



**CIPD**

Summary report  
and practical guidance  
June 2023

# **CIPD Good** **Work Index 2023**

North of England

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.

Summary report and practical guidance

# CIPD Good Work Index 2023: North of England

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## Publication information

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# 1 Introduction

Good work in the UK undoubtedly looks different in 2023. The cost-of-living crisis and prevailing geopolitical tensions have meant that a lot of uncertainty remains in many people's personal and working lives, and employers have a real responsibility to support their people. These issues are prevalent in the north of England too, where although most employees are satisfied with their jobs and experience good relationships at work, many are also experiencing hardship in their working lives. Notably financial distress and clear discontent and engagement among public sector workers.

Northern England has a higher amount of low-wage work, skills gaps and poor utilisation of people's skills in the workplace, according to research from the CIPD 2022 *Skills Policy in the North* report.

To help overcome this, the CIPD has worked with the region's metro mayors in Greater Manchester, Liverpool, North of Tyne and West Yorkshire to develop good/fair work charters. These charters aim to encourage and support more employers – in their respective city region – to improve employment standards and working practices to help tackle low productivity and weak investment in skills.

There is a clear need for assessment and improvement of job quality in the north of England. This report seeks to highlight the areas of most importance.

We believe that work can and should be a force for good. Measuring good work or job quality is increasingly acknowledged as central to assessing employment itself, our relationship to our work, its impact on our lives, and how we can make improvements to working life, where possible.

The CIPD Good Work Index provides an annual snapshot of job quality in the UK, giving insight to drive improvement in working lives.

Each year, we survey more than 5,000 workers across different sectors and occupations about key aspects of their work and employment.

Our model covers seven dimensions of job quality:

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

This short report highlights headline findings from the *CIPD Good Work Index 2023* survey report with a focus on the north of England, across the seven dimensions of job quality outlined above. The north of England sample comprises 952 respondents of the total 5,139 employees across the UK.

The data is weighted to be representative of employees in northern England, 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

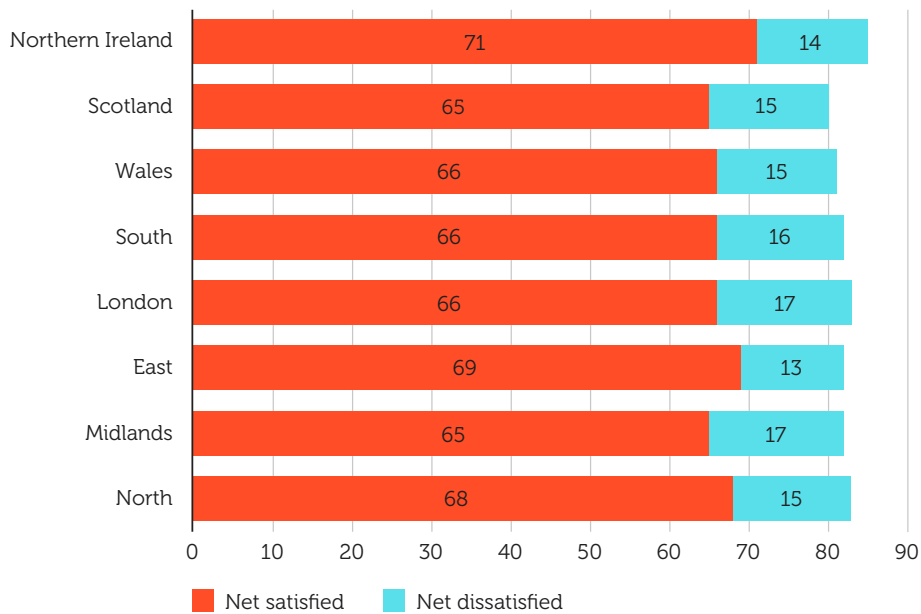
- Overall job satisfaction remains steady and generally positive in 2023. Over two-thirds of respondents in the north of England are satisfied with their job.
- Most relationships at work are strong in 2023, particularly those with line managers, team members and line reports. These have remained stable over the last few years.
- The discontent of public sector workers in the UK-wide sample carries over to the north of England, where those in the public sector are more dissatisfied than their private sector counterparts with pay and non-pay-related issues.
- Specifically, public sector workers are more likely to feel the negative effects of work on their mental health, and are more likely to feel excessive pressure, exhaustion and boredom at work.
- The effect of work on both mental and physical health is relatively negative and has worsened in 2023 compared with previous years.
- Workers are also showing signs of a decline in engagement with work in 2023 compared with previous years.
- Work has become slightly less central to people's lives this year. Fewer respondents indicate a willingness to work harder than needed to help their organisation, while more see their job as transactional – purely a way of earning money.
- As with the rest of the UK in 2023, keeping up with bills and commitments has become more difficult in the north of England.
- Positively, most people are able to take advantage of both formal and informal flexibility in their jobs.
- Perceptions of managers' ability to enable employee voice are mixed, but have remained relatively positive in 2023.
- This year, employees have mixed views on their ability to find a job as good as their current one, if they needed to. However, job security remains fairly high – most people feel it is unlikely they will lose their job.
- Most employees maintain a strong level of control and influence over the ways in which they work in 2023.

# 3 Job satisfaction

## Overall satisfaction

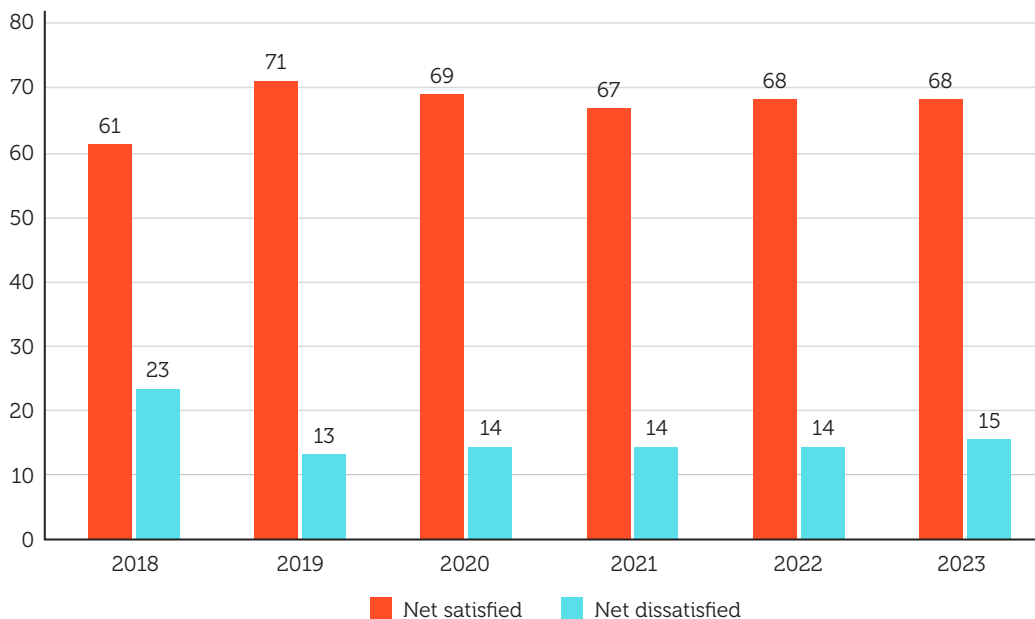
Overall job satisfaction in the north of England is generally positive in 2023 and is comparable with other regions in the UK. The figure has remained positive since before the pandemic.

