



**CIPD**

*Championing better  
work and working lives*

SURVEY REPORT | *June 2021*

# Working Lives Scotland 2021

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. As a registered charity, we **champion better work and working lives** and have been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years.

We have more than 150,000 members across the world, provide thought leadership through independent research on the world of work and offer professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development. **The CIPD has around 11,000 members across Scotland.** We sit at the heart of a proud, growing community of practitioners, members, partners, policy-makers and thought leaders in the world of work. We work with the Scottish Government, its agencies and several academic, business and voluntary partners on a broad range of public policy issues.

We are key partners on multiple working groups and serve as a conduit to our network of members, who both inform changes in policy and deliver them. **Our membership in Scotland is spread across businesses from the public, private and third sectors and across businesses of all sizes.** This puts the CIPD in a strong position in the public policy sphere.

## Survey report

# Working Lives Scotland 2021

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## 1 CIPD foreword

The last 15 months have been extraordinary for all of us, but especially for the HR profession. Our profession has been front and centre of navigating huge people and organisational challenges across Scotland. Throughout the course of the pandemic, organisations have been forced to adapt at pace and implement changes in the way they operate while navigating uncertainty and disruption.

The CIPD is hugely proud of the achievements of our members. It has been difficult – with more challenges to come as we transition to a ‘new normal’ – but we have stepped up and made a difference to Scottish employees’ working lives. And we can see hints of evidence of that in this report too.

Our second *Working Lives Scotland* report, exploring how the pandemic impacted job quality across Scotland, shows that some of the concerns many had about a deterioration of relationships at work, mental health or employee voice have not materialised. In fact, we find slight improvements in a few fair work dimensions for some employees too. Investing in better people management, before or during the pandemic, coupled with a focus on communication and wellbeing, has seemingly protected against some of the impact of the pandemic.

However, we continue to see concerning findings around the impact of work on wellbeing, challenges around work–life balance, or significant job design differences. Given the focus on new ways of working, it is also concerning to see persistent and significant gaps in flexible working availability – something that employers will need to address if they are to avoid creating a two-tier workforce of those who can and can’t work from home. Furthermore, we also highlight persistent barriers for employees with caring responsibilities or those with disabilities. Policy-makers and HR practitioners both have to play their part to improve this.

*Working Lives Scotland* also offers a timely analysis of the different experiences of various groups of workers during the pandemic – homeworkers, key workers and those on furlough. We provide some interesting evidence, from job security concerns for furloughed workers, through work–life balance issues for homeworkers, to extensive workload for key workers. All these insights can be used by policy-makers and HR practitioners to make sure that we take the lessons learned from the last 15 months to create a better world of work.

We strongly believe that the pandemic must be a catalyst for positive change. *Working Lives Scotland 2021* provides further evidence around some of the challenges and gaps, but also opportunities for progress. Fair work and good people practice should be central to achieving inclusive growth and improving job quality and productivity for all employees and employers.



**Lee Ann Panglea,**  
Head of CIPD Scotland  
and Northern Ireland

The impact of good HR practice on job quality can be significant – throughout the pandemic and beyond. Our profession has the power to improve the working lives of countless employees across Scotland. We hope this report, our conclusions and recommendations can help you in this task.

## 2 Fair Work Convention foreword

The *Working Lives Scotland* report is a valuable contribution to the evidence base around fair work. As we strive to recover from the pandemic, the need to focus on fair work has never been greater. Fair work is essential to ensuring that we build back better and deal with the structural inequalities that persist in our workplaces and labour market. Fair work will also help us to respond effectively to the range of economic challenges on the horizon, including the transition to a net zero carbon economy, the continuing impact of Brexit, particularly on trade, and the pressures associated with demographic change and automation. Fair work is an important tool that supports positive workplace change, innovation and productivity, and is fundamental to delivering Scotland's wider social and economic ambitions.

The *Working Lives Scotland* report brings out strongly the value of fair work and shows that high-quality people management and effective voice mechanisms within workplaces have supported employers to respond effectively to the impacts of the pandemic. The report highlights that in many workplaces, employees value more highly than previously the support they have received from both managers and trade union representatives, suggesting that two-way communication has been key to resilience and success throughout this challenging period.

However, the report also highlights that access to fair work is not consistent across the economy, with key workers and the lowest paid facing the greatest barriers to fair work, a finding which mirrors the Convention's *Fair Work in Scotland Report*. In the wake of the pandemic there has been a greater understanding of the value of key workers across the economy. There has also been a realisation that work can be done differently with the growth of homeworking.

As we move into recovery, we must reflect on what has been learned during the pandemic and consider how to maximise the benefits of any changes in the world of work while also recognising and dealing with the challenges. The debate around the future of work often cites greater homeworking as the key to better work-life balance. Yet the report rightly identifies that many workers, particularly key workers, cannot work from home and that for many homeworking has come with an increase in work intensity and rising stress levels.

It is important not to lose sight of the need to increase flexibility for all workers, including those who cannot work from home, and to consider how hybrid working approaches can match all aspirations and deliver for both workers and employers. There is also a need to be clear that maintaining wellbeing in the context of new forms of work might require additional measures to maintain boundaries between home and work life; a balancing of the experience of workers who can work from home and those who cannot, particularly when they are part of a single workforce; and a consideration of how effective voice can be supported in all workplace settings.



**Professor Patricia Findlay**, Fair Work Convention Co-Chair



**Grahame Smith**, Fair Work Convention Co-Chair

The principles of fair work offer an important foundation for addressing these challenges and, as this report shows, a focus on unlocking fair work across all workplaces and occupations must continue to be our priority. We have an opportunity to build fair work through the recovery and we must take it.

## 3 Key findings

The first *Working Lives Scotland* report was released three months after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. While it was already apparent that we were experiencing an unprecedented event, one year on we are still only beginning to understand the full impact on our personal and working lives, families and communities. The global health crisis has developed into a global economic crisis, with profound challenges for employers as well as employees.

Our second *Working Lives Scotland* report gives us an opportunity to look at some of the changes across all aspects of job quality. One of the most striking findings in this year's report – and the UK-wide *Good Work Index* – is that there has been relatively little change across most of our headline indicators, although we do draw out differences between groups of employees throughout. We think there are three key factors for the headline stability. First, the scale of the Government's intervention has meant that the job market has so far remained in a relatively steady state. Second, while we have seen shifts in where we work, the underlying ways of working and job design have not changed dramatically, meaning overall job quality remained steady. Finally, we may also be witnessing the impact of good people management on job quality, with the measures put in place mitigating the negative impact of the pandemic.

### COVID-19

- Differences across fair work dimensions we found in 2020 remain in 2021, suggesting that many job quality barriers (and good practice) are resilient to change.
- Employee preferences point to a hybrid future for those who can work from home, with homeworking some of the time the most popular option. However, almost half (43%) of all employees work in jobs that can't be done from home.
- Homeworkers have seen some benefits, but also drawbacks, with those fully working from home reporting worse work-life balance and higher workloads.

### Respect

- 26% of employees feel their work impacts negatively on their mental health, with 25% reporting negative impacts on their physical health.
- Carers and key workers are more likely to report going to work despite not being well enough to do so.
- Paradoxically, homeworkers report better relationships at work across most questions. Those working fully from home, however, report poorer work-life balance.

### Security

- Workers who have been put on furlough understandably report lower levels of job security.
- We also see a link between job security and pay, with those on higher salaries reporting higher levels of job security.
- The median pay of key workers is significantly lower than for non-key workers.

### Opportunity

- Less than a third (31%) of employees believe their job offers good prospects for career advancement, while 51% believe their job offers good opportunities to develop their skills.
- Only 8% of furloughed employees undertook training during their time on furlough.
- Despite a rise in homeworking, significant gaps remain in the availability of flexible working arrangements.

### Fulfilment

- 34% of all employees report their workload as too high in a normal week. Key workers and those working from home all the time are more likely to report workloads that are too high.
- 13% of those working fully from home say they don't have a suitable space and 12% say they don't have suitable broadband to do their job effectively.
- Employees in better paid jobs, management roles and those working flexibly report higher levels of job autonomy.

### Effective voice

- 19% of employees say they have no voice channel at work at all.
- One-to-one meetings with managers and team meetings are the most commonly reported forms of voice, available to 59% and 49% of employees respectively.
- Employee ratings of their managers as well as representatives in relation to voice have slightly improved compared with last year.

## 4 Introduction

Job quality is at the heart of the CIPD's purpose to champion better work and working lives. We believe that good work is fundamental to individual wellbeing, supports a fair society and creates motivated workers, productive organisations and a strong economy. The last 15 months have put these themes in sharp focus. Preconceived views on where and how jobs had to be done have been challenged. Health and wellbeing concerns took on a different dimension. The public appreciation for what we now call 'key workers' has only grown – as has our understanding of how varied these roles are.

The ripples from the biggest societal disruption in recent history will be felt for many years to come. This report focuses on the pandemic's impact on job quality and seeks to provide insight to policy-makers, employers and people professionals across Scotland. Only by learning the lessons of the pandemic can we make sure that working lives of the future are happier, resilient and productive.

### Background to the survey

This is the second iteration of the *Working Lives Scotland* report, which builds on work carried out by the CIPD over the last few years through our Good Work Index, which uses the *UK Working Lives* (UKWL) survey to present annual measures for seven dimensions of job quality.

The purpose of this report is to provide a snapshot of job quality in Scotland. Through analysis of our own survey data, we are able to look at and cover issues ranging from health and wellbeing of the workforce, through to the availability of flexible work, and skills and career development opportunities. Where we can, we highlight statistically significant differences in gender, age or sector and occupational class (SOC 2020). Given the COVID-19 context, we also look at differences between key and non-key workers, furloughed and non-furloughed workers, as well as those who work from home and those who do not.

Unlike the CIPD's *Good Work Index*, the *Working Lives Scotland* report is based around the five fair work dimensions as conceptualised by the Fair Work Convention in 2016. Each main section is dedicated to one dimension, with analysis of survey questions to provide insight into the relevant aspects of fair work. This year, we have added an additional section on COVID-19.

### Survey design

In 2017, the CIPD embarked on a project to review the research on job quality 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 in addition to the opportunities and pitfalls in measuring it; and second, on the capacity workers have to influence their job quality and the shifting balance of power between employers and employees. This survey is based on this body of work and further consultation with academics, HR experts and government officials.

The 2021 *UK Working Lives* (UKWL) survey was conducted between 13 January and 23 February 2021 and gave a sample of 6,256 workers. To make the samples representative of the UK as a whole, quotas are used to target the sample, and subsequent weights based on ONS figures are 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. For the second time, we have a boosted sub-sample for Scotland of 1,007.

Since this is the second set of annual data we have collected in Scotland, we can draw some tentative conclusions on the changes in dimensions of job quality. With each future iteration of *Working Lives Scotland*, we will be able to show trends with greater confidence. As is made clear throughout the report, one of the most surprising findings year on year is the degree of consistency in the data, given the degree of disruption we have seen. We hypothesise several reasons for this, but it may be that the 2022 data is where the holding pattern of 2021 is broken.

### Good work and fair work

Job quality has become an increasingly important area of public policy in the UK, especially following Matthew Taylor's *Review of Modern Working Practices* published in 2017. Since its publication, numerous initiatives have been launched across the UK, seeking to improve job quality among businesses, including the [Good Work Standard in London](#) and the [Good Employment Charter in Manchester](#).

However, it is Scotland that has been at the forefront of this debate. The Scottish Government set up the [Fair Work Convention](#) – bringing academics, business and union leaders together – as far back as 2015. Its [Fair Work Framework](#) was published a year later and has served as the basis for policy-making since then. The Scottish Government is, for example, rolling out [Fair Work First](#), which ties fair work principles to financial assistance from the Government where possible.

This report remoulds the CIPD's seven dimensions of job quality or 'good work' into Scotland's five fair work dimensions. The two frameworks have a good degree in common, and the differences between them are not insurmountable. Both build on a significant body of research and differ primarily in emphasis rather than substance.

In the CIPD's view, good work:

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



The survey we are analysing in this report has been developed with this perspective in mind. It analyses both objective and subjective measures as well as universal and relative aspects of work. This is important, because job quality is not static – what works for some employees will be anathema to others.

Objective measures look at things that should be unbiased – for example, how much people earn or types of contract. Subjective measures, on the other hand, include things that reflect opinions or feelings – meaningful work, job satisfaction or quality of relationships. In addition, we also look at measures that are universal and will improve job quality for anyone (for example health), but also at aspects that are relative and will differ between employees (for example part-time employment). To get an accurate picture of job quality we need to look at all of these in the round.

**Table 1: The CIPD's seven dimensions of job quality**

Dimensions	Areas included
<b>1 Pay and benefits</b>	Pay as a percentile and in relation to the Living Wage, subjective feelings regarding pay, employer pension contributions and other employee benefits.
<b>2 Contracts</b>	The terms of employment. Contract type, underemployment and job security.
<b>3 Work-life balance</b>	Overwork, commuting time, how much work encroaches on personal life and vice versa, and HR provision for flexible working.
<b>4 Job design and nature of work</b>	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.
<b>5 Relationships at work</b>	Social support and cohesion. The quality of relationships at work, psychological safety and the quality of people management.
<b>6 Voice and representation</b>	Channels for feeding views to senior management, cultural norms on voice and satisfaction with the opportunities for voice.
<b>7 Health and wellbeing</b>	Positive and negative impacts of work on physical and mental health. Often considered as an outcome of job quality.

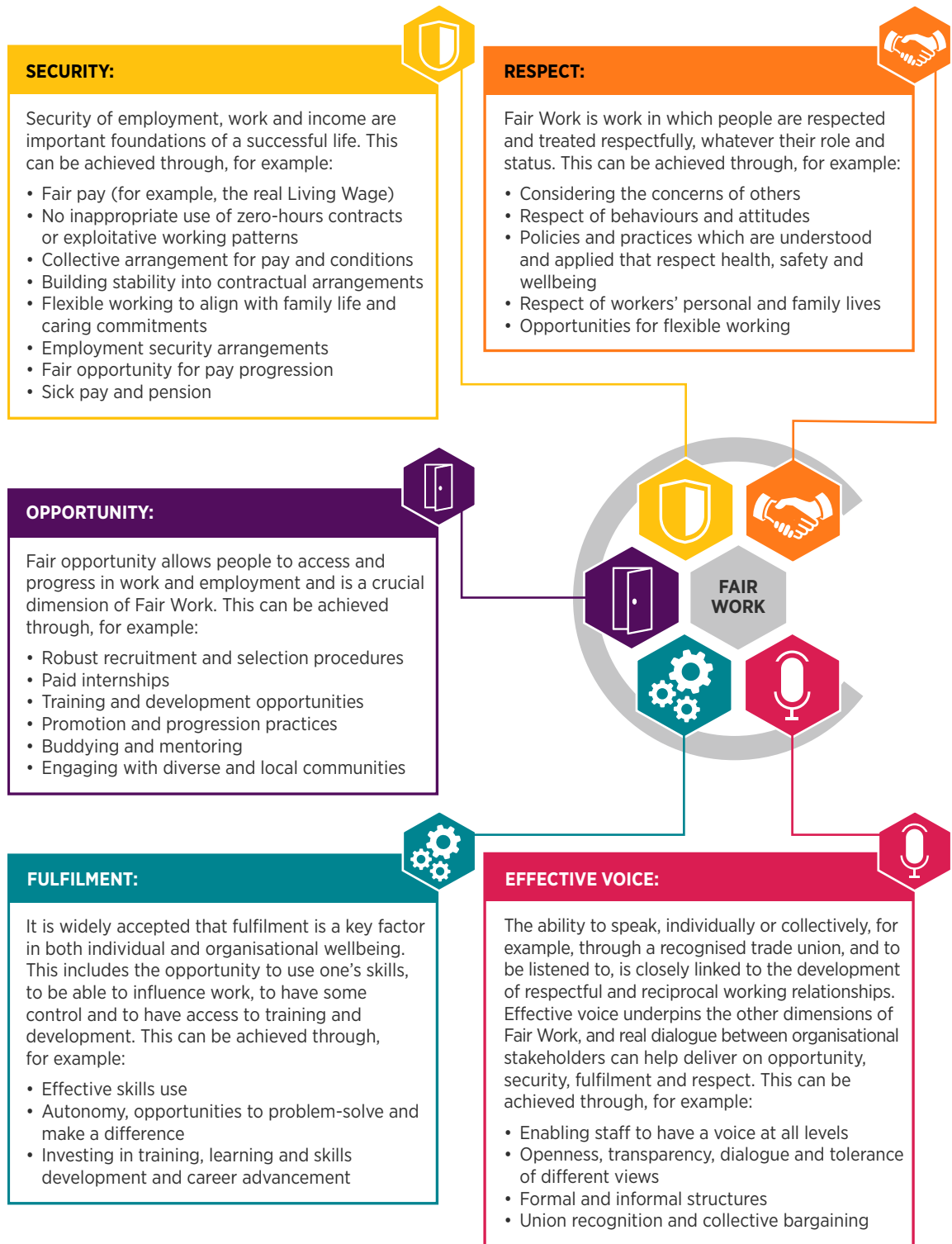
The Fair Work Convention conceptualised job quality on academic research pulled together primarily by the Scottish Centre for Employment Research, University of Strathclyde.

