



# Salary Guide 2023

Cyber Defence - UK

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# TRIDENT SEARCH

Having set the new industry standard for recruitment, Trident Search specialises in finding the very best cyber security and sales professionals for clients around the world. Working in eleven countries, we have become a trusted partner to over 120 companies and play a crucial role in helping them to build high-performing teams to protect their business-critical assets.

Founded in 2020, Trident Search has grown at a rate of 100% year-on-year to become an industry leader in cyber recruitment. Having established a global network, we are the go-to provider across all key global cyber security markets, with an ever-growing international presence.

With an in-depth understanding of how fluid and disruptive the cyber employment landscape is, we pride ourselves on keeping ahead of trends and best practice. As the hub of cyber security recruitment, our consultants ensure they are always aware of the latest frameworks, methodologies, products, threat actors and tools; in such a fast-paced industry, staying at the forefront of change is vital if we are to offer genuine career advice.



## OVERVIEW

With the UK cyber security market growing at such an unprecedented rate, it can be difficult to keep up with hiring trends across the industry. At Trident Search we're on a mission to remove some of the confusion around cyber security pay, educate organisations on the best hiring strategies and ensure people know their true worth.

Whether you are an employee looking to see if you are paid fairly or an employer wanting to ensure you compensate your teams at market rate, this report is for you.

We would like to thank all the respondents who took part in our salary survey this year.

## HOW WILL THIS REPORT HELP YOU?

### Employers

We have two key aims when supporting our clients: attracting and retaining talent. The purpose of this report is to highlight key trends around compensation, including salaries, benefits, bonuses and retention, and how your business compares to others across the industry. Our previous guides have gone a long way in aiding clients to build industry-leading teams and implement policies to withstand market challenges.

### Candidates

If you are a candidate looking for a role within defensive cyber security, this report will help you understand the true state of the market and how your salary compares to competitors in the industry. This knowledge will help to map out your career trajectory and allow you to make an informed decision on your next move.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cyber security has become increasingly important on the global stage and many countries are investing in the industry as damaging cyber-attacks become a growing concern for businesses in all sectors.

According to the latest report from the UK Government Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the UK cyber security industry has grown at a rate of 14% year-on-year, swelling to a current workforce of over 52,000 skilled professionals. With around 6,000 jobs added every year, the cyber market has shown itself to be resilient in the inflationary and economically disruptive environment we saw in 2022.

However, due to said economic turbulence, the cost-of-living crisis and supply chain disruption affecting all sectors, we have seen financial benefits including bonuses and pay rises take a hit this year. Thankfully, the cyber sector has shown itself to be resilient to the turmoil that has affected much of the tech market, and other than in some large organisations who over-hired to gain market

share we have not seen high-profile layoffs affecting cyber security to the same extent as other sectors.

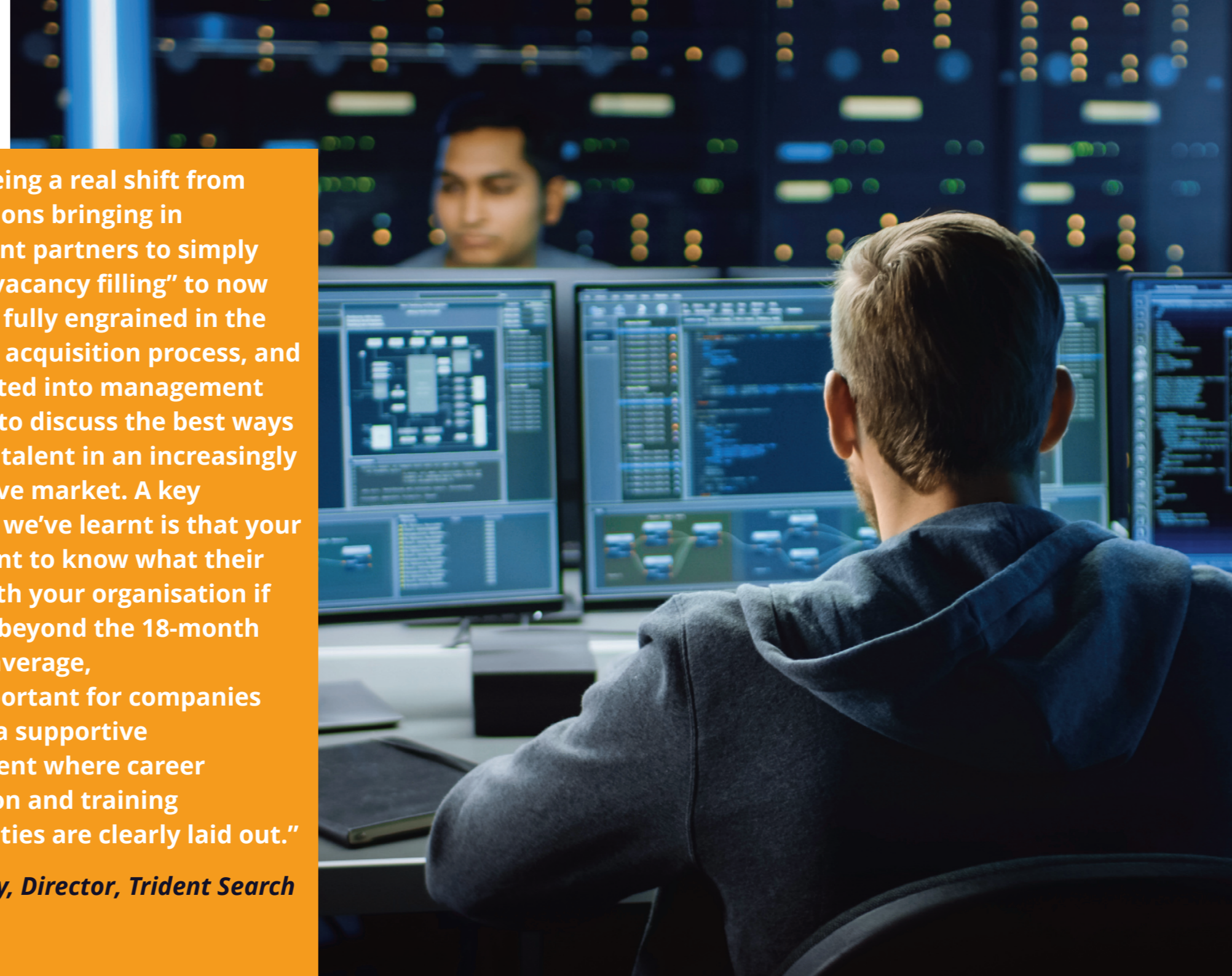
The cyber employment market is more candidate-driven than ever before, with skilled professionals at practitioner level commanding large salaries and generous benefit packages. Yet what we're seeing more and more is that employees aren't necessarily looking for the biggest payouts anymore; with high salaries across the industry, what they really want is a business that aligns with their vision and values. Increasingly the candidates we work with want to join a security-first company where their input on the latest tools, technologies and threats is valued. Motivations for moving are usually broken down into "People, Purpose and Pay". If your business cannot afford to keep up with the major players in terms of salaries, it is worth investing in your "purpose" and going after candidates who set store by a security-driven mindset.

