

A Fresh
Perspective on



Payroll

A Fresh Perspective on Payroll

"We're already seeing trends that will define the near future, but others are just on the horizon. By 2030, the payroll landscape could look very different."

ERIK BEKKÅSEN, DIRECTOR OF HR & PAYROLL SERVICES, NORDIC, AZETS

Beyond the back-office: payroll as a strategic asset

Payroll has traditionally been a back office functional necessity. For most organisations, it simply runs. Until it doesn't. But employee expectations are changing, regulatory requirements are multiplying, and the consequences of getting it wrong - financial penalties, reputational damage, and a loss of the employee trust that holds organisations together - are growing.

A shift is underway: leading organisations are beginning to recognise payroll not as a cost to manage, but as a function with genuine strategic value.

This Payroll issue of Fresh Perspectives is your window on the world of Payroll. Learn how organisations are managing cost pressures and workforce complexity, adapting to new regulatory frameworks and balancing the growing influence of AI, automation and real-time reporting.

The report draws on a survey of 205 C-suite executives, senior leaders and payroll decision-makers and the real-world expert experiences of Finance Directors and payroll leaders within Azets. Research was conducted in May 2026 across the UK, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

About Fresh Perspectives

Welcome to Fresh Perspectives, the signature thought leadership series from Azets which looks at topical business issues through a new lens. Bringing together proprietary research, real-world stories, C-suite insights and the unique local knowledge and forward-thinking expertise of Azets' senior leaders, these reports offer a peer-to-peer conversation on our industry's most pressing topics.

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Goals

Our
People

A Fresh
Perspective



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The Real Cost of Payroll Errors

Payroll rarely makes the news when it works. It makes headlines when it fails.



OVER HALF OF LEADERS SAY PAYROLL IS A FUNCTION THAT ONLY GETS ATTENTION WHEN SOMETHING GOES WRONG

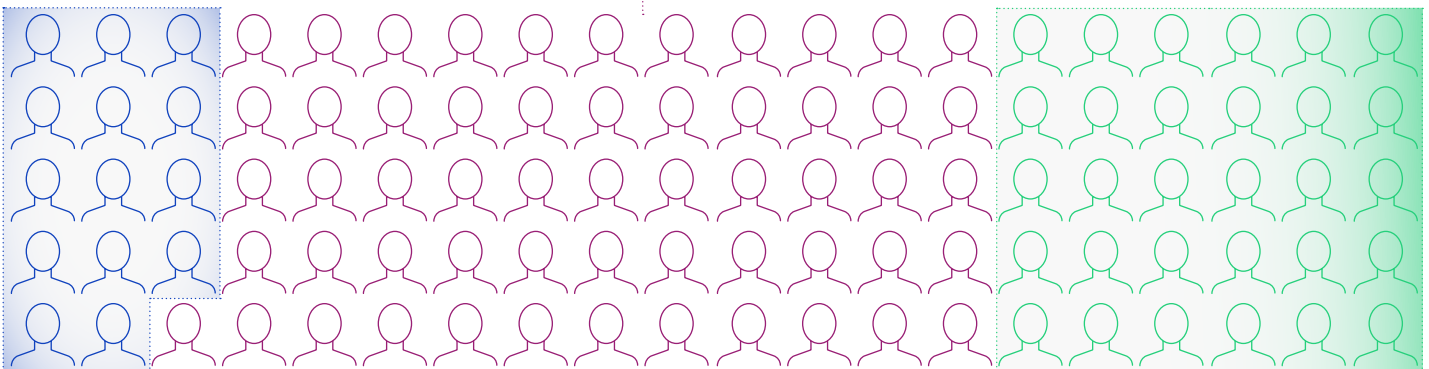
And when it does, the consequences spread fast and wide. Incorrect pay, late payments, tax errors, regulatory fines, employee complaints, boardroom escalations.

Payroll failure is not as rare as you may think, it is a regular operational reality for many organisations, and one that carries consequences far beyond the payroll department itself.

Issues happen more often than you may expect:

- more than one in ten are dealing with payroll issues regularly
- 70% dealing with payroll issues at least occasionally

How often does your organisation experience errors or issues in payroll processing?



When Payroll Goes Wrong:

Leaders told us their stories of payroll failure and fallout

New staff members were omitted from payroll altogether and people were reported incorrectly to HMRC and were being chased for missing tax. Those mistakes took a long time to resolve. There were team members who were considering suing the company for the inconvenience of being chased by HMRC.

FINANCE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC SERVICES, UK

It took almost a year to recover money from overpayments that occurred over the course of a month.

CEO, MANUFACTURING, DENMARK

Because tax codes were updated late, a number of people received emergency tax; hundreds of employees remember the issue.

CFO, FINANCE, UK

Halfway through the financial year we switched payroll systems and the historical data did not migrate properly.

CHRO, MANUFACTURING, SWEDEN

Overtime compensations affected hourly-paid workers, which led to formal complaints and significantly reduced trust in the workplace.

COO, HEALTHCARE, FINLAND

Banking integration failure delayed salaries companywide, seriously impacting morale and leadership credibility.

CFO, FINANCE, IRELAND

We have a problem where incorrect bonus calculations lead to a serious case of employee dissatisfaction, resulting in corrections in the subsequent pay cycle.

CFO, FINANCE, NORWAY

The Impact Of Payroll Errors Carries Across The Whole Organisation

Payroll failures don't just stay in one department.

Consequences of payroll errors or issues

PEOPLE & TRUST



FINANCIAL & COMPLIANCE



OPERATIONAL



They create downstream problems across finance, HR, legal, and leadership simultaneously. This makes the risk materially different from most back-office operational failures.

“Payroll is a very sensitive subject in a way. People are there to make a living, and the payroll outcome needs to be exact and correct. All individuals have their own story, it could be maternity leave, it could be sick leave. People should be able to receive that without having to go through a lot of complaints or trial and error.”

ATLE HELLE, FINANCE DIRECTOR, BIOBAG INTERNATIONAL, NORWAY

D1 HAS YOUR ORGANISATION EVER EXPERIENCED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING AS A RESULT OF PAYROLL ERRORS OR ISSUES?

Why Does It Matter?

Payroll provides a connection between the organisation and the employee and underpins employee trust in the organisation. Smooth-running payroll shows you are **getting the basics right**.

Payroll errors go beyond admin and have repercussions for trust and reputation.



69%

SAY PAYROLL ERRORS CAN DAMAGE REPUTATION AS MUCH AS A TAX INVESTIGATION OR AUDIT SCANDAL

“Building that trust with the team around their salaries, builds a trust about everything else, and also builds morale. If there is an error in your pay, you’re probably not so excited about waking up to work if you’re not being paid correctly. “If you can’t get it right. Why would I do my job right?” If we can get their pay right, they will trust that we can get everything else right. It starts with that internal servicing.”

MAGDA HOWLETT, FINANCE & OPERATIONS DIRECTOR, MONEY READY

“As long as everything is smooth, everybody is happy. But the instant people see that there is something they can’t rely on, then you have mistrust.”

ATLE HELLE, FINANCE DIRECTOR, BIOBAG INTERNATIONAL, NORWAY

“Make a mistake on one payroll, and you need about six perfect payrolls before people fully trust the process again.”

ERIK BEKKÅSEN, DIRECTOR OF HR & PAYROLL SERVICES, NORDIC, AZETS



SAY THEIR ORGANISATION
UNDER-INVESTS IN PAYROLL
RELATIVE TO ITS IMPORTANCE



SAY THEIR LEADERSHIP
TEAM DOESN'T TAKE
PAYROLL FAILURE RISK
SERIOUSLY ENOUGH

So Payroll Is A Serious Business.

Are leaders giving it the attention it deserves?

The consequences of payroll failure are clear. But leaders say there is a tendency to underestimate payroll's importance, underinvest in the function, and rely on crisis to prompt attention.

"I don't think people truly understand the risks around payroll if it goes wrong. I think it does need to change for people to understand legislative compliance-wise what is going through payroll now."

STEPHEN ABBOTTS, DIRECTOR OF PAYROLL SERVICES, UK, AZETS

"For many organisations, payroll is something that just needs to be done. They've never really given much attention to payroll until something is wrong or something has changed."

