In-depth bargaining analysis for negotiators

Unite – Fighting for
JOBS · PAY · CONDITIONS

MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

The working class now need their day in the sun

Andy Burnham has one shot to change the fortunes of this Labour Government.

I think a lot of working-class people are past caring about what happens in Westminster.

And if that is the case, only a fundamental shift in policy and approach will have any chance of breaking through.

To deliver Andy will need to do more than talk about change.

He will need to ignore the “computer says no” brigade. It won’t be easy to withstand pressure from disgruntled former Cabinet ministers or the siren voices of big finance. But to succeed he must.

If he doesn’t then it will become business as usual.

Fumbling along the road of decline. Throwing hands in the air and blaming foreign conflicts, migrants or the disabled for all society’s woes.

To build a programme of hope, this Government must learn to embrace a different economic agenda.

One where the working class are at the front of the queue, not at the back.

For forty years, those in Government of all political shades have been happy to make “tough choices” when it is everyday people paying the price.

But when it comes to the wealthy or the profiteers, we have heard nothing.

It was private debt and greed that created the banking crisis in 2008 and yet it was workers and communities who paid with ten years of austerity.

In COVID many firms and individuals made vast profits on the back of misery and yet again it is everyday people who pay with higher taxes.

It is time that those who have benefitted from 40 years of Thatcherism now help pay for the costs of that economic experiment.

We need a short and long-term plan for Britain.

First, we want to see the personal tax threshold raised, to put more money back in people’s pockets.

To drive more spending in our economy.

Freezing it year after year has just punished the working class for crises not of their making. We want to see those that have caused the problem pay for it.

Starting with taxes on extraordinary wealth and excess profits.

Second, after decades of empty rhetoric from every Government, we finally want to see a revolution in our approach to industrial strategy.

We must now grasp the nettle of investing in the jobs of tomorrow.

We face enormous challenges. AI and climate change to name but two.

But if we invest now around our incredible research capacity and have a concrete jobs’ plan, we can be the leaders of a new world, not a nation of decline.

That is what hope looks like.

A Government willing to take tough choices against those responsible for the crises we have faced.

And a Government willing to take the visionary choices needed to invest in British jobs and industry.

We need this new Government to be a government for the working class.

In solidarity

Sharon

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Unite
theUNION

SECTION ONE

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Facts and Figures

Collective bargaining is the tried and tested method of pushing up pay. We are the great equalizer; a force for good; getting money into the hands of the working class, the real wealth creators.

Sharon Graham, Unite General Secretary

1. What is the backdrop to collective bargaining this month?

1.1 RPI is 3% but may now exceed 5% by year-end

The inflation rate may have eased slightly but prices are only going one way: up, up, up. Rent and house prices are up and mortgage rates are historically high.

Independent forecasts show that RPI could be as high as 5.3% by the end of the year. Our members need inflation-busting pay deals to cope, with forecast RPI setting the floor for a decent pay deal.

- See the Cost of Living & Pay section for more.

Pensions are deferred pay and they need to be a focus for bargaining so we're not left short in later life

There is a shortfall between the income many will get in retirement and how much they need for what they deserve. We're not talking luxury, just an annual holiday, the odd night out and maybe even running a small car.

It wasn't long ago that all pension talk was of scheme deficits. Workers paid a price and deficits became surpluses. BUT favourable market forces also helped the shift. Now they're trying to remove the pension surpluses that could provide a safety net should things turn against us.

- See the Cost of Living & Pay section for more.

Many wins are helping push back against the doom and gloom

We have seen more inflation busting wins recently:

At the airports (Prestwick and Aberdeen), on the buses (Go North West Bee Network), in waste management (Veolia), and offshore (Neo Next).

They have resulted in higher hourly pay, bigger offshore allowances, increased shift premiums, more employer pension contributions, extra annual leave.

We've seen new recognition for OCS cleaners and at North Tyneside Citizens Advice Bureau, a successful organising campaign to restore bargaining rights that Milk & More took away. We will also see the introduction of mandatory regulation for the veterinary sector, following years of campaigning by The British Veterinary Union, part of Unite.

- See the Victories section for more.


£620m
WINS...and counting

SECTION TWO

VICTORIES

Facts and Figures

Unite will do everything it can to support reps building power in the workplace, at the bargaining table and in dispute. Work, Voice, Pay tools, Facts & Figures, Forensic Accounts, strike pay, Strikes Plus and organising campaigns: they're all designed for a clear purpose: To help you win better jobs, better pay, and better conditions.

Sharon Graham, Unite General Secretary

2. What have we delivered through collective bargaining?

2.1 Pay wins: Veolia, Qioptiq, Go North West Bee Network, Neo Next and Haldane Fisher members win bumper pay increases

Unite members have won improvements to their pay and conditions this month through taking - or at least preparing for - industrial action:

- Nearly 600 **Go North West Bee Network** bus drivers based in Bolton, Denton, Heywood and Wigan secured a landmark pay agreement delivering wage increases of between **23%** and **56%** over three years. Most drivers received an immediate **£2.50** an hour increase, with hourly pay rising from **£15.51** to **£18** backdated to April 2026, before increasing to **£19.50** in 2027 and **£21** in 2028. The agreement was secured after Unite members overwhelmingly backed strike action. The deal establishes a stronger benchmark for pay across the sector.[1]
- Workers at **Haldane-Fisher** in Newry secured an inflation-busting pay deal after five weeks of continuous strike action, bringing a long-running dispute to a successful conclusion. Unite members remained on all-out strike after rejecting an unacceptable pay offer, maintaining pressure on the employer until an improved settlement was reached. [2]

Facts and Figures

- Unite members employed by **Qioptiq in St Asaph, North Wales**, secured a two-year pay deal worth **8%** after rejecting an initial 3% offer and voting for industrial action. The improved agreement delivers a 3.5% pay rise in the first year, a 1.5% bonus, additional annual leave, and a further 4.5% pay increase in the second year. The credible threat of industrial action forced the employer back into negotiations, resulting in a significantly improved settlement that recognised the highly skilled work carried out by Unite members in the defence manufacturing sector.[3]

- **Veolia** workers at **Grangemouth** secured a **one-year pay deal** worth up to **9%**, backdated to January 2026, after overwhelmingly rejecting an earlier 3% pay offer. The improved agreement increased pay by around **£1.20** per hour and covers HGV drivers, operatives, team leaders and supervisors responsible for waste management at the Grangemouth industrial complex. Through collective bargaining and strong workplace organisation, Unite successfully forced the employer to improve its original proposal, delivering **inflation-beating wage** increases across the workforce.[4]
- Around 50 Unite members employed by **Neo Next** on the Elgin Franklin and North Alwyn offshore platforms secured a one-year pay deal worth more than £4,000 through increases to basic pay and offshore allowances. After workers backed strike action, Unite forced the employer to improve its original offer by approximately 75%, delivering a significantly enhanced settlement for control room, production, senior operators and operations technicians.

These victories demonstrate that workplace organising, collective bargaining and the willingness of workers to take industrial action when necessary continue to deliver substantial improvements in pay and conditions across key industries.

2.2 Runway to Success: Unite members in Prestwick and Aberdeen airports push up pay again in the sector

Hundreds of airport workers also achieved enhanced agreements this month, benefiting security staff, ground operations, firefighters, engineers, customer service workers and airfield operators.

- At **Prestwick Airport,** more than 400 workers secured pay increases ranging from **5.1%** to **8%**, improvements to shift payments and pension contributions, an additional day's annual leave and a guarantee that all permanent staff receive at least the Real Living Wage of **£13.45** an hour. The agreement followed preparations for industrial action over an unacceptable pay offer.[5]

At Aberdeen Airport, around 70 workers employed by **Aberdeen International Airport** secured **a 4.2%** one-year pay deal after backing strike action, while around 70 **ICTS Central Search** workers secured a two-year settlement including a **5%** increase in basic pay and shift allowances, backdated to January 2026, **plus RPI+1% in 2027** and wider improvements. [6]

These victories demonstrate that collective bargaining backed by credible industrial action continues to deliver meaningful gains across the civil aviation sector.

2.3 Recognition wins: OCS, Citizens Advice, Milk & More

Unite continued to strengthen workers' collective bargaining rights through recognition victories at **OCS/British Airways, Milk & More** and **North Tyneside Citizens Advice Bureau**.

Facts and Figures

- **British Airways HQ cleaners** employed by **OCS** secured recognition after a two-year campaign involving two rounds of strike action, winning sole bargaining rights over pay, terms and conditions.[7]
- Around 85 employees at **North Tyneside Citizens Advice Bureau** secured recognition after 14 months of negotiations, gaining formal bargaining rights together with elected workplace and health and safety representatives.[8]
- Workers at **Milk & More** restored collective bargaining rights at the **Erith, Ipswich and Watford depots** after Unite successfully secured statutory recognition through the Central Arbitration Committee.[9] This was after Milk & More terminated its long-standing national recognition agreement with Unite and shopworkers union USDAW last year. Unite launched a strategic organising campaign to rebuild representation within the business.

These victories continue to expand Unite's collective strength and lay the foundations for future improvements in pay and conditions.

2.3.1 Policy win: Veterinary workers secure change with mandatory regulation introduced

The **British Veterinary Union** in Unite secured an important national policy victory after the **UK Government** agreed to introduce mandatory regulation for the veterinary sector following years of campaigning.

Unite has campaigned since 2021 for mandatory regulation and continues to call for minimum staffing levels, staff-to-case ratios and occupational health and safety protections to be included in future legislation. The decision marks a significant step towards improving standards and protections for veterinary workers across the UK.[10]

2.4 Workers' Voice: Reps describe how they won

Every successful campaign has a story behind it. Here, we hear directly from Unite reps who have organised, negotiated and delivered real improvements for members in their workplaces. From **Eddie Stobart**, where workers successfully challenged attempts to create a two-tier workforce by replacing permanent drivers with agency labour, to **Prestwick Airport**, where members won better pay, enhanced shift allowances, increased pension contributions and an extra day's annual leave. These interviews demonstrate the power of collective bargaining and workplace organisation.

Hear directly from the reps behind these victories as they explain how they engaged members, built solidarity, negotiated with employers and used the strength of Unite to deliver better outcomes. Their experiences provide practical advice and inspiration for reps across every sector looking to organise, bargain and win.

> Hear it straight from the front line! Listen to the full interviews on the Facts and Figures audio channel**: Spotify:** https://tinyurl.com/4uf9y5zc **Apple Podcasts:** https://tinyurl.com/3uv8ae8d

2.4.1 Eddie Stobart Rep on driving away union-busting

Eddie Stobart is one of Britain's biggest road hauliers. Like all such companies they operate third party logistics. They are part of **Colina group** with a turnover of over £2.5 billion. Despite boasting about social values they tried to replace drivers on the North of England Morrison's contract with agency workers.

We spoke to Stockton -based senior steward Sam Chapman to find out how workers organised to stop this change.

Facts and Figures

Sam, just tell us a little bit about yourself, what you do for the union, and what you do operationally.

SC: I'm Sam Chapman. I'm a night shop steward, an HGV driver, and I've been a shop steward for about 18 months. I'm also a branch chair.

So let's get into what happened at Stobart on the Morrisons contract. What happened? What was the impact?

SC: I worked for Stobart on a previous contract for about eight years, so I understood what Eddie Stobart had done to the industry and how they ran contracts. When we were told three years ago that Morrisons had appointed Eddie Stobart as their logistics 3PL provider, concerns were high straight away.

As the contract progressed, we noticed a high turnover in staff through natural wastage, dismissals and people leaving because they were unhappy. The roles weren't being replaced. Core driver jobs were being diluted with agency staff and what they called "full-time equivalent" agency workers.

They were working five days a week, under the same rules and policies as us, but still remained agency drivers.

We lodged a tri-site grievance covering Stobart, Wakefield and Gadbrook to challenge the company's reliance on agency employees.

So what did you think were the threats to your terms and conditions if they continued with that approach?

SC: The threat was clear. They would reduce permanent numbers to the point where the three sites, which had been unionised for a long time, would lose the collective bargaining strength that had secured good pay, terms and conditions over the years. We'd seen it happen elsewhere.

Once permanent numbers are reduced to a minimum, workers lose their voice.

We followed the grievance procedure, which has three stages.

Stage 1 wasn't well received because management wouldn't even meet us. Around four or five weeks after lodging the grievance, we escalated it to Stage 2.

The response was weak. From day one they insisted they would only employ people on what they called the "green contract" – Eddie Stobart terms, which were significantly inferior.

We were determined to avoid a two-tier workforce, so the grievance moved to Stage 3, with the regional officers becoming involved. Initially, management resisted very strongly.

> **Obviously you had to get your members aware of what was going on. So how did you engage your members around this?**

SC: We used branch meetings, conversations on shift, posters on the union noticeboards, WhatsApp groups and leaflets. The important thing was making sure members understood what was happening and what it could mean for their jobs and for the future workforce.

We attended a series of meetings, but eventually it became clear we weren't making progress, so we issued a failure to agree. We then held a consultative ballot, and it was almost unanimous across the three sites that members were prepared to take industrial action to protect what we had fought for and to protect future generations.

> **While this was going on, obviously your agency workers in the sites were there. Were you talking to them about how this would impact them?**

SC: Absolutely. They were very receptive and wanted as much information as possible. Initially they thought we wanted agency workers removed from the sites, but once we explained that we were actually fighting for them to be converted into full-time jobs, they understood.

Facts and Figures

Once you had those conversations, and they understood what was going on, did you recruit them into the union?

SC: Yes. We recruited additional members from the agency workforce across the three sites.

After the consultative ballot, management asked for a meeting very quickly.

They agreed to set up four workshops, bringing together the union and the company to agree agency percentages, workload and volumes. It also gave the union valuable insight into how the depots were being staffed.

