

28 November 2023

HMRC and VOA members: Tell us your 'Pay Horror Story'

The responses to the PCS Pay Survey in HMRC and VOA are grim. With HMRC and VOA on course to stay Minimum Wage employers, 62% of members struggle to meet basic costs, 44% need outside support to supplement their pay, and 61% are considering leaving.

On 31 October 2023, PCS launched a survey of members working in both HMRC and VOA, entitled "Tell us your Pay Horror Story". We had a great response to the survey, with the final sample size being over ten times that required for it to be statistically valid, given the size of our membership. Here is a short summary of your responses.

What you told us about yourself

The survey began by asking you to tell us a little more about yourselves.

We had a very low response rate (**<2%**) from the age group that PCS classifies as "young members" (27 or under). [This makes the work currently being led by our Group Organiser, Claire Keenan, to improve our engagement with our youngest members](#), including a special young members' event, now set for 10/11 February, particularly well-timed. If you're a young member, please keep a look-out for more details

The gender-split of respondents was **53%** Female, **44%** Male, and **2%** Other/Prefer not to say. This broadly reflects the staffing composition of both the department and the agency

The largest number of respondents came from the AO-SEO grades (**93%** of you came from these grades, with a total of **36%** from the AO grade).

Members with less than 5 years' service and members with more than 20 years' service were the largest respondents (a total of **70%** fell under these categories; with **36%** of you having more than 20 years' service and **34%** having service of

fewer than 5 years).

How the state of your pay impacts you

We asked you for your “Pay Horror Story”; and sadly, we were unsurprised at the responses.

At the time of the survey, the Low Pay Commission estimated the National Minimum Wage to be between **£23,806-£24,963**, based on the conditioned hours most widely used as the basis for calculation in the Civil Service. We asked you if you were likely to be on that wage when the new Minimum Wage becomes Law in April 2024, and **32%** of you said you would. This is entirely in line with our assessments; and shows that at the lower grades, HMRC and VOA are on course to remain firmly rooted as ‘Minimum Wage employers’

62% of you told us you are struggling to meet regular costs; with main cost-struggles being Housing/Utility Bills (**47% of you**), Travelling to and from work (**34%**) and Loans/Credit Cards (**31%**). Problems meeting travelling costs can only be increased, given the recent “expectation” of 60% minimum office attendance for all staff

Shockingly, for the government department that brings in the money that funds every Public Service in the land, **44%** of you need outside support to supplement your HMRC/VOA income; including **16%** of you receiving Universal Credit or some other form of benefits, **14%** of you working an additional job or additional jobs, and **7%** relying on financial support from parents or other family members

Even more disgracefully, **8%** of you – **almost 1 in 12** - have needed to visit a Foodbank; and

What all this adds up to, is that **61%** of you said that Low Pay means you are considering leaving the Civil Service.

Fighting for fair pay

As part of the union’s National Campaign, PCS has paused our programme of industrial action, to allow talks to take place with the Cabinet Office, aimed at securing long-term improvements to Civil Service Pay. Your responses to our survey show precisely the scale of the problem we need to overcome; and major improvements are needed, if the issues you have identified are to be addressed.

Look out for updates on the central talks taking place with the Cabinet Office, and if they're necessary, the next steps in our National Campaign for fair pay.

Are your details up-to-date?

You need to be kept fully informed about our fight for fair pay in HMRC, VOA and across the Civil Service.

HMRC applies restrictions on the content of union circulars distributed using the department's email system, so make sure that you stay in touch with your union. You can find your membership number in your latest email digest from PCS; and so we can keep you in-touch, we need you to check to make sure that the details PCS hold for you are correct. You should do this by:

- Making sure that the personal address we hold for you is correct
- Making sure that the personal email address we hold for you is correct (remember: we'll only use it to keep you informed about PCS matters)
- Making sure that personal mobile number we hold for you is correct (again, we'll only use it for urgent PCS news).

You can update your details securely online by [logging-in to PCS Digital](#). If you haven't registered for PCS Digital yet, [you can register here](#). Alternatively you can contact your local PCS rep, and ask them to enter your details securely on the PCS Organising Hub.

Join PCS

As your trade union, PCS continues to fight for fair pay and to stand-up for your interests. If you've read this briefing and you aren't yet a member of PCS, then you should [join today](#).