

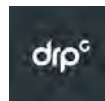


THE ANNUAL EVENTS INDUSTRY SALARY SURVEY

Produced by Jigsaw Talent Solutions



in association with



supported by



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INTRODUCTION

SETTLING INTO OUR TRANSFORMATION...

In the ever-evolving world of the events industry, understanding the dynamics of compensation and workforce trends is key to not only maintaining a competitive edge but also creating a thriving and content workforce. Now in its second year, the Annual Events Industry Salary Survey has become a critical tool that provides invaluable insights and equips industry stakeholders with the knowledge and data needed to adapt and excel in our ever-shifting environment.

Attracting and retaining top talent is a continual challenge. Our survey offers insights into what eventprofs value in their careers. It sheds light not only on salary expectations but also non-monetary incentives, such as flexible work arrangements, mental wellness provision and work-life balance. Understanding these preferences is invaluable in building a workforce that is motivated, satisfied, and loyal.

The salary survey enables organisations to gauge how their compensation and benefits packages measure up against those of competitors and industry peers. It provides a basis for ensuring that salaries are competitive, and their benefits are in step with the rest of the industry. The survey is also a powerful tool for promoting diversity and inclusion within the industry. By collecting data on ethnic origin and gender identity, the events sector can identify areas for improvement and can help us to make strides toward creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

As we look forwards into 2024, we cannot deny that the pandemic is still impacting on our industry. We are now starting to settle into our transformed landscape, and the insights garnered from our survey on company resilience, growth and forward plans will enable stakeholders to see how our industry is 'bouncing back' and what organisations are now focusing on to create profitable, healthy and successful businesses.

With over 1300 respondents, the Annual Events Industry Salary Survey serves as a credible and robust compass, guiding the industry toward sustainable growth and success. Its benefits encompass not only financial aspects but can also help companies to foster a work culture that values diversity, inclusion, and employee well-being.

Robert Kenward
Fitability® Recruiter at Jigsaw Talent Solutions



OUR COMMENTATORS

Our thanks go to the industry commentators who took the time to read the draft study and to lend their experience and expertise to help analyse and reflect on the results:



Felicia Asiedu
Marketing Director Europe, Cvent



Gabrielle Austen Browne
Founder, Diversity Alliance



Laura Capell-Abra
Founder, Stress Matters



Mary Carter-Lee
People & Culture Director, Identity Global



Mark Field
Operations Director, Victory Services Club



Steve Jones
Managing Director, Wyboston Lakes



Fiona Lawlor

SVP Director of Human Resources,
Jack Morton London



Juliet Price

Development Consultant, beam



Kerrin MacPhie

Chief Executive, Meetings Industry
Association



Margaret Reeves

Managing Director, RefTech



Dale Parmenter

CEO, DRPG



Catherine Turner

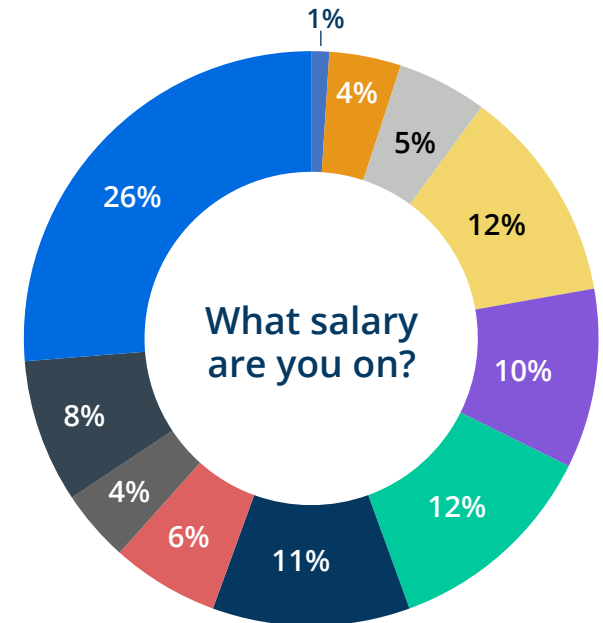
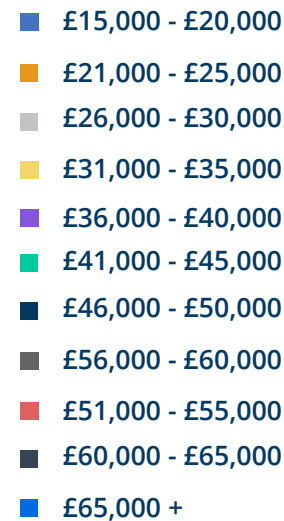
CEO & Founder, CTL Communications

OUR FINDINGS...

SALARY

CONSISTENT AND CONFIDENT

How have salaries fared this year? They have increased slightly but generally have stayed the same as 2022. As we came out of the pandemic certain skills were very much in demand. "I saw many employers overpaying to get these people into their businesses, now we are a year later and companies cannot reduce salaries, so some people are still being over paid and this may translate into the happiness shown by 45% of respondents," observes Kenward.



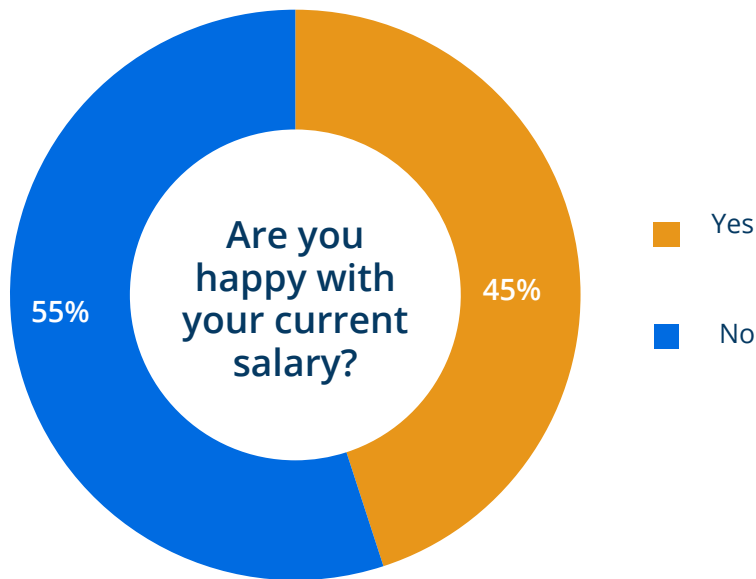
"The fact that this is so similar to 2022 could indicate employers believe they are paying at the right level, or that they can't afford to pay them more, or that those in the industry have unrealistic expectations," comments Juliet Price, development consultant at beam.

Dale Parmenter, CEO of DRPG agrees: "The progress we've seen since the last survey is positive, with incremental rises across the board."

"Post COVID times have changed, and salary demands and requirements are very different to how it was pre COVID," states Margaret Reeves, managing director of RefTech. "The industry does ask people to work long hours, and as a rule companies do not pay overtime so if you work it back to an hourly rate, the industry is poorly paid unless you are in a very senior role."

Catherine Turner, CEO & founder of CTL Communications thinks the survey reflects their own experience: "Of course, money is important which is why we pay well, and so are benefits such as health insurance and support for working remotely. What we believe hasn't changed is that people always want to be where they can do great work, with great people, for great clients, and where they can grow as individuals. So, for me, the financial elements are only one part of the story."

Mark Field, operations director of the Victory Services Club is seeing junior people coming into the industry and asking for more money than before "but that could just be that pre COVID the hospitality industry had more access to lower paid labour and so therefore the tendency was to pay a lower hourly rate. For entry level staff we have seen a salary increase of around 25%."

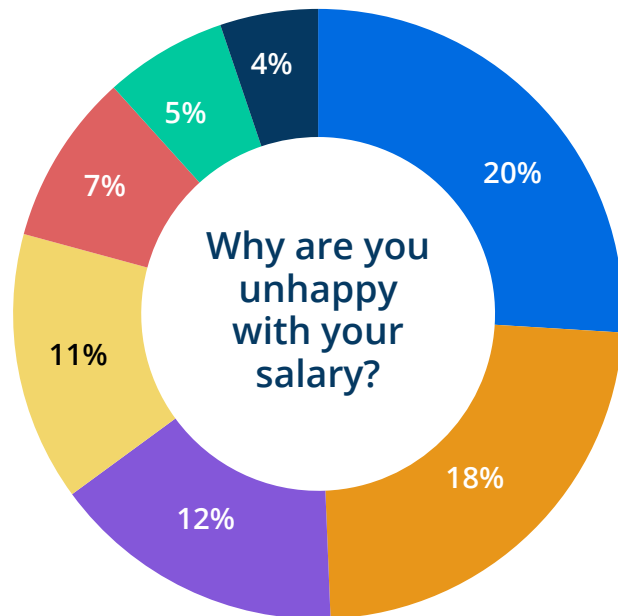


- I feel satisfied that the work I do is right for the salary I get
- It gives me enough to live comfortably
- I am paid on par or well compared to my peers
- It goes with my role
- I feel I earn more money than I should earn
- I feel I am rewarded in other ways (progression, bonuses, wellbeing etc)
- I feel little pressure due to the work I do and the salary I earn

HAPPINESS

45% of respondents are happy with their salary, which could be viewed as a positive or a negative, depending on your own view and experience. Kenward isn't surprised with this figure. "This figure is actually quite high, when compared to other sectors and other surveys I have seen which cite the figure as much lower at around 25%. This is because no one is ever 100% happy with their salary, it's human nature to always want more."

Steve Jones, managing director of Wyboston Lakes was pleased to see the high level of job satisfaction reflected in this report. "I am hopeful that this trend will continue to strengthen in the years ahead," he says. "In an industry that has long been associated with lower wages, it's truly heartening to see so many operators pioneering innovative approaches to offering higher compensation. This not only benefits the dedicated team members who reap the rewards but also enhances the overall experience for our valued customers."



- I do so much more than my job role
- I have seen adverts showing higher salaries at competitors
- I think I could get paid more elsewhere
- I have been waiting for a pay rise for a while and it hasn't materialised
- It has not risen with the cost of living
- It's not enough for me to live the lifestyle I want
- I have seen colleagues and peers gain pay while mine has stayed the same



DISSATISFACTION

Price highlights a potential industry wide issue: "Year on year, there's no real change with people's salary satisfaction, i.e. over half the respondents aren't happy," she says. "Indicating that 50% of the sector's employees could be looking for a better paid opportunity." She continues: "When you look at the different indicators relating to satisfaction vs dissatisfaction, the stand-out point is that the number of adverts that show higher salaries than the respondent is earning in the same role, has leapt by 10%. Are the respondents looking at adverts more often because they're unhappy or are those recruiting having to pay more to attract candidates?"

Kenward thinks this rise could be that more companies are adding salary bands to their adverts. "Perhaps companies are simply being more transparent with salaries now?"

THE COST OF LIVING

The top reason for respondents being unhappy with their salary was that it has not risen in line with the cost of living (from 11% in 2022 to 21% in 2023). "It's clear that the cost of living continues to have a significant impact on respondents' contentment with their salary," states Mary Carter-Lee, people & culture director of Identity Global. "The continual upward trend of living expenses means that employees must try and find ways to make their salary stretch further and, understandably, expect their employers to share this burden. At Identity, we've taken extraordinary measures over the last year. As well as moving salaries forward in a sustainable way, and paying annual bonus payments, we decided to give an exceptional bonus in June of this year to support employees with the cost of living. We also now offer breakfast in our offices and pay for employees to have railcards that can help with them travel costs. Many employers have chosen to support staff in similar ways in response to this crisis."

"It's the same 10% drop for those who don't believe their salary has risen with the cost of living," says Price. "That's interesting as the cost of living and interest rates continue to make economic headlines this year, yet these results indicate that salaries in our sector are keeping pace much more than last year."

Nearly a third (30%) of people just want a small increase of 6% to 10%. "Employers may feel that an employee should increase their output to get that raise, but they need to consider how much it would cost to replace that person, and that a new person coming in would probably get that higher salary anyway," comments Kenward.



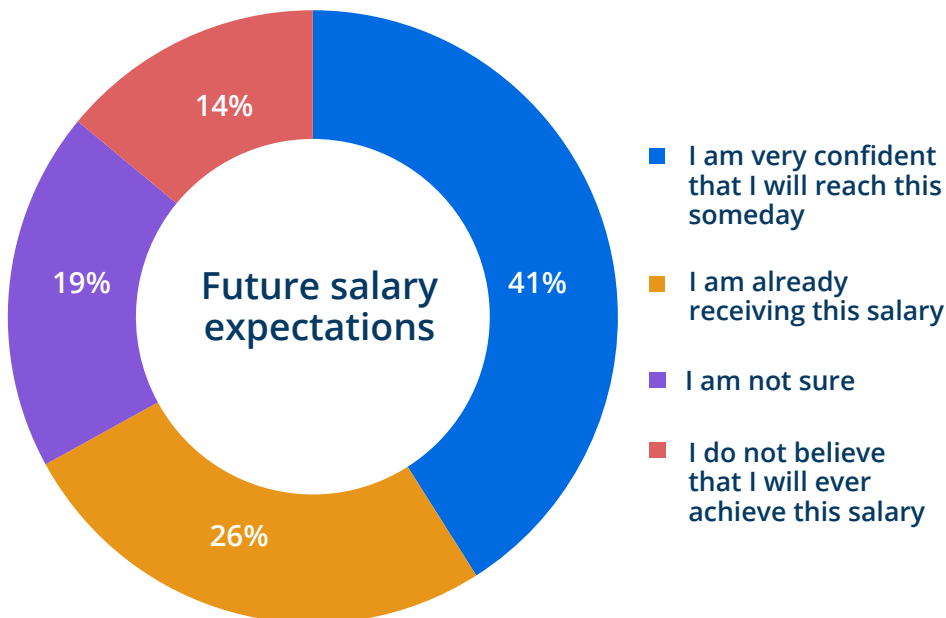
CONFIDENCE

41% say that they are confident that they will earn what they need one day. "I think this is quite impressive and a very positive finding for the industry's growth and retention," says Kenward.

Price agrees: "Confidence in the ability to attain the right salary in the future is reassuringly on the up – that's a positive to communicate to people who are considering a career in our sector."

"It is a positive result to see a slight increase on 2022 and that over two-thirds (67%) will or already receive a salary they are comfortable to live on," says Kerrin MacPhie, chief executive of the Meetings Industry Association. "This highlights that a career in business meetings and events will deliver in terms of pay."

How confident are you that you will achieve the salary you deem comfortable to live on at some point in your career?



