

Working Life on Low Pay in Ireland

Findings from the Working in Ireland Survey, 2025

Lisa Wilson, John Geary, Hugh Creaton,
Juliet Hassard, Maria Belizón and Chris Smart
September 2026



W The Working in
Ireland Survey



Please cite this report as: Wilson, L., Geary, J., Creaton, H., Hassard, J., Belizon, M. and Smart, C. (2026) Working Life on Low Pay in Ireland. Findings from the Working in Ireland Survey 2025.

Available at: <https://www.workinginirelandsurvey.com/outputs-from-wiis-2>

Abstract:

This report examines the quality and character of low-paid work in Ireland using data from the Working in Ireland Survey (WIIS), 2025. While low pay is commonly understood primarily in terms of earnings, the analysis examines the broader conditions and experiences that characterise low-paid employment across multiple dimensions of job quality.

Drawing on a multidimensional job quality framework, the report examines the conditions of work for low paid workers across a wide range of extrinsic and intrinsic employment conditions, including pay levels, employment security, working time, access to benefits and training, work intensity, autonomy, workplace relations, organisational support, employee voice, innovation capacity, mental wellbeing, and financial strain. The report also examines variation within low-paid employment through cluster analysis, identifying distinct configurations of low-paid work characterised by differing combinations of security, workplace resources, strain, and precarity.

The findings are situated within wider debates concerning job quality, labour market inequality, precarious employment, and employment standards in Ireland. In doing so, the report seeks to contribute to understanding not simply who is low paid, but the kinds of jobs low-paid workers occupy and the broader conditions under which low-paid work is experienced.

Contents

Abstract:	3
Report Summary of Findings	6
Section 1: Introduction	11
Section 2: Concepts and Measurement	13
2.1 Measurement of Earnings	13
2.2 Measurement of Job Quality	16
Section 3: The Working in Ireland Survey 2025	18
Section 4: The extent of low pay as identified in the Working in Ireland Survey 2025	20
4.1 Distribution of weekly net earnings by employment status	20
4.2 The Prevalence of Low Pay: Evidence from Net Weekly Earnings	22
4.3 Who are the low paid?	24
4.4 How likely is this group to be low paid?	26
4.5 Minimum Wage Employment	34
Section 5: The Entry Point: Structural Conditions of Low Paid Work	41
5.1 Access to non-wage benefits among low paid	41
5.2 Working Time and Work Intensity	43
5.3 Employment Security and Future Prospects	44
Section 6: Job Mobility and Retention	47

Section 7: Work Experiences in Low-Paid Employment	49
7.1 Job Autonomy and Control	49
7.2 Employee Relations and Organisational Relations	51
7.3 Managerial Support and Supervisory Relations	52
7.4 Employee-organisation relationship quality	53
7.5 Experiences of Bullying, Harassment and Violence in the Workplace	55
7.6 Training and Development	57
7.7 Work-related Stress, Strain and Engagement.	58
7.8 Innovation and Participation	62
Section 8: Consequences of Low Paid Work	65
8.1 Self-reported health	66
8.2 Mental Wellbeing	66
8.3 Household Financial Well-being	67
Section 9: The identification of distinct forms of low-paid	70
9.1 Cluster 1: Secure, higher-resource, lower-strain, better relational low-paid work	71
9.2 Cluster 2: Insecure, lower-resource, higher-strain, poorer relational low-paid work	72
9.3 What factors are associated with different types of low paid work?	74
Section 10: Policy Implications and Recommendations	79
References	84

Report Summary of Findings

1. This report examines the extent, structure, experience and consequences of low-paid employment in Ireland. It begins by assessing the scale and distribution of low-paid employment before examining the characteristics of low-paid workers and jobs. It then moves beyond earnings to examine the quality of low-paid work, its consequences for workers, the distinct forms that low-paid employment takes, and the implications for policy. In doing so, it provides a more comprehensive account of what it means to live and work on low pay in the contemporary Irish labour market.
2. Low-paid employment remains a substantial and embedded feature of the Irish labour market. Depending on the threshold applied, between 12.7% and 31.6% of employees fall below commonly used low-pay benchmarks. While estimates vary according to the measure employed, almost one-third of employees earn less than the Real Living Wage benchmark, and more than one-fifth of full-time workers remain below this threshold.
3. Low weekly earnings are shaped not only by hourly rates of pay but also by working-time arrangements, including short-hours employment, fragmented schedules, and unstable or unpredictable hours. The analysis of National Minimum Wage employment shows that while 81.3% of employees earning at or below the NMW also fall below two-thirds of median weekly earnings, 72.2% of those with low weekly earnings have an observed hourly wage above the NMW. This demonstrates that increasing the hourly wage floor, while important, will not by itself address the full extent of low weekly earnings.
4. Low earnings are not confined to part-time or marginal employment. A substantial minority of full-time workers continue to experience relatively low net weekly earnings despite sustained labour market participation, demonstrating that full-time employment does not necessarily protect workers from low pay.
5. Nor is low pay simply a feature of insecure or atypical work. A substantial share of low-paid workers hold permanent contracts and work standard hours, demonstrating that low pay is embedded within mainstream employment across key sectors of the Irish economy rather than being confined to the margins of the labour market.
6. Women, younger workers, older workers, and those with lower educational attainment face systematically elevated risks of low pay.
7. Low pay is strongly gendered. Across all thresholds examined, women account for around two-thirds of the low-paid workforce and face consistently higher risks of low pay than men. Women are also more likely than men to report earning at or below the NMW (9.1% compared with 6.9%). However, the gender difference is substantially larger when low pay is measured using net weekly earnings, with 29.7% of women compared with 16.9% of men falling below two-thirds of median weekly earnings. This indicates that gender differences in low weekly earnings

extend beyond differences in hourly wage rates and are also associated with the amount and organisation of paid work.

8. Age is strongly associated with low pay, following a U-shaped pattern across the working life course. Younger workers aged 16–24 are disproportionately affected, accounting for around one-third of all low-paid employees and facing the highest risk of low pay, with 59% earning below two-thirds of median weekly earnings and over 70% falling below the Real Living Wage threshold. However, low pay risk rises again among older workers, particularly those aged 65 and over, with around half falling below the two-thirds median threshold and 53% below the Real Living Wage benchmark.
9. Educational attainment provides significant protection against low pay, with workers holding lower secondary and upper secondary qualifications facing substantially higher risks of low pay than those with tertiary education. However, low-paid employment is evident across all levels of educational attainment. Workers with tertiary qualifications account for the largest single share of the low-paid workforce, highlighting that higher education does not necessarily prevent workers from experiencing low-paid employment.
10. Low pay is unevenly distributed across Ireland in a geographic sense. The Border region consistently records the highest incidence of low weekly earnings and also has the highest incidence of National Minimum Wage employment. The West presents a different pattern, with relatively average levels of NMW employment but a high incidence of low weekly earnings. These differences suggest that regional patterns of low pay are shaped not only by hourly wage levels but also by the availability and organisation of working hours within regional labour markets.
11. Low pay is largely concentrated within a relatively small number of sectors of the Irish economy. More than half of all low paid workers are employed in just three sectors: wholesale and retail trade (26.8 per cent), accommodation and food services (15.5 per cent), and human health and social work (14.6 per cent). While this reflects, in part, the size of these sectors, the concentration of low paid employment cannot be explained by workforce composition alone. When the analysis instead considers the likelihood of workers being low paid within each sector, accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail trade, and arts and recreation record the highest incidence of low pay, whereas workers employed in information and communication, financial and insurance activities, manufacturing, and utilities are considerably less likely to experience low pay.
12. The results suggest that low-paid employment involves more than low earnings alone. Low-paid workers frequently experience disadvantages across multiple dimensions of job quality, including employment security, access to benefits, opportunities for progression, autonomy and development. The findings indicate that low pay frequently coincides with broader disadvantages in the quality of work.

13. The findings show that low-paid employment is frequently associated with poorer job quality across both extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions. Low-paid workers are less likely to have access to non-wage benefits, particularly occupational pensions and paid sick leave, and are more likely to experience employment insecurity and precarity.
14. Low-paid workers also face more limited opportunities for progression and development within employment. They are less likely to have opportunities for career progression and have uneven access to training and development. A substantial proportion receive no training at all and, where training is provided, it is often of relatively short duration. Extended periods of both on-the-job and off-the-job training are relatively uncommon.
15. Low-paid employment is characterised by relatively limited autonomy and control over working time and the organisation of work. Low-paid workers also report fewer opportunities to participate in workplace decision-making, use their skills fully, contribute to workplace improvements, and engage in innovation-related activities, suggesting that many occupy more routinised forms of work with limited opportunities for discretion and participation.
16. Workplace relationships among low-paid workers are characterised by both strengths and weaknesses. Most report positive relationships with their immediate manager, with more than four in five reporting that they are treated with respect, receive recognition for good work, are encouraged in their development, and are supported when experiencing health-related difficulties.
17. However, broader employee–organisation relationships are more mixed. Around one in five low-paid workers report being unable to express their views to management about pay, while 15.7 per cent report a lack of trust in management, 11.1 per cent perceive unfair treatment within their organisation, and 14.5 per cent report that their organisation does not inspire them to perform at their best. The findings also point to less certain longer-term attachment to employers, with a substantial proportion of low-paid workers remaining open to seeking alternative employment within the next year.
18. Experiences of workplace bullying, harassment, verbal abuse, and violence are not uncommon among low-paid workers. Almost one in five report experiencing bullying or harassment, almost one-third report being subjected to verbal abuse or being yelled at, around one in ten report experiencing undesired sexual attention or threats of physical violence, and 5.5% report experiencing physical violence or abuse.
19. A substantial minority of low-paid workers experience work-related strain. Around one in five report frequent physical exhaustion and difficulty recovering energy after work. More than one-third also experience tension or irritability at least some of the time, while almost three in ten report concentration difficulties at least some of the time.
20. Although substantial proportions of low-paid workers experience

inferior extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of their work, their levels of work engagement remain relatively high. Many report feelings of usefulness, accomplishment, enthusiasm, belonging, and energy while working. These findings complicate simplistic assumptions that poorer employment conditions necessarily produce disengagement and instead highlight the coexistence of meaningful work experiences despite the inferior conditions of employment. It seems that Ireland's low-paid workers are, for the most part, willing to work hard and with enthusiasm, but are constrained by the limited opportunities afforded to receive ongoing training, to become involved in their work, and to engage in work improvement activities.

21. The financial consequences of low-paid employment extend beyond the workplace into household financial security. While most low-paid workers report positive overall health and wellbeing, a substantial minority experience poorer health outcomes, lower wellbeing, and financial strain. Household financial strain emerges as one of the clearest and most consistent features of low-paid employment, with nearly one-third reporting difficulty making ends meet. Financial strain remains evident even within dual-earner households, indicating that partner employment only partially buffers the effects of low pay. Full-time low-paid workers frequently report greater financial difficulty than part-time low-paid workers, suggesting that low-paid employment often functions as a primary but insufficient source of household income.

22. To better understand the diversity of experiences within low-paid employment, the report examined whether distinct forms of low-paid work could be identified. The findings identify two distinct forms of low-paid employment that differ systematically in their job quality and working conditions. The first is characterised by relatively stronger employment protections, more stable working hours, lower exposure to precarity, stronger workplace relationships, lower work-related strain, higher work engagement, and better access to training and organisational supports. However, this form of low-paid employment remains characterised by persistently low pay, limited autonomy, routine task structures, and restricted opportunities for progression. The second is characterised by fragmented working arrangements, short-hours employment, multiple jobholding, higher levels of precarity, weaker employment protections, poorer workplace relationships, higher work-related strain, weaker organisational support, and very limited access to training and development.

23. The findings indicate that improving earnings levels, while important, needs to be accompanied by attention to the wider conditions in which low-paid work is organised and experienced. The analysis of National Minimum Wage employment demonstrates that increases in the hourly wage floor are likely to improve the position of many workers experiencing low weekly earnings, but that a substantial proportion of those with low weekly earnings have an observed hourly wage above the NMW. Low-paid

employment is therefore not only a question of the hourly rate of pay, but also of the number, stability and organisation of hours worked and the wider quality of employment. The identification of different forms of low-paid employment further demonstrates that these challenges are experienced differently across the low-paid workforce, requiring responses that address both inadequate earnings within relatively secure employment and low pay combined with wider forms of disadvantage.

Section 1: Introduction

The Irish literature on low pay has traditionally focused on the extent, incidence, and distribution of low-paid employment, identifying which groups are most exposed to low earnings and how low pay varies across sectors, occupations, demographic groups, and forms of employment. Previous Irish research has consistently shown that low pay is concentrated among women, younger workers, migrants, workers in hospitality and retail sectors, part-time employees, and workers in smaller firms (Collins, 2016; Maître et al., 2017; Redmond et al., 2023). Research has also examined the relationship between minimum wage policy, wage floors, and labour market outcomes, including the effects of minimum wage increases on employment and working hours (McGuinness and Redmond, 2019; Redmond and McGuinness, 2022). While this body of work has substantially improved understanding of the prevalence and distribution of low pay in Ireland, considerably less attention has been paid to the broader experience and quality of working life among low-paid workers themselves.

More broadly, there is a growing international consensus that the quality of work cannot be understood solely through earnings (Geary and Wilson, 2023). Since the emergence of the European Employment Strategy and the Lisbon Agenda, policymakers and researchers have increasingly emphasised the importance not only of job creation, but of the creation of “better jobs” characterised by security, autonomy, opportunity, and sustainable working conditions (European Commission, 2004; Eurofound, 2012; OECD, 2016). Job quality is now widely understood as a multidimensional concept encompassing both extrinsic conditions of employment – including attributes such as pay, security, working time, and access to benefits – and intrinsic dimensions relating to the experience and organisation of work itself, such as autonomy, participation, training opportunities, work intensity, employee relations and voice, and opportunities for development (Green, 2006; Gallie, 2007; Eurofound and International Labour Organization, 2019;

Warhurst et al., 2017). The growing importance attached to job quality reflects increasing evidence that the conditions under which people work have significant consequences for workers’ wellbeing, health, job satisfaction, labour market attachment, productivity and wider social and economic outcomes (Burchell et al., 2014; Piasna, 2018; OECD, 2016).

Within the Irish context, a growing body of research has begun to examine job quality more directly. Drawing on Irish and European survey data, studies have shown that workers in low-paid employment are more likely to experience insecurity, reduced access to training, weaker progression opportunities, and lower levels of job control and flexibility (Russell et al., 2014; McGinnity et al., 2021; Redmond et al., 2023). The recent study *Job Quality of Minimum Wage Workers in Ireland* (Redmond et al., 2023) demonstrated that minimum wage workers experience lower job quality across a range of indicators, including job

security, union representation, training access, and opportunities for remote working, compared with higher-paid workers. Geary and Wilson (2023), using a multidimensional job quality framework, further demonstrated that poor job quality in Ireland tends to cluster into distinct forms of disadvantaged employment characterised by combinations of insecurity, low autonomy, weak workplace support, limited opportunities for development, and increased working demands. Importantly, one of the poor-quality employment clusters identified in their analysis was disproportionately composed of low-paid workers, suggesting that low pay is frequently embedded within broader patterns of cumulative labour market disadvantage rather than operating as an isolated wage phenomenon.

However, despite these important contributions, relatively little research in Ireland has focused on the working life of the low-paid. Much of the existing literature continues to treat low pay primarily as an earnings position rather than examining the conditions of low-paid employment as a whole. Collins (2016) highlights the importance of how low pay is conceptualised and measured, including the implications of different earnings thresholds and definitions for understanding the scale and distribution of low-paid work in Ireland. Building on this, the present paper not only examines the incidence and profile of low-paid employment using alternative low-pay thresholds but also moves beyond earnings alone to examine the wider conditions under which low-paid work is experienced. More specifically, limited Irish research has explored how dimensions of intrinsic and extrinsic job quality combine within the everyday working lives of low-paid workers.

This paper addresses that gap by examining life on low pay in Ireland through a multidimensional job quality framework. The analysis moves beyond a narrow focus on earnings to examine the broader organisation and experience of low-paid work across a range of extrinsic and intrinsic job quality dimensions, including employment security, working time, autonomy, training and development, work intensity, workplace relations, employee voice, participation, strain, and engagement. Drawing on concepts developed within job demands-resources approaches and multidimensional job quality research (Karasek, 1979; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Green, 2006; Gallie, 2007; Geary and Wilson, forthcoming), the paper argues that low pay in Ireland is associated not simply with lower earnings, but with broader patterns of inferior and poor working conditions.

At the same time, the paper also demonstrates that low-paid employment is not homogeneous. While low-paid workers overall experience poorer job quality across many dimensions, important variation exists within the low-paid workforce itself. Some low-paid workers occupy relatively stable and better-resourced forms of employment, while others experience more insecure, fragmented, and strained forms of work characterised by cumulative disadvantage across multiple dimensions of job quality. By examining these patterns, the paper seeks to provide a more comprehensive account of what it means to live and work on low pay in contemporary Ireland.

Section 2: Concepts and Measurement

2.1 Measurement of Earnings

The measurement of earnings is central to the analysis of low pay and constitutes a substantive methodological choice rather than a neutral technical decision. Earnings may be measured over different temporal units, including hourly, weekly, monthly, or annual periods, and may be expressed on either a gross or net basis. Each approach captures a distinct dimension of labour market position and, consequently, identifies different populations as low paid.

In most official statistics and comparative labour market research, low pay is conventionally measured using gross hourly earnings, typically operationalised as earnings below a threshold such as two-thirds of median hourly pay. This approach underpins standard OECD and Eurostat practice and is analytically attractive because it standardises remuneration by unit of labour time. By abstracting from differences in hours worked, hourly earnings isolate wage rates and facilitate comparison across workers with different working time arrangements.

This is appropriate where the principal analytical concern is wage-setting, wage dispersion, or the incidence of low hourly remuneration. However, hourly measures are less well suited to capturing the realised financial return to employment.

Workers do not receive or assess labour market returns as an hourly wage in abstraction, but as income realised through regular pay periods. From the perspective of workers' economic position, what matters is not solely the price of labour per hour,

but the level of income ultimately generated through labour market participation.

For this reason, the present analysis adopts weekly earnings as the primary earnings measure. Weekly earnings capture the realised monetary return to employment over a regular income period and, therefore, more directly reflect the earnings outcome associated with paid work.

This choice is substantive rather than incidental. Weekly earnings combine hourly remuneration with hours worked and therefore, capture the full earnings consequences of labour market participation. Workers with identical hourly wages may generate materially different weekly incomes depending on working time, while workers with relatively low hourly wages may generate substantially higher weekly earnings through longer hours or multiple job holding.

From the perspective adopted here, these differences are not measurement noise to be standardised away, but part of the substantive issue under examination. The analytical objective is not to isolate wage rates alone, but to examine the distribution of income generated through employment.

This necessarily broadens the concept being measured. Lower weekly earnings may arise through low hourly wages, reduced hours, variable scheduling, fragmented employment, or underemployment. Equally, they may reflect voluntary labour supply decisions, including part-time work chosen for caring responsibilities, education, phased retirement, or preferences regarding

working time. The analysis does not seek to distinguish between these mechanisms at the stage of earnings measurement. Instead, the concern is with the realised level of income derived from employment, irrespective of the mechanism through which it is generated. Accordingly, the measure used here should not be interpreted as equivalent to conventional hourly low-pay measures. Rather, it captures a broader concept of low realised earnings from employment.

A second methodological choice concerns whether earnings are measured on a gross or net basis. This analysis uses net weekly earnings. Gross earnings measure labour market income prior to deductions for taxation and statutory social insurance contributions. They, therefore, provide a relatively direct measure of labour market remuneration. By contrast, net earnings reflect take-home pay after deductions including Income Tax, Universal Social Charge (USC), PRSI, and other payroll-related deductions where applicable. Net earnings therefore, provide a closer approximation to the financial resources workers actually retain from employment.

This is particularly relevant in the Irish context, where the relationship between gross and take-home pay is materially shaped by the tax and social insurance system. Net income is influenced not only by gross earnings, but also by the interaction of income tax bands, tax credits, USC thresholds, and PRSI contribution rules. As a result, workers with similar gross earnings may experience meaningfully different levels of take-home pay depending on their position within the tax schedule and their eligibility for credits or reduced liabilities.

Using net earnings therefore, aligns the earnings measure more closely with the realised financial return to work as experienced by workers themselves. Living costs are met from post-tax income rather than gross contractual wages, and workers evaluate earnings in terms of what is ultimately received rather than what is contractually earned.

At the same time, this choice has implications for interpretation. Net earnings do not isolate labour market remuneration in the same way as gross earnings, since observed variation partly reflects institutional redistribution through the tax system. Earnings dispersion may therefore, be compressed or reshaped by tax progressivity, and workers occupying similar positions in the gross earnings distribution may be ranked differently in net terms.

In addition, net earnings may vary according to tax circumstances not directly attributable to employment conditions, including differential access to tax credits, pension deductions, or other payroll-related adjustments. Net earnings, therefore reflect both labour market outcomes and the mediating effects of the tax system.

This is accepted as part of the substantive object of analysis. The purpose is not to isolate wage-setting outcomes in abstraction from institutions, but to assess the extent to which labour market participation translates into realised take-home income.

Net weekly earnings occupy an analytically useful position between gross earnings and broader household income measures. Relative to gross earnings, they incorporate the effects of taxation and therefore, better capture realised employment returns.

Relative to disposable household income, they exclude transfers, partner earnings, asset income, and household income pooling.

This distinction is important. Measures such as equivalised disposable household income are preferable for poverty and living standards analysis, as they capture total household resources net of taxes and transfers while accounting for household composition through equivalisation or individualisation procedures. However, such measures are less appropriate where the analytical objective is to isolate income generated specifically through employment.

Net weekly earnings therefore, provide a conceptually appropriate measure where the analytical focus is neither wage rates in isolation nor household living standards more broadly, but workers' realised position within the distribution of take-home earnings generated through paid work.

The analysis is restricted to employees only ($N = 2710$), as the focus is specifically on the weekly take-home financial return to wage employment. Self-employment is excluded, as earnings from self-employment are conceptually distinct from wages and are less readily interpretable as regular returns to paid work.

Measuring earnings precisely in survey data presents well-established challenges. Accurate capture of employment income is cognitively demanding for respondents, particularly where earnings vary, deductions are not fully understood, or respondents are uncertain about gross and net amounts. Dedicated income or earnings surveys typically address this through extended

income modules, often involving multiple detailed questions designed to separately capture pay frequency, earnings components, deductions, bonuses, overtime, and other sources of variation.

The Working in Ireland survey was not designed as a specialist earnings instrument, but as a broader study of working conditions, job quality, and employment experiences. As a result, questionnaire space was necessarily limited, and the earnings questions were designed to obtain sufficiently robust earnings data while minimising respondent burden.

Respondents were, therefore, asked to report net earnings from their main job in banded form and could provide this information on a weekly, monthly, or annual basis according to preference. Survey responses were subsequently harmonised to a common weekly basis. The earnings questions used a two-stage banding structure. Respondents first selected a broad earnings band and were then routed to narrower follow-up bands within that category to increase precision.

To derive a continuous earnings variable, respondents were assigned the midpoint of the most detailed income band available. Where follow-up band information was available, the midpoint of the detailed sub-band was used. Where respondents provided only the broader category, or where detailed follow-up information was unavailable, the midpoint of the broader earnings band was assigned.

This approach maximises the precision of the earnings measure while retaining observations that would otherwise be lost through

listwise deletion. As with all midpoint assignment approaches, some approximation error is unavoidable and within-band variation is necessarily compressed, particularly for wider categories and upper-tail observations. However, given the structure of the survey instrument, this represents a transparent and pragmatic means of operationalising earnings in the absence of continuous income data.

Accordingly, all subsequent analyses define low earnings on the basis of individual net weekly earnings from employment, operationalised using midpoint-converted survey income bands and assessed relative to selected thresholds within the net weekly earnings distribution.

2.2 Measurement of Job Quality

A substantial body of job quality research therefore argues that the quality of work is inherently multidimensional and cannot be reduced to pay alone (Green, 2006; Gallie, 2007; Eurofound, 2012). Research in Ireland similarly emphasises that workers' experiences of employment are shaped not only by earnings, but by the broader organisation and experience of work itself (Geary and Wilson, forthcoming).