**Figure 1: Overall job satisfaction in the UK, by country and region (%)**



Base: all (n=5,139).

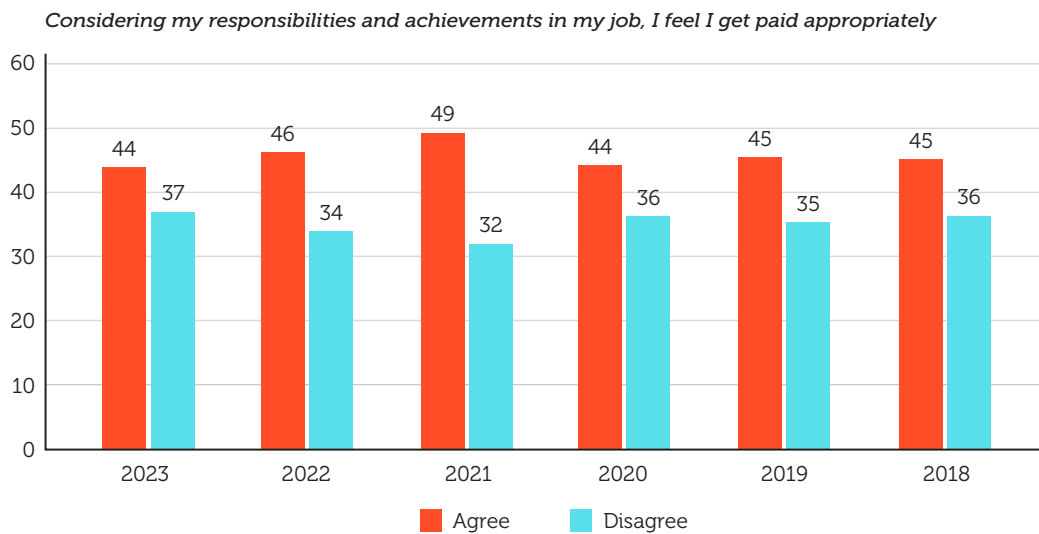
**Figure 2: Overall job satisfaction in the north of England, 2018–23 (%)**



Base: 2023 (n=952); 2022 (n=1,268); 2021 (n=1,240); 2020 (n=1,414); 2019 (n=1,132); 2018 (n=1,270).

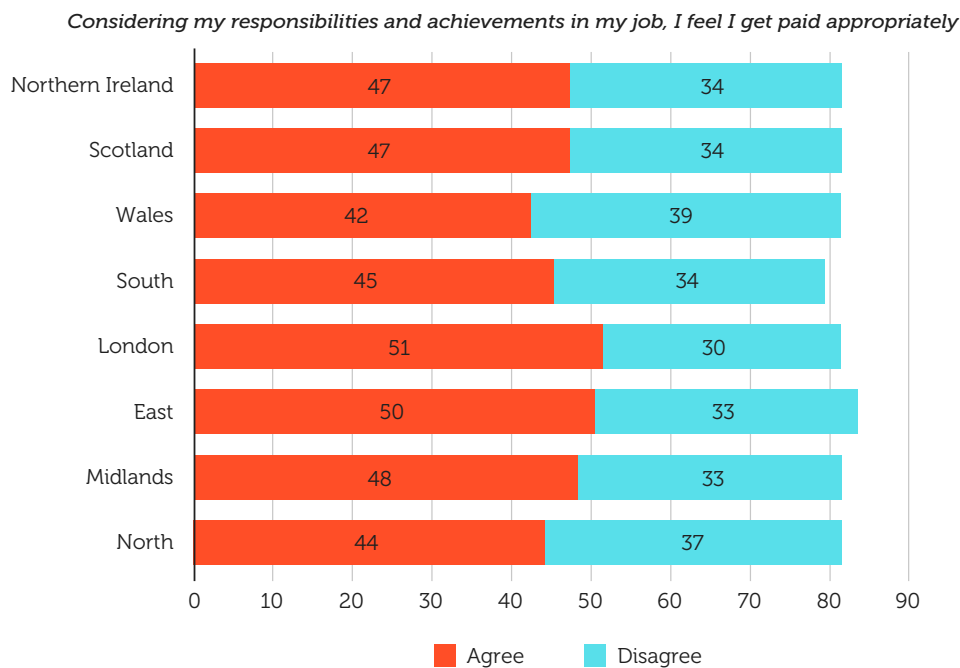
Respondents offer mixed opinions on satisfaction with pay, however. Less than half of employees in the north of England this year feel they get paid appropriately given their responsibilities and achievements. This figure has remained steady since 2018. While differences across the UK are minimal, employees in the north of England indicate lower pay satisfaction than all others countries and regions in the UK, apart from Wales.

**Figure 3: Satisfaction with pay in the north of England, 2018–23 (%)**



Base: 2023 (n=952); 2022 (n=1,268); 2021 (n=1,240); 2020 (n=1,414); 2019 (n=1,132); 2018 (n=1,270).

