

Re:Me

**The importance of individualism
in a changing world**



Re:Me reveals why understanding personal values and requirements must start with looking at employees as individuals, adapting where possible to realign this shift in values following the pandemic, to create a sense of belonging.

Introduction

The need for a new, post-pandemic roadmap for employer/employee relationships

With Covid-19 and new ways of working transforming the employer/employee relationship from Spring 2020 onwards, we recognised employers now needed an up-to-date understanding of the ways in which UK employees' priorities and expectations have moved on.

As a specialist in employee benefits, MetLife has therefore commissioned Re:Me. This new research enables organisations to accurately reshape employee solutions across communications, relationship-building and benefits, while increasing productivity and retention across their organisation.

Re:Me reveals why understanding personal values and requirements must start with looking at employees as individuals, adapting where possible to realign this shift in values following the pandemic, to create a sense of belonging. It also highlights the growing importance for

employers to demonstrate care for employees in a changed world where employees feel their employers have a social responsibility to them, and the risks of employers not doing so.

Importantly, Re:Me shows how needs and priorities differ by organisational size, gender and age. Within our study you'll see we asked the same questions of both employees and employers, allowing you to see the often-critical areas where employers' perceptions of their employees' needs and priorities are most at odds with the reality.

Re:Me's findings are pragmatic and directive for employers. We've divided them into four key phases for employers – The '4 Rs', each covered in a focused chapter:

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Chapter 1:

Recognise... the change in relationship between employers and employees



Restoring a sense of belonging

The pandemic has led to a revolution in the workplace – changing how we work, where we work, and resetting relationships between employees and employers. It's a shift both audiences fully agree has taken place, with **72%** of UK employers feeling the relationship has now changed, as do **62%** of employees.

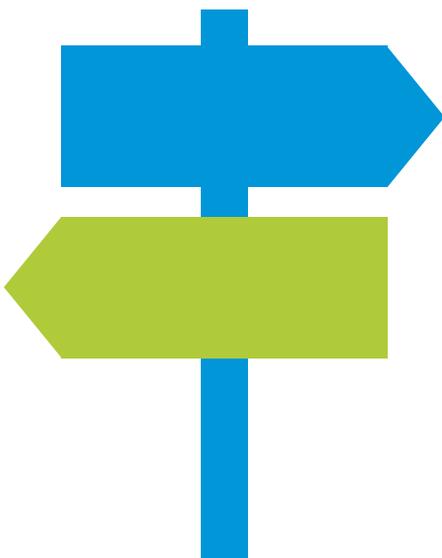
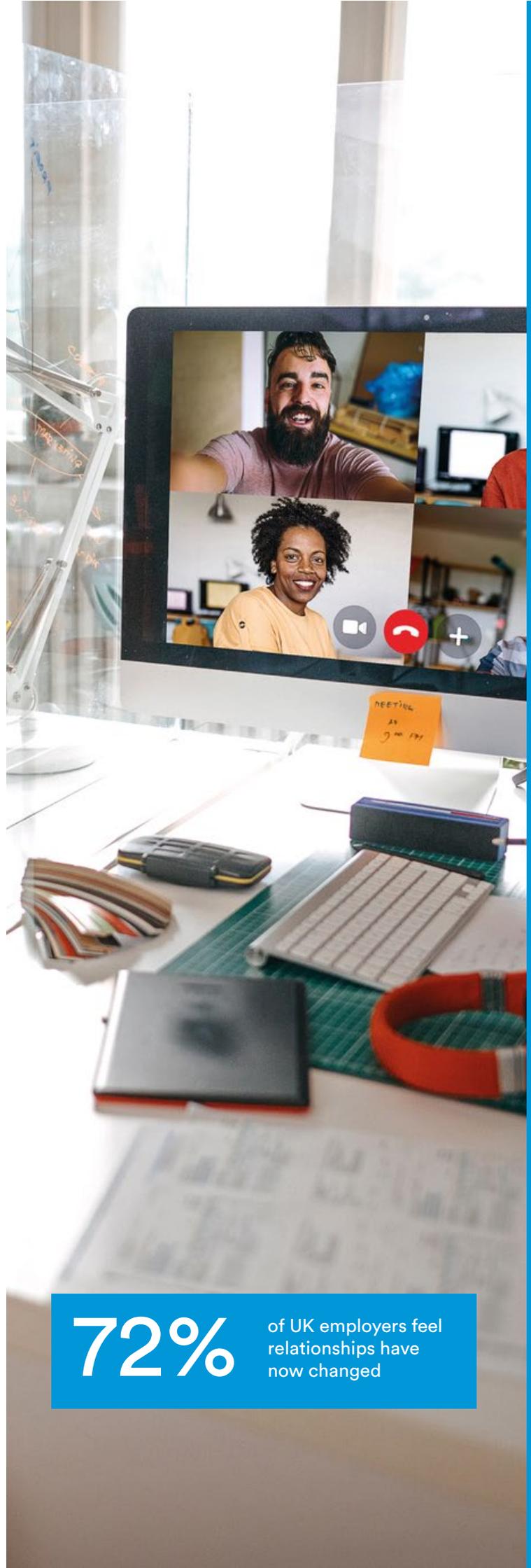
The physical presence of the company has also evolved. **41%** of previously office-based employees now work primarily from home, resulting in lower levels of collaboration and social interaction with their colleagues, and a decline in their all-important sense of community with their employer.

In a short time, the rise of homeworking has diminished many of the cultural, emotional and communications bonds employers have invested in establishing.

This has resulted in significant erosion of employees' sense of 'belonging' towards their employer – a reality experienced across companies of all sizes.

Belonging is critical for companies, given its correlation with job performance, employee turnover risk and even sick days. Employers will therefore need to act promptly to re-engage employee sentiment, if they want to maintain productivity, build loyalty, succession plan, retain their most skilled, reduce recruitment and lower absentee levels.

In this first chapter, we have identified five key findings that explore the ways in which the employer-employee relationship has changed, and the potential impact on company performance.



72%

of UK employers feel relationships have now changed

Key finding 1:

The decline in the workplace relationship

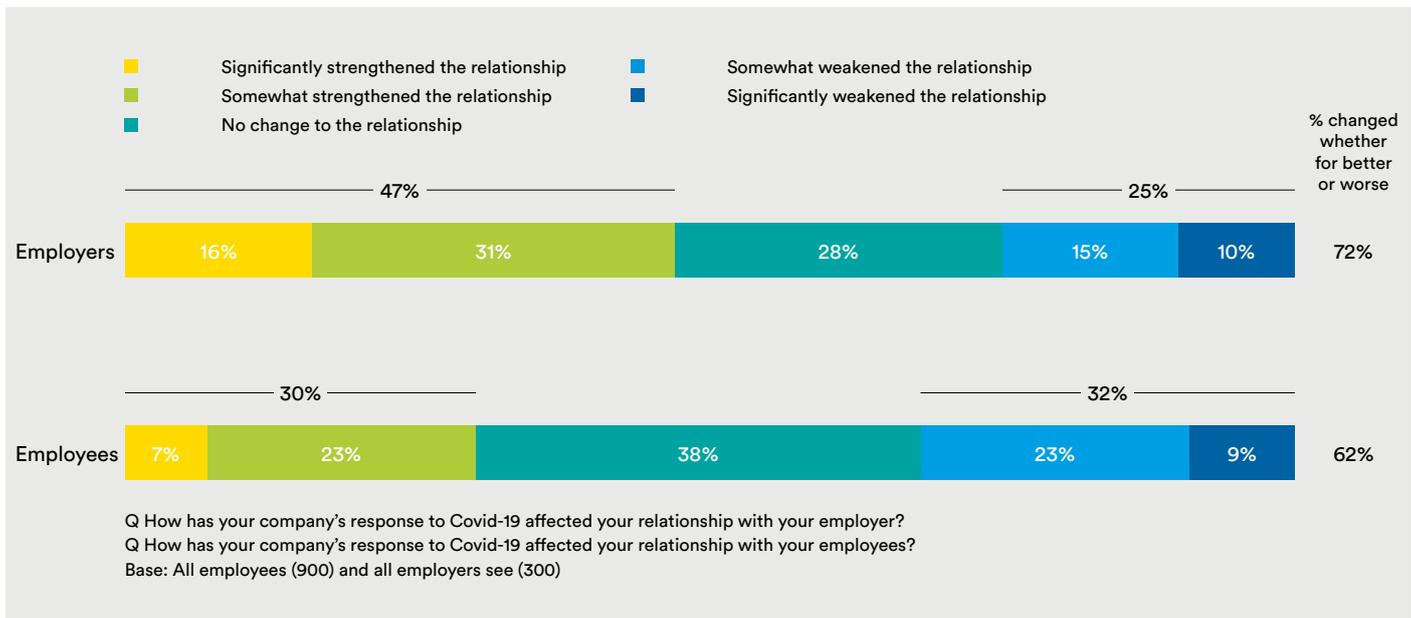
Our study shows how almost one in three (**32%**) employees feels that Covid-19 has weakened their relationship with employers, reducing employees' all-important sense of belonging. And there is a further wake-up call.

Employers are significantly misjudging how employees feel, with **47%** of those questioned believing the relationship has strengthened.

