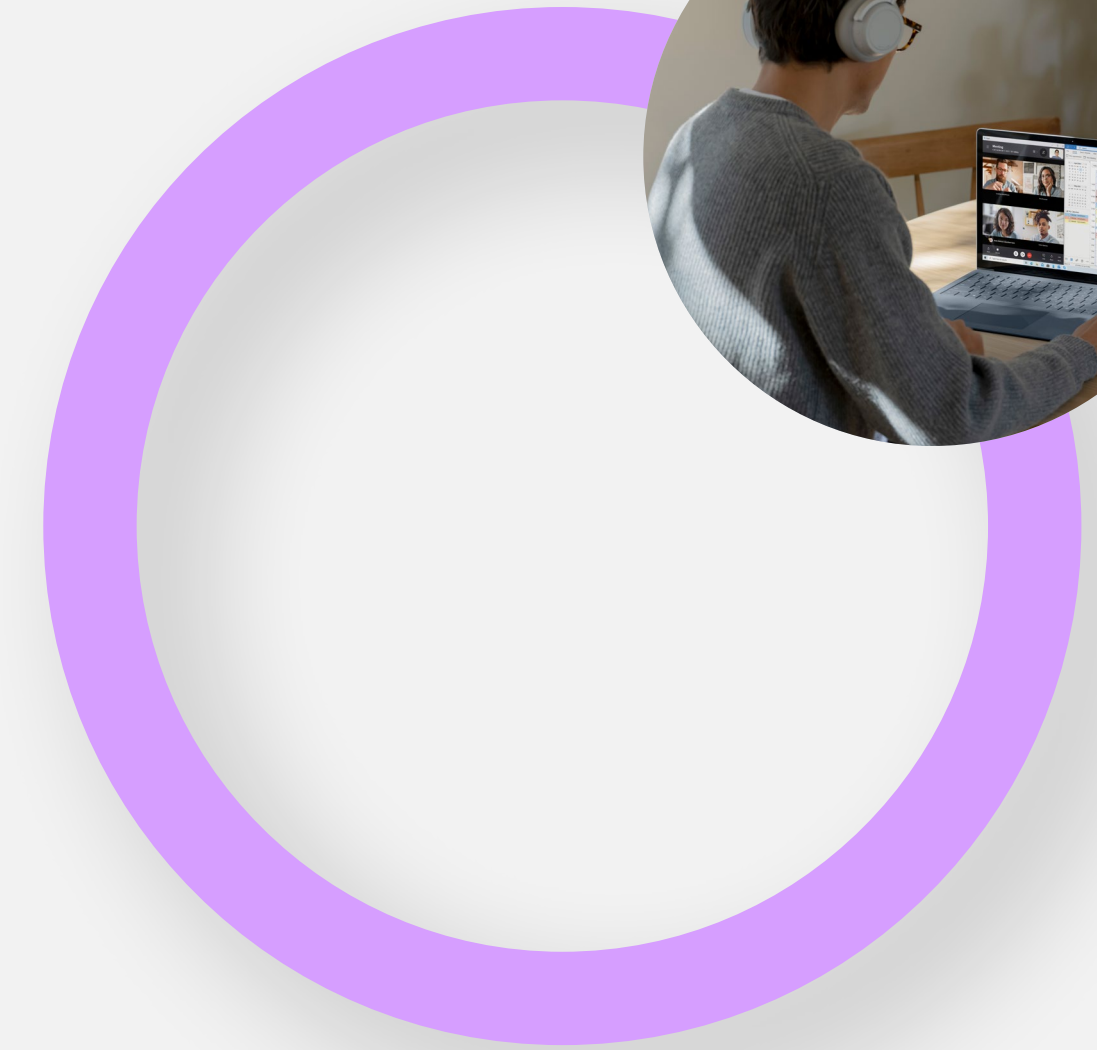
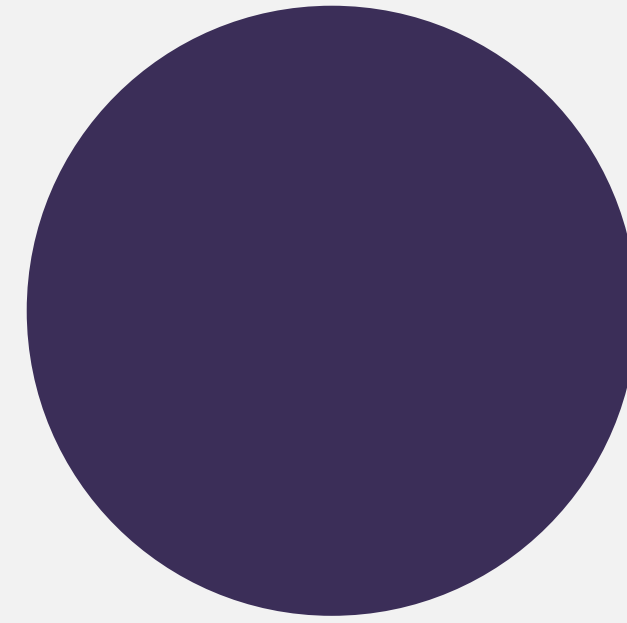




