The Workplace Health Report

2023

The true state of mental health, wellbeing and productivity in the workforce

Published by

CHAMPION
HEALTH

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Introduction

You've stepped up

The energy crisis, a soaring cost of living, and echoes of the pandemic resonating across the globe. The world appears to be lurching from one crisis to another.

While the challenge facing our people may be enormous, I've seen first-hand how the employer community has stepped up to provide support.

More than ever, people are looking to their organisations for the leadership, support and advice they need to meet today's challenges - and the ones that are undoubtedly around the corner. There is so much that the employer community can do to support the health and wellbeing of their people.

For years, Champion Health has leveraged data to support employee wellbeing at global organisations. By exploring the data in this report, you too will gain insight into the health trends prevalent within your organisation.

With 200,000 health apps clamouring for attention across the Apple and Google app stores, wellbeing is a noisy space. But you already know this.

After reading this report, you'll be able to cut through that noise and make informed, data-driven decisions about how to support your people.

The Workplace Health Report: 2023 is for those that take responsibility for employee health – whether that's through HR, wellbeing, reward and benefits or DEI. But this report is also for those of you that are passionate about making a difference, whatever your role.

Some of the information in this report makes for challenging reading. However, I hope that by revealing and targeting the issues that really matter, we can all do something amazing for the people that power our organisations.

HARRY BLISS
Co-founder and CEO at Champion Health

The Quick Read

Short on time? Read these five key findings from the report.

1 Finances are a leading cause of stress

Cited by 37% of employees, financial pressure is now the top cause of stress outside work. Plus, 76% are experiencing moderate-to-high stress, an increase of 13% year-on-year.

2 9% of professionals are experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm

The number of employees experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm has increased from 8% to 9% since last year.

3 61% struggle to be productive due to tiredness

Tiredness is the top cause of reduced productivity and 42% of employees are aiming to improve their energy levels.

4 Female employees are more affected by anxiety and depression

Female professionals are more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety and depression versus male employees, by 22% and 20% respectively.

5 98% are motivated to make a positive change

Despite the challenges they face, the vast majority are motivated to improve their wellbeing, presenting an excellent opportunity for employers to make a significant difference.

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ABOUT THE DATA

The data in this report was gathered between January 2022 and October 2022. It comprises 4,170 employees from organisations across the globe and consists of over 1,000,000 data points covering all areas of wellbeing. The participants represent a range of demographics and work in a variety of employment sectors. All data is gathered anonymously.

This report makes regular reference and comparisons to data generated for its predecessor: The Workplace Health Report: 2022.

ABOUT THE DATA

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Stress and burnout

Each of us experiences stress in a different way. What you perceive as a healthy challenge, another may perceive as strenuous and stressful.
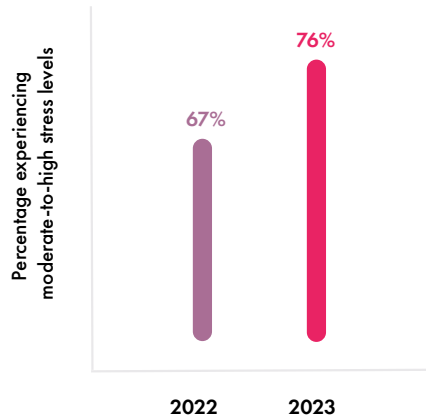
Experiencing too much stress over a long period of time can lead to feelings of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion. This is often referred to as burnout.

Stress is the impact of there being 'too much'. Too many demands, too many changes, too much to do and too many decisions to make. Chronic stress has the potential to deplete your energy, undermine your belief in your own abilities and efficacy, and lead to burnout.

Burnout means feeling like there is just 'not enough'. Not enough time, energy, enthusiasm, ability and inner resource. It is commonly described as 'being emotionally drained', 'feeling empty' or 'just not being able to be myself anymore'.

NHS Leadership Academy: Stress and burnout

Employees experiencing moderate-to-high stress levels

Percentage experiencing moderate-to-high stress levels

67% — 2022

76% — 2023

> " After such a difficult three years, everyone is hurting in some way at the moment, so our expectations of each other need to be managed. That applies to leaders, managers and employees.

JAMIE BROADLEY
Head of Group Head of Health & Wellbeing at Serco

> " People are only able to perform well at maximum capacity both mentally and physically for short periods of time, and then the human body needs rest and recovery time. In professional service you'll often find that high-performing people will keep pushing themselves mentally, at adrenaline overload, until they burn out.
>
> Leaders who set the example, not only by prioritising rest and recovery themselves, but also by encouraging their teams to prioritise this, set the tone for maximising sustainable high performance in their people.

JENN BARNETT
People & Culture Director, Head of Inclusion, Diversity and Sustainability at Grant Thornton UK LLP

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To understand the role of the workplace in employee stress, we asked employees about their experience of stress at work.

First, it's important to recognise that stress isn't always unhelpful; the right amount of stress helps to motivate and drive us forward.

This is reflected positively within the data: 54% of employees are experiencing a 'perfect amount of stress'.

At the other end of the spectrum, 37% of employees report that the stress they experience at work is having a negative impact.

A supportive organisational and team culture reduces employee stress. [1]

Here are three routes to improve organisational culture.

1. Develop KPIs that incentivise people to help one another, rather than compete with each other. Aligning your KPIs to overall company goals is one way to achieve this.

2. Create clear and defined pathways of communication in which employees can raise concerns or make suggestions for improvement. Ensure these are acted upon or clearly communicated if no action is taken.

3. Work with your leaders to ensure they are role-modelling your organisation's values daily. Culture starts at the top.

Experience of stress at work

Responses to the question: Which statement about stress at work do you most agree with?
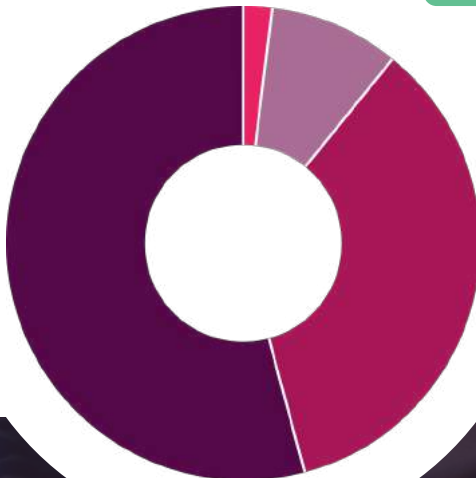
9% No stress at work

54% Perfect amount that helps me thrive

35% Stress has a negative impact but can cope

2% Overwhelmed and cannot cope

[1] BJPsych Bulletin, 2016

To understand how the employer community can improve support and reduce employee burnout, we analysed the causes of stress within the workplace.

Our findings show that workload is the most common cause of stress, greatly outranking lack of support, lack of control, and senior staff.

> " The fact that workload is the standout contributor to negative mental stress within employees means we continue to have so many organisations with a culture where there is a fear of reprisal should employees speak up about the challenges they face.

KARL SIMONS OBE
Chief Futurist at FYLD and Advisor to the British Government Cabinet Office

Causes of negative stress at work

● 2023   ● 2022

Reasons for negative stress at work. Multiple options could be selected.

Reason	2023	2022
Workload	73%	76%
Lack of Control	31%	35%
Lack of Support	29%	26%
Senior Staff Members	27%	25%
Peers	20%	18%
Other	20%	18%
Job Security	16%	13%
Insufficient Training	14%	16%
Commuting	12%	8%
Working from Home	8%	11%
Bullying	3%	3%
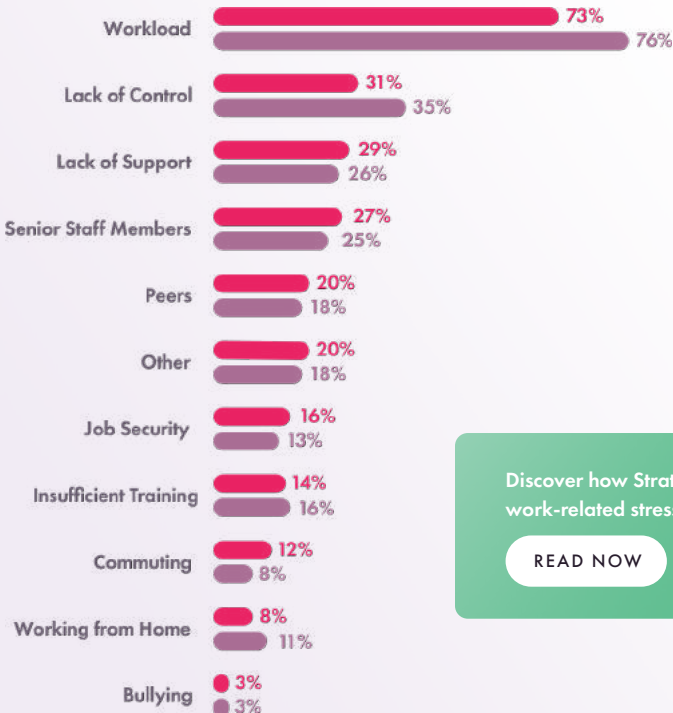
Discover how Strata reduced work-related stress by 68%

READ NOW

> **"** These results show the impact of people who influence each employee's workload - peers and senior staff.
>
> To manage this, leaders need to engage with all of their people and have open discussions around the impact their work is having on their lives.

