



2024 Salary Guide

Cyber Defence - UK

Trident Search

Having set the new industry standard for recruitment, Trident Search specialises in finding the best cyber security and sales professionals for clients around the world. Working in 24 countries, we are a trusted partner to some of the fastest-growing and most influential global cyber companies, and play an essential role in helping them to build high-performing teams to protect business-critical assets.

Since launching in 2020, the company has become an industry leader and is the go-to provider across the UK, EMEA, MENA and USA cyber security markets. We're on a mission to fight cybercrime by connecting our clients with top talent faster than anyone else in the industry, and to equip and challenge our people to redefine what good looks like in this sector.

As a data-driven hub of cyber security recruitment, we ensure we 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.

“This year we’re seeing a definite mentality shift in security hiring strategies, with increased importance given to flexibility and the provision of training and development. It’s crucial to have a realistic expectation of what talent is available on the market, as finding the right balance between technical requirements and on-the-job training is vital. For candidates, there’s also been a seismic change as more people are wanting to get into the industry yet employers are still just looking for the top 10% of applicants. To stand out, you need to take a more proactive approach to upskilling and taking on extra-curricular training opportunities to further your career.”

CHARLEE RYMAN, DIRECTOR, TRIDENT SEARCH



How will this report help you?

Clients

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.



Overview

2023 was a challenging time in the cyber hiring market, with many companies pressing pause on personnel decisions amidst a period of economic and geopolitical turmoil. We saw mass layoffs in tech and IT which impinged into cybersecurity and rocked the stability the sector had previously enjoyed. Budget cuts saw the streamlining of both sales and defensive teams at a time when we were seeing an increase in threat activity.

In the wider industry, the last 12 months presented a series of significant shifts, shaped by evolving threats, new technologies and high-profile breaches, raising concerns about the security of essential systems and emphasizing the need for robust defences. Indeed, the cyber security industry is evolving at a startling pace, with new technologies and innovations forging wide-spread changes across the sector. For instance, last year AI was a peripheral tool within cyber architecture. Now, it's difficult to imagine an event or conference where it isn't mentioned. According to the latest IBM report, 25% of companies are now turning to AI to address labour shortages, and the tech keeps becoming more influential as it evolves.

In recent months, there has been a noticeable uptick in job opportunities, particularly within specific sectors like Consulting. Companies are focussing on digital transformation and improved customer experience, driving a heightened demand for skilled talent across product development, IT infrastructure, software engineering, quality assurance and info security.

Arguably the most pressing issue facing the global cyber security industry however is the shortage of skilled talent and the workforce gap that is preventing us from being able to adequately defend business-critical assets and national infrastructure. According to the latest (ISC)² Cybersecurity Workforce Study, there is a workforce gap of 4 million people globally and 57% of professionals state this is the biggest risk to the security of their organisation.

With our privileged position of having a bird's eye view over the industry, we've been able to see firsthand the impact this has had on our sector. Yet we've also seen a change in fortunes over the first few months of 2024. As economic pressures ease slightly and more and more leaders come to realise the central importance of security in their operations, the trigger has been pulled on hiring decisions to meet cyber roadmap team builds across the industry. There certainly seems to be a better level of understanding over cyber methodologies all the way up to Board level, and the bar CISOs need to meet for investment is slowly becoming more achievable. All in all, the general feeling could be described as "hopeful".

At the same time, there's a growing demand for leadership positions, with the best candidates having hands-on experience of the security landscape, a strategic mindset and a good understanding of the regulations CISOs and cyber leaders now need to comply with. Competition is fierce at the top, with leaders' skillsets needing to complement where the business is at in its cyber maturity journey.

As demand for talent rises, so too do salaries. Many employers are bolstering their compensation and benefits packages in a bid to attract and retain the best professionals. According to our data, wage inflation has resulted in an 35% increase in defensive salaries year-on-year, and companies are having to up their game when it comes to securing the best professionals through competitive remuneration and benefits packages.

We're therefore 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. We would like to thank all 500+ respondents who took part in our salary survey this year.

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.

