

# Patch Personnel Subsurface Oil & Gas Employment Insights Australia and New Zealand – 2023/24

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# Introduction

**Welcome to the fourth annual Patch Personnel Subsurface Oil and Gas Industry Employment Insights Report for Australia and New Zealand.**

Our aim with this report is to bring you accurate and useful data from across the sector, combining remuneration trends and salary benchmarks with general employment insights. Employees and business owners alike can use this information to make informed, evidence-based decisions about how to plan ahead for the coming 12 months.

Caution is growing around hiring decisions, whilst job security looms large for many professionals working in the sector, as our findings suggest. Employers face a confirmed uphill battle in securing talent for both immediate and projected workforce gaps. Organisations that can demonstrate they fulfil candidates' most cherished preferences will be in a prime position to recruit effectively.

As ever, if you would like to discuss these findings in more detail, please contact me or one of the Patch Personnel team.



**DAVID STYLES**

Managing Director at Patch Personnel

# Key Findings

## Employer Insights 2024

- Companies are less certain about their hiring plans this year. Only 37% express intent to hire permanent employees over the next 12 months, marking a decline from 48% reported last year. Only 26% indicated plans to hire on a contract basis, a significant decrease from the 63% reported last year.
- However, there is a notable increase in potential hiring intentions. When asked about the possibility of hiring permanent staff, 41% responded with a 'maybe', up from 33% last year. Similarly, 52% indicated a 'maybe' response regarding the potential hiring of additional personnel on a contract basis, a significant increase from 22% reported last year.
- 44% of employers believe that the hiring challenges they will face in the next year will be due to the limited availability of candidates, while 41% attribute it to budget limitations.
- The primary challenges for businesses in the next 12 months include government policy, which is considered the most challenging factor at 56%, followed by access to capital, which 48% find very challenging.
- 44% of companies reviewed and increased remuneration in 2023, down from 53% the previous year.
- 68% of businesses paid bonuses, down from 71% last year.
- The percentage of employers willing to offer visa sponsorship has substantially decreased from 48% in 2023 to 4% this year.
- 19% of respondent companies hired graduate or entry level positions in the past year.

## Employee Insights 2024

- 70% of respondents are employed in permanent roles, followed by 23% who are self-employed or contractors, and 7% who are unemployed.
- Only 16% of employees are actively applying for new roles, but 63% are open to changing roles if they are approached with the correct opportunity.
- 32% of respondents have contemplated leaving the oil and gas industry entirely, a 10-point reduction from last year's 42%.
- When considering a new job opportunity, the most important factors for employees are remuneration, company culture, and work/life balance, which are unchanged from last year's report.
- The least important factors for employees considering a new role are internal company policies, such as sustainability, diversity, and parental leave, as well as flexible work arrangements.
- Respondents were asked how they would feel if their employers cancelled or reduced working from home. A quarter said that they would either look for, or consider looking for, alternative employment, which is up from 11% last year.
- 50% of respondents said their workload had increased in the last 12 months. The increase in workload is attributed to busier business conditions and a smaller workforce.
- 18% of employees had 0-10 years of industry experience, up 5% from last year, while 82% had 10+ years of experience, and 44% had 20+ years of experience. This indicates that, although the workforce is aging, there are signs of new entrants into the market.

