

2023-2024

TECHNOLOGY SECTOR RECRUITMENT RESEARCH REPORT

Tech-sector careers: aims, intentions, trends and trajectories

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Introduction

This is the ninth year in which Be-IT has commissioned research into IT candidates' job-hunting intentions and the channels they use to find new jobs, as part of our wider IT and digital jobs salary survey. As usual, the study was conducted by an independent third party, throughout November and December 2023, using Be-IT's extensive candidate database*.

The IT job market boomed throughout 2022, but calmed in 2023 – which will only make the competition for the quality candidates who do want to move (see Q. 3 below) even more intense. In our view, this is likely to continue throughout the early months of 2024, if not for the entire year.

Although the pandemic clearly distorted the market, we've moved on from that disastrous period. That said, the UK economy did not grow at all in the three months leading to October 2023. This has some forecasters speculating about a possible recession again if growth fails to pick up in the coming months. For instance, think tank [Capital Economics](#) describes the more recent macro-economic data as a possible sign of 'the mildest of mild recessions' –but any kind of contraction would be a hit to the economy and IT is not immune. AI will keep our industry in the headlines, but that alone is no reason to be complacent.

As we did last year, we've introduced a small number of new questions to look at a range of different factors – career opportunity, non-financial benefits, social attitudes, company values – and the part they play in candidates' decisions. With nine years' worth of data, we can plot trends in the IT recruitment market and make an informed assessment of their causes.

As such, this key part of our annual research makes essential reading for anyone in IT/digital who is considering moving job - and for employers looking to recruit in 2024.

As always, our thanks go to [thePotentMix](#), who carried out the salary survey and career planning questionnaire, using Be-IT's extensive candidate database of over 40,000 individuals, our Be-IT Expert's diverse LinkedIn contacts, a SurveyMonkey and a complementary social media campaign.

We know that the survey results are the most popular page on our [website](#) (other than the huge range of jobs) every year. If you have any questions or would like to discuss how the results and analysis here affect you and/or your business, please don't hesitate to get in touch with your regular Be-IT contact or, if you prefer, directly with [me](#).

Nikola Kelly

Managing Director, Be-IT Resourcing & Be-IT Projects

Executive Summary

Moving job in the last 12 months

38% of respondents had moved jobs in 2023 – down from 50% last year. Of these, 5% moved more than once, down from 7% last year.

The nine-year average for people moving jobs one or more times is 48%.

The reasons for moving last year were:

- 31% moved sideways – to a different company, but at the same level – down from 34% last year.
- 15% moved upwards at the same company – up from 11% last year.
- 27% moved upwards move at a different company – a significant drop from 34% last year.
- 20% just wanted a change – up from 16% last year.
- 7% made a downward move, for whatever reason – up from 6% last year.

Move job in the next six months?

42% intend to move jobs in the first half of 2023 – a slight decline on last year's 43% and on the nine-year average of 48%.

34% say they do not intend to move in the next six months – a small increase on 33% last year, but well above the nine-year average of 28%.

24% are undecided – which aligns with the nine-year average of 24%.

The reasons why people intend to move jobs in the next six months are:

- 27% expect to make a sideways move to a different company, but at the same level – UP from 20% last year and above the eight-year average of 25%.
- 20% expect to make an upwards move at the same company – down from 24% last year and the same as the eight-year average.
- 28% expect to make an upwards move at a different company – down from 35% last year and below the eight-year average of 33%.
- 23% just wanted a change – up on last year's 19% and above the eight-year average of 21%.

Size/status of a potential employer

46% are not concerned what size of company they work for.

18% prefer an SME (fewer than 250 employees).

17% prefer a large company (250+ employees).

14% prefer a multinational employer.

Only 5% would prefer a start-up.

WFH/remote working

In 2022, 95% of candidates said they would refuse to take a job that didn't allow them to at least partially work from home.

In 2023, this has decreased slightly to 93%, with 42% of all respondents want to work full-time from home, 51% wanting two or three days working at home and only 7% happy to work full-time in the office.



