



HOW SATISFIED ARE EMPLOYEES IN 2023?

AN EXCLUSIVE REPORT INTO MODERN
EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS





INTRODUCTION

THE EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP CAN MAKE OR BREAK A BUSINESS.

Organisations who cultivate great employee relations will be more likely to achieve greater success in the long term, and enjoy the benefits of a happy, productive and settled workforce.

However, the past few years have seen several negative and damaging trends emerge across British and Irish workforces. First it was the 'Great Resignation', which was then quickly followed by 'Quiet Quitting' and 'Resenteeism'. And, at the time of writing, the viral trend of 'Bare Minimum Mondays' is gathering pace on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

All those trends seem to indicate something is going wrong when it comes to how employers are engaging with their employees. This sentiment is echoed by [recent data from Gallup](#), who reported that the number of employees engaged with both their jobs and employers hit record low levels of just 32% in late 2022.

So, what are the driving forces behind such negative trends, and what is going wrong with employee engagement? This is something we wanted to find out...





EXAMINING THE STATE OF

EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS

ALTHOUGH EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ISN'T THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS FOR ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, IT SHOULD BE OF SUPREME IMPORTANCE TO HR TEAMS AND SENIOR BUSINESS LEADERS.

That's because research has proven how it connects directly to organisational productivity, profitability, employee turnover, absenteeism, advocacy and quality of service.

With that in mind, we wanted to examine the state of employee-employer relationships, and discover the core issues that are contributing to the current poor levels of staff engagement.

This survey and the accompanying report delves deep into how satisfied the British and Irish workforces are in their roles and with their

employers, what businesses are (and aren't) doing to sustain positive employee-employer relationships, and actionable insights for HR, line managers and senior leaders.





THE RESULTS

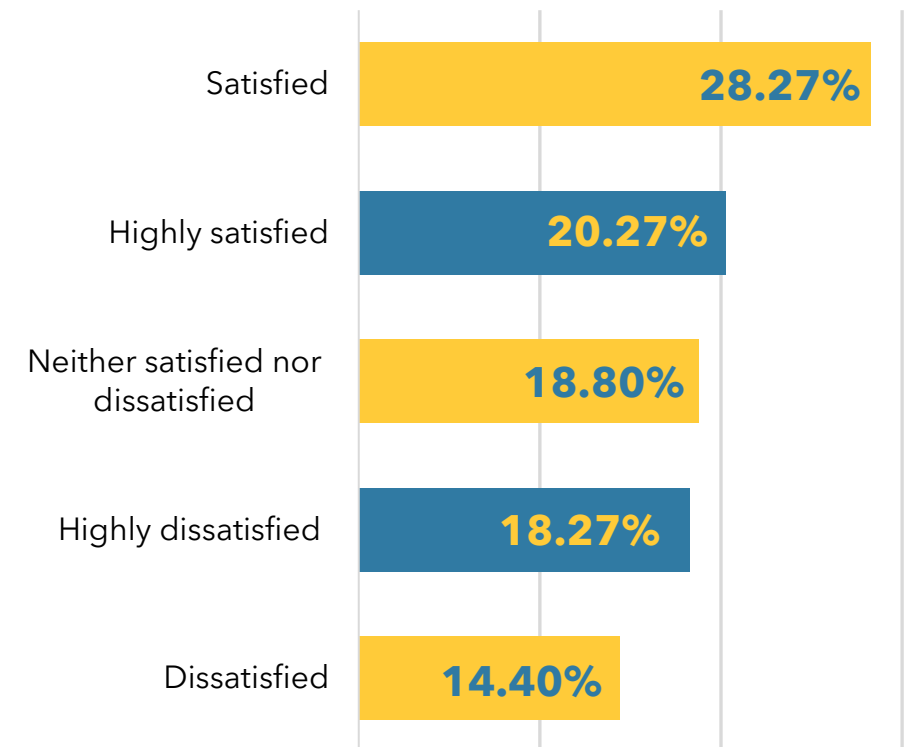
OVERALL, ONLY 48% OF EMPLOYEES ARE SATISFIED IN THEIR ROLES

Our survey found that only just over 48% of employees in the UK and Ireland are satisfied in their roles, with just under 33% saying they were either dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied - despite being happy with their annual salaries.

The rest (19%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, hinting these employees have disengaged from their employers, but not to the point of wanting to leave.

These results should set alarm bells ringing for HR teams. If 33% of employees across the UK and Ireland are dissatisfied with their jobs, it's likely their employers will be experiencing poor rates of productivity, poor levels of staff retention, and find it harder to attract talented new candidates.

How satisfied are you in your current role?





NEARLY A **FIFTH** OF DISSATISFIED EMPLOYEES SAY THEIR CORE DUTIES ARE THE MAIN REASON FOR WORKPLACE DISSATISFACTION

We asked the dissatisfied respondents why they felt dissatisfied in their role, and to our surprise, the most common reason (13%) was down to the employees not enjoying their core work duties.

For employees from companies with 251-500 staff, this jumped considerably to **over 20%**. A lack of work flexibility (ie. remote or hybrid work options) came in second (12%), and the culture of the business in third (11%).

