



GOING BEYOND PAY: JOB QUALITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND - RESULTS FROM THE SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT SURVEY 2024

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Executive Summary

The promotion of good quality work is high on the policy agenda across the globe. Good jobs are known to be good for workers and employers. They are associated with lower absenteeism, longer job tenure and increased productivity. The effects of having a bad job can be as detrimental to wellbeing as having no job at all. In the last few years, politicians in Northern Ireland have explored how they might use devolved powers to improve job quality. Creating good jobs has become one of the government's four economic missions and the Northern Ireland Programme for Government contains a key commitment to improve job quality. In pursuit of this mission, the Northern Ireland Government is currently introducing a 'Good Jobs' Employment Rights Bill which is expected to become law by 2027.

In this context, there is a strong need for robust evidence to inform, shape and evaluate policies that seek to make working life better in Northern Ireland. There are a variety of job attributes which have the capability of enhancing or reducing worker well-being. However, data on the quality of people's jobs and their experiences of work is in short supply. This report goes some way to address this evidence gap. It draws on data from the 2024 Skills and Employment Survey which collects detailed information from adults about their experiences of paid work. With the support of a dedicated online survey for Northern Ireland funded by the Department for the Economy, this report presents a picture of the working lives of people in Northern Ireland and how they compare to those living elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Our summary findings are as follows.

Skills and Skills Utilisation

- Just under half of workers in Northern Ireland (48%) reported that they held a degree level qualification. This is less than that observed across the UK (55%) and 10 percentage points lower than that reported by workers in London and its neighbouring regions (58%).
- Based upon several key measures from across the survey, the skill requirements of jobs in Northern Ireland are comparable to those elsewhere in the UK. About six out of ten jobs in Northern Ireland require no training or less than one month of training. Half of workers in Northern Ireland report that it takes less than 6 months

to get to grips with the tasks the job involves. One in five jobs however take over two years to learn to do well.

- Three quarters of workers in Northern Ireland participate in job related training over the course of 12 months – comparable to that undertaken by workers elsewhere. A quarter of those are completely or very satisfied with the training they have done.
- Workers in Northern Ireland are just as likely as workers elsewhere to report that their jobs require them to learn on an on-going basis and that their jobs provide them with the opportunity to use their knowledge, skills and abilities.
- The types of skills used by workers in Northern Ireland are similar to those used elsewhere. One exception is the high-level use of computerised equipment in Northern Ireland (63%) is lower than that reported across the UK (70%).
- Almost two thirds of workers in Northern Ireland (63%) possess qualifications that match the requirements of their jobs. The overqualification rate in Northern Ireland (27%) is lower than that observed across the UK overall (33%) suggesting a better alignment between qualifications held and required.

Terms of Employment

- Workers in Northern Ireland generally regard their jobs as being relatively secure with nine out of ten employees thinking that it is *unlikely* they will become unemployed in the coming year - slightly higher than that observed across the UK.
- Within Northern Ireland, almost two thirds of workers (65%) report that it would be quite difficult or very difficult for them to find a job as good as their current one.
- The risks of quick dismissal because of poor performance are higher in Northern Ireland than elsewhere with 15% reporting that they could be dismissed within a month for persistently not working hard.
- Fears among employees in Northern Ireland regarding unfair dismissal, being discriminated against and being victimised by management are comparable to other parts of the UK. Approximately a fifth of workers in Northern Ireland report being very or fairly anxious about each of these issues.
- A quarter of workers in Northern Ireland (24%) would like to work fewer hours, despite the effect this would have on their pay. Almost one in seven (14%) would like to work longer hours.

Job Design and the Nature of Work

- Workers in Northern Ireland are slightly more likely than those across the UK as a whole to strongly agree that their job requires them to work very hard (43% compared to 37%) and that they work under a great deal of tension (24% compared to 21%). Workers in Northern Ireland are also more likely to report working at high speed - 28% saying all or almost all the time compared to 23% across the UK.
- Workers in Northern Ireland are also marginally more likely to report that their work often or always involves carrying out repetitive work tasks (51% compared to 47% across the UK) and that their jobs have little or no variety (23% compared to 19%).
- Workers in Northern Ireland however report having higher levels of discretion over the tasks that they perform. Discretion can mitigate the effects of high intensity, reducing the levels of strain on workers. As a result, the proportion who are employed in high strain jobs in Northern Ireland (12%) is broadly comparable to that observed across the UK (10%).
- Workers in Northern Ireland report low levels of engagement with advanced technologies in their jobs. Only one in five workers in Northern Ireland (20%) report using information sharing technologies compared to over one in four (27%) across the UK as a whole.

Health, Safety and Psychosocial Well Being

- One in four workers in Northern Ireland regard their health and safety as being at risk because of their work – a figure comparable to the rest of the UK.
- Almost three quarters of workers in Northern Ireland (72%) report that they have worked whilst they were sick during the previous 12 months. On average, they worked eight days whilst unwell, one more than the average for the UK.
- Approximately one in six workers in Northern Ireland reporting having been the victim of abuse during the previous 12 months, with the most common form of abuse being bullying and harassment. These figures are comparable to those elsewhere in the UK.
- Around one in six workers in Northern Ireland report low levels of enthusiasm in their work (16%), conveying that their work has made them feel ‘depressed’, ‘gloomy’ or ‘miserable’. This is slightly higher than that observed across the UK (13%).

- Across all parts of the UK including Northern Ireland, almost three out of ten workers report low levels of contentment with their work, indicating that their work has made them feel 'tense', 'uneasy' or 'worried'.
- Nevertheless, most workers in Northern Ireland perceive their work as meaningful. Two thirds report that their job gave them the feeling of a job well done and a feeling of doing useful work either always or most of the time.

Social Support, Cohesion and Commitment

- Almost nine out of ten employees in Northern Ireland either agree or strongly agree that their boss respects them as a person. Over half report that their boss is helpful to them in a number of ways. These figures are comparable to those observed across the UK.
- Workers in Northern Ireland report lower levels of trust in their colleagues. One in five workers (19%) strongly agreed with the statement that they could trust their colleagues at work, lower than that observed for the UK overall (25%).
- Workers in Northern Ireland report being less able to rely on the help and support of their co-workers. Twenty-eight percent strongly agreed with the statement that they could get help and support from colleagues at work compared to 33% across the UK overall.
- Organisational commitment in Northern Ireland is, however, broadly comparable to or slightly higher than that of the UK as a whole, with eight out of ten workers saying that they are proud to work for their organisation and that they are willing to work hard to help it succeed.
- Twenty-four percent of workers in Northern Ireland perceive themselves as having a definite or high chance of promotion in the next five years, slightly lower than that reported across the UK (28%).

Voice and Representation

- Workers in Northern Ireland consistently report lower degrees of involvement in decision making than those across the UK as a whole, with employees reporting that managers are less likely to organise meetings that provide information about what is happening in the organisation (60% compared to 68%) and that they are

less likely to be part of groups that consider how improvements could be made (22% compared to 25%).

- Lower levels of participation potentially contribute to higher feelings of exclusion from decision-making in Northern Ireland. Over a third of employees in Northern Ireland (34%) report that they have no say in decisions that affect their jobs, a figure higher than that observed across the UK (29%).
- Satisfaction with levels of say at work are however higher in Northern Ireland than they are in the rest of the UK. Forty-one percent of workers in Northern Ireland think that they should have more say in decisions that affect work. Across the UK this figure is 46%.
- Trade unions are relatively important in Northern Ireland, with rates of membership, presence and coverage each being higher than those observed across the UK. Within Northern Ireland, approximately a third of employees (33%) are members of trade unions compared to just under a quarter of employees (23%) across the UK.
- There remains an unmet demand for union representation within Northern Ireland. Almost 4 out of 10 workers (37%) in non-unionised workplaces in Northern Ireland would vote to establish a union if they had the chance. Almost three quarters of workers (74%) in unionised workplaces would vote to retain the union, higher than the 67% observed across the UK overall.
- Over half of employees (51%) in Northern Ireland report that it is very unlikely that they will leave their employers over the next 12 months, significantly higher than that observed elsewhere (38%).

Work-Life Balance

- Four out of ten workers in Northern Ireland report that they can decide the time that they start and finish work, whilst three out of ten indicate that it is not difficult for them to take time off for personal or family matters. These figures are comparable to the rest of the UK.
- Although lower than observed elsewhere, over one in five workers in Northern Ireland report that there is an expectation for them to remain connected to work outside of their normal working hours.

- Almost a fifth of workers in Northern Ireland report that they keep worrying about job problems and find it difficult to unwind after they finish work either much or all the time.
- The most frequently reported form of job stress however relates to feeling used up at the end of the day. Over a third of workers (36%) in Northern Ireland report that they feel used up at the end of the workday for much of the time or more.
- One in five workers in Northern Ireland report that they are hybrid workers whilst approximately one in eight reports that they work exclusively at home. Both of these types of workers have greater autonomy over working hours than those who work outside of the home. These patterns are repeated across the UK.

1 Introduction

1.1 Policy Context

The promotion of good jobs is an idea now high on the agenda of politicians, policy makers and academics. For the last quarter of a century or more, both the ILO and the EU employment strategies have been based on the idea that having a job does not mean that workers' needs are automatically met (ILO, 1999; European Commission, 2001). Support for this position comes from research which suggests that jobs characterised, for example, by high demands, low control over decision-making and high levels of job insecurity can have worse effects on worker well-being than being out of work (Green *et al.*, 2016; Chandola and Zhang, 2017). International interest in how these terms and conditions of jobs vary – summed up in the phrase job quality – has grown even further in the last decade or so. In 2015, for example, the G20 – the international forum of governments and central bankers from the 20 largest countries – committed its members to 'improving job quality along three dimensions, namely promoting the quality of earnings, reducing labour market insecurity, and promoting good working conditions and healthy workplaces' (G20, 2015: 2). Ten years later the commitment to this goal remains on the international agenda with the promotion of high-quality jobs one of the European Commission President's central political missions for the institution over the next five years (Von der Leyen, 2024).

In the UK, job quality has also moved up the agenda. Over the last ten years, it has increasingly appeared in opposition party election manifestos. This began with the Labour Party's 2015 election manifesto which stressed the importance of creating jobs which provide 'better work, better pay and better skills' (Labour Party, 2015: 23). During this period, the Conservative government too shifted some of its focus onto the quality of jobs. For example, Theresa May, a former Conservative Prime Minister, commissioned the Taylor Review with the ambition of making all work in the UK 'fair and decent with realistic scope for development and fulfilment' (Taylor, 2017: 6). Following its publication and acceptance of its recommendations, commitments were made to drive up job quality, but progress was slow. However, with the election of a Labour government in Westminster in 2024 the pace of change has quickened. Most notably, the Employment Rights Bill seeks to tackle elements of bad work, namely low pay, poor working conditions and poor job security. Once implemented, it is claimed

that the Bill will ‘represent the biggest upgrade in employment rights for a generation’ (Department for Business and Trade, 2024: 1).

The devolved governments of the UK have also shown a keen interest in raising the quality of jobs in their areas, with policy initiatives outpacing those taken during the Conservative government’s 14 years in office. In this regard, the Scottish Government has been at the forefront. Back in 2015, for example, it set up the Fair Work Convention as the focal point for the development and promotion of fair work in Scotland and it has become a central part of the Scottish Government’s economic strategy (Scottish Government, 2022). Moreover, its vision is that ‘by 2025, people in Scotland will have a world-leading working life where fair work drives success, wellbeing and prosperity for individuals, businesses, organisations and society’ (Fair Work Convention, 2016: 4).

In Wales, too, interest in job quality has been growing, with a former First Minister announcing in 2017 that he wanted ‘to make Wales a “fair work nation” ... in which more people can have access to good work and a secure income ... [thereby creating] more and better jobs closer to home’ (First Minister’s Speech to the Welsh Labour Conference, Llandudno, 25 March 2017). This led to the establishment of the Fair Work Commission in 2018 and the publication of its report in March 2019. The Commission defined fair work as a situation ‘where workers are fairly rewarded, heard and represented, secure and able to progress in a healthy, inclusive environment where rights are respected’ (Fair Work Commission, 2019: 17). The report was warmly welcomed by, among others, the Wales TUC, the Federation of Small Businesses Wales, ACAS and by Assembly Members. The report also received critical acclaim from labour lawyers and industrial relations scholars – a group not accustomed to giving plaudits. Some referred to it as ‘groundbreaking’ and others suggested that it had wider applicability as a ‘manifesto for all’ (McKay, 2019; Sisson, 2019). The most significant impact of the report was the development and passing of the Social Partnership Act. The Act came into force in 2023. It strengthens the principles of social partnership working and promotes consensual decision-making which involves trade unions, employer representatives and government with the aim of building ‘an economy based on the principles of fair work’ (Welsh Government, 2021: 4).

However, governments in both Scotland and Wales have had limited scope to promote good or fair work in their jurisdictions, since labour law and employment relations are not devolved matters; the UK parliament retains these powers. In Northern Ireland, on the other hand, these are matters over which the Northern Ireland Assembly has control. In the last few years, politicians have started to focus on how they might exercise these powers to raise ‘standards for all workers across Northern Ireland – whether through higher pay, contractual security, better work-life balance, or improved voice, support, security and representation in the workplace’. Creating good jobs has become one of the government’s four economic missions (Department for the Economy Northern Ireland, 2024; 2025b) and the NI Programme for Government contains a key commitment to improve job quality (Northern Ireland Executive, 2025: 19). In pursuit of this mission, the Northern Ireland Government is currently introducing a ‘Good Jobs’ Employment Rights Bill which is expected to become law by 2027. When it is in place, it will be ‘the most significant piece of employment legislation since the Good Friday Agreement’ (Department for the Economy Northern Ireland, 2025a: 30). In many respects, it parallels the UK Government’s Employment Rights Bill which is currently making its way through the UK parliament (CIPD, 2025). Underlying both approaches, is the belief – rooted in evidence – that establishing ‘basic standards for all workers’ will ‘make it more difficult for good employers to be undercut by poor practices’ and that strengthening employee voice at the workplace will boost productivity (Department for the Economy Northern Ireland, 2025c: 2; see Erickson *et al.*, 2024 for the evidence).

1.2 What is Job Quality, and How Can it be Measured?

Job quality has climbed up the agenda. It is now regularly discussed at a variety of levels – internationally, nationally, regionally and locally. Cities and even buildings have sometimes been labelled as fair or good (Heery *et al.*, 2023). It has become a hot topic. But this raises several questions for those whose stated aim is to make working life better. What are the underlying principles of job quality? How are ‘good jobs’ or ‘fair work’ defined? How do we know when jobs are good or work is fair? What new evidence is there and how do geographical areas, even countries, compare?

This lack of clarity is perhaps surprising given that the study of job quality has a long history with indicators suggested by the European Commission through its agency the European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions, the OECD, and the United Nations (Eurofound, 2012; 2025; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2015; OECD, 2017).

Off-the-shelf, short form measures of other concepts such as personality types and levels of affective well-being, however, have been developed, are widely used and have become influential (Gosling *et al.*, 2003; Warr, 1990). The Human Development Index, for example, puts the spotlight on life expectancy at birth, the number of years of schooling and the average standard of living as constituting a summary measure of a country's development capability (Piasna *et al.*, 2017; Sehnbruch *et al.*, 2015). Yet, no universally agreed short form measure of job quality currently exists (Warhurst *et al.*, 2025).

In our view, three principles need to be used to assess the appropriateness of job quality measures (Felstead *et al.*, 2019). The first principle is that job quality is constituted by a set of work features which have the capability of enhancing or diminishing worker well-being. Research evidence suggests that good jobs are also good for employers in that they are associated with increased productivity, lower absenteeism and longer job tenure. For example, greater employee involvement in decision-making has been shown to deliver bottom line benefits to business (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2000; Felstead *et al.*, 2020a).

The second principle is that job quality needs to focus on the attributes of the job occupied by the worker and not the worker's personal circumstances and/or background. The distinction here is between the subjective and objective dimensions of job quality. The subjective approach is based on the idea that what is important is the 'utility' a worker derives from his or her job. This depends on two factors: the objective features of the job, such as the pay, the hours and the type of work, but also on each worker's preferences. What one worker feels about a job may differ from the feelings of another. What workers consider 'good', therefore, varies according to demographic differences such as gender, ethnicity, region and age. For example, research has shown that women are more satisfied with their jobs than men, lowly

paid workers are just as satisfied with their jobs as those who are highly paid, and job satisfaction falls and then rises with age (Clark, 1997; Brown *et al.*, 2007; Clark *et al.*, 1996).

The third principle is that there are a variety of job attributes which have the capability of enhancing or reducing worker well-being. The most straightforward and easiest attribute to measure is pay. By adopting such an approach pay becomes the defining feature of job quality – ‘the be-all and end-all’ (Osterman, 2013; Muñoz de Bustillo *et al.*, 2011). Yet, if job quality is a set of features which impact worker well-being, then focusing on pay alone is at odds with this principle. After all, it cannot be assumed that wages and other terms and conditions move synchronously up and down in step with one another. For example, it is quite possible for a worker to be given a pay rise, while at the same time the pace of work is quickening. Higher pay may not be sufficient to cancel out the downward pressure on well-being triggered by worsening non-pay conditions.

Other features of jobs are therefore important. The way work is organised, for example, influences how well jobs enable workers to use their capabilities. This includes the role workers play in conceiving of the tasks to be done, what level of discretion they can exercise in carrying them out, and what range of tasks their jobs involve (Braverman, 1974; Fox, 1974; Thompson and Smith, 2010). Similarly, more recent interest has focused on the security of work, the quality of training offered, the levels of work effort, the opportunities workers have to put their qualifications and skills to good use, and the ability they have to combine work and family life (Gallie *et al.*, 2017a; Green *et al.*, 2016; Felstead and Green, 2013; 2017; Gregory, 2016). Interest in job quality extends beyond economists and sociologists and includes others, such as work psychologists. They have focused their enquiries on the interplay between the level of control exercised over aspects of work and the intensity of the work process, with the suggestion that jobs which demand high effort levels but allow job-holders limited control are more likely to be stressful (Karasek, 1979).

Lack of data often mean that a single data source can rarely provide a complete picture of job quality. There are, for example, blind spots in the www.howgoodismyjob quiz developed as a short form version of the Skills and Employment Survey (Felstead *et*

al., 2019; Davies and Felstead, 2023). It does not ask about threats to health and safety at work such as those posed by exposure to chemicals and hazardous substances or the physical rigours of the job such as the need to move heavy loads, carry out repetitive physical activities and/or work in painful or tiring positions. Similarly, it does not directly collect data on the skill level of jobs but collects proxy data instead. Quiz takers are asked: ‘What is your job title? Please use words which describe your job, e.g., account manager, office cleaner, web technician and delivery driver’. On typing in their response, a pull-down list of similar sounding job titles appears with quiz takers selecting the most appropriate. This information is used to allocate quiz takers to 1-digit occupational groups which are grouped according to their skill level.

It is recognised that no existing set of indicators is perfect, but a set of indicators is needed. In 2024, the Department for the Economy Northern Ireland adopted the Carnegie framework as its set of indicators (Irvine *et al.*, 2018). In the main, the framework adheres to the three principles outlined above, but like other sets of indicators it does not cover all bases. For example, work intensity does not feature in the set of indicators, despite evidence suggesting that jobs which demand high effort levels but allow job-holders limited control produce stress at work (Karasek, 1979; Green *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, the claim that ‘understanding how satisfied someone is in work is a good starting point for measuring “good work”’ (HM Government, 2018: 22) is debatable (Geary and Wilson, 2023; Wilson, 2024). In recognition of some of these issues, job satisfaction was not included in the Carnegie framework and was dropped as a valid measure of job quality in Northern Ireland in March 2025. It is now reported as a contextual factor (NISRA, 2025a). In this Report, we therefore use the broad dimensions proposed by Carnegie but in-fill with additional data where relevant.

The Northern Ireland Executive has published a series of reports on work quality using this framework. These consist of both headline reports and more detailed reports of features of job quality such as skills mismatch, line manager support and harassment at work (see NISRA, 2025b). They all draw on official data collected from the Labour Force Survey or the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. Many of these high-level questions were introduced in 2020 and therefore provide useful insights into the

pattern of change over time (NISRA, 2025a). Furthermore, these insights are taken from surveys which have large sample sizes and therefore produce robust estimates.

However, as Table 1.1 shows, most of the indicators are based on answers given in response to a single question. For example, involvement in decision-making is measured by the proportion of employees who say that managers are good or very good 'at involving employees and their representatives in decision making'. Whereas we ask questions about four ways in which individuals can exercise decision-making on the job as well as four ways in which workers can exercise influence over organisational decisions. Similarly, in the Carnegie framework, skills matching is measured by one question, namely the proportion who say that 'my present skills correspond with my duties'. The Skills and Employment Survey, on the other hand, asks questions which allow us to compare the level of qualification held by workers and what is required to get the job they currently hold and the degree to which these qualifications are really needed to do the job. In addition, the survey asks respondents to report if they have enough opportunity to use their skills at work and how much of these skills they can use. To take another example, the Northern Ireland indicator of line manager support is based on the proportion of workers who agree or strongly agree with the statement that 'I am supported well in my job by my immediate boss'. The Skills and Employment Survey data, on the other hand, provides a more detailed picture of line manager support. Data are collected on how helpful line managers are in developing their staff, supporting them when working under pressure, recognising the ability of individual workers and respecting those they manage.

The added value of this Report, and the survey on which it is based, is that multiple questions are often asked on the same theme. Our evidence is therefore rich in terms of its breadth of coverage. In addition, the survey collects data on themes which are not part of the Carnegie framework. For example, the extent to which workers are expected to remain in contact outside of working hours, the likelihood of them leaving their jobs and even the labour market altogether, and the use of AI in the workplace. Also, unlike other reports on job quality in Northern Ireland (e.g., Zemanik, 2024) we examine both patterns within Northern Ireland as well as making comparisons between Northern Ireland, the UK as a whole, London, the East and the South East of England, and the rest of the UK.

Table 1:1: Carnegie Dimensions of Job Quality: Northern Ireland Measures

Dimensions	Measures	Single Question
<i>1. Pay and Benefits</i>		
• Pay	Proportion of employees earning at least the Real Living Wage	X
<i>2. Terms of Employment</i>		
• Job security	Employees in a permanent job or in a temporary job who did not want a permanent job	X
• Non zero-hours	Persons in employment who are not on a zero-hours contract	√
<i>3. Health, Safety and Psychological Well-Being</i>		
• No accidents at work	Persons in employment who have not reported having an accident resulting in injury at work or in the course of their work in the last twelve months	√
• Never bullied or harassed	Employees who reported not being bullied or harassed in the workplace in the last 12 months	√
<i>4. Job Design and Nature of Work</i>		
• Neither under nor over skilled	Employees who reported having the required skills for their current duties	√
• Participation in training	Employees who have taken part in any education or any training connected with their job or a job that they might be able to do in the future, in the last 13 weeks	√
• Career progression	Employees who agree or strongly agree that their job offers good opportunities for career progression	√
• Meaningful work	Employees who agree or strongly agree that they perform meaningful work in their job	√
<i>5. Social Support and Cohesion</i>		
• Line manager support	Employees who agree or strongly agree that they are supported by their immediate boss	√
<i>6. Voice and Representation</i>		
• Trade union membership	Persons in employment who reported being a member of a trade union or staff association	√

• Involvement in decision-making	Employees who report that managers are good or very good at involving employees and their representatives in decision making	√
7. Work-Life Balance		
• Neither under nor over employed	Persons in employment who would like to work more hours, either by working in an additional job, by working more hours in their current job, or by switching to a replacement job	X
• Overtime (paid and unpaid)	Persons in employment who have reported doing any work regarded as paid or unpaid overtime	X
• Flexible work	Employees who have a flexible agreed working arrangement of either: flexitime, annualised hours contract, term time working or job sharing; or part-time and not underemployed; or primarily working at home	X
Contextual Factor		
• Job satisfaction	Employees who report that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their job	√

Source: compiled from NISRA, 2025a and 2025c.

1.3 Structure of the Report

The Report is structured broadly around the Carnegie framework's job quality dimensions as adopted by the Department for the Economy Northern Ireland. However, we do not present our survey data on pay and benefits since official sources of data collect more information on this dimension of job quality and produce more robust estimates (NISRA, 2025d; NISRA, 2025e). For this reason, we have titled this Report 'Going Beyond Pay: Job Quality in Northern Ireland – Results from the Skills and Employment Survey 2024'. Given its title it is not surprising that the Skills and Employment Survey has something to say about both skills and job quality. We therefore include an additional chapter devoted to the topic of skills to reflect the breadth and depth of information that the Skills and Employment Survey provides on that topic. Furthermore, skills are often regarded as a key feature of job quality. The data chapters are organised around the following seven non-pay dimensions of job quality:

- Skills and skills utilisation

- Terms of employment
- Health, safety and psychological well-being
- Job design and nature of work
- Social support, cohesion and commitment
- Voice and representation
- Work-life balance

However, before presenting the results of the survey, the next chapter outlines the source of this new data, the history of the survey and the methods of data collection used.

2 Background to the Skills and Employment Survey 2024

2.1 History

The Skills and Employment Survey 2024 is a survey of workers in the UK. It is the eighth in a series of nationally representative sample surveys of individuals in employment aged 20-65 years old. The survey has, until recently, been conducted face-to-face with respondents in their own homes. The number surveyed has varied according to the success of the fundraising campaign; 4,047 took part in the 1986 survey; 3,855 in 1992; 2,467 in 1997; 4,470 in 2001; 7,787 in 2006; 3,200 in 2012; 3,306 in 2017; and 2,824 in 2024. Only in 2006 was the face-to-face survey extended to Northern Ireland, when funding was provided by the Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (Felstead and Green, 2008).

Each survey collects detailed information about the jobs respondents hold. This includes: the skills they use; whether they feel that their jobs are valuable to society or completely meaningless; what level of autonomy they can exercise at work; whether they have flexible hours; what training they are given; how the job makes them feel; and where they work. Interviews last an hour. Each survey consists of around 300 categorical variables which record various aspects of working life. Similar methods have been used at each survey point and many of the questions have remained the same. We can therefore make like-for-like comparisons. This allows us to paint a picture of how the world of work has changed over time and for whom it may have changed for the better as well as identifying those who may have lost out.

The way the survey has been collected has changed over time, reflecting changing technology. In 1986 and 1992, for example, interviewers used pen and paper to record respondents' answers, but from 1997, interviewers have been equipped with laptops on which to record what respondents say. A further change was made in 2024, when we decided to carry out an online version of the survey in parallel with the face-to-face survey.

The content has also changed, albeit slightly. At each survey point, we retire some survey questions to make way for new questions which reflect topical debates. In

2024, for example, we introduced new questions on: working at home; the meaningfulness of work; artificial intelligence and the impact of technology at work; and attitudes towards trade unions.

2.2 Data Collection in 2024

The Skills and Employment Survey 2024 consists of three different ways of collecting data from working adults aged 20-65 years old about their experiences of paid work.

- The first is a face-to-face survey of those working in Britain. The sample was drawn using random probability principles stratified by a selection of socio-economic indicators. Two eligible respondents per address were randomly selected for interview, 32% of those selected were interviewed and most interviews took place in 2024.
- The second is an online survey of eligible respondents living and working in Britain who agreed to join a panel of respondents recruited from previous NatCen surveys.
- The third is a fresh push-to-web sample of eligible workers living in Northern Ireland, supplemented by a smaller number of panellists who resided in Northern Ireland and were eligible to take part. Up to two eligible respondents per household were invited to take part in both the British and Northern Irish online surveys. Both online surveys were carried out in two parts to reduce cognitive burden. All online interviews were completed in the last quarter of 2023 (see Butt *et al.*, 2025a for more detail). Taken together the two online surveys provide a picture of the world of work across the UK.

2.3 Focus of this Report

For the purposes of this Report, we focus on the online data only since the mode of data collection is likely to affect the estimates produced. Many of these differences cannot be explained by differences in sample composition (Butt *et al.*, 2025b). We therefore draw only on the online component of the 2024 survey for this Report. A total of 1,892 full online interviews were carried out in Britain (with 2,029 respondents completing the first part of the questionnaire but not the second), and 753 full online interviews in Northern Ireland (with 927 finishing part one but not part two of the survey). For consistency across questions, the analyses presented in this report

focuses on those respondents who completed full online interviews. Survey weights have been computed which correct for differential probabilities of sample selection, the over-sampling of certain areas and response rate variations between groups (such as sex, age, occupation and qualification level). All the analyses that follow use these weights to ensure they are representative of the wider population.

The 'skills' and 'quality' content of jobs are not readily measurable concepts, since the concepts themselves have several dimensions and measurement instruments. This report therefore provides evidence on the various dimensions of these concepts and the ways in which they have been measured in the Skills and Employment Survey series. Despite this multiple-measures approach, the findings presented here tend to reinforce one another and therefore give validity to the overarching messages that emerge.

In all the chapters, we broadly analyse the data in two stages. Firstly, we present the overall distribution of responses to the survey questions being examined. Results for Northern Ireland are set alongside those for London, the East of England and the South East (referred to by the acronym LESE), the Rest of the United Kingdom and the United Kingdom as a whole. We distinguish London and its two neighbouring regions due to the employment conditions that are particular to these three most prosperous regions of the United Kingdom (MacKay and Davies, 2011). This allows us to place the results for Northern Ireland within a comparative context in a manner that is not confounded by the unique circumstances surrounding London and its two major commuting regions. This geographical breakdown also reflects a pragmatic choice in terms of the sample sizes that are available across Great Britain, with around 700 full online interviews carried out in the LESE region.

Our analyses then examine how issues vary across socio-economic categories such as gender, age, highest qualification, occupation, industry and sector. Again, due to sample size, we restrict our breakdown categories to large (sometimes consolidated) groups such as men and women, public and private sectors, as well as grouping categories such as 1-digit occupations and broad SIC sections. This provides for a robust evidence base and prevents the publication of data which is unintentionally disclosive in nature. For ease of exposition, the presentation of results in the report

focuses on those socio-categories where interesting differences or patterns emerge, either between different groups of workers or where results derived for Northern Ireland differ compared to those derived for the United Kingdom overall. A fuller set of tabular results is contained in a set of accompanying Excel workbooks.

3 Skills and Skills Utilisation

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the job skills held by workers in Northern Ireland. Job skills refer to the abilities that workers need to carry out their jobs. The most common way to measure the skills available in the labour market is to profile the qualifications held by individuals. However, such data does not consider what skills workers actually use in their jobs and whether workers are able to find jobs that make effective use of their skills. To address this, in addition to qualifications held, the Skills and Employment Survey captures information on both 'broad skills' and 'generic skills' (Green, 2013; Felstead *et al.*, 2017; Davies *et al.*, 2025). Broad skills are measured according to a series of job requirements needed before entry, on entry and during the early days in a job. This approach recognises that skills are acquired in different ways. Generic skills refer to skills that are used across a wide range of occupations and industrial situations and are measured using a range of ongoing activities that form part of the job.

The chapter also explores the acquisition of skills at work, examining both the incidence, duration and quality of training received by workers, and the degree to which they learn on the job. The skills that workers possess, however, may not always be in alignment with employer demand. This may be reflected in skill shortages which can arise where employers find it difficult to fill their vacancies with appropriately skilled applicants or where there are skills lacking among the existing workforce (IFF Research, 2024). Skills mismatch can also occur when workers are unable to find jobs that make effective use of their qualifications and skills. The latter results in over-qualification and under-utilisation of skills, an issue which has been demonstrated to have detrimental effects on worker wellbeing (Felstead and Green, 2013). The chapter therefore ends by examining the extent to which workers are overqualified and whether they have the opportunity to use their skills.

3.2 Qualifications Held

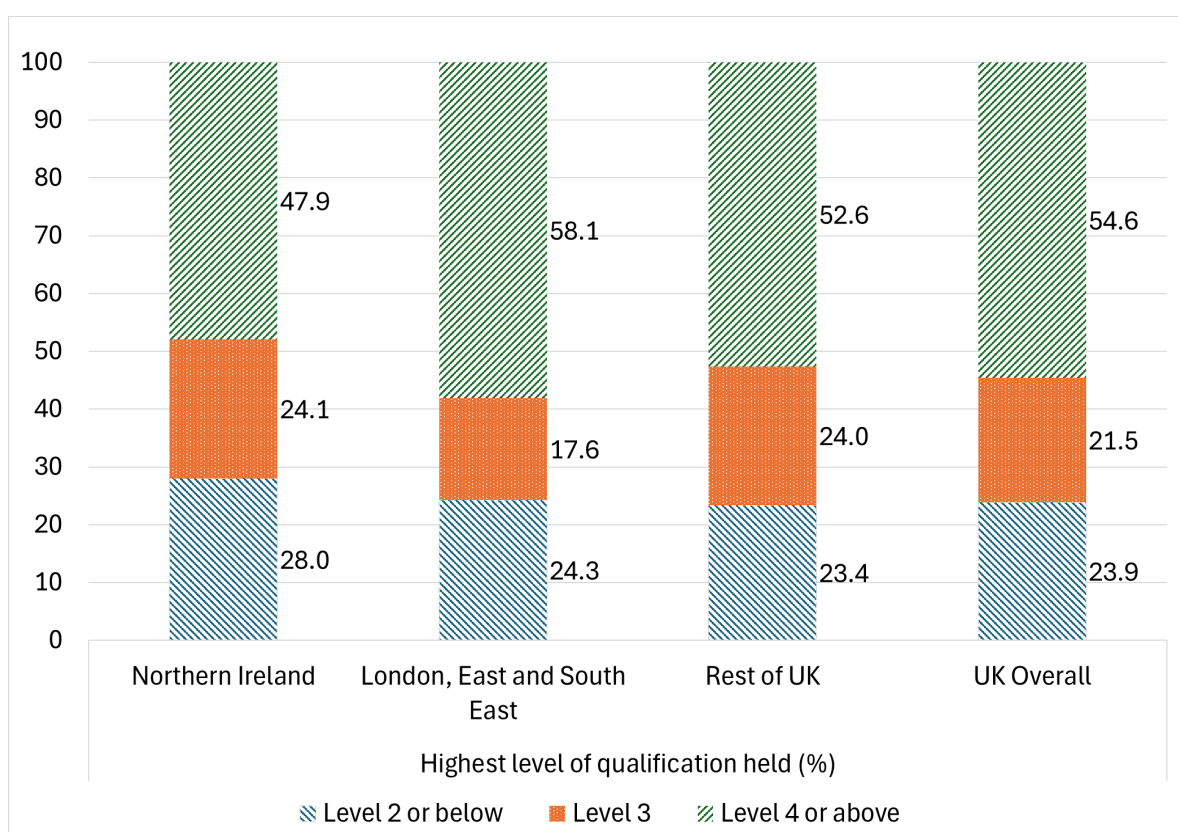
As with many other surveys of individuals, SES asks respondents which qualifications they have. Respondents are invited to identify the qualifications they hold from a list of 26 categories. Since the inception of the SES series in 1986, these detailed qualification categories have been mapped to five qualification levels (none, Level 1, 2, 3, 4+). These education levels can be regarded as representing groups of qualifications that are of a similar level¹. Whilst these levels reflect the qualification frameworks that have been developed in England and the devolved nations over time, these groups do not align precisely with NVQ and NQF equivalents.

In terms of the qualifications held, Figure 3.1 reveals that workers in Northern Ireland report holding lower levels of qualifications compared to workers elsewhere. In Northern Ireland, just under half (48%) of workers hold a qualification at Level 4 or above (equivalent to an undergraduate degree or above). This compares to 55% across the UK as a whole and 58% among those living within London, the East and the South East of England. The SES also asked respondents whether they specifically held a degree at undergraduate or postgraduate level (not presented). Among workers in Northern Ireland, fewer than four out of ten (38%) report they have a degree. This is compared to 45% across the UK as a whole and over half (51%) in London, the East and the South East of England.

Table 3.1 examines the qualifications held by different groups of workers in Northern Ireland compared to their counterparts across the rest of the United Kingdom, focussing upon the proportion of workers who possess a qualification at Level 4 or above (i.e. equivalent to a degree or above). The analysis reveals that the relatively low levels of qualifications held by workers in Northern Ireland is observed consistently across different groups of workers and workplace types. It is, however, particularly apparent among younger workers and men. Among younger workers, only 47% of 20-34 year olds report having a qualification at Level 4 or above. This is compared to 59% across the UK as a whole.

¹ Our qualification levels actually pre-date NVQ and NQF type frameworks. Details of these qualification levels are provided in Annex 1.

Figure 3-1: Qualifications Held



Level 1: GCSE Grade D-G, NVQ 1; Level 2: GCSE Grade A-C, NVQ 2; GCE 'A' Level, NVQ 3; Level 4: Undergraduate Degree, NVQ 4; Level 5: Masters PhD.

In terms of gender, among male workers in Northern Ireland, only 45% report that they possess a qualification at Level 4 or above compared to 56% across the UK as a whole. Relatedly, levels of educational attainment in Northern Ireland are relatively low among those who report their type of job is mainly done by men. Only 37% of workers among this group report that they possess a qualification at Level 4 or above. This is much lower than those in Northern Ireland who hold jobs that are done equally by men and women (53%). This is also lower than the qualifications held by those who work in male dominated roles across the UK. as a whole

Table 3:1: Qualifications Held by Selected Characteristics

Level 4 Qualification or Higher (%)	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	44.5	64.9	51.3	56.1
Female	51.5	51.4	54.2	53.0
Age				
20-34 years	46.6	62.6	57.8	59.2
35-49 years	52.5	58.2	56.9	57.3
50+ years	42.5	50.9	40.1	44.1
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	42.3	53.4	46.6	48.7
No limiting ill-health/disability	49.0	58.9	54.1	55.8
Sector				
Private	45.8	55.6	49.2	51.6
Public	53.3	58.8	59.7	59.1
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	49.7	62.5	55.1	57.7
Part-time	41.3	43.8	43.5	43.6
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	37.1	61.9	47.7	51.8
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	52.9	61.6	53.4	56.9
Mainly by women	49.5	48.7	57.3	53.7
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	42.4	49.7	47.1	48.0
26-100 workers	49.4	49.6	54.9	53.0
100+ workers	53.0	71.6	56.0	62.1
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	77.7	75.4	72.7	73.9
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	30.0	38.6	33.6	35.4
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	16.3	27.0	23.0	24.1
All	47.9	58.1	52.6	54.6

Entry to occupations is often dependent on a certain level of educational attainment. We would therefore expect differences in educational attainment to be narrower when comparing the qualifications held by those within particular occupational groups. Still,

within Northern Ireland we can see that the proportion of workers educated to Level 4 or above among those employed in Administrative, Trades and Services occupations (30% with qualifications at Levels 4 or above) and those employed in Sales, Operative and Elementary roles (16%) are lower than those observed across the UK as a whole (35% and 24%, respectively). However, those employed in Managerial and Professional roles in Northern Ireland exhibit levels of educational attainment (78%) that are slightly higher than those employed in similar roles across the UK (74%). These are occupations where the attainment of Level 4 qualifications is arguably more likely to be commensurate with the roles being undertaken.

3.3 Broad Skills

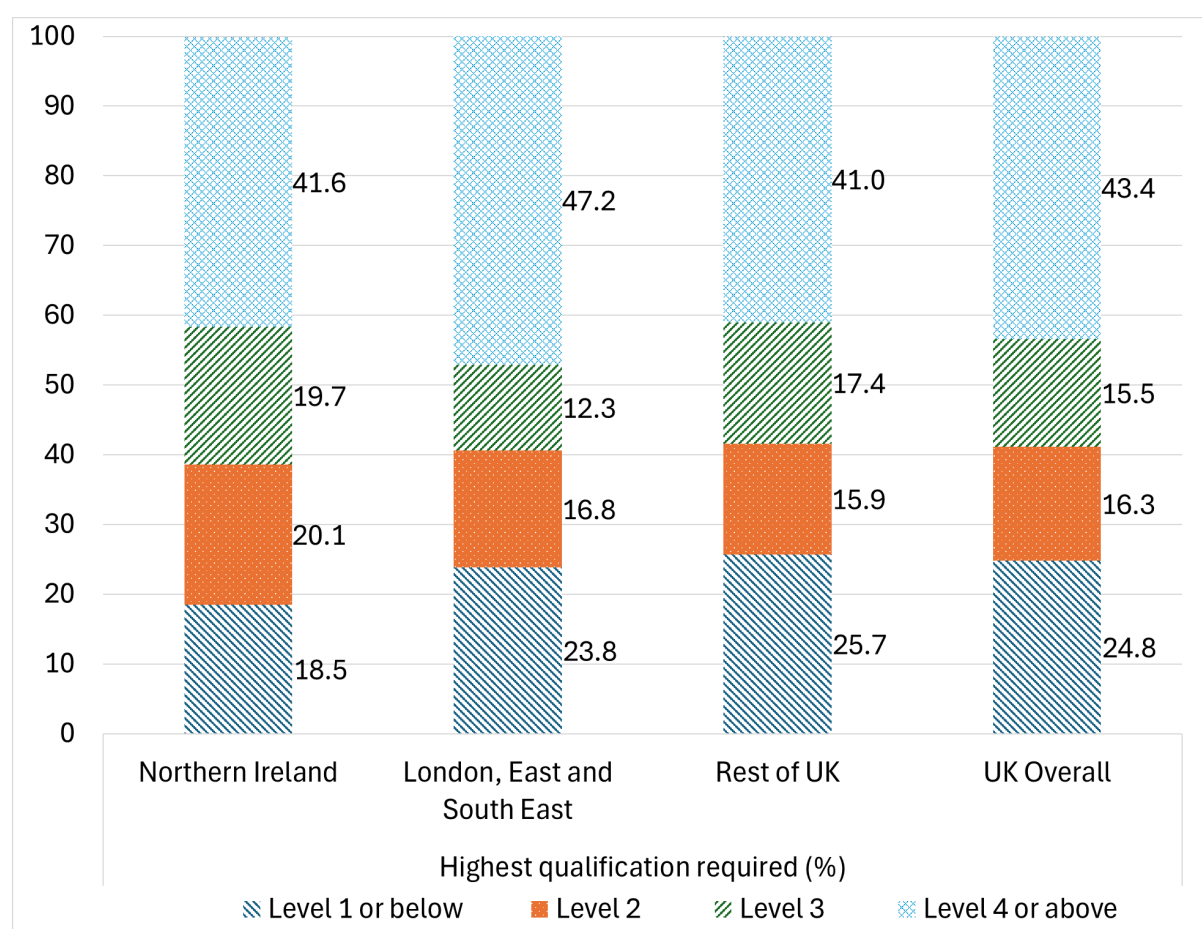
In addition to qualifications held by the jobholder, the SES contains three separate measures of the broad skills required by the job. We measure broad skills according to a series of job requirements needed prior to becoming a fully integrated member of the workforce. Firstly, respondents to the survey are asked to judge what qualifications would be required to get their current job in today's labour market. Specifically, they are asked if they were applying today 'what qualifications, if any, would someone need to get the type of job you have now?'. The same qualification level mapping used for qualifications held (see Annex 1) can be applied to qualifications required. After considering overall levels of qualification requirements, we focus on the proportion of workers who report that they would need at least a graduate level qualification if they were applying for their type of job today. Many skills are gained in the days, weeks and months that follow entry to a job. The SES therefore asks respondents to report on the training and learning requirements of their jobs. Regarding learning, respondents were asked: 'How long did it take for you after you first started doing this type of job to learn to do it well?' If they answered 'still learning', they were asked: 'How long do you think it will take?' In terms of training, respondents were asked whether they undertook any training for the type of work that they did and, if so, how long it lasted.

