



CIPD

Report
June 2024

CIPD Good

Work Index 2024

Northern Ireland

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.

Report

CIPD Good Work Index 2024: Northern Ireland

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Key findings	3
3	Pay and benefits	4
4	Contracts	7
5	Work–life balance	10
6	Job design and nature of work	12
7	Relationships at work	17
8	Voice and representation	20
9	Health and wellbeing	23
10	Conclusions and recommendations	25

Acknowledgements

This report was written by Marek Zemanik, Senior Public Policy Adviser (Scotland and Northern Ireland) at the CIPD. Thank you to everyone who provided feedback and supported its publication, in particular YouGov for running the survey and colleagues at the CIPD.

Publication information

When citing this report, please use the following citation:

Zemanik, M. (2024) *CIPD Good Work Index 2024: Northern Ireland*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

1 Introduction

The CIPD's purpose is to champion better work and working lives, putting job quality at the heart of our aims. Our research seeks to influence policy and practice by highlighting the links between good work and individual wellbeing, organisational productivity and, in turn, the country's economic growth.

The succession of crises we've experienced over the last five years has amplified the importance of job quality even more. From shifts to new ways of working in the pandemic, through skills and labour shortages, to financial wellbeing during the cost-of-living crisis – the world of work has had to adapt and must continue to do so.

Our annual *Good Work Index* report provides insight to policy-makers, employers and people professionals. It shows the gaps and trade-offs around different aspects of job quality, with additional challenges for some groups of employees. Understanding these is the first step to making jobs better for all.

This Northern Ireland report is based on an analysis of a boosted sample of respondents (499) in Northern Ireland, weighted to be representative of all working adults in Northern Ireland.

In the CIPD's view, good work:

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

We were delighted that Northern Ireland's new Economy Minister Conor Murphy put good work at the heart of his economic vision. This must be underpinned by solid evidence. Northern Ireland already collects more data on job quality than anywhere else in the UK. As we continue work on defining what good work is in Northern Ireland, our survey seeks to supplement evidence in areas where there are gaps in official statistics.

Ultimately, any job quality framework seeks the same outcome – to make work fairer and better for all employees.

2 Key findings

This report highlights the inequalities and trade-offs in job quality, significant differences by gender, age or caring responsibilities, and some of the key underlying factors that impact employees' experiences of 'good work'. Framed around the CIPD's seven dimensions of good work, it provides additional evidence to HR practitioners, employers and policy-makers striving to make work better for all.

Pay and benefits

- Seventy-two per cent of employees are satisfied with their job and 67% with their life.
- Just half of respondents feel they are paid appropriately, rising to 62% for those on the highest incomes.
- Only 38% of all employees say they can keep up with all their bills and commitments without any difficulty.

Contracts

- Most employees (84%) work at least the number of hours they would like to. However, over a quarter of those who work part-time or are self-employed say they are underemployed.
- Employees generally report good job security in Northern Ireland, but those with higher workloads or those who feel overqualified are much more likely to quit.
- The top three reasons for changing jobs are better pay/benefits, better work-life balance and unhappiness with senior management.

Work-life balance

- Twenty-nine per cent of all employees say they can't work from home and another 16% don't want to work from home at all.
- Those with childcare responsibilities were much more likely to say they can't do their job properly due to their commitments outside of work.
- While most employees report good informal flexibility in their job, those in occupations that can't be done from home have much less flexibility.

Job design and nature of work

- Twenty-eight per cent of all employees say their workloads are too high. This is even higher (41%) for disabled employees.
- Over a third (36%) of those educated to degree level or above say they are overqualified for their role.
- There are big gaps in training participation, especially for employees working in smaller organisations. Across the UK, 28% of those who work in an SME have not had any training in the last year.

Relationships at work

- Nearly a quarter (23%) of employees have personally experienced some conflict at work.
- Disabled employees report poorer relationships with their managers than those without disabilities.
- Sixteen per cent of employees feel their boss would hold it against them if they made a mistake. Over a fifth (22%) believe that people in their team sometimes reject others for being different.

Voice and representation

- Nearly a fifth (19%) of employees say they have no voice channel at work at all.
- The availability of voice channels differs significantly by organisation size, with 26% of employees working in organisations with fewer than 50 employees saying they have no voice channels at all.
- Employee surveys are seen as the poorest way of expressing views to management.

Health and wellbeing

- A quarter of employees feel their work impacts negatively on their mental health, with 22% reporting negative impacts on their physical health.
- Older workers tend to report better mental health as well as a more positive impact of work on their mental health.
- Nearly a quarter (23%) of employees always or often feel exhausted at work, with 22% saying they feel under excessive pressure.

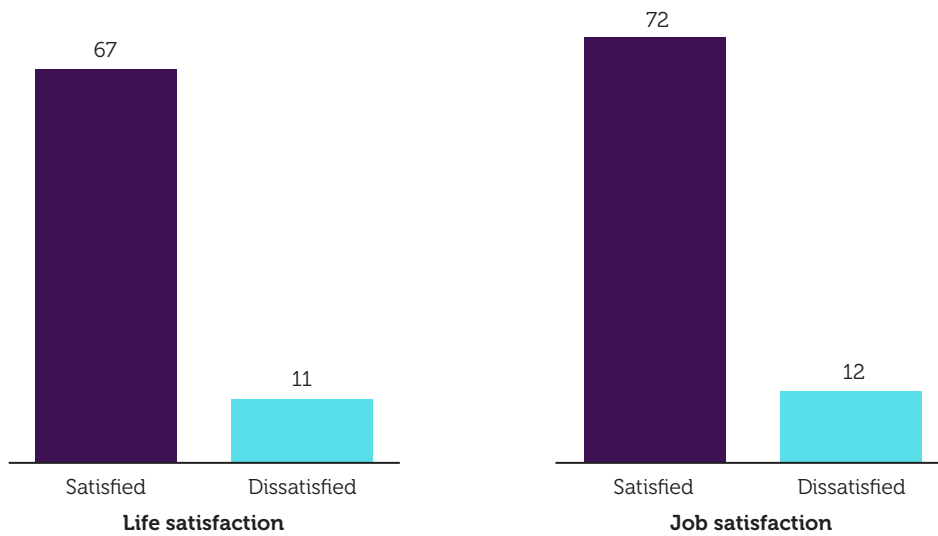
3 Pay and benefits

Objective pay (how much someone actually earns) and subjective pay (whether they feel their pay is appropriate), in addition to a broad range of employee benefits, are key elements of job quality that directly impact on individuals' and their families' quality of life as well as job and life satisfaction.

Job and life satisfaction

There were generally high levels of both life and job satisfaction (Figure 1). Job satisfaction interacts with other elements of job quality, as highlighted throughout this report, both as an outcome (for example, negative impacts of work on health drive job dissatisfaction) and a factor in itself (for example, job dissatisfaction drives likelihood to quit).

Figure 1: Life and job satisfaction (%)



Base: all (n=499).

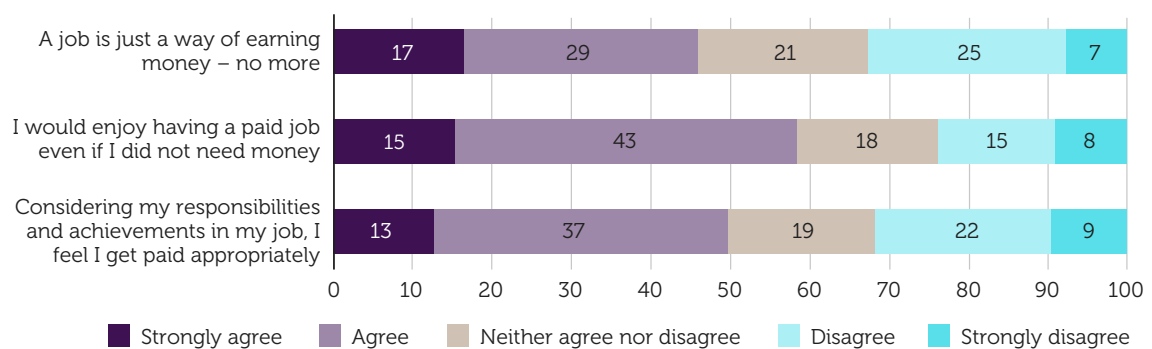
Disabled employees were less likely to say they are satisfied with their lives (54% v 69% for those without disabilities). There was also a clear link between workloads and job satisfaction – 24% of those who said their workloads are too high were dissatisfied with their jobs, compared with only 4% of those who said their workload is about right.

Pay satisfaction and work centrality

Compared with job and life satisfaction, a slightly smaller proportion (50%) of Northern Irish employees were satisfied with their pay. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this rose to 62% for those whose personal income is higher than £40,000 per year.