CHARLES ALBERTS
Director | Global Head of Wellbeing and People Experience at Clifford Chance

> **"** What we're seeing here in the stats - workload, control, support, wellbeing conversations - these things all flow through management.
>
> And yet many in these positions are ill-equipped to handle these challenges.
>
> By focusing on helping your managers to lead with confidence and care, you'll be laying the groundwork to help tackle many of the issues we're seeing in the workplace.

GEORGE BELL
LinkedIn Top Voice on Work-Life Balance & Mental Health

EMPLOYEE WORKLOAD

Five questions to ask yourself

1 Are individual accountabilities clear across the organisation?

2 Do capabilities match well to the qualitative and quantitative demands of employee tasks?

3 Are colleagues supported within their teams?

4 Are colleagues able to work flexibly when they need to and where possible control where and when they work?

5 Do colleagues feel that they will be supported if they raise challenges with workload?

DR RICHARD HERON
Health, Work, Wellbeing & Performance Consultant
Former Vice President, Health at BP

This data reveals the most common causes of stress outside the workplace and highlights the importance of considering each individual's unique situation.

Strikingly, financial pressure is now the most common external cause of stress, affecting more than one-in-three employees. This is an increase of 23% versus last year, highlighting the impact of the global cost of living crisis on employee wellbeing.

The data also demonstrates how COVID-19 is receding from view for many employees. Only 5% of professionals now consider COVID-19 to be a source of stress, compared to 18% last year.

Despite this reduction, COVID-19 continues to present a challenge for our people – whether they are concerned about their own health or protecting someone vulnerable.

23% increase in employees experiencing financial pressure versus last year

5% consider COVID-19 to be a source of stress

Causes of stress outside work

Reasons for negative stress outside of work. Multiple options could be selected.

	2023	2022
Financial Pressure	37%	30%
Relationships	32%	33%
Parenting	29%	26%
Other	13%	16%
Caring responsibilities	12%	10%
Ill health	10%	10%
Bereavement	7%	8%
COVID-19	5%	18%
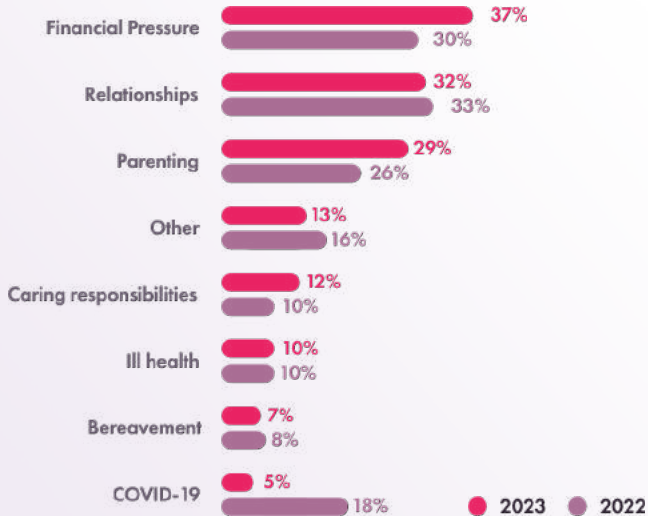
Mental health

Our people continue to face uncertainty. And, as expected, current events are impacting the mental wellbeing of our colleagues.

Symptoms of anxiety and depression remain high: 60% of employees feel anxious and 56% are experiencing low mood.

Our data also shows that 1 in 4 meet the criteria for 'clinically relevant symptoms' of anxiety and depression, suggesting they would benefit from further assessment and support from a qualified mental health professional.

60% of employees feel anxious

56% of employees are experiencing low mood

Employees experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression

Symptoms of anxiety and depression as measured by the GAD-7 and PHQ-9.
Mild symptoms defined as scoring ≥5. Clinically relevant symptoms defined as scoring ≥10

● Mild symptoms   ● Clinically relevant symptoms

60%

25%

56%

25%

Anxiety

Depression
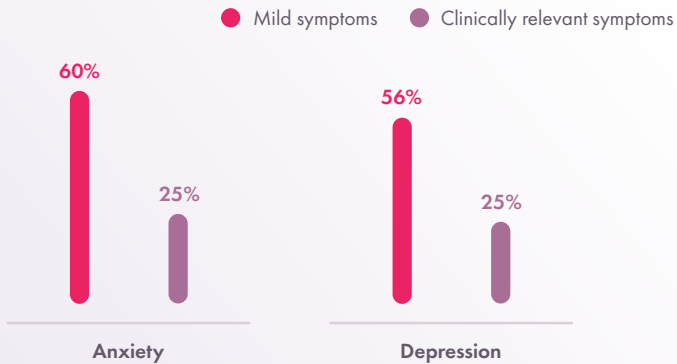
> I see this as a direct link to the cost of living crisis, with lots of colleagues feeling uncertain about what the future holds. I also feel this is a direct link to people feeling more open to share their symptoms than they would have been before.

STEVE BIRD
Wellbeing Manager at Currys

currys

The data also reveals that, despite the prevalence of feelings of anxiety and low mood, just 1 in 5 professionals are reporting a mental health diagnosis. This suggests there are many undiagnosed mental health conditions.
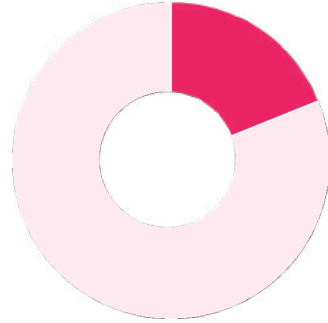
Mental health diagnoses are made by mental health professionals - like a GP or psychologist - based on an evaluation.

Mental health diagnoses can help individuals understand and manage their symptoms. They can also be a helpful step in the process of seeking treatment and support.

19% of employees have a current mental health diagnosis

> People who need clinical support haven't got to that place overnight. There's a grey area between thriving and surviving – the area of presenteeism. That's where the 60% with mild symptoms of anxiety currently are and it's where employers can have a real impact with early intervention.

SARAH RESTALL
Director of People and Client Services at Wellbeing With Cari

> We have been living through extraordinary times for almost three years and the world feels turbulent. This has inevitably caused strain and amplified existing inequalities.

Now we are facing spiralling prices that will affect everybody, although again not all equally. This has of course inevitably impacted on individual and collective wellbeing at work and in our communities.

Whilst people have adapted incredibly well, many are fatigued, languishing and worried about the future.

Work designed well can be health-promoting – it can provide a sense of purpose and structure, create connection and relationships and be a gateway to peer and professional support.

SIMON BLAKE OBE (HE/HIM)
CEO at Mental Health First Aid England

Demographic differences

Identity markers like age and gender shape an individual's experience of mental health. Our data reflects this and reveals the demographic differences in mental health outcomes.

This includes our finding that female employees are 22% more likely than male employees to experience symptoms of anxiety.

> (i)
> **Female employees are 22% more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety**

Symptoms of anxiety and depression in males and females
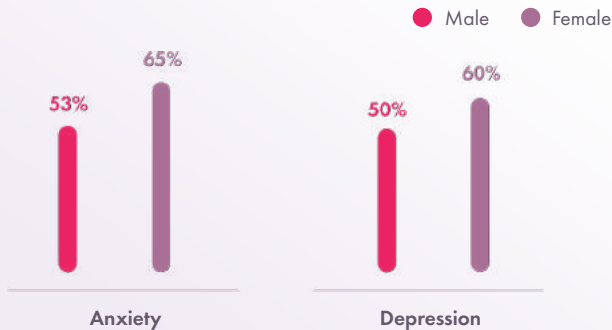
● Male   ● Female

Anxiety
- Male: 53%
- Female: 65%

Depression
- Male: 50%
- Female: 60%

DR STEPHANIE FITZGERALD
Founder at Soyo Ltd, Clinical Psychologist, author and consultant

Three ways to improve work for female employees.

1. Offer remote working
Research shows only 1 in 10 women want to work mostly on-site and many female employees cite the option to work remotely as a top reason for joining an organisation.

2. Prioritise choice and flexibility
Female employees who are able to work how they want are less burned out, happier in their jobs, and much less likely to consider leaving their companies.

