



Pay Transparency Uncovered: Are Employers Falling Behind?

An exclusive report created in partnership
with the HR Ninjas community



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Let's address this upfront...



Cezanne is not yet publishing salary ranges on every job advert. We're on the journey to full pay transparency, and we want to be honest about our position. Here's where we are, and why we're committed to the change.

"At Cezanne, we fully support the direction set out in the Employment Rights Bill and the increasing focus on pay transparency across the industry. Transparency is not just a regulatory expectation; it is an important part of building a responsible and forward-looking organisation where people understand how decisions are made and feel confident that they are treated fairly.

"As a business we are taking the time to put the right foundations in place. That means reviewing pay across the business to ensure it reflects the responsibilities, skills and contribution of each role, and making sure our approach is consistent and equitable as we continue to grow. It also means helping our teams understand how pay is determined and why different roles and levels carry different expectations and salary ranges. This internal work is essential if we are to deliver transparency in a way that is meaningful rather than superficial. While we are not yet publishing salary ranges on every job advert, it is the direction we are moving to. Our commitment to Pay Transparency is clear and we will do so in a way that is fair, well-communicated and aligned with the values we want to uphold as a business. Pay transparency is a journey, and we are progressing with pace, purpose and passion so that both our current and future colleagues can benefit from a clearer, more confident understanding of how pay works at Cezanne."

- Simon Noble, CEO, Cezanne

Report abstract

Pay transparency has shifted from a quiet conversation at the pub to a front-page HR issue.

Our survey of over 300 members of the HR Ninjas community shows employees now see transparency not as a perk, but as a baseline for fairness and trust. Nearly nine in ten HR professionals told us staff expect clarity around pay, and two-thirds said those expectations have risen sharply in the last two years.

But, while employees are racing ahead with their demands, many organisations are lagging behind. Just **18%** of respondents said their business is ahead of the curve, with almost half admitting they're behind. And, the main blockers aren't data or technology: they're leadership confidence, cultural readiness, and the complexity of legacy pay structures.

Transparency brings clear rewards: higher trust, stronger recruitment, and better retention. Yet it also carries risks, with **57%** of HR professionals fearing resentment among employees if pay differences aren't well explained. The message is clear: transparency without structure, fairness, and progression frameworks risks doing more harm than good.

For HR leaders, the challenge is to move beyond publishing numbers and build the maturity, rigour, and communication skills needed for effective pay conversations. Those who act now will gain an edge; those who wait may be forced into change on less favourable terms.



Introduction

For years, conversations about pay were whispered secretly around the office, or quietly Googled on Glassdoor.

It was something everyone was keen to know more about; but was always considered a bit of a taboo subject – something kept private and rarely discussed openly. Fast forward to the present day, and pay transparency is no longer a fringe demand or: it's front and centre in the workplace debate.

Today, employees want to know not just what they're paid, but why they're paid it. Legislators are circling too, with rules on pay gap reporting and job ad salary ranges creeping closer across Europe and the UK.

What's changed is the expectation. For many employees - particularly younger generations entering the workforce - secrecy around pay looks outdated and unfair. Transparency, on the other hand, is seen as a marker of trust, fairness, and modern working culture. And while HR professionals often agree, the question remains: are employers genuinely keeping pace with this shift, or simply paying lip service until the law forces their hand?

To dig more into the murky topic, we asked HR professionals from the HR Ninjas community whether their organisations are keeping up with these changing expectations... and the results suggest many employers are still playing catch-up.

Who we surveyed

We polled over 300 members of The HR Ninjas group: the UK's largest free HR community where in-house HR professionals can seek help and support from an amazing group of fellow professionals. Their Facebook group alone has over 38,000+ members from British businesses of all shapes and sizes, and their roles range from HR administrators to Heads of HR to Chief People Officers. We have changed the names of participant's comments to protect their identities.



A word from the HR Ninjas Community



"In HR, we all know that pay transparency matters. But it's about so much more than just the numbers. It's about trust, fairness, and creating a culture where people genuinely feel valued.

As this survey shows, bringing pay transparency into organisations that haven't had it before is not a quick policy tweak – it's a culture change project. It needs to be handled carefully and thoughtfully, with clear frameworks and structures in place so that people understand it and feel the benefits. Get this wrong, and instead of building trust, you risk eroding it.

Pay transparency also doesn't start on day one of employment – it starts way before that. If you want to build trust from the outset, you have to start as you mean to go on. That means including salary details on every single job advert.

At interview, we need to stop asking candidates about their current or previous salary. All that does is bake in existing inequities. We should be rewarding people for the role they're going to be doing and the value they'll bring, not anchoring their pay to what they happened to earn in a past job.

It's reassuring (and frankly, not surprising) to see the survey data backing up what many of us have felt for a while: pay transparency is climbing the priority list for a lot of organisations.

Here at The HR Ninjas, we've been banging this drum for years. When we launched our online jobs board back in 2021, we drew a very clear line in the sand: no salary, no sharey. If an organisation won't share the salary, we won't share their job advert. Simple.

