Survey report

June 2025

CIPD Good Work Index 2025

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

Survey report

CIPD Good Work Index 2025

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1 Introduction

The *CIPD Good Work Index* report – now in its eighth year – is an annual benchmark of job quality in the UK. It is based on a survey of 5,000 employees with questions on key aspects of good work, such as job satisfaction, pay and benefits, skills development, voice, autonomy and wellbeing.

The report gives an overview of how employees view aspects of their working lives and what key factors appear to have most influence on whether their experience of work is positive or negative. Crucially, it highlights significant associations between those factors and reported outcomes, such as job competence and performance, health, motivation and intention to quit.

This year's report is published as the UK Government's Employment Rights Bill makes its way through the Houses of Parliament. The bill contains the most significant changes to employment legislation in a generation.

The government hopes the measures in the bill will lead to better-quality and more productive work, so this is a timely opportunity to take stock and examine the state of job quality in the UK to see where more progress is needed.

The analysis in the report shines a light on the health of the workforce, which is under scrutiny by the government's Keep Britain Working review to understand how to prevent more people falling out of employment due to ill health.

Linked to this, the report also explores the important role that line managers play in supporting employee wellbeing and reported work performance.

Another key issue we explore that will be of considerable interest to both employers and policy-makers is the extent to which artificial intelligence (AI) is used to automate some tasks and the reported impact on workers' performance and wellbeing.

The key themes and findings are set out within the framework of the CIPD's seven dimensions of good work, which have been recommended to the government as the optimal framework for measuring job quality in the UK (Table 1).

What is good work?

Definition

The CIPD believes that good work is fundamental to individual wellbeing, supports a strong, fair society, and creates motivated workers, productive organisations and a strong economy.

We define 'good work' as work that:

- is fairly rewarded
- gives people the means to securely make a living
- provides opportunities to develop skills and a career and gives a sense of fulfilment
- delivers a supportive environment with constructive relationships
- allows for work–life balance
- is physically and mentally healthy for people
- gives people the voice and choice they need to shape their working lives
- is accessible to all
- is affected by a range of factors, including HR practices, the quality of people management and by workers themselves.

Seven dimensions of good work

Our definition of 'good work' is based on seven dimensions of good work that we capture data on. This data forms the basis for the *CIPD Good Work Index* itself, which uses both objective and subjective measures.

Objective measures capture aspects that, in principle, should be unbiased: for example, data on contract type and union membership.

Subjective measures reflect an opinion, preference or feeling: for example, how meaningful people find their work, the quality of relationships at work, and measures of job or life satisfaction.

Our seven dimensions of good work are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Dimensions of good work

Dimension	Areas included
1 Pay and benefits	Subjective feelings regarding pay, employer pension contributions, and other employee benefits
2 Contracts	Contract type, underemployment, and job security
3 Work–life balance	Overwork, commuting time, how much work encroaches on personal life and vice versa, and HR provision for flexible working
4 Job design and the nature of work	Workload or work intensity, autonomy or how empowered people are in their jobs, how well resourced they are to carry out their work, job complexity and how well this matches the person's skills and qualifications, how meaningful people find their work, and development opportunities provided
5 Relationships at work	Social support and cohesion, the quality of relationships at work, psychological safety, and the quality of people management
6 Employee voice	Channels and opportunities for feeding views to one's employer and managers' openness to employee views
7 Health and wellbeing	Positive and negative impacts of work on physical and mental health, often considered as an outcome of job quality

2 Job quality in 2025: Key findings and implications

Pay and benefits

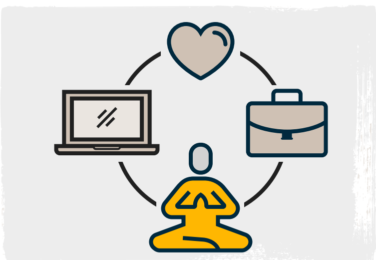
Pay satisfaction remains steady but staff feel more financially secure

- While there haven't been major changes to pay satisfaction, significantly more staff (54%) feel able to keep up with bills without difficulty in 2025 than in 2024 (50%).
- Being able to keep up with bills correlates with improved reported performance and higher likelihood of recommending one's employer.
- Better pay satisfaction correlates with better reported performance, improved mental health and lower likelihood of quitting.

Contracts

Most contracts suit employees' personal circumstances, which correlates with greater satisfaction

- The vast majority of respondents (82%) are in permanent employment, with 9% running their own business and even fewer (3%) in temporary work.
- Most staff are satisfied with their job irrespective of their contract type.
- The majority of workers feel that their contract status suits their personal circumstances well.
- A suitable contract type links to greater job satisfaction, lower intention to quit and a more positive impact of work on mental health.



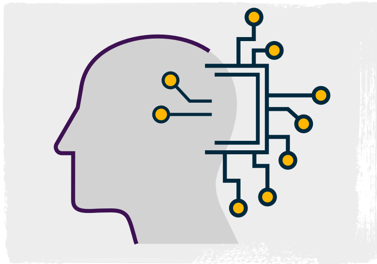
Work–life balance

Informal flexibility associated with extra effort

- Opportunities for formal flexible working arrangements (FWAs) are not widely available. But when they are, employees tend to make use of working from home (50%) and flexi-time (38%).
- There is an unmet demand for a greater variety of formal FWAs – this is particularly the case for a four-day week, compressed hours and flexi-time.

- 80% of those who have a formal FWA say that it has had a positive impact on their quality of life.
- Most staff (70%) feel able to take time away from work to deal with personal matters. This informal flexibility correlates with better reported performance and higher employee discretionary effort.

Job design and the nature of work



Automation of tasks with AI has seen benefits

- Only 16% of staff have had job tasks automated by AI. These are more likely to be younger workers and those in certain industries, particularly information and communication (35%) and professional, scientific and technical occupations (27%).
- 85% of those who have had tasks automated by AI say this has improved their performance.
- The most commonly automated tasks were repetitive ones.
- Those whose tasks have been automated by AI also find themselves more satisfied in their job and more likely to feel the positive effects of work on their mental wellbeing.

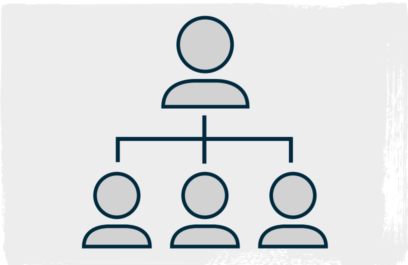
Employee engagement and autonomy correlates with better reported performance

- Job autonomy remains high and correlates with increased self-reported performance and improved mental health.
- Most employees remain engaged, enthusiastic and immersed in their work. However, a significant minority of staff experience exhaustion or excessive pressure at work.
- Positive feelings of engagement link to reduced intention to quit, improved reported performance and a greater willingness to go above and beyond for the organisation.

Overqualification correlates with increased intention to quit, while career and development opportunities link to greater effort and sentiment

- More employees feel they have the right qualifications (67%) and level of skills (56%) for their role than in 2024 (64% and 53% respectively).
- But three in 10 say they are overqualified for their role and a third say they have the skills to cope with more demanding duties.

- Employees who say they are overqualified are more likely to say they intend to quit in the next 12 months, are less likely to recommend their employer or to say they feel enthusiastic in their job. They are less likely to believe that their work has a positive impact on their mental health.
- Opportunities to develop and advance at work have remained mediocre in 2025.
- Staff who see good prospects for development and advancement are more likely to say they perform better, recommend their employer and go the extra mile to benefit the organisation. They are also less likely to see themselves quitting.



Relationships at work

Importance of line managers to employee wellbeing and reported performance

- Employees with more positive perceptions of line managers are more likely to report they are competent and perform effectively in their jobs, are less likely to say their work has a negative effect on their health, and have a lower intention to quit.
- Employee ratings of line managers have improved significantly since 2023, particularly around their support for L&D and openness around issues like mental health.
- This correlates with more managers feeling they now have the training and time needed to manage staff well.

Employee voice

Voice underused in supporting performance

- Most staff have access to voice channels like team and manager meetings, but many lack other avenues for voice, such as online forums, and all-department or all-organisation meetings.
- Staff rate managers more highly in their ability to encourage employee voice in 2025 compared with 2023, but there's room for improvement.
- Those who feel they are listened to and empowered to speak up by their managers are more likely to report better performance, both in their job role and in supporting colleagues and their team.
- Just over a fifth of workers (22%) report they have a trade union in their workplace that allows them to express views to senior management.

Health and wellbeing

Impact of work on mental health remains mixed

- About a quarter of respondents say their work has a negative effect on their mental health and a similar proportion report a negative effect on their physical health. This suggests about 8.5 million working people believe their jobs are undermining their health.
- Excessive workloads, stress and exhaustion correlate with poorer mental and physical health. Poor relationships with colleagues and line managers are also likely to influence health issues.
- The survey suggests there is a strong link between health and work outcomes. Those whose work affects their mental health negatively are more likely to quit, less likely to recommend their employer, and have lower job satisfaction.

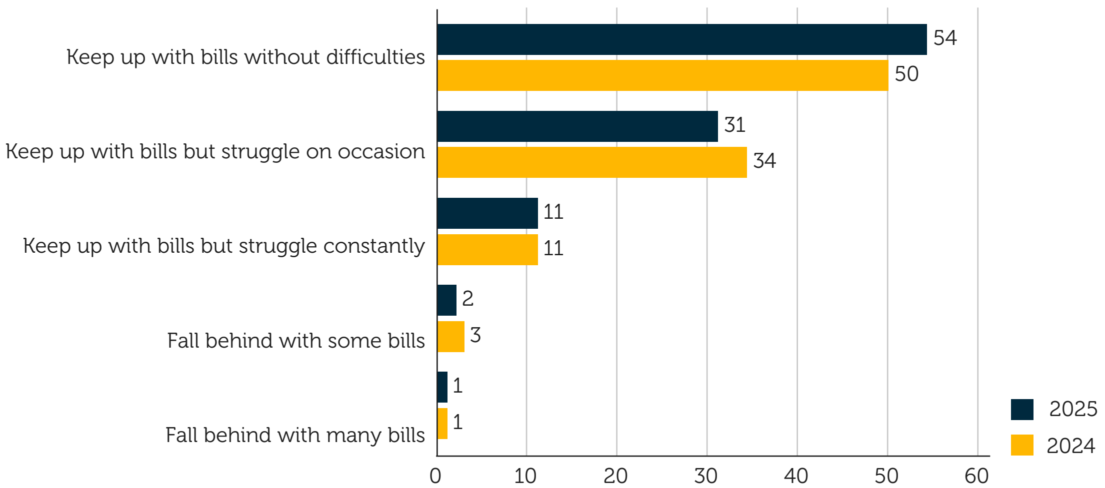
3 Pay and benefits

Pay satisfaction remains steady but more staff finding it easier to keep up with bills

While there are no significant changes in pay satisfaction between 2024 and 2025, there have been changes in employees' ability to keep on top of their finances (Figure 1).

