



**ARMA & IRPM**  
INDUSTRY WELLBEING  
SURVEY REPORT  
2023





The following report makes references to mental illness. The wellbeing of our sector's people remains a concern.

If you or anyone you know is affected by what you see or hear today, seek support. GPs can signpost to local services and charities like Mind ([www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)) and Samaritans ([www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)) are available, too.

If you identify an immediate risk to life, dial 999 and ask for an ambulance.

## 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 second survey showed some slight improvements in wellbeing of our industry's professionals.

The 2023 survey is the first survey conducted without any COVID-19 restrictions in society, however this does not mean things have got easier for the sector. Other pressures have emerged, such as a cost-of-living crisis affecting many leaseholders while the implementation of the new building safety regime has grown in urgency.

National wellbeing scores are near identical to last year (happiness: 7.0, feelings that the things done in life are worthwhile: 7.3) except for the life satisfaction score, which has dropped from 7 in 2022 to 6.9 in 2023. New for 2023 is an anxiety score out of 10, with the national average being 4.<sup>1</sup>

### Sector Wellbeing

Broadly, our Wellbeing and Resilience survey shows a workforce that is still feeling the strain, although the previous worries over cladding remediation have lessened. The most significant pressure is now from workloads.

Property management professionals continue to score significantly lower than Office of National Statistic (ONS) averages when asked about how satisfied they were with their lives nowadays and how worthwhile their life is. When asked about how happy they were yesterday, respondents posted a score that was 18% below the national average. There is a decline in the sector's scores since 2022 except for the 'life is worthwhile' score which marginally improved. For the first time, we also questioned respondents on anxiety levels. They reported 16% higher anxiety scores compared to the national average. So, whilst the general population has fared marginally better since the end of COVID restrictions, the wellbeing of staff within the sector is lagging behind.

New for the 2023 survey, we drilled into the potential causes of high 'workload pressure', specifically working hours and staffing levels across the sector. The average hours worked in a typical week is 45, with office workers working 3 hours less than those home working (43 vs 46). Highlighting the recruitment struggle which many firms are facing, on average respondents estimate 20% of roles in their businesses have remained vacant throughout the year.

Work pressure ratings correlated strongly with wellbeing scores. If work pressure was too high (7 or above) the wellbeing scores given would suffer. Very low or very high workload pressure scores correlated with people being less likely to stay in the sector over the next three years.

<sup>1</sup>'Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 22 February to 5 March 2023': [www.bit.ly/3opEN7Q](http://www.bit.ly/3opEN7Q)

To note, on 29 April 2022 the 'Coronavirus and the social impacts on Great Britain' survey was superseded by the 'Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain' survey. The latter continues to provide information from the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey on insights into daily life and events, including health and well-being, cost of living and goods shortages.

Survey results showing the prevalence of those working on cladding remediation projects has slightly reduced compared to previous years. This points to the continued progress made in cladding remediation; at the end of January 2023, 95% (464) of all identified high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings in England had either completed or started remediation work to remove and replace unsafe Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding.<sup>2</sup> Although those involved in cladding remediation generally posted lower wellbeing scores, the gap is not as significant as previous years. This could also demonstrate the sector's resilience and willingness to get on top of challenging work. Nonetheless other building safety pressures, such as implementing the Building Safety Act, have proved challenging for many, as have leaseholder concerns about service charges. This indicates that the types of workload pressures have shifted.

In our 2022 survey we reported on the damaged relationships between property management staff and those they work with. Our 2023 survey again demonstrated that property management staff continued to expect and receive little support from leaseholders, employers and wider sector groups. Furthermore, staff are still likely to face aggressive and unreasonable behaviour, and more feel they are at risk physically and mentally in their roles.

Instances of unreasonable behaviour are not acceptable for workers of any kind. Two-way dialogues should be sought, as open communication is needed to strengthen relationships. Unacceptably, instances of hate crimes and physical violence directed at staff have increased.

ARMA and IRPM - now merged as *The Property Institute* - will continue to use the survey results to help shape and improve the sector's wellbeing and resilience initiatives. The next survey will be issued in early 2024.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Wellbeing Survey was distributed to residential property management professionals between 15 February and 15 March 2023. In total, 727 individuals from across the sector responded, with a 100% completion rate and over 167 additional comments, all of which have been carefully read. We would like to thank every respondent for their valuable time, insight and honesty.

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<sup>2</sup>Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities: 'Data release; Building Safety Programme Monthly Data Release, England: 31 January 2023': [www.bit.ly/438wsEY](http://www.bit.ly/438wsEY)

## CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	.....	<b>2</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	.....	<b>3</b>
<b>CONTENTS</b>	.....	<b>4</b>
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	.....	<b>5</b>
<b>METHOD</b>	.....	<b>5</b>
<b>THE CHALLENGES</b>	.....	<b>6</b>
1. SATISFACTION, HAPPINESS & WELLBEING	.....	<b>6</b>
2. PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY	.....	<b>9</b>
3. SUPPORT	.....	<b>14</b>
4. JOB SATISFACTION	.....	<b>17</b>
5. THE IMPACT OF WORKLOAD PRESSURE	.....	<b>18</b>
6. WHAT ELSE IS HARMING WELLBEING?	.....	<b>21</b>
7. WHAT CAN I DO AS A BOSS/MANAGER?	.....	<b>22</b>
8. AVERAGE WORKING HOURS & JOB VACANCIES	.....	<b>23</b>
<b>SUMMARY</b>	.....	<b>24</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	.....	<b>28</b>

## BACKGROUND

First launched in 2021, ARMA and IRPM (Now part of The Property Institute) have been providing a 'mental health check' of residential property management professionals annually, by identifying the key pressure points to inform and help shape the future of mental health and wellbeing support for the sector. Now in its third 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 60 questions, and several questions which allowed for further comments and open-ended responses. The survey ran from 15 February to 15 March. The sample included IRPM's database of property management professional members and the member firms of ARMA. 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 and identified those dealing with cladding and external wall systems issues. For the first time, the survey also asked respondents to predict their average weekly working hours and the percentage of roles which remained vacant in their business over the past 12 months. The survey also asked respondents to rate pressure from social media platforms, leaseholder concerns around the cost of living and the implementation of new building safety regulations.

The survey 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 (22 February-5 March 2023).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 22 February to 5 March 2023: [www.bit.ly/3opEN7G](https://www.bit.ly/3opEN7G)

## THE CHALLENGES

### 1. SATISFACTION, HAPPINESS AND WELLBEING

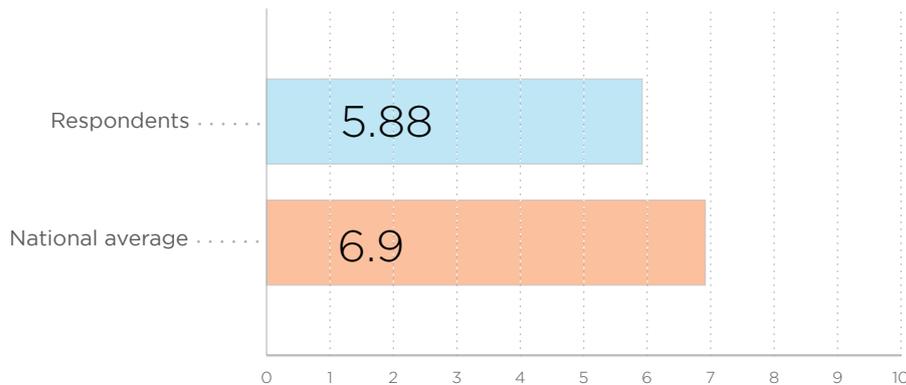
#### OVERALL, HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR LIFE NOWADAYS?

