

Industry Trends Report

2026 Industry Trends across the Transport,
Infrastructure and Built Environment sectors



Introduction

Every year, we reach out to our network to answer the most asked questions from our contacts and clients throughout the year.

As a result, we are pleased to share a comprehensive overview into the hiring trends of 2026 and how they compare to previous years.

Against a backdrop of continued economic uncertainty, rapid technological advancements, and ongoing political change, predicting trends remains a challenge for many businesses.

Thank you to all our contacts across the Transport & Infrastructure sectors who took part in the survey and made it possible for us to share these valuable insights with you.



Key Findings

61%

of companies mandated a set number of days for employees to be in the office.
This is up **5%** from last year.

26%

of companies expect their bonus will payout the maximum amount.
Last year, **41%** of respondents said the same.

67%

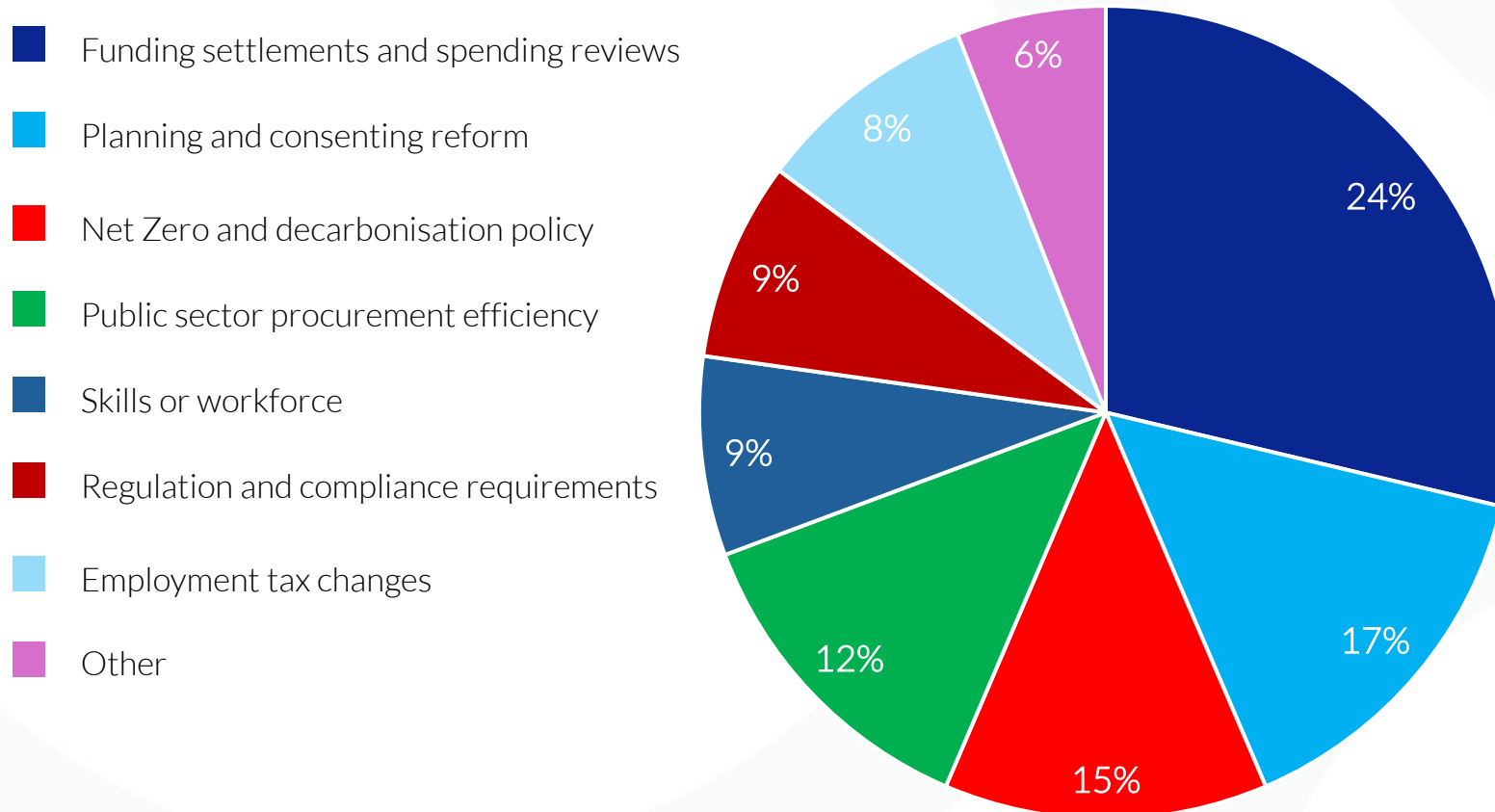
of respondents expect that salaries will rise by 2-4%*
This is down from last year – in 2025, **82%** of respondents expected salaries to rise by 2-4%.

*Based on expectations at the time of survey; external factors may impact inflation in the next few months.



Impact of UK Government policy on hiring

Which areas of UK Government policy will have the greatest impact over the next 12 months?



Of the 6% of respondents who selected “other”, some were international participants who said UK Government policy was unlikely to have a significant impact on their organisation.

Others said that their organisation would be mostly impacted by Local Government reorganisation, the 2025 Railways Bill, and government inefficiencies.

Another respondent suggested there was a lack of visibility and certainty in their current project pipelines, leading to more “boom and bust” conditions.

There were also broader concerns about the economic backdrop, with respondents noting an unstable economy is leading to failing confidence in their industry, leading to a long-term loss of skills and resources.



Which UK skills shortages present the greatest risk to delivery in 2026?

29%

of respondents from **consultancies** thought that **project and programme leadership** shortage would be the greatest risk to delivery.