More employee confidence around their finances

Figure 1: Feeling of financial security, 2025 vs 2024 (%)



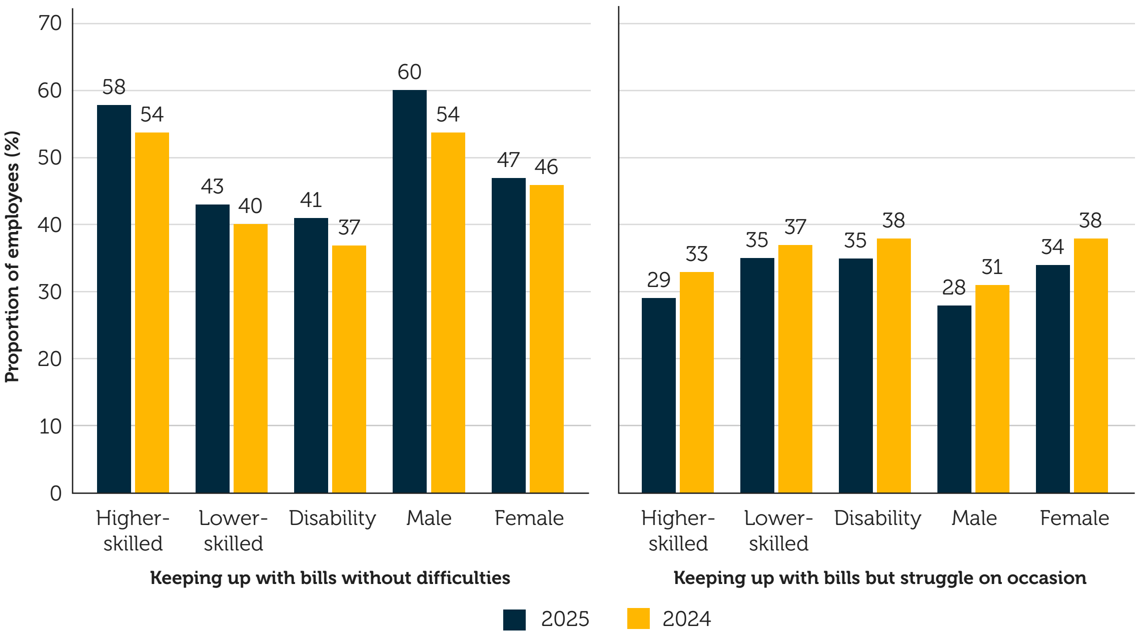
Base: all working adults in 2025 (n=4,965); all working adults in 2024 (n=5,445)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

There has been a significant uplift in the number of people feeling more able to keep up with bills without difficulties in 2025 compared with 2024. This has taken place in the context of a period of lower inflation since last year.

Certain groups face more challenges to financial wellbeing

Figure 2: Ability to keep up with bills, by demographic



Base (2025): all working adults (n=4,965); higher-skilled (n=3,755); lower-skilled (n=1,210); those with a disability (n=833); male (n=2,707); female (n=2,258)

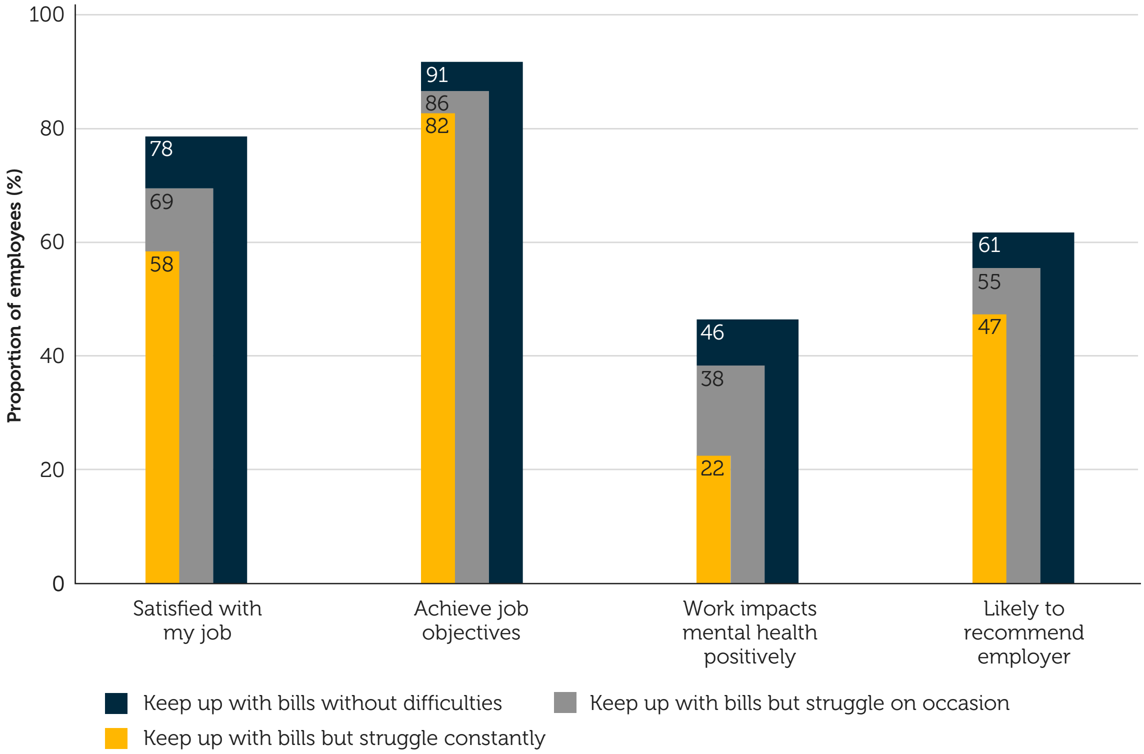
Base (2024): all working adults (n=5,445); higher-skilled (n=3,976); lower-skilled (n=1,385); those with a disability (n=904); male (n=2,844); female (n=2,601)

Certain groups face greater difficulty keeping up with bills. Nearly two-thirds of those in higher-skilled, managerial or professional jobs could keep up with bills without any issues in 2025; this number has significantly increased since 2024. For manual or lower-skilled workers, things look much less positive, with well under half able to pay bills without any issue in 2025. There hasn't been much change in this number since 2024.

There has been an improvement in the number of people with a disability showing confidence in dealing with bills and financial commitments, but there is still a great deal of room to make up. Looking at gender, significantly more men find it easy to keep up with bills compared with women. There has been a big jump in this number for men since 2024, while the number for women has barely shifted (Figure 2).

Ability to keep up with bills correlates with improved reported outcomes

Figure 3: How financial circumstances affect reported outcomes



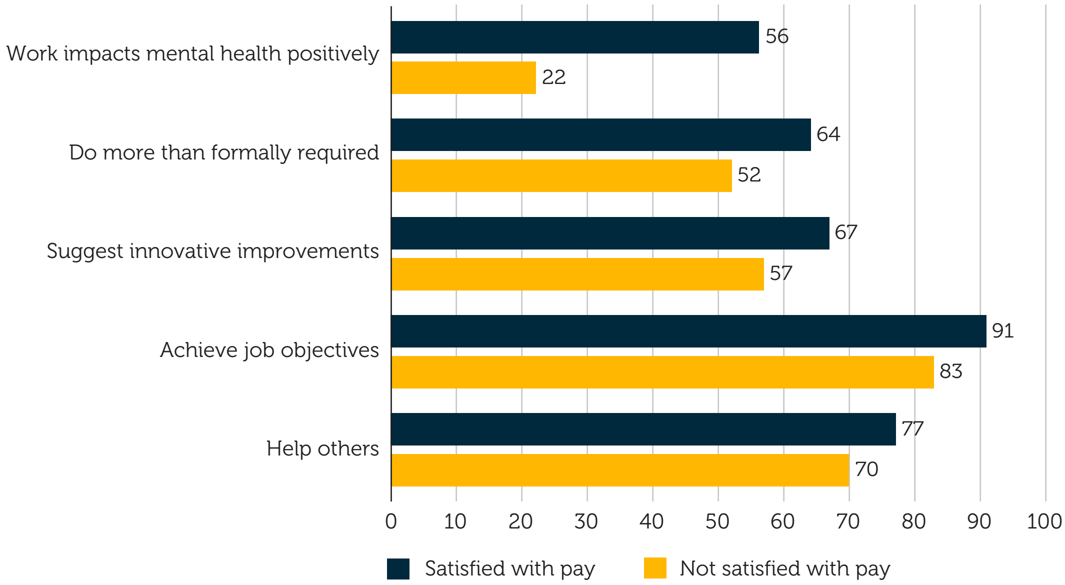
Base: all working adults (n=4,965)

Ensuring staff are sufficiently financially rewarded to the extent that they are able to keep up with bills is important not just for employee wellbeing but because it links to positive organisational outcomes. Notably, being able to keep up with bills correlates with better reported job satisfaction and performance, a more positive impact of work on mental health and a greater chance of employees recommending their employer (Figure 3).

Pay satisfaction associated with better reported performance and greater effort

Just over half of staff (52%) in 2025 feel they get paid appropriately given their responsibilities and achievements in their job. This number has remained steady since 2024.

Figure 4: Work outcomes where employees are satisfied/not satisfied with pay (%)



Base: all working adults (n=4,997)

Pay satisfaction is linked to both improved reported employee wellbeing and performance: staff who are satisfied with their pay say they perform better than those who are dissatisfied, both in their job role and in helping others. They are much more likely to say work impacts their mental health positively, and far less likely to see themselves quitting their job.

It is difficult to predict how pay, financial wellbeing and pay satisfaction will track over the next year. The last year has seen overall pay rise ahead of inflation, delivering real wage increases fairly broadly across the economy.

Looking ahead, recent above-inflation increases to the National Living Wage will boost earnings in some jobs. However, CIPD research finds that increases in employer National Insurance contributions will raise costs for many businesses and place downward pressure on pay.

Implications and recommendations

- More employees feel able to keep up with bills in 2025. However, supporting employee financial wellbeing should remain a focus for employers over the next 12 months.
- Employers should prioritise pay and financial wellbeing support where possible, recognising the implications of financial distress for employees and business outcomes, and using evidence-based measures to inform actions. Our guide provides practical steps people professionals can take to protect employees' financial security at work.

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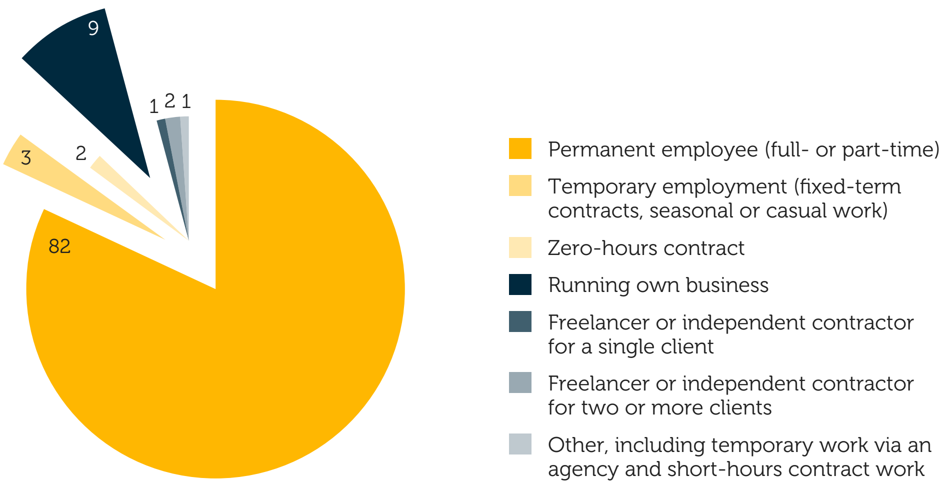
4 Contracts

One of the most debated questions on job quality is how people's experience of work is influenced by their contract type. The *CIPD Good Work Index* shows that a large majority of working people are in permanent employment (82%), followed by those who are self-employed, either running their own business (9%) or working as an independent freelancer or contractor (3%). A further 3% are temporary workers and 2% of respondents were on zero-hours contracts (ZHCs) (Figure 5).