3.3.1 Qualification Requirements

Approximately four out of ten workers in Northern Ireland (42%) report that they would require qualifications at a graduate level or above if they were to apply for their type of

job today (Figure 3.2). This figure is comparable to that observed across the UK as a whole (43%), although less than that observed among workers in London, the East and the South East of England (47%). The SES also identifies whether a degree at undergraduate or postgraduate level would be required of current applicants (not presented). Almost a third (32%) of workers in Northern Ireland specifically report a degree at undergraduate or postgraduate level would be required for them to get their current job. This compares to 39% of workers in London, the East and the South East of England, but is again similar to that exhibited across the UK as a whole (33%).

Figure 3-2: Qualification Requirements



Level 1: GCSE Grade D-G, NVQ 1; Level 2: GCSE Grade A-C, NVQ 2; GCE 'A' Level, NVQ 3; Level 4: Undergraduate Degree, NVQ 4; Level 5: Masters PhD.

Qualification requirements vary greatly across different types of jobs. Table 3.2 examines the proportion of workers who report that a Level 4 qualification or above would be required if they were to apply for their job today. Compared to the overall figure of 42%, within Northern Ireland qualification requirements at Level 4 or above

are particularly low among part time workers (27%) compared to full time workers (46%). Less than a third of workers in Northern Ireland who are in jobs mainly done by men report that they would require a graduate level or above qualification. Similarly, less than a third of workers employed in workplaces with 25 workers or fewer report they would require such a qualification. These figures are similar to those observed elsewhere in the UK.

Table 3:2: Qualification Requirements by Selected Characteristics

Level 4 Qualification or Higher (%)	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Sector				
Private	38.6	43.6	38.1	40.3
Public	48.9	51.4	48.3	49.4
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	45.5	51.8	45.2	47.7
Part-time	27.3	32.2	25.6	28.3
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	32.4	48.8	35.4	39.4
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	47.3	50.0	44.4	46.9
Mainly by women	40.7	40.9	42.2	41.7
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	32.3	36.0	32.7	34.0
26-100 workers	43.7	38.0	46.7	43.6
100+ workers	48.9	63.8	43.8	51.8
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	33.7	52.7	39.4	42.5
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	17.4	13.9	13.7	13.9
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	59.3	66.6	60.3	62.9
Administration and Defence (N-O)	43.5	46.4	37.6	41.3
Education and Health (P-S)	50.1	54.2	48.2	50.6
All	41.6	47.2	41.0	43.4

Large variations in qualification requirements are observed by sector. Within the Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation sectors, only 17% of workers in Northern Ireland report that a Level 4 or above qualification would be required. This compares to 59% of those employed in ICT, Finance and Real Estate. Industries that

are dominated by employment in the public sector, such as Education and Health, also exhibit relatively high levels of qualification requirements. Overall, 49% of those employed in the public sector in Northern Ireland report that they would require a Level 4 or above qualification compared to 39% of those employed in the private sector. Again, these figures are similar to those observed elsewhere in the UK.

3.3.2 Training and Learning Requirements

Figures 3.3 and 3.4 show the training and learning time requirements for jobs in Northern Ireland compared to elsewhere. Most jobs across UK regions require no training or less than one month of training (Figure 3.3). Almost half of workers in Northern Ireland (45%) report their jobs have no specific training requirement. At the other extreme, approximately one in seven (14%) workers report that the length of training time for their work was greater than two years. Across the UK, the distribution of learning time is evenly spread across time band categories (Figure 3.4). Almost half of employees in Northern Ireland report that they learned to do their jobs well within a period of six months. Around one in five (21%) report that it takes two years or longer for them to learn how to do their jobs well.

Figure 3-3: Training Time Requirement

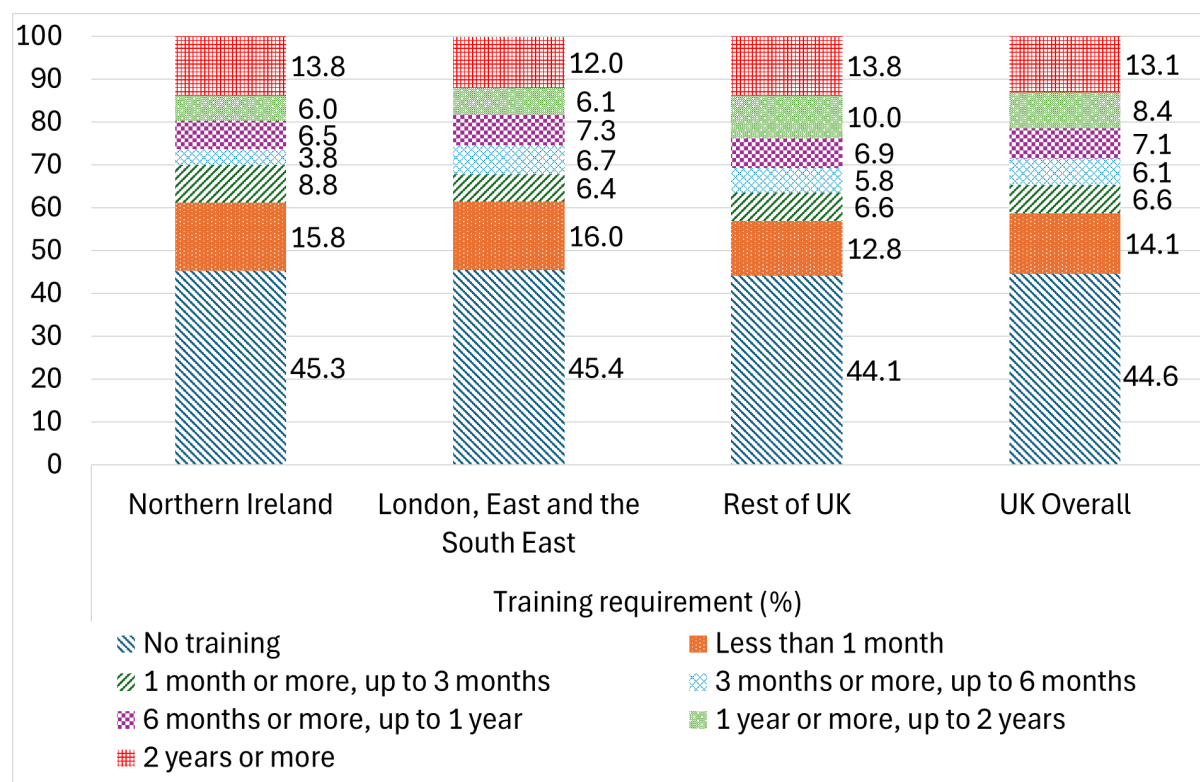
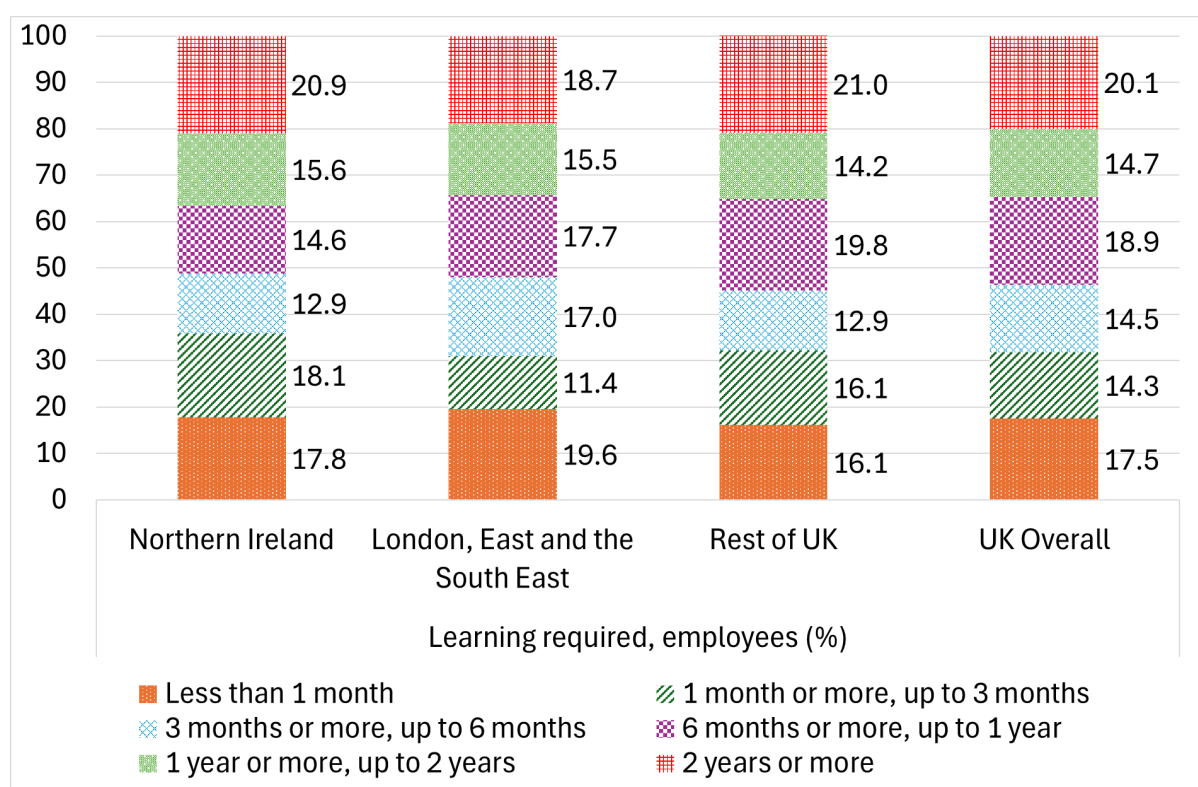


Figure 3-4: Learning Time Requirement



While formal qualification requirements upon entry to employment appear to be lower in Northern Ireland compared to London, the East and the South East of England, the acquisition of skills following entry to employment appears similar. Both in terms of training time requirements (Table 3.3) and learning time requirements (Table 3.4), workers who have higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to report that the training requirements and learning requirements of their jobs exceed two years. Those employed in higher skilled occupations that are generally associated with higher levels of educational attainment are also likely to report higher levels of training and learning requirements.

The data however also reveal that time spent training and learning on the job may also be a substitute for formal qualification requirements. Whilst male workers have lower levels of educational attainment, they report both higher levels of training time and learning time than female workers. Likewise, levels of training and learning time are lower among those employed in gender diverse roles compared to those in jobs that are more gendered – whether they be jobs mainly done by men or mainly done by women. These patterns are observed both in Northern Ireland and across the UK.

Table 3:3: High Level Training Requirements by Selected Characteristics

Training exceeds 2 years (%)	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	15.0	12.4	16.4	14.9
Female	12.5	11.6	10.9	11.2
Sector				
Private	10.6	10.0	12.7	11.6
Public	17.8	14.5	16.1	15.5
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	14.6	12.7	15.1	14.2
Part-time	10.7	9.6	9.1	9.4
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	16.9	12.6	15.2	14.4
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	10.5	11.7	11.4	11.5
Mainly by women	16.1	12.0	16.0	14.5
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	13.5	13.2	19.3	17.6
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	10.6	8.7	5.8	7.1
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	10.2	13.1	15.6	14.5
Administration and Defence (N-O)	8.8	4.2	7.9	6.3
Education and Health (P-S)	21.1	17.4	17.3	17.5
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	17.8	16.5	18.0	17.4
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	17.8	8.2	12.1	10.8
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	0.4	2.8	4.5	3.8
Highest level of qualification held				
Level 2 or below	4.7	1.4	5.8	4.0
Level 3	14.4	9.2	9.9	9.8
Level 4 or above	18.6	17.5	19.1	18.4
All	13.8	12.0	13.8	13.1

Table 3:4: High Level Learning Requirements by Selected Characteristics

Learning exceeds 2 years (%)	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	24.9	25.2	23.7	24.3
Female	16.6	12.9	18.0	15.9
Sector				
Private	15.9	15.5	18.6	17.3
Public	28.1	26.5	26.1	26.3
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	23.6	20.9	22.8	22.1
Part-time	11.0	11.5	13.0	12.3
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	28.6	26.1	25.6	25.8
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	18.1	13.3	18.3	16.2
Mainly by women	19.0	23.7	20.5	21.7
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	27.0	22.9	23.6	23.5
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	11.4	7.2	10.0	8.9
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	19.0	18.2	25.9	22.5
Administration and Defence (N-O)	21.5	16.1	17.9	17.2
Education and Health (P-S)	26.8	27.6	23.6	25.2
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	31.8	26.3	29.5	28.3
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	16.5	10.0	15.7	13.6
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	7.0	6.8	5.3	5.8
Highest level of qualification held				
Level 2 or below	10.4	8.6	10.0	9.5
Level 3	17.5	10.5	20.0	16.8
Level 4 or above	29.0	26.3	26.4	26.4
All	20.9	18.7	21.0	20.1

The importance of acquisition of skills through time spent training and learning on the job is also apparent in differences that emerge between sectors. Those employed in ICT, Finance and Real Estate report that the educational requirements of their jobs are relatively high. However, the proportion within these sectors who report high levels of training time are comparable to those in Manufacturing, Construction and Utilities

sectors and the Wholesale, Transport, Storage and Accommodation sectors where educational requirements are lower. Those employed in the Manufacturing, Construction and Utilities sectors in Northern Ireland are most likely to report that it takes over two years for them to learn how to do their jobs well (27%). Those employed in the Education and Health sectors also report relatively high levels of training time (21%) and learning time (27%). This contributes to the relatively high levels of training time and learning time observed among workers in the public sector (18% and 28% respectively) compared to those reported among those in the private sector (11% and 16% respectively).

3.4 Training

We next examine job related training. The SES captures information about training by asking workers whether they have participated in specific training related activities over the previous 12 months, including off and on the job training, evening classes and self-taught courses. Training incidence is calculated as the proportion of respondents who said that they had taken part in any of these activities (Green *et al.*, 2016). SES respondents were also asked for the number of days on which these activities took place, allowing the duration of training to be derived. We focus on ‘long training’, defined as any training that took place over ten days or more during the previous year.

Table 3.5 reveals that over three quarters of workers in Northern Ireland (76%) undertook training over the previous 12 months, a figure comparable with that observed elsewhere in the UK (78%). In terms of personal characteristics, the largest variations in the incidence of training between different groups of workers are witnessed with respect to levels of educational attainment. In Northern Ireland, six out of ten workers who possess Level 2 qualifications report having had training during the previous 12 months. This increases to 87% among those with qualifications at Level 4 and above. Relatedly, participation in training is also higher among those in occupations that are associated with higher levels of educational attainment. In Northern Ireland, six out of ten workers (59%) employed in Sales, Operative and Elementary roles had undertaken job related training during the previous 12 months. This increases to 85% among those in Managerial and Professional positions.

Table 3:5: Job Related Training by Selected Characteristics

Undertook training in last 12 months (%)	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	77.9	73.7	78.9	77.0
Female	73.9	81.6	76.8	78.6
Sector (Employees Only)				
Private	75.7	75.1	78.0	76.8
Public	81.6	85.8	83.6	84.3
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	77.3	79.3	80.3	79.8
Part-time	71.2	72.9	69.1	70.7
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	71.8	76.9	71.3	73.0
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	77.3	73.7	77.8	76.0
Mainly by women	77.6	86.0	85.8	85.6
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	68.0	71.7	68.2	69.6
26-100 workers	75.2	72.8	78.7	76.6
100+ workers	82.6	87.4	85.8	86.3
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	69.3	83.9	75.6	77.5
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	63.6	64.9	68.1	66.6
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	82.3	84.2	77.1	80.2
Administration and Defence (N-O)	79.7	74.7	74.0	74.4
Education and Health (P-S)	82.5	81.4	86.3	84.2
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	84.8	84.0	84.8	84.5
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	75.6	78.3	75.3	76.4
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	58.9	58.5	63.2	61.5
Highest level of qualification held				
Level 2 or below	59.0	69.3	67.7	68.0
Level 3	74.9	79.5	72.7	74.9
Level 4 or above	86.9	82.1	84.9	83.8
All	76.0	77.7	77.9	77.8

In terms of workplace characteristics, the proportion of workers undertaking training in Northern Ireland increases steadily with respect to workplace size. In Northern Ireland, seven out of ten workers (68%) employed at establishments with 25 workers or fewer report having had training during the previous 12 months. This increases to 83% among those employed at workplaces with over 100 workers. Again, this is a pattern observed across the UK. In terms of differences by industry, the incidence of training is lowest among those working in the Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation sectors (64%) and is highest among those employed in the Education and Health sectors (83%). Once again, sectoral differences in Northern Ireland resemble those observed across the UK as a whole.

In terms of participation in long training, Table 3.6 reveals that workers in Northern Ireland are less likely to have participated in training that lasts over 10 days in duration (45%) compared to workers elsewhere (50% overall). The largest variations in the incidence of long training between different groups of workers are again witnessed with respect to levels of educational attainment and occupation. For example, the incidence of long training among those employed in Managerial and Professional occupations in Northern Ireland (56%) is almost twice that observed among those employed in Sales, Operative and Elementary roles (29%). These rates are similar to those observed across the UK as a whole.

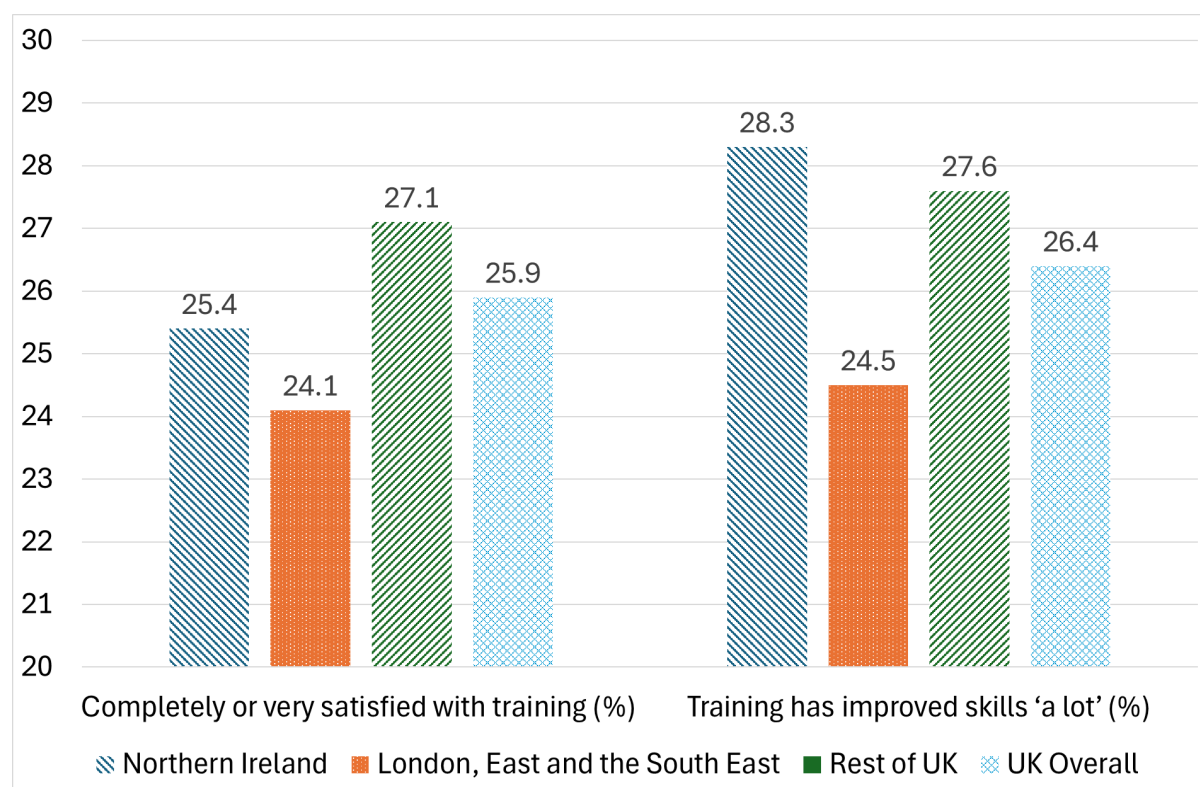
Participation in long training is also relatively low in Northern Ireland within the Manufacturing, Construction and Utilities sectors where just over a third of workers (37%) are estimated to have participated in at least ten days of training compared to almost half (49%) across the UK as a whole. Likewise, within the Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation sectors, only three out of ten workers report having participated in long training compared to 42% across the UK as a whole. These differences however could be an artefact of differences in the occupational composition of employment within workplaces in Northern Ireland.

Table 3:6: Job Related Long Training by Selected Characteristics

Undertook over 10 days of training in last 12 months (%)	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Sector				
Private	44.4	46.6	49.8	48.4
Public	52.6	57.4	55.4	56.0
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	46.4	51.8	54.5	53.3
Part-time	41.0	40.4	35.5	37.7
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	38.3	52.5	48.6	49.5
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	50.4	47.3	51.5	49.7
Mainly by women	43.2	49.7	51.0	50.2
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	35.3	40.0	43.5	41.9
26-100 workers	40.7	45.9	46.9	46.4
100+ workers	56.6	60.1	60.1	60.0
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	36.6	49.8	49.0	48.8
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	30.0	42.0	43.1	42.2
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	60.3	64.4	53.7	58.2
Administration and Defence (N-O)	48.1	34.5	48.2	42.5
Education and Health (P-S)	51.0	49.3	56.1	53.3
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	55.7	57.5	58.3	57.9
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	42.4	42.1	43.8	43.1
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	28.9	32.3	38.1	35.8
Highest level of qualification held				
Level 2 or below	32.2	31.5	34.1	33.0
Level 3	43.7	49.8	41.6	44.2
Level 4 or above	54.1	56.9	61.6	59.5
All	45.2	49.0	50.5	49.8

Finally, Figure 3.5 reveals that approximately a quarter of workers across the UK reported that they were completely or very satisfied with the training they had received. Approximately three out of ten workers also report that their skills increased a lot as a result of the training that they had received. Both satisfaction with training and perceptions of its impact appear lower in London, the East and the South East.

Figure 3-5: Satisfaction and Impact of Training



3.5 Learning at Work

Learning at work can take many forms which go beyond traditional training events and activities. This includes activities such as watching, listening and learning from others which are undertaken on an ongoing basis while at work (Felstead *et al.*, 2005 and 2015). To gauge this form of learning, SES respondents were asked whether their job required them to learn new things. Figure 3.6 reveals that in Northern Ireland, approximately a third (34%) of workers strongly agreed that their job required them to learn on an ongoing basis. This figure is slightly higher than that observed across the UK (29%), although overall levels of agreement with this statement in Northern Ireland (81%) are similar to that of the UK. A third of workers in Northern Ireland (33%) also strongly agreed that they were required to help others acquire new skills.

Figure 3-6: Learning at Work

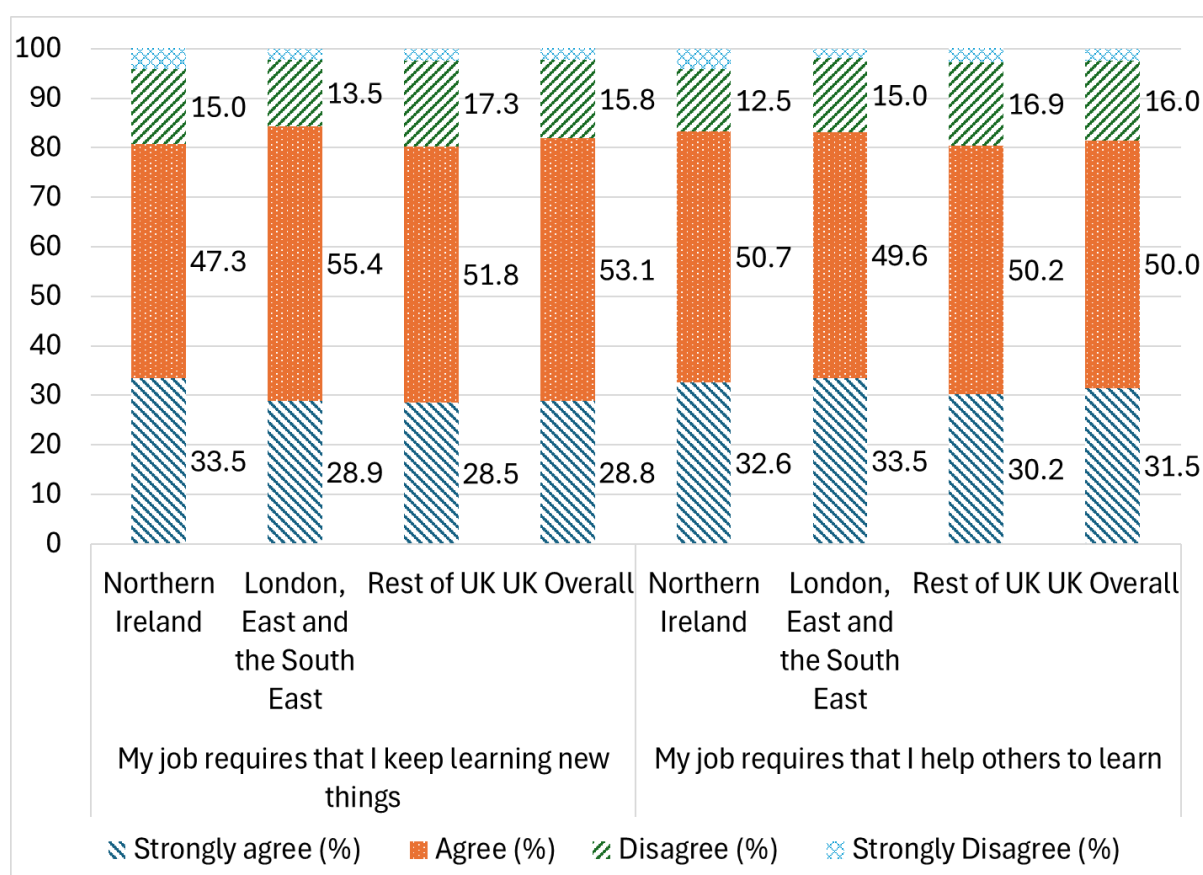


Table 3.7 reveals that both learning at work and supporting others to learn are more frequently reported among workers who are employed in higher level occupations such as Managerial and Professional roles. Those employed in Managerial and Professional positions in Northern Ireland are more likely to report that they learn skills through working in team, are more likely to report that their jobs require them to learn new things and are more likely to report that they are required to help others to learn. Although not large, these rates are consistently higher than those employed in Managerial and Professional positions in other parts of the UK. Entry to such occupations is often related to prior levels of educational attainment. As such, we also observe that learning at work and supporting others to learn is more frequently reported among workers with higher levels of educational attainment. These patterns are observed among workers across all parts of the UK. However, in each case, rates of learning at work and supporting others to learn are higher among those with qualifications at Level 4 in Northern Ireland than elsewhere.

Table 3:7: Learning at Work by Occupation and Educational Attainment

% Strongly Agree	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
<i>I am able to learn new skills through working with team</i>				
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	22.3	15.1	19.4	17.8
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	19.3	22.6	18.8	20.2
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	11.2	7.2	15.4	12.5
Highest level of qualification held				
Level 4 or above	22.3	18.2	21.8	20.4
Level 3	18.1	10.5	14.1	13.1
Level 2 or below	14.5	14.7	15.2	15.0
All	19.5	15.7	18.4	17.4
<i>My job requires that I keep learning new things</i>				
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	45.6	37.6	37.4	37.6
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	31.4	22.9	20.6	21.8
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	11.1	9.5	14.6	12.8
Highest level of qualification held				
Level 4 or above	41.9	36.6	37.7	37.3
Level 3	23.7	19.6	20.7	20.5
Level 2 or below	26.5	18.6	16.1	17.4
All	33.5	28.9	28.5	28.8
<i>My job requires that I help others to learn</i>				
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	44.3	40.2	35.5	37.6
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	28.6	30.6	28.8	29.5
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	13.5	13.6	17.8	16.3
Highest level of qualification held				
Level 4 or above	39.1	37.9	36.5	37.1
Level 3	23.0	39.9	22.4	27.8
Level 2 or below	28.3	20.1	24.3	22.8
All	32.6	33.5	30.2	31.5

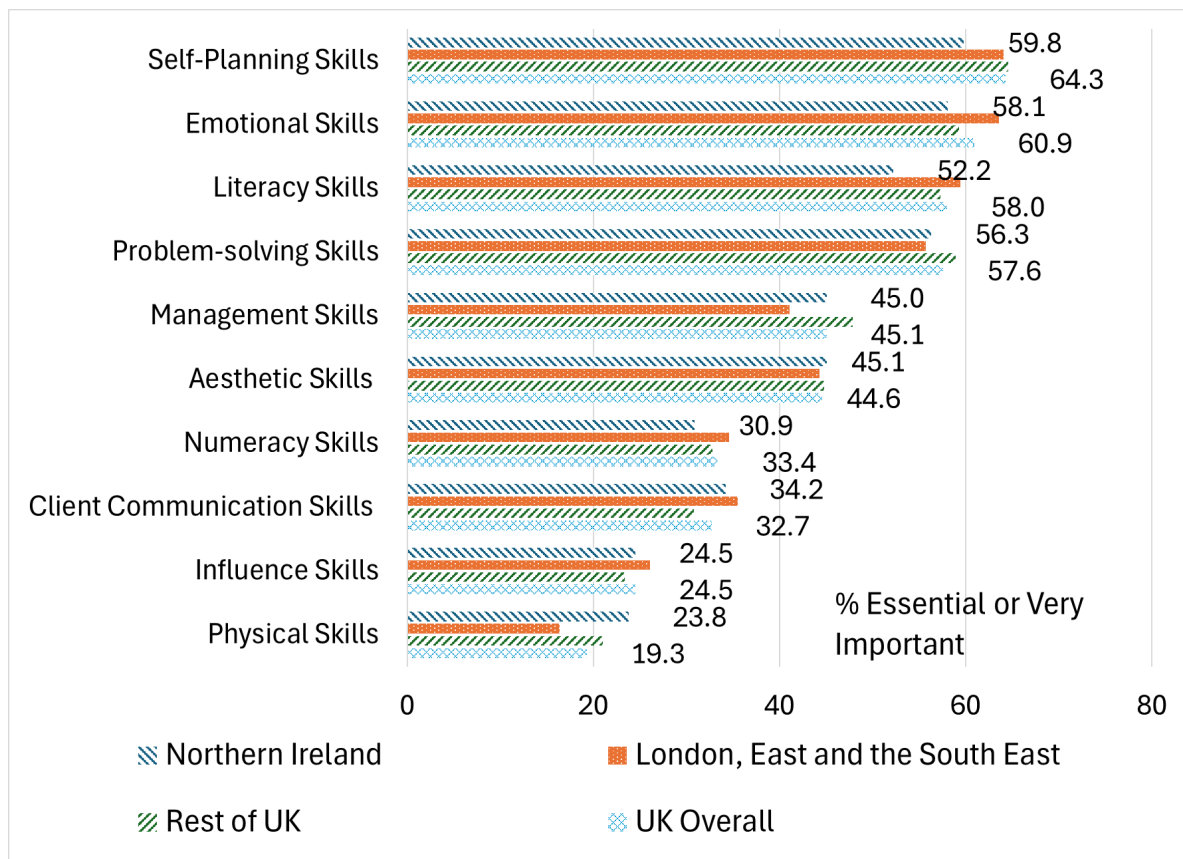
3.6 Generic Skills

In this section, we examine the cross-cutting skills demands of jobs, which are often referred to as ‘generic skills’. Generic skills refer to those skills that are used across a wide range of occupations and industrial situations, in contrast to occupation-specific or firm-specific skills that are needed in particular jobs. In the SES, these data are derived from respondents’ self-assessment of the importance of a series of over 40 activities, encompassing a variety of manual, cognitive and social skills that are conducted as part of their job. These activities can be grouped into specific sets of generic skills, such as numeracy, literacy and management skills. We define the high-level use of generic skills as those skills regarded by workers as being either ‘essential’ or ‘very important in their jobs’.

Figure 3.7 reveals that the skills most frequently reported by workers in Northern Ireland as being either ‘essential’ or ‘very important’ in their jobs include self-planning skills (60%), emotional skills (58%), problem solving skills (56%) and literacy skills (52%). Literacy skills have represented a strong area of growth across the UK in recent years, with more workers being employed in roles where the writing of short reports, letters or emails are regarded as essential or very important in their jobs (Davies *et al* 2025). The often-touted demand for jobs that requires management skills takes up an intermediate position with 45% regarding this skill as being ‘very important’ or ‘essential’.

At the other end of the spectrum, only around a quarter of workers in Northern Ireland regard physical skills (24%) and influencing skills (25%) as being either ‘essential’ or ‘very important’. The relatively low position of client communication skills is also interesting. These skills cover dealing with people, selling a product or service, counselling, advising, or caring for customers or clients or having knowledge of particular products or services. Across the UK, these skills have exhibited a downward trend in recent years (Davies *et al* 2025), indicating their potential vulnerability to the increased use of the internet by businesses and consumers and AI based innovations such as Chatbots. Overall, the pattern of generic skills used by workers in Northern Ireland is very similar to that observed across the UK.

Figure 3-7: High Level Generic Skills



3.7 Computing Skills

While computing skills also have generic qualities, in this chapter we analyse them separately given their presumed importance in the 21st century. The Skills and Employment Surveys have long standing questions measuring the use of digital technologies at work. Since 1997, respondents have reported the importance of using a computer and other types of computerised equipment in their jobs, with responses ranging from essential to not at all important. The increasing importance attached by workers to the use of computer skills has arguably been one of the strongest trends mapped by the SES series. This trend shows no sign of abating, with the proportion of workers across Great Britain who regard these skills as either essential or very important increasing by approximately a fifth between 2017 (49%) and 2024 (58%) (Henseke *et al.*, 2018; Davies *et al.*, 2025). Other skills are also affected by this, with literacy skills also gaining importance as more workers regard the writing of short reports, letters, or emails as essential or very important, increasing from 57% to 66% between 2017 and 2024.

Table 3.8 reveals that 63% of workers in Northern Ireland report that the use of computerised equipment in their job is 'essential' or 'very important'. This is approximately seven percentage points lower than that reported across the UK as a whole (70%). The lower levels of importance associated with computer use in Northern Ireland are more apparent among men (62% compared to 70% across the UK overall); younger workers (55% among 20 to 34 year olds in Northern Ireland compared to 71% overall); among those whose jobs are mainly done by men (45% compared to 63%) and those who work within the Wholesale, Transport, Storage and Accommodation sectors (38% compared to 48%).

Table 3:8: High Level Computing Skills

% Essential or Very Important	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	61.5	73.5	67.7	69.7
Female	64.7	69.7	69.1	69.2
Age				
20-34 years	55.4	76.0	68.1	70.5
35-49 years	70.9	70.9	69.2	69.9
50+ years	61.1	66.3	67.6	67.0
Sector				
Private	62.9	71.5	66.0	68.1
Public	67.7	74.0	78.1	76.2
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	45.2	65.5	61.9	62.6
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	73.0	73.7	75.7	74.8
Mainly by women	63.2	72.3	64.4	67.5
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	53.7	68.4	55.1	58.4
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	38.1	45.2	50.7	48.0
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	96.1	94.1	95.4	94.9
Administration and Defence (N-O)	78.1	82.3	74.7	78.1
Education and Health (P-S)	62.7	68.8	67.6	67.9
All	63.1	71.6	68.4	69.5

A follow-up question captured information about the complexity of computer use, ranging from straightforward (printing out an invoice) to advanced (using syntax, programming). In Northern Ireland, Table 3.9 reveals that 26% of workers regard their use of computers as being either advanced or complex. This figure is very similar to that observed across the UK overall (28%). Within Northern Ireland, levels of high-level computer use are relatively low among those aged 20 to 34 years old (24% compared to 30% across the UK overall); those whose jobs are mainly done by men (23% compared to 35%) and those who work within the Manufacturing, Construction and Utilities sectors (23% compared to 29%).

Table 3.9: High Level Computer Use by Selected Characteristics

% Advanced or Complex	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	31.1	34.5	33.4	33.8
Female	20.8	18.8	25.4	22.6
Age				
20-34 years	24.3	26.9	32.6	30.4
35-49 years	31.5	27.7	27.8	27.9
50+ years	20.4	21.1	28.2	25.4
Sector				
Private	28.5	28.1	32.1	30.5
Public	25.2	24.5	24.0	24.2
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	22.9	44.2	31.5	35.1
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	32.9	26.1	33.7	30.4
Mainly by women	19.0	13.2	20.9	17.8
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	23.1	31.2	28.1	28.7
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	10.7	10.9	18.7	15.2
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	48.3	50.5	52.9	51.8
Administration and Defence (N-O)	35.3	35.3	32.0	33.5
Education and Health (P-S)	22.9	15.8	22.5	19.9
All	26.2	26.5	29.6	28.3

3.8 Qualifications and Skills Mismatch

The SES collects information on both the qualifications held by job holders and those currently required for their job. With this information, it is therefore possible to estimate the proportion of workers who have qualifications either above the level currently required of new recruits (overqualified), beneath the level currently required (the underqualified) or those whose qualifications match the requirements of new recruits. Across the UK, evidence from the time series of SES data suggests that the rate of over-qualification increased between 1986 and 2006 with this increase accelerating around the turn of the millennium reaching a high in 2006, since when it has exhibited a small but steady decline, such that by 2024 around a third of workers report that they were over-qualified (Davies *et al.*, 2025). Figure 3.8 reveals that across the UK, six out of ten workers possess the qualifications that match the requirements of their jobs. A third are however over-qualified. Within Northern Ireland, the rate of over-qualification in 2024 (27%) is six percentage points lower than that observed across the UK overall (33%). This is offset in part by an increased, albeit relatively small, proportion of workers who are under-qualified for their jobs (ten per cent compared to seven per cent across the UK overall).

Figure 3-8: Qualifications Mismatch



Table 3.10 examines how the rate of over-qualification varies by selected personal and job-related characteristics. Men in Northern Ireland are less likely to be over-qualified than their female counterparts, such that the rate of over qualification among males in Northern Ireland (20%) is some 13 percentage points lower than that observed among men the UK overall (33%). Relatedly, rates of over-qualification are also lower in Northern Ireland among those who are in jobs that are predominantly done by men (21%). The over-qualification rate in Northern Ireland is comparable or lower than that observed for the UK overall across a variety of sectors. The clear exception to this is among those employed within the Administration and Defence sectors where almost half of workers (48%) report that they possess qualifications at levels higher than those currently required of new recruits to those roles. Finally, across the UK, rates of over-qualification are higher among those employed in occupations that are associated with lower levels of educational attainment. However, it is noticeable that the rate of over-qualification among those employed in Sales, Operative and Elementary occupations in Northern Ireland (40%) is considerably lower than that observed for the UK overall (58%).

To further examine issues surrounding the under-utilisation of skills, we next explore the responses to questions regarding whether respondents were able to use their skills at work effectively. Table 3.11 reveals that almost four out of ten workers (39%) in Northern Ireland strongly agree with the statement that they have enough opportunity to use their knowledge and skills. A further half agrees with this statement. A third of workers in Northern Ireland (32%) also report that they are able to use almost all of their past experience, skills, or abilities in their jobs, a figure very similar to that observed across the UK overall (33%). However, just under a third (32%) of workers in Northern Ireland also report that they only use a little or very little their past experience, skills, or abilities in their jobs; a figure around six percentage points higher than that observed across the UK (26%). Lower levels of over-qualification in Northern Ireland do not appear to translate into an increased propensity for workers to say that they have more opportunity to use their knowledge, skills and abilities in their jobs. This suggests that qualification matching and the ability to use skills at work are incommensurate measures, instead they shed light on the same issue.

Table 3:10: Over-qualification by Selected Characteristics

%	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	19.5	31.9	34.2	32.9
Female	34.0	31.1	33.8	32.8
Age				
20-34 years	27.8	36.2	40.0	38.3
35-49 years	26.2	29.4	29.0	29.1
50+ years	25.0	30.5	33.0	31.9
Sector				
Private	28.8	34.3	35.4	34.8
Public	19.9	28.3	28.8	28.3
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	21.3	33.7	33.5	33.2
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	27.2	31.3	31.5	31.3
Mainly by women	29.6	30.2	38.7	35.1
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	19.7	21.6	27.9	26.1
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	37.2	58.7	53.8	55.4
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	17.2	18.1	20.8	19.6
Administration and Defence (N-O)	48.2	37.3	35.8	36.8
Education and Health (P-S)	18.7	24.9	32.5	29.1
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	14.0	19.5	22.1	20.9
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	34.7	42.8	39.9	40.8
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	39.6	58.8	59.1	58.4
All	26.5	31.5	34.0	32.8

Table 3:11: Opportunities to Use Skills and Abilities.

Column %	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Agree/disagree: I have enough opportunity to use my knowledge/skills				
Strongly agree	38.9	38.9	39.3	39.1
Agree	50.0	50.3	47.5	48.7
Disagree	8.9	7.8	10.8	9.6
Strongly disagree	2.2	3.1	2.3	2.6
How much past experience/skill/abilities can you use in your job?				
Very little	8.5	5.2	5.4	5.4
A little	23.4	19.6	21.4	20.8
Quite a lot	35.8	43.4	40.3	41.4
Almost all?	32.2	31.8	33.0	32.5

4 Terms of Employment

4.1 Introduction

Concern about losing employment with an organisation is the most widely discussed aspect of fear in the workplace (Burchell, 1999; De Witte, 1999). As well as having detrimental effects on health, job security has also been demonstrated to be important in terms of supporting motivation at the workplace. However, it must also be acknowledged that job security may also have adverse effects on productivity if those in work felt that their jobs were so secure that they were immune from the consequences of poor performance. Fear at work can also take many other forms, including anxieties about unfair treatment at work or loss of job status (Gallie *et al.*, 2017a; Felstead *et al.*, 2018; 2020b).

