



Workplace Mental Wellbeing Audit 2021

FOREWORDS

This research does more than shine a light on a well-known problem. It is a call to action; the power to improve the mental health of our employees and colleagues is in our hands. We have to move beyond yoga sessions, encouraging walking breaks, and EAP hotlines. As leaders one of the biggest challenges facing us is how we create new culture and new ways of working. Anything else is not sustainable.

These results highlight the overwhelming expectations on employers to address these issues. If our model of work isn't working for the majority of us, how do we fix it? Normalise conversations around mental health. Allow people time off for stress and mental health concerns. And actively manage your team's workload and your stakeholder's expectations.

The findings in this report will come as no surprise and, possibly for some, even provide reassurance that these are not isolated issues.

Whether you are working with clients or in-house, the pressures of working in public relations are very real.

It is fast-paced, public facing, and mistakes are often made out in the open. And we're a new industry with a value is being increasingly recognised but is perhaps still not well understood. It's right that we should be concerned but we should also be hopeful.

There has been a noticeable shift towards more open and supportive cultures, with more than half of those who experienced mental health concerns talking about them to someone else at work. That must continue and the industry must embrace the new world of hybrid working as an opportunity to deliver a better balance between work and life.

Another way is not just possible, it's essential.



Alastair McCapra
CIPR CEO

I thought long and hard about what to say in this foreword. And after a great deal of hesitation, I reached the conclusion that honesty was best. So here goes...

I have suffered from appalling mental health my whole life. Frequent bouts of depression; destructive and pointless anxiety; an underlying lack of confidence. All of which I've hidden from almost everybody.

Why do I say this now having kept quiet about it for decades? Because it would be disingenuous to do otherwise given the content of this report, and given the recommendations it makes, particularly about the need for candour.

Covid threw a powerful spotlight on mental health. I have never before had so many conversations about how people were feeling. And they were honest conversations, not the 'Oh fine thanks. How about you?' type. That's one positive of Covid, and I can't see it going away.

This report delivers data on where we are, and recommendations on what we should do.

Some of its findings - such as nine out of ten practitioners have suffered mental ill health over the past year - are shocking. Others - such as three out of four have found their workplace to be supportive - are very welcome.

The four recommendations are simple, sensible, and sound. You shouldn't feel guilty because you're feeling unwell. You definitely should talk about the issue. We need to take better care of ourselves, and for many, that's about workload. And where hybrid working works well, keep on with it - we've certainly embraced it at the PRCA and ICCO: some people like working from an office - cool. Some people like working from home - that's cool too. Most people like a mix.

For many of us, this has been the most stressful, challenging period of our lives. Many people have been broken by it. Even more have come close to breaking point. But every crisis is a catalyst for change, whether for the better or for the worse. If we embrace the recommendations made here, then that change can definitely be for the better.



Francis Ingham MPRCA
Director General, PRCA

As we reach our third year of conducting our mental health audit amongst the PR industry we have started to see organisational change not only within how mental health is communicated, and supported throughout the industry but how mental wellbeing as a whole is approached.

Over the last three years, we've uncovered many key issues that employees have addressed and it is great to report both the progress so far and further identify where we should continue to place our focus moving forwards.

In our first year, we opened the conversation with mental health still posing a rather taboo topic, and PR professionals more likely than UK workers to avoid telling someone at work for fear of it jeopardising their career. In the second year, we saw progress in the number of PR professionals who felt that their mental health was being taken seriously. We also saw that Covid posed many challenges to the industry, was a top stressor, and negatively impacted mental wellbeing for the sector. There was a lot for the industry to learn during the pandemic, how to adapt to a completely upside-down world, remote working, fear and stress at all time highs. The industry has made great progress since the knock of Covid.

Encouragingly, the industry has made a great recovery from the depths of Covid-19 last year, where we no longer see the impact of Covid on the company as a top stressor for PR professionals. Alongside this, over three quarters (79%) rated their organisation as having a good handling of the pandemic. We've seen encouraging insights as almost three quarters (74%) of PR professionals who spoke up at work about their mental health found their workplace to be understanding and supportive.

On the other hand, we also see, without the impact of Covid being in the way as much, that overwhelming workloads are still a key source of stress for the industry (67%), and that this is something that employees are calling to be specifically addressed.

Huge thanks to the PRCA for our continued partnership on this important industry wide piece of work.

As we continue to run this survey yearly, we gain rich insights into the PR industry's mental wellbeing, and help to accelerate change over time.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the survey, this year we surveyed 559 PR professionals, including 202 in-house /client side, 291 at agencies and 42 freelancers. It is thanks to the response rate that we are able to develop these insights. We hope this report continues to provide actionable insights and recommendations for the industry to continue to support colleagues and improve workplace wellbeing.



James Endersby
CEO, Opinium



INTRODUCTION

Much progress has been made in the area of mental health in the last several years; talking about it openly and honestly has become more commonplace, and governments and businesses have recognised that they have a major role to play in helping people look after their mental wellbeing.

We designed our Workplace Mental Wellbeing Audit to help businesses and other organisations understand the mental health of their employees and in turn take steps to help them. We have once again partnered with the PRCA, ICCO and CIPR to survey 559 PR professionals through their networks, with the aim to understand specifically the mental wellbeing of those working in the PR and Communications industry, the impact of coronavirus has had and changes over time.

Throughout the report, we also compare to last year's survey of PR and Communications professionals, to understand changes over time, as well as our normative database of national UK workers, to understand how the industry fares in comparison to other sectors.

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)

A key element of our audit is the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale; a rigorous and scientific method designed by the University of Warwick with funding from NHS Scotland. Not only does the scale give our research a robust method for measuring mental wellbeing, it also distinguishes our approach from the myriad of other mental health surveys by giving us a benchmark to work with that is underpinned by academic research.

Looking at the scores of the scale, the mental wellbeing of an individual can be determined in terms of whether it falls above or below the national average. The scale enables us to quantify mental wellbeing, thus promoting wider understanding of mental wellbeing as a whole. Furthermore, scores can be tracked over time, allowing organizations and society at large to understand factors that impact mental wellbeing.

