting strong dissatisfaction compared with around 9% of workers in other sectors. This could perhaps be evidence of the impact of real-term pay cuts that have occurred in this sector in the last decade.[51]

Few differences in subjective feelings regarding pay are recorded by diversity characteristics. We do find that those in the middle-age group (35–44) are marginally more satisfied with their pay, with half stating they feel their pay is appropriate, compared with around 45% of other age groups. Interestingly no notable differences are found in subjective measures of pay by gender.

In addition to direct questioning on pay, the UKWL survey also collects data on the relative importance of work. Here we find that three-fifths of workers place a positive value on their jobs, stating that they would enjoy having a job even if they did not need the money (Figure 10). Equally, though, a notable portion of respondents (45%) report viewing work as just a way of earning money, evidencing some division in the way individuals consider the role of paid work in their lives.

Pensions and other employee benefits

In addition to pay many workers receive a number of other benefits from engagement in paid work. This includes pension contributions from employers, but also a range of other benefits, including for example transport schemes and health care plans. Overall, just under four in five employees report saving for a pension through a company pension plan. Of these employees, 71% receive a contribution from their employer of 6% or less of their salary, 18% receive a contribution of 7–10% of their salary, and 12% of employees receive a contribution of 11% or more (Figure 11).

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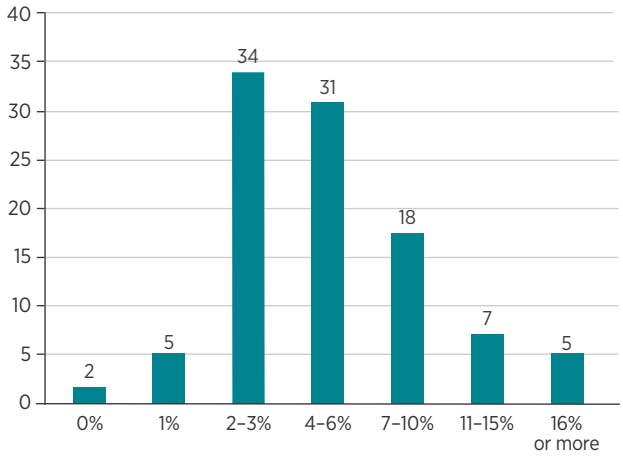
Figure 11: As a proportion of your salary, how much does your employer contribute into your company pension? (%)

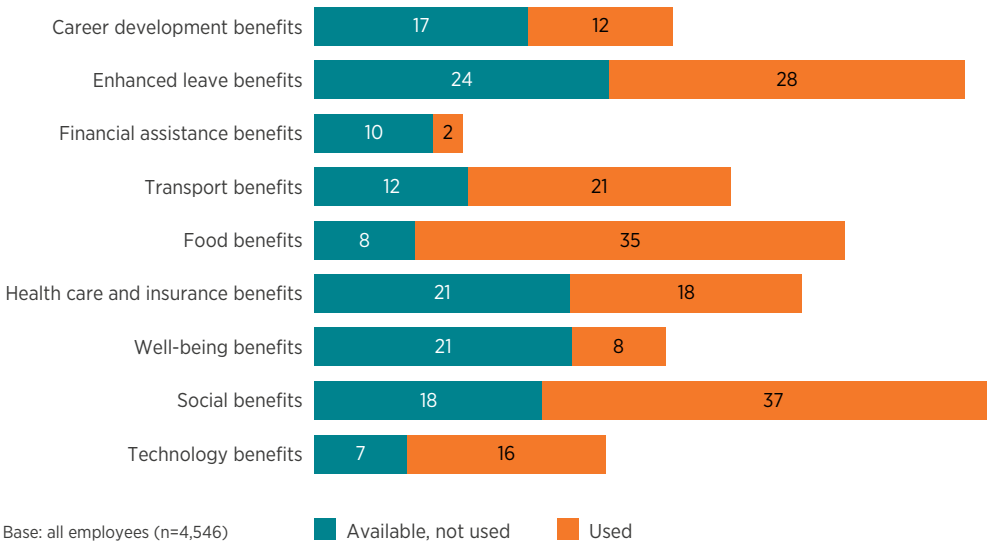


Base: employees saving through a company pension plan (n=2,098)

A range of other non-pension benefits are available to employees (Figure 12). The most commonly offered are social benefits (55%), which include parties and other social events, and enhanced leave benefits (52%), which include paid bereavement leave, emergency eldercare support, or more than the legal minimum of 20 days' paid annual leave (excluding bank holidays).

Other frequently used benefits include food benefits (free or subsidised food or drink), used by 35% of employees, transport benefits such as free or subsidised parking, rail season tickets and/or a company car, which is used by just over a fifth of employees, and health care and insurance benefits, which include death in service or life assurance, flu jabs, dental or health insurance, which is used by 18% of employees. Other benefits are less frequently reported as being available and/or used, although around a quarter of employees report career development and well-being benefits.

Figure 12: Employee benefits other than pensions (%)



Base: all employees (n=4,546)

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5 Contracts

Key findings

- Most workers (more than three in four) have a permanent employment, whether full- or part-time.
- Other 'contingent' contracts, including temporary, zero-hours and short-hours contracts, are relatively uncommon.
- Workers in these contingent or 'non-standard' forms of employment are more likely to have precarious jobs. In particular, they more often face underemployment.
- Multiple job-holding is also more common among those on non-standard contracts and those reporting underemployment, suggesting financial necessity is a key driver for taking more than one job.

While the structure of paid work undoubtedly remains centred on work as a permanent employee at one organisation, for a growing portion of the labour force participation in paid work is insecure and characterised by periods of temporary or reduced hours work. These patterns are the result of a labour market in which, some have argued, flexibility is increasingly employer-driven.[52]

International comparisons on contracts

UK workers fare better than average in contractual stability, based on international measures of part-time and temporary employment.[53] The UK sits 8th out of 25 comparator countries, alongside the United States and Slovenia. Estonia, Hungary and Norway come top, and France and Spain come bottom. France ranks very low, despite having strong protections against dismissal for permanent employees, because this index reflects people's ability to secure the work contracts they want. Stability in this broad sense is not a simple function of legal protection, but of the availability of stable work and conditions in the labour market.

Table 4: Country rankings of an international index of employment contract stability

Contracts rank	Country
1	Estonia
2	Hungary
3	Norway
4	Latvia
5	Belgium
6	Lithuania*
7	United States*
8	United Kingdom
9	Slovenia
10	Israel*
11	Austria
12	Japan
13	Germany

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14	Iceland*
15	Switzerland
16	Denmark
17	Czech Republic
18	Finland
19	New Zealand*
20	Sweden
21	Chile*
22	Australia*
23	Mexico*
24	France
25	Spain

*Due to absent data, population means are imputed for these figures. This maintains the ability to produce an overall ranking but makes the ranking of the country on this metric unreliable.

The UKWL survey allows us to develop a detailed picture of employment contracts. As well as temporary work, we consider other forms of 'contingent' or 'precarious' work, such as zero-hours and short-hours contracts and the gig economy. We also look at factors that can be related to contingent work, namely multiple job-holding,[54] underemployment[55] and various measures of work security.

Contract type

Nearly four in five of our sample report work as a permanent employee (either part-time or full-time). This is relatively consistent with UK national estimates.[56] Within this group, 29% work part-time and the majority of these are women (see section 3). Also consistent with national estimates, around 15% of workers in the UKWL survey report some form of self-employment. Self-employment in the UK is close to the EU average, and has been increasing as a share of overall employment.[57] In our sample, we find 11% of workers overall report running their own business and a further 5% report working as a freelancer or independent contractor. It should also be acknowledged that there exist quite blurred boundaries between some forms of employment and self-employment, in particular in forms of work including own-account self-employment/gig working, discussed later in this section. Some self-employed individuals may in practice work for one contractor and are in some respects effectively employees.

Other contract types account for the remaining 5% of workers, comprising 2.5% on temporary (including agency), 2.4% on zero-hours and 0.5% on short-hours contracts. Despite media and political interest in non-standard or contingent contracts over recent years – in particular zero-hours contracts – they are generally no more common than in the past.[58] The proportion of temporary employees is the same as in the 1980s and has shrunk over the past year or two, while the number of permanent workers has increased relatively sharply, and the proportion of zero-hours contracts has stabilised in the last couple of years. Nonetheless, non-standard contracts remain an important aspect of working life and, while they give some workers much desired flexibility, for others they are a central aspect of what constitutes a bad job and they can also backfire for employers by harming performance.[59]

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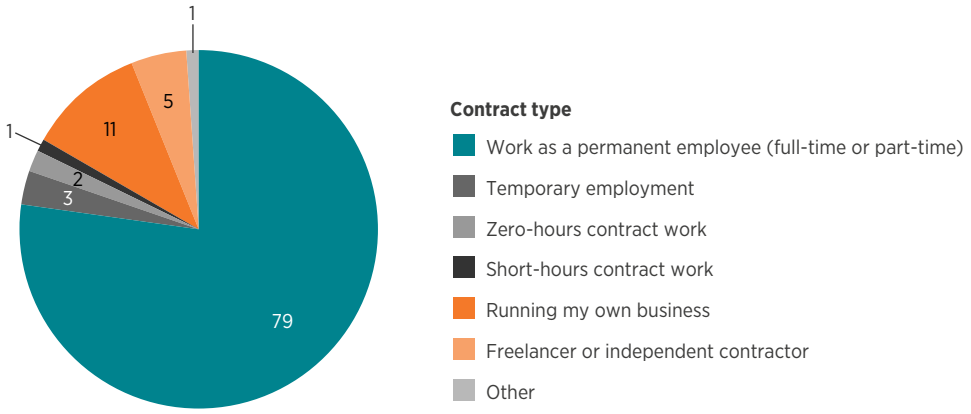
Figure 13: Working status and contract type (%)



Base: all workers (n=5,136)

Exploring further patterns of contract type, we find that workers in higher-level managerial, administrative and professional occupations (NRS social grade A) and skilled manual workers (grade C2) are the most likely to run their own business. Almost two-fifths of grade A workers own their own business, while it is 17% among skilled manual workers. One in ten grade A workers also report working as a freelancer or independent contractor. Among remaining workers, over four-fifths report permanent employee status, with intermediate managers, administrative and professional (grade B) workers especially likely to report this form of employment (87%). Meanwhile, workers in grade D and E occupations are much more likely to report working on temporary, zero-hours and short-hours contracts (9%), compared with under 5% among other occupation groups.

With respect to diversity characteristics, the greatest differences are found between age groups. Younger workers (aged 18–34) and older workers (55 and over) more often report other contract types, including temporary, zero-hours and short-hours. Older workers, aged 55 and over, are the most likely to be self-employed (17% running own business and 8% working as freelancer or independent contractor). Women are more likely to report other contract types (7% compared with 4% of men), while men are marginally more likely to report work as a freelancer or independent contractor (6% compared with 4% of women).

The gig economy

In addition to contract type, the UKWL survey also includes questions regarding work in the gig economy. This has been an area of particular political and media focus in recent years. Although potentially offering opportunities to workers seeking flexibility and/or those who have higher levels of employability, in particular the highly skilled,[60] concerns have been raised regarding working conditions,[61] while the gig economy has also been linked to growth in insecure part-time self-employment, including amongst those exiting unemployment.[62]

The gig economy is defined by the CIPD as:
'...work arranged through an online platform covering a variety of on-demand customer services. These services include (but are not limited to) taxi services and ride sharing (for example Uber, BlaBlaCar, and so on), vehicle rental (for example EasyCar), food or goods delivery (for example Deliveroo, City Sprint), as well as platforms that link people for other services (for example TaskRabbit, Upwork, and so on).'

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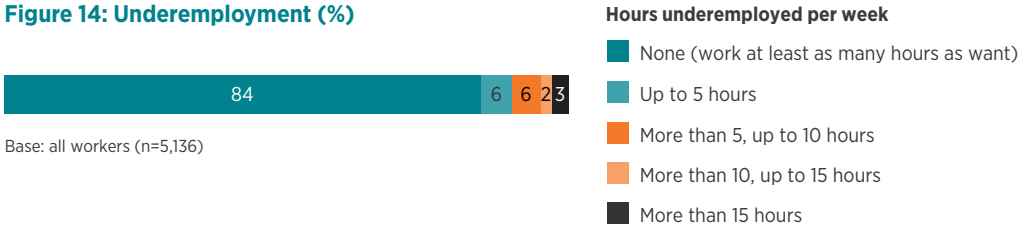
Estimating numbers of workers engaged in the gig economy is problematic, in part, as work may be performed for multiple 'employers' during the same month, week, or even day.[63] Estimates vary from figures published by the CIPD[64] of around 4%, to estimates of up to around one in seven workers.[65] Consistent with previous CIPD estimates, we find 3.5% of workers report having worked in the gig economy in the last 12 months, while only 1.7% of the UKWL sample report working in the gig economy as their main job. Consistent with other evidence, we find that working in the gig economy is more common among higher-level occupations (social grade A) and low-level grade D and E occupations, that is, at either end of the labour market.[66] Because of the small number of gig workers in the survey sample, no further detail can reliably be drawn from this group of workers.

Underemployment

Underemployment acts as a source of insecurity in the labour market, reflecting not having as much work as would be preferred. It is a particular concern as it has implications for financial status and living standards. It is calculated in the UKWL survey by looking at the difference between the number of hours usually worked per week and how much an individual would like to work per week. Where workers report preferences for more hours, this is counted as underemployment.

We find underemployment is present among one in six workers (Figure 14). The majority of these workers report underemployment of up to five hours (6%) and between five and ten hours per week (6%). The presence of underemployment is much higher among workers on non-standard contracts, with almost half of those on temporary, zero-hours and short-hours contracts reporting being underemployed (Figure 15). Almost a quarter of individuals working as a freelancer or independent contractor also report underemployment.

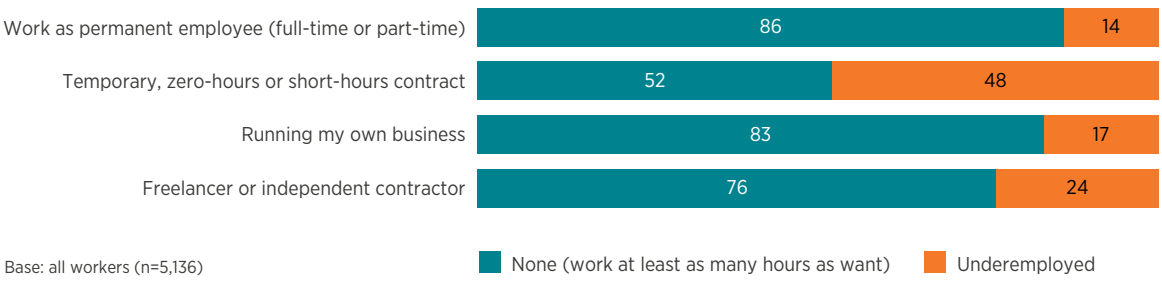
Figure 14: Underemployment (%)



Base: all workers (n=5,136)

Rates of underemployment are highest among younger workers (aged 18–34), with almost one in five reporting underemployment compared with only around 15% of those in the middle age groups (35–44 and 45–54). This is undoubtedly linked to the aforementioned patterns of non-standard employment among different age groups.

