



Wellbeing at Work Survey Report

June 2024

📞 01633 261794 📧 info@conveyancingfoundation.org.uk

🌐 www.conveyancingfoundation.org.uk

Introduction

The Wellbeing at Work Survey was conducted to assess progress and changes in workplace wellbeing since our 2023 survey results were issued. This comprehensive review aims to identify trends, improvements, and ongoing challenges faced by professionals in the property industry.

The 2024 survey was open for responses for one month, from early February to early March. and generated 604 responses from professionals across the property industry, with 83% of respondents working in Legal Conveyancing Practices (LCPs).

We asked a series of questions under the following headings:

Support for Your Mental Wellbeing
Stress at Work
Reducing Stress in the Workplace
Hybrid Working
Working Relationships with People You Work With
Working Relationships Across the Industry
Charity Fundraising
Making Things Better
Summary of Key Findings

The survey reveals little change in the past 12-18 months for Conveyancers, with high stress levels persisting, especially among Conveyancers/Solicitors at 68%. Despite access to 'colleague support', usage remains low, and satisfaction with hybrid working has declined. While work friendships are valued, senior managers are often seen as less approachable. Overall, there is an urgent need for improved workload management, greater hybrid working flexibility, and stronger working relationships to enhance the work environment in the property industry.



Support for Your Mental Wellbeing

- The survey explored the availability and use of a range of different types of help and support for people's mental wellbeing. We were attempting to shed some light on what people could access and what they do actually use.
- There has been little change in terms of people's access to the various support mechanisms and also very little movement in terms of their relative usage.



87% Say that they have access to 'colleague support' where they work (54% have made use of this). Scores in the 2023 survey were 89% and 48% respectively.

- **80%** (Was 85%) have access to 'management support' and 36% have used this (was 33%).
 - **75%** (76%) Have 'HR support' and only 18% (16%) have used it.
 - **53%** (57%) Have other 'external support / wellbeing assistance' (8% usage, vs. 7%).
 - **52%** (56%) Have 'complimentary counselling facilities' (9% usage, vs 10%).
 - **53%** (52%) Have access to Mental Health First Aiders (4% usage, down from 7%)
 - **28%** (33%) Have access to another factor (not in the list) (8% usage, from 10%) – this again covers access to GPs, and other online professionals. The full list of comments/factors is provided in Appendix II.
- Usage of MHFAs has dropped to just 4% overall, but is slightly more prevalent amongst Auxiliary Service Providers (10%) and those in Client Services (17%). In fact, those 'groups' are also more likely than the average to have used any of the services listed here – especially counselling facilities and wellbeing assistance.
 - In terms of what's missing, we can look at instances when people say that a support mechanism is not available at their work BUT they would really like this to be on offer.
 - Around one third of all respondents say that they do not have access to complimentary counselling facilities or wellbeing assistance/other external support and that they would like this to be available. This reaches over 50% amongst Estate Agents (albeit with a small sample size of just n=20).



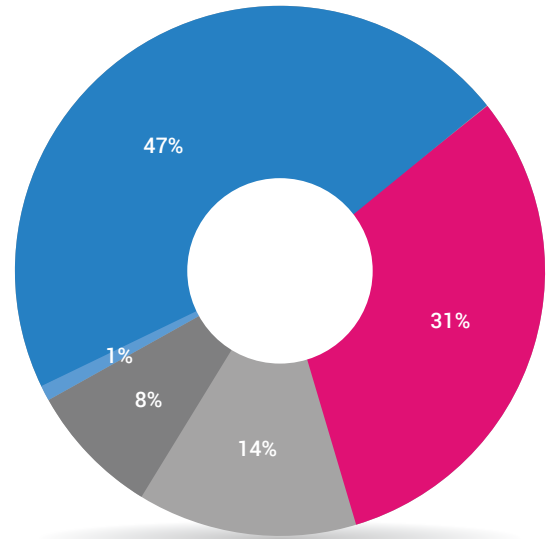
Stress at Work

We asked how typical workplace stress is in what people do on a day-to-day basis.



