THE STATE OF WORK-LIFE WELLNESS 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

wellhub

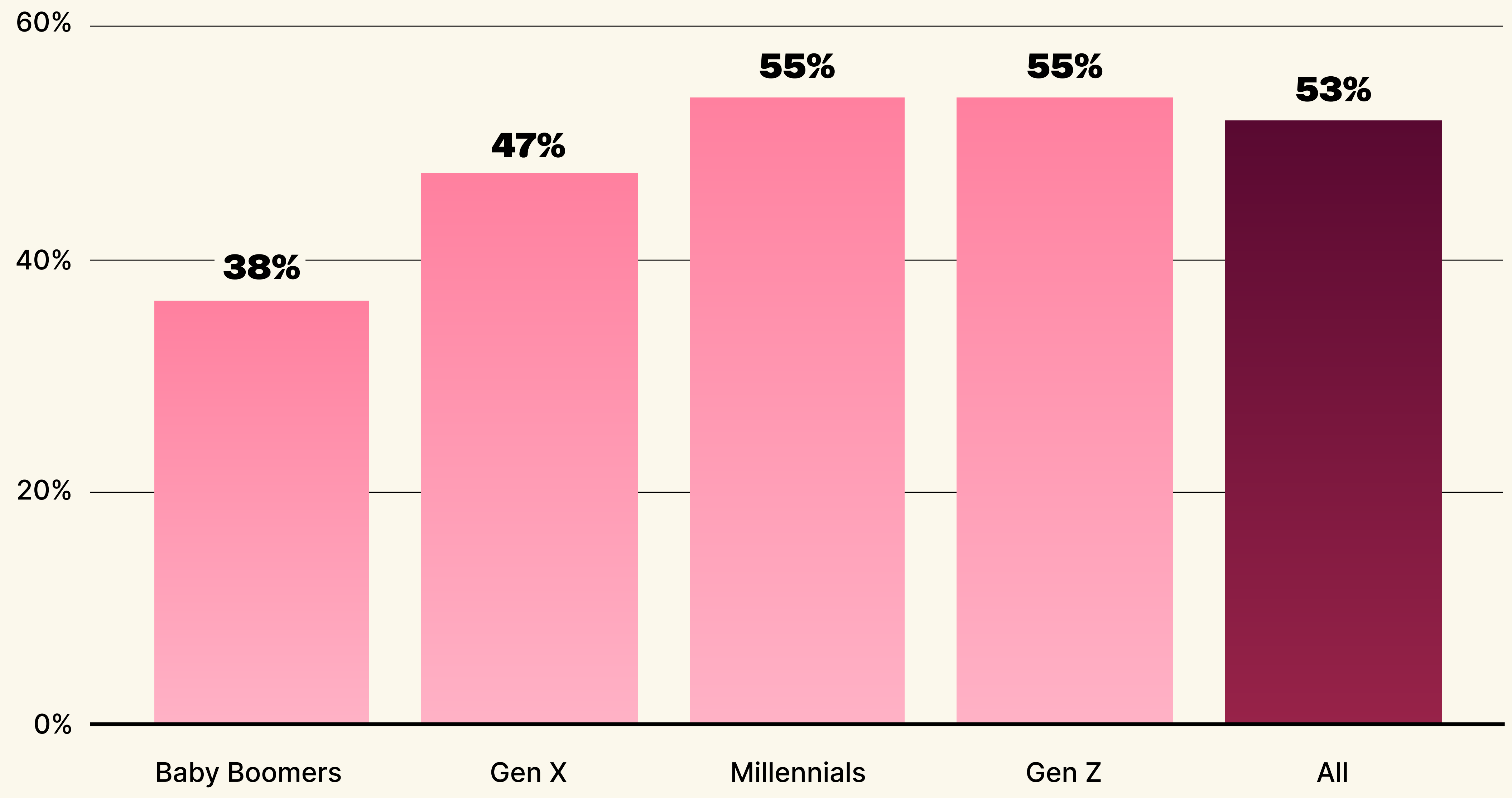
The State of Work-Life Wellness 2026 report reveals a decisive lifestyle shift: employees are moving away from a work-hard, play-hard mentality and building their lives around wellbeing. Stress, burnout, and rigid return-to-office mandates are fueling this change, while gyms, wellness studios, and outdoor spaces have emerged as the new “third places” where people recharge, connect, and sustain healthy routines. What was once an afterthought in benefit packages is now a baseline expectation shaping how employees live, work, and evaluate their employers.

Across the globe, the message is clear: **wellness is no longer a perk, it is a daily priority.** Workers increasingly expect employers to enable holistic health across the five pillars of wellness: fitness, mindfulness, therapy, nutrition, and sleep. HR leaders who align their programmes with this shift will gain a competitive advantage in hiring, productivity, engagement, and retention. This expectation is not isolated to one region or age group; it represents a global, cultural transformation that is reshaping the fabric of modern work.

THE PRESSURES DRIVING A WELLNESS-FIRST MINDSET

Employees are experiencing unprecedented levels of stress and burnout, particularly younger generations. More than half of Gen Z (55%) and Millennials (55%) report their stress has increased year over year, compared to 47% of Gen X and 38% of Baby Boomers.