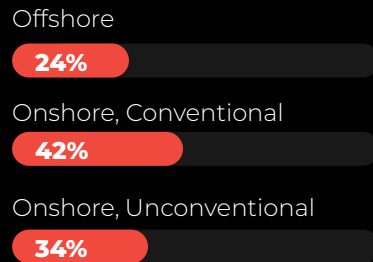


# About the Participants (Methodology)

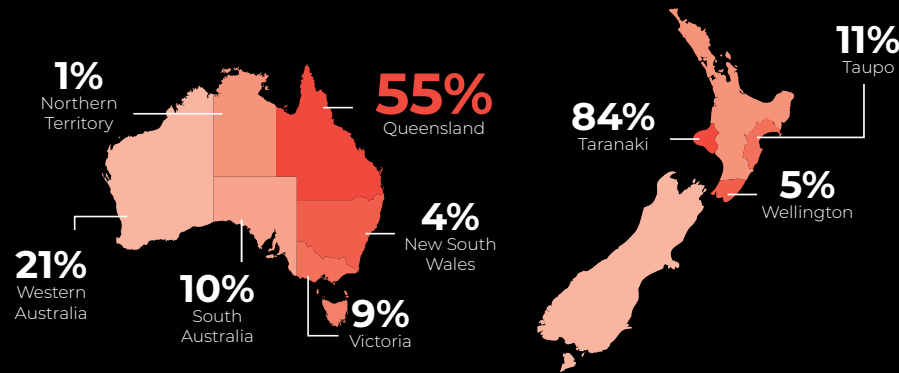
In 2024, we collected data from 27 Employers (Companies) and 293 Employees (individuals) engaged in various roles across Australia and New Zealand.

Our survey encompassed both onshore and offshore, including a combination of conventional and unconventional assets. Three-quarters of respondents reported permanent employment, while one-quarter indicated they are self-employed or working as contractors.

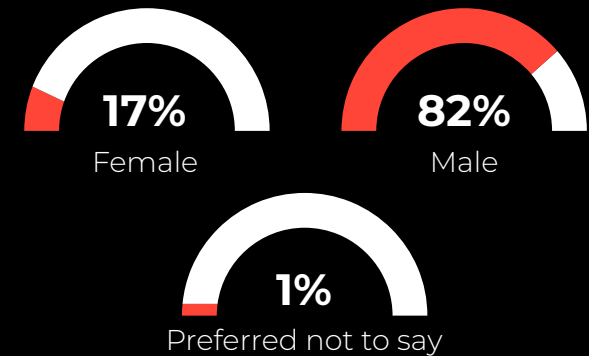
## Asset Type



## Locations

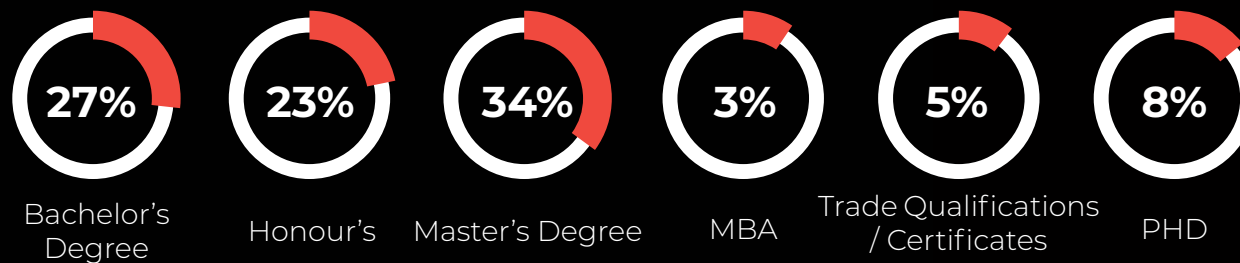


## Gender split



## The demographic breakdown:

### Qualifications



### Years of Experience

Year(s)	Percentage
1 - 5	6%
6 - 10	12%
11 - 15	20%
16 - 20	18%
21 - 25	16%
26 - 30	14%
30+	14%

# Salary & Remuneration Trends



## Changes to Staff Remuneration Since 2023

From the employers who chose to discuss whether they reviewed salaries and pay for both contractors and permanent employees, of those who responded, 19% said they offered a raise of 5% or higher, and a quarter offered between 3-5%.

We see a close split between those who increased remuneration and those who maintained it at current levels. Compared to last year, however, 17% fewer employers said they increased pay.

Employer-Reported Changes to Pay	2022/2023	2023/2024
Increased Staff Remuneration	53%	44%
Maintained Staff Remuneration	21%	48%

As for whether they intend to review their salary offerings within the next 12 months for permanent and contract employees, of those who chose to answer, **a majority of 59% plan to increase remuneration**, while 26% will leave salaries unchanged.

Employer-Reported Changes to Pay	2023/2024
Received a Pay Rise	56%
Pay Remained the Same	38%
Pay Decreased	6%

Among employees who experienced a salary boost in the last year, 56% reported a modest increase falling within the 1-5% range, 28% enjoyed a moderate raise ranging from 5-10%, while 17% saw a substantial uptick of more than 10%.

