

CIPD

LABOUR MARKET

OUTLOOK

VIEWS FROM EMPLOYERS

Summer 2023

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

Report

Labour Market Outlook

Summer 2023

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Foreword from the CIPD

The quarterly CIPD *Labour Market Outlook* provides an early indication of future changes to the labour market around recruitment, redundancy and pay intentions. This quarter's findings are based on a survey of more than 2,000 employers.

The impact of rising interest rates is hitting mortgage holders hard. Rents are also increasing at what is the busiest time of year for the rental market. Food price rises continue, but so far wage growth has not quite been as high as many would hope.

Previous *Labour Market Outlook* reports have highlighted that future pay intentions are at their highest level since our time series began in 2012. Overall, the median employer plans to increase wages by 5% – this has remained constant for three consecutive quarters. In the public sector, expected pay awards have now increased to 4%, the highest in our time series. Private sector pay intentions remain at 5%.

At the time of writing, the UK Government has agreed to pay rises of around 6.5%, as recommended by independent pay review bodies. The government says these need to be funded through existing departmental budgets.

Our data shows employment intentions in the public sector have fallen this quarter. And redundancy expectations, although low, are on the rise. Half of public sector employers have hard-to-fill vacancies. A similar level expects significant problems in filling these roles over the next six months. The best way to prevent having to advertise vacancies is to stop existing employees leaving. For employers, this may mean making counteroffers.

Counteroffers are where an employer attempts to retain an employee, usually by offering an improved salary, after they've had a job offer elsewhere. We find the use of counteroffers is widespread, has increased in the last year and is expected to increase in the year to come. This is reflective of the tight labour market. While common across the UK economy, large private sector employers in a strong financial position use this retention tactic at a much higher rate. The public sector has less ability to retain staff this way. Thirty-eight per cent of employers match the salary of the new job offer, with 40% offering even higher sums.



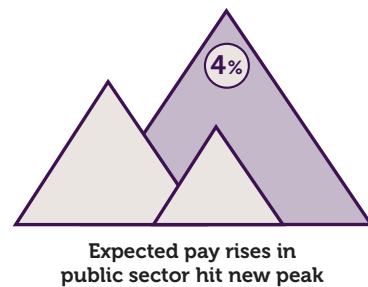
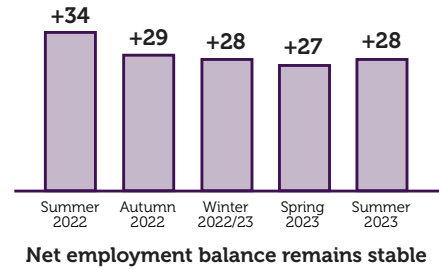
James Cockett,
CIPD Labour Market
Economist

The National Living Wage rose by a record 9.7% in April 2023. This move was to bolster the wages and living standards of low-paid workers. As a result, one in five employers believe their wage bill has been affected to a large extent. Due to the number of lower-paid workers, employers in hospitality, utilities and retail have been disproportionately affected. So, these businesses find themselves between a rock and a hard place, choosing to hike prices or stomach lower profits.

Read on for our latest labour market data and analysis on employers' recruitment, redundancy and pay intentions this summer.

2 Key points

- The net employment balance – which measures the difference between employers expecting to increase staff levels in the next three months and those expecting to decrease staff levels – remains stable at +28. Net employment intentions remain steady in the private sector at +32. However, they have fallen in the public sector in the most recent quarter, from +16 to +11, and have risen in the voluntary sector (from +22 to +34).
- Redundancy intentions remain low in historic terms but have continued their gradual rise since 2021. Nineteen per cent of employers are planning to make redundancies in the three months to September 2023. In the public sector, this has risen from 12% last quarter to 20% this quarter.
- One in five employers (18%) believe increases in the National Minimum Wage (NMW)/National Living Wage (NLW) have impacted their wage bill to a large extent. This impact is particularly pertinent in the hospitality sector, where 43% of employers are feeling the pinch, possibly due to the number of lower-paid workers they employ.
- The median expected basic pay increase remains at 5% for the third consecutive quarter. The figure for the public sector has risen from 3.3% last quarter, to 4% this quarter – the highest in the LMO time series (since 2012).
- Forty per cent of employers have made a counteroffer in the past 12 months. Among them, half (51%) have delivered more counteroffers than before, with 40% offering the same level and 9% offering less than before.
- Among employers giving counteroffers, 40% offer a higher salary, 38% salary match, and 9% offer a salary below the offer.

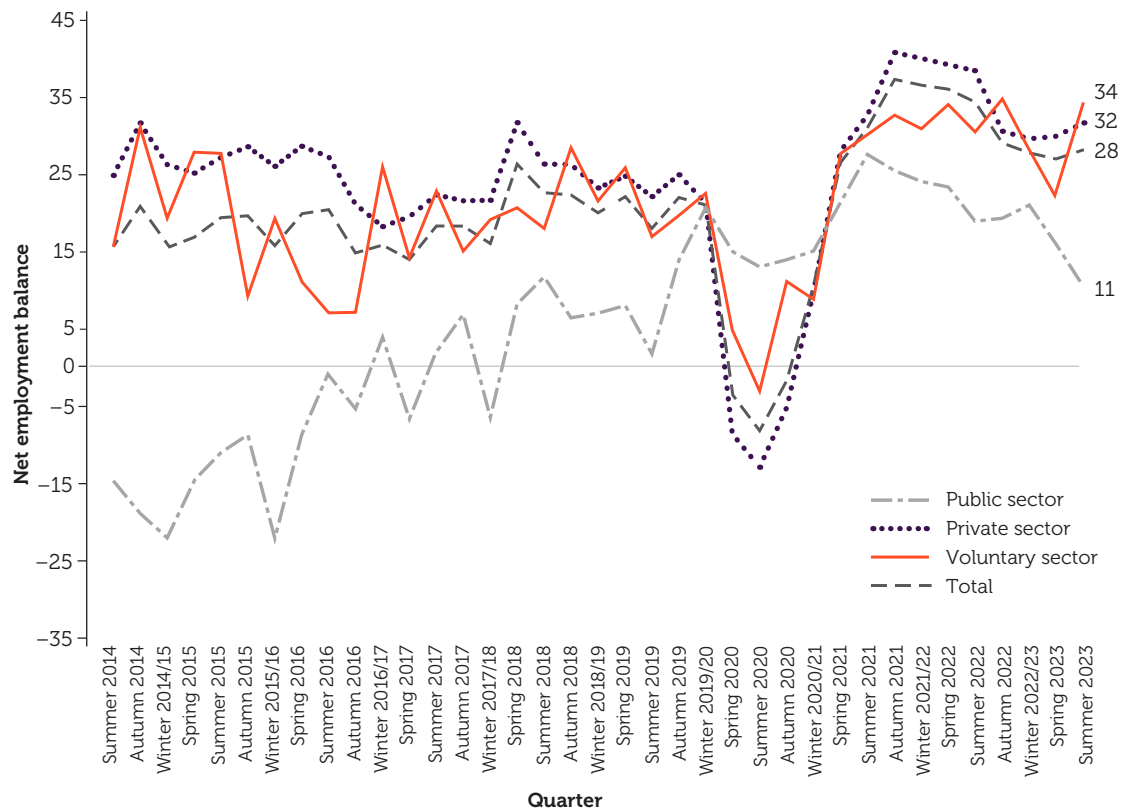


3

Recruitment and redundancy outlook

The net employment balance – which measures the difference between employers expecting to increase staff levels in the next three months and those expecting to decrease staff levels – remains stable at +28. Net employment intentions remain steady in the private sector at +32. However, they have fallen in the public sector in the most recent quarter, from +16 to +11, and have risen in the voluntary sector (from +22 to +34).

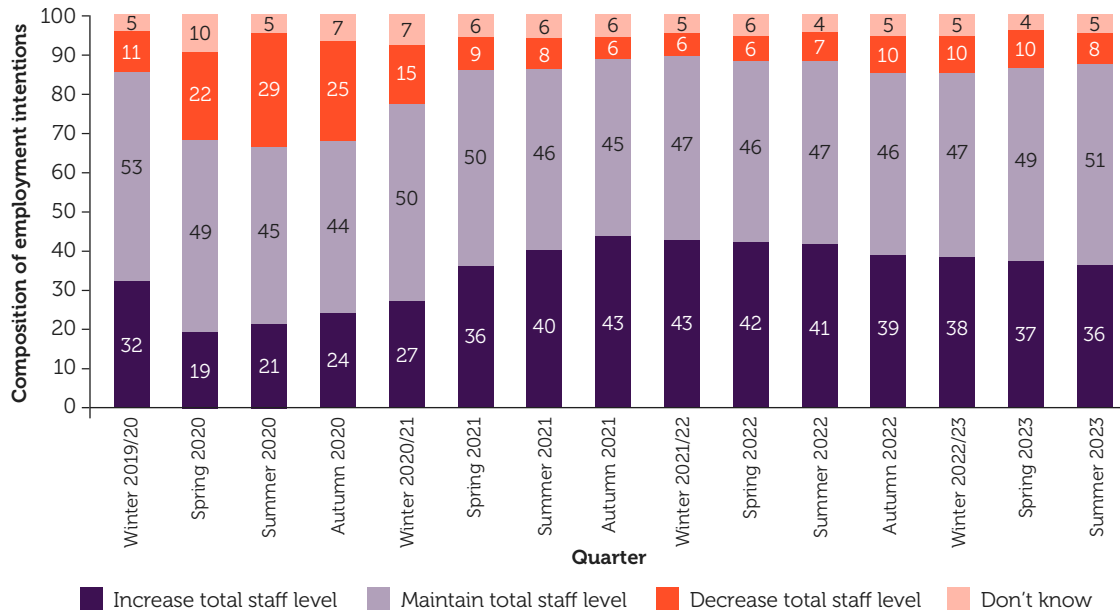
Figure 1: Net employment balance



Base: summer 2023, all employers (total: n=2,003; private: n=1,486; public: n=362; voluntary: n=155).