The analysis in this study draws on this broader multidimensional approach to job quality by examining both extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions of employment. While this does not constitute a complete or exhaustive model of job quality, it captures many of the core dimensions consistently identified within contemporary job quality research as shaping worker wellbeing, organisational attachment, labour market inequality, and employment

experience (Gallie, 2013; Eurofound, 2021). In particular, the framework adopted here is informed by research emphasising the relationship between job demands and job resources within the labour process (Karasek and Theorell, 1990; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

Extrinsic job quality refers to the contractual and material conditions attached to employment. These dimensions capture the extent to which employment provides economic security, predictability, and access to organisational protections and benefits. In this study, extrinsic job quality is measured using indicators relating to working-time arrangements, employment precarity, multiple jobholding, and access to employment-related benefits and protections including pensions, paid sick leave, paid holidays, and private medical insurance. Previous research has consistently shown that insecure contractual arrangements, unstable working hours, and weaker access to employment protections are associated with poorer job quality and heightened labour market vulnerability (Kalleberg, 2009; Rubery et al., 2018). Research on job quality in Ireland similarly identifies security, contractual stability, and access to organisational resources as key dimensions differentiating higher- and lower-quality employment (Geary and Wilson, forthcoming).

Intrinsic job quality refers to the substantive experience of work itself and the extent to which jobs provide workers with autonomy, support, participation, manageable demands, and opportunities for development and skill utilisation. The analysis, therefore, examines dimensions including job autonomy, work-related strain, work engagement, employee-

organisation relations, managerial support, workplace harassment and abuse, training and development, and opportunities for innovative participation and continuous improvement. These dimensions capture both the demands placed upon workers and the resources available to them within the labour process. Research has consistently shown that jobs characterised by greater autonomy, organisational support, participation, and developmental opportunities are associated with higher wellbeing, stronger organisational commitment, and improved work outcomes, while highly constrained and resource-poor forms of work are associated with poorer health and wellbeing outcomes (Karasek and Theorell, 1990; Green, 2006; Felstead et al., 2019).

The framework adopted here is also informed by job demands–resources approaches, which emphasise the interaction between pressures associated with work and the resources available to workers in managing those demands (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Job demands include factors such as work intensity, strain, insecurity, and emotional or cognitive pressures, while job resources include autonomy, support, participation, training opportunities, and access to organisational protections. From this perspective, job quality reflects not simply the presence or absence of individual job characteristics, but the broader balance and interaction between demands and resources within the organisation of work.

Section 3: The Working in Ireland Survey 2025

The *Working in Ireland Survey 2025 (WIIS 2025)* surveys people's work and employment on the island of Ireland. It is the most significant and comprehensive survey of its kind, covering a wide range of topics including skills and training, employee involvement and autonomy, the use of artificial intelligence, remote working, trade union allegiance, health and wellbeing, job churn and intention to quit, low pay, and job quality.

The fieldwork for the survey was conducted between May 15th and August 28th, 2025. A total of 3,040 interviews were conducted in Republic of Ireland and 1,260 interviews in Northern Ireland. The survey fieldwork was undertaken by Ipsos B&A in both jurisdictions.

To ensure a nationally representative sample of working people aged 16 years and over, the data were weighted for age, gender, region and economic sector to agree with the then most recent population estimates as derived from the Republic of Ireland's Central Statistics Office's Labour Force Survey (LFS) Q1 2025, and in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Statistics Research Agency's Labour Force Survey June-Aug 2025 and the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), Northern Ireland, September 2022. All the analyses in this report use the weighted sample.

The Working in Ireland Survey 2025 is the second survey in the WIIS series. The first survey, conducted between May and August in 2021, was confined to the Republic of Ireland. It had a sample size of 2,046. It also drew from a representative sample of people of working age in paid employment and was conducted by the same means as WIIS 2025.

A mobile telephone only sample approach was used. In the Republic of Ireland, the approach used was Random Digit Dial (RDD) whereby a sample was randomly generated using known mobile stems as provided by the Commission for Communications Regulation.

Respondents underwent a series of screening questions to confirm their eligibility for inclusion in the study, including inquiries about their age and employment status. The research was confined to working people, employed and self-employed, of over 16 years of age who were at work for at least one hour in producing goods and providing services for pay or for profit in the week prior to the survey.

All interviewers attended a training/briefing webinar convened by an Ipsos B&A project manager and which was attended by all call centre supervisors and the WIIS's principal investigator, John Geary. Interviewers had the opportunity to ask questions to all team members. Directly after the webinar, all interviewers logged on to the test script to familiarise themselves with the questionnaire and the routing of questions, and to address any queries they might have had before administering the survey in the field.

A pilot survey was also conducted to ensure that respondents understood the questions asked and were able to provide clear answers, as well as to ensure that the routing of questions was appropriate and that the questionnaire was not too long as to make unreasonable demands on respondents. New questions in the questionnaire were cognitively tested, first by members of the research team and second by the survey agency. Lessons were then shared and the questions adapted as required. The reformatted questions were then tested again during the pilot survey.

Several methods were employed to monitor the quality of interviewing, including a proportion of all interviews being monitored by supervisory staff from the start to the end of an interview. For the WIIS 2025, 13.4% of the Republic of Ireland were fully monitored. Call centre managers were responsible for the scheduling of resources, monitoring of interviewers and sample management, and were in close contact with the project management team, including the PI, to ensure fieldwork was progressing well and to respond to queries from the interviewers. Interviewing was conducted between 2pm to 9pm Monday to Friday, 10am to 6pm on Saturday and 11am to 7pm on Sunday. Interviewees were dialled a minimum of three times, over various time periods such as afternoons, evenings and weekends.

Section 4: The extent of low pay as identified in the Working in Ireland Survey 2025

4.1 Distribution of weekly net earnings by employment status

Before examining low pay directly, it is useful to first situate workers' take-home earnings across the wider earnings distribution. Looking at the distribution of weekly net earnings provides a broader picture of the financial returns to employment in Ireland and helps contextualise where low-paid workers are located within the overall labour market.

Table 1 presents the distribution of weekly net earnings across all employees, full-time employees and part-time employees, highlighting substantial variation in the realised financial returns to work by employment status.

Across all employees, net weekly earnings are concentrated in the lower- to middle-income bands. The largest share of employees (32.0%)

report weekly net earnings of €600–€899, making this the modal earnings category. A further 19.1% earn between €900 and €1,199, while 9.5% earn between €1,200 and €1,499. At the lower end of the distribution, 8.3% of employees earn less than €299 net per week, while an additional 25.6% earn between €300 and €599. Taken together, this indicates that 33.9% of all employees earn below €600 net per week, indicating that approximately one-third of employees fall within the lower end of the weekly net earnings distribution. At the upper end of the distribution, earnings become progressively less common, with 2.4% earning between €1,500 and €1,799, 1.1% earning between €1,800 and €2,099, and 1.9% earning €2,100 or more.

The distribution for full-time employees is shifted upwards relative to the employee population, reflecting the stronger earnings profile associated with greater work intensity.

Table 1: Distribution of weekly net earnings by employment status (all employees, full-time and part-time)

	All Employees		Full-time employees		Part-time employees	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Under €299	8.3	191	1.7	32	40.2	159
€300–€599	25.6	627	22.4	443	41.3	184
€600–€899	32.0	809	35.7	741	14.4	68
€900 to €1,199	19.1	513	22.6	499	-	14
€1,200 to €1,499	9.5	242	11.3	239	-	3
€1,500 to €1,799	2.4	66	2.9	65	-	1
€1,800 to €2,099	1.1	31	1.3	31	-	0
€2100 or more	1.9	49	2.2	48	-	1

Cannot be reported owing to small sample size

Among full-time employees, the modal category remains €600–€899, accounting for 35.7% of workers. A further 22.6% earn between €900 and €1,199, while 11.3% earn between €1,200 and €1,499. Higher earnings categories are also more prevalent among full-time workers than among employees overall, with 2.9% earning between €1,500 and €1,799, 1.3% earning between €1,800 and €2,099, and 2.2% earning €2,100 or more.

Despite this upward shift, the results also reveal a sizeable degree of low or modest net pay among full-time employees. While only 1.7% of full-time workers earn less than €299 net weekly, a much larger 22.4% earn between €300 and €599, meaning that 24.1% of full-time employees earn below €600 net per week. This is a notable finding, as it indicates that relatively low net earnings are not exclusively a feature of part-time employment or limited working hours. Instead, a substantial minority of workers remain concentrated in lower net earnings bands despite full-time labour market participation.

This suggests that hours worked alone do not fully explain weak weekly financial returns from employment. Since these workers are classified as full-time, their concentration in lower earnings bands is likely to reflect a combination of relatively low hourly wages, concentration in lower-paying sectors or occupations, and the effect of deductions for income tax, USC and PRSI on already modest gross earnings. Rather, the findings point to a more fundamental issue: many workers in these bands appear to be earning relatively modest gross wages to begin with.

That is, these results are more consistent with a low-pay issue than a

high-tax issue. Assuming a stylised case of a single PAYE worker without dependants, pension contributions or additional deductions, workers in these lower full-time net earnings bands are unlikely to face particularly high effective tax burdens. At these earnings levels, income tax liabilities are often substantially reduced through the operation of personal and PAYE tax credits, meaning that deductions are more likely to arise through PRSI and USC, alongside relatively modest Income Tax liabilities. For workers at the lowest end of the full-time distribution, particularly those earning under €299 net weekly, direct tax liabilities are likely to be minimal in absolute terms, implying that very low take-home pay at this level is primarily driven by low underlying gross earnings.

Similarly, workers in the €300–€599 net band are likely to face only modest average tax burdens relative to earnings. While deductions do reduce already limited take-home pay, they are unlikely to be the principal explanation for these net earnings outcomes. Rather, the findings suggest that many workers in these bands are simply earning relatively modest gross wages to begin with. In this sense, taxation acts more as a secondary moderator of already constrained earnings than as the primary driver of low net take-home pay.

This distinction is important in the Irish context, where public and policy debate frequently centres on take-home pay, the taxation of earned income, and whether workers retain enough of their wages after deductions. These results suggest that concerns regarding low take-home pay among full-time employees should not be interpreted primarily as evidence

of unusually heavy taxation of lower earners. Instead, they point to a more fundamental issue the adequacy or otherwise of earnings. Put differently, for many workers in these lower full-time net earnings bands, the issue appears to be that there is relatively little income to tax in the first instance.

Nevertheless, even relatively modest deductions may be financially salient at these earnings levels. For workers with already constrained gross earnings, deductions for Income Tax, USC and PRSI can still affect weekly spending power, particularly given elevated living costs in Ireland, including housing, childcare, transport and utilities. The importance of take-home pay should not be dismissed, with the findings suggesting that attention to net earnings be accompanied by a focus on the underlying adequacy of wages.

In contrast, the distribution for part-time employees is heavily concentrated at the lower end of the earnings distribution. Among part-time workers, 40.2% earn less than €299 net weekly, while a further 41.3% earn between €300 and €599. Combined, this indicates that 81.5% of part-time employees earn below €600 net per week. Only 14.4% of part-time employees fall within the €600-€899 band, with no meaningful representation in higher earnings categories.

The contrast between full-time and part-time workers is one of the most striking features of the results. While approximately one-quarter of full-time employees earn below €600 net weekly, more than four-fifths of part-time employees do so. This indicates that low weekly net earnings in Ireland are strongly associated with hours worked. However, the persistence of relatively modest net

earnings among a sizeable minority of full-time employees suggests that low pay cannot be understood solely as a consequence of reduced hours or weaker labour market attachment.

4.2 The Prevalence of Low Pay: Evidence from Net Weekly Earnings

A central objective of this paper is to estimate the extent of low pay using workers' realised net weekly earnings. While much of the low-pay literature focuses on hourly wage rates, hourly pay provides only a partial picture of earnings because weekly income is also shaped by the number and stability of hours worked, together with the effects of the tax and social insurance system. As a result, workers may experience low weekly earnings even where their hourly wage exceeds statutory or benchmark thresholds. Focusing on net weekly earnings, therefore, captures a broader and more socially meaningful dimension of labour market inequality than gross hourly pay alone by measuring the extent to which workers realised take-home income falls below the living standards prevailing in society.

The analysis also addresses an important conceptual issue in low-pay research: different thresholds reflect different understandings of inadequate earnings. Relative thresholds based on median earnings identify workers whose incomes fall substantially below prevailing societal living standards, while the Real Living Wage benchmark assesses whether earnings are sufficient to achieve a socially defined minimum acceptable standard of living. Examining multiple thresholds, therefore, provides a more comprehensive assessment of the extent of low pay than reliance on a single measure, illustrating how both the

Table 2: Median weekly net earnings by earnings quintile and relative position to overall median

	Median net weekly earnings (€)	As % of overall median
All employees	727.48	100
Bottom quintile (lowest 20% of earners)	357.96	49.2
Second quintile (lowest 40% of earners)	542.72	74.6

scale and interpretation of low pay vary according to the benchmark adopted.

The section begins by situating low pay within the overall distribution of net weekly earnings before estimating the proportion of employees falling below a range of relative and absolute low-pay thresholds. Table 2 first situates low pay within the wider distribution of net weekly earnings. Median net weekly earnings across all employees were €727.48. However, workers in the bottom earnings quintile recorded median net weekly earnings of just €357.96, equivalent to 49.2% of the overall median. Workers in the second quintile recorded median earnings of €542.72, or 74.6% of the median.

Table 3 then provides a range of relative income thresholds for net weekly earnings, offering a broader assessment of income adequacy among employees. Using the median net weekly earnings of all workers as a reference point, the results show that 23.4% of employees earn below two-thirds of the median (€357.96), while 17.4% fall below 60% of the median (€325.00), and 12.7% earn below 50% of the median (€248.27). These thresholds indicate a clear concentration of low-paid employees within the lower end of the earnings distribution and identify workers whose realised take-home earnings place them substantially below prevailing median living standards.

Table 3: Proportion of Employees Below Selected Net Weekly Earnings Adequacy Thresholds

	€ net weekly employee earnings	%	N
Below two-thirds median net weekly earnings (all workers)	357.96	23.4	563
Below 60% median net weekly earnings (all workers)	325.00	17.4	414
Below 50% median net weekly earnings (all workers)	248.27	12.7	302
Below Real Living Wage (net, all workers)*	543.06	31.6	759
Below Real Living Wage (net, ft workers only)	543.06	21.8	428
Below two-thirds mean net weekly earnings (all workers)	526.39	26	622

* This is the estimate of net earnings required for an assumed single adult household working full-time 39 hours per week.

When assessed against the Real Living Wage benchmark, which is estimated at €543.06 net per week for a full-time worker, almost one-third of employees (31.6%) fall below this standard. Restricting the comparison to full-time workers, the proportion remains substantial at 21.8%, indicating that even among those working full-time, a significant minority do not reach a living wage threshold based on current estimates. This suggests that differences in weekly earnings are not solely explained by employment status (part-time versus full-time) or hours worked, as lower earnings remain evident even among full-time employees.

A further comparison using two-thirds of mean earnings places 26% of employees below this alternative benchmark (€526.39), reinforcing the presence of a sizeable low-to-middle income segment within the workforce.

Overall, the results indicate that a significant proportion of employees have net weekly earnings below commonly used adequacy thresholds, with a substantial share earning below both relative median-based measures and the Real Living Wage benchmark. Importantly, these measures capture related but analytically distinct dimensions of labour market disadvantage: relative distance from prevailing societal living standards on the one hand, and insufficiency relative to a socially defined minimum standard of living on the other.

4.3 Who are the low paid?

Table 4 profiles the composition of workers falling below alternative low-pay thresholds. While the composition of the low-paid workforce varies somewhat depending on the threshold applied, several consistent patterns emerge.

Low pay is strongly associated with reduced working time. Under the two-thirds median threshold, part-time workers account for a slight majority of low-paid employees (54.5 per cent), despite representing a considerably smaller share of total employment. This concentration becomes substantially more pronounced under the more restrictive 60 per cent median threshold, where part-time workers account for 77 per cent of those classified as low paid. This reflects the extent to which lower weekly earnings are shaped not only by hourly wage rates, but by reduced hours.

This is also evident in the distribution of hours worked. Workers below both relative earnings thresholds are disproportionately concentrated in shorter-hours roles, particularly among those working between 17-24 hours per week.

By contrast, the Real Living Wage threshold captures a somewhat different population. While still encompassing many part-time workers, it includes a substantially larger share of workers in standard hours employment, with over two-fifths of those below the threshold working 31-40 hours per week. This suggests that the Real Living Wage threshold captures not only workers with shorter working hours, but also a broader group whose earnings remain insufficient despite more standard employment patterns.

Low-paid workers are predominantly employed on permanent contracts, with around four-fifths of workers below the thresholds employed in permanent roles. This is notable given the common association of low pay with labour market insecurity. While temporary and non-permanent workers face elevated risks of low pay, the composition results

Table 4: Composition of those paid below various low paid thresholds by job characteristics

	Below two-thirds median	Below 60% median	Below Real Living Wage	Below two-thirds mean
Working status	N = 563	N = 371	N = 689	N = 622
Full-time	45.5	77	57.1	50.2
Part-time	54.5	23	42.9	49.8
Working hours	N = 559	N = 412	N = 755	N = 618
1-6	2.6	3.4	1.9	2.3
7-10	5.1	6.8	3.9	4.6
11-16	10.2	13.2	8	9.6
17-24	25.3	30.7	19.5	23
25-30	14.8	16.4	13.2	13.9
31-40	33.2	22.7	41.4	35.4
41-48	6.5	5.2	9.3	8.2
49+	2.4	1.6	2.9	3
Contract type	N = 563	N = 414	N = 222	N = 222
Permanent	80.4	77	83.4	82
Non-permanent	19.6	23	16.6	18
Sector of employment	N = 508	N = 371	N = 689	N = 565
Private	70	69.8	70.9	73.1
Public/Non-market	30	30.2	29.1	26.9
Working location	N = 554	N = 411	N = 748	N = 613
Dublin	28	26.7	30	28
Mid-East	13.4	13.4	12.8	34.7
Midlands	4.8	5.7	4.9	25.6
South-East	8.1	7.7	8.1	24.9
South-West	14.6	14.6	14.4	26.3
Mid-West	9.9	10.5	9.2	25.2
West	11.7	10.9	11.4	39.1
Border	9.6	10.5	9.1	36.3
Sector	N = 563	N = 414	N = 759	N = 622
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1.2	1.4	1.2	1.1
Utilities and extractive industries	0.7	0.2	0.9	0.6
Manufacturing	4.9	3.9	5.9	5.6
Construction	3.4	2.5	3.5	4.1
Wholesale and retail trade	26.8	26.7	24.4	26.8
Transportation and storage	4	3.9	3.6	3.8

Accommodation and food services	15.5	18	13.8	15.6
Information and communication	2	1.6	2.7	2
Financial and insurance activities	1.3	1.4	2.2	1.4
Professional, real estate and technical services	4.7	4.8	5.7	4.4
Administrative and support services	3.9	4.1	4.1	4.5
Public administration and defence	3.2	3.4	4	3.3
Education	8.2	8.4	8.7	7.9
Human health and social work	14.6	14.1	14.2	13.8
Arts, entertainment and recreation	3.4	3.6	2.7	3.2
Other services	2.2	2.1	2.2	2
Occupation	N = 563	N = 414	N = 759	N = 622
Managers, Directors & Senior Officials	1	1.1	1.9	1.2
Professionals	7.9	6.6	10.1	8
Technicians & Associate Professionals	7.1	6.3	9.1	6.8
Administrative & Secretarial Occupations	16	15.6	17	15.6
Skilled Trades	6.1	5.2	7	6.8
Caring, Leisure & Other Service	14.3	15	13.5	13.9
Sales & Customer Service	23.6	24	20.2	23
Process, Plant & Machine Operatives	4.9	4.1	5	5.4
Elementary Occupations	19.2	22	16.3	19.2

indicate that low pay is not confined to atypical employment relationships but is embedded within mainstream forms of employment.

Sectorally, low pay is highly concentrated. Wholesale and retail trade accounts for the largest share of workers below the two-thirds median threshold (26.8 per cent), followed by accommodation and food services (15.5 per cent) and human health and social work (14.6 per cent). Taken together, these sectors account for a substantial share of all low-paid workers.

4.4 How likely is this group to be low paid?

Table 5 below complements the analysis in the table above by examining the risk of being low paid

within each group. While the composition table identifies who makes up the low-paid workforce, the risk estimates indicate which workers are most exposed to low pay.

The strongest gradient is observed across working time. Part-time workers face substantially elevated risks of low pay across all thresholds. Nearly three-quarters of part-time workers fall below the two-thirds median threshold, compared with just 12.9 per cent of full-time workers. Similar disparities are observed across alternative thresholds, including the Real Living Wage, under which 78.5 per cent of part-time workers fall below the threshold.

Risk declines sharply as hours increase. Workers in very short-hours employment are overwhelmingly likely

to be low paid, with 93.8 per cent of those working between one and six hours per week falling below all thresholds. Risks remain high among those working up to 24 hours per week before declining progressively among those working longer hours. Among workers employed for 41 hours or more, the probability of low pay falls markedly.

These findings reinforce the importance of working time in shaping realised weekly earnings. However, while the incidence of earnings below 66 per cent of median net weekly earnings declines sharply with increases in working hours, falling from 93.8 per cent among those working 1-6 hours per week to 15 per cent among those working standard full-time hours (31-40 hours), and to 5.3 per cent among those working 49 hours or more. While this pattern highlights the importance of working hours in shaping weekly earnings, it also shows that full-time employment does not eliminate low earnings. Among full-time employees, 12.9% earn below two-thirds of median net weekly earnings, 14.0% fall below 60% of the median, 15.8% earn below two-thirds of mean earnings, and 21.8% earn less than the Real Living Wage benchmark. These findings indicate that inadequate earnings are not solely a feature of part-time or low-hours work, but remain evident for a substantial minority of full-time employees.

Non-permanent workers also face substantially higher risks of low pay than permanent workers. More than half of non-permanent workers fall below the two-thirds median threshold, compared with one-fifth of permanent workers. However, because permanent employment is

substantially more prevalent overall, most low-paid workers remain permanently employed.

Geographic disparities are also apparent. Workers outside Dublin face consistently higher risks of low pay, particularly in the Border and West regions, suggesting meaningful regional variation in labour market opportunities and earnings structures.

Sectoral differences are pronounced. The highest risks of low pay are concentrated in accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail trade, and arts and recreation, all sectors characterised by lower pay floors and weaker earnings progression. By contrast, workers in information and communication, financial services, manufacturing, and utilities face substantially lower risks.

Taken together, these results suggest that low pay in weekly terms is structured not simply by low hourly wages, but by the interaction of wage levels, working time, and sectoral labour market structures. While low pay is strongly associated with part-time work, shorter hours, and non-permanent employment, it is not confined to the labour market periphery. A substantial share of low-paid workers are employed on permanent contracts and, under broader thresholds such as the Real Living Wage, in standard-hours employment. Low pay, therefore, appears less as a marginal labour market phenomenon than as a more structurally embedded feature of employment in several major sectors of the Irish economy.

Table 5: Risk of low-pay

	Below two-thirds median	Below 60% median	Below Real Living Wage	Below two-thirds mean
Working status	***	***	***	***
Full-time	12.9	14	21.8	15.8
Part-time	73.7	45.7	78.5	75.1
Working hours	***			
1-6	93.8	93.8	93.8	93.8
7-10	69.8	68.2	70.5	69.8
11-16	77.9	74.4	83.1	80.8
17-24	76.4	68.9	80	77
25-30	51.5	42.6	62.1	53.8
31-40	15	7.7	25.3	17.8
41-48	8.2	5.0	15.9	11.6
49+	5.3	2.7	8.7	7.6
Contract type	***	***	***	***
Permanent	20.6	14.6	28.9	23.3
Non-permanent	52.3	45.7	59.9	53.8
Sector of employment	ns	ns	*	*
Private	23.7	17.4	32.7	26.9
Public/Non-market	21	15.6	27.8	23.1
Working location	***	***	***	***
Dublin	17.5	12.6	25.5	19.5
Mid-East	30.2	22.8	39	34.7
Midlands	23.9	21.4	33.3	25.6
South-East	22.9	16.5	31.1	24.9
South-West	24.1	18.1	32.2	26.3
Mid-West	24.3	19.2	30.7	25.2
West	31.6	22.4	41.9	39.1
Border	33.3	27.4	42.9	36.3
Sector	***	***	***	***
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	16.7	14.6	24.4	17.1
Utilities and extractive industries	6.6	1.7	11.7	6.6
Manufacturing	10.5	6.2	17	13.4
Construction	11.2	6.2	15.7	15.1
Wholesale and retail trade	48.6	35.8	59.8	54.1
Transportation and storage	25	17.7	30.2	26
Accommodation and food services	51.4	44.1	61.7	57.5

Information and communication	7.3	4.3	13.3	7.9
Financial and insurance activities	7.8	5.8	17.6	8.8
Professional, real estate and technical services	15.4	11.5	25.3	15.9
Administrative and support services	26.1	20.5	37.1	33.7
Public administration and defence	11.9	9.4	20	13.8
Education	19.3	14.6	27.6	20.5
Human health and social work	25.4	18.1	33.2	26.5
Arts, entertainment and recreation	41.4	33.3	45.8	42.9
Other services	36.1	25	50	36.1
Occupation		***	***	***
Managers, Directors & Senior Officials	2.7	2.3	6.8	3.6
Professionals	6.6	4.1	11.4	7.4
Technicians & Associate Professionals	12.2	8.1	21.2	13
Administrative & Secretarial Occupations	29.6	21.6	42.5	32.2
Skilled Trades	16.8	10.7	26.2	21
Caring, Leisure & Other Service	49.7	38.4	62.8	53.5
Sales & Customer Service	67.3	51	77.9	72.7
Process, Plant & Machine Operatives	18.5	11.5	25.5	22.9
Elementary Occupations	61	51.9	70.1	67.9

Table 6 examines the composition of workers falling below alternative low-pay thresholds by a number of worker characteristics, while Table 7 presents the risk of being low paid based on these same worker characteristics.