*"I struggle every day with my mental health but ... I try my best to not bring it into work."*

#### 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 10 March 2023, entitled 'Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 22 February to 5 March 2023'.<sup>4</sup>

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) entitled 'Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain'. In the period between 22 February and 5 March 2023, the survey sampled 4,963 households. These were selected from those that had previously completed similar surveys in the past. The responding sample for the latest period contained 2,789 individuals, representing a 56% response rate. Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population (based on ONS population estimates).



OF 727 RESPONSES

An average satisfaction with life rating of 5.88 for our respondents; this is compared to a national average of 6.9.

#### Findings

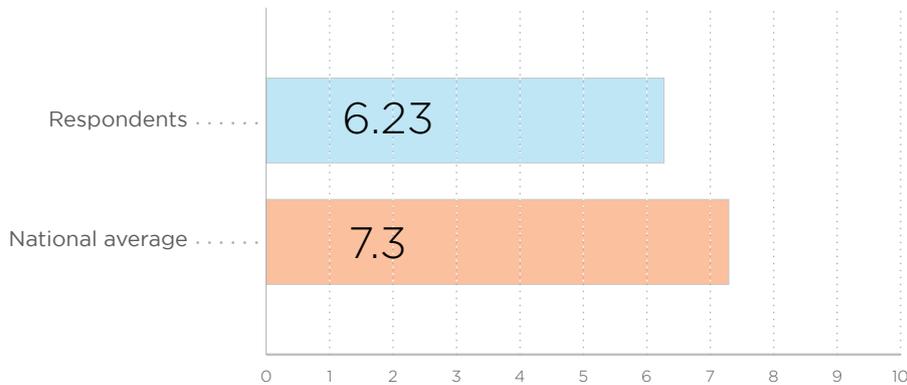
The above graph shows an average satisfaction with life rating of 5.88 for our respondents. This compares to 6.02 last year (a decrease of 2.5%) with the current national average being 6.9.<sup>5</sup> The gap to the national average is now 15%, which is marginally more than the 14% gap last year.

<sup>4</sup> Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 22 February to 5 March 2023: [www.bit.ly/3opEN7Q](http://www.bit.ly/3opEN7Q)

<sup>5</sup> Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: 22 February to 5 March 2023: [www.bit.ly/3opEN7Q](http://www.bit.ly/3opEN7Q)

## 1. SATISFACTION, HAPPINESS AND WELLBEING (CONT)

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

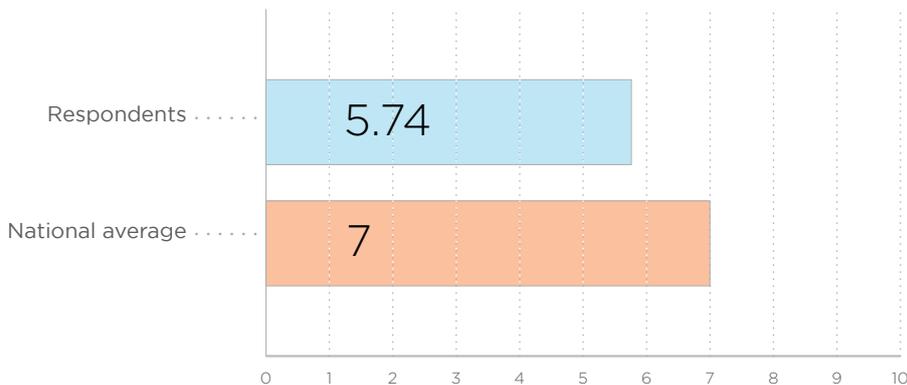


OF 727 RESPONSES

An average satisfaction with life rating of 6.23 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 6.23, a slight improvement on last year's 6.21. However, survey respondents are still 15% below the national average of 7.3.

### OVERALL, HOW HAPPY DID YOU FEEL YESTERDAY?



OF 727 RESPONSES

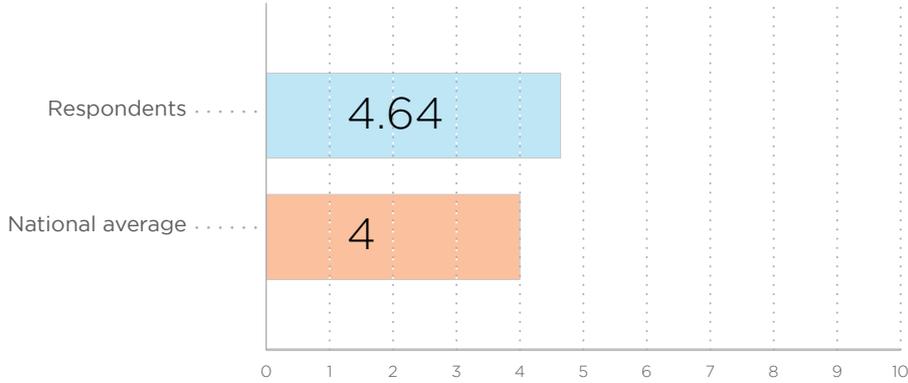
An average satisfaction with life rating of 5.74 for our respondents; this is compared to a national average of 7.

Property managers are also below the national average when asked how happy they felt the previous day. Respondents averaged a score of 5.74, compared to 5.99 in the 2022 survey (a decrease of 4%) and a national average of 7.

Respondents' average score is 18% below the national average compared to being 15% below the national average last year. Furthermore, about 30% of the UK score 9 or 10 out of 10 for happiness measures, whereas only 3% of our respondents gave scores of 9 or 10.

## 1. SATISFACTION, HAPPINESS AND WELLBEING (CONT)

### OVERALL, HOW ANXIOUS DID YOU FEEL YESTERDAY?



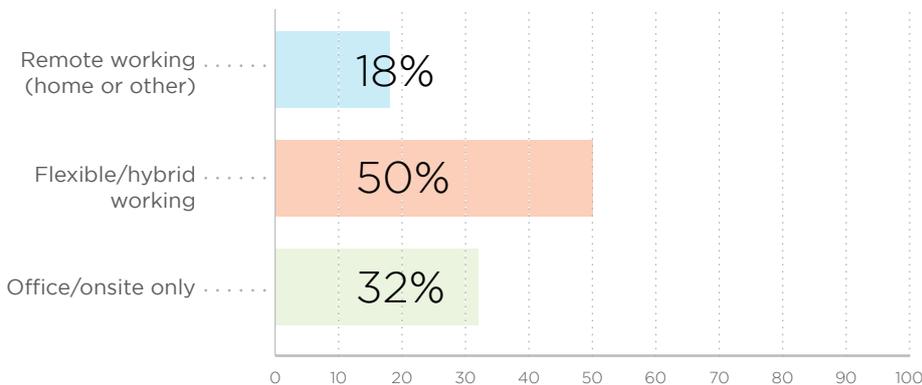
OF 727 RESPONSES

An average satisfaction with life rating of 4.64 for our respondents; this is compared to a national average of 4.

For 2023 we added a new measure of wellbeing which was anxiety, asking the question “Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?” Respondents scored 4.64, compared to a national average of 4, meaning on average respondents were 16% more anxious than the national average.

2023 respondents scored lower on happiness and life satisfaction but fared slightly better than 2022 in terms of how worthwhile their life is. Overall, respondents reported feeling a reduced sense of wellbeing and the gap to national averages for life satisfaction and happiness have increased slightly.