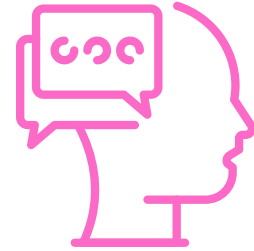
*© University of Warwick, NHS Health Scotland and University of Edinburgh, 2007, all rights reserved. If you would like to use the scale, please visit the University of Warwick website for more details: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>

KEY FINDINGS

90% of those in PR have experienced mental health issues to an extent in the past year

54% of those who didn't take time off work for their mental health cited the heavy workload as the top reason for not doing so

60% of those experiencing mental health issues have told someone at work about it



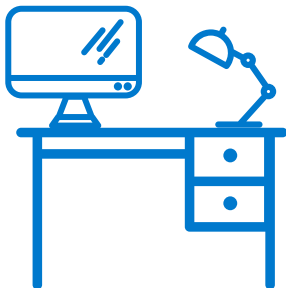
61% of those taking time off due to mental health problems have felt guilty for doing so

60% felt considerable improvements in their mental wellbeing after having taken time off

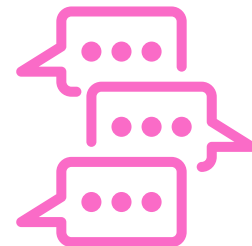


67% said an overwhelming workload was a key source of workplace stress

74% of those speaking up at work about their mental health found their workplace to be understanding and supportive



95% of PR professionals believe their workplace has a role to play in looking after the mental wellbeing of employees



79% rated their organisation as having a good handling of the pandemic

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

Upon analysing the wealth of data this research has provided us and compared that to last year's findings and the national benchmarks, we found four key areas of recommendation for employers in the PR industry:

1. Break the guilt and normalise the use of mental wellbeing initiatives

Our data indicates that while the culture around mental health and wellbeing has started to shift and there are more open discussions around this topic within workplaces, PR professionals are still somewhat reserved from taking up the mental wellbeing initiatives available to them. While experiencing mental health issues is alarmingly high, taking time off for mental health reasons is proportionately low, with many who did take time off reported feeling guilty and pressured for doing so. Businesses need to reassure employees of the positive mental health impacts and improved quality of work upon taking time off and make sure to normalise the use of mental health initiatives by putting an end to the associated guilt or stigma.

2. Continue to encourage conversations and address the overwhelming workload

Encouragingly, we've seen an increase in the number of conversations around mental health in the workplace, and PR professionals are more likely to know how to approach the topic. This is also apparent in the rise of those who feel they would be supported if they were to struggle with their mental health. While coronavirus is no longer a top 5 stressor at the workplace, overwhelming workloads remain a serious source of stress across the industry. Employers in the PR industry need to continue to encourage open conversations about mental health and wellbeing to nurture an empathetic environment at the workplace, but it is also crucial that they acknowledge and address the issue of heavy workload. Practical strategies to manage high demands need to be introduced as well as supporting employees with stress management.

3. Promote a preventative approach to mental wellbeing

While initiatives such as flexible working, working from home, stress management support and mental health first aiders are on the rise, uptake remains low throughout the PR industry. Workload induced stress and feelings of guilt and stigma prevent PR professionals from using the tools around them, which in turn can easily cause further stress or lead to burnout. A more wholistic approach to mental wellbeing that considers both the stressors, and the resulting poorer mental health is key to tackle the issue from all angles. Promoting a preventative approach and encouraging employers to use the available support is therefore key to reduce the stress levels throughout the industry.

4. Support employees through hybrid working

Despite the PR industry being hard hit by the pandemic last year, the majority of PR professionals have felt that their organisation handled the situation well and provided good support throughout the pandemic. The vast majority have worked from home during the lockdowns, and whilst PR professionals have had mixed experiences doing so, the overall feelings towards the future are optimistic. Businesses across the industry need to ensure that they continue to adopt this supportive nature whilst working life continues in a hybrid nature.



1. BREAK THE GUILT AND NORMALISE THE USE OF MENTAL WELLBEING SCHEMES

Coming out of the UK lockdowns, the overall WEMWBS score of those working in PR shows a slight increase compared to last year's findings, indicating a slightly improved overall mental wellbeing among PR professionals. There has been some progress in supporting those taking time off for their mental wellbeing with new processes being put in motion to support those returning to work after a difficult time. On the other hand, the number of those who did take time off for mental health reasons continues to be alarmingly low, despite the fact that experiencing mental health issues remains to be significantly higher in the PR sector when compared to the national average.

This indicates that while the culture around mental wellbeing has become more open and supportive, PR professionals still feel some reservation from making use of the schemes put in place to help them. This is also apparent in the fact that despite the drastic decrease in PR professionals who don't know how to approach the topic of mental health at the workplace, feeling guilty for taking time off for mental wellbeing is still commonplace among those who did so.

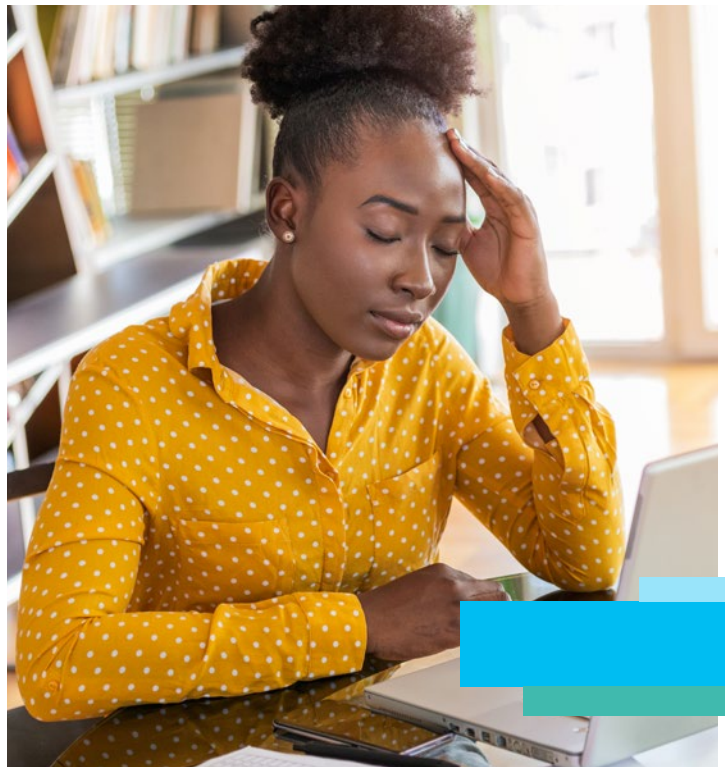
The progress that workplaces show in supporting those who face mental health issues through different wellbeing support schemes, mental health first aiders, or open conversations around mental health is very promising, however, there is still more to be done. A dual solution that is at once preventative and reactive needs to be put in place so that PR professionals can feel enabled to make use of the supporting schemes and take time off to recover if necessary. For this, however, workplaces will have to reassure their employees about the positive impacts that taking time off work for mental health reasons have on both mental wellbeing and quality of work, furthermore, feelings of guilt and pressure due to the overwhelming workload need to be acknowledged and addressed.