What this means for HR

If dissatisfaction within a business is primarily being driven by employees disliking their core duties, there are a number of contributing factors that could be at play. Things HR should investigate include:

- **Inaccurate job descriptions**
No one would accept a job role if they knew they didn't like what it entailed. So, if employees don't like their core duties, it may be because their job simply doesn't match their initial expectations set by your job listing. You can read more about [this issue and how to solve it by following this link](#).
- **Lack of career development opportunities**
Doing the same duties day in, day out can quickly become laborious and uninspiring - especially if someone has been in the same role for a long time. Having a lack of career development or support within your business can sow the seed of resentment, or - worse still - drive staff away entirely.
- **Lack of reward or recognition**
Employees who feel they're not recognised for their hard work, or rewarded for going above and beyond their core duties, will likely disengage from their role - and their employer - incredibly quickly.
- **Lack of purpose or meaning**
Employees should understand how their role impacts the wider business. If they can't see how their job does this, they may become dissatisfied and disengaged with their core duties. Showing them how their tasks are vital to business success can give crucial meaning to employees - even if they think their duties are mundane or repetitive.

A POSITIVE WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION IN 2023

At the other end of the spectrum, over 16% of satisfied employees we surveyed said their satisfaction was due to having a positive work-life balance. Relationships with colleagues came second (15%), and the working environment came third (12%).

What this means for HR

HR teams should actively encourage a healthy work-life balance and support their employees in regularly 'switching off' from work. Highlighting the importance of taking annual leave is one way to do this: it gives everyone a chance to reset and recharge away from the pressures of the daily grind, plus it can also give your staff something to look forward to.

It's also essential that HR teams examine more strategic efforts to enhance the work-life balance: be it exploring the idea of flexible working, to maybe even seeing if something more radical – such as a four-day working week – could improve both the productivity and wellbeing of their workforces.

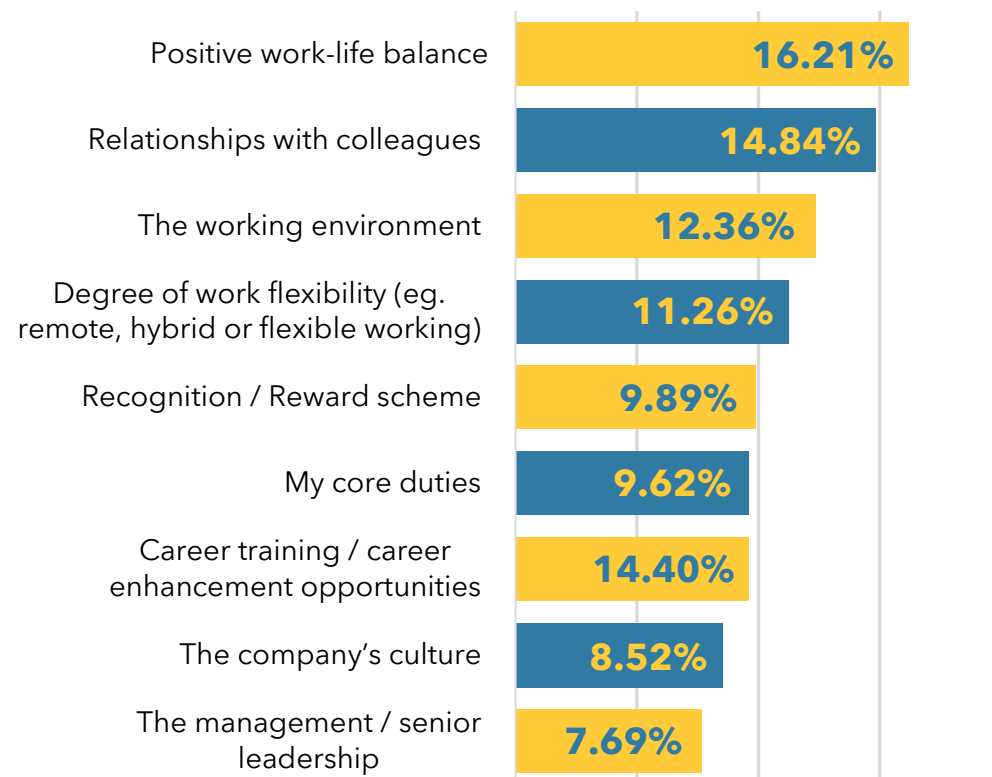
Of course, encouraging a healthy work-life balance is just a small part of maintaining workforce wellbeing. To learn more about how you can maintain positive mental wellbeing, just [follow this link to watch some excellent TED talks](#) on the subject.