The Convention defined fair work through five dimensions: effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect. The dimensions cover a broad range of issues – from how employees are treated at work, to pay and conditions, and whether they can have their voice heard and influence change.

Every single one of the CIPD's good work dimensions can be found in some form across the Fair Work Convention's framework too. *Pay and benefits* and *contracts* are both key parts of the **security** dimension in fair work. *Health and wellbeing*, *relationships at work* and *work-life balance* are all incorporated in the **respect** dimension. *Job design and the nature of work* is a key part of the **fulfilment** dimension, with *voice and representation* directly translatable to **effective voice**. Our survey also includes questions around career and skills development opportunities, which sit at the heart of the **opportunity** dimension.

Ultimately, it does not matter whether we refer to good work, better employment, fair work or any other variation of the concept. What matters is that there is an increasing body of research on job quality that provides policy-makers and HR practitioners with evidence on what works, what can be done better and how boosting job quality benefits employees and employers alike.

Figure 1: The Fair Work Convention's Fair Work Framework



Source: Scottish Government's [Best Practice Guidance on Addressing Fair Work Practices, including the Real Living Wage, in Procurement](#)

## 5 COVID-19 and fair work

The first *Working Lives Scotland* report was released three months after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. While it was already apparent that we were experiencing an unprecedented event, one year on we are still only beginning to understand the full impact on our personal and working lives, families and communities. The global health crisis has developed into a global economic crisis, with profound challenges for employers as well as employees.

Some businesses were forced to shut, some had to radically adapt their business model and others found opportunity to thrive. Swathes of employees were put on furlough, many lost their jobs and others continued to work – either as key workers under the most challenging of circumstances or as homeworkers, regardless of whether they had the space or desire to do so. The ‘new normal’ – our post-pandemic working lives – will grow out of our experiences throughout the crisis.

Our second *Working Lives Scotland* report gives us an opportunity to look at some of the changes across all aspects of job quality. And while the headline indicators have not changed significantly, we are able to draw out differences between types of worker that are interesting in their own right. After all, the impact of the pandemic was not uniform. In our analysis, we were particularly keen to see whether there were any differences to be found between key workers and those not in key worker roles, between those put on furlough and those who continued to work, and those who have been able to fully work from home compared with those who have not.

The differences are highlighted throughout the report, but some of the most interesting findings are pulled out in this first section too. In addition, we also look at employee attitudes towards a range of COVID-19-related questions, including how they feel their employer responded to the crisis. Finally, we also look at homeworking in particular and ask employees to tell us their preferences for the future based on their experience throughout the crisis.

### Key findings

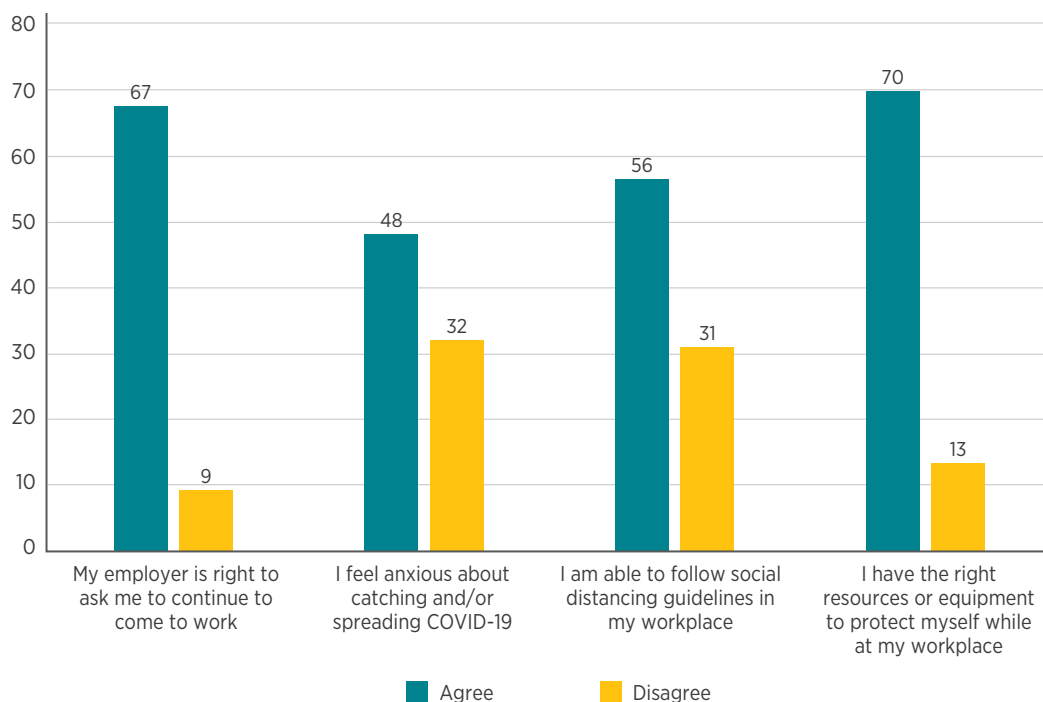
- Differences across fair work dimensions we found in 2020 remain in 2021, suggesting that many job quality barriers (and good practice) are resilient to change.
- Employee preferences point to a hybrid future for those who can work from home, with homeworking some of the time the most popular option. However, almost half (43%) of all employees work in jobs that can't be done from home.
- Key workers report worse job quality across most indicators, although – perhaps understandably – score better on questions around meaningful work.
- Furloughed workers also generally report worse job quality, especially if furloughed full-time.
- Homeworkers have seen some benefits, but also drawbacks, with those fully working from home reporting worse work-life balance and higher workloads.

### COVID-19 workplace attitudes

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a very unequal impact across different industries and occupations. Overall, we find that 51% of all employees in our survey say they need to attend their normal place of work to some extent. The significant differences by occupation mean that we see considerable differences by indicators like social grade (where 70% of C2DE employees need to attend their normal place of work), education level (66% of those below graduate level) and salary (61% of those earning less than £20,000 per year).

In this year's survey, we ask employees a range of questions to ascertain their attitudes and experiences towards COVID-19 in the workplace. The headline findings are summarised in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: COVID-19 workplace attitudes (%)**



We see that the majority of employees feel their employer is right to ask them to continue to come to work, with less than a tenth (9%) disagreeing with their employer's choice. This number rises significantly for those who are dissatisfied with their job, with over a quarter (26%) disagreeing with their employer. There are no other significant differences by industry or occupation.

Just under half (48%) of all employees say they feel anxious about catching and/or spreading COVID-19. This is something that employers, and line managers in particular, should keep in mind when thinking about bringing more employees back into the workplace – proper health and safety measures will be crucial in alleviating concern. We see that those with underlying conditions are more likely to be anxious about the disease – 62% of those with a non-physical condition and 59% of those with a physical condition report being anxious, compared with just 24% of employees without any underlying conditions.

Concerningly, 13% of employees say they don't have the right resources or equipment to protect themselves while at their workplace and almost a third of employees (31%) say they are unable to follow social distancing guidelines in their workplace. We see differences by organisation size across these two questions, with employees working in larger organisations (and sectors like retail or education) more likely to disagree with both statements.

### Stability during unstable times

One of the most striking findings in this year's report – and the UK-wide Good Work Index – is that there has been relatively little change across most of our headline job quality indicators. This of course does not mean that certain employees' job quality has not changed as a result of the pandemic, and we do highlight the differing experiences between groups of employees throughout the report.

However, the fact is that those whose working lives have been impacted by the pandemic the most – those who lost their jobs – are no longer captured in the data. Looking at labour market statistics, as well as data on furlough, we know that the impact of the pandemic has been unequal, with women, people with disabilities, ethnic minority workers and young people hit the hardest.

There are, however, three other factors that we hypothesise may explain this stability. First, the scale of government intervention through the Job Retention Scheme and other types of direct business support, as well as the approach taken by lenders, has allowed many employers to continue operating despite the sharp drop in business activity. This has meant that the job market, despite a modest increase in unemployment, has so far remained in a steady state in anticipation of the vaccine rollout and global economic conditions. In this sense, we may well find that next year's data will be the first truly post-pandemic set of job quality indicators that will show us the full impact on our working lives.

Second, the resilience of the fair work indicators can also be explained by the fact that while many have experienced changes to where they work, the underlying ways of working and job design have stayed broadly the same. Occupation remains the most significant predictor of job quality.

Finally, we may also be witnessing the impact of good people management on job quality. The fact that we don't see significant drops in the quality of relationships or some of the voice indicators suggests that the measures put in place by employers to facilitate the large shift to homeworking, in addition to a sharper focus on support and wellbeing, have worked.

### **Key workers, furlough and working from home**

We have seen huge changes to working lives over the last 15 months. Not only have almost half of all employees had to work from home – whether they wanted to or not – we have also seen new categories of worker enter the public's vernacular. Millions of employees across the UK have been defined as key workers (most obviously those working in health and social care, but also food production, transport, logistics and many more) and millions more have been put on furlough at some point during the crisis – some full-time and others only part of the time.

All three of these distinctions – homeworkers versus non-homeworkers, furloughed versus non-furloughed, key worker versus non-key worker – span a broad range of occupations and industries, with very different experiences of fair work dimensions, not least in pay and reward. This also means that aspects of job quality will differ significantly between these three distinctions of workers. Where possible, we try and draw conclusions by controlling for occupational, gender and industry differences in analysis, but these three remain important determinants of an employee's job quality.

There has been a particular interest in looking at the experiences of key workers, considering their role in the pandemic response. Our survey shows that key workers fare poorly compared with those in non-key roles across many fair work dimensions. We know key workers are more likely to be in lower-paid occupations and this is reflected in the significant difference in median annual pay recorded in the survey (nearly £10,000) as well as poorer subjective pay (whether employees feel they get paid appropriately). Key workers also score lower on issues like presenteeism, workload and job autonomy. On the other hand, they respond better on questions around meaningful work, especially in respect of whether they feel their jobs make a difference to society – this should not come as a surprise.

Our Scottish sample of furloughed workers was relatively small and so the level of analysis we can do is limited. Nonetheless, in combination with insights included in our UK-wide Good Work Index report, we are able to draw some conclusions. Generally, we see furloughed workers – especially those furloughed full-time – respond more poorly on questions around health and wellbeing, job autonomy, complexity and resources. Perhaps unsurprisingly, we see furloughed employees report lower workloads in a normal week, but much higher job insecurity.

The shift to homeworking has led to much speculation over the impact on employees’ productivity, wellbeing and job quality in general. Our survey finds there have been some positive aspects to homeworking, but there have also been some drawbacks in relation to job quality. Encouragingly, we don’t see anything that would suggest a significant impact on wellbeing as a result of homeworking alone – any drops are more likely the result of the pandemic as a whole. We also see homeworkers respond positively to questions around work relationships and employee voice, which offers some comfort given the challenges associated with remote working. On the other hand, we see homeworkers report considerably worse work-life balance, not all of which can solely be explained by occupation or industry. We also generally find that those working partly from home score better across fair work dimensions than those working from home fully and those not working from home at all. This fits the analysis in the next section, which shows employee preferences pointing to a hybrid future.

### Future of work

The long-term changes to the way we work as a result of employer and employee experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic have been of great interest to researchers, policy-makers and the media. We have seen regular news headlines and opinion pieces proclaim the death of the office, although the evidence for these statements was shaky at best.

It is important to emphasise that not every job can be done from home, not everybody can work from home and not everybody wants to work from home. *Working Lives Scotland* provides some interesting insight on this too. We see significant differences in homeworking by occupation, management level, salary or social grade. The incidence of homeworking is much higher across higher-level occupational classes. While 75% of board-level managers work fully or partly from home, this number falls to 42% of those without any management responsibility. If we look at social grades, 72% of those in C2DE don’t work from home at all, compared with only 34% in ABC1. Finally, the differences by salary are even starker, as summarised in Figure 3.

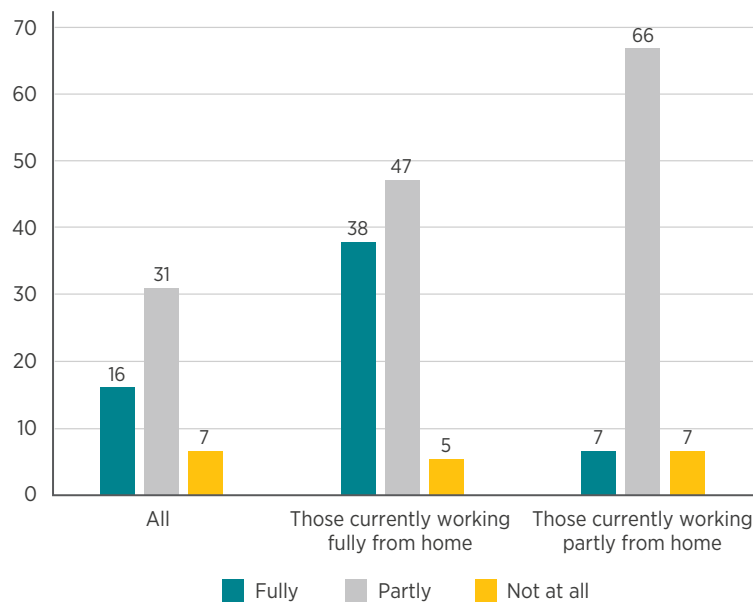
Figure 3: Homeworking, by salary (%)



In many respects, employees’ experiences throughout the pandemic will have an impact on their preferences for their post-pandemic ways of working. Our survey asks employees ‘once social distancing measures and other COVID-19-related restrictions are fully relaxed, how often, if at all, would you like to work from home?’ We find that 43% of employees say their job cannot be done from home (69% of those earning less than £20,000), which underlines the importance of other forms of flexible working (for example flexi-time, compressed hours, job-sharing) to be made available by employers.

The overall findings are summarised in Figure 4. The one thing that stands out is the preference for working from home part of the time. Thirty-one per cent of all employees would like to work this way in the future, rising to 66% among those currently working that way. Interestingly, looking at just those who currently work from home all the time, partly working from home in the future is their preference – nearly half (47%) of these workers would like to work that way. This would suggest that working fully from home has not been a universally positive experience.

**Figure 4: Future homeworking preferences (%)**



The remaining sections of the report follow the structure of the Fair Work Framework, just like our first report in June 2020. The aspects of job quality as categorised under the five dimensions are largely unchanged, with one exception. Our analysis of flexible working arrangements has been moved to the **Opportunity** section from **Respect** to better align with the Fair Work Measurement Framework published in late 2020.

## 6 Respect

The first fair work dimension we look at is **respect**. This dimension includes crucial job quality aspects like health and wellbeing at work, interpersonal relationships and relationships with managers. It also looks at issues in relation to work-life balance and presenteeism. All of these aspects of job quality have become more pronounced during the pandemic – there were concerns over mental health impacts of social isolation, pressures on work relationships in the absence of face-to-face contact and work-life balance for homeworkers, especially those with caring responsibilities.

### Key findings

- 56% of employees experienced a health-related physical condition, while 54% reported experiencing a non-physical one.
- 26% of employees feel their work impacts negatively on their mental health, with 25% reporting negative impacts on their physical health.
- The most common reported health conditions (sleep problems, musculoskeletal issues and anxiety) are more prevalent in female employees.
- Carers and key workers are more likely to report going to work despite not being well enough to do so.
- Paradoxically, homeworkers report better relationships at work, in particular with line managers. Those working fully from home, however, report poorer work-life balance.