33%

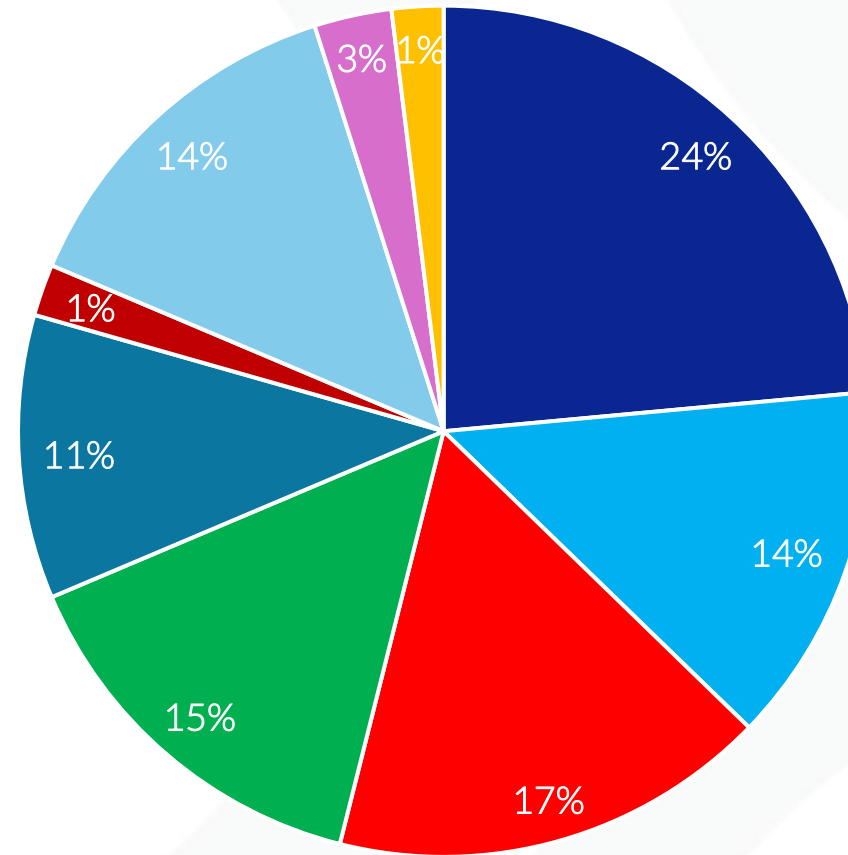
of respondents from **asset owners** thought that **commercial and contract management** shortage would be the greatest risk to delivery.

22%

of respondents from **contractors** thought that **operations and asset management leadership** shortage would be the greatest risk to delivery.

33%

of respondents from **operators** thought that **systems engineering & integration** shortage would be the greatest risk to delivery.



- Project and Programme Leadership
- Commercial & Contract Management
- Engineering & Design

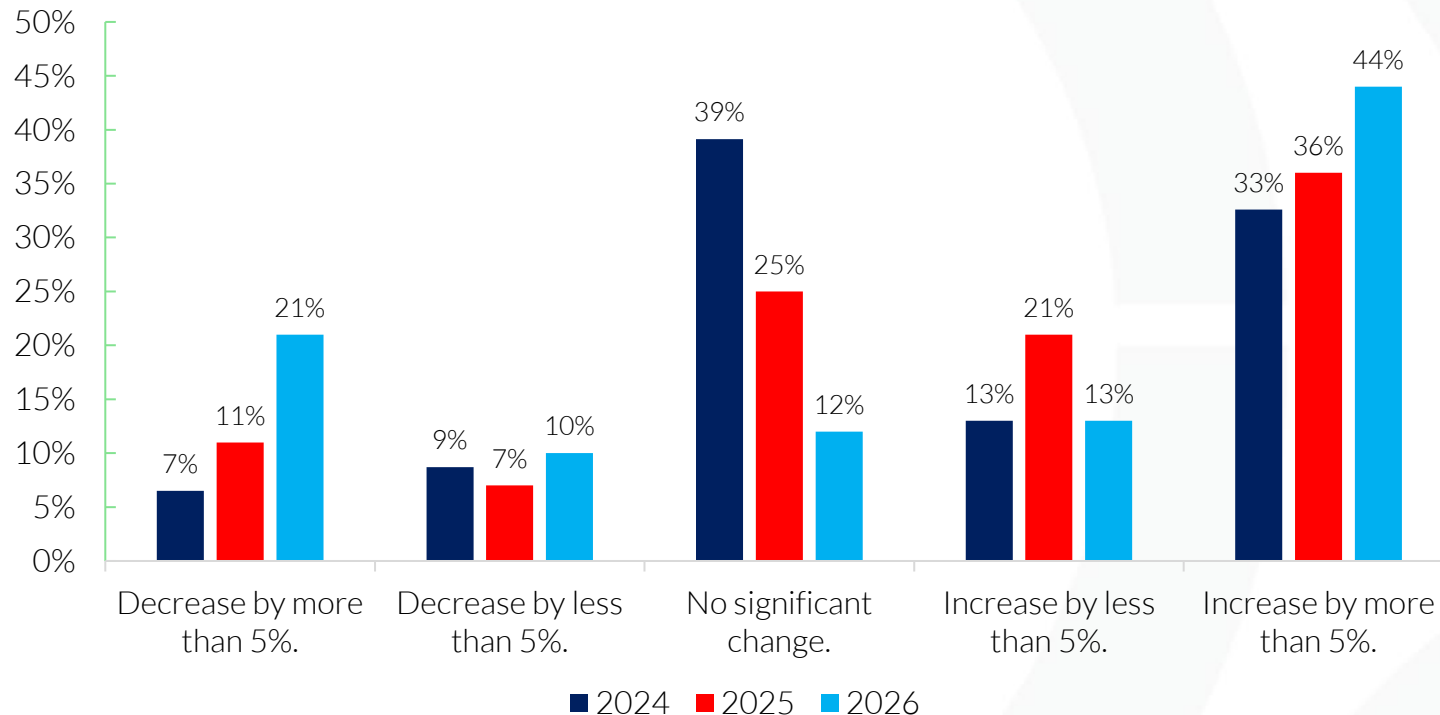
- Systems Engineering & Integration
- Digital, Data, and Automation Capability

- Sustainability and Carbon Expertise
- Operations and Asset Management Lead
- Safety and Assurance
- Other



What are companies doing in terms of headcount?

Comparison of headcount predictions over the last three years



56%
of respondents from **contractors** thought that headcount would *increase by more than 5%*

54%
of respondents from **consultancies** thought that headcount would *increase by more than 5%*

33%
of respondents from **operators** thought that headcount would *decrease by less than 5%*

33%
of respondents from **asset owners** thought that headcount would *decrease by more than 5%*

The 2026 data is tilted towards growth, with an increased proportion of companies planning to increase headcount by more than 5%. At the same time, the prominence of respondents anticipating decreases of more than 5% indicates a more polarised outlook across the industry. Whereas last year pointed broadly to positive hiring intentions, this year's data suggests a more divided set of expectations.



