



CIPD

Report
June 2024

CIPD Good

Work Index 2024

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 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: North of England

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Key findings	3
3	Job satisfaction	4
4	Conflict	6
5	Work centrality and discretionary effort	9
6	Employee engagement	11
7	Meaningful work	12
8	Wellbeing	14
9	Work–life balance	15
10	Autonomy	15
11	Training and skills	16
12	Conclusion	16

Acknowledgements

This report was written by Jake Young, Senior Adviser at the CIPD, and is based on the *CIPD Good Work Index 2024* survey report, written by Ian Brinkley.

Thank you to our CIPD colleagues for their support and feedback on this project.

Publication information

When citing this report, please use the following citation:

Young, J. (2024) *CIPD Good Work Index 2024: North of England report*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

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 acute as ever.

Northern England continues to suffer from regional inequalities in health, wealth, power and opportunity, with clear disparities between the north of England and London and the southeast when it comes to living standards and working conditions.

IPPR North's *State of the North 2024* report outlines the impact of this, with findings revealing that the gap in healthy life expectancy between the north and southeast England won't close until 2080, unless action is taken to address regional inequalities.

To help close regional gaps, this CIPD report calls for a renewed urgency in the creation of good jobs – with fair and healthy working conditions – after findings reveal concerns over productivity and the quality of jobs in the north of England.

While most people in the north of England benefit from satisfying, engaging work, the research finds there are still large minorities who feel disillusioned with the wider impact of their contribution to their organisations and regard a job as little more than a pay cheque. Add to this the significant numbers of employees experiencing the negative effects of interpersonal workplace conflict, such as poorer wellbeing, more negative perceptions of managers and a lack of trust in senior leaders, and the responsibility for employers to support their people remains paramount.

To help with this, the CIPD continues to support the region's metro mayors in Greater Manchester, Liverpool, North of Tyne and West Yorkshire with their good work charters. These aim to encourage and support more employers to improve workplace practices and help tackle low productivity and weak investment in skills.

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 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 short report highlights headline findings from the *CIPD Good Work Index 2024* survey report, telling the story of working lives in the north of England with reference to the seven dimensions of job quality outlined above. The north of England sample comprises 893 respondents of the total 5,496 respondents across the UK.

The data is weighted to be representative of employees in the north of 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.

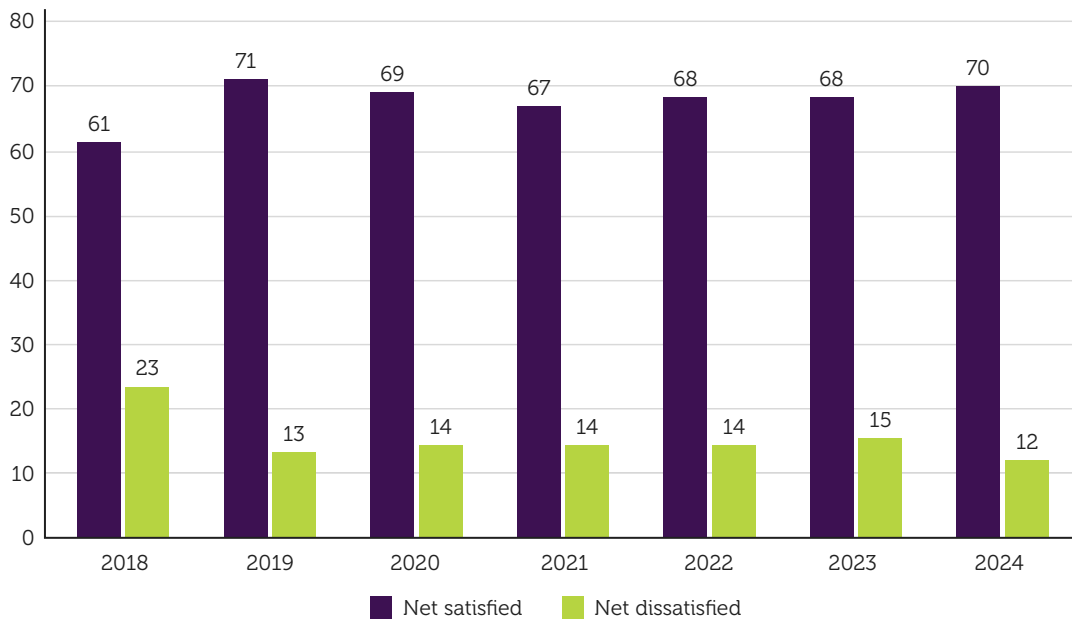
2 Key findings

- Overall, job satisfaction in the north of England remains positive in 2024. More than two-thirds of employees are satisfied with their job.
- Surprisingly, staff are more satisfied with their pay in 2024 than in previous years, with over half of respondents feeling their pay reflects their achievements and responsibilities.
- Work centrality remains an issue this year, as the number of staff who view work as transactional edges closer to 50%. The number of employees willing to put in extra effort for their employer remains steady.
- Conflict is a major area of focus this year, with 25% of employees in the north of England reporting experience of some form of conflict in the last 12 months. This is comparable with the rest of the UK.
- Women, under-35s, those in lower-skilled jobs and employees with disabilities are most at risk of experiencing conflict at work.
- Nearly half of respondents simply let incidents of conflict go, rather than escalating them.
- Employees remain engaged at work, with negative feelings relatively rare.
- Employees gain meaning through doing important work for their employer, but feel less positive about their work's impact on both wider society and their intrinsic sense of achievement.
- The effect of work on mental and physical health remains mixed, but is showing small signs of improvement among workers in the north of England this year.
- Work-life balance and employee autonomy continue to be benefits enjoyed by many staff in the north of England.
- Perceptions of opportunities to develop and advance at work are mixed in 2024, but have shown a sharp improvement since 2019.

3 Job satisfaction

Overall, job satisfaction in the north of England remains positive in 2024 and is comparable with other regions and nations in the UK, where around two-thirds of employees are satisfied with their jobs. Satisfaction levels are at their highest since 2019, but the difference is small (see Figure 1).

