

# EBTS 2024

## Maximising Employee Care:

Opportunities for enhancing  
care delivery across the  
employee experience







Research-based  
insights into the value of  
employee care and how  
employers can deliver  
care in key work and life  
moments to drive better  
talent outcomes.





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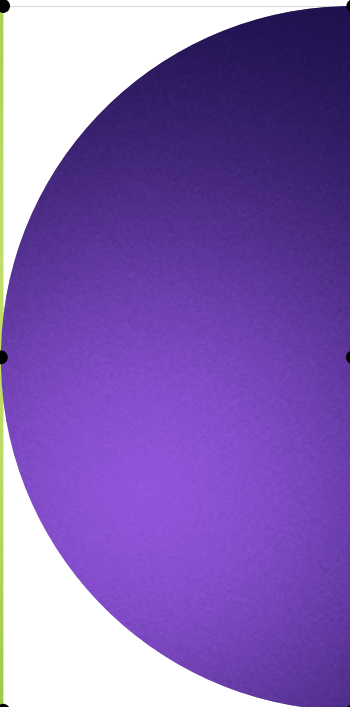
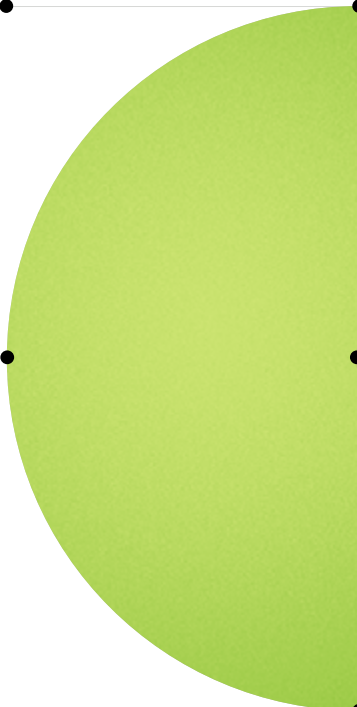
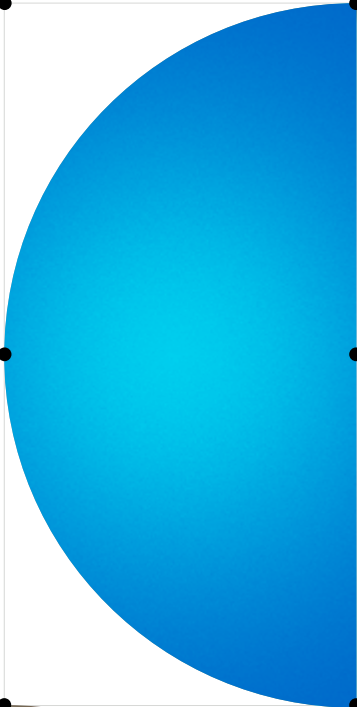
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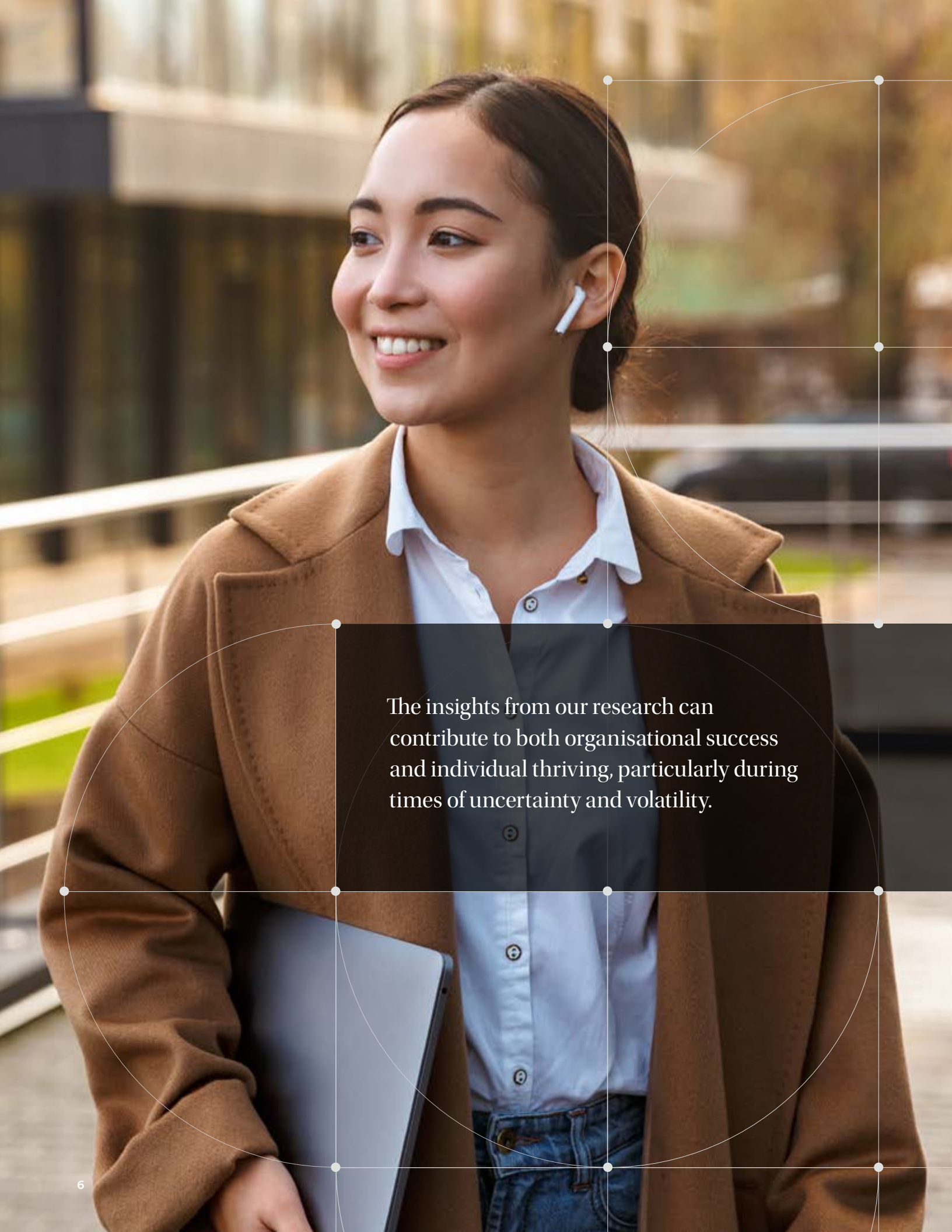
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The insights from our research can contribute to both organisational success and individual thriving, particularly during times of uncertainty and volatility.

