



CIPD

Report
June 2024

CIPD Good Work Index 2024

Wales

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: Wales

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1 Introduction

In 2024, the UK labour market continues to demonstrate resilience despite challenges relating to increased living costs and ongoing geopolitical tensions. Levels of employment remain relatively high, as do unfilled vacancies. Nevertheless, concerns over productivity and the quality of jobs remain as urgent as ever. In Wales, while most people benefit from satisfying work that provides them with autonomy and flexibility, there are still large majorities who feel disillusioned with their contribution to their organisations and regard a job as little more than a pay cheque. The need for employers to support their people remains a priority.

The University of Warwick's Institute for Employment Research produced a document for the Welsh Government in 2020, aiming to provide an estimate of the likely trajectory of the labour market from 2017 to 2027. Among these projections, employment was expected to grow over this decade, with women especially likely to be moving into work in Wales. However, the economy's demand for labour over this period could be more than 11 times greater than this increase in employment, due to the need to replace those leaving the workforce. In 2024, there is a clear need for employers to attract and recruit a diverse workforce and retain them by providing opportunities to develop and progress and have autonomy to work in ways that suit their needs. The *CIPD Good Work Index* provides a picture of employees' perspectives, giving employers and people professionals vital insight into what may drive and motivate workers.

Each year, we survey more than 5,000 workers across different sectors and occupations about key aspects of their employment, covering seven dimensions of job quality:

- pay and benefits
- employment contracts
- work–life balance
- job design
- relationships at work
- employee voice
- health and wellbeing.

This report highlights headline findings from the *CIPD Good Work Index 2024* survey report, with a focus on working lives in Wales. The Wales sample comprises 505 respondents of the total 5,496 employees across the UK. This being the second year of having a dedicated report for Wales, we are able to make year-on-year comparisons between 2023 and 2024.

The data is weighted to be representative of employees in Wales, with the exception of comparisons across regions and countries of the UK and across years, where the data is representative of employees in the UK as a whole.

2 Key findings

- Overall job satisfaction in Wales is high in 2024 – over two-thirds of employees are satisfied with their job.
- Pay satisfaction also shows some promising improvements in 2024, as nearly half of respondents feel their pay reflects their achievements and responsibilities.
- Limited work centrality remains an issue this year. While changes are minimal, nearly half of respondents view work as purely transactional, while levels of discretionary effort have dropped.
- Conflict, a major focus area for 2024, is an issue in Wales, where nearly a quarter of employees report experiencing conflict in the last 12 months.
- Women are particularly at risk of experiencing conflict in work.
- Over half of respondents simply let incidents of conflict go, rather than escalating them.
- Employee engagement remains positive, with fairly high levels of enthusiasm at work and low levels of boredom and exhaustion.
- Employees gain meaning through doing important work for their employer, but feel less positive about work's impact on both wider society and their intrinsic sense of achievement.
- In Wales, the effect of work on mental and physical health remains mixed to negative, with physical health most at risk this year.
- Flexibility and work–life balance are especially positive in Wales this year, as over three-quarters of respondents find it easy to take time off during work hours.
- Levels of autonomy over ways of working remain positive, with small improvements in each area.
- Perceptions of opportunities to develop and advance at work are extremely mixed in Wales in 2024.

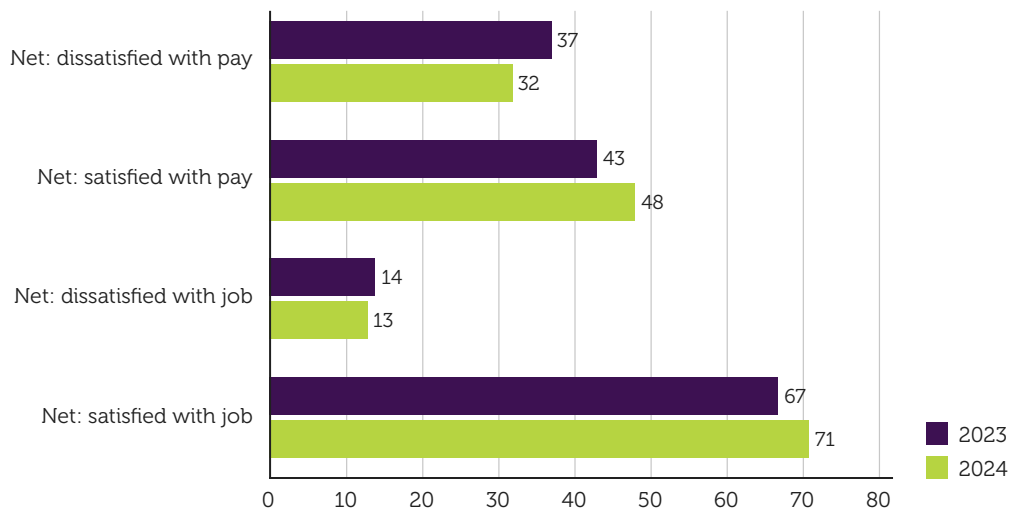
3 Job satisfaction

Overall job satisfaction in Wales remains high in 2024. There is a small positive shift this year, and Wales is comparable with the rest of the UK, where around two-thirds of employees are satisfied with their jobs (see Figure 1).

