



Best Employers  
Eastern Region

Pure  
Executive

# 2021 SURVEY

## A PURE EXECUTIVE ANALYSIS



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# INTRODUCTION

Workplaces have changed amidst the turmoil of the pandemic, with lots of employees ditching the commute and working from home. Has this changed the way they engage with their workplaces and colleagues?

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# THE BEST EMPLOYER SURVEY

Best Employers was founded by Pure and psychometrics experts Eras Ltd in 2012. Every two years, this collaboration surveys employees across participating companies in the East of England, asking their opinions on key metrics like communication, autonomy, motivation, and trust.

Businesses that achieve the highest scores, on a 1 to 10 scale, are eligible for awards and accreditation, giving them the chance to showcase their expertise and employee focus.

The latest fascinating findings from the 2021 Pure Best Employers survey, compiled by Dr Scarlett Brown on behalf of Pure Executive, showed changes in employee engagement levels. Compared to findings from 2018, we can see how rapidly these shifts have taken place and assess what they mean for the modern workplace.

The results help emphasise how vital it is for employers to focus on actively engaging with their people and show that employees in the Eastern region don't always need to be present in the office to stay engaged with their work.



# COMMUNICATION

Maintaining good communication is central to the success of your business:

- Employees want their voices to be heard
- Businesses need clear goals
- Customers should always be a key focus

No matter what is happening within an organisation, **openness is always crucial** in the modern workplace.

## 1. Customer focus

No company can survive without customers. Unsurprisingly, this metric has always been the highest in our surveys.

In 2021, customer focus has risen to 8.54.

Companies surveyed already place significant emphasis upon looking after their customers, with or without a pandemic to overcome.

A rise in the metric shows that there has been an even **greater emphasis on customer care** this year, perhaps fuelled by pandemic pressure.

## 2. Clarity of vision

Our results suggest companies have invested time and effort in refining their business model amidst the pandemic.

While these have been difficult times for many businesses, there have also been opportunities to get back to basics, to **refocus on what truly makes the company great**, and to reconnect with that sense of purpose during a time when everything was already in a state of unavoidable flux.

Clarity of vision has risen from 7.56 to 7.73 in 2021, and if businesses can maintain this momentum by pinning down what makes them great, they are sure to see significant benefits.



# AUTONOMY

With remote work booming and teams no longer consistently congregating in the office, employee autonomy is an area to closely monitor.

## 1. Impact on employee independence

Autonomy amongst employees now stands at 7.30, with only a very small decrease since 2018.

The small decrease could demonstrate that the same working conditions that provide most employees with freedom are a little more restrictive for others.

Some people may have felt:

- Isolated or disconnected due to homeworking
- Unable to influence the direction of the company
- Micromanaged from afar while working from home
- Powerless to implement their new ideas

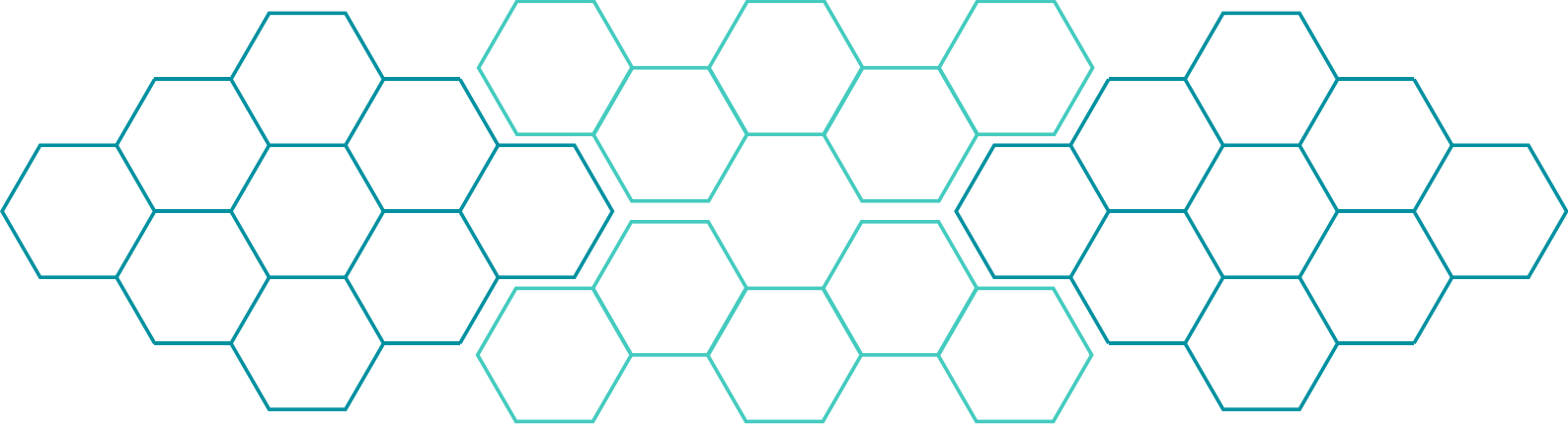
None of these factors are insurmountable - or inevitable - when your employees are working remotely, and **autonomy remaining relatively stable** is a great sign for employers in the Eastern region.

