

Pay survey

YOU might expect this to be a time when curiosity about the health and safety job market had waned. Metaphorical tumbleweed have blown through the recruitment pages of the safety press this year as most practitioners battened down the hatches and stayed put.

But the 29% leap in responses to our latest pay and benefits survey suggests no lack of interest among professionals in benchmarking their conditions of employment. Perhaps many were interested to find out whether their counterparts in other industries were weathering the same pay freezes or even cuts they had suffered.

Our questionnaire was online during October and early November and advertised on the Healthandsafetyprofessional website, in our weekly e-newsletter and to practitioners registered with recruiters

Attwood Burton, HSW's partners in the survey.

The poll drew 860 responses, up from 644 last year (see www.healthandsafetyprofessional.co.uk/health-and-safety-pay-survey-2008). To allow us to focus on pay and benefits for UK health and safety professionals, we excluded 29 responses from practitioners working overseas, leaving a base sample of 831.

We asked respondents to locate their salaries in a series of £2500 bands ranging from £20,000 to £79,999. There were 32 respondents, 4% of the sample, who fell under the £20,000 mark, most of them in the manufacturing, construction and general services sectors — the latter is a catch-all services category for everything apart from financial services, from law firms through call centre operators to facilities management providers. No one in this lowest paid group was a health and safety manager, most were advisers, assistants or administrators.

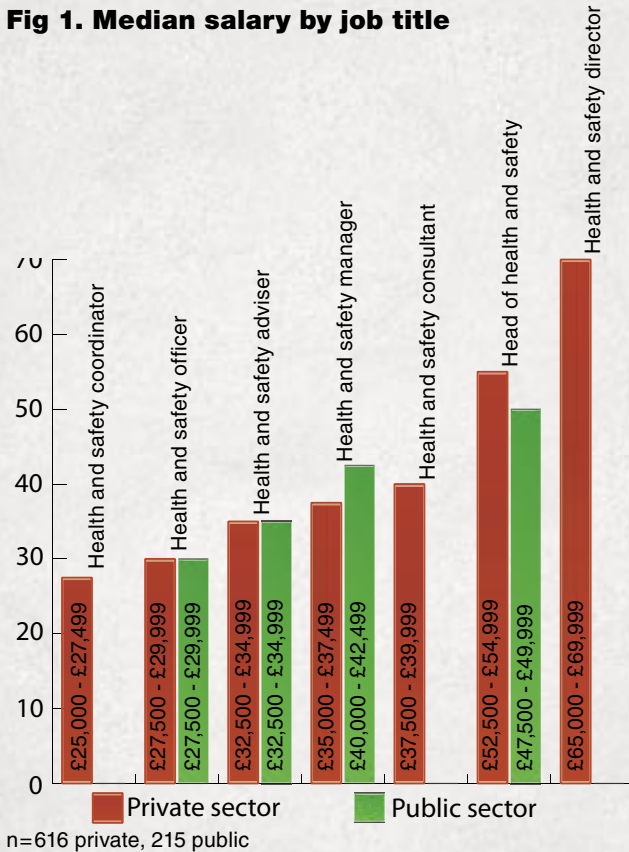
At the other end of the earnings spectrum there were 20 individuals (2.5% of the total) who reported salaries above £80,000, almost all directors or heads of health and safety in firms in the transport, construction, mining and quarrying and utilities sectors with more than 1000 employees.

Almost 6% (47) respondents earned £60,000 or more. One of the highest earners in our sample, the head of health and safety for a utilities group in the North West, offered his view of the way to get to the top, saying "I believe safety professionals need to considerably increase their commercial and leadership skills if they wish to attain salary levels at or above £60,000". See page 19 for our report on the annual HSW conference which included a session on safety leadership.

In the middle

The average pay figures in our graphs and tables are the medians, the midpoints in the lists of survey respondents' salaries. Medians are favoured by pay analysts because they give a more realistic picture than the more commonly used mean average, which can be distorted by a few high earners at the top of the scale.