Satisfaction with pay, while still significantly lower than job satisfaction, shows positive signs this year. Nearly half of staff say they are being paid appropriately in their roles given their responsibilities and achievements, while under a third feel dissatisfied. Although there is still plenty of room

for improvement, this positive jump in pay satisfaction from 2023 may lead us to a couple of conclusions. It might follow that workers are beginning to leverage greater power and autonomy over their salary, but perceptions of managers' role in allowing their staff to do this are unchanged from 2023. What is perhaps more likely is that employees are simply glad to be in stable work, and have lowered their salary expectations as a result of increased living costs and a slower job market.

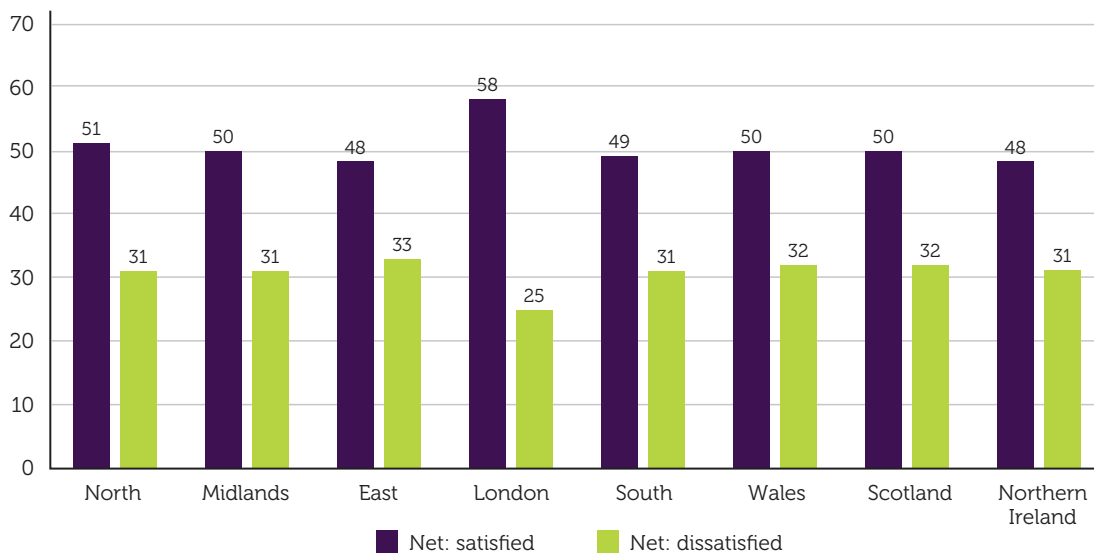
Figure 1: Job and pay satisfaction, 2023–24 (% agreement)



Base: 2023 (n=544); 2024 (n=505).

Wales is comparable with the other UK nations and regions with regard to pay satisfaction, except London, which is an outlier (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Satisfaction with pay, by UK nations and regions (%)



Base: all (n=5,477).

4 Conflict

Wales is comparable with the rest of the UK when it comes to personal experiences of conflict at work, with just under a quarter of respondents having experienced a type of conflict in the last 12 months (see Figure 3).

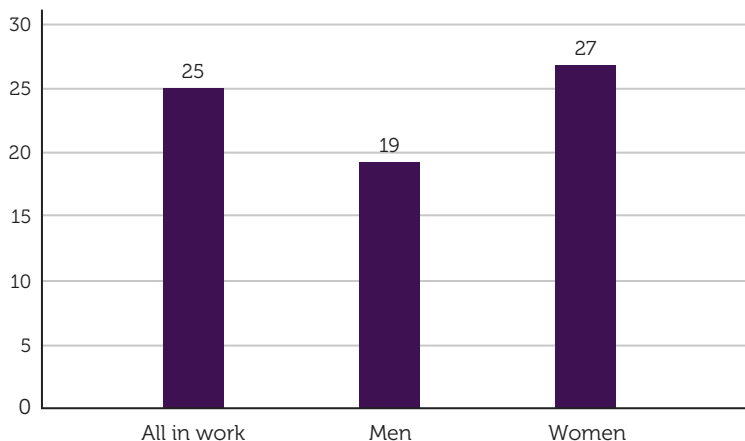
Figure 3: Experience of conflict, by UK nations and regions (%)



Base: all (n=5,539).