3. Role-model change you want to see
If you want your organisations to have equal rights and career progression then you have to show that. The positive impact for women seeing Jacinda Ardern hold a position of power whilst pregnant was beyond fantastic.
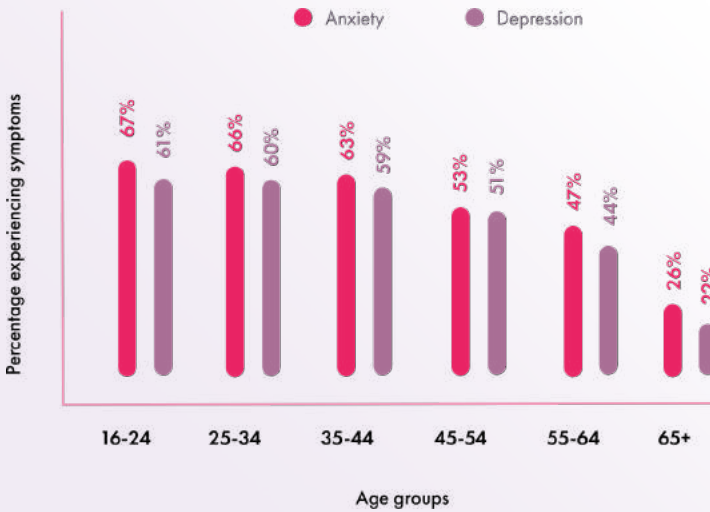
In 2018, The Resolution Foundation called for a radical new approach to support the prospects of the younger generation.

Despite these efforts, our data reveals higher levels of anxiety and depression in workers aged 16-35 versus their older peers.

66% of employees aged 25-35 experience symptoms of anxiety

Symptoms of anxiety and depression across age groups

Legend: ● Anxiety   ● Depression

Percentage experiencing symptoms

Age group	Anxiety	Depression
16-24	67%	61%
25-34	66%	60%
35-44	63%	59%
45-54	53%	51%
55-64	47%	44%
65+	26%	22%

Age groups

> ❝ The younger generation are far more likely to scrutinise what an employee is doing with wellbeing. Top talent are looking for organisations that go beyond the tick-box. They're expecting a range of wellbeing solutions, choice, personalisation and a recognition of the impact that work has on mental health.

ROB STEPHENSON
Founder of FormScore

> ❝ We know that COVID-19 affected the young more than the old in terms of impact on mental wellbeing. The issue is that the support available to the young, such as Centres for Addiction and Mental Health, cannot meet demand soon enough.

SEAN MAYWOOD
Mental Health First Aid Instructor

Quick tips for supporting young people within the workplace

In 2022, the Champion Health team brought together a group of experts to share their insights in supporting young people at work. Here are their tips.

1 ONBOARDING

Revisit your onboarding and induction process to ensure it is robust and inclusive for all new hires.

When it comes to young people, consider including a well-planned two-week itinerary that includes plenty of breaks and will help set the scene for a working week.

2 LEAD FROM THE FRONT

Your people will model their behaviour on their leaders. So, senior leaders must be living the values of your workplace.

Ensure that is happening and that line managers are also living these values.

3 AUTHENTICITY

Young people are coming to our workspaces already more equipped to speak openly about who they are than older generations. Actively create an environment where this is possible.

4 JUST ASK

Unsure how to create a psychologically safe working environment for young people? Start by asking some young people.

Stitch the question into their first day of work: 'Do you know how you work best? How do you think we can make sure we are maximising your potential?'

5 PEER SUPPORT

Data from peer support app, Tellmi, suggests that young people are more likely to approach peers than line managers. Consider ways to encourage support from peers and don't expect young people to always reach out to their line managers.

Insight provided by

SARAH RESTALL
Director of People and Client Services at Wellbeing With Cari

SIMON JAY
Commercial Director at Tellmi

Mental health and performance

Poor employee mental health is one of the top challenges facing organisations today. Our data shows that this is not purely a moral challenge, it's also a significant business challenge.

Exploring anonymised responses to validated mental wellbeing assessments, we reveal how poor mental wellbeing affects the day-to-day experiences of our colleagues.

The data overleaf highlights the challenge of employee tiredness: over 80% of professionals are experiencing fatigue at work and 71% rate their sleep quality as 'average' or worse.

The impact of anxiety is also clear: 71% of professionals are struggling to relax, and over 60% of professionals are struggling to sleep. These are common symptoms of anxiety [1].

The data also points to challenges with focus. Almost half of all employees are struggling to concentrate and almost one in ten are acting indecisively.

Poor mental health negatively affects the performance of 1 in 5 employees

Read the chapter 'Productivity, energy and culture' for related findings

> " These results show that anyone responsible for high performance within an organisation is also responsible for supporting mental wellbeing.
>
> Being an employee is just part of being human and no one can separate the two. As a double Olympian, I ran at my fastest when I felt at my happiest and most supported. These results are telling the same story within our workplaces.
>
> It is your responsibility to be aware of stresses and pressures because they impact performance. It's not always your responsibility to fix them, but it's your responsibility to be aware of them, and to support your employees where you can.
>
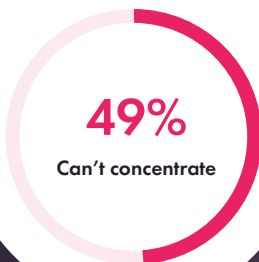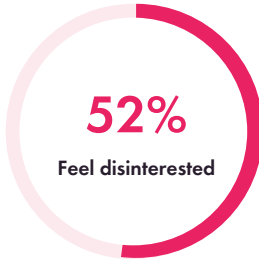> Because, as the data shows, supporting the mental wellbeing of your team is supporting high performance.
>
> As employers we must do all we can to help people in our teams navigate the challenges, find ways of working that work for them and the business, and in doing so support them to both survive and hopefully thrive.

JACK GREEN OLY
Double Olympian, Head of Performance at Champion Health

[1] NHS Inform

What our people are experiencing

12%
Can't deal with problems

12%
Can't think clearly

9%
Can't act decisively

59%
Can't control worrying

71%
Can't relax

52%
Feel disinterested

62%
Struggle to sleep

81%
Feel tired

49%
Can't concentrate

This data comprises aggregated answers to various questions from GAD-7, PHQ-9 and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.

Accessing support

The pandemic brought mental health support to the forefront of many organisations' workplace health strategies.

While many organisations currently invest in mental health support, our data reveals that not enough employees are engaging.

Only 10% of employees are currently seeking support for their mental health.

This is despite our data also showing that 60% of employees are experiencing symptoms of anxiety and 56% are experiencing symptoms of depression.

60%
Experiencing Anxiety

10%
Seeking Support

How to make wellbeing support more accessible

Every individual is different and many factors will influence whether someone does (or doesn't) access support.

However, there are practical actions you can take now to improve help-seeking behaviour at work.

1. Create space and opportunity
Employees need space and opportunity to look after their mental health. This starts with an open culture that gives employees time to prioritise their wellbeing.

2. Make your support visible
If you've got it – shout about it. Don't bury your services in the depths of the intranet. Where possible, ensure these services are just one click away.

3. Consider the types of support available
Not everyone can (or will want to) access support in the same way. Consider introducing alternative options like text support, alongside more traditional phone lines or in-person therapy.

LAURA DALLAS
Head of Product at Champion Health

Our data also highlights that fewer male employees are seeking help than females.

This suggests that male employees are still finding it difficult to reach out for help and talk about their mental health - even when they're struggling.

Therefore, organisations must continue to focus on opening up the conversation around male mental health, and make the support that is available visible, accessible and stigma-free.

Empoyees currently seeking mental health support

25% Male

74% Female

1% Other

The CLASS Approach

A 5-step guide to supporting someone who is struggling with their mental health.

Connect
Make time to ask how the person you're concerned about is doing.

Listen
Allow the person the time to talk things through and listen to what's being said.

Assess
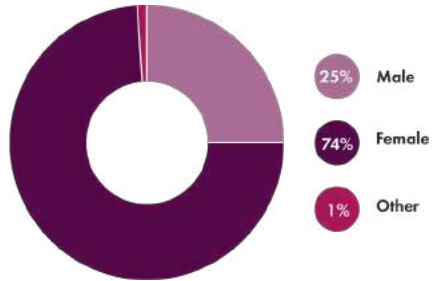Assess the situation and consider what support the person could benefit from.

Support
Make it clear that you're there to help. Explore with the person the support they could access.

Signpost
Connect the person with services so they can access timely support. Main points of contact include their GP, NHS 111 (if out-of-hours) and confidential helplines (see page 17).

> ❝ If you tell men that 'men don't want to talk about mental health' then you somehow take away permission from those that do want to talk.

