



Work, Health and Wellbeing

The employee perspective

A survey by Engage Health Group

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Executive summary

Welcome to Engage Health Group's 'Work, Health & Wellbeing' survey which provides an employee's perspective on workplace benefits and related trends.

Every forward-thinking business strives to develop an employee benefits strategy which best supports workers' health, wellbeing and general outlook. While it's ethically sound, it also lays the foundations for a happy and productive workforce. However, the best intentions can be misdirected...

We've long preached against approaching employee perks as a box-ticking exercise. Instead, businesses first need to understand the needs and desires of their employees. Trends are fast flowing and expectations always evolving. For that reason, we commissioned this survey to uncover the perceptions of workers and what they most want from their employer.

Main areas of focus in our survey have included:

- Life priorities of the individuals
- Connection between employee benefits and loyalty
- Health as a business priority
- Employer support for physical, mental, and financial wellbeing.

Key highlights and findings:

9 in 10 employees chose health as the top and main priority, this takes into consideration both personal health and family health. Financial Security was the third most important life priority after their own or their family health.

1 in 3 employees feel that health and wellbeing is not a business priority where they work, and it is not promoted by the management.

1 in 3 employees said that their employer was genuinely not interested in their mental and physical wellbeing, this goes up to 44% when we asked about financial wellbeing.

8 in 10 respondents agreed that employee benefits were a very important factor when deciding whether to join a new company.

8 in 10 employees confirmed that the benefits they receive makes them loyal to their company.

1 in 3 said that their employer didn't provide support for their mental, physical, and financial wellbeing.

4 in 10 employees were offered enhanced pension contributions (44.66%), flexible working (44.66%), home working (42.69). This was followed by private medical insurance which is available for 33% of the respondents.

Top 3 Private medical insurance (32%) is the most wanted employee benefit after flexible (46%) & home working (42%).

The employee survey suggests that health is the most important factor in the world right now, unsurprisingly during a pandemic. This is far ahead of other important life factors such as love, friendships or even job security. Businesses who understand this and implement a holistic approach to employee wellbeing will have greater success in cultivating happy and contented teams.

The report shows that businesses are becoming more aware that they have a role to play in enhancing their employees' wellbeing. They have started to alter their workplace culture to reflect this - for example, many have offered more hybrid working arrangements during these difficult times.

Having said that, the survey also highlights that one in three businesses are still missing a huge opportunity in engaging with their employees on their physical, mental, and financial wellbeing, the three main pillars of wellbeing. Financial wellbeing consistently performed lower in many of the survey questions, likely reflecting the fact that it is a relatively new approach to wellbeing, like mental wellbeing was ten years ago in the world of employee health.

Strong correlation between employee benefits and loyalty have been confirmed. Workers today have a strong desire to receive more than just a salary. 'Beyond the salary' offerings are a very important factor both at the time of job hunting as well as during employment. Six out of the top ten desired workplace benefits are directly related to health, suggesting a very strong association between life priorities and benefit needs.

Employers who genuinely support and invest in employee wellbeing will not only see an increase in productivity and a decrease in costs associated with sickness, but they will also create a positive workplace culture which will ensure the returns extend beyond just a positive impact on the bottom line. We hope you find this report useful and that it provides the insight required to move your employee benefits strategy to the next level.

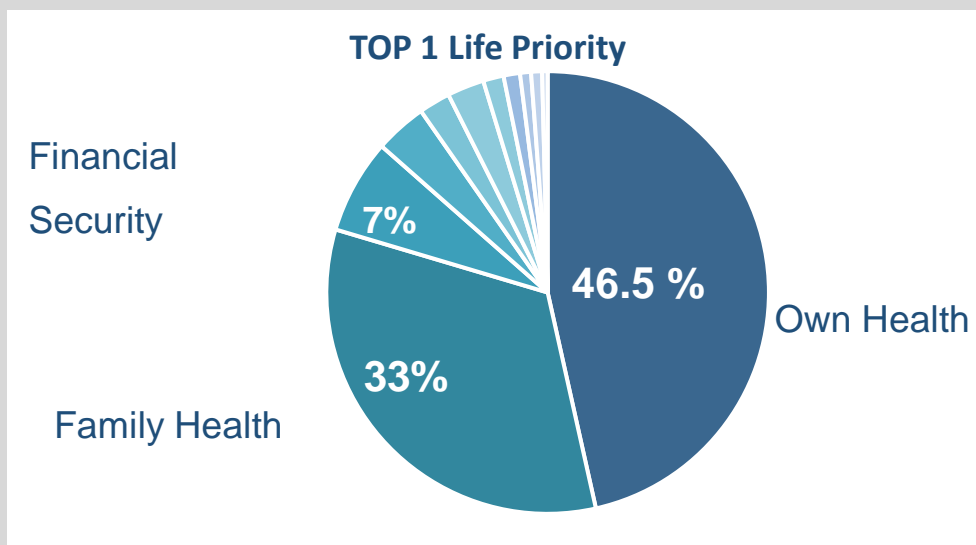
Where are employees' priorities in the wake of the pandemic?

