



ARMA & IRPM INDUSTRY WELLBEING SURVEY REPORT 2022





ARMA & IRPM

Industry Wellbeing Survey Report – 2022



The following report makes references to mental illness. Based on the results of 2021's survey, there is some improvement in the data, however the wellbeing of our sector's people remains deeply concerning.

Mental health outcomes can be improved when early intervention is sought. If you or anyone you know is affected by what you read in this report seek support. GPs can signpost to local services and charities like Mind and Samaritans are available, too. If you identify an immediate risk to life, dial 999.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We launched our Wellbeing Survey in 2021 to build a picture of the main pressures that residential property management staff are facing and to understand ways to alleviate them. The past 12 months have seen an easing of lockdown restrictions, contributing to improved wellbeing for the population.¹ However, other pressures, such as the rising cost of living, have grown.² A lot has changed in the residential property management sector over the same 12-month period. Positive steps have been taken by Government to resolve the building safety crisis, which include increased funding for remediation and a pledge to make at-fault developers pay. However, the building safety crisis is far from over and in some ways has become yet more complex. Also, those who will benefit the most from these policy changes – the leaseholders – are often yet to feel their impact. In general, there remains a significant amount of uncertainty about how long the crisis will rumble on, a full five years after Grenfell.

Broadly, our Wellbeing and Resilience survey shows a workforce that is still feeling the strain, although there is a degree of improvement. Property management professionals scored significantly lower than Office of National Statistic (ONS) averages when asked about how worthwhile their life is, their life satisfaction and their levels of happiness (14% lower than the national average, across all three measures). However, the sector's scores have improved, and are now closer to the national averages compared to 2021. Staff wellbeing is therefore faring a little better, but it remains well behind the rest of the population.

For 2022, we gathered more information on the backgrounds of our respondents, to understand which sub-groups are under the most pressure. One question sought information on respondents' years of experience in the industry. Compared to those starting out in the industry (under 2 years of experience) and the highly experienced staff (those with 10+ years of experience), our survey reveals a squeezed group of mid-level staff (3-9 years of experience) facing the most pressure. It is this group that is bearing the brunt of pressure from other groups, yet expecting and receiving the least support from the industry. Financial pressures outside of work are also increased for this group, and they are more likely to be responsible for managing cladding remediation projects, which continued to negatively impact the wellbeing and resilience of respondents. Unsurprisingly, these workers are most likely to leave the sector in 3-5 years' time – something of particular concern to an industry that has a statistically high staff churn rate.³

Underpinning a lack of progress in the sector's wellbeing is relationships. Our 2021 survey demonstrated that property management staff expected and received little support from leaseholders, employers and wider sector groups. Our 2022 survey shows this gap has widened, most notably in terms of leaseholder and freeholder relationships. Furthermore, staff are still likely to face aggressive and unreasonable behaviour, and many feel they are

¹ Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 4 March 2022 – <https://bit.ly/3LPEfib>

² Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: November 2021 to March 2022 – <https://bit.ly/3snjPFo>

³ Labour turnover rates survey 2020 – <https://bit.ly/387EC9b>

at risk physically (25%) and mentally (64%) in their roles. It's imperative that breakdowns in communication are bridged by constructive, two-way dialogue. Unacceptably, there are still instances of hate crimes and physical violence directed at staff, requiring a zero-tolerance approach.

ARMA and IRPM - now merged as The Property Institute - will continue to use survey results to help shape and improve the sector's wellbeing and resilience initiatives. The next survey will be issued in early 2023.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Wellbeing Survey was distributed to residential property management professionals between 7 February and 7 March 2022. In total, 563 individuals from across the sector responded, with a 100% completion rate and over 125 additional comments, all of which have been carefully read. We would like to thank each respondent for their valuable time, insight and honesty.

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BACKGROUND

First launched in 2021, ARMA and IRPM teamed up to provide a 'mental health check' of residential property management professionals, identifying the key pressure points to inform and help shape the future of mental health and wellbeing support for the sector. Now in its second year, we will be continuing to revisit our survey on an annual basis to track the progress our sector has made.

METHOD

Our research was carried out using a quantitative and anonymous questionnaire distributed online using a survey tool called SurveyMonkey, with 50 questions, and one question which allowed for further comments and open-ended responses. The sample included IRPM's database of property management professional members and the member firms of ARMA, and the survey was also shared publicly through social media, as well as being posted on both IRPM and ARMA's websites. Respondents were distributed across the UK. Responses were requested from property managers, as well as onsite and back-office support staff. The survey required respondents to share their current life pressures, their experiences of aggressive behaviour, the implications of COVID-19, and identified those dealing with cladding and external wall systems issues.

The survey also set out to measure current levels of job satisfaction by establishing whether existing employer support is adequate and gauging what proportion of the workforce is likely to seek employment in a different sector in the near future. Once the responses were collected, IRPM and ARMA conducted an exploratory data analysis. This report includes discussions, observations and proposals, derived from the findings of the survey.

We have compared the data from our wellbeing questions with a survey published by the ONS which asked identical questions and was issued at a similar time (16 February - 27 February 2022).⁴

⁴ Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 4 March 2022 - <https://bit.ly/3LPEfib>

THE CHALLENGES

1. SATISFACTION, HAPPINESS AND WELLBEING

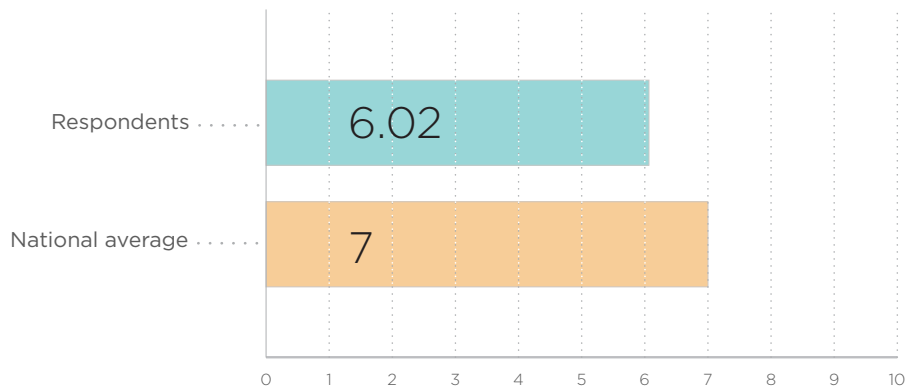
OVERALL, HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR LIFE NOWADAYS?

Rationale

We opened our survey with general indicators to help build a picture of how our industry is coping and give an overview of 'wellness'. This gave us an opportunity to benchmark our findings against the national average using the most recent data from the Office of National Statistics' (ONS) wellness survey published on 4th March 2022, entitled 'Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 4 March 2022'.⁵

This UK-wide survey has been issued on a bi-monthly basis since March 2020 to gauge the social impact of the pandemic on the adult population. Part of our survey focused on general wellbeing and asks the same questions used in the ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) to understand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on British society. In the period between 16 and 27 February 2022, the survey sampled 4,495 households. These were randomly selected from those that had previously completed similar surveys in the past. The responding sample contained 3,170 individuals, representing a 70.5% response rate. Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population (based on June 2021 population estimates).

"I started in the industry when I was 18, it is all I know"



OF 536 RESPONSES

An average satisfaction with life rating of 6.02 for our respondents; this is compared to a national average of 7.

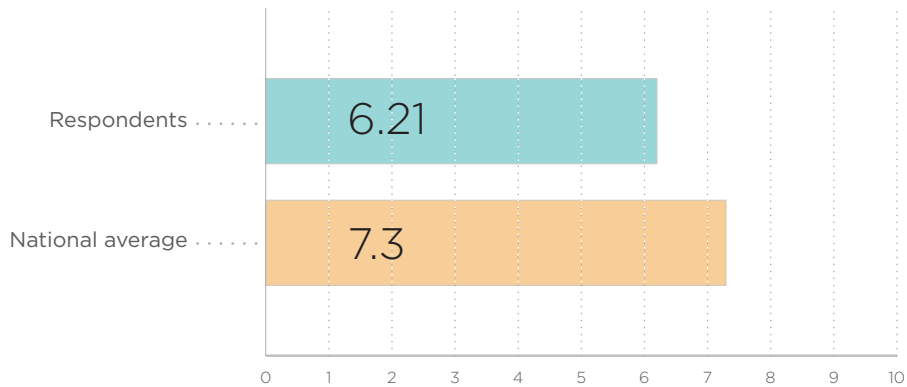
Findings

The above graph shows an average satisfaction with life rating of 6.02 for our respondents. This compares to 5.16 last year (an increase of 16.7%) and a current national average of 7 (ONS MNW Feb 16 to 27 2022). Respondents average scores is 14% below the national average, compared to being 19% below last year.

⁵ Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain: 4 March 2022 - <https://bit.ly/3LPEfib>

1. SATISFACTION, HAPPINESS AND WELLBEING (cont)

OVERALL, TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FEEL THAT THE THINGS YOU DO IN YOUR LIFE ARE WORTHWHILE?



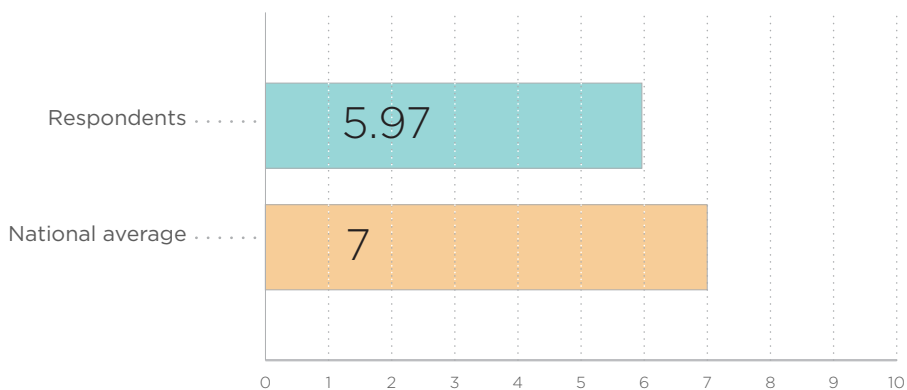
OF 536 RESPONSES

An average satisfaction with life rating of 6.21 for our respondents; this is compared to a national average of 7.3.

