

The Workplace Health Report

2024

A data-driven view on the real state of employee mental health, wellbeing, and productivity, inside and outside of the workplace.

Published by

CHAMPION
HEALTH

A chance for change

It seems that with each year that passes, unprecedented events have become the norm.

And 2023 was no different.

We've once again seen millions battle the soaring cost of living and the impact that is having on the collective mental, physical, and financial wellbeing of many.

As well as this, we continue to live in a state of flux politically and watch on as conflicts reach frightening heights. It seems that current and long-term instability is something we are, unfortunately, having to grow used to.

There's no doubt that major world events – regardless of how close or far away they are from our doorsteps – has had serious implications on the health of many around the world. In times like this, the overriding feeling can be one of hopelessness. What is the hope for our future? For the next generation?

But now, at the start of a new year, we want to look at how we can create hope.

As leaders, it's down to us to create an environment at work where our people feel safe, heard, and understood. We want to offer stability in a world where things seem far from stable. And at Champion Health, this has been our mission from the start.

Our annual Workplace Health Report lifts the lid on the current state of employee wellbeing, equipping you with real-life insights to support building out pillars of hope for your people.

With insights from over 4,300 employees and over a million data points, we dig deep into the challenges our people are currently facing both inside and outside of work. By taking a realistic look at the data and its implications, only then can we know how to truly make a positive impact on the lives of those we work with.

And it's not all doom and gloom. With a rise in the amount of people suffering from mental health issues, we have also seen more receiving a diagnosis for such issues. More men are reaching for help. And there has been a huge increase in the number of people feeling content with their current physical and mental health.

This shows progress and a way through. And I personally believe it is so important to see that our efforts in bettering the wellbeing of our colleagues is not in vain. But as always, our work does not have an end date, and there is always still so much more we can do.

What is revealed to us during the insights you are about to read may be confronting, but we hope that you can turn that on its head and see it as an opportunity to intact real change and make all the difference in all the right ways.



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Chief Growth Officer, Champion Health



Nick McClelland

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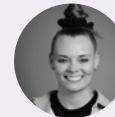
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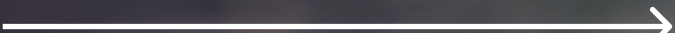
Vicky Fytche

Wellbeing Lead, Champion Health

The Quick Read

An hourglass with blue sand is positioned in the center of the page. The background is a blurred beach scene with pebbles in the foreground and a soft, hazy sky. The hourglass is dark, and the sand is a vibrant blue. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

Short on time? Here are five
key findings from the report:

A white arrow pointing to the right, indicating the direction of the key findings.

1

The impact of physical health issues: MSK pain, chronic pain, long-term health conditions and female health issues continue to have a big impact on productivity

2

Renewed focus on suicide: Thoughts of suicide and self-harm are more prevalent this year (a percentage increase of 44%)

3

More men are seeking help: Despite a worsening mental health picture, more men are accessing mental health support

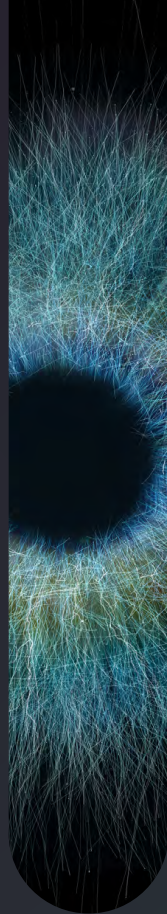
4

Young people continue to be disproportionately affected: Poorer outcomes are seen in those aged 16-24, across mental health, stress, and financial wellbeing

5

Harness the power of a positive workplace culture: Supported employees feel healthier, happier and more productive

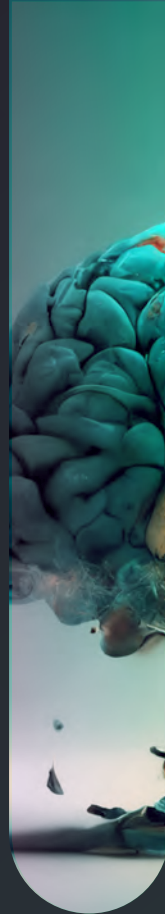
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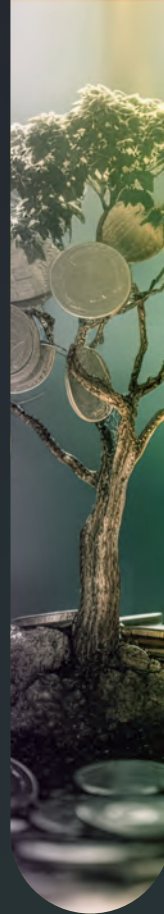
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- > Chronic pain and long-term conditions
- > Eye health and headaches



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Mental Health

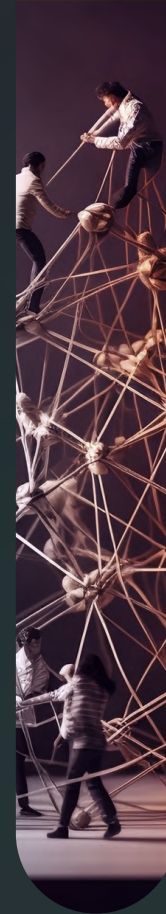
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Financial Wellbeing

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- > Culture



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Goals and Obstacles

- > Goals and motivation
- > Barriers to change



Physical Health

Physical health is something that impacts every single person around the world. From musculoskeletal pain to eye strain and chronic conditions, this chapter delves into the issues our people are currently facing when it comes to their physical health and how it has a ripple effect throughout their lives.

INSIDE

Musculoskeletal pain

Chronic pain and long-term conditions

Eye health and headaches

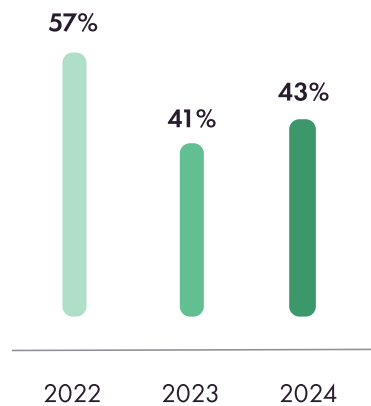
Musculoskeletal pain

With almost one third [1] of the UK population suffering from a musculoskeletal condition, it is unsurprising that cases of MSK pain are still prevalent in the workforce.

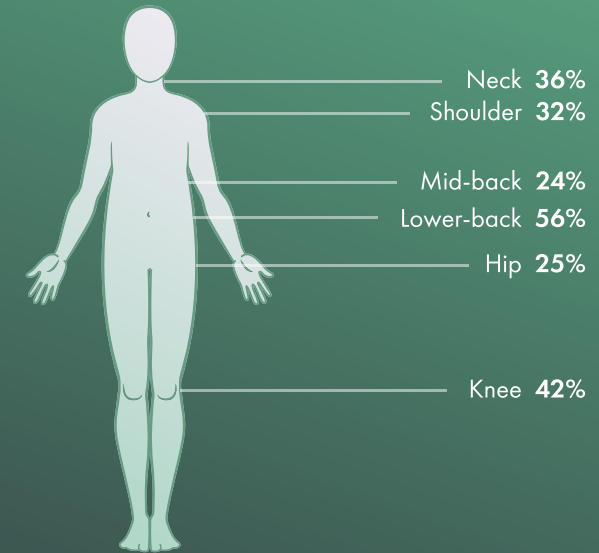
In 2023, we reported that the number of people reporting MSK pain had fallen (from 57% to 41%). This year, this figure has stayed around the same at 43%.

However, the impact this is having in the workplace cannot be ignored. Of those who reported current MSK pain, 84% rated the severity as 'moderate' or 'severe', with nearly 1 in 2 saying it actively impacts their productivity at work.

Employees experiencing MSK pain



Five most common areas of MSK pain



Just as we feel thirsty when we start to become dehydrated or feel hungry when we need food, aching after sitting for long periods is not an indication of tissue damage, but a primal indication that we need to move our body, joints and muscles.

Georgie Oldfield, Physiotherapist and Head of SIRPA

99

Our data also suggests that work type has an influence on the experience of MSK pain, too.

Whilst most of those who experience MSK pain are hybrid workers (37%), followed by retail workers (20%), our data also shows that 1 in 2 manual workers report current MSK pain.

This indicates that physical labour has the greatest strain on the body than any other kind of work, and considerations on how to protect manual workers' MSK health need to be made.

Work type of those with current MSK pain



Hybrid

workers are more likely to experience MSK pain than any other work type

Nearly

1 in 2

manual workers experience MSK pain

“

The key to managing risk amongst hybrid workers is information and education. Too many people consider office ergonomics in a purist form – that everyone should have an adjustable chair, etc.

At home, people may not have the space or want the office aesthetic. It is reasonable to assume a hybrid worker will not be using a standard office-style desk and chair and therefore training needs to be pragmatic. If someone is working at a kitchen counter, teach them how to work safely at that kitchen counter.

Equipment is only part of the solution, helping a worker to understand how their behaviours in terms of adjusting their posture and taking short breaks will deliver better outcomes. There are lots of online solutions in the market that enable training via eLearning and self-assessment. We have a solution called Healthy Working which is the world's most widely used system.

The solution will always come back to education, helping a worker to understand the hazards they are exposed to and give them the tools and knowledge to address those hazards.



Jon Abbott

Director, Cardinus Risk Management

Our data also revealed gender differences in the experience of MSK pain. Of those experiencing current pain, 64% are women and only 35% are men - a similar pattern found in previous years. So, why do women struggle more with MSK pain than men?

“

Past trauma, learned behaviours and personality traits, as well as anxiety and depression and beliefs about pain persisting, have also been shown to be linked to the perpetuation of pain. Therefore, if these are involved in its perpetuation, it makes sense that pain relief is more likely when these are identified and addressed, in both men and women.



Georgie Oldfield
Physiotherapist and Head of SIRPA

Did you know?