At the overall (all respondents) level;

- **47%** Said "there is a lot of stress in my role, but there are some moments of calmness and times when things are not so bad". This is up +5 points from 42% in 2023.
- **31%** Chose "there is a mix of stressful times and not so stressful times - about 50-50 in what I do" (no change vs. last year).
- **14%** Picked "workplace stress is a constant factor in what I do. There is never a moment at work when I don't feel stressed and under pressure" (down from 16% last year).
- **8%** Felt "It's generally quite relaxed in my role and I rarely feel stressed when I am at work" (was 10%).
- **1%** Said "I never feel stressed at work" (no change).



If we combine the results for "constant factor" (14%) and "lot of stress" (47%), we get to the fact that **61%** of all respondents are certainly under a lot of pressure for the majority of the time. This is a slight increase on the score of 58% in the 2023 survey.

14%

47%

=

61%

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- This is a slight increase on the score of 58% in the 2023 survey.

So, the data is very clear. Workplace stress in the property industry has NOT got any better over the past 12 months, despite all of the efforts and support mechanisms in place.



Stress at Work

We asked how typical workplace stress is in what people do on a day-to-day basis.



- Compared to the overall average of 61% who are under the most pressure, this is still the highest amongst Conveyancers / Solicitors at 68% (even though this represents a slight improvement since 2023's 72% score).
- That 68% score is streets ahead of any of the other role groups from the survey which ALL fall in the range 43% to 48%.
- When we examine the data of Role by Business Type, the pattern could not be any clearer:
 - 68% of those who work as a Conveyancer/Solicitor in an LCP have constant stress or a lot of stress.
 - Only 46% of those who work in other roles within an LCP have this (but this is up sharply from 36%), driven almost entirely by those in the Secretarial/Admin role who have seen their score go from 28% in 2023 to 46% in 2024.
 - 48% of people who work in all other roles in non LCPs have this level of stress (up from 46%).
- Female staff at 62% are still slightly more likely to have high levels of workplace stress than Male staff (57%).
- When we look at the data based on people's hybrid working arrangements, then levels of stress are more apparent for those who are 100% office-based (68%, up from 62%) than they are for those who have a mixed working set-up and/or freedom to choose where they work.



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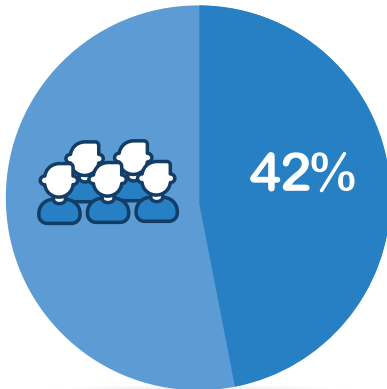


Reducing Stress in The Workplace

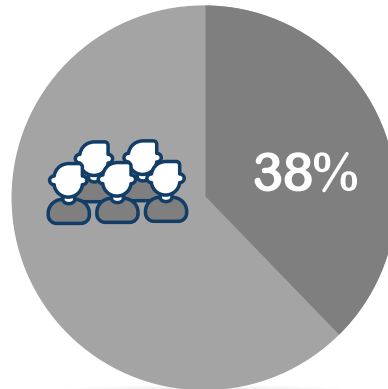


We asked people to pick up to 3 factors (from a list of 7) which would be their preference for how to reduce their own levels of stress in the workplace.

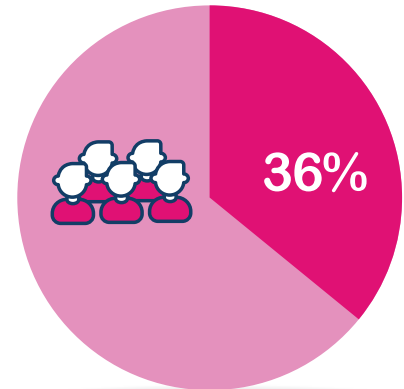
The key issues are still around volume of tasks and the level of support. The top 3 factors were the same as in 2023, but the order has changed.



