



Quarterly survey report  
Spring 2009

# Employee outlook Employee attitudes and the recession

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# Summary of key findings

This report sets out the findings of the CIPD's quarterly survey of employee attitudes exploring the fast-changing world of work and emerging challenges for individuals, employers and policy-makers. It is based on a representative sample of more than 3,000 people in employment in the UK.

## Job satisfaction

- Overall, UK employees are satisfied with their current job, with a net satisfaction score of +46 compared with a score of +26 recorded in the *Working life: employee attitudes and engagement 2006* survey.
- Most UK employees are satisfied with the relations they have with their co-workers (more than 69%).
- Second on the list is freedom to choose your own method of working (more than 51%).
- UK employees are least satisfied with their chances of promotion (fewer than 11%) and rate of pay (more than 2%).

## Employee loyalty

- When it comes to loyalty, customers and clients are at the top of the list for employees in 2009, with 82% saying they have a lot (55%) or some (27%) loyalty.
- Loyalty towards fellow employees (79%) is second on the list.
- Those aged 55 and over are twice as likely to be loyal towards their organisation than those aged 18 to 24 (49% compared with 25%).

## Employee views of their immediate line manager

Employees are most likely to feel that their managers are always/usually:

- committed to their organisation (71%)
- treat them fairly (70%)
- listen to their suggestions (62%).

On the other hand, employees are most likely to say

their managers rarely/never:

- coach them on the job (44%)
- discuss their training and development needs (35%)
- provide them with feedback on their performance (26%).

## Employee perceptions of their senior management

Respondents are most likely to agree that their senior leaders:

- have a clear vision for their organisation (42% compared with 48% in 2006)
- treat employees with respect (42% compared with 38% in 2006).

Respondents are most likely to disagree that senior managers:

- consult employees about planned changes (48%)
- can be trusted (35%).

Women and voluntary sector employees are most positive about their senior managers.

Overall, women view senior management more positively than men, and voluntary sector employees are more positive than private and public sector employees.

## Employee well-being

- Although not a completely positive outlook, it is encouraging to know that UK employees are more likely to feel cheerful as a result of their job than they are tense, stressed or miserable.
- However, the proportion of employees feeling worried or tense has increased since our last survey in 2006.
- One area where a high proportion of employees are struggling is in relation to work pressure. In all, 38% of employees feel under excessive pressure in their job

either every day (12%) or once or twice a week (26%).

- Yet employees are slightly less likely to report that they are under excessive pressure at work in today's challenging economic environment than they were in 2006.
- Most UK employees (48%) feel they have a fair amount of control over the way they do their job; a quarter (27%) feel they have a great deal of control.

### **Bullying and harassment at work**

- The majority of UK employees have not experienced bullying or harassment at work in the last two years; however, 16% have been affected in this way.
- Women more commonly report they have suffered bullying or harassment than men, as do respondents in the public and voluntary sector compared with the private sector.

### **Work-life balance and flexible working**

- The majority of UK employees (56%) agree that they achieve the right work-life balance, although around a quarter (26%) disagree.
- Women, those with non-managerial responsibility and people working for micro organisations are most happy with their work-life balance.
- For a third (34%) of UK employees, flexible working is not available. This represents a big improvement from 2006, when 61% said flexible working was not available.
- Overall, homeworking (28%), flexitime (26%) and part-time working (17%) are the most common forms of flexible working.

### **Effect of the downturn on employee attitudes**

- Most employees, regardless of their position, remain confident about keeping their jobs, with 52% believing it is unlikely or very unlikely that they will be made redundant. However, nearly one in five employees think their jobs are at risk.
- Unsurprisingly, public sector employees are more confident about the security of their jobs than those

in the private sector.

- Nearly one in six employees say they are worried about the future as a result of the recession, and just under half agree they feel less secure in their job, while more than one in four respondents report there is more stress at work. Over a third of employees agree they are concerned about being made redundant.
- Employees are very pessimistic about their prospects of finding a job if they are made redundant, with almost two-thirds thinking it will be difficult or very difficult to find new employment.

### **Organisational impact of the recession**

- Three-quarters of UK employees say their organisation has been affected by the economic downturn in some way, particularly those working in the private sector.
- Recruitment freezes and redundancies are the most common responses to the recession among private sector organisations.
- Almost half (46%) of respondents in organisations affected by the recession have noticed an increase in stress.
- Results indicate that the majority of UK employees (78%) have not received any additional support from their employer to help them cope with the downturn, particularly those working in small organisations.
- In response to the recession, more than a third of organisations are placing greater emphasis on downsizing or making redundancies as well as restructuring and looking for new markets.
- Employers are placing less emphasis on a range of activities, including recruitment of skilled employees, investment in learning and development, employee well-being and flexible working, and diversity initiatives.

### **Employee views on the future**

- The majority of UK employees (75%) plan to stay with their current employer for the foreseeable

future.

- However, when asked if ideally they would like to change jobs, more than a third said 'yes', indicating that the current economic downturn is seen as an obstacle to moving to a new job.
- The top three reasons why UK employees would ideally like to change their job are to increase job satisfaction (54%), to do a different type of work (48%) and for better pay and benefits (47%).

#### **Challenges facing organisations in next five years**

- According to UK employees, the biggest issues their organisation will face in the next five years are adapting the business to new economic conditions (45%) followed by keeping the most talented employees (39%) and improving customer service (33%).

# Job satisfaction and employee loyalty

UK employees are most satisfied with their relations with co-workers and least satisfied with their chances of promotion. Employees feel most loyal to customers and clients, followed by fellow employees and their immediate line manager.

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## Job satisfaction

Overall, UK employees are satisfied with their current job with a net satisfaction score of +46, compared with a score of +26 recorded in the CIPD survey, *Working life: employee attitudes and engagement 2006*. Women employees are more satisfied (+51%) than men (+41%). With the highest satisfaction score (+71), sole traders are the most satisfied with their current job followed by UK employees working in micro businesses; those working within large organisations are least satisfied with their job (+38).

Comparison across sectors shows that employees working within the charity/voluntary sector are most satisfied (+54), while those working within the private (+46) and public (+45) sectors are fairly equally satisfied. See Figure 1 overleaf.

As shown in Table 1 (page 8), job satisfaction across all the elements surveyed has increased since 2006.

Most UK employees are satisfied with the relations they have with their co-workers (+69%), in particular those who work in the public sector (+74). Second on the list is freedom to choose your own method of working (+51%); satisfaction here is highest among private sector employees (+55). Those working in the public sector are less satisfied (+40).