**We've seen an increased demand across the industry in Q1 2023 compared to the same period in 2022. With the impact of COVID-19 largely behind us, business confidence has increased, and this is reflected in 2023 hiring strategies.**



**"We're seeing a real shift from organisations bringing in recruitment partners to simply support "vacancy filling" to now becoming fully engrained in the full talent acquisition process, and being invited into management meetings to discuss the best ways to attract talent in an increasingly competitive market. A key takeaway we've learnt is that your teams want to know what their path is with your organisation if they stay beyond the 18-month industry average, so it's important for companies to create a supportive environment where career progression and training opportunities are clearly laid out."**

***Josh Keeley, Director, Trident Search***





# DEFENSIVE CYBER SALARIES

JOB TITLE	EXPERIENCE (YEARS)	SALARY	DAILY RATE FOR CONSULTANTS
Level 1 Security Operations Analyst	1-3	£40K - £50K	£250+
Level 2 Security Operations Analyst	3-5	£50K - £60K	£400+
Level 3 Security Operations Analyst	5-8	£60K - £80K	£700+
Incident Responder	3-5	£80K - £100K	£650+
SecOps Leadership	8+	£100K - £120K	£800+
CTI Analyst	1-3	£40K - £50K	£400 - £450
Senior CTI Analyst	3-5	£50K - £75K	£500 - £600
CTI Manager	5-8	£80K - £95K	£600 - £700
Head of CTI	8+	£95K - £120K	£700+
Security Architect	5-8	£80K - £100K	£650 - £750
Senior Security Architect	8+	£100K - £125K	£800+
Security Engineer	1-3	£50K - £70K	£500 - £550
Senior Security Engineer	5-8	£70K - £100K	£600 - £700
InfoSec Analyst (internal)	1-3	£40K - £55K	£300 - £400
Senior InfoSec analyst (internal)	3-5	£55K - £70K	£400 - £500
InfoSec Manager	5-8	£70K - £90K	£500 - £600
Head of InfoSec	8+	£90K - £120K	£700+
Cyber Security Consultant	1-3	£60K - £70K	£500+
Cyber Security Consultant	3-5	£70K - £80K	£600+
Senior Cyber Security Consultant	8+	£80K - £100K	£700+
CISO	15+	£175K - £200K	£1,000+

As with all variables, there are nuances to each of these categories, and the salary you can command for a role can depend on factors such as:

- Your exposure to tooling and hands-on experience with the latest tech
- Previous sector experience (e.g. a SOC Analyst transitioning into an Engineering role could ask for a higher salary than someone going into that position straight out of university)
- The size of organisation you are joining, as well as its sector and location
- The full compensation package (e.g. benefits/bonus/stock options) you might be offered alongside a salary
- Whether you are moving to a purposeful, non-profit or charitable organisation to align with your values

A Recruitment Consultant can help you to understand these nuances and explain how your salary band might be affected by them.





# COMPANY BENEFITS

Employee benefits offer a way to attract and keep people, contribute towards improving wellbeing, and encourage required behaviours, achievements, values, and skills. Companies are now having to be more and more competitive in what they offer to both attract and retain skilled professionals.

## Bonuses

As a mainstay of compensation packages, especially in more client-facing or KPI-driven roles, bonus payments have remained a crucial part of many employment offers.

Despite a slight annual decline to 63% of respondents receiving a bonus compared to 64% in 2022, OTE is still a highly rated benefit.