11.6 million women in the UK live with an MSK condition [1]



Women are almost **twice** as likely to experience MSK pain than men

[1] (Versus Arthritis)

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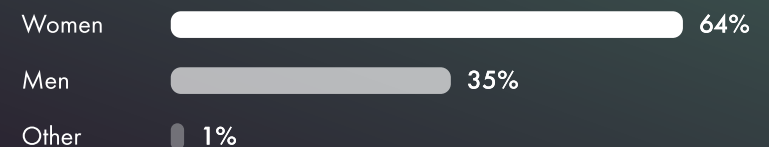
Whilst there has been a lot of awareness recently around women's health, you don't see as much discussion about it in the MSK space, despite statistics saying almost 1 in 2 women suffer with MSK pain. What's the cause of this?

Going through big life events such as pregnancy and the menopause can have a real impact on a woman's body, with things like changing hormone levels and structural changes to the pelvic floor. This can cause pain in itself, but also affect core stability and influences secondary pains as a result. Reduced oestrogen levels can also cause problems with bone density and muscle mass, all of which can lead directly to MSK pain.



Oliver Atkinson
Chartered Physiotherapist & Head of Occupational Health and Wellbeing, The AA

Gender differences in experience of MSK pain



Given the prevalence of MSK pain in the workforce, the impact it's having on work performance is also unsurprising - with nearly 1 in 2 employees reporting their MSK pain impacts productivity. This only highlights the need to improve access to comprehensive, specialist MSK support, to enable more than the 45% of people who are currently accessing this type of support.



47% of people with current MSK pain say it impacts their productivity

Studies have shown that back pain is more likely when employees are unable to make decisions and leadership is perceived as not empowering or fair. Addressing these could therefore have a bigger impact on MSK health than might be recognised.

Georgie Oldfield, Physiotherapist and Head of SIRPA

Percentage of employees seeking MSK support



The workplace can cause many MSK health issues, and with waiting lists for treatment reaching almost 11 million, the onus is now landing on employers to reduce the risks.

Organisations – particularly those with hybrid and remote working – need to be providing easier access to services such as physiotherapy and ergonomic support.

Education around workstation set ups and MSK health should be more embedded within the workforce. This will encourage more employees to take a proactive approach to healthcare which is key to better MSK health outcomes when a problem does arise.



Oliver Atkinson

Chartered Physiotherapist & Head of Occupational Health and Wellbeing, The AA

Chronic pain and long-term conditions

This year, 40% of people reported at least one kind of long-term health condition, with the top 3 most common conditions listed as:

Hay fever (14%)

Asthma (11%)

Chronic pain and/or Fibromyalgia (4%)

Did you know?

The number of people diagnosed with hay fever has trebled over the last 30 years. [2]



Work-based or occupational asthma accounts for approximately 15% of adult onset asthma

While conditions like hay fever and asthma can be easier to manage, chronic pain is often much harder to. And with 67% of people with chronic pain saying it impacts their productivity at work, it's important that we seek out effective and sustainable treatment.

[2] (Allergy UK)



Chronic pain is typically pain that lasts for more than 3 months and can often be very debilitating for people, not to mention having an ongoing affect on their mental health.

The difficulty with chronic pain is often that it appears to be non-specific and has no real obvious cause behind it which makes it challenging for clinicians to treat.

Generally a good place for any treatment plan to start should be aiming to improve overall wellbeing through gentle, regular exercise and better nutrition, along with mental health support when needed.

Employers can support by making sure the appropriate workplace adjustments are put in place to support employees proactively.



Oliver Atkinson

Chartered Physiotherapist & Head of Occupational Health and Wellbeing, The AA

MSK adjustment checklist:



Accommodate flexible working schedules



Arrange ergonomic workspace support



Implement policies offering treatment options

Eye health and headaches

In our modern lives, constant exposure to screens and daily activities subjects our eyes to frequent strain. This year mirrors the last, with almost two-thirds of people facing eye strain symptoms. Tired eyes, the most common symptom, affects 46% of employees.

Did you know?

In the UK alone, people spend 2hrs 55mins on their desktops and 2hrs 52 mins on their mobile per day [3]



But the risks of poor eye health extend beyond just our eyes, leading to other unpleasant symptoms such as headaches, migraines and the inevitable impact on productivity.

In fact, 37% of people report experiencing headaches or migraines during the working day. And nearly 1 in 2 (47%) say these symptoms impact their productivity at work.

37% of people
experience headaches or
migraines

46% of people
experience tired eyes
during the working day

“

Screen time seems an inevitable part of daily life, not only at work but also during so-called relaxation time. Even whilst wearing vision correction, the muscle use in focussing on near objects causes fatigue, often resulting in tired eyes and headaches.

Another element which is often overlooked, is a significant reduction in the blink reflex. This causes a less stable tear film, which results in reduced vision quality and sore, irritable eyes.

The obvious answer to this is to reduce screen time, but even a few minutes away from your screen at regular intervals can help significantly - by looking at a distant object, or through a window.

The use of good quality preservative-free artificial tears can help soothe irritated eyes, and not forgetting a regular sight test to make sure that your eye correction is optimised.

Statistics show that eye strain can cause regular headaches, which results in chronic pain, which is shown to have a significant impact on mental health and wellbeing.



Daniel & Rohana Hayton

Optometrists, Founders and Directors, Daniel Hayton Opticians



Mental Health

In this chapter, you will get a far-reaching view of the challenges people are struggling with when it comes to their mental health, as well as how it is affecting their everyday lives and how we can truly make a difference.

INSIDE

Anxiety and depression

Stress and burnout

Suicide and self-harm

Diagnosis and support

Anxiety and depression

With there being very little change in the last year when it comes to major global challenges we have been facing, it's unsurprising to see the mental health landscape has not improved much.

Symptoms of depression have increased by **11%** since last year

Nearly **2 in 3** are experiencing at least mild symptoms of anxiety and depression

In fact, the prevalence of anxiety and depression symptoms remains high, with an 8% increase in symptoms of anxiety, and an 11% increase in symptoms of depression on last year.

This pattern is true for both mild symptoms of anxiety and depression, and clinically-relevant symptoms (i.e. a score of 10 or above on the GAD-7 and PHQ-9).

What are the GAD-7 and PHQ-9?

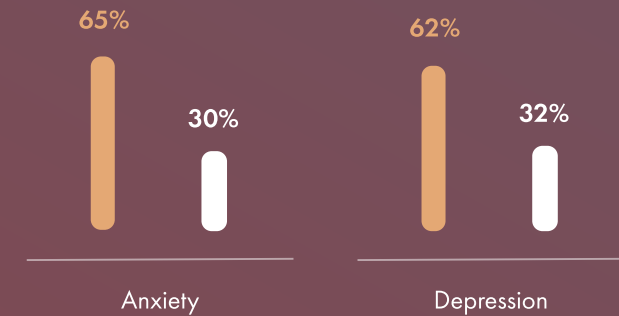
The GAD-7 and PHQ-9 are clinically-validated measures that are widely used to indicate symptoms of anxiety and depression respectively.

i

Employees experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression

As measured by the GAD-7 and PHQ-9. At least mild symptoms defined as scoring ≥ 5 . Clinically-relevant symptoms defined as scoring ≥ 10 .

● At least mild symptoms ● Clinically-relevant symptoms



Despite the prevalence of anxiety and depression symptoms remaining high, these difficulties were less prevalent in those using the Champion platform.

Most notably, there was a 16% decrease in the prevalence of clinically-relevant symptoms of anxiety, and a 23% decrease in the prevalence of clinically-relevant symptoms of depression, in those who have been with Champion for at least one month.

This highlights the importance of early intervention when treating and managing mental wellbeing.

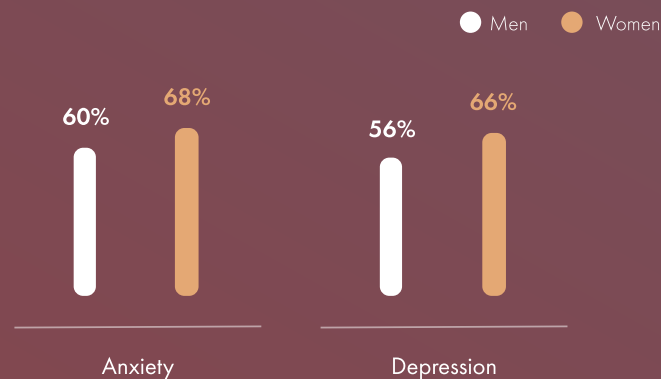
62% of people experiencing clinically-relevant levels of anxiety are women

Women are still more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety and depression than men; a similar pattern to what we reported last year.

31% of those actively seeking support for their mental health are men (up from 25% in 2023)

However, the data also shows a greater proportion of men are seeking support for their mental health (a percentage increase of 24% since last year). This is a great indicator that more men are reaching out for help when they need it.

Symptoms of anxiety and depression in men and women



“Champion Health’s Report shows a 24% increase in the number of men seeking mental health support which is incredibly encouraging. However, we still don’t have a culture where seeking help is seen as a real strength, particularly for men.

As we think about the support available for our workforces, it is always helpful to ask ourselves if men know this support/service is for them, or if it will feel relevant to them. Will they trust and use it? What is the data telling us about who is using it and who isn’t? Is there anything we need to do to promote and encourage wider use by men?

Some organisations have peer-led support networks specifically for different communities, like Nationwide’s peer support programme led by men, for men. This is backed up by thinking through a gendered lens to make messaging across all workplace mental health initiatives relevant and inclusive for all men, which will really help drive change.

So, my question to all of us is how can we build on this progress and what can we do to move the age-old narrative from one that reinforces beliefs that men don’t talk and won’t ask for help, to a narrative which recognises many men want to and do get help? A narrative that reinforces all men deserve help when they need it, and help-seeking behaviours are normalised, encouraged and celebrated.