SALARY INCREASES

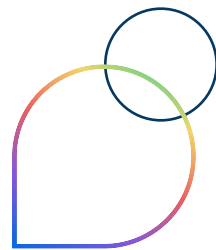
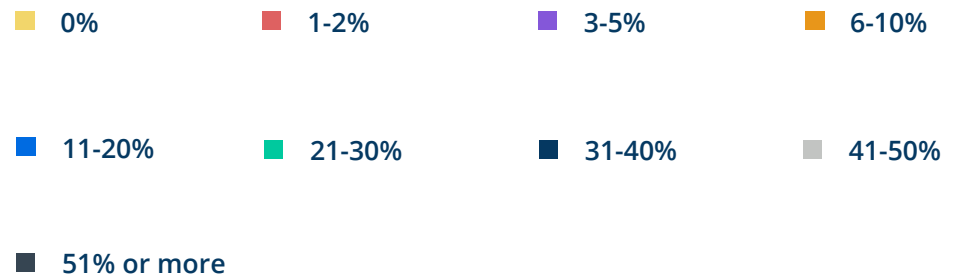
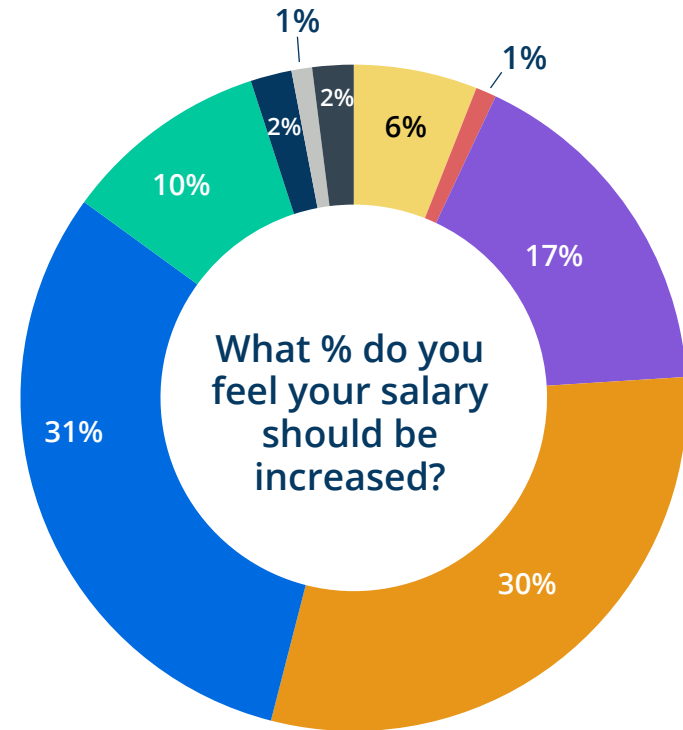
It was a shock to most employers that nearly half of respondents thought their salary should increase by 11% to 30%. "Whilst its normal for employees in most companies to indicate that they believe their salaries should be increased, for 42% of respondents to indicate that they think their salary should increase between 11% and 30% is unusually high," comments Carter-Lee. "Again, this is probably connected to the rise in the cost of living. Trying to manage salary expectations of employees in the current climate is a genuine concern of all employers as it has to be balanced with the reality of budget limitations, profitability, and overall economic conditions."

"When it comes to salaries, it's a natural instinct to want more," says Field. "It doesn't matter whether you're at the top of the pay scale or the bottom; everyone hopes for better compensation. People are feeling hard done by and the cost of living is through the roof, but that said, I was surprised to see a big percentage wanting a 30% raise! Figures like this, especially at the top salaries, could make a company unprofitable."

Reeves agrees: "I was surprised to see that 30% of respondents would like an 11 to 20% raise in salary; as a business owner, that's just not feasible because the events industry is very budget driven. Organisers can push suppliers to get the lowest price possible, but we do walk away from work if it's just not feasible to do a good job for the budget. Our biggest cost is our payroll so a 20% increase would be impossible to implement."

MacPhie thinks it is reasonable to expect that just over half (54%) expect up to 10% increases, “It is interesting to see nearly a third (31%) are looking for a 10% to 20% increase. This could be due to roles becoming more agile, so people are doing more, taking on more responsibility and younger talent are now doing more senior tasks. With the persistent staff and skills shortage, retention may be reliant on this percentage increase. But, with 78% of respondents being senior or managerial then increases of this size will impact businesses who are already hard hit through other rising costs.”

Price thought it was reassuring that people have downsized the percentage by which they feel their salaries should be increased, “though does that indicate that employers are paying better or that people are being more realistic about what’s feasible? Maybe it’s taken 12 months for people to realise that companies are being squeezed on every aspect of costs since the pandemic.”

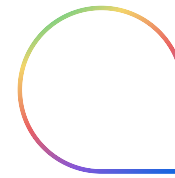


OUR FINDINGS...

BENEFITS

WE WANT A FOUR-DAY WEEK...

This year 'four-day week' was added as a benefit and it scored the highest on the 'benefits we'd like to have' question with over half (55%) of respondents keen to implement it. "That is a seismic shift from employees saying, 'we'd like this to happen' to 'this needs to happen now,'" comments Kenward. "A true four-day week isn't squeezing five days' work into four days, that's called compressed hours, or working four days a week for 80% of your salary, that's simply working part-time. A proper four-day week is working for four days and still being paid a full-time salary. Our industry isn't set up for this shift but fundamentally, as an industry we need to recognise this call for change and see how we can adapt."



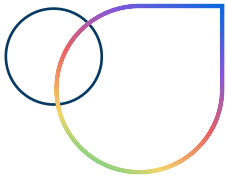
Price thinks that lifestyle is leading the way forward, "ensuring employers respect that people's attitudes to work has changed. 2% of those who responded said their company supported a four-day week and 55% would like to have that option. It's always going to be a tough one in terms of what happens to someone's clients and responsibilities on the day of the week that an employee doesn't work, but it's a definite plus for those companies can navigate this."

"The appeal for a four-day work week does not surprise me and an approach that we've spoken to many employers about," agrees Laura Capell-Abra, founder of Stress Matters. "It is of course appealing to create a better sense of balance but not an initiative that I see gaining huge traction in this industry in the coming year. Before it can be implemented, 20% efficiencies need to be found in the team and in teams where resourcing is often such a challenge, I see this as a working style that's going to take a while to take off in the events industry."

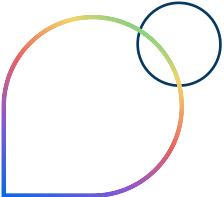
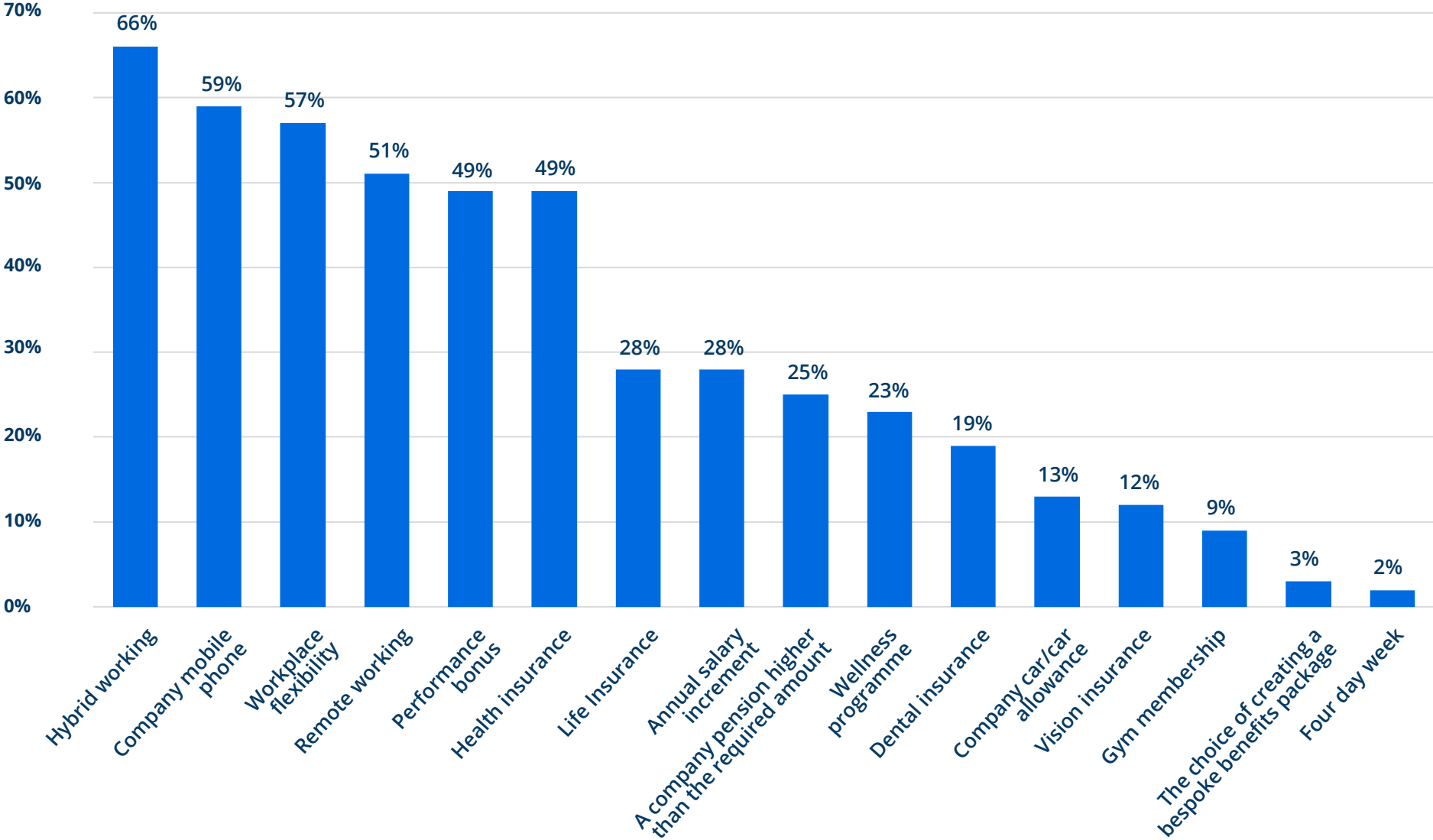
Some companies are already offering their teams compressed hours. “Our chefs do a four-day week of compressed hours to give them more work / life balance,” comments Field. “But it is unlikely that the rest of our teams could do this because different things work in different departments. To do a four-day week, employees would have to produce 20% more in these four days, and is that good for mental health? Most people would like to have more time off, but this debate runs a lot deeper; people are under so much pressure to achieve their work in five days so we’d now expect them to do it in less time? In some areas it could be achievable, but for us being a 24/7/365 always on-call business we couldn’t do this for everyone.”

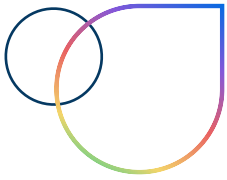
Reeves agrees: “I’m sure most people would like a four-day week, but is that really feasible in our industry? Our days and hours are dictated by our clients and when their events are; even leaving early on a Friday is impossible because that’s when some of our events teams are getting ready to go on site. Is the risk of stress really worth trying to cram five days’ work in four? Or would companies have to reduce expected staff output by 20% – when profit margins are already so low? I just can’t see how it could work in our industry.”



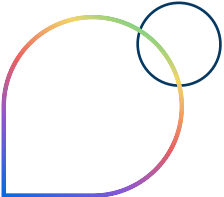
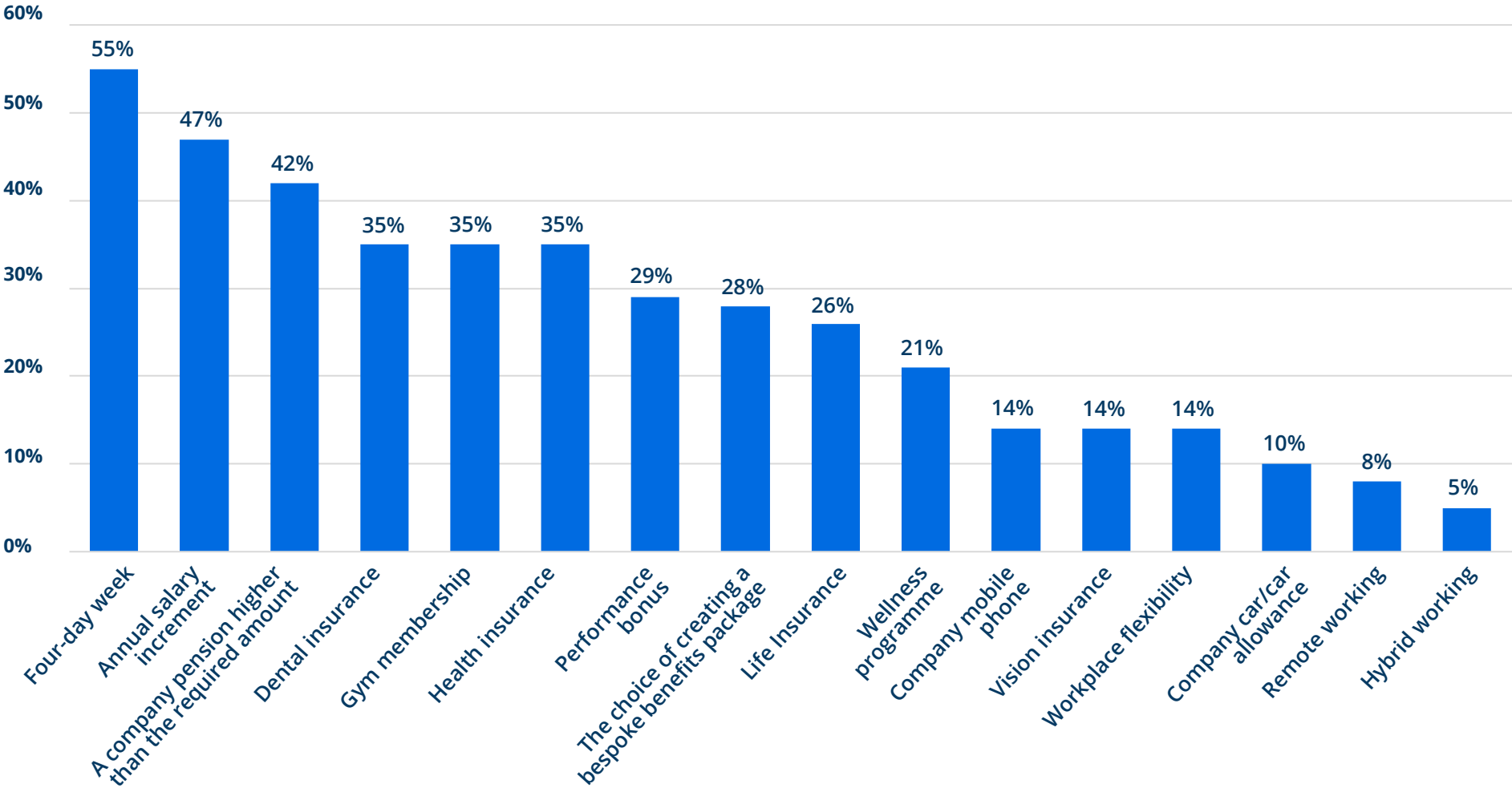


Which benefits does your company provide?