The positive net employment balance is driven by employers looking to hire staff (36%), with very few looking to decrease total staff levels (8%). This is unchanged from previous quarters (see Figure 2).

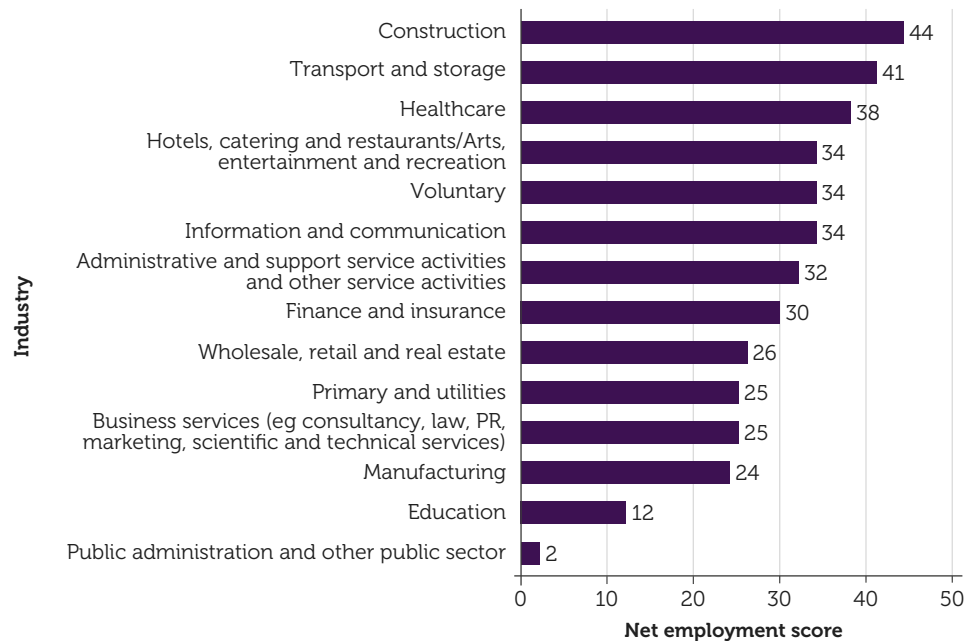
Figure 2: Composition of employment intentions (%)



Base: summer 2023, all employers (total: n=2,003).

Employment intentions remain positive in all industries (see Figure 3), but two industries stand out. The net employment balance in public administration and other public sector has fallen from +15 in the previous quarter to just +2 in summer 2023. Seventeen per cent of employers in this sector plan to decrease staff levels over the next three months, which is markedly higher than many other industries. Education is the other industry with a weaker employment outlook – 13% of employers in this sector plan to decrease staff levels over the next three months, above usual trends.

Figure 3: Net employment balance, by industry

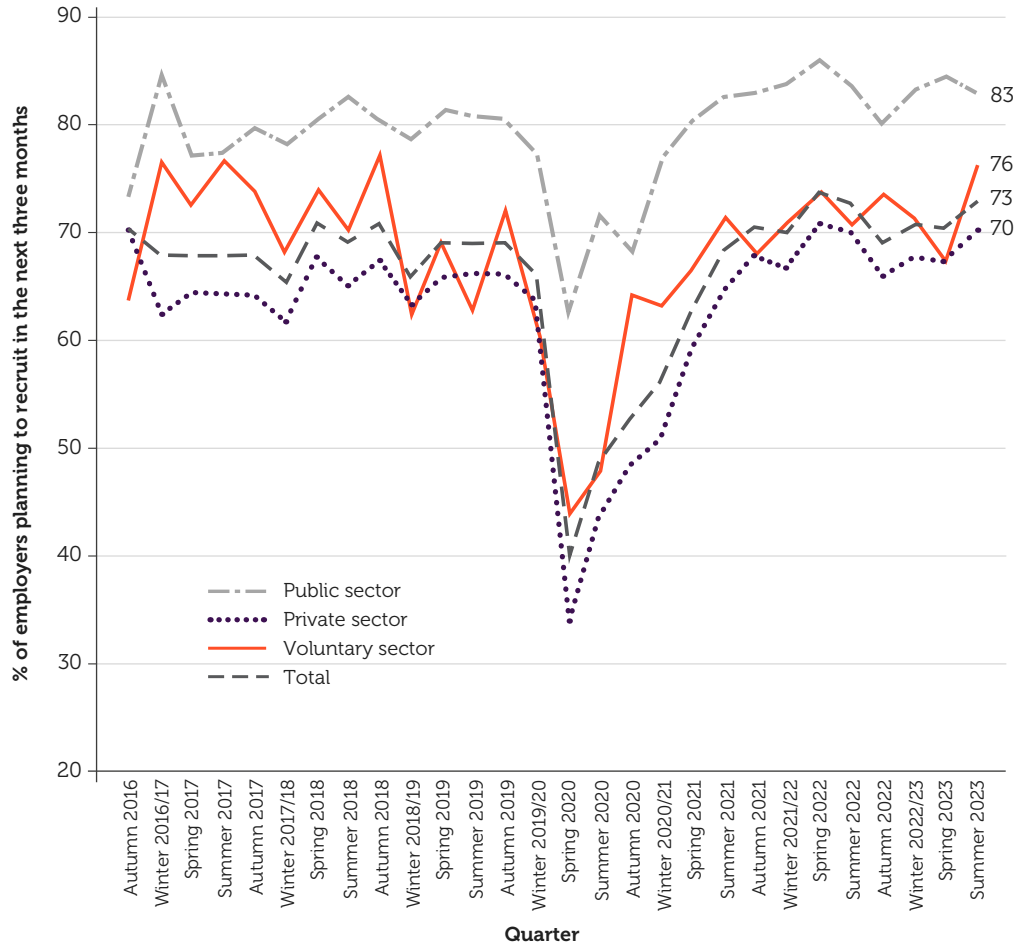


Base: industries with base sizes less than 50 have been excluded. For a breakdown of base sizes, see Table 3.

Recruitment

Almost three-quarters (73%) of employers plan to recruit in the next three months. Recruitment intentions remain highest in the public sector (83%), followed by the voluntary sector (76%) and the private sector (70%) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Recruitment intentions, by broad sector (%)

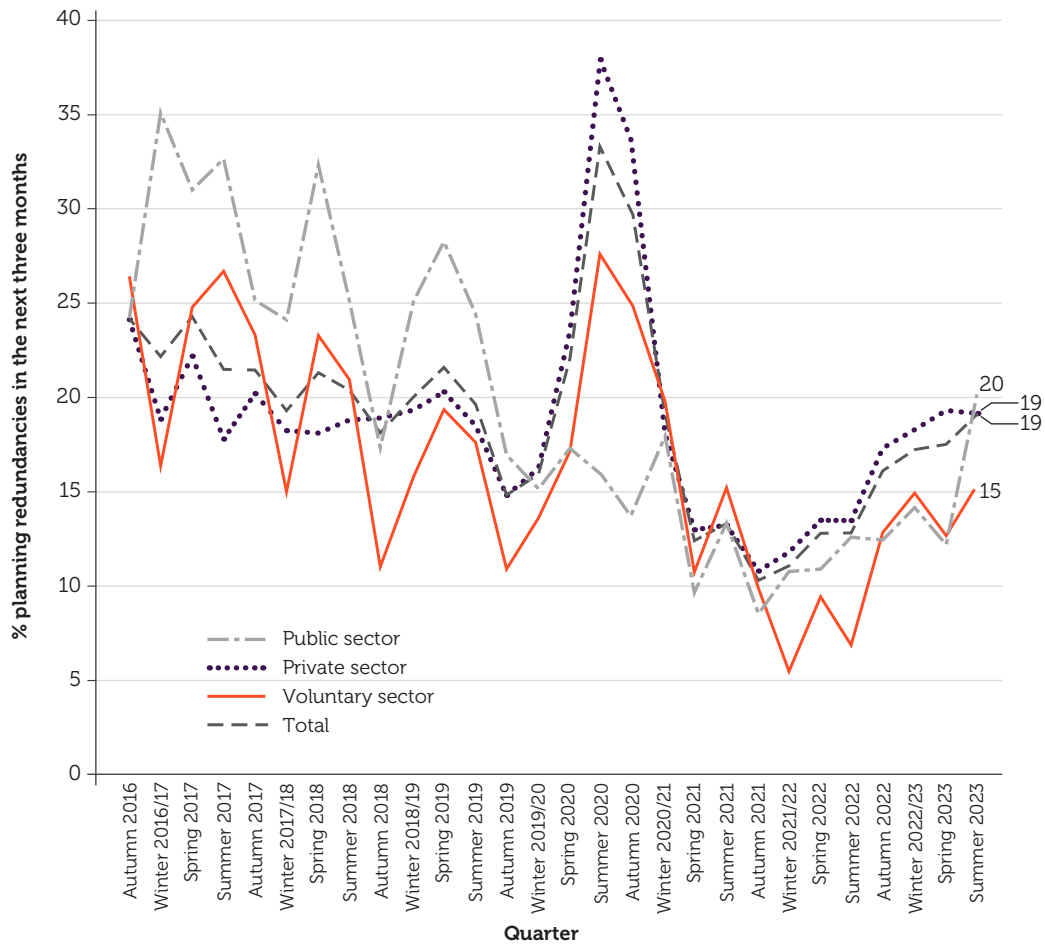


Base: summer 2023, all employers (total: n=2,003; private: n=1,486; public: n=362; voluntary: n=155).

