RETURN ON WELLBEING '25

Why CEOs Are Betting on Wellness

wellhub

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1 Introduction

1.1 Foreword

Innovation isn't just about technology—it's about people. Employees understand the value of wellbeing, and companies that fail to support it will fall behind. Wellness isn't a perk, it's a business imperative.

I know firsthand how easy it is to forget this foundational truth. Growing up in Brazil, I enjoyed almost effortless access to wellness. The warm climate, abundant parks, and active culture meant physical activity was naturally integrated into daily life.

This changed dramatically as my career began. As an analyst, consultant and then executive, access to wellness became a struggle. Time constraints, pressure from work and an endless amount of competing priorities made it hard to continue with the habits I had for so long. These challenges negatively impacted my health, my focus and my relationships. It was not sustainable and I knew my personal struggle was far more widespread than I could quantify.

This was the inspiration for Wellhub: to restore what had been lost—simple, natural access to wellness for busy people navigating modern life, with support from their employers.

There's a critical lesson in my journey for other CEOs and business leaders: Just as our organizations provide healthcare, retirement plans and life insurance, investing in employee wellness is the logical next step in supporting the modern workforce. We set the tone for whether or not wellbeing succeeds at our organization.

In this third edition of *Wellhub's Return on Wellbeing* report, we reveal how a CEO's personal wellness is a bellwether for the company's entire wellbeing program. Our survey of more than 1,500 international CEOs and business leaders reveals that the more often an executive leader actively participates in their company's wellness program, the higher their personal wellbeing, **and the more likely they are to approve—and increase—funding for the program.** Having wellness-focused leadership is a huge business advantage in a world where a healthy workforce means higher productivity, lower turnover, and stronger financial returns.

CEOs aren't just going through the motions. They truly care. Sixty percent of CEOs *strongly* believe **their company has a responsibility to support employee wellbeing. More than half—58%—*strongly* agree that wellbeing is critical to their company's financial success.** This is because when employees use wellness programs it creates measurable ROI through reduced healthcare costs and improved productivity. CEOs understand that a thriving workforce is a competitive advantage, not just a moral obligation.

This is where HR leaders have a mission-critical role. You don't just run programs—you build the bridge between leadership strategy and employee experience. You bring the data, the insights, and the strategies that make wellness returns real. And when CEOs and HR work together, the impact is undeniable. CEOs who receive strategic updates on the impact of their wellness programs are significantly more likely to approve bigger budgets: **58% of those who receive monthly program updates increased wellness funding last year.**

That's because these reports surface the bottom-line returns CEOs hope to see from wellness programs: reduced absenteeism, increased productivity, higher morale, lower turnover, better recruiting, and reduced healthcare spending. You, HR leaders, are the ones who show your C-suite that wellness is an investment, not an expense. **You're why 82% of CEOs see a positive return on investment from their wellness program.**

At Wellhub, we believe wellness isn't just a nice-to-have—it should be the heartbeat of every company. Not as another corporate buzzword. Not as a checkbox item. But as a fundamental business strategy that drives real results: better retention, higher productivity, and a thriving culture.

What keeps me going is seeing Wellhub's enrollment rates consistently outperform industry standards. Behind those numbers are real people finding paths to better health and happiness. When employees embrace wellbeing, everyone wins—the individual, their families, and yes, the business too.

In this report, I want to address the concerns I hear from fellow CEOs about wellness programs. I've been there. I understand the hesitation. But I've also seen firsthand how the right approach to employee wellbeing can transform a company's bottom line.

This is why in this report we'll show you how to overcome the most common concerns CEOs have about wellness programs, so you can transform your company with wellbeing.

The future belongs to organizations that recognize their people as their greatest asset—and invest accordingly. This transformation starts with leadership. **It starts with us.**

Cesar Carvalho

Cesar Carvalho
CEO & Co-Founder, Wellhub

1.2.1 Key Stats

58% of CEOs strongly agree that wellbeing is critical to their organization's financial success.

94% of CEOs have the final sign-off on wellness budgets.

58% of CEOs who receive impact updates at least once a month significantly increased funding for their wellness program last year.

50% of CEOs strongly agree that employees care about their wellbeing as much as their salary.

56% CEOs invest in wellness programs to enhance employee productivity and performance.

63% of CEOs that engage in their wellness program daily significantly increased program funding last year.

82% of CEOs see a positive ROI from their wellness program.

47% say workforce productivity is extremely impacted by their wellness program.

30% of CEOs say employee engagement rates in wellness programs are a top concern, making it the most common objection to program adoption.

1.2.2 Key Insights

#1 CEOs recognize wellness as a business asset—but overestimate the wellbeing of their workforce, risking underinvestment in this strategic advantage.

#2 CEOs view engagement rates as the most effective way to gauge the ROI of wellness programs.

#3 CEOs see wellness as boosting employee productivity and retention, driving improved financial returns.

#4 CEOs need clear ROI metrics to justify wellness spend.

#5 CEOs who receive frequent reporting on wellness impacts are more likely to approve bigger budgets.

#6 CEOs are more likely to approve funding when wellness is framed as a strategic investment, not a luxury perk.

#7 CEO engagement in wellness drives the company's wellness culture and funding.

1.2.3 Key Action Items

Report the Impact of Wellbeing Program Frequently

Provide clear wellness ROI metrics to leadership at least once a month.

Budget Wellness as Preventive Healthcare

Integrate wellness funding into healthcare budgets to sustain investment and maximize long-term impact.

Prepare for the Future

Invest in flexible work, mental wellness support, and holistic, tech-driven wellbeing solutions.

Frame Wellness as a Business Asset

Connect it to productivity, cost reduction, and retention.

Close the CEO-Employee Perception Gap

Use employee feedback to show leadership that their personal wellness is not a gauge for the wellness of their employees.

2 CEO Perceptions of Wellness

2.1 What CEOs Really Think of Employee Wellbeing

KEY FINDINGS

CEOs are all-in on employee wellbeing: 60% strongly insist it's their company's responsibility, and half (50%) strongly believe employees value their wellness as much as their paycheck. They also see the business impact, with 58% strongly agreeing that wellbeing is critical to financial success.

Unfortunately, that positive energy has yet to trickle down to their workforce. While 92% of execs think employees believe leadership prioritizes wellbeing, only 68% of employees agree (Fisher et al., November 2023). Only half (50%) think their C-suite actually cares about their wellbeing, and nearly half (47%) say work stress is wrecking their mental health (Fisher et al., November 2023; Wellhub, State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024).

Yet CEOs believe their employees recognize their commitment to wellness. A staggering 77% of executives think employee mental wellbeing improved last year, but only 33% of employees agree. The disconnect is just as sharp in physical (80% vs. 36%) and financial wellbeing (76% vs. 30%). Even when CEOs think they're leading by example—72% say they share their wellness journeys with staff—only 16% of employees notice (Fisher et al., June 2023).

This perception gap isn't just an optics problem. It's a business risk. Disengagement, turnover, and slipping productivity are on the line. HR leaders need to challenge assumptions, push for real, visible change for wellbeing to deliver the full potential CEOs see in it.

IN-DEPTH

CEOs aren't just talking about wellbeing—they're preaching it. Sixty percent feel *strongly* that their company has a responsibility to support employee wellbeing. (An impressive 97% agree at least somewhat that their company has this responsibility.) They're convinced workers care about wellbeing just as much as their paycheck—50% strongly agree that's the case.

And hiring? The stakes are just as high: 74% of CEOs agree or strongly agree that job seekers won't even consider their company unless wellbeing is a clear priority.

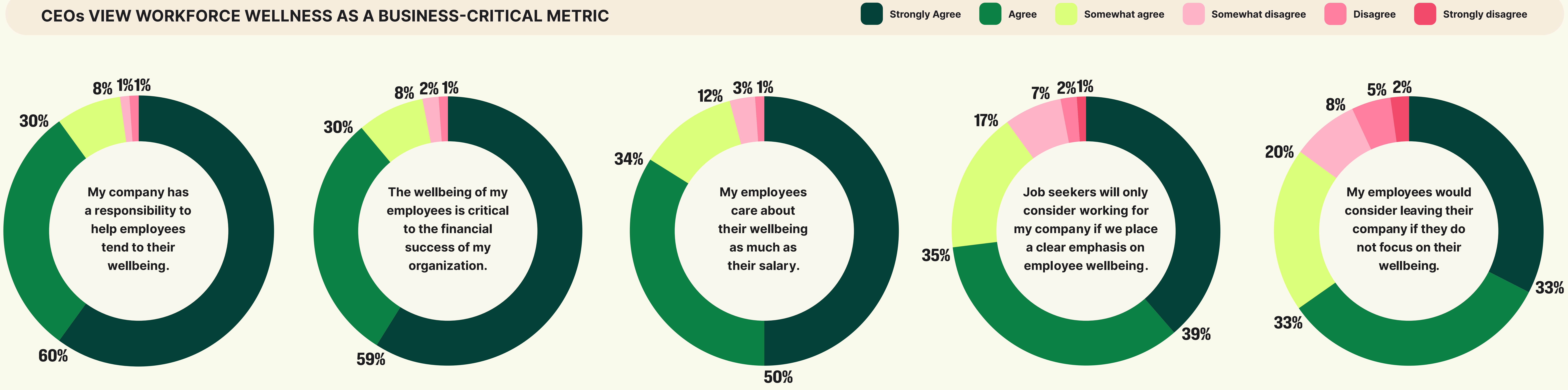
And it doesn't stop there—66% agree or strongly agree that employees would walk away if their company fails to make wellbeing a priority. And our survey shows it doesn't matter whether employees work behind a desk or on their feet—CEOs have consistently sky-high expectations for how their organization should prioritize workforce wellbeing.

Their employees agree. A solid 85% say their company should play a role in their wellbeing, 88% say wellbeing is just as important as pay, and 83% would leave if their employer didn't prioritize wellbeing (Wellhub, State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024).

This sounds like a dream. Employers and employees are aligned! Everyone wants to prioritize health and wellbeing.

The problem? Employees don't believe their leaders actually care. Only half of workers think their C-suite genuinely prioritizes their wellbeing (Fisher et al., November 2023). And skepticism is rising—more than half (52%) now believe their company's wellbeing efforts are fake, up from 46% just two years ago (Hemmerdinger, 2023).

CEOs VIEW WORKFORCE WELLNESS AS A BUSINESS-CRITICAL METRIC



That's a brutal reality check for executives who see themselves as champions of workplace wellness.

And workers aren't just feeling ignored; they're feeling drained. Nearly half (47%) say work stress is wrecking their mental health, making it the top cause of emotional strain. Even worse, only one in three employees believes their job has a positive impact on their physical, mental, and social wellbeing (Wellhub, State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024).

The gap doesn't end there. CEOs believe their wellbeing strategies are making a difference, but employees aren't feeling it. While 77% of executives say their employees' mental wellbeing has improved over the past year, only 33% of employees agree (Fisher et al., June 2023).

The gap is just as wide for physical wellbeing—80% of executives say things got better, but again, only 36% of employees see it. And financial wellbeing? It's even worse. Seventy-six percent of executives think employees are in a better financial position, but just 30% of workers say the same (Fisher et al., June 2023).

Most CEOs think they're leading by example, with 72% claiming they "always" or "often" share their personal wellbeing experiences. But employees aren't seeing it—only 16% say their leaders share their wellness journey (Fisher et al., November 2023). The solution is real action, not just PR. When CEOs walk the talk, employees feel it.

Seven out of 10 employees say a stronger commitment from their leaders to sustaining their wellbeing would improve their engagement, job satisfaction, productivity, and retention. Engaged employees who trust their leaders are more than twice as likely to say their company is making real progress on wellbeing than those that don't trust leadership (Fisher et al., 2024).

But if workers feel like wellbeing talk is just corporate fluff, things unravel fast. Employees see right through "carewashing"—when companies brag about wellness initiatives but do nothing to fix burnout (Hedrick et al., 2024). And once they stop believing, trust vanishes, engagement craters, and performance takes a hit.

Fortunately for HR leaders, that's exactly where a comprehensive wellness program comes in. These programs make the company's commitment to wellness visible and actionable.

2.2 What CEOs Really Think of Wellness Programs

KEY FINDINGS

CEOs are all in on wellness programs—and for good reason. They see the direct benefits for their workforce: better health, lower healthcare costs, and fewer days OOO. But it doesn't stop there. A strong wellness strategy strengthens the business by enhancing brand reputation and employee resilience.

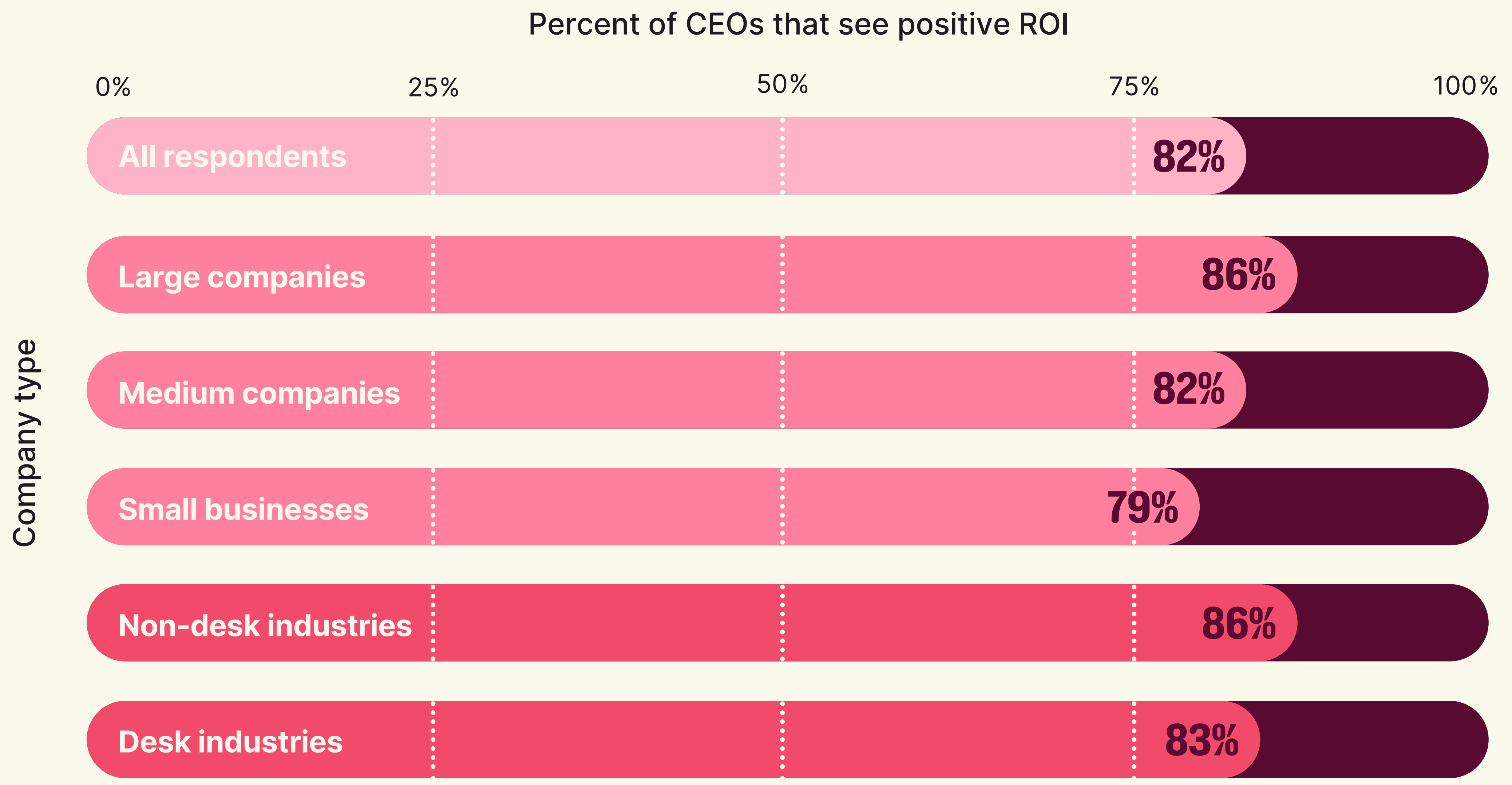
But there's still a disconnect. HR leaders—who see the impact firsthand—report even bigger benefits from wellness programs than CEOs realize. And while more executives are starting to see wellbeing as a competitive edge, many still underestimate just how powerful it can be.

IN-DEPTH

Bottom-Line Growth

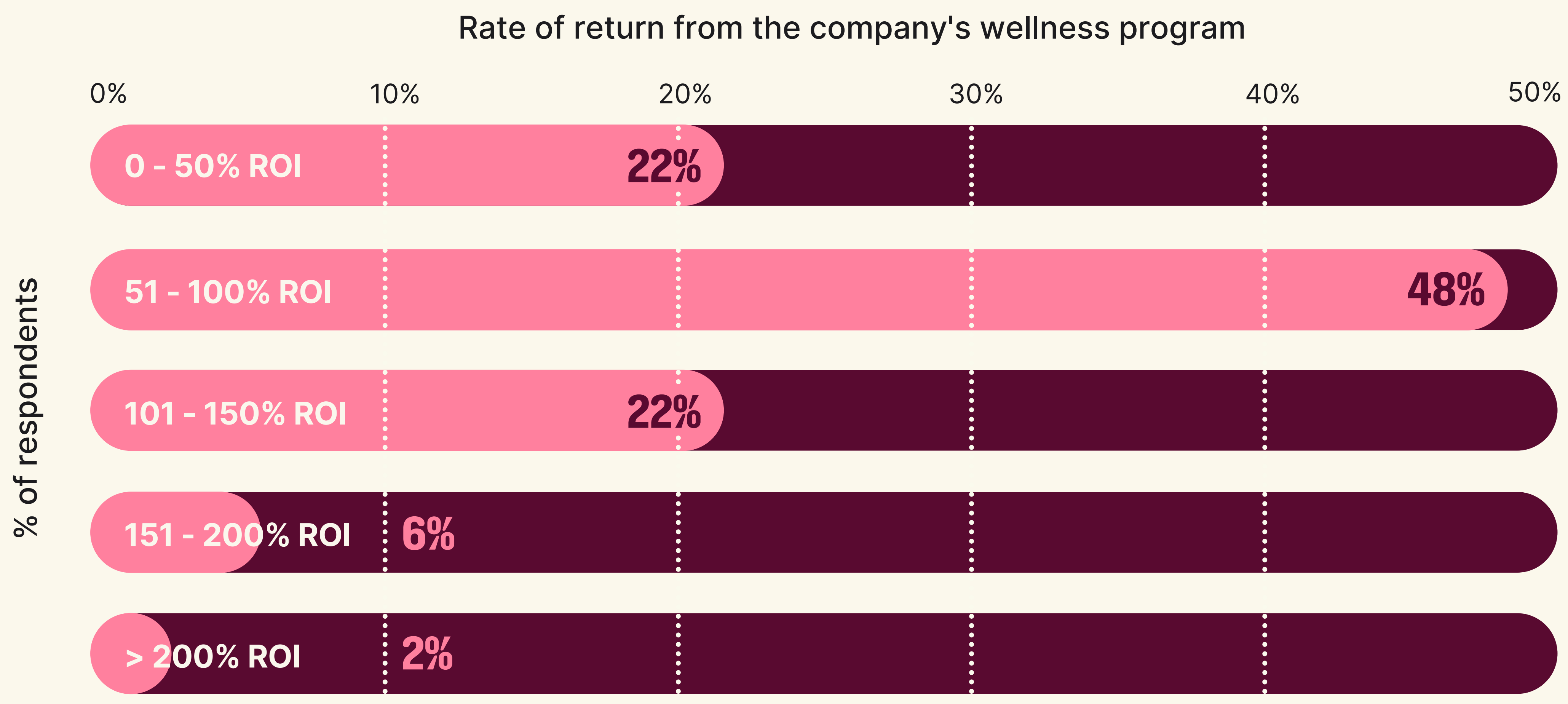
CEOs aren't just seeing returns on wellness programs—they're banking on them. A solid 82% say their company's wellness initiatives deliver a positive return on investment, and it doesn't matter if they run a massive corporation or a small business. The payoff is consistent: 86% of large companies (> 5,001 full-time employees), 82% of medium (501 to 5,000 FTEs), and 79% of small businesses (100 to 500 FTEs) report clear financial benefits. And when it comes to workplace environments, CEOs in non-desk industries and desk-based industries report positive ROI at similar rates (86% vs. 83%).

CEOs ACROSS INDUSTRY TYPES AND COMPANY SIZES REPORT POSITIVE RETURNS FROM THEIR WELLNESS PROGRAM



These returns aren't marginal: 78% saw returns greater than 50% while a full 30% saw returns in excess of 100%—that means getting back $2 for every $1 invested in a wellness program.

CEOs REPORT STRONG RETURNS FROM WELLNESS INVESTMENTS



And these numbers might actually be underselling the impact. HR leaders—the ones keeping a close eye on the data—say 95% of wellness programs deliver positive returns (compared to 82% of CEOs) (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing, 2024).

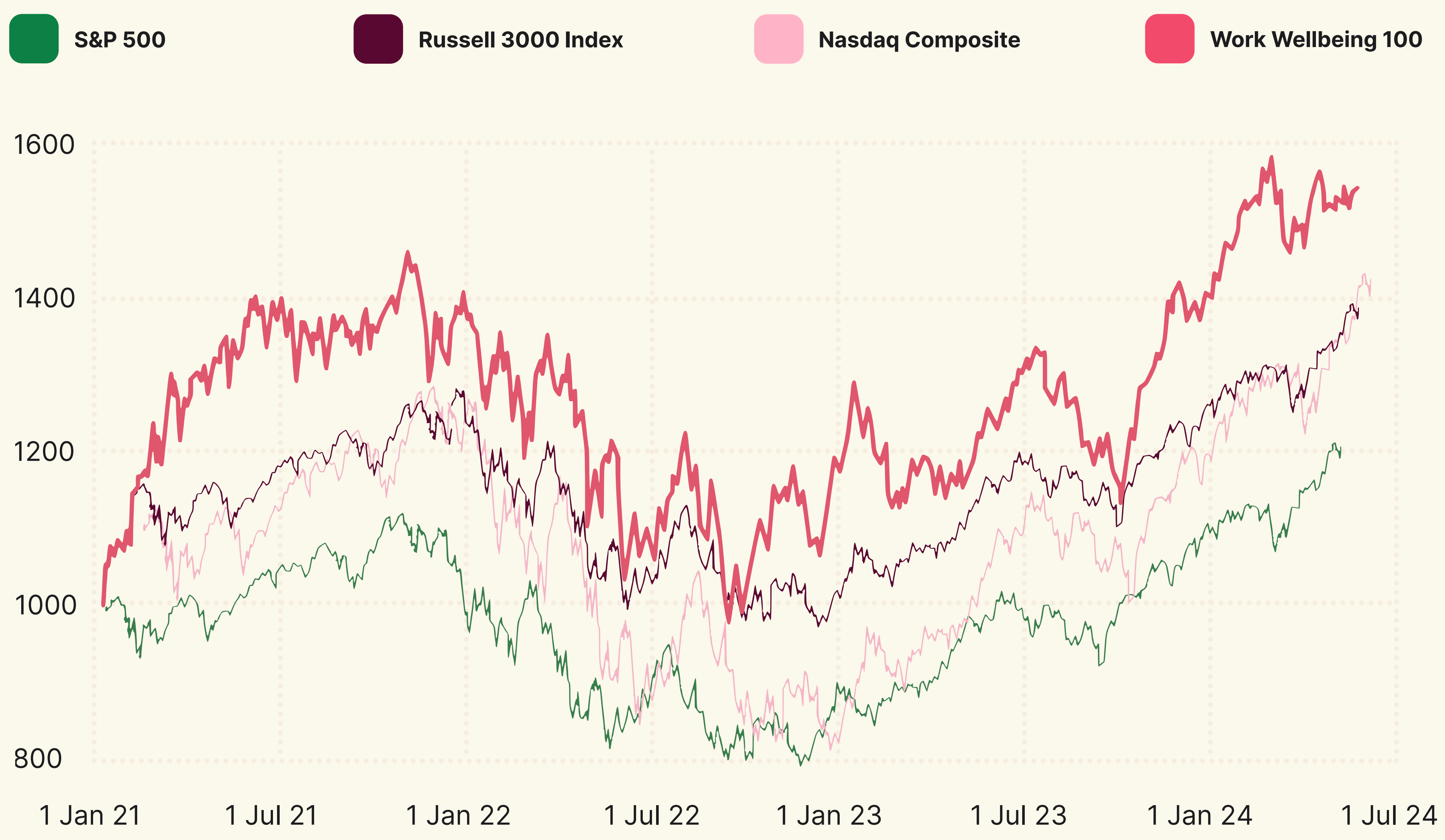
Research from other organizations backs it up—higher employee wellbeing isn't just good for people, it's good for business. The best wellness programs do more than cut healthcare costs; they lift morale, boost retention, and drive engagement. What sets them apart? Personalized coaching, strong leadership support, and a culture that makes employees feel valued. And when employees thrive, so does the company—they perform better, stay longer, and contribute more (Kaul et al., 2024).

The ripple effect doesn't stop there. A decade-long Glassdoor study found that every one-star increase in an employer's rating translates to a more than 2-point jump in customer satisfaction on a 100-point scale (Glassdoor, 2019). Happy employees create better experiences, driving stronger customer loyalty and a more powerful brand reputation.

Better employee wellbeing doesn't just feel good—it shows up in financial performance. Companies that prioritize wellness see stronger stock performance and higher profits. In fact, Indeed's Wellbeing 100—publicly traded companies with the highest employee wellness ratings—have outperformed the S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite every year since 2021 (Indeed, 2024).

The financial impact is clear: A massive global study across 49 industries found that higher employee wellbeing (measured by job satisfaction and low burnout) is associated with higher productivity, higher profitability, and higher customer satisfaction, as well as lower turnover at the business-unit level (Krekel et al., 2019).

WORK WELLBEING 100 AND STOCK PERFORMANCE



Source: Indeed, 2024

On the flip side, ignoring employee wellbeing is a recipe for long-term trouble. Burnout today means talent loss tomorrow, and a struggling workforce leaves businesses exposed when market conditions change. The global cost? An estimated $322 billion in lost productivity every year.

It also hits the bottom line in talent management—voluntary turnover alone can cost up to 20% of an employee's total payroll. Prioritizing wellbeing isn't just about keeping employees happy—it's about keeping businesses strong (Gallup, n.d.).

The verdict is clear: CEOs who still view wellness as a warm and fuzzy perk are missing the bigger picture. The companies leading the market are securing their long-term business success with aggressive investments in wellbeing.

Productivity Gains

CEOs know that a thriving workforce is a productive workforce. That's why 56% say their top reason for investing in employee wellbeing is to boost performance—above engagement (52%) and work-life balance (48%). And they're seeing the results they want: 47% report that their wellness program has an extreme impact on their workforce productivity. (A full 97% say their wellness programs improve productivity at least slightly.)

HR leaders back this up, with a whopping 91% saying these initiatives increase or significantly increase productivity (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing, 2024). Employees feel it too—60% say emotional wellness has a very or extremely strong sway on their productivity (and 95% say it impacts it to some degree); meanwhile, 54% of employees say the same about physical health (Wellhub, The State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024).

When employees feel their best, they work their best—bringing more energy, sharper focus, and stronger results: companies with wellness programs report a 20% increase in employee productivity (Wellable, 120 Employee Wellness Statistics for 2025; n.d.). It's so impactful, in fact, that wellness-driven productivity gains account for the single largest portion of ROI from employer-sponsored insurance in the U.S.—to the tune of $275 billion in 2022 alone. **That is projected to grow to an eye-popping $346.6 billion in 2026.** Yep, that's billion—with a big, bold B (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2022).

Companies who seize on this potential are seeing real-world results. Aetna, for example, credits yoga and meditation classes for adding 62 extra minutes of productivity per week, a boost valued at $3,000 per employee each year (Gelles, 2015). And you don't have to be a major company to see results: A three-year study at an industrial laundry company in the midwestern United States credited the company's wellness program with a 5% productivity boost—equal to an extra day of productive work per employee each month (Nightingale, 2017).

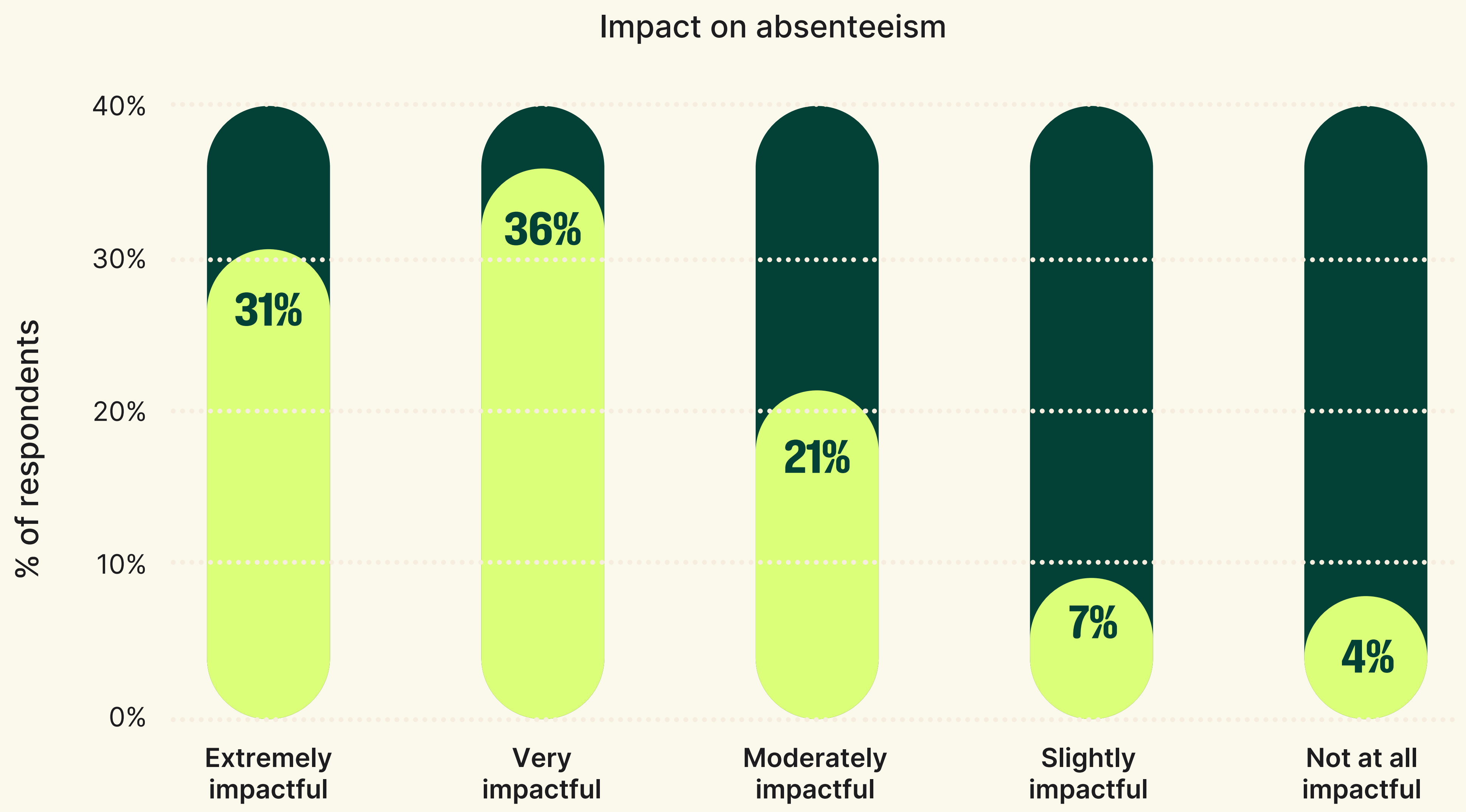
Yet, despite this clear link between wellness and productivity, many HR leaders struggle to show the financial benefits their company is enjoying. More than a third admit they lack confidence in their ability to clearly communicate ROI to their C-suite (Lattice, 2023). Luckily the equation is simple: healthier employees work harder, make fewer mistakes, and drive better results. Every hour invested in wellness delivers multiple hours of peak performance in return. CEOs who recognize this aren't just enhancing employee wellbeing—they're strengthening their businesses from the inside out.

Absenteeism Reduction

Absenteeism is more than just an operational inconvenience—it's a silent drain on productivity, morale, and budgets. Every unexpected absence forces teams to reshuffle workloads, slows down projects, and can even lead to burnout for those left picking up the slack.

Wellness programs are delivering real results, keeping employees healthier, more engaged, and showing up to work. In fact, 67% of CEOs report a significant drop in absenteeism thanks to their initiatives. HR leaders, who see the impact firsthand, are even more confident: 89% say their programs directly reduce sick days. And for some companies, the difference is game-changing—13% of HR leaders report cutting the average number of sick days per employee by at least five days a year. That's like getting back a full workweek per person, every year (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing, 2024).

CEOs SEE REDUCED ABSENTEEISM FROM WELLNESS PROGRAMS



This isn't just a feel-good story—it's backed by hard data. A 2022 analysis found that companies with wellness programs cut absenteeism by 14 to 19% on average (McCain, 2022). For example, the American multinational chemical company DuPont launched a wellness program that dropped sick days by 14% over two years across 41 plants. They only saw a 5.8% decline at their control sites. This resulted in a staggering 11,726 fewer disability days at program sites. Even better, the cost savings kicked in fast, covering the program's expenses in the first year and delivering a $2.05 return for every dollar invested by year two (Bertera, 1990, pp. 1101-1105). In all, it's estimated wellness programs save $2.73 in absenteeism costs for every $1 spent on wellbeing (Baicker et al., 2010).