42% picked "specifically recruit more people in administration and support roles into our business to help with the workload"
(Up from 39%)



38% of people chose "it's not about the speed I have to work, it's the sheer volume of work tasks that I have to do. Less work should be the goal"
(Down from 45%)



36% said "recruit more people into the business so we have more people to do the jobs"
(Was 34%)

All other factors were only picked by around 1 in 3 or fewer people.

- The demand for more Admin staff is more keenly felt amongst those in Conveyancer/Solicitor roles (45%) and especially amongst those in Client Services roles where this factor was chosen by 68% of the group.
- Unsurprisingly, the people who feel under most pressure (i.e. "constant stress" or "a lot of stress" from the previous question) are the most likely to talk about the volume of work being their biggest challenge – picked by around 46% of this sub-group compared to only 38% overall.
- There was an opportunity for people to add their own factor to the list by selecting other and completing an open-ended prompt. Overall 12% of people did this (rising to 30% amongst those who work in Estate Agents).
- One quarter of all of these comments were about clients and their unrealistic demands/expectations. A further quarter talked about workloads and processes (including regulatory requirements). Example comments are shown below, with the full list in the Appendix.

Reducing Stress in The Workplace



Some example comments are show below,
with the full list in the Appendix.

“My current employer has the perfect balance. Supportive, small caseload, qualified and well trained lawyers. Other employers have pushed unrealistic targets, low fees, high caseload and a manager's job with the same caseload.”

“Less work should be the goal, but as the business owner we just don't have the margins to miraculously pull out an extra £30k out of our back pockets, the government are battering us with extra legislation with unread list of deadlines to meet and increasing min wage is putting pressure on to increase wages for the more senior staff who are getting discontent with the reducing gap between pay - so where are we supposed to get more staff from?”

“Nature of the job and the red tape is what needs to change. training of staff in other firms would help greatly. conveyancing will always be stressful due to majority of clients wanting to move yesterday!”

“Better understanding across the board i.e. from other professionals , estate agents, banks... Some professionals don't understand the need to communicate properly, which creates distressing situations and unrealistic expectations.”

“Managing expectations of clients and other parties in the chain. Estate agents sometimes make life more difficult by imposing unrealistic time frames and not checking with conveyancers whether the time frame can be achieved.”

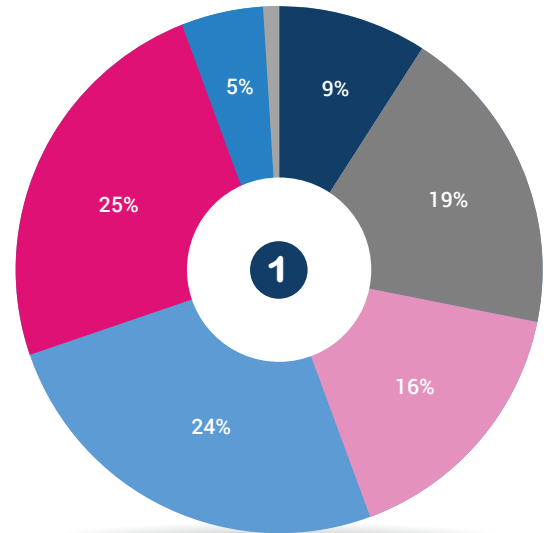


Hybrid Working



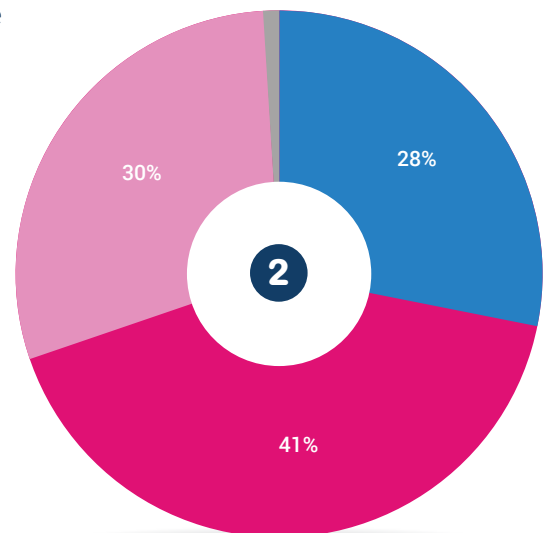
1 We asked people to describe how hybrid working works in their organisation.