**Figure 4: Job satisfaction in the UK, by country and region (%)**

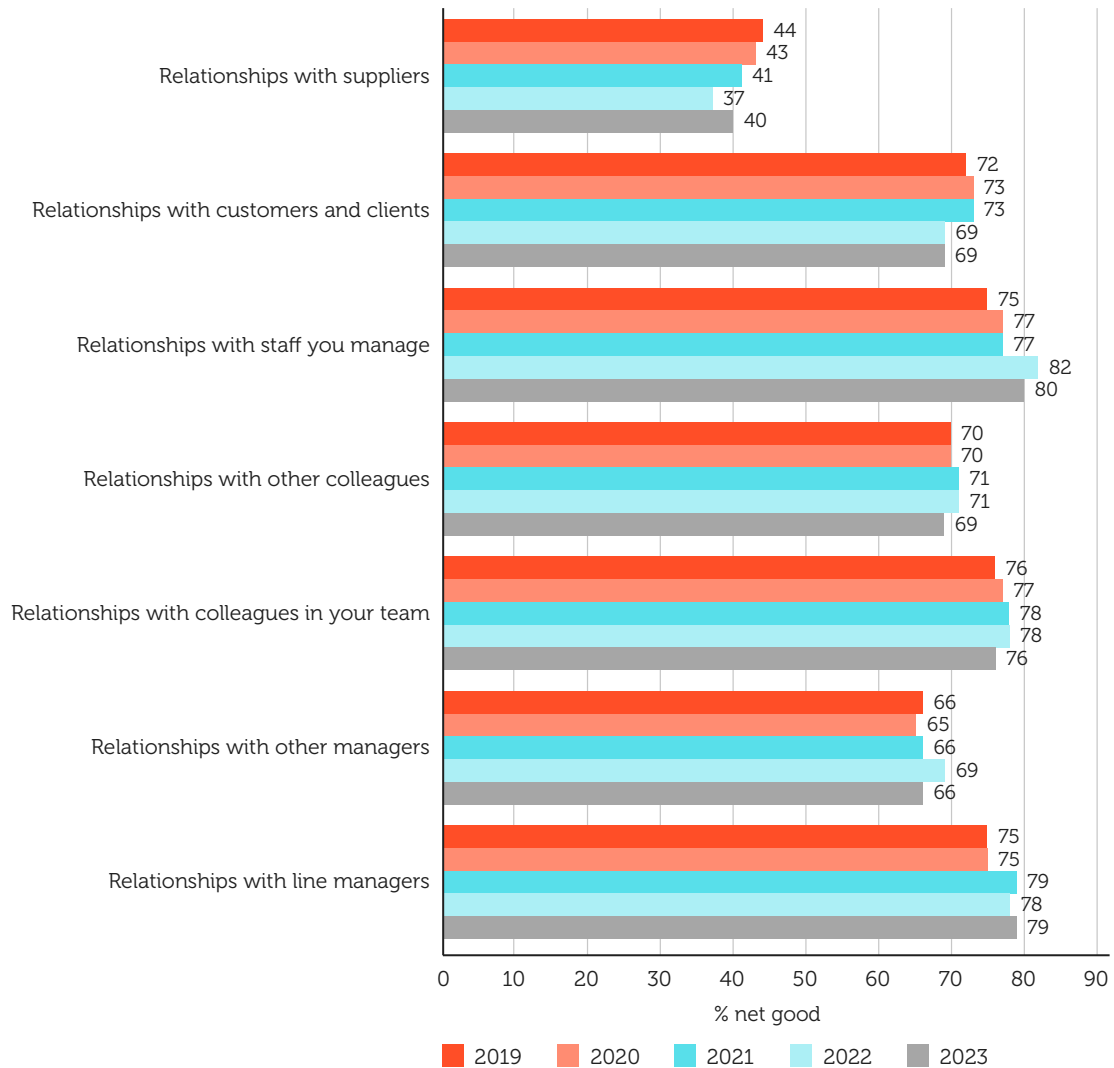


Base: all (n=5,139).

# 4 Relationships at work

Respondents generally indicate good-quality relationships at work in 2023. Particularly positive are relationships with line managers, team members and line reports. These relationships vary over time, but have stayed relatively stable.

**Figure 5: Percentage of respondents who report their relationships as 'good', 2019–23 (%)**



Base: 2023 (n=952); 2022 (n=1,268); 2021 (n=1,240); 2020 (n=1,414); 2019 (n=1,132).

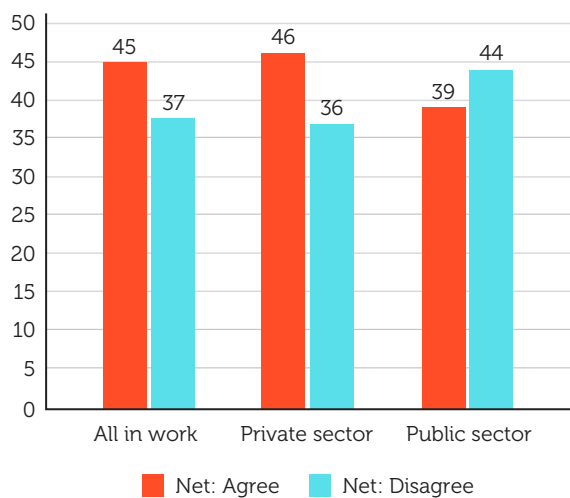


# 5 Discontent among public sector workers

Public sector workers in the north of England are less likely to feel they are paid appropriately in their role than private sector workers.

**Figure 6: Satisfaction with pay in the north of England, by sector (%)**

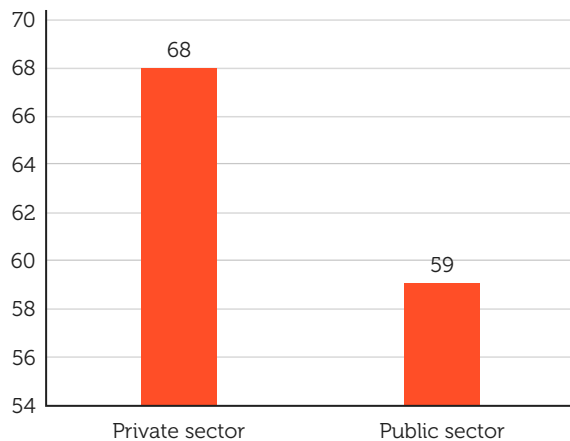
*Considering my responsibilities and achievements in my job, I feel I get paid appropriately*



Base: all (n=952); private sector (n=735); public sector (n=156).

This dissatisfaction among public sector workers extends to non-pay-related factors. Public sector workers in the north of England are less satisfied with their current job than those in the private sector.

**Figure 7: Overall job satisfaction in the north of England, by sector (% satisfied)**



Base: private sector (n=735); public sector (n=155).

Compared with those in the private sector, public sector workers are more likely to experience:

- negative effects of work on mental health
- excessive pressure
- exhaustion
- boredom
- a workload they consider too great.

Public sector workers are also far less likely to work harder than they have to in order to help their organisation (36% agree versus 52% in the private sector).

More positively, they indicate feeling less frequently miserable at work (10% always/often v 14% in the private sector).

**Figure 8: Non-pay-related discontent among public sector workers in the north of England (%)**



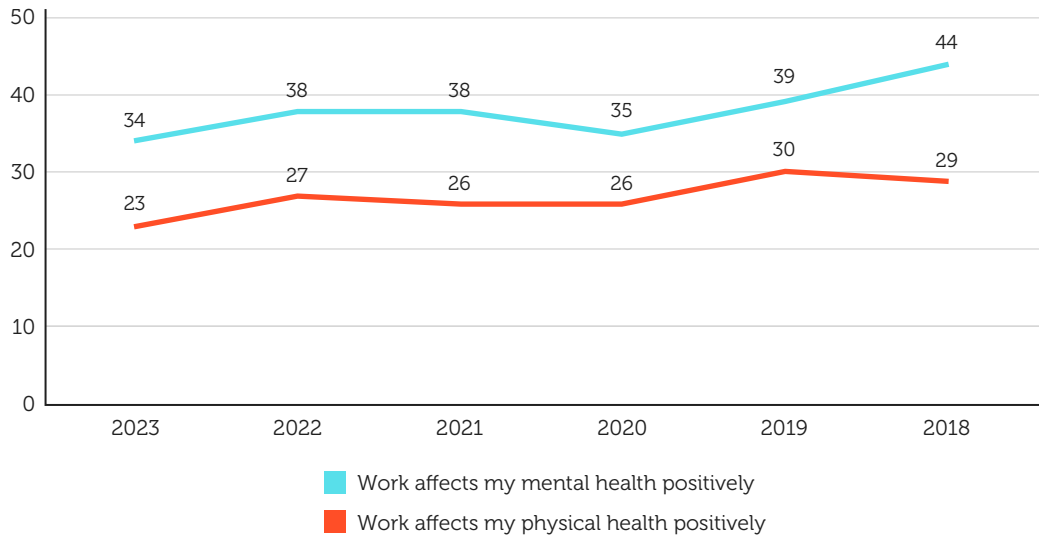
Base: private sector (n=735); public sector (n=155).

## 6

# Health and wellbeing

While the effect of work on mental and physical health has generally been steady, it has become slightly more negative in 2023. This year, less than a third of respondents in the north of England feel their work affects their mental health positively, while less than a quarter report their work having a positive effect on their physical health. This contrasts with 2018 and 2019, when work's perceived influence on health was at its most positive, as shown in Figure 9.