A similar question asking respondents 'to what extent do you feel that things you do in your life are worthwhile' gave an average score of 6.21, compared to 6.1 in the 2021 survey (an increase of 3.5%) and a national average of 7.3 (ONS MNW 16 to 27 Feb 2022).

Respondents average score is 15% below the national average compared to 13% last year.

OVERALL, HOW HAPPY DID YOU FEEL YESTERDAY?



OF 536 RESPONSES

An average satisfaction with life rating of 5.97 for our respondents; this is compared to a national average of 7.

Property managers are also below the national average when asked how happy they felt the previous day. Respondents averaged a score of 5.97, compared to 5.6 in the 2021 survey (an increase of 7%) and a national average of 7 (ONS MNW 16 to 27 Feb 2022).

1. SATISFACTION, HAPPINESS AND WELLBEING (cont)

Respondents average score is 14.5% below the national average compared to being 20% below the national average last year.

On average 2022 respondents scored higher in all three measures of national wellbeing than the average for 2021 respondents.

Comparing 2021 survey results to 2022 survey results, life satisfaction was 16.7% greater, the feeling that the things they do in life are worthwhile was 3.5% greater and the feeling of happiness yesterday was 7% greater.

However, national average scores for satisfaction and feeling things done in life were worthwhile also increased compared to the comparison ONS data used for the 2021 survey. National satisfaction with life had grown 9% and “worthwhile” by 4%. Nationally, happiness remained static at 7%.

The percentage gap between national average score and survey respondents' average score closed by over 5% for satisfaction and happiness. However, the gap on feeling that things done in life are worthwhile grew by over 2%.

On average respondents reported feeling a somewhat greater sense of wellbeing and the gap to national averages for satisfaction and happiness have closed slightly.

Variations Based on Region and Years of Experience

Splitting the data up by region showed differences in life satisfaction, happiness and 'life is worthwhile' scores. Generally, property staff in Wales and Scotland appear happier than those working in England. Combined, Wales and Scotland posted life satisfaction scores that were 11% higher, life worthiness scores that were just under 2% higher, and happiness scores that were 9% higher than the rest of the group.

Property management staff in Yorkshire recorded the lowest wellbeing scores. Respondents from this region recorded a life satisfaction score that was 10% below the group average, a happiness score that was 11% below the group average and a 'life is worthwhile' score that was 4% below the group average.

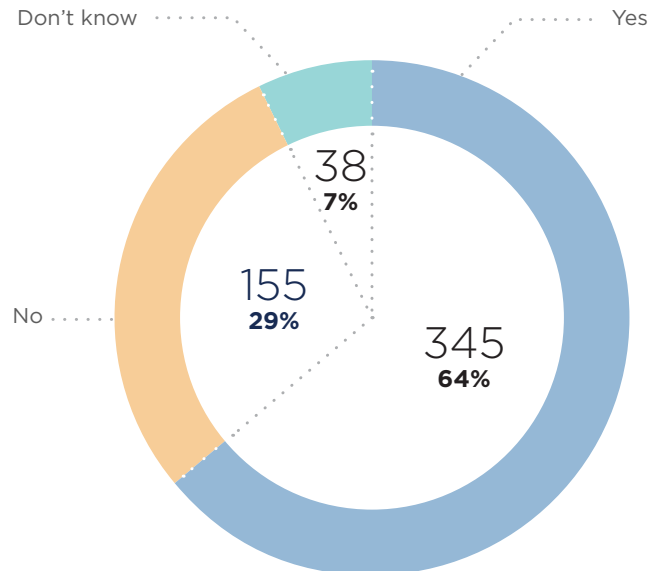
There were also noticeable variations in wellbeing scores when grouping individuals based on their years of experience. Those with less than two years' experience and those who had been in property management for 10+ years fared slightly better across all three ONS scores, with those having 0-2 years' experience reporting 9% higher happiness scores compared to the rest of the sample. In contrast, respondents involved in property management for 3-9 years scored at least 4% less on all three measures when compared to the rest of the sample.

Of all job roles, back-office support staff posted the highest wellbeing scores across the three indicators, with their happiness score being 18% higher than the group average, and above the national average.

There were no notable differences in scores when the data was split between those working from home, those working solely in the office/onsite, and those undertaking a mixture of home and office/on-site working. This suggests that work pressures experienced in the sector are not dependent on working locations.

2. PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY

DO YOU THINK YOUR MENTAL HEALTH OR SAFETY IS AT RISK BECAUSE OF YOUR WORK?



"People have become more impatient, confrontational, argumentative and volatile since lockdown"

Of all respondents, only 29% believed that their mental health was not at risk, whilst 64% thought it was at risk because of work. These notable figures are telling of a sector that still has more to do to account for the health of its workforce.

Findings

Our survey continues to show that those working within the property management sector believe they are at an increased risk, both physically and mentally. Over a quarter of respondents believe their physical safety is at risk because of their work, though this figure is down 11% on the 2021 survey results.

Despite an 11% decrease compared to last year's results, over a quarter of all those surveyed believed that they were physically at risk from doing their role. Compared to 2021, 70% believed they weren't at risk, an 8% increase on last year's figure (65%).

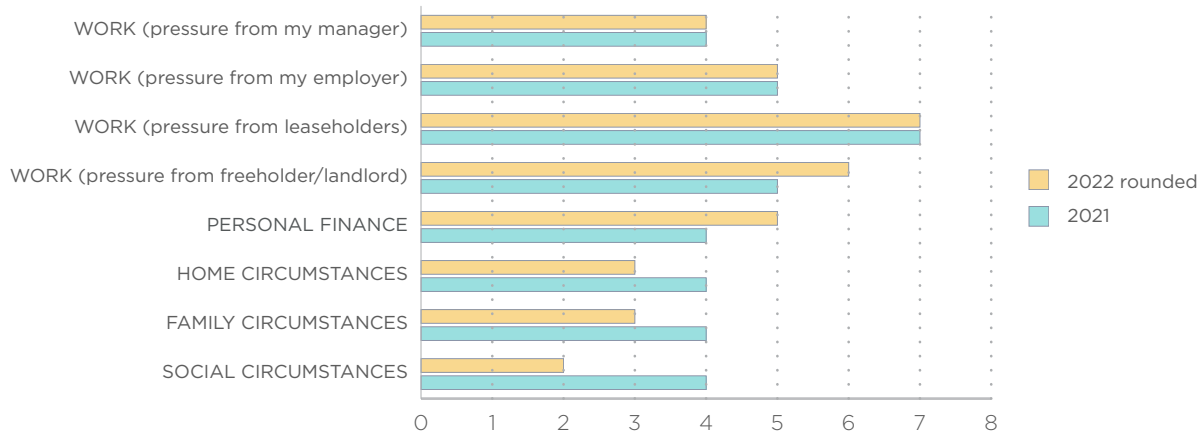
Compared to 2021, an additional 4% of respondents thought their mental health was at risk, taking this percentage from 60% last year to 64% for 2022. Those that didn't know if their mental health was at risk was down 31%. In recent years, awareness of mental health issues and their associated risks, have entered the public's lexicon. National and global events such as Mental Health Awareness Week and World Mental Health day have helped raise awareness, as have open discussions around mental health in the media by politicians, public figures and charities.⁶ With around one in four people experiencing mental health problems each year, awareness of the risks associated with poor mental health seems self-evidently sensible.⁷

⁶ World Health Organisation - Mental Health - <https://bit.ly/3kljAke>

⁷ Mind Charity - <https://bit.ly/3LQ5FEL>

2. PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY (cont)

SOURCES OF PRESSURE IN YOUR LIFE



When comparing the stress of work to other life sources, we can see that work-related pressure continues to outweigh personal stresses. Emergence from lockdown may be the cause of relieved pressure from home, family and social circumstances. However, scores for personal financial pressures have increased by 25% year-on-year.

The most significant pressure came from leaseholders and, to a lesser extent, employers and freeholders/landlords. Pressure from landlord/freeholder is the only increased source of pressure from work.

Good working relationships between managing agent staff, leaseholders and freeholders/landlords remain essential. Our survey suggests that these relationships have either remained the same or worsened, and that there is a clear need for relations to improve. A focus on collaboration over confrontation is needed, as strained working relationships impact negatively on all parties. Partnership-orientated working should improve the wellbeing of managers and their customers, and it should follow that all stakeholders will benefit from boosted productivity, positivity and staff retention.

