



Legal & General study finds national workplace wellbeing divide

Workers in the north of England have much lower opinions about how well their employers look after their wellbeing compared to their southern counterparts.

The research, published by Legal & General Group Protection found that just 59% of SME employees in the north of England believed their employer actively looked after their wellbeing, compared to 88% of those based in the south, suggesting a north/south divide.

But employers overall were far more confident that they supported the wellbeing of their employees. In the north, 83% of bosses felt they supported the mental wellbeing of workers, while in the south, this figure stood at 91%.

The study, which is part of L&G's Wellbeing at Work Barometer¹, suggested that employers over-estimated the impact their workplace wellbeing initiatives had. In the north, over two thirds (69%) of employers believed their benefits and wellbeing programme had 'good' appeal to all their employees, yet only 38% of employees agreed. In the south, while a gap was still present, it was less significant (79% of employers vs. 65% of employees).

At the same time, employee respondents said they would be more likely to work for an organisation that was open about its commitment to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of its people. But employees in the south demanded this at a greater level (90%) than the north (75%).

The L&G Barometer also found that use of wellbeing benefits among SME employees was far lower in the north, with just one in five (19%) employees saying they had used the workplace benefits available to them. While in the south over three in five (65%) employees reported having used the benefits available to them. Similarly, on awareness of benefits, almost a quarter (24%) of employees in the north said they were unaware of the wellbeing workplace benefits available to them at all, compared to 12% in the south.

“The need for workplace wellbeing is universal, yet our research shows that when it comes to wellbeing it appears that the age-old north/south divide is very much present. Employers that don't have wellbeing either already embedded or as a priority to address are missing out on new talent as well as impacting on the effectiveness of their existing workforce. In an employee's market – where the demand for talent is fast outstripping supply - this should be of serious cause for concern for employers.

“Helping address health and wellbeing inequalities does not only make good people and societal sense, it makes good business sense, impacting on key outcomes such as absenteeism, presenteeism and productivity.²

“Savvy employees are increasingly looking to the 'S' – the Social – in ESG, in terms of sustainable and inclusive employee, customer and community practices and helping tackle health inequalities is crucial here. That's why Legal & General has suggested that health inequality should be a key element of ESG, making it 'ESHG'. It's our duty as insurers, along with our intermediary partners, to help our customers get on top of this from the perspective of informing, designing and communicating tailored and purpose driven benefit and wellbeing programmes.”

Colin Fitzgerald, Distribution Director at Legal & General Group Protection

From ESG to ESHG

Legal & General has recently announced a partnership with Sir Michael Marmot, Director of the University College of London (UCL) Institute of Health Equity and Professor of Epidemiology.³

The collaboration will consider the role of business in addressing health inequality, suggesting also that health and health inequality should be a key element of ESG, or 'ESHG'.

The partnership also aims to provide funding in this space through a multi-million-pound charitable, "Legal & General IHE Places Fund".

Levelling Up

Legal & General's Wellbeing at Work Barometer findings coincide with the organisation's latest Rebuilding Britain Index, which tracks quality of life. It shows that in 12 months there had been declines in healthcare, along with some other areas of life such as housing access. Health also remains a key area of disparity on a regional basis.

The Rebuilding Britain Index highlighted that the UK had 'yet to show significant signs of rebuilding' and comes at a time when the government's proposed White Paper on Levelling Up is imminent.⁴

Notes to editors

¹ Wellbeing at Work Barometer - Legal & General's research was conducted by Opinium among 1,055 employees (middle managers and below) in businesses with 10-249 employees and 1,011 senior managers in business with 10-249 employees, between 13-20 May 2021. The representative split of companies included in the research, across the North and South, is shown in the table below.

How many members of staff does your business currently employ?			
	Total	Where is your workplace based? If your business has offices / branches in multiple locations, please answer for where you are personally based.	
		North	South
No. of cases	1011	156	641
10 to 29	22 %	33 %	17 %
30 to 49	16 %	24 %	12 %
50 to 99	38 %	20 %	48 %
100 to 249	24 %	22 %	23 %

² **Table:** Proportion of SMEs who correlate a good wellbeing strategy for employees with various business outcomes

Impact on workforce	National average (SMEs)	Southern SMEs	Northern SMEs
Improve morale	87%	89%	83%
Positive & supportive culture	86%	89%	79%
Increase productivity	83%	87%	74%
Increase retention	82%	85%	74%
Improve customer experience	81%	85%	77%
Attract talent	80%	85%	72%
Reduce absenteeism	80%	82%	77%
Reduce presenteeism	74%	79%	60%

³ <https://www.legalandgeneralgroup.com/media-centre/press-releases/legal-general-establishes-partnership-with-sir-michael-marmot-to-address-uk-health-inequality/>

⁴ <https://group.legalandgeneral.com/media/34qh222e/rebuilding-britain-index-the-great-british-migration-january-2022.pdf>

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** at 30 June 2021*

About Legal & General Insurance (LGI)

Legal & General Insurance (LGI) has been offering life insurance cover since 1836 and is the UK's number one individual life insurance provider. Our group protection business in the UK offers life insurance and income protection products to individuals through their employers and we offer term-life insurance in the US. We now have over 5.5 million UK life insurance policyholders, 1.8 million people in group protection schemes and approaching 1.3 million US term-life insurance policyholders. Here in LGI, we protect our customers and their loved ones throughout life and death. <https://www.legalandgeneral.com/employer/>

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