The first three meetings were productive, but the fourth meeting went sideways. We realised we weren't going to achieve what we had been led to believe was possible, and it felt as though we were simply being appeased. At that point we decided to proceed with a formal industrial action ballot.

So what was management's reaction at that stage?

SC: The company didn't want industrial action, so Acas became involved. We agreed to run the ballot alongside Acas talks.

The discussions were constructive and we reached an agreement to end the dispute.

Initially, the company agreed to recruit 65 drivers across the three sites by converting the full-time equivalent agency drivers into permanent roles because they were clearly filling permanent jobs.

They also agreed to pay parity across all three sites, with terms and conditions matching those of the existing workforce.

So final question. Is there one or two points that you would share with other reps in a similar situation, whether in road haulage or another sector, that would help them in similar circumstances?

SC: Absolutely. First, stand your ground. Make sure you're prepared and don't always accept what management says as the final word, because it often isn't.

Secondly, use what the union has to offer. The collective bargaining process and the support of regional officers make a real difference.

Those are two great points to end on. Thanks very much, Sam.

2.4.2 Prestwick Airport Convenor on winning better shift allowances, pay, pensions and holiday

Prestwick International Airport has long runways, a 24-hour operation and a strategic position on the Great Circle route between Europe and the US. Since the Scottish Government purchased the airport in 2013 to rescue jobs and services, it has gone from strength to strength. Ryanair operates passenger services to European destinations, while a major cargo operation runs 15 flights per week to mainland China.

Prestwick is also a key hub for Middle Eastern airlines and hosts the US and other militaries as a refuelling and crew rest base. It is currently the temporary base for the RAF's Voyager tanker fleet. A booming airport that kept operating throughout lockdown is now back in good financial health. The workforce that sustained it are making sure they share in that recovery.

Facts and Figures

We're talking to Dave McRonald, convener of the Prestwick Airport shop stewards. Dave, first of all, introduce yourself.

DMcR: I'm Dave McRonald from Prestwick Airport. I've been there since 2012. Before that I was a rep and before that a junior member. My original union was the Transport and General Workers' Union before it became Unite, so I've been a member for a long time.

Let's get into the deal you won at Prestwick Airport. Take us through what you achieved.

DMcR: We've been fighting for recognition of shift allowances. Last year we made progress, but this year we managed to double the night shift allowance to £20 per shift, increased the early start allowance from £10 to £15 per shift, and secured £10 for late finishes.

We achieved pay rises ranging from 4.5% for the lowest-paid group, covering around 60 people, up to 8.8% for a small number of staff. The majority of our bargaining unit of received 5.3%, so most people got over 5%.

We also secured an extra day's holiday and increased the employer pension contribution by 1%, taking the pension match from 8% and 10% to 8% and 11%. The biggest issue was always shift allowances because that was the most expensive part of the deal.

I take it that's because Prestwick works a lot of night shifts and cargo handling?

DMcR: Exactly. People had been working shifts for years without being properly paid for them. That almost led to industrial action in 2021, just after COVID. At the time the employer argued they didn't have the finances, but as the airport became busier we believed it was time to pay staff back for what they had contributed.

We felt we'd worked shifts for free for a long time and it was time for the employer to give something back.

Tell us about management's reaction when you submitted your claim.

DMcR: Before negotiations I go round every department, speak to members and non-members and gauge the mood. I also use that opportunity to encourage people to join the union.

Once I'd gathered members' priorities I discussed the claim with our full-time officer.

The first offer was rejected. It simply wasn't enough. I also told management the second offer wouldn't be accepted because they hadn't put enough into the pot.

It was rejected by 86% of members.

After that there were lots of phone calls and Zoom meetings. To be fair, the company did engage. We told them we needed to change something to get across the line and they responded. Towards the end they became very proactive.

Once the union recommends a deal, I'd say around 90% of the time members will support it, so they knew getting the union's recommendation mattered.

Facts and Figures

You've talked about engaging members. How did you keep everyone informed?

DMcR: I've got WhatsApp groups for every department - firefighters, baggage handlers, cleaners and others.

It can be hectic because everyone is asking questions at the same time, but it's the quickest way to keep members updated.

We also send newsletters and share information electronically. Having direct communication means members always know where negotiations stand.

How important was Unite's support?

DMcR: When you're negotiating pay you need to understand the company's finances. Unite's financial analysis suggested a pay rise of around 5%, and we actually achieved slightly more than that.

Having that information is invaluable because it lets you challenge the employer's arguments with evidence. We also benefited from the airport RISC, where reps from airports across Scotland share information and coordinate bargaining.

We used the Runway to Success campaign, which all the airports followed, and that consistency strengthened everyone's position.

Finally, what advice would you give to other reps going into negotiations?

DMcR: Listen to your members. If you know what they want, you can negotiate with confidence because you know what they will and won't accept.

Use all the support your union provides. Full-time officers, organisers, financial analysis and the RISC all give you confidence and strengthen your position. I've only had to call on that support a couple of times, but when I needed it, it was there.

Use all your union resources. That's huge.

That's a great piece of advice to end on. Thanks very much to Dave McRonald from Prestwick Airport for talking to Facts & Figures about their excellent agreement.

2.5 Bite-sized Bargaining: More wins from the past year

When workers stand together, armed with the facts and supported by their union, real change is possible. Winning workers are telling us how they won better pay deals in their workplaces.

- **HSL** Reps on how they won 15.4% pay rise over two years after a strike action: https://tinyurl.com/29whsadb Facts & Figures December 2025, p.18.
- Unite Rep **Laurie** on how **Chartwells**' workers won full sick pay rights: https://tinyurl.com/2u24cmww Facts & Figures November 2025, p.18.
- **Unite EC South East Rep** and hospitality Rep **Megan** on working conditions in the hospitality sector: https://tinyurl.com/3mjwjm57 Facts & Figures October 2025, p.36.
- Senior Unite Rep **Kevin Byrne**at **Livv Housing** and Unite Rep **Lorraine Hanson** at **Capita** told us how they won a pay rise through determined organising, collective strength, and the support of their union. Read the interview at https://tinyurl.com/d5p4nwhp or see Facts & Figures June 2025, p.29.
- Lead Shop Steward **Sharon Williams** at **Loganir** shared how strong organising, member-led action, and sector comparisons delivered a remarkable 27% pay deal over 18 months, and what others can learn from it. Read the interview at https://tinyurl.com/53ambvb9 or see Facts & Figures April 2025, p.20.
- Unite lead Rep **Dishon Boxer-Gylenhall** shared how they secured a dramatic pay increase for cabin crew of **Qantas** in the UK. Read the interview at https://tinyurl.com/zu4228bc or see Facts & Figures March 2025, p.19.

Use Work, Voice, Pay tools to win
There are several tools in the **Work, Voice, Pay** armoury to understand more about your company's financial data and prepare better collective bargaining negotiations, all of which can be accessed at https://www.unitetheunion.org/work-voice-pay

SECTION THREE

COST OF LIVING AND PAY

Facts and Figures

> *We are under no illusion: this is not the end - the cost of living crisis is not over. Furthermore, those who have profited from the crisis should pay for it.*
>
> **Sharon Graham**, Unite General Secretary

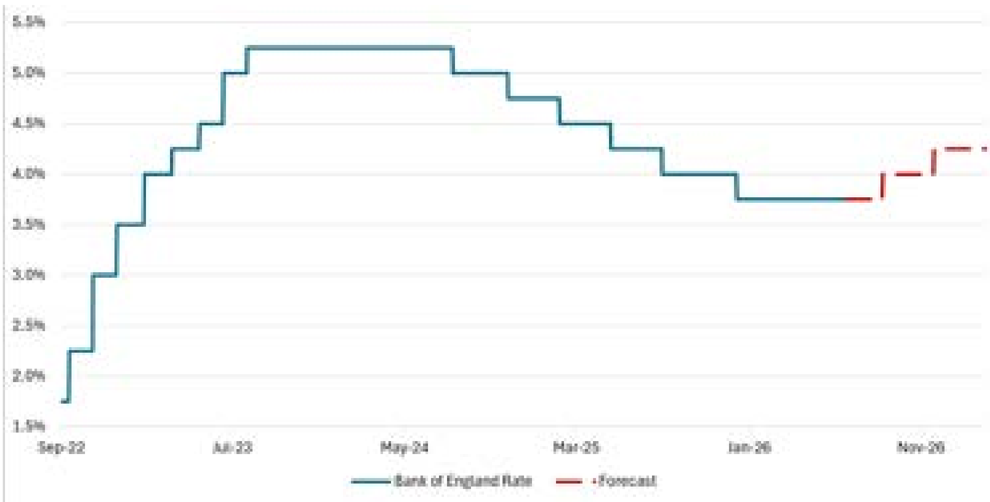
3. What is happening to the cost of living and pay?

3.1 Key figures: RPI is 3% and forecast to rise

The RPI inflation rate is 3% but will rise significantly this year. Unite Reps can use **forecast RPI** to set the floor for pay deals this month.

- **Prices rose 3% in the year to June,** as measured by the Retail Price Index (RPI).[11]
- **The cost of living is set to rise further.** The Strait of Hormuz is closed again. Oil and gas prices have already risen and profiteers across the economy will look to hike prices wherever they can. City forecaster Capital Economics says RPI may hit 4.5% by year end. The National Institute of Economic and Social Research predicts 5.3%. We deserve pay deals that reflect that.[12]
- **The Bank of England may increase interest rates twice this year.** City traders are now betting that the base rate will be increased twice by year-end to 4.25%, up from 3.75% currently. This has a serious effect on our members' cost of living, especially housing costs and debt interest payments.[13]
- **Tying pay to CPI or CPIH short-changes workers.** CPI is 2.6% this month, CPIH (which includes housing) is 2.8%.[14]

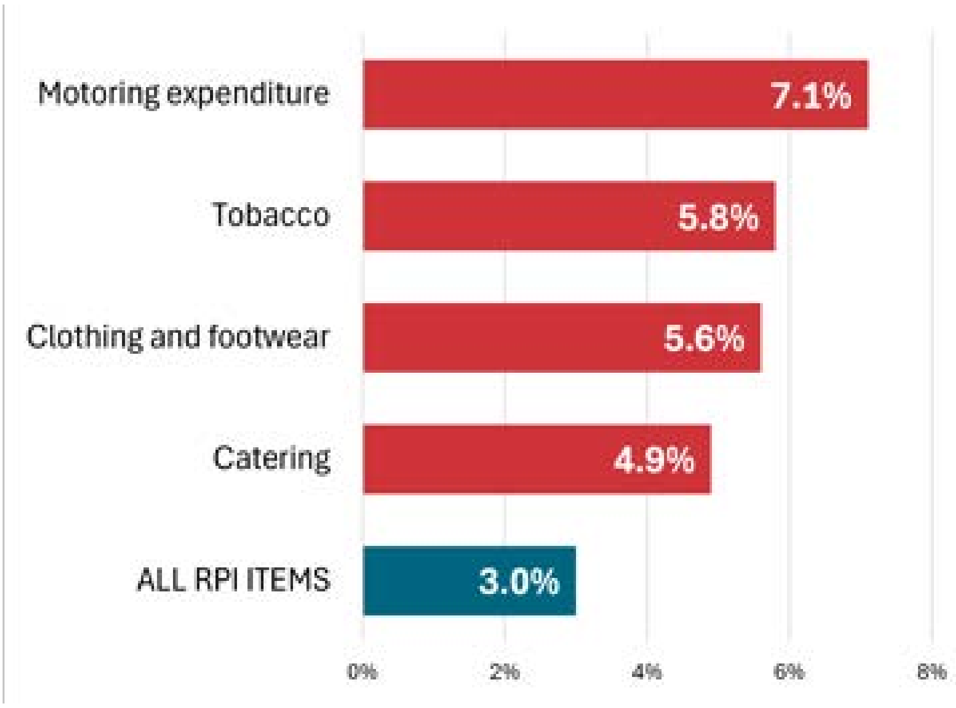
Traders expect the Bank of England to increase rates twice by year-end