# Salary

The following pages contain salary averages, organised by job title, seniority and specialisation where data was available.

The categories presented in the table below have been established as a reference. Actual salaries may vary according to the company, person and each role's responsibilities.

Seniority	Years of Experience
Junior	0-5
Intermediate	6-10
Senior	11-15
Lead/Principal/Chief	16+



# Oil & Gas Salary Trends 2023/2024

Management	2022/23		2023/24		Difference (%)	
	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Annual	Day Rate
Drilling and Completions Manager	\$286,000	\$1,600	\$290,000	\$1,610	1.21%	0.62%
Exploration Manager	\$242,500	\$1,675	\$245,000	\$1,700	1.02%	1.47%
Subsurface Manager	\$297,500	\$1,800	\$300,000	\$1,820	0.83%	1.10%

Completions Engineer	2022/23		2023/24		Difference (%)	
	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Annual	Day Rate
Junior	\$95,000	\$625	\$95,000	\$625	0.00%	0.00%
Intermediate	\$142,500	\$1,400	\$147,500	\$1,500	3.39%	3.33%
Senior	\$180,000	\$1,275	\$180,000	\$1,275	0.00%	0.00%
Lead/Principal/Chief	\$272,500	\$1,800	\$272,000	\$1,850	0.91%	2.70%

Drilling Engineer	2022/23		2023/24		Difference (%)	
	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Annual	Day Rate
Junior	\$120,000	\$600	\$120,000	\$600	0.00%	0.00%
Intermediate	\$180,000	\$1,000	\$182,500	\$1,000	1.37%	0.00%
Senior	\$232,000	\$1,425	\$230,000	\$1,400	-0.87%	-1.79%
Lead/Principal/Chief	\$246,000	\$2,000	\$262,500	\$1,900	6.29%	-5.26%



# Oil & Gas Salary Trends 2023/2024

	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Annual	Day Rate
Drilling Supervisor (OCR)		\$1,500		\$1,550		3.23%

## 2023/24

Development Geologist	Median Annual	Median Day Rate
Junior	\$118,000	\$750
Intermediate	\$160,000	\$900
Senior	\$230,000	\$1,200
Lead/Principal/Chief	\$272,000	\$1,600

Exploration Geologist	Median Annual	Median Day Rate
Junior	\$105,000	\$950
Intermediate	\$140,000	\$1,200
Senior	\$190,000	\$1,600
Lead/Principal/Chief	\$230,000	\$1,700

Please note that year on year comparison figures for Geologists are unavailable in this year's report due to a revision of our survey methodology.

# Oil & Gas Salary Trends 2023/2024

2023/24		
Operations Geologist	Median Annual	Median Day Rate
Junior		
Intermediate	\$165,000	\$1,100
Senior	\$200,000	\$1,550
Lead/Principal/Chief	\$240,000	\$1,600

2023/24		
Wellsite Geologist	Median Annual	Median Day Rate
Junior		\$700
Intermediate		\$1,100
Senior		\$1,250
Lead/Principal/Chief		\$1500

Please note that year on year comparison figures for Geologists are unavailable in this year's report due to a revision of our survey methodology.

2023/24		
Geophysicist	Median Annual	Median Day Rate
Junior	\$107,000	\$550
Intermediate	\$170,000	\$700
Senior	\$205,000	\$810
Lead/Principal/Chief	\$270,000	\$1,350

# Oil & Gas Salary Trends 2023/2024

Petroleum Engineer	2022/23		2023/24		Difference (%)	
	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Annual	Day Rate
Junior	\$92,500	\$350	\$95,000	\$400	2.63%	12.50%
Intermediate	\$150,000	\$1,100	\$155,000	\$1,150	3.23%	4.35%
Senior	\$209,250	\$1,200	\$212,000	\$1,250	1.30%	4.00%
Lead/Principal/Chief	\$260,000	\$1,400	\$264,000	\$1,500	1.52%	6.67%

