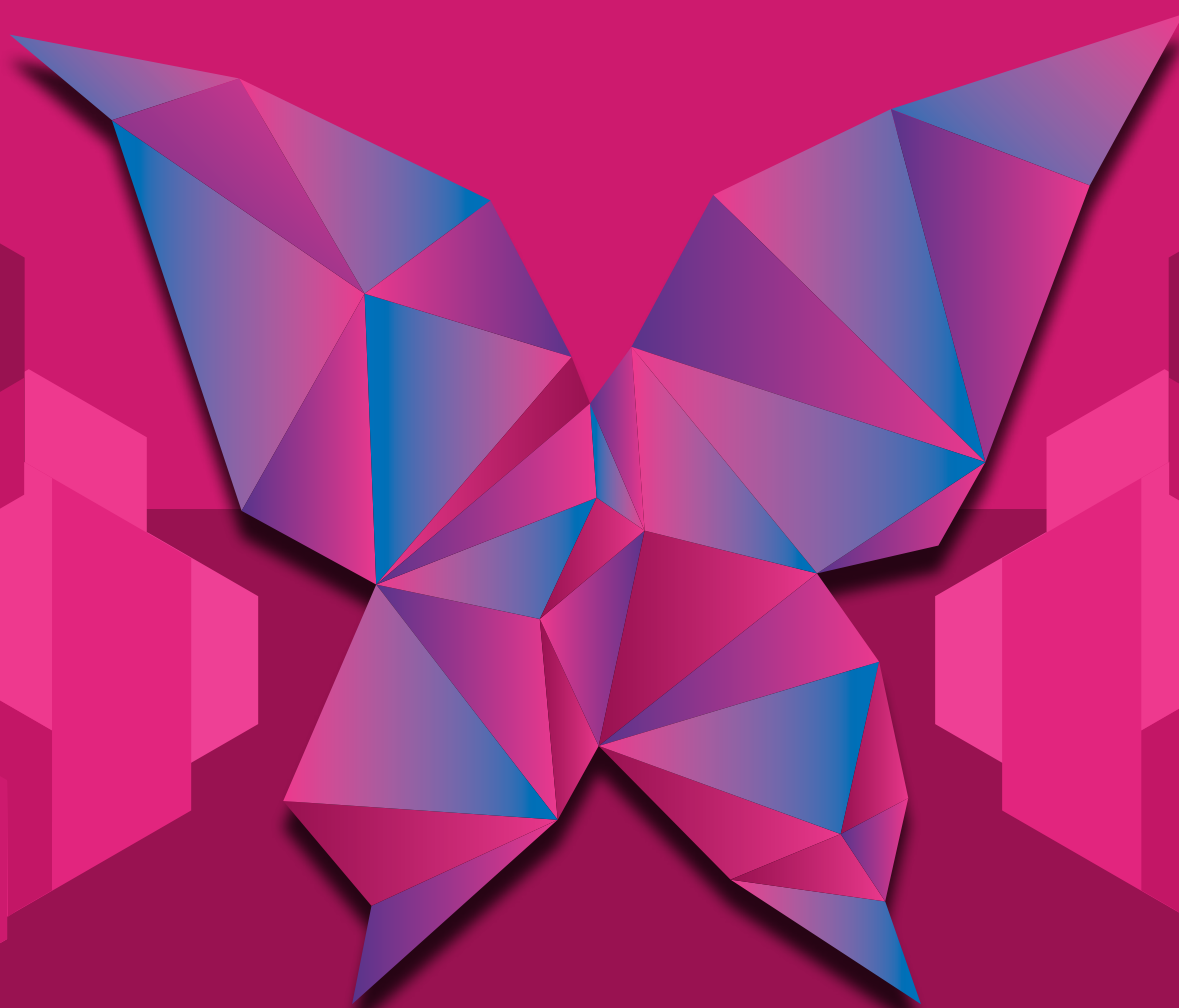


Employee Wellbeing Research 2023

reba
Reward & Employee
Benefits Association
PURSUING BEST PRACTICE

Societal change is transforming workplace experience



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£399

Working towards a new future

Debi O'Donovan

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Association (REBA)
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Given the far-reaching societal transformations we are living through, it follows that our experience of work is changing too. Digital technologies and automation are affecting jobs across all sectors from agriculture, retail and healthcare, through to manufacturing, hospitality and logistics. Desk-based roles are unrecognisable from just a generation ago, with major shifts and greater flexibility in how, where and when employees work.

Therefore, when examining wellbeing, it is essential that employers question whether the current experience of work at their organisation is fit for the future, and whether they have an environment that will nurture a sustainable workforce, and therefore a sustainable organisation, for decades to come.

REBA's Employee Wellbeing Research 2023 finds that when aligning wellbeing strategies to objectives that support business sustainability, the vast majority of employers point to creating positive workplace cultures, being an employer of choice and achieving greater diversity and inclusion. However, a substantial minority are putting a heavy emphasis on more fundamental business objectives linked to organisational transformation, skills gaps, as well as increased digital technology and automation.

REBA expects this emphasis on transformation, skills and technology to become more marked, because these key areas also show up as the top three risks affecting employee wellbeing.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents say skills availability versus business requirements is putting pressure on employees now or will do in the near future. More than seven-in-10 say organisational or transformational change is a wellbeing risk now or will be.

Most notable of all, while just under one-in-10 currently see the digitisation and automation of work as a risk to wellbeing, this is set to quadruple, with just over four-in-10 employers expecting it to be a future risk.

Unless wellbeing strategies more actively align to building resilience, workforce planning and developing talent, these risks will remain, holding back change and affecting mental, physical, social and even financial wellbeing.

Demographic shifts are also having an impact on wellbeing strategies. Policies

and practices to increase the number of older people in the workforce, the proportion of women in more senior roles, plus moves to retain parents and carers are all linked to the need to fill skills and talent gaps as well as widen the diversity of thinking, innovation and creativity within organisations.

This research shows how these demographic shifts are steering employers to adapt their wellbeing offerings. The proportion of employers addressing age-related physical wellbeing will more than double in the next two years. Given that chronic diseases, from diabetes and cardiovascular disease through to musculoskeletal conditions and many cancers, are often linked to lifestyles that develop from a young age, focusing on age-related physical wellbeing means running preventative programmes among all generations.

The research results also show increasing support for women's health, with two-thirds of respondents already having specific strategies in place and a further quarter planning these in the coming two years. While being a working carer or parent can apply to all genders, it is acknowledged that women often take most of this burden. While fewer than half (43%) of employers currently view carers' needs as part of their wellbeing strategy, as many as four-in-10 are reviewing the option to include this in the next two years. This is a major shift, driven not only by inclusivity objectives but also by the need to retain talent.

Given the vital role of well-thought-out wellbeing strategies to nurture the workforces that create sustainable organisations, it is not surprising that eight-in-10 employers prioritise wellbeing strategies to create a positive workplace culture. The link between the ongoing employee experience of work and the wellbeing of both employees and businesses is incredibly strong.

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Benefits Association

PURSuing BEST PRACTICE

Seven key trends

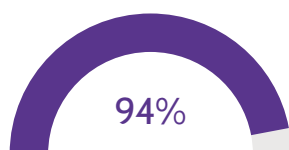
Organisational change is a key risk



32% say it is a current risk, while 39% say it as an emerging risk

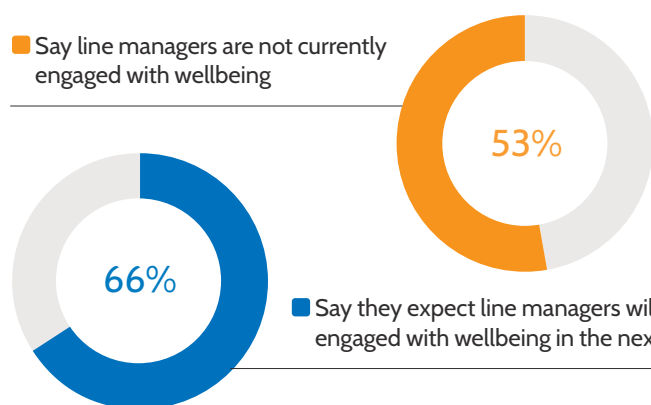
Use of wellbeing data is informing future strategy

Say data will inform future health focus/wellbeing strategy priorities in two years' time



Line managers are crucial for wellbeing risk reduction

■ Say line managers are not currently engaged with wellbeing



■ Say they expect line managers will not be engaged with wellbeing in the next two years

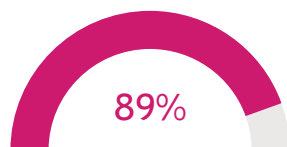
Employee experience is linked to wellbeing



Say it is a key priority for their wellbeing strategy to create a positive workplace culture

Wellbeing data is shaping DEI plans

Use wellbeing data to identify DEI issues either now or in the next two years



Top five wellbeing benefits currently offered



92%

Employee assistance programme



86%

Cycle-to-work scheme



85%

Support for serious illness or death



83%

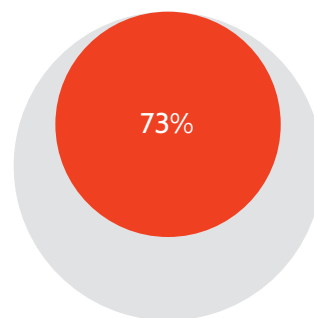
Clinical-level counselling sessions



82%

Pension contributions above auto-enrolment minimums

The cost of living crisis is hitting employees hard



of employers believe the cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on overall workforce wellbeing

Every mind and body matters

Paul Moulton

Director SME and Corporate
AXA Health



“There is still much to be done to better support people, especially young adults and women”

Wellbeing and people strategies have never been in the spotlight more. Global, societal and workplace change is contributing to as many as eight-in-10 organisations prioritising their wellbeing strategies to create a positive workplace culture and better address employees' rising expectations around support for their personal wellbeing.

This year's report highlights the range of priorities that wellbeing strategies should address, such as equity and inclusion, leader and manager effectiveness, and transformational change. The report explores the challenges as well as progress organisations have made in assessing the impact and effectiveness of those measures put in place to support their people.

Supporting mind health during turbulent times

Analysing our own service experience data shows that incidence of mental ill health is mirroring the newspaper headlines and on the increase. Zooming in on this in more detail, our recent mind health study showed young adults and women to be flourishing less and struggling more, with only 50% of employees citing they had good mental health support at work. This year's REBA report, while showing that 52% of respondents have a joined-up mental wellbeing strategy, also highlights that 48% don't – meaning there is still much to be done to better support people, especially young adults and women.

Organisations must consider holistic, and strengthen preventative, measures to build resilience and help their teams bring their best selves to work. An ever-valuable employee assistance programme (EAP) is just one cog in a much larger solution, where a deep, evolving understanding of the workforce is needed, so resource and efforts are best targeted. Within this year's report, we see clinically diagnosed conditions (34%), equity of mental health benefits (30%) and family support (26%) as areas of significant organisational focus for the next two years.