We might be a small business, but we've got big ambitions – and we're hopeful that, in time, other job boards will follow our lead! Time will tell!"

Lizzie Henson, Owner and Founder of the HR Ninjas Community

The survey results

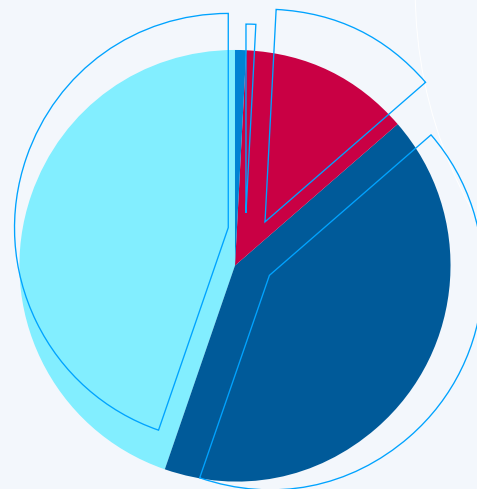
It's official: pay transparency is now an expectation in modern organisations...

To kick things off, we cut straight to the chase and asked the Ninjas community how important they believed pay transparency is to employees – and the message was loud and clear. **Nearly nine in ten HR professionals told us that employees now expect genuine clarity around pay.**

What's striking here is the shift from privacy to openness: pay transparency is no longer seen as a nice extra or a “progressive” perk. For today's workforce, it's become part of the basic trust contract between employer and employee. Put simply, if people can't understand how salaries are set (and whether they're being paid fairly), they're far more likely to question the organisation's values overall.

This result set the tone for the rest of the survey: transparency is not a passing HR fad, it's an expectation that's shaping how employees view fairness, culture, and whether they'll stick around.

How important do you think pay transparency is to employees today?



- Not a big deal – 1%
- Nice to have – 13%
- Essential – 42%
- Absolutely vital – 45%

“I think pay transparency is incredibly important for internal and external reasons. We are currently finding labour turnover high, with advertised wages causing problems internally with those who have been incorrectly compensated (too high or too low) in the past. I notice a difference when I don't post pay bandings that there are less applicants for roles, understandably, but the challenges this causes internally is quite difficult to deal with. I'd love to get to the point where we had total and whole pay transparency and confidence.”

Ellie, senior HR leader for a large private business

“It's like a dirty secret when organisations don't use it, especially when it comes to looking for a new role. I think expectation setting is so important for both employee and employer. So far, I've only really applied for roles where salary is advertised.”

Rae, People Partner at a publicly funded organisation

... And employee expectations are rising fast

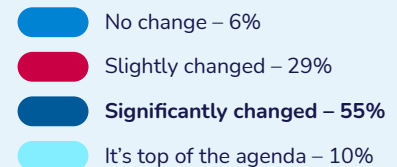
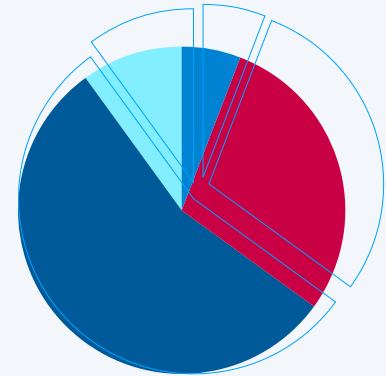
When we asked whether employee expectations around pay transparency had shifted in the past two years, the response was emphatic.

Only 6% of HR professionals felt there'd been no change at all. By contrast, more than half (55%) said expectations had significantly changed, with a further 29% acknowledging a slight shift. And for 10%, the issue has leapt right to the very top of the workplace agenda.

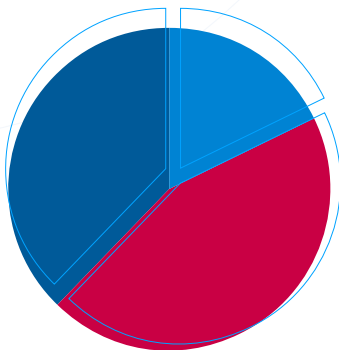
This paints a clear picture: pay transparency has rapidly climbed the ladder of employee priorities.

What might have once been a background concern is now front and centre in discussions about fairness, engagement, and organisational culture. In just two years, transparency has moved from a “nice conversation to have someday” to a pressure point employers can't afford to ignore.

Do you think employee expectations around pay transparency have changed in the last 2 years?



Do you think your organisation is ahead, behind, or just about keeping pace with expectations around pay transparency?



HR admits they're falling behind on pay transparency

With employee expectations clearly on the rise, the next logical question was whether organisations are managing to keep pace. The answers, however, suggest a widening gap between what employees want and what employers are currently delivering.

Just 18% of HR professionals felt their organisation was ahead of the curve when it comes to pay transparency. Nearly half (45%) admitted they're behind, and a further 38% said they're only just about keeping pace.

When viewed alongside the earlier findings, the message is clear: employees are accelerating towards greater transparency, but many employers are stuck in first gear. HR is left in the awkward middle ground - fully aware of the expectations, but often lacking the tools, leadership backing, or cultural readiness to move as quickly as employees would like.