The Skills and Employment Survey provides a wider perspective on insecurity than relying on the type of employment contract as the single measure. We first consider the issue of job insecurity and which workers feel they may be made unemployed over the next 12 months. We then explore the cost of job loss by considering how easy workers feel that they would be able to get a new job as good as their existing one. We also examine the prevalence of quick dismissal for poor performance. Given their importance to living standards and the maintenance of household income, we then explore issues related to underemployment and unpredictable hours. The final two sections present data on other anxieties and worries held by workers. These questions provide a combined measure of events occurring and the anxieties they might prompt. As a result, it captures subjective feelings that vary from person to person based on personality and/or personal circumstances.

4.2 Likelihood of Job Loss

The SES includes a battery of questions that ask respondents to provide an assessment of their job security. Respondents were first asked: 'Do you think there is any chance at all of you losing your job and becoming unemployed in the next twelve months?' Those who indicated that there was at least some chance of them losing their jobs in the year ahead were asked to rate the chances that this would happen. Figure 4.1 firstly distinguishes between those workers reporting that they felt that there

was no chance or that it would be unlikely for them to be unemployed in the next 12 months as opposed to those workers who rated their chances of unemployment as evens or higher. Across the United Kingdom overall, the proportion of workers who rated the chances of them becoming unemployed as being ‘evens or higher’ was 13% in 2024. Workers in Northern Ireland appear to exhibit slightly lower perceptions of job insecurity, with one in ten (ten per cent) of workers regarding their likelihood of job loss over the next 12 months as being ‘evens or higher’.

Figure 4-1: Likelihood of Job Loss

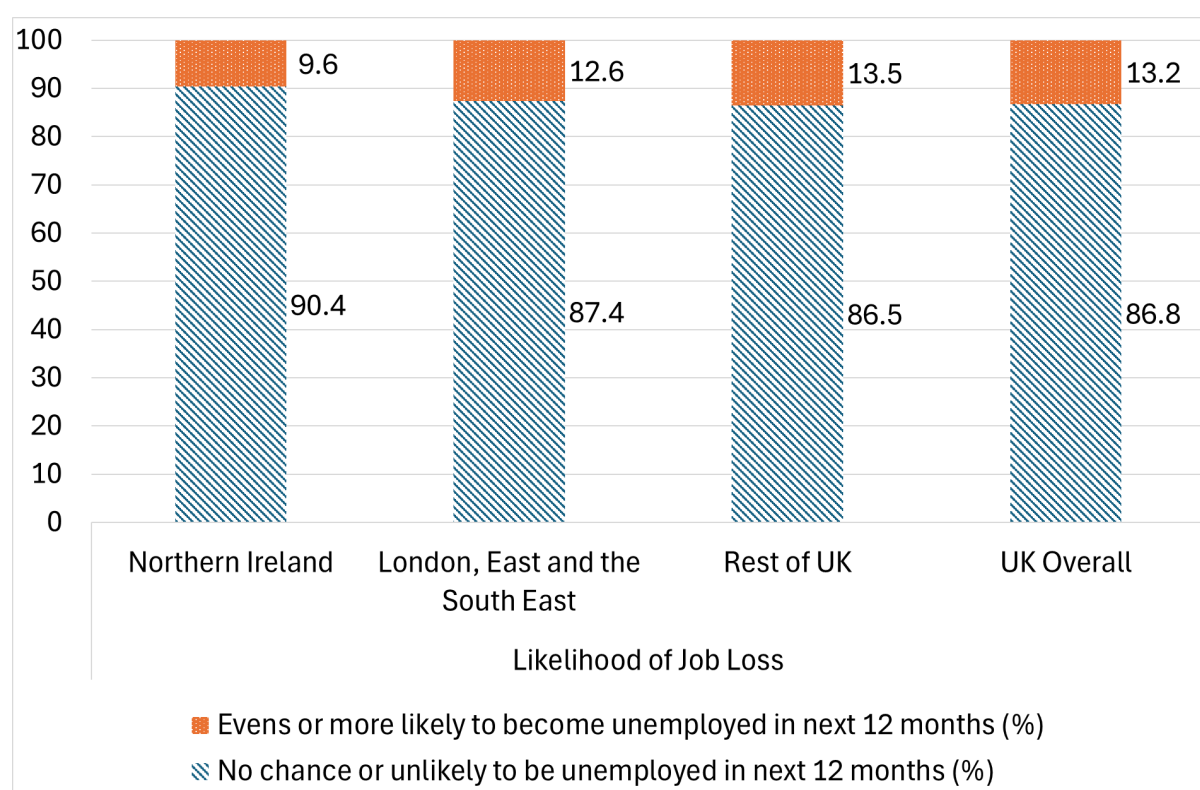


Table 4.1 reveals that, as elsewhere, the likelihood of job loss in Northern Ireland is perceived to be higher among men compared to women. Women in Northern Ireland exhibit particularly low levels of job insecurity, with only four per cent perceiving that the chances of them becoming unemployed in the next 12 months are evens or higher. Job insecurity in Northern Ireland is perceived to be higher among older workers, with 13% of those over the age of 50 regarding their chances of losing their jobs over the next 12 months as evens or higher. Nonetheless, this figure is much lower than that observed across the UK as a whole where almost one in five workers aged over 50 (19%) report that there is at least an evens chance of them losing their jobs over the

next 12 months. Another common theme that emerges across the UK are the increased levels of job insecurity reported by those who perceive themselves as having poorer health. This issue is particularly prevalent in Northern Ireland where almost four out of ten workers (39%) who perceive their health as being fair report that there is an 'evens or higher' chance of them becoming unemployed in the next 12 months, almost twice the rate observed across the UK as a whole (21%).

Table 4:1: Likelihood of Job Loss by Selected Characteristics

% Evens or Higher	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	14.0	14.6	14.7	14.6
Female	4.4	10.7	12.3	11.6
Age				
20-34 years	6.0	10.3	9.4	9.7
35-49 years	10.0	10.9	13.2	12.2
50+ years	12.8	18.9	19.2	19.0
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	7.6	3.5	8.6	6.5
Very good	3.7	11.1	12.7	12.0
Good	11.4	15.6	13.3	14.3
Fair	39.2	21.8	20.5	21.0
Sector				
Private	12.7	14.9	14.0	14.3
Public	6.3	7.2	11.9	10.1
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	9.2	13.5	12.7	13.0
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	11.8	8.7	13.3	11.5
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	8.7	15.1	16.3	15.8
All	9.6	12.6	13.5	13.2

Turning to the jobs that people do, the likelihood of job loss in Northern Ireland is perceived to be higher among those employed in the private sector compared to those in the public sector. Public sector workers in Northern Ireland exhibit particularly low levels of job insecurity, with only six per cent perceiving that the chances of becoming unemployed in the next 12 months is evens or higher. This is half the rate observed

among private sector workers in Northern Ireland and lower than the figure of ten per cent observed among public sector workers across the UK as a whole. Within Northern Ireland, those in relatively low-skilled occupations perceive the likelihood of job loss as being relatively low compared to the UK overall.

4.3 Cost of Job Loss

Respondents to the SES were also asked to provide an assessment of how easy or difficult they felt it would be to find a job as good as their current one. We refer to responses to this question as an indication of the cost of job loss. Figure 4.2 presents information on responses to this question. Perceptions regarding the cost of job loss are relatively similar across the UK with most respondents indicating that it would be challenging to find a job as good as their current one. Within Northern Ireland, almost two thirds of workers (65%) report that it would be quite difficult or very difficult for them to find a job as good as their current one. This is marginally higher than the figure observed across the UK as a whole (62%).

Figure 4-2: Cost of Job Loss



There is relatively little systematic variation with respect to perceptions of the cost of job loss across different groups of workers. Table 4.2 shows how the proportion of workers who report that it would be ‘quite difficult’ or ‘very difficult’ to find a job as good as their current one varies by sector, industry and occupation. It can be seen that outside of London, the East and the South East of England, workers in the public sector report higher costs of job loss. The higher costs of job loss among public sector workers are particularly apparent in Northern Ireland, where almost three quarters of workers in the public sector (74%) report that it would be difficult for them to find a job as good as their current one. This finding is also apparent when focusing on those industrial sectors where public sector employment is concentrated. Employment in the Education and Health sectors in Northern Ireland is particularly associated with a high cost of job loss, more so than in other parts of the UK. In terms of occupations held, across all parts of the UK the cost of job loss is reported to be lower among those in lower skilled occupations.

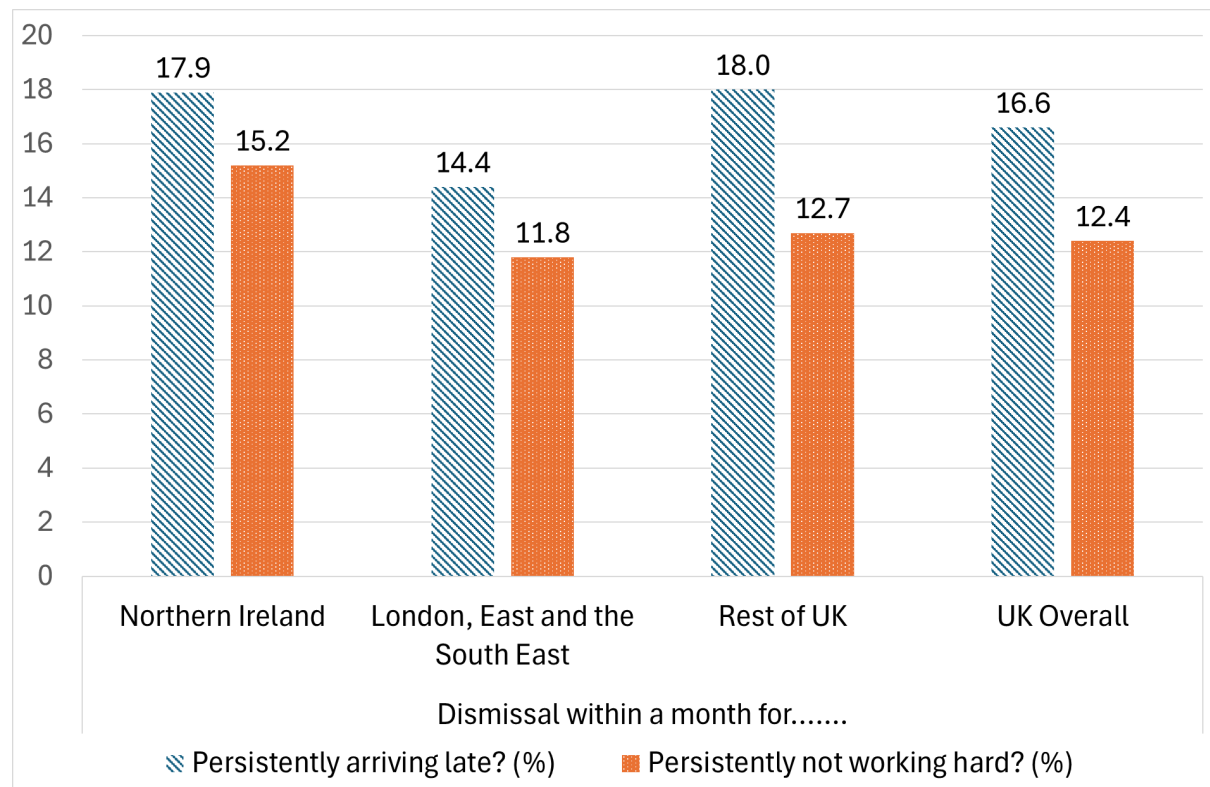
Table 4.2: Cost of Job Loss by Selected Characteristics

% Quite or Very Difficult	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Sector				
Private	58.1	62.4	58.3	59.9
Public	73.9	59.0	68.8	65.3
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	67.5	61.2	67.5	65.9
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	54.4	62.7	56.3	58.9
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	58.5	53.6	58.4	56.4
Administration and Defence (N-O)	71.1	74.8	75.3	75.0
Education and Health (P-S)	71.4	60.6	57.6	59.2
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	67.4	65.3	63.2	64.1
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	64.9	62.0	63.4	62.9
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	58.1	49.1	57.1	54.4
All	64.9	61.8	62.0	62.0

4.4 Dismissal for Poor Performance

Whilst job security can be to the benefit both employees and employers by creating an environment where motivation and acquisition of skills is supported, job security may also have adverse effects on productivity at the workplace if those in work felt that their jobs were so secure that they do not need to perform. The SES includes two questions asking respondents how long it would take somebody within their organisation *and* doing their kind of jobs to be dismissed because of persistently arriving late at work and for persistently not working hard enough. Figure 4.3 reveals that the time it would take to be dismissed for not working hard is perceived by workers to be shorter in Northern Ireland than in other parts of the UK. Around 15% of workers in Northern Ireland indicate that people in their organisation could be dismissed within less than a month due to not working hard, compared to 12% of employees across the UK as a whole. In terms of the repercussions for coming to work late, 18% of workers in Northern Ireland report that they would be dismissed within a month for persistently arriving late – similar to that observed across the UK as a whole (17%).

Figure 4-3: Job Loss Through Poor Performance



The risks of quick dismissal for not working hard are therefore perceived to be higher among employees in Northern Ireland while the risks associated with coming to work late are broadly comparable to elsewhere. Nonetheless, there are variations among employees within Northern Ireland. Table 4.3 reveals that men, younger workers, and those with limiting ill-health conditions are more likely to report being dismissed quickly as a result of persistent late arrival. In terms of the jobs that workers in Northern Ireland do, those employed in low skilled occupations and those employed on a part time basis are more likely to report being dismissed quickly as a result of persistent late arrival. Those employed in Managerial and Professional positions in Northern Ireland report lower risks of job loss as a consequence of late arrival compared to those employed in these occupations elsewhere in the UK. In terms of the types of workplaces where employees work, within Northern Ireland those working in the private sector, those working in smaller workplaces and those who are employed in Wholesale, Transport, Storage, and Accommodation sectors each perceive relatively high risks of quick dismissal for persistent late arrival. The perceived risks of quick dismissal among these workers also appear to be higher in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the UK.

Similar patterns are observed in terms of the perceived risks of job loss associated with not working hard (Table 4.4). However, among workers in Northern Ireland, the risks of job loss are relatively large compared to those perceived among workers across the UK. Younger workers, those in the private sector, and those employed within the in Wholesale, Transport, Storage, and Accommodation sectors each perceive the risks of quick dismissal associated with not working hard as being both relatively high compared to other groups in Northern Ireland and higher than their counterparts in other areas of the UK. The largest difference is observed among those in lower skilled occupations. In Northern Ireland, approximately a third of workers (32%) employed in Sales, Operative and Elementary occupations report that they would be dismissed in less than a month for persistently not working hard. This compares to just over a fifth (22%) of workers across the UK as a whole.

Table 4:3: Job Loss Through Late Arrival by Selected Characteristics

% Dismissed within a Month	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	19.5	12.5	19.8	17.2
Female	16.1	16.1	16.0	16.0
Age				
20-34 years	24.4	16.3	23.6	21.0
35-49 years	15.5	14.1	15.1	14.7
50+ years	12.4	13.2	14.9	14.2
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	20.0	19.2	21.3	20.6
No limiting ill-health/disability	17.4	13.6	17.2	15.8
Sector				
Private	21.5	16.8	20.5	19.1
Public	12.8	8.9	12.3	11.0
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	16.1	11.9	17.4	15.3
Part-time	24.3	23.3	20.6	21.9
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	27.5	22.2	20.8	21.5
26-100 workers	17.4	15.2	20.6	18.7
100+ workers	11.7	7.9	13.7	11.3
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	21.7	18.6	23.3	22.2
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	33.4	16.0	25.6	21.8
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	8.9	10.5	14.4	12.5
Administration and Defence (N-O)	5.3	12.8	10.9	11.6
Education and Health (P-S)	15.3	17.3	15.8	16.4
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	6.5	9.2	14.0	11.9
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	25.3	20.3	18.7	19.5
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	28.9	23.5	27.4	26.2
All	17.9	14.4	18.0	16.6

Table 4:4: Job Loss Through Not Working Hard by Selected Characteristics

% Dismissed within a Month	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	16.8	11.5	16.0	14.4
Female	13.5	12.2	8.9	10.4
Age				
20-34 years	21.8	11.0	16.9	15.0
35-49 years	12.3	12.3	10.9	11.5
50+ years	10.6	12.7	9.5	10.6
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	19.1	21.0	17.4	18.6
No limiting ill-health/disability	14.4	10.3	11.6	11.2
Sector				
Private	19.2	14.3	15.0	14.8
Public	9.8	6.4	7.4	7.1
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	14.1	12.7	13.3	13.1
Part-time	19.2	9.0	9.7	9.7
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	21.9	14.8	18.7	17.1
26-100 workers	12.4	14.1	12.6	13.1
100+ workers	12.4	7.9	8.7	8.5
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	25.9	25.6	21.0	22.2
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	26.9	11.1	13.9	13.2
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	9.1	10.7	9.3	9.9
Administration and Defence (N-O)	7.7	13.6	10.4	11.7
Education and Health (P-S)	8.2	8.8	9.8	9.4
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	8.0	7.7	7.9	7.8
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	13.6	16.3	14.5	15.1
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	32.3	19.5	22.7	21.9
All	15.2	11.8	12.7	12.4

4.5 Fears and Anxieties at Work

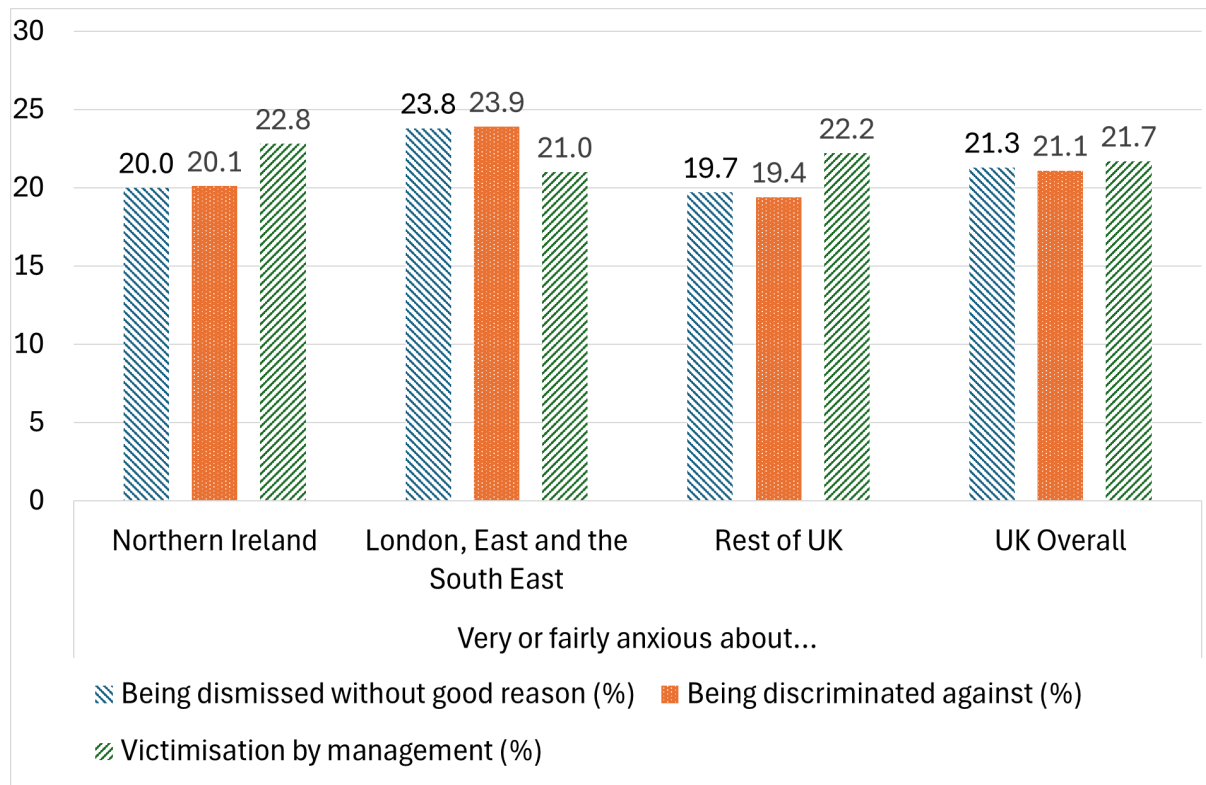
Concern about losing employment with an organisation is the most widely discussed aspect of fear in the workplace. In this section, however, we consider two other dimensions of fear. First, fear may consist of anxiety about unfair treatment at work. Such anxiety may manifest, for example, as worry about discrimination or victimisation at work. Secondly, fear at work may take the form of anxiety about loss of job status. Such anxiety may manifest itself through concern about having to take a pay cut, being moved to another job in the organisation that offers less opportunity to utilise acquired skills, is intrinsically less interesting or is associated with lower levels of autonomy (Gallie *et al.*, 2017a; Felstead *et al.*, 2018; 2020b).

4.5.1 *Unfair Treatment*

Figure 4.4 presents information on the levels of fear with respect to unfair treatment in the UK. The indicators of fear of unfair treatment consist of three items where respondents are asked about their levels of anxiety concerning ‘being dismissed without good reason’, ‘being unfairly treated through discrimination’ and ‘victimisation by management’. Across each of the three dimensions, approximately one in five employees report that they are very or fairly anxious about being treated unfairly. Regarding differences across the UK, anxieties regarding dismissal and discrimination are higher within London, the East and the South East of England where approximately one in four employees report that they are very or fairly anxious about being treated unfairly.

In terms of anxiety surrounding unfair treatment, there is relatively little systematic variation between different groups of workers. Common patterns, however, do emerge with respect to how levels of anxiety surrounding unfair treatment vary with respect to self-reported health and occupations held. Figures 4.5 to 4.7 show the proportion of employees who report being either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ anxious about different dimensions of unfair treatment. Two key themes emerge.

Figure 4-4: Anxiety About Unfair Treatment



First, it can be seen that, both within Northern Ireland and across the UK overall, levels of anxiety surrounding unfair treatment are consistently higher among those who report having a limiting ill-health condition. Approximately a third of workers in Northern Ireland who report having such conditions indicate that they are very or fairly anxious about unfair dismissal (30% - see Figure 4.5), discrimination (34% - see Figure 4.6) and victimisation (36% - see Figure 4.7). In each case, the differentials related to ill-health in Northern Ireland are comparable to those that exist elsewhere outside of London, the East and the South East of England.

Secondly, those in low skilled occupations are also more likely to report being anxious regarding unfair treatment. Similar patterns exist in Northern Ireland as elsewhere, although it can be seen that those in Northern Ireland who are employed in Sales, Operative and Elementary roles report relatively high levels of anxiety surrounding unfair treatment.

- Figure 4.5 reveals workers in Northern Ireland employed in these lower skilled roles express relatively high levels of anxiety regarding the prospect of being dismissed without good reason (32%) compared to other parts of the UK outside of London, East and the South East (25%), although anxieties surrounding unfair dismissal are highest among those workers living in London and its two major commuting regions (35%).
- Figure 4.6 reveals that those employed in Sales, Operative and Elementary roles in Northern Ireland express relatively high levels of concern about being unfairly treated through discrimination (33%) compared to those in similar jobs across the UK as a whole (27%).
- Figure 4.7 reveals that those employed in these lower skilled roles in Northern Ireland are particularly anxious about victimisation from management (39%) compared to those in similar jobs across the UK as a whole (26%).

Figure 4-5: Anxiety About Being Dismissed Without Good Reason

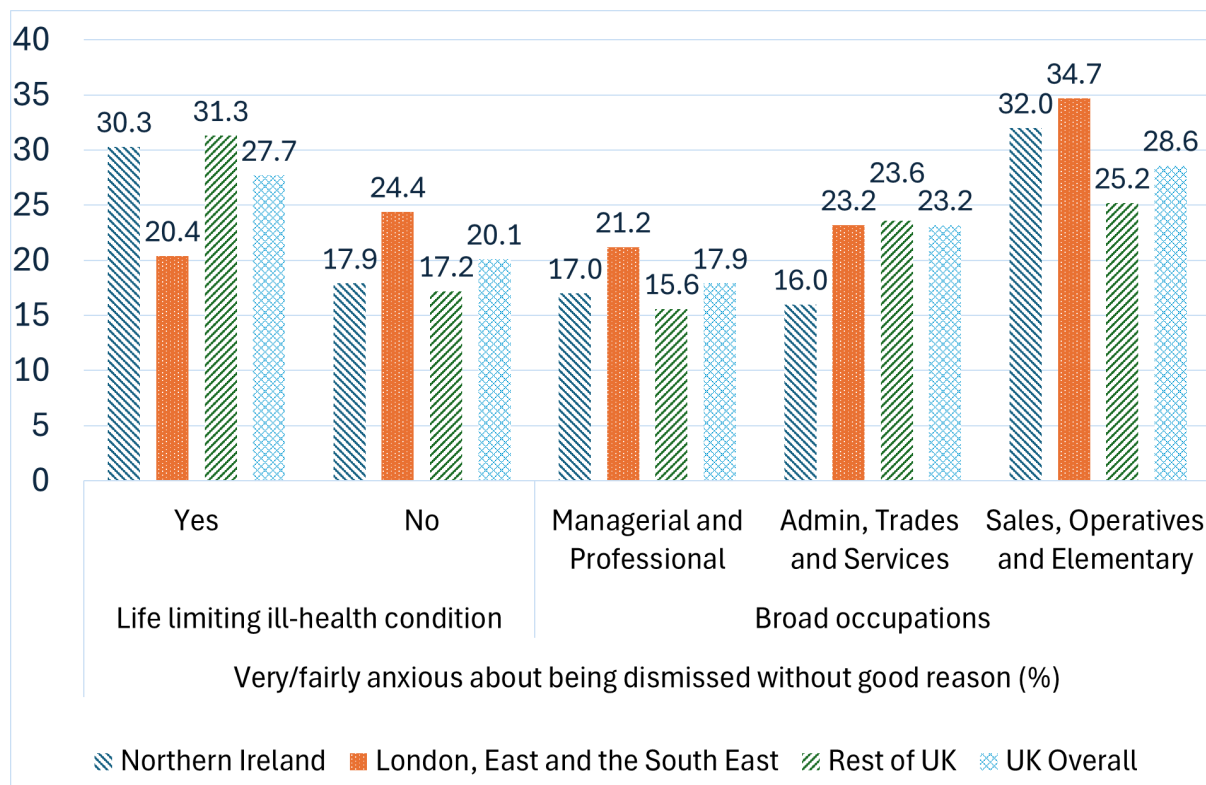


Figure 4-6: Anxiety About Being Unfairly Treated Through Discrimination

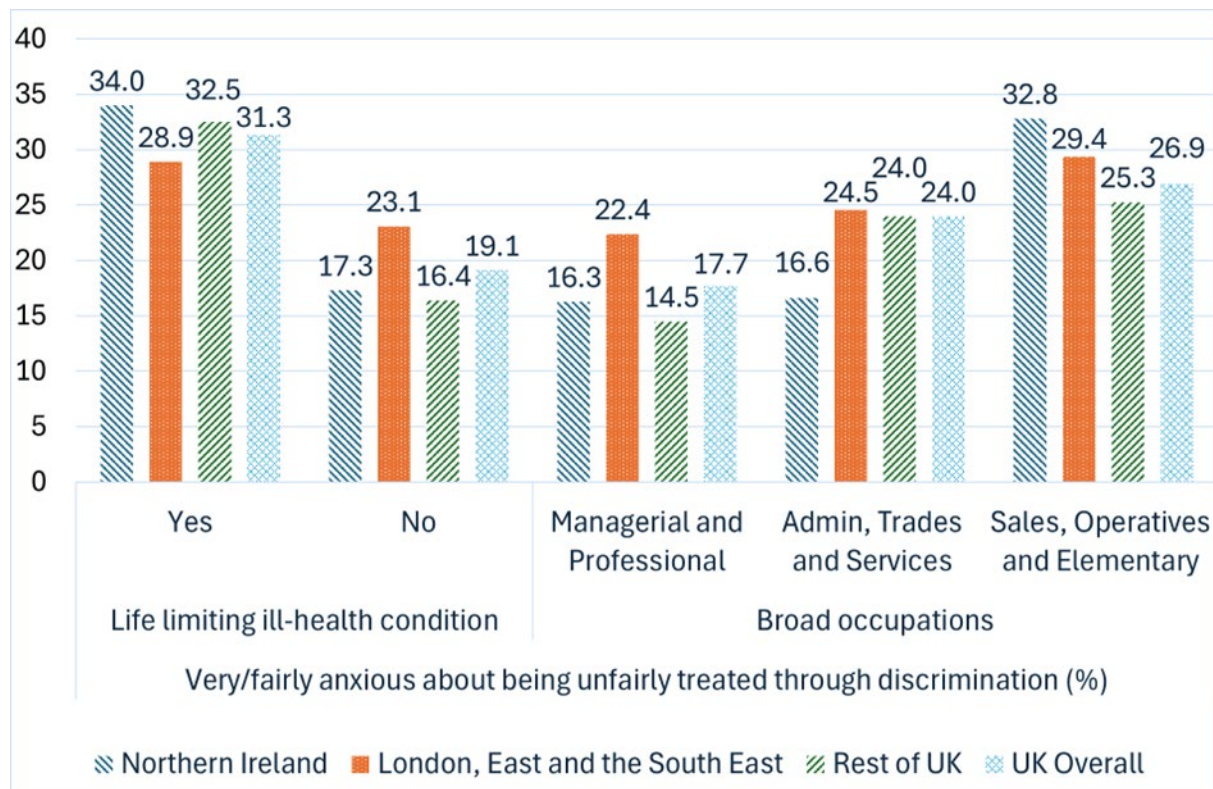
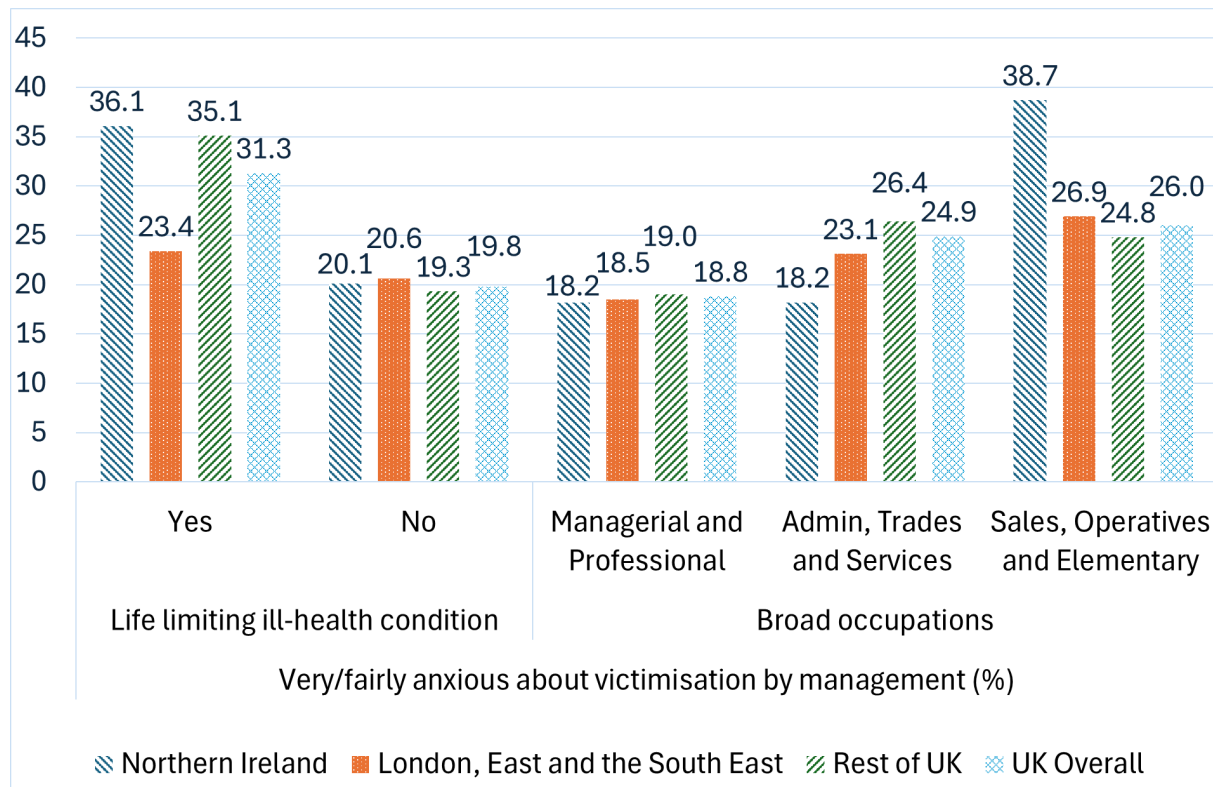


Figure 4-7: Anxiety About Victimisation from Management



4.5.2 Status Loss

Table 4.5 presents information on concerns about job status loss. Once again, respondents were asked about their levels of anxiety regarding ‘future changes to my job that may give me less say over how it is done’, ‘future changes to my job that may make it more difficult to use my skills and abilities’, ‘future changes that may reduce my pay’, ‘being transferred to a less interesting job in the organisation’ and ‘unexpected changes to my hours of work’. Table 4.5 reports the proportion of employees who indicated that they were either ‘very’ or ‘fairly anxious’ about job status loss.

In Northern Ireland, over a third of workers express anxiety surrounding changes to their hours of work (36%); having less say over how their jobs are done (34%) and future changes that reduce their pay (34%). Approximately one in four employees in Northern Ireland report being anxious about changes that may make it more difficult for them to use their skills and abilities (27%) and being moved to a less interesting job (27%). Levels of anxiety about job status loss are generally very similar to those concerns expressed by workers elsewhere in the UK.

Table 4.5: Anxiety Over Job Status Loss

% Very or Fairly Anxious	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Having less say over how job is done	34.2	33.2	33.6	33.5
More difficult to use skills and abilities	27.2	28.8	26.4	27.4
Future changes that reduce my pay	34.2	33.2	33.6	33.5
Being moved to a less interesting job	26.5	24.8	23.8	24.2
Unexpected changes to my hours of work	35.7	30.0	33.1	32.0

Figures 4.8 to 4.10 show how anxiety over status loss varies across different groups of employees. Once again, there was found to be relatively little systematic variation between different groups of workers. We therefore focus on anxiety with respect to pay, being moved to a less interesting job and hours worked as these were areas

where greater variation was observed. Most notably, once again consistent patterns emerged with respect to self-reported health and occupations held.

- First, it can be seen that, both within Northern Ireland and across the UK overall, levels of anxiety surrounding status loss are consistently higher among those who report that they have a limiting ill-health condition. Furthermore, rates of anxiety with respect to status loss among those who have a limiting ill-health condition are higher in Northern Ireland than across the UK as a whole.
- Patterns observed across different occupational groups depend upon the job attribute being considered. However, those in low skilled occupations are uniformly most likely to express the highest levels of anxiety about status loss.

Figure 4-8: Anxiety Over Future Changes that Reduce Pay

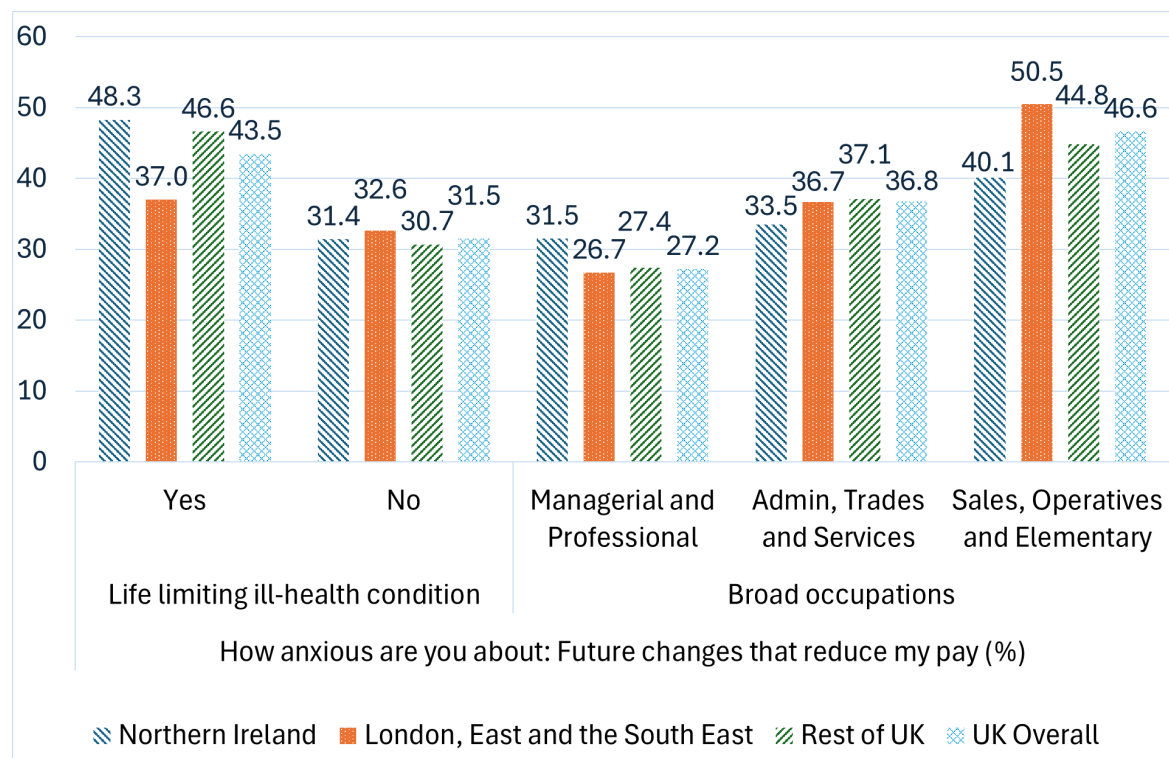


Figure 4-9: Anxiety Over Being Moved to a Less Interesting Job

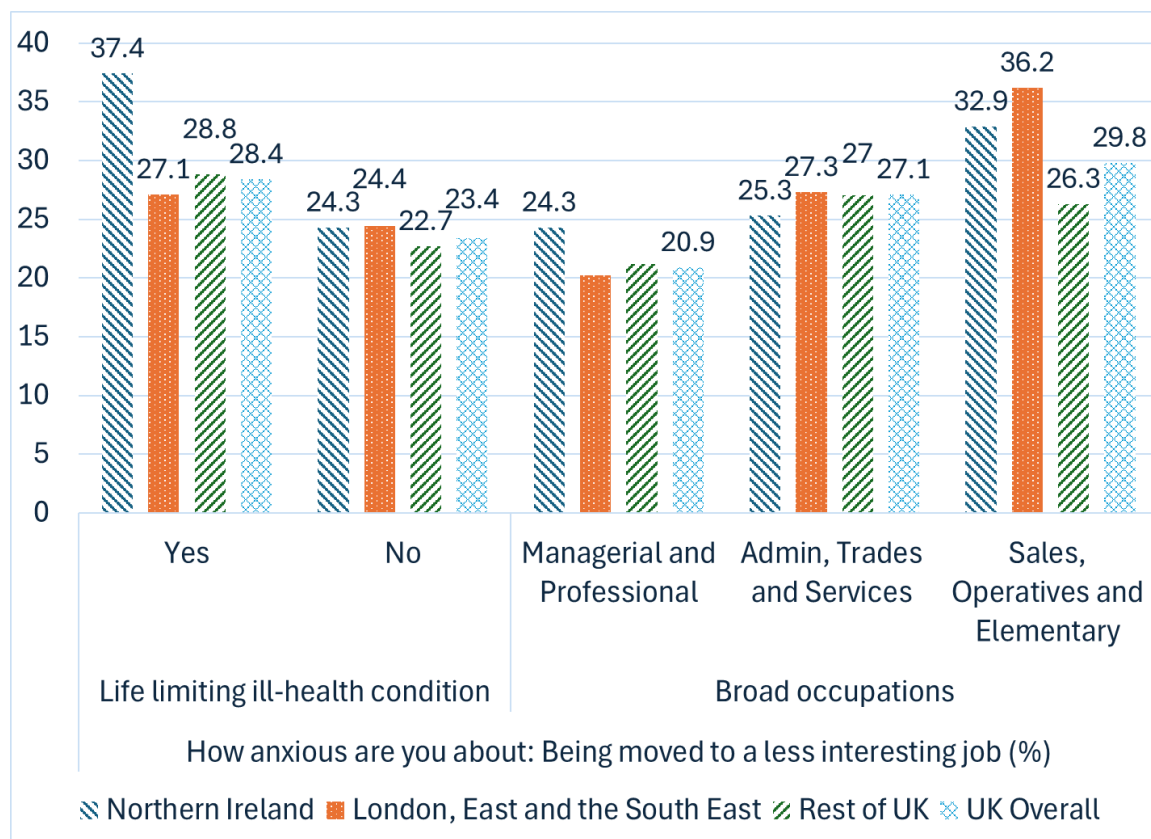
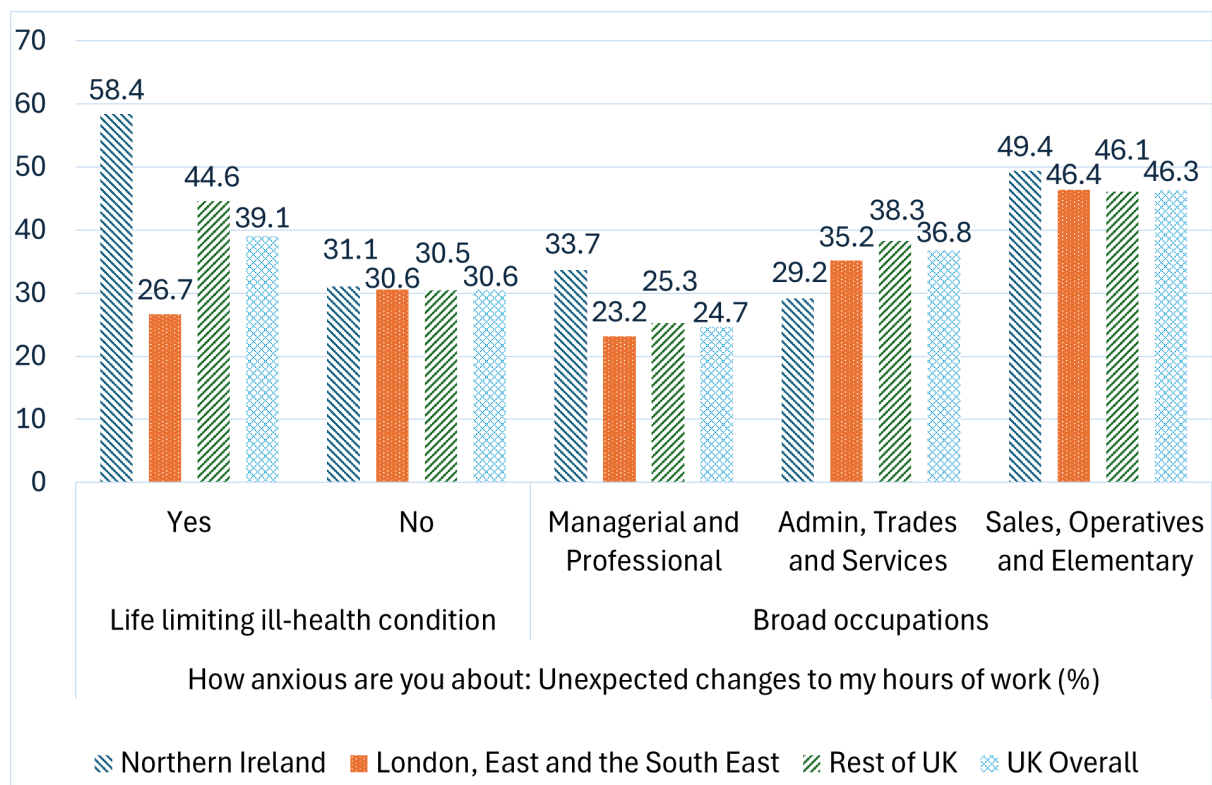


Figure 4-10: Anxiety Over Unexpected Changes to Hours Worked

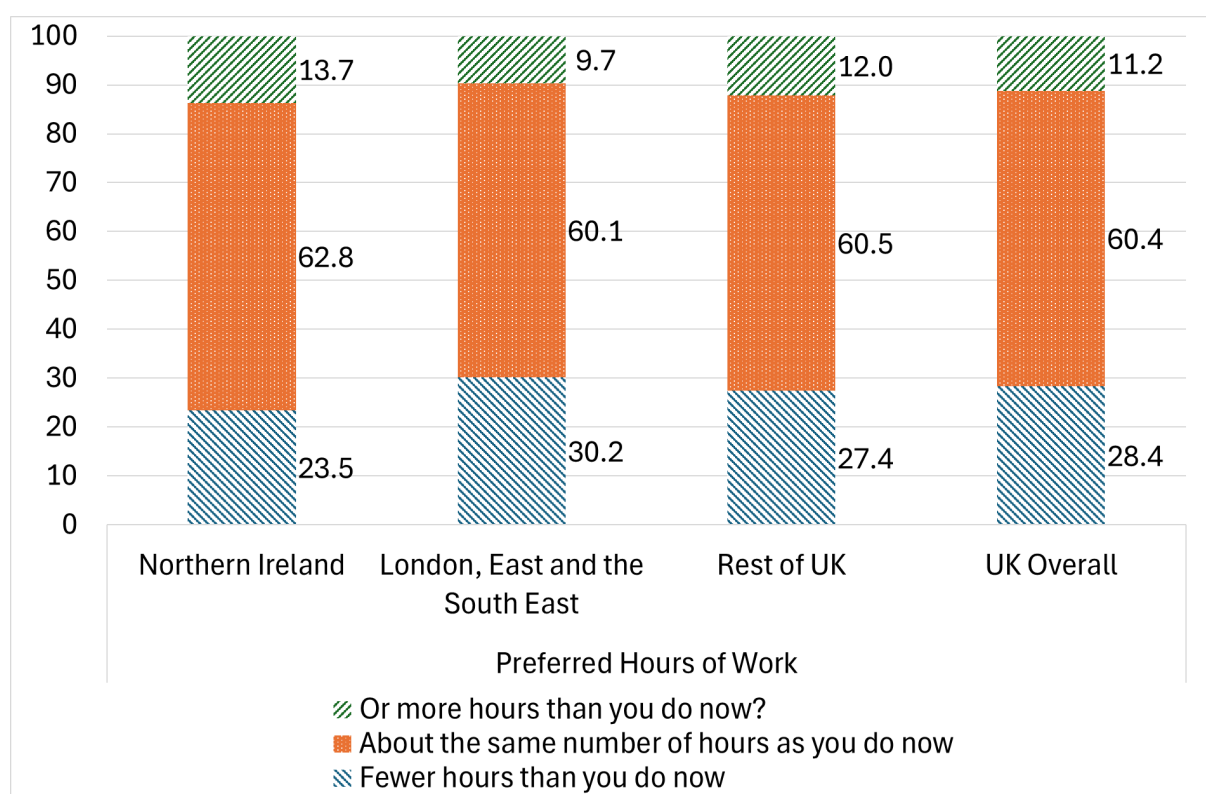


4.6 Underemployment

The previous section revealed that workers in Northern Ireland express higher levels of concern regarding unexpected changes to their hours of work compared to the overall average for the UK, with 36% reporting that they are either very or fairly anxious about this issue. In the context of the cost of living crisis and the imperative for households to maintain their income levels, the issue of under-employment has come to the fore. Under-employment can be measured in a variety of ways. For example, the LFS is used to derive involuntary part-time employment (i.e. those working part-time because they were unable to find a full-time job) and the proportion of people reporting that they would either like another job or that they would like to work longer hours in their present job.

