

**CIPD**

*Championing better  
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EMPLOYEE

# OUTLOOK

EMPLOYEE  
VIEWS ON  
WORKING LIFE

*March 2016*

**FOCUS**

*Skills and careers*

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The not-for-profit organisation champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. It has 140,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development.

# Skills and careers

## Contents

	<b>Key findings</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Over-qualification</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Training and career development</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Why people work</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Career expectations</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Reasons for career satisfaction</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Reasons for career dissatisfaction</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Kick-starting careers</b>	<b>16</b>
	<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>17</b>

# Key findings



**Almost a third (31%) of employees believe they are over-qualified for their current job, with 63% believing they have the right level of qualification and just 3% saying they are under-qualified.**

## Over-qualification

Almost a third (31%) of employees believe they are over-qualified for their current job, with 63% believing they have the right level of qualification and just 3% saying they are under-qualified.

University graduates with a first degree are most likely to report they are over-qualified for their jobs, with 41% saying this is the case, compared with just 32% of those with a second higher degree, such as a PhD or other technical or professional higher qualification, and 31% of those with A-levels.

## Training and career development

Less than half of employees (44%) are satisfied (34%) or very satisfied (10%) with the current level of training and career development in their organisation, with 34% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

## Factors that are most important to people when thinking about their working lives

The two most important factors people identify as being most important to them when thinking about their career or working life are job satisfaction and work-life balance, with 69% of respondents citing these among their top three most important factors.

## Career expectations

In all, just over half (51%) of employees report their career progression to date has met (37%) or exceeded (14%) their expectations, with a third (33%) saying their career progression to date has failed in this respect. Men are marginally more likely than women to say that their career expectations have exceeded or failed to meet their expectations.

Respondents who said their family's income level when they were growing up meant they were poor or very poor are significantly less likely to say their career progression to date has met or exceeded their expectations (44%), compared with those who said their family backgrounds were middle income (54%) or well off (56%).

Respondents whose highest qualification is a university first degree are significantly more likely to say their career progression to date has failed to meet their expectations (40%), compared with respondents whose highest level of education is GCSE or equivalent (32%), A-level (36%) or university higher degree (25%).

## Reasons for career satisfaction

### Family background and education

Most respondents whose careers have met or exceeded their expectations believe their own

talent and hard work and a degree of luck have been important in achieving this. Outside these factors, the most commonly cited reasons for meeting or exceeding career expectations cited by respondents are taking the right qualifications (27%), choosing a career that fits their skills and aptitude (50%) and investing in their own personal development by studying for a qualification/developing new skills outside work (23%).

Younger workers aged 18-24 are significantly more likely than older workers to identify good parental advice and participating in effective work experience or other engagement with employers while still in education as key factors in them meeting or exceeding their career progression expectations.

Employees with poor backgrounds are less likely than those from middle-income or well-off backgrounds to report that taking the right qualifications at school, college or university helped them to meet or exceed their expected career progression. However, respondents from poor backgrounds are most likely to say that they took the opportunity to re-train and start a new career from scratch.

### The workplace

In all, 44% of employees identified the relationships they have built across the organisation as being important to meeting or exceeding their expected career progression. The next most important factors for meeting or exceeding anticipated career progression are good-quality line management (28%), a

focus by organisations on internal progression and promotion (25%) and good-quality training and development (24%).

### Reasons for career dissatisfaction

#### Family background and education

The top two factors outside bad luck that employees blame for failing to meet their career expectations are ending up in a career which does not allow them to show their strengths (cited by 29% of employees who have failed to achieve their career progression expectations) and poor career advice and guidance (26%).

The next factor most commonly cited by employees for failing to meet their career progression expectations are not being able to afford to invest in their own personal development by studying for a qualification/developing new skills outside work (25%) and taking the wrong qualifications at school, college or university (23%).

More than a third (35%) of respondents from poor or very poor backgrounds cite poor career advice and guidance as a factor in their lack of career progression, compared with 19% of those from a middle-income background and 27% from a well-off or very well-off background.

#### The workplace

Employees are most likely to identify poor line management when they entered the workplace or at key points during their careers as the biggest reason why they have failed to achieve their hoped-for career progression, with four in ten respondents (39%) citing

this as a key factor. The next most commonly identified reasons for people's career progression disappointing are a lack of effective training programmes at work (34%), negative office politics (34%), poor performance management (29%) and engrained work cultures.

Women are more likely than men to say they have experienced no or inadequate training when entering the workplace and to report a lack of flexible working opportunities has held them back. Women are also more likely than men to identify discrimination as a reason for disappointing career progression.

### Kick-starting careers

Looking ahead over the next 12 months, employees are most likely to say that moving to a new job in a different organisation would enable them to kick-start their career, with 27% of respondents identifying this as the change that would make a difference. Networking is also regarded as important, with 19% saying they planned to network with people outside their organisation to kick-start their career in the year ahead and 15% reporting they are going to do more networking with people inside their organisation.

In all, just over a fifth (21%) of employees are currently looking for a new job with a different organisation. Younger workers are more likely than older workers to be looking for a new job. Almost three in ten (29%) employees from the voluntary sector are looking for a new job compared with 20% of people working in the public or private sectors.

# 1 Over-qualification

Almost a third (31%) of employees believe they are over-qualified for their current job, with 63% believing they have the right level of qualification and just 3% say they are under-qualified.

Women (35%) are more likely than men (27%) to believe they are over-qualified.

