



In-depth bargaining  
analysis for negotiators

Unite – Fighting for  
**JOBS • PAY • CONDITIONS**



# MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

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## **New Reps tool to fight against stealth taxes**

In November last year the Labour Government imposed more stealth taxes on workers.

The pay of all Unite members in work will be hit by the Government's choice to freeze tax thresholds until 2031. This will hit take home pay and undermine the pay rises won by yourselves through collective bargaining.

A worker on £25,000 whose pay goes up by RPI inflation will pay close to £1,000 extra in tax over the next five years. Those making £45,000, not too far above the UK's average wage, will be dragged into the higher tax bracket by 2029.

One in four workers - including thousands of Unite members across different industries - will be paying 40% as a result.

This issue is coming up time and time again.

**Under my leadership the union will support members against any attacks on their jobs, pay and conditions.**

To this end, I asked the Work Voice Pay team to set up a new online calculator to help Unite Reps fight against the impact of this stealth tax at the bargaining table.



The calculator shows how much the tax threshold freeze will cost workers.

You can access it through this link:

<https://workvoicepay.unitetheunion.org/stealthtax>

With prices still rising, good pay deals are as necessary as ever.

We know the money is there. The FTSE 100 stock market index hit record levels this month, while CEOs make 113 times more than the average worker.

This new calculator is designed to give you the information you need to win your fair share this pay round. Use it together with the other Work Voice Pay tools in upcoming negotiations.

And share the link round your workplace for members to use themselves.

For Scotland or the Republic of Ireland, where tax rates are different, Reps can contact [workvoicepay@unitetheunion.org](mailto:workvoicepay@unitetheunion.org) for support as required for bespoke data.

Unite will continue to campaign for this workers' tax to be dropped, and the other new tax limiting the National Insurance relief on salary sacrifice pensions.

We are the sixth richest economy in the world - a wealth tax is needed, along with re-framed fiscal rules so we can borrow to invest in our industries, the public sector and communities.

If Labour do not change course and back workers, they will inevitably pay the price.

Solidarity

Sharon

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*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

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

### 1.1 The cost of living continues to rise, with this month's RPI up 4.2%

Inflation has regularly been around the 4% mark in recent months.

Food and housing are currently running above headline inflation. Food prices were up 5.5% in the run-up to Christmas. Supermarket sales soared over Christmas and that hasn't even all made it into the figures yet. Housing costs were up 4.4%.

- Read the [Cost of Living & Pay section](#) and [How much are employers making section](#) for more.

### 1.2 Employers want us to focus on dodgy inflation forecasts and low pay settlements rather than the cost of living

The latest employer narrative is that we have had big pay rises recently so now it is time to tighten our belts. They're conveniently forgetting that prices went up by more than wages for most of the past decade, so we are actually worse off in real terms. Unite Reps have reported employers using two lines of attack.

Firstly, they're trying to base pay deals on inflation forecasts. As new research for this month's Facts & Figures shows, these forecasts aren't reliable indicators.

We've spoken a lot about government and employers wanting to use the CPI measure of inflation because it is usually lower than RPI. These forecasts often even underestimate CPI, never mind the true cost of living increase. Plus they are guesses on the future.

Workers have already been paying higher costs, so pay rises are about recovering what has been lost, more than what might happen in the future.

Secondly, employers are trying to justify low offers by using low average settlements that have been achieved recently. It's a self fulfilling prophecy and flawed logic.

Just because some workers have been asked to tighten their belts recently doesn't justify that continuing indefinitely, or it happening in other workplaces.

## Facts and Figures

There's a much stronger argument for basing pay rises on the actual increase in costs that people have experienced.

- Read the [Inflation Forecasts section](#) and [Pay Settlements section](#) for more.

### 1.3 Our new Stealth Tax Calculator highlights yet another attack on workers by the Government and can be used in bargaining

Our newest Work, Voice, Pay tool, the Stealth Tax Calculator, aims to highlight the impact of the Government's decision to freeze tax thresholds in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

- Try it out at <https://workvoicepay.unitetheunion.org/stealthtax>

Once you know what effect it will have on your members you can incorporate it into your next pay claim as more evidence of increased costs and why we deserve our fair share.

- Read the General Secretary's Message for more.

### 1.4 Collective bargaining is the only reliable way to protect our hard earned rights

The Employment Rights Act finally passed in December 2025 but it's a "shell" of what we envisaged when we fought for it. The Government caved into pressure from employers and the weakening of protections against unfair dismissal and the removal of a ban on fire and rehire are two particularly bad changes.

Meanwhile, last year the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) only carried out two thirds as many inspections as they carried out ten years ago. Is it any wonder that the number of inspections are dramatically down, given the Government has told regulators to go easier on business? The number of employment tribunal wins by workers was also markedly down on the year before.

It is yet more evidence that we can't rely on government to protect us, we have to defend ourselves. Collective bargaining is the only way that we can ensure our rights.

- Read the [Employment Rights Act section](#) and [Health and Safety section](#) for more.



## 1.5 Our focus for bargaining should be on better distribution of the vast wealth that already exists rather than how much bigger the pie will get

GDP is likely to be well above £3 trillion by 2030. Growth is forecast to be between 1-1.5% per year until the end of the decade but don't get sidetracked by that.

Even without growth there's plenty of money in the economy. FTSE 100 fat cat CEOs have already got more this month than the average worker will earn in 2026.

They're getting their share and then some. We need to make sure we get ours.

- Read the [Economy and Labour Market section](#) for more.
- Read the [How much are employers making section](#) for more.

## 1.6 Get in touch if you have an issue you want us to cover

Work, Voice, Pay is here to support you at the bargaining table. If you have anything you would like it to cover get in touch at [workvoicepay@unitetheunion.org](mailto:workvoicepay@unitetheunion.org).

Our monthly Facts & Figures online "run-throughs" have already delivered ideas for new content to push back against employer arguments.

Attend one of the latest run-throughs or email us with your employer's arguments and we'll be happy to give you the evidence you need to counter them.

Join us at either 10am or 6pm the day after the inflation figures are released.

- Click on this link to [sign-up for January](#).
- If that is too short notice, we will hold them again on 19 February. So save the date and click the same link for updated dates.





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What have we won this month?



## Facts and Figures

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*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

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## 2. What have we won this month?

### 2.1 Monthly round-up: Unite members at SAS, Glen Dimplex, DHL, and others won inflation busting pay deals and improved working conditions

Collective bargaining remains the most powerful tool we have to improve pay, terms and conditions.



#### Latest pay victories secured through the collective power of Unite members over the last month:

- **Heathrow** cabin crew at **SAS** airline won an 8% pay rise over 14 months after strike action. It will also see their overtime pay go from £79 up to a maximum of £240, as well as two additional days of annual leave, plus an extra pay grade to aid progression.<sup>1</sup>
- Unite members employed in staff grades at **Glen Dimplex** in Portadown ended their industrial dispute after accepting a consolidated uplift of £2,330 to all staff grades - worth between 6% and 8% to most workers over an 18 month period.<sup>2</sup>
- **DHL** workers at **Luton Airport easyJet** secured an improved deal of 5.5% over 18 months, a 25% increase to night shift premiums and a £250 payment in April 2026, after 3 days of strike action before Christmas.<sup>3</sup>

What have we won this month?

## Facts and Figures

- **First Bus** cleaners, fuellers and shunters in Glasgow suspended their strike action after securing a 5% pay offer.<sup>4</sup>



Unite members in these workplaces improved their working conditions through their collective power:

- **Metrolink** tram drivers ended their strike as they accepted a deal to tackle fatigue.<sup>5</sup>
- **Shelter** workers ended their strike after accepting a new working hours deal, shortening of the working week from 37 hours to 35 hours, equivalent to a 5+% pay rise. They will also receive two extra days of annual leave, with both improvements effective from 1 Jan 26.<sup>6</sup>
- Unite members at Glenrothes based **Bosch Rexroth** secured a major victory against the company's threat of redundancies, fire and rehire practices and short term working.<sup>7</sup>
- Unite signed a recognition agreement for workers at the engineering firm **Trescal**. They will now have bargaining rights for pay, terms and conditions as well as facility time for union reps.<sup>8</sup>

Unite Reps can use **Work, Voice, Pay** tools to improve collective bargaining negotiations for pay, terms and conditions at their workplaces: <https://www.unitetheunion.org/workvoicepay>

## 2.2 Unite members took industrial action and won major pay rises in 2025, including 15.76% at First West Yorkshire

2025 was another year where Unite members fought and won inflation-busting wins in their workplaces and sectors. Our industrial power is only getting stronger through strikes and negotiations.

Since **Sharon Graham** was elected General Secretary in August 2021, over 267,000 Unite members have stood up in nearly **1,600 disputes**.

More than **£620 million** has been put into our members' pockets through winning these disputes.

This is only a headline figure and does not include wins on enhanced pensions, annual leave, shorter working weeks or other conditions, or pay increases secured through negotiations.

**Active members and being ready to strike is what moves the bosses.**



Looking at this headline figures for 2025, we present you the "Top 5 pay wins by percentage at Unite workplaces over the last 12 months".

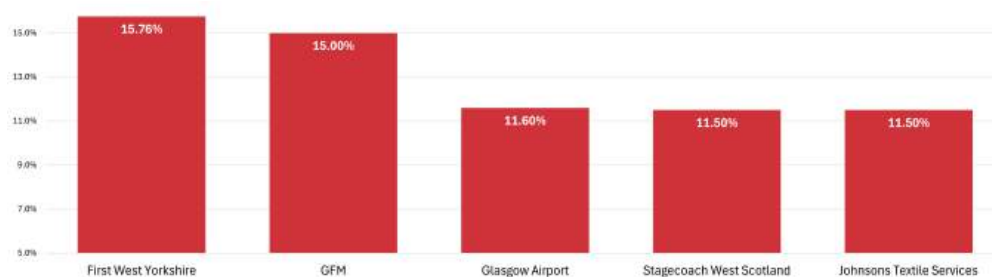
The biggest pay rises in percentage terms were won by **First West Yorkshire** workers (15.76%) in Passenger Transport and **GFM** workers (15%) in Health.

In February 2025, Unite members at **First West Yorkshire** called off their strike after they secured a pay deal of nearly 16%, worth more than £4,000 for full time employees.

Just before Christmas 2025, **GFM** workers not only celebrated their recognition agreement but a fantastic pay rise of up to 15% after taking strike action.

## Facts and Figures

This put GFM workers on a near equal footing with the colleagues they work alongside who are directly employed by the NHS. The agreement also included a clause on RPI+ pay deals each year.



**Figure 1 Top 5 pay wins by percentage at Unite workplaces in 2025. Source: Unite analysis (This chart does not include non-consolidated lump sums.)**

The **Passenger Transport** sector saw multiple double-digit wins. First West Yorkshire was followed by **Western Buses Ltd** (11.50% pay rise over 18 months).

Unite members at **Leicester Citybus Ltd** won 10.45% over 16 months, 10% at **Ribble Motor Services Limited** Birkenhead bargaining group, and 20% at **First Manchester Limited** over 2 years.

In addition to pay rises, Unite members also saw their terms and conditions improved. This includes better annual leave and sick leaves for **GFM** workers and improved incremental pay rises and annual leave for Unite members at **Lancashire Unison**.

It was wins like these that pushed overall pay across the economy up. Average weekly pay rose in real terms for the second consecutive year, after a wave of industrial action. For more on this read December 2025 Facts and Figures: <https://tinyurl.com/2kkfhjzp>

Fighting Unite members will not stop in 2026. Workers across many sectors are already preparing for industrial action for better pay, improved working conditions, and union recognition. See the [Building Industrial Power](#) section for further information.





## 2.3 Workers' Voice: Amulet Reps describe how they won better pay and insourcing at the Bank of England

Christmas came early for striking Unite members last year. Security officers working at the **Bank of England** for **Amulet Security** secured a pay rise and recognition. They also won a promise to be taken in-house by the Bank.

Workplace Rep **Bishow** tells us how they organised and achieved this fantastic victory.



Hear it straight from the front line! Listen to the full interview in the Facts & Figures Podcast: **Spotify:**

<https://tinyurl.com/4uf9y5zc> **Apple Podcasts:**

<https://tinyurl.com/3uv8ae8d>



**Tells us about how you got organised in the Bank of England.**

**B:** I've been working there since 2017, and most of the security officers have been working since then.

There were three contractor companies we worked for, from G4S initially back in 2017, to Mitie, and this year, Amulet Churchill Security Solutions. We've come a long, long way since we joined Unite back in 2023.

At first, we never had the majority. It just started from one member joining and persuading others to join. Peer to peer at that moment.

What have we won this month?

## Facts and Figures

At first it was about disparity between teams, along with other things like holidays, bank holidays, pay, sick pay, trainings, and many other things that were happening in our site.

We had to go through many meetings. This year, we balloted for industrial strike action. That was for 24 hours on 13 November. It went well in favour of Bank of England security officers; we got most of the things.

We got an 8% pay rise this year, and next year is already confirmed, which is good. And also we got union recognition for one of our teams, which we never had before. We got our bank holiday pay and trainings as well.

"And recently, after that offer was made, on 3 December, we got more brilliant news. The Bank of England security team will be taken in-house. That means all contractors will be taken in-house. So the end of outsourced security. That was great news, surprising for us, but this has already been confirmed by Bank of England senior personnel. This is a huge turning point for us. And I think this is really one of the most inspiring stories that I'm sharing with everyone."





## What does that actually mean, being brought back in-house for the security staff?

**B:** We are in a very early phase at the moment but we have had confirmed that our salaries and terms and conditions will be kept. Which is very good news.

In terms of shift patterns, nothing will change, at least for six months, just like we did this year. If there are any proposed changes, they have to be consulted with all the officers and it has to be mutually agreed. This is a very good opportunity. The client has decided to take all the officers in, rather than contractors changing like before, which was our main point.

Also this benefits all Unite members. Amulet officers will be getting enhanced benefits such as sick pay, overtime rates. In contractor companies they wouldn't offer any such benefits.



## Throughout the campaigns, both the pay campaign and the recognition campaign, how did you communicate with the members?

**B:** We see all the officers, our colleagues, every day on Friday. We have a group chat on WhatsApp, where we communicate there as well.