Slight increase in mental wellbeing scores since 2020, but gender and seniority differences remain

The overall mental wellbeing score of PR professionals currently averages at 45.1 out of the maximum of 70 WEMWBS score, a slight increase compared to both the 2020 and 2019 WEMWBS scores (43.5 and 44.6 respectively). Now only marginally behind the WEMWBS score of the national average, at 46.5 this year.

The number of PR professionals with mental wellbeing scores below the industry average shows a slight improvement as well. While last year two in five (39%) have scored lower than the industry average, this year it has fallen to one in three (34%). There are, however, considerable gender and seniority level differences. While 28% of male PR professionals have a lower-than-average mental wellbeing score, this rises to 35% in for females.

When looking at the differences between levels of seniority, junior PR professionals continue to score lowest (WEMWBS score 42.9) compared to those working in mid-level (WEMWBS score 43.1) or senior level (WEMWBS score 47.0). Furthermore, more than two in five of both junior professionals and mid-senior professionals have lower-than-average mental wellbeing score within the industry (43% and 44% respectively), compared to only one in four (25%) senior professionals. This shows a slight improvement since last year's findings, where half (49%) of junior level PR professionals had a lower mental wellbeing score than the industry average, compared to three in ten (29%) amongst those working in senior level positions.



Experiencing mental health problems continue to be notoriously common in the PR sector

Nine in ten (90%) PR professionals reported having struggled with their mental wellbeing to an extent over the past 12 months and three quarters (74%) experienced a physical health problem. This is significantly higher compared to 65% of UK workers who have experienced a mental health issue and 57% a physical health issue during the same period.

Compared to our findings last year, the numbers remain stagnant. In 2020, nine in ten (90%) PR professionals reported having experienced a mental health problem and a little over three quarters (77%) with a physical health problem.

Females consistently face more mental and physical health problems than males, both in the PR industry and beyond

While 84% of male PR professionals have struggled with their mental wellbeing in the past year and 64% with a physical health problem, the numbers are considerably higher among females in the industry: 92% faced mental health issues and 78% physical health issues.

Whilst both mental and physical health problems decreased among male PR professionals compared to last year's figures (91% faced mental and 71% faced physical health issues in 2020), the occurrence of these problems have not decreased among female PR professionals. In fact, the numbers show a slight increase in mental health issues of females in PR and only a marginal decrease in physical health problems (90% faced mental and 79% physical health issues in 2020).

Taking time off work due to mental health reasons remain lower in PR compared to UK workers

Unfortunately, there has been no positive change in the number of people who have taken time off work for mental wellbeing since last year. Amongst PR professionals who experienced mental health problems over the past 12 months, only a quarter (26%) took time off work, which is the same figure as last year. Whereas this increases to a third (32%) of UK workers, suggesting that those in the PR industry are less likely to take a break from work for mental wellbeing reasons.

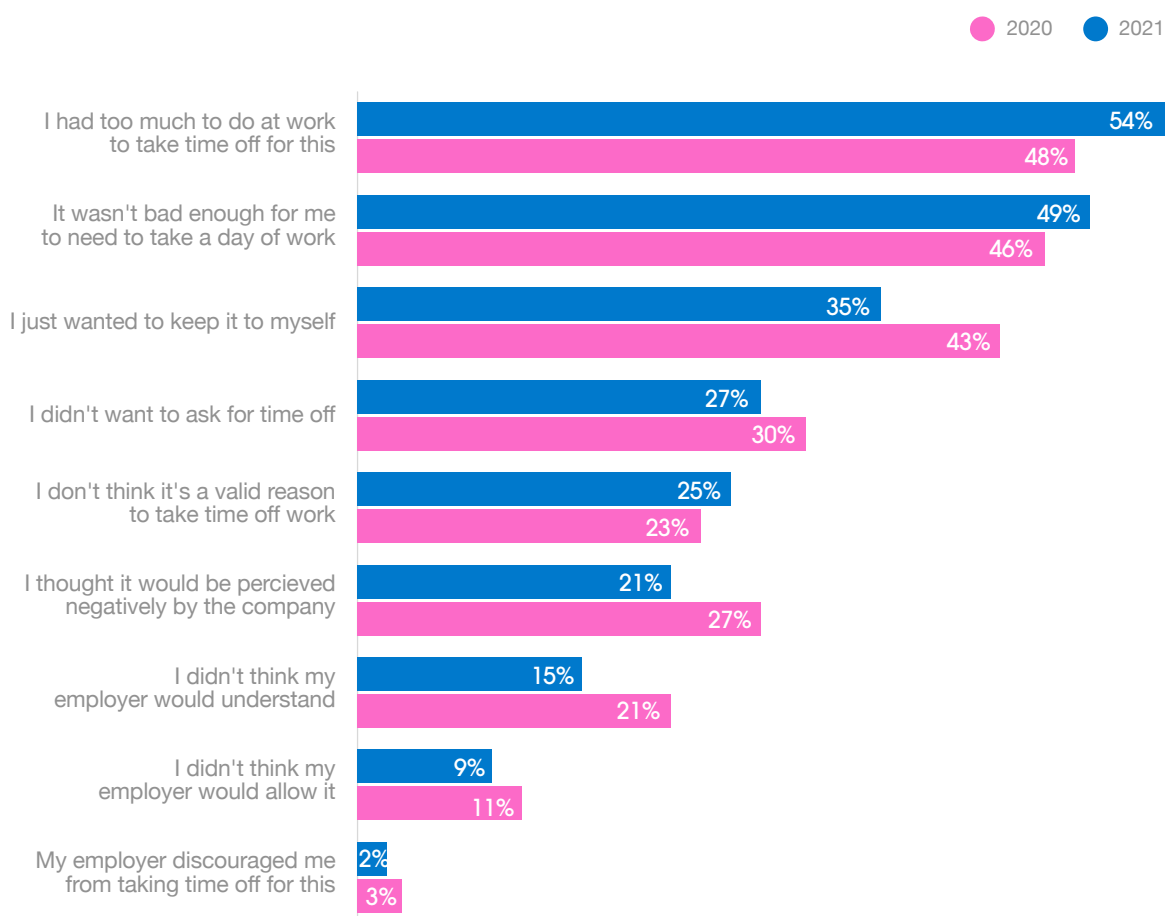
While there are no significant gender differences, young PR professionals aged 25-34 are noticeably more likely to have taken time off due to their mental wellbeing than those aged 35-49 (32% falling to 22% respectively).