Which benefits would you like added?



FLEXIBILITY

Parmentier thinks that benefits are subjective, and personal to the individual “which can often lead to a ‘majority-wins’ scenario,” he says. “At DRPG, we knew a refresh of our benefits system was needed after significant changes to working culture over the past few years, and it was clear that this could not be a decision made top-down. We have a Next-Gen board whose position is perfect for this type of company progression, and after taking the topic away as a project have now implemented a brand-new benefits scheme in which every team member had their say. It’s not only given a more reflective and flexible list of benefits for our team, but also installed the Next-Gen board with a sense of collective leadership and empowerment.”

Fiona Lawlor, SVP, director of human resources, Jack Morton London thinks that benefits are an important part of work and life. “It’s really encouraging to see our benefits cover a lot of these findings as we want our people to be able to leverage them to support their health and wellbeing at work and outside work. Post COVID, a lot of focus on our benefit program went into flexibility regarding hybrid working and no meeting Fridays were introduced. Since then, we’ve been more creative with our benefits and introducing non-standard perks such as massages, nutritious breakfasts, workshops for sleep and finances and painting classes. These benefits not only encourage our teams to make purposeful office meetings but educate and help personal wellbeing.”

“It’s also interesting that health benefits such as dental insurance, gym membership and overall health insurance are desired by over double the percentage of those wanting a company mobile phone or workplace flexibility,” comments Price. “I would expect that health insurance will be flying up the benefits wanted list next year.”

MacPhie says: “The way we work has changed so it is good to see benefits such as hybrid working, workplace flexibility, performance bonuses, health insurance and wellness programmes showing slight increases year-on-year as these are key for positive teams and happy employees.”

“In an exciting and fast-paced industry like ours, it’s the highly skilled and committed workforce that drives our evolution and enables us to provide exceptional value to our customers,” says Jones. “We recognise that fair compensation is only right, and we are proud to pair it with flexibility, including hybrid working arrangements and a comprehensive package of employee benefits. It is pleasing to see the substantial progress made in this regard.”



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Capell-Abra thinks it is great to see an increase in wellbeing orientated benefits being provided to team members. “There is data that shows that employees who are physically and mentally well are more likely to be productive and when they have access to wellbeing benefits, they are better equipped to manage stress and maintain a healthy work-life balance, leading to increased productivity and better results for the organisation,” she states.

Reeves agrees: “The last few years have been really difficult for the whole industry, and we are still building back. We had to lose some of our team through the lockdowns and it’s been hard to find the right people to build the team back up again. As we’ve got busier it’s been ‘all hands to the pump’ and this has affected our team and people have been tired and burnt out at times, but that is not sustainable. We’re a team and we support each other so I’m proud that we are part of the 23% of companies to offer a mental health and wellness programme for our employees.”

THE ANNUAL PAY RISE

After the desire for a four-day week, next on the list of wants was an annual salary increment, implying that the cost-of-living crisis was very much on people’s minds. “I thought it interesting that only 28% of employers have an annual pay review, but nearly half of respondents would like one,” says Reeves. “I hope this will change as our industry stabilises; before COVID we had an annual pay increase and we introduced it again last year.”



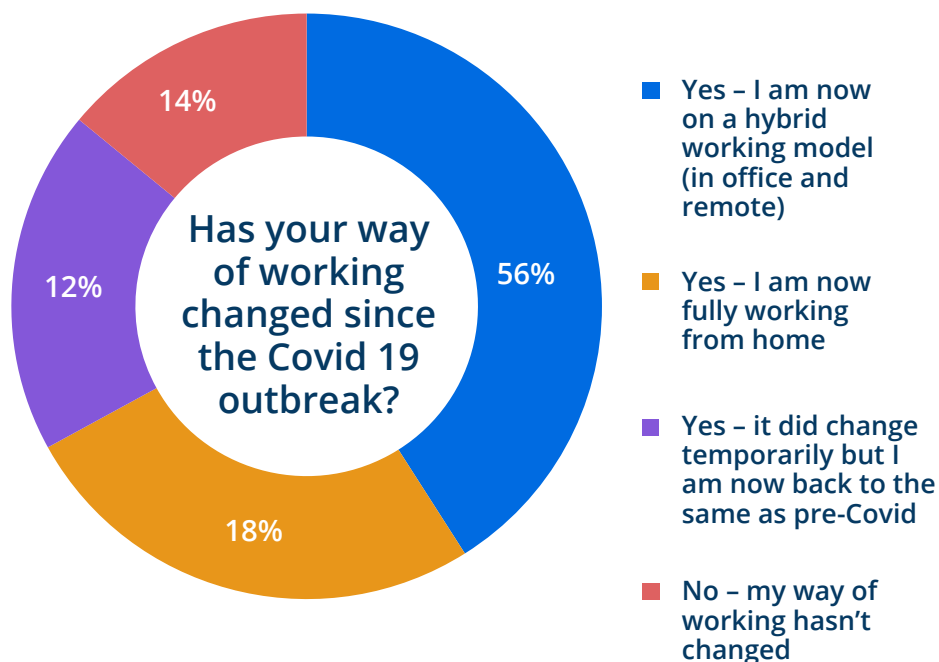


OUR FINDINGS...

WAYS OF WORKING

HYBRID IS NOW AN ESTABLISHED PART OF WORKING LIFE...

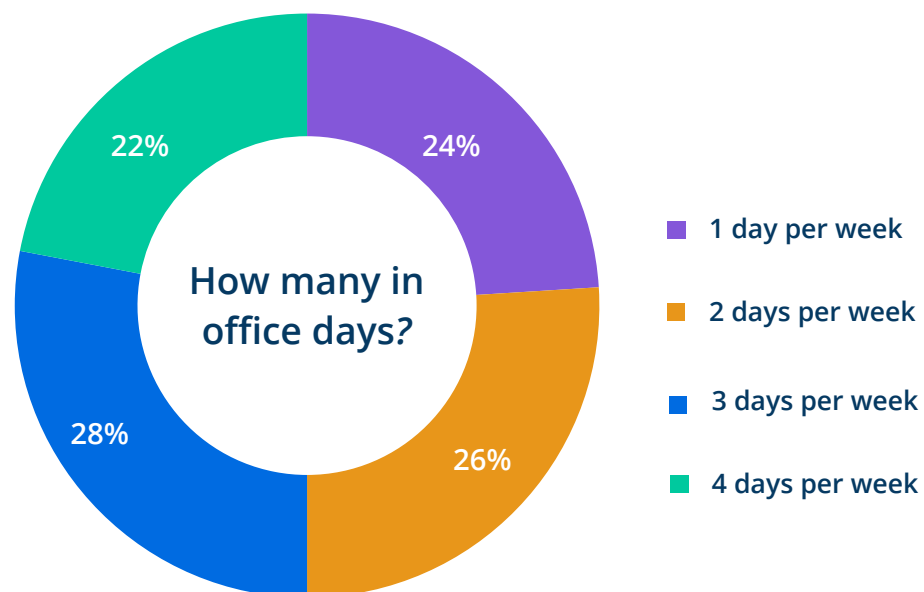
Three quarters of the industry are working hybrid or fully remotely with the majority of those people (54%) working either two or three days in the office. Kenward thinks that this ratio is the way forward but expresses concern for fully remote working. "We are a soft touch industry, built upon encouraging people to meet face to face so we do need to practice what we preach and ensure that we are not all working completely remotely in silos."



Key:

- **Remote working:** is never going into the office, i.e. you can work anywhere
- **Hybrid working:** is working a number of days from home and a number from a place of business to a set pattern
- **Flexible working:** is working sometimes from home, sometimes from the office but not a set pattern, and chosen by the employee **business to a set pattern**

Hybrid workers – how many days per week do you work in the office/ business location (new question for 2023)

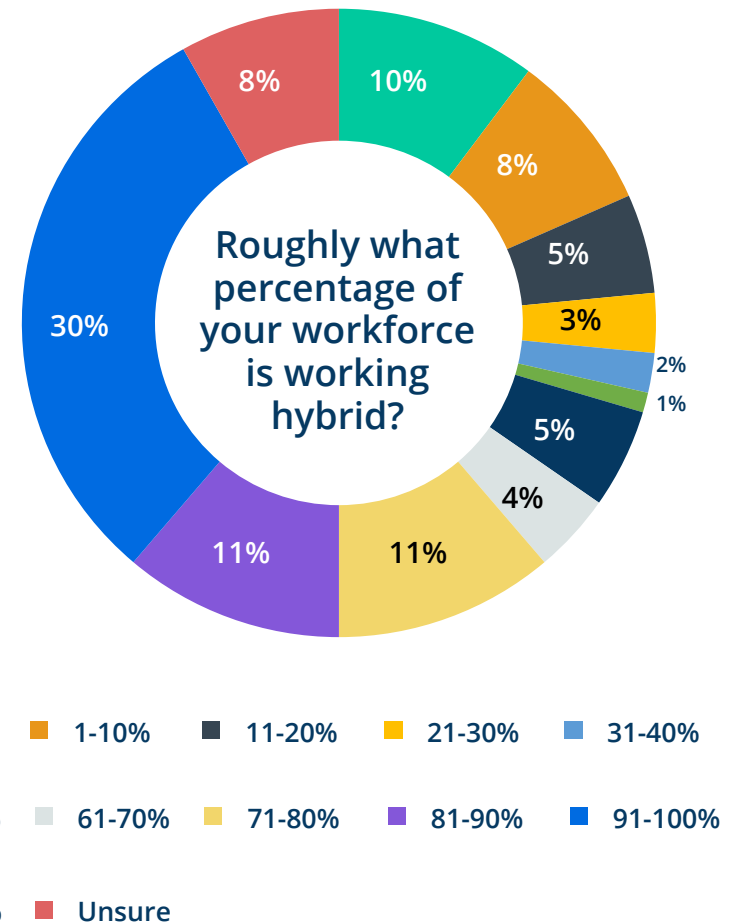


“With a marginal 1% increase in 2023, this latest survey demonstrates that hybrid working continues to remain high on the agenda with nearly three-quarters seeking a hybrid role,” says MacPhie. “Employers need to continue to offer flexibility in order to retain their employees.”

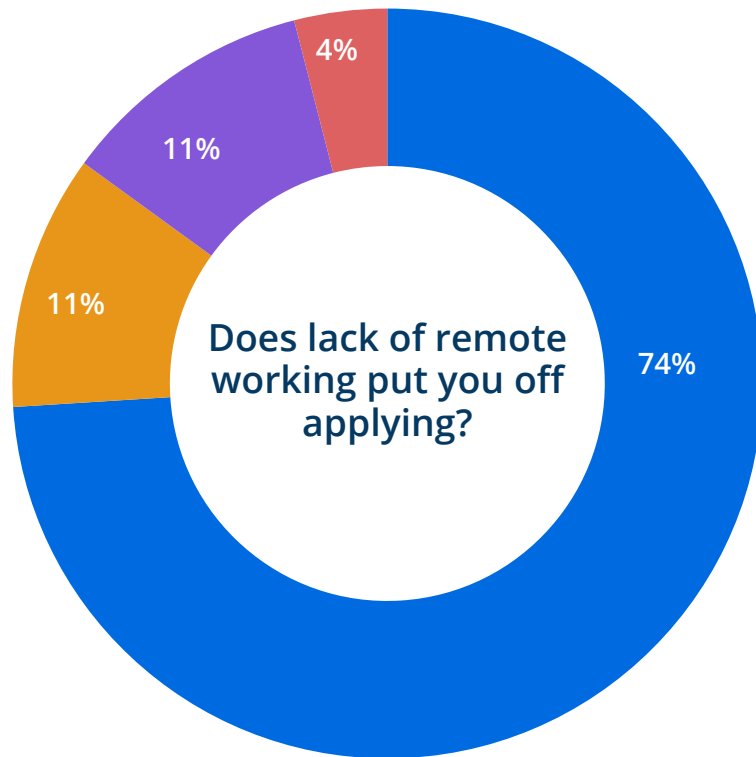
Price says: “The results in this section and the relevant points in the last all compound that hybrid working is now an established way of working life, and from these results it looks like everyone who wants it has it. According to these results, those employers who don’t offer hybrid working will be losing out on at least 75 % of the available talent.”

“COVID changed the way our teams work,” says Field. “Our sales team continues to work hybrid – working one day a week from home. We ask the team to be consistent, so we have some of the team in every day because we have a physical business with client visits, venue show rounds and meetings with the rest of the event delivery teams.”

“21% of companies offer 2 days a week from home, and I think that’s the ‘sweet spot’ of remote working. Our team can work up to two days a week from home – but it is subject to the demands of the job,” says Reeves. But she also shows concern about remote working, saying: “Personally, I don’t think that working completely remotely is good for mental health, and it can also hamper training as new team members pick up so much from their interaction with colleagues.”



If you were looking for a new role in the future, would the fact that it does not offer remote working put you off applying?



■ Yes, I would be looking for a hybrid role

■ No, I do not want to work remotely at all

■ Yes, I would be looking for a remote only role

■ No, my job doesn't allow me to work remotely



OUR FINDINGS...

