

2022 Alight
international workforce
and wellbeing
mindset study:
United Kingdom



alight



Alight's Mindset Research

Our research seeks to help companies optimise the wellbeing and overall experiences of their employees to improve employee engagement, productivity and performance.

The *2022 International workforce and wellbeing mindset study* is the first international look into employee wellbeing, culture, total rewards and workplace technology.

During February and March 2022, responses were collected from 2,002 UK employees working full or part-time at companies with at least 1,000 employees. Included in the sample were respondents from multiple age groups, across a broad array of industries and in a variety of work setups (including fully remote, in the office and hybrids of the two).

Change is a foot. UK employees have experienced significant pressure over the last few years, first there was Brexit and then there was the COVID-19 pandemic. Now they are faced with the highest inflation in decades. To top it all, UK employees are rating their employee experience 2nd lowest of 5 countries surveyed in *Alight's 2022 International workforce and wellbeing mindset study*.

Only 14% rate their experience as great. This matters as it is the foundation for productivity, low staff turnover and most importantly higher overall wellbeing. UK employers are perceived to be not doing enough to help their employees.

For many, stress and financial pressures are mounting and there is an appreciation that they can no longer handle them alone.

If UK companies want to focus investment on supporting their employees' wellbeing and create a competitive and differentiated employee experience, they need to concentrate on the following:

Mental and financial wellbeing

- Create open and transparent cultures that encourage people to be themselves
- Personalised recommendations to help make better financial decisions
- Expand benefits to include areas such as work from home reimbursements

Wellbeing programmes

- Focus on work/life balance
- Clear and easy to follow communication around available programs and resources

Flexibility

- Continue to offer working from home models
- Expand flexibility to include pay (i.e. when and how employees get paid)

Employees are looking for a significant shift in their work experience and are asking their employers to step up. Companies that do will not just have a more productive and loyal workforce but will also set themselves up for the future.

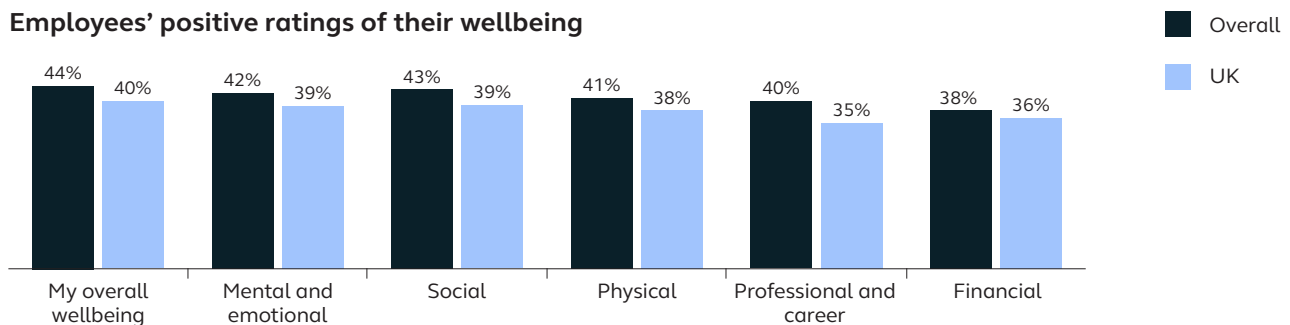
Only 14% of UK employees have a great experience at work — UK companies have an opportunity to differentiate if they focus on areas such as employee benefits, flexibility and creating engaging cultures.

Through our research, we found that UK employees are demanding more from their employers. While more than half (57%) currently rate their overall employee experience positively, this lags behind the survey respondents in France, Germany and The Netherlands.

Additionally, only 26% say their employee experience exceeds their expectations (25% say it falls below their expectations). Overall wellbeing ratings for the UK lag behind their international counterparts. Only 40% rate their overall wellbeing positively. Yet it is employees' professional and financial wellbeing that are the lowest. Employers can have a significant influence on these areas of their lives.

Only about a third (35%) of UK employees rate their professional or career wellbeing highly*. To improve employee satisfaction, employers need to improve communication, offer more flexibility and provide tools and technologies that can improve productivity. Benefits packages should be redesigned to better meet the needs and expectations of their workforce. Employers should also create cultures where employees feel engaged and align company values with those of their workers.