# Introduction

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The eighth edition of MetLife’s Australian Employee Benefits Trends Study (EBTS) tracks important shifts in the workplace, employment relationships, workers’ holistic wellbeing and best practices for benefits programs. Our research serves as an index of profound economic, demographic and cultural change.

Through a global financial crisis, a global pandemic, the rise of “leaning in” and then “quiet quitting,” we have aimed to help organisations of all sizes understand the needs of their people and provide solutions that boost loyalty, engagement, productivity, and workers’ feelings of being cared for and appreciated. We believe the insights from our research can contribute to both organisational success and individual thriving, particularly during times of uncertainty and volatility.

This idea of individual thriving is reflected in the Study’s strong focus on employee care and the ‘care gap’ – defined as the difference between an employee’s expected care across work and life moments, and the actual level of care shown by their employer. The Study records the positive impact that employee care has on holistic wellbeing, talent management outcomes and, ultimately, every aspect of the employee experience.

We also gain insight into the impact – both positive and negative – that the care gap can have on factors such as mental health and employee loyalty, particularly across demographics. Ideally, we find that care delivery will be “always-on” and embedded as an intrinsic feature of everyday operations and the organisational culture. This year’s findings reflect the cultural moment, including lingering macroeconomic uncertainty and geopolitical conflicts around the world.

The post-pandemic blurring of work and home, ubiquitous social media, 24/7 connectivity and continuous technology disruption are other sources of stress. Collectively, these forces can produce professional and personal stress that equates to a “permacrisis” for some individuals and may lead to polarisation between employers and employees in the workplace.

Certainly, societal trends influence how employees feel and what they want from their employers. In turbulent times such as these, a caring and supportive work environment, with attractive benefits, can serve as a foundation for trust-based and mutually beneficial employment relationships. Employer-provided resources and a strong organisational culture can also help individuals prepare for unexpected external events and provide a sense of stability for workers of all types.