- **9%** (Was 10% in 2023) Don't have any hybrid working, as everyone is on the office all of the time (40% amongst Estate Agencies).
- At the other extreme, just **5%** are working from home /remotely all of the time (was 7%).
- In 2024, only **24%** now claim to have complete freedom to choose which days they spend in the office or elsewhere – with no rules or prescribed minimum amount of days in any location. This has dropped from 31% last year. Auxiliary Service Providers do still have the most freedom, but this too has dropped year on year – from 46% to 39%.
- **25%** Overall – up from 18% - say they “do have the option to work from home during the week, and can pick and choose which days I come into the office as long as I come in for the minimum amount of days.”
- **16%** (Was 13%) Claim they “do have the option to work from home during the week, BUT the company has told me which specific days I must be in the office.”
- **19%** (Up from 14%) Say that “some people are able to work from home during the week, BUT not me in my role. I always have to be in the office.” This is higher amongst Secretary/Admin staff (42%) and especially Paralegals (46%), both of which have shown a slight year-on-year increase here.
- Only **1%** picked ‘other’ and provided an explanation.



2 We grouped some of these responses into 4 distinct Hybrid Working categories

- Office based (169 people, 28% and +3 points from 2023's 25%)
- Mixed working pattern with some rules (247 people, 41%, +10 from 31%)
- Remote/home working full time or with freedom to choose (179 people, 30%, -8 from last time's 38%)
- Other (6 people, 1% down from 6%)



So, the year-on-year shift here is that fewer people are now working with the same freedom they had in 2023. There are more rules in place than before and people are in the office more frequently than last year.

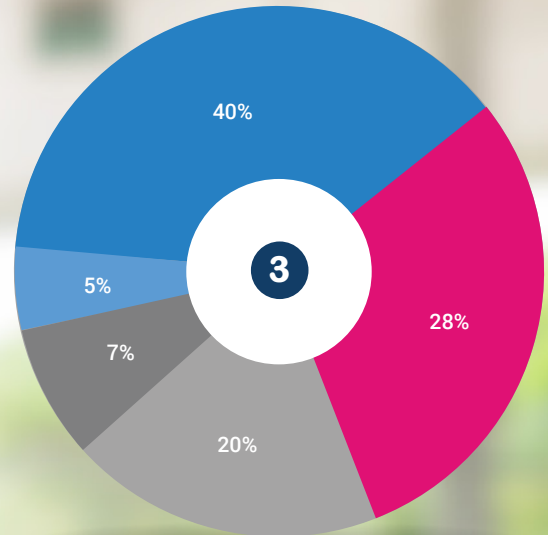


Hybrid Working



3 A follow up question asked whether people were happy with how hybrid working works in their organisation.

- **40%** Said they were “absolutely happy with how things work” – down -7 points from 2023’s 47%. This reaches 70% amongst those who work fully remotely or have the freedom to choose their own patterns.
- **28%** (Up from 24%) Say it’s pretty good most of the time.
- **20%** (Was 18%) Would like the opportunity to work from home more often than they currently do (48% amongst those who are office-based).
- **7%** (6%) Would like more people to be in the office more often.
- **5%** (6%) Answered ‘other’ and provided an explanation.



“I would like more flexibility as to the days I work from home. Only certain people in the team / other teams in the firm, if they are team have that.”