% OF EMPLOYEES WHO INDICATED THEIR STRESS INCREASED OVER THE PAST YEAR



Overall, 90% of employees say they experienced burnout symptoms in the past year, with nearly 4 in 10 (39%) experiencing them at least weekly. These pressures are not temporary spikes; they are sustained strains that threaten both individual wellbeing and organisational performance.

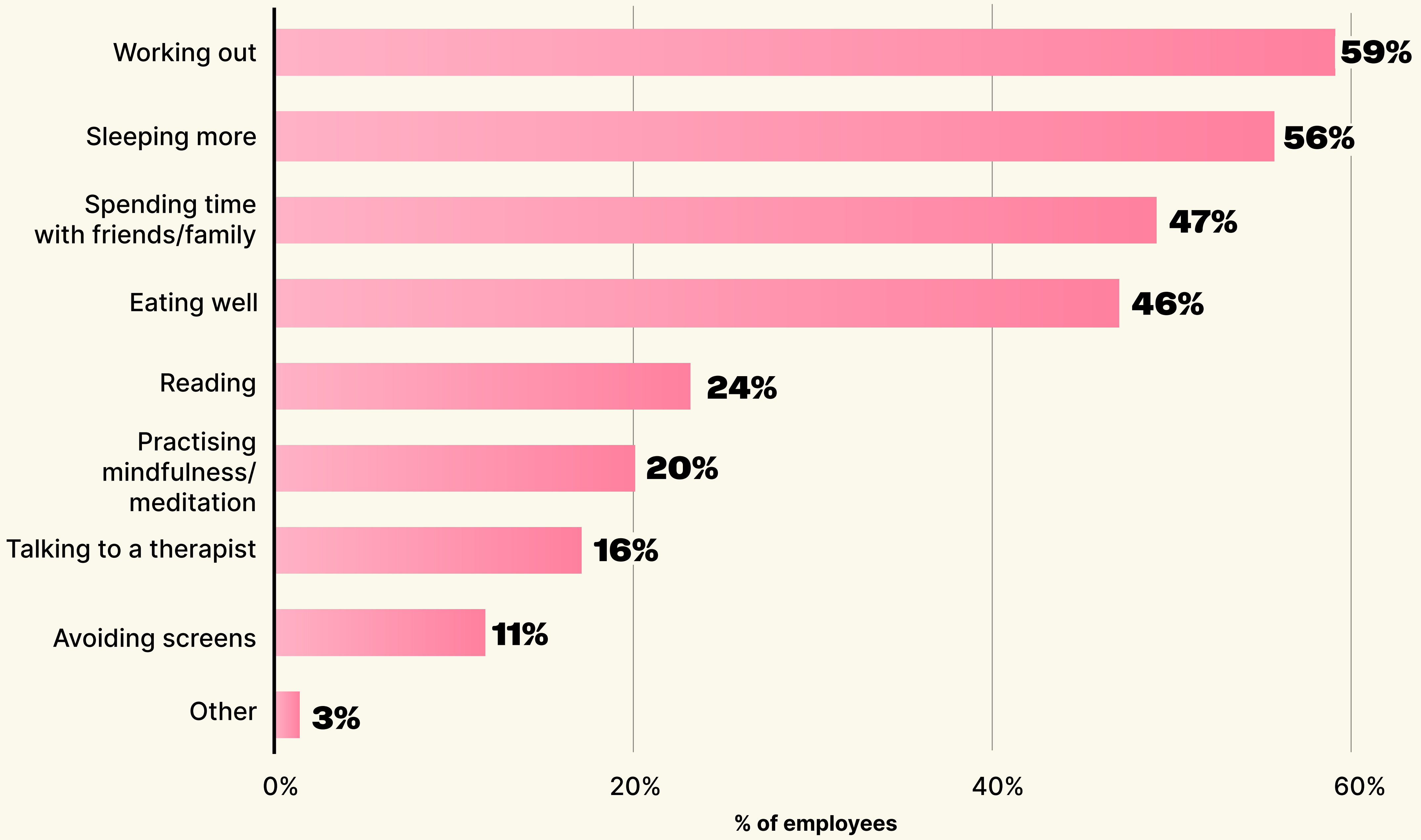
But employees are not simply absorbing these pressures; they are recalibrating their lives in response. Ninety-five percent agree that physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects of wellbeing are interconnected, with 46% strongly agreeing.

Sixty-four percent say they are more focused on wellness today than five years ago. The coping mechanisms they choose are holistic and intentional: working out (59%), sleeping more (56%), spending time with family and friends (47%), and eating well (46%). These habits reflect a recognition that wellness is no longer something to squeeze into the margins of life but something that must be woven into daily routines.