The majority of my clinical caseloads have been 100% male. Men do want to talk about their mental health, of course they do, it's a significant part of being human. But when we continually talk about the hard-to-reach population and say that it's so difficult to get men to talk, we're making it sound as though men shouldn't talk and so they don't.

We need to normalise the male mental health conversation every day, to give male employees that permission to talk that for so long has been denied to them.

DR STEPHANIE FITZGERALD
Founder at Soyo Ltd, Clinical Psychologist, author and consultant

Suicide risk

Suicide is complex: there is no one reason why an individual may die by suicide or experience suicidal thoughts and behaviour.

Despite the progress we've made around normalising mental health, suicide remains a misunderstood and taboo topic.

Our data shows that year-on-year, the number of employees experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm has increased from 8% to 9%.

This means that, in an average organisation of 1,000 employees, there are 90 individuals experiencing thoughts of suicide. Put another way, 10 more people in that organisation are now experiencing suicidal thoughts versus last year. This is a tragic increase that could have a devastating impact.
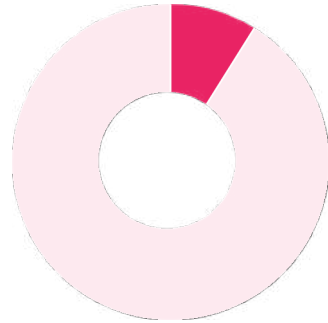
9% of employees are currently experiencing suicidal thoughts

Regarding the likelihood of suicidal ideation and self-harm, our data shows little difference between male and female employees. However, it's worth noting that our data does show that female employees are twice as likely to access mental health support compared to male colleagues.
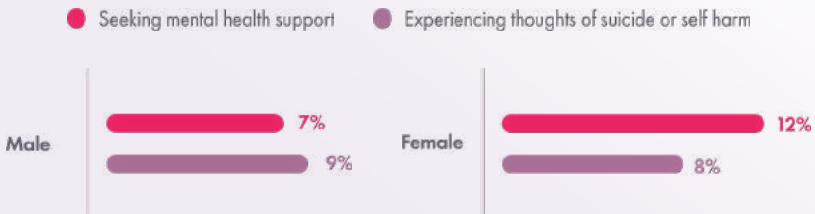
Take action to prevent suicide in the workplace

READ GUIDE

Relationship between suicidal thoughts and help-seeking in males and females

Employees experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm on at least 'several days' as measured by the PHQ-9 questionnaire

● Seeking mental health support   ● Experiencing thoughts of suicide or self harm

Male
7%
9%

Female
12%
8%

> **"** At Corin & Co we believe that all workplaces should be educating their teams on the role that they can play in helping to prevent suicide. It's our belief that suicide education can save lives. It's our belief that suicide is preventable, and we believe that the workplace is central to this mission.
>
> We spend multiple hours per week in work - there is no better place for people to engage with this education, especially as we know that employees will take this knowledge into all aspects of their lives.
>
> Equip your teams with the knowledge to spot the signs, equip your teams with the knowledge to have conversations about suicide, and equip your teams with the resources available to them internally and externally – this education can and will save lives.

HARRY CORIN
Mental Health First Aid Instructor and Founder of Corin & Co

> **"** Organisations need to get more comfortable with talking about suicide within the wider mental wellbeing conversation. In doing so they can discuss risk factors, prevention strategies and sources of support in a non-stigmatising way.
>
> This can then enable employees to self-identify and employers have a clearer mandate to engage in these difficult conversations.
>
> It's also important to widen the support on offer to those who are bereaved by suicide.
>
> In this way, people are safe to bring their whole selves to work and for it to become a safe place to be in your darkest times.

WENDY ROBINSON
Head of Services at Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

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mind
- 0300 123 3393
- Infoline
- mind.org.uk

shout 85258
- Text SHOUT to 85258
- 24/7 text service
- giveusashout.org

SAMARITANS
- 116 123
- 24/7 helpline
- samaritans.org

YOUNGMINDS
- Text YM to 85258
- 24/7 text service
- youngminds.org.uk

CAMPAIGN AGAINST LIVING MISERABLY
- 0800 58 58 58
- Helpline
- thecalmzone.net

PAPYRUS
PREVENTION OF YOUNG SUICIDE
- 0800 068 4141
- Under 35s Helpline
- papyrus-uk.org

Six simple ways to address mental health and suicide prevention in the workplace

ALICE HENDY
Founder of R;pple Suicide Prevention

Reduce the stigma of suicide

One of the greatest challenges for individuals struggling with mental health is the associated stigma which prevents them from reaching out to get treatment. Businesses have a responsibility to ensure the correct language and terminology is used, as well as ensuring mental health is embedded at the core of its company values.

Prioritise social inclusion

Isolation in the workplace contributes to mental health issues and it is important that employees are able to talk to one another. Businesses must encourage socialising during office hours and arrange social events to ensure teams are bonding and engaging with one another.

Provide support for financial struggles

Financial struggles are linked to mental health issues and businesses must do everything they can to support their staff. Providing free financial counselling for employees is a simple but effective route to do this.

Train colleagues in suicide prevention

One of the most important (and obvious) steps to preventing suicide in the workplace is to recognise it and know the signs to look out for when someone is struggling. Businesses should set up annual training exercises with staff to ensure vulnerable employees are identified and receive the support they need.

Address work-related stress

Employers must ensure that workloads are realistic and achievable, and that employees aren't taking that stress home with them. Flexible working hours, meeting-free time and regular check-ins are good ways of doing this. Employers should also support staff suffering a mental health crisis with access to paid leave using supportive policies.

Intercept harmful web searches

Utilise tools, like R;pple, to intercept harmful searches relating to suicide or self-harm. R;pple can be integrated into workplace Wi-Fi networks to "intercept" these searches by instead providing routes for people to seek free, accessible, 24/7 mental health support.

Financial wellbeing

The cost of everyday essentials is skyrocketing, inflation is soaring and recession is here. Things are getting tougher - and it's affecting our teams.

In this chapter, you'll discover how financial wellbeing is intrinsically linked to our mental and physical health.

Global forces are at play and not everything is in our control, but organisations can help to ease the pressure.

What is financial wellbeing?

Financial wellbeing is the state of feeling content, comfortable and secure with your financial situation, while having the freedom to choose how you want to live your life.

It encompasses your relationship with money: do you feel in control of your spending or confident about managing your finances?

Financial wellbeing is also extremely personal and is not fully described by objective measures like salary. Every employee can experience financial wellbeing - or a lack of it - regardless of their income.

Financial wellbeing

Amid a global cost of living crisis, financial wellbeing is front-of-mind for organisations and their employees.

Our sample was asked to identify causes of negative stress outside of the workplace. The result: 37% of employees cited financial pressure. This makes financial pressure the most common cause of stress, outranking relationships, parenting and COVID-19.

This is a percentage increase of 23% when compared with findings from last year.

23% increase in employees experiencing financial pressure versus last year

Financial stress is also impacting other areas of wellbeing, with 1 in 5 employees stating that money worries have impacted their ability to do their job.

> Financial wellbeing is about having confidence, control and capacity with money. All of these are under threat with rising inflation and interest rates.
>
> Macro-economic factors are having a huge impact on personal finances, so the sense of feeling in control is eroded.
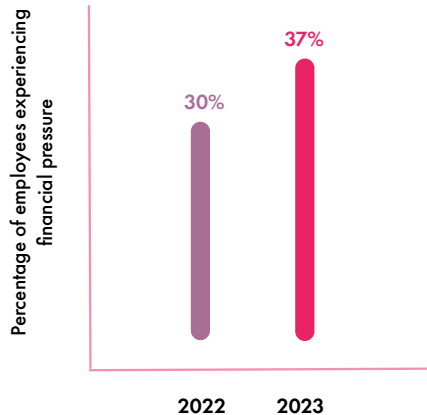
FRANCIS GOSS
Director | People Experience
Consulting at Gallagher

Financial Pressure

Percentage of employees experiencing financial pressure

- 2022: 30%
- 2023: 37%

Discover how finances affect employee wellbeing

READ GUIDE

A deeper dive into the data highlights how money worries disproportionately impact different employee demographics.

Our research found that employees between the ages of 25-34 are most likely to be impacted by financial stress, followed closely by employees between the ages of 35-44.

Interestingly, research by Aviva [1] shows that younger employees are more likely to seek financial wellbeing support and speak to their employer about financial wellbeing concerns.

Put simply: younger employees are disproportionately affected by financial pressure, but they are also more likely to seek assistance.

This reveals an opportunity for organisations to support their younger employees as they navigate the cost of living crisis.