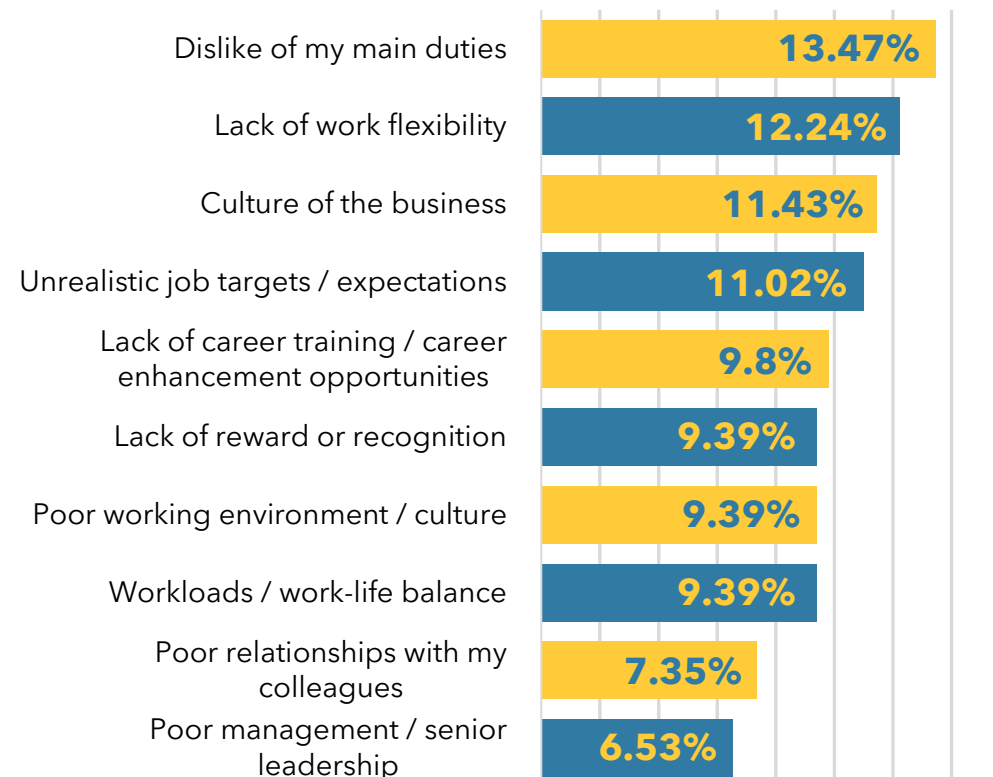


WHAT'S DRIVING SATISFACTION AND DISSATISFACTION WITH BRITISH AND IRISH EMPLOYEES

Aside from annual salary, what is the main reason for your satisfaction?



Aside from salary, what is the main reason for your dissatisfaction?





UNDER HALF OF EMPLOYEES IN THE UK AND IRELAND FEEL VALUED BY THEIR EMPLOYER

When we asked whether they agreed their employer valued them and their roles, only 48% of them said they agreed. Just over 35% disagreed, and 17% didn't agree or disagree.

This is another deeply concerning statistic for HR teams. Employees who don't feel valued will most certainly disengage from their tasks, pitch in less often, work slower, and likely take more unplanned absences – all highly damaging when it comes to nurturing positive employer-employee relationships.

What HR can do

To help your employees feel valued in their roles, and that their work efforts count for something, here are some initiatives HR should consider:

- **Peer-to-peer recognition**
Peer-to-peer recognition schemes allow employees from any part of your business acknowledge the skills, contributions and achievements of their peers – giving that all important feeling of value and worth. To [learn more about setting up a peer-to-peer recognition scheme, just follow this link.](#)
- **Regular 1-1 catchups**
Regular 1-1 check-ins can provide a 'safe' opportunity for line managers to talk with their employees about any challenges they're facing or to ask for help. In addition, they also provide an excellent opportunity for positive feedback to be shared with employees, and highlight the things they're doing well and how they're helping support wider business objectives.
- **Celebrate the little (but important) things**
Simple gestures like for rewarding dedication, loyalty, hard work or personal achievements can help employees feel more than just another cog in the machine, and nurture those all-important employer-employee relationships.
- **Support the personal development of your people**
Investing in your employees shows your organisation values them and their contributions. You could consider offering professional development classes within the company or, if budgets allow, paying for online courses, conferences or tuition reimbursement.



LESS THAN **HALF** OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEIR EMPLOYERS ARE ENERGISING THEM TO DO THEIR BEST AT WORK

Despite challenging economic times, our survey found that less than half of employees (46%) agreed their employers helped energise them into doing their best at work. For respondents from businesses of 501-1,000 workers, this result was substantially worse: with the majority (22%) saying they neither agreed nor disagreed, and 38% disagreeing.

In addition to employees feeling their senior leaders weren't doing enough to energise them to do their best, our survey also found that only a slim majority (**57%**) said their senior leaders contributed to a positive experience for employees.

What HR can do

To help employees feel energised to do their best at work, here are some initiatives HR should consider:

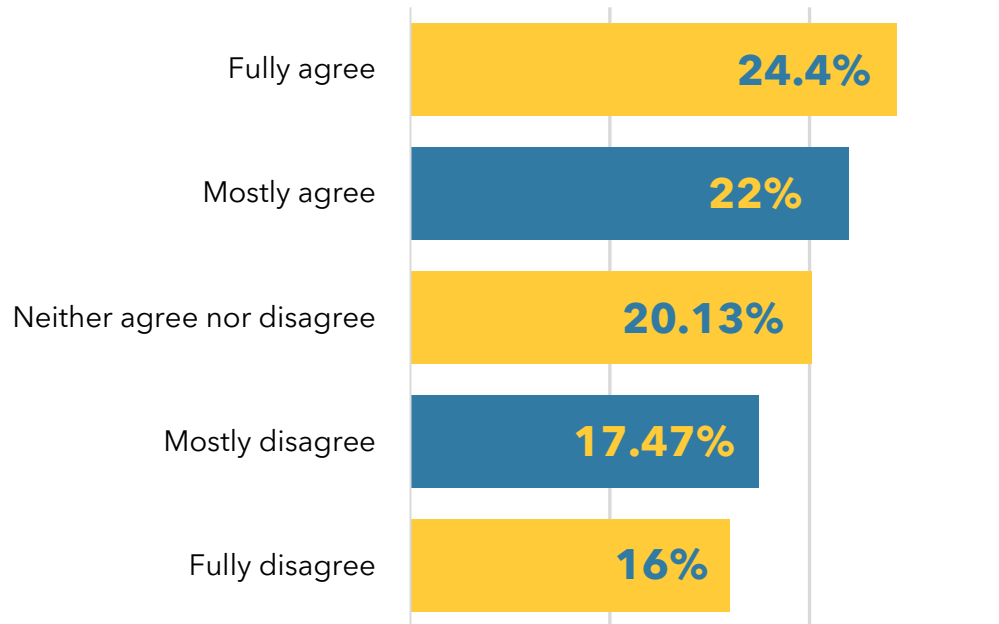
- **Highlight the importance of self-care**
Encourage and support your company leaders in reminding your employees about the importance of having a healthy work-life balance, as well as getting good amounts of rest and exercise.
- **Encourage a culture of feedback**
If employees feel that senior leaders listen to their opinions, it can become easier for your business to nurture a positive relationship with them. You'll also inspire a sense of collective ownership and accountability within the company, which can translate into better team dynamics.