Workload is the main barrier to taking time off work for mental wellbeing

Amongst PR professionals who did not take time off work for their mental wellbeing, the top two reasons are the heavy workload (54%) and feeling that it was not bad enough to take time off work (49%). These remain the top two barriers from last year, however, there has been a slight increase in both of these. There has been a 6% increase in those who felt their workload is too much for them to take time off (from 48% in 2020 to 54% in 2021). The third top reason for not taking time off for mental wellbeing is due to wanting to keep the problem to themselves (35%). Furthermore, a quarter (25%) of PR professionals who faced mental health problems but did not take time off work, did not think it was a valid reason to do so. A further fifth (21%) thought doing so would be perceived negatively by their company.

Reasons for not wanting to take time off work for mental health problems



Taking time off work for mental health reasons came with feelings of guilt but also with improved wellbeing

While workplaces in the PR industry are slightly better at supporting their employees who take time off for their mental wellbeing than before, employees seem reluctant to make use of those schemes.

There has clearly been some progress in the culture around mental health at the workplace, with more people having felt that there was a clear process in helping them return to work after taking time off for their mental wellbeing (from 26% in 2020 to 30% in 2021). On the flipside, when looking at PR professionals who have taken time off due to mental health reasons, we've seen a decrease from last year in those who have told to their employer the exact reason behind their time off. While two thirds (66%) of PR professionals took time off for their mental health have told the exact reason to their employer, this is down from 72% last year. Furthermore, the number of those who felt pressured to return to work early when they took time off work mental health reasons have slightly risen as well (from 31% in 2020 to 35% in 2021). Interestingly, while three in five (61%) of those taking time off for their mental wellbeing felt guilty for having done so, the same number (60%) have experienced a considerable improvement in their mental health after. Moreover, taking a mental health break resulted in significant work benefits as well, seven in ten (72%) reporting the positive benefits it has had on the quality of their work upon returning to work.

These contradictions point to the fact that while the PR industry has seen improvements in the measures put in place for their employees experiencing mental health issues, the take up of such schemes remain relatively low due to the associated guilt and high workload induced stress. Businesses should encourage those who need time off for their mental wellbeing to do so, and use the benefits outlined above to help remove the guilt and stigma.



2. CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE CONVERSATIONS AND ADDRESS THE OVERWHELMING WORKLOAD

Encouragingly PR professionals continue to feel their workplace takes the mental health of their employees seriously, and the number of PR professionals who would not know how to approach the topic of their mental health or wellbeing continues to decrease. We've seen the number of conversations around mental health in the workplace continue to rise, which is very uplifting for the industry. Those who feel they would be supported if they were to struggle with their mental health are increasing, and again more PR professionals are telling someone at work if they have struggled with their mental health, compared to UK workers.

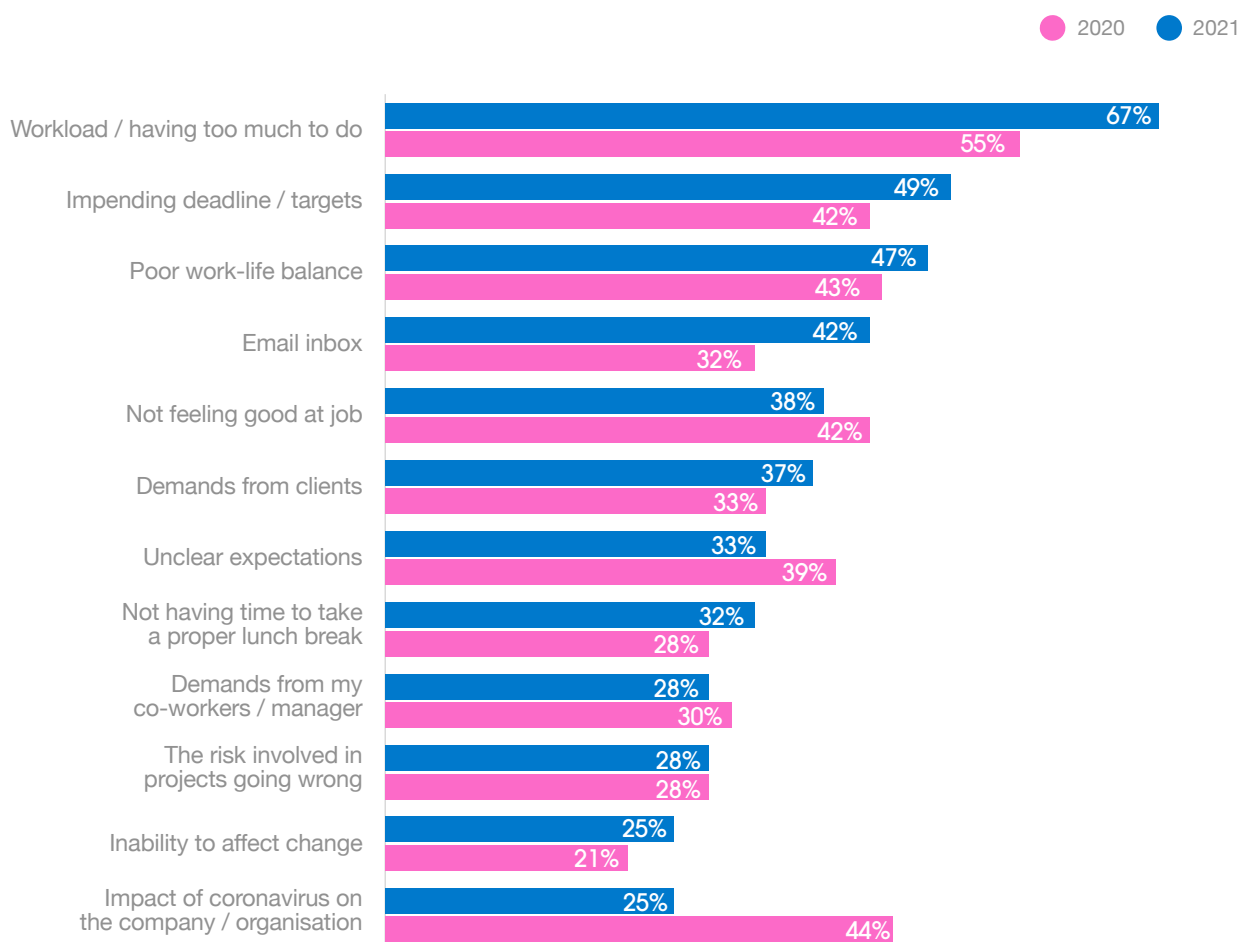
Whilst we saw that Covid-19 had badly affected the PR industry last year, it is encouraging to see that its impact on the company is no longer a top 5 stressor for PR professionals. However, workload stress remains the overwhelming source of stress amongst the industry, particularly for junior employees. It has increased as a source of stress since last year, and it is important that businesses address the overwhelming workload within the PR industry. Strategies need to be put in place to properly support employees with their workload and ensure that their mental health does not suffer due to the demands placed upon them. Businesses should continue to encourage these conversations and start shaping them specifically on the issues that PR professionals face, namely how to better manage workload related stress.