Attracting and Retaining Top Talent

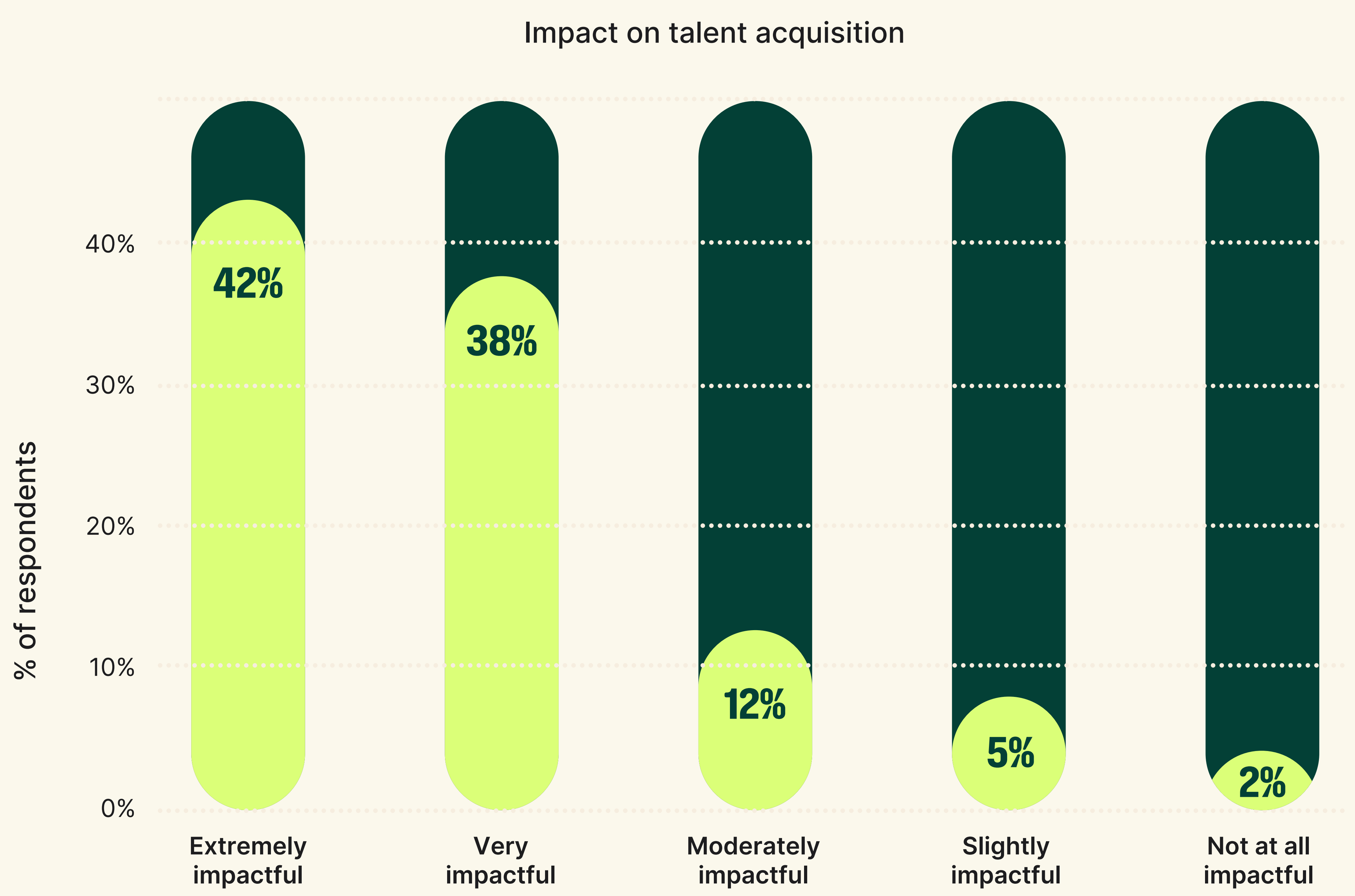
Attracting and keeping top talent is tougher than ever. Employees today want more than just a paycheck—they want to work for companies that genuinely care about their wellbeing. And if they don't see that? They won't hesitate to leave.

An overwhelming 89% of employees say they'll only consider companies that prioritize employee wellbeing in their next job search (Wellhub, The State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024). That's not just a perk—it's a dealbreaker. And it doesn't stop once they're hired. Wellbeing remains a make-or-break factor, with 62% saying they're more likely to stay if their company offers strong wellness programs.

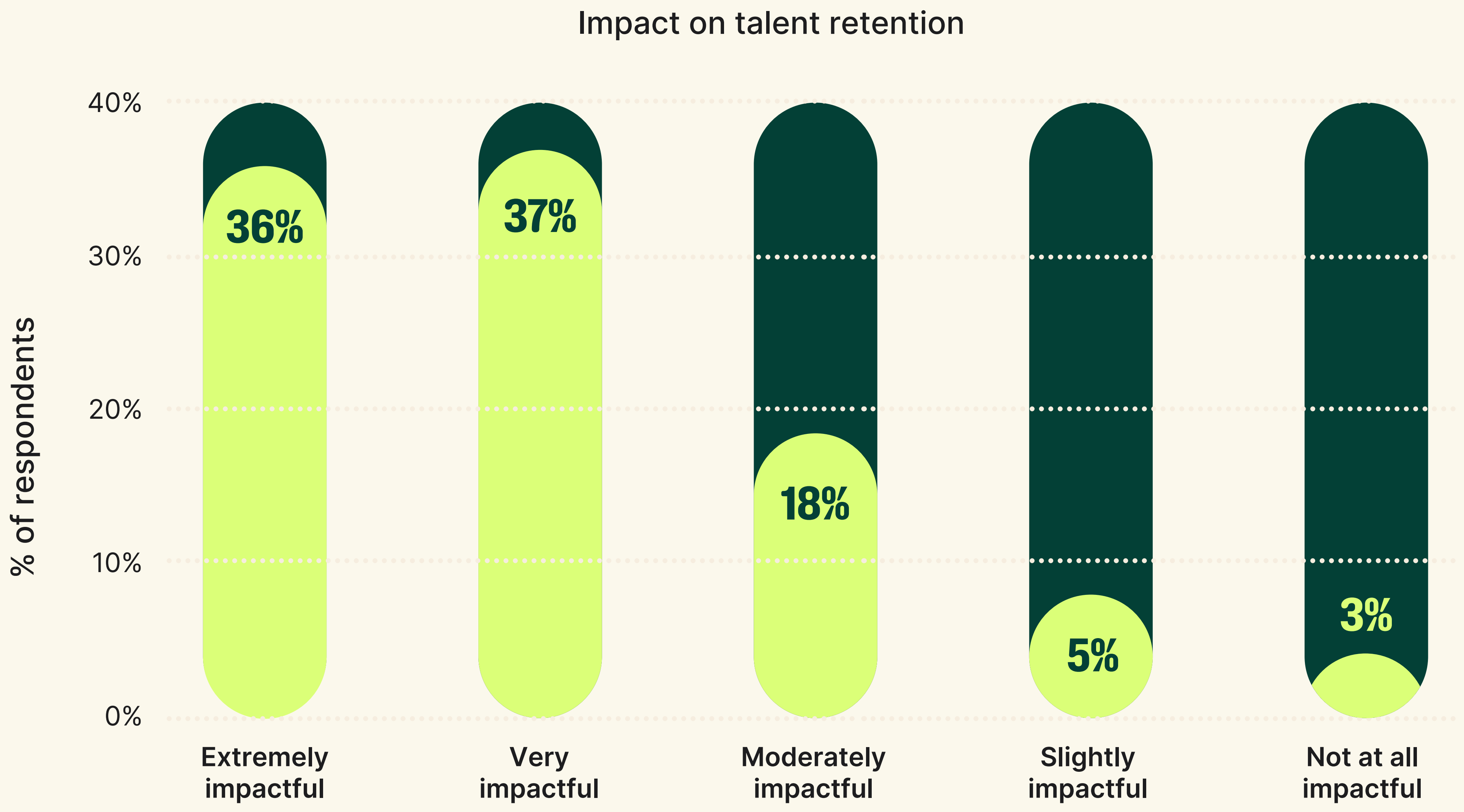
Nearly half (48%) have quit a job in the past due to its negative impact on their wellbeing (Fisher & Silverglate, 2022). CEOs are taking note: 80% say their wellness program is a highly effective talent attraction tool—with 42% calling it "extremely impactful." And it's not just about hiring: 73% of CEOs say these programs help keep employees around longer.

Two-thirds (66%) of CEOs agree or strongly agree their employees would consider leaving if their company doesn't prioritize wellbeing. That belief is strongest at small companies: 67% say they agree or strongly agree that employees would leave without a focus on wellbeing, compared to 63% in medium and 59% in large companies.

CEOs SAY WELLNESS PROGRAMS IMPROVE TALENT ACQUISITION

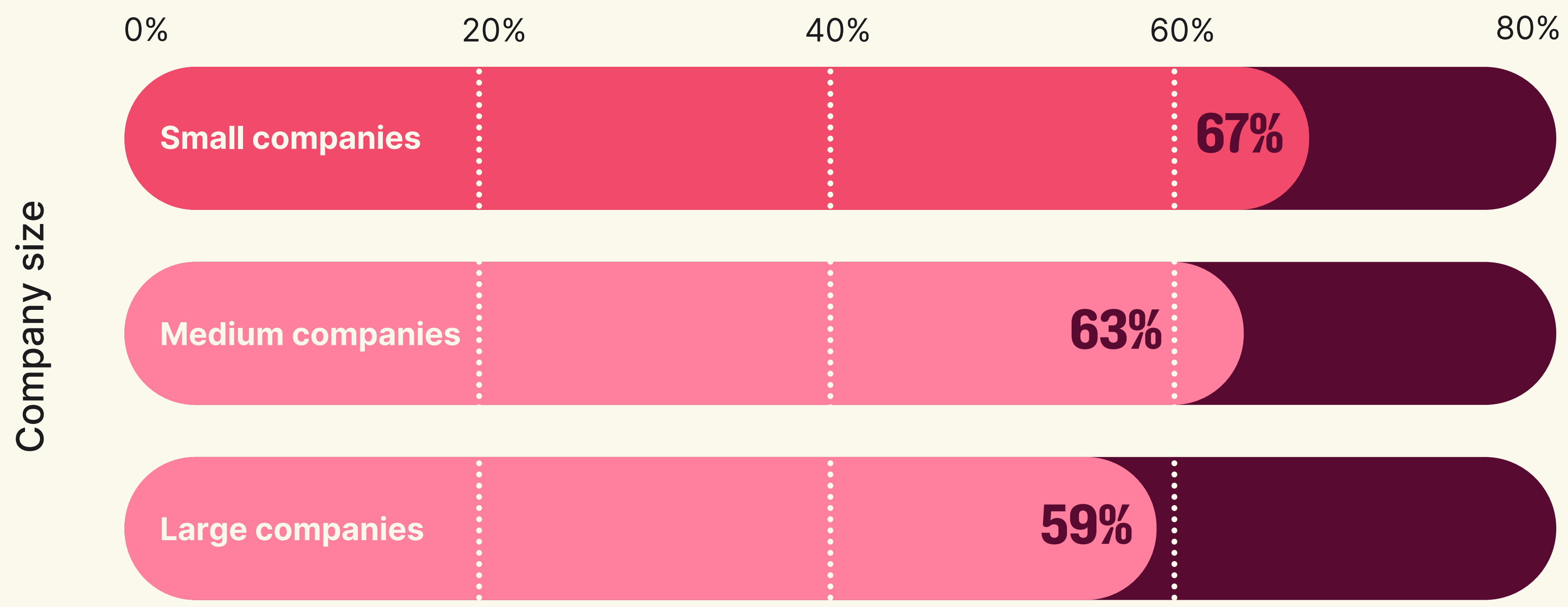


CEOs REPORT RETENTION BOOSTS THANKS TO WELLNESS PROGRAMS



THE SMALLER THE COMPANY, THE GREATER THE ROLE WELLNESS PLAYS IN RETENTION

% respondents that agree or strongly agree employees would leave if wellbeing is not prioritized



But HR leaders see an even bigger impact than the C-suite realizes. A whopping 83% say their wellness programs are “very” or “extremely” important for attracting top talent.

In industries like hospitality, retail, healthcare, and manufacturing—where turnover is notoriously high—the impact is particularly undeniable. Take one hotel chain that made employee wellbeing a top priority. By focusing on engagement, measuring satisfaction, and offering wellness resources, they brought their annual turnover rate down to just 18%—compared to the industry average of 74%. Their secret? A culture of wellbeing that made employees want to stay (Deloitte, 2024).

And this isn’t just a one-off success story. Organizations across industries partnered with Wellhub, for example, see 40% lower turnover than those without structured wellness initiatives.

The takeaway? Investing in wellbeing can be a game-changer for talent retention. In today’s competitive job market, companies that prioritize wellness aren’t just attracting and retaining employees, they’re attracting and retaining the best employees.

Enhancing Brand and Market Reputation

Employee wellness programs do more than support your workforce; they shape your brand and reputation. In fact, 76% of CEOs say their wellness initiatives significantly impact brand perception, making wellbeing a strategic advantage in competitive fields.

A company known for strong wellness benefits isn’t just supporting employees—it’s creating advocates. Eighty-nine percent of employees at companies whose senior manager supports involvement in wellbeing initiatives are likely to recommend their company as a good place to work; that figure nosedives to 19% when managers lack enthusiasm for wellbeing program engagement (American Psychological Association, 2016).

That kind of organic advocacy is priceless for attracting top-tier talent. Just look at companies like Salesforce and Google.

By offering perks like fitness support and mental health days, they're not just keeping employees happy—they're making their workplaces irresistible to job seekers.

Wellness programs do more than attract talent—they boost corporate reputation. Best Places to Work rankings now prioritize employee wellbeing. In addition to Indeed's 2024 Work Wellbeing 100, Newsweek's list of America's Greatest Workplaces for Mental Well-Being highlights 750 employers leading in mental health support (Indeed, 2024; Newsweek, n.d.). Earning a spot on these lists signals a people-first culture. And it's not just job seekers who notice—customers do, too.

A strong wellbeing strategy reinforces a company's reputation as socially responsible, which builds consumer trust. And trust matters: 81% of customers expect brands to do what's right, while 67% will walk away if that trust is broken (Edelman, 2019).

A strong wellness program is a branding powerhouse. It draws top talent, boosts your company's reputation, and creates a workplace where people actually want to be. In the race for top-tier talent, that's a competitive edge you can't afford to ignore.

Healthcare Cost Savings

CEOs who take a strategic approach to wellness aren't just boosting employee health—they're driving serious healthcare savings: 68% of respondents say their wellness programs contribute to reducing healthcare costs. Research backs up their perceptions. For every dollar spent on corporate wellness, companies save an average of $3.27 in medical costs—an impressive 227% return on investment (Baicker et al., 2010). Why? Because wellness programs improve health, reducing the need for expensive medical care.

Here's a real-world example: In a study of 185 high-risk employees and spouses, a six-month exercise and cardiac rehab program cut the number of high-risk individuals by 57%. The result? Annual medical claims dropped by $1,421 per participant, delivering a 6:1 return on investment. Meanwhile, the control group—without the program—saw no improvement (Berry et al., 2010).

It's not just one-off studies proving the impact. A five-year analysis of 600,000 employees found that those in wellness programs saved an average of $157 per year in healthcare costs compared to non-participants.

The biggest savings were in chronic disease management, which delivered an impressive 380% ROI (Mattke et al., 2014). This highlights that comprehensive wellness programs outperform one-off initiatives: Almost 74% of companies with a positive ROI from their program take a comprehensive approach—offering health screenings, stress management, risk assessments, and fitness and nutrition programs (Miller, 2012).

Most companies recognize this dynamic and act accordingly: 65% of respondents say their companies fold wellness costs into their overall healthcare budgets. This reinforces a critical shift in thinking—wellness isn't a perk, it's a cost-saving strategy.

Companies with this approach are more likely to sustain and increase their investment than organizations that budget wellness programs as a separate line item. (For more on this dynamic, see Section 3.3 What Drives CEOs to Increase Wellness Investments.)

Improved Employee Resilience

Resilience is the backbone of a thriving workplace. And guess what? Wellness programs play a huge role in making that happen. In fact, 73% of CEOs say their wellness initiatives are very or extremely impactful in fostering resilience. But HR leaders take it even further: 86% believe these programs are crucial for helping employees navigate workplace challenges.

And companies are taking action. In 2024, 66% of companies planned to increase investment in stress management and resilience-building tools—a clear sign that organizations see resilience as a long-term priority, not just a buzzword (Wellable, 2024 Employee Wellness Industry Trends Report, n.d.). And science backs it up: After just 12 weeks of guided wellbeing sessions and breathing exercises, workers in a breathwork study showed significant improvements in resilience and overall wellbeing (Montes & Penzenstadler, 2023).

It makes sense. When employees are well-rested, well-nourished, and equipped with the right tools to manage stress, they bounce back faster from setbacks. A strong culture of wellness strengthens individual resilience at scale, in turn strengthening the entire organization. Investing in employee wellbeing enables long-term sustainability and creates a workplace where people don't just survive—they thrive (Jeffery et al., 2025).

2.2.1 Getting Your C-Suite to View Wellness Programs as an Investment

A CEO's mindset can be the driving force behind a thriving wellness program. The good news? Most—78%—already see wellness as a strategic investment, recognizing its power to boost engagement, retention, and long-term business success. **These investment-minded leaders** are actively investing in wellness, getting involved in program selection, and integrating it into their company's financial strategy. Their commitment fuels stronger workplaces where employees perform at their best.

That's a great situation for most HR leaders! But it still leaves one in five (22%) working with a C-suite that still views wellness as a cost. Fortunately, HR leaders can take steps to shift their perspective—starting with getting these **expense-focused leaders** more involved in program selection. Right now, investment-minded CEOs are far more engaged—51% are deeply involved in selecting wellness programs, compared to just 35% of expense-focused leaders.

Presenting wellness programs as preventative healthcare can also be effective: 69% of leaders who view these programs as an investment account for them in their overall healthcare budget, compared to just over half (53%) of expense-focused CEOs. These CEOs who still think wellness is a cost are more likely to see these programs budgeted for as a separate line item (39% vs. 28%).

This not only makes them more vulnerable to funding cuts but also implies that wellness is not considered a preventative healthcare intervention. (For a deeper dive into what drives changes in wellness program funding, see Section 3.3: What Drives CEOs to Increase Wellness Investments.)

And one of the most powerful ways to strengthen executive support? Frequent performance reporting. The more often a CEO sees wellness performance data, the more likely they are to increase investment and sustain long-term funding. Eighty-three percent of execs who receive monthly reports—which help them see the direct connection between wellbeing and business performance—view wellness programs as a strategic asset. On the flip side, 68% of CEOs that receive this kind of update only once or twice a year view wellness programs as an overall expense. When wellness is out of sight, it's out of mind—making it feel like an optional expense rather than a core driver of success.

For HR leaders, this is an exciting opportunity. Regularly showcasing the impact of wellness programs—whether through improved productivity, higher retention, or reduced healthcare costs—can reinforce the business value of wellbeing. Framing wellness as a healthcare investment instead of a discretionary HR expense also strengthens financial commitment.

The key is visibility: The more CEOs see the benefits of wellness, the more they invest in programs that keep employees thriving.

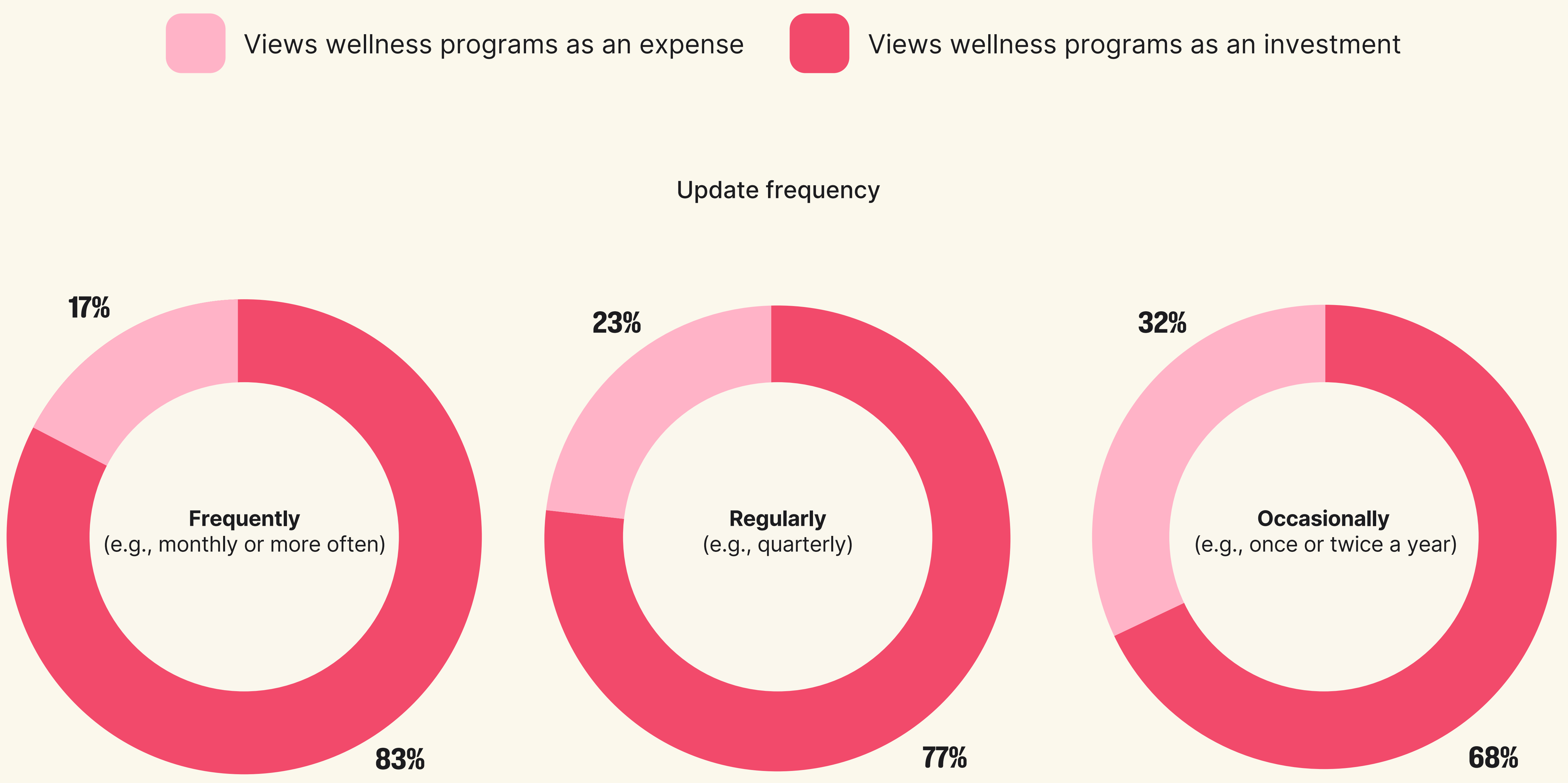
THE BOTTOM LINE

The numbers speak for themselves—most CEOs believe in wellness programs and acknowledge their impact on ROI, productivity, and retention.

But many still underestimate just how powerful these programs can be. Compared to HR leaders, CEOs tend to underrate the impact of wellness on absenteeism, productivity, and retention—all of which are stronger than they realize.

With such high potential returns, forward-thinking CEOs aren't just approving wellness budgets—they're maximizing them. Companies still treating wellness programs as mere perks risk missing out on one of the most powerful tools for long-term business resilience.

THE MORE OFTEN A CEO RECEIVES WELLNESS PROGRAM IMPACT UPDATES, THE MORE LIKELY THEY ARE TO VIEW WELLNESS PROGRAMS AS AN INVESTMENT



2.3 The Wellness Programs Trending with CEOs

KEY TAKEAWAYS

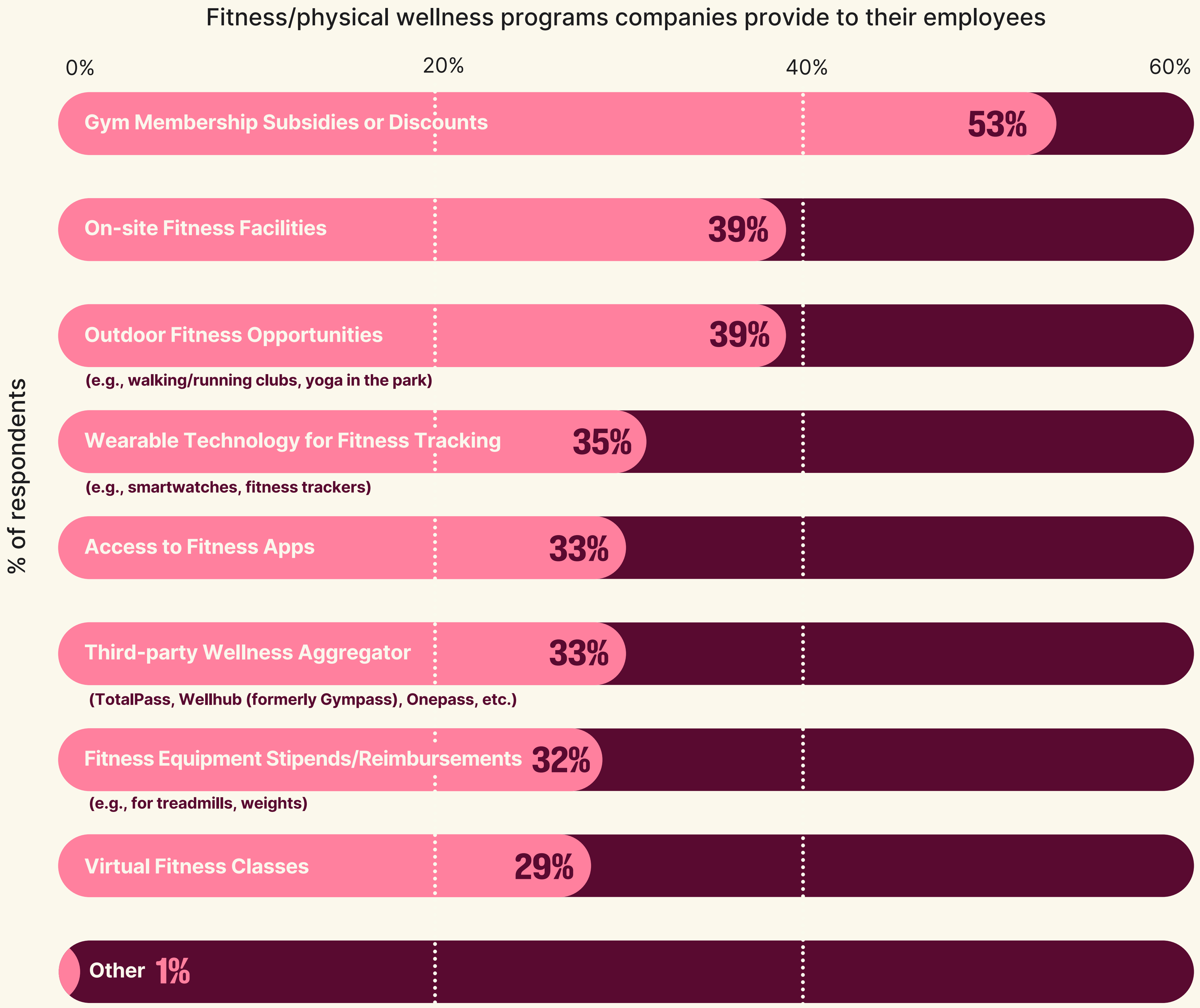
CEOs are moving away from one-size-fits-all wellness programs and investing in flexible, tech-powered solutions that support fitness, mental health, and financial wellbeing. Wearable fitness tech, gamified challenges, mental health apps, and financial literacy tools are reshaping how companies engage employees.

But there's still work to do—remote-friendly fitness is underdeveloped, proactive mental health support is lacking, and short-term financial wellness needs more attention. The companies that close these gaps and build wellness into a seamless, employee-first strategy will see the biggest wins in engagement, retention, and productivity.

IN-DEPTH

Workplace wellness is getting a major upgrade. CEOs are no longer just offering onsite gyms and casual dress Friday—they're investing in tech-driven, flexible, and highly personalized wellness solutions. The focus is shifting toward engagement, accessibility, and integration across fitness, mental health, and financial wellbeing. But while companies are making big strides, gaps remain in proactive mental wellbeing support, remote-friendly fitness options, and short-term financial wellness tools. For HR leaders, this presents a golden opportunity to optimize wellness programs for lasting impact and ROI.

GYM MEMBERSHIPS ARE THE MOST POPULAR FITNESS PERK



Tech-Driven, Flexible Fitness is the Name of the Game

Fitness remains a cornerstone of employee wellness, with 53% of CEOs saying they offer gym membership subsidies or discounts (making it the most common perk). On-site fitness centers (39%) and outdoor workout options (39%) like walking groups and jogging clubs are also popular, proving that companies want to give employees a mix of structured and flexible ways to stay active.

But the days of one-size-fits-all wellness are fading fast. Employees want choice, flexibility, and tech-powered engagement—and companies are stepping up. With this, it's no surprise that wearable fitness tech is taking off: 35% of execs report their program offers fitness trackers and smartwatches to help employees monitor their health in real time. Gamification is also making waves, as 33% of companies use fitness apps and corporate challenges, like step competitions, to turn wellness into a fun, competitive experience.

One of the biggest shifts is the rise of third-party wellness aggregators like Wellhub (which 33% of CEOs say their organization offers). These platforms let employees choose from a variety of fitness and wellness options, making it easier to find something that fits their lifestyle. Whether it's a yoga studio, a HIIT class, or a meditation app, these aggregators deliver flexibility without the limitations of a single gym membership.

However, many execs report their companies are missing a big opportunity in remote-friendly fitness. Only 29% offer virtual fitness—but with hybrid work on the rise, this is a missed opportunity to engage remote talent.

For HR leaders, the playbook is clear: expand digital wellness offerings and integrate in-person, outdoor, and virtual fitness options into a seamless, all-inclusive experience. Wellness programs that meet employees where they are—whether in-office, hybrid, or remote—will see higher participation, stronger engagement, and a bigger return on investment.

Mental Wellness is a Priority, But Companies Are Still Playing Catch-Up

CEOs are making mental health a major focus. Over half (51%) of CEOs say their organizations offer therapy or counseling services, making it the most common workplace mental wellness benefit. Many also recognize the need for mental wellness leave, with 45% offering paid mental health days. Structured programs like stress management workshops (40%) and employee assistance programs (39%) are also popular—proof that companies aren't just talking about mental health; they're putting real support behind it.

But there's a catch—most companies are still stuck in reactive mode. All of those supports kick in after an employee has already experienced a rise in stress and decrease in mental wellbeing. Proactive mental support programs are less common: Less than a third (32%) provide wellbeing health apps like Headspace or offer mental health awareness training for managers (32%). Only 30% of companies offer mindfulness or meditation programs, even though research shows these practices reduce stress, boost focus, and improve overall mental resilience (Sercekman, 2024). Even more concerning, only 25% of companies have burnout prevention initiatives, despite burnout being a major contributor of disengagement and turnover (Gonzales, 2024; Üngüren et al., 2024).

For HR leaders, the takeaway is clear—waiting until employees hit a breaking point is already too late. Companies need to step up with proactive mental health support that helps employees manage stress before it spirals out of control. Expanding mindfulness programs, resilience training, and burnout prevention initiatives helps create a workforce that is healthier, more engaged, and more productive. The companies that take action now will be the ones that see stronger performance and lower absenteeism, creating workplace culture where employees truly thrive.

Financial Wellness: Long-Term Security, Short-Term Gaps

Companies are playing the long game when it comes to financial wellness—47% offer some type of retirement savings plans, making it the most common perk. Many also provide financial advisors (40%), stock options or equity sharing (37%), and emergency savings programs (37%). It's a clear sign that businesses recognize the power of financial security, helping employees not just get by, but build real wealth for the future.

Education-related financial support is on the rise—35% of companies offer student loan repayment assistance, while 33% provide tuition reimbursement or education assistance. Investing in education isn't just good for career growth—it's a smart move for long-term financial health, helping employees boost their earning potential over a lifetime (Baumann & Keimer, 2023).

The hitch in these plans is they treat short-term financial wellness as an afterthought. While companies focus on retirement planning and stock options, many employees are struggling with everyday financial stress: 86% of employees say they feel increasingly stressed about their finances, and nearly two out of three workers feel unprepared to handle a major unexpected expense, like repairing a furnace or replacing a broken appliance (Konrad, 2024). As a result, more Americans than ever before are making early withdrawals from their 401(k)s: A record-breaking number of account holders tapped into their savings early last year, with nearly 5% making withdrawals to cover emergencies like medical bills or avoiding foreclosure. That's up from the previous high of 3.6% in 2023 and more than double the prepandemic average of about 2%, according to Vanguard Group, which manages 401(k)-style accounts for nearly five million people (Tergesen, 2025). Treating long-term investment vehicles like a rainy-day fund is a clear sign that workers are facing a short-term cash crunch—one that undercuts the effectiveness of all these robust long-term financial wellness tools companies are offering.

This stress shows up in employees' day-to-day performance: 66% of full-time employees say their financial situation distracts them from work (Wellhub, The State of Work-Life Wellness, 2023). And yet only 31% of companies offer budgeting tools or apps, while a mere 29% provide financial education workshops or webinars. This leaves a huge gap for employees who need help managing expenses, saving for emergencies, or simply figuring out how to stretch their paycheck.

For HR leaders, this is a prime opportunity to fill in the missing piece. Offering financial literacy programs, budgeting tools, debt paydown support, and emergency employee assistance funds can help employees feel more financially secure today—not just in the distant future.

The companies that bridge the gap between long-term security and short-term financial support will have a happier, more financially stable workforce—and a competitive edge in talent retention.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Companies are stepping up in fitness, mental wellness, and financial health, but too many programs still operate in silos. This limits their impact. The future of workplace wellness is all about integration—connecting benefits across every area of wellbeing.

HR leaders can lead the charge by blending digital and in-person wellness, expanding preventative mental health support, and bridging short-term financial gaps. The companies that invest in flexible, tech-powered, and holistic wellness programs will see higher engagement, stronger retention, and a better ROI.

2.4 Top CEO Objections to Wellness Programs (And How to Overcome Them)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

To secure long-term investment in wellness, HR leaders need to shift the focus from cost to impact. CEOs hesitate when they see wellness as just another expense. The key is proving it drives business results.

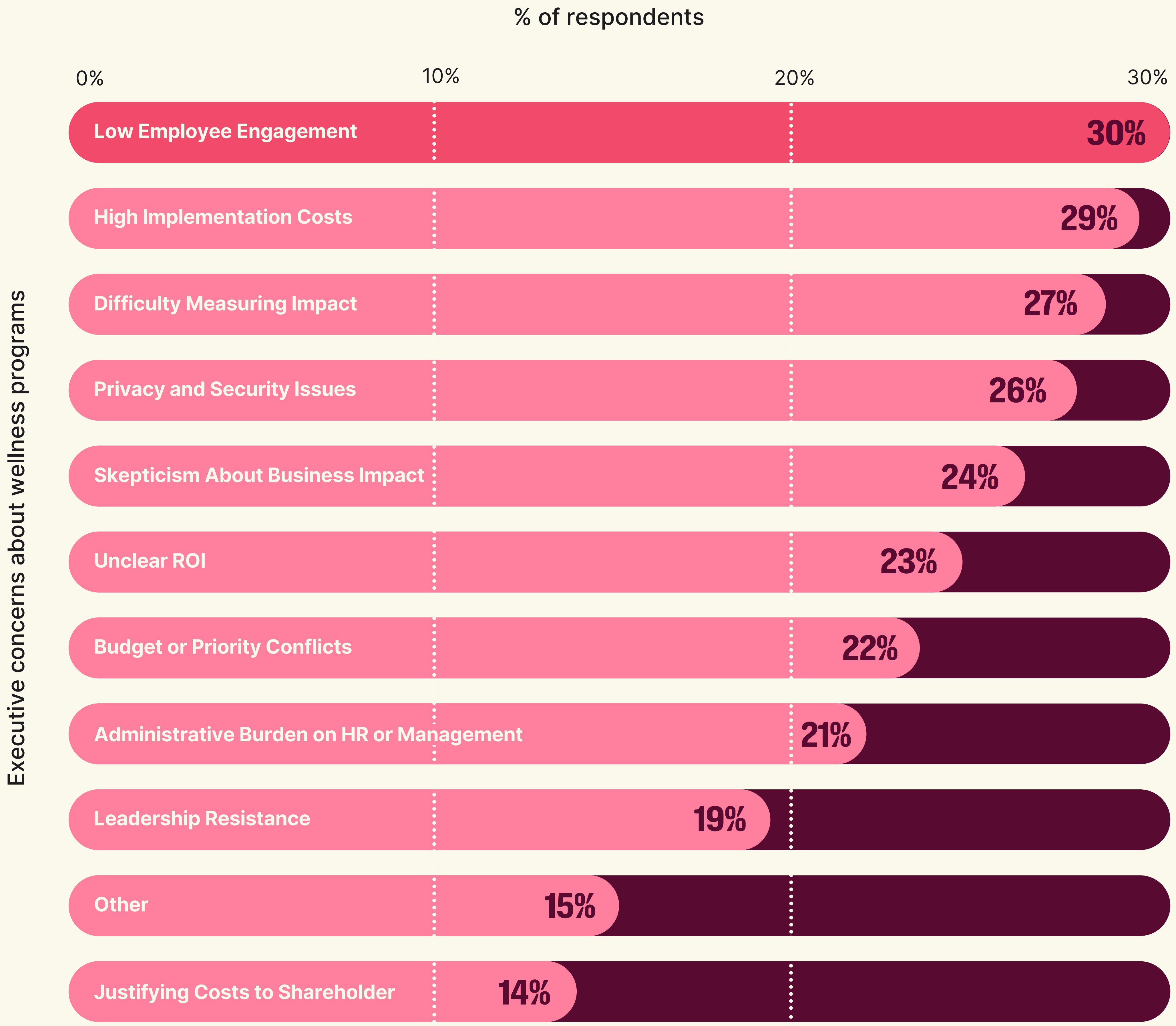
The best cases are backed with hard data, highlight employee demand, and align wellness with leadership goals. Pilot programs, executive participation, and ongoing impact reports turn skeptics into believers. When HR frames wellness as a revenue booster—cutting absenteeism, increasing productivity, and improving retention—it transforms from a cost center into a competitive edge.