What people look for in a new job

Base pay, flexible working and the technical challenges of the work are ranked first, second and third by candidates as the most important elements they look for in a new role. These are followed (in order) by other financial benefits (bonuses, incentives, etc.), job security, company culture and values, employers' pension contributions, location/commute, the feeling that your job makes a difference and serves a larger purpose, and finally, non-financial benefits (diversity/inclusion policies, wellbeing, social activities, etc.)

Recruitment channels and comms used in job hunting

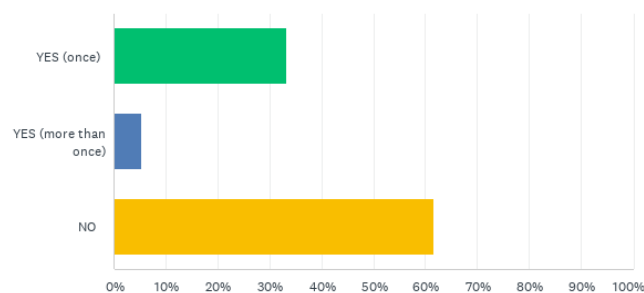
LinkedIn dominates, with 86% using it to find jobs. Recruitment agencies are next most popular, on 69%.

Generalist job-boards (65%) and then specialist job-boards (61%) are the next most popular. No other channel scored over 50%, with Networking on 46%, Direct approaches to an employer on 36% (bucking the trend of the last five years) and social media on just 10%.

Summary & Analysis

Q.1 Have you moved jobs in the last year?

Having seen a decline during the pandemic, followed by an upturn in 2022 as the market caught up and began to boom, this last year (2023) saw a fall in the numbers moving jobs. With only a third of respondents moving once (the second lowest figure in the last nine years), we can see just how difficult the IT job market has been for employers. This is reinforced by the fact that the percentage who say they had not moved jobs is the (joint – with 2016) highest we've seen: a real indication of how things have changed since the post-pandemic boom, with IT professionals preferring to stick rather than twist. This is also reflected in the percentage moving more than once, which is the lowest we've seen in the series so far.



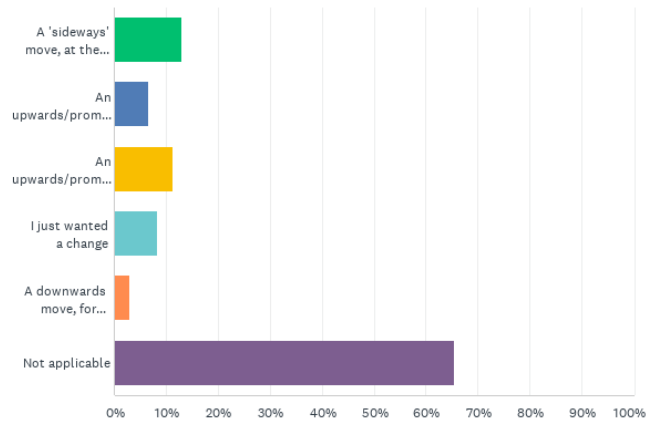
The turnaround between movers and non-movers in the last nine years is shown on Table 1 below:

Table 1

Year	% - Yes, once	% - Yes, more than once	% - No
2015	45	17	38
2016	32	6	62
2017	40	8	52
2018	45	7	48
2019	35	6	59
2020	50	6	44
2021	38	7	55
2022	43	7	50
2023	33	5	62
Average	40	8	52

Q.2 Reasons for moving last year?

As with the previous question, although there are different interpretations that could be made of each individual option (a move up, down, etc.), the overall picture does, we suggest, mirror what we found in the response to Q.1 above.



Respondents are given five principal reasons for moving jobs. These are shown in Table 2 below, together with all results from the first of our surveys to last year.

Table 2

Year	% Sideways move to a diff. company	% Upwards move at the same company	% Upwards move to a diff. company	% I just wanted a change	% Downwards move, for whatever reason
2015	33	12	19	31	5
2016	38	10	23	25	4
2017	21	21	31	25	2
2018	27	12	27	27	7
2019	36	18	21	21	4
2020	38	7	24	24	7
2021	27	10	32	27	4
2022	34	11	32	16	6
2023	31	15	27	20	7
Ave.	32	13	26	24	5

The numbers making a sideways move at the same level is slightly down on last year. In contrast, there is a slight increase above the series average for those moving upwards, either at the same company or at a new one. The percentage who 'just want a change' is lower than average, whilst the number moving downwards is actually the joint highest (with 2020 and 2018) in the last nine years. All this does, of course, need to be seen in context, with the majority of respondents not moving at all in 2023.



