

reba

Reward & Employee
Benefits Association

Covid-19 and employee mental health research



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Introduction

The Reward & Employee Benefits Association (REBA) conducted this survey between 4 May and 11 May 2020, to gain fast-track insight into the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on employee mental health and employers' strategic planning and investment responses.

The Covid-19 pandemic has the potential to impact on employees' mental health which will affect their personal wellbeing, their ability to be productive human beings both at home and at work. In turn, this will have an effect on workplaces.

A 12th May study by Open Evidence¹, of the effects of Covid-19 and lockdown in Italy, Spain and the UK found statistical evidence that being unemployed, living with more than one person, having children of school age at home, experiencing a stressful event (such as losing a job) and loss of earnings are all mental health vulnerability factors. Using this data, researchers predict that 41% of the UK population is at risk of developing some form of mental health problem during the current crisis.

Employers are in a prime position to offer help and support for their employees, whether they are continuing to come into work or they are having to carry out their duties from home. This survey looks at how employers think the current crisis is affecting their staff's mental health and what they are doing to try and alleviate some of the impacts now, and in the future.

REBA received 151 responses to the survey, including organisations such as BT, Centrica, Diageo, DHL Supply Chain, Gatwick Airport, Jaguar Land Rover, Intercontinental Hotels Group, John Lewis & Partners, Marks and Spencer, RBS Group, Shell International, Sky, TSB and Virgin Media. In total, the businesses that responded to the survey represent more than half a million employees. Just over three quarters (76.8%) of respondents were from the private sector.

REBA has also carried out three previous snapshot surveys related to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on pay, bonuses and employee benefits. All three are available for download from www.reba.global/research.

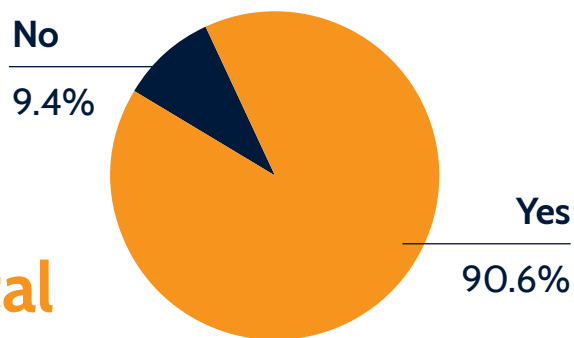


1 Open Evidence (2020) Study on the effects of Covid-19 and lockdown in Italy, Spain and United Kingdom. Available at: <https://open-evidence.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/20-05-10-COVID19-Open-Evidence-1-wave-EN.pdf>

The importance of supporting employee mental health

The current crisis has brought the issue of employee mental health firmly into the foreground for employers. More than nine in ten (90.6%) respondents told us that the importance of supporting the mental health of their employees has increased as a result of Covid-19.

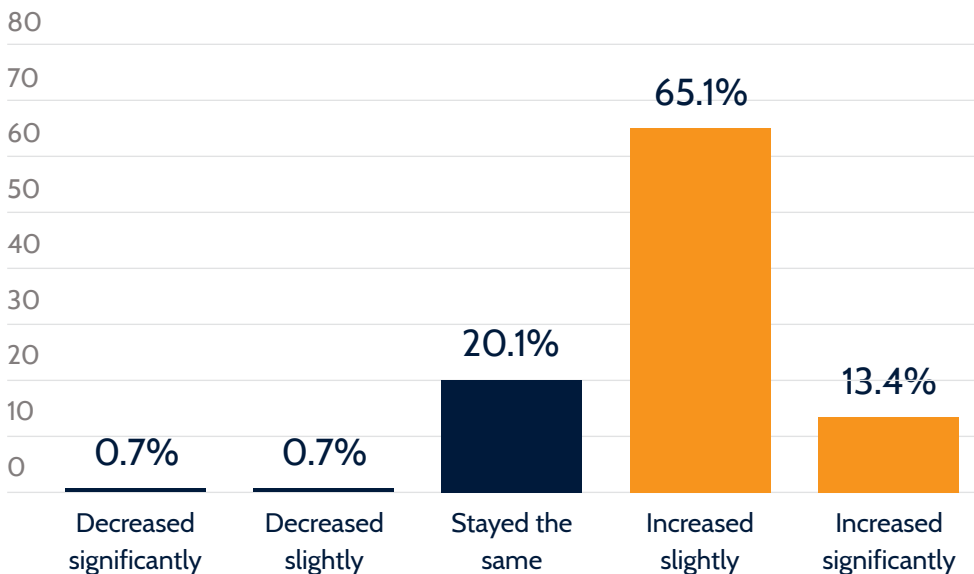
Has the importance put on supporting employee mental health increased in your organisation, as a result of COVID-19?