Tackling inclusion and delivering employee experience

Wellbeing and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) agendas are inextricably linked. In the next two years:

- 43% of organisations will address age-related physical wellbeing issues.
- 41% of organisations plan to address gender identity and dysphoria within their strategies.
- 41% of organisations intend to strengthen neurodiversity support.

And 62% of employers already or plan to offer fertility benefits, including IVF, counselling and miscarriage support.

At AXA Health, we have attempted to be at the forefront of this curve, strengthening service options such as our neurodivergent assessment and support service, as well as our early parenthood, fertility and menopause services and benefits. Early service insight has shown how life-changing it can be for individuals when awareness, support and safe environments combine.

Time to focus on outcomes over engagement

Data and digital capabilities present an opportunity for organisations to strengthen the performance of their wellbeing approach. 50% of employers now say their wellbeing data informs their future health focus.

As organisations keep a sharp eye on the value of investment, a healthy scrutiny and shift into looking at outcomes over engagement increases. While the report continues to show that a unified wellbeing dashboard remains a challenge for most, wellbeing works. Organisations, employees and providers must work together to tell the story of improved employee experience, health risk reduction, people retention and enhanced performance as a result of their wellbeing strategies.

Together, we will co-create wellbeing strategies to help everyone bring their best selves to work.



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Our 2023 research: round-table events

To complement our quantitative research this year, REBA conducted a series of round-table events with six senior reward, benefits and wellbeing directors across different sectors, including financial services, energy, social care and engineering.

We discussed topics and trends related to our survey results, focusing on areas such as the relationship between business risk and wellbeing, as well as the growing links between wellbeing and diversity and inclusion.

We've summarised key findings from the events throughout this report in our round-table boxouts.

REBA would like to thank everyone who took part for their time and insights. A full list of the companies that participated is on p40.

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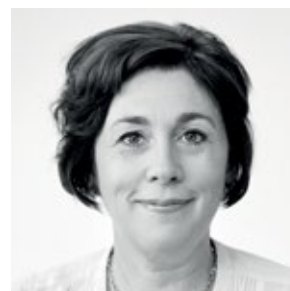
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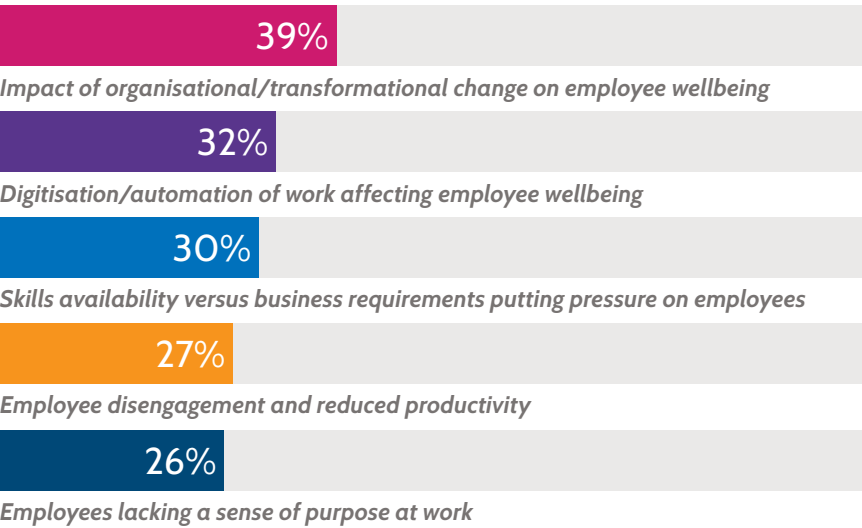
Report devised by: **Debi O'Donovan, Phil Hayne and Maggie Williams**. In association with: **AXA Health**
Research conducted by Graham Brown. Written by Anna Scott and Dawn Lewis. Edited by Maggie Williams. Project managed by Dawn Lewis. Subbed by Caroline Taylor. Designed by Sallyann Smith.

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Executive summary

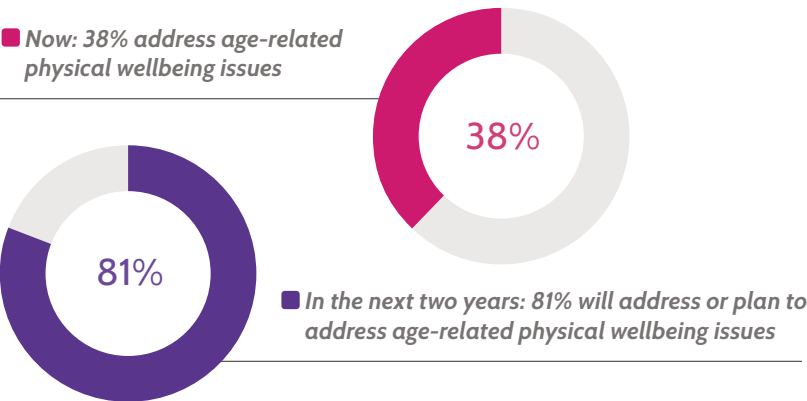
Organisational change and work redesign are future wellbeing risks

Top five emerging risks (in the next two years)



Societal and economic change are driving business and organisational transformation. That transformation is introducing new wellbeing risks through current skills gaps, new ways of working and employees' need for purpose in their working lives.

Age-related physical wellbeing will more than double in relevance in the next two years



Longer working lives will drive more focus on supporting the physical wellbeing of older workers, both in terms of preventative programmes and support for age-related, long-term conditions.

Employee experience and wellbeing are becoming more closely linked

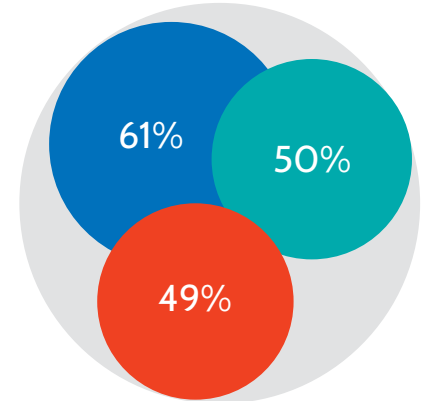


Employees' experiences at work, such as line-manager behaviour, job design and feeling that their employer cares, are as critical to wellbeing as offering healthcare benefits.

Organisations demonstrate accountability for employee wellbeing through their brand, DEI and ESG goals

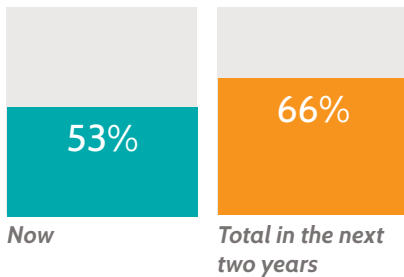
Wellbeing is now fundamental to becoming an employer of choice, demonstrated through employer brand and closer alignment with both corporate environmental, social and governance (ESG) strategies and publicly stated DEI objectives.

- 61% Employer brand
- 50% ESG/corporate social responsibility (CSR)/sustainability goals and/or corporate purpose
- 49% DEI objectives

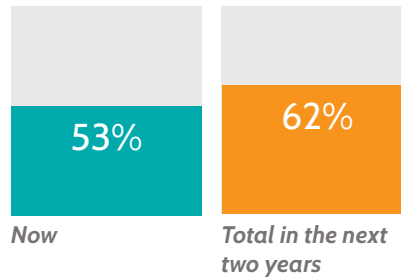


Line managers are a focus for future risk reduction

Line managers are not engaged with wellbeing

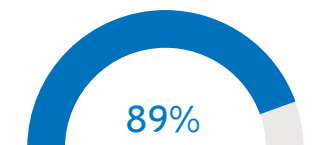


Line managers unaware of wellbeing benefits

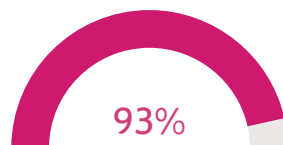


Line managers are pivotal to the success of wellbeing strategies. They play a vital role in creating a positive workplace culture and are often employees' first point of contact when they need workplace healthcare services. Training, engaging and supporting line managers should be a focus for reducing risk and improving uptake of wellbeing benefits.

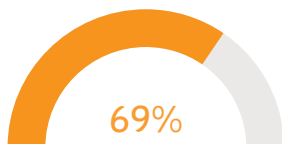
DEI is growing in importance in wellbeing strategies



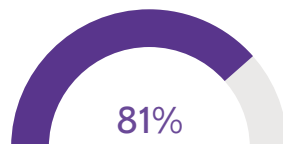
Use wellbeing data to identify DEI issues either now or in the next two years



Address women's health within physical wellbeing themes either now or in the next two years



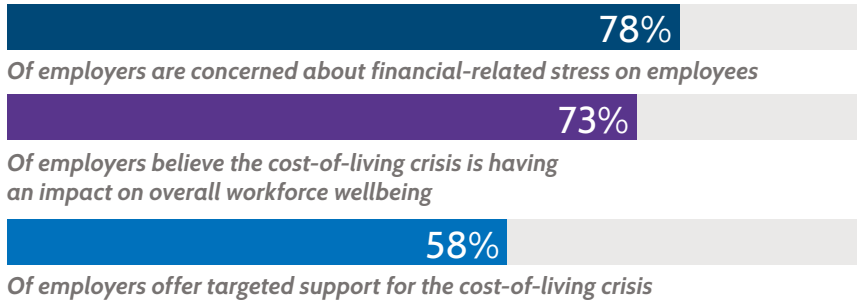
Address gender identity and dysphoria within their strategies either now or in the next two years



Include carers' needs as part of social wellbeing policies either now or in the next two years

Helping everyone to perform at their best means creating inclusive wellbeing strategies. Supporting women's health issues is becoming higher-profile, and other groups in the workforce such as carers also have specific needs that can be supported through wellbeing strategies.

The cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on employees

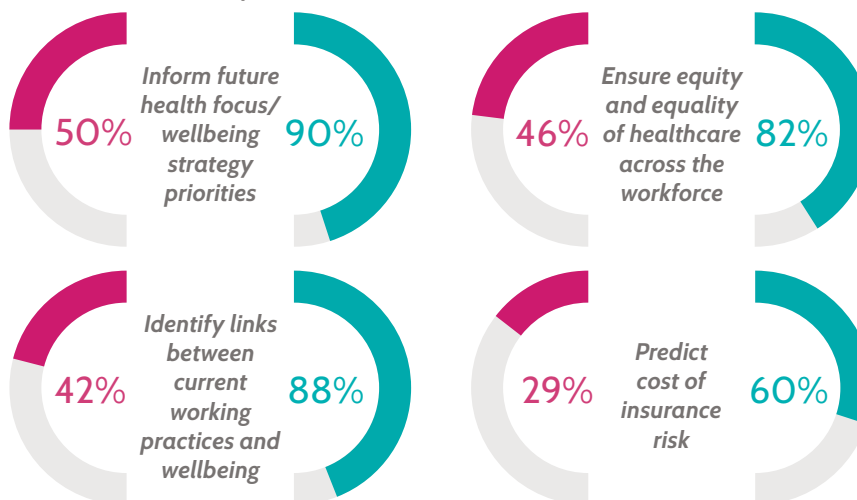


Stresses in the wider economy are taking a toll on employees' wellbeing, both financially and in terms of wider wellbeing. Basic needs such as energy and food have come into focus, with more employers offering targeted support.