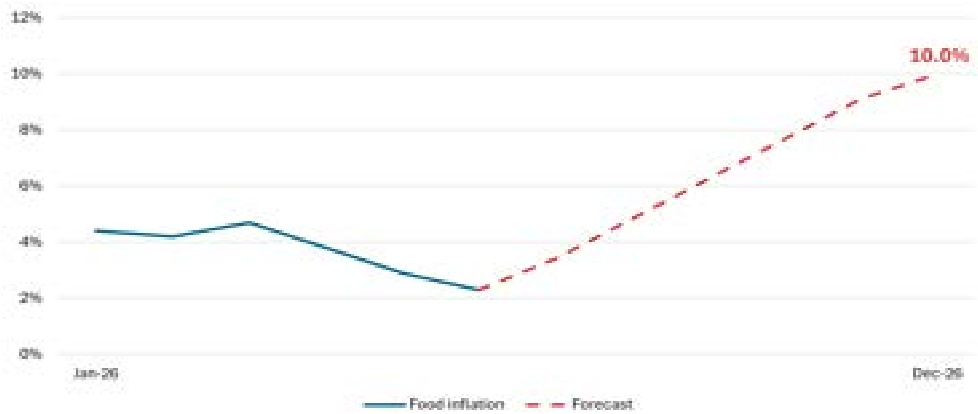
Facts and Figures

RPI is 3.0% but will go up by the end of the year

Motoring and clothing are rising faster than the headline rate

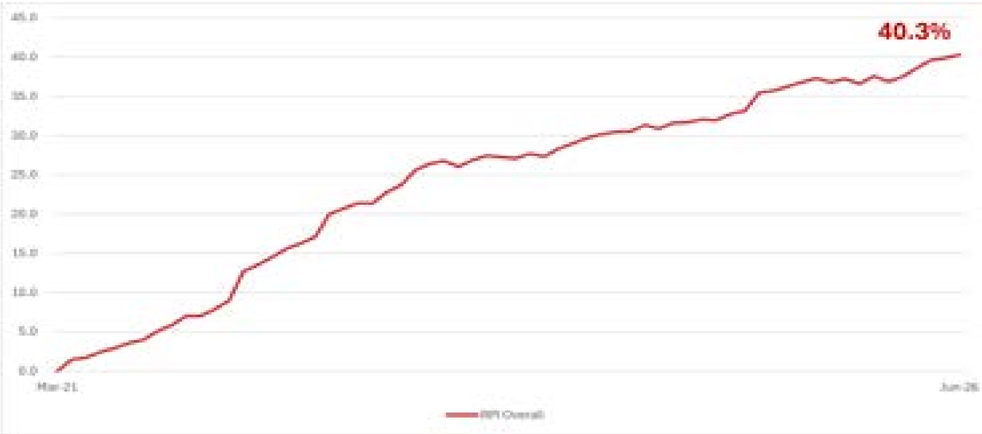


Food price inflation will be increasing by 10% by year end

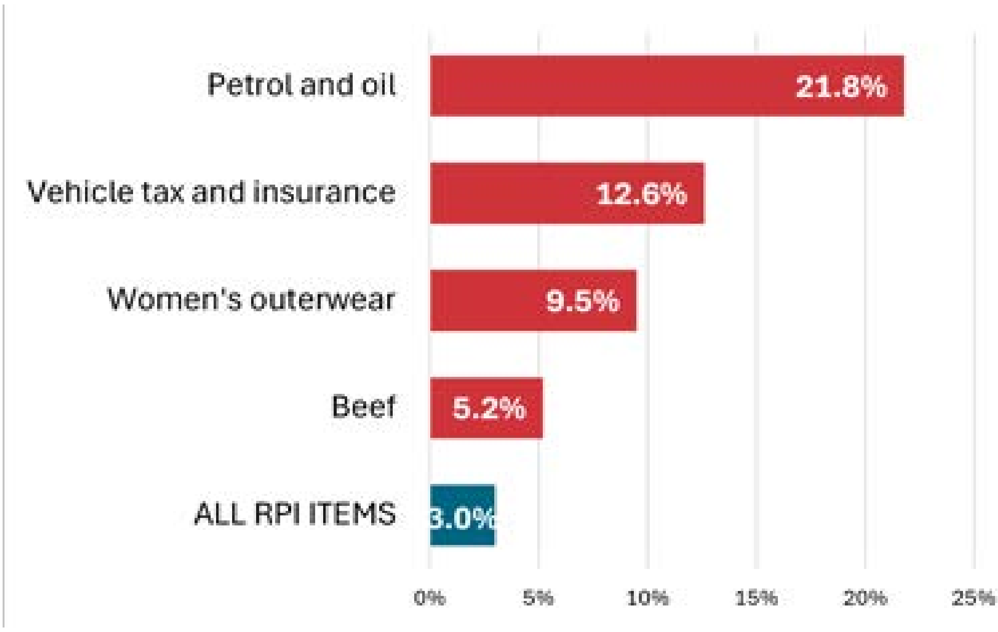


Facts and Figures

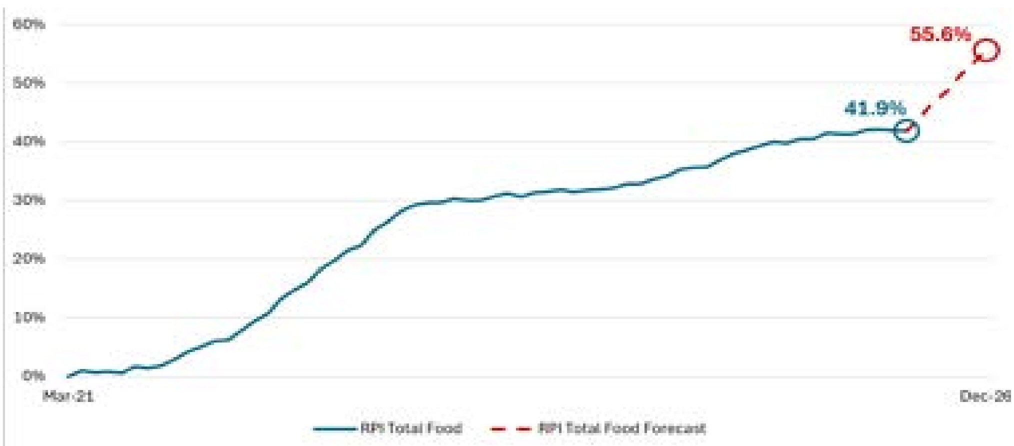
Overall, prices have risen 40% since March 2021



Fuel costs are up 21.8% year-on-year



Food will be 56% more expensive compared to 2021



Facts and Figures

3.2 The Strait of Hormuz is closed yet again: inflation will rise, pay deals need to reflect this

The Strait of Hormuz continues to dominate the new headlines this month. It's an ever-changing story but at the time of writing, the Strait is closed, again.

Oil prices are back on the up, and the prospect of paying reasonable prices for essentials like food and fuel is dwindling. **Workers will yet again be expected to pay for a crisis that is completely out of our hands.**

The tried and tested way to protect ourselves is by securing pay deals that reflect the forecast rise in inflation, through collective bargaining.

Your employer may have tried to use the news of the deal to reopen the Strait in June as an excuse to limit pay increases. But as we wrote in last month's Facts and Figures, inflation was already baked in for months to come.

Pre-war, the Treasury forecast that RPI would hit 3.2% by the end of 2026. Now, in July, that estimate has increased to 4.1%. But some analysts used by the Treasury suggest that even 4.1% may be overly optimistic. City forecaster Capital Economics predicts 4.5%. The National Institute of Economic and Social Research reckons 5.3%.[15]

When the war first kicked off, the closure of the Strait blocked off around a quarter of the world's oil supply - and prices soared as a result.

In response, member countries of the International Energy Agency (IEA) made 400 million barrels - or around a third of their emergency reserves - available to the market.[16]The idea was to:

- Cover the supply shock caused by the closure and;
- Soften price spikes.

Oil prices hit their peak in late April at around $120 barrel, and had since fallen consecutively on the news of ceasefires and investor optimism.

Then, in June, the US and Iran announced they had finally reached a deal and the Strait was reopened, allowing oil to flow through. Oil prices neared $70/barrel, and many though that the worst was behind us.

Now, in July, the war is back on. It turns out that the US and Iran couldn't reach a deal after all, and the Strait of Hormuz is yet again closed.[17]

But this time, oil traders think that oil stockpiles are nearly empty.

IEA countries have already burned through three quarters of the 400 million barrels they made available at the start of the war. Stocks held by OECD countries have fallen to lows not seen since the 1980s.[18]

And while many countries do still have millions of barrels in reserve, much of this simply cannot be touched.

As ridiculous as it sounds, JP Morgan says that a small portion of US reserves are used as "roof oil" to stop the underground caverns where the barrels are stored from caving in. In total, they estimate that up to half of US reserves are needed for structural stability.[19]

This means that the buffer put in place to soften price spikes is quickly running out and so are the hopes of falling inflation.

If oil continues the trend it's currently on, the Bank of England's forecast that inflation will push 5% by year-end is looking ever-more likely.[20]

Workers need to push for above-inflation pay deals through collective bargaining to stay afloat.

Facts and Figures

And if the current outlook wasn't already looking expensive enough, traders are now pricing in two interest rate rises by the Bank of England this year.[21] The base rate is currently at 3.75%, but traders expect an increase to 4% in September, followed by a further rise to 4.25% by year-end.[22]

That means everything from mortgage costs, rent, and loan payments will become more expensive. To put that into perspective, analysts expect the forecast **0.5% increase will cost an additional £906 per year for the typical mortgage**.[23]

And all while workers are feeling the brunt of never-ending global crises, firms and shareholders are pocketing millions in windfall profits.

As we reported last month, the UK's Big 4 banks took home over £11 billion in net profit - that's after all costs including tax are taken off - in just three months.[24] With interest rate hikes on the horizon, these profits will continue to climb.

Meanwhile, BP just announced that net debt had fallen by up to $3.3 billion after profits more than doubled due to the war, to £2.4bn for the first quarter of 2026.[25] Either BP's cash balance has grown by $3.3 billion, or it's been able to pay off that much debt due to higher oil prices. Either way, the likes of BP and banks such as Barclays have massively benefited - all while workers struggle to pay their bills.

This makes it clear - we can't wait around for politicians to sort out the crisis. **Workers need to take matters into their own hands and secure above-inflation pay deals that will keep up with ever-growing costs.**

We can't continue to be expected to pay the price for every global crisis while firms and shareholders across the world pocket millions.

3.3 Rents are up by 3.3% in the last year

The current housing market works for no one except the wealthy. As the Resolution Foundation has reported, **the share of families' income dedicated to housing has doubled since 1980.**[26]

Successive governments have failed to provide decent, affordable housing, leaving workers with no choice but to **seek better pay through collective bargaining to keep up.**

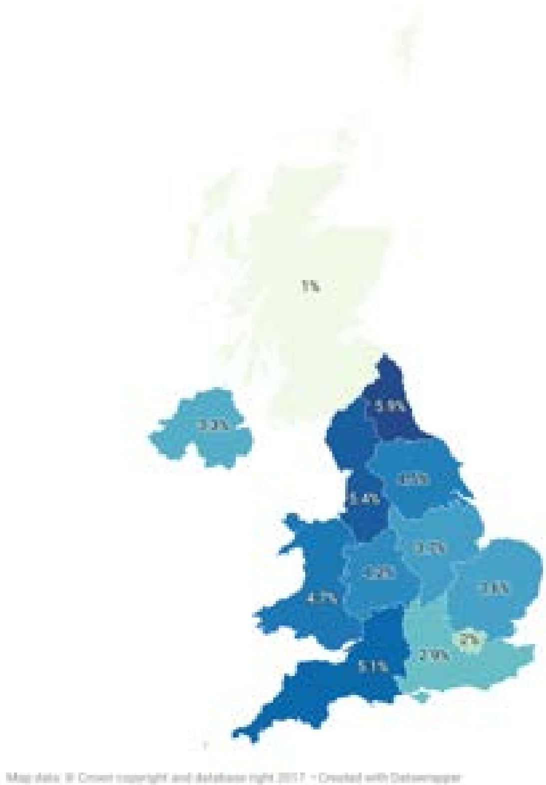


Figure 1 Annual change in private rent. Source: ONS.

- Overall, rents have increased by 3.3% in the 12 months to June 2026.[27]
- Rent rose the fastest in Wales, up 4.7% compared to 3.4% in England and 1% in Scotland. The latest data for Northern Ireland is to March 2026, when it rose 3.3%.
- Rent in North East England outstripped the other English regions, with prices increasing 5.9%.

The Government itself highlights the pressure housing costs are putting on families: rent payments now take up 40% of joint income for private renters - and that's even with housing support. Without it, the proportion increases to 46%.[28] Both are well above the 30% proportion that the ONS deems to be "affordable".[29]

The ONS also breaks down "rental affordability" by region, comparing private rent prices to gross monthly income. As you might expect, London is by far the most expensive region - with rent taking up 41.6% of income.[30]

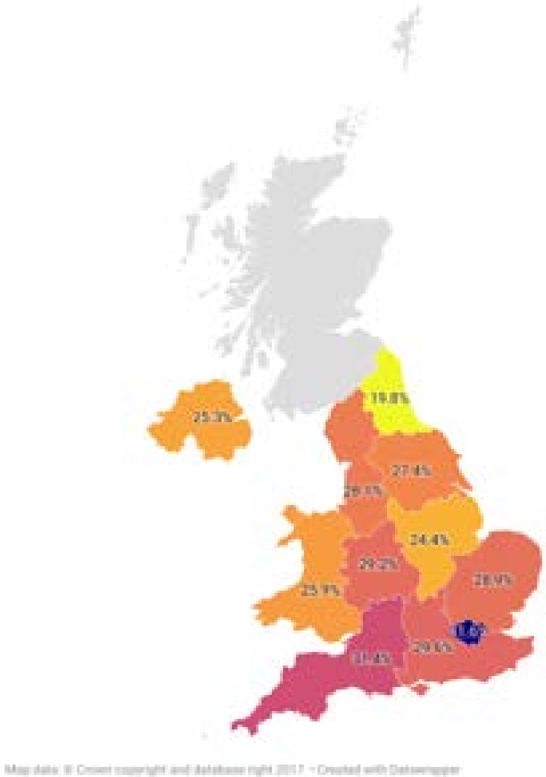


Figure 2 Ratio of private rent to median income, FY24. Source: ONS.

The latest data from the ONS is from 2024, but as many workers will know, there hasn't been a drastic turn around in the rental market. A growing share of income is being swallowed by housing costs before the month even begins.

Only through collective bargaining can members fight back and demand decent pay increases that keep them afloat.

3.4 Average UK house prices are up 3.8%

It isn't just rent that's on the rise. House prices are following the same trend, increasing up 3.8% compared to last year.[31]

In the latest available 12 months:

- England saw the largest rise, with average house prices up 3.9% to £291,000 (to April 2026).
- Prices in Scotland grew 2.8% to £192,000, while homes in Wales saw a 3.5% uptick to £212,000 (to April 2026).

- The average house price for Northern Ireland was £198,000 up 7.4% (to March 2026).