Closing the gap: salary benchmarking as a transparency toolkit

If nearly half of HR professionals admit their organisation is behind on pay transparency, the obvious question is: how do you catch up?

One answer lies in salary benchmarking - the process of comparing your pay structures against the wider market. Done well, benchmarking gives you the evidence you need to make pay conversations clear, fair, and defensible. Done badly, it risks fuelling the very mistrust you're trying to solve.

1 Define your scope

An HR software solution with people analytics will help you take care of analysing your own workforce data. Decide which roles or job families to benchmark. Don't try to do everything at once.

3 Match roles properly

Look beyond job titles and compare responsibilities, seniority, and skills.

5 Analyse and prioritise

Identify where you're under or overpaying, and act first on high-impact roles.

2 Use reliable data

Salary surveys, benchmarking tools (the sort featured in many compensation planning software systems), and even recruiter insights can help build a credible picture.

4 Think total reward

Benchmarking isn't just base salary. Benefits, bonuses, and flexibility all shape the picture.

6 Communicate clearly

Transparency isn't just about sharing numbers; it's about explaining the why behind them.

For employers who feel "behind the curve" on transparency, benchmarking is a practical first step. It not only helps close pay gaps but also gives employees confidence that your decisions are based on evidence, not guesswork. In short: if transparency is your destination, benchmarking is your map.

If you want to read more about how to get salary benchmarking right, [check out the full complete guide online here.](#)



Market competition is the biggest driver of pay transparency right now

So, if employees want more transparency, and HR professionals know expectations have changed, what's actually pushing organisations to act?

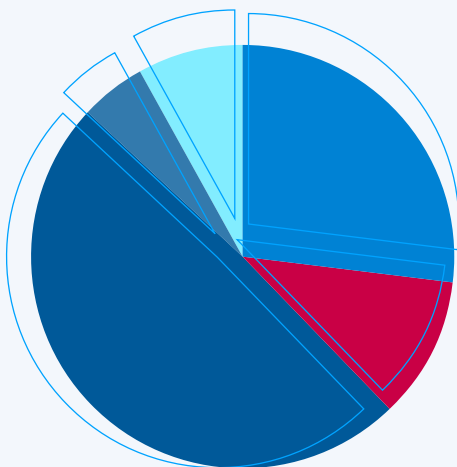
According to our respondents, the biggest driver isn't legislation or top-down leadership pressure. It's **market competition**. And given the scarcity of talent right now, it appears many organisations are looking for the edge in their recruitment efforts.

Nearly half (**49%**) said organisations are being forced to open-up about pay because competitors are doing it first, setting a new standard that employees quickly latch onto. Meanwhile, **27%** pointed to direct employee pressure as the key driver, underlining just how vocal staff have become about pay fairness.

"As someone actively looking for a new role. It's frustrating to read the role description but no salary or 'competitive'. You don't look at buying a car without first knowing the price tag. Jobs should be the same."

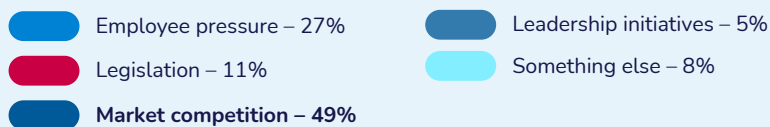
Ki, HR Manager at a large private business

What's the biggest driver of pay transparency in your view?



By contrast, only **11%** saw legislation as the main push factor, and a tiny 5% credited leadership initiatives. Another **8%** flagged "something else," showing there's no single story here; but, external forces are clearly doing more of the heavy lifting than internal ones.

Put simply: it appears many organisations aren't embracing transparency out of choice. Rather, because they don't want to lose talent to the company down the road that already is.



"Just that I agree this should absolutely be the norm, it's so frustrating for job seekers and a waste of time when people apply for roles which don't meet expectations"

Hayley, Team Leader at a large publicly-owned organisation

Salary banding is very much a work in progress for many

If transparency is the goal, publishing salary bands is one of the most visible steps an organisation can take. But our survey shows that practice is still patchy.

Just over a third (**35%**) of HR professionals said their organisation publishes bands for all roles, while another **21%** do so only for some. Encouragingly, **30%** said they don't currently publish bands but are planning to; suggesting momentum is building. However, **14%** admitted they don't publish bands at all and have no plans to start.

Seen alongside the earlier finding that market competition is the biggest driver of transparency, the message is seemingly clear: many organisations are being nudged into publishing salary ranges not because they're leading the charge, but because **they risk looking old-fashioned if they don't**.

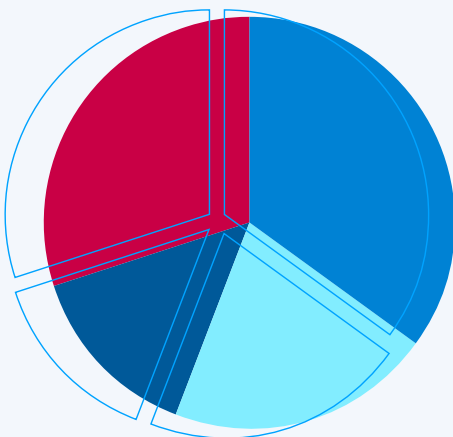
And, while publishing bands is an important step, it shouldn't be considered job done. Salary ranges without clear progression pathways and competencies frameworks risk raising more questions than they answer. Employees want to know not just what a role pays, but how they can move forward, and what skills or behaviours are needed to progress. Without that context, transparency can feel incomplete, or worse, hollow.