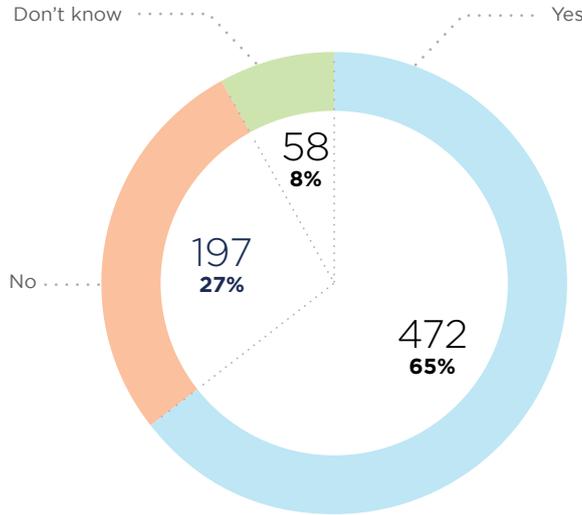
### OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS, HOW HAVE YOU BEEN PRIMARILY BEEN WORKING?



We also asked a question about the numbers of people working in a hybrid function (a mixture of office and home working), home-working only or completely office-based/ on-site. When studying the wellbeing scores, there were no significant differences when comparing groups, suggesting that work locations do not have a noticeable impact on wellbeing.

## 2. PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY

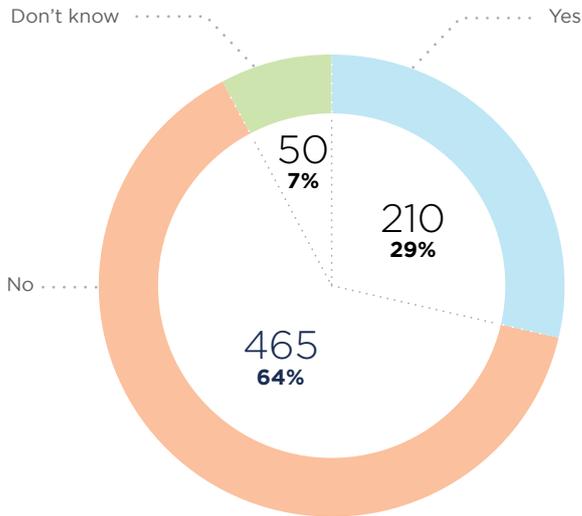
### DO YOU THINK YOUR MENTAL HEALTH OR SAFETY IS AT RISK BECAUSE OF YOUR WORK?



*“This is an incredibly stressful sector to work in, and a lot of the time feels it is everyone against us. Working under these conditions is at times completely overwhelming and negative.”*

Of all respondents, 65% thought their mental health was at risk from their work (up 1% on last year and 5% on 2021). These notable figures are telling of a sector that still has more to do to account for the health of its workforce.

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



The percentage of those who believe they are physically at risk from their job has gone up from 25% to 29%, a 4% increase on last year..

#### 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. Nearly 30% of respondents believe their physical safety is at risk because of their work, a figure which is up from the previous two years. When it comes to mental health, 65% of workers believe it is at risk because of work, the highest figure recorded since we began surveying in 2021.

## 2. PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY (CONT)

### SOURCES OF PRESSURE IN YOUR LIFE



When asking about sources of pressure in life, we included a new category which asked about the Government or regulator. This sought to highlight the impact of new building safety regulations on the sector’s wellbeing. It was ranked as the joint second highest source of pressure. This suggests that many employees are not feeling adequately supported by the very bodies setting new regulations in their sector.

The values for the other categories are largely the same as previous years. Pressure from leaseholders remains the single greatest source of pressure in life. Without COVID restrictions, home, family and social circumstances are the least pressuring. Personal financial pressures increased last year but have not increased on average for respondents in the last 12 months.

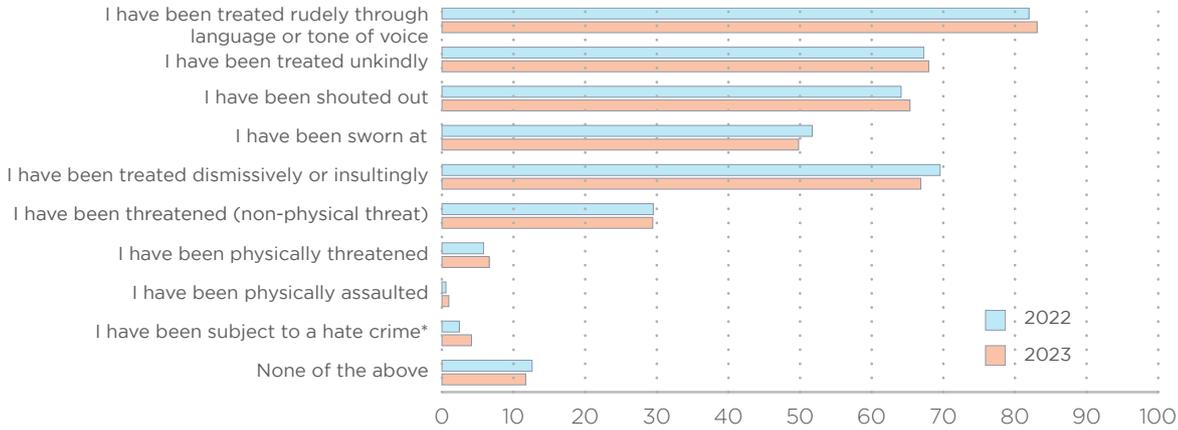
When comparing the stress of work to other life sources, we can see that work-related pressures continue to outweigh personal stresses. The most significant pressure came from leaseholders and, to a lesser extent, employers and freeholders/landlords. Pressure from landlords/freeholders is the only decreased source of pressure from work.

It is evident that good working relationships between managing agent staff, leaseholders and freeholders/landlords is essential, however our survey suggests these interactions have either remained stagnant or worsened.

The sector should focus on relationships becoming collaborative efforts. 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.

## 2. PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY (CONT)

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



Our next question sought feedback on the physical or emotional abuse experienced by workers in the sector.

#### Findings

Abuse across the sector is still high. There is a slight decrease in the number of people who haven't experienced abuse, meaning an overall increase of those who have experienced abuse, which is now at 88%.

Being insulted and being sworn at are the only measures down on last year. There has been a slight increase in the more serious forms of abuse, including those who have been physically assaulted, which is up from 0.7% to 1%. If you extrapolate this across the IRPM membership (roughly 6,300 individuals) this equates to 63 assaults a year.

*"A few times a week emails received are aggressive and rude. We've lost staff over this and had staff off sick with depression. I am so sick of seeing my colleagues abused ... I'm not sure what the answer is but something needs to change if we have any hope of retaining staff."*

**Hate crimes have increased by 69% year-on-year**  
 There has also been a 43% increase in physical assaults over the same period. Although this type of abuse represent a small number of cases, the rises are nevertheless alarming.

Abuse is increasing in other customer facing work roles such as retail and hospitality. 12% of retail workers reported having been physically assaulted in a 2022 survey.<sup>6</sup> Across the UK in 2019/2020, there were almost 700,000 workplace incidents which comprised 389,000 threats and 299,000 assaults.<sup>7</sup> These figures are unacceptable in any context.

Abuse can result in lasting damage to people long after the incident has occurred. In some cases it may be necessary for victims to seek professional help and counselling due to abuse received at work.