Less than half of employees (44%) are satisfied (34%) or very satisfied (10%) with the current level of training and career development in their organisation, with 34% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

University graduates with a first degree are most likely to report they are over-qualified for their

jobs, with 42% saying this is the case compared with just 32% of those with a second higher degree such as a PhD or other technical or professional higher qualifications and 31% of those with A-levels. In contrast just 13% of respondents whose highest qualifications are GCSEs or equivalent say they are over-qualified.

**Table 1: Proportion of respondents who think they are under- or over-qualified, by gender and sector (%)**

	All	Men	Women	Private	Public	Voluntary
Over-qualified	31	27	35	29	31	40
Right level of qualifications	63	66	61	64	64	55
Under-qualified	3	4	2	3	2	2
Don't know	3	3	2	3	2	3

Base: All: 2,037; Men: 1,033; Women: 1,004; Private: 1,411; Public: 469; Voluntary: 125

**Table 2: Proportion of respondents who think they are under- or over-qualified, by age and background (%)**

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Poor/ very poor	Middle income	Well off/ very well off
Over-qualified	54	27	25	31	31	34	28	37
Right level of qualifications	45	64	68	62	65	60	66	59
Under-qualified	0	3	4	3	3	4	3	2
Don't know	1	6	3	4	1	2	3	2

Base: 18-24: 142; 25-34: 230; 35-44: 451; 45-54: 544; 55+: 670

**Table 3: Proportion of respondents who think they are under- or over-qualified, by highest level of qualification (%)**

	All	GCSE O-level CSE level 1	A-level or higher certificate	University or CNAA first degree (eg BA, BSc, B.Ed)	University or CNAA higher degree (eg MSc, PhD)	Other technical professional, higher qualifications
Over-qualified	31	13	31	41	32	32
Right level of qualifications	63	80	57	56	66	66
Under-qualified	3	4	5	2	0	1
Don't know	3	4	7	2	2	1

Base: All: 2,096; GCSE, O-level: 245; A-level: 277; University first degree: 543; University higher degree: 235; Other technical or higher qualifications: 312

## 2 Training and career development

Just over a fifth (22%) of employees are dissatisfied (14%) or very dissatisfied (8%) with the current level of training and career development they have received in their current organisation.

Men are less likely to say they are satisfied/very satisfied (42%) with the level of training and career development they receive than women (46%) and more likely to be dissatisfied/very dissatisfied,

with 24% saying this is the case compared with 20% of women.

Employees working in the private sector are overall more satisfied with their training and career development opportunities than those in the voluntary or public sectors.

About half of employees are satisfied with how their career has developed to date, with little

difference between men and women in this respect. A quarter (24%) of respondents are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their career development.

Private sector employees are very marginally more likely to be satisfied or very satisfied with their career development (51%) than those in the voluntary sector (50%), with employees in the public sector least satisfied (47%).

**Table 4: Proportion of respondents who say they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the current level of training and career development in their current organisation, by gender and sector (%)**

	All	Men	Women	Private	Public	Voluntary
Very satisfied	10	10	10	10	9	12
Satisfied	34	32	36	34	34	35
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	34	32	36	36	30	30
Dissatisfied	14	15	12	12	18	16
Very dissatisfied	8	9	8	8	9	8

Base: All: 2,037; Men: 1,033; Women: 1,004; Private: 1,411; Public: 469; Voluntary: 125

**Table 5: Proportion of respondents who say they are satisfied or dissatisfied with how their career has developed to date, by gender and sector (%)**

	All	Men	Women	Private	Public	Voluntary
Very satisfied	12	11	13	13	8	11
Satisfied	39	39	38	38	39	39
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	25	27	23	26	26	22
Dissatisfied	18	17	19	17	21	20
Very dissatisfied	6	6	6	6	6	4

Base: 2,096

## 3 Why people work

The two most important factors people identify as being most important to them when thinking about their career or working life are job satisfaction and work-life balance, with 69% of respondents citing these among their top three most important factors. Four in ten employees (41%) regard the people they work with as among the top three most important factors to them when thinking about their career or working life, while 29% say meaning or purpose is important to them. Wealth is the fifth most frequently cited factor by respondents when thinking about their careers or working lives.

Men are significantly more likely to rate wealth as a top three factor (32%) than women (21%) and put slightly more weight on progression, with 13% of men citing this as important compared with 10% of women.

Women are more likely to cite work-life balance as a top three most important factor (73%) than men (66%) and also more likely to identify job satisfaction as a most important factor (72%) than men (66%).

Women are also more likely to regard the people they work with as a top three most important factor (48%) than men (34%).

Younger workers aged between 18 and 34 are more likely than older employees to rate progression as a top three most important factor when thinking about their career or working lives.

Older workers aged 45 and above put more weight on job satisfaction than younger workers. Older workers in this age cohort (45+) place less emphasis on wealth than younger workers, with just 24% citing wealth as a top three most important factor, compared with about three in ten for those aged 44 and under.