32% of employees feel that Covid-19 has weakened their relationship with their employer

47% of employers believe the relationship with employees has strengthened

Impact of Covid-19 on relationships



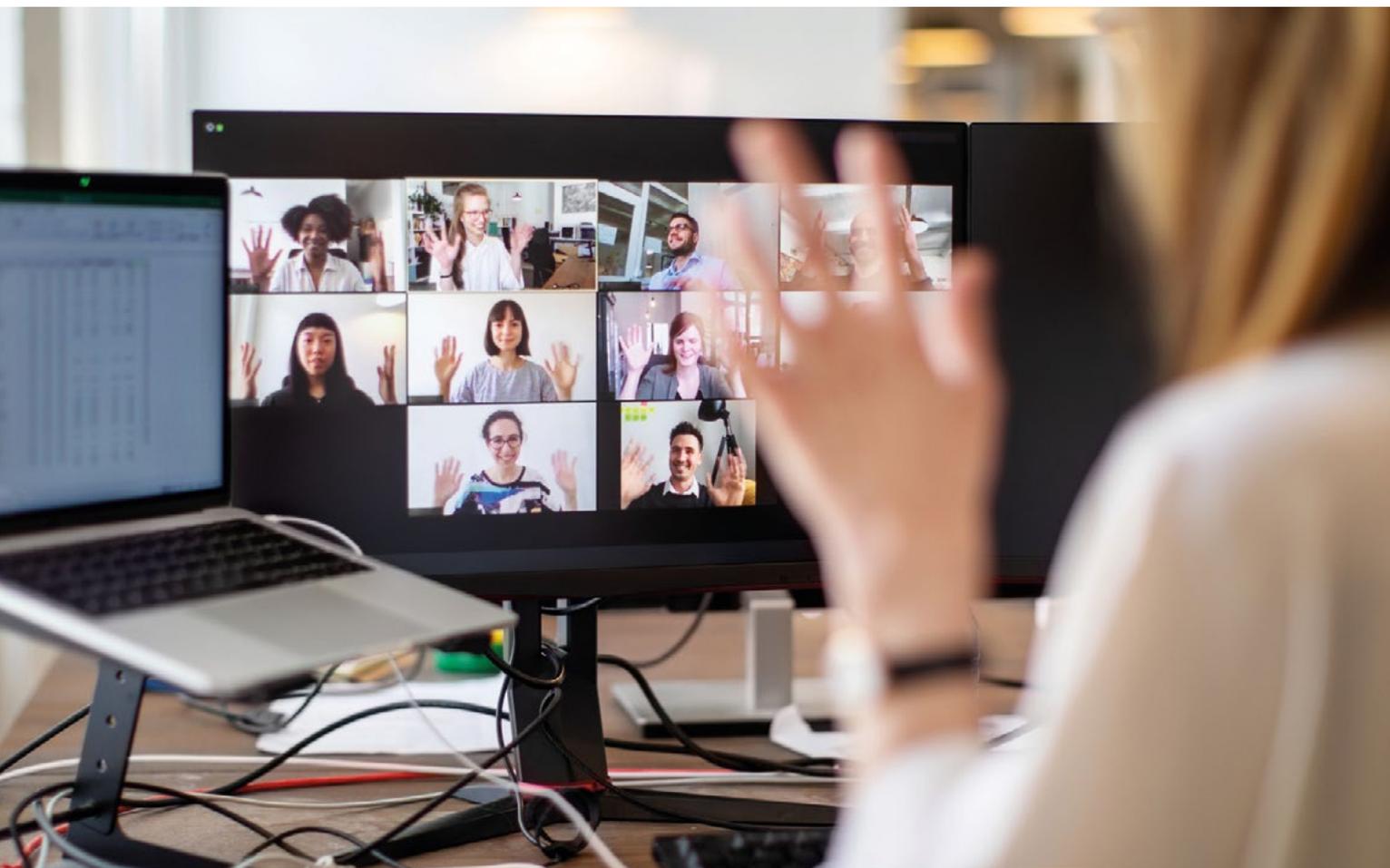
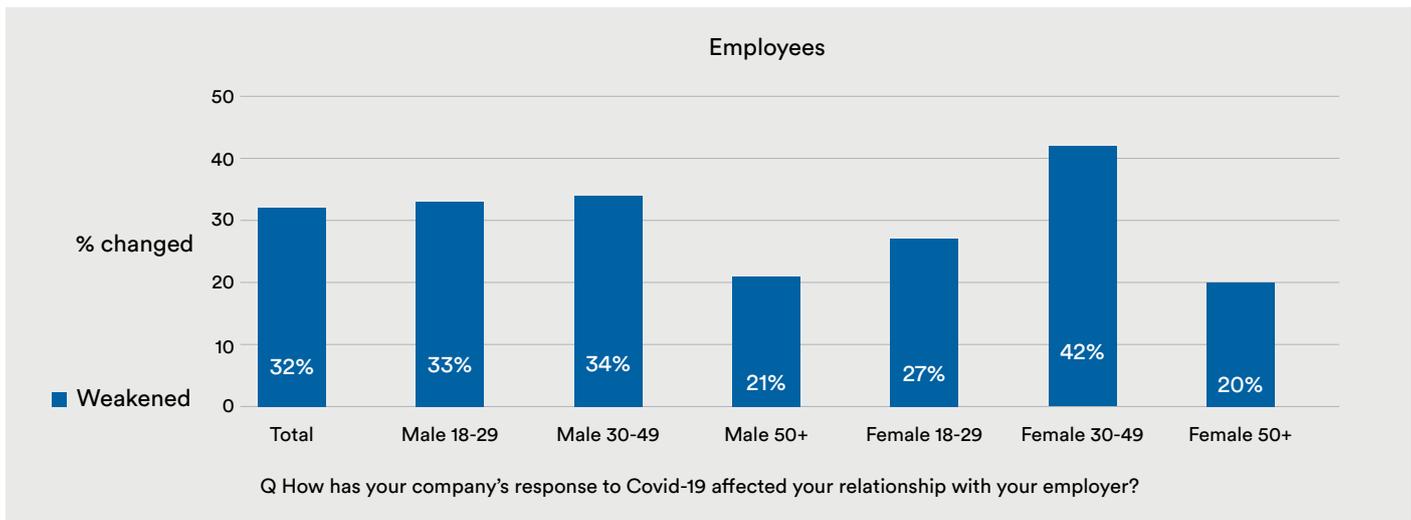
This unravelling of relationships is felt most acutely by females aged 30-49 (**42%** feel the relationship has declined) who, with increased home time, may be finding employers less supportive of their wider family-related needs.

In contrast, only **20%** of females over 50 feel it has declined, pointing to the importance of employers tailoring employee experiences to the individual, a shift over historic one size fits all.

33% of males aged 18-29 also express a weaker relationship, perhaps missing the greater collaboration, social interaction and guidance of the formal workplace.

42% of females aged 30-49 feel the relationship with their employer has weakened

Impact of Covid-19 on relationships, employees by age/gender



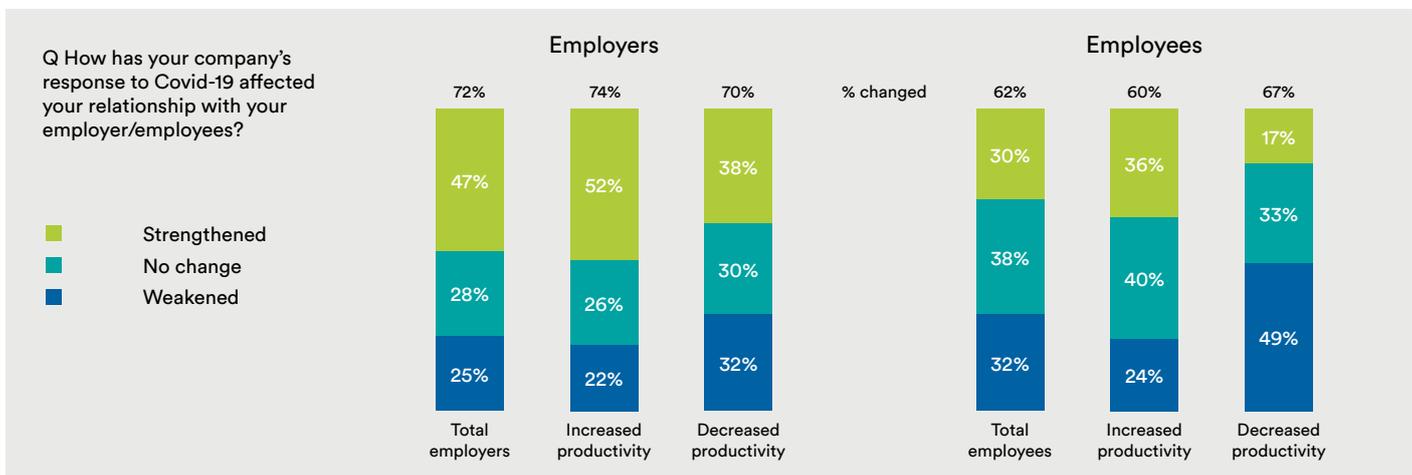
Key finding 2:

The impact on productivity and trust

Significantly, our study identifies a strong correlation between a weakened relationship and productivity. **49%** of employees who felt their relationship had worsened, also felt their productivity had decreased. Yet, there is a clear disparity between the two groups' outlooks, with employers under-estimating its impact on employee productivity, feeling the figure is a much more optimistic **32%**.

49% of employees who felt their relationship had worsened, also felt their productivity had decreased

Impact of Covid-19 on relationships, by change in productivity



Trust is another critical area employers will need to rebuild. **25%** of employees admitted their employer's response to Covid-19 has either 'somewhat or significantly weakened their trust in them'. A sentiment felt by both audiences. Employers also admit that their response has affected their trust in their employees. And while many say there is no change in their trust levels, companies need to reach out sooner rather than later to understand reasons behind any breakdown – at both a macro and individual employee level.

25% of employees admitted their employer's response to Covid-19 has either 'somewhat or significantly weakened their trust in them'

Key finding 3:

How employee expectations have changed

A key objective of the research was to understand how employees' mindsets and priorities have moved on since the outbreak of Covid-19, providing employers and advisers with the understanding to build back stronger.

One of the most significant of the findings, is that employees expect to be treated differently now their employers know more about their personal lives and family commitments. Accordingly, employees have higher expectations of an employer experience tailored to them as an individual.



Agreement with statements as a result of Covid-19, by company size

| Employees % agree | Total | SME | Mid-sized | Enterprise |
|--|-------|-----|-----------|------------|
| Companies have a social responsibility to their employees. | 71% | 66% | 70% | 80% |
| Employers % agree | Total | SME | Mid-sized | Enterprise |
| Companies have a social responsibility to their employees. | 62% | 54% | 63% | 74% |

This could be expressed within a new employee experience in terms of time flexibility for school runs, family-related health benefits or increased contact to support mental wellbeing. And while **62%** of SMEs agree with this, the figure rises to **69%** for larger mid-sized companies and **64%** for enterprise companies. This is echoed in **61%** of employees saying 'they expect the company to make accommodations for their personal circumstances'.