As expectations grow, the organisations slowest to act - or those who offer only half the picture - may soon struggle to attract and retain talent against more open and better-structured competitors.

"I think it will enhance recruitment practices and efficiency. I have applied for roles in the past which have, once contact has been made, at a much lower salary so have withdrawn. This wastes time for everyone."

Sam, Senior HR Leader for a large government-funded organisation

Does your organisation currently publish salary bands for roles?



- Yes, for all roles – 35%
- Yes, but only for some – 21%
- No, with no plans to do so – 14%
- No, but planning to – 30%

So, we know expectations are rising fast. We know competition is forcing employers to open up. And we know many organisations are experimenting with publishing salary bands... though often in fits and starts.

That begs the next question: if transparency is clearly on the agenda, what's actually stopping organisations from going further, faster?

"I personally don't apply for roles with no salary advertised. It's a waste of everybody's time and effort."

Faval, HR Manager at a medium-sized private organisation

The barriers to change

With expectations rising and market competition pushing the issue forward, why aren't more organisations moving faster on pay transparency? Our survey shows a familiar mix of blockers, but a notable pocket of momentum.

The two biggest barriers, tied at **26%** each, were leadership resistance and the complexity of pay structures. Close behind, **23%** of HR professionals pointed to fear of employee backlash; the concern being that openness could spark discontent rather than build trust.

Interestingly, fewer than **1%** said lack of data or technology is the problem. But here's the surprise: **18%** reported no barriers at all, suggesting a meaningful minority are already set up to move quickly. Another **7%** cited "something else", including:

- Managers not being equipped with the skills needed to discuss pay transparency
- Reconciling existing salaries to the new band and the potential negative message this could send to staff
- Historical inaccuracies causing problems
- A mix of all the problems!

"Due to legislation coming into other markets, we are planning to publish salary ranges for all roles globally by mid-2026. We are currently undergoing benchmarking activities in the UK to ensure we are offering competitive pay and benefits before we share the ranges internally and then publish externally."

Rupa, Team Leader at a global SME

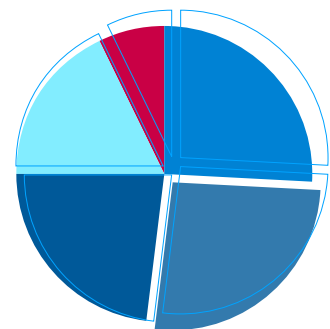
So, what does this all mean?

Well, our research would indicate that the most challenging obstacles are mainly cultural and structural, not technical. For many, the work is getting leaders comfortable and untangling legacy pay frameworks. But, with nearly one in five encountering no barriers, the gap may widen between organisations that lean in now and those still wrestling with internal resistance.

"I think it will enhance recruitment practices and efficiency. I have applied for roles in the past which have, once contact has been made, at a much lower salary so have withdrawn. This wastes time for everyone."

Sam, Senior HR Leader for a large government-funded organisation

What's the biggest barrier to implementing pay transparency in your organisation?



- Leadership resistance – 26%
- Fear of employee backlash – 23%
- Complexity of pay structures – 26%
- Lack of data/technology – <1%
- We haven't encountered any barrier – 18%
- Something else – 7%

31% of HR professionals say they aren't confident explaining pay decisions

Publishing salary bands is one step toward transparency, but the harder test comes when employees ask the most direct question of all: "Why am I paid what I'm paid?" Well, the answers from HR professionals show a mixed picture:

20% said they were very confident in giving a clear and fair explanation.

49% felt reasonably confident.

25% admitted they were not very confident.

6% said they were not confident at all.

"I just don't think it's as straightforward as we want it to be"

Josh, HR Director of a medium-sized private business

"It's important to get it right internally first, as a private company the people who have been here for a long time typically have higher historical salaries - we need to sort this first before we can be truly transparent."

Jo, HR Advisor for a medium-sized private business

On the positive side, almost seven in ten respondents felt they could justify pay decisions if challenged. But, the fact that nearly a third confessed to low confidence highlights a serious vulnerability. Employees increasingly expect not just numbers but a narrative that makes sense – so, how roles are benchmarked, how progression works, and how fairness is maintained across teams.

Without that clarity, publishing bands risks backfiring. Numbers without explanation can fuel suspicion, and HR may find themselves fielding even tougher questions. Building confidence here isn't just about communication skills. It requires robust frameworks, clear progression pathways, and leadership buy-in. In other words, transparency doesn't stop at the payslip; it's about being able to tell the story behind the salary.

"For smaller companies it is hard as there is no budget for external support on pay bands implementation. Having explored this in the past it would be thousands of pounds to go through JDs, draft pay grades and then benchmark. Small business leaders see no benefit to revenue for this."