Redundancies

Redundancy intentions, while remaining low in historic terms, have continued their gradual rise since 2021. Overall, 19% of employers are planning to make redundancies in the three months to September 2023 (see Figure 5). The notable change in the most recent quarter is the rise in redundancies expected in the public sector from 12% to 20%.

Figure 5: Redundancy intentions, by broad sector (%)



Base: summer 2023, all employers (total: n=2,003; private: n=1,486; public: n=362; voluntary: n=155).

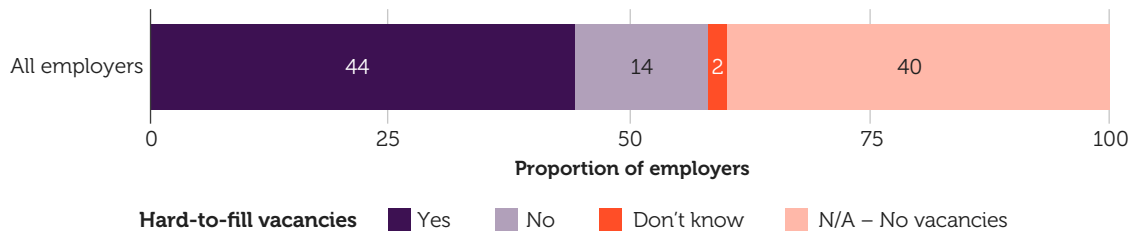
Further reading and practical guidance

- CIPD | [Recruitment](#)
Explore our wide range of best practice recruitment resources and gain the knowledge to benefit your organisation.
- CIPD | [Fair selection: An evidence review](#)
Evidence-based insight and practical recommendations for ensuring fair selection in recruitment and promotion practices.
- CIPD | [Redundancy: UK employment law](#)
Explore our collection of resources on redundancy, including managing and planning for redundancies, commonly asked Q&As and relevant case law.
- CIPD | [Redundancy: Guidance for people professionals](#)
This guide provides step-by-step advice for employers on managing the redundancy process.

4 Job vacancies

Forty-four per cent of employers surveyed have hard-to-fill vacancies (see Figure 6). Public sector employers are still struggling to find the staff they need, with half (50%) reporting hard-to-fill vacancies. Forty-six per cent of employers in the voluntary sector have hard-to-fill vacancies, as do a similar proportion (43%) in the private sector.

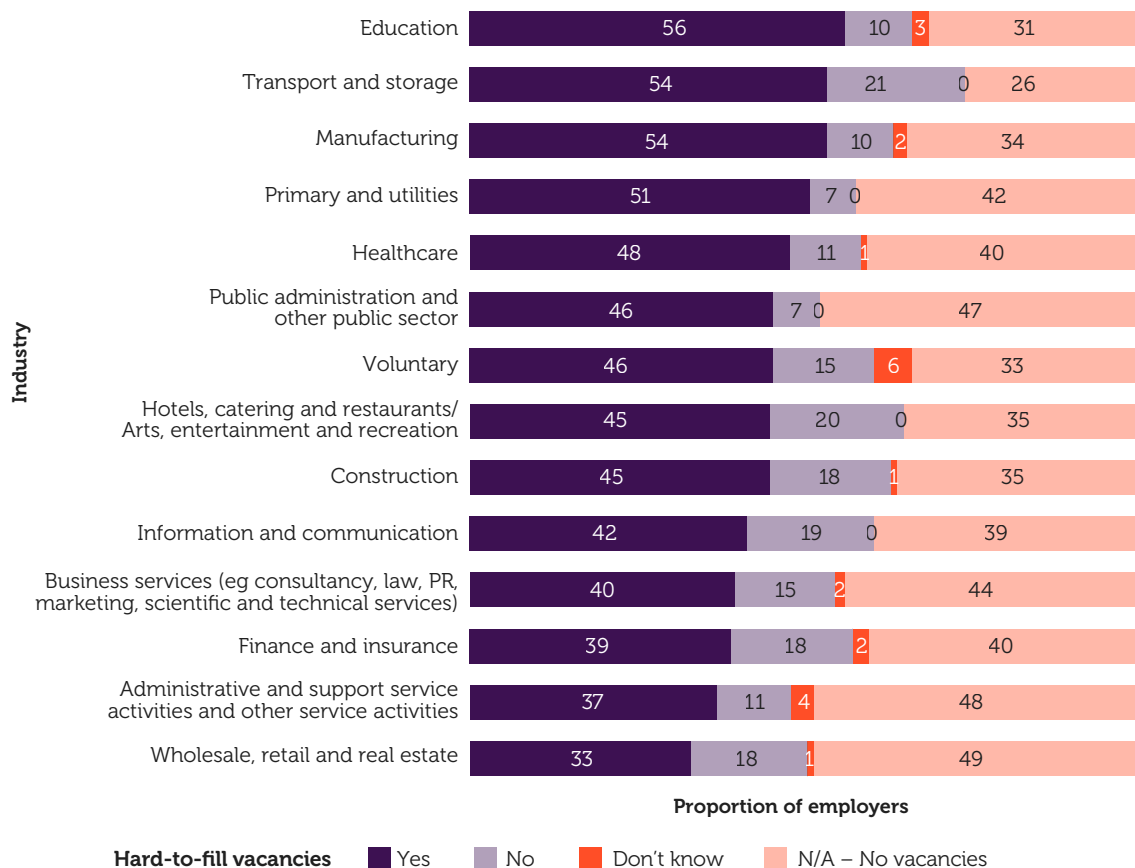
Figure 6: Employers with hard-to-fill vacancies (%)



Base: summer 2023, all employers (total: n=2,003).

Figure 7 shows hard-to-fill vacancies persist across the economy. Over half of employers in education (56%), transport and storage (54%), manufacturing (54%) and utilities (51%) report hard-to-fill vacancies.

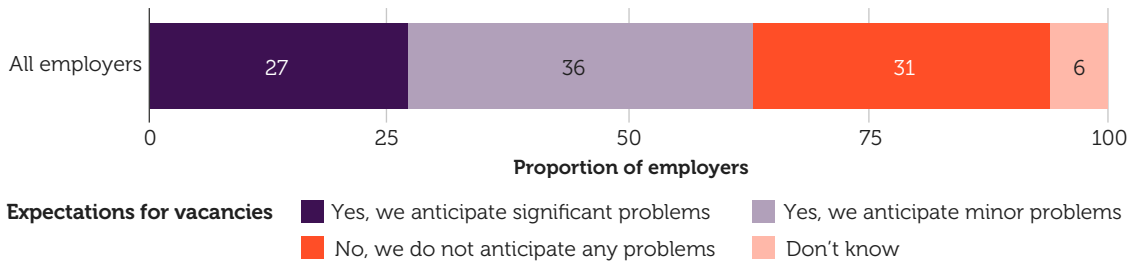
Figure 7: Employers with hard-to-fill vacancies, by industry (%)



Base: industries with base sizes less than 50 have been excluded. For a breakdown of base sizes, see Table 3.

In the next six months, 27% of all employers anticipate significant problems in filling vacancies, and a further 36% anticipate minor problems (see Figure 8). A higher level of public sector employers (43%) anticipate significant problems in filling roles than private sector (24%) and voluntary sector (21%) employers.

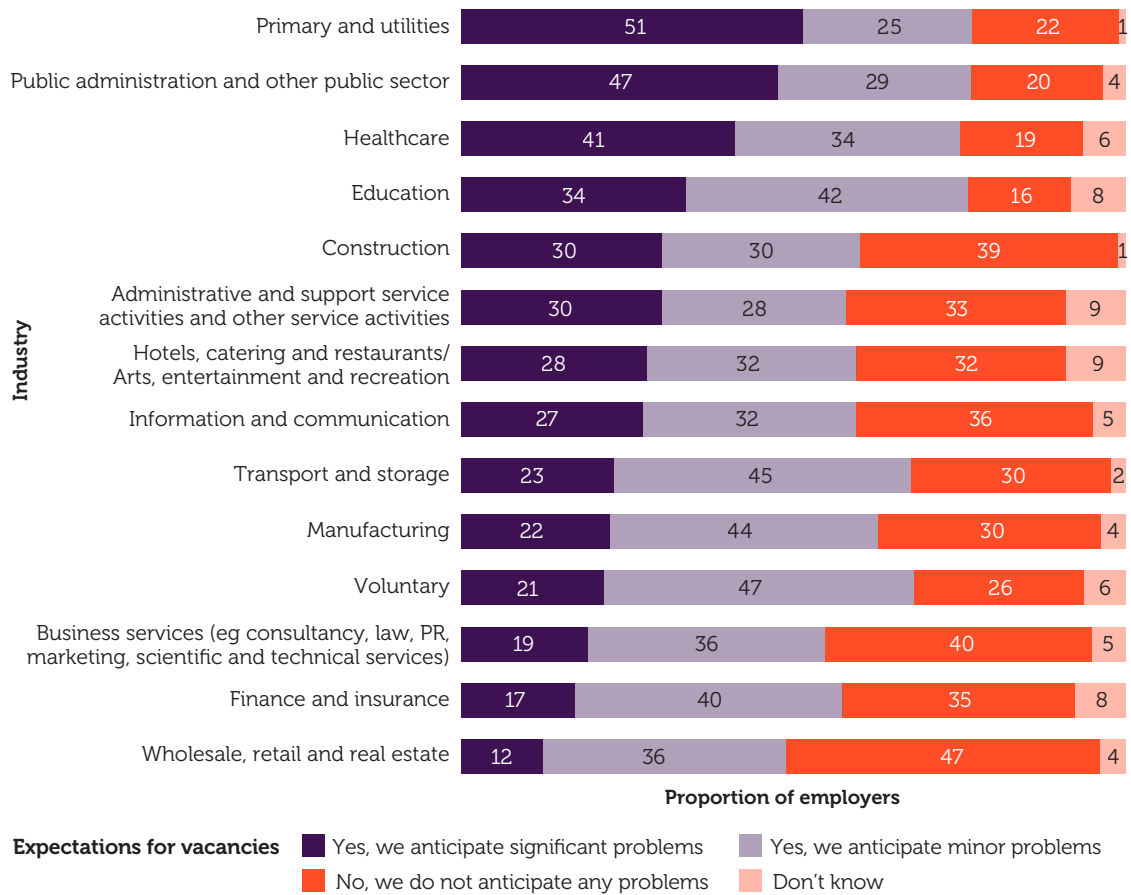
Figure 8: Expectation for vacancies in the next six months (%)



Base: summer 2023, all employers (total: n=2,003).