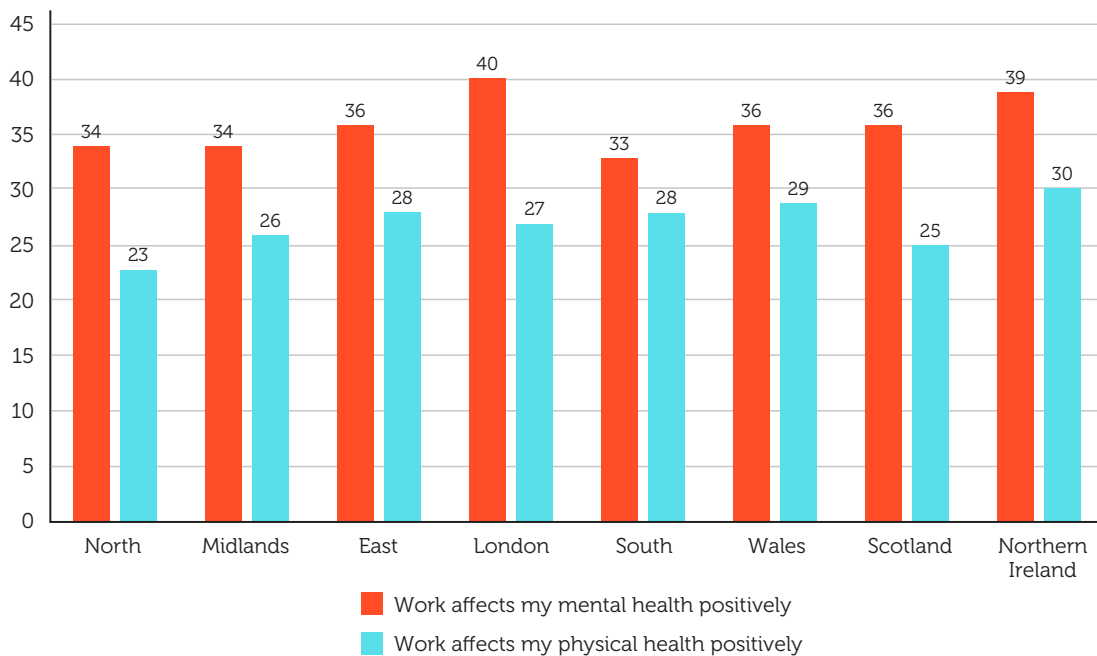
**Figure 9: The effect of work on mental health and physical health in the north of England, 2018–23 (%)**



Base: 2023 (n=952); 2022 (n=1,268); 2021 (n=1,240); 2020 (n=1,414); 2019 (n=1,132); 2018 (n=1,270).

Perceptions of the effect of work on mental health and physical health differ only slightly across the UK. But employees in the north of England feel more negatively than most.

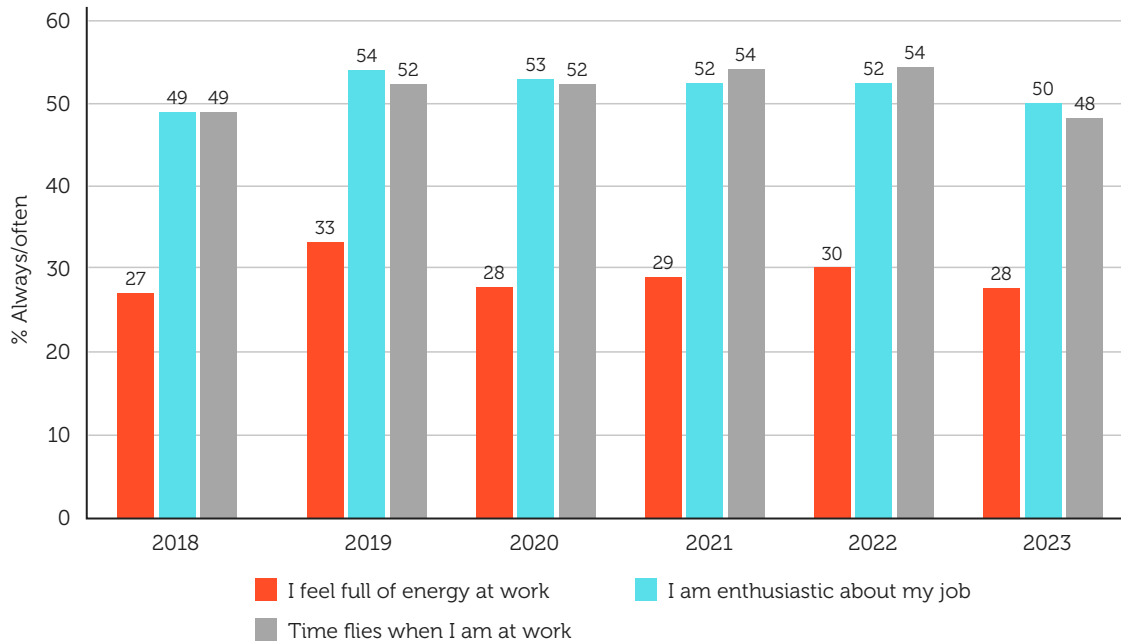
**Figure 10: The effect of work on health in the UK, by region and country (%)**



Base: all (n=5,139).

Workers in the north of England are less likely to report being full of energy at work this year than in previous years. Our survey sample also report feeling less enthusiastic about their job this year, and fewer say that time flies when they're at work.

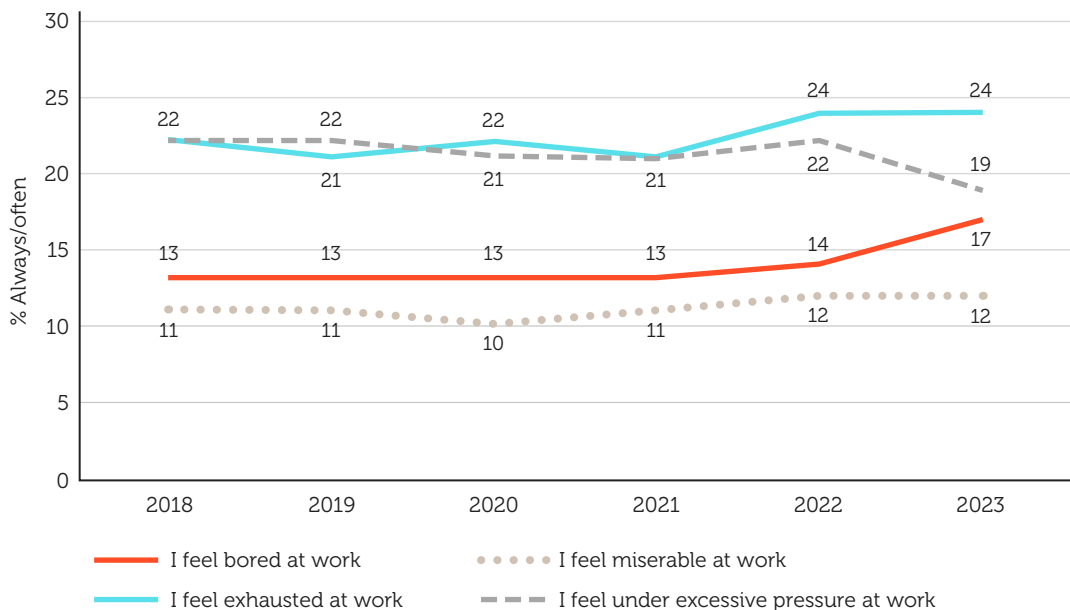
Figure 11: Engagement with work in the north of England, 2018–23 (%)



Base: 2023 (n=952); 2022 (n=1,268); 2021 (n=1,240); 2020 (n=1,414); 2019 (n=1,132); 2018 (n=1,270).