95%

95% of employees agree that improving one area of **wellbeing** supports the others

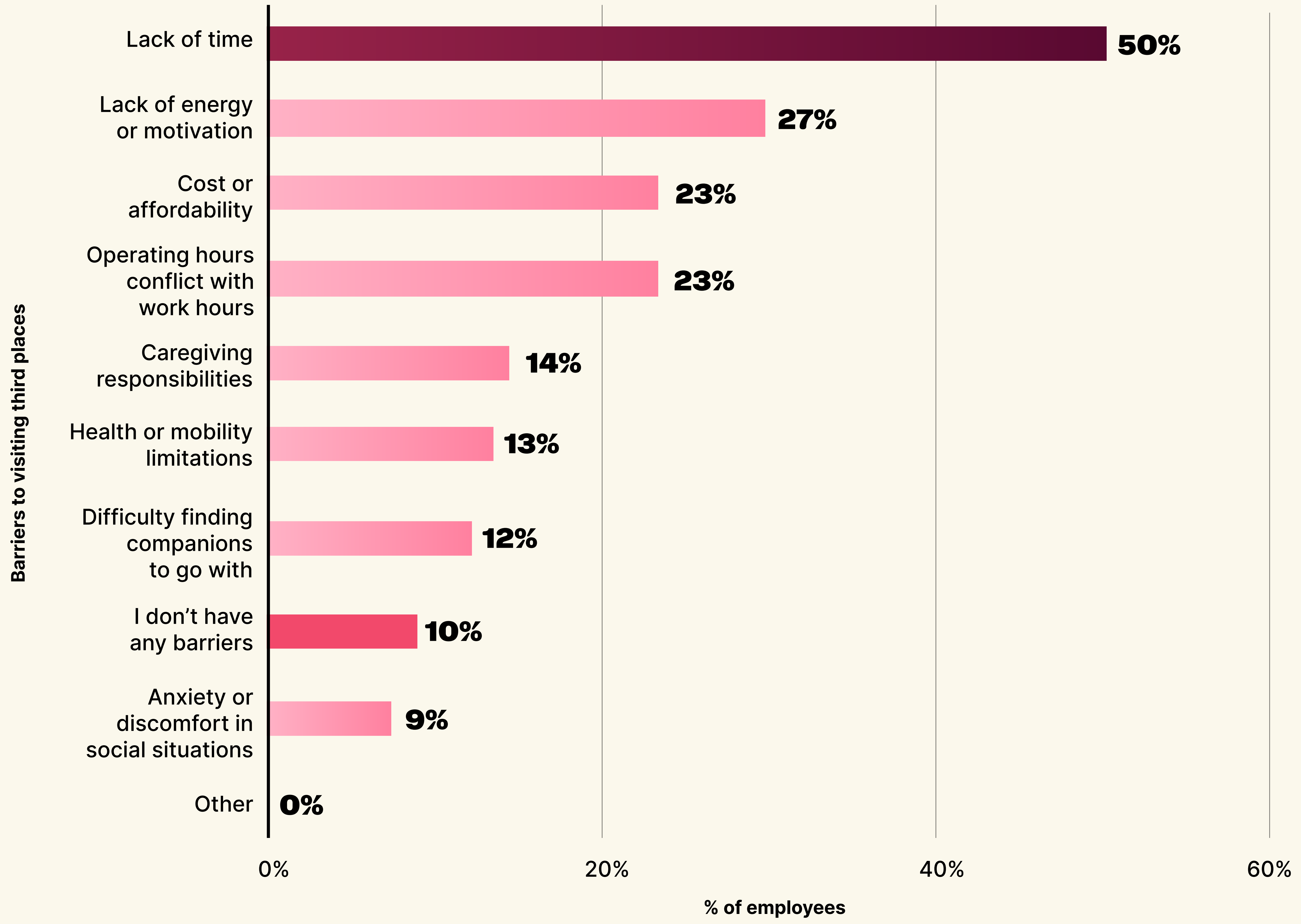
STRESS COPING MECHANISMS



The rise of wellness-focused "third places" brings this shift into sharper focus. Ninety-one percent of employees say that spending time in gyms, yoga studios, or recreational spaces improves their ability to manage work-related stress.

These spaces are not luxuries but essentials that employees are weaving into the rhythm of their lives. Three-quarters (74%) visit them at least weekly, and 21% go daily. They provide a sense of belonging and accountability, with 62% saying community support is critical for sustaining healthy habits. Eighty-three percent would be more likely to join a wellness initiative if it included a group or community component.

Yet barriers remain: half of employees cite lack of time, while 27% point to lack of motivation and 23% to cost. These gaps are driving higher expectations for employers, with nearly half (47%) of employees saying they now expect more wellness support at work compared to a year ago.

