

Reskilling for career change

Summary

People are likely to need to switch careers and jobs more often during longer careers, and the pandemic may have brought some of this need forward. Learning and Work Institute's (L&W) [Fast Forward](#) report showed that actual rates of career switching have fallen since the financial crisis. However, our [Adult Participation in Learning Survey](#) shows that many people are interested in changing careers – so how do we square this circle? People tell us they'd find learning or training helpful, as well as financial support and careers advice. Our [New Futures](#) pilots will put this to the test in five local areas over the next two years.

Context

The Covid-19 pandemic had a profound effect on the labour market, with a sharp fall in employment and millions of workers being furloughed¹. The economy is now recovering with job vacancies at record levels. However, employment remains 600,000 lower than before the pandemic and we've seen a rise in the number of people who are economically inactive². In addition, the latest data indicate that the cost of living is rising faster than wages. The economic impacts of the pandemic haven't been equally felt, with differences by geography and sector, and in many respects have exacerbated previous inequalities³.

Long-term trends were reshaping the labour market even before the pandemic, including: an ageing population and extended working lives; advances in technology and automation; Brexit leading to changes in some sectors and supply chains; and the transition to a net zero economy. These trends will continue to affect the jobs available and the skills needed.

The changes in the labour market and the impact of the pandemic require workers to upskill and reskill to ensure their skills remain current and that they can switch jobs or careers when needed. While moving jobs or sectors can improve rates of pay for individuals, workers who leave jobs involuntarily can take longer to find a new job and, when they do, they are more likely to find a job that pays less than the one they left⁴. Given the sectoral nature of the recession created by the pandemic, it's critical that workers are supported to reskill for career change to ensure they can take advantage of the opportunities ahead.

¹ Learning and Work Institute (October 2021) [Fast Forward? Where next for the labour market](#)

² Learning and Work Institute [Labour Market Analysis](#), January 2022

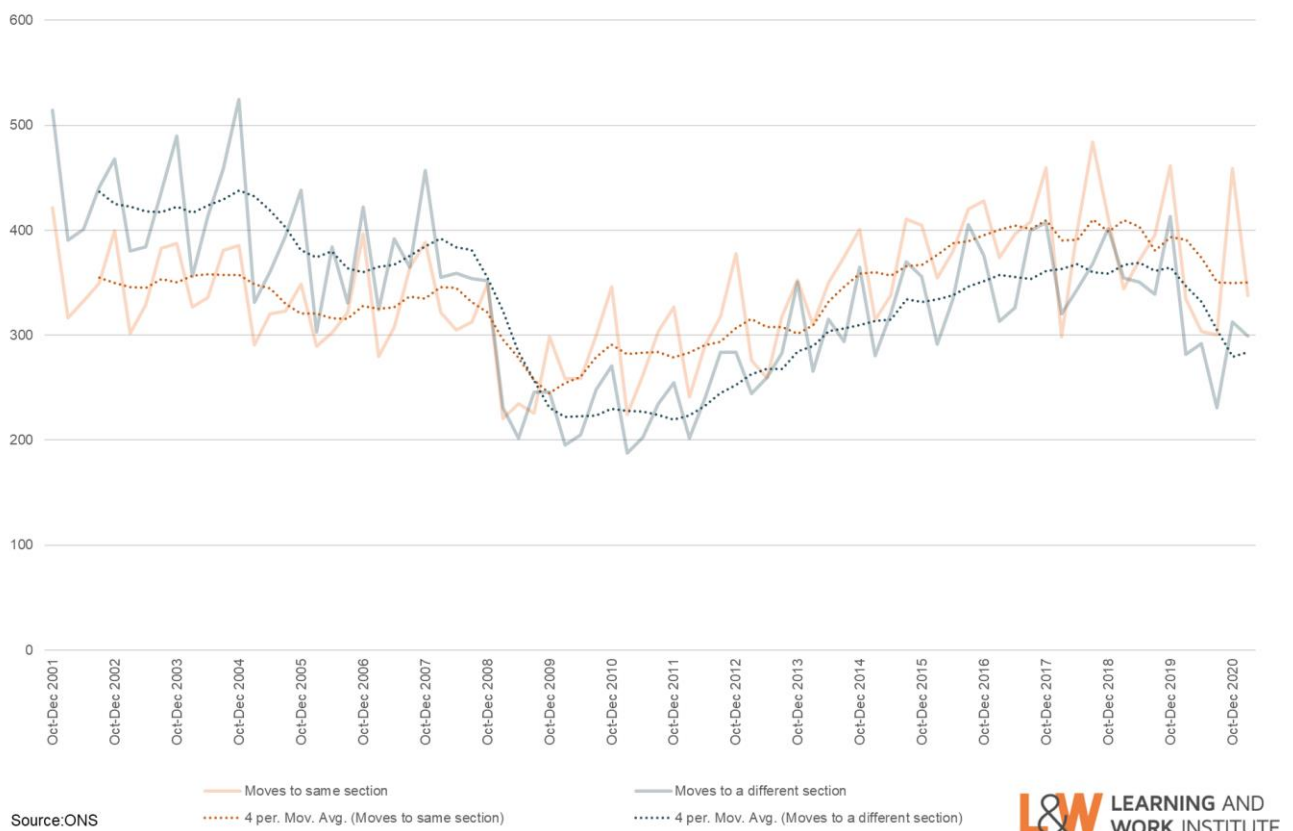
³ Learning and Work Institute (March 2021) [One year on: The labour market impacts of coronavirus and priorities for the year ahead](#)