It is also affecting employers, with 44% saying that rising inflation is starting to affect wellbeing spend.

Organisations' use of wellbeing data is becoming more sophisticated

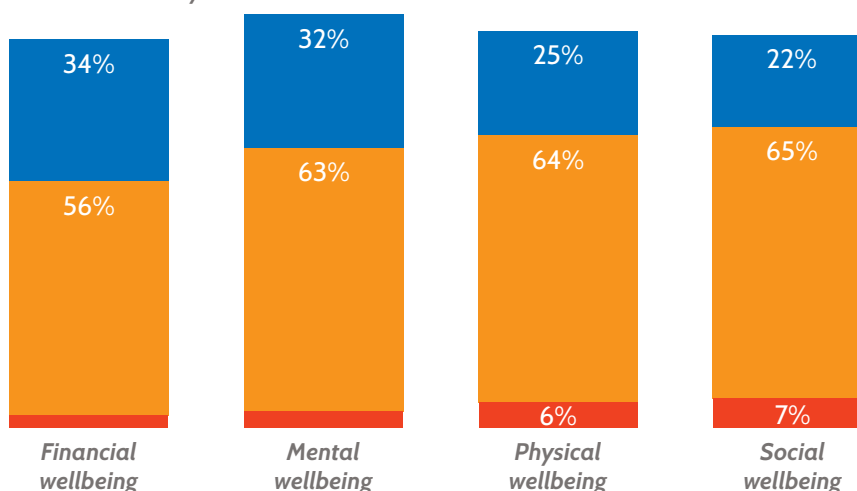
■ Now ■ Total in two years' time



Data will increasingly drive decision-making about wellbeing strategies, as well as helping to identify gaps in cover within the workforce. As data collection and analysis becomes more sophisticated, employers will also be able to see and act on the links between current working practices and wellbeing risks.

Wellbeing spend is set to increase or remain the same

■ Increase ■ Stay the same ■ Decrease



The cost of living crisis has driven increased spend on financial wellbeing in 2022-23. This could have positive long-term effects, as this area has traditionally lagged behind other pillars of wellbeing. It is positive to see that spend also remains consistent or is increasing across physical and mental health as well.

1. The cost-of-living crisis is affecting employees' wider wellbeing

The biggest risks to wellbeing within organisations in 2023 are driven by the current cost-of-living crisis. Nearly three-quarters of businesses say money worries are affecting the overall wellbeing of the workforce, and nearly four-fifths of respondents (78%) are concerned about financial-related stress on employees, with a further 17% anticipating that this will become a risk in the next two years.

Figure 1.1

Which of the following are risks to wellbeing within your organisation?

■ Current risk ■ Likely to be a risk in the next two years ■ No risk



Many employer respondents find themselves facing a dichotomy. They recognise the huge wellbeing risk that severe money worries present, but don't yet have mature strategies to address financial wellbeing.

Last year, our [2022 Employee Wellbeing Research](#) found that socio-economic issues beyond the workplace, such as loneliness and living costs, were already increasing wellbeing risk and having a heavy impact on employees' wider mental and physical health. Since then, the cost-of-living crisis has put the relationship between wellbeing and socio-economic factors centre stage.

Wellbeing risks beyond the cost-of-living crisis

The process of rebalancing working arrangements in the wake of Covid-19 is also continuing to have an impact on wellbeing. After the cost-of-living crisis, the most frequently cited risk (55%) to employee wellbeing is limited social contact between colleagues, owing to hybrid or remote working. A further 13% expect this to become a risk within the next two years, but the relatively small number that see this as a future risk suggests that business approaches to hybrid working are starting to stabilise, along with putting wellbeing processes in place to support employers' desired blend of working arrangements.

Many of the familiar, long-term risks to employee wellbeing remain in play. In our [2020 Employee Wellbeing Research](#), the biggest workforce risk to employee health and wellbeing was a high-pressure and high-intensity working environment (69%). Excluding 'crisis factors', such as cost-of-living and Covid-19-initiated hybrid working arrangements, this continues to be the biggest issue facing organisations. Only 21% do not see this as an issue now or during the next two years.

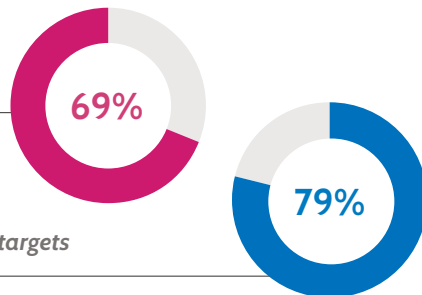
Work pressure is still a growing wellbeing risk

Percentage that see this as a wellbeing risk

2020

High-pressure and high-intensity working environment

Now and in the next two years:
pressure on employees to meet
business growth or performance targets



During the course of the past three years, businesses and employees have been thrown from one wellbeing crisis to another. The Covid-19 pandemic drove home the effect of workforce-wide wellbeing on business profitability; now, the cost-of-living crisis has joined the dots even more firmly between financial wellbeing and wider mental and physical health issues.

Money worries affect employees' mental health, with knock-on effects on physical health, such as sleep quality. Soaring inflation has brought basic essentials such as heat and food into focus, raising the risk of poor nutrition, for example, with long-term impact on physical wellbeing.

However, in 2023, financial wellbeing still appears to be the 'poor relation' compared with other areas of wellbeing, especially mental wellbeing – but there is a gradual shift taking place. Just 8% of employers have no benefits or strategy for financial wellbeing, compared with 11% in 2021.

Wellbeing strategies in an era of crisis

Financial and mental wellbeing
– a tale of two pillars

■ Financial wellbeing

■ Mental wellbeing

2023

We have a mature strategy that is integrated into our company culture	14%	30%
We have a well-developed strategy, but it is not part of our company culture	14%	19%
We have lots of benefits, but they are not joined up in a strategy	31%	28%
We offer some relevant benefits, but they are not joined up in a strategy	23%	15%
We do not have specific benefits or a strategy to support this pillar	8%	3%

2021

We have a mature strategy that is integrated into our company culture	14%	28%
We have a well-developed strategy, but it is not part of our company culture	16%	21%
We have lots of benefits, but they are not joined up in a strategy	31%	30%
We offer some relevant benefits, but they are not joined up in a strategy	30%	25%
We do not have specific benefits or a strategy to support this pillar	11%	3%

Trends in financial wellbeing benefits

Right now, the top financial wellbeing benefit, offered by 87% of respondents, is support for mental wellbeing related to money, through an EAP, for example. This is closely followed by support for serious illness or death, provided by 85% of companies. The same proportion of respondents, 82%, have a product discounts scheme or pay pension contributions above auto-enrolment minimums.

So far, so predictable. We'd expect companies to have these traditional kinds of financial offerings. But we can also see the shift to other kinds of financial wellbeing benefits that many companies are looking to make in the next two years. More than a third (36%) intend to introduce financial education or coaching programmes, for example. REBA's [2022 Financial Wellbeing Research](#) gives further insight into current and future trends in this area.

Top six financial wellbeing themes set for growth in the next two years



48%

Financial planning for the medium term (eg, mortgage, parenthood)



43%

Building financial resilience



37%

The impact of money worries on mental wellbeing



37%

Financial habits (eg, budgeting, debt management)



35%

Financial planning for the short term



35%

Financial planning for retirement



**BIG
SHIFT**

+350%

Is the rise of automation the next wellbeing crisis?

Digitisation and automation are set to increase wellbeing risk during the next two years. Just 9% see this as a current risk, but 32% perceive it as a risk within the next two years – an increase of 350%. This could be related to worries over job security, skills that do not fit future requirements, or reductions in headcount owing to automation.

Case study: colleagues lead response to cost-of-living crisis at Wickes

EXPERT VIEW

Neil Goodwin

Head of Reward
Wickes plc



“For us, being healthy and productive is a key differentiator as a retailer”

Wellbeing is fully integrated into the culture at Wickes. We describe working for us as ‘Feeling at home’, and that’s quite powerful for us to test our initiatives and benefits against, to make sure they fit with our wider culture. For us, being healthy and productive is a key differentiator as a retailer – it’s a tough market, where there’s not a lot of differentiation on basic pay – so having a strong wellbeing culture is key for our overall employee value proposition (EVP).

With this in mind, we reacted as early as we could to take action to support staff during the cost-of-living crisis.

We set up a colleague-led cost-of-living working group, which helped us to come up with a number of initiatives to support colleagues with cost-of-living pressures. Measures included: enhancing our colleague discount, introducing free food provision within our stores, and running webinars for the first time on the cost of living and pensions.

We also reviewed targets for our store-based bonus plan, in light of the economic conditions – again, a suggestion that came from the cost-of-living working group. It has been really good to see the output of that group lead to some practical and valued solutions for colleagues.

Monitoring ongoing needs

As part of the ongoing process of assessing colleague needs, we recently ran a pulse survey to get feedback on the cost-of-living initiatives we’ve introduced. It highlighted that many colleagues are being personally affected by the cost-of-

living crisis, and there’s a risk that this is going to have a knock-on effect for them at work.

Having this information is really important, as when we’re trying to make a business case to make changes and bring in new benefits and services, we can be clear on what we’re actually hearing from our colleagues.

In addition to finding out what support colleagues need to help with the cost of living, we’re also pressuring our brokers to make savings in our benefits renewals, with the aim of potentially redirecting that money to support cost-of-living initiatives.

Don’t neglect wider wellbeing

As we look forward, we will inevitably continue our focus on cost of living to maintain what we’ve already got, as well as to introduce new initiatives. But we are being careful at same time not to neglect wider wellbeing, which is easy to do at the moment.

2. Integrating wellbeing into the employee experience

Wellbeing strategy is becoming more closely integrated with employee experience. Around a third of companies already use wellbeing data to measure the impact of employee wellbeing on employee retention, engagement and motivation, with small and mid-sized companies the most likely to make the link in the next two years.

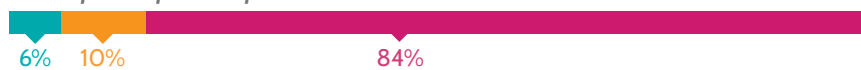
Who is accountable for wellbeing?

Figure 2.2

How does your organisation demonstrate accountability for employee wellbeing?