To learn more about how you can use accountability to aid teamwork and positive workplace relationships, [just follow this link to download a guide on the topic.](#)
- **Lead by example**
The most productive businesses have a sense of shared purpose and belief in the company's ethos, vision and values. This comes from the top with positive role models that inspire the wider workforce to achieve more, and be more committed to wider organisational goals through their own actions.

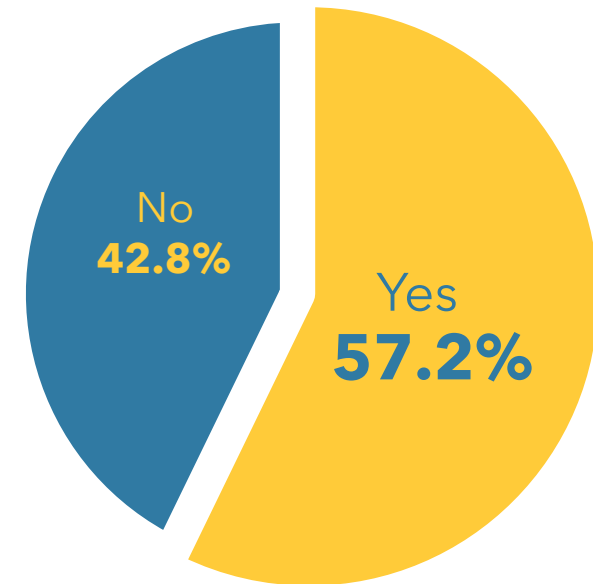


THE EFFECT OF SENIOR LEADERS ON THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Would you agree that your organisation's leadership energises you to come to work and do your best?



Do you believe the senior leaders in your business contribute to a positive experience for employees?



SENIOR LEADERS WHO SUPPORT CAREER GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYEES ARE VITAL TO BUILDING SATISFYING WORK ENVIRONMENTS

Of the respondents who felt their senior leaders were contributing to positive employee experiences, the majority (20%) said it was due to being offered the chance to grow and develop their own careers.

Asking and responding to employee feedback was a close second (19%), and focusing on diversity, equality and inclusion initiatives was third (17%).

Nearly a quarter of employees believe their senior leader's lack of communications is harming their workplace satisfaction.

On the other side of the coin, those respondents who felt their senior leaders weren't contributing to a positive employee experience said it was mainly down to poor levels of communication (**21%**).

A lack of career development opportunities came second (18%), whilst not responding to employee feedback came third (18%).

Interestingly, for respondents aged between 45-54 years old, they said lack of career development was the biggest reason (34%) why senior leaders weren't contributing to a positive workplace experience. This highlights the fact that businesses cannot afford to ignore the needs and ambitions of older workers – especially during the much-publicised skills shortage the UK is currently experiencing.

To find out more about how businesses can better engage with older workers, [just follow this link](#).





WHAT SENIOR LEADERS ARE AND AREN'T DOING TO HELP CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS A **POSITIVE EXPERIENCE** FOR EMPLOYEES

**What would you say is the most impactful activity
your senior leaders are doing to help to create a
positive employee experience?**



**What is the main reason why you feel your
employer's senior leaders are not contributing to a
positive experience for employees?**





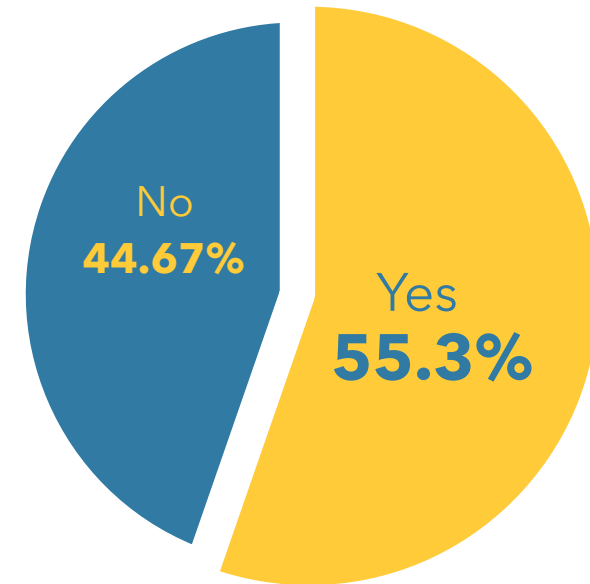
ONLY 55% OF EMPLOYEES FEEL THEIR EFFORTS ARE RECOGNISED BY THEIR EMPLOYER

Recognition helps employees see their company values them and their contributions to the success of the business. However, despite this widely accepted fact, only 55% of employees in our survey said their employer recognised their efforts in the workplace.

This is another worrying result when it comes to positive employer-employee relationships. If employees feel their efforts and hard work are ignored or taken for granted, it can lead to damaging forms of disengagement, such as the quiet quitting and resentment trends we mentioned earlier.

If HR is to successfully combat the root causes of disengagement and poor employee-employer relationships, recognising employees for their efforts should be at the top of their priority list.

Are you recognised for your individual efforts at work?