In addition to pay satisfaction, our two work centrality questions measured the relative importance of work in our lives, with the results summarised in Figure 2. In line with previous research, older workers tended to be more positive about work – a view likely driven by higher levels of self-employment among this group. Those aged 55+ were much more likely to disagree that work is just a way of earning money (47% v 27% across younger age brackets).

Figure 2: Subjective measures of pay satisfaction and work centrality (%)

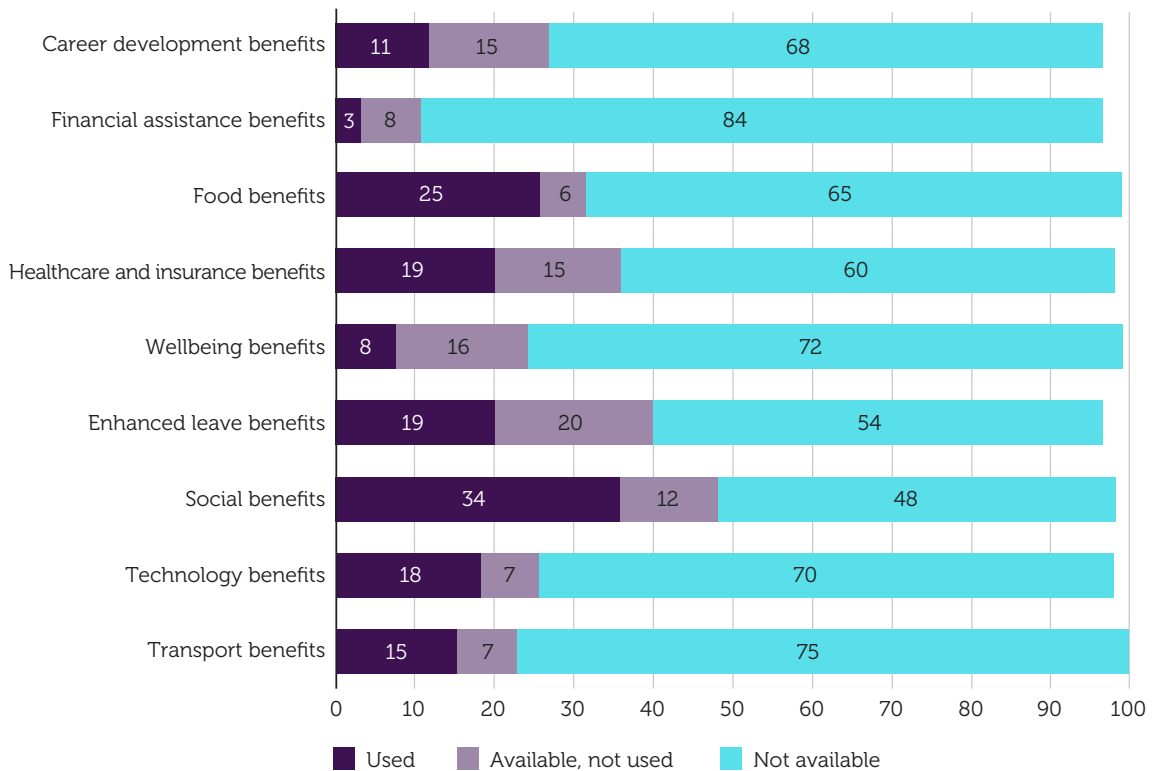


Base: all (n=499).

Employee benefits

In addition to pay, the overall benefits package across organisations was important – especially so during the cost-of-living crisis. The availability of employee benefits varied considerably (Figure 3). There were significant differences by size of organisation, with employees working in some of the smallest businesses (up to 10 employees) generally reporting much poorer availability of benefits – especially food, healthcare and enhanced leave benefits.

Figure 3: Employee benefits (%)



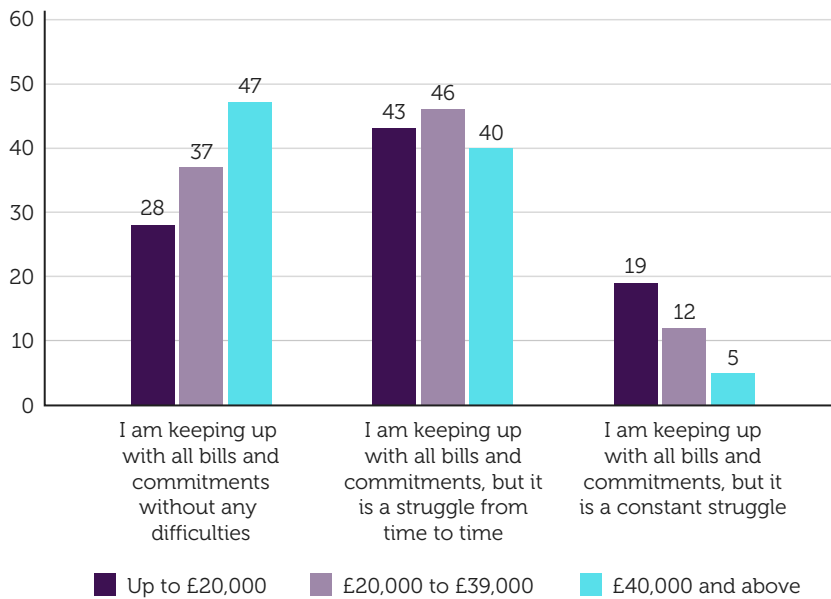
Base: all (n=499).

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

Keeping up with bills

Despite falling inflation, employees continued to struggle with the cost of living. Only 38% of all employees said they can keep up with all their bills and commitments without any difficulty, with those on lower incomes struggling more. Of those earning less than £20,000 per year, 19% said keeping up with bills is a constant struggle.

Figure 4: Keeping up with bills and credit commitments, by income (%)

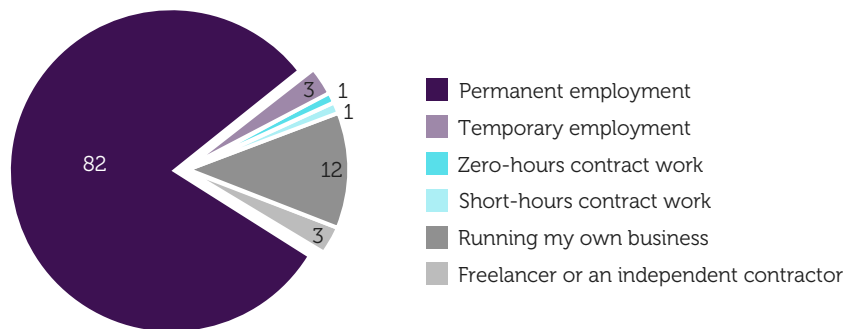


Base: up to £20,000 (n=107); £20,000 to £39,000 (n=165); £40,000 and above (n=244).

4 Contracts

The second good work dimension we looked at was contracts. This covers issues like the type of employment contract and contractual stability, job security and underemployment – where employees work fewer hours than they would want.

Figure 5: Types of contract (%)

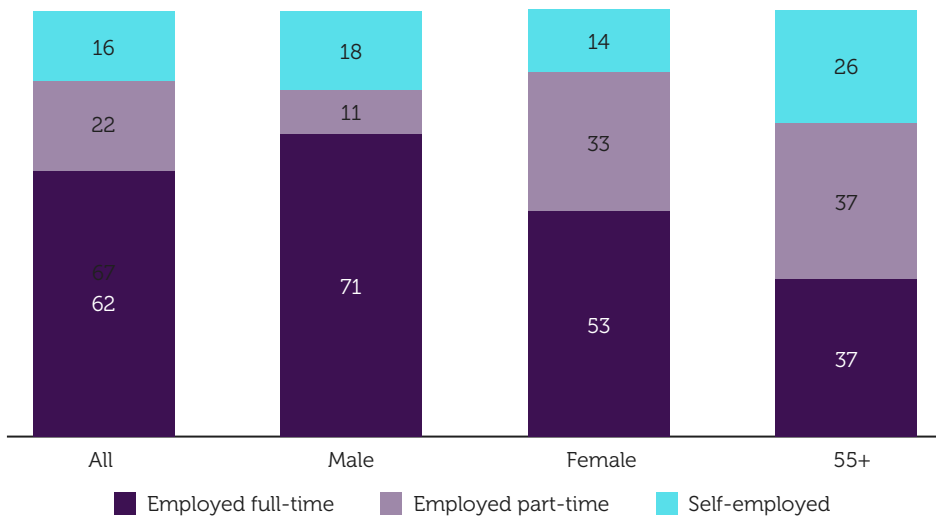


Base: all (n=499).

