



ENGAGE  
FOR  
SUCCESS

JANUARY 2023



# UK EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY 2022

EXPLORING THE IMPACT  
OF COVID-19 ON  
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT  
IN THE UK

Prepared in collaboration with:



# FOREWORD

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As we emerge from the pandemic, the challenges of recruitment, retention, and productivity have become central issues again as organisations seek to respond, adapt, and grow in an uncertain economic context. The last year or so has seen a supply driven labour market where people's expectations of work have shifted towards more flexibility and choice at work, and expectations that their employers will be focused on inclusion, wellbeing, and support of their people.

People should be more at the centre of the business agenda, and the ability to attract, retain and get the best out of people are paramount to organisational success. The Engage for Success movement over the last 10 years has championed the principles and importance of engagement of people at work, and to shine a light on what makes the difference. Engagement can be seen as a key measure and outcome for what makes people want to join and stay in an organisation, and to be committed to their work.

Much has changed over those years and the pandemic itself has forced new thinking. Understanding how engagement was impacted during the pandemic itself and where we are now is an important area for more evidence and understanding. This report highlights a fascinating research project led by Nottingham Business School and gives us important insights on how engagement shifted during the pandemic and how it compares now to where it was pre-pandemic.

What is striking is not only how engagement dropped for many people during the pandemic, but also how critical were the levels of support people felt they had, combined with how much their organisation focused on areas like learning and development, wellbeing, and keeping connected. Where these were less in evidence, engagement dropped and is not back to where it was pre-pandemic. Where organisations did focus on their people and the support to them, engagement was sustained, and they are in a better position now going forwards.

These are strong reminders and reinforce the importance of putting people first, giving them voice, supporting them, investing in them, and having engaging leadership at all levels. These are the essence of the 4 enablers of engagement that Engage for Success originally developed and have stood the test of time. As we now look ahead to the more uncertain and changeable context we are all operating in, now surely is the time to recommit to these principles. Without people with the right skills and capabilities, we will struggle to compete. But without engagement we won't be able to outcompete and to bring people with us as we adapt and change to meet the uncertainties, and opportunities ahead.



*Peter Cheese*

Peter Cheese  
Chief Executive CIPD  
Chair Engage for Success Advisory  
Board



*Nita*

Nita Clarke OBE  
Co-Founder Engage for Success  
Director Involvement and Participation  
Association



*DMacLeod*

David MacLeod OBE  
Co-Founder Engage for Success

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The COVID-19 pandemic had an unprecedented impact on our working lives, resulting in organisations and employees being forced to make dramatic changes overnight. This report aims to provide insight into current levels of employee engagement in the UK, explore the impact of COVID-19 on employee work experiences, and examining how organisations responded and whether it influenced employee engagement during this time. In addition, an objective of the report is to offer guidance for organisations on how to measure and compare their employee engagement levels, utilising an Engage for Success (EFS) Employee Engagement Index measure.

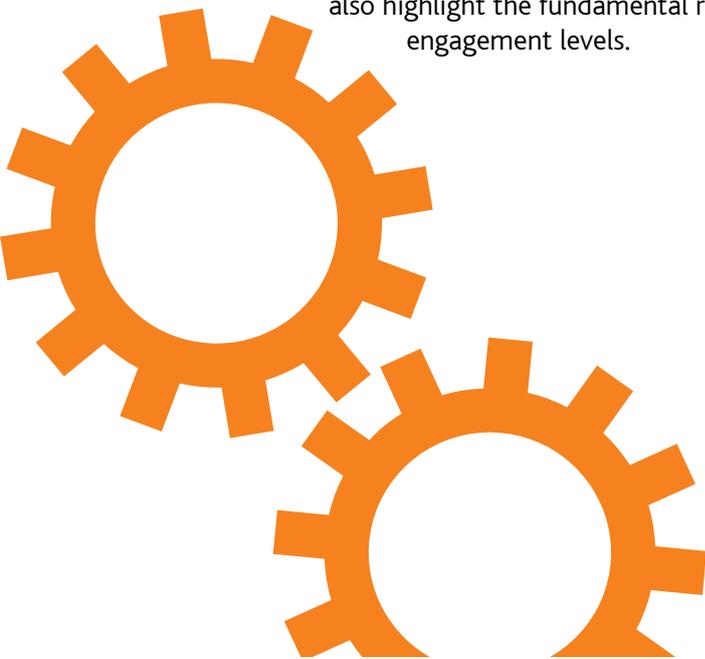
## ABOUT THE SURVEY

The report discusses findings from an online survey conducted in 2022 of a representative sample of the UK population (n=814). Respondents were asked to self-report their levels of engagement across four main areas, namely engagement with their job, their colleagues, their manager, and their organisation. Data was collected in 2022 and required respondents to reflect on their experiences. Whilst there is the potential that this could influence results, how we reflect on our experiences impacts our current actions and behaviour. In addition, results on engagement are comparable to surveys conducted during the pandemic.

## KEY FINDINGS

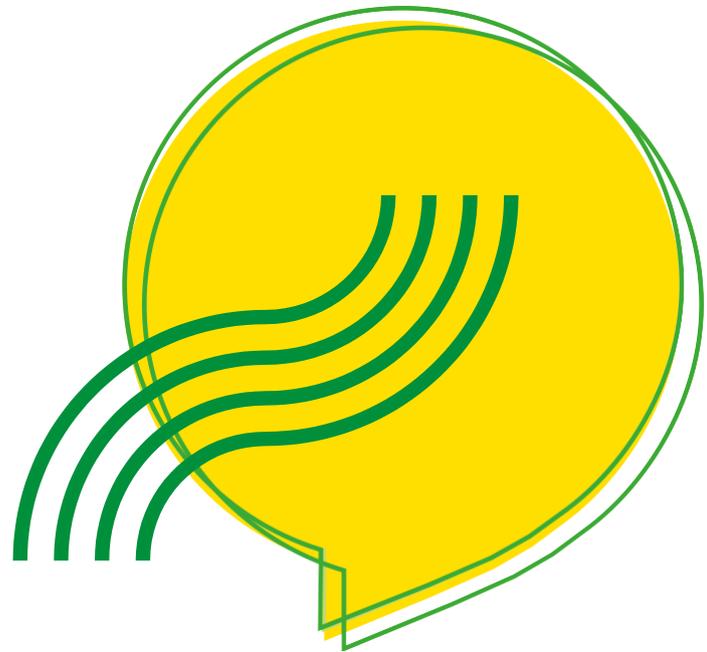
Overall, the results indicate that employee engagement significantly dropped during the pandemic for most employees. Decreases were seen across an employee's engagement with their job, colleagues, manager, and organisation. Across these four areas of engagement, there was an average drop in engagement during the pandemic of -11%. Although engagement has improved since, there has only been a partial recovery in engagement levels. On average, this has only increased by +3%. As a result, employee engagement in the UK is now rated as -8% lower than before the pandemic. The degree of drop in engagement was not universal, as there were variations across backgrounds and demographics.

The depth of the drop in engagement varied depending on the organisational response and the methods they used to engage with employees during the pandemic. There is a clear and consistent message across the findings; the more methods organisations used, the smaller the drop in engagement during the pandemic. For example, respondents who reported that their organisations did not provide online health and well-being initiatives during the pandemic reported a -13% drop in engagement with their organisation. This compared to a 1% drop for respondents who reported their organisations offered four (or more) health and well-being initiatives. Similar levels can be seen across communication channels, learning and development and employee involvement methods. Findings also highlight the fundamental role of line managers during the pandemic in maintaining engagement levels.



## ENGAGE FOR SUCCESS EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INDEX

The report discusses the Engage for Success (EFS) Employee Engagement Index. The index is a method to establish a UK employee engagement level based on analysis from the survey. Findings indicate that on average in the UK employee engagement stood at 62%<sup>1</sup>. The EFS Employee Engagement Index level can provide organisations with a reference point (or benchmark) to offer insight into areas they may wish to develop. Using three simple outcome questions, the Employee Engagement Index can empower organisations to gain a fundamental understanding of their employees' engagement. Engage for Success is not proposing this is the only method to measure engagement; on the contrary, there are many methods and providers. However, we are offering a straightforward method that would enable organisations not currently collecting data with an acceptable approach to measuring employee engagement. For organisations that already collect data, the three questions may already be built into their survey (or can be easily incorporated).



## CONCLUSION

Findings highlight the significant drops in employee engagement during the pandemic and the remaining deficit in pre- and post-pandemic levels. However, it is evident from the analysis that how Employers responded made a big difference, with employee engagement effectively insulated from the worst impacts of the pandemic where there was provision of a choice of methods to engage, develop and communicate, where a range of services were provided.

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<sup>1</sup> With a 95% confidence level.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was written by Dr Sarah Pass (Nottingham Trent University and Engage for Success), James Court-Smith (Stillae Ltd and Engage for Success), Dr Yu-Ling Liu-Smith (Nottingham Trent University), Serban Popescu (Stillae Ltd), Dr Maranda Ridgway (Nottingham Trent University), and Dr Nadia Kougiannou (Nottingham Trent University) on behalf of Engage for Success. The project was jointly funded by Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University and Engage for Success.

We would like to thank Nita Clarke (Involvement and Participation Association and Engage for Success (EFS)), David MacLeod (EFS), Peter Cheese (CIPD and EFS), Ben Willmott (CIPD), Professor Clare Kelliher (Cranfield University and EFS), Professor Bruce Rayton (University of Bath and EFS), Sarah Dawson (IPA), Russell Grossman, (Office of Rail and Road and EFS), Francis Goss (Gallager and EFS), Geoff Lloyd (Meggitt and EFS), Jo Moffat (Woodreed and EFS), Jo Dodds (Counterpoint Matters Ltd and EFS), Fiona Anderson (My Change Expert and EFS), Frazer Rendell (E-Trinity Consultancy and EFS), Monica Pabualan (South West London Health and Care Partnership and EFS), Paul Beesley (Beyond Theory and EFS), Sarah Worth (GMB and EFS), Binu Jacob (CIPR and EFS) and Rory Campbell (New Vantage Consulting) for their valuable guidance and feedback on the findings of this study.

## PUBLICATION INFORMATION

When citing this document, please use the following citation:

Pass, S., Court-Smith, J., Liu-Smith, Y-L., Popescu, S., Ridgway, M. and Kougiannou, N. 2023. *Engage for Success UK Employee Engagement Levels 2022: Exploring the impact of the pandemic on employee engagement*. Engage for Success. 10.17631/rd-2023-0001-drep <https://doi.org/10.17631/rd-2023-0001-drep>

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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The MacLeod Review (2009) placed a spotlight on employee engagement and 'cemented it as a focal point in the Government's industrial strategy, [and] signalled its importance to the business and research world' (Gifford & Young, 2021: 2). Over the years, there has been an accumulation of evidence showing an association between engagement and a range of outcomes (Rayton et al., 2012; Bailey, 2016; Bailey et al., 2017; Bal and de Lange, 2014; Barrick et al., 2015; Court-Smith, 2016; Kane-Frieder et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2014). As a result, engagement has become a significant concept in management with rising attention and widespread use in practice (Crawford et al., 2014; Shuck et al., 2021).

The world of work has changed considerably since the original MacLeod Review (2009) and the subsequent launch of Engage for Success, most notably, the COVID-19 pandemic. The word 'unprecedented' is often used when describing the pandemic, and it is hard to find an alternative that so accurately describes its social, cultural, and economic impact. Organisations and employees were forced to adapt their way of working at a pace of monumental change previously unknown. During this time, employers had to rethink how they engaged with their employees whilst conforming to covid restrictions. For many organisations, this required grappling with how to engage with a dispersed workforce.

Limited research has been conducted on the impact of the pandemic on employee engagement. Initial findings have provided mixed results, with reports showing both increases and decreases. However, recent terms like the 'great resignation', the 'great retirement', and 'quiet quitting' suggest that employees are feeling 'disengaged, disconnected, and disillusioned by work' (Pass & Ridgway, 2002: 255). Internally, many organisations that had previously undertaken engagement surveys decided not to conduct them during the peak periods of the pandemic. As a result, the true impact of the pandemic on engagement is unknown. While the pandemic has been a significant disruptor, internal and external pressures and changing dynamics were already building. The challenges of climate change, the impact of Brexit, increasing employee activism, rapid developments in technology and methods of production, artificial intelligence, and changing customer and consumer demands are a few of the significant forces that have been shifting the 'tectonic plates that have been underpinning our traditional ways of work' (MacLeod and Clarke, 2021). As we emerge from the pandemic, there is an opportunity for the COVID-19 crisis to be a catalyst for positive change in the world of work (Cheese, 2021). To do so requires organisational reflection, sharing experiences and good practice, and 'grasping the learning' from the pandemic.

The following report aims to provide insight into the impact of the pandemic on employee engagement levels, explore how employers responded, and provide organisations with a straightforward method to measure and compare employee engagement levels.

## BACKGROUND TO THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY 2022

Engage for Success (EFS) is a 'growing, dynamic, voluntary movement promoting employee engagement as a better way to work that benefits individual employees, teams and whole organisations'<sup>2</sup>. The Government backed movement consists of an extensive team of 'thinkers and doers, including practitioners, academics, researchers, consultants, service providers, representatives from membership organisations and professional bodies, all with extensive experience in the theory and practice of employee engagement'. Established in 2011, EFS was tasked with raising awareness of employee engagement and sharing good practice. This is achieved through Thought and Action Groups

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<sup>2</sup> [About Us - Engage for Success](#)

(TAGs)<sup>3</sup> that share good practice through events, undertake research, 'form conclusions, develop resources and tools, and promote action on a variety of aspects of employee engagement'.

The following survey is provided in response to consistent requests from EFS volunteers and members for an independent UK measure of employee engagement levels and advice on how to measure employee engagement. Whilst many organisations collect employee engagement data to assess internal levels of employee engagement, there is little national data on engagement levels and an inability for organisations to establish how their engagement levels compare. Due to the lack of research, there was also a need to explore the impact of the pandemic on employee engagement.

Whilst the following survey examines the pandemic's impact on engagement levels, it is important to note that respondents were asked to reflect on the pandemic. Whilst it would have been ideal to have collected the data throughout the pandemic, the opportunity to do so was not available. Instead, data was collected by asking respondents to self-report their levels of engagement before the pandemic, during, and now (August 2022). Although there is the potential that reflecting on pre-pandemic life, respondents have done so with 'rose-tinted glasses', findings from the survey are consistent with research conducted during the pandemic reporting a drop in engagement levels. Whilst initial findings at the start of the pandemic showed a slight improvement in engagement, as the pandemic continued, engagement saw a decline (e.g., Harter, 2022). Additional reports around increases in resignations (e.g., 'the great resignation'), retirement levels (e.g., 'the great retirement'), and 'quiet quitting' support this notion. In addition, how we recall a memory and how we feel about that memory (more than its accuracy) influences our current behaviour and feelings (Fandakova et al., 2021).

In the future, the intention is to conduct the survey as an annual event, providing an annual rating for employee engagement in the UK.

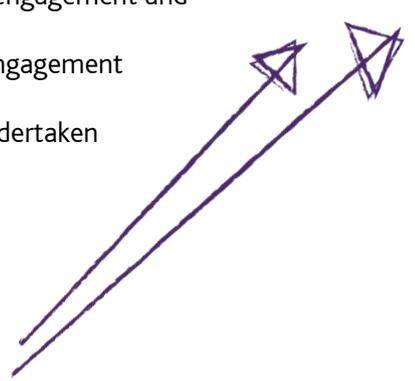
## FOCUS AND STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is structured around several key areas.

- ▶ Section 1 provides a general overview and background to the research.
- ▶ Section 2 focuses on current employee engagement levels in the UK and discusses the development of the Employee Engagement Index (EEI).
- ▶ Section 3 examines the impact of the pandemic on employee engagement levels and considers variations in experiences.
- ▶ Section 4 looks in detail at four bundles of methods (employee involvement methods, learning and development opportunities, communication channels, and health and wellbeing initiatives) and their impact on engagement levels during the pandemic.
- ▶ Section 5 reviews how employers responded to the pandemic and how their actions had a fundamental impact on engagement levels. The section looks closely at how employers who provided a breadth and depth of methods to support, develop, communicate, and involve their employees had minimum drops in engagement during the pandemic.
- ▶ Section 6 considers the role of the line manager and the impact they had on employee engagement during the pandemic. The need for line manager training is also highlighted.
- ▶ Section 7 reviews respondent opinions on the importance of employee engagement and whether it is considered a priority in their organisation.
- ▶ Section 8 provides guidance on how to measure and report employee engagement results.
- ▶ Section 9 presents background information on how the research was undertaken and the demographics of respondent.
- ▶ Section 10 reviews the main points of the report.

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<sup>3</sup> [Topic & Sector Thought and Action Groups - Engage for Success](#)



## 2. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT LEVELS IN THE UK

A key focus of the EFS survey was to gain insight into UK levels of employee engagement. This was achieved by focusing on three key areas commonly used to assess organisational levels of employee engagement:

- ▶ overall satisfaction
- ▶ loyalty
- ▶ advocacy

Questions focusing on these three areas have been used to create an Employee Engagement Index (EEI) to measure the overall level of employee engagement. The EEI aims to provide organisations with a simple, straightforward and 'good enough' measure and be a reference point for current UK engagement levels to enable organisations to gain insight into how they are doing and highlight areas for development<sup>4</sup>.

The following section examines the EFS Employee Engagement Index in more detail and discusses current engagement levels in the UK, specifically looking at overall satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy.

### EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INDEX

The EFS Employee Engagement Index is a combination of three simple questions focusing on overall satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy (see Fig 2.1). These three questions can provide organisations with an adequate understanding of employee engagement. For organisations without the capacity and resources to measure their engagement levels, the EEI enables them to ask three simple questions. For organisations that already run their own in-house or third-party surveys, it is likely that these questions (one or all) are already included, if so, the results can be compared against the results of those question(s) from the EEI. Other questions are needed for a more detailed understanding of employee engagement to understand what is driving engagement. However, these three questions provide a good starting point in measuring the key outcome of Engagement.

Fig. 2.1 Employee Engagement Index



The overall Employee Engagement Index score is calculated by taking the average score on a 5-point rating scale across these three questions. The mean is used to reflect every respondent's

<sup>4</sup> The Employee Engagement Index in this report is not intended to replace existing models and approaches. There are plenty of measures and models of employee engagement available on the market. Engage for Success has always maintained a stance of being model-agnostic. The focus is not on replacing or recommending one method over another. Instead, it is about ensuring all organisations wanting to measure their engagement levels have guidance and advice on how to do so.

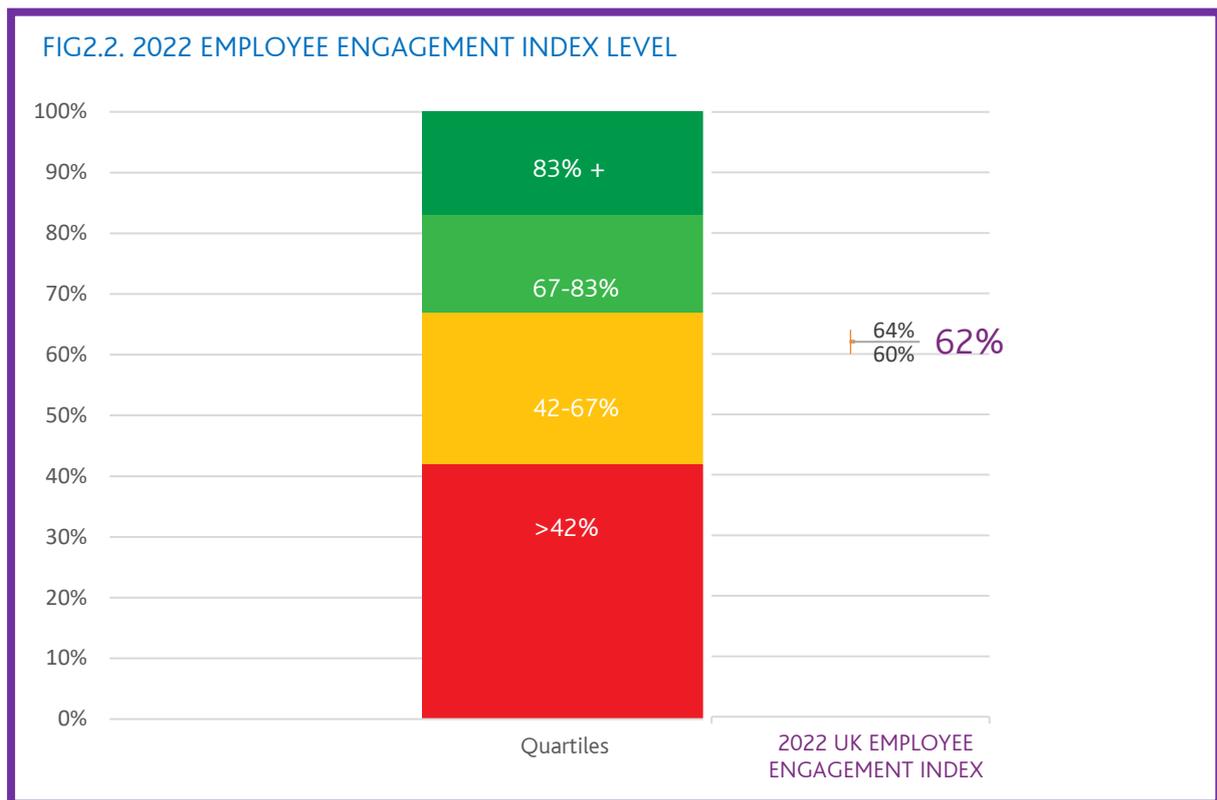
answer 'as given', and no weighting is required (the three questions count equally). In reporting the EEI we convert the mean score to a percentage, simply to make it more intuitive (there is nothing complicated about the calculation, it is a straight conversion like Celsius vs Fahrenheit). For full details explaining how to calculate the score, please see Section 8.

The following section discusses the results from the 2022 survey and the overall Employee Engagement Index level for 2022 and reflects on individual responses to the three questions.

## 2022 UK EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INDEX LEVEL UK

Taking the average of the three questions from a representative sample of the UK population (n=814), the 2022 UK Employee Engagement Index was 62% (see Fig 2.2)<sup>5</sup>. This is the mean score that has been converted into a percentage.

Using the index as a basis, quartiles can then be developed. For example, an engagement score of 83% or higher is in the top quartile of the UK population for levels of engagement. Conversely, if the result is 42% or lower, i.e., in the bottom quartile, that reflects lower engagement than ¾ of the UK population. This enables organisations to consider how they are doing compared to the rest of the UK population.



Correlations<sup>6</sup> were found between the EEI and key indicators. Strong correlations were found between the EEI and respondents' perceptions of engagement as a priority to their managers, senior leaders, and the organisation. A strong correlation was also evident between EEI and respondents considering their

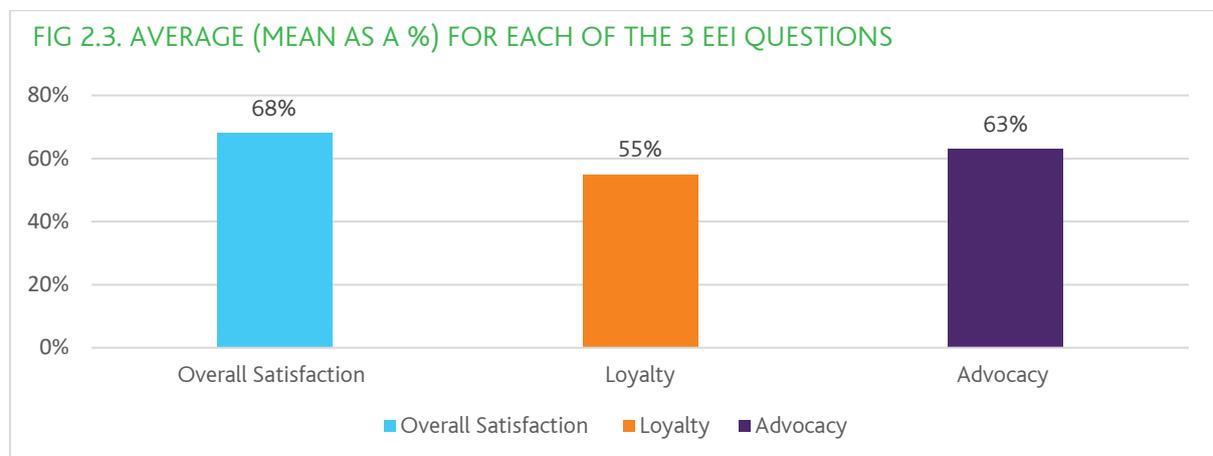
<sup>5</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence rating

<sup>6</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence rating

job meaningful, important, and believing in the vision and purpose of the organisation. In addition, correlations were found between the EEI and feeling motivated during the pandemic, considering engagement as a priority individually, and believing that engagement was becoming more important.