Simon Blake OBE

Chief Executive, Mental Health First Aid England

Young people and mental wellbeing

As with last year, it seems young people are suffering most across the board when it comes to their mental health. In this age group alone:

74% of 16-24 year olds experience at least mild symptoms of anxiety

40% of 16-24 year olds report clinically-relevant symptoms of anxiety

67% of 25-34 year olds experience at least mild levels of depression

“ What is the link between young people and poor mental health?

The period between adolescence and adulthood involves significant life changes, which can be challenging. Coupled with constant exposure to curated versions of life on social media, high expectations from parents, and fears of unemployment, it begs the question, why is not every individual in this age band suffering with poor mental health? It is imperative that we take appropriate action to ensure individuals in this vulnerable age band feel supported. Employers and pastoral care providers must be proactive to ensure the wellbeing of these individuals is maintained.



Keira Wallis
Head of Clinical Operations, Healix

The graph below brings to life the vast difference in wellbeing between ages groups, with 16-24 year olds fairing the worst - scoring only 21 on the wellbeing scale.



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.

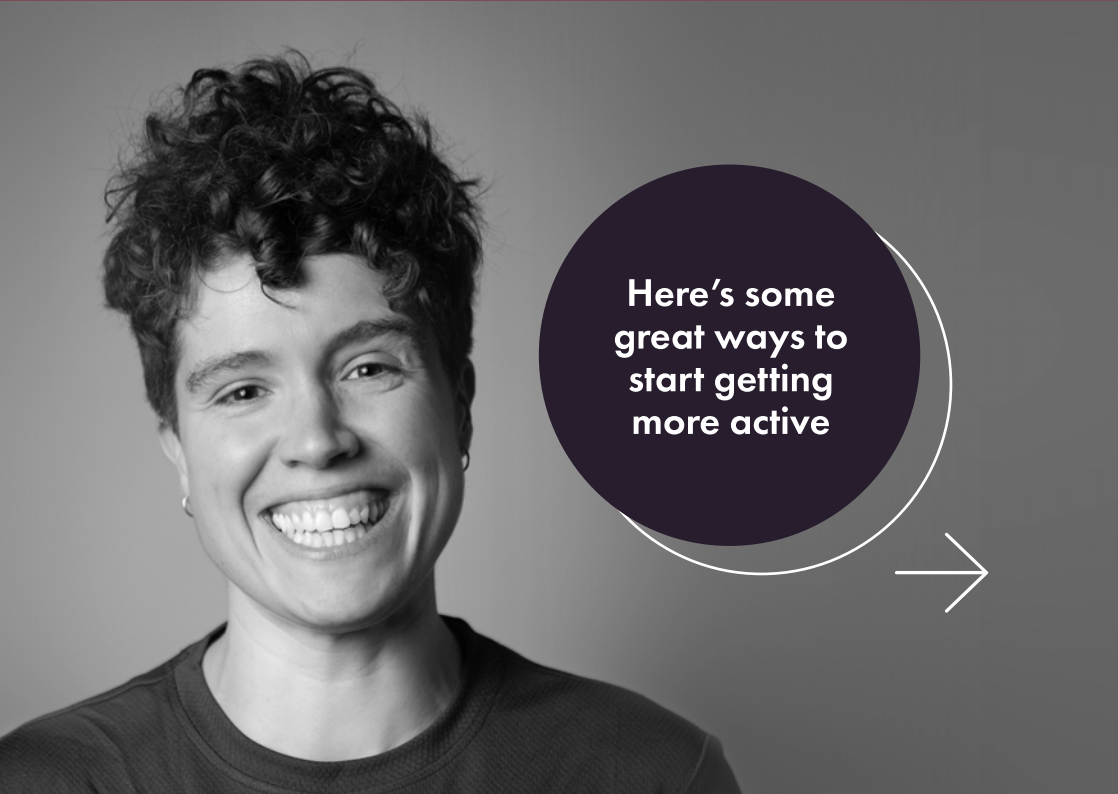


Mental health and activity


Our data has also shown the power of exercise. 70% of people who do less than 150 mins a week exercise experience at least mild symptoms of depression, compared to 56% of people who do over 150 mins a week.

Did you know?

Staying fit and active is a great way to manage mental health issues, but sometimes finding the motivation and getting into a routine can prove challenging.

A black and white portrait of a young person with curly hair, smiling broadly. They are wearing a dark-colored t-shirt. The background is a plain, light color.

**Here's some
great ways to
start getting
more active**

A simple white arrow pointing to the right, positioned below the circular callout box.

When trying to think of easy and fun ways to stay active I always encourage people to pair social time with active time. That way you're more motivated to do it because the reward is the social connection, which in turn is so good for wellbeing. If you struggle to incorporate physical activity or exercise into your day this can be a helpful way to start because you also have other people to keep you accountable. So this could be arranging a walk with colleagues at lunch or friends at the weekend. Better still, joining community groups can really help.

Many of us see being active as another thing on the to-do list. To shift your mindset try to focus on how you feel after a short walk or after being active - whatever that is for you. Set the intention to move for your mind and it'll become easier to do.

One way to make being active fun and easy is to take part in follow-along movement classes in person or online. When there are good tunes on and someone is guiding you through, it can make it so much easier. Try scheduling in just 10-15 minutes into your day to do a follow-along workout and notice how your mood shifts as a result.

Being active doesn't mean you have to go to the gym. Think about what you enjoy doing or what makes you feel good, and reject any messages that you being active needs to look a certain way. Just try to move in a way that feels good for you. Some movement is better than no movement!



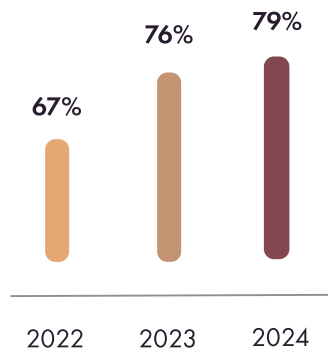
Brinny Roe (they/them)

Mind-Body Coach and Facilitator, Brinny Does Coaching

Stress and burnout

As we know, there's a fine line when it comes to stress; too little and it's difficult to stay motivated, too much and it can quickly snowball into burnout. Our data reveals that overall stress levels are rising year-on-year, with a 14% increase since 2022. This is something we need to address so it doesn't continue to escalate.

Employees experiencing moderate-to-high stress levels



Did you know?

Of those experiencing stress, 16% had self-harmed and 32% said they had experienced suicidal thoughts and feelings. [4]



Experience of stress at work

Responses to the question: Which statement about stress at work do you most agree with?



To explore the nature of employee stress levels at work, we also consider 'healthy' levels of stress – that is, the kind of stress that motivates employees and helps them thrive.

The number of people reporting this type of stress has dropped slightly this year from 54% to 51%, while levels of unhelpful stress at work have increased slightly.

Demographically, women are more likely to report unhelpful stress at work than men (61% compared to 37%) – a gap that has widened since last year.

But once again, it is young people who are struggling more than any other age group. The number of 16 to 24-year-olds experiencing negative stress at work has increased by a staggering 50% since last year.

While there are many reasons for this, including the impact that unprecedented world events can have on a generation that consumes so much media, there are also many things employers can be doing to support.

How to support employees with stress



Engage

- > Approach
- > Ask openly
- > Show concern



Understand

- > Listen non-judgementally
- > Maintain eye-contact
- > Avoid unsolicited advice
- > Facilitate the conversation



Support

- > Reassure you're there
- > Find a way forward
- > Signpost

“

The higher reported stress levels among women compared to men in the workplace can be attributed to several socio-economic factors. Despite advances in recent years, gender inequality persists in some workplace settings, which means women may experience disparity in pay, career progression opportunities and lack of representation in senior leadership roles.

In addition, women may bear greater family and caring responsibilities, leading to a greater mental load. Employers can help support wellbeing in women by addressing these issues through policies and practices that promote gender equality, work-life balance, and a supportive work environment. Initiatives such as flexible work arrangements, family-friendly policies, mentorship programs, and diversity and inclusion efforts can help create more equitable workplaces.



Keira Wallis

Head of Clinical Operations, Healix

61% of people experiencing unhelpful stress in the workplace are women

Prevalence of workplace stress in young people has increased by **50%** since 2023

So, what exactly is making our people stressed?

Workload continues to be the leading cause of workplace stress, with 65% of people citing it as a contributing factor (a percentage decrease of 11% since last year). However, lack of control and lack of support are still major factors and continue to rise.

As well as this, 1 in 4 people are now citing their peers as a cause of stress at work (up from 1 in 5 last year).

This is an important reminder that the culture set out by a business needs to be maintained in every change and every hire, and it must continue to evolve positively as the team grows.

“ Workload is still the biggest cause of workplace stress at 65%

I think for the majority, this will often be the case. Sometimes, it's not actually the workload that is the issue, it is the relationship that we have with our work, the way in which we interact with certain tasks. I often try and take a step back and compare the urgency with the importance of the things I am working on – it enables me to move everything from a perceived 'high importance and urgency' and see what is/isn't a priority.