Contractual working arrangements and the related issues of job and hours insecurity, as well as underemployment, are aspects of job quality that have risen within the public policy agenda in recent years. While our survey included questions on contractual types, the sample size for non-standard contracts was very small, so the level of analysis we can do for Northern Ireland is limited. Figure 5 shows the breakdown of our sample.

There were significant differences in the patterns of full-time and part-time employment as well as self-employment. In line with official data, the survey shows that women are much more likely to work part-time than men – widely attributed to child and elderly caring responsibilities, which remain significantly gendered. Furthermore, we also see that those in the oldest age bracket (55+) were more likely to work part-time or be self-employed (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Employment status (%)

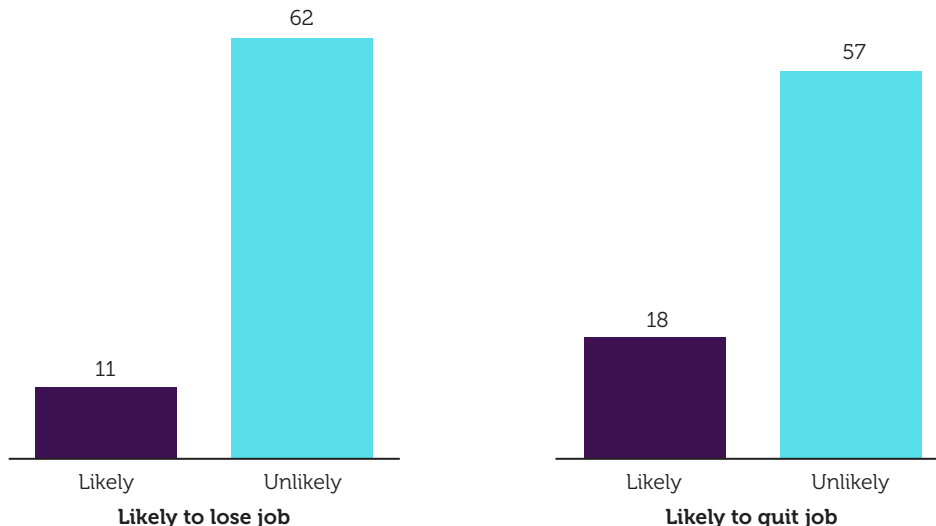


Base: all (n=499); male (n=251); female (n=248); 55+ (n=111).

Job security

On the issue of job security as a subjective measure, we looked at the perceived likelihood of the respondent losing or quitting their job in the next 12 months. Overall, there were good levels of job security across both questions, as highlighted in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Likelihood to lose or quit job (%)



Base: all (n=499).

While we didn't find differences in likelihood to lose their job, there were interesting differences between groups of employees and their likelihood to quit – a good indication of what matters for retention.

There was a clear link to job satisfaction, with 50% of those who were dissatisfied saying they are likely to quit, compared with only 10% of those who were satisfied.

Over a fifth (22%) of those who said their workloads are too high said they are likely to quit, compared with only 13% of those whose workloads are about right.

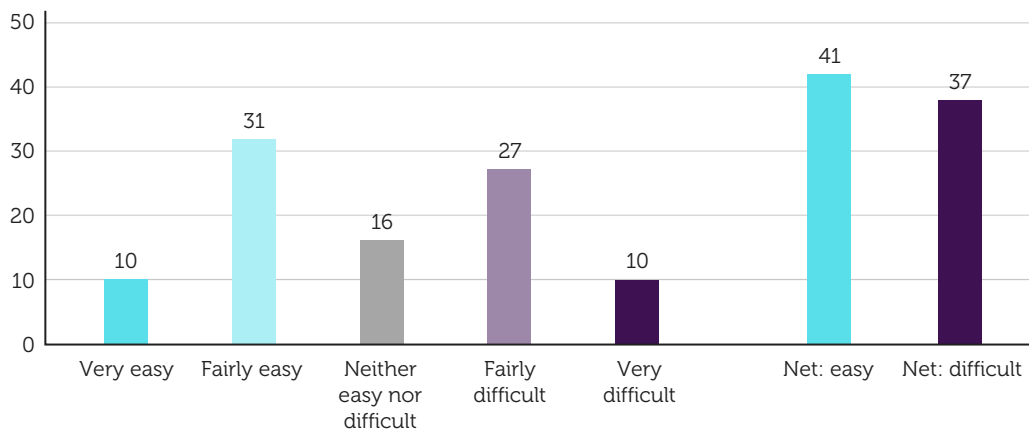
Overqualification is a significant factor here too – 28% of those who feel overqualified were likely to quit, compared with only 14% of those with the right level of qualification.

Confidence in the labour market

In addition to these two questions, the survey asked employees how easy or difficult it would be to find a job at least as good as their current one. Some 41% said it would be easy, while 37% said it would be difficult.

We don't see any differences across gender, age or disability, but there were differences by tenure – those who had been in their jobs for over 10 years were much less likely to say finding an equivalent job would be easy (34%), compared with those with less than five years of service (52%).

Figure 8: Confidence in the labour market (%)
Difficulty finding job at least as good as your current one...



Base: all (n=499).

Underemployment

In addition to the objective measure of hours worked, the survey asked employees to subjectively report how many hours they would like to work, while 'taking into account the need to earn a living'.

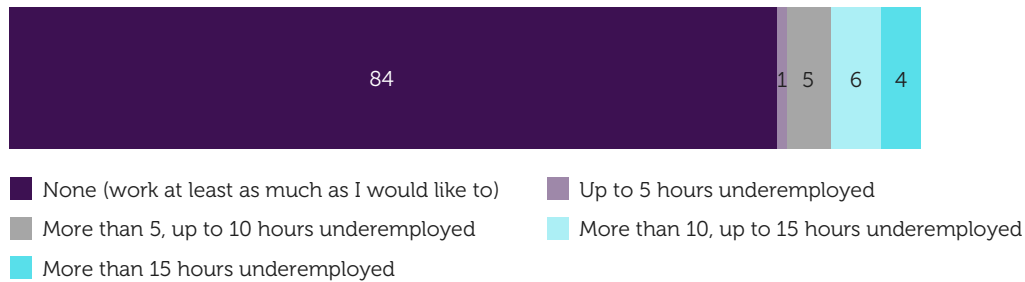
Looking at the difference between the number of hours usually worked per week and how much an individual would like to work per week, we can estimate an employee's level of underemployment.

Results showed that 84% of people work at least as much as they would like to, with around 16% saying they would like to work more than they currently do. A tenth would like to work more than 10 hours per week more than they currently do.

As expected, these numbers are much higher for those in part-time roles and the self-employed, with over a quarter in both groups (26% and 25% respectively) reporting underemployment.

In addition, those who were overqualified as well as those on the lowest incomes were much more likely to be underemployed, with 31% of those earning less than £20,000 reporting this. This shows links to occupational groups, where some of the lowest-paid groups also have the highest rates of part-time working and, indeed, overqualification.

Figure 9: Underemployment (%)



Base: all (n=499).

5

Work–life balance

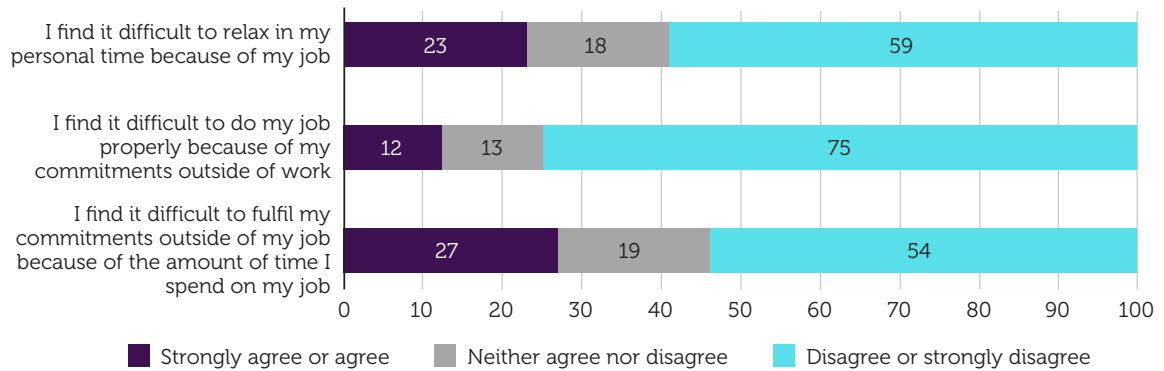
Finding the right balance between our personal and working lives is crucial to our wellbeing. On one hand, work commitments can spill over into our personal lives, and on the other, our personal commitments can impede on the ability to do our jobs properly. These issues were thrown into the spotlight during the pandemic. With the seemingly permanent shift in ways of working, they remain important to discussions about wellbeing and productivity.