IN-DEPTH

Even as workplace wellness gains momentum, executives have real concerns about engagement, price, and pay off. If HR leaders want full buy-in, they need to tackle these objections head-on.

The biggest hurdle? Low employee engagement. Thirty percent of CEOs say their top concern is that employees won't actually use the wellness programs provided.

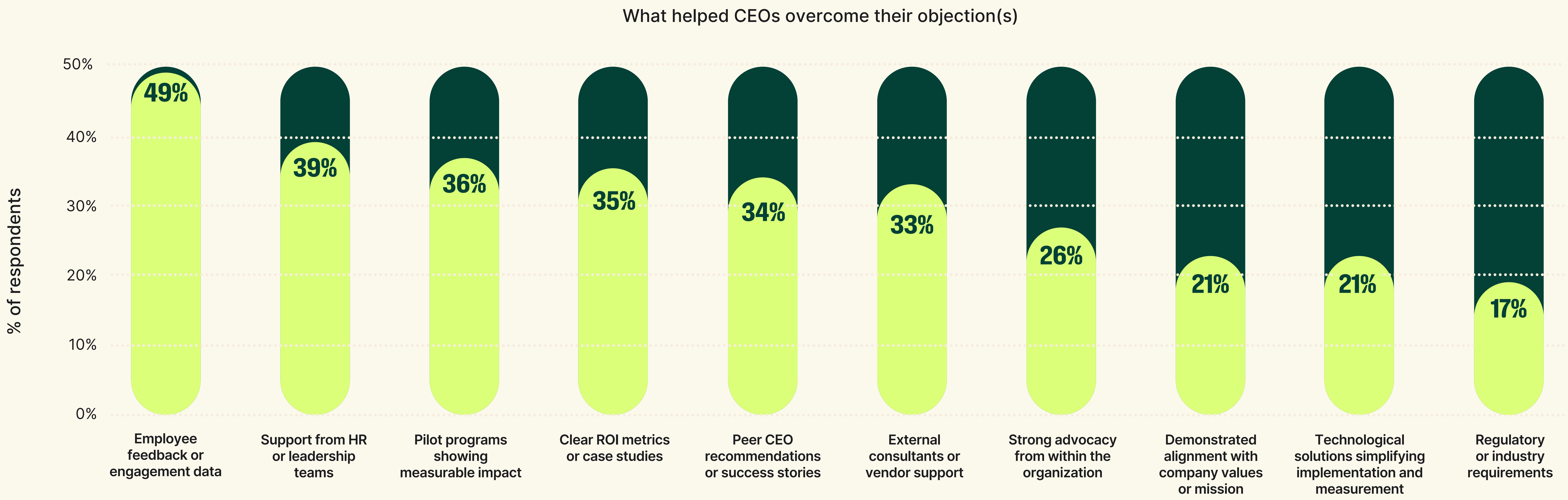
EMPLOYEE UTILIZATION AND START-UP COSTS LEAD CEO CONCERNS ABOUT WELLNESS PROGRAMS



Budget concerns are just as pressing. Twenty-nine percent of CEOs see wellness programs as too expensive, while 27% struggle to measure their impact. Another 24% question whether the ROI is worth it, and 22% say budget conflicts hold them back, forcing wellness to compete with hiring, compensation, and operational costs.

Data privacy, administrative burden, and internal resistance add to the challenge. More than a quarter (26%) of CEOs worry about data security, while 21% see wellness programs as too complex for HR to manage. Nineteen percent say pushback from other executives is a major roadblock, but external pressure is less of a concern—only 14% of CEOs cite shareholder justification as an issue.

EMPLOYEE AND HR INPUT ARE THE MOST IMPACTFUL INPUTS FOR OVERCOMING CEO CONCERN ABOUT WELLNESS PROGRAM



The message from CEOs here isn't that they are against wellness, but they need proof it works, a clear ROI, and a strategy that doesn't add more complexity to HR's plate.

Fortunately, there are many effective ways for HR to overcome these concerns.

The real game-changer? Employee feedback. Nearly half (49%) of successful companies used direct input from their teams to prove that wellness programs aren't just a perk—they're a necessity. Engagement surveys, participation tracking, and real-time feedback gave leadership a clear picture of what employees needed and how wellness programs drive morale, performance, and retention. When employees spoke up, HR had the data—and the firepower—to turn skepticism into action.

But data alone wasn't enough—HR needed leadership buy-in. Thirty-nine percent of CEOs credited support from executives and HR as the make-or-break factor in overcoming objections. This means it's critical to educate your entire C-suite, not just CEOs, on the business benefits of wellbeing. Consider pulling your CFO, head of sales, and other revenue-focused leaders into your wellness impact reporting meetings so everyone makes a clear connection between healthy employees and healthy profits.

For HR leaders facing "Will this even work?" pushback, pilot programs became their secret weapon. Thirty-six percent of companies started small testing programs before a full rollout. These mini-launches provided hard data—participation rates, employee testimonials, and early ROI metrics—that erased doubt and paved the way for full-scale investment.

When it comes to ROI, numbers speak louder than words—and 35% of companies used hard data to win over decision-makers. CEOs and CFOs who were hesitant about wellness budgets quickly changed their tune when they saw the real impact: cost savings, lower absenteeism, and higher productivity. Regular reporting became a must-have, proving that wellness isn't just an expense—it's a smart business strategy.

Even with strong internal data, some HR teams needed an extra push—so they called in reinforcements. Thirty-four percent of companies leaned on peer CEO endorsements to shift executive mindsets. When CEOs heard from other leaders who had already seen massive success with wellness initiatives, the lightbulb went off. Retention, reduced burnout, a healthier workforce—it wasn't just theory, it was reality.

To keep things seamless, 33% of companies turned to outside experts. Wellness consultants, benefits analysts, and third-party vendors helped HR teams design, refine, and scale programs that actually delivered results. The best wellness programs have a fully integrated team ready to help with implementation; their expertise takes the pressure off internal teams and gives wellness initiatives the professional backing they need to succeed.

There's a proven playbook for HR leaders looking to drive real engagement in wellness programs. *Wellhub's Return on Wellbeing 2024* highlights five key strategies that have helped HR teams successfully boost participation.

The secret? A proactive approach. Sharing this roadmap upfront shows the C-suite that you're not just launching a program and hoping for the best—you're committed to making it work.

1. Offer Personalized, Flexible Wellness Options

Employees are far more likely to participate in a wellness program when it meets their individual needs. Companies that provide a mix of fitness, mental health, nutrition, and financial wellness options see stronger engagement because employees can choose benefits that fit their lifestyle and goals.

2. Get Leadership Involved

CEOs have power to address their own concerns. When executives actively participate in wellness programs, engagement skyrockets. Ninety-eight percent of HR leaders say executive buy-in is critical, and companies with strong leadership participation see employee engagement rates climb from 44% to 80% (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing, 2024; Wellhub, State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024). Having CEOs and senior leaders publicly champion wellness initiatives helps normalize participation across all levels of the organization.

3. Improve Internal Communication

Employees can't use a wellness program if they don't know what's available. Many employees report being unaware of their company's wellness offerings, making internal communication a top priority. HR teams that leverage multi-channel messaging—emails, Slack, town halls, and employee testimonials—see significantly higher program participation.

4. Use Gamification and Incentives to Drive Engagement

Wellness challenges, step competitions, and rewards make participation fun and engaging. Companies that gamify wellness programs see higher engagement, especially when paired with incentives like extra PTO, wellness stipends, or recognition. Turning wellness into a friendly competition or milestone-based achievement system can transform participation rates.

5. Continuously Track and Optimize the Program

Wellness programs must evolve with employee needs. Fifty-three percent of HR leaders adjust their wellness offerings every quarter based on participation trends, employee feedback, and engagement data (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing, 2024). Frequent program updates ensure wellness initiatives remain relevant, accessible, and engaging over time.

A strong rollout starts with internal wellness champions—the employees and managers who bring programs to life and get CEOs on board. In fact, 26% of companies said having internal advocates made all the difference in winning leadership approval. These champions turned passive interest into active involvement, embedding wellness into company culture.

Technology made it even easier. Twenty-one percent of companies use digital tools to streamline administration, track participation, and report real-time impact. From wellness aggregators (e.g., Wellhub) to engagement tracking platforms, HR leaders lean on tech to make wellness data-driven, efficient, and scalable—eliminating the fear that wellness programs would become a burden on HR.

THE BOTTOM LINE

HR leaders who turned wellness doubters into believers didn't just push harder—they got smarter. They listened to employees, launched pilot programs, tracked impact, and leaned on leadership to drive adoption. Peer CEO endorsements, expert partnerships, and internal wellness champions all play a role in securing wellness investments.

For HR teams still facing resistance, the formula is clear: Let the data do the talking, start small, report results often, and make wellness a business priority.

Once leaders see the ROI, experience the benefits, and hear success stories firsthand, funding follows—and wellness becomes a cornerstone of company success.

3 The ROI Equation: How CEOs Evaluate Wellness

3.1 What CEOs Value Most in Wellness Programs

KEY TAKEAWAY

CEOs care about productivity, retention, and cost savings, so your pitch should speak their language—ROI, engagement rates, and financial benefits. The key to approval? A program that's cost-effective, easy to implement, and aligned with company goals.

If you can prove measurable results—lower turnover, higher productivity, and reduced healthcare costs—you'll position wellness as more than just a perk. You'll show it's a strategic advantage that delivers real business value.

IN-DEPTH

3.1.1 What CEOs Want out of a Wellness Program

CEOs do more than sign off on wellness programs—they shape them. A whopping 94% of CEOs have the final say on wellness budgets, and nearly all are hands-on in choosing the right program (48% are extremely involved, 36% are very involved). That means if you want your wellness initiative approved, you need to speak their language—ROI, engagement, retention, and business impact.

So, what exactly makes a wellness program stand out to a CEO? Let's dive in.

Productivity Boosts are in High Demand

CEOs don't invest in wellness programs just for fun—they expect results. Their number one reason for funding wellness initiatives? Boosting productivity and performance (56%).

They're onto something: Nearly half of HR leaders (47%) report major productivity gains from their wellness programs (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing. 2024).

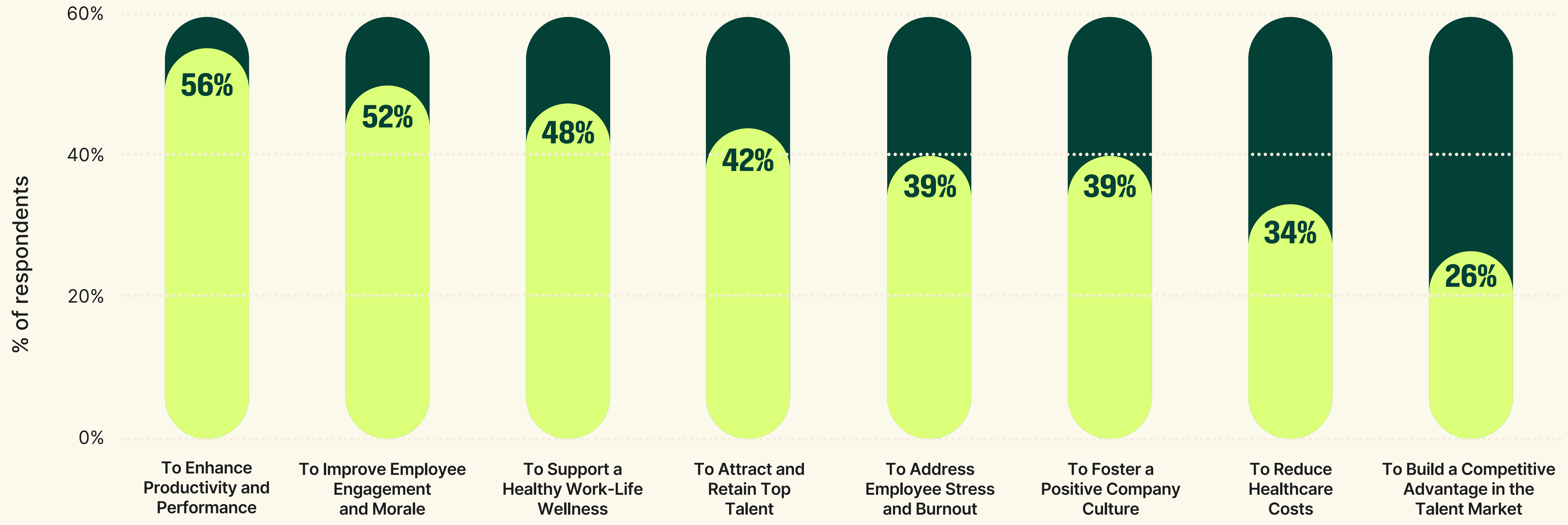
This means higher wellness equals more output. With burnout inflating turnover and degrading productivity—costing companies a staggering $322 billion per year—CEOs know that keeping employees energized, engaged, and present is a non-negotiable (Gallup, n.d.).

But it's not just about working harder—it's about working happier too. More than half of CEOs (52%) invest in wellness programs to boost morale and engagement, and for good reason. With three out of five employees disengaged, the global economy takes an $8.9 trillion hit every year (Gallup, 2024).

CEOs aren't about to leave that kind of money on the table. They see wellness as the key to reenergizing their workforce and driving real results.

PRODUCTIVITY, ENGAGEMENT, AND RETENTION MOTIVATE CEO WELLNESS INVESTMENTS

Motivations for investing in employee wellbeing programs



Having Top Talent is a Top Priority

CEOs want wellbeing to help them win the war for talent. Forty-two percent of CEOs fund wellness programs to attract and retain top talent, and they're making a smart bet. When over half (55%) of employees agree or strongly agree they'd leave a company that doesn't prioritize wellbeing, organizations that ignore wellness risk losing their best people (Wellhub, The State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024).

But retention is only half the battle—26% of CEOs see wellness as a competitive advantage in recruitment. And they're right: More than a third (38%) of HR leaders say wellness programs are extremely important to talent acquisition (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing, 2024).

In today's job market, benefits packages can make or break a hiring decision, and companies with robust wellness offerings don't just attract the best of the best—they keep them.

CEOs Seek an End to Stress and Burnout

Let's talk about the silent business killer: stress. It's why 39% of CEOs prioritize burnout prevention when investing in wellness programs—and for good reason. Ninety-six percent of employees experience stress at work daily, with 32% reporting a high level of stress (Wellhub, The State of Work-Life Wellness, 2023). And the fallout? They leave. Burnout-driven turnover alone drains 20% of payroll budgets (Gallup, n.d.).

Meanwhile, 48% of CEOs invest in wellness programs to support a better work-life balance—because when work-life balance goes out the window, so does performance. Right now, 47% of employees say work stress is wrecking their mental wellbeing, and 55% say poor mental wellness is destroying their sleep (Wellhub, The State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024). If employees are exhausted, overwhelmed, and checked out, they're not bringing their A-game to work. CEOs see wellness as the solution.

Healthcare Savings Are a Bottom-Line Win

With healthcare costs on the rise, CEOs are looking for long-term, cost-saving solutions. Wellness programs are answering their call. Thirty-four percent of CEOs say reducing healthcare costs is a key driver of wellness investments, and the results speak for themselves: 91% of companies report lower healthcare expenses thanks to their wellness initiatives (Wellhub, 2024).

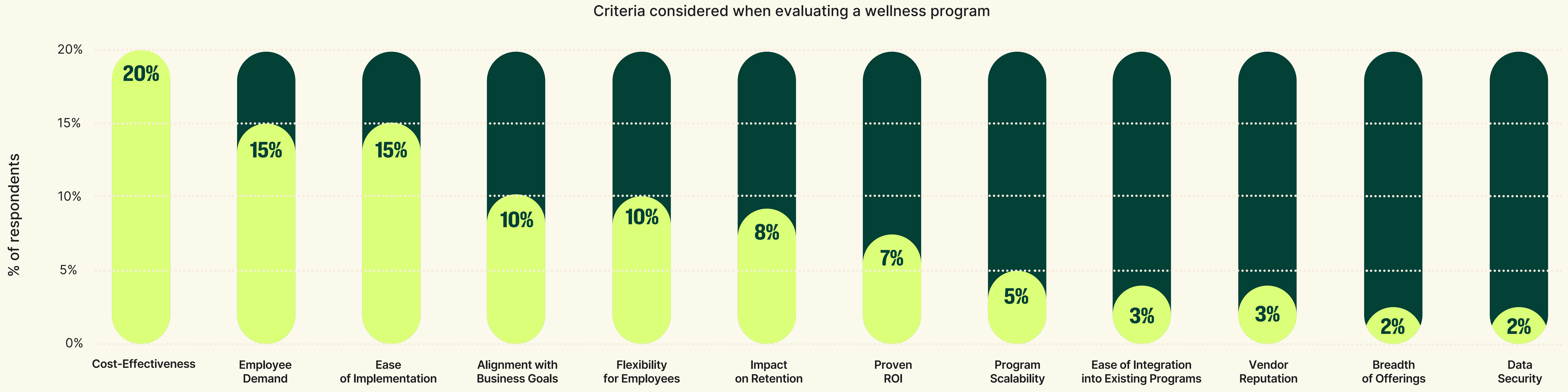
This is because wellness programs shine by preventing the need for healthcare in the first place: Three-quarters of medical costs stem from preventable conditions, meaning companies that fail to invest in wellness are signing up to pay avoidable expenses (Gallup, n.d).

That makes the choice simple: invest now for prevention or pay later for skyrocketing healthcare claims. Smart leaders are betting on wellness—and winning.

3.1.2 How CEOs Evaluate Potential Wellness Programs

Now, those high-level goals are great, but how do CEOs decide if a specific wellness program is worth the investment? What metrics tell them a program will actually deliver on productivity, engagement, and cost savings? Let's break it down.

WELLNESS PROGRAMS WOO CEOS WHEN THEY DELIVER ON COST AND MEET EMPLOYEE DEMAND



Cost-Effectiveness Reigns Supreme

Every dollar spent needs to justify itself in a business. That's why 20% of CEOs say cost-effectiveness is their number one evaluation metric when selecting a wellness program.

The logic is simple: If a program doesn't drive measurable savings or gains, it's out. And CEOs don't just want any return—they want proof: 7% specifically say their make-or-break metric is proven ROI. They need to see how wellness programs are cutting costs, reducing absenteeism, and increasing engagement to boost the bottom line.

Employee Demand and Ease of Use Drive Decisions

It doesn't matter how great a wellness program looks on paper—if employees aren't going to use it, it's not going to get a green light. That's why 15% of CEOs say employee demand is their top priority when choosing a program. Fortunately, 79% of employees with access to a wellness program use it—54% of employees say they consistently utilize their wellness program, with 20% of them saying they use it all the time—proving that when companies offer the right benefits, people engage (Wellhub, State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024).

But it has to be easy to roll out. Another 15% of CEOs say ease of implementation is a top priority, and it makes sense. The best programs fit right into existing workflows, don't create extra headaches, and are easy for employees to actually use. If it's simple and seamless, it's a smart investment.

Business Alignment and Flexibility Are Key

CEOs aren't investing in wellness for the sake of it—they expect wellbeing to align with their company's goals. That's why 10% say their top priority is to find programs that directly support business objectives. Whether it's improving productivity, reducing turnover, or strengthening employer branding, a wellness program has to contribute to the company's bigger strategic picture.

Flexibility is another must-have for modern wellness programs. Another 10% of CEOs rank employee flexibility as a top evaluation metric, recognizing that rigid, one-size-fits-all programs don't work. Employees want wellness solutions that fit into their lives—whether that means virtual meditation, nutrition coaching, sleep trackers, on-demand fitness, or budgeting apps.

THE BOTTOM LINE

CEOs are clear on what makes a wellness program worth funding: it must deliver ROI, drive employee engagement, and be simple to implement. Cost-effectiveness leads the pack, but demand, ease of use, and alignment with business goals also carry weight.

To win executive buy-in, HR teams need to highlight programs that are flexible, data-backed, and employee-approved. When wellness solutions are easy to adopt and tied to performance, they move from nice-to-have to must-have.

3.2 How CEOs Gauge Performance

KEY TAKEAWAYS

To get CEOs on board with wellness, HR leaders need more than feel-good stories—they need data that proves impact.

That means tracking what CEOs care about most: engagement, productivity, cost savings, and retention. Participation rates, performance metrics, and healthcare spend should be front and center.

The magic happens when hard data meets real stories—from manager feedback to culture shifts on the ground. When HR connects wellness to business outcomes and ROI, it becomes a clear and powerful strategy for growth.

IN-DEPTH

Once a wellness program is up and running, CEOs don't just sit back and hope it works—they want to hear about all the great impacts it's having. And they're paying close attention. Nearly half (48%) get updates at least monthly, and another 41% check in quarterly. The good news? Eighty-nine percent of CEOs have never pulled the plug on a wellness program. That means when a program works, it sticks.

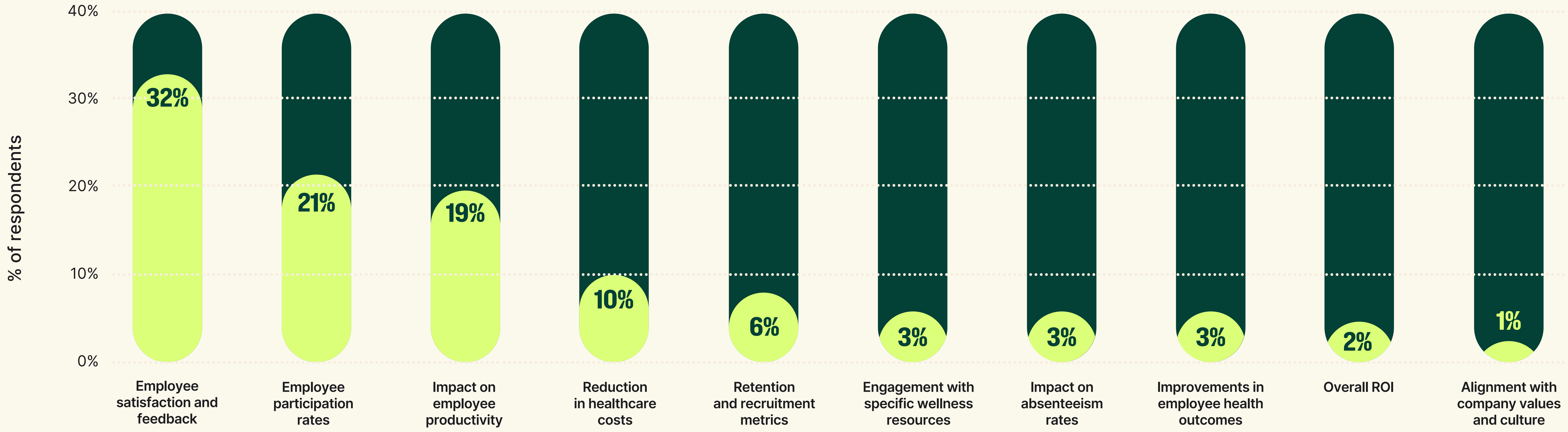
But CEOs aren't looking for feel-good reports. They want hard data. Is the program boosting productivity? Are employees actually using it? Is it saving the company money?

3.2.1 People and Performance Success Metrics

Here's what they care about most, and how HR leaders can collect the data they need to tell a compelling story.

EMPLOYEE-CENTRIC SUCCESS METRICS PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN SHAPING HOW CEOS EVALUATE WELLNESS PROGRAM SUCCESS

Data points used to evaluate returns of wellness program success



Employee Engagement and Sentiment Come First

The first thing CEOs want to know is if employees actually like the program—and if they're using it. Employee satisfaction tops the list, with 32% of CEOs prioritizing employee feedback as a key measure of success.

But sentiment alone isn't enough. Participation rates matter just as much, with 21% of CEOs tracking how many employees are actively engaging with wellness offerings. Even the best-designed wellness initiative is useless if employees don't use it. But the more they use a program, the greater the returns: Research shows that when employees take advantage of programs, companies see stronger wellbeing outcomes, higher morale, and increased productivity (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing, 2024).

For HR leaders, surveying employees regularly can provide insights into satisfaction. Simple pulse surveys sent during and after wellness program launches can reveal how employees are responding in real time. Anonymous feedback forms give employees space to share more detailed thoughts, especially if they're hesitant to speak up in a survey. Both tools can surface trends worth acting on—like whether employees find a program valuable, easy to use, or worth continuing.

Employee focus groups take that insight deeper. Just make sure they reflect your full workforce—different roles, departments, and locations. Include both users and non-users to understand what's working, what's not, and what's getting in the way.

Finally, participation data can be gathered through wellness platform analytics, gym check-ins, and digital health app usage. The more engagement data HR can track, the clearer the picture will be.

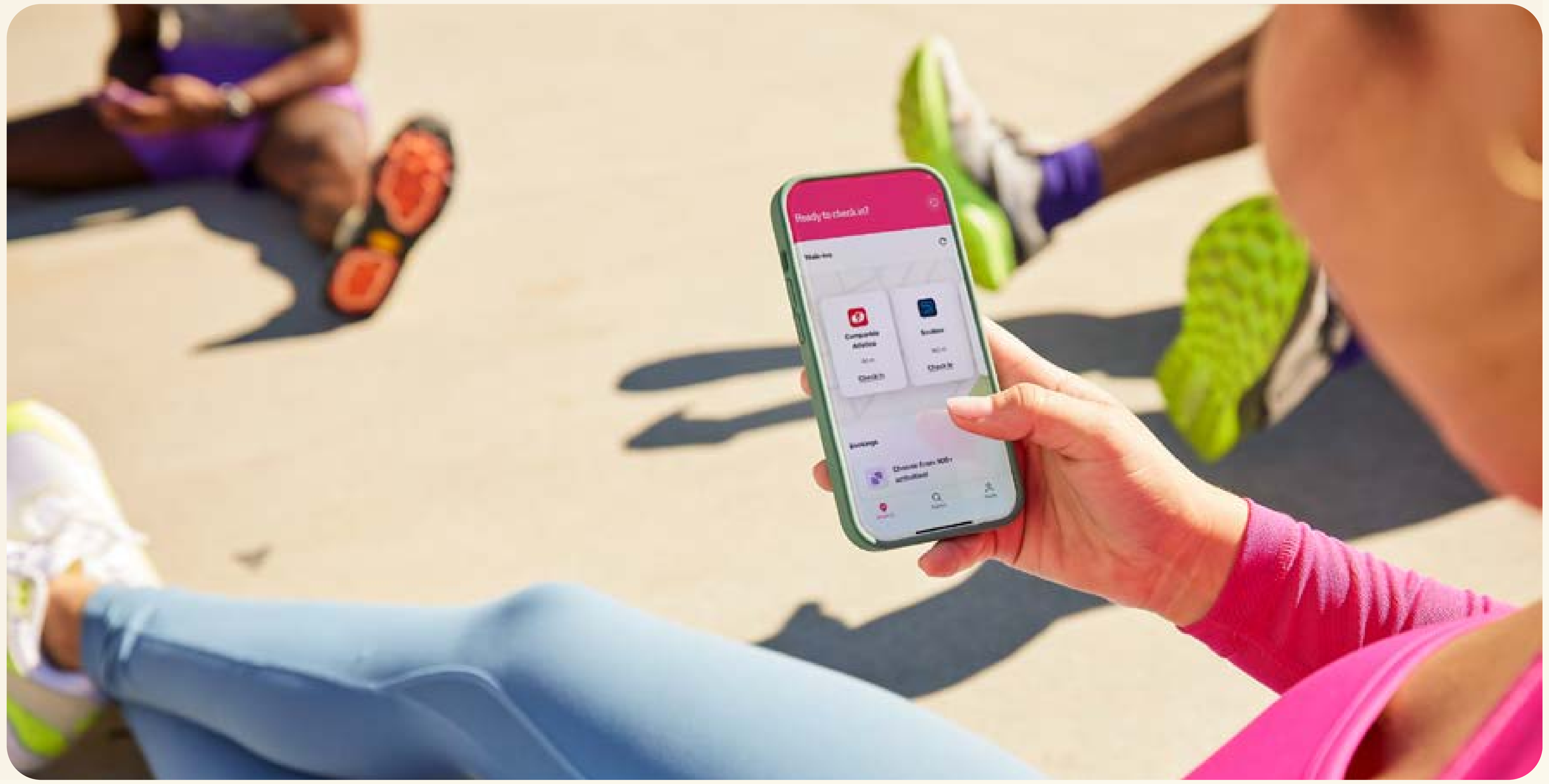
Productivity is the Game-Changer

Wellness isn't just about feeling good—it's about performing better. That's why 19% of CEOs say productivity improvements are their main KPI when assessing a program's success. They want to know if wellness initiatives are helping employees stay focused, energized, and efficient.

Burnout and disengagement have massive financial consequences, with lost productivity costing businesses $322 billion annually (Gallup, n.d.). Meanwhile, employees themselves report that better physical and emotional wellbeing directly boosts their performance at work (93% and 95%, respectively) (Wellhub, State of Workplace Wellness, 2024).

HR teams can track productivity improvements by monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs) before and after program implementation. This might include tracking deadlines met, quality of work assessments, or employee self-reported productivity through internal surveys. You can also look at more direct metrics like output per employee or revenue per employee to get a clearer picture. For a meaningful comparison, measure these metrics against a baseline—such as employees who aren't actively engaged in your wellness program. This can help isolate the program's impact and strengthen your case with leadership. Connecting wellness program participation to performance reviews and manager feedback can provide powerful evidence that wellness fuels workplace success.

Employee focus groups take that insight deeper. Just make sure they reflect your full workforce—different roles, departments, and locations. Include both users and non-users to understand what's working, what's not, and what's getting in the way.



Healthcare Savings Are on the Radar

For CEOs, a wellness program that reduces healthcare costs is a program worth keeping: 10% say financial savings on medical claims and insurance expenses is the most important marker of success.

The numbers show that companies with strong wellness programs report significant reductions in healthcare costs, particularly in preventable conditions (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing, 2024). If a program helps lower chronic disease risks, reduce stress-related illnesses, or improve preventive care utilization, you are reducing your high-dollar healthcare claims—a direct contribution to the company's bottom line.

HR can work with benefits providers to analyze year-over-year healthcare claims, preventive screenings, chronic disease management metrics, prescription drug spend, and hospitalization rates.

Retention and Recruitment Matter

CEOs recognize that wellness plays a critical role in attracting and retaining top talent. For 6% of respondents, it's not just a factor—it's the single most important success metric when evaluating a wellness program. With over a quarter of employees (28%) strongly agreeing they'll only apply to companies prioritizing wellbeing in their next job hunt (Wellhub, State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024), wellness programs aren't just a perk—they're a competitive advantage.

HR can track this impact by analyzing turnover rates, exit interviews, and new hire surveys to see if wellness benefits are influencing employee decisions. If top candidates mention wellness as a reason they joined or departing employees cite a lack of wellbeing support as a reason they're leaving, that's crucial data for CEOs. Internal mobility and promotion rates are also telling—employees who feel supported and engaged are more likely to grow within the company. Track the percentage of wellness program participants who pursue or receive new roles to spot patterns and highlight long-term value.

3.2.2 Culture and Sentiment Success Metrics

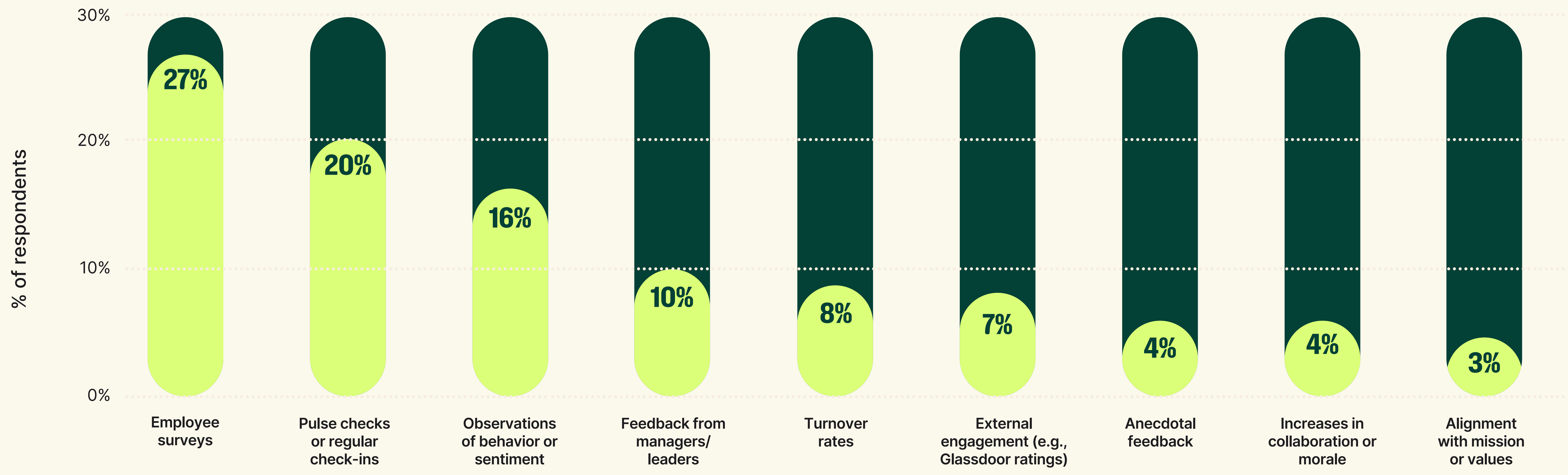
Some wellness wins are easy to measure—like higher offer acceptance rates or lower turnover. But what about the intangible benefits, like a stronger company culture, better morale, and deeper engagement?

CEOs still want proof that their wellness investment is driving change, even when the impact isn't tied to a spreadsheet.

So, how do you measure what's hard to quantify? Here's what CEOs say matters most—and how HR can bring them the data they need.

HR LEADERS CAN HARNESS WORKFORCE INPUT TO EVALUATE CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF THEIR WELLNESS PROGRAM

Data points used to evaluate intangible returns of wellness program success



Employee Input is CEOs' Go-To Metric

When CEOs want to know how employees feel about their work environment, 27% say surveys about employee engagement in wellness programs are the metric they care about the most. These surveys don't just measure happiness—they reveal how invested employees are in their work, their teams, and the company. Ask questions like: *How often do you feel energized at work? Do you feel supported in maintaining your wellbeing? Has the wellness program improved your day-to-day experience?* These responses offer valuable insight into how culture and performance are shifting. And engagement matters: Highly engaged employees are 23% more profitable for their companies (Gallup, 2024).