They are also slightly more likely to experience boredom at work in 2023 than in previous years. However, the number of respondents feeling miserable or exhausted has remained steady, and feelings of being under excessive pressure have reduced slightly this year.

Figure 12: Feelings towards work in the north of England, 2018–23 (%)

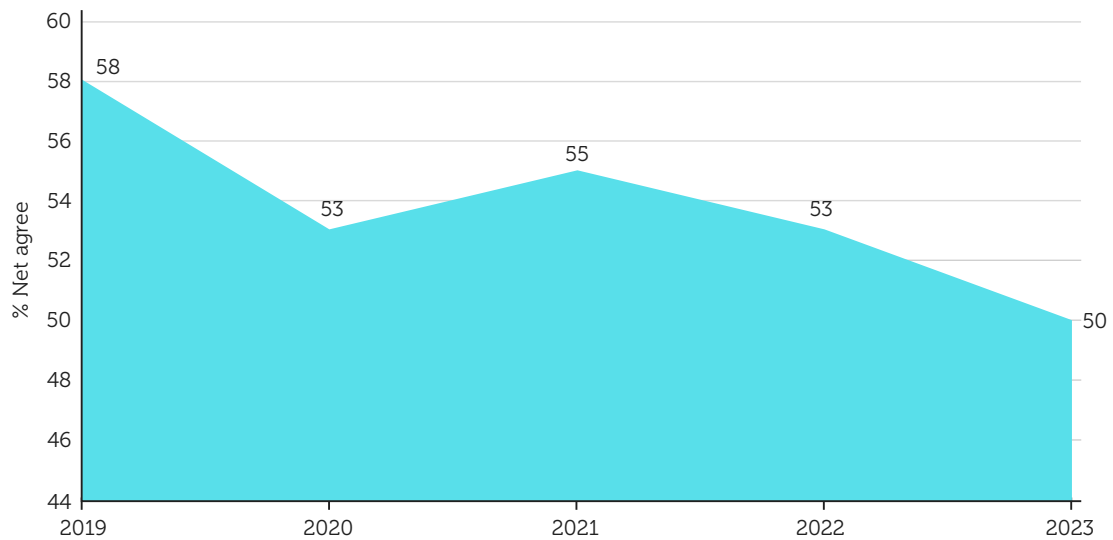


Base: 2023 (n=952); 2022 (n=1,268); 2021 (n=1,240); 2020 (n=1,414); 2019 (n=1,132); 2018 (n=1,270).

# 7 Work centrality and discretionary effort

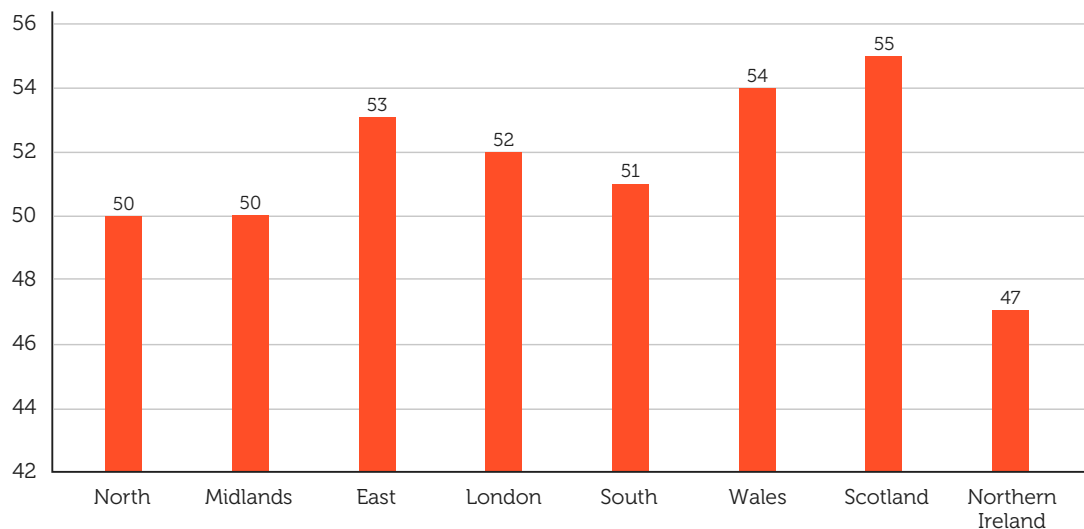
Around half of employees in the north of England in 2023 report being willing to work harder than necessary to help their employer or organisation. However, this number is down from previous years, particularly 2019. Moreover, while differences across the UK are minimal, the north of England compares negatively with most parts of the UK.

**Figure 13: Willingness to work harder than necessary to help the organisation in the north of England, 2019–23 (%)**



Base: 2023 (n=952); 2022 (n=1,268); 2021 (n=1,240); 2020 (n=1,414); 2019 (n=1,132); 2018 (n=1,270).

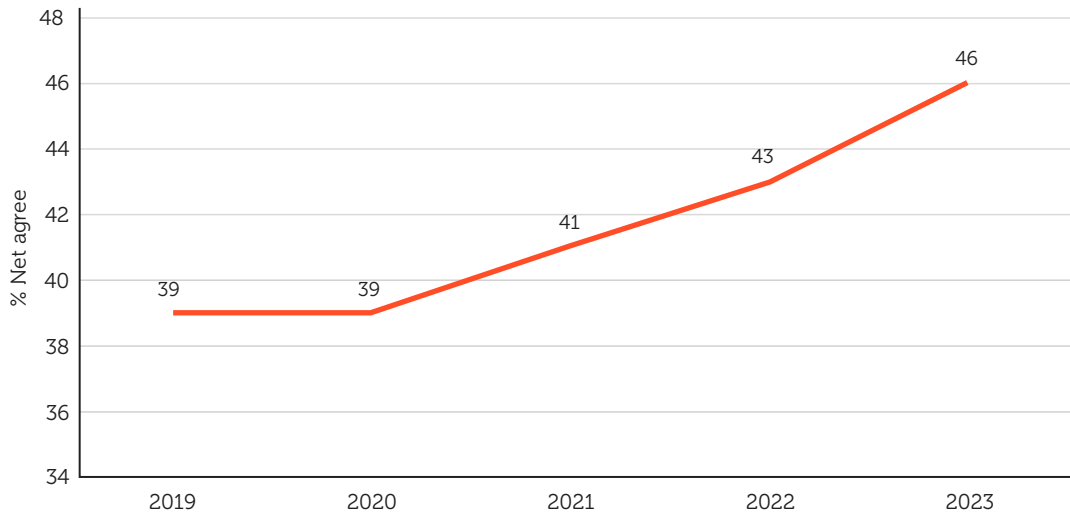
**Figure 14: Willingness to work harder than necessary to help the organisation in the UK, by region and country (%)**



Base: all (n=5,139).

