



# 10 years of Britain's Healthiest Workplace:

The changing face of the UK at work

POWERED BY A DECADE OF DATA



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# "UK productivity is at a crossroads"

UK economic inactivity has been making headline news since the pandemic. This life-changing outbreak in 2020 is often pinpointed as a key turning point at which our nation's productivity problem came sharply into focus, alongside the declining health of the nation. In truth, and as this report will show, the origins of this downward trend can be traced back before that.

Over the past 10 years, Britain's Healthiest Workplace, one of the UK's largest surveys of employee wellbeing, has gathered deep insights into the many risk factors faced by employees. This period has seen staff productivity in the UK dwindle significantly and consistently, with lost productivity doubling over the course of a decade.

These findings mirror what other organisations report, with the Health Foundation predicting that more than nine million people in the UK will be living with a major chronic illness by 2040<sup>1</sup>. Given our ever-diminishing economic productivity rates compared to the United States, Germany and France<sup>2</sup>, this issue is now a pressing concern for the government and businesses of all sizes.

Today we live in an age when more is being expected of employers. Looking after staff is no longer an after-thought – but recognised as bringing benefits to growth and productivity.

Our working practices have also changed dramatically since the pandemic, with more widespread flexible and remote working: which continues to attract much debate.

Over the past 10 years, over 600 employers and almost 200,000 employees have participated in Britain's Healthiest Workplace, and the wealth of data generated helps to confirm that the physical and mental health of employees is intrinsically linked to their productivity at work. This directly impacts businesses,

most significantly through absenteeism and presenteeism (where employees turn up but are unable to perform at their best).

By connecting the dots and drawing conclusions on workplace wellbeing trends, the Britain's Healthiest Workplace data conveys a clear message: that a healthier, happier and more productive workforce is better for everyone. Staff and their families benefit and so do the employing businesses which then help improve our nation's economy when it is so clearly needed.

**Dame Carol Black GBE**



**A healthier,  
happier  
and more  
productive  
workforce  
is better for  
everyone.**

1. Health in 2040: projected patterns of illness in England - The Health Foundation 2023
2. The UK's productivity gap: what did it look like twenty years ago? - Economics Observatory, 2024

# Note on the data

## Britain's Healthiest Workplace

Britain's Healthiest Workplace is a survey of employers and employees run by Vitality since 2014, consisting of questions on workplace wellbeing strategies, organisational culture and employees' physical health, mental wellbeing and lifestyle behaviour.

The survey took place between 2014-2019, and 2022-2023 (but not during 2020 and 2021 due to the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic). This provides us with data points across eight separate survey years, comprising approximately 600 organisations and 198,000 employees.

**The BHW data-set:**  
**8 surveys between 2014-2023**  
**600 organisations**  
**198,000 employees**

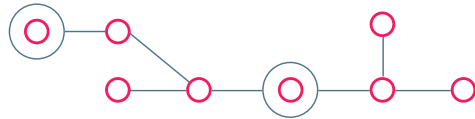
BRITAIN'S  
HEALTHIEST  
WORKPLACE



### Snap Survey, 2024

In October 2024, Vitality conducted a survey of 2,000 UK employees, in partnership with Opinium. These employees were asked how their health and wellbeing has changed, their perspectives on the support offered by their employer, and attitudes towards remote and flexible working.

The report also calls upon a variety of Vitality and external sources for further insight on health, wellbeing and productivity.



All data referenced is **Britain's Healthiest Workplace 2014-2023** unless otherwise sourced.



## The productivity problem

Our productivity is getting worse

Lost productivity has more than doubled since 2014.

In 2023, the average UK employee lost the equivalent of **49.7 days of productive time** - due to absenteeism and presenteeism.



Lost productivity due to ill-health is estimated to have cost the UK economy **£860 billion over the past 10 years**, between 2014 and 2023.

On average, **productivity losses are greater for younger employees**, compared to older employees.



 **Presenteeism** accounts for approximately **90%**

 **Absenteeism** accounts for approximately **10%**

Health and productivity are closely linked

Britain's Healthiest Workplace shows a **clear correlation between employees' physical and mental health, and their health-related productivity loss over time**. This underscores the need for employers to prioritise employee wellbeing and to register it as a tangible risk facing their business.



**Employees at risk of depression lose on average**

**151% more productive time.**



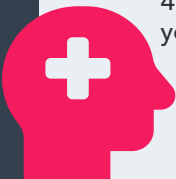
## The UK's mental and physical health landscape

### Younger generations are struggling mentally



As a society, **our mental health is deteriorating**, with rates of depression and anxiety rising.

Those **aged 35 and younger are 63% more likely to suffer from depression** compared to employees older than 35; 15% more likely to experience burnout, and 55% more likely to report having a lot of financial concerns.



**Younger employees are also more likely than older employees to say that their mental health has worsened** since before the pandemic - 40% of those younger than 35 say that their mental health has worsened\*.

### Unhealthy living is a significant challenge

**Obesity rates have increased by 51% since 2014.**



In 2023, **37% of employees were physically inactive**, and more than half (56%) did not eat a healthy diet.



**Smoking rates and alcohol consumption are lower** in 2023 than they were 10 years ago.



## The changing face of work

### Employers face a challenge to drive awareness and participation with workplace health initiatives



**63%** of employees want their employer to **do more to support their health\***.

**Mental health support, private medical insurance and financial wellbeing support are the most in-demand services\*** ✓



There is a participation gap, **employees use just 25% of the interventions offered to them** on average.



### Attitudes to remote working are complex

Employees generally feel **remote working is good for their physical and mental health.**



However, attitudes to productivity are nuanced, with some concerns that employees may be less productive and less available while working remotely.



Britain's Healthiest Workplace data indicates that health - rather than where we work - is the most important factor for our productivity.