■ Currently do ■ Will introduce in the next two years ■ No plans to introduce

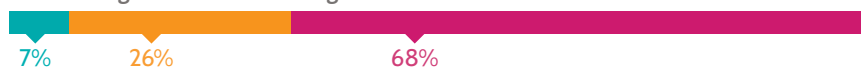
As a separate public report



Executive pay linked to employee wellbeing factors



Line managers are set wellbeing KPIs



Part of our procurement process within supply chains



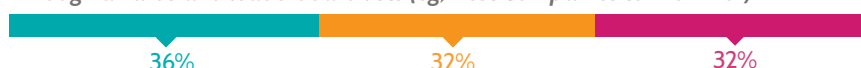
Report on wellbeing in annual report and accounts



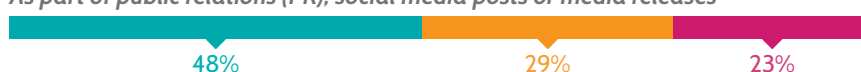
As part of ESG/CSR/sustainability reporting to investors



Through awards and leaderboard lists (eg, Best Companies to Work For)



As part of public relations (PR), social media posts or media releases



Part of stated DEI objectives



It is part of our ESG/CSR/sustainability goals and/or corporate purpose



As part of employer brand (eg, included in recruitment literature, promoted on company website, etc)



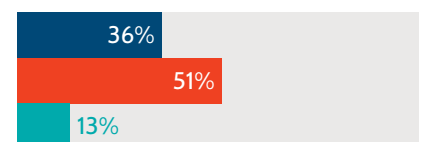
Figure 2.1

Linking wellbeing to retention, engagement and motivation

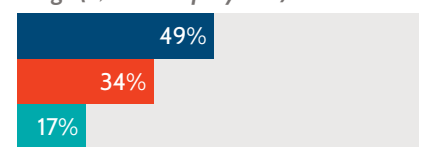
Percentage that plan to use wellbeing data to measure the impact of wellbeing on retention, engagement and motivation either now or in the next two years

■ Currently do ■ Plan to do in the next two years ■ No plans

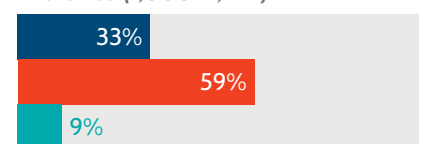
Overall



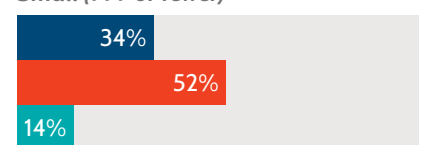
Large (5,000 employees+)



Mid-sized (1,000-4,999)



Small (999 or fewer)



An organisational approach to wellbeing carries distinct responsibilities for HR and reward professionals, line managers, occupational health professionals, board members and employees themselves. But how do employers demonstrate that accountability publicly?

The most common response to this question is as part of their employer brand, with 92% of employers already taking actions such as including this in recruitment literature or on company websites, and 77% using this as part of PR campaigns.

Wellbeing is a positive promotional story for employers, but it is also becoming integral to broader business objectives as well. Half have employee wellbeing within their ESG/CSR/sustainability goals and/or their corporate purpose, and 28% plan to add it in the next two years.

Research from the [High Pay Centre](https://highpaycentre.org) has found that 80% of FTSE 100 companies include a specific KPI related to the workforce in their annual report and accounts, but reporting on employee mental wellbeing, for example, is a “work in progress”¹.

Our research suggests that half of employers are engaged with the idea of reporting on wellbeing to investors. Nearly a third (31%) of respondents refer to their employee wellbeing within their ESG, CSR or sustainability reporting to investors.

Line managers need more support within wellbeing strategies

Which of the following are risks to employee wellbeing in your organisation?

(Percentage that said this was either a current or future risk)



66%

Line managers are not engaged with wellbeing



62%

Line managers are unaware of wellbeing benefits

Reward professionals are well aware of the pivotal role line managers play in influencing the workforce's health and wellbeing. In 2022, the majority (70%) said line managers enable a caring culture at their companies, 68% said they create a safe working space for all employees, and in 43% of companies employers said they act as an entry point for their teams to wellbeing programmes and strategies.

But our 2023 findings show that line managers need better understanding of wellbeing. They are not engaged with wellbeing in two-thirds of organisations, and a similar proportion say line managers are unaware of wellbeing benefits. These two findings are the fifth and sixth most common risks to wellbeing among our respondents.

Why are line managers not as engaged with wellbeing as we would like them to be? One reason may be the way organisations demonstrate accountability for employee wellbeing. Just 7% currently set wellbeing KPIs for line managers, and 5% for senior leaders or executives.

This could be set to change in future, with 26% of respondents planning to set wellbeing KPIs for managers within the next two years.

¹ https://highpaycentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Workforce-planning_WEB-1.pdf

Another factor could be that pressures on all employees apply to line managers as much as anyone else in an organisation. About a third (32%) of respondents say that the impact of organisational or transformational change on employee wellbeing is a current risk, and 39% believe it will become so in the next two years. Skills shortages are also putting pressure on employee wellbeing and are likely to have a direct effect on managers. This poses a risk to 44% of companies now and to 30% in the next two years.

Employer insight: engaging line managers with wellbeing

Engaging line managers with wellbeing benefits and initiatives was consistently identified as a challenge in our employer-led round-table debates.

Here are some top tips from round-table participants to help better engage line managers with employee wellbeing:

- Integrating wellbeing into the culture of an organisation helps to support and reinforce wellbeing communications and, in turn, will naturally become a part of managers' broader training.
- Wellbeing should be considered holistically – it's not just about benefits. Line managers should consider flexible working policies, how to listen to employees' needs and how an organisation's culture should influence their management approach.
- Create accountability by making wellbeing part of line managers' development plans and to encourage regular conversations between line managers and their teams.
- Share wellbeing data with line managers to give them a better understanding about the role of wellbeing in supporting the business.
- Take advantage of line manager training offered by benefits providers. Many have a host of resources to support line managers.
- Educate line managers around referrals to healthcare benefits so they better understand when they should be making one, and when an alternative provision might be more appropriate.
- Create a wellbeing toolkit for managers so they understand what's on offer and how best to signpost to these benefits.
- Deepen employees' ownership of their own wellbeing, through regular conversations in the workplace as well as health assessments and building on national awareness days.



**BIG
SHIFT**

+116%

Wellbeing and supply chains

Businesses want to see evidence of good employee wellbeing in their supply chains. The percentage of organisations that plan to explore accountability for wellbeing as part of their procurement process is set to more than double from 24% currently to 52% within the next two years. This is good news, showing that employee wellbeing is increasingly becoming part of business decision-making processes when building commercial partnerships.

Case study: wellbeing as part of employee experience

EXPERT VIEW

Ian Grimshaw

Global Benefits Director
Dentsu



“Our employees are mostly young and creative Millennials or Gen Z”

Dentsu is a global advertising, public relations and creative agency and we have grown quickly through the acquisition of smaller companies.

Our employees are mostly young and creative Millennials or Gen Z, but we also have an ageing workforce in some parts of the organisation at a senior level.

Wellbeing is part of our employee experience at global level, so we look at these two elements together in developing our strategy and creating a consistent EVP.

Building a consistent approach to wellbeing

Our multiple acquisitions mean we have a decentralised model, which can lead to differences of experience within the Dentsu group. One of our key goals for wellbeing and employee experience is to bring our range of different brands together as a consistent company and offering across multiple regions, and help everyone to identify as being part of Dentsu.

At present, in some regions and teams, there is a strong focus on wellbeing, but much less support in others. In time, employees will inevitably become aware of those differences. We aim to complement state systems in the different regions where we operate in terms of wellbeing design.

Some parts of the group are also more engaged with employee experience and wellbeing than others, so we sometimes see inconsistencies even within the same country. The challenge is in finding the right balance of globalisation and decentralisation – we want to encourage ideas that work locally, but we also want to ensure a consistent employee experience.

Creating inclusive healthcare

DEI is also an important part of our employee experience plans and one of the factors we use for considering new benefits. That sometimes means taking difficult decisions about what actions will have the most impact and be cost-effective for the business. We have to weigh up offering a benefit for a small group of employees, versus what we can provide for as many people as possible globally. ‘Work anywhere’ can’t work without an egalitarian approach, so harmonising benefits is important and supports mobility.

Offering time off is one way that we can give support everywhere. For example, we have company-wide global mental health days each year, where everyone can take time away from work to focus on their own wellbeing. During that time, we saw around a 60% fall in email traffic, so employees were also less worried about inbox overload when they returned to work.

Employees also have additional wellbeing days that they can use for any reason – such as menopause issues, mental health or simply not feeling like work. These days off are valuable, but not everyone is aware of them, so we want to make sure that our communications are also working effectively.

Overall, we want to create a culture where people can thrive, and where we support employees when they are having a difficult time. That can mean empowering line managers and driving mindset changes across the whole organisation or in particular teams.

Engagement is a global challenge



28%

Of UK employees
are languishing



24%

Of UK employees
are struggling

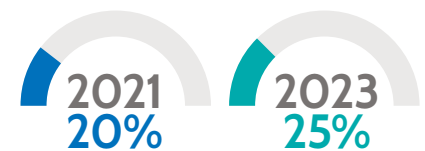
(Source: AXA Mind Health Index)

AXA's Mind Health Index study found that in the UK over a quarter of respondents describe themselves as 'languishing' and just below a quarter are 'struggling'.² Outside the UK, one-third of employees said they were 'just getting by' at work, so had some sense of wellbeing but not enough to describe themselves as 'flourishing'.³

Wellbeing continues to become more closely linked with business strategy

A quarter of respondents have a set of closely integrated wellbeing pillars and link wellbeing to business strategy. This figure has climbed steadily since we first asked the question in 2021.

The proportion of companies with closely integrated wellbeing pillars that are linked to business strategy is gradually increasing



A static third of companies have some integration between wellbeing pillars, but not a truly joined-up approach

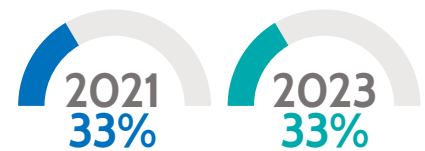


Figure 2.3

How well evolved is your organisation's wellbeing strategy?

Our pillars are closely integrated and wellbeing is linked to business strategy

25%

Our pillars are integrated but wellbeing is not linked to business strategy

14%

Some integration between pillars but not a truly joined-up approach

33%

Disparate benefits, which are grouped as wellbeing but are not joined-up

15%

Disparate benefits, which are not grouped as wellbeing and are not joined-up

8%

We do not have a wellbeing strategy

5%

² https://www-axa-com.cdn.axa-contento-118412.eu/www-axa-com/c8d15a4d-ee4a-49cf-af24-1ab4b7025d37_axa_mindhealthstudy2022_c.pdf

³ https://www-axa-com.cdn.axa-contento-118412.eu/www-axa-com/c8d15a4d-ee4a-49cf-af24-1ab4b7025d37_axa_mindhealthstudy2022_c.pdf

3. Wellbeing data is becoming more sophisticated

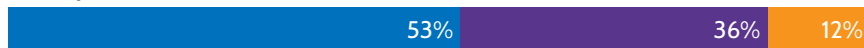
The way employers are collecting and using data reflects a shift towards recognising wellbeing issues and business risks such as an ageing population in the workplace, with data analysis becoming increasingly sophisticated within the next two years.