Across all thresholds, women make up a clear majority of the low-paid workforce. Under the two-thirds median threshold, women account for 63.7 per cent of low-paid workers, rising slightly to 67 per cent under the more restrictive 60 per cent median threshold. A similar pattern is observed under the Real Living Wage threshold. This indicates that low pay in Ireland remains strongly gendered, with women disproportionately represented among workers with lower realised weekly earnings.

This overrepresentation is not simply compositional but reflects materially

higher risks of low pay among women. As shown in Table 7, 29.7% of female employees fall below the two-thirds median threshold, compared with 16.9% of men. The gender gap persists across all thresholds and is particularly pronounced under the Real Living Wage measure, where nearly two-fifths of women fall below the threshold, compared with just under one-quarter of men.

These findings are consistent with the interaction between gender and working-time patterns. Women are more likely to be concentrated in part-time employment, reduced-hours work, and sectors characterised by lower pay progression, all of which are captured more directly under a weekly earnings measure.

Age patterns are similarly distinctive. Younger workers are heavily overrepre-

Table 6: Characteristics of low paid based on worker characteristics

	Below two-thirds median	Below 60% median	Below Real Living Wage	Below two-thirds mean
Gender	N = 559	N = 410	N = 754	N = 618
Male	36.3	33	36.8	37.4
Female	63.7	67	63.2	62.6
Age Category	N = 563	N = 414	N = 759	N = 622
16-24	30.9	33	27.6	29.8
25-34	18.9	18.1	22.2	20.1
35-44	16.2	14.3	17.1	16.3
45-54	13	13.3	13.7	13
55-64	15.7	15.2	15.1	15.6
65+	5.4	6.1	5.4	5.1
Educational Qualifications	***N = 557	***N = 409	***N = 751	N = 615
Low (Lower secondary or below)	7.7	9.4	6.8	8.3
Upper secondary	26.9	24.6	23.8	27.2
Post-secondary (incl. apprenticeship/diploma)	24.8	26.5	25.2	24.6
Tertiary (Bachelor's or above)	40.6	36.4	44.2	39.9

sented among the low paid, with those aged 16-24 accounting for approximately one-third of workers below all thresholds. This group also faces by far the highest risk of low pay, with 59% falling below the two-thirds median threshold and over 70 per cent below the Real Living Wage threshold.

This likely reflects the concentration of younger workers in entry-level, part-time, and lower-paid service sector employment, as well as weaker labour market attachment at earlier career stages. Risk declines sharply through the prime working-age years. Workers aged 35-54 face the lowest risks of low pay across all measures, with rates broadly clustered between 14% and 21% depending on threshold.

However, low pay risk rises again among older workers. Employees aged 55-64 face somewhat elevated risks

relative to prime-age workers, while those aged 65 and over face particularly high risks. Almost half of workers aged 65+ fall below the two-thirds median threshold, rising to 53% under the Real Living Wage measure.

This suggests a U-shaped relationship between age and low pay risk, with heightened exposure concentrated at both the beginning and end of the working life course. While low pay among younger workers is likely linked to labour market entry and weaker attachment, higher risks among older workers may reflect part-time work, labour market re-entry, or concentration in lower-paid supplementary employment later in life.

Educational composition is somewhat more complex. Workers with tertiary qualifications constitute the largest single share of low-paid workers

across all thresholds, accounting for between 36 and 44 per cent of low-paid employees.

At first glance, this appears counterintuitive. However, this largely reflects the underlying educational composition of the workforce, in which tertiary-educated workers represent a substantial share of total employment. Risk estimates show a more conventional gradient. Workers with lower levels of educational attainment face substantially higher risks of low pay. Around 40% of workers with lower secondary or upper secondary qualifications fall below the two-thirds median threshold, compared with 15.9% of workers with tertiary education.

A similar gradient is observed across all thresholds, indicating that higher educational attainment remains strongly protective against low pay risk,

even though highly educated workers still constitute a sizeable share of the low-paid workforce in absolute terms.

This distinction between composition and risk is important. While tertiary-educated workers make up a large share of low-paid employees simply because they are numerous within the labour market, their individual probability of being low paid remains substantially lower than for workers with lower qualifications.

Taken together, these findings suggest that low pay is strongly patterned by demographic and human capital characteristics. Women, younger workers, older workers, and those with lower educational attainment face systematically elevated risks of low pay. However, the composition results also indicate that low pay is not confined to traditionally disadvantaged

Table 7: Risk of being low paid based on worker characteristics

	Below two-thirds median	Below 60% median	Below Real Living Wage	Below two-thirds mean
Gender	***	***	***	***
Male	16.9	11.3	23.2	19.4
Female	29.7	23.2	39.9	32.6
Age Category	***	***	***	***
16-24	59	47.1	71.6	63.5
25-34	20.6	14.7	32.7	24.4
35-44	14.5	9.5	20.8	16.4
45-54	14	10.7	20	15.7
55-64	22.8	16.4	29.7	25.2
65+	48.5	40.9	53	51.5
Educational Qualifications	***	***	***	
Low (Lower secondary or below)	40.2	36.6	48.2	48.2
Upper secondary	40.6	31	48.6	45.7
Post-secondary (incl. apprenticeship/diploma)	27.2	21.6	37.3	30
Tertiary (Bachelor's or above)	15.9	10.6	23.5	17.4

Table 8: Characteristics of low paid based on household characteristics

	Below two-thirds median	Below 60% median	Below Real Living Wage	Below two-thirds mean
Marital Status	N = 557	N = 409	N = 752	N = 615
Single	45.5	50.7	44.7	48.3
Married/Living together as a couple	46.7	42.7	47.6	43.7
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	7.7	6.7	7.7	8
Employment status of partner/spouse	N = 243	N = 179	N = 343	N = 274
In paid employment	79.9	80.6	83.9	82.1
Not in paid employment	20.1	19.4	16.1	17.9
Financially dependent children	N = 563	N = 414	N = 759	N = 622
Has financially dependent children	26.1	25.4	27.1	25.9
Does not have financially dependent children	73.9	74.6	72.9	74.1
Number of financially dependent children	N = 143	N = 102	N = 207	N = 622
1	33.9	34.8	29.4	33.3
2	39.7	34.8	40.8	38
3 +	26.4	30.4	29.8	28.7

groups alone. A substantial minority of low-paid workers are male, prime working-age, and tertiary educated, suggesting that low realised weekly earnings extend beyond narrowly defined labour market disadvantage and are embedded across a broader segment of the workforce.

Table 8 examines the composition of workers falling below alternative low-pay thresholds according to household characteristics, while Table 8 presents the corresponding risk of low pay within these groups. Together, the results highlight important differences in how low pay is distributed across household circumstances and family structures.

In compositional terms, workers who are married or living with a partner account for the largest share of low-paid employees across the thresholds examined. Under the two-thirds

median threshold, 46.7 per cent of low-paid workers are married or cohabiting, compared with 45.5 per cent who are single. A very similar pattern is observed under the Real Living Wage threshold. Divorced, separated and widowed workers account for a relatively small share of the low-paid workforce overall.

However, the risk estimates reveal a somewhat different pattern, as shown in Table 9. Single workers face substantially higher risks of low pay under the two-thirds median threshold, with 36 per cent classified as low paid compared with 17.2 per cent of workers who are married or cohabiting. Divorced, separated and widowed workers also face elevated risks relative to partnered workers. These findings suggest that while partnered workers comprise a large share of the low-paid workforce in absolute terms due to their preva-

Table 9: Risk of being low paid based on household characteristics

	Below two-thirds median	Below 60% median	Below Real Living Wage	Below two-thirds mean
Marital Status	***	***	***	***
Single	36	27.4	47.1	39.3
Married/Living together as a couple	17.2	12	23	18.5
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	26.3	17.4	36.5	31.1
Employment status of partner/spouse	ns	ns	ns	ns
In paid employment	16.7	11.6	23	18.2
Not in paid employment	19.1	14	22.2	19.8
Financially dependent children	***	***	***	***
Has financially dependent children	16.1	11.4	22.2	17.4
Does not have financially dependent children	28.3	21.1	37.5	31.4
Number of financially dependent children	ns	ns	ns	ns
1	18.8	14.1	23.2	20.7
2	14.7	9	20.6	15
3 +	15.5	12.5	24	18

lence within the wider workforce, the individual likelihood of experiencing low pay is substantially higher among single workers.

A similar distinction between composition and risk emerges in relation to financially dependent children. Workers without dependent children account for the large majority of low-paid employees, representing approximately three-quarters of those below both the two-thirds median and Real Living Wage thresholds. However, this largely reflects the composition of the workforce rather than heightened exposure to low pay among workers without children.

In fact, the risk estimates indicate the opposite pattern. Workers without dependent children face considerably higher risks of low pay than those with children. Under the two-thirds median threshold, 28.3 per cent of workers without dependent children are low

paid, compared with 16.1 per cent of workers with dependent children. Similar differences are observed under the Real Living Wage threshold.

This pattern likely reflects differences in labour market attachment and household life-course position. Workers with dependent children are more likely to be concentrated in prime working-age groups, while workers without dependent children include a larger share of younger workers, students, and workers with weaker or more fragmented labour market attachment.

The number of dependent children does not appear to be significantly associated with low pay risk. While workers with two dependent children account for the largest share of low-paid workers among those with children, the risk of low pay varies only modestly across family size categories. This suggests that the presence of

children itself is less important in shaping low pay risk than broader labour market characteristics associated with household and life-course position.

Finally, the employment status of a partner or spouse does not appear to be significantly associated with low pay risk. Although most low-paid workers with partners have spouses who are themselves in paid employment, this largely reflects the high prevalence of dual-earner households within the wider population rather than a substantive difference in exposure to low pay.

4.5 Minimum Wage Employment

In addition to the analysis of low pay based on net weekly earnings, the survey includes a self-reported measure of hourly pay among employees who reported being paid a fixed hourly rate for their main hours of work. Respondents who answered affirmatively were asked to report their gross hourly rate of pay, including any shift payments, fees, bonuses, commission, or benefits in kind. This enables the identification of employees with an observed hourly wage at or below the statutory National Minimum Wage (NMW).

Hourly wage information is available only for employees who reported receiving a fixed hourly rate for their main hours of work. Consequently, hourly pay is not observed for the full employee population, and some salaried employees may have an implied hourly rate at or below the NMW threshold but cannot be directly identified. Based on the observed hourly wage data, employees reporting a gross hourly wage of €13.50 or less

were classified as earning at or below the National Minimum Wage. This identifies an estimated 8.1 per cent of employees as earning at or below the NMW. This estimate is broadly consistent with recent estimates derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), providing reassurance regarding its overall plausibility.

To assess the potential scale of any under-identification arising from the absence of hourly wage information among non-fixed-hourly workers, we examined net weekly earnings among employees who did not report being paid a fixed hourly rate. Only 12 employees in this group reported net weekly earnings below €299 per week, representing a relatively small potential pool of workers whose implied hourly earnings could not be directly assessed. While net weekly earnings cannot be used to infer hourly pay because they are also influenced by working hours, taxation, social insurance contributions, and other deductions, this suggests that the exclusion of workers without observed hourly rates is unlikely to substantially alter the estimated prevalence of employees earning at or below the National Minimum Wage. Nevertheless, the estimate should be interpreted as referring to employees with directly observed hourly wage information.

The analysis that follows compares the characteristics of employees earning at or below the National Minimum Wage with those identified as low paid using net weekly earnings. Although the two measures capture related aspects of low pay, they identify different groups of workers. Gross hourly pay reflects the wage received per hour worked, whereas net weekly earnings capture the income workers ultimately receive

Table 10: The relationship between National Minimum Wage employment and low weekly earnings

	N	% of employees
At/below NMW and below two-thirds median weekly earnings (MWE)	165	6.5
At/below NMW and above two-thirds median weekly earnings (MWE)	38	1.5
Above NMW and below two-thirds median weekly earnings (MWE)	428	16.9
Above NMW and above two-thirds median weekly earnings (MWE)	1,907	75.1

from employment over a typical week after accounting for differences in working hours and the operation of the tax and social insurance system. Comparing these measures provides insight into the extent to which minimum wage employment overlaps with, and differs from, the broader population of workers experiencing low realised weekly earnings.

The comparison between employees earning at or below the NMW and those identified as low paid using the two-thirds median weekly earnings threshold highlights the different dimensions captured by these measures. While the two groups overlap substantially, they are not equivalent. Among employees earning at or below the National Minimum Wage, 81.3 per cent are also below two-thirds of median weekly earnings, indicating that increases in the hourly wage floor are likely to improve the earnings position

of a substantial proportion of workers experiencing low weekly earnings. However, the majority (72.2 per cent) of employees identified as low paid using the weekly earnings measure have an observed hourly wage above the NMW threshold. This indicates that low weekly earnings are not solely a consequence of low hourly pay, but also reflect the number, stability, and organisation of hours worked.

This distinction is important in considering the potential impact of further increases in wage floors, including the Government commitment to move towards a Living Wage based on 60 per cent of median hourly earnings by 2029. Increasing the hourly wage floor represents an important mechanism for improving the financial returns from work, particularly among those concentrated at the bottom of the hourly wage distribution. However, the findings suggest that improving low

Table 11: Minimum Wage and Low Weekly Earnings Overlap

At or Below NMW		
	N	% of Employees
Below Two Thirds MWE	165	81.3%
Above Two Thirds MWE	38	18.7%
Total	203	100.0%
Below Two Thirds MWE		
	N	% of Employees
At or Below NMW	165	27.8%
Above NMW	428	72.2%
Total	593	100.0%

Table 12: Working Status, Minimum Wage Employment and Low Weekly Earnings

Working Status	At or below NMW	Below two thirds MWE	At or below NMW and below two thirds MWE
Full time	4.4%	12.9%	64.5%
Part time	25.1%	73.7%	95.5%
Total	8.0%	23.4%	81.3%

weekly earnings will also require complementary measures that address insufficient hours for those who are underemployed, have unpredictable working arrangements, and desire access to secure employment.

Among part-time employees earning at or below the National Minimum Wage, 95.5 per cent are also below two-thirds of median weekly earnings. This indicates that, for part-time workers, low hourly pay is closely associated with low realised earnings from employment, reflecting the combined effect of lower hourly wages and fewer hours of work. By contrast, among full-time employees earning at or below the National Minimum Wage, 64.5 per cent are also below the weekly earnings threshold, while 35.5 per cent are not captured as low paid using this measure.

Similarly, those working less than 24 hours a week are more likely to report earning the NMW or below and have lower net weekly earnings. Similar to those working part-time, over three quarters of those working less than 24 hours per week report low weekly

net earnings. In addition, for those working less than 24 hours a week and earning the NMW or less, the vast majority also report low weekly earnings. There is a much lower incidence of both NMW employment and low weekly earnings for those working more than 25 hours a week.

In addition to the number of hours worked in a week, job permanency provides an insight into the structure of low pay on an hourly and weekly basis. Those with permanent jobs report a lower likelihood of both earning the NMW (6 per cent) and earning less than two-thirds of median weekly earnings (21 per cent) compared to those without permanent jobs. For those without permanent jobs, over 90 per cent of those earning the NMW or below also report low weekly realised earnings.

Slightly more females (9.1 per cent) than males (6.9 per cent) reported earning the NMW or less. More importantly as previously highlighted, an even larger proportion of females (29.7 per cent) compared to males (16.9 per cent) had low net weekly realised earnings highlighting a significant structural difference

Table 13: Hours Worked, Minimum Wage Employment and Low Weekly Earnings

Hours Worked (%)	At or below NMW	Below two thirds MWE	At or below NMW and below two thirds MWE
1 to 10	22%	75%	100%
11 to 24	23%	77%	97%
25 to 40	6%	19%	81%
41 plus	4%	7%	40%

Table 14: Job Permanency, Minimum Wage Employment and Low Weekly Earnings

Permanent Job	At or below NMW	Below two thirds MWE	At or below NMW and below two thirds MWE
Yes	6%	21%	78%
No	25%	52%	91%
Total	8%	23%	81%

Table 15: Sex, Minimum Wage Employment and Low Weekly Earnings

Sex	At or below NMW	Below two thirds MWE	At or below NMW and below two thirds MWE
Male	6.9%	16.9%	80.5%
Female	9.1%	29.7%	81.7%
Total	8.0%	23.3%	81.2%

in reported low weekly net pay among males and females. Of those earning the NMW or less, a similar proportion across both sexes reported low weekly earnings c.81-82%.

The incidence of those earning the NMW and those earning below two-thirds MWE varies across education level. In effect, those with lower education levels report a higher incidence of NMW employment and/or having low net weekly earnings. For example, 19 per cent of those with an upper secondary education report earning the NMW and 41 per cent have weekly net earnings below two thirds of the median. In contrast, a much lower proportion of those with a tertiary education report earning the NMW (5 per cent) and having low weekly earnings (16 per cent). For those with lower secondary education and below, there is a greater

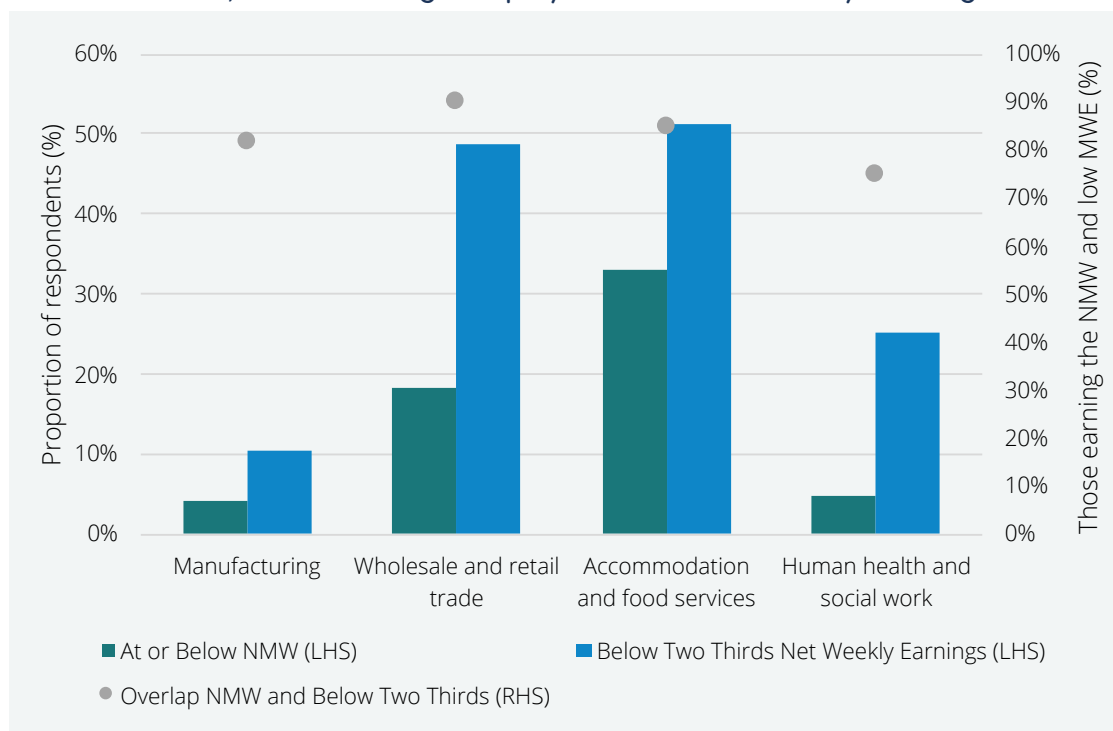
link between low hourly gross pay and net weekly earnings compared to those with higher education levels.

Across industries, low hourly pay is concentrated in the accommodation and food services (33 per cent), and wholesale and retail trade (18 per cent) sectors. Again, we see that these sectors also report the highest incidence of low net weekly median earnings at 51 per cent and 49 per cent respectively. Structurally, the vast majority of those earning the NMW also report having low weekly net earnings in the wholesale and retail (90 per cent), accommodation and food services (85 per cent) and manufacturing (82 per cent) industries. On the other hand, a smaller but not insignificant proportion in the human health and social work sector earning the minimum wage also report having low weekly earnings (75%).

Table 16: Education Level, Minimum Wage Employment and Low Weekly Earnings

Education Level	At or below NMW	Below two thirds MWE	At or below NMW and below two thirds MWE
Low (lower secondary or below)	15%	40%	94%
Upper secondary	19%	41%	89%
Post secondary (incl. apprenticeship/diploma)	7%	27%	66%
Tertiary (bachelor's or above)	5%	16%	80%
Total	8%	23%	82%

Chart 1: Sectors, Minimum Wage Employment and Low Weekly Earnings



Importantly, regional data shows that those earning the NMW and those reporting low weekly net pay are not distributed evenly across Ireland. The highest incidence of minimum wage employment is in the Border region (13 per cent), followed by the Mid-West of Mid-East regions (both 11 per cent). As previously shown, the Border region has the highest concentration of those reporting low net weekly earnings at 33 per cent, followed closely by the West (32 per cent) and Mid-East (30 per cent) regions. The border region has both above average levels of NMW employment and those who report low net weekly earnings. In contrast, the West is structurally different with an average level of those earning the NMW (c.7 per cent) but an above average share reporting low weekly net earnings (c.32 per cent).

The North and Westerly regional dimension to low hourly and weekly pay is evident through the significant overlap between those who reported earning the NMW also having low weekly realised earnings. The majority of those earning the NMW or below in the North and West of Ireland also report low weekly earnings; 95 per cent of those in the Border region, 94 per cent of those in the West and 92 per cent in the Mid-West. In contrast, of those earning the NMW or below in the South-East and Midlands regions only 56% and 67% respectively reported low weekly net earnings.

Across age groups, those aged 16-24 years had the highest incidence of minimum wage employment with 34 per cent of participants reporting earning the NMW or below in this age group. In contrast, the proportion of those earning the NMW or below is much lower, ranging from 3-7 per cent, across all other age groups in the survey.