HR leaders should track engagement survey results before and after launching a wellness initiative. Go beyond satisfaction to ask sharper questions like: *Do you feel motivated to do your best work each day? Does your work feel meaningful? Do you understand how your role contributes to company goals?* Questions like these help measure whether wellness programs are moving the needle on focus, motivation, and connection—key indicators of employee engagement CEOs care about.

But CEOs aren't just looking for once-a-year engagement surveys: 20% say pulse checks are the most important feedback for them. You can use one-question polls, quarterly pulse surveys, or feedback tools to capture employee sentiment. If wellness programs are working, scores should show an upward trend of improved wellbeing, stronger connection to company values, and lower reports of burnout.
CEOs love to see consistent improvements, not just one-time engagement spikes.

It also helps to look beyond internal feedback. Watch how your Glassdoor or Indeed scores are trending. Rising employer ratings can signal stronger morale and better workplace reputation. And if your company ties wellness to customer experience, monitor customer satisfaction scores, too. Engaged, healthy employees often show up more positively for customers—another critical metric.

Morale and Collaboration Are Key Culture Indicators

Not all wellness program results show up in data—16% of CEOs rely on direct observations of team morale and collaboration. Are employees more energized? Are teams working together more effectively? Are meetings more positive and productive? These are the cultural cues CEOs are watching.

HR can review internal documents to spot shifts in team dynamics noted during check-ins, performance reviews, and cross-functional projects. If wellness programs are creating a more connected, supportive work environment, highlight those stories alongside the hard data in your monthly impact reports. Think of them like internal testimonials—direct quotes from employees, shoutouts in team meetings, or even a LinkedIn post from someone who's grateful for the flexibility to take a mental health day or fit in a midday workout. These moments make the impact real and relatable, especially for executive audiences.

Managers and Team Leaders Provide Critical Insight

Frontline managers interact with employees daily, making them a crucial barometer for measuring engagement, stress levels, and team morale. In fact, 10% of CEOs say manager and team leader feedback is the most effective way to assess how wellness programs are shaping workplace culture.

To tap into this insight effectively, HR can create structured channels for manager input, such as:

- Quick-pulse surveys specifically for people managers
- Monthly or quarterly roundtable discussions to share trends and challenges
- Structured one-on-one check-ins between HR and team leaders
- Feedback templates or dashboards for reporting team sentiment and observable behavior changes

Encourage managers to report on:

- Changes in team energy and morale
- Observed improvements in focus, collaboration, or attendance
- Reduction in stress-related performance issues or conflicts
- Uptake and sentiment around wellness offerings

By consistently collecting and synthesizing this feedback, HR can spot early trends, identify high-performing teams, and even pinpoint areas where additional support or wellness communication is needed.

When managers say their teams are happier, more resilient, and better supported, that's more than anecdotal—it's a powerful signal that wellness is working.

Retention and Brand Reputation Prove Culture is Thriving

Recognition matters—especially to CEOs. For 7% of executives, external awards and rankings are the most important measure of the impact of wellness on company culture. Whether it's earning a Best Place to Work award or seeing a boost in Glassdoor ratings, external validation sends a strong message: Your culture is thriving, and wellness is playing a role.

To leverage this, HR teams can proactively track and showcase culture-focused recognition, such as:

- Glassdoor and Indeed reviews, including trends in keywords like "work-life balance", "supportive leadership", or "wellbeing"
- Employer awards and certifications, like Great Place to Work, Fortune Best Workplaces, or local industry recognitions
- Social media sentiment, including employee advocacy posts and positive engagement on wellness-related content. There are many social media tools that can analyze comments on your posts to provide an overall sentiment score.

Better yet, make external recognition part of your strategy:

- Encourage employees to share their experiences on platforms like Glassdoor or LinkedIn
- Include wellness as a talking point in award applications and branding efforts
- Use recognition wins in internal comms to reinforce the value of wellness and boost morale

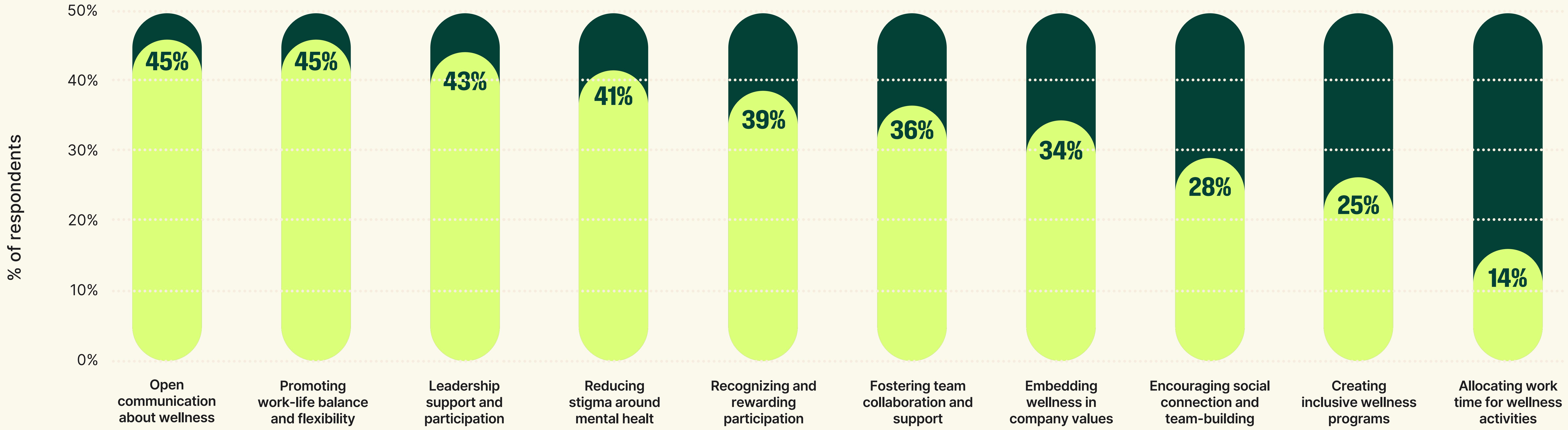
When wellness programs lead to public praise and third-party credibility, it not only boosts your employer brand—it gives leadership tangible proof that your culture investments are paying off.

3.2.3 Sustaining Success in the Long-Run

Once a wellness program is up and running, what helps it succeed over the long haul? A strong rollout plan and supportive external partners go a long way, but they work most effectively when a company's culture truly embraces wellness. According to CEOs, this is not about carewashing or one-off events—it's about making wellbeing part of how the company works.

COMMUNICATION AND FLEXIBILITY ARE THE TOP CULTURE PRIORITIES FOR CEOs LOOKING TO SUSTAIN THE SUCCESS OF WELLNESS PROGRAMS

Workplace Culture Changes That Would Enhance the Success of a Wellness Program



The strongest signal comes from the top: 45% of CEOs say open communication about wellness is essential, matched by another 45% who prioritize promoting work-life balance and flexibility. These two go hand in hand. If employees don't know what's available—or feel like they don't have time to use it—engagement stalls. CEOs see awareness and accessibility as baseline requirements, not bonus features.

But communication alone isn't enough. Forty-three percent of CEOs say leadership support is a key factor in a program's success. That means showing up—talking openly about wellness, participating in initiatives, and reinforcing their importance. When executives model healthy behaviors and back wellness publicly, it creates momentum across the org.

Reducing stigma is next on the list. Forty-one percent of CEOs want to see more open conversations around mental health. This reflects a growing recognition that psychological safety is a workplace issue—not just a personal one. Wellness programs can't thrive in silence. To work, they need to live in an environment where vulnerability is met with support.

Recognition also matters. Thirty-nine percent of CEOs believe acknowledging and rewarding participation keeps energy high. This doesn't mean handing out trophies—it means reinforcing the message that wellness isn't a distraction from work, it's a driver of performance. A thank-you from a manager or a spotlight in an all-hands can go a long way.

Culture shows up again through collaboration and values. Thirty-six percent of CEOs say fostering team support is key, and 34% want to see wellness embedded into company values. These leaders know that wellness can't live in an HR silo. It needs to show up in how teams work together, how success is defined, and how people treat one another across the org.

Social connection (28%) and inclusivity (25%) round out the list of culture drivers. CEOs recognize that programs need to resonate across roles, identities, and geographies. When wellness feels personal and community-driven, people are more likely to opt in.

One stat stands apart. Only 14% of CEOs say allocating work time for wellness is critical to success. That doesn't mean time isn't a barrier—it means most leaders believe wellness should be integrated, not isolated. They want programs that fit into the flow of the workday, not ones that pull people away from it.

The deeper message is clear: CEOs want wellness programs that align with how business gets done. They see success as a shared responsibility—driven by HR, modeled by leadership, and supported by a culture that values balance, safety, and belonging. For HR leaders, this is both a challenge and an opportunity. The path to lasting impact isn't just about launching new programs—it's about reshaping how the organization thinks about work and wellbeing together.

THE BOTTOM LINE

CEOs are championing wellness programs that deliver real impact. They want to see higher productivity, stronger engagement, and lower costs.

The best part? When a program works, it lasts. Employee satisfaction and participation are key success metrics, alongside performance gains and healthcare savings.

But success is about more than numbers—execs also look for cultural wins like boosted morale, stronger teams, and deeper engagement. HR teams that bring clear data, real-time insights, and powerful success stories will keep wellness programs thriving and business performance soaring.

3.3 What Drives CEOs to Increase Wellness Investments

KEY TAKEAWAYS

You and your CEO have evaluated wellness programs. You've selected one. And you are gauging impact. Now, how do you ensure your executive team is continuing to up the ante each year during budget season?

The key is that CEOs invest in what they believe in—and they believe in what they experience. The strongest wellness funding comes from leaders who feel the benefits firsthand and see the business impact clearly. Personal health, regular reporting, and clear ROI turn wellness from a nice-to-have into a must-have.

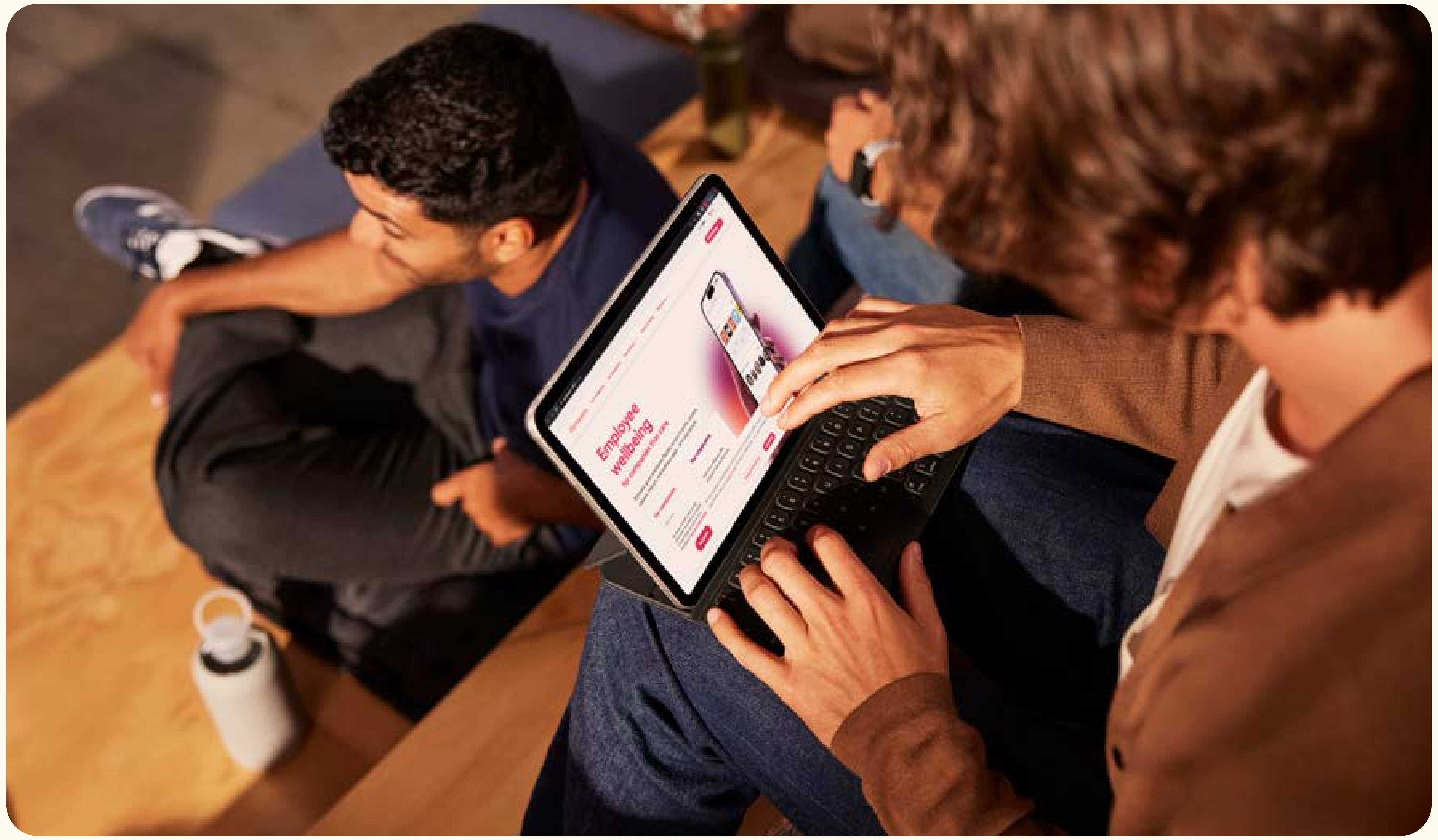
For HR, the formula is simple: Get your CEO involved, show them the data proving that wellness is great for business. When leaders thrive, so does investment.

IN-DEPTH

Where Wellness Meets the Bottom

HR leaders who make this case with hard numbers, frequent updates, and smart budgeting are winning bigger investments.

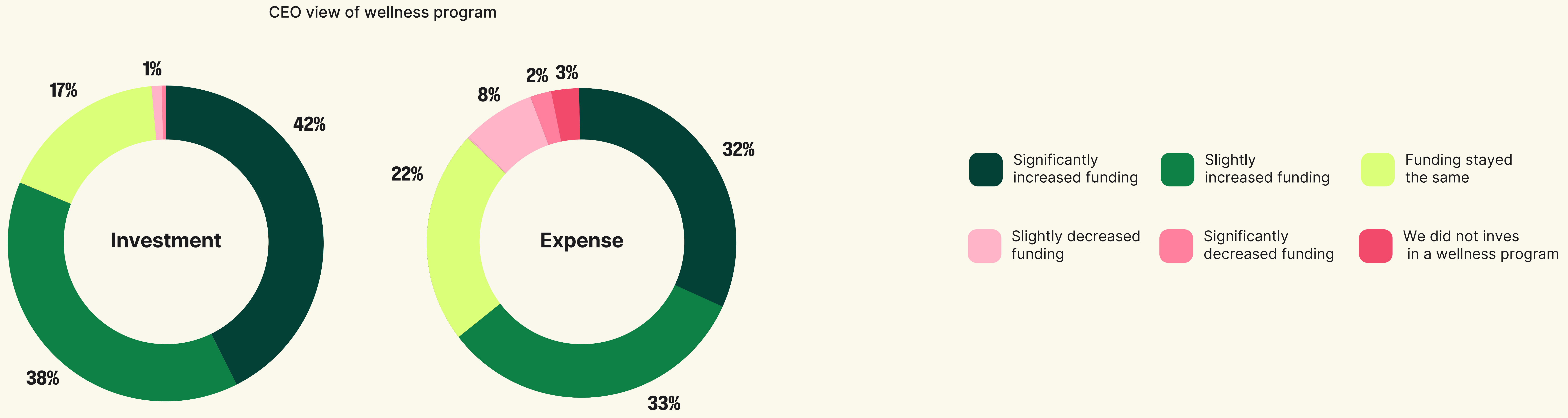
CEOs are far more likely to invest in wellness when they believe it drives business results. Among the 78% of CEOs who view wellness as an investment, four out of five (80%) plan to increase funding next year. In contrast, among the 22% who see wellness as an expense, only 65% plan to boost investment. On the flip side, skepticism has real consequences. CEOs who doubt the impact of wellness programs are five times more likely to cut budgets (15% vs. 3%) or opt out entirely (15% vs. 1%).



Whether CEOs view wellness as an investment or an expense does more than shape whether or not they invest—it determines how much they're willing to spend.

Leaders who see wellness as a strategic driver of business performance tend to fund it accordingly. A massive 80% of CEOs who view wellness as a business investment increased their budgets last year, with 42% making significant hikes. Only 65% of those who see it as an expense increased funding, and less than a third approved major boosts (32%).

CEOs THAT VIEW WELLNESS PROGRAMS AS AN INVESTMENT ARE MORE LIKELY TO INCREASE SPENDING THAN CEOS WHO THINK PROGRAMS ARE AN EXPENSE

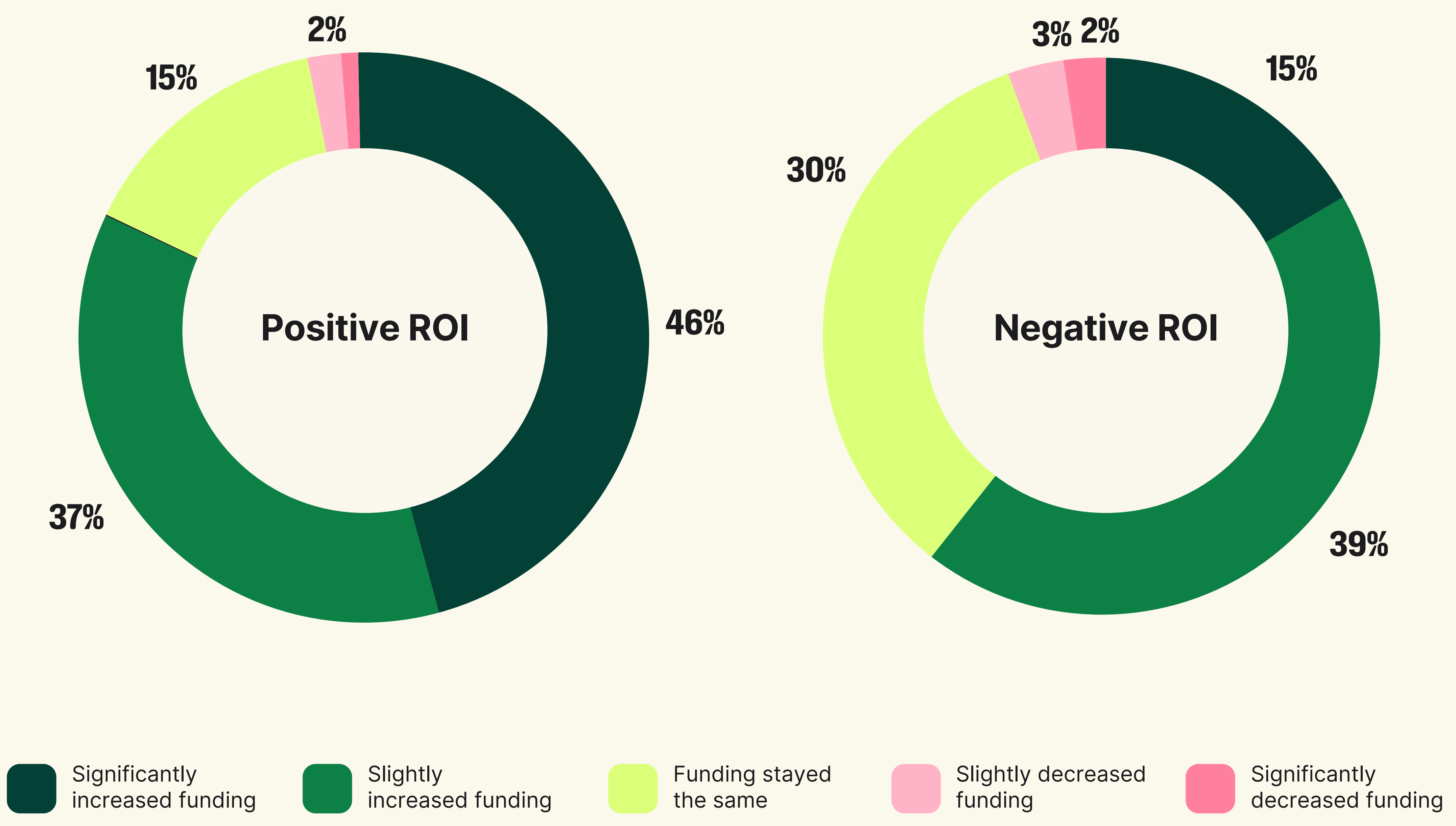


Return on Investment

The pattern is even clearer among CEOs who report seeing a positive ROI—83% increased funding, and nearly half (46%) made major investments. Even among those who saw a negative return, more than half (54%) still expanded their budgets, though they were far more cautious, with only 15% making big increases.

CEOs THAT SEE A POSITIVE ROI FROM THEIR WELLNESS PROGRAMS ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE INCREASED WELLNESS BUDGETS LAST YEAR THAN CEOS WHO SEE A NEGATIVE ROI

CEO perception of wellness program returns

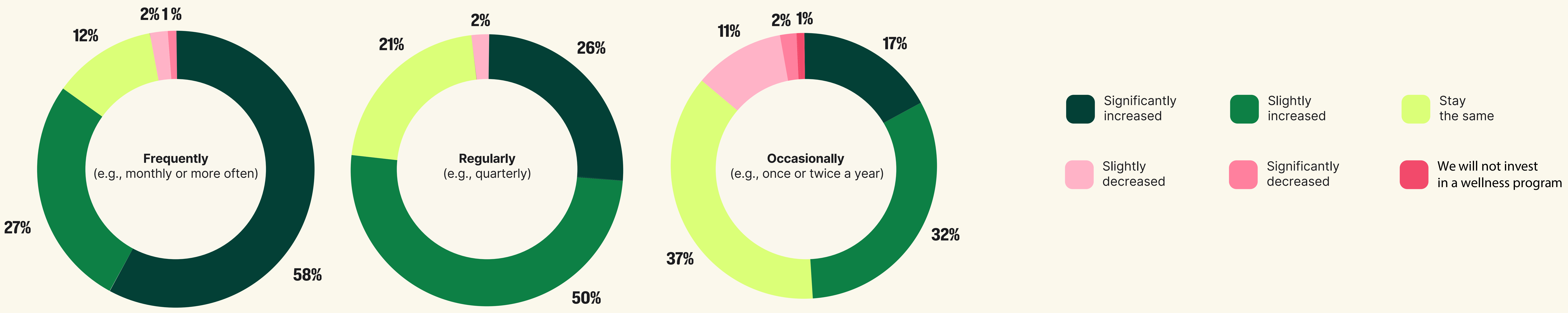


Frequency of Reporting

One of the most powerful weapons in securing wellness funding? You can likely guess by now: frequent impact reporting. When CEOs get regular updates, they act. And they didn't just bump budgets—they backed programs in a big way. Fifty-eight percent of these leaders approved significant increases, compared to just 27% who made smaller adjustments. Quarterly updates still work, but they don't pack the same punch—76% of these CEOs increased funding, with only 26% approving significant hikes. Wait too long to report the performance contributions of a wellness program, and the connection weakens. Only 49% of CEOs who get occasional updates boosted budgets, with far fewer approving major increases.

THE MORE FREQUENTLY CEOs RECEIVE WELLNESS PROGRAM IMPACT UPDATES, THE MORE LIKELY IT IS THEY INCREASED PROGRAM FUNDING SINCE LAST YEAR

Frequency of program impact updates

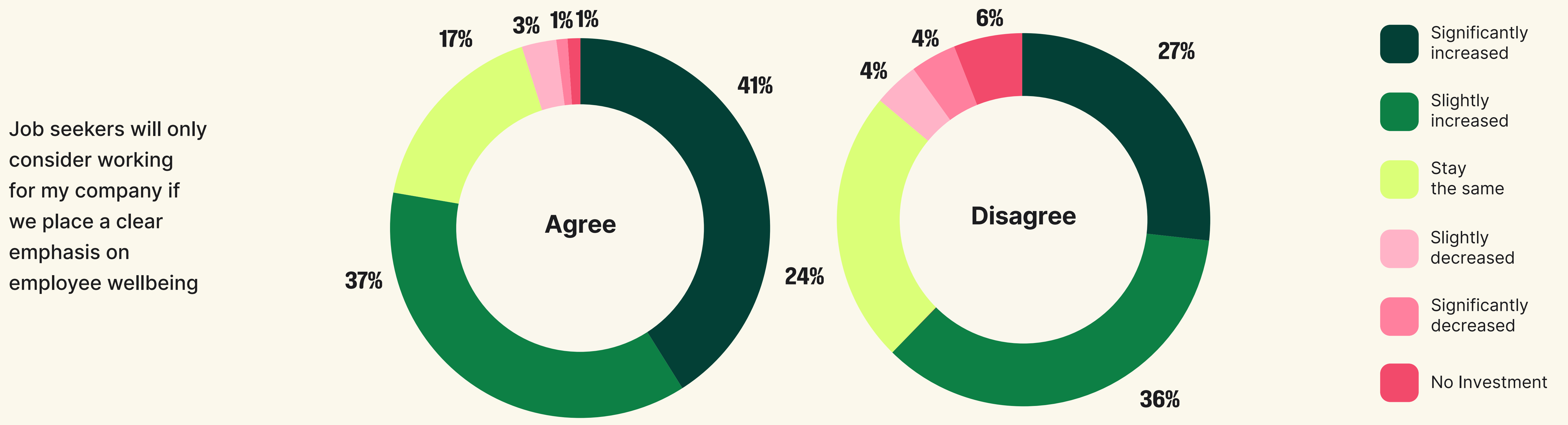


Talent Management

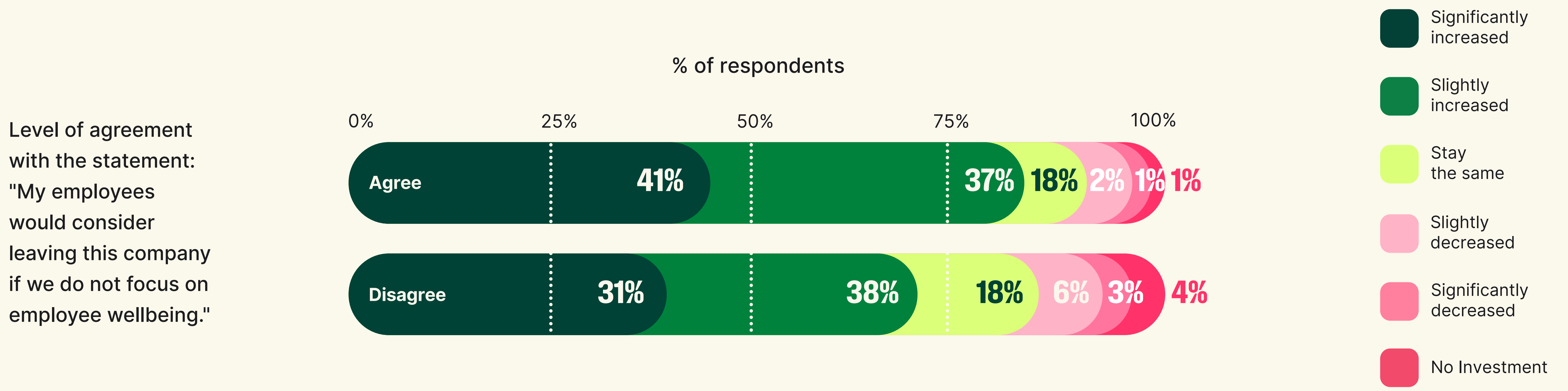
Wellness funding is also tied to talent strategy. CEOs who recognize that wellbeing fuels recruitment were far more likely to expand budgets (78%) than those who don't (63%). The same goes for retention—78% of CEOs who see wellness as a key retention driver increased funding, and those who feel most strongly about this connection are all in. An impressive 86% of CEOs who firmly believe in the wellness-retention link increased funding, with over half (56%) making significant increases.

So how do you get your CEO to invest more in wellness? By communicating the impacts on talent management.

CEOs WHO BELIEVE WELLBEING IMPACTS RECRUITMENT ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE APPROVED WELLNESS BUDGET INCREASES



CEOs WHO BELIEVE WELLBEING INFLUENCES RETENTION ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE APPROVED WELLNESS PROGRAM BUDGET INCREASES

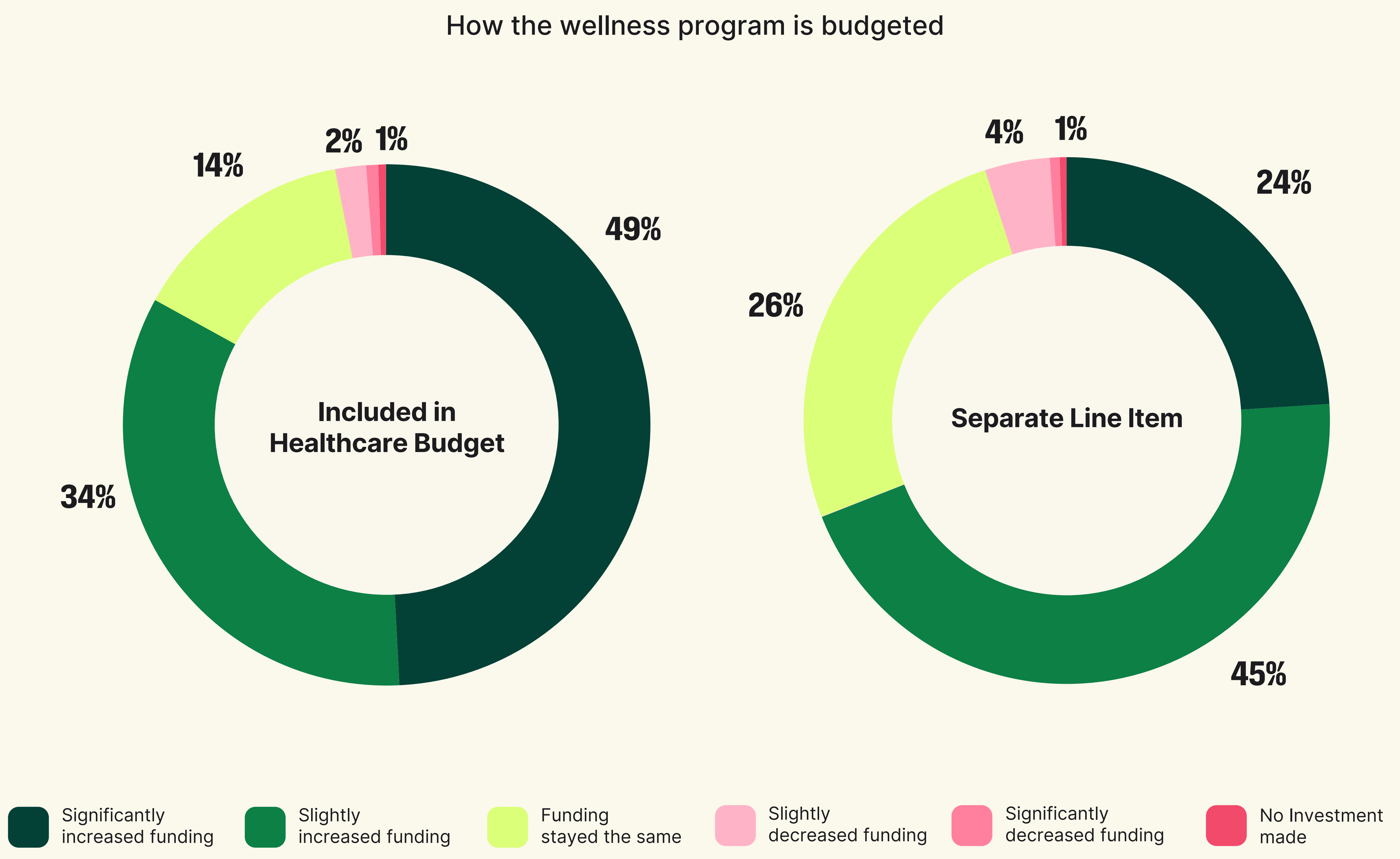


Healthcare Budgeting

Budget allocation is another hidden lever. When wellness programs are embedded within healthcare budgets, CEOs are far more likely to approve funding increases (83%), with nearly half (49%) greenlighting major hikes.

Compare that to wellness programs treated as a separate line item in HR's budget—here, only 69% increased funding, and less than a quarter (24%) made significant boosts. The takeaway? How wellness is categorized matters. When programs are folded into the healthcare budget, they're more likely to be seen as preventive health interventions—essential to managing costs and improving outcomes. But when wellness sits alone in HR's budget, right next to line items like company swag or team outings, it risks being perceived as a nice-to-have perk. Positioning wellness as a strategic healthcare investment can give it more credibility and a better shot at long-term funding.

WELLNESS PROGRAMS BUDGETED FOR AS EMPLOYEE HEALTHCARE WERE MORE LIKELY TO RECEIVE SIGNIFICANT FUNDING INCREASES THAN THOSE BUDGETED FOR AS A SEPARATE LINE ITEM



3.3.2 Experience Drives Belief

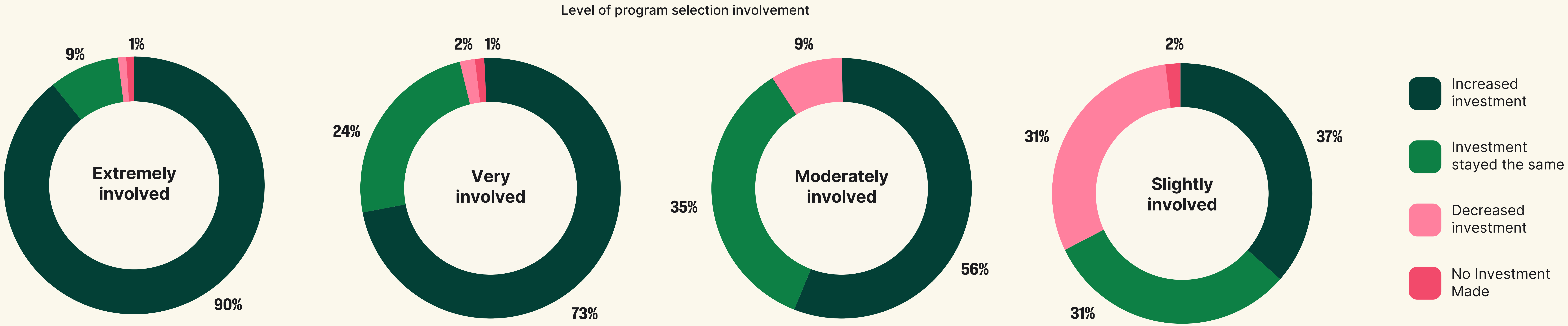
A CEO's personal involvement in a program indicates whether a program's funding will increase or decrease. Leaders who feel the best physically and mentally are also the ones most likely to invest heavily in employee wellness programs. Conversely, when an executive is struggling with their own health, wellness investment at the company level tends to take a hit.

But the relationship isn't one-way. The data suggests a powerful cycle between personal wellbeing, engagement in wellness programs, and long-term investment.

