

# Latest ONS labour statistics highlight concerning need for stability in the UK

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Responding to the latest labour market statistics from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Tania Bowers, Global Public Policy Director at the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) comments:

“The rise in the UK employment rate noted in Q1 of this year when compared to Q4 of 2022 does suggest that skills shortages are still rife across the country. The net flow out of economic inactivity paints a similar picture, with the record highs reported in the latest statistics being driven by people moving from ‘inactive’ into employment. This demonstrates an increased reliance on those out of work to fill resourcing needs that is to be expected in a skills short market.

“We can’t ignore the fact that vacancies are down, falling for the tenth consecutive quarter between February to April 2023 – a figure that our own Recruitment Trends data also highlighted, with permanent vacancies across the country falling 16% and contract down 13% between March and April this year.

“The decline does show that hiring across the country is contracting which is to be expected following the many months of record highs we had last year. However, with the current economic uncertainty that we’re facing and the ONS data suggesting skills shortages remain prevalent, the strength of the country’s labour market is seemingly at risk. The hiring market tends to act as a bellwether for the broader economy, making the latest figures a concern.

“The high number of days lost due to labour disputes only serves to further highlight the difficulties in the country’s labour market, particularly for sectors such as education and healthcare which are already facing skills shortages. Stability is urgently needed if the UK is to continue to avoid slipping into a recession.”

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## About APSCo

The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) is the trade association for the professional recruitment market. APSCo Global comprises APSCo Asia, APSCo Australia, APSCo Deutschland and APSCo United Kingdom as well as APSCo OutSource, the trade body for the RPO and MSP sectors.

Find out more: [www.apsco.org](http://www.apsco.org)