Chart 2: Proportion earning the NMW or Below across Regions

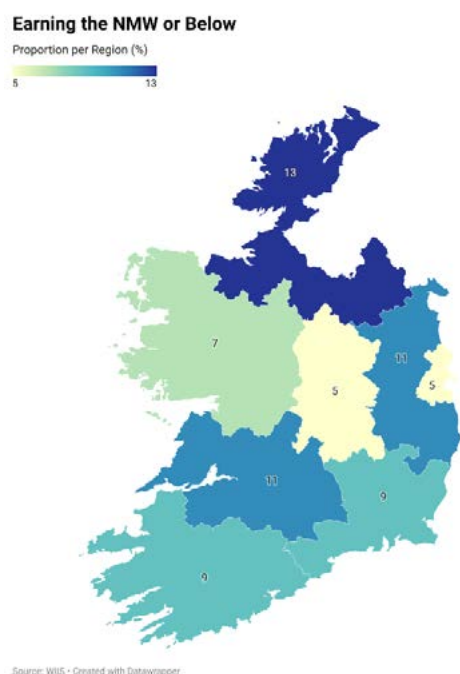


Chart 3: Incidence of Low Weekly Earnings across Regions

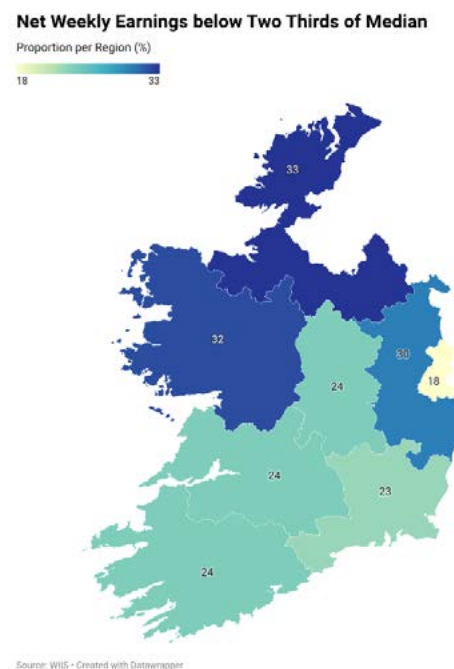
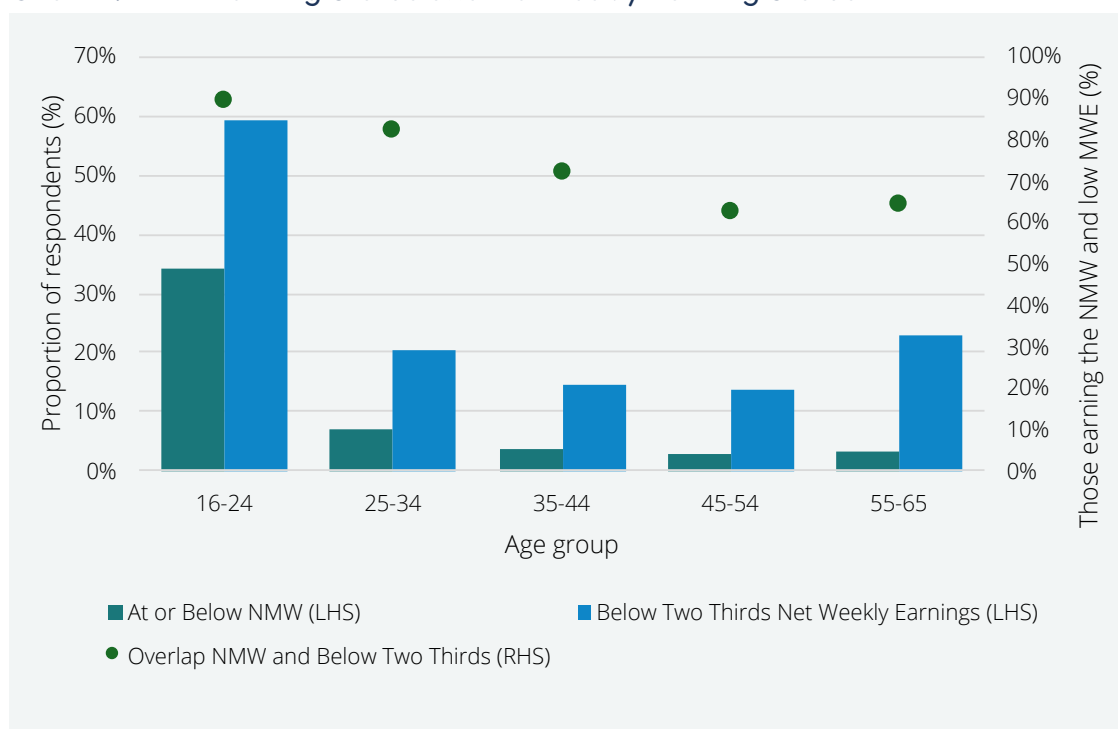


Chart 4: NMW Earning Status and Net Weekly Earning Status



There is a high incidence of low net weekly earnings for those aged 16-24 years with 60 per cent of individuals in this age category reporting low weekly earnings. Unlike the NMW earning likelihood which tapers off after the age of 25, the likelihood of low net weekly earning is U-shaped, gradually falling until the age of 54 and then starting to increase for those aged 55-65. One possible reason for this increase in lower weekly pay amongst these older workers, could be due a reduction in the number of hours worked as these individuals approach retirement.

Workers earning both the NMW or below and reporting low weekly realised earnings are most prominent amongst those in the youngest age brackets. Around 90 per cent of those aged 16-24 years and 82 per cent of those aged 25-34 years were paid at or below the NMW and had net weekly earnings below two thirds of the median. For older individuals, other factors outside of NMW status may explain lower realised weekly earnings.

4.5.1 Understanding earnings below the National Minimum Wage

From those that earned a fixed hourly rate of pay, one of the responses in the survey captured those who were paid below the NMW. This cohort represent just under a quarter proportion (23 per cent) of all those paid the NMW or less. Of those who earned below the NMW, a follow up question asked respondents the reason for earning below this rate. The most common reason for earning below the NMW, cited by 45 per cent of respon-

dents, was being under 20 years old and as a result could be paid to be the subminimum youth rates of the NMW.¹ Other reasons given for earning below the NMW include being employed by a close relative, participating in an apprenticeship or authorised training scheme, an acknowledgement by participants that they are uncertain why their paid less than the National Minimum Wage, underpayment by employers and an option for another unstated reason.

¹ Employees under 20 can be paid sub-minimum rates of the National Minimum Wage: 90% of the full rate for 19-year-olds, 80% for 18-year-olds, and 70% for those aged under 18.

Section 5: The Entry Point: Structural Conditions of Low Paid Work

The entry point into the experience of low-paid work is its extrinsic structure - the set of conditions that exist prior to and outside the immediate job tasks but fundamentally influence the nature of work. Rather than being incidental features of work, the extrinsic conditions of work define the basic institutional and contractual architecture within which employment takes place.

Focusing on extrinsic conditions is essential because they define the *baseline terms of participation* in the labour market: the degree of security attached to employment, the extent of protection and non-wage rewards, the organisation of working time, and the stability of future work prospects.

Examining low paid workers at this level is analytically important because it allows us to move beyond wages as a summary indicator of job quality. It examines the employment structures, the job security, additional pecuniary protections, the working hours and future prospects of low paid work. Doing so makes it possible to assess the extent to which low-paid employment is characterised by particular patterns of security, protection, working-time organisation, and future opportunity. Rather than treating low pay solely as an earnings outcome, this approach conceptualises it as a position within a wider set of employment relations that shape workers' experiences of work and their capacity to achieve economic stability and wellbeing through employment.

The analysis examines low-paid work across four domains: non-wage benefits, working time and intensity, employment security and future prospects, and labour market mobility. Together, these dimensions provide a

structured account of the employment conditions that characterise low-paid work.

Whereas the previous section examined the prevalence and distribution of low pay using a range of thresholds, the analysis that follows focuses on workers earning below two-thirds of median net weekly earnings. The emphasis now shifts from measuring the extent of low pay to examining the employment conditions under which low-paid workers enter, participate in, and remain within employment relationships. The focus is, therefore, not simply on who is low paid, but on the structural organisation of low-paid work itself and the employment conditions through which low pay is experienced.

5.1 Access to non-wage benefits among low paid

Access to non-wage benefits constitutes a central dimension of employment quality because such benefits shape workers' longer-term economic security, protection against risk, and capacity to sustain wellbeing beyond immediate earnings. Examining differences in access to these benefits therefore helps establish whether low pay operates primarily as a wage disadvantage alone or whether it is embedded within broader inequalities in employment protection and social security within work.

Chart 5: Access to Non-Wage Benefits Among Low-Paid workers

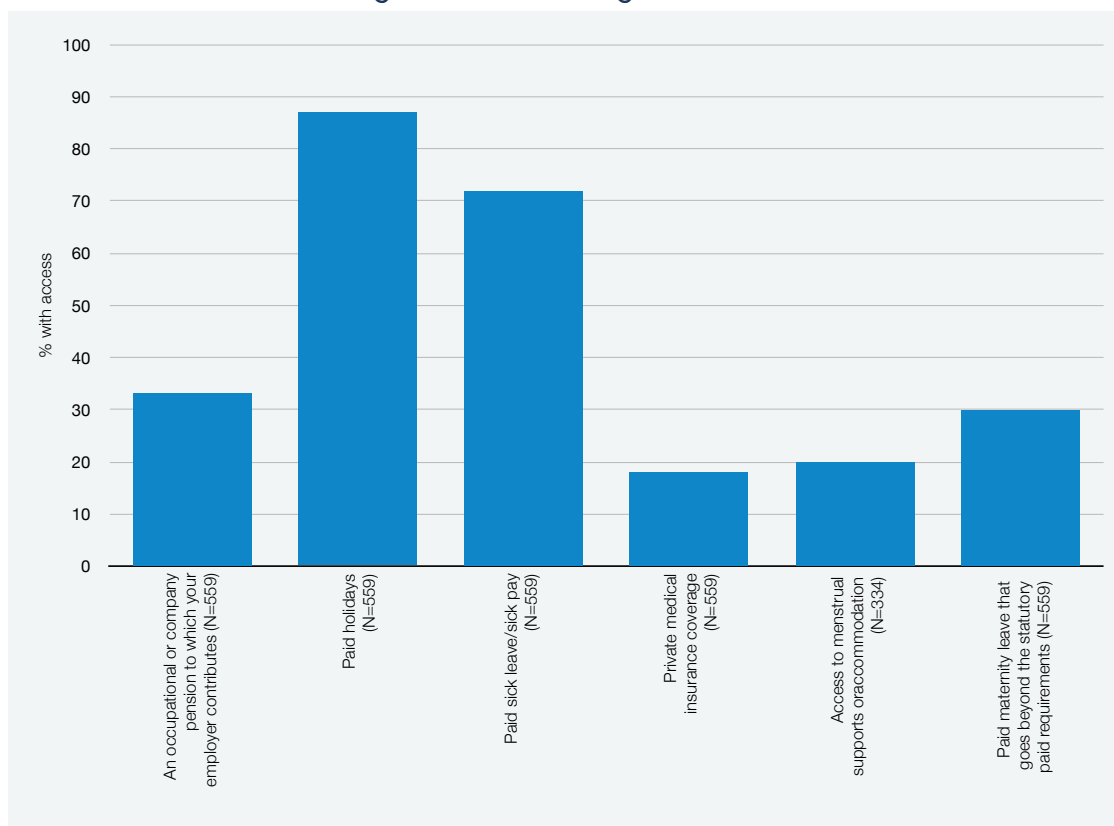


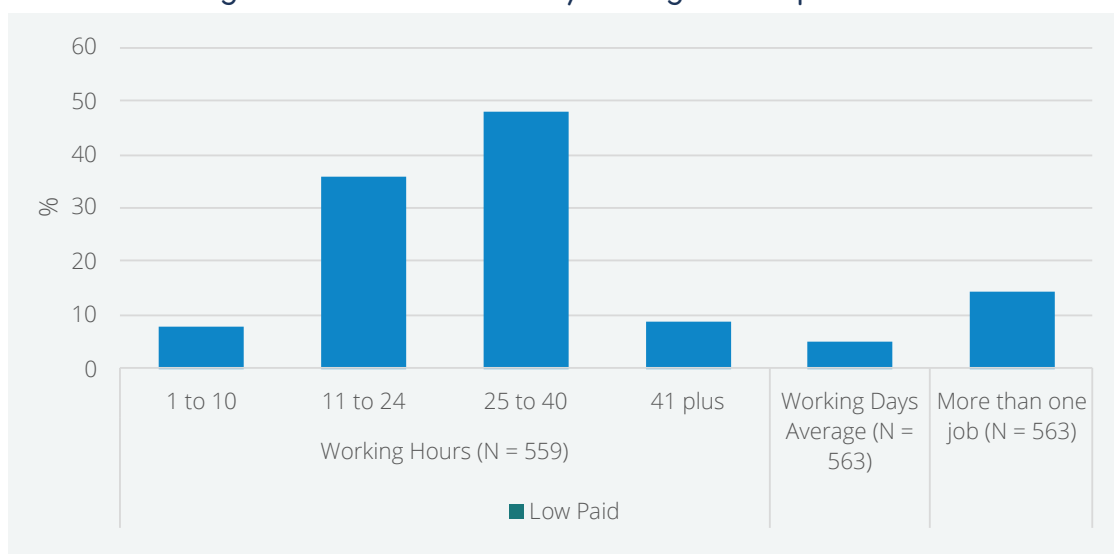
Chart 5 presents access to non-wage benefits and workplace supports among low-paid employees. The findings indicate considerable variation in access across different forms of employment-related protection and support, suggesting that the experience of low-paid work extends beyond earnings alone to encompass broader dimensions of employment quality.

Access to core employment-related benefits was uneven. While a large majority of low-paid employees reported access to paid holidays (87.3%), lower proportions reported access to paid sick leave or sick pay (72.4%). Access to employer-supported occupational or

company pensions was considerably less common, with only 33.6% of low-paid employees reporting that their employer contributed to a pension scheme. Given the importance of pension provision for long-term income security and financial wellbeing in later life, this finding points to potential vulnerabilities extending beyond current earnings². Access to supplementary benefits and workplace supports was generally more limited. Only 18% of low-paid employees reported access to private medical insurance, while 30.4% reported access to paid maternity leave beyond statutory entitlements. Workplace supports relating to gender-specific health needs were also relatively uncommon. Just

² Since January 1st 2026, the government introduced new legislation in support of an auto-enrolment pension scheme for employees. Employees are automatically enrolled into the scheme if they earn more than €20,000 per annum, are aged between 23 and 60 years, and are not paying into a pension through payroll. Since January 1st 2024, employees have a legal right to 5 days sick pay per annum. The legal minimum requires an employer to pay 70% of an employees normal pay to a maximum of €110 a day.

Chart 6: Working Time and Work Intensity among the low paid



12.5% of low-paid employees reported access to menopausal supports or accommodations, while 19.7% reported access to menstrual supports or accommodations.

Taken together, these findings indicate that low-paid work is characterised not only by lower earnings, but also by uneven access to forms of institutional protection and workplace support. While some benefits, such as paid holidays, are available to the majority of low-paid workers, access to pensions, health-related benefits, and additional workplace supports is substantially less widespread. The analysis now turns from non-wage benefits to the organisation of working time itself, examining the patterns of labour market participation that characterise low-paid employment.

5.2 Working Time and Work Intensity

The organisation of working time represents another key dimension of employment quality because working hours, scheduling patterns, and labour market attachment shape both income security and everyday life outside work.

Chart 6 presents patterns of working time and work intensity among low-paid employees. The findings indicate considerable diversity in working-hour arrangements, reflecting different forms of labour market attachment within low-paid employment.

A substantial proportion of low-paid employees worked relatively short hours, with 43.3% reporting fewer than 25 hours of work per week. The largest share of low-paid employees (47.9%) worked between 25 and 40 hours per week, indicating that many low-paid workers remained engaged in what might be considered standard working-hour arrangements. A smaller proportion (8.8%) reported working 41 hours or more per week.

On average, low-paid employees reported working 4.8 days per week. At the same time, 14.2% indicated that they held more than one job, suggesting that a notable minority combined multiple sources of employment. The presence of multiple jobholding among low-paid workers points to the diverse ways in which labour market participation is organised within

this segment of the workforce and may reflect attempts to supplement earnings, increase working hours, or maintain income stability.

Overall, the findings indicate that low-paid work encompasses a range of working-time arrangements, although reduced working hours are a prominent feature for many workers. At the same time, the prevalence of multiple job-holding and the substantial proportion working standard weekly hours suggest that many low-paid workers are not at the margins of the labour market but are engaged in regular, and often full-time, employment.

5.3 Employment Security and Future Prospects

Alongside earnings and working time, employment security constitutes an important dimension of job quality because it shapes workers' ability to maintain stable incomes, plan for the future, and exercise predictability over working life. Low pay and employment insecurity are analytically distinct labour market conditions: many low-paid workers occupy relatively stable employment, while some higher-paid workers may also experience forms of insecurity or uncertainty. However, previous research has frequently suggested that low pay and insecure employment conditions may cluster together within particular segments of the labour market (Geary and Wilson, 2023). Examining both objective forms of precarity and workers' subjective perceptions of future employment uncertainty, therefore, provides insight into the

extent to which low-paid workers in Ireland are exposed to insecure employment conditions and instability beyond earnings alone.

Table 17 presents data on objective forms of employment precarity among low-paid workers, measured through non-permanent employment arrangements and earnings instability. Earnings instability captures whether workers receive a stable and regular wage (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly) or whether their wages or earnings vary from week to week or month to month. The findings indicate that precarious forms of employment are present for a notable minority of low-paid workers. Overall, 28.5 per cent experience at least one form of precariousness, while 2.5 per cent experience both forms simultaneously. These patterns highlight that, for a significant minority of low-paid workers, employment insecurity is not merely an occasional feature of work but a structural component of their employment experience, encompassing uncertainty over contract continuity, the predictability of earnings, and the stability of future work opportunities.

Particular attention should be paid to workers experiencing both forms of precariousness. Although this group is relatively small in absolute terms, they occupy a particularly vulnerable position within the low-paid workforce. Exposure to both non-permanent employment and variable earnings represents overlapping sources of instability, combining uncertainty regarding continued employment with

Table 17: Employment Precarity

	Low Paid (N = 562)
Non-permanent OR varying earnings	28.5%
Non-permanent AND varying earnings	2.5%

unpredictability in income. For these workers, low pay exists alongside multiple dimensions of insecurity that may limit opportunities for financial planning, increase exposure to economic shocks, and reduce predictability in working life.

However, employment security is not only shaped by workers' current contractual arrangements or earnings patterns. Perceptions of future employment prospects also represent an important dimension of job quality. Within the Job Demands-Resources model, perceived employment insecurity can be understood as a job demand that may generate anticipatory strain through uncertainty about future income, hours, and employment continuity, even where workers are not currently experiencing immediate contractual instability.

To capture this dimension of employment security, the analysis develops a Future Employment Uncertainty Index measuring workers' perceived uncertainty regarding their future employment situation. The index consists of five items capturing anxiety about: losing one's job or source of work; securing new employment or alternative work if current employment is lost; future changes that may reduce pay; unexpected changes to working hours; and future changes that may make it more difficult to use skills and abilities effectively.

Together, these items capture different dimensions of perceived employment uncertainty, including concerns about employment continuity, income security, working-time stability, and future labour market opportunities. Responses were combined into a composite Future Prospects Index, with higher scores indicating greater

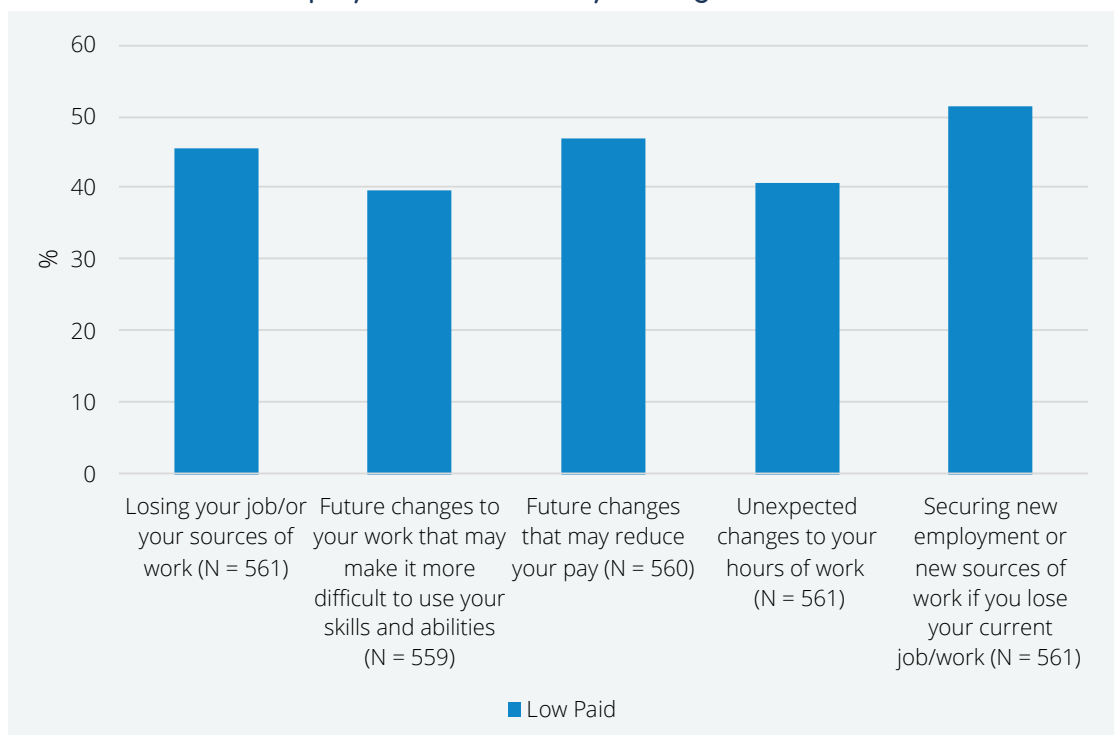
perceived anxiety regarding future employment conditions. The five items demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.827$), indicating that they capture a coherent underlying dimension of perceived employment insecurity. Exploratory factor analysis further supported the construction of the index, with all five items loading onto a single factor.

The mean score on the Future Prospects Index among low-paid workers was 1.72, indicating the overall level of perceived uncertainty across the five indicators. However, examining the individual components of the index provides greater insight into the specific forms of uncertainty experienced by low-paid workers.

Chart 7 presents the individual indicators included within the Future Prospects Index and examines the extent to which low-paid employees report anxiety regarding different aspects of their future employment situation. The findings indicate that concerns regarding future employment conditions are relatively widespread, although the specific sources of uncertainty vary across different aspects of working life.

At the individual item level, substantial proportions of low-paid employees reported feeling very or moderately anxious about a range of future employment risks. Over half (51.3%) reported anxiety about their ability to secure new employment if they lost their current job, making this the most commonly reported concern. Nearly half expressed anxiety regarding future changes that may reduce their pay (46.9%) and the possibility of losing their current job or source of work (45.5%). Concerns regarding unexpected changes to working hours were also

Chart 7: Perceived employment uncertainty among Low Paid workers



common, reported by 40.7 per cent of low-paid employees. Similarly, 39.6 per cent reported anxiety regarding future changes that may make it more difficult to use their skills and abilities effectively.

These findings suggest that uncertainty regarding future employment conditions represents an important part of the experience of low-paid work. Concerns extend beyond

immediate earnings and encompass broader anxieties relating to employment continuity, income stability, working-time predictability, and future opportunities in the labour market. While low-paid employment does not necessarily imply insecurity, the results indicate that many low-paid workers experience uncertainty regarding their future employment circumstances.

Section 6: Job Mobility and Retention

The extent to which employment allows for stable attachment and progression over time is an important attribute of job quality. Labour market mobility is often interpreted as a potential mechanism through which workers can improve their employment outcomes by moving between jobs.

Chart 8: Labour Market Mobility and Tenure Among Low-Paid workers

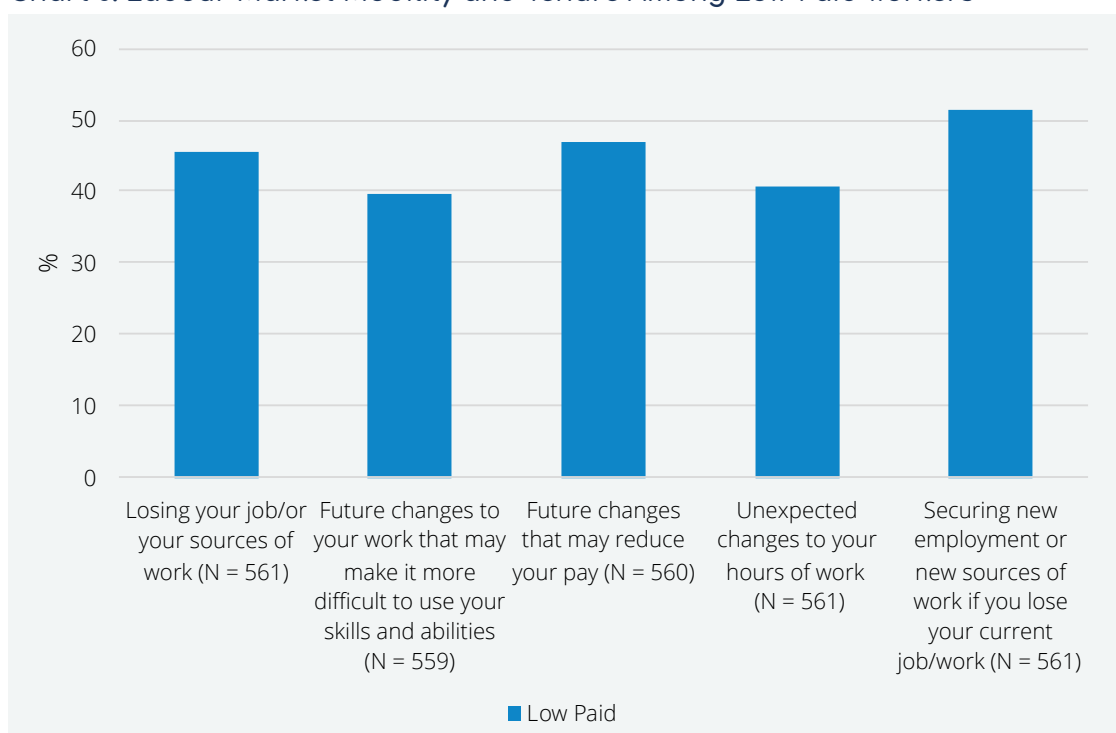


Chart 8 examines labour market mobility and tenure among low-paid workers. The findings indicate a notable degree of movement both within and between employment positions, alongside relatively short periods of attachment to individual employers.