Defensive cyber salaries

As with all variables, there are nuances to each of these categories, and the salary you can command for a role can depend on a number of factors including your previous technical experience, the compensation package offered alongside salary and the market position of the organisation you are joining.

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

JOB TITLE	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	SALARY	DAILY RATE
CTI Analyst	1-3	£40 - £50k	£500 - £600
Senior CTI Analyst	3-5	£50 - £70k	£550 - £650
CTI Manager	5-8	£80 - £90k	£650 - £750
CTI Leadership	8+	£90 - £120k	£900 - £1300 (DV Cleared)
Security Architect	3-5	£80 - £100k	£550 - £650
Senior Security Architect	5-8	£100 - £120k	£650 - £800
Senior Enterprise Security Architect	6+	£130 - £150k	£900 - £1100
Incident Responder	1-3	£50 - £60k	£450 - £600
	5-8	£70 - £90k	
InfoSec Analyst	0-1	£25 - £30k	£300 - £500
	1-3	£50 - £60k	
InfoSec Consultant	3-5	£60 - £70k	£500 - £600
	5+	£70 - £80k	
Security Engineer	0-1	£30 - £40k	£500 - £600
	3-5	£70 - £90k	
Senior Security Engineer	3-5	£80 - £95k	£600 - £700
	5-8	£95 - £110k	
Security Operations Analyst	0-1	£25 - £30k	£500 - £600
	1-3	£40 - £55k	
	3-5	£55 - £75k	
Senior Security Operations Analyst	3-5	£55 - £65k	£700 - £800
	5-8	£80 - £90k	
SOC Leadership	5-8	£100 - £120k	£700 - £800
	5+ (technical)	£110 - £130k	
Leadership (Head, Director, VP, CISO)	3-5	£110 - £130k	£1,000+
	8+	£140k - £180k	





Benefits

Employee benefits are essential for enhancing well-being and fostering desired behaviors, achievements, values and skills. Beyond just financial compensation, benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, flexible work arrangements and professional development opportunities contribute significantly to employee morale and engagement. With the market heating up, companies are having to be more competitive with their offering to both attract and retain top talent.

Flexi-working

The Covid-19 lockdowns and subsequent years created a peak in flexi-work arrangements, with 68% doing this in 2020. Since then, there has been a steady decline reflective of changing work patterns to 48% in 2024, a 3% drop on the previous year. We're seeing more and more employers requesting at least hybrid models if not a full return to the office, especially in London, which isn't necessarily aligning with candidate expectations.

Healthcare

The number of people receiving personal healthcare benefits from their employer has increased from 63% to 70% this year. It's clear that employers are diversifying their packages and with the difficulties employees in the UK face accessing NHS care, private healthcare insurance has become a highly prized commodity in the market.

Stocks and Shares

An astonishing 26% of respondents reported stock and share options as forming part of their benefits offer. Typically used by startups and SMEs, it's a good way for businesses to stay competitive, offering potentially high future returns for employees as a counter to the higher base salaries offered by more established companies.

TRIDENT TIP

The age profile of your employees plays a major role in the benefits most important to them. Recent research from Forbes found that over 30% of 18–41-year-olds are most concerned with having pet insurance available, whereas 40% of 42–57-year-olds are most likely to want mandatory paid time off and over 80% of those 42 and up are looking for employer-covered healthcare. If you're planning to change the benefits you offer, first map out your employee demographics and include representatives in the decision-making process.

37%

of respondents enjoy an enhanced pension scheme, progressively more important as the retirement age increases in 2024.

are happy to continue working for their employer next year, in large due to the benefits offered and their compensation package.

52%

Bonuses

Bonuses have long been a key element of the compensation package, but as budgets are squeezed, many businesses are diversifying their compensation offers with elements like flexi-work and enhanced annual leave which aren't strictly financial. Thus, we have seen a corresponding drop in respondents receiving a bonus as part of their benefits package from 64% in 2023 to 48% now. Of those who did receive a bonus over the last 12 months, the vast majority (43%) achieved between 0-5% of their annual salary, illustrating that in roles outside of the sales environment this benefit may be at risk.

Yet for those in leadership positions there are still big bonuses up for grabs, with 6% of respondents receiving between 16-20% of their annual salary and 2.5% being paid over 31% of their salary as a lump sum.

