

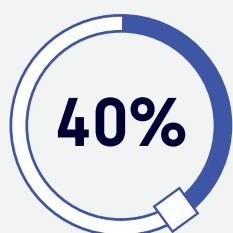
BUILDING A STRATEGIC PAYROLL TEAM BY CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP



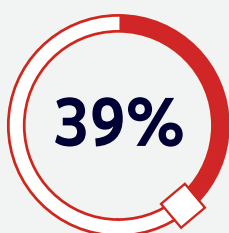
Payroll has always required specialist knowledge, and the industry isn't immune to the skills shortage currently affecting many industries. In **The potential of payroll in 2026 global payroll survey**, nearly seven in 10 organisations say their payroll service has been affected by a lack of skilled staff, and 64% continue to struggle with external hiring.

In order to make the payroll function more resilient, payroll leaders are adapting to this new reality and rethinking how to deliver payroll with fewer people.

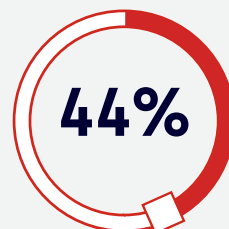
For those organisations reviewing how to deliver payroll with fewer people, they are exploring



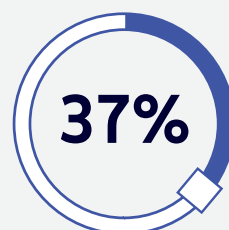
Automating
manual processes



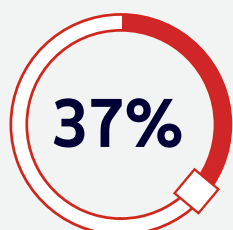
Standardising processes
across geographies



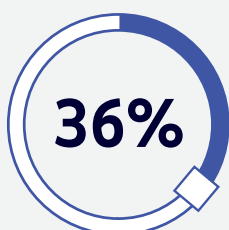
AI technology



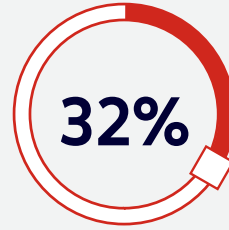
Robotic process
automation



Outsourcing some
payroll processes



Creating shared
service operations



Centralising
operations

From administrators to strategists

Payroll teams are being asked to do more than ever before. They're expected to manage complex multi-country compliance, navigate evolving data privacy regulations, interpret workforce analytics, and contribute to strategic planning. On top of all that, pay still needs to be accurate and on time.

The expectations that payroll leaders have of their teams reflects this dynamic: Professionals are shifting away from manual, transactional work and toward higher-value activities. Payroll leaders are looking to redesigning their teams' roles, rebalancing workloads, and investing in tools to maximise efficiency.

Perhaps the clearest signal of payroll's strategic evolution is its shifting role within an organisation. In 2026, 43% of payroll teams believe they operate as a standalone function. They're no longer nested inside finance, but instead operate as visible entities in their own right. This independence brings with it greater accountability and greater strategic influence.

What do payroll leaders want their teams to spend more or less time on?	More time
Data analysis	44%
Business process improvements	44%
Data collection	43%
Data privacy/security	43%
Strategic planning	43%
Integrating emerging technologies	43%

Doing more with less, and doing it smarter

Faced with skills shortages and rising expectations, payroll leaders are rethinking their operational models. Seventy-two percent are actively exploring how to deliver payroll with fewer people, and 44% of those leaders are looking to AI and automation to make that possible.

Leaders also want teams to spend more time on data analysis (44%), business process improvement (44%), strategic planning (43%), and integrating new technologies (43%). This shift in priorities underscores the way payroll leaders are setting their teams up to be more resilient while stepping into strategic roles.

Building for the future

The organisations that will come out ahead are those treating skills development as a strategic investment rather than an HR afterthought. That means committing to reskilling existing teams and building more strategic capabilities instead of simply trying to increase team sizes.

Payroll's skills shortage is challenging, but it is also an opportunity. The teams that use this moment to redesign how they work, who they hire, and what tools they use will emerge with payroll functions that offer strategic value and are more resilient to future developments.

DISCOVER MORE

Learn how organisations are closing the payroll skills gap and building future-ready teams in the full report: [The potential of payroll in 2026: Global payroll survey](#)