\* Vitality and Opinium, 2024



SECTION ONE

# The UK's productivity problem

Numerous factors have hit UK productivity levels hard in recent years. From the effects of the pandemic to staff shortages and changing working practices, all set against a cost-of-living crisis and global uncertainty.

However, no contributing factor has been as widely documented as the health and wellbeing challenges we face as a nation, with around nine million people recorded as economically inactive between August and October 2024<sup>3</sup>.

3. UK Labour Market Statistics 2024

# Lost productivity has more than doubled over the past decade

Looking at Britain's Healthiest Workplace data, **lost productivity has more than doubled across a 10-year period** - from 23 lost days of productivity in 2014 to around 50 lost days in 2022 and 2023.

In financial terms, this represented a staggering £138bn in lost productivity to the UK economy in 2023. We estimate that lost productivity due to employee health cost the UK economy £860bn between 2014-2023. This is over and above other impacts of ill-health, including direct costs to the healthcare budget, and health-related benefits for working aged people<sup>4</sup>.

## Is it getting any better?

A snap survey from October 2024, across a different sample group of 2,000 employees, points to a potentially worsening UK productivity crisis driven largely by ill-health. Using the same methodology of calculating productivity loss as Britain's Healthiest Workplace, employees reported even higher levels of absenteeism and presenteeism in 2024 - **equivalent to 91 working days per employee**<sup>5</sup>.

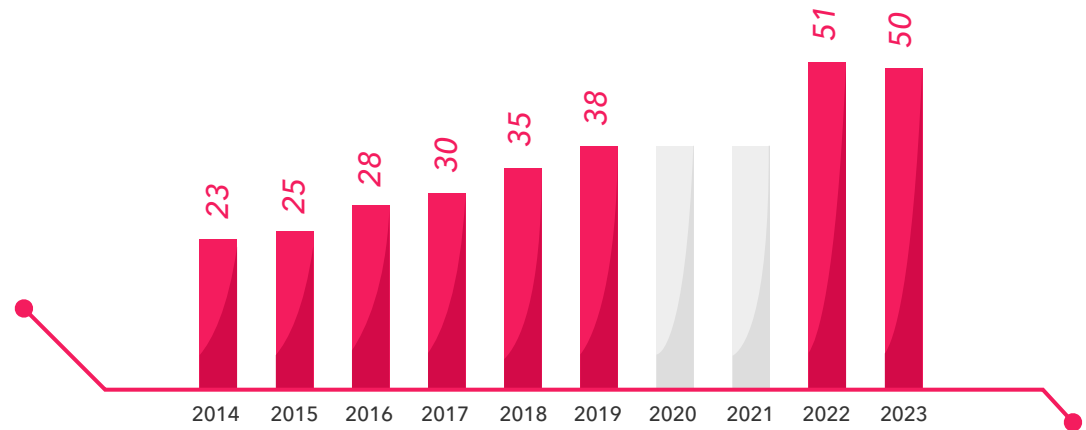


**Presenteeism** - time at work, but not performing optimally due to ill-health.



**Absenteeism** - time taken off work due to ill-health.

### LOST PRODUCTIVITY (DAYS)



Britain's Healthiest Workplace did not take place in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## How do we measure productivity?

Britain's Healthiest Workplace measures productivity in the form of absenteeism (time taken off work due to ill-health) and presenteeism (time employees may have spent at work, but where their performance has been hampered by poor health). A major challenge facing employers is the fact that, despite having processes in place to track and manage formal absence from work, presenteeism (which is 'unseen' and harder to track) accounts for **NEARLY 90% OF ALL LOST PRODUCTIVITY.**

4. Financial impact of lost productivity is calculated based on lost productivity as a % of wages, numbers of people in full or part-time work, and median salaries for the respective years (according to ONS data between 2013-2024). For 2020 and 2021, when Britain's Healthiest Workplace did not take place, we have made a conservative estimate of £92 billion lost - based on the figure calculated in 2019.

5. Vitality and Opinium, 2024



## What's driving productivity loss?

### Worsening mental and physical health

Since 2014, rates of mental health risks, such as depression and anxiety, have increased significantly as the UK workforce has grappled with a plethora of challenges - from the pandemic to changing working patterns amid social uncertainty. Meanwhile, obesity rates, unhealthy eating and musculoskeletal problems have risen during this period.

### A rapidly shifting work environment

In recent years, we've seen flexible, remote and hybrid working patterns become mainstream. The effect of this on our health and productivity has been hotly debated, and our data illustrates the different attitudes employees hold.

### Health and productivity differs based on age

Mental and physical health risks differ significantly for employees of different ages, and this has a knock-on effect on productivity. Younger generations are more likely to suffer from mental ill-health, and lose on average more productive time.

## Connecting the dots: our health and productivity are highly correlated

There is a **clear correlation between a range of health risks and employee productivity losses**, with mental health appearing as a major influencing factor.

In 2023, compared to employees not at risk:



An employee at risk of **depression** is estimated to lose **151%** more productive time.



Someone experiencing **burnout** loses **119%** more productive time.



**Physically inactive** employees lose **28%** more productive time.

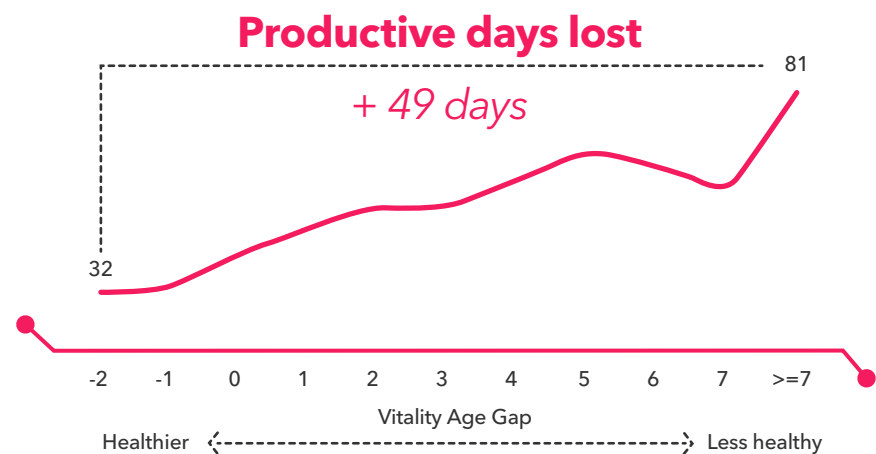


Those eating an **unhealthy diet** lose **14%** more productive time.