From the data, it is clear that the bonuses on offer in 2024 are significantly less than they have been in previous years, which will likely result in increased churn in the industry over the months following the end of the financial year. Financial motivations still rank highly amongst candidates, with 68% claiming they would move roles for a salary increase. Employers need to be careful to balance stretched HR budgets with the need to retain the best performers and reward good performance.

We do need to be aware however that within the cyber sector specifically, 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.



TRIDENT TIP

Although the inclusion of a bonus in compensation packages is traditionally less common in defensive roles, we're seeing more offers including this as employers compete to attract talent with the most in-demand skillsets.

43%

of respondents received a 0-5% bonus, although it is likely that some of these individuals will be given alternative benefits to aid retention.



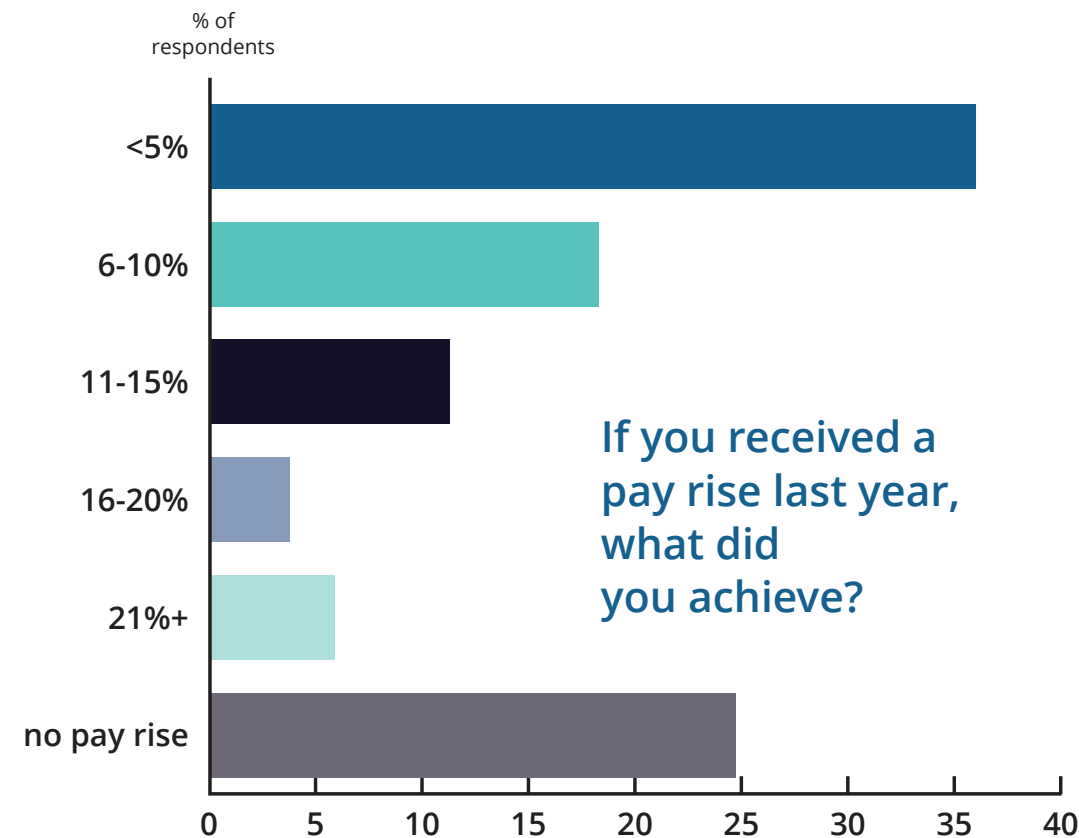


Pay rises

According to the Office for National Statistics, in the three months leading up to March 2024, annual growth in regular earnings (excluding bonuses) was 6.1%, with annual growth in employees' average total earnings including bonuses sitting at 5.6%. Wage inflation remains a constant in economic analysis of the UK labour market, despite many of us being unable to feel the benefits due to the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Yet in our analysis the figure for those who received no pay rise has remained consistent at 25%. The only real increase since last year has been within the category of those receiving a pay rise of less than 5%, which 36% of respondents reported compared to 27% in 2023.