As important is the shift in perceptions of the employer's role. **71%** of employees now feel 'employers have a social responsibility to their employees'. A belief that beyond work itself, employers now have an increased role in their welfare, wellbeing and even overall happiness. Yet there is significant variation by company size. While **66%** of SMEs feel this is true, this figure rises to **70%** for mid-sized and **80%** for enterprise companies. And this shift in beliefs is felt just as strongly by employers (**62%**).

61% of employees say they expect their company to make accommodations for their personal circumstances

71% of employees now feel employers have a social responsibility to their employees

Key finding 4:

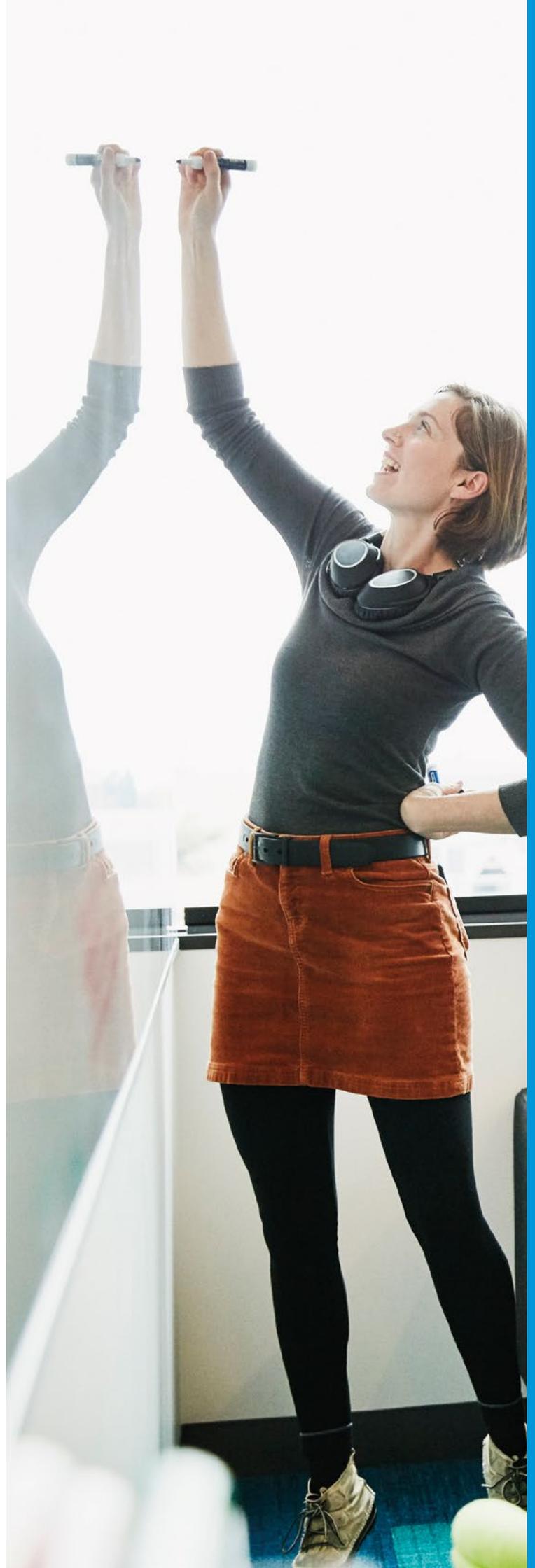
The rise of the caring employer

Beyond social responsibility, another important new responsibility for employers is now caring. A sizeable **68%** of employees feel that 'companies who care will attract the best talent' and this shift is felt just as strongly by employers themselves (**66%**).

In a clear shift from historic 'transactional' relationships, this points to the inclusion not just of companies measuring perceptions of themselves as caring to truly engage with their employees, but also, of embedding a tangible demonstration of caring into all aspects of the employee experience – from managerial responsibilities, through to employee benefits for the individual.

68%

of employees now feel that companies who care will attract the best talent



Key finding 5:

A wider role for employee benefits within the employee experience

Our study shows how companies are now also incorporating benefits into the employee experience, as demonstrations to employees of both care – and intent. Two thirds of employers (67%) confirmed their current employee benefits packages are evolving to support employees' needs today. And approximately the same number (64%) have been 'promoting benefits more during and since the pandemic'. Both actions represent visible manifestations to employees of meaningful responses to changing needs.

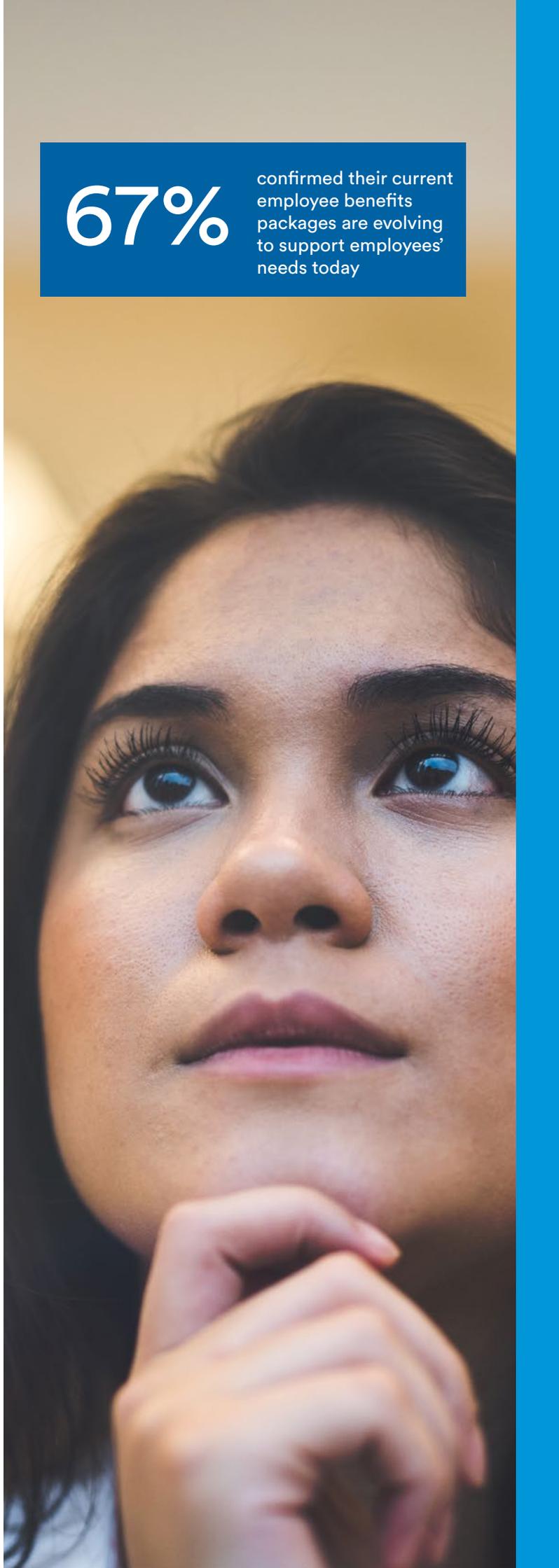
64% have been 'promoting benefits more during and since the pandemic'

Examples of such benefits include healthcare (for both employees and their families), critical illness cover and pension contributions. It's benefits like these that help demonstrate to the employee that their employer understands their new needs and, ultimately, they will help to build a stronger sense of belonging.



67%

confirmed their current employee benefits packages are evolving to support employees' needs today



Chapter 2:

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

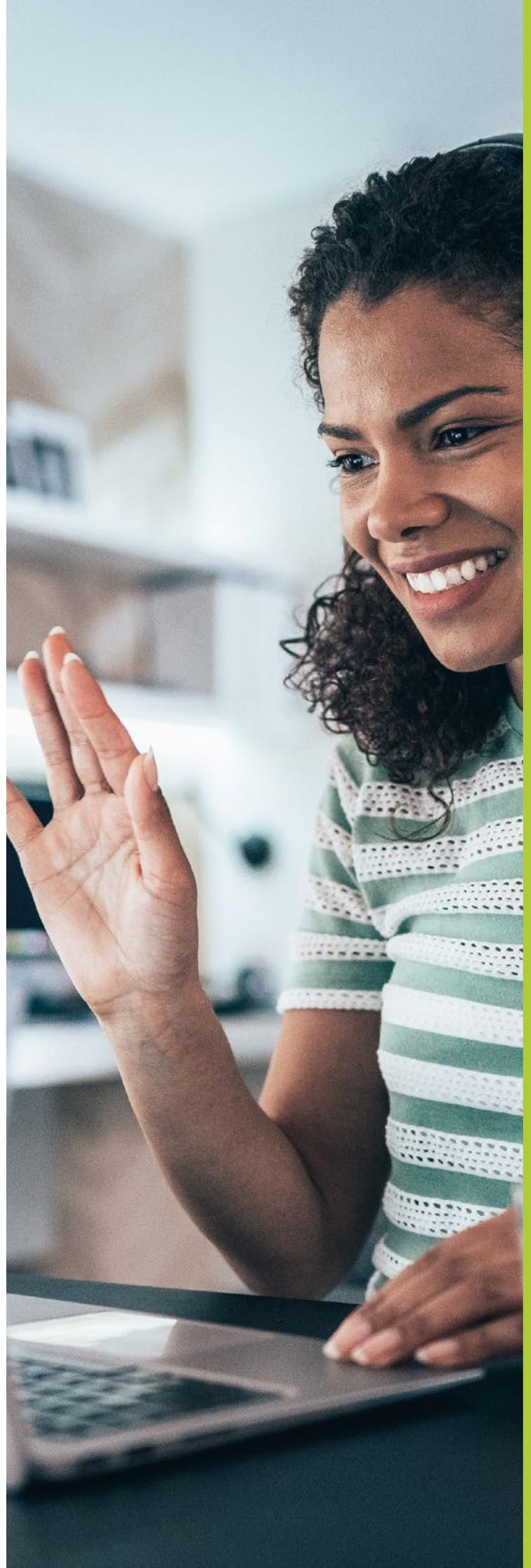
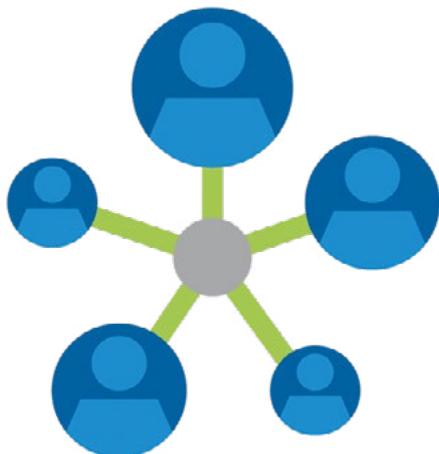


Employees' expectations of employers have changed

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.

