

Re:Me

The importance of individualism in a changing world

Chapter 1:

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

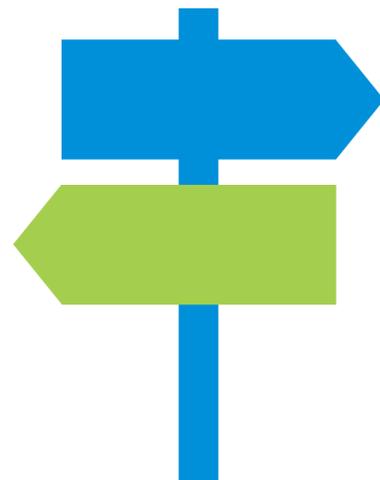
Recognise Realign Reassure Redefine



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.

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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.



Restoring a sense of belonging

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.

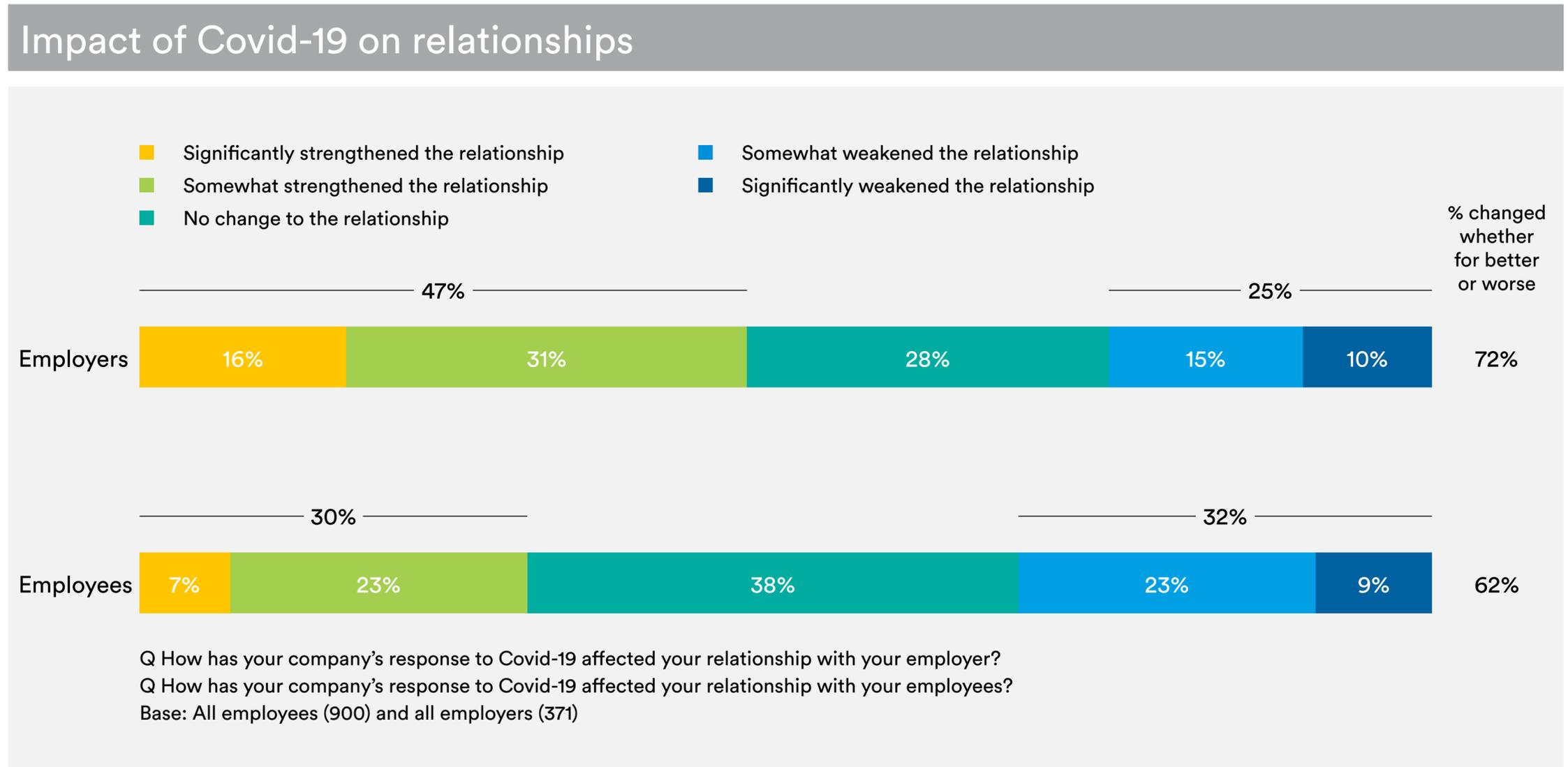
In this first chapter, we have identified five key findings that explore the ways in which the employer-employee relationship has changed and the potential impact on company performance.