It is important to note that the survey results report the data at an individual level, this compares to organisations who will report results at a team level. When collecting survey data, the most granular level of reporting within organisations is at a team or department level (to protect the confidentiality of individual responses). As such, when reporting average responses across individuals, scores that are at the extreme high and low levels are slightly attenuated (it is less likely for an entire team to have Engagement at 100% than it is for one individual employee to respond in this way)<sup>7</sup>.

Looking specifically at the three key questions (see Fig 2.3) of the Employee Engagement Index, respondents' overall satisfaction with their organisation was 68% (mean 3.70), advocacy was 63% (mean 3.51), followed by loyalty at 55% (mean 3.21). These measures can be used as reference points or benchmarks. Whilst organisations might not have asked all three questions, it is likely that one of the questions in the index is currently already being asked.



### EXPLORING OVERALL SATISFACTION

Considering responses to the question 'Overall, how satisfied are you with your organisation?', most respondents were 'somewhat satisfied' followed by 'very satisfied' (see Fig 2.4).



<sup>7</sup> This should be taken into account when comparing Team results with our survey findings, especially for results at the higher end (e.g., in the top quartile). For example, a Team threshold may be lower at circa 75%+ rather than 83%+. Adjustments are effectively negligible at lower levels (bottom quartile and median). We will expand further on this topic in future reports.

There was a significant relationship<sup>8</sup> between satisfaction and where the respondent was working. Respondents mainly working from home during the pandemic, reported an average satisfaction level of 69%, slightly higher than respondents who mainly worked from their place of work (65%). There were no statistically significant differences in sex, age group, essential worker status, being furloughed, manager role, or carer responsibilities.

## EXPLORING LOYALTY

A greater variation is observed in responses to the statement 'I plan to be working for my organisation three years from now'. Half of the respondents stated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, whilst 35% disagreed or strongly disagreed (see Fig 2.5.)



Delving into the data, statistically significant variations between loyalty and position are evident<sup>9</sup> with managers scoring 59% while non-managers scored 52% on loyalty.

Significant relationships<sup>10</sup> were seen between loyalty and full-time and part-time workers, age range, and caring responsibilities. Full-time workers had an average loyalty level of 58%, slightly higher than part-time workers at 50%. Respondents aged between 35-54 years had higher loyalty scores (63% versus 53% for ages 55 years+ and 47% for those under 35 years). There were no variations in gender, essential/key workers, or work location. Respondents who stated they had caring responsibilities<sup>11</sup> had a higher average level of loyalty (60%) than respondents who stated they had no caring responsibilities (52%).

<sup>8</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence rating

<sup>9</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence rating

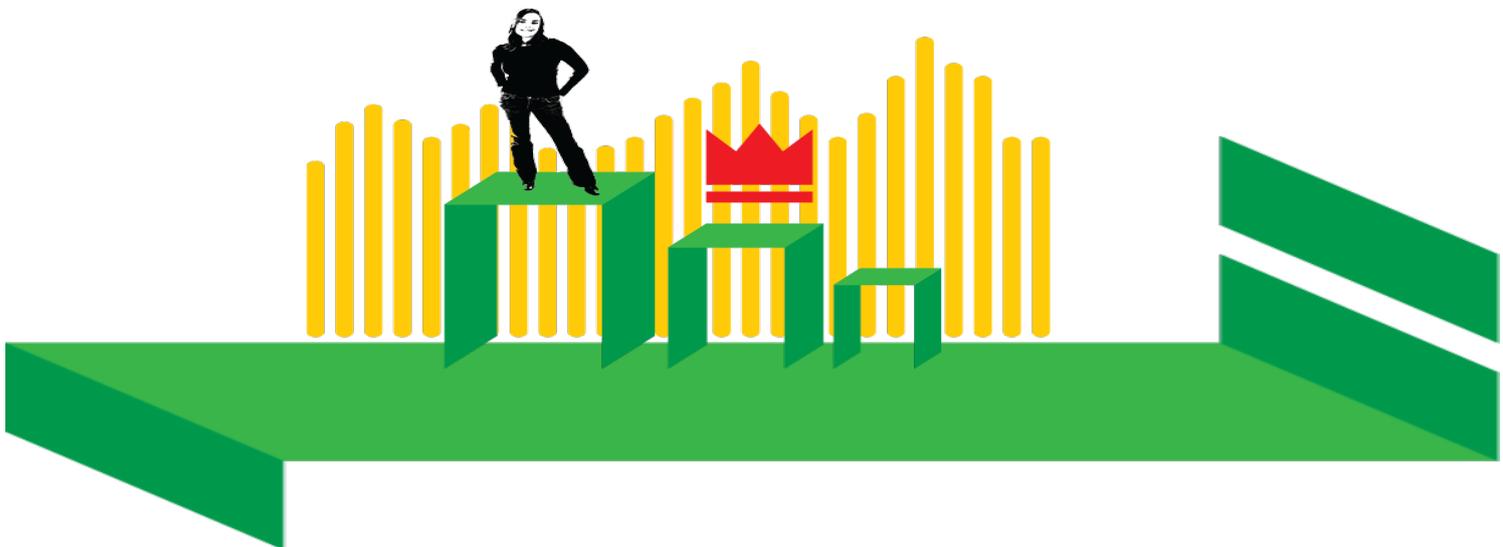
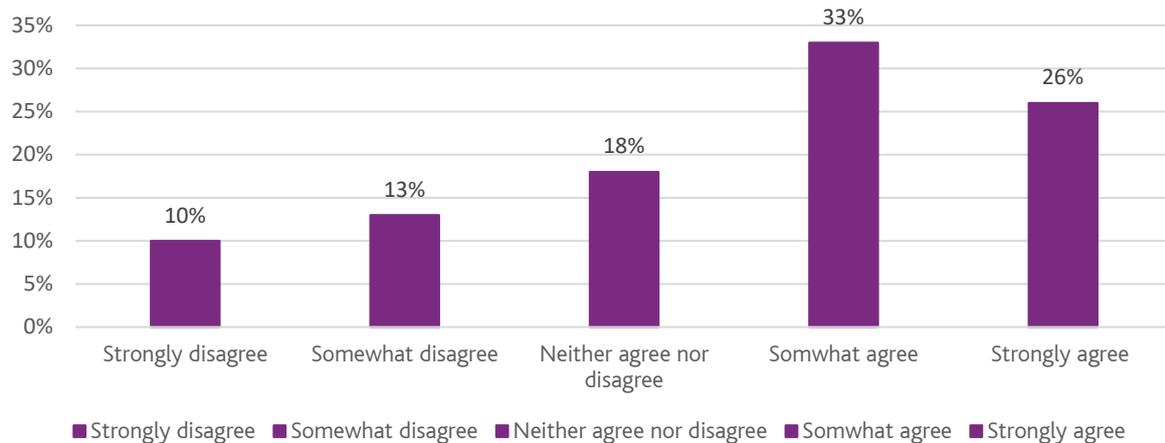
<sup>10</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence rating

<sup>11</sup> Caring responsibilities included caring for children, disabled or elderly

## EXPLORING ADVOCACY

Advocacy was measured by the statement, 'I would recommend my organisation as a great place to work'. The majority agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (59%) (see Fig 2.6). There were statistically significant variations in responses<sup>12</sup> depending on the location of work, managerial position, and furloughed status. Respondents working mainly from home had a slightly higher level of advocacy (65%) than respondents who were mainly at their place of work (59%). Respondents without managerial responsibility had lower levels of advocacy (60%) than those in management positions (66%). Average advocacy levels also varied for respondents who had been on furlough during the pandemic (56%) matched against those who had not been on furlough (64%).

Fig 2.6 BREAKDOWN OF ADVOCACY RESPONSES



<sup>12</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence rating

### 3. EXAMINING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT OVER THE LIFESPAN OF THE PANDEMIC

The following section reports on survey findings explicitly related to the pandemic. A key focus of the survey was to explore the impact COVID-19 had on levels of engagement. From a research perspective, data ideally would have been collected at various points throughout the pandemic to provide an accurate representation. However, this was not possible at the time. So instead, the survey asked respondents to self-report their levels of engagement, reflecting on before the pandemic, during, and now (August 2022).

As previously noted, respondents may reflect on pre-pandemic life with a level of bias (depending on their experiences). However, findings on the negative impact of the pandemic on engagement are supported by other sources. For example, Gallup noted a slight increase at the start of the pandemic but a drop across the span of the pandemic (Harter, 2022).

We believe these findings are important as how people remember their experience (when reflecting as here) is likely to influence their current attitudes and behaviours.

#### EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT LEVELS BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, DURING AND NOW

The following section examines responses from a representative sample of the UK population (adjusted to represent the working population<sup>13</sup>). Respondents were asked to self-report their engagement before the pandemic, during the pandemic, and now (August 2022). Separate questions were asked relating to engagement with their organisation, with their job, with their colleagues and with their line manager:

ORGANISATIONAL	I feel engaged with my organisation [before/during the pandemic/now]. Rated at 73% before the pandemic, this dropped to 63% during the pandemic. When asked about engagement now (August 2022) scores crept up to 65%.
JOB	I feel engaged in my job [before/during the pandemic/now]. Rated at 76% before the pandemic, this dropped to 65% during the pandemic and crept up to 67% now (August 2022).
MANAGER	I feel engaged with my line manager [before/during the pandemic/now]. Rated at 72% before the pandemic, this dropped to 61% during the pandemic and crept up to 67% now (August 2022).
COLLEAGUE	I feel engaged with my team/colleagues [before/during the pandemic/now]. Rated at 81% before the pandemic, this dropped to 66% during the pandemic and crept up to 71% now (August 2022)

<sup>13</sup> In relation to ONS data taken at the same time as the survey

Fig 3.1. SUMMARY OF SELF-REPORTED LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT OVER THE LIFESPAN OF THE PANDEMIC

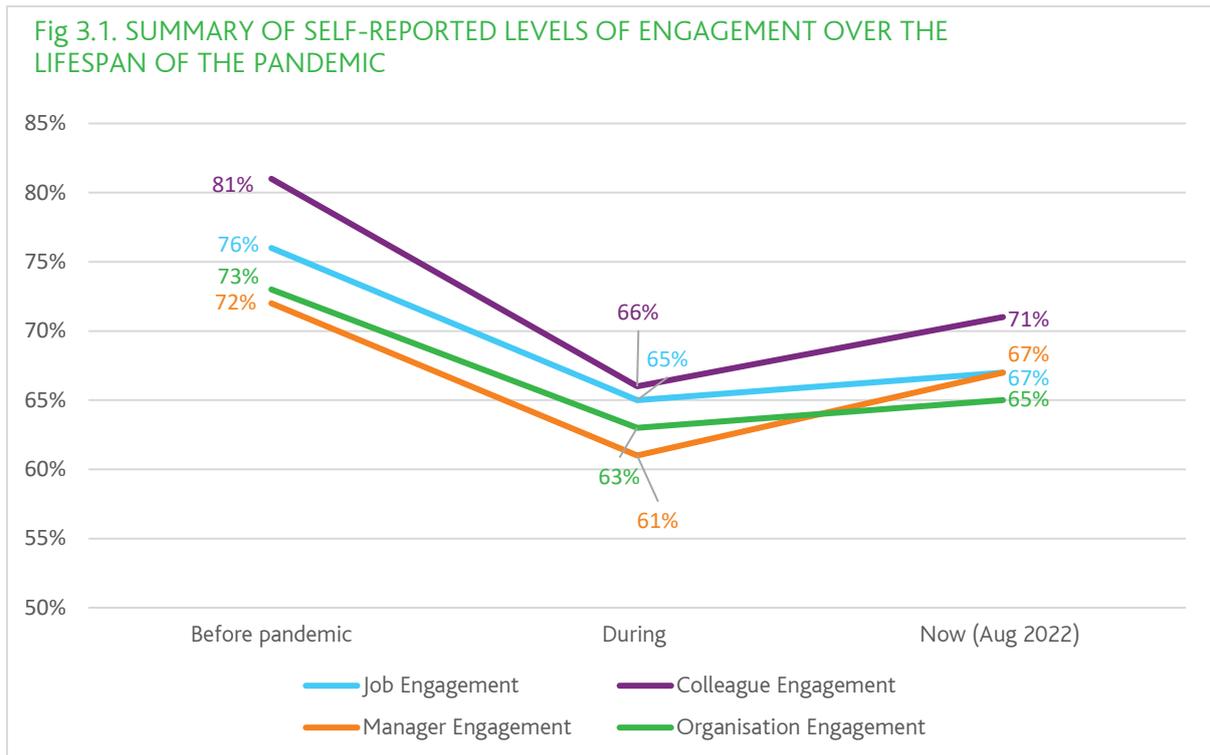
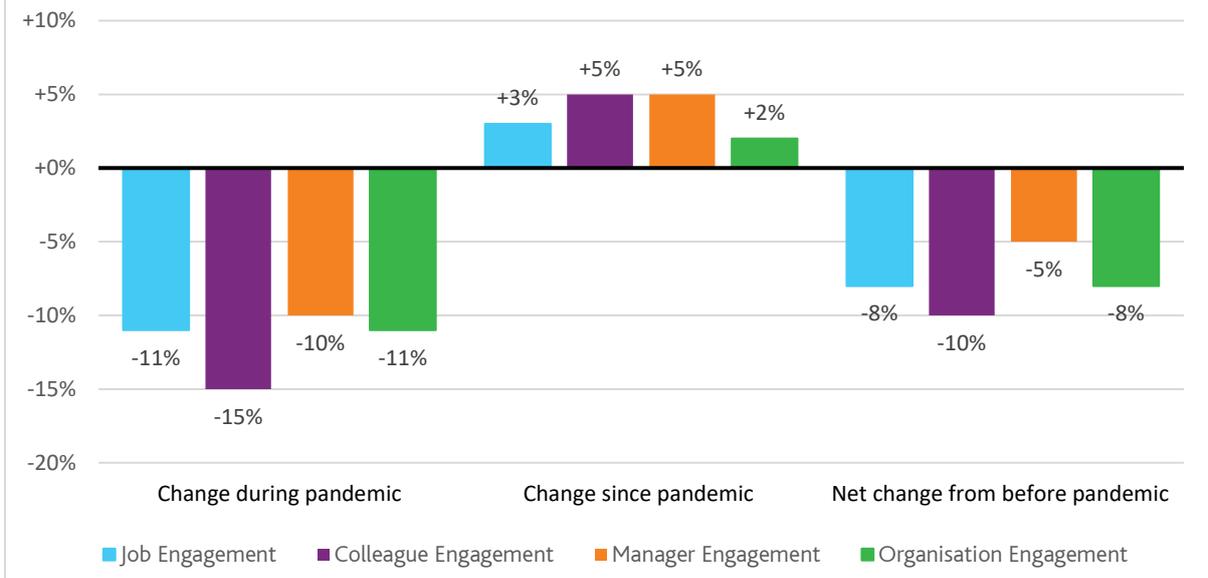


Figure 3.1. reprises the self-reported levels of engagement for the organisation, line manager, job, and colleagues during the lifespan of the pandemic. As clearly depicted, there is a significant decrease in engagement across all four areas. It is also evident that current levels have not rebounded to pre-pandemic levels.

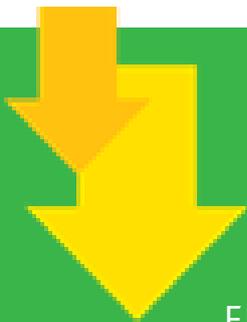
Exploring the drop in more detail. Fig 3.2 highlights the changes in engagement levels across the four areas. For example, self-reported levels of engagement with colleagues dropped from 81% before the pandemic to 66% during the pandemic. This is a change in engagement of -15%.

FIG 3.2. CHANGES IN SELF-REPORTED LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT BEFORE PANDEMIC, DURING AND NOW



There were significant drops in engagement across all four areas. Looking at changes in engagement during the pandemic to now (August 2022), it is clear levels of upturn do not mirror the drops experienced during the pandemic.

Taking the example of colleague engagement again, scores for “during the pandemic” were 66% and have risen 5% to reach 71% now (August 2022). However, when comparing the current level with the pre-pandemic level (81%), it is evident that engagement with colleagues remains significantly lower. The difference (or net change) in engagement with colleagues from before the pandemic is -10%.



LARGE DROP IN ENGAGEMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC (-11%)

WITH PARTIAL RECOVERY OR REBOUND SINCE, REGAINING A THIRD OF THE DROP (+3%)

ENGAGEMENT NOW RATED AS LOWER THAN BEFORE THE PANDEMIC (-8%)

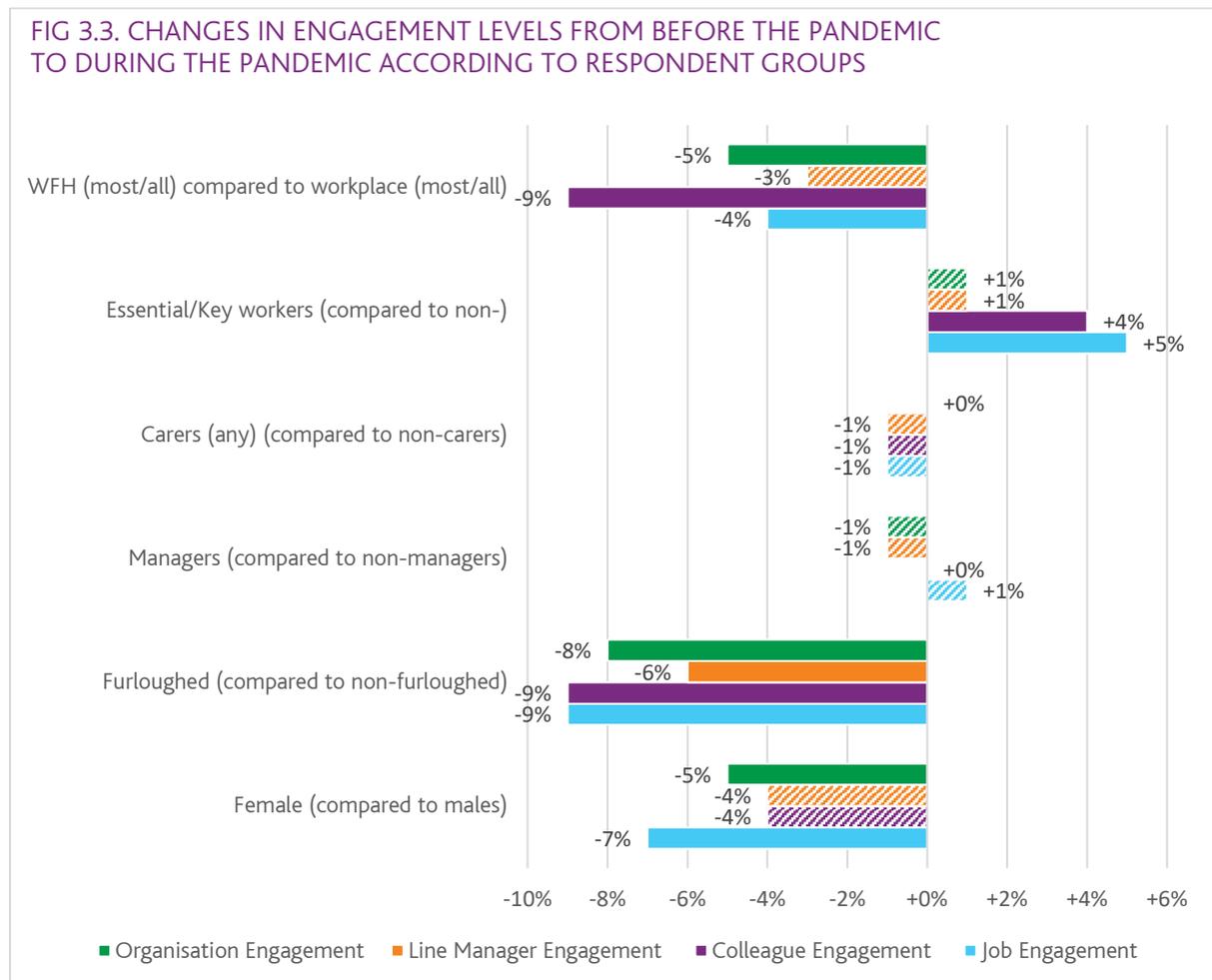
Examining the data in more detail, the degree of drop in engagement varied in relation to the availability and frequency of certain methods utilised by the employer to support, train, and communicate with employees. Statistically significant variations in engagement levels were related to the following:

- ▶ EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT METHODS
- ▶ COMMUNICATION CHANNELS
- ▶ LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT METHODS
- ▶ VIRTUAL EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING INITIATIVES

The relationship between these methods and services with employee engagement is discussed in later sections.

### VARIATIONS IN EXPERIENCES DURING THE PANDEMIC

Reflecting on the data from different perspectives, it is evident that experiences of the pandemic varied, resulting in differences in all four areas of engagement. Fig 3.3 shows variations in levels of employee engagement according to different respondent groups, highlighting the changes in engagement between ratings before and during the pandemic. Bars of solid colour show statistically significant relationships were found<sup>14</sup>.



#### ESSENTIAL/KEY WORKERS

Essential/key workers saw smaller drops in job and colleague engagement compared to non-essential/key workers. For example, essential/key workers reported a drop of -8% in their engagement with their job, compared to non-essential/key workers, who reported a drop of -13% in their job engagement. This reflects a +5% better experience for Essential/Key Workers as their drop during the pandemic was 5% smaller.

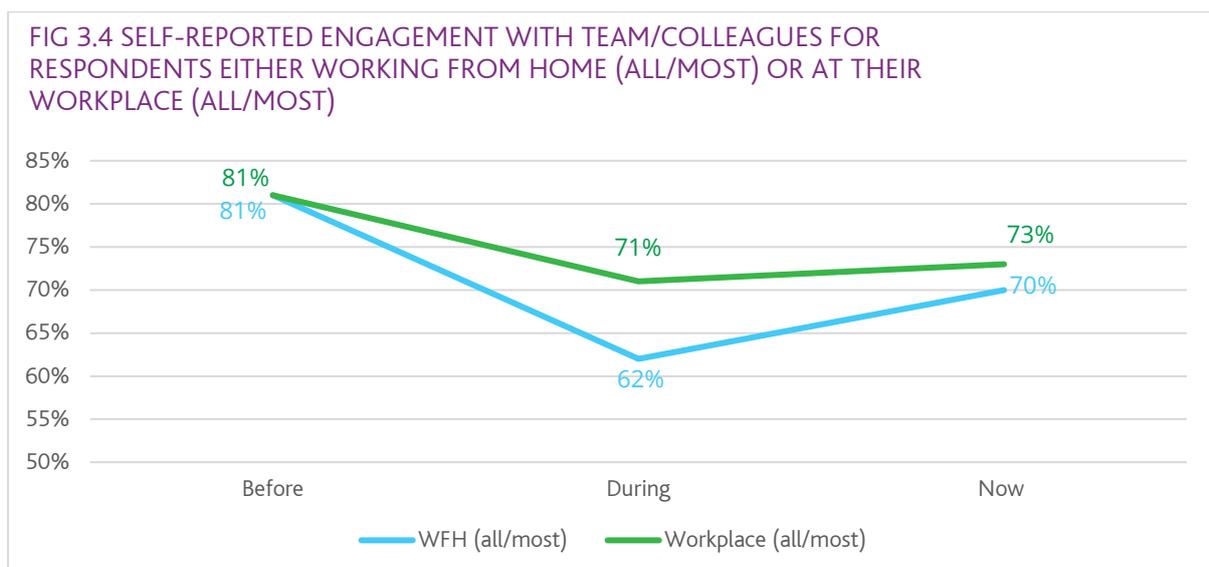
<sup>14</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence rating

	Job Engagement Before	Job Engagement During	Job Engagement Change During	Difference between 2 groups
<b>Essential/Key Workers</b>	75%	67%	-8%	<b>+5%</b>
Non-essential/key workers	76%	63%	-13%	

### PLACE OF WORK

Respondents working from home (all/most of the time) saw more significant drops in colleague, organisational, and job engagement. Specifically, those working from home (all/most of the time) showed a drop in team/colleague engagement of -19% compared to a -10% drop from respondents working at their workplace (all/most of the time). This is a difference of -9%.