62% of employees now feel their relationship has changed

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.



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.

71% of employees

agree that companies have a social responsibility to their employees

54% of employees

feel that their employers are now more aware of their personal lives and family commitments

64% of employees

agree that companies have had to become more socially responsible as a result of Covid-19

68% of employees

agree that companies that care will attract the best talent

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.

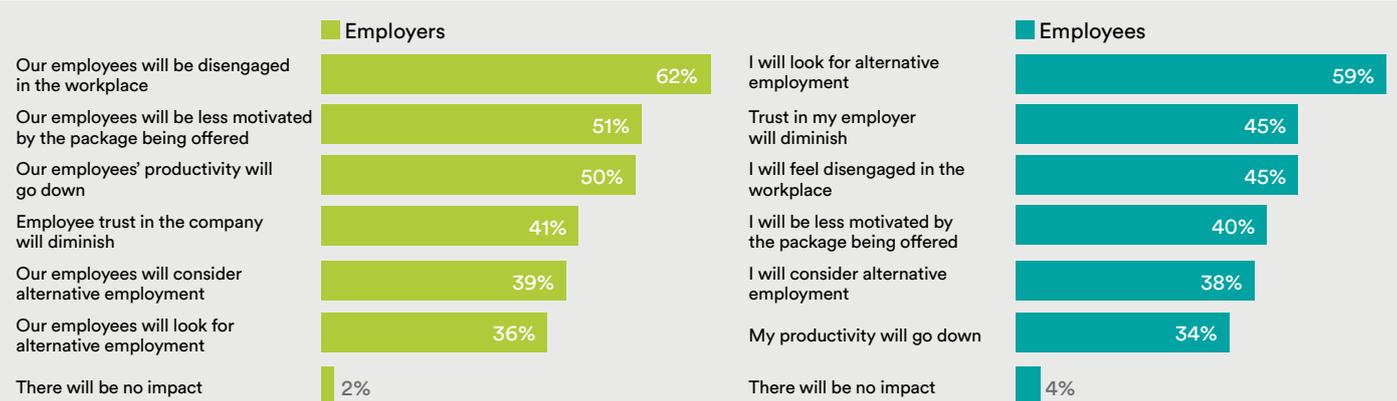
A high **45%** of employees felt that if employers didn't accommodate their new work values, this would lead to a decrease in trust.

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.

Proposed action if work values are not accommodated



Q Please complete the following sentence: 'If my employer does not accommodate my work values...'
 Q What do you think might happen if your company does not accommodate your employees' work values?

45% of employees felt not accommodating new values would lead to a decrease in trust

36% of employers felt not accommodating new values would lead to employees looking for another job

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.

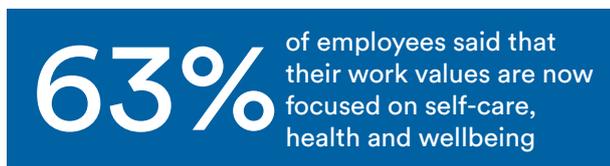
While **66%** of employees confirm their work values are now focused on job and financial security, **63%** now prioritise self-care, health and wellbeing – for both themselves and their wider family. With relationship boundaries clearly evolving, this indicates employees increasingly feel their employer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

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.

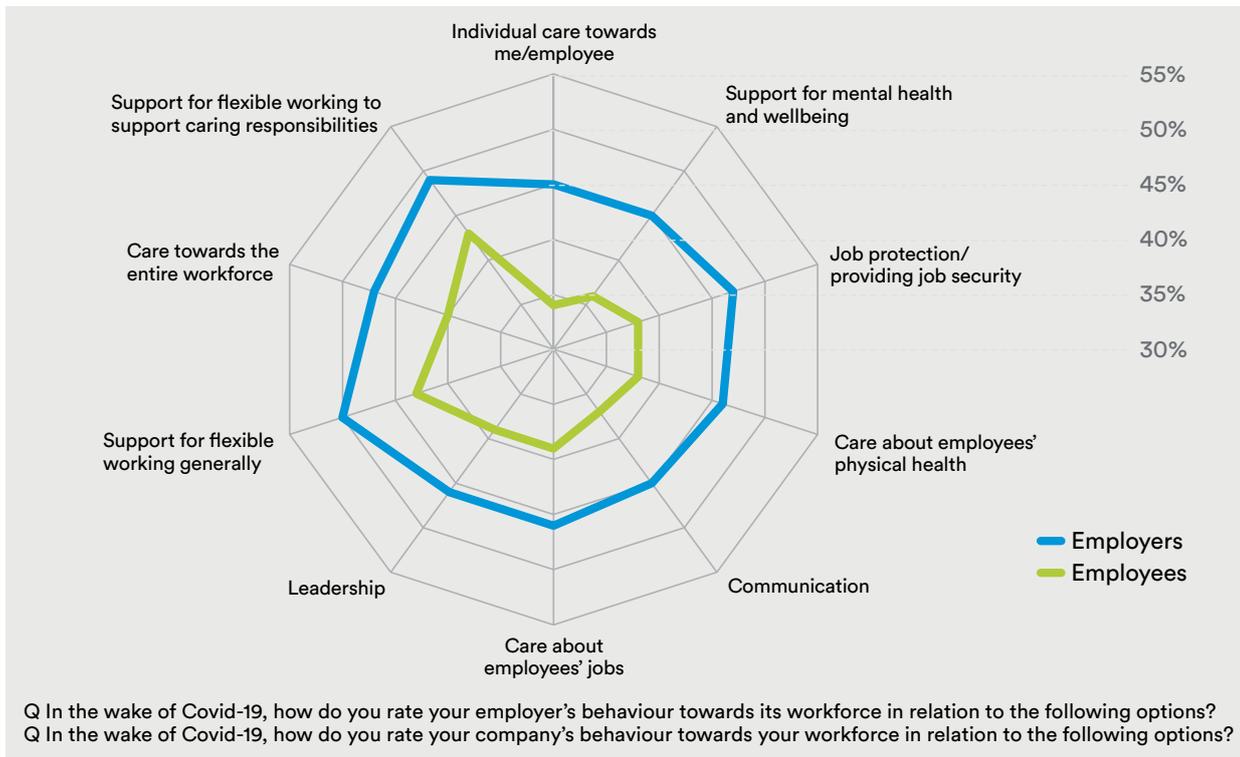
The value, however, of companies recognising the gap and realigning their thinking is clear and positive. **40%** of employees who were planning to leave, said that if their employer demonstrated more care for their physical wellbeing, it might impact on their decision, and **39%** if their employer demonstrated more care for their mental wellbeing.



Impact on work values for employees



Rating of company behaviour across employers and employees



“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

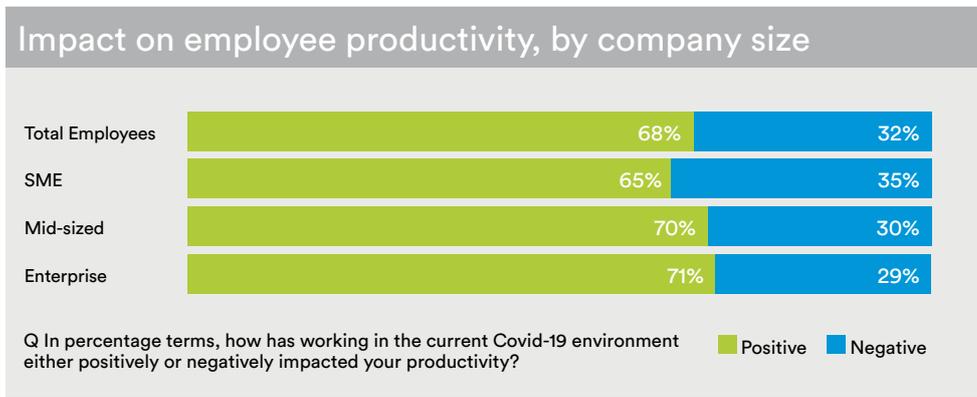
Key finding 4:

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.

68% of employers feel the Covid-19 environment has improved productivity

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



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.

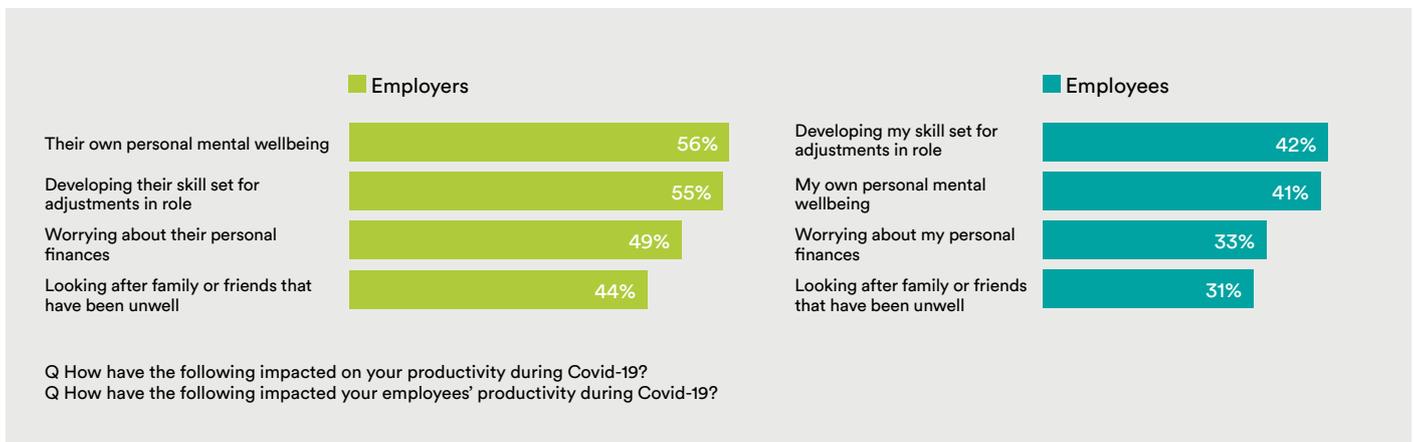
For a third (**33%**) of employees 'worrying about personal finances' was a significant drag on productivity.