Fig 1. Median salary by job title



2009

More than 800 health and safety practitioners gave us details of their pay and benefits for this year's salary poll. **Louis Wustemann** does the sums



Respondents were asked to place themselves in the job title that most closely fitted their own, ignoring any extra responsibilities such as quality or facilities management. As Figure 1 (bottom left) shows, the larger sample than previous surveys allowed us to calculate separate median salaries for most job titles in the public and private sectors.

The pay rates for health and safety officers are level for both sectors, but the public services managers in our sample had a higher median rate than their private sector counterparts. This position was reversed at the senior level where the private sector heads of section were better paid.

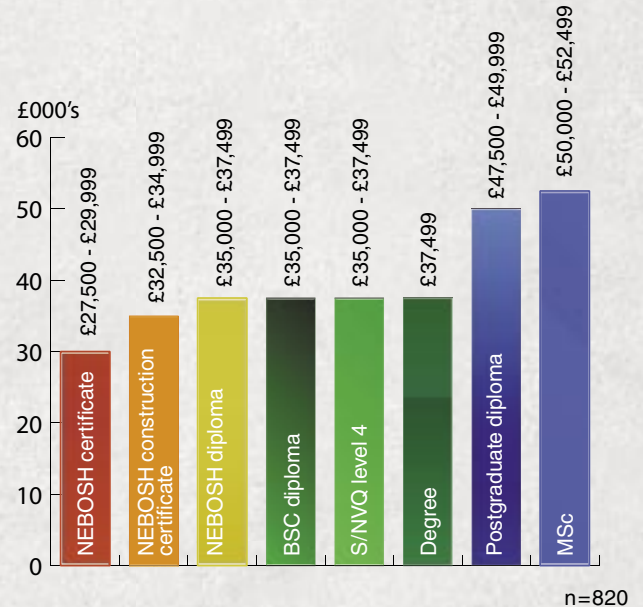
We have made no attempt to compare this year's salary averages with those from last year's survey, since the respondents are not a matched group, so differences in pay rates may reflect differences in the composition of the samples as much as anything else. The poll simply provides a snapshot of rates in the profession.

Table 1 on page 26 shows the breakdown of the private sector figures by industrial sector where the samples were big enough to give us a reliable result. There were enough returns for a few job titles in other sectors to provide meaningful averages:

- ☒ health and safety officers in manufacturing earn a median £27,500 to £29,999
- ☒ health and safety advisers in construction are paid on average £32,500 to £34,999
- ☒ health and safety advisers in manufacturing earn £30,000 to £32,499 at the median
- ☒ health and safety consultants in general services earn an average £37,500 to £39,999
- ☒ heads of health and safety in construction are paid a median £57,500 to £59,999.

The returns for a few job titles were large enough to examine regional variations in the private sector. Most of these were in line with the national averages for their jobs, but health and safety managers in Scotland and the East Midlands and North West of

Fig 2. Median salary band by highest qualification



England were paid up to £2500 higher than the national band of £35,000 to £37,499, while their counterparts in the West Midlands earned up to £2500 less. In line with

Only 12 respondents (1.5% of the total) said they had no relevant qualifications

national wage trends, the highest rates were in the south of England; managers in the South West earned an average £40,000 to £42,499 and in the South East the rate was even higher at £42,500 to £44,999.

The rates for private sector health and safety advisers, consultants and heads of section were also pitched up to £2500 higher than the national numbers set out in Figure 1. In Wales, advisers earned slightly below the national average.