MAGDA HOWLETT, FINANCE & OPERATIONS DIRECTOR,
MONEY READY

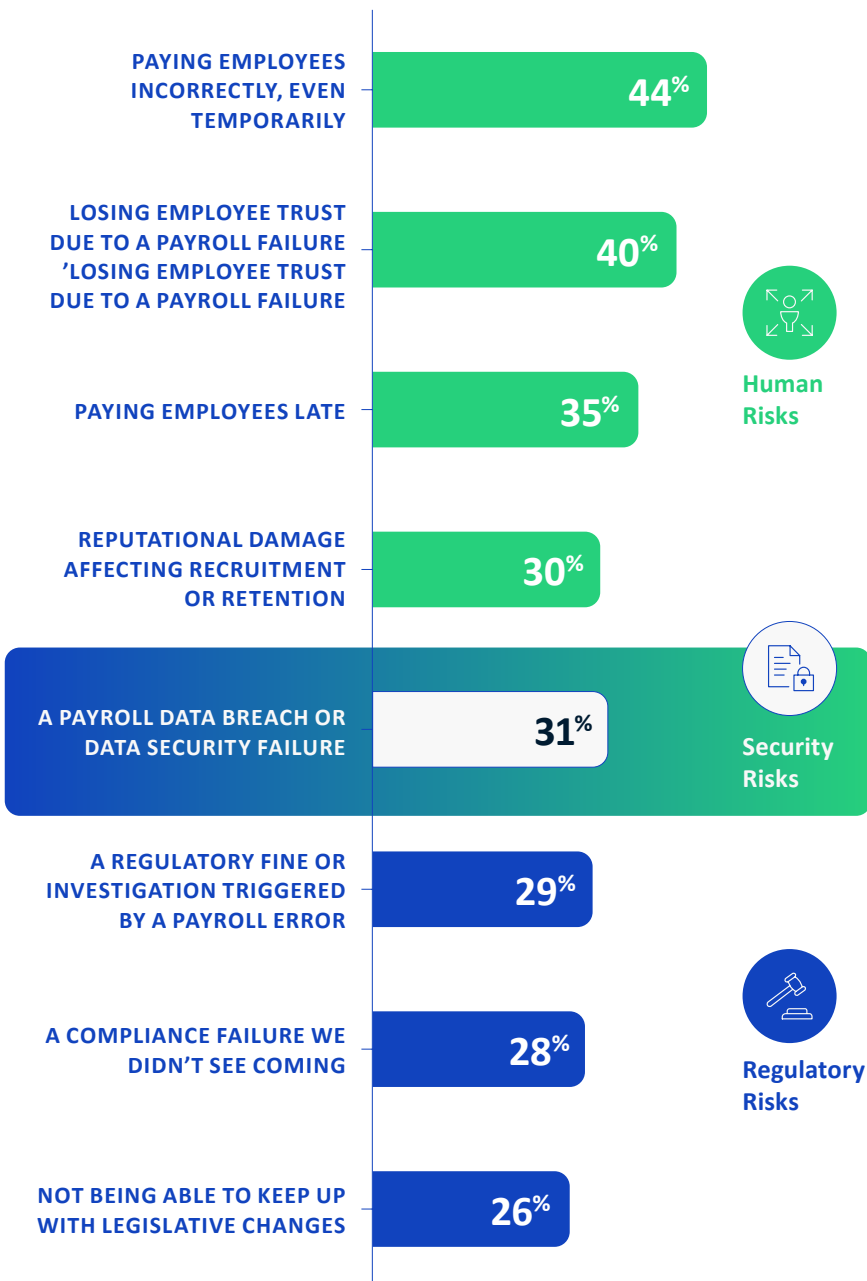
"In the Nordics, you have approximately 50% of businesses not doing any outsourcing and handling the payroll themselves. I do not think the local providers, local companies, employers in the Nordics are taking this seriously enough and really understanding the possible impact."

ERIK BEKKÅSEN, DIRECTOR OF HR & PAYROLL SERVICES,
NORDIC, AZETS

What Keeps Payroll Leaders Awake At Night?

When asked to identify their biggest payroll fears, leaders' answers reveal the anxiety around payroll risk sits with people, not processes.

Biggest payroll fears



“People can react badly if the payroll is not correct, and you get an immediate response if it’s late or it’s wrong. The correctness of payments coming through payroll is so very important as it means a lot to many people. They are depending on quality coming out of the system. So that’s why it’s really important to still have the checks in place and capable people doing it.”

ATLE HELLE, FINANCE DIRECTOR, BIOBAG INTERNATIONAL, NORWAY



Payroll Today

Most leaders acknowledge that payroll is underinvested and underattended. But what do they say about their own organisation's approach? The answer, perhaps surprisingly, is largely positive.

The majority claim payroll is a strategic priority. Most have reviewed their setup within the last three years. The function is predominantly run from Finance, with clear ownership and active management.

But the challenges organisations report; regulatory change, system integration, data quality, persistent errors; suggest that claiming strategic intent is easier than building the systems, talent, and processes that strategic payroll requires.

Most leaders claim payroll is a strategic priority, but intent does not ensure delivery.

Payroll Has Moved

From the back office to the core of the organisation



STRATEGIC PRIORITY:
ACTIVELY REVIEWED
AND INVESTED IN

The argument for payroll’s importance has largely been won at senior level. Is this stated strategic importance reflected in how payroll is governed, resourced, and prepared?



MANAGED IN-HOUSE:
PAYROLL HANDLED INTERNALLY,
WITH SOME SUPPORT

Most organisations are running payroll largely in-house, retaining control and visibility. The challenges, risks, and opportunities are therefore experienced directly.



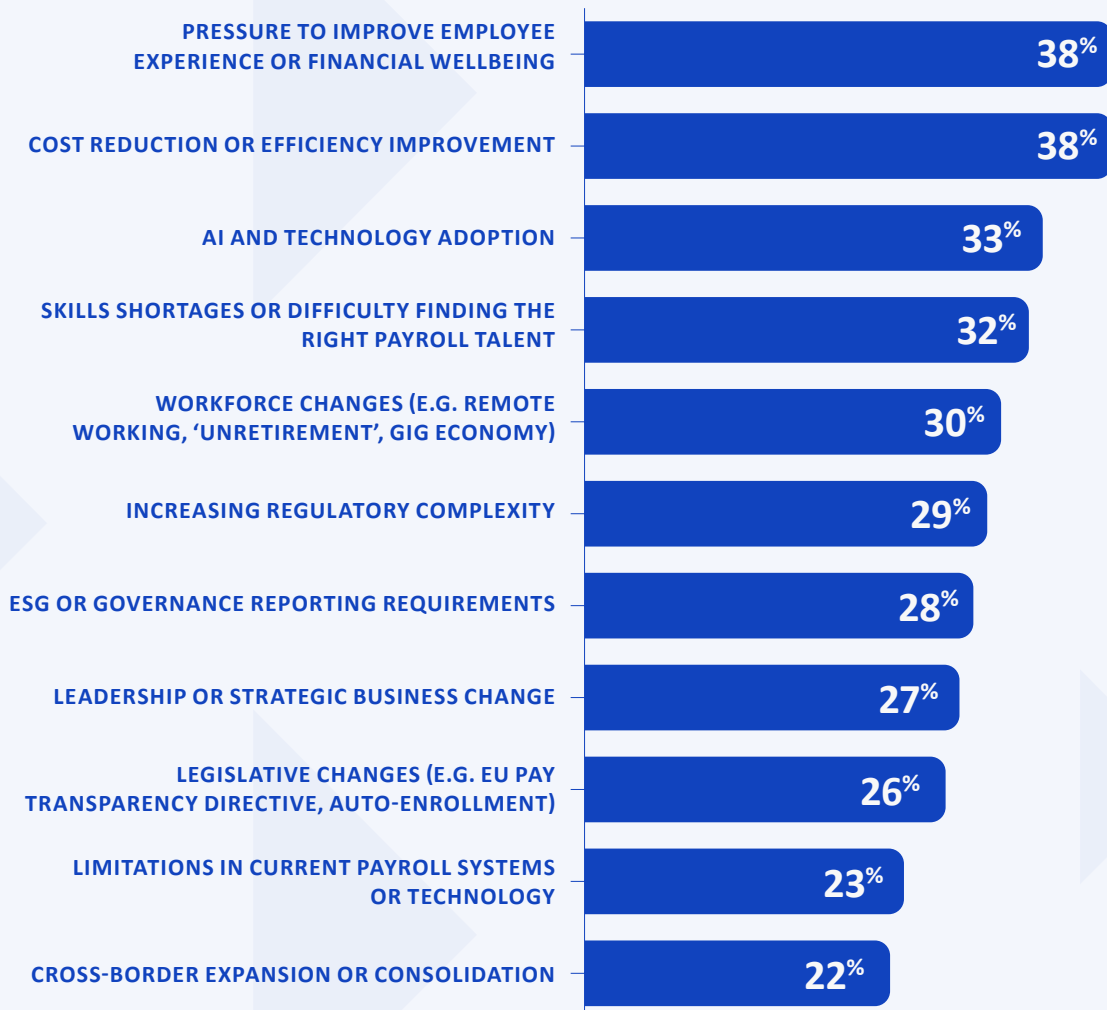
SITS WITHIN FINANCE:
PAYROLL’S HOME FOR MOST
ORGANISATIONS, ONLY ONE IN
FIVE HAVE A STANDALONE
PAYROLL FUNCTION

With payroll anchored in Finance for the majority, questions of governance, reporting, and technology integration are likely to fall within Finance’s remit. This shapes how payroll decisions are made, who is accountable for them, and how payroll connects to ESG and strategic reporting priorities.

Shaping Investment Decisions

Payroll investment decisions are shaped by a combination of commercial, regulatory, technological, and human factors

Factors influencing how organisations manage or invests in payroll



E1 WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING FACTORS ARE INFLUENCING HOW YOUR ORGANISATION CURRENTLY MANAGES OR INVESTS IN PAYROLL?

Drivers of Change

The most likely trigger for changing a payroll provider is not a crisis, it is an opportunity.