Pay scales are also variable based on role, with more noticeable fluctuations in pay for those whose skills align with organisational needs or technological developments. According to research from AmbitionBox, the average global salary for AI professionals hit \$160,000 in 2024, which reflects the industry's keenness to invest in new skills.



“A major challenge in cyber is that it’s hard to find a middle ground with connected technologies, that’s where art meets science. Those behaviours and experiences are hard to acquire and develop, so their value increases with the person’s skill level. Throw in needing to talk to the C-Suite and you’re left with a very small pool of candidates that meet the requirements.”

PAUL CRICHARD, CISO, SERCO

TRIDENT TIP

The cost of living crisis has had a big impact on salary trends. 80% of organisations increased pay in the year to October 2023, with half of all pay rises either equal to, or greater than, the rate of inflation. The most important influences on pay rise decisions were inflation, the cost of living, and trying to follow the going rate.

68%

cite a salary increase as their main motivation for looking for a new role.

of respondents received either no pay rise or one of less than 5%.

60%

Contract Recruitment

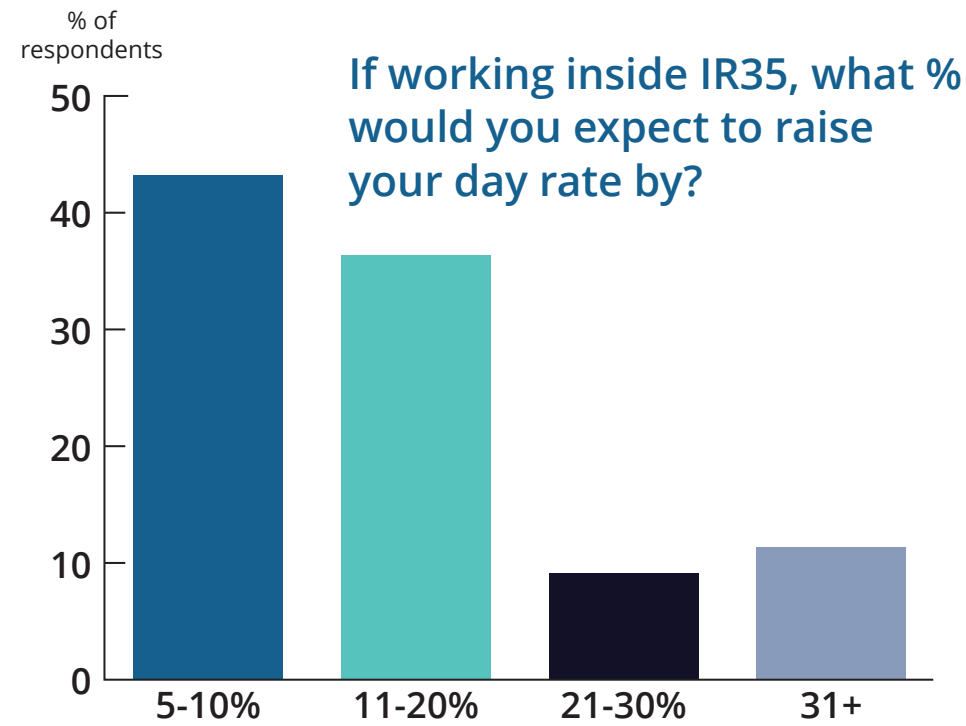
Demand for cyber professionals with specialist skills has soared over the last few years, making contract work an attractive proposition for those with expertise in a particular industry niche. For businesses, engaging contractors for specific short-term projects can often be a more cost-effective solution than hiring and training a full-time employee, ensuring better resource allocation.

Contractors also bring valuable scalability to the cybersecurity strategy, providing a more resilient and long-term security solution for digital assets.