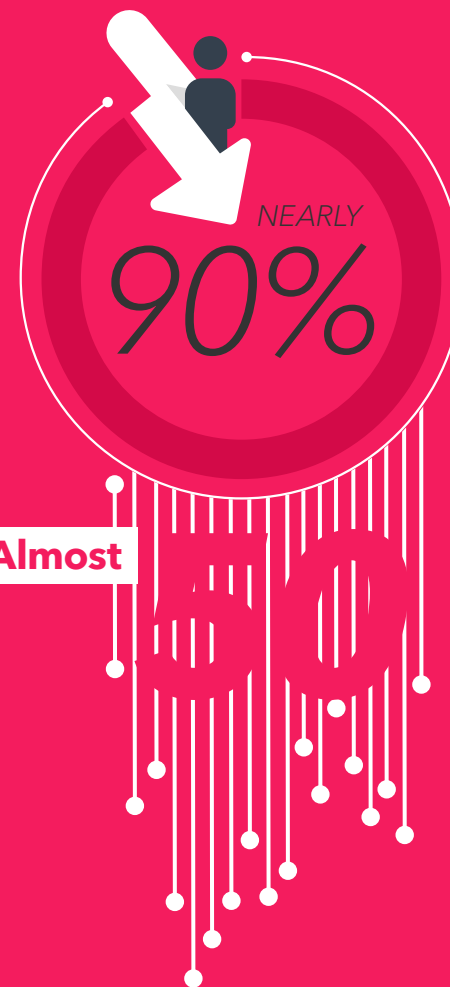
## But there is a silver lining...

For employers, the number of days productivity lost per employee in 2023 equated to **approximately 20% of their wage bill** due to employee health and wellbeing issues. However, the research also shows that healthier employees lose less productive time on average, indicating that supporting healthy behaviour in the workplace can unlock business benefits too.

HEALTHIER EMPLOYEES LOSE SIGNIFICANTLY LESS PRODUCTIVE TIME



Vitality Age is the calculated 'health age' of an individual based on their health risks - including physical activity levels, smoking and mental health. Britain's Healthiest Workplace data shows that the greater their Vitality Age gap (when Vitality Age is higher than their real age), the less productive they are. For example, those with a Vitality Age that's seven years higher than their real age lost 81 days of productivity in 2023, compared to 32 days lost for those with a Vitality Age that's two years younger than their real age (indicating very good health).



**of all lost productivity between 2014 and 2023 was caused by presenteeism.**

*PRODUCTIVE DAYS LOST*  
**per employee on average in 2023.**



**£860BN**  
*ESTIMATED COST TO UK ECONOMY*  
**as a result of lost productivity due to ill-health between 2014 and 2023.**



# The UK's mental and physical health landscape

While it's difficult to pinpoint one single reason for the UK's high levels of lost productivity, mental health issues are on the rise and employees continue to suffer from poor physical health.

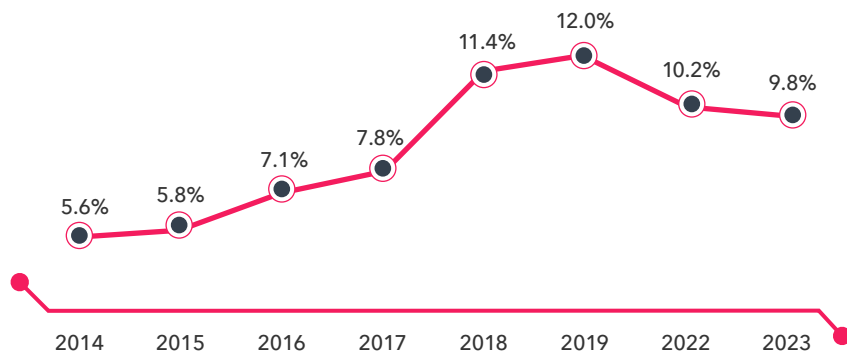
We're also seeing differing levels of productivity loss across generations. Older employees are losing less productive time and less likely to report symptoms of anxiety and depression than younger generations.

# Employee mental health: A downward spiral

The mental health situation in the UK has continued to worsen in recent years. **Since 2014, anxiety and depression rates among UK workers have risen 75%.** Additionally, financial worries are common, with 52% expressing concerns in 2023, 10% of which are severe. In 2023, 15% of employees reported burnout - defined as a result of chronic workplace stress.

These factors are putting additional pressure on public services, with the NHS revealing record numbers of mental health referrals in recent years. The private sector has also been impacted, with the Association of British Insurers (ABI) reporting that counselling and therapy sessions funded by private medical insurance (PMI) more than doubled between 2019 and 2022<sup>6</sup>.

## ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION RATES



Britain's Healthiest Workplace did not take place in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## A generational divide

Analysis of the Britain's Healthiest Workplace data highlights significant differences in the physical and mental health risks affecting different generations of employees.

Somewhat surprisingly, on average, older employees (50 and older) are losing the least productive time when compared to younger employees, despite showing signs of poor physical health and lifestyle risk factors. Older employees show the highest rates of obesity (27%) and are most likely to not be reaching weekly physical activity guidelines (42%). They are also most likely to drink to excess (29%). However, there are stark differences in mental health risk between different generations, with older employees being significantly less likely to report symptoms of mental ill-health, or high levels of financial concerns.