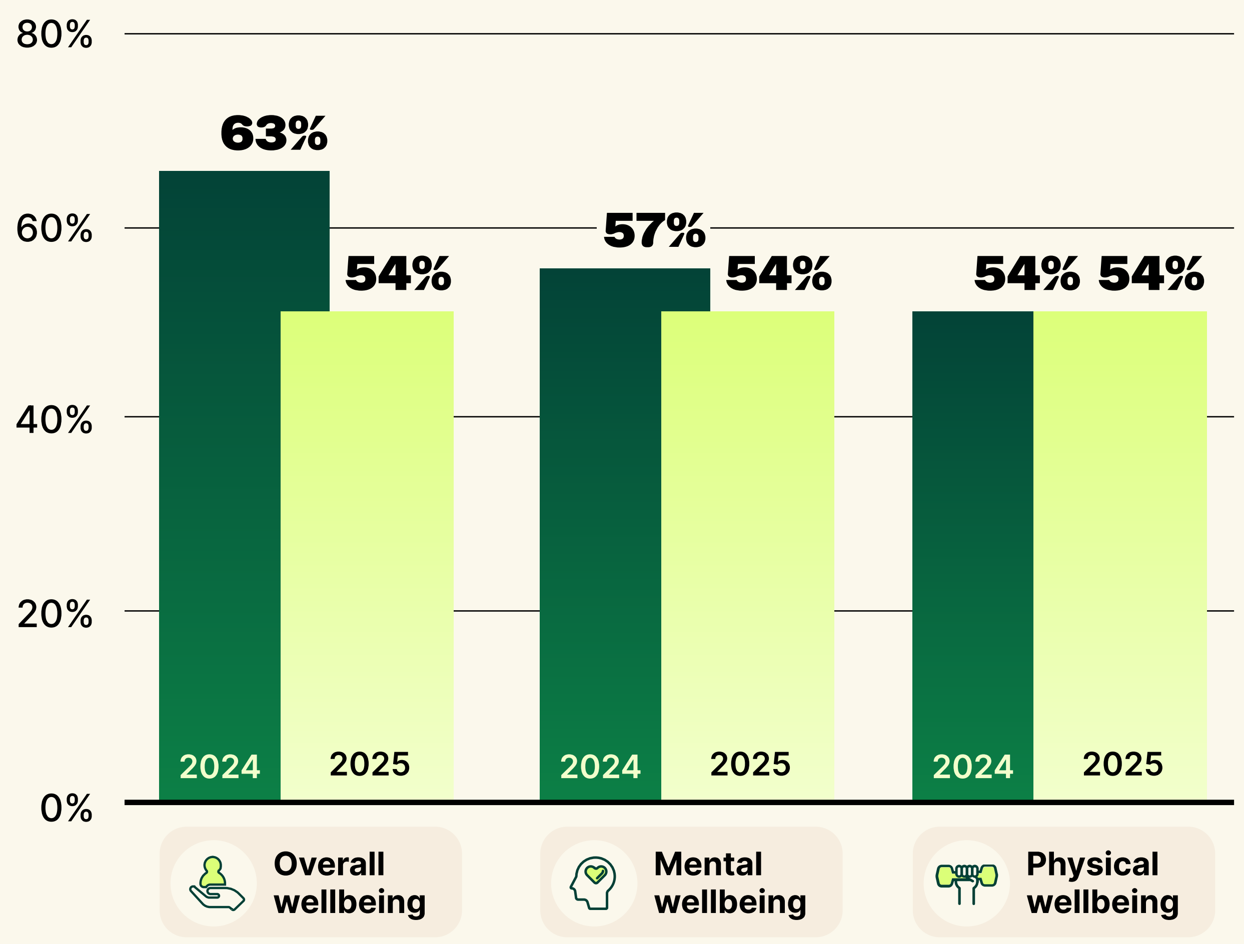


Beyond physical fitness, these third places are becoming cultural anchors. They are where people build community, find accountability, and reset their energy for the challenges of work and life. They also play a role in combating loneliness and isolation, which remain widespread across global workforces. When employees connect in these environments, they not only improve their physical and mental health but also strengthen social bonds that carry over into workplace collaboration and resilience.

THE STATE OF EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

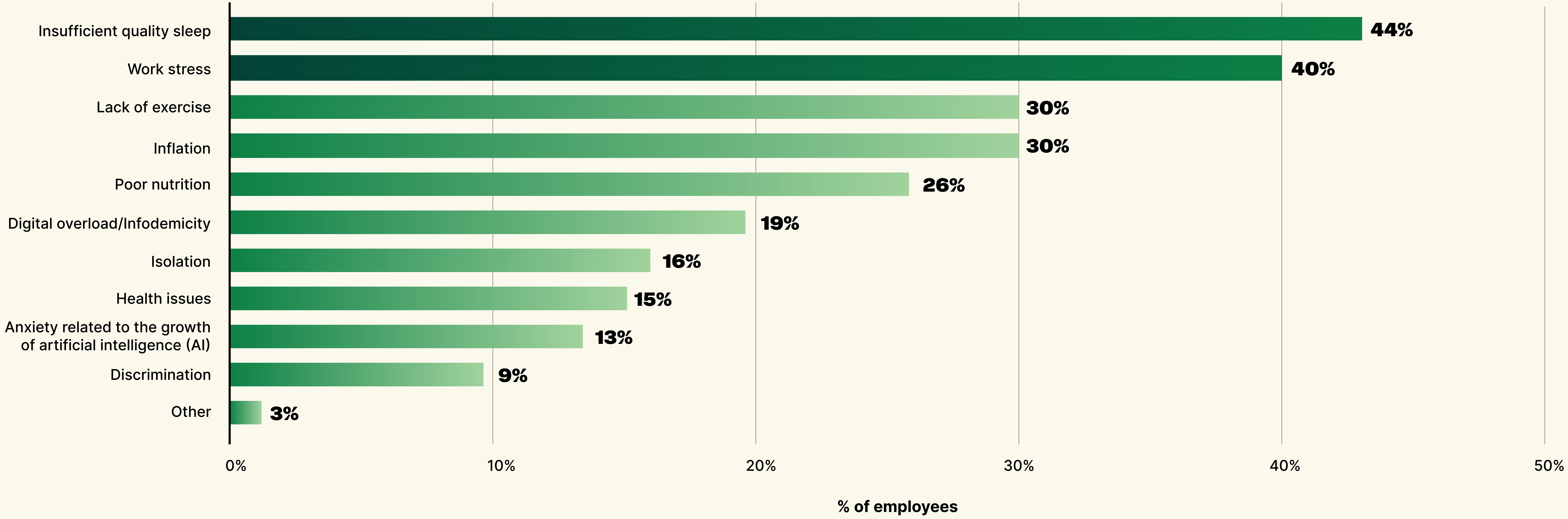
Despite these lifestyle shifts, employee wellness overall is declining. In 2025, just 54% of workers rated their wellbeing as good or thriving, down from 63% in 2024. The deterioration of wellbeing is not limited to a single factor but emerges from the intersection of long work hours, lack of rest, and insufficient organisational support.