Figure 3.1

Using data to recognise future wellbeing trends

■ Currently do ■ Will introduce in the next two years ■ No plans to introduce

Identify DEI issues



Inform future health focus/wellbeing strategy priorities



Ensure equity and equality of healthcare across the workforce



Identify links between current working practices and wellbeing



Measure impact of wellbeing on employee retention/engagement/motivation



Predict cost of insurance risk



Measure impact of wellbeing on employee performance



Measure cost of lost business or productivity resulting from wellbeing issues



Predict future cost risks to the business resulting from wellbeing issues



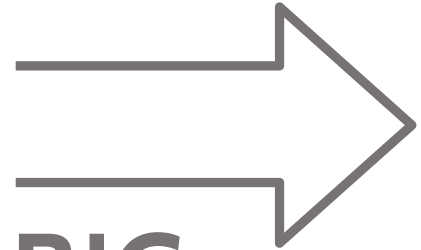
Predict return on wellbeing investment



Cost analysis of impact of wellbeing on HR goals



Set KPIs for senior managers and/or executives



**BIG
SHIFT
19%**

**Currently use wellbeing
data to predict
future cost risks**

50%

**Plan to do so in the
next two years**

Employers plan to make better use of wellbeing data to predict future cost risks. This may reflect an anticipation that, given the current financial climate, more scrutiny will be applied to return on investment and the benefits to the wider business of wellbeing initiatives. There is also likely to be more focus on outcomes and impacts as measures of success, rather than engagement with benefits alone, and this could put more scrutiny on choice and credibility of suppliers.

Case study: appreciating the ageing workforce

EXPERT VIEW

Ryan Exley

Occupational Safety
and Health Specialist
IOSH



“Flexibility and adaptability are crucial to address work design for older workers”

Organisations should ensure that older workers, over the age of 60, are not neglected from reward programmes. They need to feel heard, seen and appreciated. Older workers might be more enticed by benefits such as mentoring programmes for junior colleagues, sharing their knowledge and experiences with those who are wanting to strive towards a career.

Flexibility and adaptability are crucial across different parts of the organisation to address work design for older workers, and professionals should consider psychological as well as physical changes as workers age. Organisations need to think beyond physical and mental wellbeing to look at the broader concept of overall wellbeing, including social, financial, career and community aspects. They need to listen, add wellbeing measurements, and share the information with the wider organisation.

While occupational safety and health professionals will not directly gather wellbeing data, they should aim to collaborate with HR and other areas of the business to collect meaningful data, such as stress-related sickness and absence data, capturing feedback on the effectiveness of wellbeing programmes or inputting into worker satisfaction surveys.

Occupational health and safety and reward professionals can work together to ensure that wellbeing incentives are applicable to their workforce. One way to start is by carrying out a survey to gather information on individuals, which will help to find out what workers would like or are interested in. Putting wellbeing plans and reward incentives in place can build upon the overall culture of the organisation, encouraging skilled and experienced workers to feel recognised and valued, which will make them more likely to stay at the organisation.

Employer insights: How to get the most out of your wellbeing data

Employers feel that the quality of data they receive from their providers is improving, but identified challenges for providers and businesses.

Explore access to data outside large markets and core benefits

"In the UK and US, we have good data, but beyond that it is limited, especially outside core health plans."

Focus on outcomes

"Outcomes are my biggest priority. I want to know whether employees can get appointments quickly, whether they are treated quickly and whether they are getting better quickly."

Anonymity in small businesses or regions

"We have good data for larger countries in the business, but less so for smaller ones. We're a relatively new business, but our occupational health colleagues already want to know about usage and support."

Improve connectivity with other HR and business systems

"We are often only looking at a small part of the whole when we see wellbeing data. It's challenging to understand what an employee is really experiencing and how this affects employee engagement."

Combine sources of data

"We look at our supplier data and start to pinpoint geographies where there are specific health issues, by overlaying this with absence details, for example. However, it is difficult to consolidate multiple data sources in this way."

Six tips for integrating DEI and wellbeing benefits

1. Build a deep understanding of the makeup of your workforce, to use as the baseline for creating a wellbeing strategy.
2. Work out where there are gaps in the workforce cover, or no cover at all. In a global policy, some countries may be more engaged with DEI in general and have stronger links between DEI and wellbeing than others.
3. Tell the stories of colleagues from under-represented groups, such as disabled employees, in the workplace. "We have also had to learn lessons in how to tell stories well," said one participant. "You need to exercise sound judgement to support both the individual and the business."
4. Assess the balance between adding benefits that will have a positive effect on a wide number of employees and supporting specialist needs for a small group of employees.
5. Combine product-based benefits with support such as time off where appropriate – this may be more cost-effective and also create a positive employee experience. It can also help in situations where benefits are not yet easily available or there are challenges around cost.
6. Make DEI factors part of the consideration process for new benefits, as well as incorporating ESG factors into procurement and supply chain management.

Source: Employer insights round-table event

Wellbeing data is influencing wider business processes

Employers are increasingly linking wellbeing data with other areas of HR and business strategy. Four key areas of development are:

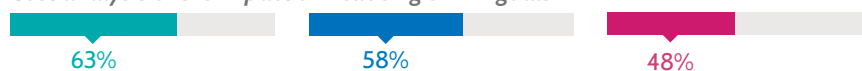
1. DEI strategies – Organisations are currently most likely to use their wellbeing data to help identify DEI issues, with 53% using information in this way. Almost half (46%) use data to ensure equity and inclusion of healthcare across the workforce, and 36% intend to do this in the next two years.
2. Predict return on investment – The area set for the largest growth is using wellbeing data to predict the return on investment in health and wellbeing benefits. Currently, just 16% of respondents do this, but well over half (56%) intend to use data in this way during the next two years.
3. HR strategy and metrics – Currently, half of employers inform their future health focus and wellbeing strategy priorities with wellbeing data, and 40% intend to do so in the next two years. The vast majority (87%) either already use wellbeing data to measure the impact of wellbeing on employee retention, motivation and engagement, or plan to do so in the next two years.
4. Impact on performance – Almost three-quarters (74%) currently or plan to use wellbeing data to measure the impact of wellbeing on employees' performance. And 67% already or intend to use data to measure the cost of lost business or productivity resulting from wellbeing issues.

Figure 3.2

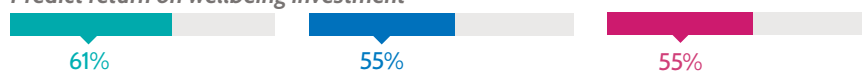
How different-sized organisations will use their wellbeing data in the next two years

■ 5,000+ employees ■ 1,000-4,999 employees ■ 1-999 employees

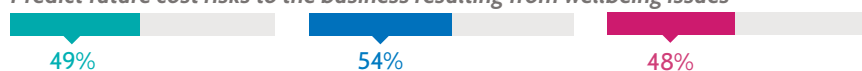
Cost analysis of the impact of wellbeing on HR goals



Predict return on wellbeing investment



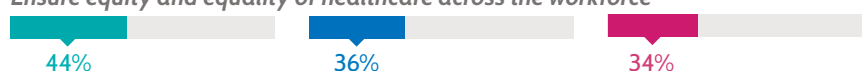
Predict future cost risks to the business resulting from wellbeing issues



Measure impact of wellbeing on employee performance



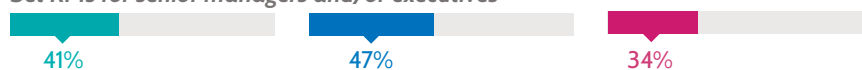
Ensure equity and equality of healthcare across the workforce



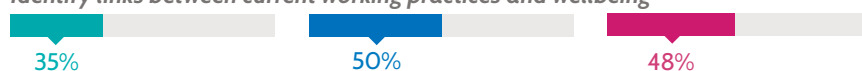
Measure cost of lost business or productivity resulting from wellbeing issues



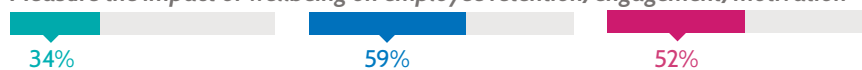
Set KPIs for senior managers and/or executives



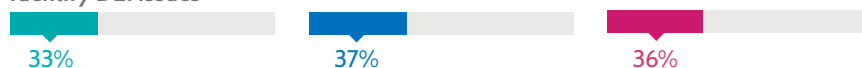
Identify links between current working practices and wellbeing



Measure the impact of wellbeing on employee retention/engagement/motivation



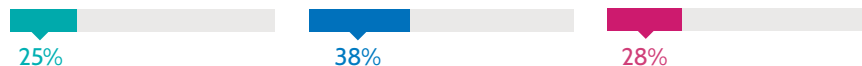
Identify DEI issues



Inform future health focus/wellbeing strategy priorities



Predict cost of insurance risk



How different-sized companies are using wellbeing data

Larger employers generally make wider use of their wellbeing data. This may point to better availability of analysis skills, or more bargaining power to request bespoke analysis from providers.

However, mid-sized companies lead the way in using wellbeing data to understand the link between wellbeing and wider business performance, in areas such as:

- Identifying DEI issues
- Ensuring equity and equality of healthcare across the workforce
- Establishing the cost of lost business or productivity resulting from wellbeing issues
- Measuring the impact of wellbeing on employee retention, engagement and motivation

Wellbeing and the over-50s

In 2022, the Office for National Statistics polled nearly 44,000 people aged over 50 in the UK to understand why so many had left the workforce during the pandemic years as part of the [Over-50s Lifestyle Study](#)⁴. For example, in May to July 2022, there were **386,096 more economically inactive adults** aged 50 to 64 years than in the pre-coronavirus pandemic period between December 2019 and February 2020⁵.

This older age group is typically at **greater risk of never returning to work** than members of younger age groups who have been economically inactive (about 400,000 people during the same period)⁶.

Analysis of the figures by consultants LCP found that the main reason for economic inactivity in the over-50s is ill health. This could be partly caused by short-term sickness evolving into long-term sickness as a result of current NHS shortages.

Three-quarters (74%) of our respondents said that skills availability versus business requirements is putting pressure on employees now or in the near future. Retaining the knowledge and experience of older workers is likely to become more important than ever.

Wellbeing benefits for a changing workforce

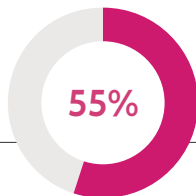
Currently, 13% of employers are increasing their spend on wellbeing benefits in relation to changing demographics, including the ageing workforce, and 38% plan to increase their spend in the next two years.

Benefits that support other demographic groups, such as women and carers at work, are also seeing growth.