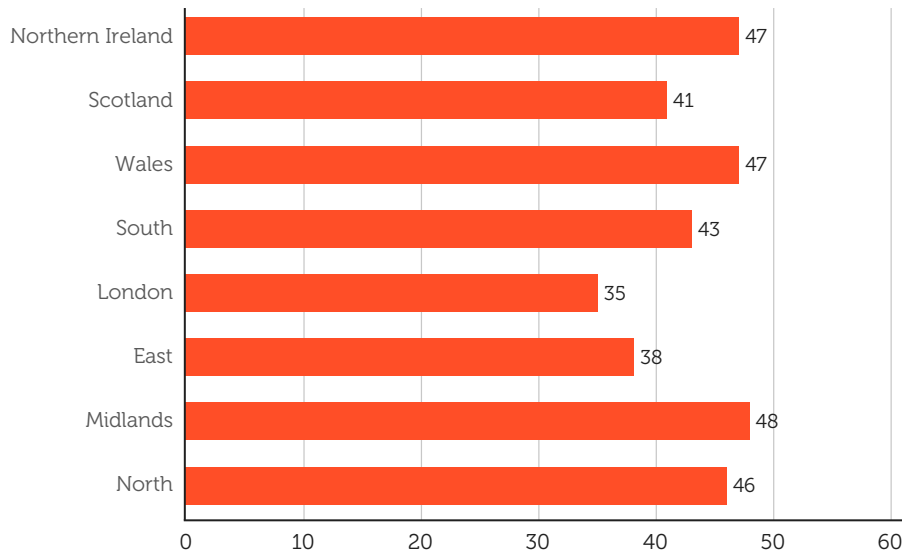
Just under half of respondents (46%) this year view their job as transactional – simply a way of earning money. This figure has been rising in small increments over time and has peaked this year. Regionally, employees in the north of England are slightly more likely than most to feel this way.

**Figure 15: A job is just a way of earning money, 2019–23 (%)**



Base: 2023 (n=952); 2022 (n=1,268); 2021 (n=1,240); 2020 (n=1,414); 2019 (n=1,132).

**Figure 16: A job is just a way of earning money, by country and region (%)**

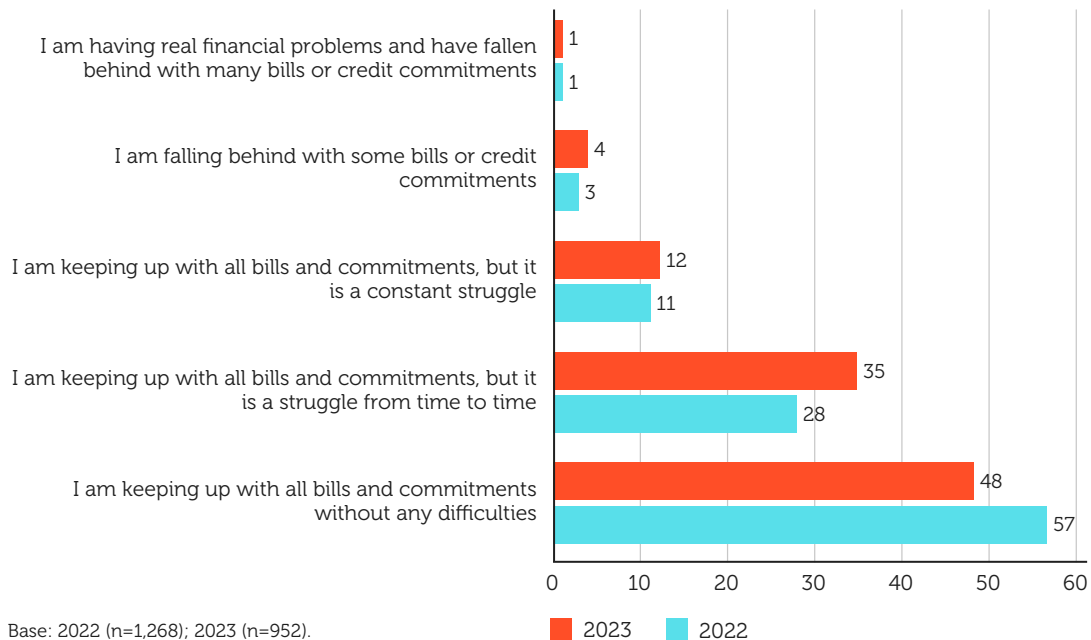


Base: all (n=5,139).

## 8 Cost-of-living crisis and financial wellbeing

Results from the north of England reflect the wider cost-of-living crisis in the UK. Those able to keep up with bills without any difficulties has dropped sharply, from 57% to 48%. This has meant that the number of respondents struggling to keep up from time to time has increased from 28% to 35%. Numbers facing a constant struggle to keep up with bills, or falling behind, have also increased.

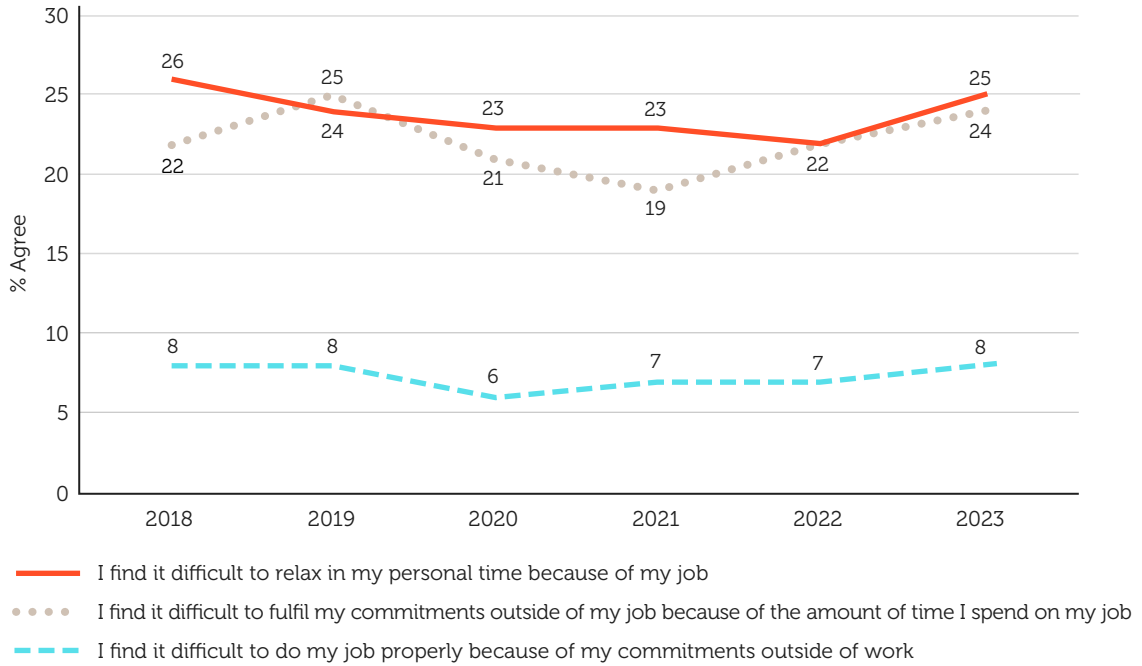
**Figure 17: Ability to keep up with bills and credit commitments in the north of England, 2022 and 2023 (%)**



## 9 Work–life balance and flexible working

Positively, the number of respondents reporting difficulty maintaining a healthy work–life balance is relatively low in 2023. However, these figures have risen slightly from previous years. Employees in the north of England now find it harder to fulfil commitments outside of their job because of work commitments, to relax in their personal time because of their job, and to do their job properly because of outside commitments. Interestingly, these figures are similar to pre-pandemic numbers, suggesting that during the pandemic, people were achieving a healthy work–life balance with greater ease.