Organisations are not just waiting for something to go wrong before they consider change. They are also open to switching when a compelling alternative presents itself, when they grow, or when their digital infrastructure demands it.

“Waiting for problems to show up is the worst way to handle payroll changes.”

CFO, TRANSPORT & STORAGE, IRELAND

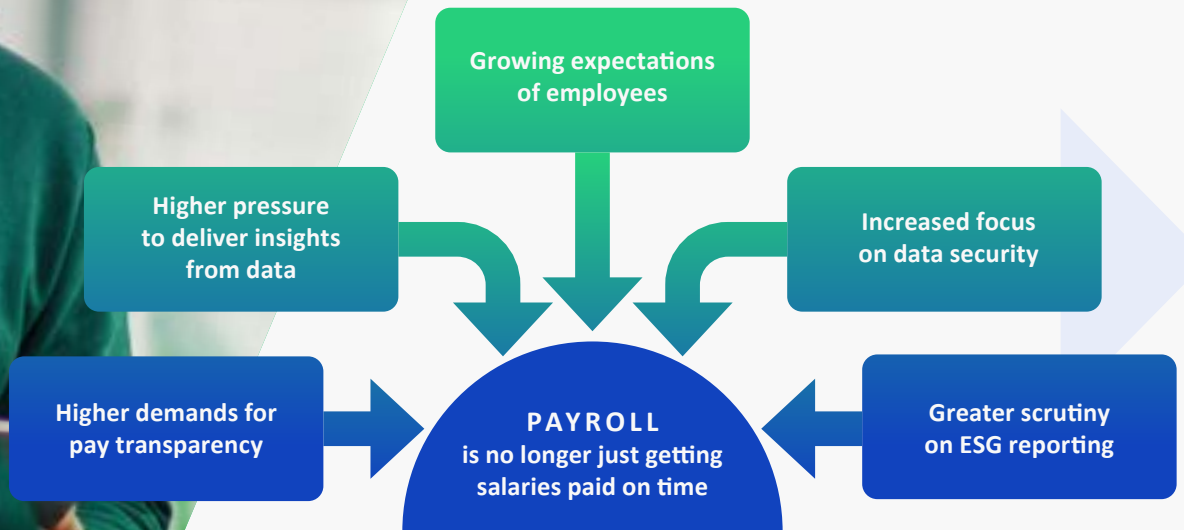
2 IN 3

REVIEWED THEIR PAYROLL SETUPS IN THE LAST 3 YEARS

For the majority of organisations, payroll is actively managed and periodically tested, not simply inherited and left to run.

What would trigger organisations to change their payroll provider or setup





Payroll Under Pressure

Regulation, cross-border complexity, talent shortages and employee expectations; the external pressures converging on payroll functions.

Senior leaders clearly see the need to treat payroll as a strategic priority, a governance obligation, and a meaningful contributor to employee wellbeing, YET the investment, talent, and infrastructure needed to deliver on that ambition are not always keeping pace - the environment is working against them. The regulatory landscape is expanding, cross-border operations amplify compliance challenges, and the specialist talent needed to manage it all is often hardest to find and retain.

“There are so many aspects coming in from all angles, it’s a world of complications. To make the system easy to understand and use, and to be able to explain where the various details are coming from, you need to have an overview and also an eye for the detail, it’s very important.”

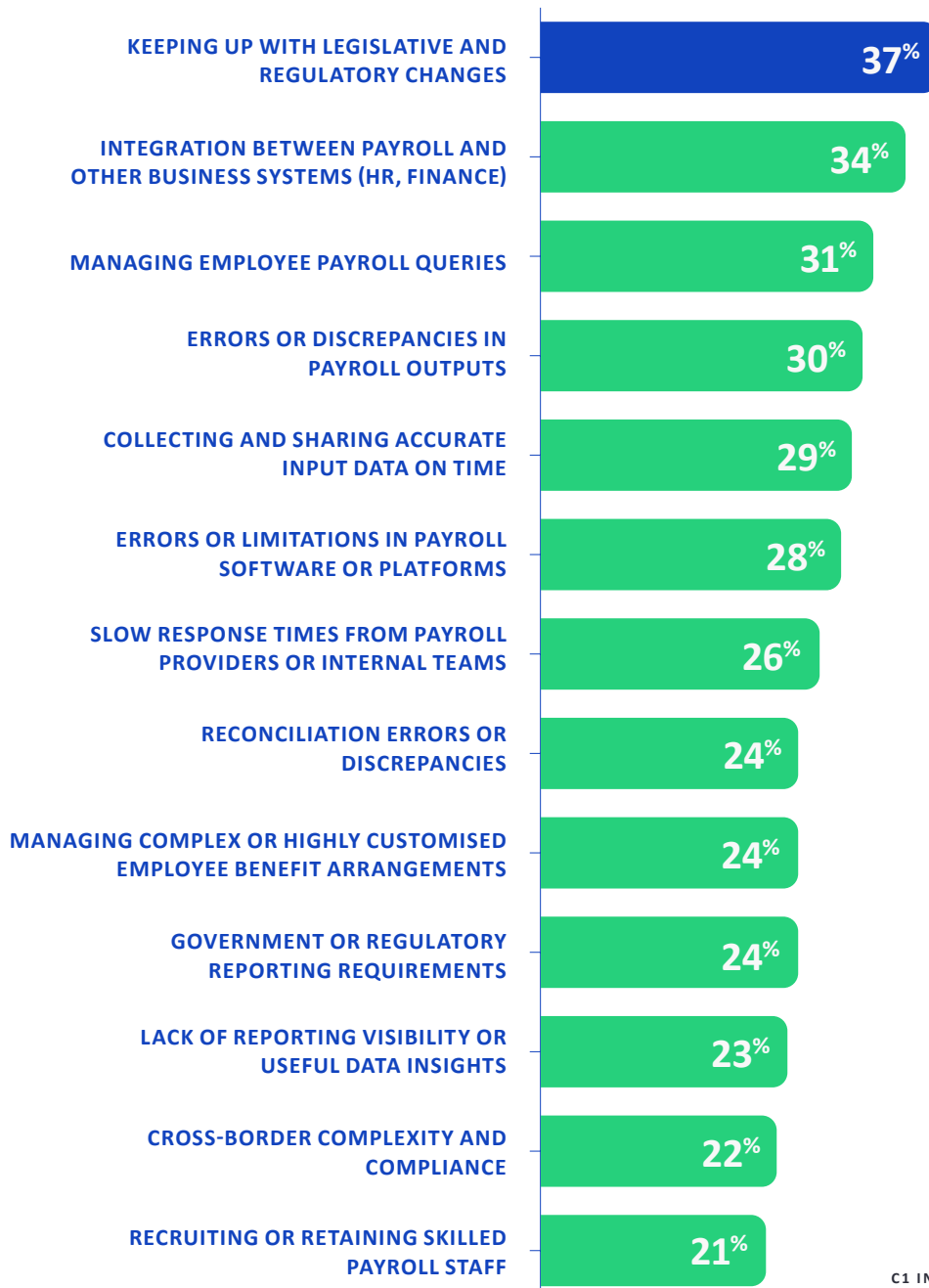
ATLE HELLE, FINANCE DIRECTOR, BIOBAG INTERNATIONAL, NORWAY

Legislative and regulatory changes top the list of challenges

The top-three challenges are systemic, rather than incidental.

They reflect the structural pressure payroll is under as regulatory environments grow more complex, data demands increase, and organisations expect their payroll function to connect seamlessly with the rest of the business.

Significant challenges with payroll in the past 12 months



C1 IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES WITH PAYROLL IN YOUR ORGANISATION?

Regulatory Red Tape

Preparedness is patchy

The EU Pay Transparency Directive, cross-border working compliance, and ESG reporting requirements all have payroll implications that most organisations acknowledge but many are not yet fully prepared for.

Just 22% say their organisation is fully prepared for ESG governance data submission.

“One of the biggest things we learned was that the pace of regulatory change does not slow down, so neither can the team.”

SENIOR LEADERSHIP, FINANCE, FINLAND

Preparedness for regulatory changes or requirements % Fully Prepared



Cross Border Complexity

For most organisations, payroll is a multi-jurisdiction challenge, involving different regulatory requirements, data formats, and compliance obligations.



Most helpful for managing cross-border payroll

For cross-border payroll, organisations point critical needs:



What have organisations learned

“Payroll must be tightly integrated with compliance and HR, supported by automation and clear audit trails. Staying ahead of regulatory changes and training staff has been critical. My advice is to invest in robust systems early and maintain strong governance to reduce risk and build employee trust.”

VP, FINANCE, UK

“Manual data entry is the enemy of compliance. In a manufacturing environment with complex shift patterns and varying pay rates, relying on spreadsheets leads to ‘compliance debt’ and costly errors.”

CEO, MANUFACTURING, UK

“One-size-fits-all approaches are ineffective since local regulations vary greatly, particularly in multi-country payroll.”

CFO, FINANCE, IRELAND

A8 DOES YOUR ORGANISATION MANAGE PAYROLL ACROSS MORE THAN ONE COUNTRY?