Figure 9 shows that half (51%) of employers in primary and utilities are anticipating significant problems in filling vacancies in the next six months. Public sector industries such as public administration and other public sector (47%), healthcare (41%) and education (34%) are all anticipating significant problems in filling vacancies in the next six months.

Figure 9: Expectation for vacancies in the next six months, by industry (%)



Base: industries with base sizes less than 50 have been excluded. For a breakdown of base sizes, see Table 3.

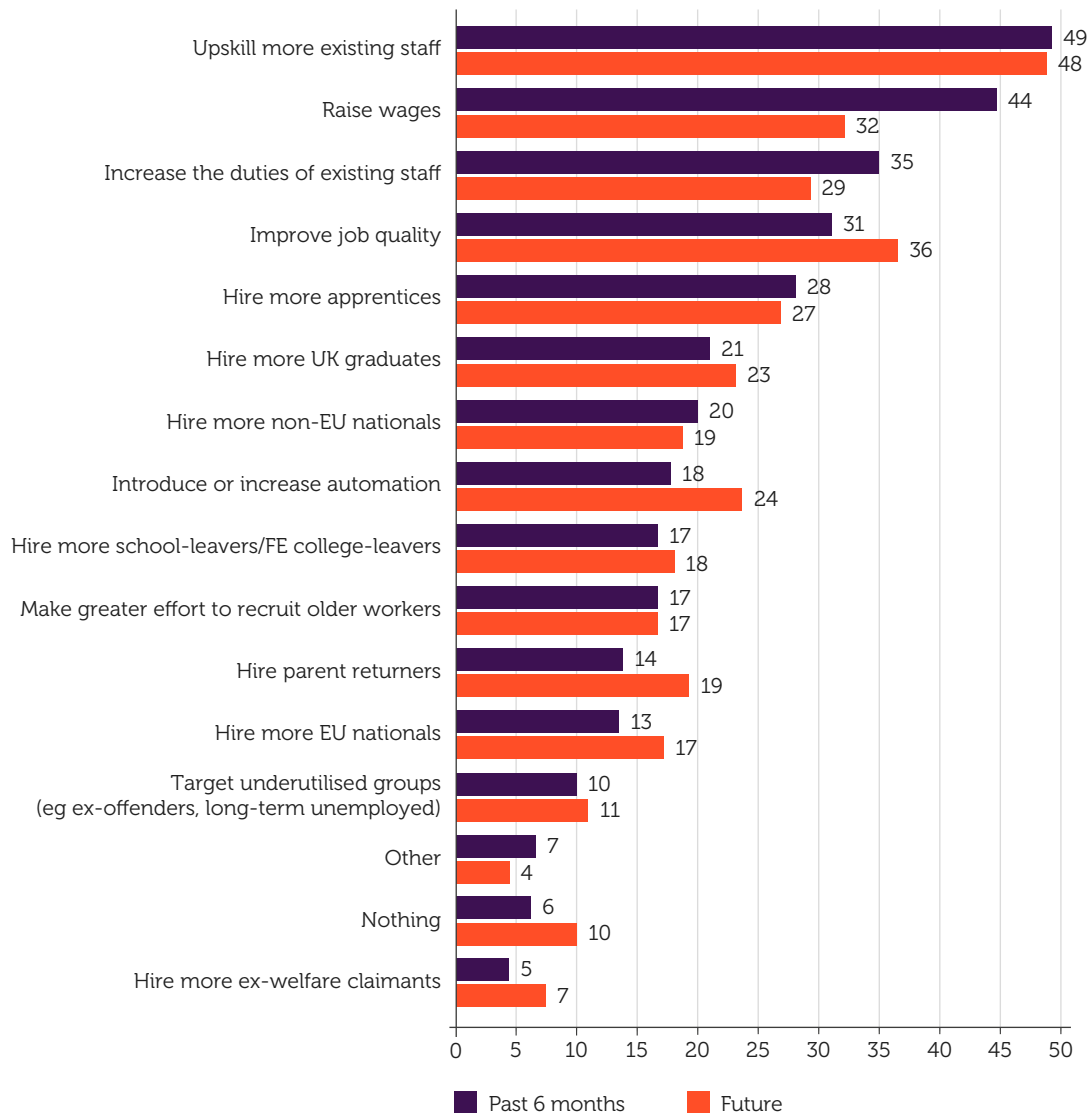
Employer responses to hard-to-fill vacancies

Half (49%) of employers have responded to hard-to-fill vacancies by upskilling more existing staff. As with previous quarters, many employers have had to raise wages (44%) and increase the duties of existing staff (35%) in the past six months. However, in the future, fewer employers plan to raise wages (32%) to increase the duties of existing staff (29%).

Responding to hard-to-fill vacancies by upskilling staff is higher among employers in the public sector (58%) than in the private sector (47%). However, public sector employers are increasing the duties of existing staff at a significantly higher rate (43%) than private sector employers (32%). Comparatively, fewer public sector employers have been raising wages to address hard-to-fill vacancies (21%) compared with the private sector (50%).

A quarter (24%) plan to address hard-to-fill vacancies by introducing or increasing automation in the future, compared with 18% of employers who have done so in the last six months (see Figure 10).

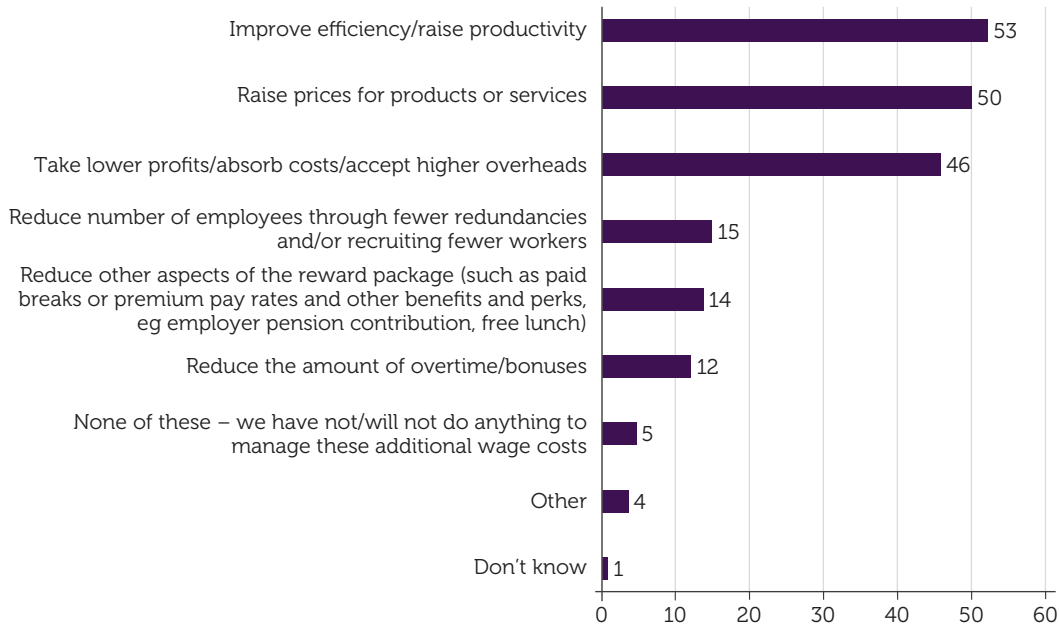
Figure 10: Employers' planned response to hard-to-fill vacancies (%)



Base: summer 2023, all employers with hard-to-fill vacancies (n=817).

Of employers who plan to raise wages in response to hard-to-fill vacancies, half (53%) plan to improve efficiency or raise productivity. A similar level plan to raise prices for products or services (50%) or take lower profits/absorb costs/accept higher overheads (46%).

Figure 11: Employers' planned responses to mitigating wage rises in response to hard-to-fill vacancies (%)



Base: summer 2023, all employers with hard-to-fill vacancies who have already raised, or plan to raise, wages in response (n=410).