## Flexi-working

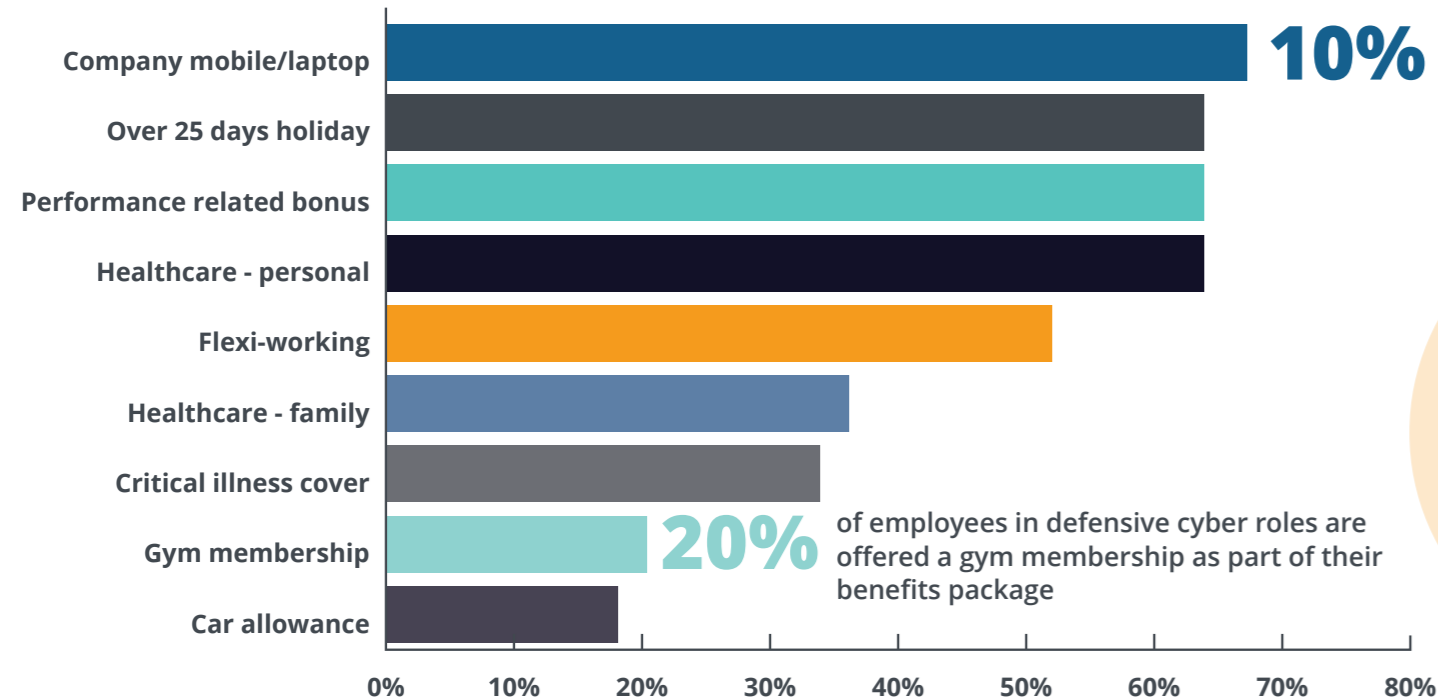
After a peak in flexi-work being offered to 68% of respondents during the 2020 lockdown, there has been a steady decline down to 51% in 2023 which is reflective of changing work patterns across the industry as companies encourage a return to the office.

## Healthcare

The number of people receiving personal or family healthcare benefits from their employer has dropped very slightly from 64% to 63% and 39% to 36% respectively. With the economic commotion of the last year, we might have expected non-essential benefits such as these to be cut. However, the stability of these figures shows how organisations are feeling the need to maintain competitive packages to attract and retain talent.

### TRIDENT TIP

According to a recent survey by Bright HR, 18 to 24 year olds say that unlimited annual leave is the most attractive perk a company could offer, so generous holiday entitlement should certainly be a consideration for employers looking to hire graduate talent.



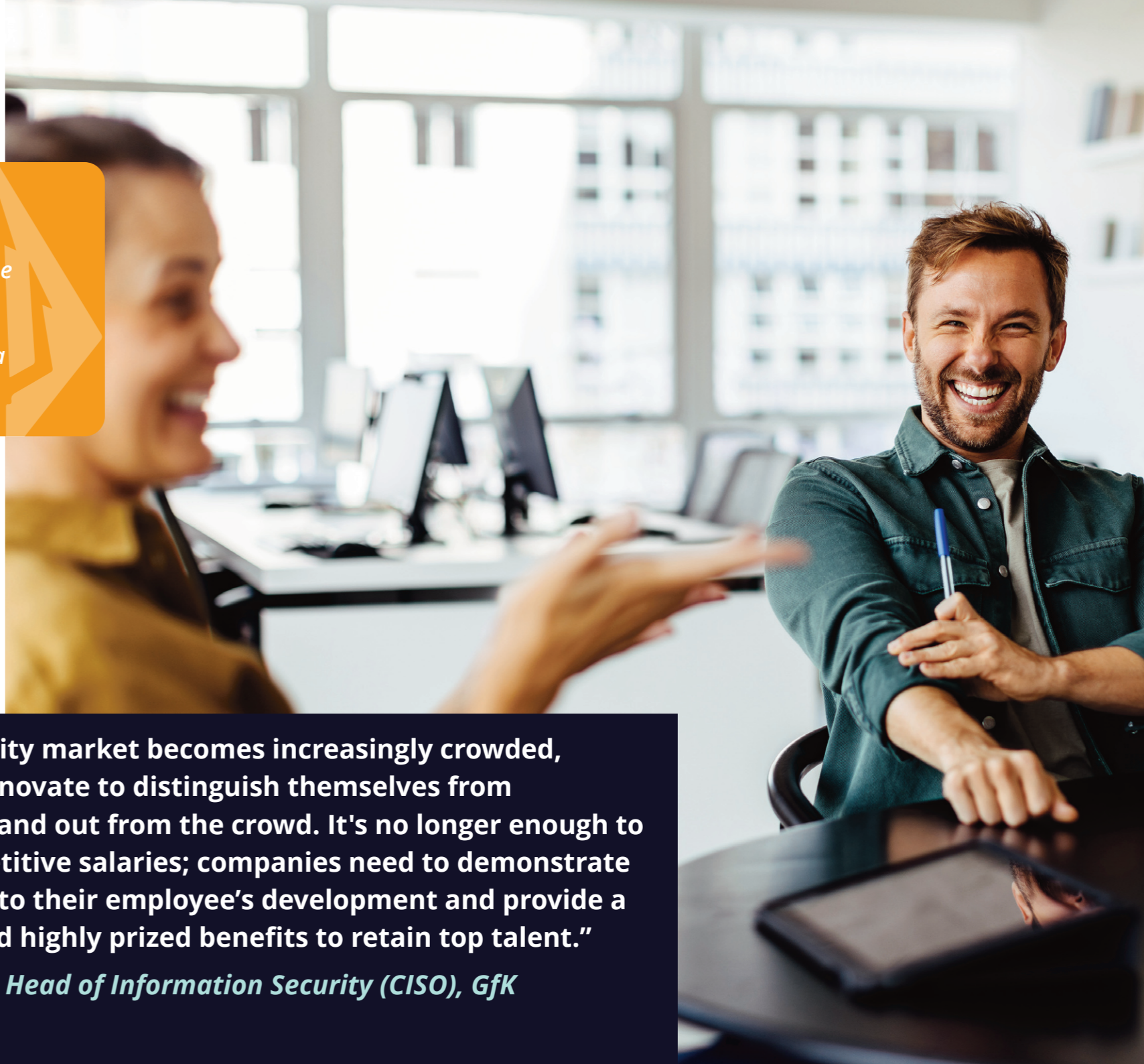
**10%** drop in workers being offered a company mobile or laptop between 2022 and 2023, with just 67% of respondents reporting this benefit