The SES adopts a different approach by directly asking all workers, 'If you could choose the number of hours you work each week, and taking into account how that would affect your income, would you prefer to work fewer hours than you do now, about the same number of hours as you do now or more hours than you do now?' Figure 4.11 reveals that across the UK, approximately six in ten workers would choose to work the same number of hours as they do now. Despite the associated loss of income, around three out of ten workers (28%) would like to work fewer hours. In terms of under-employment, just over one in ten (11%) would choose to work more hours than they do. In Northern Ireland, the proportion of workers who report that they would like to work fewer hours is slightly lower at 24%. However, this may reflect the lower incomes earned by workers in Northern Ireland and their reduced capacity to work fewer hours.

Figure 4-11: Preferred Hours of Work



Given the importance of under-employment to maintaining income levels, Table 4.6 explores how rates of underemployment vary across different groups of workers. As would be expected, those employed part-time are among the most likely to report that they would like to work longer hours. Within Northern Ireland, 24% of part time workers report that they would like to work longer hours – a figure similar to that estimated for the UK overall (27%). Workers with a limiting ill-health condition are also more likely to report that they would like to work longer hours. This is particularly apparent in Northern Ireland, where over a quarter (25%) of such workers report that they would like to work longer hours.

Across the UK, those employed in lower skilled occupations are more likely to report that they would like to work longer hours. This pattern, however, is not observed in Northern Ireland, where employees in Administrative, Trades and Service occupations who are most likely to report wanting to work longer hours (20%). Those employed in Sales, Operative and Elementary occupations within Northern Ireland are less likely to want to work longer hours than their counterparts elsewhere in the UK.

Table 4:6: Underemployment by Selected Characteristics

% Who Would Like More Hours	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	25.3	13.9	18.4	17.1
No limiting ill-health/disability	11.3	9.0	10.6	10.0
Sector				
Private	11.9	9.8	12.4	11.4
Public	16.1	9.6	11.2	10.8
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	10.8	6.7	7.6	7.3
Part-time	24.3	20.1	31.6	26.5
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	8.3	4.5	5.6	5.2
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	20.1	12.9	16.9	15.5
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	16.1	23.0	22.2	22.3
All	13.7	9.7	12.0	11.2

4.7 Unpredictable Hours

Of particular interest in the UK has been the rise of non-standard forms of employment as a key feature of the labour market. Often referred to as precarious employment, the increase in flexible working patterns, zero-hour contracts, false self-employment and the growth of the so-called gig economy have provided mechanisms for employers to shift the risks of business to their workers. To examine such risks, the SES asks workers whether their employer ever reduces their weekly hours of work at short notice. Table 4.7 reveals that within Northern Ireland, seven per cent of workers have experienced a reduction in their weekly hours at short notice. This figure is similar to that exhibited across the UK as a whole.

Table 4:7: Unpredictable Changes to Hours by Selected Characteristics

%	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Age				
20-34 years	9.1	11.8	7.1	8.8
35-49 years	5.7	3.9	5.7	4.9
50+ years	4.7	8.5	3.4	5.2
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	12.8	5.5	13.1	10.6
No limiting ill-health/disability	5.4	7.7	3.9	5.4
Sector				
Private	8.4	8.4	7.1	7.6
Public	4.2	5.0	2.2	3.3
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	3.8	5.3	3.0	3.9
Part-time	16.7	14.4	16.8	15.8
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	12.4	6.6	10.5	8.9
26-100 workers	6.8	16.5	4.1	8.4
100+ workers	2.5	1.6	3.2	2.6
Selected Industries				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	3.7	1.5	5.7	4.7
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	19.9	25.4	9.1	16.2
Education and Health (P-S)	3.5	5.7	8.0	7.0
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	0.5	5.2	2.0	3.3
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	4.5	6.6	7.5	7.1
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	19.8	16.2	12.2	13.8
All	6.6	7.4	5.6	6.3

Reductions in hours are more commonly experienced by those workers employed on a part-time basis. Across the UK, 16% of part-time workers have experienced a reduction in hours compared to just four per cent of those employed on a full-time basis. These figures are mirrored in Northern Ireland. As such, reductions in hours are more likely to be experienced by those groups more likely to be employed in part

time roles, including younger workers and those who have a limiting ill-health condition. Such variations in hours are also more likely to affect those employed in low skilled occupations. Within Northern Ireland, approximately one in five workers (20%) employed in Sales, Operative and Elementary roles had experienced a reduction in their hours at short notice. This figure is higher than the overall UK average for such workers (14%).

In terms of employer characteristics, short notice reductions in hours are relatively common among those employed within the Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation sectors. Within Northern Ireland, one in five workers (20%) in this sector have experienced a short notice reduction in their hours. Relatedly, reductions in hours are also more likely to affect those in Northern Ireland who are employed in smaller workplaces with 25 or fewer workers (12%). Finally, those employed in the private sector are approximately twice as likely to experience a reduction in their hours as those employed in the public sector (eight per cent and four per cent respectively). This is a differential that is observed both within Northern Ireland and across the UK as a whole.

5 Job Design and the Nature of Work

5.1 Introduction

Working hard can bring benefits to workers in terms of higher earnings, opportunities for progression and promotion, or simply the satisfaction of a job well done. While working hard can bring benefits to both employers and employees, working long hours and at high levels of intensity can however also be associated with significant costs. When workers continually have to meet tight deadlines, operate at high speeds, or are just generally having to exert high levels of effort over long periods, their wellbeing is likely to suffer. Higher levels of intensity can lead to increased levels of workplace accidents, work related ill-health and stress. Perceived stress at work is widespread in the UK (Smith *et al.*, 2000) and has been identified by the World Health Organization as a worldwide epidemic (Leka *et al.*, 2003). Days lost to sickness absence results in costs to both the employer and the employee. Significant costs can also be imposed on the families of those working hard.

In understanding how hard people work, it is useful to distinguish between extensive and intensive work effort (Felstead and Green, 2017). Extensive work effort concerns how much labour is supplied by the individual and relates to length of hours worked, including decisions about whether to work full or part time or whether to work overtime, paid or unpaid. By contrast, intensive work effort refers to the level of intensity with which people work on the job. Whilst surveys of the labour market generally contain detailed information on working hours, there is much less information regarding intensive levels of effort among those in employment. Furthermore, research has long established that the effects of work intensity must be considered in the context of the level of autonomy that can be exercised by those in employment (Karasek, 1979). Work intensity is most likely to lead to have adverse effects on wellbeing where employees have little choice over their job tasks.

The Skills and Employment Survey includes questions designed to explore the nature of work in Northern Ireland that goes beyond simply examining hours worked. We firstly examine levels of extensive and intensive work effort. We then examine the nature of work tasks performed and the degree of discretion workers are able to

exercise over their jobs. We then examine the use of advanced technologies among workers and how this equipment is used to set out, monitor and evaluate what people do in their jobs. When jobs combine hard work and low discretion, this is often referred to as working under 'high strain'. The chapter culminates in an examination of the prevalence of high strain work in Northern Ireland.

5.2 Working Hours

In terms of extensive work effort, the SES asks respondents about their working hours. Information is collected on usual weekly hours; that is, the usual number of hours worked per week, including both paid and unpaid overtime. An individual is defined as working long hours if they work more than 48 hours per week. Table 5.1 indicates that one in twenty workers (five per cent) in Northern Ireland report that they work long hours. Within Northern Ireland, long hours working is more prevalent amongst men (six per cent) compared to women (four per cent), although the incidence of long hours working among men in Northern Ireland is lower than that observed overall across the UK where one in ten male workers report working long hours. Relatedly, the prevalence of long hours working in Northern Ireland is higher among those who report working in roles mainly done by men (seven per cent), although the rate in Northern Ireland is again lower than that observed for the UK as a whole (12%).

Within Northern Ireland, the prevalence of long hours working increases with age. Among those over the age of 50, one in ten workers report that they work long hours. The rate of long hours working also increases among those with poorer health. One in ten of workers in Northern Ireland who regard their health as 'fair' report that they work long hours. This figure falls to four per cent among those who regard their health as 'excellent'. This difference is greater than that observed across the UK as a whole. In terms of the types of jobs people do, those employed within the public sector in Northern Ireland are slightly more likely to report that they work long hours compared to those working in the private sector. However, greater variation in long hours working is observed when comparing across industries. Within Northern Ireland, long hours working is highest among those employed in the Education and Health Sectors (seven per cent) and is lowest among those working in the Administration and Defence sectors (three per cent).

Table 5:1 Long Hours Working by Selected Characteristics

% Working 48+ hours	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	6.4	10.7	10.0	10.2
Female	3.9	2.8	3.2	3.1
Age				
20-34 years	0.9	3.0	5.2	4.3
35-49 years	5.5	9.6	7.6	8.4
50+ years	10.4	6.3	7.5	7.2
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	4.2	5.6	5.4	5.5
Very good	3.7	7.1	6.4	6.6
Good	6.0	6.8	6.9	6.8
Fair	9.8	6.2	8.6	7.9
Sector				
Private	2.5	5.4	6.4	5.9
Public	4.3	7.1	6.0	6.3
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	7.1	10.7	12.7	12.0
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	3.6	5.7	3.6	4.5
Mainly by women	5.9	5.3	4.8	5.1
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	5.5	11.6	8.9	9.5
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	3.1	5.6	10.1	8.0
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	5.5	5.1	4.8	4.9
Administration and Defence (N-O)	2.7	7.1	3.9	5.2
Education and Health (P-S)	7.0	7.5	5.6	6.4
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	3.9	8.1	6.7	7.2
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	6.9	5.4	5.9	5.7
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	5.5	4.0	8.0	6.6
All	5.2	6.7	6.8	6.7

The SES also asks respondents whether they often have to work extra time, over and above the formal contracted hours of their jobs, to get through their work or to help out. Table 5.2 presents information on the proportion of respondents who regarded this statement as 'very true'. As for the UK overall, within Northern Ireland approximately one in five workers (21%) report that they have to work extra time. As with long hours working, within Northern Ireland this figure is slightly higher among men (23%) compared to women (20%), those workers in jobs that are mainly done by men (27%), those workers over the age of 50 (24%) and those who perceive their health as being 'fair' (26%). These patterns broadly reflect those observed across the United Kingdom, with the exception that elsewhere in the UK working extra hours peaks among those aged 35 to 49.

In terms of the types of jobs people do, those employed within the public sector in Northern Ireland are slightly more likely to report that they work extra hours (23%) compared to those working in the private sector (20%). This differential is narrower than that observed across the UK as a whole. Within Northern Ireland, around a quarter of workers in both the Manufacturing, Construction and Utilities sectors (26%) and within the Education and Health sectors (25%) report that they work extra hours to get their jobs done. The Education and Health sectors exhibit the highest rate of overtime across the UK as a whole (26%). In terms of occupation, over one in four of those employed in Managerial and Professional roles (27%) in Northern Ireland report working extra hours. This is over twice the rate observed among those employed in Sales, Operative and Elementary roles (12%).

Table 5:2: Working Extra Hours to Get the Job Done by Selected Characteristics

% Very True	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	22.9	22.5	20.9	21.6
Female	19.7	19.3	21.0	20.2
Age				
20-34 years	18.5	17.6	16.1	16.7
35-49 years	21.8	24.2	24.2	24.1
50+ years	24.4	19.8	22.6	21.6
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	20.6	21.9	22.4	22.2
Very good	19.0	19.7	18.1	18.8
Good	23.2	20.6	22.5	21.8
Fair	26.0	24.7	23.8	24.1
Sector				
Private	20.1	18.4	18.9	18.8
Public	23.1	25.2	25.2	25.1
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	26.6	25.9	22.9	23.9
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	19.2	19.9	18.1	18.9
Mainly by women	20.3	18.8	23.2	21.4
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	26.2	18.5	22.1	21.3
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	18.9	16.7	15.0	15.8
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	22.8	15.8	22.3	19.6
Administration and Defence (N-O)	12.9	22.0	11.7	16.1
Education and Health (P-S)	25.2	27.4	25.8	26.4
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	27.0	26.8	25.8	26.2
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	21.1	11.3	15.0	13.9
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	11.8	15.8	15.7	15.6
All	21.4	20.9	20.9	20.9

5.3 Intensive Effort

The Skills and Employment Surveys asks respondents about a number of issues that pertain to the level of intensive effort they put into their job. Respondents are first asked to what extent they agree with the following statement: 'My job requires that I work very hard'. Figure 5.1 reveals that most workers across the UK feel their jobs require them to work very hard, with around 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. In Northern Ireland, 43% of workers strongly agree with the statement that their job requires them to work very hard. This figure is higher than that estimated for the UK (37%). Respondents are also asked to what extent they agree with the statement: 'I work under a great deal of tension'. It can be seen from Figure 5.1 that workers in Northern Ireland are also more likely to strongly agree with the statement that their work requires them to work under a great deal of tension (24%) compared to workers across the UK overall (21%). Workers in Northern Ireland therefore have the strongest perceptions of working hard and working under tension.

Figure 5-1: Working Hard or Under Tension

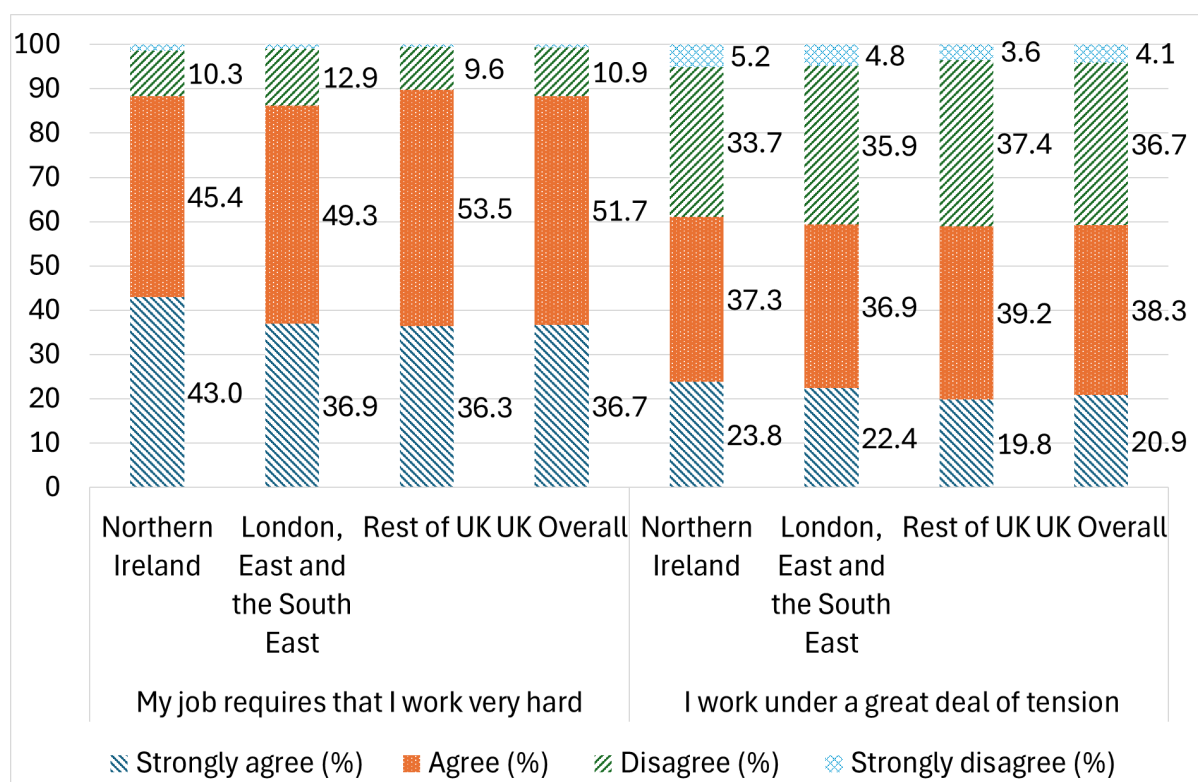


Table 5.3 reveals that within Northern Ireland women are more likely to report that they have to work hard than men (47% compared to 39%). Relatedly, those who report that they work in roles that are mainly done by women (52%) are more likely to report that they have to work hard than those in male dominated roles (40%). In terms of the types of jobs people do, those employed within the public sector in Northern Ireland are slightly more likely to report that their jobs require them to work hard (45%) compared to those working in the private sector (38%), a pattern which is observed across the UK. Analysis by sector reveals that those employed in the Education and Health sectors are most likely to report that their jobs require them to work hard (56%), which will contribute in part to the higher rates of hard work observed in the public sector.

With respect to occupations, those in Northern Ireland who are employed in Managerial and Professional roles are most likely to report that they are required to work hard (47%). Those in Sales, Operative and Elementary roles in Northern Ireland are least likely to report that their job requires them to work hard (34%). Nonetheless, when making like-for-like comparisons for specific occupational groups, workers in Northern Ireland are consistently more likely to report that their job requires them to work hard compared to those working in similar roles across the UK as a whole. The higher levels of effort expended by workers in Northern Ireland compared to elsewhere in the UK can therefore not simply be accounted for by differences in the occupational composition of employment.

Table 5.4 suggests that levels of tension at the workplace do not vary greatly between different sub-groups of workers. Within Northern Ireland, relatively high levels of tension are reported by those who work full time (26%) compared to part time (17%); those employed in roles that are mainly performed by women (29%) as opposed to men (20%); those working in Manufacturing, Construction and Utilities (35%); and those who are employed in Managerial and Professional Occupations (27%). Across the board, workers in Northern Ireland are generally more likely to report that they work under tension, although these differences are not as large as those associated with effort expended.

Table 5.3: Effort Expended in Job by Selected Characteristics

% Strongly Agree	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	39.3	35.3	34.7	35.1
Female	46.9	38.4	38.1	38.5
Sector				
Private	37.8	37.0	32.2	34.2
Public	44.6	34.6	42.4	39.6
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	42.6	38.6	35.8	37.1
Part-time	44.5	31.7	38.1	35.6
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	39.6	36.0	35.0	35.4
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	38.7	31.9	31.8	32.0
Mainly by women	51.8	46.6	45.3	46.0
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	43.1	42.5	25.7	30.3
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	38.0	43.7	31.1	36.6
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	39.2	24.0	36.8	31.6
Administration and Defence (N-O)	26.3	23.4	27.5	25.7
Education and Health (P-S)	55.9	45.2	49.8	48.1
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	46.7	38.4	41.2	40.2
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	43.8	40.5	31.6	35.3
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	34.1	26.9	29.5	28.8
All	43.0	36.9	36.3	36.7

Table 5.4: Working Under Tension by Selected Characteristics (% Strongly Agree)

% Strongly Agree	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	23.2	23.6	21.8	22.5
Female	24.5	21.2	17.6	19.3
Sector				
Private	23.1	20.4	17.4	18.7
Public	24.3	29.0	25.6	26.8
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	25.6	25.5	21.4	23.1
Part-time	17.2	12.8	13.6	13.4
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
mainly by men	19.8	22.7	20.1	20.9
by a fairly equal mixture of men and women	22.2	19.6	18.3	19.0
mainly by women	29.2	27.2	21.8	24.2
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	34.5	31.3	16.5	20.7
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	16.4	26.8	17.4	21.3
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	21.1	18.0	19.4	18.9
Administration and Defence (N-O)	22.0	16.9	19.5	18.5
Education and Health (P-S)	27.2	24.0	24.1	24.1
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	26.7	25.6	24.3	24.9
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	25.5	18.7	16.0	17.3
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	14.6	17.0	12.5	14.1
All	23.8	22.4	19.8	20.9

Two further questions in the survey ask respondents, 'How often does your work involve working at very high speed?' and 'How often does your work involve working to tight deadlines?'. Figure 5.2 reveals that workers in Northern Ireland are also more likely to report that they work at very high speed for three quarters of the time or more (41%) compared to workers across the UK overall (37%). The extent to which workers report that they work to tight deadlines appears relatively even across the UK, with approximately half of workers stating that they work to tight deadlines for three quarters of the time or more.

Figure 5-2: Working at Very High Speed or to Tight Deadlines

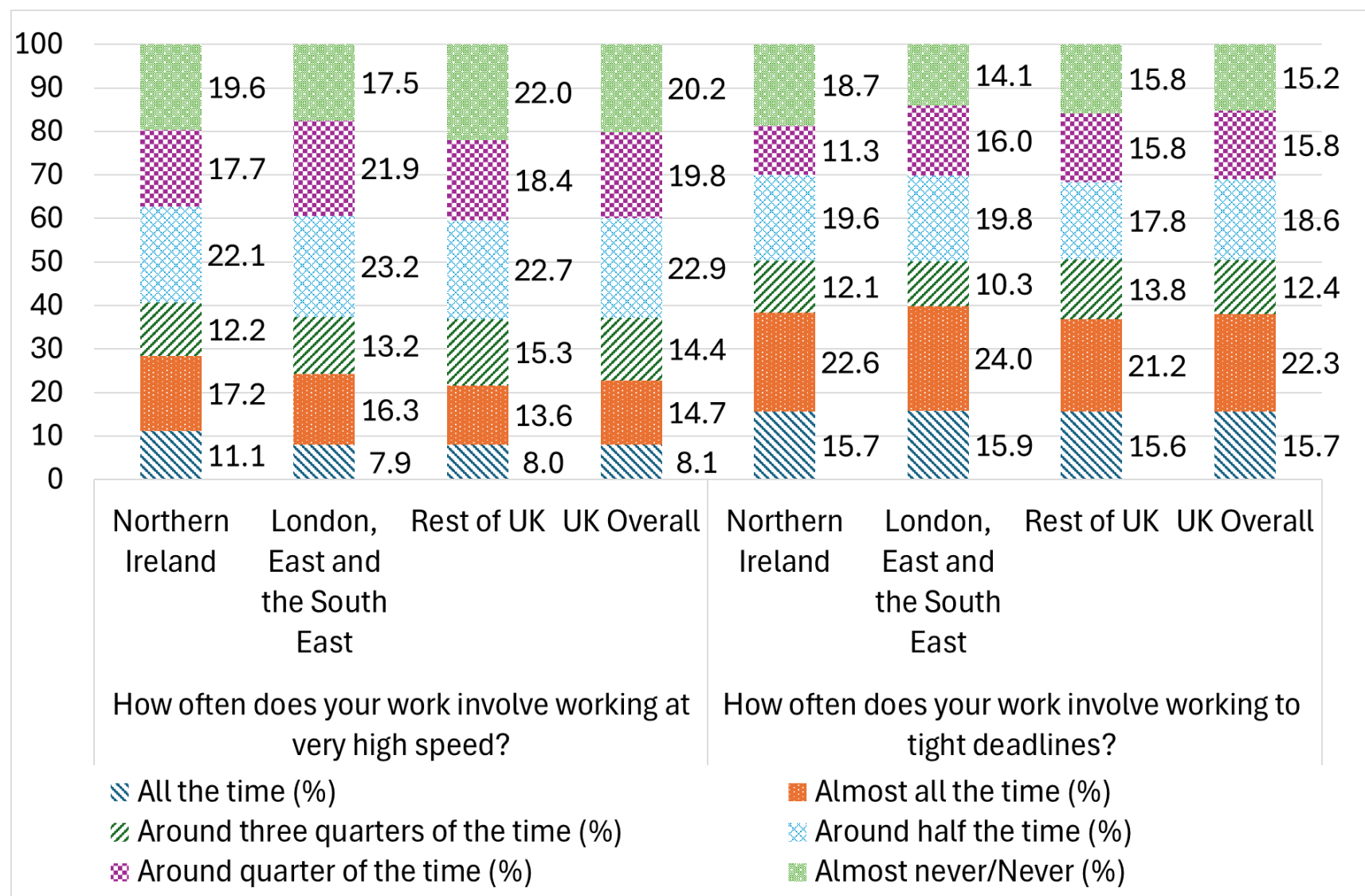


Table 5.5 reports the proportion of respondents who report working at very high speed for three quarters of the time or above. A relatively high proportion of workers in roles predominantly undertaken by men report working at high speed (45%) compared to those undertaken mostly by women (38%). This is in contrast to elsewhere in the UK, where those in female dominated roles are more likely to report working at high speed. Over half of workers (52%) in the Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation sectors in Northern Ireland report that they work at very high speed. High speed working is also high among those in Sales, Operative and Elementary roles (48%).

Table 5.5: Working at High Speed by Selected Characteristics

% Three Quarters of Time or More	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	39.2	34.6	34.7	34.8
Female	42.1	40.0	39.3	39.7
Sector				
Private	40.4	39.1	36.0	37.3
Public	41.0	37.5	40.9	39.6
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	40.6	37.5	37.2	37.4
Part-time	40.5	37.2	35.9	36.6
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	44.5	31.6	29.9	30.8
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	40.0	35.1	40.0	37.9
Mainly by women	38.2	46.2	40.3	42.6
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	45.1	38.9	29.3	32.1
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	52.0	52.9	41.2	46.4
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	33.6	32.9	39.5	36.6
Administration and Defence (N-O)	35.5	29.0	37.3	33.7
Education and Health (P-S)	36.7	35.0	38.9	37.3
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	40.2	36.6	38.1	37.6
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	34.9	34.2	33.1	33.6
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	48.2	45.6	39.0	41.5
All	40.6	37.4	36.9	37.2

Table 5.6 reports the proportion of respondents who report that they work to tight deadlines for three quarters of the time or above. There is generally less variation in this measure between different groups of workers in Northern Ireland. Almost two thirds of workers (64%) in Northern Ireland who are employed in the Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities sectors report that they work to tight deadlines. Working to tight deadlines is similarly high among those employed in Managerial and Professional Occupations in Northern Ireland (62%), although this figure is similar to that observed across the UK as a whole for the Managerial and Professional group (55%).

Table 5.6: Working to Tight Deadlines by Selected Characteristics

% Three Quarters of Time or More	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	50.5	50.5	53.5	52.3
Female	50.3	49.8	47.4	48.5
Sector				
Private	50.7	50.0	49.9	50.0
Public	50.9	52.9	52.4	52.5
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	54.4	52.9	52.0	52.4
Part-time	35.6	41.7	45.6	43.7
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	46.8	48.7	50.6	49.9
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	53.5	50.3	53.3	52.0
Mainly by women	48.7	51.2	46.5	48.4
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	64.4	59.1	47.0	50.5
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	46.7	44.3	50.2	47.7
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	53.0	52.2	61.1	57.2
Administration and Defence (N-O)	46.3	48.4	55.4	52.2
Education and Health (P-S)	48.4	50.4	45.7	47.7
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	62.2	53.2	56.2	55.1
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	41.2	50.5	42.7	45.6
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	40.0	40.2	46.3	44.1
All	50.4	50.1	50.6	50.4

5.4 Repetition and Variety of Tasks

Analysis has revealed that workers in Northern Ireland are more likely to report that their jobs require them to work hard, that they work at high speed and that they work under relatively high levels of tension. These findings may in part relate to the kind of work that is conducted by workers in Northern Ireland. The SES includes questions that explore the nature of tasks performed. The survey firstly asks, 'How often does your work involve carrying out short, repetitive tasks?'. This is then followed up by a question which asks, 'How much variety is there in your job?'. It can be seen in Figure 5.3 that repetitive tasks are a routine part of work for around half of workers across the UK, with 48% reporting that they perform such tasks either always (14%) or often (34%). Workers in Northern Ireland are more likely to report that their work always involves carrying out repetitive work tasks (18%) compared to the average for the UK as a whole (14%). Likewise, Figure 5.4 reveals that workers in Northern Ireland are less likely to report that there is 'a great deal' of variety in their jobs (14%) compared to that observed across the UK overall (18%).

Figure 5-3: Repetition in Tasks

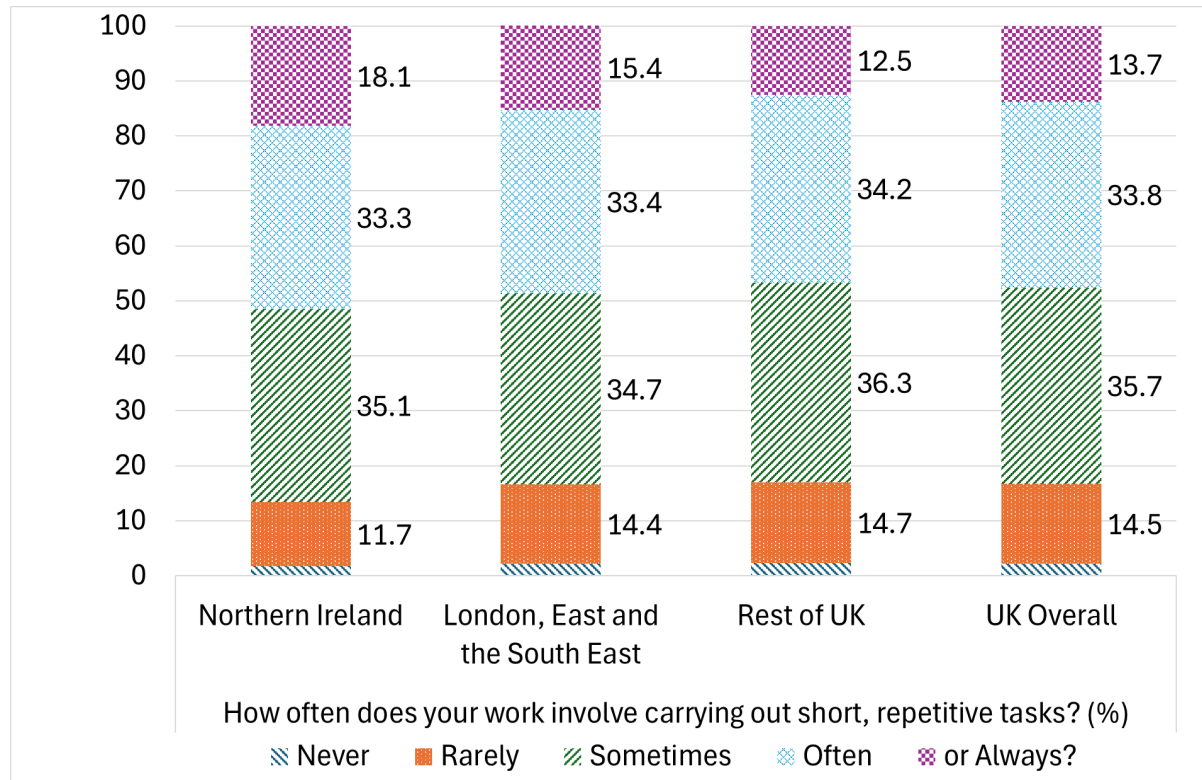
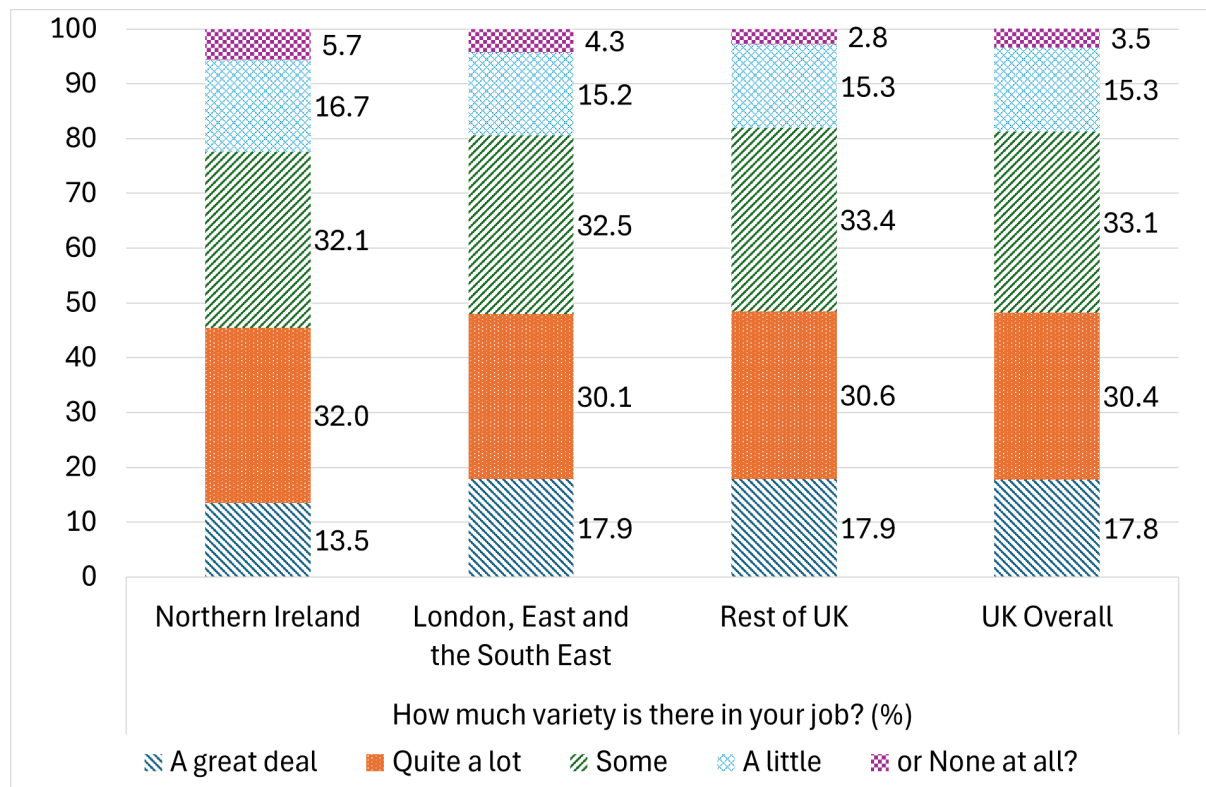


Figure 5-4: Variety in Job



Tables 5.7 and 5.8 explore which groups of workers are more likely to be in jobs that are characterized by high levels of repetition (defined as carrying out short, repetitive tasks either often or always) and low levels of variety (defined as the level of variety being a little or none at all). Table 5.7 reveals that those groups who are more likely to be engaged in highly repetitive work in Northern Ireland include women (57%) or those in roles that are mainly performed by women (60%), those aged 20 to 34 years (60%), those with a limiting ill-health condition (60%), part time workers (65%) and those based in the private sector (54%). Table 5.8 reveals that those groups who are more likely to be engaged in work that lacks variety in Northern Ireland similarly include younger workers (30%), those with a limiting ill-health condition (31%), part time workers (40%) and those based in the private sector (26%).

Table 5:7: Performance of Short Repetitive Tasks by Selected Characteristics

% Often or always	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	46.8	46.3	44.4	45.2
Female	56.6	51.1	49.1	50.1
Age				
20-34 years	60.3	55.8	53.2	54.3
35-49 years	47.1	47.0	43.0	44.8
50+ years	46.7	41.3	43.4	42.7
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	60.3	52.8	58.2	56.5
No limiting ill-health/disability	49.7	48.1	43.9	45.7
Sector				
Private	53.7	52.5	47.1	49.4
Public	46.4	41.0	46.9	44.7
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	47.7	45.0	45.3	45.2
Part-time	65.3	60.4	51.8	55.7
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	51.1	48.1	44.3	45.6
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	45.6	45.1	45.5	45.3
Mainly by women	60.2	56.1	51.2	53.4
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	62.9	58.7	43.9	48.1
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	62.0	71.2	67.1	68.7
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	35.6	42.5	34.7	37.9
Administration and Defence (N-O)	41.4	38.7	40.5	39.8
Education and Health (P-S)	50.8	39.4	45.6	43.3
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	33.0	31.7	37.5	35.1
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	64.7	67.0	51.5	57.7
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	67.5	81.8	65.2	70.9
Total	51.5	48.8	46.6	47.6

Table 5:8: Variety of Job Tasks

% A little or none at all	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	22.5	21.0	17.1	18.7
Female	22.4	18.0	19.2	18.8
Age				
20-34 years	30.4	25.1	22.4	23.5
35-49 years	18.3	18.8	12.7	15.4
50+ years	18.4	14.4	20.2	18.1
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	31.1	18.7	24.9	23.1
No limiting ill-health/disability	20.7	19.6	16.5	17.8
Sector				
Private	25.7	22.9	19.9	21.2
Public	17.2	15.1	16.4	15.9
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	17.7	16.0	16.5	16.3
Part-time	40.0	30.0	24.1	27.0
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	25.9	15.2	17.7	17.2
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	21.6	21.9	16.9	19.1
Mainly by women	20.9	18.4	20.5	19.7
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	22.8	12.4	13.7	13.6
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	36.2	44.8	32.5	37.7
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	17.7	17.3	9.8	13.1
Administration and Defence (N-O)	29.0	8.2	20.5	15.5
Education and Health (P-S)	13.0	11.4	15.5	13.8
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	9.9	11.2	12.1	11.7
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	23.5	20.3	20.4	20.5
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	45.9	47.2	31.2	37.1
Total	22.5	19.4	18.1	18.7

Like-for-like comparisons made for specific groups of workers generally confirms that the incidence of repetitive work and work that lacks variety is higher in Northern Ireland than for the UK overall. Analysis by industry and occupation, however, demonstrates that rates of repetitive work are broadly comparable to those observed across the UK. One area of concern appears to be the relatively high incidence of jobs within the Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities sectors in Northern Ireland that involve short repetitive tasks (63%) compared to the UK average for the sector overall (48%). However, these differences could reflect sectoral differences in the occupational composition of employment in Northern Ireland compared to elsewhere.