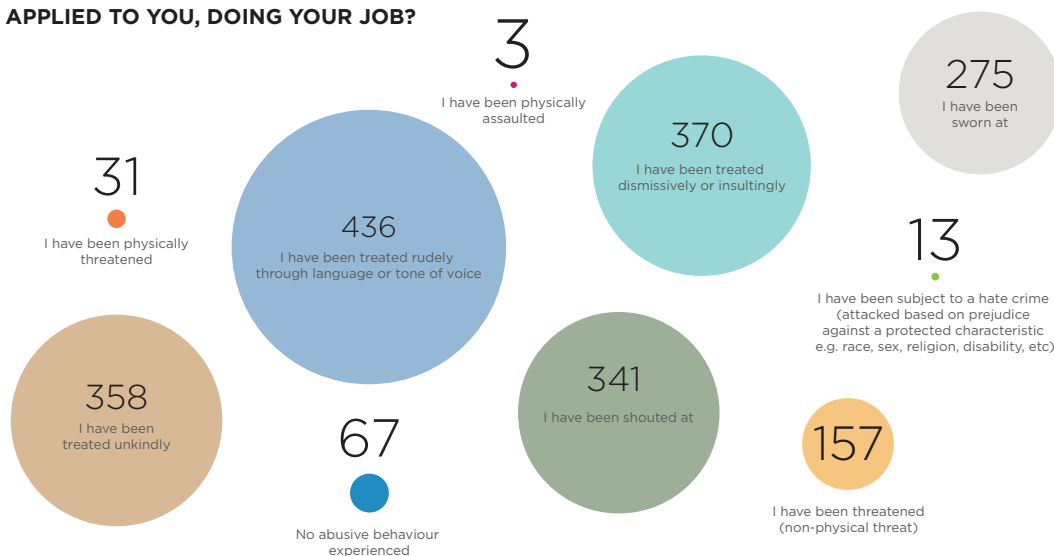
When asked about positive action taken on health and wellbeing by employers, 61% said yes compared to over two thirds of respondents in 2021, although this does not necessarily reflect a decline in support. Alternatively, based on current wellbeing scores and evidence of increasing work pressures, it is clear employers with existing wellbeing strategies should continue to evaluate and monitor their effectiveness.

2. PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY (cont)

As the recent ONS survey reveals, there has been a gradual increase in happiness and life satisfaction as lockdown restrictions have eased. There has also been a steady decrease in anxiety across the population, although this has not yet reached the pre-pandemic baseline.⁸

At the same time, the residential leasehold management sector has continued to grapple with a building safety crisis which has left many leaseholders trapped in unsellable flats and facing crippling bills. Frustrations often spill over, and our survey reveals that property management staff continue to regularly face abusive behaviour in their day-to-day lives.

IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CIRCUMSTANCES APPLIED TO YOU, DOING YOUR JOB?



Findings

The question asking property management staff to detail the types of abuse received in the last 12 months revealed that nearly all respondents had been treated rudely through language or tone of voice (82%), while 67% had been treated unkindly.

Of all respondents, 64% noted being shouted at, 52% said they had been sworn at and 30% recalled being threatened in a non-physical way. Our survey also revealed that 6% of respondents had been physically threatened, with 0.5% being physically assaulted. This equates to an IRPM member being threatened with physical violence every working week.

2.5% of respondents were also victims of hate crimes, a figure that is unacceptable in any context.

13% of respondents had not experienced any of the circumstances. However, this means 87% faced some form of abuse in the last 12 months. Being sworn at, threatened either physically or non-physically and experiencing an assault remain almost unchanged.

When comparing responses year-on-year, we must acknowledge that the option to choose "none of the above" was not present in our 2021 survey.

ARMA and IRPM believe that a step to mending the strained relationships between parties is to equip staff with the tools needed to de-escalate confrontations. This would also protect staff from abuse directed towards them.

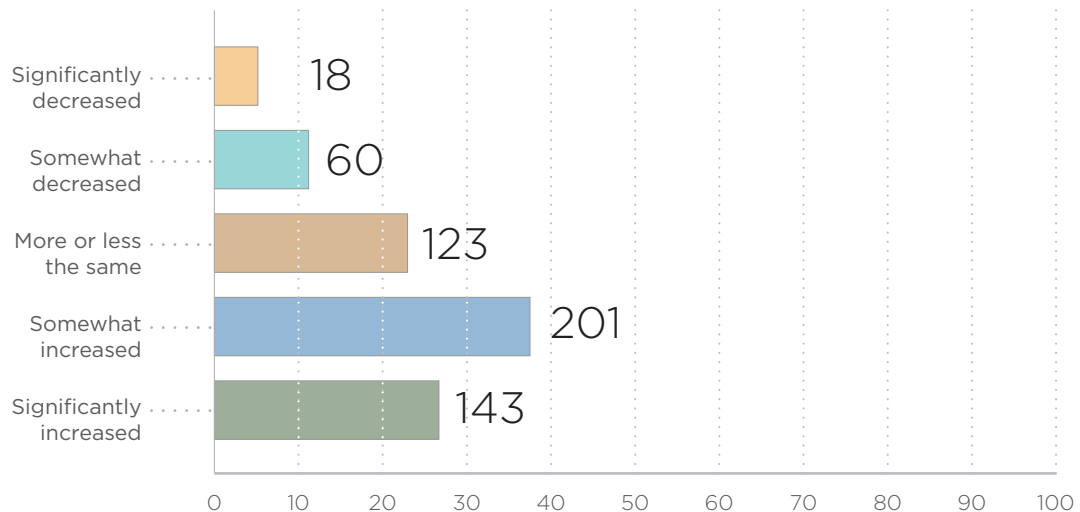
Our 'Unacceptable Behaviour Policy' was first issued last year and has been revised for 2022. The policy (See page 25) offers a suggested process for managing agents to follow when they encounter forms of unacceptable behaviour.

"As costs increase so does tension with leaseholders and their tenants. This has led to hostile responses from leaseholders for things outside of our control, but we are often on the receiving end."

⁸ Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain – Office for National Statistics – <https://bit.ly/3LPKNx3>

2. PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY (cont)

HAVE YOUR WORK-RELATED STRESS LEVELS INCREASED OR DECREASED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS?

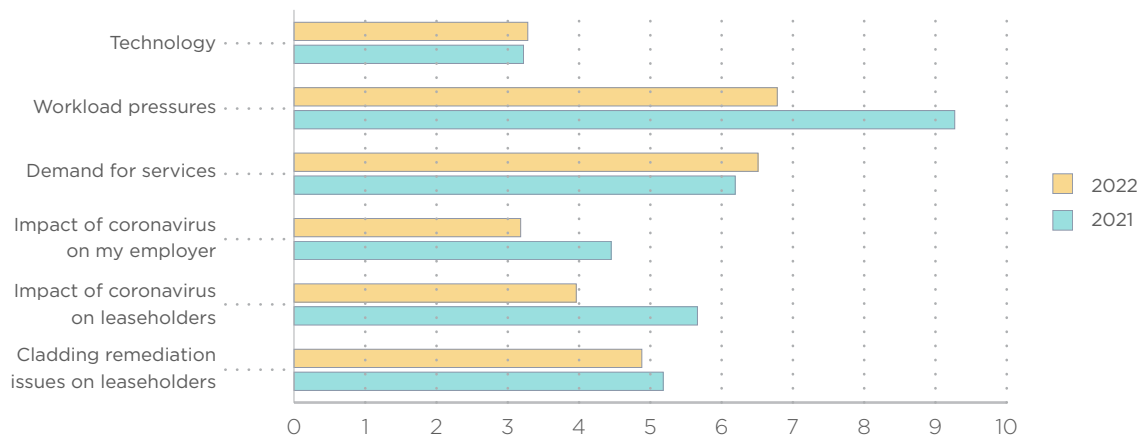


Question 15 focussed on whether work stresses had increased or decreased in the past 12 months, revealing that 64% of respondents had noticed an increase compared to 74% the year before. This of course does not mean that stress increases from previous years have now been relieved, but perhaps ways of managing them have been found.

Only 15% of respondents reported any reduction in stress, however this is significantly more than the 8% who reported decreases in work-related stress in the 2021 survey.

"I have never in 20 years of leasehold management experienced anything like the past 18 months - the demand in work and way people speak to you"

CAUSES OF PRESSURE AT WORK



The impact of coronavirus on both employers and leaseholders was a lower cause of pressure for respondents in 2022 than in 2021. Workload pressure was also considerably lower, falling significantly from 9.27/10 to 6.78/10, but it still remains the greatest cause of pressure. Demand for services grew somewhat as a cause of pressure.

3. SUPPORT

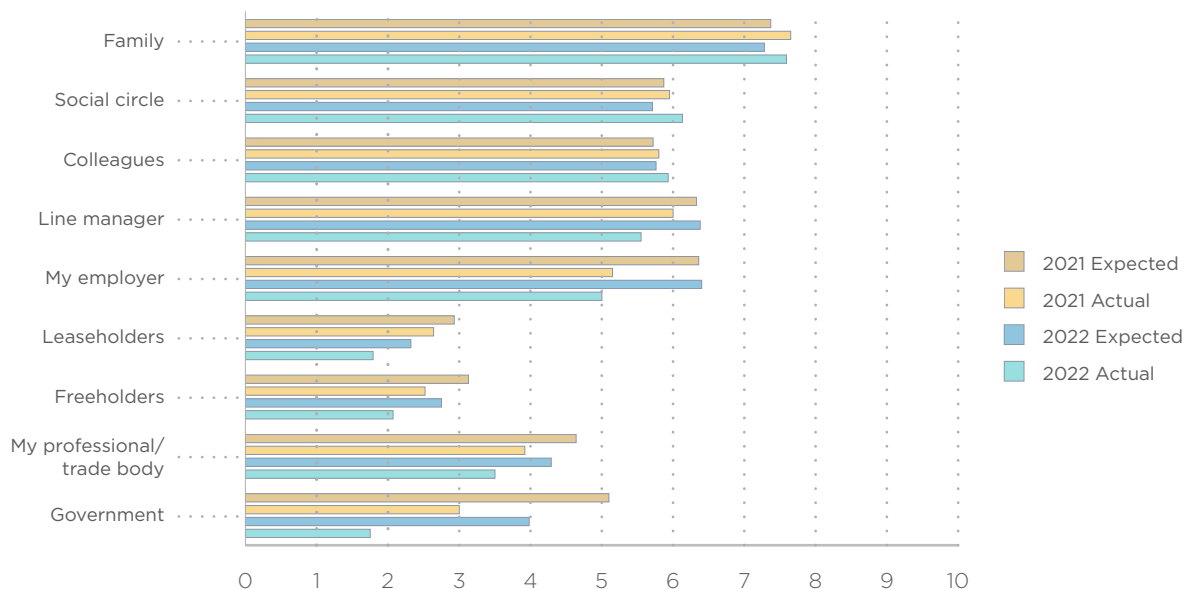
Rationale

After reviewing the pressures that property management staff are faced with, our survey then moved on to focus on the support, both perceived and actual, that is available to them.