Reservoir Engineer	2022/23		2023/24		Difference (%)	
	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Annual	Day Rate
Junior	\$95,000	\$575	\$98,000	\$600	3.06%	4.17%
Intermediate	\$185,000	\$850	\$190,000	\$880	2.63%	3.41%
Senior	\$215,000	\$1,200	\$218,000	\$1,250	1.39%	4.00%
Lead/Principal/Chief	\$273,000	\$1,500	\$275,000	\$1,520	0.73%	1.32%

Petrophysicists	2022/23		2023/24		Difference (%)	
	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Median Annual	Median Day Rate	Annual	Day Rate
Lead/Principal/Chief		\$1,820		\$1,900		4.21%



# Benefits and Bonuses

We asked employees whether they received bonuses or other benefits in addition to their regular pay and found the share of those receiving bonuses and benefits decreased from 71% last year to 68%. Meanwhile, 3% fewer employers have offered bonuses compared to last year, although they have paid them in the past, indicating more tightening of company budgets.

## Split of Benefits Received by Employees

### Learning & Development Allowance

19%

### Extended Parental Leave

18%

### Car Allowance

6%

### Private Health Insurance

12%

### Other

22%

## Companies Offering Bonuses

Did you pay bonuses in the past 12 months?	2023	2024
Yes	67%	64%
No, but we have paid them in the past	15%	18%
No, and haven't done it before	18%	18%

### Short-term Incentives (cash bonus)

68%

### Long-term Incentives

27%

### Salary Sacrificing

43%

### Extra Annual Leave

16%

## Types of Benefits Offered

We asked employees whether they received bonuses or other benefits in addition to their regular pay and asked employers if they have offered these in the past 12 months.

Both camps indicated a notable reduction in bonuses and other non-salary benefits on offer. The share of employees receiving bonuses and benefits has shrunk from 71% to 33%, whilst the number of employers offering incentives has decreased by 16%.

### Short-term Incentives (cash bonus)

68%

### Long-term Incentives

13%

### Other

44%



Salary Sacrificing



Extra Annual Leave



Learning & Development Allowance



Additional Parental Leave



Car Allowance



Private Health Insurance

# Headcount Growth and Reduction

Companies either increased permanent headcount or maintained it, in line with last year, albeit in larger proportions. Contractor hiring, meanwhile, tells a different story – this year’s decrease is significantly higher at 26%, whilst the increase is less pronounced.

Of those who changed headcount, 40% reported a 20+% increase, possibly reflecting a regeneration of workforce numbers that had contracted during the pandemic years. A further 25% increased headcount by 15-20% and 15% of employers grew their workforce by 0-5%.

## Staff Headcount Changes in the Past 12 Months

	2023	2024
Decrease	19%	22%
Increase	41%	52%
Stayed the same	40%	26%

## Contractor Headcount Changes

	2023	2024
Decrease	7%	26%
Increase	56%	44%
Stayed the same	37%	30%



# Unemployment, and Why Employees Leave

For most of our employee respondents, employment status remains static, with 76% reporting no change over the past year – a trend in line with our previous survey. Approximately 70% are currently employed, 23% are self-employed or contractors and a further 7% are unemployed, down slightly from last year.

## Why Employees Changed Roles in the Past 12 Months

### New job

43%

### Redundant

21%

### Went from contract to perm

12%

### New role with the same company

7%

### Contract ended

4%

### Resigned

4%

### Retired

4%

### Changed industry

1%

### Went from perm to contractor

1%

## Reasons for Considering Changing Roles

Turning to reasons for why employees might want to head for greener pastures, pay is unsurprisingly an important factor, whilst the allure of fresh intellectual challenges is also a compelling driver. Two small but notable subsets cited team instability and company instability as influencing factors, highlighting the importance of cohesive and supportive work environments and employees' preference for companies with a secure footing in the market.

New technical challenge	19%
Increased remuneration	23%
Better benefits	13%
Taking on a more senior role	16%
Team instability	4%
Company instability	10%
Relocation to another area	6%
Flexible work policy	7%
Other	3%

# Job Satisfaction and Industry Sentiment

Most employees seem to have a positive outlook on their current roles, with 45% expressing that they like their job, while an additional 29% love their current position.

