

Re:Me

The importance of individualism in a changing world

Chapter 2:

Realign... relationships and productivity by focusing on what now matters most to employees

Recognise **Realign** Reassure Redefine



Employees' expectations of employers have changed

In the first chapter of Re:Me, we saw how changes in how we work, led by the pandemic, have fundamentally affected the nature of the relationship between employees and employers.

62% of employees now feel their relationship has changed, with a third feeling it has weakened (**32%**). Employers are feeling this even more keenly, with **72%** agreeing the relationship has changed – and **25%** that it is for the worse.

Sizeable gaps, such as this, in perceptions between the two groups is an issue that reoccurs throughout the research, and highlights the need for employers

to now 'relearn' what matters most to employees – enabling them to then realign their thinking on everything from employee communications to tailoring employee benefits to individuals.

Employers need to recognise that, following the pandemic, employee benefits such as healthcare not only fulfil a role in improving employees' physical and mental wellbeing, but also tangibly demonstrate their social responsibility towards them.

73% of employers would like to see benefits packages adapted to suit their priorities in a post-Covid world.

Key finding 1:

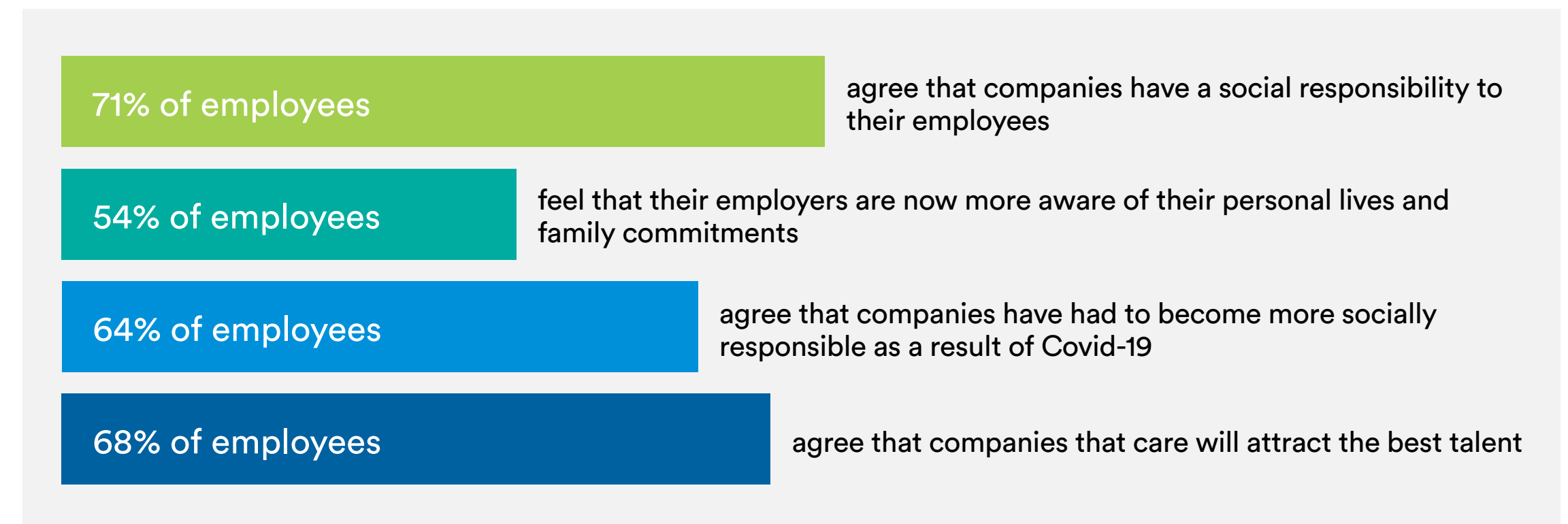
Employees feel employers have a social responsibility to them

With the pandemic significantly increasing the numbers of people working from home, managers have learned far more about the detail of their employees' lives, their physical and mental health, and the time and financial pressures each is under. **54%** of employees feel employers are now more aware of their personal lives and family commitments. As a result, employees want companies to respond: **61%** now expect their employer to make allowances for their personal circumstances.