Comments on reasons for changing jobs in the last year

- Started in a new field, freelance
 - It's my first coding job
 - I need to change country
 - Contract roles
 - I wanted to get outside of IR35
 - I migrated back to the UK from Australia
-

Q.3 Do you intend actively to look for a job in the next six months?

In last year's Be-IT salary survey report, we noted that the percentage who said they would not move jobs in the year ahead (2023) was the (joint) highest in our records. Conversely, the percentage saying they would move was one of the lowest on record. This year, both these figures have been exceeded.

It's striking that the percentage who said they would move jobs in 2023 (43%) was far higher than the number who actually moved (38%, as per Q.1 above). With the job market continuing to be tight at the time of writing, it remains to be seen whether the 42% who say they will be seeking pastures new in the first six months of 2024 will actually do so. Moreover, the fact that this 42% figure is, as last year, below the series trend, suggests things will not change quickly in the first half of next year. This is reinforced by the percentage saying they will not move next year: at just over one third (34%), this is the highest figure we've recorded. The number of undecideds is in line with the series average and virtually the same as last year. None of this is great news for employers as it suggests they will have to work even harder to attract new talent, while at the same time making sure they keep the back-door shut to prevent existing stars from heading for the exit door.

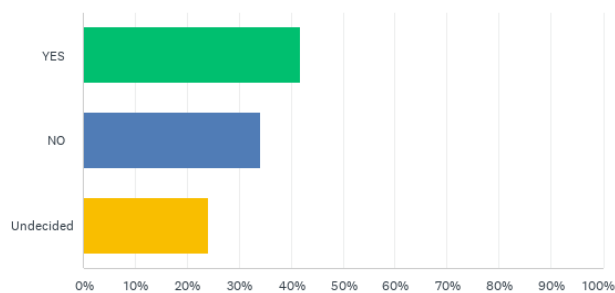


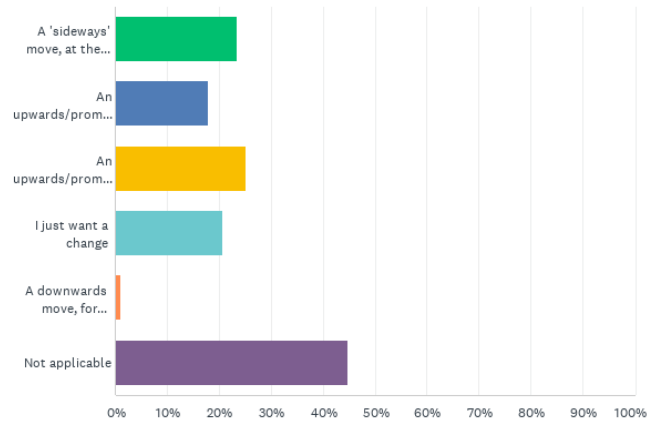
Table 3 below shows the longer-term trend. The totals may not always add up to 100 due to rounding.

Table 3:

Year	% Undecided	% No	% Yes
2016	18	29	53
2017	29	24	47
2018	24	33	43
2019	21	23	56
2020	20	26	54
2021	16	32	52
2022	30	24	46
2023	23	33	43
2024	24	34	42
Average	24	28	48

Q.4 Reasons for moving in the coming year?

The same five reasons are offered for those seeking to move in the year ahead as for those who moved last (and in every other) year.