Findings

Naturally, those closest to workers, such as families, friends, colleagues and line managers, continue to offer the most support, and at times exceeded the levels of expected support. Conversely, employers, professional/trade bodies and the government were judged to offer lower levels of support than expected.

QUESTIONS 22-39: ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 10 HOW DO YOU RATE THE SUPPORT YOU ARE RECEIVING FROM THE FOLLOWING GROUPS?



Respondents in 2022 were receiving less support in every category apart from their social circle and colleagues. This may be linked to the relieving of COVID-19 restrictions, both in terms of social gatherings and the return to the office. Collapse in both expected and actual support from government may also be COVID-19 related with the end of the furlough scheme and generally reduced government intervention in daily life. Support received from government is down 42%.

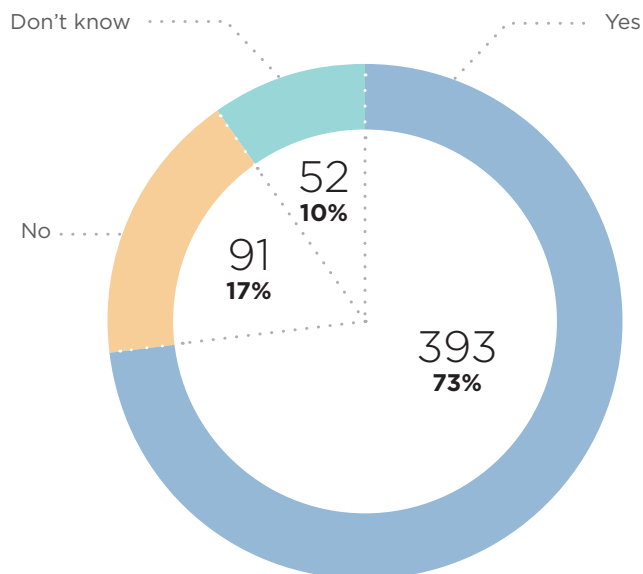
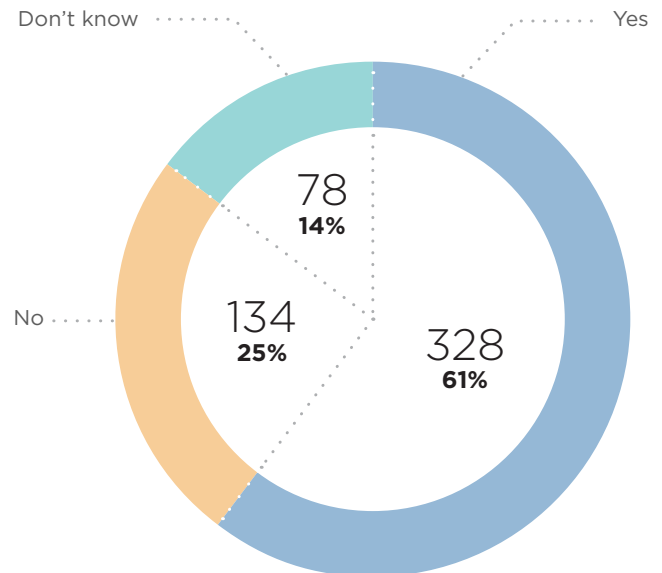
Relations with both leaseholders and freeholders appears to be deteriorating with expectations of support (-21% from leaseholders and -12% from freeholders) and actual support received (-32% from leaseholders and -18% from freeholders) all down.

It remains vital that property managers, freeholders and leaseholders continue to communicate and work together effectively. For things to improve we need to move forward from a position where lines in the sand are drawn.

3. SUPPORT (cont)

DOES YOUR EMPLOYER TAKE POSITIVE ACTION ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING?

When asked about positive action taken on health and wellbeing by employers, 61% said yes compared to over two thirds of respondents in 2021, although this does not necessarily reflect a decline in support. Alternatively, based on current wellbeing scores and evidence of increasing work pressures, it is clear employers with existing wellbeing strategies should continue to evaluate and monitor their effectiveness.



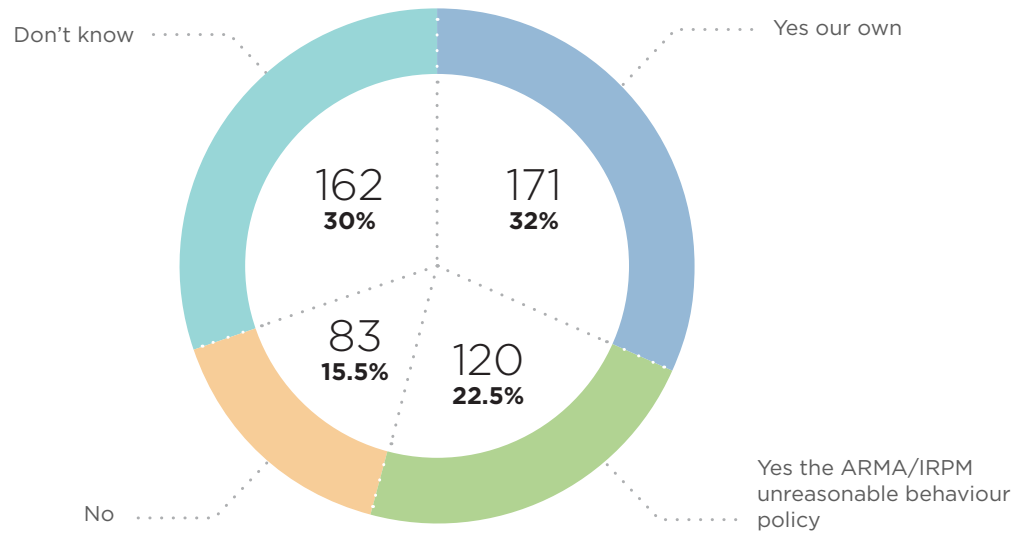
In a new question for 2022, we asked if people were taking positive actions themselves to improve their own health and wellbeing. Almost three quarters of respondents said they were, with popular activities including:



It should be noted that some respondents reported not having the time to take any action due to workload pressures.

3. SUPPORT (cont)

DOES YOUR EMPLOYER HAVE AN UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY?



In response to the 2021 survey, IRPM and ARMA produced and published an Unreasonable Behaviour Policy to help Property Managers who were experiencing abuse. An Unreasonable Behaviour Policy creates process for dealing with abuse by:

- Identifying behaviour which is abusive
- Documenting that abuse has occurred
- Providing a series of actions and recourse to counter and reduce abusive behaviour

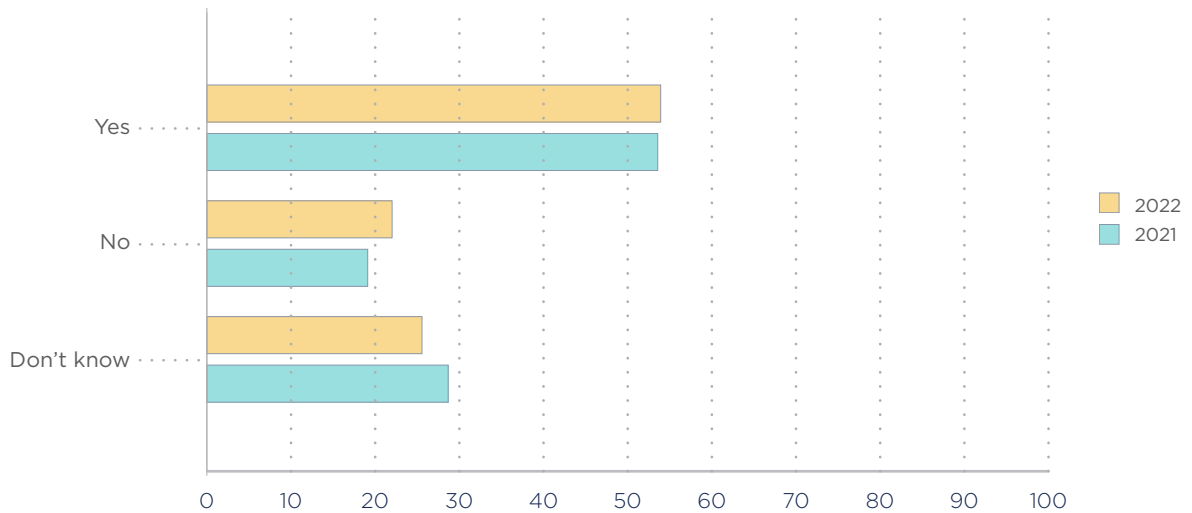
54% of respondents said their employer had an unreasonable behaviour policy in operation. In over 40% of cases, it was the ARMA/IRPM policy that was being used.

However, over 45% of respondents said their employer did not have, or they did not know if they had, an unreasonable behaviour policy.

To access the updated ARMA/IRPM 2022 Unreasonable Behaviour Policy [click here](#).