## 2. Diversity and social responsibility

This finding is accompanied by a growing focus on diversity (7.47, up from 7.36 in 2018), with businesses increasingly seeing employees as individuals and **investing in environmental, social, and governance initiatives**.

Developing autonomous, diverse teams is a powerful way for companies to build greater engagement, employee independence, and productivity.

As the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic begins to wane, companies may be able to dedicate more time to innovation in these areas, rather than focusing on the high-pressure activities which have dominated so much of the last two years.



### 3. Investment in staff development

In 2021, this metric has experienced the greatest gain compared to results from 2018, rising from 6.87 to 7.05. In 2018, employee development scores were amongst the lowest surveyed.

We can attribute this to businesses spending more time on employee development. With a continued focus, employees could become more confident in their autonomy, more consistent, and more adept at handling crises.

The positive change in employee development is largely driven by medium-sized businesses:

- Mid-sized companies can **adapt to changing circumstances** quickly, without losing track of staff development goals.
- Mid-sized companies also have **access to training and development** resources that are out of reach for smaller businesses.
- Some of these **changes are harder to implement** for larger organisations with more people to manage.



# MOTIVATION

Motivated employees are noted as being more productive and contented.

Keeping people engaged and connected to their job when they're not all in a centralised workplace is a new challenge for leaders.

## 1. A renewed focus on motivation

Together with employee development, the motivation metric was the lowest score in 2018.

A rise in motivation amongst employees in 2021 (from 7.24 to 7.40) shows they have been willing to rise to the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic, remaining on-task and reinforcing their commitment to their respective roles, despite considerable obstacles and adaptation.

## 2. Strong emphasis on teamwork

Employee dedication to teamwork remains high in 2021, rising slightly from 2018.

As with so many of the changes we observe, this could possibly be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic and renewed efforts to create an efficient, cohesive team.

The last two years have certainly not been business as usual, and yet we see a small rise in teamwork to 8.14 (from 8.09 in 2018).



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# TRUST

Cultivating trust in your organisation is another central pillar of strengthening and futureproofing it. As employees increasingly choose location-independent roles, it seems working for companies they trust has also become more important to them.

## 1. Leadership transparency

Transparency is important to employees, particularly during times of hardship and uncertainty. During 2021, **leaders have carefully tuned into the needs of their employees** and been more transparent about the challenges they face.

Organisational engagement has risen from 7.33 to almost 7.44 in 2021. The companies surveyed are also more willing to learn from their mistakes (rising 0.2 to 7.33 in 2021).

This suggests a greater emphasis on communicating with people is already paying off, cultivating a culture of openness.

## 2. Organisational authenticity

Authenticity is also important for businesses to prioritise, as it helps define whether an organisation is deemed truthful and trustworthy by its employees, and how motivated they are to produce their best work.

Understanding of brand goals and values has risen to 8.11 (from 7.90 in 2018). Quality is a metric that has fallen in 2021 from 8.12 to 8.10.

Employees who truly believe in the companies they work for can become their biggest cheerleaders, even while handling pandemic disruption. Overall, trust in businesses has increased since 2018.