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.



Factors impacting on productivity according to employers and employees



Chapter 3:

Reassure... employees they are doing a good job in difficult times



The growing importance of demonstrating care

Employees have had two major sets of challenges to deal with during the pandemic: adapting to new ways of working – and coping with new time and emotional pressures such as increased isolation, caring for family members and home-schooling. As a result, **41%** of employees in our research report their mental health has impacted their productivity at work.

In the first two chapters of Re:Me, we've seen the detail of how the pandemic has reset the relationship between employees and employers, with **32%** of employees now feeling the relationship has weakened.

73%

of employees say they will work harder for an employer who cares about them

We've also seen how those employers who understand employees' new priorities (and have realigned their behaviours) have improved productivity. Plus the risks of not realigning with employees expressing that if their new values are not accommodated, they will look for new employment.

59%

of employees will look for a new job if their work values aren't accommodated

Many employees have had a difficult time. In this chapter we explore the importance of reassurance: the need for employers to increase focus on care, recognition, communication and reward, and show their commitment to employees and their families by ensuring their basic needs are met.

Drawing on our study, we show how employers can better communicate with staff to recognise success, support wellbeing and rebuild a lost sense of belonging.

In this chapter, we demonstrate how reassurance can best be achieved through three key findings from the research.



Key finding 1:

Employers need to reprioritise communication

In the same way that the pandemic has changed how we work together, it has also changed how we communicate. Findings from the **Re:Me** research can now inform the reprioritisation of messages employers now most need to focus on, to reassure and motivate employees around the following themes:

- ✓ Job security
- ✓ Career development
- ✓ Fair distribution of workload
- ✓ The right level of communication.

Job security

Understandably high on employees' list of priorities is job security. Seven out of ten now say they will 'work harder for an employer who makes me feel my job is secure'. And while employers will often be unable to make this commitment, recognising the importance of the role the individual holds and how well they are delivering is of increasing importance.

Career development

Our study shows that employees want the reassurance that their career progression is continuing, undiminished by the pandemic. **65%** of employees say they want the opportunity to enhance their skill set to prepare for changes in their job role in the next six to 12 months, while this was only a reality for **49%**.



Fair distribution of workload

With many employees working excess hours since the outbreak of the pandemic, our research shows employees need to be better informed of the fairness of work distribution among their peers. **52%** of employees admit ‘their productivity has been impacted by the way resource allocation of colleagues has been handled’.

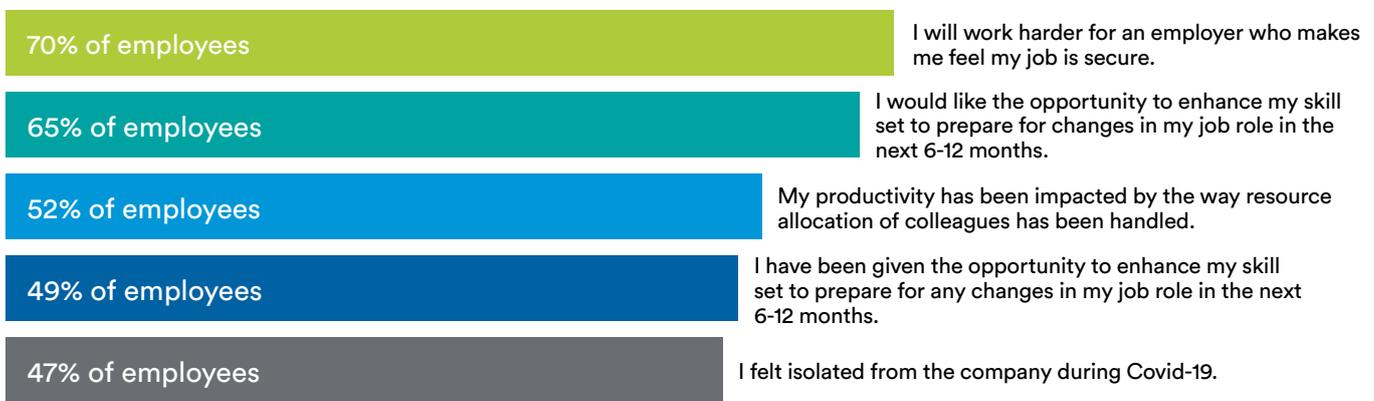
Recognising individuals’ workloads, providing clarity to overcome misperceptions and rectifying any imbalances have become critical factors in maintaining motivation.

The right level of communication

While frequency of employer communication needs to be reviewed, achieving the right balance is proving a fine line to tread. Many employees are unhappy with contact levels, leading to disengagement.

47% of employees said they felt isolated from the company during Covid-19. Yet for three in ten employees, over-communication is the issue. **29%** feel their productivity has been impacted by too much communication from managers and colleagues.

Employee agreement with statements about behaviour and values



47% of employees said they felt isolated from the company during Covid-19



Key finding 2:

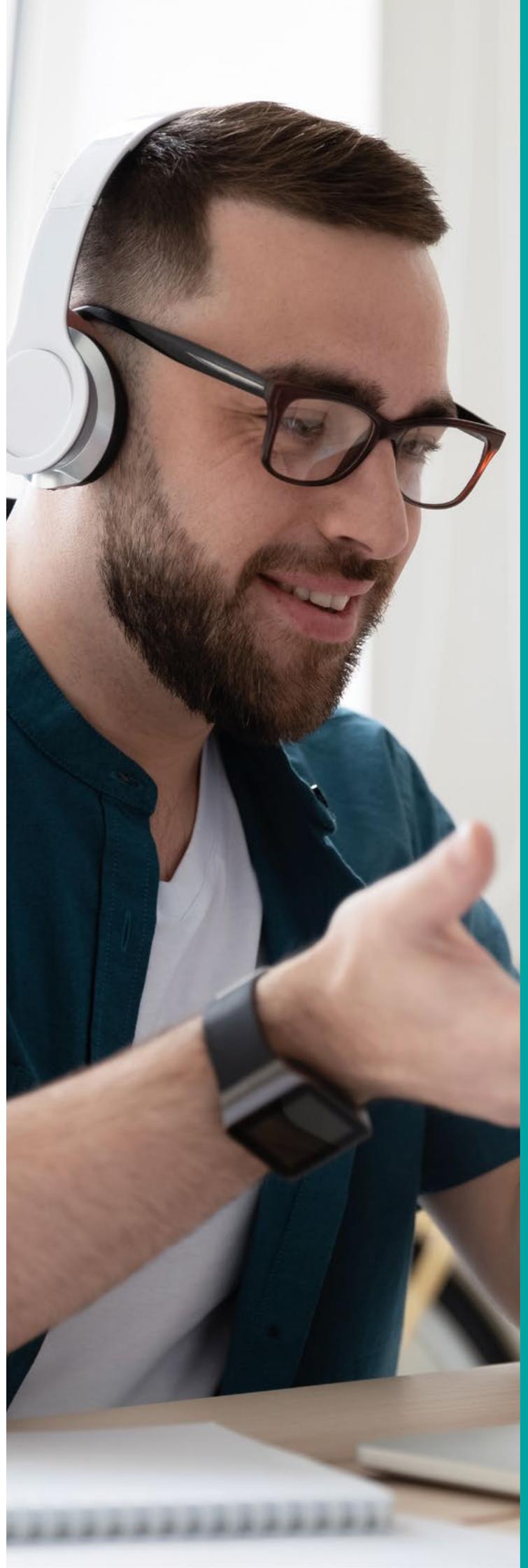
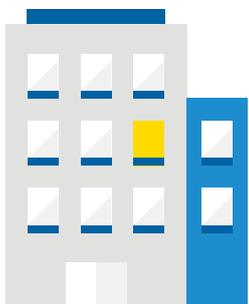
Employees' basic needs are the bedrock of the new relationship

62% of employees and 72% of employers feel that their relationship with each other changed, with one in three employers feeling it has weakened. In the same way that Re:Me shows how employee values and priorities have changed, it is essential we also understand how their basic needs have evolved.

