



# KPMG AND REC, UK REPORT ON JOBS

## Hiring freezes amid COVID-19 pandemic leads to substantial contraction of recruitment activity

### KEY FINDINGS

Record falls in permanent placements and temp billings

Demand for staff plummets and starting pay declines

Staff availability rises at quickest rate since November 2009 amid reports of redundancies

### KEY DATA

#### Permanent Placements Index



#### Temporary Billings Index



The KPMG and REC, UK Report on Jobs is compiled by IHS Markit from responses to questionnaires sent to a panel of around 400 UK recruitment and employment consultancies.

Commenting on the latest survey results, James Stewart, Vice Chair at KPMG, said:

*“The COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc on the UK jobs market with a record drop in vacancies and recruitment plans frozen.*

*“The uncertainty over the outlook is weighing heavily on the nation – we estimate that as many as 13 million jobs are highly affected by the lockdown, representing just over a third of all jobs in the UK.*

*“It’s an unprecedented situation for UK business and resilience, then recovery, is key to navigating through the crisis. All eyes will also be on the Government’s forthcoming announcement on easing current restrictions so confidence in the jobs market can start to rebuild.”*

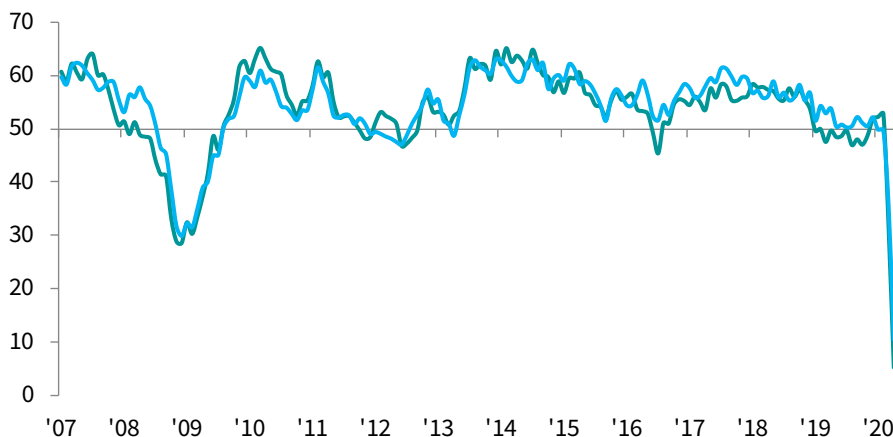
Neil Carberry, Chief Executive of the REC, said:

*“These numbers set records in all the wrong ways – but they are not unexpected, given the lockdown and the hit the economy is taking. While fighting the virus must remain our priority, the strain the lockdown is placing the economy under cannot be sustained indefinitely without very significant and long-lasting effects on unemployment and job creation.”*

*“The good news is that the capacity for our economy to recover quickly is definitely there – but we won’t get back to strong growth instantly when the lockdown eases. Government needs to work with businesses to ensure that the support they have offered tapers out as the economy returns to normal, rather than leaving firms facing a cliff-edge and having to cut costs quickly through things like higher redundancies. This approach will also allow firms to invest in the future – creating new jobs to drive the economy and help the UK bounce back.”*

#### Permanent Placements Index / Temporary Billings Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month



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# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Report on Jobs is unique in providing the most comprehensive guide to the UK labour market, drawing on original survey data provided by recruitment consultancies and employers to provide the first indication each month of labour market trends.

The main findings for April are:

### Unprecedented fall in recruitment activity

Recruitment consultancies across the UK signalled a severe drop in overall hiring activity at the start of the second quarter as the COVID-19 pandemic led companies to put hiring plans on hold. As a result, both permanent placements and temp billings fell at rates far exceeding those seen even at the height of the global financial crisis.

### Staff vacancies fall at sharpest rate on record

The pandemic also weighed on demand for staff as uncertainty over the outlook, including the longevity of any measures to contain the virus, led clients to reassess their staffing needs. Vacancies for both permanent and temporary workers fell at the sharpest rates ever seen since the survey began in October 1997.