Also every now and then, I would say every two weeks if there are any scheduled events, I would always communicate with all my members and make sure all their concerns are being heard. I would always ask them if there are any issues that they would like to address in the next meeting. That was the initial process, and for the core team, I would also follow up with the Reps, because in each team we have two Reps.

## Did you use any of Unite's resources like Work, Voice, Pay?

**B:** Last year I did. I attended a lot of union courses that Unite offered. They were very helpful for me. That really motivated me, and also helped getting all the resources.

Because before, I never had a clue about all those resources that Unite has got already. They gave me all the books, all the leaflets, all the links,

## Facts and Figures

about many things like employment law, the Equality Act. All these things really helped.

Also about things like, if your case goes through ACAS, what will be the process, and after that, if that doesn't resolve it, then it goes to an employment tribunal, what will happen, how long will it take? All those things really helped me to build myself as a workplace Rep and to gain my confidence as well, and to also get valuable information about most of the things like pay, working hours, about holidays, sick leave, grievances.

Before, I used to do my own kind of research, but later, when I joined Unite as a workplace Rep, my Unite regional officer also really helped me.



**Could you give us three key lessons from your experience that you would share with other Reps who may be in a similar situation?**

**B:** I think the most important would be the first step: join Unite. That is the initial process. I have been talking with lots of colleagues who are not in the union, from different departments, and they've been asking me how did you manage to get this? How did you do this? And the first answer I give them is: first join Unite, join Unite, and don't worry about anything.

Then, if you don't have a majority as a union, let's say if you have only one member, possibly it might not go in favour. So talk to peers, persuade them that the union is always helpful for us. Not just for pay rises, also for other things such as fighting discrimination, bullying, harassment or racism.

Lastly, prepare well for meetings with management and communicate well with your members.

## 2.4 Nationwide agreement on AI grants Italian telecoms workers a seat at the table

Italian unions in the telecommunications sector have negotiated a new nationwide collective agreement for 200,000 workers. It includes provisions for worker consultation on the deployment of artificial intelligence (AI), alongside pay rises and increased protections for women and LGBT+ workers.<sup>9</sup>



The agreement focuses on strengthening labour relations as the sector undergoes rapid change driven by digital transformation and AI. It includes new provisions for a specific working group to monitor and assess the impacts and risks of AI and algorithmic management on workers and their jobs.

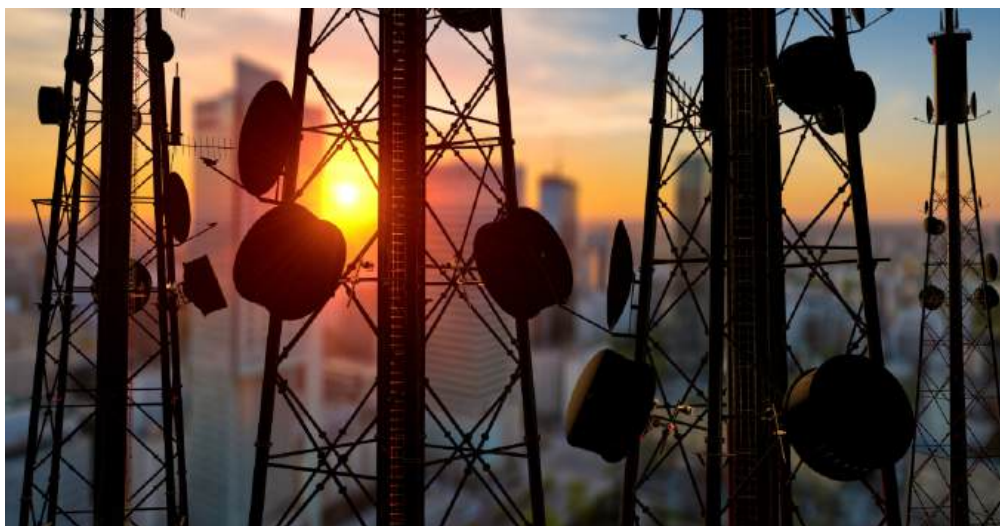
The working group establishes a basis for future negotiations on:

- algorithmic transparency - so it is clear what rules have been chosen and why,
- workers' right to information on AI systems,
- limits to digital surveillance and automated decision making,
- human oversight in AI-supported processes,
- access to performance and operational data.

## Facts and Figures

*"This contract is an important signal at a crucial time for the future of the sector and for the digital transition of our country. It strengthens the protection and enhancement of labour in a strategic sector for Italy's technological and infrastructural development."* CISL General Secretary Daniela Fumarola

As well as a median salary increase of €298 a month, the renewed agreement includes a framework to support negotiations on remote work - and introduces the option of spreading the 40-hour week over four days. It also improves protections against gender-based violence for LGBT+ people and allows consideration for future measures relating to the 'three Ms' in women's lives: maternity, menstruation and menopause.



The contract - bargained by **SLC-CIGL** and **FISTEL-CISL**, as well as **UILCOM-UIL** with the Italian telecommunications employers' association, **Assotelecomunicazioni-ASSTEL** - will now be put to all members for approval.

*"This renewal is good news for workers who will have tools to defend their interests and rights during a profound phase of restructuring of the sector. While the government is decreasing their wages, the contract tries to adjust the wage to the cost of living".* Riccardo Saccone of the SLC CGIL





## 2.5 Bite-sized Bargaining: Hear how more workers won better jobs, pay and conditions in 2025

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.
- **Unite Rep Ian** on how Unite members at **Liverpool University** fought back to protect their hybrid working policy: <https://tinyurl.com/52ahnjxr> Facts & Figures September 2025, p.24.
- Senior Unite Rep **Kevin** at **Livv Housing** and Unite Rep **Lorraine** at **Capita** told us how they won a pay rise through determined organising, collective strength, and the support of their union. <https://tinyurl.com/d5p4nwhp> Facts & Figures June 2025, p.29.
- Unite convenor **Tony** at **First Glasgow** and Unite Branch Secretary **Ralph** at **Arriva Midlands** told us how Unite members led successful disputes that delivered wins in their workplaces. <https://tinyurl.com/2p9j4ees> Facts & Figures May 2025, p.23.

### 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>





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# COST OF LIVING AND PAY

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## Facts and Figures

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*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

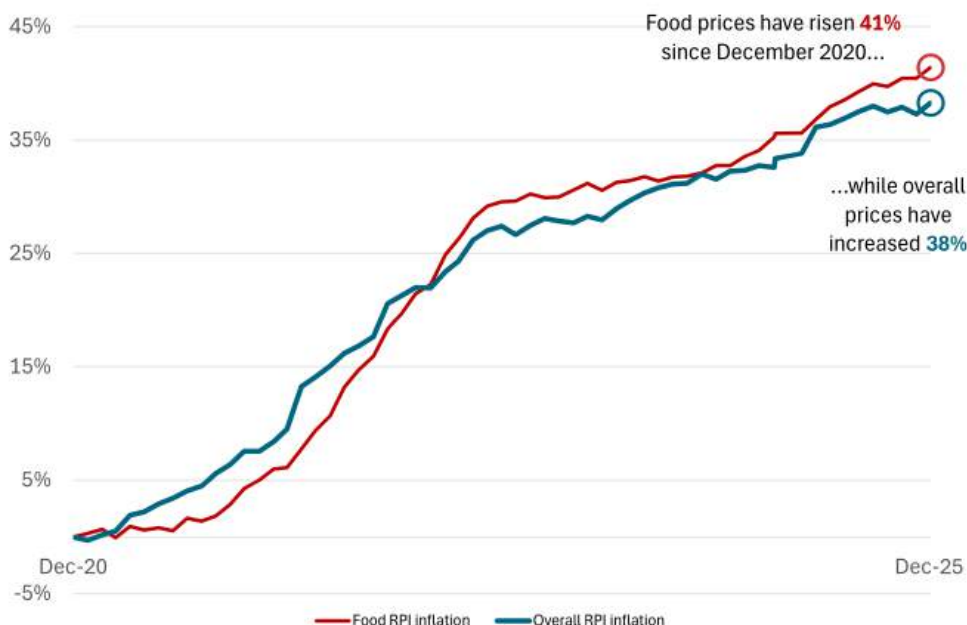
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## 3. What is happening to the cost of living and pay?

### 3.1 Key figures: RPI has increased to 4.2% but employers are planning low-ball pay offers for 2026

The rate of inflation increased this month to 4.2%. The prices of food continues to soar and government stealth taxes will eat into take home pay. But employers are planning below-inflation pay offers for 2026. Unite Reps can use this information to build power in their workplaces and win at the bargaining table.

- **Prices rose 4.2% in the year to December**, as measured by the Retail Price Index (RPI).<sup>10</sup> Prices are now 38% higher than they were five years ago.
- **Workers enjoying Christmas with a nice meal and a few drinks got hammered at the tills.** The food inflation rate rose to 5.5%, alcohol rose to 4%. Food prices have now gone up by 41% over the last five years.
- **But employers are planning low ball pay offers in 2026.** Surveys by industry bodies Brightmine and Incomes Data Research suggest employers are planning pay offers of between just 3-3.4% this year. Reps know what is coming and can prepare accordingly.<sup>11</sup>



## Facts and Figures

Employers may try to link pay to the CPI or CPIH measures of inflation. Both underestimate the real price hikes faced by workers.

- **Tying pay to CPI or CPIH short-changes workers:** CPI is just 3.4% this month, CPIH is 3.6%.<sup>12</sup>
- **Only RPI represents workers' cost of living:** CPI and CPIH include the spending of non-workers like tourists, skewing the numbers.
- **Mobile phone bills, utility bills, and even government bonds are linked to RPI.** If it's good enough for them, why not workers?

Workers' disposable income will also be hit by the **Government's extension of the tax threshold stealth tax** and our members need decent pay increases as a result. Read the General Secretary's message at the start of this issue and use our new calculator to work out how much it will hit your members:

<https://workvoicepay.unitetheunion.org/stealthtax>



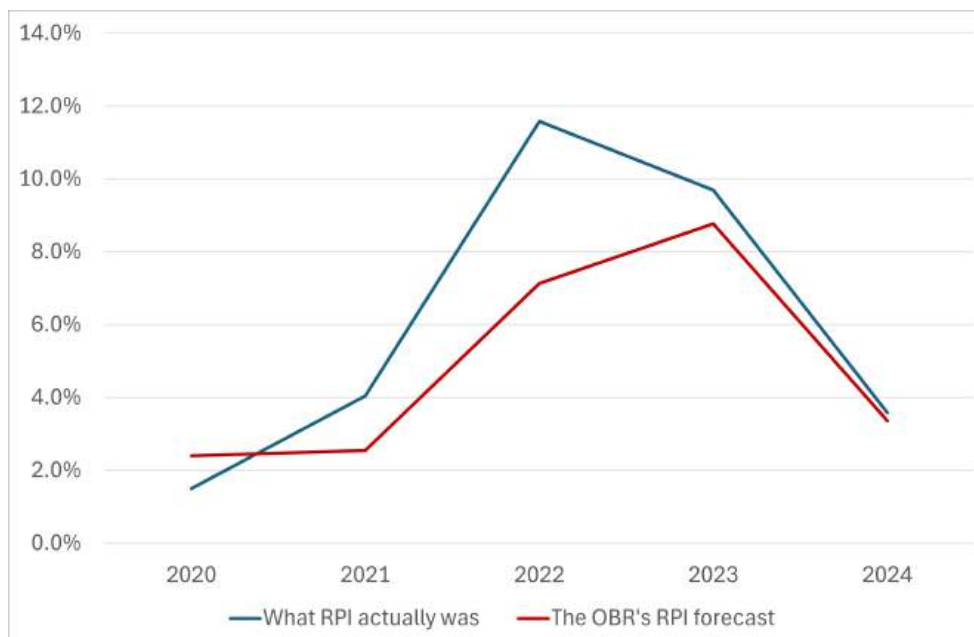
### 3.2 Inflation forecasts: don't believe the hype

Management may try to tie pay to inflation forecasts that are lower than the current rate. "This pay deal will only take effect from April, inflation is forecast to be lower then so that's all we're going to offer."

**But new research for Facts & Figures shows forecasts are usually wrong. And what's more, they usually under-estimate forecast inflation.** So tying pay to forecasts is likely to leave workers short-changed.

**So unless inflation is forecast to increase, only the current rate will do.**

# Facts and Figures



**Figure 2** The OBR has underestimated RPI every year since 2021. OBR forecast figures calculated as an average of the four latest estimates prior to the actual RPI release date.

The two most widely-used inflation forecasts are those produced by the Bank of England and the Office for Budget Responsibility. Reps in Finance and Chemicals have reported management trying to tie pay to forecasts from these two bodies in current pay rounds.

Both bodies are currently forecasting inflation to dip through the coming year. Management are trying to push lower pay deals as a result. Looking for narratives they could use to push back on this, the Reps asked the Facts & Figures team to look into how accurate past forecasts by these two bodies have been. The table below shows how each body has done this decade. The short answer is: not great! The Bank of England, for example, has been wrong 96% of the time. What's more, the majority of the time they *underestimate* the rate. The OBR has been slightly more accurate but it too tends to underestimate what inflation will be.

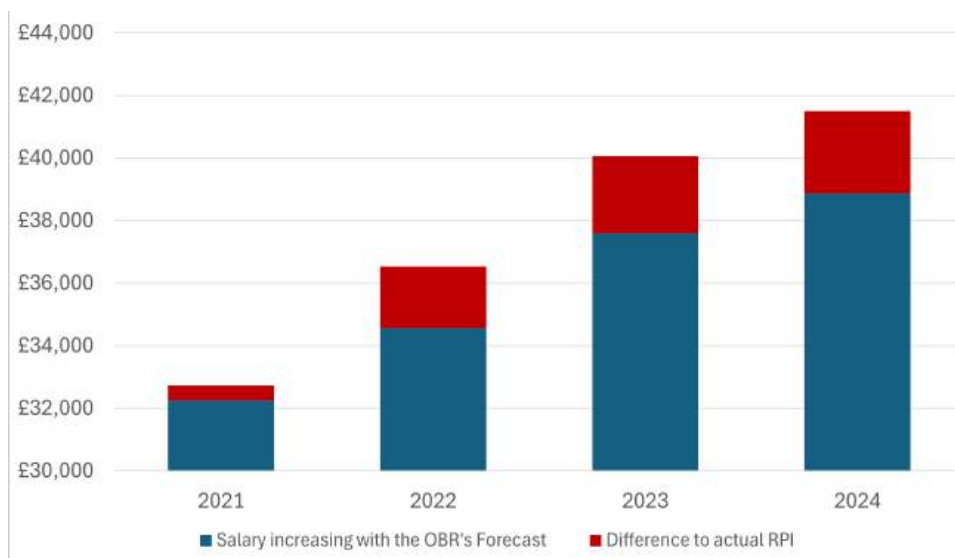
	Bank of England	OBR
Underestimated	60%	55%
Overestimated	36%	35%
Got it right	4%	10%

**Table 1:** Bank of England and Office for Budget Responsibility forecast accuracy. We have analysed forecasts made for the year before the relevant inflation released. The further into the future the forecast is, the more inaccurate it becomes, so we have discounted forecasts made over a year in advance.