Having too much on at work remains the main source of stress for PR professionals

Stress levels overall remain consistent with last years' (6.5 in 2021 versus 6.4 in 2020 on a 10-point scale where 0 is not at all stressful and 10 is extremely stressful), again higher than UK workers with 5. Looking at the sources of this stress, having too much to do at work and an overwhelming workload remains the main concerning source of stress amongst PR Professionals. This has increased from 55% in 2020 to 67% this year. Those in junior level positions were most likely to feel this stress, increasing to 87% compared to those in middle (69%) and senior (62%) level positions. On a positive note, the impact of Covid on the company has significantly decreased as a source of stress from, 44% in 2020 to 25% this year and is no longer in the top 5 stresses. The PR industry was badly affected by Covid last year, and we saw this as a key source of stress for PR professionals, so it is encouraging to see that this is no longer one of the top-of-mind stressors for the industry.

Main sources of stress in the workplace



Those who feel they would be supported if they were to struggle with their mental health continues to rise

Almost all PR professionals (95%), believe their workplace has a role to play in looking after the mental wellbeing of their employees, up from 90% last year. Further to this, encouragingly, PR professionals still feel their workplace takes the mental health of their employees seriously, (68%) compared to 64% last year. The number of PR professionals who feel they would be supported at work if they were struggling with their mental wellbeing is also still on the rise, to 68% from 65% last year and 56% in 2019.

The number of PR professionals who would not know how to approach the topic of their mental health or wellbeing has decreased

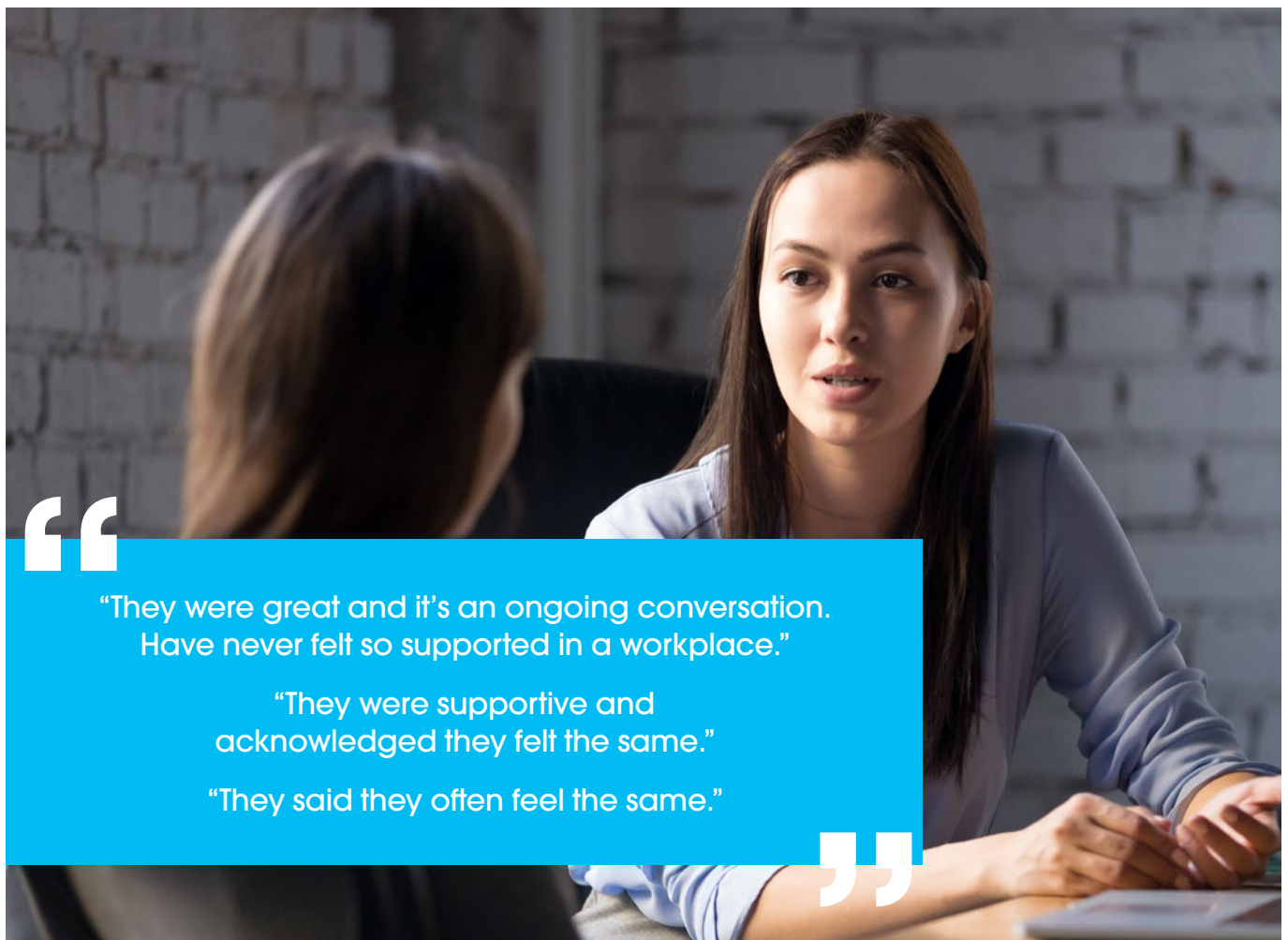
Positively, the number of PR professionals who would not know how to approach the topic of their mental health or wellbeing if they were struggling has further decreased to 29% compared to 35% last year. This is greatly encouraging to see for the PR industry, as we've seen over the past few years a shift in how conversations about mental health or wellbeing are received and approached, also reflected in the number of PR professionals who told someone at work that they were struggling.