UK employees are least satisfied with their chances of promotion (-11%) and rate of pay (+2%). Employees within the private sector are most dissatisfied with their pay (-1%) and chance of promotion (-12%). Public sector employees, however, are satisfied with their pay (+9%) but not with their chances of promotion (-8%). With the

UK currently in recession, it is not surprising that satisfaction with promotion and pay is so low. Yet these figures are certainly improvements on the results in 2006 (promotion -20, pay -5).

Satisfaction with working hours is relatively high among UK employees (+46) as whole results show that public sector employees are far more satisfied with their working hours than private sector employees, with a ten-point difference (+55 compared with +45).

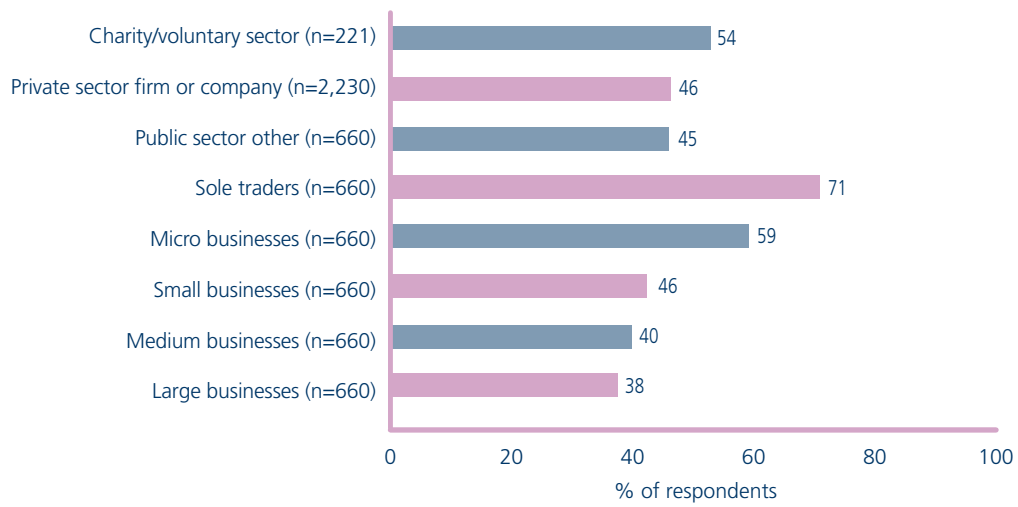
There is also a clear difference among the sectors with regard to the amount of variety in their jobs – with a net satisfaction score of +50, public sector employees are also far more satisfied than private sector employees (+36). Employees working within the public sector are far more satisfied with the opportunities that they are given to allow them to learn compared with UK employees as a whole.

## Employee loyalty

When it comes to loyalty, customers and clients are at the top of the list for employees in 2009, with 82% saying they have a lot (55%) or some (27%) loyalty. Loyalty towards fellow employees (79%) is second on the list. In 2006 this was the opposite, with loyalty towards fellow employees top (89%) and loyalty to customers and clients (85%) second. See Table 2 (page 8).

Although over a third (36%; 42% in 2006) of UK employees state that they have a lot of loyalty towards their immediate supervisor and organisation, these figures are among the lowest, and 8% state that they have no loyalty at all towards either. Overall, however, employee loyalty seems to be high.

Figure 1: Employee satisfaction by sector



Employees aged 55 and over are more loyal to their organisations. Those aged 55 and over are twice as likely to be loyal towards their organisation than those aged 18 to 24 (49% compared with 25%). When looking at role level, only 30% of junior managers feel a lot of loyalty towards their organisation compared with 80% of partners.

#### Public sector employees feel more secure in their jobs

In the current climate, public sector employees are, unsurprisingly, far more confident about the security of their jobs. They have the higher net satisfaction score of +65 compared with +22 for private sector employees.

Table 1: Employee satisfaction: 2009 compared with 2006 (%)

		Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
Satisfaction with current job	2006	52	22	26
	2009	64	18	18
The physical working conditions	2006	53	24	23
	2009	63	19	17
Freedom over working method	2006	57	24	19
	2009	65	19	14
Relations with your fellow workers	2006	75	18	8
	2009	74	11	5
The recognition you get for good work	2006	42	24	34
	2009	46	23	28
Your immediate boss	2006	53	25	22
	2009	52	16	18
The amount of responsibility you are given	2006	57	25	18
	2009	60	20	14
Your rate of pay	2006	35	24	41
	2009	39	21	37
Your opportunity to use your ability	2006	45	26	29
	2009	60	17	21
Relations between employees and managers	2006	40	31	29
	2009	42	21	24
Your chances of promotion	2006	23	34	43
	2009	19	28	30
The way the organisation is managed	2006	27	27	45
	2009	36	25	36
The attention paid to the suggestions you make	2006	35	33	32
	2009	47	27	21
Your hours of work	2006	58	24	18
	2009	63	20	17
The amount of variety in your job	2006	51	26	23
	2009	58	22	18
Your job security	2006	52	26	22
	2009	52	27	18

Table 2: How much loyalty would you say you feel towards the following? (%)

**Your profession or occupation**

No loyalty at all	7
Only a little loyalty	11
Some loyalty	29
A lot of loyalty	49
Not sure	2
Not applicable	4

**Your organisation**

No loyalty at all	8
Only a little loyalty	15
Some loyalty	33
A lot of loyalty	39
Not sure	1
Not applicable	4

**Your immediate supervisor**

No loyalty at all	8
Only a little loyalty	12
Some loyalty	27
A lot of loyalty	36
Not sure	1
Not applicable	16

**Your fellow employees**

No loyalty at all	2
Only a little loyalty	6
Some loyalty	29
A lot of loyalty	50
Not sure	1
Not applicable	12

**Your customers and clients**

No loyalty at all	4
Only a little loyalty	8
Some loyalty	27
A lot of loyalty	55
Not sure	1
Not applicable	5

# Employee attitudes towards management

Line managers are seen as committed and fair but more work is needed around performance management. Employees believe senior leaders create clear organisational visions but don't consult employees about change.

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Employees are most likely to feel that their managers are always/usually committed to their organisation (71%), treat them fairly (70%) and listen to their suggestions (62%). These figures have all increased since the 2006 findings (68%, 65% and 58% respectively). On the other hand, employees are most likely to say their managers rarely/never coach them on the job (44%); this is particularly the case with larger organisations. They are also more likely to say their managers rarely/never discuss their training and development needs (35%) nor provide them with feedback on their performance (26%). See Table 3 overleaf. Clearly, effective performance management in today's uncertain economic climate is more important than ever.

## Employee perceptions of their senior management

Respondents are most likely to agree that their senior leaders have a clear vision for their organisation (42% compared with 48% in 2006) and treat employees with respect (42% compared with 38% in 2006). Respondents are most likely to disagree that senior managers in their organisations consult employees (48%) about planned changes and that they trust senior managers (35%). See Table 4 (page 10).