Requests for mental health support

Employers have seen a marked rise in the number of employees asking for support with mental health in response to Covid-19. Almost four-fifths (78.5%) of respondents have witnessed an increase in enquiries from staff, with more than one in seven (13.4%) seeing requests for mental health support increase significantly.

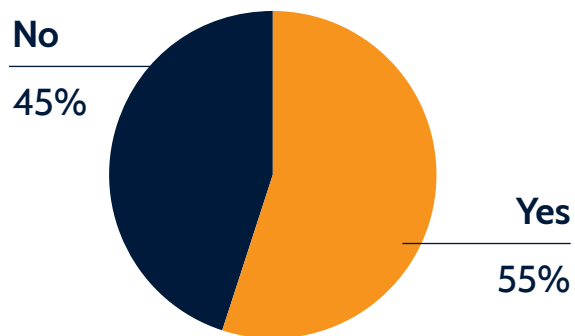
To what extent has the volume of requests for mental health support from your employees changed, as a result of COVID-19?



Impact on business performance

There is some uncertainty about how much of an impact the mental health impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic will have on business performance over the next 12 months. Just over half (55.0%) of respondents believe the impact on employees' mental health will have a knock-on negative impact on the success of their businesses – but a sizeable minority (45.0%) do not think the impact on employees will translate into weaker company performance.

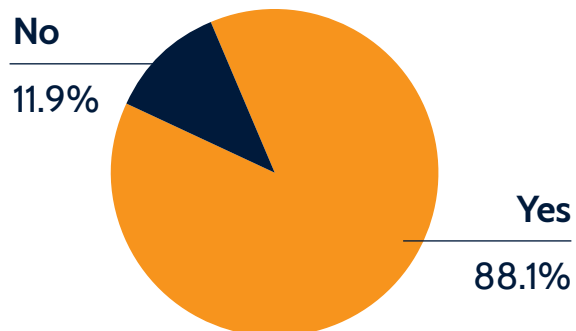
Do you think that the employee mental health implications of COVID-19 will negatively impact business performance over the next 12 months?



Support for mental health at board level

Employers are clear that the fallout of the current crisis will lead to greater support for employee mental health at the highest levels of management. Almost nine in ten (88.1%) respondents believe that employee mental health will receive greater backing from their board members and senior managers as a result of Covid-19.

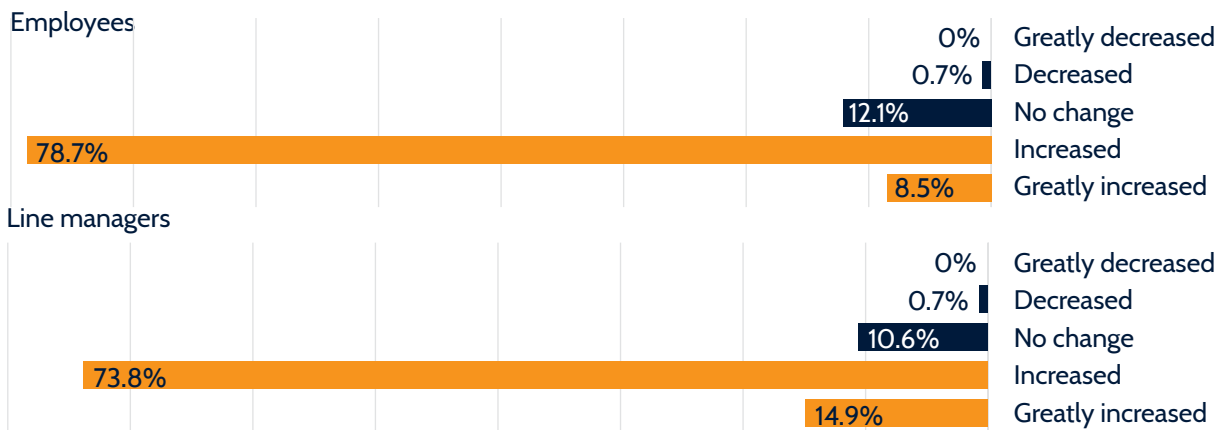
Do you believe that employee mental health support will receive greater backing from your board/senior management, as a result of COVID-19?