## Money and mental health

Younger employees are at significantly higher risk of anxiety and depression, with 14% of under 35s and 10% of those aged 35 to 49 being at risk, compared to 5% of those aged 50 or over.

Rates of depression have more than doubled for employees aged 35 to 49, a life stage often referred to as the 'sandwich generation' due to caring responsibilities for elderly parents and young children.

Concerningly, under 35s are the most likely to report significant financial concerns (13%), while more than one in 10 (11%) of employees aged 35 to 49 are also reporting this, compared to just 5% of those aged 50 and older.

6. Growing demand: increased use of health and protection services in 2022, ABI 2024

Rates of depression have **MORE THAN DOUBLED** over the past 10 years for those aged 35 to 49.

## Younger employees need mental support the most

While mental health is a growing concern for employees of all ages, Britain's Healthiest Workplace data highlights the scale of the problem facing younger employees in particular. In 2023, those aged 35 and younger were 63% more likely to suffer from depression and 55% more likely to suffer from significant financial concerns compared to older employees (those older than 35).

The research conducted by Vitality and Opinium in October 2024 also revealed that, relative to older employees, younger employees are more likely to feel that their physical and mental health has worsened since before the pandemic.

With productivity loss being highest for this generation, and Labour Market Statistics also showing rising levels of economic activity among under 35s<sup>7</sup>, this highlights the important role employers can play in supporting younger employees in particular.

## A proactive approach to prevention

There is a clear case for employers to put in place proactive ways to prevent issues before they occur or intervene at early stages.

Wider Vitality data points to the potential benefits of a preventative approach for managing mental wellbeing<sup>8</sup>:



When people get **active just two days per week**, this reduces their risk of being hospitalised for a mental health issue by **17%**.



Timely access to **Talking Therapies treatment (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy)** reduced their risk of being hospitalised for a mental health issue by **21%**.



Timely access to **Talking Therapies** even reduced their risk of being hospitalised for a non-mental health issue by **20%**.

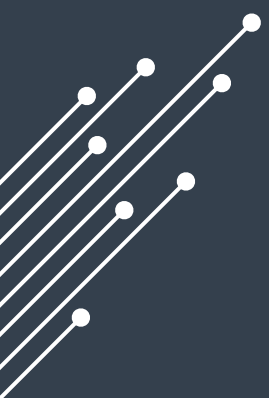
This clear evidence of the two-way relationship between our physical and mental wellbeing highlights the opportunity for employers to help get staff more active. Workplace initiatives such as lunchtime run clubs, team sports and meetings on the move can all help play a role in improving not just physical, but also mental health.

VITALITY HEALTH CLAIMS INSIGHTS



7. Labour Market Statistics, September 2024 | Institute for Employment Studies, 2024

8. Vitality Claims Insights report 2023



**OBESITY RATES UP 51% between 2014 and 2023**

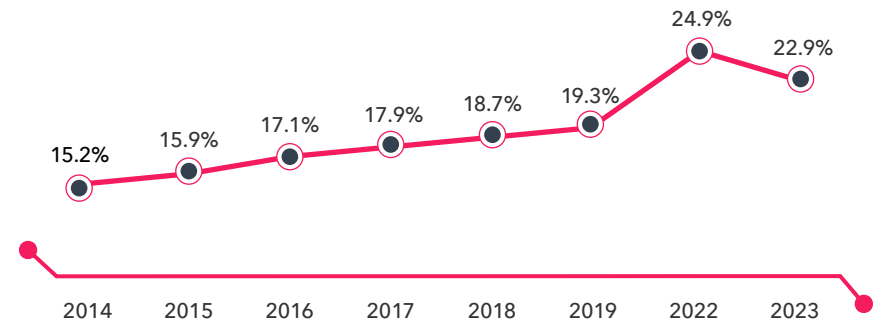
## Unhealthy living is a growing challenge

Whether it's rising obesity, barriers to physical activity or the negative consequences of a sedentary lifestyle, **encouraging employees to make healthy lifestyle choices has never been harder**. But this has made the role of employers even more crucial.

## Obesity rates are increasing

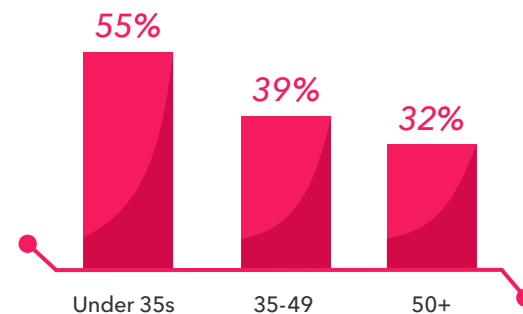
Our data shows that over a third (37%) of employees did not reach recommended physical activity guidelines and more than half (56%) were not eating healthily in 2023. Unhealthy lifestyles are contributing to rising obesity rates in the UK, with Britain's Healthiest Workplace showing that 23% of employees were obese in 2023 - a 51% increase since 2014. Concerningly, while obesity is still more common among older people, its increase has been most rapid for younger people. Between 2014 and 2023, under 35s have seen a 55% rise in obesity rates compared to 39% and 32% increases among 35 to 49s and those 50 and older respectively.

**OBESITY RATES**



Britain's Healthiest Workplace did not take place in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

**INCREASE IN OBESITY RATES 2014-2023**



# Physical activity and the role employers can play

While we are marginally more active than 10 years ago, 37% of UK employees were not reaching weekly exercise guidelines in 2023.

