

Salary, security and purpose

What employees want in 2023





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The labour landscape

The pandemic. Hybrid working. The Great Resignation. Quiet quitting. Over the last few years we have seen seismic changes in the labour market. For the first time in a long time, it's employees and jobseekers who have been in control, able to choose roles that work for them, and prepared to walk away if they don't get the career opportunities and personal satisfaction they seek.

In June to August 2022, the total number of job vacancies in the UK was 470,000 (59.1%) above the January to March 2020 pre-pandemic level. The last few releases from the ONS have shown a fall, potentially as recruitment budgets look set to tighten with the looming recession, but vacancies remain high.

Number of vacancies in the UK, seasonally adjusted, September to November 2003 to November 2022



The unemployment rate stood at 3.7% in December 2022 having averaged 6.8% between 1971 and 2021. (ONS, Labour market overview, UK: December 2022). We're in a situation where there are lots of jobs available, and not enough people to take them. So in some sectors it's candidates who hold the power, whilst in other sectors such as health and social care there has been a huge surge in vacancies, partly caused by an exodus of foreign workers post Brexit.

According to [Microsoft's 2021 Work Trend Index](#), 41% of people said they would consider leaving their jobs within the next year, while in May 2022 [PwC reported one in five](#) were planning a move. Whether it's a reevaluation of priorities post pandemic, shifts in working practices, or technological advances, candidates in many professional sectors have been a lot more choosy about their careers.



But with a recession on the horizon and a cost of living crisis that is seeing record inflation and increased costs hitting the pockets of everyone in the country, are employees and candidates feeling so confident?

Our latest survey of over a thousand UK workers suggests not. The data and insight in this report shows that things have changed. Instead it points to a pool of employees who are worried about the short-term impacts of the recession and it's making them fearful of taking steps to progress their career in case it 'rocks the boat' and destabilises security.

“ I quit 3 jobs within 9 months between September 2020 and June 2021 before I ended up launching myself as a freelance business. I accepted a couple of roles that just weren't right for me and resigned quite quickly. But even though it was the height of the pandemic and quit rates were really high everywhere, I always felt pretty confident about my chances of finding a new job.

I can't say for sure I'd make the same decisions in the current market, though. Although inflation has driven some salaries up and it's a candidate-driven market, seeing people get hit by layoffs has really crystallised the value of finding stability and certainty.

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Camille Hogg, Freelance Writer

Pay and security

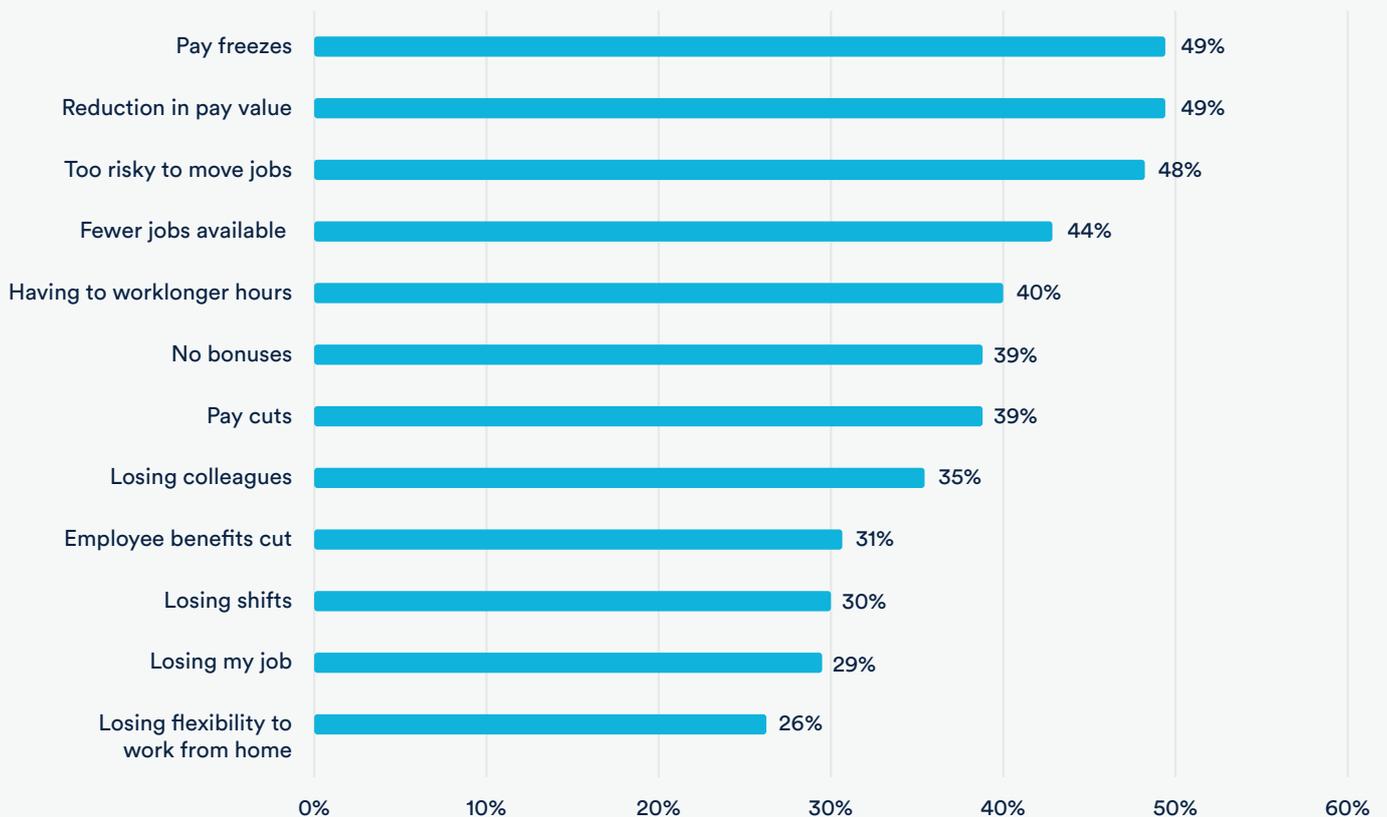
According to our survey, pay and security are the biggest worries of employees in the UK right now. Half (49%) are concerned or very concerned about reduction in pay value and pay freezes and four in ten (39%) worry about tangible pay cuts. It seems people feel it is too risky to move jobs right now, with 48% saying they are concerned or very concerned about trying to make a move in the current climate.