Conversations around mental health

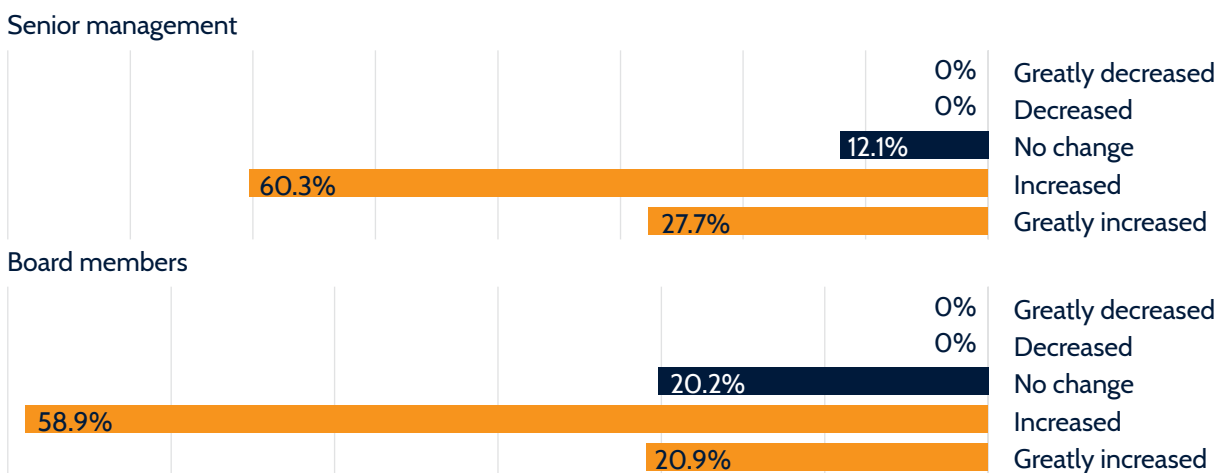
The current crisis has led to an increase in conversations around mental health at all levels of the business, particularly among senior managers. Almost nine in ten (87.2%) respondents report that their employees are having more conversations about mental health, while a similar number (88.7%) indicate that mental health is a topic of increased conversation among line managers.

To what extent have conversations about mental health changed among the following groups at your organisation, as a result of COVID-19?



The increase among senior managers is even more marked, with three-fifths (60.3%) of respondents reporting an increase in mental health discussions at this level and more than a quarter (27.7%) finding that these conversations have 'greatly increased'. The picture among board members is slightly more mixed: while a fifth (20.2%) of respondents tell us that the extent of conversation around mental health among this group has not changed, almost three-fifths (58.9%) report an increase and a further fifth (20.9%) say it has 'greatly increased'.

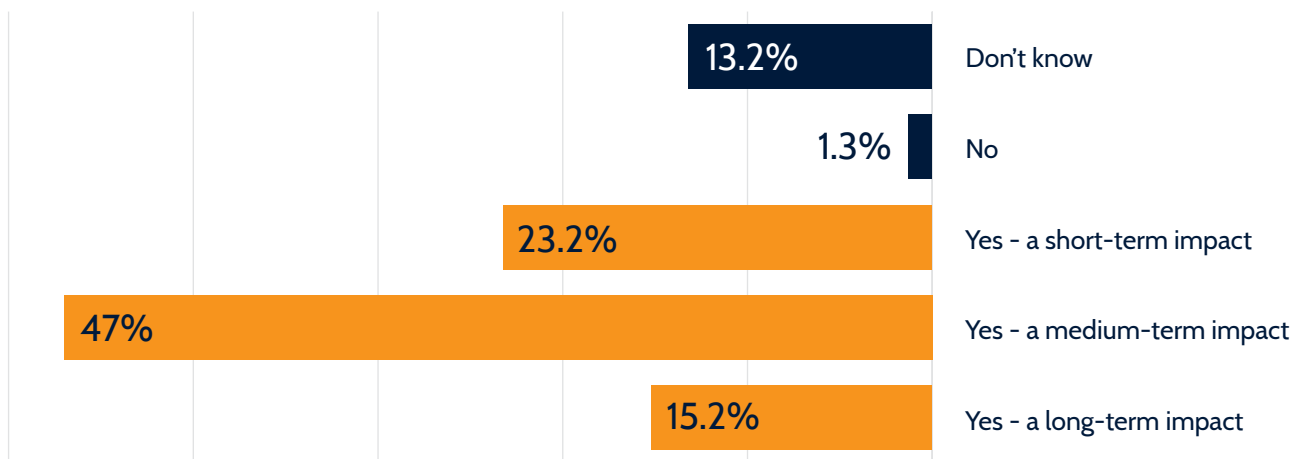
To what extent have conversations about mental health changed among the following groups at your organisation, as a result of COVID-19?



The mental health impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

Nearly all employers are expecting the current crisis to have a negative impact on the mental health of their employees. Around a quarter (23.2%) of respondents think any effect will be short-lived. However, almost half (47.0%) think there could be a medium-term impact and more than one in seven (15.2%) respondents believe the current pandemic could have a long-term impact on the mental health of their employees.