This year’s results show positive momentum in certain important employer metrics, including employee satisfaction and loyalty. However, the Study also shows that there is a gap between employer and worker perceptions of the overall employee experience, indicating an opportunity to bridge the gap with different solutions. Further, our results also show that the needs of distinct cohorts are not being met as effectively as those of others, as evidenced by significant disparities in levels of holistic wellbeing.



Our research confirms that delivering employee care across all elements of the employee experience leads to increased holistic wellbeing and, ultimately, improved talent management outcomes.

Four dimensions of employee holistic health

We define holistic health as the overall measure of employees' health across physical, mental, financial, and social wellbeing.

This measurement has been studied within within this Study for multiple years and it informs our understanding of employee wellbeing.



Throughout the report, we use research-based insights to highlight how employers can effectively care for their employees, particularly during key moments and events in workers' personal lives. Specifically, we focus on:

**CHAPTER 1**  
Shifts in holistic health and wellbeing, employee benefit trends and expectations

**CHAPTER 2**  
The need for effective care delivery across key experiences in workers' professional and personal lives, which positively impacts talent outcomes for employers and employees' overall health and happiness

**CHAPTER 3**  
How employers can design and deploy solutions for "always-on" employee care and take action to help employees choose the right benefits and use them more effectively, especially during important moments.





Why employee ‘care’ matters during high-impact moments

In examining distinct moments and events that employees experience at work, as part of the employment lifecycle, and in their personal lives, we identified many that have an outsized impact on employee perceptions of being cared for. Our analysis confirms that organisations able to convincingly demonstrate care for employees during these high-impact moments are more likely to improve their employees’ holistic wellbeing and, ultimately, their own talent management outcomes. Conversely, organisations unable to deliver care during these important times may experience declines in employee satisfaction, loyalty, employees’ sense of belonging and other key metrics. Further, workers who don’t feel cared for may conclude that the employee experience is not designed with their needs in mind.

Many organisations design the employee experience around workplace milestones (e.g., onboarding, promotions) and life’s biggest moments (e.g., having a child, retirement). Such an approach addresses the core needs of many workers but may overlook unique and challenging personal situations – that aren’t always visible – that shape individuals’ wellbeing, their attitudes toward their employers, and their ability to perform to their full potential.



Employees on the links between work and life:

- “ I think [employers] need to show some care about what's going on at home because it definitely affects how productive I'm able to be at work.
- “ Feeling cared about is something I expect with my day-to-day stuff and my personal life.

As our Study shows, employees increasingly expect employer support during experiences and moments that employers may not even be aware of (e.g. the death of a loved one, ongoing medical conditions, experiencing peri/menopause, child struggling at school, and significant unplanned financial stress). Not recognising these moments or failing to offer appropriate support mechanisms as part of the overall employee experience can impact employees’ holistic health, satisfaction, engagement and loyalty. Note that our research has revealed insights for employers looking to close these gaps.