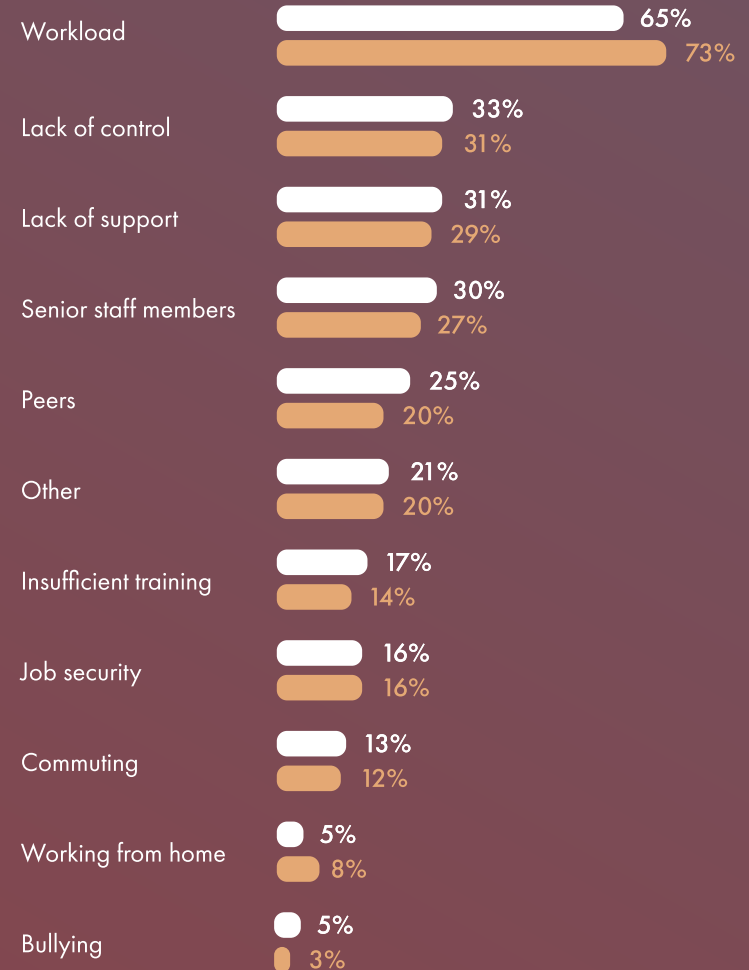


Oliver Henry
Health & Wellbeing Lead, EasyJet

Causes of negative stress at work

● 2024 ● 2023

Multiple options could be selected.

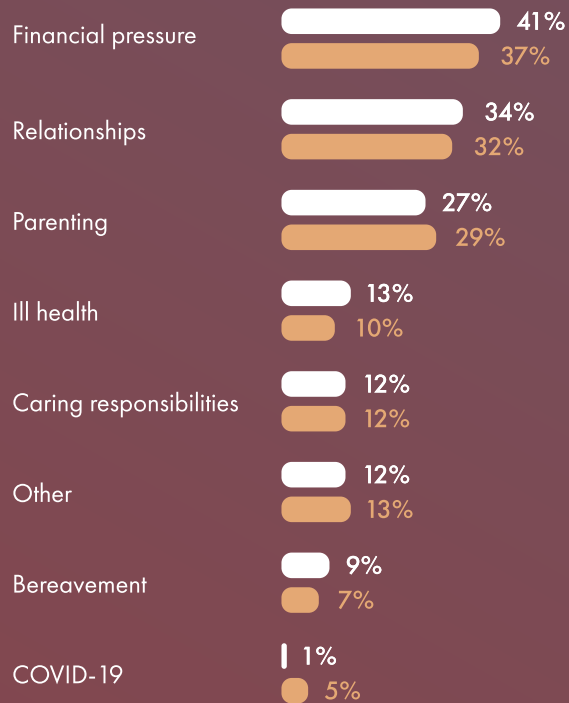


Outside the workplace, the toll that money worries are having on our people is evident, with 41% citing financial pressure as their biggest stress factor (up from 37% last year). In better news, COVID-19 seems to finally be in our rear-view mirror, with just 1% of people reporting it as a current cause of stress.

Causes of stress outside work

● 2024 ● 2023

Multiple options could be selected.



1 in 2 parents cite parenting as a cause of stress outside of work

An area often overlooked is the impact parenting has on people, with 1 in 2 parents citing parenting as a cause of stress. What's more, it's those with children between the ages of 1 and 5 years old that are struggling the most (74%).

How to support parents in the workplace: 'The Parent Network' by E.ON

We have 358 members with an active SteerCo that are continuing to progress our family friendly policies to another level, such as the introduction of Equal Parent Leave. This has seen us go on to be double award winners at the 2023 Working Dads Employer Awards and rank 8th in the UK's Most Inclusive Employers.

Here's a quote from one of our colleagues who has benefitted from our family-friendly and flexible working policies: "I have been on a flexible working arrangement since I joined E.ON due to a change in family circumstances. My team leader was brilliant. I was still new on her team, she listened and showed empathy. My marriage had broken down and my ex left me to look after the children. I needed to collect my children from school and nursery. My team leader set up flexible hours almost instantly and I can't thank her enough!"



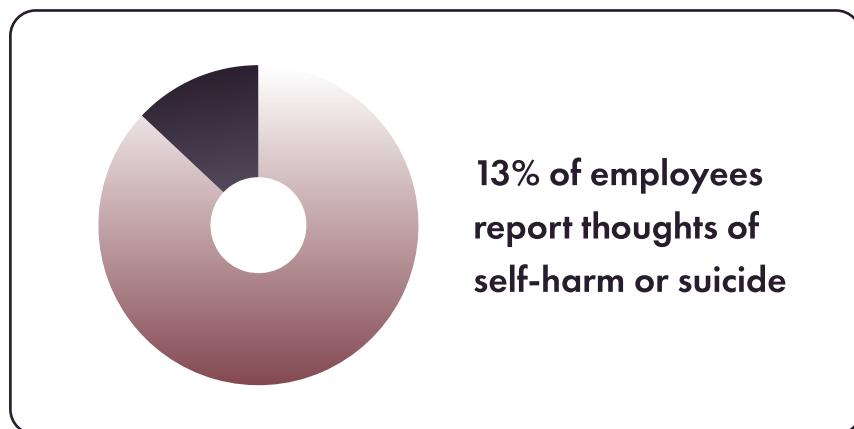
Charlotte Lack

Employee Relations, Health and Policy Manager, E.ON UK

Suicide and self-harm

Every week in the UK alone, 115 people die by suicide [5]. Almost every person we meet will somehow have been touched by suicide – whether they have lost someone they love to it or have made an attempt themselves.

Our data shows that the rate of employees experiencing suicidal ideation or thoughts of self-harm has increased from 9% to 13% - a percentage increase of 44%.



Actionable steps everybody can take to support someone with suicidal thoughts.

DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE



For all 700,000 people who die by suicide each year [6], there are countless others affected by those deaths.

Family and friends of a person who has completed suicide are often at risk of mental health issues or even suicidal ideations themselves. How can we support people through this very singular type of grief?

Supporting someone who's lost a loved one to suicide

- 1 Educate yourself on suicide** – it's important to understand suicide for yourself and the person you are supporting
- 2 Offer them support in whatever way they need** – they may want support in person, over the phone or not to speak at all. Go at their pace and be there for them if and when they need it
- 3 Suggest professional help** – suicide bereavement is usually very complex, so it is helpful to reach out to a professional for support (such as a doctor or a psychologist)
- 4 Provide flexibility** – any loss can turn your life upside down, so let them know that they can work flexibly – time off, shorter hours – whatever might be helpful for them
- 5 Listen and be patient** – it's likely they will need to go over the same feelings and thoughts for a while, so give them the time to do this so they can process their loss

[5] (Mental Health at Work)

[6] (WHO)

As taboo a subject as suicide is, self-harming is sometimes even harder to spot – particularly in the workplace. But with 1 in 14 people actively self-harming [7], it is something we need to know how to support.

Self-harm

Self-harm is the act of hurting oneself in order to cope with painful feelings and thoughts that have become difficult to manage. Self-harming can take various forms, but no matter how high or low risk the resulting injury, it is something we must always take seriously as it can escalate into more critical actions such as suicide (though it is important to remember self-harming doesn't automatically reflect a suicidal state of mind).

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SAMARITANS

☎ 116 123

ⓘ 24/7 helpline

🌐 samaritans.org

shout 85258

☎ Text SHOUT to 85258

ⓘ 24/7 text service

🌐 giveusashout.org

Advice for
supporting
someone who is
self-harming:

Supporting someone who is self-harming

- 1 **Don't pass judgement** – someone who self-harms probably already feels bad about themselves, so withhold judgement and listen to them with an open mind
- 2 **Don't shame them** – this can trigger a cycle of self-harm. Ensure they know they haven't done anything wrong and they are not a bad person because they have self-harmed
- 3 **Be empathetic** – you may not understand why people are driven to self-harm, but show empathy to those who do
- 4 **Create a safe space** – it's likely that they don't feel safe in their own mind, so offer or create an environment where they can feel safe
- 5 **Remember they are not 'attention-seeking'** – try not to reinforce this myth, as many who self-harm keep it hidden
- 6 **Reassure and remain positive** – reassure them that things can and will get better
- 7 **Offer them support** – you can signpost them to resources that can help, keep them company or just give them a shoulder to cry on
- 8 **Look after yourself** – self-harm can be a heavy topic, so it is vital to look after your own mental and emotional wellbeing when supporting others

[7] (Mind)

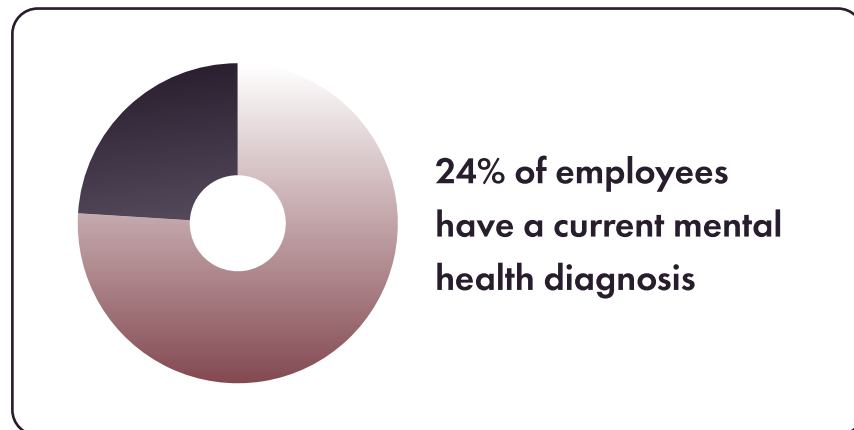
Diagnosis and support

The picture painted by our data suggests mental health is worsening, but this may be understandable in the context of diagnosis rate.