## Facts and Figures

Looking back further to 2010, the OBR has overestimated more. But as the table above shows, it has sharply underestimated inflation since the cost of living crisis began. Since 2020 the OBR has guessed right 10% of the time, the Bank of England just 4%.

The consequences for pay are significant. If your pay over the last year was tied to the OBR's 2024 forecast rather than actual RPI, you would have seen a 0.2% real terms pay cut. That's equivalent to around £80 in lost pay based on the median salary. But it's important to remember that this loss will compound and snowball in the years to come. **Tying pay to OBR forecasts since 2020 rather than actual RPI would have cost a worker on the average salary £7,500.**



**Figure 3** Lost earnings from tying pay to OBR forecast compared to real RPI. Based on the median full-time salary from 2020 of £31,461 with a pay anniversary in April

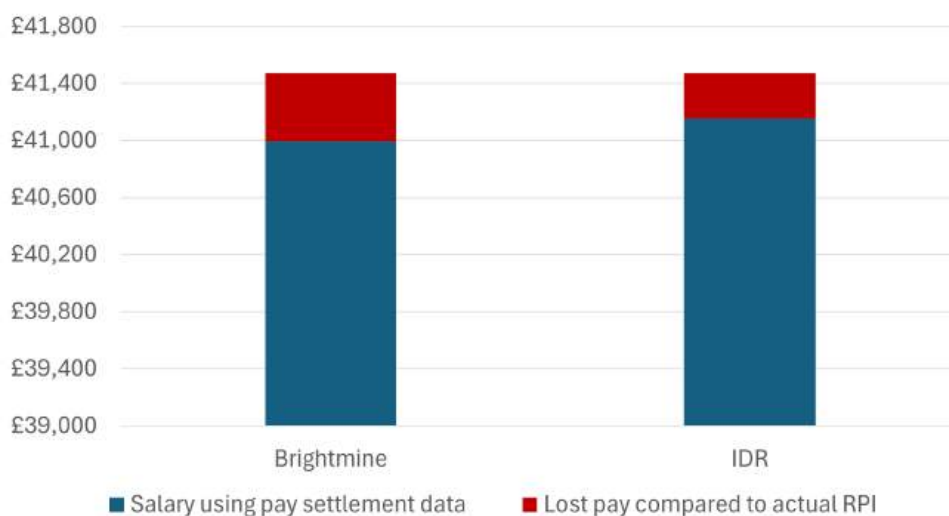
### 3.3 Employers are using average settlement data to push down pay: RPI is the only measure to tie pay to

Reps currently negotiating pay deals have reported management using average pay settlements across the economy to justify below-inflation pay offers. This is smoke and mirrors. Any below-RPI pay increase is a real terms pay cut, leaving workers worse off. "Everyone else is doing it" isn't a credible excuse.

Every quarter, industry bodies like Brightmine or Incomes Data Research (IDR) produce figures on average pay deals that employers are awarding across the economy. These are reported in the media and may be used by employers to benchmark pay, especially when the results are lower than the inflation rate.

According to Brightmine the average pay deal for the three months to November 2025 was 3%. They forecast the average pay deal for 2026 will also be 3%.<sup>13</sup> IDR reckon the average pay deal was 3.4% in the three months to November and that pay awards will be similar in the coming year.<sup>14</sup>

Both these numbers are, of course, lower than RPI. A worker on the average full time income of £39,800 would have lost £478 if they had tied their November pay deal to Brightmine's data and £318 to IDR's instead of the average RPI rate of 4.2% over the same three month period.



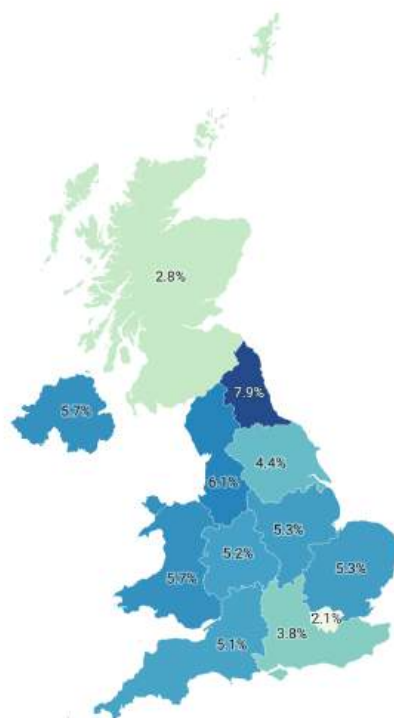
This isn't just a one-off loss either. Unite research has shown that even one below-inflation pay deal can compound into thousands of pounds of real-term losses over the years. Rather than using estimates and old data, it's best to wait for the actual figures to be released.

### 3.4 Rents are up by 4% 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.**<sup>15</sup>

Successive governments have failed to provide decent, affordable housing, leaving workers with no choice but to **seek better pay through collective bargaining.** Housing costs are a major cost-of-living element and should be addressed directly in pay negotiations.

## Facts and Figures



Created with Datawrapper

**Figure 4 Rents continue to rise across Britain & Ireland. Annual percentage change comparison Dec 24 v Dec 25 (Note: for Northern Ireland the data is from Oct 25).**

**Source: Price Index of Private Rents, ONS**

Overall, rents have increased by 4.0%, to £1,368, in the 12 months to December 2025. In the North East of England rents rose 7.9%, although that's down from 8.4% the previous month.<sup>16</sup>

ONS year-on-year data on private rent affordability shows:

- Average private renters in England spent 36.3% of income for housing in 2024. In Wales, the figure is 25.9%, and in Northern Ireland, 25.3%.<sup>17</sup>

For the average private renter in England, housing costs exceed the 30% "affordability" threshold.<sup>18</sup>



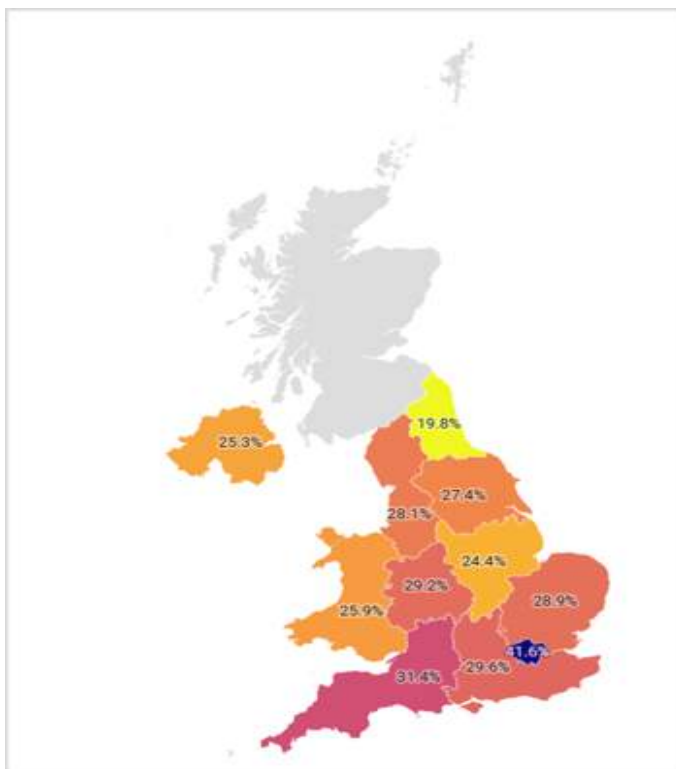


Figure 5 The ratio of private rent to median income of private renting households in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, financial year ending 2024 (Note: No data is available for Scotland). Source: Rental Affordability, ONS

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government survey highlights the pressure on families: **in 2024 to 2025, renters spent 34% of household income on rents with housing support included, or 39.3% without housing support.**<sup>19</sup>



Figure 6 Household income spent on rent and mortgage with or without housing support included in income in 2024 to 2025. Source: ONS

## Facts and Figures

While rents have been soaring, wages should not lag behind. For many workers, a growing share of income is swallowed before the month even begins. In collective bargaining, our members should demand pay rises that reflect rising housing costs.

### 3.5 Average UK house prices are up 2.5%

In the 12 months to November 2025<sup>20</sup>:

- UK average house prices rose by 2.5%, to £271,000.
- Northern Ireland saw the largest rise, 7.1%, while Wales experienced the smallest increase, 0.7%.
- England and Scotland grew by 2.2% and 4.5% respectively

In England regional differences are stark:

- The North East recorded the highest annual increase at 6.8%.
- London saw a slight decline of 1.2%.

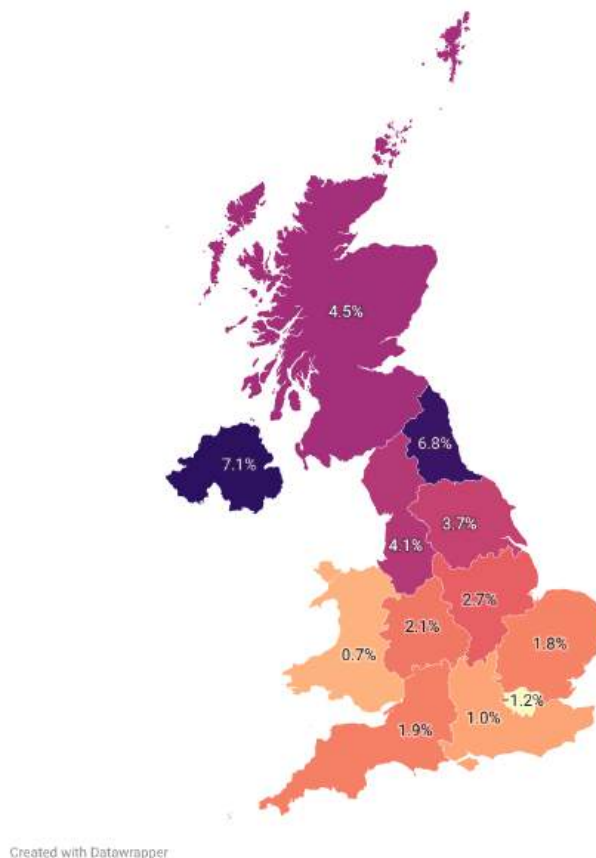


Figure 7 House price percentage change, Nov 24-Nov 25 (Note: Northern Ireland compares Q3 2024 vs Q3 2025). Source: UK House Price Index, ONS

## 3.5.1 Average mortgage rates are 7.25%, trending downwards, but are still well above recent historical levels

Interest rate rises have made borrowing for a mortgage prohibitive to many - making it even harder for renters to get on the housing ladder.

As of 16 January 2026, the average standard variable mortgage rate was 7.25% across all lenders.<sup>21</sup> This is a minimal decrease from last month's average of 7.27%, despite a recent Bank of England base rate cut.<sup>22</sup>

Even as rates trend downward from recent peaks, they remain well above historical levels, meaning **households renewing mortgages face significantly higher monthly costs**.<sup>23</sup> Many potential buyers are now carrying credit card or other debts, making it harder to secure mortgages.<sup>24</sup>

The Bank of England's "revert-to-rate mortgage" was 6.77% in December 2025, lower than last year's 7.47%. However, it is worryingly above historical levels.<sup>25</sup> The revert-to-rate mortgage rate is a monthly average interest rate for mortgages that moves onto lenders' standard or default rate after an initial fixed or discounted deal ends.



## Facts and Figures

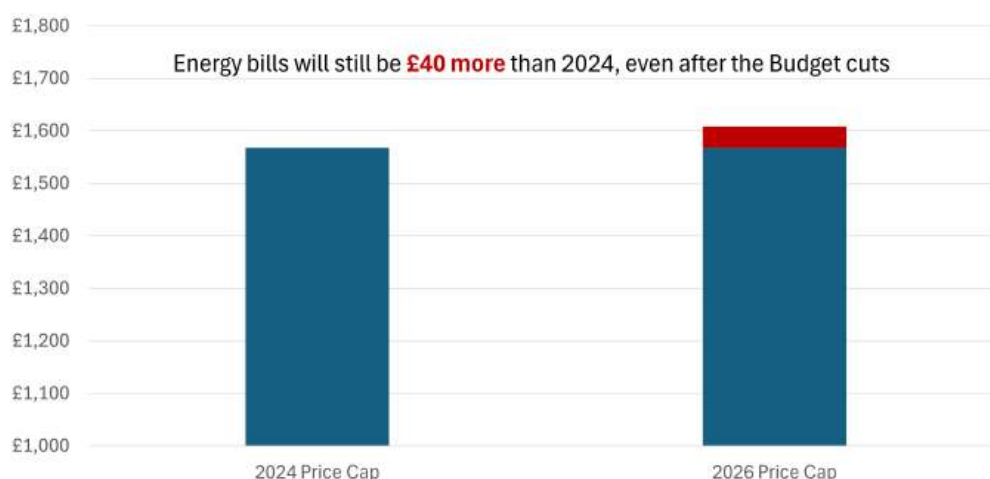
### 3.6 Energy bills will still be £40 more than a year ago after budget reforms

The Labour government has loudly trumpeted the £150 cuts to energy bills announced in its November budget. As long as the government doesn't u-turn households should see the benefit from April. Any respite from soaring energy bills is of course welcome.

In reality, energy bills remain historically high. The average household will still be paying £40 more compared to when Labour came into power in summer 2024 - far different than the £300 reduction Keir Starmer previously promised.