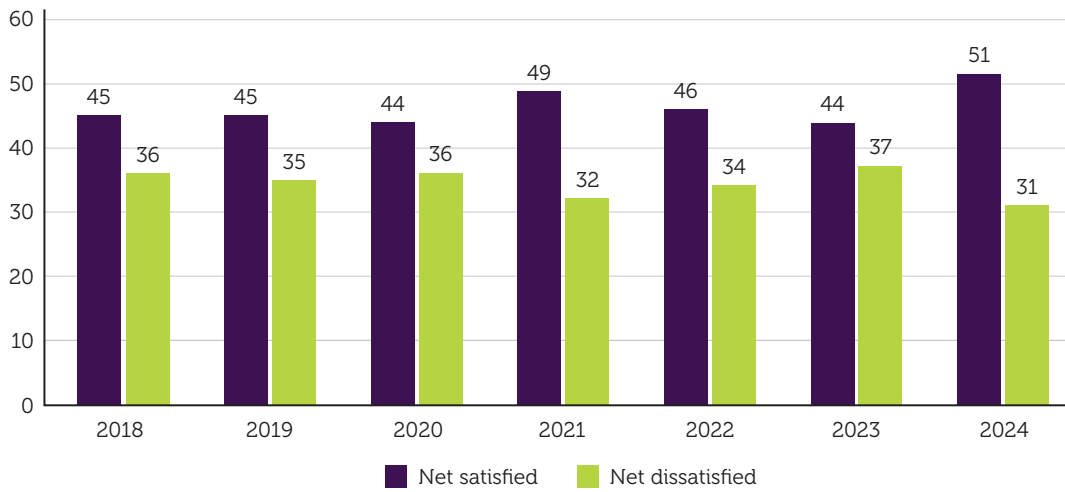
Figure 1: Overall job satisfaction in the north of England, 2018–24 (%)



Base: 2018 (n=1,270); 2019 (n=1,132); 2020 (n=1,414); 2021 (n=1,240); 2022 (n=1,268); 2023 (n=952); 2024 (n=893).

Satisfaction with pay, typically far lower than overall job satisfaction, shows some promising findings in 2024. Over half of employees in the north of England said they get paid appropriately for their job responsibilities and achievements (see Figure 2). While 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, although perceptions of managers' roles in allowing their staff to do this are unchanged from 2023. What is perhaps more plausible is that employees are currently glad to simply be in stable work, and have lowered their salary expectations as a result of increased living costs and a slower job market.

Figure 2: Satisfaction with pay in the north of England, 2018–24 (%)



Base: 2018 (n=1,270); 2019 (n=1,132); 2020 (n=1,414); 2021 (n=1,240); 2022 (n=1,268); 2023 (n=952); 2024 (n=893).

Workers in the north of England are comparable with those in the rest of the UK with regard to pay satisfaction (see Figure 3). Only those in London stand out as being significantly happier with their wages.

Figure 3: Satisfaction with pay, by UK nations and regions (%)

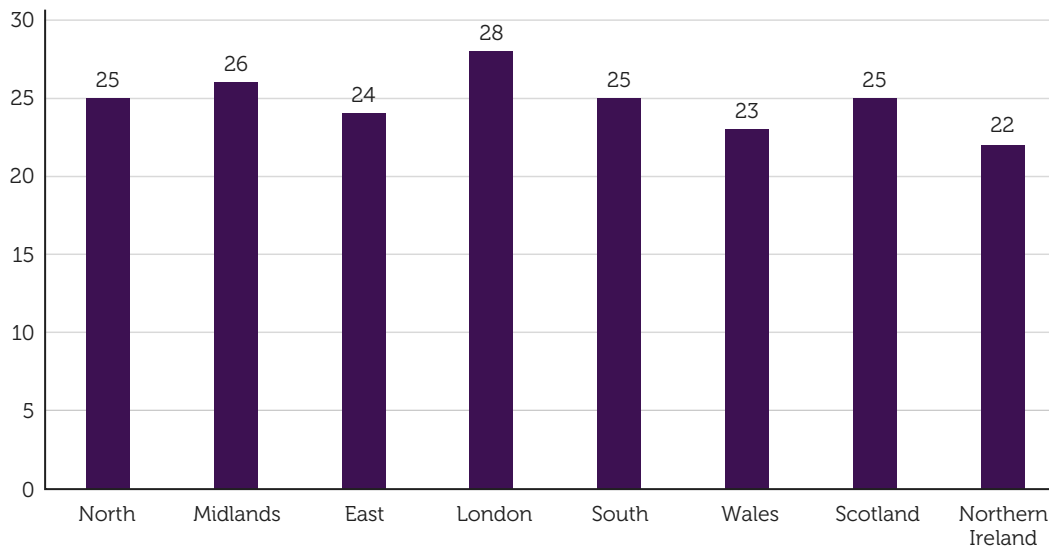


Base: North (n=893); Midlands (n=666); East (n=371); London (n=553); South (n=992); Wales (n=501); Scotland (n=1,002); Northern Ireland (n=498).

4 Conflict

The north of England is comparable with the rest of the UK when it comes to experiencing conflict in 2024, with a quarter of respondents having experienced a type of conflict in the last 12 months (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Experience of conflict in the last 12 months, by UK nations and regions (% experienced any conflict)

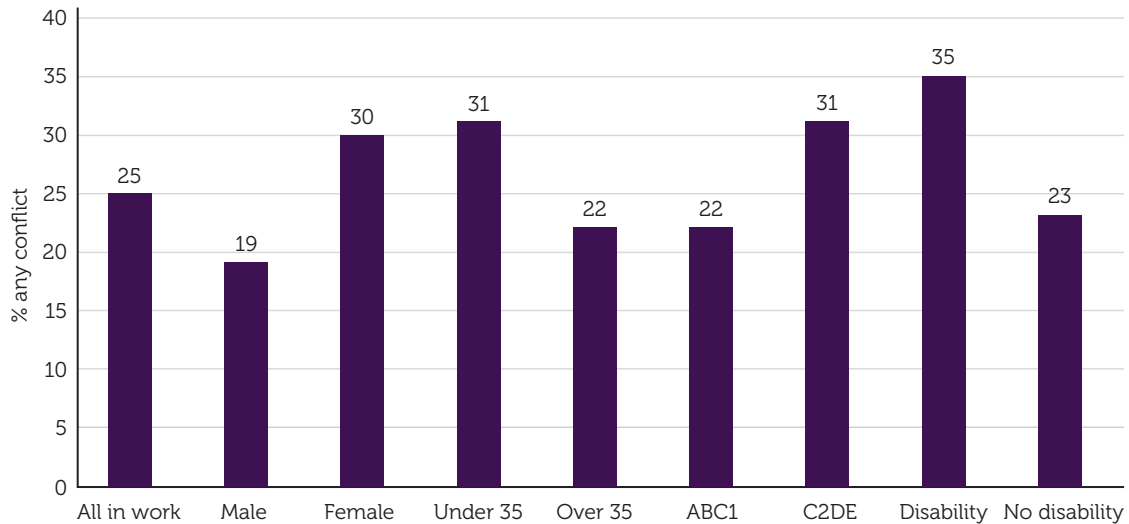


Base: all (n=5,496); North (n=893); Midlands (n=668); East (n=374); London (n=554); South (n=996); Wales (n=505); Scotland (n=1,006); Northern Ireland (n=499).

We see some stark differences in experiences of conflict when comparing different groups. Notably, women are significantly more likely than men to have experienced conflict, while the same goes for those under the age of 35, compared with employees aged over 35 (see Figure 5).

Not surprisingly, those in lower social grade employment (C2DE) report having experienced much more conflict than those in higher-skilled work. While the sample size of employees with disabilities is small, their experiences of conflict at work are much more frequent than those without disabilities.