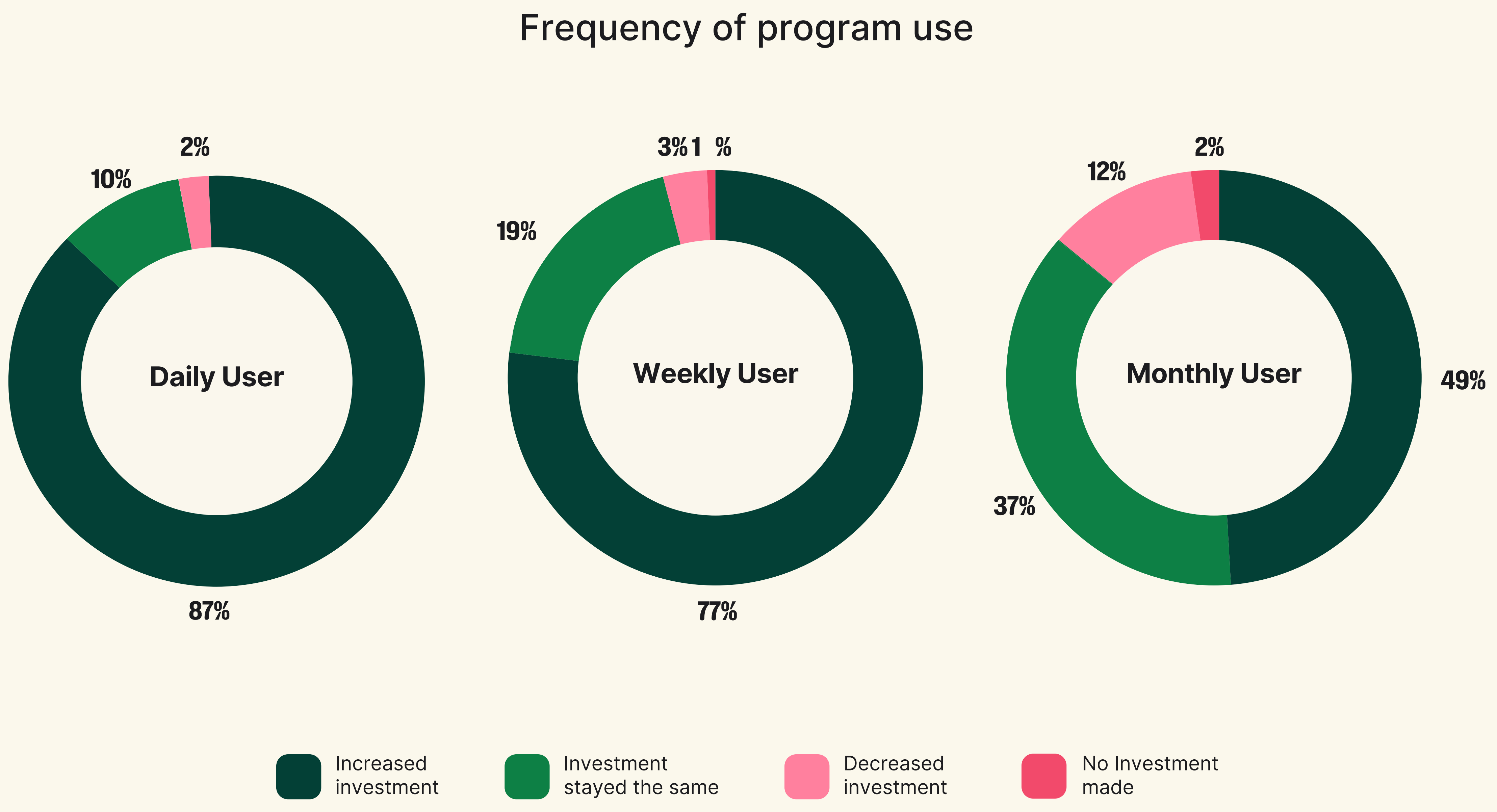
When a CEO is deeply involved in selecting a wellness program, it is more likely to align with their own health needs. That in turn can increase likelihood that they will actively engage with the program themselves, leading to personal improvements in wellbeing. As their health improves, they experience first-hand the connection between wellness and workplace performance—a realization that reinforces their commitment to continued investment.

In short, while a CEO's personal wellbeing isn't a direct indicator of company wellness, it is a prerequisite for deep and lasting investment.

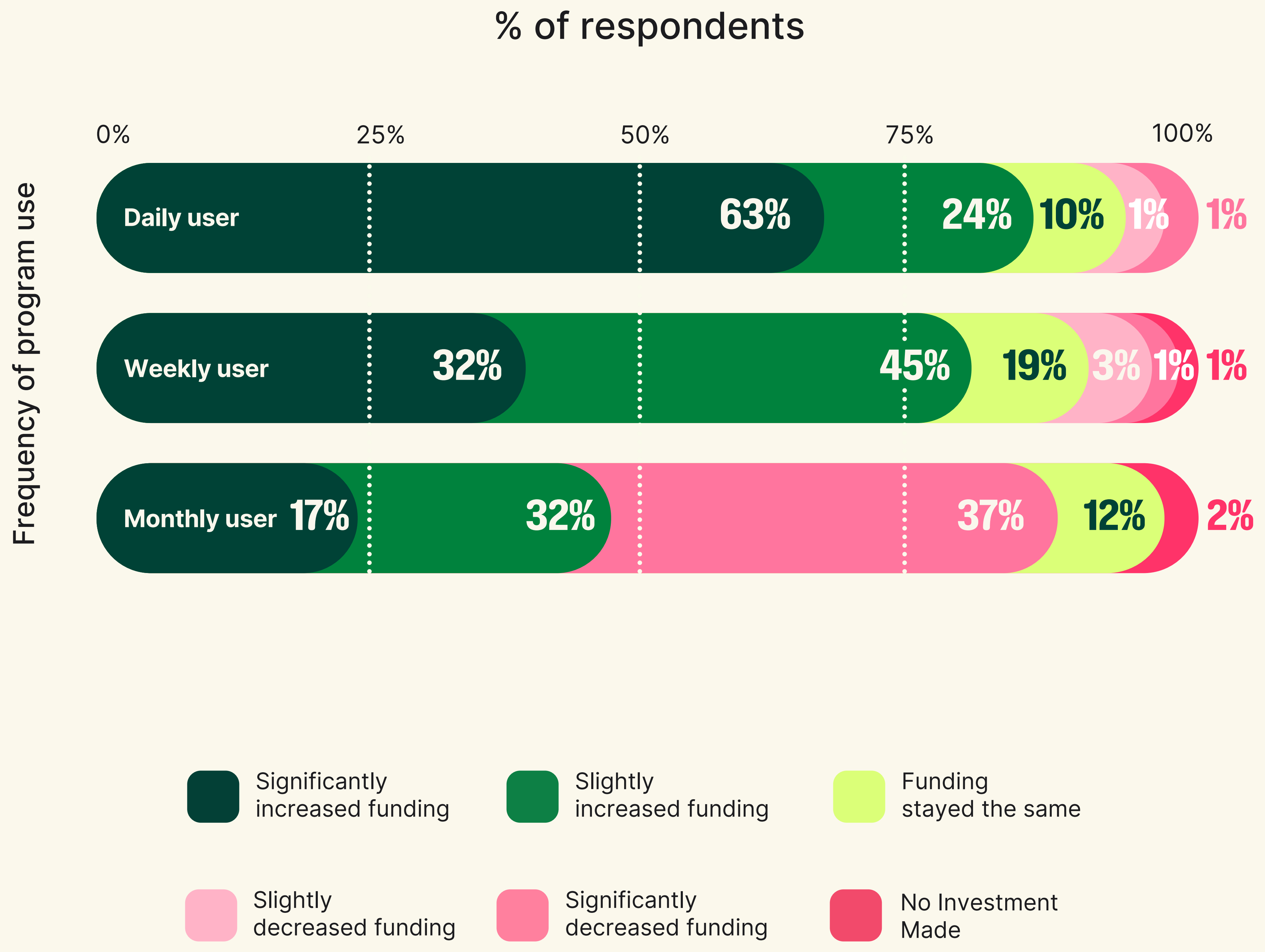
THE MORE INVOLVED A CEO WAS IN SELECTING A WELLNESS PROGRAM, THE MORE LIKELY THEY WERE TO INCREASE WELLNESS PROGRAM FUNDING LAST YEAR



THE MORE OFTEN A CEO USES A WELLHUB PROGRAM, THE MORE LIKELY THEY WERE TO INCREASE PROGRAM FUNDING LAST YEAR



HIGHER CEO ENGAGEMENT IN WELLHUB LEADS TO INCREASED FUNDING

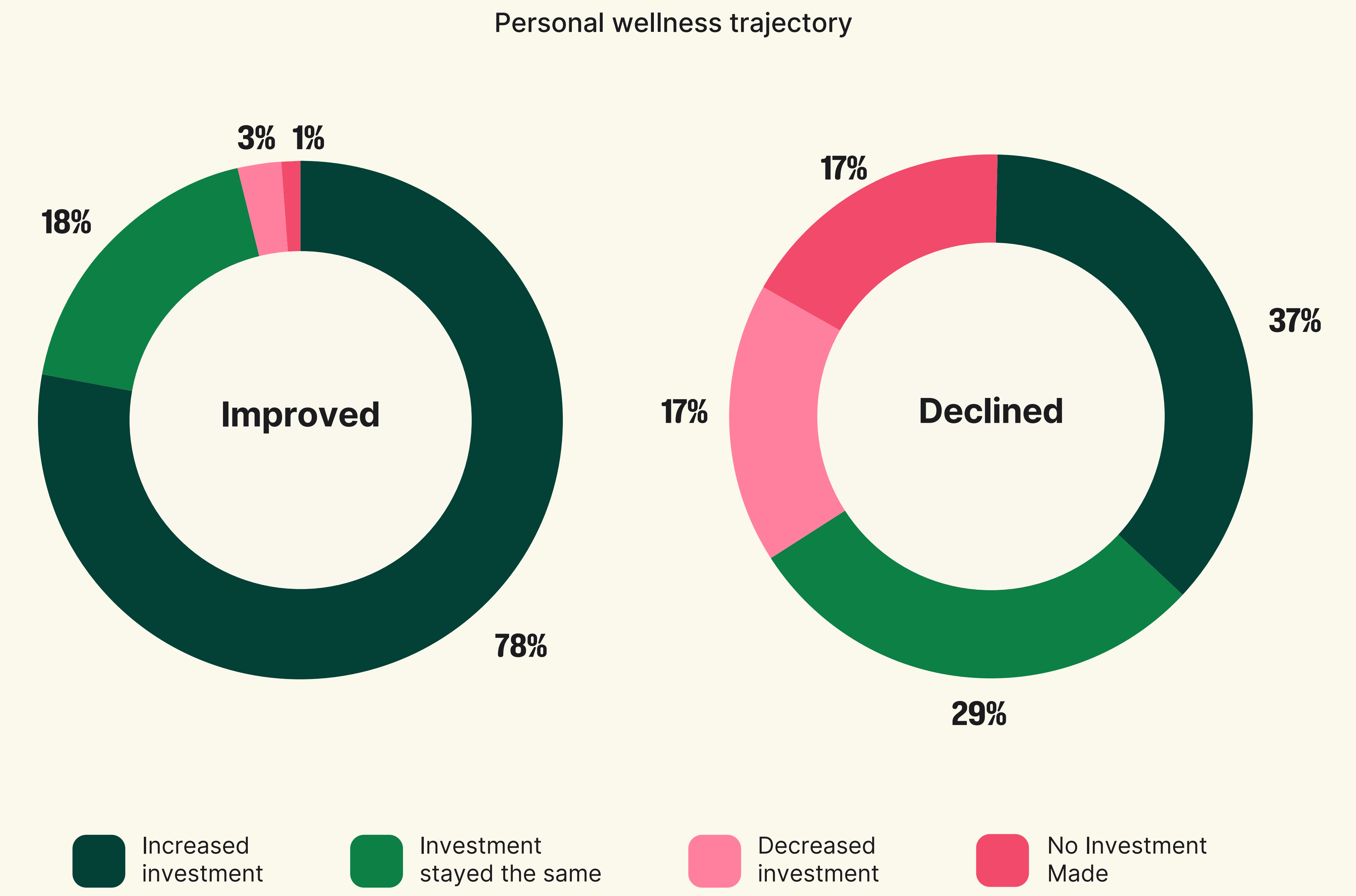


Zooming in on the companies that **significantly increased** their investment in wellness programs, it's evident their CEOs are most likely to be thriving. These execs are leading from a position of strength, and they see the value of extending that strength to their employees.

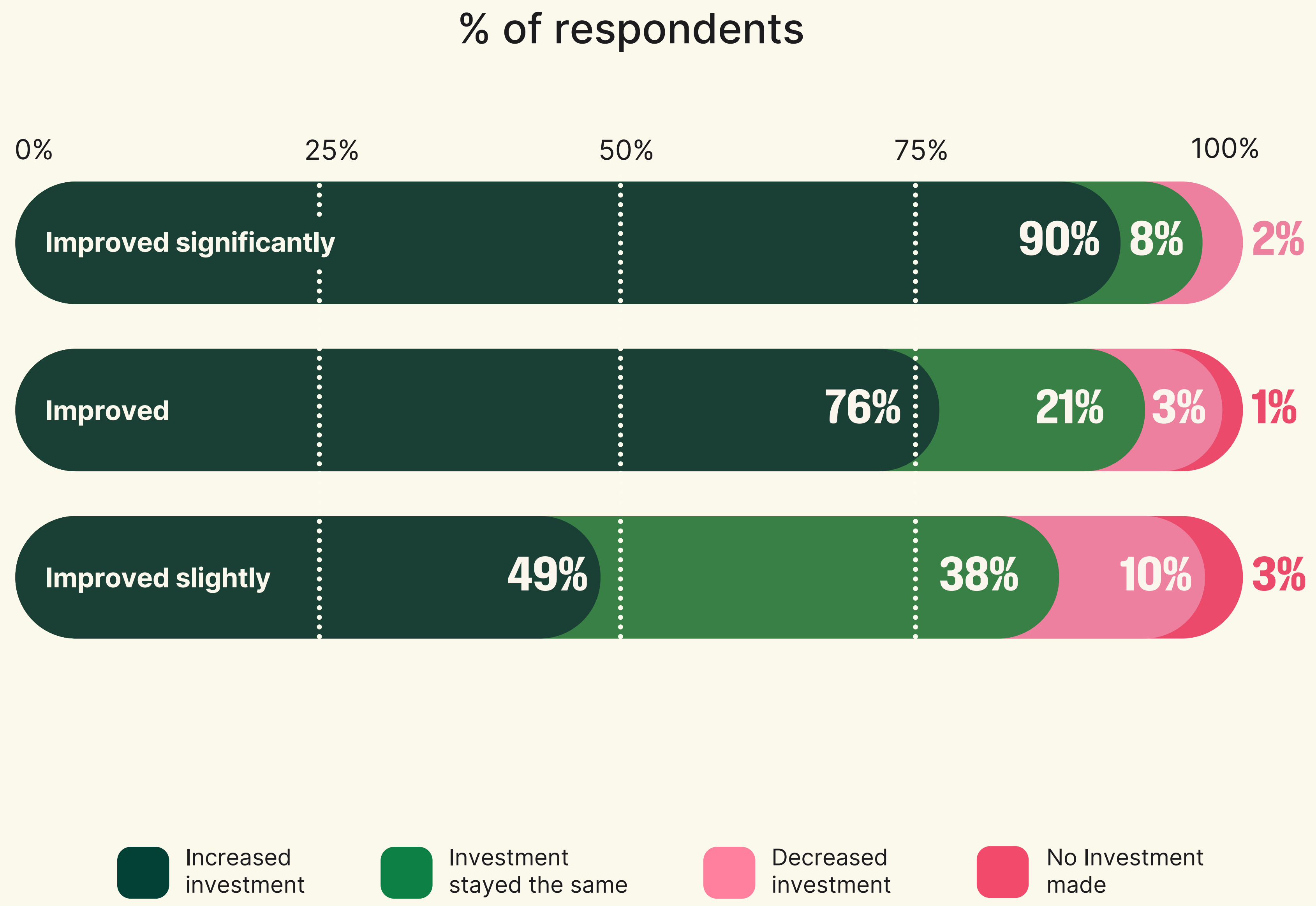
A staggering 78% of these leaders rate their overall wellbeing as excellent, with fewer than 1% reporting poor health. This surprisingly high number signals a shift in how top executives are thinking about performance. This new wave of CEOs isn't just investing in wellness for their teams—they're living it themselves. They've discovered that prioritizing personal wellbeing gives them a sharper edge, stronger focus, and more staying power.

And the trend holds across every dimension of wellbeing. Sixty-nine percent of CEOs who significantly increased funding say their mental wellbeing is excellent, with less than 1% reporting poor or very poor mental health. The same pattern shows up in their physical fitness (66% vs. less than 1%), sleep (59% vs. less than 1%), and nutrition (65% vs. less than 1%).

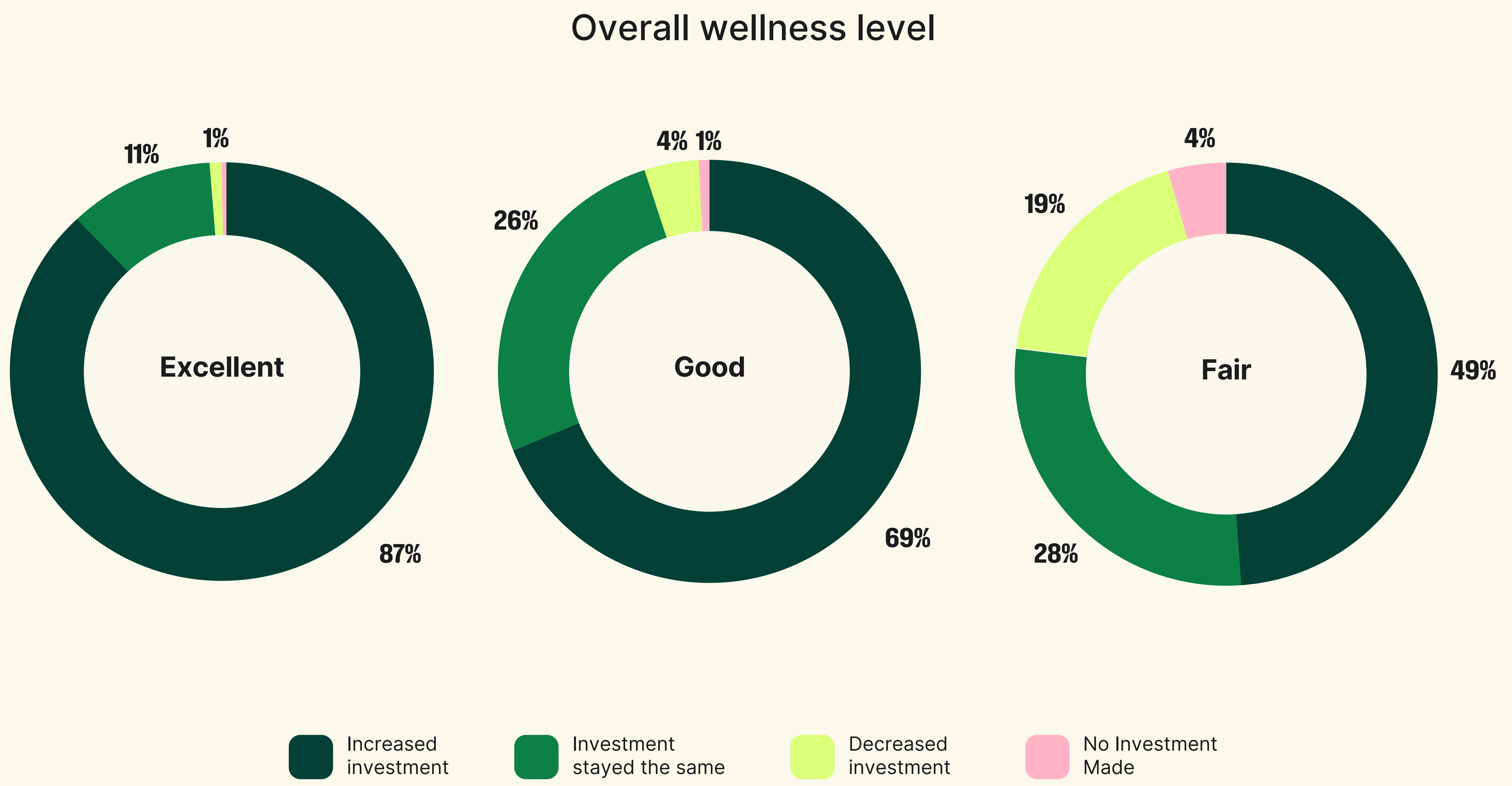
CEOs WHOSE WELLNESS IMPROVED OVER THE LAST YEAR WERE MORE LIKELY TO INCREASE THEIR WELLNESS PROGRAM INVESTMENTS



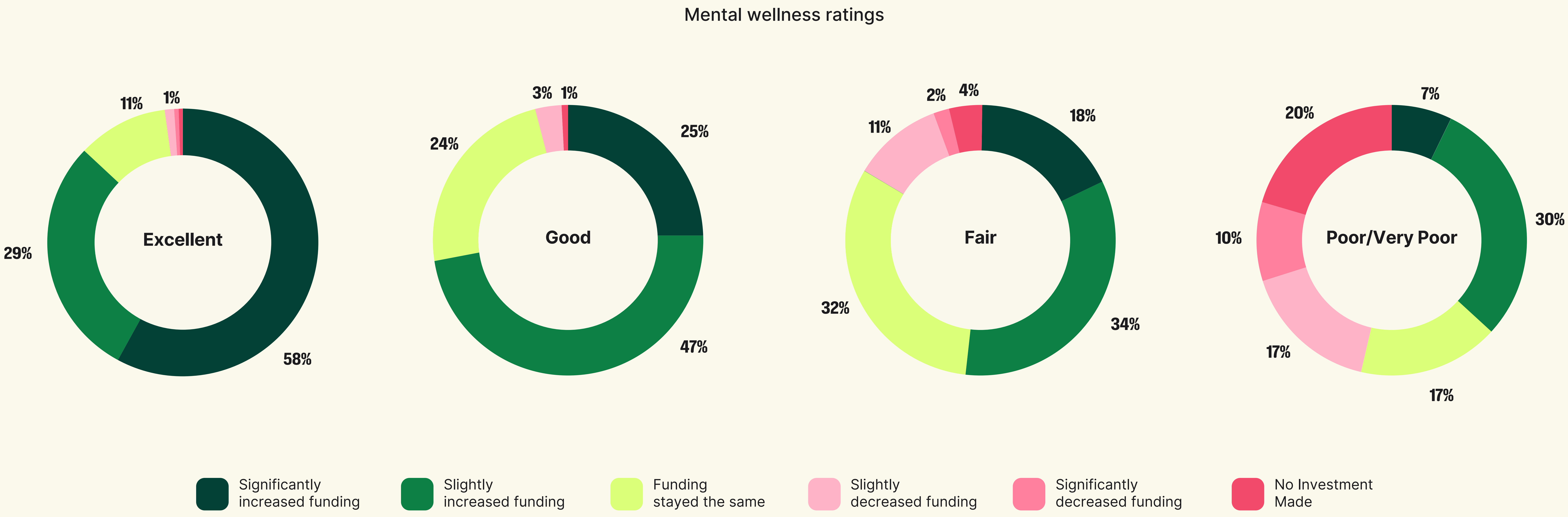
THE GREATER A CEO'S PERSONAL WELLNESS IMPROVEMENT IN THE LAST YEAR, THE GREATER THEIR INVESTMENT INCREASE IN THE PROGRAM



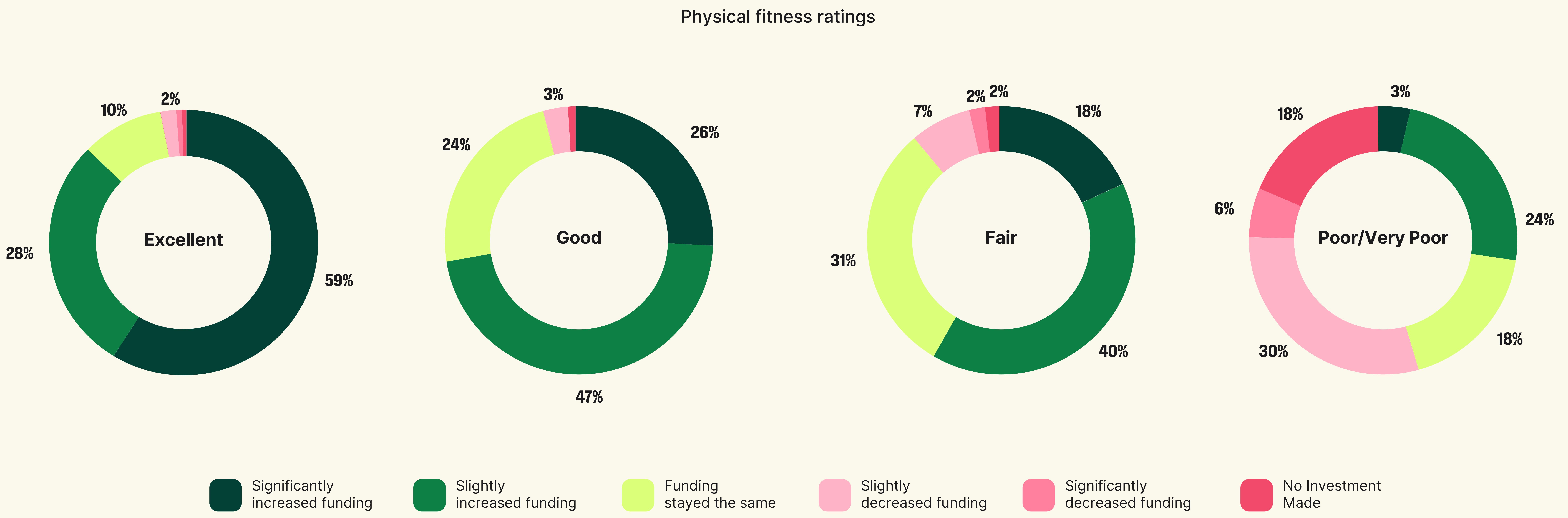
THE HIGHER A CEO'S OVERALL WELLBEING, THE MORE LIKELY IT IS THEY INCREASED THEIR WELLNESS PROGRAM FUNDING



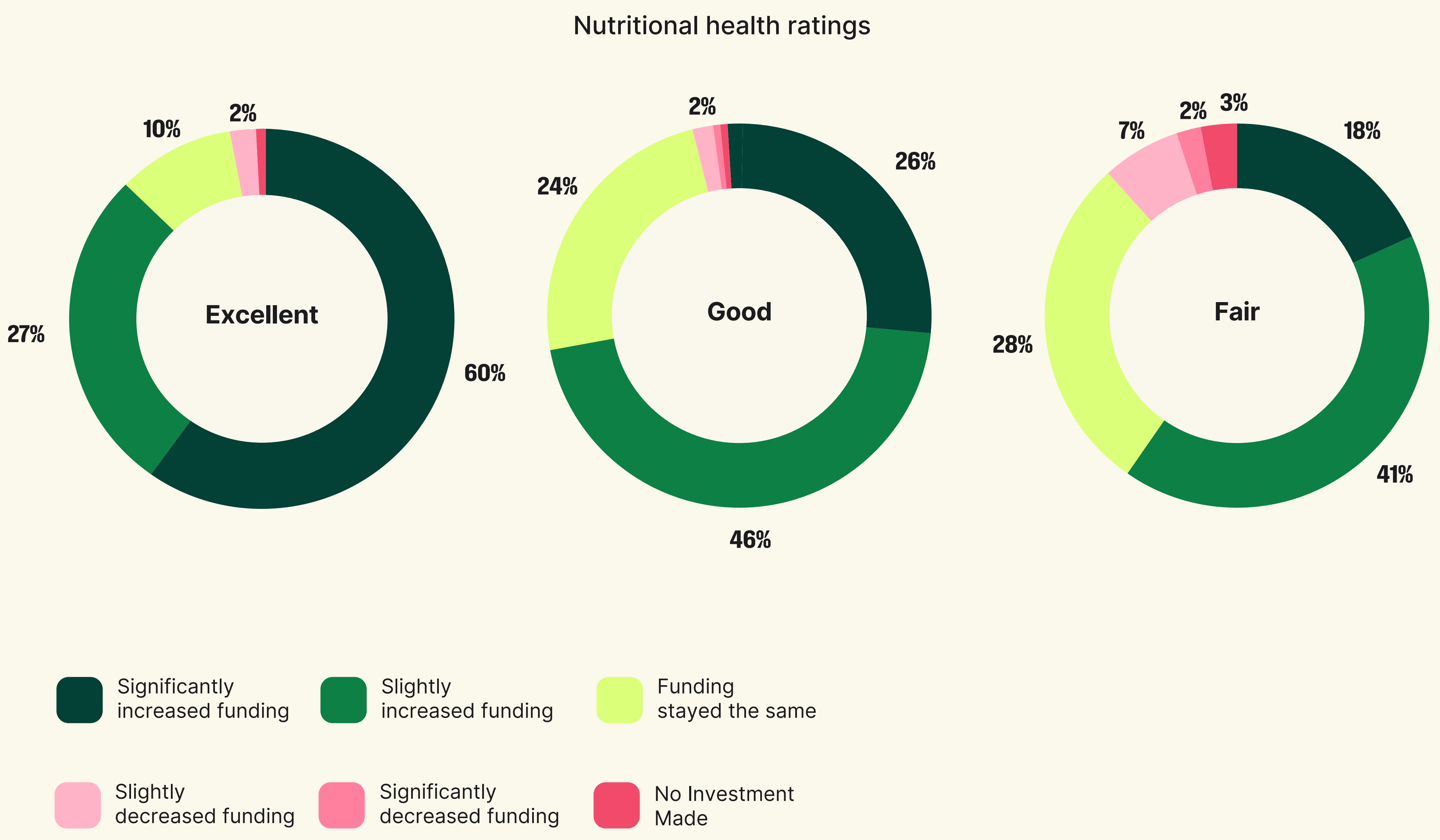
THE HIGHER A CEO RATES THEIR MENTAL WELLBEING, THE MORE LIKELY THEY WERE TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR THEIR WELLNESS PROGRAM



THE HIGHER A CEO RATES THEIR PHYSICAL FITNESS, THE MORE LIKELY THEY WERE TO INCREASE WELLNESS PROGRAM FUNDING



THE HIGHER A CEO RATES THEIR NUTRITIONAL HEALTH, THE MORE LIKELY THEY WERE TO INCREASE WELLNESS PROGRAM FUNDING



Contrast that with CEOs who cut wellness program budgets since last year, and the picture looks very different. These leaders are struggling more with their own wellbeing, and it shows in their company's wellness funding.

The difference between CEOs who cut wellness funding and those who increased it is striking. Among leaders at companies that significantly *increased* investment, 78% rate their overall wellbeing as excellent, and fewer than 1% report poor health. But in companies that *decreased* funding, that number drops to just 39%—while 15% report poor or very poor health.

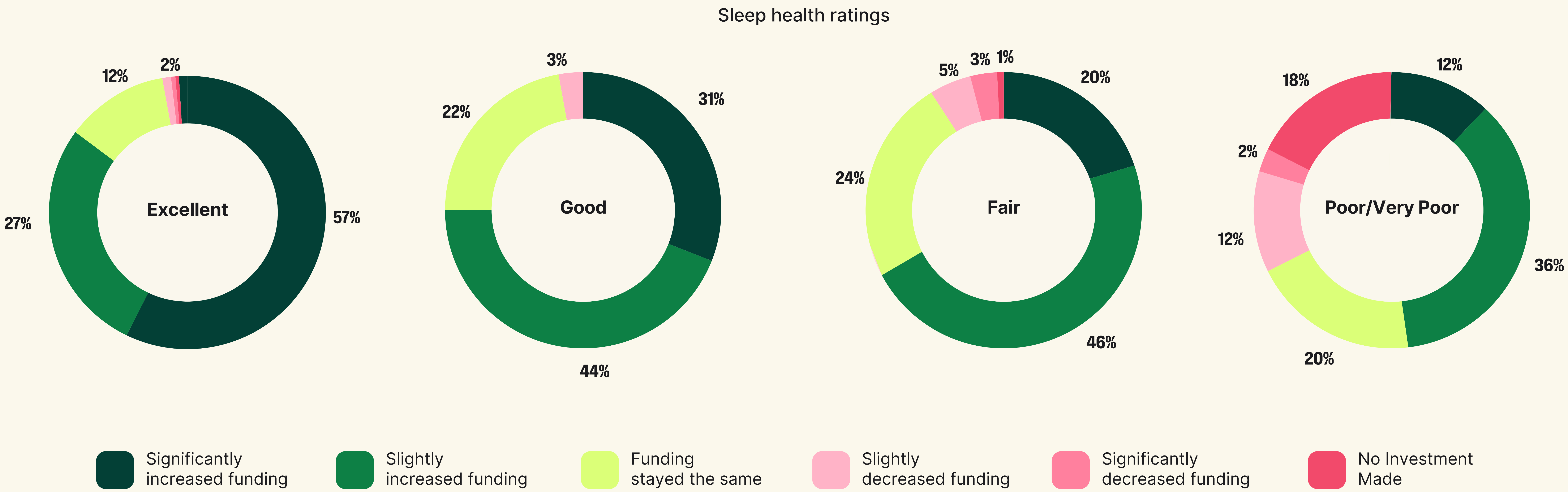
The mental wellbeing gap is even more pronounced. Sixty-nine percent of investment-increasing CEOs say their mental health is excellent, compared to only 38% of those cutting budgets. Nearly a quarter (23%) of the budget-cutting group report poor or very poor mental wellbeing. The story is the same in physical health: 66% of investment-increasing CEOs rate their fitness as excellent, while only 39% of those who cut funding say the same.

Sleep is another major divide. Fifty-nine percent of CEOs increasing wellness investment say their sleep is excellent, while just 31% of CEOs cutting funding can say the same. And 8% of the budget-cutting group report poor or very poor sleep—more than eight times the rate of their wellness-forward peers.

The takeaway is clear: The CEOs investing most in employee wellness are the ones thriving personally, across every measure of health. Those pulling back are feeling the consequences in real time.

For HR leaders looking to secure wellness funding, understanding this dynamic is key. A CEO who personally experiences the benefits of wellness is far more likely to champion it for their workforce. Encouraging executive participation in company wellness programs, providing data on how wellbeing impacts leadership performance, and framing wellness as an investment in both personal and organizational success can make a powerful case for increased funding. In the end, a healthy CEO is good for the entire company.

THE HIGHER A CEO RATES THEIR SLEEP HEALTH, THE MORE LIKELY THEY WERE TO INCREASE WELLNESS PROGRAM FUNDING OVER THE LAST YEAR



THE BOTTOM LINE

CEOs who see wellness as a business investment fund it—and fund it big. Leaders who recognize the connection between employee wellbeing (including their personal wellness) and business success are nearly twice as likely to boost budgets. Frequent performance reporting, smart budget positioning, and clear ROI drive funding increases.

But personal experience matters too. CEOs who prioritize their own health are the strongest wellness advocates, while those struggling with their wellbeing are more likely to cut funding.

The takeaway? HR leaders who help CEOs experience the power of wellness firsthand and back it up with hard data will unlock bigger budgets and long-term investment. A thriving CEO leads a thriving company.

4 The CEO's Role in Wellness

4.1 The State of CEO Wellness

KEY TAKEAWAYS

CEOs are reporting that their overall wellbeing is sky-high, and this is not incidental—it's the result of deliberate habits in mental, physical, sleep, and nutritional health through wellness programs. These findings make a strong case that intentional wellbeing practices drive sustained leadership performance.

But—and this is a big but—there is a stark divide between CEO wellbeing and that of their employees. With their own wellbeing at all-time highs, CEOs assume their employees are equally satisfied—but the reality is far different.