As shown in Chart 8, over one-third of low-paid workers (34.4%) reported an intention to search for a new job within the next year, while just over half (51.7%) reported having changed employer within the previous four years. Average tenure with a current employer stood at 4.9 years, indi-

cating that many low-paid workers experience relatively limited long-term attachment to a single workplace.

Taken together, these patterns point to a degree of employment turnover among low-paid workers and suggest that movement between jobs forms a regular feature of many workers' employment trajectories. The findings show that many workers observed in low-paid employment at the time of the survey had changed employer in recent years, indicating that job mobility is common among this group. However, because these workers remain in low-paid employment when

observed, the evidence suggests that job mobility alone does not necessarily guarantee sustained movement beyond low-paid work. Although the data cannot determine the outcomes of individual employment transitions, they are consistent with the possibility that some workers move between jobs that offer limited improvements in pay or job quality. This interpretation is consistent with theories of labour market segmentation, which emphasise the existence of relatively bounded areas of employment characterised by limited progression opportunities and persistent disadvantage.

Section 7: Work Experiences in Low-Paid Employment

The previous sections examined the structural conditions associated with low-paid employment in Ireland, including earnings adequacy, employment security, working time, and labour market mobility. This section turns to the everyday experience of work itself, examining how low-paid employment is organised and experienced within work. It considers the extent of workers' control over their tasks and schedules, the demands and pressures they encounter during the working day, the quality of workplace relationships, opportunities for development and progression, and the extent to which work provides security, dignity, participation, and a sense of value.

Drawing broadly on job demands–resources, and job control frameworks, this section examines whether low-paid workers in Ireland experience systematically different forms of working life compared with higher-paid workers. The analysis focuses on several interconnected dimensions of intrinsic job quality, including autonomy and control over work, managerial and organisational relations, workplace bullying and harassment, access to training and development, work intensity and strain, work engagement, and opportunities for participation and innovation. Together, these indicators provide insight into whether low-paid work in Ireland is associated not only with lower earnings, but also with distinct patterns of day-to-day work organisation and experience.

7.1 Job Autonomy and Control

A central dimension of job quality concerns the degree of control workers exercise over how, when, and under what conditions work is performed. Job autonomy has long been identified as an important component of job quality and employee wellbeing because it shapes workers' capacity to exercise discre-

tion over work tasks, working time, pace of work, and the management of competing demands inside and outside employment. Research on job quality has consistently shown that low levels of control over work are associated with poorer wellbeing outcomes, greater work strain, and reduced capacity to manage work-life pressures (Leka *et al*, 2010). Equally, autonomy is often unevenly distributed across the labour market, with workers in lower-paid and lower-status occupations tending to experience more routinised work, tighter supervision, and weaker control over working conditions.

Control over work is particularly important because it influences not only workers' experience of flexibility and dignity at work, but also their ability to cope with work demands and work intensity. Where workers are required to work at high speed, meet tight deadlines, or sustain effort over prolonged periods while having limited control over how work is organised, the negative effects of work demands are often intensified. Previous Irish research on job quality has similarly highlighted the importance of autonomy and discretion in shaping workers' experience of work and their

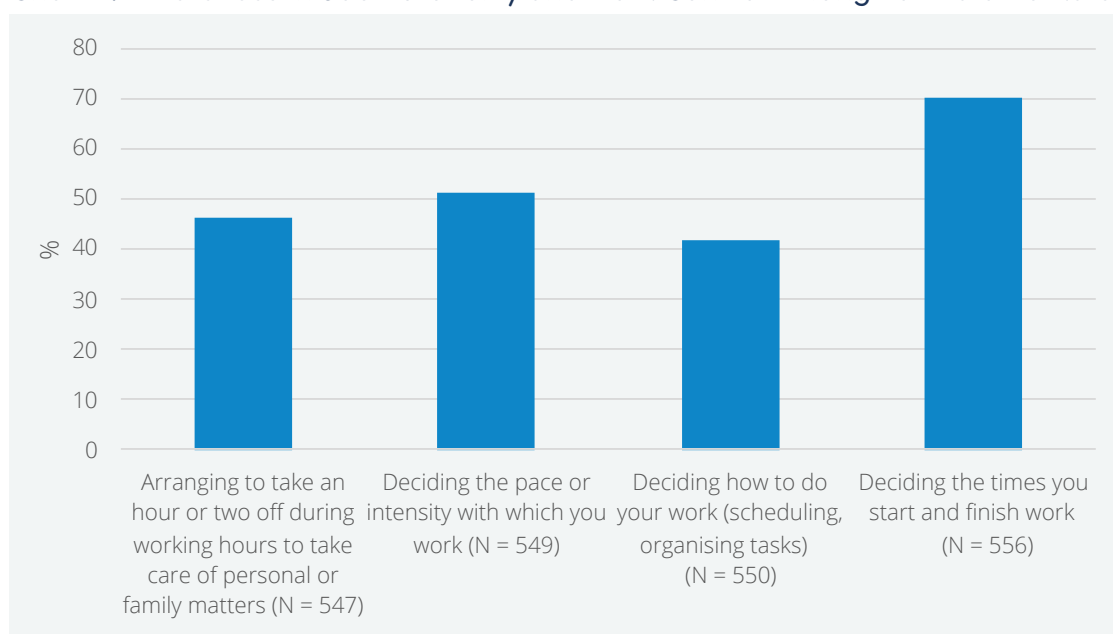
broader wellbeing (Geary and Wilson, forthcoming).

Job autonomy and work control were measured using four items capturing employees' perceived influence over key aspects of their day-to-day work organisation and working time. Respondents were asked how much say they had over: arranging to take time off during working hours for personal or family matters; deciding the pace or intensity of work; deciding how work is carried out, including scheduling and organising tasks; and deciding start and finish times. Responses were recorded on a four-point scale ranging from "a lot of say" to "no say at all". The four items demonstrated acceptable internal consistency and loaded onto a common underlying dimension of work autonomy, supporting construction of a composite Job Autonomy Index. The index was calculated as the mean score across the four items, with lower scores indicating lower levels of perceived control and autonomy over work tasks and working time.

The composite Job Autonomy Index, derived from the four indicators described above, has a mean score of 1.39 among low-paid workers, indicating relatively limited levels of autonomy and control over key aspects of work organisation and working time. Looking at specific dimensions of autonomy, substantial proportions of low-paid workers report having little or no say over important aspects of their work:

- **Taking an hour or two off during the workday to deal with a personal or family matter:** 46.3% of low-paid workers report having little or no say.
- **Deciding the pace or intensity of work:** 51.3% of low-paid workers report limited control over the pace or intensity of their work.
- **Deciding how work is carried out (including scheduling and organising tasks):** 41.8% of low-paid workers report limited autonomy in deciding how work is carried out.

Chart 9: Differences in Job Autonomy and Work Control Among Low Paid workers



- **Deciding start and finish times:** this is the area with the greatest constraint overall, with 70.2% of low-paid workers reporting little or no control.

Taken together, these findings indicate that low-paid work is characterised by relatively limited control over working time, task organisation, and day-to-day flexibility. Constraints are particularly evident in relation to scheduling and working hours, although substantial proportions of workers also report limited influence over how work is organised and performed. These patterns suggest that restricted autonomy forms an important dimension of the everyday experience of low-paid employment.

7.2 Employee Relations and Organisational Relations

A further dimension of intrinsic job quality concerns the quality of workers' relationships with management, colleagues, and the organisation more broadly. Employment relationships shape not only how work is coordinated and supervised, but also how workers experience fairness, support, voice, recognition, and inclusion within the workplace. Research on job quality and employment relations has consistently shown that supportive organisational environments are associated with higher levels of wellbeing, organisational commitment, trust, and job satisfaction, while poorer workplace relations are linked to disengagement, weaker attachment to employers, and greater intentions to leave employment.

Employee–organisation relations are important because they reflect the extent to which workers are incorporated into workplace decision-making

and organisational life beyond the immediate performance of tasks. Opportunities to express concerns, raise grievances, contribute ideas, and feel supported by managers and colleagues all shape workers' broader experience of dignity, reciprocity, and participation at work. Equally, perceptions of fairness, organisational trust, and managerial support provide insight into whether employment relationships are experienced as supportive and developmental or as more distant and transactional.

These issues may be particularly significant within low-paid employment, where work is often characterised by tighter supervision, more standardised forms of organisation, and more limited opportunities for voice and participation. Examining managerial support and broader employee–organisation relationship quality, therefore, helps assess whether low-paid workers experience systematically different forms of workplace social relations alongside their weaker material employment conditions.

To examine these dimensions, the analysis distinguishes between two related but conceptually distinct aspects of workplace relations. The first captures perceptions of direct managerial support, including whether managers provide respect, recognition, encouragement, and support in dealing with health-related issues. The second examines broader employee–organisation relationship quality, including perceptions of organisational fairness and trust, ability to express views and raise concerns, willingness to contribute to organisational improvement, support from colleagues, and attachment to the organisation itself.

7.3 Managerial Support and Supervisory Relations

Direct managerial support forms an important component of everyday job quality because managers often mediate workers' immediate experience of work. To examine perceptions of managerial support, a composite measure was developed based on four items: whether a manager respects you as a person, gives praise and recognition when you do a good job, encourages and supports your development, and supports you when dealing with health-related issues. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

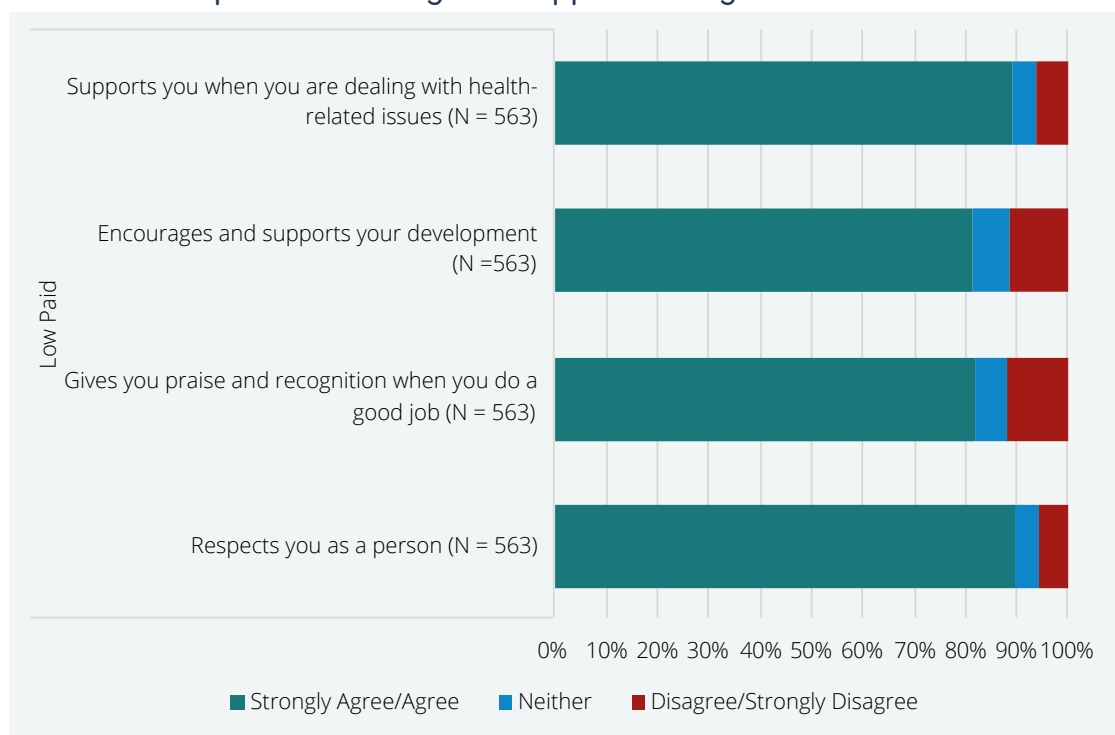
The internal consistency of these items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = 0.865$). Factor analysis further indicated a single dominant underlying dimension, with one component exceeding an eigenvalue

of 1 (2.867) and accounting for 71.7% of total variance. The remaining components all had eigenvalues below 1 and explained relatively small proportions of variance, supporting the unidimensional structure of the scale. On this basis, an index of perceived managerial support was constructed by calculating the mean score across the four items.

Overall, perceptions of managerial support among low-paid workers were positive. The mean score on the managerial support index was 1.76, indicating generally favourable assessments of managerial relationships and support within the workplace.

Individual item results are presented in Chart 10 below. High proportions of low-paid workers agreed or strongly agreed that their manager respects them as a person (89.9%). Similarly, over four-fifths reported receiving praise and recognition when they do

Chart 10: Perceptions of Managerial Support Among Low Paid workers



a good job (82.1%) and felt that their manager encourages and supports their development (81.1%). Support from managers when dealing with health-related issues was also widely reported, with 89.0% agreeing or strongly agreeing that such support was available.

Taken together, these findings indicate that direct managerial support is generally viewed positively among low-paid workers. Across all dimensions examined, substantial majorities reported respectful treatment, recognition for good performance, encouragement and support for development, and assistance when facing health-related difficulties. These findings suggest that, despite the various structural and organisational constraints associated with low-paid work identified elsewhere in the analysis, relationships with immediate managers are often experienced as a source of support and positive workplace engagement.

7.4 Employee-organisation relationship quality

Beyond immediate supervisory relations, job quality is also shaped by workers' broader relationship with the organisation itself. This includes whether employees feel trusted, treated fairly, able to express concerns, contribute ideas, and participate meaningfully within organisational life. These dimensions are important because they capture the extent to which workers are incorporated into workplace decision-making and organisational processes beyond the immediate performance of tasks.

Research on employee voice and organisational participation has consistently shown that opportunities

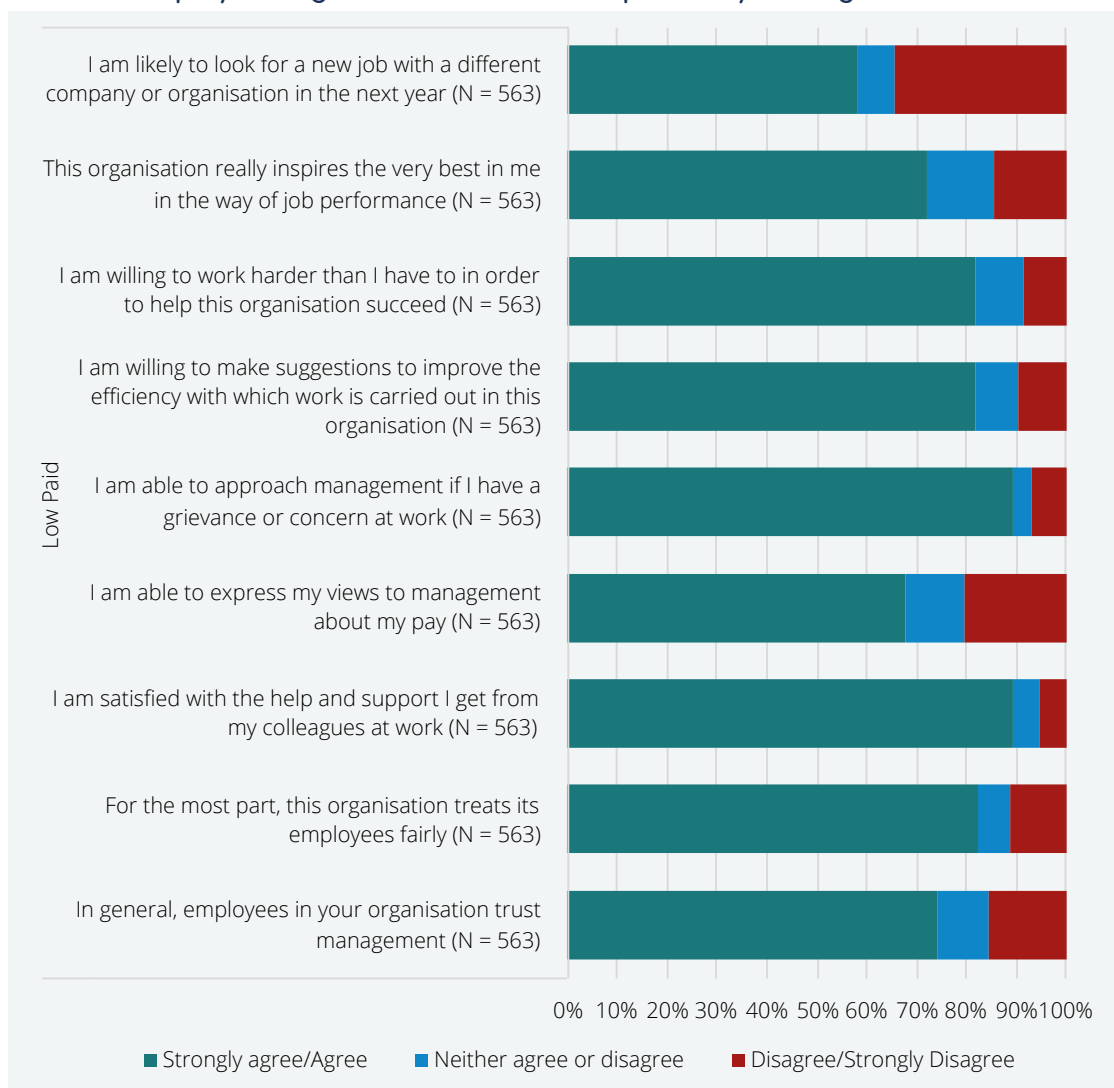
to express views, raise grievances, contribute suggestions, and participate in organisational improvement are associated with stronger organisational commitment, higher job satisfaction, and improved workplace outcomes. Conversely, weaker opportunities for participation and voice may contribute to more distant or transactional employment relationships characterised by lower levels of trust and organisational attachment.

Employee-organisation relationship quality was measured using a seven-item scale designed to capture employees' overall perception of their relationship with the organisation. The items assessed perceptions of support from colleagues, ability to express views to management, ease of raising grievances, willingness to make suggestions for improving work processes, willingness to exert extra effort for organisational success, the extent to which the organisation inspires high performance, and intention to seek alternative employment within the next year.

All items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The item measuring intention to look for a new job was reverse coded prior to analysis so that higher scores consistently reflected a more positive employee-organisation relationship.

Exploratory factor analysis indicated that all items loaded onto a single factor, supporting the unidimensionality of the scale. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.829, indicating that the items reliably measure a single underlying construct of employee-organisation relationship quality.

Chart 11: Employee-Organisation Relationship Quality among Low Paid workers



The mean score on the Employee–Organisation Relationship Quality Index among low-paid employees was 2.03, indicating generally positive perceptions of relationships with their organisation. At the item level, however, a more mixed pattern emerges across different aspects of organisational life. While many low-paid workers report positive experiences in areas such as colleague support, fairness, and willingness to contribute effort, substantial minorities report weaker experiences in relation to trust in management, organisational inspiration, employee voice, and longer-term organisational

attachment. The findings therefore point towards a complex picture of employee-organisation relations among low-paid workers, further detail of which can be understood by examining Chart 11.

As shown in Chart 11, 15.7% of low-paid employees disagreed or strongly disagreed that employees in their organisation trust management. Similarly, 11.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the organisation treats employees fairly. Smaller proportions reported dissatisfaction with help and support from colleagues (5.2%)

or indicated that they were unable to approach management with a grievance or concern (7.1%).

At the same time, there is evidence of constraints around participation and organisational engagement. One-fifth of low-paid employees (20.4%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were able to express their views to management about pay, while 9.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were willing to make suggestions to improve organisational efficiency. In addition, 14.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed that their organisation inspires them to perform at their best.

The findings also point to a degree of uncertainty regarding longer-term attachment to employers. Just over one-third of low-paid employees (34.3%) indicated that they were unlikely to look for a new job within the next year, suggesting that a substantial proportion remain open to seeking alternative employment opportunities.

The findings presented point toward a nuanced picture of workplace relations among low-paid workers. While many report positive experiences of support, fairness, and collegial relations within the workplace, there is also evidence of weaker organisational attachment in several areas, particularly around voice, participation, and future employment intentions. This suggests that positive day-to-day workplace experiences can coexist alongside more limited involvement in organisational decision-making and less certain long-term attachment to employers.

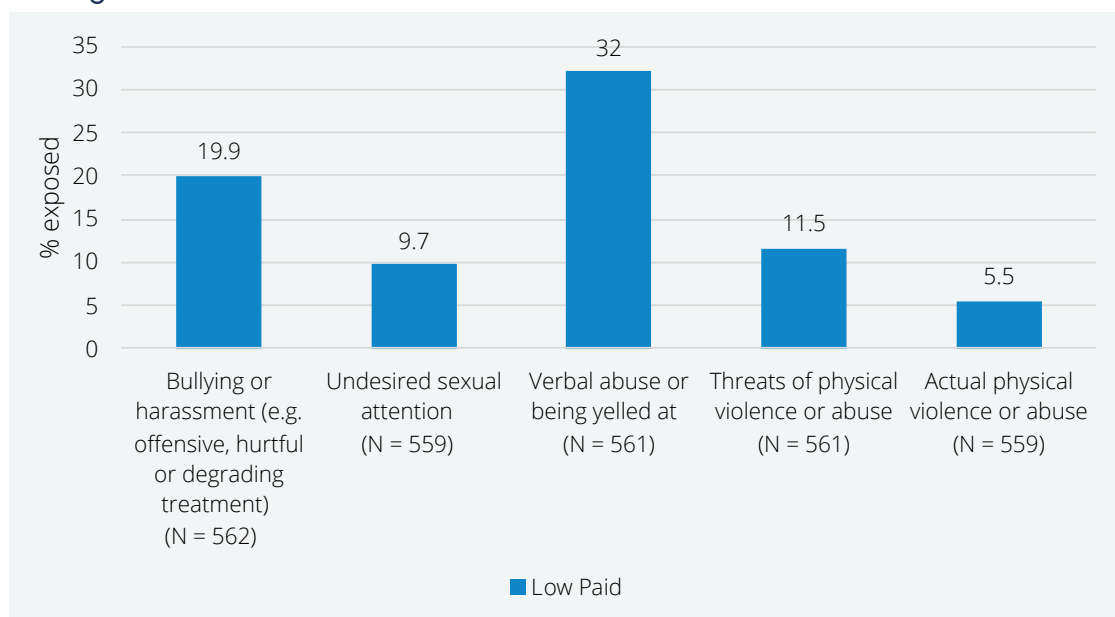
In practice, low-paid workers may feel respected and supported within their immediate working environment while still experiencing limited influence over organisational decisions, fewer

opportunities for meaningful participation, and weaker attachment to the organisation as a whole.

7.5 Experiences of Bullying, Harassment and Violence in the Workplace

A strong body of research shows that exposure to workplace bullying, harassment, verbal abuse, and violence is associated with poorer mental health outcomes, higher levels of stress and emotional exhaustion, reduced job satisfaction, lower organisational commitment, and increased intentions to leave employment (Einarsen et al., 2020; Høgh et al., 2011; Nielsen and Einarsen, 2012). These experiences also generate wider economic and societal costs, including increased sickness absence, reduced productivity through absenteeism and presenteeism, higher staff turnover, and additional costs associated with healthcare provision and organisational responses (Hassard et al., 2018; Hassard et al., 2019). The burden of workplace aggression therefore extends beyond individual workers and employers, with implications for labour market participation, organisational performance, and wider social and economic wellbeing. Studies have also shown that workers occupying lower-status, customer-facing, or more precarious forms of employment may face elevated exposure to emotional labour and interpersonal hostility (Korczynski, 2003; Grandey et al., 2007; Eurofound, 2021). These risks may be particularly pronounced where workers have limited autonomy, weaker employment protections, or fewer mechanisms through which to challenge inappropriate behaviour, highlighting the importance of considering exposure to workplace aggression as a key dimension of job quality.

Chart 12: Experiences of Bullying, Harassment and Violence in the Workplace among Low Paid workers



The WIIS measured exposure to workplace bullying, harassment, verbal abuse, and violence by asking respondents how often, during the previous 12 months, they had personally experienced a range of negative behaviours while in or through their work. Respondents were asked about experiences of bullying or harassment, cyberbullying, undesired sexual attention, verbal abuse or being yelled at, threats of physical violence or abuse, and actual physical violence or abuse. Responses were recorded on a five-point frequency scale ranging from “daily or almost daily” to “never”. For the purposes of analysis, the measures presented below capture employees reporting any exposure to these behaviours, ranging from a few times in the year to daily occurrence.