This year, 24% of people reported a mental health diagnosis (predominantly anxiety and depression), compared to 19% in 2022 - a percentage increase of 26%.

Reassuringly, employees do appear to be seeking support for their mental health. The data shows that 1 in 2 employees have accessed mental health support at some point in their lives, and this year, a greater proportion of men are seeking help.

This suggests that the mental health conversation is having a real impact, empowering employees to take their mental health into their own hands and reach out for help when they need it most. As leaders, it's important we keep this conversation going.



1 in 2

employees have accessed mental health support at some point in their lives

31%

of those actively seeking support are men (up from 25% last year)

“

In fostering a resilient workplace, organisations must pave seamless pathways to mental health support, eradicating stigma and offering choice, so that seeking help is as natural as the flow of collaboration.



Charlotte Lack

Employee Relations, Health and Policy Manager, E.ON UK



☎ 0300 123 3393

📍 Infoline

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SAMARITANS

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☎ 0800 58 58 58

📍 Helpline

PAPYRUS
PREVENTION OF YOUNG SUICIDE

☎ 0800 068 4141

📍 Under 35s Helpline

There is something else that has been at the forefront for a lot of organisations lately: neurodiversity. This discussion is mostly centred around how we can, as leaders, better understand neurodiversity and support our neurodiverse colleagues in the workplace.

We sat down with Jodie Hill, the founder of Thrive Law who, as a person with ADHD, is a huge part of and a voice for the neurodivergent community.

Jodie took us through how to open up conversations with neurodiverse team members and the adjustments we can make within the workplace to support them.

Read the full
feature to find
out more



Many neurodivergent individuals are more than likely to be defined as disabled by the Equality Act 2010. When someone meets this definition, it places a legal obligation on employers to make reasonable adjustments for each person based on their unique needs to help alleviate any substantial disadvantage they face as a result in their role. It is worth noting here, especially given the huge waiting list for assessments, that there is no requirement for a medical diagnosis to be defined as disabled, and in turn to put in place reasonable adjustments at work.

First and foremost, it is vital that employers provide the wider team with education, coaching and training to understand the benefits of supporting neurodivergent employees by helping them to understand traits, how those traits may manifest at work and adapting their management style accordingly. This will enable the team to identify 'the signs' associated with the employee's neurodivergence, manage their own expectations, and help to remove the stigma associated with neurodivergent conditions in the workplace.

Employers must avoid placing the burden on the neurodivergent employee to educate everyone else, as this can have a negative impact - they need to make sure the 'burden' is shared. This is why outsourcing the training to an expert is recommended. When thinking about adjustments, employers should be in dialogue with employees. Never assume what someone needs as each neurodivergent condition is different.



Jodie Hill
Founder, Thrive Law



Financial Wellbeing

The financial landscape continues to be a challenge for many people, with no sign of things easing in the not-so-distant future. In this chapter, we will look at how financial wellbeing – and the mounting stress of financial pressures – is impacting people both inside and outside of work.

INSIDE

Financial pressure

Demographics and productivity

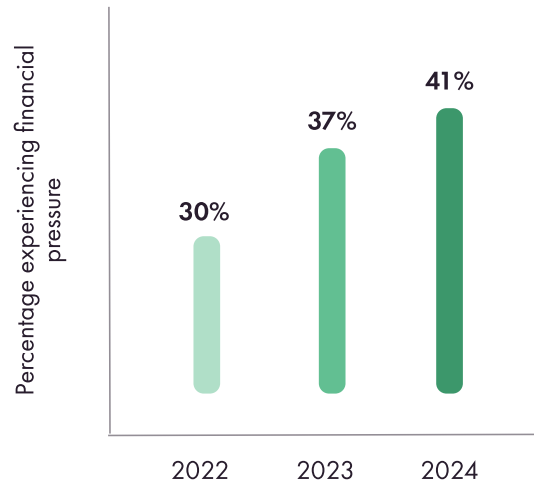
Impact on wellbeing

Financial pressure

With 41% of people now citing financial pressure as the top cause of stress, it's unsurprising that our people continue to struggle with their financial wellbeing.

We continue to live through a cost-of-living crisis that has impacted every aspect of our lives, and as such, money worries remain at the forefront for many.

Employees experiencing financial pressure



Percentage of employees experiencing financial pressure by age group



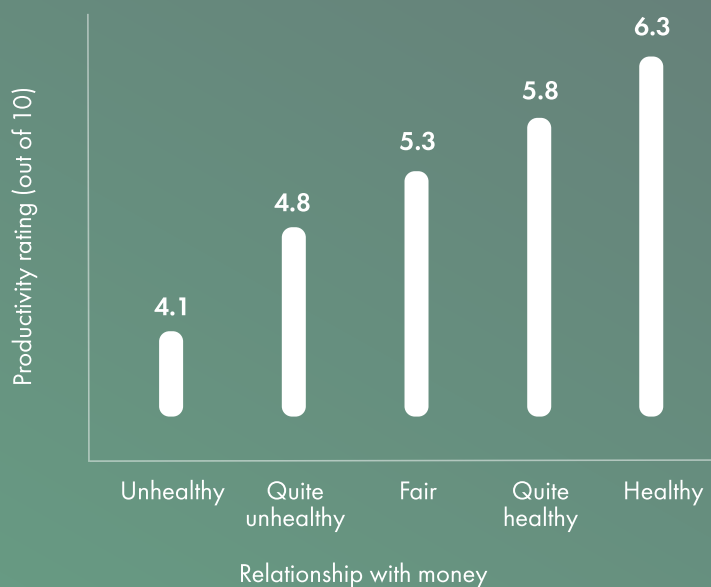
When it comes to demographics, our data indicates that those aged 16 to 34 are citing financial pressure as a cause of stress more often this year.

41% of those experiencing financial pressure are men (up from 36% in 2023)

Among men, there has also been an increase in those reporting money-related stress, jumping from 36% to 41%.

We also can't ignore the impact that financial concerns can have on job performance, with 27% of people reporting that money worries have impacted their ability to do their job.

Relationship with money vs productivity



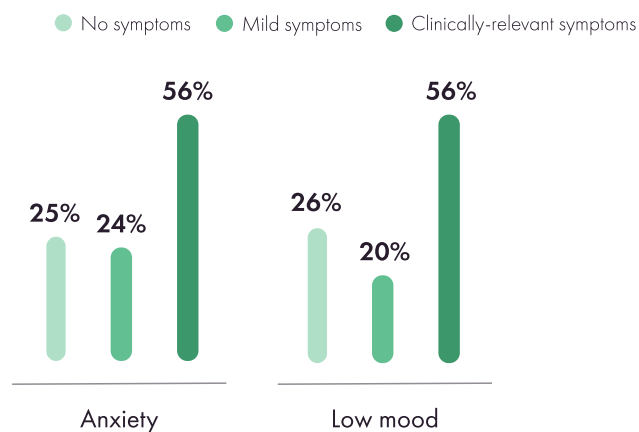
Impact on wellbeing

The relationship between financial and mental wellbeing is a complex one, but one thing is certain – if you're struggling with your mental health, it's likely you're struggling with your finances (and vice versa).

56% of people with clinically-relevant symptoms of anxiety and low mood experience financial stress

Our data shows that you are over 2 times more likely to experience financial stress if you have clinically-relevant symptoms of anxiety and depression (compared to those with no or mild symptoms).

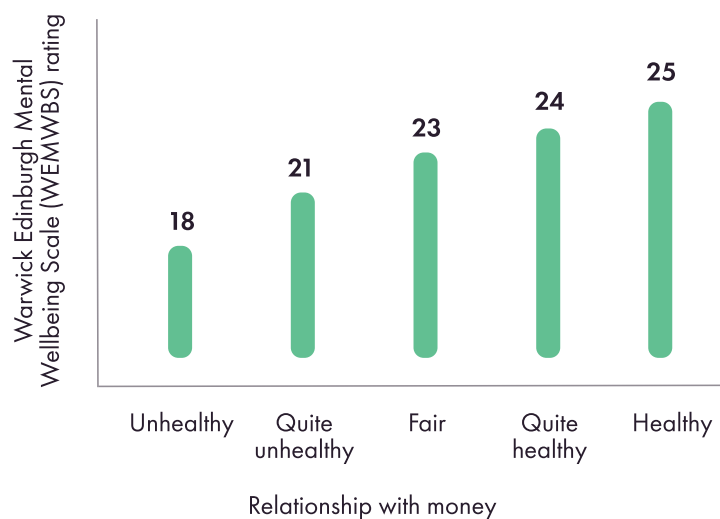
Prevalence of financial pressure in those with symptoms of anxiety and depression



There is also a clear relationship between a person's relationship with money and their wellbeing score.

In fact, those who report an unhealthy relationship with money score an average of 18 on the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, which is suggestive of mild depression.

Relationship with money vs wellbeing score



Did you know?

Almost 40% of people with a mental health problem say their financial situation worsens it. [8]



It's time to #TalkAboutMoney

Like mental health, we need to break the taboo around talking about money. Many of us didn't learn the basics and can feel stress, overwhelm, and shame if we're not on top of our finances. Here's a few things for employers to consider:

- **Sharing Stories – Leadership & Employee Teams**
Encourage leaders and managers to share times when they faced financial challenges, along with successes and best practice. Create a psychologically safe space to #TalkAboutMoney.
- **Employee Network Groups**
Use employee networks and communication to share challenges and discuss solutions relevant to age, stage of life, cultural backgrounds and life events.
- **Internal 1-1's & Reviews**
Incorporate financial wellbeing check-in's on performance reviews and identify potential support and resources for unique employee needs.
- **External Group Training Workshops & 1-1 Sessions**
Consider a programme of workshops and 1-1 support from external training providers covering key life events.
- **Leadership & Management Training**
Upskilling managers, wellbeing leads and mental health first aiders to spot signs, have empathetic conversations and signpost to existing benefits and resources.