### Renewed fall in pay as demand for staff weakens

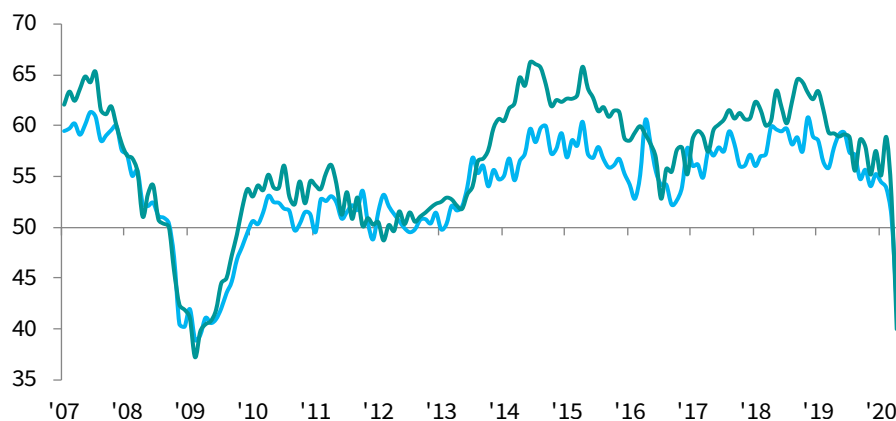
After rising at notably slower rates in March, starting salaries and temp wages both fell during April. Permanent starting salaries declined at the quickest rate since March 2009, while pay awarded to short-term staff dropped to the greatest extent since July 2009.

### Labour supply increases for first time in seven years

The availability of candidates rose for the first time since April 2013, with the rate of expansion the steepest since November 2009. Recruiters widely commented that redundancies had led to marked increases in the supply of both permanent and temporary staff.

Permanent Salaries Index / Temporary Wages Index

sa, >50 = inflation since previous month



## 2 STAFF APPOINTMENTS

Recruitment consultancies report on the number of people placed in permanent jobs each month, and their revenues (billings) received from placing people in temporary or contract positions at employers.

An index reading above 50 signals a higher number of placements/billings than the previous month. Readings below 50 signal a decline compared with the previous month.

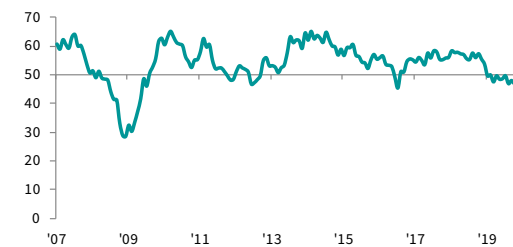
### April sees considerable contraction in permanent staff placements

Latest survey data signalled a back-to-back monthly drop in permanent staff placements across the UK. The rate of contraction accelerated to by far the steepest in the 22-year series history as the UK faced strict lockdown measures as part of efforts to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Temporary company closures, social distancing and uncertainty around the outlook led to widespread recruitment freezes and delayed hiring decisions, according to panel members. Furthermore, approximately 92% of the survey panel registered a fall in permanent placements, compared to just 3% that saw a rise.

Permanent staff appointments fell at record rates across all four monitored English regions in April, led by the North of England.

### Permanent Placements Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month



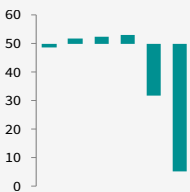
### Permanent Placements Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month

	UK	London	South	Midlands	North
Nov '19	48.8	50.6	45.3	47.0	51.7
Dec '19	51.9	51.7	48.4	52.9	54.1
Jan '20	52.3	48.0	52.4	48.2	56.7
Feb '20	52.9	47.5	53.9	52.5	57.3
Mar '20	31.7	20.3	32.0	35.1	35.3
Apr '20	5.3	5.2	5.8	4.7	2.4

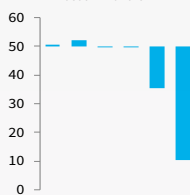
### Permanent Placements Index

Last six months



### Temporary Billings Index

Last six months



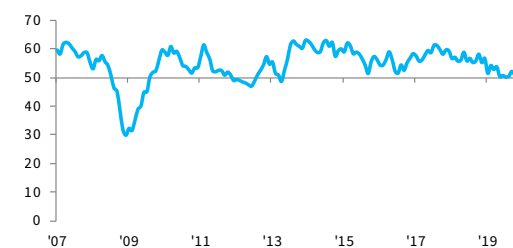
### Unprecedented decline in temp billings

Recruitment consultancies in the UK signalled the most severe drop in billings received from the employment of temporary staff on record in April. This was highlighted by the respective seasonally adjusted index posting by far its lowest reading in over two decades of data collection. As was the case for permanent placements, recruiters widely linked the fall to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent public health measures.