All organisations should strive to become employer of choice – and providing support is crucial. To understand how employers can support their workforce successfully, we needed to step back and look at what occupies the mind of individuals and unpick exactly what the most important things are in their life at this moment.

Top life priorities

We asked the respondents to rank 14 important life factors in order of importance. The top three life priorities were 'my health', 'the health of my family', and 'financial security'. This was also the case when we broke it down by income, age, or employment status.

'My health' represents almost half of first choices (46.5%), followed by 'health of my family' with 33% and financial security by 7%.



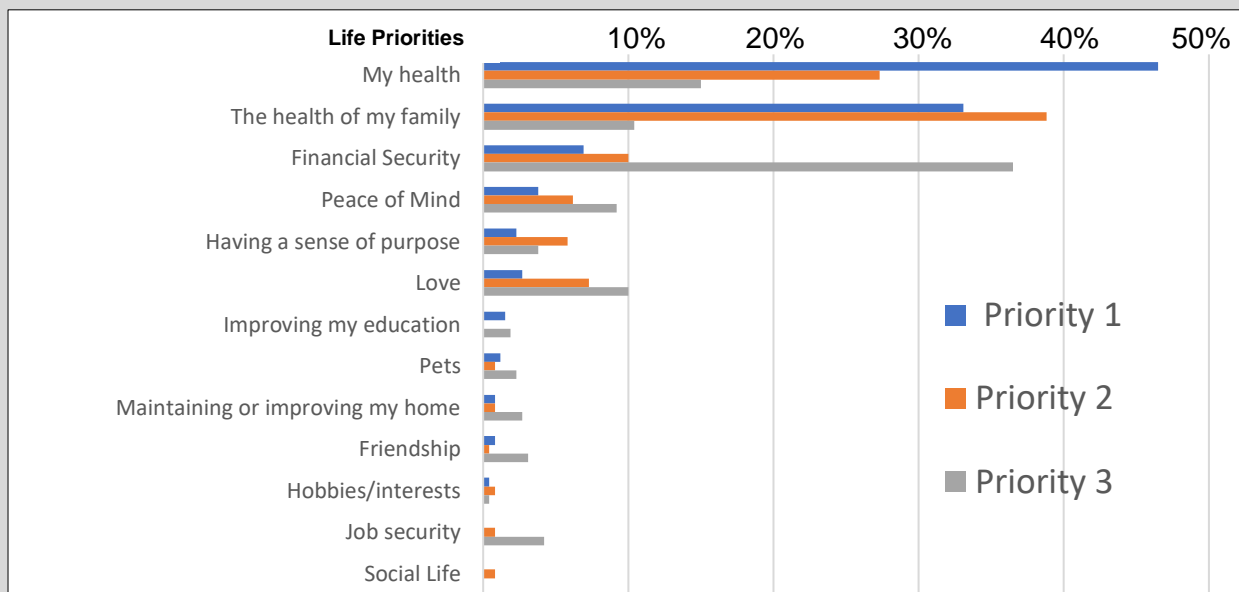
Those who didn't select their own health as the number one priority then selected it as their second or third. In total, 9 out of 10 employees chose "own health" either first, second or third in their life priorities. The prominence of health as the centre of importance in people's lives is clear and, after having more than 18 months of the Covid pandemic, it is not a surprise.

88.8%



Own health in TOP 3 priority

'Health of my family' is also significantly high with more than 8 out of 10 (82.3%) placing it within their top 3, followed by financial security with 53.4%. 'Peace of mind', 'having a sense of purpose', and 'love' were the next highest priorities, but still far behind. 'Hobbies', 'pets,' holidays', and 'social life' were the lowest life priorities (it is important to bear in mind this was a relative importance ranking question, rather than absolute importance).