Whilst hybrid and flexible working remains important, it is currently far less of an issue when it comes to the real pay pocket impact of wages and money right now, with only a quarter (26%) stating they are concerned that they may lose flexibility to work from home.

And it's not only pay and benefits. A startling one in three (29%) are fearful they will lose their job. Far from confident, it points to a labour market plagued by worry.

With a recession ahead, how concerned are you about these problems?

% Concerned and very concerned



A generational divide

Generally speaking it's those in their thirties who are most concerned about pay issues, perhaps because many have young families to care for. The youngest cohorts are worried there will be fewer jobs available for them as they enter the workforce, with nearly half (46%) of 18-24 year olds saying this is concerning them, whereas the top concern is pay value for other cohorts and risk of moving for 45-54.

Half (50%) of entry level respondents are concerned about reduction in pay value compared to 35% of senior leadership or CEOs. Average graduate starting salaries have not increased in line with inflation or the market, and averages remain around £25k pa.

We know that people who enter the job market during a recession end up years behind where they would have been had it been a more buoyant period. Our youngest workers are going to be impacted more significantly than their older colleagues and potentially unable to progress and unable to progress, unless they can be supported by wealthy parents to fund internships or further studies, thus widening the economic gap even further.

“

We are creating an environment where young people are going to be set back years. It will be difficult to get a job unless parents can afford an internship, and these people can't afford to stay at uni and study like previous generations. Salaries aren't keeping up, and positions are precarious. Younger people are losing hope – of a job, a career, a home - and their high expectations can't be matched by reality. The chasm between old and young, rich and poor is just getting bigger.

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Dean Sadler, CEO

“

I've been laid off in recessions before and just went and found something in order to survive. I've never had the luxury of being wealthy so when times have been tough, I've always found a temp job or a gig or even some manual work.

”

John Carvell, Copywriter

It's the over 55s who are less concerned about their jobs. Secure in their roles, perhaps with a long tenure behind them, they are not feeling the impact of the recession as much as those entering the employment market or in the early stages of their career. These are people who perhaps own their houses, have savings, and are more secure in their lives. Gen X and Baby Boomers are far wealthier than millennials, with some studies saying they hold 11 or 12 times more wealth. Our older generations continue to be confident, perhaps buoyed by the fact that economically and educationally they have had it better than previous generations.

A third in entry level jobs are concerned they will lose their jobs, going down to one in five (21%) in senior leadership positions. It is those in midsize companies (33% in companies of 250-499 employees) who are most worried (vs 25% in the smallest and largest companies).

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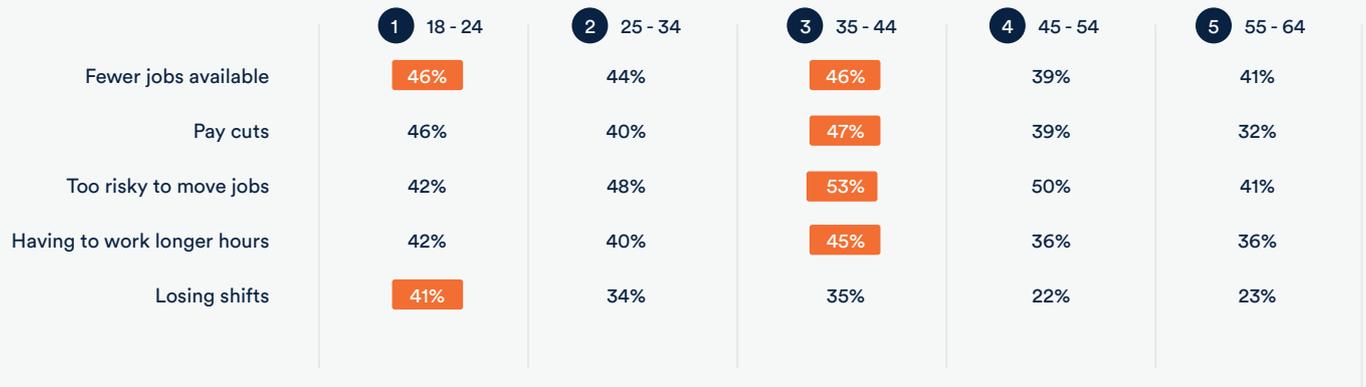
After graduating in 2019 I have found finding a job more challenging than I have ever realised. Recruiters would ghost me, I'd respond to proposals and hear nothing, and often without any feedback. It's complex and exhausting, and takes up so much time and space, both practically and mentally

Luana, 26, Digital Strategist

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With a recession ahead, how concerned are you about these problems?

