



Consultation on Agency Workers Recommendations - Organise community response

This report summarises the findings from the Organise survey of agency workers. This was designed with the Government's consultation questions in mind and combines quantitative data and qualitative information around what it's like finding work through an agency in 2018.

The survey was completed by 733 agency workers within the Organise online community between 2nd and 8th May 2018.

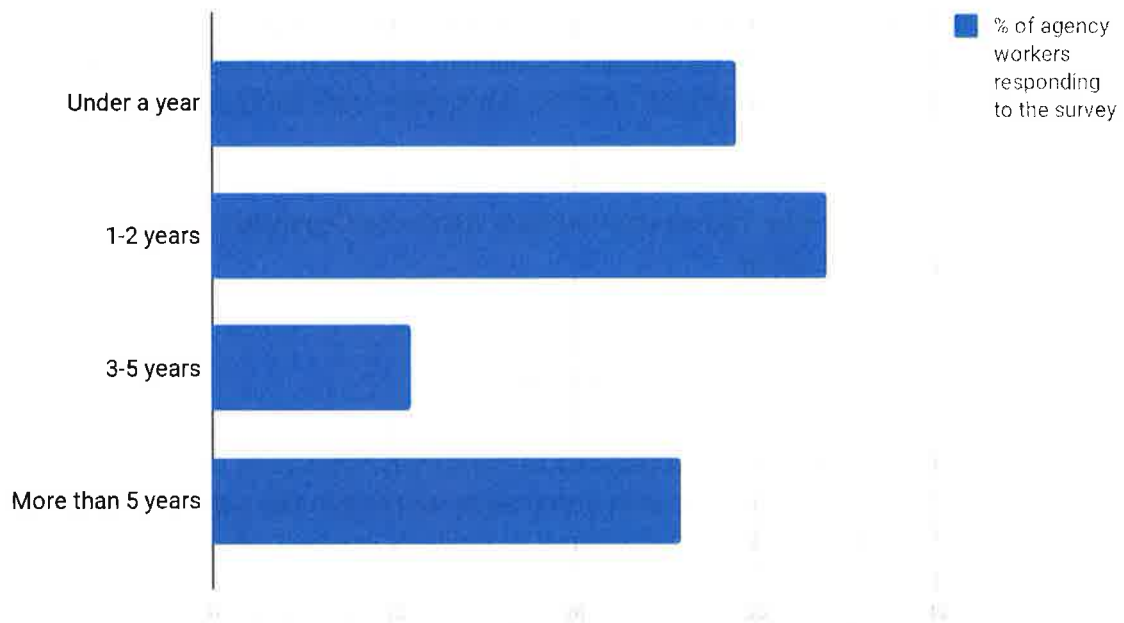
Key findings

- Close to three-quarters of respondents to the survey have been using an agency to get work for at least one year, with one-quarter working in this way for five years-plus
- Over half of respondents are not offered a choice of contract when taking a booking from an agency
- Around one-third of respondents do not have their employment status explained to them when they take a booking
- More than 4 in 10 respondents get paid less than their contemporaries employed directly by the company
- More than one-quarter of respondents are paid less than they are expecting due to deductions not being fully explained
- Around one-quarter of respondents do not always receive the payslip they are legally entitled to
- While a few agencies were doing a good job addressing complaints, many respondents were fearful of raising issues in case they were not then offered assignments as a punishment
- Almost all respondents support the idea of a 'key facts' document which would enable them to make more informed decisions about work