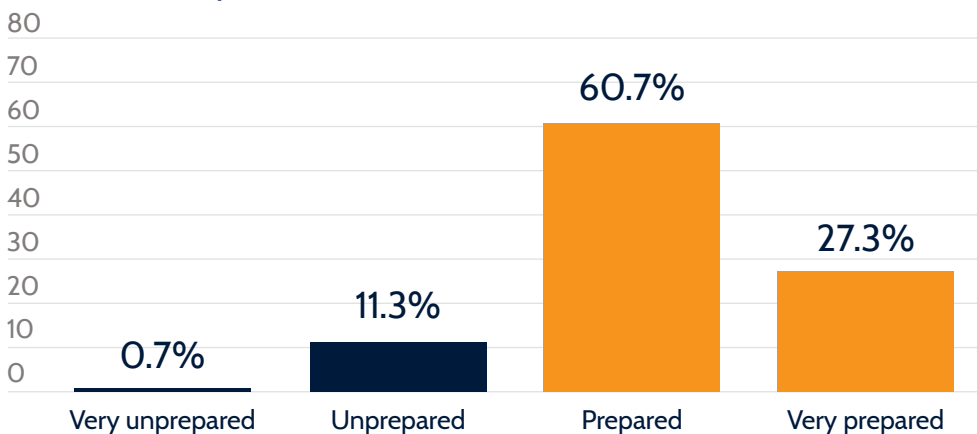
Do you think there will be a negative impact on the mental health of your employees, as a result of COVID-19?



Organisational preparedness

While most employers are expecting the current crisis to have some negative impacts on the mental health of their employees, nearly all of them believe they are set up to provide any help their workforce may need. Almost nine in ten (88.0%) respondents feel prepared to adequately support the mental health of all their employees through the Covid-19 pandemic, with over a quarter (27.3%) believing they are 'well-prepared' for this.

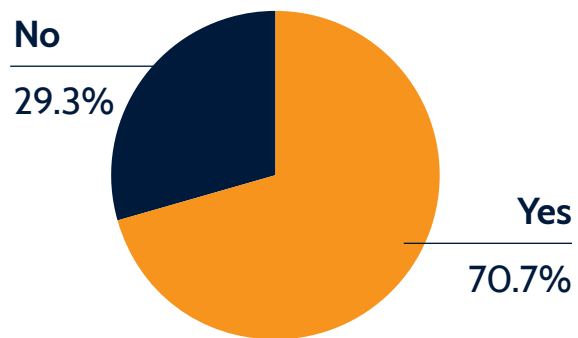
How well prepared is your organisation to adequately support the mental health of all employees during the current COVID-19 pandemic?



Increased investment in employee mental health

The majority of employers are planning to raise how much they spend on supporting the mental health of their employees in direct response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. More than two-thirds (70.7%) of respondents tell us they will boost their investment in employee mental health over the next 12 months, while less than a third (29.3%) will not be increasing their budgets.

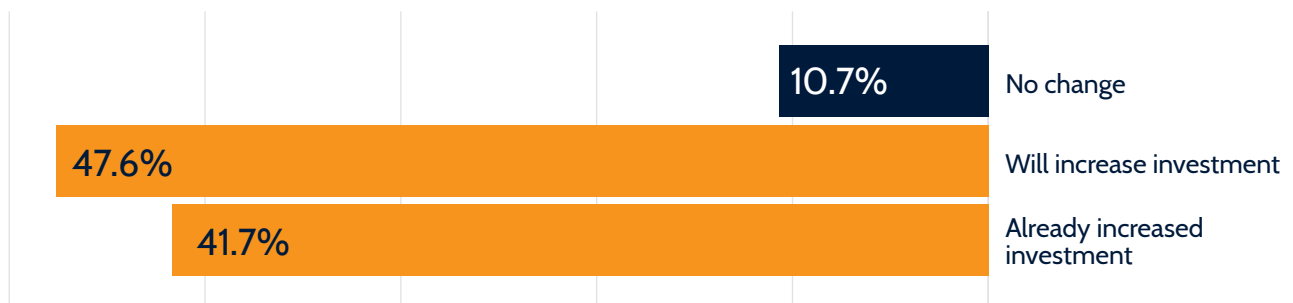
Will your organisation be increasing investment in employee mental health over the next 12 months, as a result of COVID-19?



Investing in different areas of employee mental health

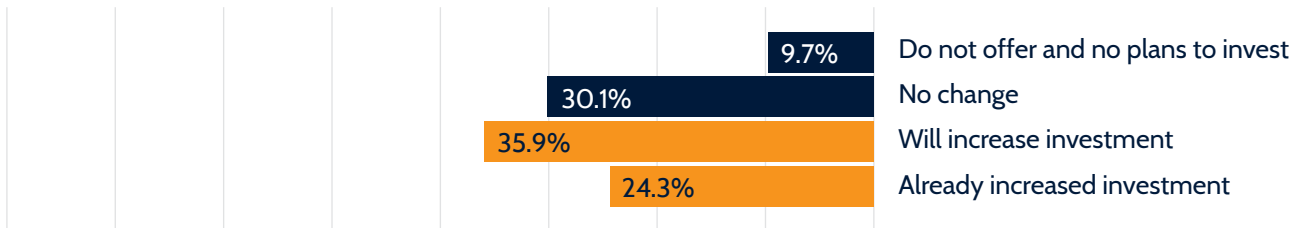
Among employers that are looking to spend more on supporting their employees' mental health, almost nine in ten (89.3%) have either already increased or plan to increase the amount spent on existing mental health initiatives.