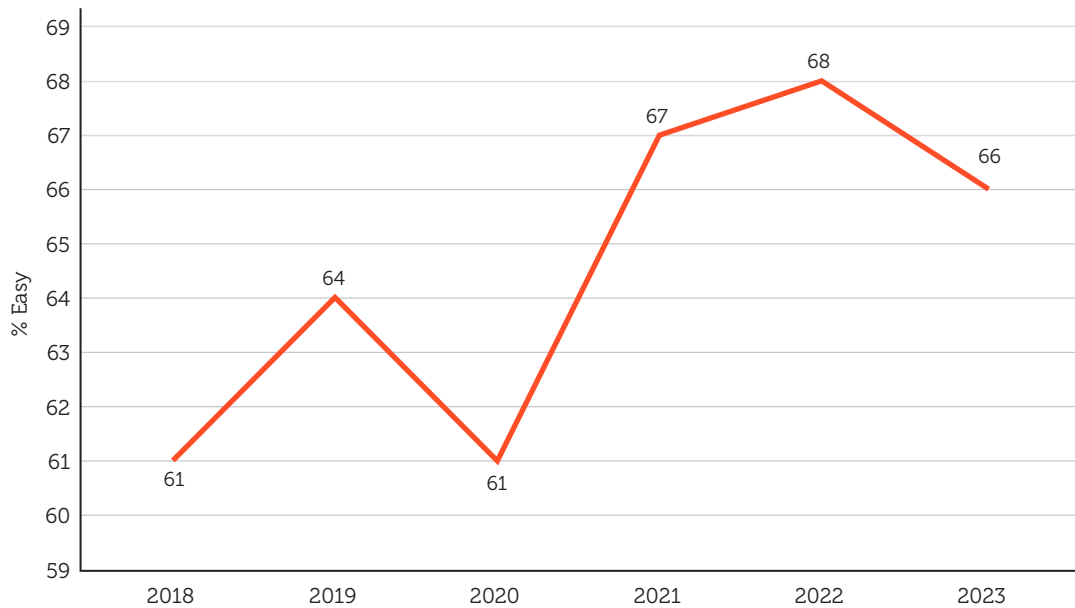
**Figure 18: Ability to maintain a positive work–life balance in the north of England, 2018–23 (%)**



Base: 2023 (n=952); 2022 (n=1,268); 2021 (n=1,240); 2020 (n=1,414); 2019 (n=1,132); 2018 (n=1,270).

In 2023, employees in the north of England continue to find it relatively easy to arrange to take an hour or two off during work to take care of personal or family matters.

**Figure 19: Ease of taking time off during work hours in the north of England, 2018–23 (%)**



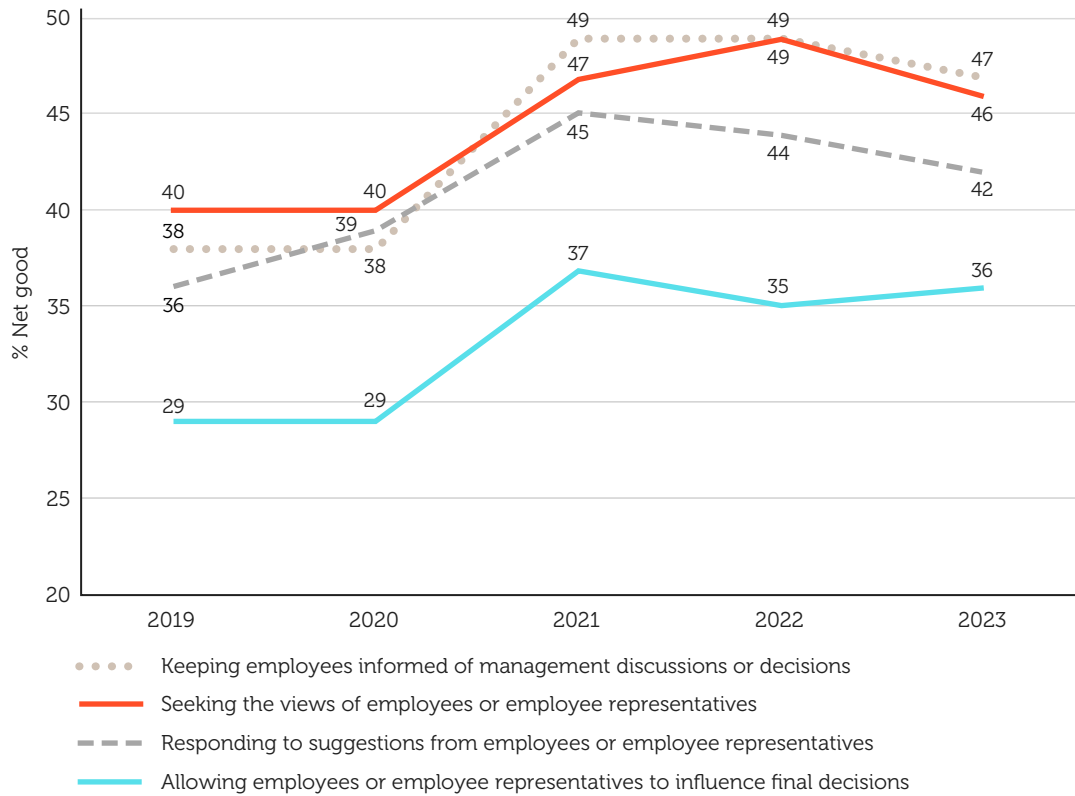
Base: 2023 (n=952); 2022 (n=1,268); 2021 (n=1,240); 2020 (n=1,414); 2019 (n=1,132); 2018 (n=1,270).



# 10 Voice

Respondents in the north of England this year indicate mixed feelings on the extent to which managers enable employees to use their voice at work. These numbers have remained relatively stable in the last few years.

**Figure 20: The extent to which managers enable voice at work in the north of England, 2019-23 (%)**

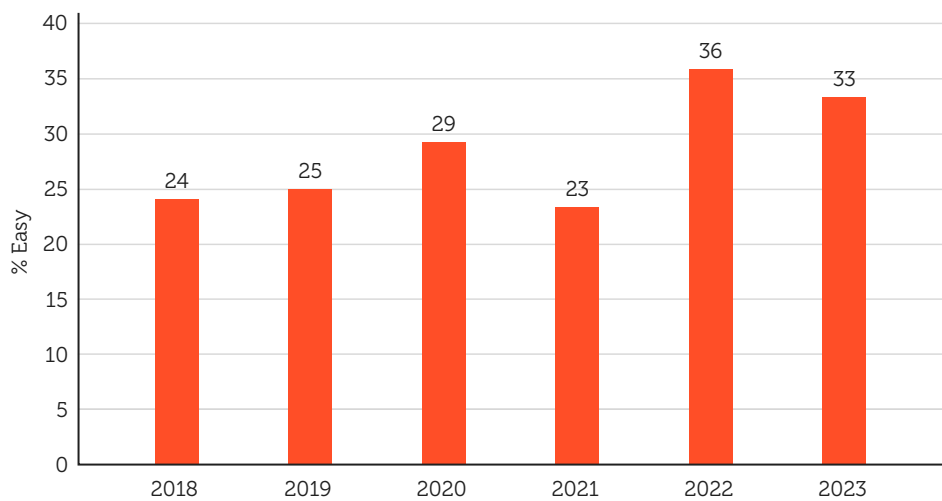


Base: 2023 (n=867); 2022 (n=1,155); 2021 (n=1,103); 2020 (n=1,178); 2019 (n=1,006).