Well lettered

Respondents were asked to pick their highest health and safety qualification from a list of those attainable in the UK and the median salaries for the major qualifications are shown in Figure 2 above. The difficulty in gaining any foothold in the profession

Fig 3. Pay rises October 2008 to October 2009

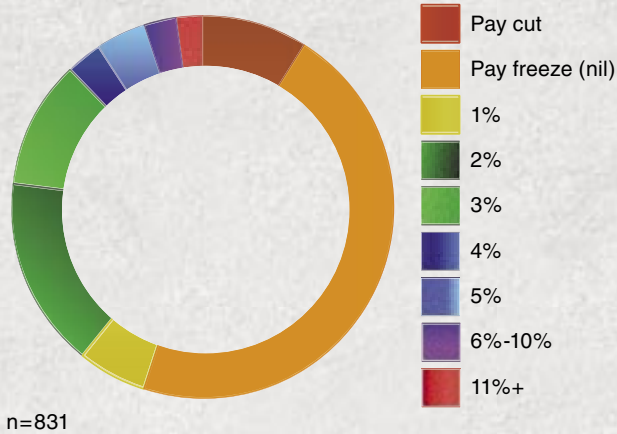


Fig 4. How secure is your job?

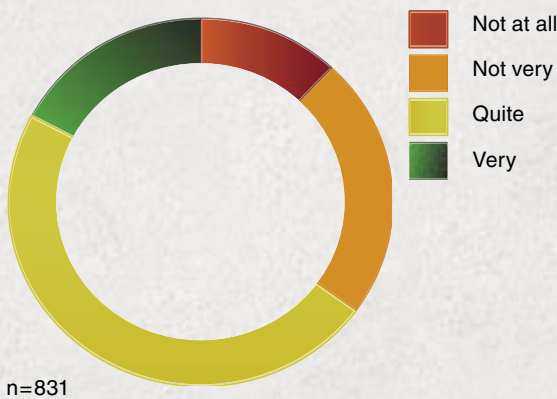
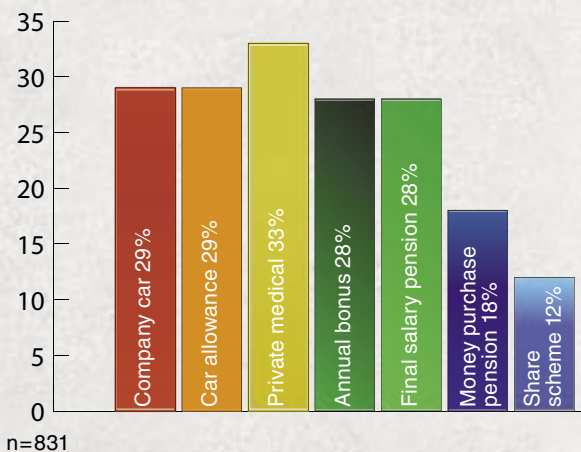


Fig 5. Employee benefits



Industry	Health and safety manager
Construction	£40,000 - £42,499
General services	£37,500 - £39,999
Manufacturing	£37,500 - £39,999
Retail/wholesale	£40,000 - £42,499
Transport/logistics	£37,500 - £39,999

without dedicated study is reflected in the fact that only 12 respondents (1.5% of the total) said they had no relevant qualifications, most of them in junior positions as assistants or administrators.

The most common qualification our practitioners hold is the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health's (NEBOSH) National Certificate (168 practitioners or 20% of the total), followed by the same organisation's National Diploma (154 or 18.5%) and the Scottish or National Vocational Qualification Level 4 in Occupational Health and Safety Practice (130 or 15.5%).

In contrast with previous years when the survey showed a hike in earnings for those with health and safety degrees over qualifications such as the NEBOSH National Diploma and the British Safety Council Diploma and S/NVQ Level 4. This year, with a larger sample than ever, the results show the pay of degree holders (78 or 9% of respondents) as level pegging with those with the other qualifications.

The real jump comes at the level of postgraduate qualifications, where the median salary for those with masters degrees (another 9%) is at least £7,500 higher than those with BSc or equivalent.

Mark Burton, director of Attwood Burton, says as more practitioners are qualified to degree level, postgraduate qualifications are becoming a way for those who want to advance their careers to distinguish themselves. It's not something that clients currently ask for when recruiting," he says. "But I believe it will become more important and will eventually be something they will actively look for.