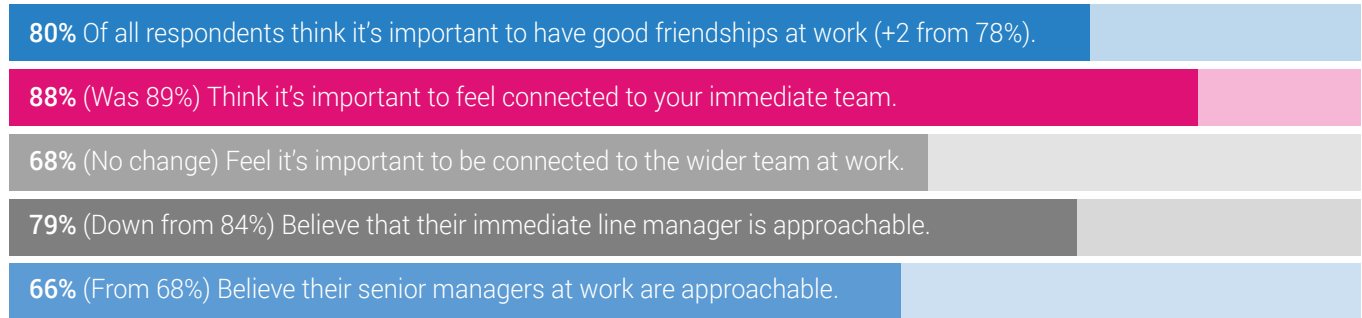
“It is much better when more people are in office, the atmosphere is brilliant on 'Happy Days', however the availability of hybrid is also great and works well for some members of staff.”

- When we aggregate “absolutely happy” plus “pretty good”, we see that 69% of all respondents are happy as things stand (was 71% in 2023).
- Maybe unsurprisingly, this is highest amongst both those with ‘freedom to choose/100% WFH’ who score 88% here. However, 75% of those who have a ‘mixed working set-up with some rules’ are generally quite happy with their situation. This falls to just 38% amongst those who are 100% office-based.
- By Business Type, those in LCPs match the overall average of 69% who are either “absolutely happy” or feel “pretty good” about their hybrid working arrangements. This isn’t surprising given that the LCPs constitute 91% of all survey responses.
- In contrast, some 84% of Auxiliary Service Providers are content with their hybrid working arrangements, but this falls to just 45% of all those who work in Estate Agencies.
- Looking at the same aggregated ‘positive’ scores geographically, there are some differences. Compared to the 69% overall average, scores are at 75% in Wales and peak at 77% in North West England which is up sharply from just 53% at the time of the previous survey.

Working Relationships With People You Work With



We asked people about the importance of various relationships with people they work with. The answer scale ranged from “not at all important” through to “a bit”, “quite a lot” and “very much so”. We aggregated the percentages of people who picked “quite a lot” or “very much so” to produce an overall positive score.



- So, there is very little year-on-year change here.
- This data pattern is not unusual. People feel close to others that they are organisationally close to. Immediate team is more important than wider team. Immediate manager is more important than senior manager.
- All of the scores for all of the business types, roles and role by business type are reasonably similar.
- The one surprising (but consistent) finding here is that those who work in Estate Agencies have less approachable senior managers than others in the survey. Compared to the average 68% who feel their senior manager is approachable, just 60% of those in Estate Agencies agree. There are similar issues amongst Paralegals and Secretarial staff where just 54% have the same feeling of positivity towards their senior management.
- On the same issue, maybe counter-intuitively, those who are in the office all of the time are less likely to feel their senior managers are approachable - 51%, versus scores around the 70%s for the other hybrid working groups. On the surface, you'd maybe expect those that were in the office to have more opportunity to interact with their senior managers and therefore feel they were more approachable - but this is not the case. It may be due to the fact that in some business, the senior managers are not as much in attendance as others would like.

“Most of my team are in the office about 2 days a week. The manager lives further away and comes in once a month or so. I find this very difficult and think there should be much more management presence. We have another admin team member who always works remotely and it is difficult as she doesn't integrate well with the rest of the team because of this.

