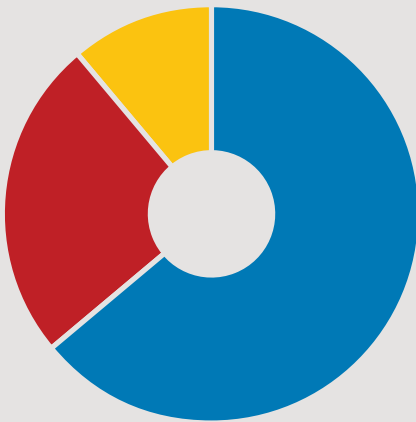


The long and the short of it

In your opinion, is the average period of employment increasing or decreasing?



64%: Decreasing

25%: Increasing

11%: I have no opinion on the matter

In light of Chancellor George Osborne having recently changed the UK's rules on unfair dismissal, so that employees must work in a job for two years before they can claim it, this month's *Quick question* looks at issues surrounding tenure.

Opinion was quite evenly split on whether the Chancellor has made the right move as regards unfair dismissal. 43% of respondents felt that this was the right thing to do and would help employers, while 48% of respondents felt the move eroded employees' rights. One respondent suggested that 'unfortunately it will benefit the 'bad' employer, who is either careless or ignorant of the law', going on to consider 'it will help to save money as it will be easier to let employees go'. Another expressed concern that 'we will just return to a riskier environment for employees until they have two years' service'. Despite such concern, one respondent argued that the change 'will assist small businesses, which tend to avoid employing people in case they make a mistake. It will also help get people back into employment in the short-term'.

It is interesting to consider this change within the context of modern working patterns and career development. The so-called 'job for life' is becoming increasingly rare; more often than not we are told that

career progression will be more rapid and perhaps more highly remunerated if we are to move organisation when seeking promotion. One respondent asserted that 'an employee with service with a number of employers is more valuable than one with a long period of service with only one employer.' Another explained that 'my limited career experience has required me to change jobs for career progression', also pointing out that 'in the current market, frequent redundancies are also a factor to consider.' Indeed, the influence of the current economic climate was on the minds of several respondents. Some suggested it may encourage individuals to stay in post longer than they may have otherwise done, as 'people are probably afraid to take the risk of moving and would prefer to stay where they are'.

We asked how long respondents held their first secretarial position for, with an even spread of responses: 20% held their first position for 0–1 years, 29% for 1–2 years, 33% for 3–6 years and only 18% for more than six years. Even more telling, 64% of respondents said they felt the average period of employment was decreasing and only 25% felt it was increasing. Furthermore, 50% of respondents capped the time they expected to remain in their current position at three years, while 26% felt they would be in post for between three and five years and only 24% thought that would stay where they are for more than five years. For most respondents (42%) the longest time period that they had spent in one position was between four and eight years, 23% had held one position for between eight to 12 years, 22% had held a position for more than 12 years, while for 13% the longest time they had stayed in one role was between 0 and four years.



Conducted in association with Company Secretarial Services

If you're a company secretary of a leading UK business, and you'd like to take part in or comment on future surveys, e-mail Caroline Evans at cje@blt.co.uk.