Survey responses in full

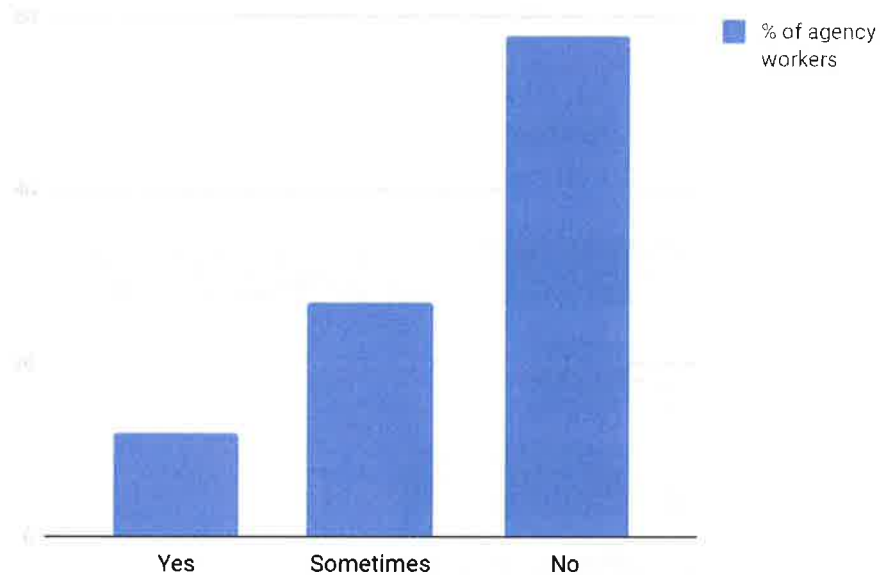
For many, agency work is a long term way of working and not just a stop-gap solution. Around three-quarters of respondents to our survey had been working via an agency for at least one year. One-quarter had been working in this way for five years or more. Tackling abuse of agency worker rights is key for all but is especially important for the many for whom this is an enduring form of work.

How long have you been using an agency to get work?



The data below indicates that even though workers are meant to have a choice of contract when they first take an assignment, many of them do not. This shows that agencies are not presenting work seekers with all the options they are legally entitled to pick from. Worse still, it's likely that the people who answered "no" are not even aware that a choice is available to them, as they have never been offered one.

When you get an assignment or a booking, do you get a choice of different employment types to pick from?



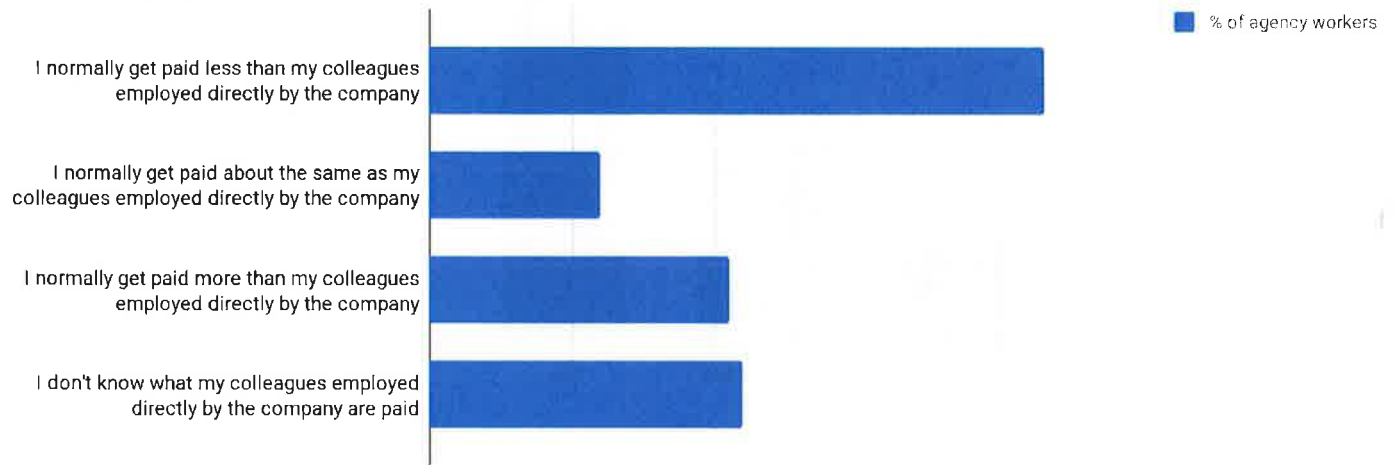
With so many respondents saying that they aren't regularly given a choice over the types of contracts they pick for each assignment, it's even more worrying that over 60% of workers regularly do not have their employment status explained to them before an assignment, and around 35% never having it explained to them:

When you take a booking through an agency, is your employment status fully explained to you?