Whilst findings show a bigger drop for respondents working from home, it is important to note that this was not a strategically planned and considered approach for many workers forced to work from home during the pandemic. For both employers and employees, it required overnight radical changes to ways of working as employees attempted to work from home, balance family and personal life, and resource appropriate equipment to do so (see Pass and Ridgway, 2022). Working from home during the pandemic was initially a 'hot mess'. These findings cannot be seen as a reflection of hybrid or remote working on employee engagement, especially when contrasted with current levels of engagement (see Fig 3.4).



Although those working from home (all/most of the time) suffered a larger drop in engagement during the pandemic, the rebound has been greater. Employee engagement levels with colleagues have recovered by +7% for colleagues working from home, compared to only a +2% improvement for colleagues based at their workplace. As previously noted, respondents working from home (all/most of the time) have a significantly<sup>15</sup> higher level of overall satisfaction in their job and higher levels of advocacy.

<sup>15</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence rating

## FURLOUGH

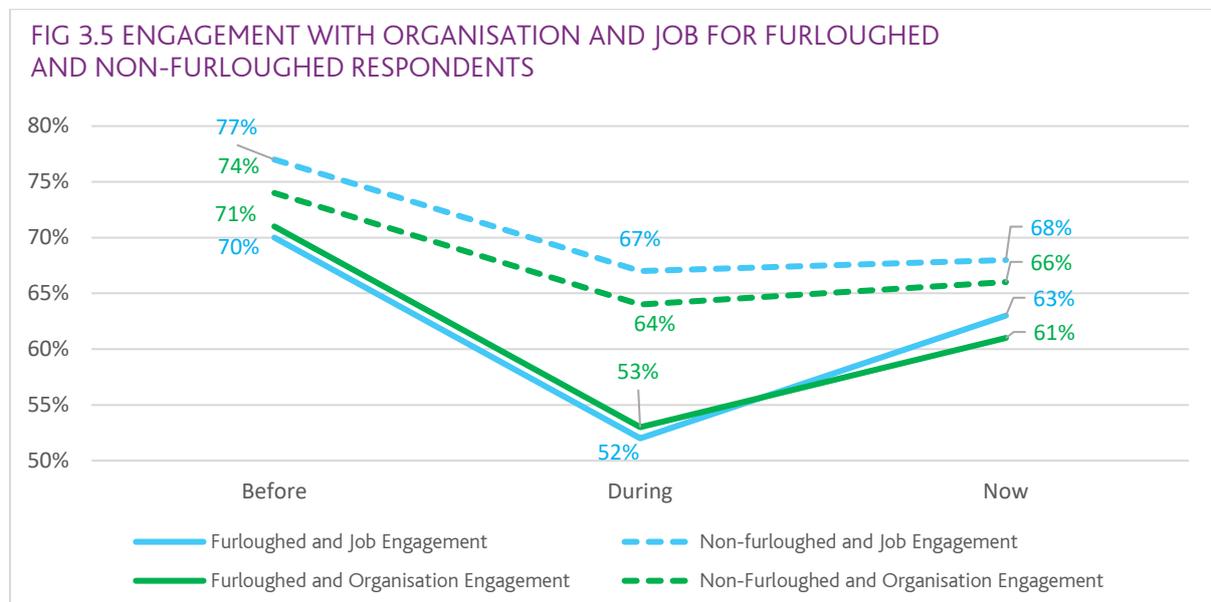
The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), commonly known in the UK as the furlough scheme, was launched to support UK businesses during the pandemic. The scheme enabled businesses to place employees on a form of paid 'gardening leave'. Whilst the scheme ran between March 2020 and September 2021, the period employees were placed on furlough varied depending on the organisation they worked.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2021) reported that between March 2020 and June 2021, the furlough scheme was used by 1.3 million businesses, covering 11.6 million jobs, meaning 1 in 4 people working in the UK were placed on the furlough scheme at some point. On average, those with GCSEs as their highest qualification were more likely to be furloughed than those with degrees or equivalent. In addition, those being placed on the scheme were more likely to be aged 24 years and under and over 65 years. The hospitality, construction, and recreation sectors were most likely to have used the furlough scheme. However, across all sectors, corporate managers, directors, or those in professional occupations were less likely to have been furloughed.

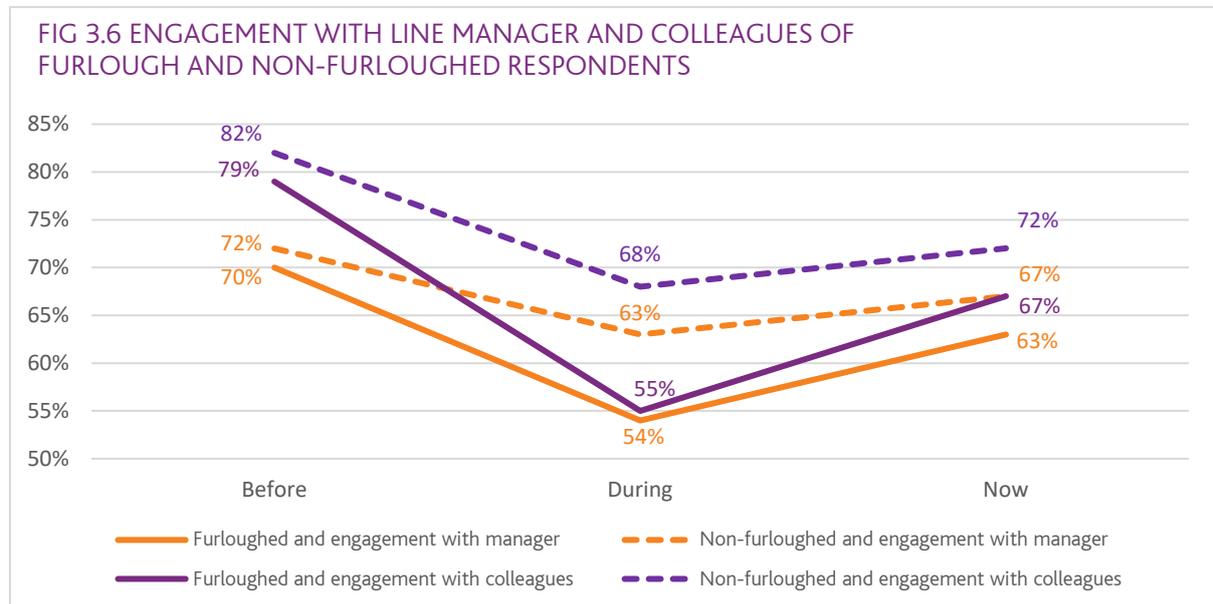
Reflecting on the survey, the majority (59%) of respondents saw no change in their employment status during the pandemic, whilst 17% of respondents stated they had been placed on furlough at some point during its run. This is below the ONS data of 1 in 4 workers.

Respondents who stated they had been on the furlough scheme for some or all of the pandemic had more significant drops for all four engagement ratings than respondents who had not been furloughed during the pandemic. For example, furloughed respondents had an 18% drop in job engagement during the pandemic, while non-furloughed respondents had a drop of 9%. However, recovery levels are higher for furloughed respondents. Since the pandemic, levels of engagement with their job have increased by +11%, compared to a +1% increase in job engagement for non-furloughed workers.

Similar findings can be seen across engagement with the organisation, colleagues, and line manager (see Fig 3.5).

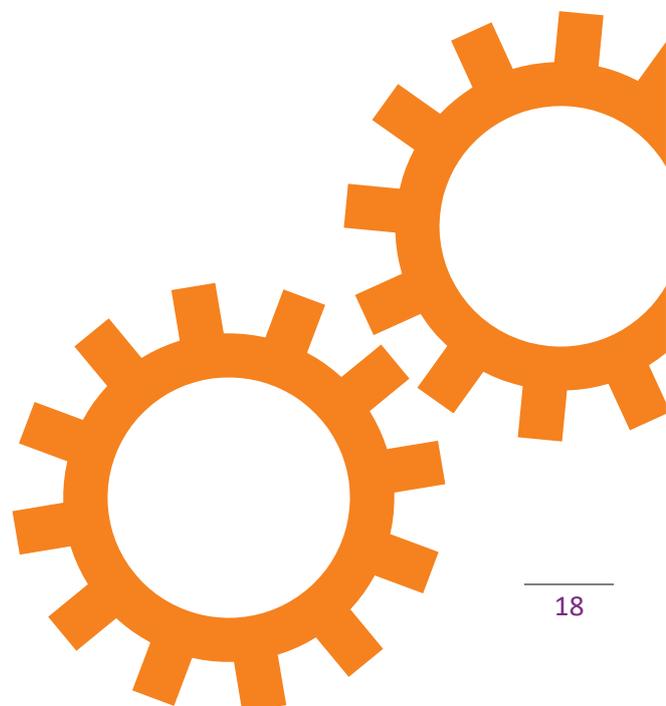


Looking at levels of engagement and being placed on the furlough scheme, statistically significant relationships<sup>16</sup> were also found for engagement levels with their line manager and their team/colleagues.



Like engagement with job and organisation, the rebound in engagement for furloughed respondents is higher than for non-furloughed respondents. Colleague engagement has increased by 11%, compared to non-furloughed respondents, who have an increase of 4%. Although the rebound has been swifter for furloughed workers, they still report lower levels than non-furloughed workers and had lower self-reflected levels of engagement before the pandemic.

<sup>16</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence rating



## 4 HOW EMPLOYERS RESPONDED DURING THE PANDEMIC

There are apparent variations in the degree of drop in engagement levels during the pandemic that relate to the employer's response. Grouping methods together showed a statistically significant relationship between bundles of methods and levels of engagement during the pandemic.

The following section considers the four bundles of methods (see Table 4.1): employee involvement methods, communication channels, learning and development methods, and online health and well-being initiatives.

Whilst certain methods appeared to have a slightly larger impact on engagement, it was the collective use of methods that significantly impacted engagement levels. Specifically, the more methods used in each bundle, the lower the drop in employee engagement. Passive bundles of methods (using none or few methods in the group) showed the biggest drops in engagement, whilst highly active bundles (using a wide variety of methods in the group) resulted in smaller drops in engagement levels. The number of methods respondents experienced was in the employer's control. The more methods they used; the more employee engagement was insulated from the impact of the pandemic.

The different bundles of methods and their specific impact on levels of engagement during the pandemic are discussed in more detail next.



TABLE 4.1. METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCED BY RESPONDENTS GROUPED INTO 4 BUNDLES

<p>1 BUNDLE OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT METHODS</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Individual meetings with the line manager online</li> <li>▶ Online team meetings</li> <li>▶ All employee conference with senior managers online</li> <li>▶ Virtual community groups</li> <li>▶ Individual meetings with the manager face to face</li> <li>▶ Team meetings in person</li> <li>▶ Pulse Surveys</li> <li>▶ All employee conference with senior managers in person</li> <li>▶ Other methods</li> </ul>
<p>2 BUNDLE OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ E-learning sessions provided by internal teams</li> <li>▶ Webinars</li> <li>▶ Digital learning programmes provided by external organisations</li> <li>▶ Online seminars</li> <li>▶ Online conferences</li> <li>▶ TED Talks</li> <li>▶ Other methods</li> </ul>
<p>3 BUNDLE OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Emails</li> <li>▶ Virtual meetings</li> <li>▶ Company Newsletter</li> <li>▶ Company Facebook</li> <li>▶ Town Hall meeting in person</li> <li>▶ Company Podcast</li> <li>▶ Company Twitter</li> <li>▶ Other methods</li> </ul>
<p>4 BUNDLE OF ONLINE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING INITIATIVES</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Anonymous online feedback initiatives</li> <li>▶ Online counselling</li> <li>▶ Virtual downtime activities</li> <li>▶ Virtual fitness initiatives</li> <li>▶ Other well-being sessions</li> </ul>

## EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT METHODS

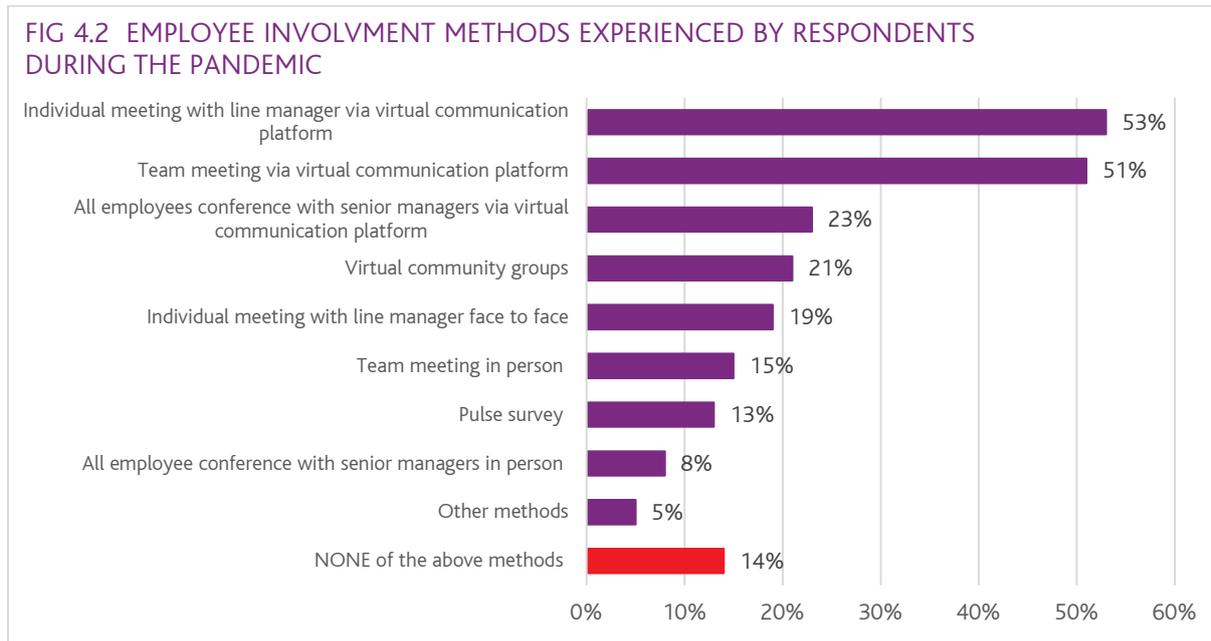
The following section examines employee involvement methods experienced by respondents during the pandemic.

**1 BUNDLE OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT METHODS**



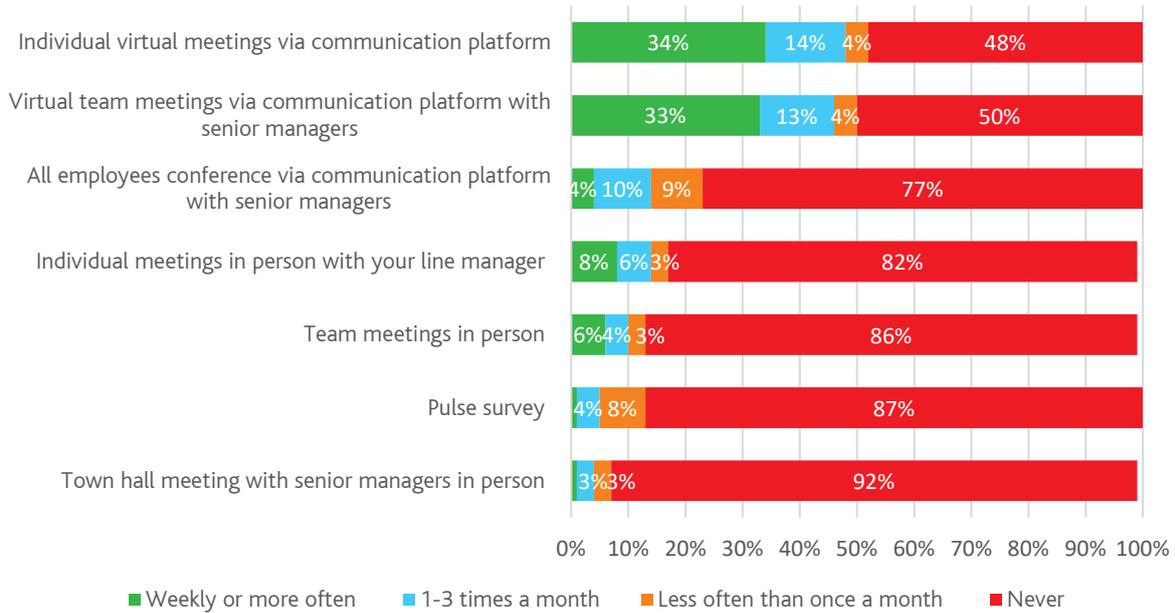
- ▶ Individual meetings with the line manager online
- ▶ Online team meetings
- ▶ All employee conference with senior managers online
- ▶ Virtual community groups
- ▶ Individual meetings with the manager face to face
- ▶ Team meetings in person
- ▶ Pulse Surveys
- ▶ All employee conference with senior managers in person
- ▶ Other methods

Due to covid restrictions imposed during the pandemic, non-essential contact and travel were restricted in the UK, forcing employers and employees to move to virtual platforms. Whilst the combination of new variants of COVID and the rollout of the vaccination programme led to changes to working restrictions, throughout the pandemic, there were limitations on proximity to others. As a result, traditional face-to-face methods were replaced with online approaches. This is evident in Fig 4.2.



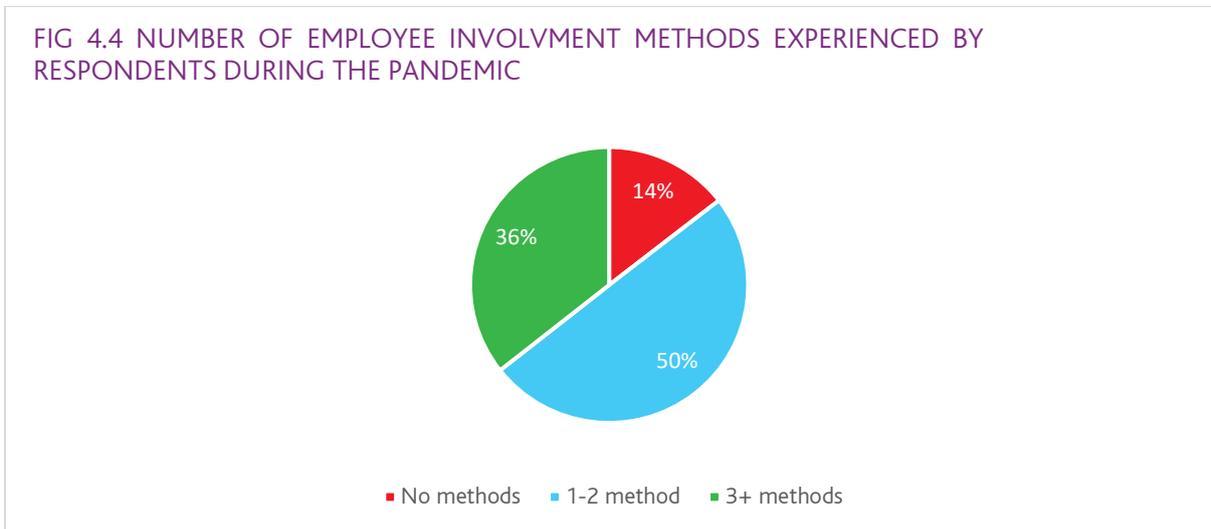
Respondents were asked to select all methods used during the pandemic by their employer. Individual and team meetings via virtual platforms were the most used. Those that experienced both individual and team virtual meetings were most likely to have them weekly.

FIG 4.3 FREQUENCY OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT METHOD



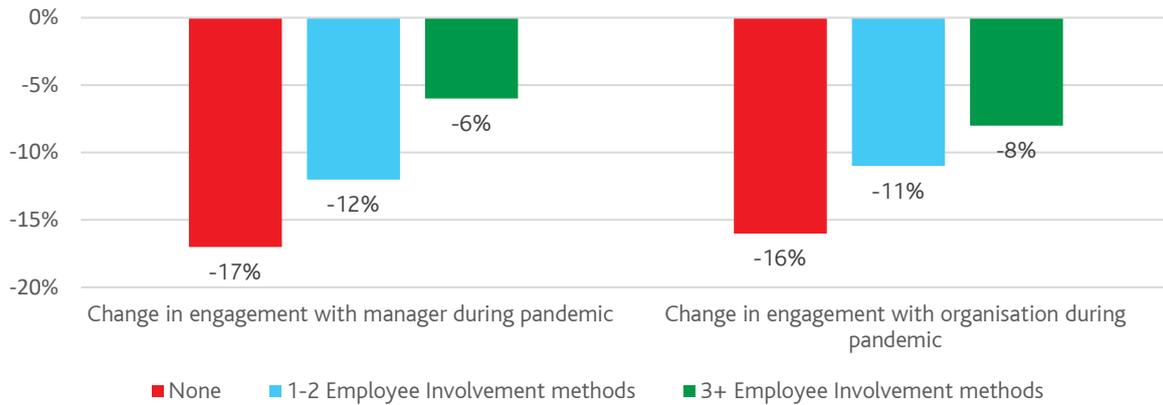
Respondents were asked to list all employee involvement methods experienced during the pandemic. Most respondents experienced 1-2 methods (50%). Whilst 36% of respondents experienced 3 or more employee involvement methods used by their employer during the pandemic.

FIG 4.4 NUMBER OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT METHODS EXPERIENCED BY RESPONDENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC



It is evident that the degree of activity in utilising employee involvement methods varied. Notably, the number of employee involvement methods used by employers significantly impacted the drop in line manager and organisational engagement (see Fig 4.5).

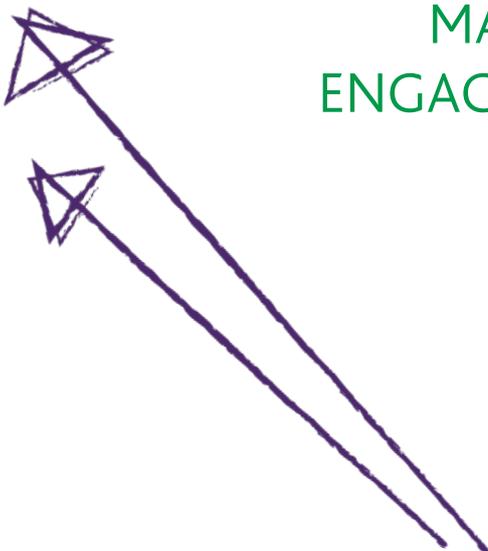
FIG. 4.5 CHANGES IN RATINGS OF ENGAGEMENT DURING PANDEMIC AND NUMBER OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT METHODS USED BY EMPLOYER



Reflecting on the overall drops in engagement discussed earlier in the report, the average drop in organisational engagement during the pandemic was 11%. Examining this drop in relation to employee involvement methods showed the number of methods employed by the organisation impacted the drop. For example, respondents that did not experience any employee involvement methods by their employer had a 16% drop in their levels of engagement with the organisation. Those that experienced 3 (or more) methods had an 8% drop in their levels of engagement with the organisation. A similar pattern is seen for line manager engagement. The average drop in line manager engagement was 10%. Respondents who experienced no employee involvement methods had a 17% drop in their engagement with their line manager. Whilst respondents who experienced 3 (or more) methods had a 6% drop in levels of engagement with their line manager.

Whilst some employee involvement methods were more frequently experienced by respondents, it was not the type of method per se that impacted engagement but the quantity of methods. The survey did not specifically ask about quality; however, this is an important factor to consider. As emphasised by the MacLeod Report (2009), engaging managers and integrity are enablers of engagement. Individual meetings with your line manager that employees perceive to be a 'tick box' are likely to have a negative impact on engagement.

**FINDINGS SHOW THE GREATER NUMBER OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT METHODS USED BY THE EMPLOYER, THE LOWER THE DROP IN MANAGER AND ORGANISATIONAL ENGAGEMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC**



**FREQUENCY OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT METHODS** The frequency of meetings as a method of employee involvement impacted levels of engagement. However, there was no statistical relationship<sup>17</sup> between the frequency of virtual team meetings, all employee conferences, town hall meetings, and pulse surveys.