Promotion of existing initiatives

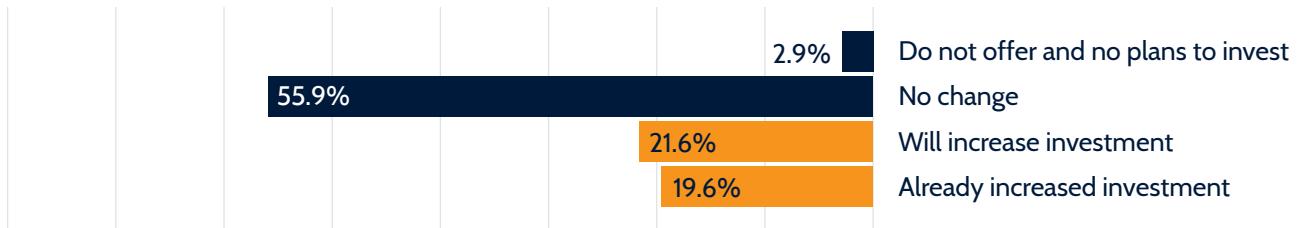


Looking in more detail at where this increased investment is being spent, many employers are turning to dedicated mental wellbeing platforms and apps, as well as traditional employee assistance programmes (EAPs). Almost a quarter (24.3%) of our respondents have already increased their investment in digital or smartphone mental wellbeing apps for their employees, with more than a third (35.9%) planning to increase spending in this area. Meanwhile, around one in five (19.6%) have already upped spending on their EAP, with a further one in five (21.6%) earmarking increased investment on these services.

Digital/smartphone mental wellbeing platforms/apps



Employee Assistance Programmes

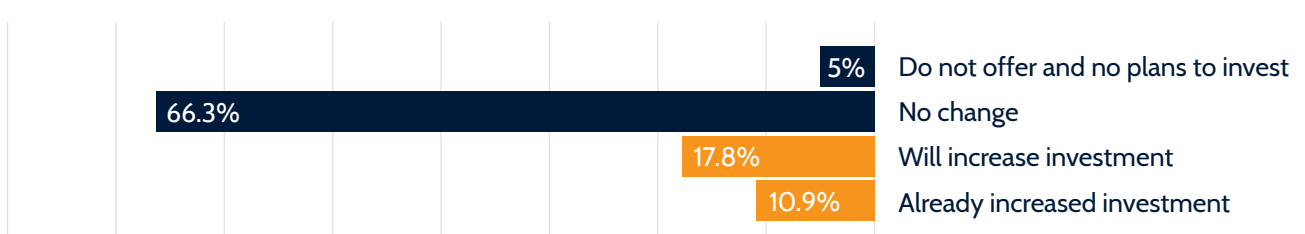


In contrast, just over a quarter (26.7%) of employers are planning to invest in occupational health (OH) services and/or private medical insurance (PMI) to help support employee mental health through the current crisis and beyond. Already almost one in ten (9%) of employers have increased investment in PMI, with a further 8% planning to do so. To see 17% of employers increase spend in this area is notable. Equally the fact that well over a quarter (28.7) of employers will, or are planning to spend more on occupational health is a significant shift.