**Table 6: Factors identified by respondents as being important to them when thinking about their career or working life, by gender and sector (% of respondents identifying the following as top three factors)**

	All	Men	Women	Private	Public	Voluntary
Status	5	6	4	5	6	3
Wealth	26	32	21	31	17	14
Progression	12	13	10	11	12	9
Job satisfaction	69	66	72	70	69	61
Fun	11	12	10	13	7	9
The people I work with	41	34	48	41	39	41
Work-life balance	69	66	73	70	69	61
Giving something back/ serving the public	12	11	13	6	25	36
Meaning/purpose	29	29	29	24	39	48
Other	2	2	1	2	1	3
Don't know	2	2	2	2	1	1

Base: All: 2,096; Men: 1,084; Women: 1,012; Private: 1,470; Public: 469; Voluntary: 125

**Table 7: Factors identified by respondents as being important to them when thinking about their career or working life, by age and background (% of respondents identifying the following as top three factors)**

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Poor/ very poor	Middle income	Well off/ very well off
Status	6	3	4	4	7	4	5	9
Wealth	26	31	30	24	24	27	26	29
Progression	27	26	14	7	5	9	11	21
Job satisfaction	62	63	62	70	76	66	71	70
Fun	19	5	12	14	9	13	10	11
The people I work with	40	41	36	40	44	41	42	36
Work-life balance	57	68	70	73	69	70	72	55
Giving something back/ serving the public	10	7	12	14	9	14	11	13
Meaning/purpose	30	29	30	29	28	29	28	34
Other	0	0	2	2	2	3	1	1
Don't know	2	6	2	1	1	2	2	0

Base: 18-24: 142; 25-34: 232; 35-44: 456; 45-54: 562; 55+: 704; Poor/very poor: 679; Middle income: 1,169; Well off/very well off: 214

## 4 Career expectations

In all, just over half (51%) of employees report their career progression to date has met (37%) or exceeded (14%) their expectations, with a third (33%) saying their career progression to date has failed in this respect. Men are marginally more likely than women to say that their career progression has exceeded or failed to meet their expectations.

Age does not seem to make a significant difference to people's views on whether their career has met or failed to meet their

expectations. In all, 16% of 18–24-year-olds say their career progression to date has exceeded their expectations, as do 16% of those aged 55 and above. Just over a third (36%) of 18–24-year-olds report their career progression has failed to meet their expectations, with a similar proportion of those aged between 35 and 54 also saying this is the case.

The survey also asked respondents to say whether their family income level when they were growing

up was poor, very poor, middle income, well off or very well off. Respondents who said their family's income level when they were growing up meant they were poor or very poor are significantly less likely to say their career progression to date has met or exceeded their expectations (44%), compared with those who said their family backgrounds were middle income (54%) or well off (56%).

**Table 8: Proportion of respondents who say their career progression to date has met, exceeded or failed to meet their expectations, by highest level of qualification (%)**

	All	GCSE O-level CSE level 1	A-level or higher certificate	University or CNA first degree (eg BA, BSc, BEd)	University or CNA higher degree (eg MSc, PhD)	Other technical professional, higher qualifications
Met expectations	37	34	29	36	44	40
Exceeded my expectations	14	17	15	12	18	13
Failed to meet my expectations	33	32	36	40	25	29
Don't know	6	5	10	3	8	6
Not applicable – I do not have any career expectations	11	13	10	8	6	12

Base: All: 2,096; GCSE, O-level: 245; A-levels 277; University first degree: 543; University higher degree: 235; Other technical or higher qualifications: 312

**Table 9: Proportion of respondents who say their career progression to date has met, exceeded or failed to meet their expectations (%)**

	All	Men	Women	Private	Public	Voluntary
Met expectations	37	37	37	37	38	29
Exceeded my expectations	14	15	13	14	10	21
Failed to meet my expectations	33	35	31	32	35	34
Don't know	6	5	7	6	7	6
Not applicable – I do not have any career expectations	11	8	14	11	10	10

Base: All: 2,096; Men: 1,084; Women: 1,012; Private: 1,470; Public: 469; Voluntary: 125

**Table 10: Proportion of respondents who say their career progression to date has met, exceeded or failed to meet their expectations, by age and background (%)**

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Poor/ very poor	Middle income	Well off/ very well off
Met expectations	32	35	39	32	41	29	42	36
Exceeded my expectations	16	14	11	13	16	15	12	20
Failed to meet my expectations	36	32	36	35	30	39	30	32
Don't know	10	13	6	5	3	4	7	4
Not applicable - I do not have any career expectations	6	6	9	15	11	12	9	8

Base: 18-24: 142; 25-34: 232; 35-44: 456; 45-54: 562; 55+: 704; Poor/very poor: 679; Middle income: 1,169; Well off/very well off: 214

Nearly four in ten (39%) employees from poor family backgrounds said their career progression to date has failed to meet their expectations, compared with 30% of respondents from middle-income families and 32% among respondents from well-off backgrounds.

Respondents with a higher degree such as a PhD are most likely to say that their career progression to date has met their expectations, with 44% saying this is the case compared with 40% of those with technical or professional higher qualifications and 36% of those with

a first university degree. Employees whose highest qualifications is at A-level or equivalent are least likely to say their career progression to date has met their expectations.

However, respondents whose highest qualification is a university first degree are significantly more likely to say their career progression to date has failed to meet their expectations (40%), compared with respondents whose highest level of education is GCSE or equivalent (32%), A-level (36%) or university higher degree (25%).

# 5 Reasons for career satisfaction



**The most commonly cited reasons for meeting or exceeding career expectations cited by respondents are taking the right qualifications (27%), choosing a career that fits their skills and aptitude (50%) and investing in their own personal development by studying for a qualification/developing new skills outside work (23%).**

## Family background and education

Most respondents whose careers have met or exceeded their expectations believe their own talent and hard work and a degree of luck have been important to achieving this. Outside these factors, the most commonly cited reasons for meeting or exceeding career expectations cited by respondents are taking the right qualifications (27%), choosing a career that fits their skills and aptitude (50%) and investing in their own personal development by studying for a qualification/developing new skills outside work (23%).

Younger workers aged 18-24 are significantly more likely than older workers to identify good parental advice and participating in effective work experience or other engagement with employers while still in education as key factors in them meeting or exceeding their career progression expectations. This might reflect the considerable efforts and initiatives by both government and employers since 2010 to tackle youth unemployment.