% - concerned + very concerned



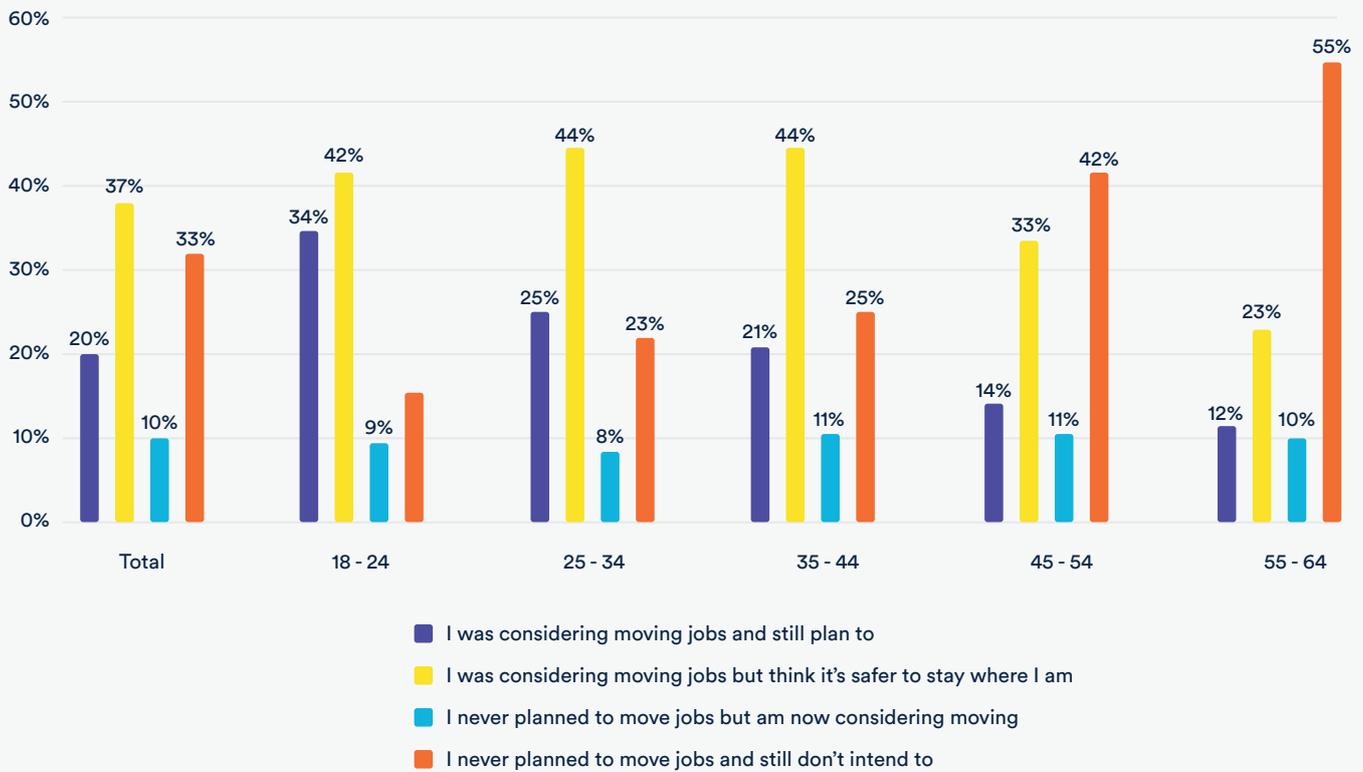
Public sector employees are less likely to be worried about job losses (24% vs 31%) but still fear pay freezes that are common in times like these (53% vs 48%). With the mobilisation of trade unions and wide public sector strikes throughout 2022 and 2023 we're seeing a tumultuous environment where security and satisfaction can't be taken for granted.



A changing approach

Two in five (37%) people surveyed were of people were considering a new move but have chosen to stay in their current role. This attitude was more likely to be held by younger generations. More than two in five (43%) under 44 year olds say that they were considering moving jobs, but now think it's safer to stay where they are. Only 1 in 5 say they were looking to change role and are continuing rising to one in three (34%) of under 24s. For a small proportion (10%) the recession has actually encouraged them to start looking for something new.

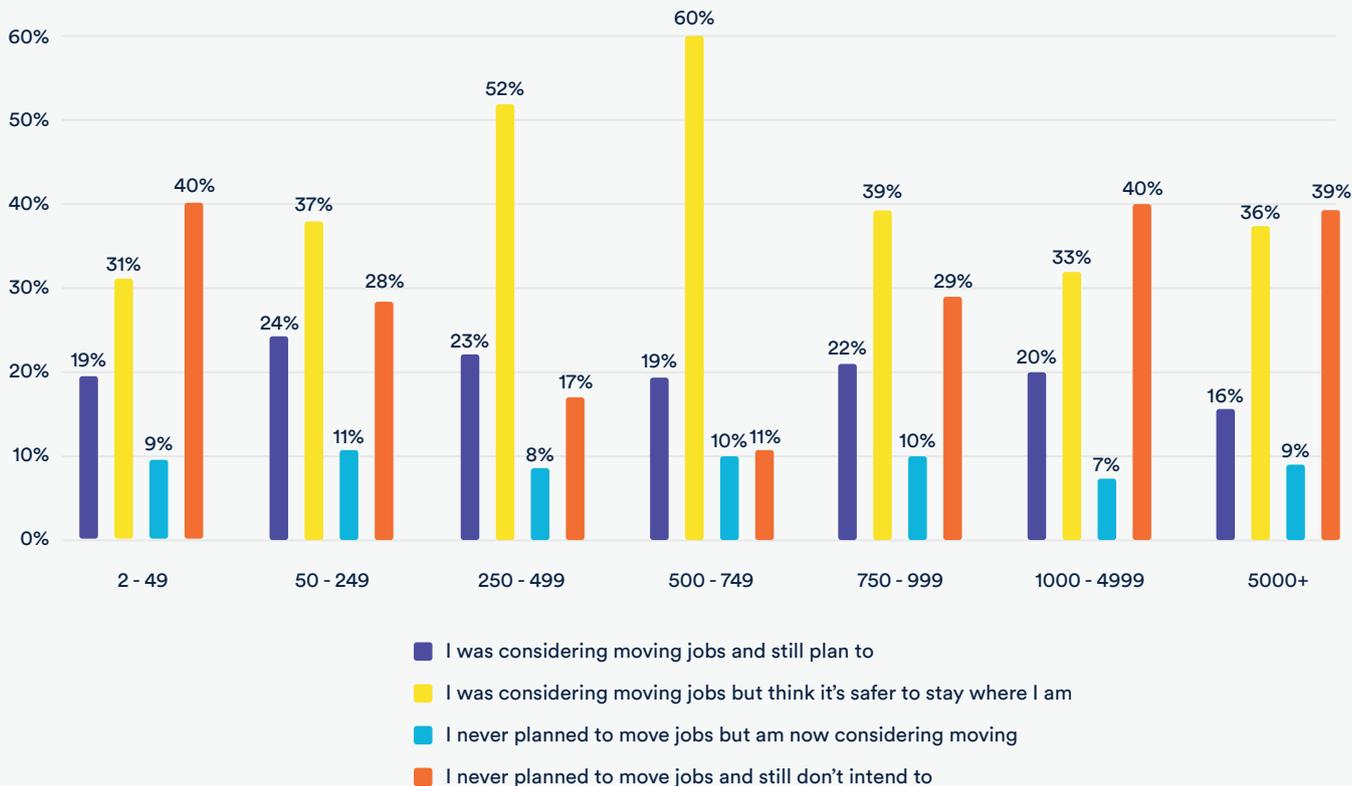
Compared to this time last year, has the recession changed your career plans?