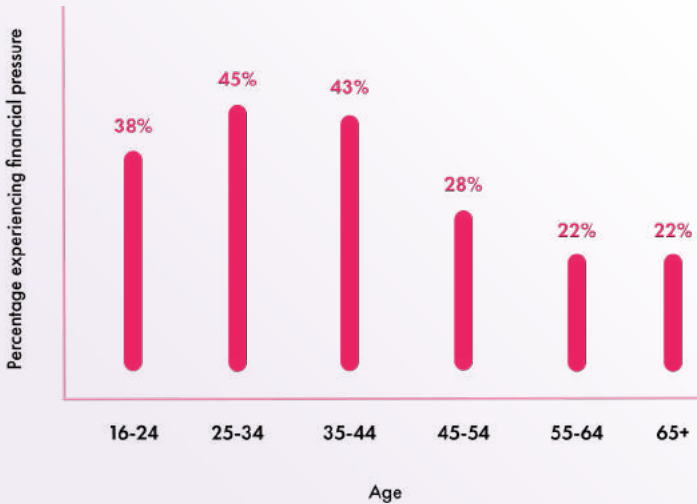> ❝ Over the next year, we need to do more to break down the taboos around talking about money.
>
> You can't manage what you can't talk about.
>
> We need our people to know that it's okay to have money issues, it's nothing to be ashamed of, and with the right support, things can get better.

LOUISE ASTON
Wellbeing Director at
Business in the Community

Financial pressure across age groups

Percentage experiencing financial pressure

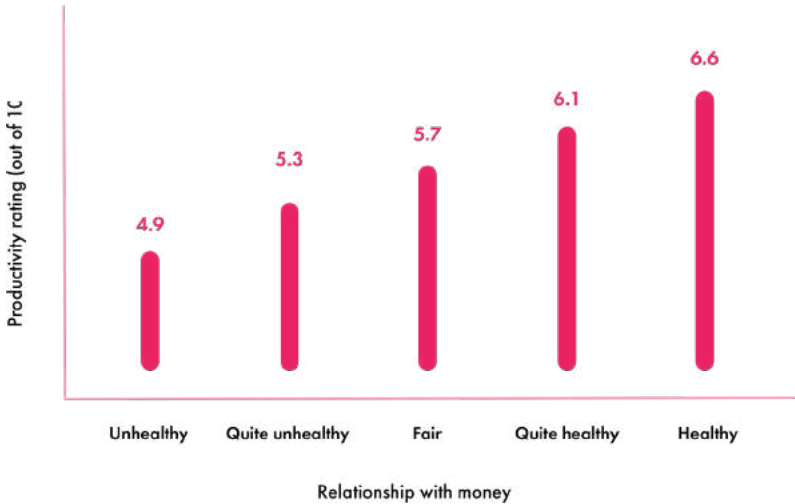| Age	Percentage
16-24	38%
25-34	45%
35-44	43%
45-54	28%
55-64	22%
65+	22%

Age

[1] Aviva's Working Lives Report 2022: The Big Squeeze

Our data also reveals how financial wellbeing impacts performance at work: a positive relationship with money is correlated to higher productivity (see below graph).

Clearly, employers that take action to support the financial wellbeing of their people will reap the rewards: improved employee health alongside better productivity and performance.

Relationship with money vs productivity

Productivity rating (out of 10

| 4.9 | 5.3 | 5.7 | 6.1 | 6.6 |

Unhealthy | Quite unhealthy | Fair | Quite healthy | Healthy

Relationship with money

RYAN BRIGGS
Founder of FinWELL

The Foundations of Financial Wellbeing

Use these five starting points to embed financial wellbeing within your organisation.

1. Communicate your free options
Reinforce and communicate your existing employee benefits, resources and suppliers.

2. Bring your teams closer together
Arrange groups online or in-person where employees and leadership teams can discuss challenges and potential solutions.

3. Utilise wellbeing champions and mental health first aiders
Upskill your teams to more effectively spot the signs of poor financial wellbeing. Ensure signposting options are clear and understood.

4. Access to education
Provide access to educational content. Cover various topics and themes relating to real life events through interactive group workshops.

5. Guidance, support & advice
Offer confidential support via your existing EAP providers or introduce 1-1 financial guidance sessions.

Physical health

From construction firms to global banks, poor physical health affects all types of employers. It also impacts every employee, from stationary office workers to active operational personnel.

In this chapter, you'll discover the most prevalent physical health issues facing your employees, from musculoskeletal (MSK) health to menopause, eye health and beyond.

Inside

- ✔ Musculoskeletal pain
- ✔ Eye health and headaches
- ✔ Menopause

Musculoskeletal pain

In the UK alone, 7.3 million working days were lost due to work-related musculoskeletal (MSK) disorders in 2022 [1].

During 2022, we reported that almost 60% of employees were experiencing MSK pain.

These levels have fallen, with only 41% of employees currently experiencing MSK pain.

While this is positive, the data shows that a significant number of employees are still in pain.

To understand the extent to which MSK pain impacts performance, we asked employees whether MSK pain affects their productivity in work.

We found that the performance of 17% of employees is being impacted by MSK pain.

Employees experiencing MSK pain

57%

41%

2022   2023

17% of employees report that MSK pain negatively impacts their productivity
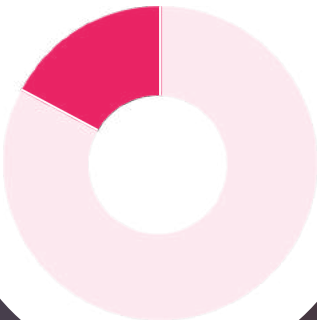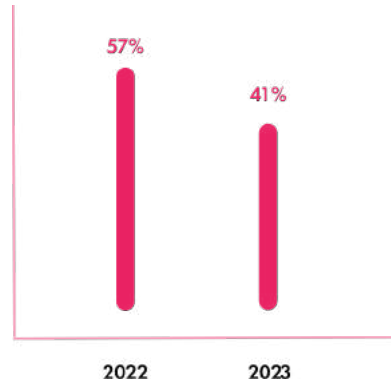
Research-backed routes to support the MSK health of your employees

1 **Offer physiotherapy support**
Work absences can be reduced by five days when employees receive advice on lower back pain from physiotherapists. [2]

2 **Encourage active breaks**
Active breaks that involve movement away from the desk reduce pain and discomfort. [3]

3 **Roll out DSE assessments**
Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments give employees the opportunity to assess their workstation and ensure they work with a safe posture. [4]

[1] Work-related musculoskeletal disorders statistics in Great Britain, HSE 2022

[2] Moving Forward - Physiotherapy for Musculoskeletal Health and Wellbeing

[3] Applied Ergonomics, 2018

[4] Health and Safety Executive

Further exploration of the data reveals the most common areas causing pain for our employees.

Ranked top is pain in the lower-back, which affects 52% of employees.

Other common locations of pain include the neck, knee, shoulder, and hip.

The data also shows that many employees experiencing MSK pain are not seeking the support they need from a specialist.

Of those with MSK pain, less than half say they are actively seeking support.

As most MSK issues can be managed successfully when treated early, this is a key area in which employers can provide effective support.
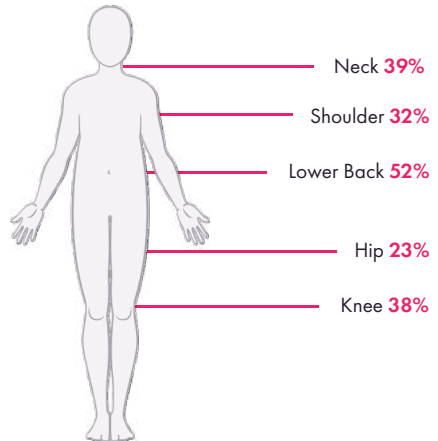
Percentage of employees in pain who are seeking specialist support

42% Seeking support from a specialist

58% Not seeking support from a specialist

Five most common areas of MSK pain

Neck **39%**

Shoulder **32%**

Lower Back **52%**

Hip **23%**

Knee **38%**

> 66 The location of the MSK pain suggests people are experiencing the consequences of working at makeshift workstations inappropriate for long periods of sitting.
>
> When MSK support is fully utilised, research shows that it can provide a 10:1 return on investment. This shows the potential of investing in good MSK health, and also the losses organisations are incurring because their employees are not seeking the correct support.

RICHARD JACKSON
Co-founder of Champion Health Plus

Discover how One Health improved MSK health

READ NOW

Eye health and headaches

The shift to home and hybrid working poses a greater risk to employee eye health due to increased screen time [1].

The environment in which we work can also put extra strain on our eyes, especially in makeshift home offices.

This increases the risk of eye strain and headaches, which impacts the health and productivity of your employees.