Diversity in Senior Leadership Teams

Increasing diversity at leadership level remains a priority for our clients.

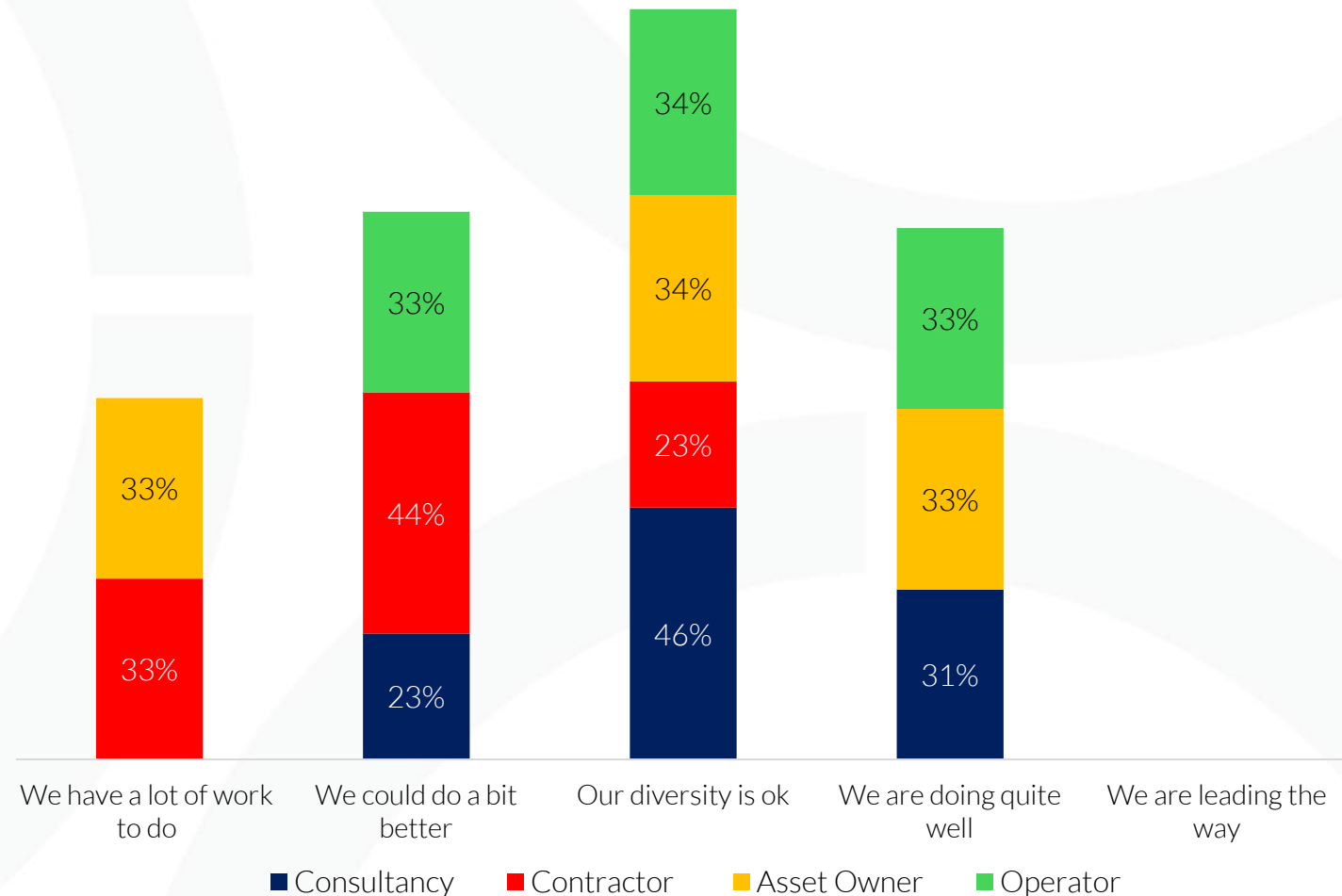
In 2024, 61% of respondents felt their organisation's diversity "could be better", falling to 50% in last year's report and 28% in 2026. This points to gradual progress in representation at senior levels.

This trend is consistent with our wider gender diversity reporting, where we see steady improvement alongside increased focus on targeted initiatives and leadership accountability.

You can read our latest diversity report [here](#), which explores the work still needed to improve diversity across the sector.

A small number of outlier responses (not shown due to sample size) highlight the range of views. One Trade Association respondent described their organisation as "leading the way", while a Public Sector respondent noted substantial progress is still needed. Overall, few organisations view themselves as leaders in this area.

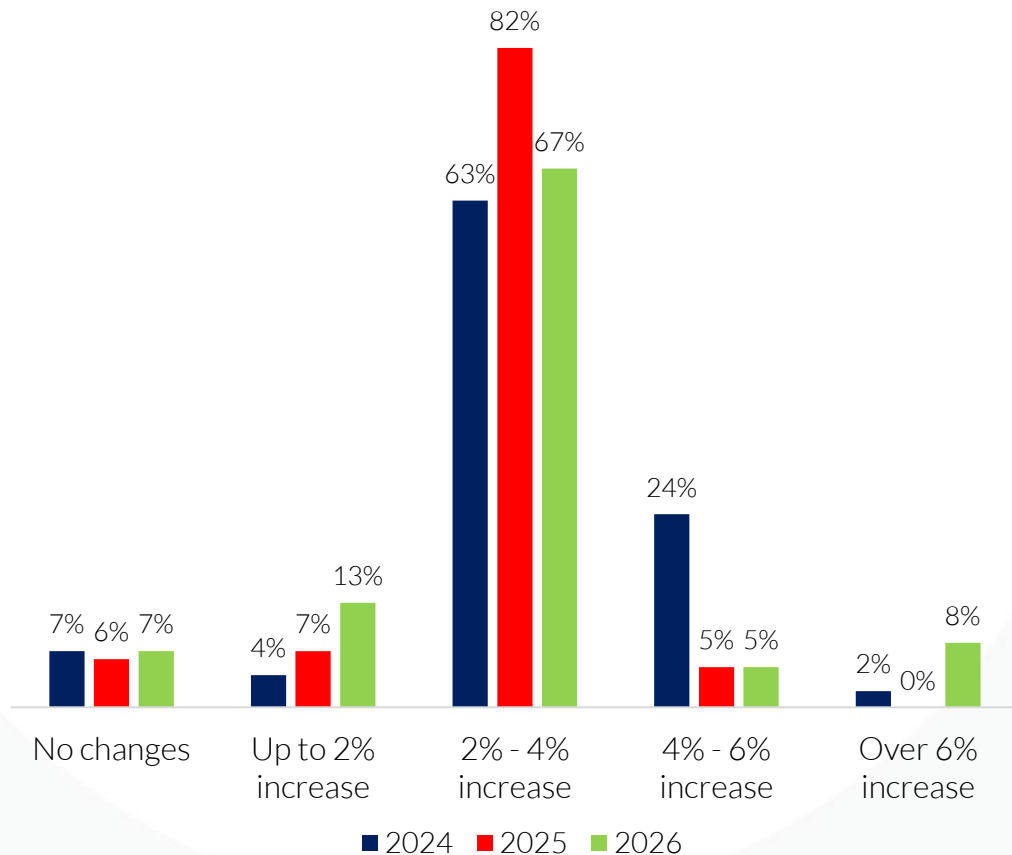
How satisfied are you with the diversity of your current leadership team?