Balancing work and personal life

Nearly a quarter (23%) of all employees said they find it hard to relax in their personal time because of their job. This rises to 47% for those who said they have excessive workloads, compared with only 14% of those who say their workload is about right.

Fulfilling commitments outside of their job was difficult for 27% of employees because of the amount of time spent on the job, suggesting that there is some spillover of paid work into personal lives. As above, this is higher (51%) for those who say they have excessive workloads and lower (18%) for those whose workloads are about right.

Figure 10: Balancing work and personal life (%)



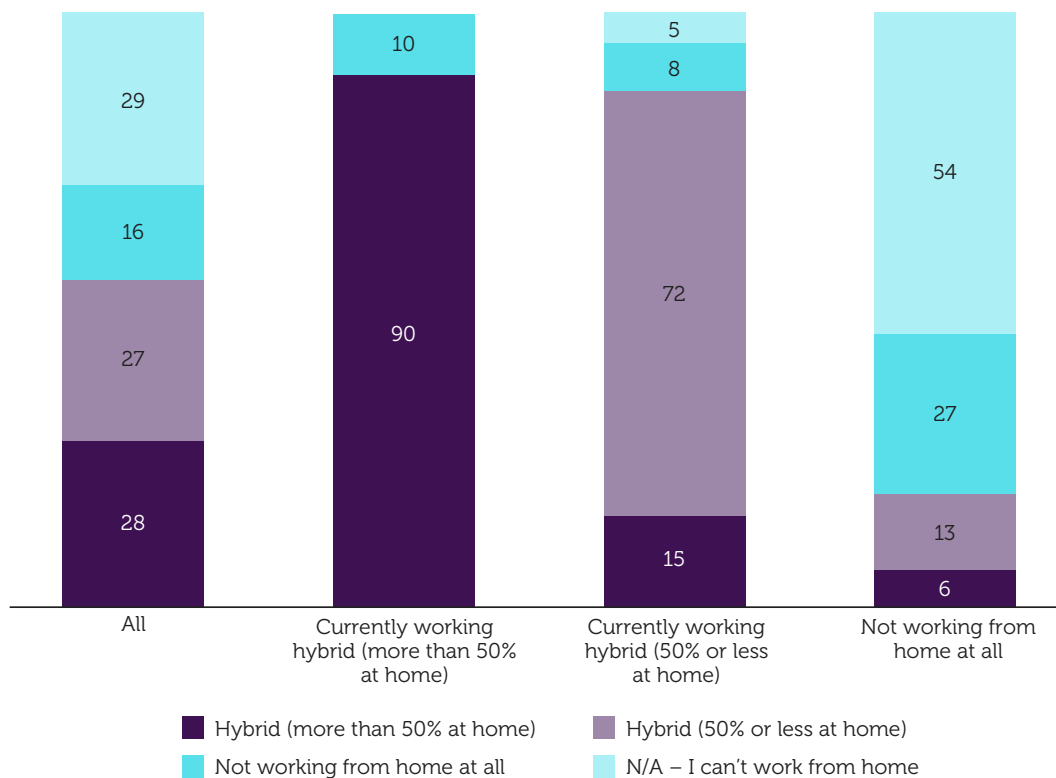
Base: all (n=499).

Conversely, 12% of employees said that they find it difficult to do their job due to commitments outside of work. For those with childcare responsibilities, this rises to 19%, compared with just 8% for those without any caring responsibilities.

Home and hybrid working

The most obvious impact of the pandemic has been the increase in home and hybrid working across Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole. Around half of all employees (49%) work at least some of the time from home – 9% work fully from home, 14% work at home for more than 50% of their time, and another 26% work at home for 50% or less of their time.

Figure 11: Home and hybrid working preferences, by current working pattern (%)



Base: all (n=498); more than 50% at home (n=131); 50% or less at home (n=138); not working from home at all (n=230).

Home and hybrid working patterns also match future working preferences well. This is illustrated by Figure 11, where we see the vast majority of employees across each home/hybrid working pattern want to continue working the way they currently do.

It is important to point out that 29% of Northern Irish employees said that they are in jobs where they can't work from home at all. Another 16% said they do not want to work from home at all. Combined, that's nearly half (45%) of all employees for whom the benefits of flexibility can only be unlocked by looking beyond homeworking. This is crucial not just for individual wellbeing, but also organisational inclusion, retention and fairness.

Informal flexibility

Informal flexibility – flexibility without a formal change in employment contracts – can also enable greater control over the way work interacts with the rest of our lives. The survey found that 69% of all employees reported good informal flexibility in their jobs, saying they would find taking some time off for personal or family matters easy.

There is a direct correlation with income – employees on lower incomes reported less informal flexibility. This is due to lower-paid occupations generally reporting lower flexibility, illustrated by difference across homeworking too – 77% of those who primarily work from home would find taking time off easy, compared with only 64% of those not working from home at all.

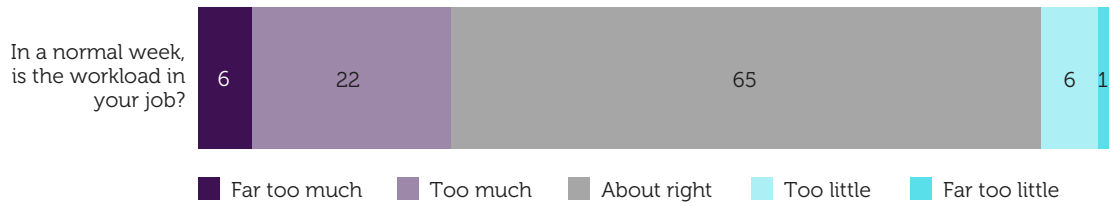
6 Job design and nature of work

The next dimension of job quality the survey looked at is job design and the nature of work, covering a broad range of issues, from job autonomy and complexity, skills development and overqualification, to workloads and personal meaningfulness of work.

Workload

In addition to concerns over the *length of time* spent in work, the *relative intensity* of work is increasingly significant to our understanding of the quality of work. Therefore, the survey asked employees to rate their workload in a normal week. Figure 12 summarises the results and shows that 28% of employees report their workload as too much or far too much.

Figure 12: Workload (%)



Base: all (n=493).

The impact of high workloads is highlighted throughout this report – whether that be poorer wellbeing, job satisfaction or work–life balance. There aren’t significant differences by income, which is in line with our previous research showing that high workload is not confined to lower- or higher-paid occupations, and it is the nature of tasks in jobs that is to blame.

However, disabled employees reported higher workloads than those without disabilities, with 41% saying their workloads are too high (versus 26%). Conversely, those educated to postgraduate level were more likely to say their workloads are too low. This is linked to feelings of overqualification, which is much higher for postgraduates.

Job autonomy and complexity

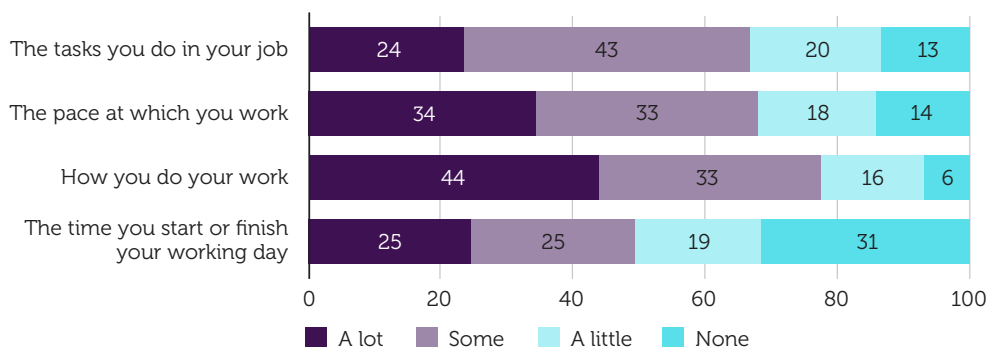
The level of control over one’s job is an intrinsic component of the nature of work – this can be control over time, pace or tasks in one’s job. In addition, the survey looked at job complexity, examining the nature of an employee’s job and whether it involves interesting or monotonous tasks as well as problem-solving (see Figures 13 and 14).

Both job autonomy and job complexity are closely linked to occupations. This can be illustrated by highlighting differences by homeworking. For example, while 67% of those who primarily work from home said they have a lot or some influence over the time they start or finish their working day, this falls to 36% for those who don’t work from home at all.

Similarly, 54% of those not working from home at all report monotonous tasks always or often, compared with only 35% of those primarily working from home.