In England regional differences are also stark:

- The North East recorded the highest annual increase at 9.9%.
- In London, house prices fell 2.1% compared to last year - marking the ninth consecutive month of decreases. The changes to Stamp Duty aren't to blame though, according to the ONS, but rather that buyers are being priced out due to the recent rises in mortgage costs.[32]

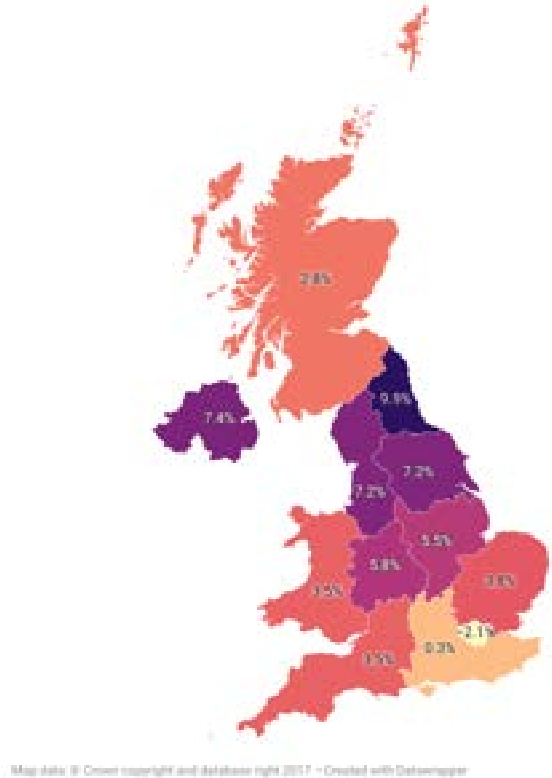


Figure 3 House prices annual percentage change. Source: ONS

3.4.1 Average mortgage rates are above 7%, trending downwards, but still well above recent historical levels

As of 15 July 2026, the average standard variable mortgage rate was 7.34% across all lenders.[33]

Even as rates fall from recent peaks, they remain well above historical levels, meaning **households renewing mortgages face significantly higher monthly costs**.[34] Many potential buyers are now carrying credit card or other debt, making it harder to secure mortgages.[35]

Facts and Figures

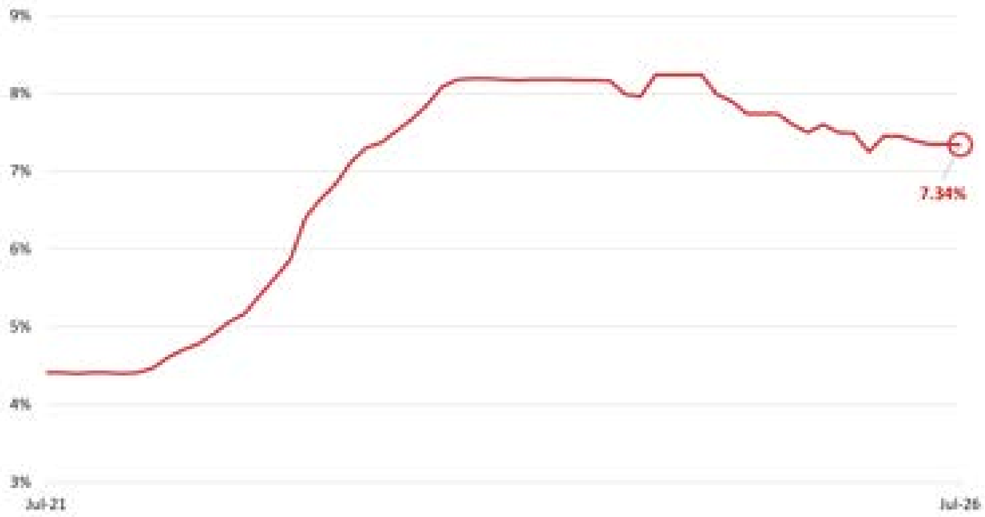


Figure 4 Standard variable rate, Jul 21-Jul 26. Source: Uswitch

Housing is hugely expensive in the UK, and to address this, our members – whether renters or owners – need good pay deals to keep up.

The ongoing conflict in Iran doesn't help things either. Banks have not only pulled thousands of deals off the market in response to the Strait of Hormuz closure but also put up their rates.

These are the same banks who recently made over £11 billion in net profit in just three months, while the rest of us face ever-growing housing payments.

For more on the Big 4 Banks, see Facts and Figures: June 2026: https://tinyurl.com/mr33nf82

The need to ensure that we pursue above-RPI pay increases, and resist attempts to use measures which do not cover the costs of housing, has never been greater.

3.5 What 'enough' pension means in reality e.g. an annual holiday, regular nights out, or owning a car

In May's Facts & Figures we looked at [pension contribution rates]() and the difference they make to workers' retirement income. But using figures on their own can make it hard to imagine how different levels of retirement would look in practice. So in this article we'll provide a clearer picture.

We've previously used the Pensions UK Retirement Living Standards benchmark to compare levels of pension income.

Facts and Figures

This shows what a given standard of living in retirement actually costs. It is based on research into what people think they need for a decent lifestyle when they have retired, rather than abstract savings targets. **The Pensions UK benchmark is a useful way to judge whether your pension will provide enough for the lifestyle you would like when you retire.**

Standard	Annual cost (single person)	What it covers
Minimum	£13,900	Covers all basic needs with a little left over for fun: a week's self-catering UK holiday, eating out about once a month, and modest leisure activities a couple of times a week. Assumes using public transport and no car.
Moderate	£32,700	More financial security and flexibility: a fortnight's all-inclusive holiday abroad plus a UK weekend break, a small car replaced every seven years, and regular but not extravagant social spending.
Comfortable	£45,400	More financial freedom: a fortnight's half-board holiday abroad plus several UK weekend breaks, a newer car replaced more frequently, and more generous spending on eating out, gifts and helping family.

Table 1: for a single person, three levels of income projected by Pensions UK

We compare four different contribution rate structures ranging from the legal minimum up to best practice

Our four scenarios are:

- **Scenario A – Auto-enrolment minimum: 8% total**. This is the legal floor, with the employer paying the statutory minimum of 3% of qualifying earnings.
- **Scenario B – Moderate: 12% total**. Such as 6% employee + 6% employer
- **Scenario C – Good practice: 15% total.** Such as 6% employee + 9% employer

Facts and Figures

- **Scenario D – Best practice: 20% total.** Such as 7% employee + 13% employer.

For each scenario we assess a worker on one of three levels of income, with their pension contributions varying accordingly

To see what kind of pension income they might receive we have created a model based on assumptions about investment returns, inflation, charges and so on. Our model assumes that in each case the worker contributes continuously from age 22 to State Pension age (67) under the four different contribution scenarios.

These are illustrative projections as it is hard for anyone to accurately forecast outcomes from DC pensions. That said, comparing the projected retirement income against the Retirement Living Standards shows a clear and troubling pattern.

Unless contribution rates are raised above legal minimums workers risk a retirement income that falls well short of what most people would consider adequate.

Unite's model tracks three illustrative worker profiles: a low-paid worker on the National Living Wage, a worker on a median earnings trajectory, and a professional on a graduate-entry trajectory.

Lower-paid workers may not be able to afford a yearly holiday abroad let alone owning a small car

Low-paid workers such as in retail, hospitality and care are those most likely to be on auto-enrolment's legal minimum contributions. These are industries with historically low union membership, high staff turnover, and employers who treat pension contributions as a cost to minimise rather than a benefit to attract workers with.

Contribution scenario	Pension income p.a. (£)	vs Minimum of £13,900	vs Moderate of £32,700	vs Comfortable of £45,400
Auto-enrol-ment	£21,624	£7,724	-£11,076	-£23,776
Moderate	£26,161	£12,261	-£6,539	-£19,239
Good Practice	£29,565	£15,665	-£3,135	-£15,835
Best Practice	£35,237	£21,337	£2,537	-£10,163

As you can see, many of these workers will retire with a low retirement income, which relies heavily on the State Pension. In our model a low-paid worker only achieves the Moderate level under the Best Practice contribution rate structure. This means many workers might not even be able to enjoy an overseas holiday once a year.

Median earners can generally have a holiday and the odd night out, as long as nothing big has to be replaced at home

Median earners such as those in administration, skilled trades and parts of the public sector see more variation. Some are in pension schemes with employer contributions above the legal minimum but a significant share may still be on or near the auto-enrolment minimum, especially in smaller, non-unionised workplaces.

Contribution scenario	Total income p.a. (£)	vs Minimum of £13,900	vs Moderate of £32,700	vs Comfortable of £45,400
Auto-enrol-ment	£25,305	£11,405	-£7,395	-£20,095
Moderate	£31,684	£17,784	-£1,016	-£13,716
Good Practice	£36,468	£22,568	£3,768	-£8,932
Best Practice	£44,442	£30,542	£11,742	-£958

This group provides the clearest case for why we need to bargaining over contribution rates. Relatively modest improvements in contribution rates, from auto-enrolment to good practice, can be the difference between falling short of the Moderate level set by Pensions UK and comfortably exceeding it.

Facts and Figures

While it should give more wiggle room finances are still likely to be stretched by a big unexpected cost, such as your boiler having to be replaced.

Higher-paid professionals are the only group likely to have a shot at financial security but it's still far from guaranteed

Higher-paid professionals are more likely to work for employers with better default contribution rates, often as part of a wider benefits package designed to attract and retain staff. But this isn't always the case.

Professionals in smaller firms, on contract or agency terms, or in newer industries without historically generous pension schemes can still find themselves on minimum contributions despite a relatively high salary.

Because their spending expectations in retirement are likely to be higher too, even professionals on the auto-enrolment minimum can fall short of the Moderate standard of living.

Contribution scenario	Total income p.a. (£)	vs Minimum of £13,900	vs Moderate of £32,700	vs Comfortable of £45,400
Auto-Enrol-ment	£28,068	£14,168	-£4,632	-£17,332
Moderate	£35,828	£21,928	£3,128	-£9,572
Good Practice	£41,648	£27,748	£8,948	-£3,752
Best Practice	£51,348	£37,448	£18,648	£5,948

In June's Facts & Figures we showed that fewer than one in ten are set for a comfortable retirement. It is out of reach for most. Only the higher-paid have a chance and, even then, **only the higher-paid whose pension contributions also match best practice are likely to achieve the Comfortable standard**.

The majority need their pension contributions increased so we can at least afford the Moderate standard in retirement

Using these examples, we can see pension provision using the auto-enrolment minimum is not enough to reach the Moderate standard for any of our three worker profiles.

For the low-paid worker the shortfall is over £11,000 a year.

Pensions UK's Moderate level is the standard that the majority would consider the least they would need to have a decent retirement.

We all deserve the opportunity for a proper holiday once a year and to a enjoy night out regularly, not just as a rare treat.

The pattern across all three profiles is that moving from the auto-enrolment minimum to good practice or best practice contribution levels closes the gap to the Moderate standard of living.

This is exactly why **pension contribution rates need to be part of pay negotiations**. A worker on the auto-enrolment minimum today is very unlikely to live well in retirement. A worker whose Rep has successfully moved the employer to higher contributions has a realistic shot at it.

3.6 Pensions regulator estimates 82% of UK DB schemes were in surplus, holding £163 billion more assets than needed

After a long period of defined benefit (DB) pension scheme deficits most schemes are now in surplus. A surplus basically means that a pension scheme holds more assets than it will have to pay out to members.

The Pensions Regulator estimates that at the end of 2025 82% of UK DB schemes were in surplus, holding an extra £163 billion. But who should benefit from that excess?

The government wants to use it to boost economic growth. By April 2027 it could be much easier for employers to release scheme surpluses.

That may be good for members but only if handled cautiously.

These surpluses came at a cost to employees and were helped by favourable market conditions, which could turn

Most of the schemes now in surplus closed to new members many years ago and later closed to future accrual.

Facts and Figures

Changes such as cuts to benefits, later retirement ages and higher employee contributions have cost scheme members.

Individual benefit changes can seem small but they can shave thousands of pounds from individual pensions. They can add up to big savings to a scheme. Changes were often justified by the need to reduce deficits, so they should be seen as a major factor behind these new surpluses.

Another part of the explanation is favourable markets. Those closed DB schemes now have most of their assets invested in bonds and bond-like assets. How much investors expect to earn from government bonds (gilt yields) impacts the value of a scheme's assets and liabilities. Both have fallen, but liabilities have fallen by more, improving funding positions.

Between 1987 and 2000 employers saved around £19 billion through contribution holidays, reduced contributions and refunds, according to Inland Revenue data. Those surpluses later disappeared when markets dropped, with smaller investment returns working against schemes.

Surpluses are sometimes portrayed as unused lumps of money that could be put to better use, but they are also security for benefits that will have to be paid over many years. This is why Reps and trustees should proceed with caution as the new rules come in.

The Pension Schemes Act 2026 would let trustees pass surplus payments to employers

The draft regulations for the new Pension Schemes Act 2026, published in June, give trustees a new statutory power to amend scheme rules to permit surplus payments to employers, provided that trustees agree to this.

At present, a pension fund surplus can generally only be extracted from an ongoing scheme if it is funded above buyout level - the amount required to secure, or buy out, every member's benefits - through an agreement with an insurer.

The new test is weaker. An actuary must certify that, at any point during the following three years, it is at least as likely as not that assets will exceed liabilities, meaning the scheme should be able to pay benefits without further employer contributions, provided its assumptions hold.

Trustees are left to decide what funding margin is appropriate. In practice it means the level of protection members enjoy will be settled through negotiations between trustee boards and the employer.

Using surpluses could result in lower pension payouts should the employer go bust or if risky investment decisions are taken

If surplus is removed, and the employer later becomes insolvent with the scheme underfunded, members may have to rely on Pension Protection Fund compensation. That could be less than their full scheme benefits, so trustees will need to take a prudent view of the financial security of the employer before reaching decisions.

There is also a risk that surpluses become a target. Schemes may come under pressure to be run for extractable surplus, for example by taking more investment risk or adopting more favourable actuarial and investment assumptions to produce it. Companies whose pension funds have substantial surpluses could even become takeover targets, with a view to accessing the surplus.