⁴ Resolution Foundation and Centre for Economic Performance (2022) [Changing jobs? Change in the UK labour market and the role of worker mobility](#)

Changing sectors – what does the data tell us?

L&W's Fast Forward report found that the number of people switching careers has actually fallen since the global financial crisis⁵. The analysis shows that the number of 'sector switchers' fell after the last recession and only partially recovered before falling again during the pandemic. The number of people moving to another job in the same sector fell following the last recession but subsequently recovered back to its pre-recession level of around 350-400,000 per quarter and only fell slightly during the pandemic. By contrast, the number of people switching sectors remained about 20% below prerecession levels and fell again during the pandemic.

Figure 1: Job to job moves by sector each quarter, thousands



However, our surveys did find interest from employees in switching jobs, particularly those working in sectors such as hospitality (42%) and retail (36%).

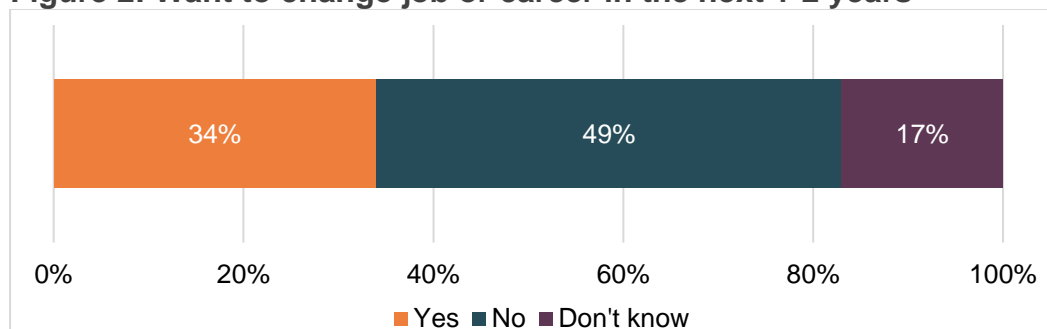
⁵ Learning and Work Institute (October 2021) [Fast Forward? Where next for the labour market](#)

Changing job or career – what do people want?

Learning and Work Institute's 2021 Adult Participation in Learning Survey⁶ asked adults about their plans to change job or career in the near future and the support they would need to do so.