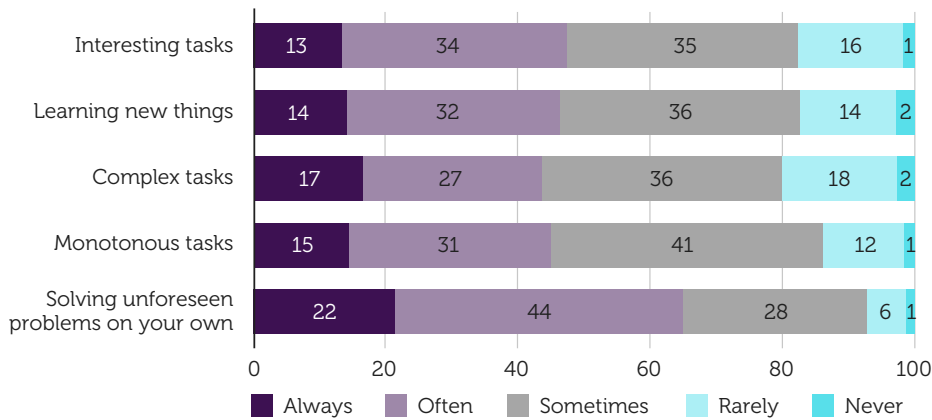
Figure 13: Influence over aspects of work (%)

How much influence do you have over...?



Base: all who are not self-employed (n=442).

Figure 14: Job complexity (%)
How often does your job involve...?

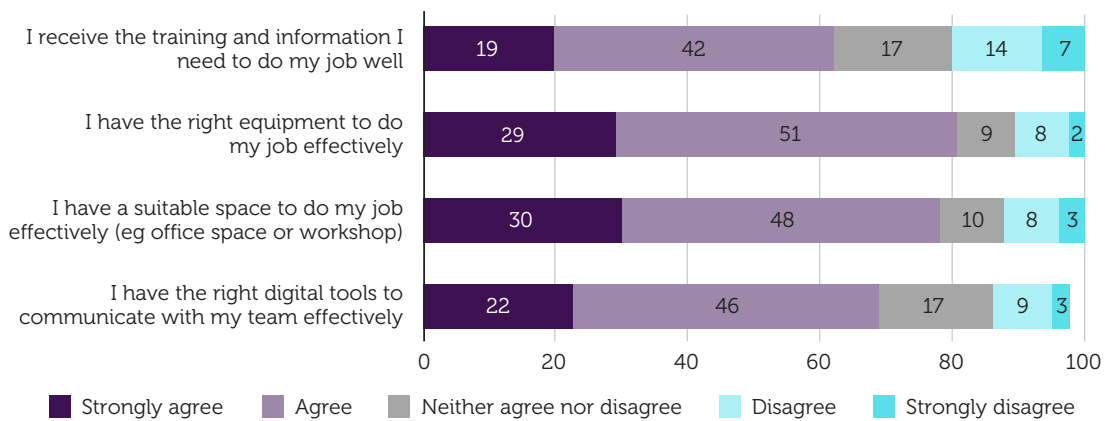


Base: all (n=499).

Adequate work resources

Having access to the right resources, equipment, training and suitable premises to do the job effectively is crucial to our performance at work. As illustrated in Figure 15, employees generally reported good access to resources, with the biggest gaps around training. A fifth didn't think they received the training and information to do their jobs well. Those who primarily work from home were more likely to report better access to digital tools as well as a suitable space to work, compared with those not working from home at all.

Figure 15: Adequacy of work resources (%)



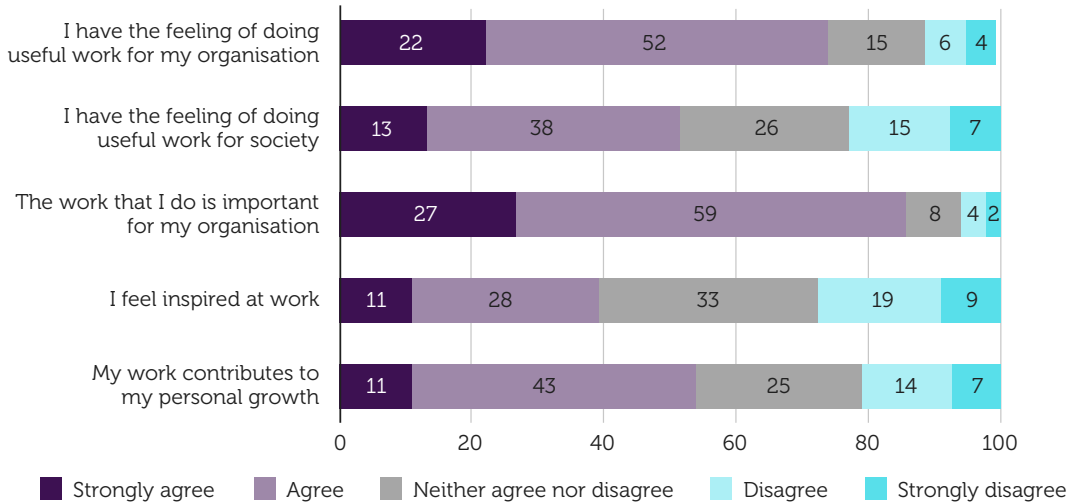
Base: all (n=499).

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

Meaningful work

Our survey also looks at whether employees feel they make a useful contribution through their work – be it to the organisation or to society as a whole. It also asked employees to say whether they feel inspired at work, are growing personally and feel important – all indicators of fulfilling and meaningful work. The results are summarised in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Feelings on meaningfulness of work (%)



Base: all (n=499), for society, inspired and growth questions; all who are not freelancers (n=485), for organisation questions.

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

There is a significant correlation with job and life satisfaction across all questions, with those agreeing with the statements significantly more likely to be satisfied than dissatisfied with their jobs and their lives.

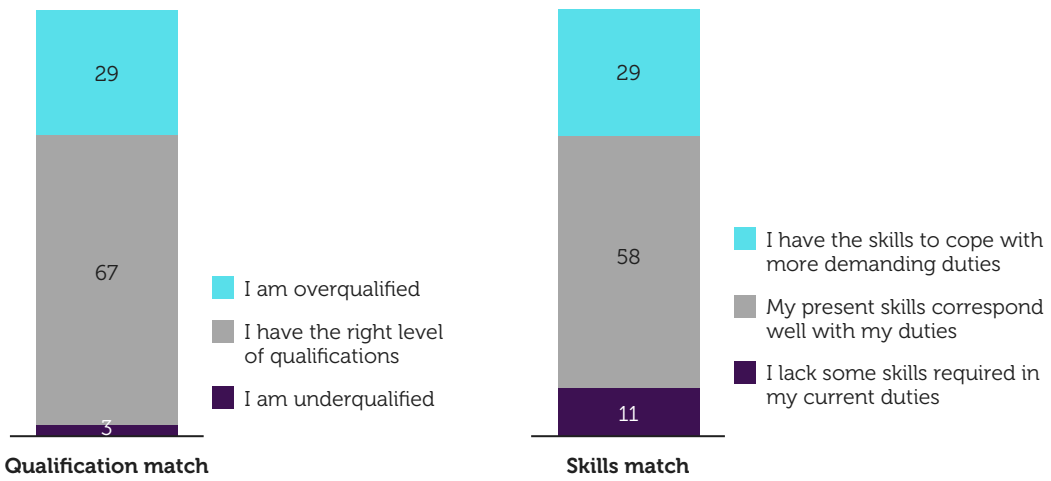
Furthermore, we also see a strong relationship with performance, with the exception of the society question. Employees who feel they are in meaningful jobs are much more likely to say they are proficient and competent at their jobs, but are also willing to go above and beyond for their colleagues and the organisation.

Skills and qualification match

Widespread skills and labour shortages following the pandemic have pushed skills higher up the employer and policy-maker agendas. Skills mismatches and overqualification impact individual job quality and wellbeing, but also performance and therefore organisational productivity. Consequently, this impacts Northern Ireland's economic growth as a whole.

The majority (67%) of employees felt their qualifications match their job well, but 29% felt overqualified. The same proportion of employees felt they have the skills to cope with more demanding duties. Over half (58%) said their skills match their current duties well.