Our data shows that 62% of employees are experiencing at least one symptom of eye strain, 31% are experiencing headaches and 10% are experiencing migraines.

In addition, headaches are impacting the productivity of 18% of employees.

62% of employees are experiencing at least 1 symptom of eye strain

18% of employees report that headaches impact their productivity

Ergonomic work set-ups prevent and improve symptoms of eye strain. Share these tips with your colleagues to reduce the risk of eye strain.

1 Lighting

Eye strain can be caused by excessive sunlight coming in through windows or by bright interior lighting. Use curtains or blinds to reduce the glare from the sun and avoid sitting under fluorescent lights.

2 Devices

Your computer screen should be about an arm's length from your eyes and the centre of the screen should be 10-15 degrees below your eye line.

3 Workstation

Improper posture while working can strain your eyes. Ensure your workstation and chair are at the correct height for your feet to be flat on the floor and your back to be straight.

Menopause

Women experiencing the menopause are the fastest-growing demographic in the workplace [1]. It's therefore vital that the employer community provides proactive support to employees experiencing the menopause.

The physiological and psychological effects of the menopause can negatively impact the health and wellbeing of your people [2]. With that in mind, we asked our sample how the menopause affects their work.

The results are clear: almost 30% of employees experiencing menopause report that it negatively impacts their productivity.

> 66 Menopause support will not always give you huge engagement from a numbers perspective, but it will give you huge impact.
>
> People may drop in and out of using the services, but there's still massive value for organisations in recruitment, retention, the caring view of you as an employer and the personal impact you can have on the lives of women experiencing the menopause.

DANIELLA BRACKPOOL
Senior Reward Manager at Wickes

> 66 Given that 3 out of 4 women experience numerous menopause symptoms, it's little wonder that menopause can negatively impact on productivity.
>
> Giving the right information, providing support and offering practical workplace adjustments can have a transformative effect on individuals and productivity. Organisations play a crucial role in offering this to their team and it all starts with a willingness to create a workplace culture where talking about menopause is positively encouraged.
>
> Everyone should be involved, not just those experiencing menopause symptoms. Everyone should be menopause aware and have access to factual information that enables them to make personal choices about their own menopause. And everyone should know how to support others through menopause.

JULIE ROBINSON
Founder of MenoHealth

28% of employees experiencing the menopause report that it negatively impacts their productivity
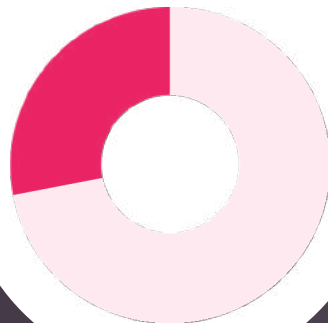
[1] BMC Women's Health

[2] NHS Inform

Menopause support checklist

What can leaders do to support and retain women experiencing the menopause? Here's a list of small workplace changes to support those going through the menopause.

Tackle the taboo and start talking about the menopause in your organisation

READ GUIDE

Offer flexible working hours, particularly later start times or permission to leave at short notice

Provide access to a quiet and private working space

Give employees the option to work from home by making hybrid working an option (particularly for times when menopausal symptoms are challenging)

Offer easy access to cold drinking water

Cool the working environment, for example by providing a fan, moving a desk closer to a window or adjusting the air conditioning

Provide easy access to welfare and sanitary facilities

Allow time off to attend medical appointments that are menopause-related

Agree some protected time when employees can catch up with any work that is missed due to difficulties caused by the menopause

Identify a supportive colleague to talk to away from the office, such as a designated wellbeing champion or menopause expert

Empower your team so that all leaders and line managers understand what menopause is, how it can affect colleagues, and what the available support options are

Productivity, energy and culture

The events of recent years have transformed the way we work. The employee experience has changed, as have the priorities of our people.

In this chapter, you'll explore three key aspects of workplace wellbeing: productivity, energy and culture.

Inside

- Productivity
- Energy and performance
- Sleep
- Culture
- Psychological safety

Productivity

High employee productivity is crucial to ensure your organisation outperforms its competitors – and our data reveals room for improvement.

Over 50% of employees rate their productivity as 'average', 'below-average', or 'low'. Just 13% of those we surveyed rate their productivity as 'high'.

These results point to presenteeism: lost productivity that occurs when employees are not fully functioning in the workplace, usually due to illness or injury.

In 2022, Champion Health found that, on average, presenteeism costs businesses over £9,000 per employee per annum [1].
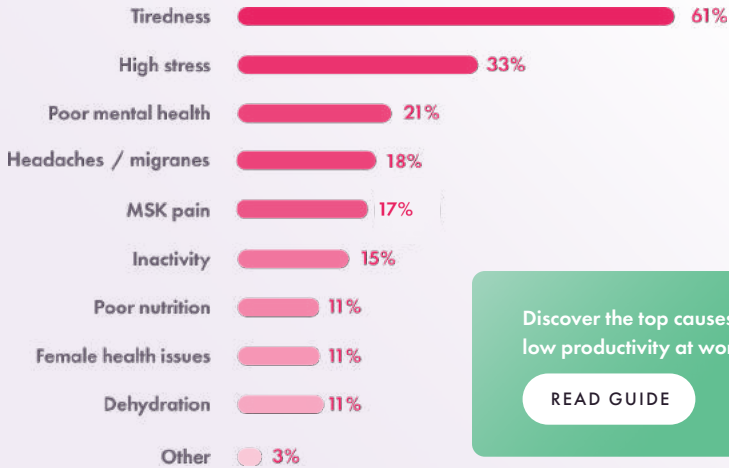
Productivity rating

1%	Low
11%	Below average
44%	Average
31%	Above average
13%	High
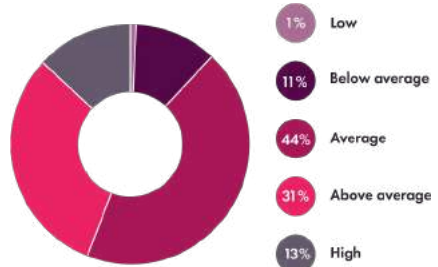
To discover what's contributing to this cost, each employee in our sample was also asked to identify the areas of wellbeing impacting their productivity.

Health issues impacting productivity

The most frequently selected issues impacting productivity at work. Employees could select multiple health issues.

Health issue	Percentage
Tiredness	61%
High stress	33%
Poor mental health	21%
Headaches / migranes	18%
MSK pain	17%
Inactivity	15%
Poor nutrition	11%
Female health issues	11%
Dehydration	11%
Other	3%

Discover the top causes of low productivity at work

READ GUIDE

[1] Champion Health | The Global Productivity Report, 2022

Energy and performance

While many health areas impact productivity, energy levels stand out as an area to which employers must pay particular attention.

That's because over 60% of employees report that tiredness affects their performance in work. In addition, the most common change employees would like to make is to improve their energy levels (more on this in the next chapter).

The tiredness epidemic is revealed through employee energy levels with over 40% reporting their daily energy levels as "fatigued" or "extremely fatigued".

> 66 Leaders are used to solving problems. But the default when looking at 'problem' data is that we react to the numbers rather than exploring the sentiment or root cause.
>
> Flipping the question from how do we fix the problem to what's the opportunity that's driving the data will lead us to a very different solution, with a much more significant and sustainable impact.
>
> **ANDY HOLMES**
> **Client Partner at Korn Ferry**

Average daily energy levels

3%	Extremely fatigued
40%	Fatigued
53%	Energised
4%	Extremely energised
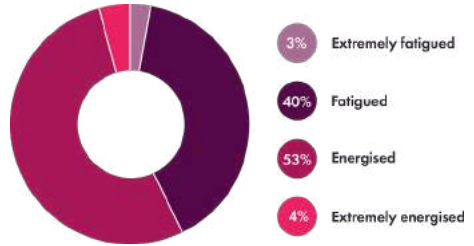
> 66 With all the change that's happened in recent years, some of our healthy habits, like work-life boundaries, have fallen by the wayside.
>
> This is leading to increased employee tiredness. Employers must encourage and facilitate employees putting these boundaries back in.
>
> **ZOE ECCLESTON**
> **Workplace Health and Wellbeing Consultant**

Our data also highlights how energy levels fluctuate throughout the day.

On average, employees feel least energetic at 3:31PM and most energetic at 10:21AM.

Most energetic
10:21 am

Least energetic
3:31 pm

Sleep

It may not be surprising that, considering tiredness is cited as a top drainer of productivity, our data also reveals that employees are struggling with sleep.

When asked to rate their sleep, 71% of employees responded with 'average' or worse. And over 1 in 3 employees report their sleep quality as 'poor'.

