

# What do employees expect from your recognition programme now?

The results of our study of more than 4,000 global employees uncovers what they want (and expect) from a successful recognition programme in the new world of work

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# What do employees expect from your recognition programme now?

## Introduction

After two years of monumental disruption and uncertainty during the pandemic, the world of work is almost unrecognisable from how it was at the start of 2020. Little wonder then that employees have looked to their employers to help them through this challenging time; and that their expectations around how employers should be supporting them have risen inexorably.

As this research finds, 77% of employees say their expectations of their employer have increased since the start of the pandemic. People are asking more of their employers across a wide range of different areas – they want to work more flexibly, they want improved line management, they want more relevant and personalised benefits that support their wellbeing, they want better internal communication, and they want better technology and systems at work.

At a time when the boundaries between work-life and home-life have become so blurred, people are giving far more consideration to the whole experience they have while working. Indeed, 79% of people say that their employee experience at work is more important now than it was a year ago, and this figure rises to 81% amongst under 40s.

Businesses have recognised the growing emphasis that people are placing onto employee experience and, in particular, acknowledged the need to do more to support their employees through the pandemic. Across all industries, employers have stepped up to the plate, introducing wide-ranging programmes to protect and enhance all areas of employee wellbeing – mental, physical, emotional and financial.

But while many employers have rightly focused on renewing their benefits packages to directly support wellbeing during this time, one critical area of the employee experience is too often being overlooked.



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# Employee recognition in the spotlight

Employee recognition has long been an important part of the employee experience, essential for people to feel valued and appreciated by their colleagues, line managers and senior leaders within the business. Not only that, but employee recognition also provides a critical platform for employers to communicate and reinforce the values and culture of the company.

“...many recognition programmes have quickly become irrelevant.”

However, with seismic changes in working patterns over the last two years, along with huge shifts in employee needs, many recognition programmes have quickly become irrelevant. The traditional touchpoints for recognition – the regular line manager meetings, the watercooler chats, the weekly team meetings, the all-hands company get togethers – have disappeared. And in many cases, employers have struggled to recreate the same level of recognition across a more fragmented and fluid workforce.

This now represents a major challenge for employers, particularly at a time when people need recognition, reassurance and appreciation more than ever before. With employees still adjusting to the realities of working at home or in a hybrid model, many feel isolated and disconnected from their employers. Working on their own for long hours, often under intense pressure, employees need to feel that the work that they are doing is valued and making an important contribution towards a bigger goal. They need this for their own sense of purpose and wellbeing.

This paper, based on comprehensive Benefex global research with employees in India, Singapore, the UK, and the U.S, explores the extent to which attitudes and expectations around employee recognition have evolved since the pandemic and, critically, what employees are now looking for from their employers when it comes to recognition. It details the key ingredients that come together to create a compelling employee recognition strategy, one that can engage and incentivise employees, while also supporting the overall company vision, values, and employee experience.

## About the research

- 4,027 online interviews with employees across UK, US, Singapore and India were conducted.
- All respondents worked for organisations with 200 or more employees and within a broad range of job roles and levels of seniority.
- Respondents worked for organisations within a wide range of industries including manufacturing, healthcare, pharmaceutical, technology, retail, public sector, professional services, financial services, media, transport and logistics, education, hospitality and leisure, and energy and utilities.
- All research was conducted by Insight Avenue up to January 2022.

# Heightened expectations for recognition across the workforce

Recognition is now a critical factor within the overall employee experience for the vast majority of people. 92% of employees say it's important to be recognised for their efforts and achievements at work.