All four English regions registered the most severe drops in temp billings since data collection began in October 1997.

### Temporary Billings Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month



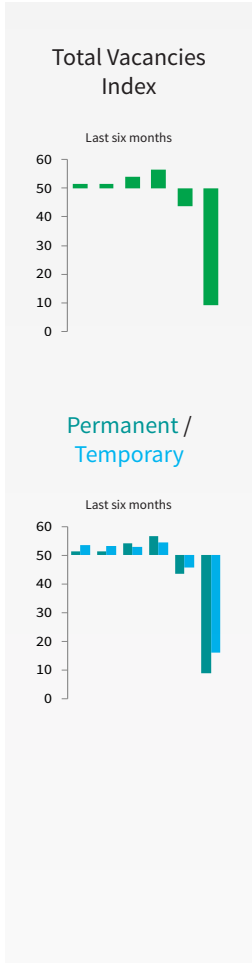
### Temporary Billings Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month

	UK	London	South	Midlands	North
Nov '19	50.5	50.2	47.6	54.9	52.4
Dec '19	52.2	52.3	51.3	57.1	51.4
Jan '20	49.8	48.5	49.1	53.4	50.9
Feb '20	49.7	45.0	53.6	48.9	53.7
Mar '20	35.6	27.2	36.1	33.9	40.1
Apr '20	10.4	9.5	11.0	5.5	15.5

### 3 VACANCIES

Recruitment consultants are asked to specify whether the demand for staff from employers has changed on the previous month, thereby providing an indicator of the number of job vacancies.



#### April sees record drop in staff vacancies

The seasonally adjusted Total Vacancies Index dropped sharply from 43.8 in March to just 9.3 in April, to signal a back-to-back monthly fall in demand for staff. The latest reading pointed to the sharpest reduction in vacancies since the survey began in October 1997 by a considerable margin.

#### Permanent and temporary vacancies

Recruitment consultancies indicated that demand for both permanent and temporary workers deteriorated considerably in April. Overall, demand for permanent staff fell at a slightly quicker pace than for temporary workers. Nonetheless, the rates of decline for both measures were unprecedented in the survey's more than two-decade history.

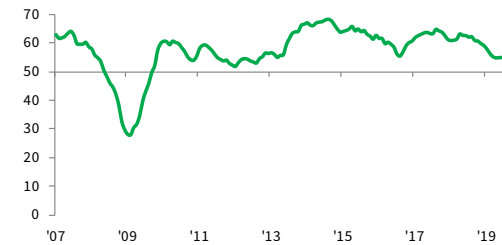
#### Public & private sector vacancies

April data highlighted a broad-based decline in staff vacancies across the public and private sector.

The most severe falls in demand for staff were seen for permanent and temporary workers in the private sector. That said, the public sector also saw record declines in vacancies for both permanent and short-term staff.

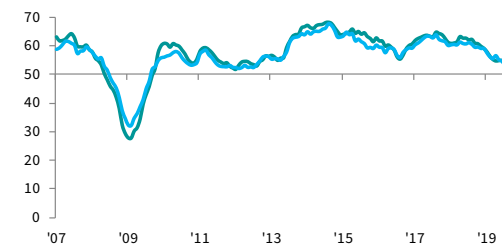
#### Total Vacancies Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month



#### Permanent / Temporary

sa, >50 = growth since previous month



#### Vacancy Index summary

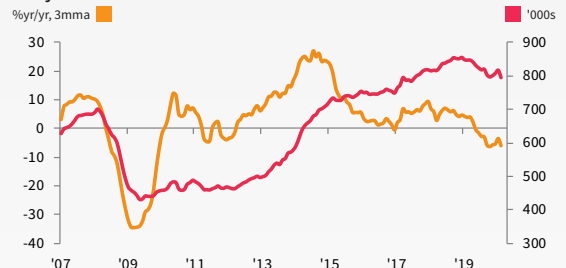
sa, >50 = growth since previous month. \*Not seasonally adjusted.

