



# Redefining *inclusive leadership*

Insights on the new hybrid workforce in the United Kingdom



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# New insights on UK employees

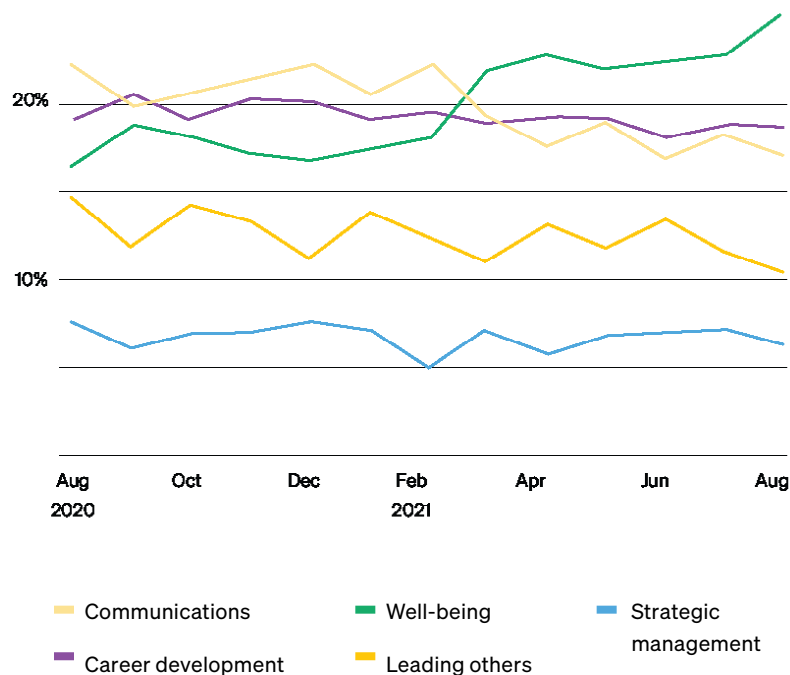
Since the start of the pandemic, we've tracked over **4,000** BetterUp Members in the United Kingdom who engaged in our ***1-to-1 personalised coaching***. Representing all industries and functions, organisations large and small, these BetterUp Members are a cross-section of the workforce at many of today's leading companies in the United Kingdom.

From these data, we've noticed several trends that suggest both the challenges and opportunities for organisations at this pivotal time when organisations are re-inventing what work looks like under a new ***hybrid era***.

## Well-being support needs at highest levels of the year

Throughout the pandemic, we've seen massive increases in the need for personal support with stress management, resilience and well-being. Our data thus far in 2021 specifically shows a growing demand for coaching sessions centred around well-being for Members in the UK.

### Trends in coaching topics



Our data shows a growing demand for coaching sessions centred around well-being for Members in the UK.

## Leaders showing more empathy, yet less self-compassion

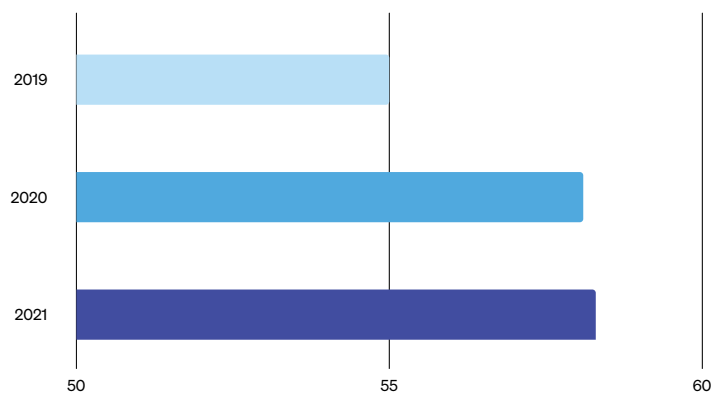
In the UK we also see that the pandemic has broken boundaries between the workplace and people's personal lives. Even for those not working virtually, the pandemic has shifted conversations at work to become more personal, with managers checking in about family members, safety concerns and mental health.

We see this reflected in the baseline data for BetterUp Members in the UK, before they begin any coaching. Baseline empathy scores for UK Members have been on the rise, increasing by 6% since 2019. This reflects a generally higher sensitivity to others' struggles and needs.

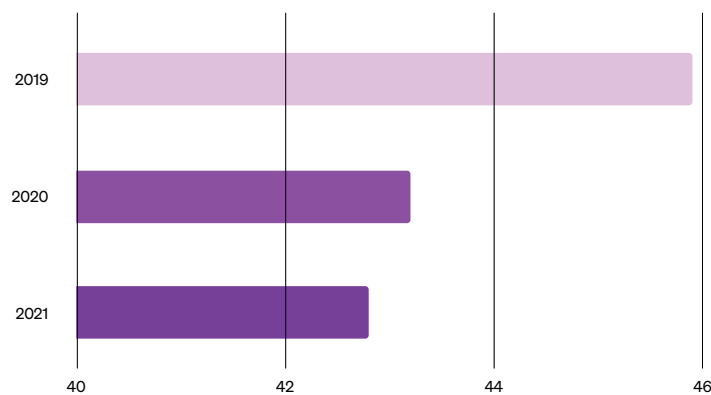
Interestingly, people aren't extending that same compassion to themselves. We actually saw a 9% decrease in the UK baseline rates of self-compassion compared to pre-COVID.