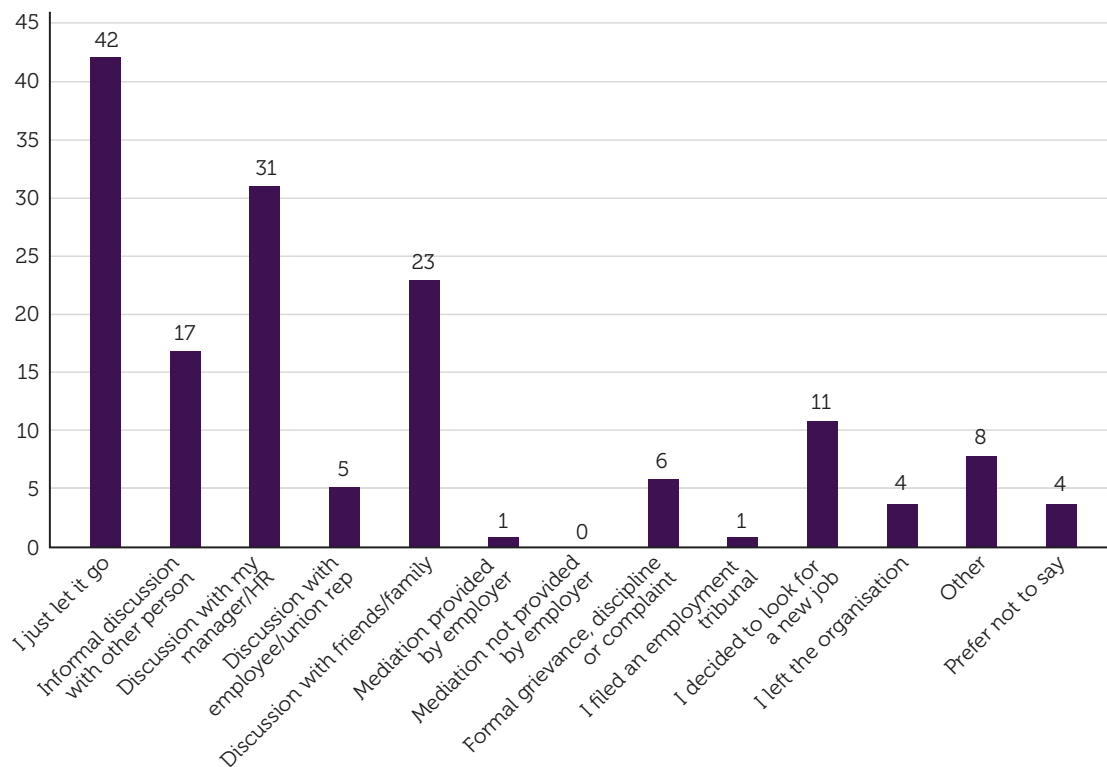
Figure 5: Experience of conflict in the last 12 months in the north of England, by different groups (% who experienced any conflict)



Base: all (n=893); male (n=467); female (n=427); under 35 (n=249); over 35 (n=645); ABC1 (n=641); C2DE (n=238); disability (n=129); no disability (n=753). With particularly small sample sizes, please proceed with caution.

Around half of incidents of conflict are let go, rather than escalated (see Figure 6). More encouraging is that conflict is fairly regularly discussed – either with the other person involved, a manager, HR or friends and family. Conflict rarely escalates to a formal grievance or discipline being issued, while more staff tend to look outside of the organisation as a result of conflict.

Figure 6: How employees dealt with conflict in the north of England, 2024 (% of respondents)



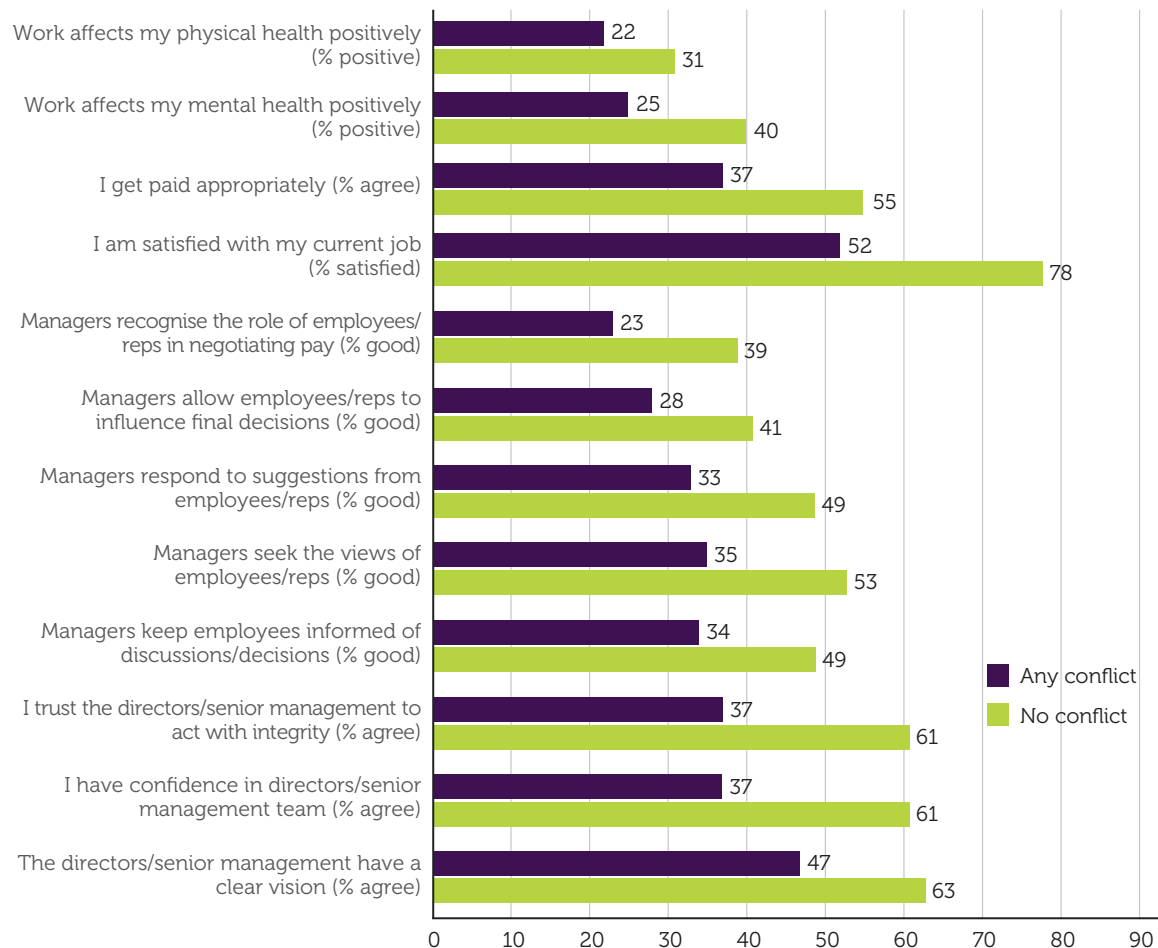
Base: all who experienced a conflict in the last 12 months (n=212).