Menopause

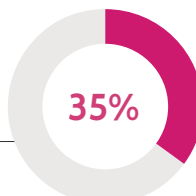
2023

55% of employers currently offer support



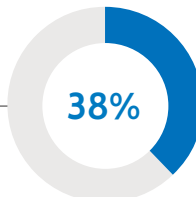
2023

35% plan to add support in the next two years



2022

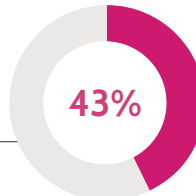
38% of employers offered support



Carers' needs

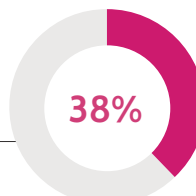
2023

43% of employers currently offer support



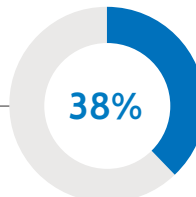
2023

38% plan to add support in the next two years



2022

38% of employers offered support



Planned uses of wellbeing data in the next two years



Cost analysis of the impact of wellbeing on HR goals

63%

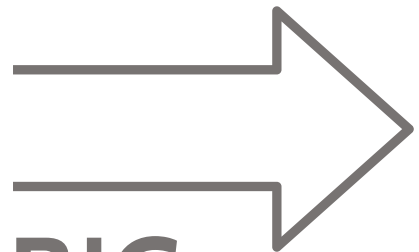
5,000+ employees

58%

1,000-4,999 employees

48%

Up to 999 employees



BIG SHIFT

81%

Supporting older workers

Age-related physical wellbeing issues are currently addressed by 38% of employers in their strategies. And 43% plan to include age in their physical wellbeing strategies in the next two years, meaning it will more than double in relevance and be an issue for 81% of employers in the next two years.

This marks an increase on last year's research, in which 28% of respondents were addressing age-related physical wellbeing themes. But the appetite was already visible then, with age-related issues being among the top five areas of growth in wellbeing strategies, with 44% saying they would focus on them.

⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/reasonsforworkersagedover50yearsleavingemploymentsinceshthetartofthecoronaviruspandemic/wave>

⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/employmentintheuk/latest>

⁶ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/reasonsforworkersagedover50yearsleavingemploymentsinceshthetartofthecoronaviruspandemic/wave2>



Health

Together, let's support every mind and body

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4. Future wellbeing trends focus on flexibility, resilience and new working methods

Employee experience is inseparable from wellbeing

When employers are inclusive and focus on encouraging diversity and equity with strong policies and initiatives, people from different groups in society feel secure and safe at work, have greater levels of wellbeing and an improved employee experience. In turn, when people have greater levels of wellbeing, they are more likely to be open to DEI initiatives.

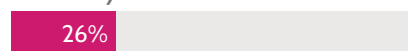
Inclusivity and a reflection of different demographics in workforces are evident across all four pillars of wellbeing (physical, mental, financial and social).

Physical

67% address women's health



26% plan to do so in the next two years

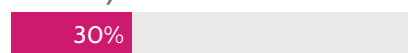


Mental

54% include inclusive and equitable mental health support

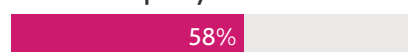


30% plan to do so in the next two years



Financial

58% include addressing financial inequality



28% plan to do so in the next two years



Social

81% include hybrid working and distributed team support



13% plan to do so in the next two years



35% address wellbeing for physically disabled employees



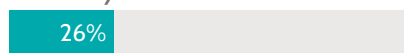
42% plan to do so in the next two years



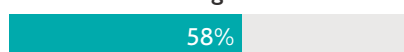
58% include support for family members with mental wellbeing issues



26% plan to do so in the next two years



58% include targeted support for the cost-of-living crisis



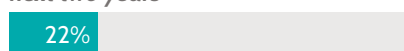
24% plan to do so in the next two years



67% include building inclusive networks



22% plan to do so in the next two years



62%

of employers already or plan to offer fertility benefits, including IVF, counselling and miscarriage support.



Health insurance trends

2022 brought record premiums in the group risk market, exceeding £3 billion for the first time, according to Swiss Re's Group Watch 2023. The total number of group risk policies also rose to 87,376, an increase of 3.6% on the previous year.⁷ More than 14.4 million people are now covered by group risk benefits in the UK.

The number of critical illness cover policies increased by 11.6% to 5,678, and there was a 5.5% increase in the membership of group life policies. More than three million people in the UK are covered by long-term disability income. Group income protection is experiencing a price increase, which, despite the interest in provision, puts employers off. In 2021, 2,775 million people were insured for annual income protection benefits totalling over £100 billion.⁸

There has been a 1.2% rise in the number of people insured under group death benefit to 10,631,009. And as of 2022, there are 8,369,502 members of registered group life policies and 2,135,095 members of excepted group life policies.

The number of UK adults using private health insurance has climbed from 12% in 2019 to 22% in December 2022, according to Statista's Consumer Insights.⁹ The market for private health and medical insurance is projected to reach £11.1 billion by 2025, and estimated to expand by 6.5% a year from 2023 to 2030.¹⁰

⁷ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/another-strong-year-group-risk-market-ron-wheatcroft/>

⁸ <https://www.grouprisk.org.uk/group-income-protection#:~:text=The%20group%20risk%20market%20insures,Swiss%20Re%20Group%20Watch%202021.>

⁹ <https://www.statista.com/chart/29261/share-of-uk-paying-for-private-health-insurance/>

¹⁰ <https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/united-kingdom-health-and-medical-insurance-market>

Themes for physical wellbeing strategies

Figure 4.1

Themes for physical wellbeing strategies

■ Currently include ■ Plan to include in the next two years ■ No plans to include

Women's health



Lifestyle (eg, healthy eating, sleep, weight, sedentary routines)



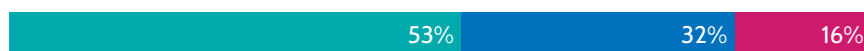
Men's health



Musculoskeletal conditions



Cancer



Age-related physical wellbeing issues



Common illnesses (eg, flu, Covid-19 and colds)



Wellbeing for physically disabled employees



Gender identity/dysphoria



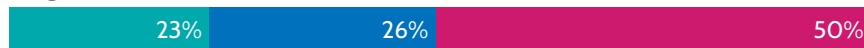
Non-communicable diseases (excluding cancer)



Metabolic diseases (eg, diabetes management)



Long Covid



Physical benefits employers currently offer



86%

Cycle-to-work scheme



82%

Discounted or free access to physical wellbeing activities (such as gym or online exercise classes)



79%

Physical health support (such as GP or physiotherapy)



75%

Vaccinations (such as flu or travel)



71%

Health/wellbeing apps



69%

Discounted or employer-paid dental or optical cover



61%

Lifestyle support (such as nutrition or sleep coaching)



59%

Health screenings/assessments (including genetics testing)



55%

Menopause support



25%

Long Covid support



14%

Gender transition services (such as steroid injections or surgery)

Themes for mental wellbeing strategies

Figure 4.2

Areas that mental wellbeing strategies will address

■ Currently include ■ Plan to include in the next two years ■ No plans to include

Removing stigma of mental ill health at work



Stress, anxiety, depression and burnout



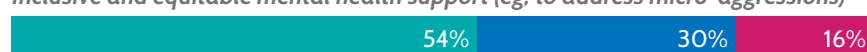
Developing mental resilience



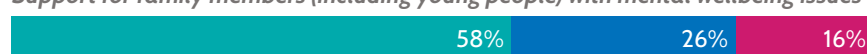
Emotionally difficult life events (eg, bereavement, domestic abuse, divorce)



Inclusive and equitable mental health support (eg, to address micro-aggressions)



Support for family members (including young people) with mental wellbeing issues



Clinically diagnosed psychological or psychiatric conditions (eg, post-traumatic stress disorder, bi-polar, obsessive compulsive disorder, depression)



Addictions (eg, drugs, alcohol, gambling)



Mental wellbeing benefits employers currently offer



92%

Employee assistance programme



83%

Clinical-level counselling sessions



73%

Support for personal trauma (such as bereavement and domestic abuse)



65%

Resilience or mental health workshops



64%

Mental wellbeing coaching



63%

Extension of mental wellbeing benefits to family members



54%

Mental wellbeing management/coaching via an app



50%

In-patient treatment for mental health conditions



45%

Mental health-focused roadshow or day



38%

Addiction support

Themes for financial wellbeing strategies

Figure 4.3

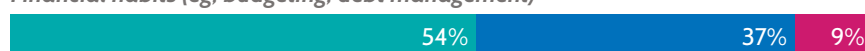
Areas that financial wellbeing strategies will address

■ Currently include ■ Plan to include in the next two years ■ No plans to include

Financial planning for retirement



Financial habits (eg, budgeting, debt management)



Impact of money worries on mental wellbeing



Building financial resilience



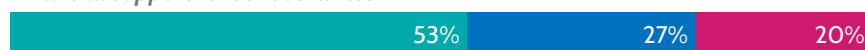
Addressing financial inequality (eg, acting on gender pay gaps, exploring other gaps beyond legislative requirements)



Targeted support for cost-of-living crisis



Financial support for serious illness



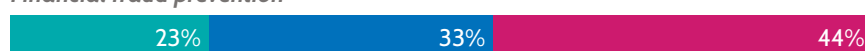
Financial planning for the medium term (eg, mortgage, parenthood)



Financial planning for the short term (eg, emergencies, Christmas savings)



Financial fraud prevention



Inheritance planning



Financial wellbeing benefits employers currently offer



87%

Support for mental wellbeing related to money (via EAP)



85%

Support for serious illness or death



82%

Pension contributions above auto-enrolment minimums



82%

Product discounts scheme



56%

Retirement-specific financial education or advice



48%

Financial education or coaching



47%

Access to financial advice



39%

Debt management support



28%

Writing of wills and lasting power of attorney documents



24%

Payroll or sidecar savings scheme



21%

Workplace ISA



16%

Mortgage or rental support



11%

Inclusive financial wellbeing (eg, Shariah finance pension)

Themes for social wellbeing strategies

Figure 4.4

Areas that social wellbeing strategies will address

■ Currently include ■ Plan to include in the next two years ■ No plans to include

Hybrid working and distributed team support



Contributing to the community



Employee connections and interaction



Building inclusive networks



Psychological safety (eg, ability to be yourself at work)



Life events (eg, marriage, bereavement)



Carers' needs



Loneliness and isolation



Employers are prepared to spend more to create more inclusive wellbeing

31% of employers say wellbeing spend has increased as a result of offering more support for different employee groups

20% are currently increasing spend to expand what is covered by insurance, such as additional counselling sessions and cancer support

34% will increase spend in this area in the next two years

33% will increase spend in this area in the next two years

Our research has found that wellbeing is becoming more inclusive in terms of the breadth of benefits offered and has greater depth in the support extended to specific groups of people. The majority of respondents (65%) say that this is either already increasing wellbeing spend or will do so in the future. However, this appears to be a cost that business is prepared to embrace - one-fifth of respondents say that expanding their wellbeing benefits offering to be more equitable across the workforce will have an impact on budget, and double this proportion of companies are planning to increase their spend in this area in the next two years.

More than three-quarters (77%) of companies say a key priority is to use their wellbeing strategy to create a more diverse and inclusive culture over the next two years, and a quarter say it is important. Just 3% say a diverse and inclusive culture is not relevant in the next two years.

Social wellbeing benefits employers currently offer



80%

Social events in the workplace (such as a free lunch or mentoring)



76%

Volunteering programme



75%

Team celebration of significant events (such as birthdays, awards)



71%

Employee networks/resource groups (such as LGBTQ+, women, parents)



68%

Recognition programme



65%

Counselling or other service to support remote and hybrid workers (addressing issues such as isolation or loneliness)



58%

Sports and/or social clubs



48%

Family support (such as childcare and eldercare)

Case study: creating a flexible wellbeing strategy

EXPERT VIEW

Tom Gardner

Head of Reward
Sky



“Where employees are working flexibly, we use this as an opportunity to re-communicate related benefits”

Wellbeing has always been part of our benefits offering at Sky, so, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, we didn't have to create a new offering, but we did have to think about how we communicate it.