Bargaining can help future proof scheme members against these risks so it is important to be part of the discussion

Trustees hold the decision-making power and their duty runs to scheme beneficiaries. According to the consultation trustees should consider how members gain by using surpluses, assessing both risks and benefits.

There is already a benchmark. When Aberdeen became sponsor of the Stagecoach pension scheme in late 2025, the deal that unlocked surplus gave members an immediate 1.5% uplift and improved inflation protection. It involved a framework under which members receive the majority of future surpluses, with the employer taking a minority share.

One challenge is that when DB schemes closed to future accrual many removed member-nominated trustees from their trustee boards because, legally, they no longer had to have them.

So, there is real danger that Unite members will not have a place at the table when surplus use is being discussed in their DB schemes.

Reps should urgently start dialogue with their trustee boards and sponsoring employers.

We should present the case for any future sharing of surplus to include the members and not the employer alone.

Where it is proposed, a reasonable opening position could include:

- An independent assessment of the employer covenant - the employer's legal obligation and financial ability to meet DB scheme benefits - before any decisions are taken regarding the surplus
- A funding buffer above the ‘low dependency’ floor - so the scheme is not reliant on the employer for addtional funding to meet benefits

Facts and Figures

- Benefit improvements such as restoration of lost indexation e.g. where benefits were updated using the usually lower CPI rather than RPI measure of inflation
- That scheme members get the majority of future releases of surplus
- Clear provision of contingent assets (think collateral) or specification of claw-back arrangements (recovering funds that have already been paid out) to safeguard against future deficits.

3.7 Bite-sized Bargaining: Increased social care, child care, and leisure costs add to workers' burden

Unite backs its members who fight collectively for inflation-busting pay in the workplaces and sectors. See below for a compiled cost-of-living and real terms pay articles in our previous issues to strengthen your negotiations.

- **Use Financial Insider to discover whether real-terms pay at your company has kept pace with inflation.** Find out more here: https://www.unitetheunion.org/work-voice-pay/financial-insider.
- **CPI and CPIH both short-change workers when used instead of RPI.** Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/2wujk5s2 or look in the June 2025 edition, p.54-57.
- **The UK is the most expensive country for childcare in Europe, with costs for an under two-year-olds rising by 43% in the last decade.** Find out more here: tinyurl.com/2bcvj8hc or look in the May 2024 edition, p.49-51.
- **Social care has been mostly privatised, running for profit and costs its patients over £60,000 a year.** Find out more here:tinyurl.com/2xu66av4 or look in the August 2024 edition.
- **The lowest paid workers are experiencing the highest rate of inflation** Find out more here: tinyurl.com/uccet97z or look in the April 2024 edition, p.51-52.
- **The rising cost of living has made personal leisure a privilege as workers have had to prioritise bills and food.** Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/4nu8vvbd or look in the December 2024 edition, p.32.
- **Since 1977, the income gap between the top and bottom income groups is continuing to widen.** Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/3t9ep345 or look in the October 2024 edition, p.45-47.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WORKERS CAN'T GET BY
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SECTION FOUR
ABILITY TO PAY

Facts and Figures

Put simply: huge profits and dividends show that firms have the ability to pay.

Sharon Graham, Unite General Secretary

4. How much money are employers making?

4.1 Quarterly results update: firms have now raked in profits of £888 billion in just three months

This month, we're able to update the quarterly results of firms worldwide yet again. This time, 2,753 firms on the world's largest stock exchanges have declared how well they've done, up from 2,181 last month.

New entrants to our analysis on the London Stock Exchange (LSE) includes United Utilities - the water company for the North West of England. It raked in £173 million in net profits for its latest 3 month period - more than double what it made in the same period last year.

And these results are before the above-inflation water bills kicked in at the start of April. As we laid out in April's edition of Facts & Figures, most water companies already profitable. Yet Ofwat, the industry regulator, has allowed firms to put bills up by 36% between 2025 and 2030.

It isn't just firms on the LSE that have generated eye-watering profits. Across the world, firms have been declaring bonanza profits - many of which are Unite employers. Across the board, profit margins have increased compared to the same period last year.

Net profit margin	Same Quarter 2025	Latest Quarter
LSE	13.4%	14.5%
NASDAQ	16.5%	24.3%
NYSE	9.2%	10.9%
ENX	10.9%	12.0%
SEHK	14.3%	14.9%
TSE	5.9%	7.9%
SZSE	7.7%	8.8%

Table 2: Net profit margins at major stock exchanges. Source: S&P Capital IQ Pro.

The New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), which is the largest stock exchange in the world, topped the profits chart yet again. In total, 1,023 firms raked in a whopping £331 billion in profit in just three months.

The tech-filled NASDAQ came in at a close second, despite only 489 firms reporting results. Combined the NASDAQ generated over £306 billion in net profit, led by the likes of Alphabet, Nvidia, and Microsoft.

In London, the 61 firms with results available on the LSE have made more than £31 billion in profit.

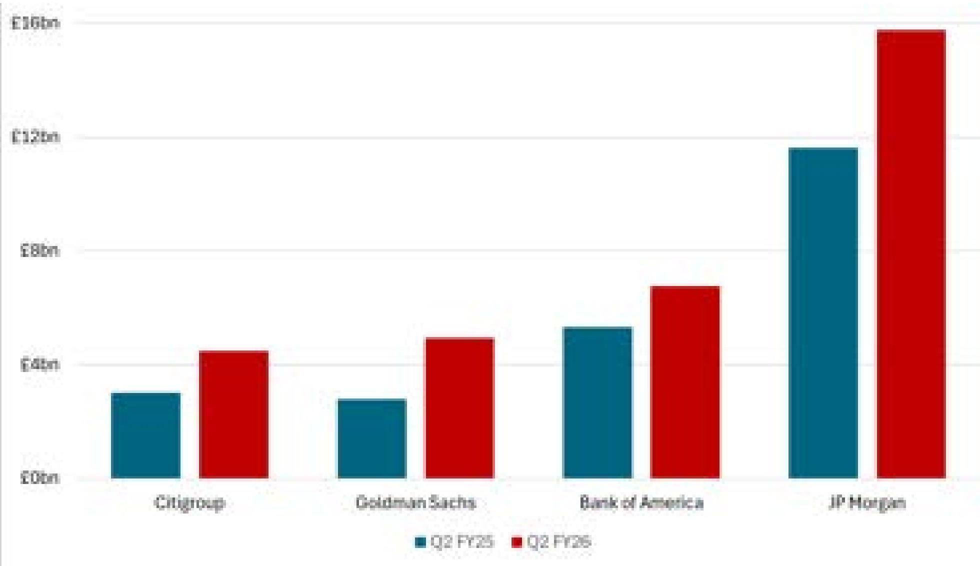
4.2 Wall Street banks have raked in their highest ever quarterly profits, boasting things are "as good as it gets"

Four of Wall Street's biggest banks have just revealed record-high profits in for the second quarter of 2026. Bolstered by their trading divisions banking off the AI boom, the four have raked in nearly £32 billion in net profit in just three months. JP Morgan's exec Jamie Dimon even boasts that "it's getting close to as good as it gets".[36]

While companies continue to pile into AI, it's crucial that jobs are protected. Unite has multiple resources available on Work, Voice, Pay to ensure that workers' can protect themselves against companies looking to replace jobs with new technology. Visit the link below to find out more:

- https://www.unitetheunion.org/work-voice-pay/work-voice-pay-guides

Profits were led by JP Morgan, which raked in an eye-watering £15.8 billion in net profit for the latest three months ending in June, a 78% increase from last year. Combined, they made a whopping £32 billion in net profit - 44% higher.



The results, which were far above what analysts were expecting, reflect the race to build AI infrastructure across the world.

Stock prices in US, China, Korea, and Taiwan have all soared - allowing the banks' trading divisions to bank in bonanza profits.[37]

With these banks expecting trillions in spending on AI in the coming years, the risk of technology replacing jobs continues to be a threat. Through collective bargaining and securing jobs, pay, and conditions, workers' can fight back with full support from Unite.

4.3 Accountant's corner: Why it's legitimate to point to group results in pay talks

If your company is part of a huge multinational group, you might ask - why should I care about the finances of the whole group instead of just my employer? And the chances are, your employer at negotiations will be saying the same thing.

The simple answer is that companies within a group are usually heavily connected and all rely on one another.

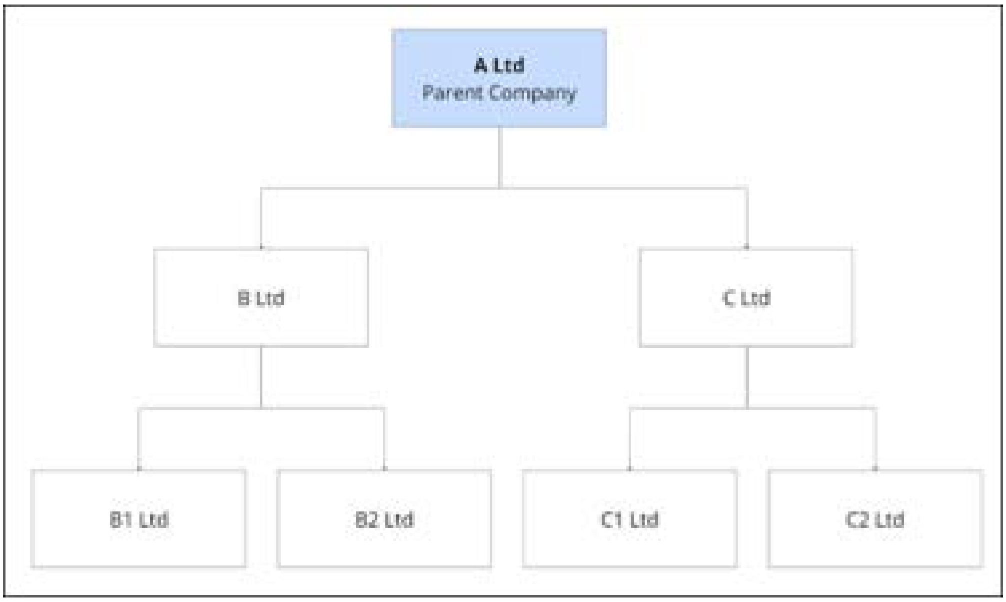
Money, costs, profits, and services often move between group companies. Because of this, looking at just one company's accounts in isolation likely won't give you the full picture.

Below, we'll go through some of the reasons why it is legitimate for you to point to the group's results during pay talks.

Group companies all trade with one another

To explain this, let's look at an example of a group of companies below. Think of it as a 'family tree' of companies.

At the top of the family tree is 'A Ltd'. You can think of it as the parent company, with its 'children' or subsidiaries being B and C Ltd.



Facts and Figures

Although they're all legally separate companies and file their own sets of accounts, they're connected because A Ltd owns them all.

B Ltd and C Ltd both also owns companies of their own. Although they're separate branches of the family tree, they're ultimately all connected because A Ltd owns B Ltd, and B Ltd owns B1 and B2 Ltd.

Let's imagine that the B Ltd side of the group owns all of the factories. Its job is to manufacture all of the group's products. Each product costs B Ltd £8 to make.

C Ltd's role is to advertise the products and sell to customers. Let's say C Ltd can sell each product for £15.

Here's how it plays out:

- B Ltd doesn't have the facilities to sell the products that it makes, so it sells them directly to C Ltd.
- B Ltd wants to make as much profit as possible, while C Ltd wants to pay as little as possible - so the two can't agree on a price.
- A Ltd steps in and tells B Ltd it has to sell the products to C Ltd for £8 - exactly how much they cost to make.
- C Ltd then sells the products on to customers for £15 each, making a £7 profit per item while B Ltd makes no profit whatsoever.

If your employer was B Ltd, you'd look its accounts and see that it doesn't make a profit at all - that must mean it can't afford a pay rise, right?

But just looking at B Ltd's accounts don't reveal the whole picture.

The products that B Ltd makes *are* profitable, but those profits are showing up elsewhere in the group - on C Ltd's accounts instead.

This is why it is so important to look at overall group results.

A Ltd, as the parent company, combines the results of both B Ltd and C Ltd into a single figure for profit and shows the full picture.

It isn't just intra-group trade of products that make it difficult to track down profits though. Groups use a wide range of methods that often aim to minimise the overall tax bill the group as a whole pays.

- **Group debt loading**: The group may allocate high levels of debt to the subsidiary in the UK. Interest payments on this debt reduce the subsidiary's reported profitability, even when the operating business itself is healthy.

- **Transfer pricing**: Profits may be shifted across jurisdictions through pricing arrangements that favour low-tax or strategically chosen locations.
- **Intra-group charges**: The UK subsidiary may be charged significant fees by the parent company for use of branding, intellectual property, or central services. These services may be higher than the market rate, resulting in dramatically reduced UK profits.

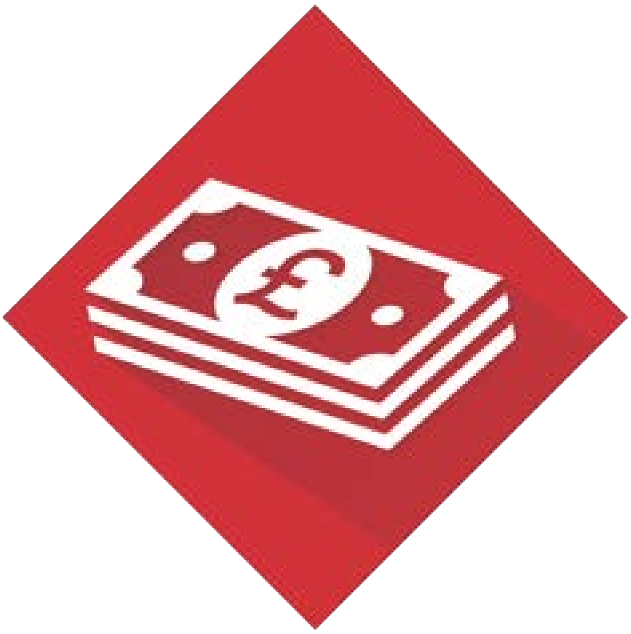
4.4 Bite-sized Bargaining: Ability to pay

Previous editions of Facts & Figures have identified how companies maximise profits and the methods they use.