<sup>6</sup>Nearly a third of shopworkers are thinking of quitting because of violence, threats and abuse – an Usdaw survey finds: <https://bit.ly/42aKkgE>

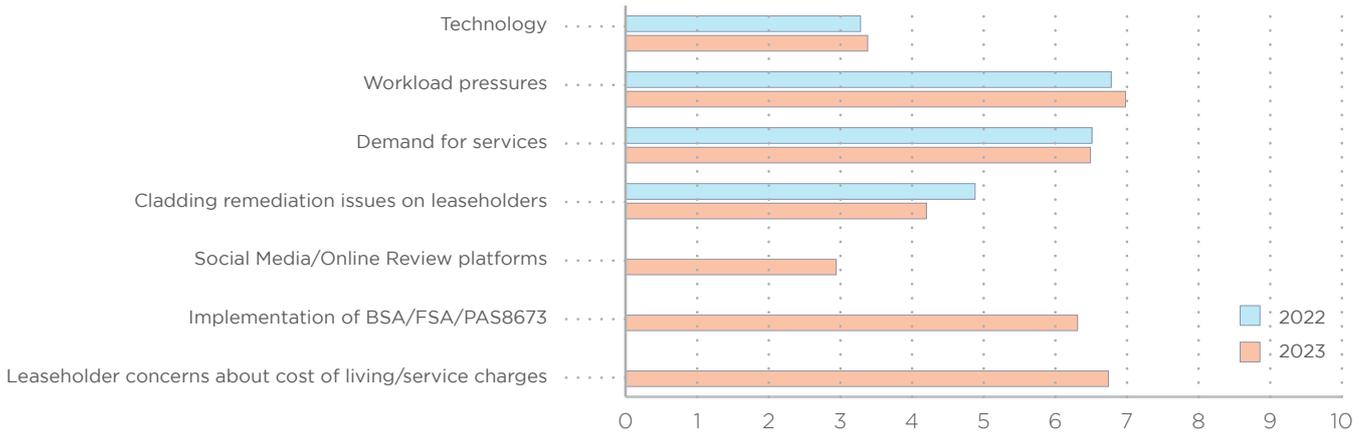
<sup>7</sup>Violence at work – is it time for specific legislation to protect retail workers? <https://bit.ly/3q53irs>



## 2. PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY (CONT)

In 2023, 75% of people said they had had an increase in stress, an increase from 65% in the previous two years. Those seeing a reduction in stress is also down from 15% to 11%. Next, we will identify the possible causes.

### CAUSES OF PRESSURE AT WORK



For 2023 we added 3 new categories as sources of pressure.

1. **Social media/online review platforms.** Pressure from public online platforms had appeared in verbatim comments, so we asked specifically about this. It is an extreme source of pressure for some, but when averaged across respondents it came out at under 3. Therefore, judging from our sample, it doesn't appear to be a significant cause of pressure at work across the board.
2. **Leaseholder concerns about cost of living and service charges.** This was the second highest cause of pressure at work.
3. **Building Safety Act and associated regulations (i.e. Fire Safety Act & implementation of PAS 8673)** – Now that many remediation projects are underway, we wanted to understand the impact of implementing further building safety reform which remains ongoing. This is now the fourth highest source of pressure at 6.31.

In comparison to last year, pressure from cladding is down, and fewer people seem to be involved in remediation projects.

However, above all other work demands, workload is proving to be the greatest source of pressure for employees.

We used a self-reported rating from zero to 10 (with 5 being the halfway mark) where the average score is 7 out of 10. Workload pressure remains the greatest source of pressure and has risen slightly year on year. This is indicative of rising workloads, and pressure from current workloads not being alleviated.

We will look more closely at the impact of workload pressure on wellbeing on [page 19](#).

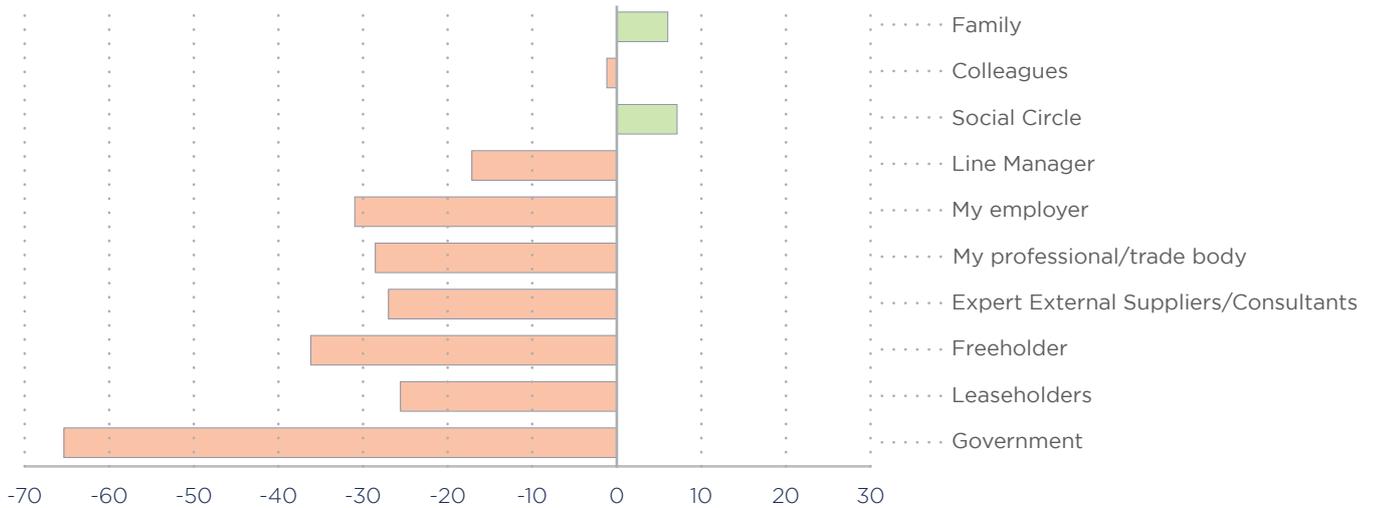
*“The workload and the stress from various parties is in most cases unmanageable and it [all comes at a] cost to our mental and physical health.”*

### 3. SUPPORT

#### HOW DO YOU RATE THE SUPPORT YOU ARE RECEIVING FROM THE FOLLOWING GROUPS?

**Findings**

Respondents were asked about their expectations of support from various people in their lives and how the actual support received compared. The below table is ranked by support received and shows the variation on the support respondents expected to receive.



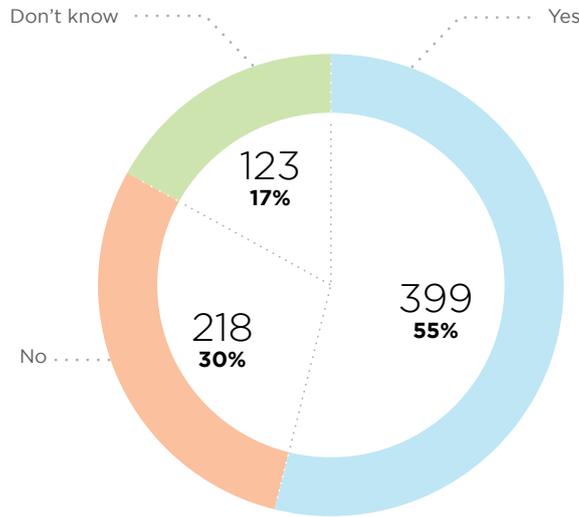
Variation (%) between the support expected and the actual support received

Ranking of support hoped for, and the variation shows that only family and friends exceeded the levels of support expected of them. Conversely, employers, professional/trade bodies and the government were judged to offer lower levels of support than expected.

In other words, everybody is underperforming (including all work-related support) against expectations apart from family and social circles.

### 3. SUPPORT (CONT)

#### DOES YOUR EMPLOYER TAKE GENUINE POSITIVE ACTION ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING?



In 2021 and 2022 we received significant verbatim feedback from respondents suggesting that whilst their employer did take some form of action on wellbeing, it was not viewed as genuine. We therefore added the word genuine into the question. The 'yes' answers have reduced by 10% from 61% to 55%, this is down from 66% in the first year of the survey. The 'No' responses have gone up from 25% to 30%.

#### How have people taken control of their wellbeing?

As part of our 2023 survey, we wanted to understand the actions people have taken to improve their wellbeing themselves.

71% of respondents stated they had taken positive steps themselves, just 1% lower than last year, showing that personal responsibility for wellbeing remains high.