The findings indicate that experiences of workplace mistreatment are not uncommon among low-paid workers. Nearly one in five low-paid employees (19.9%) reported experiencing bullying or harassment, including offensive, hurtful, or degrading treatment. Expe-

periences of undesired sexual attention were reported by 9.7% of low-paid employees, while almost one-third (32.0%) reported having been subjected to verbal abuse or being yelled at in the workplace.

Exposure to threats and acts of physical violence was less common, although still reported by a notable minority of workers. Threats of physical violence or abuse were reported by 11.5% of low-paid employees, while 5.5% reported experiencing physical violence or abuse.

These findings highlight that protecting workers from bullying, harassment and violence should form an important component of efforts to improve job quality. While these experiences are not shared by the majority of low-paid workers, they remain a reality for many employees, with substantial numbers reporting verbal abuse, bullying, harassment and threats of violence in the course of their work.

7.6 Training and Development

Access to training and development opportunities represents a key organisational resource within contemporary labour markets. Training shapes workers' opportunities for skill acquisition, progression, adaptability, and longer-term labour market mobility. Unequal access to training may therefore contribute not only to current inequalities in job quality, but also to the longer-term reproduction of labour market inequality over time. From a job quality perspective, training is important because it reflects the extent to which employers invest in the development and future skills of workers.

Chart 13 presents the duration of on-the-job training received by low-paid employees. The findings indicate that training experiences are often relatively limited in duration, with the majority of low-paid workers reporting either no training or only short periods of training.

Just over one-quarter of low-paid employees (27.1%) reported receiving no on-the-job training. A further 48.3% reported receiving only a few hours up to one week of training, making this the most common training experience among low-paid workers. Longer periods of training were less common. Approximately one-fifth (20.3%) reported receiving between three weeks and six months of training, while only 4.4% reported receiving training lasting six months or more.

Taken together, these findings suggest that opportunities for extended workplace training are relatively limited within low-paid employment. While most workers receive at least some form of training, this is typically concentrated in shorter-duration programmes. Given the importance of training and skill development for career progression, employability, and longer-term earnings growth, the predominance of shorter training periods may have implications for opportunities for advancement among low-paid workers.

Chart 13: On-the-Job-Training Among Low Paid workers

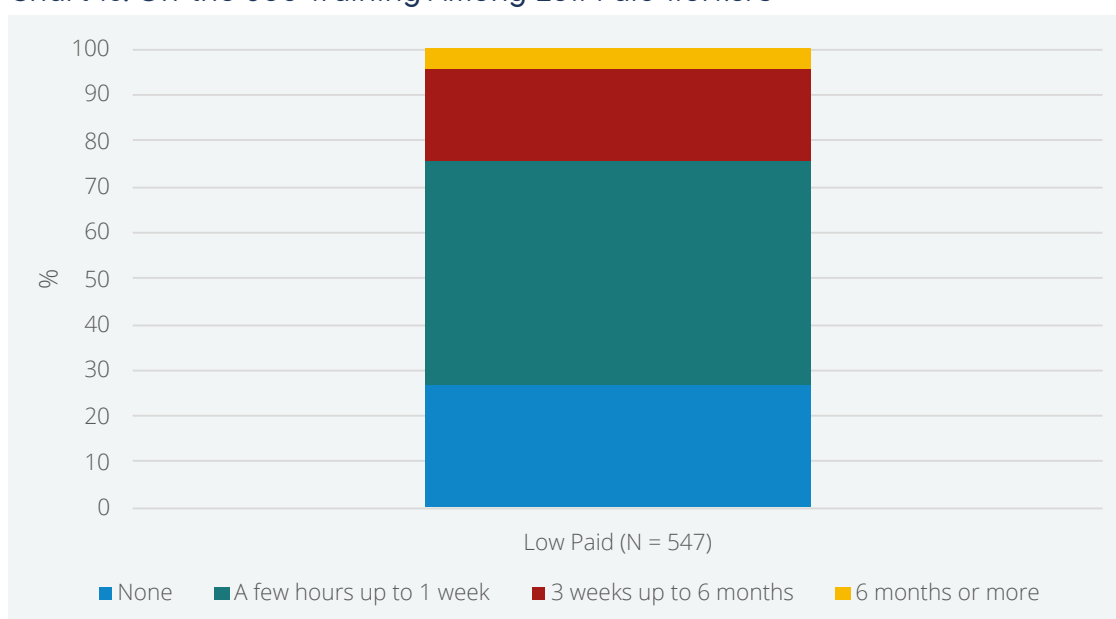


Chart 14: Off-the-Job-Training Among Low Paid workers

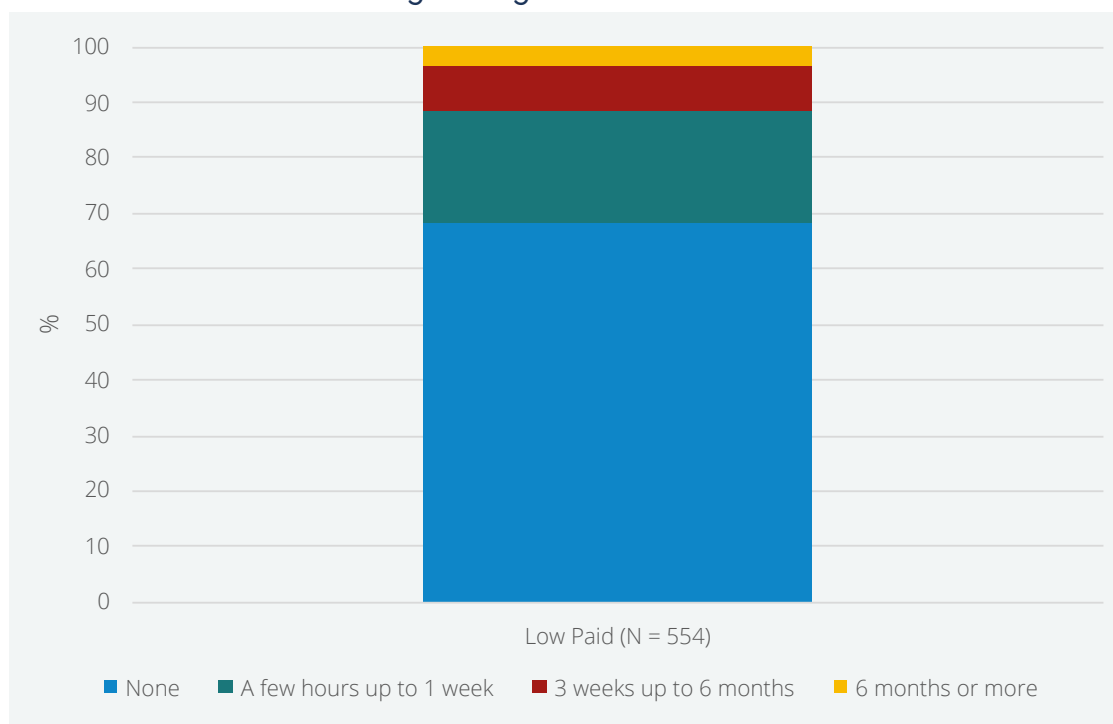


Chart 14 presents the duration of off-the-job training received by low-paid employees. The findings indicate that participation in off-the-job training is relatively limited, with a large majority of low-paid workers reporting no such training.

Over two-thirds of low-paid employees (68.2%) reported receiving no off-the-job training. Among those who did receive training, the most common duration was between a few hours and one week, reported by 20.4% of workers. Longer periods of off-the-job training were considerably less common. Just 8.1% reported receiving between three weeks and six months of training, while only a very small proportion reported training of longer duration.

Taken together, these findings suggest that opportunities for formal off-the-job training are relatively uncommon within low-paid employment. The predominance of workers receiving no

off-the-job training, combined with the relatively small proportion participating in longer-duration programmes, may limit opportunities for skills development, career progression, and movement into higher-quality employment over time.

7.7 Work-related Stress, Strain and Engagement.

A further dimension of intrinsic job quality concerns the balance between work demands and the personal and organisational resources available to workers. The survey first captures this through a global assessment of work-related stress, in which respondents are asked to evaluate how stressful they consider their job to be overall. This measure provides a broad indicator of perceived work-related stress, reflecting respondents' overall appraisal of the extent to which their work is experienced as stressful. While this summary measure captures the overall level of

stress associated with work, it does not identify the specific features of the job or working environment that may contribute to this experience, such as workload demands, lack of autonomy, insecure employment conditions, or limited support from colleagues and managers. Building on this broad measure of work-related stress, we next examine more specific indicators of stress-related responses to work. Work-related strain captures the extent to which workers experience fatigue, tension, concentration difficulties, and energy depletion in the course of employment, while work-related engagement captures positive forms of attachment, enthusiasm, meaning, and involvement in work.

Taken together, these measures provide a more complete picture of work-related stress by combining an overall measure of perceived stress with more specific indicators of work-related strain and engagement. We begin by examining patterns of reported work-related stress before turning to more detailed indicators of strain and engagement.

Chart 15 presents low-paid employees' reported levels of work-related stress. The findings indicate that experiences of work-related stress vary across the low-paid workforce, although the largest proportion of workers report either no stress or moderate levels of stress in their jobs.

Almost three in ten low-paid employees (29.3%) described their job as not at all stressful. The majority (60.0%) reported their work as moderately stressful, while smaller proportions reported higher levels of stress, with 8.6% describing their job as very stressful and 2.0% reporting that it was extremely stressful.

These findings suggest that, while experiences of work-related stress are present within low-paid employment, severe levels of reported stress are relatively uncommon. Nonetheless, a substantial majority of low-paid workers report at least some degree of work-related stress, indicating that managing workplace demands remains an important feature of everyday working life.

Chart 15: Work-related Stress among Low Paid workers

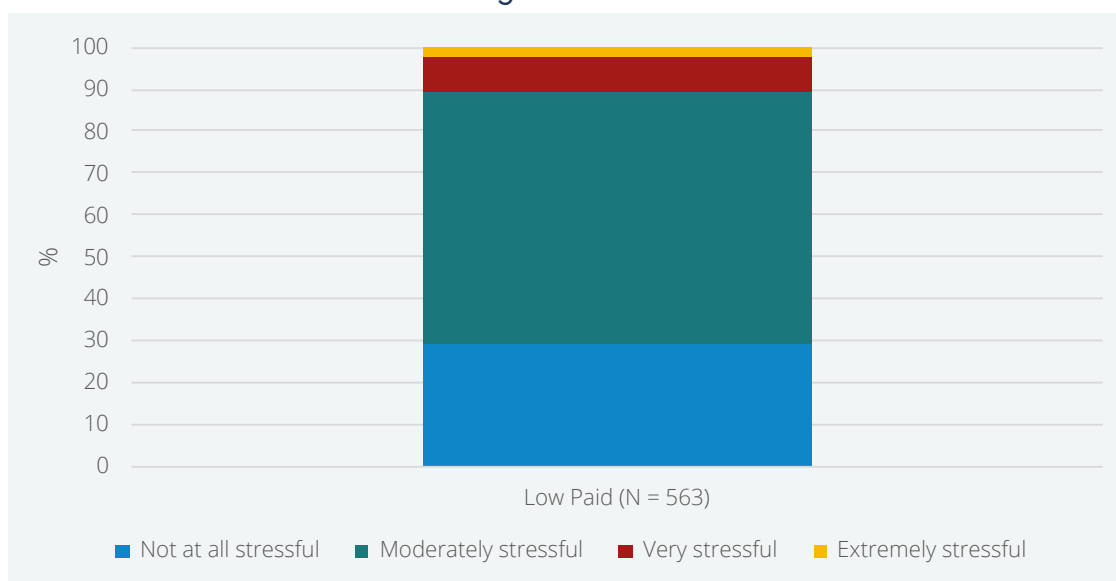


Chart 16: Work-related strain among Low Paid workers

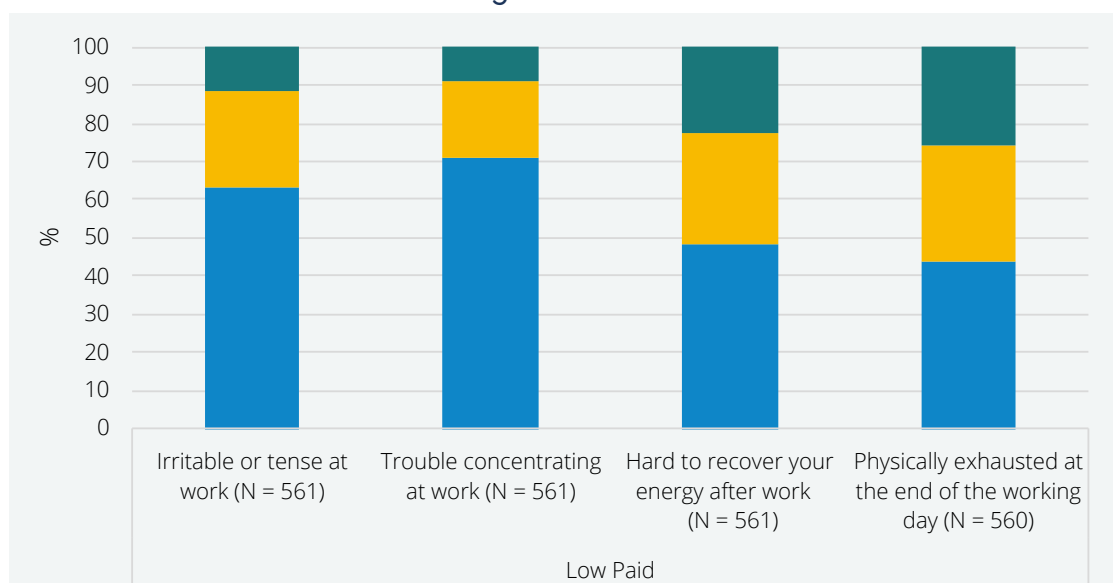


Chart 16 examines more specific indicators of work-related strain, capturing the frequency of fatigue, tension, irritability, concentration difficulties, and energy depletion experienced at work. The four indicators of work-related strain were examined to assess whether they captured a common underlying dimension of strain associated with the experience of work. Exploratory factor analysis identified a single factor with an eigenvalue greater than one and all four items loaded positively on this factor, with loadings ranging from 0.51 to 0.81, indicating that irritability or tension, concentration difficulties, difficulties recovering energy after work, and physical exhaustion reflect related aspects of work-related strain. The scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.664$), supporting the construction of a composite work-strain index based on the mean score across the four items. The strain index has a mean score of 2.51 among low-paid employees, providing an overall measure of the extent to which workers experience the physical, emotional, and cognitive demands associated with their work.

Furthermore, while average scores on the strain index (mean ≈ 2.05) indicate that low-paid employees do not frequently experience strain on a day-to-day basis on average, further distributional analysis reveals meaningful variation within the low-paid workforce. Strain is not uniformly low and instead appears to be unevenly distributed, with a meaningful subgroup experiencing frequent and elevated levels of work-related strain. Specifically, approximately one-fifth of low-paid employees (around 20%) record an average strain score above 3, indicating frequent experiences of strain-related symptoms. This suggests that while average levels of strain are relatively moderate, a notable minority experience elevated and recurrent strain in the course of their working lives.

Moreover, average scores mask more differentiated patterns at the item level. Item-level distributions show that a substantial minority of low-paid employees report high levels of fatigue and exhaustion, particularly in relation to energy recovery and physical tiredness. Chart 16 presents the prevalence of work-related strain

across four indicators among low-paid employees.

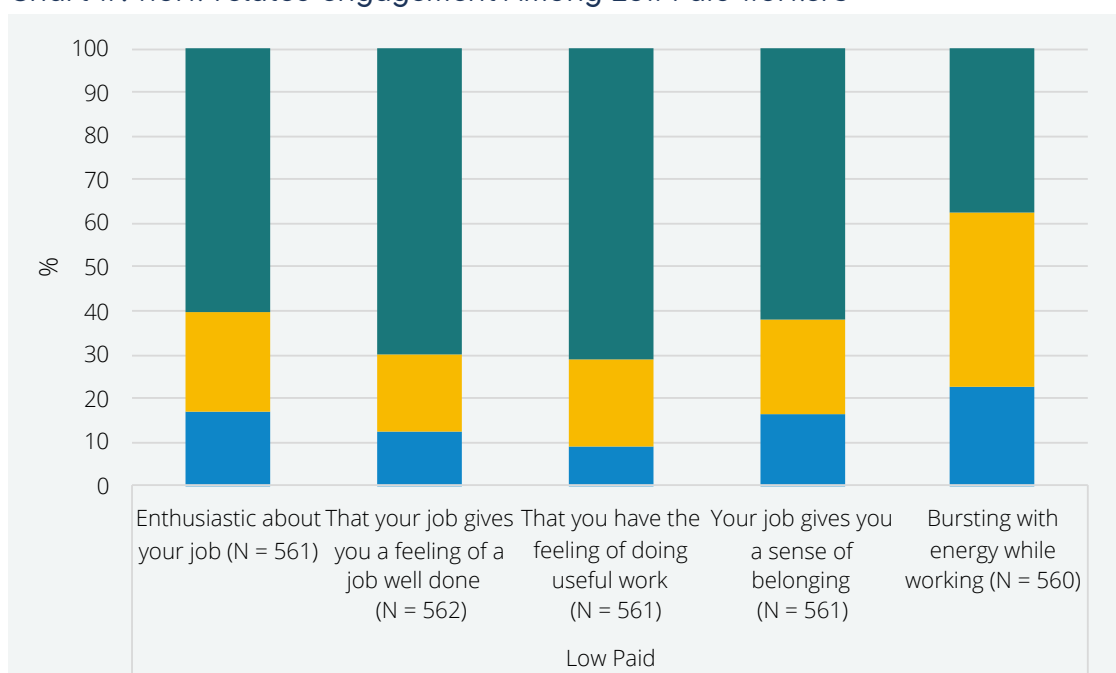
Low-paid employees reported notable levels of irritability or tension at work, with 11.5% experiencing this most or all of the time and a further 25.3% experiencing it some of the time. A similar pattern was observed for trouble concentrating at work, with 9.1% reporting concentration difficulties most or all of the time and 19.8% reporting them some of the time.

Indicators relating to energy depletion were particularly prominent. Around one in five low-paid employees (22.5%) reported difficulty recovering energy after work most or all of the time, while a further 29.4% experienced this some of the time. Similarly, physical exhaustion at the end of the working day was common, with approximately one-quarter of low-paid employees (25.6%) reporting this most or all of the time, alongside substantial additional proportions reporting it intermittently.

These findings present a somewhat different picture to the general work-related stress results presented earlier, where almost three in ten low-paid employees described their jobs as not at all stressful. This likely reflects the fact that the two measures capture different, but related, aspects of workers' experiences. The general work-related stress measure captures workers' overall perception of how stressful they find their work, whereas the work-related strain indicators capture more specific symptoms associated with work-related stress, including tension, concentration difficulties, fatigue, and difficulties recovering energy after work. Taken together, these measures provide complementary perspectives, distinguishing between an overall perception of work-related stress and the specific manifestations of strain experienced in day-to-day work.

We now turn to the positive dimension of work-related wellbeing: engagement. Work-related engage-

Chart 17: Work-related engagement Among Low Paid workers



ment was measured using a five-item scale capturing positive experiences of work, including enthusiasm about the job, feeling a sense of accomplishment, perceiving work as useful, experiencing a sense of belonging, and feeling energetic while working. Responses were recorded on a 5-point frequency scale ranging from never or a little of the time to all of the time. The items demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.758$) and loaded onto a single latent factor representing work-related engagement, supporting construction of a composite engagement index. The index was calculated as the mean score across all five items, with higher values indicating greater levels of work engagement.

The average score on the work-related engagement index among low-paid employees was 3.59. This indicates generally high levels of engagement, suggesting that many low-paid workers frequently experience positive aspects of work, including motivation, energy, and a sense of accomplishment. Although average engagement levels are relatively high, distributional analysis indicates that approximately one-quarter of low-paid employees recorded an engagement index score of 3 or below, suggesting that a sizeable minority experience positive aspects of work no more than some of the time.

At item level, several distinct patterns emerge within the low-paid workforce. A majority of low-paid employees reported feeling enthusiastic about their job most or all of the time (60.1%), while 71.4% reported feeling that they are doing useful work most or all of the time. Around seven in ten (69.8%) reported feeling a sense of a job well done

most or all of the time, and 37.3% reported feeling bursting with energy while working most or all of the time. Just over six in ten (62.2%) reported a sense of belonging in their workplace most or all of the time.

Taken together, these findings indicate that work engagement is a substantial feature of many low-paid workers' experience of work. While levels vary across individuals and across dimensions of engagement, the overall pattern suggests that positive psychological experiences of work - such as enthusiasm, perceived usefulness, accomplishment, and belonging - coexist alongside the structural and experiential constraints identified in earlier sections of the analysis.

7.8 Innovation and Participation

Opportunities to contribute ideas, participate in workplace improvement, and engage with new technologies constitute an important dimension of intrinsic job quality because they reflect the extent to which workers are incorporated as active participants within the labour process rather than confined to narrowly prescribed or routinised forms of work. Research has consistently shown that participation at work is associated not only with higher levels of employee well-being, organisational commitment, and job satisfaction, but also with improved organisational performance and innovation outcomes (Gallie et al., 2017b; Avgoustaki and Frankort, 2018; Felstead et al., 2020). The involvement of employees in decisions affecting how work is organised therefore represents an important mechanism through which both job quality and productive capacity can be enhanced.

From a job quality perspective, these forms of participation are significant because they capture whether workers have opportunities to exercise discretion, utilise skills, contribute knowledge, and influence workplace practices. Jobs that provide scope for participation and innovation tend to involve higher levels of autonomy, skill utilisation, and organisational trust, whereas jobs characterised by tightly constrained or routinised task structures may offer fewer opportunities for discretionary input or developmental engagement.

The WIIS captures these dimensions through measures of workers' perceived capacity to contribute to workplace improvement, engage with digital and automated technologies, and participate in the development of new products and services. Examining these indicators provides insight into whether low-paid workers are positioned as active contributors within organisational processes of learning and innovation or are concentrated in forms of work organisation characterised by more limited participation and constrained opportunities for skill utilisation.

Turning to the findings, across measures of innovation and participation in work processes, a substantial proportion of low-paid workers report limited scope to engage in activities that support workplace improvement, technological use, and product or service development.

For identifying new ways to improve how work is organised and performed, just over two-thirds of low-paid workers (67.5%) report being very well or moderately well equipped to do so. However, a small but notable minority (7.0%) report being poorly or very

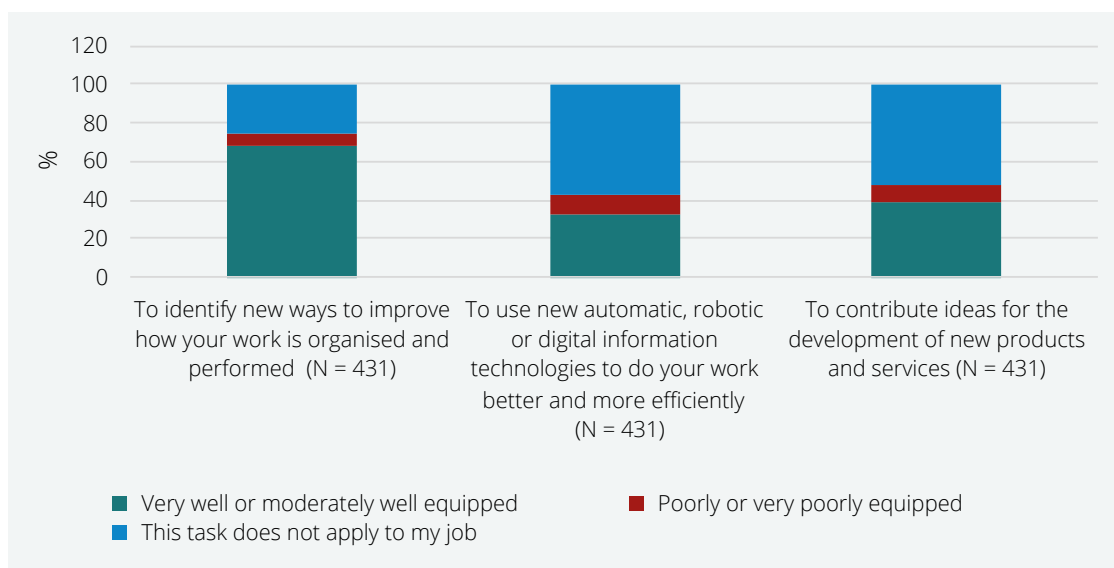
poorly equipped, while one-quarter (25.6%) indicate that this task does not apply to their job.