### Work and its impact on mental and physical health

The importance of good mental and physical health goes beyond individual wellbeing. There is a clear relationship between poor health and work engagement and job satisfaction – for example, the CIPD’s previous UK Working Lives and Good Work Index reports have shown health and wellbeing as having the strongest relationship with job satisfaction and job enthusiasm out of all job quality dimensions. The last 15 months have also put these questions into a different context, with both mental and physical health at the top of policy-makers’ agendas.

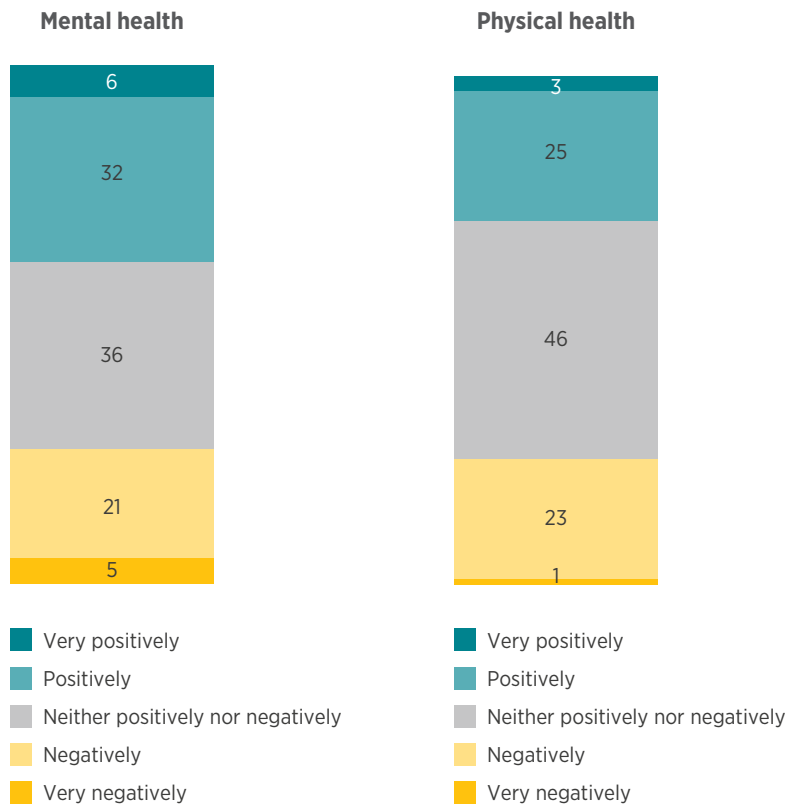
We ask employees a raft of questions about physical and mental health. The survey asks individuals whether they had experienced health problems, such as backache or other bone, joint or muscle problems. This also encompassed problems relating to breathing, the heart, hearing, the skin, as well as road traffic accidents during commuting, injury due to work accidents and repetitive strain injury. In addition, it asks about the level of exhaustion at work and whether workers thought their work had a positive or negative impact on their physical health. With respect to mental health, individuals are asked whether they felt miserable, stressed, anxious or depressed as a result of their work.

The survey also asks people to describe their current physical and mental health, and to answer whether their work affects these positively or negatively. Given the narrative during the pandemic, it was surprising to find that the changes were relatively minor. Fifty-four per cent of employees describe their mental health as good, with 57% describing their physical health as good – both were 61% in our 2020 survey.

When it comes to how work impacts on health, the survey found 26% of employees believe their work impacts negatively or very negatively on their mental health, with 25% reporting the same for their physical health – virtually unchanged from last year. Conversely, however, we have seen an uptick in employees who say that work impacts positively on their mental health – 38% in this survey compared with 30% in 2020. Those working from home all the time due to the pandemic were more likely to report a negative impact of work on both their mental and physical health – 32% of these workers reported a negative impact on mental and physical health.



Figure 5: Work's impact on mental and physical health (%)



As in last year's survey, there are differences by occupation, gender and age, with an impact on differences by furlough. For example, men are more likely to report better mental health (61% vs 48% for women), as are older workers (65% of those 55+ report good mental health, compared with 42% of those aged 25–34). Consequently, those on furlough report worse mental health than those who have not been furloughed at all.

Based on the conditions reported, 56% of employees have experienced some form of physical health condition, while 54% have experienced a mental health condition over the last 12 months. The most common reported conditions were:

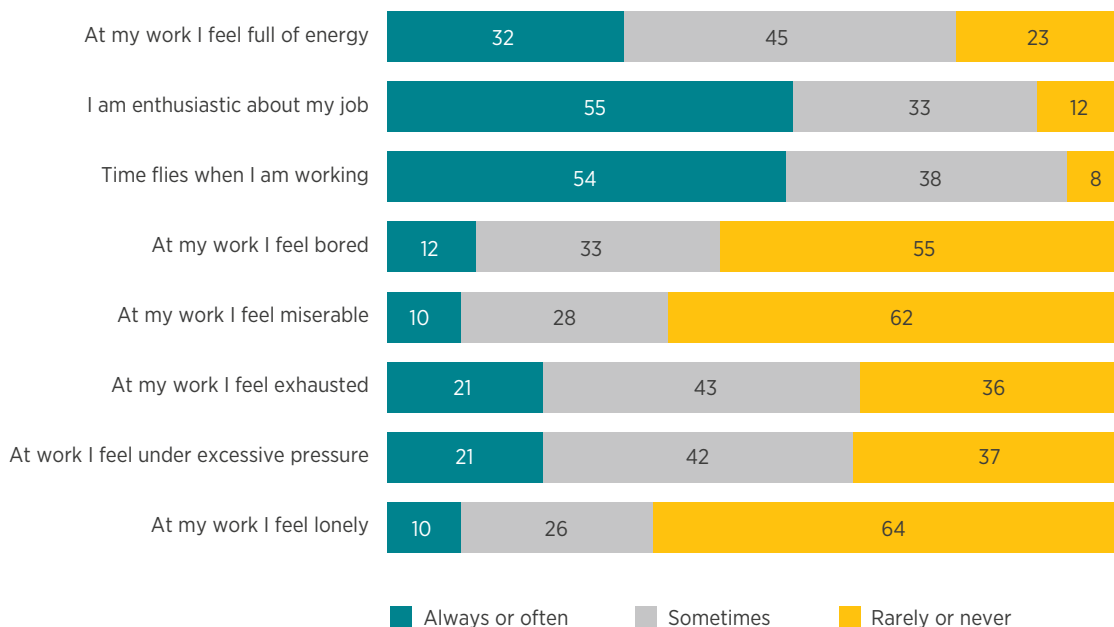
- backache or other bone, joint or muscle problems (41%)
- sleep problems (40%)
- anxiety (31%)
- depression (19%)
- skin problems (18%).

These are not significantly different from the conditions reported last year. The survey again shows considerable differences by gender. Anxiety was reported by 40% of women versus 21% of men, sleep problems by 45% of women versus 33% of men, as well as musculoskeletal problems, where the difference is 46% of women versus 35% of men. We also find some differences by furlough status – 26% of those furloughed report depression compared with 17% of those not furloughed.

In addition to reporting physical and non-physical conditions, the survey also looks at the subjective feelings workers have in jobs. These can be a good indication of the impact work has on individuals' mental health in particular. Figure 6 summarises the answers to the question of how employees feel at their work. It shows, for example, that 21% of employees always or often feel exhausted at work, with the same proportion saying they

feel under excessive pressure. We find more negative attitudes by key workers across most of these statements, with the biggest differences on the exhausted and excessive pressure statements – 26% versus 17% for non-key workers across both statements.

**Figure 6: How workers feel at work (%)**



**Presenteeism**

One of the CIPD’s particular main areas of research interest is the problem of presenteeism – going to work despite not feeling well enough to do so. Previous research carried out by the CIPD has found this to be a very common problem, with significant impacts on employee wellbeing as well company performance. Evidence also shows that presenteeism is just as big a problem for homeworkers, which raised concern about what our survey may find this year.

Our 2020 report found a worrying 55% of employees answered positively to the question: ‘in the last three months have you ever worked in your main job despite not feeling well enough to perform your duties?’ Rather surprisingly, this number drops significantly in this year’s report – down to 35%. There are no significant differences between homeworkers and non-homeworkers and, given the sample size, the differences by furlough are not big enough to explain this large drop.

There are several possible reasons for this finding. It could be that there was an overall drop in seasonal illnesses due to social distancing. It is also possible that employees started avoiding going to work when unwell, or they are more reluctant to admit it during a pandemic. However, given some of the recent evidence from employers in our Health and Wellbeing Survey, which has found an increase in homeworking has failed to curb unhealthy working practices such as presenteeism, it is likely to be the latter.

Nonetheless, some clear divisions exist, which highlight the unequal pressures employees face. We find that those with caring responsibilities report much higher levels of presenteeism – 42% of those who care for a child, 54% of those who care for an adult, compared with 30% of those without caring responsibilities. In line with last year’s report, we see higher levels of presenteeism in employees with disabilities – 51% compared with 32% for those without disabilities. Furthermore, 40% of key workers reported presenteeism, compared with 31% of non-key workers.

### Relationships at work

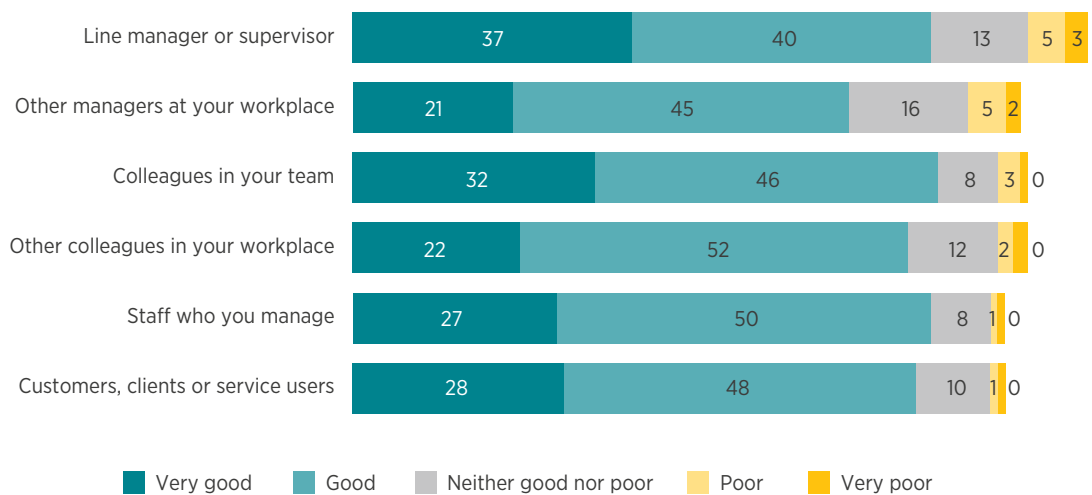
Previous Good Work Index reports – and a wealth of academic research as well as practitioner experiences – support the view that relationships at work matter a great deal. The relationships we forge, both in our working and personal lives, are a key part of our overall quality of life. They impact how we treat each other, how we share knowledge and how we accomplish group-based tasks. Good relationships at work improve the way organisations function, with bad relationships negatively affecting performance. Relationships at work matter to individuals’ health and wellbeing, to their motivation, commitment and performance, and to organisational functioning – directly through impact on performance and indirectly through trust and engagement.

The shift to homeworking we have seen over the last 15 months has significantly impacted the way we interact and engage with our colleagues, managers or clients. It is therefore positive to see that workplace relationships held up despite these new challenges and strains. Perhaps surprisingly, we record better relationships at work for those working from home than those not working from home at all – even when controlling for occupational differences in the case of manager relationships.

We ask employees to rate their relationships with a range of people at work. In line with last year’s findings, the vast majority of employees report very good or good relationships with those the survey asks about – managers and colleagues, as well as managed staff or clients (where applicable). The most positive relationships reported are with colleagues in their own team, with 78% reporting very good or good relationships, followed by line managers on 77%.

As expected, there is a strong correlation between job satisfaction and good relationships at work. Those who say they are satisfied with their job are more likely to report better work relationships than those who say they are dissatisfied – this is true for every relationship we ask about. We also see positive workplace relationships associated with higher task performance (for example achieving the objectives of the job) and contextual performance (for example helping colleagues or making innovative suggestions).

**Figure 7: Quality of relationships at work (%)**



Note: Does not add up to 100% due to N/A answers.

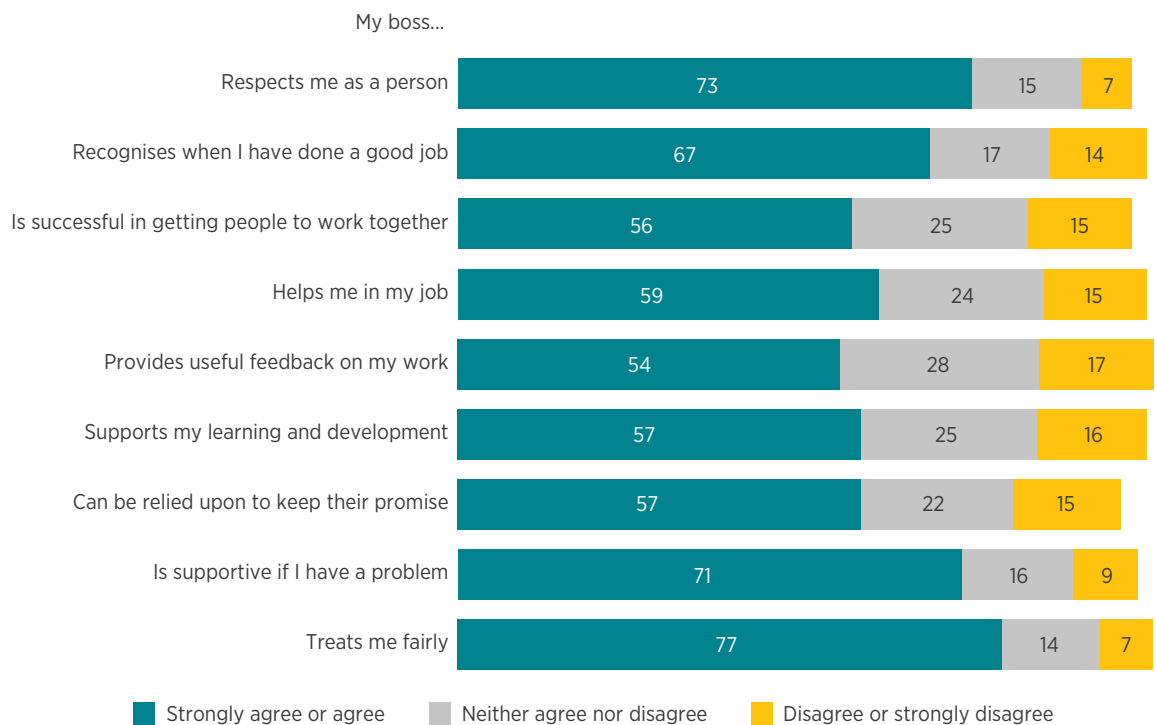
### Relationship with managers

In addition to the quality of relationships in the workplace, the survey includes a series of questions that focus specifically on the relationship with managers. Figure 8 shows a summary of the findings.

Over 70% of employees believe that their boss respects them as a person, treats them fairly and is supportive if they have a problem. The highest percentage of negative responses was associated with the question about feedback, with nearly a fifth of employees disagreeing with the statement that their boss provides useful feedback on their work.

There are some interesting differences between different types of employee that come through in the data. Homeworkers (both those working from home fully and partly) report more positive relationships with managers compared with those who do not work from home at all, irrespective of occupational differences. Employees in the voluntary sector are considerably more positive than average about their managers – 84% say their manager is supportive if they have a problem, 80% say their boss recognises a good job and 67% say their boss provides useful feedback.

**Figure 8: Relationships with managers (%)**



Note: Does not add up to 100% due to N/A answers.