WORK/LIFE BALANCE

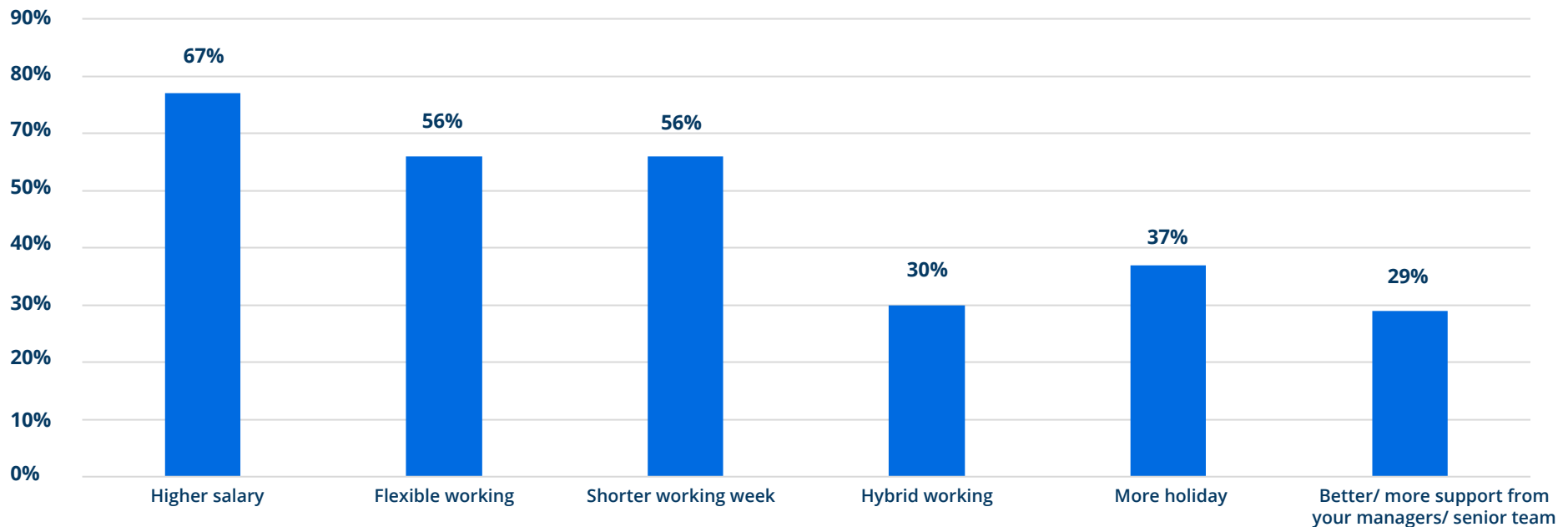
HYBRID IS HERE IS STAY... BUT...

Hybrid working is now seen as the norm in our industry, but nearly a third (30%) of respondents would like to work in a hybrid way to enable a better work / life balance. "That's a scary amount of people who haven't got this option," says Kenward. "I'd expect this figure to be really low and almost a given – in fact we almost took this option out of the survey. I do understand that some companies can't offer hybrid – but even one day a week from home would be beneficial for most people."

Helping employees achieve a better work life balance is a very individual process says Field. "Managing people as adults and individuals to ensure they each get what they need to juggle their own personal life issues and challenges."

Three quarters of employees thought that more money would provide a better work life balance. Reeves was surprised at this figure: "Money could make a difference to how you live outside of work, and it can reduce stress if you have enough to pay your bills, but a better work life balance can only be achieved with the co-operation of the employer. I do think that social events – such as the summer parties and BBQs we hold can encourage the team to let off steam and relax."

What would give you a good work/life balance? *(multiple answers allowed)*



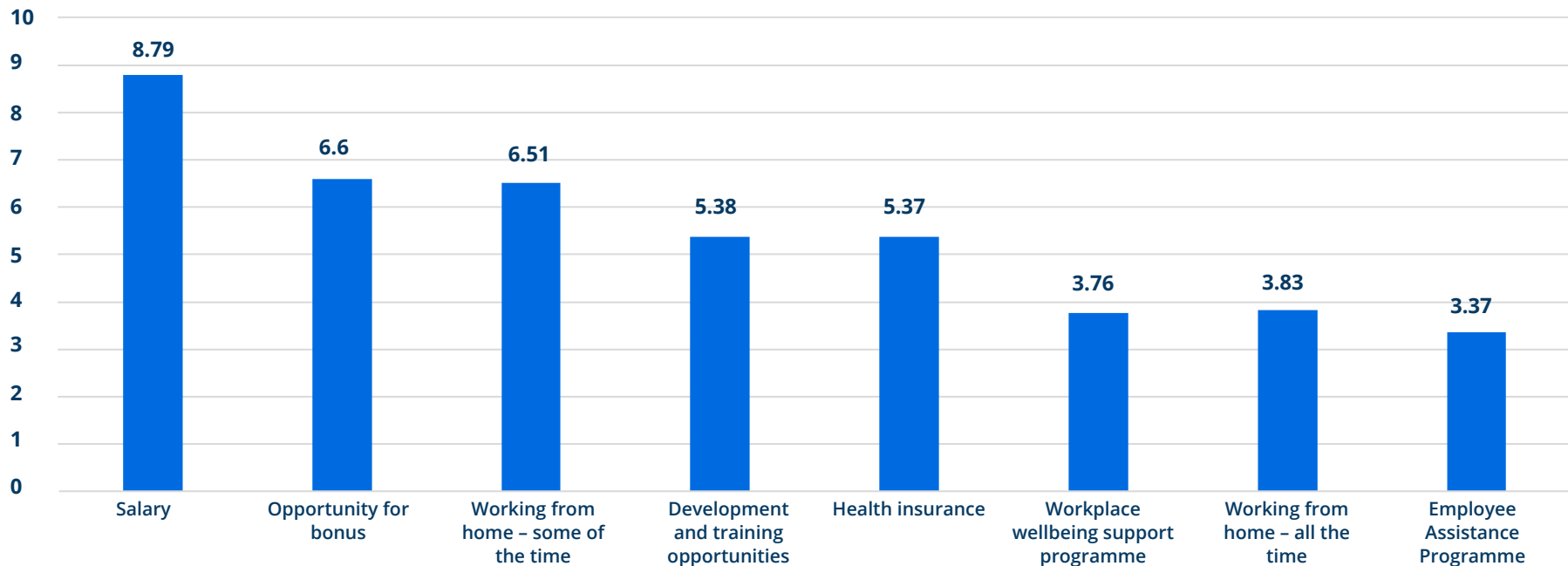
Field agrees: “For me, money doesn’t give you more work life balance; it just gives you more money. It may give you a better balance because you don’t have the pressure of bills and the stresses of day-to-day life, but you could win a million pounds and not have a great work life balance because you still work too hard. If you are not happy in your job, the money will not fix that.”

It’s not a surprise to Price that salary is the biggest driver for a future role. “Working from home all the time doesn’t really support the type of roles available in our sector but back to the hybrid option, employees definitely do want to work from home some of the time,” she comments.”

MacPhie thinks it would be interesting to see how many would opt for a job share as a preference; “as it could potentially demonstrate an appetite for employers to consider.”

Field raises an interesting point: “I would have liked the survey to ask, ‘are you happy in your role?’ because if 70% said no then that would have a huge impact on how we analyse the findings. Some people want promotion and the money it brings, but others are simply happy in a more junior role. Happiness is extremely important.”

When deciding on a future role, how important are each of these?



OUR FINDINGS...

BOUNCING BACK

A CONFIDENCE BOOST

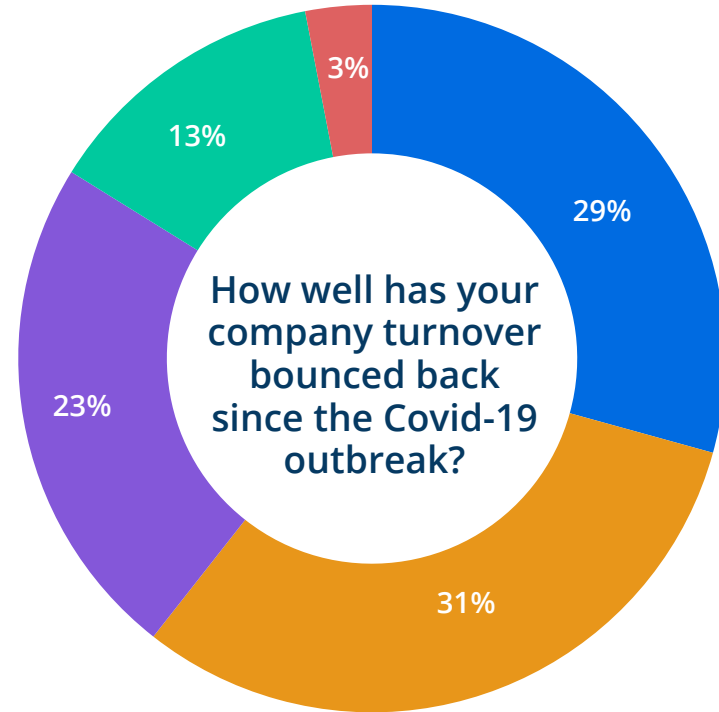
The majority of businesses are doing well, with just over half (54%) either at pre-pandemic levels or doing better than before. 13% experienced the highs last year but are now struggling. "But last year was an anomaly and we have to recognise that," says Kenward. "Everyone had a fantastic year as the flood gates opened and we all just tried to cope with all the business we had. But that was a bonus year, and not the norm," he says. "Just because things have settled down again its not a bad sign, just an indicator that this is our new baseline to measure against. Business will go up from here, and even down again, but never down below our new base line."

Felicia Asiedu, marketing director Europe, at Cvent thinks this research should be seen as a confidence boost. "Particularly figures that show that more than half of the organisations surveyed (54%) are doing as well as, or better than, before COVID," she says.

RECRUITMENT GETS PUSHED DOWN THE AGENDA

'Growth through recruitment' has been reduced to just 5% of companies, from 15% last year. "This indicates that many companies over recruited the wrong people last year," says Kenward.

"So according to these results we are not the sector we were pre-pandemic, and priorities have switched heavily to profitability as companies struggle to deal with rising costs," says Price. "The 10% drop in recruitment activity year on year may indicate that employers are stretching their existing workforce rather than risk expanding it at this point."

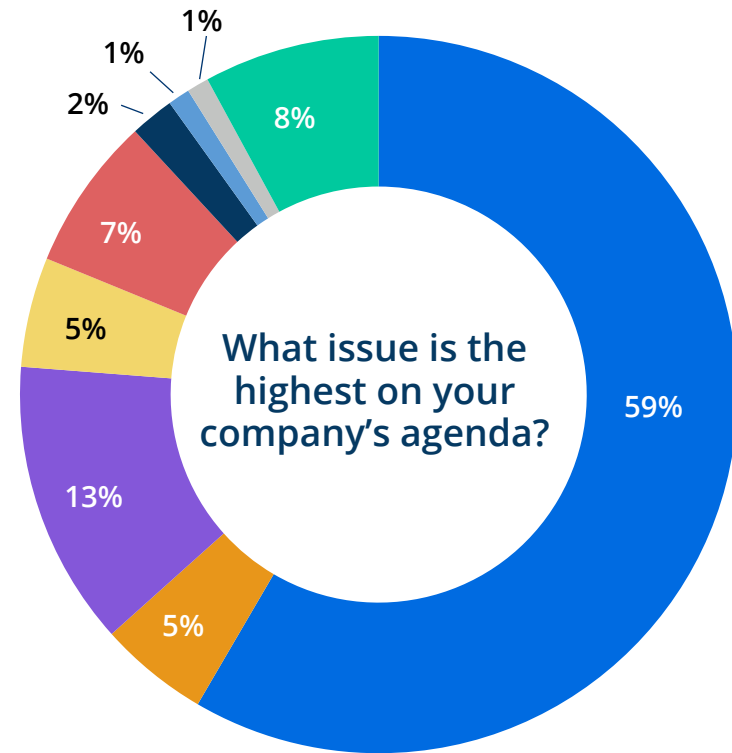


- Almost at pre-pandemic levels
- Doing better than before the pandemic
- Back to pre-pandemic levels
- Did well initially, but now struggling
- Not well at all

MacPhie thinks that it is vital to retain staff: "As the need to recoup lost profits from soaring costs and the recovery process post- pandemic." She says: "Recruitment is costly, retention needs investment but in the long run is far more cost effective for any business."

TURN OVER OR PROFIT?

"It was interesting to see that companies are doing well, but that there is a big focus (60%) on profitability," says Reeves. "To me, this could imply that the income and work is there, but the profit may need some help. The increases in cost of living, the price of utilities and the cost of food have eaten into our profits and there are only small increases that can be passed onto the client or customer. If some companies are genuinely doing better than pre-covid, I'd like to see their finances, and ask what they are doing differently? Are they managing more work with a smaller headcount maybe?"



- Making the company profitable
- Growth through recruitment
- Wellbeing of staff
- Growth through staff retention
- Inclusion and diversity
- Survival
- Managing and implementing hybrid working
- Training
- Unsure

OUR FINDINGS...

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

A KEY PART OF THE DECISION PROCESS

80% of our industry now say that a company's stance on supporting mental health would impact on their decision to work there. "This is now a key part of the decision process for the majority of employees in our industry. It's brilliant that people are talking about mental health and openly saying that this matters to them," states Kenward.

"Offering comprehensive well-being benefits can make a company more attractive to potential employees, backed up by what we see here with an increase in people reporting that the reputation around mental health of a business's approach to mental health would impact their choice to work there," says Capell-Abra.

"I'm glad to see that mental health provision was important to 80% of respondents," agrees Reeves. "It's a stressful industry and so employers need to do more to support their employees. We have just introduced a quiet room in our building – so anyone feeling overwhelmed can find a quiet place to re-centre themselves and breathe."

"The importance of a robust wellness culture continues to be desirable for employees, now running at 80% of respondents siting it as being important to them," says Price. "As a sector that demands a lot from our employees, this is paramount."

"In a competitive job market, organisations that prioritise employee wellbeing are more likely to attract and retain top talent," concludes Capell-Abra. "While there may be initial costs associated with implementing wellbeing programmes, in the long run, these initiatives can lead to cost savings."



■ Yes - it is important to me

■ No - it's not important to me

■ Don't know

OUR FINDINGS...

RECRUITMENT TRENDS

DISCONNECTED AND LACKING IN STRATEGY

60% of companies have recruited this year to grow their businesses, yet if we refer back to the Bouncing Back section of this report, only 5% of companies view recruitment as important. "This is a total disconnect and reveals that companies still don't have a recruitment strategy and still see it as a knee-jerk reaction to either gaining work, or staff leaving," comments Kenward.

Asiedu also picked up on this figure: "60% are actively looking to grow through the recruitment of new talent. Such figures are an overwhelming endorsement of not just our resilience but also the vital role the sector plays in bringing people together and significantly improving organisational success."