However, the survey suggests that good-quality career advice and guidance is still hard to find, with just 3% of 18-24-year-olds reporting this as helping them, with little variance among the different age cohorts.

Respondents from poor backgrounds are much less likely to identify their family backgrounds or good parental advice as reasons for meeting or exceeding their expected career progression than employees from middle-income or well-off backgrounds. Employees with poor backgrounds are less likely than those from middle-income or well-off backgrounds to report that taking the right qualifications at school, college or university helped them to meet or exceed their expected career progression. However, respondents from poor backgrounds are most likely to say that they took the opportunity to re-train and start a new career from scratch.

Perhaps not surprisingly, employees who report their family was well off or very well off when they were growing up are more likely to report that their family background was an important factor in them meeting or exceeding their career progression expectations (26%) than those respondents from middle-income (11%) or poor family backgrounds (7%).

## The workplace

The survey highlights the value of employees building networks and relationships across the organisations they work for as means of supporting their ability to develop and progress their careers. In all, 44% of employees identified the relationships they have built

across the organisation as being important to meeting or exceeding their expected career progression. The next most important factors for meeting or exceeding anticipated career progression are good-quality line management (28%), a focus by organisations on internal progression and promotion (25%) and good-quality training and development (24%).

Women (48%) are even more likely than men (40%) to say that the relationships they have built across the organisation have been a factor in their career progression. Men are marginally more likely than women to say that benefiting from a mentor and good line management has been key to them meeting or exceeding their expected career progression.

Younger workers aged 18–24 who say their career progression has met or exceeded their expectations identify the relationships they have built across the organisation or organisations they have worked for as being particularly important, with 47% saying this is a key factor. Younger workers aged 18–24 are more likely than older workers to cite good-quality line management

**Table 11: The factors during their upbringing or in their education that respondents believe helped them to meet or exceed their expected career progression (%)**

	All	Men	Women	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55+	Poor/ very poor	Middle income	Well off/ very well off
Family background	12	12	11	11	7	8	15	13	7	11	26
Good parental advice	8	8	8	27	10	5	8	5	3	9	15
Received good-quality career advice and guidance at school, college or university	2	3	1	3	1	1	3	2	1	3	4
Took the right qualifications at school, college or university	27	26	27	27	43	28	27	21	21	28	30
Participated in effective work experience or other engagement activities with employers while still in education	9	9	9	23	12	12	9	4	8	9	15
Participated in an effective apprenticeship or other form of vocational training	8	8	8	6	9	9	7	8	8	9	4
My own hard work and talent	71	72	70	47	74	74	74	71	78	70	60
A degree of luck	47	52	40	29	47	40	49	51	49	46	50
Choosing a career that fits my skills and aptitude	50	48	53	29	54	50	52	52	44	55	41
I took the opportunity to re-train and start a new career from scratch	15	15	15	14	13	11	16	19	20	14	12
I invested in my own development by studying for a qualification/developing new skills outside work	23	20	27	16	25	27	27	19	28	20	28
Don't know	2	2	2	8	1	1	3	1	2	1	2
None of the above	3	3	4	8	0	5	1	4	4	3	3

Base: All: 1,059; Men: 560; Women: 499; 18–24: 68; 25–34: 113; 35–44: 226; 45–54: 245; 55+: 398; Poor/very poor: 30; Middle income: 628; Well off/very well off: 119

(32%) and effective development programmes at work (32%) as being important to their progression.

Older workers are more likely than younger workers to say receiving good-quality training when they first entered the workplace has

been important to them meeting or exceeding their career progression expectations.

Respondents who said their family background when growing up was poor or very poor are more likely than those from middle-income

or well-off family backgrounds to identify good-quality training and an organisational focus on internal progression and promotion as key factors in their positive career progression.

**Table 12: The factors in the workplace that respondents believe helped them to meet or exceed their expected career progression (%)**

	All	Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Poor/ very poor	Middle income	Well off/ very well off
Participated in an effective graduate programme at the start of my career	6	6	6	8	11	8	5	3	4	7	8
Received good-quality training when I first entered the workplace	24	26	22	19	25	18	26	27	29	23	20
Benefited from a coach or mentor when entering employment or at key point in my career	12	14	10	2	13	14	12	12	14	11	12
Benefited from good-quality line management from my direct manager at key points in my career	28	29	26	32	20	32	29	25	26	29	26
Received effective training and development programmes at work	24	24	23	32	23	17	25	26	27	23	17
Benefited from a tailored talent management programme	2	3	2	0	5	3	2	1	3	2	1
My employer paid for me to study a qualification/new skills outside work	16	16	17	10	21	21	16	14	18	15	18
The provision of flexible working has enabled me to progress while balancing parenting or other commitments at home	14	8	20	2	6	17	18	13	12	15	14
The provision of flexible working has helped me to progress while managing a health condition	4	4	5	2	3	4	5	6	5	4	7
The relationships I have built across the organisation	44	40	48	47	40	48	42	43	42	46	41
The organisation I work/worked for encourages progression and promotion from within	25	27	23	22	35	22	25	25	27	26	19
Don't know	4	4	4	9	4	2	8	1	3	5	3
None of the above	16	18	14	16	9	16	13	20	15	16	17

Base: All: 1,059; Men: 560; Women: 499; 18-24: 68; 25-34: 113; 35-44: 226; 45-54: 245; 55+: 398; Poor/very poor: 30; Middle income: 628; Well off/very well off: 119

## 6 Reasons for career dissatisfaction

### Family background and education

The top two factors outside bad luck that employees blame for failing to meet their career expectations are ending up in a career which does not allow them to show their strengths (cited by 29% of employees who have failed to achieve their career progression expectations) and poor career advice and guidance (26%).