We want to be able to offer the same general wellbeing and healthcare benefits for everyone, and to look at the diverse people, skills and job roles we have to make sure we are being inclusive. That has meant realigning some legacy principles to serve our wider audience and recognising our demographic trends with a mostly young workforce.

Listening to employees

Sky carries out targeted listening with our employees. Most understand that the reward and benefits offering is comprehensive, but flexibility is also very important and we formally recognise hybrid working. Where employees are working flexibly, we use this as an opportunity to re-communicate related benefits, such as holiday buying, for example, and how employees can use their healthcare plans to support them when working flexibly.

Sometimes, even longstanding employees don't understand the full purpose and extent of the package, so we have been reiterating our three-pillar approach recently in communications.

We use employee forums to help communicate the wellbeing package and also understand how effective it is, but there are important governance challenges around the ebb and flow of how influential forums can be. Some will be very active and potentially have a strong influence on our benefits plans – whereas other groups may be more marginalised. That does need a central voice to make sure that influence is regulated. We also need to make sure that misunderstandings don't result in misinformation being shared across forums.

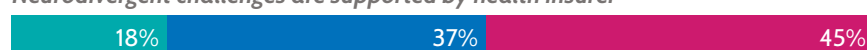
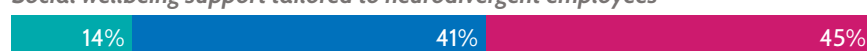
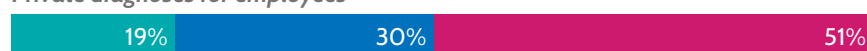
Governance of employee involvement is also essential to other aspects of our wellbeing approach. For example, while we want line managers to be open about their mental health resilience, it is important to make sure that people can balance sharing their own story appropriately with what is needed to support other employees and being able to spot signs of stress.

There is trepidation about the next few years for both customers and our own people. We have a cost-of-living checklist – we want to make sure we can get our people through the cost-of-living crisis, and sustain that with good financial habit building. We also need to encourage employees to be self-reliant. Across the global group there are different concepts of where employer responsibility starts and ends – we want people to have more than the state offers, but not to replace the state.

Figure 4.4

Wellbeing support for neurodivergent employees

■ Currently offer ■ Plan to offer in the next two years ■ No plans to offer

Flexibility in job design to meet neurodivergent needs*Redesigned HR processes or policies to better accommodate neurodivergent talent**Changes to workplace environment (eg, quiet working areas, areas of low sensory stimulation, areas with more sensory stimulation)**Mental health support tailored to neurodivergent employees**Physical wellbeing support tailored to neurodivergent employees**Neurodivergent challenges are supported by health insurer**Social wellbeing support tailored to neurodivergent employees**Private diagnoses for employees**Benefits specifically to support neurodivergent employees**Financial wellbeing support tailored to neurodivergent employees**Private diagnoses for family members***Growing trends: neurodiversity**

In our [Employee Wellbeing Research 2022](#), we found that support for neurodivergent employees was one of the top five areas for growth. While 21% of respondents already included neurodiversity within their mental wellbeing initiatives, 43% planned to include it in the next two years. And 41% of companies intended to address neurodiversity within their wellbeing strategies within the next two years.

This year, we've delved deeper into what kinds of support employers are offering neurodivergent members of their workforce.

The biggest areas of support are focused on HR policies, such as flexibility in job design to meet neurodivergent needs (75% already offer or plan to add this), and redesigning HR processes and policies to better accommodate talent (71%). Just over half (52%) believe wellbeing support for neurodiversity helps improve employee engagement.

Mental, physical and social wellbeing support tailored for neurodivergent employees are also all areas set for growth over the next two years, and there is significant future growth in providing benefits specifically to support neurodivergent employees. At present, just 6% of respondents offer this, but 41% plan to add it in the next two years.

Reasons for supporting neurodivergence

Figure 4.5

Why employers support neurodivergence within their wellbeing strategies

It aligns with our wider DEI strategy

63%

Improve employee engagement

52%

Support employees or their family members who have a diagnosis of neurodivergent conditions

49%

Support employees or their family members who may have undiagnosed or undisclosed neurodivergence

46%

Open up new recruitment opportunities

44%

Three tips for creating a supportive workplace for neurodivergent employees

1. Take a person-centred approach – speak to the individual about what they need, rather than putting people into boxes.
2. Employee relations groups are an invaluable source of expertise and compassion.
3. Look at existing diversity and inclusion policies and practices to make sure they take neurodiversity into account.

Source: [Supporting neurodiversity at work | AXA Health](#)

The drive to support psychological safety

Workplace mental health is continuing to evolve, especially with the launch of ISO 45003 psychological health and safety at work certification. Interest in supporting psychological safety in the workplace is increasing.

Broadly speaking, psychological safety comes down to the way that work is organised, the working environment and social factors. For many organisations this includes providing a safe working environment, where employees feel free to speak up and to be their authentic selves – something that also links with DEI aims.

Amanda Dini, Head of UK and Ireland Compensation and Benefits at Ipsen Biopharm, explains that its wellbeing ambassadors are crucial to supporting a culture of psychological safety.

“They’re somebody to go to and speak about health, confidentially, in a safe environment, who will be empathetic and open minded, diverse and supportive, be a good listener, non-judgemental and just make the employee feel more valued and included.”

5. Wellbeing spend remains stable, with more cost scrutiny ahead

Budgets remain relatively stable

Figure 5.1

How will your wellbeing budget change in 2023 in the areas of physical, mental, financial and social wellbeing, and overall?

■ It will increase
 ■ It will stay the same
 ■ It will decrease
 ■ We do not spend in this area

Overall strategy



Financial wellbeing



Mental wellbeing



Physical wellbeing



Social wellbeing



Well over one-third (38%) of respondents will increase their overall spend on wellbeing this year, with increases most likely in the areas of financial (34%) and mental (32%) wellbeing.

In contrast, just 25% expect to increase spending on physical wellbeing, and less than a quarter (22%) plan to spend more on social wellbeing – although this may reflect that many initiatives related to social wellbeing, such as volunteering and social events for colleagues, are not traditional areas for employee benefits spend.

Only 5% of respondents expect their overall wellbeing budget to decrease in 2023, with cuts more likely for social (7%) and physical (6%) wellbeing than for mental (4%) or financial (3%) wellbeing. The majority (54%) expect that their wellbeing budget will stay the same in 2023.

In addition, 45% of employers expect to see their wellbeing spend increase in the next two years in response to employee demands/requests for additional benefits. And 5% of respondents think their wellbeing spend will decrease in the next two years as a result of shrinking wellbeing budgets.

However, respondents anticipate a much closer focus on cost in the future. For example, currently, just 16% of respondents use wellbeing data to predict the return on their wellbeing investment. This is an area set for the significant growth, with 56% of employers planning to introduce this in the next two years.

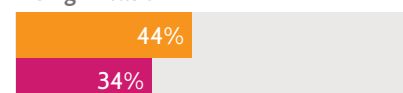
And just as the cost-of-living crisis is the biggest risk to employees' wellbeing, so rising inflation is having the most pronounced impact on wellbeing. A total of 44% of respondents cite it as a reason for increasing their spending in this area.

Figure 5.2

What is affecting wellbeing spend?

■ Now
 ■ In the next two years

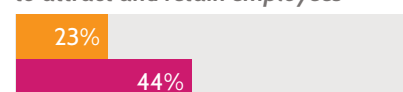
Rising inflation



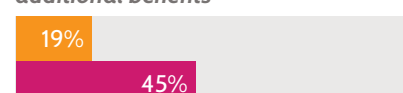
Size of allocated wellbeing budget



Need to improve wellbeing benefits to attract and retain employees



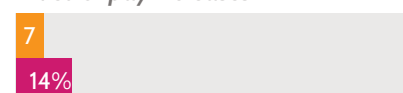
Employee demands/requests for additional benefits



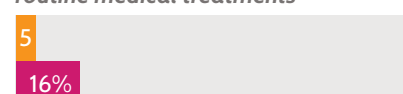
Impact of delayed diagnosis of chronic illness



Offering wellbeing benefits in lieu of pay increases



Support for employees self-funding routine medical treatments



Case study: line managers – the ‘squeezed middle’

EXPERT VIEW

Charles Cotton

Senior Reward Adviser
CIPD



Rachel Suff

Senior Wellbeing Adviser
CIPD



“Line managers are very often the ‘squeezed middle’, facing competing demands and under pressure to deliver on operational priorities as well as their people management responsibilities”

We know from our research at the CIPD that there's an increasing expectation for line managers to support people's health and wellbeing in several ways, for example:

- managing absence and return to work
- making reasonable adjustments
- supporting mental wellbeing
- tackling work-related stress.

That expectation is not misplaced: with implementation of people management policies devolved to line managers, they have the day-to-day relationship with employees in their team. This means they should be well placed to have supportive and sensitive conversations about wellbeing issues. Line managers are also responsible for workloads and deadlines, as well as other areas that can affect people's wellbeing, such as performance management.

To carry out this responsibility effectively, they need support, guidance and training from the organisation. But we know from [our research](#) that in many organisations there is a stubborn gap between the expectations for managers to support wellbeing and the level of investment in their confidence and capability. For example, under half of organisations (44%) have trained managers to support people with mental ill health.

Line managers are very often the ‘squeezed middle’, facing competing demands and under pressure to deliver on operational priorities as well as their people management responsibilities. The latter should not be an ‘add on’ – managers need to understand what their role is for supporting wellbeing and where the boundaries lie. They are not medical experts or counsellors but should signpost to specialist help where needed, make helpful adjustments and make sure work is not part of the problem.

CIPD research reveals that while 61% of workers surveyed in the winter 2022 [Labour Market Outlook](#) said that they were able to keep up with their bills and credit commitments without any difficulties, by winter 2023 this proportion had fallen to 48%.

Our research also uncovers an increase in the proportion of workers reporting that money worries have affected their ability to do their job from 28% to 33%. These worries are reflected in increases in the percentages of the staff reporting health problems or finding it hard to concentrate at work.

Of course, just as employees are facing a cost-of-living crisis, many employers are facing a cost-of-doing-business crisis, limiting the support they can offer. Nevertheless, we're still encouraging organisations to review what they can do to support line managers and wider workplace financial wellbeing.

Figure 5.3

How wellbeing strategy will be used to achieve business sustainability objectives over the next two years

■ Key priority ■ Important but not a priority ■ Not relevant in the next two years

Creating a positive workplace culture



Being an employer of choice



Creating a more diverse and inclusive culture



Improving employee productivity



Being a long-term sustainable business (eg, by building a resilient workforce)



Being a purposeful business



Creating a good impact on society



Achieving good workforce governance



Meeting environmental targets (eg, net zero)



Assisting organisational transformation



Developing different skill sets



Becoming a more digital, technology or automation-driven organisation



Employers are recognising that additional spend on wellbeing contributes to wider business goals, long-term business sustainability and a better employee experience. There are clear links to the war for talent, with 80% saying that a positive workplace culture is a key priority for the next two years, and 72% using wellbeing to position themselves as an employer of choice.

