

Only a third of UK employees report having good emotional wellbeing, according to WTW survey

4 years ago



Only a third of employees (37%) in the UK report having good emotional wellbeing.

While around one in eight employees are showing poor levels of wellbeing across financial, physical, emotional, and social dimensions. That's according to a 2022 Global Benefits Attitudes Survey conducted by WTW (Willis Towers Watson, NASDAQ: WTW), a leading global advisory, broking and solutions company.

The survey revealed that those impacted by poor wellbeing are likely to miss more workdays per year due to presenteeism and are three times more likely to feel disengaged and burnt out at work. It also found those employees are five times more likely to have suffered with anxiety or depression in the last two years. Single women with children, those on low income and those working in the retail and wholesale sector are most negatively affected.

Lucie McGrath, wellbeing expert at WTW says: "The emphasis placed upon wellbeing in the workplace over the last few years, is a positive reflection of how both employers and employees have grown to value broader health as a main priority. And while it's a step in the right direction, employers now need to tackle supporting those with more specific needs and acknowledge that it's not a case of 'one size fits all'."

While levels of financial and emotional wellbeing have remained fairly stable over the last few years, and levels of physical wellbeing have improved, an area of concern lies around social wellbeing, which has sharply declined since 2019. Over the last three years, there is a stronger sense of social disconnection, as social wellbeing levels amongst employees have dropped by 40%. This is particularly prevalent among

older workers and lower earners, prompting debate around the need for hybrid working and inclusive workplaces.

In the last year, 42% of employees have taken significant action to try to improve their wellbeing. However, the survey reported high risk employees find it difficult to translate actions into notable improvements. In addition, employees with low wellbeing are less likely to take action to improve their wellbeing and are less likely to report improvements in wellbeing after taking action. In fact, four in ten high risk employees saw a deterioration in their wellbeing across the last year.

Robust benefits, tools and resources and a workplace culture that supports dignity and builds employee trust are important to addressing staff wellbeing. Employees who feel they are treated with dignity and respect at their organisation, including having a supportive manager, being paid fairly and having good opportunities for career progression report having higher levels of wellbeing. Yet, employees with low wellbeing are the least likely to agree that the benefits package offered by their employer meets their needs.

The research also found the use of apps helped employees to improve their wellbeing, amplifying the positive effects from taking action. In fact, a third of employees (33%) say they are regular users of at least one app to manage their wellbeing. In addition, more than a third of staff (36%) believe health apps and wearable devices should be a core part of an employers' benefit offerings, while a third (33%) of staff would trust the apps and devices suggested to them by their employer, rather than conducting their own research.

Lucie McGrath, wellbeing expert at WTW says: "As people try to juggle their financial, physical, emotional and social wellbeing, while continuing to perform in their work role, it's becoming increasingly important that employers focus on developing the full package they offer in order to achieve high levels of wellbeing among staff. Looking at pay and bonuses alone simply won't cut it any longer."

About the survey

WTW's 2022 Attraction & Retention research was conducted during December 2021 and January 2022 as part of the wider Global Benefits Attitudes Survey. Respondents include 4,129 UK employees from large and midsize private employers, representing a broad range of industries.

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