Private Medical Insurance

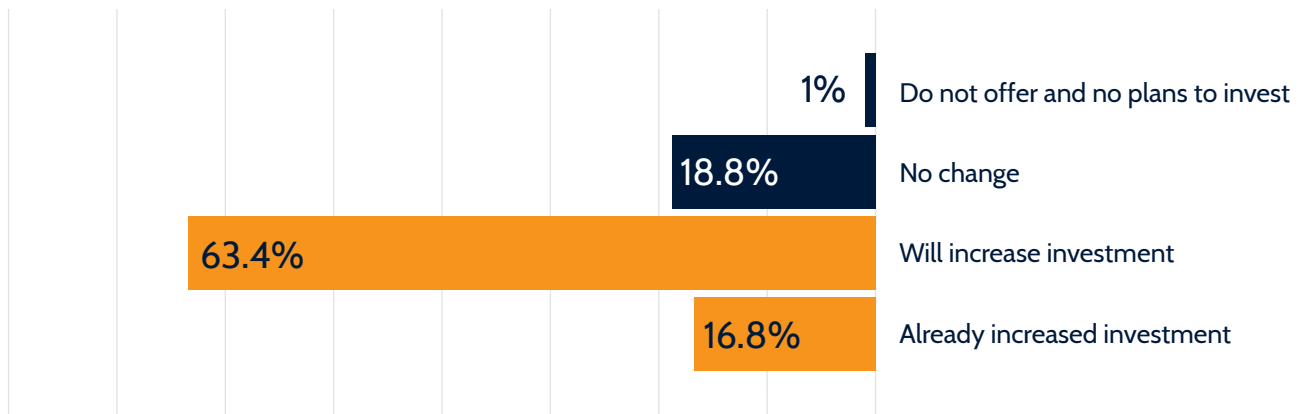


Occupational health services

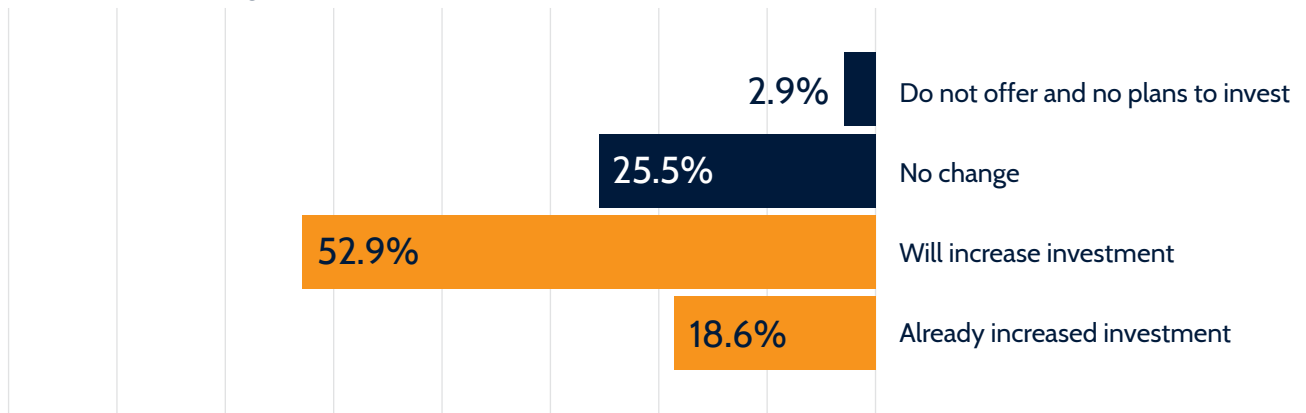


By far the biggest area of increased spending is mental health training. More than one in six (16.8%) respondents have already committed more money to training line managers in the skills needed to support employees with their mental health, with almost two-thirds (63.4%) planning to up their spending on this in the near future. Meanwhile, almost one in five (18.6%) respondents have increased their investment in mental health training for employees, such as implementing resilience training, mindfulness workshops and establishing networks of mental health first aiders. And a further half (52.9%) of respondents are planning to increase spending on these types of initiatives.

Line manager training



Mental health training for employees



About the survey

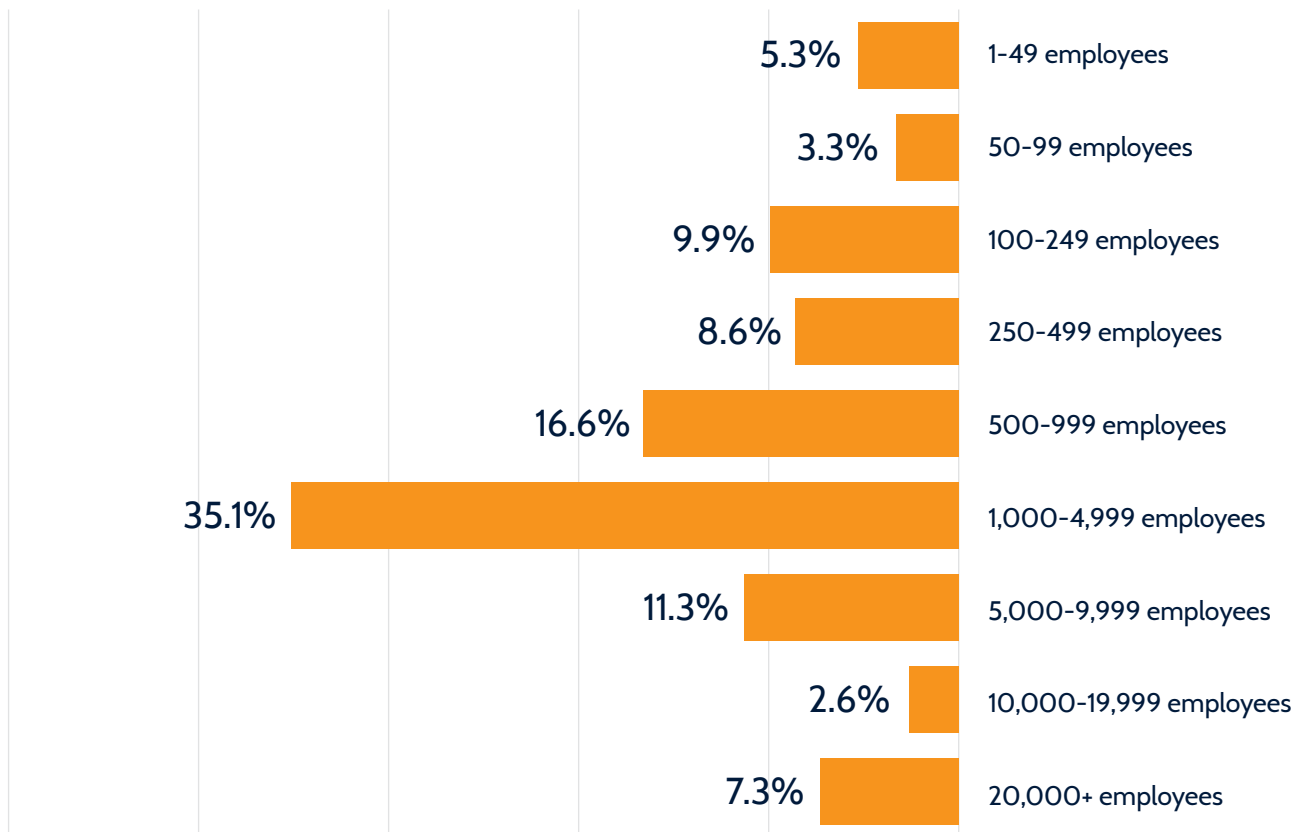
The Reward & Employee Benefits Association (REBA) represents more than 2,000 HR professionals who are responsible for pay, benefits and wellbeing policies at medium to large UK businesses.