Results show that the smaller the organisation the more likely it is that senior management consult employees about important decisions. Additionally, the smaller the organisation the more trust employees have. Overall, these figures on senior management are slightly worse than 2006.

Despite size, all employees agree that their senior management team has a clear vision of where the organisation is going, and this is particularly the case for sole traders and those working in micro businesses.

## Women and voluntary sector employees are most positive about their senior managers

Overall, women are more positive than men when thinking about senior management, and respondents from the voluntary sector are more positive than the private and public sectors. Most employees trust the information they receive but believe there are not enough opportunities to feed their views upwards.

Almost half (46%) of UK employees usually believe the information they receive from senior managers about what is happening within their organisation. Although one in ten say they seldom believe the information they receive, and 2% state they never believe it. See Table 5.

Table 3: To what extent does your immediate supervisor, manager or boss do each of the following? (%)

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't know
Consults me on matters of importance to me	24	32	23	14	7	1
Discusses my training and development needs with me	16	24	23	20	15	2
Recognises when I have done a good job	25	32	23	12	6	1
Makes me feel my job counts	23	31	25	14	6	1
Gives me feedback on how I am performing	19	27	27	18	8	1
Is open and honest	28	32	21	11	4	3
Is supportive if I have a problem	30	34	19	10	4	2
Keeps me in touch with what's going on	19	31	28	16	5	1
Makes clear what is expected of me	22	35	24	13	4	1
Listens if I have a suggestion to make	29	33	22	10	4	1
Treats me fairly	30	40	20	7	3	1
Is committed to my organisation	35	36	16	5	3	5
Makes sure I have the resources to do the job	18	35	26	14	5	2
Coaches me on the job	11	19	24	25	19	2

Table 4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your directors/senior managers? (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
They have created a clear vision.	10	32	27	16	9	6
I have confidence in them.	9	27	27	21	13	3
I trust them.	10	25	27	22	13	3
They treat employees with respect.	10	32	24	18	13	3
They consult employees about important decisions.	6	20	23	31	17	3

More than one in five (26%) are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the opportunities that exist within their organisation to feed their views upwards. See Table 6.

Table 5: To what extent can you believe the information you receive from senior managers about what is happening within your organisation? (%)

I can always believe it	13
I can usually believe it	46
I can believe it about half the time	24
I can seldom believe it	10
I can never believe it	2
Don't know	5

Table 6: How satisfied are you with the opportunities that exist to feed your views/issues/ ideas upwards? (%)

Very satisfied	8
Satisfied	31
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	35
Dissatisfied	21
Very dissatisfied	5

**Management communication with employees**

Only one in ten employees feel fully informed about what is happening within their organisation. Many (46%) feel fairly well informed and one-third feel they receive only a limited amount of information. Finally, one in ten state they get to hear very little about what goes on. These figures are very similar to 2006. Again, frequent and honest communication in the present climate is particularly important in maintaining employee motivation and engagement.

# Employee well-being

Employees are more likely to feel cheerful because of their jobs than tense, stressed or miserable, but a significant proportion of employees are under excessive pressure all or most of the time.

## State of mind

A key aspect of employee well-being is how people's jobs affect their moods and their emotions.

Although not a completely positive outlook, it is encouraging to know that UK employees are more likely to feel cheerful as a result of their job than they are tense, stressed or miserable. There does not seem to be a clear divide between 'happy' and 'sad' feelings. Results tend to show that UK employees' jobs have made them feel not only cheerful and optimistic, but also miserable and stressed.

Almost a third of survey respondents report their job makes them feel cheerful most (30%) or all (2%) of the time, while 21% say their jobs make them feel similarly optimistic.

However, just over a fifth of employees say they feel stressed all or most of the time because of their jobs, and

a smaller but significant percentage of employees are worried and tense as a result of their jobs. See Table 7.

The proportion of employees feeling worried or tense has increased since our last employee attitudes survey in 2006. This could be because of concerns over job security as media headlines highlight the latest redundancies being made by organisations and rising levels of unemployment.

Employees working for smaller organisations are typically less likely to report that their jobs make them stressed, miserable or worried than those working for medium and large employers.

Public sector employees are marginally more likely than those working in the private sector to feel stressed most or all of the time. However, private sector employees are slightly more likely to be worried than their public sector counterparts and less likely to report that their job makes them cheerful all or most of the time.

Table 7: Thinking about the past few weeks, how much of the time, if at all, has your job made you feel each of the following? (%)

	Stressed	Miserable	Optimistic	Relaxed	Worried	Cheerful	Tense
<b>Never</b>							
2009	10	32	14	19	15	5	13
2006	—*	35	13	15	17	7	16
<b>Occasionally</b>							
2009	36	34	27	32	38	28	38
2006	—*	32	28	29	40	27	42
<b>Some of the time</b>							
2009	34	24	38	30	31	35	32
2006	—*	23	40	33	30	33	30
<b>Most of the time</b>							
2009	17	8	19	19	13	30	15
2006	—*	8	18	21	10	28	10
<b>All the time</b>							
2009	4	2	2	1	3	2	2
2006	—*	2	1	2	2	4	2

\*The 2006 survey did not cover 'stressed' in this question.

**Pressure in the workplace**

One area where a worryingly high proportion of employees are struggling is in relation to work pressure. In all, 38% of employees say they feel under excessive pressure in their job either every day (12%) or once or twice a week (26%). The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as the adverse reaction someone has to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. Long-term exposure to stress is linked to mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, as well as increased risk of heart disease.

Perhaps surprisingly, employees are very slightly less likely to report that they are under excessive pressure at work in today's challenging economic environment than they were in 2006, when our last employee attitudes survey was conducted. This reading will be interesting to track as the recession continues. One explanation is that there may be a lag effect before the recession starts to impact on the pressure at work being felt by employees. Another is that employers are beginning to manage work-related stress better as the issue becomes better understood.

Results tend to indicate that sole traders are less likely to feel under excessive pressure, with 22% stating that they never feel under excessive pressure. This may seem quite surprising considering the limited resources of such businesses. However, this may also be down to the high

level of control sole traders have in their working lives over their day-to-day activities. Research consistently identifies employee autonomy as a key, mitigating factor against stress at work.

At the other end of the spectrum, UK employees working for medium-sized businesses are more likely to feel under excessive pressure, with 14% stating they feel under excessive pressure every day.

There seems to be an indication that the larger the organisation, the more excessive the pressure. See Table 8.