Nearly twice as many people in businesses of 500-749 employees were considering moving and have changed their mind, compared to those in businesses of 1000 or more employees - 60% vs 33%. This may be as people believe that with scale comes security. It is the largest and smallest companies where the idea of moving had not even been a consideration.

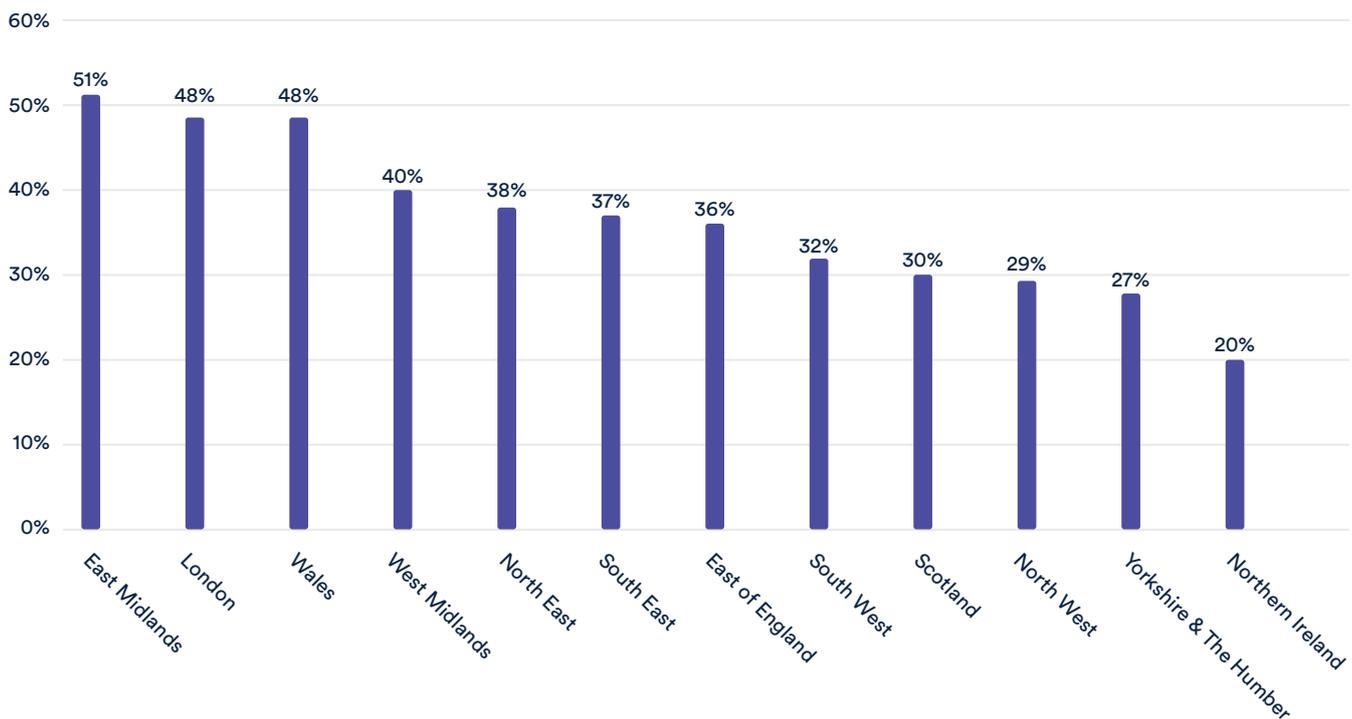
Compared to this time last year, has the recession changed your career plans?

By company size



It is those in London, East Midlands and Wales who have had their plans curtailed the most. London in particular is a busy hub for jobs and moves with the concentration of the population and business and has grown at an unprecedented rate over the past 30 years, [adding nearly 2m jobs since 1991](#).

% agreeing 'I was considering moving jobs but think it's safer to stay where I am'

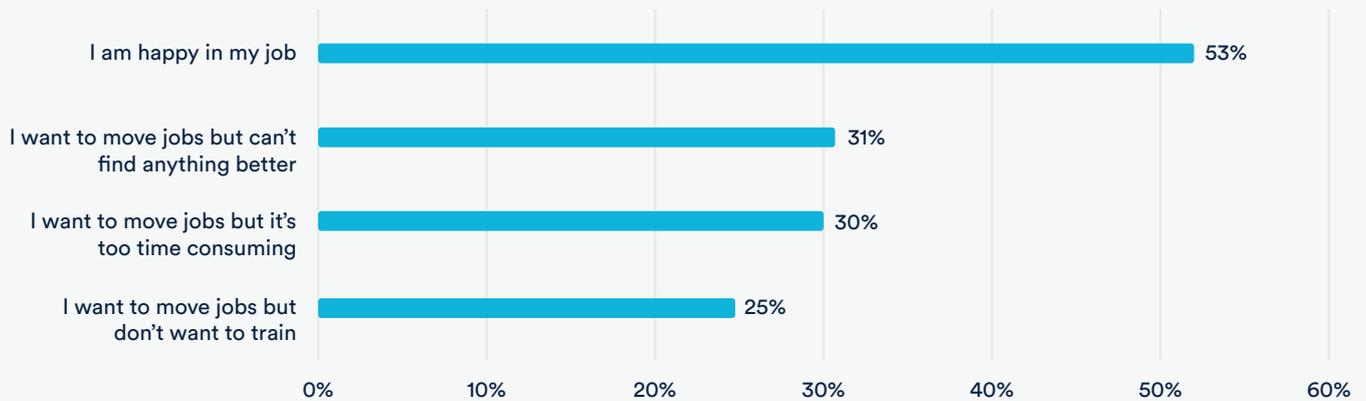


Happy at work?