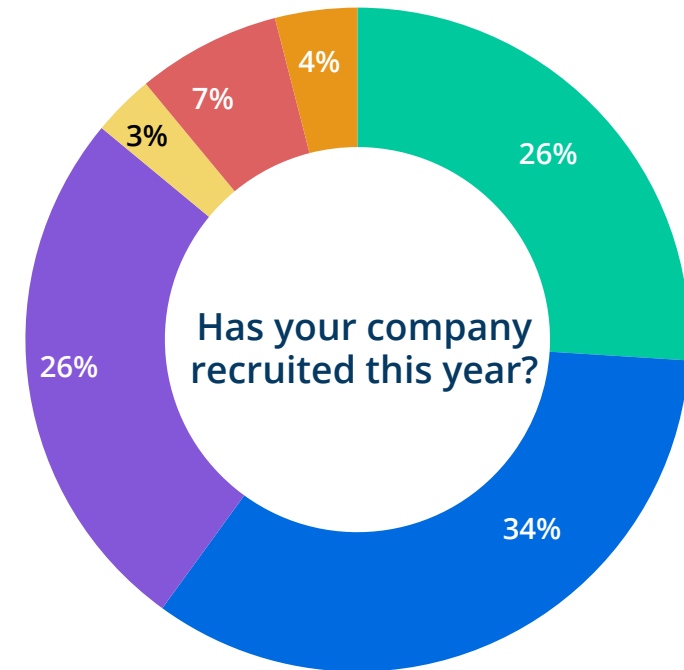
RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES

Only 19% of companies said that recruitment was a challenge due to candidates looking for a better work life balance – a huge decrease on last years 58%. "I see this as a positive for the industry and what we are doing is working. Ways we are working and the initiatives that companies are putting in place are having an impact," says Kenward.

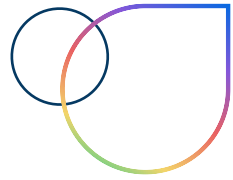
Price agrees: "Some big downturns here, we seem to be bridging the skills gap better, and salary expectations are less

of a pressure but the biggest plus here is that employers have addressed the needs for a better work life balance, and now provide opportunities for working from home."

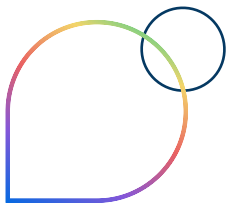
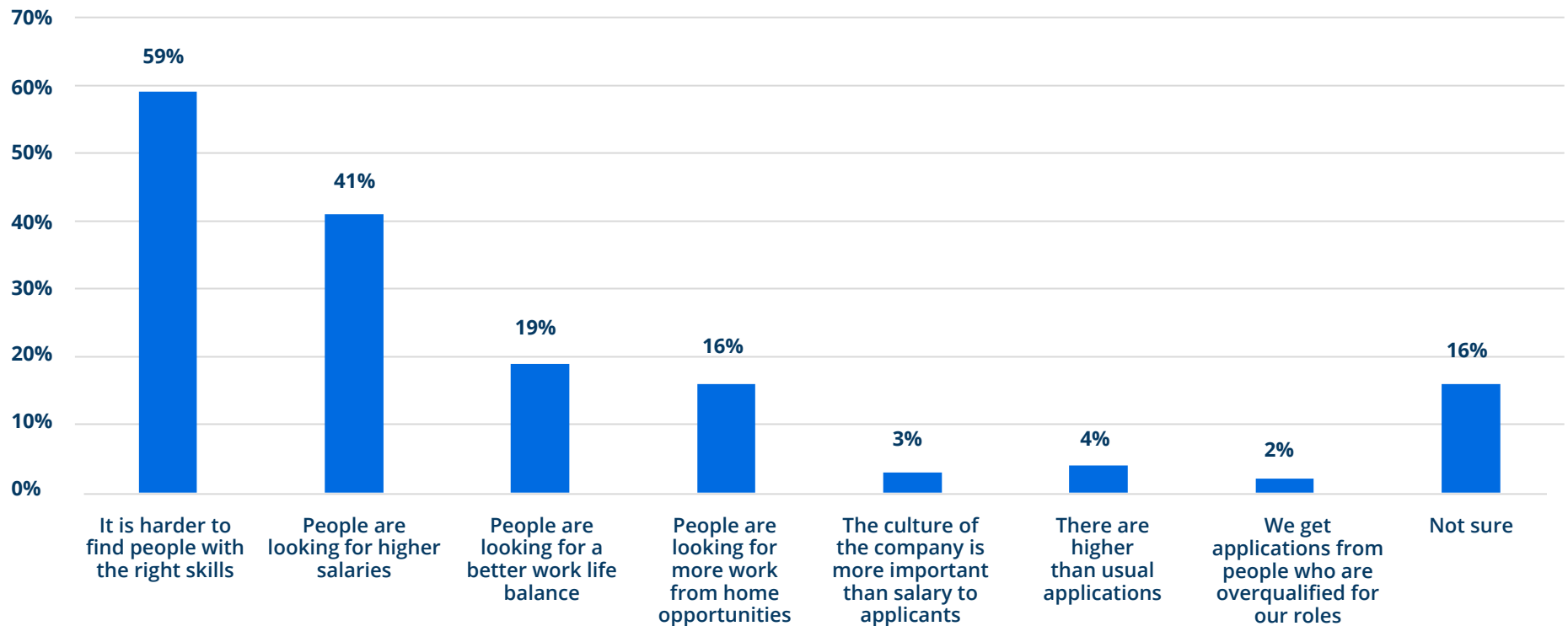
"Although 59% of organisations are still finding it hard to recruit people with the right skills, this is an improvement of 11% from last year, which clearly shows that the industry and those people coming into the industry are upskilling. However, there is a need for more people to do so more quickly, otherwise, we will continue to have a skills gap. Plenty of organisations within the sector offer training and education, much of it for free. These opportunities are valuable and should be fully utilised," says Asiedu.



- Yes - to grow the business back to pre-pandemic levels
- Yes - to grow the business to exceed pre-pandemic levels
- Yes - but just to replace staff leaving
- No - we don't need to recruit because we have retained staff
- No - we have not replaced staff who have left
- Unsure



What would give you a good work/life balance? *(multiple answers allowed)*



OUR FINDINGS...

DIVERSITY

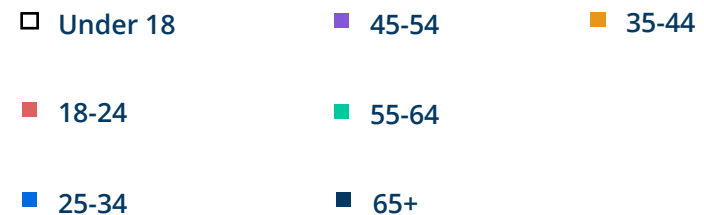
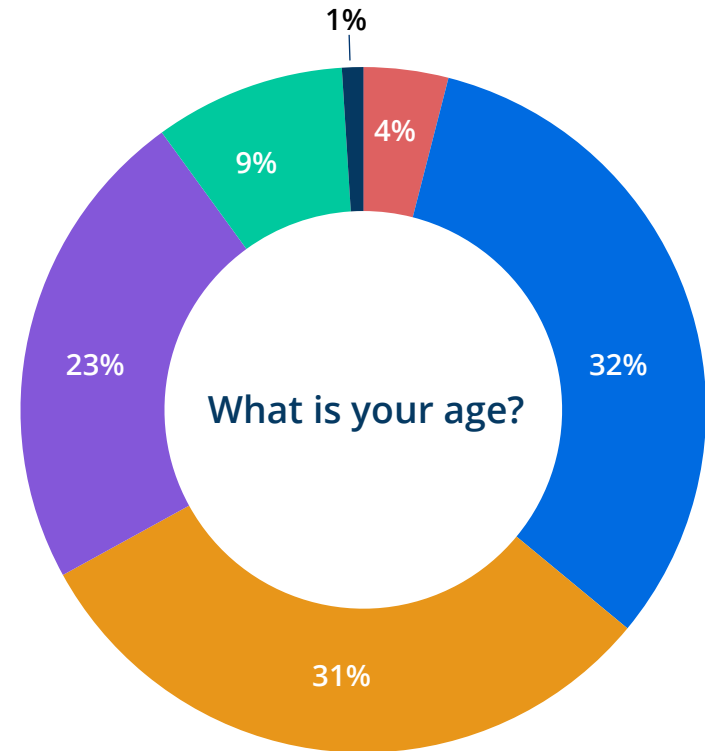
MUST DO BETTER...

The industry is still overwhelmingly White British observes Gabrielle Austen Browne, founder of Diversity Alliance: "We need more effort on diverse hiring and career progression to increase ethnic diversity. Efforts from within the industry such as the REACH scholarship initiative are trying to support this, but it's still not seen as a priority, which is disappointing. I feel some cultural awareness training would help organisations understand the ethnic minority experience, which in turn make people from minority backgrounds feel more welcome in our industry. Must, do better in my opinion!"

"It's good to see 7% of people identify as disabled, which is more than last year," says Austen Browne. "But this is probably still lower than the real number. I think more can be done to bring in and support neurodiverse people and those with access needs. Venues, agencies, and events should be really looking at prioritising accessibility."

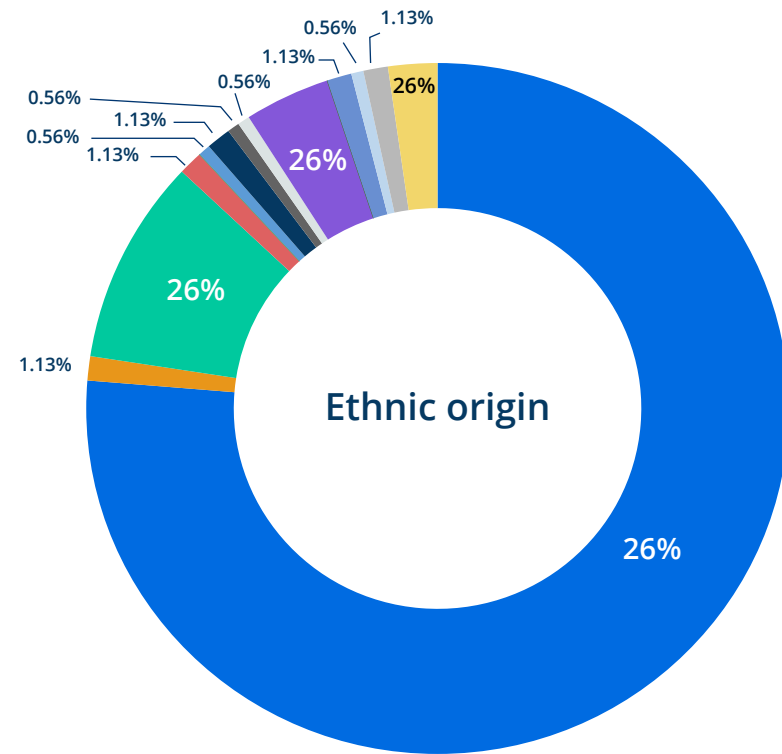
"While LGBTQ+ representation seems good, it worries me that 6% still don't declare their sexual orientation," she continues. "Having open cultures where people feel they can bring their whole selves to work is vital."

"The makeup of our workforce's ethnicities is moving in the right direction," says Parmenter. "But clearly still needs long-term work. My advice to business leaders and HR teams is to see what support can be given to schemes like the [REACH programme](#), with its efforts focussed on investing in the upcoming talent currently in education, to show our collective backing for ethnic minorities choosing the events industry as a career."

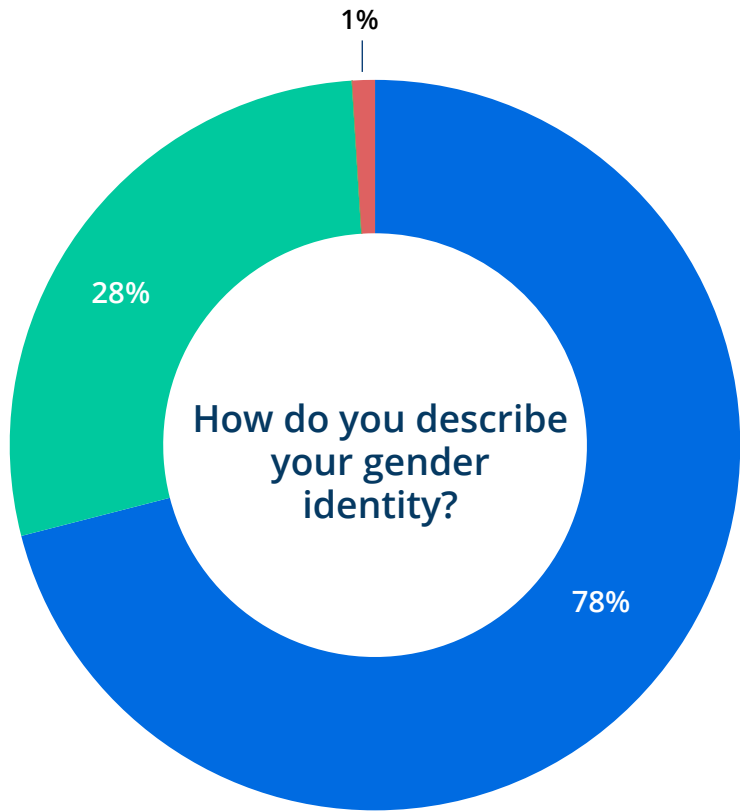


Price agrees: "Some slightly encouraging results here, at least the trajectory of becoming more ethnically inclusive and welcoming to those with disabilities is going in the right direction but there's still much to be done."

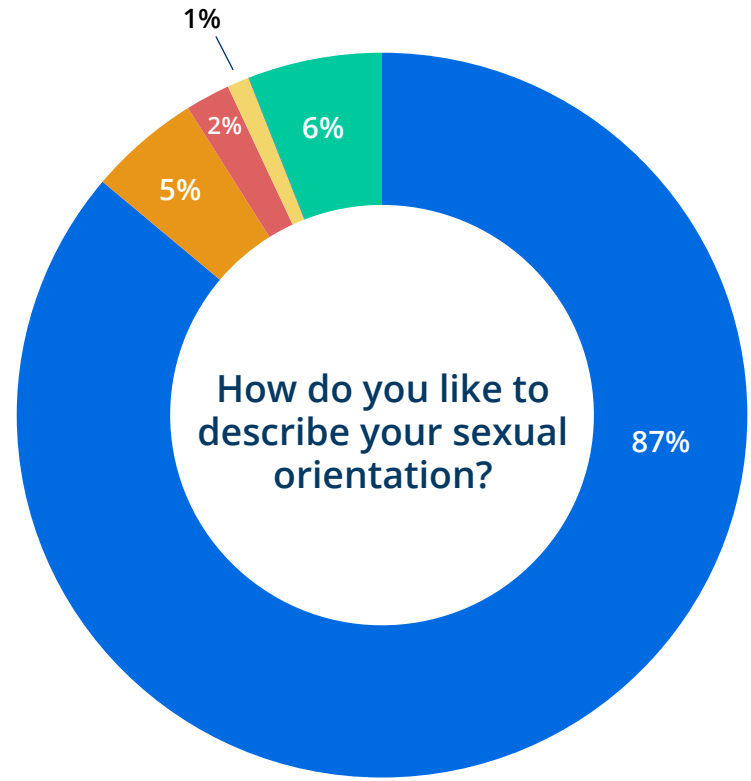
"It appears that diversity remains an issue in the industry," says Carter-Lee. "The demographics of respondents show that there could be better representation of all groups. Initiatives like the REACH scholarship programme and offering paid internships (as Identity do) to those from a range of backgrounds will help encourage new diverse talent into the industry. It's also important for companies to focus on how they can create high trust inclusive cultures via well thought through DEI strategies and roadmaps."