Verbatim responses were sought for this question. Dividing up examples, we can see that responses generally fit into four main groups:

**Lifestyle -**  
healthy eating/  
drinking, exercise,  
sleep

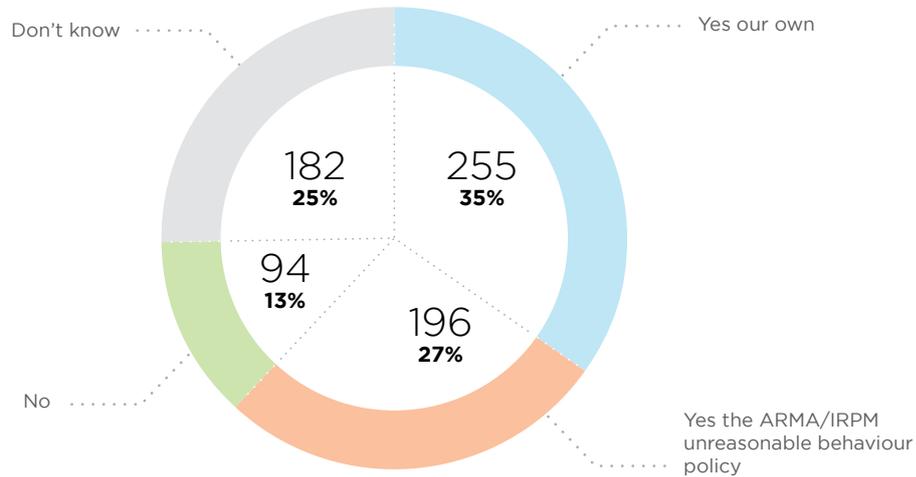
**Work/life balance**  
- reducing  
working hours  
and engaging in  
personal activities/  
hobbies

**Professional  
or Self-Help -**  
professional help,  
self-help - through  
online therapy and  
books or other  
resources.

**Examples of things  
offered by employees  
which have improved  
wellbeing -** These include  
an Employee Assistance  
Programme, fruit drops,  
office dog, fortnightly  
lunch, 'work to rule' days,  
TOIL, birthday day off,  
vouchers, wellness walks.

### 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 processes for dealing with abuse by:

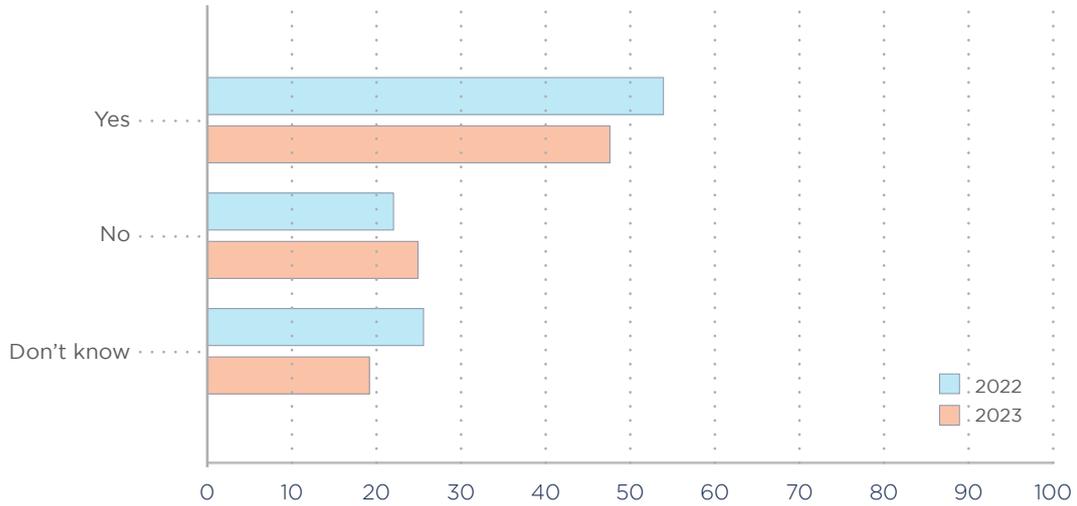
- Identifying behaviour which is abusive
- Documenting that abuse has occurred
- Providing a series of actions and recourse to counter and reduce abusive behaviour

62% of respondents said they employer had an unreasonable behaviour policy in operation. In over 40% of cases, it was the ARMA/IRPM policy that was being used.

The updated ARMA/IRPM 2023 Unreasonable Behaviour Policy can be found on [page 26](#), and downloaded at [www.bit.ly/unrepolcy23](http://www.bit.ly/unrepolcy23).

## 4. JOB SATISFACTION

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



#### Career Outlooks

Respondents were asked if they saw themselves staying in property management for the next three years. Fewer than half of respondents (48%) saw themselves staying in the sector over the next 3 years while those that didn't see themselves staying is now up to 25%. The amount of people who aren't sure about whether they are staying is now decreasing, sitting at 19% compared to 26% last year.

Unless addressed, this could spell more challenging times for a sector that is already understaffed.<sup>8</sup>

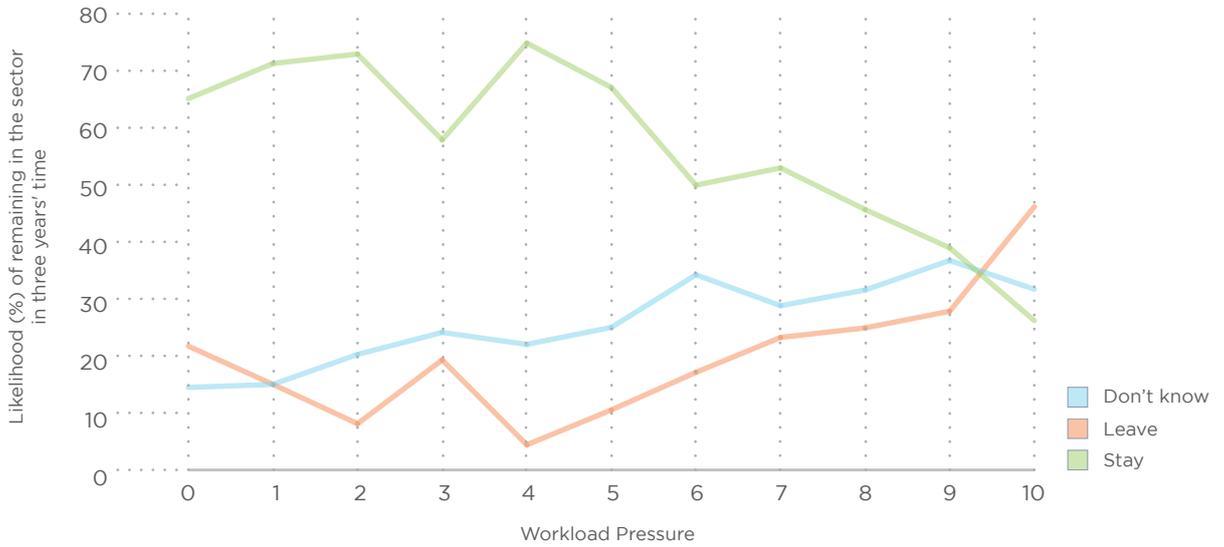
*"It is often unbearable and I don't think a long-term career in PM is possible anymore due to the huge workload."*

*"It's really not a job I see myself doing for much longer and I've been in estate management for 20 years."*

<sup>8</sup> Labour turnover rates survey 2020: <https://bit.ly/42ZobDd>

## 5. THE IMPACT OF WORKLOAD PRESSURE

### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEPTION OF WORKLOAD AND LIKELIHOOD OF REMAINING IN PROPERTY MANAGEMENT IN 3 YEARS TIME



The survey data suggests that those experiencing negative amounts of workload pressure (either too low or too high) are more likely to consider leaving the sector.