Figure 15: Underemployment, by contract type (%)



Base: all workers (n=5,136)

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Multiple job-holding

Whether workers hold more than one job is another useful indicator of the structure of work and the economy. It can reflect both a choice made by a worker in order to enable greater flexibility in the way they work, including the ability to hold secondary employment alongside self-employment.[67] Equally, it can be a result of underemployment, which drives multiple job-holding through financial necessity.[68]

While multiple job-holding is relatively uncommon, it is reported by 11% of our sample. The majority of the UKWL sample who report more than one job hold two jobs (9%), with those holding three jobs or more only comprising 2% of our sample (Figure 16). These figures are higher than the proportions reported in the Labour Force Survey for second-job-holding, which are closer to 4%,[69] reflecting some distinction in the UKWL sample. Importantly, and perhaps indicative of the key drivers of multiple job-holding, we find that in our sample 27% of those holding more than one job are underemployed, compared with only 15% of workers with a single job.

Figure 16: Number of jobs held currently (%)

Base: all workers (n=5,136)

In addition, multiple job-holding is reported by three in ten workers on temporary and other non-standard contracts, and almost a quarter of those working as a freelancer or independent contractor. Meanwhile, two-fifths of those reporting having worked in the gig economy in the last 12 months have held more than one job. We also find multiple job-holding to be more common among younger workers and those aged 55 and over.

Job and labour market security

Job security is an important dimension of job quality, reflecting the job prospects encountered by workers. A substantial minority of workers (15%) feel that they are likely or very likely to lose their job within the next year. Consistent with the patterns observed so far, those who feel the least secure in their jobs are on temporary, zero-hours or short-hours contracts (Figure 17). As we might expect given the precarious nature of these forms of employment, almost a third of workers on temporary, zero-hours or short-hours contracts consider it likely or very likely that they will lose their job in the next 12 months. This is much higher than is found among both permanent employees (15%) and those who run their own business (9%).

Figure 17: Job security, by contract type (%)

Base: all workers (n=5,136)

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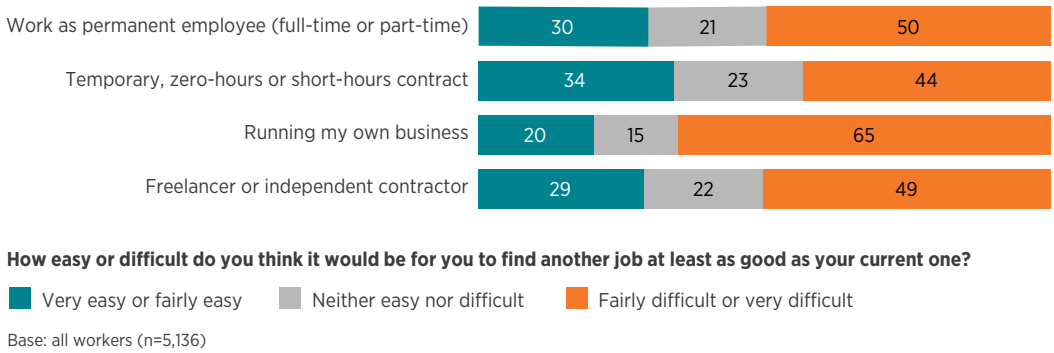
It is also relevant to consider the wider confidence in the labour market among UK employees. With reference to the question, 'how easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to find another job at least as good as your current one?', we find approximately half of all workers in our sample would consider it fairly or very difficult to find comparable work. The outlier among workers by contract type is those running their own business, of which almost two-thirds feel it would be difficult to find a job comparable with their current one (Figure 18). This may reflect the flexibility, autonomy and wider lifestyle benefits that are found among many entrepreneurs,[70] all of which are features of good work that may be difficult to find in alternative employment.

Figure 18: Confidence in the labour market, by contract type (%)



A further measure which offers us insight into the relative security of an individual's position in the labour market is job tenure. In the UKWL sample, two-fifths of workers who have been in their current job less than one year report feeling it would be difficult to find a comparable job; however, this is considerably higher among those in their job for 15–20 years (63%) and 20 years or more (68%). Finally, as we would expect, those with shorter tenures in their current job are those who report feeling most insecure, with around a fifth of those in their current job under one year reporting it likely they will lose their job in the next 12 months, compared with only less than one in seven of those who have been in their job for 15 years or more.

6 Job design and the nature of work

Key findings

The nature of work differs considerably by occupation level. Higher-level occupations exhibit characteristics of good work, including greater autonomy, variety, complexity, and meaningfulness. Mid-level managerial, administrative and professional occupations, while benefiting from a number of these characteristics, face problems associated with high workloads.

- One in three workers considers that they have too much work to complete in their job. One in five does not have the time to do their job in their allocated hours.
- Half of UK workers believe the skills they have are not well matched to their job, 37% being overskilled and 12% being underskilled.
- Around half of workers feel their jobs give good opportunities to develop their skills, but only three in ten workers feel they have good prospects for career advancement.

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- Most workers have at least some autonomy over what tasks they do, how they work and how fast they work. Levels of autonomy are much greater among higher-level occupations and permanent employees.
- The clear majority of workers feel they engage in meaningful work that contributes to their organisation, but almost a quarter feel that their job does not contribute to society and one in ten think it does not even contribute to their organisation.

The intrinsic nature of the work we do is a central yet multifaceted aspect of job quality. It relates to job design and the allocation of tasks, and concerns how skilled the work is that we do, how well we can shape this work and what opportunities we have to develop.

International comparisons on skills, autonomy and development

UK workers fare better than average by international standards, according to combined measures of the extent of professional roles, work autonomy and development opportunities.[71] The UK sits 7th out of 25 comparator countries, alongside Sweden and Belgium. Switzerland, the United States and Norway are ranked top; Germany, Slovenia and Austria rank in the middle; and Mexico, Hungary and Chile are ranked bottom.

Table 5: Country rankings of an international index of skills, autonomy and development

Skills, autonomy and development rank	Country
1	Switzerland
2	United States
3	Norway
4	Denmark
5	Finland
6	Sweden
7	United Kingdom
8	Belgium
9	Australia
10	Iceland
11	New Zealand
12	Germany
13	Slovenia
14	Austria
15	France
16	Israel
17	Estonia
18	Lithuania
19	Czech Republic
20	Latvia
21	Japan
22	Spain
23	Mexico
24	Hungary
25	Chile

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The UKWL survey adds detail to this view of the intrinsic nature of work in several areas. In particular, we consider people's workload and the intensity of work, levels of control and autonomy, whether they have the resources they need, how meaningful they find their work, their job complexity and career development opportunities. We now look at these in turn.

Workload and intensity

In addition to concerns over the length of time spent in work, which is considered in section 3 (overemployment) and section 5 (underemployment), the relative intensity of work, or how hard someone has to work in order to complete their tasks in a given time period, has become of increasing significance to our understanding of the quality of work and its impacts, including on well-being.[72] Work overload and task ambiguity create stress and can result in burnout and other negative consequences.[73]

A third of workers consider themselves to have too much work to complete in their job (Figure 19). One in twenty, meanwhile, feel completely overloaded by their jobs, suggesting substantive problems of overwork are present among an important minority of workers.

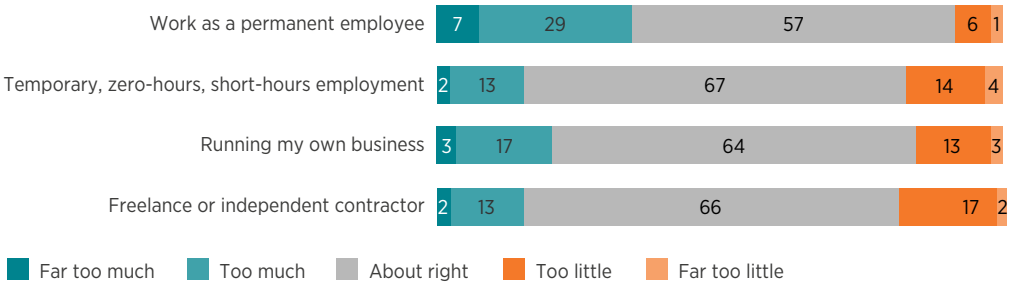
High workloads are relatively consistent in their presence across occupational groups, although workers in intermediate managerial, administrative and professional occupations (grade B) report marginally higher incidence (37%) of intense working routines. As was discussed in the 2018 survey report, this could reflect the existence of a 'squeezed middle' of middle-level managers and professionals performing supervisory tasks alongside a number of other core responsibilities.[74]

Figure 19: Workload (%)

Base: all workers (n=5,136)

A little over a third of permanent employees are overworked (Figure 20). Incidence of overwork is most prominent among full-time employees, with 41% reporting too much or far too much work compared with 25% of part-time workers. Among those on other contract types, overwork is less common, accounting for around 15% of temporary, zero-hours and short-hours contracts, and freelancers and independent contractors, and one in five business owners. Finally, we find that more than two in five (42%) workers in the public sector are overworked compared with around three in ten workers in other sectors. Other evidence shows that this has worsened for some public sector jobs – such as teaching and nursing – over the last decade, potentially due to the pressure put on public sector resources.[75]

Figure 20: Workload, by contract type (%)



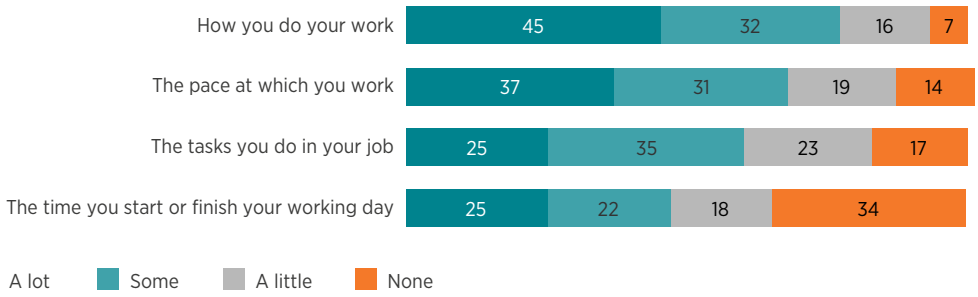
Base: all workers (n=5,136)

Control and autonomy

The presence of autonomy in paid work can be considered to be an important intrinsic component of the nature of work. Autonomy can be usefully understood as the level of control workers have over decisions in their job.[76] It is an aspect of work which can be present in regard to both the level of control over tasks and work conduct, referred to as job control, and discretion over the timing and/or location of work, referred to as schedule control.[77] The presence and level of autonomy forms an important component of job quality, potentially enabling employees to cope with greater work demands, and impacts on both the relative well-being of employees as well as the health of their employer, that is, through productivity levels.[78]

Levels of autonomy suggest that employees are empowered, overall, in shaping how they work in their jobs. Employees report a considerable level of discretion over aspects of job control, including how they do their work, where we find just over three-quarters of workers report having a lot or some control, and just over two-thirds over the pace at which they work (Figure 21). Control over the tasks completed as part of a job is reported by three in five workers. Schedule control, in the form of autonomy over the start and finish times of the working day, is slightly less common, with just under half (48%) of workers reporting this form of autonomy in their jobs.

Figure 21: Job autonomy (%)



Base: all employees (n=4,546)

The autonomy present in paid work differs in all measures greatly by occupational group, consistent with the findings of existing research.[79] For example, those in higher-level occupations have much higher degrees of control over the tasks they do in their job, with 70% of higher managerial, administrative and professional workers (grade A) reporting a lot or some control over tasks, compared with only around two in five skilled manual workers (grade C2) and workers in grade D and E occupations. Differences are also stark in autonomy over start and finish times, where we find that around three in five workers in higher-level occupations (grade A and B) report a lot or some control over the timing of work, but this is only found among one in four of those in grade D or E occupations.

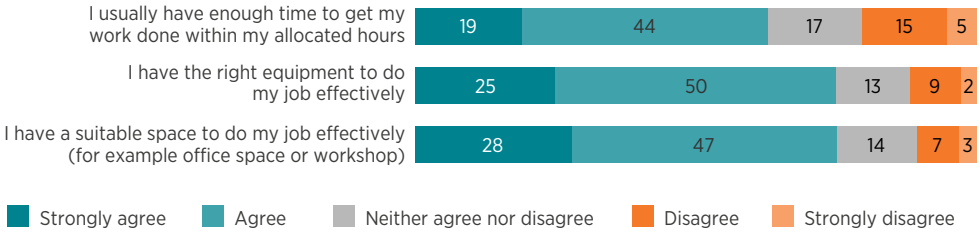
Turning to sector of employment, we find notable differences in control over start and finish times, with around three in five workers in the public and voluntary sectors reporting autonomy in this aspect of work compared with 44% of those in the private sector. It is likely that this, in part, reflects the greater use of certain flexible working arrangements including flexi-time in these sectors.[80]

Finally, workers in temporary, zero-hours and short-hours contracts report lower levels of autonomy. The majority (54%) of workers on these contracts have little or no control over job tasks, compared with just under two in five permanent employees. Differences are also quite large with respect to the pace of work, with under a third of permanent employees reporting little or no control over this aspect of work, compared with two in five workers on non-standard contracts.

Resources

Having the correct resources available to us is another important factor that influences the intrinsic quality of work.[81] Consistent with the 2018 survey, the UKWL survey includes three questions that focus on the resources available to workers, which focus on whether they have enough time to get their work done, whether they have the right equipment to perform in their job, and whether they have a suitable space, either office or other workspace, to do their job effectively. The majority of workers report having access to adequate work resources (Figure 22). Around three-quarters report having the right equipment and a suitable workspace. Time is a more limited commodity, it appears, as around one in five workers feel they lack the necessary time to get their work done in their allocated hours. Proportions do vary notably by occupation group, however. We find that in higher-level jobs, including senior and intermediate managerial and professional occupations (social grade A and B), around a quarter of our sample state they feel they do not have enough time to get work done within allocated hours, compared with around 18% of those in grade C (associate professional and skilled manual workers) and D and E (semi-skilled and unskilled). Where individuals feel they do not have enough time, this can reflect the presence of overload discussed earlier in this section, which can act as a significant work stressor.[82]

Figure 22 : Adequate work resources (%)



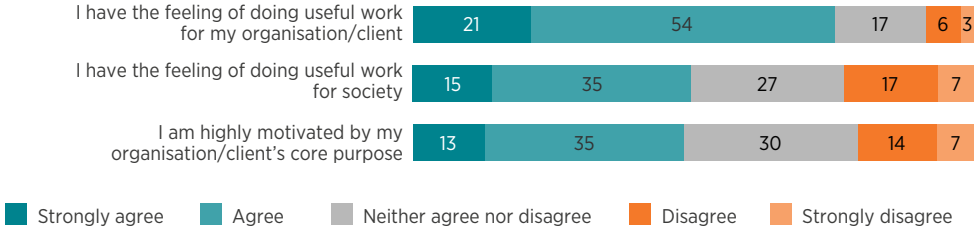
Base: all workers (n=5,136)

Meaningful work

Work can have a deep sense of meaning to an individual, acting as a source of achievement and fulfilment.[83] Equally, work can become an 'alien' activity, disconnected from the individual and seen only as a toil or laborious activity.[84] The sense of meaning an individual receives from work is, as such, an important intrinsic characteristic of job quality with wider relevance to worker well-being.