To truly support their people, HR leaders must back their instincts with hard data and advocate for solutions rooted in employee reality—not executive assumptions. The organizations that bridge this disconnect will define the future of workplace wellbeing: keeping top talent engaged, minimizing burnout, and building cultures where high performance and human thriving go hand in hand.

IN-DEPTH

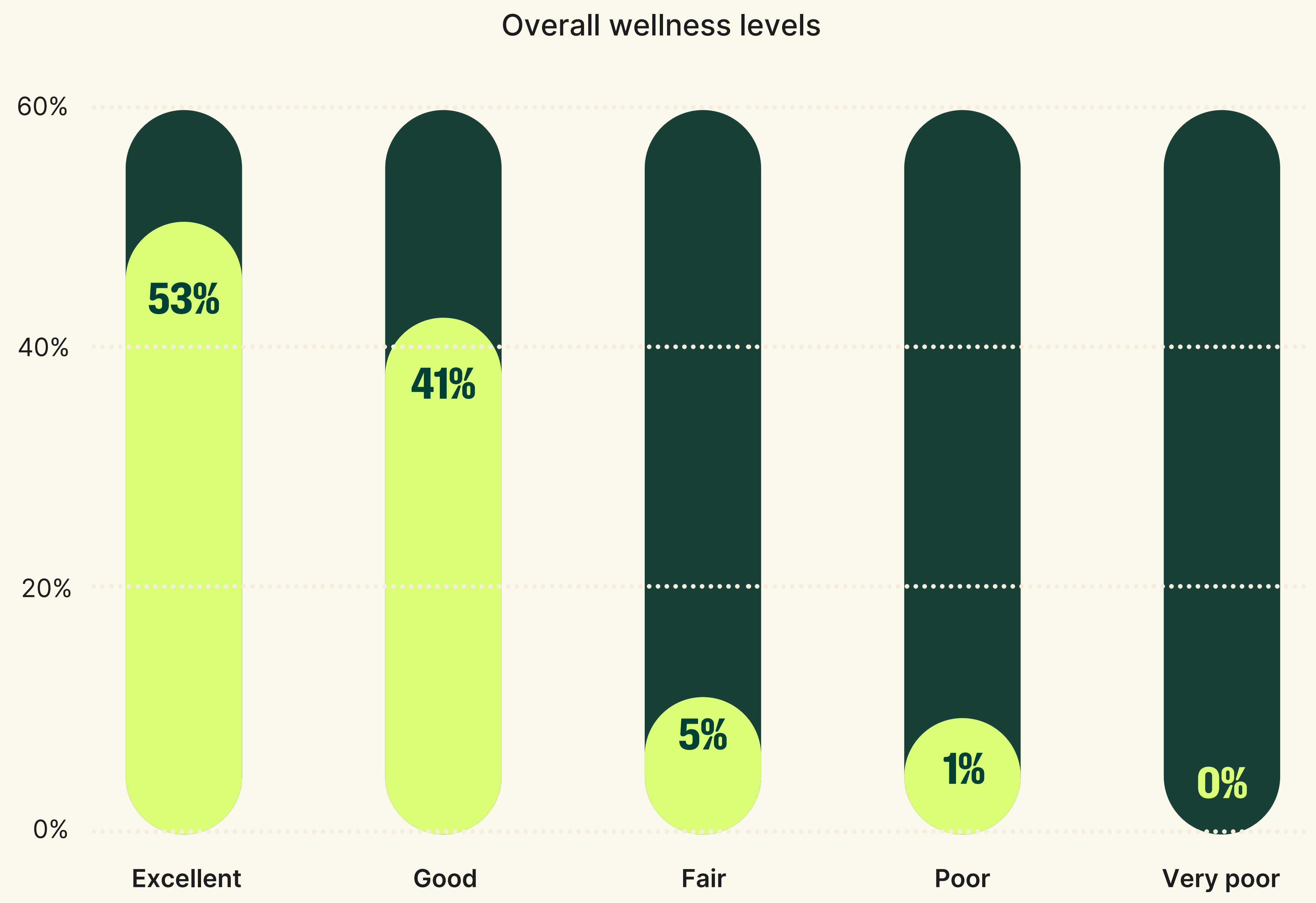
4.1.1 Overall Wellbeing

CEOs say they are positively thriving: 53% rate their overall wellbeing as excellent, and 41% report significant improvements in the past year. In a role defined by constant pressure, these numbers stand out.

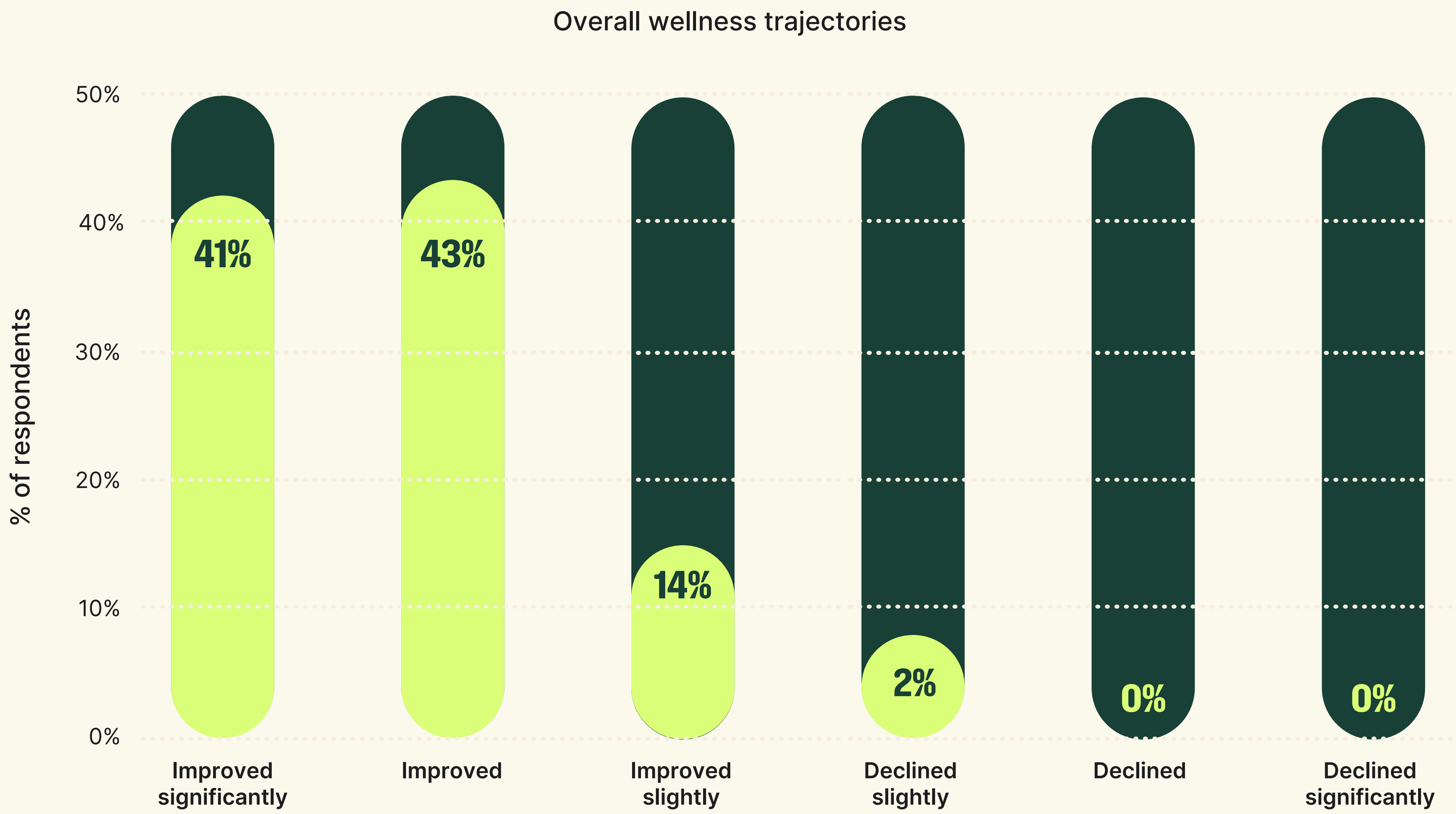
What's changed?

Today's CEOs increasingly view personal wellbeing not as a trade-off for performance, but as a requirement for it. The old badge of honor—endless hours and burnout—no longer holds. In fact, 78% say their role compels them to actively prioritize their health. This reframes wellness as more than a personal choice. Leadership demands stamina, focus, and resilience. Their own health is now a business necessity, not a luxury. And this trend holds across different work environments. Desk-based and non-desk-based CEOs report at similar rates that their role pushes them to prioritize their wellbeing (79% vs. 75%). This suggests that the connection between leadership and personal health isn't tied to a specific industry or work style—it's a universal shift in how executives approach performance.

CEOs SAY THEY ARE THRIVING



NINE OUT OF TEN CEOs SAW WELLNESS IMPROVEMENTS OVER THE LAST YEAR



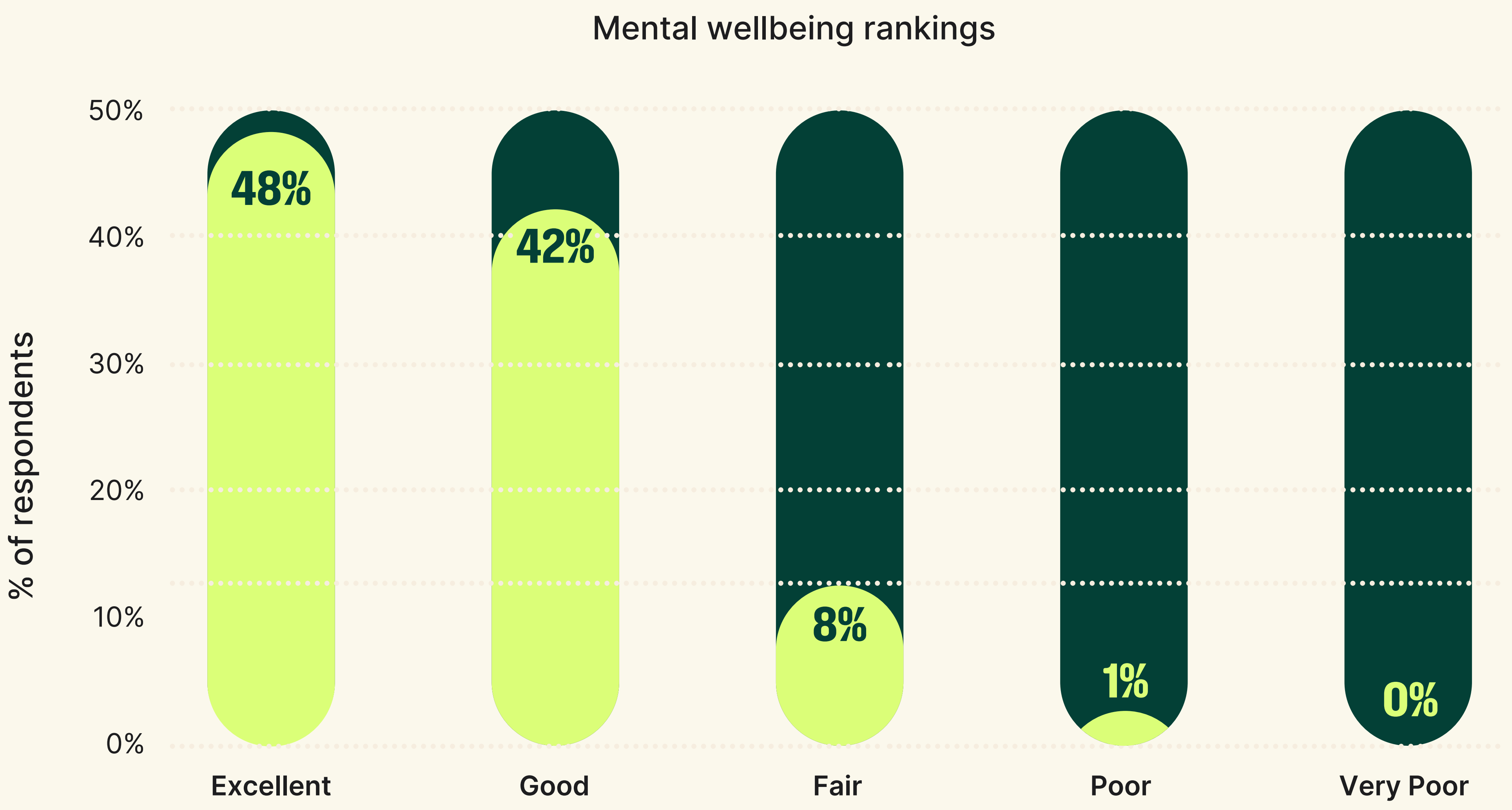
The connection between wellness programs and positive outcomes is hard to ignore. Among those who participate daily, 79% report that their overall wellbeing is excellent. In contrast, only 25% of those who never participate rate their wellbeing that highly. The gap becomes even more striking at the other end of the spectrum: Fewer than 1% of daily participants report poor or very poor wellbeing, while 25% of non-participants fall into that lowest category. When it comes to progress, the difference is just as sharp—69% of daily participants say their wellbeing has significantly improved over the past year. Those who never engage, however, report little to no improvement. In fact, wellbeing is most likely to decline among those who rarely or never take part.

The most important message here isn't just that CEOs are prioritizing wellness—it's that they are reaping the rewards of doing so. The numbers suggest a direct link between daily wellness practices and better overall wellbeing. Just as businesses don't thrive on one-time efforts, neither does personal health. Wellness, like leadership, thrives on discipline and routine.

4.1.2 Mental Wellbeing

Mental wellbeing among CEOs is at an all-time high, with an overwhelming 90% rating their mental health as excellent or good. (Nearly half of those—48%—say it's excellent.) This level of reported wellbeing is striking, given the relentless pressure of executive leadership. It raises an important question: What's driving this shift?

CEOs REPORT SOLID MENTAL WELLBEING



The answer lies in a radical transformation of how CEOs approach mental health. A striking 84% say they are in therapy, with 42% opting for in-person sessions, 32% engaging in online therapy, and 10% participating in group sessions. Another 10% rely on self-help resources, leaving only 6% of CEOs without any structured mental wellness practice. And most say these practices are foundational to their mental wellness. Nearly half of CEOs—47%—say therapy is extremely important to their wellbeing, while another 40% call it very important. That means almost nine in 10 CEOs recognize mental health care as foundational to their personal and professional resilience.

This overwhelming adoption of mental health support marks a departure from the past, when executive success was tied to emotional detachment. Just a few decades ago, vulnerability was seen as a liability for any leader. Can you imagine Dilbert's boss opening up about his therapy journey? Would *Office Space's* Bill Lumbergh ever sit in a group counseling session? The idea would have been laughable until recently. Now, it is reality — and viewed as a strength at the highest levels of leadership.

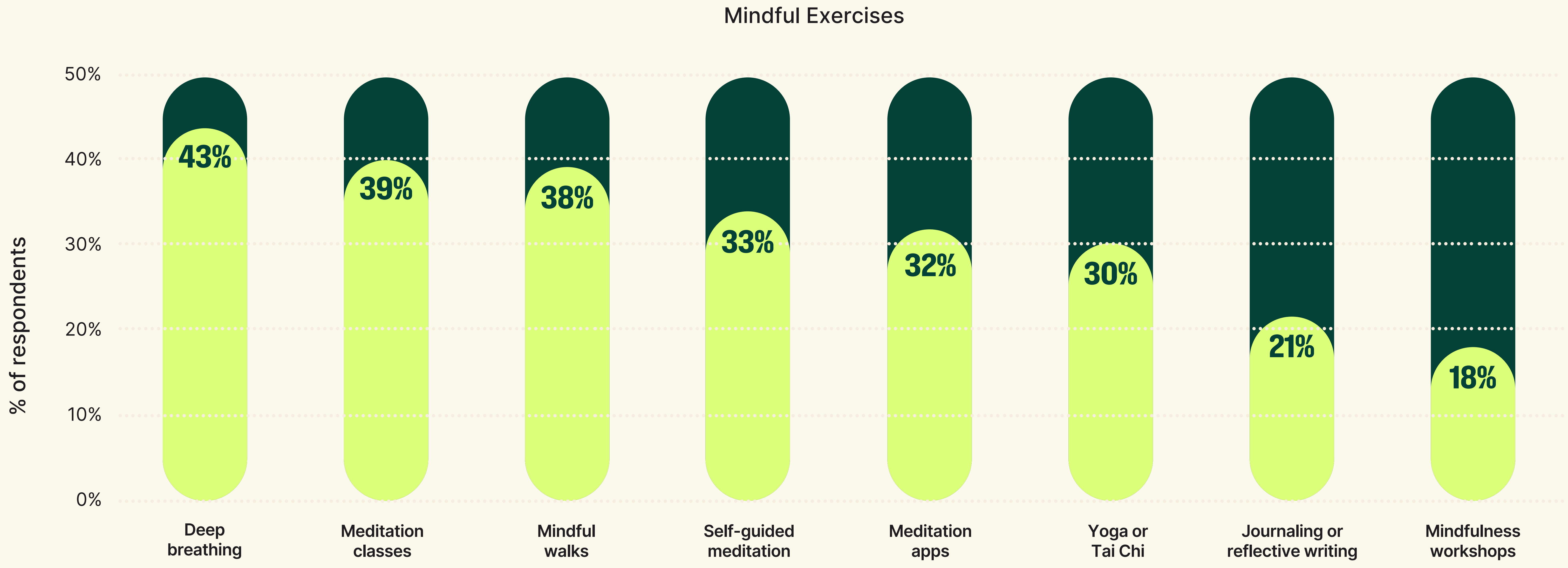
This transformation reflects a deeper cultural shift, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced leaders to confront stress, uncertainty, and personal wellbeing like never before. Mental health used to be a silent struggle, often ignored out of shame. Now, mental wellness care is as normalized and widespread as going to the gym.

The fact that only 6% of CEOs abstain from therapy or self-help suggests that mental health is no longer a fringe concern in executive circles. Instead, it is a core part of what it means to lead effectively.

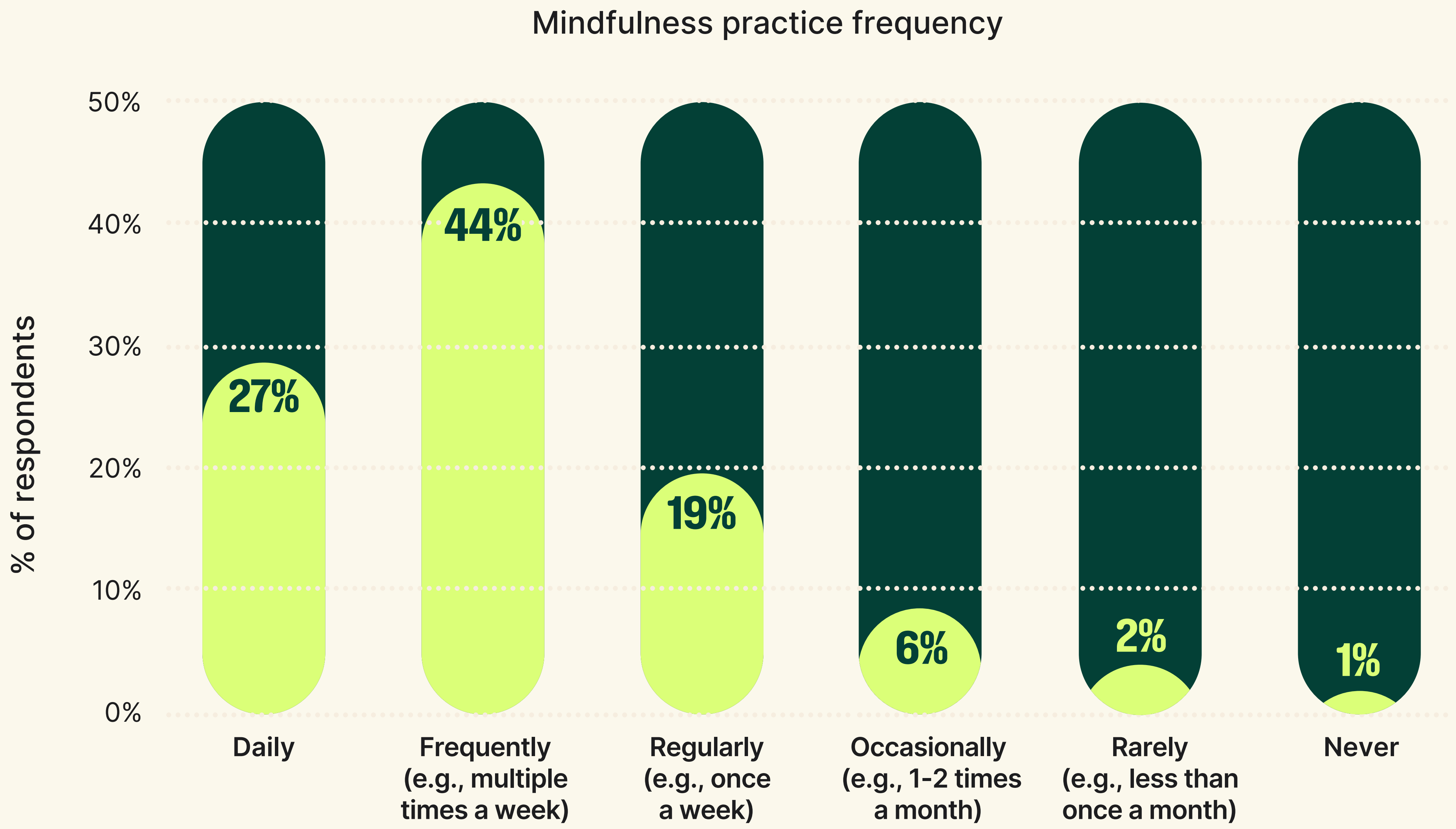
That shift extends beyond therapy. Mindfulness, once a trendy wellness buzzword, has become a leadership necessity. An overwhelming 91% of CEOs practice mindfulness at least weekly, and 27% do so daily.

The go-to techniques—deep breathing (43% incorporate this into their wellness routine), meditation classes (39%), and mindful walks (38%)—are not passive relaxation strategies. They are active tools to manage stress, sharpen decision-making, and stay present in high-pressure environments. Just as therapy has become a cornerstone of executive wellbeing, mindfulness is now seen as essential to maintaining peak performance at the top levels of business.

MINDFULNESS EXERCISES HAVE ENTERED THE CEO MAINSTREAM



MINDFULNESS EXERCISES ARE A STAPLE OF CEOs WEEKLY ROUTINE



The biggest game-changer, however, may be wellness programs. The data is clear: CEOs who participate daily in their company's wellness program see the strongest mental health benefits, with 72% reporting excellent mental wellbeing.

Meanwhile, only 13% of those who never engage say the same. The contrast is even starker at the other end of the spectrum—less than 1% of CEOs participating daily in the wellness program report poor or very poor mental wellbeing, compared to a staggering 25% of those who never participate. It's clear that investing in mental wellness is foundational for top-performing leaders.

CEOs do face some barriers to getting all the mental health support they want—such as time (29% say this is a blocker for them) and cost (10%)— but the implications of their dedication to mental wellness are far-reaching.

This shift suggests that the pandemic's impact on mental health was not just a temporary disruption but a lasting change. COVID-19 forced leaders to reckon with their own limits, and redefined what success looks like. The old model of the unfeeling executive is being replaced by one that values self-awareness and adaptability. Leadership expectations now favor emotional intelligence taking precedence over the rigid, detached decision-making of the past. As therapy, mindfulness, and daily wellness routines become standard at the highest levels, the next generation of leaders will be expected to bring more than vision and execution. They'll be expected to lead with clarity, empathy, and a strong foundation of personal wellbeing.

4.1.3 Physical Wellness

Mental health isn't the only wellness priority for CEOs: They are also building their bodies with the same discipline they bring to building their companies.

A striking 89% of CEOs rate their physical wellbeing as excellent or good (including 44% who say they're in excellent shape). That's not coincidence—it's strategy. Just like mental wellbeing, top executives treat physical fitness as a performance tool. They're training their bodies with the same discipline they bring to leading a company.

The consistency behind these numbers is revealing. An impressive 83% of CEOs say they work out multiple times a week, and 38% exercise every single day. One of the most illuminating takeaways is that all CEOs (100%) surveyed reported some level of regular physical activity.

Compare that to the general workforce, where lack of time, motivation, and cost are common barriers (Wellhub, The State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024). Executives don't allow these obstacles to dictate their health. They know that when energy levels, clarity, and stamina decline, so does leadership effectiveness. Their approach proves a simple but crucial truth: Prioritizing physical health leads to measurable results.

How CEOs stay fit is just as telling as how often they work out. Sixty-five percent go to the gym, train at home, or play sports, while 62% incorporate movement into their daily routines through walking and stretching. This suggests they don't rely solely on intense workout sessions—they're weaving movement throughout their day. That approach aligns with research showing that even regular exercise can't fully offset the harms of prolonged sitting (Bruellman et al., 2024). CEOs appear to be taking that science seriously, treating movement as a continuous habit rather than a one-hour obligation.

Technology is playing a growing role in how CEOs stay active. In a world where data drives decision-making, it's no surprise that many CEOs apply the same analytical mindset to their own health. More than a quarter (27%) track their progress with wearables or fitness apps, and 32% participate in fitness challenges. These tools are more than just conveniences. Research shows they increase activity levels (Ferguson et al., 2022). They also lend themselves to gamification, which can drive consistency in fitness (Hydari et al., 2022). For time-crunched executives, tech-driven fitness solutions offer an efficient way to measure progress, compete with peers, and stay engaged.

One surprising trend is that personal trainers aren't a priority. Despite their deep commitment to fitness, only 12% of CEOs work with a coach. Instead, they favor flexibility, structuring workouts around their unpredictable schedules. This reflects a broader shift in high-performance fitness strategies.

Rather than following rigid training plans, these leaders understand their own bodies, optimize movement for their energy levels, and adapt workouts to fit their demanding lives.

The broader implications of these findings extend well beyond the executive suite. Executives have the flexibility and resources to prioritize movement, but many employees do not. Most workplaces reinforce sedentary habits, making it difficult for teams to build the same high-performance routines that CEOs rely on. If companies want healthier, more engaged, and higher-performing teams, they need to take a page from the CEO playbook. That means restructuring workplace cultures to encourage movement, offering flexible wellness programs, and integrating the same tech-driven solutions that keep executives engaged.

4.1.4 Sleep Health

The myth of the sleep-deprived CEO is officially dead. A staggering 84% of CEOs rate their sleep health as excellent or good, and two-thirds (66%) get eight hours *or more* every night.

This marks a major departure from the hustle culture that once glorified exhaustion. Instead, today's CEOs are optimizing rest to gain a competitive edge. They've embraced quality Zs as a non-negotiable asset that fuels their long-term endurance. They're showing that peak performance isn't about working more hours—it's about making those hours count.

However, even with a widespread *commitment* to sleep, many CEOs still struggle with sleep *quality*. Spending eight hours in bed doesn't always translate into eight hours of great sleep. Stress remains the biggest disruptor, keeping 39% of CEOs awake at night. Another 37% report poor sleep habits—like checking emails before bed—while an equal 37% cite inconsistent schedules as a major factor. These numbers reveal that while leaders are getting the hours in, many haven't fully optimized their sleep hygiene.

And the obstacles don't stop there. More than a quarter (27%) say environmental disruptions—like noise, temperature, or light—negatively affect their sleep. Another 23% struggle with physical discomfort or health conditions, and 10% juggle caregiving responsibilities that impact their rest. No matter how high up the corporate ladder they climb, CEOs are not immune to the everyday challenges of getting quality sleep.

One of the most compelling insights in the data is the role of wellness programs in sleep quality. CEOs who participate in wellness initiatives daily experience the best outcomes, with 67% rating their sleep health as excellent. In stark contrast, those who rarely or never engage in wellness programs report significantly worse sleep, with 12% and 13%, respectively, saying their sleep is poor or very poor. This is perfectly sensible: As Dr. Peter Attia puts it in his international bestselling book *Outlive: The Art and Science of Longevity*: "...[A] good night of sleep may depend in part on a good day of wakefulness: one that includes exercise, some outdoor time, sensible eating (no late-night snacking), minimal to no alcohol, proper management of stress, and knowing where to set boundaries around work and other life stressors."

The takeaway is clear: Wellness programs are not just about fitness or stress relief. They directly impact sleep, creating a domino effect that enhances energy, focus, and overall performance.

The implications for businesses are massive. Sleep isn't just a personal benefit—it's an organizational advantage. When CEOs prioritize rest, they lead with sharper judgment, better emotional regulation, and increased adaptability. Companies that recognize this shift have an opportunity to embed sleep-friendly policies (like flexible work schedules and stress management initiatives) into their cultures to create an energized workforce.

4.1.5 Nutritional Health

CEOs are getting the fuel they need to run their companies. Just as they optimize their businesses, they optimize their bodies, treating food as fuel for success rather than an afterthought. A commendable 89% said they get quality nutrition, with 43% rating their nutrition as excellent.

This commitment to nutrition is intentional, structured, and deeply embedded in their approach to performance. A strong 62% prioritize balanced, well-rounded meals, and 56% actively cut back on processed foods and sugar. They aren't simply avoiding unhealthy choices—they're curating a diet designed to sustain mental acuity, decision-making, and long-term stamina. Their approach mirrors their leadership philosophy: Strategic planning, high-quality inputs, and discipline lead to sustained success.

Some CEOs take it even further, bringing the same precision to their plates as they do to the boardroom. Nearly 30% follow structured plans like keto, vegetarianism, or intermittent fasting, and 26% track their intake with apps and wearables. It's a clear sign they're applying a performance-driven mindset to their health. If data and optimization drive business growth, why not use them to level up personal wellbeing too?

Yet despite their focus on self-improvement, only 14% work with a dietitian or nutritionist—a figure that mirrors the 12% who work with a personal trainer. This isn't about lack of interest in expert support—it reflects a broader preference for flexibility and self-direction. Just as CEOs tailor workouts around their energy levels and busy schedules, many take a similar approach to nutrition, relying on self-education, tracking tools, or routines they've refined over time. For high-performing leaders used to managing complex systems, personal health is just another area they feel confident navigating solo.

One of the most powerful differentiators in CEO nutrition is the impact of wellness programs. Leaders who engage in structured wellness initiatives daily report the best results, with 68% rating their nutrition as excellent. By contrast, those who never participate struggle—only 13% rate their nutrition as excellent.

Clearly, structured wellness programs improve more than fitness and mental health. They're transforming the way CEOs eat, reinforcing better habits, and driving long-term performance.

4.1.6 CEOs Are Doing Way Better Than Their Workforce

So CEOs are living their best lives now. But their employees? Not so much. There's a clear opportunity for companies to close the wellbeing gap between executives and employees. **While 98% of CEOs say they feel better than they did a year ago, only 50% of employees report the same** (Wellhub, The State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024).

The disparity extends across multiple dimensions: 93% of CEOs rate their overall wellbeing as excellent or good, compared to just 63% of employees. The gaps are even starker in specific areas—mental health (90% vs. 57%), physical fitness (89% vs. 39%), and sleep. Two-thirds of CEOs get at least eight hours of sleep a night, while employees average just 6 hours and 21 minutes (Wellhub, The State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024).

While this gap is sobering, it also presents a clear path forward. Leaders who have successfully prioritized their own health can use that momentum to build a culture where every employee has the same opportunity to thrive.

One of the most effective ways to do that is by understanding the different barriers employees face. CEOs and employees experience wellness challenges through completely different lenses.

For CEOs, time constraints (29%) are the biggest challenge to accessing therapy. For employees, cost is the bigger issue—36% say they can't afford therapy (Wellhub, The State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024).

The same pattern holds across other wellness resources—what's easily accessible to executives isn't always within reach for their teams. Consider autonomy as an example. Executives have the flexibility and resources to prioritize their health, and they're using that to their advantage. While CEOs can typically adjust their schedules for workouts, rest, and recovery, many employees are navigating high workloads, financial constraints, and rigid work structures that make prioritizing health more difficult.

This is part of why a staggering 78% of CEOs say their role actually motivates them to invest in their wellbeing, and just 2% say work makes it hard to stay healthy. For leaders, the demands of the job often act as a catalyst for better habits—driving them to prioritize fitness, sleep, and mental health to perform at their peak.

But for many employees, the experience is the opposite. Forty-seven percent say work stress negatively impacts their mental health (Wellhub, The State of Work-Life Wellness, 2024). Instead of fueling healthier routines, their day-to-day responsibilities are taking a toll. This disconnect underscores the need to design wellness strategies that don't just work for executives—but work for everyone.

Companies that close these gaps will lead the next era of workforce wellbeing. When businesses listen to employees and address real wellness barriers, they create a culture that prioritizes everyone's health—not just leadership's. They build workplaces where people perform at their best.

HR leaders play a crucial role in making this happen. By bringing hard data to the table, identifying gaps in employee support, and advocating for solutions that reflect the workforce's actual needs, they can bridge the divide between executive and employee wellness. Companies in turn retain top talent, reduce burnout, and cultivate a high-performing, engaged workforce. The future of workforce wellness requires making sure every employee feels just as supported as the CEO.

THE BOTTOM LINE

CEOs are thriving, and that's no accident: They prioritize fitness, sleep, nutrition, and mental health. This is fueling their success, personally and professionally.

But there's still opportunity for HR leaders to have an impact by ensuring employees get the same support.

Companies that bring wellness to everyone, not just leadership, will build stronger, healthier, and more engaged teams. The best workplaces won't just have high-performing executives—they'll have high-performing, energized employees at every level. The future of workplace wellbeing starts with making wellness a win for all.

4.2 Leading by Example

KEY TAKEAWAY

Wellness starts at the top. When CEOs prioritize their own wellbeing, they shape the culture. A wellness-driven CEO fosters a wellness-driven workplace, boosting employee participation, engagement, and performance.

But it's not just about setting the example: It's about sharing it. When leaders talk openly about their own wellness routines, challenges, and progress, they normalize the conversation and make wellbeing feel accessible at every level. Companies that invest in executive wellbeing—and encourage leaders to model it out loud—aren't just supporting one person. They're building a healthier, more engaged workforce from the top down.

IN-DEPTH

4.2.1 Active Participants Are Effective Advocates

CEOs do more than influence workplace wellness—they define it. Nine out of 10 (91%) executives participate in their company's wellness programs at least weekly, and more than a quarter (27%) engage daily. This sets a strong example for their teams. When leaders prioritize their own wellbeing and share it with their workforce, they create a company culture where employees are more engaged in their wellbeing (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing, 2024).

Most CEOs know their actions set the tone—84% say they play a critical role in shaping workplace wellness, and 77% believe leading by example is part of being an effective leader. And they're putting that belief into practice. Nearly half (47%) lead by actively participating in wellness programs. Others are driving impact by offering wellness training (44%), advocating at the leadership level (37%), hosting events (36%), and communicating benefits directly to employees (34%).

To make wellness a visible priority, 90% of CEOs share their personal wellness journey at least weekly. Whether it's sharing Strava miles or posting about a walking meeting on LinkedIn, they want employees to see that taking care of their health isn't a side project—it's part of the job.