Fig 4.6 Shows the differences in the level of drop in engagement for individual face-to-face meetings with their line manager. There was a statistically significant difference in the degree of drop in engagement for job, colleague, line manager and organisation with more frequent meetings.

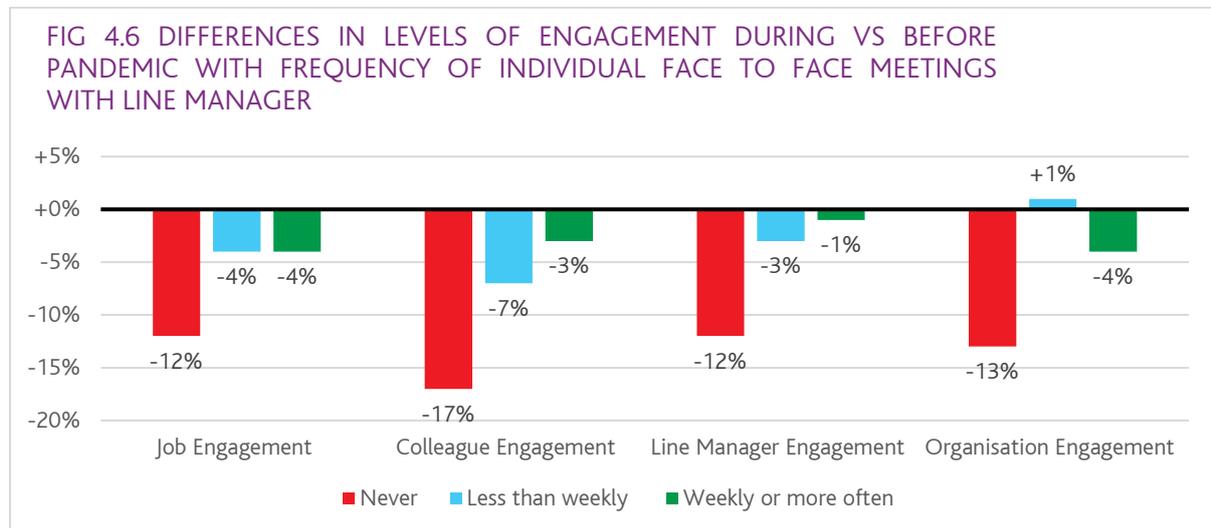
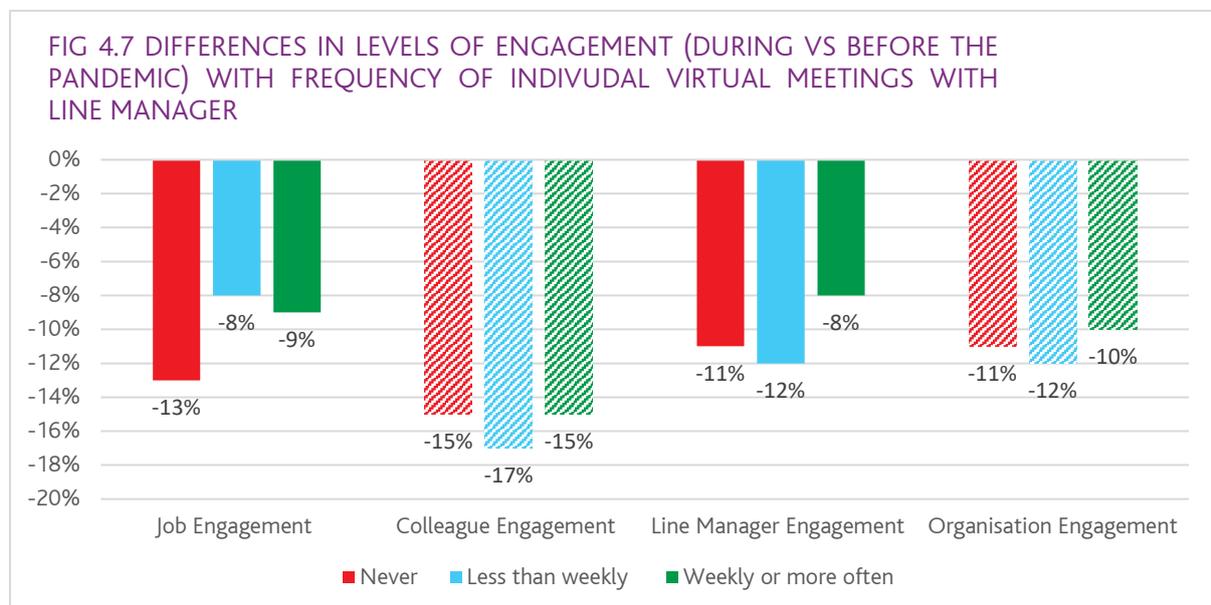


Fig 4.7 shows the differences in the self-reported drop in engagement of respondents with the frequency of individual virtual meetings with their line manager. There was a statistically significant relationship between the frequency of the virtual meeting with job and line manager engagement.

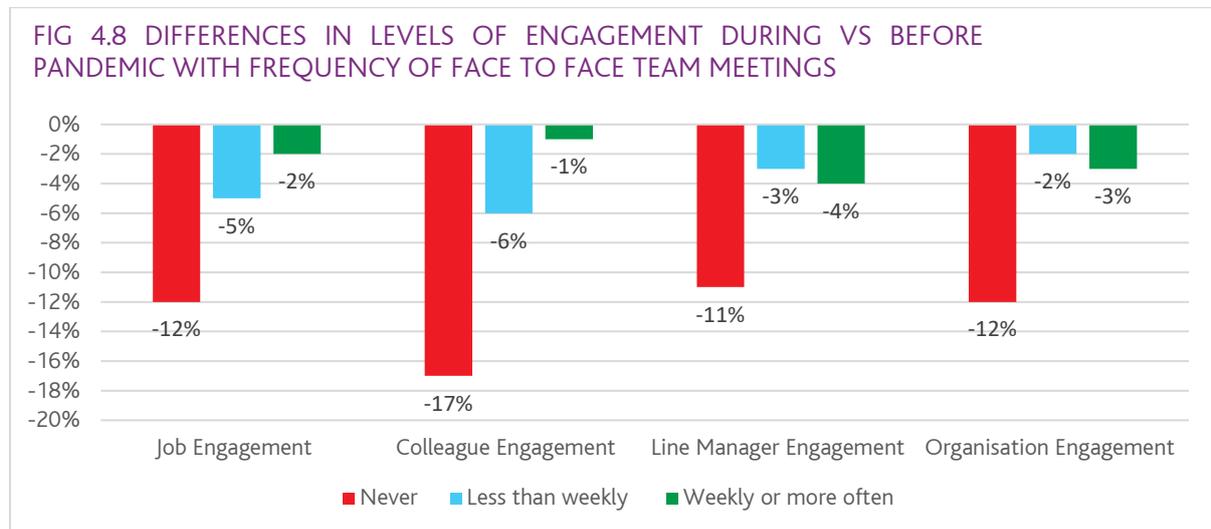


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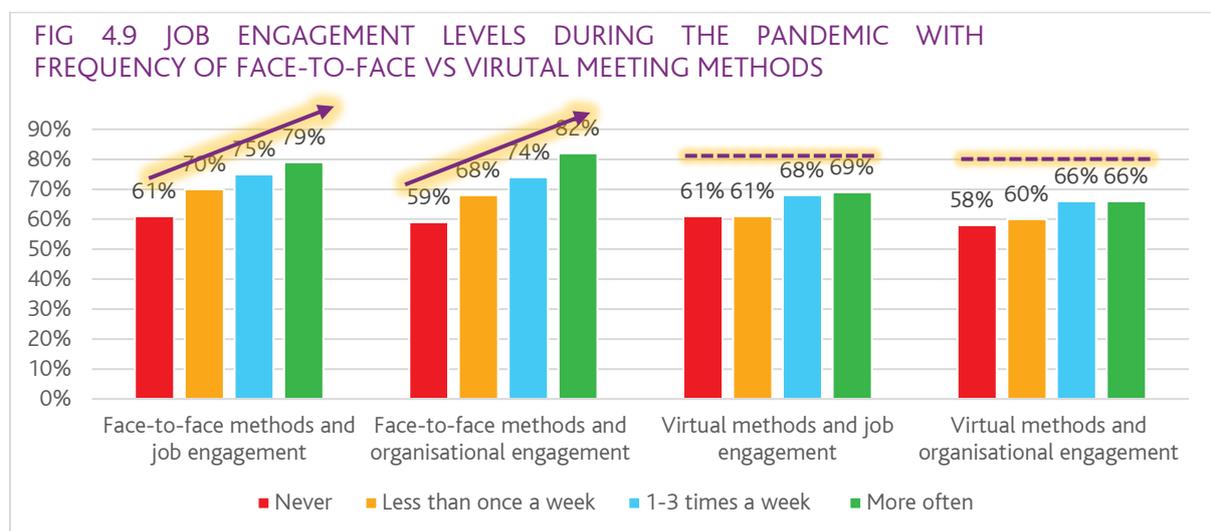
<sup>17</sup> At a 95% confidence level.

<sup>18</sup> Statistically significant relationships are at a 95% confidence level and demonstrated by solid bars, non-statistically significant relationships are shown as diagonal bars.

Fig 4.8 shows the differences (or drops) in levels of engagement from before the pandemic to self-reported levels of engagement during the pandemic by frequency of face-to-face team meetings. Significant relationships<sup>19</sup> were found for job, colleague, line manager and organisational engagement. It is clear from the data that the frequency of face-to-face meetings positively impacted levels of engagement.



When examining the difference between face-to-face and virtual meetings, the results are consistent: increased frequency of face-to-face positively impacted job and organisational engagement levels (whereas virtual frequency had no significant effect).



<sup>19</sup> At a 95% confidence level.

## LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

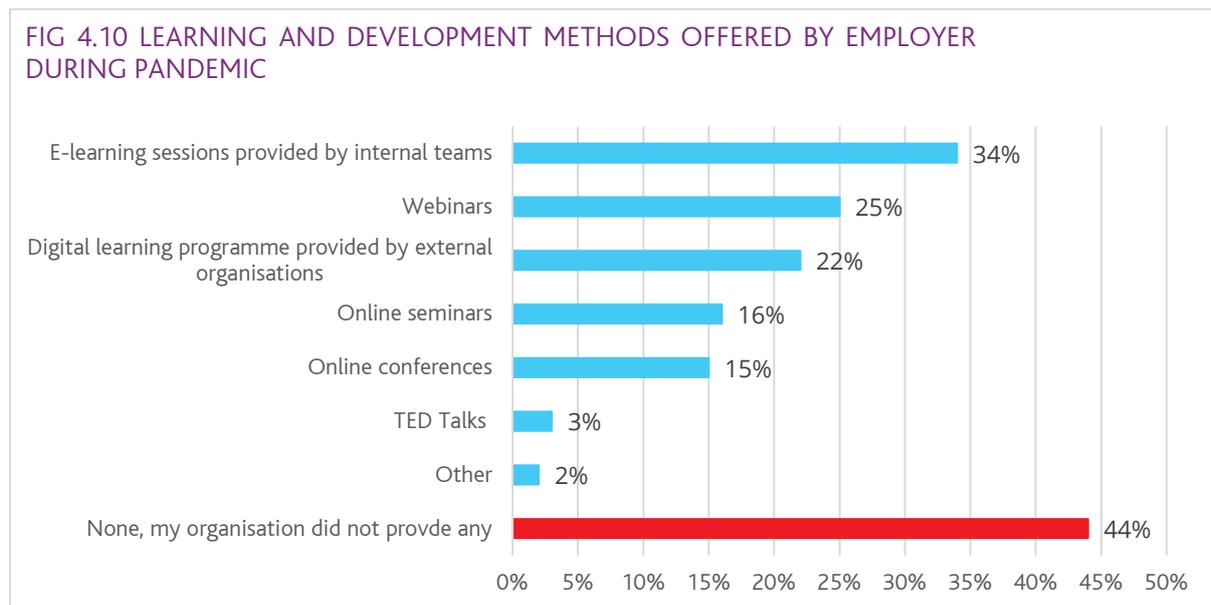
The following section considers learning and development opportunities available to respondents by their employer and the impact on levels of employee engagement.

**2 BUNDLE OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**



- ▶ E-learning sessions provided by internal teams
- ▶ Webinars
- ▶ Digital learning programmes provided by external organisations
- ▶ Online seminars
- ▶ Online conferences
- ▶ TED Talks
- ▶ Other methods

Fig 4.10 shows the different methods respondents stated were available to them during the pandemic. Most respondents reported that their organisation did not provide learning and development opportunities during the pandemic (44%). Of respondents who stated their employer offered learning and development opportunities, the most common were e-learning sessions provided by an internal team (34%).



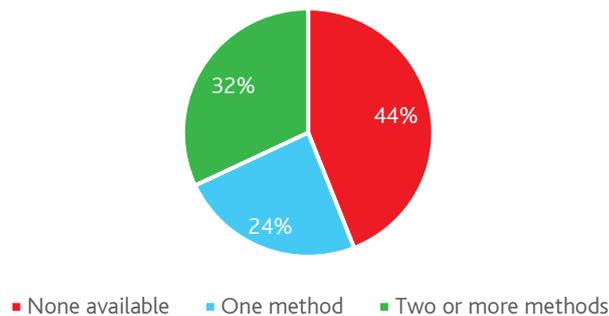
For respondents who stated that training and development opportunities were available, the majority reported that their employer used more than one method (see Fig 4.11).

However, only a small minority reported having more growth opportunities during the pandemic than before (22%), while the majority (53%) reported that their line manager did not encourage them to attend training or professional development.

Respondents based at their place of work during the pandemic were more likely to state that their line manager did not encourage them to attend training<sup>20</sup> (60%) compared to those working from home (52%).

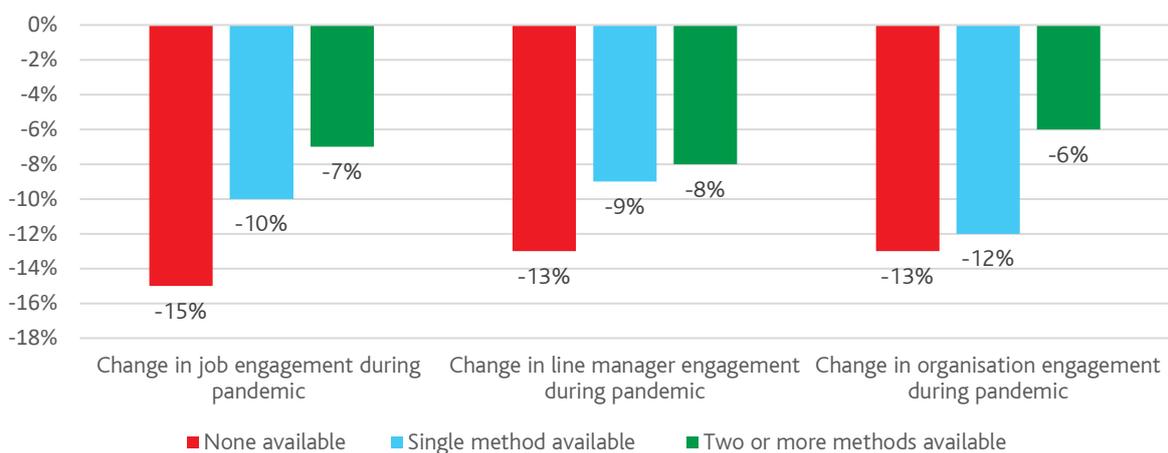
Non-managers were more likely to state that their line manager did not encourage them to attend training<sup>21</sup> (59%), compared to managers (48% saying their own manager did not encourage this).

FIG 4.11 NUMBER OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES WERE AVAILABLE TO RESPONDENTS DURING THE PANDEMIC



The number of opportunities available had a statistically significant relationship<sup>22</sup> with changes in engagement levels (see Fig 4.12).

FIG 4.12 CHANGES IN ENGAGEMENT LEVELS AND NUMBER OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT METHODS OFFERED BY EMPLOYER DURING THE PANDEMIC



Declines in organisation, line manager and job engagement were significantly less when two or more methods were available, compared to no learning and development methods available.

<sup>20</sup> Findings relating to place of work are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

<sup>21</sup> Findings relating to managers and non-managers are statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

<sup>22</sup> At a 95% confidence level.

The results highlighted smaller drops in all four engagement ratings when internal teams provided e-learning sessions compared to none available. Similarly, there was a smaller drop in engagement with the manager when organisations used webinars compared to those that did not. In addition, the drop in organisation, colleague and job engagement was smaller when external organisations provided digital learning programmes compared to none. Drops in reported levels of manager and job engagement were smaller when online conferences were used compared to not used. Lastly, there were no significant differences in reported levels of engagement when comparing the availability of online seminars and TED talks.

## THE MORE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE DURING THE PANDEMIC, THE SMALLER THE DROP IN ENGAGEMENT



### COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

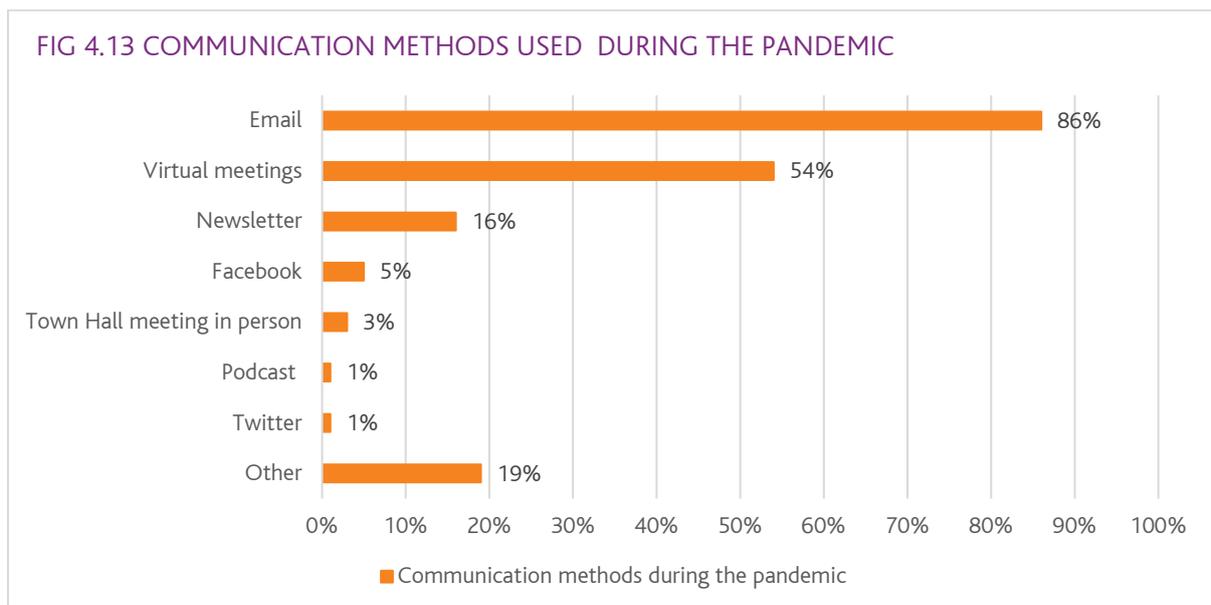
The following section reviews the communication channels experienced by respondents during the pandemic and the impact on levels of engagement.

3 BUNDLE OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS



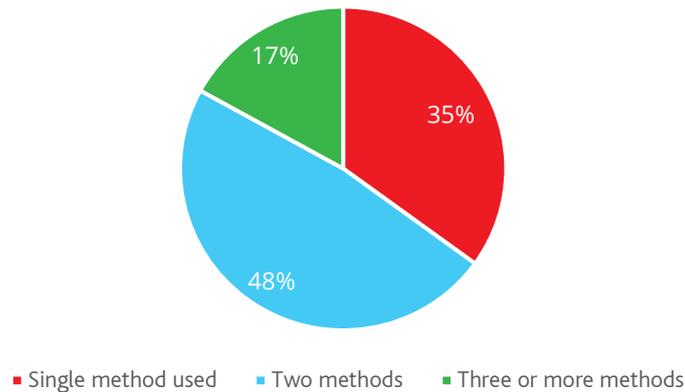
- ▶ Emails
- ▶ Virtual meetings
- ▶ Company Newsletter
- ▶ Company Facebook
- ▶ Town Hall meeting in person
- ▶ Company Podcast
- ▶ Company Twitter
- ▶ Other methods

Most respondents agreed that their organisation kept them informed during the pandemic and that it was clear and consistent. Fig 4.13 shows that the use of emails (85%) was the most prominent method of communication, followed by virtual meetings (54%).



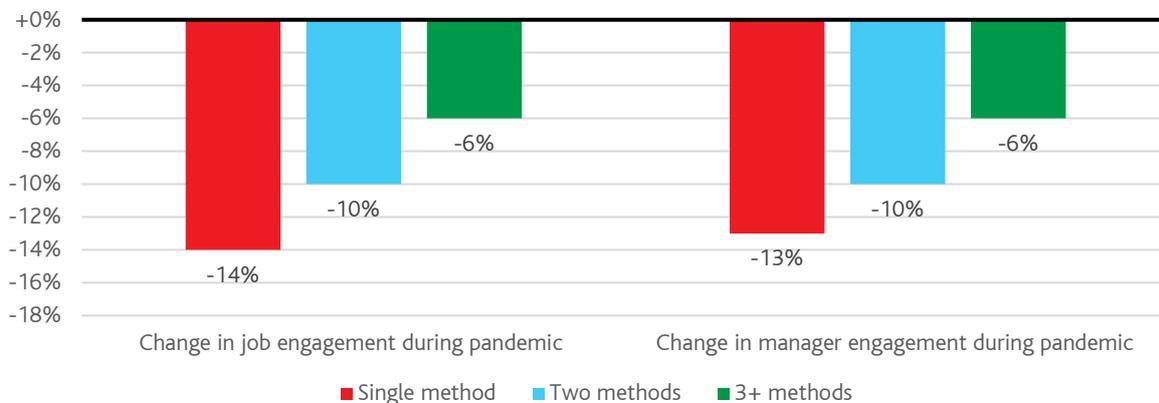
Most respondents stated that they experienced two communication channels during the pandemic (see Fig 4.14). Whilst there were no significant differences in the changes in engagement levels (during vs before) by individual communication methods, there were smaller drops in job engagement during the pandemic when two or more communication methods were used (-9%) compared to a single method being available (-14%).

FIG 4.14 NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS WHO EXPERIENCED ONE (OR MORE) COMMUNICATION METHOD BY THEIR EMPLOYER

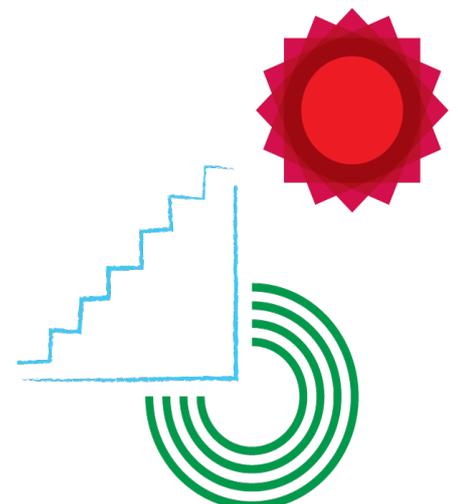


Following a similar pattern to employee involvement methods and learning and development opportunities, bundles of communication channels significantly impacted engagement levels. Drops in job and manager engagement were smaller the more communication channels were experienced by the respondent, with respondents reporting 3 (or more) methods having the smallest drop in engagement.