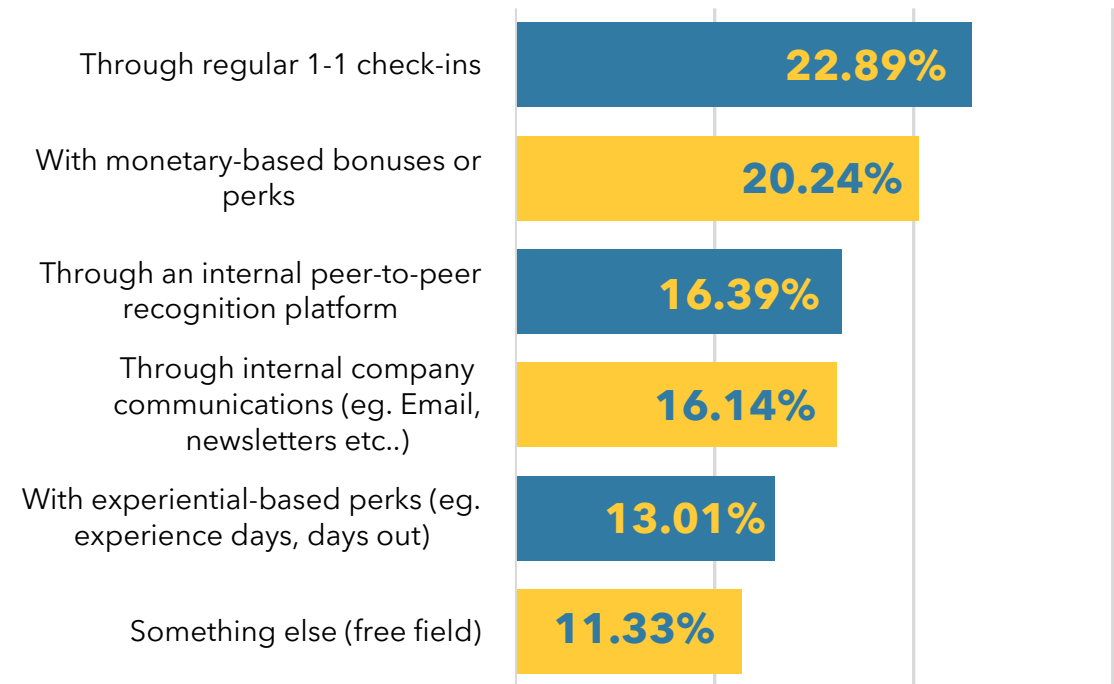


HR SHOULD FOCUS ON 1-1 CHECK-INS WHEN IT COMES TO NURTURING EFFECTIVE WORKPLACE RECOGNITION

Of the respondents who said they were recognised for their individual efforts at work, regular 1-1 check-ins (23%) were the most popular method used by employers. This was followed by monetary-based bonuses or perks in second (20%) and through an internal peer-to-peer recognition platform in third (16%).

As highlighted earlier in this report, 1-1 check-ins appear to be a popular and effective way to maintain healthy employer-employee relationships and enhance the employee experience, too. It's something that HR teams should ensure happen on a regular basis within their organisation.

What is the main method your employer uses to recognise your efforts at work?



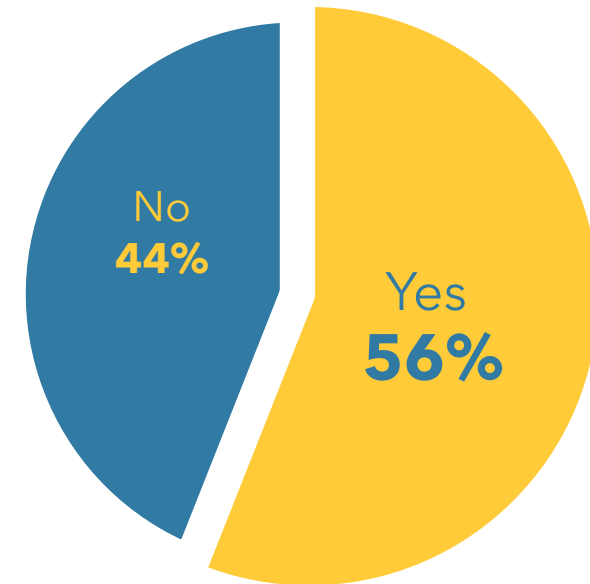


ONLY 56% OF EMPLOYEES FEEL SUPPORTED BY THEIR LINE MANAGER

Part of being a good line manager is being able to provide coaching and mentoring to their employees. That includes giving constructive performance feedback to all team members in their quest to achieve departmental and wider strategic goals.

However, it appears only a slim majority of employees feel they are supported by their line manager (56%); meaning a large minority feel either abandoned, ignored, or unable to build meaningful bonds with those who are meant to lead and inspire.

Do you feel supported by your line manager?






POSITIVE **WORK-LIFE** EXPECTATIONS FROM LINE MANAGERS ARE VITAL IN CREATING POSITIVE EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES...

For those respondents who said they did feel supported by their line manager, the most popular answer as to why was having positive work-life balance expectations (20%).

Great leadership and personal management skills came second (18%), and transparency when it comes to targets and objectives was third (15%).

What is the main reason why you feel supported by your line manager?