Maisie, HR Manager for a small business

Fairness is what employees really value

If pay transparency is about meeting employee expectations, then it's worth asking: what do employees actually care about most when it comes to pay?

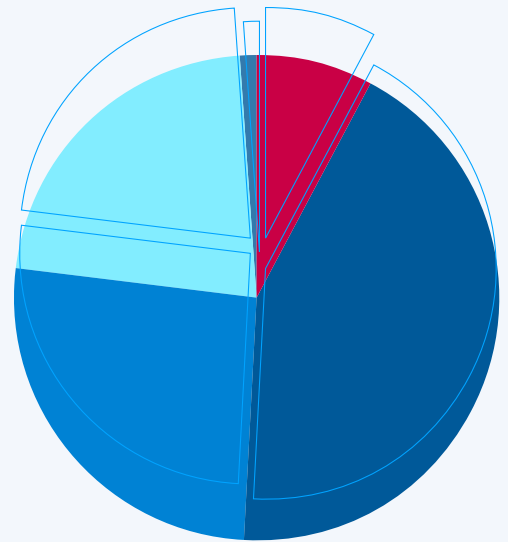
According to our survey, the clear winner was **fairness across peers**, chosen by **43%** of HR professionals. For employees, it's less about the number itself and more about whether that number stacks up fairly against colleagues doing similar work.

Beyond fairness, **26%** of respondents said employees value **competitive pay**, while **22%** highlighted **progression opportunities** as the priority. Only **8%** believed employees cared most about **clarity around ranges**, and just **1%** opted for "something else" – primarily, simply more money.

However, it's worth noting that these results would indicate that pay transparency alone isn't the endgame. Employees don't just want to see salary bands on a page; they want to trust that those bands are *fairly* applied, competitive in the market, and backed up by clear progression opportunities. This echoes our earlier finding: bands without progression frameworks or competency structures risk feeling hollow.

To deliver true transparency, organisations need to offer both the numbers and the pathway that explains how employees can move through them.

What do you think employees value most when it comes to pay?



- No change – 6%
- Clarity about pay ranges – 8%
- Competitive pay – 26%
- Pay progression opportunities – 22%
- Something else – 1%

Linking pay transparency to retention: the role of reviews

Our survey showed that employees care most about fairness across peers, competitive pay, and clear progression opportunities. But how do organisations bring all of that together in practice? One answer lies in how performance and pay reviews are structured.

Regular, well-managed reviews do more than tick a compliance box. They create space for employees to understand how their performance is assessed, how it links to their pay, and what opportunities exist to progress. That connection between effort, recognition, and reward is critical for retention: people are far more likely to stay when they feel the system is both transparent and fair.



Clarity

Employees should know what's being measured and how it links to both pay and progression.



Consistency

Reviews need to be applied fairly across teams to avoid perceptions of favouritism or bias.



Future focus

Reviews shouldn't just look back; they should point forward, setting goals and mapping the skills or competencies needed for advancement.

When reviews are done well, they strengthen trust. Employees don't just see a pay number; they see the rationale behind it and the pathway ahead. And for employers, that combination of fairness, progression, and transparency can be the difference between retaining valued talent or watching them leave for an organisation that does it better.



The upside of transparency: trust, talent, and retention...

Having explored what employees value most - fairness, progression, and competitive pay - we next asked the Ninjas community what they thought the biggest benefits of pay transparency would be for their own organisations.

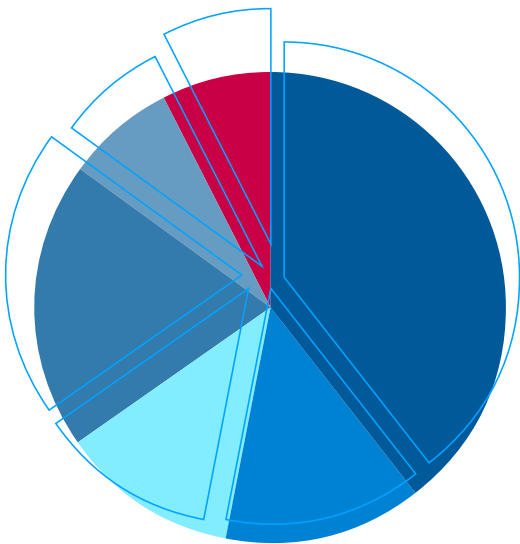
The most common answer was **higher trust**, chosen by **32%** of respondents. This aligns with our earlier findings: if employees believe their pay is fair and can be explained clearly, trust in the organisation naturally grows. And in the current climate, trust is a powerful currency.

Beyond that, **16%** said transparency would attract **more applicants** to roles, showing its potential as a recruitment advantage. Others pointed to **better retention (11%)** and **higher levels of engagement (10%)**, while **6%** highlighted its role in reducing **pay gap issues**. Another **6%** chose "something else."

Taken together, the results suggest that transparency isn't just about preventing awkward questions. It really does have the potential to reshape how employees view their organisation. From building trust to attracting new talent, HR professionals see transparency as a lever for culture, recruitment, and retention.