Conversely, only a small minority, 4%, admit to feeling unhappy in their current role, whilst 5% feel that things have been better in the past. Another 12% find their job to be merely “okay” and a further 5% opted not to disclose their level of job satisfaction.

How many individuals are seeking employment opportunities in 2024? Our findings reveal that 16% are actively engaged in applying for new jobs, marking a slight increase from the 14% last year. Conversely, there has been a marginal decrease in the percentage of people not open to changing roles.

A substantial 62% of respondents are willing to entertain a job change if presented with the right opportunity. Overall, the sentiment towards looking for a new role is largely unchanged from last year.

## Would you consider accepting a new role in the next 12 months?

	2023	2024
No	23%	22%
Yes – I’m actively applying for jobs	14%	16%
Yes – for the right job	63%	62%

## Employee Sentiment About the Industry

With the understanding that job satisfaction feeds into overall sentiment about the industry, we also quizzed employees about their perceived future in oil & gas. More than half (56%) envision spending the rest of their careers in the industry, but there is a sizeable proportion, 28%, expressing uncertainty about their long-term prospects, whilst 11% simply do not expect a lifelong career in the industry.

## Have you contemplated leaving the oil and gas industry in the past 12 months?

No	62%
Yes	32%
Prefer not to say	6%

Delving into the reasons why employees have considered leaving the oil and gas industry, many respondents pointed towards job uncertainty, fewer opportunities and stagnating pay:

# Job Satisfaction and Industry Sentiment

## What are your main reasons for considering leaving the industry?

Lack of employment opportunities	43%
Instability of work	43%
Reduced remuneration / rates	28%
Mental fatigue	36%
Desire to work in a different industry	29%
Anti-Oil and Gas sentiment in the media	23%
Regulatory challenges	19%
Other	21%

When it comes to passing the baton to the younger generation, sentiment is uneven at best. About 44% of professionals would recommend a school leaver to join the oil and gas sector, but 35% would not. A further 14% say their recommendation would depend on certain factors, many citing issues related to industry uncertainty and concerns about long-term job security.





## Working from Home

Almost 80% of employees were working from home in some capacity at the time of our survey.

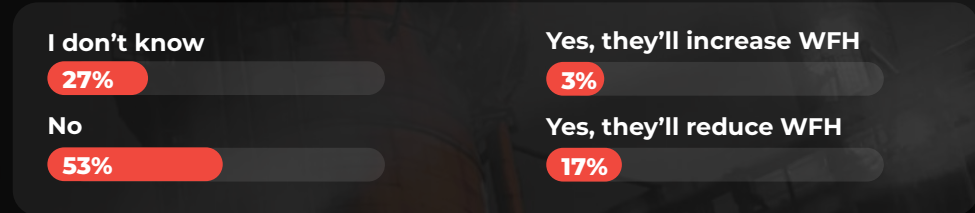
When asked how they would feel about their employer cancelling or reducing WFH, 40% said they would feel discontent but would be ultimately resigned to accepting the decision – an increase from 34% last year.

Meanwhile, 35% of respondents would have no issue with the cancellation or reduction of WFH policies, a significant drop from 49% last year. On the unequivocal end of the spectrum, 22% would consider changing jobs if faced with such a decision, whilst a small but noteworthy 3% assert that they would immediately resign in response to the change.

### How would you feel if your employer cancelled or reduced WFH?

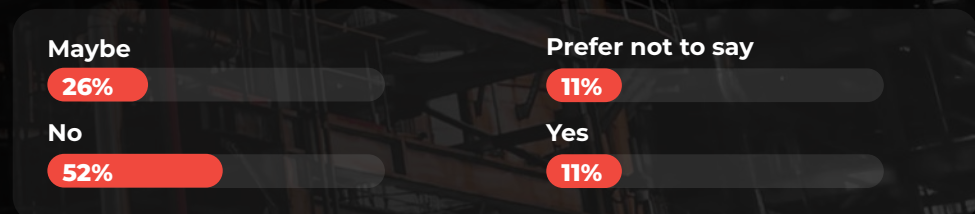
	2023	2024
No issue	49%	35%
I would be unhappy but would accept the decision	34%	40%
I would consider changing jobs	11%	22%
I would immediately resign	0%	3%

### Employees: Do you think your employer will revise WFH arrangements in 2024?



With 17% of employees expecting their organisations to reduce WFH and only 52% of companies saying they do not intend to review their WFH policy in 2024, expectations around remote working arrangements could become a growing factor in job churn over the coming year. As we will highlight later in this report, flexible working arrangements are at least an 'important' consideration when searching for a new job.