A more constrained pattern is evident in relation to the use of new automatic, robotic, or digital information technologies to improve work efficiency. Here, only 31.9% of low-paid workers report being very well or moderately well equipped, while 10.6% report being poorly equipped. More than half (57.4%) state that this task does not apply to their job, suggesting that for a majority of low-paid workers, engagement with new workplace technologies is not a feature of their current role.

A similar pattern is observed for contributing ideas for the development of new products and services. Fewer than four in ten low-paid workers (38.8%) report being very well or moderately well equipped to do this, while 9.2% report being poorly equipped. Just over half (52.0%) indicate that this activity does not apply to their job.

Overall, these findings indicate that opportunities for innovation-related tasks are unevenly distributed within low-paid employment. While a majority report some capacity to identify improvements in work organisation, fewer report being equipped to engage with technological change or contribute to product and service development, with a substantial proportion indicating that these forms of participation are not part of their job role.

Chart 18: Innovative Participation/Continuous improvement capacity among Low Paid workers



Section 8: Consequences of Low Paid Work

The consequences of low-paid employment extend beyond earnings alone and are increasingly understood within the broader job quality and occupational health literature as reflecting the cumulative effects of material insecurity, adverse working conditions, constrained job resources, and unequal exposure to workplace demands. Research across occupational health psychology, labour process theory, and the sociology of work has consistently demonstrated that employment conditions characterised by high work demands, limited autonomy, low organisational support, insecurity, and restricted access to developmental resources are associated with poorer physical and psychological health outcomes (Karasek, 1979; Siegrist, 1996; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Importantly, the health consequences of work are shaped not simply by the presence of demands themselves, but by the balance between demands and the resources available to workers to manage and recover from them.

Within this literature, low-paid work is often understood as a potential site of cumulative disadvantage because workers in lower-paid employment are disproportionately concentrated in jobs characterised by weaker autonomy, reduced control over working time, greater work intensity, more routinised forms of labour, and fewer opportunities for participation and progression. As the previous sections demonstrated, low-paid workers in Ireland experience lower levels of job autonomy, more constrained opportunities for participation and innovation, reduced access to training, and greater exposure to certain forms of workplace mistreatment. Research has shown that sustained exposure to these forms of work organisation may negatively affect both physical health and psychological wellbeing over time, contributing to fatigue, stress-related symptoms, poorer self-rated health, burnout, and increased risk of clinically low mental wellbeing (Marmot et al., 2020; Benach et al., 2014; Eurofound, 2021).

At the same time, the consequences of low pay are not confined to experiences within the workplace itself. Low earnings may also shape workers' wider living conditions through increased financial strain, reduced household resilience, and greater difficulty meeting everyday costs. The consequences of low pay therefore operate simultaneously through both the organisation of work and the material conditions of everyday life.

Against this background, this section examines whether low-paid employment in Ireland is associated with broader differences in workers' health, wellbeing, and household financial security. The analysis focuses on three interconnected dimensions: self-reported general health, subjective mental wellbeing measured using the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index, and indicators of household financial wellbeing and financial strain. Together, these measures provide insight into the extent to which the disadvantages associated with low-paid employment extend beyond earnings inequality to

encompass wider consequences for wellbeing, health, and material living standards.

8.1 Self-reported health

Self-reported health provides a broad summary indicator of physical wellbeing and is widely used in population health research as a strong predictor of longer-term morbidity and mortality outcomes. It therefore offers an important initial measure of potential health differences associated with low-paid employment.

Chart 19 presents the distribution of self-rated general health among low-paid workers. The findings indicate a generally positive health profile, with the largest share of workers reporting either excellent or very good health, although variation is observed across the distribution. Most low-paid workers report good or very good health, but a non-negligible minority experience lower levels of self-rated health.

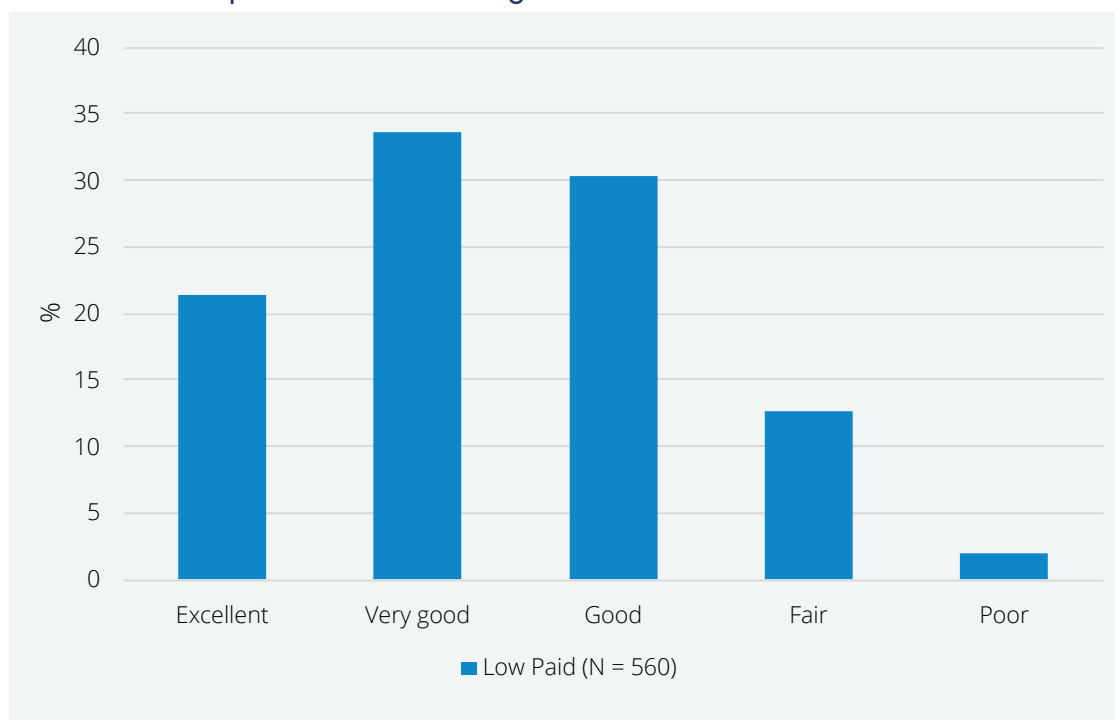
Just over one-fifth of low-paid workers (21.6%) report excellent health. A further 33.7% report very good health, making this one of the most common health categories. At the same time, 12.7% of low-paid workers report fair health, while a small proportion (2.0%) report poor health.

8.2 Mental Wellbeing

Psychological wellbeing was measured using the WHO-5 Well-Being Index (World Health Organization, 2024). This five-item scale asks respondents to indicate how often they have experienced different facets of positive psychological wellbeing over the previous two weeks. The items capture whether respondents have felt cheerful and in good spirits, calm and relaxed, active and vigorous, fresh and rested when waking, and that their daily life has been filled with things that interest them.

For the purposes of this survey, the response scale was adapted to

Chart 19: Self-reported health among Low Paid workers



a five-point format ranging from 1 (“never”) to 5 (“all of the time”), with higher scores indicating more positive wellbeing. This adaptation was made to ensure consistency with other survey items and maintain a common response format across the questionnaire. An average wellbeing score was calculated across the five items, producing a scale ranging from 1 to 5. Given this adapted scoring approach, the index is used here to examine relative differences in subjective wellbeing across workers rather than applying the original WHO-5 threshold classification.

Across all respondents, the mean wellbeing score was 3.47 (SD = 0.66; median = 3.60), indicating moderate levels of subjective wellbeing overall. On average, workers reported experiencing positive wellbeing states between “some of the time” and “most of the time” over the previous two weeks. However, average wellbeing scores provide only a partial picture of worker experiences, as they can conceal important variation within the workforce and mask poorer outcomes experienced by a smaller subgroup.

Among low-paid workers, 12.5% recorded wellbeing scores at the lower end of the distribution. While this represents a minority of the low-paid workforce, it identifies a group experiencing comparatively poorer psychological wellbeing relative to their peers. From an occupational health perspective, this subgroup is particularly important, as understanding the employment conditions, job quality characteristics, and workplace factors associated with lower wellbeing may provide greater insight into where targeted supports and interventions could be most effectively directed.

8.3 Household Financial Well-being

Life on low pay extends beyond the workplace itself, shaping the material conditions under which households manage everyday life. Here we consider how low earnings translate into broader financial security at the household level. This section focuses on household financial well-being, examining how workers report their ability to make ends meet and how they assess their household’s financial position compared to last year.

Table 18 shows clear differences in household financial wellbeing between low-paid and non-low-paid workers. Across all employees, 21.7% report difficulty or great difficulty making ends meet, while 61.5% report that they are able to make ends meet easily or very easily.

Among employees below 66% of median net weekly earnings, financial strain is significantly higher. 32.5% report difficulty or great difficulty making ends meet, while 49.1% report that they are able to make ends meet easily. This indicates a clear deterioration in household financial wellbeing associated with low-paid employment, consistent with the expectation that position within a lower-paid labour market segment translates into reduced material security.

Within the low-paid group, financial strain varies by working time. Full-time low-paid workers report higher levels of difficulty making ends meet (36.3%) compared with part-time low-paid workers (29.2%). Conversely, part-time low-paid workers are more likely to report that they are able to make ends meet easily (56.2% compared with 40.8% among full-time workers).

Table 18: Low Pay and Household Financial Wellbeing: The Role of Working Time and Partner Employment

	All employees	Below 66% median net weekly	Below 66% median net weekly + working full-time	Below 66% median net weekly + working part-time	All employees + partner in paid employment	Below 66% median net weekly + partner in paid employment	Below 66% median net weekly + working full-time + partner in paid employment	Below 66% median net weekly + working part-time + partner in paid employment
Ability to make ends meet	(N = 2214)	*** (N = 553)	(N = 254)	* (N = 299)	*** (N = 1281)	*** (N = 193)	*** (N = 84)	Ns (N = 109)
Very easily/easily	61.5	49.1	40.8	56.2	68.5	55.9	46.7	63.2
Neither easily nor with difficulty	16.8	18.4	22.8	14.6	15.8	15.2	18.9	12.3
With difficulty/with great difficulty	21.7	32.5	36.3	29.2	15.7	29.2	34.4	24.6
Overall financial position of household compared to last year	(N = 2518)	Ns (N = 556)	Ns (N = 254)	Ns (N = 302)	*** (N = 1279)	Ns (N = 192)	Ns (N = 83)	*** (N = 109)
Better off	34.2	31.4	32.6	35.5	34.4	25.5	36.4	27.4
The same	40.5	41.6	39.7	39.9	39.6	37.6	39	38.9
Worse off	25.3	27	27.7	24.6	26	36.6	24.5	33.6

One possible interpretation is that this pattern may reflect differences in labour market attachment and household reliance on earnings. Full-time low-paid employment may more often function as a primary source of household income, whereas part-time low-paid work may more often be embedded within secondary or supplementary earning arrangements. However, the data do not directly measure household income

composition, so this explanation should be treated as suggestive rather than conclusive.

Household employment is associated with lower levels of financial strain in the wider population. Among all employees living in households where a partner is in paid employment, 15.7% report difficulty making ends meet. However, among low-paid workers in dual-earner households, this rises

to 29.2% indicating that partner employment does not eliminate financial strain associated with low pay.

Within dual-earner households, financial strain remains higher among full-time low-paid workers (34.4%) than among part-time workers (24.6%), broadly mirroring the pattern observed in the wider low-paid group.

These results suggest that household employment may provide only partial buffering against the financial consequences of low pay. However, the persistence of financial strain among low-paid workers in dual-earner households indicates that the effectiveness of household-level buffering is limited when individual earnings remain low.

Table 18 shows more limited variation across groups when respondents are asked to assess their household financial position compared with the previous year. Across all employees, 34.2% report being better off, 40.5% report no change, and 25.3% report being worse off.

Among employees below 66% of median net weekly earnings, the distribution is broadly similar. 31.4% report being better off, 41.6% report no change, and 27.0% report being worse off. This suggests that differences in current earnings position are less strongly reflected in perceptions of year-on-year financial change than in immediate ability to meet household expenses.

Overall, the results suggest that perceptions of change in household financial position over time are less sensitive to differences in earnings and employment composition than current assessments of financial strain.

From an analytical perspective, this may indicate that low pay is more strongly associated with immediate constraints on household liquidity (i.e. day-to-day ability to make ends meet) than with perceived directional change in financial circumstances. In other words, while low-paid workers experience greater difficulty managing current finances, this does not translate into a sharply different perception of whether their household financial position has improved or deteriorated over the past year.

This pattern would perhaps suggest that retrospective assessments of financial position are influenced by broader household adjustment strategies, expectations, and reference points, which may partially dampen observable differences across labour market groups.

Section 9: The identification of distinct forms of low-paid

To better understand the quality and diversity of low-paid employment, the next stage of the analysis employs cluster analysis to identify distinct configurations of job quality across multiple dimensions, including extrinsic job conditions and intrinsic job characteristics such as job demands, job resources, support, and control.

Examining job quality types within the low-paid workforce enables the analysis to move beyond treating low pay as a uniform labour market condition. Rather than assuming all low-paid workers experience the same forms of disadvantage, this approach recognises that low-paid employment may be internally differentiated into distinct job quality profiles. Some low-paid workers may occupy relatively stable but low-wage jobs with otherwise reasonable working conditions, while others may experience more acute forms of disadvantage characterised by insecurity, limited control, weak support, and constrained opportunities for development and progression.

Importantly, the purpose of this approach is not simply to identify whether low-paid workers experience disadvantage on individual indicators of job quality, but to understand how different dimensions of work combine together in practice to shape the overall experience of low-paid employment. While the preceding analysis examined individual dimensions of job quality separately, workers do not experience autonomy, insecurity, support, work intensity, or opportunity as isolated phenomena. Rather, these dimensions interact and accumulate within everyday working life. Cluster analysis, therefore, allows low-paid work to be examined more holistically,

as an overall configuration of employment conditions and work experiences rather than a series of separate indicators.

This distinction is analytically important for three reasons. First, it allows assessment of whether low-paid work in Ireland is characterised primarily by wage disadvantage alone, or whether low pay is frequently bundled with broader forms of poor job quality. Second, it helps distinguish relatively 'better' and 'worse' forms of low-paid employment, revealing whether some low-paid workers experience more precarious or resource-poor forms of work than others. Third, it provides a more nuanced account of what it means to live and work on low pay in Ireland by situating earnings disadvantage within the wider organisation and conditions of work.

Workers do not experience pay, additional non-wage benefits, security, autonomy, work intensity, or workplace support as separate phenomena, but as interconnected features that combine and interact to shape their working lives. Cluster analysis is, therefore, employed as a person-centred approach to identify patterns across multiple job quality dimensions, allowing the analysis to capture heterogeneity within low-paid employment and identify distinct forms of low-paid work characterised

by differing combinations of security, demands, control, support, and opportunity.

This approach is particularly valuable because it shifts the focus from isolated measures of disadvantage towards identifiable patterns of working life among the low paid. Rather than examining whether low-paid workers score worse on any single dimension, the analysis instead examines whether distinct types of low-paid work emerge from the way different job quality dimensions cluster together. In doing so, it becomes possible to identify whether some forms of low-paid employment are characterised by cumulative disadvantage across multiple dimensions, while others involve more mixed or comparatively favourable job quality profiles despite low wages.

The two-step cluster analysis identified two distinct clusters of low-paid workers, each characterised by a different configuration of extrinsic employment conditions and intrinsic job quality experiences. Although all workers in the analysis were located within low-paid employment, the findings demonstrate substantial heterogeneity in the quality and structure of low-paid work. In interpreting the common characteristics and underlying patterns within each cluster, descriptive labels were assigned to reflect the dominant configurations of employment security, resources, strain, and workplace relations observed.

The first cluster was labelled secure, higher-resource, lower-strain, better relational low-paid work. The second cluster was labelled insecure, lower-resource, higher-strain, poorer relational low-paid work. In summary, the first cluster captures workers in compara-

tively more stable and higher-quality forms of low-paid employment, characterised by stronger access to employment protections and resources, more favourable workplace relations, lower strain, and higher engagement. The second cluster captures workers concentrated in more economically insecure and lower-quality forms of low-paid work, characterised by weaker access to employment protections and resources, more strained working conditions, and poorer workplace relations.

Of the 563 low-paid workers identified in the survey, 412 had complete information and were included in the cluster analysis. Two distinct clusters emerged. The secure low-paid cluster comprised 182 workers (44.2% of clustered cases) and represented 6.7% of the workforce, while the insecure low-paid cluster comprised 246 workers (55.8% of clustered cases) and represented 9.1% of the workforce. The remaining 151 low-paid workers (26.8%) were excluded from the cluster analysis due to missing data. These findings indicate that low-paid employment is not homogeneous but is instead structured by two clearly differentiated patterns of job quality and employment conditions.

9.1 Cluster 1: Secure, higher-resource, lower-strain, better relational low-paid work

Cluster 1 represents a comparatively advantaged segment of low-paid employment, combining greater employment security with stronger workplace resources, more favourable relational conditions, and lower overall strain.

In terms of extrinsic employment conditions, this cluster is strongly

associated with access to core employment protections. It contains 88.3% of all workers with pensions, 88.0% of workers with private medical insurance, and 56.3% of workers with paid sick leave, indicating substantially higher access to both statutory and supplementary benefits compared to Cluster 2. Access to paid holidays is also relatively concentrated here, with 48.2% of all workers with paid holiday entitlement located in this cluster.

Crucially, Cluster 1 is characterised by markedly lower exposure to employment precarity. It contains 46.4% of all non-precarious workers and 43.0% of workers precarious on one dimension, but only 7.7% of workers experiencing dual precarity, indicating limited concentration of the most severe forms of insecurity. This points to a comparatively more stable contractual and earnings structure relative to Cluster 2.

In terms of intrinsic job quality, Cluster 1 reports more favourable outcomes across most indicators. Workers report higher work engagement (mean = 3.75) and lower perceived job insecurity (mean = 1.69) than Cluster 2. Workplace relational conditions are also more favourable, with lower exposure to bullying (mean = 0.55) and better employee-organisation relations (mean = 1.96) and employer relations (mean = 1.55). Workers in Cluster 1 also report slightly lower levels of work strain (mean = 2.45) than those in Cluster 2 (mean = 2.48).

Although autonomy is low overall in both clusters, it does not meaningfully differentiate groups (Cluster 1 mean = 1.38), indicating that control over work tasks is uniformly constrained across low-paid employment and not a key structuring dimension in this model.

Cluster 1 is also associated with more stable and standardised working patterns. It contains a higher proportion of workers in the 25-40-hour category (51.3%) and a large share of workers in the 41+ hour category (77.1%), suggesting stronger attachment to standard employment schedules. Multiple jobholding is less prevalent, indicating less reliance on fragmented labour market participation.

Training access is also relatively stronger. Cluster 1 contains a disproportionate share of workers receiving longer-duration on-the-job training, including 71.1% of those receiving 3 weeks to 6 months of training, and all cases in the longest training category.

Overall, Cluster 1 reflects a segment of low-paid work that, while still economically constrained by low pay, is comparatively more secure, better resourced, less strained, and characterised by more favourable workplace relations.

9.2 Cluster 2: Insecure, lower-resource, higher-strain, poorer relational low-paid work

Cluster 2 represents the more disadvantaged segment of low-paid employment, combining weaker employment protections, higher exposure to precarity, more fragmented working arrangements, higher strain, and poorer workplace relations.

In terms of extrinsic conditions, this cluster is strongly defined by limited access to employment protections. It contains (79.8%) of workers without pensions, (66.9%) without private medical insurance, and (88.4%) without paid sick leave, indicating substantial

exclusion from key employment benefits. Lack of paid holiday entitlement is also heavily concentrated here (79.7% of all workers without paid holidays), reinforcing the overall pattern of weaker contractual protections.

Precarity is a defining feature of this cluster. It contains (53.6%) of all non-precarious workers, but more importantly, it includes (57.0%) of workers precarious on one dimension and (92.3%) of workers experiencing

dual precarity, demonstrating a strong concentration of workers facing multiple and overlapping forms of employment insecurity.

Working-time arrangements are more fragmented and unstable. Cluster 2 contains 57.1% of workers in the 1–10-hour category and 71.9% of workers in the 11–24-hour category, indicating a strong concentration in short-hours employment. It also contains 67.3% of all multiple jobhold-

Table 19: Summary of the Characteristics of the Two Low-Paid Job Quality Clusters

Dimension	Cluster 1: Secure, higher-resource, lower-strain, better relational	Cluster 2: Insecure, lower-resource, higher-strain, poorer relational
Employment protections	88.3% of workers with pensions; 88.0% with private medical insurance; 56.3% with paid sick leave; 48.2% with paid holiday entitlement	79.8% of workers without pensions; 66.9% without private medical insurance; 88.4% without paid sick leave; 79.7% without paid holiday entitlement
Employment precarity	46.4% of non-precarious workers; 43.0% precarious on one dimension; 7.7% experiencing dual precarity	53.6% of non-precarious workers; 57.0% precarious on one dimension; 92.3% experiencing dual precarity
Working time	Higher concentration in standard working hours (25–40 and 41+ hours); lower incidence of multiple jobholding	Higher concentration in short-hours employment (1–10 and 11–24 hours) 57.1% of workers in the 1–10-hour category and 71.9% of workers in the 11–24-hour category; 67.3% of all multiple jobholders
Job engagement	Mean = 3.75	Mean = 3.54
Work strain	Mean = 2.45	Mean = 2.48
Perceived job insecurity	Mean = 1.69	Mean = 1.84
Workplace bullying	Mean = 0.55	Mean = 0.77
Employee-organisation relations	Mean = 1.96	Mean = 2.08
Employer relations	Mean = 1.55	Mean = 1.86
Job autonomy	Mean = 1.38	Mean = 1.39
Training	Greater participation in longer-duration training; 71.1% of workers receiving 3 weeks–6 months of on-the-job training are in this cluster, together with all workers in the longest training category	83.5% of workers reporting no on-the-job training and 69.1% reporting no off-the-job training are in this cluster
Overall profile	Comparatively secure, better-resourced and more favourable workplace environment despite low pay	Low Paid & More insecure, resource-poor and disadvantaged across multiple dimensions of job quality

ers, suggesting greater reliance on combining jobs or managing fragmented income streams.

In terms of intrinsic job quality, Cluster 2 performs less favourably across most indicators. Workers report lower engagement (mean = 3.54), slightly higher work strain (mean = 2.48), and higher perceived job insecurity (mean = 1.84). Workplace relational conditions are also weaker, with higher exposure to bullying (mean = 0.77), poorer employee-organisation relations (mean = 2.08), and weaker employer relations (mean = 1.86). These patterns indicate more strained and less supportive workplace environments overall.

Training access is also more limited. Cluster 2 contains 83.5% of workers reporting no on-the-job training and 69.1% reporting no off-the-job training, suggesting weaker access to skill development and progression opportunities.

Overall, Cluster 2 represents a structurally insecure and lower-quality form of low-paid employment, characterised by weaker employment protections, greater exposure to precarity, more fragmented working patterns, higher strain, and poorer workplace relations. Compared to Cluster 1, the defining feature is the cumulative clustering of disadvantage across both extrinsic employment conditions and intrinsic job quality conditions.

9.3 What factors are associated with different types of low paid work?

To examine the characteristics associated with different forms of low-paid employment, two binary logistic regression models were estimated. The first

model examined the likelihood of being employed in a 'Secure, higher-resource, lower-strain, better relational low-paid' job, while the second examined the likelihood of being employed in a 'Insecure, lower-resource, higher-strain, poorer relational low-paid' job. In both models, the dependent variable was coded dichotomously, comparing workers with other employees in the sample. The same set of independent variables was included in each model in order to facilitate comparison across the two forms of low-paid work. These variables captured both worker characteristics (gender, age, and education) and job characteristics (industry, ownership type, sector, and occupation). The results are presented as odds ratios, which indicate the relative likelihood of belonging to each low-paid employment cluster.

9.3.1 Characteristics associated with secure, higher-resource, lower-strain, better relational low-paid'

The regression model for 'Secure, higher-resource, lower-strain, better relational low-paid' yields a Nagelkerke R^2 of 0.189, indicating that the included covariates explain a modest but non-trivial proportion of variation in the likelihood of belonging to this employment type. The results show that secure low-paid employment is structured primarily by occupation and, to a lesser extent, by gender and age, with limited explanatory power from education or most broader workplace characteristics once job type is accounted for.

The results show that the characteristics of the worker are associated with one's likelihood of being in 'Secure, higher-resource, lower-strain, better relational low-paid'. Women are significantly more likely than men to be

located in secure low-paid employment (OR = 2.170, $p < 0.01$), pointing to a gendered concentration of this form of work within particular segments of the service and routine economy. Age effects are similarly pronounced at the lower end of the life course: workers aged 16-24 are substantially more likely to be in secure low-paid employment than those aged 35-44 (OR = 3.801, $p < 0.001$), suggesting a strong lifecycle or entry-level concentration into this segment. By contrast, educational attainment does not exert a statistically significant effect once occupational structure and other characteristics are controlled for, indicating that secure low-paid employment is not primarily a function of individual human capital differences.