The higher rate of jobs that lack variety in Northern Ireland however appear to persist among low skilled workers when like for like comparisons by occupational group are made. Within Northern Ireland, 46% of those employed Sales, Operative and Elementary roles report that their work lacks variety. This is compared to just 31% among those employed in such roles across the UK as a whole. Those in Managerial and Professional occupations however enjoy as much variety in these roles as their counterparts do elsewhere in the UK.

5.5 Discretion

The survey contains a number of questions that identify the amount of discretion workers have over the tasks that they perform. Respondents to the SES are asked, 'How much influence do you personally have on.... How hard you work? Deciding what tasks you are to do? Deciding how you are to do the task? Deciding the quality standards to which you work?'. Figure 5.5 reveals that levels of discretion are highest with respect to how hard workers work and the quality standards to which they work, with over four out of ten workers reporting that they personally have a great deal of influence over these aspects of work tasks. Levels of discretion are lowest with respect to being able to decide what tasks to do with a quarter of workers indicating that they have a great deal of influence over this.

Across each of these four measures, levels of task discretion are higher in Northern Ireland compared to elsewhere in the UK, especially in relation to how hard people work and quality standards. The right side of Figure 5.5 presents a combined measure

of task discretion, which identifies the proportion of workers who report having a great deal of influence over all aspects of work tasks. In Northern Ireland, one in five workers reporting having a great deal of influence over each of these aspects of work tasks (21%). This figure is higher than that observed across the UK as a whole (15%).

Figure 5-5: Measures of Job Discretion

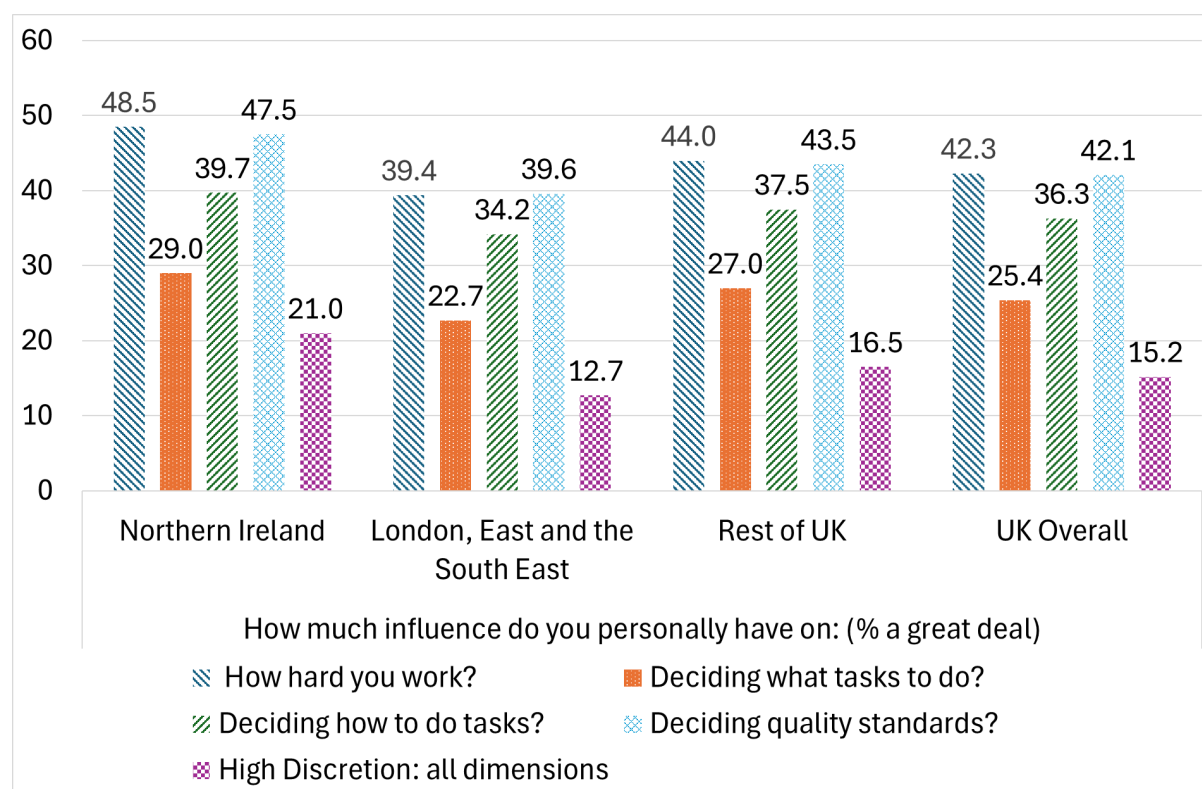


Table 5.9 shows how the combined measure of task discretion varies across different groups of workers. Analysis reveals that there is relatively little in the way of systematic variation in levels of task discretion between different groups of workers. Of the patterns that do emerge, among those employed in Northern Ireland, task discretion is found to be relatively high among older workers (24% among those aged 50+), those who work full time (22%) as opposed to part time (17%) and those who are employed at relatively small workplaces (28% among those based at establishments with 25 or fewer workers). Comparisons for occupational areas reveal that, even among specific groups of workers, reported levels of task discretion are higher in Northern Ireland than they are across the UK as a whole, particularly among those in lower skilled roles.

Table 5:9: High Job Discretion by Selected Characteristics

%	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Age				
20-34 years	15.6	5.2	13.2	10.4
35-49 years	23.8	13.6	16.8	15.6
50+ years	23.6	20.6	20.4	20.6
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	22.1	14.8	16.9	16.3
Part-time	16.6	6.1	15.0	11.3
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	27.8	19.1	23.8	22.0
26-100 workers	17.5	7.8	14.2	12.1
100+ workers	18.5	9.6	12.4	11.5
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	18.1	14.8	19.1	17.3
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	22.3	11.7	16.3	14.8
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	25.6	6.5	10.2	9.4
All	21.0	12.7	16.5	15.2

5.6 Advanced Technologies and Work Control

The 2024 version of the SES introduced several new questions to measure the adoption of advanced task-automating technologies (Henseke *et al.*, 2025). Respondents were asked, ‘Does your job involve working with automated machinery, tools or processes, including the use of robots, AI algorithms and technologies for automated information sharing (such as Dropbox)?’. Those who answered in the affirmative or indicated some importance of computer use in their job were asked to specify if their job involved ‘the use of automated machinery, automated equipment or robots, these are machines which carry out complex physical tasks’, ‘using software that has artificial intelligence’, ‘using software that simplifies complex mental tasks or makes recommendations on how you should be working’ and ‘the use of information sharing technologies which allow you to collaborate or communicate with others (e.g. drop-box or video-conferencing)’.

Figure 5.6 reveals that, across a variety of measures, workers in Northern Ireland report low levels of engagement with advanced technologies in their jobs. For example, only one in five workers in Northern Ireland (20%) report using information sharing technologies compared to over one in four (27%) across the UK as a whole. Despite the introduction of task automating technologies in recent years, such as ChatGPT, which has raised the profile of AI applications, the reported use of software that embodies artificial intelligence by workers in Northern Ireland is relatively low (9%) compared to that reported across the UK as a whole (13%).

Figure 5-6: Use of Advanced Technologies

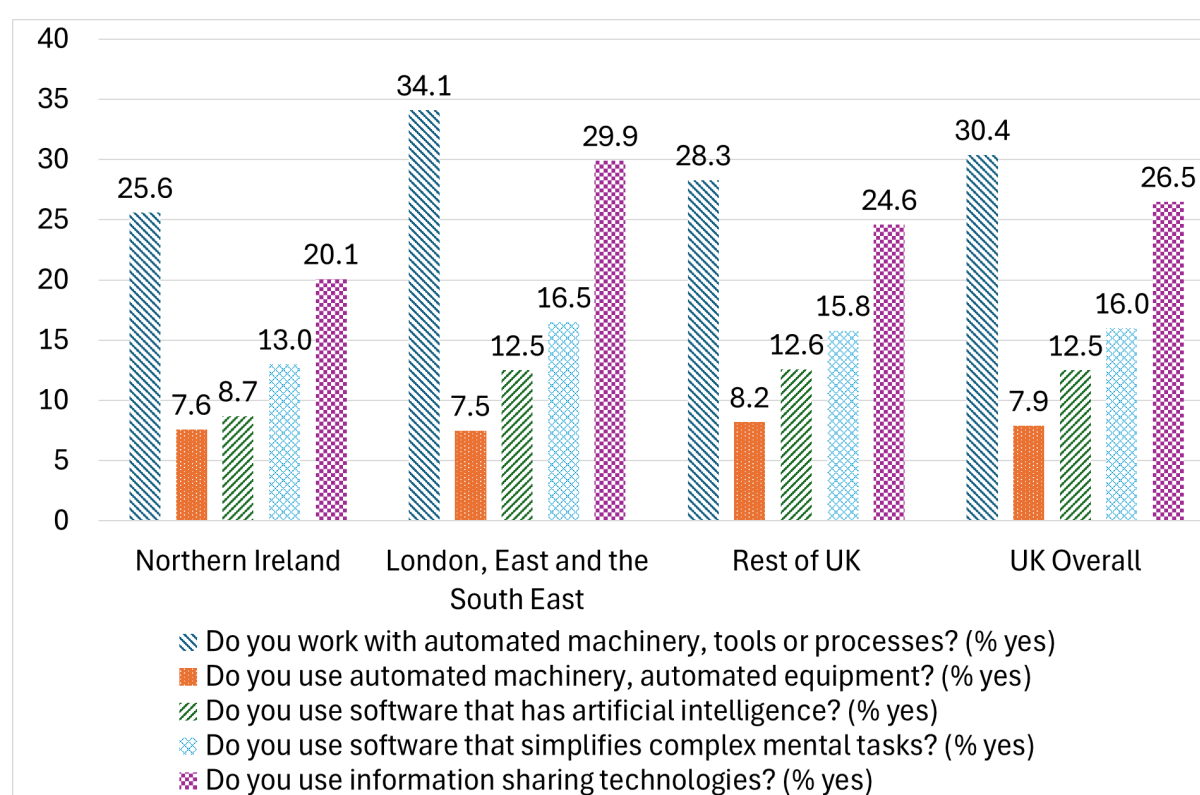


Table 5.10 reveals that overall engagement with automated machinery, tools and processes is higher among men, younger workers, full timers, those in the private sector, those working in larger workplaces and those in higher skilled occupations. Levels of engagement are also higher among those in Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities and the ICT, Finance, Real Estate sectors. Lower levels of engagement in Northern Ireland with advanced technologies are particularly apparent among the young, those in female segregated roles, those working in the ICT, Finance, Real Estate sectors and those in Managerial and Professional occupations.

Table 5:10: Use of Automated Machinery, Tools or Processes by Selected Characteristics

%	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	Total
Gender				
Male	30.2	40.2	32.7	35.4
Female	20.7	28.2	23.4	25.3
Age				
20-34 years	26.1	38.9	32.0	34.3
35-49 years	29.7	33.7	27.9	30.4
50+ years	18.8	26.3	24.1	24.8
Sector				
Private	29.8	39.7	30.3	33.9
Public	21.0	24.2	23.6	23.7
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	29.1	40.6	32.3	35.3
Part-time	12.8	14.0	13.4	13.6
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	31.7	46.0	35.2	38.4
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	31.5	33.9	28.7	31.0
Mainly by women	12.2	24.9	19.5	21.4
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	19.3	25.0	22.0	23.1
26-100 workers	22.2	35.9	22.1	26.8
100+ workers	33.8	41.4	39.7	40.2
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	39.8	38.0	33.9	35.1
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	14.3	32.1	16.2	22.8
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	40.2	50.5	49.4	49.6
Administration and Defence (N-O)	24.3	29.8	25.0	27.0
Education and Health (P-S)	17.6	25.2	21.5	22.9
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	31.5	43.3	38.5	40.3
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	21.0	26.8	16.5	20.5
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	18.8	12.4	16.3	15.0
All	25.6	34.1	28.3	30.4

The use of computerised equipment can have implications for work intensity. Such technologies have made it increasingly easy to schedule and fill up the working day with tasks, meaning that employees have fewer gaps during the day. The SES asks a series of questions regarding how computerised or automated equipment is used to control work tasks. In Table 5.11 it can be seen that among those in Northern Ireland who report using such equipment, the largest impact is observed in terms of this equipment being used to monitor work (14%). Approximately one in ten report that this equipment is used to track the time and duration of work, whilst eight per cent report that the equipment provides management with information to evaluate performance. Only five per cent report that the equipment is used to set out work tasks. There is relatively little difference in these responses across the UK.

Table 5:11: Automated equipment and work control

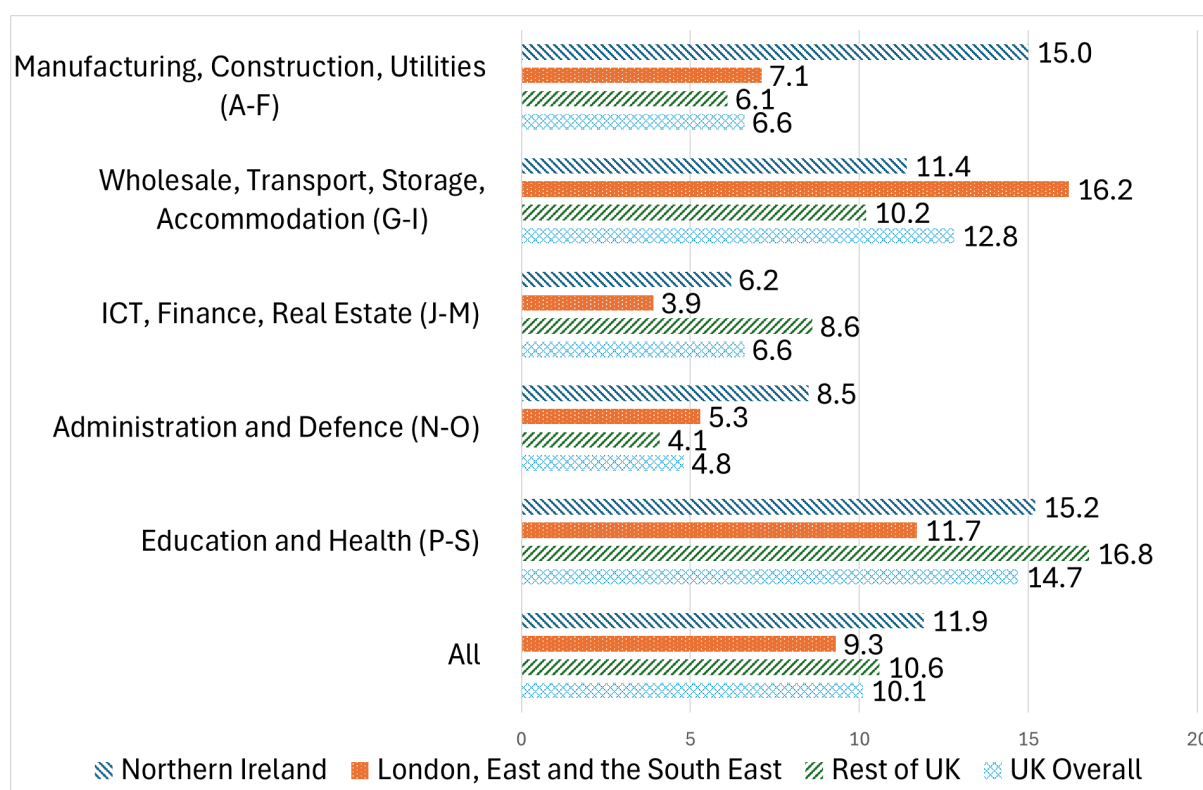
%	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Does this equipment set out what you are to do and when?				
Yes	5.3	6.3	6.5	6.4
No	92.0	89.0	90.8	90.1
Unsure	2.8	4.7	2.8	3.5
Does this equipment monitor your work?				
Yes	13.8	13.9	13.5	13.7
No	82.8	80.3	82.5	81.7
Unsure	3.5	5.8	3.9	4.6
Does this equipment track when and for how long you have worked?				
Yes	9.7	8.4	9.0	8.8
No	85.7	85.3	87.5	86.6
Unsure	4.5	6.2	3.5	4.6
Does this equipment provide management info to evaluate performance?				
Yes	8.3	11.5	10.1	10.6
No	86.4	81.2	85.9	84.1
Unsure	5.3	7.2	4.0	5.3

5.7 High Strain Jobs

The adverse effects of high intensity work upon workers occur when high levels of intensity are combined with low levels of autonomy. These are referred to as ‘high strain’ jobs. Using data from the SES, we define ‘high strain’ jobs as those in which respondents ‘strongly agree’ with the statement that ‘my job requires that I work very hard’ and where they report having, on average, ‘not much’ influence over work intensity; task selection; task execution; and quality standards.

Figure 5.7 presents data on the proportion of workers who are in high strain jobs. Twelve per cent of workers in Northern Ireland were classified as being employed in high strain jobs – slightly higher than the UK as a whole (10%). There is less systematic variation in the patterns of high strain jobs between different groups of workers. Within Northern Ireland, employment within the Manufacturing, Construction and Utilities sector is associated with a relatively high proportion of workers in high strain jobs (15%) compared to the UK overall (7%). Within Northern Ireland, the incidence of high strain jobs is also relatively high within the Education and Health sectors (15%) and the Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation sectors (11%).

Figure 5-7: High Strain Jobs



6 Health, Safety and Psychological Well Being

6.1 Introduction

Work has long been acknowledged as an important social determinant of health and well-being. There is strong evidence to suggest that being in work is good for both physical and mental well-being (Green *et al.*, 2013 and 2016; Chandola and Zhang, 2017). Work provides more than simply a source of income for many in employment, offering benefits such as intrinsic interest and a sense of belonging. However, work can also be detrimental to health. For example, physical risk factors associated with working in hazardous environments increases the risk of workplace accidents in some industries. Ergonomic risk factors may similarly contribute to longer term work related ill-health conditions. Those in customer facing roles may be at an increased risk of abuse from the public (Green *et al.*, 2025).

This chapter considers how workers perceive their jobs affect their health and well-being. We first examine whether respondents believe their health and safety is at risk because of work. In the context of the increased risks of dismissal for poor performance in Northern Ireland (see Section 4.4), we also explore the issue of presenteeism – working whilst unwell. We then provide new evidence on the relatively under-researched topic of abuse at work, exploring the extent to which workers have been the victims of physical violence, harassment and bullying. We then examine job related wellbeing through an exploration of the enthusiasm and contentment that workers feel towards their jobs. Finally, we explore the issue of meaningful work – the extent to which workers find their jobs worthwhile, significant, useful, and valuable (Zhou *et al.*, 2025).

6.2 Health and Safety and Work

The Skills and Employment Survey asks respondents to provide an assessment of whether their health and safety is at risk because of their work. Figure 6.1 reveals that one in four workers in Northern Ireland regard themselves as being at risk, a figure that is comparable to that observed across the UK as a whole (24%). Analysis reveals that there is relatively little systematic variation in responses to this question across different population sub-groups. The main exception to this is the greater risks that are

perceived among those with poorer levels of health. Within Northern Ireland, four out of ten workers who regard their health as 'fair' report perceiving their health and safety as at risk because of their work. This figure falls to 18% among those who regard their health as 'excellent'. Comparisons between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK that account for the health of workers confirm that there is relatively little difference in perceived exposure to risk among workers in Northern Ireland compared to elsewhere, although those in Northern Ireland who regard their health as 'excellent' appear more likely to report that their health and safety is at risk compared to elsewhere.

Figure 6-1: Health and Safety at Work



Related to the health and safety of workers, the SES also includes questions that address the issue of presenteeism, defined as the act of working while sick. The reasons behind presenteeism may include workplace culture, the costs to workers associated with taking time off or job insecurity that makes people feel that they must be seen to be at work. Figure 6.2 reveals that approximately three quarters of workers in Northern Ireland report working whilst they were sick over the previous 12 months. The rate of presenteeism is also higher among those with poorer levels of health, increasing to 81% among workers in Northern Ireland who regard their health as being

‘fair’. This figure is approximately six percentage points higher than the overall UK average for workers who regard their health as being ‘fair’. Otherwise, there is relatively little difference in rates of presenteeism among workers in Northern Ireland compared to elsewhere when accounting for self-reported health.

Figure 6-2: Working Whilst Sick

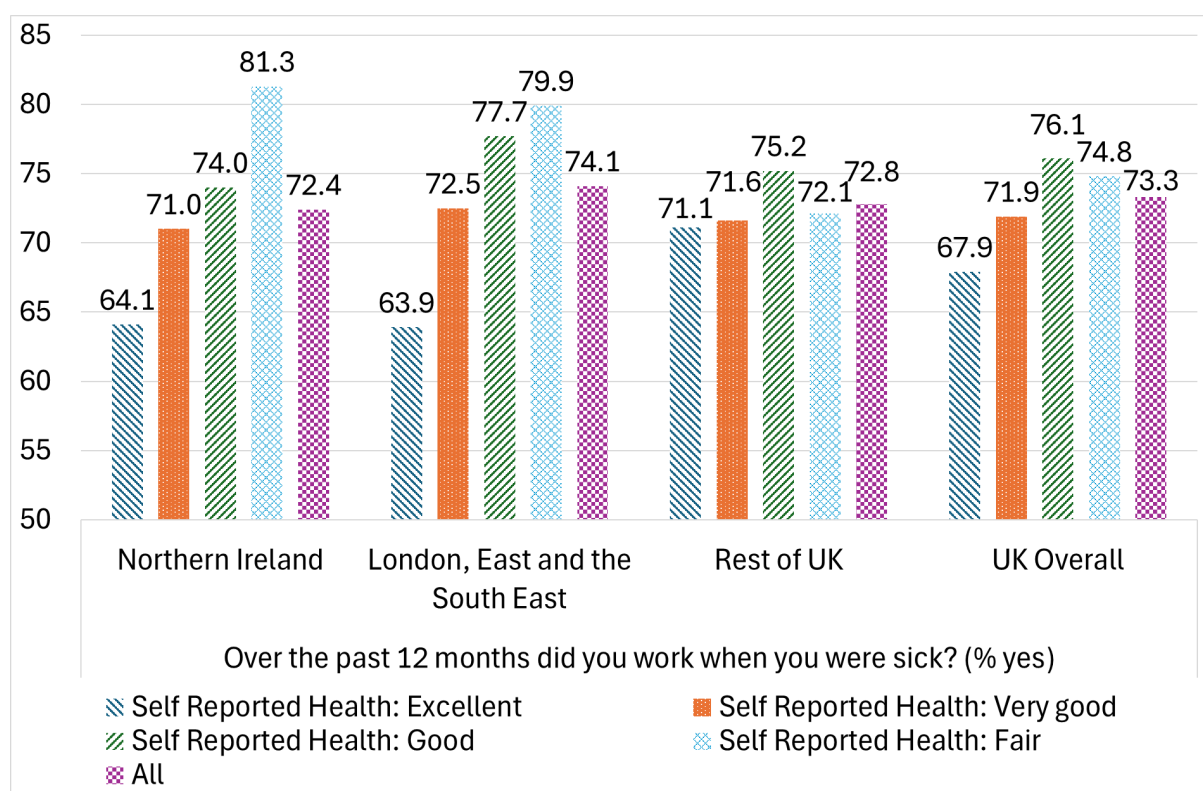
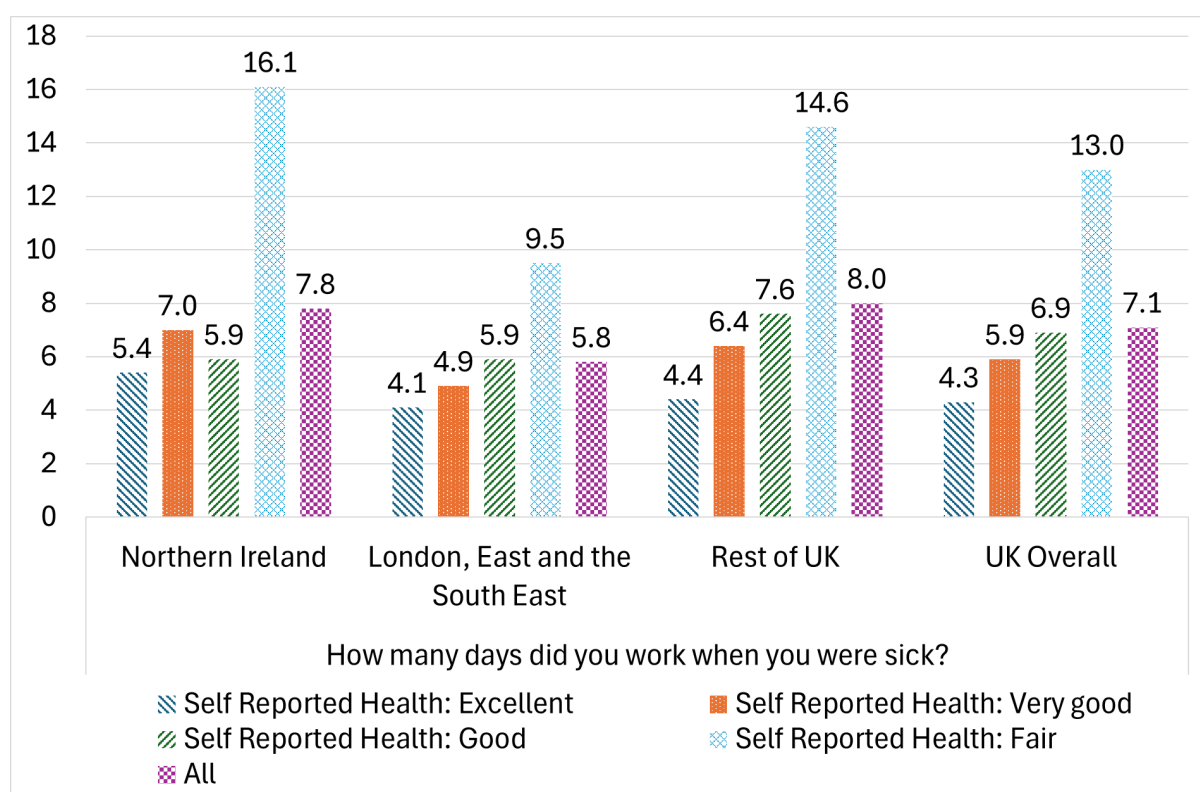


Figure 6.3 reports the average number of days that respondents to the SES reported that they worked while they were sick. Among those workers in Northern Ireland who reported that they had worked whilst they were sick, the average number of days worked was eight. Workers in Northern Ireland work approximately one day more while sick than the overall average for the UK, but two days more than workers within London, the East and the South East of England. Once again, those workers who perceive their health as being ‘fair’ report working the most days whilst sick. Within Northern Ireland, the average number of days worked whilst sick amongst those who perceive their health as being ‘fair’ is 16 – over two days more than the overall average for the UK and seven days more than workers in London, the East and the South East of England.

Figure 6-3: Number of Days Worked Whilst Sick



6.3 Abuse at Work

Respondents to the SES who were employees and who had been in employment a year earlier were asked: 'Over the past 12 months, during the course of your work have you been subjected to any of the following: physical violence, sexual harassment, bullying/harassment, cyberbullying?'. In each case, respondents were simply asked to reply either 'yes' or 'no'. This approach allows us to provide a picture of the type of abuse experienced at work. Only a very small number of respondents reported that they were the victims of cyber bullying and so for the purposes of this analysis, this group is combined with the broader category of 'bullying/harassment'.

It can be seen in Figure 6.4 that ten per cent of employees in the UK reported that they had been victims of bullying/harassment at work; six per cent reported that they had been the victims of physical violence and three per cent reported that they had experienced sexual harassment at work. Taking these categories together, more than one in seven employees (15%) report having experienced at least one form of workplace abuse over the previous 12 months. It can be seen that the prevalence of both physical violence (5%) and sexual harassment (less than 1%) appear to be lower

in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. However, levels of bullying and harassment are higher in Northern Ireland (12%) compared to other areas of the UK outside of London, the East and the South East of England (9%).

Figure 6-4: Abuse at Work

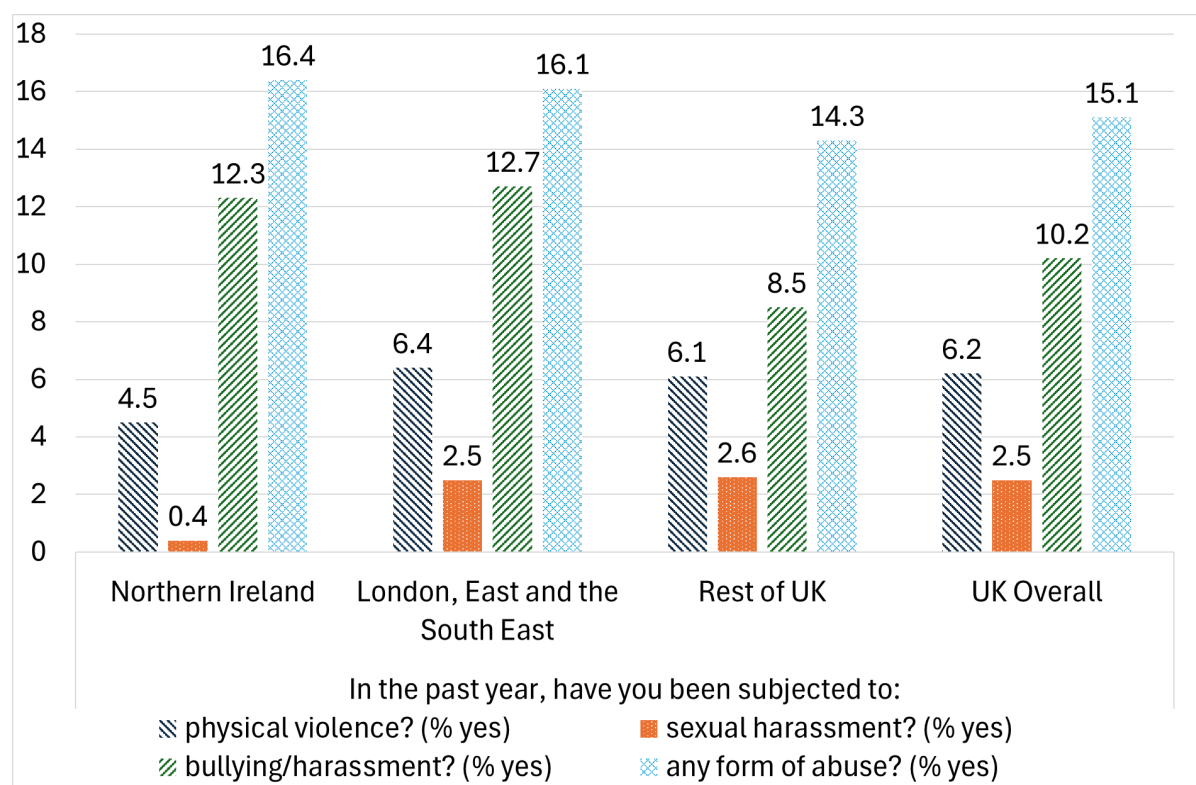


Table 6.1 examines the incidence of workplace abuse in all its forms by selected personal and job-related characteristics. The prevalence of workplace abuse is greater for women than for men. Within Northern Ireland, 20% of women reported having suffered abuse over the previous 12 months compared to 13% of men. The risk of suffering abuse in the workplace is greater among those with poorer levels of health. Within Northern Ireland, a quarter of workers who regard their health as ‘fair’ report being the victims of workplace abuse. This figure falls to 13% among those who regard their health as being ‘excellent’, although comparisons between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK reveal that it is among this group of workers where rates of workplace abuse are noticeably higher in Northern Ireland compared to elsewhere. Relatedly, those workers with a limiting ill-health condition report higher rates of abuse. The incidence of abuse suffered by such workers is relatively high in Northern Ireland (26%) compared to that exhibited across the UK as a whole (20%).

Table 6:1: Abuse at Work by Selected Characteristics

%	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	13.2	14.5	10.0	11.7
Female	19.7	17.6	19.1	18.5
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	13.4	8.3	7.6	8.1
Very good	16.2	17.8	12.2	14.5
Good	14.9	14.4	15.4	15.0
Fair	25.3	25.9	23.8	24.4
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	26.3	22.7	18.2	19.9
No limiting ill-health/disability	14.5	15.1	13.4	14.1
Sector				
Private	11.0	13.7	12.4	12.9
Public	23.8	21.7	18.5	19.9
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	18.1	12.5	8.1	9.4
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	9.1	26.1	16.5	20.3
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	15.1	5.2	6.5	6.1
Administration and Defence (N-O)	16.7	11.5	13.9	12.9
Education and Health (P-S)	22.9	20.4	22.4	21.6
All	16.4	16.1	14.3	15.1

In terms of job characteristics, the next panel shows substantive gaps between public and private sector jobs. Across the UK as a whole, one in five (20%) public sector workers have been the victims of some form of abuse during the previous 12 months, as compared with 13% of workers in the private sector. The rate of abuse among public sector workers in Northern Ireland is slightly higher at 24%. The higher rates of abuse suffered by workers in the public sector will, in part, reflect the public facing roles that are associated with employment within sectors. Within Northern Ireland, almost one in four (23%) of those working in Health and Education sectors have been the victims of some form of abuse over the previous 12 months.

6.4 Enthusiasm and Contentment

In this section, we present information on two measures of subjective job-related well-being. Rather than a simple 'catch-all' question related to overall levels of satisfaction, the analysis uses a more sophisticated concept of job-related well-being using Warr's (1990) enthusiasm-depression and contentment-anxiety scales. These measures are based upon a series of questions introduced with the words 'Thinking about the past few weeks, how much of the time has your job made you feel each of the following?', each followed by an adjective describing a different feeling. The adjectives used for the enthusiasm scale include 'depressed', 'gloomy', 'miserable', 'enthusiastic', 'cheerful' and 'optimistic'. The enthusiasm scale ranges from the feeling of 'depression' (low pleasure, low arousal) to its opposite, 'enthusiasm' (high pleasure, high arousal). The contentment scale ranges from 'anxiety' (low pleasure, high arousal) to its opposite, 'contentment' (high pleasure, low arousal). The adjectives used for the contentment scale include 'tense', 'uneasy', 'worried', 'calm', 'contented' and 'relaxed'.

Table 6.2 compares levels of enthusiasm with work across the United Kingdom. In terms of the negative items, approximately 15% of workers in Northern Ireland report that their jobs make them feel 'depressed', 'gloomy' and 'miserable' either most of the time or much of the time. In terms of the positive items, approximately 35% of workers in Northern Ireland report that their jobs make them feel 'enthusiastic' either most or much of the time; 27% report that their jobs make them feel 'optimistic' and 29% report that their jobs make them feel 'cheerful'. These figures are very similar to those observed among workers across the UK as a whole.

Table 6.3 compares levels of contentment with work across the United Kingdom. In terms of the negative items, approximately a third of workers in Northern Ireland (33%) report that their jobs make them feel 'tense' either most or much of the time; 19% report that their jobs make them feel 'uneasy' and 20% report that their jobs make them feel 'worried'. In terms of the positive items, approximately 22% of workers in Northern Ireland report that their jobs make them feel 'calm' either most or much of the time; 33% report that their jobs make them feel 'contented' and 16% report that their jobs make them feel 'relaxed'. These figures are again similar to those for the UK overall.

Table 6:2 Enthusiasm with Work

Column % (total=100%)	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
How much of the time has your job made you feel: depressed				
Never	43.0	44.4	42.4	43.2
Occasionally	23.3	24.7	24.2	24.4
Some of the time	17.4	19.3	19.1	19.2
Much of the time	9.4	5.1	8.8	7.4
Most of the time	6.9	6.4	5.4	5.9
How much of the time has your job made you feel: miserable				
Never	47.6	41.6	39.3	40.4
Occasionally	25.1	30.0	29.4	29.6
Some of the time	12.7	16.2	18.2	17.3
Much of the time	8.2	5.0	7.8	6.7
Most of the time	6.3	7.2	5.2	6.0
How much of the time has your job made you feel: gloomy				
Never	33.8	31.2	32.9	32.3
Occasionally	31.8	33.8	32.4	32.9
Some of the time	19.2	21.3	20.5	20.8
Much of the time	8.2	7.3	8.5	8.0
Most of the time	6.9	6.3	5.7	6.0
How much of the time has your job made you feel: enthusiastic				
Never	13.1	8.7	10.2	9.7
Occasionally	20.4	19.1	21.6	20.6
Some of the time	31.5	35.7	29.8	32.1
Much of the time	16.9	16.6	20.9	19.2
Most of the time	18.1	19.9	17.4	18.4
How much of the time has your job made you feel: optimistic				
Never	13.8	12.0	13.2	12.7
Occasionally	23.3	23.3	24.2	23.8
Some of the time	35.8	35.4	33.5	34.3
Much of the time	15.8	13.3	17.3	15.7
Most of the time	11.3	16.0	11.9	13.5
How much of the time has your job made you feel: cheerful				
Never	10.2	8.7	8.6	8.7
Occasionally	27.6	27.2	30.6	29.2
Some of the time	33.3	33.3	31.8	32.4
Much of the time	14.5	14.6	15.9	15.4
Most of the time	14.4	16.1	13.1	14.3

Table 6:3: Contentment with Work

Column % (total=100%)	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
How much of the time has your job made you feel: tense				
Never	8.6	8.3	7.4	7.8
Occasionally	24.8	23.1	24.0	23.7
Some of the time	33.8	34.0	34.6	34.3
Much of the time	18.8	18.6	17.1	17.7
Most of the time	14.0	16.1	16.9	16.5
How much of the time has your job made you feel: uneasy				
Never	24.8	20.6	22.8	22.0
Occasionally	25.9	31.3	30.1	30.5
Some of the time	30.0	29.0	27.1	27.9
Much of the time	10.8	9.9	12.3	11.3
Most of the time	8.5	9.3	7.7	8.3
How much of the time has your job made you feel: worried				
Never	18.6	16.6	21.3	19.4
Occasionally	33.1	28.6	29.7	29.4
Some of the time	28.1	32.9	28.4	30.1
Much of the time	10.1	12.7	12.3	12.4
Most of the time	10.0	9.1	8.3	8.6
How much of the time has your job made you feel: calm				
Never	22.3	18.9	21.4	20.5
Occasionally	24.2	31.6	30.0	30.4
Some of the time	31.1	25.5	27.6	26.9
Much of the time	11.9	10.1	11.2	10.8
Most of the time	10.5	13.9	9.8	11.4
How much of the time has your job made you feel: contented				
Never	9.6	8.2	12.9	11.0
Occasionally	26.0	27.7	28.1	27.9
Some of the time	32.0	32.7	29.8	31.0
Much of the time	16.5	18.1	16.3	17.0
Most of the time	15.9	13.3	12.9	13.1
How much of the time has your job made you feel: relaxed				
Never	29.6	26.7	30.5	29.0
Occasionally	27.3	34.6	30.9	32.2
Some of the time	26.9	20.3	23.4	22.3
Much of the time	8.9	11.3	10.0	10.5
Most of the time	7.3	7.1	5.3	6.0

To make comparisons of overall levels of enthusiasm and contentment between different groups of workers, indices were derived by taking the average of the responses to each question set, having first reversed the coding of negative items. Those who, on average, reported that their jobs either ‘never’ or only ‘occasionally’ made them feel enthusiastic or contented were defined as exhibiting low levels of enthusiasm or contentment. Figure 6.5 reveals that, compared to other areas of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland exhibits the highest proportion of workers who report low levels of enthusiasm (16%). Those based in London, the East and the South East of England are least likely to report having low levels of enthusiasm (12%). Across all parts of the UK, almost three out of ten workers report low levels of contentment in their work.

Figure 6-5: Job Enthusiasm and Contentment

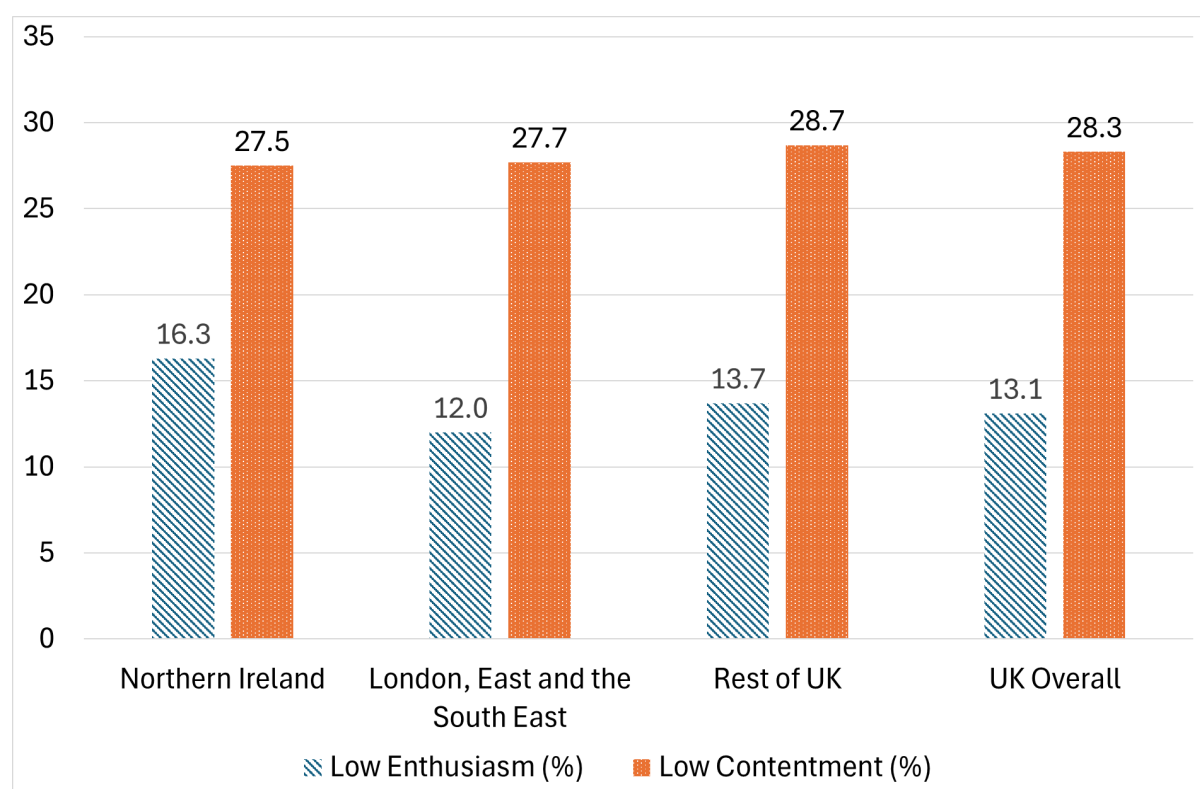


Table 6.4 shows how levels of enthusiasm vary across different groups of workers. Workers in Northern Ireland who exhibit relatively low levels of enthusiasm compared to the average for the UK include men (19% compared 15% across the UK overall); those aged 20-34 (25% compared to 15%); those with a limiting ill-health condition (28% compared to 22%); those employed in the private sector (19% compared to

14%); those employed in jobs that were mainly done by men (25% compared to 14%) and those in lower skilled occupations. Over a quarter of workers employed in Sales, Operative and Elementary roles (27%) in Northern Ireland report low levels of enthusiasm with work compared to 16% across the UK as a whole.