The level of seniority within an organisation appears to have a significant impact on the extent to which people feel under excessive pressure. Perhaps, not surprisingly, employees with no managerial responsibility are least likely to feel under excessive pressure. However, line managers are particularly vulnerable in this respect, with almost half saying they are under excessive pressure either every day or once or twice a week.

Chairmen are most likely to feel under excessive pressure every day, while middle managers and board-level managers and directors are also under significant and often continuous pressure at work. See Table 9 overleaf.

Table 8: Approximately how much of the time do you feel under excessive pressure in your job? (%)

	Never	Less frequently than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Every day
All respondents	13	23	26	26	12
Large businesses	11	20	27	28	13
Medium businesses	9	24	27	27	14
Small businesses	12	26	24	26	11
Micro businesses	14	25	31	22	8
Sole traders	22	30	15	23	11

Table 9: How much time you feel under excessive pressure in your job? (%)

	Pressure at work by position/seniority at work					
	Owner/ proprietor	Chairman	Board-level director/ manager	Middle manager	Line manager	Employee with no managerial responsibility
Every day	11	22	16	15	17	7
Once or twice a week	25	21	28	29	30	23
Once or twice a month	15	–	26	30	27	30
Less frequently than once a month	29	39	21	21	18	27
Never	20	18	9	6	9	14

### Control at work

Overall, most UK employees (48%) feel they have a fair amount of control over the way they do their job – a quarter (27%) feel they have a great deal of control.

UK employees working within the private sector are more likely to feel they have a great deal of control over the way they do their job than those employees working within the public sector (30% compared with 19%). See Table 10.

Results also tend to show that the smaller an organisation the more control it seems employees have. Forty per cent of UK employees working in micro businesses state they have a great deal of control compared with 17% working in large businesses.

The level of control people have at work is also affected by their seniority. Not surprisingly, business owners and chairmen have high levels of autonomy within their jobs. However, line managers have the same levels of perceived control in their jobs as employees with no management responsibilities. See Table 11.

As would be expected, age also plays a part – 84% of UK employees aged 55 and over feel they either have a fair amount or a great deal of control compared with 62% of UK employees aged 18 to 24.

Only a small percentage of UK employees (3%) feel that they have no control at all over the way they do their job.

Table 10: How much control do you feel you have over the way you do your job? (%)

	A great deal of control	A fair amount of control	Not much control	Just a little control	None at all
All employees	27	48	18	4	3
Private sector	30	47	17	4	3
Public sector	19	51	21	5	3
Charity/voluntary	27	51	15	4	3

Table 11: How much control do you feel you have over the way you do your job? (%)

	Pressure at work by position/seniority at work					
	Owner/ proprietor	Chairman	Board-level director/ manager	Middle manager	Line manager	Employee with no managerial responsibility
A great deal of control	57	78	47	24	19	19
A fair amount of control	39	22	38	56	51	51
Not much control	4	–	15	15	23	20
Just a little control	1	–	–	2	5	6
None at all	–	–	–	2	3	4

### Bullying and harassment at work

The majority of UK employees have not experienced bullying or harassment at work in the last two years; however, 16% of respondents have been affected in this way. In addition, 3% of staff say they have been subjected to violence or the threat of violence over the same period.

Women more commonly than men report that they have suffered bullying or harassment at work, with nearly one in five affected in the last two years. See Table 12 on page 16.

Public sector and voluntary sector workers are significantly more likely to report that they have been affected by bullying in the last two years than those working in the private sector.

Results show that bullying is more prevalent in larger organisations, with 16% of employees working in larger businesses stating they have been personally affected by bullying in the previous two years, compared with 5% in micro businesses.

A third of employees have witnessed some form of bullying or harassment against others in their organisation in the last two years. Public sector workers are most likely to report that they have seen such incidents, with nearly half reporting they have witnessed either sexual or racial harassment or bullying over the period. Almost 10% of public sector staff have witnessed someone at work being subjected to the threat of violence or actual violence in the workplace. This comparatively high figure is likely to reflect that many public sector staff, such as police officers, nurses and social workers, work in challenging public-facing roles where frequently they have to deal with people in emotionally charged situations. See Table 13 overleaf.

One in ten respondents had observed people being picked out for redundancy, with results indicating that this is more common among the private rather than the public sector (12% compared with 7%).

Table 12: Which, if any, of the following forms of bullying or harassment have you experienced yourself at work in the last two years? (%)

	All employees	Men	Women	Private sector	Public sector	Charity/voluntary sector
Sexual harassment	2	1	3	1	2	4
Racial harassment	1	1	1	1	2	1
Bullying	13	11	14	10	18	18
Violence or threat of violence at work	3	3	3	2	6	1
Picked out for redundancy	3	3	3	3	2	5
None of these	83	84	81	85	78	77

Table 13: Which, if any, of the following forms of bullying or harassment have you observed happening to others at work in the last two years? (%)

	All employees	Private sector	Public sector	Charity/voluntary sector
Sexual harassment	5	4	7	4
Racial harassment	4	3	5	4
Bullying	24	20	35	28
Violence or threat of violence at work	5	4	9	4
Picked out for redundancy	10	12	7	9
None of these	67	70	59	65

# Work–life balance and flexible working

Most employees are happy with their work–life balance, with those in smaller organisations more likely to be satisfied. However, managers could do more to support employees on this issue.

The majority of UK employees (56%) agree that they achieve the right balance between their home and work lives, although around a quarter (26%) disagree. These figures represent a slight improvement from 2006 (54% and 24% respectively). Women are more likely to agree that they have a good balance (60%) compared with men (52%). Workers with non-managerial responsibility (67%) are most likely to be happy with their balance with senior managers not at board level (43%) least happy.

Results tend to indicate that the larger the business, the harder it is for employees to achieve this balance. Fifty-four per cent of UK employees working in large businesses agree that they achieve the right balance between home and work compared with 62% working in micro organisations.

## Organisations and line managers could provide more support for work–life balance

When it comes to support provided by employees' organisations for work–life balance, there is a fairly even split – 32% agree that support is provided, but 34% disagree. This has improved since 2006, when the figures were 29% and 42%. Similarly, 33% agree that support is provided by their manager and 32% disagree. Clearly, more could be done on both of these fronts to help employees to be as effective as possible. See Table 14.

The figures suggest that those working in the public sector are more likely to receive support from their managers than those working in the private sector.

Table 14: Employee views on work–life balance (%)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	N/A
I achieve the right work–life balance.	11	45	16	19	7	1	1
My organisation provides work–life balance support.	6	26	22	21	13	1	12
My manager provides work–life balance support.	6	27	21	21	11	–	15

**Flexible working has increased rapidly but is still unavailable to a third of UK employees**

For a third (34%) of UK employees, flexible working is not available. This represents a big improvement from 2006, when 61% said flexible working was not available to them. This figure is much higher within the manufacturing (50%) and wholesale retail sectors (44%). Junior managers/team leaders (39%) are more likely to say this than other employees/role levels.