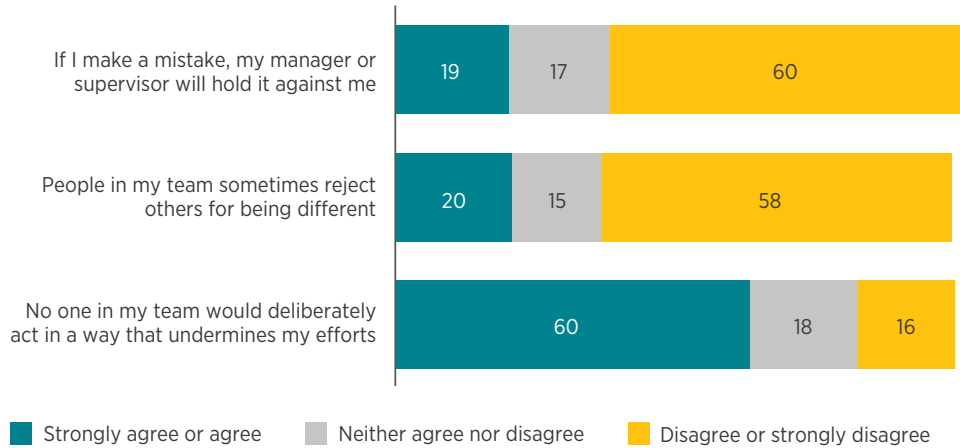
### Psychological safety

Survey participants are also asked about what we call ‘psychological safety at work’. This seeks to uncover whether a ‘blame culture’ exists – where people are fearful about making mistakes or expressing their opinions because of negative consequences.

The findings show that almost a fifth (19%) of employees feel their boss would hold it against them if they made a mistake. A fifth (20%) believe that people in their team sometimes reject others for being different. Another 16% disagree with the statement that no one in their team would deliberately act in a way that undermines their efforts. These numbers are virtually identical to those recorded last year. Similarly to the above, however,

we see that key workers and those not working from home at all report lower levels of psychological safety than those who are not key workers and are able to work from home.

**Figure 9: Psychological safety at work (%)**



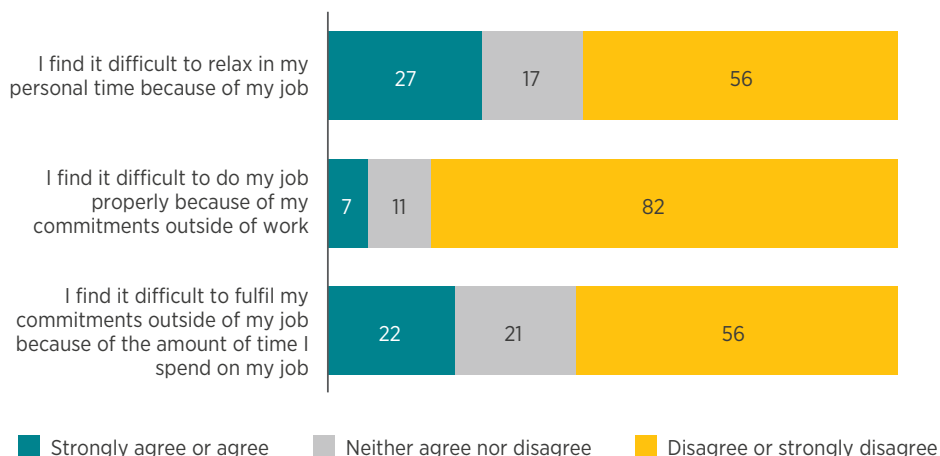
**Work-life balance**

Work-life balance is at the heart of the job quality debate and has been put into sharp focus throughout the pandemic. The mass shift to homeworking has threatened to further blur the lines between working and personal lives. The dangers of the so-called ‘always-on’ culture, which sees emails and messages dealt with outside of regular office hours, have been exacerbated. Finding the right balance between personal and working lives is crucial to our wellbeing. These are subjective measures that are teased out through a series of questions in the survey.

Over a quarter (27%) of all employees say they find it hard to relax in their personal time because of their job. Twenty-two per cent say they find it difficult to fulfil commitments outside of their job because of the amount of time spent on the job, suggesting that there is some spillover of paid work into our personal lives. Conversely, 7% of employees said that they find it difficult to do their job due to commitments outside of work.

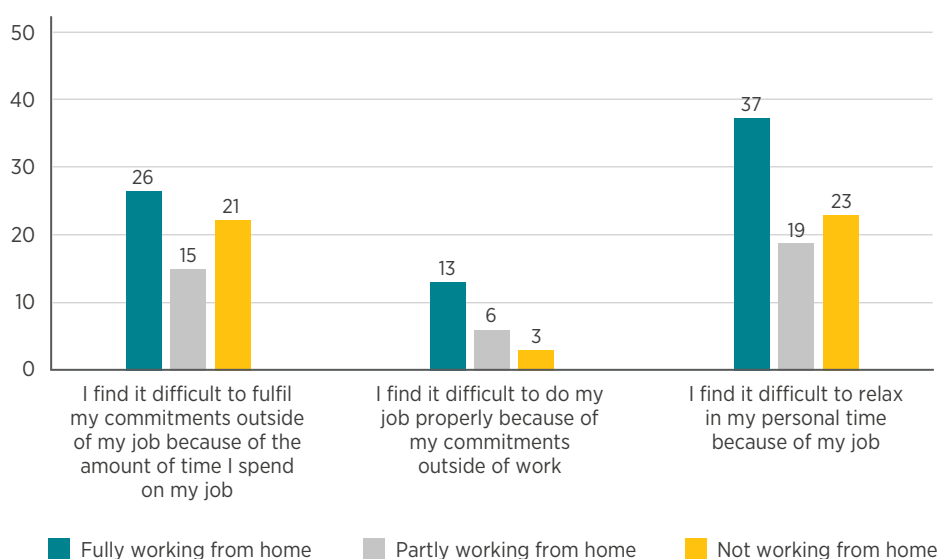
There are discernible differences in responses across the occupations. For example, ‘managers and senior officials’ are finding it harder than average to relax – 46% versus a 27% average. Furthermore, caring responsibilities are a significant factor across the three questions. Sixteen per cent of those caring for adult relatives say they find it difficult to do their job properly, compared with just 4% of those with no caring responsibilities.

**Figure 10: Work-life balance (%)**



The really interesting findings here are in relation to homeworkers. While flexible working in general (discussed in the **Opportunity** section) can lead to better work-life balance, the experience of homeworking during lockdown has not had a positive impact. It is crucial to distinguish between homeworking as a flexible working option – consciously picked by an employee – and homeworking mandated by the Government’s response to a pandemic. On the latter, our findings show that those working fully from home reported worse work-life balance than those not working from home at all, with the best scores recorded by those partly working from home across two of the three questions.

**Figure 11: Balancing work and personal life for homeworkers (%)**



## 7 Security

The second fair work dimension the survey explores is **security**. This dimension primarily covers employee pay, benefits and contractual arrangements. Security and stability in employment, in addition to predictable income, are important job quality and fair work aspects that impact on individuals’ and their families’ quality of lives. Job security concerns are of course linked to times of economic crisis and this section therefore also explores the experiences of those on furlough or key workers.

### Key findings

- Workers who have been put on furlough understandably report lower levels of job security.
- There is correlation between life and job satisfaction and pay levels.
- We also see a link between job security and pay, with those on higher salaries reporting higher levels of job security.
- The median pay of key workers is significantly lower than for non-key workers.
- 60% of employees are reporting some levels of overwork, with 11% of employees saying they work 15+ more hours than they would like to.

### Pay and benefits

When thinking about employee pay and its impact on job quality, it is important to distinguish between objective and subjective measures of pay. Objective measures are straightforward – an employee’s hourly wage or annual salary. However, this doesn’t take

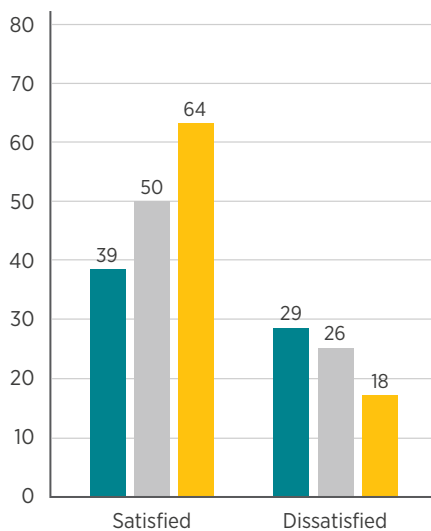
into account how an employee feels about how they're remunerated for the work they do – this is known as subjective pay. Measuring objective pay using a survey has limitations, where pay can include complex reward schemes or an employee's reluctance to disclose information, for example. This is perhaps reflected by 35% of employees choosing not to respond to this question in 2021.

Out of those who did respond, the survey found a median gross annual salary of £25,988, which is just over the Scottish median of £25,616 recorded in the latest [official statistics](#). The survey results show a significant gender pay gap in the median gross annual salary, in line with official statistics. Furthermore, if the data is broken down by occupation (SOC 2020), there is consistency with official statistics, which show a link between occupational classes and annual median pay. We do see a significant difference in objective pay between key and non-key workers, with a median of £22,425 and £32,000 respectively.

When looking at the correlation between pay and life/job satisfaction, the results are self-evident – both life and job satisfaction are higher for those earning £40,000 and above per year compared with those earning up to £20,000. It is important to point out that while there is good correlation between salary and job satisfaction, some highly paid jobs exhibit several qualities that may be considered negative – for example around workload, work-life balance and stress. Of course, overall levels of life satisfaction have dropped significantly, presumably due to the impact of the pandemic. These drops are also dependent on salary bands – the proportion of those on the lowest salaries saying that they are satisfied with their life dropped from 61% to 39% this year, compared with a drop from 79% to 64% for those on the highest salaries.

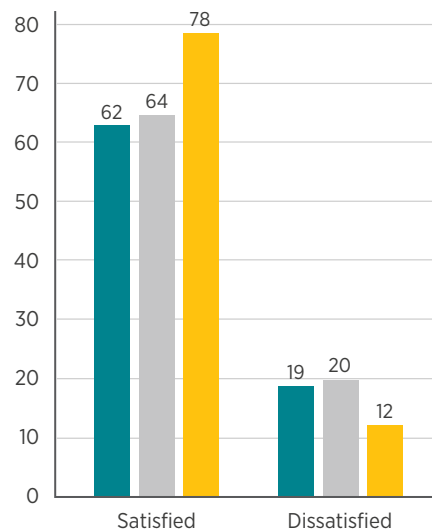
In last year's survey, we saw no differences between levels of life and job satisfaction for most employees. The pandemic has seemingly broken this link. In 2021, life satisfaction is considerably lower than job satisfaction for all employees, further underlying that job quality is only a partial factor in the quality of one's life.

**Figure 12: Life satisfaction (%)**



■ Up to £20,000 per year  
■ £20,000 to £39,999 per year  
■ £40,000 and above per year

**Figure 13: Job satisfaction (%)**



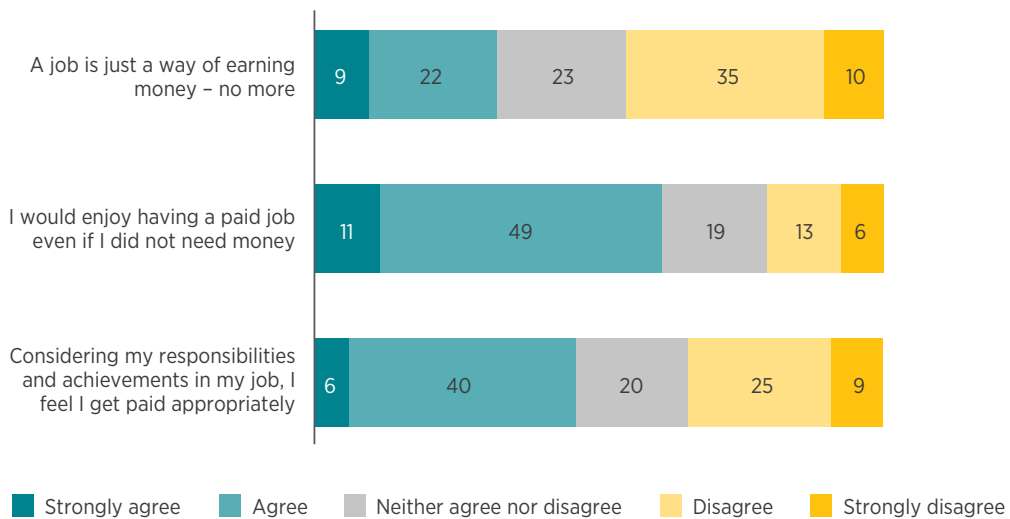
■ Up to £20,000 per year  
■ £20,000 to £39,999 per year  
■ £40,000 and above per year

### Subjective measures of pay

In addition to objective measures of pay, *Working Lives Scotland* also considers subjective measures of pay and what we call ‘work centrality’ – what role work plays in employees’ lives. Results show that 46% of employees feel they get paid appropriately for the work that they do. Just like last year, there is a positive correlation between this and reported salary levels – those on higher salaries are more likely to feel they are paid appropriately. We do find significant differences here by key worker status, with 41% of key workers disagreeing with the statement, compared with 28% of employees not in key worker roles.

Our two work centrality questions measure the relative importance of work in our lives. Sixty-one per cent of employees stated they would enjoy having a paid job even if they did not need the money, and 32% say that a job is just a way of earning money – a drop from 39% recorded last year.

**Figure 14: Subjective measures of pay and work centrality (%)**

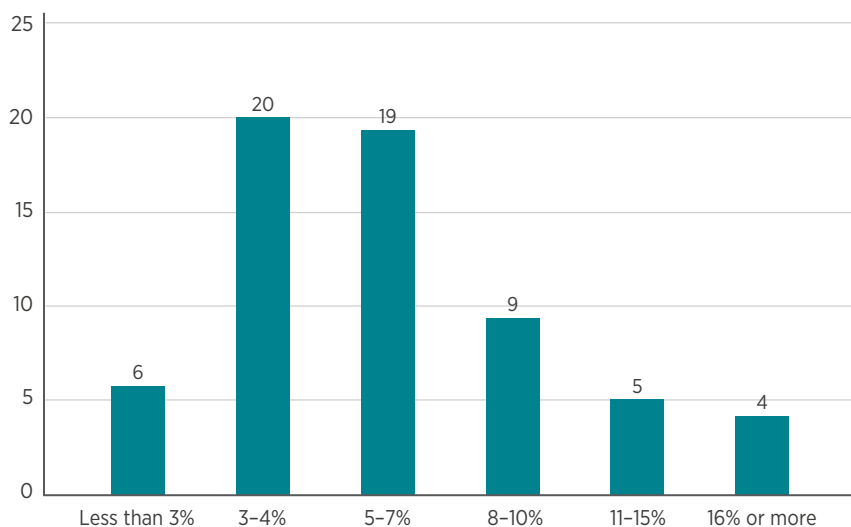


### Pensions and other employee benefits

In addition to pay, our survey also looks at employer pension contributions and other employer benefits that may be available. Turning to pensions first, Figure 15 shows the reported employer contributions across the survey. Even though 3% is now the legal minimum for employer contributions, 6% of respondents reported receiving less than that – unchanged from last year.

In line with last year’s findings, we see that higher salary bands tend to attract higher contributions, which is probably a reflection of employers, particularly large employers, incentivising higher employee contributions from those on higher salaries. We again find much more generous contributions for public sector employees (median 10% vs 5% for the private sector), with 12% of public sector employees reporting contributions of 16% or more, compared with only 2% of private sector employees.



**Figure 15: Employer pension contributions (%)**

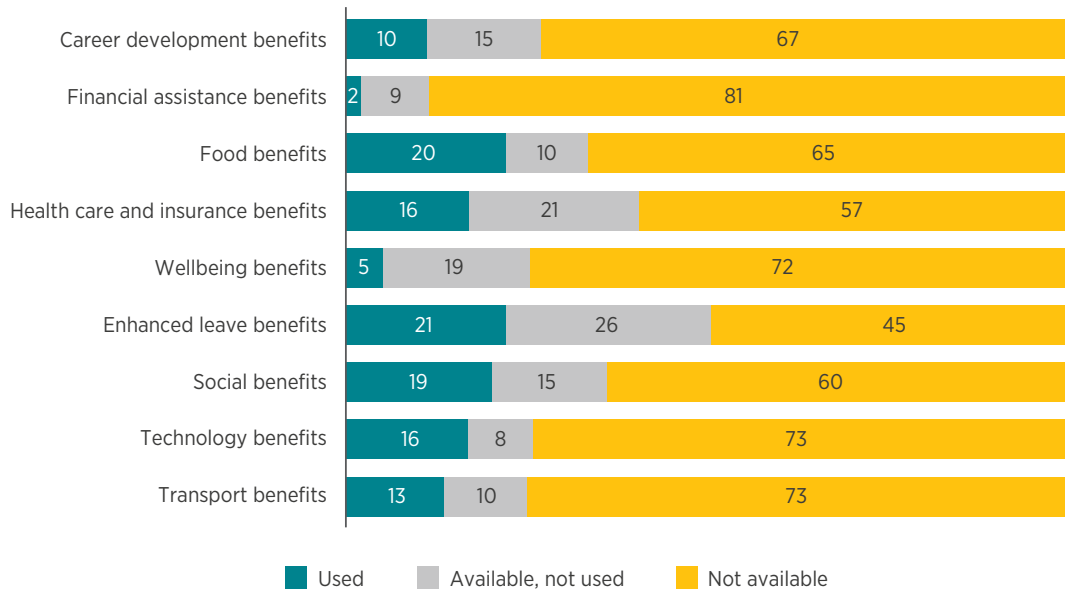
*Working Lives Scotland* also examines a range of employee benefits other than pensions. In particular, it asks employees about the availability of the following nine types of benefits:

- social benefits, which include parties and other social events
- enhanced leave benefits, including paid bereavement leave, emergency eldercare support, or more than the legal minimum of 20 days' paid annual leave (excluding bank holidays)
- food benefits (free or subsidised food or drink)
- transport benefits such as free or subsidised parking, rail season tickets and/or a company car
- health care and insurance benefits, which include death in service or life assurance, flu jabs, dental or health insurance
- career development benefits (for example paid study leave or professional subscriptions paid)
- financial assistance benefits (for example relocation assistance or homeworker allowance)
- wellbeing benefits (for example subsidised gym membership, massage or exercise classes)
- technology benefits (for example mobile phone for personal use or home computer).