The message is clear: the upside goes well beyond pay itself.

If pay transparency becomes the norm, what positive impact do you think it would have in your organisation?



- Higher trust – 32%
- Better retention – 11%
- Better levels of engagement – 10%
- More applications to advertised roles – 16%
- Fewer pay gap issues – 6%
- Something else – 6%

"I believe that pay transparency works best when you have good Reward education in place. People need to understand the difference between market benchmark data and what a company will pay to attract a new hire, and how a business balances salary costs - there isn't a bottomless bucket. Employees should know how to demonstrate value in their roles to negotiate a pay rise (not just because of tenure or because another company is paying more). Leaders also need to stand behind their pay policies and not cave to hard-line negotiators who hold them to ransom for a pay increase, which can lead to male-dominated retention increases. They should ensure there are no single points of failure, and equal development and opportunities so that pay equity is possible."
[Edited for clarity]

Fatima, Team Leader at a large private organisation

... And the downside: resentment running wild

Of course, every opportunity comes with risks. So, to close our survey, we asked the Ninjas what worried them most about pay transparency.

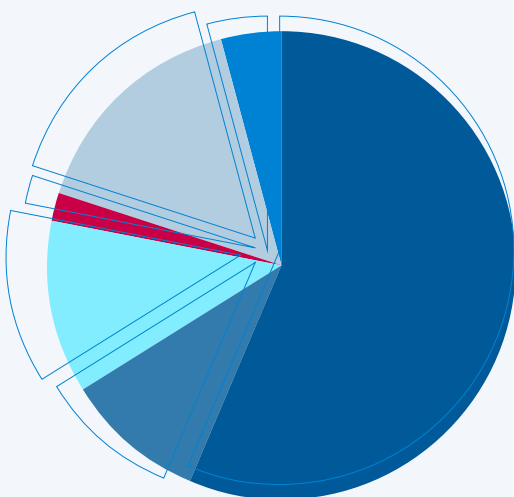
By far the biggest concern was resentment among employees, cited by **57%** of respondents. It's the classic fear: when pay information is laid bare, employees may compare themselves to colleagues and question whether they're being treated fairly.

Other risks weighed less heavily but still registered: **12%** worried competitors could gain an advantage from greater openness, while **10%** pointed to the potential loss of negotiation flexibility. Only **2%** flagged extra admin for HR as the main issue. Interestingly, **16%** said they don't believe there are any risks at all, and **4%** chose "something else", which included answers such as a lack of management skills and a lack of staff turnover – something which can be just as damaging as a revolving door workforce.

This is why frameworks matter - without them, transparency creates mistrust instead of solving it. And, together with the previous findings, this highlights the tension at the heart of transparency. On one hand, organisations see the potential for higher trust, stronger retention, and better recruitment. On the other, many fear it could just as easily spark resentment if fairness and progression frameworks aren't clear.

In short: openness shines a light, and whether that light builds trust or exposes cracks depends on how ready an organisation really is.

And the downside... what risks worry you most about pay transparency?



- Resentment among employees – 57%
- Loss of negotiation flexibility – 10%
- Our competitors gaining an advantage – 12%
- More admin for HR – 2%
- I don't think there are any risks – 16%
- Something else – 4%

The risks and rewards of pay transparency

Writing for leading publication Business Reporter, Cezanne's CEO Simon Noble argues that while pay transparency can drive fairness and trust, the journey from opaque pay zones to open, defensible frameworks is neither simple nor without risk....

Labour's proposed pay transparency reforms could seriously shake up the UK's employment scene. On paper, it's all about fairness: tackling stubborn pay gaps and giving people a clearer picture of what their work's really worth. But, whilst the goals are admirable, the reality for employers is a bit messier. Behind the headline-grabbing promises is a tangle of operational headaches, cultural shifts, and financial questions that businesses will need to start wrapping their heads around.



The implementation challenge

At the heart of Labour's proposals is a requirement for employers to disclose salary ranges in job adverts, share pay structures internally, and potentially allow employees to compare their earnings with those of colleagues in similar roles. Now, these measures are designed to combat pay discrimination and improve equity (both good things, of course).

However, translating these principles into practice is far from straightforward. That's because most organisations do not operate with rigid, formulaic pay structures. Compensation is often shaped by market dynamics, individual negotiation, legacy arrangements, and performance-based incentives.

Turning pay into something open and standardised isn't just a quick policy update; it's taking a deep dive into how businesses value roles and people. And for many companies, especially SMEs, that kind of overhaul isn't something you can knock out over a working lunch. It takes serious investment in the right HR systems, tools, and know-how, things that a lot of teams simply don't have lying around.

The cultural undercurrents of transparency

On the surface, pay transparency sounds great, and in many ways, it is. But opening the books doesn't automatically build trust. In fact, it can have the opposite effect if not handled carefully. When people see pay differences - no matter how valid the reasons - it can still really sting. That kind of reveal can cause frustration, knock morale, and stir up tension within teams, even when everything's above board.