The next factor most commonly cited by employees for failing to meet their career progression expectations are not being able to afford to invest in their own personal development by studying for a qualification/developing new skills outside work (25%) and taking the wrong qualifications at school, college or university (23%).

Women (31%) are more likely than men (21%) to say that not being able to afford to invest in their own personal development outside work is a key factor holding back their career progression. Women (31%) are also much more likely than men (8%) to say that parenthood or other family commitments have prevented them from meeting their hoped-for career progression. Women (20%) are less likely than men (32%) to blame bad luck for failing to meet their career progression expectations and more likely to cite poor personal health as an issue (16% versus 9%).

Older workers aged 35 and above are more likely than younger workers to identify poor-quality career advice and guidance as a factor in not achieving their expected career progression. Younger workers aged between 18 and 34 are significantly more likely than older workers to say that being unable to show their strengths and potential because they are in the wrong career is a key factor that has limited their career progression.

The survey suggests that the career progression of people from poor or very poor family backgrounds is disproportionately affected by a number of key factors in comparison with people from a wealthier upbringing.

Top of the list is receiving poor-quality career advice and guidance at school, college or university. More than a third (35%) of respondents from poor or very poor backgrounds identify this as a factor in their lack of career progression, compared with 19% of those from a middle-income background and 27% from a well-off or very well-off background.

Linked to this is taking the wrong qualifications, with 29% of employees from a poor background citing this as a factor preventing them from meeting or achieving their expected career progression in comparison with 19% of middle-income respondents and 24% of well-off employees.

Employees from poor upbringings are also more likely than those from wealthier backgrounds to cite poor parental advice and not having the chance to take part in work experience or other employer engagement activities while at school or college.

However, respondents from poor backgrounds are less likely than those from middle-income or well-off backgrounds to blame bad luck for their disappointing career progression.

### The workplace

Employees are most likely to identify poor line management when they entered the workplace or at key points during their careers as the biggest reason why they have failed to achieve their hoped-for career progression, with four in ten respondents (39%) citing this as a key factor. The next most commonly identified reasons for people's career progression disappointing are a lack of effective training programmes at work (34%), negative office politics (34%), poor performance management (29%) and engrained work cultures.

Women are more likely than men to say they have experienced no or inadequate training when entering the workplace and to report a lack of flexible working opportunities has held them back. Women are also more likely than men to identify discrimination as a reason for disappointing career progression.

**Table 13: The key factors relating to respondents' upbringing and education that prevent them from progressing (%)**

	All	Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Poor/ very poor	Middle income	Well off/ very well off
Family background	8	8	8	10	4	4	10	9	13	3	11
Received poor-quality career advice and guidance at school	26	26	26	17	22	29	26	26	35	19	27
Poor parental advice	7	7	7	0	4	6	11	8	12	4	5
Took the wrong qualifications at school, college or university	23	25	21	19	21	25	24	22	29	19	24
Did not have the chance to take part in work experience or other employer engagement activities while still in education	7	9	6	1	11	3	6	12	11	5	3
Was not able to get on an effective apprenticeship programme or other form of vocational training course	3	4	2	5	4	2	4	2	3	3	3
Had not found time to invest in my own personal development by studying for a qualification/developing new skills outside work	22	20	23	16	21	19	22	25	21	22	20
Could not afford to invest in my own personal development by studying for a qualification/developing new skills outside work	25	21	31	6	29	20	32	26	33	22	8
I'm in the wrong career so cannot show my strengths/potential	29	29	29	47	48	28	19	28	29	28	37
A degree of bad luck	27	32	20	18	28	21	24	35	24	28	34
Parenthood or other family commitments have prevented me from progressing further	18	8	31	7	1	8	26	28	19	19	12
Poor personal health	12	9	16	6	18	9	9	16	15	11	5
Don't know	6	6	6	23	4	7	5	3	5	7	7
None of the above	14	17	11	11	11	21	12	13	13	15	14

Base: All: 693; Men: 384; Women: 309; 18-24: 51; 25-34: 74; 35-44: 163; 45-54: 196; 55+: 210; Poor/very poor: 265; Middle income: 352; Well off/very well off: 69

Younger workers are more likely to blame not being able to get on an effective graduate programme after completing a degree than older workers, with 20% of 18-24-year-olds citing this as a factor, compared with between 5% and 7% for employees aged 35 and above. 18-24-year-olds are also much more likely to report a lack of flexible working as an obstacle to progression than older workers.

Employees from poor backgrounds are particularly likely to report that poor line management has been an obstacle to their progress, with 42% citing this as a factor, compared with 39% among those from middle-income backgrounds and 32% from well-off backgrounds. Similarly, 42% of workers from poor backgrounds say that no or inadequate training has held them back, in contrast to 28% of employees from middle-

income backgrounds and 30% from well-off backgrounds. Respondents from well-off family backgrounds are more likely than those from middle-income or poor backgrounds to say their career progression has failed to meet their hoped-for progression because they failed to get on an effective graduate programme or because of a lack of flexible working.