This is using the current price cap to March 2026, but experts don't think it will change that much when the new cap is published for April.<sup>26</sup>

So Unite members will still feel the impact of the energy crisis throughout this year. **We can't rely on the government to resolve it - decent pay rises are the only way to be sure we can heat our homes.**



**And there's a kicker: workers will pay for over half of the cut through general taxation.**

Labour's savings come from cutting some of the “policy charges” (so-called “green levies”) on household bills. There are two changes:

- Scrapping the “Energy Company Obligation” (ECO) scheme that funds energy companies to install insulation or new boilers for lower income households.
- Moving 75% of the charge on household bills for “Renewables Obligations” into general taxation. Renewables Obligations (RO) are subsidies paid to energy generators for building power stations and wind farms. These are legacy schemes that ended in 2013 - but we are still locked into paying them on 20 year contracts.

# Facts and Figures



The ECO change will save £59, the RO change £88. But the latter will just add £2 billion to general taxation, making the overall savings to workers' disposable income significantly lower than suggested.

And as Facts & Figures readers know: these numbers are peanuts compared to the profits energy companies are making from our bills. The £150 cut is much less than the £500 energy companies made from average household bills in 2024.

And we are still paying the same massive subsidy to energy profits through the RO scheme. Just now we will pay it from taxes rather than bills.

- Read Unite Investigates latest Energy Profiteering report for more on the grand larceny of our energy system here:  
<https://www.unitetheunion.org/what-we-do/unite-investigates/unite-investigates-to-fix-the-energy-crisis-end-the-market-mess>

*The government is turning a blind eye to these excessive profits. That must change. Everyday people cannot continue to pay. We need to look at other countries like France and begin to plan to own our own energy. Only then can the ever-bulging profits currently going to shareholders, be used to keep bills down for households and businesses.”* Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham



What is happening to the cost of living and pay?

## Facts and Figures

### 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://tinyurl.com/2585t624> or look in the September 2024 edition, p.134-135.
- **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](https://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](https://tinyurl.com/2xu66av4) or look in the August 2024 edition, p.33-35.
- **The lowest paid workers are experiencing the highest rate of inflation** Find out more here: [tinyurl.com/uccet97z](https://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.



**Heathrow bosses!**

**END POVERTY PAY**

**WORKERS CAN'T GET BY**



**#HALStrike**

Unite, fighting for Jobs. Pay. Conditions.







## SECTION FOUR

# ABILITY TO PAY

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## Facts and Figures

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

Sharon Graham, Unite General Secretary

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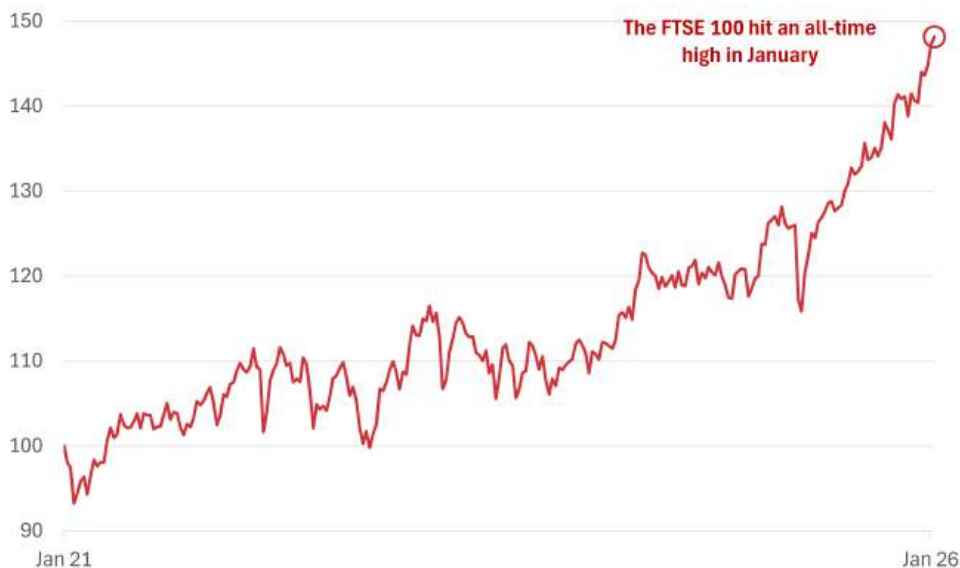


## 4. How much money are employers making?

### 4.1 Key figures: supermarket sales boomed over Christmas and the FTSE 100 has hit yet another all-time high

Across the world, companies are reporting results that reveal ever-growing profits. **Armed with the facts, workers can fight back against profitable firms crying the poor tale at the bargaining table.**

- **Supermarket sales soared over Christmas:** Tesco now expects higher profits and Sainsbury's is set to pay out £1.3 billion to its shareholders.
- **Interest rates have fallen to 3.75%:** Firms across the country are set to save millions in debt costs, boosting ability to pay.
- **Fat Cat Day:** The average FTSE 100 CEO has already earned far more than the average worker's *annual* salary this year.
- **Stock markets hit yet another all-time high:** The FTSE 100 broke the 10,000 points mark for the first time, considered a landmark and one that signals a rising ability to pay for many Unite employers.



Use the **Forensic Accounts** team to find out how your employer is doing financially, Get in touch at [forensic.accounts@uniteunion.org](mailto:forensic.accounts@uniteunion.org)

## Facts and Figures

### 4.2 Fat Cat Day: CEOs had made more than your annual salary by 6 January

The bosses of FTSE 100 companies had made more money by midday on 6 January than their average worker will make this whole year. It's the latest reminder of how unequal pay can be in a firm. **We know there's enough money to go around for fair pay. The issue is how it's shared.**



New research by the High Pay Centre found the average FTSE 100 CEO pay amounted to £4.4 million (excluding pension). That's 113 times the average UK worker's pay, and 4.22% up on the previous year. **The average FTSE 100 boss' wage is now £1,353 an hour.**<sup>27</sup> According to the Guardian, that means UK bosses will have exceeded the average annual pay of staff in less than 29 hours of work, or by about 11.30am on Tuesday if they started work on Friday 2 January.<sup>28</sup>

Unite negotiators know unionising is how workers start levelling the playing field in the face of bosses that hoard profits. **Use Work Voice Pay's Financial Insider tool to find out how much the boss at your employer is making.**

You can access it here: <https://www.unitetheunion.org/work-voice-pay/financial-insider>

*"CEOs are pocketing millions and their pay continues to shoot up much faster than that of their workers. So, let them take note - Unite will not tolerate employers who want one rule for the bosses and another for the workers."* Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham

### 4.3 Supermarkets raked in billions in sales over Christmas off the back of sky-high food prices

As we've shown in the cost of living section, food prices are at record highs and everyday shoppers are feeling the squeeze. Yet despite cries of price wars, national insurance costs, and a higher minimum wage - supermarkets have been reporting all-time high profits in recent years.

Driven by the influx of sales over Christmas, Tesco has now claimed its highest share of the British grocery market in more than a decade.<sup>29</sup> Its revenue increased 3.7% in its latest set of results, hitting £25 billion over just 19 weeks of trading.<sup>30</sup>



Tesco hasn't revealed how much profit it made off the back of Christmas shoppers, but it expects to make a whopping £3.1 billion this year.<sup>31</sup>

It wasn't just Tesco that raked in the rewards from Christmas either. Sainsbury's shareholders are set to pocket £1.3 billion in payouts this year, after the grocer's sales grew 4.9% over Christmas.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, M&S appears to have shrugged off its cyber attack last year, with food sales growing 5.6%.<sup>33</sup>

This makes it clear - supermarkets aren't struggling. In fact, they're doing better than ever. With food prices still high, grocers are simply raising their prices to pass on extra costs and maintain their margins.

In 2024, the Big 4 supermarkets together made operating profits of £4.7 billion. This year, that figure is likely to be even higher.

*"While workers and their families, including Tesco's own workers, are still struggling with rampant food inflation, Tesco is paying out millions in shareholder dividends and their executive pay has soared. This sort of rampant profiteering is simply a disgrace, and it must be stopped." Unite general secretary Sharon Graham*





# Facts and Figures



Much of this debt is charged at floating rates, so when the interest rates rise, so does the amount Thames Water pays out in interest, and vice-versa.



In its latest set of accounts for example, Thames Water paid out over £414 million in cash purely from interest on its borrowings.<sup>36</sup>

The company's debt structure is complicated, so to quantify the impact of changes in interest rates, let's focus on the parent company's bank loans.

Thames Water Utilities Limited had £3.71 billion in bank loans and private placements in its latest set of accounts, £1.5 billion of which is linked to the Bank of England's base rate.<sup>37</sup>

The average interest rate was 4.9% in Thames Water's 2025 financial year, but as discussed that has since been cut to 3.75%. This means that Thames Water will save roughly £17 million a year just on its Bank of England variable rate loans.

In reality, Thames Water's interest payments could fall further, if the Bank of England cuts rates again, plus we've only looked at the parent company's bank loans.<sup>38</sup>

**So, when interest rates are falling, it's likely that the profits at your company are on the rise - boosting ability to pay for many employers. Even when interest rates rise, companies are often insulated against the effects, through a thing called hedging. Think of it as insurance against costs going up. They often pay the banks for that security in a way that isn't available to individuals.**

If your company is trying to use debt as an excuse to avoid fair pay increases, reach out to Unite's Forensic Accounts team for an in-depth analysis at [forensic.accounts@unitetheunion.org](mailto:forensic.accounts@unitetheunion.org)

How much money are employers making?

## Facts and Figures

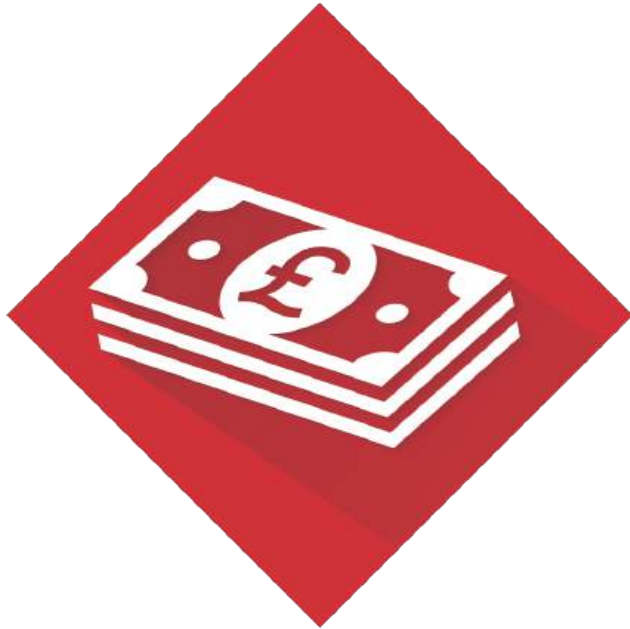
### 4.5 Bite-sized Bargaining: Ability to pay

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.
- **Companies listed on the world's largest stock exchanges made over £2.2 trillion in profit in 2024.** Find out more here: <https://tinyurl.com/ye237yha> or look in the October 2025 edition, p.70-71
- **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>.







# SECTION FIVE ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET

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## Facts and Figures

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*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

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

### 5.1 Key figures: Employers say they are "optimistic" about the economy in 2026

Bosses and their cheerleaders in the media are pushing the narrative of a "cooling" labour market. Why? To justify low-ball pay offers. But when they talk to their banks it's a different story.

- The latest NatWest UK Business Growth Tracker, released 20 January, says "the UK private sector was buoyed by a sharp expansion in output among mid-market businesses at the end of 2025, **which has helped to fuel optimism for 2026**".<sup>39</sup> The separate Lloyds Bank's Business Barometer survey reports: "**Business confidence staged a post Budget rebound, to end the year on a high**".<sup>40</sup>
- Employers in retail and hospitality are cutting jobs. The Office for National Statistics estimates the majority of the 135,000 decline in payrolled jobs in the three months to November came from these sectors, mainly due to a lack of new hires.<sup>41 42</sup> **Recent Unite wins in Village Hotels show how to push back against management attacks.**
- Transport, Finance and Healthcare employers are hiring, with payrolled jobs up over the last year. **Reps in these sectors can use any extra bargaining power that comes from this to push pay and conditions up.**<sup>43</sup>



## Facts and Figures

### 5.2 GDP is forecast to be well over £3 trillion by the end of the decade: there is more than enough money to go around

Read the news and you'll get a gloomy picture of the UK economy. It's "flat-lining", growth is "weaker than expected", the economy "shrank" last month, and so on.<sup>44</sup> This is true: growth rates are lower than forecast. And 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.

But - and it's a big but - **even with sluggish growth rates, there is easily enough money in the UK for better pay and higher living standards.** According to newly released data from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), GDP is set to grow by an average of 1.5% up to 2030.<sup>45</sup>

Even if these forecasts are too optimistic - and as we know from this month's Cost of Living section, they are unlikely to be right! - **the UK economy is still very likely to be worth more than £3 trillion by the end of the decade, making it the sixth richest country in the world.**

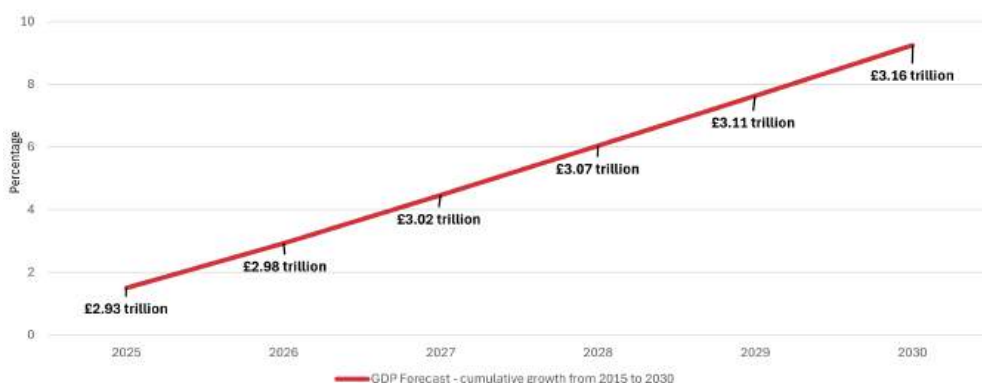


Figure 9 GDP Forecast - cumulative growth from 2015 to 2030. Source: Autumn Budget based on the OBR's GDP forecast, House of Commons Library

The "low growth" narrative risks distracting from the real issue: Workers' share of the pie. **Growth alone doesn't raise living standards. Collective bargaining power does.** Collective bargaining raises wages, protects conditions, limits the race to the bottom on contracts. It stops employers hoarding the benefits of growth, 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.