Large majority of staff in permanent employment

Figure 5: Composition of workforce, by employment type (%)

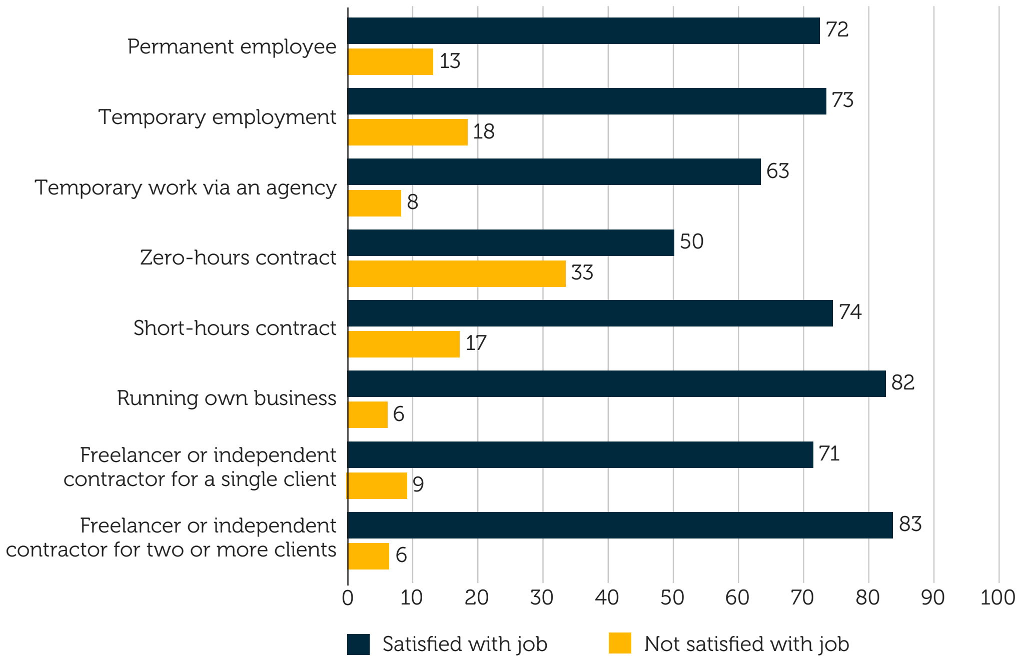


Base: all working adults (n=5,006)

Nearly three-quarters of people working as permanent employees say they are satisfied with their jobs, with just 13% reporting they are dissatisfied. The self-employed also report high levels of job satisfaction and low levels of dissatisfaction, particularly those running their own business or working as a freelancer or independent contractor for two or more clients. Temporary workers are as likely to be satisfied with their jobs as permanent workers, as are workers on short-hours contracts. Nearly two-thirds of agency workers are satisfied with their jobs and fewer than one in 10 are dissatisfied.

Half of ZHC workers are satisfied with their jobs, while a third are dissatisfied (Figure 6). However, it should be noted by those interested in evidence-based policy-making that previous analysis of the *CIPD Good Work Index*'s merged data over a number of years shows that comparing ZHC workers with permanent workers in similar jobs, there is little difference in their reported job quality and wellbeing. This suggests that contract type is not the most material factor in job quality for most people in these jobs.

Figure 6: Job satisfaction, by employment type (%)

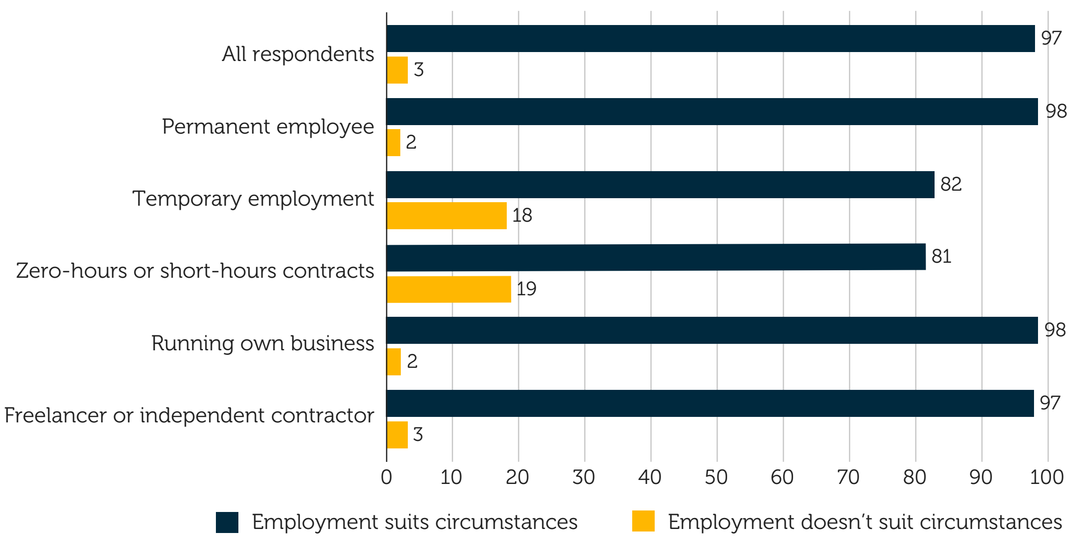


Base: all working adults (n=5,009); permanent employment (n=4,280); temporary employment (n=115); temporary work via an agency (n=20); zero-hours contract (n=65); short-hours contract (n=18); running own business (n=318); freelancer or independent contract for a single client (n=61); freelancer or independent contractor for two or more clients (n=99)

Most feel their contract type suits their personal circumstances

Those in full- or part-time permanent employment and people running their own business or working as a freelancer or contractor are most likely to say their employment status reflects their personal circumstances well. More than eight in 10 workers in temporary employment and a similar proportion of those on zero-hours and short-hours contracts also report their employment status suits their personal circumstances well. A fifth of workers in these categories say their employment status does not suit their personal circumstances (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Suitability of employment status with personal circumstances (%)

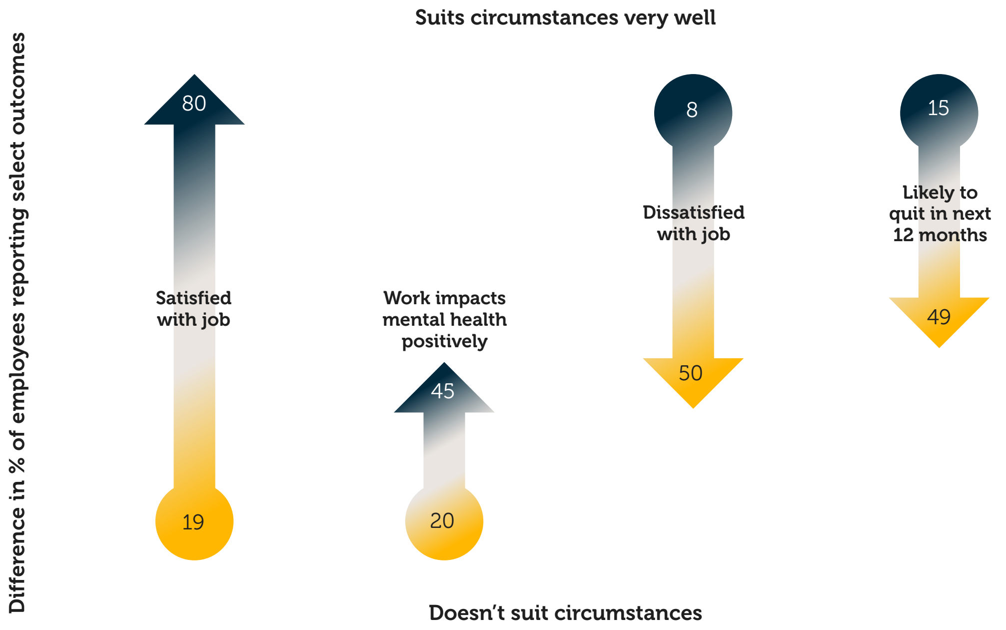


Base: all working adults (n=5,006); permanent employment (n= 4,286); temporary employment (n= 135); zero-hours or short-hours contract (n= 83); running own business (n= 319); freelancer or independent contractor (n= 160)

Analysis also shows that it is not just the type of contract people are on that matters to job quality but also whether they feel their employment status suits their personal circumstances. A suitable contract type correlates with greater job satisfaction, lower likelihood of intending to quit, and a more positive impact of work on mental health (Figure 8).

Suitable contract type correlates with greater job satisfaction

Figure 8: Impact of employment suitability on reported outcomes



Base: all working adults (n=5,006)

Employment Rights Bill – implications of new rights for zero-hours workers

The UK Government's proposal to give ZHC workers and short-hours workers a right to a minimum guaranteed hours contract is designed to help more people move to a contract that better suits their circumstances. However, it is debatable if this will have much of an effect. CIPD research shows that employers that use ZHCs are particularly likely to report they will increase their use of temporary workers and other atypical workers if they perceive the new rights for ZHC workers as too burdensome or restrictive. CIPD research also shows three-quarters of employers categorise their ZHC staff as employees, which means they will have full employment rights, subject to length of service. There is a risk that by giving ZHC workers a right to a guaranteed hours contract, it will lead to an increase in temporary and involuntary temporary employment, both of which are currently at a low level in the UK by international standards.

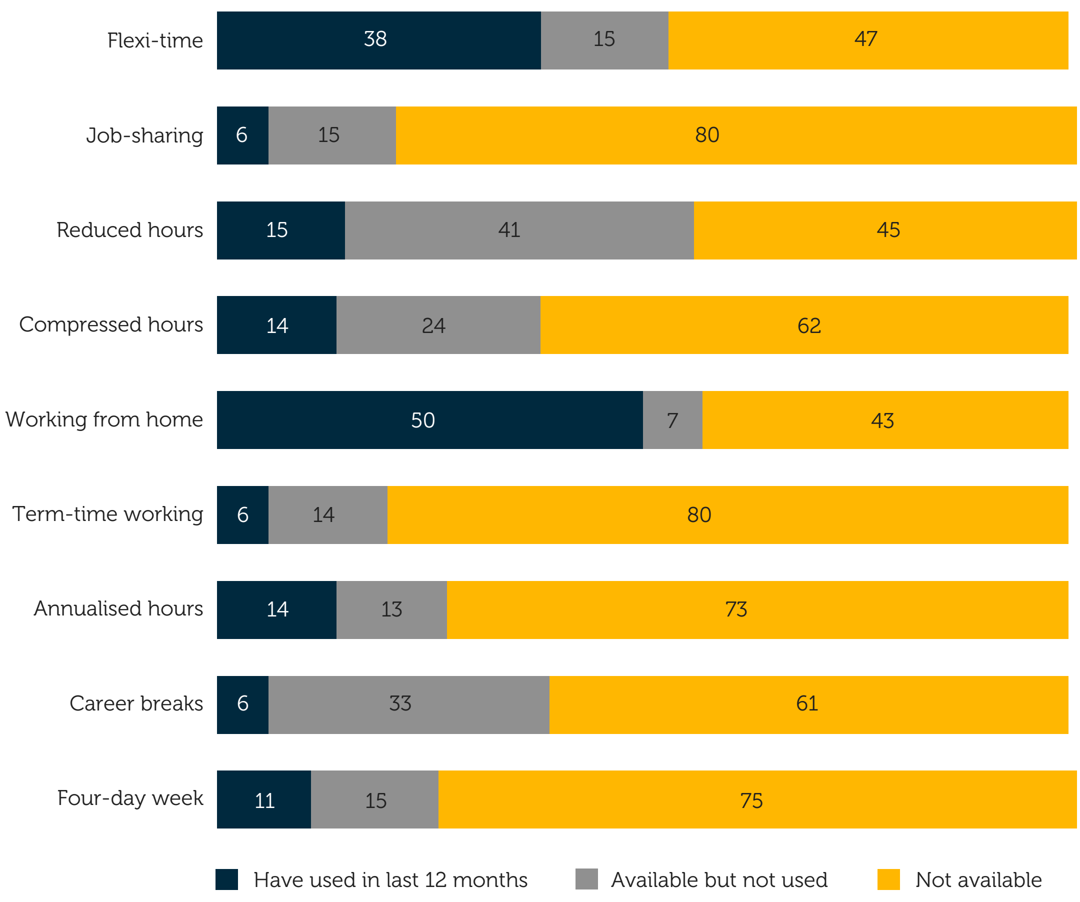
5 Work–life balance

Unmet demand for greater variety of formal flexible working patterns

Despite the day-one right to request flexible working legislation being introduced in April 2024, our 2025 findings indicate that, for many employees, formal flexible working arrangements (FWAs) are not available. Notably, job-sharing, working only during school term time and annualised hours are not available to the majority of staff. Working from home (50%) and flexi-time (38%) are the arrangements that are most commonly used.