For leaders in the UK, it seems that while they have rapidly adapted a heightened sense of concern for others, it isn't matched by care for oneself. They are still holding themselves to high expectations that might not reflect COVID realities. While this data pattern may reflect a sense of selflessness and grit, a belief in powering through, left unchecked, this low self-compassion could lead to higher rates of burnout (and turnover) for people leaders in the long term. The negative ripple effect of burnt-out managers doesn't bode well for the performance, well-being, or retention of their teams, either. Self-compassion, self-care and self-awareness are all essential for sustainable performance. These data offer a warning.

### Change in empathy



### Change in self-compassion



# Unique challenges for returning to work

For UK employees shifting into remote work or returning to work that is remote, this year has brought new challenges around work effectiveness, maintaining relationships with colleagues and communication. Virtual teams have had to adapt to technology changes and learn new ways of conducting business and meetings, but also have had to find new ways to stay connected and build relationships at work, all aside from managing unprecedented personal challenges. UK members who have shifted into remote work cite communication as the most frequently occurring topic in their coaching sessions. Drawing from our global data, communication also rises to the top for employees when they shift back out of remote work to the office full-time. Whether moving in or out of full time remote or office presence, people are needing support in re-learning and re-norming their communication strategies and behaviour.

On the other hand, shifting into a hybrid work arrangement has a unique set of challenges. Hybrid work can create higher demands for planning, the need to develop new strategies to work optimally at different locations, and

greater schedule management needs. Hybrid work carries a promise of the “best of both worlds”, allowing for face-to-face meetings and greater interpersonal connection, but maintaining the productivity, efficiency and work-life balance gains of working from home. It is not surprising that most people desire this form of work, and this is especially true for parents.

However, among our UK Members shifting into hybrid work, we see that well-being is the top coaching topic coinciding with this shift. Hybrid work is bringing flexibility, but with it comes added complexity and stress.

Although hybrid work seems to offer massive benefits, our data suggest that the hybrid workforce introduces a new form of diversity, work arrangement, that carries with it new challenges and requires unique forms of support. Whether it's a shift into or out of remote or hybrid work, our data suggests that in the UK, Members are struggling with the transition from remote to a hybrid model. Unique sub-groups have unique needs: psychological safety or under-represented groups; support for well-being is critical for women and parents.





**Whether or not they are eager for the next era of work, UK Members are aware of the need for more support and new approaches to make hybrid work well for their teams and organisations.**



# What UK employees need from their teams

In the UK, where job vacancies hit all-time highs this summer, employees are feeling the freedom to seek new work environments. They have higher expectations for their employers and the work experience to support them and mitigate the challenges of the hybrid arrangement. In the new world of hybrid, that experience will hinge on the skills and behaviour of the manager and fellow team members.



# Belonging is a *top predictor* of intent to stay

With a new “war for talent” underway and workers willing to leave, in-demand talent at all levels has agency to choose where and when to work. Workers can now choose work environments that fit their needs and preferences, including for support, connection, inclusion and belonging, and also align with their values. Demands have escalated.

What we’ve seen in our Member data from around the world is that belonging is essential for retention and the UK is no exception. In an analysis of 60 potential predictors of intent to stay, a sense of belonging was at the top, second only to job satisfaction. Other top predictors include purpose and meaning, engagement and overall satisfaction with that status of one’s life. Together, these data showcase what matters the most in creating a high intent to stay in UK employees: a connection to their work and to others.

## Top drivers of intent to stay in the UK

- 1 Job satisfaction
- 2 Belonging
- 3 Purpose and meaning
- 4 Engagement
- 5 Life satisfaction

## Psychological safety is key for connection and belonging

Our research shows that fostering a sense of safe, open communication within teams is critical. UK members who report experiencing this type of communication, not only feel more strongly connected to their immediate team (by 32%), they also feel a greater sense of belonging to their organisation (by 15%) and perceive that their organisation cares about their well-being (by 14%). High psychological safety in teams, especially under the conditions of work today, is powerful for the employee experience and sense of belonging.

### When employees experience psychological safety:

**+32%**

feel more **strongly connected** to their immediate team

**+15%**

feel a **greater sense of belonging** to their organisation

**+14%**

perceive that their organisation cares about their **well-being**







In fact, the overall predictive power of a leader's skills for inclusive leadership belonging has increased by 26% since the start of the pandemic. That means a leader's ability to do things like encourage participation, create alignment, and foster social connection have an even greater impact on employees' experience now than they did before the pandemic.

People leaders in particular bear the weight of creating psychological safety and fostering belonging. They are the ones encountering the human impact of new trends and challenges. Leaders must build understanding, sensitivity, and workable solutions that flex to the unique needs and growth potential of each team member. Once a "nice to have," inclusive leadership has graduated to a core competency. New skills and mindsets are needed to support every employee.

**If organisations don't capitalise on this moment, to support their managers in developing the skills and mindsets to lead inclusively, then they risk losing their most powerful predictor of performance: their people.**

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