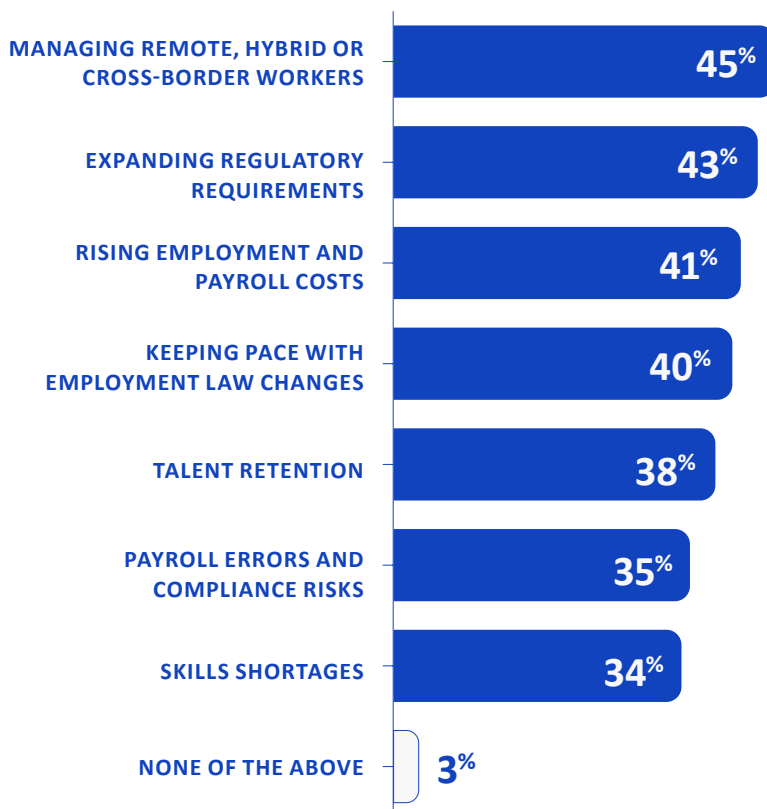
I1 WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ARE MOST HELPFUL TO YOUR ORGANISATION IN MANAGING CROSS-BORDER PAYROLL?

H2 WHAT IS THE BIGGEST LESSON YOUR ORGANISATION HAS LEARNED ABOUT MANAGING PAYROLL IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPLEX REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT? WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHERS?

Personnel Problems

Managing remote, hybrid, and cross-border workers tops the list of workforce concerns.

Workforce-related issues of greatest concern to organisations



New ways of working add regulatory complexity with every employee who crosses a border or works from home in a different jurisdiction.

“People are living in one country and working in two other countries. That’s just the norm. It’s how to cover that, how to make sure that you are compliant, and all the legislations are covered within all three countries.”

ERIK BEKKÅSEN, DIRECTOR OF HR & PAYROLL SERVICES, NORDIC, AZETS

“The tax systems for personal payroll are not unified. So that is an added complexity for the finance manager working across countries. It’s time consuming to understand the differences. So you need to have trusted reports, you need to have trusted people and reliability throughout the value chain.”

ATLE HELLE, FINANCE DIRECTOR, BIOBAG INTERNATIONAL, NORWAY

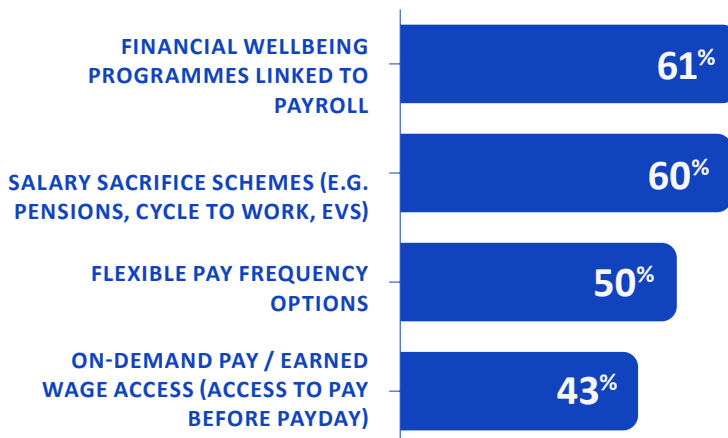
Matching Employee Expectations

Payroll is being asked to do more for employees, not just paying them correctly and on time, but actively supporting their financial health through the structure and timing of pay itself.



SAY PAYROLL HAS A MEANINGFUL ROLE TO PLAY IN SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE FINANCIAL WELLBEING — AND ORGANISATIONS ARE ACTING ON IT

Pay practices currently offered or being actively considered



“It’s not just the power of the data, but it’s also the comfort of a company knowing that they’re compliant, in control, and being kept safe.”

STEPHEN ABBOTTS, DIRECTOR OF PAYROLL SERVICES, UK, AZETS

But Payroll isn’t always ready to support the options being offered to staff:



SAY THEIR PAYROLL FUNCTION IS NOT EQUIPPED TO MEET THE WORKFORCE OBLIGATIONS HEADING THEIR WAY



SAY THEIR PAYROLL FUNCTION IS NOT READY FOR THE GROWING WAVE OF OLDER WORKERS RETURNING TO WORK / RETIRING IN STAGES

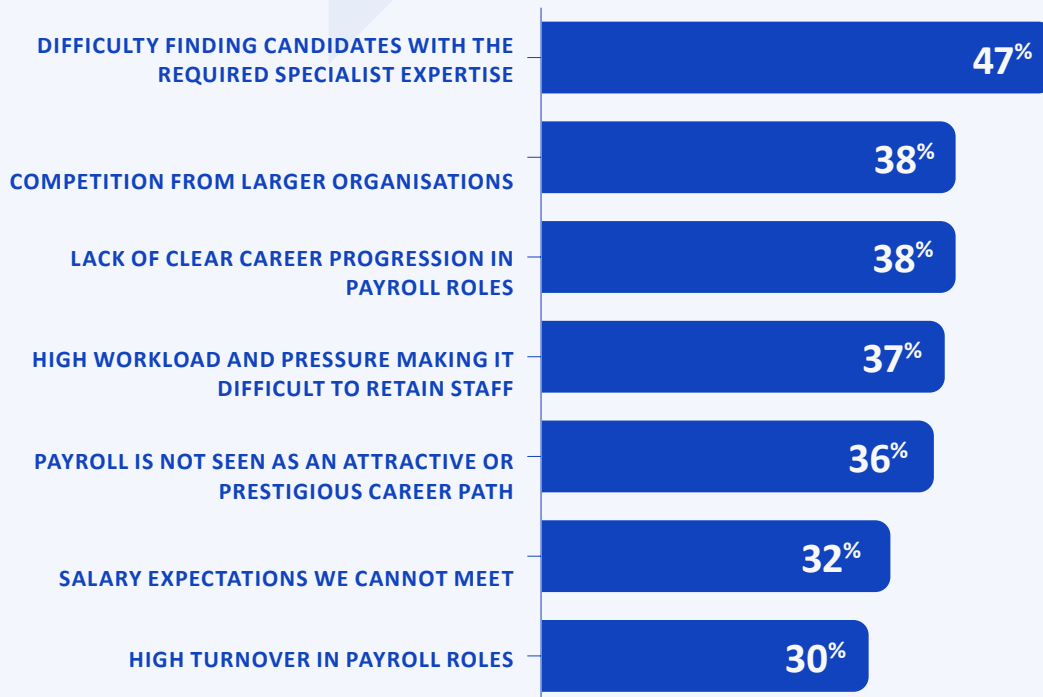
Talent Shortages

The workforce payroll must serve is growing more complex, while the talent pool available to manage that complexity is shrinking

Just 5% of organisations say they have a stable payroll team with no significant recruitment or retention barriers.

Difficulty finding candidates with the required specialist expertise tops the list.

Main barriers to recruiting or retaining payroll talent



Payroll Talent Paradox

Demanding experts but budgeting for beginners: yet payroll is a highly skilled job

“There’s a myth around payroll that it’s just pushing a button, anybody can do it. But genuinely, it takes years to train somebody, it’s undervalued. To be a payroll person in today’s world, it’s not just about knowledge, but empathy plays a very big part of it. Despite all the work that’s being done to raise the profile of payroll, I think we still need to do more work getting people to understand that payroll is a professional career.”

STEPHEN ABBOTTS, DIRECTOR OF PAYROLL SERVICES, UK, AZETS

“I think the problem is that payroll is usually given to a junior member of staff who doesn’t have enough knowledge to know or appreciate the impact. Payroll is very specific and requires a specific level of knowledge to understand the requirements, but also the gravity of consequences, because there are lots of regulations. Often people who are given payroll to process do not have specific training.”

MAGDA HOWLETT, FINANCE & OPERATIONS DIRECTOR, MONEY READY

“There are no big education offerings for payroll in the Nordics, there’s a gap of payroll expertise. One is the client-facing part, keeping the dialogue with the client and the partnership. Then you have the technical part, to understand what an integration is and how it works. Then you have the expertise on payroll, regulation, etc.”

ERIK BEKKÅSEN, DIRECTOR OF HR & PAYROLL SERVICES, NORDIC, AZETS

The Future of Payroll:

Shifting from back-office function to business asset

Data, automation, and the untapped potential of payroll intelligence. Payroll is one of the most data-rich functions in any organisation, yet most of that intelligence goes unused. The organisations pulling ahead are those treating payroll as a source of strategic insight: workforce cost modelling, ESG reporting, turnover risk, pay equity analysis.