- **Unite has identified five main forms of profiteering, including windfall profits.** Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/2dvcbwa6 or look in the March 2024 edition, p.76-80.
- **Companies paying dividends and share buybacks to shareholders indicates there is money for workers.** Find out more here: http://tinyurl.com/3e3f3wv6 or look in the March 2024 edition, p. 235-236.
- **Companies will use various different measures of profit but the main measures are explained here:**https://tinyurl.com/4z6jfbwc or look in the February 2024 edition, p.73-74.
- **Explainer: Why you can use group profits to back up pay demands:** https://tinyurl.com/yerzmsh8 or look in the June 2025 edition, p.83-85.
- **Unite Reps have been using stock market analyst research to reinforce the ability to pay argument.** Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/4tnnvdtf or look in the March 2025 edition, p.73-74

Use Work Voice Pay's Financial Insider tool to generate a report about your employer's finances. Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/yhk7y344.

Contact Unite's forensic accounts team for a bespoke analysis of your employer's finances.
forensic.accounts@unitetheunion.org



SECTION FIVE

ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET

Facts and Figures

Workers earn less today in real terms than they did in 1997, and the divide between the rich and the rest of us is growing ever wider. We need to fix our broken economy right now and not allow growth targets to be used as an excuse for a smokescreen for fresh rounds of austerity.

Sharon Graham, Unite General Secretary

5. What is happening to the economy and labour market?

5.1 UK GDP is worth a massive £2.8 trillion: there is more than enough money to go around

UK GDP is currently worth £2.8 trillion, making it the fifth largest economy in the world.[38]

This means the UK's GDP is incredibly high and there is more than enough money for good jobs, pay and conditions for workers.

Figure 5 UK GDP since 1960. Source: ONS.

Despite the size of the UK economy, read the news and you'll get a gloomy picture of the UK economy. It's "flat-lining", growth is "weaker than expected", and so on. And they aren't entirely wrong - GDP growth has been sluggish recently. In May, the economy grew by just 0.1%.[39]

But the important thing is that the economy *is* getting bigger. The UK's growth in the first three months of 2026 was the fastest out of all G7 countries and the Treasury boasts that this will remain true for the rest of the year.[40]

As Unite's General Secretary **Sharon Graham** has repeatedly argued, the economy won't grow without a sustained and strategic ramp-up of public investment by the Government.

Facts and Figures

Until then though, there is easily enough money to go around even with sluggish growth rates. According to the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), GDP is set to grow by an average of 1.5% up to 2030.[41]

Even if these forecasts are too optimistic **the UK economy is still very likely to be worth more than £3 trillion by the end of the decade, making it the fifth richest country in the world**.

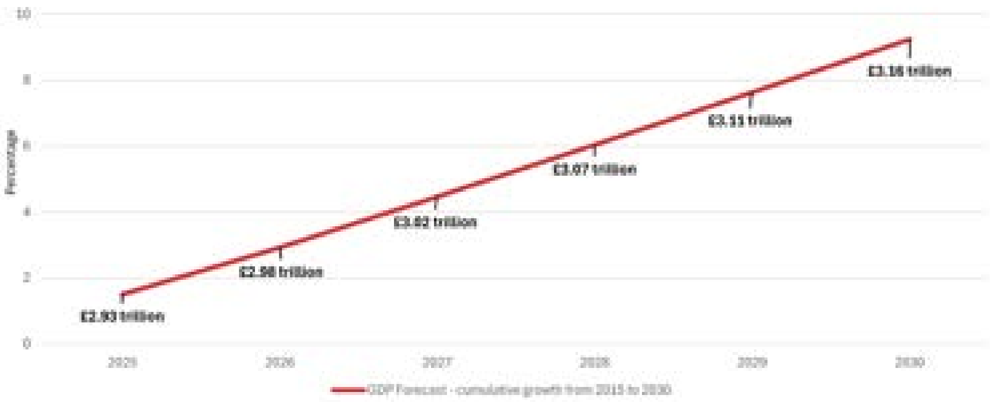


Figure 6 GDP Forecast - cumulative growth from 2015 to 2030. Source: Autumn Budget based on the OBR's GDP forecast, House of Commons Library

The "low growth" narrative risks distracting from the real issue: Workers' share of the pie. **Growth alone doesn't raise living standards. Collective bargaining does.**

Collective bargaining raises wages and protects conditions. It stops employers hoarding the wealth, and ensures productivity gains lead to pay gains. This is exactly why **Unite emphasises stronger collective bargaining to convert economic growth into pay growth.**

> If bosses use "slow growth" or "falling monthly GDP" excuses, use Unite's **Work, Voice, Pay** tools to look at your employer's finances, or contact the forensic accounts team at forensic.accounts@unitetheunion.org.

In the meantime, Unite is fighting on the political front to move the Government toward a serious industrial strategy and real investment to boost jobs, productivity, and GDP.

The slow growth of the UK economy is a direct result of years of weak public and industrial investment.

5.2 Jet fuel imports keep Britain flying but lack of refinery capacity means Government must invest

Britain's low level of investment has left vital infrastructure exposed. Oil refining is a key casualty. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has highlighted the risks of relying on imported fuel, after refinery closures at Grangemouth and Lindsey.[42]

Unite has consistently warned that there should be no reduction in refinery capacity without a plan.

Jet fuel supplies are once again being disrupted as the latest Iran war ceasefire breaks down at the time of writing.

The UK is particularly vulnerable because of our lack of refinery capacity, but Europe has only 30 days' supply according to one source.[43]

The cost of jet fuel broadly doubled in the first months of the war and settled down. Now fuel prices are likely to accelerate again as the ceasefire fails.[44]

As last month's Facts and Figures explained, Britain has one of the lowest investment rates in the G7.[45]According to the World Bank, investment accounts for just 19 % of current UK GDP compared with around 25 % in the 1970s.

Chronic underinvestment has left vital infrastructure exposed.

Facts and Figures

The latest example is refining. Because of refinery closures the UK is running on fumes when it comes to the jet fuel essential for tourism and trade.

Jet fuel is one of the "middle distillates" produced when crude oil is refined. The same refining process also produces diesel, bitumen for road building and many other essential industrial products.[46]

The conflict affecting shipping through the Strait of Hormuz has exposed the risks of relying on overseas supplies. With domestic refining capacity reduced, Britain has had to import jet fuel from Spain to keep aviation operating normally.[47]

Refining jet fuel requires complex chemical processes and supports a lot of vital economic activity.[48] Retaining Lindsey and Grangemouth under public ownership could have preserved strategic refining capacity while long-term transition plans were developed.

Much of the crude processed in Britain already comes from the same North Sea basin.

Increasing domestic refining capacity would allow more of that value to be created here rather than importing refined products.

Conventional jet fuel will remain essential for aviation for decades. Sustainable aviation fuel can be used in existing aircraft and offers an important route to reducing emissions, but production remains limited. Battery-powered aircraft are only likely to be practical for the shortest routes for many years to come.

Britain cannot build economic resilience by closing strategic industrial capacity before viable alternatives exist.

Net zero will require enormous investment, but the transition must strengthen national resilience rather than weaken it.

Unite's campaign to use our energy resources as we transition rather than fall over a cliff-edge of energy insecurity could not be better illustrated than the jet fuel issue.[49]

"The government is guilty of industrial vandalism. It has allowed two of our six UK refineries to close. We could be producing our own green aviation fuel, which would be better for jobs, the environment and energy security. Until we have a real plan, with real investment in our future jobs and energy security, the government should not be abandoning what we already have in the name of net zero." Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham

5.3 We're going to need a bigger berth! How the super-rich are fuelling a super yacht profit bonanza

You almost have to feel sorry for the super-rich. There simply aren't enough marina berths for all their super yachts. As the Forbes' real-time billionaire tracker shows, there are now around 25% more billionaires than a decade ago. The world now has 3,428 billionaires. That's 400 up on last year. Let Forbes tell the story:[5051]

> "There has never been a better time to be a billionaire. Thanks to AI's explosion, sizzling markets and favourable fiscal policies, a record 3,428 entrepreneurs, investors and heirs made this year's World's Billionaires list, 400 more than in 2025."

The global boom in leisure sailing has turned the infrastructure that supports it into a hugely profitable investment opportunity. Companies such as BlackRock have been investing heavily in marinas, while private equity firms have spotted another lucrative market. CVC Capital Partners has just sold its D-Marin marina business to a French buyer, reportedly making a tidy profit of around €800 million in the process.[52]

The figures explain why investors are so interested. The global marina market is now worth around $15 billion and is expected to grow by about 8 per cent a year for the rest of the decade. According to one industry estimate, there are around 210,000 yachts worldwide but only 160,000 marina berths.[53] That shortage gives marina owners considerable pricing power.

The yachts themselves range from around $500,000 for smaller luxury craft to well over $1 billion for the largest floating palaces.

Facts and Figures

Annual running costs start at around $40,000 but can exceed $15 million for the biggest vessels, with crews, maintenance, insurance and fuel all adding to the bill. For the companies providing berths, maintenance, servicing and marina facilities, the rewards are enormous.

For the skilled workers who build the yachts it can be a different story. That's why when Unite workers at Princess Yachts in Plymouth won a 6% above RPI pay increase last year we should celebrate. The members who make luxury long-range yachts up to 29 metres long, secured that 6% and lifted the pay of the lowest paid by up to £3000.[54] However, the workforce is not on the top deck when it comes to the rewards of extreme wealth.

This matters because it illustrates a much wider economic trend. Extraordinary concentrations of wealth are creating entirely new luxury industries while many governments struggle to fund the public services that ordinary people rely upon. As wealth becomes increasingly concentrated at the very top, so too do the opportunities to make profits from serving it.

This is one more reason why governments should be taking seriously the case for effective international taxation of the super-rich.

It's no accident that Forbes the rich person bible, talks about a "favourable fiscal regime" creating more billionaires.[55]

By using holding companies, offshore structures, trusts and favourable tax treatment for dividends and capital gains, many ultra-wealthy individuals can legally reduce the proportion of their income that they pay in tax.[56]

> The running cost of one mega gin palace could fully fund the employment of 300 NHS nurses!

If billionaires can spend millions of dollars each year simply keeping a yacht afloat, they can certainly afford to contribute more towards the schools, hospitals, transport networks and other public services that keep society afloat.

And we can act now. Labour can introduce a wealth tax as Unite has been demanding. This would raise £25 billion in the Uk alone. The rich wouldn't even notice it – it's just a fraction of what they pay to moor their boats!

5.4 Bite-sized Bargaining: Collective bargaining reduces inequality

Employers rely on our labour. Our members, through their union and collective bargaining, can shift the balance of power in the economy. **Whether it's winning above-inflation pay rises, improving conditions, or securing a fair share of public investment, this is about building real market power from the ground up.**

- **Studies show that greater union membership leads to money being distributed more evenly across society.**Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/382n83mf or look in the March 2024 edition, p.210.
- **CMA studies show that without collective bargaining, concentrated labour markets reduce wages.**Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/bddn5x88 or look in the March 2024 edition, p.211.
- **Union power extends beyond its membership, with collective agreements covering 40% of the workforce, and we can increase this by organising more.** Find out more here: tinyurl.com/3akae4w7 or look in the March 2024 edition, p.208-209.
- **Government's failure on the economy is no excuse for employers offering poor pay deals**. Find out more here: tinyurl.com/4pxcmt4p or look in the April 2024 edition, p.110-111.
- **Investment is a collective bargaining issue where worker focused investment can benefit employers and employees.** Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/2wx2mtvj or look in December 2023 p.182.
- **UK companies lag behind peers in comparable countries with far lower investment levels.**Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/4fpa8ytx or look in November 2023 p.144-145.


RETIRED MEMBERS
Health
H&S
combines
RISC
BAEM
RISC
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combines
BAEM
NISC
h&Safety
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SECTION SIX

WORKPLACE ISSUES

Facts and Figures

Equality, safety, and decent conditions aren't extras. They're the basics. When workers stand together, we win better pay, safer jobs, and real equality. That's what Unite is built for.

Sharon Graham, Unite General Secretary

6. What's happening in our workplaces?

6.1 With the law failing to protect workers during heat waves, workers must take matters into their own hands

With heat waves hitting the UK at the moment, temperatures are reaching record highs. But many workplaces haven't adapted to the heat, and the law provides very little protection for workers' whatsoever.

Unite is calling for a maximum working temperature of 30 degrees to be put in place for all workplaces - or 24 degrees for strenuous work - but we can't wait around for politicians to make their minds up.

As shown in our Know Your Rights guide for Reps last month, working in excessive heat can cause problems like heat stress, dehydration, fatigue and in severe cases heat stroke.