**Homeworking is the most popular form of flexible working**

Overall, homeworking (28%), flexitime (26%) and part-time working (17%) are the most common forms of flexible working. Again, this represents an increase

from 2006 where flexitime was the most commonly adopted pattern at 25%, and only 14% adopted homeworking. Homeworking in 2009 tends to be most popular within the professional services sector (48%), while working part-time seems more common among the wholesale retail (25%), and the banking and finance sectors (26%). As would be expected, term-time contracts are more popular within the education sector. When we look at sector splits, employees in the voluntary/not-for-profit sector are most likely to be working from home (39%), with those in the public sector least likely (18%). Employees in the private sector are more likely to say that no flexible working exists (39%). See Table 15.

Table 15: Which, if any, of the flexible working options do you make use of? (%)

	Overall	Private	Public	Not-for-profit
Homeworking	28	29	18	39
Flexitime	26	21	41	41
Part-time	17	17	15	16
Job-share	1	1	3	2
Term-time contract	2	1	4	2
Annualised or compressed hours	2	1	4	3
Available but I don't use them	12	9	20	12
None are available at my work	34	39	21	21
Other	2	3	1	3

# Impact of the recession on employees and the organisations they work for

The majority of employees and organisations have been affected by the recession. Employees are worried about what the future holds, concerned about losing their jobs and have identified increases in stress and workloads. Redundancy, restructuring and pay and recruitment freezes are among the most common responses by employers.

## Job security and opportunities for new employment

Most employees, regardless of their position, remain confident about keeping their jobs, with 52% believing it is unlikely or very unlikely that they will be made redundant. However, nearly one in five employees think their jobs are at risk.

As would be expected, results indicate that public sector employees are more confident about the security of their job, with only 7% stating it is likely or very likely that they could lose their job as a result of the economic climate compared with almost a quarter of private sector employees. See Table 16.

The small number of chairmen in the survey are most confident when it comes to job security, with 100% stating it is unlikely/very unlikely that they will lose their job. However, nearly a third of board-level managers or directors think they may lose their jobs, with 11% stating that it is very likely and 18% saying it is likely.

Although not as confident as those higher up, the majority of middle (51%) and junior managers (60%) state it is unlikely that they will lose their job.

The survey also finds that men are more pessimistic about their job security than women, with more than one in five male workers believing they are likely or very likely to lose their job compared with 17% of female employees.

Table 16: How likely do you think it is that you could lose your current main job as a result of the economic climate? (%)

	All employees	Private	Public	Charity/ voluntary sector
Very likely	5	7	2	6
Likely	13	16	5	10
Neither likely nor unlikely	25	28	16	20
Unlikely	29	28	34	34
Very unlikely	23	17	40	26
Don't know	4	4	2	4

### The chances of finding a new job after redundancy

Employees are very pessimistic about their prospects of finding a job if they are made redundant, with almost two-thirds thinking it will be difficult or very difficult to find new employment. Public sector employees are most hopeful of finding new work following redundancy. Older employees are particularly pessimistic about their work prospects if they were forced to try and find another job. Three-quarters of those aged 55 or over think it would be difficult or very difficult to find a job compared with just under half of employees aged 35–44 years old, who are the most optimistic age group about their job prospects. See Table 17.

### The effect of the economic downturn

Three-quarters of UK employees say their organisation has been affected by the economic downturn in some way, particularly those working within the private sector.

Among private sector respondents, frozen recruitment and redundancies have been the most common responses to the recession. In all, 27% of UK employees working within the private sector state their organisation has made redundancies because of the economic downturn compared with just 9% working in the public sector. As would be expected, pay has also been affected because of the recession, and this, too, seems to have had more of an impact within the private sector. See Table 18.

One-fifth of private sector respondents (22%) state pay has been frozen compared with 7% within the public sector. Private sector employees are also more likely to respond that working hours have reduced.

### The effect of the economic downturn

As a result of these changes, almost half of respondents in organisations affected by the recession have noticed an increase in stress (46%). A smaller but still significant proportion of employees have also noticed an increase in conflict at work between colleagues (15%), bullying by managers (11%) and people taking time off sick (16%).

Employees working in small businesses are most likely to see an increase in stress (53%) and particularly conflict at work (27%). An increase in bullying by line managers is reported most commonly by employees working in medium-sized and large organisations. Employees working in large organisations are most likely to think there has been an increase in sick leave because of the downturn. See Table 18.

Board-level managers and directors are most likely to say that conflict between colleagues has increased because of the downturn (32%), while middle managers most commonly report that stress has increased (54%).

Table 17: If you were to lose your job, how easy do you think it would be to find another one? (%)

	All employees	Private	Public	Charity/voluntary sector
Very easy	2	2	3	2
Easy	10	9	13	13
Neither easy nor difficult	21	20	24	24
Difficult	37	38	35	38
Very difficult	24	27	21	17
Don't know	5	5	5	6

Figure 2: In which ways, if at all, has your organisation been affected by the downturn?