- White British
- White Irish
- White other
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian background
- Mixed - White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed - White and Black African
- Mixed - White and Asian
- Any other mixed background
- Black or Black British Caribbean
- Black or Black British African
- Any other Black background
- Chinese
- I do not wish to disclose my ethnic origin
- Any other ethnic origin



- Female
- Male
- Transgender female
- Transgender male
- Gender variant/non-conforming
- Not listed
- Prefer not to answer



- Heterosexual or straight
- Bisexual
- Gay, lesbian or homosexual
- Something else
- Don't know
- Prefer not to answer

OUR FINDINGS...

THE GENDER GAP

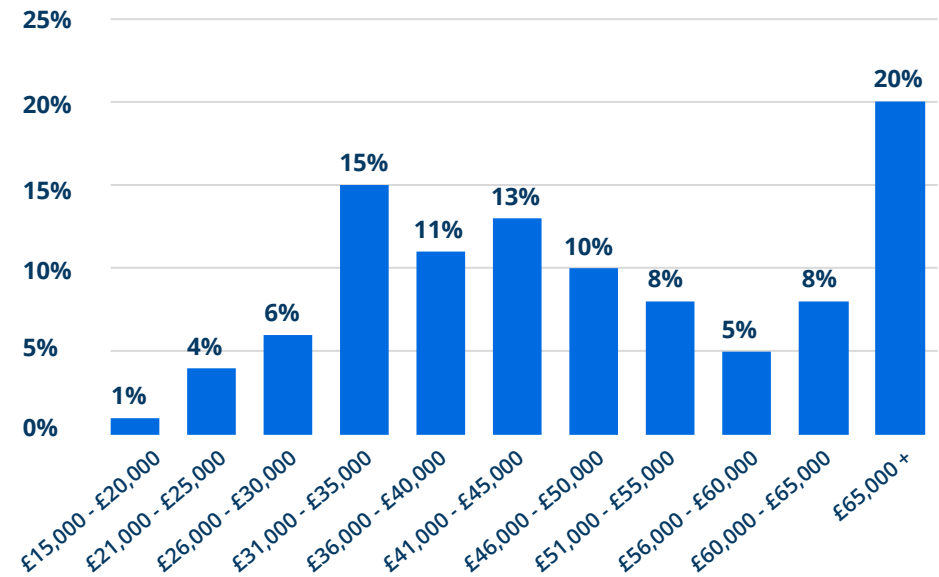
NEEDS IMPROVEMENT...

In an industry that is 75% female, “we have a lot of work to do,” states Kenward.

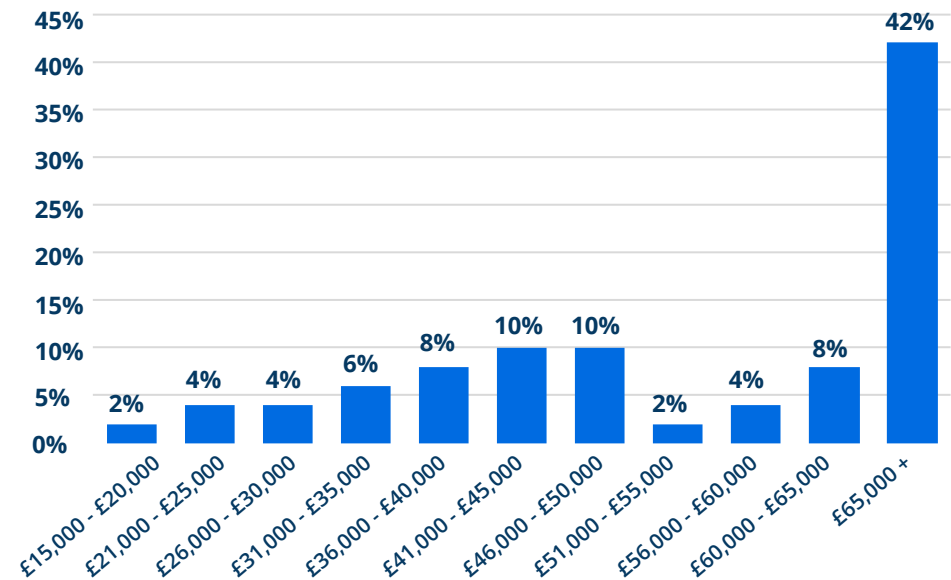
“Despite many positives, one clear area where the industry still needs to achieve progress is the gender gap,” says Asiedu. “We are known as an industry that has a strong female work force; this is supported by the fact that more than twice the number of women than men took this survey. However, despite this, 38% of men are directors or board directors, whilst only 23% of women hold those roles. In terms of pay 50% of men earn over £60,000 compared to 28% of women. Not only does this indicate that men occupy more of the top positions, but it also suggests that when women hold the same senior positions, they do not receive the same level of recompense as their male counterparts. For an industry that is so progressive in so many areas and has so many opportunities to be a bastion of equity and diversity this needs urgent attention”.

Austen Brown agrees that the salary differences between men and women in senior roles are really disappointing to see. “There is still a huge gender pay gap, with 42% of men earning over £65,000 compared to just 20% of women. This shows more work is urgently needed on equal pay and getting more women into senior positions.”

Women’s salaries



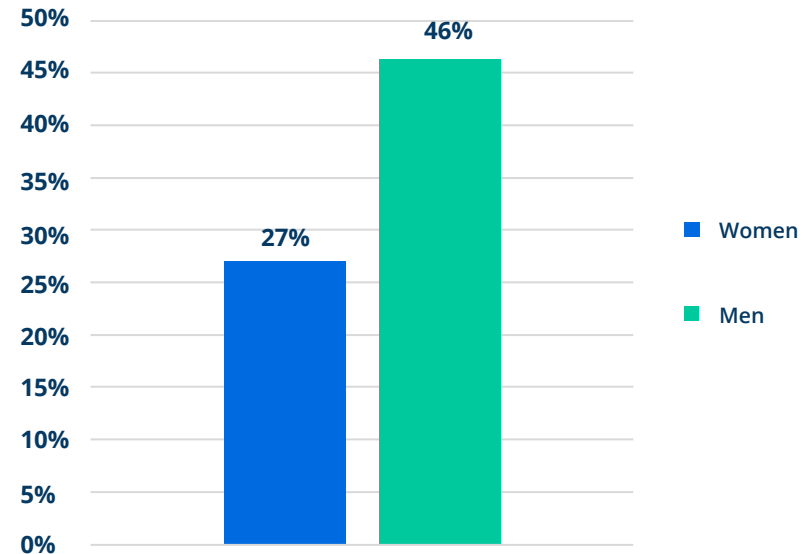
Men’s salaries



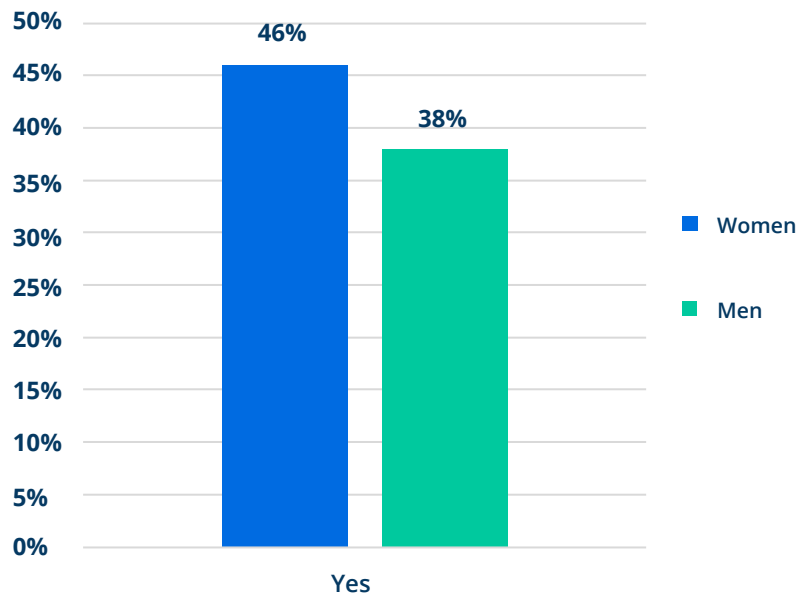
But Reeves thinks that the gender pay gap isn't that simple: "I can see that more men than women are earning over £64k, but if you look at the figures, in most of the higher salary brackets there are more women than men. I'd like to see the survey delve a little deeper - to see whether women chose not to put themselves forward for the really senior roles. Perhaps preferring a better work life balance? Or whether the menopause has affected women, and they chose to leave the stress of the events industry?"

"There is an opportunity here for further change, the dial has moved greatly compared to the past, but there is still more to do," agrees MacPhie. "We need to consider that not all women are striving to get to the top, which is great, but the ones that do, should be given every opportunity."

All four senior positions combined



Are you happy with your salary?



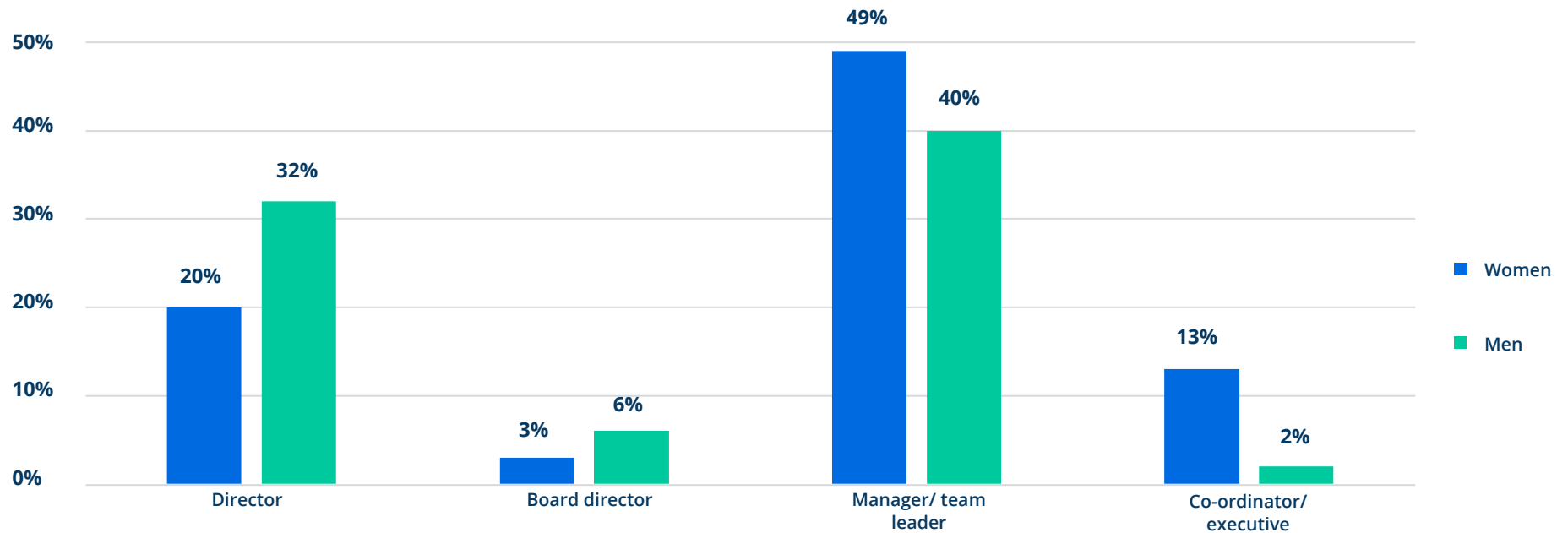
Field also agrees: "This is not as straightforward as comparing men's salaries to women's. I'm sure that most companies pay the same for the same role - irrespective of gender, so the real question should be is there a gender bias in recruitment in senior roles? The 12% gender difference in senior management from this survey isn't a huge percentage difference. Surveys provide helpful data, but data alone is not the solution for this issue."

“Females dominate the industry, so much so that there may be an imbalance here – why do we not see more males in the sector?” asks Price. “It would be good to understand if it’s the salary scales, career pathways, or the type of work involved, or something else...”

Grasshoff feels optimistic: “I found it interesting that although 42% of men’s salaries are above £65,000, there is such a low percentage of men in entry level / junior roles within the industry. So could this mean that we will see the growth of females in senior positions across the industry?”



Whats the seniority of your job?



OUR FINDINGS...

