Continuing the Conversation: Mental Wellbeing in Market Research 2020

Summary of findings

26th August 2020
We are Opinium

Thought Leadership, Brand & Comms, NPD, Stakeholder Engagement

London + New York

50 people

Method neutral
We all have mental health
Our audit at a glance...

1. **Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale**
   - 14 positive statements about mental wellbeing, each scored 1-5 based on feeling over past 2 weeks.
   - Sum scores for each statement to give a score for mental wellbeing

2. **Overall Wellbeing**
   - **Experiences** of poor mental and physical wellbeing
   - **Days off** work
   - **Attitudes** towards taking time off

3. **Mental health at work**
   - **Stress** levels and sources at work
   - Attitudes towards mental wellbeing
   - Opening up to employers: reactions and barriers

4. **Support at work**
   - **Awareness** of current support
   - **Usage** and effectiveness of support
   - What would they like to see in future
   - **Ideas** for mental wellbeing support

5. **Covid-19 module**
   - Feelings of support at work
   - Experience of WfH
   - Impact of WfH on mental wellbeing
   - Return to the office

We ran a study in parallel amongst UK workers to provide a benchmark
Key findings and recommendations
Thank you research land!

Fieldwork
June – July 2020

Sample size
1,143 responses from UK researchers:
• 275 In-house/ client-side
• 570 Agency
• 79 Supplier
• 145 Freelance
• 74 ‘other’
Key recommendations from the research

Don’t get complacent

A great deal of progress has been made in the last year and this is something all of us in the industry can be proud of. However, there is still lots of work to do and plenty of areas for improvement. Employers need to keep striving for better mental health amongst their employees.

Continue to offer wellbeing programmes and initiatives

Employees are enjoying the benefits of wellbeing initiatives on their mental health; employers should continue to offer these and expand to new initiatives. There are some initiatives that there are demand for but are not currently being widely provided.

Learn from the lockdown

Working from home has provided employees with a number of benefits during lockdown, and has improved the mental wellbeing of many. Employers need to learn how to make some of these changes in working patterns permanent and allow greater flexibility.
Recommendation 1:
Don’t get complacent
Wellbeing scores have remained stable versus 2019 and are higher than national benchmarks.
Workplace attitudes towards mental health are changing for the better

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes towards mental health in the workplace</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My colleagues would be supportive if I was struggling with my mental health</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be supported at work if I was struggling with my mental health</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My workplace takes the mental health of their employees seriously</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can talk to my manager openly about mental health</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can talk to colleagues openly about mental health</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would feel embarrassed if my colleague discovered I was struggling with my mental health</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wouldn’t know how to approach the topic of my mental health if I was struggling at work</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: all participants excluding sole traders, 989
Particularly regarding feeling more able to talk openly and mental health being taken seriously

Attitudes towards mental health in the workplace

- I wouldn't know how to approach the topic of my mental health if I was struggling at work: 31% (2020) vs 40% (2019)
- Can talk to colleagues openly about mental health: 47% (2020) vs 38% (2019)
- Can talk to my manager openly about mental health: 56% (2020) vs 48% (2019)
- My workplace takes the mental health of their employees seriously: 66% (2020) vs 60% (2019)

Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: all participants excluding sole traders, 989
This has resulted in more researchers being open about their mental health at work

Experiences of opening up about mental health at work
(vs. 2019 %)

- **75 %** They were understanding and supportive (vs. 62%)
- **26 %** They asked me what the company could do to help (41%)
- **25 %** Although they were sympathetic they didn’t know how best to support me (30%)
- **18 %** They told me about various ways in which the company could help (19%)
- **14 %** They offered me the option of compassionate leave if ever things got too much (23%)
- **8 %** They didn’t take it as seriously as they should have (vs. 15%)
- **6 %** They told me to speak to my line manager/ a mental health first aider/ HR

Q11. You mentioned that you have experienced the following in the last 12 months: Have you ever told someone at your current workplace about this? Base: all participants who experienced a mental health problem, excluding sole traders, 834.
Q14. You mentioned that you told someone at your current workplace that you were experiencing: . How did they respond? Please select all that apply
Base: all participants who told someone about struggling with mental health, excluding sole traders, 489
We are becoming more open about mental health problems and needing to take time off.

62% of those who did take time off for mental health told their employer the exact reason (vs 47% in 2019).

Q5. Did you tell your employer the exact reason why you needed to take time off work for the following? Base: all participants who took time off for mental health, excludes sole traders (151)
However, less people are taking time off for their mental health, and workload is still an issue.