Figure 17: Qualification and skills matching (%)



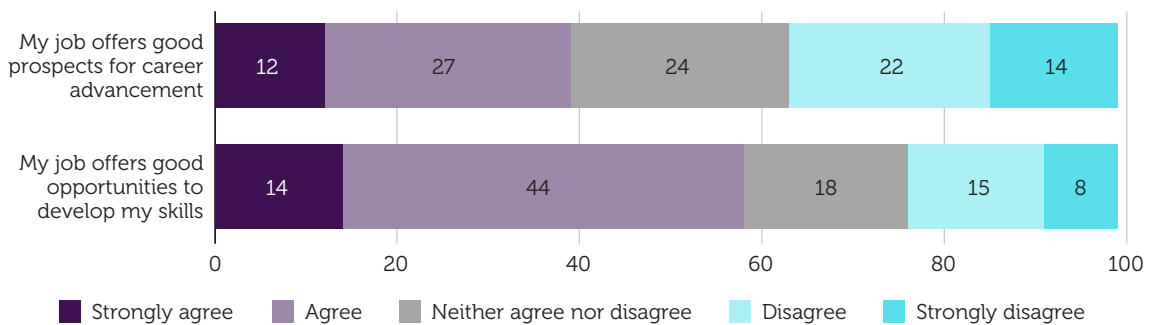
Base: all (n=499).
 Note: doesn't add up to 100% due to 'don't know' answers.

Underlining the problem of overqualification, we find that 36% of those who are educated to degree level or above feel overqualified in their current job. This does not change by tenure, contesting the notion that graduates only stay in non-graduate jobs temporarily.

Personal and career development

To tackle skills and labour shortages, many employers have increased focus on skills development and career progression to boost retention as well as help with recruitment. Employee perception of skills and career opportunities is summarised in Figure 18.

Figure 18: Personal and career development (%)



Base: all (n=499).
 Note: doesn't add up to 100% due to 'don't know' answers.

Across both measures, those on the highest incomes reported higher levels of agreement. This again shows a link to occupations, providing further evidence of the gaps in training for those in some of the lower occupational groups.

On career advancement, we also see older workers with lower levels of agreement – only 22% said their job offers good career advancement opportunities, which is partly a reflection of the stage of their working lives.

Training participation

The findings from the latest UK-wide [Employer Skills Survey](#) have shown that employer investment in training has dropped over the last 10 years across all parts of the UK, which is concerning given the importance of skills to our economy. Our survey asked employees to select the types of training they engaged in over the last year. Three-quarters engaged in some form of training, with the most common types being:

- on-the-job or in-the-flow-of-work training or learning (46%)
- online learning (42%)
- learning from peers (19%)
- blended learning (19%)
- in-house development programmes (14%)
- instructor-led training delivered off the job (14%)
- external conferences, workshops and events (11%).

Worryingly, a fifth of all employees had not engaged in any form of training at all. Across the UK, there are clear differences here by organisational size, with 28% of SME employees not having had any training, compared with 15% for those in 250+ organisations.

Only 3% of all employees said they received some training around emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. And while those who received training found it overwhelmingly useful, the lowest proportion of usefulness was recorded by those engaging in online training.

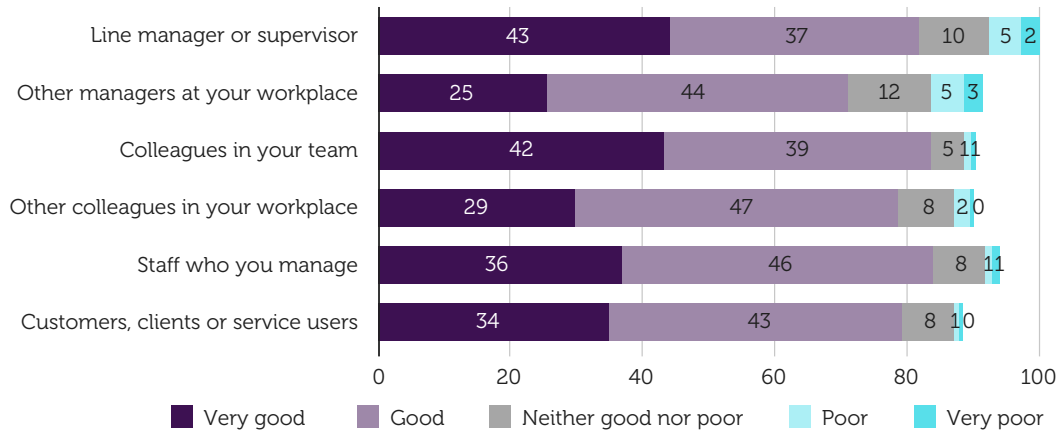
7 Relationships at work

Relationships in both our working and personal lives are a key part of our overall quality of life. Good relationships at work improve the way organisations function, with bad relationships negatively affecting performance. They also impact individuals' health and wellbeing, their motivation and commitment, as well as their performance.

Quality of relationships

The vast majority of employees reported good or very good relationships with those the survey asked about – managers and colleagues, as well as managed staff (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Quality of relationships at work (%)



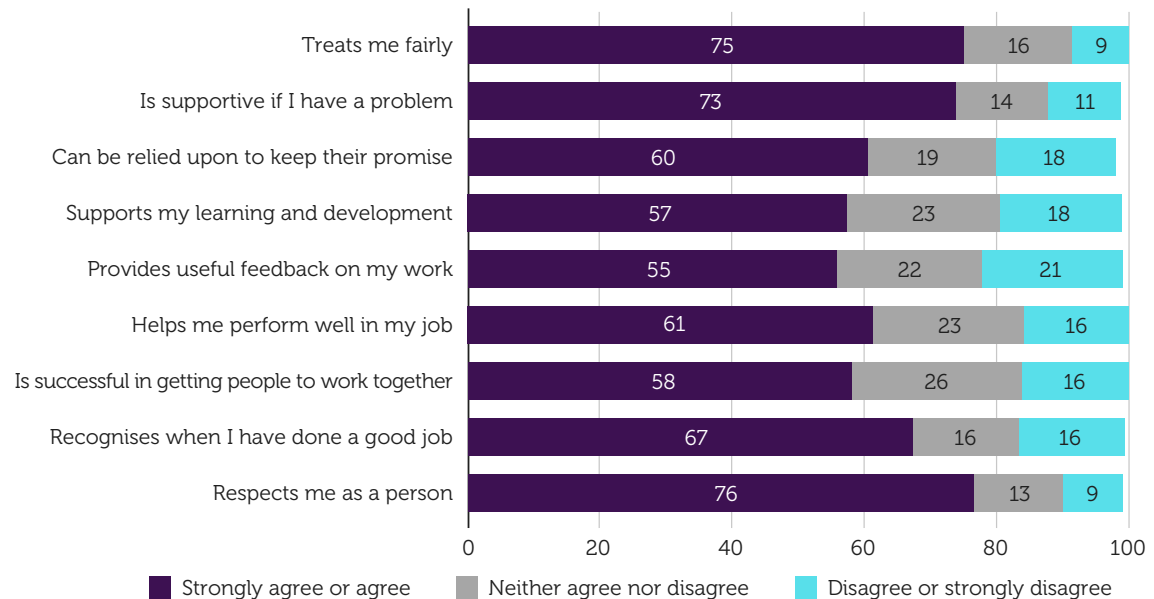
Base: all (n=499), for colleague and customer questions; all with line manager (n=432), for manager questions; all who are managers themselves (n=224), for staff managed question.
 Note: doesn't add up to 100% due to 'N/A' answers.

There is a strong correlation between job satisfaction and good relationships at work. Those who rated their relationships as poor reported much lower job satisfaction – this was true for every relationship we asked about. We also see positive workplace relationships associated with higher task performance (for example, achieving the objectives of the job) and contextual performance (for example, helping colleagues or making innovative suggestions).

Quality of line management

In addition to the quality of relationships in the workplace, the survey included a series of questions that focused specifically on the relationship with managers. Given the importance of good people management to productivity, this is a key element of good work. Figure 20 shows a summary of the findings.

Figure 20: Relationships with managers (%)
My immediate supervisor, line manager or boss...



Base: all with line manager (n=432).
 Note: doesn't add up to 100% due to 'N/A' answers.

The biggest gaps seem to be around providing feedback and supporting learning and development – both of which are skills that can be developed through training.

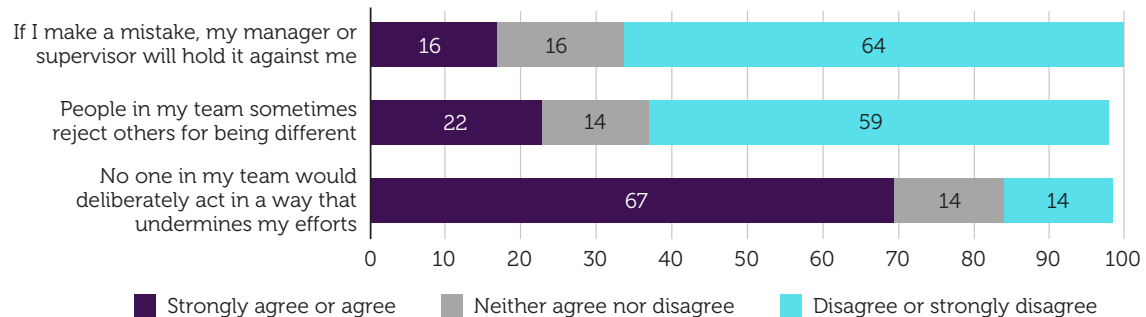
Disabled employees, however, reported a poorer relationship with managers. Most notably, only 57% believed that their boss is supportive if they have a problem (versus 75% of those without disabilities), 59% agree that their boss respects them as a person (versus 78%) and 29% disagree that their boss helps them perform well (versus 14%).