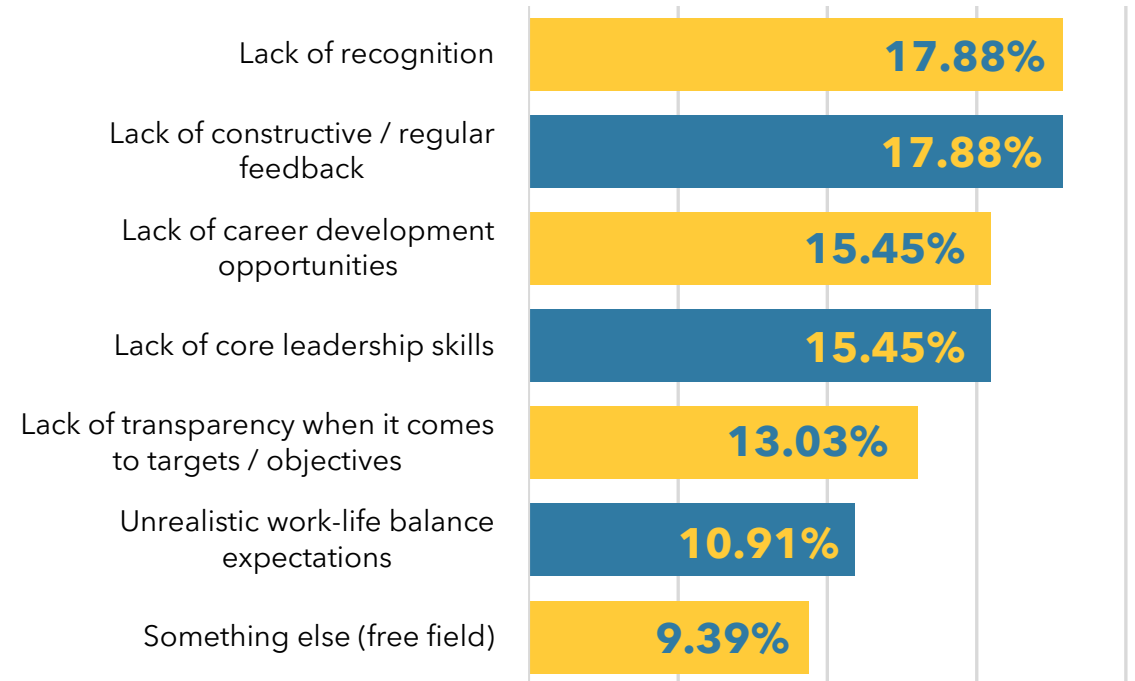


...BUT FAILING TO PROVIDE **REGULAR FEEDBACK** OR **RECOGNITION** TO THEIR EMPLOYEES CAN BE **HUGELY DETRIMENTAL**

Of the respondents who said they didn't feel supported by their line manager, the top two reasons were a lack of regular and constructive feedback (18%) and failing to offer any kind of recognition (also 18%).

A lack of core leadership skills (15%) and lack of career development opportunities (15%) followed closely behind.

What is the main reason why you do not feel supported by your line manager?





WHAT HR CAN DO TO SUPPORT THEIR LINE MANAGERS

As our results have shown, the most positive way a line manager can support their employees is through a mix of highlighting the importance of positive work-life balances, having great leadership skills and being transparent when it comes to targets and objectives.

HR professionals are in a fantastic position to support line managers in getting the best out of their employees. They're also perfectly placed to help them build better relationships with their employees, and nurture those all-important connections needed to fully engage with employers.

A couple of effective initiatives you could try include:

- **Consider mentoring opportunities**

Mentoring is a great way for HR to support line managers with their people management responsibilities – particularly for managers who feel they've been thrown in the deep end or are struggling to see the value of devoting time to their people duties - It's a win-win situation for both your employees and line managers! You can [read more about mentoring here.](#)

- **Highlight the importance of setting clear objectives**

Setting clear objectives, and reviewing these at least quarterly, ensures that people are clear about what's important and that everyone is pulling in the same direction. HR systems that include integrated performance management software, like [Cezanne HR](#) for example, can support this approach by providing a central place where objectives can be recorded, easily accessed and adjusted if necessary.





ONLY 54% OF EMPLOYEES BELIEVE HR TEAMS CONTRIBUTE TO CREATING POSITIVE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENTS

A great HR team has the interests of its employees (as well as the business) at its heart. The problem is, to those on the outside at least, it may not always appear so - and our survey would appear to confirm this statement.

Despite becoming a key strategic partner for many forward-thinking organisations, only just over half of the employees we surveyed (**54%**) felt their organisation's HR teams contributed to creating positive workplace environments.

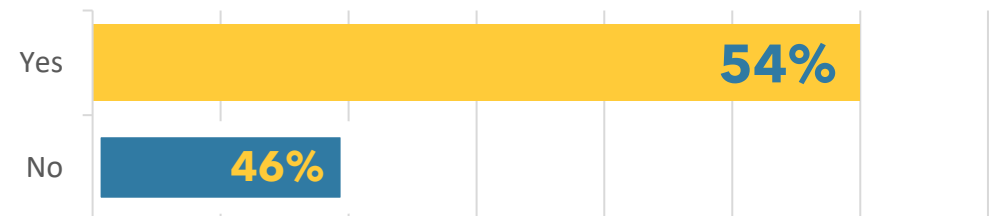
Those employees cited driving health and wellbeing initiatives within the business as the key thing HR were doing (**21%**), with promoting recognition to those going above and beyond their core duties second (19%) and providing great levels of communications throughout the business third (14%).

However, for employees from organisations of between 501-1,000 employees, the majority (51%) **didn't** think their HR teams contributed to creating positive employee experiences. Clearly, the good work that HR teams are doing is either going unnoticed, or they're not doing enough...

For the 46% of employees who felt their HR teams were **not** contributing to a positive employee experience, a lack of reward or recognition initiatives was the most popular reason (**16.5%**) why they believed HR wasn't helping. A lack of workplace wellbeing initiatives came second (15%) and a lack of transparency as to what they do / how they support employees came third (15%).