We see a stark difference in experiences of conflict by gender, with women significantly more likely than men to have experienced any conflict (see Figure 4).

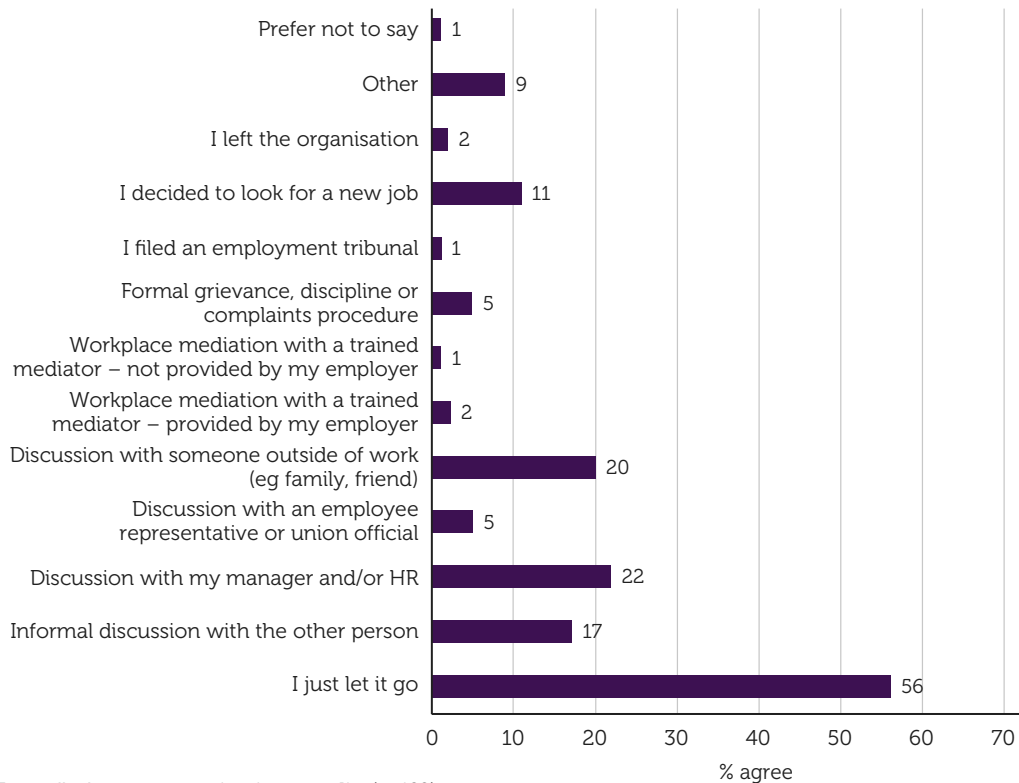
Figure 4: Experience of conflict in the last 12 months, by gender (%)



Base: men (n=255); women (n=250).

Many incidents of conflict are let go, rather than escalated. More encouraging is that conflict is fairly regularly discussed – either with the other person involved, a manager, HR or friends and family (see Figure 5). Conflict rarely escalates to a formal grievance or discipline being issued, while more employees tend to look for another job outside of the organisation as a result of conflict.

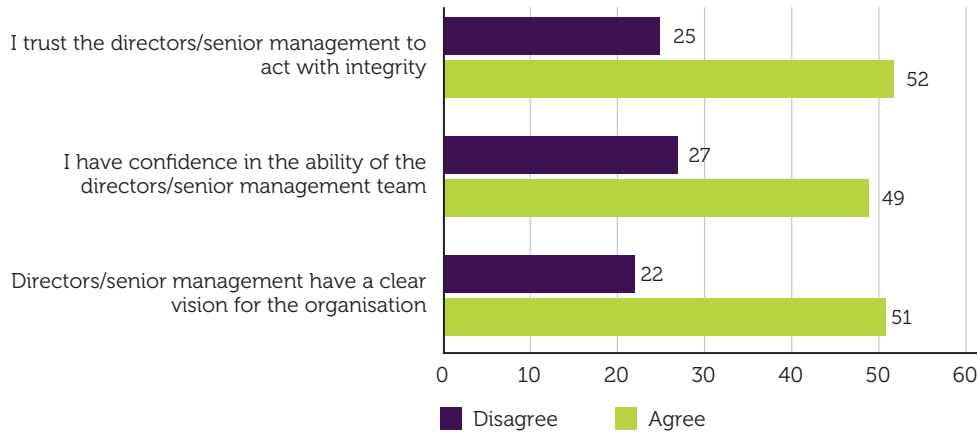
Figure 5: How employees dealt with conflict (%)



Base: all who report experiencing a conflict (n=122).