Opportunities for and uptake of flexible working arrangements mixed

Figure 9: Use and availability of flexible working arrangements (%)



Base: all except those running their own business (n=4,157)

If FWAs were available to them, almost half (45%) would like a four-day week (working a reduced number of hours per week without a reduction in pay), a quarter would like to work compressed hours and a fifth would like flexi-time.

In all, 80% of those who have an FWA say that it has had a positive impact on their quality of life – just 4% say it has had a negative impact. Further, a third of those who have an FWA say that it has had a positive impact on their career, with just 10% saying it has had a negative impact.

Staff would like better access to FWAs, such as a four-day week and compressed hours

Table 2: Which flexible working arrangements would you use if available?

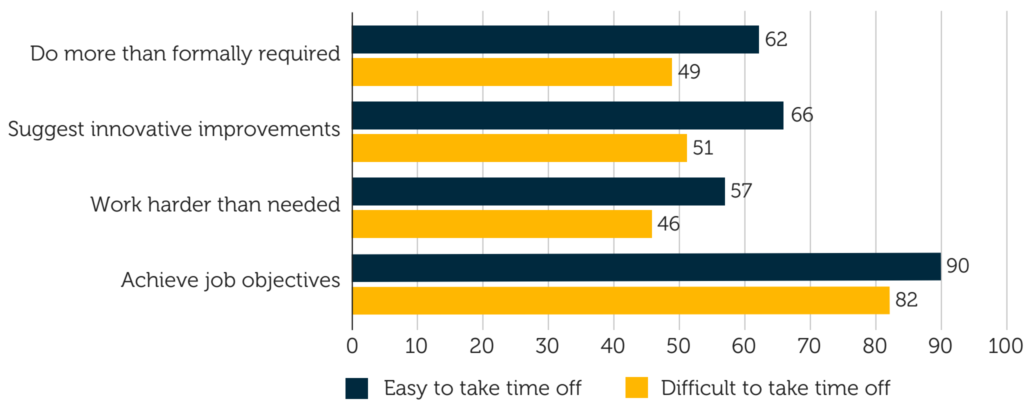
Flexible working arrangement	Proportion of employees (%)
Four-day week	45
Compressed hours	25
Flexi-time	20
Working from home (normal hours)	12
Annualised hours	9
Reduce working hours	9
Career breaks	8
Term-time working	8
Job-sharing	5
None of the above	30

Base: all those who said they have used at least one FWA (n=4,221)

Informal flexibility associated with extra effort

Employees continue to have high access to informal flexibility opportunities, with the vast majority of employees (70%) feeling able to take an hour or two away from work to deal with family or personal issues. This is comparable with previous years' findings.

Figure 10: Impact of informal flexibility and reported discretionary effort (%)



Base: all working adults (n=4,951)

Perhaps more important is the influence this kind of informal flexibility has on outcomes such as performance, discretionary effort and innovation. Finding it easy to take time away from work correlates with higher reported performance. This link is especially strong when it comes to going beyond the job role, where staff are much more likely to do more and work harder than required as well as offer ideas for improvement. We should note, however, that this type of informal flexibility is more accessible for managers than non-managers, and for men than women.

Implications and recommendations

- There is an unmet demand for a greater variety of formal flexible working arrangements – this is particularly the case for a four-day week, compressed hours and flexi-time. While hybrid and remote working have increased during and beyond the pandemic, organisations should look to offer a variety of flexible working arrangements to support the needs of the organisation and employees.
- Additionally, providing staff with informal flexibility, such as allowing them time to attend to family or personal matters, not only provides them with a more fulfilling and motivating workplace experience, but is associated with greater performance and, quid pro quo, a higher likelihood of them benefitting the organisation by showing discretionary effort and innovation. Developing the mutual trust and appropriate systems and processes needed between managers/senior leaders and employees in this will be critical. Our *Flexible and hybrid working practices* report outlines how organisations can make the most of flexible working.

6 Job design and the nature of work

Automation of tasks using AI

The automation of business processes using artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on our experience of work is not a new phenomenon, but is one that has boomed in recent years, particularly with the emergence of generative AI tools like ChatGPT and more recent hype around AI agents. As these technologies evolve, people professionals will need to stay up to date on the benefits and risks and anticipate how AI implementation will impact employees. For the first time in the *CIPD Good Work Index*, we explore the impact of AI on employees' experience of work and reported performance.

In context, only 16% of employees overall had some tasks automated by AI, with a significantly larger proportion of these coming from the private sector (17%) than the public sector (13%). Unsurprisingly, industries in which the largest portion of staff have seen tasks automated are information and communication (35%) and professional, scientific and technical occupations (27%). Older employees are less likely than younger employees to have had tasks automated through AI (Table 3).

Younger employees more likely to have had tasks automated by AI

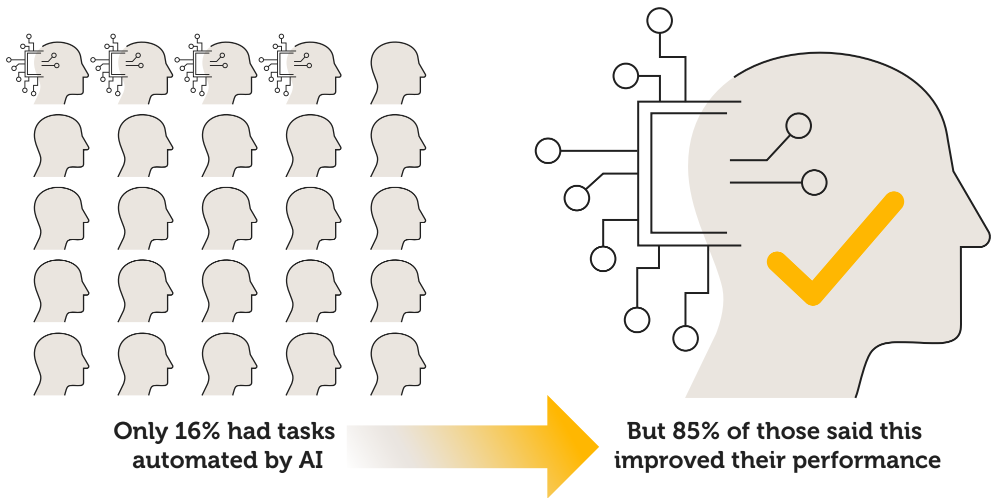
Table 3: Employees who have tasks automated by AI, by age group

Age group	Employees who had tasks automated by AI (%)
18–24	25
25–34	26
35–44	19
45–54	12
55+	6
Overall	16

Base: all working adults (n=4,788); 18–24 (n=259); 25–34 (n=990); 35–44 (n=1,120); 45–54 (n=1,138); 55+ (n=1,281)

Of those respondents who have had some tasks automated by AI, 85% said it had improved their performance, with just 5% reporting it had a worsening effect on performance. The remainder (10%) said automation had no impact on their performance. Having tasks automated by AI also correlates with greater job satisfaction and a more positive impact of work on mental health.

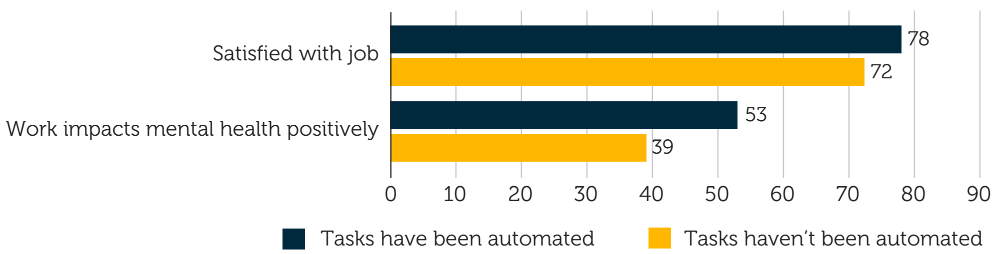
Figure 11: Those who have had tasks taken over by AI felt improved performance



Base: all working adults (n=4,788); all who have had tasks automated by AI (n=785)

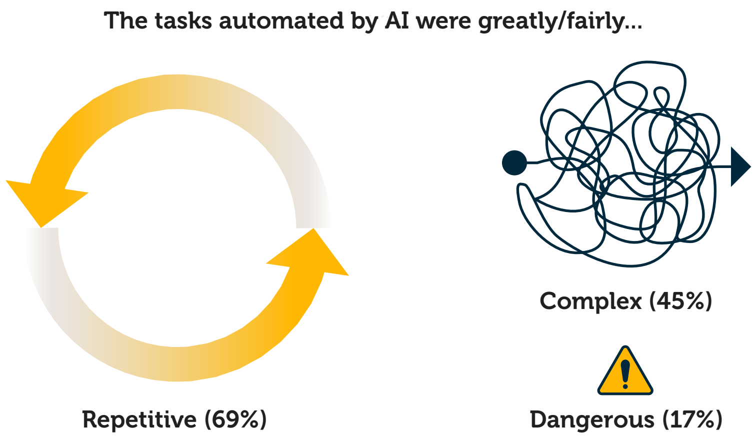
Automation correlates with greater job satisfaction and a positive impact on mental health

Figure 12: Impact of AI automation on reported outcomes (%)



Base: all working adults (n=4,788); all who have had tasks automated by AI (n=785)

Figure 13: AI automation currently focused around repetitive tasks



Base: all who have had tasks automated by AI (n=785)

Most tasks being automated by AI are repetitive ones, with a sizeable portion being complex tasks. Far fewer automated tasks were dangerous, but this could be an area to watch where AI automation could play an important role in boosting worker health and safety.

Implications and recommendations

- While only a small portion of staff have had tasks taken over by AI, we can see that using AI to complete repetitive tasks is generally welcomed by survey respondents, who felt it enhanced their performance. These employees also reported better job satisfaction and mental health. When looking for opportunities to leverage AI, employers should focus on automating boring, repetitive tasks that employees won't miss, freeing up their time to do higher-value or more enjoyable tasks.
- The data indicates that automation has largely been aimed at replacing repetitive tasks and to good effect. But possibly an underused but significant area is where tasks are dangerous and automation could have an important impact on worker health and safety.
- For a minority, AI automation has had a negative effect on performance; AI implementation should therefore be considered with due care and consultation with those impacted. The CIPD guidance *How to choose the right technology for your business* provides a framework for those actions.

Employee autonomy and engagement links to positive outcomes

Autonomy

Employee autonomy remains fairly high in 2025, with many employees reporting that they have control over how they work (78%), the speed at which they work (70%) and the tasks they choose to do (61%), while just over half suggest they can control the time they start or finish a working day (54%).