Ryan Briggs
Founder, FinWELL

A group of people are building a large, triangular structure made of sticks and balloons. The structure is a human pyramid, with people standing on the shoulders of others. The structure is made of sticks and balloons, and it is illuminated by a warm, golden light. The background is dark, and the overall atmosphere is one of teamwork and achievement.

Productivity and Culture

Everything that you have read so far has a ripple effect throughout the lives of our people. This chapter gives you an insight into the experiences of our teams across the board and how they feel about the environment they are working in.

INSIDE

Productivity

Energy and performance

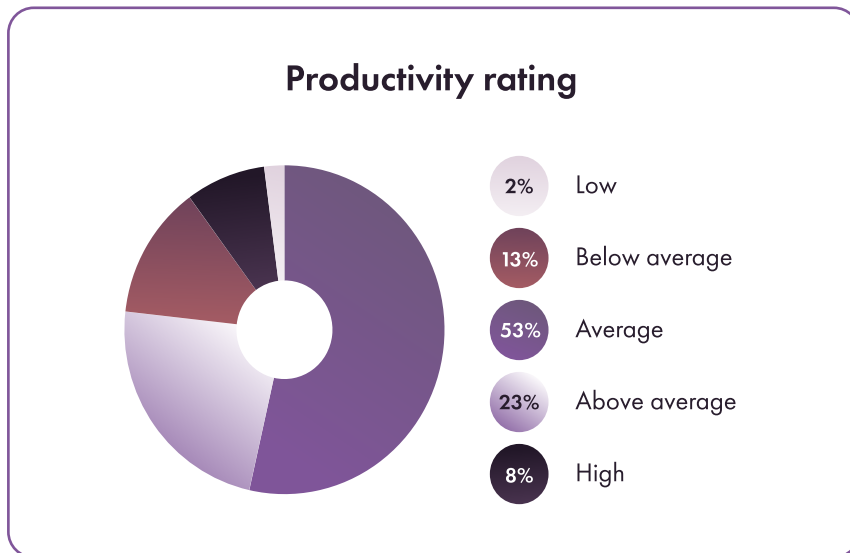
Sleep

Culture

Productivity

It goes without saying that employee productivity is crucial to any organisation. As our people are our business, their productivity levels can determine how successful your business is.

This year, our data has shown a dip in self-reported productivity levels, with nearly 70% of people rating their productivity as 'average' or worse (up from 50% last year). What's more, the number of people rating their productivity as 'low' has doubled.



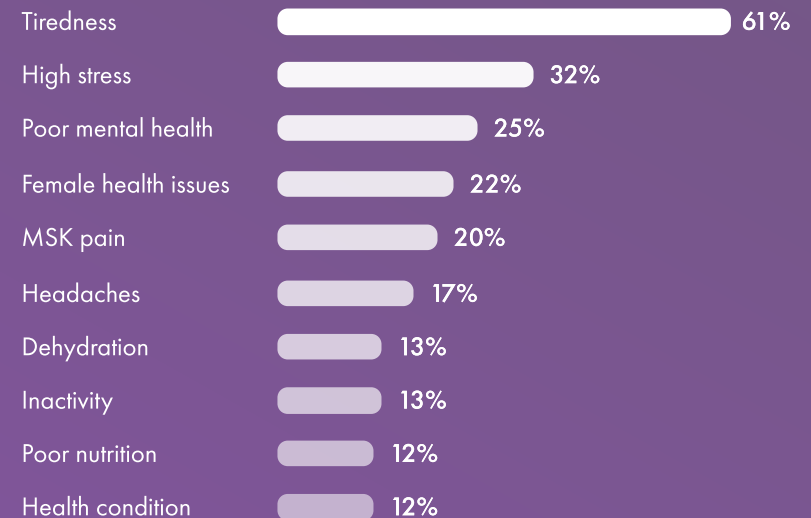
So, with just over 30% of people rating their productivity as 'above average' or 'high', what exactly is causing this dip in productivity?

The top three issues impacting productivity have remained the same as last year, with tiredness being the most cited challenge at 61% (followed by high stress at 32% and poor mental health at 25%).

Whilst the number of people citing tiredness and high stress has remained stable, there has been an uptick in the proportion of people citing poor mental health as a productivity drain (a percentage increase of 20%). This further highlights the business case for timely and effective mental health support in the workplace, helping employees thrive and perform at their best.

Health issues impacting productivity

Multiple options could be selected.



22% of women say female health issues can negatively impact productivity

32% of women in the menopause say it negatively impacts their productivity

Another notable difference this year is the prevalence of female health issues impacting productivity, with 22% of women reporting it has affected their work negatively. In fact, it has overtaken previously prominent issues such as MSK pain, and headaches/migraines.

Discover ways to reduce the impact of poor mental health on productivity

“

Productivity and mental health

When you consider common symptoms of poor mental health, the impact we see on productivity is not surprising. Factors such as poor concentration, low motivation and increased fatigue can lead to difficulty focusing on tasks, making decisions and meeting deadlines.

Mental health conditions can affect the way you think about things, placing strain on working relationships and communication, even impacting the way feedback is interpreted. This can lead to feelings of overwhelm, and issues coping with once-manageable workloads.

There are things that employers can do to support individuals to navigate their challenges and work to their strengths:

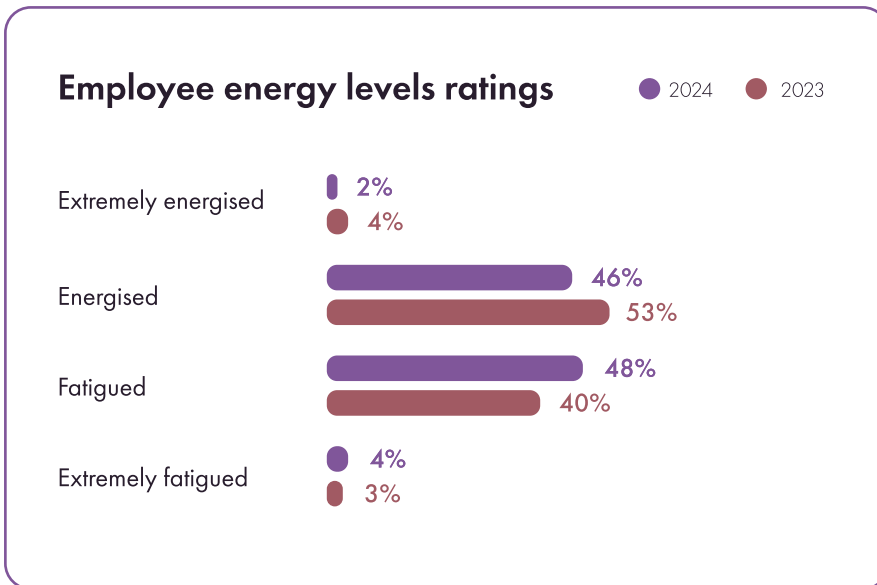
- 1. Keep communication channels open** - An open dialogue will help employees feel listened to and supported, and allows for early identification of issues and collaborative problem-solving.
- 2. Flexible work arrangements** - Identify a structure that works with their symptoms rather than against them, such as flexible hours, remote working or compressed work weeks.
- 3. Create awareness through education** - Informed managers will be better able to spot the impact of poor mental health on work performance, leading to lower employee stress levels.



Laura Dallas
Head of Product, Champion Health

Energy and performance

When it comes to the productivity of our people, energy levels can make or break their performance. Typically, the more energised you feel, the greater your motivation, and the better the output.



Compared to last year, we have seen a slight dip in energy levels, with fewer people feeling 'energised' and more feeling 'fatigued'.



Employers can play a part in helping employees feel more energised. Ways they can do this include:

1. Leaders setting and modelling boundaries at work
2. Normalising taking a proper lunch break
3. Encouraging movement and fresh air breaks during the day – short and frequent is best
4. Reducing the 'always on' culture and not messaging people outside of work hours
5. Raising awareness around how taking regular breaks actually increases both energy and productivity. Encouraging use of the Pomodoro technique, for example
6. Allowing employees the freedom to schedule, where possible, their own time to take advantage of their most energetic and focused and least energetic times
7. Educate employees around being savvy with scheduling - putting focused work at peak energy times and easier admin when energy levels are likely to dip



Alice Bagley-Harrison
Content Production Lead, Champion Health



Tuning in: Why women should work with their cycles to enhance performance

I've worked with many organisations to create physical and mental health strategies, and an increasingly important pillar of any inclusive wellbeing strategy is female health. But this is something businesses have difficulty mastering due to lack of knowledge.

We can draw inspiration from the England Lionesses who partnered with Jessica Ennis-Hill DME OLY and her app 'Jennis Cyclemapping', to plan training around their cycles and enhance their performance on the field. They worked with their cycles, not against them.

And while we are talking about a group of women with a highly physical occupation, we can apply the same logic across all professions. Instead of seeing female health and cyclical issues as a hindrance, we should embrace it as a means to accelerate performance. Here's how:



Education and awareness:

Becoming better acquainted with menstrual cycles can help women understand how their bodies act at different times of the month. There are great tools for tracking cycles, and this is the perfect way for women to get familiar with the stages of their cycle.



Adapting lifestyles to cycles:

By understanding their cycles, women can then create a schedule and routine around them. This can transform the way women exercise, eat, sleep, and even feel about their health. It can also help ease menstrual symptoms and improve body image.



The experience of women at work:

Organisations should not rush to create policies. Speak to your women. Allow for open, honest discussions. Create focus groups people have the option to join. We need to understand the real experience of being a woman in the workplace to truly change the culture.

Across the board with female health, knowledge really is power, and this knowledge leads directly to empowerment.



Amy McKeown

Strategist and Consultant

Mental Health, Wellbeing and Women's Health

Did you know?