# WELLBEING

2021 marks the first time we have ever surveyed the wellbeing of employees and organisations.

Wellbeing has been an important factor for years, but in light of the pandemic, it felt like the right time to assess how teams are feeling and the impact that may have on their workplace experiences.

## 1. Rising organisational wellbeing

Our measurement of organisational wellbeing looks at the extent to which employees feel their company has tried to support them. The rates of organisational wellbeing are slightly higher than those of personal wellbeing, across all company sizes and sectors.

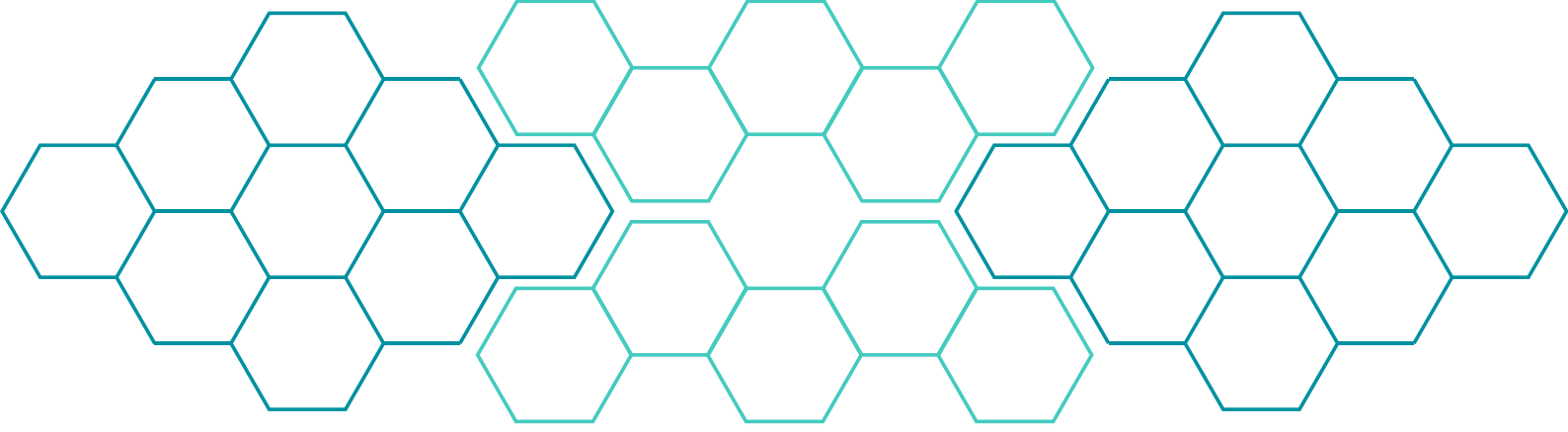
The highest rates of organisational wellbeing can be found in the following sectors:

- Pharmaceutical and life sciences
- Healthcare
- Engineering
- Technology

These scores vary between 8-8.50. It is possible that these sectors experienced less disruption than others, and therefore report higher results.

The topic of organisational wellbeing is multi-layered, and was explored by Ian White, CEO of Becketts when presenting at our health and wellbeing-focused Best Employer webinar.

As he noted at the event on 22nd June 2021, and as our own research reinforces, building more resilient teams has a positive impact on all areas of a business, but can only be achieved by being [mindful of employee wellbeing](#).



## 2. Obstacles to personal wellbeing

Whilst we have no prior personal wellbeing measure to compare our findings to, it seems striking that this is a metric where scores in some sectors have dipped below 6.0. This can perhaps be attributed to the stresses of working during a pandemic.

Despite low rates of personal wellbeing, employees report high personal engagement (8.11). This demonstrates that they are still dedicated to their workplaces and engaged with the work they do.

Yet it could be argued that employee wellbeing is the core determining factor in how much each person can give to their organisation, and the quality of those contributions.