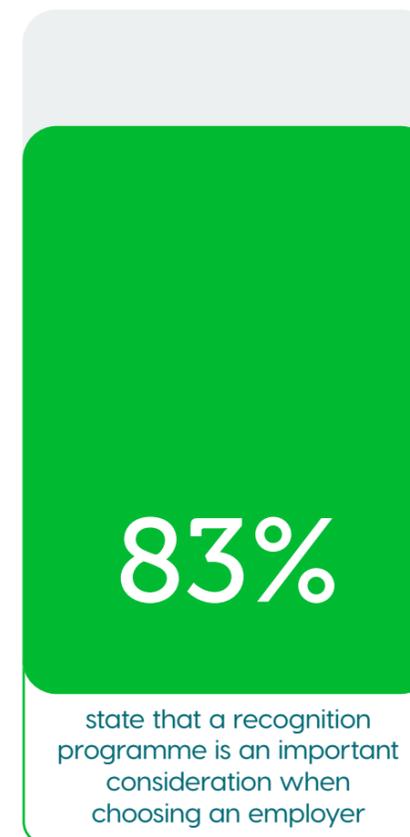
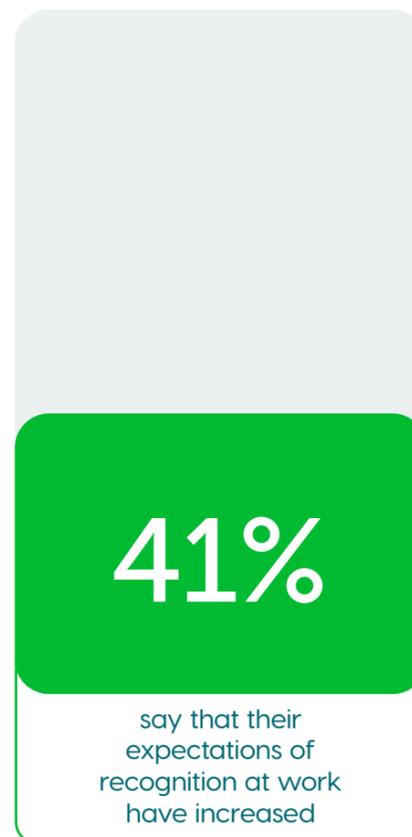
This figure is remarkably consistent across every type of worker (remote, hybrid and on premise) and across gender and age demographics. Feeling recognised at work is now hugely important across every corner of the workforce.

At a country perspective, employees in India and Singapore feel particularly strongly about recognition, with 97% and 94% of employees respectively declaring it important to be recognised by their employer.

People have become more discerning, and more demanding, in terms of what they expect from businesses in this area. 41% of employees say that their expectations around getting recognition at work have increased during the pandemic, while 48% of people say their expectations have remained the same.

And it's not just existing employees that are closely examining organisations' approaches to recognition. 83% of employees state that the quality of an organisation's employee recognition programme is now an important consideration when choosing an employer.

Evidently, employee recognition is playing an increasingly important role in how people feel about current employer and potential employers.



# The make-up of a strong employee recognition programme

88%

want to be able to recognise colleagues for their efforts and successes



89%

believe people should be recognised for embodying the values of the company



86%

expect their employer to have recognition technology in place



Employees have clear ideas around what they want and expect from employers when it comes to recognition. 89% believe it's important for employers to encourage recognition at work and 88% say it's important for them to be able to recognise colleagues for their efforts and successes. This sentiment is felt particularly strongly amongst workers under the age of 40.

## Linking recognition to values

Importantly, employees believe recognition should not just be focused on achievement but also on the overall behaviours and attitudes displayed by workers. As many as 89% of employees believe people should be recognised for embodying the values of the company.

This need for recognition to reinforce company values is heightened in a remote or hybrid working environment, where many of the other vehicles for demonstrating and celebrating values are no longer feasible.

## Connecting recognition to rewards

Another key aspect to recognition is that it is aligned to rewards. 88% of employees feel it is important for recognition to be linked to a reward, whether that is financial or otherwise. Once again, workers in India and Singapore feel particularly strongly about this.