Table 6:4: Low Enthusiasm with Work by Selected Characteristics

%	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	18.5	13.2	15.3	14.6
Female	13.9	10.8	11.9	11.5
Age				
20-34 years	25.0	12.4	15.8	14.9
35-49 years	13.4	14.8	13.5	14.1
50+ years	9.3	6.9	11.2	9.6
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	28.3	14.9	24.4	21.5
No limiting ill-health/disability	13.9	11.5	11.1	11.3
Sector				
Private	19.4	12.9	15.1	14.4
Public	12.7	10.9	12.7	12.0
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	24.5	14.5	12.7	13.5
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	13.7	12.3	13.9	13.2
Mainly by women	13.3	9.4	14.6	12.6
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	12.2	13.6	11.5	12.4
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	15.3	10.8	13.8	12.7
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	26.5	8.6	19.3	15.9
All	16.3	12.0	13.7	13.1

Table 6.5 presents information on contentment for different groups of workers. Approximately 28% of workers in Northern Ireland are estimated to have low levels of contentment with work, a figure comparable to that observed across the UK as a whole. Those workers who exhibit the lowest levels of contentment in Northern Ireland include those aged 20 to 34 (33%); those who have a limiting ill-health condition (37%);

those employed in the private sector (29%); those working in jobs that are mainly done by men (31%); and those employed in Managerial and Professional Occupations (33%). Unlike enthusiasm where workers in Northern Ireland often fared worse, levels of contentment in Northern Ireland are similar to those observed elsewhere in the UK.

Table 6:5: Low Contentment with Work by Selected Characteristics

%	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	25.6	25.9	28.4	27.4
Female	29.4	29.5	29.0	29.2
Age				
20-34 years	33.4	32.5	32.4	32.5
35-49 years	28.0	28.0	29.3	28.7
50+ years	19.0	22.5	23.0	22.7
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	36.9	41.2	42.8	42.1
No limiting ill-health/disability	25.6	25.4	25.3	25.4
Sector				
Private	29.3	25.7	28.2	27.3
Public	25.9	32.7	32.9	32.6
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
mainly by men	31.1	29.4	30.1	29.9
by a fairly equal mixture of men and women	26.1	24.1	26.4	25.4
mainly by women	26.4	33.0	30.7	31.5
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	32.5	30.3	30.1	30.2
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	20.8	23.5	27.7	25.9
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	29.1	26.4	25.8	26.1
All	27.5	27.7	28.7	28.3

6.5 Meaningful Work

Meaningful work typically involves performing job tasks that are seen as worthwhile, significant, useful, and valuable (Zhou *et al.*, 2025). More specifically, it often comprises a sense of purpose (making a positive contribution to society), a sense of

significance (doing important work that matters), and a sense of belonging (having opportunities to build and maintain valued social relationships at work). Reflecting these dimensions, the SES asked respondents how frequently they experienced the following feelings: ‘Your job gives you the feeling of a job well done’; ‘You have the feeling of doing useful work’ and ‘Your job gives you a sense of belonging’. Each statement was rated on a five-point scale ranging from ‘never’ to ‘always’. Although the three items are highly correlated, they capture slightly different facets of meaningfulness. The first statement addresses personal achievement, the second focuses on the broader value of work, and the third emphasises social connections, a recognised source of motivation and well-being.

Figures 6.6 to 6.8 compare the distributions of responses to these questions across the UK. Overall, the majority of the UK workforce perceives their work as meaningful. Figure 6.6 shows that across the UK, most workers report feeling a sense of a “job well done” either most of the time or always. Around six out of ten workers in Northern Ireland (57%) said their job gave them the feeling of a job well done most of the time (45%) or all of the time (12%). Over two thirds of workers in Northern Ireland (68%) reported having the feeling of doing useful work either always (24%) or most of the time (44%), and close to six out of ten workers (57%) felt a sense of belonging at work either always (20%) or most of the time (38%).

Taking those who answered ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ together as a proxy for meaningless work, the proportions of workers in Northern Ireland who regard their work as meaningless are very small across all three measures. Approximately one in ten workers in Northern Ireland indicated that their job either never or rarely gives them a feeling of a job well done (Figure 6.6) or gives them a feeling of doing useful work (Figure 6.7). Approximately one in seven workers in Northern Ireland report that their work either never or rarely gives them a sense of belonging (Figure 6.8). The figures for Northern Ireland generally mirror those for the UK.

Figure 6-6: Feeling of a Job Well Done



Figure 6-7: The Feeling of Doing Useful Work

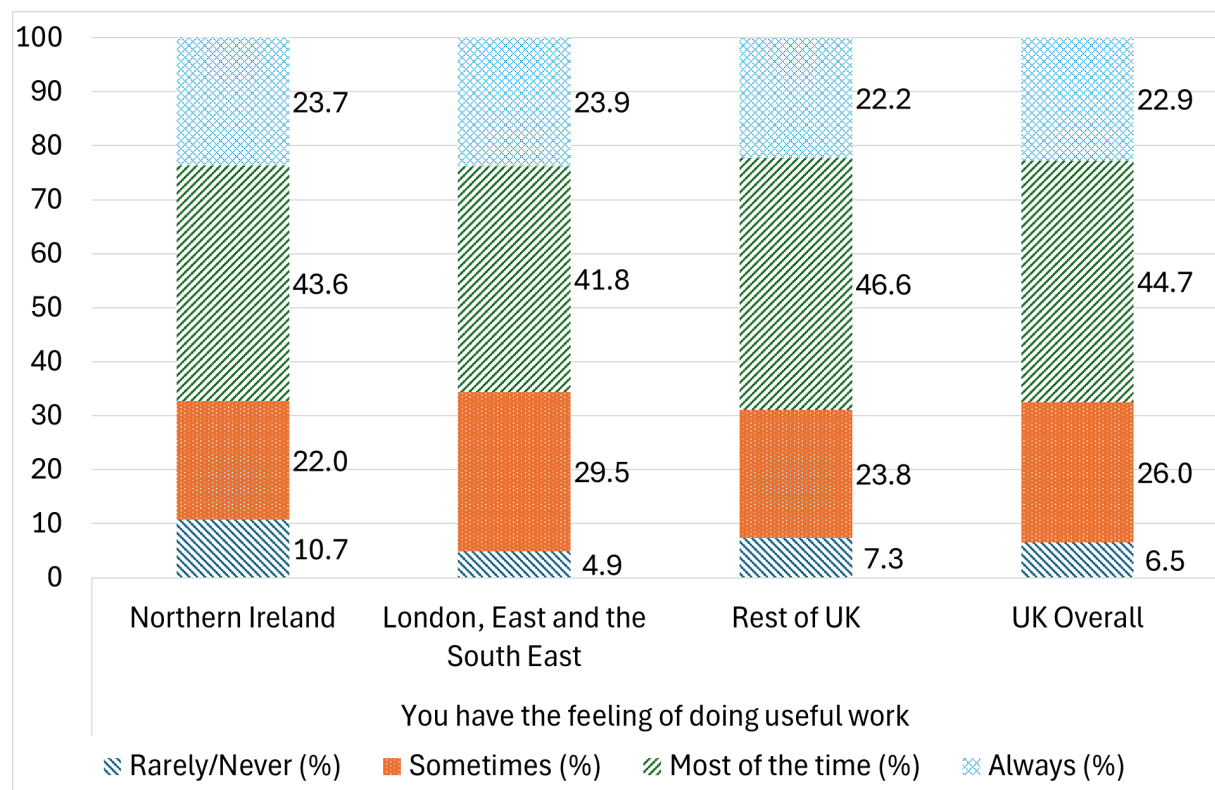
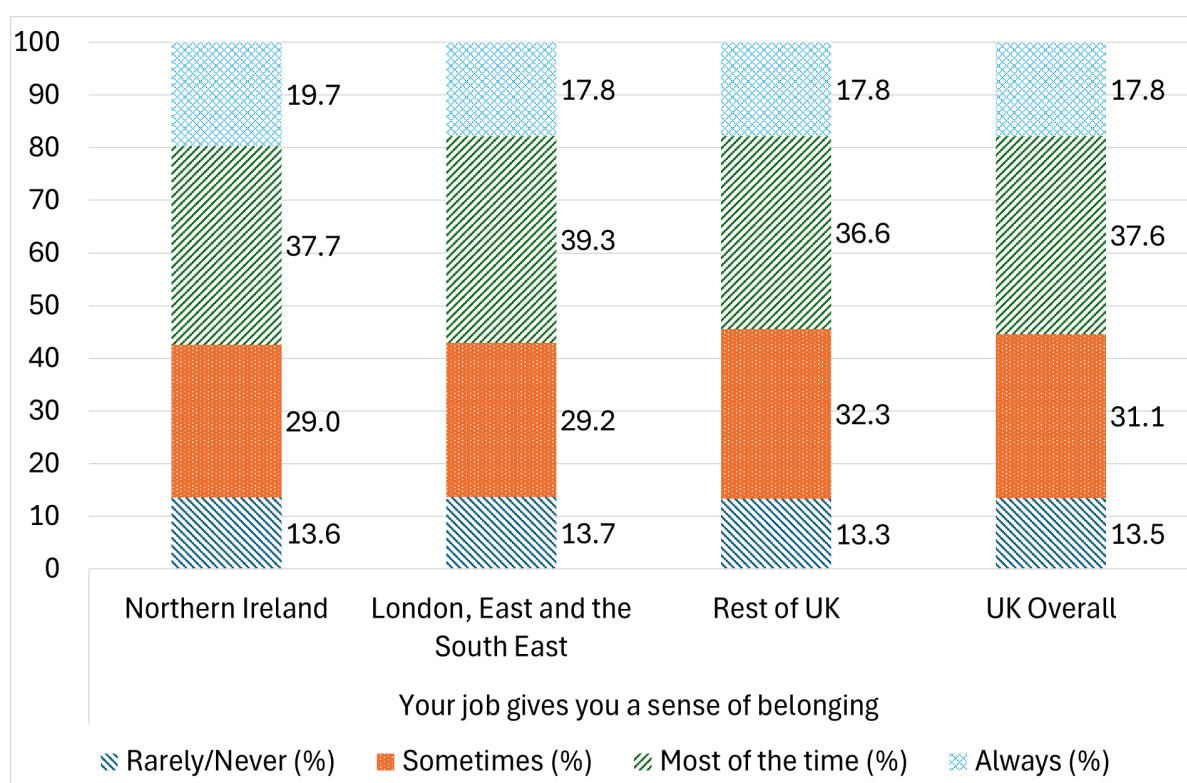


Figure 6-8: The Feeling of a Sense of Belonging



Tables 6.6, 6.7 and 6.8 show the notable variations in perceptions of meaningful work that exist across a variety of personal and job-related characteristics. In each table, we take those who answered 'always' as an indicator of the proportion of workers who feel that they are engaged in meaningful work. It can be seen that women in Northern Ireland reported higher levels of meaningfulness than men across all three items. While the gap in the feeling of doing useful work is small (24% for women and 23% for men), women are much more likely to report that they have a feeling of a job well done (14% compared to 9% for men) and that their work gives them a sense of belonging (23% compared to 17% for men). Related to this, within Northern Ireland, each of these measures of meaningfulness is relatively low among those workers who report that their jobs are mainly done by men. Furthermore, the differentials in these measures of meaningfulness between those roles that are mainly done by women and those that are mainly done by men are relatively large in Northern Ireland.

Tables 6.6, 6.7 and 6.8 also reveal a clear age gradient. Workers over the age of 50 consistently consider their work to be more meaningful than their younger counterparts. For instance, in Northern Ireland, only one in ten younger workers said

they always had the feeling of doing a job well done. This proportion increases to 18% among those over the age of 50. Similarly, younger workers are less likely to have feelings of doing a job well done and having a sense of belonging in the workplace. In Northern Ireland, another clear gradient emerges with respect to self-reported health, with workers reporting poorer health considering their work to be less meaningful. Within Northern Ireland, each of these measures of meaningfulness is relatively low among those workers who report that their health is 'fair' compared to similar workers across the UK as a whole. For example, only 11% of such workers in Northern Ireland report that their job gives them a sense of belonging, whereas across the UK as a whole the figure is 18%.

Apart from demographic characteristics, the experience of meaningful work also depends on the types of workplaces where people are employed and the jobs that they do. Those employed at the smallest workplaces, with 25 workers or fewer, are more likely to report that they have a feeling of a job well done (15%) and a sense of belonging (24%). Workers in Northern Ireland employed in the public sector also reported much stronger feelings of doing useful work (32%) compared to those in the private sector (18%). This again will, in part, reflect the relative concentration of public centred roles in sectors such as Education and Health.

Across each of the three measures, levels of meaningfulness are highest among those workers in Northern Ireland who are employed within the Education and Health sectors. Approximately one in five in these sectors report feelings of a job well done; two in five report feelings of doing useful work and a third report feelings of belonging. Furthermore, across each of the three measures, levels of meaningfulness reported by workers in these sectors in Northern Ireland are higher than those reported by workers in these sectors elsewhere in the UK.

Table 6:6: Meaningful Work: A Job Well Done by Selected Characteristics

% Always	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	9.1	8.1	10.3	9.5
Female	14.2	12.5	11.8	12.2
Age				
20-34 years	9.6	5.9	7.8	7.2
35-49 years	9.2	9.8	13.2	11.7
50+ years	17.9	17.3	12.1	14.1
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	18.7	15.4	12.9	14.1
Very good	10.4	9.2	12.9	11.4
Good	11.0	7.4	8.4	8.1
Fair	6.9	16.9	9.9	12.0
Sector				
Private	10.2	11.0	8.2	9.3
Public	12.8	6.9	14.9	11.8
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	4.2	3.3	9.3	7.4
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	12.4	11.9	13.2	12.6
Mainly by women	16.5	12.8	9.6	11.1
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	14.7	14.5	12.9	13.6
26-100 workers	13.4	7.5	10.2	9.3
100+ workers	7.3	8.4	9.9	9.2
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	6.6	6.4	13.8	11.8
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	6.7	16.2	6.5	10.5
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	7.5	7.3	6.2	6.7
Administration and Defence (N-O)	9.2	8.7	13.8	11.5
Education and Health (P-S)	20.3	11.6	15.4	14.1
All	11.6	10.4	11.0	10.8

Table 6:7: Meaningful Work: Doing Useful Work by Selected Characteristics

% Always	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	23.0	20.7	21.2	21.0
Female	24.4	27.0	23.4	24.9
Age				
20-34 years	21.5	9.6	18.7	15.6
35-49 years	21.6	27.2	22.9	24.7
50+ years	29.8	36.3	25.8	29.7
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	26.4	33.2	29.0	30.6
Very good	24.2	21.1	21.9	21.6
Good	22.2	21.7	18.7	20.0
Fair	22.0	28.9	24.2	25.6
Sector				
Private	17.5	21.8	18.9	20.0
Public	31.6	27.6	29.1	28.6
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	18.6	15.5	20.5	18.9
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	21.0	23.4	21.2	22.2
Mainly by women	31.8	31.2	26.0	28.2
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	23.2	24.0	22.6	23.2
26-100 workers	23.6	29.4	22.7	25.1
100+ workers	22.5	19.5	21.3	20.6
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	7.3	18.6	20.9	20.0
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	19.3	23.7	10.9	16.5
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	21.9	13.7	16.4	15.4
Administration and Defence (N-O)	18.4	22.4	18.8	20.3
Education and Health (P-S)	38.2	34.3	35.9	35.3
All	23.7	23.9	22.2	22.9

Table 6:8: Meaningful Work: A Sense of Belonging by Selected Characteristics

% Always	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	16.5	15.8	15.7	15.8
Female	23.2	19.6	20.1	20.0
Age				
20-34 years	16.6	10.2	13.9	12.7
35-49 years	19.6	15.8	20.6	18.5
50+ years	23.9	27.4	19.0	22.2
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	26.5	21.5	21.4	21.6
Very good	22.2	17.7	19.1	18.6
Good	16.0	14.9	15.2	15.1
Fair	11.0	22.2	16.5	18.1
Sector				
Private	19.3	17.5	14.2	15.6
Public	20.0	17.1	23.9	21.2
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	10.4	13.0	14.7	14.1
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	19.6	17.0	18.5	17.9
Mainly by women	27.4	22.5	20.5	21.5
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	24.2	19.7	19.5	19.7
26-100 workers	19.3	15.2	17.2	16.5
100+ workers	16.1	17.3	16.7	16.9
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	16.5	14.0	15.9	15.5
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	9.8	20.9	13.8	16.7
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	23.3	15.1	14.4	14.9
Administration and Defence (N-O)	7.8	16.8	19.1	17.8
Education and Health (P-S)	31.0	20.0	23.3	22.2
All	19.7	17.8	17.8	17.8

7 Social Support, Cohesion and Commitment

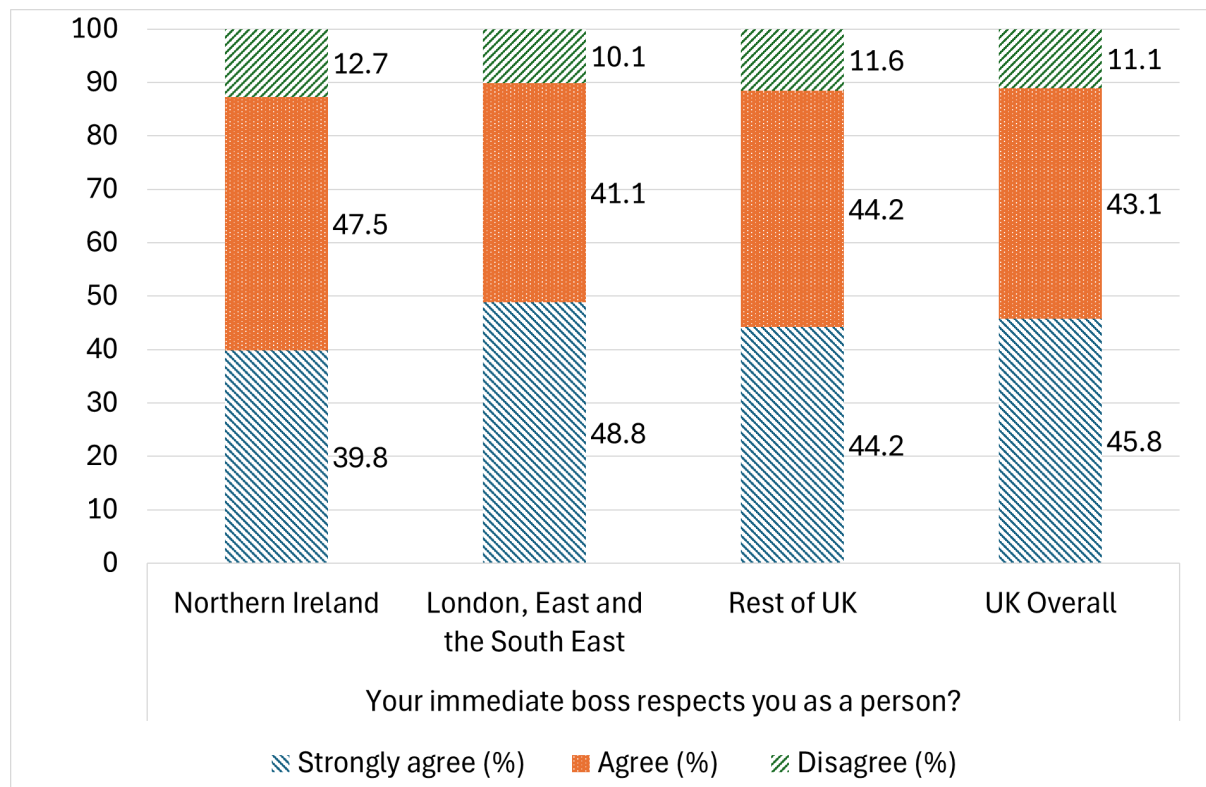
7.1 Introduction

Work is more likely to provide a source of meaning to individuals when it provides a source of social support and connectedness. Social support not only relates to how workers view the support provided by their managers but also to how they regard their colleagues. These feelings will influence how workers perceive their organisation more broadly and in turn how committed they are to it. The advantage of SES is that it asks several questions relating to these themes. This provides a fuller picture of the level of social support and cohesion at work. This chapter reflects this wider perspective. It first considers the level of respect employees are shown by their superiors and the level of managerial support employees are offered at work. The chapter then considers trust in colleagues and co-worker support. We then examine levels of organisational commitment and what factors are associated with higher levels of organisational commitment. Finally, we examine the opportunities that workers have for promotion within their organisation.

7.2 Managerial Respect and Support

This section examines how immediate superiors treat those in their charge, both in terms of the level of respect they show and the level of help or support they provide. When done well, this makes employees feel safe as well as valued at work and generates business benefits. To tap into these feelings, we asked respondents: 'To what extent do you agree or disagree that your immediate boss respects you as a person?' Respondents were asked to choose one of four options: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. In practice, very few respondents reported 'strongly disagree' and so we combine those who did with the larger group who reported that they disagreed with the statement. Figure 7.1 reveals that across the UK, the large majority of employees either *agree* or *strongly agree* that their immediate boss respects them. Four out of ten employees in Northern Ireland strongly agreed with the statement that their boss respected them as a person. This figure is slightly lower than that observed for the UK overall (46%). Within London, the East and the South East of England, almost half of workers (49%) report that they are respected by their bosses.

Figure 7-1: Managerial Respect



The survey also asked employees about the help and support they received from line managers in terms of ‘enabling you to learn how to do your job better’; ‘supporting you when you are under pressure’; and ‘recognising the extent of your abilities’. For these questions, respondents were asked to choose from the following options: ‘a great deal of help’; ‘quite a lot of help’; ‘of some help’; ‘a little help’; and ‘of no help at all’. Across each of these three measures (see Figures 7.2 to 7.4), over one in five workers in Northern Ireland report that their bosses provide a ‘great deal of help’, whilst around half report that their bosses provided either ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot of help’, although managers appear slightly more helpful in terms of recognising abilities. At the other extreme, approximately one in ten employees in Northern Ireland are of ‘no help at all’ across each of these three measures. Responses in Northern Ireland are broadly comparable to those reported by employees across the UK.

Figure 7-2: Managerial Support to do Job Better

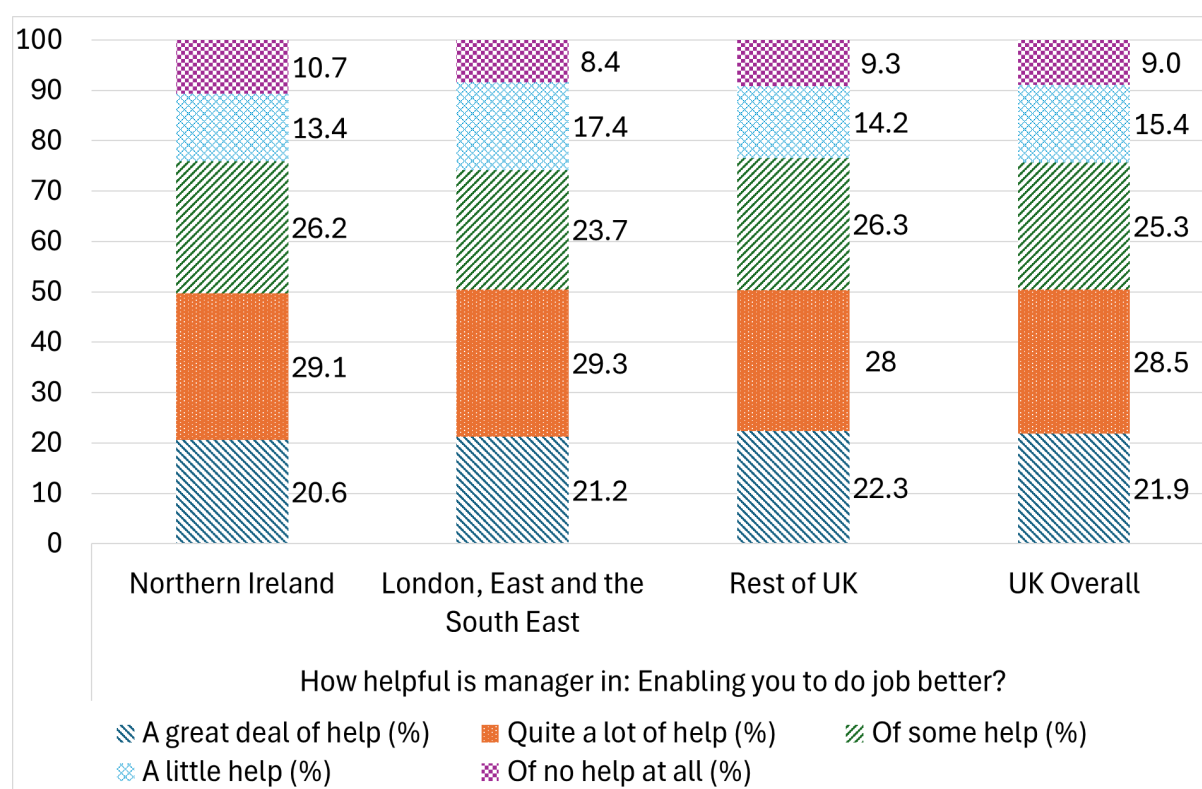


Figure 7-3: Managerial Support When Under Pressure

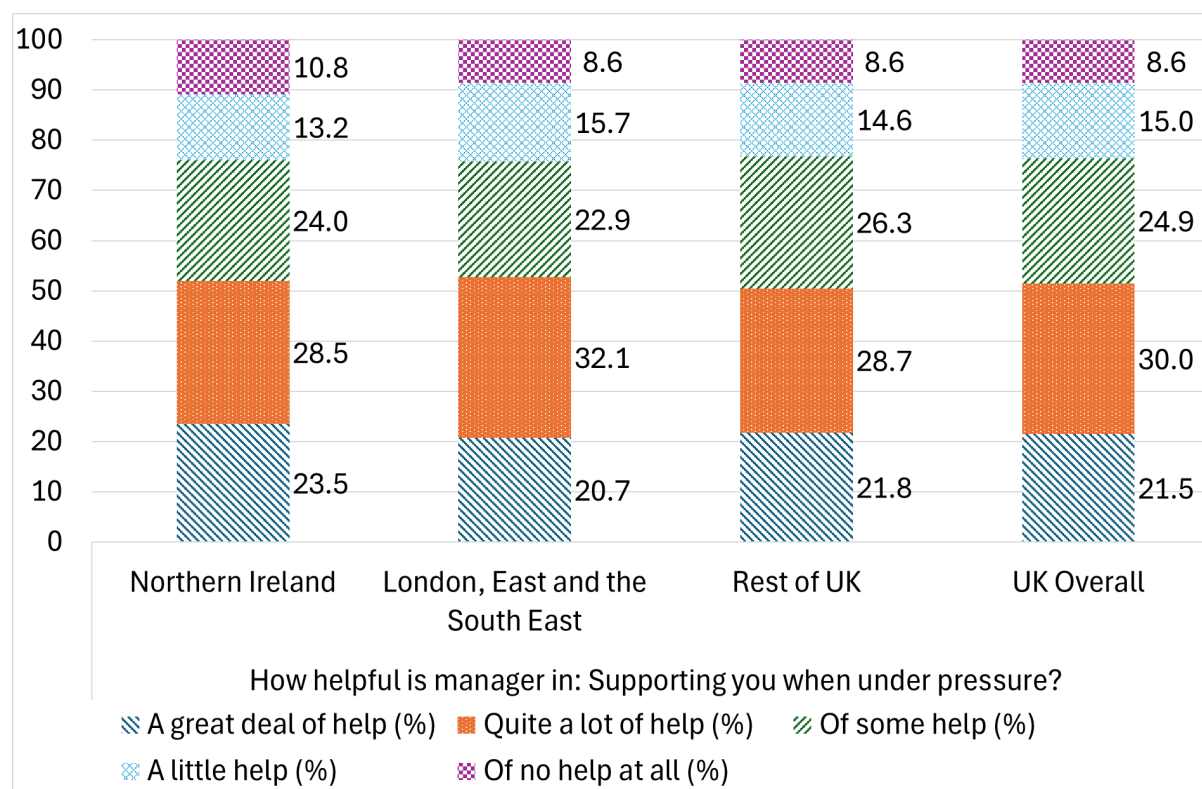


Figure 7-4: Managerial Support in Recognising Abilities

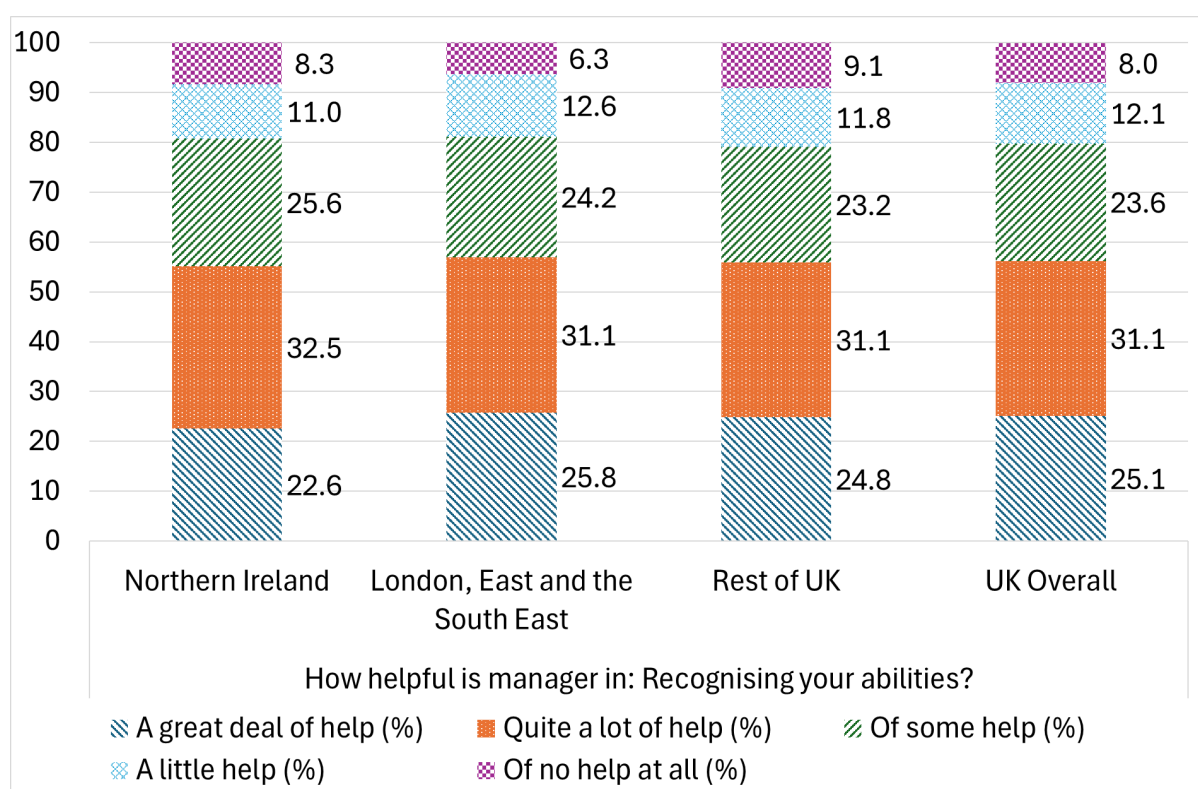


Table 7.1 examines the levels of respect that are afforded to different groups by managers in Northern Ireland compared to elsewhere.

- There is relatively little difference in levels of respect reported by gender. However, it is observed that levels of respect among workers in Northern Ireland are higher among those in roles that are performed by a fairly equal mixture of men and women whilst levels of respect are lowest among those who are employed in male dominated roles (34%). The position of those in male dominated roles in Northern Ireland does appear to be relatively poor compared to that observed across the UK as a whole.
- Younger workers in Northern Ireland are less likely to report that their boss respects them (38%) compared to younger workers across the UK (47%).
- Those workers in Northern Ireland who perceive their health as 'fair' and those who report that they have a limiting ill-health condition are both relatively less likely to report that their boss respects them.

These negative differentials appear to be wider in Northern Ireland compared to other parts of the UK.

Table 7:1: Managerial Respect by Selected Characteristics

% Strongly Agree	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	40.8	50.0	44.4	46.3
Female	38.7	47.7	44.0	45.3
Age				
20-34 years	38.3	54.4	43.4	47.1
35-49 years	42.1	45.1	46.8	46.0
50+ years	38.2	46.1	41.5	43.0
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	57.5	66.2	57.2	60.8
Very good	37.4	55.1	49.5	51.4
Good	36.4	34.4	35.0	34.8
Fair	31.3	46.1	37.0	39.4
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	34.8	43.6	43.0	43.0
No limiting ill-health/disability	40.8	49.6	44.4	46.4
Sector				
Private	37.3	49.6	43.0	45.4
Public	43.1	47.0	46.5	46.6
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	33.5	45.0	41.1	42.1
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	44.1	54.0	47.7	50.2
Mainly by women	38.2	42.0	42.0	41.9
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	26.0	54.2	41.2	43.9
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	30.9	43.1	32.0	36.6
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	49.5	52.0	54.8	53.4
Administration and Defence (N-O)	44.2	57.0	45.3	50.4
Education and Health (P-S)	43.2	46.5	47.0	46.7
All	39.8	48.8	44.2	45.8

Levels of respect afforded to workers in the private sector appear relatively low in Northern Ireland (37%) compared to the UK overall where little difference is observed between those in the private (45%) and public sectors (47%).

The lower levels of respect reported by workers in the private sector in Northern Ireland appear in particular to the very low levels of respect afforded to employees in the Manufacturing, Construction and Utilities sectors in Northern Ireland (26%) compared to the UK overall (44%). Those employed in Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation sectors are also afforded relatively low levels of respect (31%). This is however a feature of the sector across the UK and is not particular to Northern Ireland.

Tables 7.2 to 7.4 explore how perceived levels of managerial support vary across different groups of workers. The analysis reveals that whilst systematic variations exist within each of the three measures of managerial support, it is with respect to the support of managers in helping employees to do their jobs better and in helping them to recognize their own abilities that these variations are wider and that the position of some groups of workers is relatively poor. Levels of managerial support afforded to workers in Northern Ireland are relatively low among:

- men and those in roles that are predominantly done by men;
- younger workers;
- and those who perceive themselves as being in relatively poor health or who suffer from a limiting ill-health condition.

Table 7.2: Managerial Help by Selected Characteristics

% A Great Deal of Help	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	16.8	19.7	20.8	20.3
Female	24.7	22.6	23.9	23.4
Age				
20-34 years	17.5	26.3	25.0	25.3
35-49 years	22.8	17.7	21.1	19.7
50+ years	21.6	17.9	20.4	19.6
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	31.9	26.3	31.7	29.5
Very good	18.1	20.8	20.7	20.7
Good	19.8	17.0	21.3	19.5
Fair	15.5	30.9	20.0	22.9
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	16.6	17.3	25.3	22.4
No limiting ill-health/disability	21.4	21.9	21.6	21.7
Sector				
Private	18.5	21.4	21.5	21.4
Public	23.6	21.0	24.0	22.9
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	14.0	16.6	19.1	18.3
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	22.4	22.4	21.7	22.0
Mainly by women	23.3	22.6	27.0	25.1
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	12.7	9.4	22.8	19.3
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	11.1	15.8	14.7	15.0
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	26.7	24.4	21.4	22.8
Administration and Defence (N-O)	25.4	28.4	26.2	27.2
Education and Health (P-S)	25.8	22.8	25.0	24.2
All	20.6	21.2	22.3	21.9

Table 7:3: Managerial Support by Selected Characteristics

% A Great Deal of Help	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	20.5	19.4	19.9	19.7
Female	26.7	21.9	24.0	23.2
Age				
20-34 years	22.5	20.5	19.0	19.6
35-49 years	25.8	19.3	23.1	21.5
50+ years	21.2	20.2	23.8	22.5
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	28.2	20.5	30.5	26.4
Very good	21.8	22.7	21.8	22.1
Good	24.7	15.8	18.8	17.7
Fair	19.6	30.9	20.4	23.3
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	21.1	21.3	21.8	21.7
No limiting ill-health/disability	24.0	20.6	21.8	21.4
Sector				
Private	21.5	21.9	20.6	21.1
Public	26.2	18.0	24.6	22.2
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	18.0	17.2	16.9	17.0
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	26.3	21.3	24.2	23.0
Mainly by women	23.8	22.3	23.7	23.1
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	17.1	15.4	19.8	18.7
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	15.5	18.1	18.3	18.2
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	31.6	23.3	19.0	21.1
Administration and Defence (N-O)	27.9	16.6	29.0	23.6
Education and Health (P-S)	26.8	23.5	24.5	24.2
All	23.5	20.7	21.8	21.5

Table 7.4: Managerial Appreciation by Selected Characteristics

% A Great Deal of Help	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	19.2	26.0	23.8	24.5
Female	26.2	25.7	25.9	25.8
Age				
20-34 years	18.5	32.1	24.5	27.0
35-49 years	25.4	24.4	25.6	25.1
50+ years	23.8	21.4	24.0	23.1
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	32.4	28.1	33.8	31.4
Very good	21.1	28.4	24.8	26.1
Good	21.0	20.4	20.9	20.7
Fair	17.9	32.0	24.3	26.3
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	17.2	24.0	26.8	25.6
No limiting ill-health/disability	23.7	26.2	24.3	25.0
Sector				
Private	21.2	25.8	23.8	24.5
Public	24.5	25.9	27.0	26.5
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	13.0	25.0	21.2	22.2
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	27.1	27.6	25.1	26.2
Mainly by women	23.6	23.4	28.5	26.3
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	16.4	33.7	24.4	26.4
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	11.1	21.2	20.5	20.5
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	29.6	27.7	27.6	27.7
Administration and Defence (N-O)	24.1	33.8	25.1	28.9
Education and Health (P-S)	29.3	21.8	25.4	24.2
All	22.6	25.8	24.8	25.1

7.3 Co-Worker Support

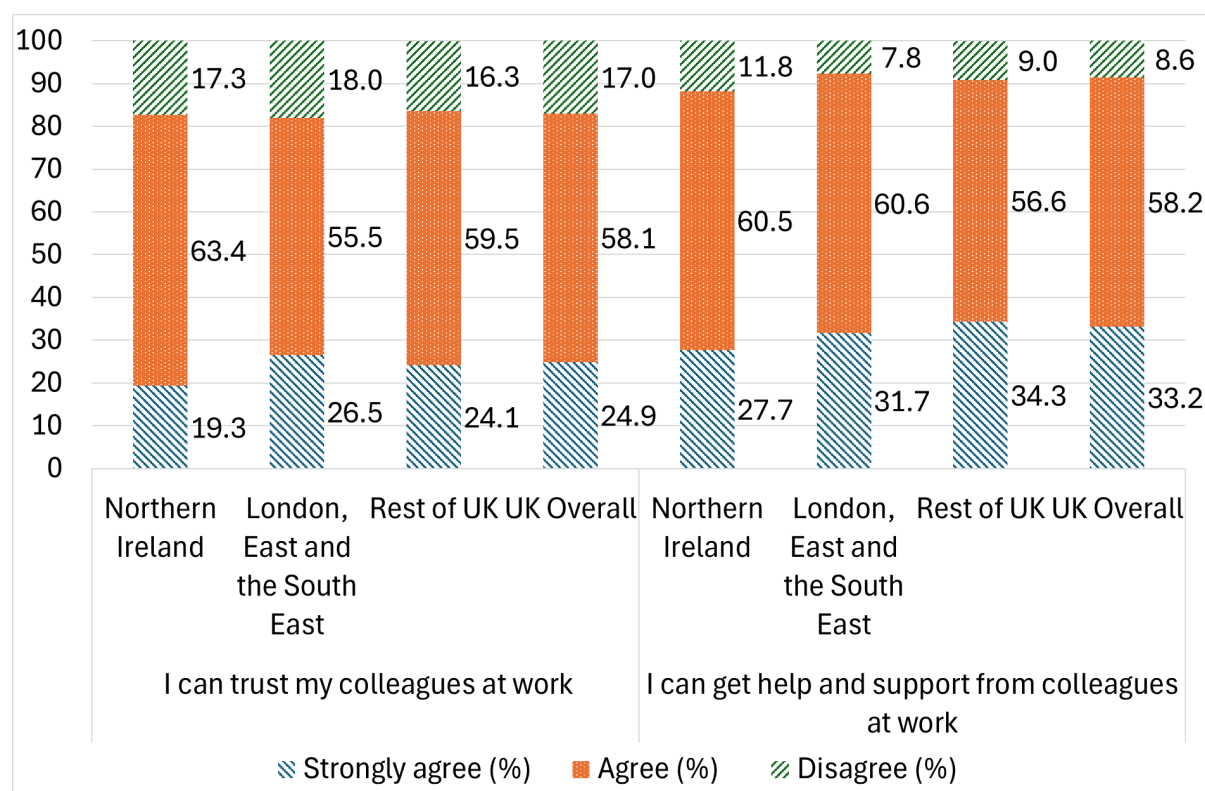
Social connectedness has been demonstrated to play a crucial role in determining whether workers regard their jobs as being meaningful (Zhou *et al.*, 2025). In addition to managerial support, the SES also includes two questions related to the support that workers get from their colleagues. Respondents were asked to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements: 'I can trust my colleagues at work' and 'I can get help and support from colleagues at work'. Respondents were asked to choose one of four options: 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'. In practice, very few respondents reported 'strongly disagree' to either of these statements and so we combine these responses with those who reported that they disagreed.