Employees relationship with money has been affected by the pandemic after many job losses, the reduced payment via the furlough scheme, and general uncertainty in finances and life. Whether financial security is first (7%), second (10%), or third (36.5%) priority, it is clearly indicated that financial happiness is the second most important part of our life after health.

Life priorities by age

Life priorities were also quite consistent across age groups – the top three priorities were the same across the generations. The older age group were slightly less likely to prioritise 'sense of purpose' or 'love' while the younger age group were more likely to prioritise 'improving my education'.

Life priorities by income

The top three life priorities were (once again) the same across all subgroups. However, 'sense of purpose', 'maintaining or improving my home', and 'improving my education' ranked higher amongst the priorities of the lowest income group, compared to other income groups.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that businesses who wish to attract and retain their best people need to provide the desired support. There are a wide range of benefit options available to support these initiatives, so it's important to consult with your teams and get a true understanding of what they most need.

Do employees think that their workplaces support their own wellbeing?

Overall employee wellbeing is essential for a healthy, happy, and productive workforce. There are three main elements that are essential for a successful wellbeing strategy: physical, mental, and financial health.

Being in a positive mental state can keep people healthy and help prevent serious health conditions. On the other hand, poor mental health can lead to poor physical health. The reverse is also true: having a long-term illness or a serious health condition also negatively impacts mental health.



There is increasing evidence that shows the two-way relationship between financial health and mental health, and how they are inextricably tied together. Financial wellbeing can contribute to mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and high-stress levels which can drastically affect the ability to work happily and productively.

At Engage we use People Centred Design to create and implement a benefits strategy that resonates with your culture and is valued by your employees.

[According to the Mental Health Taskforce](#), 1 in 4 people in the UK experience mental health issues at some point in the year.

[The AVIVA Thriving in the Age of Ambiguity 2021 study](#) showed that finances affect 39% of people's mental health.

Employer's interest in my wellbeing

Physical Wellbeing

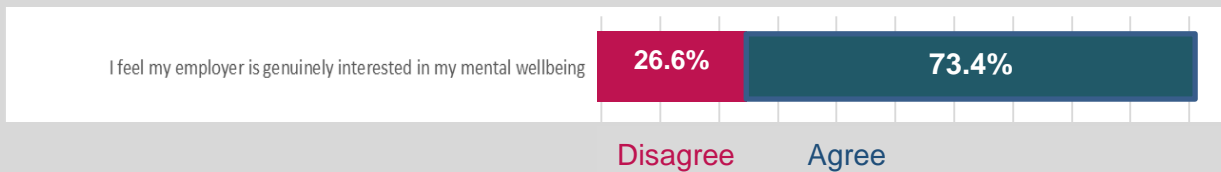
More than 70% of employees feel that their employers care about their physical wellbeing. This is not surprising as most of businesses are now aware that promoting good physical health and wellbeing among employees can reduce their levels of sickness while increasing energy levels and boosting levels of concentration.

But are they delivering with practical support? 65.7% of employees confirmed their employers provided services to support their physical wellbeing. It indicates that a small number of respondents feel their company cares about their physical health but are falling short with providing support.



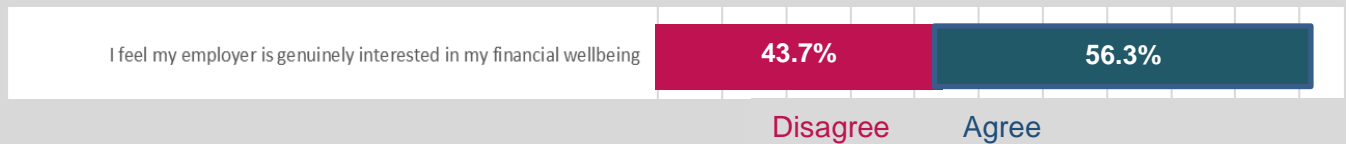
Mental wellbeing

The survey findings are similar for mental wellbeing where only 1 in 4 said that their employer showed no interest in their mental wellbeing. The UK has made significant progress over the last 10 years in opening conversations around mental health as it attempts to reduce the stigma it invokes and promote an environment which supports mental wellbeing.