**Table 14: The factors in the workplace that respondents believe meant they have failed to achieve their hoped-for career progression (%)**

	All	Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Poor/ very poor	Middle income	Well off/ very well off
Was not able to get on an effective graduate programme after completing a degree	9	7	11	20	19	6	5	7	8	6	21
Received no training or inadequate training when I first entered the workplace	17	14	21	14	26	16	17	17	18	16	18
Did not benefit from a coach or mentor when entering employment or at a key point in my career	20	20	19	2	8	17	19	31	22	19	16
Experienced poor-quality line management from my immediate manager when I entered work or at key points during my career	39	41	38	42	39	37	37	43	42	39	32
Lack of effective training programmes at work	34	33	34	21	44	32	38	30	42	28	30
Poor performance management at work has meant my achievements are not recognised	29	31	26	20	38	28	28	29	33	28	20
Negative office politics	34	33	35	20	40	36	32	35	38	31	31
Lack of flexible working opportunities	15	8	22	40	16	12	11	14	12	14	27
Engrained working cultures have made it hard to progress	29	28	30	11	32	27	37	25	31	27	29
Experienced discrimination (related to age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation)	10	8	13	1	10	11	8	13	11	9	12
Don't know	10	8	13	8	8	9	6	1	6	5	5
None of the above	15	17	12	18	9	13	14	17	12	17	13

Base: All: 693; Men: 384; Women: 309; 18-24: 51; 25-34: 74; 35-44: 163; 45-54: 196; 55+: 210; Poor/very poor: 265; Middle income: 352; Well off/very well off: 69

## 7 Kick-starting careers

Respondents were asked whether they were planning any changes that would enable them to kick-start their career in the year ahead. Employees are most likely to say that moving to a new job in a different organisation would enable them to kick-start their career, with 27% of respondents identifying this as the change that would make a difference. Networking is also regarded as important, with 19%

saying they planned to network with people outside their organisation to kick-start their career in the year ahead and 15% reporting they are going to do more networking with people inside their organisation. In all, 15% of employees say having access to more training is a change that would enable them to boost their career, with women (17%) more likely than men (13%) to say this is the case.

In all, just over a fifth (21%) of employees are currently looking for a new job with a different organisation. Younger workers are more likely than older workers to be looking for a new job. Almost three in ten (29%) employees from the voluntary sector are looking for a new job compared with 20% of people working in the public or private sectors.

**Table 15: Respondents' views on the changes that would enable them to kick-start their career in the year ahead (%)**

	All	Men	Women
More networking with people inside my organisation	15	15	15
More networking with people outside my organisation	19	21	18
Moving abroad	5	7	2
Having access to financial support to help me study for a new qualification	9	7	11
Having access to more training provided by my employer	15	13	17
Moving to a new job in a different organisation	27	28	26
Moving to a new role in a different department within my organisation	13	13	13
Increasing visibility within my current organisation (eg presenting to clients or senior members of staff, mentoring staff, providing training, etc)	12	12	11
Having access to more affordable childcare	2	1	3
Having more supportive line manager who coaches me and develops me	13	12	15
Other	2	2	2
Don't know	7	7	8
Not applicable – not planning to kick-start my career in the year ahead	38	36	39

Base: All: 693; Men: 384; Women: 309; 18-24: 51; 25-34: 74; 35-44: 163; 45-54: 196; 55+: 210; Poor/very poor: 265; Middle income: 352; Well off/very well off: 69

**Table 16: Proportion of respondents currently looking for a new job with a different organisation (%)**

	All	Men	Women	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Yes	21	20	21	36	25	23	24	12
No	79	80	79	64	75	77	76	88

Base: All: 2,096; Men: 1,084; Women: 1,012; 18-24: 142; 25-34: 232; 35-44: 456; 45-54: 562; 55+: 704

## Conclusions

Wealth comes a comparatively low fifth on the list of things that people think are important when considering their working lives or careers, according to the findings from this survey. Joint top of the list are job satisfaction and work-life balance, followed by 'the people I work with' and a sense of meaning or purpose. Women are significantly less likely than men to identify wealth as an important factor when thinking about their working lives and more likely to cite work-life balance, while younger workers are more likely than older employees to value progression.

These findings show that people expect more from work than a simple exchange of payment from their employer for services delivered. Work plays a central part in most people's lives and society, and consequently it is important to understand what people think about their working lives and careers and the things that matter to them.

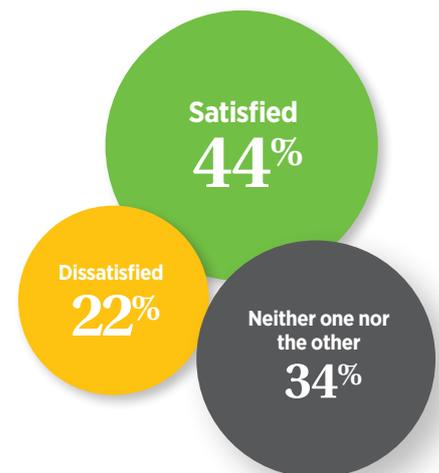
From an employer perspective, this type of insight is crucial because it enables organisations to ensure that their people management strategy – how they recruit, manage and develop their people – is aligned to their business strategy. It is very difficult to deliver excellent customer service, or increase product quality or innovation, for example, if you are struggling to recruit and retain the right talent.

This survey suggests that while many people do see work as a positive experience and are generally happy with their working lives and careers, a sizeable minority are not. Just over half (51%) of respondents say they are either satisfied or very satisfied with how their career has developed to date; however, a quarter (24%) say the opposite. A further quarter (25%) report neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction with their career development.