Just over half of those surveyed (53%) say they are happy in their job. But that still points to the equivalent of 15.5 million people who are not (based on 32.86m in employment – [ONS](#)). But those who want to move are finding it hard to find a better role and report the challenges of how long it can take to do so - up to 20 hours a week, for often six months at a time. Part time self-employed people are the happiest, with 74% being happy with what they do, compared to 46% in mid size companies (250-499 people). One in four want to move jobs but don't want to have to do the training that comes with this. A better focus on professional development throughout an individual's career, where they are supported by the business they work for, would make for a more confident and well equipped workforce.

On a scale of 1-5 how far do you agree with the following?

Agree or completely agree



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When you're working multiple jobs, stressed, overworked you don't have the capacity to find a new one. This results in people stuck in jobs they don't like and don't want to do, fighting for survival. The difference between an awful/good/great job is massive – a job you love gets you up, pays bills, gives you enjoyment and means you're not burned out. All of which makes you a better actor in society, benefiting everyone.

”

Dean Sadler, CEO

People have the perception that working for a larger organisation is going to result in better money and systems, although smaller organisations might be more supportive and have a good culture. Over three times as many believe job security is greater at large organisations (38%) compared to smaller organisations (12%) although there is an acknowledgement that there may be more bureaucracy to deal with - five times as many say there is more bureaucracy in large organisations (48%) than small (9%).

Generally speaking people seem to take a more positive view of larger organisations when it comes to the more practical benefits and aspects of working life.

	1 Small	2 Medium	3 Large	4 All the same
Pay is better	13%	35%	31%	22%
Benefits are better	12%	24%	49%	15%
Hiring process is easier	30%	24%	26%	19%
Job security is greater	12%	27%	38%	22%
Systems and processes are better	9%	29%	39%	23%
Business is more efficient	16%	29%	29%	25%
Colleagues are more collaborative	33%	24%	20%	23%
There is more bureaucracy	9%	23%	48%	20%
Culture is more supportive	29%	27%	21%	24%
There is more flexibility	23%	24%	33%	19%

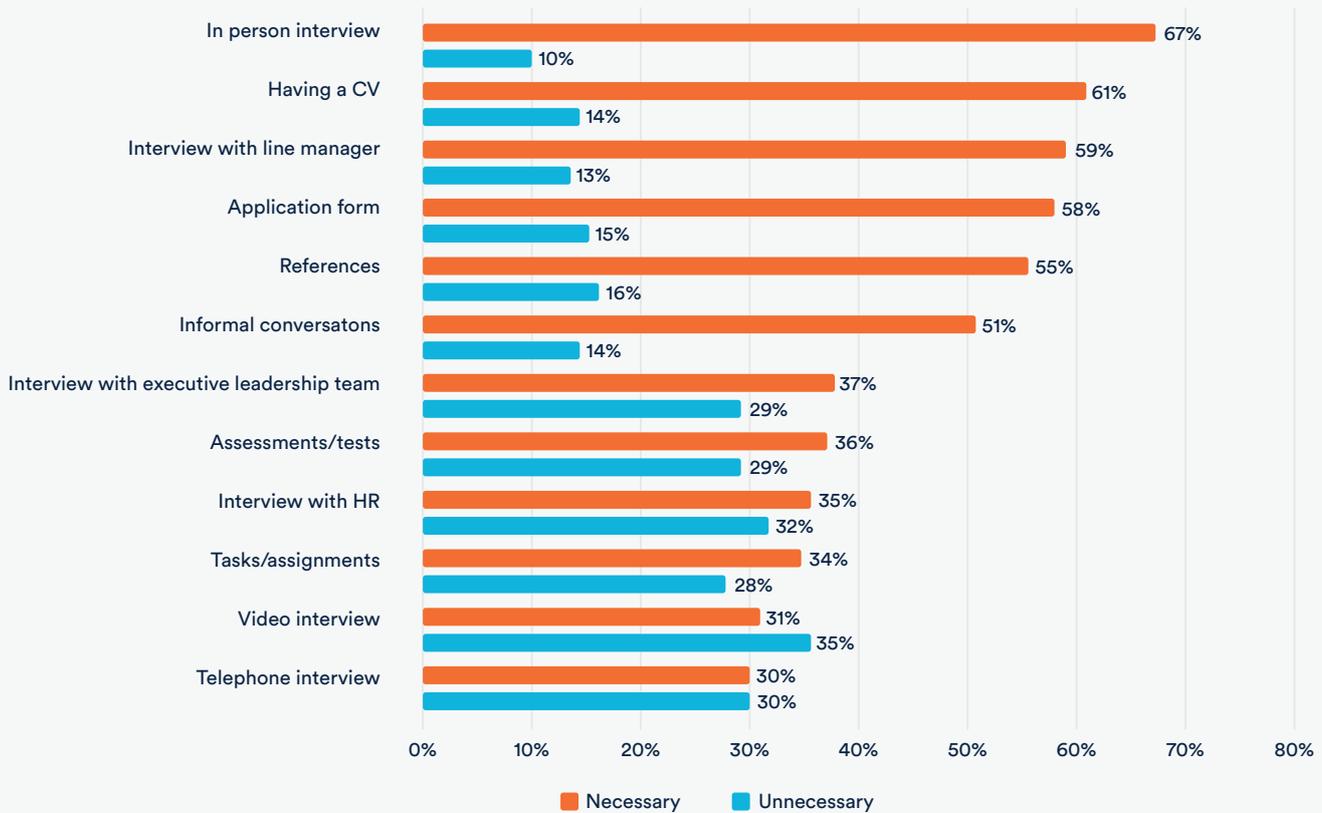
Hiring processes

So when it comes to looking for jobs, how do candidates like to approach the task? The UK workforce is quite old school - in person interviews (67%), CVs (61%) and application forms (58%) are considered essential by most. Despite the impact of the pandemic and a shift to virtual hiring, only a third (31%) saying that video interviews are necessary.