The focus on meaningful work in the UKWL survey is on the 'sense of pride and achievement at a job well done'. Three-quarters of workers feel they perform useful work for their organisation (or client in the case of the self-employed). Approximately half of workers are highly motivated by the core purpose of their organisation (or client). The wider impact of the work an individual performs is seen as somewhat less common, with around half feeling they do useful work for society, but almost a quarter feeling that the work they do does not offer a useful contribution to society (Figure 23).

Figure 23 : Meaningful work (%)



Base: all workers (n=5,136)

The meaningfulness of work declines as we move down occupational level. Those in higher-level grade A and B occupations generally report more meaningful work, with four in five workers in these occupations feeling they contribute useful work to their organisation, compared with only around two-thirds of workers in grade C2 and D and E occupations. Similarly, workers in higher-level occupations – 61% of grade A and 53% of grade B – report being more motivated by their organisation or client's core purpose than we find in other occupation groups, where this is only reported by around two in five workers. Consistent differences are also observed in societal contribution.

Differences by sector of work are most distinct in societal contribution. As we might have expected, we find that around three-quarters of both public and voluntary sector workers report feeling they do work that is useful for society, compared with only two in five private sector workers. Voluntary sector workers are also those most motivated by their organisation/client, with seven in ten reporting feeling motivated compared with 57% of public sector workers and just 45% of private sector workers.

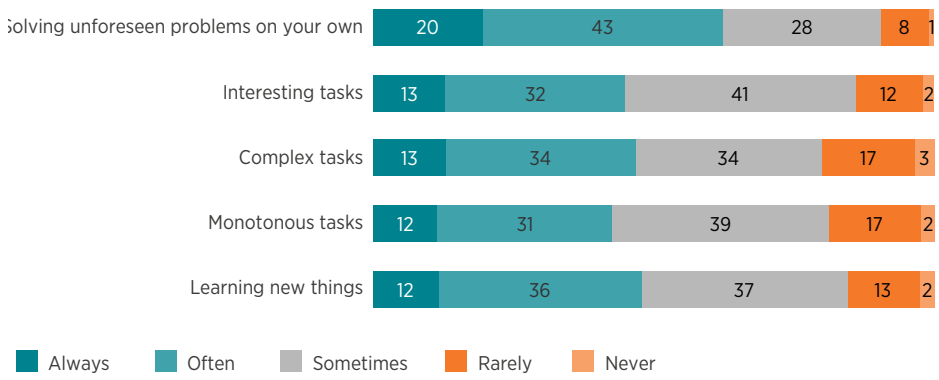
Job complexity and skills

The complexity of a job and the skills that are used to do it are undoubtedly relevant to our understanding of the intrinsic characteristics of job quality. Job complexity, sometimes referred to in terms of variety encountered in a job, encompasses the types and range of activities involved in a job.[85] The relative fit or match between the skills an individual possesses and their job is also relevant to job quality. Overqualification or being overskilled can result in boredom, lack of engagement, negative impacts on earnings and stagnation, and lower levels of life satisfaction at the level of the individual worker, while being underskilled can result in underperformance and higher levels of work-related stress.[86] At the macroeconomic level these issues are also important, as skill mismatch and underuse of skills reflects a waste of human capital and potentially limits the productivity of the workforce, which has been a key concern in the UK context.[87]

We find in our sample that over three-fifths of workers regularly engage in problem-solving in their job (Figure 24), and that a little under half report their job as involving interesting tasks (45%), complex tasks (47%) and learning new things (48%). On the opposite end of variety, around two in five workers report frequently completing monotonous tasks in their job. However, these overarching patterns hide quite stark differences by contract type and occupational group.

Figure 24: Job complexity (%)

In general, how often does your main job involve the following?



Base: all workers (n=5,136)

If we explore differences by contract type, we find that workers on temporary, zero-hours and short-hours contracts report lower levels of complexity and variety in their jobs, with a third stating they rarely or never perform complex tasks and less than half regularly engaging in problem-solving. Meanwhile, the self-employed – both business owners and freelancers and independent contractors – generally have jobs which involve higher levels of problem-solving, reported by seven out of ten of these workers, learning new things, reported by around half of these workers, and among freelancers and independent contractors, levels of complexity (56%).

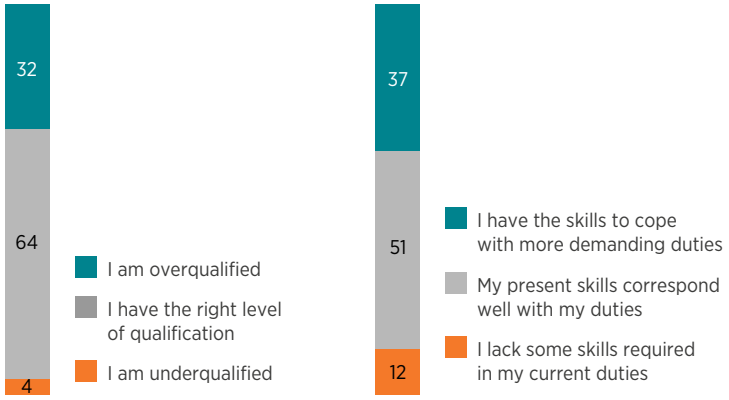
We find that jobs in higher-level occupations (NRS grade A and B) have much greater degrees of complexity and variety, with three-quarters of workers in grade A and two-thirds in grade B occupations having jobs that regularly involve problem-solving, while three in five workers in grade A occupations describe their job as involving complex and interesting tasks. In contrast, only one in five workers in grade D and E occupations say their job involves complex tasks, while three in five workers in these occupations have jobs which frequently involve monotonous tasks, and less than a quarter learn new things.

Overall, there is a general pattern of increasing levels of complexity and variety as we move up occupational groups in regard to skill level. We find weak correlations between high-level occupation groups and problem-solving (0.174), interesting tasks (0.222), complex tasks (0.277), and learning new things (0.207), and a negative correlation with monotonous tasks (–0.153).[88]

These patterns may simply be indicative of the differing content of occupations. Some occupations by their nature involve routine completion of simple and repetitive tasks. The patterns are also consistent, though, with the argued move in some sectors to job design that is characterised by highly subdivided tasks and low levels of autonomy and variety, associated with low job quality.[89]

Turning to the match between the qualifications and skills possessed by workers and their jobs, we find that almost two-thirds of workers (64%) consider themselves to have the correct level of qualifications for their jobs. Almost a third, however, consider themselves to be overqualified. In terms of skills match, half of workers feel their present skills correspond well with their duties. This means, though, that equally half of workers consider themselves to be either overskilled (37%) or underskilled (12%).

Figure 25: Person–job match: qualifications and skills (%)



Base: all workers (n=5,136)

If we explore this in terms of occupational group and contract type, we find that workers in grade C2 and lower-skilled grade D and E occupations are more likely to report being overqualified (39% and 42% respectively) and overskilled (42% and 42%). Equally, workers on temporary, zero-hours and short-hours contracts are those that consider themselves

more often to be overqualified (48%) and overskilled (45%). As we might expect, feelings of being underqualified and lacking skills are more prominent among younger workers: 7% of 18–34-year-olds feel they lack the correct qualifications, and 16% feel they lack skills to fulfil their current duties.[90]

Overall, the data suggests that overqualification and overskilling is perhaps a greater concern than workers lacking the necessary qualifications or skills to perform in their job. The findings relating to skills, though, also point to a potential broader issue of the presence of skills mismatch in the UK economy.[91]

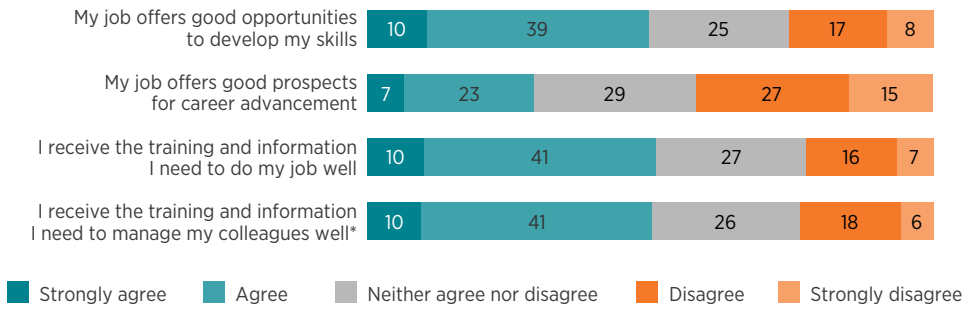
The impact of skills and qualification mismatch appears to be reflected in relative levels of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is lower among those who report being under- and overqualified and skilled: approximately three-fifths of those who report a qualification or skills mismatch are satisfied with their job, compared with over three-quarters (76%) who have a good qualification/skills match.

Learning and career development

Career development opportunities form an important part of job prospects while at the same time having clear links with skills and a number of other job quality dimensions.[92] Alongside education outside of work, training and career development is central to personal and career advancement. Increasing the skills levels of the workforce is generally agreed as being beneficial not only to the individual, but also to employers and more broadly the economy and society.[93]

In our sample, around half of workers consider their job to offer good opportunities to develop their skills (Figure 26). Referring to the specific situation of training and information being provided to workers to enable them to do their job effectively, we find again around half of workers agree that they receive necessary training and information, and this is also reported by those with managerial responsibilities. However, career advancement is perhaps not as common a feature of some jobs. Only three in ten workers agree that their job offers good prospects for career advancement.

Figure 26: Personal and career development (%)



Base: all employees (n=5,136) except * line managers (n=1,321)

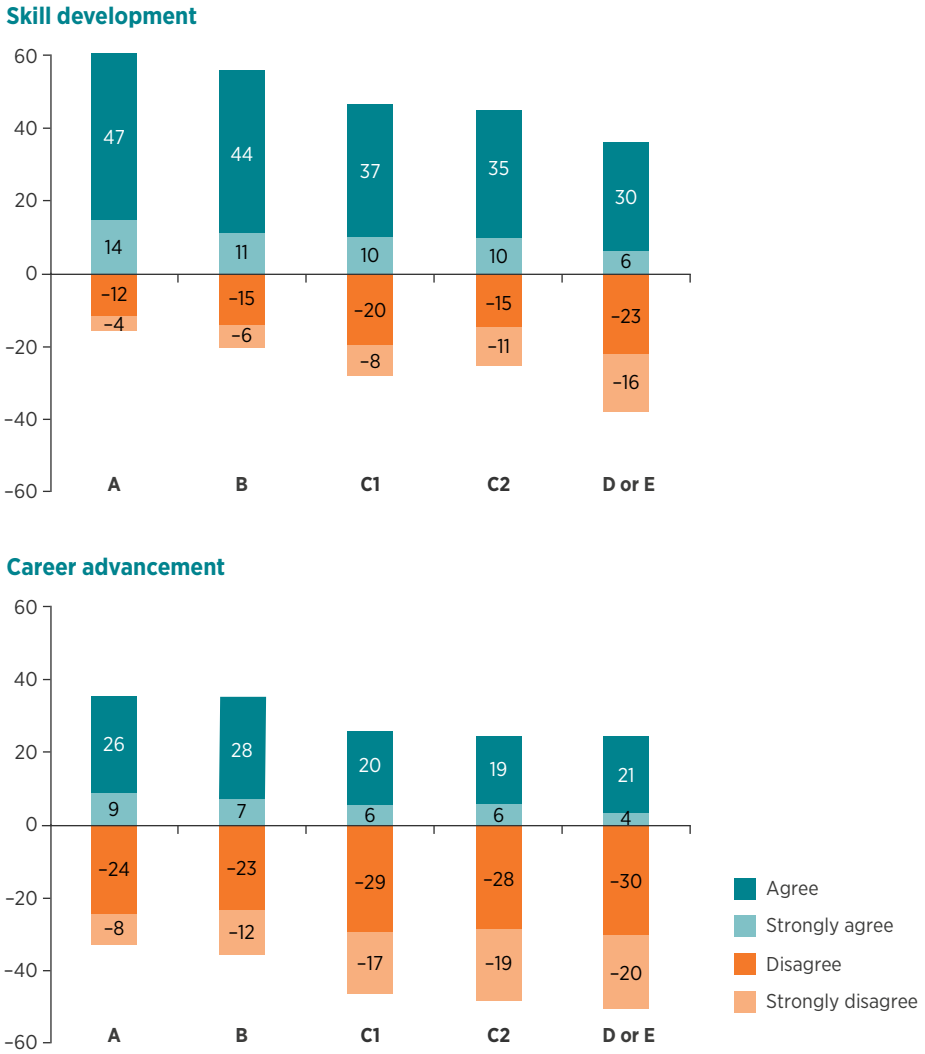
Exploring in more detail by occupation, it is clear that the level of opportunity for skill development is greater in higher-level occupations (Figure 27). Three in five workers in higher managerial, administrative or professional occupations (NRS grade A) feel they have good opportunities to develop their skills, whereas this is only reported by just over a third of workers in grade D and E occupations. As per the overall pattern observed, career advancement opportunities are lesser, with a clear division by occupation group between those in grade A and B occupations, of which a third feel they do not have good opportunities for career advancement, compared with grades C1 (46%), C2 (48%)

and D and E (50%). These findings suggest that while workers who already have greater levels of skills also have good opportunities for further development, other workers could find themselves trapped in lower-skilled work with few opportunities for advancement. However, this could perpetuate further polarisation of the labour market.

Private sector workers, which again are quite diverse because of the large size of this sector, report fewer opportunities for skill development. Just under half report good skill development opportunities, compared with around 55% in both the public and voluntary sectors. Public sector workers, meanwhile, feel they have the best opportunities for career advancement. A third of public sector workers agree that they have good opportunities for career advancement, whereas this is 29% in the private sector and 27% in the voluntary sector. This is likely a reflection of organisation size and the presence of internal labour markets in the public sector.

Differences are also observed by work status. Two in five workers (41%) on temporary, zero-hours and short-hours contracts feel they have good opportunities to develop their skills, compared with approximately 55% of the self-employed (business owners, freelancers and independent contractors). Permanent employees, which itself is of course a diverse group comprising many occupations, fall somewhere in the middle, with 49% reporting they have good opportunities for skill development.