## Establishing a digital platform for recognition

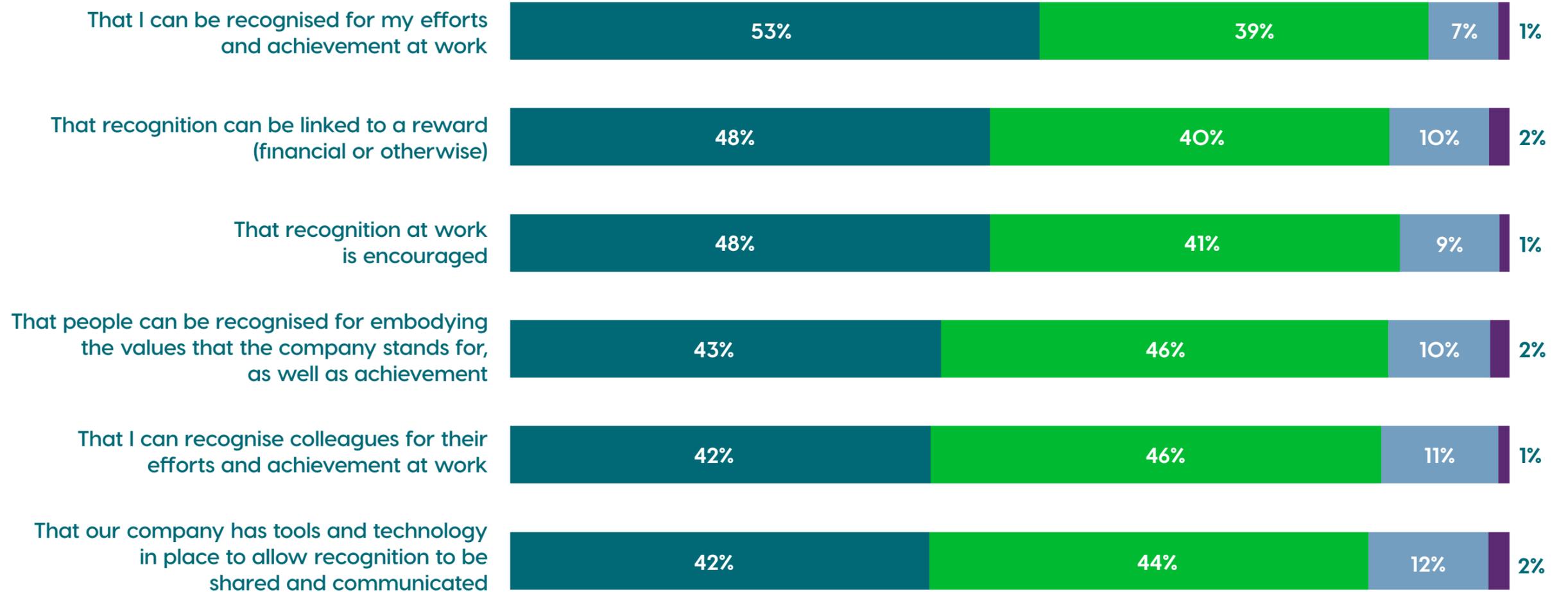
The research emphasises the need for businesses to have a platform in place to encourage and simplify recognition. 86% of employees state that it's important to work for a company that has tools and technologies in place to allow recognition to be shared and communicated.

This sentiment is felt particularly strongly within the technology and financial services industries, and slightly more amongst younger workers. However, across the board there is a widespread feeling that employers should be providing their workforces with specialist tools and platforms for recognition.

## Importance of recognition factors at work

Looking at recognition at work, how important are the following to you?

Very important    Quite important    Not particularly important    Not at all important



# The recognition gap

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## Unfortunately, many people still don't feel fully recognised for the work they do

