

The power of positive resilience



It's early days but, so far, the 2020s aren't winning any prizes as the UK workforce's favourite decade. Times are tougher, belts are tighter, and pension scheme membership is under pressure as employees navigate the seismic shift in the status quo from early 2020 to now. The cumulative impact of the pandemic, the rise of working from home, the cost-of-living crisis and more cannot be underestimated.

Barnett Waddingham's latest wellbeing research

Barnett Waddingham recently surveyed 3,000 employees, representing a cross section of full and part-time permanent workers, across all major industries and locations throughout the UK.

Across 30 wide-ranging questions, we wanted to discover what support was being made available by employers, both financial and wellbeing focussed, and if it was adequately covering the needs of employees.



Key findings - cost-of-living

The cost-of-living crisis has had an impact on most people, and our findings support this. The greater impact appears to be on women over all ages, but there is no correlation between age and the impact itself.

A circular infographic with an orange ring and a thick orange segment, containing the text "90%".

90%

Almost 90% of respondents have been impacted by the cost-of-living crisis (34% in a significant way)

A circular infographic with an orange ring and a thick orange segment, containing the text "42%".

42%

Two out of five respondents (42%) do not have access to any funds set aside for an emergency and 55% of this group are unable to set up such a fund

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1/5

More than one out of five respondents (21%) admit to starting new employment on at least two occasions over the last two years

A circular infographic with an orange ring and a thick orange segment, containing the text "25%".

25%

The top reason for changing jobs is being unhappy (25% of respondents), followed by inadequate pay (20% of respondents)

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60%

60% of respondents think their employer has an ethical responsibility to provide employees with additional financial support during a recession

Financial support - widen the financial support options

Our research clearly shows that many modern employees believe their employers have a duty to step-up during times of nationwide financial hardship. However, it this doesn't necessarily mean this support should come via pay increases. There are many avenues to explore, from introducing or increasing performance bonuses, through to hardship funds for the worst affected.

There are ways for HR to help – your organisation might already have an extensive benefit and discount package in place, and HR is ideally situated to make everyone aware of the additional savings they could be making through existing services. In addition, consider signposting to relevant external sources, like charities, dealing with this. Showing your business's willingness to help during hard times can also help with retention.





Retention – look beyond pay to solve issues

While most people surveyed didn't change jobs over the last two years, 43% did, which for any typical company would represent a huge turnover of staff over a relatively short time. The knee-jerk response would be to presume that a large majority of the people who changed jobs did so because of money. But while this was the leading reason stated (34%) in our survey, a desire for more flexibility was close behind (22%).

The advancement of technology that makes working-from-home easier (turbo-charged by the pandemic) has led to people putting more stock into flexible working arrangements. Not all industries can offer this flexibility, but a rigid policy on topics such as hybrid working could be causing people to make like-for-like job changes just to keep their new-found flexibility.

The last two years have seen unprecedented numbers of people leave their established careers to take up new endeavours entirely, emboldened by the free time lockdown afforded people to explore turning hobbies into full time jobs. Whilst HR teams won't be able to convince everyone to stay on-board, supporting career progression in-house or actively developing people's skills can help employees see the benefits of remaining in their current jobs long-term

Key findings - mental health and wellbeing

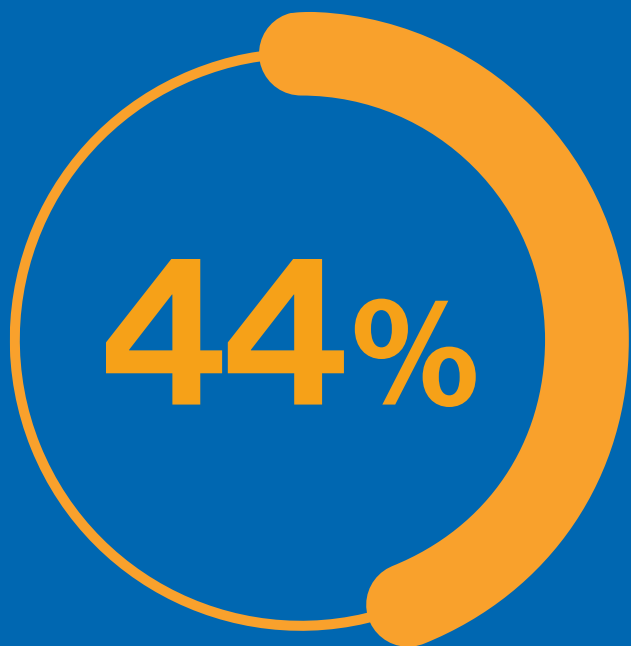
Of those who indicated that mental health support was available, roughly a third did not use the services provided. We know that employees have been facing challenges with increasing frequency over the last few years, so this lack of uptake may not necessarily be because of lack of need – but rather a failure on the employer’s part in not communicating the services available effectively.

People are critical to the success of an organisation and supporting their wellbeing is essential, but how do you ensure the wellbeing benefits are supporting your employees’ mental health?





The data shows that more than four out of five (81%) individuals with positive resilience have access to family or a social network for mental health support.



By contrast, for those with negative resilience less than half (only 44%) have access to family or a social network

Employers should do what they can to provide a safe environment and adequate mental health support for their people as some might not have access to a sufficient support network outside of work.

Embedded within your Employee Value Proposition (EVP) should be a robust system of communication, that advertises these services throughout the year. It is also important to find the right mix of services. While services that can help during true life-crises are vital, seek out those that can offer help with every day, less-severe challenges, such as financial guidance and work/life balance.