Further reading and practical guidance

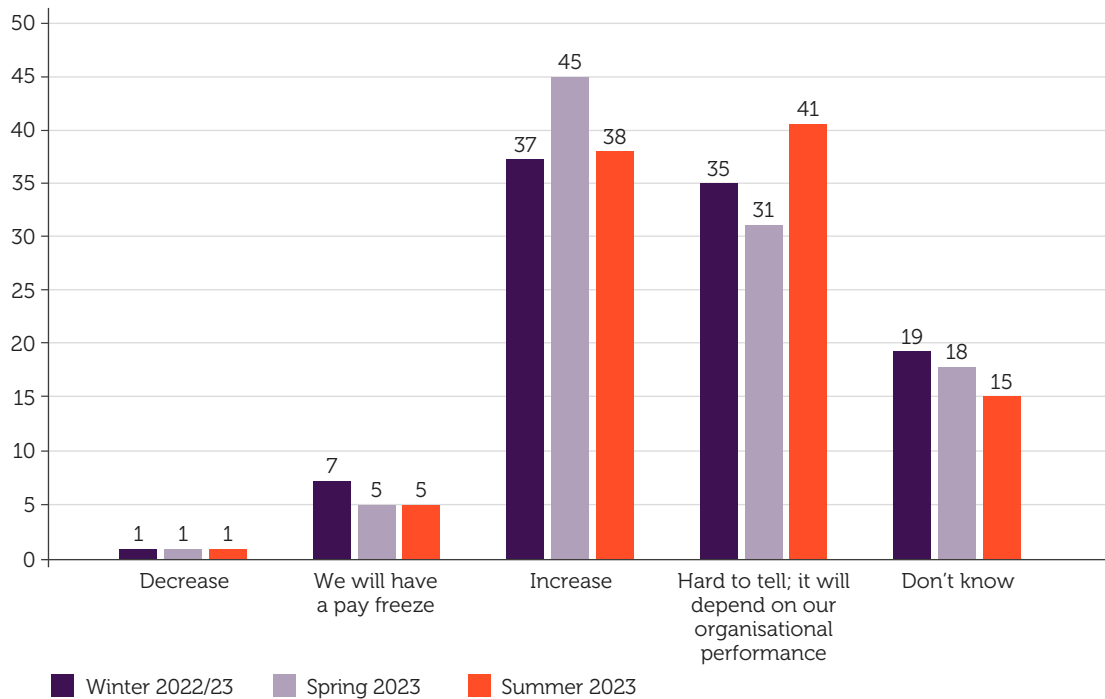
- CIPD | **Technology use in recruitment and workforce planning**
Guidance on how technology can be leveraged to plug skill gaps and address hard-to-fill vacancies.
- CIPD | **Youth employment and UK training: Guide for employers**
Find out how traineeships, T Levels and apprenticeships can help young people succeed in your organisation.
- CIPD | **Migrant workers and skills shortages in the UK**
A report exploring the role of immigration in the context of post-Brexit skills challenges.
- CIPD | **Employing overseas workers in the UK**
Learn about recruiting overseas workers, the categories of non-UK nationals able to enter and work in the UK, and the legal framework involved.

5 Pay outlook

There has been a shift in the last quarter among employers planning a pay review in the next 12 months. The level of employers who say it is hard to tell and will depend on their organisational performance has increased from 31% last quarter to 41% this quarter. This reflects uncertainty among employers' confidence in economic prospects and the effects of previous larger wage increases.

Thirty-eight per cent of employers planning a pay review expected their pay to increase. Fifteen per cent don't know. Five per cent expect a pay freeze and only 1% expect a decrease, the same as the last quarter (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Employers' expected direction of pay award (%)

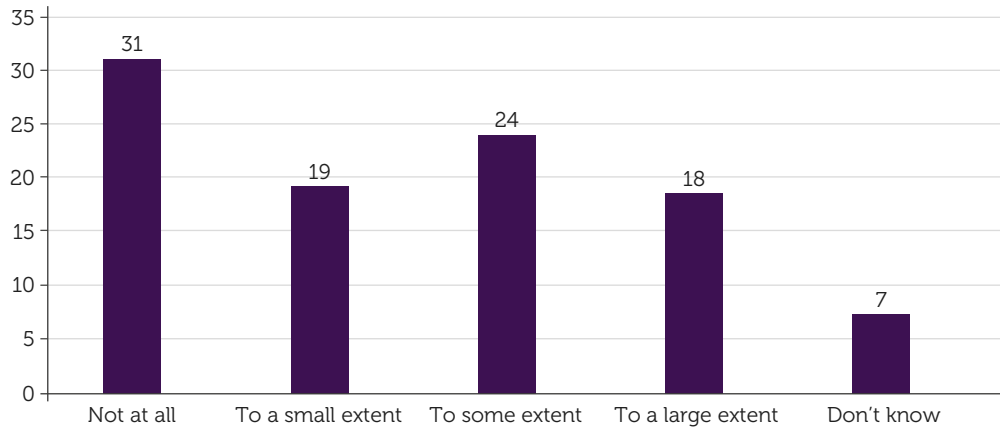


Base: all employers planning a pay review in the next 12 months (winter 2022/23: n=1,714; spring 2023: n=1,742; summer 2023: n=1,740).

Following the rise in the NMW in April 2023, there has been significant mandatory wage growth among the lowest paid. The rate rises included a 9.7% increase in the NLW (aged 23+), from £9.50 per hour to £10.42, the equivalent of more than £1,600 extra per year before tax for someone working full-time.

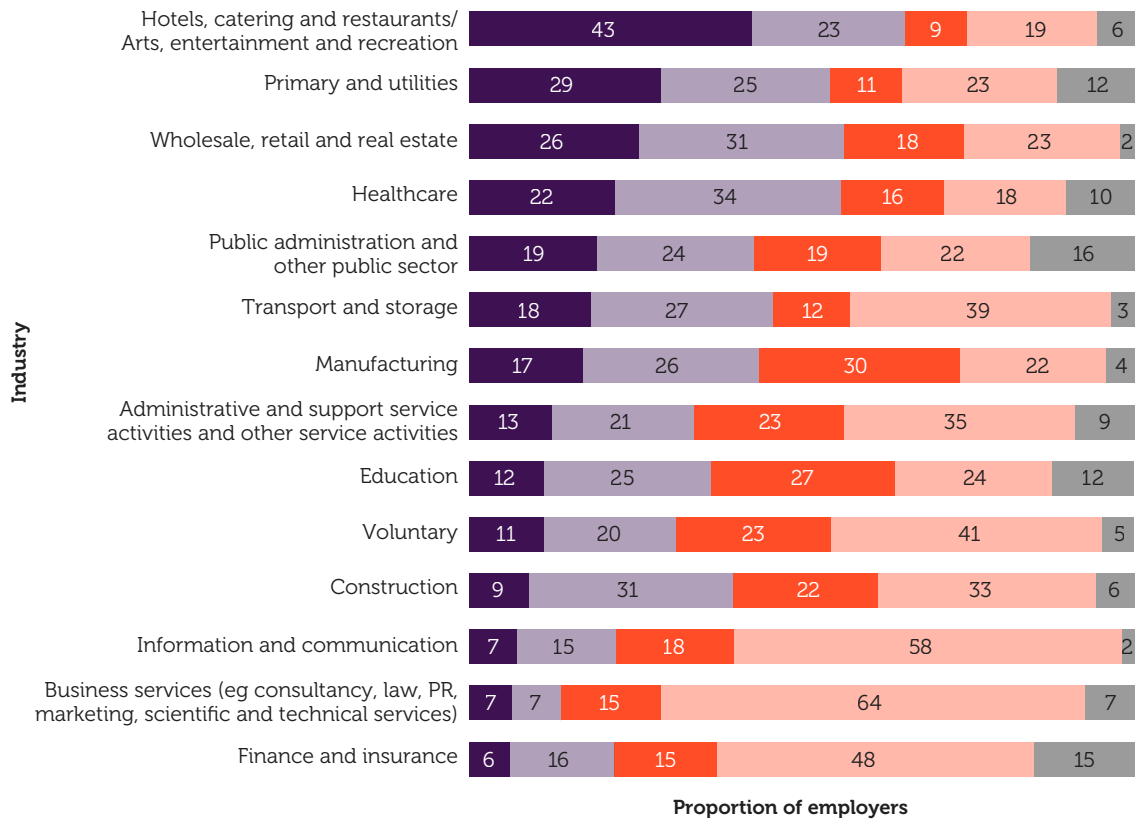
Consequently, one in five employers (18%) say these increases have impacted their wage bill to a large extent. A further quarter (24%) say it has impacted their wage bill to some extent. Hospitality, for example, has been disproportionately affected by the increase in the NMW/NLW due to the level of lower-paid workers in the industry, with 43% of employers saying it has impacted their wage bill to a large extent.

Figure 13: Impact of National Minimum Wage rates on wage bill (%)



Base: summer 2023, all employers (total: n=2,003).

Figure 14: Impact of National Minimum Wage rates on wage bill, by industry (%)



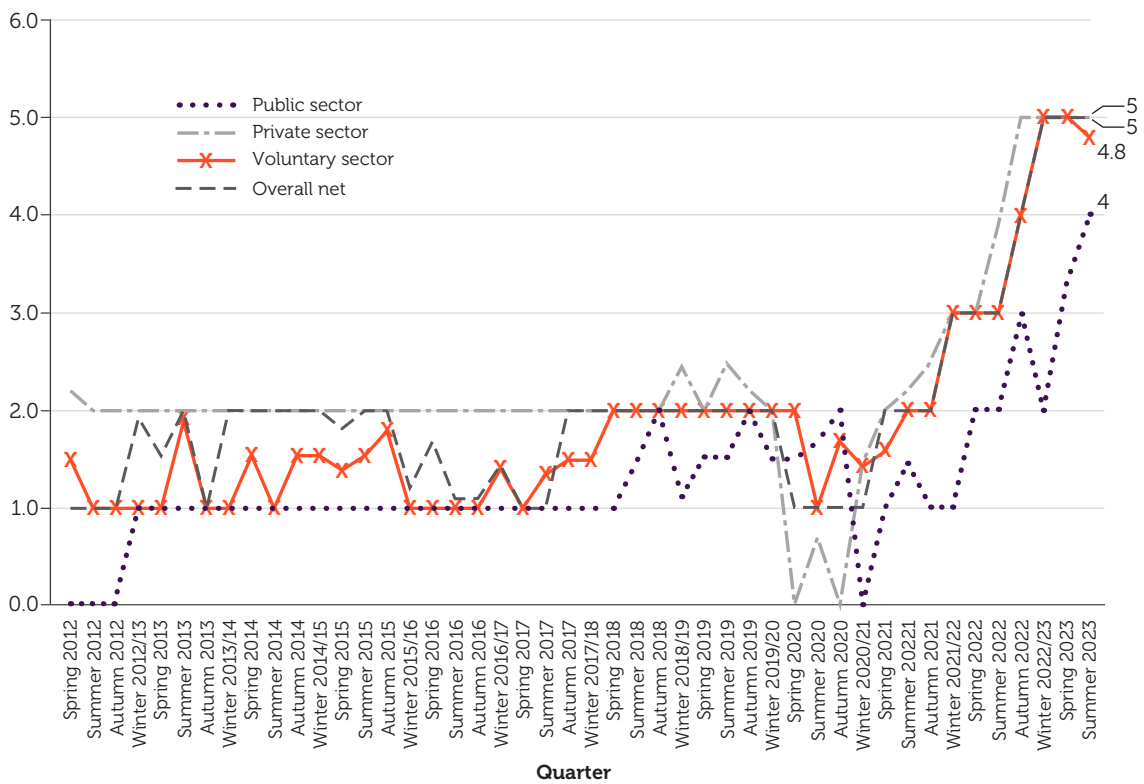
Impact of NMW on wage bill: To a large extent (dark purple), To some extent (grey), To a small extent (orange), Not at all (light orange), Don't know (dark grey).