Onboard not overboard

How hybrid working can help UK organisations retain top talent in the age of 'the great resignation'



The world of work has not just changed – it is changing. Constantly. Yes, the rapid and pervasive shift in operating practices ushered in by the pandemic is here to stay. Yet as restrictions lift and people begin to establish new patterns combining home and office working, the hybrid era is giving rise to a raft of new and evolving challenges for organisations looking to attract and retain top talent.

Currently, much is being made of ‘the great resignation’ – and rightly so. At the start of this year, burned-out staff were re-evaluating their views on life, work and how to balance them. Microsoft research¹ conducted in January, found that as many as 41% of employees globally said they were likely to consider leaving their current employer in 2021. Meanwhile, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), recently reported² that resignations and job-to-job moves in the UK are at the highest level in two decades.



41% of employees globally said they were likely to consider leaving their current employer in 2021.

¹ <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/hybrid-work>

² <https://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforhouseholdsandindividuals/householdandindividualsurveys/labourforcesurvey>



People power

On the surface at least, such figures represent a powerful opportunity for the nation's workers, especially those looking to pivot or transition their careers. Rarely has their voice carried more weight in salary negotiations or discussions about flexible hours and career progression.

Likewise, for employers, the fact that so many people are open to the idea of moving jobs should not simply be viewed as a threat to their existing headcount. For those willing to adapt to the needs and expectations of modern employees, it also carries the potential to attract vital new skills and ideas into their workforce, often without the limitations of geography or traditional working hours.

“The pandemic has proven that organisations can trust their people to be productive wherever they are. They now have an opportunity to reshape work around individual roles, preferences and even personal lives.”

Nick Hedderman, Director, Modern Work Business Group, Microsoft UK





Awkward introductions

However, there are also some significant issues presented by this ongoing state of flux – not least when it comes to how new joiners are introduced to and embedded in the organisation’s systems, processes and culture. Rather than the usual face-to-face meetings, welcome lunches and in-person IT demos, a rising number of these onboarding sessions must, in a hybrid world, take place virtually – be that through necessity or choice.

To understand how this transition is impacting UK organisations and at what scale, Microsoft UK recently conducted a survey of 2,046 of the nation’s employees and 504 HR decision makers. It found that over half (53%) of people surveyed, who started a new job since the start of the pandemic, had at least one element of their onboarding completed remotely.

More than one in three (36%) went through the process without ever setting foot in their new workplace, and 17% were onboarded in a hybrid fashion: in part in a physical workplace and in part remotely.

Crucially, this is having a detrimental impact on their experience. Almost half (48%) of those who were onboarded remotely (either partly or entirely) found it harder to integrate and develop a sense of belonging in company and team culture compared to their pre-pandemic experiences of joining a new workplace. Among their chief concerns were forming relationships with colleagues (42%), not having a manager/team ‘in the room’ to help them (33%), and learning to use new software and applications (24%).

Top 5 remote onboarding challenges for UK workers:






	Forming working relationships	42%
	Not having a manager/team ‘in the room’ to ask for information or guidance	33%
	Learning to use new software and applications	24%
	Earning the confidence of colleagues	23%
	Soaking up the company culture	21%

Figure 1

HR professionals also agree that hybrid working has quickly moved from 'nice to have' to 'must-have'.

The difficulties also extend to those responsible for managing employees' careers and wellbeing. When asked about key pain points faced in onboarding new staff remotely, more than a third (36%) of HR decision makers surveyed felt remote onboarding makes it hard to provide effective, role-specific training for new starters. Meanwhile, 35% voiced concerns about ensuring employees have easy access to the information they need to hit the ground running and 28% worried about upholding their organisation's culture and reputation.