The impact of wellbeing on building a long-term sustainable business (60% say this is a key priority), assisting organisational transformation (41%) and being a more purposeful business (55%) shows how embedded wellbeing has become in business culture as a whole.

Case study: how The AA plans to enhance wellbeing to retain talent

EXPERT VIEW

Oliver Atkinson

Head of Benefits and Wellbeing
The AA



“We’re already taking steps to improve engagement by carrying out employee surveys”

The AA is a diverse organisation with just over 7,000 employees working in a variety of roles, from patrol teams out on the road through to our insurance and legal teams.

One of our main business goals is to retain staff and so, as part of that, we’re looking at how we can enhance our wellbeing and benefits offering to really improve the overall job package. Consolidation is playing a big part in this process to ensure we are spending our resources in the right place to give our employees the best possible benefit and wellbeing package.

Overall, wellbeing is viewed favourably within the organisation. In our latest annual employee survey, access to wellbeing scored 81%, so our focus going forward is trying to understand what we want to achieve with wellbeing and use that information to plug any gaps in our provision. A clear one is the need to be more proactive in our approach, rather than reactive.

Engaging older workers

Our patrol teams, who are typically above the age of 50 and male, are particularly susceptible to musculoskeletal injuries, which are quite a high cause of sickness absence. Although they can self-refer to physiotherapy, we want to explore what we can do prior to that. What can we do to get them looking after themselves and can we motivate them through incentivisation?

However, before we do that, the main barrier is engaging this group with benefits and their wellbeing and accessing them, as they spend the majority of their time on the road.

We’re already taking steps to improve engagement by carrying out employee surveys, taking an active part in networking groups, running topical webinars and regularly speaking with their managers about the wellbeing services so information can be cascaded down. We also plan to do a benefits roadshow later in the year.

So, for us, the first step is to start engaging that workforce and find out what they really want, and what benefits and wellbeing initiatives this population of older male workers would really value.

6. Conclusions and action points

From our supporting partner, AXA Health

Build wellbeing strategies that support both mind and body

Why? Organisational change, automation and the impact of skills gaps are among the fastest-emerging wellbeing risks over the next two years. Creating wellbeing strategies that support employees' resilience through change will help to retain key talent and enable everyone to perform at their best.

Action: Simple changes to employees' mental and physical health can improve resilience – but only if they are embedded as a part of workplace culture. Equip line managers with the tools and practices to support employees' wellbeing and include wellbeing needs as part of business change plans.



Work collaboratively to empower neurodivergent colleagues

Why? At work, neurodivergent employees offer unique skills, including analytical thinking, complex problem solving, creativity, innovation and empathy. Neurodiversity at work makes business sense, and so strengthening neurodiversity support must be a focus of DEI agendas.

Action: To create a wellbeing strategy that supports neurodivergent colleagues requires collaboration inclusive of neurodivergent colleagues, HR, wellbeing, reward and benefits. With wait times for an assessment often long and stressful, consider connecting your employees, and their eligible family members to timely assessments and early guidance.



Address life-stage-related wellbeing

Why? From menopause support, to fertility, to increased rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes, developing your wellbeing strategy through a life stage lens can support your employees at much-needed periods of their lives. The reality is that more and more people are navigating these health challenges while in employment.

Action: Understand different life-stage-related wellbeing challenges and needs among employees, based on close analysis of your workforce to inform and evolve your future strategy.



Train line managers to help reduce future wellbeing risk

Why? When line managers are engaged with good working practices and are aware of their available wellbeing benefits, they become better placed to help employees understand the value of what's on offer and how to access it.

Action: Help managers to become an effective first point of contact. Equip them with knowledge to champion wellbeing strategies, and to explain benefits to help employees make the most of workplace health support. Managers can then play an active role in mitigating and even preventing health issues.



Support employees' mind health through the cost-of-living crisis

Why? The cost-of-living crisis has intensified the relationship between employee wellbeing and socio-economic factors, as well as highlighting the close links between financial and mental wellbeing.

Action: Normalise conversations about money worries at work and train line managers to support employees in speaking openly about all aspects of mental health-related issues. Remove barriers to seeking psychological support. Help employees by signposting to expert support, such as counselling or an EAP, as well as free debt and money guidance services, and where possible design roles flexibly so that employees can access help where they need it.



About AXA Health

We're here to keep your business happy and healthy, and help your employees bring their best selves to work. Working alongside businesses large and small, our dedicated client team has a deep understanding of what helps your business stay well, and our range of health and wellbeing services support from prevention through to treatment. Together, let's unwrap the value of wellbeing for your organisation.

For more information, contact: wellbeing@axahealth.co.uk

Website: www.axahealth.co.uk/business

7. Appendix

Appendix 1: About the survey

The REBA Employee Wellbeing Survey 2023, in collaboration with AXA Health, was carried out online between November 2022 and January 2023. Responses were received from 265 wellbeing, HR and employee benefits specialists working at organisations of various sizes and across a broad range of industry sectors.

Figure 7.1

Respondents by organisation size

1-49	5%
50-99	3%
100-249	12%
250-499	9%
500-999	15%
1,000-4,999	37%
5,000-9,999	9%
10,000-19,999	5%
20,000+	6%

Figure 7.2

Respondents by industry sector

Professional services	18%
Financial services	14%
Media, IT and telecommunications	14%
Retail	8%
Not-for-profit sector	8%
Manufacturing and production	8%
Engineering and construction	7%
Public sector	7%
Health and pharmaceuticals	4%
Leisure and travel	4%
Transport and logistics	4%
Utilities and energy	3%
Mining, oil and gas	1%

Reward & Employee Benefits Association

REBA is the professional networking community for reward and benefits practitioners.

We make members' working lives easier by saving them time, money and effort through sharing experience, ideas, data and insight with each other.

Contact REBA:

Debi O'Donovan, co-founder:

debi.odonovan@reba.global

Phil Hayne, co-founder:

phil.hayne@reba.global or

0771 466 0857

Website: www.reba.global

Twitter: @Reba_Global

LinkedIn: Reward & Benefits Association

reba

Reward & Employee
Benefits Association

Appendix 2: Full list of respondents

A.P. Møller – Maersk	Blake Morgan	Department for Work & Pensions
Abri	Blue Mining	Deutsche Post
ABS	BlueSky	DHL Supply Chain
Accenture	Bluewave	e-Centric Innovations
AccorInvest	BNP Paribas	Eccocar Sharing
Acushnet Europe	Boston Scientific	Electronic Arts Software
Adobe	Bouygues	Element Six
AECOM	Brambles	Energo-Pro
Aegon UK	calfordseaden	Entain
Amcor	Camellia Plc	Ericsson
Angel Trains	Canada Life	ERM – Environmental Resources Management
Anglian Water	Cancer Research UK	Esken
Aon	Caseware	Eversheds Sutherland
Aptos	Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland	Eversholt Rail
Arch Capital	Circle Insurance Services	Experian Plc
Asda	Claire's	FedEx
Ashurst	CLC Group	Finning
ASOS	Clifford Chance	First Central Insurance
Aspris Children's Services	Climate Group	Fred Perry
Assurant	CloudPay	Gatwick Airport
AstraZeneca	Clyde & Co	Girls' Day School Trust
Avanade	CNOOC	Gowling WLG
Avery UK	Colgate-Palmolive	Grant Thornton
AVEVA	Columbia Threadneedle Investments	Greenwoods Legal
Aztec Group	Commonwealth War Graves Commission	GSK
Babcock International	COOK Trading	GWI
Balfour Beatty	Costa Coffee	Haleon
Beazley	Cox Automotive	Harrison Spinks
Beko	Curtis Banks	Harvey Nichols Group
Berry Bros. & Rudd	Dachser	Havas UK
Bettys & Taylors Group	Dassault Systèmes	Hawksmoor
Bidwells	DBS Bank	Hearst UK
BlackRock	Dentsu	Hightown Housing Association

Hilton Food Group	Maples and Calder	Progress Housing Group
HMQ Partners	Markerstudy	Protective Life
Howden	McCann Central	Pure Storage
HSBC Holdings	McDonald's Restaurants	Puyvast Africa
Hymans Robertson	Medallia	QA
IMC Pan Asia Alliance	Mercedes-Benz	Qualcomm
Imperial Brands	Merck Group	Quartz
Incorporate Benefits	MFS International	Rathbones
Inenco Group	Michelin	Raytheon UK
InMoment	Mondel z International	Reckitt
Interflora	Moody's	Red Hat
International SOS	Motorclean	Redmayne-Bentley
Ipsen Biopharm	MS Amlin	RELX
Ipsos	MUFG	ResMed
IQVIA	Narrow Quay	RGP
Joules	National Nuclear Laboratory	Richer Sounds
JPM HR	NHS Property Services	Ricoh UK
Kellogg	Nikko Asset Management Europe	Robert Walters
Kerry Group	NMS Infrastructure	Ropes & Gray International
Kier	Nominet UK	Santander UK
Kindred Group	Norton Rose Fulbright	Savannah Energy
knoell	Nottingham City Council	Sciensus
KPMG	NTT DATA UK	ScottishPower
Kraft Heinz	Openfield Agriculture	Seasalt
Kuehne+Nagel	Ørsted	Secure Trust Bank
Leeds Beckett University	Oscar	Sedulo
Leeds Building Society	Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance	Serco
Lendlease	Palletways	Severn Trent
Leonardo	Paramount	Shell
Lewis Silkin	Parker Hannifin Manufacturing	Shoosmiths
Lockheed Martin UK	Platform Housing Group	Simplyhealth
Lovat Parks	Precision Polymer Engineering Ltd	Sky
Macfarlanes	Prescient Healthcare Group	Slalom
Magnox	Primark	SLB

Snappy Shopper	The AJR	Unite Students
SNC-Lavalin	The British Library	University of Derby
Social Chain	The Co-operative Group	University of Manchester
Société Générale	The Donkey Sanctuary	UPP
Sprinklr	The Honorary Society of the Middle Temple	Vencora
Stantec UK	The Hyde Group	Viking Raja Group
Stäubli UK	The Pirbright Institute	Virgin Media O2
Stephenson Harwood	The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	VMware
Stilwell & Singleton	The Very Group	Volkswagen Financial Services (UK)
Stowe Family Law	Three	Warner Music
Superdrug & Savers	Timpson	Watlow
Swiss Re	TJX Europe	West Midlands Trains
T Bailey	Towergate Health & Protection	Westminster City Council
T-Systems	Transpennine Route Upgrade	Whistl UK
T2 Media	Travers Smith	Wickes
Take-Two Interactive Software	Trayport	Wienerberger
TalkTalk	TRL	Workday
Taylor Wessing	TUI	Wycliffe UK
Ted Baker	Turcan Connell	Wyndham Hotels & Resorts
Teesside University	UK Export Finance	Yusen Logistics UK
Terumo Europe	Unilever	Zego Insurance
The AA		



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