Employees' positive ratings of their wellbeing



* Wellbeing rating percentages represent top three box agreement on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is "couldn't be worse" and 10 is "couldn't be better"

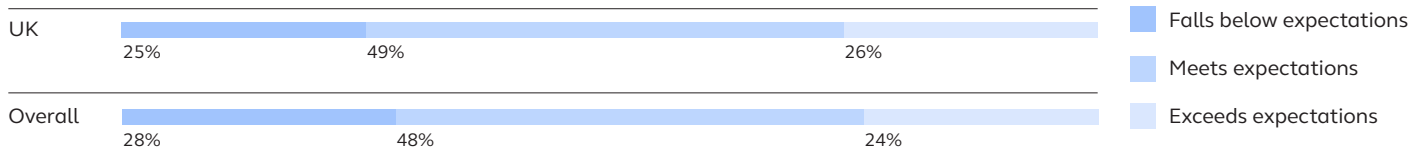
UK employees need a better employee experience

Roughly half of UK employees (49%) say their employee experience meets their expectations while another 25% say it is below the mark. Only 26% say it exceeds expectations.

More than one in four UK employees (27%) dread going to work or starting their workday and only 21% say they are likely to recommend their company as an employer. Additionally, only a slight majority (56%) say their experience is better now than it was with their previous employer. It's unsurprising that only 35% of UK employees rate their professional or career wellbeing highly*.

*Wellbeing rating percentages represent the top three agreement ratings on a 0 to 10 scale where 0 is "couldn't be worse" and 10 is "couldn't be better"

How well does the employee experience at your company meet your expectations?

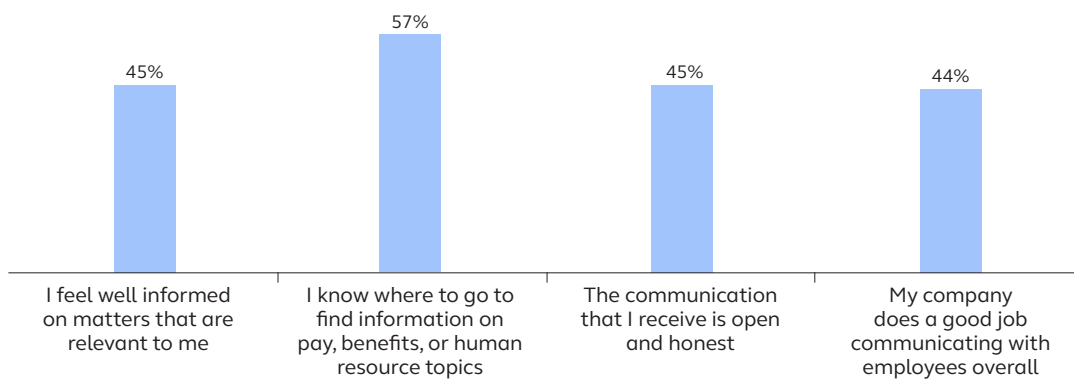


Effective communication is lacking

Communication that is open, honest and informative is a key predictor of overall productivity and employee engagement.

Only 45% of UK employees say they feel well informed by their employers on matters that are relevant to them. While more than half (57%) say they know where to go to find information on pay, benefits or human resource related topics, fewer than half (45%) believe the communication they receive is open and honest. Only 44% say their company does a good job communicating with employees overall.

UK employees' level of agreement with the following statements*



Sample size in UK: 2,002 respondents

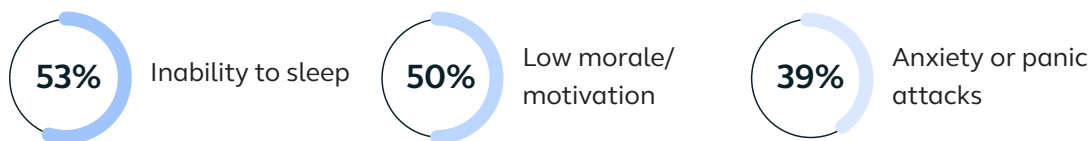
*Percentages represent the top two agreement ratings on a 0-6 scale

Effective communication is a baseline expectation among UK employees (58% expect it of just about any employer), but too often it is not being delivered.