4. JOB SATISFACTION

DO YOU SEE YOURSELF STAYING IN PROPERTY MANAGEMENT FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS?



Findings

Question 42 focussed on whether workers thought they would remain in property management for the long term. The results revealed a resilient and committed, but strained, workforce. Over 22% can't see themselves staying in the sector for the next three years, whilst 54% can and 26% aren't sure. Wellbeing of staff is one factor which will prove critical to the sector retaining its skilled and experienced workforce.

Comparing likelihood of remaining in property management year-on-year a greater percentage of respondents see themselves as staying (changing from 54% to 55%) BUT a greater percentage of respondents see themselves as leaving (changing from 19% to 22%). More respondents had made up their mind one way or another than last year with "Don't know" responses reducing from 29% to 26%.

"I used to love my job but I just need to take early retirement now, it's breaking me."

Variations Based on Years of Experience

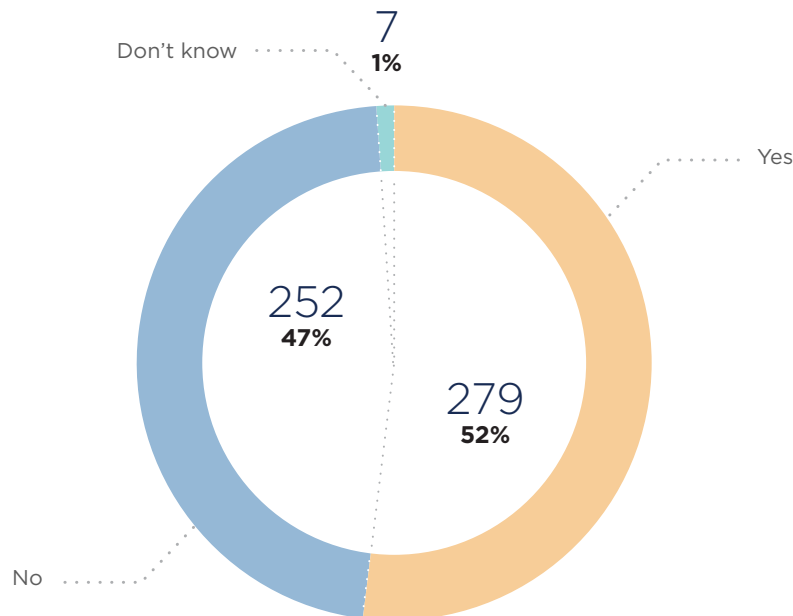
When we divide the data up based on years of experience, we can see notable differences in outlooks depending on whether respondents had 0-2 years' of experience, 3-9 years' of experience, or 10+ years' experience.

Of these three groups, respondents with 3-9 years' experience are most doubtful about remaining in property management for the long term, with only 46% of respondents believing they would still be working in the sector in three years' time. Compared to those with 3-9 years' experience, those with 0-2 years' experience are 35% more likely to see themselves staying in property management for the next 3 years. In addition, only 16% of those with under 2 years' experience see themselves leaving, which is 30% lower than the average score for those with 3 - 9 years' experience (23%).

Those with 10+ years' experience were 23% more likely to see themselves staying in property management in 3 years' time compared to those with 3-9 years' experience. Respondents with 10+ years' experience were also 2.5% less likely to see themselves not in the sector in three years' time, when compared to respondents with 3-9 years' experience.

5. THE IMPACT OF THE BUILDING SAFETY CRISIS ON WELLBEING

ARE YOU INVOLVED IN DEALING WITH BUILDING SAFETY ISSUES?



Building Safety Crisis: The Picture Today

Progress in tackling the building safety crisis has been made after a recent overhaul in government measures. The government now plans to restore greater risk proportionality to the remediation of unsafe buildings, introduce significant contributions from developers with at fault buildings, and has scrapped the previously proposed loan scheme for affected 11m-18m buildings.

But the crisis is far from over. Though the Government has made assurances that leaseholders 'won't pay' for internal, non-cladding defects, the scale of the problem remains unknown. A recent ARMA and IRPM survey reveals that compartmentation issues, which are likely to exist across significant numbers of blocks, could cost an average of £25,000 per flat to remedy – £2,500 more than the average cost of cladding remediation per flat in 2020. Furthermore, rising insurance premiums in buildings with unsafe cladding will have to be covered by leaseholders, too. This leaves many trapped in flats they cannot sell, with significant annual charges. Though there has been some clarity, both for managing agents and leaseholders, the implications are yet to be seen. These factors, coupled with the lack of available teams qualified to remediate cladding, means that we estimate the crisis may continue for 5-10 years.

Of our sample, 52% of respondents were involved in managing blocks affected by the building safety crisis.

"I used to love my role, and mostly still like it, but the enormous responsibility placed on Property Managers is incredible and overwhelming"

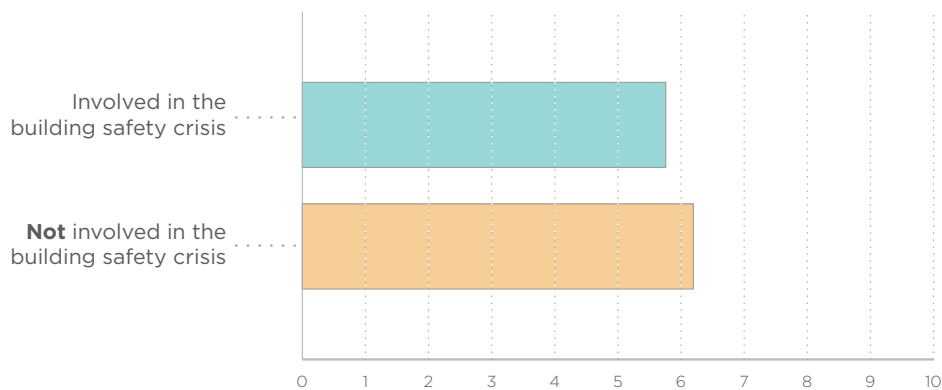
5. THE IMPACT OF THE BUILDING SAFETY CRISIS ON WELLBEING (cont)

BUILDING SAFETY CRISIS IMPACT ON WELLBEING:

Findings

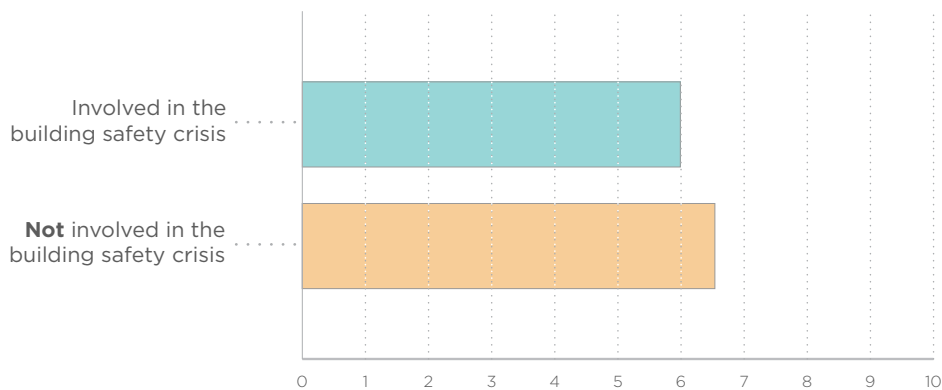
Our survey reveals the impact that the building safety crisis is continuing to have on leaseholders and the property management staff who must oversee it.

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR LIFE NOWADAYS?



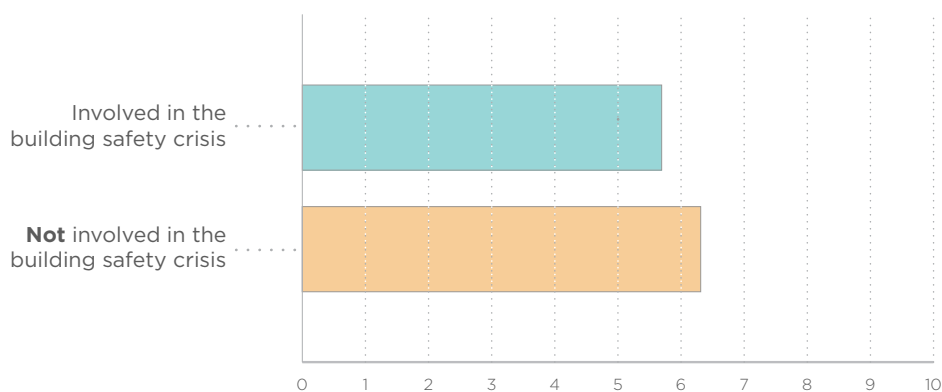
Life satisfaction is 12% higher for respondents not involved in building safety compared to those who are.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FEEL THE THINGS YOU DO IN YOUR LIFE ARE WORTHWHILE?



Feeling that things done in life were worthwhile was 9% greater for respondents not involved in building safety remediation work.

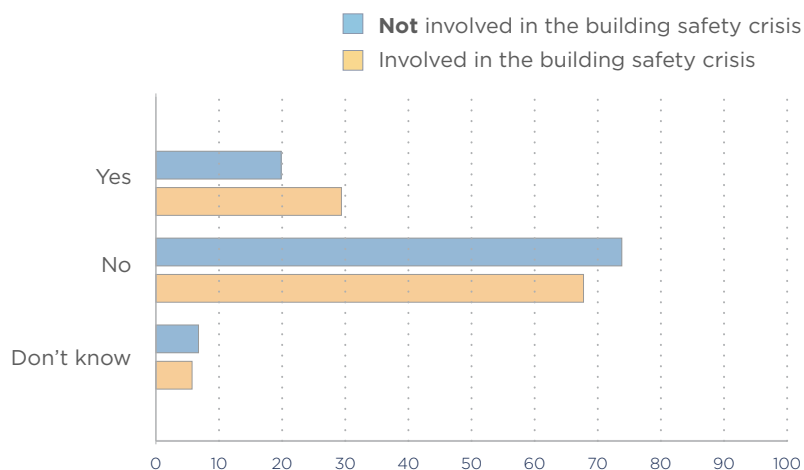
HOW HAPPY DID YOU FEEL YESTERDAY?