If there is enough money for shareholder dividends and bonanza CEO pay, there should certainly be money for decent pay rises for workers.

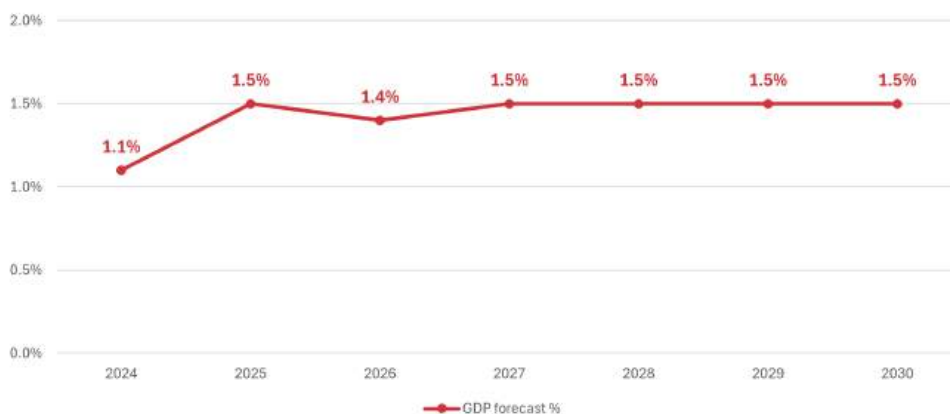


Figure 10 GDP Forecast growth percentage from 2024 to 2030. Source: Autumn Budget based on the OBR's GDP forecast

When it comes to "slow growth", Unite is also fighting on the political front. We are pressing government for 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.** Without a serious government commitment to a long-term industrial strategy and capital investment, Britain will continue to fall behind competitor nations that are investing heavily in their economies.

*"The latest figures reflect the low investment, low growth doom loop that still defines the UK economy. We desperately need more government investment and joined up thinking on industry to create jobs and to raise GDP. Last month's budget was a wasted opportunity to deliver on that. Other advanced economies invest much more than us and we simply can't afford to be left further behind."* Unite General Secretary Sharon Graham

**While GDP growth is important, excessive focus on it ignores many other measures of the economy, such as inequality.**

- **GDP growth ignores income inequality.** Despite boasting the sixth-largest GDP in the world, the UK ranks ninth in terms of income inequality among OECD countries.<sup>46</sup> GDP growth does not measure where the wealth is going. Are workers seeing the fruits of their labour, or are only the wealthiest seeing the benefits of the GDP growth arising from the workforce's labour?

## Facts and Figures

- **GDP growth ignores activity that may have societal function but little economic value.** GDP only measures products that have market value. As a result, public services may be undervalued (e.g. unpaid work) and/or ignored by any measure of GDP.
- **GDP growth ignores regional divide.** In 2023, GDP per head in London was £69,077, while in the North East it was only £28,583.<sup>47</sup> A strategy focused on GDP growth may overly focus on higher value regions, leaving other regions economically neglected.
- **GDP growth ignores non-economic activity like leisure or reduced work hours.** GDP requires productivity to grow. Therefore, workers working fewer hours, retiring earlier, or prioritising leisure, are seen as a 'failure' in growing GDP.<sup>48</sup> However, what makes the average person happier, a better work-life balance or seeing headlines that GDP grows X%?
- **GDP growth is not a measure for standard of living.** While GDP can measure a country's economic prosperity, it is still very limited in measuring standards of living. While GDP is still growing, real wages have fallen, household income has fallen, public services are declining, and investment towards sustainability has fallen.





## 5.3 UK-South Korea trade deal may benefit Unite firms in automotive, pharmaceutical, food and drink, and finance

In December 2025, the UK signed an upgraded tariff-free trade agreement (FTA) with South Korea.<sup>49</sup> The Government said it would "support thousands of UK jobs and grow the economy". **UK industries like car manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, food and drink exporters are set to benefit from this deal.**<sup>50</sup> If your firm exports to South Korea they should benefit - and negotiators can use this at the bargaining table.

UK exports to South Korea supported around 1.5 million jobs in 2023.<sup>51</sup> Major British exports to South Korea include luxury cars, Scottish salmon and Guinness.<sup>52</sup> The Government's press release said this is good news for Unite employers like **Bentley, Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), and Diageo.**

The Government also said that services exports, including financial and insurance, could increase by £400 million annually. The deal also offers British service companies the opportunity to tender for public procurement contracts in Seoul.<sup>53</sup> This is good news for Unite members' whose companies are interested in South Korean public procurement.

South Korea is currently the UK's 18th biggest export market.<sup>54</sup>

Rank	Country	October 2025 Exports (£ million)	November 2025 Exports (£ million)
1	United States	4,770	4,707
2	Germany	2,885	2,940
3	Netherlands	2,300	2,323
4	Ireland	2,047	2,167
5	France	1,939	2,040
18	South Korea	286	413

**Table 2: The UK's Top 5 export markets plus South Korea (18th largest) in the 12 months ending Nov 25. Source:ONS**

The trade deal with South Korea is the fourth the UK has agreed in 2025 following agreements with India, the EU and the US.<sup>55</sup>

**Reps can request forensic accounts to check their employers' financial position before entering into talks.** For support on this and more, contact the **Forensics Accounts team** at [forensic.accounts@unitetheunion.org](mailto:forensic.accounts@unitetheunion.org)

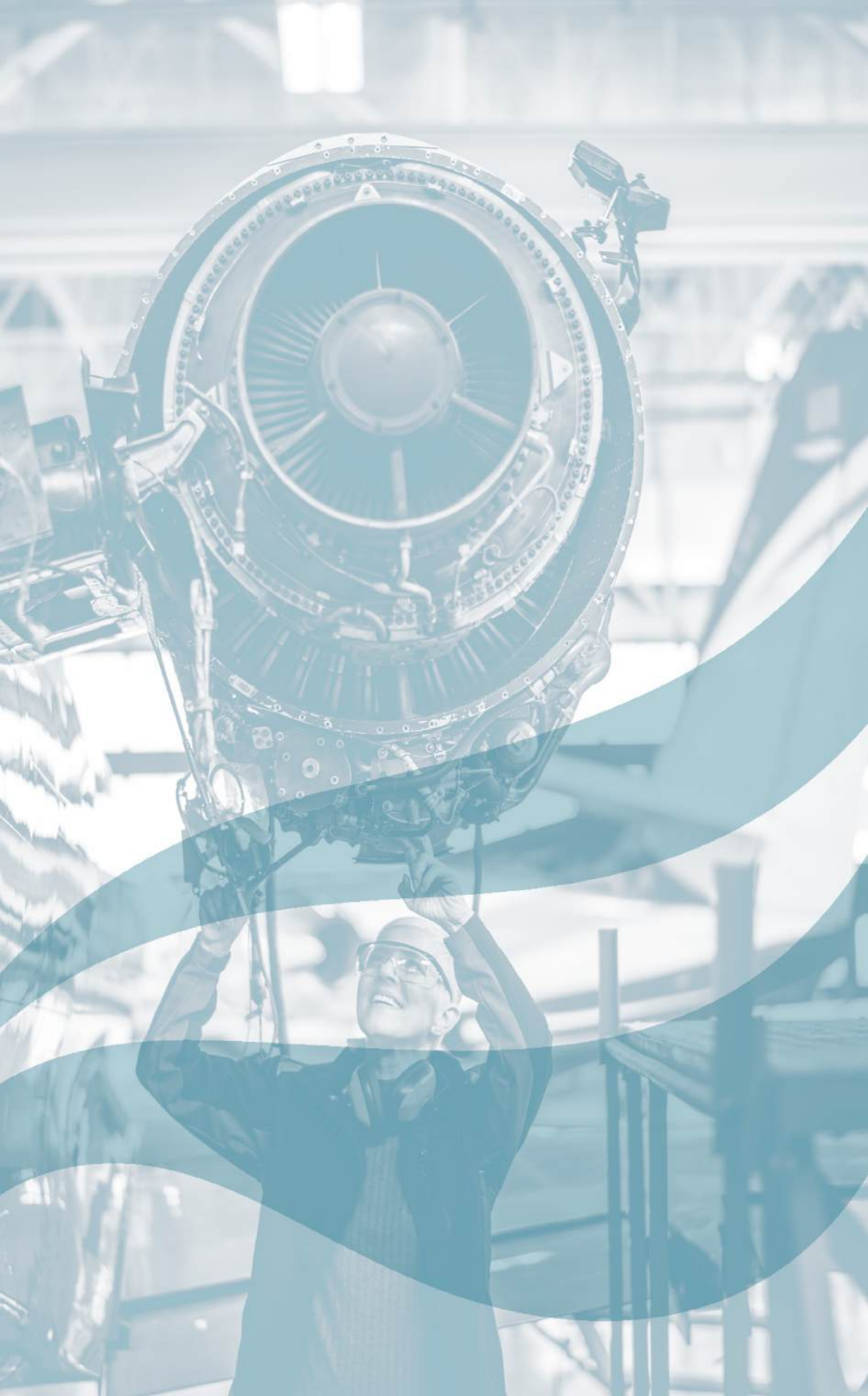
## Facts and Figures

### 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](https://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](https://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.









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*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

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## 6. What's happening in our workplaces?

### 6.1 The Employments Rights Act is a “shell of its former self” without a ban on “fire and rehire” or zero hours contracts

The **Employment Rights Act (ERA) 2025** finally passed in December 2025. The Act contains important protections, including improved recognition rights and industrial action laws, enhanced safeguards against harassment at work and new statutory rights for equality reps, giving them the right to a seat at the negotiating table on equality issues.

As our General Secretary **Sharon Graham** says, the Act is a “shell of its former self”. There’s no outright ban on “fire and rehire”. There’s no ban on zero hours contracts. Last-minute concessions made by the Government replaced day one rights to unfair dismissal protection with a 6-month qualifying period. Most importantly, the Act will do very little to extend collective bargaining and to give workers a say over their own pay and conditions.

Unite alone has publicly called out the Labour government on watering down key manifesto commitments.



## Facts and Figures

Unite will continue to fight for robust rights, including new clear and effective rights to union access in the workplace and online. Unite is calling for legal rights to regular (weekly) union access during working time where people work or in staff canteens during breaks. It is essential employers cannot refuse access and face substantial fines where they block unions meeting workers.

### Gap in the Employment Rights Act 1

**There's no outright ban on "fire and rehire".** The Act introduces new dismissal protections. But employers can still rely on economic arguments to defend "fire and rehire" sackings. For example, in the private sector, employers can claim a business's survival is at risk and public sector employers can argue they cannot afford to meet their statutory duties. In Local Government, fire and rehire can still be used where the government has intervened and appointed Commissioners. The new rights rely on employment tribunals being willing to second-guess employers' financial assessments - something they will never do. Unite will always do whatever is necessary to defend our members.

### Gap in the Employment Rights Act 2

**There's no ban on zero hours contracts.** Instead, the government plans to introduce a weak right for some workers to be offered a guaranteed hours contract reflecting their normal working hours. Unite continues to campaign for all gaps and loopholes in the new rights to be closed in future regulations.

#### 6.1.1 Important changes to trade union rights apply from February, including protection from unfair dismissal for taking part in industrial action, but members must wait for many rights

Important changes to trade union rights apply from February. But members must wait for many rights. The detail about many new rights is not contained in the Act but will be decided in future regulations.

#### Minimum Service came into effect on the day the Act passed:

- Minimum Service Level laws - these required some public services to run on strike days. (It came into effect on 18 Dec 2025)

**From 18 Feb 2026:** The majority of the Trade Union Act 2016 will be repealed and some pre-2016 anti-trade union laws will be reformed.





## Changes to industrial action rules:

- Unions must give 10 days' notice of industrial action, reduced from 14 days
- Unions will need to provide less information on industrial action ballot papers
- The 40% yes vote threshold for industrial action in some public services, e.g. health and rail, will be repealed
  - **Note:** the 50% turnout threshold will also be repealed after e-balloting is introduced (expected in April)
- There's no need to appoint a picket supervisor to monitor picket lines
- The mandate of new industrial action ballots will last for 12 months (up from 6 months)
- The information unions are required to give employers in ballot and industrial action notices will be simplified
- Employees will be protected from unfair dismissal for taking part in industrial action, whatever the length of the strike action (due to removal of the 12-week cap). This only applies to industrial action starting after 18 February
- Updated Codes of Practice on picketing and notices to employers on industrial action and ballots.

## Union facility time in the public sector

- Public sector employers will no longer be required to report on union facility time and powers to cap facility time
- It will not be mandatory for unions to pay for check off in public authorities.

## Changes will also apply to:

- Union political funds
- Investigation and enforcement powers of the Certification Officer.