% OF EMPLOYEES WHO REPORT A HEALTHY WELLBEING



Sleep and work stress are the most damaging forces. Forty-four percent of employees say lack of sleep harms their wellbeing, while 40% cite work stress. When diving deeper on what's impacting sleep, nearly half (47%) say stress or anxiety keeps them up at night, cutting into the recovery that sustains productivity.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES

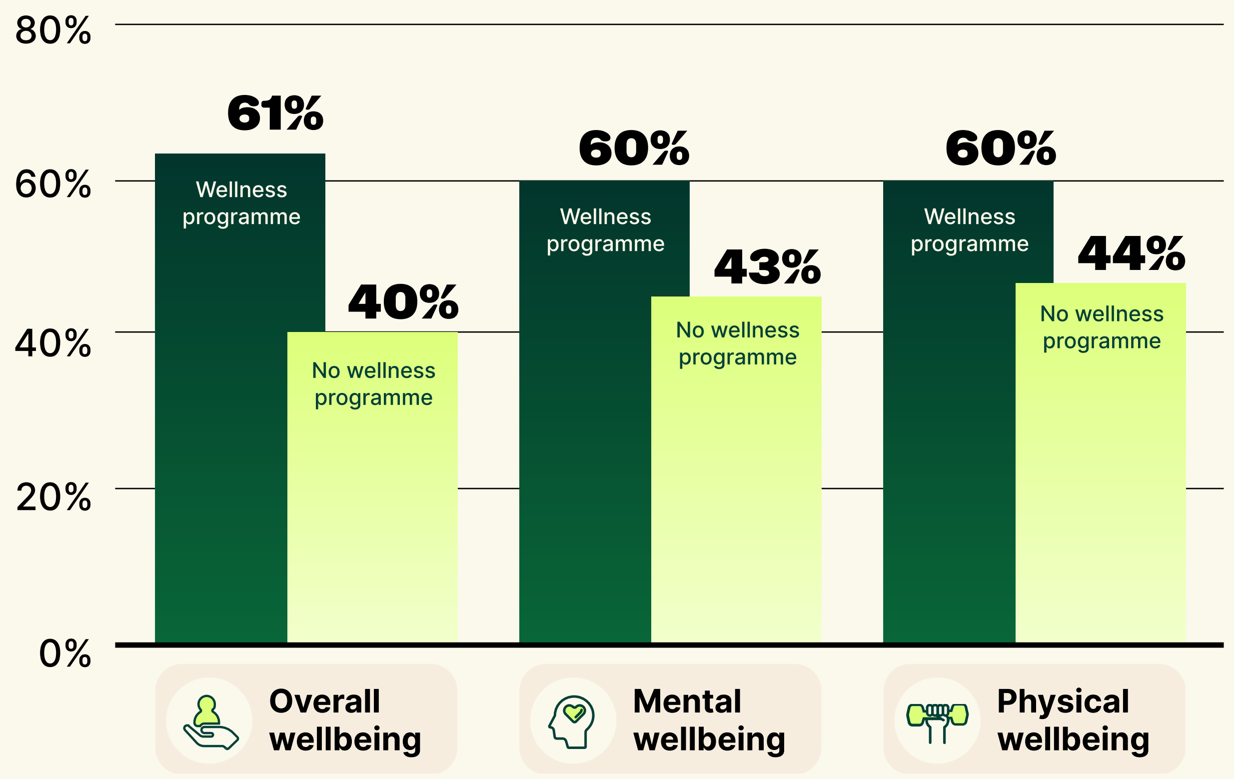


Mindfulness, though recognised by 57% of employees as important, is rarely practised consistently. Only 22% do so daily. This inconsistency highlights a gap between awareness and action, and for many employees, it signals the need for more structured support. Alongside mindfulness, therapy has emerged as a critical outlet. Younger generations are turning to therapy in greater numbers: 68% of Gen Z and 59% of Millennials consider therapy critical to their wellbeing, compared to 45% of Gen X and 33% of Baby Boomers.

Physical health is also under pressure. Fifty-one percent say lack of time prevents them from exercising, while 26% cite lack of motivation. When employees do engage, they gravitate toward accessible, energising activities: 32% choose running and 23% strength training. These preferences show that employees want to move but struggle to integrate fitness into busy schedules. The cumulative effect of these challenges is a workforce that is aware of what it needs but constrained in its ability to act consistently.