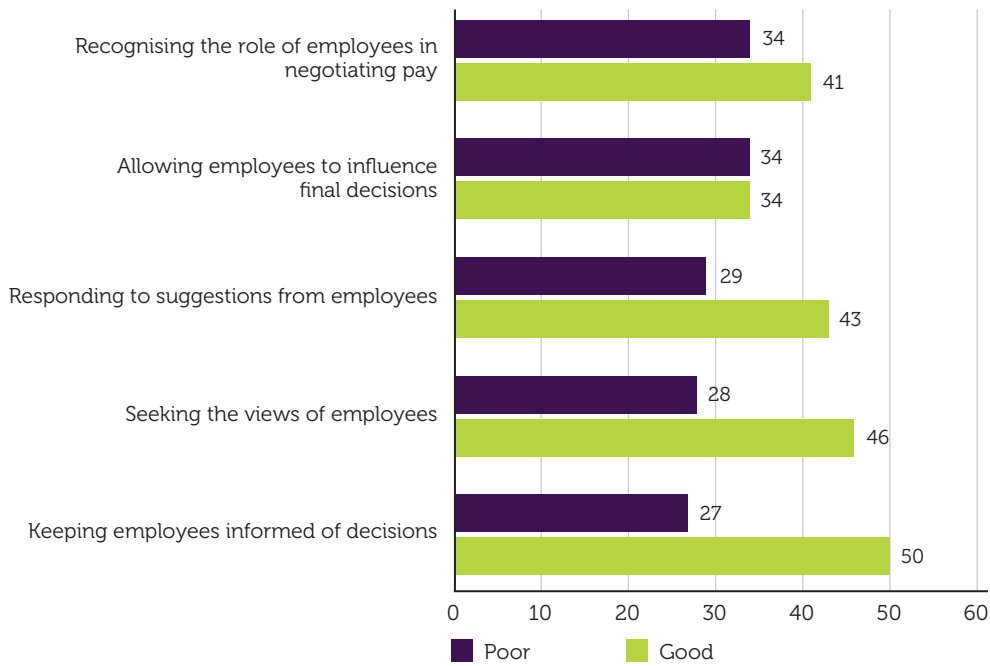
Looking at employee perceptions of senior leaders and line managers, we see trends that may help explain why staff tend to let incidents of conflict go rather than escalating them. Employees have mixed feelings towards senior leaders – around a quarter lack confidence in them, do not trust them to act with integrity and fail to see their vision (see Figure 6). Moreover, similar numbers rate managers’ ability to encourage employee voice – keeping them informed of decisions, seeking their views, responding to their suggestions and allowing them to influence decisions and pay negotiations – as poor (see Figure 7). So we can see how it is possible for employers to inadvertently foster a workplace climate where senior leaders don’t have the trust and confidence of their staff, and managers fail to facilitate speaking up (perhaps due to not being trained to do so), leading to staff staying quiet about issues at work.

Figure 6: Employee perceptions of senior management (%)



Base: all except those running their own business or working as a freelancer/contractor (n=408).

Figure 7: Employee perceptions of managers' ability to encourage voice through... (%)



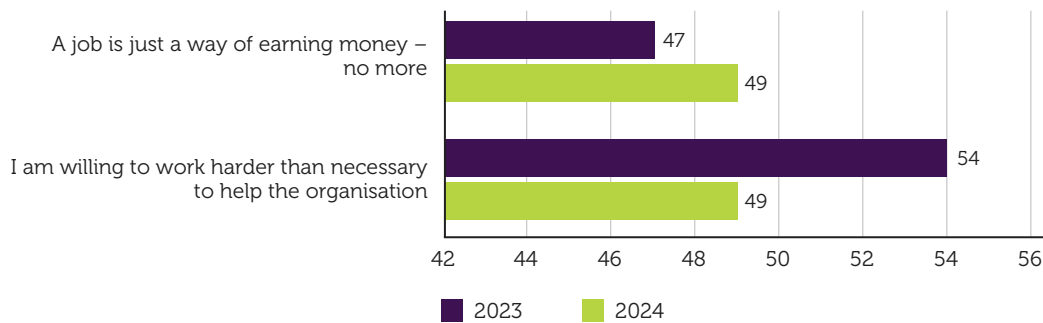
Base: all those who are not self-employed (n=407).