The above chart compares respondents scores of workload pressure (bottom axis) with their likelihood of remaining in the sector in three years' time (left axis). Of those rating their workload pressure as 10, only 26% see themselves as staying in the sector, with 46% leaving. Where workload pressure is reduced to 9 there is a gain of 13% points in likelihood of staying in the sector and an 18% point reduction in the likelihood of leaving.

Of those rating their workload pressure as 4, 74% see themselves as staying with just 4% leaving.

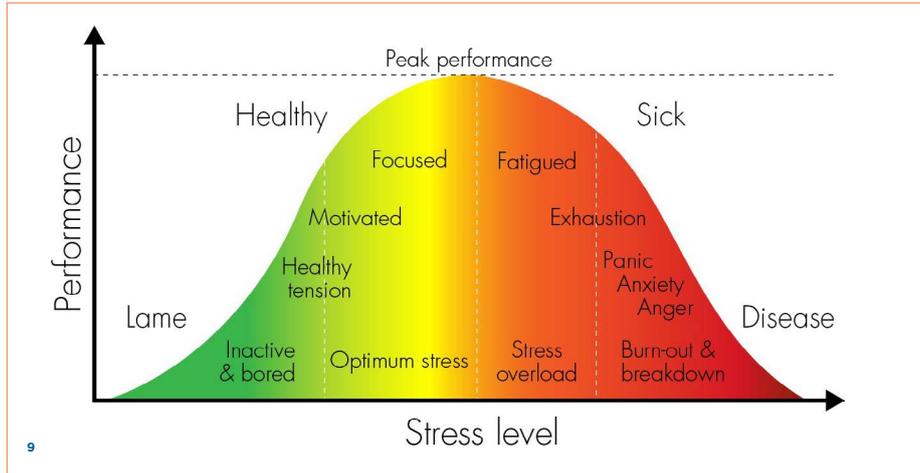
When viewing the workload pressures of four or below, the trend lines begin to curve away again, with more people thinking they will leave and fewer believing they will stay, indicating that very low levels of work pressure can fail to motivate workers.

***“The workload to meet demands of leaseholders and comply with regulations whilst trying to maintain properties and complete major works is immense.”***

## 5. THE IMPACT OF WORKLOAD PRESSURE (CONT)

### YERKES-DODSON STRESS CURVE

This trend accurately reflects the classic stress threshold diagram shown below.

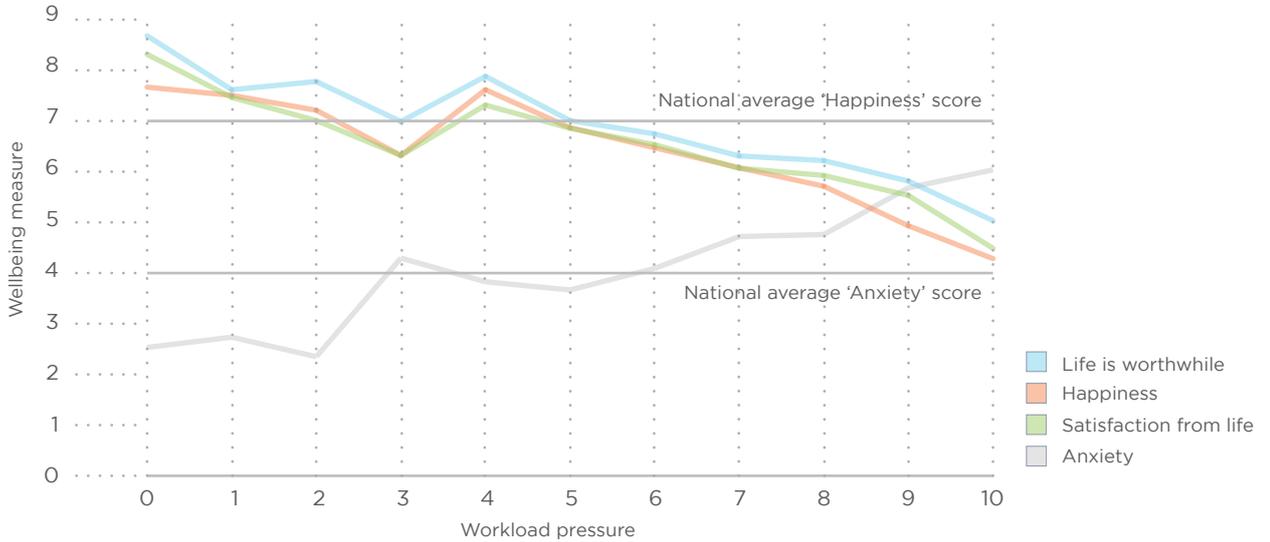


People positively respond to some form of pressure. Usually, they recognise that they require some level of pressure to perform at their best. Understandably then, inactive and bored people have an increased likelihood of leaving.

As more pressure is added after a certain point, their performance will decline and will inexorably continue to decline no matter how much pressure is added on them. On our workload pressure scale of 0 to 10, for our sector it appears this tipping point is at about the halfway mark.

## 5. THE IMPACT OF WORKLOAD PRESSURE (CONT)

### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKLOAD PRESSURE AND WELLBEING



#### Work Pressure & Wellbeing

The chart above compares the workload pressure people report along with their reported national wellbeing measure. The left hand scale is the wellbeing measure and workload pressure is along the bottom.

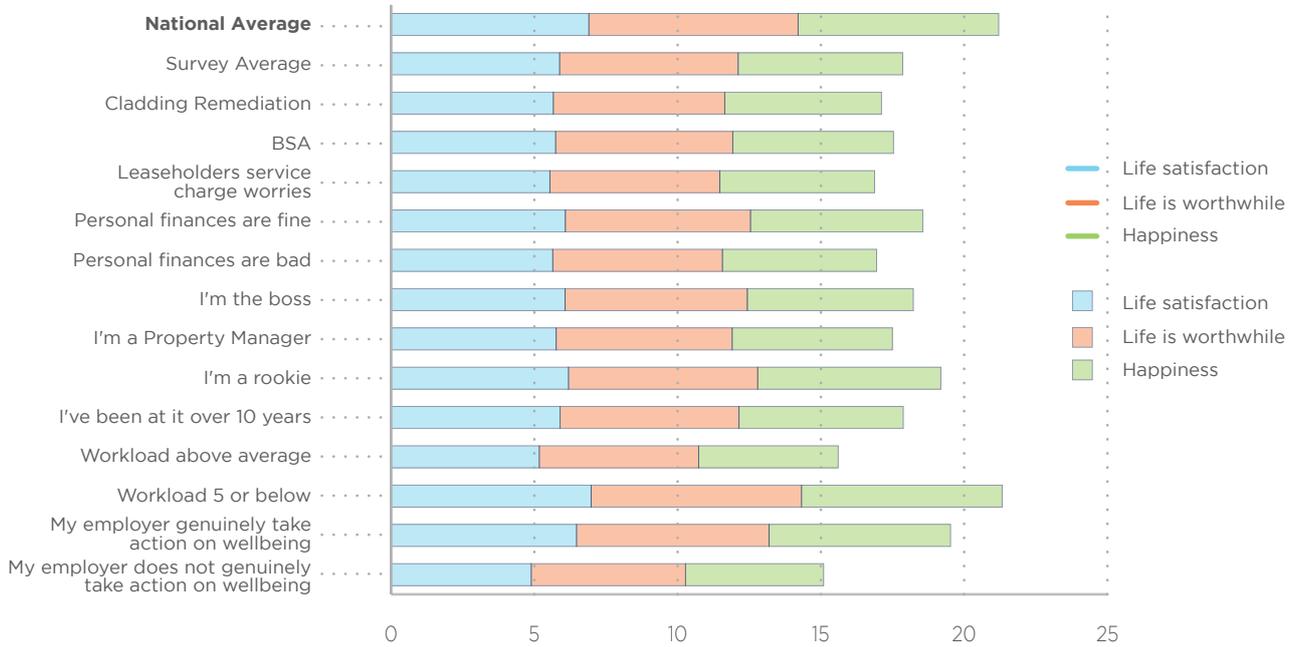
Take 7 on the left-hand scale as the national average for life satisfaction, how worthwhile life is and happiness. With the exception of those scoring 3 for workload pressure, respondents are at or above the national average all the way from zero to 5 workload pressure.