”



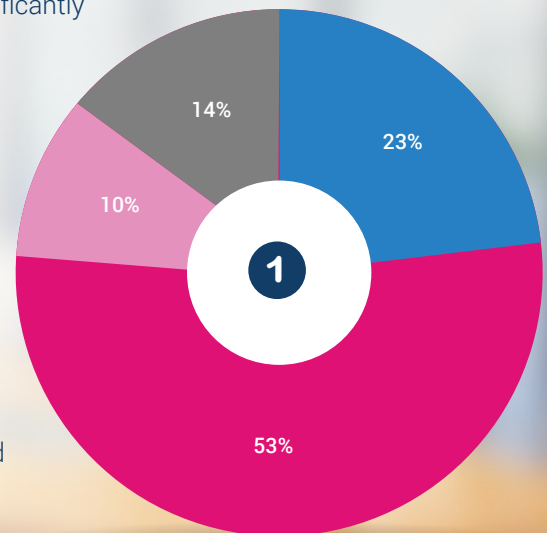
Working Relationships Across The Industry



- We then asked people about their working relationships with other job role types across the property industry.
- We explored relationships with Estate Agents, Conveyancers, Mortgage Brokers, Mortgage Lenders and Clients.
- We asked people to assess whether their relationships with each of these groups was “brilliant”, “mostly OK, but with some difficult individuals”, “mostly really difficult” or “I don’t cross paths with people in this role”.
- The breakdown of the data showed that for any of these roles, the majority choice was “most people are OK, but there are some individuals who I find it difficult to work with”. Percentages for this selection ranged from 49-68% across the role types.
- The percentages who were picking “brilliant relationship” was significantly lower – in the range 17-24% across the 5 role types.
- Just 5-13% of people picked the “mostly really difficult” option.

1 When thinking about Estate Agents

- 23% Have a brilliant relationship.
 - 53% Said things were “mostly OK, but with some difficult individuals”.
 - 10% Though most people tend to be really difficult.
 - 14% Had no contact or interaction with this people in this role.
- Naturally, 45% of people who work in Estate Agencies though they had a brilliant relationship with Estate Agents.

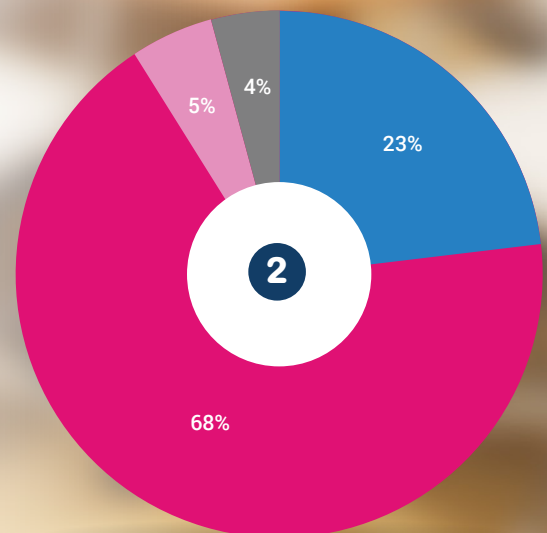


2 When thinking about Conveyancers

- 23% Have a brilliant relationship.
- 68% Said things were “mostly OK, but with some difficult individuals”.
- 5% Though most people tend to be really difficult.
- 4% Had no contact or interaction with this people in this role.

Of course, Conveyancers made up the vast majority of survey respondents, so it is not surprising that the “brilliant” score is the highest for any group here.

Importantly, 25% of Estate Agents say that most people in the Conveyancer role tend to be really difficult to work with (this was 35% in the 2023 survey).



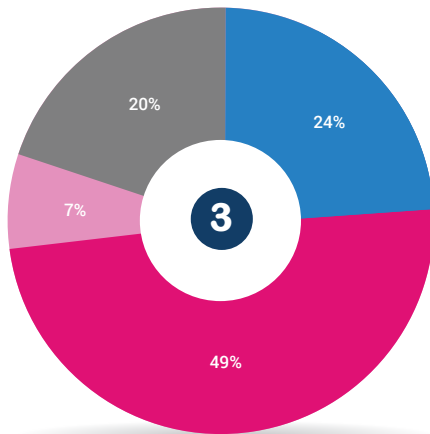
Working Relationships Across The Industry