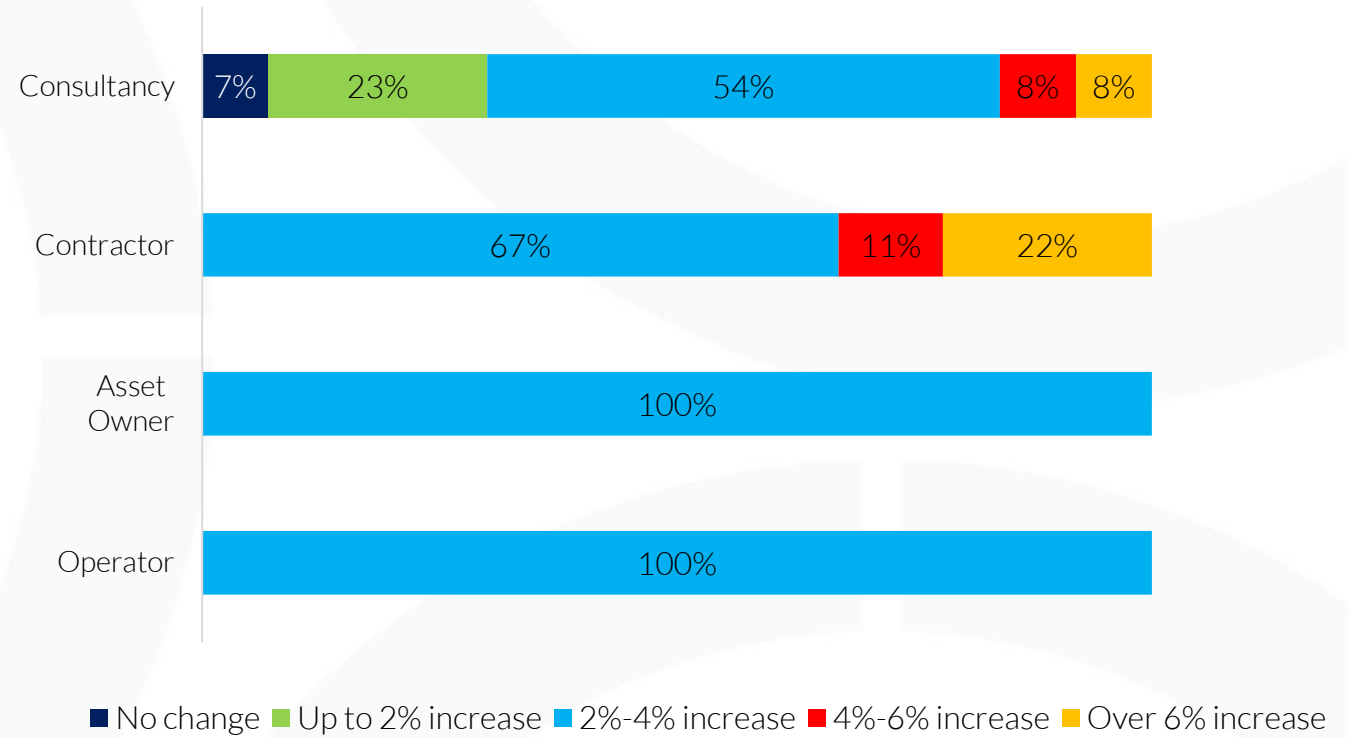


What changes will companies see in terms of salaries this year?

Comparison of predicted salary changes over the last three years



Salary change by company type

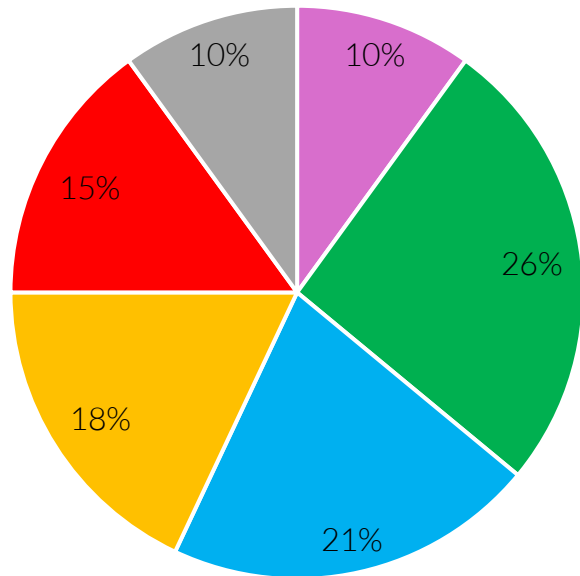


Predicted salary increases remain broadly in line with recent years, with most organisations expecting moderate uplifts rather than significant rises.



On average, what will be your annual bonus payout this year?