5 Work centrality

Work centrality, or the degree to which work plays a central role in people’s lives, was a key focus of analysis in 2023, and we see some interesting patterns emerging in 2024 (see Figure 8). While changes in Wales were only minimal, we see that the number of employees who view work as transactional – purely for money – has reached nearly 50% in 2024. Wales is comparable with the rest of the UK in this aspect (see Figure 9).

As for discretionary effort, the number of employees willing to work harder than needed to help their organisation has dropped below half this year. There are only small differences among regions and nations of the UK, but Wales sits at the lower end of the scale for this measure (see Figure 10).

Figure 8: Measures of work centrality and discretionary effort, 2023–24 (% agreement)



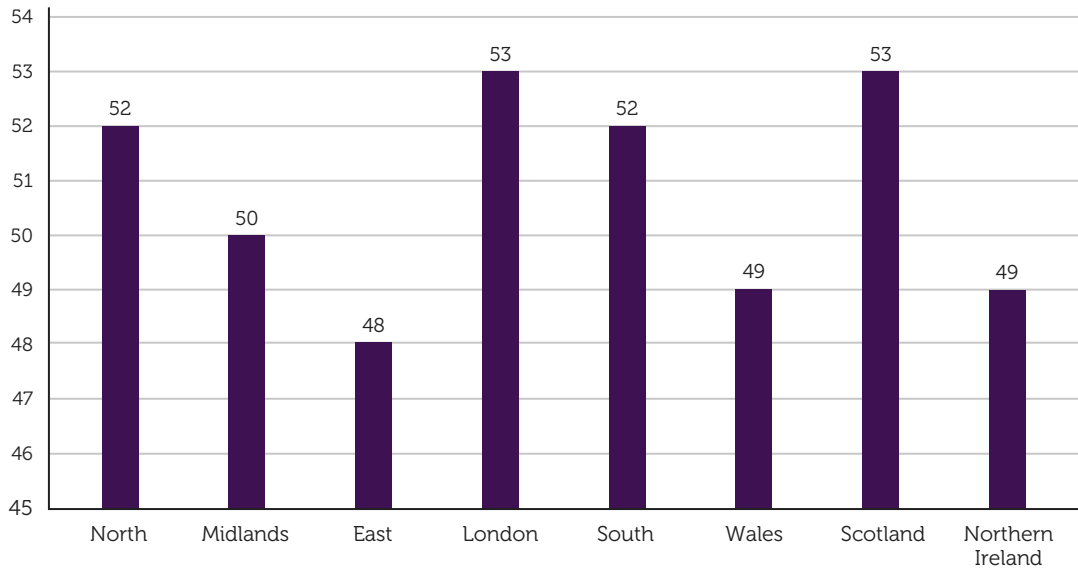
Base: 2023 (n=471); 2024 (n=428).

Figure 9: A job is just a way of earning money, by UK nations and regions (%)



Base: all working adults (n=5,482).

Figure 10: Willingness to work harder than needed, by UK nations and regions (%)

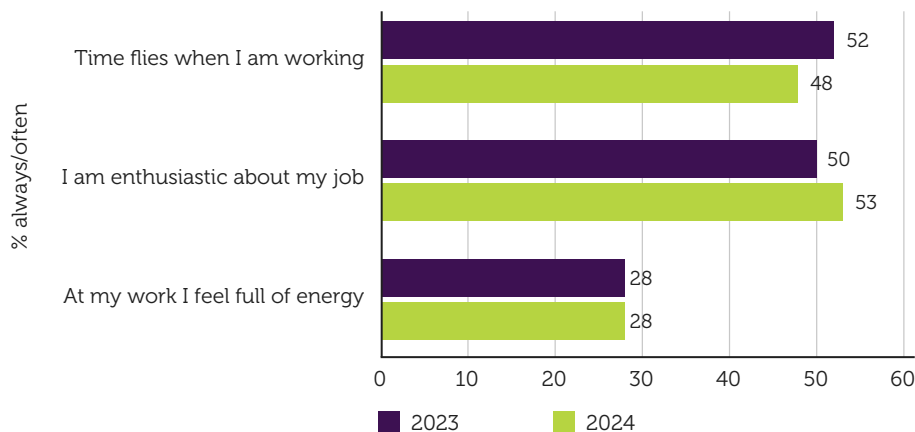


Base: all who are not self-employed (n=4,854).