Take 4 on the left-hand scale as the national average for anxiety, respondents are below or on the average from zero to 6 workload pressure. This demonstrates that workers in the sector can still handle significant amounts of workload pressure. However, there are limits. Anxiety is 50% higher than the national average for those reporting a workload pressure of 10.

As a rule of thumb, for every 1 point reduced from workload pressure you are adding half a point to each of the wellbeing measures.

Reducing workload pressure from 10 to 9 increases satisfaction with life by an entire point, three-quarters of a point for the feeling that life is worthwhile and two-thirds of a point for happiness. These are profound differences in wellbeing.

## 6. WHAT ELSE IS HARMING WELLBEING?



As we can see being involved in cladding remediation is no longer a huge divider. Similarly, although the Building Safety Act is causing pressure, it doesn't appear to significantly impact on wellbeing. Once again, the sector is proving its capability to take on new regulations and challenges.

When we split up the responses between those who work from home, hybrid work or work from the office/on-site, there are no significant differences in wellbeing.

In contrast, an above average workload pressure (bearing in mind the average is 7) drops the total wellbeing score by 2.25 points below the average.

If respondents record a workload pressure of 5 or below, the wellbeing score is raised by 3.5 points over the survey average, and actually takes respondents above the national average.

In combination with the detrimental pressure of workload, the impact on wellbeing is compounded further when respondents don't believe their employer is taking genuine action on wellbeing. They scored two- and three-quarter points below the survey average, and almost four and a half below those respondents who believe their employer is taking genuine action.

## 7. WHAT CAN I DO AS A BOSS/MANAGER?

The greatest impact you can have on wellbeing is taking genuinely positive action to help improve it, and reduce workload pressure where possible. Our figures show that any and every reduction in workload pressure leads to improved wellbeing.

But what does taking genuine positive action on wellbeing look like? Assessing the verbatim feedback on this question, we have summarised it as:

- You have to listen, be flexible, care.
- You need some kind of structure - like an Employee Assistance Programme. However, employers must be aware that these programmes may draw scepticism from employees that they are dealing with symptoms and not the cause.
- Respondents mentioned days off for their birthday, being taken out for the occasional lunch, vouchers, an open door to the MD, the odd round of drinks, being thanked, being asked how you are feeling and fresh fruit around offices.

Having a diverse range of approaches would be beneficial since different individuals require different strategies. For instance, while a company might offer gym memberships, not all employees would take advantage of them. The most effective wellbeing programs offer a flexible “menu” of options, allowing employees to choose what suits them best. We encourage organisations to engage in discussions with their employees to understand their preferences and determine what would truly have a positive impact on them. Incorporating elements of “Employee Voice” not only enhances employee engagement but also fosters authenticity.

None of these will work in silo, but together, with a structured programme and the genuine intent to improve things, these will make a difference.

***“...it used to be an enjoyable job! Now it is just anxiety inducing, with very little support from the people it should be coming from.”***

## 8. AVERAGE WORKING HOURS & JOB VACANCIES

In understanding the high scores posted for workload pressure, we asked for estimates on how many hours respondents worked per week. On average, respondents recorded working 45 hours a week, with some verbatim comments noting that some work was also done during weekends. This is well above the national average for full time workers which sits as 36.4 hours per week.<sup>10</sup>

*“People leave, no one [replaces them], I get more work and I’m less happy. It’s a downward spiral.”*

Vacancies within teams would also have a likely impact on workload pressure. On average, 20% of roles remained vacant across companies throughout the year.

### Remote vs Office Working

Much has been debated about the rise of homeworking and its impact on worker performance. We have looked at the data to understand how working locations have influenced workloads and found that:

- 18% of people only work remotely.
- 50% of people work flexibly.
- 32% of people only work on-site or in the office.

The average for those working in a hybrid style is between 2 and 3 days.

Those working in the office average 43 hours a week. If you work from home, you average 46 hours a week. This figure is similar for those working flexibly.

<sup>10</sup> Average actual weekly hours of work for full-time workers (seasonally adjusted): <https://bit.ly/4334xG8>

## SUMMARY

We first launched our wellbeing survey in 2021. Two years later, wellbeing scores for the sector are still lagging behind the national average, and in some instances have dropped further away.

### Workload Pressure & Wellbeing

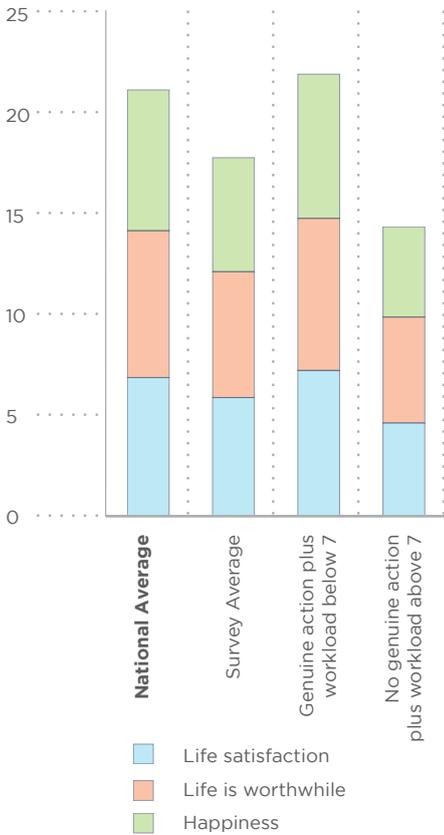
The residential property management sector continues to change at great pace. Workers must grapple with a new building safety regime, understand additional and changing legislation and meet the continually rising expectations of consumers.

Even the most experienced of workers are now faced with new challenges and 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.

Workloads are proving the largest source of pressure for many employees. The typical full-time respondent faces nearly 9 extra work hours per week compared to the national average and is working within teams that are 20% understaffed.<sup>11</sup> Workers also feel unsupported, from employers, government, and trade bodies. Nevertheless, even the best support can't alleviate unrealistic workloads.

### SHOWING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF REDUCED WORKLOAD PRESSURE AND GENUINE EMPLOYER ACTION ON MENTAL HEALTH

Our survey highlights a clear link between workload pressure and wellbeing. The data also supports that anything employers can do to reduce people's perception of workload pressure will increase their wellbeing.



Respondents who genuinely believe their employer takes positive action on wellbeing and have a below average workload pressure rating post wellbeing scores that are significantly above the national average.

The survey reveals the stress threshold of respondents to be about midway on a scale of 0 to 10. When looking at respondents on or below that threshold, who also believe their employer takes positive action on wellbeing, then you get wellbeing scores greater than 10% above the national average. This is around 20% of respondents.

The rewarding property management job that people love is still alive and well at firms where people believe their employer is genuine about their wellbeing and manage to keep workload pressure below average (7).

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.

20% of respondents have significantly below national average wellbeing.

<sup>11</sup> Average actual weekly hours of work for full-time workers (seasonally adjusted): <https://bit.ly/4334xG8>

### What Can You Do Today?

This year's survey results reveal a strained workforce, but also demonstrates a sector that has resilience and robustness. The majority of respondents have taken personal responsibility for safeguarding their wellbeing. This awareness of wellbeing means that any positive steps employers take are likely to be noticed.