Senior leaders are more likely to say that informal conversations (58%) are necessary than those in entry level positions (48%), pointing to the value of networking increasing as careers progress.

What this demonstrates is the importance of people first, with systems that are set up for both candidates and hiring managers.

On a scale of 1-5, how do you feel about the following when applying for a job?



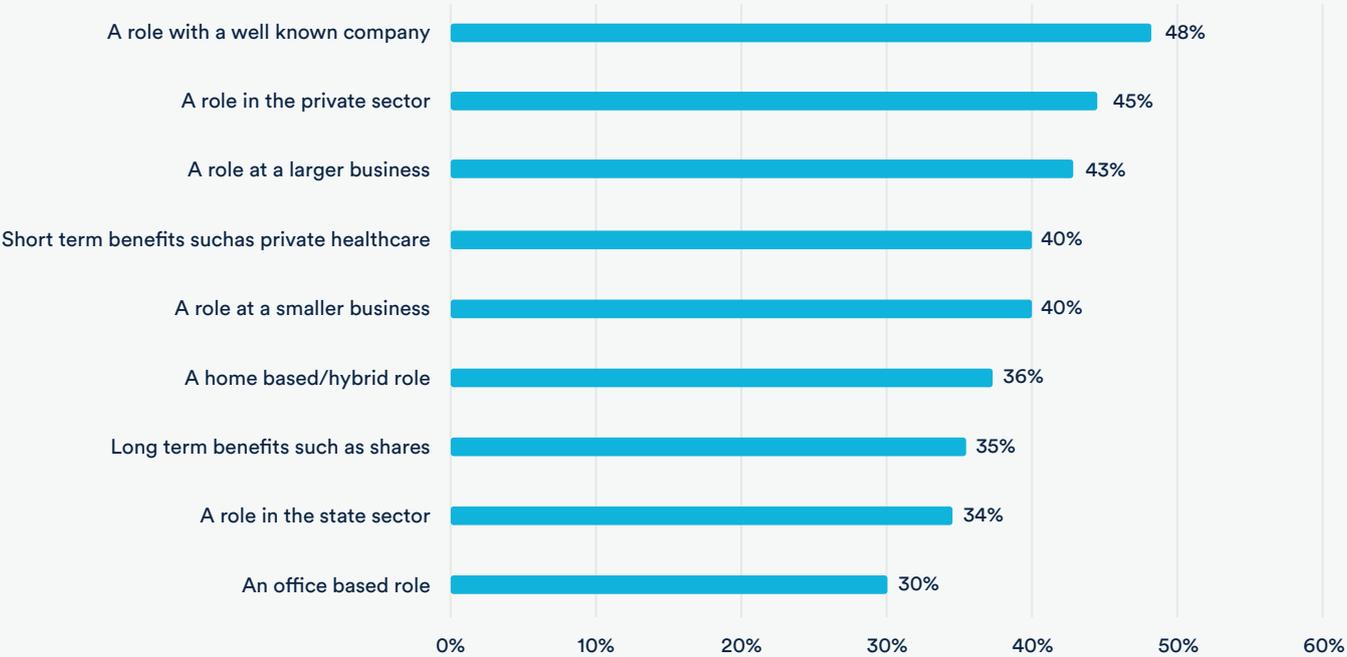
How do you feel about the following when applying for a job? % necessary + very necessary

	Entry-level	Experienced	Manager/Director	Senior Leadership/CxO
Video interview	26%	30%	35%	35%
Telephone interview	29%	27%	40%	36%
Task/assignments	28%	33%	41%	41%
References	50%	56%	58%	48%
Interview with line manager	52%	62%	61%	51%
Interview with HR	33%	33%	41%	34%
Interview with executive leadership team	29%	35%	46%	49%
Informal conversations	45%	52%	58%	44%
In person interview	67%	67%	69%	56%
Having a CV	60%	62%	64%	53%
Assessments/tests	33%	35%	40%	33%
Application form	58%	59%	57%	51%

What future appeals to workers?

Right now the private sector is more appealing for two-thirds, nearly half (48%) of British adults likely due to a long held perception that the sector offers more security, and the added benefits of pensions. Hybrid roles (36%) are slightly more appealing than office based ones (30%). Perhaps because of the immediate impact of the cost of living crisis, 2 in 5 (40%) say short term benefits are appealing compared to 1 in 3 (35%) saying long term benefits such as shares have a high appeal.

If you were to move jobs now, what would appeal most to you?



Men are more likely to be concerned about the size and reputation of the company than women with half (50%) seeing a role at a large company as offering high appeal compared to only one third of women (36%).

Only a third (36%) say a home based or hybrid role is appealing, but it's questionable whether that's a true reflection of what they want, or based on fears around presenteeism.