## Timetable for future employment rights

The Government has published a so-called roadmap, which timetables when the new rights are introduced. This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/implementing-the-employment-rights-bill>

## Facts and Figures

When are these expected to come into effect?	Future rights
April 2026	Electronic and workplace balloting for some union statutory ballots.
April 2026	The cap for protective awards in collective redundancies cases will double from 90 to 180 days' pay
April 2026	The CAC statutory recognition scheme will be improved allowing unions earlier access to workplaces and earlier protection from employer "union-busting" tactics. A simple majority in a ballot will be enough for workers to win union recognition
April 2026	Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will be paid from the first day of sickness (not just from the fourth day). Workers earning less the lower earnings limit (£125 a week) will receive SSP
April 2026	Paternity leave and unpaid parental leave will become 'day one rights'
April 2026	The Fair Work Agency (FWA) will be created, bringing together employment enforcement agencies, except the Health and Safety Executive.
April 2026	Whistleblowing protections to be extended to include disclosures about sexual harassment.
October 2026	Rights for unions to access workers in their workplaces and online
October 2026	New dismissal protections in fire and rehire cases (see above)
October 2026	New protection for workers against detriment taking part in industrial action. (Currently employees are only protected from dismissal)
October 2026	A new duty on employers to inform workers of their right to join a trade union
October 2026	New statutory rights for equality reps to paid time to carry out their union duties
October 2026	Improved rights for reps to union accommodation and facilities at work. Responsibility for convincing

# Facts and Figures



When are these expected to come into effect?	Future rights
	employment tribunals that union reps have been provided with reasonable time to carry out duties will pass to employers
October 2026	Updated Acas Code on time off for trade union duties and activities
October 2026	Stronger tipping rules.
October 2026	A new two-tier workforce code for outsourced public services
October 2026	The new negotiating bodies for fair pay in adult social care and for school support staff
October 2026	Protection from harassment from third parties, e.g. customers or clients and stronger duties on employers to prevent sexual harassment at work
October 2026	Tighter regulation of use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs)
October 2026	Employment tribunal time limits will increase to 6 months, up from 3 months.
2027*	From 1 January 2027, there will be a 6-month qualifying period for unfair dismissal claims, down from 2 years
2027	New rights for zero hours workers, short hours contract workers and agency workers to guaranteed hours contracts reflecting their normal working hours.
2027	New rights for zero hours and agency workers to notice of shifts and compensation for cancelled shifts
2027	Revised collective redundancy protection, including new trigger for when collective redundancy rights apply in smaller workplaces
2027	Strengthened protections against dismissal for pregnant workers and those returning from maternity leave

## Facts and Figures

When are these expected to come into effect?	Future rights
2027	An extended right to unpaid bereavement leave
2027	Improved flexible working rights.
2027	Mandatory gender pay gap and menopause action plans.
2027	Additional blacklisting protections
2027	Regulation of umbrella companies

\* The Government has not confirmed the timetable for most 2027 rights and the detail for many rights is still to be confirmed.

**Unite Legal Department** will prepare updated guidance on how and when these changes come into effect and what Reps need to do in disputes.



### 6.2 "It's got to be co-ordinated": Docks Rep on resisting job-destroying automation through the combine

Last month Port of Tilbury Convenor and Executive Council Chair Andy Greene discussed the newly-formed Docks Combine and the importance of sector-wide organising. He highlighted automation as a key issue, saying it is affecting "every single port in one way or another". **But it can be challenged: in 2024 US dockers took sector wide strike action and won an agreement against job-destroying automation, plus a big pay rise, for example (more on that win below).**



**Figure 11 Docks combine with the General Secretary in November**

In the UK, previous waves of technology occurred when there was a regulated labour market under the National Dock Labour Scheme. **These changes were negotiated often after militant strike action, which brought the employers to the table.** Now, across the world ports bosses are beady eyeing automation. Worker-free gantries, cranes, tractors, and conveyor belts are the game. In alliance with global tech and engineering companies, management consultancies, and supply chain management bodies, the private multinationals that run most of our docks want fewer workers on the waterfront.

**Port of Felixstowe Convenor Phil Pemberton** is seeing automation first hand and knows the tactics employers use to bring it in. Felixstowe is owned by the Hong Kong-based conglomerate CK Hutchison, which has brought in automated equipment across its global network. He describes how CK Hutchison has first pushed automation in ports abroad before introducing it to Felixstowe:

*"We can see what Hutchison would like to do from an automation point of view by checking out what's going on globally.*

*"So we're keeping a close eye on what's happening around the world. Take Thailand, they led us by five years, so their remote-controlled cranes came in five years before us.*



## Facts and Figures



Figure 12 The Port of Felixstowe

*"In Felixstowe first, they introduced automated yard cranes. And the way they managed to get it in was to say it was to "support the drivers" because they could work remotely. Then they escalated, buying and then updating to introduce what we call TUGS internal movement vehicles. So it's started slow, but it sped up very, very quickly to the point where now we're trying to find the way of ensuring we don't lose the jobs and ensuring that there's a future here.*

*"We understand that there's a push, although we haven't seen it yet, to automate the ship to shore cranes, the gauge cranes, the big ones. And when I say that I mean remote work, not fully automated remote work. They've tried it in the past, it wasn't successful, so we believe they'll revisit that at some point. How soon in the future, we're not too sure. So, we know that the goal of Hutchison is to get as much automation as possible and that's why it was important to have this combine recently, which talks about automation and how we fight against it."*





Figure 13 Docks workers in Brooklyn, US, taking strike action in 2024

Phil pointed to the sector-wide action and win in the US in 2024 as a way to fight back.

Workers walked out at 14 major ports along the east and gulf coasts, halting container traffic from Maine to Texas. The action marked the first such shutdown in almost 50 years.

Around 47,000 dockworkers went on strike for three days at the beginning of October. Workers took action on a sectoral basis against multiple employers.

The final deal was signed between the International Longshoremen's Association and the United States Maritime Alliance, an employers association. It affected "Master Contracts" covering multiple ports. They won a 62% pay increase over six years and significant guarantees against job-destroying technology, with no new automation to be introduced without the union's consent.

*"I've looked into the recent American deal in some detail. You know, it's quite astounding really. They've seen what's happened in the West Coast of the US where they've got automation, complete automation at Long Beach.*

*"And it started off as what we call a "digital twin". They kind of try and operate the thing as if it was automated and they see how it works out. It's a piece of operational programming.*

## Facts and Figures

*"Basically the [union] decided that they didn't like the look of that because they knew it was going to come in.*

*"So they stopped work on the East Coast and the Gulf Coast ports. And that was through industrial action.*

*"Three days of strike action, from which they also got a six year contract. In fact, a 62% pay increase, so that's a plus. Plus they managed to protect the lower grades.*

*"Just a phenomenal victory and maybe something that we can all look to because we've got a concentrated enough port sector to have the same sort of impact.*

***"But it's got to be coordinated."***

If you are a Docks sector Rep and want to find out about the combine email [workvoicepay@unitetheunion.org](mailto:workvoicepay@unitetheunion.org) and we will put you in touch.

Reps in every sector can download a template New Technology Agreement to hold their employer to from the Work, Voice, Pay toolkit.

You can find it here: <https://www.unitetheunion.org/work-voice-pay/work-voice-pay-guides>



### 6.3 New statistics again show collective bargaining is the best protection at work: we can't rely on the state to inspect and regulate our health & safety

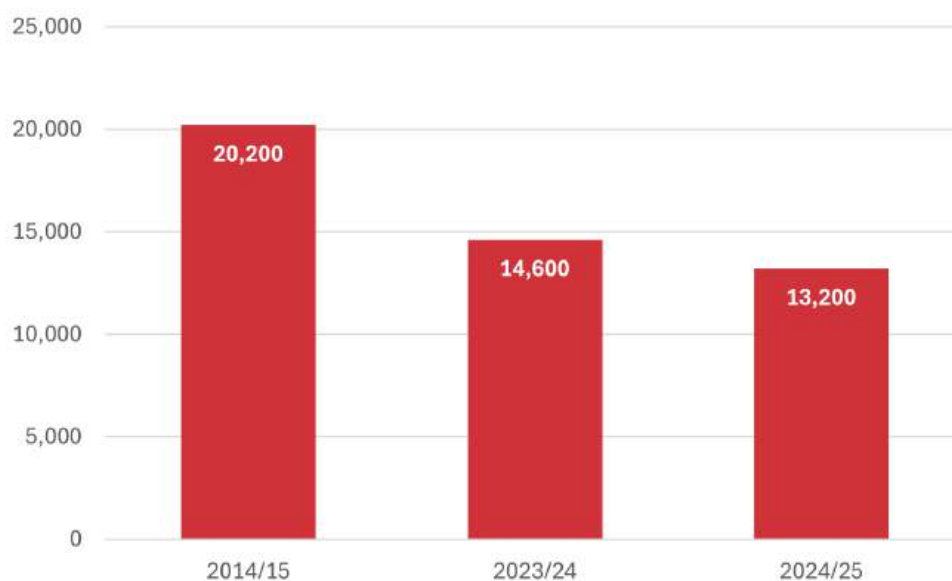
Evidence is clear: workers are safest when they are organised.



**As state enforcement has been systematically weakened, collective bargaining has become the most effective line of defence against unsafe work.**

Good Jobs First's "The State of UK Regulatory Enforcement in 2025" shows that in 2025, Health and Safety Executive (HSE) enforcement levels dropped. <sup>56</sup> Inspections and persecutions are now so rare that many employers will never face meaningful scrutiny.

According to Hazards, around 18,000 workers each year are killed or seriously injured at work. <sup>57</sup> But prosecutions for safety crimes are in freefall, dropping below 250 cases a year. HSE inspections too have dropped consistently, from more than 20,000 in 2014/15 to just over 13,000 in 2024/25, approaching a 35% fall in workplace scrutiny. It means **the average workplace enforced by HSE can expect a visit about once every 50 years.**



**Figure 14** The number of HSE inspections in 2024/25 was only two thirds of the number of inspections 10 years ago. Source: Good Jobs First, Hazards

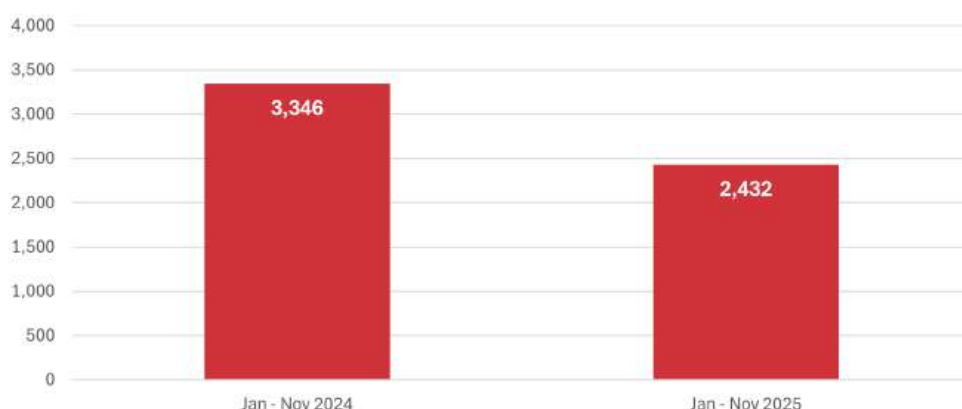
The main reason is that the Government "has embraced the idea that regulation of business is a major impediment to economic growth. At the start of the year, it sent out letters to 17 regulators asking them for commitments to ease restrictions on business. This approach ignores the fact that, by many measures, business regulation in the UK is too weak, not excessive."

**Collective bargaining is a proven, active mechanism for protection at work, particularly in the face of weak regulatory enforcement.**

## Facts and Figures

In 2025, a HSE report on safety leadership in the offshore sector found union Reps have a "strong positive" effect and provide clear "two-way communication and messaging to the frontline workforce on expected standards of behaviour."<sup>58</sup>

Crucially, the Good Jobs First analysis also shows that there other major concerns with the employment tribunal system, including a backlog of cases, employers not abiding by decisions and fewer successful cases compared to previous years, etc.



**Figure 15** Employment tribunals won in part or in full by workers. Source: Good Jobs First

### 6.3.1 Unite's National Health & Safety Conference is on 17 February

As safety enforcement remains low, collective bargaining remains the best tool we have in our workplaces to protect one another.

Unite's **National Health & Safety Conference 2026** will take place on 17 February 2026 at Eastside Centre in Birmingham.

The conference runs every 3 years, and is made up of 20 delegates from each region.





Everyone has the right to work in a healthy and safe environment. It is a well-established fact that unionised workplaces with active safety Reps are safer workplaces.

*"Whether it is protecting mental health, proper toilet facilities for drivers, or workers exposed to silica dust, we know that keeping workers safe requires us to fight just as hard as getting our 'fair share of the pie' on wages."* Unite General Secretary, Sharon Graham

## 6.4 Reps can use Unite's Pay Claim Generator and Collective Agreements Database to strengthen bargaining on health and safety

Strong health and safety clauses ensure employers are accountable for safe working conditions. Health and safety claims help reduce accidents, sickness absence and work-related stress.

Unite Reps can search health and safety clauses in existing workplace agreements using the [Collective Agreements Database](#), part of the *Work, Voice, Pay* toolkit, and they can add those to pay claims using the [Pay Claim Generator](#).

**The Collective Agreements Database helps you search health and safety related clauses in existing collective agreements**

- The [Collective Agreements Database](#) can be found by navigating to the Work, Voice, Pay section at the top of Unite's homepage.





## Facts and Figures



### Collective Agreements Database

Search our existing collective agreements and upload your own workplace's / employer's agreements to the database.

- After clicking on "Search the Database" you first log-in using your Work, Voice, Pay login credentials, then you'll arrive at the Collective Agreements Database.
- Click on the search tab and write the key words you want to search, for example "safety".

Searching the text of agreements for 6254 workplaces within 20 Sectors for 10 Regions (and Gibraltar)

Choose sectors and regions...

Search

Show all agreements for selection

- You will see many agreements with Unite employers.
- Once you find the best example for your workplace, you can click and drag the sentences related to your search. This will immediately copy those sentences into the "Scrapbook" next to the agreement.
- You can then "Click to copy" the selected examples and paste them into your document, where you can make them even more relevant to your workplace.

6. On each site there will be a site senior shop steward who will:

- Provide support and assistance to and co-ordinate the activities of Union representatives on their shift.
- Represent their shift on the SINCC.

7. The Union members at each site will elect health and safety representatives to represent each work area or shift. The health & safety representatives - who may or may not also hold the position of shop steward - will perform functions as outlined in the Safety Representatives Regulations and sit on the site Health and Safety Committee. The number of representatives and constituencies are listed in Appendix 2 of the Agreement.

8. Facilities will be provided by the Company for elections to be held in respect of all Union representatives.

Scrapbook (click to copy)

responsible for Health and Safety and Learning for the Bargaining Unit and to act as a Health and Safety Representative and Union Learning Representative. **Click to copy** the role of the Union representatives who sit on the JONIMAC. The total of 2 three representatives (of which in accordance with 64.8 of this document, no more than up to 2 will be members of the JNOC) will fully cover all of the duties of a Union Representative, Health and Safety Representative and **Click to copy** Representative.

**Click to copy** The Union members at each site will elect health and safety representatives to represent each work area or shift. The health & safety representatives - who may or may not also hold the position of shop steward - will perform functions as outlined in the Safety Representatives Regulations and sit on the site Health and Safety Committee. The number of representatives and constituencies are listed in Appendix 2 of the Agreement.