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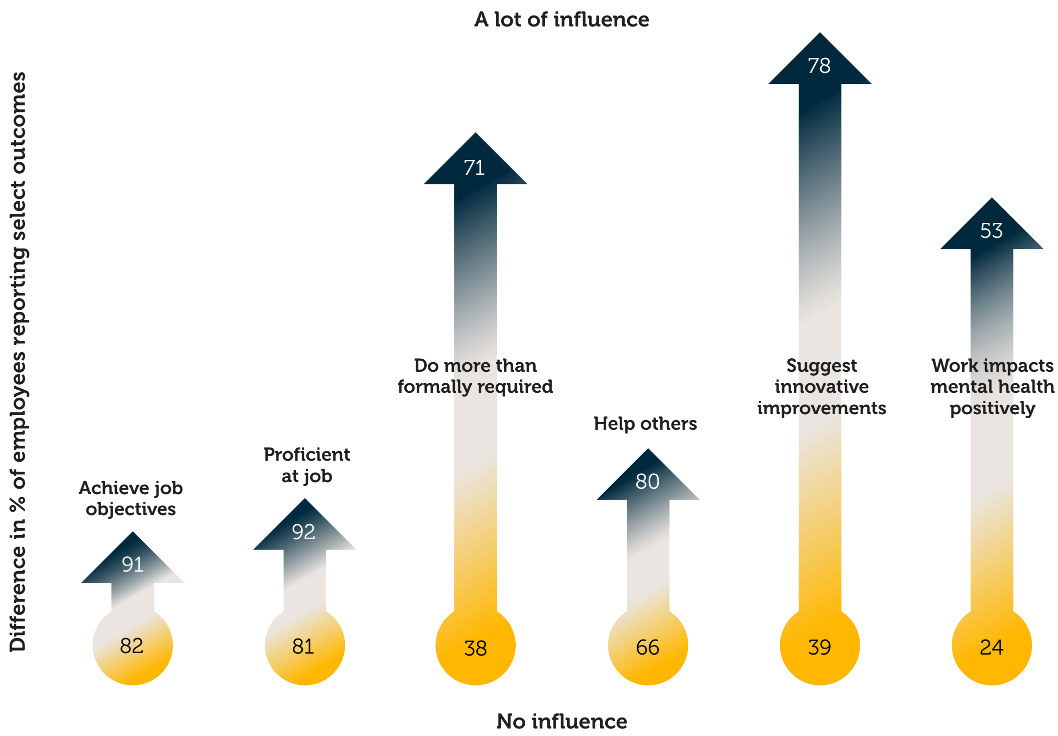
Our research suggests that providing staff with genuine autonomy over different aspects of their work can have positive impacts not just for the individual, but for the organisation more widely. Better control over different elements of work is associated with improved self-reported performance and a more positive impact of work on mental wellbeing.

Increasing autonomy aligns with better reported performance and a more positive impact of work on mental health

Figure 14: Impact of influence over tasks done on reported outcomes



Base: all who are not self-employed (n=4,532)

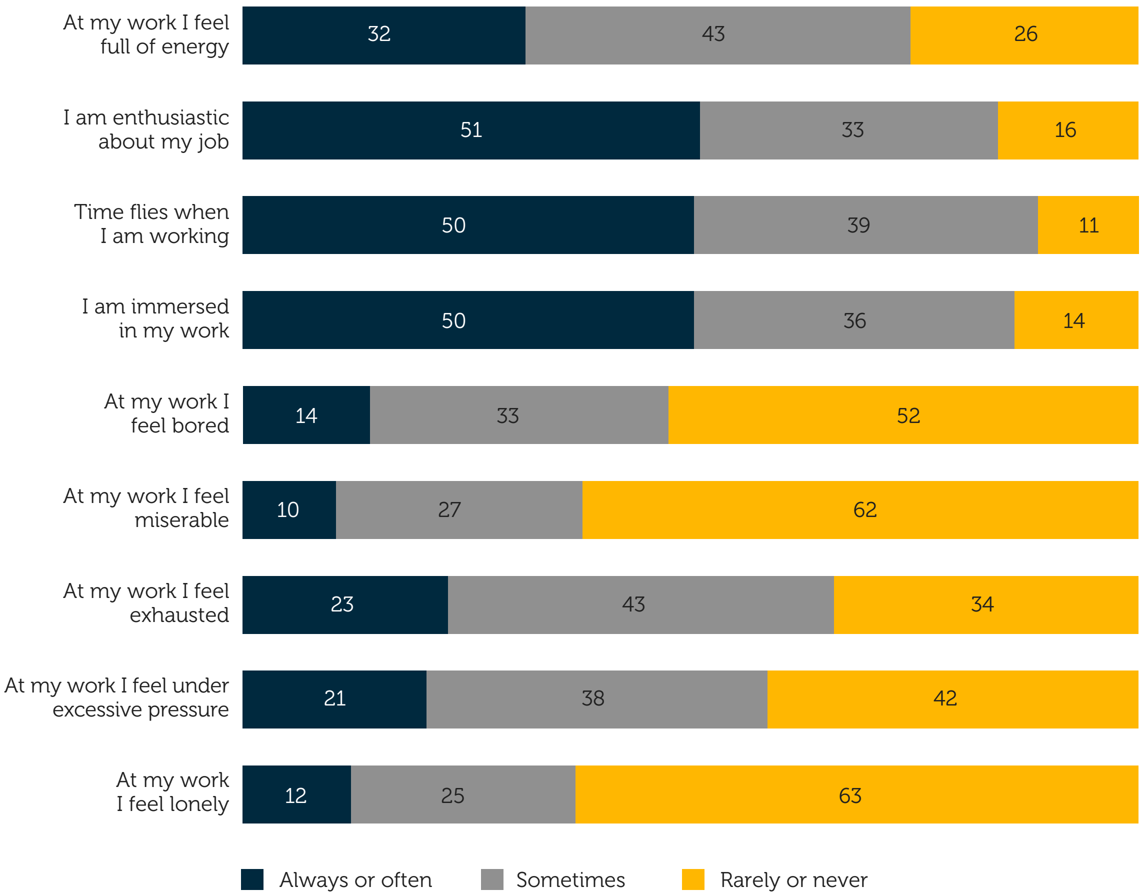
Evidence on employee engagement also shows that having autonomy is a key driver of employees identifying with and feeling committed and engaged towards their work and their employer.

Employee engagement

The degree of influence people have over their work links to indicators that affect employee engagement – how motivated people feel and the extent to which they will go the extra mile for their organisation. Most people report feeling full of energy and enthusiasm for their job, but a significant minority experience exhaustion or frequently feel under excessive pressure at work. The extent to which people are engaged at work should be a preoccupation for employers, as it is important for job quality and can have an influence on team and organisational performance.

Most feel engaged at work, but a significant minority feel negative

Figure 15: How workers feel at work (%)



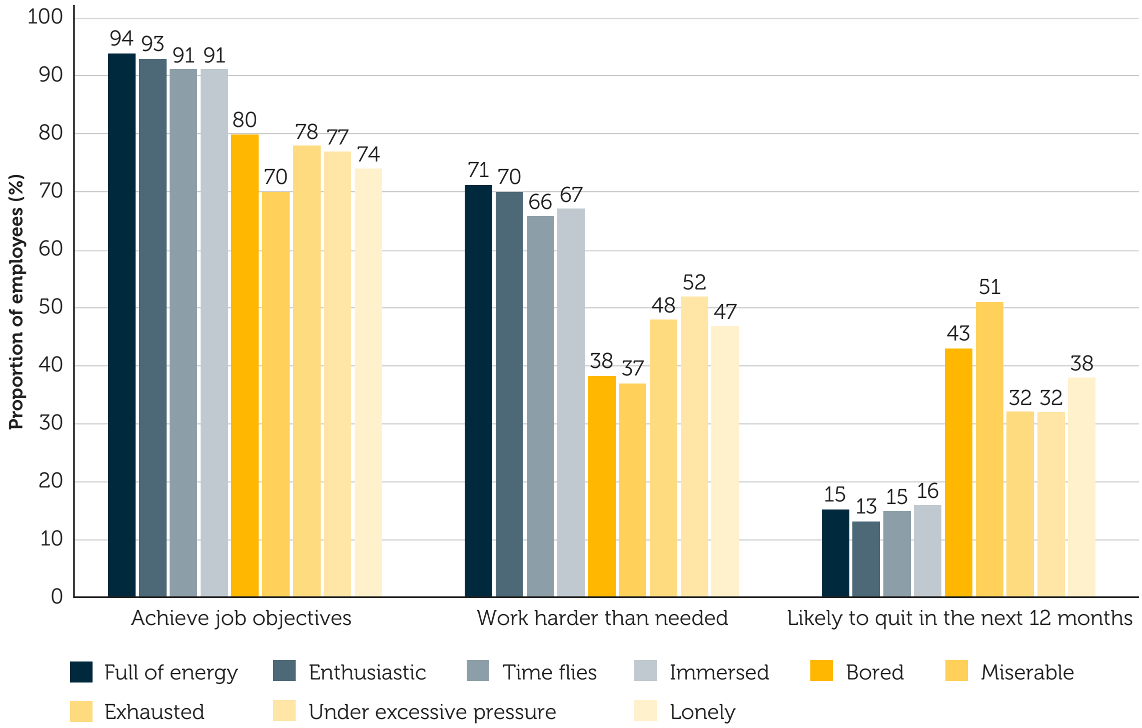
Base: all working adults (n=5,017)

There are some clear associations between occupations and management level across these indicators. For example, a significantly higher proportion of senior managers reported higher stress levels – 25% always or often felt under excessive pressure, compared with those without management responsibilities (19%).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Engagement correlates with better performance, while negative feelings most strongly associated with quitting

Figure 16: Feeling when working and correlation with reported outcomes



Base: all working adults (n=5,017)

Keeping employees engaged, enthusiastic and immersed in interesting and absorbing work is important because experiencing positive emotions at work is associated with a lower likelihood of seeing themselves quitting their job. Conversely, feeling miserable, lonely, under pressure or exhausted links to greater intention to quit. Positive engagement at work correlates with improved reported job performance, while negative experiences at work are linked to lower performance. Finally, feelings of enthusiasm, immersion, high energy and time flying at work correlate with a greater willingness to go the extra mile for the organisation. Negative feelings, like boredom, misery and exhaustion, correlate the other way, with staff less likely to work harder than needed for their organisation.

Implications and recommendations

- Affording staff autonomy in their role, and ensuring they are engaged, immersed and enthused at work correlates with boosts to different aspects of their performance and a lower risk of seeing themselves quit their job. In the context of skills shortages and the attention organisations are directing towards retention, these will be important considerations to reflect in job design, how employees are managed, and workplace environment and culture.

- Pressure and exhaustion are not only associated with lower performance, but they also link to much greater likelihood of employees intending to quit. Staff should have the resources to do their job to prevent job demands becoming overwhelming. Unsupportive management styles and lack of boundaries around technology use, for example, can lead to staff feeling pressure to be 'always on' and struggle to switch off. Offering improved autonomy can prevent the potentially negative impact of digital and hybrid working on mental health.
- The importance of employee care, and fostering community and good relationships with managers and colleagues cannot be understated. Whether employees feel misery or loneliness at work are the engagement factors that make the biggest difference to likelihood of quitting and to reported performance.

Impact of overqualification, skills match and career progression

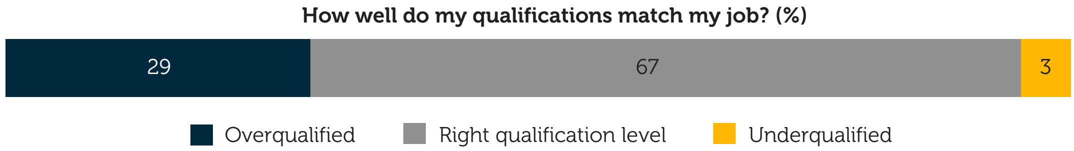
An important aspect of job design and the nature of work is the extent to which people feel they have the skills and qualifications for their jobs and to progress in their careers. This year, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of employees who say their qualifications and skills are matched to their role compared with last year (67%, up from 64% in 2024). However, three in 10 employees (29%) still report they are overqualified for their role and a third (34%) say they have the skills to cope with more demanding duties, little changed from 2024. A much lower proportion of employees say they are underqualified (3%) or lack skills (10%) for their current duties.

This picture also reflects recent research showing that England has the most overqualified and over-skilled workforce in the OECD. That research found that people who are overqualified for their job suffer a wage penalty of 18% compared with peers in well-matched jobs.

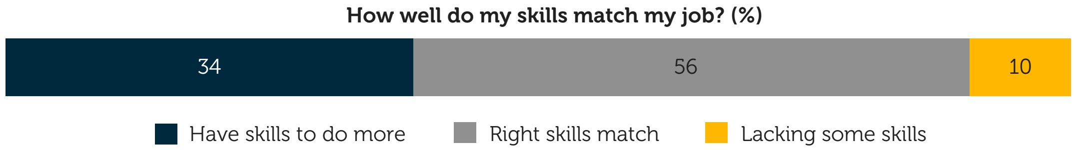
Analysis of *CIPD Good Work Index* data also shows that employees who say they are overqualified for their role are more likely to say they intend to quit their job in the next 12 months. They are less likely to say they feel enthusiastic in their job or to believe their work has a positive impact on their mental health (Figure 18).