Whilst there are a portion of people who are paid a premium as agency staff (almost exclusively highly skilled workers) there are many who do not reach equality with people employed directly by the company, for performing the same job:

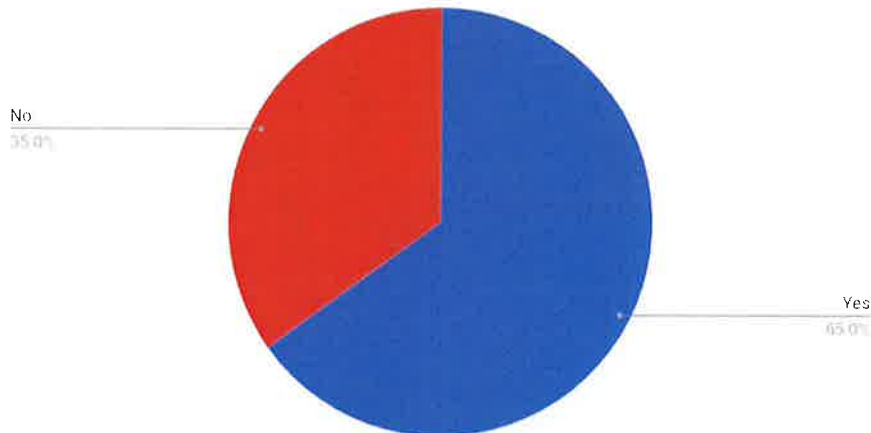
When you get a booking at a company, what's your pay like compared to the people employed directly by the company?



When you're working for an agency...

A lot of respondents mentioned that hidden fees and deductions from agencies or umbrella companies result in them not receiving the amount of money they were expecting to when they took the job. Many work seekers will find this extremely difficult to tackle given the retribution that many of them face for raising issues or concerns:

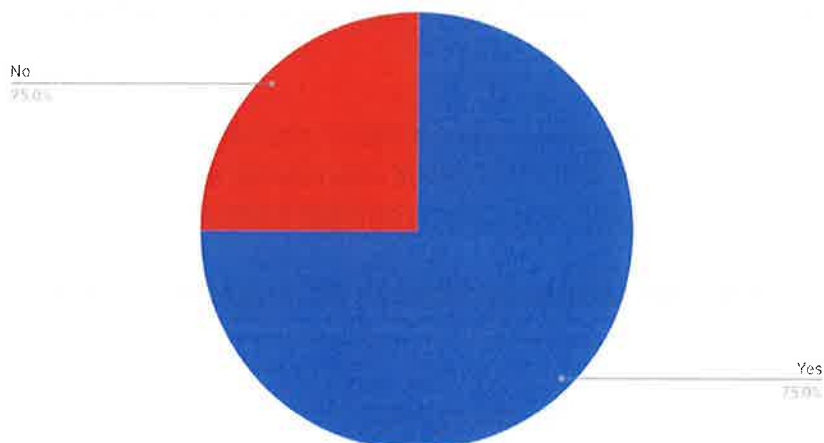
Do you normally get the amount of money you were expecting?



(Personal accounts of both hidden fees and retribution are below.)

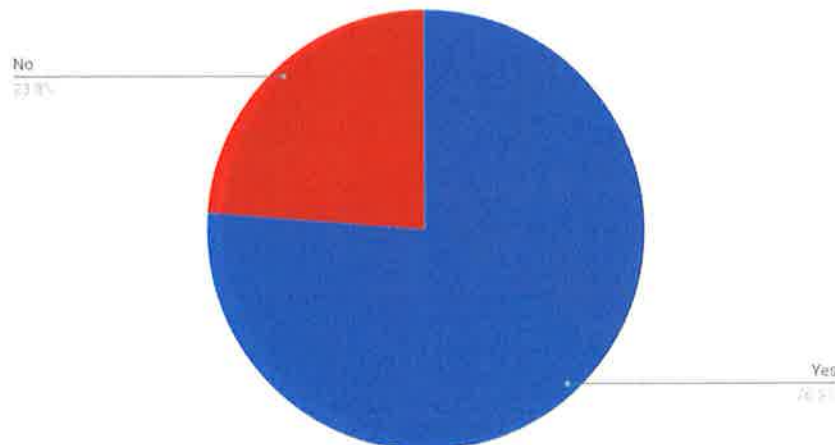
An alarming 25% of workers do not always get their payslips. This would create countless other difficulties for things like credit checks, securing loans and proof of work, which would limit access to opportunities and result in further insecurity.

Do you always get a payslip?



For precarious contract workers, particularly those who rely on agency work as an enduring form of work, inconsistent pay can massively limit the extent to which they can plan for themselves and their families. Chasing up delayed payment can also result in punishment from agencies who may give the work seeker less opportunities. (Accounts of which are below.)

Do you always get paid on time by your agency?



99% of agency workers agree that a 'key facts' page would support them in making decisions about work.

What information would be important to include in a "key facts" page?