**52%** of respondents are happy to continue working for their employer next year, in large due to the benefits offered and their compensation package

20% of employees in defensive cyber roles are offered a gym membership as part of their benefits package

**"As the cyber security market becomes increasingly crowded, businesses must innovate to distinguish themselves from competitors and stand out from the crowd. It's no longer enough to simply offer competitive salaries; companies need to demonstrate their commitment to their employee's development and provide a range of unique and highly prized benefits to retain top talent."**

*Matt Adcock, Global Head of Information Security (CISO), GfK*





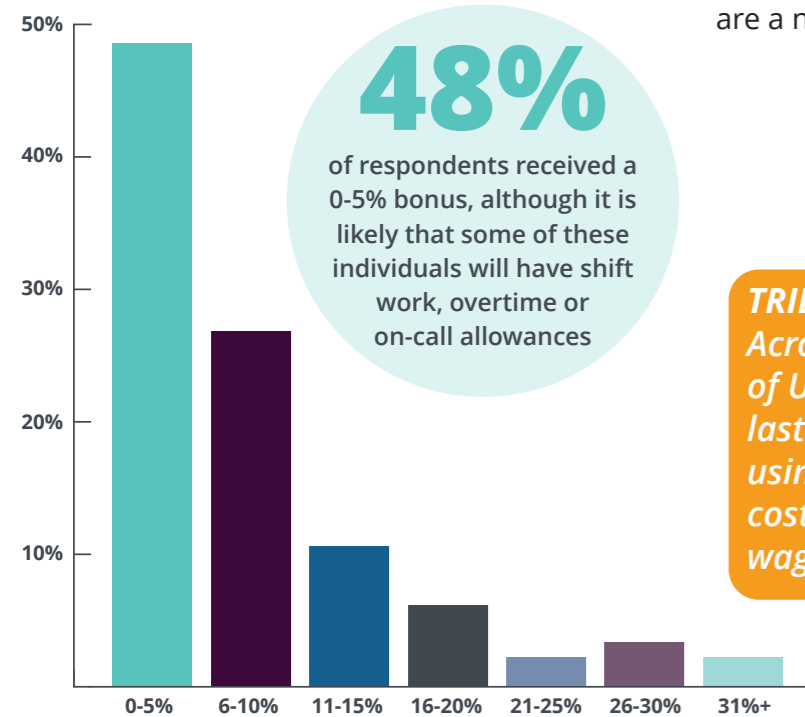
# BONUSES

Transparency around the percentage of the cyber security team who achieved their bonus over the past year is becoming a popular request from candidates in the package negotiation phase.

The vast majority (48%) of bonuses are offered at the lower end of the scale, at around 0-5% of the respondents' total salary. Yet despite the cost-of-living crisis and the economic challenges businesses are facing,

large bonuses are still being offered. In fact, 26% received a bonus of 6-10% of their salary, and we have seen an increase at the higher end of the scale with 3% and 2% receiving bonuses of 26-30% and 31%+ respectively.

Overall, bonus levels in the cyber industry have remained relatively stable when compared with previous years. Within the cyber sector specifically it is also evident that not all workers are compensated via OTE earnings. MSSPs and Consultancies frequently offer shift work, overtime or on-call allowances in lieu of bonus payments, so are a notable outlier in this analysis.



**48%**  
of respondents received a 0-5% bonus, although it is likely that some of these individuals will have shift work, overtime or on-call allowances

**TRIDENT TIP**  
*Across all sectors bonus payments as a share of UK earnings hit their highest level since 2013 last year. There is evidence that employers are using this to compensate workers for the rising cost of living without having to commit to wage deals during a period of high inflation.*

# PAY RISES

With the economic disruption of the last 12 months, we have seen a slight increase in respondents receiving no pay rise this year, up from 24% to 25% in 2023. This is not unexpected, and in total 52% of participants received 5% or less of an increase in their salary, along with a decline in high-value bonus payouts.