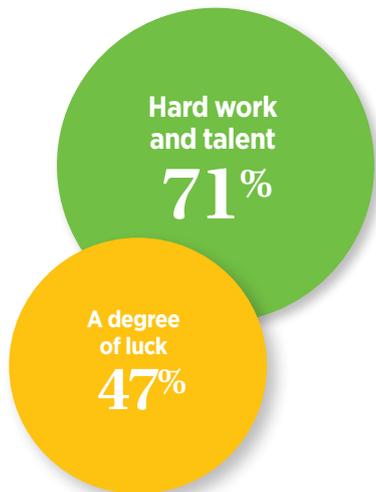
When asked about the level of training and career development they have received to date, just over four in ten employees (44%) say they are satisfied, with 22% dissatisfied and over a third (34%) neither one nor the other. Men are slightly more dissatisfied than women on this measure. Overall, age does not appear to make a big difference, with only those aged 45-54 reporting significantly less satisfaction with their career development and training than other age cohorts.

### Career expectations

In terms of whether, overall, people feel that their career progression has met their expectations, again the picture is mixed. Just over half (51%) say their career progression has either met (37%) or exceeded their expectations (14%), compared with a third (33%) who report it has failed to meet their expectations.



**When asked about the level of training and career development they have received to date, just over four in ten employees (44%) say they are satisfied, with 22% dissatisfied and over a third (34%) neither one nor the other.**



**Focusing first on respondents' upbringing and education, among respondents who report their career progression to date has met or exceeded their expectations, the two most commonly cited factors by respondents are their own hard work and talent (71%) and a degree of luck (47%).**

There is little difference between men and women, but men are marginally more likely than women to report their career progression has exceeded their expectations and also to say it has failed to meet expectations. Older workers aged 55+ are most likely to say their career progression has met or exceeded expectations, but there is little clear pattern for workers aged 55 and under. For example, respondents aged 45–54 are less likely to say their career progression has met or exceeded expectations than those aged 18–24.

However, the survey suggests that people's family income level when they were growing up does have a significant impact on their ability to achieve their career progression expectations.

In all, 44% of those respondents who said their family background growing up was poor or very poor say they have met or exceeded their career progression expectations. In contrast, 54% of employees from a middle-income upbringing and 56% of those from a well-off background say this is the case. Almost four in ten employees from poor backgrounds say their career progression has failed to meet their expectations, compared with three in ten respondents from middle-income or well-off backgrounds.

### **Factors behind career progression**

The survey breaks down the factors that contribute to workers either meeting or exceeding their career expectations between those that are related to their upbringing and education and those that are linked to the workplace.

Focusing first on respondents' upbringing and education, among respondents who report their career progression to date has met or exceeded their expectations, the two most commonly cited factors by respondents are their own hard work and talent (71%) and a degree of luck (47%).

The other most frequently identified factors are choosing a career that fitted their skills and aptitude (50%) and taking the right qualifications at school, college or university (27%). Just under a quarter (23%) of employees whose career progression has met their expectations say this is because they have invested in their own development by studying for a qualification or developing a new skill outside work, while 15% say they have taken the opportunity to re-train and start a new career from scratch.

There is little difference between the views of men and women on the factors that have had most impact. However, younger workers aged 18–24 are more likely than older workers to say they have benefited from good parental advice and are less likely to cite their own hard work and talent or luck as factors in their positive career progression.

Employees who report their family background growing up was poor or very poor are less likely to say they have benefited from good parental advice or taken part in effective work experience than those from middle-income or well-off backgrounds and more likely to say they re-trained and started a new career from scratch.

When asked to identify the factors in the workplace that had contributed to either meeting or exceeding their career progression, employees cite the relationships they have built across the organisation they work for as the most significant, with 44% citing this as important. Almost three in ten respondents cite good-quality line management from their direct manager at key points in their career, followed by a quarter (24%) who say they received good-quality training when they first entered the workplace and more generally they have received effective training and development in the workplace.

Women (20%) are much more likely than men (8%) to regard the provision of flexible working as one of the factors behind their positive career progression to date.

The survey also highlights the importance of training and development opportunities in the workplace to enable people from more disadvantaged backgrounds to progress. Respondents from poor or very poor backgrounds are more likely than those from middle-income or well-off upbringings to identify good-quality training when they first entered the workplace or effective training and development programmes as important factors in their career progression.

### Reasons why people don't progress

The survey also asked respondents whose career progression had failed to meet their expectations to identify the key factors that had contributed to this. Aside from bad luck, the top two factors are closely connected, with just over a quarter of respondents citing both poor-

quality career advice and guidance at school and being unable to show their strengths because they are in the wrong career. A similar proportion also say they have not been able to afford to invest in their own development by studying for a qualification or developing a new skill outside work, while just over a fifth cite not having the time to invest in their own personal development outside work.

Perhaps not surprisingly, parenthood and other family commitments are regarded as a bigger obstacle to progression by women, with 31% citing this as a factor compared with just 8% of men. Women are also more likely to say they have not got the time or the money to invest in their own personal development outside work than men.

In terms of the factors that hinder progression from the perspective of younger or older workers, employees aged 18-24 are significantly less likely than older workers to blame poor advice and guidance at school compared with those aged 35 and over but more likely to say that being unable to show their strengths and potential because they are in the wrong career is holding them back.

The survey also suggests that there are a number of factors that disproportionately hold back people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Poor career advice and guidance is one of these, with 35% of respondents who described their family background as poor or very poor identifying this as a key issue, compared with 19% of respondents from middle-income

upbringings and 27% of those from well-off backgrounds. Respondents from poor backgrounds are also more likely than those from more affluent backgrounds to report they took the wrong qualifications at school, college or university or to say they could not afford to invest in their own personal development by studying for a new qualification or skill outside work.

### Factors that hold people back in the workplace

Turning to the factors relating to the workplace that prevent people from meeting their career progression expectations, the most commonly cited factor by some way is poor line management. Almost four in ten respondents say their experience of poor-quality line management from their immediate manager when they entered work or at key points during their career was a key reason they have failed to meet their hoped-for career progression. The next two most commonly cited factors are a lack of effective training programmes at work and negative office politics, both of which are cited by just over a third of respondents. Almost three in ten employees identify poor performance management and engrained working cultures that make it hard to progress.