Sleep quality rating

- 5% Terrible
- 30% Poor
- 36% Average
- 23% Good
- 6% Excellent
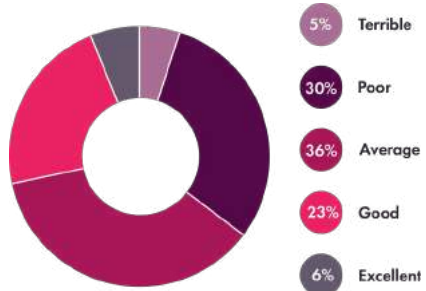
71% of employees rate their sleep as 'average' or worse

Over 1 in 3 employees rate their sleep as 'poor'

Boosting employee energy levels

1. Prioritise rest and recovery
Just like athletes, employees need recovery to perform at their best.

Make sure they're prioritising recovery behaviours, like taking breaks and making full use of their annual leave. As leaders, you need to model those behaviours as well.

2. Discuss fatigue in 1:1s
The data shows that employee fatigue is a prominent issue, so make sure you're bringing it up in 1:1s and staff appraisals.

Work with your employees to identify and address any sources of fatigue, such as excessive workload and Zoom fatigue.

3. Consider the working environment
Consider whether your employees' working environment is set up to contribute to fatigue or reduce it.

This includes everything from breakout rooms to the nutritional value of the food employees can access.

JAMIE BROADLEY
Group Head of Health & Wellbeing at Serco

serco

Culture

The culture within your organisation affects every aspect of the employee experience, from feelings of support to the impact of work-related stress.

This data provides an insight into the current state of organisational culture.

As many organisations adapt to hybrid work, maintaining a supportive company culture (in which employees feel part of a team) is a high priority for leaders and wellbeing professionals.

Our data shows that, while most employees do 'feel part of a team', only 51% 'feel supported at work'.

> **Leaders play a crucial role in embedding a thriving culture of wellbeing in any organisation.**
>
> Investing in this population to better understand themselves and connect with their people will create an environment where individual's needs are voiced and met.
>
> At Keller, we developed and launched a wellbeing training program for line managers. This gives our leaders the knowledge and tools to gain agency over their personal wellbeing, be able to role-model this space well and to better support their people.

SANDY-LEE CONNOLLY
Group Head of Talent and Diversity at Keller Group plc

Do you feel supported at work?

51%	Yes
9%	No
41%	Sometimes
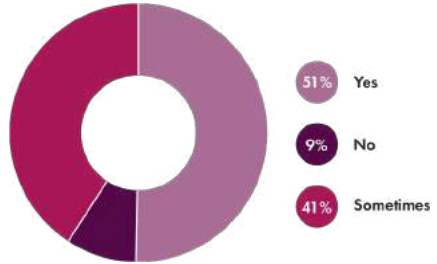
Do you feel part of the team?

65%	Yes
6%	No
29%	Sometimes
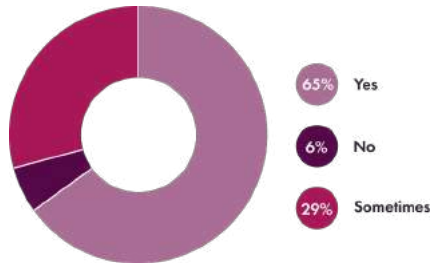
Five traits of successful teams

Google spent two years studying its people using over 35 different statistical models. They identified five traits that successful teams share:

1. **Psychological safety**
2. **Dependability**
3. **Structure and clarity**
4. **Meaning**
5. **Impact**

Search 'Project Aristotle by Google' online for more information.

Feeling 'supported' and 'part of a team' are not just nice-to-haves. When employees feel this way it has a real impact.

Our data shows that these sentiments are associated with higher levels of mental wellbeing and productivity.

> " When we care for our people, when we invest in our teams, we not only invest in employee wellbeing, we invest in our overall success as an organisation. This research proves that.

GETHIN NADIN
Award-winning psychologist, author and Chief Innovation Officer at Benefex

Feeling supported at work vs mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing score (WEMWBS)

25   23   21

Yes   Sometimes   No

Do you feel supported at work?

Feeling supported at work vs productivity

Productivity rating (out of 10)

6.3   5.8   5.4

Yes   Sometimes   No
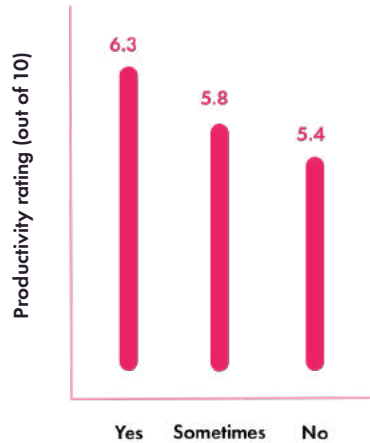
Do you feel supported at work?

What is the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)?

The WEMWBS is used internationally to measure mental wellbeing. Here we utilise this scale to provide a snapshot of mental wellbeing within our sample.

> **There is a powerful connection between inclusion and wellbeing. Research shows us that when leaders are inclusive, employee job satisfaction, engagement and commitment multiplies.**
>
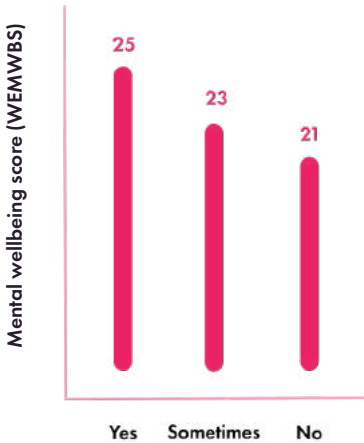> **Feeling included and part of a team really strengthens belonging and drives employee wellbeing.**

SANDY-LEE CONNELLY
Group Head of Talent and Diversity
at Keller Group plc

Three tips to help your people feel supported

1. Implement fit-for-purpose healthcare benefits

2. Create safe spaces where leaders and team members can share experiences

3. Adopt flexible policies that guide, not dictate, how an employee can be supported based on individual needs

PAUL DOCKERTY
HR Benefits and Wellbeing Manager
at HSBC

Feeling like part of a team vs mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing score (WEMWBS)

Yes	Sometimes	No
24	22	20
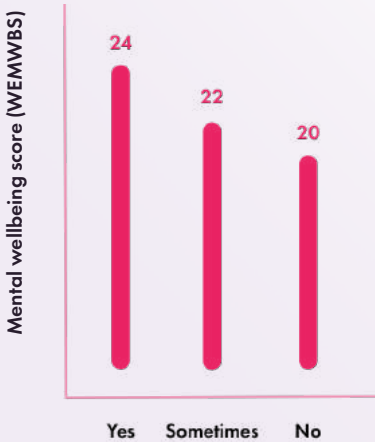
Do you feel like part of a team?

Feeling like part of a team vs productivity

Productivity rating (out of 10)

Yes	Sometimes	No
6.2	5.7	5.3
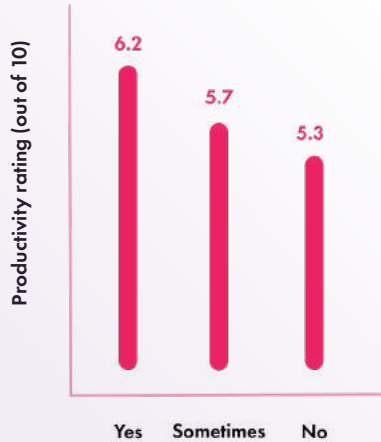
Do you feel like part of a team?

Workplace culture in 2023

What do leaders think?

> The best way for leaders to foster a culture of caring is to role-model the behaviours they are attempting to encourage - such as talking about mental health.
>
> And if they can't do that, they should feel psychologically safe enough to admit they too are on a journey and will therefore create the space for everyone else to openly discuss their mental health.

ARTI KASHYAP-AYNSLEY
Global Head of Wellbeing & Inclusion at Ocado Group

> I'd equate feeling part of a team with experiencing psychological safety, or the ability to speak up freely without fear.
>
> This inevitably leads to better performance, as questions can be asked openly, budding problems are addressed early and people share information and data more freely.

BETH SAMSON
People Director at Investors in People

> Feeling supported is fundamental to creating a psychologically healthy and safe work environment.

Lack of support from supervisors and co-workers, lack of access to support services, and lack of information or training inhibits a culture of learning, contribution and challenge. Ultimately, this impacts productivity, performance levels, innovation, and improvement.

Support includes empathetic and compassionate leadership through listening and carrying out regular wellbeing conversations. You could also signpost to wellbeing resources, as well as providing practical support.

It also includes job clarity, autonomy and control, manageable workloads, transparency and consultation during workplace change.

HAYLEY FARRELL
Global Wellbeing & Resilience Manager and Global Affinity Group Programme Manager at Arcadis

> Feeling connected to others and having the psychological safety of working as part of a close team are huge drivers of wellbeing, so it's great to see so many people are looking out for one another.