FIG 4.15 DIFFERENCE IN LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT DURING VS BEFORE PANDEMIC WITH THE NUMBER OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS USED



THE HIGHER NUMBER OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS USED DURING THE PANDEMIC, THE SMALLER THE DROP IN ENGAGEMENT



## ONLINE EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING INITIATIVES

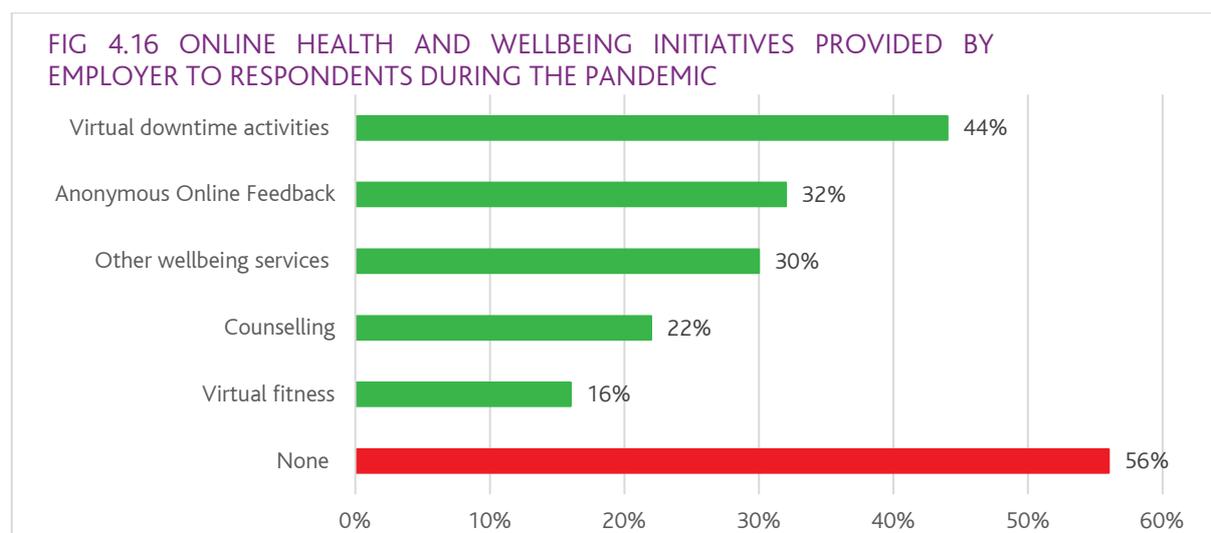
The following section explores employers' online health and well-being initiatives during the pandemic and the impact on engagement levels.

4 BUNDLE OF ONLINE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING INITIATIVES



- ▶ Anonymous online feedback initiatives
- ▶ Online counselling
- ▶ Virtual downtime activities
- ▶ Virtual fitness initiatives
- ▶ Other well-being sessions

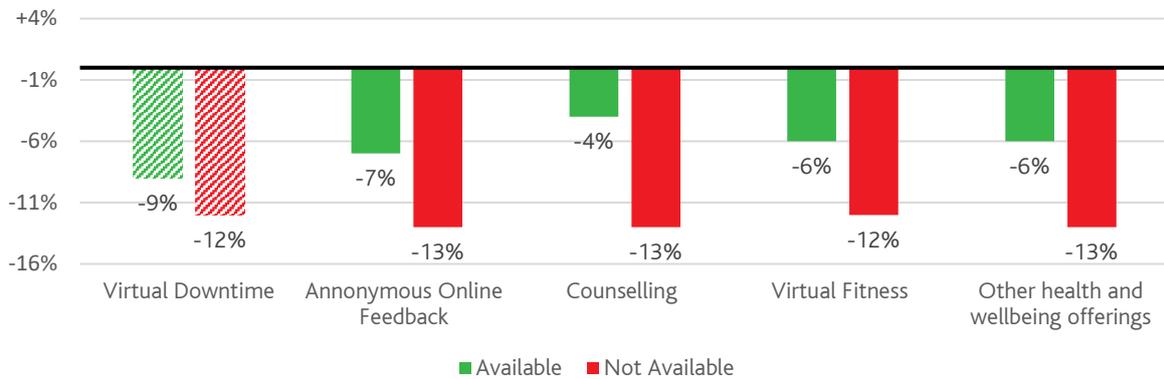
Respondents were asked to state the online health and well-being initiatives offered by their employer during the pandemic. Fig 4.16 shows the availability of different initiatives. Most commonly respondents stated their employer offered virtual downtime activities (44%). The least common method used was virtual fitness initiatives (16%).



The most frequently used virtual downtime activity was a quiz (experienced by 26% respondents). Social drinking (10% of respondents), online games (9%), social eating (5%), book clubs (2%) and cookery clubs (1%) were least likely. Although offered, 16% of respondents did not want to take part in virtual downtime activities.

Online counselling initiatives were not offered to most respondents by their organisation (78%) and only 3% of respondents attended online counselling sessions offered by their employer. Online wellbeing sessions were offered to 30% of respondents (although only 6% attended). Virtual fitness initiatives were not offered to most respondents by their organisation (84%) and only 3% took part.

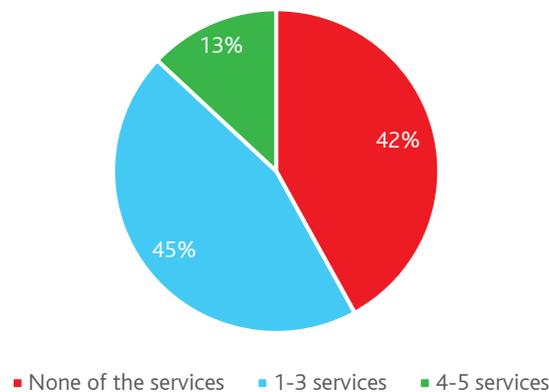
FIG 4.17 CHANGE IN LEVELS OF ORGANISATIONAL ENGAGEMENT DURING VS BEFORE PANDEMIC AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING INITIATIVES BY EMPLOYER



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Fig 4.17 shows the differences in organisation engagement and the availability of online health and well-being initiatives compared to each not being available. Anonymous online feedback initiatives, counselling, virtual fitness, and other health and well-being offerings had a statistically significant<sup>24</sup> relationship with changes in organisational engagement (significantly smaller drops in engagement during the pandemic).

FIG 4.18 NUMBER OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING INITIATIVES OFFERED BY THEIR EMPLOYER DURING THE PANDEMIC

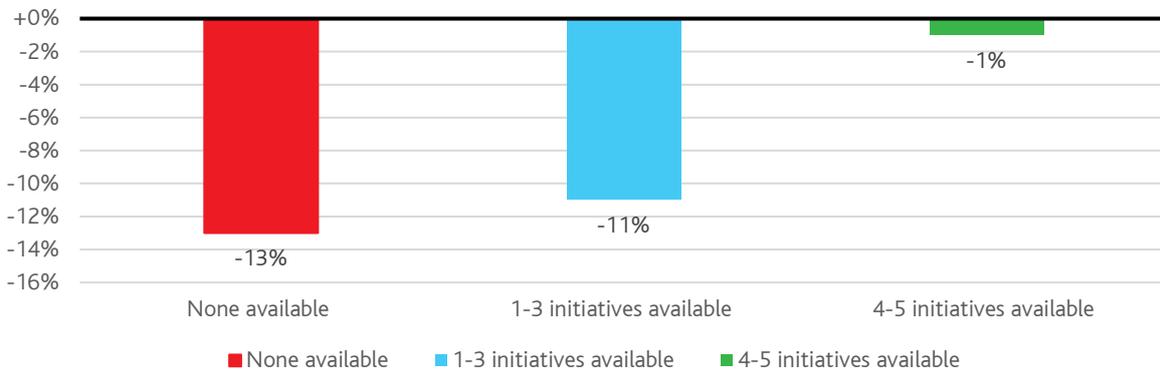


A large proportion of respondents were not offered any online health and wellbeing initiatives during the pandemic (42%). Most were offered 1-3 services (see Fig 4.18).

<sup>23</sup> Statistically significant relationships are shown as solid colour bars.

<sup>24</sup> At a 95% confidence level.

FIG 4.19 DROP IN ENGAGEMENT LEVELS WITH ORGANISATION AND NUMBER OF HEALTH AND WELLBENG INITIATIVES OFFERED BY EMPLOYER DURING PANDEMIC



The quantity of online health and wellbeing initiatives offered by their employer had a significant impact on the drop in organisation engagement. Respondents who were offered no online initiatives showed a -13% drop in engagement, compared to a -1% drop for respondents offered 4-5 initiatives.

FIG. 4.20 LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT AND AVAILABILITY OF ONLINE HEALTH AND WELLBEING INITIATIVES

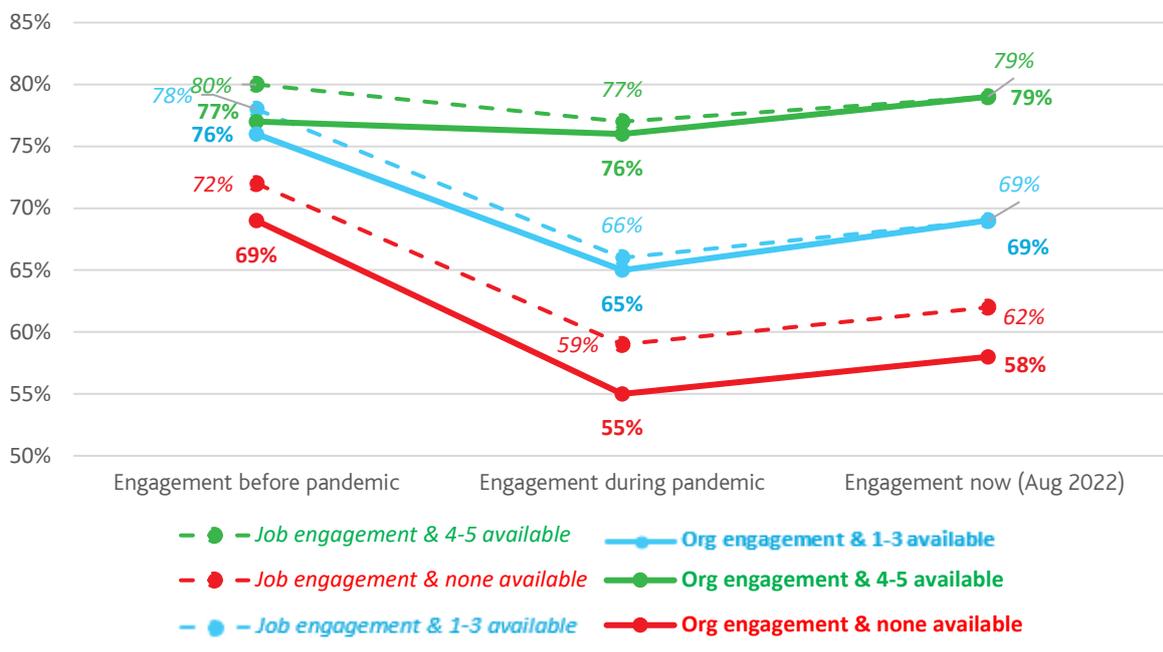


Fig 4.20 demonstrates the impact the availability of online health and wellbeing initiatives had on engagement. Respondents reporting 4-5 initiatives did not report a drop in engagement during the pandemic (non-significant changes). This compared to respondents who reported none of the initiatives being offered during the pandemic. For example, respondents reporting none of these initiatives self-rated their engagement with the organisation after the pandemic as 11 points lower than before it.

## 5 INFLUENCE OF EMPLOYER RESPONSE ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

The previous section discussed the different practices and services employers provided to employees during the pandemic, specifically looking at employee involvement methods, communication channels, learning and development opportunities, and online health and well-being initiatives.

The following section provides an overview of the organisational response to the pandemic and how much control an employer has to insulate themselves from big shocks like the pandemic.

Results show a statistically significant relationship between the number of practices and services offered to employees and their levels of engagement during the pandemic. In addition, it was evident from the findings that bundles of practices had a more significant positive impact on engagement levels than a limited number (or none).

### SUMMARISING THE ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSE

As discussed in the previous section, bundles of practices had a greater impact on employee engagement. There is a clear association between levels of engagement and the availability of practices and services during the pandemic. When we look collectively at the four different bundles of practices experienced by respondents (i.e., employee involvement methods, learning and development methods, communication methods, and health and well-being initiatives), there are statistically significant relationships between the number of methods available in each bundle and self-reported levels of engagement across the span of the pandemic.

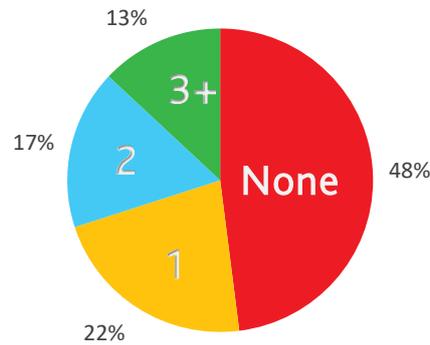
### HIGHLY ACTIVE BUNDLES OF PRACTICES SHOWED SIGNIFICANTLY SMALLER DROPS IN ENGAGEMENT.

#### 4 Highly Active Bundles:

- ▶ 3+ employee involvement methods
- ▶ 3+ communication channels
- ▶ 2+ learning and development opportunities
- ▶ 4-5 online health and well-being initiatives

Notably, half of respondents did not have an optimal or very good set of methods (i.e., highly active bundle of methods) (see Fig 5.1). Only 13% of respondents experienced 3 or 4 optimal, or highly active bundles (e.g., 3+ employee involvement methods, 3+ communication channels, 2+ learning and development opportunities, 4-5 online health and wellbeing initiatives).

FIG 5.1 RESPONDENT EXPERIENCE OF HIGHLY ACTIVE BUNDLES DURING THE PANDEMIC



■ Did not experience any highly active bundles ■ Experienced 1 highly active bundle  
■ Experienced 2 highly active bundles ■ Experienced 3-4 highly active bundles

Findings showed that employee involvement methods were the most utilised bundle, followed by bundles of learning and development opportunities. As employers moved from modest to active/highly active response, they complemented employee involvement methods and learning and development opportunities with communication channels. Offering a variety of online health and well-being initiatives were the most under-utilised approach yet had one of the biggest impacts on employee engagement.

Table 5.2 shows respondent experience of the four bundles of methods examined in the survey and the level of response by employers. The activity level of the different methods can be equated to the level of response from the employer. Employers who demonstrated a highly active response, provided their employees with highly active bundles of methods. However, as noted in Fig 5.1, most respondents did not experience any optimal bundle of methods (i.e., highly active bundle). Instead, they were likely to experience only 1 or 2 employee involvement methods (most likely online meetings with their line manager either individually or as a team) and communication via 1 channel (most likely email). This can be categorised as a passive response in supporting, developing, communicating, and involving the respondent by the employer during the pandemic (see Table 5.2). This compares to respondents who experienced a highly active response by their employer, who offered 3 or 4 highly active bundles of methods during the pandemic.

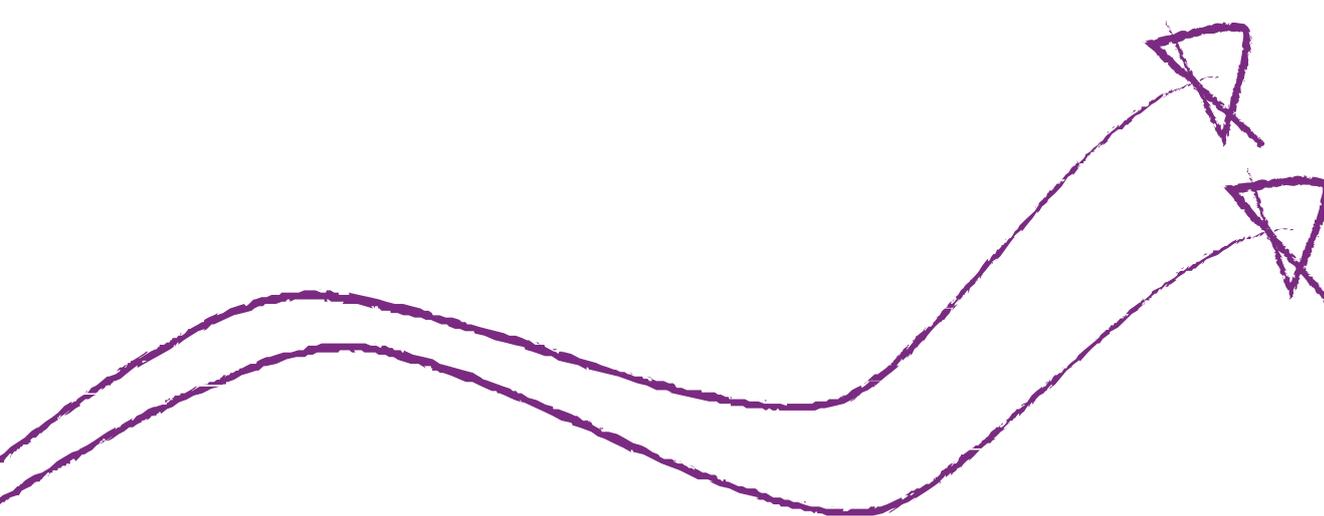


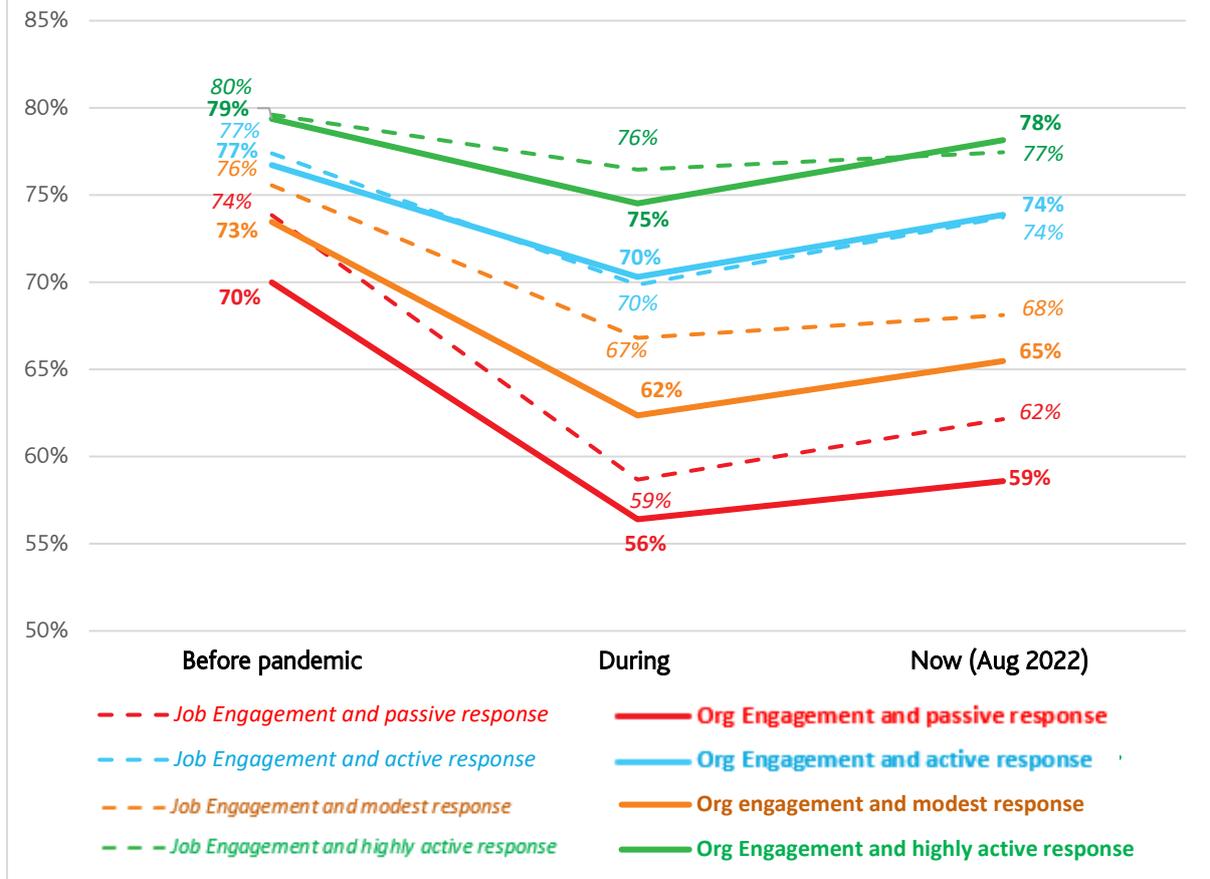
TABLE 5.2 NUMBER OF EMPLOYER OFFERED METHODS TO SUPPORT, DEVELOP, COMMUNICATE, AND INVOLVE EXPERIENCED BY A MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS AT EACH BUNDLE LEVEL

	EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT METHODS 	LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES 	COMMUNICATION CHANNELS 	ONLINE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING INITIATIVES 
<b>PASSIVE</b> No highly active bundles (48% of respondents)	1 or 2 methods used	None available	1 channel used	None available
<b>MODEST</b> 1 highly active bundle (22% of respondents)	1 or 2 methods used	1+ opportunities available	2+ channels used	1+ initiatives available
<b>ACTIVE</b> 2 highly active bundles (17% of respondents)	3+ methods used	2+ opportunities available	2+ channels used	2+ initiatives available
<b>HIGHLY ACTIVE</b> 3+ highly active bundles (13% respondents)	3+ methods used	2+ opportunities available	3+ channels used	4+ initiatives available

Examining the different bundles of methods in more detail, a statistically significant<sup>25</sup> relationship was evident between the employer response (level of bundles) and self-reported levels of job and organisational engagement during the pandemic (see Fig 5.3). Respondents who experienced a passive response by their employer reported both bigger drops in engagement during the pandemic, and lower levels of engagement now (August 2022). This dramatically contrasts with respondents who experienced a highly active response by their employer.

<sup>25</sup> At a 95% confidence level

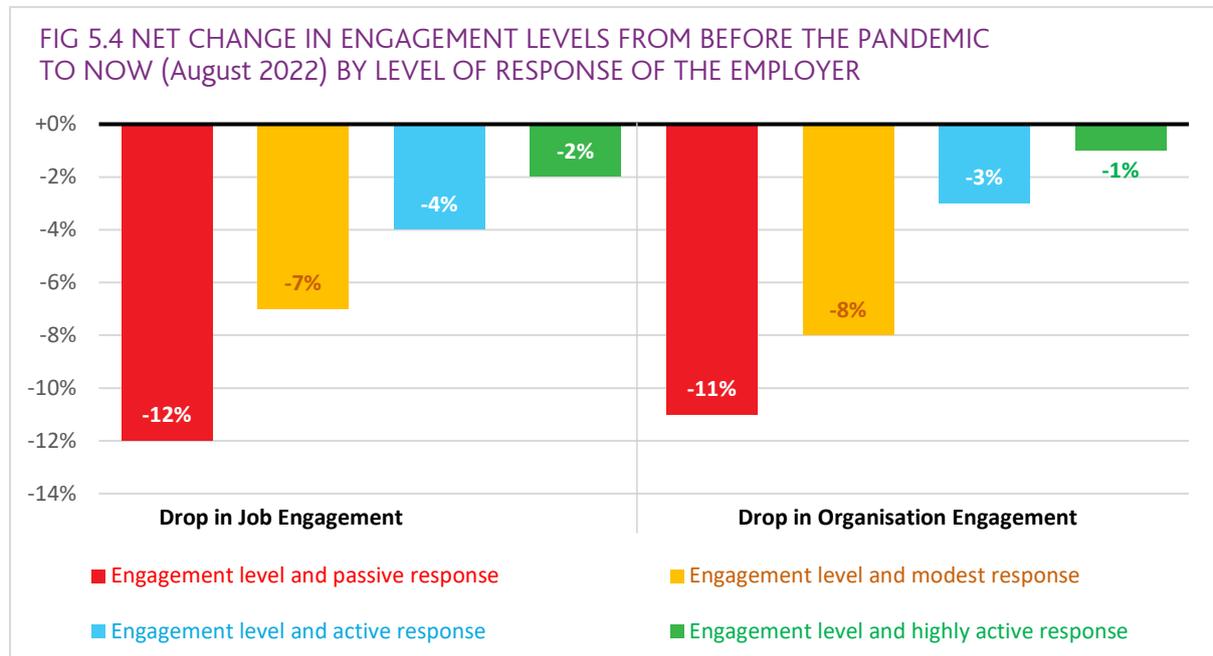
FIG 5.3 IMPACT OF EMPLOYER RESPONSE ON SELF-REPORTED LEVELS OF JOB AND ORGANISATION ENGAGEMENT LEVELS



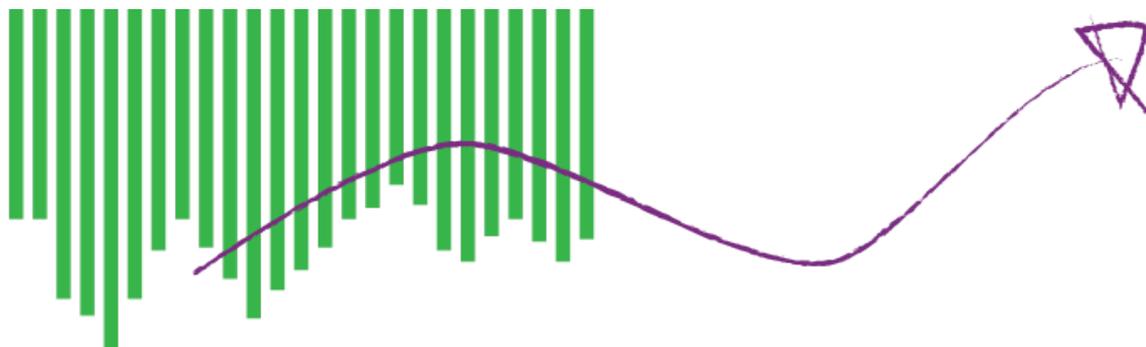
Respondents who experienced a passive response by their employer reported bigger drops in engagement during the pandemic (14-15% drop) and lower levels of engagement now (August 2022). This contrasts dramatically with respondents who experienced a highly active response by their employer, who experienced a minimal drop during the pandemic (3-5% drop). It is also worth noting that respondents who experienced a passive response by their employer, self-reported lower levels of engagement with their organisation before the pandemic.