## CONCLUSION

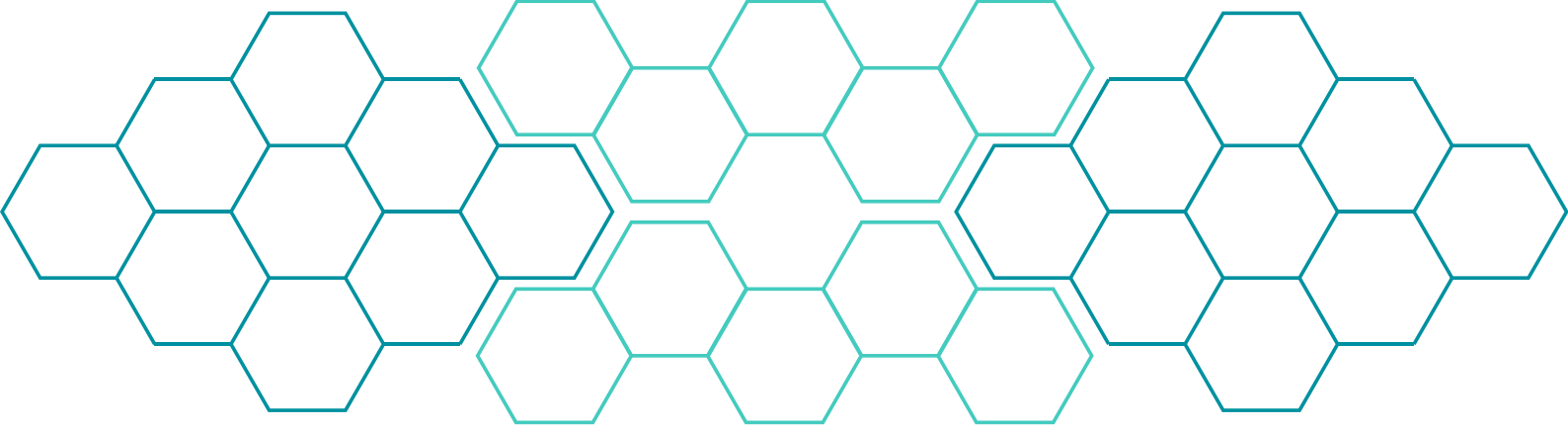
This year's Best Employers survey has unearthed many intriguing insights for leaders. Perhaps most interestingly, engagement has increased in 2021 by almost every measure.

Impressive as this would be under normal circumstances, it is even more incredible when we factor in the disruption of a pandemic, which has derailed the plans of every business in every industry for almost two years.

The highest scores we found in 2021 were:

- Customer focus (8.54)
- Teamwork (8.14)
- Personal engagement (8.11)
- Employer brand (8.11)

Each of these areas has remained strong through the pandemic, with businesses focusing their energies on finding new ways to engage with customers and teams, as well as bolster their respective brands.



## 1. The post-Covid workplace

Digital communication tools have grown in dominance, social distancing is a must for many businesses, and there has also been an increased demand for hybrid/flexible roles in almost every sector.

It is impossible to predict how many of these changes will be permanent, but certain elements of the pandemic workplace look set to become mainstays of modern offices.

## 2. A mid-sized business advantage?

Mid-size businesses have the highest scores across most categories, which can likely be attributed to their size allowing them to adapt quickly, whilst still providing them with the resources to do so.

As the pandemic starts to wane, companies of all sizes will be freed up to focus on innovation – something that has been a necessary casualty during this difficult time.

## 3. The benefits of prioritising engagement

These fascinating findings will prove surprising to employers who may have been predicting employee alienation and stagnation because of the pandemic.

Despite concerns raised that remote working and socially distanced offices could reduce engagement levels, our findings suggest this has not been the case.

However, there is evidence to suggest the personal well-being of employees has room for improvement – a move that could transform businesses for the better.





## WHAT'S NEXT FOR EMPLOYERS?

During the dark days of a pandemic, it seems leaders have become more attuned to the engagement needs of their teams. In turn, this has had a positive impact on employee experiences at work.

At Pure Executive, we wholeheartedly encourage employers to **continue prioritising engagement**. The positive results will help futureproof businesses, boost employee wellbeing, improve productivity, and even help companies keep hold of their best employees.

For businesses willing to engage with their people, the future looks remarkably bright!

Follow [Pure Executive](#) for more insights into what drives top companies across the East of England.

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