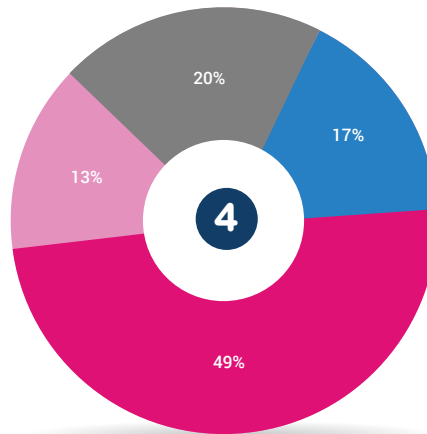
“Not have third parties (such as estate agents) promising unrealistic time scales and constantly chasing. Conveyancers not immediately getting their back up or going into a matter with a negative attitude and automatically taking it out on the other side.”

“It's the constant pressure from parties e.g. estate agents, I enjoy my job and try and do this to the best of my ability but agents appear to cause trouble for clients who then put more pressure on conveyancer.”

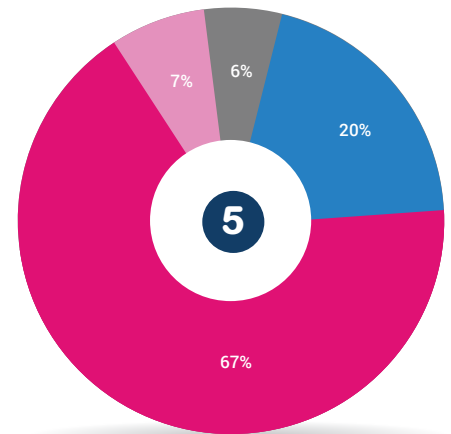
3 Mortgage Brokers



4 Mortgage Lenders



5 Clients



- Have a brilliant relationship
- Said things were "mostly OK, but with some difficult individuals"
- Though most people tend to be really difficult
- Had no contact or interaction with this people in this role

“The main cause of stress that I have is the way that I am spoken to by other parties to the transaction be it clients or third parties. Since COVID I have noticed that some clients can be extremely rude and abusive and that some third parties have less patience. The environment that they contribute to is the main cause of stress. The management of my company have worked very hard to engineer a compassionate outlook and endeavoured to ensure wellbeing in the workplace.”



Working Relationships Across The Industry



“More realistic client expectations. Many clients act as if they are the only clients you have. They expect things to be dealt with immediately and don't appreciate the timescales currently involved with buying and selling property.”

- By age group, it is clear that older respondents still continue to have a better overall relationship with all of the job roles than the younger respondents – completely understandable given people's relative experience and exposure to people in different role types.



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Charity Fundraising



- 82% of all respondents agreed that their company does participate in Charity Fundraising.
- Amongst LCPs, this averaged at 82%, rising to 87% for ASPs and reaching only 60% amongst Estate Agencies.
- Geographically, scores peaked at 96% within Wales.
- All of these results are very strong and of course linked to the fact that the Conveyancing Foundation was responsible for distributing the survey out into the industry.
- We then followed up to ask about people's frequency of personally participating in fundraising events.
 - Some 17% said "never" (plus another 14% who 'can't remember')
 - 10% do something annually
 - 23% do something twice per year
 - 35% take part 4 or more times each year
- So, some 82% of all companies do participate in Charity Fundraising, and 68% of individuals contribute at least once per year.
- Those most likely to be involved 4+ times each year are in Secretarial roles (52% of this group), younger staff (41% of those aged under 35) and then those based in Wales or the Midlands (47% and 41% respectively).



Making Things Better



We asked an open-ended question to all respondents.

If you could change **ONE** thing about your job, your working arrangements or your relationships with other people that you come across at work, what one suggestion would you make that would most improve your personal wellbeing?

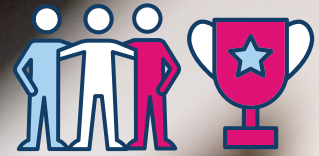
- 428 of the 604 survey respondents wrote a comment in response to this open-ended question. This is a 71% participation rate – ahead of the norm for this kind of question (60-65%), but down slightly on 2023's 77% take up.
- They contributed 443 coded ideas in total. 19 of these comments were along the lines of 'nothing to change, everything is good' so have been discounted. This leaves 424 valid comments/ideas to code.
- The breakdown of those comments by theme is shown in the table below.