The availability of other employee benefits varies, as summarised in Figure 16. The survey found that employees report the highest availability of enhanced leave benefits (47%), followed by health care and insurance benefits (37%), with financial assistance benefits the least available (81% unavailable). The numbers are broadly unchanged from last year, with three exceptions. First, the availability of social benefits has dropped due to the pandemic (47% down to 33%) and there has been an uptick in the availability of health care and insurance benefits as well as technology benefits.

In line with last year's survey, we see that benefit options are more readily available to employees in the public sector with the exception of food, social and technology benefits, which are less likely to be available to them. The difference is particularly pronounced in enhanced leave benefits, which are available to 66% of public sector workers, but only 41% of private sector workers.

**Figure 16: Employee benefits other than pensions (%)**



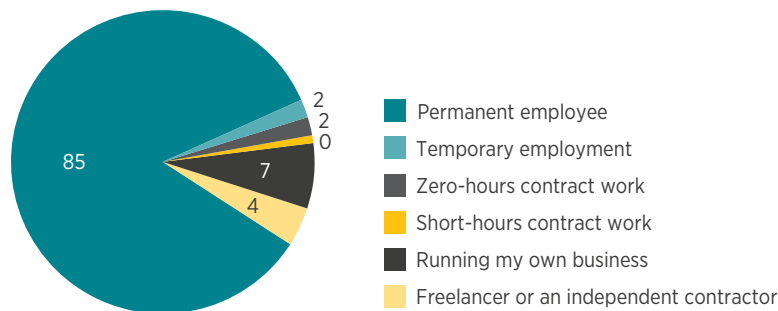
**Types of contract**

Contractual working arrangements and the related issues of job and hours insecurity, as well as underemployment, are aspects of job quality that have risen within the public policy agenda in recent years, not least in Matthew Taylor’s *Review of Modern Working Practices* and subsequent policy pledges. Most recently, the *Supreme Court Uber ruling* again highlighted the importance of reform and modernising the law around employment status.

While our survey includes questions on contractual type, the sample size for non-standard contracts is relatively small, so the level of analysis we can do for Scotland is somewhat limited. Past iterations of the Good Work Index use a larger UK-wide sample and provide interesting insight into UK-wide job quality in relation to non-standard contracts.

*Working Lives Scotland* covers an array of contract types to give a clear and accurate representation of work in Scotland. The breakdown of those surveyed in the report is presented in Figure 17 – it shows that 85% of employees are in permanent employment, 7% run their own business and 2% are on zero-hours contracts. In line with previous research, the results show the highest incidence of zero-hours contracts in the ‘caring, leisure and other services’ occupational class, where 9% are on zero-hours contracts.

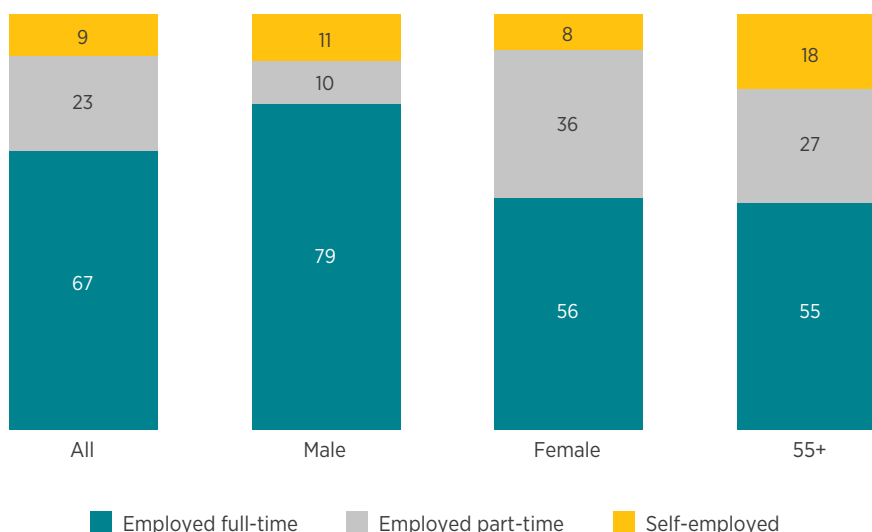
**Figure 17: Types of contract (%)**



Looking at both full-time and part-time employment shows significant differences. In line with ONS labour market data, the research shows that women are much more likely to work part-time than men – this has widely been attributed to childcare and elderly care responsibilities, which remain significantly gendered despite policy interventions around shared parental leave. We also see people with disabilities less likely to be in full-time employment (55% vs 70% of those without disabilities), linked to their underemployment (as discussed below).

Furthermore, in line with last year’s data, the distribution of full-time and part-time employment among the 55+ age category is roughly the same as for women. There is also a slightly higher percentage of self-employment among those aged 55+. We record much higher levels of job satisfaction among the self-employed, 89% of whom say they are satisfied, compared with 64% and 66% for those working full-time and part-time respectively.

**Figure 18: Employment status (%)**



### Job security

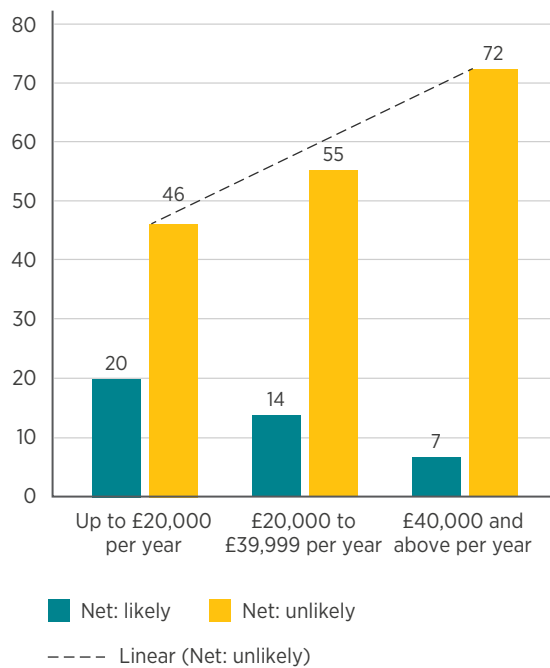
In addition to pay levels, pension contributions and contractual arrangements – primarily objective measures – the survey asks two questions to assess perceived job security. It asks employees whether they think they are likely to lose their job in the next 12 months and whether they are likely to quit their job in the next 12 months. In last year’s report we highlighted that the findings are likely to change considerably as a result of the pandemic, and while the overall figures have not shifted as much as some expected, we do see significant differences in job security across different types of worker.

It is important to bear in mind that some employees dropped out of the survey altogether as they will have been made redundant – these are self-evidently likely to have been in less secure roles. That will impact on the overall levels of reported job security, which remains relatively stable. Fifty-five per cent of those surveyed said they think it was unlikely they would lose their job, and 68% thought it was unlikely they would quit. The latter is an increase from 57% recorded last year and suggests that employees put job moves on hold during turbulent economic times. We even see a sharp fall in the likelihood to quit among those who are dissatisfied with their job – a drop from 51% to 32%.

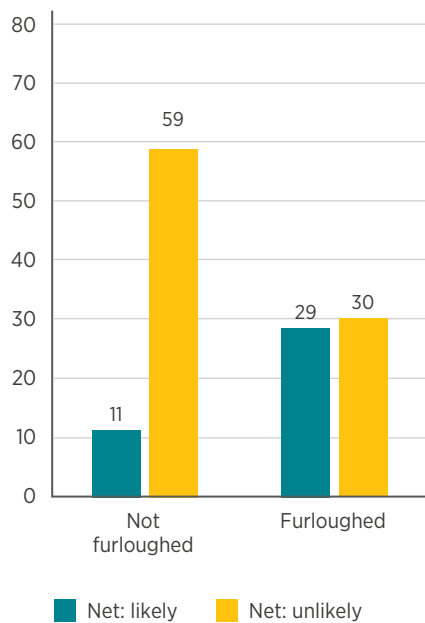
In line with last year’s survey, the findings show that public sector employees feel significantly more secure in their employment, with a 16 percentage point difference compared with employees in the private sector on the likelihood to lose job measure – 68% of public sector employees say they are unlikely to lose their job, compared with 52% of private sector employees. Job security also increases with higher salary bands, which is in line with past research on insecure low-paid employment.

As one would expect, there are significant differences between those who have been put on furlough and those who have not. Figure 20 shows that the proportion of employees who say they are likely to lose their job is almost three times higher for those on furlough (29% vs 11%) and the proportion of employees who say they are unlikely to lose their job is almost twice as high as for those not on furlough (59% vs 30%).

**Figure 19: Likelihood to lose job, by salary (%)**



**Figure 20: Likelihood to lose job, by furlough status (%)**

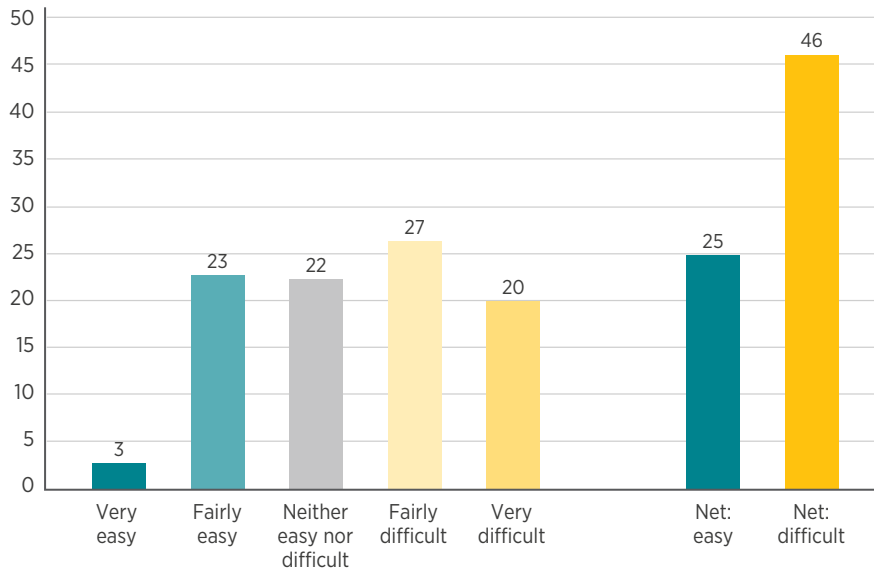


### Confidence in the labour market

Another aspect of job security measured in the survey is employees’ confidence in the labour market. It asks: ‘How easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to find another job at least as good as your current one?’ In last year’s report we anticipated significant changes to the answers to this question; however, these have not materialised. It is likely that the various government interventions continued to mask the pandemic’s impact on the labour market, influencing employee views on their prospects.

We also see interesting differences by age in the survey, with labour market confidence declining sharply by age. Twenty-eight per cent of those aged 55+ say finding a job at least as good as their current one would be very difficult, compared with only 7% for those aged 18–34.

**Figure 21: Difficulty in finding a job at least as good as your current one (%)**



### Underemployment and overwork

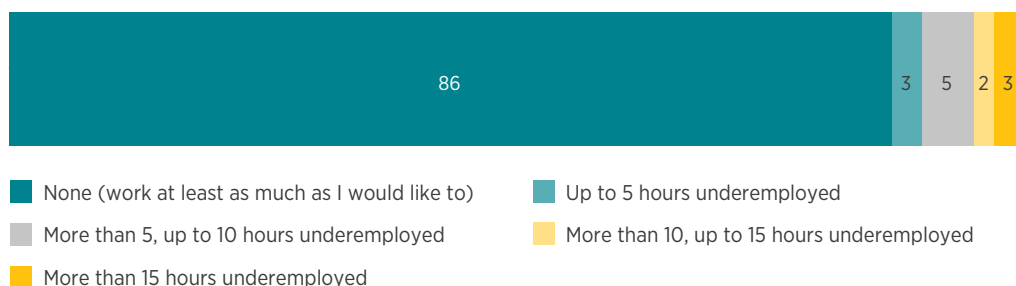
In addition to the objective measure of hours worked, the survey asks employees to subjectively report how many hours they would like to work, while ‘taking into account the need to earn a living’. This gives an indication of underemployment and overwork, which are elements of job quality.

Underemployment, where employees aren’t working as much they would like, is a source of insecurity in the labour market. This inevitably has financial repercussions on living standards. Looking at the difference between the number of hours usually worked per week and how much an individual would like to work per week, we can estimate an employee’s level of underemployment.

Results show that 86% of people work at least as much as they would like to, with around 11% saying they would like to work at least five hours per week more than they currently do. This is roughly in line with ONS data that estimates underemployment at around 10% across the UK. There have been no significant changes compared with last year’s survey, but we do see differences across types of worker.

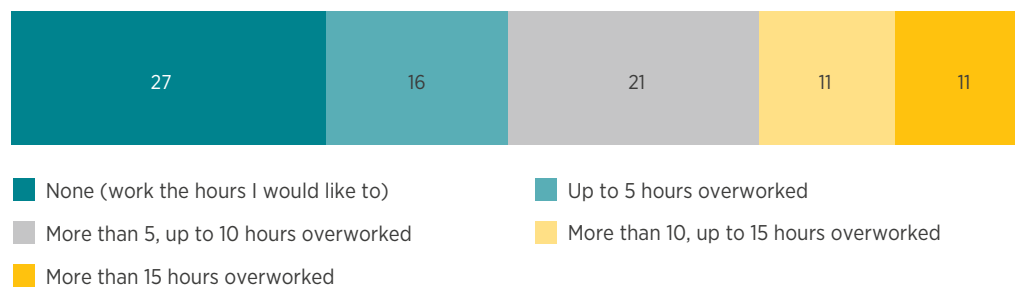
As one would expect, those on furlough are more likely to say they are underemployed (22% vs 13% for those not furloughed), as are the self-employed, 37% of whom would like to work more hours. We also see significant differences by disability – 24% of those with disabilities are reporting underemployment, double of those without disabilities (12%). Furthermore, in line with previous research, those in lower occupational classes are more likely to report underemployment.

**Figure 22: Underemployment (%)**



Conversely, levels of overwork can be estimated by measuring the difference between reported usual hours of work and preferred hours of work. The presence of overwork is likely to impact negatively on how people balance work with the rest of their lives. The survey finds that only 27% of employees work at least the hours they would like to, with 60% reporting some levels of overwork. Eleven per cent of employees say they work 15 or more hours more than they would like to.

**Figure 23: Overwork (%)**



## 8 Opportunity

For work to be fair, opportunities must be made available for everyone regardless of race, age, gender or disability. In addition, opportunities to develop skills or to progress one's career are an important element of fair work. Our survey asks employees about their experiences in work, so we can't use it to provide insight around issues like recruitment practice or employee experiences of the application process. However, it does allow us to expose some differences in opportunities available to different groups of employees. This year's *Working Lives Scotland* includes a discussion on flexible working in this section, to allow for better alignment with the Fair Work Measurement Framework.