Vitality research in partnership with London School of Economics (LSE) has pointed to the profound benefits of healthy habits when it comes to physical activity. People who recorded 10,000 steps three times each week saw a 41% reduction in their risk of type 2 diabetes, and a 19% reduction in incidence of cancer. Exercising three or more times each week for three years was also linked to a 27% reduction in overall mortality<sup>9</sup>.

Given the health and longevity benefits of physical activity, and the link to workplace productivity, it's not just employees that benefit - it's better for business too.

## Women are more likely to be inactive than men

Around 42% of women are not reaching physical activity guidelines, compared to 33% of men, indicating a particular challenge for employers to promote exercise amongst female employees.

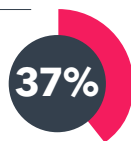
[Recent research from Vitality on the motivations and barriers for women getting active](#) highlights the potential role employers can play, with nearly half of women saying that a decreased workload or more flexible working hours would help them to be more physically active<sup>10</sup>.

9. The Habit Index: Vitality and LSE, 2024

10. Active women, healthy lives: Understanding barriers to women's participation in physical activity, Vitality 2024

11. Vitality Health Claims Insights Report 2024

12. Use-of-vapes-among-adults-in-Great-Britain-2024, Action on Smoking and Health, 2024



37% of employees do not reach **weekly exercise guidelines**

## Our musculoskeletal health has worsened

Musculoskeletal conditions continue to remain a concern. In 2023, eight in 10 employees report at least one musculoskeletal problem and more than half report two or more. The proportion of employees with multiple musculoskeletal conditions has also been increasing, with 20% more employees reporting two or more conditions in 2023 compared to 2014.

Rates of musculoskeletal issues are the highest for employees who work remotely all of the time, which may in part be caused by poorly set-up home working equipment.

Perhaps surprisingly, younger employees - not usually the focus of musculoskeletal health interventions - have seen the biggest increase in the occurrence of musculoskeletal issues over the past 10 years. This is reinforced by Vitality Health claims data, which shows that physiotherapy claims rates are highest for 30 to 50-year-olds<sup>11</sup>.

## Smoker rates have dropped

Since 2014, the percentage of employees who smoke has reduced from 11% to 9%. This reflects a longstanding societal trend of decreasing smoking rates, with the 2007 smoking ban, increased taxation and health warnings on tobacco packaging all examples of the government's focus on encouraging smoking cessation. However, this does not include vaping and e-cigarettes which have emerged in recent years. They are currently used by 5.6 million adults<sup>12</sup>.

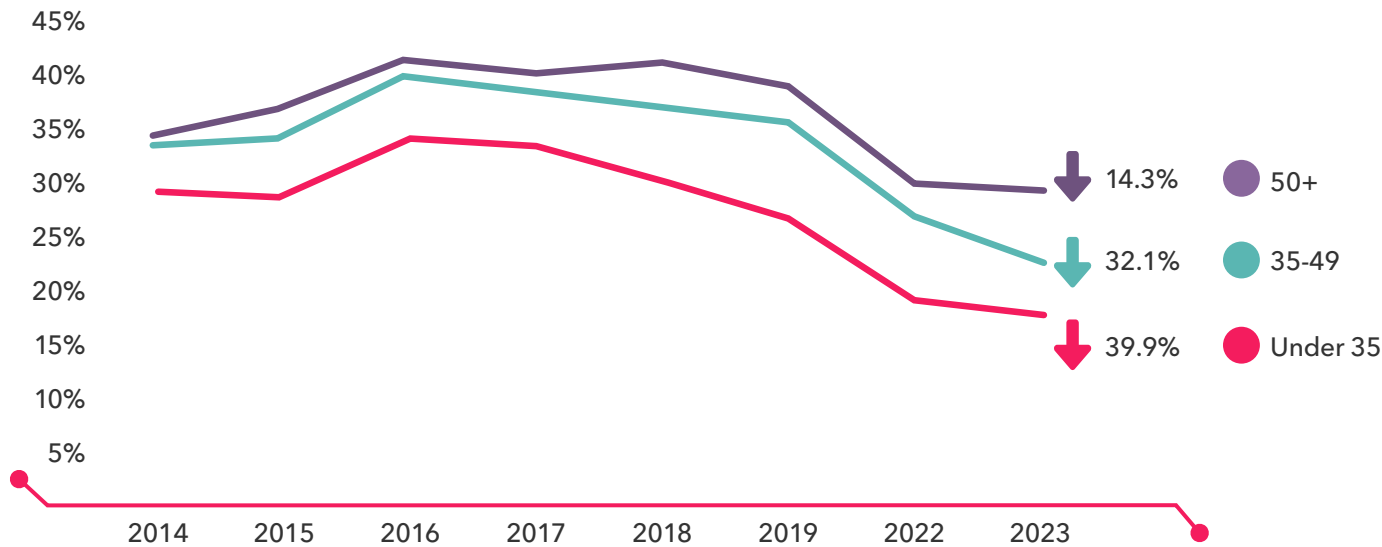
With the average employer offering at least one smoking cessation benefit, and approximately 20% of employees who smoke participating, there are signs that employers have also played a role in reducing the number of smokers in the UK. While this trend has been observed among all age groups, younger employees (under 35s) have consistently been the most likely group to smoke.

## Younger employees drinking to excess less

The proportion of employees exceeding weekly alcohol guidelines have reduced significantly, from 32% in 2014 to just 23% in 2023. Interestingly, unlike smoking, younger employees (under 35) were 31% less likely to drink to excess compared to employees aged 35 and older in 2023. While employees of all ages have reduced their alcohol intake, this has been most pronounced for the under 35s, with a 40% reduction between 2014 and 2023.

While reduction in excessive alcohol consumption is a positive development, which would be expected to drive a long-term health benefit for UK employees, it is questionable whether this has been driven by changes in the workplace itself. Britain's Healthiest Workplace data not only shows that fewer alcohol interventions are offered on average by employers, but that usage of these interventions is extremely low. In fact, just 1% of employees reported using alcohol interventions on offer to them.