# 11 Job security and intention to leave

In 2023, employees in the north of England have mixed views on their ability to find another job as good as their current one. The number of respondents who think it would be easy to find a new job has slightly decreased from 2022 but remains higher than levels from before or during the pandemic.

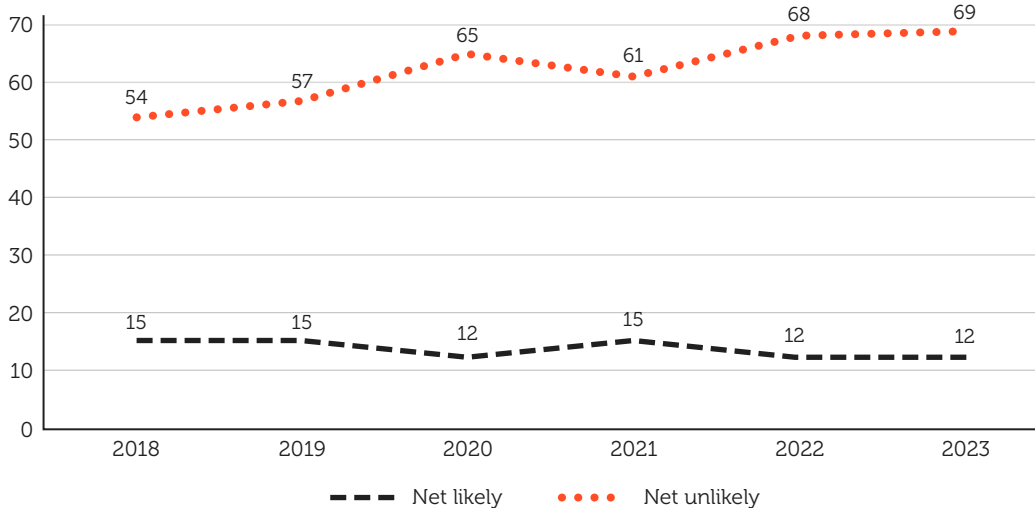
**Figure 21: Ease of finding another job in the north of England (%)**



Base: 2023 (n=952); 2022 (n=1,268); 2021 (n=1,240); 2020 (n=1,414); 2019 (n=1,132); 2018 (n=1,270).

Job security in the north of England remains fairly high in 2023. Over two-thirds of employees (69%) feel it is unlikely they will lose their job in the next 12 months. Job security has been rising in small increments since before the pandemic – apart from a dip in 2021, during the pandemic’s height.

**Figure 22: Likelihood of losing current job in the north of England, in the next 12 months (%)**

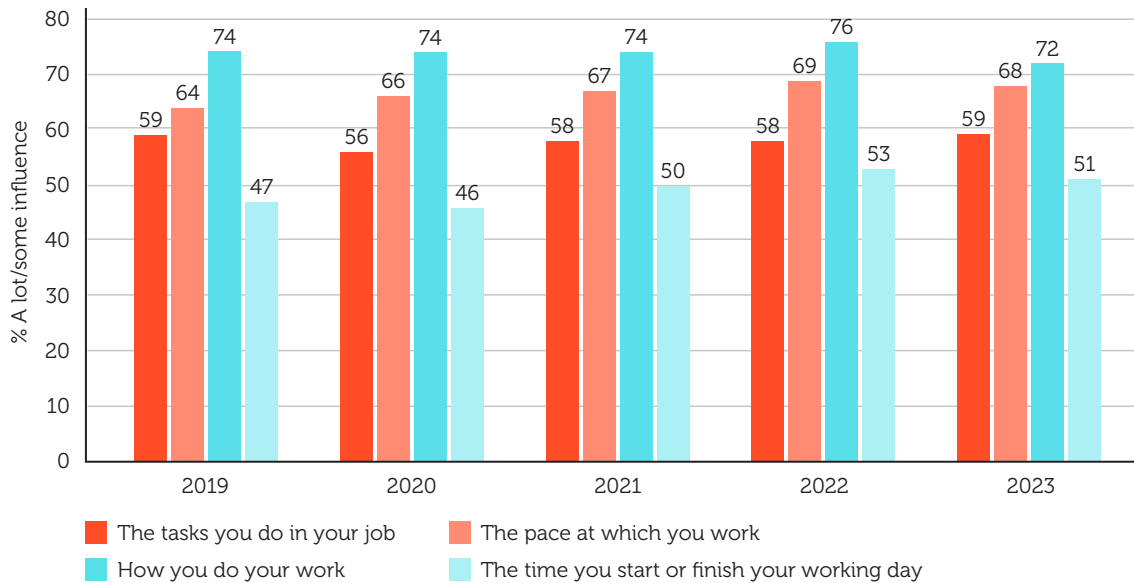


Base: 2023 (n=952); 2022 (n=1,268); 2021 (n=1,240); 2020 (n=1,414); 2019 (n=1,132); 2018 (n=1,270).

# 12 Autonomy

Employees in the north of England maintain a strong level of control and influence over the ways in which they work in 2023.

**Figure 23: Autonomy over ways of working in the north of England (%)**



Base: 2023 (n=952); 2022 (n=1,268); 2021 (n=1,240); 2020 (n=1,414); 2019 (n=1,132).

# 13 Conclusion

The picture of good work in the north of England this year looks similar to the rest of the UK. While overall job satisfaction and relationships at work remain strong this year, there are several areas of job quality in which a slide towards mediocrity has begun and could be set to continue in the near future.

Public sector workers are showing dissatisfaction with both pay and non-pay-related issues at work, reporting feelings of excessive pressure, exhaustion and boredom at work. More broadly, all employees remain wary of the effects of work on their health, and many are beginning to move away from feeling that work plays a central role in their lives.

The effects of the cost-of-living crisis on financial wellbeing are, and will continue to be, notable. Nevertheless, employees in the north of England do highlight some aspects of job quality that remain positive, in particular work-life balance and flexibility, job security, and autonomy over ways of working, particularly flexible working arrangements.

These findings are vital in helping the CIPD and the people profession to identify the elements of good work most in need of attention. Below are some practical recommendations for employers, people professionals and line managers:

- ✓ Develop trust, psychological safety and cohesion among teams at work to build strong interpersonal relationships and create high-performing teams.
- ✓ Boost recognition of financial wellbeing: understand the implications of financial distress for both employee wellbeing and performance, and integrate a financial wellbeing strategy into your wider wellbeing strategy.
- ✓ Enable staff to have autonomy over their work–life balance and flexible working arrangements by making them aware of and consulting them on hybrid working practices.
- ✓ Encourage managers to enable employee voice by providing them with training to build their understanding of how they can influence employees' confidence to raise important issues at work.
- ✓ Boost your organisation's attractiveness to both potential new recruits and those within the organisation, engaging employees through the recruitment process and helping them to perform at their best.
- ✓ Develop an engaged and motivated workforce through ensuring staff feel properly supported and have both the autonomy and resources to shape their jobs in ways that suit their lifestyles.



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