Figure 7.5 reveals that across the UK over eight out of ten employees 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they trust their colleagues. In Northern Ireland almost one in five workers (19%) strongly agreed with the statement that they could trust their colleagues at work. This figure is however lower than that observed for the UK overall (25%), although it is important to note that this differential is attributable to a higher proportion of workers in Northern Ireland reporting that they 'agreed' with the statement rather than disagreeing with the statement. Similarly, Figure 7.6 also reveals that more than nine out of ten employees report that they can rely on the support of colleagues. However, again a slightly lower proportion of workers in Northern Ireland (28%) strongly agreed with the statement that they could get help and support from colleagues at work compared to the UK overall (33%).

Tables 7.5 and 7.6 explore how perceived levels of co-worker support vary across different groups of workers. In each table, we present data on the number of workers who report that they 'strongly agree' with each of the statements that explore the issue of co-worker support. The analysis reveals that there is relatively little difference in levels of co-worker support in Northern Ireland by gender, although those in roles that are predominantly done by men in Northern Ireland appear less likely to be able to rely on the help and support of colleagues (25%) compared to the UK overall (33%). Workers in Northern Ireland who perceive themselves as being in relatively poor health or who suffer from a limiting ill-health condition report being less likely to be able to

rely on the help and support of colleagues. Trust in colleagues is particularly low in Northern Ireland among those with limiting ill-health conditions (12% compared to 20% overall). Those who perceive their health as being relatively poor (defined as 'fair') are relatively less likely to say that they could get help and support from colleagues at work (20%) compared to the UK overall (34%).

Figure 7-5: Levels of Co-Worker Support



In terms of sectoral difference, trust in co-workers in Northern Ireland is relatively low among those employed in Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (17% compared to 24% overall); Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (10% compared to 18%); and Administration and Defence (16% compared to 26%). The ability to get help and support from colleagues at work is higher in the public sector in Northern Ireland (31%) compared to the private sector (26%); this represents a reversal of the picture observed across the UK overall. The ability to get help and support from colleagues is particularly low in Northern Ireland among those employed in Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (21% compared to 30% overall); Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (19% compared to 28%); and Administration and Defence (28% compared to 40%).

Table 7:5: Trust of Co-Workers

% Strongly Agree	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	19.8	25.3	25.5	25.3
Female	18.9	27.6	22.7	24.6
Age				
20-34 years	19.9	28.9	23.0	25.0
35-49 years	17.9	22.7	25.9	24.4
50+ years	20.8	27.2	23.0	24.4
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	35.8	39.2	30.2	34.0
Very good	18.0	30.0	30.3	29.8
Good	14.0	15.6	17.7	16.7
Fair	14.8	30.0	15.7	19.6
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	11.6	17.0	22.2	20.3
No limiting ill-health/disability	20.9	28.1	24.6	25.8
Sector				
Private	19.8	27.1	24.7	25.5
Public	18.7	25.1	23.1	23.6
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	19.1	27.0	23.1	24.2
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	18.4	27.4	24.8	25.7
Mainly by women	21.0	24.3	24.3	24.2
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	16.8	28.7	23.1	24.2
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	9.6	19.9	17.6	18.3
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	25.6	31.0	28.9	29.7
Administration and Defence (N-O)	15.5	35.9	18.9	26.2
Education and Health (P-S)	24.8	23.6	27.8	26.1
All	19.3	26.5	24.1	24.9

Table 7.6: Support of Co-Workers by Selected Characteristics

% Strongly Agree	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	26.7	31.0	36.8	34.5
Female	28.8	32.3	31.6	31.8
Age				
20-34 years	29.7	35.1	38.7	37.2
35-49 years	25.3	28.0	35.0	31.8
50+ years	28.7	31.1	27.7	28.9
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	40.2	42.6	46.0	44.5
Very good	28.3	33.8	37.9	36.0
Good	23.1	22.4	25.3	24.0
Fair	19.6	38.4	32.8	34.0
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	24.8	22.5	35.3	30.9
No limiting ill-health/disability	28.3	33.2	34.1	33.6
Sector				
Private	25.5	32.3	35.9	34.3
Public	30.7	30.3	30.9	30.7
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	24.8	31.7	34.4	33.3
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	29.0	31.8	37.5	34.9
Mainly by women	28.1	31.3	29.1	30.0
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	21.2	30.9	29.5	29.6
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	18.6	23.9	31.7	28.0
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	34.8	33.7	44.2	39.5
Administration and Defence (N-O)	28.3	46.6	34.7	39.7
Education and Health (P-S)	33.4	28.7	33.6	31.7
All	27.7	31.7	34.3	33.2

7.4 Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment is formally defined as ‘feelings of attachment to goals and values of the organisation, one’s role in relation to this, and attachment to the organisation for its own sake rather than for its strictly instrumental value’ (Cook and Wall, 1980: 40). From this definition, survey questions have been developed within the SES which tap into employees’ attitudes towards their organisations and the nature of the behaviours employees exercise within the organisation. The SES asks respondents a suite of questions widely used to derive levels of organisational commitment. Three questions relate to employee attitudes and three relate to employee behaviours. Respondents were asked to indicate, on a four-point scale, their level of agreement or disagreement with the following seven statements: ‘I am willing to work harder than I have to in order to help this organisation succeed’; ‘I feel very little loyalty to this organisation’; ‘I find that my values and the organisation’s values are very similar’; ‘I am proud to be working for this organisation’; ‘I would take almost any job to keep working for this organisation’; ‘I would turn down another job with more pay in order to stay with this organisation’.

Table 7.7 presents information derived from these questions. For ease, we focus on the proportion of respondents who state that they either ‘Strongly Agree’ or ‘Agree’ with these statements, with the exception of responses to the negatively framed question related to loyalty where we present information on those who either ‘Strongly Disagreed’ or ‘Disagreed’ with that statement. The results suggest that organisational commitment in Northern Ireland is broadly comparable to, or slightly higher than that of the UK as a whole. The largest difference is observed in terms of the proportion of workers who agree with the statement that they would take almost any job to keep working for this organisation. Within Northern Ireland, almost three out of ten workers (29%) either agree or strongly agree with this statement. This is compared to less than one in four (23%) across the UK as a whole. This may be related to the higher costs associated with job loss in Northern Ireland and the increased difficulties that workers report in terms of being able to find a job as good as their current one (see Section 4.3).

Table 7.7: Measures of Organisational Commitment

% Agree or Strongly Agree	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
I am willing to work harder to help this organisation succeed	77.1	74.0	75.8	75.1
I feel very little loyalty to this organisation (% Disagree)	66.6	63.9	64.9	64.5
I find that my values and the organisation's values are very similar	71.4	73.9	72.9	73.2
I am proud to be working for this organisation	82.8	80.6	78.3	79.3
I would take almost any job to keep working for this organisation	28.6	21.8	23.6	23.1
I would turn down a job with more pay in order to stay	30.3	26.7	31.6	29.7
High organisational commitment (Agree across all measures)	27.7	23.2	26.9	25.5

The base of Table 7.7 presents estimates derived from a combined Organisational Commitment Index. We examine the proportion of workers who express a level of commitment that is at least equivalent to them responding as either 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' to each of the six commitment questions. The combined measure again reveals that levels of organisational commitment are slightly higher in Northern Ireland (28%) compared to the UK overall (26%). Levels of organisational commitment are lowest within London, the East and the South East of England (23%).

Further analysis reveals that there is a relative lack of variation in levels of organisational commitment across different groups of workers, both within Northern Ireland and across the UK as a whole. Table 7.8 presents data for those groups of workers where some differences do appear to be present. There is a strong relationship between organisational commitment and age, with older workers exhibiting the highest levels of commitment. Among workers in Northern Ireland, those over the age of 50 exhibit relatively high levels of organisational commitment

compared to the average for the UK as a whole. Compared to elsewhere in the UK, organisational commitment in Northern Ireland is relatively high among those employed in the public sector, those employed in roles undertaken fairly equally by both men and women and those employed in relatively small workplaces. What is somewhat surprising is that, despite the relatively low levels of managerial and co-worker support in both Manufacturing, Construction and Utilities; and the Wholesale, Transport, Storage and Accommodation sectors, levels of organisational commitment appear to be relatively high and compare favourably to levels of commitment in these sectors across other parts of the UK. The lowest levels of organisational commitment in Northern Ireland are observed within the Administration and Defence sectors.

Table 7:8: High Organisational Commitment by Selected Characteristics

% Agree	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Age				
20-34 years	22.6	14.1	21.9	19.2
35-49 years	26.0	23.7	30.4	27.5
50+ years	37.3	31.1	28.6	29.7
Sector				
Private	25.0	24.6	26.3	25.6
Public	31.3	20.1	28.2	25.3
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	21.2	20.0	25.4	23.7
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	33.9	22.5	27.1	25.3
Mainly by women	23.5	27.0	28.5	27.8
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	33.3	24.3	30.4	27.9
26-100 workers	21.3	21.9	25.2	24.0
100+ workers	27.7	23.3	26.4	25.2
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	28.6	27.0	29.4	28.8
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	24.8	19.7	18.3	19.1
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	28.8	17.8	31.8	25.6
Administration and Defence (N-O)	18.9	27.2	25.6	26.1
Education and Health (P-S)	31.5	28.7	28.8	28.8
All	27.7	23.2	26.9	25.5

7.5 Promotion Prospects

A key aspect of good work or fair work is the opportunity for progression. The SES asked respondents: ‘How high do you think *your* chances are of being given a significant promotion with your *present* organisation in the next five years (assuming that you did want promotion)?’ They were presented with five possible responses: ‘100%/definite’, ‘75%/high chance’, ‘50%/fifty-fifty’, and ‘25%/low chance’, and ‘0%/no chance at all’. Those reporting that there was no chance at all that they might be promoted were asked whether this was because they were already in the highest type of job for people who do their sort of work. Figure 7.6 shows that almost a quarter of workers in Northern Ireland (24%) perceive themselves as having a definite or high chance of promotion in the next five years. Promotion prospects are perceived to be slightly poorer in Northern Ireland than across the UK as a whole (28%).

Figure 7-6: Chances of Promotion with Present Employer

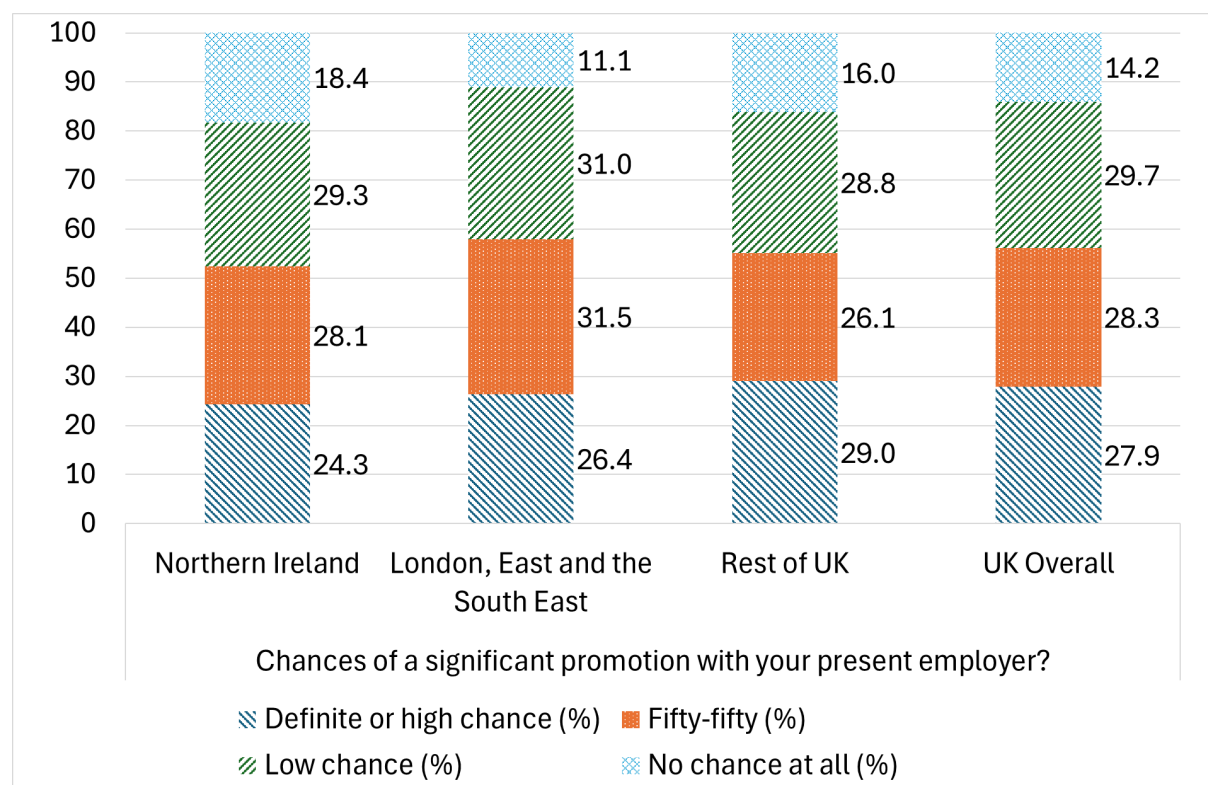


Table 7.9 examines how the percentage of workers who report that they either have a ‘definite’ or ‘high’ chance of promotion varies between different groups of workers.

Table 7.9: Chances of Promotion by Selected Characteristics

% Definite or High	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	26.5	25.8	30.7	28.7
Female	21.9	26.9	27.2	26.9
Age				
20-34 years	32.7	42.1	39.9	40.5
35-49 years	24.1	18.9	27.4	23.6
50+ years	11.7	13.8	14.4	14.1
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	29.9	45.0	45.9	45.1
Very good	28.2	23.3	32.9	29.0
Good	18.8	21.7	21.4	21.5
Fair	15.9	28.1	17.6	20.8
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	26.2	29.3	32.9	31.3
Part-time	17.3	15.7	11.6	13.5
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	25.1	27.6	31.1	29.9
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	26.2	26.0	31.0	28.7
Mainly by women	20.4	26.2	23.2	24.3
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	13.3	17.0	22.3	19.8
26-100 workers	24.3	23.2	26.6	25.4
100+ workers	30.3	34.9	35.4	35.0
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	12.8	28.9	30.4	29.6
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	26.9	25.0	30.0	27.8
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	42.7	31.2	40.0	36.2
Administration and Defence (N-O)	19.9	30.9	28.0	29.1
Education and Health (P-S)	18.4	17.9	21.9	20.3
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	29.2	30.1	33.8	32.2
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	20.4	25.9	23.5	24.3
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	20.6	14.2	23.8	20.5
All	24.3	26.4	29.0	27.9

The analysis reveals that poorer promotion prospects in Northern Ireland were reported by women and those in roles that are mainly performed by women, older workers, those who perceive their health as being relatively poor and those who work at smaller workplaces. These patterns generally follow those that exist across the UK, although the promotion prospects of women and younger workers appear to be relatively poor in Northern Ireland. In terms of differences by sector, among workers in Northern Ireland, those who are employed in the ICT, Finance and Real Estate sectors perceive themselves as having the highest chances of promotion with more than four out of ten workers rating their chances as 'definite' or 'high'. The chances of promotion within the Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities sectors in Northern Ireland appear relatively poor (13%) compared to those employed in these sectors in the UK overall (30%).

8 Voice and Representation

8.1 Introduction

Participation at work is an important determinant of personal well-being and is considered to be a key factor for enhancing motivation and productivity in the workplace. This is because the involvement of employees in decisions that affect their work provides an important mechanism through which the quality of jobs and the experience of work can be enhanced. Direct participation over organisational decisions has been demonstrated to have positive effects for employees' organisational commitment and well-being (Gallie *et al.*, 2017b; Avgoustaki and Frankort, 2018). Organisational participation has also been demonstrated to provide an important mechanism for improving the productivity of organisations by drawing upon the experience of workers and supporting employee-led innovation (Felstead *et al.*, 2020a).

One mechanism through which workers are able to collectively raise concerns or make suggestions to managers is trade unions. Evidence suggests that trade unions are associated with improved terms and conditions for workers and that these gains are not to the detriment of workplace performance (Bryson and Forth, 2017). Official statistics also consistently reveal that Northern Ireland exhibits the highest levels of trade union membership within the United Kingdom, exceeding those of traditionally unionised areas such as Wales, Scotland and the regions of Northern England (Department for Business and Trade, 2025).

This chapter provides new evidence on employee voice and representation at the workplace. We first explore the mechanisms used at the workplace to support organisational participation. Specifically, we examine whether meetings are held at which workers can express their views and whether respondents participate in quality circles. We then present new evidence on the prevalence of trade unions in Northern Ireland, exploring rates of union membership, presence and coverage. We then explore attitudes towards trade union membership, including the demand for union representation among those employed in workplaces where trade unions are not present. An alternative course of action for workers who feel that their voices are not heard by management is to quit their jobs (Freeman and Medoff, 1984). The final

section of this chapter therefore examines the intentions of workers to voluntarily leave their employer.

8.2 Organisational Participation

The Skills and Employment Survey includes a suite of questions relating to the degree to which workers are involved in organisational decision-making. Again, this goes further than reliance on one survey question which asks respondents to rate how good managers are at involving employees in decision-making. An overview of responses to these questions from workers in Northern Ireland compared to other parts of the UK is provided in Figure 8.1. An initial question on organisational participation asked whether management organises meetings that provide information about what is happening in the organisation. In Northern Ireland during 2024, around six out of ten of those in employment (60%) reported that managers arranged such meetings – some eight percentage points lower than that reported among employees across the UK overall (68%). Respondents to the surveys were also asked whether the employee belonged to a ‘group of employees who meet regularly to think about improvements that could be made within the organisation’ – sometimes referred to as Quality Circles. In Northern Ireland, just over a fifth of those in employment (22%) reported that they belonged to such a group. Once again, this figure is slightly lower than that reported among employees across the UK as a whole, where one in four employees (25%) report being members of such groups.

Employees were then asked about how much say they had in decisions that affected the way they did their jobs. Those employees who responded ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ are regarded as having a measure of organisation influence. The analysis reveals that levels of organisational influence do not vary greatly between different areas of the United Kingdom, although workers in Northern Ireland consistently report lower levels of participation at work and higher feelings of exclusion from decision-making. Over a third of workers (34%) in Northern Ireland report that they have no say in decisions over their jobs compared to 29% across the UK overall. Respondents to the survey are finally asked if they are satisfied with the level of satisfaction that they have at their workplace. Despite respondents in Northern Ireland reporting that they have

less say in decisions that affect their jobs, a higher proportion are satisfied with the level of say that they have (59%) compared to the UK as a whole (54%).

Figure 8-1: Organisational Participation at Work

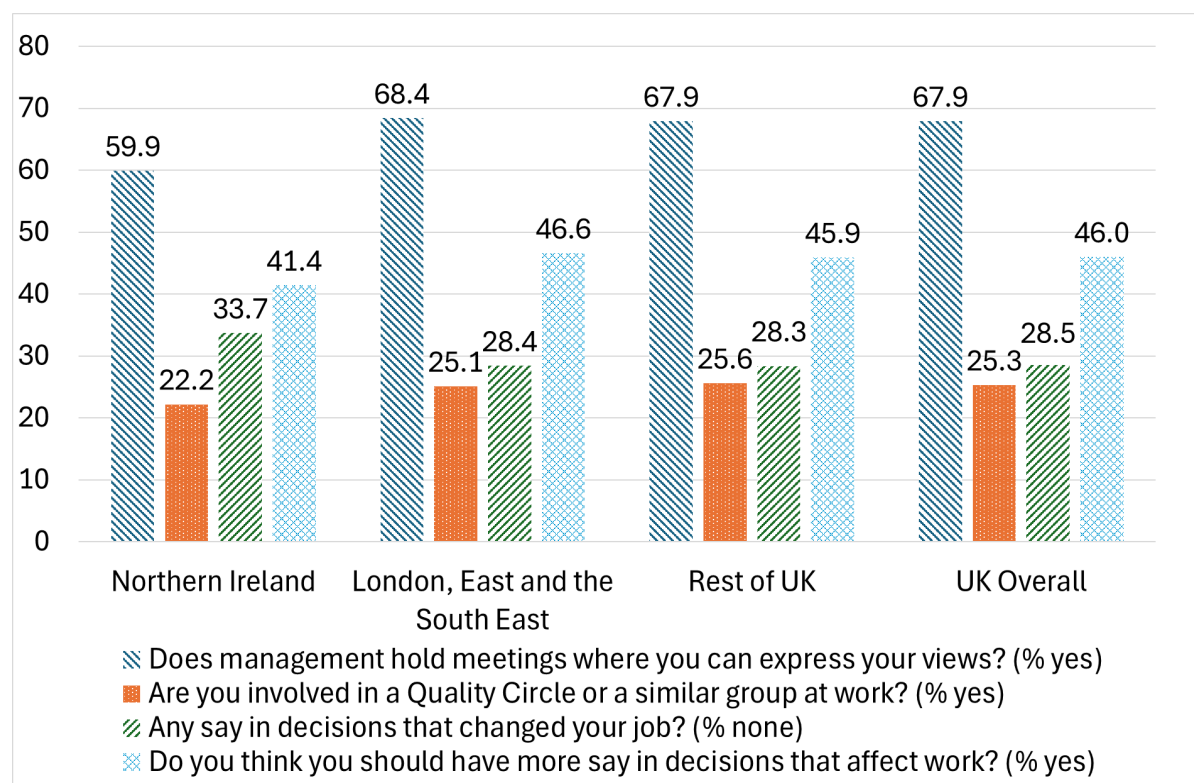


Table 8.1 explores organisation influence in further detail, focusing on the proportion of employees who report that they have some measure of organisational influence. It can be seen that men, older workers and those employed in small organisations report higher levels of organisational influence. These patterns are observed in Northern Ireland, as they are elsewhere. However, the gap in organisational influence between men (24%) and women (14%) in Northern Ireland is wider than it is across the UK. In terms of variations by industry, levels of say are highest within the ICT, Finance and Real Estate sectors in the UK (26%). Whilst levels of say are also relatively high in these sectors in Northern Ireland (19%), they are lower than the UK average. Workers in Northern Ireland employed within the Education and Health sectors appear to exhibit relatively high levels of organisational influence, both within Northern Ireland (21%) and compared to these sectors across the UK as a whole (17%).

Table 8.1: Organisational Influence by Selected Characteristics

% Quite A Lot or A Great Deal	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	23.7	20.6	20.4	20.6
Female	13.6	15.2	18.2	16.9
Age				
20-34 years	14.4	11.9	12.2	12.2
35-49 years	19.7	20.0	24.6	22.6
50+ years	23.6	22.1	21.2	21.6
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	23.6	24.9	24.7	24.7
26-100 workers	19.7	12.0	19.7	17.1
100+ workers	15.7	15.9	15.4	15.6
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	17.3	24.1	19.4	20.5
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	17.7	13.1	18.2	16.1
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	18.8	27.5	25.9	26.4
Administration and Defence (N-O)	12.6	15.7	13.9	14.7
Education and Health (P-S)	21.4	13.5	18.5	16.7
All	18.8	17.8	19.3	18.7

Table 8.2 explores which groups of workers would like to have more say in decisions that affect their work. Despite already reporting that they have higher levels of organizational influence, men generally report that they would like to have increased levels of say over their work. However, this is not found to be the case in Northern Ireland where men are more satisfied with levels of say than women. Only 38% of men in Northern Ireland report that they want more say compared to 48% in the UK overall. A similar issue emerges with respect to age. As younger workers generally report that they have lower levels of organizational influence, across the UK they are more likely to report that they would like to have increased levels of say over their work. This is not observed to be the case in Northern Ireland. Among those aged 20-34, 36% of workers in Northern Ireland report that they would like more say over their work. Across the UK overall, this figure is 52%.

Table 8:2: Wanting More Say by Selected Characteristics

%	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	38.1	49.0	48.1	48.2
Female	45.0	44.3	43.5	43.8
Age				
20-34 years	36.0	54.4	51.0	51.8
35-49 years	44.4	46.0	44.7	45.2
50+ years	44.2	39.4	41.0	40.5
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	32.2	44.7	41.2	42.4
26-100 workers	43.2	47.5	46.2	46.6
100+ workers	47.4	47.6	48.7	48.3
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	55.6	54.9	43.8	46.7
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	38.9	53.5	51.3	51.8
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	27.5	43.4	37.7	39.9
Administration and Defence (N-O)	45.1	34.5	51.7	44.0
Education and Health (P-S)	43.0	48.5	46.6	47.2
All	41.4	46.6	45.9	46.0

Demand for increased levels of say is generally lower among those who are employed in smaller workplaces, possibly reflecting the increased levels of organizational influence that these workers already have. This lower level of demand is however particularly apparent within Northern Ireland where only 32% of employees based at the smallest workplaces report that they would like more say over their work. In terms of variations by industry, demand for increased levels of say within Northern Ireland is highest among workers employed in the Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities sectors (56%). Demand for increased levels of say is lowest within the ICT, Finance and Real Estate sectors (28%). Whilst this sector is characterised by a relatively high level of workers reporting that they have organisational influence in Northern Ireland, this level of demand for more say is considerably lower than that expressed by workers in this sector based in other parts of the United Kingdom (40%). Workers in Northern Ireland

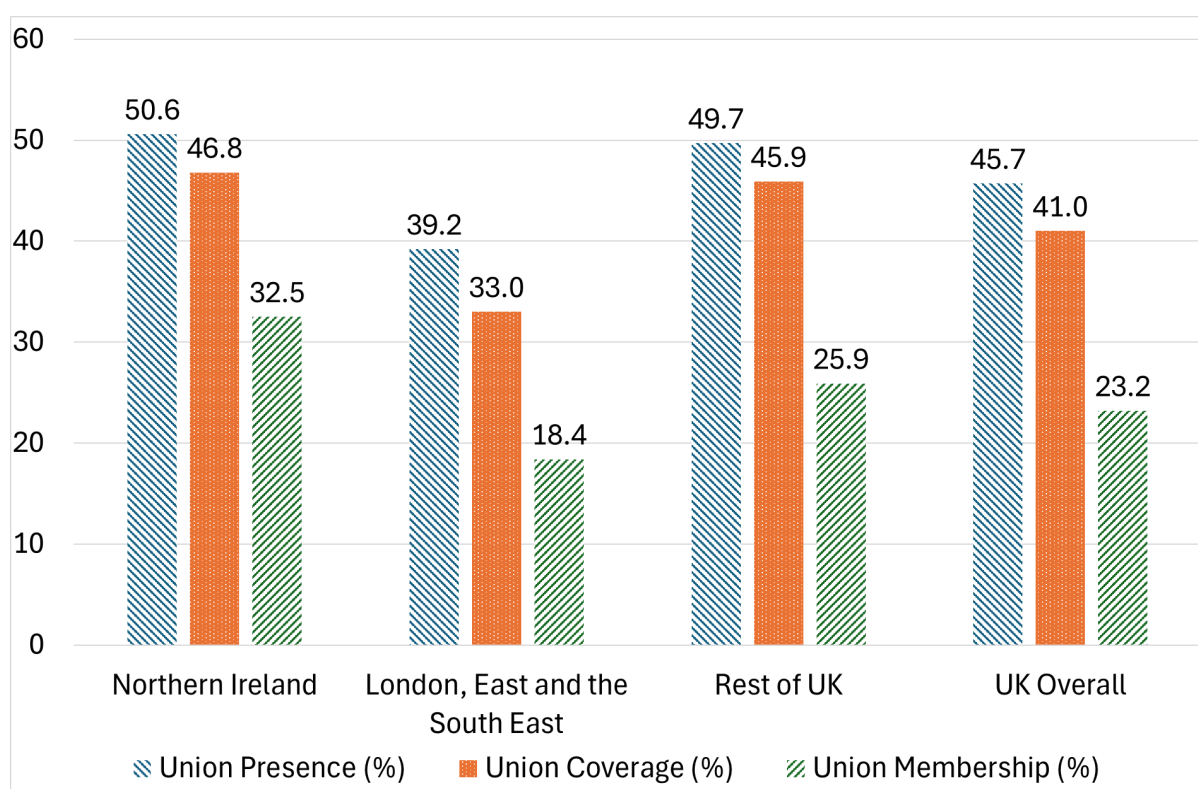
employed within the Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation sectors also appear to exhibit relatively low levels of demand for increased levels of pay compared to their counterparts elsewhere in the UK (39% compared to 52%).

8.3 Trade Union Membership, Presence and Coverage

The SES captures information about union membership, union presence and union coverage. The survey firstly addresses the issue of *union presence* with all respondents asked: 'At your place of work, are there unions or staff associations?'. Among those respondents who report that a trade union is present at their workplace, *union coverage* is established with the follow-up question: 'Is any union or staff association recognised by management for negotiating pay and/or conditions of employment?'. Finally, all respondents are asked: 'Are you a member of a trade union or staff association?'. From this, we derive *union density*; that is, the percentage of employees who are trade union members. The wording, ordering, and routing of these questions is unique to the SES. Unlike the LFS, the question on trade union presence is asked of all respondents rather than just non-members. Similarly, the question on union membership is asked of all respondents rather than only being asked of those who are employed at workplaces where unions are present.

Based on data from the SES, Figure 8.2 confirms the relative importance of trade unions within Northern Ireland. The rate of union presence is estimated to be 51% in Northern Ireland compared to 46% in the UK overall. The rate of union coverage in Northern Ireland is 47% compared to 41% across the UK as a whole. Larger differences emerge in terms of the rate of union density. Within Northern Ireland, approximately a third of employees (33%) are members of trade unions compared to just under a quarter of employees (23%) across the UK as a whole. Accounting for sector of employment, Table 8.3 reveals that within Northern Ireland the rate of union presence is estimated to be slightly lower in the private sector and higher in the public sector than the UK overall. Once again, upon accounting for sector, the rate of union coverage is also estimated to be slightly lower in the private sector and higher in the public sector in Northern Ireland than the UK overall.

Figure 8-2: Union Presence, Coverage and Membership



The higher rates of union membership observed in Northern Ireland are however demonstrated to persist in both the private and public sectors. In Northern Ireland, union membership in the private sector is estimated to be 16% compared to 14% in the UK overall. Larger differences however emerge within the public sector across the benchmarked regions. Within Northern Ireland, 61% of public sector employees are estimated to be trade union members compared to just 47% across the UK as a whole. More detailed comparisons by industry confirm the higher levels of trade union membership that exist in Northern Ireland, particularly within those industrial sectors where public sector employment is relatively concentrated. Within Northern Ireland, almost half of workers employed in the Administration and Defence sectors (48%) and within the Education and Health sectors (48%) are members of trade unions. This is compared to rates of union membership of 31% and 38% within these sectors across the UK as a whole.

Table 8:3: Union Presence, Coverage and Membership by Sector

%	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Union Presence by Sector				
Private	27.1	22.9	35.7	30.6
Public	88.3	77.9	90.9	85.9
All	50.6	39.2	49.7	45.7
Union Coverage by Sector				
Private	21.2	15.5	31.4	25.1
Public	87.5	75.0	89.9	84.3
All	46.8	33.0	45.9	41.0
Union Membership by Sector				
Private	15.8	8.6	16.7	13.5
Public	60.5	39.3	51.1	47.0
All	32.5	18.4	25.9	23.2
Union Membership by Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	15.3	18.0	20.4	19.7
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	26.1	11.6	19.5	16.4
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	15.7	5.9	7.0	6.8
Administration and Defence (N-O)	47.7	17.8	39.9	30.7
Education and Health (P-S)	47.8	33.7	41.1	38.3
All	32.5	18.4	25.9	23.2

8.4 Attitudes Towards Unions

Unions are not present in all workplaces and those employed within relatively un-organised sectors may not have the opportunity to join a trade union. An unmet demand for union membership can lead to a representation gap. Given the role of unions in protecting disadvantaged workers, this gap may vary between different groups of workers. To measure the disposition of workers towards trade unions, two new questions were introduced to the SES in 2024. The same questions were asked in the Working in Ireland Survey 2021 (Geary and Belizon, 2022). Those employed in non-unionised workplaces were asked: ‘If a vote to establish a union was held in your organisation today, would you vote yes to establish a union or would you vote no to establish a union?’ A similar question was asked of those who worked in unionised organisations as to whether they would vote to retain union representation.

Figure 8.3 presents evidence on the differences in attitudes that exist towards unions across different parts of the UK. Analysis confirms the importance of incumbency effects as to why people develop favourable or negative attitudes towards trade unions (Diamond and Freeman, 2002). A large majority of those in unionised workplaces would vote to keep the union. In Northern Ireland, three quarters of workers (74%) in unionised workplaces would vote to keep the union. In non-unionised workplaces, attitudes towards trade unions are more negative, with these employees considering their non-unionised state as optimal. In Northern Ireland, 37% of workers in non-unionised workplaces would vote to establish a union if given the opportunity. These figures reflect those observed across other parts of the UK.

Figure 8-3: Attitudes Towards Trade Unions

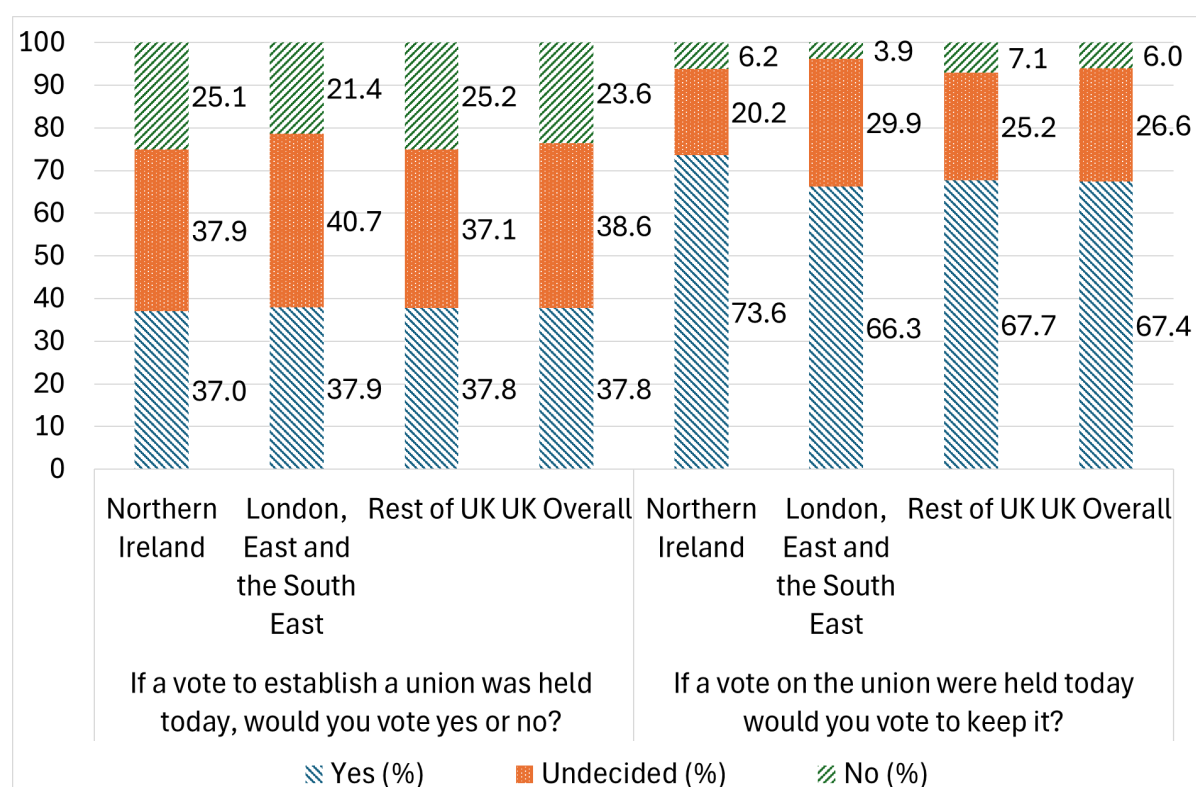


Table 8.4 explores how the unmet demand for unionisation varies across selected population subgroups. It can be seen that women in Northern Ireland are more likely to report that they would vote yes to establish a union than men (42% compared to 32%). Such a differential does not exist across other parts of the UK. Similarly, in Northern Ireland less than a quarter (24%) of those who work in roles that are predominantly done by men would vote to establish a union. This is compared to over

four out of ten workers who are employed in female dominated roles or roles that are done equally by men and women.

Younger workers are more likely to express positive attitudes towards unions. Forty per cent of non-unionised employees aged 20-34 in Northern Ireland would vote to establish a union compared to 33% of employees aged 50 and over. Those who suffer with poorer levels of health also have more favourable attitudes to unions. In Northern Ireland, only a quarter of those who regard their health as being excellent would vote to establish a union at their workplace. Finally, in Northern Ireland those in lower skilled Sales, Operative and Elementary occupations are most likely to report that they would vote to establish a union if given the chance (47%).

Table 8:4: Would Vote to Establish a Union

% Yes	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	32.3	37.7	38.6	38.0
Female	42.2	38.2	36.8	37.6
Age				
20-34 years	39.6	39.5	46.3	43.4
35-49 years	36.4	41.3	36.1	38.5
50+ years	32.8	33.5	28.6	30.8
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	25.7	32.9	32.2	32.3
Very good	40.0	33.0	36.8	35.2
Good	38.5	39.5	38.4	38.9
Fair	40.3	57.2	43.1	48.2
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	24.0	36.1	31.5	32.8
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	44.1	37.9	42.7	40.3
Mainly by women	41.2	40.1	40.8	40.5
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	33.8	39.7	35.1	37.2
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	33.1	30.7	40.2	36.0
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	46.9	45.7	40.8	42.7
All	37.0	37.9	37.8	37.8

Table 8.5 explores which population subgroups in unionised workplaces would be most likely to vote to keep the union. It can be seen that there is less systematic variation between different groups. Younger workers are again more likely to express positive attitudes towards unions. Within Northern Ireland, 80% of employees in unionised workplaces aged 20-34 would vote to keep a union compared to 69% of employees aged 50 and over. Those in lower skilled Sales, Operative and Elementary occupations are less likely to report that they would vote to keep a union if given the chance (63%) compared to those employed in Managerial and Professional positions (76%).

Table 8.5: Would Vote to Keep the Union

% Yes	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	75.2	63.7	67.0	66.4
Female	71.9	68.1	68.4	68.4
Age				
20-34 years	79.8	83.3	73.9	76.6
35-49 years	73.3	57.8	63.5	61.6
50+ years	69.1	68.1	66.8	67.3
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	63.1	71.3	78.1	75.5
Very good	76.2	72.3	70.9	71.5
Good	74.3	57.9	62.1	60.9
Fair	77.6	62.0	59.6	60.6
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	78.2	55.4	64.9	62.8
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	72.3	65.9	65.8	66.0
Mainly by women	72.8	72.8	73.3	73.1
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	75.7	72.0	70.0	70.8
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	77.4	58.9	65.1	63.7
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	63.1	55.9	63.4	60.9
All	73.6	66.3	67.7	67.4

8.5 Intention to Quit

An alternative course of action for workers who feel that their voices are not heard by management is to quit their jobs (Freeman and Medoff 1984). This final section therefore examines the intentions of workers to voluntarily leave their employer. The SES asked respondents 'How likely are you to voluntarily leave your current employer in the next 12 months?' The word voluntarily was emphasised in the question in order to get respondents to think about their own intentions regardless of their employers' plans and/or the state of the business. Respondents were given five response options: 'very likely', 'quite likely', 'evens', 'quite unlikely' and 'very unlikely'. Relatively few people report that they are very or quite likely to leave their employers and so these categories are combined with 'evens' to form an 'evens or higher' group.

It can be seen in Figure 8.4 that voluntary exit is lower in Northern Ireland than elsewhere. Over half of employees (51%) report that it is very unlikely that they will leave their employers over the next 12 months. This is almost 20 percentage points higher than the figure that is reported among workers from London, the East and the South East of England and ten percentage points higher than that for the Rest of the UK. This finding is consistent with the higher perceived costs of job loss reported by workers in Northern Ireland (see section 4.3).

In terms of variations between different groups of workers, Table 8.6 reveals that intention to quit in Northern Ireland is relatively low among men and those in roles mainly undertaken by men, older workers, those who perceive their health as being relatively good, those in the public sector and those employed in Administrative, Trades and Service occupations. In each case, rates of voluntary exit are also relatively low compared to the average for the UK. Within Northern Ireland, those employed in the ICT, Finance, Real Estate sectors exhibit the highest intention to quit, with over four out of ten workers saying that they intended to leave their employer over the next 12 months.