The entire series, from the first of our surveys, is shown in Table 4 below. Again, totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Table 4:

Year	% Sideways move to a diff. company	% Upwards move at the same company	% Upwards move to a diff. company	% I just wanted a change	% Downwards move, for whatever reason
2017	34	13	31	21	1
2018	24	17	35	21	3
2019	24	21	30	23	2
2020	27	18	31	22	2
2021	23	20	34	22	1
2022	20	24	35	20	1
2023	20	24	35	19	1
2024	27	20	28	23	1
Ave.	25	20	33	21	2

The results this year are not too far out of kilter with those from last year. As always, a tiny minority are happy to move downwards (usually for personal reasons in our experience – although, as Table 2 shows, more end up moving downwards than expected to), while most people (53%) seek to improve their position financially with an upward move, whether with their existing employer or a new one.

Comments under Question 4

- I need more money to be able to live in a different area of the UK where costs of living are higher.
- Currently redundant

- End of contract
- Current contract may be extended.
- I need to stay outside of IR35, I can't handle being PAYE, paying Employers NI and apprenticeship levy with no benefits, lose-lose
- A different job more aligned to my skills and passions

Comparing this year with last year

As we did last year, we can look to see if there is any consistency in candidates' decision-making. We can do this by comparing the reasons people gave for actually moving in the last 12 months with those they give for potentially moving in the next six months.

Table 5:

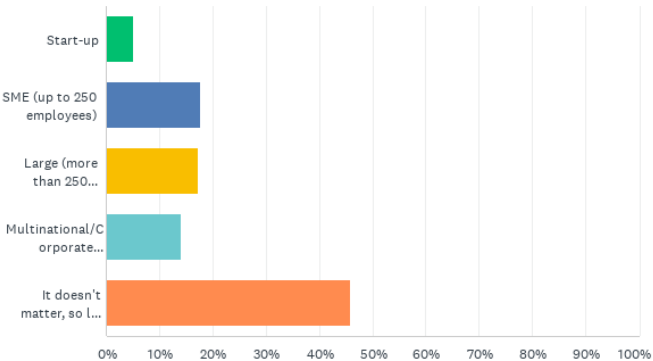
Reason	2022 ACTUAL	2023 INTENTIONS	2023 ACTUAL	2024 INTENTIONS
A 'sideways' move to a different company	34%	20%	13%	25%
A promotion at the same company	11%	24%	15%	20%
An upwards move to a different company	32%	35%	27%	33%
I just want a change	16%	19%	20%	21%
A downwards move, for whatever reason	6%	1%	7%	2%

What can we read into these statistics?

With the caveat that this is an inference based on our knowledge of the IT jobs market, the fact that there was a significant increase in the percentage who actually had an upward move at their current company might suggest that there is a rise in the number of counter-offers being made to those who would otherwise head for pastures new. This is supported by the fact that the percentage who actually made an upwards move at a different company has declined. Further research would be required to confirm this.

Over the years of this survey, the numbers who intend to move (for whatever reason – other than those who 'just want a change'), is often higher than the numbers who eventually move. The factors influencing individuals' decisions are, of course, many and varied, but the background economic situation and the general perception that in a flat market it's often better to 'stick with the devil you know' means that we anticipate that this will continue to be the case in 2024. Consequently, for employers who are seeking both to add and retain talent, it is imperative to ensure that, a) they work much more closely with their recruiters (both in-house and external) to make sure they get first choice of the best candidates, and b) they work even harder to make sure that they are offering their current staff both competitive salaries and bonuses and comprehensive benefits packages. This leads us to the last few questions in this part of our annual survey, examining flexible working, the size/type of employer candidates want and whether the various rewards and benefits on offer are important to candidates (or not).

Q.5 What size of company would be your ideal employer?



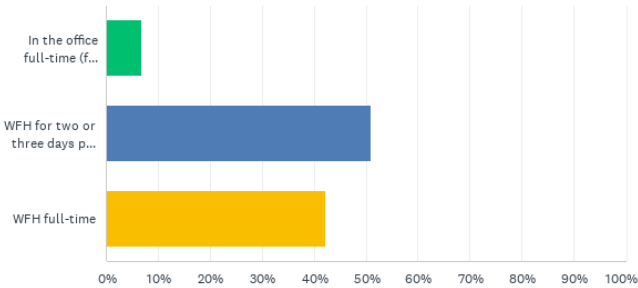
This question was new to our survey last year, so we were able to make a year-on-year comparison.