Leaders suggest that more can still be done to harness the true power of payroll and the data it captures

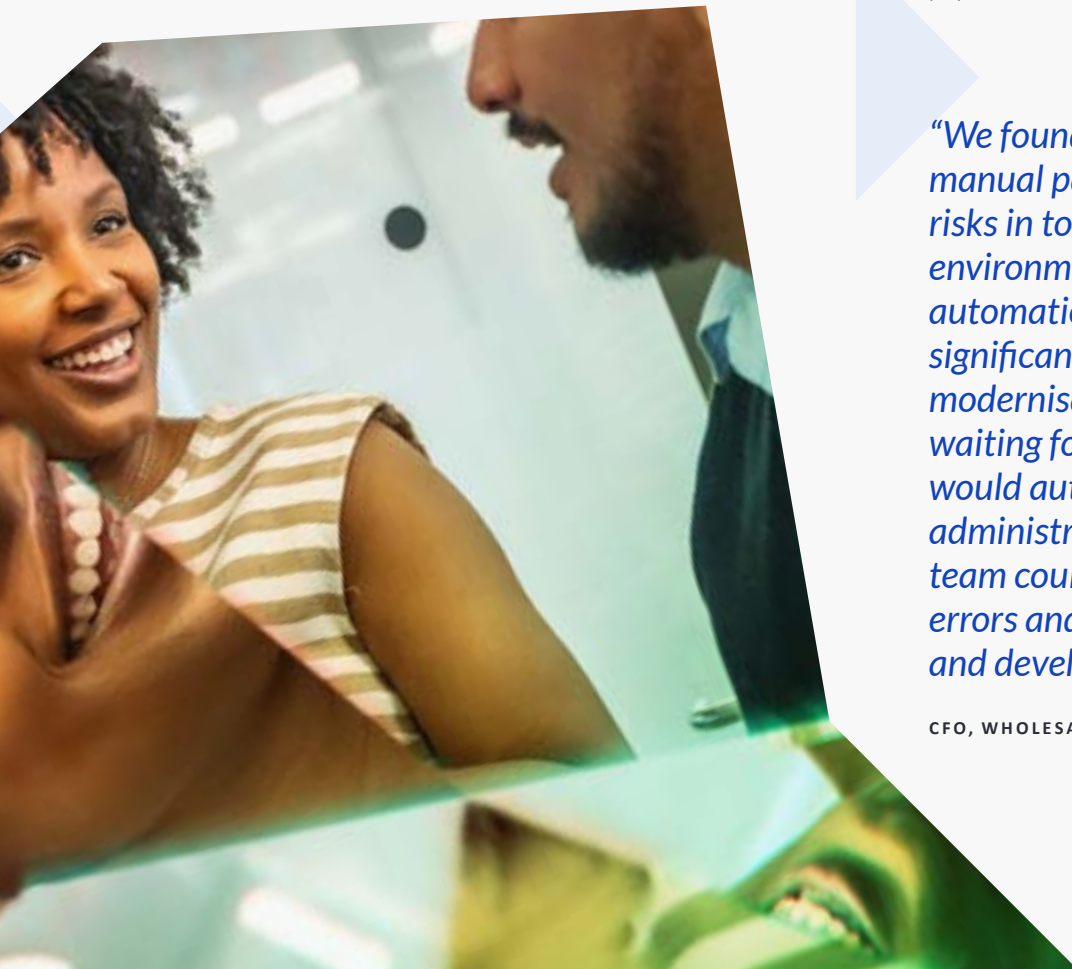
AI and automation are the enablers making that shift possible, and adoption is moving faster than many anticipated. When asked what one thing they would change about payroll, most leaders say: automate more.

AI is accelerating the shift, but human oversight isn't going anywhere

Eight in ten organisations are already using or adopting automation in payroll, yet human oversight remains a firm expectation. The real opportunity is using automation to free up the expertise that turns payroll data into business intelligence.

“We found that too much reliance on manual payroll increases operational risks in today’s complex regulatory environment. After implementing automation tools, accuracy improved significantly. My advice is to invest in modernisation gradually rather than waiting for a major disruption. I would automate payroll administration tasks more so the team could spend less time correcting errors and focus more on planning and developing operations.”

CFO, WHOLESALE, FINLAND



Harnessing The Power Of Data

Raising the profile of payroll

“I don’t think businesses have ever truly seen the value of payroll, or understood that there’s money to be saved by harnessing that data. It’s seen as a cost. I’d like people to look at the value within the data, to look at what they can get out of payroll. For the right reason, not because something’s gone wrong. Do you understand your payroll? Do you understand the compliance and complexity and risk around that spend that you are putting in payroll? That is what businesses need to be thinking of.”

STEPHEN ABBOTTS, DIRECTOR OF PAYROLL SERVICES, UK, AZETS

“I believe payroll should have a higher profile. There should be a recurring point on a board-level discussion where it says “where we are at, what’s going to happen next, how does that impact the organisation?” Not just from a financial, but also from a reputational point of view.”

MAGDA HOWLETT, FINANCE & OPERATIONS DIRECTOR, MONEY READY

“I’m a supporter of raising the importance of payroll and the payroll specialists. In all my years in finance, I’ve realised that payroll is kind of a hidden function, falling between HR and accounting. In the past, people working on payroll haven’t been recognised as the good quality workers that they actually are and so important for the business. It’s difficult to get good people working on payroll. People need to be made aware, and realise that there’s a lot of work going into this service - it shouldn’t be underrated.”

ATLE HELLE, FINANCE DIRECTOR, BIOBAG INTERNATIONAL, NORWAY

Mind The Gap:

Aspiration vs reality

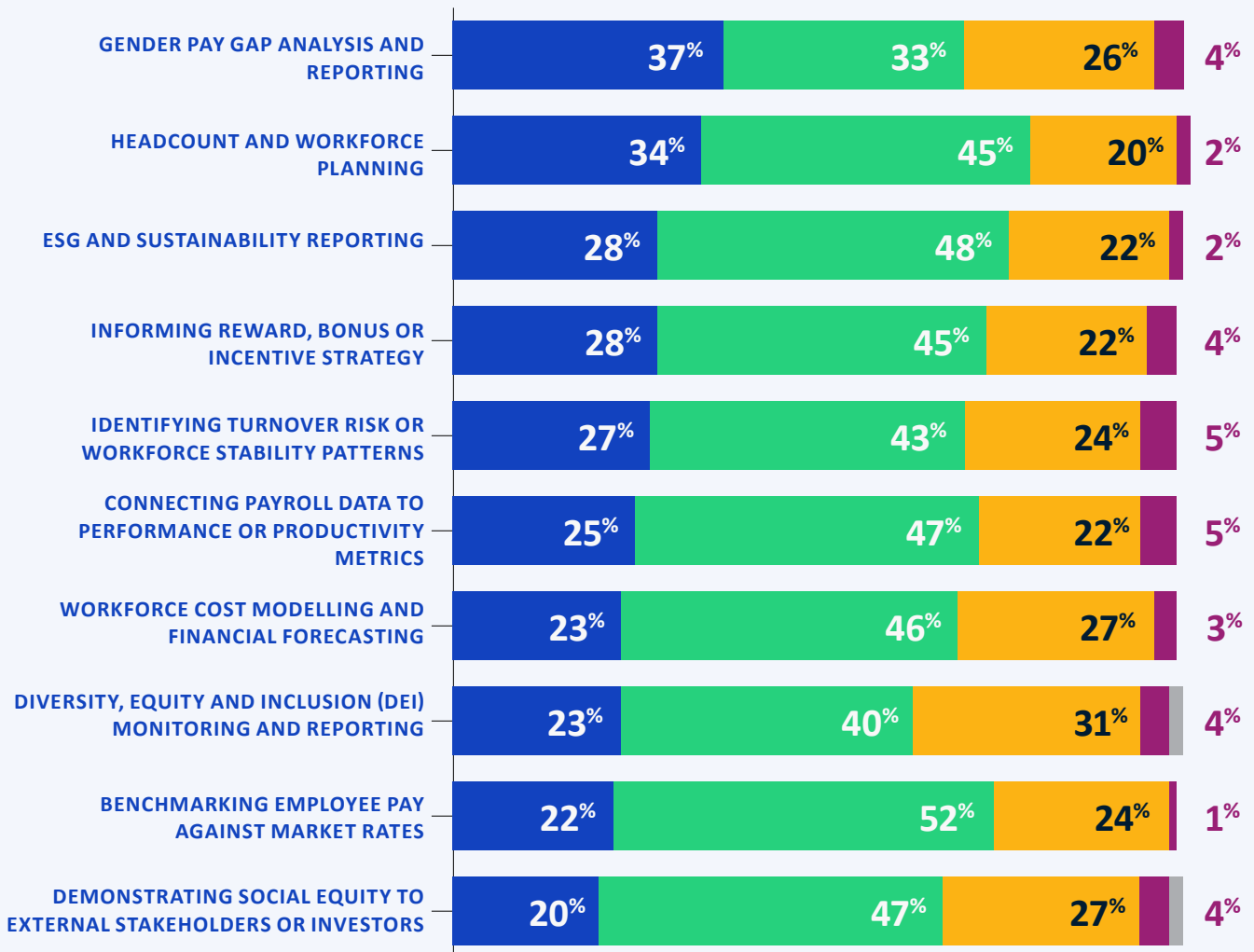
Payroll data is being used strategically, but the potential is still outpacing the practice



“The introduction of better tools and software has gradually lifted payroll up to be a more and more automated service. You have the self-service in terms of delivering your personal expenses and travel, entertainment, all those have really improved over the last few years and have really increased productivity.”