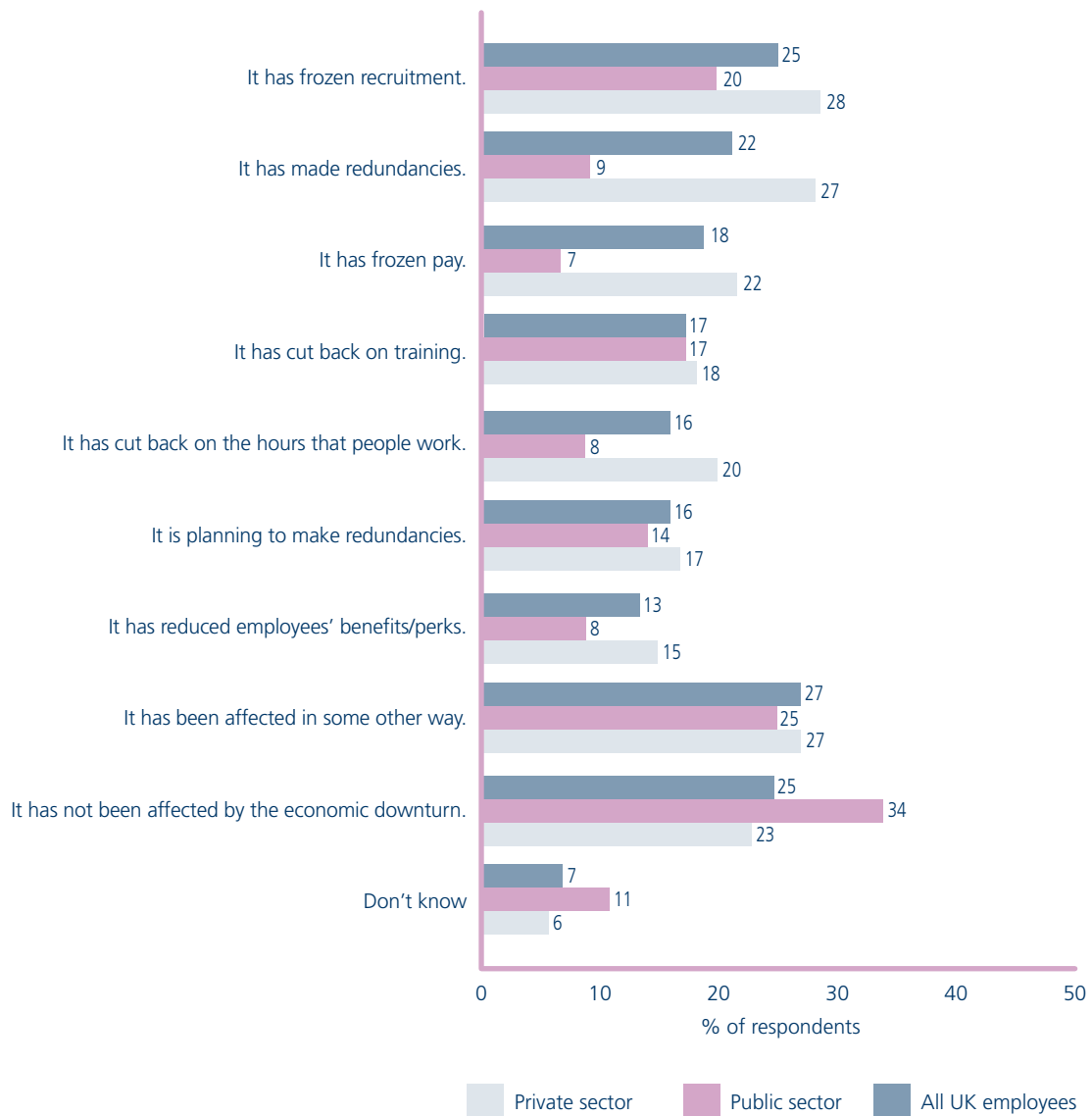


Table 18: As a result of the economic downturn, have you noticed any of the following? (%)

	All employees	Sole traders	Micro businesses	Small businesses	Medium businesses	Large businesses
An increase in conflict at work	15	4	10	27	19	17
An increase in bullying by line managers	11	3	4	11	15	13
An increase in stress	46	33	42	53	49	49
An increase in people taking time off sick	16	4	7	18	18	19
None of these	47	65	53	39	43	44

### **Support introduced by organisations to help employees cope with the downturn**

Just over one in five employees whose organisation has been affected by the downturn report their employer has introduced additional support to help them cope.

The most common support introduced is access to financial advice (9%), followed by an employee assistance programme helpline (8%) and health and well-being programmes (7%).

A minority of employees say their organisation has introduced access to face-to-face counselling (6%), stress management training (4%) or advice on job search (4%).

Employees working for large organisations are more likely to have received additional support, particularly in relation to financial advice (13%).

### **Most likely organisational responses to the downturn**

In response to the recession, more than a third of employees say their organisations are placing greater emphasis on downsizing or making redundancies, as well as restructuring and looking for new markets. See Table 19.

However, a positive net balance of employees report that their employers are placing less emphasis on a range of activities, including recruitment of skilled employees, investment in learning and development and employee well-being.

Employees also report that organisations are likely to place less rather than more emphasis on flexible working and diversity initiatives.

### **Impact of the downturn on individuals**

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements on the impact of the recession on them in the workplace.

Nearly six out of ten employees say they are worried about the future as a result of the recession, and just under half agree they feel less secure in their job. More than half report there is more stress at work. Over a third of employees agree they are concerned about being made redundant. See Table 20.

A positive net balance of employees believe their workload has increased and that there is more office politics as a result of the economic downturn.

Employees are most likely to disagree that they are confident of finding work elsewhere, that they are learning new skills or have more opportunities to progress because of the recession.

It seems younger employees – 18 to 24 – are far less trusting of colleagues than those aged 55 and over. They also tend to be far less trusting of their managers.

Most UK employees disagree that they will be able to find work elsewhere, particularly those aged 55 and over. Results show that UK employees in this age group tend to feel less secure about their job and more worried about their future compared with those aged 18 to 24.

Employees aged between 35 and 44 are most likely to agree they are concerned about being made redundant. Office politics seems not to be an issue among those aged 18 to 24; however, employees of 55 and over feel that it has increased because of the economic downturn.

Table 19: How organisations are responding to the economic downturn (%)

	More emphasis	Less emphasis	About the same	Don't know	Not applicable
Downsizing/redundancies	35	5	25	16	19
Restructuring	38	5	26	14	17
Looking for new markets	37	7	27	11	17
Acquiring other businesses	14	17	19	17	32
Recruiting more skilled employees	6	30	28	16	20
Flexible working	9	16	46	12	16
Employee well-being	6	24	47	11	12
Diversity initiatives	10	15	40	20	15
Investment in learning and development	8	29	38	12	13

Table 20: The impact of the recession on individuals in the workplace (%)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure	N/A
I feel less secure in my job.	13	33	25	19	5	1	4
I am learning new skills.	4	20	26	32	11	1	6
There are more opportunities to progress.	1	6	25	39	17	2	10
I feel confident of finding work elsewhere.	3	12	20	34	23	2	6
I feel worried by the future.	16	40	22	15	3	1	2
There is more office politics.	10	28	23	20	5	3	11
There is more conflict.	5	20	30	27	6	2	10
There is more stress at work.	13	39	24	15	3	2	4
I am concerned about being made redundant.	12	25	22	23	6	1	10
I am less trusting of colleagues.	3	14	29	32	11	1	10
I am less trusting of my manager.	7	19	24	27	8	1	14
My workload has increased.	10	27	27	25	5	1	4

# Employees' views on the future

Employees are more likely to stay with their current employer because of the recession. The survey suggests that the biggest issues organisations will face in the next five years are adapting the business to new economic conditions, keeping the most talented employees and improving customer service.

The majority of UK employees (75%) plan to stay with their current employer for the foreseeable future. See Figure 3.

However when asked, if ideally they would like to change job within the next year, 37% said yes. Of those employees who would ideally like to change jobs within the next year, 39% are optimistic that they will be able to and 37% are pessimistic. Employees working within the public sector are more optimistic than private sector employees.