Take the [Pimlico Plumbers case](#), for instance. When their pay data was disclosed, it led to resignations and forced salary adjustments. It's a reminder of what can happen when you don't get this stuff right, the kind of mess that no business wants to find itself in. So, employers must prepare for similar scenarios: equipping managers with the tools and training to navigate difficult conversations and defend pay decisions with clarity and consistency.

Financial ripple effects and strategic risk

The financial implications of these reforms are potentially profound. For example, a survey by **WTW** found that nearly half of UK employers anticipate unexpected pay rises as a direct consequence of increased transparency. On top of that, 60% of employers reckon pay negotiations are about to become a lot more frequent, which could throw a serious spanner in the works for existing pay structures and budget planning.

It's not just about cost. It's about keeping things balanced. Bumping one salary often triggers a chain reaction to maintain internal fairness. For organisations already battling inflation and rising employment costs, this can stretch budgets and lead to tough trade-offs.

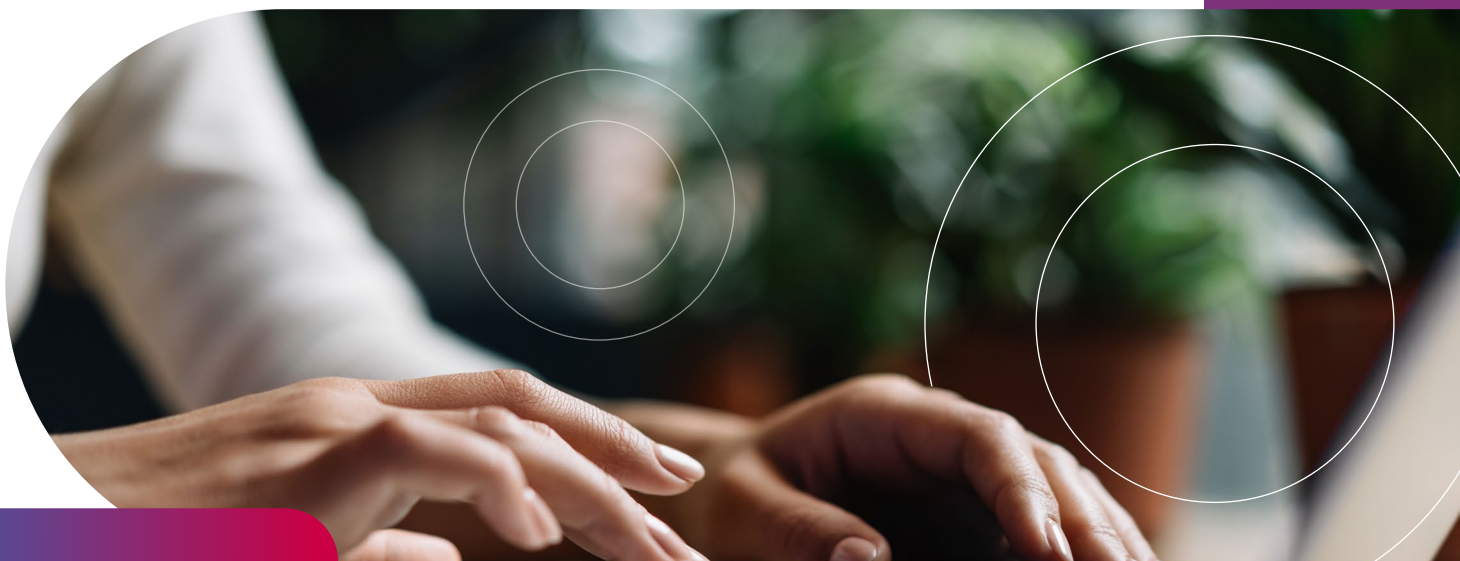
A call for nuanced reform

The Labour Market Enforcement Strategy 2025–2026 rightly calls out the need for “better engagement and support with business and workers.” It's great to see it recognised, but words alone won't cut it. What employers really need is clear, practical guidance. How do you build fair pay bands? What do you do with old-school pay deals already in place? And how do you roll out changes without upsetting your people or throwing a wrench in how things run day to day?

To me, a more measured approach to reform is essential. For pay transparency to work, it must take into account that every organisation's different. Employers need time, support, and a bit of breathing room - especially if they're trying to untangle old-school pay practices. A phased approach, with the right backing, is way more likely to stick than some blanket, one-size-fits-all rule.

Transparency with integrity

Whether you agree with them or not, Labour's reforms could be a real game-changer for UK employment policy: but their success won't come down to good intentions alone. It's all about how things play out in the real world. Employers need the time, tools, and breathing room to make transparency work properly, striking the right balance between fairness and what's actually doable day-to-day.



The conclusion: Pay transparency can't be ignored any longer

Our survey makes one thing clear: pay transparency is no longer a distant ideal.

It's here, it's accelerating, and employees expect it. HR professionals from the HR Ninjas community overwhelmingly recognise the shift; with fairness, progression, and clarity now central to how people judge whether their organisation can be trusted.