This is part of a wider, more fundamental change in employees' expectations of their employer.

Our research shows that **71%** of employees now feel companies have a social responsibility to their employees. This extends beyond work itself, with employees feeling employers now have an increased duty of care for their welfare, wellbeing and overall happiness. And this shift in beliefs is felt just as strongly by employers (**62%**).

The research shows how employees are now seeking an improved, more individualised employer experience, aligned to their work life, changed priorities and their employer's heightened understanding of their specific family circumstances.



Companies that realign their employee experience empathetically, recognising individual needs, stand to benefit in terms of productivity – as well as retaining and acquiring new employees, as the economy picks up. In fact, **68%** of employees now feel that companies that care will attract the best talent.

For HR departments, an accurate understanding of the changes now, creates the opportunity to realign business objectives with new employee priorities: an updated Employee Value Proposition centred on the individual that integrates communications, policy and benefits into a single strategy.

Key finding 2:

The risks of failing to realign with employees' new priorities

The changed 'contract' between employee and employer points to a tipping point for both inter-dependent groups. While taking on board employees' new values and practical needs will undoubtedly lead to increased productivity, not doing so risks leaving employees' sense of belonging diminished.

A high **45%** of employees felt that if employers didn't accommodate their new work values, this would lead to a decrease in trust.

Proposed action if work values are not accommodated



59% of employees said they would look for alternative employment if their work values weren't accommodated

Just **4%** of employees felt there would be no impact. Worryingly, there is a significant mismatch between the two

groups' realities, with employers not recognising the risk they are facing. Just **36%** of employers felt not accommodating new

values would lead to employees looking for another job (vs **59%** of employees), and **41%** that it would diminish trust.

Key finding 3:

The gap between employers' and employees' perceptions

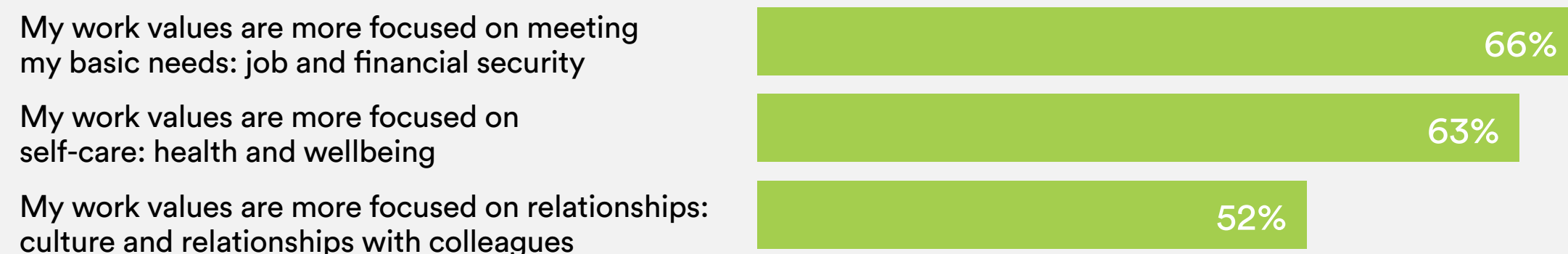
The research also shows how the pandemic has led to employees reprioritising those values that matter most. In turn, this provides valuable direction for employers keen to increase productivity, loyalty and an improved sense of employee belonging – the benefits of realigning with them.

While **66%** of employees confirm their work values are now focused on job and financial security, **63%** now prioritise self-care, health and wellbeing – for both themselves and their wider family. With relationship boundaries clearly evolving, this indicates employees increasingly feel their employer has a clear duty of care towards them.

63%

of employees said that their work values are now focused on self-care, health and wellbeing

Impact on work values for employees



Q To what extent do you agree with the following statements on how your work values may have changed since Covid-19?