Overall, happiness levels recorded were 12% greater for those not involved in building safety remediation work.

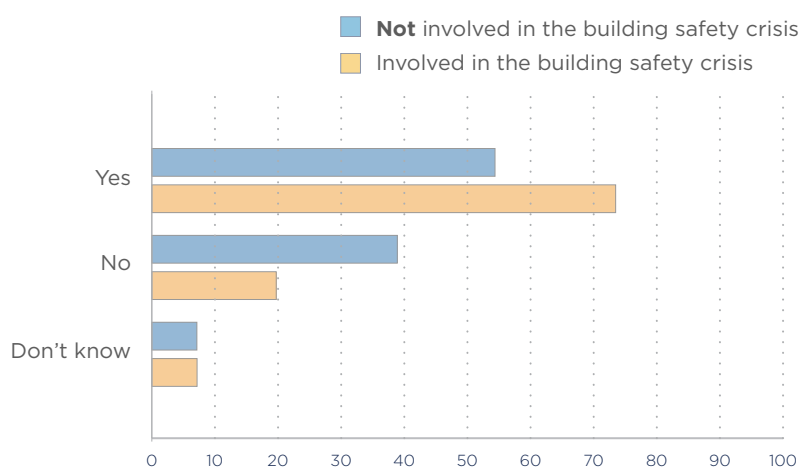
5. THE IMPACT OF THE BUILDING SAFETY CRISIS ON WELLBEING (cont)

DO YOU THINK YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IS AT RISK BECAUSE OF YOUR WORK?



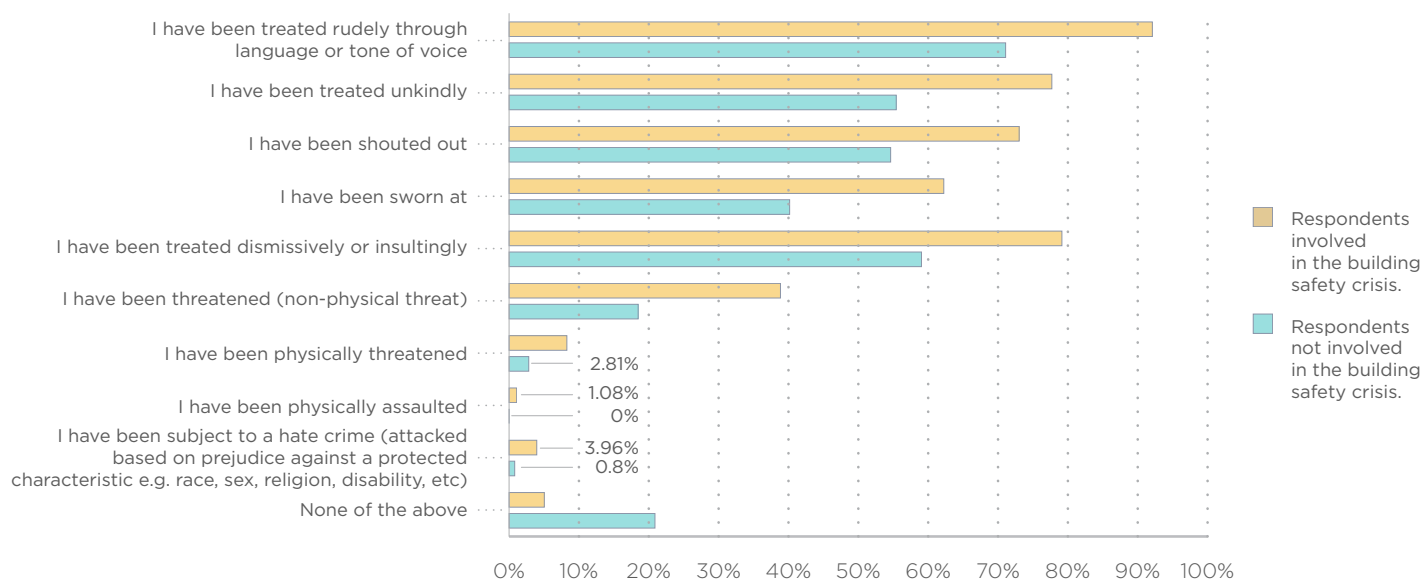
Thinking your physical health and safety was at risk because of work was 48% greater for respondents involved in building safety remediation work.

DO YOU THINK YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IS AT RISK BECAUSE OF YOUR WORK?



Thinking your mental health and safety was at risk because of work was 35% greater for respondents involved in building safety remediation work.

5. THE IMPACT OF THE BUILDING SAFETY CRISIS ON WELLBEING (cont)

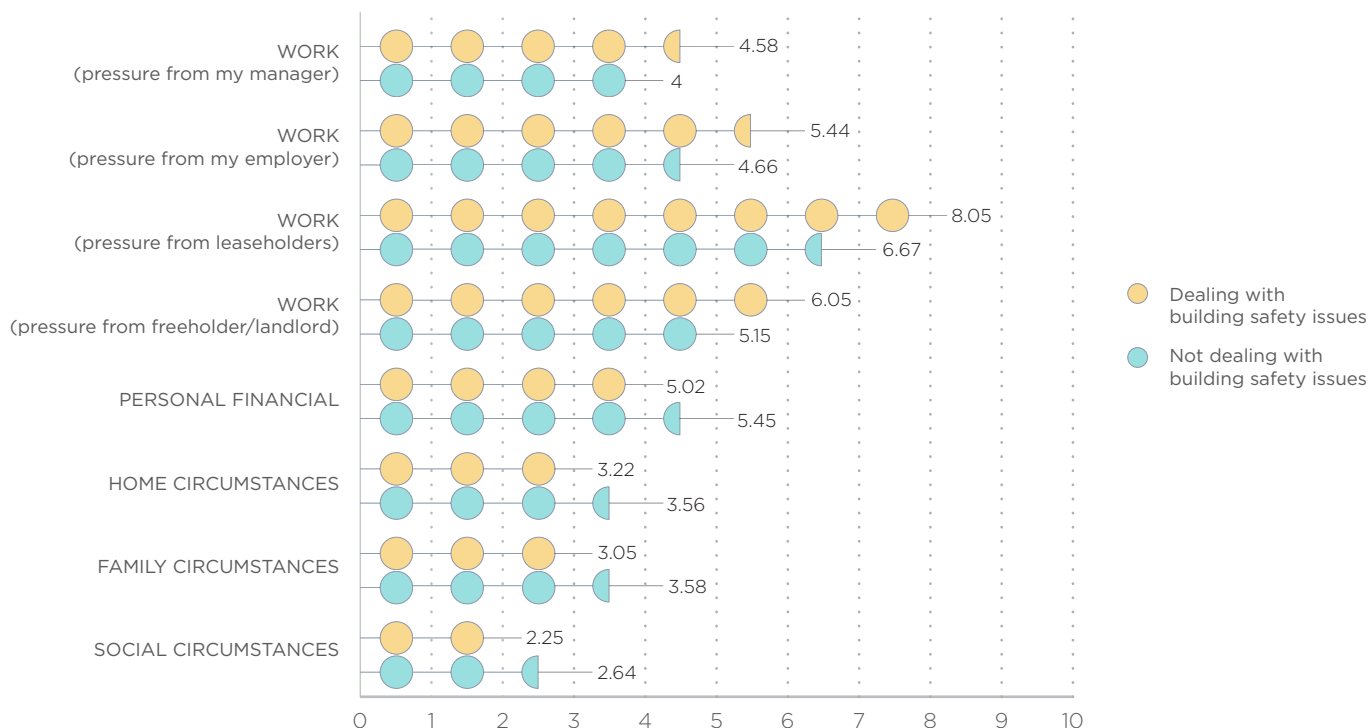


Those involved in building safety remediation also recorded higher levels of abuse. Almost 95% had been subject to some form of abuse, compared to 71% for those not involved in building remediation issues.

Those involved in building safety remediation were 82% more likely to have been sworn at, 94% more likely to have been physically threatened and almost 5 times more likely to have been subject to a hate crime. 100% of physical assaults happened to respondents involved in building safety issues.

5. THE IMPACT OF THE BUILDING SAFETY CRISIS ON WELLBEING (cont)

BUILDING SAFETY CRISIS IMPACT ON STAFF: OUT OF TEN RATE THE FOLLOWING AS SOURCES OF PRESSURE IN YOUR LIFE



Respondents involved in building safety remediation had greater than average pressures in every aspect of their working life. However, all their personal circumstances scored lower levels of pressure than average.

A note on personal financial pressures

More business owners, directors and team managers and more respondents with 6 or more years of experience in property management are involved in building safety remediation work.

A notable difference between the 2021 and 2022 survey results is a 25% increase in personal finance as a pressure in life. Removing responses from business owners, directors and team managers, the data showed that the remainder of respondents scored personal finances as 5.5 (38% higher than the average respondents score in 2021), making it a greater source of pressure than work pressures from managers or employers. For directors and business owners, personal financial pressures average just 4.2 out of 10.