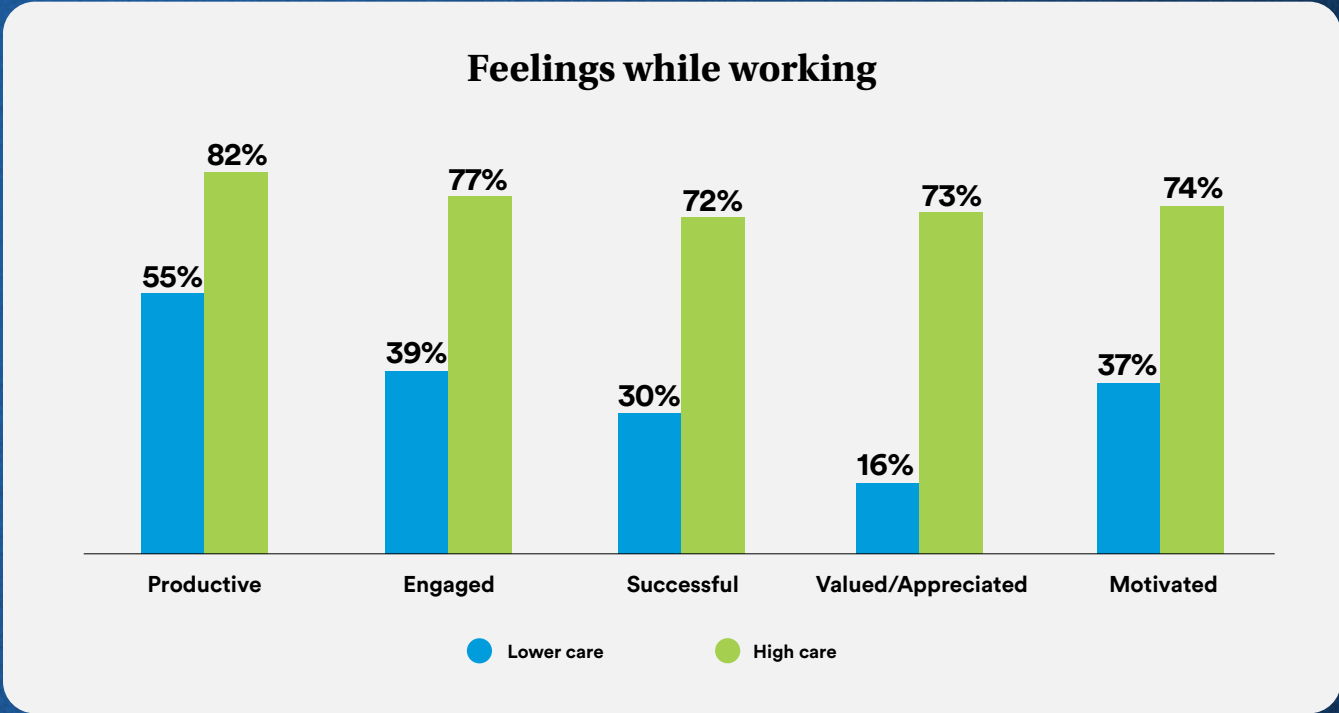
Realising the value of benefits

Our research this year uncovered practical insights regarding the availability and use of benefits, ranging from core offerings (e.g., flexible working arrangements, EAPs) to non-traditional benefits (e.g., mental health/wellbeing leave, additional personal/carer’s leave) that are of increasing interest to employees. It’s clear that benefits are critical to supporting employees in their personal lives, though the impact of having different benefits can play out in surprising ways depending on what workers are going through at work and in life.

Our analysis this year shows how benefits provide a foundation for wellbeing; to go beyond, employees need to take advantage of their benefits and have a positive experience when using them. Clearly communicating what benefits are available, the value of those benefits and how to use them properly is itself a demonstration of care. That effort will pay off for employees facing many different situations and at many different points in their careers. In other words, benefits that meet the evolving needs of workers are essential to delivering care consistently, when and where employees need it.

Employers that are able to demonstrate care to employees are likely to see a much more fulfilled workforce.

Creating a more caring environment has its benefits, with stark differences evident between those that are feeling cared for vs those that aren’t. Employers that are able to demonstrate care see employees feeling more productive, engaged, valued and motivated. Which in turn is leading to them being happier and satisfied with their work.



When employees feel cared for:

MORE SATISFIED WITH THEIR JOB:

91%

+18% vs. overall

HAPPIER:

85%

+18% vs. overall



# Chapter 1

## The importance of employee care in a time of uncertainty

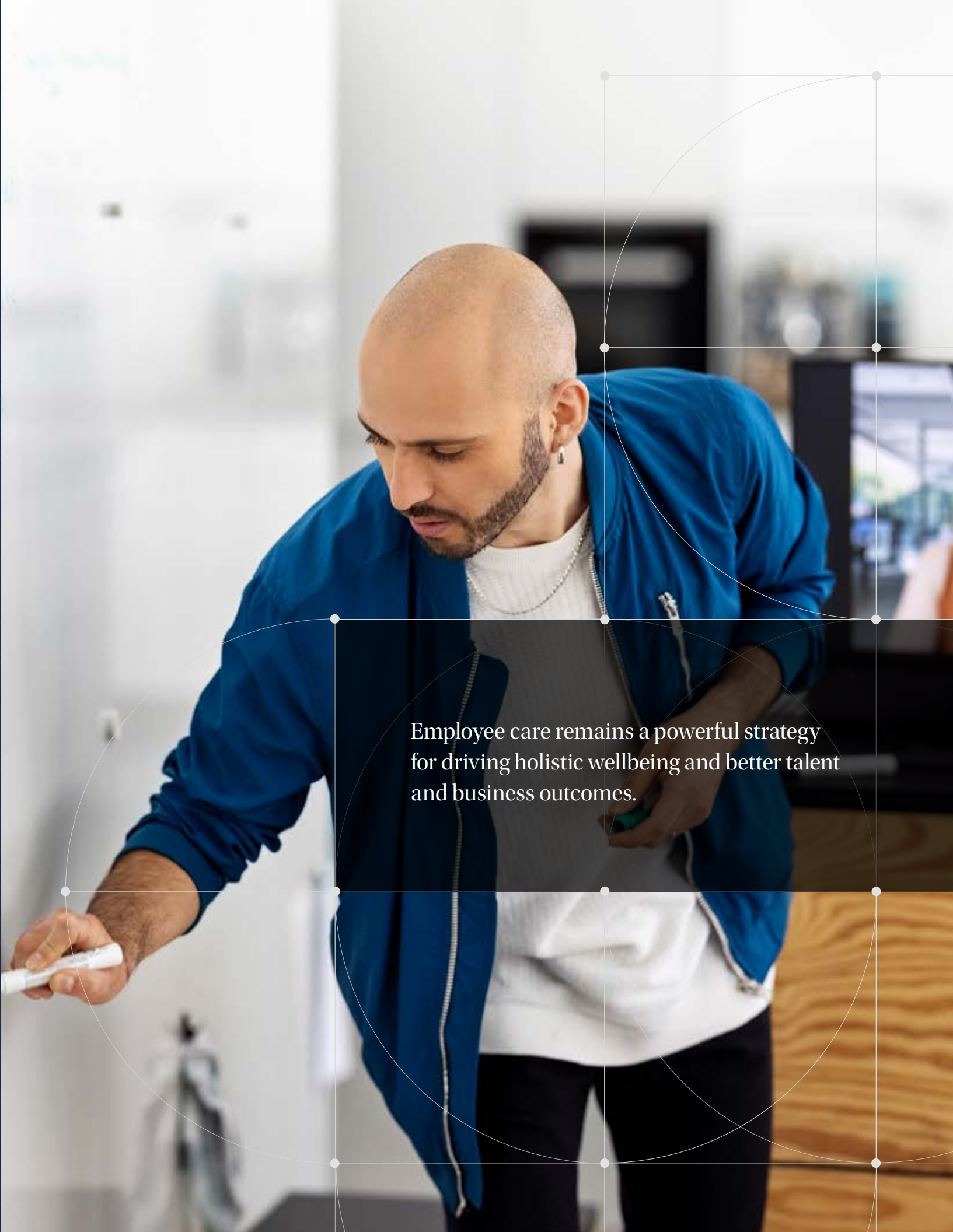
KEY TAKEAWAYS

The business case for employee care is clear, with our research and studies from other sources showing a range of benefits for organisations, including stronger financial performance.

Employee care remains a powerful strategy for driving holistic wellbeing and better talent and business outcomes, but worker expectations for care are rising.

While our findings show positive trends in key employee outcomes, significant gaps exist for different workers and financial health lags other metrics.

Employee care remains a powerful strategy for driving holistic wellbeing and better talent and business outcomes.





For the many employers that have made investments in workers’ wellbeing and the overall employee experience, our latest EBTS data shows key talent outcomes are mixed compared with 2022.

The Study for 2024 finds higher job satisfaction and loyalty is stable, with engagement and happiness down on previous years.

Alongside rising satisfaction with benefits, our results indicate a growing interest in more tailored offerings, communication and decision-making support in choosing from available offerings. Employees are also keenly interested in insurance protection, additional super contributions, and cash bonuses, along with services to support their wellbeing and flexible work arrangements, which highlight the uneasiness employees feel around their financial circumstances. Given the level of uncertainty many workers feel – from macroeconomic forces, geopolitical conflicts, and disruptive technology – understandably, more would want protection against the unexpected. A welcoming employee experience, with a supportive culture and attractive benefits, can serve as an anchor of stability and trust.

The 2024 EBTS findings confirm the importance of employee care while highlighting the need for more nuanced and tailored approaches to delivering it. Effective employee care strategies can drive the talent outcomes employers seek, provided they reflect the evolution of workers’ expectations for care, across every element of the employee experience and in response to their personal situations. Further, employers should seek visibility into how effectively they’re delivering care today and how satisfaction levels vary among different groups of workers. Our research underscores the importance of viewing employee care as a strategic business priority, where the right investments in benefits and other aspects of the employee experience can yield meaningful and sustainable improvements.