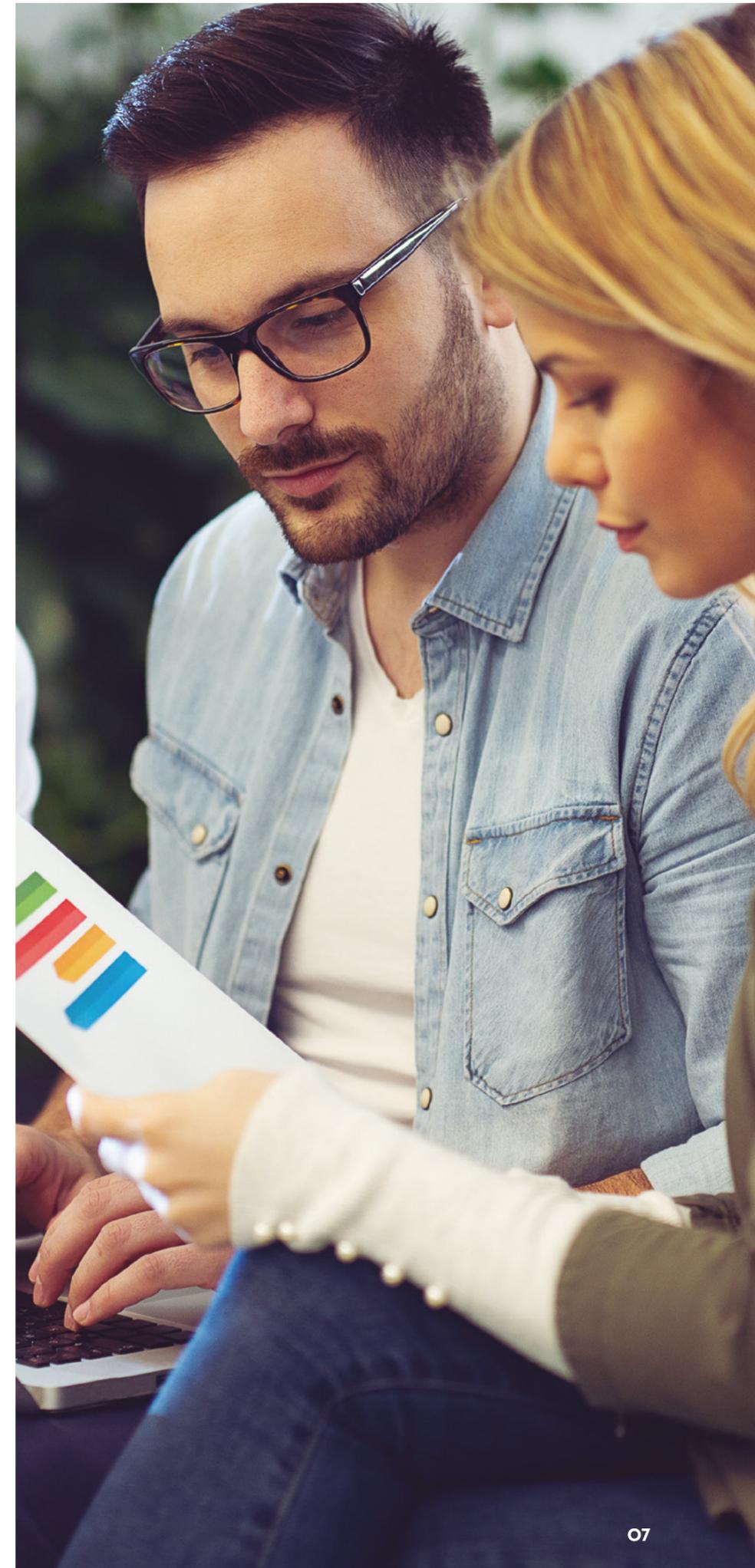
Employees are more likely to say they feel recognised (to a great or some extent) by colleagues in their team or by clients or customers, than by their line manager or the Board or leadership team. Only one in four people feel recognised to a great extent by their line manager (25%) or by the Board or senior leadership team (24%).

## Employees report that the group that often gives them the most meaningful recognition is actually their clients and customers, rather than internal colleagues or managers

30% of employees report that they feel that clients given them genuinely meaningful recognition and praise, while only 28% get this level of recognition from colleagues and 25% from their line manager.