Addressing overqualification requires policy-makers to improve the quality of careers advice and work with employers to provide more apprenticeship and vocational routes into employment to ensure young people have more choice and alternatives to university when they leave school. This is also needed to tackle growing technical skills shortages in the economy.

Figure 17: Level of qualification and skill match to jobs



Base: all working adults (n=4,852).



Base: all working adults (n=4,920).

Meanwhile, employees with university-level qualifications are those most likely to feel they are overqualified in their role.

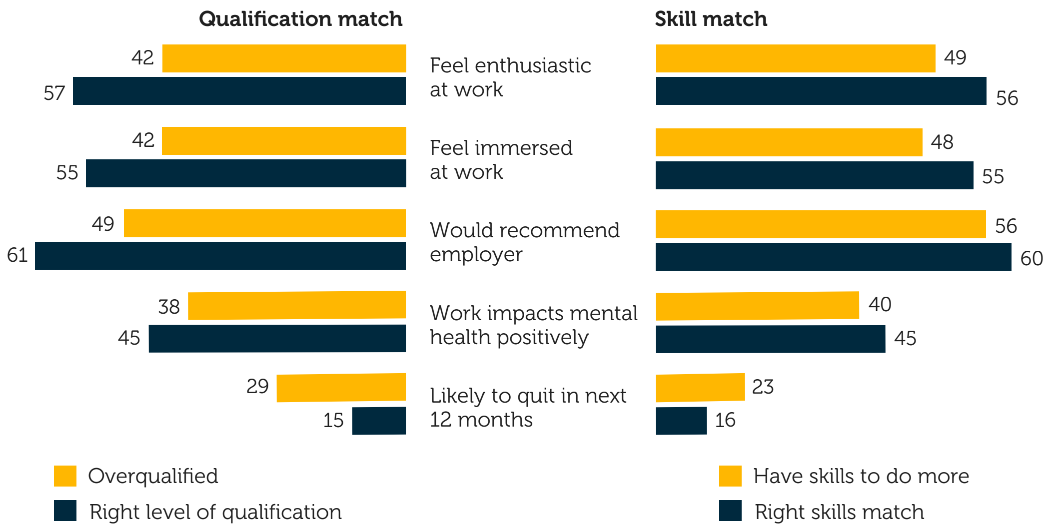
Table 4: Employees who feel overqualified, by qualification level

Qualification level	Employees who feel overqualified for their job (%)
CSE grade 1, GCE O level, GCSE, School Certificate	19
GCE A level or Higher Certificate	26
University or CNAA first degree (eg BA, BSc, BEd)	34
University or CNAA higher degree (eg MA, MSc, PhD)	33
Other technical, professional or higher qualification	25

Base: all working adults (n=4,852)

Wrong level of qualification or skills associated with lower engagement

Figure 18: How overqualification and being 'over-skilled' correlate to reported outcomes (%)



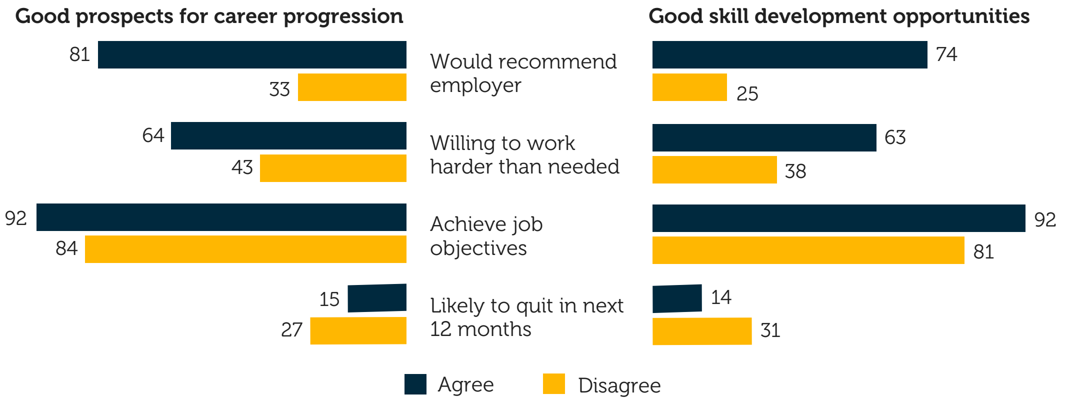
Base: all working adults (n=4,920)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Career and development prospects correlate with greater discretionary effort and promoter sentiment

Closely linked to whether people have the right qualifications and skills for their jobs is the extent to which they believe they can progress at work. This year, only 39% of staff feel they have good prospects for career advancement in their job, while a similar number (34%) say that they don't have these opportunities. This hasn't changed much over the years of this report series. However, a greater proportion of employees (56%) feel they have opportunities to develop in their role.

Figure 19: How prospects for advancement and development correlate to reported outcomes (%)



Base: all working adults (n=4,979)

Being aware of good prospects for career advancement and opportunities to develop skills is associated with better reported in-role performance. Opportunities to advance and develop at work are also linked to a greater push to go the extra mile, a lower likelihood of voluntarily quitting and a stronger recommendation for your employer.

Implications and recommendations

- Our report *Over-skilled and underused: Investigating the untapped potential of UK skills* highlights the similar benefits when employees' qualifications and skills are well matched to their job, such as higher engagement, stronger relationships and greater desire to stay with their organisation.
- Policy-makers need to work with employers to provide more apprenticeships and other vocational routes into employment to provide meaningful alternatives to university and tackle growing technical skills shortages in the economy.
- There is a strong rationale for providing staff with opportunities to grow both within their role and along their career path. Not only do these prospects correlate with a greater likelihood of performance success, but they are strongly associated with discretionary effort and whether employees become willing ambassadors for the organisation. These therefore are key elements for employers to weigh as they consider their employee value proposition, attraction and retention strategies, and job design. The CIPD has dedicated guidance and tools on retaining talent for people professionals.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

7 Relationships at work

Importance of line managers to reported performance and wellbeing

The analysis in this report adds to previous research[1] which suggests line management quality is associated with both employee wellbeing[2] and performance.

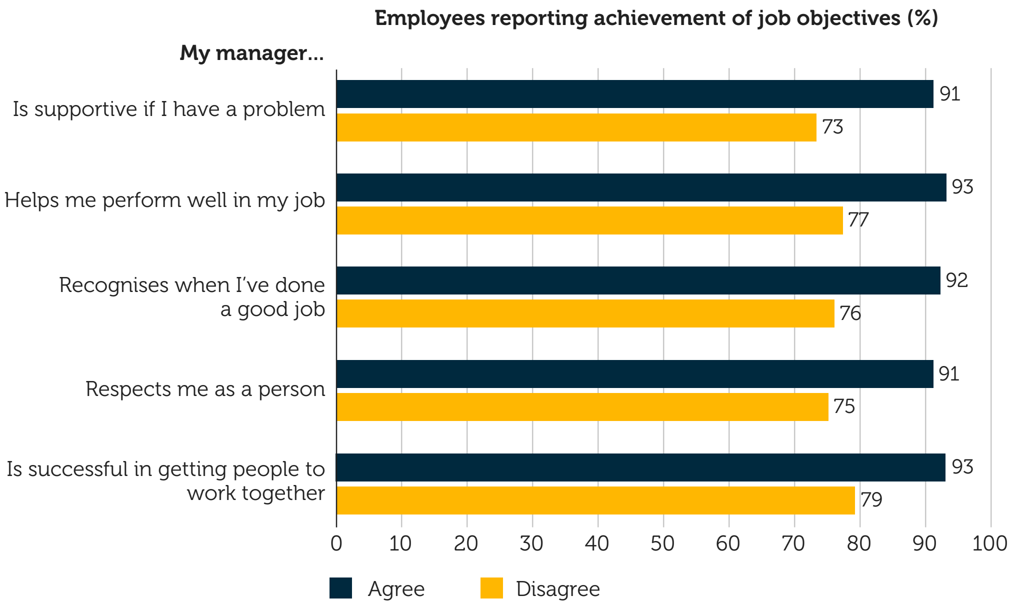
It shows that employees' views of their line managers influence whether they believe they achieve their job's objectives and fulfil its requirements.

For example, 91% of employees who say their line manager respects them as a person report they achieve their job objectives. This drops to 75% for those who disagree their manager respects them. Similarly, 92% of employees who agree that their manager recognises that they have done a good job say they achieve their objectives, compared with 76% of employees who disagree their manager recognises their good work.

A range of other areas of line manager behaviour around their relationship with employees also affect whether their staff believe they achieve the objectives in their jobs. These include whether staff think their manager treats them fairly, provides support if they have a problem and if they give useful feedback (Figure 20).

Good line management associated with better reported job performance

Figure 20: Line manager behaviour and correlation with achieving job objectives



Base: all with a line manager (n=4,247)

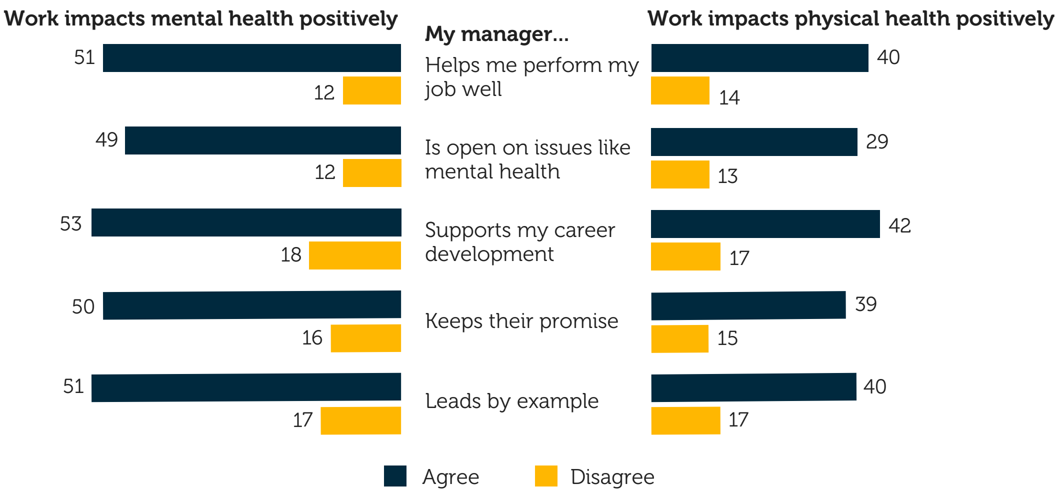
[1] For example, Shaw, K.L. (2019) Bosses matter: The effects of managers on workers' performance. *IZA World of Labor*. No 456; Lazear, E., Shaw, K. and Stanton, C. (2013) *The value of bosses*. NBER Discussion Paper, No 18317.

[2] See Berry, M. (2008) Poor management linked to heart disease among employees. *Personnel Today*. 25 November; Bhui, K., Dinos, S., Galant-Miecznikowska, M., de Jongh, B. and Stansfeld, S. (2016) Perceptions of work stress causes and effective interventions in employees working in public, private and non-governmental organisations: A qualitative study. *BJPsych Bulletin*. Vol 40, No 6, pp318–325.

The quality of line management is also closely associated with whether employees say their work has a positive or negative effect on their mental and physical health, an issue we explore in more depth further on. Employees whose managers help them perform well in the job, who support their longer-term career development and who are open and approachable on issues like mental health are particularly likely to say their work impacts on their mental and physical health positively (Figure 21).