Yet despite this awareness, many employers are seemingly behind the curve. The barriers aren't about technology or data; instead, they're about leadership confidence, cultural readiness, and the complexity of legacy pay structures. For some organisations, these are daunting challenges. For others - the 18% who report no barriers at all which, perhaps surprisingly, are not all publicly-owned bodies - they're opportunities to get ahead and differentiate in a competitive talent market.

The potential upside is powerful: **greater trust, stronger retention, and an edge in recruitment.** But the risks are equally real. Without fair frameworks and clear communication, **transparency can just as easily breed resentment as it can build trust.** Employees don't only want numbers; they want to see that those numbers are applied consistently, competitively, and with a genuine pathway for progression.

That means pay transparency isn't just about openness; it's about **building the maturity and rigour to have effective conversations around pay.** So, HR leaders will need to invest in equipping managers, strengthening progression frameworks, and creating a culture where pay discussions are clear, fair, and defensible.

For HR leaders and business decision-makers, the takeaway is straightforward: **pay transparency is inevitable; the only choice is whether you're proactive or reactive.** Organisations that prepare now will be best placed to turn transparency into a competitive advantage. Those that delay risk being forced into it on less favourable terms, whether by legislation, employees, or the market.

The transparency train has left the station. The question is no longer if it will arrive at your organisation, but whether you'll be in time to catch it.

Next steps for HR leaders

To stay ahead of rising expectations outlined in this report, HR leaders need to put structure, confidence, and clarity behind the numbers. Here are some practical steps to get started:



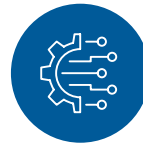
Audit your pay structures

Identify gaps, inconsistencies, and areas where clarity is lacking.



Benchmark externally

Use market data to ensure pay is fair and competitive.



Build progression frameworks

Link pay bands to skills, competencies, and career pathways.



Equip your managers

Train leaders to have confident, fair, and consistent pay conversations.



Communicate clearly

Don't just share numbers; explain the "why" behind them.

Useful resources

We have plenty of helpful guides and resources to help HR and payroll professionals - why not take a look?

Your First 90 days as an HR Leader →

Are you stepping into a new HR leadership role? The first 90 days are crucial for setting the tone, building relationships, and establishing your influence. Our comprehensive guide is designed to help you make the perfect start, avoid common pitfalls, and drive impactful change.

Why Digitise the Compensation Planning Process? →

In today's digital-first world, old-school compensation planning just doesn't cut it anymore. If your HR team's aiming to stay ahead of the curve, it's time to ditch the admin grind and embrace smarter, faster, digital compensation planning. This e-book breaks down exactly how going digital transforms your approach; from streamlining workflows to making data-driven pay decisions that actually stick.

HR Under Pressure →

To discover the true state of mental health in HR today, we surveyed HR professionals from the HR Ninjas community. Thanks to their input, this report explores how they're coping – or indeed not coping – with the pressures of their roles.

The HR Software and Payroll Buyer's Guide →

Effective HR and payroll software is crucial to every business. But, in a world where HR technologies and ways of work are changing faster than ever before, how do you go about selecting the right software for your organisation? This guide covers six of the most important areas to consider when evaluating a new HR system.



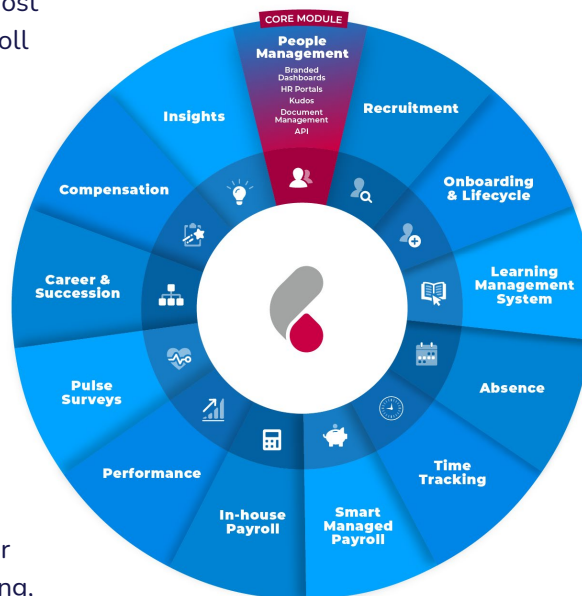
Who we are

Hello there, we're Cezanne. Nice to meet you!

We're on a mission to be the most loved and trusted HR and payroll partner for mid-sized UK and international organisations. We provide modern, secure Cloud HR software and payroll that lets companies quickly and effectively digitise, streamline and improve human resources management.

Covering the full employee lifecycle, Cezanne software includes integrated modules for core HR, recruitment, onboarding, absence and performance management, pulse surveys, time tracking, career and succession planning, workforce analytics, compensation planning and both in-house and managed payroll – together with an integration platform service and open APIs to leading third-party solutions.

With customers covering virtually every business sector, from financial services and legal firms to logistics and non-profits, the Cezanne system is purposely designed to be exceptionally quick to deploy and easy to manage. Our software is proven to take out both cost and complexity... without sacrificing the flexibility or depth of features required to support complex and evolving HR needs.



[Book a demo](#)

[Success stories](#)