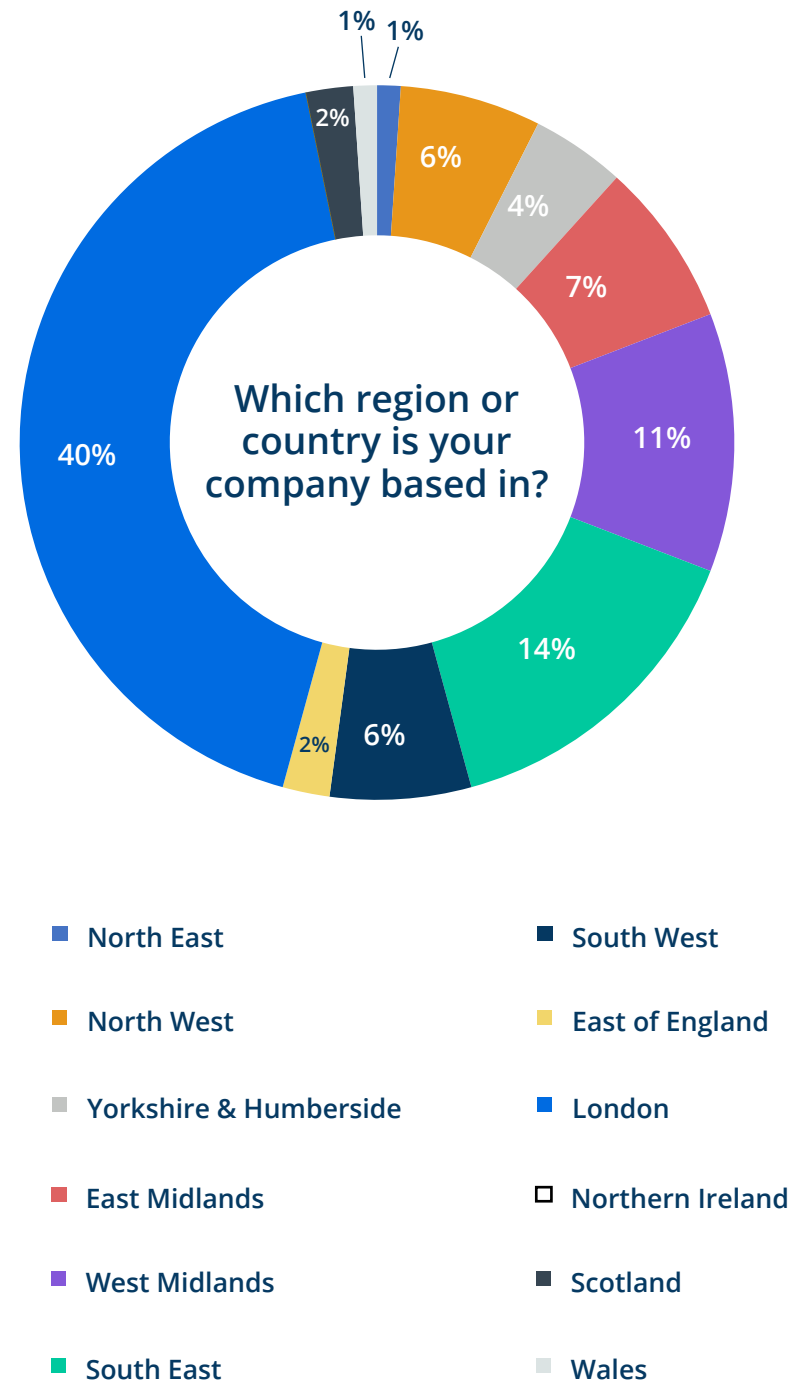
LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

MOVING ON UP?

There is a 12% reduction of respondents who live in London, and an increase of those living further north. "Could this be that flexible remote working has enabled people to move out of the capital in pursuit of a better work / life balance and is it also driven by the cost of living in the city?" asks Kenward. "But will this be impacted as companies are now asking people to come into the office more?"

"It's particularly good for us to see an increase in regional representation either through a better pool of survey contributions from outside of London or, even more excitingly, the sign of industry growth in areas like the West Midlands and the North," comments Parmenter.

RefTech is based in Tamworth in the West Midlands "which has its pros and cons when it comes to recruitment," comments Reeves. "We don't pay London rates, and so some candidates from the south of England may look upon us unfavourably if they compare our salaries to London suppliers. Because we are in the Midlands, our new recruits come from outside of the industry, so we always have to look for transferable skills, the right attitude and flexibility. Training is a big part of our business, and we are mindful that we have to allow time for new starters to get up to speed."

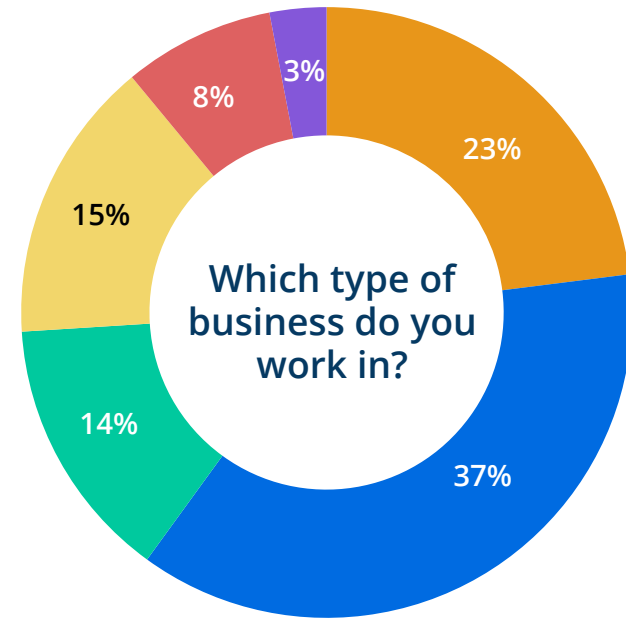
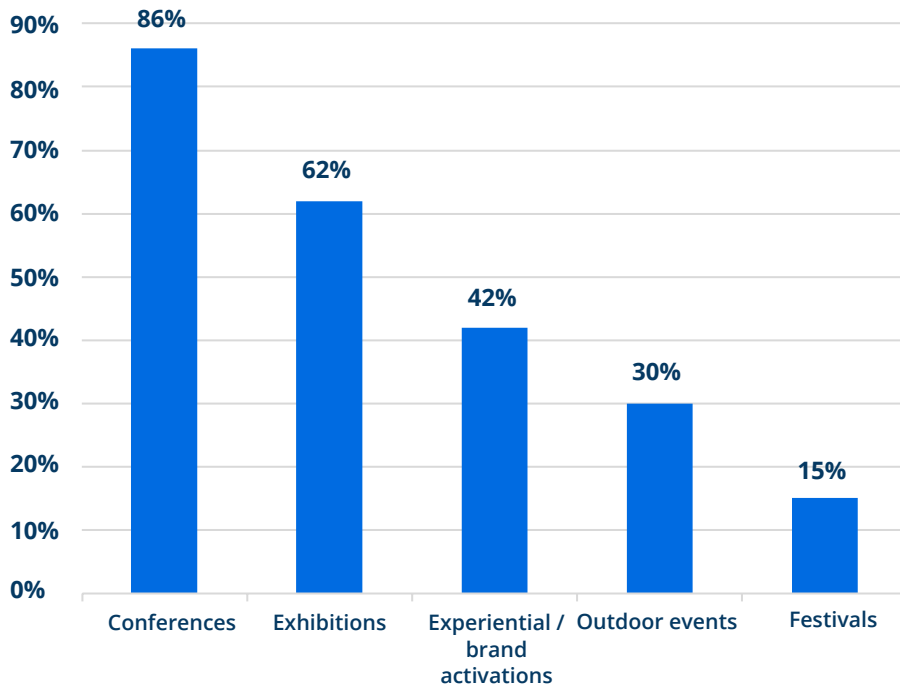


OUR FINDINGS...

SECTOR VS SECTOR

We are a multifaceted industry with many very different types of business, different working environments and conditions, and therefore very different employees and employee salaries and benefits. Trying to benchmark the salary and working conditions of a venue chef against an agency event producer was always going to be impossible.

For the first time this year, we asked about business type and three quarters of respondents were event organisers - with the biggest percentage being agency, followed by corporate and then exhibition organising companies and then association organisers.



- Corporate/ in house
- Exhibition organising company
- Supplier
- Agency
- Venue
- Association

Conferences came top again, followed by exhibitions, we saw a slight rise in experiential events (from 37% last year) whilst outdoor and festivals remained steady.

This data was gathered to ensure we are representing the whole industry, and we will be interrogating this data to look at differences between the sectors in future articles.

OUR FINDINGS...

SALARY BANDINGS

HOW DO YOU COMPARE?

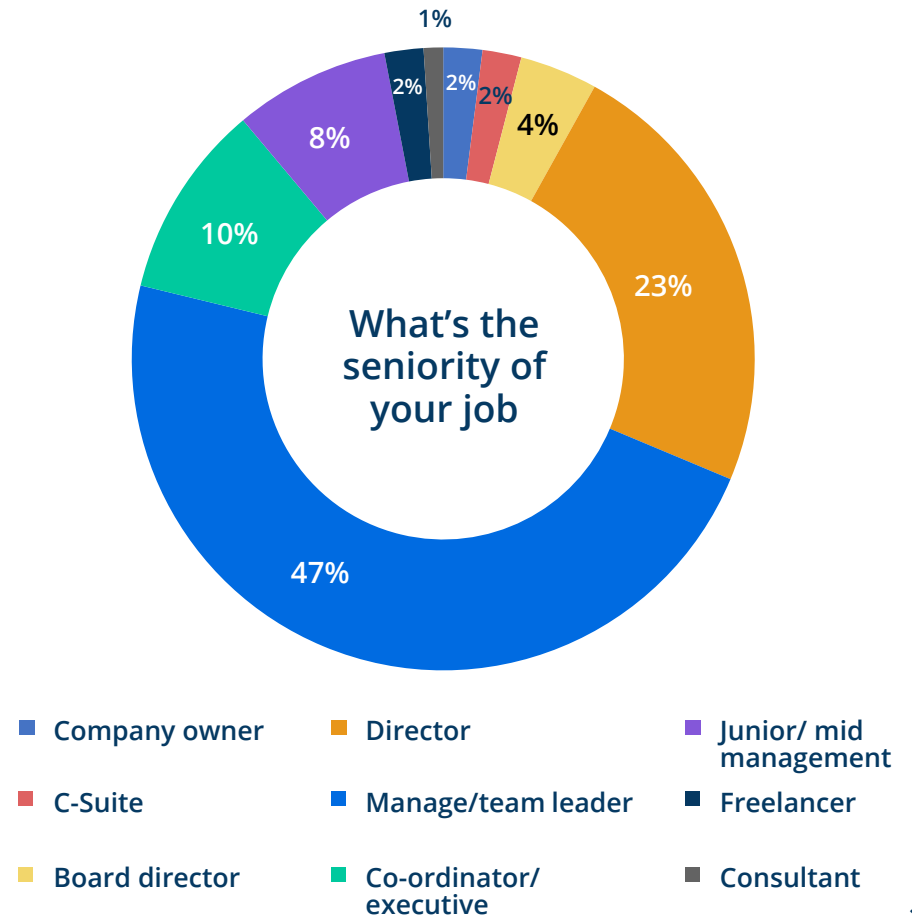
The real living wage is a voluntary scheme that many industry employers adhere to. On 24th October 2023 the new rate for 2023-24 was announced. The new rate of £12 an hour for the standard 37.5-hour week equates to £23,400 a year. "It's good to see that only 1% of respondents are earning less than £20,000 a year, but 5% earn less than £25,000 which puts up to 650 people in our survey below the real living wage. Should any salaries in our industry be below the real living wage?" asks Kenward.

When comparing 'happiness' data with seniority, between a third and three quarters of the workforce from mid management downwards are unhappy with their salaries. "Wow! That's a massive vulnerability that could result in a lot of recruitment activity if those employees' concerns are not addressed," says Price. "And if we don't secure people in these roles then our natural pipeline for the more senior roles is jeopardised. So, retention at this level is where investment needs to be made and should be a priority for the sector."

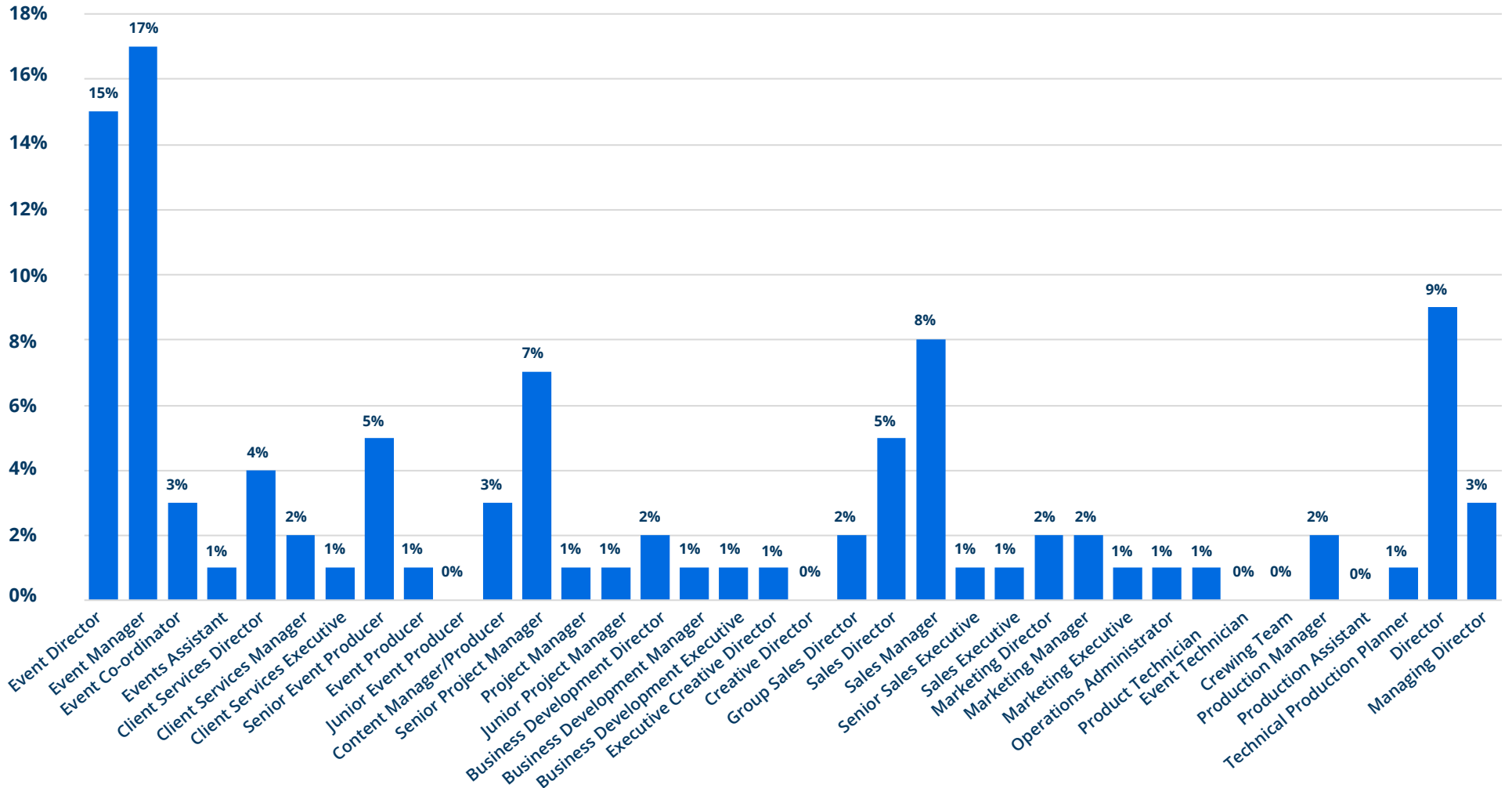
Kenward agrees: "This is our pipeline, the next generation of event industry leaders. We talk a lot about bringing people into the industry, but the figures suggest that we have lots of mid-level people who are unhappy and may not stay in it. We cannot allow this 'burn and churn' approach to continue. I think that this unhappiness could stem from many companies operating with a smaller workforce, so people are getting asked to do things outside of their skillset.