IR35 has been hugely influential in the contractor market since the early 2000s, but especially since 2021. 48% of respondents this year were working inside IR35, showing a levelling of the market as contractors make their own decisions about tax strategy. It has meant a more granular specialization of contractor roles, with more

requirements for contract hires to meet a particular business need. This has resulted in increased demand for professionals with experience in a particular industry niche, with those people able to charge a higher day rate for their expertise. It has however caused a variation in salaries and day rates across the sector, with those working inside IR35 expecting to raise their base to compensate for taxation. Yet in our data we've seen a variation in this, with 43% expecting to raise this by 5-10% compared to 11% of respondents who would add a hike of 30%+! Clearly, there is still a lot of fluctuation in contractor pay in 2024.

Almost half of the contractors surveyed (48%) receive day rates between £500-£599, compared to 15% in the previous year.



43%

of those working inside IR35 would expect to raise their day rate by 5-10% to compensate for the additional tax.

11%

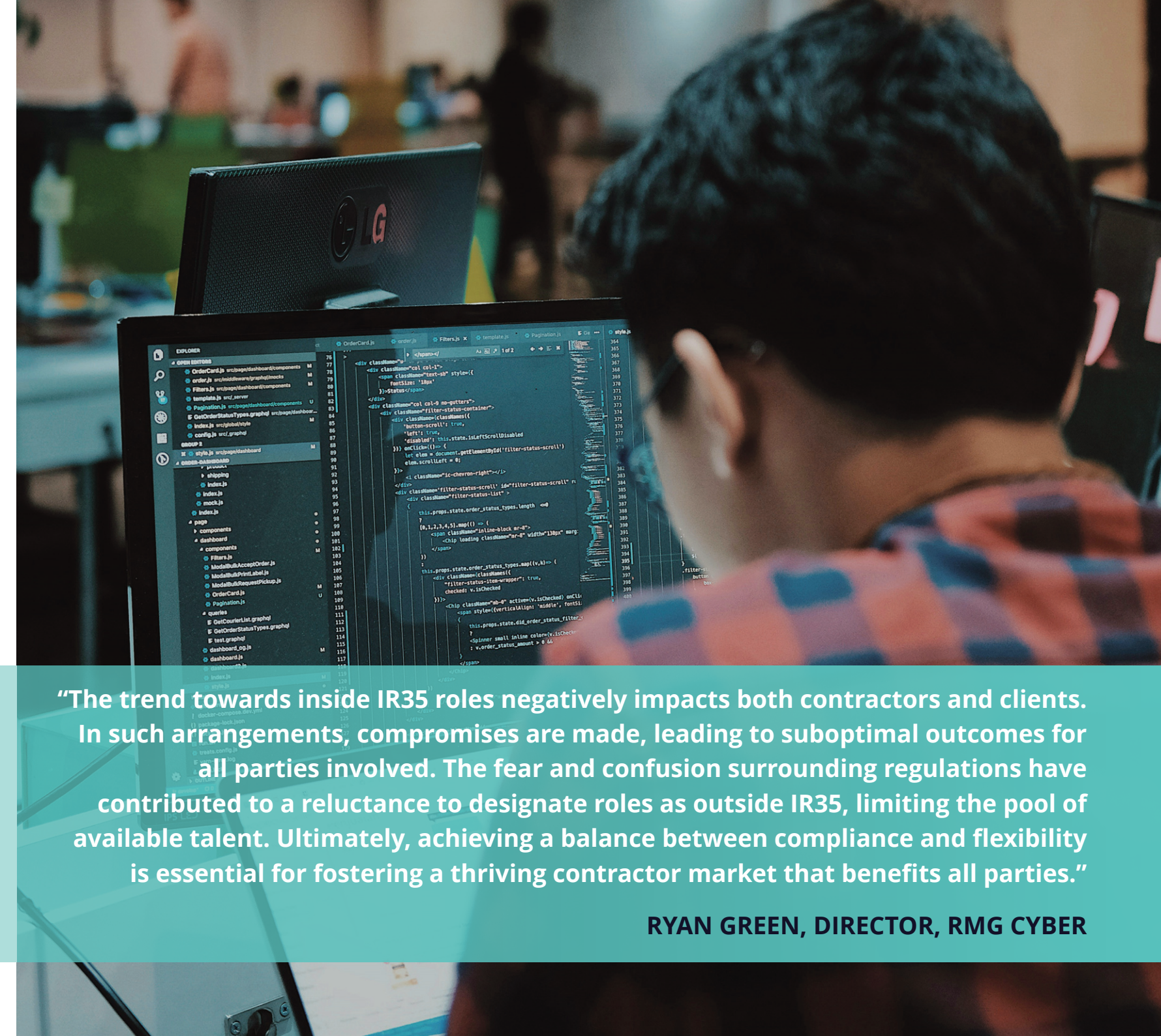
of contractors would raise their day rate by over 30% if inside IR35.