Bus drivers, for example, often have to work in cabs that exceed 40 degrees with no functioning air conditioning units.[57]

Unite has already pushed Sadiq Khan to call for the government to introduce a maximum working temperature across the board, but in the meantime workers' must stick together through collective bargaining.[58]

Bus drivers for **Arriva North London** are balloting on strike action over working conditions in hot weather. Unite has provided an official letter they can show their employer which cites the Employment Rights Act. You can access this letter by following the link below:

- https://www.unitetheunion.org/media/ubmpnsrk/25-extreme-heat-letter.pdf

See our Know Your Rights guide and learn what protections and rights you have in place when it comes to working in the heat. See Facts and Figures June 2026, p.74 or follow the link below for the full guide:

- https://tinyurl.com/23m6v3ra

6.2 AI watch: Hyundai workers strike against AI job destruction

South Korean workers at Hyundai are fighting back against the imposition of automation as it threatens their jobs and livelihoods.[59]

The carmaker has announced its intention to deploy a humanoid robot known as ATLAS. These robots would officially be deployed on “hazardous and highly repetitive tasks.” The union was sceptical. The Korean Metal Workers Union, issued a statement in January 2026:[60]

> “Without labour management agreement not a single robot using new technology will be allowed to enter the workplace.”

Now 87% of the union’s 40,000 members have voted for industrial action. The union is also demanding a performance bonus equivalent to thirty percent of Hyundai’s net profit. This would give the 73,000 workers around the world amounting to about £20,000. They are also seeking an increase in the retirement age from 60 to 65, and monthly base pay increases.[61]

At the heart of the dispute is the company’s plan to place up to 30,000 robots in its plants in the anti-union US state of Georgia. Georgia has Right to Work laws which forbid workers being subjected to a union agreement if they do not consent.

They can then “free ride” on hard won union wins. The state also has a procurement law that promotes union busting and a state legislature that bans collective bargaining for public sector workers.

South Korea has a history of free and militant trade unionism, combating both authoritarian employers and monopolistic employers.

Big integrated firms like Samsung, Hyundai and POSCO would like to escape the grip of powerful unions.

It’s no surprise the rich heirs of the Hyundai conglomerate and their executives would like to expand away from their home nation.

South Korea has advanced skills and productivity, so the bosses clearly want to programme out highly skilled human workers.

The retirement age demand should be viewed in the context of government policies which force many workers retiring at 60 in poverty. Firstly, the state pension replaces only 30% of earnings. The UK replaces about the same but after accounting for auto enrolment over half.[62]

Secondly, firms in South Korea reduce wages as retirement approaches on the basis that older workers become less productive.[63] This known as “peak pension wage” and is agreed by the unions as a way of keeping jobs open for older workers.

This also effectively reduced pension growth as workers approach retirement.[64]

This often leads to premature retirement and poverty.[65] With age discrimination legislation protective only to the age of 60 in place, and the government fully on the employers’ side, the only way to deal with this is to raise retirement ages, through strikes and other forms of collective action.

What the AI issues show is a first major industrial strike against the imposition of AI based robotics in the modern economy.[66]

As companies at the leading edge such as Hyundai roll out this technology every car maker will follow suit.

Following their lead organising in the workplace and being strike ready is the only reliable way to resit the rise of robots and automation when used to destroy jobs.

Facts and Figures

6.3 Unite calls for a full ban of engineered stone to protect workers from deadly silica dust exposure

Respirable crystalline silica (RCS) is one of the biggest occupational health risks facing workers in construction, manufacturing, stone masonry and the installation of engineered stone worktops.

It is a fine dust that can penetrate deep into the lungs. Exposure can cause silicosis, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and kidney disease.

Unite is clear that silica dust is not an unavoidable part of the job but it is a workplace health and safety issue. No worker should develop a life-changing or fatal disease because employers have failed to eliminate or properly control exposure.

Every year, hundreds of workers develop serious and preventable diseases after breathing in silica dust generated when materials such as engineered stone, concrete, brick and stone are cut, drilled or polished.

Having a **model workplace policy on respirable crystalline silica** is essential to ensure consistent, fair and lawful protection for workers.

Without a clear policy, health and safety measures are often applied inconsistently, leaving workers exposed to preventable risks and employers failing to meet their legal duties.

Engineered stone worktops can contain more than 90% crystalline silica, making them particularly hazardous.

While the Health and Safety Executive has strengthened its guidance on controlling exposure, **Unite believes this does not go far enough and continues to call for a complete ban on engineered stone, following Australia's lead.**

The HSE guidance fails to require adequate control for exposure and is unachievable for localised fitting, cutting and finishing of stone worktops in people's kitchens and living areas.

> *"Engineered stone is causing serious preventable illness and death amongst workers. The HSE guidance is inadequate - the UK needs to follow Australia's example and ban this deadly material outright."*
> Sharon Graham, Unite General Secretary

Unite is encouraging members who believe they have been exposed to silica dust at work to complete the Unite Legal Services Silica Dust Register.

Unite maintains a register of members who believe they have been exposed to silica dust at work.

This record of exposure means that if a Unite member requires legal assistance after being diagnosed with a disease caused by silica dust exposure, it can be used as potential evidence to aid their claim.

To add your details to the register, complete the **Silica Dust Questionnaire**, details in the box below.

> To register your exposure, visit the Unite Legal Services Silica Dust Register: *https://www.unitelegalservices.org/surveys/silica-dust-register*
>
> For free legal advice or to make a claim, contact Unite Legal Services on *0800 709 007.*

We must not tolerate preventable occupational disease!

6.4 Bite-sized Bargaining: Research shows that women, the young, LGBT+ and disabled people face disproportionate discrimination in the workplace

See below for a compilation of Equalities articles in our previous Facts & Figures issues. **Unite represents all its members equally and will fight and defend against all forms of discrimination**

- **Under the Worker Protection Act 2023, employers have to take reasonable steps to stop their workers from being sexually harassed at work.** Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/mj2apcj3 or look in the January 2025 edition, p.50-52.

Facts and Figures

- **Know your rights as a young worker or apprentice in the UK.** Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/3apsvm2y or look in August 2025 edition, p.121-123.
- **The TUC reports over half of LGBT+ people experienced workplace bullying/harassment in the last five years.** Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/yc8hz43j or look in the February 2025 edition, p.48-50.
- **Support for workers with caring responsibilities: session for reps** Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/9vvjt9mv or look in the April 2026 edition, p.78.
- **Brits are working more and paying for it with their health** Find out more here: https://tinyurl.com/9vvjt9mv or look in the April 2026 edition, p.76.


Fridge
EXIT
Blood Bank Issue Fridge

SECTION SEVEN

BUILDING INDUSTRIAL POWER

Facts and Figures

We will look to join up local fights and maximise our power through coordination. Without coordination, how can you build solidarity? Without solidarity, how can you build an effective Union or deliver results at the workplace?

Sharon Graham, Unite General Secretary

7. Where are we building our industrial power this month?

7.1 Industrial strength remains high, with Unite members securing taking action in sectors including Local Authorities, Health and Construction

Unite members are on the move, taking action and ready to win. This month, members across multiple sectors are on strike, including Local Authorities, Health, and Construction.

- Unite members at **Cwm Taf Health Board** are continuing strike action after a director received a £30,000 pay increase, all while hundreds of health workers are losing up to £9,000 per year.[67]
- 400 workers at bus maker **Alexander Dennis** are set to escalate strike action after rejecting a pay offer from management that fails to reverse years of below-inflation pay increases.[68]
- Over 300 workers at the **Institute of Cancer Research** performing roles including research, laboratory support, and site management are continuing strike action. While its CEO pockets £400k per year, nearly a quarter of workers on strike say they're falling behind on bills.[69]
- Thousands of Unite members across multiple councils are balloting on strike action, after rejecting a pay offer that failed to address years of pay freezes and below-inflation offers.[70]
- In Cambridge, around 250 Unite members are balloting on strike action at **Marshall Aerospace**. The highly skilled engineers, who maintain C-130 Hercules aircraft and manufacture fuel tanks for Boeing, overwhelmingly rejected a pay offer that failed to address a 16% real terms pay cut since 2020.[71]

Facts and Figures

The table below shows the workers across many sectors who are fighting for better pay, improved working conditions, and union recognition.

Employer	Region	Unite Sector	Dates
Birmingham City Council - Waste Management Refuse Collection	**WM**	LAs	Continuous
Job & Talent - Birmingham City Council agency workers	**WM**	LAs	Continuous
Institute of Cancer Research	**LE**	CYWNFP	13/07 - 07/08
Alexander Dennis Limited	**NEYH**	AUTO	16/07 - 20/07
Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (Blood Sciences Department at Royal Blackburn Teaching Hospital)	**NW**	HEALTH	20/07 - 24/07, 27/07 - 31/07, 03/08 - 07/08
CWM TAF MORGANNWG - South Wales NHS	**WA**	HEALTH	20/07 - 24/07, 27/07 - 30/07, 03/08 - 07/08, 10/08 - 14/08, 17/08 - 21/08, 24/08 - 28/08, 31/08 - 04/09, 07/09 - 11/09, 14/09 - 18/09, 21/09 - 25/09, 28/09 - 02/10, 05/10 - 09/10, 12/10 - 16/10, 19/10 - 23/10, 26/10- 30/10
GKN Aerospace	**SW**	A&S	All roles: 20/07 Other roles: 19/09 - 20/09 26/09 - 27/09

Employer	Region	Unite Sector	Dates
Balcas Timber Limited	**NI**	CONS	24/07 - 30/07
London Borough of Tower Halmets (Leisure Services)	**LE**	LA	25/07, 26/07
Manchester Oxford Street Hotel OpCo Limited The Refuge, Oxford Street, Manchester	**NW**	SI	25/07, 26/07
South London and Maudsley Foundation Trust	**LE**	HEALTH	28/07 - 02/08

Table 3: Unite workplaces due to take industrial action in the next month. Source: Unite (as of 20 July 26)

7.2 Get involved in Unite's Industrial Combines to raise standards across your sector

Our Industrial Combines have helped bring Reps together to coordinate action sectorally.

They are also the most effective way to raise awareness and understanding among workers within a specific industry.

Unite's Finance Combine meets to coordinate pay claims

Unite's Finance Sector Combinemeets to coordinate pay claims and negotiations in the Banking and Insurance sector.

To get involved, please email Michelle.Smith@unitetheunion.org

Facts and Figures

Unite's Ground Services Combine meets about pay and conditions, including health issues

Unite's Ground Services Combine is open to those working in ground handling.

Reps can join future meetings to discuss pay and working conditions.

To get involved email: christine.vera@unitetheunion.org

The Ground Services Combine has also been carrying out an **online survey about health-related issues** within the aviation industry.

To join the survey, click on the link: https://surveys.unitetheunion.org/250274033423042

The Health Combine (England) meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month

Since it was created in 2022, **Unite's Health Combine** for Reps in England meets regularly to discuss, agree and develop campaigns across the NHS in England. Together, it takes on issues that health workers face and supports them to win.

Meetings will take place on the 2nd Wednesday of each month and are open to all Reps in the sector.

Email National Officer Onay Kasab to join the meetings: onay.kasab@unitetheunion.org

7.3 The next National Industrial Sector Committees (NISCs) are in October but Regional Industrial Sector Committees (RISCs) will take place in July and August

The next **National Industrial Sector Committees (NISCs)** meetings aren't until October but this month sees two **National Committees for Equalities meetings**.

Committee	Date	Location
Young Members	24 July	London
Women	23 July	London

Regional Industrial Sector Committees (RISCs) for all sectors are scheduled throughout July and August. Please contact your region for more information.

7.4 Balloting Brief: Unite Reps across 50 workplaces are balloting their members in the coming months

Unite members are fighting for better jobs, pay and conditions with fair and decent pay rises being essential during this cost-of-living crisis.

Employer	Region	Closing
Swissport GB Limited	**SE**	23/07
Navantia UK Limited	**SC**	26/07
Lockwood Haulage Limited	**NEYH**	27/07
National Education Union	**LE**	29/07
RLC (UK) Limited	**NI**	29/07
Arriva London North Limited - All members across 10 bus depots	**LE**	29/07
West Fraser Europe Limited	**SC**	30/07
GAC Services (UK) Limited	**NW**	04/08
Ford Motor Company Limited	**LE**	05/08
ASCO UK Limited	**SC**	05/08
Wood Group Limited	**SC**	06/08
Change, Grow, Live (CGL)	**SE**	10/08
Menzies Aviation (ASIG) Limited	**SE**	11/08
SPS Technologies Limited	**EM**	12/08
Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust Procurement	**LE**	12/08

Facts and Figures

Employer	Region	Closing
London Sovereign Limited	LE	13/08
Landmarc Support Services Limited	WA	13/08
Great Yarmouth Borough Council	National	17/08
Durham County Council	National	17/08
Leeds City Council	National	17/08
North East Lincolnshire Council	National	17/08
South Tyneside Council	National	17/08
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	National	17/08
Bolton Council	National	17/08
Cumberland Council	National	17/08
Knowsley Metropoliton Borough Council	National	17/08
Liverpool City Council	National	17/08
Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	National	17/08
Oldham Council	National	17/08
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	National	17/08
Warrington Borough Council	National	17/08
Westmorland and Furness Council	National	17/08
Wirral Council	National	17/08
Portsmouth City Council	National	17/08
Southampton City Council	National	17/08
Veolia ES (UK) Limited	WM	17/08
Urenco Nuclear Stewardship Limited	NW	18/08
Urenco UK Limited	NW	18/08
Urenco ChemPlants Limited	NW	18/08
Neo Next + Energy Resources UK Limited	SC	20/08
London Borough of Haringey	LE	03/09

Table 4: Unite workplaces currently balloting for industrial action. Source: Unite Balloting Department (as of 13 July 2026)

8. Appendix 1: Significant Unite wins on pay and conditions

Major trade disputes won by Unite members over the last 12 months:

July 2026 wins

Sector	Company	Results
Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, Process & Textiles	**Neo Next + Energy E&P Limited** at Elgin Franklin & North Alwyn offshore platforms	3.1% increase to base rate. 6% increase to offshore allowance.
Road Transport Commercial, Warehousing & Logistics	**Oxalis Logistics UK Limited** Avonmouth's Tanker Driver members	For "12 shift" colleagues: 9% on the base rate backdated to 1 February 2026. For "14 shift" colleagues: 11.8% on the base rate backdated to 1 February 2026. For all colleagues: The higher of RPI or 3.5% on the base rate from 1 February 2027. The higher of RPI or 3% on the base rate from 1 February 2028. The higher of RPI or 2% on the base rate from 1 February 2029. The higher of RPI or 2% on the base rate from 1 February 2030.