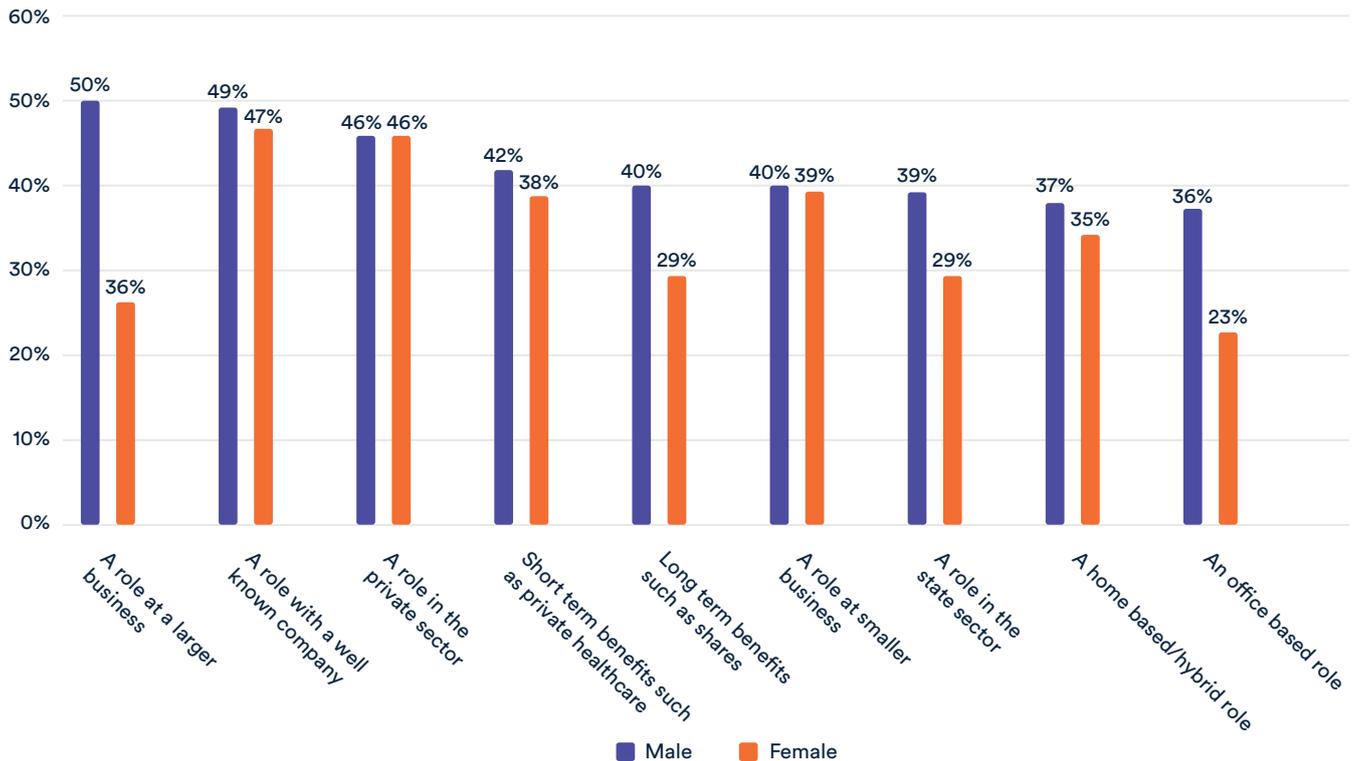
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With the recession looming business owners are starting to worry about whether people are performing and contributing to the bottom line. At the same time presenteeism is increasing, as worried staff are coming into the office just to ensure their face is seen rather than risk any kind of job loss. We musn't let the recession undo the work that has been done during the pandemic around flexible working, which has helped us create a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

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Dean Sadler, CEO

If you were to move jobs now, what would appeal most to you?



If you were to move jobs now, what would appeal most to you?

Age	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
An office based role	26%	34%	35%	27%	25%
A home/hybrid role	43%	46%	45%	32%	20%
A role in the state sector	31%	39%	33%	36%	31%
A role in a small business	37%	40%	40%	42%	39%
Long term benefits such as shares	33%	45%	40%	33%	24%
Short term benefits such as private healthcare	49%	48%	46%	30%	31%
A role in the private sector	49%	43%	53%	50%	36%
A role with a well known company	39%	45%	56%	49%	48%
A role at a larger business	47%	54%	45%	36%	36%

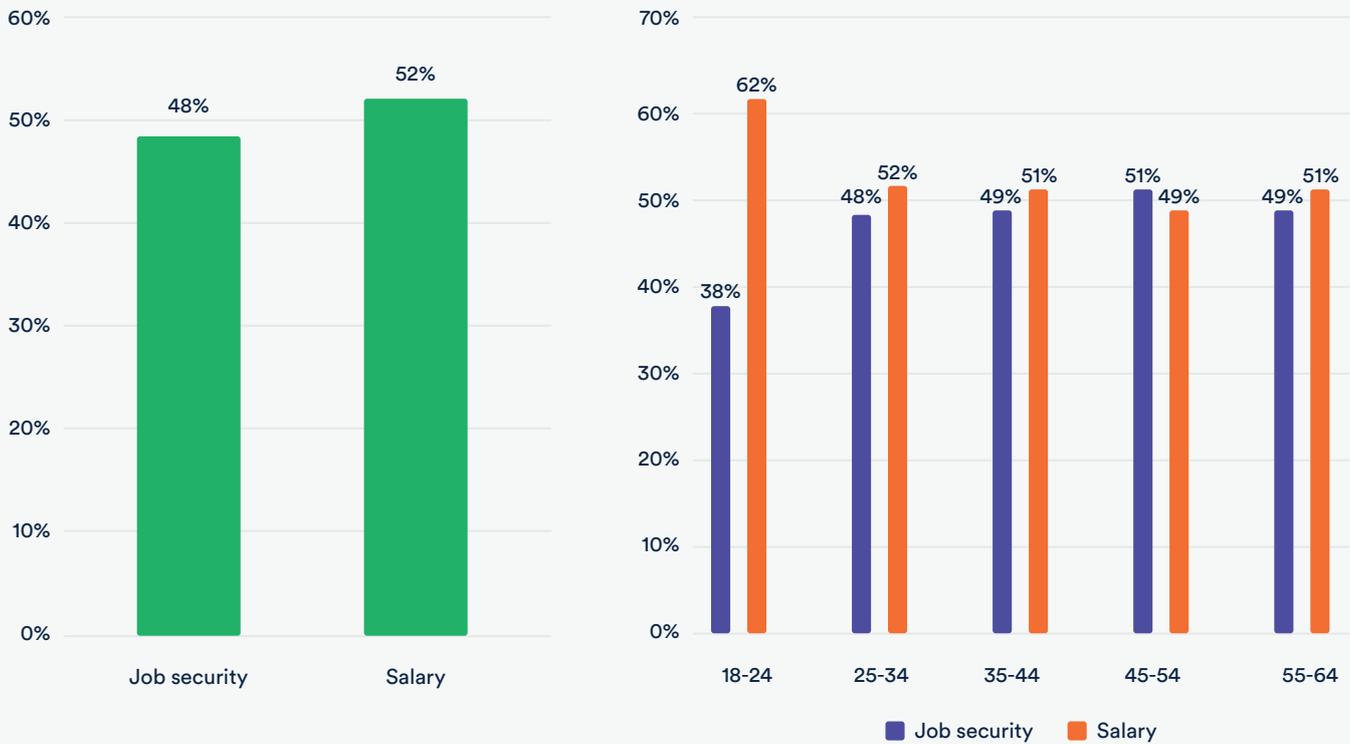
Those under 44 are twice as likely as those 55+ to say a home based or hybrid role is appealing (43% to 46% compared to 20%). Older people are less concerned about long term benefits as you may expect.