Financial wellbeing

Financial wellbeing is still a relatively new term within the industry, with increased information and attention needed. This is reflected in our survey as the data revealed a comparative neglect for financial wellbeing. Significantly more people (43.7%) felt that their employer didn't care about their own financial wellbeing.

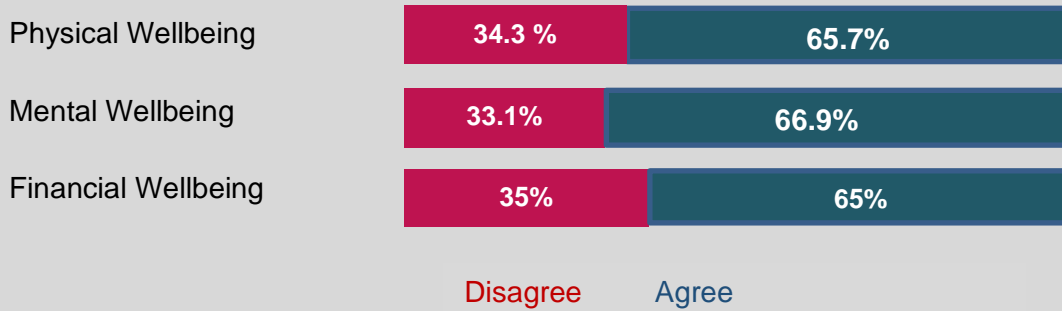


Almost 10% of people chose 'peace of mind' as their third most important life priority. This is mainly affected by our financial situation and worries.

Physical, mental, and financial wellbeing support

Overall, 1 in 3 people said that they didn't receive support for any of the three wellbeing pillars at work. It is important to keep in mind that we're currently in a post-pandemic environment where health is the main life priority for the majority of respondents. People need reassurance and stability in their health the most.

My employer provides services to support my wellbeing



If we extrapolate these findings to the 32.18 million people employed in the UK (as of May 2021, gov.uk website), that means over 10 million workers today are without access to physical, mental, or financial wellbeing support services.

10 million

No. of employees in the UK potentially without physical, mental, or financial health support at work in 2021.



1 in 3

Action-point

Employers are in a unique position to help their employees as they are in daily contact with their workforce. Employers should consider how they can use their position to improve the financial, mental, and physical health of their staff by addressing the different needs of their workforce. For example, Employee Assistance Programmes can offer a wide range of services from face-to-face counselling, CBT, stress-related support, debt problems, domestic issues, and medical helplines.

Employers' ability to help employees' physical, mental, and financial wellbeing

We asked our employees whether they believe their employer could find a solution if they had problems with their physical, mental, or financial wellbeing. One in three people lack confidence in their employer's ability to provide support for them. The lack of confidence increases by 3.5% for mental health to 34.4% and by 12.1% for financial wellbeing to 43%. (See next page)



We all talk about our family, friendships, or work issues to people we feel close and comfortable with. It takes time to build confidence and trust. The same is true for the employer and the employee relationship. When we asked our respondents whether they would be comfortable sharing their wellbeing with their employer, we have found that mental and financial wellbeing had more negative responses than physical wellbeing. This suggests there is still some stigma and self-consciousness around mental and financial wellbeing, which employers must break down to fully support the wellbeing of their employees.



The problem with having a lack of trust or confidence in employers creates barriers for people to seek help and can make the situation worse. More often than not, this is because the services around them haven't been implemented or promoted effectively by the organisations.

Action point

Our survey demonstrates that many companies are unfamiliar with the importance of financial wellbeing. Therefore, it's unlikely to be integrated into their overall strategy. The introduction of automatic pension enrolment in 2012 had a massive impact, increasing the number of employees putting money into their workplace pension. Yet, financial wellbeing needs to go further than that. For example, employers could offer financial educational programmes on savings, investments, or debt management.

Is wellbeing a business priority?

Implementing employee benefits is a good place to start, but employers also need excellent communications strategies that let people know about, and utilise, the benefits on offer. Over 30% of employees confirmed (strongly disagreed and disagreed) that regular communication is lacking about the available benefits at work.

A wellbeing strategy is only successful if the management promote it and live it day by day. 33% of employees in our survey felt that health and wellbeing is not promoted or championed by the management.