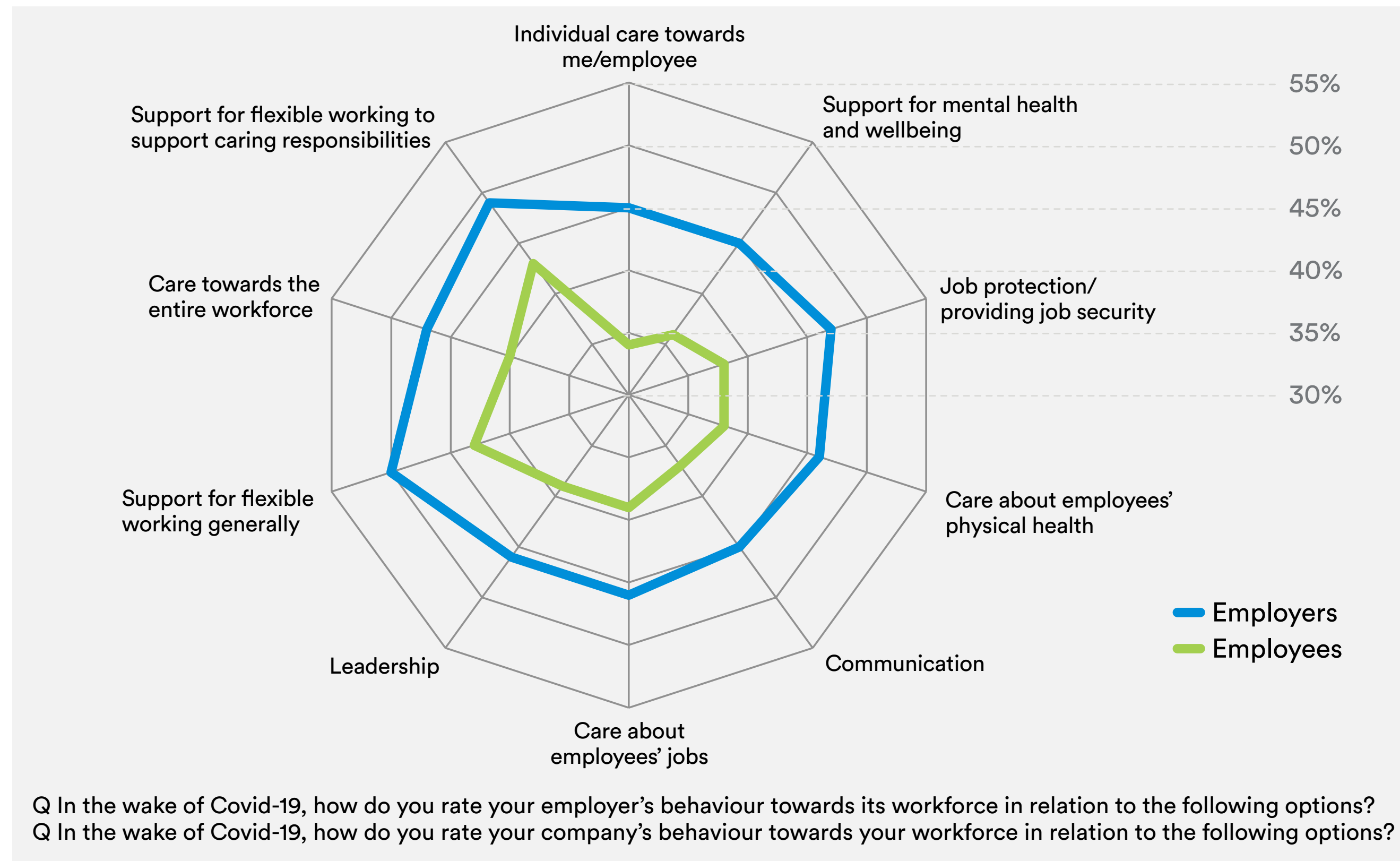


Yet our research reveals a worrying mismatch in perceptions, with employers rating their care of employees considerably higher than employees themselves. As one example, **47%** of companies 'rate' their own behaviour towards employees regarding job protection and financial security, while just **38%** of employees feel the same way.