This survey had 151 responses from employers, representing an estimated collective total of more than half a million workers. It took place between 12pm on 4 May and 9am on 11 May 2020. It was conducted by the Reward & Employee Benefits Association among its 2,000 Professional Members and Unmind’s database of contacts.

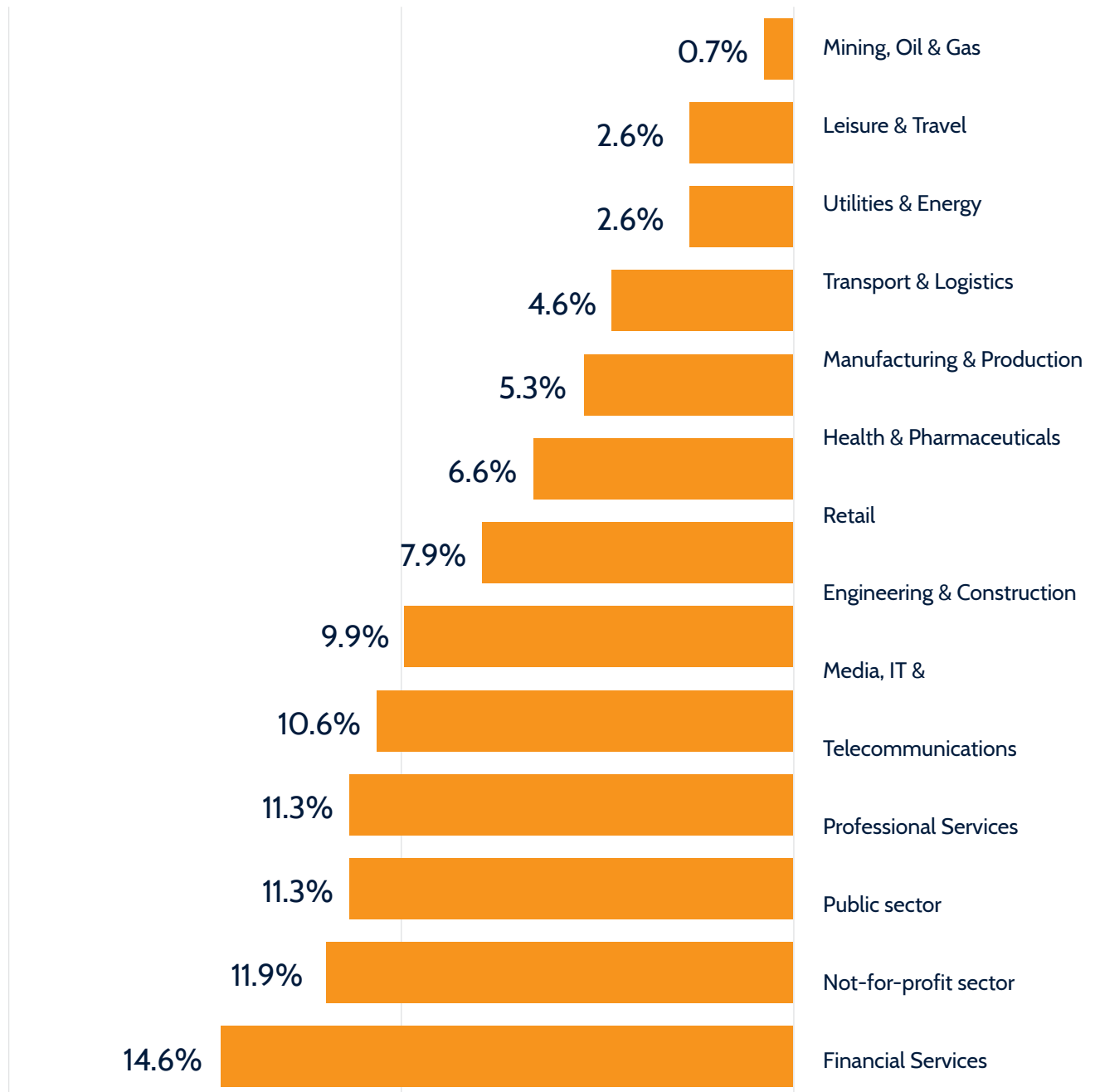
Responses primarily represent medium to large workforces:

- 56.3% of responding businesses had more than 1,000 employees
- 25.2% had 250-999 employees
- 76.8% are private sector employers

How many UK-based staff does your organisation employ?



Which specific sector does your organisation broadly fall into?



REBA would like to thank all the organisations that took part:

@one Alliance, Accell Group, Accord Housing Association, Ageas Insurance, AirTanker, Amey Services, Argos, Argyll Community Housing Association, Arup, Aster Group, Aston Villa Football Club, ATS Euromaster, AWE, B.Braun Medical, BAM Nuttall, Bamboo Crowd, Barratt Developments, BCLP Law, Bibby Financial Services, Birmingham City University, Blue Prism, BNP Paribas, Bombardier Transportation, Bouygues E&S Contracting, Brambles, Britvic, Browne Jacobson LLP, BSG, BSI, BT, Cambridge University Press, Cancer Research UK, Cane, Capula Investment Management, Carmarthenshire County Council, CAYSH, CDK, Centrica, Charles Stanley, Chartered Management Institute, Chuangyi Group, City & Guilds Group, Civil Service, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Connect Group, CooperVision, Debenhams Retail, DHL Supply Chain, Diageo, Direct Line Group, Direct Wines, DNV GL, doc.ai, Dogs Trust, Doosan Babcock, DrApp, E-days, Eli Lilly, EMCOR UK, ENGIE, Epsom, Equifax, Financial Reporting Council, FIS, FTI Consulting LLP, Garenne, Gate Group, Gatwick Airport, GEA, General Dental Council, Gymshark, Halma, Havas Media, Hawk-Eye Innovations, Hexagon Geosystems, Hilti Gt Britain, Hilton Worldwide, Hymans Robertson, IES Abroad (London), Imagination Technologies, InterContinental Hotels Group, Jaguar Land Rover, John Lewis & Partners, Johnson Matthey, Lendlease, LHH, lululemon athletica, LV-, Mansfield District Council, Maples and Calder, Marks and Spencer, Marriott Hotels, Marshall Aerospace and Defence Group, Mayo Wynne Baxter, Milton Keynes College, Mishcon de Reya, Molson Coors Beverage Company, Mondelez Philippines, MS Amlin, National Grid, Navigo, NHBC, NTT DATA UK, Nuix, Ocean Housing Group, Orange Business Services, Pegasystems, Personal Group, Port of Tyne, Priory Group, Progress Housing Group, Rabobank, RBS Group, RBWM, ReAssure, Refinitiv, Ringtons, Romero Insurance Brokers, Sensata Technologies, Shell International, Sky, Soulgenic, Southern Co-op, SS&C Financial Services, Sunrise Senior Living, Superdry, Takeda, Taylor Wessing LLP, TellMe, Tesco Bank, The Adecco Group, The Co-operative Group, The Coca-Cola Company, The Insight Network, The Riverside Group, The Very Group, Thirteen, Thomson Reuters, Three UK, TSB, UCB, UKRI, United Trust Bank, Value Retail, Virgin Media, VMware UK, Waterman Group, WebhelpUK, Wigan & Leigh College, Yorkshire Building Society, Zappor

Thank you to our supporter Unmind

REBA would especially like to thank Unmind for their support and mental health expertise input in drawing up the survey questions.

As with all REBA surveys, the results are impartial and independent and our sponsor had no influence over how the results have been reported.



REBA is the Reward & Employee Benefits Association.

We are a professional community of 2100 HR practitioners. We supply information services to help organisations provide better employee benefits for millions of employees.

Contact: jessica.tester@reba.global

Visit : www.reba.global



Unmind is a workplace mental health platform.

We empower organisations and employees to proactively measure and improve their mental wellbeing.

Contact: hello@unmind.com

Visit : www.unmind.com