Around a third (34 per cent) of adults want to change their job or career within the next two years, while a substantial minority (17 per cent) are unsure whether they want to change their job or career, suggesting that there is some level of uncertainty among workers regarding their immediate career plans.

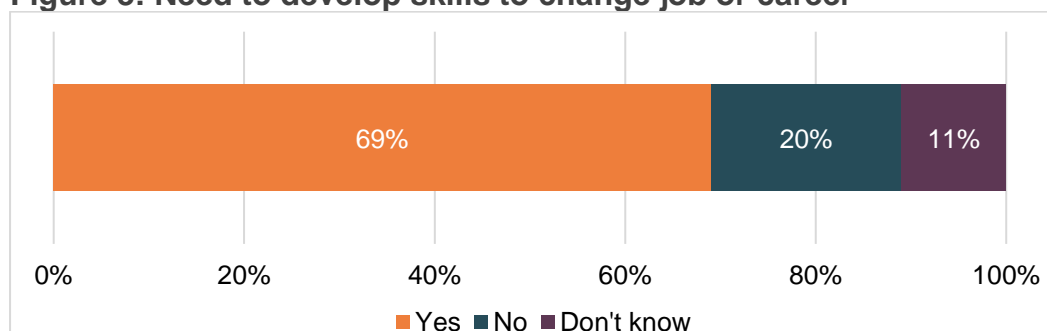
Figure 2: Want to change job or career in the next 1-2 years



Base: respondents who are employed, self-employed, in full-time higher education, or unemployed and seeking work. Weighted base = 2,964; unweighted base = 3,084.

Almost seven in 10 (69 per cent) adults saying they want to change job or career believe that they would need to develop their skills in order to do so (Figure 2).

Figure 3: Need to develop skills to change job or career



Respondents who are looking to change job or career in the next 1-2 years. Weighted base = 994; unweighted base = 1,048.

Respondents who have experienced a change to their work status since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic are more than twice as likely to want to change job or career compared to those who have not experienced any changes (44 per cent compared to 20 per cent). This includes around half of those who have already changed the

⁶ Learning and Work Institute (2021) [Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2021](#). The Adult Participation in Learning survey has been running since 1996 and is the longest running and frequently occurring survey of its kind in the UK. It adopts a broad definition of learning, including formal, non-formal and informal learning, and captures data from a representative sample of 5,000 adults.

type of work that they do/their career (50 per cent) and those who have started a new job (49 per cent).