Base: industries with base sizes less than 50 have been excluded. For a breakdown of base sizes, see Table 3.

For employers looking to increase, decrease or freeze pay in the next 12 months, we see a median expected basic pay increase of 5%. This increase is consistent with the previous two quarters and remains the highest median expected basic pay increase in the LMO time series (dating back to 2012). Expected pay awards in the private sector have remained at 5% for the previous four quarters. The figure for the public sector has risen from 3.3% last quarter to 4% this quarter. This is the highest level seen in our time series (see Figure 15).

It should be noted that the average basic pay award covered in this analysis is only one pay component. Many people will also benefit from incremental progression or promotion, bonuses, or a pay bump when switching jobs.

Figure 15: Median basic pay increase expectations – median employer



Base: summer 2023, all employers expecting and able to estimate a pay award (n=755; private: n=537; public: n=149; voluntary: n=69).

6 Counteroffers

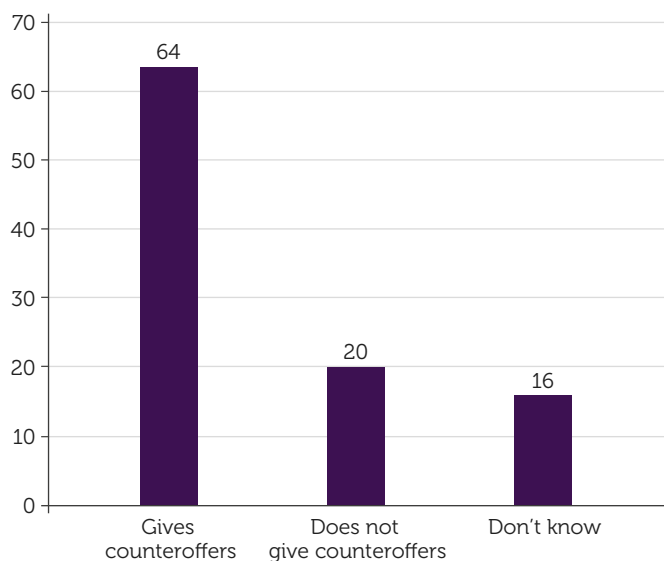
On the backdrop of the highest wage increases according to official data (ie including those who have moved organisations), we look into the practice of counteroffers.

A counteroffer is where an organisation attempts to retain an employee after they have been provided an offer of employment from another employer. Often organisations will offer an improvement to the current salary of an employee in response. But can also take other actions, such as offering more flexible working or providing the employee with a company car, as part of their counteroffer.

Counteroffers are commonplace among employers

Two-thirds of organisations (64%) give counteroffers, one in five (20%) employers don't, and a further 16% of employers are unsure if they do.

Figure 16: Employers' practice of counteroffers (%)

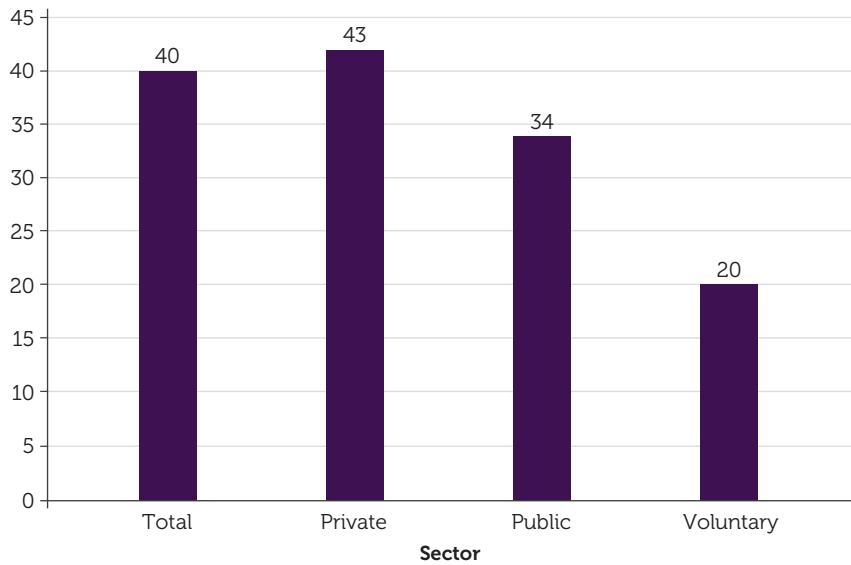


Base: summer 2023, all employers (total: n=2,003).

Large private sector employers are most likely to use counteroffers

Forty per cent of employers have given a counteroffer in the past 12 months. Figure 17 shows the private sector has used this as a mechanism to retain employees (43%) more than the public (34%) and voluntary (20%) sectors. Just 24% of SMEs have granted a counteroffer in the last 12 months, compared with 58% of large private sector organisations. London is the counteroffer capital of the UK, with 58% of employers based here making counteroffers in the past 12 months.

Figure 17: Employers' using counteroffers in last 12 months, by sector (%)



Base: summer 2023, all employers (n=2,003; private: n=1,486; public: n=362; voluntary: n=155).

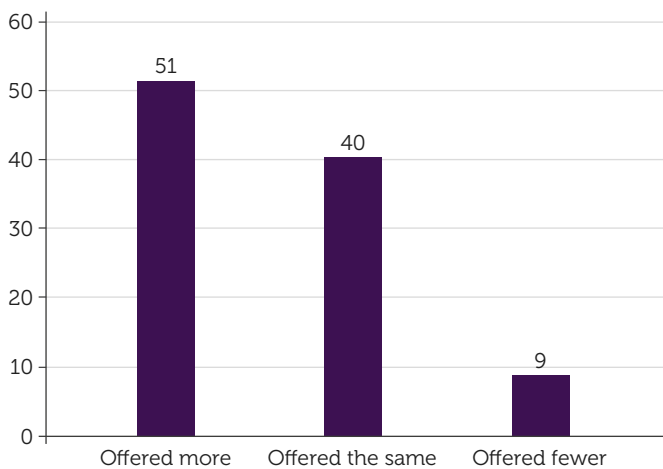
Employers are using counteroffers at a greater rate than before

Among employers giving counteroffers in the last 12 months, half (51%) have offered a higher number than before, with 40% offering the same level of counteroffers and only 9% offering fewer than previously.

Sixteen per cent of employers in the public sector have offered fewer counteroffers than before, compared with 8% in the private sector. This is evidence that the public sector is less able to make counteroffers to retain staff.

Among employers that have been most impacted by the increase in the NMW, 71% report an increase in counteroffers over the last 12 months. Fifty-seven per cent of organisations who rate their profitability/financial performance above average have also offered more than before, compared with 40% of all other organisations.

Figure 18: Number of counteroffers in the last 12 months, compared to before (%)



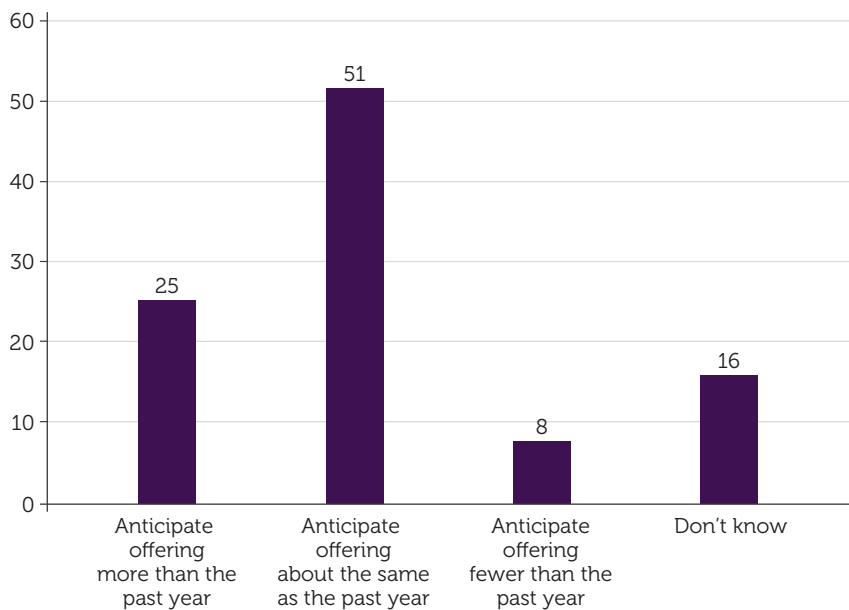
Base: summer 2023, all employers who have used counteroffers in the last 12 months (total: n=757).