However, the number of PR professionals who still would not know *who* to turn to in their office if they were struggling remains consistent with last year (23% versus 24%). Businesses should continue to encourage conversations in the workplace perhaps focusing more so on every employee holding these conversations rather than only those who are struggling so that each employee has these happening to some degree and would know who to turn to if needed.

A similar proportion of PR professionals (60%) told someone at work that they struggled with their mental health, compared to last year (59%). This also remains fairly consistent amongst genders, with females slightly more likely to have told someone in their workplace (62% female compared to 55% male). As with last year, this is significantly higher than UK workers at 40% this year. PR professionals were most likely to talk to their line manager (62%) or another colleague (43%).

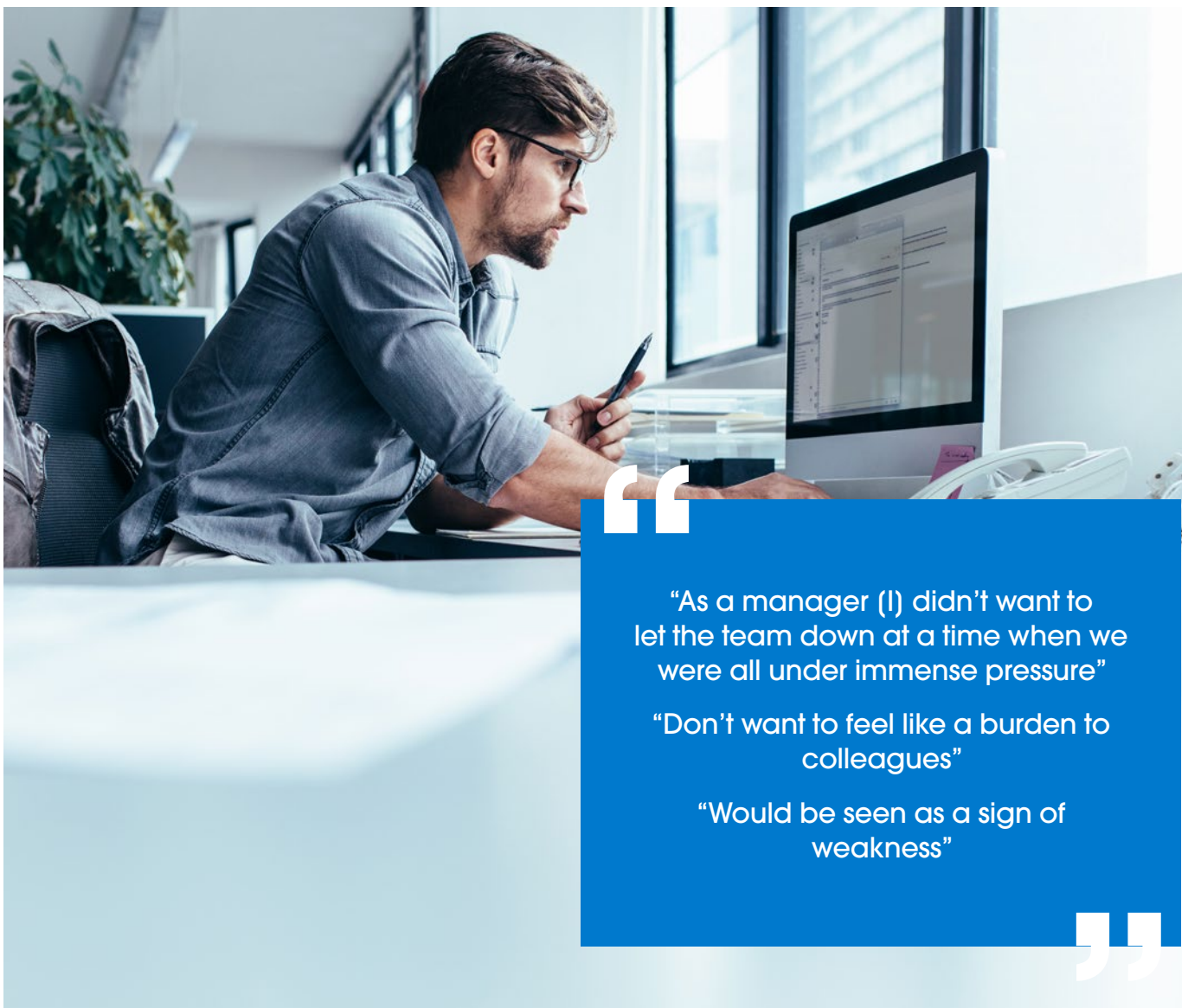
For those who spoke up, they found others to be supportive and had similar experiences.



As with last year, those who spoke out had a positive experience, as almost three quarters (74%) found their workplace to be understanding and supportive, significantly higher than UK workers of 57%. Three in ten (31%) asked what the company could do to help, and a similar proportion were told about the ways in which the company could help (28%). However, a fifth (20%) found that although they were sympathetic, they did not know how best to support them.

For those who did not tell anyone, the main reasons include not feeling it was necessary to tell them (40%), not thinking they would be able to help (37%) and thinking it would jeopardise their career (29%). Encouragingly, not knowing how to talk about mental health or wellbeing is down from 31% last year, to 23% this year. This shows that the emphasis on having more conversations around mental health has continued to impact how open employees feel to start conversations in the workplace.