ATLE HELLE, FINANCE DIRECTOR, BIOBAG INTERNATIONAL, NORWAY

Use payroll data beyond processing pay



J1 BEYOND PROCESSING PAY, TO WHAT EXTENT DOES YOUR ORGANISATION USE PAYROLL DATA FOR ANY OF THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES?

Peer To Peer

Business leaders share their top tips for managing the payroll of the future

“The biggest lesson has been the importance of staying proactive with compliance and keeping payroll systems updated as regulations change. Regular training, clear processes and strong communication between HR, finance and payroll teams are essential. My advice to others would be to invest in reliable payroll technology, carry out regular audits and always have contingency plans in place to reduce errors and ensure employees are paid correctly and on time.”

VP OF FINANCE, INSURANCE, UK

“Payroll is no longer just an administrative task; it has evolved into a compliance function requiring real-time visibility, automation, and cross-border regulatory awareness. My advice: invest early in scalable payroll systems and local compliance expertise, because fixing payroll mistakes later is far more costly than preventing them upfront.”

SENIOR LEADERSHIP, MANUFACTURING, IRELAND

“Compliance should never reside with only one person, as single points of failure can harm the business.”

HEAD OF PAYROLL, MANUFACTURING, UK

“Investing in integrated payroll and finance systems is essential since disjointed tools greatly raise the risk of inconsistent reporting and audit exposure.”

CFO, FINANCE, UK

“Running the old and the new systems in conjunction with one another helps prevent the issues that affect individuals.”

CFO, FINANCE, SWEDEN

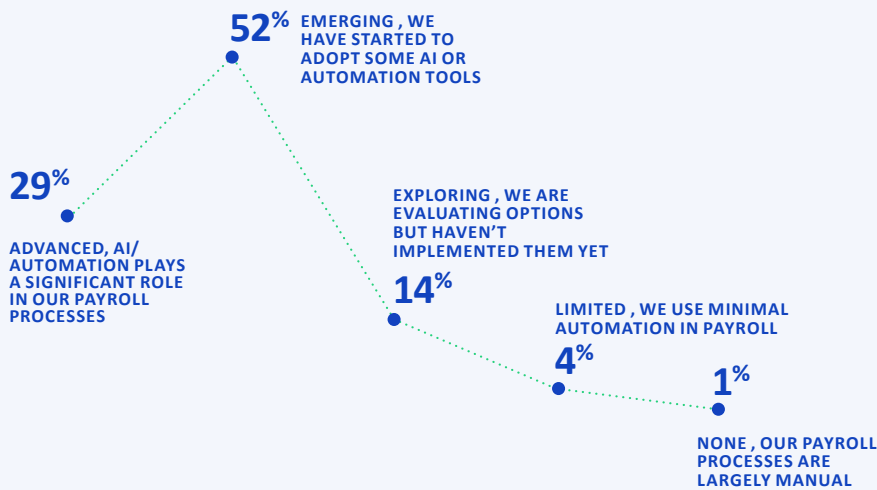
AI Has Arrived In Payroll, But People Stay Hands-On

AI's role in payroll is growing but the expectation of human oversight remains strong.

For payroll providers, demonstrating that audit trail and reliability record is the clearest path to earning greater autonomy for AI-driven processing.

Current use of AI or automation in payroll

Eight in ten are actively using or adopting AI and automation in payroll

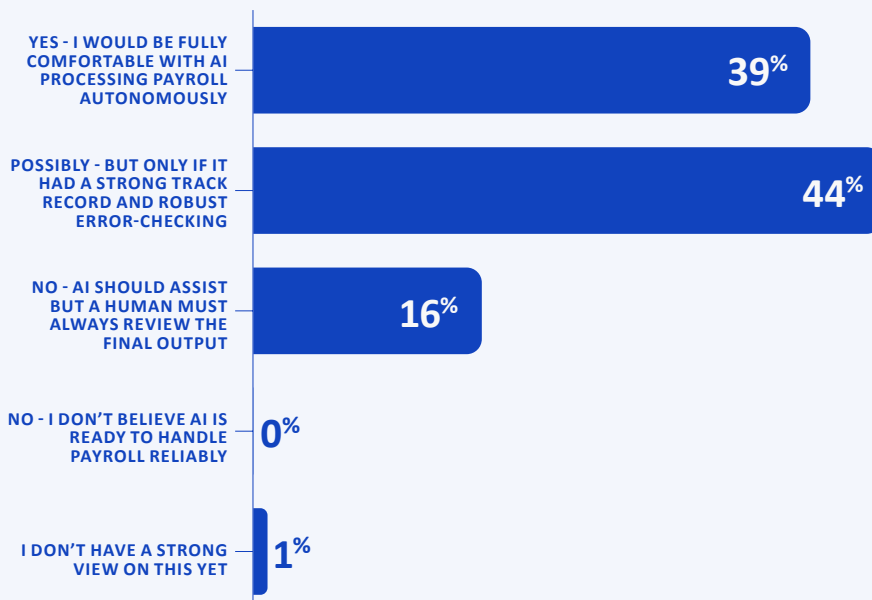


“Where AI can support is in receiving the input, validating the input, seeing any deviations or suspect data and connecting back to the source. AI will probably use less time for that process and it will increase the quality of the data. But in the end, we do still need human interaction within payroll to make sure everything is correct.”

ERIK BEKKÅSEN, DIRECTOR OF HR & PAYROLL SERVICES, NORDIC, AZETS

Trust in AI to process organisation's payroll without any human oversight

Only 39% would be fully comfortable with AI processing payroll autonomously



“There's a lot of potential in automating and using AI in payroll services, to do things faster and process data quicker, but we still need to do the checks and the follow-up. The human factor is important and it's not easy to replace that.”

ATLE HELLE, FINANCE DIRECTOR, BIOBAG INTERNATIONAL, NORWAY

“AI will be embraced in terms of what it can do and it absolutely will have a role. But it just enhances the service. It allows you to do things you haven't thought of doing.”

STEPHEN ABBOTTS, DIRECTOR OF PAYROLL SERVICES, UK, AZETS

F2 HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANISATION'S CURRENT USE OF AI OR AUTOMATION IN PAYROLL?

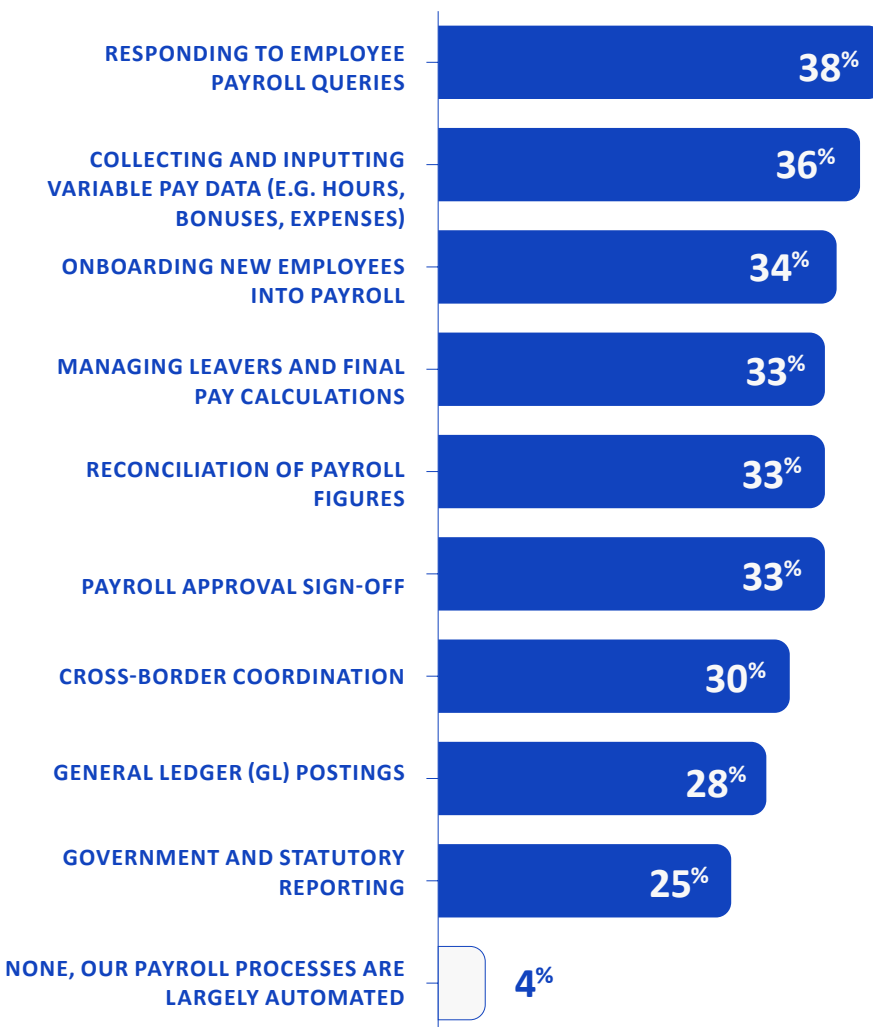
F3 WOULD YOU TRUST AI TO PROCESS YOUR ORGANISATION'S PAYROLL WITHOUT ANY HUMAN OVERSIGHT OR REVIEW?