As in previous years, three quarters of our survey sample (628) had some association with the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), though only 40% were chartered members or fellows; the rest had GradIOSH, TechIOSH or affiliate status.

Around one in four respondents is a member or affiliate of the other major body representing individual safety practitioners in the UK, the International Institute of Risk and Safety Management (IIRSM). A fifth of all practitioners (166) keep a foot in each camp, paying dues to both organisations. Around one in six practitioners (116) is at least affiliated to the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), suggesting a large minority have some environmental duties as well as health and safety responsibilities.

One in six (128) practitioners stands outside the professional bodies altogether.

Frozen out

Last year was the first time in the HSW pay survey that we asked respondents about their most recent pay rises. It was a shock

result to find that one in four had received no rise in the previous 12 months.

In this year's sample that figure has almost doubled to nearly half, as Figure 3 (above left) shows, but the figure seems less shocking, as the economic storm clouds that gathered quickly last year opened with a vengeance throughout 2009.

The British Chambers of Commerce carried out a survey in late 2008 which showed 43% of private sector companies planned a general pay freeze in 2009 and our finding is in line with that. What is still unnerving is that almost one in 10 respondents (75 practitioners) says they have accepted a cut in wages in the last 12 months. A third of these work in construction and a fifth in manufacturing, but the remainder are fairly evenly distributed between the sectors.

"It's a conversation a lot of people have been having in the last 12 months," confirms Attwood Burton director Alistair Attwood.

Just as the headlines about economic contraction have concealed a more mixed story in parts of industry; manufacturers in a few sub-sectors still boast strong order books, so our data on pay increases shows a minority of practitioners have fared well so far. The Consumer Prices Index, the government's preferred inflation measure, started the year around 3% and fell in most of the months since to stand at 1.5% in October. More than a fifth of our sample received increases at or above 3% in the 12 months to October, a few even topping 10%.

Time to go?

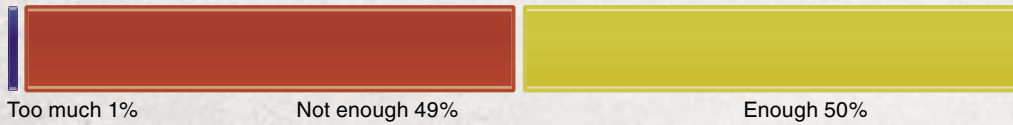
Among the majority whose pay had been frozen or cut there was the odd sign of discontent. "My last pay rise (in line with my colleagues) was in January 2008," noted one manager of a transport and logistics firm working in the South East. "Since then I have achieved CMIOSH so am effectively providing a superior qualification for a salary previously paid to a Grad IOSH by my organisation. Am I looking to move? Yes."

Others were less confident of their ability to vote with their feet. "There appear to be fewer advertised vacancies for health and safety professionals and the salaries being offered are not as high as 18 months ago," noted a public sector manager in the West Midlands. A health and safety officer in the South East put it even more starkly: "In these troubled times any employment is a bonus".

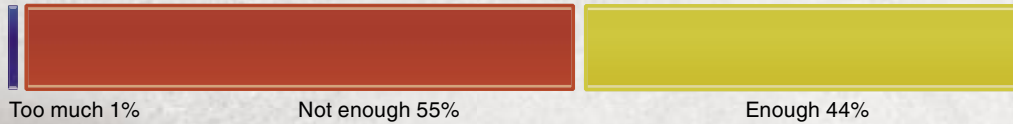
Mark Burton says that though the job market shows few signs of increased activity, he is hopeful the recession has bottomed out. "It doesn't feel like things are getting any worse at the moment, which is the first step towards them beginning to get better," he says.

Fig 6. Salary satisfaction

Are you paid enough?



Is the profession paid enough?



Pay freezes and cuts are sometimes seen as a trade-off for avoiding excessive job losses. We asked the survey sample how secure they believe their jobs are; the results are shown in Figure 4 on page 28.