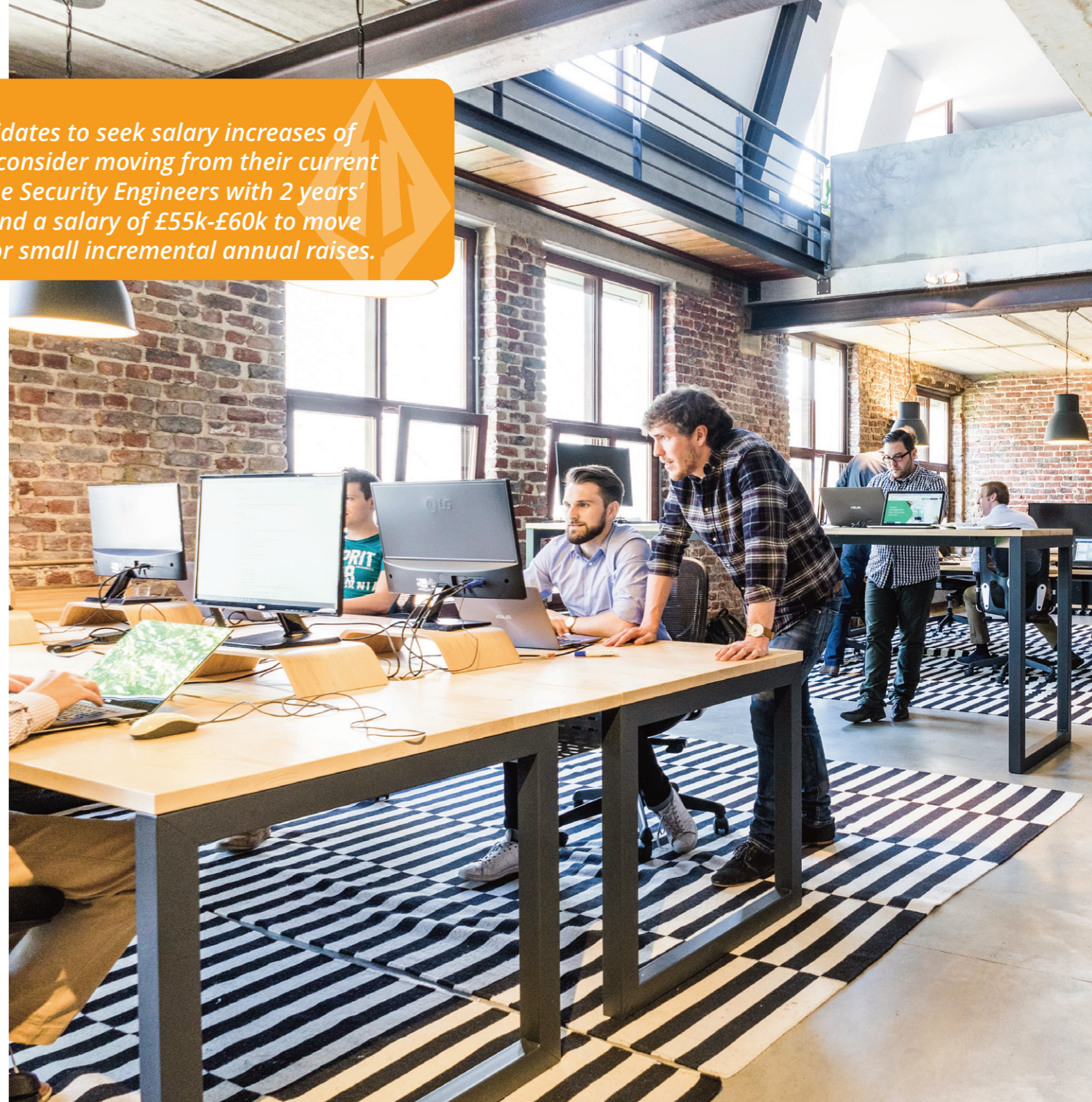
There are an estimated 1,838 firms active within the UK providing cyber security products and services, and the market still expanding. So, this news of pay stagnation must be tempered by the number of new businesses entering the industry who will offer high salaries to new joiners to secure the best talent.



**25%**  
of respondents received no pay rise over the last 12 months, meaning that due to inflation a quarter of employees have seen a 2.4% cut in the real-term value of their earnings

**75%**  
cite a salary increase as their main motivation for looking for a new role

**TRIDENT TIP**  
*It is not unusual for candidates to seek salary increases of 25% or more before they consider moving from their current employer. We regularly see Security Engineers with 2 years' experience on £40k demand a salary of £55k-£60k to move in order to compensate for small incremental annual raises.*







## CONTRACT RECRUITMENT

With the current skills shortage in cyber, many businesses are turning to interim staff to bridge gaps in the workforce and bring on specialists for a particular project. This has come to the fore in recent months as critical cyber projects become delayed due to external pressures. In a poll run by Trident Search in February 2023, 45% of respondents told us they were looking to take on contractors to deliver key projects this year and 68% said they had had to bring forward unfinished projects from 2022 due to delays in their timelines.

With the average time to place a permanent employee within the cyber industry still hovering around 3-6 months, being able to take on contractors is essential to ensuring objectives are delivered and business assets