These two findings support why one in three employees also felt that health and wellbeing was not a business priority.



One way to improve communication is by arranging regular performance reviews which provide the opportunity to discuss the general wellbeing of individuals. This is a dedicated time for the employees to have the full attention of their line managers.

While it is promising that 65% of people in our survey do talk about such issues at one-to-ones, there is still a worryingly high 35% of employees who don't. It is usually the employer's responsibility to promote a positive work culture and the line manager should motivate the employees to discuss wellbeing with all the different supports that are available inside and out of their workplace.

We can safely assume that for some, company wellbeing is not a priority or is lost in the everyday running of the business. But for the workers it could lend the impression that their employer doesn't care about them. In this case, the employee and employer relationship is not people-centred, which in turn can be bad for business. The employee may be tempted to switch to a company which better demonstrates its duty of care.

Are there any correlations between employee benefits and loyalty?

The positive impacts of having employee benefits are common knowledge and at many forward-thinking businesses it is already a key part of the employment wellbeing strategy. Four-fifths (80%) of respondents in our survey said that employee benefits were a very important factor when deciding whether to join a new company.

80.7%



The employee benefits on offer are a very important factor when deciding whether to join a new company

We also asked in our survey whether the benefits they receive make them feel loyal to their employer directly. More than three-quarters (78.6 %) confirmed that the benefits do influence their loyalty. It makes them feel more valued and appreciated within the company.

78.6%



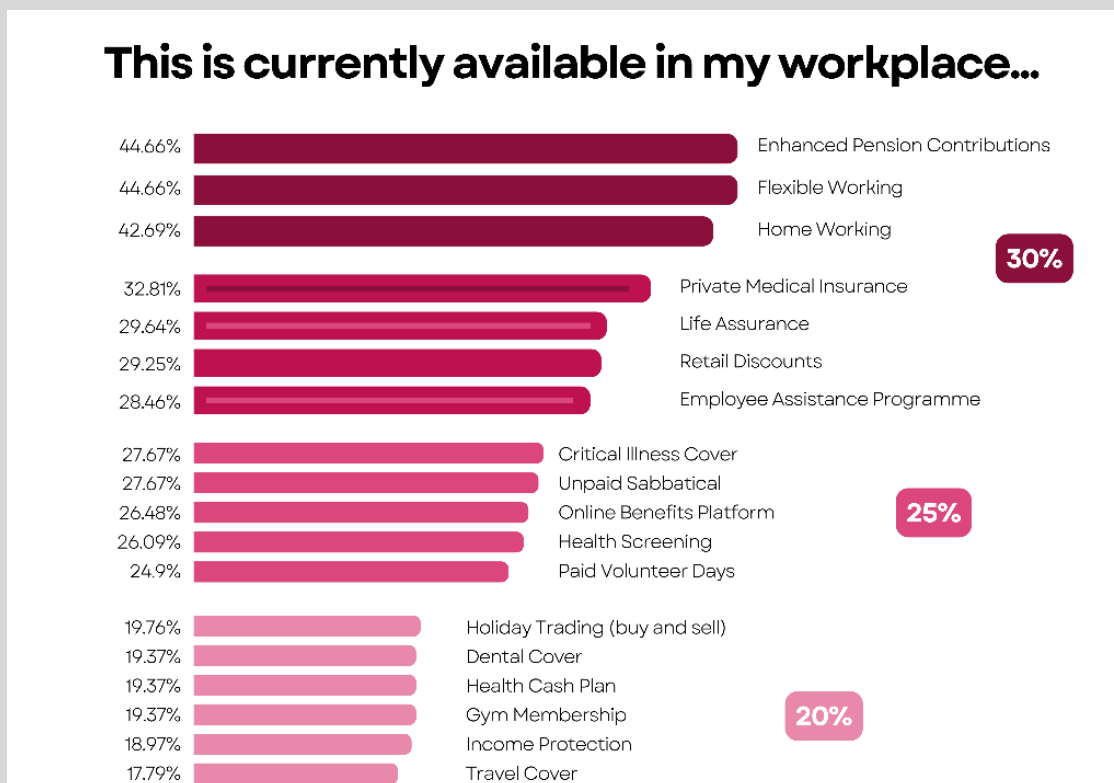
The benefits I receive make me feel loyal to my employer

These findings suggest a very strong association between employee benefits and loyalty to employer.