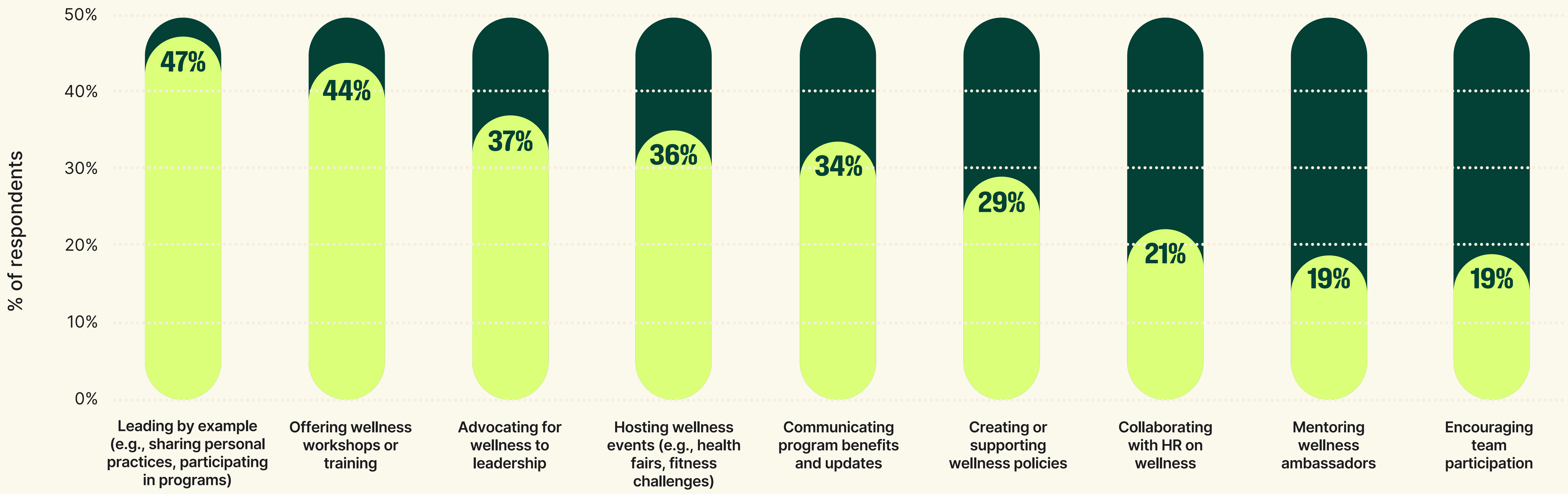
This creates a powerful feedback loop: The more CEOs engage, the more they advocate. Seventy-seven percent of CEOs who participate in a wellness program each day actively share their wellness experiences with employees, compared to just 13% of non-participants.

And the deeper their engagement, the stronger their belief in wellness as a business imperative. Seventy-four percent of daily participants strongly agree that workforce wellbeing is a corporate responsibility, compared to 63% of weekly participants and just 43% of those who engage monthly.

But among non-participants? Not a single CEO strongly agrees that wellness is critical to their business. The takeaway is clear: When leaders commit to wellness, employees follow. Their participation turns wellness from a program into a movement, embedding it into company culture. For organizations looking to drive real impact, the solution isn't just more benefits—it's leadership that walks the walk.

CEOs LEAD BY EXAMPLE TO EMBED WELLNESS IN THEIR ORGANIZATION

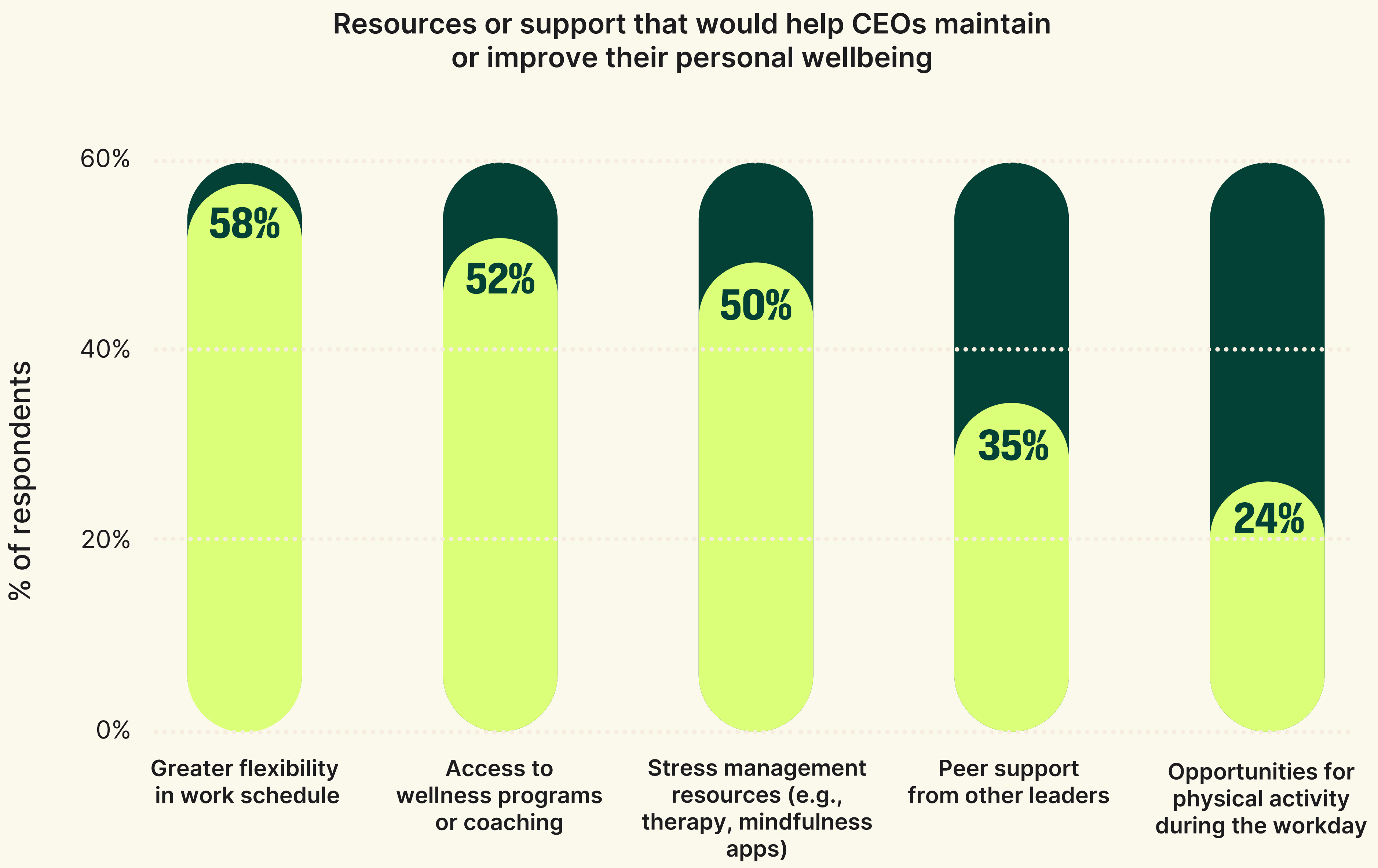
Initiatives CEOs lead to promote wellness in their organization



4.2.2 The Next Frontier for CEO Wellness

Even the most wellness-focused CEOs haven't perfected their routines—and they know it. While many are thriving, most still see clear opportunities to improve their health and performance with the right support or resources.

FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES AND COACHING TOP CEO WELLNESS NEEDS



Flexibility tops the list. Fifty-eight percent of CEOs say a more flexible schedule would enhance their wellbeing. Despite their control over the calendar, competing demands and unpredictable hours still make it hard to prioritize wellness consistently.

Structured support is another major gap. More than half of CEOs (52%) say they would benefit from formal wellness programs or coaching tailored to their role. This points to an important opportunity: Companies already invest heavily in leadership development—so why not invest just as intentionally in leadership wellbeing? Personalized tools can help executives maintain energy, manage stress, and stay focused when the stakes are high.

Mental wellness remains a top priority. Half of CEOs say they want greater access to stress management resources like therapy or mindfulness apps. CEOs increasingly see mental wellness not just as personal care but as a strategic advantage for sustainable performance.

One of the most overlooked areas? Peer connection. A third of CEOs (35%) want opportunities to connect with other executives around wellness, yet few have structured ways to do it. Executive roles can be isolating. Creating space for leaders to share experiences and strategies could build resilience—not just for individuals, but for the culture they shape.

The message is clear: CEO wellness isn't a finished product. It's a work in progress, and the companies that support it will reap the rewards. Whether through flexible schedules, tailored coaching, or peer-based support, organizations that invest in the wellbeing of their leaders create healthier, higher-performing workplaces from the top down.

THE BOTTOM LINE

When CEOs prioritize their own wellbeing, they do more than set a good example—they set the tone for the entire organization. In the most successful companies, wellness isn't treated as a perk—it's embedded into the business strategy, championed from the top. And the opportunity doesn't stop there. With smarter schedules, expert support, and meaningful peer connections, executives can elevate their own health while fueling a culture of resilience and performance. When leaders thrive, teams follow—and that's how strong, healthy, high-performing workplaces are built for the long haul.

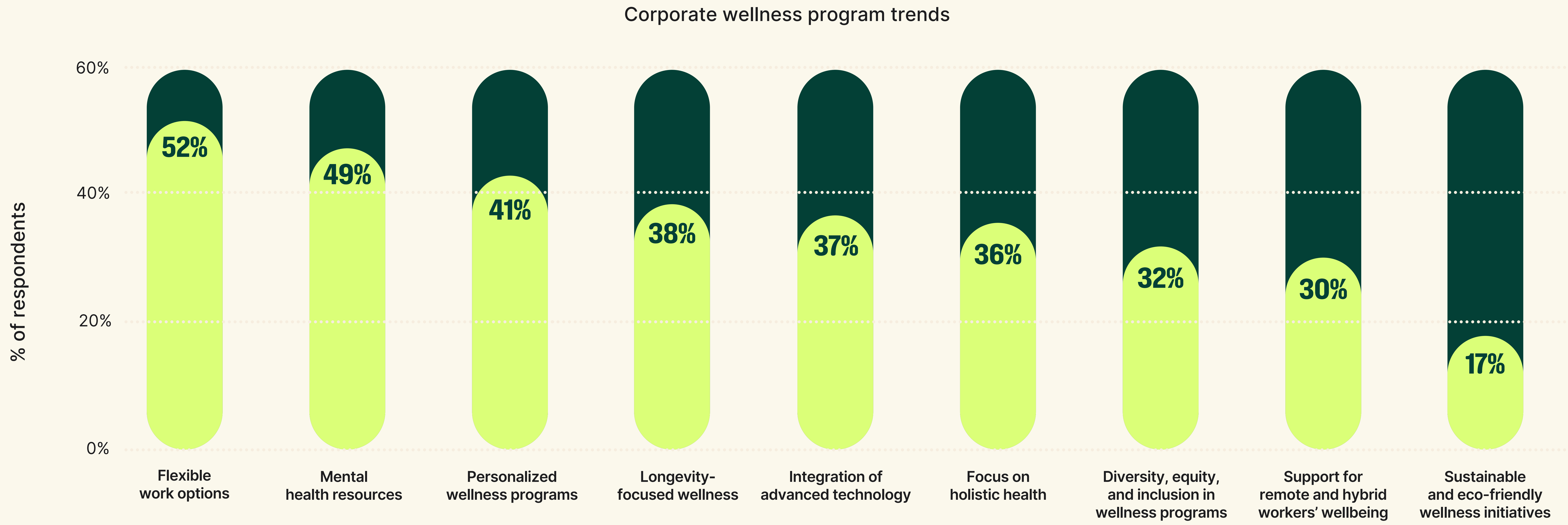
5 The Future of Workplace Wellness

A full 77% of companies plan to increase their wellness investments next year—a clear sign that wellbeing is shifting from an HR checkbox to a strategic advantage.

So, where's all that investment going?

Into the future of wellness programs—making it smarter, more personalized, and central to the employee experience. The next generation of workplace wellness is already taking shape. It's bold, data-driven, and deeply embedded in company culture. Mental health support, AI-powered personalization, holistic programs, and flexible work structures aren't just trends—they're becoming the backbone of high-performing organizations.

CEOs SEE WELLNESS PROGRAMS BECOMING MORE PERSONAL AND HOLISTIC OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS



5.1 Mental Wellbeing Takes Center Stage in the Future of Workplace Wellness

The era of treating mental health as an afterthought is over. Nearly half (49%) of business leaders plan to invest in mental health resources over the next five years—a clear signal that companies are rethinking what employee wellbeing really means.

The stakes are high. Businesses are increasingly aware of the cost of inaction: lower productivity, higher turnover, and disengaged teams (Popera, 2025). And employees are making their priorities known—mental wellness now ranks as the most important dimension of wellbeing (Wellhub, The State of Work-Life Wellness, 2023).

This growing demand is driving a major shift in how mental health is supported at work—and technology is leading the way. More than a third (36%) of leaders believe AI-powered tools represent the future of workplace wellness. While these tools aren't a replacement for therapy, they can play a powerful complementary role—detecting early warning signs of burnout, guiding employees toward appropriate resources, and supporting routine, mindfulness-based activities.

By making mental health care more proactive, accessible, and personalized, AI is helping reduce stigma and integrate wellbeing into the flow of everyday work.

Together, these trends mark a fundamental transformation. Companies that treat mental health as a core business priority—and embrace smart, scalable solutions—will build more resilient, high-performing teams prepared for the future of work.

5.2 Personalization, Prevention, and Tech-Driven Wellness

Cookie-cutter wellness programs are officially outdated. To meet evolving employee needs—and to drive real impact—HR leaders must shift from generic offerings to personalized, tech-enabled support. In fact, 41% of CEOs say that customized wellness programs will be critical in the next five years.

What's driving the change? Technology is making personalization not only possible, but expected. Tools like wearables, AI, and predictive analytics are moving beyond basic metrics like step counts. They're capturing real-time health insights that help employees make smarter, more proactive decisions. Nearly half (45%) of business leaders say these real-time insights are the next big opportunity in workplace wellness, and over a third (35%) believe predictive analytics will help companies spot and address health risks early—before they escalate.

What does this mean for HR? It's time to think about wellness not just as a benefit, but as a preventative strategy—one that supports long-term employee health and reduces burnout, absenteeism, and healthcare costs. That means investing in tools that adapt to individual needs, offering flexible solutions that work across roles and regions, and using data to guide smarter interventions.

This is especially important for remote and hybrid teams. Forty-three percent of leaders see technology as the key to making wellness programs more accessible across work environments. For HR teams, that means choosing platforms and partners that can meet employees where they are—whether at home, in the office, or on the move.

The takeaway? Personalized, tech-powered wellness isn't just the future—it's fast becoming a competitive necessity. HR teams that embrace this shift now will be better positioned to boost engagement, retention, and overall workforce wellbeing in the years ahead.

5.3 Longevity and Holistic Health Take Center Stage

The most effective wellness programs are no longer just about short-term wins—they're built for long-term impact. As work becomes more complex and demanding, HR leaders are rethinking wellness as a strategy for sustained performance, resilience, and retention. More than a third (38%) of business leaders say longevity-focused wellness will be a top priority in the next five years, while 36% are doubling down on holistic health approaches that care for the whole person.

What does this mean in practice? Programs centered on longevity go beyond fitness goals or burnout recovery. They support sustained energy over the course of an employee's career—through proactive stress management, flexible work structures, preventative care, and policies that promote rest, recovery, and psychological safety.

Holistic wellness expands that lens, recognizing that mental, emotional, physical, and even financial wellbeing are interconnected. Leading companies are moving toward integrated solutions that meet employees where they are—offering support not just during times of crisis, but as part of daily work life.

This isn't a short-term trend—it's a structural shift. Companies that design for longevity and embrace holistic wellness aren't just reducing burnout—they're extending the healthspan of their workforce. The result? Stronger, more resilient teams that are able to perform—and thrive—for the long haul.

5.4 Flexibility Is the Future—Even If Some Leaders Resist

Return-to-office mandates? They might be making headlines, but flexibility is here to stay. More than half (52%) of leaders say flexible work is the most critical factor in employee wellness over the next five years—beating out every other wellness initiative.

Why? Because wellness programs only work if employees actually have the time and flexibility to use them. Employees don't just want benefits—they want work structures that allow them to take advantage of them.

Why does this matter for HR? Because no wellness program—no matter how well-designed—works if employees don't have the time or autonomy to engage with it. Employees aren't just asking for more benefits. They're asking for work structures that make those benefits usable. When flexibility is limited, even the best wellness offerings become inaccessible or irrelevant.

And it's not just employees who feel this. Executives want flexibility, too. A full 58% of CEOs say that greater schedule flexibility would improve their own wellbeing, and 45% believe that promoting work-life balance and flexible work models is key to the success of any wellness initiative. **So, how can HR leaders take action?**

Embed flexibility into wellness strategies:

Don't treat remote work or flex hours as separate policies—consider them core enablers of wellbeing.

Measure access and utilization, not just availability:

Ensure that your wellness programs are actually being used—and that employees have the freedom to take advantage of them.

Equip managers to lead with empathy:

Help team leaders navigate hybrid or flexible environments with tools that support trust, accountability, and work-life boundaries.

Model flexibility from the top:

Encourage leadership to normalize balance—through behaviors like setting boundaries, taking time off, and openly supporting flexible work.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The future of workplace wellness is bold, personalized, and built for lasting impact. Mental health is taking center stage, with nearly half of business leaders making it a top priority. AI-powered tools are making support smarter, faster, and more accessible.

Generic wellness programs are on their way out. Wearables, predictive analytics, and real-time health insights are revolutionizing how employees stay healthy and engaged. Companies are shifting from short-term perks to long-term strategies that support whole-person wellbeing—creating environments where people don't just work, they thrive.

And flexibility? It's the ultimate game-changer. The best organizations are redesigning work itself to make wellness not just available, but effortless. Those that embrace these trends will attract top talent, boost engagement, and build resilient, high-performing teams ready for the future.

6 Overcoming Implementation Hurdles to Adopting Wellness Programs

Even the most wellness-friendly CEOs won't greenlight a program without a second thought: Not a single executive surveyed approved a wellness initiative without at least one objection. That doesn't mean they're against it—they just have some questions that need to be answered.

And the secret to securing buy-in? Data, ROI, and a rock-solid business case. The companies that get this right aren't just improving employee wellbeing; they're making wellness a strategic advantage.

Employee feedback can be a game-changer. Nearly half (49%) of CEOs said engagement rate data helped them overcome their biggest objections to wellness programs. It was the most common factor in overcoming all challenges—except one: high implementation costs. In that case, CEOs pointed to clear ROI metrics or case studies (15%) and employee feedback (14%) as equally influential.

But broad feedback only goes so far. To drive real change, it's important to understand what actually moves the needle. Every executive will have questions. The most successful HR leaders don't wait for objections—they anticipate them, come prepared with answers, and frame wellness as a business win from day one.

Objection 1:

Our Employees Won't Use a Wellness Program

Many C-suite leaders are laser-focused on one major challenge when it comes to employee wellness: engagement. In fact, 30% say their biggest hesitation about investing in a wellness program is the fear that employees just won't use it.

If this is a concern you're hearing from your C-suite, here's what helped other execs overcome their hesitation.

Solution 1

Present Clear, Compelling Data

- [ ] Provide specific examples or case studies from comparable organizations where wellness programs have seen strong participation rates.
- [ ] Highlight key statistics from these case studies, such as percentage increases in employee engagement, decreased absenteeism, or improvements in productivity and retention.
- [ ] Visualize this data in a concise dashboard or infographic to quickly convey impact to your CEO.

Solution 2

Highlight Employee Demand

- [ ] Conduct brief employee surveys to quantify demand clearly, presenting the CEO with direct quotes or high-level summaries of employee enthusiasm.
- [ ] Share testimonials or stories from employees who have expressed interest or benefitted from informal wellness initiatives.
- [ ] Demonstrate how employee-requested wellness features align with current organizational culture or values.

Solution 3

Showcase Simple and Accessible Programs

- Offer examples of highly user-friendly wellness options such as mobile apps, online portals, or virtual fitness classes that employees can easily integrate into their daily routines. Mobile-friendly access is especially effective for organizations with a large non-desk workforce.
- Clearly explain the enrollment process and emphasize minimal administrative hurdles, highlighting the ease of initial adoption and ongoing use.
- Recommend a phased rollout, starting with a pilot for a select group of employees to test the program's effectiveness before fully committing.

Solution 4

Position Wellness as Strategic

- Connect wellness initiatives explicitly to strategic business goals, such as talent acquisition, competitive positioning, or reputation as an employer of choice.
- Present research or third-party endorsements underscoring the correlation between wellness programs and measurable improvements in company performance.
- Outline potential long-term savings through reduced healthcare costs and enhanced productivity to underscore wellness as a strategic business investment.

Solution 5

Commit Leadership Visibility

- Obtain commitments from key executives and managers to visibly support and participate in wellness activities, emphasizing their role in influencing broader employee engagement.
- Outline specific examples of leadership engagement opportunities, such as participating in wellness challenges, endorsing programs in internal communications, or sharing personal wellness stories.
- Illustrate the positive impact of executive-level involvement on employee adoption through case studies or industry examples.

Objection 2:

We Have Other Budget Priorities

With 94% of CEOs allocating budgets for wellness programs, it's clear that employee wellbeing is a top priority at the highest level. But cost is still a big hurdle for some. Nearly a third (29%) of CEOs cite high implementation costs as a key concern—second only to low employee engagement. Other budget-related worries include competing priorities (22%) and justifying expenses to shareholders (14%).

So, how do you handle budget objections? Here's a strategic approach to make the case for wellness investments.

Solution 1

Showcase Cost-Efficient Wellness Activities

- [ ] Present budget-friendly yet impactful wellness options like virtual workshops, mindfulness sessions, or group fitness challenges that require minimal investment.
- [ ] Explore wellness services that bundle these engaging activities into a single, cost-effective experience.
- [ ] Emphasize the ROI of digital wellness tools and apps that deliver significant value without high upfront costs.

Solution 2

Align Wellness with Employee Productivity Metrics

- [ ] Clearly link wellness initiatives to key productivity indicators, such as reduced absenteeism, higher job satisfaction, and improved employee performance, demonstrating their direct impact on business success.
- [ ] Present targeted case studies or industry research showcasing how wellness programs have enhanced workforce productivity, retention rates, and overall company performance in similar organizations.
- [ ] Leverage data-driven insights from prospective wellness platforms to showcase the link between engagement and productivity, enabling leaders to make informed, ROI-driven decisions.

Solution 3

Leverage Existing Employee Benefit Investments

- Bundle wellness programs with existing offerings by aligning wellness initiatives with existing healthcare, EAPs (Employee Assistance Programs), or financial wellness benefits to create a seamless, more holistic employee experience without adding significant costs.
- Highlight case studies of companies that have successfully embedded wellness initiatives into their benefits programs, showing how this approach boosts engagement and enhances employee satisfaction.

Solution 4

Provide Clear Communication to Stakeholders

- Provide data-driven reports, case studies, and ROI projections that clearly demonstrate how wellness initiatives drive key business objectives, such as productivity, retention, and cost savings.
- Illustrate how wellness investments support broader company goals, such as talent attraction, DEI efforts, and long-term financial sustainability, making it easier to justify expenditures to boards, shareholders, and internal stakeholders.
- Use employee testimonials, success stories, and real-world examples to humanize the impact of wellness programs, making the case for investment more relatable and persuasive.

Objection 3:

We're Already Supporting Employee Wellbeing

Some CEOs believe their organization already "does enough" for employee wellbeing. Maybe there's an EAP in place or an occasional mental health webinar. That's a start—but it's not a strategy. If that sounds familiar, here's how you can help your leader see the bigger picture.

Solution 1

Highlight the Difference Between Reactive and Proactive Programs

- Emphasize how proactive initiatives, such as ongoing fitness programs, mental health support, and financial wellness education, help prevent issues before they escalate, whereas reactive approaches focus on crisis management and short-term solutions.
- Use research and case studies to illustrate how addressing multiple dimensions of wellness leads to improved employee health, reduced long-term healthcare costs, and stronger workforce engagement.
- Illustrate how today's workforce increasingly values proactive wellness benefits, making them a key differentiator in attracting and retaining top talent.

Solution 2

Present Comprehensive, Holistic Programs

- Highlight companies that have effectively combined physical health initiatives, mental and emotional wellbeing support, financial literacy education, and work-life balance resources, demonstrating the power of a multifaceted approach.
- Explain the incremental value of a holistic approach, including improved overall employee health, reduced long-term healthcare costs, and stronger workforce engagement.
- Highlight how offering diverse wellness options, such as digital platforms, on-site services, and flexible participation models, ensures that employees at all levels and work environments can engage meaningfully.

Solution 3

Demonstrate the Strategic Value of Comprehensive Wellness

- Show how comprehensive wellness programs contribute to even higher talent attraction, reduced turnover rates, lower healthcare costs, and an enhanced employer brand, making them a strategic investment rather than an expense.
- Illustrate how companies with a reputation for prioritizing employee wellbeing stand out in competitive job markets, attracting top talent and fostering long-term employee loyalty.
- Provide industry benchmarks and case studies demonstrating measurable business improvements directly attributable to comprehensive wellness programs.

Solution 4

Identify Gaps and Opportunities

- Conduct a detailed audit of current wellness offerings, clearly highlighting any gaps in addressing key employee wellness needs such as mental health, physical fitness, or financial wellbeing, ensuring all key employee needs are addressed.
- Provide strategic suggestions for enhancing or broadening wellness initiatives, such as integrating digital wellness tools, expanding access to mental health resources, or incorporating financial wellness education.
- Demonstrate employee demand and business impact. Use engagement surveys, utilization metrics, and workforce demographics to show CEOs how addressing wellness gaps can improve retention, reduce absenteeism, and boost overall productivity—making a clear case for investment.

Solution 5

Share Employee Voices and Success Stories

- Highlight real-life employee experiences that showcase tangible improvements in health, productivity, and workplace satisfaction due to wellness initiatives. These can include testimonials from other organizations or from employees who have benefited from wellness programs at previous companies.
- Use data-backed storytelling, video testimonials, or case study reports to make the impact of wellness programs feel personal and actionable for decision-makers.
- Connect these stories to key business outcomes—such as improved retention, lower healthcare costs, and higher engagement—to help CEOs see the direct return on investing in employee wellbeing.

Objection 4:

Wellness Programs Don't Actually Improve Employee Wellbeing

Skepticism about impact is a common blocker at the executive level. Some CEOs question whether wellness programs truly improve employee health or simply check a box. They want to see real outcomes—not just good intentions. If your leadership team is looking for proof, here's how to build a case grounded in results.

Solution 1

Share Proven Industry Outcomes

- [ ] Present data-driven evidence from comparable organizations showcasing measurable benefits such as reduced absenteeism, increased productivity, and higher employee satisfaction resulting from wellness programs.
- [ ] Distill complex research into concise, impactful insights that directly link wellness initiatives to improved employee wellbeing and business performance.
- [ ] Incorporate findings from reputable industry reports, healthcare organizations, or business leaders to reinforce the credibility of wellness investments and strengthen the case for implementation.

Solution 2

Introduce Benchmarked Assessments

- [ ] Gather data on key health indicators such as stress levels, sleep quality, fitness habits, and job satisfaction to highlight areas where employees may be struggling.
- [ ] Present findings that demonstrate how current wellbeing gaps could be impacting productivity, engagement, and retention, making a data-driven case for investment.
- [ ] Show how your company's employee wellbeing metrics stack up against similar organizations, emphasizing the competitive advantage of prioritizing wellness initiatives.

Solution 3

Utilize Third-Party Validation

- Share insights from reputable health professionals, wellness researchers, and industry analysts who validate the effectiveness of structured wellness programs in improving employee health and business performance.
- Present findings from leading organizations and research institutions that quantify the ROI of wellness initiatives, such as reduced healthcare costs, lower turnover, and increased productivity.
- Highlight case studies where external validation helped convince executives to invest in wellness programs, demonstrating how third-party credibility can overcome skepticism and drive decision-making.

Solution 4

Feature Employee Voices Pre-Implementation

- Conduct surveys or focus groups to capture employees' interest in wellness programs, showcasing their desire for structured support in areas like mental health, fitness, and stress management.
- Share statements from employees on how wellness initiatives could positively impact their productivity, job satisfaction, and overall wellbeing, reinforcing the program's potential value.
- Present this feedback to leadership as proof of employee enthusiasm, illustrating how a wellness program aligns with workforce needs and contributes to a healthier, more engaged company culture.

Objection 5:

Wellness Programs Are Too Difficult to Manage

Some CEOs (21%) worry that wellness programs will overload HR with extra work. But the truth is, the right approach makes them seamless, effective, and often easier to manage than doing nothing. The CEOs who've moved past this concern did it by listening to employees, getting leadership buy-in, learning from their peers, running pilot programs, and focusing on ROI. Here's how HR can turn hesitation into full-speed-ahead momentum.

Solution 1

Highlight Simple and Automated Solutions

- Showcase wellness platforms that simplify implementation. Highlight digital tools that automate enrollment, participation tracking, and reporting, minimizing administrative burden and ensuring seamless employee engagement.
- Provide examples of companies where automated wellness programs have freed HR professionals to focus on strategic initiatives rather than day-to-day program management.
- Illustrate how these solutions can be easily integrated into existing benefits systems, allowing for effortless expansion as employee participation grows.

Solution 2

Leverage Third-Party Expertise

- Suggest partnering with external wellness vendors who can partner on implementation and administration, reducing the burden on HR teams while ensuring high-quality offerings.
- Provide real-world examples of organizations that have leveraged third-party platforms and expertise to implement effective wellness programs with minimal internal resource allocation.
- Highlight how external platform providers bring specialized knowledge, proven engagement strategies, and economies of scale, making wellness programs more impactful and efficient.

Solution 3

Emphasize Leadership and Employee Involvement

- Empower employees through leadership roles. Propose forming employee-led wellness committees or assigning wellness champions who can drive engagement, provide peer support, and help coordinate activities—reducing the administrative burden on HR.
- Secure leadership advocacy for top-down support. Encourage executives and managers to actively participate in wellness programs, reinforcing their importance and driving company-wide adoption. Research shows that leadership involvement boosts employee engagement and normalizes wellness as a business priority.
- Highlight case studies where peer-led wellness programs increased participation, improved workplace morale, and created a culture of shared responsibility, leading to sustained engagement.

Solution 4

Present Clear and Efficient Reporting

- Recommend concise, user-friendly dashboards that track key wellness metrics such as participation rates, employee satisfaction, and cost savings, making it easier for HR to communicate program impact.
- Offer real-world examples of organizations that have used streamlined reporting to secure executive buy-in, adjust strategies based on data insights, and showcase ROI effectively.
- Highlight how wellness metrics can be linked to broader corporate goals—such as reduced absenteeism, improved retention, and enhanced productivity—helping executives see the direct business impact.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Wellness objections aren't roadblocks—they're invitations to lead. Every executive will have questions or concerns about implementing a wellness program, but each challenge presents an opportunity to reinforce the business case for employee wellbeing. CEOs respond most effectively to clear data, compelling ROI metrics, and real employee feedback. HR leaders who proactively address specific objections—such as concerns about employee engagement, budget constraints, existing wellness efforts, program impact, and management complexity—can successfully secure executive buy-in.

To move forward confidently:

- Anticipate objections and prepare targeted solutions, leveraging both quantitative data and qualitative employee stories.
- Emphasize wellness as a strategic investment with measurable returns, aligning closely with broader organizational goals.
- Utilize third-party validation and benchmark comparisons to build credibility and reduce skepticism.
- Streamline implementation through the adoption of digital, mobile-first platforms and empowered employee leadership, simplifying management and maximizing effectiveness.

Ultimately, organizations that turn executive hesitations into strategic dialogues don't just achieve wellness program approval—they create healthier, more productive, and higher-performing companies.

7 The Wellhub Effect

Wellhub doesn't just boost wellbeing—it powers better business.

CEOs leading organizations with Wellhub engage more deeply in workplace wellness, report stronger personal and organizational wellbeing, and see higher returns on investment. These outcomes are fueled by Wellhub's core strengths: Flexible access that fits every schedule, a comprehensive range of offerings across physical, mental, and financial wellbeing, and a holistic approach that supports the whole person.

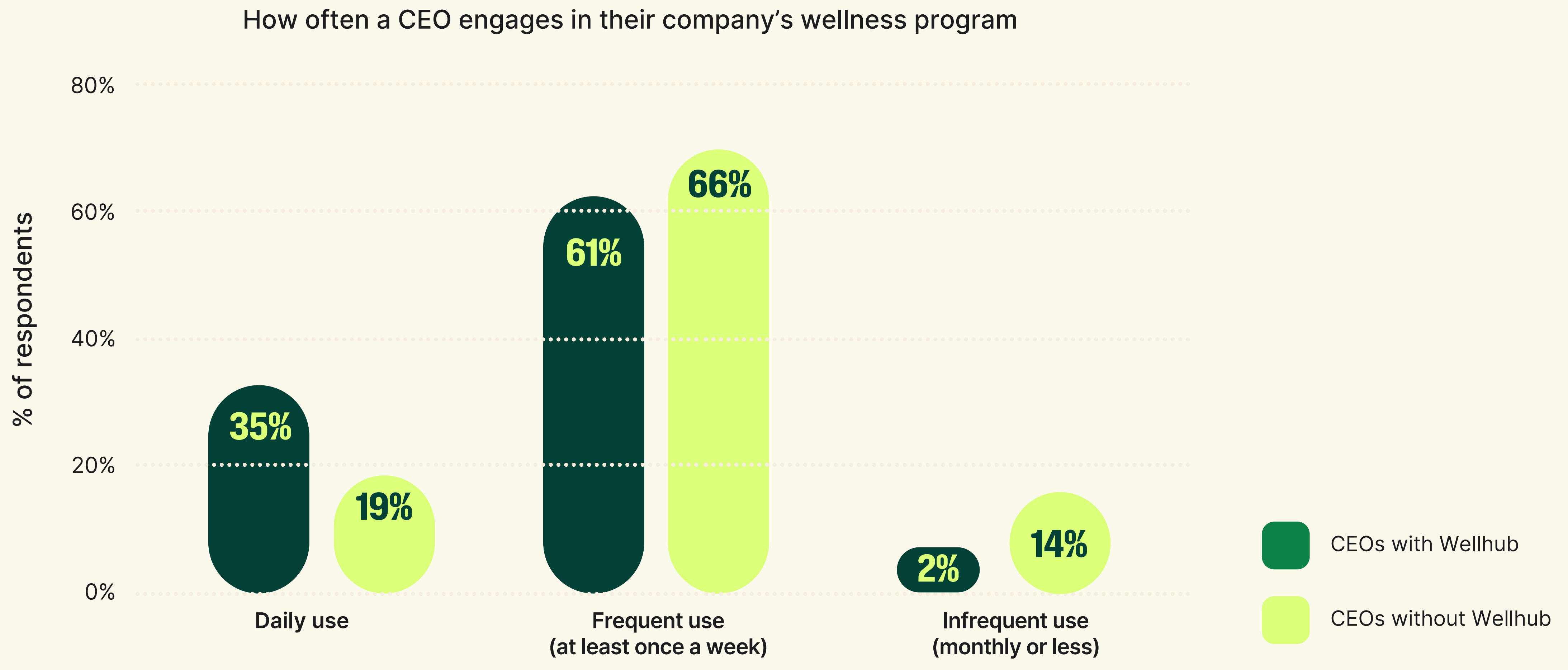
This all-in-one model drives real impact—lower turnover, reduced healthcare costs, and stronger business results.

Notably, 79% of CEOs of companies with Wellhub view wellness programs as an investment, compared to 75% at companies without Wellhub. The fact that CEOs at both types of companies view wellness as an investment at similar rates shows that their base perception of wellness programs isn't the differentiator here. What sets Wellhub apart is how effectively it turns that belief into real, measurable impact.