TRIDENT TIP

For contractors, inside IR35 offers a sense of security but comes with higher tax burdens or reliance on umbrella companies. Conversely, outside IR35 provides greater autonomy and lower tax burdens, albeit with increased risk. It's crucial to understand that inside IR35 contractors are considered employees, while those outside are not, a distinction that is often overlooked.

“The trend towards inside IR35 roles negatively impacts both contractors and clients. In such arrangements, compromises are made, leading to suboptimal outcomes for all parties involved. The fear and confusion surrounding regulations have contributed to a reluctance to designate roles as outside IR35, limiting the pool of available talent. Ultimately, achieving a balance between compliance and flexibility is essential for fostering a thriving contractor market that benefits all parties.”

RYAN GREEN, DIRECTOR, RMG CYBER



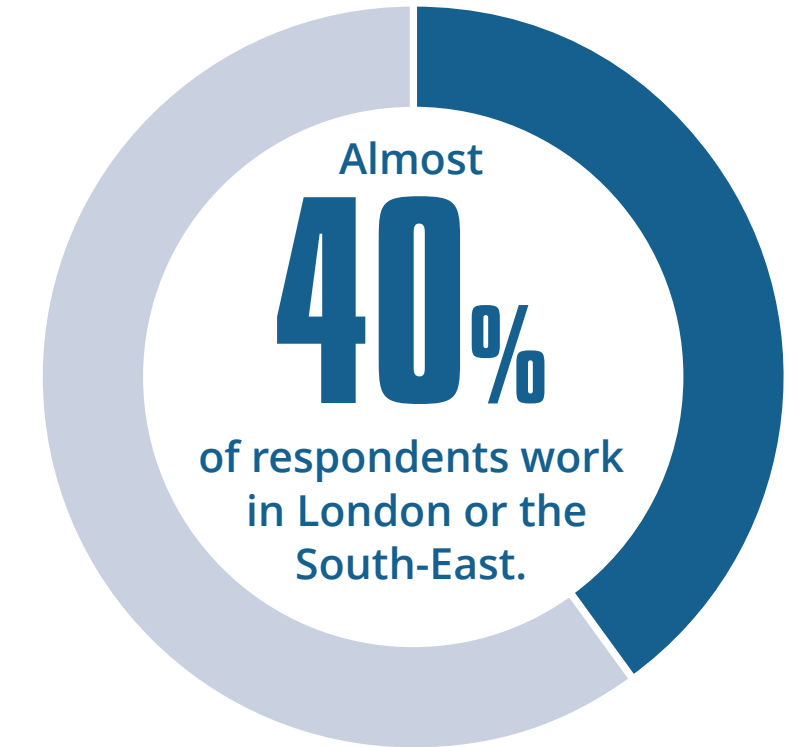


Location

As in previous years, the majority of defensive cyber roles are based in London as this aligns with where the market has moved. The surprising element this year has been an increase in the percentage of people working in fully remote positions, up from 24% in 2023 to 36%. In the wider market we are seeing more of a “return to the office” mentality, yet this does not seem to have permeated into defensive roles where there is less of an emphasis on culture fit hiring and a larger number of roles are outsourced.

Of those working in hybrid arrangements, 16% are only going in once a week and 17% only once a month. Leaders seem to have more flexibility, with many only required to be in-location for particular meetings or key client meetups.

The impression we have from candidates is that they want adaptability in how they work. In fact, 21% would consider moving roles specifically for an increase in their flexible working arrangements. Despite employers largely wanting to leverage in-office working to maximize the ROI from overhead costs and foster a workplace culture, candidates are unlikely to shift to a company that does not offer at least some degree of flexibility.