There are clear negative effects of experiencing conflict in the workplace, which begin to explain why many employees tend to simply let incidents go, instead of escalating them. First, we see that those who have experienced conflict in the last year show greater dissatisfaction with both their job overall and their pay. We also see the unsurprising effect on wellbeing, with both mental and physical health suffering being more acute among victims of workplace conflict.

Looking more widely at the impact of conflict, perceptions of managers and senior leaders are more negative among those who have experienced conflict, compared with those who haven't. Employees who have experienced conflict are less confident and trusting of senior leaders, and fail to see their vision. Perceptions of managers' roles in encouraging employee voice are also more negative among victims of conflict, with these employees less positive about managers' ability to seek their views, respond to suggestions, keep them informed, allow them to influence decisions and negotiate their pay, compared with other colleagues (see Figure 7).

We can see here how it is possible for employers to create a workplace climate in which senior leaders fail to demonstrate and encourage having open conversations about difficult topics, and where managers are not trained in conflict resolution. As a result, employees simply stay quiet about their issues at work.

Figure 7: The effect of experiences of conflict on other organisational outcomes (% agree)



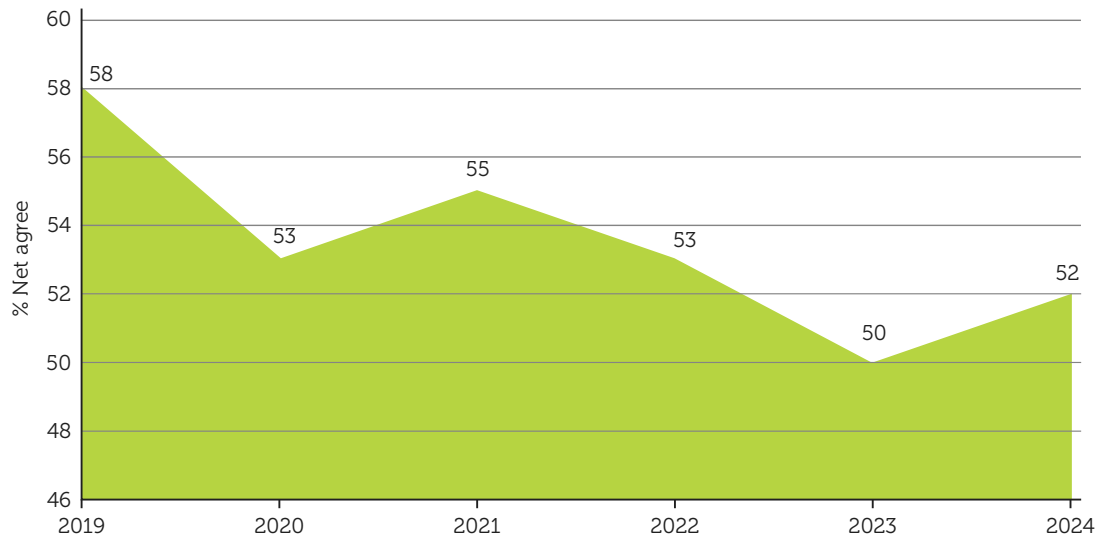
Base: all (n=893); all who experienced a conflict in the last 12 months (n=212).

5

Work centrality and discretionary effort

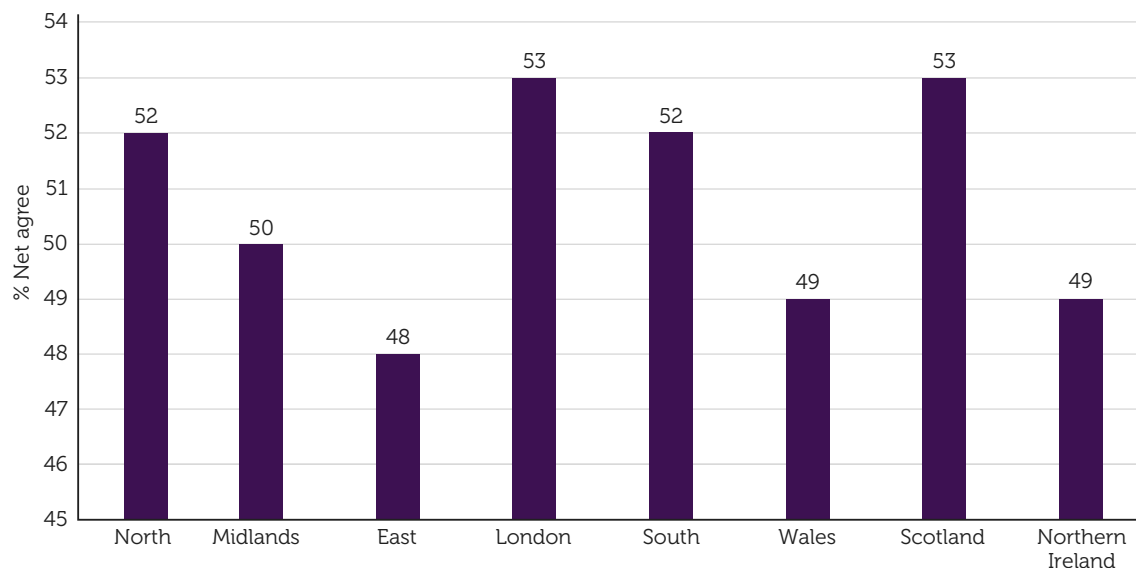
Just over half of employees in the north of England said they were willing to work harder than necessary to help their employer or organisation. This figure has risen slightly from last year, but the difference is minimal and there is still a way to go for discretionary effort to return to its 2019 peak (see Figure 8). Across the UK, differences are extremely small (see Figure 9).

Figure 8: Willingness to work harder than necessary to help the organisation in the north of England, 2019–24 (%)



Base: 2019 (n=1,132); 2020 (n=1,414); 2021 (n=1,240); 2022 (n=1,268); 2023 (n=952); 2024 (n=795).