Organisations expect to offer more counteroffers in the coming 12 months

While half (51%) of employers who have previously given counteroffers believe the number of counteroffers they expect to give in the next 12 months to be about the same, a quarter (25%) of employers anticipate offering even more than the past year. Among those employers most impacted by the NMW, this percentage is even higher at 44%. Only 8% of employers believe they will offer fewer than the past year.

Larger private sector businesses expect to increase the number of counteroffers in the next 12 months (37%) at a much higher rate than SMEs (12%) in a bid to retain employees.

Figure 19: Expected use of counteroffers in the next 12 months (%)

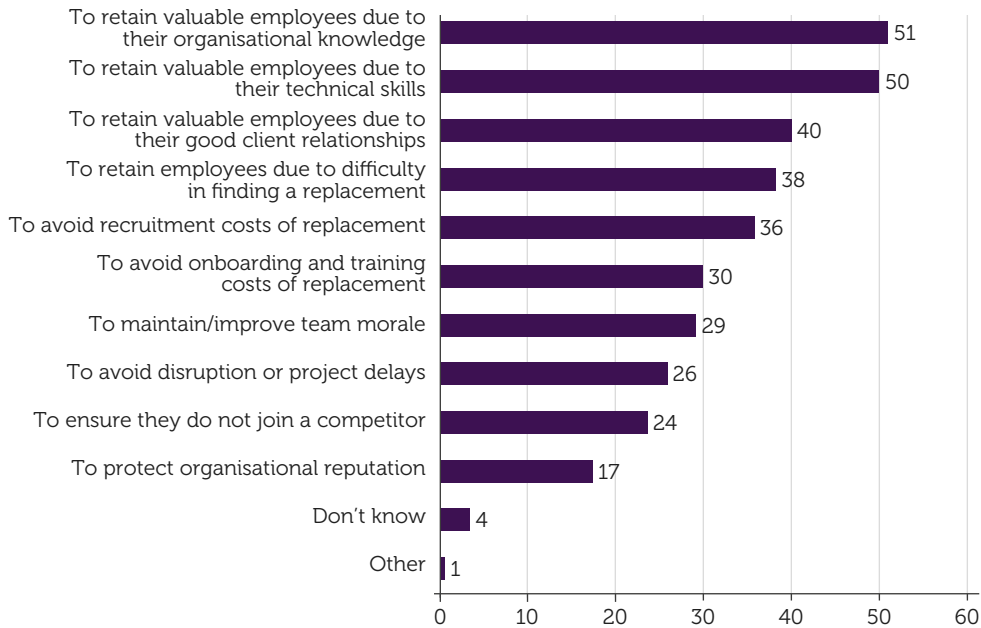


Base: summer 2023, all employers in the practice of using counteroffers (total: n=1,320).

Employers use counteroffers to keep organisational knowledge and technical skills

Half of employers who have offered counteroffers in the past year or plan to in the next year use counteroffers to retain employees due to their organisational knowledge (51%) or due to their technical skills (50%). Many employers also use counteroffers to retain employees due to difficulty finding a replacement (38%), to avoid the recruitment costs of doing so (36%) or to avoid the onboarding and training costs of sourcing a replacement (30%). While fewer employers use counteroffers to protect organisational reputation (17%), many do so to maintain their good client relationships (40%).

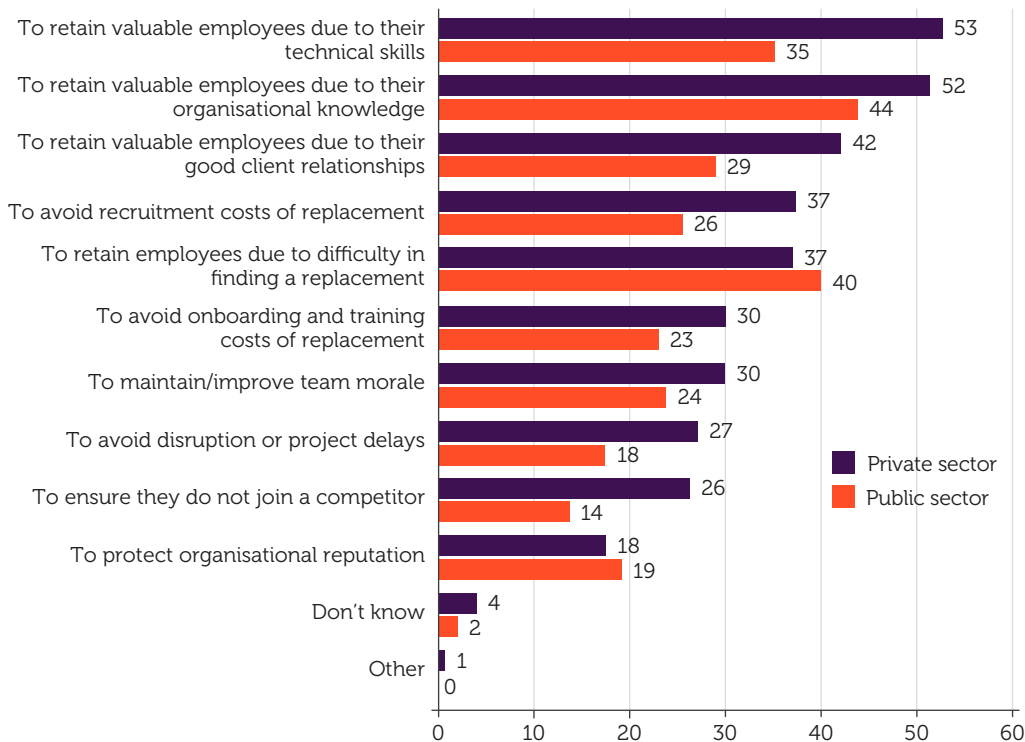
Figure 20: Reasons for using counteroffers (%)



Base: summer 2023, all employers who have used counteroffers in the past 12 months or plan to in the next 12 months (total: n=760).

Private sector employers are more likely to give counteroffers to retain employees due to technical skills than public sector employers (53% vs 35%). Private sector employers are more likely to give counteroffers due to good client relationships than those in the public sector (42% vs 29%). Private sector employers also outstrip public sector employers in giving counteroffers to avoid recruitment costs of a replacement (37% vs 26%), to avoid disruption or project delays (27% vs 18%) or to ensure they do not join a competitor (26% vs 14%).

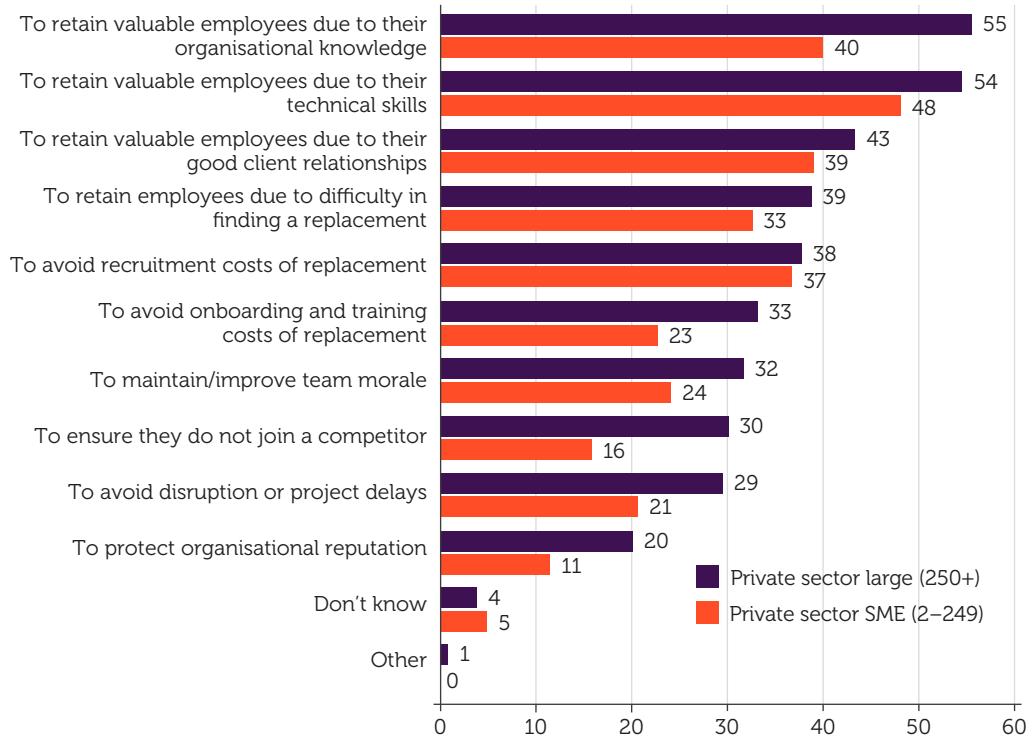
Figure 21: Reasons for using counteroffers, by sector (%)



Base: summer 2023, private (n=591) and public (n=139) sector employers who have used counteroffers in the past 12 months or plan to in the next 12 months.

Large private sector employers use counteroffers at a higher rate than SMEs to retain employees due to their organisational knowledge (55% vs 40%). Large private sector employers are also more likely than SMEs to use counteroffers to ensure employees do not join a competitor (30% vs 16%), to avoid the onboarding and training cost of a replacement (33% vs 23%), to avoid disruption and project delays (29% vs 21%) or to protect organisational reputation (20% vs 11%).

Figure 22: Reasons for using counteroffers, by organisation size (private sector) (%)



Base: summer 2023, large (n=476) and small (n=164) private sector employers who have used counteroffers in the past 12 months or plan to in the next 12 months.