Structured wellness programmes help fill the gap. Employees with access to these programmes report higher wellbeing across every measure. Sixty-one percent rate their mental health positively, compared to just 40% of those without. These wellness programmes help mitigate the effects of stress, poor sleep, and lack of exercise, turning intention into sustained improvement.

% OF EMPLOYEES WHO REPORT A HEALTHY WELLBEING

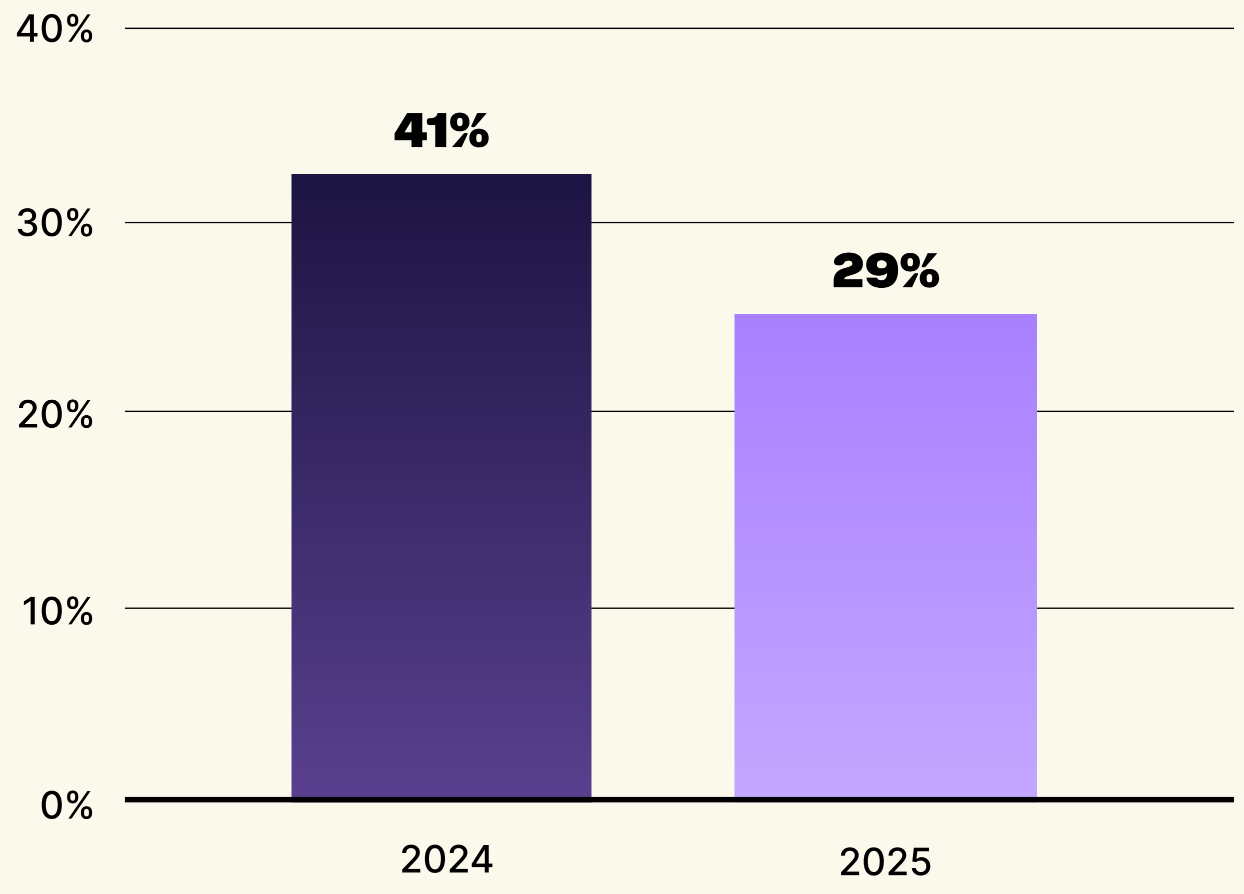


This shows the critical role employers can play: without organisational support, individual efforts are less likely to take hold and become consistent habits.