A backdrop of economic uncertainty

Lagging financial wellness reflects a growing sense of stagnation and instability among workers, particularly within distinct cohorts. As a higher inflationary environment persists in 2024, the past two years have taken a toll on Australians’ financial situations. More workers are now living pay-to-pay, increasing to 44% of employees in 2024. Additionally, the proportion of employees that have a savings cushion of three-months’ salary has now dropped to 46%, falling 11% since 2022.



Concern about economic instability is reflected in the growing importance of insurance, with 55% of employees who have experienced significant unplanned financial stress concerned they don’t have enough life insurance cover.



Employees on financial stress:

- “ Over the past few years, my concerns about not having enough life insurance coverage have grown significantly... I now worry about whether my current coverage would be sufficient to support my spouse and children in the event of my untimely death.
- “ The cost of living has increased and if I were to die my life insurance may not help my partner in the same way as it would of previously. The money won’t go as far or cover as much of the mortgage as it would of in the past.

Our research confirms that employers are feeling financial pressures, too: 79% of employers say retaining talent is the most important goal. Additionally, 75% of employers are placing importance on creating an engaged workforce, while 74% are prioritising productivity as an important goal for their organisation. Finally, employee wellbeing is a top goal for over 70% of employers.

The top challenges employers are facing:

Attracting and retaining talent:	60%
Employee productivity:	54%
Ensuring compliance:	54%
Employee burnout:	54%
Employee stress:	52%





# Changing trendlines for key talent metrics and holistic health

In the face of a turbulent macroeconomic and cultural landscape, our 2024 findings show a mix of positive and negative trends in several key metrics, with changes most strongly associated with demographics such as home status, disability\*\* and neurodivergence\*.

## Loyalty remains steady

51% of employees report no intention of leaving their current role, a figure which remains steady from 2022.

## A rise in satisfaction

Satisfaction is trending upward, with 73% of employees reportedly content in their current role, up from 68% in 2022 and a post-2020 high.

## Decreasing engagement

Employee engagement is down 6% since 2022, falling from 70% to 64%

## A drop in workforce health

Holistic wellbeing – how employees rate the balance of their own physical, mental, financial and social health – has declined since 2022, falling to 25%. Driving the decrease is a steep decline in financial health, falling from 60% to 46% since 2022, with financial drop-offs in those feeling in control of their finances, having a 3-month savings cushion, and having/sticking to a budget.

Our study indicates some key differences in talent outcomes and holistic health between key demographics and employee cohorts. Men, in particular, feel a stronger sense of financial health compared with women, while those aged over 55 feel better compared with other age groups in all categories except satisfaction and physical health, with studies showing it's more likely that those over 55 are in a position where they don't have mortgages, and have lower levels of debt and bigger savings cushions.

Employees identifying as neurodivergent\* reported negative talent outcomes across loyalty and engagement, and negative health outcomes across mental, financial, social and physical health, compared with those not identifying as neurodivergent\*. Those living with a disability\*\* saw negative outcomes in all categories except engagement, demonstrating the difficulty those cohorts face in the current climate compared with those not living with disability\*\*.

Comparisons in talent outcomes and holistic health have not been equally distributed among all workforce populations.

Talent outcomes and holistic health	Gender						
	Total	Male	Female	18-24	25-39	40-54	55+
Loyalty (looking around)	51%	52%	51%	37%	49%	50%	63%
Satisfaction	73%	75%	71%	67%	73%	71%	77%
Engagement	64%	66%	63%	64%	58%	66%	72%
Mental Health	62%	64%	60%	51%	57%	61%	74%
Financial Health	46%	53%	40%	44%	44%	43%	53%
Social Health	59%	61%	57%	52%	55%	60%	65%
Physical Health	54%	61%	49%	60%	52%	54%	56%

Talent outcomes and holistic health	Home status					
	Total	Own home outright	Own home with mortgage	Total home owners	Renting	Living at home
Loyalty (looking around)	51%	62%	51%	54%	49%	34%
Satisfaction	73%	80%	72%	74%	71%	64%
Engagement	64%	70%	63%	65%	64%	58%
Mental Health	62%	78%	61%	65%	57%	52%
Financial Health	46%	69%	45%	51%	34%	42%
Social Health	59%	70%	58%	61%	56%	50%
Physical Health	54%	63%	53%	56%	53%	42%