6 Employee engagement

Levels of employee engagement remained fairly high in 2024 and have shown only minor changes since last year. Around half of respondents always or often feel enthusiastic about their job, and a similar proportion said that time flies when working. More concerning is reported energy levels, with only around a quarter of respondents saying they always or often felt full of energy at work (see Figure 11).

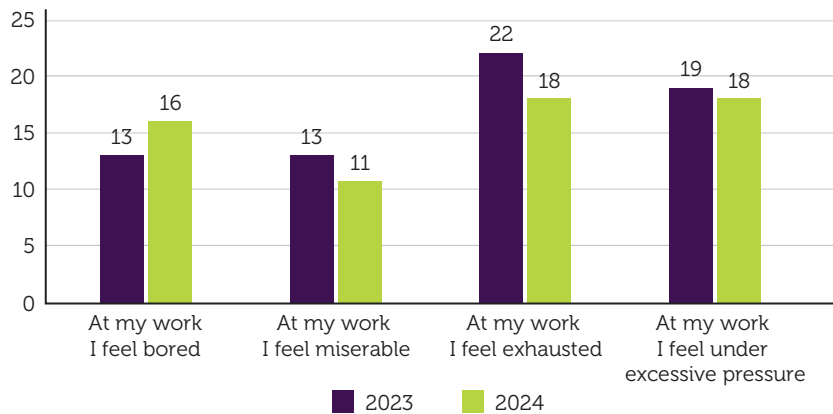
Figure 11: Engagement with work, 2023–24 (% always/often)



Base: 2023 (n=545); 2024 (n=505).

In Wales this year, negative feelings towards work remain very infrequent. Feeling bored or miserable was especially rare, while feelings of exhaustion or being under excessive pressure, although higher, have both decreased slightly since last year (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Feelings towards work, 2023–24 (% always/often)

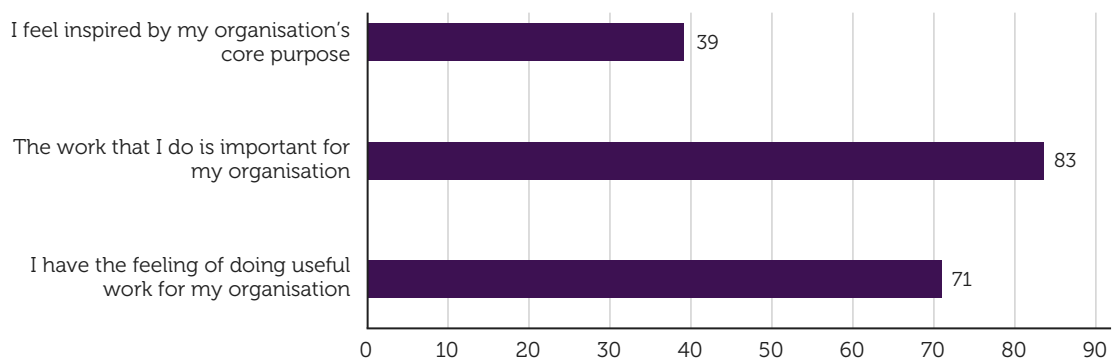


Base: 2023 (n=545); 2024 (n=505).

7 Meaningful work

Meaningful work measures can be split into three areas to determine how employees attempt to make a difference and strive for purpose in the workplace. First is at the organisational level, where most employees in Wales perceive their work as important for their organisation, and slightly fewer feel they do useful work. However, under half feel inspired by their organisation’s core purpose (see Figure 13).

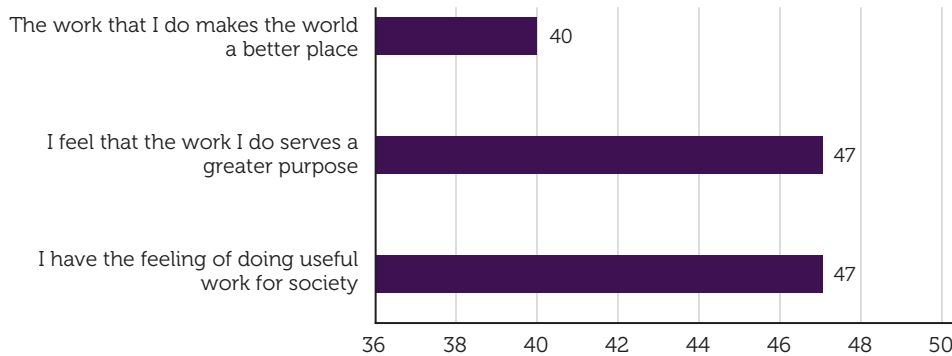
Figure 13: Meaningful work at organisational level (%)



Base: all (n=505).