Good management associated with employees perceiving work to have a positive effect on their health

Figure 21: Line manager behaviour and association with work impacting health positively (%)



Base: all with a line manager (n=4,247)

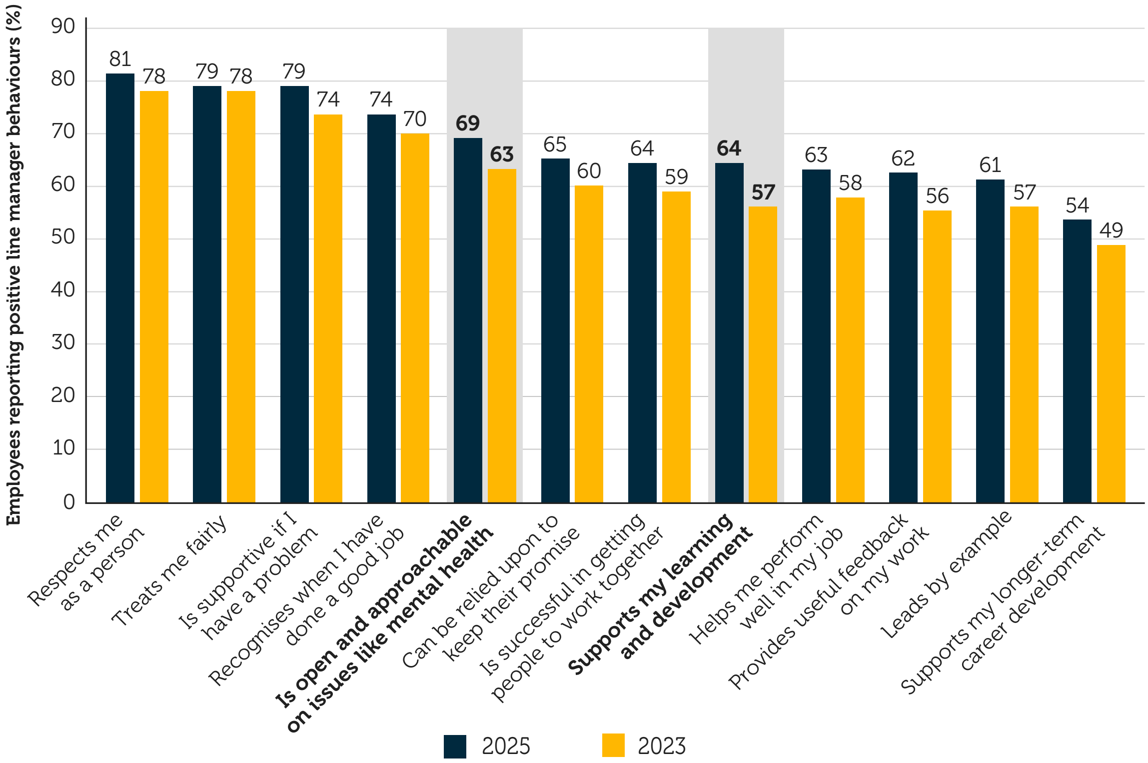
There has been an improvement in how employees view their line manager on these measures in 2025 compared with the last time the *CIPD Good Work Index* analysed this data in 2023. For example, 79% of employees report their manager is supportive if they have a problem compared with 74% two years ago, while the proportion of respondents who say their line manager is open and approachable on issues like mental health has risen to 69% from 63% over the same period.

There have also been improvements in the proportion of employees who say their line manager: provides helpful feedback (62% vs 56%); helps them perform well in the job (63% vs 58%); supports their learning and development (64% vs 57%); and gets people to work together successfully (64% vs 59%).

Despite an improvement, it should be noted that some areas of manager behaviour are still not rated as positively as others. This is a concern, as those behaviours are particularly likely to impact how employees learn, work collaboratively and perform effectively in their jobs. For instance, from a broad, economy-wide perspective, the findings suggest that about 10 million employees in the UK don't believe they receive useful feedback from their manager or that their manager helps improve their performance – food for thought for both policy-makers and employers.

Improved view of line management across all measures

Figure 22: Perceptions of managers – comparison between 2025 and 2023



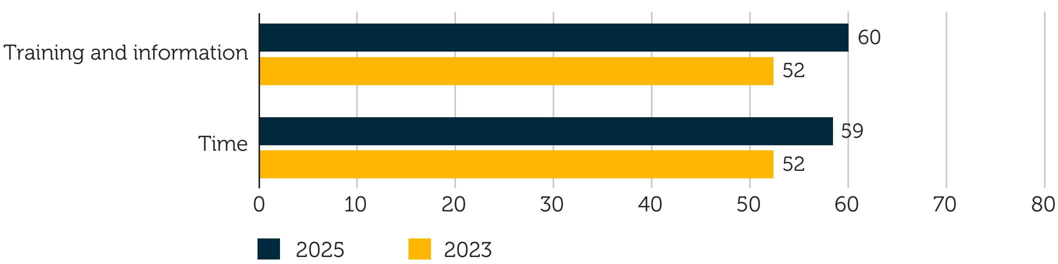
Base: all with a line manager (n=4,247)

In line with the improvements in how employees view their managers, there has been an increase in the proportion of managers who report they receive the training and information and, crucially, have the time to manage their staff well in 2025, compared with 2023.

However, this remains an area where significantly more progress is needed, as still only six in 10 managers report they have the training and information (60%) or the time (59%) to manage people well. Employers and people professionals should focus more attention on how they train and support line managers to manage and develop people effectively.

Improvements correlate with managers feeling more supported

Figure 23: Managers who are receiving what they need to manage staff well (%)



Base: all who manage other staff: 2025 (n=2,184); 2023 (n=2,168)

Implications and recommendations

- Employees with positive views of their line manager are more likely to report they meet their job objectives and to feel that work impacts their health positively. Managers need to be given sufficient training, information and time to effectively support their staff.
- While there have been improvements in how managers are rated when it comes to supporting L&D, providing feedback, helping employees perform well in their jobs and getting people to work together effectively, these areas need more focus in many organisations.
- The CIPD has exercises for managers to develop their management approach and other resources to help managers support their teams. Our *Effective people managers* evidence review highlights strong evidence linking capable and empowered managers with improved employee wellbeing, commitment, innovation and lower rates of absenteeism.

8 Employee voice

Employee voice underused in supporting performance

Our findings suggest a mixed picture for employee voice this year. While access to voice channels such as one-to-one line manager meetings, team meetings and employee surveys is available to around two-thirds of staff, far fewer are able to express their views to senior management through avenues like all-department or all-organisation meetings, online forums or employee focus groups.

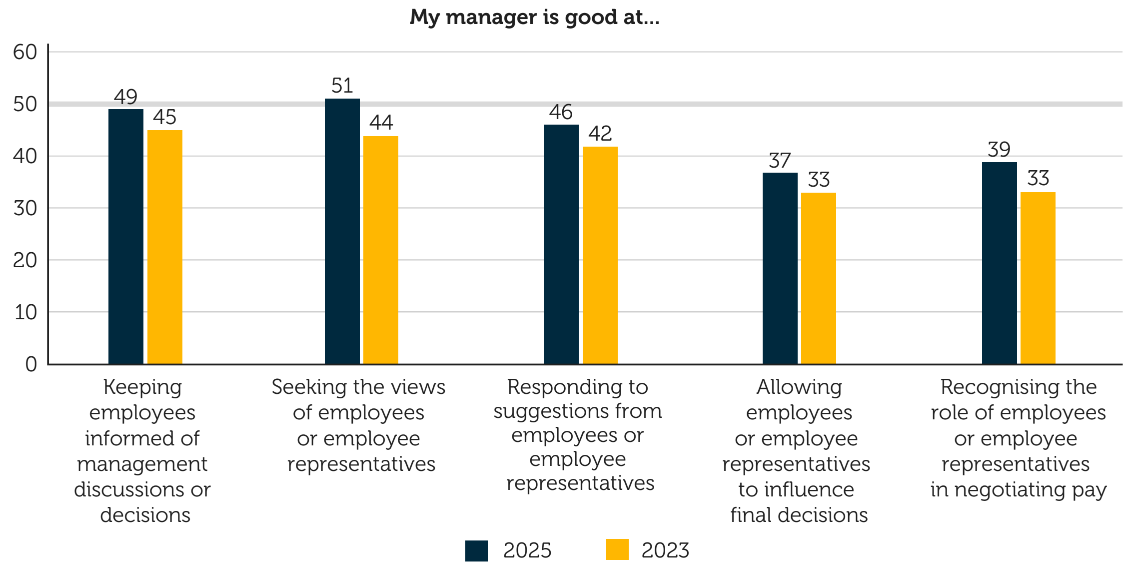
One-to-one and team meetings the most commonly used voice channels

Figure 24: Different voice channels reported in organisations (%)

Base: all except those running their own business or working as a freelancer/contractor for multiple clients (n=3,642)

Manager ratings on enabling voice improve, but approval still less than half

Figure 25: Employees who say their manager is good at enabling voice (%)

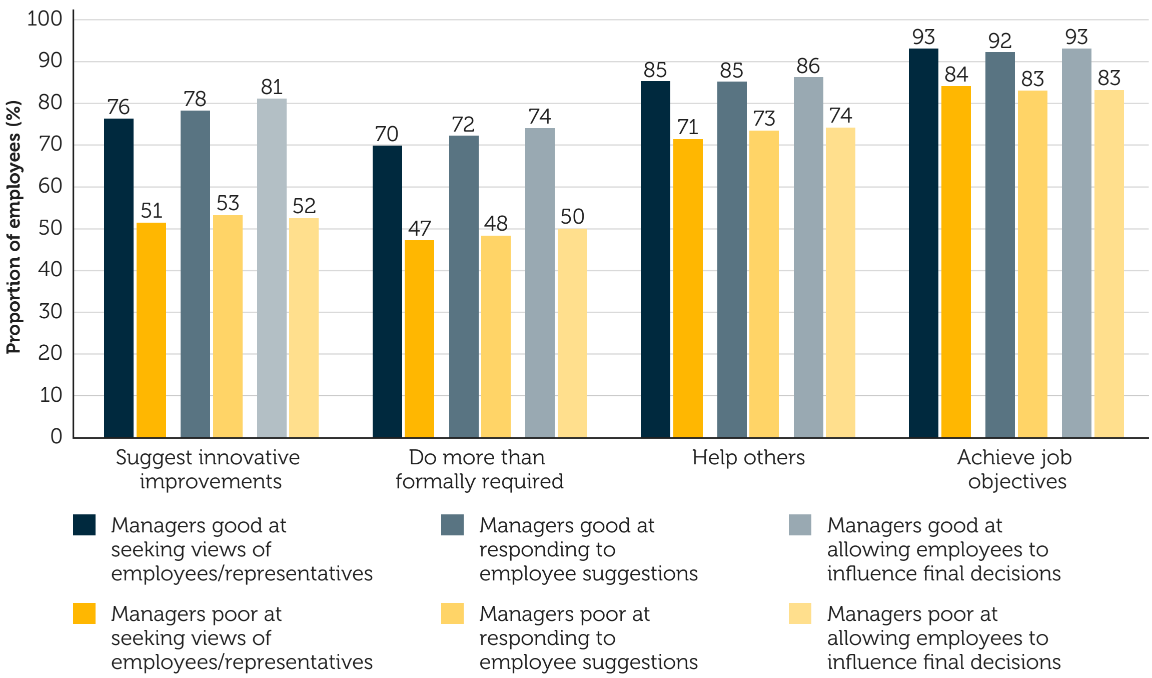


Base: all who are not self-employed (n=4,213)

More employees acknowledge their managers' ability to enable voice in 2025 compared with 2023, but there is vast room for improvement. Apart from seeking the views of their employees or their representatives (51%), less than half of respondents see their managers take action to encourage employee voice. Only 37% say managers allow them or their representatives to influence final decisions.