Again, a mismatch is notable in how well companies demonstrate their ability to show care for employee physical health and wellbeing. While just **38%** of employees 'rate' their employer caring positively about their physical health, **46%** of companies view their own behaviour more highly.

The value, however, of companies recognising the gap and realigning

Rating of company behaviour across employers and employees



their thinking is clear and positive. **40%** of employees who were planning to leave said that if their

employer demonstrated more care for their physical wellbeing, it might impact on their decision,

and **39%** if their employer demonstrated more care for their mental wellbeing.

"If a senior member of management, a CEO, HR professional or someone highly respected in your organisation is willing and able to record and share their experience around a time when their mental health was impacted, it will generate healthy conversations and demonstrate that your company understands, listens and cares by normalising such issues and problems."

Bethan Dacey, Mental Health First Aider, MetLife



Key finding 4: The need to align with new factors influencing productivity

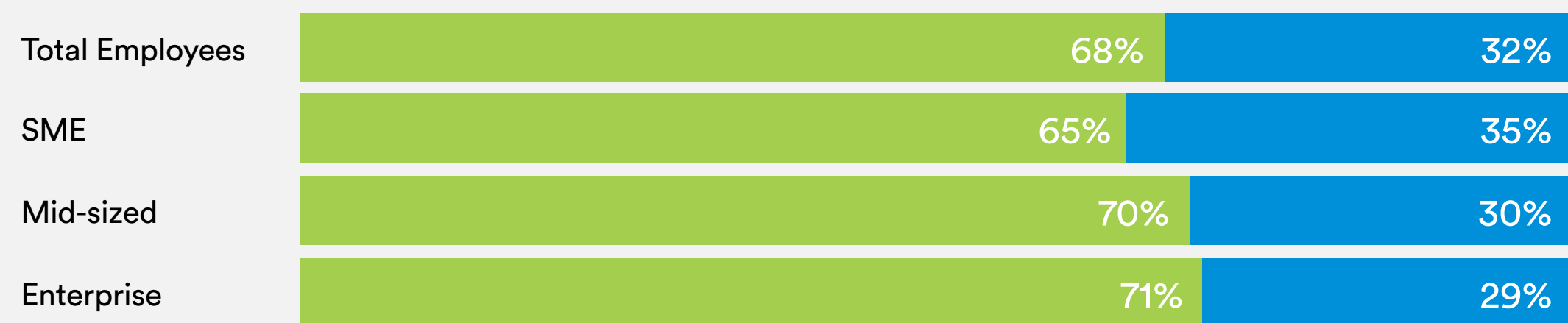
Employee productivity has certainly been polarised by the pandemic: while **32%** of employees feel their productivity has decreased in the past year, over two thirds (**68%**) feel changes at work have actually boosted productivity.

Employers echo this, with **68%** overall feeling it has improved, and larger enterprise companies feeling it the more keenly.

68%

of employers feel the Covid-19 environment has improved productivity

Impact on employee productivity, by company size



Q In percentage terms, how has working in the current Covid-19 environment either positively or negatively impacted your productivity? ■ Positive ■ Negative