Figure 27: Development opportunities, by occupational group (%)



Base: all employees (n=5,136)

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

When we consider career advancement by contract status, we find quite contrasting responses. Workers on permanent contracts are those that report better opportunities, with a third feeling they have good opportunities for career advancement, whereas only around one in five workers on other contracts report good opportunities. In fact, half of workers on temporary, zero-hours and short-hours contracts feel they do not have good opportunities for career advancement. Workers on these contracts, as well as experiencing insecure employment, also seem to benefit from fewer development opportunities. We also see that workers on these contracts who are in grade D and E occupations not only have some of the lowest-quality jobs in aspects such as how skilled the work is, but also have the fewest opportunities to develop professionally and potentially move into higher-level occupations (see section 5). As we noted in last year's UKWL survey, they may become stuck in poor quality work.

Finally, we find quite stark differences reported among workers of different age groups with regard to both the opportunities for skill development and for career advancement. Younger workers report greater skill development opportunities, with three-fifths of those aged 18–34 agreeing that their job provides these opportunities, compared with only 46% of workers aged 55 and over. Similarly, just under half of younger workers feel their job offers good prospects for career advancement, whereas this is only reported by a quarter of those aged 45–54 and only one in five of those aged 55 and over. This could simply reflect the differing career stages of these workers, with older workers more often in higher-level and more advanced roles that may have fewer progression routes. Alternatively, it could partly reflect assumptions by some employers that older workers are less interested or able to learn, which could act to limit further career development.[94]

7 Relationships at work

Key findings

Relationships at work strongly affect our working lives, but conflict at work is all too common. It has negative consequences not just for the worker but for their employer too, for example, by increasing turnover intention.

- Employees generally report a supportive working environment, although incidence of blame from management (19% of workers) and being excluded for being different (22%) is not uncommon.
- Three in ten workers report at least one form of bullying or harassment in the workplace in the last 12 months. For one in seven workers, a case remains unresolved.
- Forms of conflict at work differ in particular by gender. Women record more cases of being undermined or humiliated and unwanted sexual attention or harassment, and men report more physical threats and false allegations. We also note differences according to race and sexual orientation or gender identity.
- More than one in four workers reporting workplace conflict in the last 12 months say they are likely to quit their job in the next year (almost double workers who experienced no conflict).
- Relationships at work are generally positive, especially for those with whom we work more closely (line manager, team members).

Relationships with others at work form an important dimension of the quality of work encountered by workers. Positive interactions with others in the workplace have been shown to increase levels of commitment among employees and generate more positive work attitudes.[95] Relationships with stakeholders both inside the organisation (managers, colleagues) and external to it (clients, customers) may be equally important to job quality.[96] Workplace relationships also have an important role in creating and maintaining social connectedness – that is, the number and quality of relationships we have.[97] In addition, occupational networks act as a key source of social capital throughout our lives, which is to say that strong relationships with others and shared identities, values, interests and behavioural norms help us to perform and build our careers.[98]

International comparisons on relationships at work

The quality of work relationships in the UK is average by international standards, according to a measure of relations between management and employees.[99] The UK sits 12th out of 25 comparator countries, alongside the United States and Hungary. Austria, Switzerland and Israel come top, and Slovenia, France and Japan are ranked bottom.

Table 6: Country rankings of an international index of relations between managers and employees

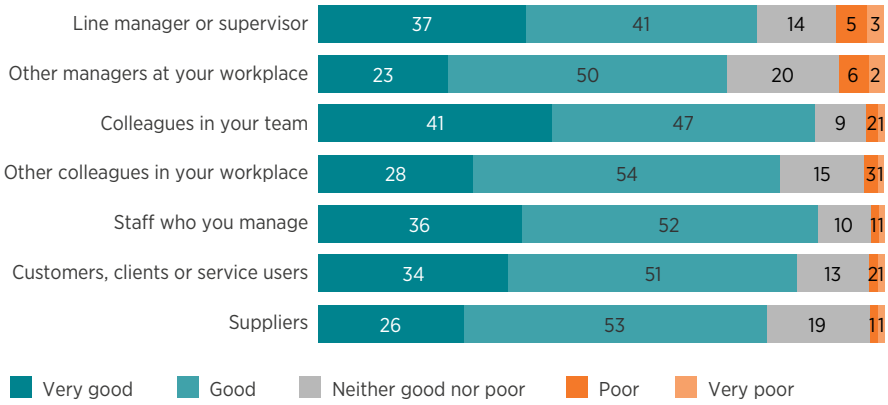
Relationships with managers rank	Country
1	Austria
2	Switzerland
3	Israel
4	Germany
5	Mexico
6	Latvia
7	Iceland
8	New Zealand
9	Spain
10	Chile
11	United States
12	United Kingdom
13	Hungary
14	Estonia
15	Finland
16	Australia
17	Norway
18	Lithuania
19	Denmark
20	Czech Republic
21	Sweden
22	Belgium
23	Slovenia
24	France
25	Japan

In the UKWL survey, we build on this by looking in more detail at relationships at work, in particular: the quality of relationships with different types of colleagues, different aspects of line management, psychological safety or how supportive our work environments are, and different forms of conflict. We now consider these in turn.

Quality of relationships at work

Relationships with managers within the workplace are generally reported as being positive, with over three-quarters of employees rating their relationship with their line manager or supervisor positively, and only slightly fewer (72%) reporting a positive relationship with other managers at their workplace (Figure 28). Poor relationships with managers are uncommon, but around 7% do report a poor or very poor relationship with management at their workplace. Among those who manage others, 88% report positive relationships with their staff. Although the difference is not great, managers may be more positive about their relationships with their staff than the staff themselves because of the power differential: for example, other CIPD evidence suggests conflict is more likely to be perceived and seen as serious by the more junior person in a relationship.[100]

Figure 28: Quality of relationships at work (%)



Base: all employees (n=4,546)

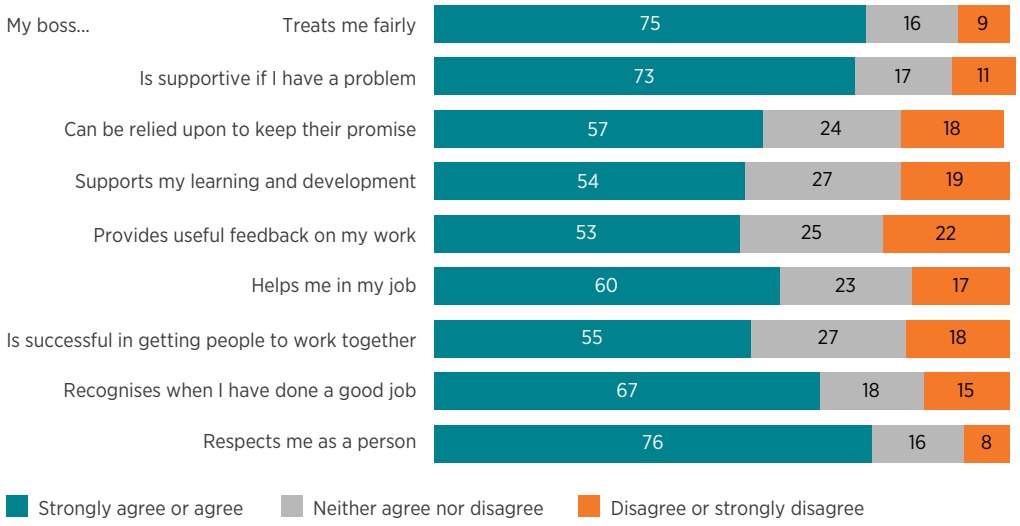
The relationships between employees and their colleagues are viewed most positively, especially with colleagues in the same team (88%). Finally, around four in five employees report positive relationships with customers, clients and service users, and with suppliers.

Relationships with managers and leaders

Further insight can be gained with regard to the reported relationships between managers and employees through additional questions which focus on the quality of line management and confidence in senior management. The most positive responses from employees regarding the quality of their manager or supervisor relate to showing respect (76%) and fair treatment (75%). The large majority of employees also report that their managers are supportive when problems arise (73%), and that they offer recognition when they have done a good job (67%).

Where managers fare worse is in relation to the support they provide with respect to learning and development, including feedback, to which around a fifth of employees report their manager as performing poorly. This is important considering the role of development opportunities to job quality, as considered in section 6.

Figure 29: Quality of line management (%)

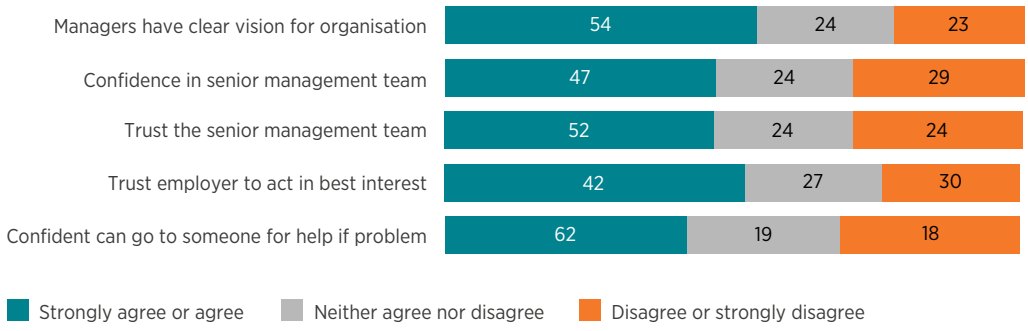


Base: all employees with a manager or supervisor or equivalent (n=4,429)

Perspectives on senior managers generally elicit positive responses from non-managerial employees, although the strength of these views is less pronounced than it is for people managers (Figure 30). Employees tend to think their leaders have a clear vision for the organisation (54%) and have trust in the senior management team (52%), but the fact that nearly one in four workers lack confidence in their leaders in these respects is clearly worrying.

A greater proportion of workers, almost two-thirds, is confident they have someone to go to if they have a problem at work, but even here, almost one in five workers says that they do not. This raises real concerns about the extent of effective worker voice and protections for whistleblowing in the UK.[101]

Figure 30: Confidence in senior management (%)



Base: all employees (n=4,546)

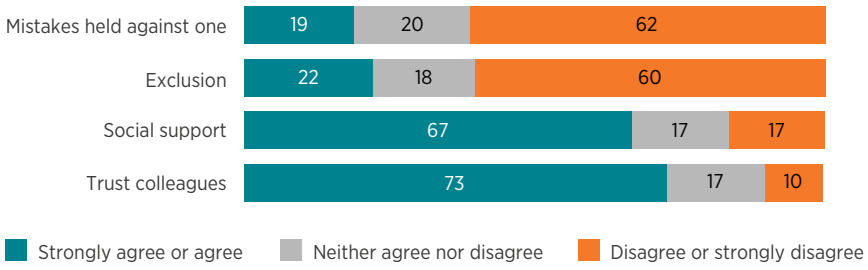
However, three in ten employees lack confidence in their senior management team and nearly a quarter did not trust them. These patterns, perhaps, offer further evidence of the greater strength of relationships held at more local levels when compared with the organisation as a whole, which is viewed with more suspicion. It could also reflect a lack of involvement in discussions and decision-making, which is explored in section 8.

Psychological safety

Psychological safety refers to the presence of blame cultures and levels of support and trust within a workplace. We find that employees generally report a supportive working environment, with two-thirds of employees stating that no one in their team would deliberately undermine them, and almost three-quarters reporting trust in their colleagues to act with integrity. While employees are generally positive regarding the behaviour of their manager or supervisor, almost a fifth feels that their manager would hold it against them if they make a mistake (Figure 31).

Finally, we find that almost one in four employees feel they do not work in inclusive environments, agreeing with a statement that their colleagues 'sometimes reject others for being different'. Thus, although discriminatory behaviour is rarer (see Figure 32), its roots are relatively common. As the notion of macro-aggressions illustrates, there are many shades of behaviour and comments that exclude people; even if unintentional or subconscious, expressions of exclusion can have a powerful negative effect on others.[102]

Figure 31: Psychological safety (%)



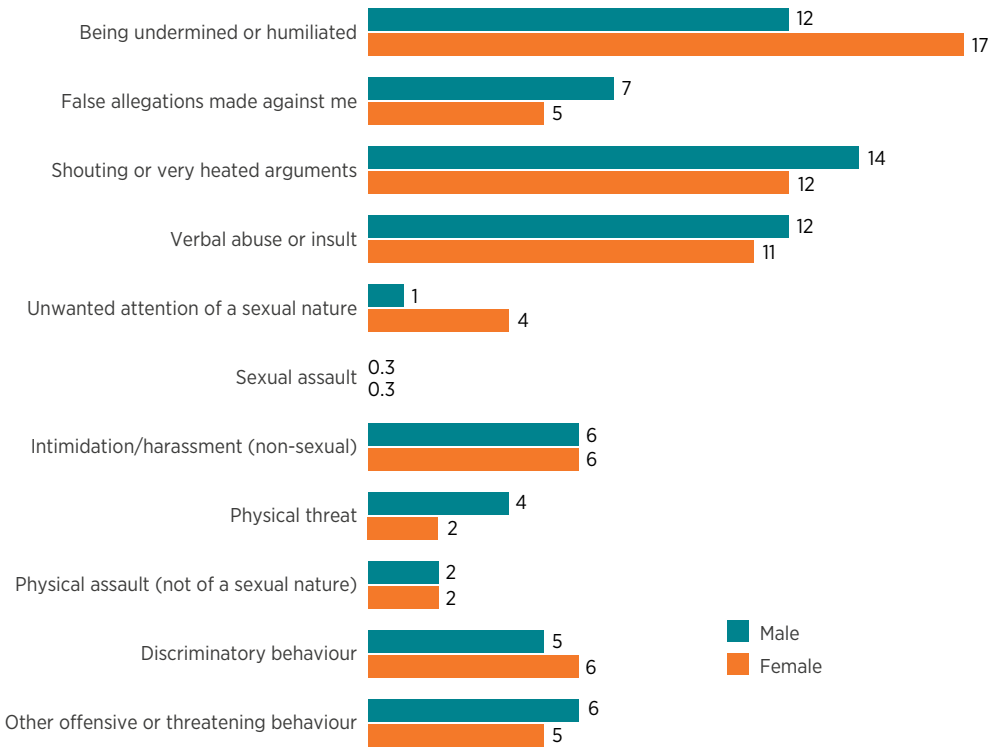
'If I make a mistake my manager or supervisor will hold it against me'
'People in my team sometimes reject others for being different'
'No one in my team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts'
'I trust my colleagues to act with integrity'

Base: all employees (n=4,546)

Conflict and unfair treatment

Incidence of conflict at work, which includes forms of bullying and harassment, can have significant negative impacts on the experienced quality of work, as it has been shown to increase levels of burnout, and result in greater intentions among workers to leave their job.[103] We find that three in ten workers report having experienced at least one form of bullying or harassment in the workplace in the last 12 months. Almost 10% have experienced at least two forms of bullying and harassment. These statistics are significant as it has been shown that even a single incident of conflict can have a serious detrimental impact on working life.[104] The most common forms of conflict encountered are being undermined or humiliated (14%), shouting or heated arguments (13%), and verbal abuse or insult (11%).