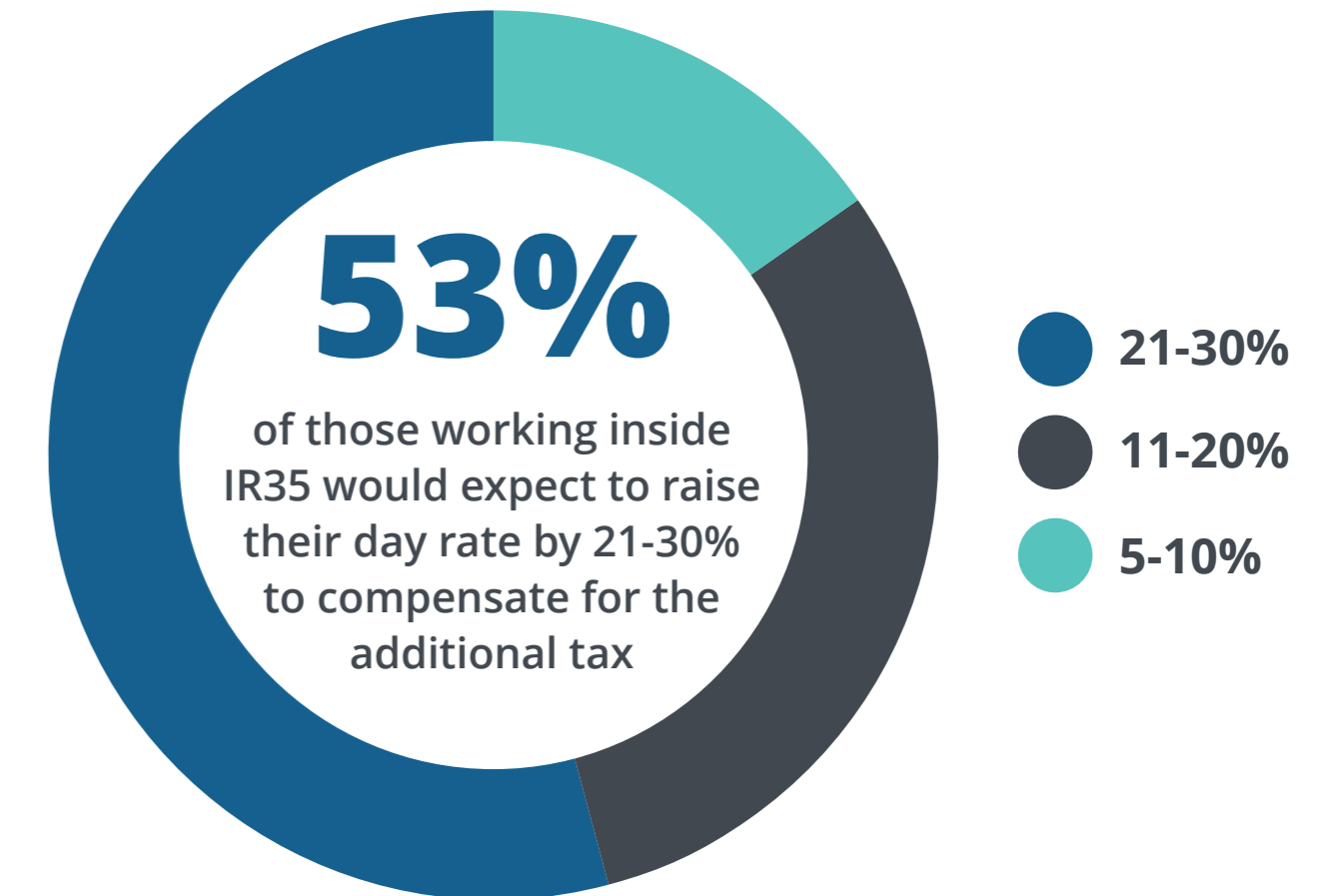
are secured. In addition, we would expect to see a rise in contractor hiring as businesses struggling with a growing cyber workload need to take on additional short-term help.

According to our data, almost half of the contractors surveyed (46%) receive day rates between £600 and £800.

### TRIDENT TIP

*If you need to fill a gap quickly in a project team but don't want to lose any expertise after its completion, it's helpful to explore bringing in a contractor who would be happy to go permanent. Your recruitment partner can always advise if a candidate is looking for this sort of opportunity.*

### IF WORKING INSIDE IR35, WHAT % WOULD YOU EXPECT TO RAISE YOUR DAY RATE BY?





# LOCATION

As we've seen in previous years, the majority of cyber security roles are still based in London, with 33% of respondents working in the capital. However, there has been a seismic shift to hybrid and remote working within the industry, with 24% stating they now work entirely from home. We know from our experience with candidates that most companies offer at least some degree of flexibility in where employees are based.

With the legacy of COVID-19 still very much felt across the industry, this shift to remote working is likely to continue. Although employers sometimes struggle with a range of challenges, including retention and cloud security with a remote workforce, a recent

## TRIDENT TIP

*With remote working arrangements becoming the norm rather than the exception, candidates are becoming increasingly unwilling to accept a lower salary for working outside of London or other key locations. Employers who have relied on this balance previously will need to adjust their expectations when hiring remote staff.*

YouGov poll found that 57% of British workers wanted the option to work from home.

Listen to your candidates: there has been a cultural shift in working patterns and with so much choice across the industry it is unlikely that top talent will choose to work for an employer who does not offer some form of flexibility.

**24%**

of cyber professionals now work in roles that are fully remote, meaning they have the flexibility to be based anywhere in the world

**3%**

of respondents now work in Wales following a £9.5 million investment pledge for a new Innovation Hub to support Wales become a global leader in cyber security

# RETENTION

Over the last three years the number of cyber employees planning to move role has fluctuated massively, as many sought to remain in their roles during the pandemic, sparking a mass movement in 2021 when they felt more secure in making a change.

Yet we have seen a negative trend now with almost half of all respondents planning to move within the next 12 months.

Indeed, according to ISACA's State of the Cybersecurity Workforce, 60% of companies are struggling to retain qualified cybersecurity professionals. From our unique vantage point, we've seen that the average tenure in a cyber security role is just 18 months, compounding the skills gap in many organisations.