7.1 Leadership-Driven Wellness Culture

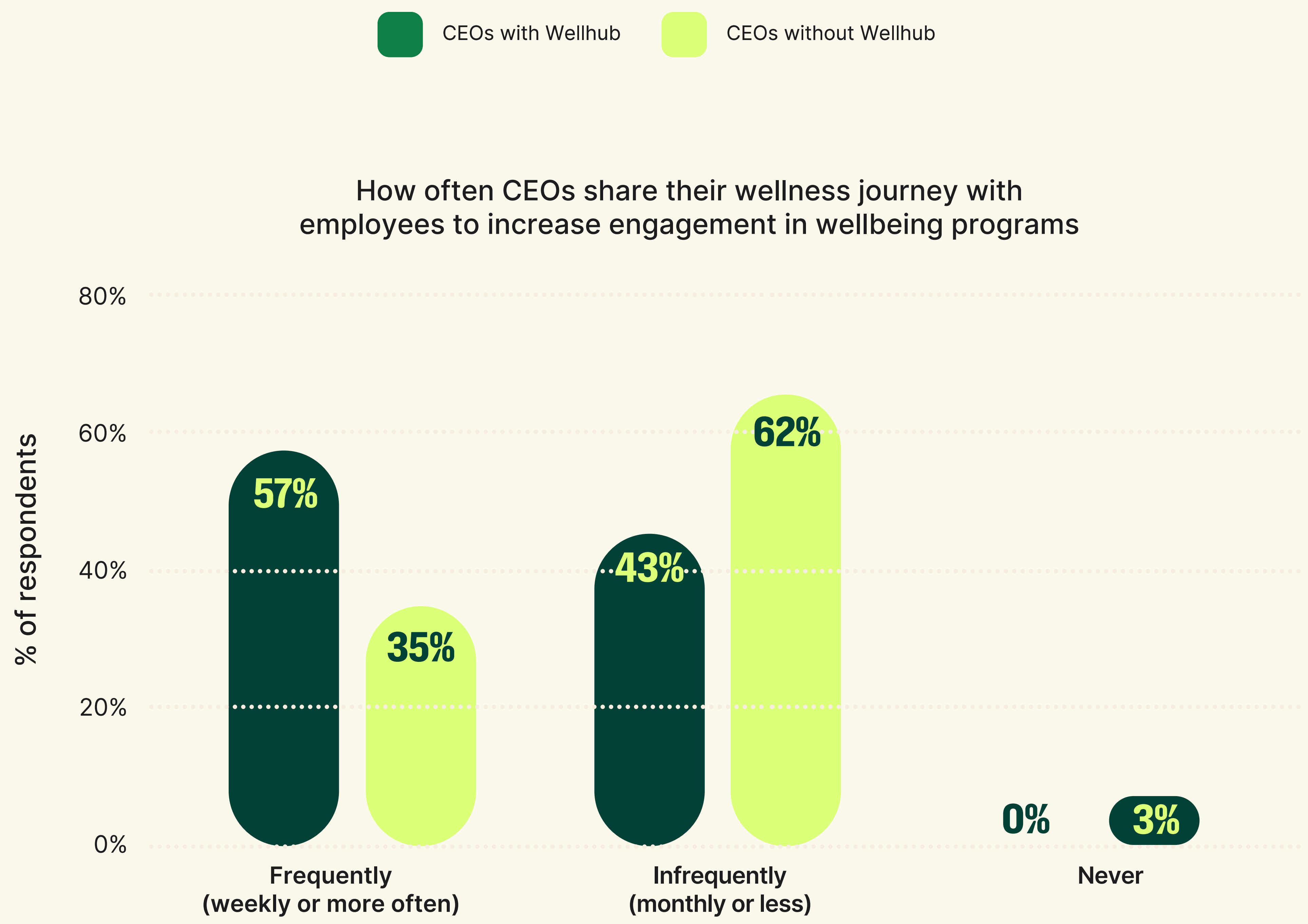
Wellness programs thrive when leaders walk the talk. At companies with Wellhub, that's exactly what happens: 35% of CEOs use their wellness program (i.e. Wellhub) daily compared to only 19% of CEOs at companies that do not have Wellhub as part of their wellness program.

CEOS WHO HAVE ACCESS TO WELLHUB USE THEIR WELLNESS PROGRAM MORE THAN CEOS WHO DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO WELLHUB



This leadership commitment sets the tone for employees. At Wellhub companies, 57% of CEOs say their teams frequently talk about their wellness journeys (at least once a week) —far surpassing the 35% at companies without Wellhub.

CEOS WITH WELLHUB ARE MORE VOCAL ABOUT THEIR WELLNESS THAN LEADERS AT ORGANIZATIONS WITHOUT WELLHUB



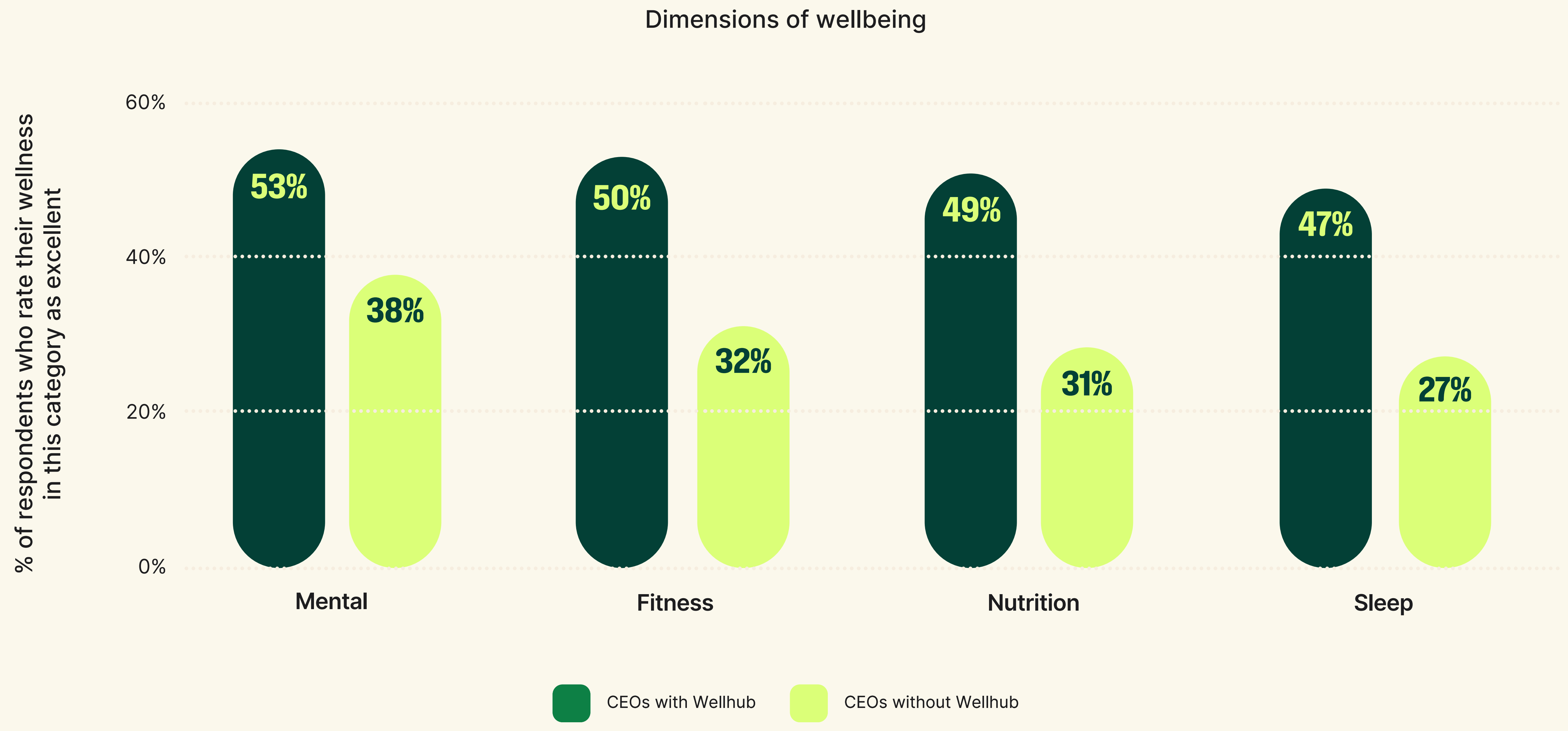
That's more than a program. It's a culture, one that creates a workplace where wellness is part of daily conversations, not just an HR tagline.

7.2 How Wellbeing Starts at the Top: The CEO Health Advantage

When leaders thrive, organizations follow. And at Wellhub-powered companies, CEOs don't just support wellness—they embody it.

Sixty percent of CEOs at Wellhub companies rate their overall wellbeing as excellent, far outpacing the 40% of leaders at companies without Wellhub who can say the same. Nearly half (48%) of Wellhub CEOs report significant improvements in their wellbeing over the past year, compared to just 26% of their non-Wellhub peers.

CEOS WITH WELLHUB HAVE BETTER RATES OF WELLBEING ACROSS THE BOARD



That impact shows up across every pillar of health:

Mental wellbeing

53% of Wellhub CEOs rate theirs as excellent, vs. 38% of CEOs without Wellhub.

Fitness

50% of CEOs that have access to Wellhub report excellent physical health, compared to 32% of their counterparts.

Nutrition

49% of CEOs that have access to Wellhub say their nutritional health is excellent, vs. 31% of CEOs without Wellhub access.

Sleep

47% of CEOs that have access to Wellhub enjoy high-quality sleep, compared to just 27% of CEOs who aren't tapping in to the Wellhub ecosystem.

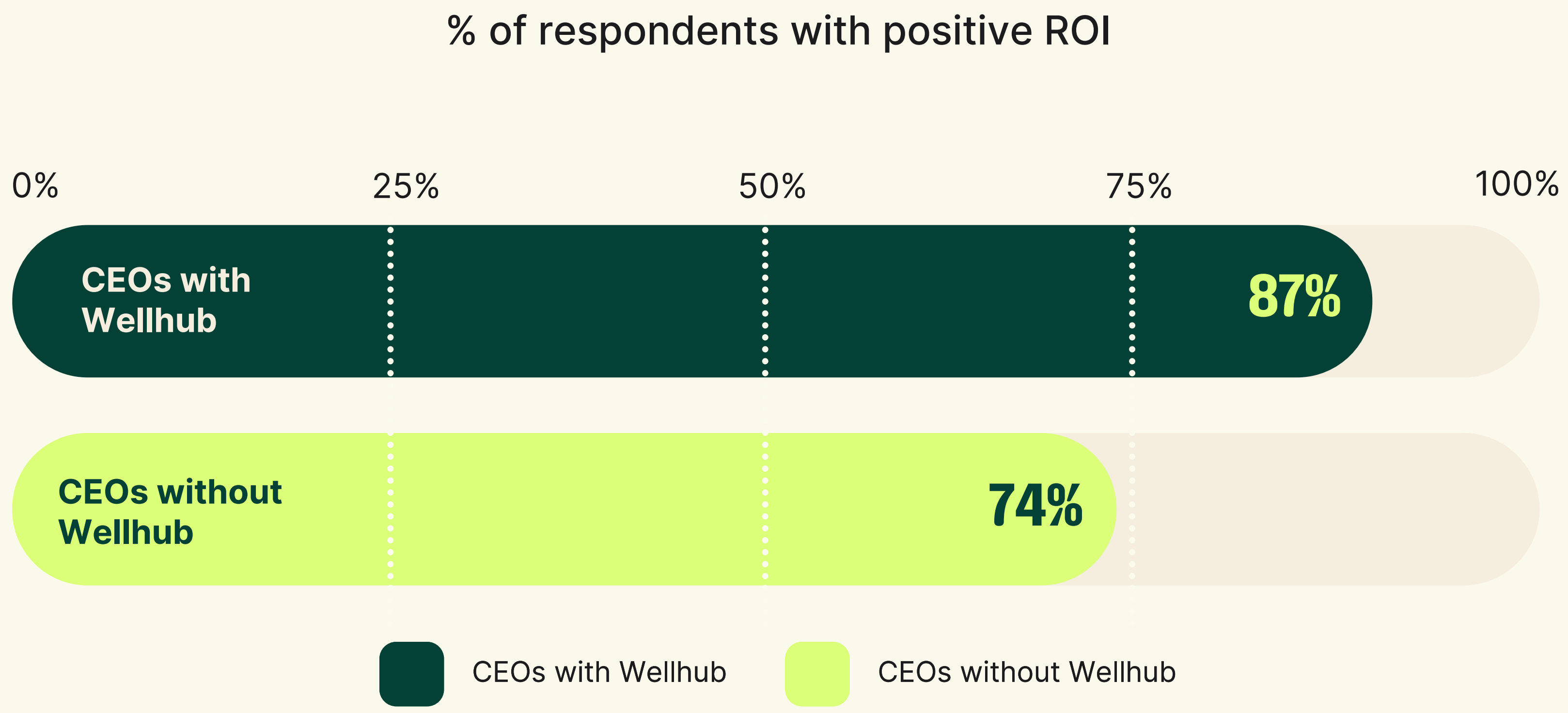
Perhaps most striking: **81% of CEOs with Wellhub say their executive role enhances their wellbeing**, while only 70% of non-Wellhub leaders feel the same. At Wellhub companies, work isn't something leaders survive—it's something that supports them. These findings suggest a powerful feedback loop: CEOs who invest in wellbeing, experience it more fully themselves. And when wellbeing starts at the top, it cascades through the company culture in measurable, meaningful ways.

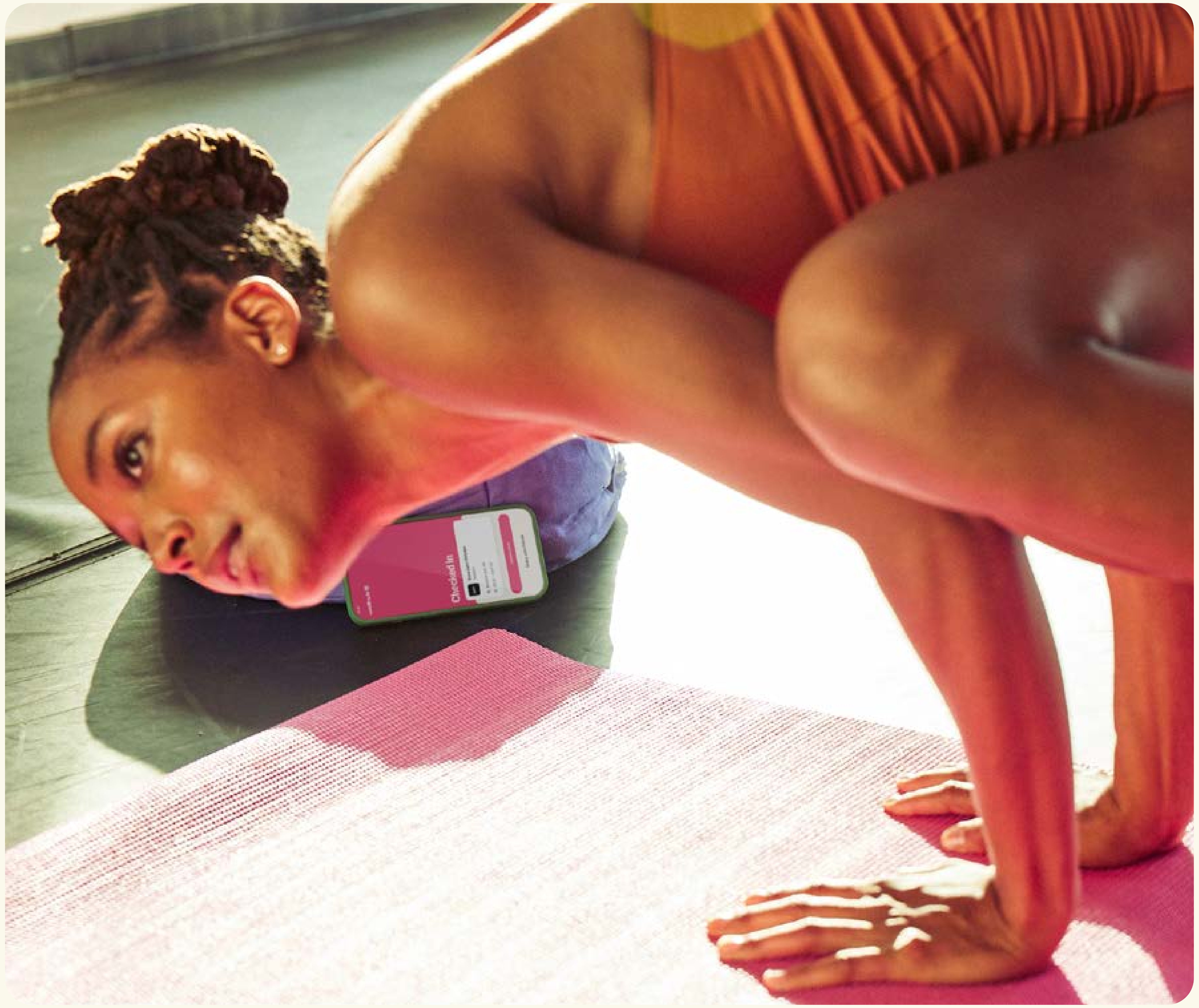
7.3 The ROI of Wellbeing: How Wellhub Drives Performance and Profit

Wellness isn't just good for people—it's great for business. And at companies powered by Wellhub, the returns speak for themselves.

Eighty-seven percent of CEOs at companies offering Wellhub report a positive return on investment (ROI) from their wellness programs, compared to just 74% of CEOs at companies without Wellhub.

CEOS WITH WELLHUB ARE MORE LIKELY TO SEE A POSITIVE ROI FROM THEIR WELLNESS PROGRAM





But this isn't about feeling good—it's about performing better.

Higher Returns, Fewer Question Marks

Wellhub companies are more likely to hit higher ROI benchmarks:

- **3% report returns over 200%—a level no company without Wellhub reached.**
- **24% achieve mid-tier returns between 101–150%, compared to just 17% at non-Wellhub companies.**

Even more telling? CEOs without Wellhub are more than four times more likely to say they don't know if their wellness investment is paying off. With Wellhub, the impact is easy to spot.

Measurable Impact on Core Costs

Wellhub drives real savings at scale:

- **Turnover reduction of up to 30%, saving companies $50 million in recruiting worldwide and hiring costs in 2023 alone. (Wellhub, Wellhub for Companies, n.d.; Hirose, 2024).**
- **91% of Wellhub clients report lower healthcare spending, with some slashing costs by as much as 35%. Total healthcare savings last year? $200 million worldwide (Hirose, 2024).**

Unlocking Human Performance

Wellbeing isn't just about cutting costs—it's about unlocking what people are capable of:

- **52% of Wellhub clients report significant productivity gains, showing that a well workforce is a high-performing one.**

When wellness is embedded into the fabric of the business—and championed from the top—it becomes a strategic advantage. Wellhub turns wellness from a line item into a growth driver. And the companies that embrace it aren't just healthier—they're more successful.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Wellhub shifts wellness from a nice-to-have into a clear business strategy. Organizations using Wellhub report higher ROI, up to 30% lower turnover, and tens of millions saved in healthcare expenses—all while seeing meaningful gains in employee productivity. Rather than an abstract benefit, wellbeing becomes a visible, data-driven advantage that strengthens culture, reduces costs, and drives sustainable growth. That is the real impact of embedding wellness into the way you work.

8 Conclusion

When CEOs treat wellness as a strategic investment, the payoff is undeniable. Companies see stronger financial performance, increased employee engagement, greater resilience, and measurable savings in healthcare and turnover costs.

Yet, despite these proven advantages, many organizations still face a critical disconnect. Leaders overwhelmingly believe in wellness, but employees don't always feel this commitment in their daily experience—and that disconnect poses a real business risk.

Structured wellness programs bridge this gap, turning leadership intention into tangible employee outcomes. Programs that are flexible, holistic, and deeply integrated into company strategy drive higher productivity, reduce absenteeism, and significantly cut costs. But these programs don't succeed on good intentions alone. Executive commitment, supported by transparent data, is essential. CEOs need clear, frequent reporting on wellness ROI—connecting employee wellbeing directly to business metrics like engagement, retention, and cost reductions. When wellness moves beyond a discretionary expense into a fundamental component of healthcare and financial planning, it gains the budgetary priority and strategic importance it deserves.

But data alone isn't enough. The true turning point comes when leaders personally engage in wellness initiatives. CEOs who participate actively—joining fitness challenges, openly discussing mental health, or sharing their own wellness journeys—create authentic visibility that inspires genuine employee participation. This level of executive engagement transforms wellness from just another company program into an authentic part of the organization's culture, driving lasting results.

The bottom line? Wellness isn't just an optional employee benefit—it's a competitive advantage.

The future belongs to companies that put people first. When wellness is embedded at every level—from boardroom to break room—businesses don't just grow. They thrive.

9 Worldwide Wellness

Argentina

62% of CEOs strongly agree that wellbeing is critical to their organization's financial success.

95% of CEOs have the final sign-off on wellness budgets.

54% of CEOs who receive impact updates at least once a month significantly increased funding for their wellness program last year.

44% of CEOs strongly agree that employees care about their wellbeing as much as their salary.

59% CEOs invest in wellness programs to enhance employee productivity and performance.

46% of CEOs that engage in their wellness program daily significantly increased program funding last year.

88% of CEOs see a positive ROI from their wellness program.

55% say workforce productivity is extremely impacted by their wellness program.

27% of CEOs say employee engagement rates in wellness programs are a top concern, making it the most common objection to program adoption.

Brazil

70% of CEOs strongly agree that wellbeing is critical to their organization's financial success.

97% of CEOs have the final sign-off on wellness budgets.

66% of CEOs who receive impact updates at least once a month significantly increased funding for their wellness program last year.

65% of CEOs strongly agree that employees care about their wellbeing as much as their salary.

77% of CEOs invest in wellness programs to enhance employee productivity and performance.

52% of CEOs that engage in their wellness program daily significantly increased program funding last year.

94% of CEOs see a positive ROI from their wellness program.

67% say workforce productivity is extremely impacted by their wellness program.

28% of CEOs say employee engagement rates in wellness programs are in their top concern, making it the most common objection to program adoption.

Chile

52% of CEOs strongly agree that wellbeing is critical to their organization's financial success.

95% of CEOs have the final sign-off on wellness budgets.

60% of CEOs who receive impact updates at least once a month significantly increased funding for their wellness program last year.

56% of CEOs strongly agree that employees care about their wellbeing as much as their salary.

54% of CEOs invest in wellness programs to enhance employee productivity and performance.

33% of CEOs that engage in their wellness program daily significantly increased program funding last year.

89% of CEOs see a positive ROI from their wellness program.

47% say workforce productivity is extremely impacted by their wellness program.

41% of CEOs say employee engagement rates in wellness programs are in their top concern, making it the most common objection to program adoption.

Germany

50% of CEOs strongly agree that wellbeing is critical to their organization's financial success.

92% of CEOs have the final sign-off on wellness budgets.

66% of CEOs who receive impact updates at least once a month significantly increased funding for their wellness program last year.

43% of CEOs strongly agree that employees care about their wellbeing as much as their salary.

45% of CEOs invest in wellness programs to enhance employee productivity and performance.

42% of CEOs that engage in their wellness program daily significantly increased program funding last year.

72% of CEOs see a positive ROI from their wellness program.

36% say workforce productivity is extremely impacted by their wellness program.

25% of CEOs say employee engagement rates in wellness programs are in their top concern.

Italy

54% of CEOs strongly agree that wellbeing is critical to their organization's financial success.

95% of CEOs have the final sign-off on wellness budgets.

64% of CEOs who receive impact updates at least once a month significantly increased funding for their wellness program last year.

47% of CEOs strongly agree that employees care about their wellbeing as much as their salary.

51% of CEOs invest in wellness programs to enhance employee productivity and performance.

60% of CEOs that engage in their wellness program daily significantly increased program funding last year.

76% of CEOs see a positive ROI from their wellness program.

35% say workforce productivity is extremely impacted by their wellness program.

21% of CEOs say employee engagement rates in wellness programs are in their top concern.

Mexico

74% of CEOs strongly agree that wellbeing is critical to their organization’s financial success.

97% of CEOs have the final sign-off on wellness budgets.

66% of CEOs who receive impact updates at least once a month significantly increased funding for their wellness program last year.

63% of CEOs strongly agree that employees care about their wellbeing as much as their salary.

68% of CEOs invest in wellness programs to enhance employee productivity and performance.

47% of CEOs that engage in their wellness program daily significantly increased program funding last year.

93% of CEOs see a positive ROI from their wellness program.

57% say workforce productivity is extremely impacted by their wellness program.

39% of CEOs say employee engagement rates in wellness programs are in their top concern, making it the most common objection to program adoption.

Romania

56% of CEOs strongly agree that wellbeing is critical to their organization's financial success.

92% of CEOs have the final sign-off on wellness budgets.

58% of CEOs who receive impact updates at least once a month significantly increased funding for their wellness program last year.

47% of CEOs strongly agree that employees care about their wellbeing as much as their salary.

55% of CEOs invest in wellness programs to enhance employee productivity and performance.

43% of CEOs that engage in their wellness program daily significantly increased program funding last year.

75% of CEOs see a positive ROI from their wellness program.

41% say workforce productivity is extremely impacted by their wellness program.

30% of CEOs say employee engagement rates in wellness programs are in their top concern.

Spain

50% of CEOs strongly agree that wellbeing is critical to their organization’s financial success.

89% of CEOs have the final sign-off on wellness budgets.

43% of CEOs who receive impact updates at least once a month significantly increased funding for their wellness program last year.

47% of CEOs strongly agree that employees care about their wellbeing as much as their salary.

59% of CEOs invest in wellness programs to enhance employee productivity and performance.

51% of CEOs that engage in their wellness program daily significantly increased program funding last year.

80% of CEOs see a positive ROI from their wellness program.

43% say workforce productivity is extremely impacted by their wellness program.

30% of CEOs say employee engagement rates in wellness programs are in their top concern.

United Kingdom

58% of CEOs strongly agree that wellbeing is critical to their organization's financial success.

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United States

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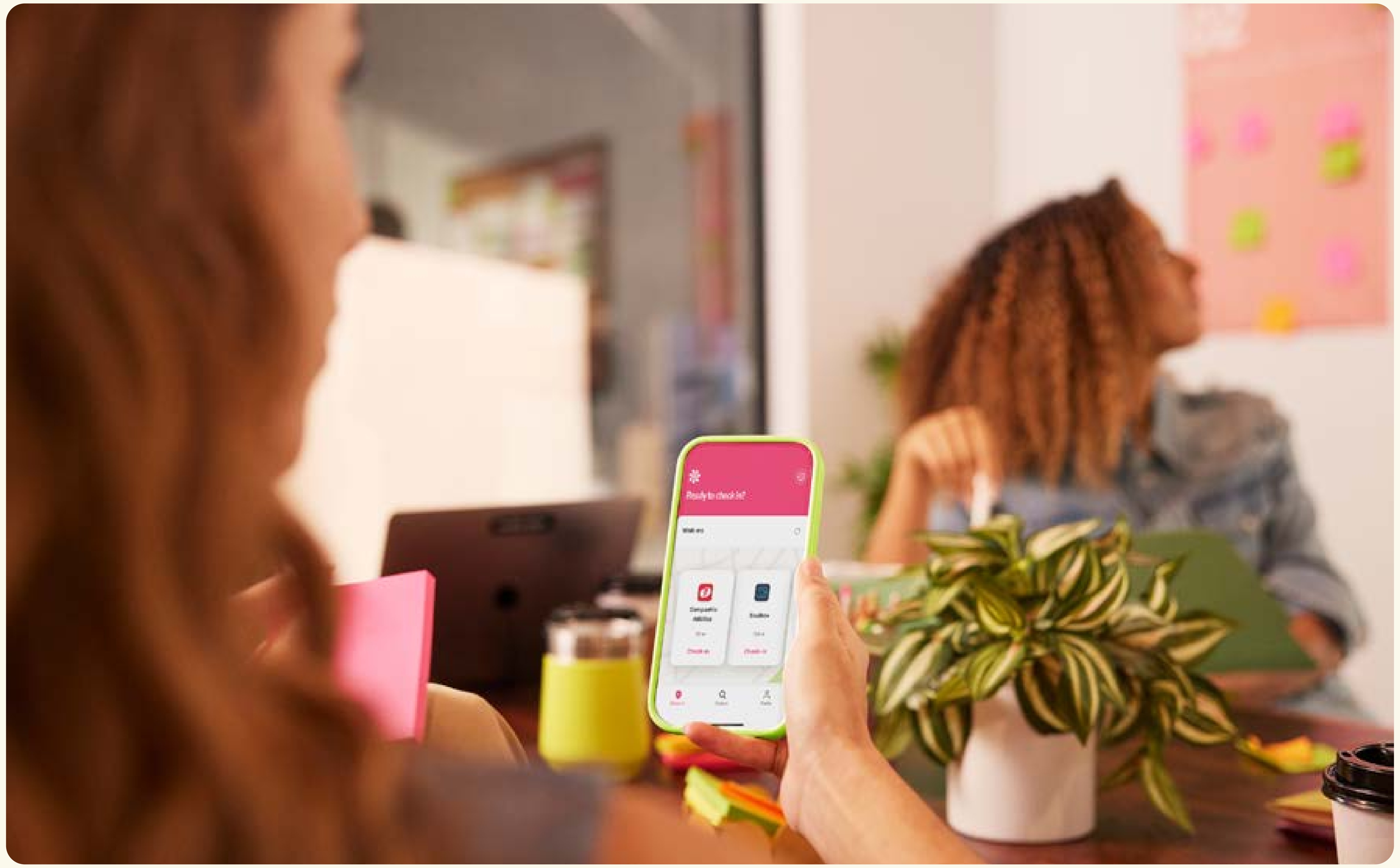
22% of CEOs say employee engagement rates in wellness programs are in their top concern.

10 About Wellhub

Wellhub is the most loved corporate wellness platform, offering the best network of gyms, studios, classes, personal trainers, and wellness apps — all in one employee benefit.

More than 15,000 companies use Wellhub to help their employees move, eat, sleep, and feel better with access to fitness and wellness partners in subscriptions that cost up to 50% less than traditional memberships.*

Wellhub more than doubles the number of employees engaged with wellness. This widespread participation results in workforces that are up to 30% less likely to turn over** and saves their companies up to 35% on healthcare costs.*** Investing in employee wellbeing is investing in company performance. Get started at Wellhub.com.



* Based on internal data.
** Results of an internal analysis of three clients with a total of 19,000 users.
*** Internal study conducted by Wellhub with Brazilian clients from January 2019-May 2022; users considered 'moderate and above' with >5 check-ins/mo.

Our Global Impact

wellhub

12
countries

900+
activities

7,500+
cities

70,000+
in-person and virtual gyms, classes, trainers and wellbeing apps

15,000+
clients

9 billion minutes
of employee wellbeing

500 million
check-ins

Over 3.5 million
subscribers

Appendices

METHODOLOGY

Wellhub conducted its Return on Wellbeing 2025 survey to assess the motivations of CEOs for investing and engaging in corporate wellness programs.

Between January 24th 2025 and February 7, 2025, CEOs and business owners were surveyed online through the polling agency QuestionPro. The response pool included CEO, Presidents, and Managing Partners/Directors of companies with 100+ employees. The results have a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Response options for the survey's 57 questions (see "Survey Questions") included Likert Scales, multiple choice, and multi-choice selections, and open response questions.

The countries included in this survey were: the United States and United Kingdom, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Romania, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Mexico. Between 150 and 151 responses were collected from each country.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Which best describes your current role within your company?
2. How many full-time employees (FTEs) are in your company?
3. Which of the following industries best describes your company?
4. When were you born?
5. In which country do you currently reside?
6. Do you think wellness programs are an expense or an investment?
7. To what extent do you agree with these statements:
    - 7.1. My company has a responsibility to help our employees tend to their wellbeing.
    - 7.2. My employees care about their wellbeing as much as their salary.
    - 7.3. My employees would consider leaving this company if we do not focus on employee wellbeing.
    - 7.4. Job seekers will only consider working for my company if we place a clear emphasis on employee wellbeing.
    - 7.5. The wellbeing of my employees is critical to the financial success of my organization.
8. Which of the following fitness/physical wellness programs does your company provide to your employee base? (Select all that apply)
9. Which of the following mental wellness programs does your company provide to your employee base? (Select all that apply)
10. Which of the following financial wellness programs does your company provide to your employee base? (Select all that apply)
11. Why did you invest in the physical, mental, and financial wellness programs mentioned above? (Select all that apply)

12. What were your biggest concerns/objections to investing in the physical, mental, and financial wellness programs mentioned above? (Select all that apply)

13. For the concerns/objections you selected above, what helped you overcome these challenges? (Select all that apply)

14. What is the main criteria you and your team considered when evaluating a wellness program?

15. Did you have the final sign-off on the budget for your wellness program?

16. Was the cost of your employee wellness program part of your overall healthcare budget?

17. How involved were you in the selection process for your employee wellness program?

18. How did your investment in your wellness program change since last year?

19. How will your investment in your wellness program change next year?

20. How often are you updated on the impacts of your wellness program?

21. What specific data points or insights are most important to you when evaluating the success of a wellness program? (Select one)

22. What impact do you think your wellness program has on:

    22.1. Talent acquisition

    22.2. Absenteeism

    22.3. Employee retention

    22.4. Healthcare costs

    22.5. Overall brand reputation

    22.6. Employee resilience

    22.7. Employee productivity

23. How do you measure the intangible benefits of a wellness program, such as improved company culture?

24. Do you compare your wellness program's performance to industry benchmarks?

25. Have you ever discontinued a wellness program? If so, why?

26. Do you see a positive or negative return on investment (ROI) from your wellbeing program?

27. Approximately what returns are you seeing on your investment?

28. How would you rate your overall wellbeing?

29. Do you feel your wellbeing has improved or declined (compared to last year)?

30. How would you rate your mental wellbeing?

31. How frequently do you meditate or practice mindfulness?

32. What are you currently doing to practice mindfulness? (Select all that apply.)

33. How important is therapy/counseling to your overall wellbeing?

34. Are you currently seeing a therapist/counselor?

35. What is preventing you from seeing a therapist/counselor?

36. How important is practicing meditation and mindfulness to your overall wellbeing?

37. How would you rate your overall fitness?

38. How are you currently tending to your fitness? (Select all that apply.)

39. How frequently are you tending to your fitness?

40. How would you rate your overall nutritional health?

41. How are you currently practicing good nutritional habits? (Select all that apply.)

42. How would you rate your overall sleep health?

43. On average, how many hours do you sleep each night?

44. What is impacting your sleep quality? (Select all that apply.)

45. How often do you participate in your company's wellness program?

46. How often do you share your wellness journey with your employees to increase engagement?

47. How important do you feel your role is in promoting and supporting your wellness program internally?

48. What initiatives, if any, do you lead to promote wellness in your organization?

49. How does your personal approach to wellbeing influence your perspective on wellness programs for employees?

50. Do you feel a sense of responsibility for modeling wellness behaviors to your employees? Why or why not?

51. How does your role as executive leader impact your personal wellbeing?

52. What resources or support would help you maintain or improve your personal wellbeing? (Select all that apply)

53. What aspects of employee wellness do you believe will be most important over the next 5 years? (Select all that apply)

54. How do you see the role of technology (e.g., AI, wearables) shaping the future of wellness programs? (Select all that apply)

55. What changes in workplace culture would enhance the success of wellness programs? (Select all that apply)

56. Does your company offer Wellhub (previously called Gympass)?

57. How often do you use Wellhub (previously called Gympass)?

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