Talent outcomes and holistic health	Born Overseas			Neurodivergent*		Disability**	
	Total	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Loyalty (looking around)	51%	50%	52%	40%	53%	43%	52%
Satisfaction	73%	71%	73%	68%	74%	64%	74%
Engagement	64%	67%	64%	59%	65%	64%	65%
Mental Health	62%	64%	61%	34%	65%	44%	64%
Financial Health	46%	44%	46%	29%	48%	27%	47%
Social Health	59%	56%	60%	47%	60%	47%	60%
Physical Health	54%	58%	53%	40%	56%	25%	58%

\*Self assessed as being a person who has unique ways of learning, communicating, socialising and perceiving their surroundings. It includes but is not limited to the following conditions: autism spectrum disorder, Asperger's syndrome, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Down syndrome, Tourette syndrome, bipolar disorder, OCD and social anxiety.

\*\*Self assessed as being a person living with a disability.



# Promoting a successful work life

While overall job satisfaction has increased 5% since 2022 (up 68% to 73%), further negative trends can be seen in employee happiness, with an overall decrease of 4% since 2022 and specific findings demonstrating that much work remains to be done.

There was a drop in engagement related satisfaction drivers with falls in manager empathy, feeling committed to employer goals and having trust in employer leadership.

Employers will note room for improvement when it comes to employees living with disability or neurodiversity. In both cases, employees report negative feelings above overall figures, including feeling stressed (35% overall compared with 49% neurodiverse and 44% disability), depressed (18% versus 30% and 35%) and burned out (32% versus 40% and 47%).

## Employees on experiencing perimenopause/ menopause symptoms in the workplace:

- “ Constant fatigue makes it hard to concentrate at work.
- “ I struggled with organising my workload.



## Menopause in the workplace

Our Study reveals some important feedback about the workplace experience of women with perimenopause and menopause. Overall numbers suggest that women consider their experience of menopause and support and care from their employer to be an important factor when it comes to their workplace health and satisfaction, with data suggesting a gap between the understanding and expectations of employees and employers in this regard.

Nearly half of women we surveyed aged over 40 report experiencing perimenopause/menopause symptoms in the past 12 months, with 63% of those being impacted at work as a result. Just 18% of this cohort feel supported by their employers, with 57% believing menopause should be more openly addressed by employers. The Study also reflects a gulf in the understanding of the workplace impacts of menopause, with 60% of employers not understanding how the experience affects retirement, and 57% not understanding how menopause affects women in the workplace.

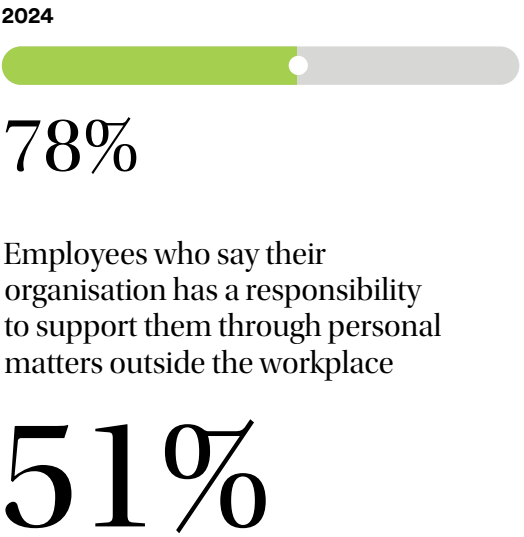
The Study acts as a significant call to action for employers to support women in managing their symptoms, as well as raising discussions of perimenopause/menopause to destigmatise the topic. Small changes can make a significant difference, and suggested initiatives include having an official menopause policy in place, equipping people leaders with information, implementing guidelines to have healthy discussions, offering flexible work arrangements (e.g., location, hours, dress code), additional paid leave, and providing access to EAP or other health and wellbeing support services aimed at helping women manage symptoms and stay connected to work.

# Wellbeing across the workforce

Employee interest in workplace wellbeing continues to grow. For many workers, it has become a non-negotiable part of the employee experience and something they expect as a baseline, with 78% considering employee wellbeing to be an employer responsibility.