Table 6:

Size of company	2022	2023
Start up	7%	5%
SME (up to 250 employees)	18%	18%
Large (more than 250 employees)	13%	17%
Multinational (thousands of employees)	20%	14%
It doesn't matter, so long as they have a good reputation	42%	46%

Based on these two years, it's clear that, post-pandemic, most people are seeking a company with a good reputation rather than focusing on a specific size of employer. Again, this reinforces the need for employers to work hard to retain their staff by offering good pay and conditions. Another thing that is very clear is that it's tough for start-ups to attract people, with even fewer saying they would want to work for one this year compared to last year. There is not a huge variation in the numbers wanting to work for SMEs, large and multinational organisations, although there is a swing towards a preference for large companies as opposed to multinationals.

Q.6 How much flexibility do you want in your working week?



As Table 7 below shows, there were slight changes compared to 2022. A slightly higher (but still very small) percentage would like to work wholly in the office, but the numbers who want the opposite (entirely WFH) have decreased. The majority now want to split their week between the office and the home – two or three days in each. It’s clear that WFH, to a greater or lesser extent, is now established as a non-negotiable for the vast majority of employees.

Table 7:

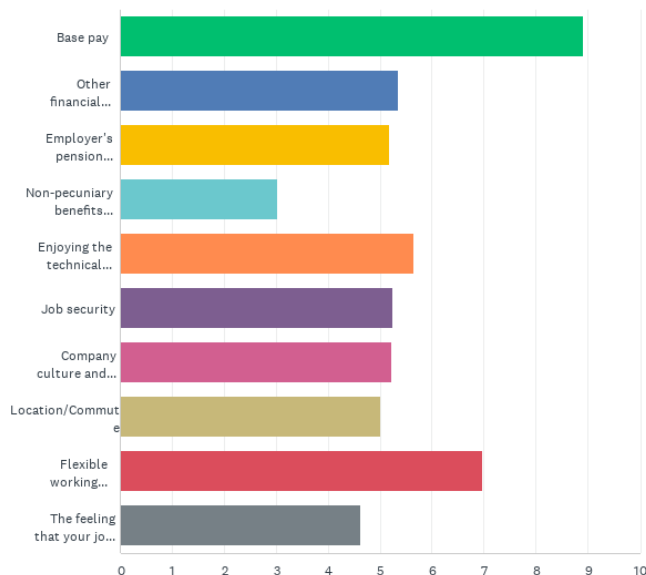
Working location	2022	2023
In the office full time	5%	7%
WFH for two or three days per week	45%	51%
WFH full time	50%	42%

Q.7 Please list these key attributes of a new job in order of importance.

We have once again tweaked this question this year, to take account of the changing demands of candidates and the responsiveness of employers which, together, create packages of pay and (regularly changing) conditions on offer/demanded for IT jobs in 2023.

The key attributes we asked respondents to rank in order were:

- Base pay
- Other financial benefits (overtime, bonus, incentives, car, travel, gym membership, etc.)
- Employer's pension contribution
- Non-pecuniary benefits (wellness, DEI policies, social activities, etc.)
- Enjoying the technical challenges of the work involved
- Job security
- Company culture and values
- Location/Commute
- Flexible working (remote, WFH, flexible hours etc.)
- The feeling that your job makes a difference and serves a larger purpose.



Respondents were asked to rank the various attributes in order of importance to them. The bar chart above shows the relative scores of all the attributes in total and Table 8 on the following page shows the varying results at each level of that ranking.

Table 8:


Attribute	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Score
Pay	56.69%	18.13%	10.44%	3.85%	2.2%	2.75%	1.65%	2.2%	0.55%	0.55%	8.92
Flexible working (location & patterns)	14.67%	24.46%	16.85%	12.5%	7.61%	2.17%	5.98%	2.17%	8.7%	4.89%	6.98
Technical challenge	4.47%	6.7%	11.73%	18.44%	13.41%	12.85%	10.06%	11.17%	7.26%	3.91%	5.65
Other financial benefits & incentives	2.22%	14.44%	13.33%	6.11%	9.44%	12.78%	10%	14.44%	12.22%	5%	5.35
Job security	6.59%	7.69%	9.34%	10.44%	10.99%	13.74%	10.44%	10.44%	12.64%	7.69%	5.24
Company culture	3.89%	6.67%	7.22%	14.44%	11.11%	17.22%	15%	9.44%	8.33%	6.67%	5.22
Pension contributions	0.56%	8.33%	12.78%	14.44%	11.67%	8.89%	16.11%	11.11%	7.22%	8.89%	5.19
Location/commute	4.4%	7.69%	9.89%	8.79%	17.03%	8.24%	8.79%	11.54%	9.89%	13.74%	5.01
Sense of purpose	5.46%	5.46%	7.65%	9.29%	9.84%	10.93%	9.29%	14.75%	9.84%	17.49%	4.62
Non-financial benefits & policies	1.1%	2.21%	1.66%	1.66%	7.18%	9.39%	11.6%	11.6%	22.65%	30.94%	3.03

Even though we didn't use exactly the same list of criteria, last year, pay was again the most important requirement for all respondents. Two years ago, some 59% ranked 'pay' first, then last year some 70% ranked it first. This year, having made the distinction more precise by referring to 'base pay,' this figure (still ranked first in the first column) declined to 58%, although in the final scores (far right column) it clearly outdistances every other attribute of the overall package.

Flexible working was another new addition this year and, as you can see in Table 8, this ranks second below pay, reflecting our findings in Q. 7 above.

Also as in previous years, the technical challenges offered by a new job score very highly. At the other end of the table, and as in the last two years, non-financial benefits, including social activities and DEI policies, scored poorly. We believe that this reflects the increasing importance of hard cash as opposed to other benefits as candidates continue to struggle to cope with persistent inflation last year and the continuing high cost-of-living.

A similar lack of interest in the idea 'that your job makes a difference and serves a larger purpose' is seen in Table 8, reflecting, we suspect, the same increased desire for financial reward rather than more nebulous, albeit arguably equally desirable, socially aware policies and benefits. This has been a consistent feature of our research over the years and might be interpreted as suggesting that there is a slight overemphasis on the importance of such socially aware aspects of work, as well as the fact that



when it comes down to it, for many people money trumps morality to some extent. However, despite this, a company's value and culture scored reasonably (in mid-table overall) and is clearly important, albeit not ranked highly in the first few columns.

One new question was 'location/commute.' Here, it's interesting (perhaps surprising?) to note that this isn't especially important for most people as it only ranked third from the bottom of the table.

Another thing that did slightly surprise us was the importance of a pension. This year, as in most previous years (apart from last year, when it was the second least important consideration for candidates), it was ranked in mid-table. As we mentioned in our report last year, there is considerable evidence that younger generations do not pay much attention to the importance of a pension, although this, naturally, changes as they get older.

Q.8 what methods do you use when job-hunting?

This question has remained virtually the same since we began these surveys back in 2015. The options offered to respondents are as shown in the table (Table 9 shows the options, in the order of this year's results) below and they could tick all that applied:

Table 9:

Channel	2021	2022	2023
Linkedin	87%	87%	87%
Recruitment agency/headhunter	76%	61%	69%
Job-boards (generalist - e.g. Totaljobs, S1, etc)	76%	53%	65%
Job-boards (specialist IT)	69%	51%	61%
Networking amongst friends and colleagues	52%	38%	46%
Direct approach to a company	37%	30%	36%
Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)	13%	8%	10%
Other (please specify)	3%	2%	3%
Newspaper or other print advert	4%	3%	1%

Once again, there is no change in the ranking of the importance of any channel – barring 'other' overtaking newspaper/print ads. More specifically, Table 9 shows, a) the continuing dominance of LinkedIn, b) the relative conservatism of job-hunters who still rely on job-boards, despite the fact that the recruitment industry considers the importance of these sites to have diminished, c) a rise in the importance of networking and direct approaches to employers, d) the (continuing) relative unimportance of social media (other than LinkedIn) and finally, e) the importance of recruitment consultancies like Be-IT, which consistently rank as the second most important source of jobs for candidates (and note that recruitment consultancies have risen in importance in the last year).



Find out more

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