Less than 1 in 5 women feel they have enough information on menstrual wellbeing (17%). [9]



[9] (Gov.uk)

Sleep

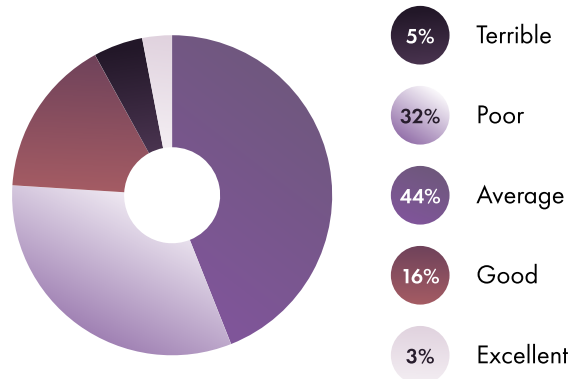
Sleep is fundamental when it comes to energy levels and performance at work. Without sufficient sleep, it can have a knock-on effect on almost every aspect of our lives, impacting concentration, motivation, and overall wellbeing.

And this year, our people are struggling with their sleep more than ever. Only 19% of people rated their sleep quality as 'good' or 'excellent' – down from 29% in the previous year.

71% of employees rate their sleep as 'average' or worse

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

Sleep quality rating



“

Because of how many of us live our lives, we are experiencing more stress, more busyness, and a sense that we're always 'on'.

Our daily screen-time plays into this, coupled with spending less time outside, not moving as much and too little rest and relaxation.

Although sleep may appear to be an 'outside of work' issue, there are ways you can help your employees with this:

- 1. Environment** – Create opportunities for your employees to see natural light during the day, to help regulate their body clocks. This could include taking outdoor breaks when the light is brightest and setting up desks near windows.
- 2. Movement breaks** – Encourage movement breaks from 30-second desk stretches to lunchtime walks. You could even socialise this by organising a group workout.
- 3. Address root cause** – Encouraging good habits and lifestyle choices with resources and support - such as handling stress, improving mental health, and what and when to eat - will help improve overall wellbeing.



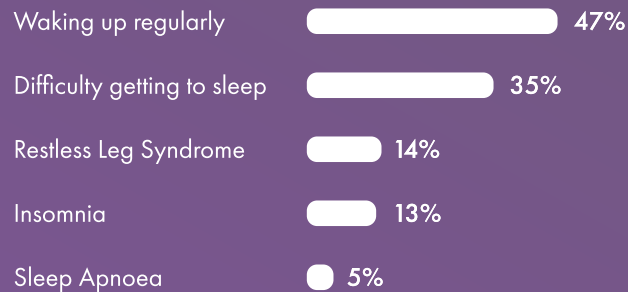
Alice Bagley-Harrison

Content Production Lead, Champion Health

To get a better understanding of what difficulties our people are facing when it comes to getting good quality sleep, we asked them to break down their sleep experience.

Causes of sleep difficulties

Multiple options could be selected.



This data reveals that nearly 1 in 2 people report waking up regularly at night, and just over 1 in 3 have difficulty getting to sleep.

Here are some top tips for getting a good night's sleep

How to get to sleep and stay asleep



1. Breathing can impact how well you sleep - 2 minutes of breathing before bed can slow down heart rate, reduce blood pressure and calm racing thoughts. Breathe through your nose, in for 3 and out for 6.
2. The hours before bed are important too. Set your alarm to **get up** at the same time each day, get natural daylight, avoid caffeine after 12pm, don't eat for 3 hours before bed, dim lights in the evening, reduce screen-time before bed, and have a wind-down routine.

Tips for night-time waking:

1. Ensure your room is cool (around 18 degrees), quiet (wear earplugs if necessary) and dark.
2. If you're not asleep again after 15-30 minutes, try reading or listening to a Body Relaxation Meditation. This can help stop you ruminating or focusing on worries.
3. Avoid clock-watching, as this increases anxiety and makes it harder to fall back to sleep.



Alice Bagley-Harrison

Content Production Lead, Champion Health

Culture

As business leaders, we can't underestimate the influence that workplace culture has – at every level of an organisation.

A bad culture can completely transform a company and is the quickest way to lose real talent. So, it's positive to see that the majority of employees continue to feel supported and part of a team.

It's important to remember, however, that ensuring employees feel supported is not just for the benefit of the culture, but is also intrinsically linked to their mental wellbeing and productivity.

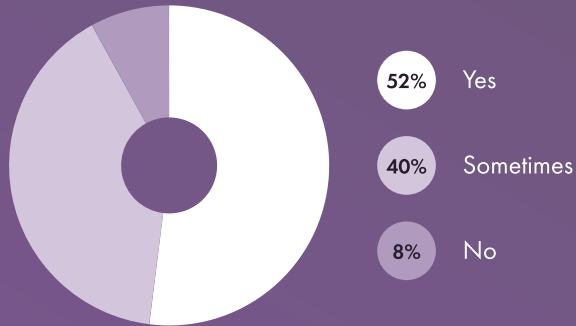


Similarly to last year, those who answer 'no' to feeling supported at work tend to experience lower levels of wellbeing (as measured by the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale), as well as rating their productivity levels much lower. The same pattern is seen for those who don't feel part of a team.

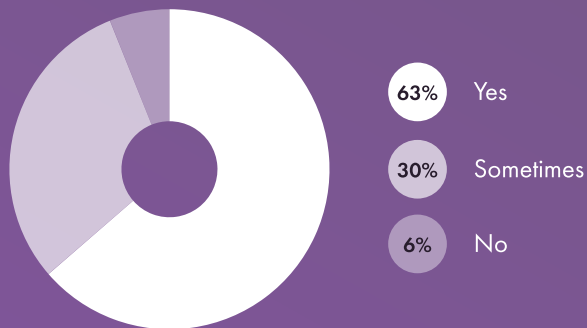
These results highlight the importance of employers taking proactive action to create supportive workplaces - not only to improve culture but to maximise performance and help employees thrive.



Do you feel supported at work?



Do you feel part of a team?



A bad culture manifests itself in many ways, and our data shows how this can play out across our workforces:

Office and hybrid employees are more likely to work an extra hour a week



This can be a ripple effect of being 'always-on'. Especially when people are working in the space they live in. Employers must be clear that working long hours should not be normalised and there is support available if workloads are becoming unsustainable.

Our data also shows more men are reporting financial pressure than women, so this could be part of why men are working longer hours. Organisations need to demystify the notion that men should work more by creating a culture where men can talk about their experiences, encouraging a healthy work-life balance for all.

Men are more likely to work, on average, an extra 2 hours a week than women



Employers need to make sure communications are transparent, productive, and compassionate. Conflict should always be addressed. Encourage regular breaks and time off. Book weekly check-ins to keep an eye on workloads. And lead with empathy. Feeling understood can go a long way in reducing stress.

Those experiencing unhelpful levels of stress take an extra 8 sick days a year on average





Goals and Obstacles

We've spoken a lot about employee health this year, and the profound effect that living through challenging times has had on us. But we have also seen an opportunity for change. In this final chapter, we will look at what our people are motivated to do and change when it comes to their wellbeing, as well as the obstacles they may need to overcome to achieve these goals.

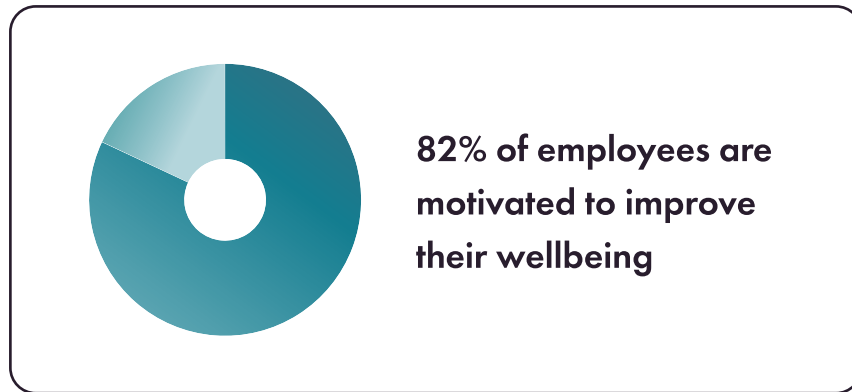
INSIDE

Goals and motivation

Barriers to change

Goals and motivation

Last year, a staggering 98% of people were looking to improve their wellbeing. This year, this figure has dropped to 82%.



This dip in motivation may not be surprising given the challenges faced by our workforce. When things feel tough, it's difficult to keep motivation high, and meaningful change is harder to achieve.

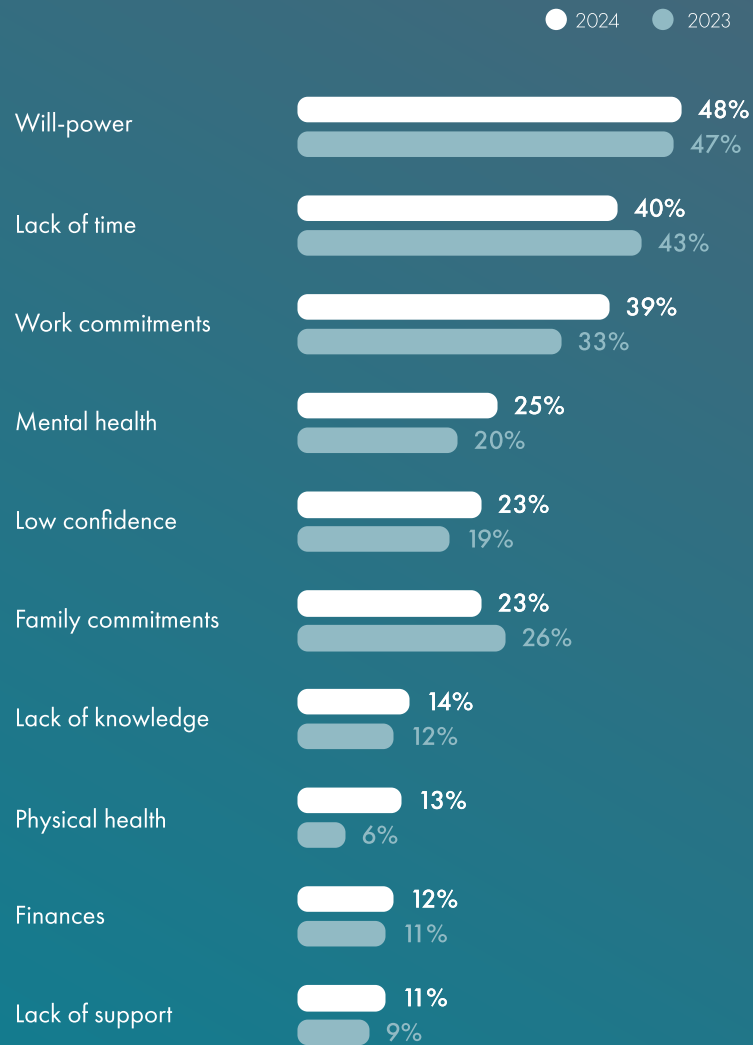
This does, however, provide an opportunity for employers to consider whether existing wellbeing initiatives align with evolving employee needs, given the changing context we're living in.