Figure 32: Experiences of workplace conflict and unfair treatment in the last 12 months (%)



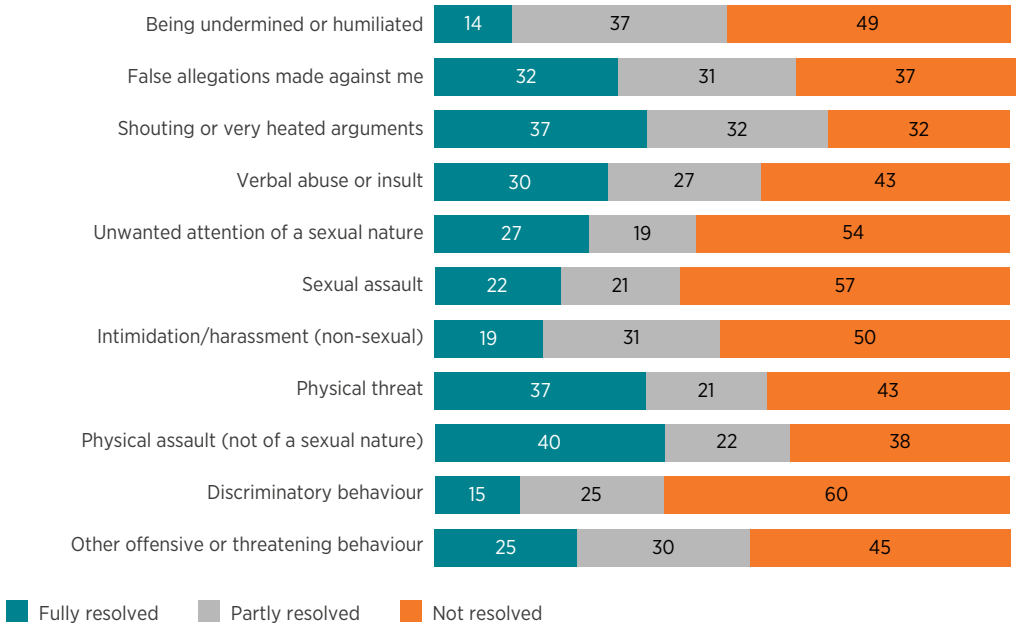
Base: all workers (n=5,136)

Quite stark differences are reported between men and women (Figure 32). Women report greater incidence of being undermined or humiliated (17%), non-sexual intimidation/harassment (6%), discrimination on the basis of a protected characteristic (which includes gender) (6%) and unwanted attention of a sexual nature, which although marginal is reported by more than double the proportion of women (4%) compared with men (1.3%). Men, in contrast, more often report shouting or heated arguments (14%), verbal abuse or insult (12%), false allegations made against them (7%), and physical threat (4%). In some cases, the more aggressive nature of a number of these conflicts may reflect occupational differences between men and women, but also could reflect differences in the way men and women interact with others at work, or indeed reflect differences between the public and private sectors.

In terms of other diversity characteristics, we find differences in workplace conflict and unfair treatment according to ethnicity, with discrimination being reported by 13% of non-white workers compared with only 5% of white workers.

We also see differences by sexual orientation and gender identity, in line with the UK Government's LGBT survey.[105] Being undermined or humiliated is reported by one in five LGBT workers compared with 14% of heterosexual workers, and discrimination is reported by 5% of heterosexual workers, but more than double the proportion of LGBT workers (11%). While this seems to tell a clear story, more data is needed – for example, we do not know in our survey whether a worker's sexual orientation is known to managers or workers.

Figure 33: Resolution of workplace conflict and unfair treatment (%)



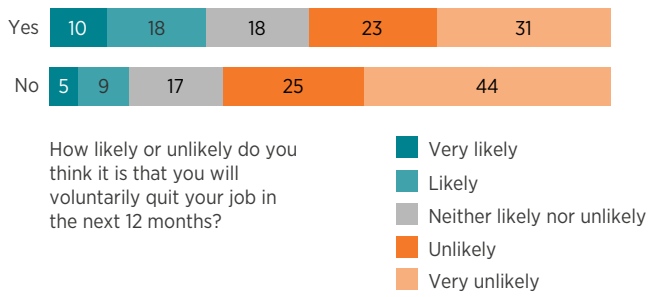
Base: all workers (n=5,136)

Turning to conflict resolution in Figure 33, we find that of those reporting conflict of some form in the last 12 months, just over half report that it has been resolved or partly resolved. This differs by the type of conflict reported, with more complex and serious conflicts, including forms of sexual harassment, appearing less likely to be resolved. Also important to note is that other behaviours, which by their nature may be difficult to prove or change, including being undermined or humiliated and discrimination, have the lowest levels of reported full resolution in both cases, equating to around 14%. Across our entire sample what this means is that one in seven of all employees report at least one unresolved conflict in the workplace in the last 12 months.

Conflicts at work and turnover intention

An important potential negative impact for organisations of incidence of conflict at work is the risk of losing human capital or 'talent'. Evidence from the UKWL survey suggests this is indeed a potential outcome. More than one in four workers who report having experienced a conflict at work in the last 12 months state that it is likely or very likely that they will quit their job in the next year, compared with only one in seven who report having experienced no conflict. Even if we remove those who have been in their current job for less than a year from our analysis, we still find that reported intention to leave remains consistent.

Figure 34: Experiences of conflict at work and turnover intention (%)



Base: all workers (n=5,136)

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8 Voice and representation

Key findings

Although workers have a range of channels for voice, we should be concerned about the willingness of managers to genuinely consult them on decisions and even to keep them informed about organisational developments.

- Direct methods of voice are the most common, including one-to-one meetings, team meetings and employee surveys.
- Considerable differences are found between sectors in the channels available to workers, with significantly lesser availability of more formal employee surveys and trade union representation in the private sector.
- Employees who have union or non-union representation, on average, are positive about their representatives, although about one in four employees feel their representative's performance is poor.
- Managers are considered less open to allowing employees to influence final decisions than inviting opinions in the first place. Meanwhile, a third of employees feel management do not keep them adequately informed of discussions and decisions.

Employee voice and representation refers to the opportunities available to workers to directly engage with managers or indirectly engage with their employer through employee representatives (union or non-union). Employee voice is undoubtedly an important aspect of the quality of work. It has both an instrumental and intrinsic value:

- The instrumental value of voice is in the way it enables a worker to influence their conditions of work through communicating preferences and concerns and being able to make a difference in an organisation.[106]
- In addition, as an intrinsic dimension of job quality,[107] it has an important role in our understanding of the quality of work encountered by UK workers. Having a meaningful voice is part of what makes us human, so even if it doesn't lead to actual external change, it can still be motivating or satisfying.

International comparisons on employee voice

One way to measure employees' ability to influence and have a voice is their access to trade union representatives. Levels of trade union density in the UK are slightly above average, according to an international measure for 25 comparator countries.[108] The UK comes 10th out of 25, alongside Austria, Slovenia and Chile. The highest levels of unionisation are the Scandinavian countries, in particular Iceland, Denmark and Sweden; the mid-ranked countries are New Zealand, Japan and Germany; and the lowest levels of union membership are in France, Lithuania and Estonia.

Table 7: Country rankings of an international index of union density

Union density rank	Country
1	Iceland
2	Denmark
3	Sweden
4	Finland
5	Belgium
6	Norway
7	Israel
8=	Austria
8=	Slovenia
10	United Kingdom
11	Chile
12	New Zealand
13	Japan
14	Germany
15	Switzerland
16	Australia
17	Spain
18	Latvia
19	Mexico
20	Czech Republic
21	United States
22	Hungary
23	France
24	Lithuania
25	Estonia

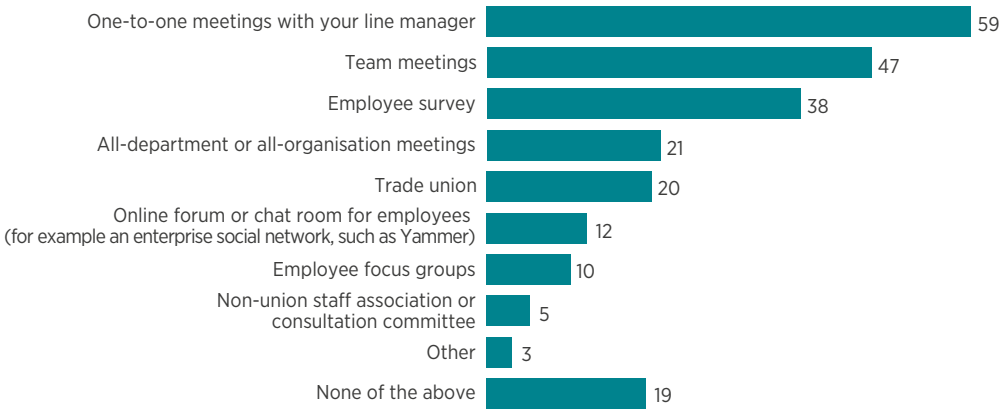
However, union density is a narrow measure of employee voice. The UKWL survey focuses in detail on two main aspects of employee voice: first, the institutional mechanisms or channels that enable employees to communicate their perspectives; and second, the behavioural norms or culture that determine the openness of management to employee voice and the willingness of employees to exercise it.

Channels for voice

A range of channels for voice are considered in the UKWL survey. The majority of employees report having access to a number of channels for voice (Figure 35). Local forms of communication and voice are the most common channels, including one-to-one meetings with a line manager reported by three-fifths of employees, and team meetings (47%). Employee surveys are also fairly common among the UKWL sample (38%).

Other methods of voice are less common. Around a fifth of respondents report all-department or all-organisation meetings and more formalised trade union representation. The latter statistic evidencing methods of indirect representation is relatively consistent with the latest UK averages available, which find union membership among 23% of all in employment in 2017.[109] It should also be noted that almost a fifth of employees report having access to none of these mechanisms of communication.

Figure 35: Channels for voice available to workers (%)

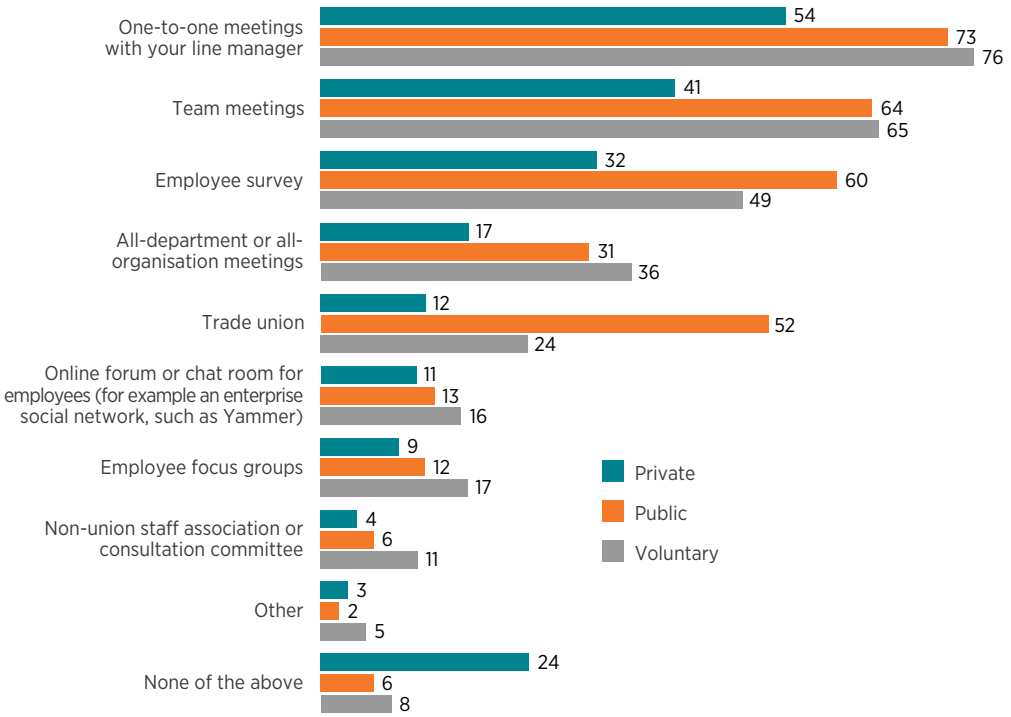


Base: all employees including freelancers with only one client, excluding other self-employed (n=4,546)

Access to channels for voice does appear to differ considerably by sector of employment (Figure 36). Workers in the public and voluntary sector report greater opportunities for voice, in particular in respect of more formal direct channels such as employee surveys, where we find this method of communication reported by three-fifths of public sector and just under half of voluntary sector workers, but only a third of private sector employees. Indirect trade union representation offers the starkest difference, as only 12% of private sector workers report union membership, while union density in the public sector is consistent with national averages at 52%.[110] Non-union indirect representation is more common in the voluntary sector (11%), but is relatively marginal in presence in the private and public sector.

A lack of access to channels for voice appears to be a primarily private sector problem. Almost a quarter of private sector employees report having access to no channels for voice, while proportions in the public (6%) and voluntary sectors (8%) are considerably lower.

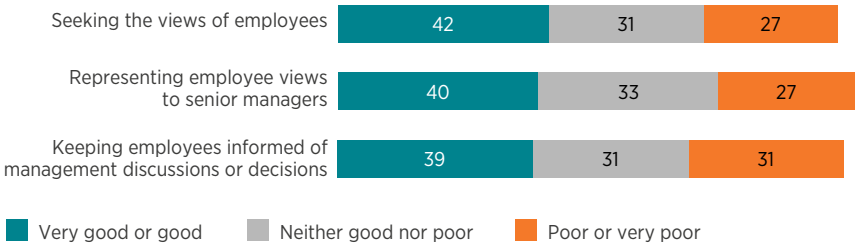
Figure 36: Channels for voice, by sector (%)



Base: all employees including freelancers with only one client, excluding other self-employed (n=4,546)

Among those employees who report having union or non-union representation (Figure 37), we find a fairly consistent proportion – around two-fifths – who report their representatives are good or very good in performing their roles. However, over a quarter consider their representatives to be doing a poor or very poor job.

Figure 37: Employee ratings of their representatives (%)

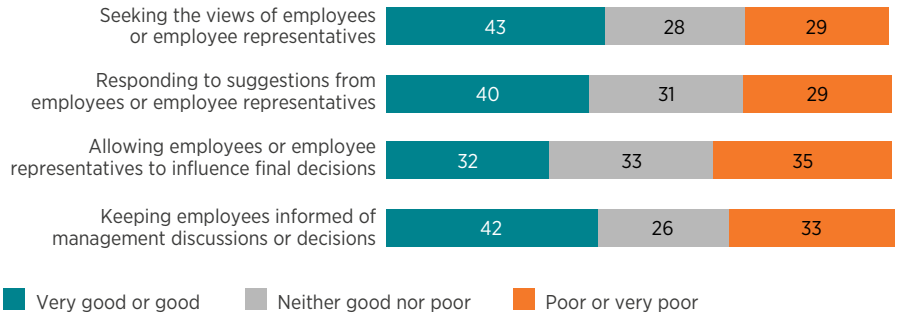


Base: employees with workplace representatives (n=944)

Managerial openness to voice

Employees tend to feel that managers are good at seeking their views (43%) and responding to suggestions (40%). Managers are slightly worse, though, at allowing employees or their representatives to influence final decisions (32%). Views on how well managers keep employees informed are slightly more mixed: 42% report their managers are good in this respect, whereas around a third report them as being poor (Figure 38).