Top 5 remote onboarding challenges for UK HR professionals:






	Providing effective, role-specific training for new employees	36%
	Ensuring employees have easy access to the information needed to start performing quickly	35%
	Upholding their organisation's culture and reputation	28%
	Training new starters on how to use the organisation's technology	28%
	Lack of face-to-face contact lengthening the onboarding processes	27%

Figure 2

Over half (53%) of people who started a new job since the start of the pandemic surveyed, had at least one element of their onboarding completed remotely.

Pain then gain

Yet, despite the potential hiccups of a remote onboarding process, both employees and HR decision makers believe the long-term benefits of hybrid working are worth the initial pain. Of the UK workers surveyed, nearly three in ten (29%) said hybrid working has had a positive impact on their mental wellbeing compared to only 16% who reported a negative impact.

Over half (51%) of those who currently have the option to mix remote and office working agreed they would consider leaving their company if that hybrid option was removed. Interestingly, this figure rises to 57% among women but drops to 46% for men.

HR professionals also agree that hybrid working has quickly moved from 'nice to have' to 'must-have'. Well over half (59%) said it has had a positive effect on the mental wellbeing of the workforce, while only 23% failed to see any employee risks for businesses without a hybrid model. The risks they did see range from an inability to retain staff, a negative impact on productivity and falling behind industry competitors in recruiting top talent.

51% of people who currently have the option to hybrid work would consider leaving their company if that option was removed.

UK HR professionals' top 5 risks of not having a hybrid working model:

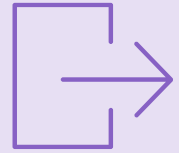
	Inability to retain new talent and risk of losing staff to organisations that offer better hybrid working options	38%
	Negative impact on productivity	25%
	Negative impact on wellbeing	24%
	Employee burnout	23%
	Inability to keep up with industry competitors	23%

Figure 3

Tech to the future

Clearly then, hybrid working is here to stay. Which means remote onboarding is too, albeit with perhaps more choice and less necessity as we move towards a post-pandemic future. The good news for both employees and employers is that over a third (37%) of the HR decision makers surveyed who have onboarded new staff remotely claimed that although they find it challenging, they believe it is easily resolvable with the right technology solutions.

Digital tools like [Microsoft Viva](#) are one such solution, empowering individuals and teams to be their best no matter where they are working – or, indeed, onboarding. That might be by offering straightforward access to learning resources, providing tools to balance productivity and wellbeing, streamlining the discovery of knowledge and expertise or simply making it easier for employees to connect (see box on page 8).



“Microsoft Viva Insights gives us the ability to look across all areas of the company and understand how we can deliver better work experiences for our associates.”

