

# ONS labour response: Why Government intervention is needed now

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Responding to the latest data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) which shows that vacancies reached new highs of 1,300,000 between March and May 2022 while the unemployment rate continued to fall, the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) has warned that the UK's economic stability is at risk unless swift action is taken.

Tania Bowers, Global Public Policy Director at APSCo commented:

“The rise in job numbers and decline in available talent has been a topic of conversation with limited action for far too long. There can be no doubt that there simply aren't enough people to fill the skills gaps in the country and economic forecasts are already beginning to be hit as a result of this. Despite the Government's commitment to Levelling Up the UK's skills, action has been limited – even the much-awaited Employment Bill has seemingly been shelved for now.”

“The skills agenda has fallen down the priority list for the Government but this needs to be rectified with some urgency. It may not be a simple problem to address but there's a lot that can be implemented to alleviate some of the pressure on the labour market at this critical time. Ensuring global trade discussions maximise the opportunity to agree appropriate services trade deals to allow the UK to efficiently access international labour markets is one such issue that, as of yet, hasn't been adequately resolved. Agreeing standards as part of the Data Reform Bill to build frictionless, cyber-secure transfer of data between countries will also speed up global hiring processes that are currently hindering our access to global resources.”

“The demand for talent is showing no sign of slowing. Indeed, APSCo's own Recruitment Trends research report showed an uptick in vacancies in May. The data, provided by the global leader in software for the staffing industry, Bullhorn, revealed that contractor jobs spiked 34% between May 2021 and May 2022, while permanent roles increased 25% year-on-year. Month-on-month comparisons also showed an uptick in job numbers between April and May 2022, up 16% for permanent and 19% for contract roles. The UK's post-Brexit, Covid recovery will continue to be in jeopardy if these numbers continue on this trajectory unless change happens swiftly.”

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