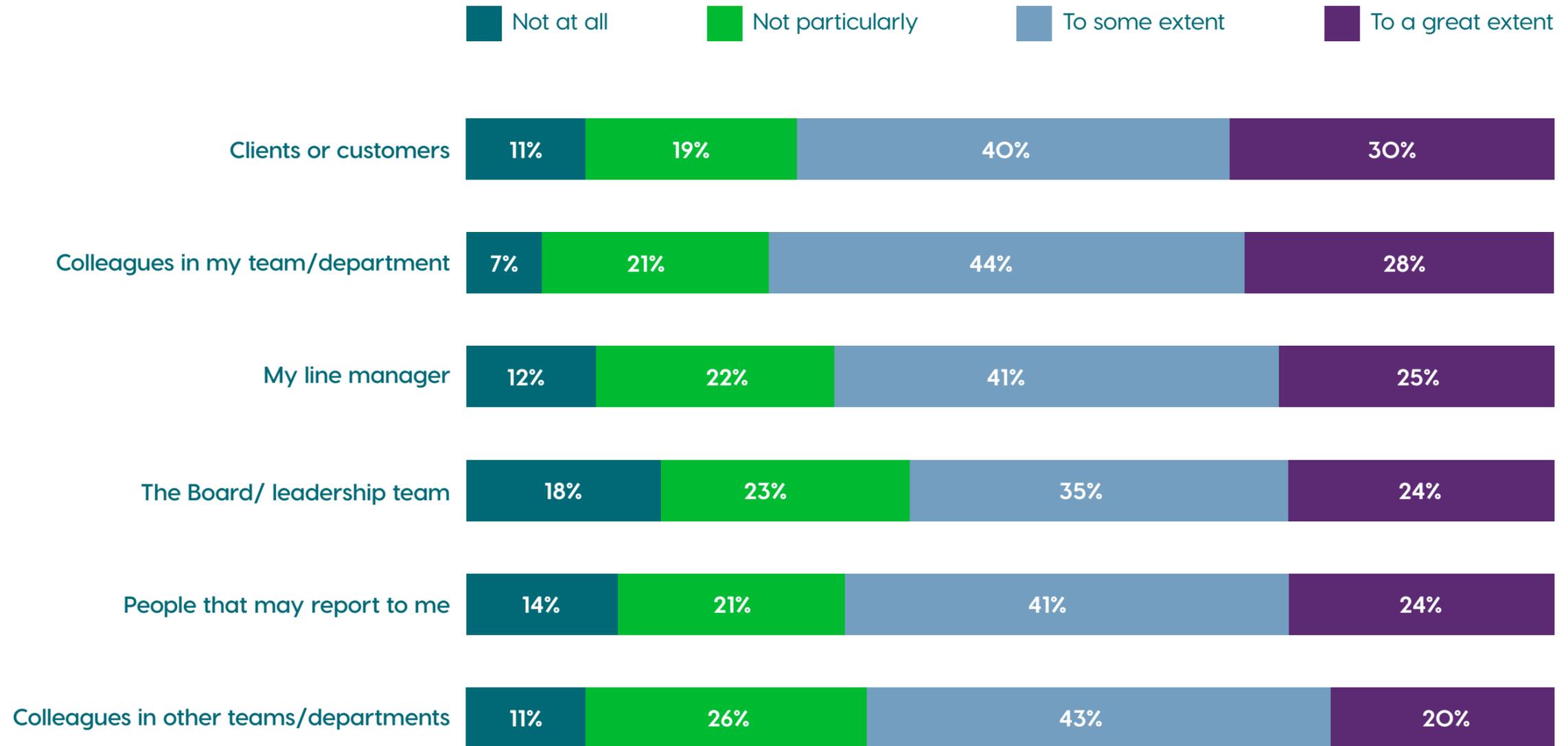
## Less than a quarter (24%) of employees report getting really meaningful recognition from Board level executives within their company

Interestingly, the research reveals some marked variations between employees in different countries. While employees in India report relatively high levels of recognition from all stakeholder groups, those in the UK feel that they aren't getting the recognition they deserve from colleagues in their teams, people that report to them or from senior leadership within their businesses.