Unite's Pay Claim Generator can help you bargain by introducing health and safety clauses into a pay claim.

- You will find the [Pay Claim Generator](#) by navigating to the Work, Voice, Pay section at the top of Unite's homepage.

## Work, Voice, Pay

← Share

Unite is focused on winning secure work, a strong union voice and decent pay for members. Central to achieving these aims are our shop stewards and reps.



Work, Voice, Pay is Unite's broad industrial strategy. It is a multi-faceted approach to supporting our reps to deliver for our members. Along with coordinating our pay bargaining, researching key workplace issues, building strike-ready workplaces and developing 'leverage' campaigning, an essential part of Work, Voice, Pay is providing support and tools to help Unite reps with your work.

This part of the Unite website is where reps can find the online elements of this support:

• [Campaign Templates](#)

• [Work, Voice, Pay guides](#)

• [Pay Claim Generator \(GB & NI\)](#)

• [Pay Claim Generator \(Republic of Ireland\)](#)

- After clicking on the big red "Pay" you first log-in using your Work, Voice, Pay login credentials, then you will enter the Pay Claim Generator.
- To include new Health and Safety clauses in your claims, add your company's name and scroll down to Section 8, 'Custom claim item'.
- Toggle the "Custom claim item" into green. Selecting this button will automatically include your bespoke text in your pay claim.

Select Issues for Your Pay Claim - 8. Custom claim item 1

☒ Custom claim item

Heading

Text

- You can now add your bespoke Health and Safety item.

## Facts and Figures

- At the bottom of the page, you can download your pay claim as a PDF or as a Word file to easily distribute it to other members.
- If you select the option to download the claim as a Word file, you can easily make any changes you want to the text.

For mobile users, download the new Work Voice Pay app from <https://www.unitetheunion.org/work-voice-pay>

### 6.5 Bite-sized Bargaining: Essentials for better workplaces

Remedies for equalities, health & safety, and terms & conditions issues can come through organising collectively through a union - and Unite will always back its members to fight for better conditions in the workplace.

- **HSE statistics indicate workers suffer from high levels of stress and physical harm across all industries.** Find out more here: <https://tinyurl.com/fu53ktm6> or look in Facts & Figures December 2024, p. 98.
- **Use Work, Voice, Pay tools to gain or improve sick pay rights in your workplace to ensure workers get more than the insufficient legal minimum.** Find out more here: <https://tinyurl.com/bddysf7e> or look in Facts & Figures November 2023, p. 195-197.
- **Zero-hours contracts have risen by 500% since 2010.** Find out more here: <https://tinyurl.com/mt5af4st> or look in Facts & Figures November 2024, p.60-62.
- **Companies advertise "ghost" jobs to undermine worker and official data.** Find out more here: <https://tinyurl.com/hcr5rr65> or look in Facts & Figures November 2024, p.64-65.
- **The ONS reports only 22% of autistic adults are in employment.** Find out more here: <https://tinyurl.com/yc5df346> or look in the July 2024 edition, p.66-67.
- **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.

Blood Bank Issue Fridge



Blood Bank Issue Fridge







# SECTION SEVEN BUILDING INDUSTRIAL POWER

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## Facts and Figures

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*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

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

### 7.1 Unite members are flexing their strike muscles, and it is bringing home real gains

When we strike together, we [win](#) together.

- This month, more than 4,700 Unite members balloted at 15 companies across 9 sectors are taking [strike action](#).
- Unite members at **Diligenta** are pushing their dispute at national level.
- **Job & Talent** bin Collection agency workers at **Birmingham City Council** are also taking strike action alongside permanent workers as they don't accept strike breaking.
- Unite members at **Veolia** are on strike for recognition for pay talks and against bullying and harassment.
- **Vue Cinema** and **Glasgow VUR Village Trading No.1 Ltd** workers are on strike for recognition and better pay.
- **Leeds City Council** staff involved in transportation roles are on strike for health and safety reasons.



### 7.2 Unite members at employers including BAE Systems, Diligenta, and Sellafield are taking industrial action in January and February

In 2024, over 52,000 Unite members were involved in successful workplace disputes.

Thousands more Unite members took industrial action in 2025.

The Table below shows those workplaces currently in dispute.

## Facts and Figures

Employer	Region	Unite Sector	Dates
<b>Veolia ES (UK) Limited</b> - All drivers and loaders, Veolia Sheffield	<b>NEYH</b>	Local Authorities	Alternative weeks until the end of the mandate Next block: 19 - 25 Jan
<b>Birmingham City Council</b> - Waste Management Refuse Collection	<b>WM</b>	Local Authorities	Continuous
<b>Job &amp; Talent</b> - Birmingham City Council bin collection agency workers.	<b>WM</b>	Local Authorities	Continuous
<b>Glasgow VUR Village Trading No.1 Ltd</b>	<b>SC</b>	Service Industries	until 31 Jan
<b>VUE Cinema</b> - Glasgow	<b>SC</b>	Service Industries	until 06 Feb
<b>WSP Textiles Limited</b>	<b>SW</b>	Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, Process & Textiles	22, 29, 30 Jan 02, 04, 06 Feb
<b>BAE Systems</b> - Air division, Lancashire	<b>NW</b>	Aerospace and Shipbuilding	until 28 Jan
<b>Sellafield</b> - 34 employers	<b>NW</b>	Construction	until 23 Jan
<b>Transport for Greater Manchester</b>	<b>NW</b>	Local Authority	22, 29, 30 Jan
<b>Leeds City Council</b> - staff involved in transportation roles	<b>NEYH</b>	Local Authority/ Passenger Transport	22, 23, 29, 30 Jan 04 - 06 Feb 11 - 13 Feb 17 - 20 Feb 24 - 27 Feb Continuous from 02 Mar
<b>Diligenta</b> Liverpool, Glasgow, Reading,	<b>National</b>	Finance & Legal	26 Jan - 18 Feb



Employer	Region	Unite Sector	Dates
Edinburgh and Stirling			
<b>Cambus Ltd.-</b> Stagecoach Cambridge	LE	Passenger Transport	26, 28, 30 Jan 09, 11, 13 Feb
<b>Wolffkran Limited -</b> Crane operators	LE	Construction	27 Jan
<b>NEU London Region</b>	LE	Community, Youth Workers, and Not for Profit	02 - 04 Feb
<b>Lea Interchange Bus Company</b>	LE	Passenger Transport	07, 08, 20, 21 Feb

**Table 3: Unite workplaces due to take industrial action from January 26. Source: Unite (as of 19 Jan 26)**

## 7.3 Unite's Industrial Combines are leading the way in setting and raising standards across our sectors

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 will meet on 17-18 February in Birmingham to coordinate pay claims and negotiations**

**Unite's Finance Sector Combine** continues to meet on 17-18 February in Birmingham to coordinate pay claims and negotiations in the Banking and Insurance sector.



To get involved, please email [Michelle.Smith@unitetheunion.org](mailto:Michelle.Smith@unitetheunion.org)

## Facts and Figures

### **Unite's Health Combine (England) will meet on 11 February**

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 each month and are open to all Reps in the sector.**

**The next Health Combine (England) is on 11 February. The meeting invitation was sent to Reps and a reminder will be sent along with a draft work programme.**

Email National Officer Onay Kasab to join **the England Health Combine meetings each month**: [onay.kasab@unitetheunion.org](mailto:onay.kasab@unitetheunion.org)

The Combine continues to develop its work on "safe staffing levels" by linking NHS annual survey results, which show numbers of sick days, with work-based stress / injury as the reason for absence. This followed a complaint made to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) by Unite. So far, the work has shown that Trusts generally do not even carry out stress risk assessments before or after staff return to work. This work has been piloted in one branch and will now be rolled out more widely.

Key campaigns include:

- Safe Staffing Levels
- Sick Pay
- NHS England / Integrated Care Boards (ICBs)
- Pay Banding
- Wholly Owned Subsidiaries
- Racism faced by staff linked to the rise of the far right and Reform



The victories and ongoing disputes from the **Health Combine** so far:

- **HSL** - pay victory (15.4% over two years, improved sick pay, introduction of special leave, additional annual leave and pension protection for transferred staff). But just as importantly, the union secured a commitment to determine workload and safe staffing levels. This win came after a period of strike action.
- **Mental Health Unit Workers in Newham (Grosvenor Facilities Management)** pay and recognition victory. (Up to 15% pay rise, five days additional annual leave and will now be entitled to two months full sick pay and an additional two months half sick pay)
- **Guys and St Thomas Cardiac Theatre Nurses** - win in dispute over payback of hours after balloting for strike action.
- **Bassetlaw ICU nurses** taking strike action over fire and rehire. (This dispute can set an example across the sector when it comes to fighting organisations because of the fire and rehire practice.)
- **Barking, Havering and Redbridge clinical engineering and pathology members** - the fight includes opposing the imposition of new shifts, reduction of pay protection, failure to address complaints of bullying and discrimination.
- **NHS England and ICB Cuts** - our public call opposing government plans.
- **Airedale NHS Foundation Trust Microbiology Department** - vote for strike action.
- **United Lincolnshire Teaching Hospital** - fighting against redundancies.



## Facts and Figures

- **South West Yorkshire Partnership Teaching Hospital** - fighting for 'agenda for change' pay and conditions.
- **Mid and South Essex Foundation Trust** - demanding action after damning CQC report over "toxic management culture".
- **Liverpool Hospital** lab workers - fighting for safe staffing.
- **Guys and St Thomas** - balloting on items including failure to consult, bank shifts, risk assessments, PPE and facility time for Reps.

### Unite's Ground Services Combine will meet in March in London

Unite's Ground Services Combinewill meet on 10-11 March in London and 16-17 June in Eastbourne. This combine includes anyone working in ground handling.

In the last meeting, delegates of the Ground Services Combine came together to discuss pay coordination. Reps also had a session on how to use **Work, Voice, Pay** tools in their collective bargaining.



Reps can join future meetings to discuss pay and working conditions. Please register here:

<https://surveys.unitetheunion.org/260074216713955>

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>

To get involved, please email [christine.vera@unitetheunion.org](mailto:christine.vera@unitetheunion.org) or National Officer Balvinder Bir: [balvinder.bir@unitetheunion.org](mailto:balvinder.bir@unitetheunion.org)

In the last meeting, Reps also made a solidarity visit to the striking Birmingham bin workers.





## 7.4 Many National Industrial Sector Committees (NISCs) and Regional Industrial Sector Committees (RISCs) will take place in January and February

See below for a list of **National Industrial Sector Committees (NISCs)** that will meet across Britain throughout January and February.

Committee	Date	Location
BAEM	28 Jan	Birmingham
Construction	22 Jan	TBC
CYW&NfP	23 Jan	Birmingham
Disabled	27 Jan	Birmingham
FD&A	21-22 Jan	Leicester
Health	23 Jan	London
LGBT+	30 Jan	Birmingham
Local Authorities	22-23 Jan	Liverpool
Passenger Transport	21-22 Jan	London
Retired Members	28 Jan	London
RTCW&L	21-22 Jan	London
Women	02 Feb	London
Young Members	29 Jan	Birmingham

## Facts and Figures

**Regional Industrial Sector Committees (RISCs)** for all sectors will also have meetings at the end of January and February. Please contact your region for more information.

### 7.5 Balloting Brief: Unite Reps across 9 workplaces are balloting their members in January and February

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

Across regions and sectors, Unite members are showing that they are prepared to face down bad bosses.

Employer	Region	Closing
<b>Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board</b> - All Band 6 Health Visitors employed by Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board	WA	26/01/2026
<b>Aer Lingus (UK) Ltd</b> - All members	NW	26/01/2026
<b>ABF Grain Products Ltd</b> - All members at Orby Link, Belfast and Old Moy Road, Dungannon.	NI	26/01/2026
<b>Veolia ES (UK) Limited</b> - Ballot 6 All our Driver and Loader members	WM	26/01/2026
<b>Michelmersh Brick UK Limited</b> - All members at Clayburn Road, Grimethorpe	NEYH	27/01/2026
<b>Oxfam GB</b> - All members	SE	02/02/2026
<b>Diligenta Limited</b> - All members , save for those working exclusively on the Aviva and Nest contracts, working at the Peterborough site.	LE	02/02/2026
<b>IPS East London Bus &amp; Coach Company Limited</b> - All Bus Driver members working at or from Bow Bus Garage	LE	11/02/2026
<b>University of Strathclyde</b> - All Members	SC	16/02/2026

Figure 16 Unite workplaces currently balloting for industrial action. Source: Unite Balloting Department (as of 15 Jan 26)



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

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

### January 2026 wins

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 and Steel	Glen Dimplex	Between 6% to 8% pay increase
Engineering, Manufacturing and 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 and 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.
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

## Facts and Figures

Sector	Company	Results
Passenger Transport	<b>Arriva Leicestershire</b>	6.5%, one off non-consolidated payment of £1,000 and an improvement to their bank holiday working rate
Passenger Transport	<b>First Aberdeen</b>	5.3% for one year
Passenger Transport	<b>First Cymru</b>	5%

### November 2025 wins (RPI was 3.8%)

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

### October 2025 wins (RPI was 4.3%)

Sector	Company	Results
Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, Process and Textiles	<b>Altradon EnQuest's Magnus and Thistle Alpha platforms</b>	4.5%
Aerospace and Shipbuilding	<b>Lufthansa Technik</b>	5%
Passenger Transport	<b>Ribble Motor Services</b>	Birkenhead - 10% Chorley and Preston - 6.2%
Passenger Transport	<b>First West of England</b>	8.6% over two years
Aerospace & Shipbuilding	<b>Collins Aerospace</b>	A fully consolidated 10.3% over a 28-month period

# Facts and Figures



Sector	Company	Results
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 and Textiles	Alpla UK	Two one-off payments of between £1,000 and £9,000 based on experience and one additional day holiday

## August 2025 wins (RPI was 4.6%)

Sector	Company	Results
Public Transport	Cardiff Bus	5.86% + improvements to breaks and travel time
Public Transport	Stagecoach North-east	5%
Aerospace	Princess Yachts	6.50%
Service Industry	Village Hotel Glasgow	10%
Civil Aviation Transport	ICTS (Gatwick Airport)	7% + Bank holiday double time
Food, Drink &	Dale Farm	4.75%

## Facts and Figures

Sector	Company	Results
Agriculture		
Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, Process and Textile	<b>Repsol Resources</b>	8.5% over two years. In 2025/26, the pay increase amounts to 4.5% and in the following year due to changes in shift rotation allowances, workers will receive a further 4%.
Civil Aviation Transport	<b>Glasgow Airport Limited</b>	A two-year pay deal effective from January this year. In 2025, the pay deal includes a basic 4% rise alongside a one-off £500 payment. The cash payment is worth an additional 4% for the lowest paid members with airside support unit operatives gaining an additional uplift increasing their pay award by up to 11.6%. In 2026, the pay award will be equal to the December inflation rate and run for one year.