RATES OF EXCEEDING ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION GUIDELINES



Britain's Healthiest Workplace did not take place in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## The aftermath of the pandemic

Our snap survey of 2,000 UK employees in October 2024 showed that younger employees more generally felt like the pandemic had a negative impact on their mental and physical health<sup>13</sup>.

### Compared to employees 35 and older, under 35s were:

- 43% more likely to feel that their mental wellbeing had worsened, relative to before the pandemic.
- 32% more likely to feel their physical health had worsened.
- 20% more likely to feel that financial worries had risen.
- 95% more likely to feel their lifestyle choices - such as smoking, drinking and physical activity - had suffered.
- 55% more likely to feel their stress levels at work had increased.
- 103% more likely to feel their relationships with colleagues have been negatively impacted.

13. Vitality and Opinium, 2024



# The working environment

The past five years brought more change in the workplace than most decades. The role that employers are expected to play in the lives of employees changed almost overnight during the pandemic, and the attitudes of younger generations have also shifted.

We've since seen hybrid and remote working become the norm for many businesses, bidding farewell to traditional 9 to 5 ways of working. But is this good or bad for our health and productivity? And with this presenting new challenges and opportunities for businesses, how can employers create working environments which support health and boost performance?

# Employers are investing, but are they doing enough?

Worsening rates of employee mental health and falling productivity levels have put even greater focus on the shifting role of employers in recent years, especially as employee expectations have changed.

The good news is that employee health appears to be on the agenda for the majority of businesses. Almost three quarters (73%) of businesses report that employee health is discussed at least annually at Board level. Some 85% discuss it at Executive Committee level. While positive, there is still some way to go. The poll of 2,000 UK employees in October 2024 also revealed that 63% of employees believe that their employers should be doing more to support their health and wellbeing.

The survey also found that employers are falling behind employee expectations in terms of the initiatives they offer. Employees rated mental health support, private medical insurance and financial wellbeing support as the most useful health and wellbeing initiatives. However, far fewer employees were aware of these being offered by their employer. Provision appeared significantly lower than demand for all initiatives, with the exception of cycle to work schemes (see table).

## MOST USEFUL AND MOST OFFERED WORKPLACE HEALTH INITIATIVES

	% of employees who selected the initiative as <b>being most useful</b> to employees	% of employees who <b>report being offered this initiative</b> by their employer
Mental health support	45%	29%
Private medical insurance	40%	18%
Financial wellbeing support	35%	14%
Return-to-work support after illness	32%	24%
Health initiatives like run clubs, healthy eating, gym membership	27%	14%
Rewards for healthy living	26%	8%
Virtual GP access	26%	13%
Line manager training on employee health & wellbeing	21%	13%
Cycle to work scheme	16%	26%

Source: Vitality and Opinium 2024.

For the questions shown in the table above: employees were able to select more than one category in response to these questions in the survey, hence the percentages do not add up to 100%.

## More accountability and better communication needed to drive take-up

Many employers still do not have measures in place to drive accountability for employee health and wellbeing. **Just 10% of employers publish health and wellbeing information within external reports.** Less than half (47%) have a health or wellness committee and just 29% measure return on investment from their health and wellbeing strategy.

### Quality not quantity

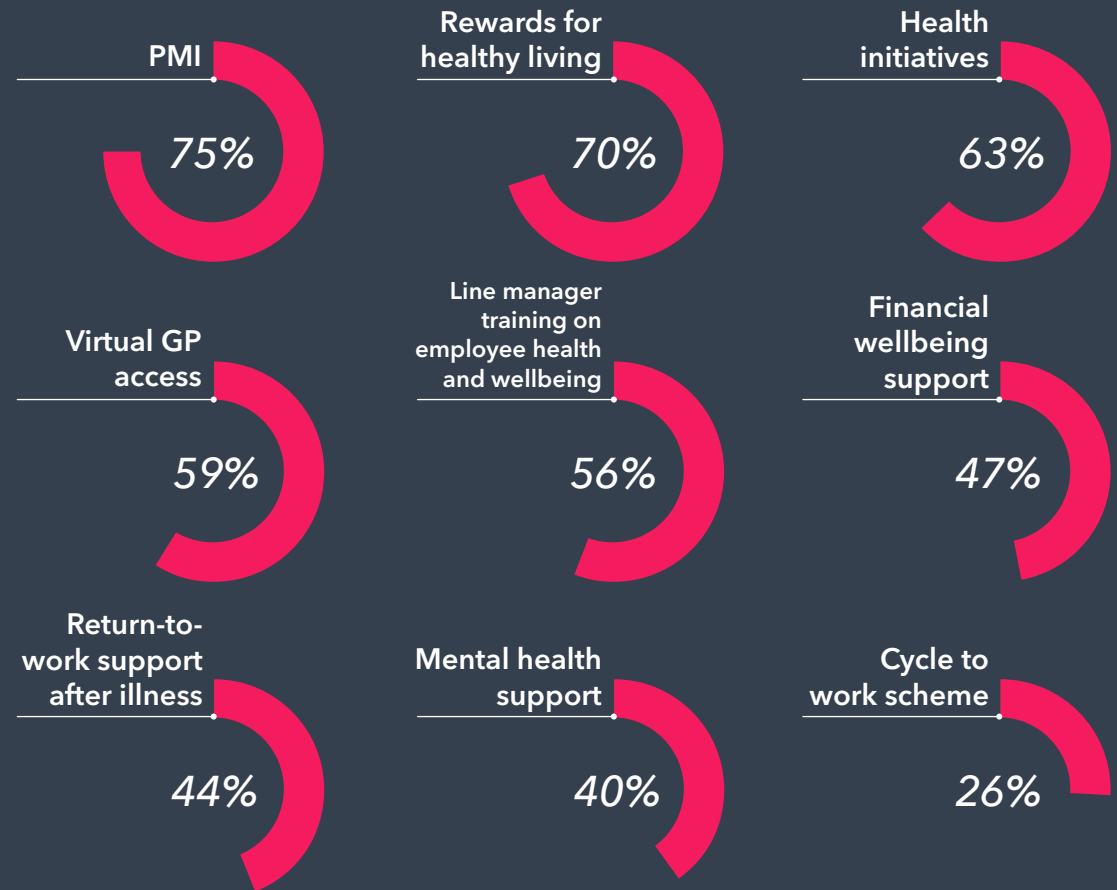
Given the sheer number of workplace interventions being offered - on average 47 per employer - it is clear some employees are simply unaware of what's on offer, or services are not resonating. According to Britain's Healthiest Workplace, while employees are, on average, aware of 70% of the interventions available to them, they use just 25% of them.