Despite the promising changes in how people feel about talking about mental health in the workplace, there is no significant increase from last year in those who told someone at work about experiencing mental health problems. When looking deeper into the reasons behind why some employees did not speak to anyone, issues around pressure and not wanting to be seen as weak begin to arise. This again falls back to addressing the overwhelming workloads within the PR industry.



3. PROMOTE A PREVENTATIVE APPROACH TO MENTAL WELLBEING

Whilst the mental wellbeing initiatives offered are on the rise, uptake remains low throughout the PR industry. Perhaps an emphasis on taking a preventative approach to wellbeing needs to be adopted to encourage PR professionals to use the tools around them to help them manage their workload and stress and prevent further burnout and increased stress. Mental wellbeing focuses on more than a clinically diagnosed mental illness, and so encouraging employees to make use of the initiatives during the times that they experience poorer mental health could be key in helping to reduce stress levels throughout the industry.

This again falls back to the emphasis on overwhelming workloads within the PR industry, employees are wanting more of a focus on workloads within their initiatives. If a preventative approach is adopted with all initiatives, rather than a focus of last resort, the initiatives should help to provide support during difficult times rather than a last-minute addition.

Uptake of initiatives remains low

The mental wellbeing initiatives that PR and Comms professionals are offered most commonly are remote working (86%, up from 68% in 2020), flexible working hours (63%, up from 54% in 2020) and information about mental health and techniques to improve wellbeing (60%, up from 51%).

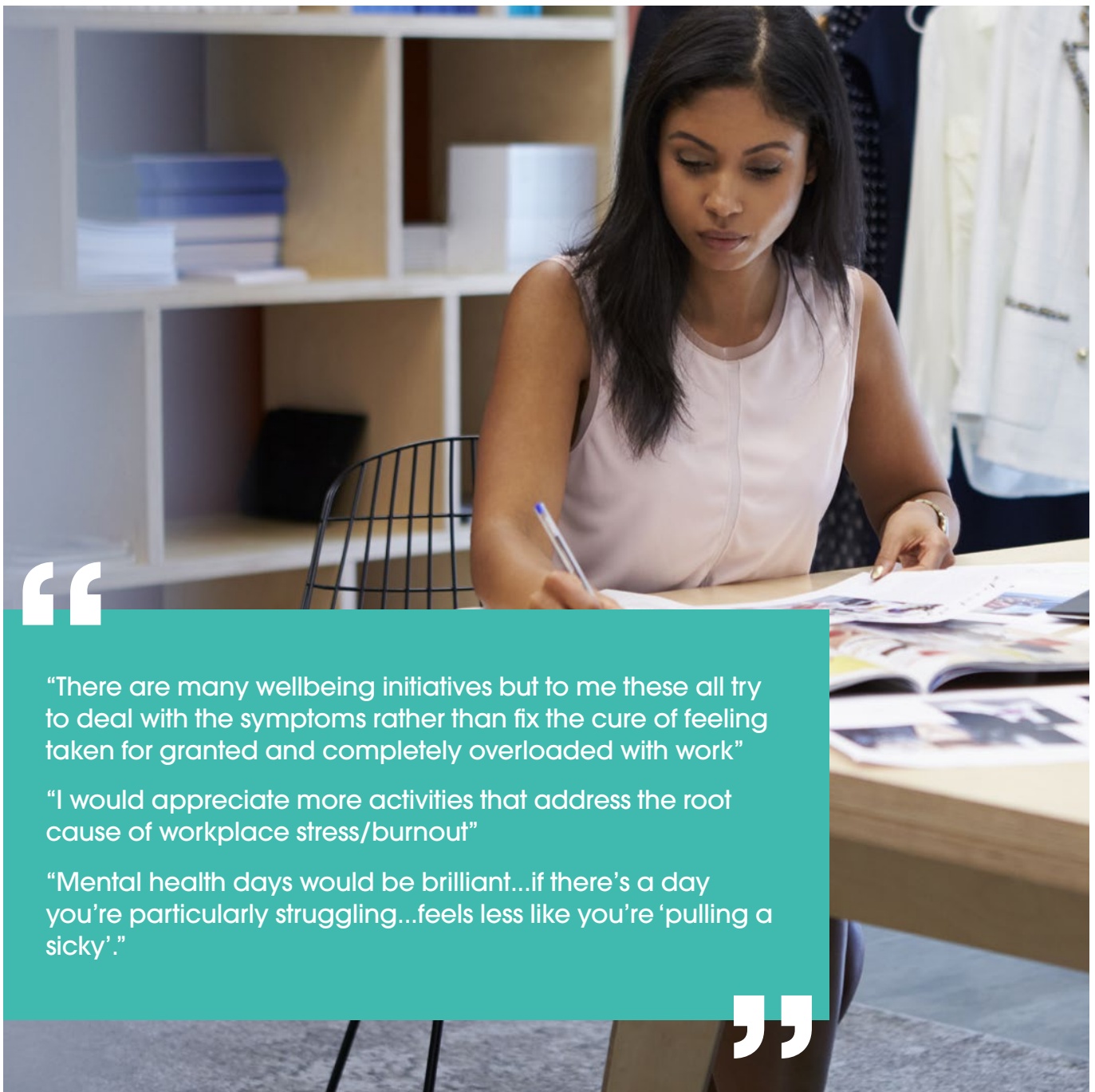
There has also been a slight increase in mental health first aiders, with 52% saying there is one in their workplace (up from 47% in 2020). And there has also been an increase in those offered an employee assistance programme (50%, up from 41%) and access to a counsellor (39%, up from 31%). However, usage of these initiatives still remains low, with only 6% talking to a mental health first aider, 9% accessing a counsellor, and 0% using their EAP where on offer. Perhaps more emphasis needs to be placed on a preventative approach to wellbeing and making use of these types of support initiatives sooner rather than later.



Looking ahead, PR and Comms professionals would like to see their employer introduced several initiatives to support mental wellbeing, including duvet/mental health days (51%), monitoring of mental wellbeing via a survey (29%), internal mentoring schemes (26%) and access to a counsellor (25%).