Reassuringly, for those who do want to make positive changes to their health, the areas of focus align closely with the data shared in this report. Boosting energy levels remains a top priority, whilst sleeping better, reducing stress and improving mental health also come high on the list.

Top 10 health areas employees would like to focus on



Top 10 barriers to making health changes



Barriers to change

So what might stop our people from achieving their goals – even when they are motivated to do so? It seems that the internal drive to make positive changes, in the form of willpower, continues to be the biggest barrier for employees (cited by 48% of people).

Nearly **1 in 3** cite a lack of willpower as a barrier to change

This is closely followed by a lack of time (40%) and work commitments (39%) – reasons that are consistent with last year.

Notably, our data also shows that for those aged 16 to 24, poor mental health and a lack of confidence are cited more frequently as barriers to reaching their goals.

Given their poorer wellbeing results overall, a different approach may be needed to support this demographic in the workplace.

Did you know?

People who very vividly describe or picture their goals are anywhere from 1.2 to 1.4 times more likely to successfully accomplish their goals. [10]



[10] (Forbes)

Our top tips for reaching goals and overcoming obstacles

Boosting energy levels

Learn to breathe properly to get more oxygen to your cells, muscles, and brain. This means gentle, slow breathing. Low into the lungs, not shallow chest breathing. Make going for a walk a non-negotiable part of your day.

Sleeping better

Set your alarm for the same time each day and stick to it. You'll find your bedtime gets earlier and more consistent, leading to better quality sleep. Ensure you get a bit of daylight outside, this helps reset your circadian rhythm, so you want to sleep when it's dark. You can also listen to things like relaxing music, yoga nidra, or sleep stories before you go to bed.

Losing weight

Start each meal with eating your vegetables first. This simple trick reduces blood sugar spikes and helps with weight management.

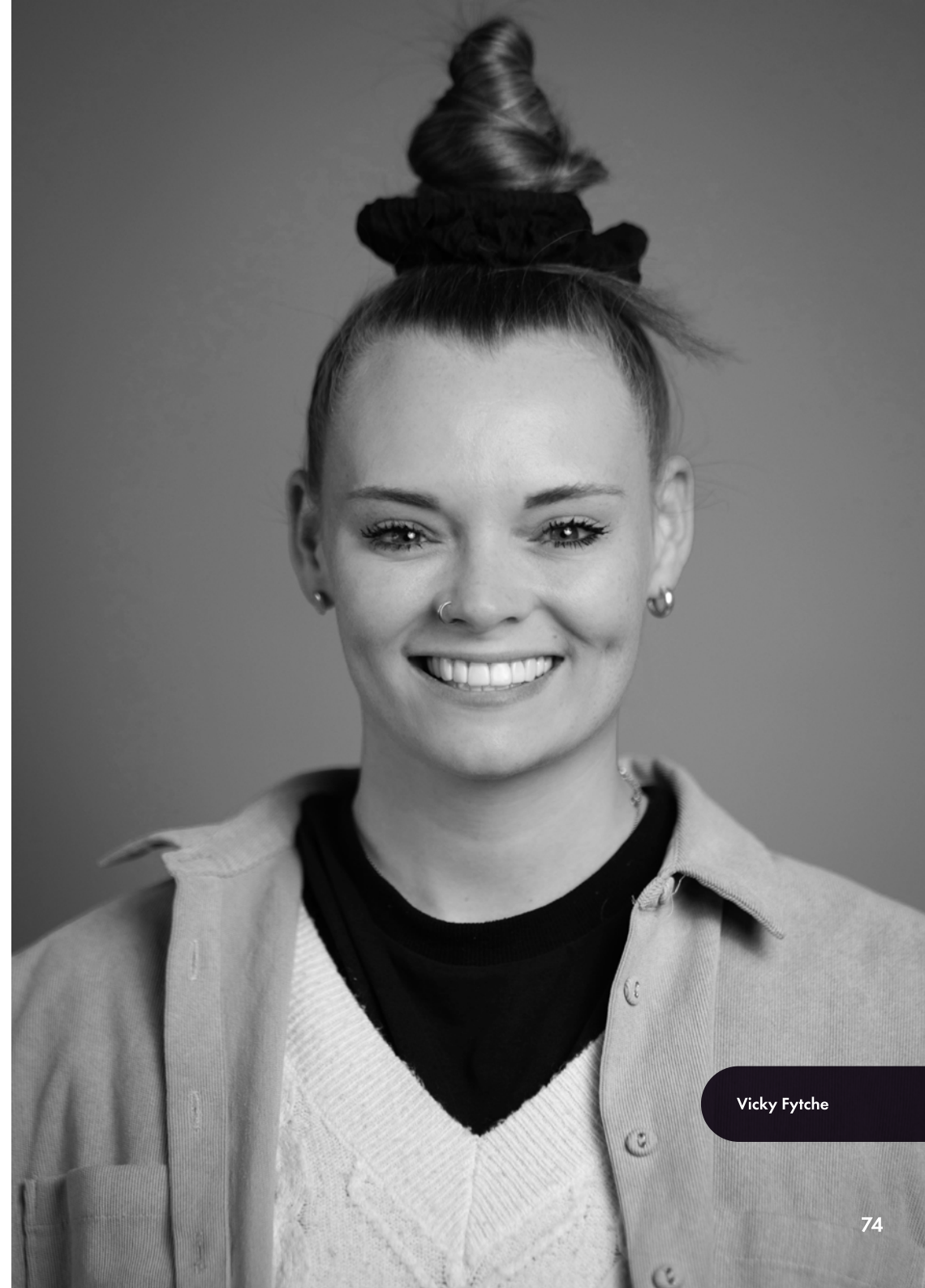
Willpower

Don't rely on willpower – it's not sustainable. Remove as many barriers as possible and make it as easy as you can to achieve your goal. You can also 'habit stack' which is stacking an established, healthy habit with a new one.



Vicky Fytche

Wellbeing Lead, Champion Health



Vicky Fytche



The next chapter: Fostering intrinsic motivation

As leaders, we need to facilitate an environment where our people feel motivated to make positive changes. Without this motivation, achieving sustained and meaningful improvements can be an uphill struggle.

Offering external rewards can play some part in fostering initial motivation. *Sign up for a chance to win a £50 gift card or join our workouts to receive a branded water bottle* might be some of the externally-based rewards you have heard of (or even used).

But these are often a flash in the pan. You might see high engagement at first, but once the external reward disappears, there's not much to keep you going.

For continued motivation, we need to offer initiatives that are personally rewarding to employees – that mean something to them. When we do this, the drive to change comes from within, rather than relying solely on external rewards, leading to more meaningful and sustained improvements.

So how can you develop initiatives that are personally rewarding? What one person finds rewarding will be different from the next, but there are common elements that can help to strengthen this internal drive. These include:

- Having choice and control over the type of initiative engaged with

- Feeling positively challenged to achieve a meaningful goal
- Tracking achievements and measuring personal growth
- Introducing healthy competition in a social setting

Finding the balance between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is something we have considered tirelessly within our own platform. In our new release of the Champion Health platform, due in 2024, we have developed a number of features that embed the elements above – to foster motivation, drive engagement, and improve health.

In the latest features, you can set, work on, and monitor progress towards health goals, track improvements in wellbeing using daily trackers, enhance wellbeing knowledge at your own pace through bespoke programmes, and foster healthy competition among colleagues with team challenges.

This new era of engagement will help our people understand their objectives and realise their full potential. It will allow them to monitor their growth, see the impact of their hard work in real-time, and give them the tools they need to thrive and be happy.

We can't wait to share it with you!



Laura Dallas

Head of Product, Champion Health

Want to know more? Scan the QR code to find out about the new 'Engagement Era' for the Champion Health platform in 2024





AFTERWORD

Harry Bliss

That was a lot to take in, wasn't it? Now that you have made it through our annual Workplace Health Report, we want you to take a step back and some time for yourself to decompress. It's important to take care of your mind, too. Working with people can be incredibly fulfilling, but it can also be mentally and emotionally taxing. And when it comes to taking care of the wellbeing of our people, the stakes are often quite high. But you are here – we are all here – because we care about the humans around us and want to make the workplace a better space for them. That's the endgame, right?

My hope is that, despite having to consume some confronting truths, the data derived from this report will be the ultimate weapon in your arsenal this year. That the insights yielded not only tell a story of the true state of employee wellbeing, but also provide answers in where to go and what to do next.

Employee wellbeing is evolving. Rapidly. And it's on all of us to keep up. To ensure we are doing everything we can to keep our people healthy, safe, and motivated. Because if we do, we are looking at so much more than just a few happy team members, we are looking at an entire ecosystem that functions to its fullest, that thrives and creates and innovates. As my friend and colleague, Nick said in his introduction, what we want to create this year is hope. Along with the drive I know we all have, through this report I believe we now have the means to do this for our people.



Harry Bliss

Co-founder and CEO, Champion Health



The Workplace Health Report

2024

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