## Extent to which employees feel recognised at work by different groups

To what extent do you feel you are recognised at work, in a way that means something to you, by the following groups?



Worryingly, the research finds significant variances in how different types of workers feel about the recognition they are receiving. In particular, remote workers, older workers and female workers are less likely to be receiving meaningful recognition from important stakeholder groups.

### Comparisons by on premises / remote / hybrid employees

Employees that work from home are more likely to feel recognised by their line manager but far less likely to feel recognised by people that they manage and Board level leadership in their organisation.

### Comparisons by age

Employees over the age of 40 are far more likely to feel that they aren't getting meaningful recognition from people that they manage, senior leaders or from clients and customers.

### Comparisons by gender (female / male)

Alarming, female employees are significantly less likely than male colleagues to be getting recognition that they feel is meaningful to them. And this is the case in the recognition they receive from every stakeholder group, from line managers and team colleagues, through to Board level leadership and clients.

	Mostly or all at employer premises	Mostly or all at home	Equally employer premises and home	Under 40s	40+	Female	Male
My line manager	64%	73%	65%	66%	66%	64%	67%
Colleagues in my team/department	73%	71%	71%	72%	73%	72%	73%
Colleagues in other teams/departments	65%	56%	61%	64%	59%	59%	66%
People that may report to me	66%	57%	75%	66%	58%	59%	71%
The Board/leadership team	62%	47%	66%	60%	52%	52%	66%
Clients or customers	71%	62%	71%	70%	66%	67%	72%

# Integrating recognition into a unified platform for employee experience



The research exposes strong demand for employers to establish a single digital platform to enable and encourage employee recognition within the workforce. But at a broader level, 86% of employees report that they would like to be able to access all the benefits, content and resources they get from their employer in one place.

Employees see clear benefits in employers providing a single platform for all elements of the employee experience – not only for recognition, but also for employee benefits, communication, reward, wellbeing, content and workplace applications. And this appetite for a consolidated digital home is consistent across both remote and on premise workers and across all ages.

However, the current situation is that most employers are still managing fragmented and disconnected systems, user journeys and analytics across each of these areas. Research carried out last year amongst UK-based HR and reward leaders found that only 19% of organisations were able to integrate all elements of employee experience within a single technology platform.

Some businesses had integrated some but not all elements of their employee experience provision but nearly a quarter (23%) of organisations had no integration between the different elements of the employee experience and were using completely separate and siloed technologies to manage each area.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the study found that only a quarter of organisations had an employee experience platform in place. However, it revealed a widespread appetite amongst HR and reward leaders for a dedicated digital platform to orchestrate a holistic and consistent approach to employee experience.

<sup>1</sup> Employee Experience in the New World of Work, Benefex, 2021

# Welcome to OneHub | Recognition from Benefex

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Overcome the challenges of hybrid working, engage your people around the world, and measure the emotional impact with OneHub | Recognition

Companies that use Benefex's OneHub | Recognition platform have reported leaps in their employee engagement of up to 13%. That's because our award-winning technology lets them harness the power of 'thank you'...

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## Bring your values to life

Link recognitions with your company's values and the behaviours that create a strong workplace culture.

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## Support your employer brand

OneHub | Recognition can be customised to display your brand colours and company logo, so your people will have a joined-up experience with your other workplace technology.

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## Celebrate major milestones

Whether that's the end of probation, the first 100 days, or a 20-year anniversary, milestones are fully-customisable, so your people get an extra-special personalised message and a fantastic feeling that they're appreciated.

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## Improve communication and collaboration

Reach remote and global employees to say 'thank you' when it matters. Encourage collaboration between teams and locations.

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## Prove the impact

Go beyond clicks and likes to measure the emotional impact of reward and recognition on your people and use heatmaps to track successful collaboration networks across your organisation.

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Ready to explore the full potential of employee recognition in your workplace? **Get in touch and book your demo now.**





Benefex™

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