Creating a culture of wellbeing that is open, supportive, and inclusive should be seen as the right thing to do, not only to show that you really care, but to support the internal growth of your business. Where possible, have the “voice” around wellbeing and mental health coming from a senior level. This has proved to be effective in making an impact and creating the required openness from junior employees.



Change management – prioritise honest, tailored communications

Our research shows that employees across both gender and age groups struggle with change and dealing with stress in the workplace, and that earnings don't carry a significant impact outside of the highest earners.

Regardless of gender, the ability to deal with sudden change within the workplace without it impacting focus or personal life reduces over time. In other words, if this is taken as a measure of resilience, we see lower levels of resilience at older ages. It is therefore crucial that effective change management is deployed whenever these changes are predetermined, with special attention afforded to your older age demographic.

'I tend to embrace change without it affecting my focus' (agree/disagree)			
Men		Women	
16 – 24	35%	16 – 24	22%
25 – 34	31%	25 – 34	22%
35 – 44	20%	35 – 44	15%
45 – 54	16%	45 – 54	20%
55+	17%	55+	14%

The usual good practices – forewarning, clear and honest communications – should always be deployed, but you should temper your approach depending on the makeup of your workforce. If your employees are, on average, above the age of 35, you may need to offer more support than you would if your age demographic skewed younger.

It is also worth bearing in mind that, typically speaking, your senior staff will be on the older side, so ineffective change management could have wide-ranging, trickle-down effects across your organisation. Change is inevitable, so managing all transitional periods via transparent communication and robust support can solve a wide range of issues, and provide comfort to your retained staff that, should more change happen in the future, the business can cope

The Importance of Employee Resilience

Resilience is a key contributor to productivity. The data implies that a resilient individual would be productive at a rate of almost double that of someone who is not resilient.

POSITIVE RESILIENCE	NEGATIVE RESILIENCE
65% have productive working hours of more than 60%	36% have productive working hours of more than 60%
50% have productive working hours of more than 70%	24% have productive working hours of more than 70%



Other key benefits of positive resilience:

- **Enhanced problem solving and increased productivity:**
Positively resilient employees are more likely to approach challenges with a problem-solving mindset. They contribute to a workplace culture that values innovation and effective solutions. When faced with setbacks, positively resilient employees are less likely to be derailed by negative emotions. This can lead to higher productivity and better task performance.
- **Positive Work Environment:**
A workforce with positive resilience contributes to a positive and supportive work environment. This can improve team dynamics, collaboration, and overall job satisfaction.
- **Adaptation to Change:**
Positive resilience aids employees in adapting to changes more readily, whether they are changes in pensions legislations, or changes in client expectations.
- **Reduced stress:**
Positively resilient employees manage stress effectively, reducing the risk of a breakdown. This can lead to lower turnover rates and higher employee retention.

However, all the volatility mentioned above brings changes to how we think about employee wellbeing, especially as it relates to recruitment and retention. What employees want and need is materially different today, though it can be hard to grasp what expectations are when looking internally.



What Employees Want:

Job Satisfaction: Employees often seek job satisfaction, which includes engaging and meaningful work, a positive work environment, and opportunities for growth and advancement.

Fair pay and benefits: Competitive and fair compensation is a key factor for attracting and retaining talent. Employees want to be rewarded fairly for their skills and contributions.

Recognition and Appreciation: Employees want their efforts and contributions to be recognised and appreciated by their managers and peers. Regular feedback and acknowledgment boost morale.

Professional Development: Opportunities for skill development, training, and career advancement are important to employees who seek to enhance their knowledge and progress in their careers.

Inclusive and Diverse Environment: Employees value workplaces that embrace diversity and inclusion, where all individuals are treated with respect and have equal opportunities.

Challenging and Meaningful Work: Many employees are motivated by challenging and meaningful tasks that allow them to use their skills and make a difference.

What Employees Need:

Health and Wellbeing: Physical and mental well-being is a fundamental need. Employers should provide resources and support for maintaining good health and managing stress.

Clear Communication: Effective communication is essential for conveying expectations, sharing important information, and promoting transparency within the organisation.

Workplace Respect: Employees need to be treated with respect and fairness by both their peers and supervisors. A respectful environment fosters positive relationships and morale.

Job Security: While employees want growth opportunities, they also need a sense of job security. Clear communication about job stability and the organisation's future can address this need.

Safe and Supportive Environment: Employees need a safe and supportive workplace that prioritises their safety and provides mechanisms for addressing concerns.

Workplace Relationships: Healthy relationships with colleagues and managers contribute to a positive work experience. Employers can facilitate team-building activities and open communication channels.

Balanced Workload: An overwhelming workload can lead to burnout and stress. Employers should ensure workloads are manageable and provide necessary support.

What more can employers do?

- **Promote Positive Resilience:** Foster a workplace culture that values positive resilience. Provide resources, workshops, and training to help employees develop healthy coping mechanisms and a growth-oriented mindset.
- **Encourage Open Communication:** Create an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing challenges and seeking support. Encourage managers to have open discussions about difficulties employees might be facing.
- **Provide Stress Management tools:** Offer stress management programmes, counselling services, and wellness initiatives to help employees cope with challenges effectively.
- **Recognition and Reward:** Acknowledge and reward employees who demonstrate positive resilience in overcoming challenges. This reinforces the value of resilience within the organisation.
- **Leadership Role Modelling:** Leaders should demonstrate positive resilience themselves, setting an example for the rest of the workforce.