### Employers: Will WFH be reviewed this year?WFH?



## Employee Workloads

Shifts in workloads reported by employees indicate two forces at play: organisations are experiencing strain from fewer staffing resources, while business demands are increasing – further solidifying an expectation of doing more with less. Persistent and growing workforce gaps, combined with the rising cost of everything, are heightening pressure across the board. Such forces are not novel in 2024, but they may have more potential to intensify recruitment and retention pressures over the coming 12 months.

## Reasons for Change in Workload

	2023	2024
Less people to do the work	47%	31%
The business is busier	34%	49%
The company expects it	19%	20%



# Preferred Working Arrangements

The share of employees preferring a full-time permanent position for their next role has nudged upwards to 79% from 65% last year, likely owing to growing concerns about job security. That said, there is some pragmatism about future job opportunities – 52% told us they would consider applying for a contract role, while 48% wouldn't.

## What would be your preferred working arrangement for your next role?

Contract – full time	8%
Contract – part time	9%
Staff – full time	79%
Staff – part time	4%

## What are the reasons why you would not apply for a contract role?

I am currently working in a permanent position	76%
I enjoy the benefits of a staff position (leave, bonuses, sick pay, parental leave)	63%
I consider it unstable	43%
I don't really understand how it works	5%
It's easier to purchase / rent property with a permanent job	21%



# Where to Find Talent and Recruitment Methods

In a tightly contested talent market like oil and gas, knowing where to find candidates is a key component of a successful recruitment strategy.

Employees and companies are similarly willing to try a range of approaches for finding roles or talent. Word of mouth remains a significant channel connecting employees to new roles, underscoring the close-knit networks within a highly specialised industry. Employers, however, could benefit from focusing more on social networks as a sourcing channel, as employees are regularly using these sites to spot (or cultivate) new opportunities.



## How Employees Search for Jobs

	Often	Sometimes	Never
Word of mouth / personal contacts	52%	42%	6%
Generalist job boards (e.g. SEEK)	39%	43%	18%
Industry specific job boards (e.g. Rigzone, Oil & Gas Job Search)	21%	46%	33%
Recruitment agency	24%	62%	14%
Social media (e.g. LinkedIn)	47%	45%	8%

## How Employers Find Subsurface Talent

	Often	Sometimes	Never
Word of mouth / personal contacts	60%	36%	4%
Generalist job boards (e.g. SEEK)	16%	48%	36%
Industry specific job boards (e.g. Rigzone, Oil & Gas Job Search)		32%	68%
Recruitment agency	40%	52%	8%
Social media (e.g. LinkedIn)	20%	48%	32%

# Talent Attraction Factors

It is a misconception to assume that employees are content to remain static in their roles. Employers would be remiss to overlook the potential for their most valued employees to be tempted by new opportunities, even in a strained market.

With that in mind, zooming into specific attraction factors can be instructive for organisations already experiencing a talent crunch. Understanding what resonates with employees during this time can help companies sharpen both their recruitment and retention strategies.

Looking closely at shifts in jobseekers' top preferences since 2023, the biggest movers are salary, which climbed from 47% to 59%; career progression (25% last year); professional development (22% last year); stability (32% last year) and work-life balance (up from 43% last year).