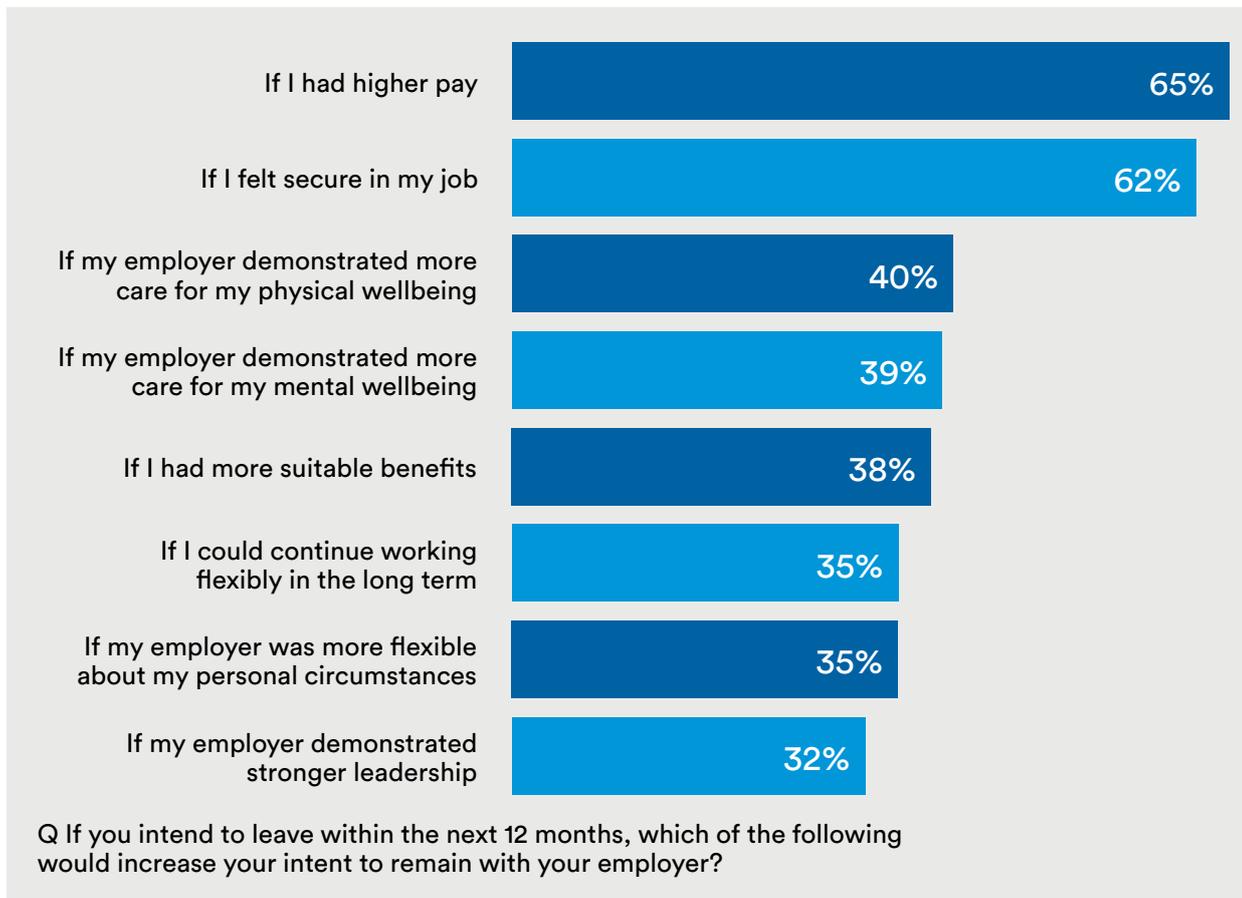
With over half of employees (54%) considering leaving their job in the next 18 months, our research set out to define those factors that would most influence their decision to change their minds and stay.

39%

of employees would remain if their employer demonstrated more care for their mental wellbeing



Factors impacting employees' decision to consider remaining



Higher pay ranked most highly (**65%**), a factor that likely pre-dates Covid-19. Yet the pandemic has surfaced new priorities. **62%** of employees now cite job security as their second most important basic need. The need for employers to ‘demonstrate more care for my physical wellbeing’ (**40%**) and ‘mental wellbeing’ (**39%**) in third and fourth places now clearly needs to be responded to by more organisations. Interestingly, ‘more suitable benefits’ ranked fifth (**38%**) indicating that employees are looking for benefits that better meet their individual needs.

And while factors such as pay and job security may be out of employers’ control, there are clearly areas employers can increase focus on, to support employee needs and reduce flight risk.



Key finding 3:

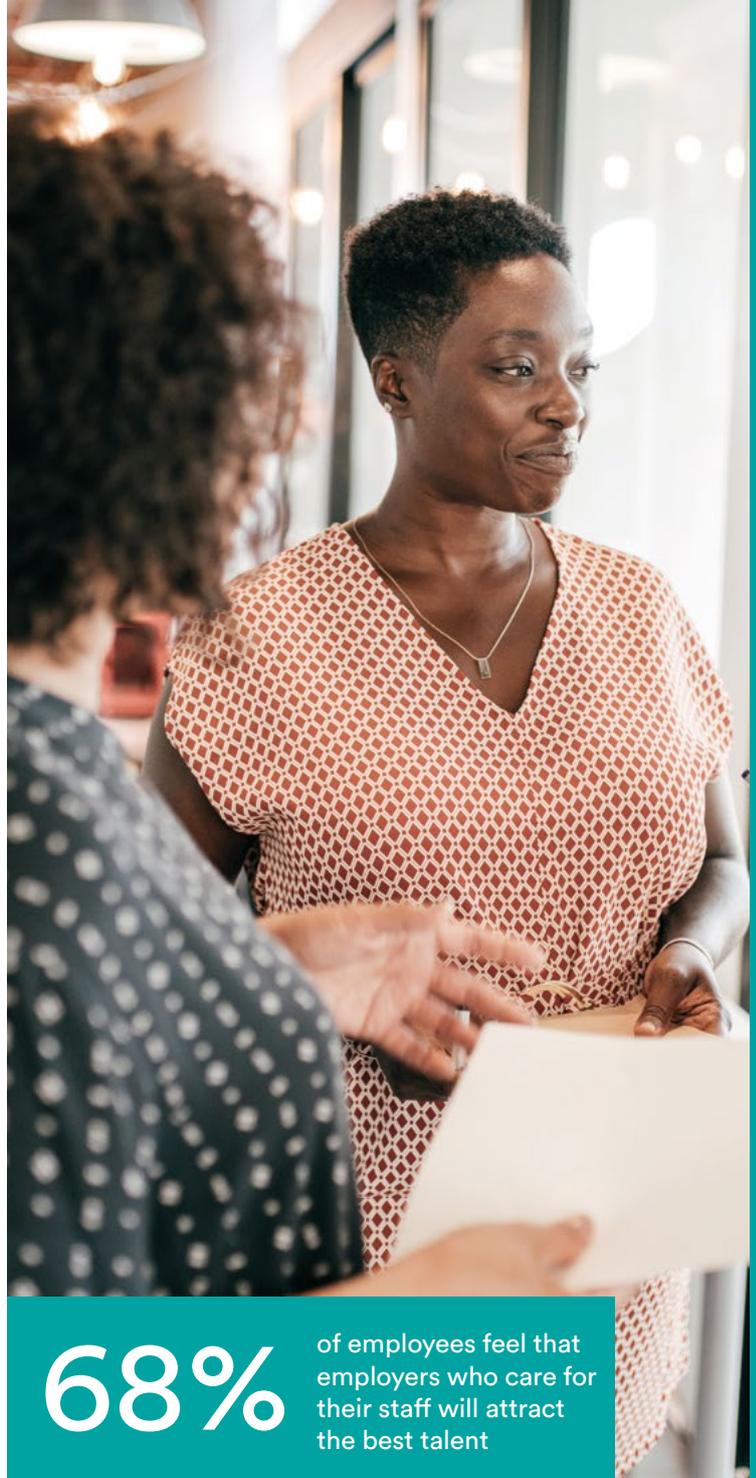
A caring approach will have a direct effect on productivity

In chapter 2 we saw how the crisis has led to fundamental changes in expectations of employers' behaviours. The shift is such that almost three in four now feel employers have a social responsibility to them (71%). The research reveals the value demonstrations of care can have on employees today.

Care will, in turn, be 'repaid' by employees in increased productivity. 73% say they will work harder for an employer who cares about them. Yet many employers appear to underestimate the value employees place on care, with just 65% believing in the correlation.

The importance of care to companies as a strategic offering is not to be underestimated, as the economy picks up. 68% of employees feel that employers who care for their staff will attract the best talent.

Recognition, reassurance and reward have complementary roles to play in demonstrating employer care in response to solid performance, identifying new ways of working – and appreciation for excess hours worked. While all are important, our research gives clear direction on the most valued ways of demonstrating care.



68%

of employees feel that employers who care for their staff will attract the best talent

 Recognition

With job and financial security figuring high in employees' concerns, 'reassurances' confirming they are doing their job well – and providing training that prepares them for future changes in their job role – are not to be underestimated.

 Care that recognises individuals' situations

Given employers now have a greater understanding of individuals' family and caring responsibilities, providing flexibility in hours worked – or reward days off – will demonstrate both care and appreciation.

 Rewards realigned with today

While pay rises and bonuses are crucial in recognising performance, they can also be absorbed into day-to-day outgoings. Rewards can help to demonstrate care through a diversity of employee benefits aligned to individuals' – and their families' – pandemic needs. An area we explore in depth in the next chapter.

Chapter 4:

Redefine... the relationship with employees



Throughout the **Re:Me** research, we've seen how the pandemic has transformed the relationship between employees and their employers, providing organisations with insight into significant changes to employee priorities and their revised expectations of their employer.

The findings point to the uplift in productivity that realigning your employee experience with these needs can achieve. And the risks of not doing so, with **59%** of employees saying they will simply look for another job if their employer doesn't adapt.

We've condensed the **Re:Me** research into a four-stage roadmap for employers today. The headline findings from each – along with those from this final chapter – are detailed on this page. This, the final chapter, reveals the rise of the individual and tailoring the solutions to them accordingly.

01

Chapter 1:

Recognise... the change in relationship between employers and employees

Key findings

- 01 The decline in the workplace relationship
- 02 The impact in productivity and trust
- 03 How employee expectations have changed
- 04 The rise of the caring employer
- 05 A wider role for employee benefits within the employee experience

02

Chapter 2:

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

Key findings

- 01 Employees feel employers have a social responsibility to them
- 02 The risks of failing to realign with employees' new priorities
- 03 The gap between employers' and employees' perceptions
- 04 The need to align with new factors influencing productivity

03

Chapter 3:

Reassure... employees they are doing a good job in difficult times

Key findings

- 01 Employers need to reprioritise communication
- 02 Employees' basic needs are the bedrock of the new relationship
- 03 A caring approach will have a direct effect on productivity

04

Chapter 4:

Redefine... the relationship with employees

Key findings

- 01 The demise of one-size-fits-all employee benefits
 - 02 Rewards will have a greater effect when tailored to the individual
 - 03 Consider workplace demographics to maximise engagement
- Conclusion:** Delaying change represents risk for employers
-

Key finding 1:

The demise of one-size-fits-all employee benefits

While employers have historically often delivered employee benefits based on 'paygrade' approaches and across the whole company, our study reveals employees instead now want benefits tailored to their individual needs – to such an extent that almost three in four (**74%**) want this.