Vitality's latest research, however, indicates that when employees are made aware of initiatives on offer, usage of benefits such as private medical insurance, rewards for Healthy Living, and health initiatives such as run clubs, healthy eating and gym membership can be significantly higher.

This points to a need to take a more strategic, targeted approach with workplace wellbeing initiatives.

### PARTICIPATION IN WORKPLACE INITIATIVES

(% based on the cases where the particular initiative is available to employees)



Source: Vitality and Opinium 2024.

For the percentages above: employees could select more than one option hence the percentages do not sum to 100%.

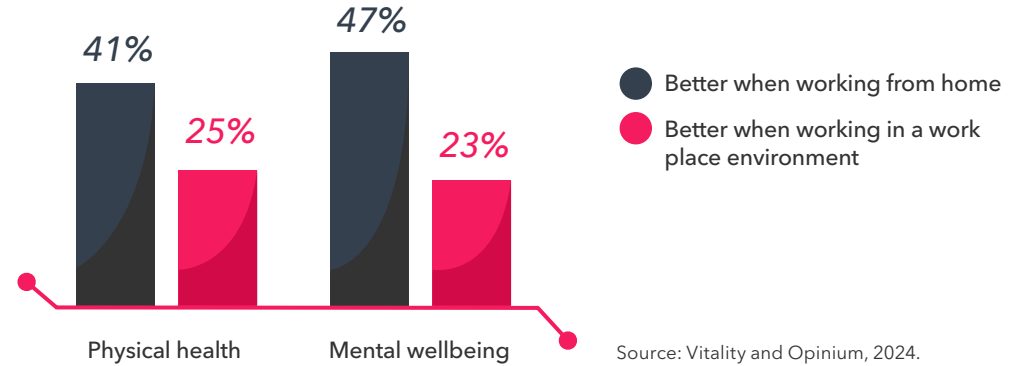
# The hybrid conundrum: Is remote working good for our health?

Our ways of working have undergone significant changes in recent years. Britain's Healthiest Workplace data suggests that around 63% of employees work from home at least some of the time, with 8% working fully remotely. While organisations were quick to adopt remote working during Covid-19, there are signs that many are now moving back to more regulated approaches - with some mandating full-time office attendance, or that employees come into the office for a certain number of days a week.

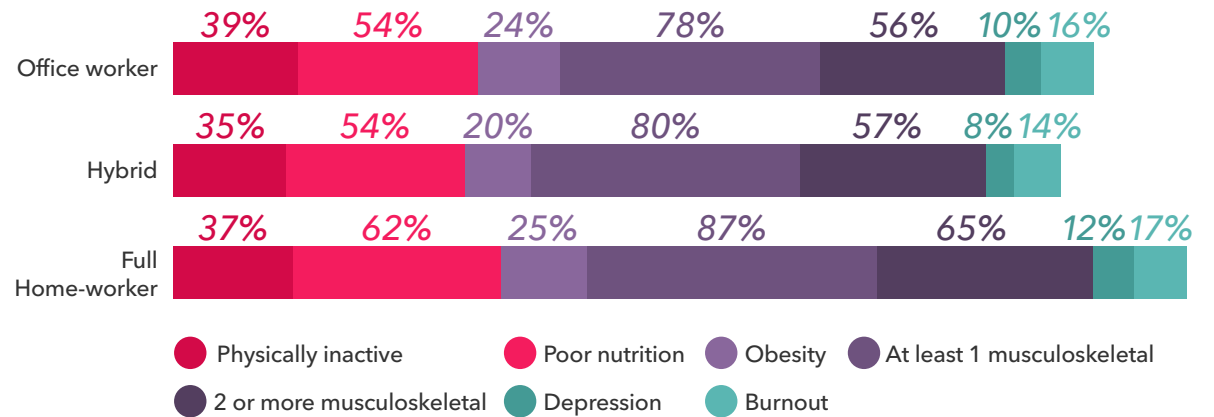
When surveyed, employees were more likely to feel that working from home is better for their physical and mental wellbeing than being in a workplace environment. This was most notable for mental wellbeing, where twice as many employees feel working from home is beneficial compared to working in the office<sup>14</sup>.

However, Britain's Healthiest Workplace indicates that going into the office at least some of the time can be beneficial. Employees working full time in an office or in a hybrid pattern reported lower risk of depression, better musculoskeletal health, and healthier diets, compared to those working from home all of the time.

## EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF REMOTE WORKING AND HEALTH



## KEY HEALTH RISKS FOR OFFICE, HYBRID AND HOME WORKERS (% AT RISK)



14. Vitality and Opinium, 2024

# Is remote working good for our productivity?

When it comes to employee assessment of their own productivity, opinions vary. Some 34% felt their productivity was better while working from home, 31% felt it was better when in the workplace, while 32% didn't feel it made a difference<sup>15</sup>.