The top three reasons why UK employees would ideally

like to change their job is to increase job satisfaction (54%), to do different type of work (48%) and for better pay and benefits (47%). See Table 21.

### Challenges facing organisations in next five years

According to UK employees, the biggest issues their organisation will face in the next five years are adapting the business to new economic conditions (45%) followed by keeping the most talented employees (39%) and improving customer service (33%). These are also the top three issues identified by private sector employees. See Table 22.

Figure 3: Do you plan to stay with your current employer for the foreseeable future?

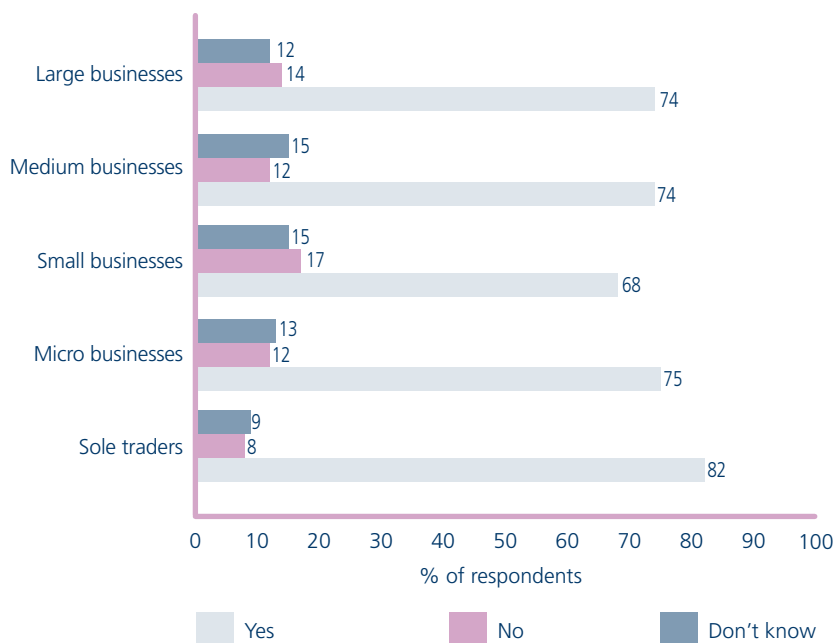


Table 21: For what reason would you like to change your job? (%)

	All employees	Men	Women
For promotion within your organisation	33	35	31
To move to another role within your organisation	12	12	12
To gain upward promotion to a higher role within a different organisation	26	27	25
To move to a position of similar responsibility within a different organisation	21	23	18
To do a different type of work	48	49	46
To be self-employed	12	16	8
To retire	10	14	5
To return to full-time study	6	5	7
To care for your children	4	3	5
To care for other dependants	2	1	2
Because I dislike my immediate line manager	11	10	13
To learn new things	40	41	40
Increase job satisfaction	54	55	52
Better pay/benefits elsewhere	47	48	47
Opportunities for promotion	29	31	27
Easier/shorter journey to work	20	21	20
More flexible hours	19	18	21
Increased job security	18	18	17
None of these	1	1	1
Other reason	4	3	6

Table 22: What do you think will be the biggest issues for your organisation in the next five years?

	All employees
Skills shortages	21
Keeping our most talented employees	39
Increased legislation	26
Adapting the business to new economic conditions	45
Promoting equality and fairness	7
Becoming more innovative	27
Speeding up time to market	11
Being acquired or acquiring another organisation	11
Improving the quality of leadership	29
Improving customer service	33
Introducing new technology	30
None of these	11

For public sector employees, the biggest issues are keeping the most talented employees (52%), followed by improving the quality of leadership (41%) and improving customer service (39%).

According to sole traders, the biggest issues their organisation will face in the next five years are adapting the business to new economic conditions (41%), improving customer service (31%) and becoming more innovative (28%).

On the other hand, for large businesses the issues seem to be slightly different.

Keeping the most talented employees (50%), adapting the business to new economic conditions (43%) and improving customer service (38%) are identified as the biggest issues organisations will face, by employees working in large organisations.

Results tend to show that although the issues faced over the next five years by these businesses will be similar, the ones most important, or biggest, will depend on the sector in which the organisation functions and its size.

# Conclusions

One of the most striking findings from this 2009 survey of employee attitudes to work is that despite the backdrop of economic recession, job satisfaction has increased on most measures since our last survey in 2006. The net employee satisfaction score has increased to +46 from a figure of +26 three years ago and has risen across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Employee satisfaction scores have increased across a range of measures including freedom over working method, recognition for good work, opportunity to use skills and job variety. And although satisfaction with pay and promotion opportunities is low, this has also increased since 2006.

Respondents are on the whole fairly positive in relation to their attitudes to their immediate manager, typically rating them as both committed and fair. However, managers are rated poorly on the extent to which they provide feedback on performance or discuss training and development needs – both areas where there has been deterioration since the 2006 survey. Managers are also scored poorly by employees on the degree to which they provide on-the-job coaching. These findings suggest that performance management is an area where most line managers need further development. Clearly, in today's uncertain climate, effective performance management is more important than ever.

Employees are less positive in their attitudes to senior management, particularly in relation to trust and whether they consult on matters of importance. The survey also shows that the majority of people remain fairly upbeat in the workplace and are more likely to feel cheerful as a result of their job than they are tense, stressed or miserable. However, employees are less likely to say they feel relaxed and more likely to report being tense and worried than they were in 2006.

In addition, more than a third of employees report they feel under excessive pressure every day or once or twice a week. This is particularly concerning as long-term

exposure to stress is linked to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, as well as increased risk of heart disease.

Providing flexible working opportunities is one way that organisations can help employees balance the pressures they are under, both at work and at home, and this is something that has almost become commonplace in respondents' organisations (39% in 2006, 66% in 2009). Over half of employees agree that they achieve the right balance; however, around a quarter disagree. These figures again represent a slight improvement from 2006.

The increase in job satisfaction and the generally positive attitudes of employees in relation to their moods and emotions at work is perhaps surprising given the wide-ranging impact of the recession.

One possible explanation for the high levels of job satisfaction during the recession may be that, in an environment where unemployment is rising fast, people are more satisfied just to have a job than they might have been during more buoyant economic times.

In all, three-quarters of employees say the organisation they work for has been affected by the recession. Nearly one in four respondents report their employer has either made redundancies or is planning to do so, with a quarter of employees saying that there has been a recruitment freeze. About one in six employees say their organisation has cut training, frozen pay or reduced working hours in response to the recession. In addition, nearly four in ten employees report their organisation is responding to the downturn by placing more emphasis on restructuring but also looking for new markets.