The move to individualisation has been influenced by a number of pandemic-specific drivers, including employees' changed caring responsibilities. As one example, **58%** now say they would like their benefits package to cover all their dependants. Concerns about job security and providing for their family have also impacted on many.

74%

of employees want benefits that meet their individual needs

65% now say they care more about financial protection benefits than 'softer' benefits such as gym memberships. In fact, more traditional protection benefits are now far more widely valued, with a particularly significant increase among the millennials.



Increased collaboration in the selection of benefits has also become increasingly important, with **62%** of employees now wanting to 'shape their packages with their employers'. And this has already translated into action, with **48%** of employees saying they have now discussed how this can be achieved with their employer.

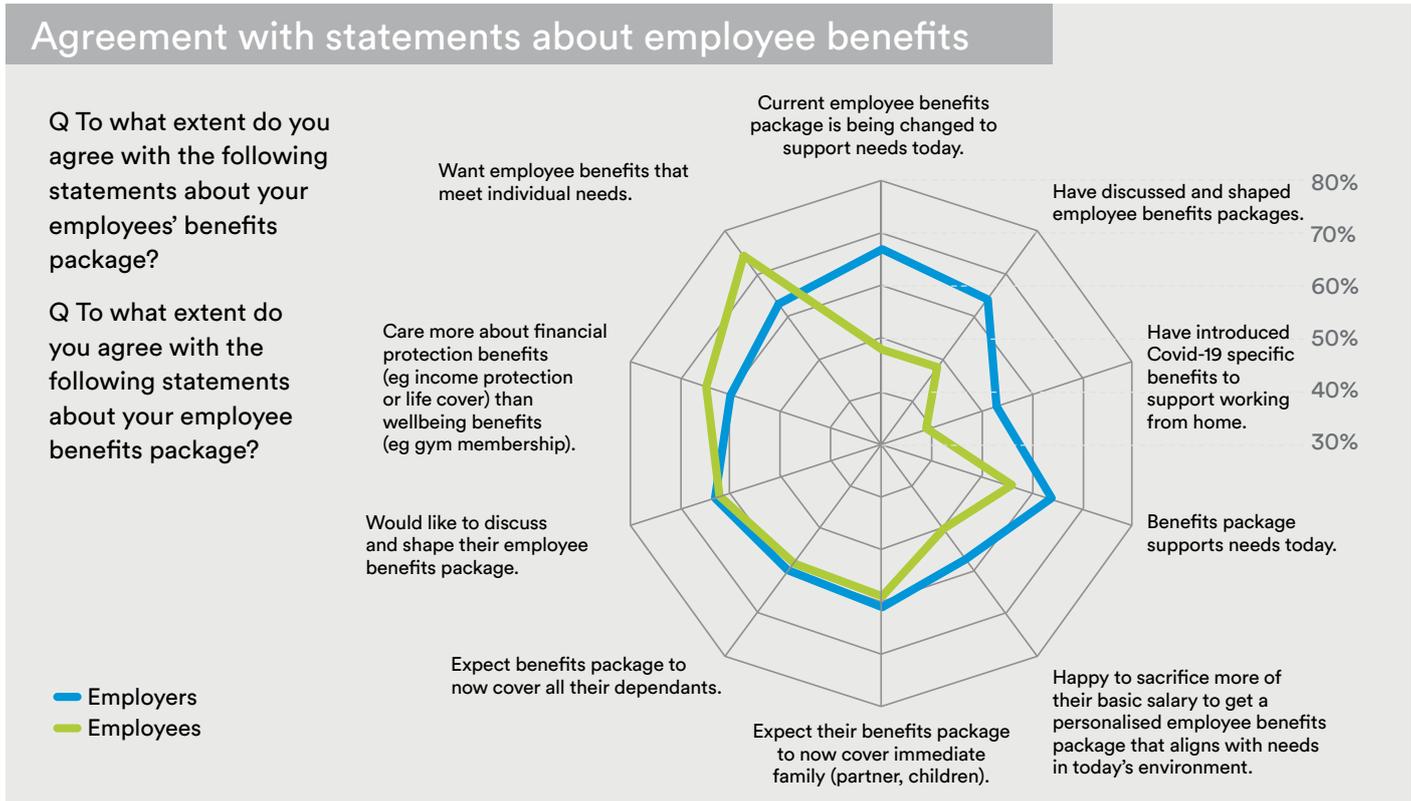
This is further echoed by employers. **63%** revealed they had seen an increase in employees' queries about benefits since the pandemic, providing a great opportunity for organisations to communicate and embed the range of company benefits available (and how to access them) at a critical time. Of note, **61%** had noticed an increase in the need for mental wellbeing products and support.

We can see that employers have been listening and are clearly taking note. **67%** now say their

employee benefits package is being reviewed to support employees' needs. Furthermore, **64%** say they have been actively promoting their benefits offering since the pandemic, to raise employees' understanding of existing levels of care.

62% of employees now want to 'shape their packages with their employers'

This in itself plays a key role in helping employees to place greater value on the benefits they receive – and shows that communications around the practical application of benefits are a must.



Key finding 2:

Rewards will have a greater effect when tailored to the individual

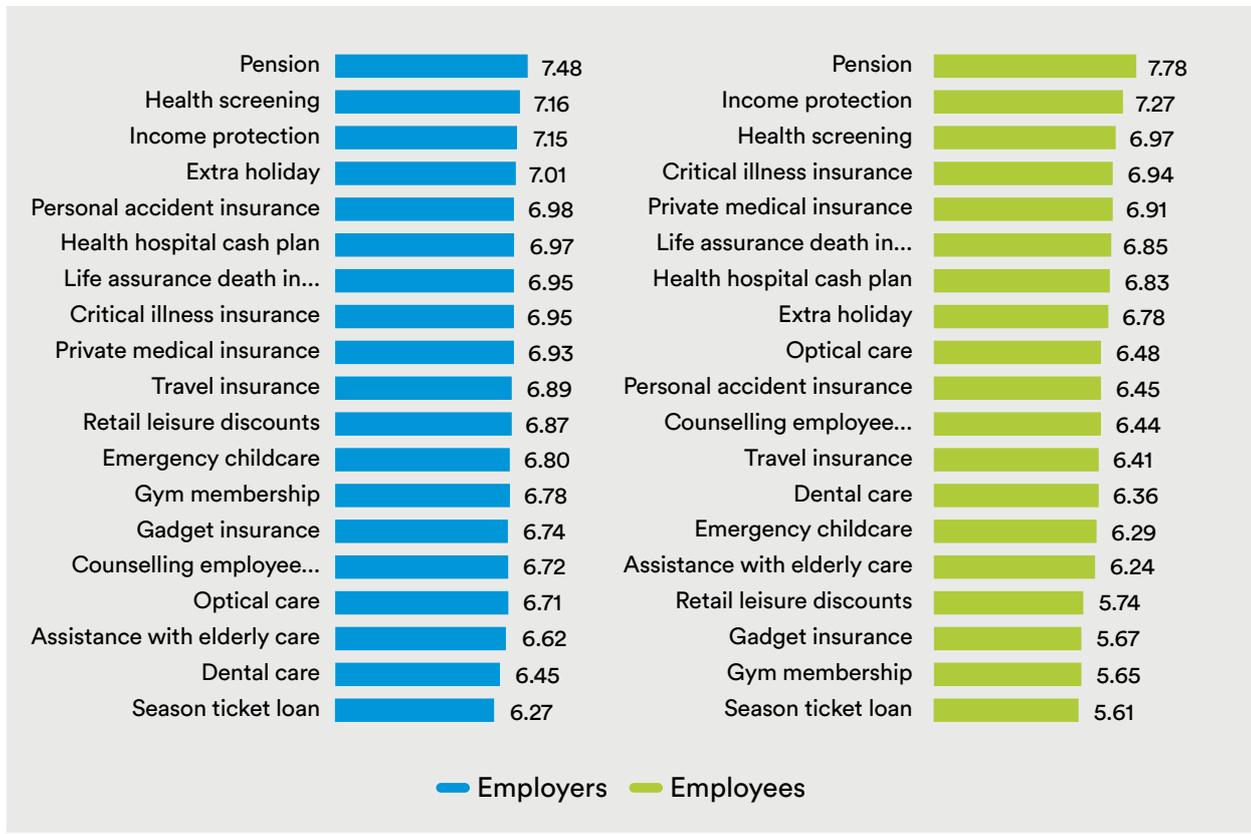
In chapter 1, Recognise, we saw that now employers have increased visibility of employees' home and family lives, there is a revised expectation from employees that this knowledge is translated into care, support and rewards individualised to not just them, but their wider family too.