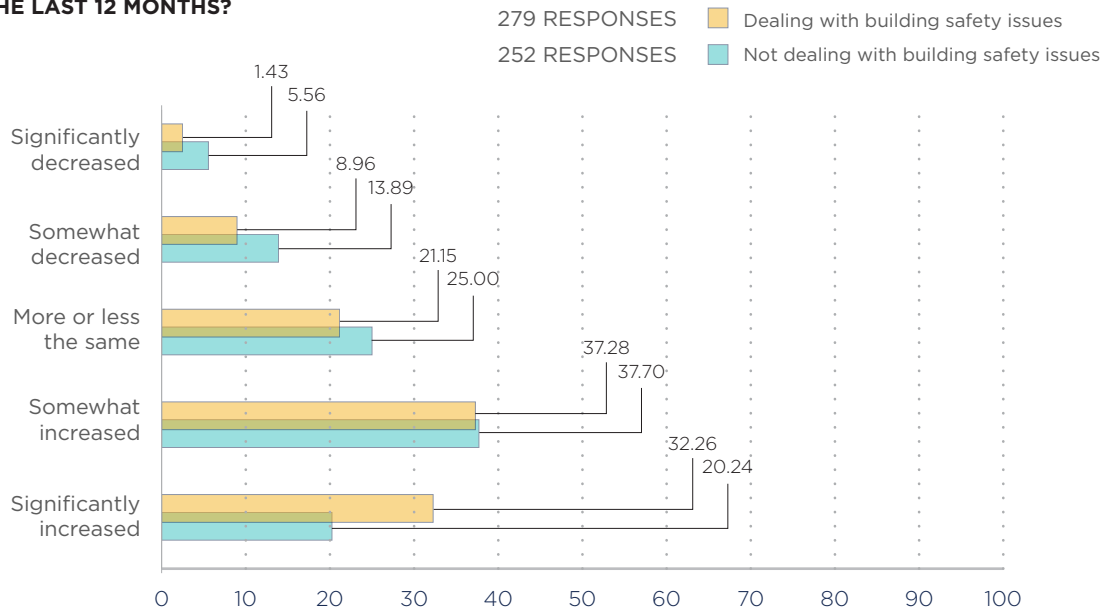
Increasing levels of personal finance pressure are in line with the growing cost of living. A recent ONS survey showed that 83% of adults reported an increase in their cost of living in March 2022, compared with around 6 in 10 (62%) adults in November 2021.⁹

"We are being treated as scapegoats for the lack of funding and remediation to unsafe cladding. In comparison to five years ago, we are also expected to have more knowledge on Fire Safety and complex H&S issues, when previously these would be looked at by consultants and risk assessors."

⁹ Impact of increased cost of living on adults across Great Britain: November 2021 to March 2022 - <https://bit.ly/3snjPFo>

5. THE IMPACT OF THE BUILDING SAFETY CRISIS ON WELLBEING (cont)

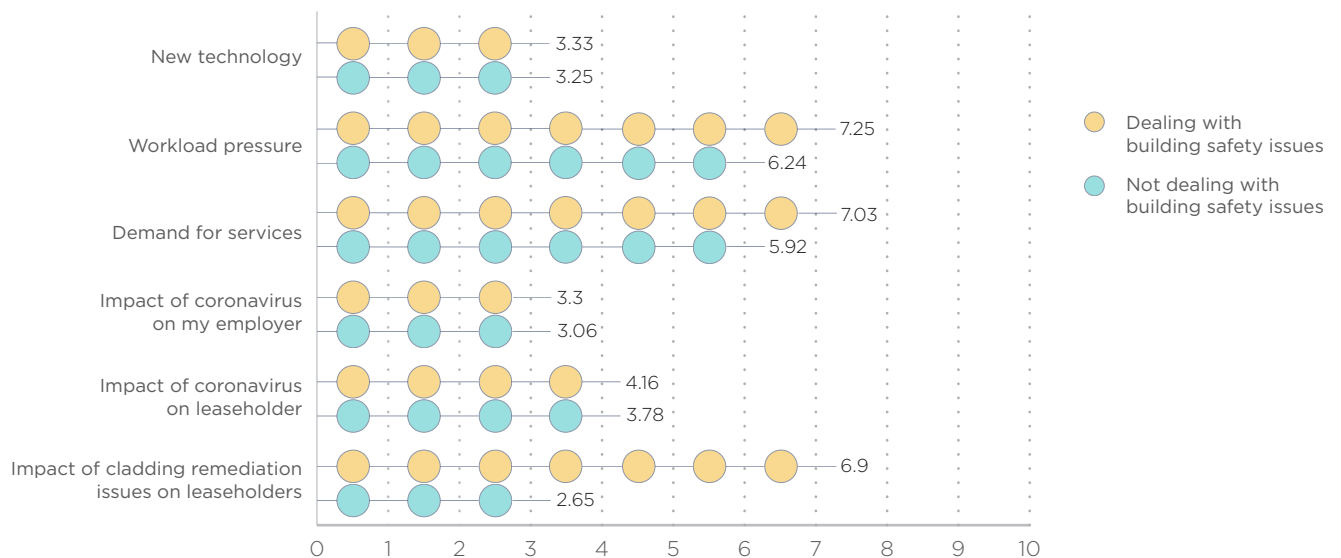
BUILDING SAFETY CRISIS IMPACT ON STAFF: HAVE YOUR WORK-RELATED STRESS LEVELS INCREASED OR DECREASED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS?



Findings

Staff involved with building safety remediation also showed signs of increased stress. 70% of those dealing with building safety issues reported an increase in stress levels, compared to 58% for those not involved with building safety issues. Significant increases in stress were noted by 32% of those dealing with remediation – 60% more than that experienced by those not involved in the building safety crisis.

BUILDING SAFETY CRISIS IMPACT ON STAFF: RATE THE FOLLOWING CAUSES OF WORK PRESSURES



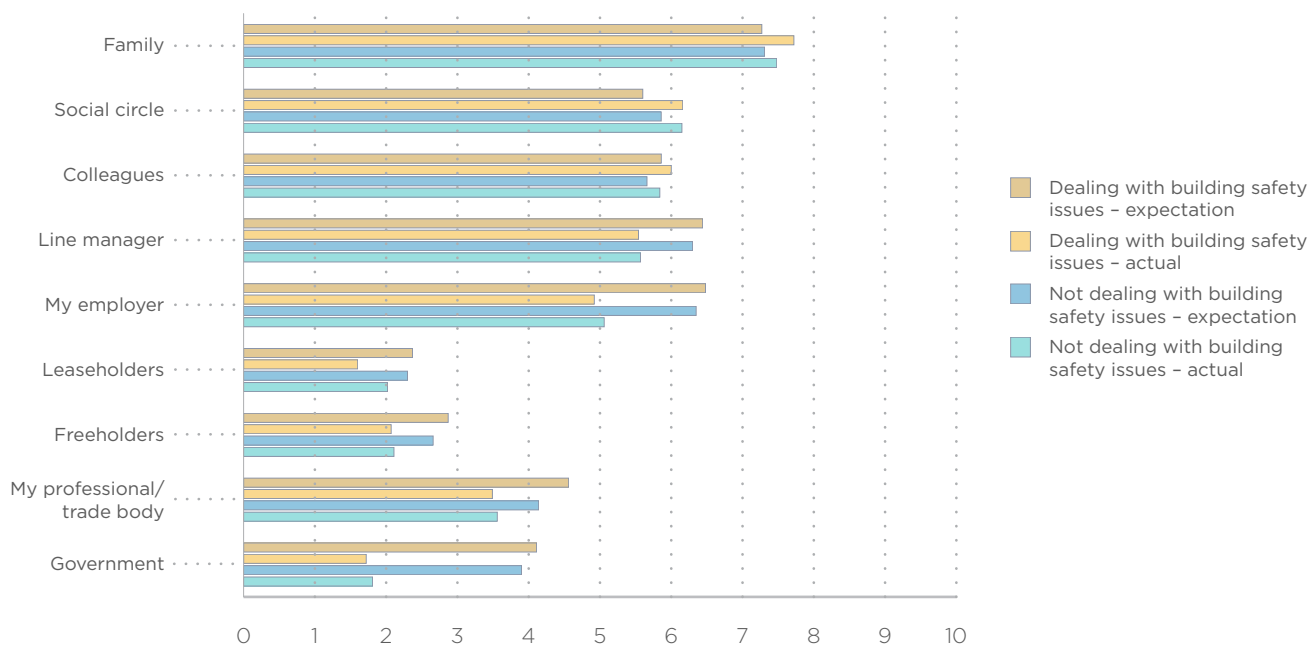
Findings

For staff dealing with building safety issues, workload pressures were 16% higher and the demand for service was 19% higher.

5. THE IMPACT OF THE BUILDING SAFETY CRISIS ON WELLBEING (cont)

Next, we identify the levels of support staff dealing with the building safety crisis expect and receive.

IMPACT OF BUILDING SAFETY CRISIS: HOW DO YOU RATE THE SUPPORT YOU ARE RECEIVING FROM THE FOLLOWING GROUPS?



2022 results were broadly the same as last year, with respondents feeling the support received from family, their social circle and colleagues meeting or exceeding expectations. Work related support all fell somewhat short of expectation.

Respondents dealing directly with building safety have a slightly greater expectation of support in all of the work-related sources of support. They feel they are receiving less support from work related sources than expected, and report feeling less support than respondents not involved.

Findings

Our survey suggests that staff members dealing with building safety issues are more likely to face increased levels of abuse and work pressure. With the crisis set to be with the industry for years to come, it is vital that the sector understands how it can alleviate pressure on affected property management staff before they become overwhelmed.

THE FOUR E'S: EXPECTATIONS, EDUCATION, EMPATHY & ENGAGEMENT

After our 2021 survey, ARMA and the IRPM created a framework covering the key areas of Expectation, Education, Engagement and Empathy. We believe that, properly addressed, these four pillars can form the basis of improving the wellbeing of property management staff in the residential leasehold sector.