THE BENEFITS GAP

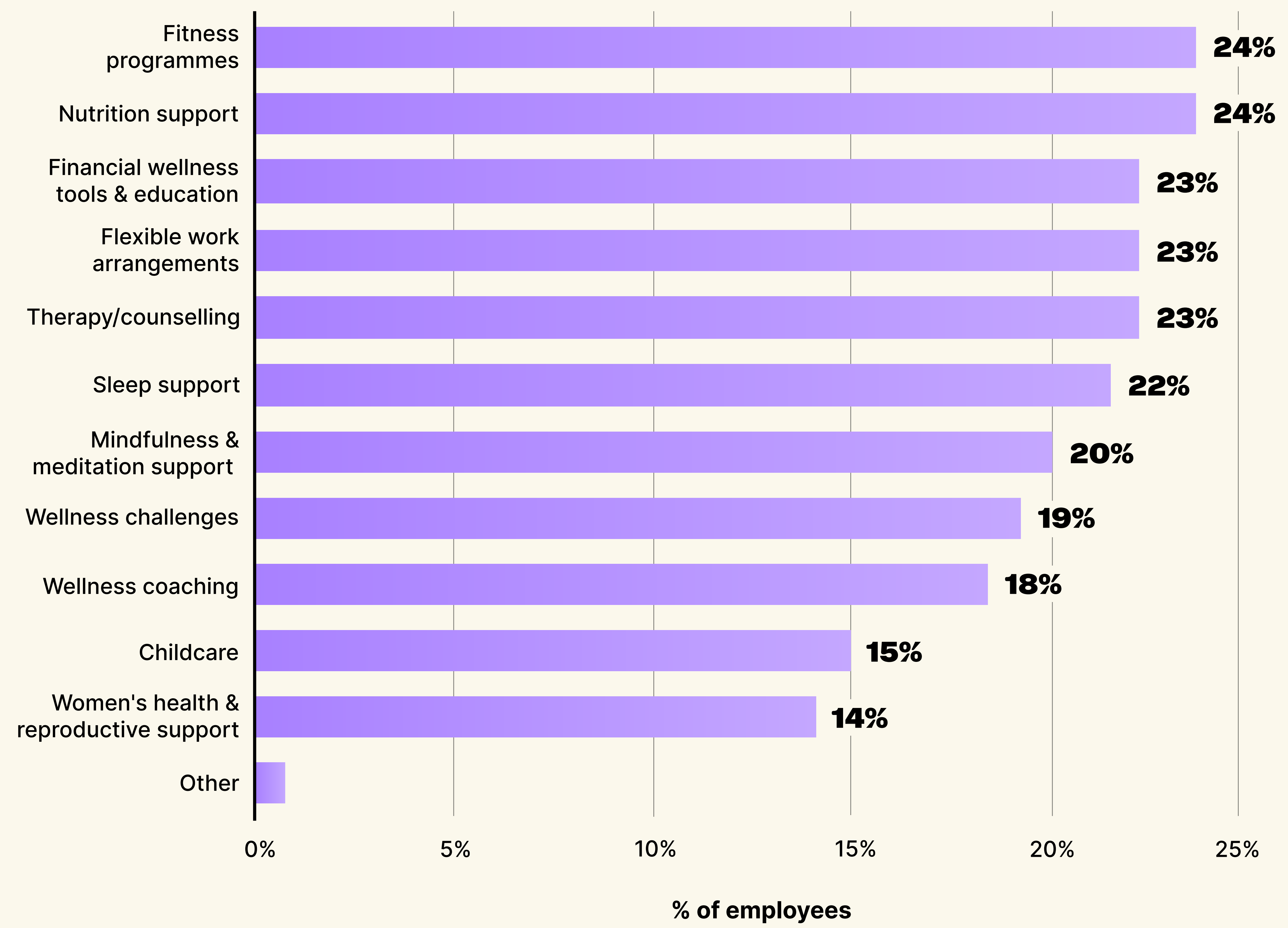
The disconnect between what employees need and what employers provide is widening. Satisfaction with corporate wellness programmes has fallen to 29% in 2025, down from 41% in 2024. And only 44% of employees say wellness is truly ingrained in their company's culture. This gap represents more than unmet expectations—it signals a trust deficit between employees and employers.

% OF EMPLOYEES WHO ARE SATISFIED WITH THEIR COMPANY'S WELLNESS PROGRAMME



Employees want integrated, holistic support that reflects the interconnected nature of physical, mental, and social health. The most requested additions include fitness (24%), nutrition (24%), financial wellness (23%), flexible work arrangements (23%), therapy (23%), and sleep support (22%).

MOST COMMONLY USED WELLNESS BENEFITS



The demand is not for one-off perks but for ecosystems of support that meet diverse needs. Without these, employees feel their organisations are falling short, limiting both engagement and loyalty. This dissatisfaction does not remain silent; it translates into reduced morale, lower productivity, and ultimately, higher turnover.

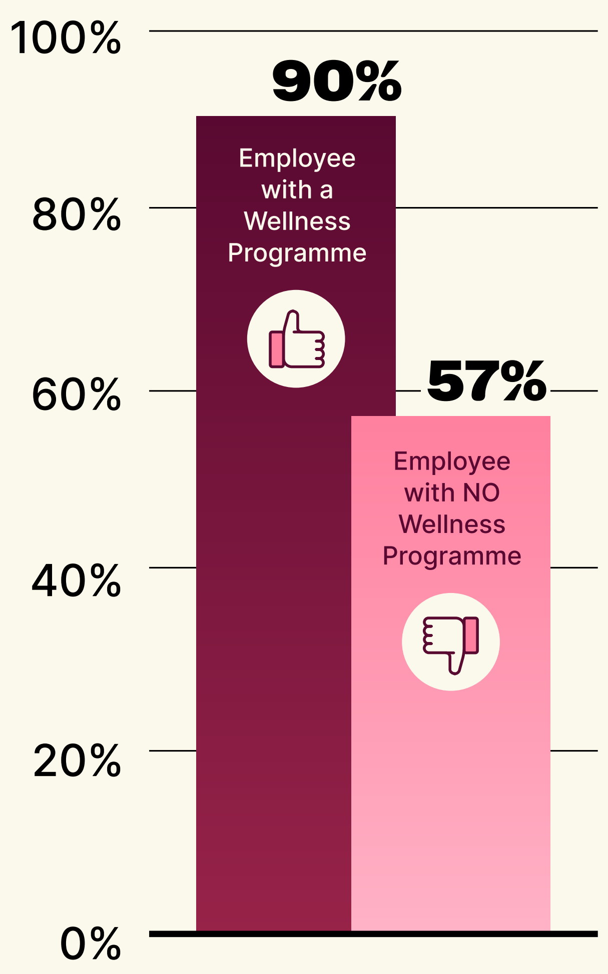
The benefits gap also reveals how quickly expectations are shifting. In previous years, a gym discount or annual wellness fair may have sufficed. Today, employees expect daily access to resources that help them manage stress, sustain energy, and care for their families. They want programmes that are flexible, digital, and inclusive.