	Permanent				Temporary		
	Total	Total	Private*	Public*	Total	Private*	Public*
Nov '19	51.3	51.2	52.3	45.7	53.6	54.9	47.2
Dec '19	51.5	51.4	52.5	46.0	53.2	53.5	51.3
Jan '20	53.9	54.0	60.4	47.8	52.7	49.5	47.6
Feb '20	56.6	56.7	65.8	51.1	54.5	57.1	53.5
Mar '20	43.8	43.7	42.8	47.9	45.8	44.7	50.9
Apr '20	9.3	8.9	2.9	14.7	16.2	8.0	24.6

### OFFICIAL DATA: UK JOB VACANCIES

Latest labour market data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) showed that overall UK job vacancies fell by -6.1% year-on-year to 795,000 in the three months to March. Although this figure remained historically elevated, it was the lowest number recorded since mid-2017. The notable deterioration in the Report on Jobs Total Vacancies Index suggests that official vacancies could fall at a sharper rate during the second quarter.

#### UK job vacancies



Source: Office for National Statistics.

## 4 VACANCIES BY SECTOR

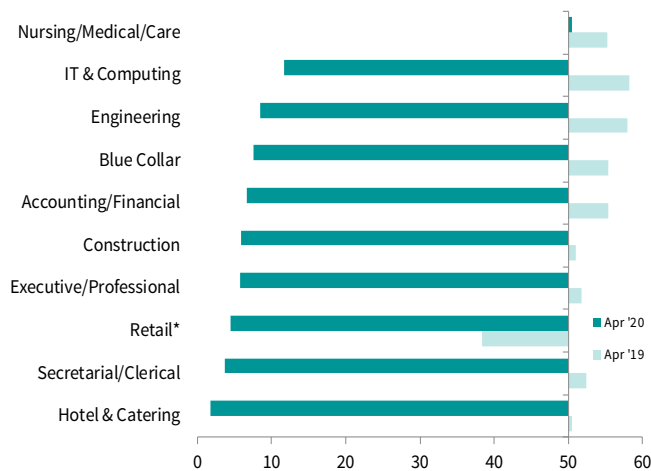
Recruitment consultancies are requested to compare the demand for staff according to sector with the situation one month ago.

### Permanent vacancies

Substantial falls in demand for permanent workers were seen across all monitored job categories except for Nursing/Medical/Care in April. The nine sectors posting falls all saw record rates of decline, led by Hotels & Catering.

#### Permanent Vacancies Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month. \*Not seasonally adjusted.

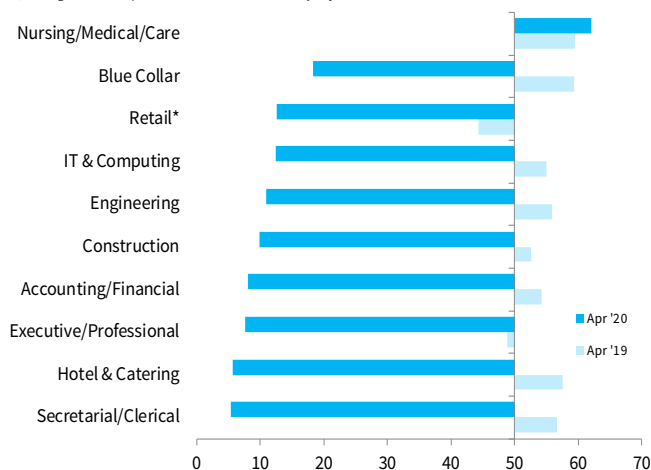


### Temporary vacancies

Nursing/Medical/Care was also the only sector to register higher demand for short-term staff during April. In contrast, record falls were seen across all nine remaining categories. Secretarial/Clerical and Hotels & Catering recorded the most severe declines.

#### Temporary Vacancies Index

sa, >50 = growth since previous month. \*Not seasonally adjusted.