Roger Cude, Senior Vice President,
Human Resources, Humana

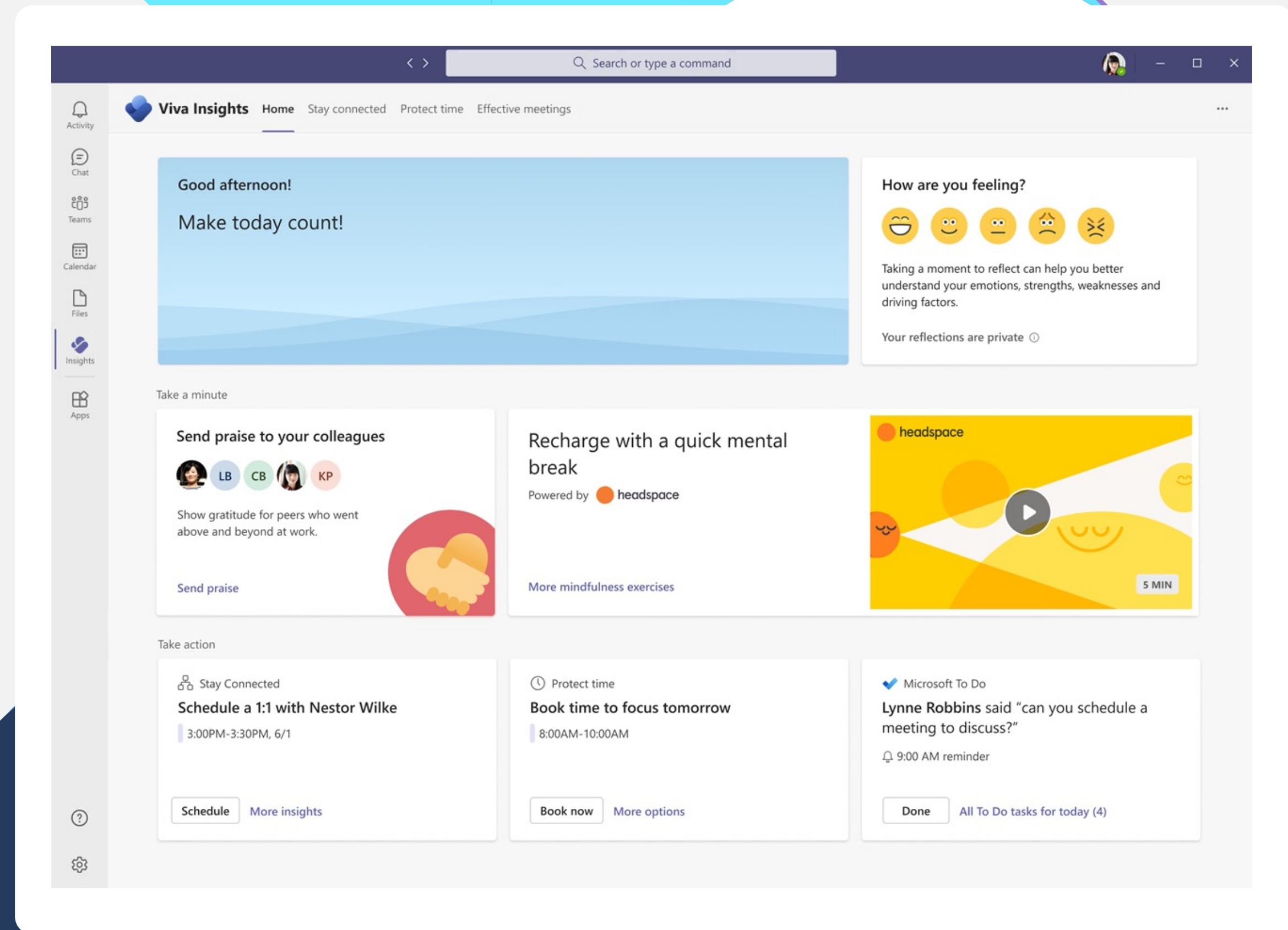
37% of HR decision makers who have onboarded new staff remotely believe the challenges of remote onboarding are easily resolvable with the right technology solutions.

Microsoft Viva

Microsoft Viva is an employee experience platform that brings together communications, knowledge, learning, resources and insights in the flow of work. Powered by Microsoft 365 and experienced through Microsoft Teams, it makes hybrid working a positive and productive experience for employees and employers alike.

Microsoft Viva is made up of four modules:

- 1. Microsoft Viva Learning** – helps employees make learning a natural part of their day by integrating into the flow of work with the tools they already use.
- 2. Microsoft Viva Insights** – provides recommendations to improve productivity and wellbeing, helping people and businesses thrive.
- 3. Microsoft Viva Topics** – lets users automatically organise content and expertise across their organisation, making it easy for anyone to find, including new starters.
- 4. Microsoft Viva Connections** – makes it simple for colleagues to collaborate and interact, bringing company culture to life and empowering everyone to contribute their best.



No time like the present

For UK employees – and the HR teams tasked with recruiting, onboarding and retaining them – our new findings highlight both the long-term benefits of the hybrid era and the evolving issues it is throwing up. It also underlines the pivotal role technology can play in overcoming them.

By highlighting these challenges to senior leadership and by working with their organisation's IT leaders to put the right solutions in place, HR professionals can make the onboarding process as smooth and painless as possible, while ultimately ensuring all their people have the technological, operational and cultural knowledge they need to thrive going forward.

At a time when unprecedented numbers of UK workers are weighing up their options, UK organisations have their own stark choice in front of them. Make a tech-enabled hybrid model work today or spend tomorrow racing to catch up.



“With Microsoft Viva Topics, we’ve found a way now, at scale, to bring together all our information and people, and identify those sorts of experts inside our business and also identify and manage information into more manageable topics.”

Craig Stanley, Productivity and Collaboration Consultant, Northumbrian Water Group

To find out more visit:

www.microsoft.com/en-gb/microsoft-viva

Notes to editors:

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc.

Employees: Total sample size was 2046

Employees: Fieldwork was undertaken between 7th - 15th October 2021.

The survey was carried out online.

The figures have been weighted and are representative of British business size.

HRDMs: Total sample size was 504

HRDMs: Fieldwork was undertaken between 7th - 13th October 2021.

The survey was carried out online.