### Key findings

- Less than a third (31%) of employees believe their job offers good prospects for career advancement, while 51% believe their job offers good opportunities to develop their skills.
- Only 8% of furloughed employees undertook training during their time on furlough.
- Despite a rise in homeworking, significant gaps remain in the availability of flexible working arrangements.
- Over half (59%) of all employees report good informal flexibility in their jobs.
- We find greater job satisfaction, enthusiasm and skills development opportunities among those working flexibly.

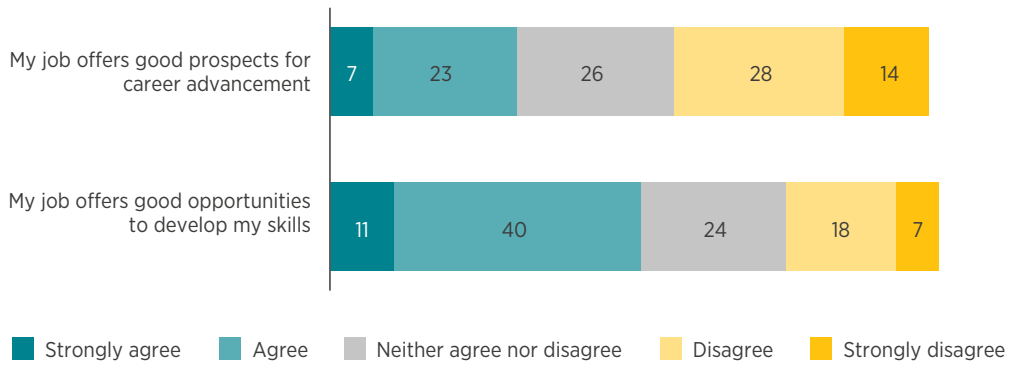
### Personal and career development

The survey asks employees two questions to ascertain the levels of opportunity in the workplace – whether their job offers good prospects for career advancement and whether it offers good opportunities to develop skills. Personal and career development opportunities form an important part of future job prospects, while at the same time having clear links with skills and several other job quality dimensions. Given past evidence around employer investment in skills development dropping during times of economic crisis, we were keen to see the impact on employee perceptions.

Figure 24 summarises the answers received across the two questions. Just under a third (31%) of employees believe their job offers good prospects for career advancement. More

encouragingly, 51% believe that their job offers good opportunities for skills development. Nonetheless, a quarter (25%) of employees report a lack of skills development in their workplace and 42% feel that they have poor career advancement prospects. All of these figures are almost identical to those recorded last year.

**Figure 24: Personal and career development (%)**



Just like last year, the survey sample allows us to look for any differences in the perceived levels of opportunity across different employee groups. On career advancement, results show that women are more likely to feel they lack the opportunities to advance than men (46% vs 37%), with a smaller gap in the skills development opportunities they report. This may point to the existence of a perceived glass ceiling for female employees.

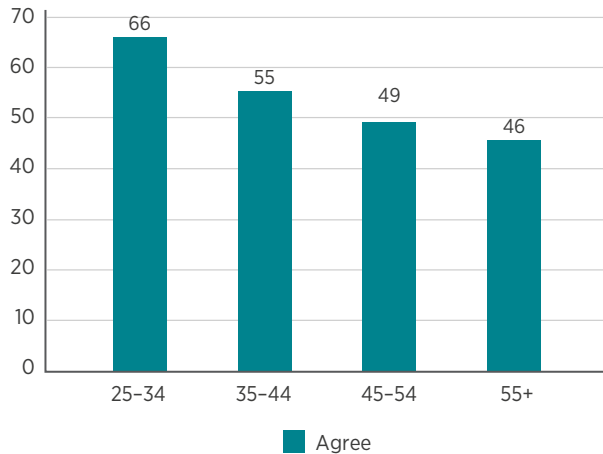
**Figure 25: Development opportunities, by gender (%)**



There is also a positive relationship between rising salary levels and reported opportunities for career advancement. Thirty-eight per cent of those earning over £40,000 per year report good career advancement options, compared with 24% of those earning less than £20,000. Just like last year, these differences are borne out when looking at occupational classes or industry. For example, only around a quarter of those working in retail (24%) or hospitality (25%) report good career advancement options, compared with employees in health and social care on 46%.

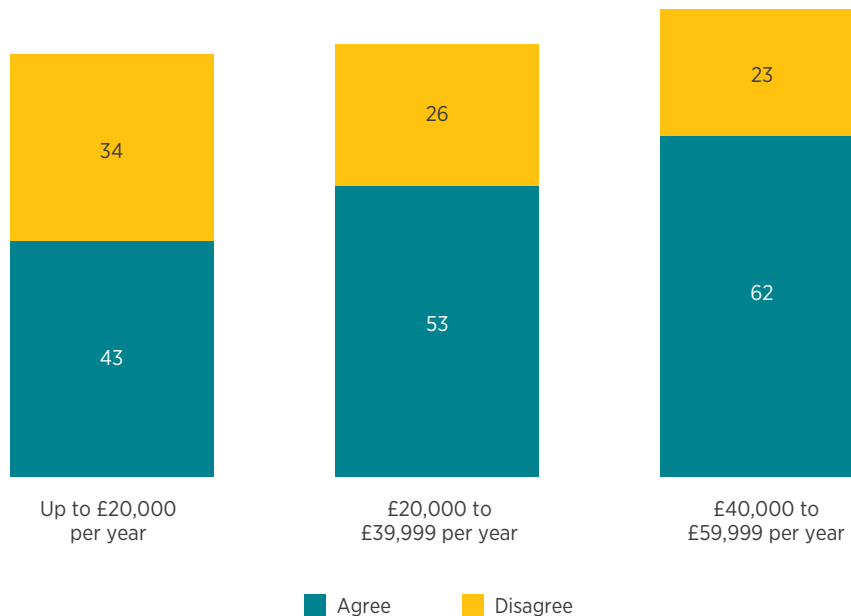
On skills development opportunities, we again find some interesting differences. Most notably, there is a significant drop in perceived skills development opportunities by age, with older workers less likely to report good skills development opportunities. This could simply reflect the stage of the employees' careers, but it could also point to a gap in the provision of training courses by employers, as well as a poorer public policy skills infrastructure for these workers.

**Figure 26: Prospects for skills development, by age (%)**



In addition to the above-mentioned gap, there are significant differences between different salary levels and skills development opportunities – they improve as employees move up the salary scale. While only 43% of those earning less than £20,000 per year agree their job offers good opportunities to develop skills, this increases to 53% for those on £20,000–£39,999 and 62% for those on £40,000 or more. This indicates a lack of skills development for lower-paid occupations, confirmed when breaking the data down by occupational class. Employees in higher occupational classes in the survey report above-average skills development opportunities, with the opposite being true for lower occupational classes.

**Figure 27: Prospects for skills development, by salary (%)**



One of the unique features of the COVID-19 crisis has been the UK Government’s Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), which financially supported employers to avoid redundancies. Employees who have been put on furlough could not be in employment with their current employer during furloughed hours, but depending on contracts, could work elsewhere, do voluntary work or undertake training. On the latter point especially, many



organisations – including the CIPD – made the case for training interventions to be put in place at times when regular job demands were low. It is therefore disappointing to see that only 8% of furloughed workers in our survey report have undertaken training during their time on furlough.

### Availability of flexible working

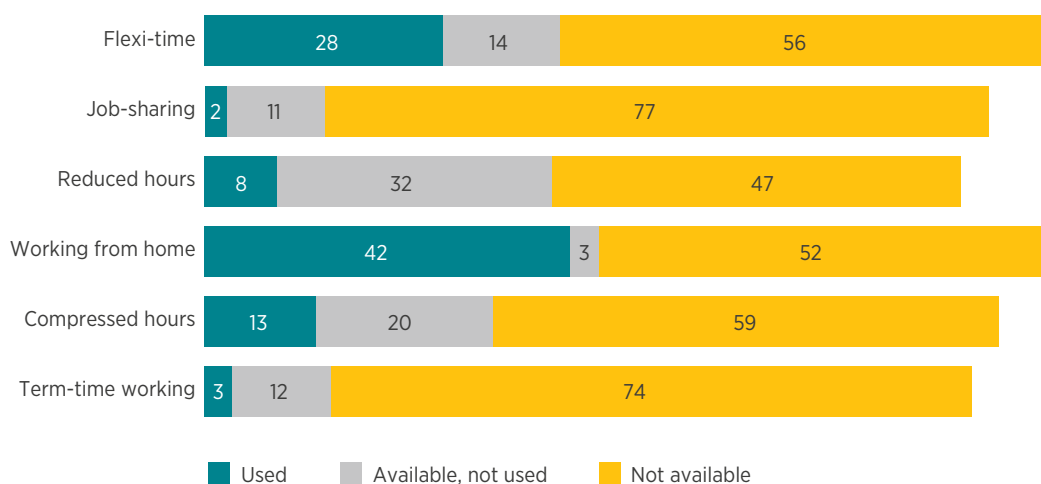
Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the incidence of flexible working has been increasing very slowly, despite government intervention. The last 15 months have been described as the largest homeworking experiment this country has ever seen, and evidence – from employers and employees – suggests that the impact on ways of working is likely to be permanent to a degree. In our first section we have seen that employee preferences point to a hybrid future, and our own [research](#) shows this matches employer expectations too.

There are, of course, many different forms of flexible working and it is crucial that homeworking does not become synonymous with flexible working – not all jobs can be done from home, not everybody can work from home and not everybody wants to work from home. Indeed, our [analysis](#) of official ONS data shows a drop in all forms of flexible working arrangements (apart from homeworking) since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Working Lives Scotland* looks at both formal arrangements, but also at so-called informal flexibility, which we know is a lot more common. On the formal side, we look at six types of arrangements. Flexi-time (choosing the start and finish time of each day) and compressed hours (working the same number of hours per week but over fewer days) are flexible working arrangements that focus on the organisation, rather than reduction, of work time. Reduced hours, job-sharing (one full-time job shared between part-time workers) 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.

The survey results show, unsurprisingly, the proportion of employees working from home increasing year-on-year. But it also shows significant gaps in the availability and usage of other forms of flexible working arrangement. In total, 59% of those asked work flexibly in some form. The most available arrangements are working from home (available to 46%), flexi-time (41%) and reduced hours (40%). The most used forms are working from home (used by 42%) and flexi-time (28%).

**Figure 28: Availability and use of flexible working arrangements (%)**



Note: Does not add up to 100% due to 'don't know' answers.

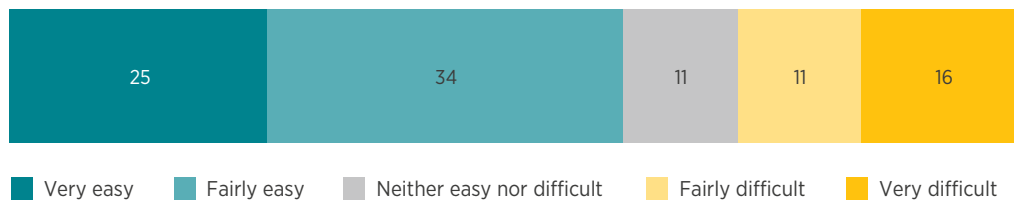
In line with last year’s report, we also see notable differences in the availability of flexible working between the public and private sectors, with greater availability in the public sector for every single flexible working option. The findings also show a significant gender difference in the usage of reduced hours (used by 12% of women and 5% of men) and compressed hours (used by 16% of women and 10% of men), which past research suggests may be due to caring responsibilities.

### Informal flexibility

We know that employees don’t always rely on formal arrangements for flexibility. Informal forms of flexibility enable 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). Informal flexibility was analysed by asking employees how difficult they would find taking some time off for personal or family matters.

The survey finds that over half of all employees report good informal flexibility in their jobs, with 59% saying they would find it easy to take time off for personal or family matters. In line with last year’s findings, the survey found a direct correlation with salary bands – employees in better-paid jobs reported more informal flexibility. This is due to lower-paid occupations generally reporting lower flexibility, with employees in ‘caring, leisure, and other services’, ‘sales and customer services’ and ‘elementary occupations’ finding taking time off the most difficult. Looking at key worker status, we find that key workers report much poorer informal flexibility too – 40% of key workers say taking time off would be difficult, compared with 16% for those not in key worker roles.

Figure 29: Difficulty of taking time off for personal or family matters (%)

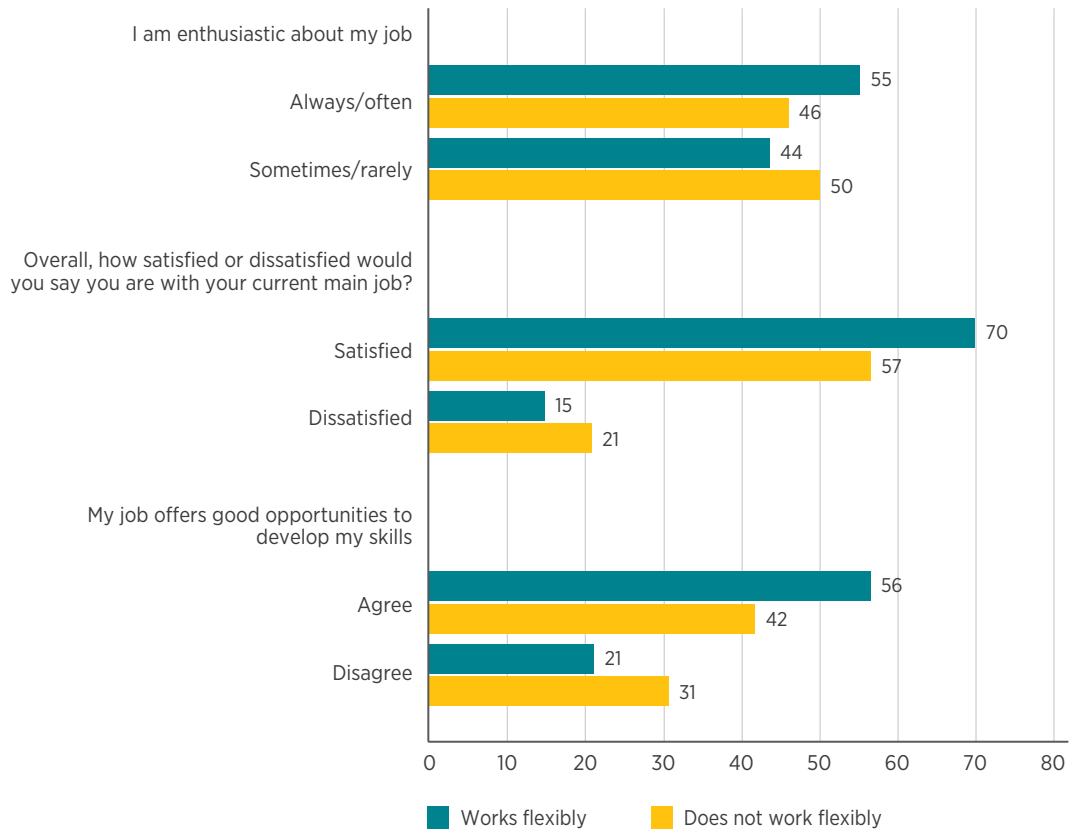


### Flexible working and job quality

In line with previous research in Scotland and across the UK, we find that the relationship between flexible working and aspects of job quality is positive. Figure 30 shows a breakdown of answers given to three qualitative questions by those who work flexibly and those who do not.

Our survey shows that those who work flexibly are more likely to be enthusiastic about their job (55% vs 46% of those who don’t work flexibly), are more likely to be satisfied with their job (70% vs 57%) and are more likely to say their job offers good opportunities to develop their skills (56% vs 42%). When analysing the possible impact of other variables (for example occupation, age, salary, industry or sector) on these results, flexible working arrangements remain a statistically significant factor across all three questions.

Figure 30: Flexible working and job quality (%)



## 9 Fulfilment

For most people job quality relates to issues like health and wellbeing in the workplace, work-life balance and personal development opportunities, or pay and contractual arrangements. We know, however, that the nature of a job is also a key component of job quality. The Fair Work Framework calls this dimension **fulfilment**. The first Fair Work Measurement Framework report highlights that there are gaps in official data around job autonomy or work intensity – this section provides some insight into these areas.

Having jobs that are matched to our skills is clearly linked to performance and any mismatch can point to labour market inefficiencies. Work that is fulfilling – that an employee feels is aligned to a valuable purpose – is associated with job satisfaction. Control over aspects of one’s job, or job autonomy, can also be a driver of productivity. There is a substantial body of research which shows that encouraging learning, growth and self-determination at work leads to higher performance and wellbeing, whereas monotonous and demeaning jobs are associated with boredom, passivity and loss of productivity.