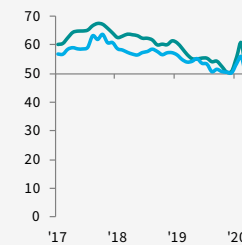


### VACANCY INDEX BY SECTOR

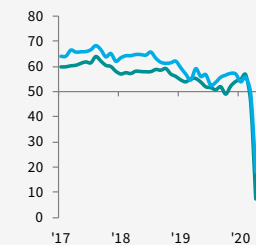
sa, >50 = growth since previous month

Permanent / Temporary

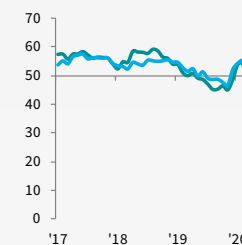
#### Accounting & Financial



#### Blue Collar



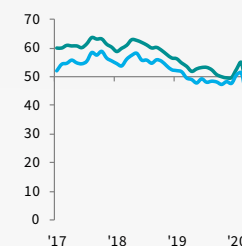
#### Construction



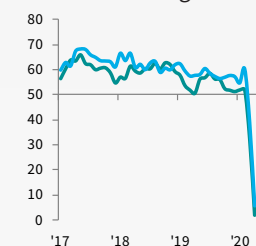
#### Engineering



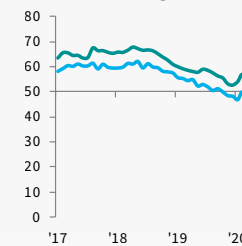
#### Executive & Professional



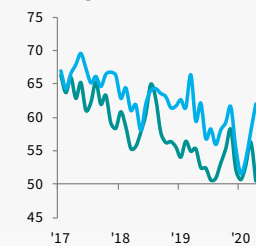
#### Hotels & Catering



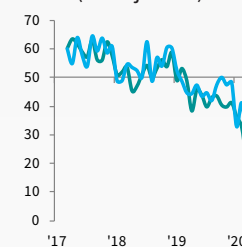
#### IT & Computing



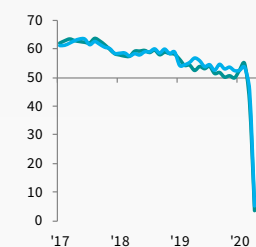
#### Nursing, Medical & Care



#### Retail (unadjusted)



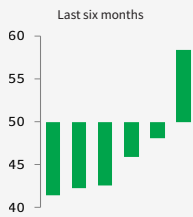
#### Secretarial & Clerical



## 5 STAFF AVAILABILITY

Recruitment consultants are asked to report whether availability of permanent and temporary staff has changed on the previous month. An overall indicator of staff availability is also calculated.

**Total Staff Availability Index**



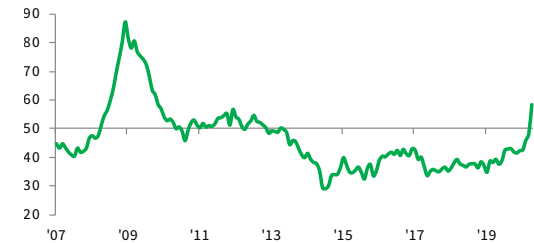
### Total staff availability increases at quickest rate since November 2009

April survey data signalled a renewed and sharp rise in overall candidate availability across the UK. Not only was it the first-time staff supply had increased since April 2013, but the rate of expansion was the steepest recorded since November 2009.

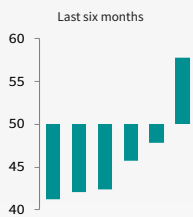
The upturn was driven by the first expansion of permanent candidate numbers for seven years, and a substantial rise in temp worker availability.

**Total Staff Availability Index**

sa, >50 = improvement since previous month



**Permanent Staff Availability Index**



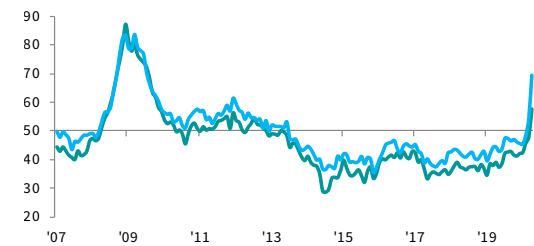
### Permanent labour supply rises for the first time in seven years

Adjusted for seasonal factors, the Permanent Staff Availability Index posted above the neutral 50.0 mark to signal the first increase in permanent candidate numbers since April 2013. Moreover, the rate of expansion was the sharpest recorded since November 2009. The upturn in permanent staff supply was attributed to redundancies that stemmed from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as furloughed staff seeking new roles.

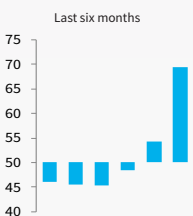
The availability of permanent workers rose across all monitored English regions, with the Midlands seeing the quickest rate of growth.