	Very important	Fairly Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not at all important	No opinion
Salary	59%	31%	9%	1%	0%	0%
Flexible work arrangements	23%	28%	26%	13%	8%	2%
Work-life balance	50%	25%	18%	5%	1%	1%
Professional development	36%	29%	17%	13%	5%	0%
Career progression	39%	21%	16%	12%	11%	1%
Company culture	50%	28%	15%	4%	2%	1%
Location	38%	29%	18%	9%	6%	0%
Stability of employment	41%	24%	21%	8%	5%	1%
Benefits package	38%	34%	13%	7%	5%	3%
Parental leave policy	7%	7%	18%	14%	45%	9%
Diversity and inclusion	13%	16%	20%	16%	28%	7%
Technical challenge of role	44%	35%	18%	1%	1%	1%
Sustainability policies	6%	12%	23%	20%	30%	9%
Leadership	33%	26%	19%	11%	7%	4%

# Hiring Intentions

Looking ahead, employers have indicated they feel more certain about hiring intentions over a 12-month window, but less so within the next 6 months. Such caution is understandable in an economic environment where uncertainty prevails.

## Permanent Hiring Intentions

	Within 6 Months	Within 12 months
Yes	22%	37%
No	22%	11%
Maybe	45%	41%
Prefer not to say	11%	11%

## Contract/Temporary Hiring Intentions

Similarly, employers are opting for a wait-and-see approach with regard to contractor hiring.

	Within 6 Months	Within 12 months
Yes	22%	26%
No	19%	11%
Maybe	48%	52%
Prefer not to say	11%	11%

## Employees on Visas and Graduate Hiring

The majority (81%) of organisations have not hired employees on visas in the past 12 months, a figure unchanged from our previous survey. As for intentions to sponsor individuals for employment visas in the next 12 months, 52% said they will not, whilst 33% are unsure. Just 4% confirmed they would do so – down from 48% last year.

## Did You Hire Employees on Visas in the Past 12 Months?

Yes	15%
No	81%
Prefer not to say	4%

Approximately 56% of employers do not intend to hire people for **graduate or entry level positions** in the next 12 months, with just 11% responding in the affirmative and a further 22% offering a 'maybe' – indicative of ongoing challenges in growing the pool of available graduates in the oil and gas industry. Around 19% of organisations did hire grads in the past 12 months, although 78% did not.



# Hiring and Business Challenges 2024

We asked employers who intend to hire in the next 12 months about the types of recruitment challenges they anticipate. The limited availability of candidates reigns as the top factor for 44% of organisations, followed by budget limitations (41%) and the risk of candidates receiving counter-offers (15%).

Hiring obstacles are just one part of the picture when it comes to overall business difficulties, although as many as 19% of organisations cite lack of access to talent as a significant business challenge and 33% rated staff retention as somewhat challenging.

The headline factor making life difficult for oil and gas businesses is government policies, rated as 'very challenging' for 56% of those we surveyed. Also ranked as highly challenging factors were 'Access to capital' (48%) and 'challenges with environmental approvals and compliance' (33%).



# Conclusion

Our survey findings indicate a marginally more stable workforce within the industry, with fewer individuals contemplating leaving, despite increasing workloads. That's good news for employers, who are expressing more caution around hiring, particularly in the short-term. Candidate scarcity and budget constraints make for ongoing challenges in talent acquisition, while external factors such as government policies and access to capital pose significant hurdles for businesses.

Remuneration, company culture, stability of employment, technically challenging work and work/life balance remain core considerations for job seekers, which suggests they can be significant levers for talent attraction and employee retention.

Ultimately, as the industry adapts to new uncertainties, effective recruitment practices grounded in solid principles remain the cornerstone of building a resilient workforce.





# About Us

## Oil & Gas Recruitment Solutions Delivered By Industry Professionals

Patch Personnel was formed by a group of successful recruitment professionals and Oil and Gas industry leaders to ensure the delivery of a comprehensive and high-quality range of personnel services to the Oil and Gas sector.

At Patch Personnel, we ensure the talent requirements of the client are matched with the capabilities of our candidates. Through the experience of the Patch Technical Selection Panel, we ascertain the required skills to find the best possible fit for every role. The Panel is made up of highly experienced Oil and Gas leaders and professionals who are well-versed in the various disciplines in which we recruit. Panel members have extensive industry experience and have typically led large projects and teams, meaning they understand our clients' needs and can identify the right people for each organisation. Contact us today to find out how we can help.



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