Second, looking beyond the organisation to the societal level, we see further evidence that people struggle to get meaning from their work beyond its importance for the organisation. Notably, under half feel their work serves a greater purpose, is useful for society, or makes the world a better place (see Figure 14).

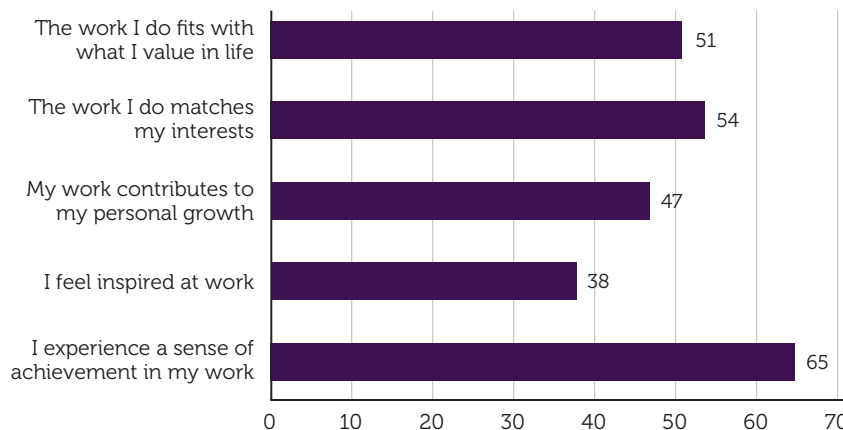
Figure 14: Meaningful work at societal level (%)



Base: all (n=505).

Third, looking at the personal level, feelings are again mixed. Only around half of respondents feel their work fits with what they value in life, matches their interests and contributes to personal growth. Even fewer feel inspired at work, aligning with the earlier findings around organisational purpose. But more encouragingly, over two-thirds feel a sense of achievement at work (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Meaningful work at personal level (%)

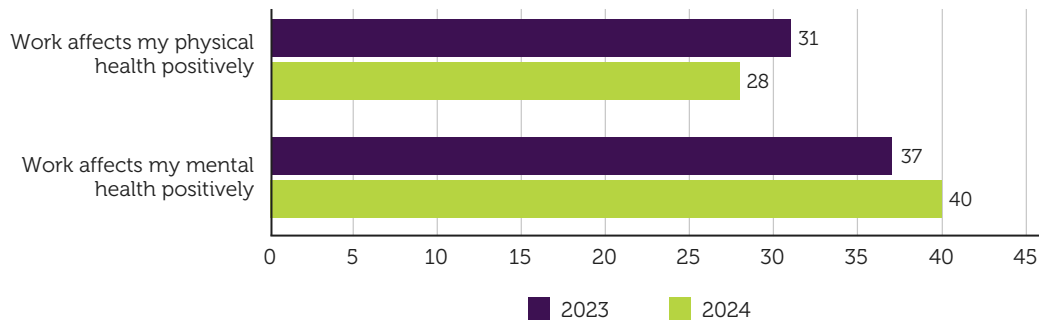


Base: all (n=505).

8 Wellbeing

The effect of work on mental and physical health remains relatively mixed, with little change from last year. There are only small differences across the UK. It is noteworthy that the impact of work on physical health has been viewed slightly more negatively this year, while its impact on mental health has been viewed slightly more positively (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Effect of work on mental and physical health, 2023–24 (%)

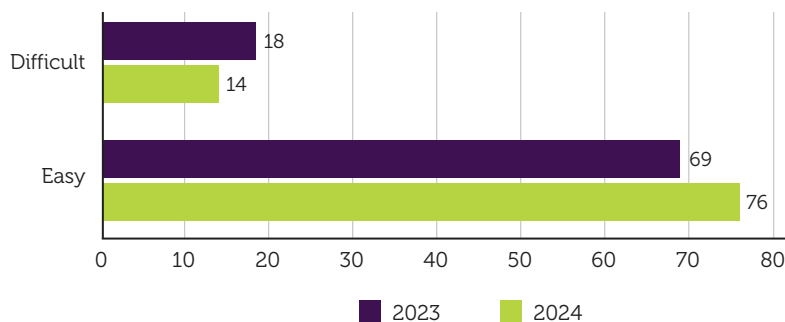


Base: 2023 (n=533); 2024 (n=496).