Figure 38: Managerial openness to employee voice (%)



Base: all employees including freelancers with only one client, excluding other self-employed (n=4,417)

Employees in the public sector are more negative in general about their managers (Figure 39). This is evident with respect to employees' perceptions of whether managers respond to suggestions from employees (or their representatives), and in particular allowing employees (or their representatives) to influence final decisions.

Figure 39: Managerial openness to employee voice, by sector (% net positive)

Net positive rating = (% very good or good) – (% very poor or poor)
Base: all employees, including freelancers with only one client, excluding other self-employed (n=4,417)

9 Health and well-being

Key findings

UK jobs tend to have positive impacts on workers' physical and mental health; mental health benefits are especially pronounced. However, work acts as a considerable stressor for a worrying proportion of us.

- Workers tend to report positive feelings about their job, such as enthusiasm, although notable proportions also report boredom in their job.
- Intense and stressful working conditions – including feeling exhausted, miserable or under excessive pressure – are reported by up to one in four workers.
- Two in five workers report having experienced some form of work-related health condition in the last 12 months.
- The most common health problems resulting from work are musculoskeletal, anxiety and sleep problems. Some important differences are found in impacts on mental and physical health by age and gender.
- Satisfaction with life is a generally accepted overall measure of well-being. We find notable differences in reported satisfaction with life overall between occupational groups, with those in higher-level occupations reporting greater satisfaction levels.

The impact of work on health and broader well-being has become increasingly acknowledged as being central to our understanding of job quality and good work.[111] Health and well-being is both a useful indicator of the job quality experienced by workers and can also be considered as reflecting an outcome of the quality of work encountered by individuals.

International comparisons on health and well-being at work

UK workers have slightly worse health and well-being at work than average, according to international measures of job strain and stress.[112] The UK sits 16th in a list of 25 comparator

countries, alongside Hungary and Austria. Israel, Switzerland and New Zealand rank top; Australia, the United States and Norway come in the middle; and France, Slovenia and Japan rank bottom.

Table 8: Country rankings of an international index of health and well-being (job strain and stress)

Health and well-being rank	Country
1	Israel
2	Switzerland
3	New Zealand
4	Mexico
5	Denmark
6	Estonia
7	Chile*
8	Latvia*
9	Finland
10	Lithuania*
11	Czech Republic
12	Australia
13	United States
14	Norway
15	Hungary
16	United Kingdom
17	Austria
18	Iceland*
19	Germany
20	Sweden
21	Belgium
22	Spain
23	France
24	Slovenia
25	Japan

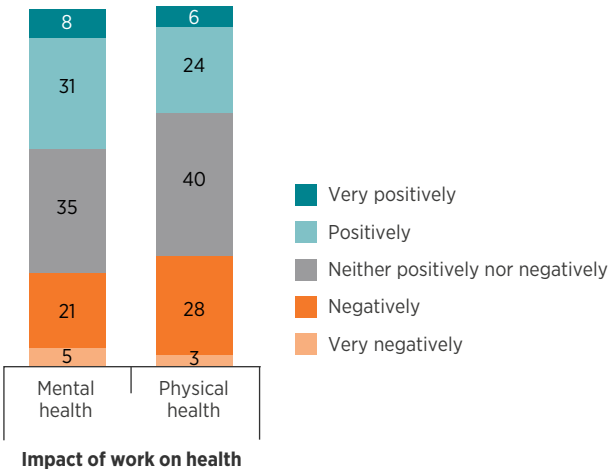
*Due to absent data, population means are imputed for these figures. This maintains the ability to produce an overall ranking but makes the ranking of the country on this metric unreliable.

The UKWL survey collects data on a range of indicators of both physical and mental health, including overall positive or negative impact of work on our health, various states of mental health and the presence of a number of health conditions related to work.

Impacts on mental and physical health

Two in five workers (40%) believe work positively affects their mental health, more than the proportion seeing a negative effect (26%). For physical health, opinions are more split, with similar proportions reporting that work helps as harms them (Figure 40).

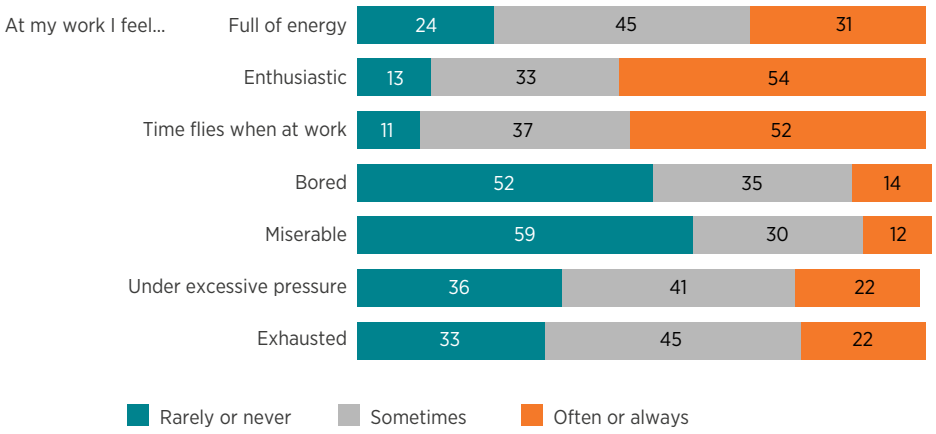
Figure 40: Impact of work on health (%)



Base: all workers (n=5,136)

The impacts of work on health can also be considered with respect to the subjective feelings workers have in their jobs. A little under a quarter of workers report feeling miserable and/or exhausted either always or often in their jobs (Figure 41). In addition, around 12% report feeling 'under excessive pressure', a measure that is considered as a general indicator of stress.[113] These patterns point toward incidence of intense working routines, identified as an increasingly common feature in certain areas of contemporary work, including some higher-paid jobs,[114] and one that could have serious negative impacts on the health – both mental and physical – of workers, which may be manifest in health conditions.

Figure 41: Energy and mental health at work (%)



Base: all workers (n=5,136)

Work-related health conditions

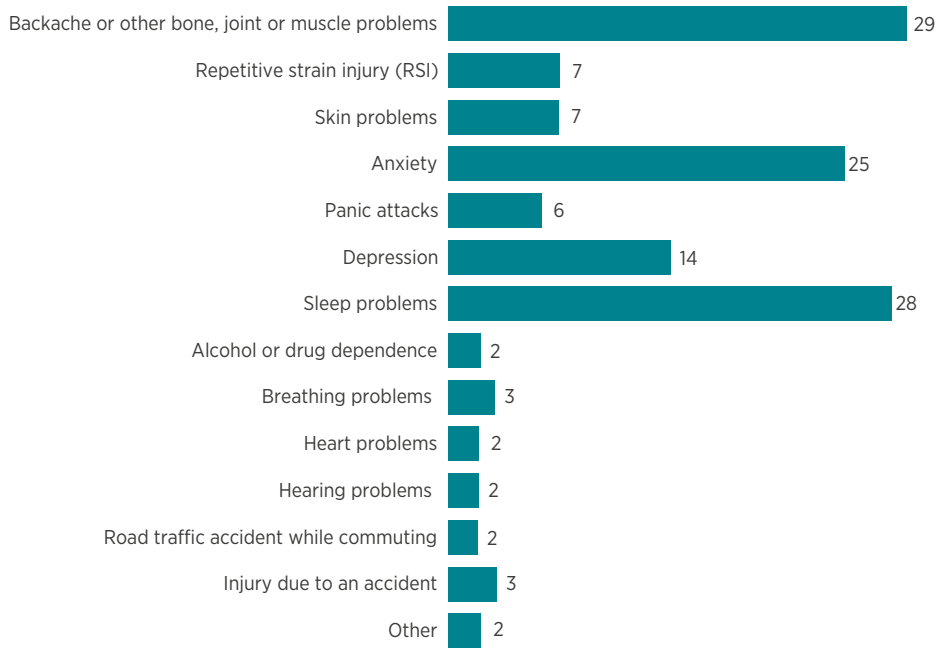
Two in five workers (44%) report having experienced some form of work-related health condition in the last 12 months. These conditions may or may not have led to workers taking time off work.

The most common physical health problems in the UKWL sample are musculoskeletal, including back and joint ache, reported by three in ten workers. Other physical effects of work include repetitive strain injury (RSI) and skin problems. Mental health problems, though, are also quite pronounced, with a quarter of respondents reporting having

experienced anxiety and 14% depression. Aside from musculoskeletal problems, difficulty sleeping is the second most reported health condition (28%), which can reflect both a mental and physical impact of work. A range of other conditions are reported, but all are relatively more marginal in incidence (Figure 42).

Quite stark differences are present by gender in the case of anxiety. A fifth of men report having experienced anxiety in the last year; however, for women this figure is higher, at 29%. Gender differences are not as pronounced for other health conditions, although musculoskeletal effects are reported by fewer men (26%) compared with women (34%). Physical health problems, including musculoskeletal and RSI, are more common among older survey respondents, as we might expect. Mental health problems, meanwhile, are more often reported by younger workers. We find, for example, that anxiety is experienced by around a third of those aged under 35, compared with only 18% of those aged 55 and over. Panic attacks are reported by around 9% of those aged under 35, compared with 5% among the 45–54 age group and 4% of those aged 55 and over.

Figure 42: Health conditions due to work in the last year (%)

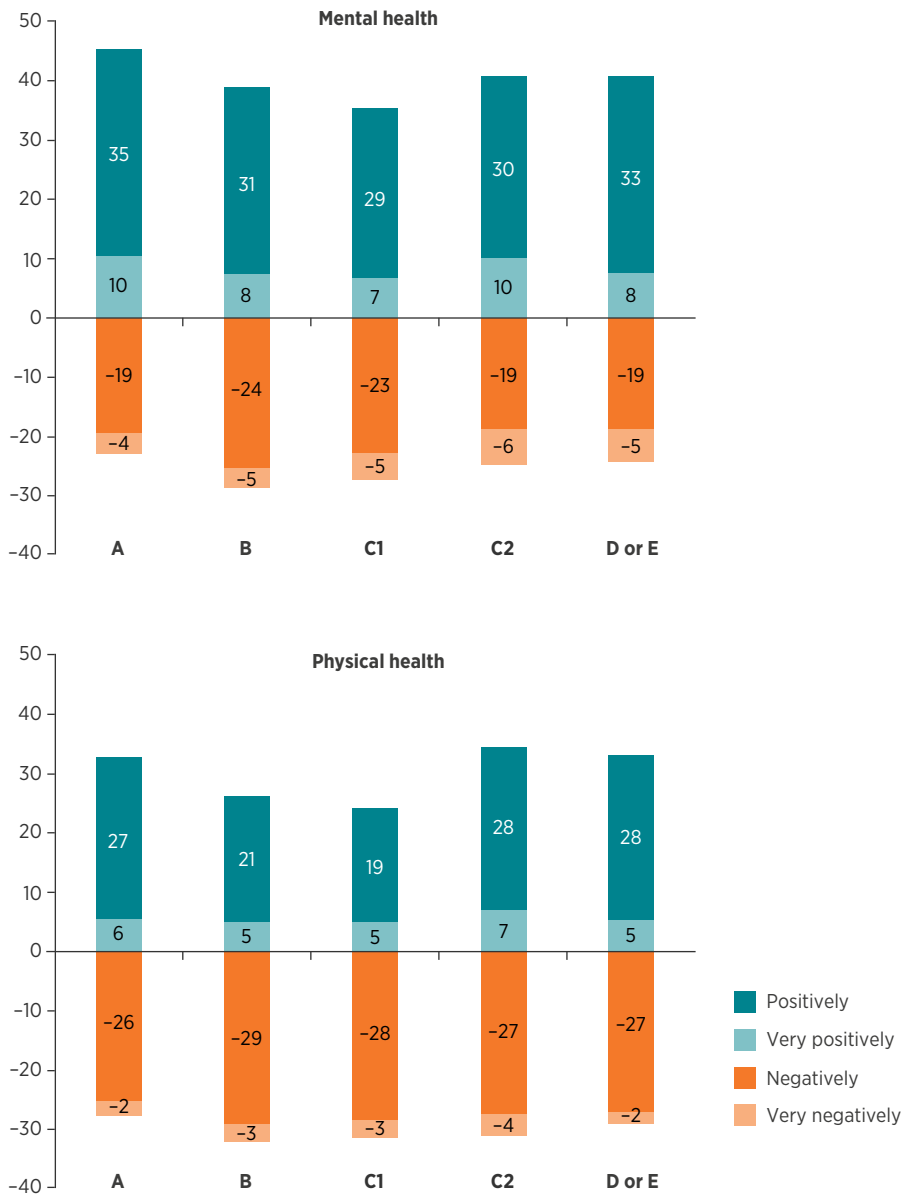


Base: all workers (n=5,136)

Differences across occupational groups

The impact of work on health varies across occupational groups (Figure 43). In particular, mid-level managers and professionals (social grade B) and junior managers and associate professionals (C1) report more negative effects on both their mental and physical health. In the prior case this may reflect intense working routines that create work-related stress: a quarter of workers in grade B occupations report always or often feeling 'under excessive pressure', a description that encapsulates the Health and Safety Executive's definition of workplace stress.

Figure 43: Impact of work on health, by occupational group (%)



Base: all workers (n=5,136)

10 The CIPD Job Quality Index

In this section we consider the different dimensions of job quality together. The focus in this section is on exploring the relationship between our dimensions of job quality and several measures that capture the outcomes of job quality.

International comparisons of job quality

We start with an international view that places the UK in the middle of a table of 25 comparator countries. As discussed in previous sections, according to our international measures, the UK sits:

- above average for skills, autonomy and development (7th) and the stability of contracts (8th)
- slightly above average in union density (10th), one measure of employee voice
- average for relationships at work (12th)

- slightly below average for pay (15th) and health and well-being (16th)
- almost bottom for work–life balance (24th).

To give a total ranking, we weight these different indices according to how important they are for job satisfaction in the UK.[115] Overall, the UK comes 13th out of 25, exactly in the middle, with Germany one place above it and Lithuania one place below (see Table 9). Switzerland, Norway and Denmark come top in these rankings of good work and Spain, Japan and France are ranked bottom.[116]

Table 9: Country rankings of an international index of good work

Good work rank	Country
1	Switzerland
2	Norway
3	Denmark
4	Israel
5	Latvia
6	Iceland
7	Austria
8	United States
9	Finland
10	New Zealand
11	Estonia
12	Germany
13	United Kingdom
14	Lithuania
15	Belgium
16	Australia
17	Hungary
18	Mexico
19	Chile
20	Czech Republic
21	Sweden
22	Slovenia
23	Spain
24	Japan
25	France

UK Working Lives survey analysis

Turning to the more comprehensive set of measures in *UK Working Lives*, we calculate job quality indexes for each of the seven dimensions of job quality. Explanation of how these are constructed can be found in the Appendix to this report.[117] Below we look at how these vary between different groups, before analysing the relationships between these indices of job quality and four key outcomes: job satisfaction, enthusiasm, work effort and likelihood of quitting.

