

Men's Health Week – purpose and pride are significantly more important to wellbeing for men than women in UK SMEs

- When asked what would help improve wellbeing in the workplace men rate a sense of purpose much more highly than women
- When asked what 'wellbeing' means, more than one in three men (36%) said having good work acknowledged by colleagues and/or superiors is a key part compared to just one in five women (20%)
- Only half of men (54%) said feeling 'mentally well' was an important part of overall wellbeing for them, compared to almost three quarters (74%) of women; and less than half of men (44%) said wellbeing was about being physically well compared to 71% of women

Wellbeing needs differ significantly between men and women, according to new research among employees of UK SMEs from insurer Legal & General, released during Men's Health Week, which found that not only do men and women define their own wellbeing differently, but also have different views on how it can be improved in the workplace. In particular, well over twice as many men as women (37% vs 15%) said that 'believing in what the company stands for and having a sense of purpose' would help improve wellbeing in the workplace.

When asked what wellbeing means to them as individual, 74% of female employees in SMEs said feeling mentally well, and 71% said feeling physically well. In comparison, just 54% of men prioritised mental health as a key part of their overall wellbeing, while fewer than half - 44% - said physical health.

However, when it comes to feeling valued at work, men were much more likely to see this as being associated with wellbeing than women, with 36% saying having good work acknowledged was a key factor, compared to just 20% of female respondents. Men were almost twice as likely to say having good career opportunities was part of wellbeing than women (23% vs to 12%).

“Throughout the pandemic, the importance of looking after mental and physical health have been high on the agenda, and we can see from our research that these things are hugely important to people in terms of their overall wellbeing, both at home and at work. But what is quite striking is the fact that, while good health is an important part of wellbeing for both men and women, it plays a more significant role for women. Conversely, feeling acknowledged at work is much more important for men in terms of their wellbeing than it is for women.”

Vanessa Sallows, Claims and Governance Director for Legal & General Group Protection

“We know that rates of work-related stress are on the increase* and are likely being exacerbated by ongoing Covid-19 related concerns. With the impending end of furlough, the potential for redundancy or the gradual return to places of work – whether on a full time or hybrid basis – levels of stress and anxiety are only likely to increase. As the results of our research help reinforce, tackling individual health and happiness is complex and can't be achieved via one-size-fits-all measures.”

Men's Health Forum's 'Can Do' challenge** this Men's Health Week, focuses on five 'scientifically-proven' ways to wellbeing that are focused as much on social aspects – connecting with others and doing things for other people – as they are about physical activity and mindfulness.

“It's great that Legal & General are thinking about the different aspects of wellbeing for men and women during Men's Health Week. Work plays a critical role in men's wellbeing. And, as we all face the challenges of coming out of pandemic restrictions, the extra insight they've provided on how employers can do more to support men's wellbeing is very welcome. Men don't always do enough to look after their

own health and wellbeing - and all our research says that employers can play a critical role in addressing that.”

Martin Tod, Chief Executive of Men’s Health Forum

L&G, the group protection insurer, says this highlights the urgent need for a much more customised approach to wellbeing in the workplace; one that acknowledges that wellbeing initiatives, employee benefits, culture, purpose, communication and line manager support all play a part and need to be considered as one.

Notes to editors

* <https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress.pdf>

** <https://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/can-do-challenge>

The research was conducted by Opinium Research 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.

According to the Federation of Small Business, SMEs account for 99.9% of the business population (6.0 million businesses) and account for three fifths of the employment and around half of turnover in the UK private sector - <https://www.fsb.org.uk/uk-small-business-statistics.html>.

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