

The hidden costs of the ESG U-turn: employers risking creating a disconnect with talent

Submitted by: BlueSky Public Relations Ltd

Monday, 31 March 2025

- 47% of workers care more about their employer's environmental impact than they did three years ago.
- 60% state organisations need to do more on ESG.
- 56% believe that most employers only talk about ESG 'for show'.
- 71% of the 35-54 age group indicate organisations have a responsibility to reduce their environmental impact.

As more businesses push their Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) responsibilities to the bottom of the corporate agenda, specialist recruitment firm, Robert Half, has warned of the potentially dangerous impact on workforce relationships.

In the latest iteration of its Jobs Confidence Index (JCI)

(<https://www.roberthalf.com/gb/en/insights/jobs-confidence-index>) – an economic confidence tracker produced in partnership with the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) – Robert Half found that employees still place significant value on a firm's ESG commitment.

Almost half (47%) of workers revealed that they care more about their employer's environmental impact than they did three years ago. A further 60% stated that organisations need to do more on ESG, while 67% said that businesses have a responsibility to reduce their environmental impact.

Despite this, 56% believe that most employers only talk about ESG 'for show', which signals talent pools can be sensitive to green washing and the ESG U-turns some companies make.

A surprising multi-generational issue

According to Robert Half's latest statistics, this isn't just an issue for Gen Z workers, who have historically placed a greater focus on choosing a company based on its commitment to ESG. Robert Half's research also reveals that the majority (61%) of those aged 35-54 believe that organisations need to do more on ESG issues, with 71% of this age group indicating that organisations have a responsibility to reduce their environmental impact, higher than those aged 18-34 (63%).

Matt Weston, Senior Managing Director UK & Ireland at Robert Half, commented:

“It appears that ESG has slid down the corporate agenda for some companies, as attentions focus on other macroeconomic issues. However, as our data clearly demonstrates, employees still place a significant value on businesses that can balance profit with purpose. With workers already stating that they feel leaders are paying ‘lip service’ to ESG and more firms reducing their efforts, there is a risk of a disconnect between workers and employers. A weakened employer brand will only result in a challenge for talent acquisition and management strategies in the longer term in a skills short job market.

“What is certainly of interest is that this is no longer an issue that matters more to the younger generations, which has historically been the case. The fact that all employees in the workforce are increasingly placing a level of importance on a firm’s ESG commitment demonstrates that employers really are at risk of damaging their ability to both attract and retain core staff. This also underscores the need for businesses to honestly and transparently communicate their commitment to workplace culture, ethical leadership, and sustainability.”

Ends

Press contact

Vickie Collinge

vickie@bluesky-pr.com

01582 790705

About the research

The Jobs Confidence Index

In partnership with the Centre for Economics and Business Research, the quarterly Robert Half Jobs Confidence Index is the most authoritative report on the key socio-economic factors influencing confidence in the UK labour market.

The Jobs Confidence Index (JCI) is made up of four equally weighted pillars, each measuring a factor which contributes to jobs confidence. These are:

1. Job security confidence
2. Pay confidence
3. Job search and progression confidence
4. Macroeconomic confidence

The JCI takes a positive or negative number, where numbers above zero signal that jobs confidence is higher than the long-term average, and numbers below zero show it is lower. The JCI can take any number, but it usually stands between -30 and 30, showing that confidence is close to a normal level when it is within this range.

2025 UK Salary Guide

The Robert Half 2025 UK Salary Guide provides information on starting salaries, hiring trends, popular jobs, and other market insights. Non-salary data referenced in the Salary Guide is based on an online survey developed by Robert Half and conducted by an independent research firm. During June and July 2024 Robert Half commissioned research amongst 1,500 respondents using an online data collection methodology. The respondents represent 500 hiring managers and 1,000 workers in finance and accounting, IT and technology, administrative and office support, marketing and creative, and the financial services industry. Respondents are drawn from a sample of SMEs to large private, publicly listed and public sector organisations across the UK.

About Robert Half

Robert Half (NYSE: RHI) is the world's first and largest specialised talent solutions and business consulting firm, connecting highly skilled job seekers with rewarding opportunities at great companies. We offer contract talent and permanent placement solutions in the fields of finance and accounting, technology, marketing and creative, legal, and administrative and customer support, and we also provide executive search services. Robert Half is the parent company of Protiviti, a global consulting firm that delivers internal audit, risk, business and technology consulting solutions. In the past 12 months, Robert Half, including Protiviti, has been named one of the Fortune® Most Admired Companies™ and 100 Best Companies to Work For and a Forbes Best Employer for Diversity. Explore talent solutions, research and insights at www.roberthalf.com/gb/en.