Key finding 1:

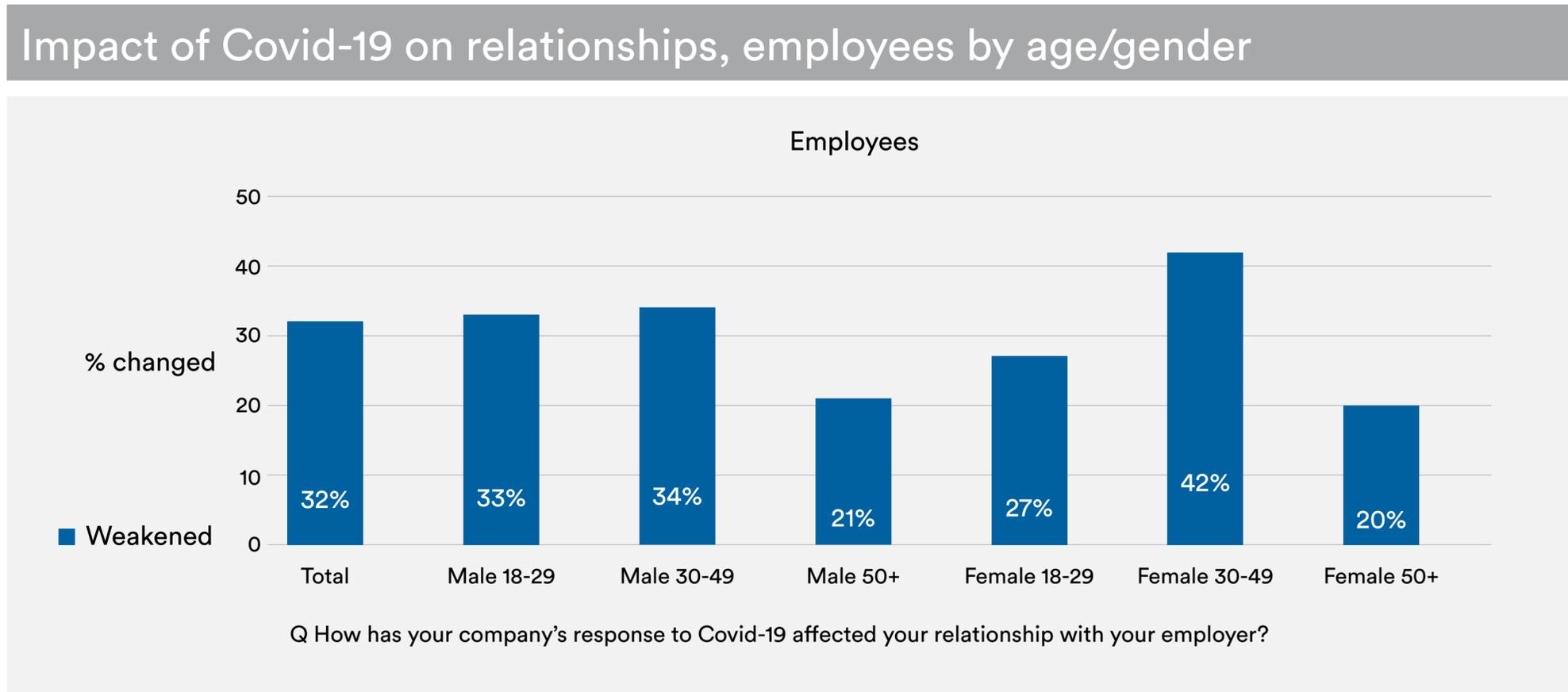
The decline in the workplace relationship

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.