Respondents consistently expressed a want to have clarity over the basic specifications of their jobs, especially how much they will be paid and expected hours:

"Key facts should include the realistic number of hours you will work. The agency I worked for could send you home after 4 hours (minimum) even if you had applied for an 11 hour shift. After travelling 1.5 hours each way, this meant that it was not worth it."

Most respondents also wanted clear information on how their pay was structured in relation to agency fees:

"How much I will actually be paid after agency fees?"

"If you have to use an umbrella agency for pay. Who pays employers' NI?"

"It would be better if agencies were transparent about the percentage they put on top. Then you could choose and agency based on reputation and value for money for you and the employer."

"Agencies are prone to random subtraction for things that aren't explained or documented when you take on the contract, sickness, child issues etc, are all deducted, then the deductions are excessive and lead to a full weeks pay in some circumstances for one days sick leave which is unacceptable and dangerous for some van drivers."

There were also other, more technical, suggestions put forward from respondents:

"I'd like the difference between the pay of a company employee and an agency employee explicitly stated."

"Terms and conditions should be clearly stated along with the option to join their occupational pension scheme along with information on how to increase your contributions."

"It would be good to know tax status. Especially if we're on 'emergency' tax codes."

"Whether the company is properly-equipped! - I was sent to one insurance company in Birmingham to archive records and transfer them to another medium. There were four of us, for whom the company had neither computers, nor even desks!"

What happens when you ask a question or make a complaint to your agency?

Many respondents explained that raising issues to their agency often has a direct impact on the amount of work they are subsequently given:

"I complained and my contract wasn't renewed"

"I've always found them to be completely useless and some people are afraid to do this out of fear of not getting further work. Trade unions should be allowed on agency sites."

"You stop being given assignments [when you raise an issue]."

"Depending on the agency's specialist, the majority of agencies employing immigrants on 0-hour contract, in most cases they ignore questions and complaints."

A few agencies were clearly dealing with the issues properly, but they are a minority:

"The agency that I work for tried to deal with complaints as soon as possible, they are thoroughly supportive with this and any questions that I may have, very reassuring, and aim to help make things easier; they offer advice and support and are very appreciative."

"My complaints usually gets answered, and sorted out."

99% of agency workers said they would like a way to anonymously report bad agencies to the government.

The most common agencies respondents worked for are Pertemps, Protocol, Reed, Hays, Randstad, Brook Street and Capita. 733 agency workers took part between 2nd - 8th May 2018.

About Organise

Organise is an online community of over 25,000 people from across different industries, with the aim of getting every working person in the UK the tools, network and confidence to make change happen at their workplace. Anyone can start a campaign for free on Organise using our platform.

Through the Organise platform, as an employee, you can collect data about the problems you and your colleagues face. As well as ideas on how to fix them. The platform allows people to be anonymous, giving staff the security to share their experiences honestly. You can analyse and package the results to take to the company leadership or potentially the press.

People taking part in the surveys and petitions join the Organise community, giving employees the safety in numbers to push for change and a safety net if they face any challenges. We're helping companies listen to their workforce, increasing their retention of talent and creating a better workplace for everyone.

Organise members run dozens of workplace specific campaigns as well as big national campaigns.

Annex

Here are a list of the survey questions used:

When you're working for an agency...

- Do you normally get the amount of money you were expecting? [Yes/No]
- Do you always get a payslip? [Yes/No]
- Do you always get paid on time by your agency? [Yes/No]

Do you think agencies should give you a sheet explaining everything about your employment status (like exactly how your pay is worked out) before you take the booking? [Yes/No]

What other information would be useful to know before you take a booking? [Open field for longer answers]

When you get a booking at a company, what's your pay like compared to the people employed directly by the company? Options are:

- I normally get paid less than my colleagues employed directly by the company
- I normally get paid more than my colleagues employed directly by the company
- I don't know
- I normally get paid about the same as my colleagues employed directly by the company

When you get an assignment or a booking, do you get a choice of different employment types to pick from? Options are:

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

When you take a booking through an agency, is your employment status fully explained to you? Options are:

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

Do you think there should be a way to anonymously report bad agencies to the government? Options are:

- Yes
- No

What happens when you ask a question or make a complaint to your agency? [Open field for longer answers]

What happens when you ask a question or make a complaint to your agency? Options are:

- 1 to 3 years
- Under a year
- More than 5 years
- 3 to 5 years

Is there anything else you would like to add about finding work through an agency? [Open field for longer answers]

Finally, which agency do you get most of your bookings from? [Open field for longer answers]