Stress is an issue

Stress is a concern for the majority of UK employees. Almost three-quarters (71%) are suffering from moderate to high levels of stress and just under two-thirds (63%) feel they don't have much control over it. Among those who have experienced impacts on their lives due to job-related stress, half (50%) have experienced low morale or motivation and 53% have suffered from an inability to sleep. Almost four in ten (39%) UK employees say they have suffered anxiety or panic attacks. One third (33%) say they put too much pressure on themselves at work.

In the past 12 months, which of the following, if any, have you experienced due to job-related stress? (of those who experienced job-related stress)



UK employees do not feel comfortable talking with their leaders or managers about their issues with stress. Only 35% feel they can speak openly at work about mental and emotional health challenges without fear of consequences. Perhaps as a result, a quarter (25%) say they often feel lonely or isolated.



Prioritising health and wellbeing

Only 40% of UK employees rate their overall wellbeing highly*. Yet, the majority (51%) say they are prioritising their overall wellbeing.

UK employees expect employers to help by placing an emphasis on employee wellbeing (53%). At the moment, however, employers are not meeting these expectations, as only 34% of employees say their company genuinely cares about their wellbeing. A third (33%) say their company supports them with resources that enable them to better manage and improve their personal health and less than half (41%) trust that their employer would support them if they were to experience a health or wellness challenge in their personal life.

UK employees understand they need to take ownership of their health and wellbeing. Almost two-thirds (62%) say they feel responsible for their own health. One issue preventing progress for many is a perceived lack of power and sufficient resources to affect real change. Fewer than half, (44%), say they have the power and resources needed to improve their health and wellbeing.

Many are facing real challenges accessing basics like healthy food. Roughly half of UK employees say access to affordable healthy food (50%), health services (54%) and reliable, safe as well as affordable transportation (45%) are at least sometimes an issue. Sufficient time (63%) and money (65%) to devote to improving their wellbeing are also challenges.

As they work to manage their wellbeing, the largest percentages of UK employees are focused on eating healthy (85%) and effectively managing or balancing work and personal commitments (85%). They need their employer's help in improving their work-life balance (61%), taking enough time off from work (43%) and creating a culture that prioritises employee wellbeing (31%).

Employers do appear to be providing environments in which their employees feel safe and secure; 62% feel safe and secure in their current work location. Among those with concerns about their safety, getting sick (45%) and colleagues or customers not following health guidance (45%) are the two top concerns UK employees have about returning to their workplace.

Most employees (59%) feel companies should require workers to get vaccinated against COVID-19; however, only 39% say their company has a COVID-19 vaccine policy.

*Wellbeing rating percentages represent top three agreement ratings on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is "couldn't be worse" and 10 is "couldn't be better"



44%

Say they have the power and resources needed to improve my own health and wellbeing

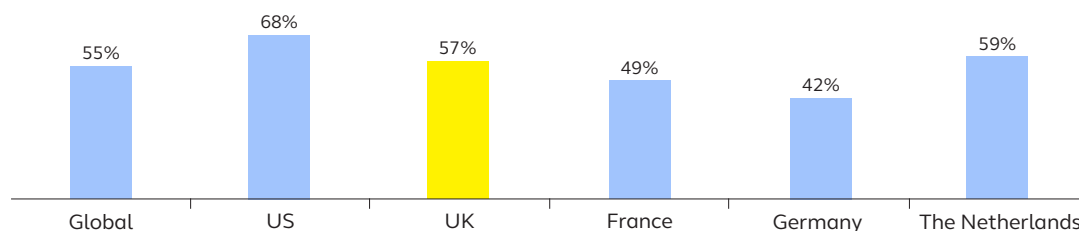
Additional employer support can help improve financial wellbeing

UK employees' financial wellbeing is a specific area where they are struggling and could use some support. Only 36% rate their financial wellbeing highly* and a similar percentage (37%) feel they have control over their financial wellbeing. Further, 35% of employees say they feel financially secure today.