If you feel your own HR team needs to improve its image and turn around a negative workforce perception, there's a number of things that can be done - [just follow this link to find out what they are.](#)

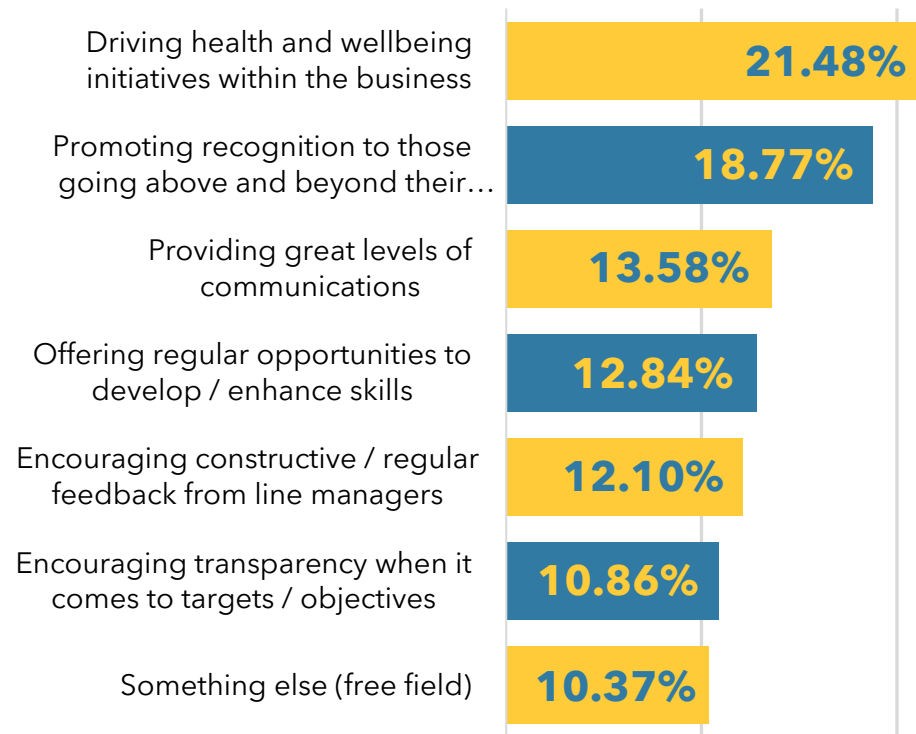
Do you feel your company's HR team contributes to creating a positive employee experience?





WHAT HR IS AND ISN'T DOING TO HELP CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE FOR EMPLOYEES

What is the main reason why you believe your company's HR team does contribute to creating a positive employee experience?



What is the main reason why you believe your company's HR team doesn't contribute to creating a positive employee experience?



NEARLY 60% OF EMPLOYEES DON'T KNOW OR DON'T ALIGN WITH THEIR OWN ORGANISATION'S VALUES

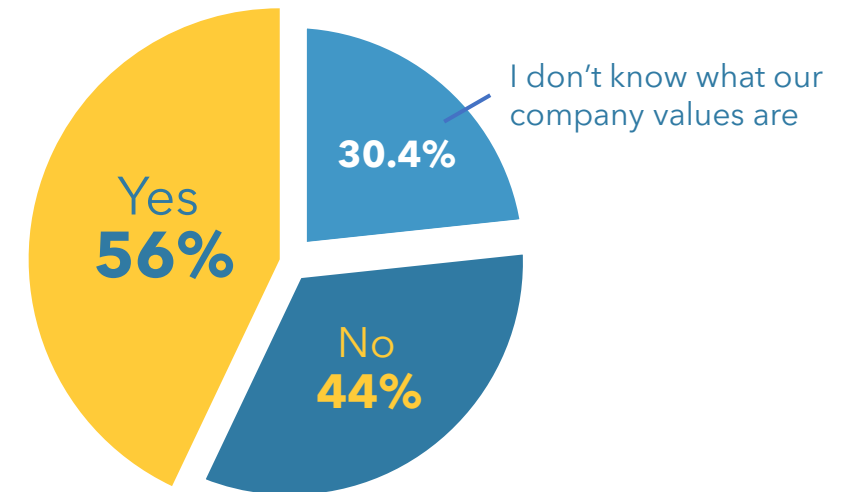
One of the more shocking facts we discovered was that 28% of employees said they didn't think their own beliefs aligned with their company's values, whilst 30% said they didn't even know what their own company values were.

Clearly communicated company values provide a common purpose that all employees should understand, work towards and live by. Plus, it's a widely accepted fact that once you define and regularly promote your values, employees will come to understand what behaviours are expected of them that are deemed essential for success.

It's a mystery, then, why it seems a large number of organisations are still failing to communicate their values successfully to their employees.

The subject of corporate values, culture and what HR can do to both promote and sustain them effectively is something we cover in our comprehensive report. It shares detailed findings on the state of workplace culture in the UK and Ireland, and includes practical advice and insights for HR professionals - why not take a look? [Just follow this link to get your copy.](#)

Do you think your own beliefs align with your company's values?





NEARLY HALF OF EMPLOYEES DON'T FEEL COMFORTABLE EXPRESSING THEIR CULTURAL OR SOCIAL BELIEFS AT WORK

A huge part of positive employer-employee relationships comes down to whether people feel comfortable being who they are in the workplace. But, if employees feel they can't express themselves based on their unique perspectives, it's likely they'll never be able to build meaningful engagement with their employer.

Our survey found that over **46%** of employees didn't feel comfortable expressing their cultural and social beliefs in the workplace. This indicates that, whilst there have been great strides to initiate effective diversity, equality and inclusion (DE&I) strategies into workplaces, there is still a heck of a long way to go.

Do you feel comfortable expressing your cultural and social beliefs in the workplace?