June 2026 wins (RPI was 3%)

Sector	Company	Results
Road Transport Commercial, Warehousing & Logistics	**Geberit Service** all members	4.25% backdated to 1 January 2026.
Aerospace & Shipbuilding	**Qioptiq Limited** at Saint Asaph	3.5% Base pay (all elements of pay) increase from April 2026. 4.5% Base pay (all elements of pay) increase from April 2027.

Facts and Figures

Sector	Company	Results
Passenger Transport	**Go North West**in Bolton, Denton, Heywood and Wigan	Pay rises of between 23 and 56% over three years. The deal sees baseline pay for most drivers increase from £15.51 an hour to £18 backed dated to April 2026. From April 2027 pay will increase to 19.50 an hour, before rising to £21 an hour from 2028.
Civil Air Transport	**Edinburgh Airport Limited**	Two-year pay deal: - £1800 or 5.5% increase, whichever is greater, in 2026. - 4% or the RPI+0.5% effective of January 2027. There are improvements to shift, sickness and paternity pay.
Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, Process & Textiles	**Amcor** in Northumberland	12.3% increase over three years (4.8% in the first year, 4% in the second, and 3.5% in the third)
Civil Air Transport	**Prestwick Airport**	from 5.1% up to 8% alongside an extra day annual leave for this year, and improvements to shift payments and pension contributions.
Civil Air Transport	**ICTS** and **Menzies Aviation** at Glasgow airport	5% increase in basic pay and shift allowances will be backdated to 1 January with a one-off bank holiday included in 2026. In 2027, the workers will receive the RPI+1% in basic and shift pay alongside a boost to terms and conditions from 1st January.
Civil Air Transport	**Aberdeen International Airport**	4.2% pay deal in a one-year deal
Civil Air Transport	**ICTS** at Aberdeen International Airport	5% increase in basic pay and shift allowances will be backdated to 1 January with a one-off bank holiday

Sector	Company	Results
		included in 2026. In 2027, the workers will receive the RPI+1% in basic and shift pay alongside a boost to terms and conditions from 1st January.

May 2026 wins (RPI was 3.1%)

Sector	Company	Results
Civil Air Transport	**ABM**at Stansted Airport	3.8% pay increase backdated to November 2025 plus 1% from May, and 3.5% next year
Engineering, Manufacturing & Steel	**Resideo**	8% pay increase this year with a further 5% in 2027
Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, Process & Textiles	**Oxalis** at Grangemouth	4-year pay deal: - 4% rise in 2025 alongside an increase in the annual bonus to £1500, and improvements to shift rates. - 5.4% for 2026, - pay increases matching the inflation rate or 3%, whichever is the higher, for 2027 and 2028. In the last year of the deal, the employer pension contributions will also go up from six to eight per cent in addition to enhancements to sick pay and rest day allowances.
Finance & Legal	**Barclays**	An overall 4.6% increase and a 5.35% pay rise for around 20,000 lower-paid Barclays employees

April 2026 wins (RPI was 3.0%)

Sector	Company	Results
Civil Air Transport	**GH Luton Ground Handling Services**	7.5% effective from 1 April

Sector	Company	Results
Engineering, Manufacturing & Steel	**National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry**	4.5% pay increase
Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, Process & Textiles	**North Air**	4.2% pay rise + 5% increase to shift allowances and overtime rates
Construction	**Bear Scotland**	5.5% pay increase
Civil Air Transport	**Bidvest Noonan** at Aberdeen Airport	Up to 10.2% pay rise and union recognition agreement

March 2026 wins (RPI was 4.1%)

Sector	Company	Results
Engineering, Manufacturing & Steel	**Oregon timber**	4.8% pay deal, plus significant enhancements to conditions including the introduction of a company sick pay scheme and paid time off for hospital appointments alongside the restoration of a service-related bonus scheme.
Aerospace & Shipbuilding	**BAE Systems** at Warton and Samlesbury	6% pay deal, plus additional annual leave and a one-off payment
Road Transport Commercial, Warehousing & Logistics	**Oxalis**	RPI+2% - which works out as 6.2 per cent as it was based on December 2025 RPI.
Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, Process & Textiles	**Lochcarron Mill**	6.7% pay increase
Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, Process & Textiles	**Bilfinger UK Limited**	5% increase in company's pension contribution
Civil Air Transport	**ICTS** at Glasgow airport	7% pay rise backdated to October + overtime rates being increased to time and half

February 2026 wins (RPI was 3.6%)

Sector	Company	Results
Docks, Rail, Ferries, & Waterways	**Orkney Ferries**	Two-year pay deal. In year one, a 5% pay increase and a non-consolidated £600 payment. In year two, a 3.5% pay increase or January 2026 RPI rate - whichever is higher.
Service Industries	**Sodexo Remote Sites Scotland Limited**	Two-year pay deal. In year one, a cost of living payment of up to £1,225, a 4% pay increase backdated to 1 April, and retention of the attendance bonus of up to £1,000. In year-two, a 4% pay increase and retention of the attendance bonus of up to £1,000.
Civil Air Transport	**ICTS at Glasgow airport**	9.8% increase for the baggage screeners last year backdated to October 2024
Food Drink & Agricultural	**Diageo**	15.5% in a three-year deal

January 2026 wins (RPI was 3.8%)

Sector	Company	Results
Civil Air Transport	**Heathrow cabin crew at SAS airline**	8% pay increase, overtime pay go to a maximum of £240, two additional days of annual leave, and an additional pay grade
Engineering, Manufacturing & Steel	**Glen Dimplex**	Between 6% to 8% pay increase
Engineering, Manufacturing & Steel	**Bosch Rexroth Limited**	4% pay increase backdated to 01/01/26.
Road Transport Commercial, Warehousing & Logistics	**Menzies Distribution Solution Limited**	4.25% pay increase for 2025, and 3.75% for 2026
Aerospace & Shipbuilding	**Safran Nacelles Limited**	4.5% pay increase backdated to February 2025 in year one, and 3.3% in year two. New employee incentive scheme worth up to £750 introduced.

Facts and Figures

Sector	Company	Results
Civil Air Transport	**DHL Services Limited**	18-month pay deal including a 5.5% pay increase backdated to October 2025, a 25% increase to night shift premiums, and a £250 payment.
Passenger Transport	**First Glasgow**	5% pay increase

December 2025 wins (RPI was 4.2%)

Sector	Company	Results
Health	**GFM at Newham Centre for Mental Health**	Up to 15% pay rise, five days additional annual leave, improved full & half day sick pay. Plus a recognition agreement
Passenger Transport	**Arriva Leicestershire**	6.5%, one off non-consolidated payment of £1,000 and an improvement to their bank holiday working rate
Passenger Transport	**First Aberdeen**	5.3% for one year
Passenger Transport	**First Cymru**	5%

November 2025 wins (RPI was 3.8%)

Sector	Company	Results
Docks, Rail, Ferries & Waterways	**Immingham DB Cargo**	£11,723 in back pay for each worker
Road Transport Commercial, Warehousing & Logistics	**GXO Logistics**	4%, boost to overtime payments
Government, Defence, Prisons, & Contractors	**Amulet Security at Bank of England**	4%+4% over two years, additional day of annual leave
Aerospace & Shipbuilding	**Leonardo**	8% over two years (across five sites)

October 2025 wins (RPI was 4.3%)

Sector	Company	Results
Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, Process & Textiles	**Altrad** on EnQuest's Magnus and Thistle Alpha platforms	4.5%
Aerospace & Shipbuilding	**Lufthansa Technik**	5%
Passenger Transport	**Ribble Motor Services**	Birkenhead - 10% Chorley and Preston - 6.2%
Passenger Transport	**First West of England**	8.6% over two years
Aerospace & Shipbuilding	**Collins Aerospace**	A fully consolidated 10.3% over a 28-month period
Civil Air Transport	**Bournemouth International Airport**	4.5% in year one, plus an additional £1/hour for workers classed as front of house backdated to 1 April. In year two, an additional pay rise of inflation plus 0.5%, or 3.1% (whichever is greater)

September 2025 wins (RPI was 4.5%)

Sector	Company	Results
Engineering, Manufacturing & Steel	**EPTA UK**	6% increase on all rates backdated to 1 April 2025, bonus scheme, improved holiday scheme, and improved maternity/paternity policy
Civil Air Transport	**OCS Group at Edinburgh Airport**	Two-year pay deal of 6.1% backdated to 1 January 2025 and a further 5% from 1 January 2026. Overtime rates increased by time and a half, as well as improved sick pay
Passenger Transport	**First Potteries**	9.8% pay deal over two years and £250 payment
Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, Process &	**Alpla UK**	Two one-off payments of between £1,000 and £9,000 based on experience and one additional day holiday

Facts and Figures

Sector	Company	Results
Textiles		

August 2025 wins (RPI was 4.6%)

Sector	Company	Results
Passenger Transport	**Cardiff Bus**	5.86% + improvements to breaks and travel time
Passenger Transport	**Stagecoach Northeast**	5%
Aerospace & Shipbuilding	**Princess Yachts**	6.50%
Service Industries	**Village Hotel Glasgow**	10%
Civil Air Transport	**ICTS (Gatwick Airport)**	7% + Bank holiday double time
Food, Drink & Agricultural	**Dale Farm**	4.75%

July 2025 wins (RPI was 4.8%)

Sector	Company	Results
Energy & Utilities	**Scottish Water**	The lowest paid Grade 2 workers will receive a 10.67% pay increase with increases for all other grades tapering to a 4.85% increase for the highest Grade 8 staff.
Civil Air Transport	**Skytanking** 'front-of-house' customer service, ramp and bagging agents	A basic 5% increase
Civil Air Transport	**Menzies Aviation**	The one-year pay deal, an average increase of 6.5% with some members gaining up to 10%, introduction of a pay grade system which rewards length of service and skills.
Road Transport Commercial, Warehousing & Logistics	**Wincanton (Marshalls contract) Wilson James (Heathrow**	5% + £1000 lump sum

Sector	Company	Results
	Passenger Assistance)	
Road Transport Commercial, Warehousing & Logistics	**Oxalis Logistics UK Limited**	Increases in the base rate and other elements of pay (excluding bonus): Y1 - 5%, Y2 - 3.5%, Y3 - Effective 1st January 2027 - mean average of RPI and CPI for December 2026 with a minimum of 3%. Improvement to holiday and sick pay.

9. Appendix 2: Unite recognition agreements

Over the last 12 months, Unite has secured many recognition agreements across the UK, with thousands more members now being covered by Unite in their workplace.

See below for a list of major recognition deals in the last year.

Date	Employer	Note
Jul-26	**Milk & More**	Statutory recognition at three depots, restoring collective bargaining for workers less than a year after the company terminated its national voluntary recognition agreement.
Jul-26	**North Tyneside Citizens Advice Bureau**	Unite now has formal recognition with the workforce electing two workplace representatives and two health and safety reps.
Jun-26	**OCS** at **British Airways HQ**	The recognition agreement provides sole bargaining for Unite over pay, terms and conditions, including working hours and annual leave.
May-26	**Seagate Technologies**	Third workforce recognition agreement with Seagate, covering administration staff in Northern Ireland.
May-26	**St John Ambulance & Rescue Service**	Union recognition agreement for 56 workers in Guernsey.
May-26	**EnQuest**	Union recognition agreement in the North Sea.
May-26	**Harrods**	Union recognition agreement for engineering, maintenance staff, and members of fire, health and safety.
Apr-26	**Apache**	Union recognition agreement in the offshore sector in the North Sea.
Mar-26	**Bidvest Noonan** workers at **Aberdeen Airport**	Union recognition agreement and double digit pay deal covering cleaners.
Feb-26	**Glasgow Community**	Union recognition for Glasgow food

Date	Employer	Note
	Food Network	workers.
Jan-26	**Trescal**	Recognition agreement for Trescal employees based in Derby Riverside Court.
Dec-25	**Grosvenor Facilities Management (GFM)**	Union recognition and wage win (up to 15% and improvements to annual leave and sick pay).
Nov-25	**Amulet Security** at the Bank of England	Union recognition and enhanced pay.
Oct-25	**Bear Scotland**	Union recognition and wage win (up to 7.25% and improvements to standby payments).
Oct 25	**Norwich Eaton Park Café**	Voluntary recognition agreement marking the first ever hospitality venue in the city to sign an agreement recognising its workers' chosen union.
Sep 25	**Gipson Supported Independent Living**	Recognition agreement for everyone from housing support workers and counsellors to advice and employment workers.
Aug 25	**EMCOR UK**	A formal recognition agreement for workers in facilities management at Oxford University.
Aug 25	**Lineage**	Recognition agreement for 30 drivers and shunters.
Aug 25	**Liverpool University**	Improvement of collective bargaining agreement with new terms to protect home working for over 300 professional services staff after strike action.
Aug 25	**Lockwood Haulage**	Recognition agreement.

10. Appendix 3: Other unions' major pay increases

The following table details private sector pay deals of 5%+ won by other unions over the last year, taken from the **Labour Research Department.** They may include multi-year deals.

Name	Date	Result (%)
G4S (Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service)	Nov-25	6.2
G4S (PSNI)	Nov-25	6
Sofina Foods (Cookstown)	Jan-26	5.5
Wrightlink	Jan-26	5.2
Grand Central Rail	Jan-26	5
Serco Northlink Ferries	Oct-25	5
Koura	Jan-26	5
Unipart Rail Doncaster	Apr-26	5

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