		2024	2024	Year on Year	2023
Rank	Main Theme	number of comments	% of all comments	+/- % points	% of all comments
1	Feeling Valued, Teamwork, Our Culture	96	23%	-5%	28%
2	Workload and pressures	72	17%	+4%	13%
3	WFH / Hybrid Rules / Flexibility / 4 day week	62	15%	+3%	12%
4	Clients / relationships with other industry partners	56	13%	-6%	19%
5	People Resources / Tools and technology	50	12%	+5%	7%
6	Leadership and management	41	10%	no change	10%
7	Salary and benefits	33	8%	+1%	7%
8	Career and training 14 3	14	3%	-1%	4%
	Total	424	100%		100%

- The top 4 factors are the same as in 2023 with these four factors making up about two thirds of all comments received. It appears that feeling valued for your contribution and how your team and business works together remains the #1 key issue for people.
- The key difference is that workload / pressure and the hybrid working changes are more on people's minds now that they were back in 2023.



Making Things Better



Example comments from each of the categories are given below.
The full set of open comments is available in Appendix II.

“ Better communication with other professionals, people should not be scared of being honest about what stage has been reached, so that client's expectations can be better managed and all clients can be better informed about what is happening with their transaction. ”

“ I work for a firm where the trust has gone. They are not supportive and scapegoat their staff rather than taking responsibility. Trust and supportiveness are very important, morale in the whole company has fallen with many people leaving. ”

“ Employers need to remember their remote workers, make them feel integrated and appreciated in the same manner office-based staff are. Especially important to consider the mental health of workers who are 100% remote - it is often a lonely and thankless role as you can feel forgotten about. ”

“ I am very happy in my work but, doing fixed rate conveyancing, just wish we did not have to record time! ”

“ More sensible use of the word 'Urgent' and an appreciation when we/I sort things out after somebody else's time management and planning has been poor and created a problem. ”

“ Conveyancing is a thankless task. We are asked to speed up the process but with all the compliance procedures we have to adhere to this just seems to slow the whole process down. ”



Making Things Better



Example comments from each of the categories are given below.
The full set of open comments is available in Appendix II.

“Working from home. When I started I was fully remote, then moved to hybrid and now I have to be in the office everyday. It is really unfair as the lawyers are allowed to work from home 2 days a week but not the assistants. No clear reasons have been given for this and it has created a bigger divide between assistants and lawyers. It has negatively impacted by motivation at work and I will be looking for another role which allows hybrid working.”

“Less hybrid working - we need more staff in office so we can interact better and so staff currently working from home some full time can obtain better training face to face to we can help each other not just work wise but mentally too in interacting face to face rather than behind emails or on Teams.”

“Other conveyancers. Rude, condescending, patronising, obstructive, counter productive and can be even aggressive in the tone of their emails. Everyone is busy and everyone is stressed but please, can they just have some respect? There is too much back and forth and no one thinks outside the box e.g. when I am instructed on a sale I ask my client for certificates from the PIF and ask them to confirm compliance of covenants and no issues with rights etc straight away because I know I'm going to be asked it. Others just don't use their initiative.”



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A big thank you to all our Partners



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Appendix I – Data Tables



Download the Data Tables

<https://www.conveyancingfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Appendix-I-Final-Data-Tables-Feb-2024-with-trends.xlsx>

Appendix II – Open-ended Comments



Download the Open-ended Comments

<https://www.conveyancingfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Appendix-II-Open-Ended-Comments.xlsx>

Appendix III – The Survey Questionnaire



Download the Survey Questionnaire

<https://www.conveyancingfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Appendix-III-Final-Questionnaire-Wellbeing-at-Work-2024.pdf>





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 01633 261794  info@conveyancingfoundation.org.uk

 www.conveyancingfoundation.org.uk