Examining the difference in engagement between now and before the pandemic according to the level of response from the employer (see Fig 5.4), it is evident that the level of activity of the employer during the pandemic is linked to fundamental differences in engagement changes.



The engagement of respondents who experienced a highly active response from their employer (offering a wide range of methods) was largely insulated from the drops during the pandemic



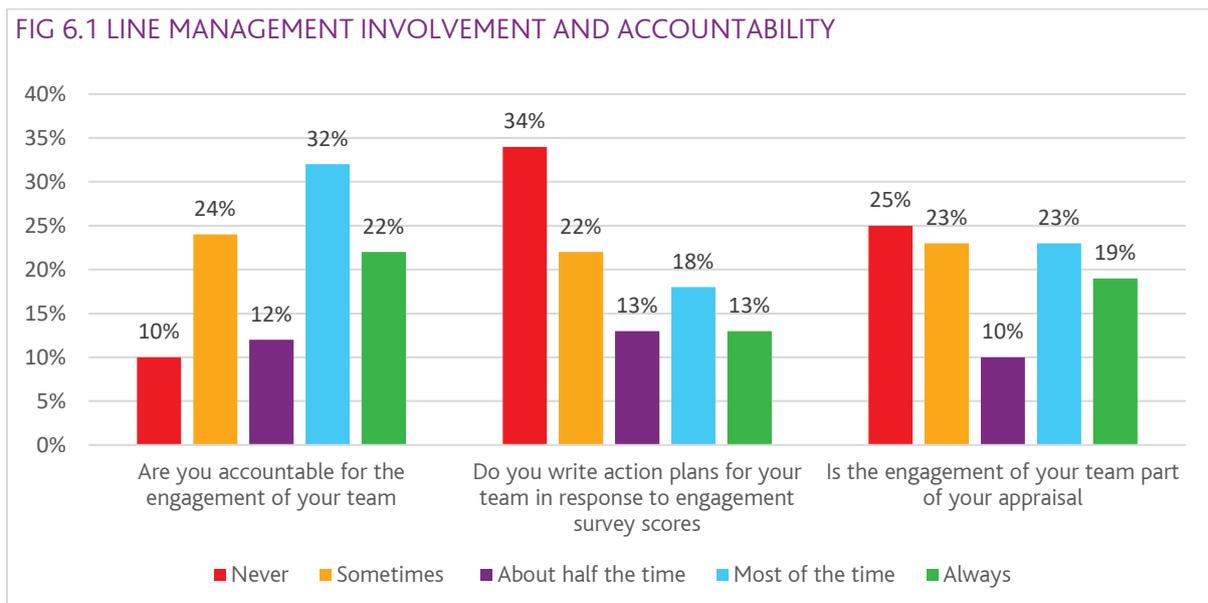
## 6 IMPACT OF THE LINE MANAGER

The line manager has a central role in developing and maintaining employee engagement levels, a role that was central during the pandemic. As employees were forced to work remotely, the need to connect placed a spotlight on the line manager as the main channel to preserve organisational relationships and maintain effective work practices (Pass and Ridgway, 2022). As a result, this has enhanced the importance in providing managers with the skills needed to be 'engaging managers' (MacLeod and Clarke, 2009).

Line managers have a fundamental impact on the employees that they manage and on the employee engagement levels of their team. In addition to providing job tasks, the line manager is required to engage, support, and develop those within their team. However, there is a history of line managers being promoted to a management position due to experience in the role or technical skill, and rarely on their ability to manage and lead a team. Whilst there are many pressures placed onto line managers (who often face competing priorities), they are often not equipped with the right skills (Bajorek, 2020). Consequently, it is fundamental that line managers are provided with appropriate training to manage and engage with their team.

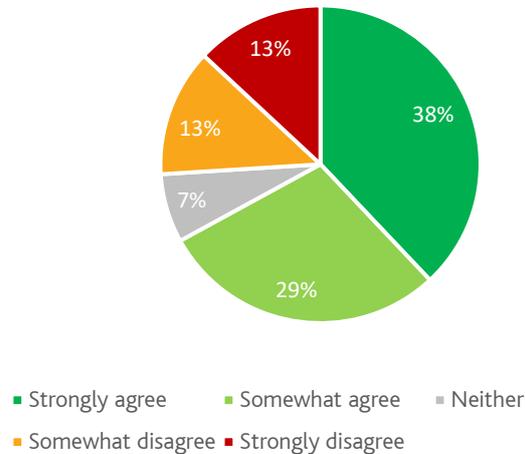
Just under half of respondents classified themselves as managers (48%), with the average number of people to manage being 1-5 (60% of line managers).

FIG 6.1 LINE MANAGEMENT INVOLVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY



When asked about involvement in and accountability for engagement, responses were varied (Fig 6.1). Almost all line managers said that they were accountable for engagement (90%), two thirds wrote action plans based on engagement scores (66%) and three quarters said engagement was part of their appraisal at least sometimes (75%).

FIG 6.2 PROVIDED WITH THE TOOLS AND RESOURCES DURING THE PANDEMIC TO PERFORM ROLE AS LINE MANAGER



Most managers responding to the survey stated that they were provided with the tools and resources needed during the pandemic to perform their job as a line manager (Fig 6.2).

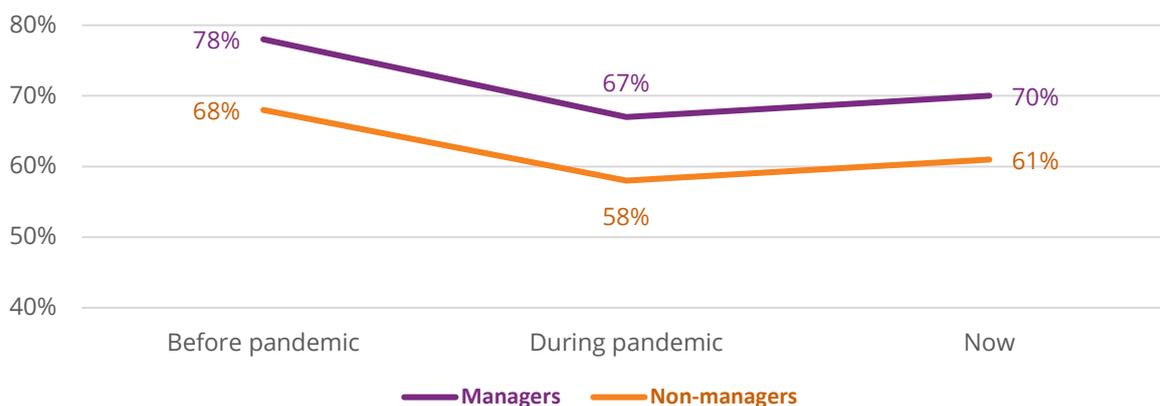
Managers<sup>26</sup> were more likely than non-managers to state that they believed in their organisation’s vision and purpose and that engaging the full capabilities and potential of people at work was becoming more important.

### VARIATIONS IN MANAGER AND NON-MANAGER ENGAGEMENT

It is common for surveys to report managers with higher levels of engagement and our results are

consistent with this finding. However, what was slightly unexpected was the parallel in engagement drops between managers and non-managers. During the pandemic there was an emphasis on the increased pressure on managing a dispersed workforce. Yet the findings showed that the drops in engagement were mirrored, with managers affected no more, or less, than non-managers during the pandemic. Data was collected from individuals from a representative sample of the UK population, as a result, it is impossible to connect line managers to employees to understand the relationship in more detail.

FIG 6.3 CHANGES IN ORGANISATION ENGAGEMENT FOR MANAGERS AND NON-MANAGERS

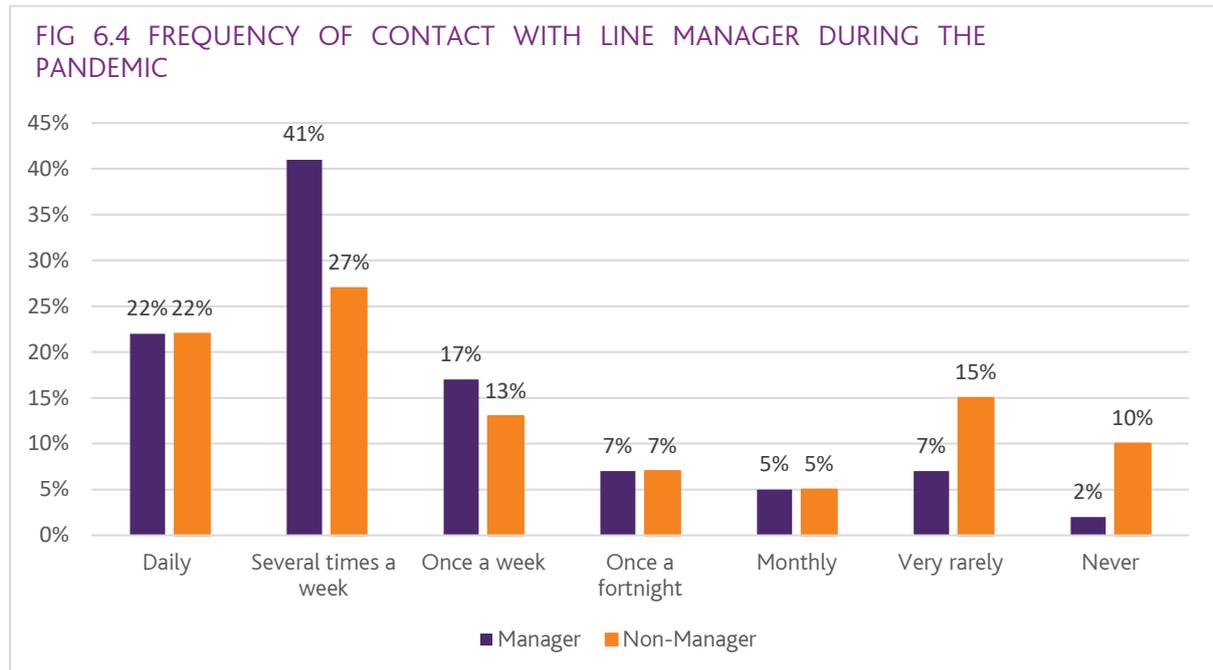


### IMPACT OF THE LINE MANAGER ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

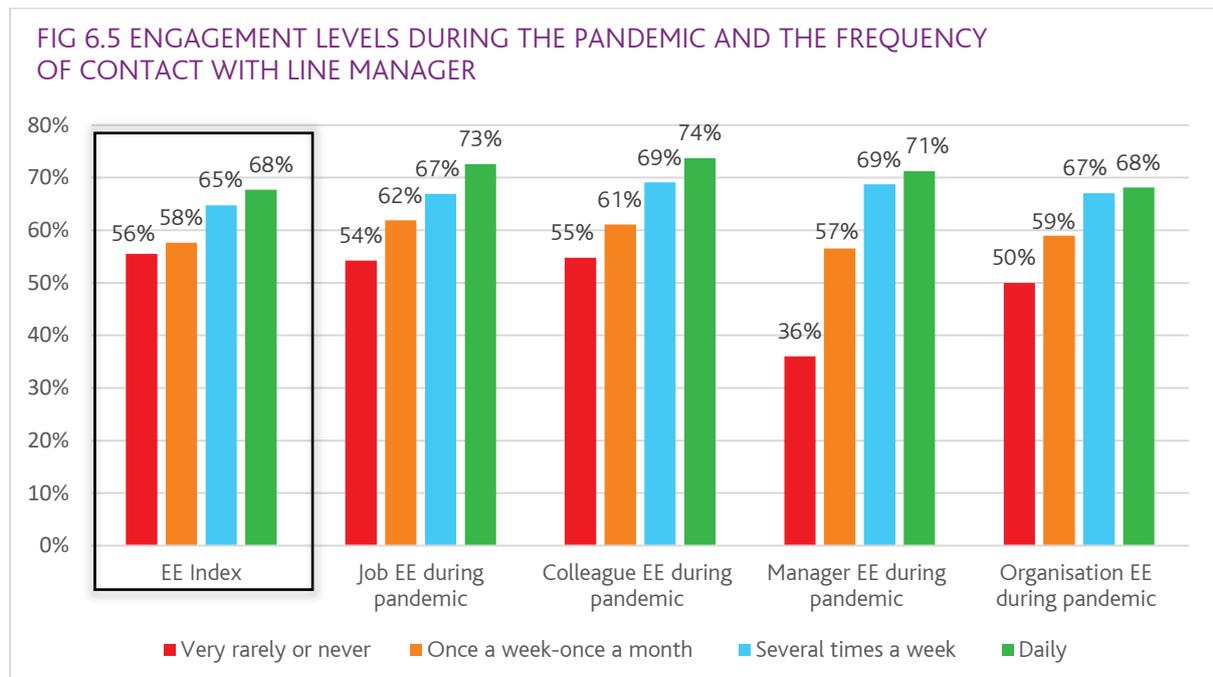
As previously noted, respondents experienced variations in the frequency of contact with their line manager during the pandemic. On average, respondents had contact with their line manager several

<sup>26</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence level

times a week (see Fig 6.4). However, it is evident that those in a management position were more likely to have contact with their line manager on a regular basis compared to non-managers.

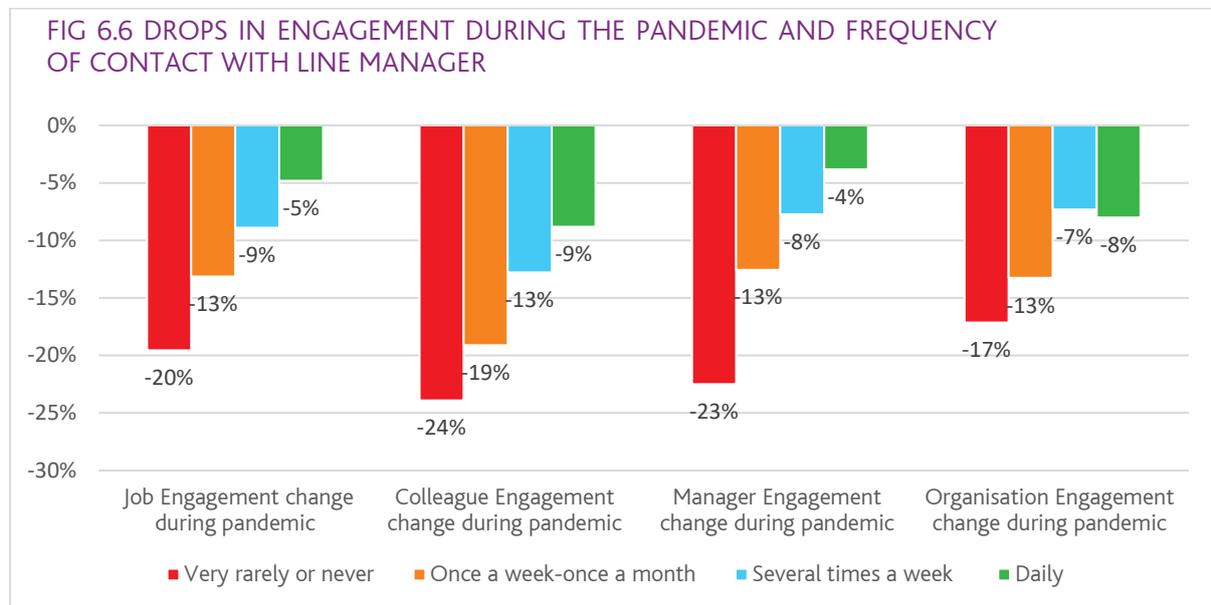


Findings show a significant relationship between the frequency of contact with their line manager and levels of engagement for job, colleague, manager, and organisation. In addition, there was a correlation between frequency of contact and the EEI (Employee Engagement Index) (see Fig 6.5)<sup>27</sup>. The higher the frequency contact, the higher the engagement level.



<sup>27</sup> Statistically significant at a 99% confidence level

Looking at the drops in engagement during the pandemic, there is a huge difference in the drop in manager engagement when there is very rare contact (-23%) compared to daily contact (-4%). Similar findings are evident for job, colleague, and organisation engagement (see Fig 6.6)<sup>28</sup>. As higher Manager contact frequency is clearly linked to better engagement, we can conclude that on average there is value in these Manager interactions.

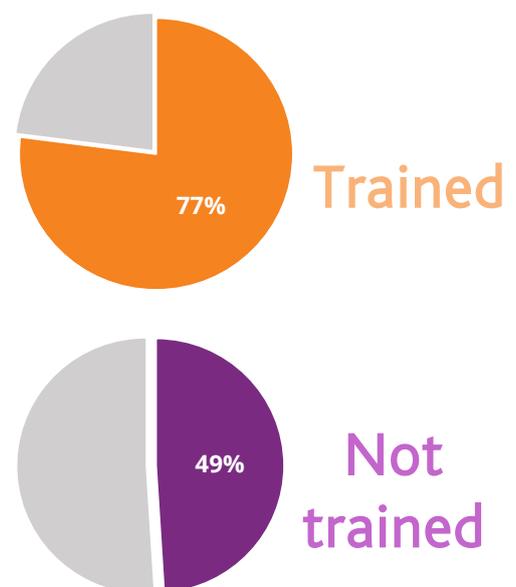


### IMPACT OF LINE MANAGER TRAINING

Respondents with line manager responsibility were asked if they had ever received training (either mandatory or chosen), when first taking on a line manager role. There was a clear divide in levels of training. The majority (63%) had received management training (44% mandatory and 19% optional), however 37% stated they had not undertaken any training (33% none were available and 4% on a waiting list).

Managers who had received training were more likely to write action plans in response to engagement survey scores (Fig 6.7)<sup>29</sup>. They were also more likely to say their thought their work was meaningful and important. In addition, their scores on the EEI (Employee Engagement Index) were also higher than managers who had not received training (see Fig 6.8<sup>30</sup>).

**FIG 6.7 LINE MANAGER TRAINING AND WRITING ACTION PLANS IN RESPONSE TO ENGAGEMENT SURVEY SCORES**

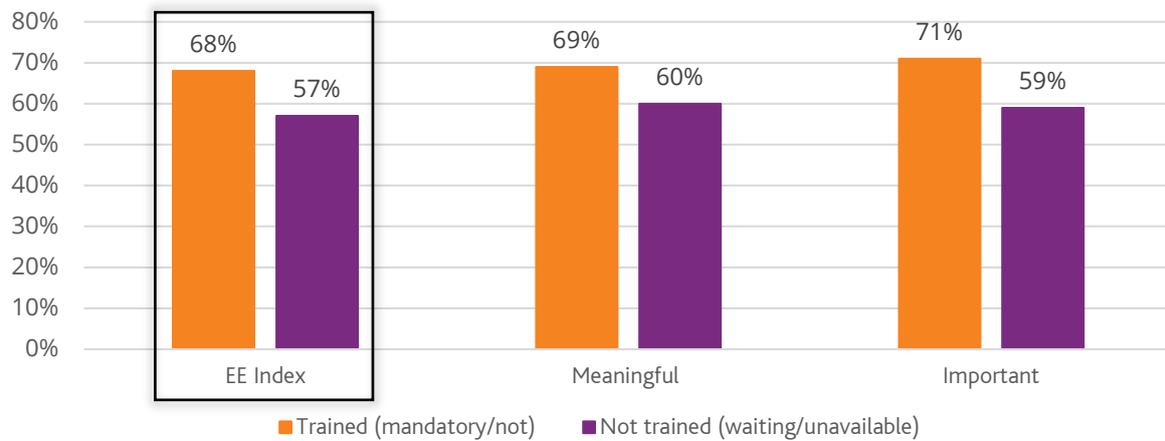


<sup>28</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence level

<sup>29</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence level

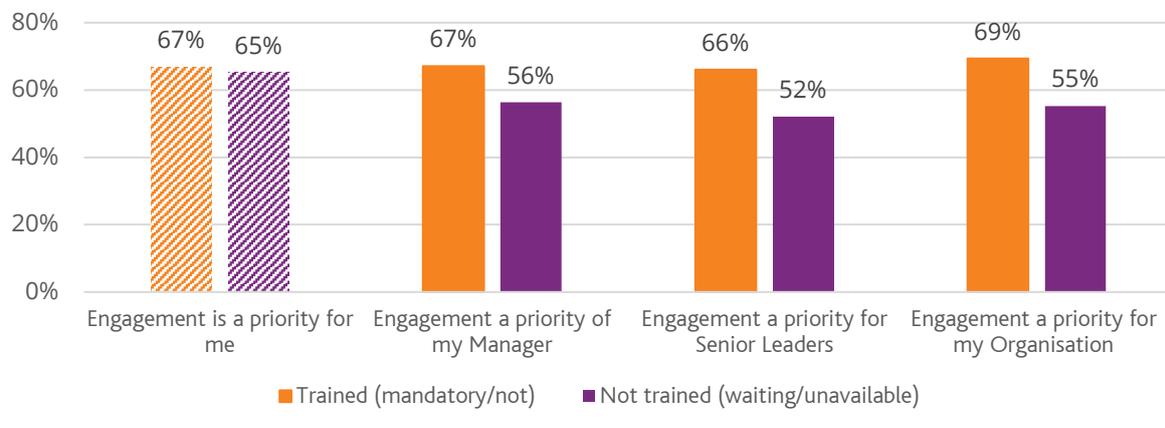
<sup>30</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence level

FIG 6.8 IMPACT OF LINE MANAGER TRAINING



In addition, managers who had received training were more likely to agree that engagement was a priority for their own manager, their senior leaders, and their organisation, but no difference in how much of a priority it is for them themselves (see Fig 6.9)<sup>31</sup>.