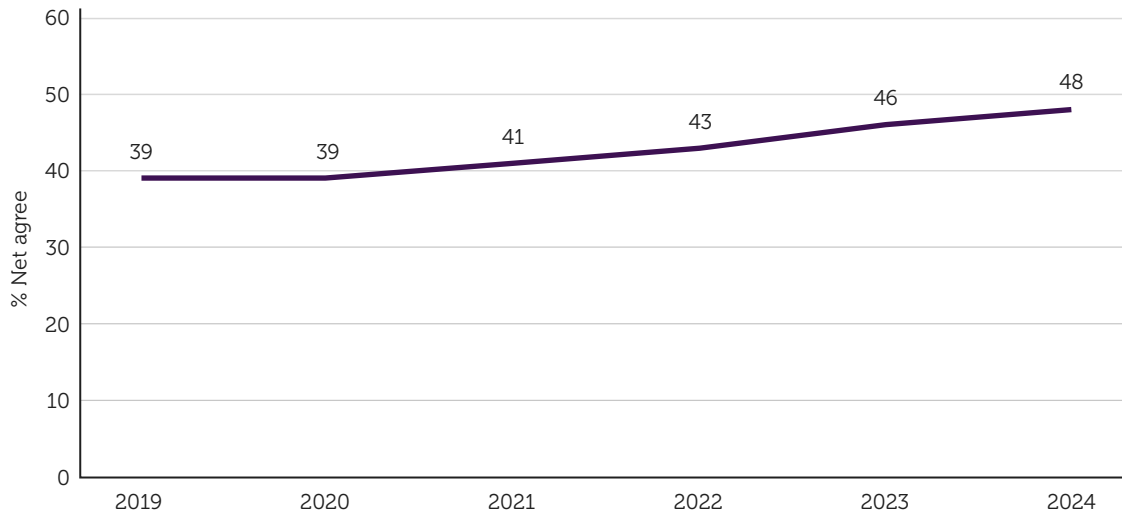
Figure 9: Willingness to work harder than necessary to help the organisation in 2024, by UK nations and regions (%)



Base: all who are not self-employed (n=4,854); North (n=795); Midlands (n=601); East (n=335); London (n=503); South (n=882); Wales (n=428); Scotland (n=872); Northern Ireland (n=438).

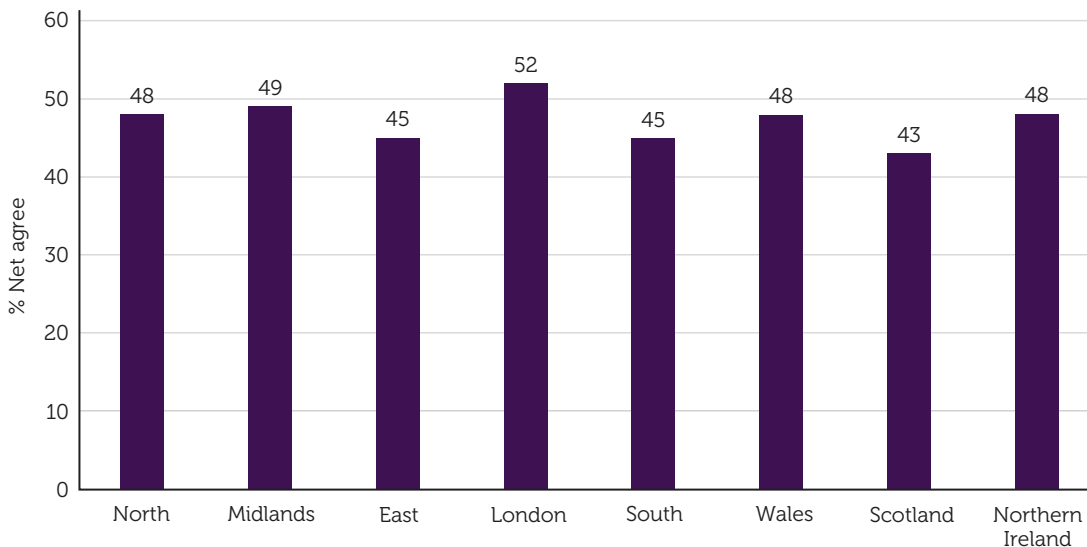
Nearly half of respondents in the north of England (48%) viewed their job as transactional – simply a way of earning money – in 2024. This figure has been slowly rising since 2019 and has peaked this year (see Figure 10). The north of England is comparable with other nations and regions across the UK (see Figure 11).

Figure 10: Perceptions that a job is just a way of earning money, 2019–24 (% agreement)



Base: 2019 (n=1,132); 2020 (n=1,414); 2021 (n=1,240); 2022 (n=1,268); 2023 (n=952); 2024 (n=893).

Figure 11: Perceptions that a job is just a way of earning money in 2024, by UK nations and regions (% agreement)



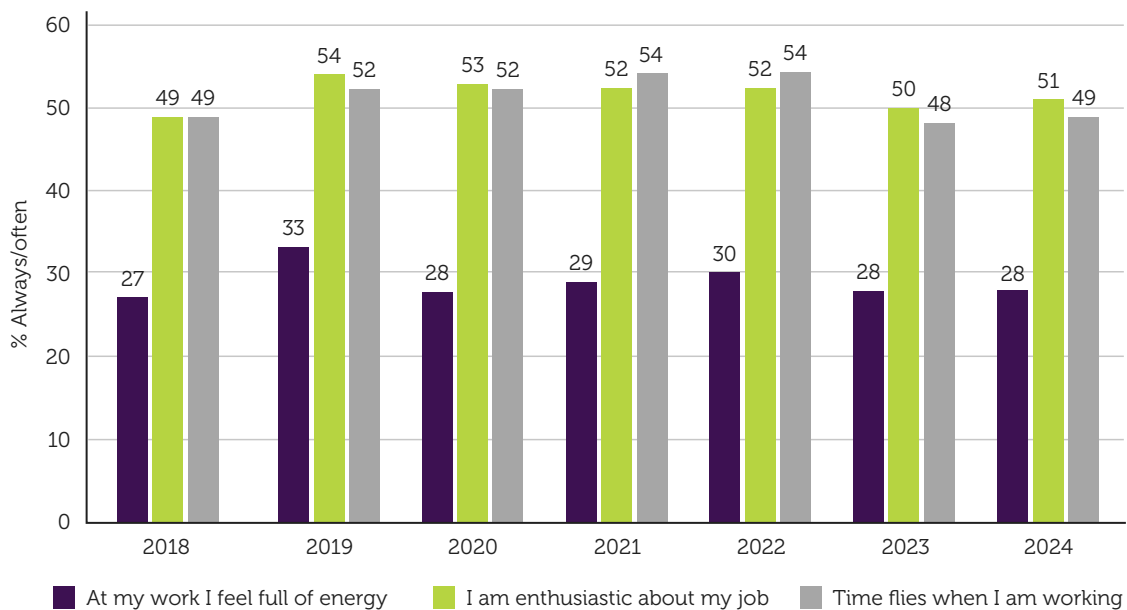
Base: all (n=5,496); North (n=893); Midlands (n=666); East (n=371); London (n=553); South (n=992); Wales (n=501); Scotland (n=1,002); Northern Ireland (n=498).

There is an association between being dissatisfied with one’s job and perceiving a job as simply for the money (63% of dissatisfied employees agree, and 40% of satisfied employees agree), but it is a weak association as most people are satisfied with their job (70% are satisfied, compared with 12% who are dissatisfied).