**Permanent / Temporary**

sa, >50 = improvement since previous month



**Temporary Staff Availability Index**



### Sharpest rise in temp candidate numbers since July 2009

UK recruitment consultancies also reported widespread redundancies across the temporary jobs market in April, which drove a further rise in short-term staff availability. Notably, the rate of expansion was the fastest seen since the depths of the global financial crisis in July 2009.

Increases in temp staff supply were recorded across all four English regions monitored by the survey. The quickest rate of increase was noted in the North of England.

**Permanent Staff Availability Index**

sa, >50 = improvement since previous month

	UK	London	South	Midlands	North
Nov '19	41.2	41.0	38.6	43.0	44.2
Dec '19	42.1	42.9	39.1	43.5	46.2
Jan '20	42.4	42.8	40.6	43.0	45.0
Feb '20	45.7	42.4	44.5	45.6	51.5
Mar '20	47.8	48.1	46.4	48.9	52.7
Apr '20	57.7	55.0	57.3	62.1	61.9

**Temporary Staff Availability Index**

sa, >50 = improvement since previous month

	UK	London	South	Midlands	North
Nov '19	46.1	46.0	47.1	40.6	51.9
Dec '19	45.5	49.2	44.3	39.8	50.9
Jan '20	45.4	51.6	44.2	41.3	49.6
Feb '20	48.5	50.0	46.8	44.3	51.4
Mar '20	54.3	58.9	53.4	45.7	59.1
Apr '20	69.3	68.5	70.3	67.3	71.8

## 6 DEMAND FOR SKILLS

Recruitment consultancies are invited to specify any areas in which they have encountered skill shortages during the latest month.

### Skills in short supply: Permanent staff

<b>Accounting/Financial</b> Accountants Auditors Credit Controllers Finance Investment Risk Taxation	<b>Nursing/Medical/Care</b> Carers Health Care Assistants Nurses Pharmacists
<b>Blue Collar</b> Cleaners Drivers Forklift Drivers Industrials Manufacturing	<b>Secretarial/Clerical</b> Office Staff
<b>Construction</b> Joiners	<b>Other</b> All Commercial Logistics Sales Security
<b>Engineering</b> Engineers Mechanical Engineers Senior Electronic Engineers Technicians	
<b>Executive/Professional</b> Compliance Human Resources Management Project Managers	
<b>Hotel/Catering</b> Hospitality	
<b>IT/Computing</b> CNC Data Professionals Data Scientists Database Developers Developers IT Java Technology	

### Skills in short supply: Temporary staff

<b>Accounting/Financial</b> Accountants Finance	<b>Other</b> Agricultural All
<b>Blue Collar</b> Cleaners Drivers Warehouse Welders	
<b>Construction</b> Construction Stress Engineer	
<b>Engineering</b> Design Engineers Engineers	
<b>Executive/Professional</b> Scientists	
<b>Hotel/Catering</b> Catering	
<b>IT/Computing</b> Data Scientists Database Developers Developers IT Java Technology	
<b>Nursing/Medical/Care</b> Carers Doctors Health Care Assistants Nurses Social Workers	
<b>Secretarial/Clerical</b> Administration Office Staff	

### Skills in excess supply: Permanent staff

<b>Accounting/Financial</b> Accountants Book Keepers Credit Controllers Finance Financial Controllers Financial Services	Project Managers Recruitment Consultants	Graduates Logistics Sales Unskilled
<b>Blue Collar</b> Blue Collar LGV Drivers Warehouse	<b>Hotel/Catering</b> Catering Front of House Hospitality Hotel	
<b>Engineering</b> Engineers Mechanical Engineers	<b>IT/Computing</b> Technology	
<b>Executive/Professional</b> Digital Marketing Human Resources Legal Management Marketing	<b>Retail</b> E-commerce Retail	
	<b>Secretarial/Clerical</b> Administration Office Staff Receptionist	
	<b>Other</b> All Designers	

### Skills in excess supply: Temporary staff

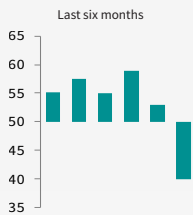
<b>Accounting/Financial</b> Accountants Book Keepers Credit Controllers	Hospitality Hotel	Sales Unskilled
<b>Blue Collar</b> Blue Collar Drivers Industrials LGV Drivers	<b>IT/Computing</b> Analysts	
<b>Construction</b> Construction	<b>Nursing/Medical/Care</b> Doctors Health Care Assistants Nurses	
<b>Engineering</b> Engineers	<b>Retail</b> E-commerce Retail	
<b>Executive/Professional</b> Marketing Project Managers	<b>Secretarial/Clerical</b> Administration Clerical Office Staff Receptionist	
<b>Hotel/Catering</b> Catering Front of House	<b>Other</b> All Commercial	

Note : Skills can be reported as being both in short supply and excess supply as we survey various recruitment agencies across the country, so there is geographical variation as well as the possibility of candidates with particular skills being concentrated in certain areas.