FIG 6.9 IMPACT OF LINE MANAGER TRAINING ON PERCEIVED PRIORITY OF ENGAGEMENT



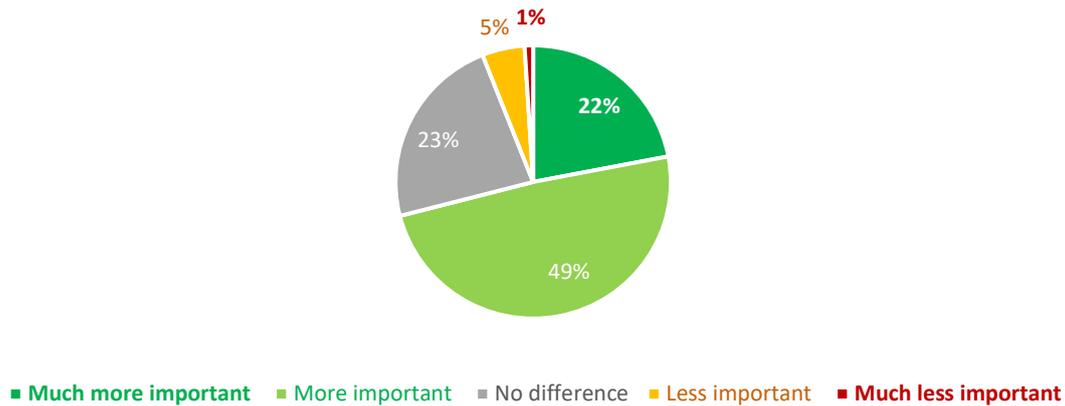
## THE FREQUENCY OF CONTACT WITH LINE MANAGERS HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

<sup>31</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence level

## 7 PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

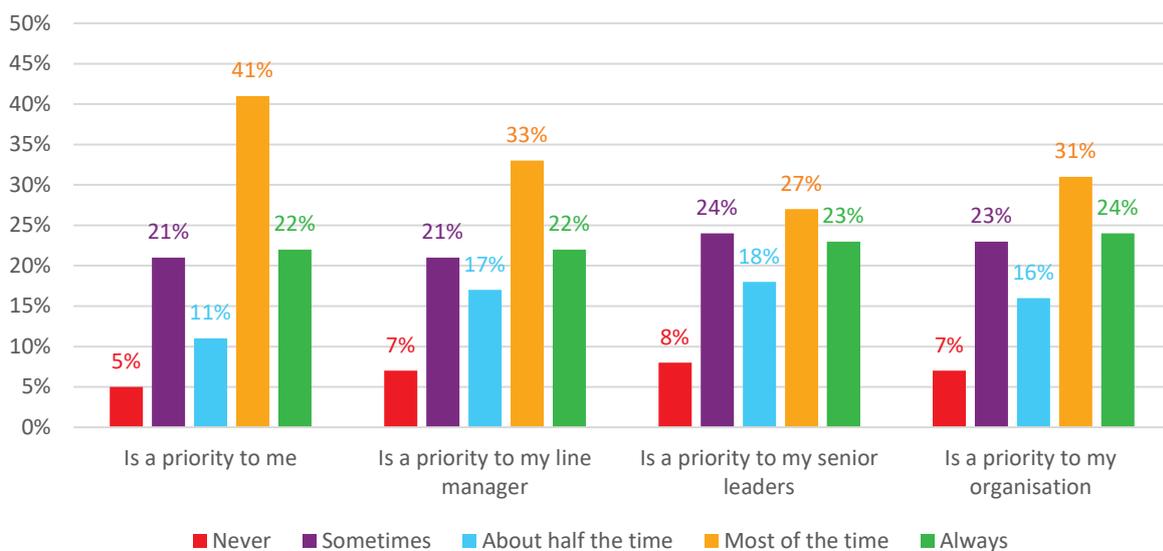
More than two thirds of respondents (71%) stated that "*engaging the full capabilities and potential of people at work is getting more important*" (22% much more important and 49% more important).

FIG 7.1. DO YOU THINK ENGAGING THE FULL CAPABILITIES AND POTENTIAL OF PEOPLE AT WORK IS GETTING MORE IMPORTANT?



Respondents were asked whether employee engagement was a priority for them, their manager, senior leaders, and their organisation (see Fig 7.2). Whilst nearly two thirds of respondents stated that engagement was a priority to them most of the time or always (63%), less than half said it was a priority to their senior leaders most of the time or always (49%). There were statistically significant differences<sup>32</sup> between managers and non-managers, with managers scoring higher on engagement as a priority (for themselves, their own manager, their senior leaders, and organisation).

FIG 7.2 RESPONDENT PERCEPTIONS OF ENGAGEMENT AS A PRIORITY



<sup>32</sup> Statistically significant at a 95% confidence level

## 8 REPORTING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT LEVELS

This report provided the mean score<sup>33</sup> for the questions asked in the Engage for Success Employee Engagement Survey (2022). The mean score is the only way to ensure that all responses are included equally, reflecting everyone's answers. Whilst the mean score reflects all responses, it is not always the most intuitive. In general, we are more likely to talk about percentages. For example, reporting an average mean score of 4.50 can be challenging to interpret. However, reporting an average of 88% is understood more clearly. Also, when comparing, it is easier to judge against another percentage.

The following section also discusses how organisations report on employee engagement survey data and how many methods do not always represent the voice of all respondents. It is essential to review the type of methods used when reviewing reports on levels of engagement.

### WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER HOW YOU REPORT EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT LEVELS

The following section looks at common methods used when reporting employee engagement levels and reflects on the importance of reporting the mean (average) score. Although the three methods discussed (e.g., strongly agree, percent positive, and eNPS) are examples of methods used, there are additional methods that organisations and providers use. It is important to reflect on the methods used to report and whether they provide you with the necessary information. The context and focus of the data are important to consider. The following methods are valid approaches, but in the case of employee engagement levels, it is vital to include all voices; this is achieved by using the mean (average) score, ensuring that all voices are heard.

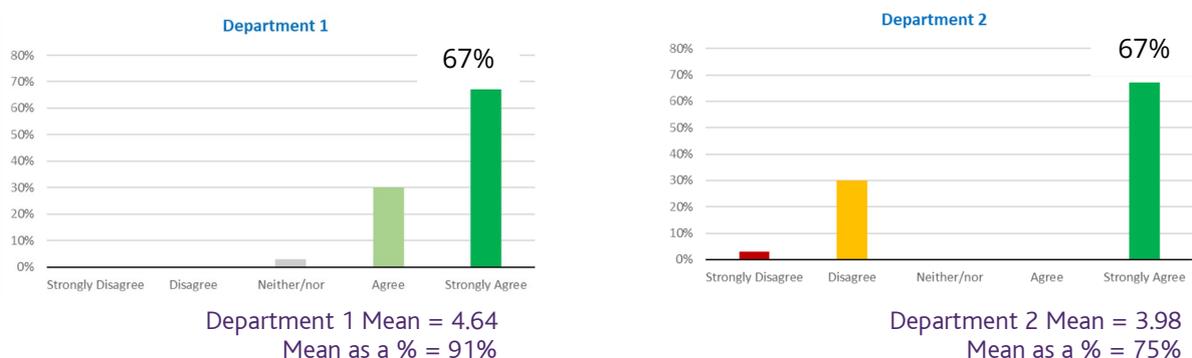
#### REPORTING 'STRONGLY AGREE' RESPONSES

The following graphs are examples provided for illustration (these are not results from our survey).

Employees in both departments were asked to rate their response on a 5-point scale on whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, '*I feel able to speak up and share my opinions at work*'.

Fig 8.1 shows the responses of department 1 and department 2. In both departments, two thirds of respondents stated that they strongly agreed with the statement (67%).

FIG 8.1 REPORTING 'STRONGLY AGREE' RESPONSES - ILLUSTRATION



<sup>33</sup> The mean score provides an average response by adding up all the scores and dividing it by the number of responses.

Whilst both departments had the same number of respondents strongly agreeing, it is evident from the graph above that the remaining respondents in department 2 felt different from those in department 1. In department 1, no-one disagrees with the statement at all. However, in department 2, a third of people feel unable to speak up & share their opinions, signalling a need for action.

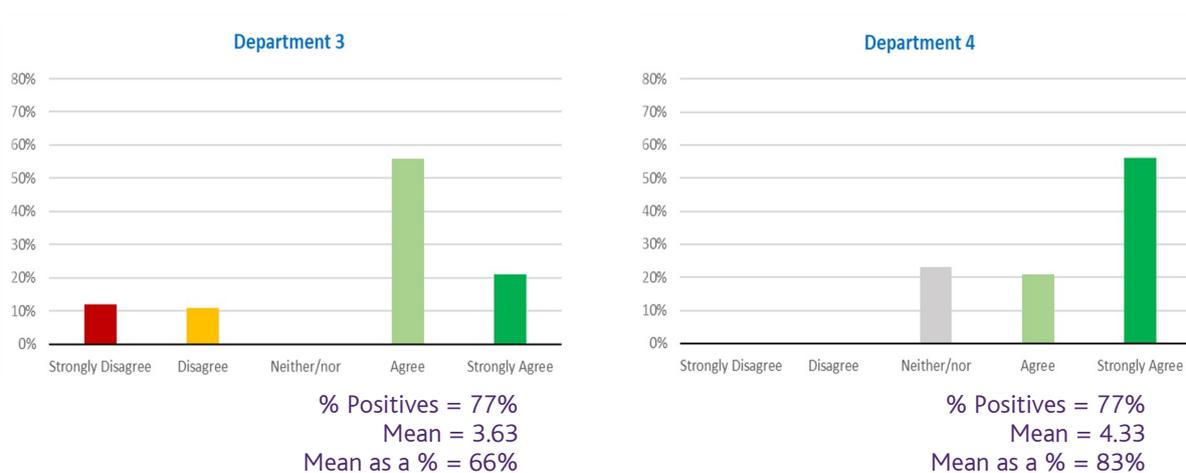
If responses are reported as the % Strongly Agreeing, most managers and leaders would assume the departments are in the same position as they both have 67% strongly agreeing (an incorrect interpretation). Whereas if reported as a mean, converted to percentage, the difference is more readily apparent. Most managers and leaders would correctly spot that Department 2 does less well here (75% score versus 91% score).

### REPORTING '% POSITIVE' RESPONSES

If we follow a similar approach when discussing reporting of '% positives' (e.g., combining agree and strongly agree) the same problem occurs. If reporting '% positive' responses for departments 3 and 4 to the question *'I feel able to speak up and share my opinions at work'* (Fig 8.2), both would be 77% so most managers and leaders would assume there is no difference (incorrectly).

However, the graph shows that responses in the two departments differed. In department 3, a quarter of people do not feel able to speak up & share their opinions. Whilst in department 4, nobody disagreed that they could. By reporting on the mean, converted to a percentage, the difference is apparent and would be noticed by most managers and leaders (scores of 83% versus 66%), showing that action is required in department 3.

FIG 8.2 REPORTING '% POSITIVE' RESPONSES - ILLUSTRATION



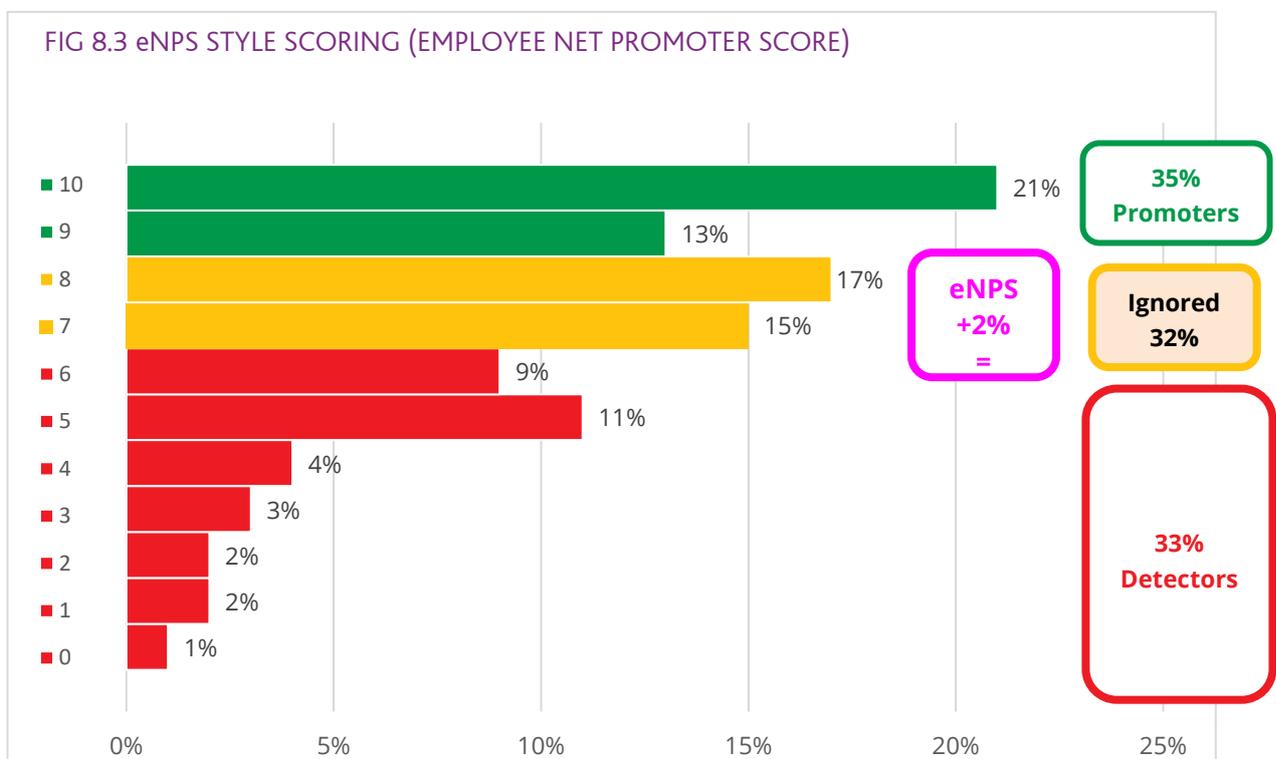
## REPORTING eNPS

Fig 8.3 illustrates real employee survey data taken from a large number of small organisations<sup>34</sup> (over 6,000 employees). Employees were asked to rate on an 11-point scale with 10 being extremely likely, and 0 being not at all likely: 'How likely is it that you would recommend this company as a place to work?'

The eNPS (Employee Net Promoter Score) is often used by organisations to measure how likely employees are to recommend their place of work. However, Net Promoter Scores were initially used to assess customer satisfaction, a concept very different from employee experience.

An eNPS score or Ratio is calculated by a simple equation: % of Promoters - % of Detractors = eNPS

The calculation of eNPS excludes any responses of 7-8 considered passive (content but not passionate) as they are considered to be neither Promoters nor Detractors.



Reflecting on the example in Fig 8.3, the responses of 32% of employees would be excluded entirely from the eNPS reporting. In this case a third of Employee Voice is actively ignored! The proportion of employees whose response is ignored will be different in every organisation, but it's unlikely to be negligible (you should check yours!).

Ignoring passives is a missed opportunity to understand why content employees are not passionate enough about the company to recommend it, but also not discontent enough to be Detractors. And if the company succeeded in moving the 5% or people from ratings or 0-1-2 up so that they now rated 6 instead (a large shift!) this would be entirely missed by this style of reporting (no change in % Detractors, nor in eNPS Ratio).

<sup>34</sup> For issues of confidentiality, we are unable to disclose the names of the organisations.

## HOW TO CONVERT YOUR MEAN SCORE INTO A PERCENTAGE

If you use a rating of 1-5, your mean score would be a number between this range - for example, 4.20. Use the following steps to convert your mean score into a percentage. Fig 8.4 shows the different scale points and the percentage equivalent. For example, your mean score of 4.00 would be reported as 75%.

FIG 8.4 EXAMPLE: MEAN SCORE AS A PERCENTAGE FIGURE

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER/ NOR	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Scale#	1	2	3	4	5
	Minimum possible		Mid-point		Maximum possible
MEAN	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
%	=0%	=25%	=50%	=75%	=100%

To convert mean scores into percentages on a 1-5 scale, use the following equation:

$$(\text{MEAN} - 1) / 4 = \text{PERCENTAGE SCORE}$$

DISPLAY THE SCORE AS A PERCENTAGE

*For example:*

A mean score of 4.20 converts to a percentage as follows:

Equation	Example
<i>Mean - 1</i>	4.20 - 1 = 3.20
<i>Divided by 4</i>	3.20 / 4 = 0.80
<i>Displayed as a %</i>	0.80 = 80%

The same principles can be applied to convert other scales to a percentage. The two steps are 1) convert the scale minimum to zero, and 2) divide by the scale's range, after which we can display the score as a %. In the above example for a 1-5 scale our first step is to subtract 1 as the scale begins at 1, then we divide by 4 as the scale has a range of 4 (from 1 to 5).

For example, on a 7-point scale from 1 to 7, the equation would be (Mean - 1) divided by 6 to give the score which can be displayed as a % (as the range is 6 here: from 1 to 7).

There is nothing to remove in step 1) for scales beginning at zero such as with eNPS. To convert a mean score that used such a 0-10 scale into percentages, the equation is: mean divided by 10 (displayed as %).

### HOW TO CALCULATE THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INDEX

The overall Employee Engagement Index is calculated using the average score of each of the three questions.

The easiest way is to convert your mean scores into percentages before calculation the Index.

$$\frac{\text{Overall Satisfaction \%} + \text{Loyalty \%} + \text{Advocacy \%}}{3} = \text{Employee Engagement Index}$$

For example

- ▶ 68% (overall satisfaction) + 55% (loyalty) + 63% (advocacy) = 186.
- ▶ Divided by 3 to get an average across all three questions.

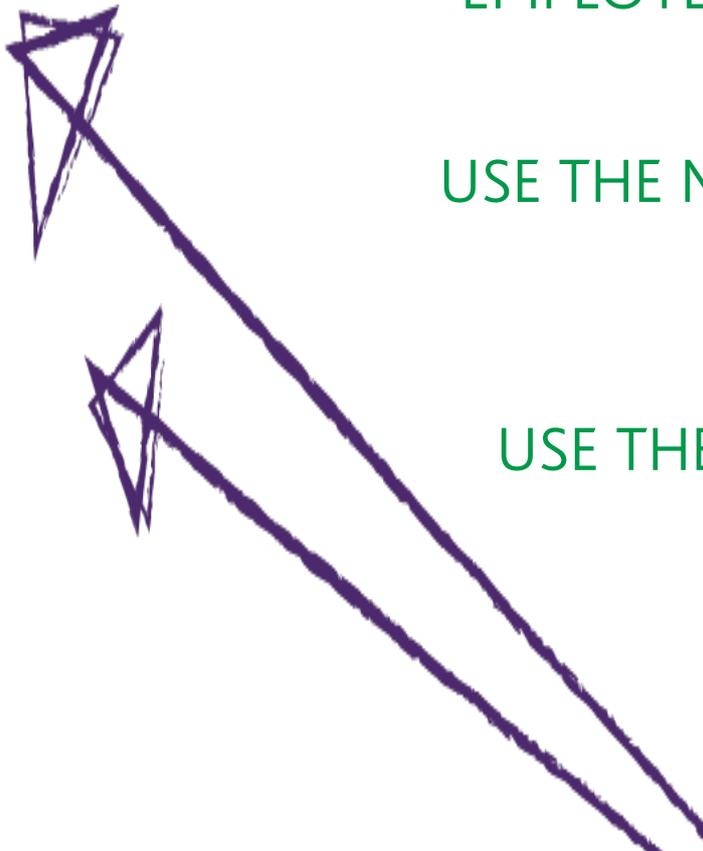
This gives an Employee Engagement Index of 62%.

Alternatively the mean scores can be averaged first, with the result then converted to a percentage.

REFLECT ON HOW YOU REPORT YOUR  
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SCORES

USE THE MEAN SCORE TO REFLECT  
EMPLOYEE VOICE FAIRLY

USE THE MEAN AS A % TO MAKE  
IT MORE INTUITIVE



## 9 SURVEY DESIGN AND RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

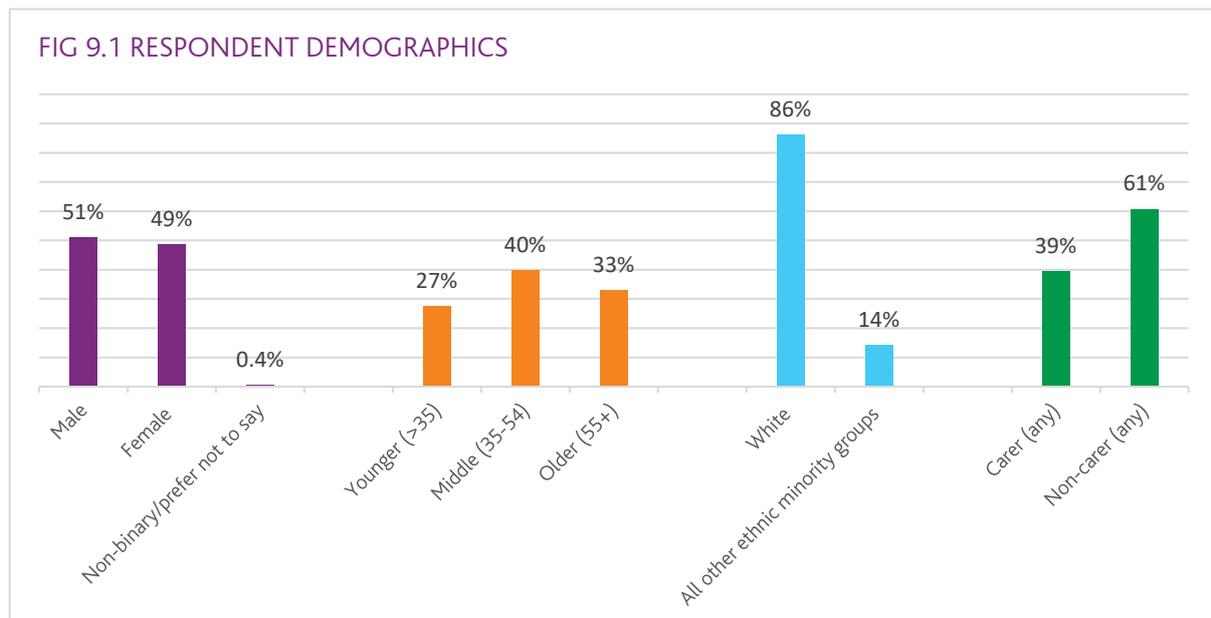
The survey was conducted online in August 2022. Respondents were sourced via Prolific (an online research platform providing access to vetted respondents) and collected using Qualtrics. There was a total sample of 953 respondents (unweighted figure) from a representative sample<sup>35</sup> of the UK population (across age, sex, and ethnicity). For the survey to be representative of the workforce, students, currently unemployed, and retired respondents were excluded from the sample. This provided a total sample of 814 respondents.

Data were analysed using appropriate statistical tests depending on the question and reported to a 95% confidence level.

As previously noted earlier in the report, this survey results are reported at an individual level. The most granular reporting of organisational surveys is at team or departmental level (depending on the number of respondents). Whilst individual employees complete the survey, organisations can not report the results at an individual level (indeed most would have no access to this) without breaching respondent confidentiality. As a result, they report it by averaging responses across a team or department.

Respondents were a representative sample of the UK population. A review of the latest ONS figures for age, gender, and ethnicity showed that our sample closely matched the ONS workforce levels for ethnicity and gender. However, there were slight discrepancies in age. This was largely due to the age categories reported by ONS differing from the age categories used for our survey. Specifically, ONS does not report on age beyond 64 years, whilst the EFS survey had no age cut-off, with 7% of respondents aged 65 years+.

Most respondents classified themselves as female (50.9%), closely followed by self-classification as male (48.6%). The remaining respondents classified themselves as either non-binary/third gender (0.4%) or preferred not to say (0.1%) (see Fig 9.1).



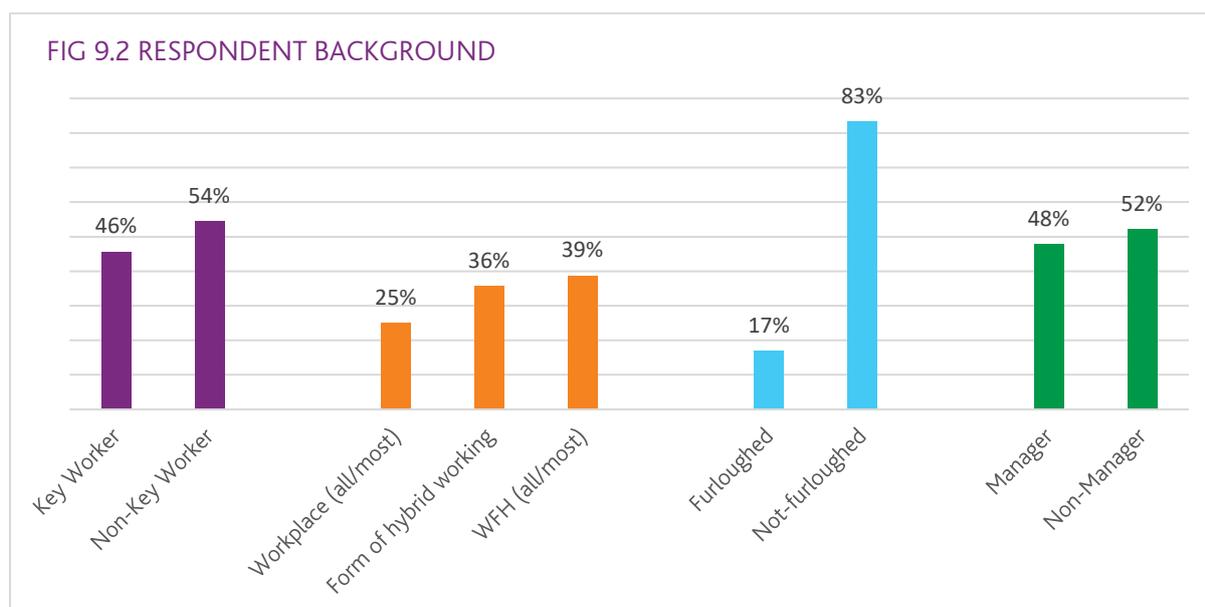
<sup>35</sup> Prolific representative sample: intended sample size is stratified across three demographics (age, sex and ethnicity) using census data from the UK Office of National Statistics to divide the sample into subgroups with the same proportions as the national population.