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.

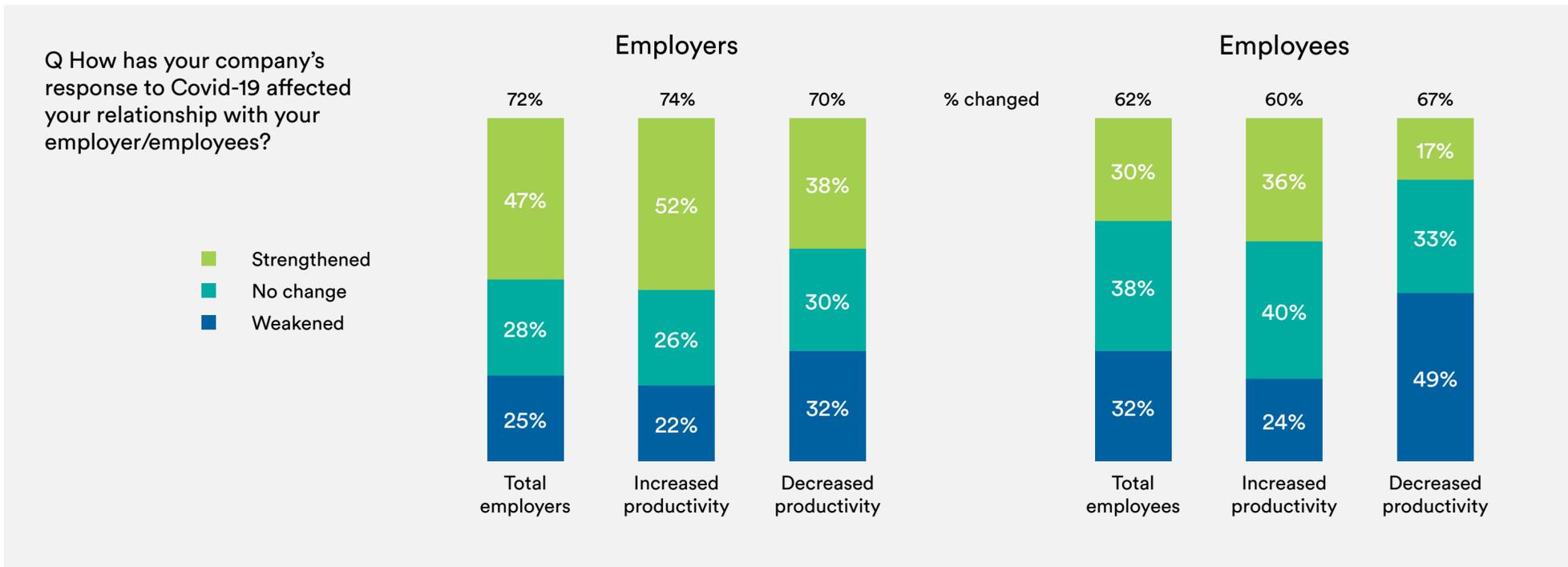


Key finding 2:

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%**.

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



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

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.

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%**).

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%**).

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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, in embedding a tangible demonstration of caring into all aspects of the employee experience – from managerial responsibilities, through to employee benefits for the individual.