A high proportion of workers report that the recession is affecting them as individuals. A third of employees worry about being made redundant and two-thirds of employees believe it will be difficult or very difficult to

find another job if they are made redundant. In addition, nearly six out of ten employees say they are worried about the future as a result of the recession and just under half agree they feel less secure in their job, while more than four in ten respondents report there is more stress at work. The survey also suggests that workloads are increasing and office politics is becoming more common as a result of the downturn, while opportunities for learning new skills and career progression are reducing.

The recession is also having an impact on the extent to which employees are considering moving jobs. Three-quarters of UK employees plan to stay with their current employer for the foreseeable future, but when asked if ideally they would like to change jobs, more than a third say yes.

Looking ahead, employees believe the biggest issues their organisation will face in the next five years are adapting the business to new economic conditions, keeping the most talented employees and improving customer services. Other key areas identified by employees as challenges organisations must meet are around the need to introduce new technology, improve the quality of leadership and to become more innovative.

### **Recommendations for employers**

The survey findings show that while employees remain surprisingly resilient in the face of the economic recession, there are a number of fault lines developing that, if not addressed, risk undermining employee engagement and well-being.

There may also be a time lag before the true impact of the recession affects generally positive employee attitudes that have benefited from the longest period of sustained economic growth ever experienced in the UK.

Going forward, as the UK economy is likely to deteriorate further, the survey indicates that individuals and the organisations they work for will face significant challenges as resources are squeezed and competitive pressures increase.

### *Improve employee communication and consultation*

The survey suggests a significant proportion of organisations are making redundancies and undergoing restructuring as they respond to new economic conditions, placing increased emphasis on senior managers to manage change effectively by ensuring there are efficient arrangements for informing and consulting with employees. However, nearly half of employees surveyed disagree that they were consulted by senior managers about important decisions, with just a quarter agreeing. This failure to involve employees in change may also explain the significant lack of trust and confidence among employees in senior management reflected by the survey.

Senior managers frequently have to walk a fine line between making tough and expedient decisions about change for the benefit of the business and involving and consulting employees to ensure there is employee buy-in and understanding around proposed changes to strategy and business objectives.

To help achieve this, employers should consider if their internal communications arrangements are working and whether there are adequate opportunities for upward feedback and employee voice. CIPD research finds that a combination of direct and representative arrangements for informing and consulting with employees:

- is more commonly associated with various enhanced and positive measures of perceived organisational performance
- is associated with relatively high levels of employee involvement in change situations
- powerfully distinguishes between establishments that describe themselves as consulting (rather than informing) with employees in the process of change.

Employee voice is also critical if organisations are to be able to tap into up-to-the-minute intelligence on changing customer requirements around services or products in fast-changing markets and to maximise the potential for innovation.

### *Focus on the role of the line manager in supporting learning and managing performance*

Employees are least satisfied with the level of feedback their manager provides them on how they are performing, the extent to which their manager discusses their training and development needs and the on-the-job coaching they receive from their managers.

In an environment where organisations need to develop new skills and make the most of reduced training budgets if they are to compete and survive, the role of the line manager in managing performance and supporting and encouraging learning in the workplace becomes ever more critical.

CIPD research has emphasised a shift over the last 15 years from training as an instructor-led, content-based process to learning as a self-directed, work-based process in which the line manager plays an increasingly important role. It is in employers' interests to invest in the development of their line managers to help them support, accelerate and direct learning effectively across the business.

Line managers also need specific training in performance management to ensure that this process is managed effectively and consistently.

### *Provide employee support through the recession*

The impact of the recession is likely to affect individual employees in many different ways. Organisations should consider providing employees with additional support to help them cope around areas such as financial advice, employee assistance helplines, health and well-being programmes, counselling and stress management training. Unfortunately, the survey suggests that 78% of organisations have not provided additional support to employees.

Managers and employers should also consider providing more support to employees around work-life balance as workloads are set to increase as a direct result of redundancies.

### *Increase attention around employee well-being*

Finally, the survey provides a red warning light on the state of employee well-being. More than a third of employees say they are under excessive pressure either every day or once or twice a week, with evidence that stress is on the increase. Around a half of employees report they have been affected by more stress at work as a result of the recession.

Employers should be conducting risk assessments for work-related stress and have a duty to do so under health and safety law. However, risk assessments, which may well be done through employee attitudes surveys or focus group sessions on organisational change or improving performance, are not a panacea. It is how line managers manage people on a day-to-day basis that will to a large extent make the difference to whether stress is managed or mitigated effectively. The CIPD has been conducting joint research with the Health and Safety Executive and Investors in People exploring the link between line management behaviour and stress at work. This has led to the development of a competency framework that highlights four key areas of competency that managers need to manage and prevent stress at work.

These are:

- managing current and future workloads
- managing difficult situations
- managing emotions and having integrity
- managing the individual.

Guidance and the competency framework, *Line Management Behaviour and Stress at Work*, is available to download from [www.cipd.co.uk/guides](http://www.cipd.co.uk/guides)

Managers should also be able to spot the early warning signs of stress, such as changes in performance, behaviour or attendance that might indicate that an individual is not coping at work for whatever reason. Once it has been established there is a problem and the cause, managers must work with HR and occupational health so that the individual can receive appropriate support.

### *Maintain an emphasis on the things that matter*

The survey findings indicate that when things get tough, organisations are placing less emphasis on long-held policies and values such as a belief in continued learning and development, employee well-being, and diversity and inclusion initiatives. Such things should be embedded within organisational practices and should not be seen as 'something for the good times'.

Overall, organisations that manage people well, provide employee support in difficult times and organise work effectively are likely to remain resilient through the recession and be best placed to take advantage of the upturn when it arrives.

# Background to the survey

The CIPD commissioned a survey among UK employees and sole traders to identify their opinions of and attitudes towards working life today, particularly during these difficult economic times.

YouGov conducted for the CIPD an online survey of 3,314 UK employees at the end of February 2009. This survey was administered to members of the YouGov Plc GB panel of 240,000+ individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. The sample was selected to be representative of the Great Britain workforce in relation to Sector (private, public, voluntary), industry type and full-time/ part-time working by gender. The responding sample is weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample. The profile is normally derived from census data or, if not available from the census, from industry accepted data.

An email was sent to panelists selected at random from the base sample according to the sample definition, inviting them to take part in the survey and providing a link to the survey.

Respondents were drawn from a mixture of public (23%), private (70%) and not-for-profit organisations (7%).

Size of organisation were classified in the following way:

- Sole trader (1 person business)
- Micro business (2-9)
- Small businesses (10-49)
- Medium (50-249)
- Large (250 plus).







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