36%

of respondents now work in roles that are fully remote with the flexibility to be based anywhere in the world.

increase in remote workers year-on-year in defensive roles.

12%

TRIDENT TIP

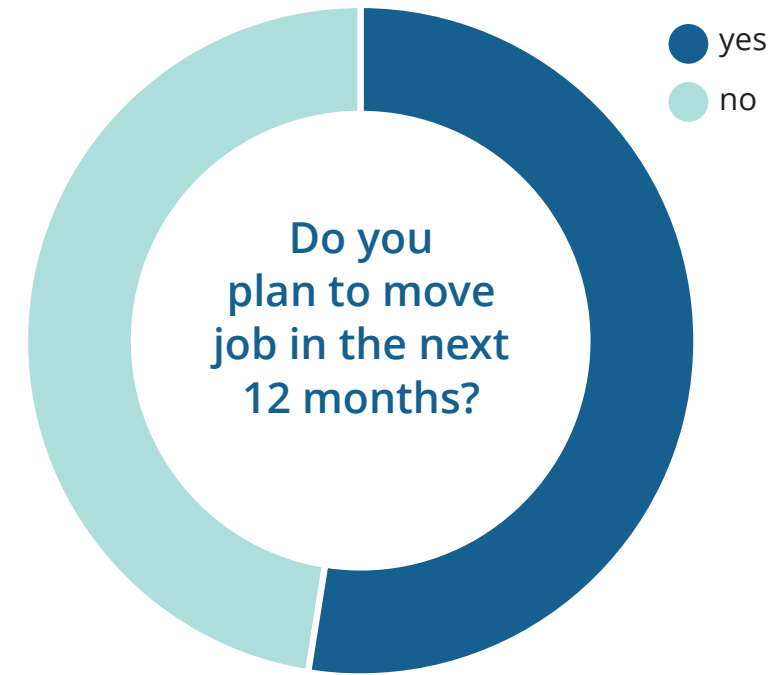
An overwhelming 98% of workers report wanting to work remotely at least part of the time, with many desiring more flexibility and autonomy in their working arrangements. Employers need to take note; those requiring a full-time in the office arrangement will need to provide a more comprehensive range of benefits to entice candidates away from roles with a better work-life balance.

Retention

As the market becomes more and more candidate driven, the number of cyber employees planning to move role has steadily increased up to a peak of 52% in 2024. With a workforce gap of 4 million professionals globally there is a real skills shortage and demand for professionals in key sectors such as cloud computing security, AI/ML and Zero Trust implementation. Thus, candidates have more choice in the hiring landscape and less loyalty to employers who aren't meeting their needs.

The average tenure in a cyber security role is still sitting around 18 months, so outside of leadership positions we're witnessing a lot of quick churn, especially for those in analyst or pen tester positions. With so much choice, candidates now have fewer qualms about moving on faster if they are unhappy in a role.

The latest ISC2 Cybersecurity Workforce Study states that "47% of cybersecurity professionals have dealt with cutbacks to their teams in the form of layoffs, budget cuts and hiring or promotion freezes". This doesn't quite chime with our data, where 30% of respondents' businesses were affected by redundancies last year but does still illustrate the level of instability facing the industry. With 31% of people expecting additional cutbacks in 2024, we would expect to see more churn in the industry as the best talent jumps ship to more profitable, sustainable or stable organisations.



TRIDENT TIP

Although AI is going to have a substantial positive impact on our industry, it has caused an increase in job security concerns for cyber professionals. The reality is that due to the volume of spam, social engineering attacks and other gen-AI threats, the need for security professionals is likely to increase rather than decrease, and employers should be adopting the tech now to complement their existing workforce.

52% of professionals are planning to move jobs in the next 12 months.





Motivations for moving

In this market, retention is arguably more important than hiring, and something too many companies fall down on. Recent industry-wide studies have shown that job satisfaction is currently sitting at just 70%, with disgruntled employees affected by cutbacks, layoffs and overstretched workloads creating a situation of distrust and poor workplace culture.

In fact, our survey has shown that 51% of cyber professionals don't believe their team is fully staffed with the appropriate number of people in each function.