Expected Bonus Payout

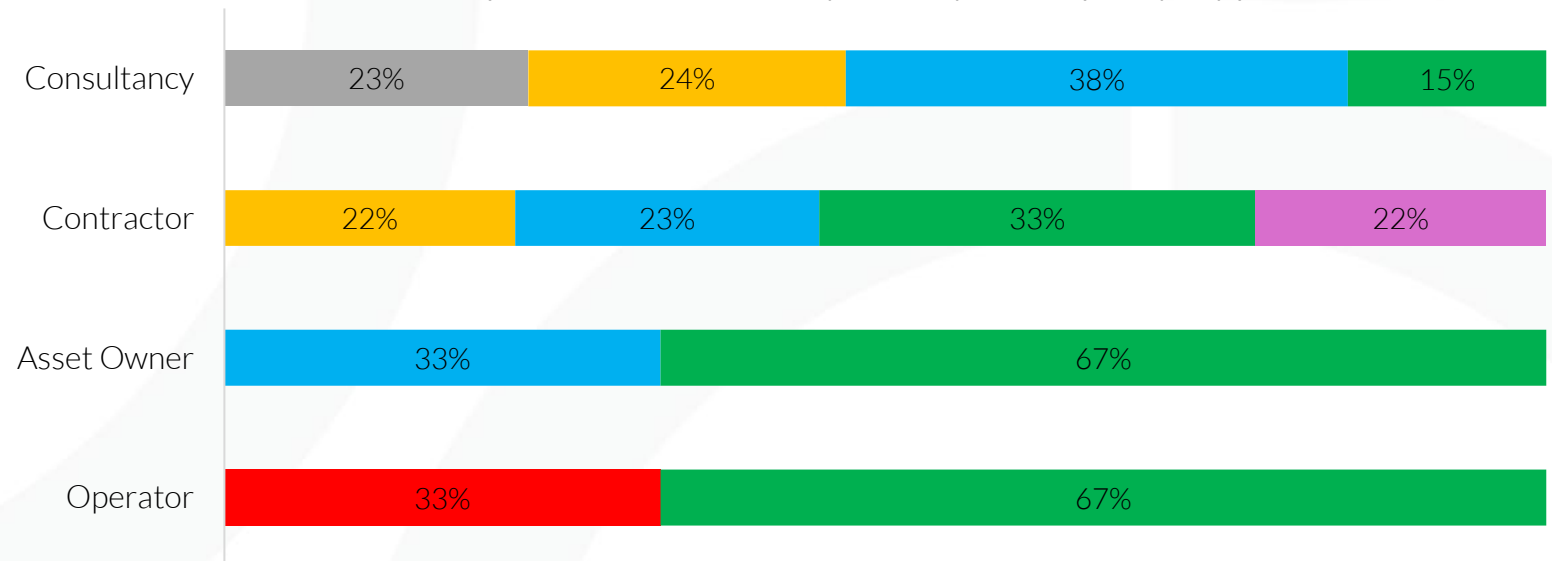


- It will reach the maximum amount
- We expect to pay out most of the bonus
- About half of the bonus will be paid
- A partial payout will be made
- No bonus payout this year
- Prefer not to disclose

Bonus payouts remain a useful indicator of business performance and confidence across the transport and infrastructure sector, though sentiment appears to have softened year-on-year. In 2026, 26% of respondents expected to receive most of their bonus, compared to 41% in 2025.

This shift is reflected in a greater proportion anticipating partial payouts, with those expecting around half of their bonus increasing from 11% to 21%. Overall, the data suggests a move away from full or near-full bonuses to more moderated outcomes.