What employee benefits are being made available?

Whilst competitive salary remains a relevant factor in employee attraction and retention, employees are now looking for more from their workplace.

Respondents were asked which benefits were currently available in their workplace. More than 40% of respondents said that their employer currently offered enhanced pension contributions, flexible working, and home working. The extra employer pension contribution is the most widely used benefit in our survey, no doubt this is encouraged by the compulsory pension enrolment law. The contribution varies massively in businesses, but it could be topped up by as much as 20% of the annual salary by the employer, hugely contributing to long term financial wellbeing.



The widespread availability of flexible and home working reflects the influence of the pandemic, where businesses adapted their workplace to new norms and expectations.

The three most widely used health-related insurance benefits in our survey are:

- Private Medical Insurance (32.46%)
- Life Insurance (29.6%)
- Employee Assistance programmes (26.46%)

Employees often have the perception that private medical cover will provide a better service compared to NHS. In turn, this makes them feel they are being looked after by their employer financially, medically, and on a personal level. This cover is the most comprehensive health support that is available today.

Life insurance is one of the most affordable and popular forms of insurance today, a fact reinforced by numerous surveys. Employee assistance programmes (EAP) also come with relatively low cost while offering an array of benefits for both the employee and employer - it's easy to understand why more businesses are incorporating these as part of their overall benefit strategy. Note: EAP's are often included within business health insurance schemes.

What are the most desired workplace benefits for employees?

Respondents were asked to select the benefits that matter the most to them from 25 options. Flexible working (46.4%) and home working (41.6%) sat at the top as the two most important workplace benefits, followed by private medical health insurance (32.4 %), enhanced pension contribution (29.6 %) and income protection (28.4 %).

Six out of the top 10 desired workplace benefits are directly related to health, demonstrating a strong association between life priorities and desired benefits.



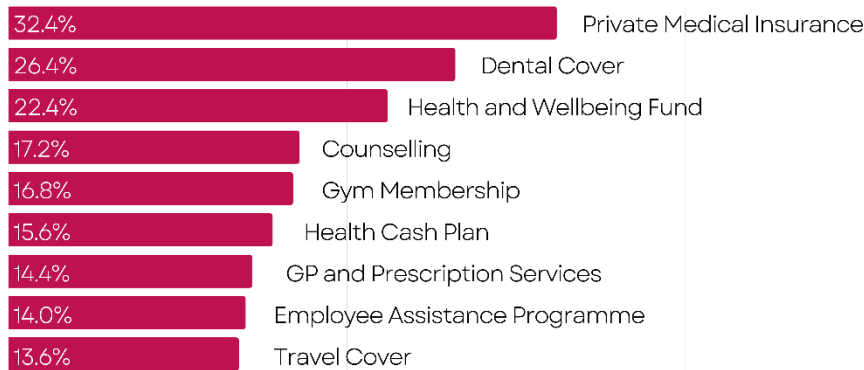
Private Medical Insurance is the most popular benefit after flexible and home working

Seeing the devastating effect of the pandemic, people are more likely worried about long waiting lists for medical appointments and treatments, so it's no surprise that access to private medical healthcare is the most desired benefits (32.4%) after home and flexible working. This cover can be extended to family members, which is an important factor for employees as family health was a top priority for a third (33%) of the respondents and second choice for 39%.

Benefits supporting physical wellbeing

Private medical insurance is the first and most obvious choice when we want to look after our physical health, but dental cover is also becoming a popular choice in our survey.

Most Important Benefits for Physical Wellbeing

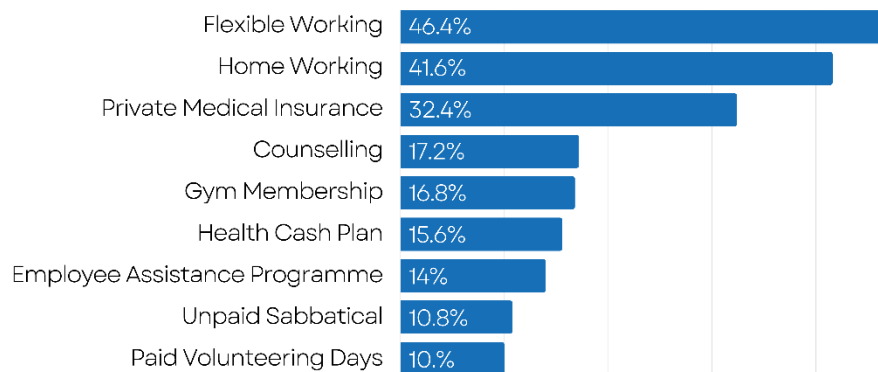


Benefits supporting mental wellbeing

With the upward trend in mental health awareness, an increasing number of employers are working hard to intervene where appropriate. Our survey shows that flexible and home working arrangements were considered the most important benefit for mental wellbeing by the highest number of people – 46% and 42% respectively.