### Key findings

- 34% of all employees report their workload as too high in a normal week. Key workers and those working from home all the time are more likely to report workloads that are too high.
- 13% of those working fully from home say they don’t have a suitable space and 12% say they don’t have suitable broadband to do their job effectively.
- Employees in better-paid jobs, management roles and those working flexibly report higher levels of job autonomy.

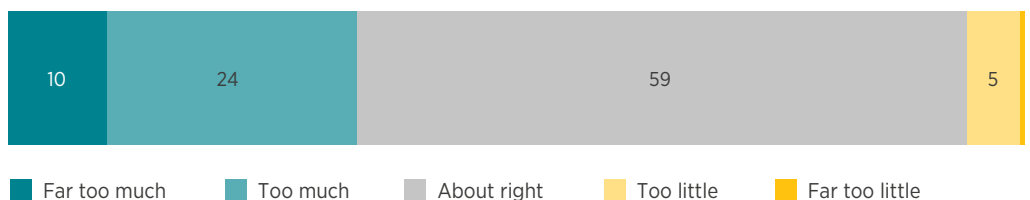
- Key workers are significantly more likely to feel their jobs are meaningful.
- Over a quarter of employees (28%) feel they are overqualified for their job, rising to over half (51%) of those in the lowest-paid jobs.

### Workload

The **Security** section looked at working hours, overwork and underemployment. However, in addition to concerns over the length of time spent in work, the relative intensity of work (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. Our survey asks employees to rate their workload in a normal week. Figure 31 summarises the results and shows that for over a third (34%) of employees, their workload is too much or far too much.

**Figure 31: Workload (%)**

In a normal week, is the workload in your job?



Workload, just like other job quality elements, varies across occupational classes. We find that employees who identify as ‘managers, directors and senior officials’, ‘professionals’ or who work in ‘caring, leisure, and other services’ and ‘process, plant and machine operatives’ report the highest workload. This shows that high workload is not confined to lower- or higher-paid occupations and it is the nature of tasks in jobs that is to blame.

Looking beyond occupational classes, this year’s data again shows that 41% of senior or other managers are reporting too much workload, compared with 28% of board-level managers and 29% of those without management responsibility. The CIPD’s 2018 [UK Working Lives](#) report discussed this phenomenon, saying 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.

Interestingly, and in line with our UK-wide [Good Work Index](#), we also see those working from home report above-average workloads – regardless of occupation. Forty per cent of those working from home all the time say their workload is too high, compared with 28% of those working from home only some of the time and 31% of those not working from home at all. We also find that key workers are more likely to be dissatisfied with their workload, with 38% reporting workloads that are too high, compared with 30% for non-key workers.

### Adequate work resources

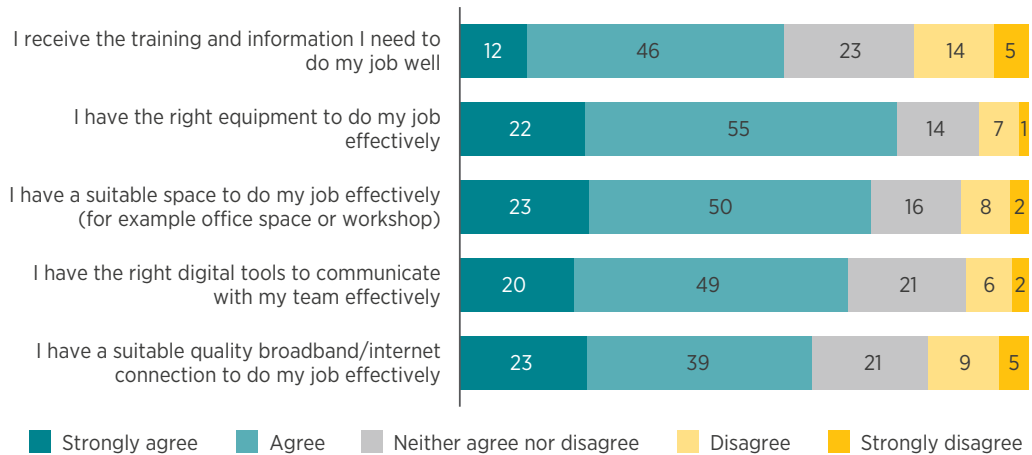
Our performance at work is also impacted by having access to the right resources, the right equipment, the right training and suitable premises to do the job effectively. This has been highlighted during the pandemic, with some employees struggling to find a suitable place to work at home or struggling with broadband issues. The survey was expanded this year and now asks employees to answer five questions in relation to adequate work resources. Most employees report good access to training, equipment, premises, digital tools and broadband – summarised in Figure 32.

As last year, the biggest gap seems to be around training, with almost a fifth (19%) of employees saying they don’t receive training and information to do their jobs well.

Those on lower salaries are more likely to report this, although there do not seem to be significant differences by occupation (with the exception of ‘caring, leisure and other services’, who report lowest disagreement).

The significant shift to homeworking also meant that some workers’ access to adequate resources was limited. Indeed, we find that out of those who fully work from home, 13% say they don’t have a suitable space and 12% say they don’t have suitable broadband to do their job effectively.

**Figure 32: Adequacy of work resources (%)**



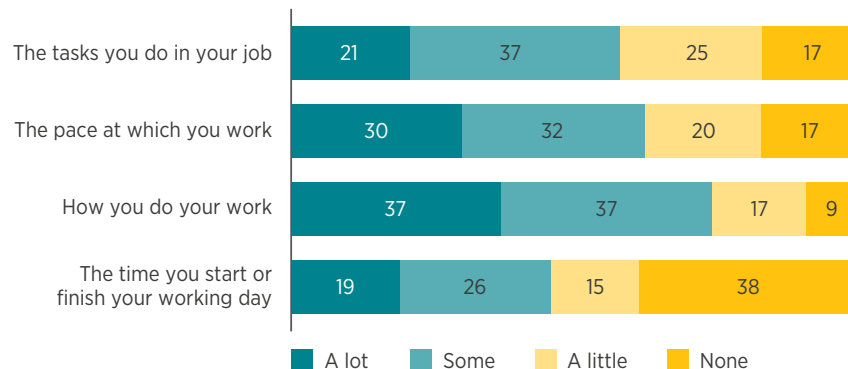
Note: Does not add up to 100% due to N/A answers.

### Job autonomy and complexity

The level of control over one’s job (that is, autonomy) is an intrinsic component of the nature of work. The aspects of control measured in the survey are the time employees start or finish their day, how they do their work, the pace at which they work and the tasks in their job. The presence and level of autonomy forms an important part of job quality. It potentially enables employees to cope with greater work demands, boosts productivity and impacts on the wellbeing of employees.

Figure 33 summarises the findings in relation to job autonomy. Despite the changes to the ways of working during the pandemic, we haven’t seen any significant shifts across the questions. As in last year’s survey, employees are found to have less autonomy when it comes to starting and finishing their working day compared with the other aspects of autonomy measured. This mirrors the flexible working data mentioned above, which found 56% employees did not have flexi-time available to them.

**Figure 33: Influence over aspects of work (%)**



We again find a relationship between occupations, salary bands and elements of job autonomy – especially strong on the question about working hours. For example, 75% of those earning over £40,000 say they have a lot/some autonomy over their working hours, in contrast with just 28% of those earning under £20,000.

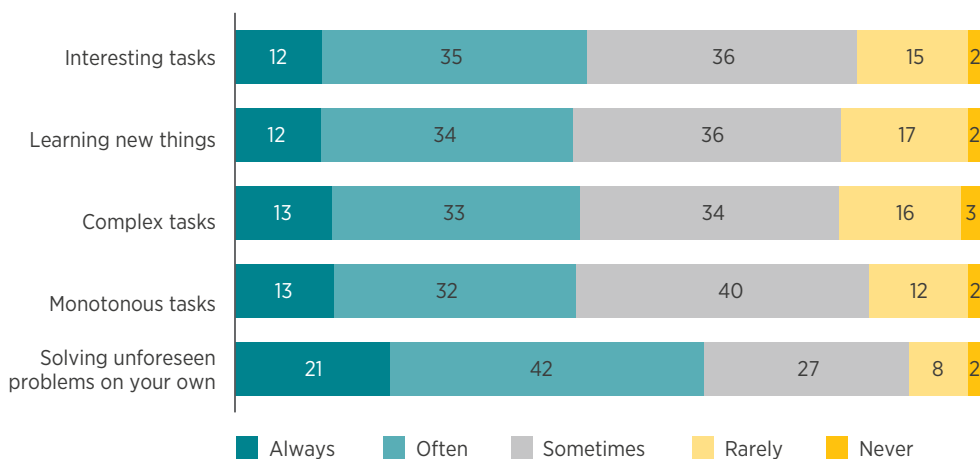
Those with flexible working arrangements and those working from home during the pandemic (both fully and partly) also report better job autonomy, especially on the question around working hours. Conversely, key workers’ and furloughed workers’ job autonomy is poorer across all four aspects measured.

**Figure 34: Influence over aspects of work, by salary (%)**



Linked to job autonomy is the issue of job complexity. This looks at the nature of an employee’s job and whether it involves interesting or monotonous tasks as well as problem-solving. Figure 35 summarises the findings, which have not significantly changed year-on-year. Here, as with job autonomy, the main differences sit with salary band and occupation. For example, while 75% of ‘managers, directors and senior officials’ report their job involves solving unforeseen problems on their own always or often, only 37% of those in ‘elementary occupations’ report the same. Working from home is also a significant factor in reporting monotonous tasks – only a third (33%) of those fully working from home report their job involves monotonous tasks always or often, compared with 57% of those who don’t work from home at all.

**Figure 35: Job complexity (%)**

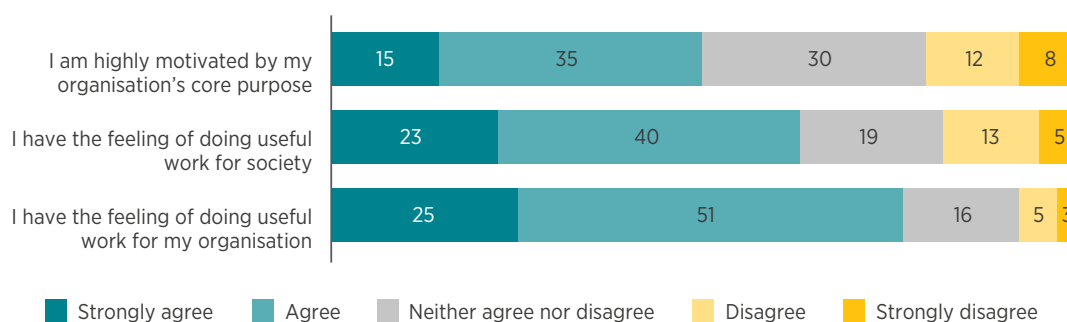


### Meaningful work

When thinking about fulfilment at work, our survey also looks at whether employees feel they make a useful contribution through their work – be it to the organisation or to society as a whole. It also asks employees to say whether they feel motivated by their organisation’s core purpose, which is also an indicator of fulfilling work.

Figure 36 shows a significant majority (76%) of employees feel they are doing useful work for their organisation, although only 49% feel highly motivated by the organisation’s core purpose. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this is one area of job quality where we do see a change from last year, especially so in the society question, driven by those in key worker roles. Overall, just under two-thirds (63%) of employees feel they are doing useful work for society, an increase from the 53% recorded last year. Seventy-three per cent of key workers agree with the statement, compared with 54% of non-key workers.

**Figure 36: Feelings on meaningfulness of work (%)**



Just like last year, employees in the public sector are more likely to feel they are in meaningful jobs, compared with private sector employees. There is a significant difference in response to the question about useful work for society in particular, with 79% of public sector employees agreeing, compared with 58% of private sector employees – although the latter is an increase from 45% recorded in 2020.

In line with previous research, the findings show a very strong correlation with job satisfaction across all three questions, with those who agree with the statements at least seven times more likely to be satisfied than dissatisfied with their jobs. Seventy-seven per cent of those who feel they are doing useful work for their organisation (and 78% of those who feel they are doing useful work for society) are satisfied with their jobs, compared with 10% who are dissatisfied. The difference is even bigger for the core purpose question, with 87% satisfied and 6% dissatisfied with their jobs.

The data also reveals some interesting differences between occupational classes. Just like last year, on the question of doing useful work for society, the two occupational classes that stand out are ‘professionals’ and ‘caring, leisure and other services’, both of which record higher levels of agreement (72% and 74% respectively) than the average (63%). These occupational classes include health and teaching professionals as well as scientific researchers, which we last year hypothesised as the cause. On the other two questions we see a clear split by occupational class too, with higher occupational classes more likely to agree with both questions than those in lower occupational classes.

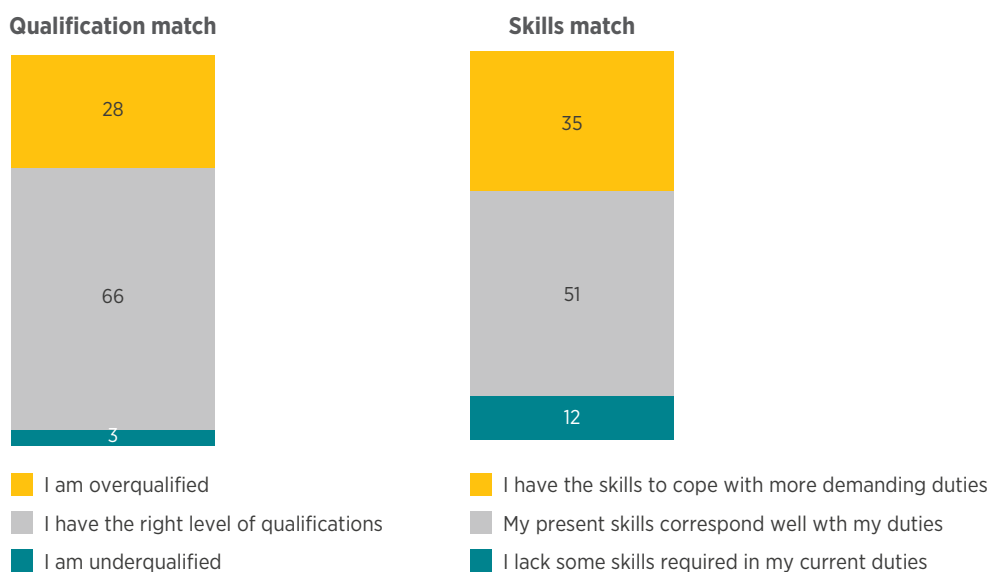
### Skills and qualification match

The last set of questions that come under the **fulfilment** dimension relate to qualification and skills match. The chance to use one’s skills to their full extent in employment is a

crucial element of fair work. The issue of overqualification, especially around the number of degree-educated employees in lower-skilled jobs and the impact of this on productivity, has also been of increasing interest to researchers and policy-makers. Overqualification points to inefficiencies in the relationship between the labour market and our skills development system, but it also impacts on individual motivation and wellbeing.

We measure skills and qualification matches by asking employees whether they feel they have the right qualifications for their job and whether they have the skills to cope with their current duties. The survey data shows that two-thirds (66%) of employees feel their qualifications match their job well, with 28% feeling overqualified – virtually no difference from last year. A slightly higher percentage (35%) of employees feel they have the skills to cope with more demanding duties, with just over half (51%) saying their skills match their current duties well.

**Figure 37: Qualification and skills matching (%)**



As we saw last year, there are significant differences in the answers between occupational classes as well as salary bands. On the latter, there is a gradual drop in perceived overqualification towards the high end of the salary scale. Over half (51%) of those earning less than £20,000 per year feel overqualified, compared with only 14% of those earning over £40,000 per year.