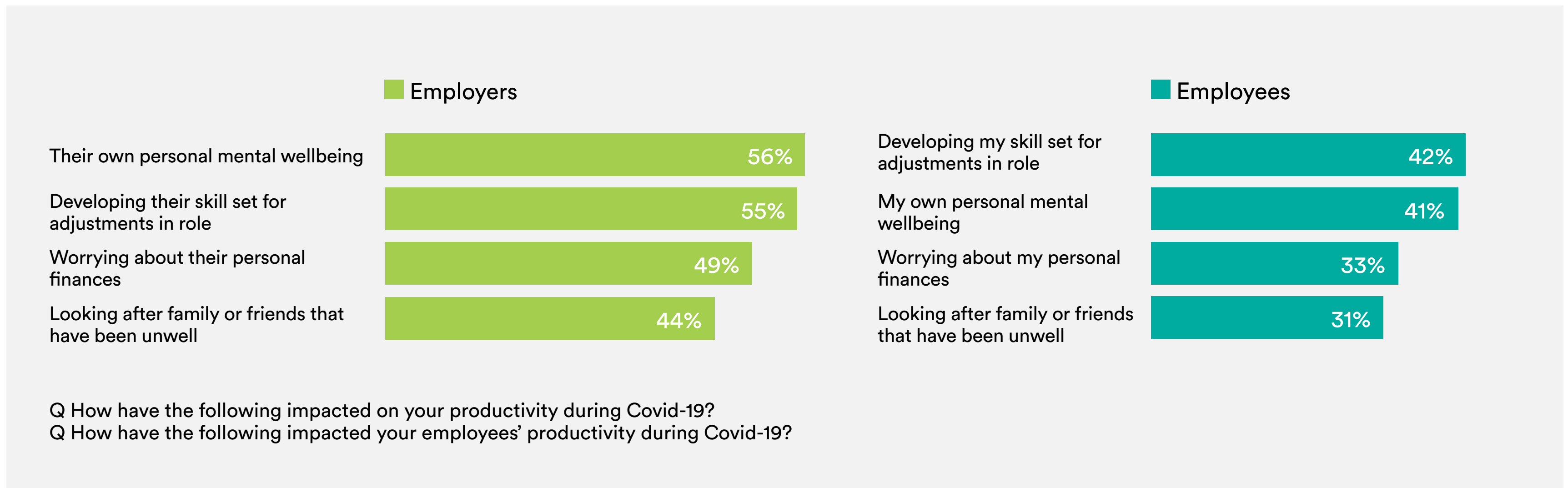


The study shows how this is not the case for all ages and sexes, with women 30-39 feeling their productivity has most been affected negatively during the pandemic, perhaps due to focus on family or other commitments.

We therefore set out to understand which factors are most influencing productivity, allowing employers and their HR departments to realign policy, behaviours and motivational benefits accordingly.

High among factors positively influencing productivity was 'supporting personal mental wellbeing', cited by **41%** of employees. As well as an even higher **56%** of employers.

Factors impacting on productivity according to employers and employees



For a third (**33%**) of employees 'worrying about personal finances' was a significant drag on productivity.

And for **31%** it is 'looking after family or friends that have been unwell', impacting via both stress and the need to find the physical time for caring. This is something that employers are keenly aware of, with **44%** citing its impact on productivity.

Employers who realign their approach to employees, offering individualised time flexibility, physical support and healthcare provision based on their increased knowledge of personal situations, are likely to enjoy the greatest success.

Chapter 3: Reassure

In chapter 3 of **Re:Me** we explore the theme: **Reassure**. Drawing on insights from our research study, we'll focus on the role of rewarding staff in Covid-19 times, and how employers can better communicate with staff to recognise success and support wellbeing.

In particular, you'll find insights into:

- How employers can drive productivity by reassuring employees that they are doing a good job
- Tailoring rewards to best suit individual employees and ensuring their basic needs are met
- The importance of celebrating success to support employee wellbeing

Visit metlife.co.uk/ReMe for further content including:



An infographic that highlights our findings



A short film explaining the importance of the four Rs

Methodology

The **Re:Me** research was conducted in August 2020 to examine the changing relationship between employers and employees, to reveal the values, expectations and priorities that are important to both sides and where the gaps lie in a Covid-19 world and beyond. It was a nationally representative, online, quantitative study among 900 employees (450 of both SME and Corporate organisations) and 300 employers (150 of both SME and Corporate organisations). Corporates have been defined as those with 500+ employees and SME defined as those with 50-500 employees.



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