There is a strong tradition in the UK of public sector workers being less exposed to redundancy than their private sector colleagues. Breaking down our respondents' answers by public/private status, there isn't a great deal of difference in their relative perception of their security.

Perhaps on the part of the public sector workers this is fuelled by a feeling that whatever has been true in the past, the need to reduce a mountainous fiscal deficit in coming years may drive government cuts that mean few public services staff are safe.

True, only 5% of public sector health and safety practitioners said they feel their jobs are "not at all" safe, compared with more than twice that proportion in the private sector. But when you add in those who said their positions are "quite unsafe", the proportions almost level out at just over 30% for both public and private employees.

Not bitter

Given that more than half of the health and safety professionals in our survey had their pay frozen or cut in the last 12

months, it would hardly be surprising if this was reflected in a sense of dissatisfaction with their earnings levels.

months, it would hardly be surprising if this was reflected in a sense of dissatisfaction with their earnings levels.

In fact, the proportion in Figure 5 (above) who say they believe they are underpaid has only risen marginally since last year's survey from 46% to 49%. But there is a real change in how respondents

feel about the salaries paid to the profession in general.

The proportion saying health and safety practitioners are underpaid has jumped from 37% to 55% this year.

The most common comment respondents made concerned this sense of being in an underrated discipline.

"I have found that health and safety is undervalued in comparison with other professions such as quality and we are seen as second-class citizens," said one manager in manufacturing. "I sometimes find it frustrating that the amount of skills and technical knowledge required is not recognised or rewarded in the same way as other professions."

"For the responsibilities you have to all the personnel and to the public I feel that all health and safety professionals are underpaid," said the head of department in an East Midland's construction firm.

Others focused their dissatisfaction on corporate responses to the current economic trough.

"I feel that practitioners continually learn through experience and qualifications," observed a public sector manager, "but this is not reflected in seeing an increase in salary. It seems that em-

ployers always want more work for less money. Especially in the current economic climate."

A handful went further, arguing that it's not just pay that is suffering in the downturn.

"The recession has given the directors and senior managers the opportunity to use lack of resources as a reason for not providing a safe working environment despite the recent changes in the law," wrote a Midlands-based construction manager, "because the HSE prosecutions are still targeting small organisations and not the multi-layered managerial businesses."

He was backed up by the head of health and safety at another construction firm in the South East: "Over the last two or three years, firms have pressurised health and safety professionals into turning a blind eye for the sake of production and also they want the safety team then to protect them when things go wrong. The construction industry is still only creating paperwork to cover up their lack of on-site safety proactiveness."

Among the 50-odd respondents who took the opportunity to add a comment to their completed questionnaires this year, only one or two had anything close to a positive perspective on pay or the health and safety world in general.

It would be cheering to think that next year's poll will find practitioners in better spirits, buoyed up by light at the end of the economic tunnel. ☒

Attwood Burton is the leading health and safety and environment recruitment specialist working alongside organisations in every industry sector to recruit the best professionals, www.attwoodburton.co.uk

The proportion saying health and safety practitioners are underpaid has jumped from 37% to 55% this year

Who's in the poll?

Three out of four health and safety practitioners in the sample (615 of 831) work for private sector organisations, leaving 186 in the public services and 30 in the charitable/third sector. We aggregated the voluntary and public sector respondents for public/private comparisons.

The detailed industrial breakdown was as follows:

- ☒ construction: 24% (198)
- ☒ manufacturing: 19% (162)
- ☒ general services: 10% (81)
- ☒ utilities: 7% (60)
- ☒ transport and logistics 7% (58)
- ☒ retail and wholesale 6% (48)

Hotels and catering, mining and quarrying, financial services and agriculture each accounted for 3% or less of the total.

Geographically, the South East of England contributed the largest proportion of the sample as in previous years, around 30% (241 respondents), followed by the East and West Midlands with 26% (216), the South West with 12% (99), the North West with 11% (90), the North East 8% (69). Around 6% apiece came from Wales and Scotland and only 1% was based in Northern Ireland.