Work–life balance and flexible working

The index for work–life balance includes measures of achieved work–life balance, measures that take account of the impact of paid work on our lives and vice versa. It also incorporates the presence of both formal and informal flexible working arrangements, and levels of overwork.

Mean scores for the work–life balance index are marginally lower in higher-level occupations. Poor work–life balance is more common among mid-level managers and professionals (social grade B), who have a mean index score of 0.52, compared with 0.53 overall. This offers further evidence of the challenges present for these workers, who also report the highest workloads (section 6) and more negative impacts on health and well-being (section 9). The mixed results across occupations for the work–life balance index highlight that jobs that otherwise exhibit good characteristics can also have bad qualities.[118]

Pay and benefits

The pay and benefits index includes either an objective or subjective measure of pay, and in addition factors in levels of pension contributions and reported worker benefits.

The scores for the pay and benefits index are clearly linked to occupational level. Using the subjective method, those in higher-level occupations score much higher: 0.52 in social grade A and 0.47 in social grade B – than those in occupation grades D or E (0.40). These differences appear even starker using the objective pay method. Workers on insecure and temporary contracts also have lower scores on the pay and benefits index, reflecting not only the lower pay often associated with these jobs but also the lack of employee benefits in these precarious forms of work.

Contracts

Our index for the terms of employment dimension of job quality is calculated using details of job security and reported levels of underemployment.

Average scores for the contracts index are highest among mid-level managerial and professional workers (social grade B: index score of 0.87) and junior managerial, clerical, administrative and professional workers (social grade C1: index score of 0.86). As per the scores for the majority of job quality dimensions, scores are lowest among grade D and E occupations (0.80). As we would expect, the inherent insecure nature of temporary, zero-hours and short-hours employment translates into lower scores for this index (mean 0.55) among workers on these contract types.

Job design and the nature of work

The job design and the nature of work dimension of job quality is split into two indexes. First, the *nature of work* index incorporates workload, levels of autonomy, resources available to workers, meaningfulness – that is, whether workers feel their work contributes to their organisation and/or society – and the suitability of workers' qualifications and skills for the job. Second, a *job complexity* index is measured separately from indicators relating to how often a job involves problem-solving and complex, interesting and monotonous tasks.

Workers in higher-level occupations have considerably higher index scores for the nature of work component: 0.62 in social grade A, compared with 0.51 in social grades D and E. These differences are even more pronounced for job complexity (0.69 for social grade A and 0.65 for grade B, compared with only 0.49 in social grades D and E). This points to large inherent differences in the content and nature of work conducted across occupational groups.

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Relationships at work

The relationships at work index consists of measures of the quality of relationships with others at work, psychological safety, which considers whether workers feel they can take risks and how blame and mistakes are handled, as well as how workers feel about line management. In addition, measures of trust and whether a worker has experienced conflict at work are incorporated into the index.

We get a mixed picture with respect to mean values of this index across occupational groups. While there is a general trend of lower scores for this index in lower-level occupations as per the other indexes, scores for skilled manual workers (NRS social grade C2) are comparable, at 0.71, with those of higher-level occupations, for example social grade B at 0.72. Differences are more pronounced by work sector, where we find lower scores in the public sector. This suggests lower-quality relationships present in this sector, and is also at least partially attributable to incidence of conflict at work, as we find differences in the mean index score to be greater using the revised calculation method that includes this factor.

Voice and representation

Employee voice and representation is captured through evidence of direct (for example employee surveys, meetings with managers) and indirect (union and non-union representation) channels for workers to be heard. It also includes measures that reflect on the managerial culture within the workplace.

Differences by occupational group follow the overall trend of the other indexes, with higher scores among higher-level occupations. Important also to note for this index are the stark differences by sector of employment. Those in the private sector score considerably lower (0.27) than workers in the public (0.40) or voluntary sectors (0.40). Voice and representation is also notably lower in temporary, zero-hours and short-hours employment (0.30), evidencing the challenge of workers being heard in these insecure jobs.

Health and well-being

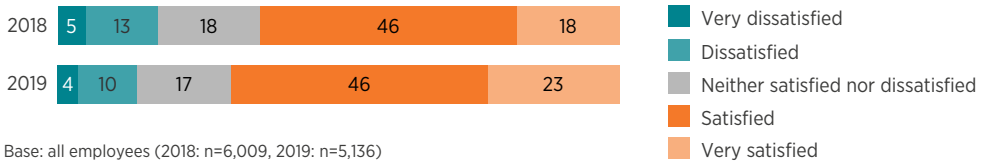
The health and well-being index is constructed using measures of both physical and mental health. It incorporates subjective measures of how work affects physical and mental health as well as measures of health conditions, levels of energy and exhaustion, whether workers feel miserable, and work-related stress captured through a measure of the presence of excessive pressure at work.

Mean scores for the health and well-being index are more evenly spread across occupational groups, with higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (0.62) the only group scoring notably higher than the overall mean for this index.

Job quality outcomes

We begin our analysis of job quality outcomes by considering the overall patterns in our four outcome measures, with comparison included with the 2018 UKWL. Job satisfaction is a fairly standard indicator of the level of happiness of workers. We find around seven in ten workers report being either satisfied or very satisfied with their job. This is broadly consistent with patterns observed in the 2018 UKWL (64%) and with previous data from the CIPD *Employee Outlook*, although these data have been subject to some short-term volatility.

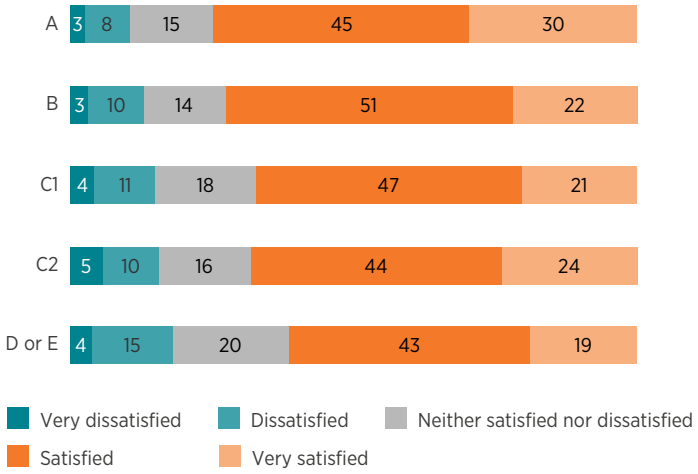
Figure 44: Job satisfaction (%)



Base: all employees (2018: n=6,009, 2019: n=5,136)

If we break down job satisfaction by occupational group, we observe a clear relationship between occupation level and satisfaction: three-quarters of workers in social grades A and B report satisfaction with their job, compared with around two-thirds of workers in group C2 and three in five workers in groups D and E.

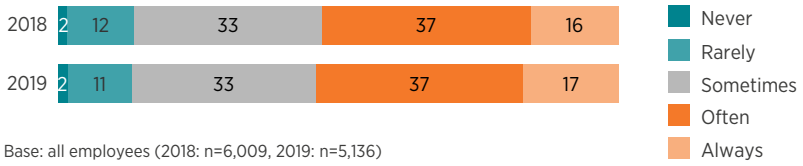
Figure 45: Job satisfaction, by occupational group (%)



Base: all employees (n=5,136)

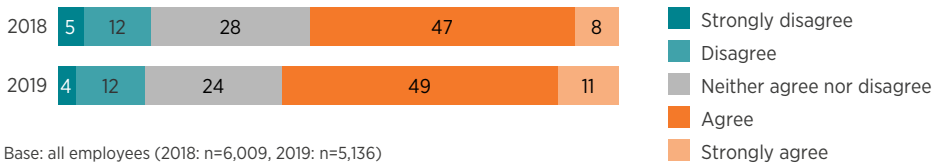
Levels of enthusiasm is another useful outcome indicator as it provides insight into the feelings of workers towards their job. Here we find 54% of workers are either 'often' or 'always' enthusiastic about their job, while only 13% report feeling low levels of enthusiasm. Meanwhile, three in five workers report that they are willing to work harder than necessary in order to help their employer or clients.

Figure 46: *I am enthusiastic about my job* (%)



Base: all employees (2018: n=6,009, 2019: n=5,136)

Figure 47: Work effort: *I am willing to work harder than I have to in order to help my employer or organisation* (%)



Base: all employees (2018: n=6,009, 2019: n=5,136)

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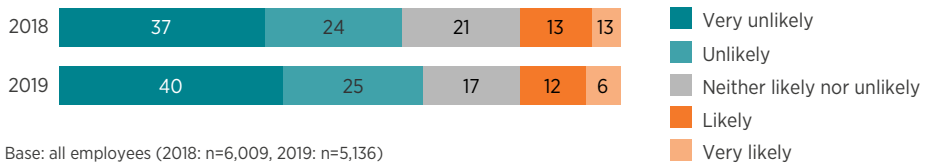
Finally, we consider the likelihood of voluntarily quitting in the next year as an indicator of relative dissatisfaction with current employment. We find that approximately the same proportion of workers indicate that they intend to quit their job, as do those who report being dissatisfied with their job, unenthusiastic or unwilling to go the extra mile for their employer or clients. This suggests that these outcomes are quite strongly related to one another. This is confirmed by statistically significant correlations between these variables, which are strong between job satisfaction and job enthusiasm (0.615), moderate between job enthusiasm and work effort (0.438), but somewhat weaker between remaining measures.[119]

Figure 48: Likelihood of voluntarily quitting job in the next year (%)

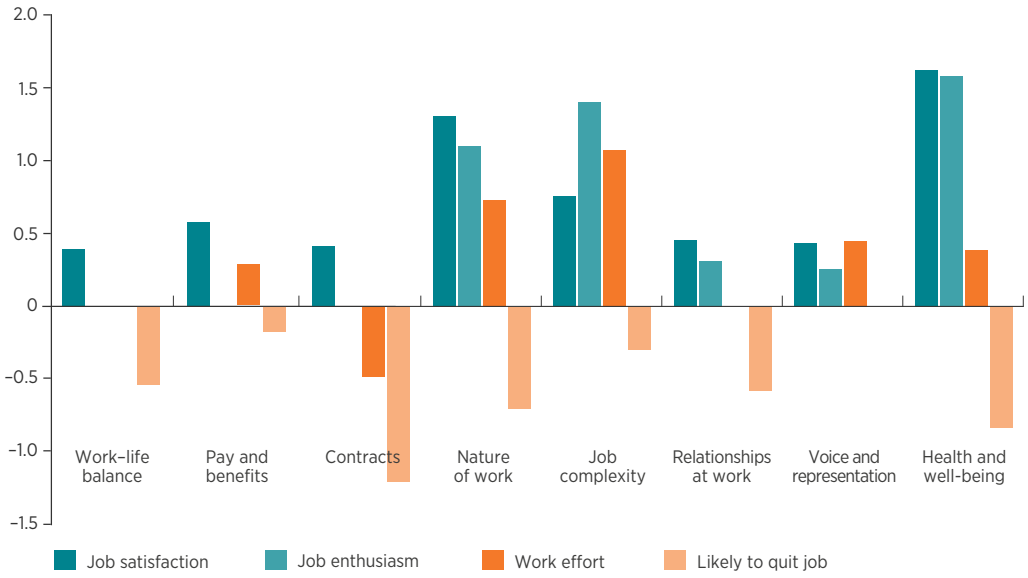


Base: all employees (2018: n=6,009, 2019: n=5,136)

The Job Quality Index and outcomes of job quality

We explore the outcomes of job quality by focusing on how our seven dimensions relate to four key measures: how satisfied people are with their jobs overall; at a more emotional level, how enthusiastic they feel about their work day-to-day; in terms of motivation, how much effort they put in; and in terms of commitment to the organisation, how likely they are to quit (Figure 49; see Appendix for full results). We conduct regression analysis as this allows us to look at each unique association or relationship while controlling for other factors.

Figure 49: Job Quality Index and related outcomes (regression coefficients)[120]



Base: all employees (n=5,136)

We find that all dimensions of job quality are relevant, that is, statistically significant, and positive with respect to job satisfaction. The nature of work, and health and well-being appear to have the strongest relationships with relative satisfaction with job, suggesting that these aspects of job quality may be at the centre of happiness in work. These dimensions, as well as job complexity, are also important to reported levels of job enthusiasm, but we find that work–life balance, pay and benefits, and contracts are not statistically significant for this outcome, casting some doubt over their relevance to this outcome measure.

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Five of our indexes have a positive relationship with reported levels of work effort, with aspects of the nature of work including skills, autonomy and development and job complexity appearing to have a particularly strong relationship. Intriguingly, we find that the contracts index has a negative relationship with work effort, that is, more secure jobs and/or those that do not result in underemployment are those in which workers report lesser willingness to go the extra mile for their employer. This could reflect workers in secure jobs feeling under less pressure to work harder than they have to, but equally could simply be a product of some permanent workers being overemployed and thus not being willing to put in any further additional effort.

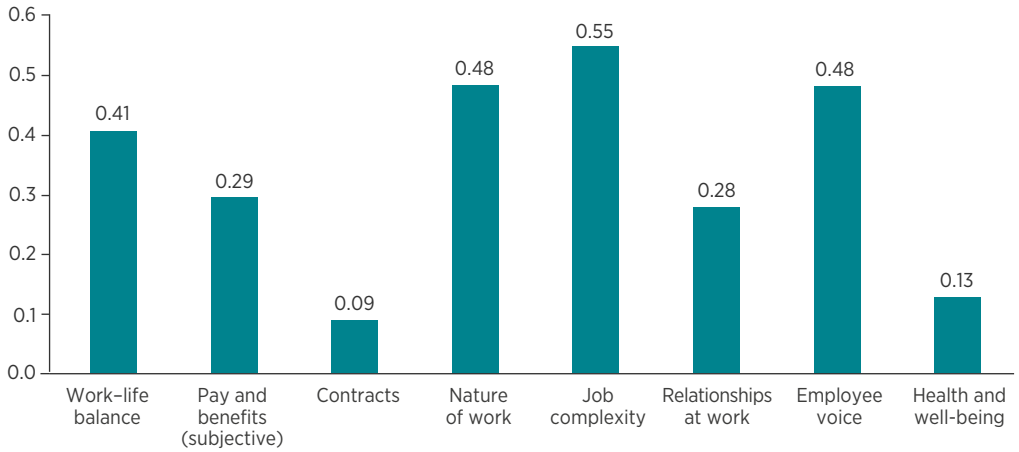
Finally, we find a negative relationship between all aspects of job quality and intention to quit, confirming that job quality has an important mediating effect on the turnover intention of workers. Higher scores in all of our job quality dimensions are associated with workers feeling it is less likely they will quit their job, with voice and representation the only non-significant result.