The most striking pattern, however, is occupational. Secure low-paid employment is heavily concentrated in lower-tier service, routine, and operative occupations. Compared to managerial and professional roles, the odds of being in secure low-paid employment are particularly high in sales and customer service occupations (OR = 13.374, $p < 0.001$), followed by process, plant and machine operatives (OR = 8.797, $p < 0.001$), administrative and secretarial occupations (OR = 7.196, $p < 0.001$), caring and service occupations (OR = 7.329, $p < 0.001$), elementary occupations (OR = 6.974, $p < 0.001$), and skilled trades (OR = 4.628, $p < 0.01$). These effects point to a clear clustering of secure low-paid work within occupational groups characterised by routinised tasks and limited scope for upward occupational mobility, even where employment security is comparatively higher.

By contrast, variation by industry and employment form is comparatively limited once occupational structure

is accounted for. Employment in wholesale and retail is associated with a lower likelihood of secure low-paid employment relative to the reference industry (OR = 0.417, $p < 0.05$), but no other industry effects are statistically robust. Similarly, neither ownership type nor public/private sector location significantly differentiates the likelihood of being in this category of work.

Overall, the results suggest that secure low-paid employment constitutes a distinct segment of the labour market that is defined strongly by its occupational location. It is concentrated among women and younger workers, but its defining feature is its embedding within lower-tier service, administrative, and operative occupations where employment may be relatively stable, but earnings remain low.

9.3.2 Characteristics associated with insecure, lower-resource, higher-strain, poorer relational low-paid

The second logistic regression model examines the characteristics associated with membership of the 'insecure, lower-resource, higher-strain, poorer relational low-paid' employment cluster. The model demonstrates a substantial overall fit, with a Nagelkerke R^2 of 0.384, indicating that the included worker and job characteristics explain a meaningful share of variation in the likelihood of being in this more precarious segment of low-paid work. Overall, the results suggest that insecure low-paid employment is not randomly distributed across the workforce but is strongly structured by occupation, industry, ownership type, and key demographic characteristics, particularly age and gender.

A first clear pattern emerges in relation to worker characteristics. Women

are significantly more likely than men to be employed in insecure low-paid work (OR = 2.08, $p < 0.001$), indicating a marked gendered concentration of insecurity within low-paid employment. Age effects are also pronounced, with a u-shaped effect. Workers aged 16-24 are almost three times more likely than those aged 35-44 to be in insecure low-paid work (OR = 2.88, $p < 0.001$), while workers aged 55+ also show higher odds of being in this form of employment (OR = 2.55, $p < 0.01$). In contrast, the 25-34 and 45-54 age groups do not differ significantly from the reference category once other factors are controlled for.

This pattern suggests that insecure low-paid employment is concentrated at both ends of the working life course - among labour market entrants and, to a lesser extent, older workers - rather than being evenly distributed across employees. Educational attainment shows a weaker and more limited relationship: only upper secondary education is associated with significantly higher odds of insecure low-paid employment (OR = 1.73, $p < 0.05$), while lower secondary education is only marginally significant and post-secondary education has no independent effect.

Again, like the model on 'secure, low paid work' the most substantial explanatory power in the model comes from occupational structure, which strongly differentiates insecure low-paid work from other employment. Compared with managerial and professional occupations, all lower-tier occupational groups show significantly higher odds of belonging to the insecure low-paid cluster. The strongest associations are observed among sales and customer service workers (OR = 24.80, $p < 0.001$), elementary occupations (OR = 23.21, $p < 0.001$), administrative and

secretarial workers (OR = 17.47, $p < 0.001$), and caring, leisure and other service occupations (OR = 16.41, $p < 0.001$). Process, plant and machine operatives (OR = 9.99, $p < 0.001$) and skilled trades (OR = 7.99, $p < 0.01$) also show substantially elevated odds. Taken together, these results indicate that insecure low-paid employment is heavily concentrated in lower-paid service, operative, and routine occupational groups, where work is more likely to be standardised, time-pressured, and this is being weakly buffered by organisational resources.

At the sectoral and organisational level, several clear patterns also emerge. Employment in Irish/Northern Irish-owned firms is associated with significantly higher odds of insecure low-paid employment (OR = 3.53, $p < 0.001$), as is employment in British-owned firms (OR = 3.93, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that insecure low-paid work is more prevalent in certain ownership structures, potentially reflecting differences in business models, organisational design or labour management practices.

Industry effects are comparatively limited once occupational structure is taken into account. While a small number of sectoral differences reach statistical significance - most notably lower odds of insecure low-paid employment in manufacturing (OR = 0.28, $p < 0.01$), construction (OR = 0.31, $p < 0.05$), and information/communication (OR = 0.09, $p < 0.05$) - these effects are secondary to the stronger and more consistent patterns observed at occupational level.

Overall, the model indicates that insecure low-paid employment represents a distinct and structurally concentrated segment of the labour

Table 20: Logistic binary regression model results across the two low paid job types

	Secure, higher-resource, lower-strain, better relational low-paid work			Insecure, lower-resource, higher-strain, poorer relational low-paid work		
	Co-efficient	Odds Ratio	P-value	Co-efficient	Odds Ratio	P-value
Constant	-4.747	.009	***	-6.108	.002	***
Gender (Reference category: Male)						
Female	.742	2.099	**	.752	2.122	***
Age (Reference category: 35-44)						
16-24	1.15	3.726	***	1.051	2.860	***
25-34	.398	1.489	Ns	.259	1.295	ns
45-54	.041	1.042	Ns	.184	1.202	ns
55 plus	.341	1.406	ns	.971	2.640	**
Educational Qualifications (Reference category: Tertiary)						
Lower secondary or below	-.415	.661	ns	.625	1.869	Ns
Upper secondary	-.007	.993	Ns	.525	1.690	*
Post secondary	-.095	.909	ns	.030	1.031	Ns
Sector (Reference category: Professional & Real Estate)						
Agriculture	-.819	.441	ns	-1.566	.209	Ns
Utilities	-.572	.564	Ns	-19.19	.000	*
Manufacturing	-.363	.696	Ns	-1.153	.316	Ns
Construction	-.112	.894	Ns	-1.030	.357	Ns
Wholesale & Retail	-.824	.439	Ns	-.161	.852	Ns
Transport	.539	1.714	Ns	-.658	.518	Ns
Accommodation	-.082	.921	Ns	-.474	.623	Ns
Information	.139	1.149	Ns	-2.291	.101	Ns
Finance	.176	1.192	Ns	-18.728	.000	Ns
Public Admin	.541	1.718	Ns	-1.291	.275	*
Education	1.170	3.223	Ns	-.194	.824	Ns
Health	.085	1.089	Ns	.159	1.172	Ns
Arts & Entertainment	-.170	.843	Ns	.513	1.670	Ns
Other services	-1.045	.352	Ns	.324	1.382	Ns
Ownership Location (Reference category: Foreign owned)						
Irish/Northern Irish owned	-.172	.842	Ns	1.258	3.519	***
British owned	.345	1.412	Ns	1.365	3.915	**
Occupational group (Refer- ence category: Managers, Directors & Professionals)						

Associate Professional	.324	1.382	Ns	1.430	4.177	*
Administrative & Secretarial	2.025	7.57.	***	2.821	16.786	***
Skilled Trades Occupations	1.547	4.698	**	2.040	7.688	***
Caring, Leisure & other service occupations	1.944	6.987	***	2.755	15.714	***
Sales & Customer service	2.649	14.136	***	3.166	23.712	***
Process, Plant & Machine operatives	2.206	9.075	***	2.268	9.656	***
Elementary occupations	1.924	6.846	***	3.119	22.628	***
Nagelkerke R2	.195			.385		
Cox and Snell R2	.074			.182		
N	106			161		

market. It is strongly shaped by occupational hierarchy and is disproportionately located among women, younger workers, and older workers. More importantly, it is embedded within a set of lower-tier occupations and ownership contexts that appear to combine low pay with weaker employment security and fewer organisational buffers. This suggests that insecurity in low-paid work is a function of labour market segmentation and job structuring across certain types of workplaces and occupations.

Section 10: Policy Implications and Recommendations

The findings presented in this report have important implications for how low-paid employment is understood and addressed in Ireland. The findings presented in this report demonstrate that low pay remains a significant problem in Ireland, including among workers who are legally paid at or above the National Minimum Wage. The analysis also shows that low-paid employment extends beyond the hourly wage to encompass the amount and security of work available, access to employment protections, opportunities for progression and development, and the experience of work itself. Low pay should therefore be understood not simply as a question of the wage rate, but as a feature of employment that can involve multiple disadvantages across both extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions of job quality.

This report examines low pay through net weekly earnings, capturing the realised take-home income generated through employment. This approach reflects the importance of considering the income workers receive over a standard earnings period alongside the conditions through which that income is generated. The findings demonstrate that low weekly earnings are shaped not only by earnings levels, but also by working-time arrangements, including short-hours employment, fragmented schedules, and unstable or unpredictable hours.

From a policy perspective, this points to the importance of addressing the structure of working time alongside wage levels. In particular, the evidence highlights the relevance of measures that improve the predictability and stability of hours, and that reduce reliance on involuntary short-hours or fragmented schedules. It also highlights the importance of effective access to employment protections that support income stability, including paid leave, statutory sick pay, and pension coverage. It is important to recognise that some of these

protections have been strengthened through recent policy developments. Statutory sick pay was introduced in Ireland in 2023, prior to the fieldwork for this report, meaning that the policy challenge relates increasingly to awareness, compliance and effective access among eligible workers. The existence of a statutory entitlement does not, however, necessarily mean that workers are able to exercise that entitlement in practice. Access may depend on workers knowing their rights, employers complying with their obligations and workers feeling able to assert those rights without adverse consequences. These considerations are particularly relevant in low-paid employment, where employee voice and bargaining power may be limited. The policy challenge is therefore not only to establish employment protections, but to ensure that they are effectively implemented, enforced and accessible to workers. By contrast, reforms such as the introduction of automatic enrolment for pensions post-date the survey period, and the findings presented here provide a useful baseline for assessing the

extent to which such reforms improve access to employment-based security over time. The evidence, therefore, highlights not only the importance of establishing employment protections, but also ensuring that these rights are effectively realised in practice.

There is also a wider financing dimension to expanding employment-based social protection. Benefits such as statutory sick pay and other social insurance entitlements ultimately depend on the financing of the social insurance system. Consequently, measures to improve access to employment-based protection need to be considered alongside the contribution base that supports these entitlements.

More broadly, measures intended to improve the quality of low-paid employment may encounter competing interests and incentives in their implementation. Improvements in pay, working-time security, employment protections and employee voice can increase costs or obligations for employers, and may therefore generate resistance where they are perceived to constrain flexibility or increase employment costs. The effectiveness of policy consequently depends not only on the design of individual measures, but also on the strength of enforcement, the capacity of workers to exercise their rights, and the institutional arrangements through which employment standards are implemented.

The findings also demonstrate that low-paid employment is not evenly distributed across the workforce or across the economy. Women, younger workers, older workers, and workers with lower levels of educational attainment face systematically higher risks of low pay. Low-paid employment is also

concentrated within particular sectors and regions, indicating that low pay is closely connected to the structure of employment opportunities available to different groups of workers and in different parts of the economy.

The gendered nature of low pay has important implications for policy. Across all thresholds examined, women account for around two-thirds of the low-paid workforce and face consistently higher risks of experiencing low pay than men. This pattern is evident under both relative earnings thresholds and the Real Living Wage benchmark, indicating that women's overrepresentation in low-paid employment reflects not only their composition within the low-paid workforce but also their greater likelihood of experiencing low weekly earnings. These findings highlight the importance of considering the sectors, occupations, and working arrangements in which women are disproportionately represented when designing policies to address low pay.

In particular, the concentration of women in sectors such as wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and food services, and human health and social work points towards the importance of improving job quality within sectors where low-paid employment is prevalent. This includes not only earnings, but also access to secure hours, employment protections, progression opportunities, and development pathways.

The age profile of low-paid employment also has important implications. Younger workers aged 16–24 face the highest risk of low pay, accounting for around one-third of all low-paid employees and with 59% earning below two-thirds of median weekly

earnings and over 70% falling below the Real Living Wage threshold. However, the analysis also identifies elevated risks among older workers, particularly those aged 65 and over, where around half fall below the two-thirds median threshold and 53% fall below the Real Living Wage benchmark. This indicates that low pay is not confined to labour market entry, but can also persist among workers later in working life. Policy responses, therefore, need to consider both the transition of younger workers into higher-quality employment and the circumstances that leave some older workers reliant on low-paid employment.

The findings also demonstrate that educational attainment provides important protection against low pay, with workers holding lower secondary and upper secondary qualifications facing substantially higher risks of low pay than those with tertiary education. However, low-paid employment is evident across all levels of educational attainment. Workers with tertiary qualifications account for the largest single share of the low-paid workforce, highlighting that higher education does not necessarily guarantee access to higher-paid employment. This points towards the importance of considering the structure of employment opportunities, occupational pathways, and progression routes within sectors, rather than viewing low pay solely through the lens of individual skills or qualifications.

The sectoral distribution of low pay further highlights the importance of addressing the characteristics of the jobs being created within particular parts of the economy. Low-paid employment is largely concentrated within a relatively small number of sectors,

with more than half of all low-paid workers employed in wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and food services, and human health and social work. While this reflects, in part, the size of these sectors, the concentration of low-paid employment cannot be explained by workforce composition alone. The analysis shows that workers in accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail trade, and arts and recreation face the highest likelihood of experiencing low pay, whereas workers in information and communication, financial and insurance activities, manufacturing, and utilities are considerably less likely to experience low pay.

These patterns suggest that addressing low pay requires attention to the organisation of employment within sectors where low-paid work is prevalent. This includes consideration of wage-setting practices, working-time arrangements, opportunities for progression, and access to employment protections. The evidence indicates that low pay is not randomly distributed across the economy, but is closely linked to the structure of labour demand and the types of employment opportunities available within particular sectors.

The geographic distribution of low pay similarly indicates that place remains an important factor shaping employment outcomes. The Border region consistently records the highest incidence of low pay across the measures examined, with the West also recording comparatively high rates, while Dublin records the lowest. These regional differences suggest that workers' experiences of low-paid employment are influenced not only by individual characteristics, but also by the availability and composition of em-

ployment opportunities within regional labour markets. Policy responses, therefore, need to consider the role of regional economic structures and the availability of quality employment opportunities across different parts of the country.

As such, effective policy responses are likely to require a combination of wage regulation, employment standards enforcement, and measures that address the organisation of working time and job design within low-paid sectors. The key policy challenge is not only to raise wage floors, but also to improve the conditions under which low-paid work is structured and experienced.

The findings indicate that addressing low-paid employment requires attention not only to earnings and employment conditions, but also to the quality of the work itself. Across the intrinsic dimensions of job quality examined in this report, low-paid workers experience more limited opportunities for autonomy, participation, skill development, and progression. These findings suggest that improving the quality of low-paid employment requires policies that address how jobs are designed, organised, and developed within workplaces.

A key challenge relates to progression and development opportunities. The findings show that low-paid workers have more limited access to training and development, with a substantial proportion receiving no training at all and longer periods of both on-the-job and off-the-job training remaining relatively uncommon. This indicates that access to opportunities for skill acquisition and development is unevenly distributed across the labour market. Policy responses, therefore, need to consider how access to training can be

expanded among low-paid workers, particularly within sectors where low-paid employment is concentrated.

However, improving access to training alone is unlikely to address the wider progression challenges identified in this report. The findings show that low pay is experienced across all levels of educational attainment, suggesting that progression is shaped not only by individual skills and qualifications, but also by the availability of higher-quality roles, opportunities to use skills within employment, and pathways for advancement within organisations and sectors. Policy approaches should, therefore, consider how training provision can be connected to meaningful progression routes, including through employer investment, structured career pathways, and greater recognition of skills developed through work.

The findings also highlight the importance of considering worker participation and autonomy as elements of job quality. Low-paid workers report more limited influence over aspects of their work, fewer opportunities to contribute ideas or participate in workplace improvement, and more restricted opportunities to use their skills fully. This points towards the importance of strengthening forms of worker voice and participation, particularly in sectors where work is more likely to be routinised and tightly controlled. Measures that support employee involvement in workplace decision-making may contribute not only to improved job quality, but also to organisational learning and improvement.

Finally, the findings on workplace relationships and work-related strain highlight the importance of ensuring

that low-paid work is organised in ways that support dignity, respect, and sustainable working lives. While many low-paid workers report positive relationships with their immediate managers, a proportion experience weaker organisational attachment, limited voice, workplace mistreatment, and work-related strain. Effective implementation and enforcement of existing employment protections, alongside measures that promote supportive workplace practices, remain important components of improving the everyday experience of low-paid work.

The implementation of such measures is not necessarily straightforward. Policies that improve pay, employment security or access to employment protections may impose additional costs or obligations on employers, creating potential resistance to their introduction or implementation. At workplace level, the effectiveness of statutory rights may also depend on the capacity of workers to exercise them. Where employee voice is weak, workers may have limited capacity to challenge non-compliance or poor practice, particularly where they are concerned about the consequences of doing so. These institutional and workplace factors are important to recognising the limits of policy that relies solely on the existence of formal rights or standards.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that addressing low-paid employment requires action on both earnings and the wider conditions of work. Increasing the financial return from employment should understandably remain a central priority for the low paid, particularly given the scale of low weekly earnings identified. However, the findings also show that low-paid employment is accompanied by a wider set of disadvantages in the everyday experience of work, including insecure hours, limited access to employment protections, restricted opportunities for training and progression, and reduced autonomy and participation.

The policy challenge is, therefore, not only to improve the level of income workers receive, but also to improve the conditions under which that income is generated. Ensuring access to predictable hours, effective employment protections, development opportunities, and greater voice and participation within workplaces can improve the conditions under which low-paid employment is experienced. These measures should not be understood as alternatives to improving pay, but as complementary elements of a broader strategy to improve the quality, security and sustainability of work.

References

- Avgoustaki, A., & Frankort, H. T. W. (2018) 'Implications of work effort and discretion for employee well-being and career-related outcomes: An integrative assessment' *Industrial and Labour Relations Review*, 72(3): 636-661.
- Bakker A. and Demerouti E (2007) 'The Job Demands-Resources model: state of the art', *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(3): 309-328.
- Benach, J., Vives, A., Amable, M., Vanroelen, C., Tarafa, G., and Muntaner, C. (2014) 'Precarious employment: understanding an emerging social determinant of health', *Annual Review of Public Health*, 35:229-53.
- Burchell, B., Sehnbruch, K., Piasna, A. and Agloni, N. (2014) 'The quality of employment and decent work: definitions, methodologies, and ongoing debates', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 38(2): 459-477.
- Collins, M.L. (2016) *A Profile of Those on the Minimum Wage*. Dublin: Nevin Economic Research Institute.
- Einarsen, S.V., Hoel, H., Zapf, D. and Cooper, C.L. (2020) *Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace: Theory, Research and Practice*, 3rd edition. Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press.
- Eurofound (2021) *Working Conditions and Sustainable Work: An Analysis Using the Job Quality Framework*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Eurofound (2012) *Trends in Job Quality in Europe*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Eurofound and International Labour Organization (2019) *Working Conditions in a Global Perspective*. Luxembourg and Geneva: Publications Office of the European Union and International Labour Office.
- European Commission (2004) *Employment in Europe 2004*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Felstead A, Gallie D, Green F, and Henseke G. (2019) Conceiving, designing and trailing a short-form measure of job quality: a proof-of-concept study. *Industrial Relations Journal* 50: 2-19.
- Felstead & Duncan Gallie & Francis Green & Golo Henseke (2020) '[Getting the Measure of Employee-Driven Innovation and Its Workplace Correlates](#)', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, London School of Economics, 58(4): 904-935,
- Gallie, D. (2007) *Employment Regimes and the Quality of Work*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gallie, D. (2013) 'Direct participation and the quality of work', *Human Relations*, 66(4): 453-473.
- Gallie, D., Zhou, Y., Felstead, A. and Green, F. (2017b) 'The implications of direct participation for organisational commitment, job satisfaction and affective psychological well-being: a longitudinal analysis', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 48(2): 174-191.
- Geary, J. and Wilson, L. (2023) *Job Quality in Ireland*, UCD. [Unpublished manuscript]
- Geary, J. and Wilson, L. (2026). *Accounting for the distribution of job quality within a (putative) liberal employment regime: the case of Ireland* [Unpublished manuscript].
- Grandey, A.A., Kern, J.H., Frone, M.R. (2007) 'Verbal abuse from outsiders versus insiders: comparing

- frequency, impact on emotional exhaustion, and the role of emotional labor', *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 12(1): 63-79.
- Green, F. (2006) *Demanding Work: The Paradox of Job Quality in the Affluent Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hassard, J., Teoh, K.R.H., Visockaite, G., Dewe, P., Cox, T. (2018) 'The cost of work-related stress to society: A systematic review', *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 23(1): 1-17.
- Hassard, J., Teoh, K. R. H., & Cox, T. (2019) 'Estimating the economic burden on society posed by work-related violence: a systematic review of cost-of-illness studies', *Safety Science*, 116: 208-221.
- Hogh, A., Mikkelsen, E.G. and Hansen, Å.M. (2011) 'Individual consequences of workplace bullying/mobbing', in Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D. and Cooper, C.L. (eds.) *Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace: Developments in Theory, Research, and Practice*, 2nd edition, Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press.
- Kalleberg, A.L. (2009) 'Precarious Work, Insecure Workers: Employment Relations in Transition', *American Sociological Review*, 74(1): 1-22.
- Karasek, R.A. (1979) 'Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: implications for job redesign', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24(2): 285-308.
- Karasek, R. and Theorell, T. (1990) *Healthy Work: Stress, Productivity, and the Reconstruction of Working Life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Korczynski, M. (2003) 'Communities of coping: Collective emotional labour in service work', *Organization*, 10(1): 55-79.
- Leka, Stavroula, Jain, A & World Health Organization (2010). Health impact of psychosocial hazards at work: an overview. World Health Organization. <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/44428>
- Maître, B., S. McGuinness and P. Redmond (2017). *A Study of Minimum Wage Employment in Ireland: The Role of Worker, Household and Job Characteristics*, Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute.
- Marmot, M. (2020) 'Health equity in England: the Marmot review 10 years on', *British Medical Journal*, 368, m693.
- McGinnity, F., H. Russell, I. Privalko, S. Enright and D. O'Brien (2021) *Monitoring decent work in Ireland*, Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute.
- McGuinness, S. and Redmond, P. (2019) 'The impact of the minimum wage on hours worked in Ireland', *Labour Economics*, 57: 163-177.
- McGuinness, S. and P. Redmond (2019). 'The Impact of a Minimum-Wage Increase on Temporary-Contract Workers', *Fiscal Studies*, 40(2): 149-173.
- Nielsen, M.B. and Einarsen, S. (2012) 'Outcomes of exposure to workplace bullying: A meta-analytic review', *Work & Stress*, 26(4): 309-332.
- OECD (2016) *OECD Employment Outlook 2016*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Piasna, A. (2018) 'Scheduled to work hard: the relationship between non-standard working hours and work intensity among European workers (2005-2015)', *Human Resource Management Journal*, 28(1):167-181.

- Redmond, P., McGuinness, S. and Kelly, E. (2023) *Job Quality of Minimum Wage Workers in Ireland*. Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute.
- Rubery, J., Grimshaw, D., Keizer, A. and Johnson, M. (2018) 'Challenges and contradictions in the "normalising" of precarious work', *Work, Employment and Society*, 32(3): 509-527
- Russell, H., Maître, B. and Watson, D. (2014) *Job Stress and Working Conditions in Ireland*. Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute.
- Siegrist, J. (1996) 'Adverse health effects of high-effort/low-reward conditions', *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 1(1): 27-41.
- Warhurst, C., Wright, S. and Lyonette, C. (2017) 'Understanding and measuring job quality', in Warhurst, C., Mathieu, C., Dwyer, R. and Wright, S. (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Job Quality*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-24.
- World Health Organization (2024) *The World Health Organization-Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5)*. Geneva: World Health Organization. WHO/UCN/MSD/MHE/2024.1.



University College Dublin
An Coláiste Ollscoile, Baile Átha Cliath



QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST

QUEEN'S
BUSINESS
SCHOOL



COMILLAS
UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA
ICADE

NEVIN
ECONOMIC
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE

 The Working in
Ireland Survey

www.workinginirelandsurvey.com