EXPECTATIONS

The landscape of the sector is changing at great pace. There is increasing and additional legislation, and a cultural change embedding building safety into the sector. Furthermore, all service providers in society are under pressure to meet rising consumer expectations, and the property management industry is no different. Even the most experienced of workers are now faced with new challenges and often asked to navigate complicated guidance, or work without any at all. This has created more work for staff, and our survey provides clear evidence that many employees are feeling the strain.

Despite this, there is evidence to suggest that leaseholders and freeholders/landlords have unreasonable expectations of property management staff. They expect them to be able to solve problems and provide answers in constantly changing areas, such as building safety. Add to this a lack of support from employers, government, and trade bodies, and we can understand why much of the workforce feels unguided and without anyone to turn to. The industry needs to raise awareness that property management staff cannot be expected to achieve beyond what is reasonable. With a new building safety regime still being shaped and other areas of legislation inbound, such as RoPA and Commonhold, it is unreasonable to expect property management staff to have all the answers.

EDUCATION

The safety of the sector's workforce is paramount. Our 2022 survey shows that the workforce feels it is at an increased risk of mental and physical abuse. It is key that the sector takes action to ensure the workforce can spot signs of harm and safeguard themselves.

The nature of property management means that many staff are frequently required to attend off-site visits, often lone working during unsociable hours. Based on the levels of abuse noted by respondents, it is reasonable to assume that much of this takes place in-person, while workers are on-site and lone working. In turn, the workforce should be educated on ways of working alone safely. ARMA and IRPM have included guidance from the **Suzy Lamplugh Trust** for property managers required to lone work away from the office.

About the Suzy Lamplugh Trust

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust is the UK's pioneering personal safety charity and leading stalking authority, established in 1986, following the disappearance of 25-year-old Suzy Lamplugh, an estate agent and lone worker who went to meet a client and never returned. Suzy was never found and eventually declared deceased after seven years in 1993.

Suzy Lamplugh Trust is widely regarded as a field expert in lone working and personal safety training, stalking training, as well as consultancy, campaigning, and support services. The Trust campaigns heavily to raise greater awareness of personal safety and stalking issues, demand systemic change where needed, influence public policy, and promote a society in which people are safer and feel safer. Its longest running campaign has been the licensing of the operators and drivers of minicabs and private hire vehicles, which began in 1998.

Suzy Lamplugh Trust Resources

We have listed several Suzy Lamplugh Trust resources which will be useful for staff who lone work:

- **Personal Safety at Work: Lone-Working** – This booklet looks specifically at identifying the risks related to working alone and provides easy strategies and helpful advice to mitigate these risks. Looking at assessing the risks lone workers may face and providing ways to prevent and avoid these, this booklet is a practical guide to how to stay safe whilst working alone.
- **Personal Safety at Work: A Guide for Everyone** – This guide looks at identifying and assessing the risks potentially faced at work and provides practical tools and advice on how to mitigate these risks. The booklet looks at areas such as recognizing the early warning signs of danger and defusing aggression.
- **Lone worker apps / Lone worker devices** – Both apps and devices can play a useful part of a person or organisation's overall personal safety strategy.

Education of those who work with property management staff is also key to improving the sector's wellbeing. Our survey suggests that the main pressures on property management staff stem from their relationships with leaseholders and, to a lesser extent, freeholders/landlords and employers. Further education about the main challenges property management professionals face in their roles, tailored to each of these groups, could help mend strained relationships. ARMA and The IRPM regularly issue guidance aimed at leaseholders to help them understand the core functions and responsibilities of property management professionals and managing agents. In February 2022, ARMA published guidance on **Reserve Funds** for leaseholders, further explaining what they are, what they are for, how they work and why they are needed. Following key building safety announcements by government in June 2021, ARMA and The IRPM also produced a series of **documents providing an overview of the Building Safety Fund**. It is the role of the sector to continue to educate those it serves.

EMPATHY

In 2021, we produced an 'Unreasonable Behaviour Policy' as we believe that no worker in the sector should have to tolerate abuse. We are encouraged that over 54% of respondents reported that their employers had an unreasonable behaviour policy in place, with 40% of those who did using the ARMA/IRPM policy. The policy outlines suggested unreasonable forms of behaviour which managing agents should be aware of. It also provides several strategies which may be adopted in order to protect staff from unreasonable behaviour.

When assessing unreasonable behaviour, it is important for any staff who might be applying this policy to also have an understanding of their obligations under the **Equality Act**. This includes the obligation to make reasonable adjustments, which includes making adjustments for those with mental health difficulties who may present unreasonable behaviours due to being mentally unwell.

Managing agents who wish to use and support the policy are encouraged to circulate the document with staff, display a version on their website and include a link to the policy within email signatures. To access the file, [click here](#).

Safeguarding Staff – Poster

We have produced a poster which is there to remind residents of the person behind their property manager's title. Those facing unreasonable behaviour on the phone, in-person or online are real people with their own life pressures. We encourage companies to publicly display the poster both online and within offices and properties managed. It is similar to other posters reminding the public to respect those working in public-facing roles.

To access the poster, [click here](#).

ENGAGEMENT

Improved engagement between groups is one way the sector can help mend the fractured relationships which currently exist. Our survey findings show that relationships between staff and customers are more strained than last year. Evidently, broken cultures are still straining key relationships between staff, employers, leaseholders and freeholders/landlords. More collaborative ways of working, founded on communication, engagement and realistic expectations, can help improve the wellbeing of all those involved.

The levels of abuse which the current workforce is experiencing points to the need for staff to be able to manage direct and, at times, abusive interactions. Understanding how to de-escalate scenarios such as these can mean more productive, measured conversations can be had. Importantly, it should be remembered that staff can be on the receiving end of abusive behaviour in-person, over the phone or online.

We have listed several resources below which can help staff understand de-escalation techniques.

- **De-Escalation Training from the British Retail Consortium:** In response to the growth in violence and abuse against shopworkers, the BRC has worked in co-operation with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust to create an animation that can be used to train staff on how to deal with such threats. Although developed for the retail sector, the advice will also prove useful for the property management sector.
- **Social Media Guidance:** ARMA and IRPM produced a short guidance piece for members, to help members effectively deal with any media and social media enquiries, should you be approached, tagged or asked for a comment.
- **Social Media Crisis Communications:** In September 2021, ARMA, IRPM and The Oracle Group ran a 'Press Office and Social Media Best Practice Webinar' to help property management professionals and firms better understand how they can respond to media enquiries and manage crisis communications, along with effective social media strategies. Access the slides [here](#) and watch the recording [here](#).

Where tensions appear most stretched is regarding the building safety crisis. Measured conversations with leaseholders and freeholders/landlords should be sought, first. Once a two-way dialogue has opened, parties can help avoid future conflict by increasing understanding and empathy.

As the sector tries to understand how to address and resolve the building safety crisis, continued advice from the government can also help it navigate complex new regulations. For this to happen, the sector should aim to engage government as much as possible, giving a voice to the views of its workers.

Our survey also sheds light on the need for staff pressures to be understood by those they work most closely with – their employers. Employers need to speak to their employees regularly to understand their mindset, and by giving them a platform to voice their worries. This internal engagement will not only help boost wellbeing but create a more motivated workforce that is fully committed to the sector.

2022 AND BEYOND

There are glimpses of positive change in the sector. Although property managers remain below the national average wellbeing scores, they have made progress, and drawn closer to the general population. Higher wellbeing scores in Wales and Scotland also shows that important lessons can be learned from England's neighbours.

The outlook on the futures of current property management staff remains a mixed picture. Although more respondents still see themselves in the sector in three years' time, more also see themselves leaving the sector in three years. Employers can make the most meaningful difference to staff by focussing on wellbeing along with practical training. Beyond this, continued support will give them the tools and drive they need to commit themselves to their job.

Education and engagement with leaseholders and freeholders/landlords may help ease pressures, while highlighting the need for empathy can create a collaborative and productive dialogue between key parties.

When looking at a workforce that feels mentally and physically at risk, we cannot ignore the importance of continued staff education which can equip them with tools that will increase their confidence to work safely alone and de-escalate abusive confrontations wherever they may take place. With the right training, the workforce can become equipped with clear processes to follow when they find themselves in difficult situations. This will have the added benefit of strengthening their resilience in their role.

Finally, in a constantly changing sector where a new building safety regime is still being formed, there needs to be reasonable expectations of staff who frequently find themselves trying to work in between regimes of old and new.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic has had a lasting impact on society's wellbeing and has caused a strain in relationships between property management staff, and those they serve. However, this is a challenge which the sector is facing in addition to a new building safety regime, increasing legislation and new Net Zero targets on the horizon. It is evident that, unattended, current strained relationships between residents and property management staff will worsen. To repair them, the sector needs to empower and prepare its workforce by paying close attention to individual wellness and mental resilience. Only then can relationships be mended, allowing the sector to become a space where productive cooperation is the new normal.

ARMA and IRPM are aware of the issues highlighted by this survey and are continuing to work to develop strategies which can help improve the sector's wellbeing and resilience. Currently, both IRPM and ARMA provide resilience training courses along with CPD portal wellbeing initiatives which can support both individuals and organisations. IRPM also has a [publicly accessible Mental Health and Wellbeing resources page](#) with videos discussing key wellbeing topics.

These survey findings will help shape our future thinking, enabling us to develop further resources that will deliver a positive impact on the wellbeing of individuals working within residential leasehold property management. In the meantime, we will look forward to issuing our next survey in 2023.



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