Employers can look to pay as an area where they can support these employees. 40% of UK employees say their level of income adequately covers their regular expenses each month. This may be contributing to employees' poor financial wellbeing and providing options like flexible pay could help. While 41% of UK employees say that getting paid more frequently would be a valuable wellbeing benefit, only 9% of UK employees said they have this available to them today. Employers can also offer greater pay transparency. With 59% of UK employees believing it is important businesses are transparent about what they pay employees.

One area of financial wellbeing where UK employees are doing relatively well is around debt. A large majority (76%) say it is important they are debt-free, and just over a fifth (21%) report the level of debt they have is ruining the quality of their life. Managing debt and improving their credit score are also two financial areas where UK employees are the most open to receiving help versus doing it all on their own.

How comfortable would you be with sharing personal financial information with your employer to allow them to provide personalized financial guidance**



**Percentages represent the top two comfort ratings on a 0 to 4 scale

Generally, UK employees are open to and eager for support from their employer when it comes to financial wellness, especially if it is personalised. 57% would be comfortable sharing their personal financial information with their employer to receive personalised financial guidance or planning.

However, only 15% say they have one-on-one personal financial coaching available to them today. Among those who have this available, 76% said it is valuable. Similarly, only 15% of employees say they currently receive personalised messaging around financial related benefits based on their personal financial information. Among those who have this available, 66% said it is valuable. It is clear that additional support from employers as it relates to personal financial wellbeing is desired, valuable and can contribute to better financial wellbeing outcomes.

*Wellbeing rating percentages represent top three agreements on a 0-10 scale, where 0 "Couldn't be worse" and 10 "Couldn't be better".

More flexibility would help

In the minds of UK employees, employers stand out by offering flexibility. Too many employers are still imposing rigid schedules or ways of working and processes on their employees.

A slight majority (55%) say a more flexible work environment would differentiate one employer from another and 53% say they would not consider a job that provided less flexibility than they have right now. This includes the flexibility for employees to balance their work and personal lives.



Only 43% of UK employees say they can effectively manage work and personal life commitments. More than half (54%) expect businesses to encourage an appropriate balance between the two.

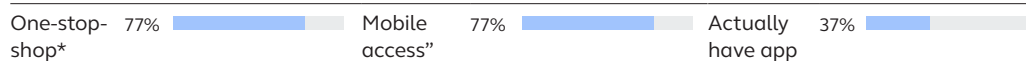


Tools and technology that improve productivity are in demand

While most UK employees (65%) say they can be fully productive while working, only 49% say they have the tools, technology and resources that enable them to work effectively. Roughly half (48%) say their experience with the technology they use enables them to be highly productive at work. What's more, around four in ten (42%) say their employer-provided technology often frustrates them.

This desire for better tools extends to HR and benefits technology. Just over a third (36%) of UK employees say the Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS) and platforms provided to them are easy to use, 35% say they are effective and only 32% say their HR systems help them be as productive as possible.

Importance of having one-stop-shop, mobile access to benefits and actually have access to an app



*Percentages represent the top two importance ratings on a 0 to 4 scale

What would improve the situation are technologies that deliver simplicity, mobile access and convenience. More than three-quarters (77%) of UK employees say it is important for them to have a one-stop shop for all their health, wealth and wellbeing benefits. And 77% say it is important to have mobile access to all of their benefit information. However, currently only 37% have access to a mobile app which contains all these elements.

Values-driven culture resonates

Almost six in ten UK employees (58%) say the culture and environment at their company contributes to their overall wellbeing. Another 59% believe employers that provide engaging places to work can stand out from the competition. That said, only 36% of UK employees say there is a positive atmosphere at their company.

An employer's values and mission are also driving employee perceptions of their overall experiences. Employees want their employers' values to match their own. Only 32% say they would be willing to work at a company whose values they don't agree with so long as the pay is good. 55% say what differentiates one employer from another is a strong fit with their own values. Six in ten (60%) say taking a stand on social and political issues is a point of differentiation.

Do you feel a company that has a strong fit with your values is something you would expect from all employers or is it something that can differentiate employers?