In this environment, business owners, hiring managers and team leaders must make staff retention a priority in order to avoid costly recruitment cycles and falling productivity. Knowing why your employees might be looking to move on is therefore crucial:

Leadership

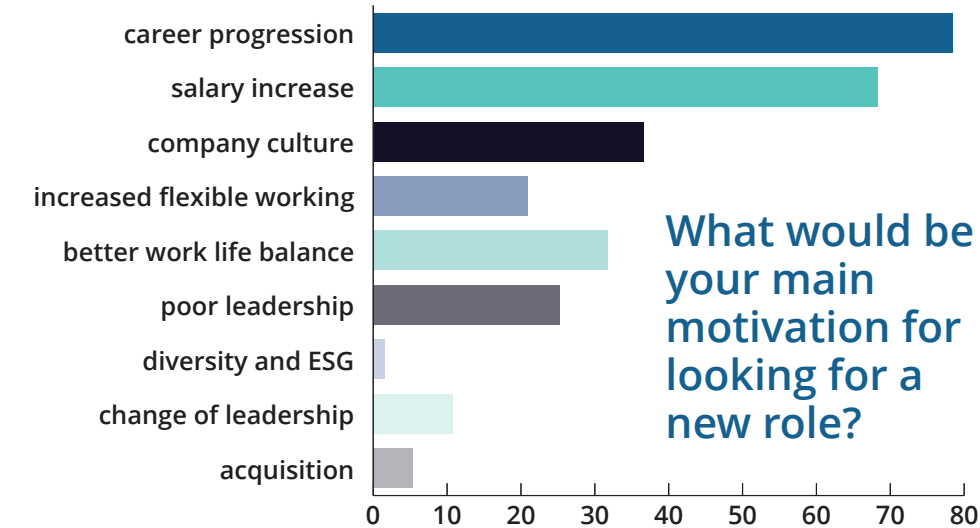
Company management and direction are incredibly important, with a quarter of professionals considering a move due to poor leadership. In addition, 10% would leave due to a change in leadership and 5% after an acquisition. Reducing churn at the top by providing better support to leadership teams and investing in managers will pay dividends in trickle down throughout the organisation.

Culture

Money isn't everything; when we speak to candidates many are equally as interested in the workplace culture and the team they will be working alongside. On occasion, we will also see professionals settling for a lower salary to work in a purposeful organisation that aligns with their values – this is especially important in defensive roles with the capacity to make a genuine societal impact or work with cutting-edge technology.

Progression

With results run concurrently, 78% of respondents were choosing to move to progress in their career and 68% for a salary increase. With the wealth of available training tools and proliferation of AI-driven automations on the market, professionals can now upskill much faster than ever before and are moving up the career ladder at an unprecedented pace. With a workforce gap of 4 million people to fill, this shift through the progression funnel can only be a good thing for our industry.



36% stated they would move to find a better company culture.

are employed in shift work, which tends to result in a higher churn rate and poor retention.

10%

TRIDENT TIP

In a candidate-driven market employees have more agency in the benefits they desire. With 31% claiming their motivation for moving is to have a better work-life balance, the era of “the corporate grind” seems to be ending and employers must take notice of employee’s desire for flexibility if they are to attract the best talent.

Job satisfaction

With the increase in the volume and sophistication of cyber threats facing us, and the strain over-stretched security teams are under, we're at a real risk of losing top talent out of the industry.

Yet despite the challenges there is still cause to be hopeful. This year we asked respondents how important cyber security was perceived to be in their company, with a resulting average of 7.8/10. With the increased visibility of critical cyber-attacks on major corporations and the use of cyberwarfare across Europe and the Middle East, there is growing comprehension of the need for cyber security.

There's also been a 3% increase in respondents who believe their salary compares fairly to the market rate. With the close-knit nature of the cyber security industry, especially in the UK, it's unsurprising that employers are now having to up their game to meet candidate expectations.



believe their next role will come through an internal promotion due to a positive outlook on the growth of the market.

23%





With the busyness of modern life, the ability to outsource the stress of finding a role to a qualified agency partner is highly valued. 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.

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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