Respondents were asked if they had caring responsibilities for elderly or those with disabilities during the pandemic (see Fig 9.1), with the majority stating they had none (81%). Most respondents (74%) had no caring responsibilities for children or others in education, whilst 23% had caring responsibilities for children at school (12% at primary and 11% at secondary). The remaining respondents had children at college or university (4%), at preschool (2%) or a nursery/childminder (3%). Throughout the report, reference to 'carers' combines both those with caring responsibilities for elderly/disabilities and children/others in education.

During the pandemic, most respondents (59%) experienced no change to their employment status. Of those experiencing changes, 3% of respondents were made redundant, 7% decided to leave, 3% decided to retire during the pandemic. Maternity or paternity leave during the pandemic was experienced by 2% of respondents. During the pandemic, 17% of respondents were placed on furlough (for some or all of the pandemic - we do not know precisely how long they were on furlough).

During the pandemic, most respondents (54%) were not classified as essential/key workers (see Fig 9.2). The remaining respondents were classified as essential/key workers for all (32%) or part of the pandemic (14%).

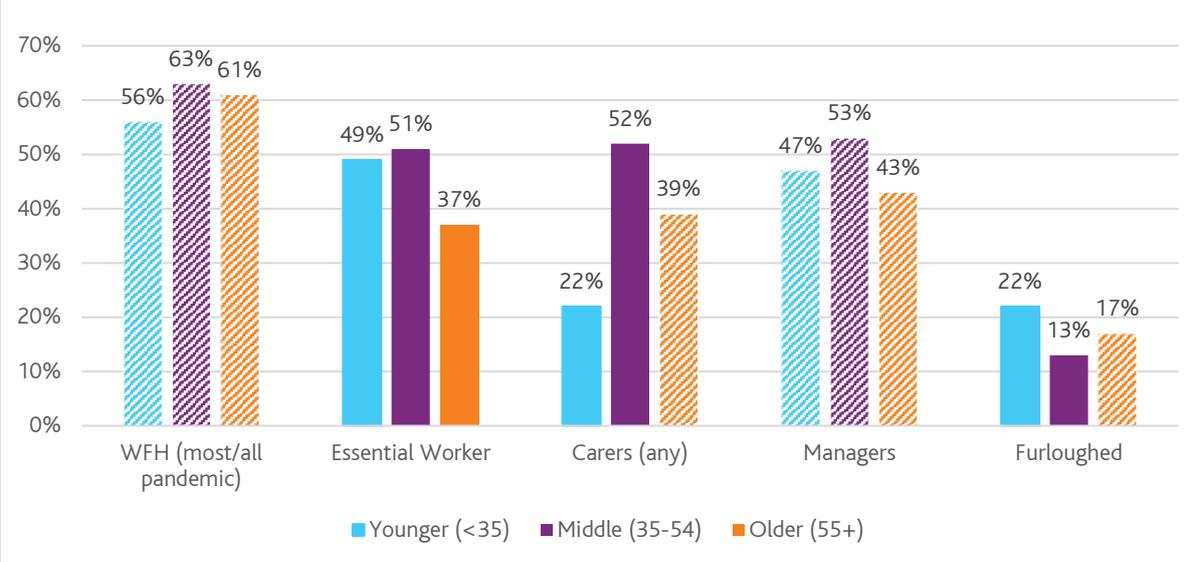
During the pandemic, most respondents worked from home all the time (39%), closely followed by hybrid working (36% mixed home/workplace). A quarter of respondents worked from their place of work all the time (25%).



Just under half of respondents directly managed others (48%), with most managers (60%) having responsibility for 1-5 people.

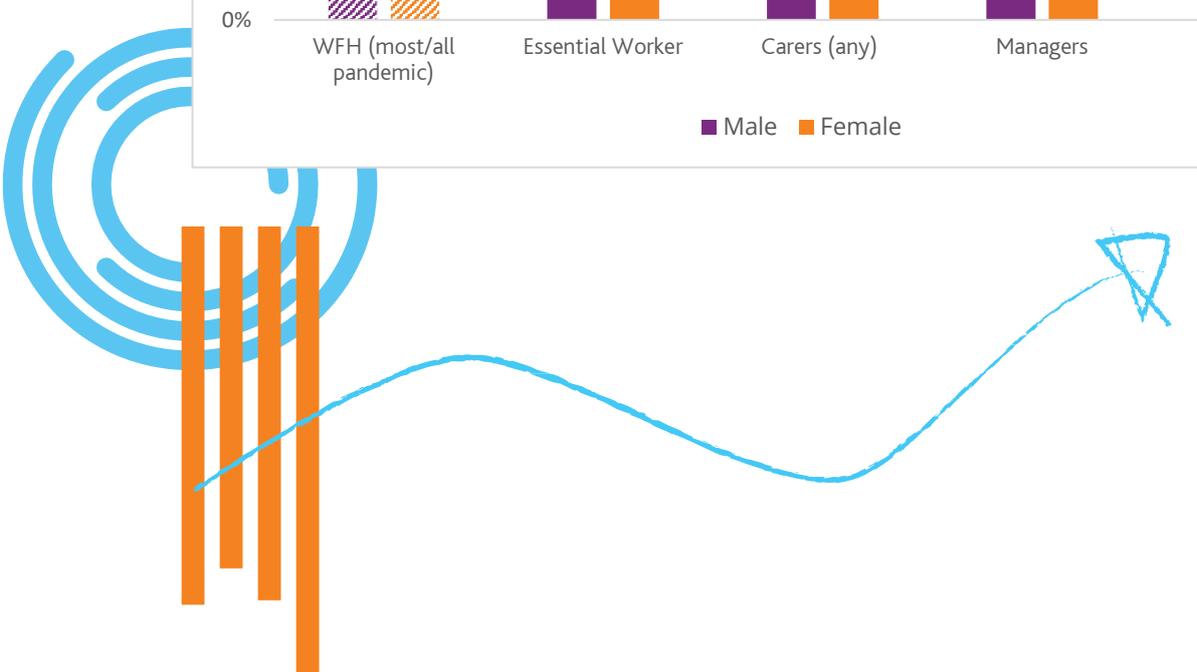
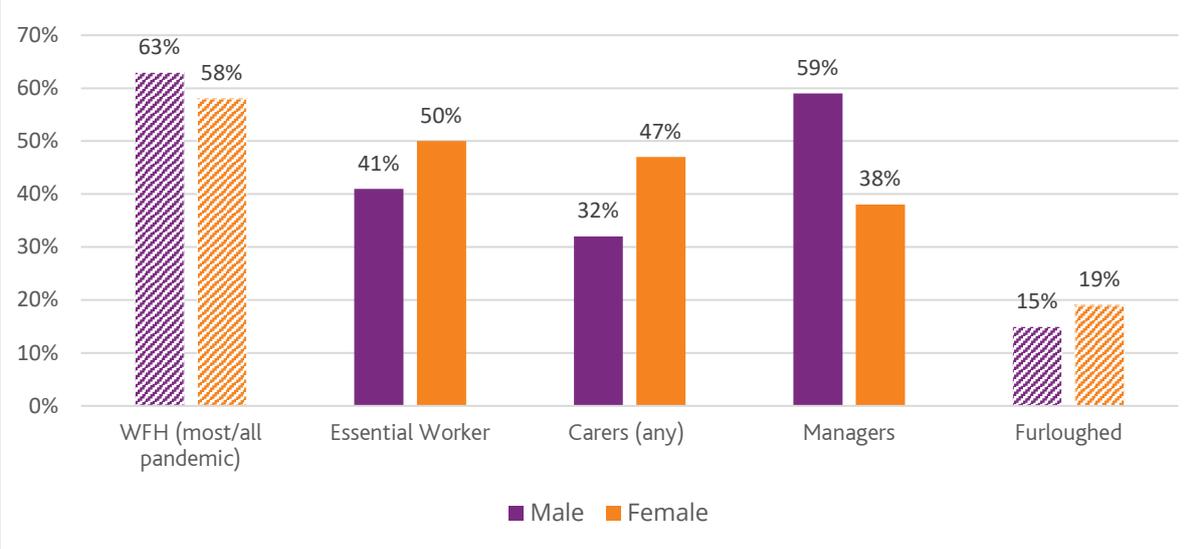
Comparing the data across different positions to age (see Fig 9.3) those in the older group (55+) were less likely to be Essential Workers. The younger group (<35) was less likely to have caring responsibilities (than the middle group 35-54) and were more likely to have been furloughed.

FIG 9.3 DIFFERENT SITUATIONS OF RESPONDENTS BY AGE GROUP



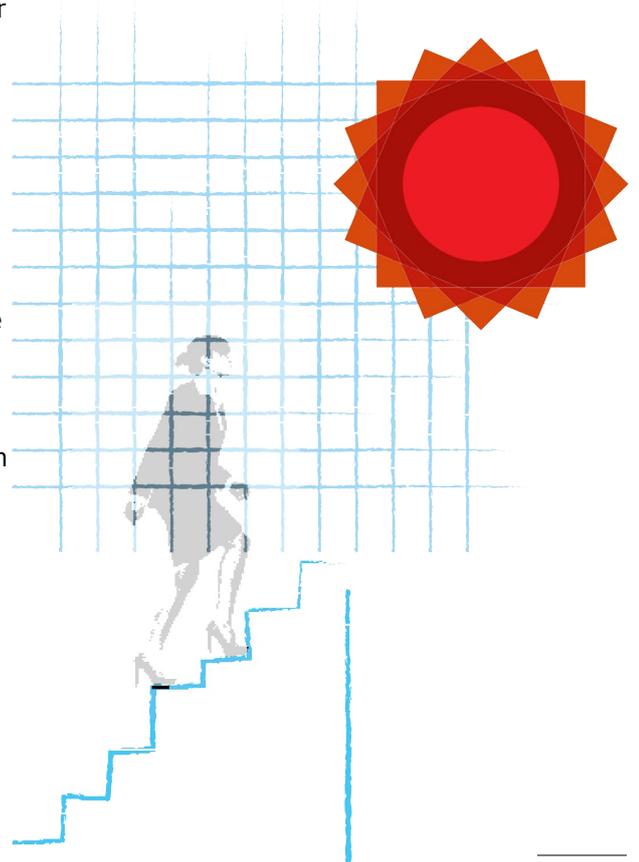
Statistically significant relationships can also be seen regarding sex and employee position. Unfortunately, due to the low number of responses for non-binary/prefer not to say, it was impossible to compare any relationships.

FIG 9.4 DIFFERENT SITUATIONS OF RESPONDENTS BY SEX



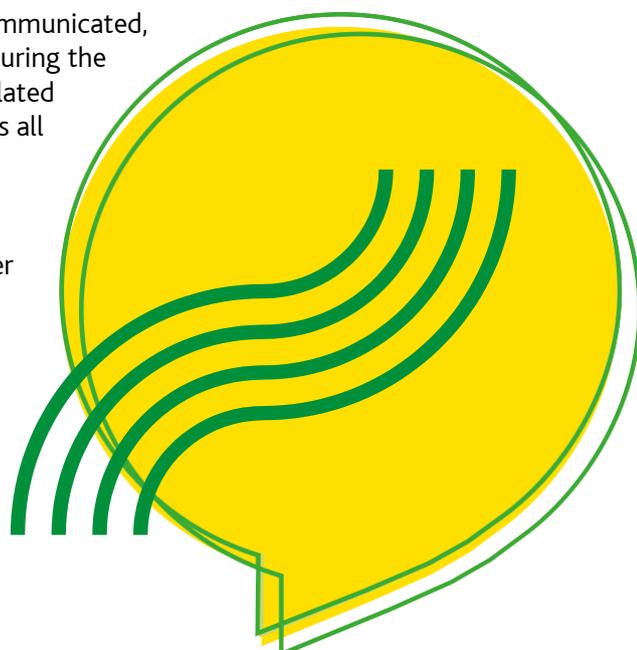
## 10 REPORT SUMMARY

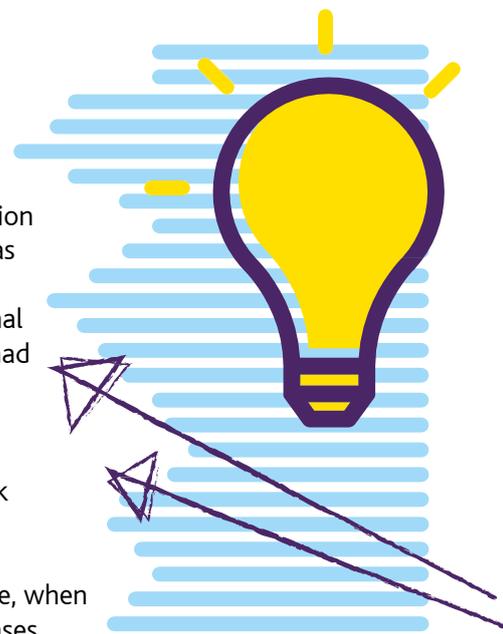
- ▶ The covid pandemic had a fundamental impact on the way we work and resulted in unprecedented levels of change, at a phenomenal pace. Worldwide restrictions caused a dispersed and divided workforce. As employees grappled with these changes, employers were tasked with keeping the organisation afloat. For many, this meant setting up vast numbers of employees as remote workers or redesigning office spaces according to covid restriction guidelines. For some, it required a vital rethink around their business model, for others, it resulted in reducing working hours, making redundancies, (or for those in the UK) join the governments furlough scheme. For many organisations, they needed to use a combination of these approaches. With the uncertainty of the pandemic and a focus on our families and friends, an impact on employee engagement was inevitable.
- ▶ The survey was conducted in August 2022 with respondents sourced from Prolific (an online research platform providing access to vetted respondents). There was a total of 953 respondents from a UK representative sample of the UK population (across age, sex, and ethnicity). For the survey to be representative of the workforce, students, currently unemployed, and retired respondents were excluded, providing a sample of 814. ONS figures compared at the time of the survey closely matched respondent characteristics, excluding age which slightly varied. This was largely due to the cut off ranges. ONS figures stop at 64 years, compared to our survey which included 65 years plus (7% of our sample).
- ▶ This report presents findings from a representative sample of the UK population (=814), weighted to working population. Examining engagement with the organisation, the job, with the line manager, and with colleagues, respondents were asked to self-reflect on their engagement before the pandemic, during, and now (August 2022). Findings show a clear picture; a significant decline in engagement levels during the **pandemic with an average drop of -11%**. A major concern is the lack of rebound, with engagement only **creeping up 3%**. As a result, the average level of **employee engagement is 8% lower now** than it was before the pandemic. Findings highlight variations in the impact on engagement both in relation to the employer response and in respondent background. For example, essential/key workers saw smaller drops in job and colleague engagement, with variations depending on location of work, and gender. Most significantly, respondents who had been on furlough saw a drop in engagement across job, colleague, manager and organisational engagement, and engagement levels remain lower than respondents who were not placed on furlough. This signals a potential longer-term impact of furlough and an issue to be considered by employers.
- ▶ Exploring the use of employee involvement methods, learning and development opportunities, online health and wellbeing initiatives, and communication channels, the data showed that how the employer responded during the pandemic contributed to the degree of drop in employee engagement. Significant variations were visible across bundles of methods.
- ▶ Examining **Employee Involvement methods**, the most common method used during the pandemic were



individual meetings with their line manager via a virtual platform or virtual team meeting. For respondents who experienced none of these methods during the pandemic, their levels of organisational engagement dropped -16%. This compared dramatically to an -8% drop by respondents who stated they had experienced 3 (or more) methods. A similar impact was seen for engagement with manager. Engagement levels were also impacted by the frequency of methods, specifically, the frequency of meeting with their line manager.

- ▶ Respondents were asked about the **Learning and Development opportunities** offered to them by their employer during the pandemic. A staggering 44% stated that their organisation did not provide any learning and development opportunities. For respondents who were offered opportunities, e-learning sessions by an internal team was the most common, followed by webinars and digital learning by external organisations. When looking at bundles of learning and development opportunities, a similar picture to employee involvement methods can be seen. Respondents who stated they were offered no learning and development opportunities saw a -13% drop in engagement with the organisation. This contrasts with a -6% drop for respondents who were offered 2 (or more) opportunities. Similar patterns were seen for job engagement and engagement with the manager.
- ▶ Examining **Communication Channels**, the most common method used during the pandemic were emails, followed by virtual meetings. Following a similar pattern, bundles of communication channels had a significant impact on engagement levels with job and manager engagement. The drop in job engagement for respondents experiencing a single method of communication was -14%. Whilst respondents who experienced 3 (or more) methods, showed a -6% drop in job engagement. The drop in organisational engagement was not statistically significant.
- ▶ **Online Health and Wellbeing initiatives** were not provided during the pandemic to over half of respondents (56%). The covid-19 pandemic had an unprecedented impact on our lives, both personally and professionally. For respondents offered health and wellbeing initiatives by their employer during the pandemic, the most common method were virtual downtime activities (44%). The availability of initiatives had an impact on organisational engagement, regardless of whether the respondent used the initiative. For example, when respondents reported no online counselling services were offered, there was a drop in organisational engagement of -13%, this compared to a -4% drop when counselling services were available. When initiatives were bundled together, the impact was more significant with a drop of -13% when no initiatives were provided, to only -1% when 4 (or more) initiatives were provided.
- ▶ It is evident from the findings that employers who communicated, involved, developed, and supported their employees during the pandemic, found engagement levels were largely insulated from its impact. Looking at the data collectively across all four bundles of methods (i.e., employee involvement methods, communication channels, learning and development opportunities, and online health and wellbeing initiatives) showed a variation in the number of methods and the drops in engagement. A **highly active employer** (who provided a range of methods across all four bundles) showed a minimal decline in engagement (3-5% drop) between pre and post pandemic figures. This contrasted sharply with **passive employers** (who provided minimal or no methods) experiencing a 14-15% drop.





- ▶ During the pandemic, the **line manager** became the main connection between employee and employer. The importance of their role was highlighted by the findings, specifically around the frequency of contact which impacted job, colleague, manager, and organisational engagement. For example, respondents who very rarely or never had contact with their line manager, showed a 50% organisational engagement level. For respondents who had daily contact, organisational engagement levels were 68%. There is minimal difference between daily contact and contact several times a week (67%).
- ▶ Just under half of respondents were line managers (48%). Of those, when asked whether they were accountable for engagement, the responses varied. The majority (32%) said they were accountable for the engagement of their team 'most of the time', compared to 24% who said they were 'sometimes' accountable. The majority did not write action plans for their team in response to engagement survey scores (34%), and the majority (25%) did not have the engagement of their team as part of their appraisal. Most managers stated they'd received some form of line manager training (63%); however, a high proportion had not received any (33%). We do not have data on the quality of training or when it was undertaken. Managers who had received training were more likely to write an action plan for the team in response to engagement survey scores. In addition, managers who had received training were more likely to say they felt their work was meaningful and important. They were also more likely to say engagement was a priority to themselves, their senior leaders, and for their organisation.
- ▶ More than two thirds of respondents (71%) stated that 'engaging the full capabilities and potential of people at work is getting more important' (22% much more important and 49% more important).
- ▶ An additional focus of the survey was to gain insight into UK levels of employee engagement through the development of an Employee Engagement Index (EEI). The aim was to develop a 'good starting point' in measuring the key outcome of engagement. The EEI is a combination of three simple questions focusing on overall satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy. Taking the average of these three questions (on a 5-point rating scale) from a representative sample of the UK population (n=814), **the 2022 UK Employee Engagement Index was 62%**. This is the mean score that has been converted into a percentage. Using the index as a basis, quartiles were developed, enabling organisations to consider how they are doing compared to the rest of the UK population. Correlations were found between the EEI and respondents considering their job meaningful, important, and believing in the purpose and vision of the organisation. In addition, correlations were seen between perceptions of engagement as a priority to their managers, senior leaders, and the organisation.

Anonymised survey data and associated documentation are available upon request from the NTU Data Achieve for research purposes, at <https://doi.org/10.17631/rd-2023-0002-ddat>

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# RESEARCH TEAM

CO-PROJECT LEAD



DR SARAH PASS

NOTTINGHAM BUSINESS SCHOOL (NTU)  
ENGAGE FOR SUCCESS BOARD MEMBER AND  
STEERING GROUP

CO-PROJECT LEAD



JAMES COURT-SMITH

STILLAE LTD  
ENGAGE FOR SUCCESS BOARD MEMBER  
AND STEERING GROUP CHAIR

## TEAM

DR YU-LING LUI-SMITH

NOTTINGHAM BUSINESS SCHOOL (NTU)

DR MARANDA RIDGWAY

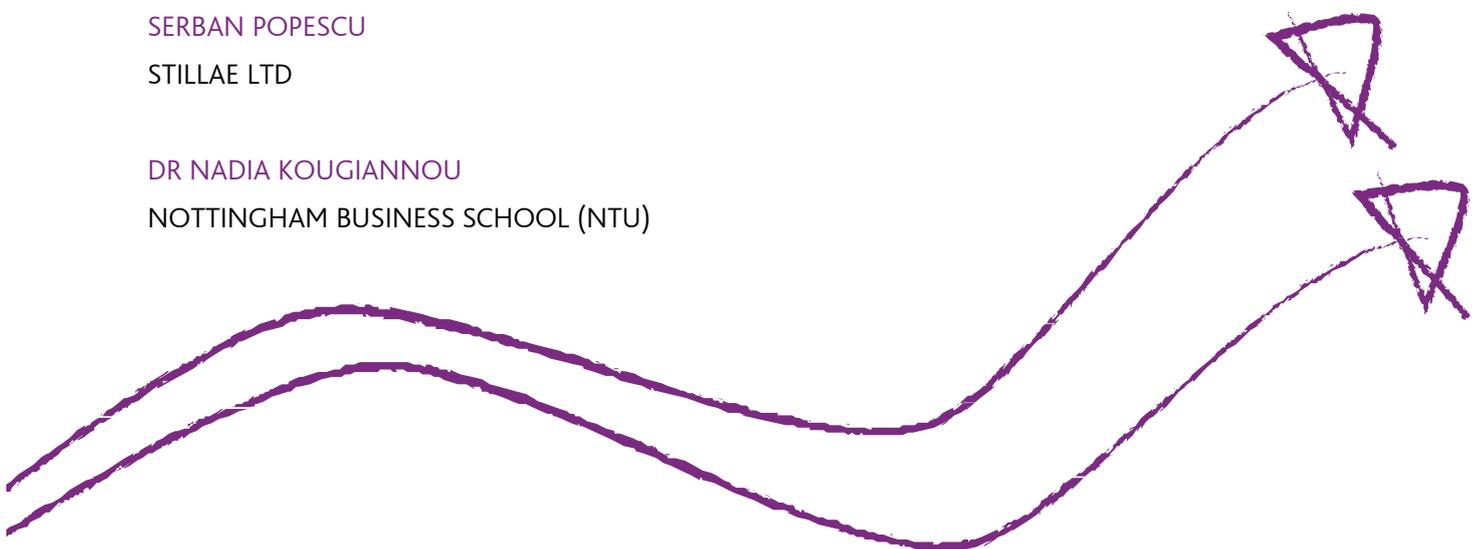
NOTTINGHAM BUSINESS SCHOOL (NTU)

SERBAN POPESCU

STILLAE LTD

DR NADIA KOUGIANNOU

NOTTINGHAM BUSINESS SCHOOL (NTU)





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## **Engage for Success**

c/o CIPD, The Broadway,  
London, SW19 1JQ, UK

[info@engageforsuccess.org](mailto:info@engageforsuccess.org)