Payroll Still Needs Manual Processing

Human interactions and queries top the list

Despite high levels of AI and automation adoption, manual processes remain widespread across the payroll function.

Payroll processes still handled manually (without automation)



“Automate as much as you can, because that’s going to give you the clarity around ensuring accuracy, and then we can focus much more on the compliance, the control and the added value.”

STEPHEN ABBOTTS, DIRECTOR OF PAYROLL SERVICES, UK, AZETS

“Having the AI agents as a kind of side function in payroll systems is something that I really recommend, but it has to be trustworthy, it has to be reliable.”

ATLE HELLE, FINANCE DIRECTOR, BIOBAG INTERNATIONAL, NORWAY

F1 WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PAYROLL PROCESSES IN YOUR ORGANISATION ARE STILL HANDLED MANUALLY (WITHOUT AUTOMATION)?

Payroll Providers As A Strategic Partner Not Just Transactional.

Organisations that outsource payroll tell us that regulatory compliance confidence, reliability, and responsiveness outrank price as evaluation criteria.

Nearly all leaders say there are value-add services that would justify paying a premium – such as seamless system integration, hands-on support during periods of change, real time reporting, proactive regulatory advice, and a dedicated expert.

The payroll provider market is moving from processing service to advisory partnership, and organisations are ready for it.

“More and more clients want to have that kind of interaction with their BPO partner, where you have monthly service review calls, in an informal style and share transparent feedback. We as a provider can put on the table our experience with the client’s input or processes, any improvement initiatives, etc. That’s where the partnership really works best.”

ERIK BEKKÅSEN, DIRECTOR OF HR & PAYROLL SERVICES, NORDIC, AZETS



When Choosing A Payroll Provider, Compliance Beats Price, And Insight Matters As Much As Accuracy

Payroll buyers are not primarily price-driven.

They are looking for a partner who provides compliance confidence, technical integration, and meaningful insight, and they are prepared to pay for it.

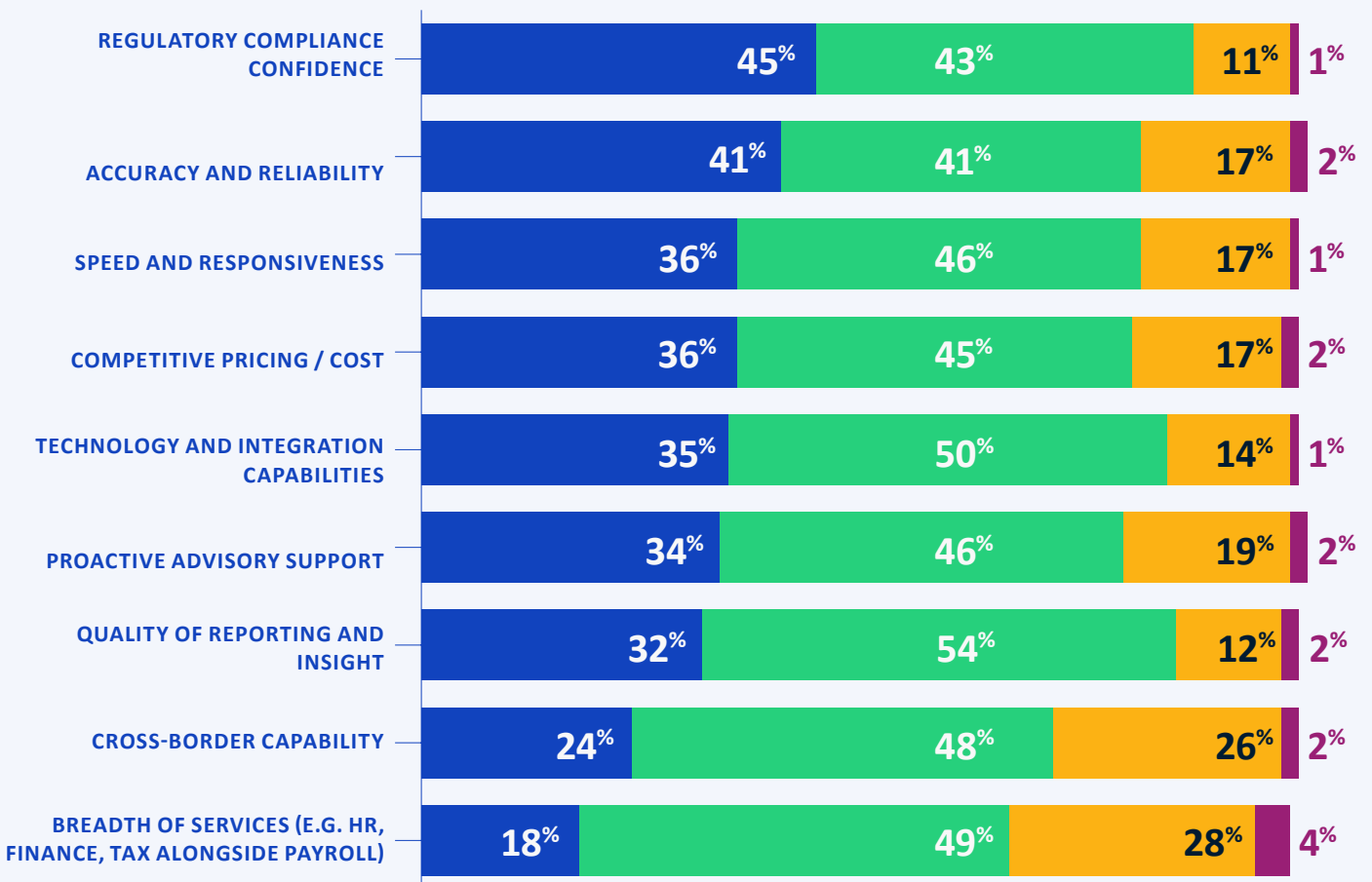
“Reliable payroll providers simplify compliance management and improve payroll efficiency during the organisation’s growth phases.”

COO, HEALTHCARE, FINLAND

“Reliable payroll vendors provide valuable compliance expertise and reduce exposure to international regulatory risks.”

CFO, FINANCE, FINLAND

Important factors for evaluating payroll providers



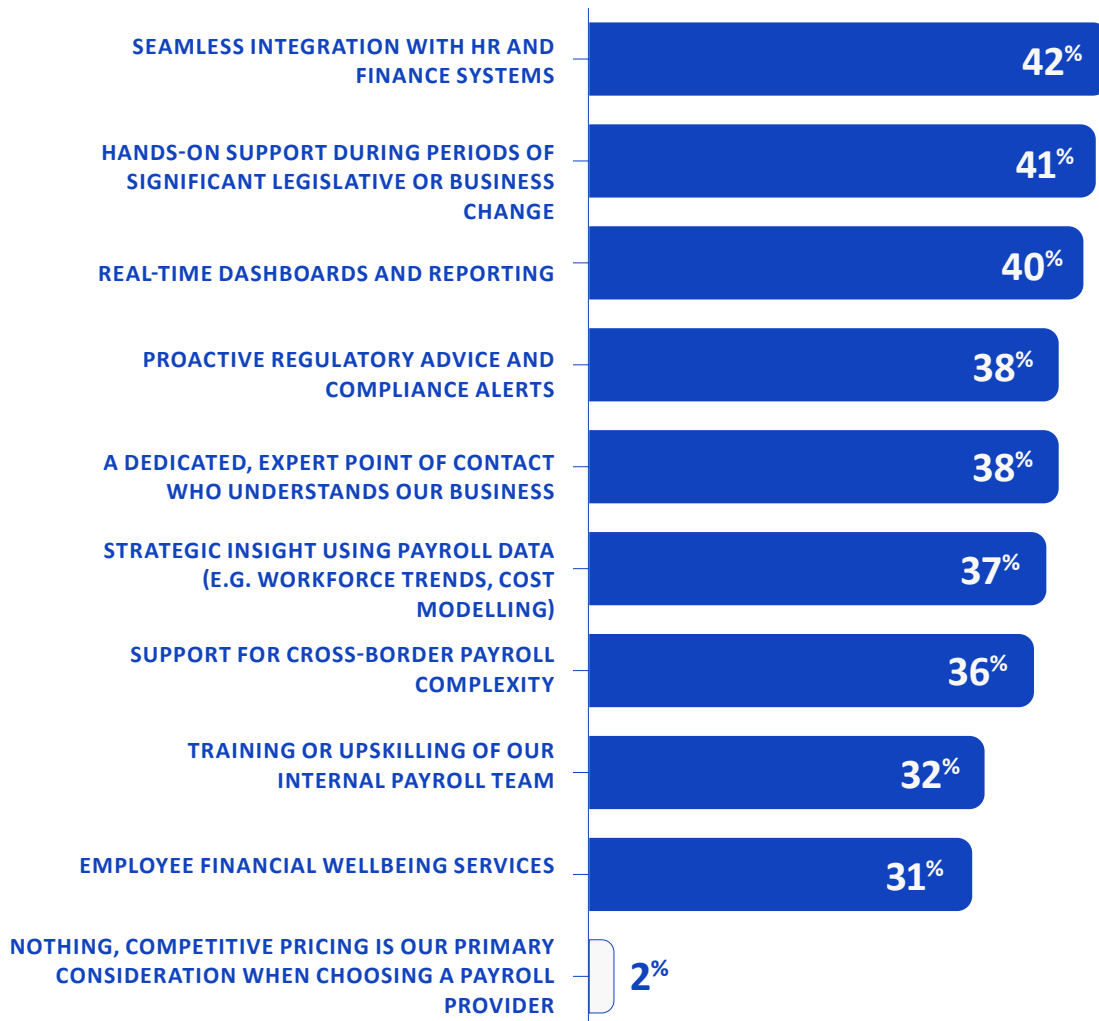
L1 WHEN EVALUATING PAYROLL PROVIDERS, HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING FACTORS?