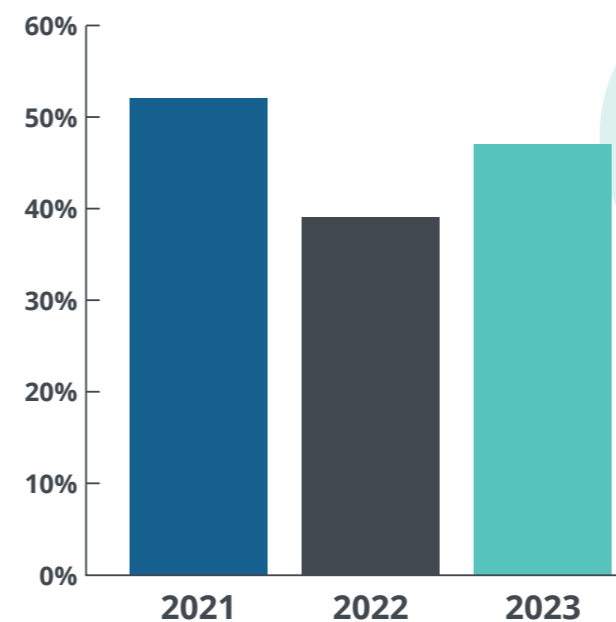
**"When it comes to retention it's crucial to stick to the three Cs: cash, culture and career advancement. "Cash" may attract candidates but without the right "culture" in place to make employees feel valued and supported, and a "career advancement" plan of how they can progress within your organisation, you are going to lose staff and your security function will never achieve the foundation of knowledge needed to really make a change."**

*Sean Tickle, Cyber Services Director, Littlefish*

## TRIDENT TIP

*Money is not always the biggest motivator when it comes to retaining staff. To many professionals, the opportunity to use their skills and be valued by an organisation with a security-first mindset is more important. If the businesses' priorities are aligned to theirs then they are more likely to stay.*

### DO YOU PLAN TO MOVE JOB IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?



**47%**  
of professionals are planning to move jobs in the next 12 months





# MOTIVATIONS FOR MOVING

As a business owner, hiring manager or team leader, a key priority must be staff retention, otherwise you will be in an endless cycle of recruitment and training. It's therefore key to know why your employees might be looking to move on.

## Remuneration

With results run concurrently, 80% of respondents were choosing to move to progress in their career. Security budgets across the UK have remained stationary at 13% over the last two years, despite an increase in the sophistication and magnitude of cyber threats. This means already stretched security teams are working harder and being pushed further than before, and many are seeing the glass ceiling effect and limited exposure to new technology as a poor payoff for their increased workload.

## Culture

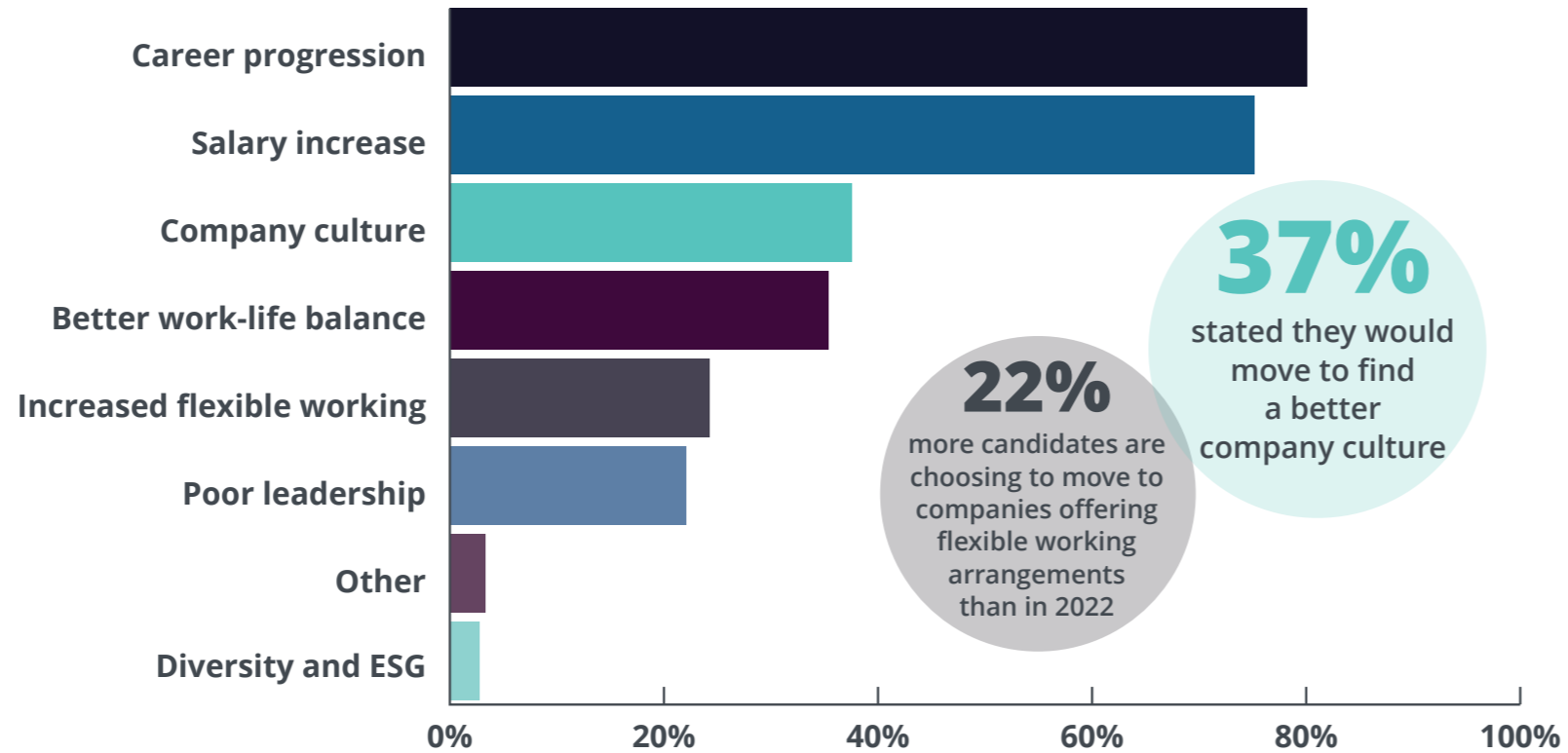
It's not just about money; creating an inclusive, high performing culture where your employees can talk openly and put ideas to leadership is vital if you want to increase retention. When employees are counter-offered, we often find that the reason they stay (other than money) is due to their relationship with a manager or team and their ability to work with exciting technology.