## 7 PAY PRESSURES

The recruitment industry survey tracks both the average salaries awarded to people placed in permanent jobs each month, as well as average hourly rates of pay for temp/contract staff.

### Permanent Salaries Index

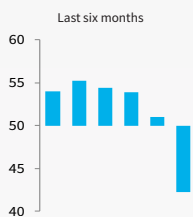


### Starting salaries fall for first time since April 2012

The seasonally adjusted Permanent Salaries Index posted below the neutral 50.0 level in April, to signal the first reduction in starting salaries awarded to permanent staff for eight years. According to panellists, clients had reduced salary offers due to worries over rising costs relating to the pandemic. Moreover, the rate of decline was the sharpest since March 2009.

Renewed falls in starting salaries were seen across all four monitored English regions in April.

### Temporary Wages Index



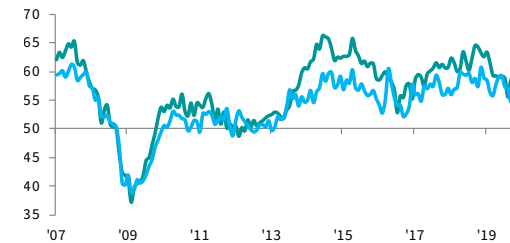
### Temp wages decline at sharpest rate since July 2009

Latest data signalled a renewed reduction in average hourly rates of pay for temporary staff at the start of the second quarter. Notably, it marked the first decrease since January 2013, with the rate of contraction the quickest since July 2009. Panel members widely attributed the fall to the pandemic and subsequent weaker demand for staff.

London recorded the most severe drop in temp pay, but marked falls were also seen across the three other English regions.

### Permanent Salaries / Temporary Wages

sa, >50 = inflation since previous month



### Permanent Salaries Index

sa, >50 = inflation since previous month

	UK	London	South	Midlands	North
Nov '19	55.2	53.7	56.7	52.9	58.4
Dec '19	57.5	54.4	57.6	57.6	58.2
Jan '20	55.1	55.1	54.8	56.8	54.7
Feb '20	58.9	57.4	56.6	62.9	61.6
Mar '20	52.9	53.5	51.1	54.5	52.3
Apr '20	39.9	35.5	41.3	38.3	41.5

### Temporary Wages Index

sa, >50 = inflation since previous month

	UK	London	South	Midlands	North
Nov '19	54.0	54.0	54.2	54.0	52.5
Dec '19	55.2	55.6	55.6	53.8	53.4
Jan '20	54.4	55.0	54.7	53.9	52.3
Feb '20	53.9	53.1	53.5	55.9	52.5
Mar '20	51.0	49.0	52.2	51.1	48.4
Apr '20	42.2	37.6	42.7	39.3	45.6

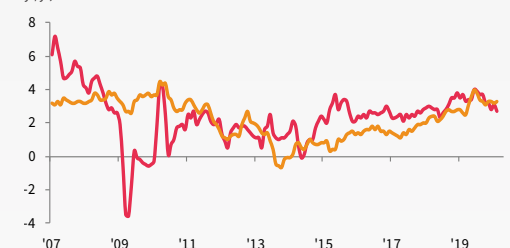
## OFFICIAL DATA: UK AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS

Employee earnings (including bonuses) increased by 2.8% on an annual basis in the three months to February 2020, according to the latest data published by the Office for National Statistics. The expansion was softer than in the previous three-month period (3.1%), and marked the slowest rate of pay growth for one-and-a-half years.

Underlying data indicates the slowdown was driven by weaker pay growth across the private sector, which eased from 3.1% to 2.7%. In contrast, public sector earnings expanded by 3.3%, which was up slightly from 3.2%.

### UK average weekly earnings (private / public)

%yr/yr, 3mma



Source: Office for National Statistics.