Top Five Drivers To Pay A Premium For A Payroll Provider

The winning combination covers both technical capability and human expertise

Organisations are looking for providers who can deliver seamless integration and strategic insight, advisory support, compliance guidance, and a dedicated contact. This is what separates a strategic payroll partner from a processing service.

What additional value, beyond accurate and timely payroll, would justify paying a premium to a payroll provider?



7 Principles For Payroll Success

1.

Elevate Payroll to a Strategic Boardroom Asset

Payroll is moving away from the back-office obligation that only gets attention when something goes wrong. By recognizing payroll as a core component of business and proactively investing, you can leverage your payroll data for workforce planning, cost modelling, and ESG and governance reporting.

2.

Harness Automation Responsibly

As you adopt AI and automation to handle processing, the goal should be efficiency without sacrificing accountability – human oversight should evolve, not disappear. Pair smart technology with robust error-checking, and demand seamless system integration across your HR and Finance tools.

3.

Transform Payroll into a Driver of Employee Wellbeing

Build trust and engagement by evolving your payroll to actively support employee financial health through pay practices like flexible schedules, on-demand access, or integrated 'wealthcare' benefits.

4.

Master Regulatory & Cross-Border Complexity

Success for most organisations managing payroll across multiple countries requires a delicate balance: implementing shared systems and data formats for global coherence, while anchoring operations in trusted local expertise.

5.

Partner for Advisory, Not Just Processing

Seek a strategic partner who offers compliance confidence, real-time reporting, proactive regulatory advice, and dedicated expert support during periods of change. Finding and retaining specialist talent is a barrier for most organisations, so leaning on an advisory partnership ensures you have the expertise required to navigate complexity without the recruitment burden.

6.

Invest in Payroll as a Professional Discipline

The organisations that will build the most resilient payroll functions are those that invest in the professional development of their payroll teams, create visible career pathways, and use automation to lighten the load.

7.

Review Your Payroll Setup Before Crisis Forces You To

Treat payroll as a function worth periodically interrogating. With the pace of regulatory and technological change accelerating, does your current payroll setup reflect where your organisation is going, or only where it has been?



Methodology & Demographics

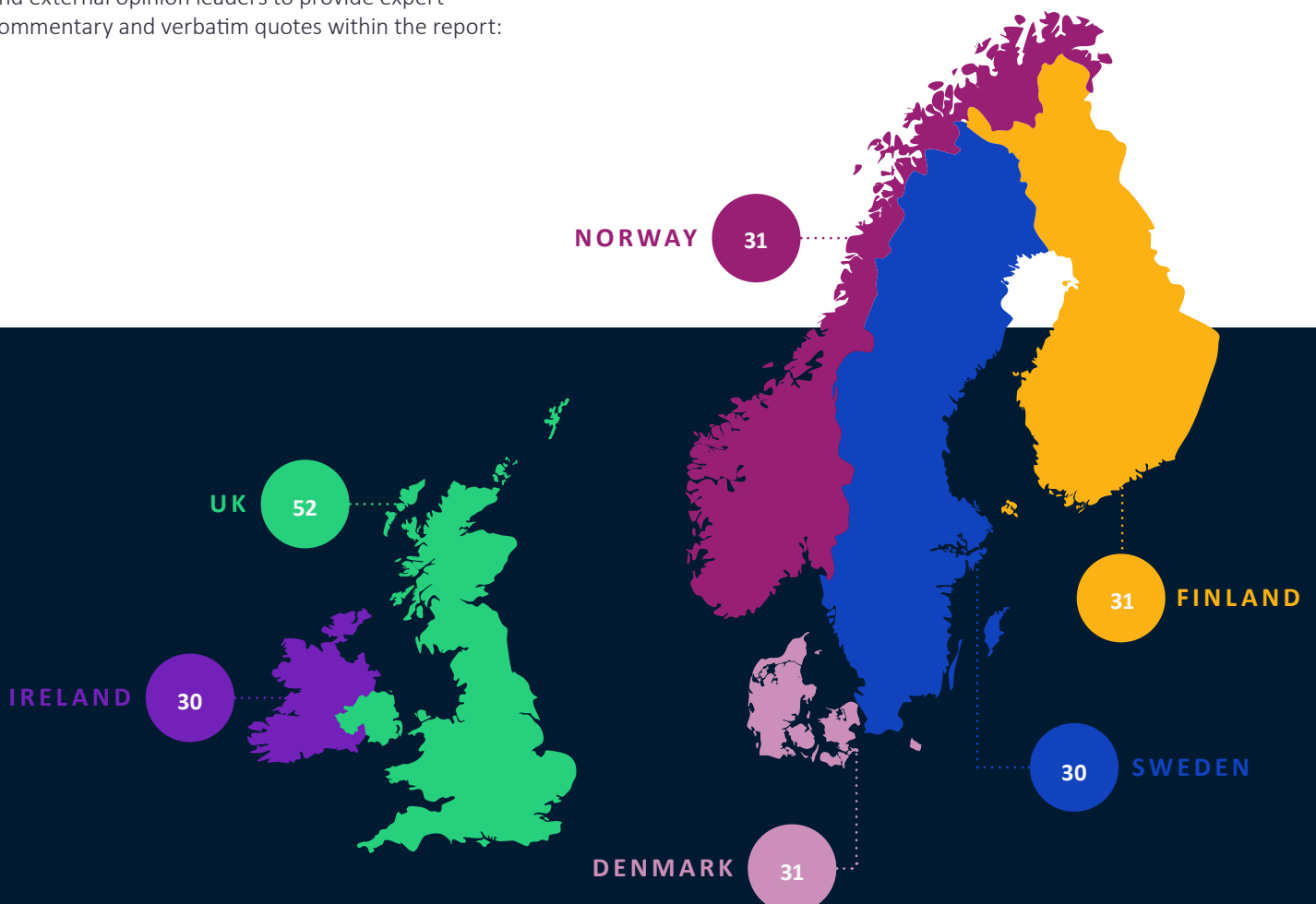
Who we spoke to

Fresh Perspectives: Payroll is an independent research study commissioned by Azets and conducted by Reputation Leaders.

All data is based on a survey of 205 C-suite executives, senior leaders and payroll decision-makers in the UK, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, conducted in May 2026. Respondents represent organisations of significant scale: 66% employ more than 500 people, and 75% have annual turnover above €50 million.

Reputation Leaders conducted four in-depth qualitative interviews with Azets executives and external opinion leaders to provide expert commentary and verbatim quotes within the report:

- Erik Bekkåsen, Director of HR & Payroll Services, Nordic, Azets
- Stephen Abbotts, Director Of Payroll Services, UK, Azet
- Magda Howlett, Finance & Operations Director, Money Ready
- Atle Helle, Finance Director, Biobag International, Norway



Move Forward With Confidence

| Take a fresh look at payroll



ERIK BEKKÅSEN IS
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“The payroll landscape is at a turning point. Meeting the challenges of tomorrow will require innovation, transparency, and a proactive approach to both technology and culture. For businesses ready to embrace these changes, the future of payroll presents an opportunity to build trust, foster engagement, and lead with purpose.”

Contact Us

| Ready to discuss
your business needs?

Contact Azets today for expert advice and support on payroll. Our role is to ensure businesses are ready for what's coming, whether that's regulatory changes, new reporting requirements, or evolving employee expectations. By offering tailored solutions and clear guidance, payroll providers can help organisations navigate this complex and dynamic landscape.

www.azets.com/en/contact-us

The logo features a stylized letter 'A' in a vibrant green color. The 'A' is composed of three main strokes: a top horizontal bar, a left vertical bar, and a right vertical bar that curves downwards and to the left, meeting the top bar. A white horizontal bar is positioned across the middle of the 'A', creating a negative space effect.

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