### July 2025 wins (RPI was 4.8%)

Sector	Company	Results
Energy	<b>Scottish Water</b>	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 Aviation Transport	<b>Skytanking</b> 'front-of-house' customer service, ramp and bagging agents	A basic 5% increase
Civil Aviation Transport	<b>Menzies Aviation</b>	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,	<b>Wincanton (Marshalls)</b>	5% + £1000 lump sum



# Facts and Figures



Sector	Company	Results
Warehousing & Logistics	contract) Wilson James (Heathrow Passenger Assistance)	
Road Transport Commercial, Warehousing & Logistics	Oxalis Logistics UK Limited	<p>Increases in the base rate and other elements of pay (excluding bonus):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Y1 - 5% .</li> <li>- Y2 - 3.5%.</li> <li>- Y3 - Effective 1st January 2027 - mean average of RPI and CPI for December 2026 with a minimum of 3%.</li> </ul> <p>Improvement to holiday and sick pay.</p>

## June 2025 wins (RPI was 4.4%)

Sector	Company	Results
Civil Aviation Transport	Wilson James (Heathrow Passenger Assistance)	12.5%
Graphical, Paper, Media & Information Technology	Amtcor Flexible Packaging	5.1%
Civil Air Transport	Gatwick Airport, Redline Oil	4.75% pay rise backdated to October 2025 + additional 1.75% from October 2025 + one fewer working hour a week
Community Youth Workers and Not for Profit	Livv Housing	7.7% + £175 non-consolidated payment + matched pension contributions between 6-10% + three more days annual leave + one fewer working hour a week

## May 2025 wins (RPI was 4.3%)

Sector	Company	Results
Civil Air Transport	Glasgow Airport	9.8% backdated to October 2024 +

## Facts and Figures

Sector	Company	Results
	<b>ICTS</b>	one off bonus of £500
Food, Drink & Agriculture	<b>Brakes Brothers</b>	5.1-9.8% for warehouse workers, hygiene, and distribution drivers. An 88p hourly increase for all workers+ one-off payment up to £515.
Civil Air Transport	<b>Glasgow Airport, ABM, and OCS</b>	5% for cleaners, OCS workers, and night shift + double time for Christmas and New Years Day
Civil Air Transport	<b>Prestwick Airport</b>	Backdated 6.8% to 1 April and improved shift allowances
Passenger Transport	<b>First Bus Glasgow</b>	13.3% for engineers
Passenger Transport	<b>Arriva Midlands</b>	Workers earning £13.36 per hour will receive £14.00 per hour(backdated to July 2024) and £14.45 per hour from July 2025. Improvements to overtime rates and a new critical illness payment policy.
Engineering, Manufacturing & Steel	<b>Merson Signs</b>	Two-hour reduction in the working week with no loss of pay, effectively delivering a 5% average pay rise. Workers move to a four-day working week and receive up £250 in back pay from 1 January.

### April 2025 wins (RPI was 4.5%)

Sector	Company	Results
Civil Air Transport	<b>Valero at East Midlands Airport</b>	6.5% in year one, and 3.5% in year two backdated to June 2024. Improved overtime rates, more holiday entitlement, paid training, and a one-off lump sum.
Civil Air Transport	<b>Edinburgh Airport</b>	5.8% and increase to shift allowances backdated to January, increases to the bonus scheme by up to £450, other improvements to working

# Facts and Figures



Sector	Company	Results
		conditions including paternity, income protection and training policies. Overall pay uplift is worth up to 8% for the airport workers.

## March 2025 wins (RPI was 3.2%)

Sector	Company	Results
Automotive Industry	BMW Hams Hall	3.5%
Civil Air Transport	American Airlines (Heathrow engineers)	Roughly 10% over two years, taking the average wage to £108,000
Passenger Transport	First Bus Hampshire	6.5% over two years

## February 2025 wins (RPI was 3.4%)

Sector	Company	Results
Passenger Transport	First West Yorkshire Limited (Huddersfield) - All Bus Drivers, Huddersfield	15.76% by April 2025
Engineering, Manufacturing & Steel	AFE Group Limited - All members	5.7%
Construction	Worley Services UK Ltd - Sullom Voe Terminal, Shetland	Members received a cost-of-living payment of £1500 plus pay increase of 4% 2023 and 4% 2024

### 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 the workplace.

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

Date	Employer	Note
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 covers 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.
July 25	Culina Logistics in Til-	Recognition for 300+ workers.

# Facts and Figures



Date	Employer	Note
	<b>bury Port</b>	
July 25	<b>Oscar Mayer</b>	Recognition agreement for more than 500 workers, reinstatement of 26 dismissed workers, improvements to holiday compensation.
July 25	<b>TAC Healthcare Group Limited on Repsol platforms</b>	Recognition agreement for around 20 off-shore medics.
Jun 25	<b>Macmillan Cancer Support</b>	Recognition agreement voted for by over 200 workers.
May 25	<b>Key</b>	Extension of recognition agreement for 2,500 social care workers across Scotland.
May 25	<b>Sodexo at Sullom Voe terminal</b>	Recognition agreement for 30 workers at Sullom Voe terminal.
Feb 25	<b>Baxter Storey</b>	Formal recognition for Drax Canteen workers as well as a 5% pay rise for 2025.
Feb 25	<b>Siemens Mobility</b>	Recognition agreement for factory workers who strip down, repair, and reassemble trains.
Jan 25	<b>Advocacy Service Aberdeen (ASA)</b>	Recognition agreement for 20 workers and volunteers who provide services for vulnerable residents in Aberdeen.
Jan 25	<b>North Air tanker drivers (Scottish airports)</b>	4.5% on basic pay plus bigger uplifts for shift allowance, overtime, and bonus rates, extension of recognition agreements.
Jan 25	<b>Wilson James (Security @Sullom Voe)</b>	New recognition agreement, alongside other Unite organised employers at the terminal.

## 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 include multi-year deals.

Company	Date	Result (%)
DHL Inside Track	Apr 25	10.13
Capita TVL (Bristol and Darwen)	Apr 25	9.52
Damory Coaches	May 25	7.7
John Lewis/ Waitrose	Apr 25	7.35
City Cruises	Apr 25	7
GIST (Carlisle) BOC	Apr 25	6.77
Carlisle Support Services (Northern Trains)	Apr 25	6.73
Fiskars (Formally Wedgewood)	Apr 25	6.73
Hovertravel	Apr 25	6.73
Leather Producing Industry	Apr 25	6.73
Racing Staff NJC	Apr 25	6.73
Anderson Maguire	Apr 25	6.7
Baxterstorey Willow Green Bridgewater Morrisons distribution centre	Apr 25	6.7
Deeside Cereals	Apr 25	6.7
Lees of Scotland (Coatbridge)	Apr 25	6.7
Lightbody Eurocentral Finsbury Food Group (both in Hamilton and Motherwell)	Apr 25	6.7
NICHOLAS & HARRIS Ltd	Jan 25	6.7
Organ Building JIC (IBO)	Jan 25	6.7
Savencia Fromage & Dairy	Jan 25	6.7
Mitie (Merseyrail Soft Services)	Apr 25	6.67
GXO Logistics (Asda) Rochdale ASC & Skelmersdale ASC & Wakefield ASC	Apr 25	6.55
Radisson Blu Canary Wharf	Apr 25	6.53



# Facts and Figures



Company	Date	Result (%)
Midcounties Co-operative Society (Food)	Apr 25	6.5
Well Pharmacy [Bestway] (Pharmacists/ Pharmacist Managers)	Apr 25	6.5
Sofina (Scunthorpe)	Apr 25	6.49
Glatfelter (Caerphilly)	Apr 25	6.47
G4S (PSNI)	Mar 25	6.3
GXO Logistics (Asda) Bedford ASC, Bristol ASC, Erith ASC, Magna Park ASC/ERC, Washington ASC	Apr 25	6.18
Scottish Midland Co-op Society (Scotmid)	Apr 25	6
ABP Scotbeef (Bridge of Allan)	Apr 25	6
Phoenix Healthcare Distribution	Apr 25	5.93
A & P Falmouth	Apr 25	5.9
Pladis - both (United Biscuits - Manchester) and (United Biscuits - McVities) Harlesden	Apr 25	5.8
Doulton Water Filters	Apr 25	5.75
Mantec Industrial Ceramics	Apr 25	5.75
Gate Gourmet (LNER Contract)	Apr 25	5.7
Booker Wholesale Branch Assistants and Supervisors	Apr 25	5.6
Well Pharmacy [Bestway] (HSC)	Apr 25	5.5
Dartline	Apr 25	5.45
Carlisle Support Services (Arriva Rail London) Cleaners	Apr 25	5.4
Bidvest Noonan (c2c Contract)	Apr 25	5.3
HATS Group (both Lewisham Hospital Patient Transport and Queen Elizabeth Hospital Woolwich Patient Transport)	Apr 25	5.3
Nottingham Trams Ltd (NTL)	Jun 25	5.3
NSL (Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea)	Apr 25	5.26
2 Sisters Food Group (Thetford)	Apr 25	5.2
AF Blakemore	Apr 25	5

## Appendix 3: Other unions' major pay increases

## Facts and Figures

Company	Date	Result (%)
Aldridge Fabrications	Apr 25	5
Amber Valley Norse	Apr 25	5
Bespoke Facilities Management (Hitachi Rail Doncaster)	Apr 25	5
FES FM LTD	Apr 25	5
G4S ( both in Kent Patient Transport Services and Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service)	Apr 25	5
Independent Theatre Council (ITC) Performers, Stage Managers & Choreographers	Apr 25	5
ISS (Northern Trains)	Apr 25	5
Kerry Foods (Hillington)	Apr 25	5
Marks & Spencer	Apr 25	5
Pilgrims Pride UK Ltd (Bristol)	Apr 25	5
Royal Mail Property & Facilities Solutions (RMPFSL) Cleaners	Apr 25	5
Tata Consumer Products GB	Apr 25	5
United wholesale	Apr 25	5
Veolia (West Berkshire)	Apr 25	5
Walkers Shortbread	Apr 25	5

# Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>[https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2026/january/heathrow-cabin-crew-at-sas-airline-win-pay-victory-after-strike-action?\\_gl=1\\*1xpp6x6\\*\\_up\\*MQ..\\*\\_ga\\*NDMzNjEzNDI1LjE3Njg5MTAzNTk.\\*\\_ga\\_8SHG2YXZ79\\*czE3Njg5MTAzNTkbbzEkZzAkdDE3Njg5MTAzNTkkajYwJGwwJGgw](https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2026/january/heathrow-cabin-crew-at-sas-airline-win-pay-victory-after-strike-action?_gl=1*1xpp6x6*_up*MQ..*_ga*NDMzNjEzNDI1LjE3Njg5MTAzNTk.*_ga_8SHG2YXZ79*czE3Njg5MTAzNTkbbzEkZzAkdDE3Njg5MTAzNTkkajYwJGwwJGgw)
- <sup>2</sup>[https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2026/january/staff-at-glen-dimplex-portadown-end-industrial-dispute-after-vote-to-accept-improved-pay-offer?\\_gl=1\\*1e3hoxa\\*\\_up\\*MQ..\\*\\_ga\\*MTU2MDE2NTQ1OS4xNzY4OTEwMjEx\\*\\_ga\\_8SHG2YXZ79\\*czE3Njg5MTAyMTAkbbzEkZzAkdDE3Njg5MTAyMTAkajYwJGwwJGgw](https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2026/january/staff-at-glen-dimplex-portadown-end-industrial-dispute-after-vote-to-accept-improved-pay-offer?_gl=1*1e3hoxa*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTU2MDE2NTQ1OS4xNzY4OTEwMjEx*_ga_8SHG2YXZ79*czE3Njg5MTAyMTAkbbzEkZzAkdDE3Njg5MTAyMTAkajYwJGwwJGgw)
- <sup>3</sup>[https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2026/january/luton-airport-easyjet-strikes-off-after-dhl-workers-secure-improved-deal?\\_gl=1\\*fe5x1z\\*\\_up\\*MQ..\\*\\_ga\\*ODg1MDAzMTgyLjE3Njc3MTQzMjY.\\*\\_ga\\_8SHG2YXZ79\\*czE3Njc3MTQzMjYkbzEkZzEkdDE3Njc3MTQzMjckajU5JGwwJGgw](https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2026/january/luton-airport-easyjet-strikes-off-after-dhl-workers-secure-improved-deal?_gl=1*fe5x1z*_up*MQ..*_ga*ODg1MDAzMTgyLjE3Njc3MTQzMjY.*_ga_8SHG2YXZ79*czE3Njc3MTQzMjYkbzEkZzEkdDE3Njc3MTQzMjckajU5JGwwJGgw)
- <sup>4</sup>[https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2026/january/strikes-off-as-first-glasgow-workers-secure-pay-win?\\_gl=1\\*gnjdaj\\*\\_up\\*MQ..\\*\\_ga\\*Mjc4Mjk3NjUzLjE3Njg5MTAwNzI.\\*\\_ga\\_8SHG2YXZ79\\*czE3Njg5MTAwNzEkbbzEkZzAkdDE3Njg5MTAwNzEkajYwJGwwJGgw](https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2026/january/strikes-off-as-first-glasgow-workers-secure-pay-win?_gl=1*gnjdaj*_up*MQ..*_ga*Mjc4Mjk3NjUzLjE3Njg5MTAwNzI.*_ga_8SHG2YXZ79*czE3Njg5MTAwNzEkbbzEkZzAkdDE3Njg5MTAwNzEkajYwJGwwJGgw)
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