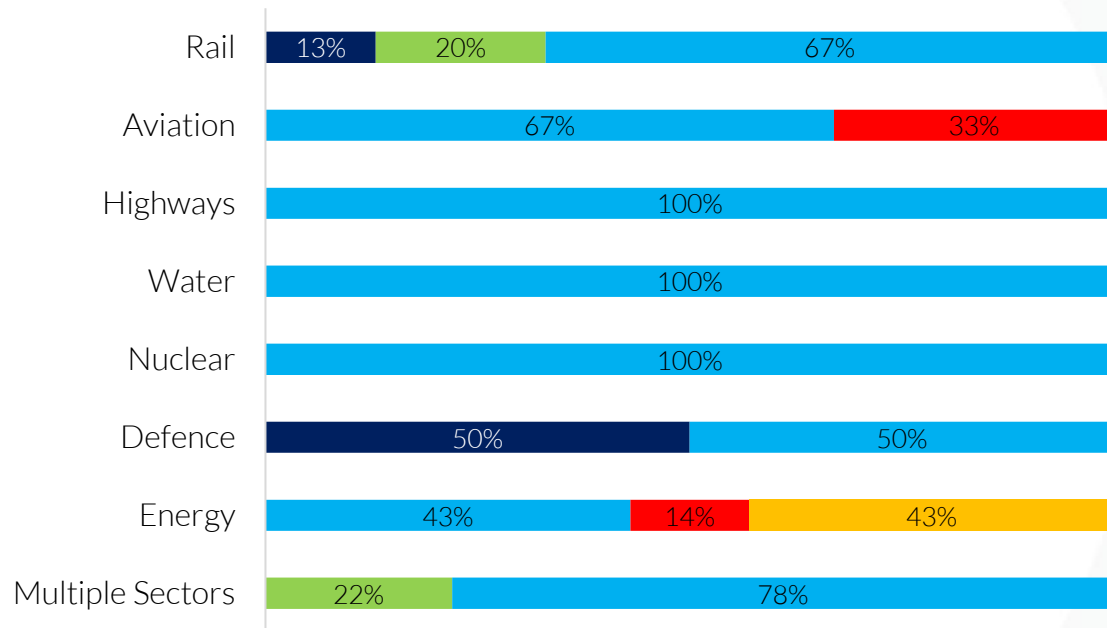
Expected Bonus Payout by Company Type





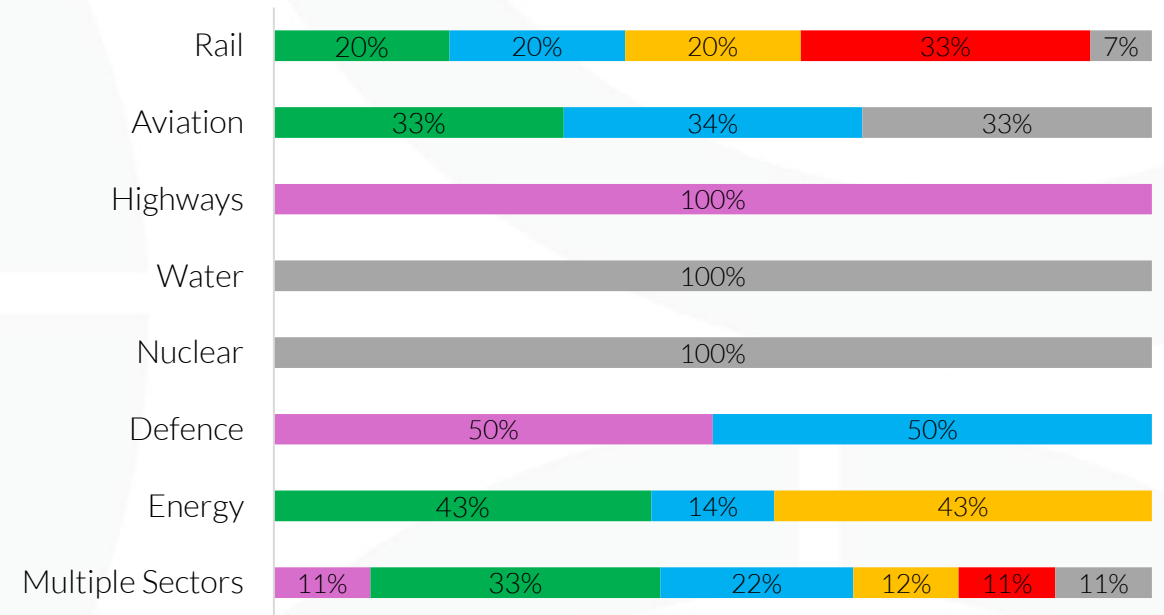
Compensation trends by sector

Breakdown of expected salary increases by sector



- No Changes
- Up to 2% Increase
- 2%-4% Increase
- 4%-6% Increase
- Over 6% Increase

Breakdown of expected bonus payout by sector



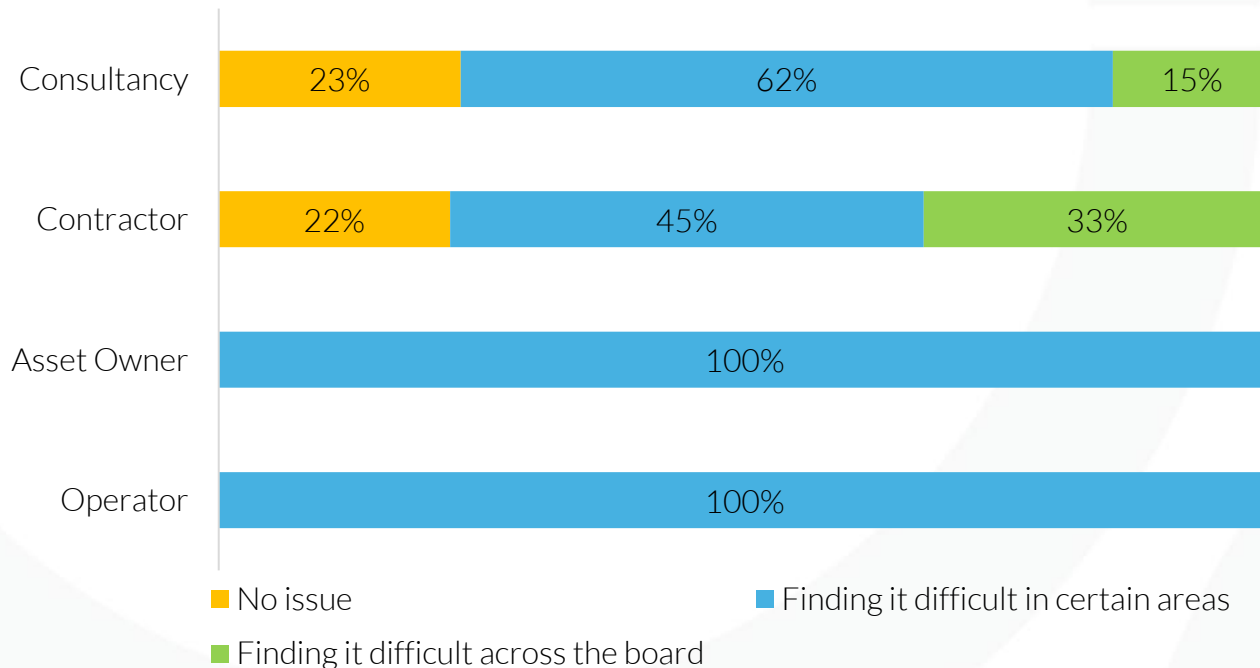
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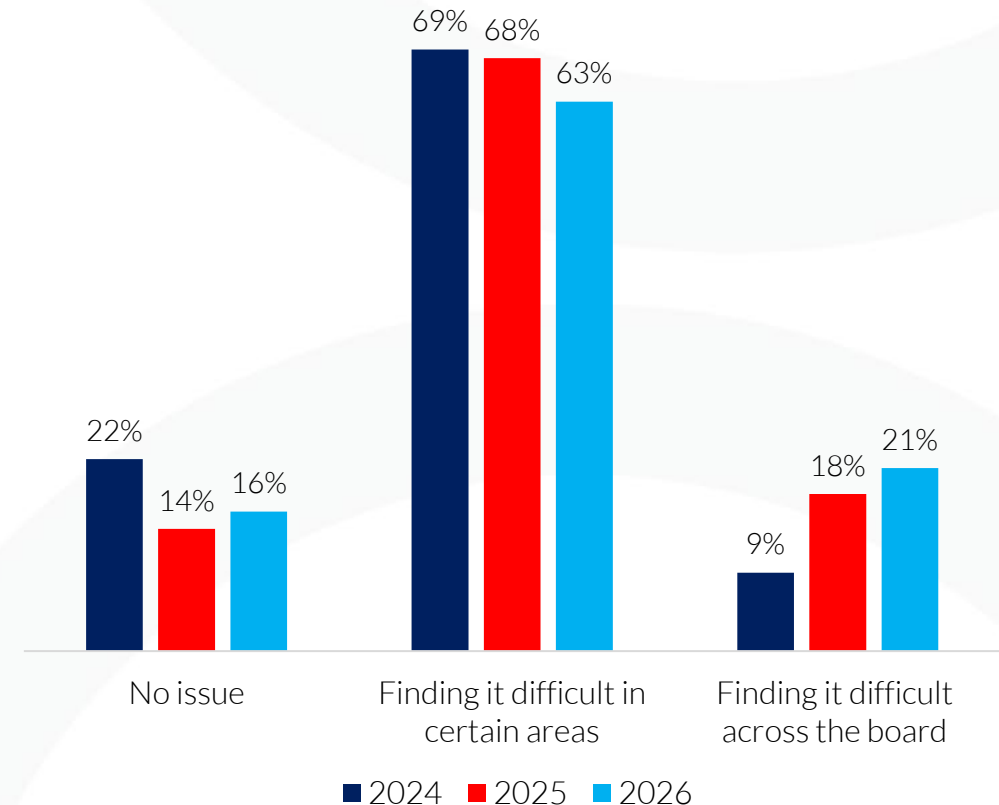
How difficult are businesses finding it to recruit at senior levels?