Security vs salary

So in this new market, what would be the biggest lure - a secure job or a higher salary?

Salary slightly trumps job security as a motivator for moving jobs at 52% compared to 48%.

If you were to move jobs now, what would you value most?

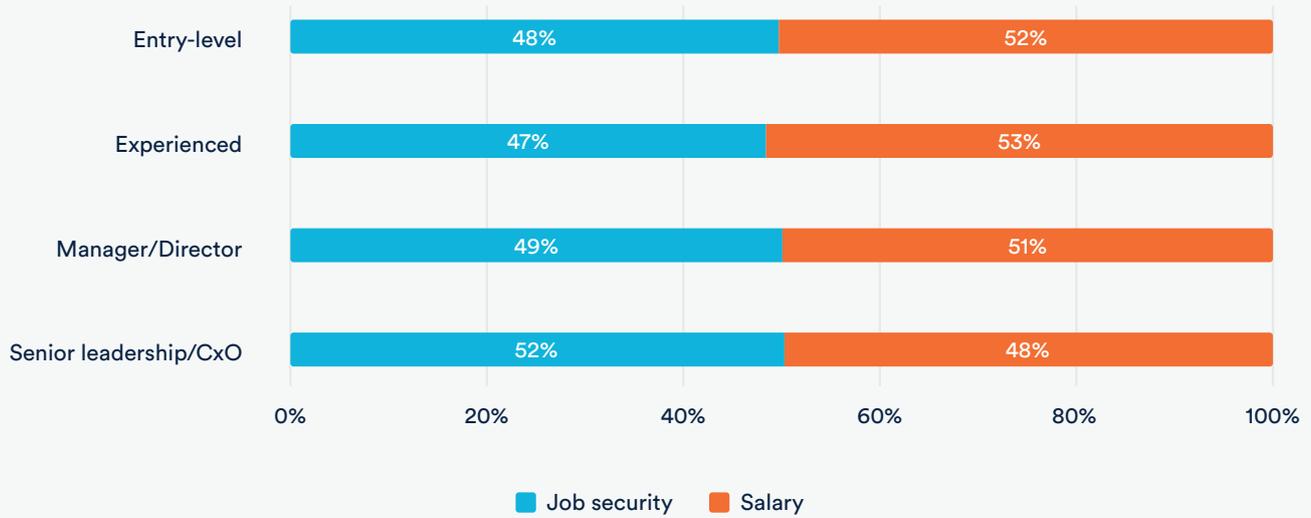


Younger people are more likely to choose salary (62%) than security (38%), demonstrating the impact of the cost of living crisis on those with lower savings and salaries.



If you were to move jobs now, what would you value most?

By seniority



As people progress in their careers job security becomes more important, and unsurprisingly 51% of public sector employees favour security compared to 47% of private sector.



What does this mean for recruiters?

In this environment recruiters and talent acquisition teams need to be focused on what is right for their candidates and employees. It's about showing you are listening to them and giving the right support in challenging times.

Everyone is concerned right now. Rising costs are affecting us all - at home and at work. And it will affect the job market. Communicate with your employees. Be open and honest with candidates. Offer your best talent a compelling package that works for them. And create a workforce that is resilient, as that will make your business resilient. It's our people who make businesses great.

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Power to the people finders starts with supporting our teams. Better tech can make processes more efficient so people are able to do their job and focus on strategy and their workforce. But this technology needs to be backed up by humanity and empathy. It's when we treat people as humans that we get the best out of them.

Dean Sadler, CEO

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In this challenging climate our people finders have got their work cut out. They need to attract great people, making them feel comfortable and confident in what is an increasingly risk adverse society. They need to recognise the differences between age cohorts and seniority levels, and adjust the employee valuable proposition as such.

Tribepad can help through talent acquisition tools, along with applicant tracking, management and candidate engagement. If you'd like to find out more about how they can help revolutionise your recruitment visit www.tribepad.com.

Appendix

On behalf of Tribepad, Obsurant carried out a survey targeting employed individuals working in a range of company sizes and industries across the UK. Respondents answered questions about their current employment concerns and their perceptions of the current UK job market. Respondents were incentivised and each provided opt-in consent in line with GDPR guidelines. Obsurant is an accredited MRS company partner.

Methodology

This survey was taken by 1,158 respondents on both mobile and desktop devices and all were based in the UK. The study ran between 2nd- 5th December 2022.

Audience

Targeting full and part time employed/self employed individuals working in a range of company sizes and industries across the UK.

Multi Sourced Approach

The different recruitment methods used alongside the supplier blend removes any potential singlesource bias.

Quality Control

Measures in place on both a supplier and respondent level. These include Geo IP tracking and digital fingerprint checks to ensure that there is no duplication or link manipulation.