## 8 SPECIAL FEATURE

This section features data from the Recruitment and Employment Confederation’s survey of employers

### MENTAL HEALTH PROVISION

This year, Mental Health Awareness Week will take place from 18-24 May. And while the theme for this year is kindness, the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown up many new challenges for businesses in terms of how to take care of your staff.

The UK lockdown has forced large swathes of the population to work from home, physically isolated from their colleagues. This is a situation that many have never found themselves in before, and both businesses and workers have had to adapt to a much lower level of social interaction than they were used to.

In the REC’s most recent *JobsOutlook* survey, conducted between 1-9 April, we found that the majority of employers had been taking action to support the mental health of their employees during the coronavirus outbreak. Of those who offered remote working, two in three (64%) ensured that all teams hold regular virtual meetings to tackle isolation, while half (51%) had circulated information and exercises promoting wellbeing to their staff.

It is also important to remember that people do not just come to work for the work. With offices across the country closed, many people are also missing the more casual social aspects of their jobs. With that in mind, it is encouraging that 57% of employers who offer home working have held virtual staff socials, to help their employees keep in touch on a more casual basis during the lockdown.

On the other end of the spectrum, millions of people are still travelling to work, especially in essential sectors like healthcare and logistics, and putting themselves at a higher risk of infection in the process. Our most recent *JobsOutlook* survey found that 44% of employers did not offer home working. During a global pandemic, this is sure to take a toll on the mental health of those workers who cannot work remotely.

However, even where home-working is not possible, businesses are taking steps to ensure that they are keeping in touch with and looking after their staff. Three in five (61%) of all business have been identifying and reaching out to vulnerable staff on a personal level, and half (52%) have offered more flexible working arrangements, such as working outside normal hours or taking more frequent breaks. Importantly for this current situation, two in three (68%) have allowed staff more flexibility to deal with sickness in the family.

It is very encouraging to see business leaders becoming more people-focused in this time of crisis. Many firms, even in the recent past, would not have been as likely to actively think about staff who might be struggling personally, have problems at home, or need more support. And with employee benefits and support packages becoming even more important for jobseekers, it could provide a competitive advantage for the organisations that do this best – firms that do all they can to support their staff now will put themselves in a great position once the jobs market recovers and people start looking for new jobs again.

Which of the following actions, if any, has your organisation taken to support the mental health of employees during the coronavirus outbreak?

Allow staff more flexibility to deal with sickness in the family	68%
Ensure each team holds regular virtual meetings to tackle isolation	64%
Identify and reach out to vulnerable staff on a personal level, aside from work related conversations	61%
Hold virtual staff socials for those working from home	57%
Offer flexible working arrangements such as working outside normal working hours or more frequent breaks	52%
Circulate information and exercises promoting wellbeing whilst homeworking	51%

n = 111

Source: *JobsOutlook*, REC

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### Methodology

The KPMG and REC, UK Report on Jobs is compiled by IHS Markit from responses to questionnaires sent to a panel of around 400 UK recruitment and employment consultancies.

Survey responses are collected in the second half of each month and indicate the direction of change compared to the previous month. A diffusion index is calculated for each survey variable. The index is the sum of the percentage of 'higher' responses and half the percentage of 'unchanged' responses. The indices vary between 0 and 100, with a reading above 50 indicating an overall increase compared to the previous month, and below 50 an overall decrease. The indices are then seasonally adjusted.

Underlying survey data are not revised after publication, but seasonal adjustment factors may be revised from time to time as appropriate which will affect the seasonally adjusted data series.

For further information on the survey methodology, please contact [ecomomics@ihsmarkit.com](mailto:ecomomics@ihsmarkit.com).

### About IHS Markit

IHS Markit (NYSE: INFO) is a world leader in critical information, analytics and solutions for the major industries and markets that drive economies worldwide. The company delivers next-generation information, analytics and solutions to customers in business, finance and government, improving their operational efficiency and providing deep insights that lead to well-informed, confident decisions. IHS Markit has more than 50,000 business and government customers, including 80 percent of the Fortune Global 500 and the world's leading financial institutions.

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### About REC

The REC is the voice of the recruitment industry, speaking up for great recruiters. We drive standards and empower recruitment businesses to build better futures for their candidates and themselves. We are champions of an industry which is fundamental to the strength of the UK economy. Find out more about the Recruitment & Employment Confederation at [www.rec.uk.com](http://www.rec.uk.com).

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