6 Employee engagement

Employees' engagement with their jobs has generally remained very steady over the last six years in the north of England, with around half of respondents saying they always or often feel enthusiastic about their job and that time flies when they are working (see Figure 12). Reported energy levels, however, are far lower, with only 28% of respondents saying they are always or often full of energy at work. This hasn't changed since last year, but is down from a high of 33% in 2019.

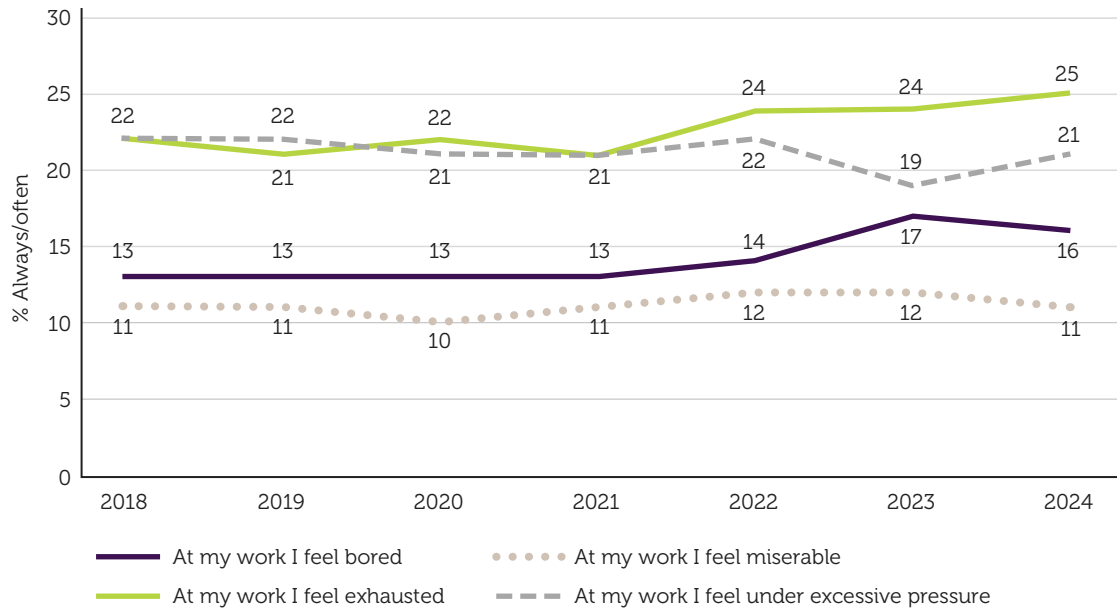
Figure 12: Engagement with work in the north of England, 2018–24 (% always/often)



Base: 2018 (n=1,270); 2019 (n=1,132); 2020 (n=1,414); 2021 (n=1,240); 2022 (n=1,268); 2023 (n=952); 2024 (n=893).

Negative feelings at work remain relatively rare, which is a welcome finding. Feeling miserable or bored at work is extremely rare for employees in the north of England (see Figure 13). However, a sizeable minority of staff do feel the strain of excessive pressure at work, and even more feel exhausted. This has hit a high of 25% for the first time in 2024.

Figure 13: Feelings towards work in the north of England, 2018-24 (% always/often)



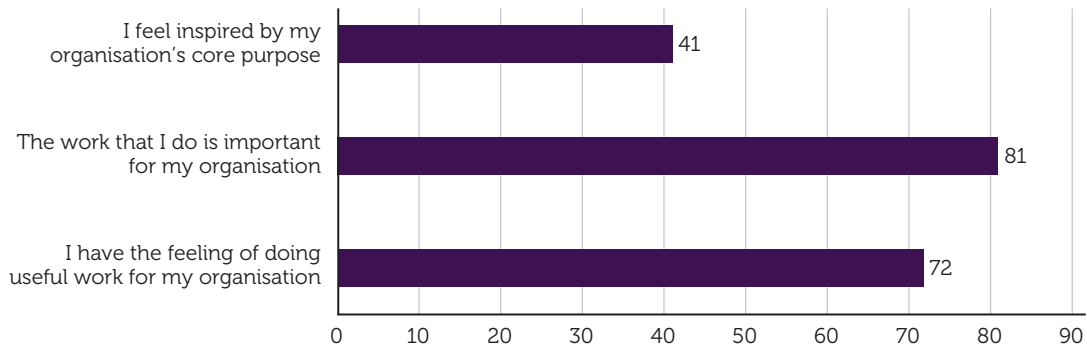
Base: 2018 (n=1,270); 2019 (n=1,132); 2020 (n=1,414); 2021 (n=1,240); 2022 (n=1,268); 2023 (n=952); 2024 (n=893).

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 the north of England perceive their work as important for their organisation, while slightly fewer feel they do useful work. Despite this, under half feel inspired by their organisation’s core purpose (see Figure 14). While we would hope this figure might be higher, the fact that employees still do important work despite limited feelings of inspiration is positive.

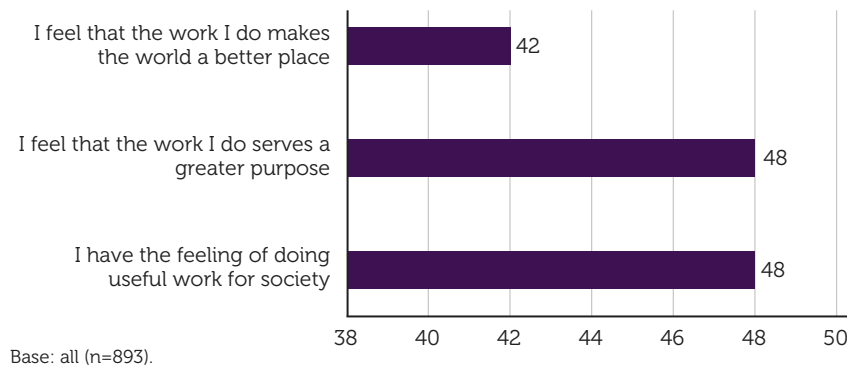
Figure 14: Meaningful work at organisational level in the north of England in 2024 (% agreement)



Base: all (n=893).