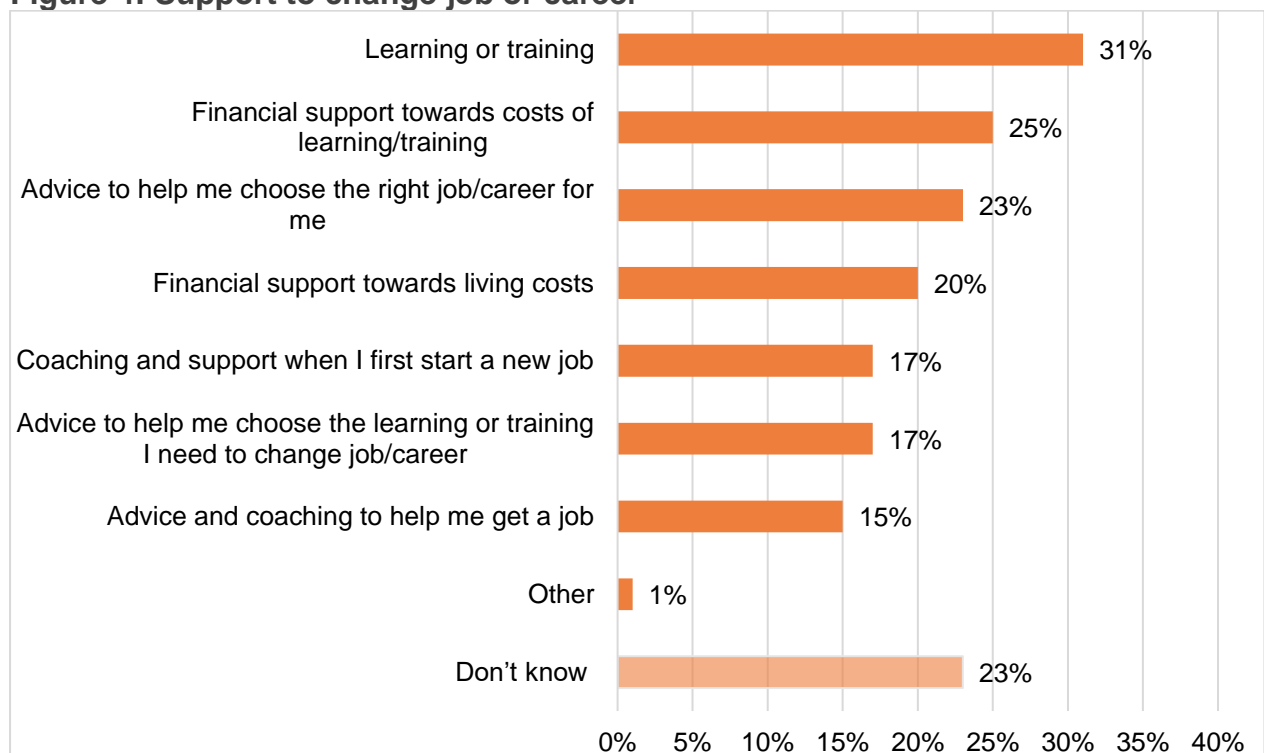
Adults who have experienced a change to their work status are also more likely to say that they would need to develop their skills in order to change job or career (73 per cent, compared to 58 per cent of those who did not experience a change to their work status). This highlights an opportunity to engage people whose employment has been affected by the pandemic in learning and support them to change job/career.

Supporting adults to change job or career

When asked about the support that they would find helpful if they were looking to change job or career, adults most commonly indicated that they would find learning or training helpful (31 per cent), followed by financial support. A quarter (25 per cent) said that they would find financial support towards the costs of learning or training helpful and one in five (20 per cent) respondents want financial support towards living costs. Respondents also indicated that they would find advice useful – to help choose the right job or career for them (23 per cent), to choose the right learning or training for them (17 per cent) and/or to help them get a new job (15 per cent). Seventeen per cent of respondents would value coaching and support when they first start a new job.

Almost a quarter (23 per cent) of adults didn't know what support they would find helpful to if they wanted to change job or career.

Figure 4: Support to change job or career



Base: respondents who are employed, self-employed, in full-time higher education, or unemployed and seeking work. Weighted base = 3,295; unweighted base = 3,419.

Note: Respondents could give up to three answers

New Futures

We need an ambitious support offer for people wanting to retrain, providing joined up employment and skills support. To find out what works, Learning and Work Institute is developing and delivering pilots to support workers who need to reskill as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, funded by the Covid-19 Support Fund.

We are working with partners to develop five place-based pilots – in Edinburgh, Belfast, Swansea, Tees Valley and Devon – to build locally-led solutions to tackle retraining challenges. The pilots will be tailored to reflect the needs of local labour markets and the skills of local populations, and will all include:

- **Tailored and targeted outreach activity** to engage people disproportionately affected by the pandemic.
- **High quality careers advice and coaching**, based on local labour market information and future skills needs.
- **Flexible models of training delivery** to fit with adults' wider work and family commitments.
- **Building the capacity of local voluntary and community sector organisations** to provide sustainable career change support throughout and beyond the lifetime of this project.

Alongside the pilots, we will evaluate the interventions to help build the evidence base on supporting reskilling for career change to inform future policy and practice.

The pilots will launch in Spring 2022 and run until September 2023.

If you would like more information or to work with us, please contact newfutures@learningandwork.org.uk