84% of respondents report finding difficulty recruiting at a senior level, only a slight decrease on last year, indicating that hiring challenges remain largely unchanged. The most commonly cited were Commercial, Programme Leadership, and Engineering/Technical roles.

Difficulty finding senior talent by company type



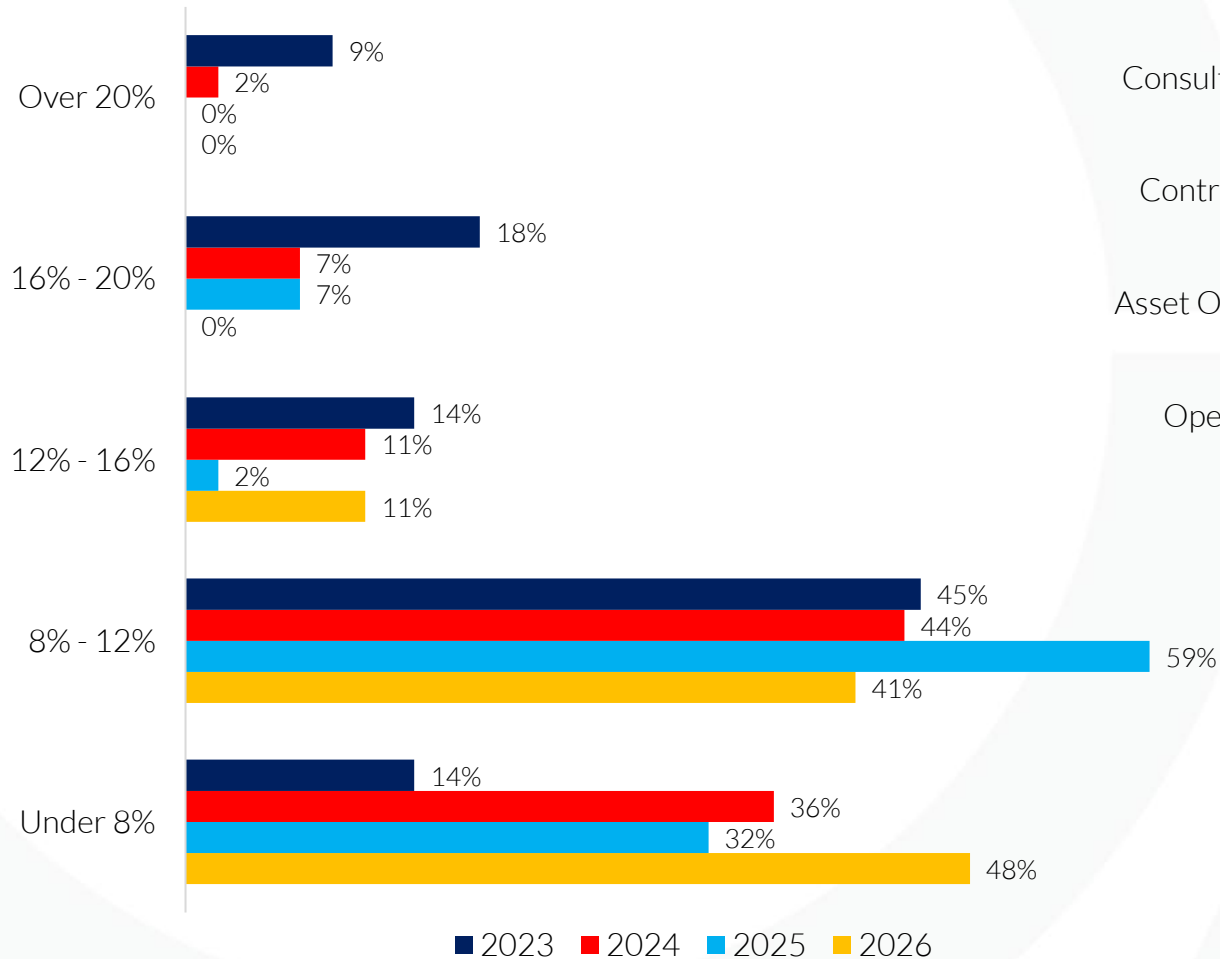
Difficulty recruiting senior talent over the last three years