WELLNESS AS A TALENT IMPERATIVE

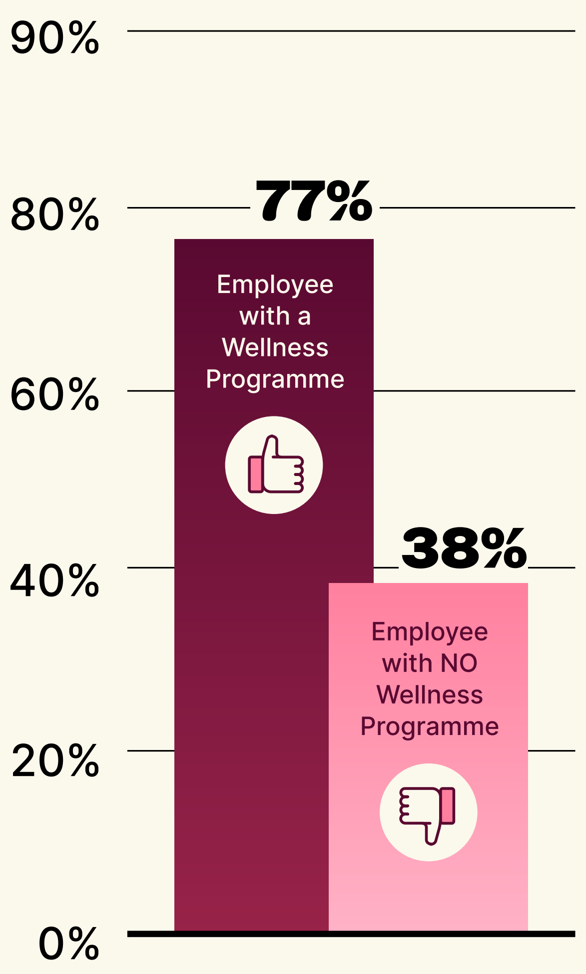
Wellness has become a decisive factor in career decisions. Eighty-six percent of employees say they would only consider companies that emphasize wellbeing when seeking their next role. The same percentage (88%) say they value their wellbeing at work as much as their salary, underscoring how wellbeing has become a core part of compensation. These numbers demonstrate that wellness is now a key component of the employer value proposition.

Wellness also shapes perceptions of leadership and trust. Ninety percent of employees with access to wellness programmes feel adequately compensated, compared to just 57% without. Seventy-seven percent of those with wellness programmes say HR cares about their wellbeing, versus only 38% of those without. These differences reveal that wellness programmes do more than improve health; they strengthen culture, build loyalty, and create the conditions for engagement. They transform employee perception of whether leadership genuinely values them.

% OF EMPLOYEES WHO SAY THEY ARE ADEQUATELY COMPENSATED



% OF EMPLOYEES WHO SAY THEIR HR DEPARTMENT GENUINELY CARES ABOUT THEIR WELBEING



When organisations neglect wellness, the consequences are immediate. Eighty-five percent of employees say they would consider leaving a company that does not prioritise wellbeing. Millennials and Gen Z, who now form the majority of the workforce, are particularly likely to act on this conviction, accelerating the urgency for companies to act. The risk is not abstract. It shows up in attrition rates, recruitment challenges, and weakened employer brands.

The Takeaway for HR Leaders

Wellness is redefining how employees live, work, and shape their careers.
To stay competitive, organisations must:

- Address rising stress and burnout with holistic support across the five pillars of wellness.
- Support access to third places and digital tools that employees are already using to recharge, connect, and build healthy habits.
- Close the benefits gap by aligning offerings with employee expectations and providing integrated, holistic ecosystems of support.
- Position wellness as a core talent strategy, embedding it into culture, leadership practices, and daily routines.

The companies that lead on wellness will be the companies that lead on talent. In today's evolving workplace, **wellbeing is not optional, it is a business imperative.** Investing in wellbeing is not just about healthier employees; it is about building stronger cultures, fostering deeper trust, and creating resilient organisations prepared to thrive in the years ahead. Organisations that recognize and embrace this shift will position themselves not only as employers of choice but also as leaders of a healthier, more sustainable workforce.

GET ACCESS TO OUR FULL REPORT FOR EXPERT INSIGHTS AND VALUABLE GUIDANCE.

Download the Full Report