Women are by some way more likely than men to say a lack of flexible working opportunities has held them back and to say they received inadequate training when they first entered the workplace. Women are also nearly twice as likely as men to report discrimination as a reason for failing to progress, with 13% citing this compared with 8% of men.

Employees from poor backgrounds are particularly likely to identify poor line management and a lack of training programmes at work as key reasons for failing to meet their career progression expectations. In all, 42% of respondents from poor upbringings blame poor line management, in contrast to 39% of those from middle-income backgrounds and just 32% of those from well-off backgrounds. Similarly, 42% of employees from poor backgrounds cite a lack of training programmes at work, compared with 28% of those from middle-income upbringings and 30% of those from well-off backgrounds.

Taken together, the survey has some useful insights for policy-makers interested in increasing labour market access, inclusion and social mobility and for employers seeking to understand the HR and people management approaches that support progression and career development of different groups.

## Insights for policy-makers

### Better career advice and guidance

The survey highlights once again the importance of the provision of good-quality career advice and guidance to people of all ages. Among respondents who have failed to meet their career expectations, the most commonly cited factors are poor career advice, taking the wrong qualifications and being in the wrong job or career. The evidence in the survey suggests that inadequate career advice has a particularly negative impact on those from poorer backgrounds. Better-quality career advice and guidance is crucial to help more young people

think more carefully about their options and what academic or vocational qualifications will lead to a fulfilling career.

### Enhanced support for people with caring responsibilities

A third of women whose career expectations have failed to meet expectations say a key reason is parenthood or other family commitments. Evidence suggests many women struggle to juggle career progression with family commitments. Women in particular struggle to get back into work after having children, and they are, according to the survey, much more likely than men to say they have not been able to afford to invest in their own personal development outside work.

The recent introduction of shared parental leave is positive and should, over time, mean more men take on a more active caring role, but the survey suggests more needs to be done to support women who struggle to progress in the labour market. Access to good-quality career advice and mentoring as well as enhanced skills development support would help address some of the obstacles faced by women.

### Access to lifelong learning activities

Too many people from poor backgrounds say they are held back because they cannot afford to invest in their own personal development by studying for a qualification/developing new skills. This highlights the importance of providing lifelong learning opportunities for people of all ages and ensuring that publicly funded further education and adult skills

are protected in the future and not treated as a poor relation to higher education. There needs to be a much bigger focus on how we incentivise and support people at different stages of their lives and careers to invest in their own development. Adults aged 24 and over are now able to access university-style Advanced Learning Loans to support learning at Level 3 and above, soon to be extended to other age groups and levels of learning. However, these don't seem to be taking off, with learning for people in this age cohort having fallen by around one-third since their introduction. It makes sense to support learners to invest in their own skills and to give them more 'skin in the game' and policy-makers need to think about the best ways to achieve this.

### Improving people management and development should be a national policy priority

The survey highlights that good-quality people management and training are key reasons why people progress at work and that poor people management and development are among the main factors that hold people back, particularly for those from poorer backgrounds. However, workplace issues such as the quality of management and the availability of training are not identified as key factors in enabling social mobility, with the recent report by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission only touching on these issues. Government can play a bigger role than it does to encourage more employers to invest in developing line management capability. It can lead by example through encouraging

good practice in the public sector and through its power to convene and initiate campaigns with key stakeholders. Evidence suggests that people management capability is a particular challenge for small employers and more can be done at local level, for example through encouraging Business Growth Hubs to provide support to SMEs to encourage them to raise their game and invest in their leadership and management capability.

### Insights for employers

#### Prioritise line management development

The survey suggests that good-quality line management lies at the heart of effective progression in the workplace and poor line management holds people back. There is a strong business case for investing in building line management capability that includes higher levels of employee engagement, lower levels of absence and stress and higher staff retention rates. Good line managers spot and nurture talent and can ensure that people feel they can fulfil their potential in the workplace.

#### Flexible working

The survey suggests that flexible working is a key factor for many women, both among those who have progressed as they would like and those who have not. Flexible working is not just important for women or parents, as our ageing working population means that increasingly older workers of both genders will have caring responsibilities and will need to work more flexibly to take account of these.

CIPD evidence (*Flexible Working: Provision and uptake*, 2013) shows that while more than 90% of organisations provide flexible working opportunities for staff, uptake beyond flexi-time and part-time working is quite limited, with many flexible working solutions such as home or remote working mainly restricted to managers or professionals and options such as job-share rarely being offered. Employers should review their approach to flexible working to see if practices do work for both individuals and the business and explore if there is more scope to broaden the uptake where there is demand and where the needs of the business can continue to be met.

#### Training and development

The importance of access to training and development opportunities in the workplace to progression comes through strongly in the survey and is no surprise. It is also in employers' interest to invest in the skills of their workforce as rapid changes to technology mean that how people work is constantly changing, requiring new skills to ensure people can adapt and make the most of new opportunities. Recent CIPD research (*Productivity: Getting the best out of people*, 2015) found statistically robust relationships between relative productivity and training – firms with a track record of investment in their people had higher productivity than their peers and competitors. Employees who are satisfied with their training and career development opportunities are more likely to be engaged and less likely to be looking for a new job, according to findings from the CIPD's quarterly *Employee Outlook* survey report series.

**'The importance of access to training and development opportunities in the workplace to progression comes through strongly in the survey and is no surprise.'**



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