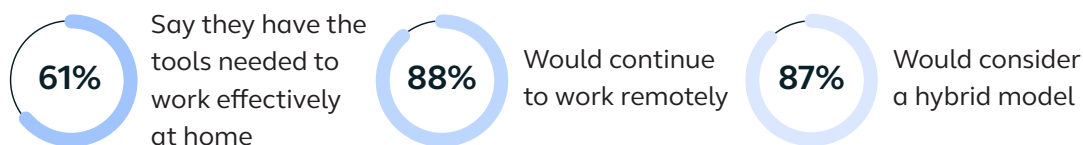
Can differentiate employers 55%  Expect from any employer 45%

That said, most employees don't feel their values are shared by their employers right now. Only 43% of UK employees say their values align with those of their employer. And only 47% feel like they belong at their current company.

Remote employees enjoy the benefits it offers

One in three UK employees (32%) are primarily working remotely (at least 80% of their time), while 50% are hardly ever working remotely (less than 20% of the time). The majority of these remote employees seem to be enjoying it: 68% say working remotely has more benefits than drawbacks for them. More than half (52%) say their manager works effectively to make their remote experiences positive and 55% say their company ensures remote employees are appropriately included and considered in work activities.

What is helping remote employees is the trust companies are placing in them to get the job done and the resources they provide. Almost three-quarters (71%) say their employer trusts that they will get their work done effectively when working remotely. Also, six in ten (61%) say their employer has provided sufficient support to allow them to work effectively and comfortably while away from the office.



Most remote employees wish to continue this way of working. The vast majority (88%) of those that began working remotely after the COVID-19 pandemic started say they would be interested in continuing to work remotely if given the opportunity. 87% of those same employees said they would be interested in hybrid work if given the opportunity, including 54% who would be 'very' interested.

Benefits and rewards too often don't meet employee needs

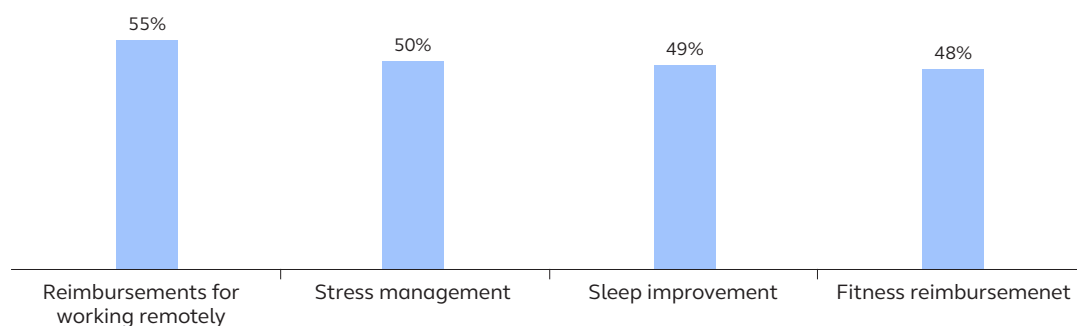
The benefits and rewards that UK employers are providing today too often don't meet the needs of their employees and families. Only about a quarter (24%) say their total rewards programs meet their or their family's needs and 32% say these programmes enhance or improve their overall employment experience.

What would help improve these programmes overall are specific benefits that provide reimbursements for working remotely (55%), stress management courses (50%), sleep improvement programmes (49%) and fitness reimbursement (48%).



wished their employer offered more resources and/or time off for mental health

How valuable employees* consider wellbeing programmes? (Top 4 programmes)



*Percentages represent the top two ratings

More than half of employees (58%), state that better than average benefits programmes differentiate one employer from another. In the main, companies are communicating their benefits programmes well, as 71% of UK employees say they have a good understanding of their total rewards packages.

In conclusion

UK employees are looking for their employers to step up and deliver. Too few rate their current professional, financial or career wellbeing highly. In order to retain employees, companies need to create relevant benefits programs and foster a culture that resonates with workers. Employers must communicate more effectively, offer flexibility that enables better work-life balance and align their values with those of their employees. Employers should partner with their workers to help them improve their overall health and wellbeing.

For more information, visit alight.com/gb

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