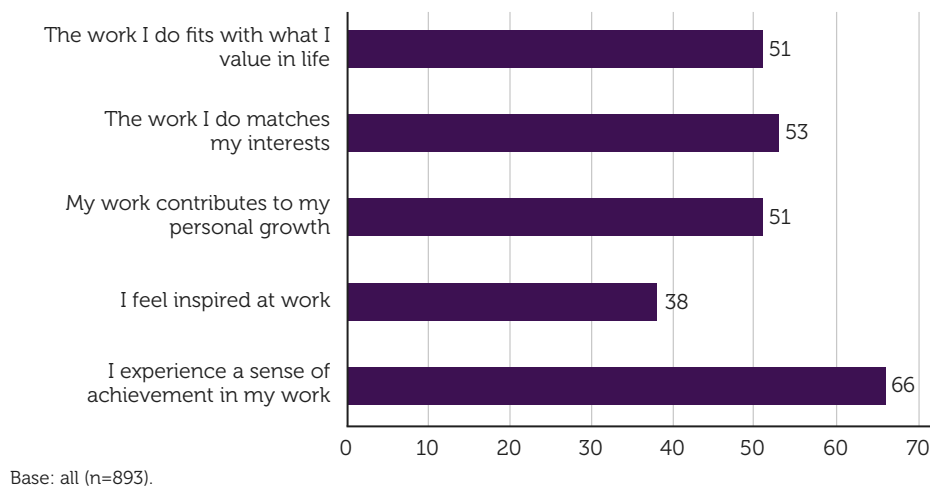
Second, looking beyond the organisation to the societal level, we see more mixed findings around employee perceptions of their work. Notably, under half feel their work serves a greater purpose, is useful for society, or makes the world a better place (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Meaningful work at societal level in the north of England in 2024 (% agreement)



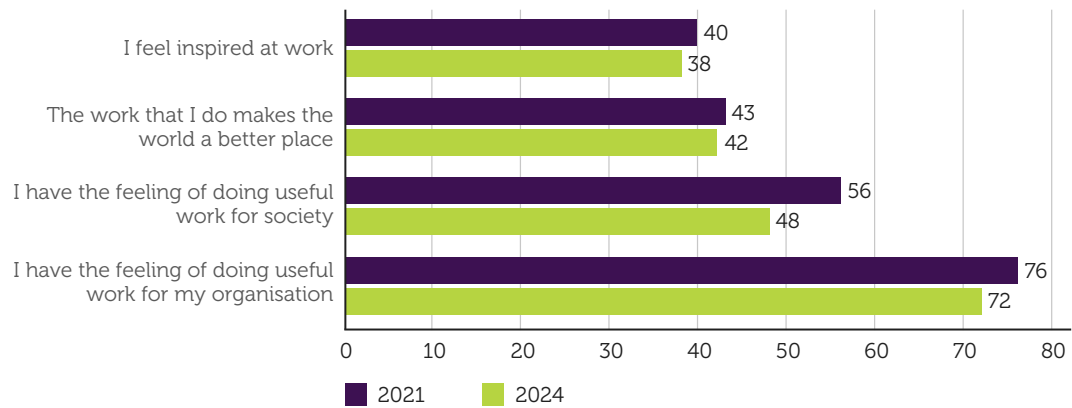
Third, looking at the personal level, feelings are again mixed. Only around half of respondents feel their work fits with what they value in life, matches their interests and contributes to personal growth (see Figure 16). Even fewer feel inspired at work, aligning with the earlier findings around organisational purpose, but, encouragingly, two-thirds feel a sense of achievement at work.

Figure 16: Meaningful work at personal level in the north of England in 2024 (% agreement)



Compared with findings from 2021, this year unfortunately looks less positive. Changes are small, but they indicate that employees are getting less out of their work than previously, particularly when it comes to its impact on both their organisation and society more widely (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Meaningful work in the north of England, 2021–24 (% agreement)

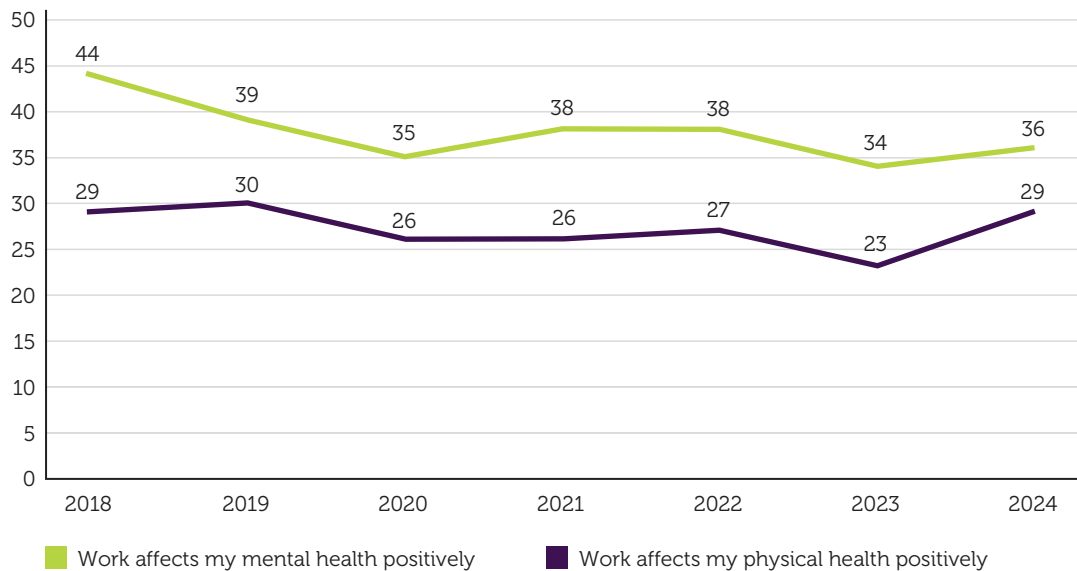


Base: 2021 (n=1,295); 2024 (n=893).

8 Wellbeing

While the effect of work on mental and physical health in the north of England continues to look relatively negative, there are signs of improvement in 2024. Both measures have increased from last year, particularly physical health (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: The effect of work on mental and physical health in the north of England, 2018–24 (% agreement)

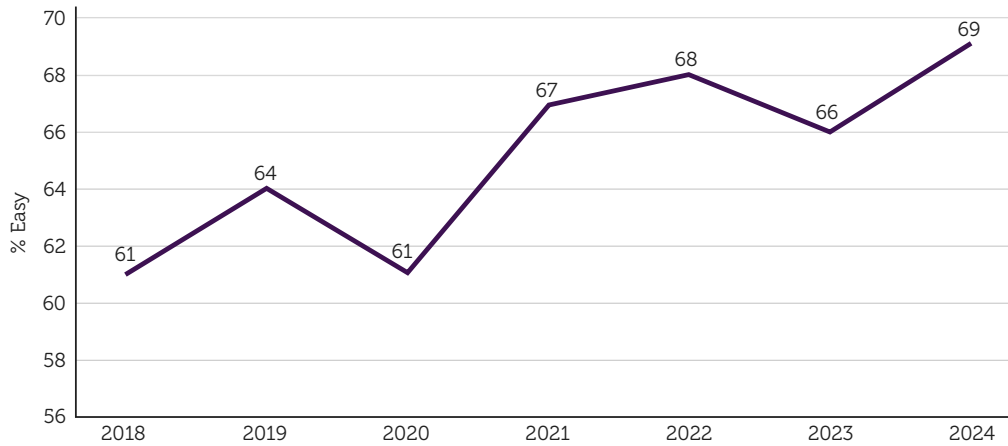


Base: 2018 (n=1,270); 2019 (n=1,132); 2020 (n=1,414); 2021 (n=1,240); 2022 (n=1,268); 2023 (n=952); 2024 (n=872).