What this means for HR

The CIPD believe that more robust DEI strategies will be vital over the course of the next few years. In addition, as [our own research into the psychology of HR](#) discovered, HR teams and their organisations who were seen championing DE&I initiatives were consistently rated higher by their employers across a number of different trust factors.

So, despite the uncertain economic times we currently live in, it's vital your own DE&I activities don't fall by the wayside. To learn more about how you can support effective DE&I strategies - even during financially challenging periods - [just follow this link.](#)



ONLY 32% OF EMPLOYEES ARE HAPPY IN THEIR ROLES AND WITH THEIR EMPLOYER

The last question we asked all our respondents was whether they were happy in their roles and with their employers. Only 32% of them were happy and not looking to leave their roles, whilst 18% wanted to leave as soon as possible, and 27% wanted to leave within the next 6-12 months.

We also wanted to find out what the key reasons were for these employees looking to leave (aside from wanting an enhanced salary). When we asked respondents what they were looking for in a new role, the most popular answer (**15%**) was to secure better job flexibility (ie. the chance to work in hybrid or remote environments).

To have a better working environment came second (12%), and the need for a new challenge (12%) and feeling no-longer engaged with their current role (12%) were joint third.

What this means for HR

Employees are looking for employment experiences that annual salaries don't cover: the chance to work on their own terms being the prime example of that, and to simply be happy, engaged and comfortable completing their day-to-day duties – all core aspects of positive employer-employee relationships.

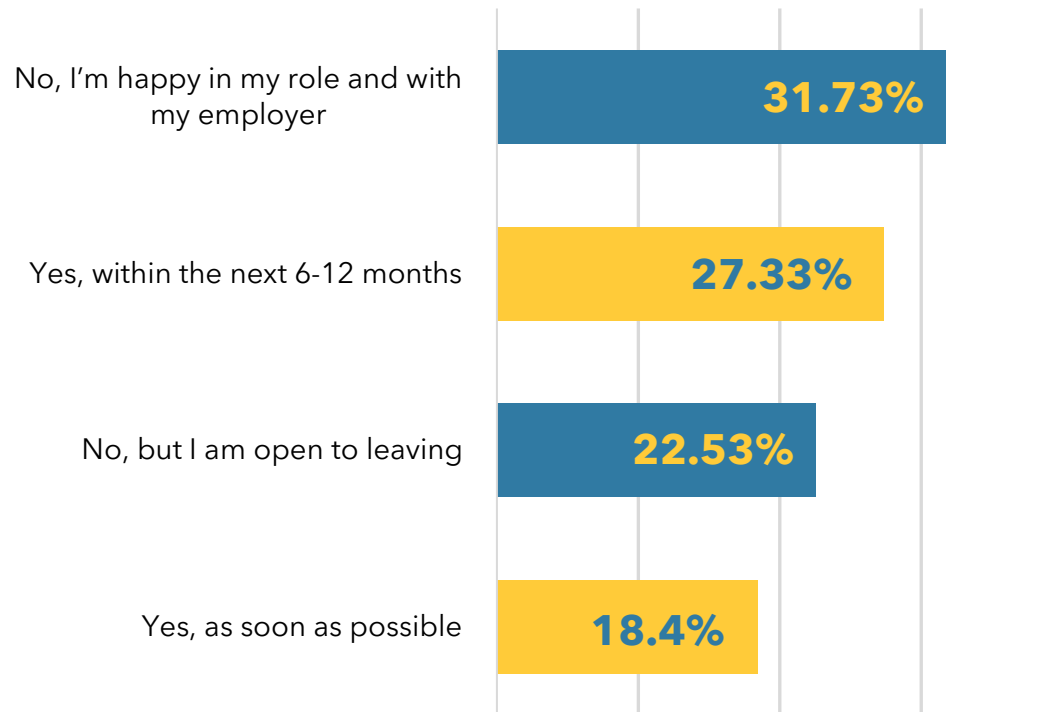
Our survey has shown that employees will leave a business if their day-to-day experiences don't meet their expectations. Offering enhanced salaries to fix the problem won't necessarily prevent them leaving.

HR needs to investigate how their organisations can connect to their people on a much deeper level, and provide them with an experience of work which they won't want to lose by going elsewhere – even if a larger salary is on offer.



HOW HAPPY ARE EMPLOYEES IN THEIR ROLE, AND WHY THEY WOULD CHOOSE TO LEAVE

Do you want to leave your role?



Aside from securing an enhanced annual salary, what would be the main reason for leaving your current role?





WHO WE SURVEYED

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH POLLFISH, WE SURVEYED 750 PEOPLE FROM PRIVATE SECTOR BUSINESSES ACROSS THE UK AND IRELAND, FROM AGES 18 - 54+ IN NON-LEADERSHIP-BASED ROLES WHO WERE HAPPY WITH THEIR ANNUAL SALARIES.

We only included people who were happy with their annual salaries as this would allow us to look past monetary-based issues and focus purely on matters relating to the employment experience.

Respondents came from a broad range of industries with organisational headcounts of between 101 and 5,000 employees.





WHO WE ARE

Cezanne HR is the leading UK supplier of modern, easy-to-adapt Cloud HR systems and managed payroll services for mid-sized UK and global businesses.

Trusted by thousands of HR professionals in the UK and worldwide, our mission is to make it easy to transform HR by providing best-in-class HR software that streamlines and improves every aspect of human resources management – saving you time and helping everyone work smarter together.

We also provide dedicated customer support that's second to none, along with monthly system releases that ensure you never, ever, have to pay for expensive implementations or future upgrades again.

Designed to fit your needs today and support your business tomorrow, Cezanne HR helps businesses work smarter and achieve more.

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