Good management is also crucial to job quality overall. As with the findings around relationships at work, we see a very strong link between the quality of line manager relationships and job satisfaction. Across all nine questions asked, over 80% of those who agreed with the statements were satisfied with their jobs. For those who disagreed, job satisfaction was below 35% on every question.

Psychological safety

Our survey asked a series of questions to uncover whether a ‘blame culture’ exists in an organisation – where people are fearful about making mistakes or expressing their opinions because of negative consequences. The responses are summarised in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Psychological safety at work (%)



Base: all with line manager (n=423), for manager question; all working adults (n=442), for other questions.
 Note: doesn't add up to 100% due to 'N/A' and 'don't know' answers.

Again, we find that disabled employees do poorer on some aspects of psychological safety. In line with the above findings about manager relationships, nearly a third (30%) of disabled employees say that their manager would hold a mistake against them, compared with only 15% for those without disabilities.

Conflict at work

Workplace conflict is one of the focus areas in this year's *CIPD Good Work Index*. The 2024 survey re-ran a set of questions on workplace conflict from 2019 to explore trends and differences across the workforce. We don't have comparable data for Northern Ireland, but an analysis of single-year data also reveals interesting findings.

Overall, we see that nearly a quarter (23%) of employees personally experienced some type of workplace conflict, with the highest incidence of:

- being undermined and/or humiliated in a job (12%)
- be shouted at or in a very heated argument (10%)
- verbal abuse or insult (10%)
- discriminatory behaviour because of a protected characteristic (5%).

We find that incidence of conflict is considerably higher for disabled employees (35% experienced conflict, compared with 21% of non-disabled employees) and for women regarding some specific types of conflict too.

Being undermined or humiliated was reported by 16% of women (versus 8% of men) and 22% of disabled employees (versus 10% non-disabled). While only 5% experienced discriminatory behaviour, this too is higher for disabled employees (13%).

Looking at the impact of conflict on job quality, we find strong negative associations with job satisfaction, life satisfaction as well as wellbeing – especially the impact of work on health. For example, while 79% of those who did not experience conflict are satisfied with their job, only 57% of those who did are. Half of those who experienced conflict said their work impacts negatively on their mental health, compared with 17% of those without conflict. Furthermore, 32% of those who experienced conflict said they were likely to quit their jobs, compared with only 13% of those who hadn't experienced conflict.

Those who experienced conflict were asked about how they dealt with it:

- I just let it go (47%)
- discussion with my manager and/or HR (30%)
- informal discussion with the other person (21%)
- discussion with someone outside of work (eg family, friend) (19%)
- I decided to look for a new job (8%).

Lastly, there was a relatively even split in answers to whether the matter has been resolved – 37% felt it was fully resolved, 34% partly and 29% felt it was not resolved.

8 Voice and representation

Meaningful employee voice allows workers to communicate concerns, provide feedback and make a difference. The survey looked at various forms of employee voice, including individual and collective voice as well as direct engagement with managers.

Voice channels and their effectiveness

Figure 22 shows that the most common channels available to employees were one-to-one meetings with managers and team meetings, available to 53% and 41% of employees, respectively, followed by employee surveys at 30%.

Of concern is that nearly a fifth (19%) of employees said they had no voice channel at work at all. This is linked primarily to organisation size, with 26% of all employees working for organisations with fewer than 50 employees saying they had no voice channel at all, compared with 13% of those in 250+ organisations and only 9% in 1,000+ organisations.

Figure 22: Voice channels available to workers (%)



Base: all except those running their own business or working as a freelancer/contractor for multiple clients (n=442).

Considering that we include team meetings as well as one-to-one meetings with managers in this question, it is concerning to see such high proportions of SME employees reporting no voice channels at all.

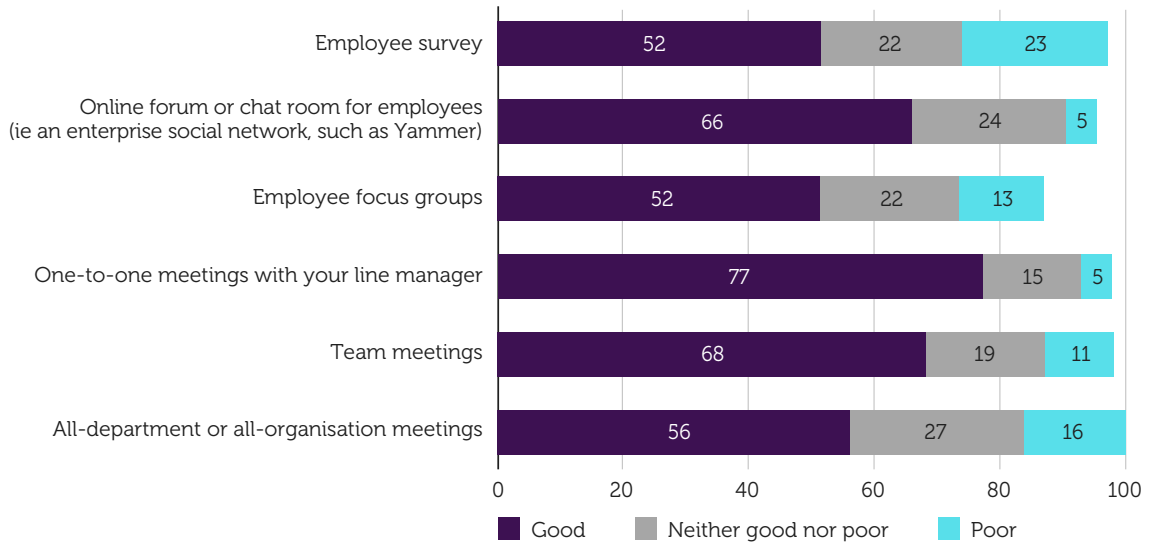
For those who said they did not have any voice channels at work, we asked them to select which ones they would use if they were available to them.

Over a third (37%) said none, indicating a worrying level of disengagement from their workplaces. The most popular channel was one-to-one meetings with managers (39%), followed by team meetings (16%) and employee surveys (15%).

Out of those who had channels available, the majority said they used them to express views to senior management, with more than 90% of employees having used manager meetings, surveys, team meetings or organisational meetings.

Figure 23, however, shows that there are considerable differences between the perceived effectiveness of these channels for expressing views to senior management. Where we have a big enough sample, employee surveys are seen as the poorest, followed by all-department or all-organisation meetings – highlighting that these can only be a part of effective voice in organisations.

Figure 23: Perceived effectiveness of voice channels (%)



Base: those who used employee surveys (n=170); online forum (n=57); employee focus groups (n=53); one-to-one meetings with line manager (n=242); team meetings (n=194); all-department meetings (n=81).

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

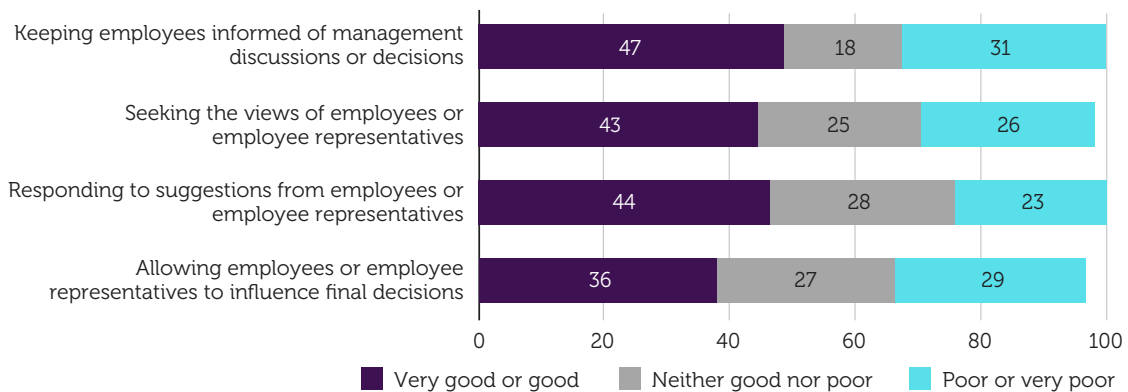
Managerial openness

In addition to questions on relationships with managers and managerial ratings, our survey also asked about the openness of employees' managers to employee views, which is a useful indicator of employee voice. Figure 24 summarises the findings across four questions.