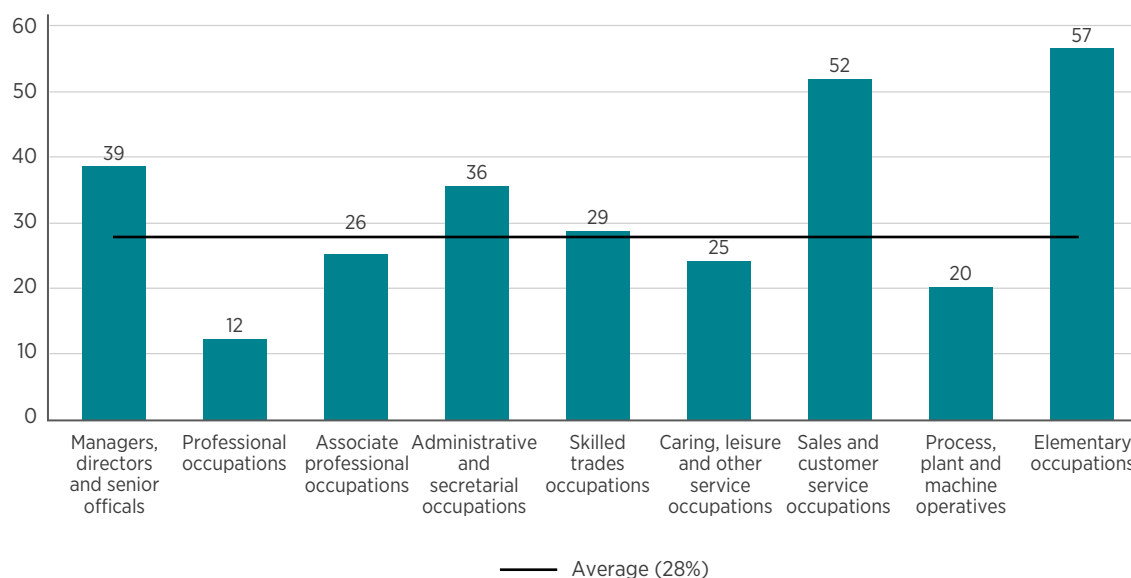
**Figure 38: Overqualification and underuse, by salary (%)**





Breaking the results down by occupational class shows the incidence of overqualification is highest among employees in 'sales and customer services' and 'elementary' classes. Year on year, there has been a considerable change in the answers from 'managers, directors and senior officials' (25% last year) and 'process, plant and machine operatives' (52% last year), some of which may be explained by changes to SOC classification, but also sampling differences. Figure 39 summarises the differences by SOC 20.

**Figure 39: Overqualification, by occupation class (%)**



## 10 Effective voice

The last dimension of fair work we look at is **effective voice**. This refers to the opportunities available to employees to engage with their employers. Past research has looked at various forms of employee voice, with emphasis on forms of individual or collective voice. It can mean direct engagement with managers or indirect engagement through a representative (union or non-union).

Having a voice and a way to engage with one's manager or employer is intrinsically important to job quality – having a meaningful voice is part of what makes us human, regardless of whether it leads to actual change. Employee voice also has an instrumental value in enabling workers to enact change, by being able to communicate concerns, provide feedback and make a difference.

### Key findings

- 19% of employees say they have no voice channel at work at all.
- One-to-one meetings with managers and team meetings are the most commonly reported forms of voice, available to 59% and 49% of employees respectively.
- Employee ratings of their managers as well as representatives in relation to voice have slightly improved compared with last year.
- The availability of voice channels differs significantly by organisation size and, consequently, between the public and private sectors in Scotland.
- We see a significant improvement in managerial openness among large organisations and public sector employees.

### Voice channels

We ask employees to select from a range of voice channels to ascertain their availability across workplaces. Figure 40 shows that – just like last year – the most common channels are one-to-one meetings with managers and team meetings, available to 59% and 49% of employees respectively. Just over a fifth (21%) of employees report the availability of a trade union in their workplace.

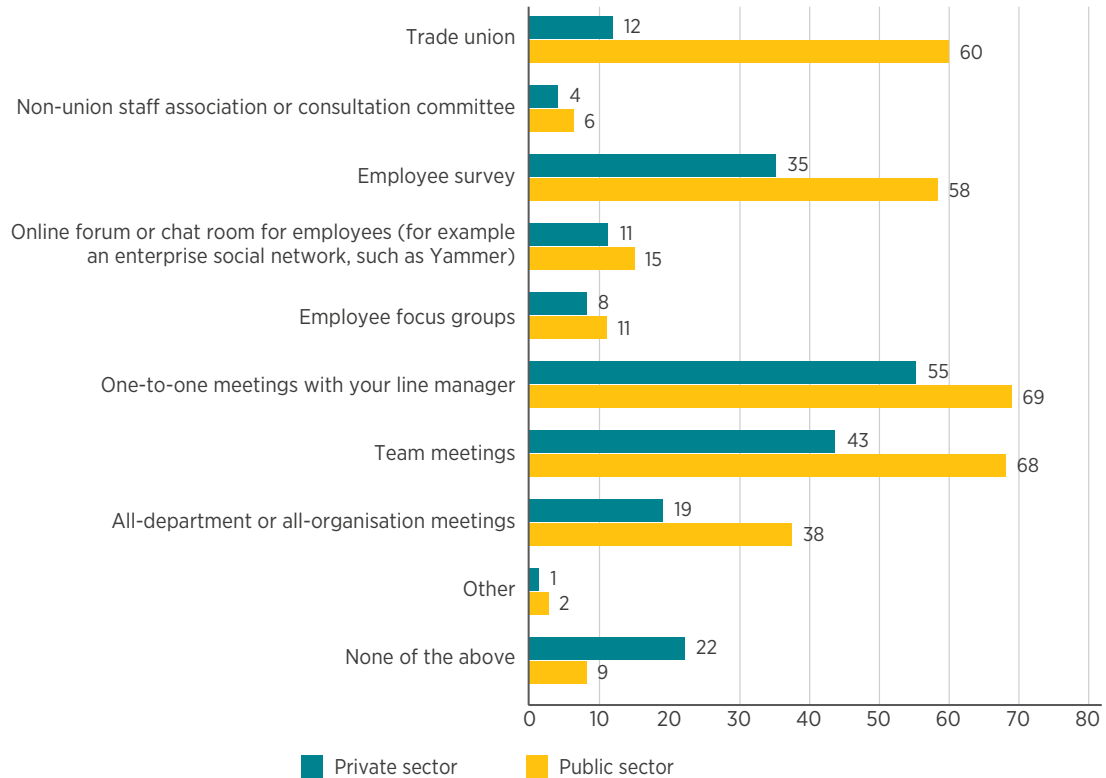
Nineteen per cent of employees say they have no voice channel at all. This is linked primarily to organisation size, with 40% of all employees working for organisations with fewer than ten employees saying they had no voice channel at all, compared with 11% of those in 250+ organisations and only 8% in 1,000+ organisations.

**Figure 40: Voice channels available to workers (%)**



The availability of voice channels differs significantly between the public and private sectors in Scotland due to the differences in organisation size. Seventy-one per cent of public sector employees work in organisations with over 1,000 employees, compared with only 26% of private sector employees. In consequence, 22% of private sector employees report no voice channels at all, compared with 9% of public sector employees. All of the channels examined have better availability in the public sector. The biggest differences in availability of the individual types of channel are observed in trade union channels (60% public sector vs 12% private sector), team meetings (68% public sector vs 43% private sector) and employee surveys (58% public sector vs 35% private sector).

**Figure 41: Voice channels, by sector (%)**



### Employee rating of their representatives

For those employees who report having an employee representative at work – just over a fifth in the survey – their representatives’ performance is crucial to the effectiveness of their voice. The vast majority of employee representatives will be trade unions, but the survey also includes employees with works councils in their organisations.

The majority of employees rate their representatives relatively well, with 46% saying they keep employees informed of management discussions or decisions, 42% saying they represent employee views to senior management and 49% saying they seek the views of employees. There has been a slight uptick across all three questions here, in line with the overall improvements in voice scores we found in our UK-wide Good Work Index report.

**Figure 42: Employee ratings of voice representatives (%)**

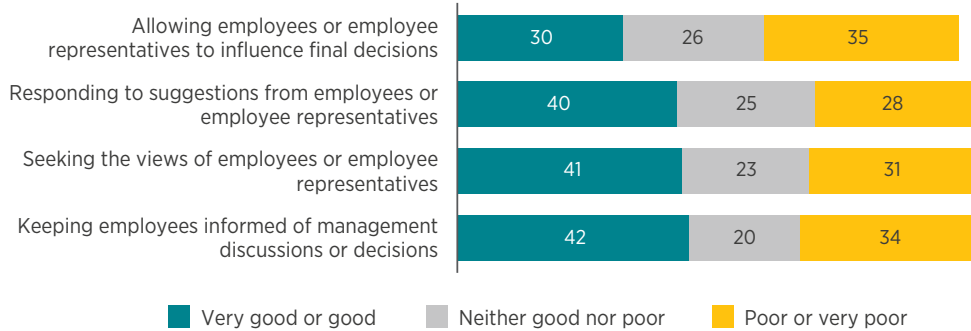


### Managerial openness

For all employees in our survey, we also measure the openness of their manager to employee views, which is a useful indicator of effective voice. Employees are asked to rate the performance of their manager across four different questions – whether they allow employees (or employee representatives) to influence final decisions, whether they respond to suggestions, whether they seek employee views and whether they keep employees informed.

Figure 43 summarises the findings, which show slight improvements on last year across all four questions. Managers are rated the poorest in the first of the questions, with only 30% of employees rating their managers as good or very good in allowing influence over final decisions. Over a third (35%) rate them poor or very poor. The splits are more even across the remaining three questions.

**Figure 43: Employee ratings of their managers (%)**



Note: Does not add to 100% due to 'don't know' answers.

Last year's survey showed that public sector employees rate their managers more poorly across all but one of the questions. This year's survey shows a significant improvement for public sector employees, with employees rating their managers' openness the same or better than those in the private sector.

This is linked to improvements in voice scores for employees working in the largest organisations – these have improved across all four questions, which may be a reflection of the additional focus on employee voice during the shift to remote working. An employee's occupation is also an important factor for the first question, where the worst scores are recorded by employees in occupational classes mostly unable to work from home – 'elementary' and 'sales and customer service' occupations.

Figure 44 shows the net difference between very good/good and poor/very poor ratings among those working in the private and public sectors.

**Figure 44: Managerial openness, by work sector (%)**



## 11 Conclusions and recommendations

*Working Lives Scotland 2021* is the first snapshot of job quality across all five fair work dimensions during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, its findings should be of interest to policy-makers and HR practitioners alike, as they look towards a post-pandemic future of the workplace. This section summarises some of the most important conclusions and provides recommendations to our profession, with some read across to public policy.

### Respect

We have seen an increased focus on health and wellbeing by employers during the pandemic, something that is likely reflected in the relative stability of the indicators in our survey. That being said, we still see around a quarter of all employees tell us their job impacts negatively on their mental and/or physical health – with worse findings for furloughed and fully remote workers. We also see higher levels of presenteeism for carers and key workers. And while, encouragingly, homeworkers report better relationships at work – in particular with their managers – their work–life balance is worse than for those who don’t work from home at all.

- **Don’t stop prioritising wellbeing as COVID-19 restrictions ease.** Our 2020 *People Profession* survey highlighted that employers are putting wellbeing at the top of their people priority list. Given the findings around the negative impact of work on health and wellbeing in this report, this focus needs to be maintained, especially when considering hybrid working in the future.
- **Account for hybrid working in your wellbeing strategy.** The data in this report, as well as the UK-wide Good Work Index, suggests that hybrid working is associated with better health and wellbeing outcomes. While more research is needed to track this over time, it’s important to recognise that choice and flexibility in where people work can be beneficial for wellbeing, but there are also challenges like sedentary lifestyle and temptation to work longer hours to contend with.
- **Support line managers to support workers.** Line managers have a key role to play in promoting wellbeing, but our latest *Health and Wellbeing at Work survey* identifies a decline in workplaces offering manager training on this important topic. It is likely that employees will have less regular ‘face-to-face’ contact with a manager in the future, so helping managers to identify signs of poor wellbeing should be high on employers’ agendas.
- **Think about workplace relationships when planning for hybrid working.** Encouragingly, our findings suggest that remote working might not have the negative impact on workplace relationships that some feared. Organisations should reflect on how they have successfully maintained workplace relationships remotely and take forward these learnings.
- **Take a holistic approach to work–life balance.** We have found that those working from home fully as a result of the pandemic find it harder to separate their working and personal lives. While other flexible working arrangements can help, there are other important factors too. In the wake of remote working, supporting employees to have time away from their work and recharge, even when their work and home are separate, will be important. We discuss boundary-setting in our report *Flexible Working: Lessons from the pandemic*.

## Security

The issue of job security is of increased importance during an economic crisis. While our survey does not capture those who lost their jobs during the pandemic, we have, understandably, recorded more concern over job security for workers who have been furloughed, compared with those who continued in employment. The differences in pay we see between key and non-key workers also highlight that there is some way to go if we want to match the rhetoric of gratitude and support with action.

- **Recognise that furloughed employees will be concerned about job security.** You should ensure that you regularly keep in touch with employees still on furlough and are transparent about future plans and what a return to work could look like.
- **Support furloughed employees back into work.** Employers, HR practitioners and managers should think about how they support furloughed employees back into work after long periods of absence – in some cases more than a year. Re-inductions could be a part of the solution, with more issues to consider explored in our [post-furlough guide](#).
- **Provide support for financial wellbeing.** Many employees who have been furloughed during the last 15 months may have experienced financial difficulties alongside fears about job security. Financial assistance benefits are also the least available out of the nine types of benefit our survey asks about. It is important that organisations think about [financial wellbeing](#) as part of their overall wellbeing strategy.

## Opportunity

While the last 15 months saw a big shift towards remote working, it needs to be emphasised that this is only one type of flexible working arrangement. Out of those who have worked from home some of the time due to the pandemic, we see that their preferences point to a hybrid future, with partly working from home the most popular way of working. Communication between employees and employers will be paramount. We also continue to see concerning gaps in skills and career development opportunities, something that both employers and policy-makers need to address.

- **Maintain trust and fairness when making decisions about hybrid working.** Many organisations are concerned about the creation of a ‘two-tier’ workforce, where some can work from home and some can’t. Organisations should have an open dialogue with workers about what is and is not possible and maintain trust and fairness through such open communication. You can access our [hybrid workforce planning tool](#) to help.
- **Review flexible working across the workforce.** It is crucial that the focus on homeworking does not crowd out other flexible working options which may suit employees (and employers) better. Flexibility is not just about location but also working patterns, with demand for flexi-time particularly high among employees. Read our guidance on flexible working across sectors [here](#).
- **Prioritise better skills development and alignment.** In line with last year’s report, we continue to see evidence of overqualification, skills mismatch and low skills development opportunities across a range of industries and occupations. Organisations need to think about how to make skills development more readily available, especially for those in routine and semi-routine roles.

## Fulfilment

We continue to see significant differences across this fair work dimension, especially around issues like job autonomy, where higher occupational classes perform much better. We have also seen differences in workloads, which are reported higher by remote workers as well as key workers. Finally, we also see some gaps in job resources, with 13% of those working fully from home saying they don’t have a suitable space and 12% saying they don’t have suitable broadband to do their job effectively.

- **Reflect on job design in your organisation.** As we plan for post-pandemic recovery, it is important that we understand what jobs look like now, and how fairly good job design is distributed across the workforce to ensure fairness and good working experiences for everyone. Engage with employees, look at workforce data and think about how job design can be adapted in the future.
- **Examine potential trade-offs in job quality.** It is also important to understand what trade-offs are made on different aspects of job quality, and whether these are necessary. Our findings suggest that lower-paid occupations have fewer opportunities for skills development, or managerial roles struggle with workload – but these issues can be proactively addressed.
- **Monitor workload.** With remote workers and key workers reporting higher workloads, consider how work is distributed across the workforce, and ensure enough resource is in place to avoid overwork and negative implications for wellbeing.

### Effective voice

It is encouraging to see that we have not seen an immediate drop in voice indicators as a result of the pandemic. In fact, there have been improvements for some workers – especially those working for large organisations, presumably as these increase their focus on communication with remote workers. That being said, the concerning gaps we have seen last year remain, with almost a fifth of all employees not having access to any voice channel at all.

- **Meaningfully engage with employees on organisational change.** As COVID-19 restrictions ease, it is important employers continue to consult with staff – through individual or collective channels like unions – about health and safety, returning to the workplace, and hybrid working, among other issues. We know from [work](#) we have done over the course of the last year that 43% of Scottish employees feel anxious about returning to the workplace – this is something employers need to consider.
- **Ensure employees have opportunities for voice, including furloughed workers.** The CIPD has a large body of work to help improve voice channels in organisations. You can read more on employee voice and find case studies on organisational approaches to voice [here](#).
- **Evaluate the effectiveness of voice channels.** We know from our data that workers are more satisfied with their ability to give their views, but less satisfied with the extent to which their views influence management decision-making. It might be worth considering whether this gap can be addressed.



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