This also implies that mid management do not have clear and robust development plans in place. Just over one third of these people state that they simply want a cost-of-living increase – which could be fairly straightforward to fix."

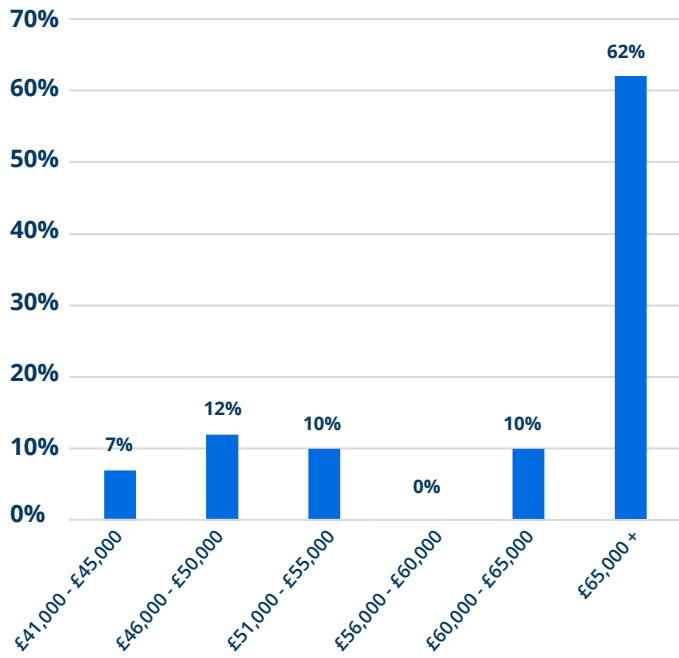
Satisfaction was only slightly better at the junior / exec level; 63% of people just starting out were unhappy with their salaries – with the biggest percentage saying it's because they do so much more than their job role. "We need to ensure that we look after these people taking their first steps in the industry. If we lose them, it's very doubtful, they would come back to an industry where they feel over worked and undervalued," concludes Kenward.



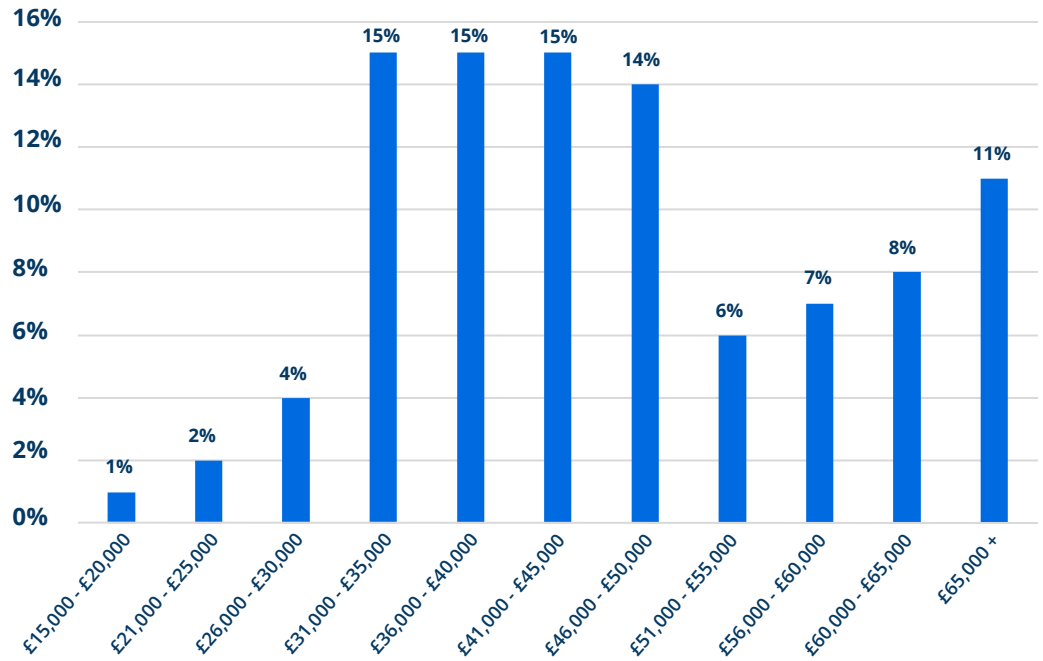
What's your job title?



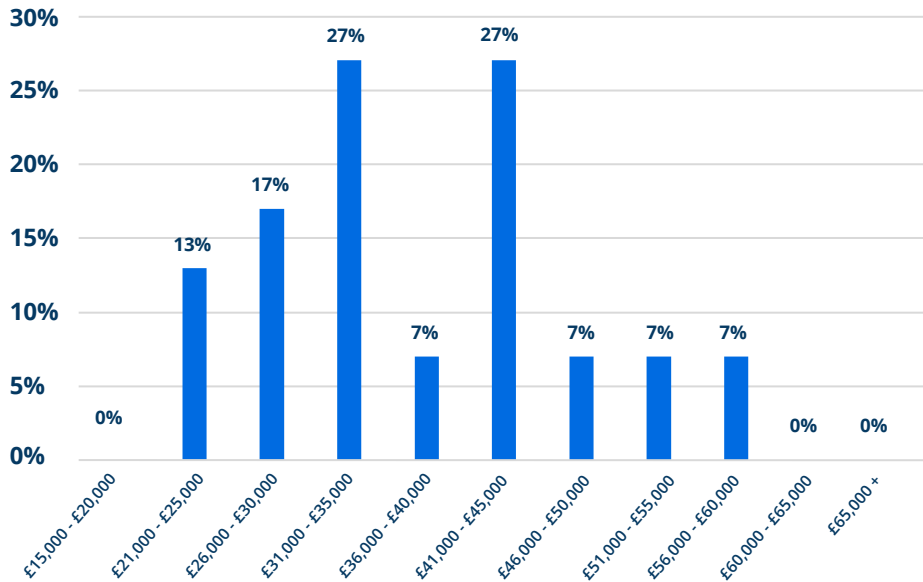
Director



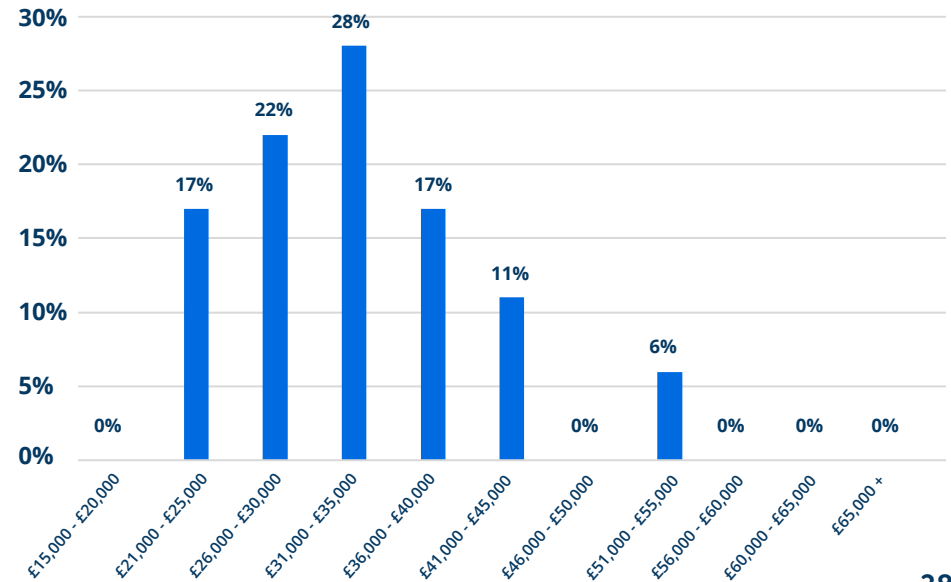
Manage/ Team Lead



Junior/ Mid Management



Co-ordinator/ Executive



THE FUTURE

PEOPLE JUST WANT TO FEEL APPRECIATED...

“The global meetings and event sector is undeniably people oriented. We facilitate gatherings of individuals and are at our most successful when people share knowledge and ideas,” says Asiedu. “We continue to grow through new connections and shared experiences. Given the importance of people to our work, it cannot be understated how important research is into the welfare and compensation of our current teams, as well as those wanting a career in our sector, without which we cannot survive.”



She continues: “However, the research also clearly shows the work we need to do to attract and retain the talent that will grow our industry in the years ahead. Firstly, the salaries have to be right, but so do the myriad other benefits that employees are now looking for when joining a new organisation, whether that is the 74% that want to work from home or the 80% who believe an organisation’s reputation for supporting employee mental health is important.”

In looking ahead, Kenward takes a three-pronged approach to dissecting the results and discussing next steps:

The pipeline

“We’ve seen a good increase in people coming into our industry at junior to mid-level, which is fantastic,” he says. “But we need to ensure that we listen to them. We need to fully understand what is important; mental health provision, hybrid working and a four-day week. They feel over worked, underpaid and they do not feel appreciated. We have a talent pipeline telling us what they expect – we need to listen to that.”

The workforce

“We have a workforce of middle management telling us that they are not happy,” he continues. “We need to retain, grow, and develop those people. We have to understand that it’s not all about salary; they just want to feel appreciated and be given some pretty basic benefits. These are people in the work force right now, who are the bulk of our industry and we have to listen to them or we will lose them to other industries.”

Longevity

“Only a tenth (10%) of our industry is over 55, compared to the national workforce average of 30%. That’s insane, and a huge red flag for our industry’s diversity. Where have this whole generation of event pros gone? I was hoping that this demographic would increase this year because everyone is saying how important experience is and that they need people to jump in and hit the ground running. So why aren’t we utilising people who have this experience? We also know that we do not have enough women in senior roles and this needs to be addressed too.”

Jones believes that the workplace should not only provide a fair salary but also recognition for exceptional performance, a spirit of teamwork, and a vibrant and enjoyable environment. “We are committed to fostering an atmosphere that continues to attract enthusiastic and dedicated team members of all ages. We look forward to welcoming more talent into our dynamic industry in the years ahead.”

“The survey demonstrates the recent importance of supporting people through the cost-of-living crisis and challenges accessing holistic healthcare but as a large employer we see the potential of imaginative and personal benefit schemes as a key part of the future,” says Turner. “So many policies and packages were fitted to hierarchies and one size fits all on benefits. This just isn’t the life outlook for the next generation of talent. We must all innovate and adapt. We are a people-led industry.”

“This year’s research once again highlights challenges in the sector,” concludes Asiedu. “But more importantly it shows us solutions - it demonstrates how to support our teams and meet their needs. What we must do now is listen and respond in a collaborative way for the betterment of all.”



RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Now in its second year, this survey was originally launched in July 2022 and is an annual survey covering the events and experiential industry – looking at salaries, benefits, ways of working and business and recruitment trends.

Since its launch, the majority of the questions have stayed consistent to offer some year-on-year comparisons and indication of change, whilst some have been adapted to follow the shape of the post covid industry and options to reflect current trends and concerns have been added.

The 2023 survey was promoted by all the sponsors and partners across their publications, websites, via email and social media.

Completing the survey was voluntary and anonymous. A survey of this nature may be flawed because there is no control over who completes it; certain demographics may be keener to fill out a survey and so this will affect the data.

1332 people responded to the survey (a slight increase on 1228 in 2022) giving us a robust and credible look at the industry's salaries, benefits and working patterns. Some of the findings confirmed patterns and trends that were predicted, whilst other were very surprising.

The findings and reactions from the industry are laid out question by question, but then we have taken some deep dives into the data to analyse the results. Over the coming year we will be looking at doing more deep dives into the data to reveal more trends.

This white paper was compiled, researched, and written by Jill Hawkins a freelance writer working within the events industry.



SPONSORS



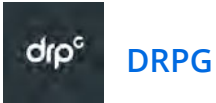
Jigsaw Talent Solutions is an independent recruitment consultancy specialising in senior level roles above £60k. We help each client really understand the business needs of the role and then create a job description, bespoke role profile and job advert to ensure we are attracting the right people. We take on the heavy lifting of interviewing and assessment to enable us to present a qualified shortlist who match the needs of the role and culture they'll be working in. We work exclusively for businesses within the live event, experiential and integrated communications sector and provide an industry first, 6-month 100% rebate.

Founder, [Robert Kenward](#) is a recruitment expert and experienced speaker, moderator, industry commentator and EDI advocate who is able to convey his expertise and experience to an audience with a vibrant, passionate and vehemently honest approach. Robert has over 21 years' experience of the recruitment and events sectors and brings a unique perspective of hiring from all angles - as a candidate, a client and a [fitabilty®](#) recruiter. In September 2023 Robert was awarded the 'Personality of the Year' award at the M&IT Awards as recognition of the work he has done to improve recruitment practises in the industry, his pro bono support of those facing redundancy and for his part in launching the Reach events industry scholarship.



cvent

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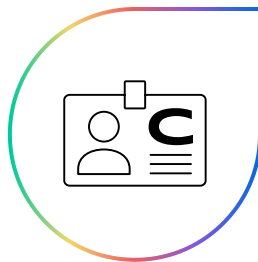


The mia is one of the fastest growing associations in the business meetings and events sector, founded by a proactive group of hotel and event venue operators and booking agents to provide the sector with education, training, best practice guidance, accreditation, and a voice to government. external and internal audiences worldwide.

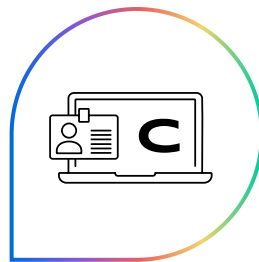


Cvent is a global meeting, event, travel, and hospitality technology leader.

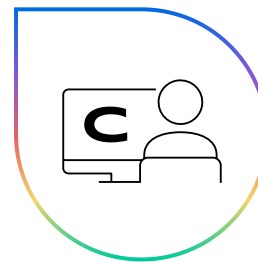
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