Figure 8-4: Intention to Quit

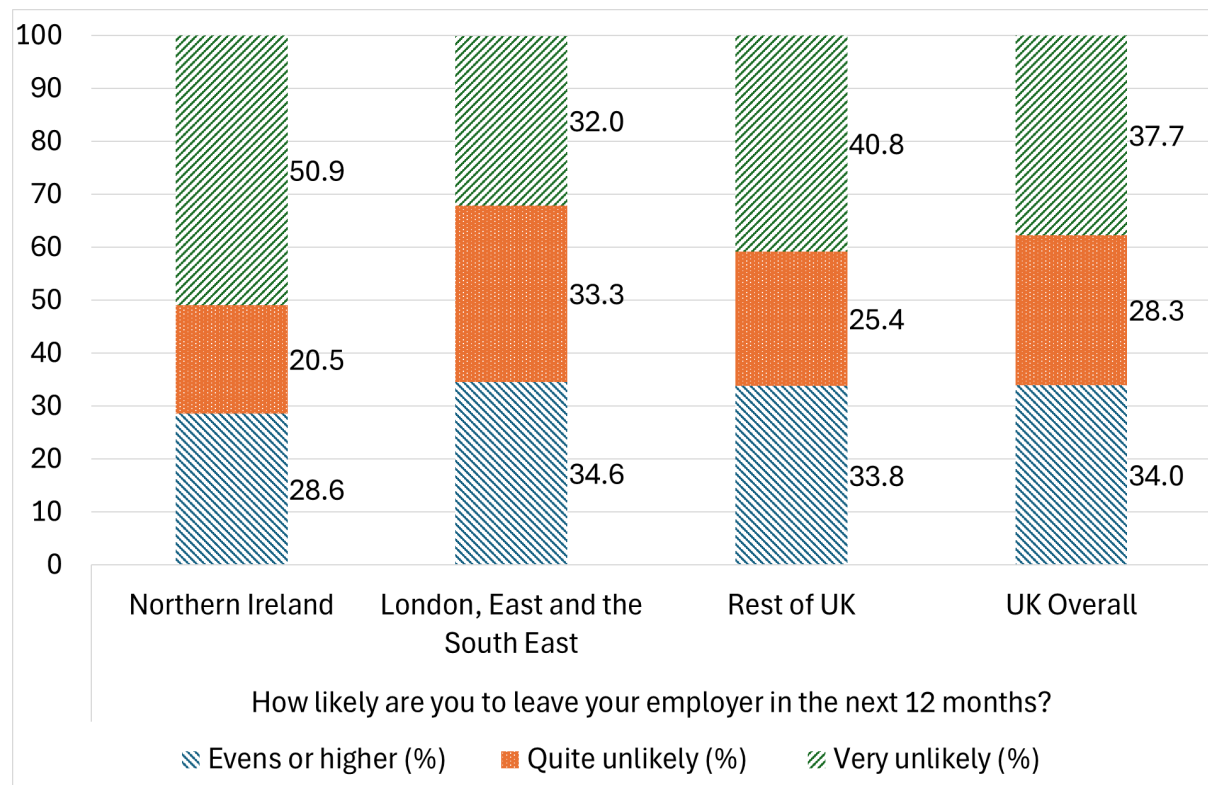


Table 8:6: Voluntary Exit by Selected Characteristics

% Evens or Higher	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	26.6	35.9	35.5	35.4
Female	30.8	33.5	31.9	32.5
Age				
20-34 years	39.4	44.4	42.6	43.1
35-49 years	27.4	32.8	33.1	32.9
50+ years	15.6	26.7	23.1	24.2
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	27.7	27.2	27.2	27.2
Very good	26.1	33.4	31.1	31.8
Good	34.1	39.2	39.6	39.3
Fair	24.5	35.1	35.0	34.8
Sector				
Private	35.4	33.9	36.3	35.3
Public	19.3	36.3	28.5	31.1
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	23.2	28.9	36.0	33.5
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	33.8	36.1	32.5	34.1
Mainly by women	25.2	36.4	33.3	34.3
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	29.6	32.7	33.9	33.5
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	29.8	34.4	41.1	37.9
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	40.8	35.0	26.7	30.6
Administration and Defence (N-O)	24.8	27.0	32.5	29.9
Education and Health (P-S)	23.1	36.4	34.5	34.9
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	31.4	36.2	34.8	35.3
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	19.2	30.8	27.5	28.4
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	37.9	35.7	39.3	38.0
All	28.6	34.6	33.8	34.0

9 Work-Life Balance

9.1 Introduction

In this final chapter we consider how work interacts and spills over to other areas of life. Earlier chapters have explored the importance of task discretion in mitigating the detrimental effects of work intensity on employee wellbeing. In this chapter we first examine another important dimension of discretion in terms of the degree to which workers have control over their working time. A further aspect of control over working time is the ability to disconnect from work outside of normal working hours. Here we explore how increased use of new technologies, both at work and home, have made it increasingly easy for people to be reached by their employer even after they have officially left work. We then examine the adverse impacts that work intensity can have in terms of being unable to unwind or switch off at the end of the day.

Historically, there has been a sharp physical division between work and home. However, the pandemic meant that this dividing line became blurred for many. Combining the worlds of work and home in the same place is not easy. While there are benefits of working at home – such as more autonomy, being able to deal with family matters and avoiding commuting into work – there are costs (Davies and Felstead 2023). Those working at home are often connected to work for longer and work outside of normal working hours. In addition, the pressures of work can spill over into non-work life with homeworkers reporting difficulties in being able to ‘switch off’. The chapter culminates in an examination of the location of work across the UK and how this is associated with work-life balance.

9.2 Working Time Autonomy

The SES asked respondents how much they agreed with the statement “I can decide the time I start and finish work”. Figure 9.1 reveals that in Northern Ireland, four out of ten workers agree or strongly agree that they can decide the time that they start and finish work. This figure is observed to be very similar across the UK.

Figure 9-1: Choice Over Start and Finish Time

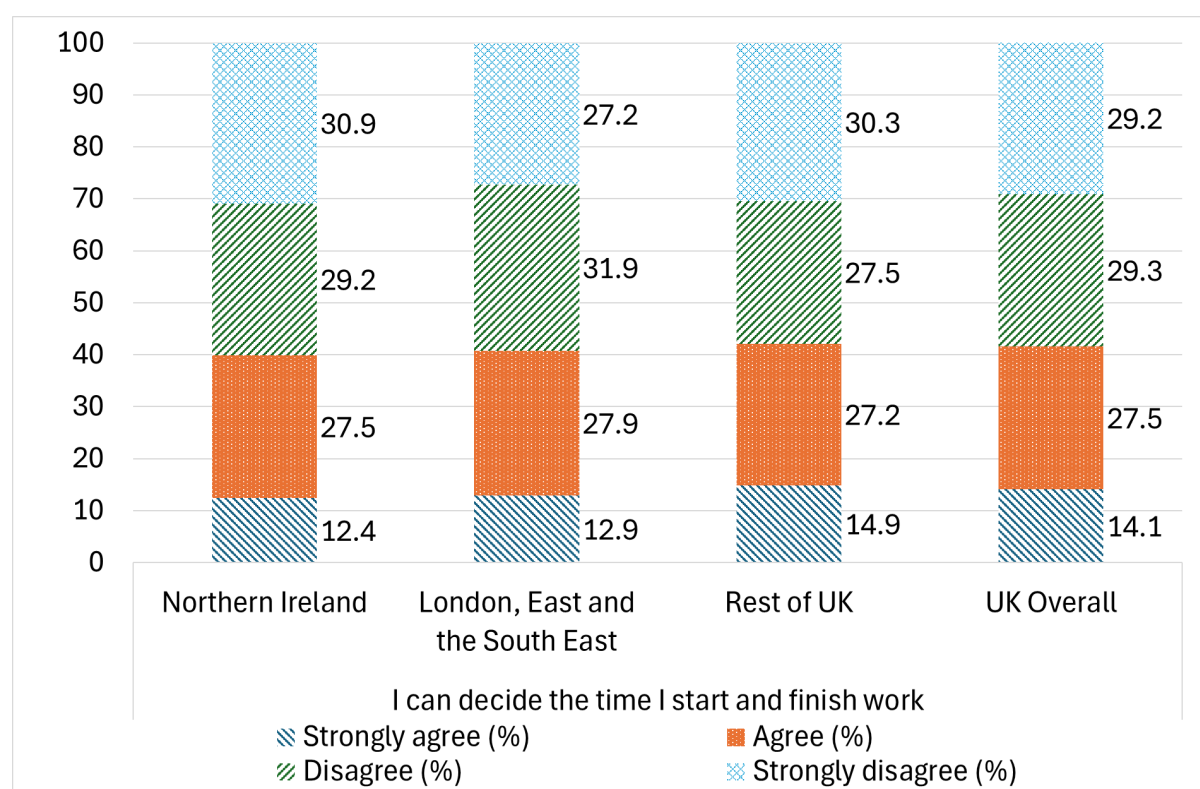


Table 9.1 reveals how discretion over start and finish times varies across different groups of workers. The proportion of workers in Northern Ireland who either strongly agree or agree that they have discretion over their start and finish times is lower among women (33%) or by those in jobs that are mainly done by women (30%), those aged 20-34 years old (30%), workers in the private sector (33%), part time workers (23%), those employed in the Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation sectors (28%) or Education and Health sectors (28%) and those employed in Sales, Operatives and Elementary roles (22%). These patterns mirror those that are observed across the UK as a whole.

Table 9.1: Discretion over Start and Finish Times by Selected Characteristics

% Agree/Strongly Agree	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	46.1	47.9	43.6	45.2
Female	33.1	34.0	40.5	37.7
Age				
20-34 years	30.1	42.1	36.1	38.0
35-49 years	47.7	39.8	45.2	43.0
50+ years	40.5	42.7	45.7	44.5
Sector				
Private	32.5	37.9	36.2	36.8
Public	43.9	36.4	44.1	41.2
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	44.5	43.3	43.5	43.4
Part-time	22.7	33.2	37.0	35.1
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	39.8	47.2	44.9	45.4
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	46.9	42.8	45.7	44.5
Mainly by women	29.8	32.1	33.2	32.7
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	42.3	63.2	40.8	46.4
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	28.0	27.6	20.6	23.8
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	51.1	48.5	64.3	57.5
Administration and Defence (N-O)	69.8	49.4	66.3	59.2
Education and Health (P-S)	28.0	31.9	32.6	32.2
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	45.3	50.0	54.5	52.5
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	42.9	31.4	38.7	36.1
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	22.4	24.3	13.5	17.5
All	39.9	40.8	42.1	41.6

A second question asks respondents how difficult it would be to arrange to take an hour or two off during working hours to take care of personal or family matters. Figure 9.2 shows that almost two thirds (63%) of workers in Northern Ireland indicate that it is either 'not too difficult' (29%) or 'not difficult at all' (34%) to take time off for personal or family matters. This combined figure is slightly lower than that for the UK (68%).

Figure 9-2: Ability to Take Time Off for a Personal or Family Matter

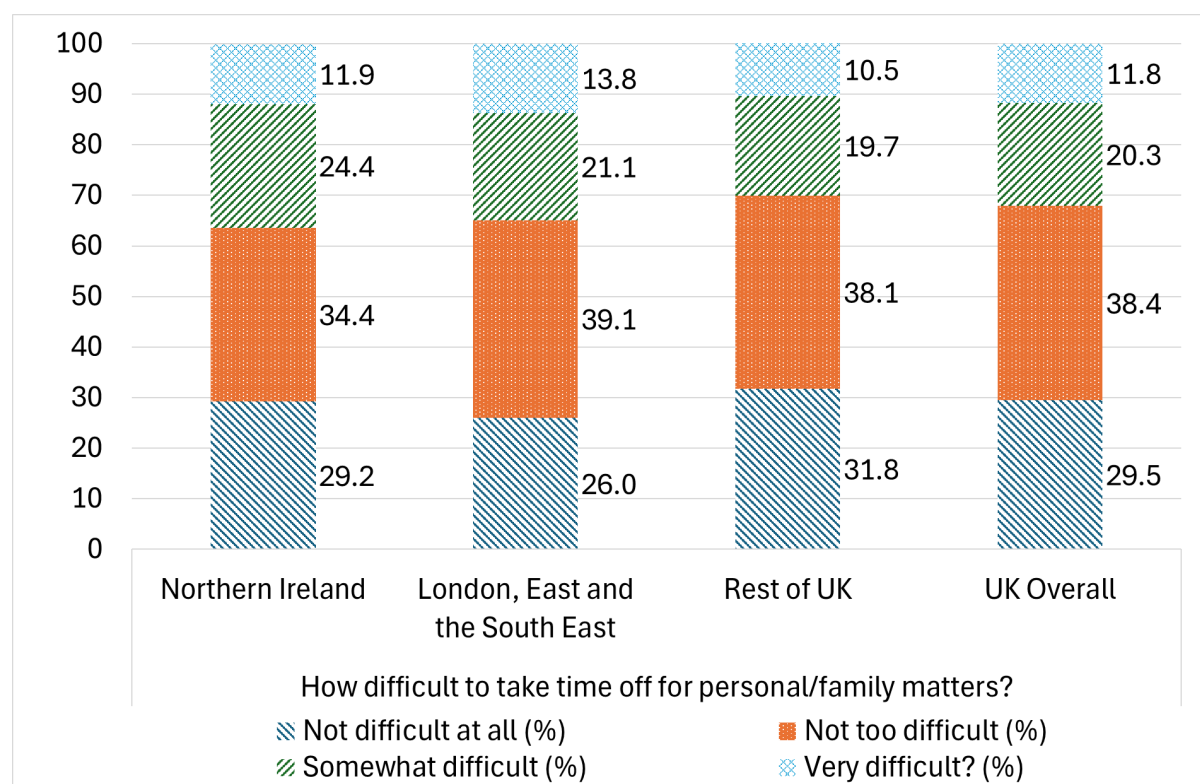


Table 9.2 reveals how the ease with which people can take time off varies across different groups of workers. The proportion of workers in Northern Ireland who indicate that it is either not too difficult or not difficult at all to take time off is lower among women (56%) or by those in jobs that are mainly done by women (52%), workers in the public sector (60%), part time workers (52%), those employed in the Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation sectors (59%) or Education and Health sectors (46%) and those employed in Sales, Operatives and Elementary roles (54%). These patterns closely reflect those observed more broadly across the UK, although women and those employed in the Manufacturing, Construction and Utilities appear relatively disadvantaged in Northern Ireland in terms of their ability to take time off.

Table 9.2: Ease of Taking Time Off

% Not Difficult	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Gender				
Male	70.7	66.5	73.8	71.0
Female	56.0	63.8	65.4	64.5
Age				
20-34 years	62.5	66.3	67.2	66.7
35-49 years	66.1	64.0	69.4	67.0
50+ years	61.4	64.4	73.7	70.0
Sector				
Private	67.6	69.7	70.6	70.2
Public	59.8	54.8	65.2	61.1
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	66.8	68.8	73.3	71.5
Part-time	52.1	53.9	56.6	55.3
In your workplace, what gender is your type of job done by?				
Mainly by men	70.1	66.2	71.0	69.5
By a fairly equal mixture of men and women	68.0	70.3	74.0	72.2
Mainly by women	52.1	54.9	61.8	58.8
Industry				
Manufacturing, Construction, Utilities (A-F)	67.7	71.5	79.8	77.4
Wholesale, Transport, Storage, Accommodation (G-I)	59.3	52.8	60.3	57.1
ICT, Finance, Real Estate (J-M)	83.6	85.8	88.5	87.3
Administration and Defence (N-O)	77.8	69.4	81.7	76.3
Education and Health (P-S)	46.4	53.4	52.5	52.7
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	69.6	74.1	76.0	75.1
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	61.4	59.4	66.5	63.7
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	54.3	42.6	57.8	52.5
Total	63.6	65.1	69.8	67.9

9.3 Ability to Disconnect

In 2024, the SES introduced a new question asking respondents the extent to which they were expected to remain connected to their work outside of normal working hours. Connected to work was defined as keeping on electronic devices – such as phones, messaging apps and laptops - so that they could respond to customer queries or matters raised by work colleagues, clients or their employer. Response options included always, often, sometimes, rarely or never. Table 9.3 reveals that 22% of workers in Northern Ireland reported that they were either always or often expected to remain connected to work outside of normal working hours. This figure is slightly lower than across the UK as a whole (27%) and particularly London, the East and the South East of England (29%). This lower level of connectedness in Northern Ireland is particularly apparent among men (22% compared to 30% across the UK). The groups most likely to report that they were expected to remain connected were those in Managerial and Professional occupations (28%) and those workplaces with 25 workers or less (29%).

Table 9.3: Connected to Work Outside Normal Hours by Selected Characteristics

% Always or often	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	Total
Gender				
Male	22.4	35.5	27.0	30.0
Female	21.9	23.4	22.6	22.9
Age				
20-34 years	18.2	15.9	20.8	19.0
35-49 years	24.9	36.8	26.6	30.9
50+ years	23.1	33.4	27.6	29.6
How many people work at, or from, the place where you work?				
1-25 workers	28.8	36.5	31.3	33.4
26-100 workers	19.3	27.8	25.0	25.8
100+ workers	18.4	23.7	19.4	21.1
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	28.1	37.8	31.4	33.9
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	20.7	15.2	19.1	17.7
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	11.4	22.7	15.0	17.5
All	22.2	29.3	24.9	26.5

9.4 Work Stress

In Chapter 5 we examined evidence on job-related subjective well-being using measures of enthusiasm and contentment. These measures focused upon how the jobs of respondents made them feel. In this section, we supplement these measures with two indicators that capture job related stress. Job stress is a negative measure of job-related wellbeing that captures the adverse impacts that work can have on people's lives. The SES asks respondents how much of the time respondents had felt the following in relation to their jobs:

- 'After I leave my work I keep worrying about job problems';
- 'I find it difficult to unwind at the end of a workday';
- 'I feel used up at the end of a workday'.

The responses to these questions range from 'never' to 'all of the time'.

Figure 9.3 reveals that most people experience some level of persistent job-related worry after work. Within Northern Ireland, almost a fifth of workers report that they keep worrying about job problems (18%) for much of the time or more. Less than one in five workers report that they never worry about work problems after they finish work. These patterns are similar across the UK. Figure 9.4 similarly reveals that a fifth (19%) also report that they find it difficult to unwind at the end of the day for much of the time or more. Over a quarter of workers in Northern Ireland however report that they never have any difficulty unwinding at the end of the day – a rate slightly higher than elsewhere in the UK.

The most frequently reported form of job stress however relates to feeling used up at the end of the day. Figure 9.5 reveals that in Northern Ireland, over a third of workers (36%) report that they feel used up at the end of the workday for much of the time or more. Almost one in ten workers report that they feel used up all of the time. However, workers in Northern Ireland are most likely to report that they never feel used up (14%).

Figure 9-3: Worry About Job Problems

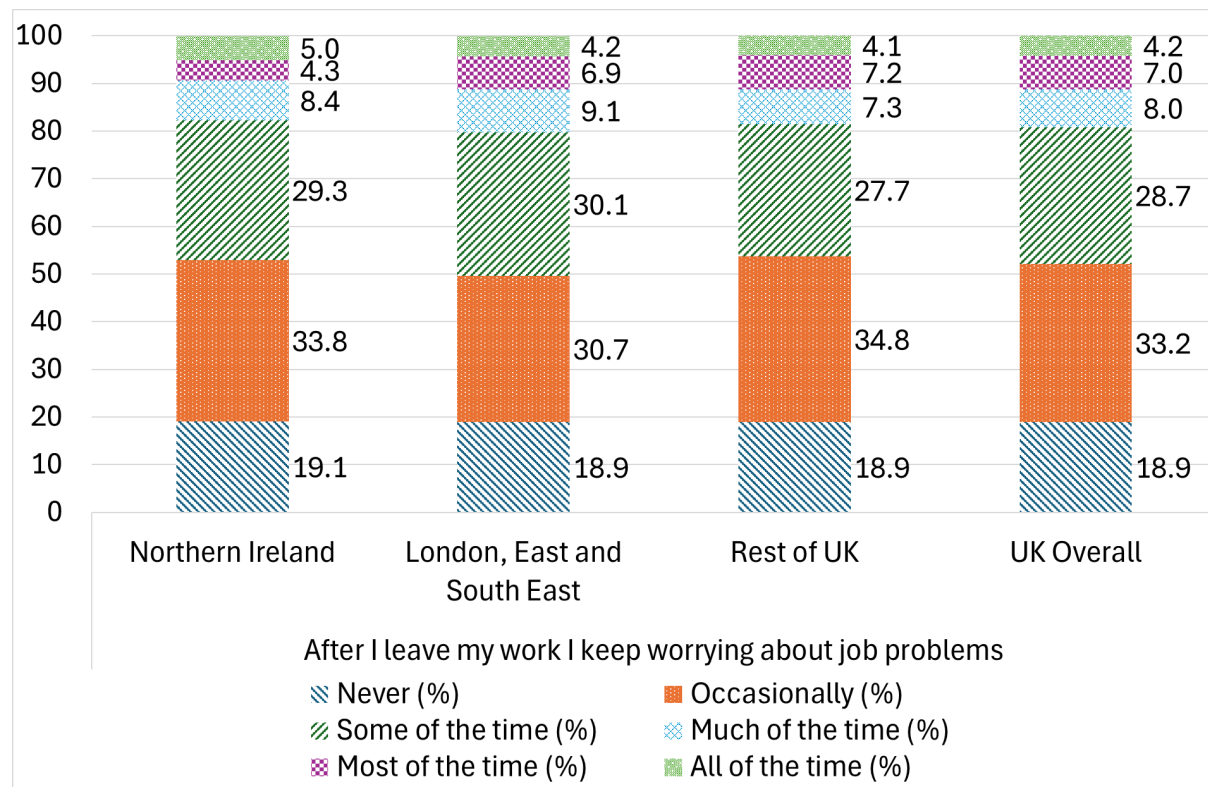


Figure 9-4: Difficulty Unwinding at the End of the Day

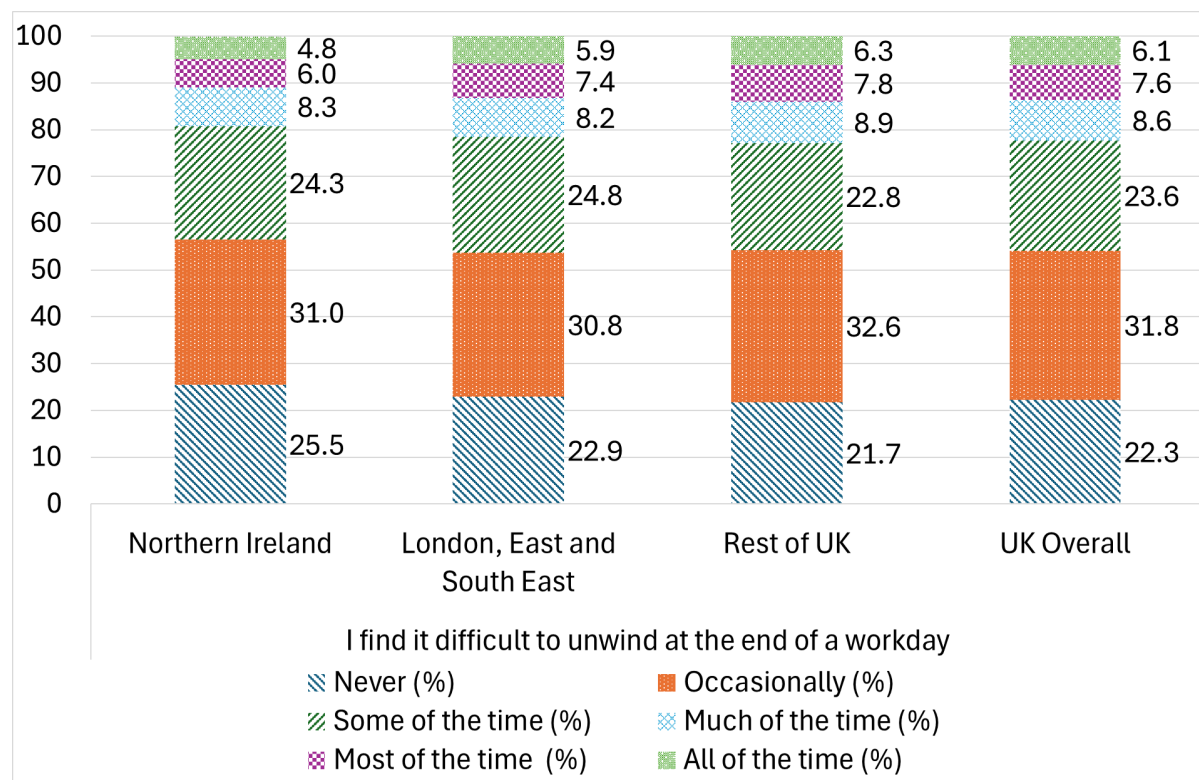
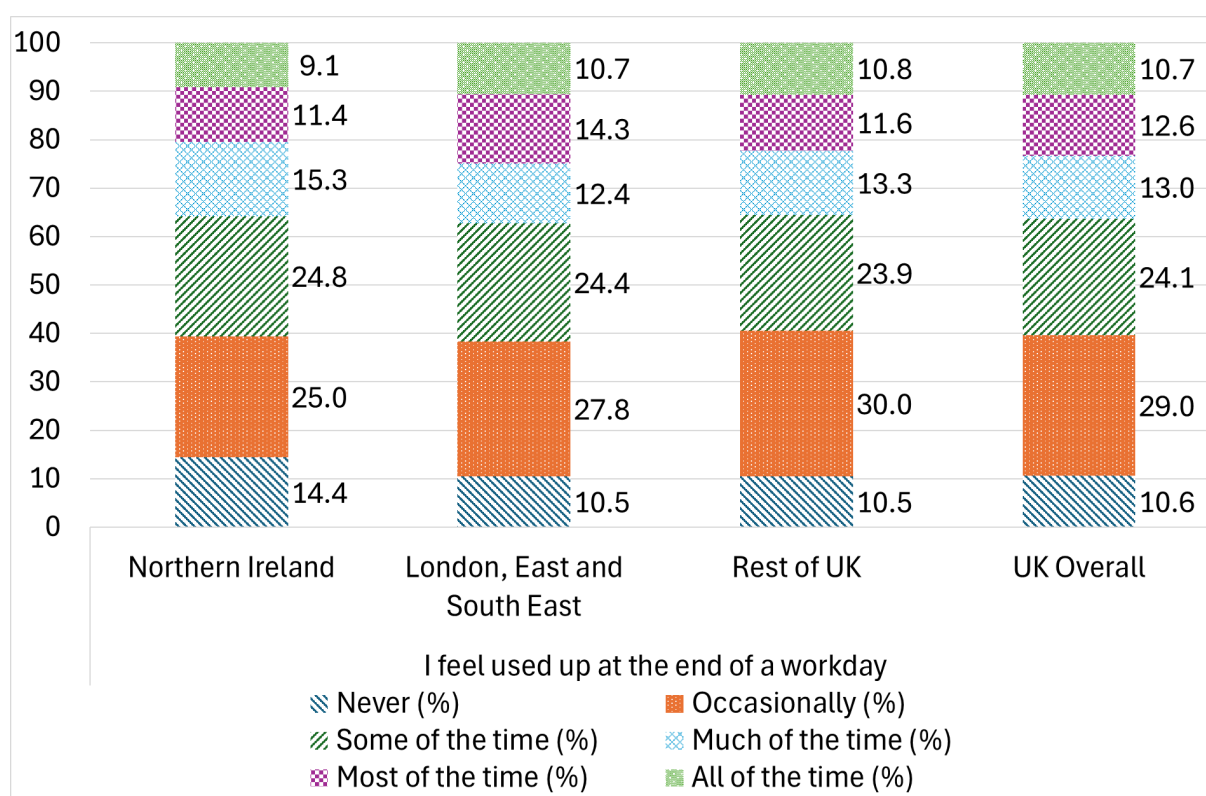


Figure 9-5: Feeling Used Up at the End of the Day



Tables 9.4, 9.5 and 9.6 reveal how job-related stress varies across different groups of workers. With respect to worrying about work and finding it difficult to unwind at the end of the day, consistent patterns emerge. Those who are middle aged, have poorer levels of health, are employed in the public sector and who work full time are each more likely to report that they worry about work and find it difficult to unwind much of the time or more. In terms of occupation, those who are employed in Managerial and Professional roles are more likely to report that they worry about work and that they find it difficult to unwind compared to those in lower skilled roles. As such, it is also observed that those with higher levels of educational attainment are also more likely to report that they worry about work and find it difficult to unwind. Less systematic variation is observed in terms of workers who report that they feel used up at the end of the day. Those who are more likely to report this form of job strain include younger workers and those who have poorer levels of health.

Table 9:4: Worry About Work by Selected Characteristics

% Much/Most/All of the Time	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	Total
Age				
20-34 years	12.4	21.8	20.5	20.7
35-49 years	24.1	20.4	18.6	19.5
50+ years	15.4	18.9	16.5	17.3
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	12.2	22.5	16.5	18.8
Very good	16.0	21.1	14.9	17.4
Good	20.4	18.7	22.0	20.6
Fair	25.5	18.4	23.7	22.1
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	18.4	25.2	25.0	24.9
No limiting ill-health/disability	17.7	19.4	17.2	18.1
Sector				
Private	15.9	21.0	16.4	18.1
Public	21.8	16.4	22.3	20.1
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	19.9	22.9	19.7	20.9
Part-time	10.2	11.9	15.0	13.6
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	27.8	28.0	21.7	24.4
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	11.4	11.2	18.9	15.7
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	8.2	8.1	10.6	9.7
Highest level of qualification held				
Level 2 or below	11.5	8.6	12.2	10.7
Level 3	11.2	24.0	16.1	18.5
Level 4 or above	24.9	24.3	22.6	23.4
All	17.8	20.3	18.7	19.3

Table 9:5: Difficulty with Unwinding by Selected Characteristics

% Much/Most/All of the Time	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	Total
Age				
20-34 years	13.6	23.3	26.8	25.2
35-49 years	25.6	22.4	23.4	23.0
50+ years	16.7	18.4	17.5	17.8
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	11.0	15.7	16.2	15.8
Very good	13.8	22.1	17.1	19.0
Good	24.9	21.3	27.3	24.8
Fair	35.4	28.0	35.4	33.2
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	26.0	32.5	36.7	35.1
No limiting ill-health/disability	17.9	19.6	19.7	19.6
Sector				
Private	15.6	20.5	22.8	21.7
Public	23.7	22.3	22.8	22.7
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	20.9	23.8	23.6	23.6
Part-time	13.0	14.4	20.6	17.8
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	27.5	26.1	25.7	25.9
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	14.5	21.1	21.7	21.2
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	10.4	7.1	17.7	13.9
Highest level of qualification held				
Level 2 or below	15.2	11.6	17.5	15.1
Level 3	13.0	21.8	18.0	19.1
Level 4 or above	24.8	25.9	27.6	26.8
All	19.2	21.5	23.0	22.3

Table 9.6: Feeling Used Up by Selected Characteristics

% Much/Most/All of the Time	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	Total
Age				
20-34 years	43.3	44.7	45.2	44.9
35-49 years	33.9	37.6	32.4	34.6
50+ years	29.1	29.4	28.2	28.7
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	33.6	34.1	27.9	30.5
Very good	30.1	36.5	29.1	32.1
Good	39.1	37.1	39.8	38.7
Fair	50.5	46.0	51.2	49.6
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	42.3	48.8	51.2	50.2
No limiting ill-health/disability	34.6	35.4	32.0	33.4
Sector				
Private	34.3	37.3	35.6	36.2
Public	36.3	38.3	37.8	37.9
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	35.8	37.8	35.9	36.6
Part-time	35.9	36.1	34.8	35.4
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	37.6	40.6	39.0	39.6
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	32.7	31.5	31.3	31.4
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	38.2	35.6	32.5	33.8
Highest level of qualification held				
Level 2 or below	29.6	32.4	31.1	31.6
Level 3	37.7	40.9	32.0	35.0
Level 4 or above	38.7	39.0	39.4	39.2
All	35.8	37.4	35.7	36.3

Table 9.7 combines these three measures of job-related stress into a single measure of high stress which is defined as those workers who report that they are stressed to a level which is equivalent to 'much' or more of the time across each of these indicators. Based on this indicator, overall approximately 16% of workers are estimated to report having high levels of job-related stress in Northern Ireland. Once again this is lower than that reported across the UK overall (19%), with the proportion

of workers in high stress jobs being highest among those based in London, the East and the South East of England (20%).

Table 9:7: High Stress Jobs by Selected Characteristics

%	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	Total
Age				
20-34 years	13.4	22.6	22.8	22.5
35-49 years	20.7	21.0	18.0	19.4
50+ years	13.7	15.3	14.5	14.8
In general, how would you say your health is?				
Excellent	10.1	18.0	13.2	15.0
Very good	12.8	19.4	13.6	15.9
Good	20.2	19.2	22.6	21.2
Fair	28.3	26.3	29.1	28.2
Life limiting ill-health condition				
Limiting ill-health/disability	17.5	29.2	30.4	29.7
No limiting ill-health/disability	16.2	18.3	16.0	16.9
Sector				
Private	13.6	20.3	18.0	18.8
Public	19.8	18.2	20.9	19.9
In your job, are you working full-time or part-time?				
Full-time	18.2	22.2	20.3	20.9
Part-time	9.7	12.5	13.0	12.7
Broad Occupations				
Managerial and Professional (SOC1-3)	24.8	24.8	21.3	22.7
Admin, trades and services (SOC4-6)	12.0	16.5	18.8	17.7
Sales, operatives and elementary (SOC7-9)	6.7	8.9	12.3	10.9
Highest level of qualification held				
Level 2 or below	12.9	10.4	12.4	11.6
Level 3	9.0	22.1	16.0	17.7
Level 4 or above	22.2	23.5	22.6	23.0
All	16.4	19.9	18.7	19.1

Table 9.7 shows how our combined measure of high stress jobs varies across different groups of workers. Those who are more likely to report being in high stress jobs in Northern Ireland included the middle aged (21%), those who regard their health as being 'fair' (28%), those employed in the public sector (20%) and those employed in Managerial and Professional occupations (25%). There are some points of difference when comparing work related stress in Northern Ireland to elsewhere in the UK. Compared to the UK as a whole, the differential between public and private sector workers is higher in Northern Ireland. Younger workers (aged 20-34 years) in Northern Ireland appear to exhibit lower levels of stress (13%) compared to those across the UK as a whole (23%). Indeed, across the UK as a whole, younger workers exhibit the highest levels of job-related stress. Finally, across the UK as a whole, workers who have a limiting ill-health condition report higher levels of job-related stress. This differential does not emerge among workers from Northern Ireland.

9.5 Working at Home

This section examines the location of work across the UK and how this can impact on the wellbeing of workers. The SES has included two location of work questions since 2001. The first asks: 'In your job, where do you mainly work?' with five response options: 'at home; in the same grounds and buildings as home (e.g., in an adjoining property or surrounding land); at a single workplace away from home (e.g., office, factory or shop); in a variety of different places of work (e.g., working on clients' premises or in their homes); and working on the move (e.g., delivering products or people to different places)'. The second question asks: 'In the last seven days have you spent at least one full day working in any other places?'. Combining responses to these questions allows us to refine the distinction between those who work exclusively from a particular mode of workplace and those who work across different settings (Felstead *et al.*, 2025).

Figure 9.6 firstly examines the location of work in Northern Ireland compared to elsewhere. Across the UK, most workers are based in a fixed workplace. It can be seen that just over four out of ten workers (44%) in Northern Ireland are fixed place workers. One in five workers (21%) in Northern Ireland report that they are hybrid workers whilst approximately one in eight reports that they work exclusively at home.

These patterns are similar to those observed across the UK as a whole, although hybrid working is relatively prevalent in London, East and the South East of England (27%).

In terms of the correlation between location of work and work-life balance, it can be seen in Table 9.8 that both home workers and hybrid workers find it easier to take time off than those working in a fixed location. In Northern Ireland, approximately eight out of ten home workers (84%) and hybrid workers (79%) report that it is not difficult to take time off compared to around a half of fixed place workers. Home workers (70%) and hybrid workers (57%) are also more likely to report that they have discretion over start and finish times than fixed place workers (19%). In terms of the ability to disconnect from work, a third of mobile workers report that they are expected to remain connected to work outside of normal hours. Among fixed place workers, this falls to 17%.

Figure 9-6: Location of Work

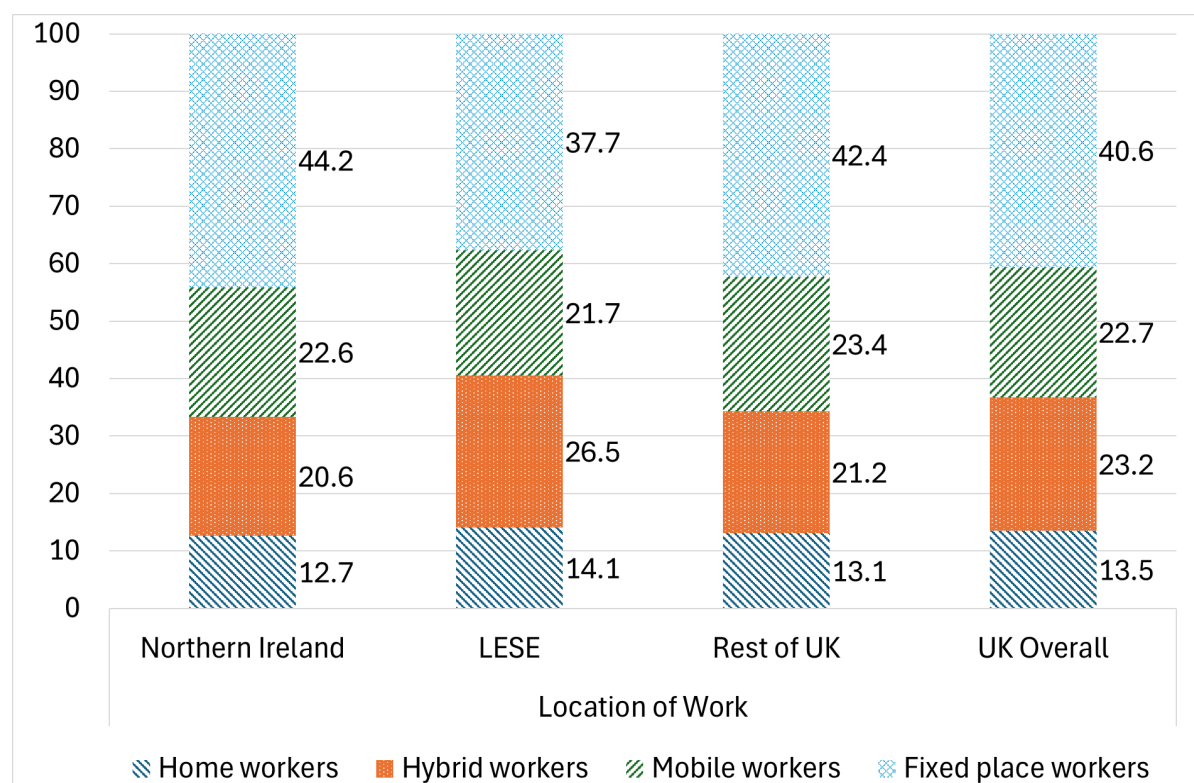


Table 9:8: Location of Work and Work-Life Balance

	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Ease of taking time off (% Not difficult)				
Home workers	83.8	86.1	88.8	87.6
Hybrid workers	79.2	83.8	84.1	83.8
Mobile workers	58.8	59.1	70.2	65.8
Fixed place workers	53.1	47.7	56.6	53.3
All	63.6	65.1	69.8	67.9
Discretion over start and finish times: (% Strongly agree/Agree)				
Home workers	69.2	56.0	71.2	65.0
Hybrid workers	57.1	59.3	64.7	62.2
Mobile workers	49.2	44.0	47.5	46.3
Fixed place workers	18.6	20.2	18.9	19.3
All	39.9	40.8	42.1	41.6
Ability to Disconnect (% Always or Often Available)				
Home workers	25.9	27.8	25.3	26.3
Hybrid workers	19.3	27.6	20.2	23.4
Mobile workers	33.3	39.8	34.9	36.7
Fixed place workers	16.7	25.0	21.5	22.6
All	22.2	29.3	24.9	26.5

In terms of the relationship between location of work and job stress, in Table 9.9 it can be seen that in Northern Ireland, fixed place workers are least likely to report that they worry about problems outside of work (15%) compared to other groups. There is very little variation in the reported ability of workers to unwind at the end of the day by location of work. However, fixed place workers in Northern Ireland are much more likely to report that they feel used up at the end of the day (43%) compared to other groups. Across the UK as a whole, the combined measure of high stress jobs reveals that homeworkers exhibit the lowest levels of stress (13%) whilst mobile workers report the highest (22%). These patterns are repeated in Northern Ireland.

Table 9:9: Location of Work and Job Stress

	Great Britain and Northern Ireland			
	Northern Ireland	LESE	Rest of UK	UK Overall
Worry about problems (% Much/Most/All of the Time)				
Home workers	19.7	10.2	17.5	14.6
Hybrid workers	20.2	20.9	15.4	17.9
Mobile workers	19.9	24.9	20.6	22.2
Fixed place workers	15.1	20.9	19.6	19.9
All	17.8	20.3	18.7	19.3
Difficult to unwind (% Much/Most/All of the Time)				
Home workers	17.9	16.7	15.6	16.1
Hybrid workers	21.2	21.8	22.4	22.1
Mobile workers	19.3	26.8	26.7	26.5
Fixed place workers	18.7	20.0	23.5	22.1
All	19.2	21.5	23.0	22.3
Feel Used Up (% Much/Most/All of the Time)				
Home workers	31.8	23.1	30.1	27.3
Hybrid workers	30.3	31.3	32.0	31.7
Mobile workers	30.1	39.6	35.8	37.1
Fixed place workers	42.5	45.6	39.2	41.6
All	35.8	37.4	35.7	36.3
High stress jobs (%)				
Home workers	14.8	13.6	13.0	13.3
Hybrid workers	17.0	19.2	18.6	18.8
Mobile workers	18.2	24.8	19.6	21.5
Fixed place workers	15.6	19.9	20.1	19.9
All	16.4	19.9	18.7	19.1

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Annex 1: SES Qualifications Schema: 2024

Respondents to the SES are asked 'Which qualifications do you have?'. Respondents are invited to *"Please select as many as appropriate"* from the list below.

	Qualification List	Level
1	None/no qualifications	0
	GCSEs, A-Level or Equivalent	
2	GCSE D-G/CSE below Grade 1/ Welsh Baccalaureate Foundation	1
3	GCSE A*-C/ GCE 'O' Level/CSE Grade 1/ Welsh Baccalaureate National	2
4	GCE 'A' Level/ Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced	3
	Scottish Certificate of Education	
5	SCE Standard (4-7)/Ordinary (below C)/National 3/National 4	1
6	SCE Standard (1-3)/Ordinary (A-C) or SLC/SUPE Lower/National 5	2
7	SCE Higher or SLC/SUPE Higher	3
8	Certificate of Sixth Year Studies/Advanced Higher/Scottish Baccalaureate	3
	Vocational Qualifications	
9	Level 1 NVQ: Award, diploma, certificate or skills/ GNVQ Foundation	1
10	Level 2 NVQ: Award, diploma, or skills / National certificate or diploma/ GNVQ Intermediate.	2
11	Level 3 NVQ: Award, diploma, or cert / GNVQ Advanced / ONC/OND/SNC/SND)/ T-level	3
12	Level 4 NVQ: Award, diploma, or certificate / Higher national certificate (or SHNC)	4
13	Level 5 NVQ: Award, diploma, or certificate / HND (SHND or)/ HE Diploma (not Degree)	4
	Scottish Higher-Level Qualification	
14	SCOTVEC National Certificate	3
15	SCOTBEC/SCOTEC Certificate/Diploma	3
	Professional Qualifications Involving Exams	
16	Professional qualification below degree level (e.g., social worker, security guard).	3
17	Nursing (e.g. SCM, RGN, SRN, SEN)	4
18	Degree-level professional qualification/ membership (e.g. law, medicine, accounting, engineering)	4
	Degree Level	
19	Foundation degree	4
20	Undergraduate degree	4
21	Masters	5
22	PhD	5
	Other	
23	Teaching (e.g. PGCE)	4
24	Completion of an Apprenticeship	3
25	Professional qualification without sitting exam	2
906	Other [please specify]	1