% who have taken time off work for mental health

23% 18%

51% of those who didn’t take time off cited too much work as the reason (47% 2019)

53% said that workload and having too much to do causes them stress at work. The top stress for market researchers (59% 2019)

Q3. Did you take any time off work to rest/ recover from each of the following? Base: all participants who experienced a mental health problem in past 12m, 951

Q4. Why didn’t you take time off work for each of the following? Base: all who didn’t take time off for mental health, 792

Q9. Which, if any, of the following cause you to feel stressed at work? Select all that apply. Base: all participants, 1143
And there is still work to do in changing attitudes towards mental health in the workplace.

**56%** felt *guilty for taking time off* work for their mental health *(65% 2019)*

**25%** Didn’t tell anyone at work about their mental health problem because *didn’t think it appropriate* to discuss their mental health at work *(23% 2019)*

**21%** Didn’t tell anyone at work about their mental health problem because they were afraid it would *jeopardise their career* *(28% 2019)*

*I felt these were ‘normal’ situations to be in, and also… I didn’t want to be perceived as weak or attention seeking (absurd as it sounds, I know).*
Recommendation 1

Summary:

• Attitudes towards mental health in the workplace are changing for the better
• Employees are becoming more open about mental health
• Those who have taken time off for their mental health have had positive experiences
• But there is still work to be done, as many are still not taking time off for mental health, with workload being a key reason
• Employers need to continue to cultivate a safe environment for employees to be open about mental health, whilst also managing stresses such as workload
Recommendation 2: Continue to offer wellbeing programmes and initiatives
Working from home and flexible working hours are the most common initiatives offered by employers.

Programmes and initiatives offered by employers:

- Remote working/WfH: 75%
- Flexible working hours: 62%
- Space for people to take breaks: 60%
- Provide info about techniques to improve mental health: 50%
- Offer exercise/recreational classes: 37%
- Employee assistance programme: 35%
- Have a mental health first aider: 34%

Q18 Are you aware that your current workplace provides any of the following to improve the mental wellbeing of their employees?: 989 (excludes sole traders)
There is evidence to suggest that those with access to these schemes have better mental wellbeing.

**Percentage with an above average WEMWBS based on access to schemes**

- Enforce mandatory breaks: 52% have, 39% don't have
- Mentoring scheme within the company: 46% have, 38% don't have
- 'Duvet days' / mental health days: 46% have, 39% don't have
- Flexible working hours: 43% have, 35% don't have
- Access to a counsellor: 42% have, 39% don't have
- Remote working / working from home: 40% have, 39% don't have

Q18 Are you aware that your current workplace provides any of the following to improve the mental wellbeing of their employees?: 989 (excludes sole traders)
There is still demand from employees for the introduction of more programmes

Initiatives employees would like to see their workplace introduce

- "Duvet days" / mental health days: 44%
- Monitoring of mental wellbeing: 25%
- Mentoring scheme within the company: 21%
- Access to a counsellor: 21%
- Flexible working hours: 20%
- Exercise/ recreational classes at lunch: 19%

Q22 Would you like to see your current workplace introduce any of the following to improve the mental health and wellbeing of their employees?: 989 (excluding sole traders)
Recommendation 2

Summary:

- Employers that don’t already should introduce initiatives for their workers.

- Those that do should keep up the good work!

- There is always room for more; look to introduce new programmes and initiatives by finding out what your people want.
Recommendation 3: Learn from the lockdown
An existing working from home culture made the transition to lockdown an easy one.
Working from home has had many positive effects on wellbeing

Benefits of working from home during lockdown

- Improved mental health: 62%
- More relaxed: 59%
- Improved worklife balance: 57%
But not everything about working from home has been easy

Not everything about lockdown has been positive

- Find it hard to draw boundaries between work and rest:
  - Disagree: 40%
  - Agree: 48%

- Working longer hours now they are home:
  - Disagree: 35%
  - Agree: 43%

- Struggle to keep in contact with colleagues:
  - Disagree: 41%
  - Agree: 43%

“As someone who lives alone, it has been a lonely experience (no amount of zoom, skype, Teams, webex calls can make up for the lack of human interaction)”

“I’ve also been looking after a small child during this time (while also trying to work) so that also hasn’t helped!”

“I find it very helpful to have the structure of getting up and going to work, being in the office around my colleagues, interacting with them, and then physically leaving the office to come home. Also I live in a very small flat with my partner who is also working from home - it is very cramped and uncomfortable, which just makes the days more difficult.”

C4 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about working from home?: 833 (all working from home)
Overall, most people want working from home to continue in some capacity

Percentage who want working from home to continue after lockdown

96%
Recommendation Summary:

- Working from home has clear and obvious benefits for the wellbeing of employees

- However, there are also positives to office working

- The key is to be flexible and encourage a culture that works on a person by person basis
In any difficulty there is also opportunity...
Thank you

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