9 Work-life balance

In 2024, workers in the north of England continue to find it relatively easy to arrange taking an hour or two off during work to attend to personal or family matters. This year, the figure has peaked (see Figure 19).

Figure 19: Ease of taking time off during work hours in the north of England, 2018–24 (% agreement)

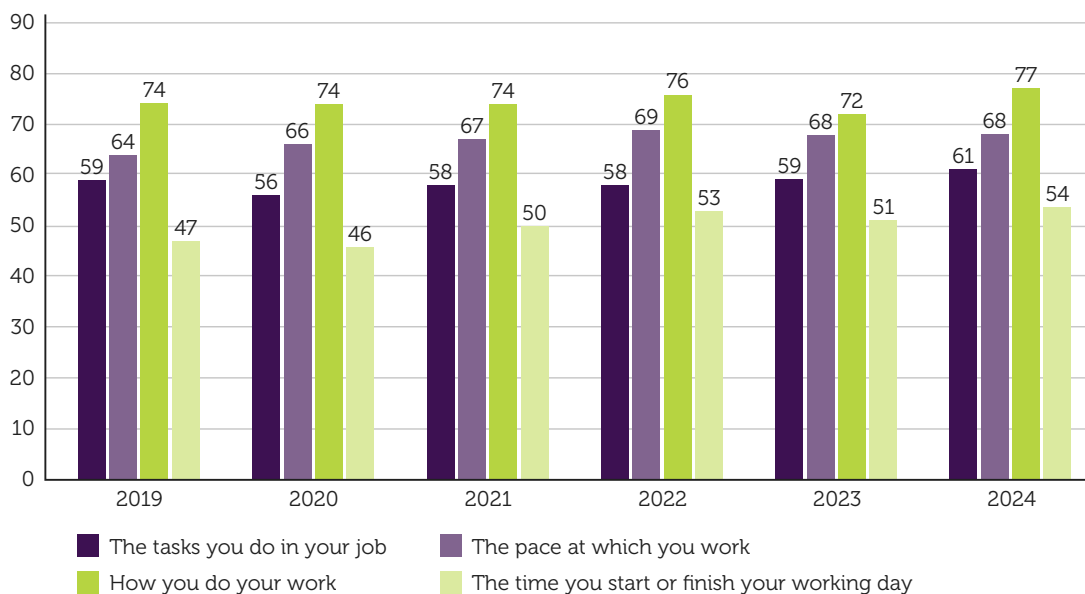


Base: 2018 (n=1,270); 2019 (n=1,132); 2020 (n=1,414); 2021 (n=1,240); 2022 (n=1,268); 2023 (n=952); 2024 (n=893).

10 Autonomy

Employees in the north of England maintain a strong level of control and influence over the ways in which they work in 2024. There are positive signs this year, with our measures of employee autonomy either remaining stable or slightly improving, particularly around employee feelings of influence over how they do their work (see Figure 20).

Figure 20: Autonomy over ways of working in the north of England, 2019–24 (% a lot/some influence)

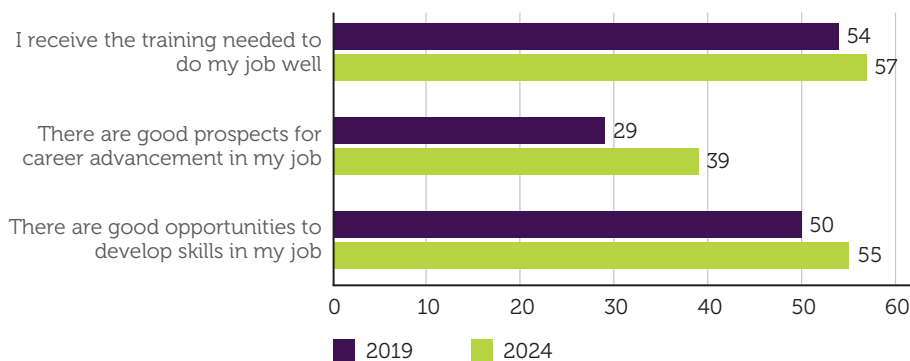


Base: 2019 (n=1,132); 2020 (n=1,414); 2021 (n=1,240); 2022 (n=1,268); 2023 (n=952); 2024 (n=804).

11 Training and skills

Employees in the north of England have mixed feelings on the opportunities available to them at work to develop and advance in 2024. However, comparing them with 2019, we see a marked improvement (see Figure 21). While the number of those who feel they have received the training needed to do their job well has only changed minimally, we see a significant positive shift in the perceptions of career advancement prospects, as well as opportunities for skills development in their current role.

Figure 21: Skills development opportunities in the north of England, 2019–24 (% agreement)



Base: 2019 (n=1,132); 2024 (n=893).

12 Conclusion

The picture of working lives in the north of England is unsurprisingly comparable with the rest of the UK in 2024. We see that most people are generally satisfied with their job, while pay satisfaction has taken an interesting upturn. Other important aspects of job quality also fare well this year, with most staff feeling engaged at work and gaining meaning from their work through doing work that is valuable to their organisation. Many employees in the north of England are also able to maintain a healthy work–life balance through flexible working arrangements and, crucially, being afforded autonomy over ways of working.

However, some aspects of job quality stand out as ranking poorly among staff in the north of England. Conflict, in particular, is a major focus area for 2024, and we see that experiences of conflict not only affect certain groups more severely, but have a negative impact on a number of employee outcomes. Senior leaders and line managers have a long way to go to create an environment in which employees feel they can escalate incidents of conflict and will be listened to.

Low work centrality emerged as a key theme last year and prevails this year, with large numbers of staff unwilling to go the extra mile for their employer, seeing work as purely transactional. This finding isn't overly worrying, but looking further at key themes, a concerning picture may be beginning to

emerge. With certain groups at higher risk of experiencing conflict at work, few seeing the wider impact of their effort and, instead, many experiencing the negative impact of work on their wellbeing, there is a risk of work doing more harm than good and leading to unfulfilled, unhappy employees.

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

Recommendations

- 1 Senior leaders should encourage and demonstrate having open conversations about difficult subjects to create an environment in which employees feel empowered to use their voice when they experience conflict in the workplace.
- 2 Employers must provide managers with the training and skills they need to become part of the solution to resolving workplace conflict at an early, informal stage, before incidents escalate.
- 3 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 that crack down on poor behaviour at work.
- 4 Organisations should work hard to develop an engaged and motivated workforce through ensuring staff feel able to influence the ways in which they work to suit their life outside of work.
- 5 Improve development opportunities at work through understanding the unique skills of different employees within the organisation, designing jobs in ways that optimise those skills, and investing in deliberate and well thought-out training that explores a number of techniques.



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