## Work-life balance

In a candidate-driven market employees have more agency in the benefits they desire. With 35% claiming their motivation for moving is to have a better work-life balance and 24% seeking more flexible work, the era of "the corporate grind" seems to be ending.

### TRIDENT TIP

*This year we introduced "Diversity and ESG" as a reason for changing roles, which 3% of respondents believed to be an important part of their rationale. Companies should be aware that with the growing awareness of social and environmental issues, and the introduction of a younger generation into the workforce, their ESG credentials will be an important arm of any talent acquisition strategy.*







## HOW DO PROFESSIONALS EXPECT TO FIND A NEW ROLE?

Specialist recruitment agencies and LinkedIn jobs continue to be the most effective and trust-worthy sources for finding a new role. With the busyness of modern life, the ability to outsource the stress of moving to a qualified agency partner is highly valued.

However, a surprisingly high number (39%) suggest they will be able to find their next job through their own network. This speaks to the close-knit UK cyber community and the relatively small size of the industry. The more

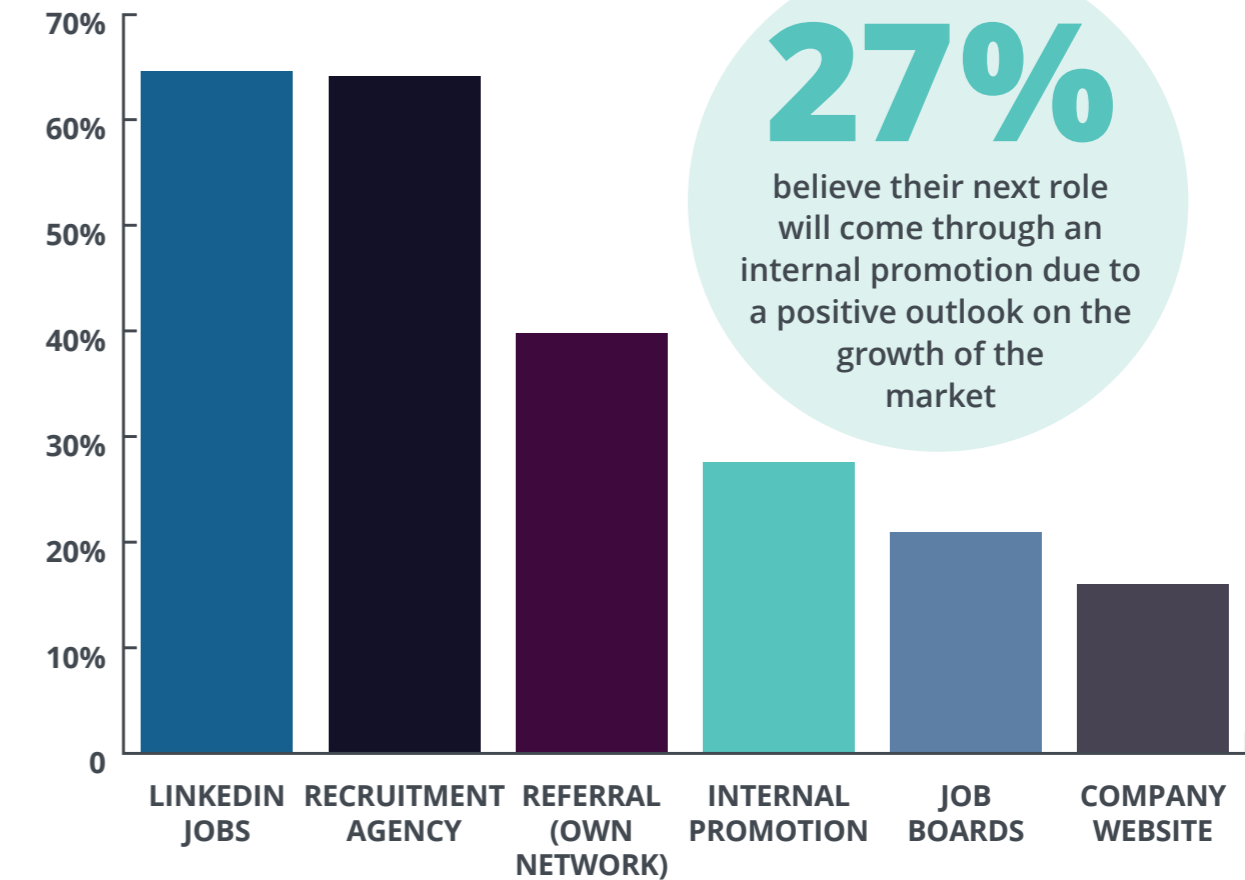
senior a candidate is, the more likely they are to use referrals for their next role, meaning building a network within the sector is crucial if companies are to attract C-Suite talent.

### TRIDENT TIP

*With the average time a candidate is on the market averaging just two weeks, speed and efficiency are of paramount importance throughout the interview process.*

**“The process of finding and securing a new job has become increasingly convoluted and time consuming. We’re finding that many candidates are looking to us as a long-term recruitment partner to support them through the challenges of locating the right opportunity and understanding the requirements of the client. That’s why it’s so important to work with a recruiter who has the skills and experience to deliver a fully developed hiring strategy.”**

***Charlee-Ben Ryman, Director, Trident Search***







## CONTACT US

Get in touch for more information on anything covered in this report, as well as additional insights into the other markets we recruit for.

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