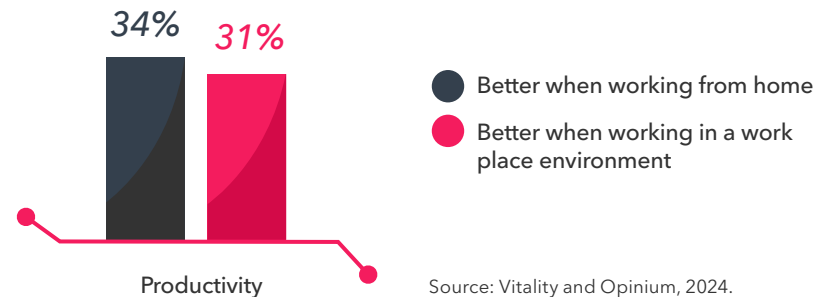
Britain's Healthiest Workplace shows just marginal differences in the lost productivity reported by homeworkers, those who work in an office, and hybrid-workers. Hybrid employees were shown to lose on average three days less productive time per employee per year compared to those working from home full-time.

## Employees question the productivity of others

Despite most employees feeling they are just as - if not more - productive when they work remotely, their attitude towards their colleagues' productivity is less positive. Some 41% of employees reported thinking that their colleagues are less productive or available when they are working from home (with just 21% disagreeing).

Pessimism about colleagues' productivity is greater among senior managers within businesses. Over half (58%) of those who manage large teams (of more than 20 people) feel productivity is lower while people are working from home, compared to just 29% of those without teams reporting to them<sup>15</sup>.

## ATTITUDES ON REMOTE WORKING



## Average lost productive time per employee by work environment during 2023



15. Vitality and Opinium, 2024

## The future of the workplace

### Younger employees are more positive about going into work

Despite the view that working from home can be good for our mental health, many employees believe that going into the workplace still has benefits.

This is particularly pronounced for younger employees, who are more likely to value the social aspect of the workplace. For example, 61% of under 35s think that the social elements of working in an office are good for their health, compared to almost half (49%) of those aged 55 and older. Some 60% of under 35s feel they have better access to learning and development when working in the workplace environment, compared to 45% of those 55 and older. Nearly half (48%) of those younger than 35 feel isolated from colleagues when they work from home, compared to just 31% of those 55 and older<sup>16</sup>.

As more young people continue to enter the workforce, the challenge and opportunity lies with employers to cater to this through their company culture.

### Strong demand for flexibility

Almost three quarters (73%) of employees believe that all employers should offer flexible working options, while 61% think they would be more productive if they were afforded greater flexibility to choose their own hours. Just under two thirds (64%) of employees believe a four-day working week would be better for their physical and mental health.

However, 46% of employees said they find it difficult to 'switch off' even while not at work, while three quarters (75%) of employees are still contactable for work reasons outside of working hours<sup>16</sup>.

As technology which enables employees to work anytime and anywhere continues to evolve, this challenge will only become more pronounced.

**Our health is the biggest factor driving productivity, not where we work.**

16. Vitality and Opinium, 2024

## Health is the most significant factor for productivity

These findings highlight the need for employers to identify an approach to flexible and remote working which responds to the needs of their business, and their employees. At the same time, there is more employers can do to offer relevant health and wellbeing interventions for office-based or remote workers, and ensure these are effectively communicated to ensure participation and return on investment.

Ultimately, unhealthy lifestyles, mental ill-health and burnout, and risks such as musculoskeletal issues have significantly greater impacts on employees' productivity at work, compared to whether they work at home or in the office.



## 5 steps to building a healthier business

With the data showing that UK health and productivity is in decline, Vitality believes that employers have a critical role to play in not just supporting, but actively improving employees' health and wellbeing. In doing so, we can help people live healthier, longer lives.

1

**Prioritise** employee health and wellbeing as a key metric of organisational performance: e.g. on your company risk register and corporate bonus scorecards.

2

Drive **accountability and visibility** of health and wellbeing through reporting to Executive and Board committees, appointing a champion, and including key metrics in external reports.

3

Tailor your strategy to the needs of all employees, **using data and insights** on the key risks of different employee groups to go beyond a one-size-fits-all approach.

4

Track participation with workplace health initiatives and key outcomes (e.g. health and productivity) to measure the **return on investment** of your workplace health strategy.

5

Deliver a **preventative approach** which does not wait for employees to require hospital treatment and take long-term sickness leave, but encourages healthy lifestyles and provides the right early intervention support, reducing absenteeism and presenteeism as a result.

## An incentive-based solution to workplace health

Vitality has offered an incentive-based behaviour change programme to employers in the UK and globally for over 20 years, often as part of its health insurance products. By driving strong engagement amongst employees, Vitality has been able to demonstrate powerful results, in the UK and abroad.

Britain's Healthiest Workplace 2023 found that employees with Vitality Health Insurance are:

8% more likely to be reaching exercise guidelines.

11% less likely to be suffering from depression.

13% less likely to report low job satisfaction.

17% more likely to agree that their employer plays an active role in supporting their health and wellbeing.

The improved health metrics of employees with Vitality Health Insurance equate to:

2.5 additional days of productive time per employee each year<sup>17</sup>.

This is also playing out globally.

A Vitality Impact Study published by Vitality Group USA in September 2024 pointed to

4.4 additional days of productive time per employee being generated through health improvements due to the Vitality Programme<sup>18</sup>.

POWERED BY A DECADE OF DATA



17. Comparison of employee responses at employers with Vitality Health Insurance, and employers offering PMI through other insurers. Vitality and BHW data, 2023.

18. Impact Study: Analyzing Vitality engagement's impact on health risks, claims costs, and healthcare utilization, Vitality Group International, 2024



BRITAIN'S  
HEALTHIEST  
WORKPLACE



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