The latter is interesting, as it seems to downplay the classic notion proposed by Hirschman[121] that employee 'voice' is a main alternative to quitting ('exit') or putting up with poor conditions ('loyalty'); in the grand scheme of things, other aspects of job quality are more important. However, as we discussed in last year's UKWL survey,[122] this analysis looks at the independent effect of voice, controlling for other aspects of job quality, that is, the intrinsic value of voice. Separate from this we can see that voice has an important influence on shaping these other aspects, that is, through its instrumental value (see section 8).

Work–life balance and flexible working

In line with the focus on work–life balance and flexible working in the 2019 UKWL, we consider in greater detail the relationship between flexibility in work and aspects of job quality. We observe differences in the mean values as a percentage of standard deviation of the Job Quality Index between those who work flexibly and those who do not (Figure 50). There is a clear and consistent pattern of higher levels of job quality reported across all dimensions among those who are able to work flexibly. It is likely that there is a level of dual causality in this relationship. Workers who are able to work flexibly benefit from improved balance between work and life, which has wider work, lifestyle and well-being benefits;[123] however, it is also likely that this simply reflects greater availability and use of flexible working in jobs that are better quality, as already noted in section 3.

Figure 50: Difference in CIPD Job Quality Index, by whether work flexibly (d values)[124]



Base: all employees (n=5,136)

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To offer greater insight we perform a regression analysis that considers the relationship between availability of flexible working arrangements and levels of job quality (see Appendix for full results). We find weak but positive relationships with the pay and benefits, skills autonomy and development, job complexity and employee voice indexes. Alongside this, the analysis suggests that workers in the public and voluntary sectors are more likely to report greater availability of flexible working, while those in NRS social grade C2, D and E occupations have lesser availability. Combined, these findings suggest there is some weight to the assertion of greater availability, and in turn benefits, of flexible working arrangements in jobs that exhibit a number of other good qualities, including autonomy, complexity, and better pay and benefits.

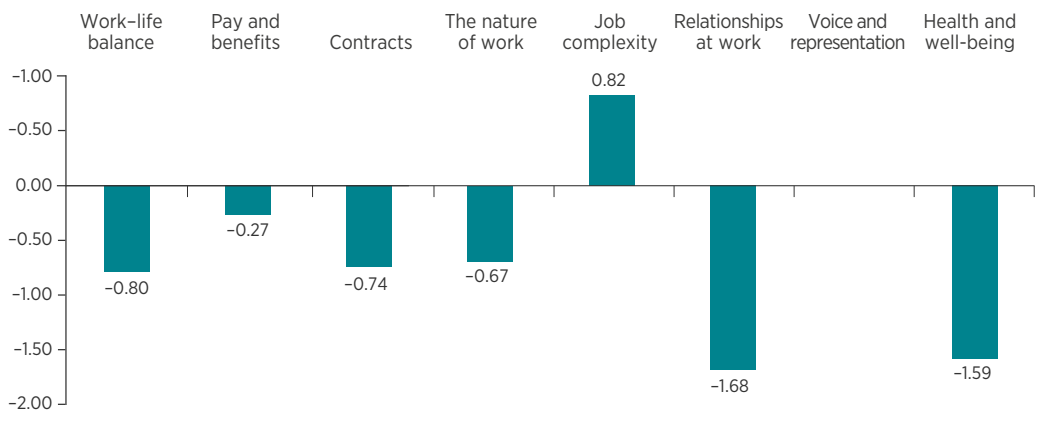
Finally, we perform separate analysis for men and women to take account of the differences we observed in the flexible working impacts reported by gender in section 3. We find that where there is greater availability and/or use of flexible working arrangements, this is associated with higher scores in the pay and benefits, the nature of work, and voice and representation indexes for both men and women. However, there are important gender differences. A positive relationship with the health and well-being index is only found among women, whereas for men we instead find a positive relationship with the job complexity index. These findings could reflect the positive quality of life impacts of flexible working we found reported by many women in section 3, and for men the positive relationship with job complexity may be indicative of the greater availability and use of flexible working in good jobs.

Conflict at work

We saw in section 7 that people's experiences of conflict at work have large implications for their intention to quit. Given the importance of this, we analyse workplace conflict in further detail, in relation to the CIPD Job Quality Index.

We assess how conflict relates to other dimensions of job quality through regression analysis, to allow us to control for other factors (Figure 51, see Appendix for full results). We find statistically significant negative relationships between experiences of conflict and our indexes, with only one exception (employee voice). We find a particularly strong negative relationship with health and well-being, highlighting how serious conflict is for our working lives. Unsurprisingly, we find a strong association between the presence of workplace conflict and workers' assessment of social support and cohesion (the 2018 method of measuring relationships at work[125]). The positive relationship between conflict and job complexity reflects that differences of opinion and tension in relationships are more likely when work is not routine and straightforward.

Figure 51: CIPD Job Quality Index and whether experienced conflict at work (regression coefficients)[126]



Base: all employees (n=5,136)

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The job complexity index is positive when controls are included in the analysis, while the relationship with the voice and representation index is insignificant. The latter of these two relationships is, therefore, not reliable. The result for complexity could reflect jobs that are complex and high pressure in nature being more likely to create incidence of conflict, but more research would need to be performed to better understand this relationship.

Notwithstanding these two exceptions, our findings suggest that low job quality goes hand in hand with experiences of conflict at work. These findings also further expand our understanding of the relevance of aspects of job quality to the turnover intention of workers, which we found to be strongly related to both job quality dimensions and conflict at work.

11 Conclusion

The *UK Working Lives* survey provides a snapshot of working life in the UK, offering insight into the dimensions of job quality, including through the analysis of the CIPD Job Quality Index, and related outcomes. This section outlines the central findings and conclusions from the analysis of the 2019 UKWL.

In focus: work–life balance and flexible working

Achieving work–life balance is undoubtedly a central focus of many workers, and has become increasingly acknowledged as a core dimension of job quality.[127] In 2019 the UKWL survey gave specific focus to work–life balance and flexible working and this has been explored in depth in this report.

Our analysis finds widespread availability of flexible working, but importantly quite considerable gaps between the availability and use of different flexible working arrangements.[128] Flexi-time, reduced hours and working from home are most common. There is greater availability of some forms of flexible working, including flexi-time and working from home, among workers in higher-level occupations. There are a range of drivers of flexible working, with women more often reporting the provision of care as a primary driver. Increased leisure time and reducing/avoiding the commute are also commonly reported drivers.

Despite relatively widespread availability, we find evidence of unmet demand for flexible working arrangements. In particular, workers show preferences for greater availability of flexibility over the arrangement of work time, including flexi-time and compressed hours, as well as working from home. Our analysis suggests that the use of flexible working arrangements offers workers substantial quality of life benefits; however, impacts on careers are more mixed. More negative impacts are reported by women and those using reduced hours arrangements, evidencing trade-offs among some flexible workers.

Finally, while our work–life balance index was not found to be statistically relevant to job enthusiasm and work effort, we do find a positive relationship between work–life balance and both job satisfaction and lesser intention to quit job. These findings suggest that work–life balance and flexibility in work are important factors in the happiness and commitment of workers.

In summary, our findings are indicative of flexible working delivering for some workers, but not for others. Workers in higher-level occupations, who we find to have jobs which are good in many other respects, are able to use flexible working to manage the work–life balance challenges encountered in these demanding forms of employment. However, we find a lack of equality in access to, and impacts of, flexibility. There is unmet demand for

forms of flexibility which potentially offer the most benefits, including flexi-time and working from home. Meanwhile workers using reduced hours flexible working arrangements, often because of caring responsibilities, more often face negative career implications.

Positive impacts on job quality can certainly be realised by enhancing access to flexible working arrangements, as well as more informal flexible working practices. Ensuring that there is greater equality in access across different job types and among different workers is one part of the solution.

The other part is to make sure that, culturally, workplaces are supportive of the range of types of flexible working. We note in particular that arrangements that reduce workers' hours are more likely to harm their career prospects and that women are more likely than men to use these arrangements. Developing appropriately inclusive and supportive organisational cultures in this respect may involve changing some deep-rooted attitudes. Qualitative research has found that attitudes to male workers reducing their hours can be very negative – for example, even labelling them as 'lazy bastards'.[129] Challenging such limiting traditional stereotypes about the gender division of labour is central to making progress in gender equality in the workplace.

Other dimensions of job quality

Across the remaining six dimensions of job quality considered in this report, we identify a set of core findings.

Pay and benefits

We find that while absolute levels of pay are certainly important to our working lives, workers who are happy with their pay are happy with their job overall. This suggests that perceptions of relative incomes and appropriateness of pay are key to the happiness of workers.

Contracts

The majority of workers continue to report permanent employment, and recent growth in permanent employment has outstripped growth in others forms of work. However, an important minority of workers are engaged in forms of non-standard work, including temporary, zero-hours and short-hours contracts, and it is among these workers where we find greater incidence of underemployment, often involving multiple insecure jobs.

Job design and the nature of work

The nature of work differs considerably by occupation level. Higher-level occupations exhibit a number of characteristics of good work, including greater autonomy, variety, complexity, and meaningfulness. Mid-level managerial, administrative and professional occupations, while also benefiting from a number of these characteristics, face problems associated with high workloads. Opportunities for skill and career development vary considerably across the labour market. These differences are important as we find almost half of workers report a skills mismatch, suggesting there is a need to enhance opportunities in order to better match workers with jobs.

Relationships at work

Relationships at work act to create a positive working environment. Conflict at work is all too common, however, and has negative consequences not just for the worker but for their employer, as it makes workers more likely to quit. Workers also remain concerned about the level to which managers are open to workers' input in decision-making, and often feel that managers do not keep them adequately informed about organisational developments.

Improving communication channels and the quality of relationships at work are relatively lower-cost methods of improving job quality and should be a key focus of employers.

Health and well-being

Finally, we find that work has positive impacts on both physical and mental health. However, it can also act as a considerable stressor where working conditions are intense and high-pressure, and where conflict occurs. Well-being is an increasingly high-profile aspect of paid work,[130] and our findings suggest it is a central tenet of job quality.

Differences in job quality

The seven dimensions of job quality explored in this report all have relevance to the work outcomes we considered, although the relationships differ by dimension and job quality outcome. Job satisfaction is consistently associated with higher levels of job quality, while we also find that job enthusiasm and work effort are outcomes associated with a number of dimensions of job quality. Better-quality jobs are also likely to elicit lesser turnover intention among workers. These outcomes together generate a picture of job quality being highly important to the productivity, commitment and well-being of workers.

We find important differences in the CIPD Job Quality Index across occupation groups and, for some dimensions, by work sector. We find a general trend of lower quality of work being experienced by workers in lower-level occupations, although workers in mid-level managerial, administrative and professional occupations also report a number of concerning characteristics, including high workloads and work–life conflict. It seems that for at least some of these workers the transition from lower-level to senior occupations is a challenging one indeed. Meanwhile, although working in the public sector generally appears to be associated with better job quality, public sector workers do fare worse in some respects, including lower quality of relationships at work, which in part relates to greater incidence of conflict at work. We also find key differences between traditional and other forms of work, with workers in temporary, zero-hours and short-hours employment subject to lower-quality jobs in a number of dimensions.

Our analysis of the CIPD Job Quality Index provides evidence of the differing job quality encountered by workers across different types of work. We also find a number of differences by diversity characteristics, with gender appearing particularly relevant in this regard. Women's working lives are still more often subject to interruptions associated with childrearing and other caring responsibilities. This translates into differing experiences of work, including in the use of flexible working arrangements and career progression. We also find that women are more likely to experience certain forms of conflict at work, including bullying and sexual harassment.

Improving job quality in the UK

It is not realistic to expect all jobs to be equal in all ways: in some cases, the differences we see in job quality are a natural reflection of different occupations. Moreover, if we look at broad categories of occupations – such as the NRS social grades – we see that they all contain some characteristics of good work and characteristics of poor-quality work. It seems most of us make some trade-offs; it is the balance between the good and bad characteristics that is central to how we experience our working lives.

The broad associations we note above between good-quality work and productive organisations need to be unpacked and analysed in more detail, yet it is clear that within them there lies a huge opportunity to improve job quality. Some improvements will bring immediate mutual gains for workers and employers alike – for example, certain flexible working arrangements may be 'no brainers' for organisations to implement. Other

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improvements will undoubtedly have cost implications in the short run, but may deliver longer-term returns for employers through more productive and committed workers. But all improvements must be encouraged where possible.

Good work is an achievable goal, but requires buy-in from both policy-makers and employers.[131] To support policy-makers and employers as they foster good work, research needs to continue to identify ways to improve job design and conditions of work sustainably. This requires a more detailed understanding of the nature and quality of jobs across sectors, occupations and at different levels of the organisation. Tools such as the *UK Working Lives* survey provide a method to do this, both through further analysis of rich datasets and by employers themselves gathering data on their workforces.

The findings in this report suggest more tailored policies based on understanding of jobs and workforces are likely to be most effective in reducing incidence of low-quality jobs through identification and enhancement of the dimensions of job quality.

12 Notes

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71 See Appendix: International ranking of good work. We include measures of the proportion of professional roles in the economy (Standard Occupational Codes 1 to 3), whether employees can work independently, the extent companies invest in training and employee development, and whether employees received training to improve job skills in the past 12 months.

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110 Ibid.

111 Stevenson and Farmer (2017); Taylor et al (2017).

112 See Appendix: International ranking of good work. The measure of job strain is a combination of high job demands and limited job resources. The measure of stress is a simple measure of how often employees find their work stressful.

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115 See Appendix for detail on the weighting.

116 These are approximate rankings based on available data and a small number of indicators. Nonetheless, they give us some insight into how the quality of jobs varies between countries.

117 The indexes are constructed using methods consistent with the 2018 UKWL survey, which are outlined in Gifford (2018) and Sarkar and Gifford (2018), with several revisions associated with changes to the survey and the focus of this year's report. These are described in the Appendix to this report.

118 Kalleberg (2012).

119 Spearman's rho correlation. See Appendix for more details on methods.

120 OLS regression analysis using Job Quality Indexes and control variables. Results are not shown where not statistically significant at $p<0.1$.

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124 These figures represent Cohen's d, the difference in mean scores as a proportion of the expected standard deviation. D is considered small at values of 0.2, medium at 0.5, large at 0.8 and very large at 1.2 or above.

125 The 2018 index for Relationships at Work assesses social support and cohesion; it does not include the measures of conflict at work. We include this measure in the analysis to show how experiences of conflict relate to other aspects of relationships at work.

126 Regression analysis: binary probit model used as dependent variable has two categories. Coefficients are indicative of direction and relative size of relationship between experiences of conflict at work and dimensions of job quality.

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Issued: June 2019 Reference: 7878