Managers enabling voice links to achieving objectives and extra effort

Figure 26: Reported outcomes when managers are good/poor at enabling voice channels



Base: all who are not self-employed (n=4,213)

Employees who feel their managers are good at seeking their views, responding to their suggestions and allowing them to influence final decisions are more likely to report positive in-role performance, and that they would go above and beyond their job to help their colleagues and team.

Implications and recommendations

- Our findings indicate that being encouraged by managers to use their voice correlates with staff reporting greater performance at work, both in their role and for the benefit of others. Giving staff meaningful voice where they can influence matters that affect them at work, raise suggestions and feel listened to is therefore important for employers in supporting performance. Our report *Talking about voice* outlines some ways employers and managers can more effectively provide staff with a platform.
- Across all but one measure, less than half of employees see their managers taking various actions to encourage employee voice. Managers should be given effective development to better understand how their behaviour and leadership style can influence employees' confidence and comfort to raise personal and work-related issues.
- Employers and managers should work to develop an open and supportive organisational climate and facilitate a psychologically safe environment where feedback and suggestions are welcomed and acted on – for example, recognising and rewarding those who devise and apply new insights for their innovation.

9 Health and wellbeing

Impact of work on mental health remains mixed

Our survey asked employees questions about physical and mental health, the impact of work, as well as whether they had experienced specific physical or mental health problems. Overall in 2025, 63% of employees described their mental and physical health as good – virtually unchanged over the years this survey has run.

When it comes to how work impacts on health, 25% of employees said their work impacts negatively or very negatively on their mental health, while 24% said the same for their physical health. These numbers have also stayed consistent throughout our previous surveys. Looking at different groups of employees, employees with a disability were more likely to say that work has a negative impact on their mental (32%) and physical (33%) health.

Just under half (46%) of employees have experienced some form of physical health condition, while 42% 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 (32%)
- sleep problems (27%)
- anxiety (27%)
- depression (15%).

Drivers and outcomes of ill health at work

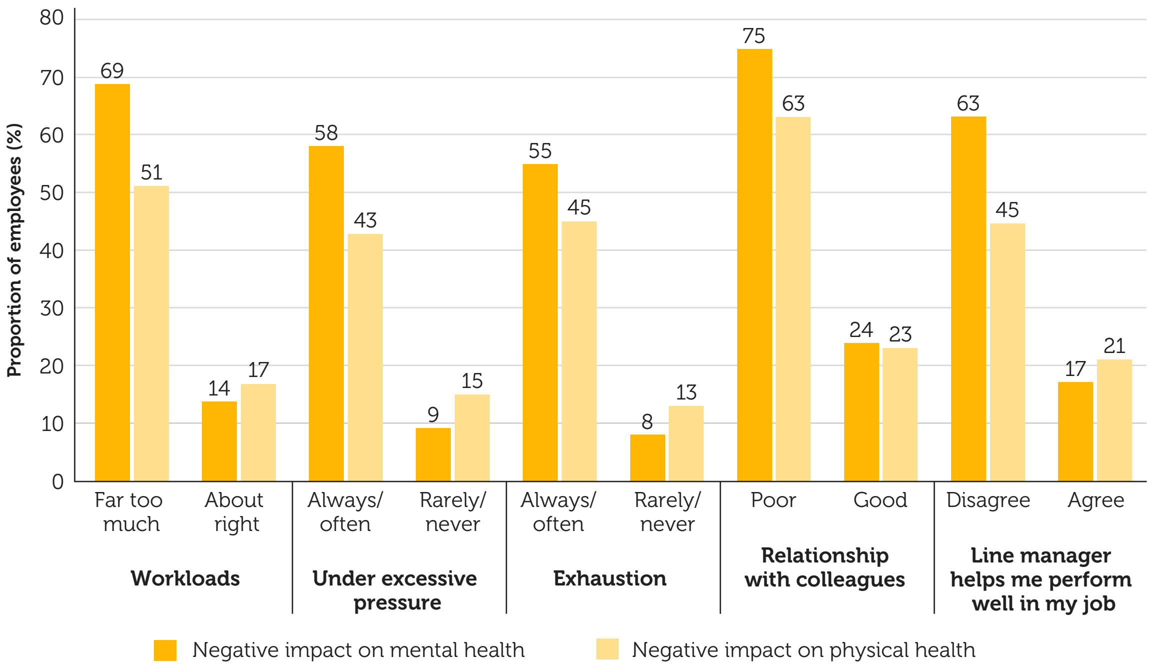
The CIPD's previous job quality research has shown health and wellbeing as having the strongest relationship with job satisfaction and enthusiasm out of all job quality dimensions. Therefore, in addition to their direct impact on wellbeing, good mental and physical health can also impact individual – and by extension organisational – performance.

Given the recent attention paid to economic inactivity, especially inactivity due to long-term sickness, understanding the drivers of ill health at work is an important piece of the puzzle for policy-makers across the UK. Based on our survey, around 8.5 million workers in the UK say work has a negative impact on their mental health. It is these workers who may be more likely to be at risk of falling out of employment into economic inactivity due to ill health.

Figure 27 shows the impact of high workloads, stress and exhaustion on both mental and physical health. For example, seven in 10 (69%) workers who report their workload is far too much say work has a negative impact on their mental health, compared with only 14% of those who say their workload is about right. And nearly three-fifths (58%) of those who always or often feel under excessive pressure at work report work has a negative impact on their mental health compared with just 9% of workers who are rarely or never under excessive pressure.

Our data also suggests that those who have poor relationships with colleagues, and a lack of line manager support are more likely to report that work has a negative impact on their mental and physical health.

Figure 27: Drivers of negative impact of work on health

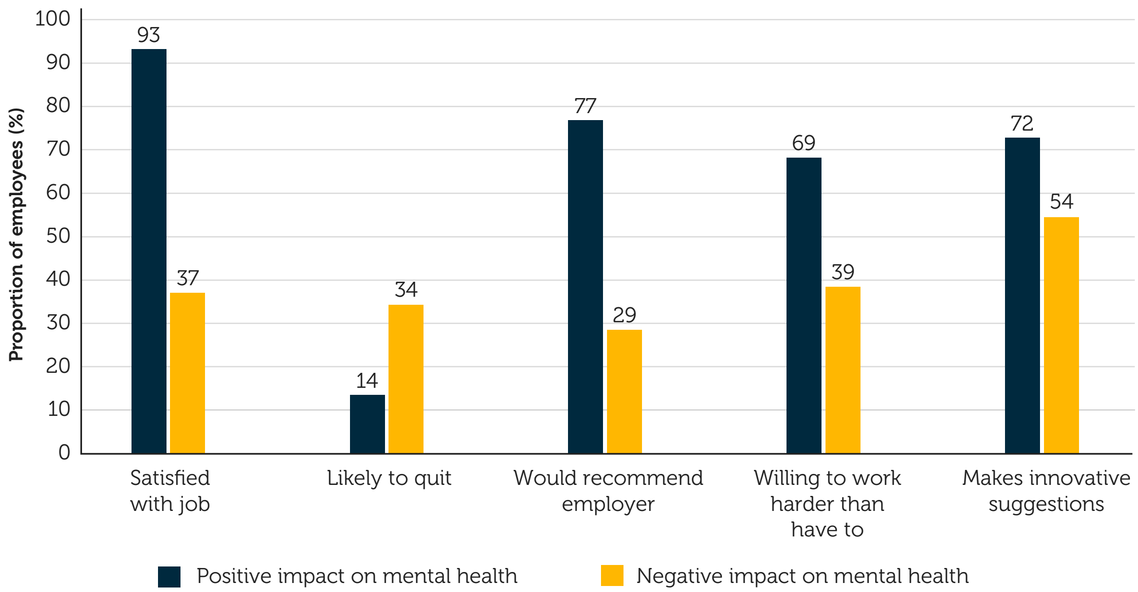


Base: all working adults (n=4,910)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

The impact of ill health at work can be individual as well as organisational. Figure 28 illustrates the relationship between work that negatively impacts mental health and a range of metrics. Compared with answers given by those who report a positive impact on mental health, those who report negative impacts are more likely to voluntarily quit their roles in the next 12 months and less likely to recommend their employer. They also have lower job satisfaction as well as lower innovation.

Figure 28: How impact on mental health links to reported outcomes



Base: all working adults (n=4,910)

Implications and recommendations

- While on the whole work is much more likely to impact positively than negatively on employees' mental health, there is a consistent proportion who report that negative sentiment.
- When work makes a positive impact to employees' mental health, employers see benefits. These include a much higher likelihood of being recommended as an employer, receiving more discretionary effort and better reported innovation from employees, as well as lower risk of turnover.
- Building good working relationships is one key way that employers and managers can facilitate better wellbeing among their staff. Line managers are clearly essential to ensuring that staff don't feel overworked and stressed in their role, and feel able to speak up when they are struggling.
- There is a clear moral and business case for prioritising employee mental wellbeing at work and designing jobs and facilitating work environments that support this. The CIPD's *Health and wellbeing at work* survey report outlines key recommendations for employers and people professionals, and our guidance provides further information, advice and helpful templates.

10 Conclusion

This year's *CIPD Good Work Index* finds that the majority of UK workers continue to enjoy satisfying, fulfilling and engaging jobs. Workers who report a positive experience of work typically benefit from good-quality line management, have sufficient autonomy and manageable workloads. They are also likely to report they are appropriately paid, qualified and skilled for their jobs and have opportunities to progress in their roles.

Good work matters for both employees and business

Our analysis shows clearly that good work matters not just for workers, but for businesses and employers across the UK. Workers who have a positive experience of work report higher motivation and performance in their jobs and are more likely to support colleagues and to put forward ideas and suggestions to help their team or department.

They are, in addition, less likely to want to quit their jobs and more likely to recommend their employer.

Improving people management key to improving workers' health

However, there is a significant minority of the workforce whose experience of work is associated with excessive pressure, a lack of voice, a lack of development opportunities and poor wellbeing. It is particularly concerning that a quarter of the workforce believe that their jobs have a negative impact on their health. The quality of line management has an especially strong link to whether people feel their work has a positive or negative effect on their wellbeing.

Some of the differences in reported levels of job quality and wellbeing can be attributed to the different occupations and types of job that people do. However, analysis of our *Good Work Index* data over the last eight years shows that many people in similar jobs have positive or negative experiences of work that appear to be primarily determined by differences in how they are managed at work and not just the type of work they do.

This suggests there is significant potential to improve job quality and associated good work outcomes for businesses in many workplaces across the UK through raising the quality of people management and development.

Legislation alone won't improve job quality

The UK Government will hope measures in its Employment Rights Bill can play a role in encouraging better workplace practices. Legislation can help ensure employers are managing people fairly and in tackling exploitation and unfair treatment where it exists, but only if new laws are well designed and can be implemented and enforced effectively.

Beyond legislation, whether employers can improve job quality will be influenced by economic and labour market conditions. Improving job quality will also depend on more employers recognising the business case for investing in the capability of their managers and increasing the priority they place on areas such as job design, employee voice and workforce development.

This business case is bolstered by evidence showing that building capacity in these areas can also support organisations as they seek to increase the responsible use of AI at work.

Looking ahead, improving job quality will require action on a number of fronts and government to work in partnership with employers and other stakeholders. It will require a supportive business environment and changes to a number of areas of public policy, including business support, occupational health and safety, innovation and skills.

It also depends on joined-up policy-making across government, and a long-term strategy to improve the health, wellbeing and productivity of the UK workforce, including in overlooked everyday economy sectors.

11 Methodology

The data in this report comes from the eighth wave of the CIPD/YouGov *UK Working Lives* survey. This report is based on data from 5,017 UK employees (unweighted figure), collected in January and February 2025. To make the sample representative of the UK as a whole, quotas were used and subsequent weights based on ONS figures were applied to the dataset. The sample is representative of the UK workforce in: the intersection of gender by full- or part-time work status; organisation size within sector; industry; and age. We also refer to longitudinal data from previous years of the *CIPD Good Work Index*.

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