GETHIN NADIN
Award-winning psychologist, author and Chief Innovation Officer at Benefex

How individuals can create psychologically safe workplaces

Lead the way

As a leader, you can foster psychologically safe environments by promoting conversation around different issues within the workplace. You can also model curiosity by asking your employees lots of questions, which creates a necessity for them to speak up.

Acknowledge your own fallibility

If employees see their seniors admitting fallibility, they are more likely to feel comfortable doing so themselves. That's why phrases like "I may miss something - I need to hear from you" really help to create psychologically safe environments.

Ensure feedback is constructive

Giving feedback is important for the development of your workforce, but it's crucial that your employees do not feel criticised or stilted by it. Try to draw on individuals' strengths whilst encouraging growth in areas requiring improvement.

Commit to an open-door policy

Make sure you're available and make sure your team knows it. When they approach you, endeavour to be approachable, open-minded and non-judgemental. Employees will then be more likely to come to you to discuss potential issues.

Be open to feedback

Your team need to know that you're confident in your ability, but also flexible in your approach and open to feedback. Demonstrate this by inviting your team to challenge your decisions – healthy conflict leads to better decisions and more accountability.

Goals and obstacles

Despite an increasingly challenging global environment, the overwhelming majority of employees want to make positive health changes. This should motivate all of us and it's something to be celebrated.

Key to translating that motivation into action is understanding the changes your people want to make, as well as the barriers in the way.

This is an excellent opportunity for employers to facilitate significant and meaningful change. In this chapter, you'll discover what employees are motivated to change and what's stopping them.

Inside
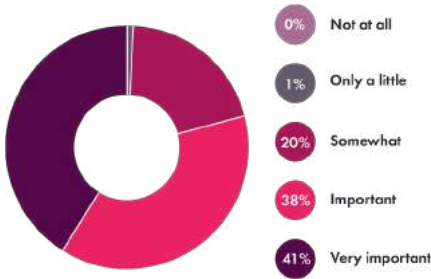
- Motivation
- Changes and barriers

Motivation

Last year, we reported that 94% of employees wanted to make positive changes to their wellbeing.

This year the level of motivation has increased: 98% of employees are motivated to make a positive change to their wellbeing and almost 80% of employees consider making these changes to be 'important' or 'very important'.

Employees motivated to improve their wellbeing

- 2% Not motivated
- 98% Motivated
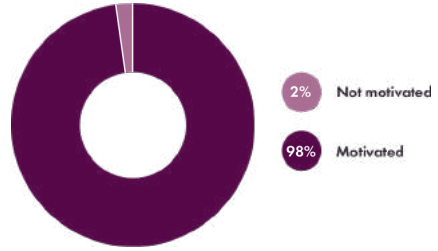
How important is it for you to reach your goals?

- 0% Not at all
- 1% Only a little
- 20% Somewhat
- 38% Important
- 41% Very important

> Organisations have the opportunity to increase motivation through value and gratitude.
>
> Ask yourselves how you can reward individuals from a gratitude perspective.
>
> This could be something as simple as showing knowledge and appreciation for the work they're doing.

JONATHAN GAWTHROP
Executive Director, Wellbeing Sustainability and Assurance at EMCOR UK

> You want to encourage individuals to own their health and wellbeing.
>
> To do that, you'll need data, you'll need insight and you'll need information.
>
> You also need to recognise that, within your colleague population, you have similar traits which you can use to galvanise people into communities. Utilising these communities means your people can engage and be part of the solution, rather than waiting to be invited into taking part.

NICK DAVISON
Health and Wellbeing Strategist, previously Head of Wellbeing at John Lewis

Changes and barriers

The most common changes employees would like to make are in the areas of energy and weight management.

Overall, 42% want to boost energy levels and 41% want to lose weight. Other commonly cited areas of focus include sleep, stress and activity.

> " If we look at the COM-B model of behaviour, we see the influence of capability on motivation. If organisations can give their employees the capability for behaviour change, then they will increase the opportunity for behaviour change – and therefore influence motivation. Here are three things to consider when creating capability:
>
> 1. What are the wellbeing entry points for your employees?
>
> 2. Do your employees have time to prioritise wellbeing?
>
> 3. Is the working environment conducive to employees making a change?

JAMIE DOUGLAS
Global Health and Wellbeing Lead at Babcock

What is the COM-B model of behaviour?

The COM-B model sets out three key components that will lead to successful behaviour change: capability, opportunity and motivation.

Top 10 health areas employees would like to focus on

Health area	Percentage
Boost energy levels	42%
Lose weight	41%
Sleep better	28%
Reduce stress	27%
Become more active	26%
Improve mood	26%
Improve physical health	22%
Eat well	19%
Improve financial wellbeing	12%
Boost productivity	11%

While your people are motivated to make improvements to their health, there are challenges to achieving better wellbeing. As an employer, you can support your people to navigate these obstacles. The most common barrier to improving wellbeing is lack of willpower, followed by lack of time, work commitments, family commitments and mental health.

> 66 As leaders, one of the most valuable things we can give our employees is five minutes to themselves.

RYAN HOPKINS
Future of Wellbeing Lead at Deloitte

> 66 Time and willpower are barriers to improving wellbeing, so make it easier for your people to engage. Ensure your wellbeing services are accessible from one central location and make it easy to access support when it's needed most.

LAURA DALLAS
Head of Product at Champion Health

Top 10 barriers to making health changes

Barrier	2023	2022
Willpower	47%	44%
Lack of Time	43%	43%
Work Commitments	33%	29%
Family Commitments	26%	23%
Mental Health	20%	16%
Low Confidence	19%	17%
Lack of Knowledge	12%	13%
Lack of Support	11%	9%
Finances	9%	8%
Nothing	7%	10%

● 2023   ● 2022

Willpower at work: what does the evidence say?

Low willpower can be due to low fuel

Some researchers have proposed that brain cells working hard to maintain self-control consume glucose faster than it can be replenished.

Action: Encourage your employees to make the right food choices (e.g. by offering nutritious food in the workplace).

The influence of beliefs and attitudes

Those who are driven by their own internal goals and desires - rather than external factors like people-pleasing - are likely to retain more willpower.

Action: Encourage colleagues to set personal goals based on their own internal motivations.

Mood matters

A good mood can overcome some of the willpower depletion effects normally seen after exercising self-control.

Action: Celebrate the wins and engage with your colleagues regularly. Boost mood and you'll boost willpower too.

American Psychological Association

" It's really interesting to see willpower being the top self reported barrier. I think this is positive though because it shows a level of self awareness which is really needed to take the first step of action.

Something which I think is really powerful is clearly communicating with your teams the different accountabilities each area of an organisation has. From your individual responsibility for self care, to your team's responsibility to exercise compassion and awareness, and the organisation's responsibility to create a safe environment for all.

JAKE SANDERS
Global Wellbeing Initiatives Lead at Phillip Morris International

" Since working in wellbeing I have found it interesting to overcome the willpower barrier when it comes to engaging colleagues. I feel 18 months ago people saw wellbeing as something they needed to engage with if they were struggling or in crisis.

It is starting to move forward from that with more people seeing the importance of maintaining positive wellbeing. However, I feel that wellbeing is still seen as a 'nice to do' by colleagues and something that is first to fall off the table when things like time, willpower and other commitments are challenged.

STEVE BIRD
Wellbeing Manager at Currys

Looking forward

Awareness into action

This report summarises the immense challenges faced by your people.

It shines a spotlight on the areas in which employees need the most focus and support. This includes rising levels of stress, greater financial pressure and increased incidence of thoughts of suicide and self-harm.

But it also reveals the opportunity we all have to make a difference; this report shows that 98% of your people are motivated to improve their wellbeing. This must be celebrated.

It's also important to highlight the amazing work that you and your colleagues have done to support your people.

I've had the pleasure of working alongside hundreds of passionate professionals that are going above and beyond for the wellbeing of their colleagues.

Whether that's by providing support for the menopause, mental health, or anything in between, so many of you are working tirelessly behind the scenes to build open and caring environments in which your people can thrive.

The world is changing quickly around us. But we can all make a difference to the lives of our employees.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report.

HARRY BLISS
Co-founder and CEO at Champion Health

Discover
Champion Health

Champion Health enables businesses like yours to thrive through our digital wellbeing platform.

The platform empowers employees to improve their wellbeing through digital health assessments, personalised wellbeing action plans and tailored workplace health content.

Meanwhile, your leaders will access the support, resources and insights they need to develop impactful, engaging, data-driven wellbeing strategies.

Find out how you can support your people and generate record engagement. Book a demo now and discover Champion Health.

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