9 Work–life balance

Flexibility and work–life balance continue to be benefits enjoyed by many employees in Wales this year, with over three-quarters finding it easy to take time off during work hours to take care of personal or family matters. This has shown a positive increase from 2023 (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Ease of taking time off during work hours, 2023–24 (%)

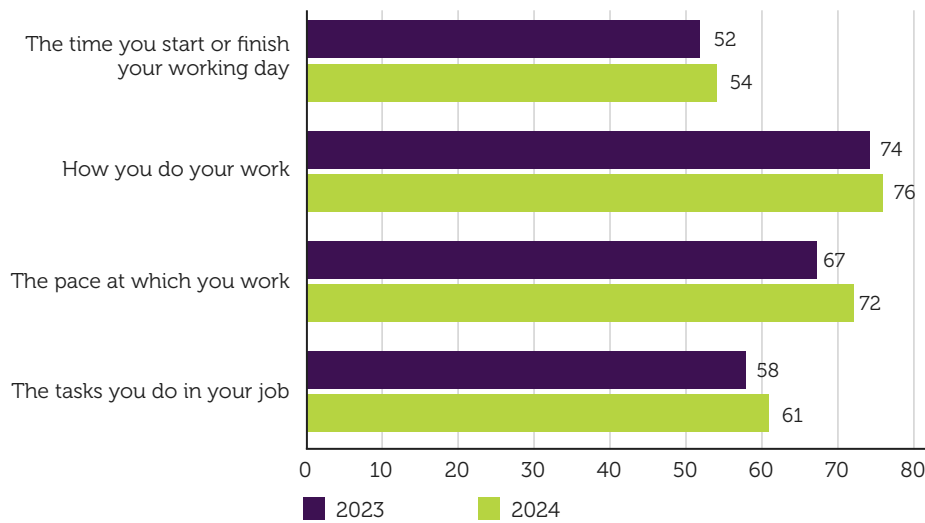


Base: 2023 (n=535); 2024 (n=498).

10 Autonomy

Employees in Wales maintain a good level of control and influence over the ways in which they work, particularly how they work and the pace at which they work. Changes are only small since 2023, but each measure of autonomy shows signs of improvement (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Autonomy over ways of working, 2023–24 (%)



Base: 2023 (n=545); 2024 (n=505).

11 Training and skills

Perceptions of opportunities to develop and advance at work are more mixed among employees. While over half of respondents agree that they receive the training needed to do their job well and have good opportunities to develop in their job, sizeable minorities disagree with these statements. Prospects for career advancement are seen less favourably, with only 30% of respondents agreeing that these are good, and 40% disagreeing (see Figure 19).

Figure 19: Skills development and career advancement opportunities (%)



Base: all (n=505).

12 Conclusion

The picture of working lives in Wales in 2024 is unsurprisingly similar to that in the UK as a whole. Most people are generally satisfied with their job. Other important aspects of job quality are also perceived positively. Notably, many employees in Wales were also able to maintain a healthy work–life balance through flexible working arrangements and, crucially, being afforded autonomy over ways of working.

However, several aspects of job quality stand out as ranking poorly among employees in Wales. Conflict in particular is a major focus area this year, being experienced by around a quarter of the workforce, with women especially at risk compared with men. Combined with the mixed sentiment towards senior leaders and managers, the findings show there is still much to be done to get to an environment where employees feel able to escalate incidents of conflict and feel listened to.

Work centrality was again limited this year, with a larger proportion of people viewing work as simply for money and being less willing to go the extra mile to help their organisation. Of itself, a transactional relationship with work isn't necessarily negative. But given that many also saw their work as only important to their organisation and found little meaning in it beyond that, there is a risk of work becoming unfulfilling and uninspiring.

Add to that the limited experience of developing and progressing at work, and employers face an interesting challenge to re-engage their people and inspire discretionary effort, while being realistic about the fact that some may be perfectly happy to have a transactional relationship with work.

The findings in this report are vital in helping the CIPD and the people profession identify the elements of job quality most in need of attention. Below are some practical recommendations for employers, people professionals and managers:

- Senior leaders should encourage and role-model having open conversations about difficult subjects to create an environment where employees feel empowered to use their voice when they experience conflict in the workplace.
- Employers must provide managers with the training and skills they need to resolve workplace conflict at an early, informal stage, before incidents escalate.
- An open working climate where employee voice is encouraged will only go so far on its own. Employers and people professionals must also create policies which crack down on poor behaviour at work.
- Engage and motivate your workforce by ensuring they feel able to influence how they work to suit their life outside of work.

- Provide employees with sufficient support to ensure they feel cared for and valued in their jobs. This is likely to increase their identification with the organisation and leave them feeling more engaged and committed.
- Improve development opportunities at work through understanding the unique skills of different employees within the organisation, designing jobs to optimise those skills, and investing in deliberate and well-considered training that explores different techniques.



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