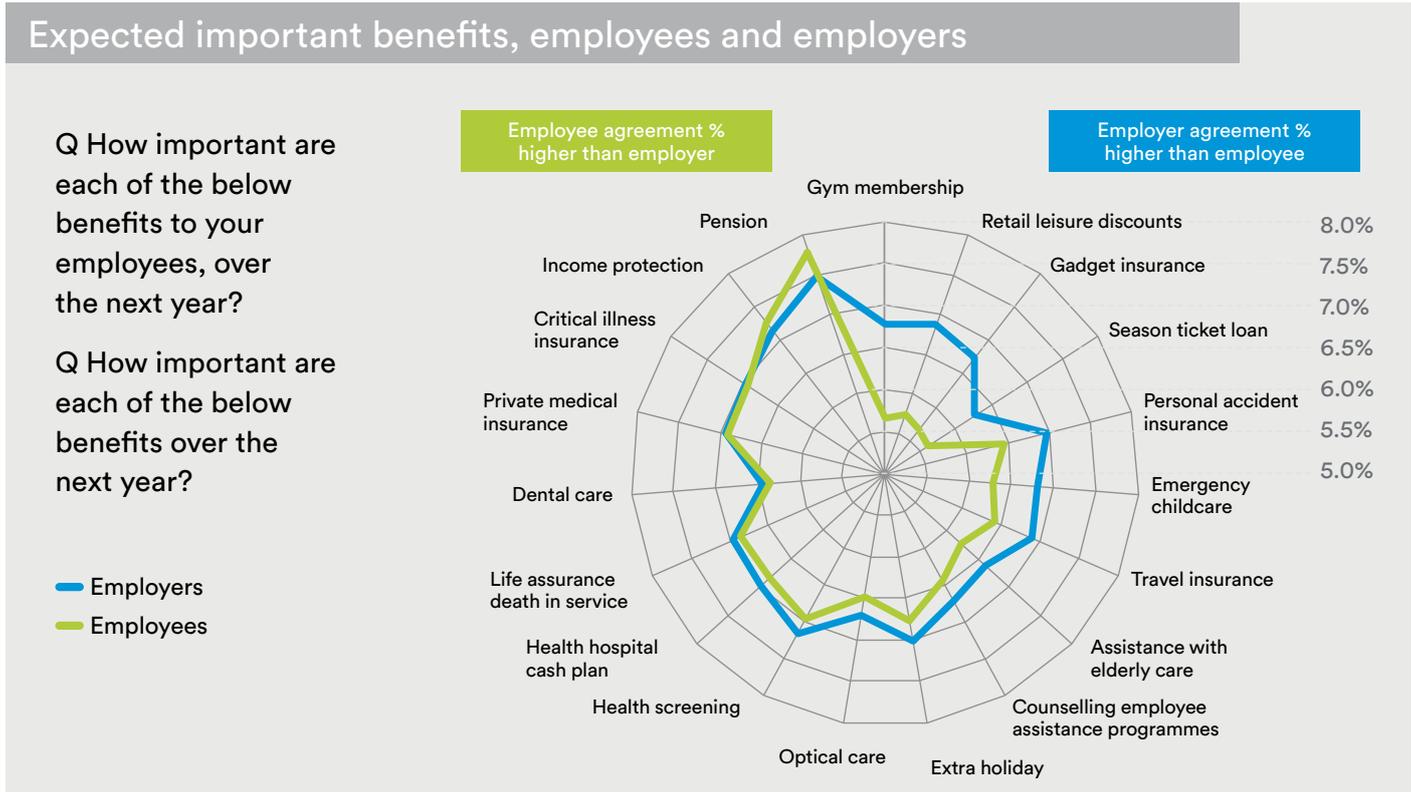
For employers, this is a step beyond the era of group and company-wide strategies. Individualised benefits have moved so far up employees' agendas that one in two (50%) said they would be willing to sacrifice more of their basic salary to get a personalised employee package in today's environment.

59% of employees 'will work harder for an employer who provides employee benefits that support my individual needs'

Personalising rewards will, in turn, also benefit the employer. Our research shows 69% of employees 'will work harder for an employer who provides employee benefits that support my individual needs' – fostering a sense of belonging that our study has shown has been fractured in many cases.

Importance of specific benefits over the next year – employee and employer comparison (out of 10; 10 being highest)





In the same way that employee priorities have changed following the pandemic, so have the benefits that are now most valuable to them.

Employers' ranking of the benefits they feel are most important to employees following the pandemic, now sees income protection rise to third: a dramatic change from 13th pre-Covid. In addition, death in service/life assurance rising from the bottom of the table (19th) pre-Covid to become the seventh most important.

In parallel with this, employees' concerns about job and financial security are reflected in income protection rising from seventh pre-Covid to the second most important benefit overall, and life insurance remaining high on priorities in sixth position.

The research shows many employers have already started to act, demonstrating care and taking steps to restore a sense of belonging. **48%** of employees say that their benefits package has already changed, and **39%** that their employer has introduced specific benefits to support them while working from home.

69% In the same way that employee priorities have changed following the pandemic, so have the benefits that are now most valuable to them



Key finding 3:

Consider workplace demographics to maximise engagement

The need to tailor employee benefits at an individual level to create an improved sense of belonging, becomes self-evident when you view the wide variances in workplace priorities for distinct age groups and genders. Going forward, employers will increasingly need to tailor benefits, support and recognition to optimise motivation and minimise disengagement.

Males aged 18-29, for example, feel less strongly than any other group about most aspects of their benefits package being of great importance to them, providing lower scores than the average across everything from job security to benefits – with the exception of salary. Work/life balance registers a relatively low **53%** in relation to other groups.

In sharp contrast, almost four out of five (**78%**) females in the **50+** group rank work/life balance as important and value recognition almost twice as highly (**45%**) as this group.



Most important employee benefits by age/gender

Q From the list here, please select the factors that are important to you in terms of your employment

| | Employees % who feel statement is important | | | | | | |
|--|---|------------|------------|----------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| | Total | Male 18-29 | Male 30-49 | Male 50+ | Female 18-29 | Female 30-49 | Female 50+ |
| Worklife balance | 61% | 53% | 56% | 72% | 57% | 61% | 78% |
| Job security | 59% | 50% | 57% | 67% | 58% | 61% | 64% |
| Salary | 55% | 55% | 54% | 56% | 54% | 51% | 66% |
| Flexible working | 46% | 39% | 44% | 50% | 48% | 47% | 57% |
| Pension | 38% | 28% | 36% | 54% | 30% | 37% | 55% |
| Opportunities for personal development | 36% | 34% | 30% | 37% | 48% | 36% | 37% |

While the chart shown on the previous page maps the wide discrepancy across gender and age as employees group the factors 'important to you in terms of your employment', we've highlighted some significant findings:

- **Opportunities for personal development** are most valued by females aged 18-29 (**48%**), while just **34%** of their male counterparts see this as important, against a cross-age/gender score of **36%**
- **Salary** is most highly rated by females aged 50+ (**66%**) with **56%** of their male counterparts ranking it highly (against an average cross-age/gender score of **55%**)
- **An employee experience that engenders a sense of fulfilment and belonging** indexed high with both the over **50+** groups, with **59%** of females and **48%** of males deeming it important (cross-age/gender average of **39%**)
- **Flexible working** proves universally important, but slightly more so for women than men. Against an all-gender average of **46%**, **57%** of women aged **50+** voiced its importance, as did **48%** of females aged **18-29** and **47%** of those aged **30-49**. This compares with a **50%** ranking for males aged **50+** and just **39%** for those aged **18-29**.

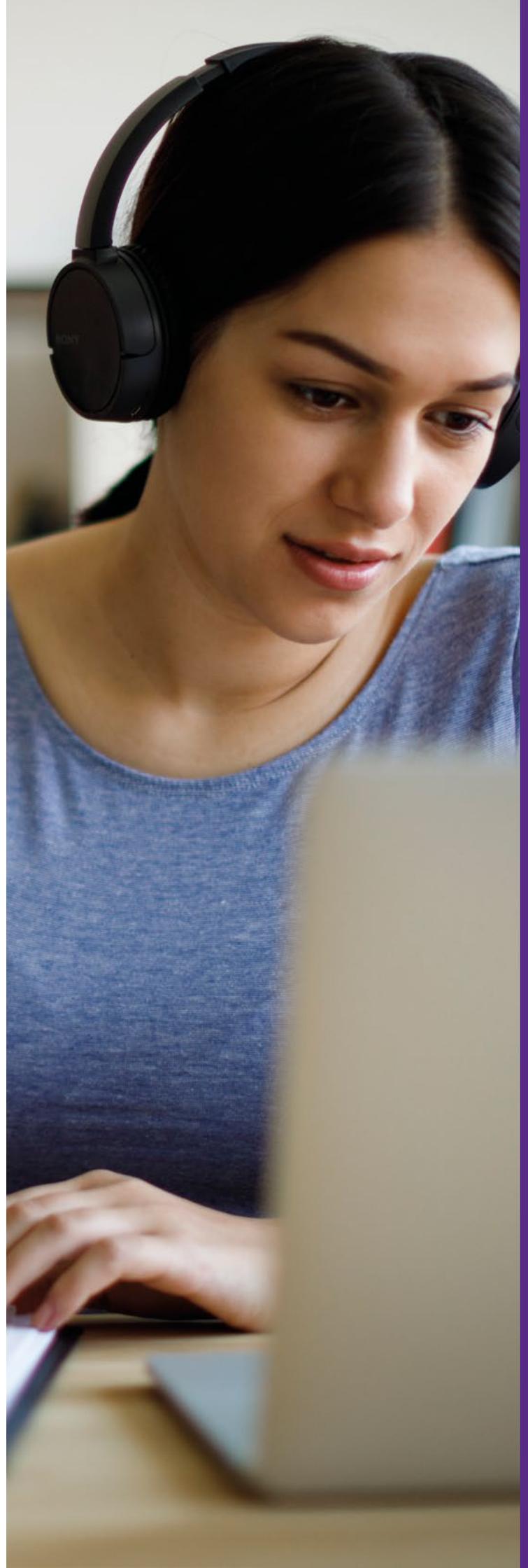


Work/life balance matters far more to females aged

50+ (78%)

than it does to ages

18-29+ (53%)



Conclusion:

Delaying change represents risk for employers

The findings from our research evidence the extent of the changes that have taken hold in the workplace following the onset of the pandemic. They present clear choices for today's employers.

Once-in-a-generation changes to working patterns have impacted employee relationships with employers of all sizes, often weakening an established sense of belonging.

The main catalyst for this has been often dramatic changes in employee personal priorities. The research shows how many employers have not taken these on board and realigned how they support, recognise and reward employees. Employees have clearly said that if employers don't take these changes on board, they will leave their employer. Action is required now to mitigate a potential loss of talent and the costs associated with this.

On the flipside, we've also seen in the study how some employers have tangibly increased productivity. Through demonstrating care, creating working practices that take on board the home pressures they're now able to see, they've been able to adapt the employee experience with effect.

A key learning from the study has been how companies adopting one-size-fits-all approaches to reward and recognition need to move to a model focused on the individual, to improve productivity and support belonging. The foundations are set for organisations to open the dialogue – **Re:Me**.



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.

Visit metlife.co.uk/ReMe to uncover further content, including:



An infographic condensing our findings



A short film explaining the importance of the four Rs



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