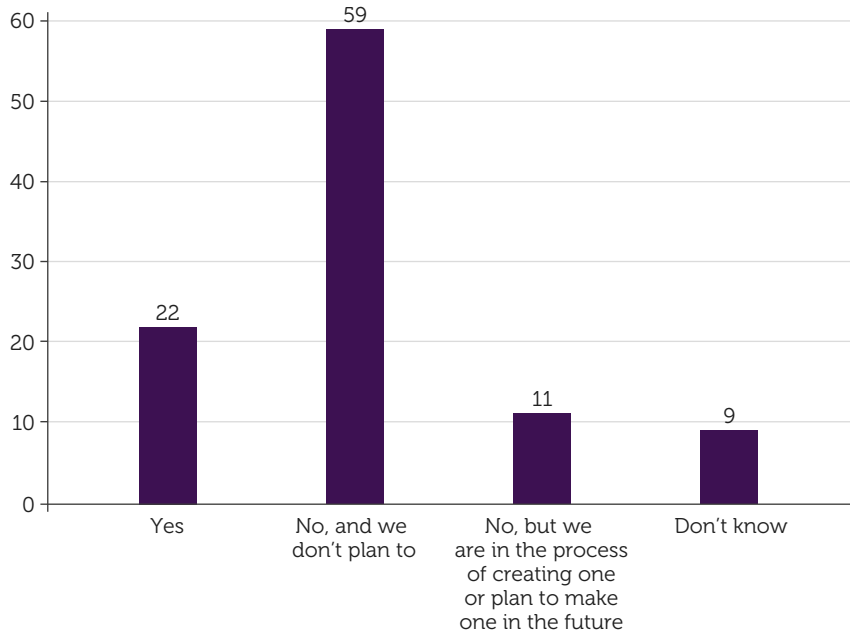
Few employers have formal counteroffer process

One in five (22%) employers who have used counteroffers in the past 12 months or plan to in the next 12 months have a formal policy regarding them, for example explaining in what circumstances a counteroffer can be made. Half as many (11%) do not have one but are in the process of creating one or plan to do so in the future. Fifty-nine per cent of organisations do not have any formal policies and do not plan to.

Twenty-nine per cent of public sector employers giving counteroffers have a policy regarding them, compared with 21% of private sector employers. Among private sector employers, larger ones (27%) are more likely to have a policy compared with SMEs (14%).

Employers that have been most impacted by the increase in the NMW/NLW are also highly likely to have a policy (38%).

Figure 23: Formal policies regarding counteroffers (%)



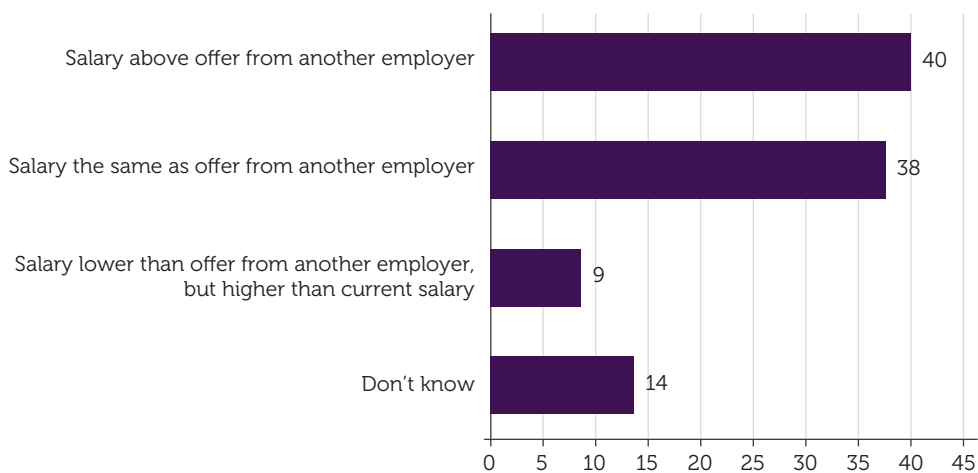
Base: summer 2023, all employers who have used counteroffers in the past 12 months or plan to in the next 12 months (total: n=1,173).

Many employers offer more money than the other offer

Money talks when it comes to counteroffers – 40% of employers who have used counteroffers or plan to in the next 12 months are exceeding offers given by other employers. A similar level (38%) salary-match offers from other employers. Around one in 10 (9%) employers do so, but at a rate below the offer from other employers, but higher than the current salary.

Larger private sector businesses are more likely to offer a salary above the offer of other employers (43%) than SMEs (34%). Those most impacted by the increase in the NMW/NLW are more likely to match the offer of rival employers (45%) than exceed it (37%).

Figure 24: Value of salary offers in counteroffers (%)



Base: summer 2023, all employers who have used counteroffers or plan to in the next 12 months (total: n=760).

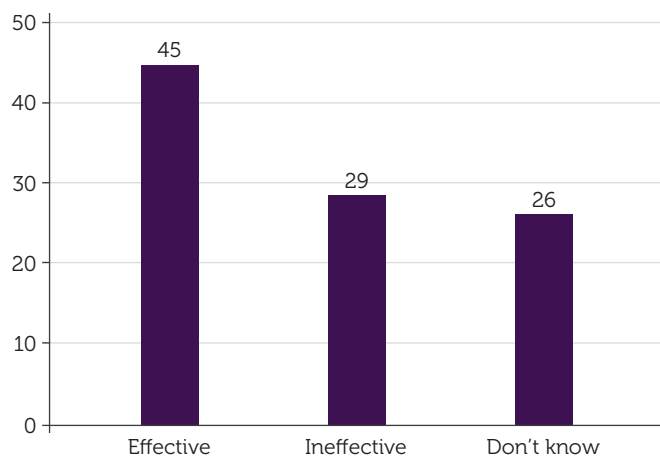
Counteroffers seen as relatively effective in the short term

Counteroffers are seen by employers as more effective than ineffective in retaining employees for 12 months or more. Forty-five per cent believe it is effective, compared with 29% of employers who believe it is ineffective. This shows the practice may only be valuable as a short-term option and that employees will move if the wider package (eg workload, autonomy, environment) does not meet their expectations.

Almost all (92%) organisations that have a counteroffer policy say counteroffers are effective.

Employers that have been most impacted by the increase in the NMW/NLW say that counteroffers are effective (54%) at retaining staff for 12 months or more.

Figure 25: Effectiveness of counteroffers in retaining employees for 12 months or more (%)



Base: summer 2023, all employers (total: n=2,003).

Further reading and practical guidance

- CIPD | **Job evaluation and market pricing**

Understand the fundamentals of job evaluation and market pricing, as well as how to choose and install the right scheme for your organisation.

- CIPD | **Pay structures and pay progression**

Understand the purpose of pay structures and pay progression, including common ways for structuring pay and managing pay progression.

- CIPD | **Pay fairness and pay reporting**

Find out what fair pay can mean, what pay information UK employers must disclose by law and the opportunities pay narratives bring.

- CIPD | **Is pay transparency good for business?**

Listen to our podcast exploring the benefits, pitfalls and challenges of increasing pay transparency and the broader impact on global organisations.

7

Recommendations for employers and people practitioners

- ✓ Take a varied approach to addressing your hard-to-fill vacancies. This might include adopting inclusive recruitment and selection approaches to ensure you are tapping into broad and diverse employee pools while also taking opportunities to upskill and develop your existing workforce. Our [guide to workforce planning](#) will help you assess your talent and skill needs in line with the labour market.
- ✓ If your organisation is going through a difficult financial time, explore all your options before considering redundancies. Making people redundant should be a last resort. As an employer, it's important that you can prove you've first looked at alternative cost-saving measures, such as redeploying staff or reducing working hours. As well as saving jobs, this will help you avoid unfair dismissal claims.
- ✓ Ensure a fair process when making reward decisions by regularly assessing your decision-making processes and the outcomes of those decisions, such as carrying out reviews to ensure your pay rates are fair, competitive and lawful, or that the grade structures you use to manage pay progression and career development are aligned to business and employee needs.
- ✓ If making counteroffers, ensure your organisation has a formal process explaining the circumstances under which they can make them. While the focus of counteroffers is typically on pay, it can also involve non-pay elements, such as additional paid holiday or additional pension contributions. However, care must always be taken when making any kind of counteroffer as it will have implications for the rest of your reward approach, such as the size of your pay gaps.

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Survey method

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The total sample size was 2,003 senior HR professionals and decision-makers in the UK. Fieldwork was undertaken between 9 June and 5 July 2023. The survey was conducted online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of UK employment by organisation size, sector and industry.

Weighting

Rim weighting is applied using targets on size and sector drawn from the BEIS *Business Population Estimates for the UK and Regions 2021*. The following tables contain unweighted counts.

Table 1: Breakdown of the sample, by number of employees in the organisation

Employer size band	Count
2–9	375
10–49	408
50–99	150
100–249	244
250–499	170
500–999	154
1,000 or more	502

Table 2: Breakdown of sample, by sector

Sector	Count
Private sector	1,486
Public sector	362
Third/voluntary sector	155

Table 3: Breakdown of sample, by industry

Industry	Count
Manufacturing	160
Construction	126
Primary and utilities	74
Education	201
Healthcare	141
Wholesale, retail and real estate	134
Transport and storage	56
Information and communication	88
Finance and insurance	163
Business services (eg consultancy, law, PR, marketing, scientific and technical services)	247
Hotels, catering and restaurants/Arts, entertainment and recreation	117
Administrative and support service activities and other service activities	186
Public administration and other public sector	135
Police and armed forces	20
Voluntary	155

Table 4: Breakdown of sample, by region

Region	Count
Scotland	164
Wales	55
Northern Ireland	35
Northwest England	157
Channel Islands	1
Northeast England	50
Yorkshire and Humberside	81
West Midlands	109
East Midlands	110
Eastern England	100
London	416
Southwest England	105
Southeast England	205
All of the UK	415



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