Private medical insurance is also in high demand for the purposes of mental wellbeing. Not only does it provide peace of mind for employees with a critical health condition, but it also covers mental health and psychiatric treatments. Group health policies can also include Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) which provide extra digital-based wellbeing services such as: face-to-face counselling, 24-hour confidential support, and cognitive behavioural therapy.

Most Important Benefits for Mental Wellbeing

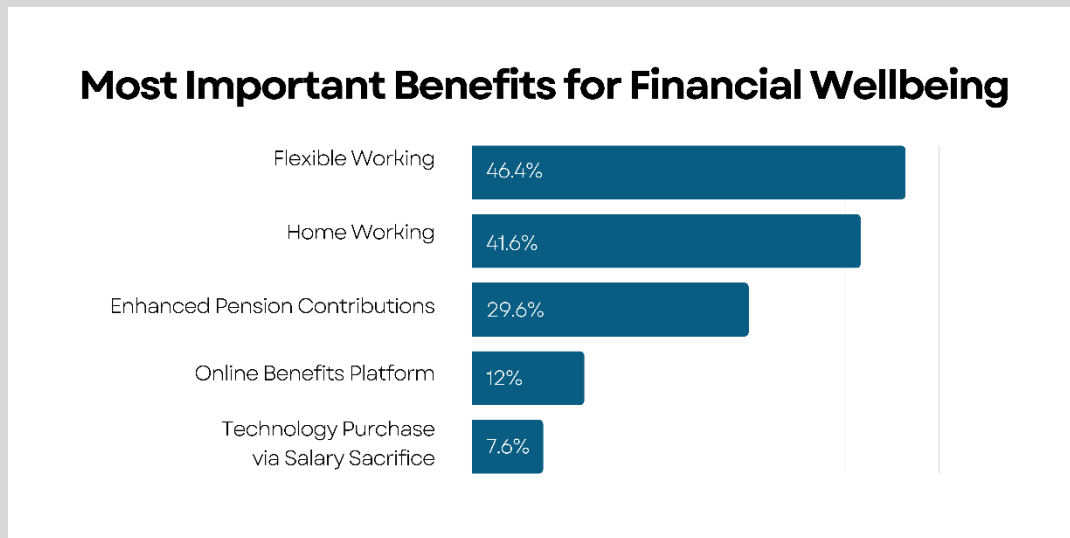


Benefits supporting financial wellbeing

Earlier in the report, we detailed how financial wellbeing was among employee's top life priorities and desired benefits. So, it's interesting to pick out some of those benefits which are most likely to assist in that sense. The popular demand for flexible and home working arrangements clearly has a financial benefit - erasing travel costs and perhaps even childcare costs.

Meanwhile the desire for enhanced pension contributions will have a direct impact on finances.

It's worth remembering the financial value that employee benefits can provide to your staff. Sometimes it's not altogether obvious, and employees may not be cognizant of the financial assistance provided by homeworking, for example. As mentioned previously in this report, it emphasises the importance of communicating the value of the perks you provide.



About the survey

The Engage survey drew responses from 250 UK participants in September 2021 across a wide range of sectors from retail to professional services, with the majority of them being in full employment (70%) with 17% in part time employment and the rest self-employed or in other types of employment.

A broad range of income bands were represented in the survey. Around one fifth (19%) had net household income of £20,799 or less; 30% had household income £20,800 to £36,399; a third (32.8%) had household income of £36,400 to £57,199; 6.8% had household income of £57,200 to £67,599; and 11.2% had income of £68,000 or more.

9.2% of respondents were aged 16-24; 22% were aged 25-34; 19.2% were aged 35-54; 26% were aged 45-54; 18.4% were aged 55-64; and 5.2% were aged 65 or over.