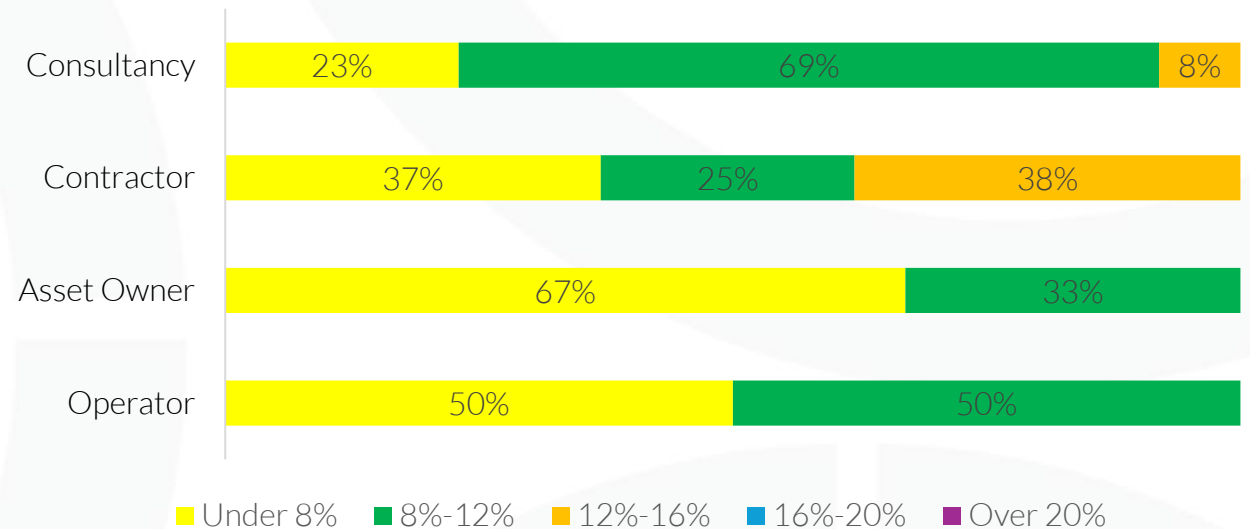


Staff turnover

Staff Turnover: 2023-2026



Staff Turnover by Company Type in 2026



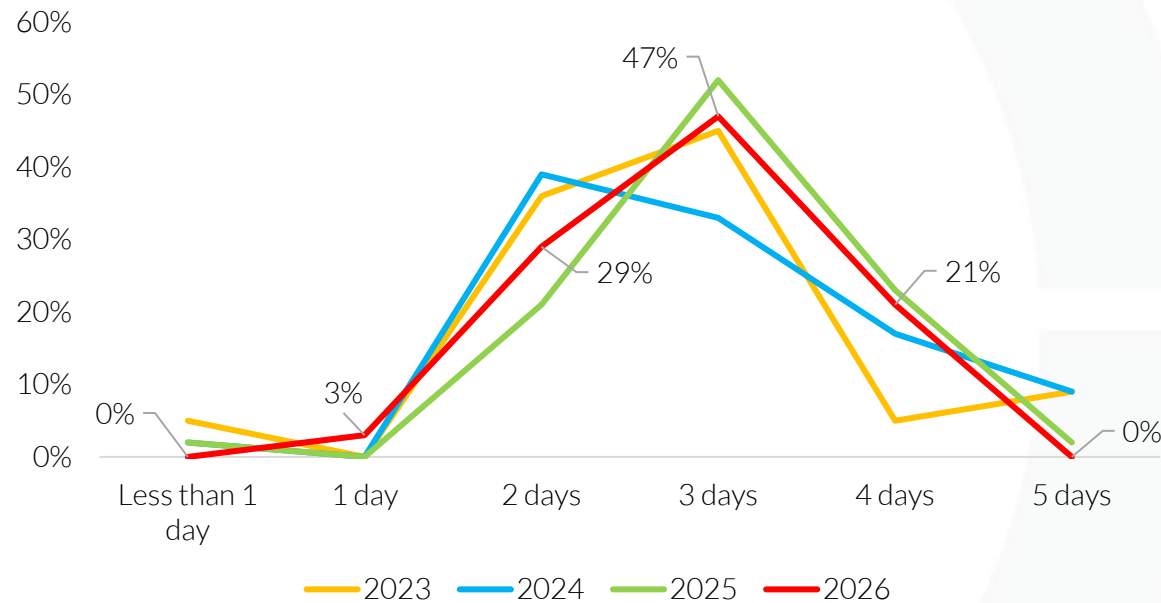
Staff turnover continues to trend downward, with a clear shift towards lower turnover brackets over the past four years.

This suggests a stabilisation in the labour market following the post-pandemic "Great Resignation". Employees appear to be staying in roles for longer, likely reflecting a combination of improved employer retention strategies and a more cautious workforce prioritising stability amid ongoing economic uncertainty.

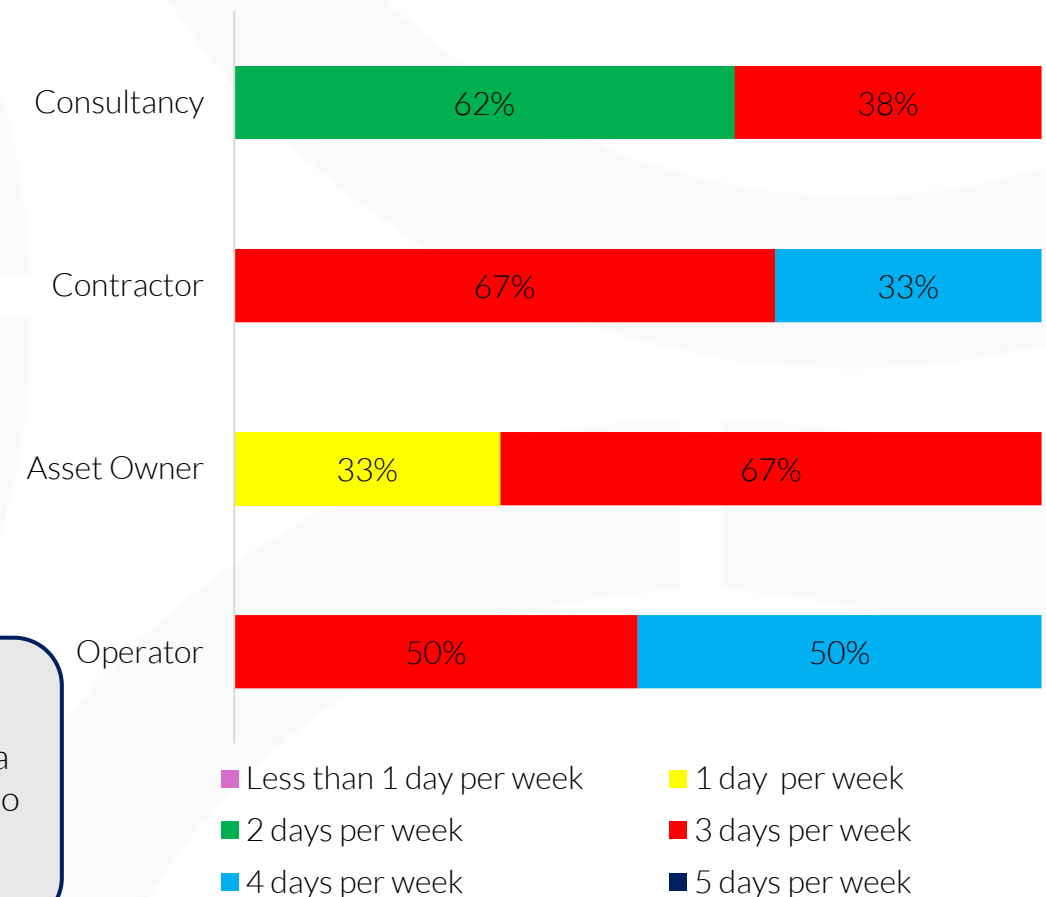


How often are staff in the office?

Average office days per week



Average office days by company type



61% of companies now mandate a minimum number of in-office days, up from 56% last year. However, the structure of these policies has shifted. While three days remains the most common requirement, its prevalence has declined with a greater number of organisations now mandating two days per week. Notably, no respondents reported a full five-day in-office requirement, reinforcing the continued move toward hybrid working models.

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