

Shared approach required to better support workers' wellbeing in a changing world – new research

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The lack of an agreed definition of wellbeing, and no shared way to quantify it or measure interventions to improve it, is holding employers back from supporting workers' wellbeing better in the face of rapid change, new research highlights.

How employers can support their employees to thrive, in a world where rapid social, political, and economic change are the norm, is the focus of a joint report based on primary and tertiary research by British Safety Council and the Institute of Occupational Medicine, called *Being Well in a Changing World*.

The research was undertaken as part of a joint project by [British Safety Council](#) and the [Institute of Occupational Medicine](#). This set out to identify and examine current practices that employers are implementing to improve the wellbeing of their workforce.

It found that there is no consistent definition of wellbeing across both academic and industry sources, organisations are not consistently measuring wellbeing and there is a need for a more inclusive and targeted approach. While the majority (87%) of employers' wellbeing strategies are grounded in health and safety, a disconnect exists between what is known about wellbeing and what is being applied.

Conducted between June 2023 and September 2024, the research involved: a survey of 609 employers across a range of organisational sectors, sizes and locations around the world; a review of 74 pieces of academic and 44 of grey literature on workplace wellbeing; and in-depth interviews with 10 employers in different sectors and locations.

The research found no single definition exists for 'wellbeing', and no common way to measure it, or quantify the impact of any interventions to improve it. This lack of agreement about what wellbeing is, and no standardised metric for measuring it, makes it harder to assess and compare wellbeing interventions across different organisations, sectors, industries, cultures, and nations.

In the survey conducted for *Being Well in a Changing World*, the main challenges to improving worker wellbeing were found to be time pressures (25%), resource constraints (24%), and managing a dispersed workforce (23%). On a more positive note, most survey respondents (87%) reported their wellbeing strategy was grounded in health and safety and 70% of respondents said their organisational purpose was linked to worker wellbeing.

Commenting on the publication of the joint research, Mike Robinson, CEO of British Safety Council said: "Our *Being Well in a Changing World* research shows that, although employers want to do the right thing and support their workers' wellbeing, there is still no agreed definition of what wellbeing is, how it should be measured, or indeed how organisations can measure their progress in improving it.

"Without shared metrics, or ways that employers can learn from each other, workers risk being left behind, in a world where rapid change is the norm. The recommendations we are making based on our research would help employers adapt better to change and make the difference between them merely surviving or thriving."

Nathan Baker, CEO of the Institute of Occupational Medicine said: "This research shows that effective wellbeing strategies require flexibility and responsiveness to the different challenges faced by workers. Employers who are able to adapt to external changes will be better positioned to support their employees' wellbeing effectively and will reap the benefits in increased productivity and profits."

On the back of these and other findings, the research makes five key recommendations for employers, employees, and policymakers, to further improve the wellbeing of workers, help them adapt to change, and share best practice across workplaces and sectors. These are to:

1. Create and adopt standardised metrics for assessing wellbeing
2. Align workplace wellbeing offerings with wider occupational health and safety strategies
3. Foster an industry wide culture that encourages organisations to learn from each other
4. Ground wellbeing strategies in a holistic approach to health, safety and wellbeing
5. Ensure wellbeing strategies work at an organisation, person-by-person, and group level.

To download a copy of the full *Being Well in a Changing World* report, visit: <https://www.iom-world.org/iom-today/being-well-in-a-changing-world/>