Employees call for a focus on workload

When looking into what PR professionals think about their current initiatives and future initiatives, they want more of a focus on workload to be reflected in the initiatives offered.



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“There are many wellbeing initiatives but to me these all try to deal with the symptoms rather than fix the cure of feeling taken for granted and completely overloaded with work”

“I would appreciate more activities that address the root cause of workplace stress/burnout”

“Mental health days would be brilliant...if there's a day you're particularly struggling...feels less like you're 'pulling a sickie'.”

”

4. SUPPORT EMPLOYEES THROUGH HYBRID WORKING

Despite the PR industry being hard hit by the pandemic, PR professionals have rated their organisation as having a good handling of the pandemic, and their employer as having been supportive throughout the outbreak. Whilst working from home has had mixed results, the majority want to continue doing so in some capacity moving forwards. Despite the mixed feelings, there remains much more optimism for the future than pessimism. Businesses should ensure that they continue to adopt this supportive approach, even when coming out of the pandemic and ease the process of adopting a hybrid working nature.

Good handling of the pandemic and employees have felt supported

Over three quarters (79%) rated their organisation as having a good handling of the pandemic, with 44% saying it has been very good. Only 14% gave an average rating, and 5% poor. Whilst last year junior employees were more likely to give a lower rating, this has evened out this year. Almost all (91%) rated their employer as supportive towards them during the coronavirus outbreak, much higher than UK workers (76%). Again, this is even throughout all seniority levels.

At the time of the survey, almost all (98%) were working from home, 82% doing so full time. This shows a huge change during the pandemic for the industry, since three fifths (60%) had not worked from home before the pandemic.

Working from home during the pandemic has had mixed impacts on the industry.

Two fifths (41%) say working from home because of coronavirus has decreased their mental wellbeing. A similar proportion (43%) feel isolated whilst working from home.

Yet, 98% want to continue working from home. Two thirds (66%) say no longer having to commute into work has improved their mental health and over half (58%) report feeling more relaxed whilst working from home.

Again, statements are evenly split when it comes to returning to office life, with almost equal proportions of PR professionals feeling either apprehensive (32%) or excited (36%) to return. Although despite the mixed feelings, there remains much more optimism for the future than pessimism (46% versus 22%).

Feelings about returning to the office



The main concerns around returning to the office include losing free time gained from working from home (56%), busy commutes (54%), and a further 37% concerned about using public transport or having less time with their family.



CONCLUSION

Whilst we saw the impact of coronavirus hugely impacting mental wellbeing throughout the PR industry last year, we've seen positive changes this year as the UK comes out of the national lockdown. Overall, the majority of PR professionals felt their company handled the pandemic well and businesses need to ensure they continue to support employees.

The culture around mental health and wellbeing is beginning to shift and there is an increased focus on open discussions and practical support around mental health at the workplace.

Mental health initiatives, such as flexible working, working from home or mental health related information and techniques are on the rise, and employees are feeling more confident about knowing how to approach the topic of mental health at the workplace.

The shift towards a more open and empathetic workplace culture is promising, however the overwhelming workloads continue to be a barrier to further progression. Businesses should adopt a preventative approach towards mental wellbeing, considering stressors and how to prevent those from causing further declines in mental wellbeing amongst employees. Furthermore, there is an increased need to promote the benefits of mental health and wellbeing initiatives, so that the use of the different support types is normalised and can truly make a difference in employee wellbeing.



AUTHORS



Kate Whiffen

Kate is passionate about mental health and holds a BA in Social Sciences (majoring in Health) and has an MSc in Work and Organisational Psychology. Kate focuses on research within Opinium's stakeholder understanding practice area, working on employee research programmes. Kate helped develop Opinium's workplace mental wellbeing audit and heads up Opinium's mental health research team. She is also Head of Wellbeing internally at Opinium, introducing workplace initiatives to support employee mental wellbeing. Kate works on a variety of different projects from design to delivery, ranging from large scale quantitative research and international studies to in-depth qualitative research. She is heavily involved in the thought leadership, charity sector and social research.

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Isobel Hunt

Isobel works within Opinium's PR sector running a mix of quick-turnaround and large international projects across a range of sectors. Isobel is involved in the wellbeing team and is also a trained Mental Health First Aider as well as holding a BSc Hons in Psychology. Isobel is also involved in the training and welcome teams at Opinium supporting new joiners.

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Tamara Strabel

With a BSc in Sociology from LSE and an MPhil in Sociology from the University of Cambridge, Tamara joined Opinium in May 2021 where she now works on a wide array of projects. She has helped delivering insights for a range of clients and sectors including public sector and government departments. Her experience is primarily in qualitative research, from designing creative participatory methods to insightful visual delivery. Her passion lies in the research for good space, through which she wants to drive a positive social change.

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What people think,
feel and do

About Opinium

OPINIUM is an award winning strategic insight agency built on the belief that in a world of uncertainty and complexity, success depends on the ability to stay on pulse of what people think, feel and do. Creative and inquisitive, we are passionate about empowering our clients to make the decisions that matter. We work with organisations to define and overcome strategic challenges – helping them to get to grips with the world in which their brands operate. We use the right approach and methodology to deliver robust insights, strategic counsel and targeted recommendations that generate change and positive outcomes.

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About The PRCA

The Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA) is the world's largest professional PR body.

We represent more than 35,000 PR professionals in 70 countries worldwide. With offices in London, Singapore, Dubai, and Buenos Aires, we are a global advocate for excellence in public relations.

Our mission is to create a more professional, ethical, and prosperous PR industry. We champion - and enforce - professional standards in the UK and overseas through our Professional Charter and Code of Conduct. The Code compels members to adhere to the highest standards of ethical practice.

We deliver exceptional training, authoritative industry data, and global networking and development opportunities. We also manage the International Communications Consultancy Organisation (ICCO), the umbrella body for 41 PR associations and 3,000 agencies across the world, and LG Comms – the UK's national body for authorities raising standards of local government communication.

www.prca.org.uk



About the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR)

Founded in 1948, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) is the world's only Royal Chartered professional body for public relations practitioners with nearly 10,000 members.

The CIPR advances professionalism in public relations by making its members accountable to their employers and the public through a code of conduct and searchable public register, setting standards through training, qualifications, awards and the production of best practice and skills guidance, facilitating Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and awarding Chartered Public Relations Practitioner status (Chart.PR).