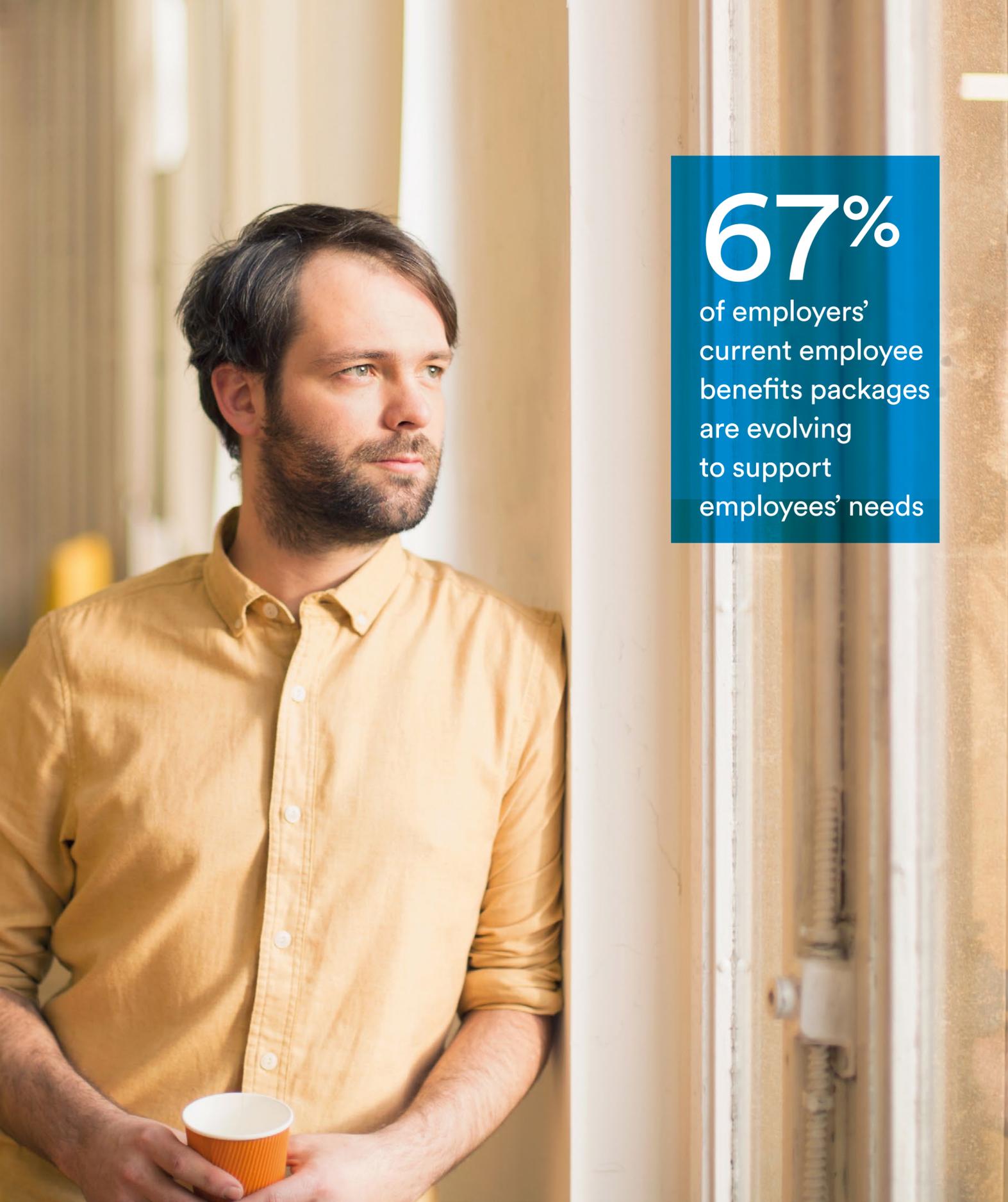
Key finding 5:

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.

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.



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of employers' current employee benefits packages are evolving to support employees' needs

Chapter 2: Realign

In chapter 2 of **Re:Me** we explore the theme: **Realign**. Here, we'll focus on what employers can learn once they've understood employees' new expectations and how, by revisiting company values, there's the potential to rebuild and enhance employee relationships.

In particular, you'll find insights around:

- The key values driving employee decision-making and productivity
- How employers can bridge the expectation gap and demonstrate care for employees
- The importance of supporting employee wellbeing post-pandemic

Visit metlife.co.uk/ReMe for further content and the latest updates, including:



An infographic condensing 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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