Managers were rated the poorest on the last question, with just over a third (36%) of employees rating their managers as good or very good in allowing influence over final decisions. Just under a third (29%) rate them poor or very poor.

Across three of the four questions (keeping informed being the exception), employees working in SMEs rate their managers better than those working for 250+ organisations. Interestingly, we don't see these differences in the other sets of management quality questions.

Figure 24: Employee ratings of their managers (%)



Base: all who are not self-employed (n=442).

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

9 Health and wellbeing

The last dimension in our good work framework is health and wellbeing. Not only did this become a priority during the pandemic, but the recent links between economic inactivity and long-term ill health are of increasing interest to policy-makers too. The importance of good mental and physical health goes beyond individual wellbeing, with a clear relationship between poor health and work engagement and job satisfaction.

Mental and physical health

Over half of all employees reported good physical and mental health – 62% said their mental health is good and 64% said their physical health is good. We found significant differences by age around mental health, with workers in the oldest age bracket reporting the best mental health (73% of over-55s said it was good).

Looking at the breakdown in reported conditions, we saw that 55% of employees have experienced some form of physical health condition, while 45% have experienced a mental health condition over the last 12 months.

Older workers (aged 45+) were more likely to report a physical condition than those in younger age groups. On the other hand, women were more likely to report a non-physical condition than men.

The most common reported conditions were:

- backache or other bone, joint or muscle problems (38%)
- anxiety (29%)
- sleep problems (28%)
- depression (16%).

Disappointingly, albeit unsurprisingly, the majority of employees did not discuss their condition with their employer. As many as 79% of those suffering from panic attacks did not speak to their employer about it. The only exception was COVID-19, where 57% of employees discussed it with their employer.

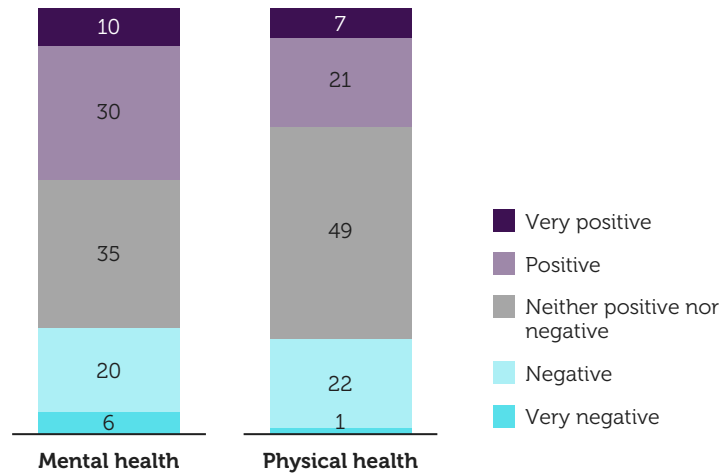
Impact of work on health

In some cases, work can be a contributory factor to the conditions described above. The survey asked employees what impact their work has on their general mental and physical health. The breakdown of answers is in Figure 25.

We found older workers more likely to report a positive impact of work on mental health – some 55% reported a positive impact. This is primarily linked to a much higher proportion of older workers being self-employed and working part-time, with these workers much more likely to be positive about their jobs (50% of self-employed and 51% of part-time report a positive impact, compared with only 34% of full-time employees).

Again, however, we find disabled employees reporting poorer job quality. Nearly two-fifths (39%) of them say work has a negative impact on their mental health, compared with only 23% of those without disabilities.

Figure 25: Work's impact on mental and physical health (%)



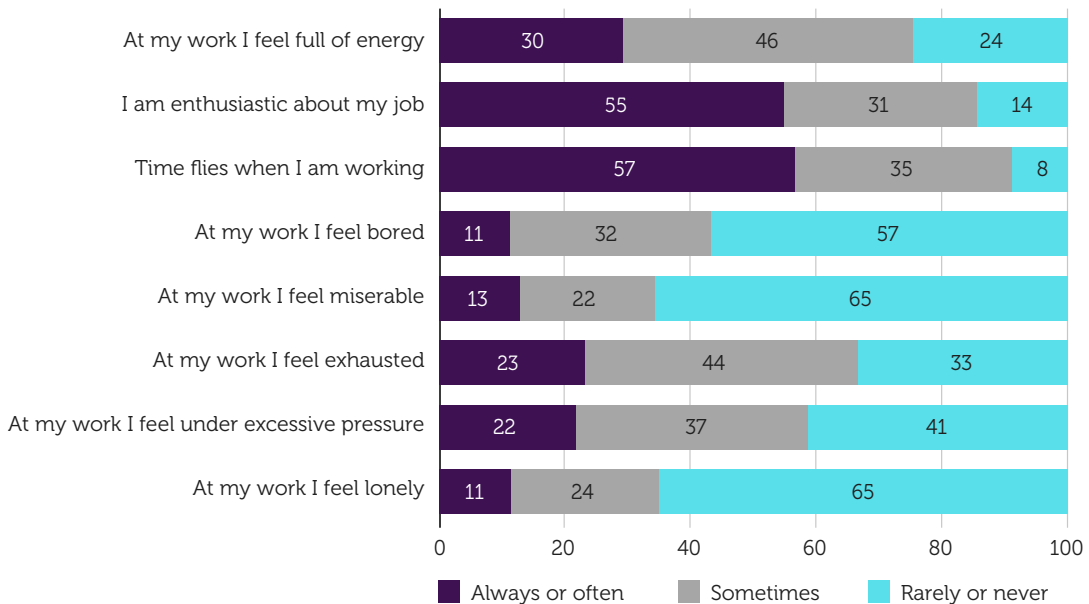
Base: mental health (n=493); physical health (n=492).

Subjective feelings in work

In addition to reporting physical and non-physical conditions and the overall impact of work on health, the survey also looks at the subjective feelings workers have in jobs. These can be a good indication of the impact work has on individuals' mental health. Figure 26 summarises the answers to the question of how employees feel at their work.

There are some clear associations between occupations and management level across these questions and they serve as a good illustration of the trade-offs some make between elements of job quality. For example, we find senior managers report higher stress levels (being under excessive pressure) and feelings of exhaustion than those without managerial responsibility.

Figure 26: How workers feel at work (%)



Base: all (n=499).

10

Conclusions and recommendations

The *CIPD Good Work Index* series seeks to shine a light on the inequalities and trade-offs between elements of good work. The findings and conclusions inform policy-makers, employers and HR practitioners who want to improve job quality across Northern Ireland.

Evidence in this report, and beyond, increasingly shows that improving work for employees not only impacts their wellbeing, but also their job satisfaction, enthusiasm and performance. For employers, these contribute positively to retention and recruitment, which in turn boosts both the organisation's and the country's productivity.

Some of these improvements do not require significant investment, but they start with an understanding of the scale of the problem and making use of resources that are readily available.

For example, giving employees a meaningful voice through a range of channels does not need to be expensive. Likewise, the first steps towards a health and wellbeing strategy can start with existing resources. And fostering an open and honest culture must start from the top and requires leadership, rather than investment.

Our key recommendations include:

- Given the relationships between management quality and a range of job quality metrics, this should be a priority. Providing managers with the time and training to manage staff well can make a considerable difference.
- In addition to the persistently high disability employment gap, we find several areas of concern in this report. Ensure that disabled employees receive the support they need and that colleagues and managers in particular are equipped to work collaboratively and supportively with disabled colleagues.
- Make health and wellbeing an organisational priority and show leadership. Be holistic and look at physical, mental, social and financial wellbeing.
- Ensure that your organisational values are well articulated and emphasised to employees, supporting enthusiasm and engagement.
- Minimise scope for inappropriate behaviour through training and an open organisational culture, while putting in place policies to manage and resolve conflict.
- Review flexible working policies and ensure that a broad range of formal and informal arrangements are available. Flexible working is not synonymous with remote working.

- Boost skills development and career progression opportunities by addressing training gaps – in scale, type, and quality of training.
- Understand skills mismatches in your organisation and make efforts to explore upskilling or redeployment options with employees.
- Explore how job design (no matter how well established) could be reviewed to boost job autonomy and job complexity for staff.
- Don't just use employee surveys as a primary voice channel, but look at the broad range of voice options, and their perceived effectiveness, to ensure meaningful dialogue.



CIPD

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
151 The Broadway London SW19 1JQ United Kingdom
T +44 (0)20 8612 6200 F +44 (0)20 8612 6201
E cipd@cipd.co.uk W cipd.org

Incorporated by Royal Charter (RC000758)
Registered as a charity in England and Wales (1079797)
Scotland (SC045154) and Ireland (20100827)

Issued: June 2024 Reference: 8625 © CIPD 2024