The time to act is now. For the first time, the majority of respondents don't see themselves in the sector in three years' time. Employers can make the most meaningful difference to staff by focussing on reducing workloads where possible and offering genuine wellbeing initiatives. These don't have to be huge or costly programs, but they will serve as indicators that employers are genuinely seeking to improve the wellbeing of their employees.

### The True Cost of Blocks

Employers may want to consider the real cost of blocks which they currently manage. Some blocks will, naturally, require more attention from staff. In some cases, these blocks can stretch understaffed teams, and may impact the wellbeing of employees. If employees are overworked and choose to move on from their role, the employer will face the added costs of recruiting and training new staff. The true cost of blocks may therefore be higher than face value.

Firms often focus on the economic profitability of blocks, but they should also consider the, at times, hidden costs of unmotivated and unhappy staff.

### Support for Employees

The abuse of workers remains high and there remains a clear breakdown in communication between property management staff and leaseholders. More concerning is the increase in serious forms of abuse; physical assaults and hate crimes. These are unacceptable in any context, and will often require intervention from authorities.

Understanding how to de-escalate abusive scenarios, where possible, will help workers foster more productive and measured conversations. 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 ([www.bit.ly/brcdeesc](http://www.bit.ly/brcdeesc)):** 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.
- **Advice for Workers on Violence in the Workplace from the Health & Safety Executive ([www.bit.ly/hseviolence](http://www.bit.ly/hseviolence)):** The Health and Safety Executive has several resources on tackling violence at work, for both workers, and those responsibility for health and safety in their workplace. The guidance looks at ways to prevent violence occurring and what to do if a violent incident occurs. More broadly, the Executive also has guidance on managing stress at work ([www.bit.ly/hsestresswork](http://www.bit.ly/hsestresswork)).

### **Unreasonable Behaviour Policy**

ARMA and IRPM believe that no worker in the sector should have to tolerate abuse. We are encouraged that over 62% of respondents know their employer has an unreasonable behaviour policy, up from 54% last year. In 44% of cases this is the ARMA/IRPM 'Unreasonable Behaviour 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 ([www.bit.ly/eqactgov](http://www.bit.ly/eqactgov)). 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.

Download the 2023 Unreasonable Behaviour Policy here ([www.bit.ly/unrepolicy23](http://www.bit.ly/unrepolicy23)).

### **Safeguarding Staff – Posters**

We have produced two new posters for 2023 which serve as reminders to 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 either version of our 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 ([www.bit.ly/irpmarmasg](http://www.bit.ly/irpmarmasg)).

### **New Forms of Pressure**

We investigated three new areas of work pressure for 2023 based on industry feedback and historic verbatim responses. These have helped us understand which other sources of tension are impacting on wellbeing.

#### **1. Social Media/Online Review Platforms**

Our survey results showed that online platforms can be a very significant source of pressure for employees. Public online commentary on social media channels from complainants can be inflammatory and highly emotive. Online reviews can also be highly polarising. With 91% of 18-34-year-old consumers trusting online reviews as much as personal recommendations, it's understandable why negative company reviews are contributing to feelings of increased pressure among employees.<sup>12</sup>

Whether or not online comments and reviews are founded, ARMA and IRPM have made available several resources which can offer guidance on the use of social media and crisis communications. They can be found below:

- **Social Media Best Practice Guide** ([www.bit.ly/irpmarmasm](http://www.bit.ly/irpmarmasm)) ARMA and IRPM produced a short guidance piece for members, to help them effectively deal with any media and social media enquiries, should you be approached, tagged or asked for a comment.

<sup>12</sup> Why Reviews Are Essential And How To Generate Positive Reviews For Your Business: [www.bit.ly/3OAV9VS](http://www.bit.ly/3OAV9VS)

- **Online Reviews & Endorsements – Advice for Businesses** ([www.bit.ly/reviewsgov](http://www.bit.ly/reviewsgov))  
The Competition and Markets Authority has made guidance on online reviews available, including a piece on the ‘Dos and Don’ts of managing online reviews’ ([www.bit.ly/cmaonrev](http://www.bit.ly/cmaonrev)).
- **Social Media Crisis Communications:** Previously, 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 ([www.bit.ly/irpmarmacrisis](http://www.bit.ly/irpmarmacrisis)) and watch the recording here ([www.bit.ly/crisisrec](http://www.bit.ly/crisisrec)).

## 2. Leaseholder Concerns About Increases in Service Charges/Cost of Living Increases on Residents and Leaseholders

Inflation rose to a 41-year high of 11.1% in October 2022, and has affected the affordability of goods and services for households.<sup>13</sup> The current cost-of-living crisis is continuing to affect millions in the UK. Managing the gathering of service charges during periods of austerity is, expectedly, a challenging task. Managing agents will seek to support residents struggling to meet payments as much as they can. In order to help, we have listed several government resources which may be helpful for residents.

- The Government’s ‘Help for Households’ ([www.bit.ly/helphousegov](http://www.bit.ly/helphousegov)) page includes information on the Cost of Living Payment, and includes energy saving tips.
- The Government’s general ‘Cost of Living Support’ ([www.bit.ly/costlsupp](http://www.bit.ly/costlsupp)) page offers information on income support and child and maternity costs.
- The Citizen Advice Bureau ([www.bit.ly/citizenscost](http://www.bit.ly/citizenscost)) is another source of help and support for those struggling financially.

## 3. Implementation of New Requirements of the Building Safety Act, Fire Safety Act & PAS 8673

Our survey shows that the implementation of the new building safety regime is proving a source of significant pressure to the sector’s workers. Although not all property managers will bear full responsibility for the safety of buildings they manage, there remains a need for them to understand the scope of the new regime, and the part they will play. Key aspects of the new regime include compiling the Safety Case Report and working to the new PAS 8673 standard ([www.bit.ly/pas8673](http://www.bit.ly/pas8673)).

Increased sources of pressure from regulatory bodies and Government bodies suggests implementing the new regime is not being adequately communicated. Below are several resources which can help.

### ARMA and IRPM Resources

The Building Safety Act (BSA) and the Fire Safety Act (FSA) are having a significant impact on almost all property management companies. Many details of the new regime are yet to be finalised, and ARMA and IRPM continue to work with government on the latest building safety legislation to ensure it is achievable for those involved in implementing it. To help members, ARMA and IRPM have created a **Building Safety Hub** to assist professional and corporate members in staying up to date with the latest building safety regulations through resources pooled from internal and external industry sources. In addition, members receive fortnightly bulletins detailing the latest building safety updates.

Building safety training courses are also continually run and open to both non-members and members, visit: [www.bit.ly/armatrain](http://www.bit.ly/armatrain). Visit the ARMA Building Safety Hub here: [www.bit.ly/armabshub](http://www.bit.ly/armabshub). Visit the IRPM Building Safety Hub here: [www.bit.ly/irpmbshub](http://www.bit.ly/irpmbshub).

<sup>13</sup> Rising cost of living in the UK: [www.bit.ly/45q07uH](http://www.bit.ly/45q07uH)

## CONCLUSION

Despite the end of pandemic restrictions and marked progress on cladding remediation projects, the sector's wellbeing in 2023 has not improved. New challenges have emerged, and it is up to the sector to adapt and manage the impact of a cost-of-living crisis and a new building safety regime.

Underpinning these challenges is an understaffed and overloaded workforce. Our survey has shown that a consistently high workload will continue to dent the happiness of workers. Action needs to be taken by employers, with even small steps leading to significant improvements in the wellbeing of their workers.

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 [www.bit.ly/mhwell](http://www.bit.ly/mhwell) 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 2024.

END



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