Employers face rising pressure to meet demand for employee wellbeing, which requires tailored approaches to meet the full range of needs across the workforce. For employers, the Study suggests that understanding the importance of wellbeing is often difficult to initiate or justify where financial benefits are not immediately obvious.

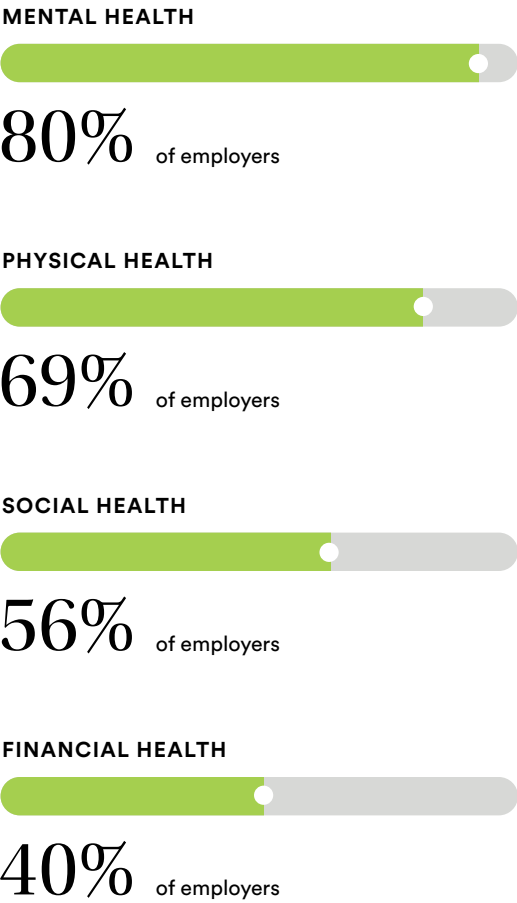
## Employees expecting employer care in the workplace:



## Priority of health and wellbeing



## What employers include in their definition of their employee's holistic health

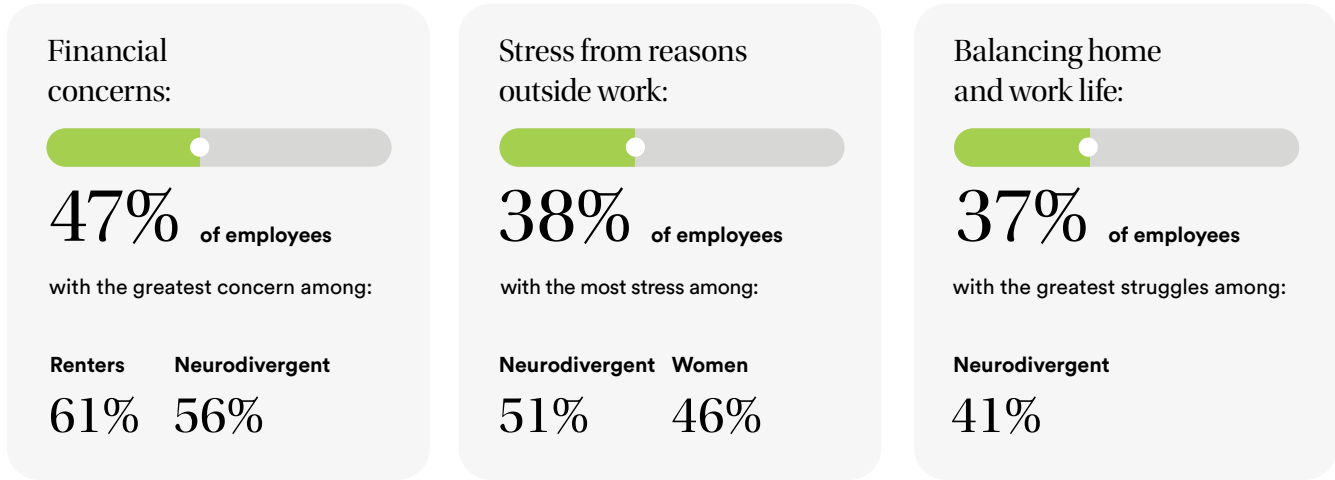




Looking at the individual areas of wellbeing, our Study shows a general downward trend in self-reported health since 2022.

Physical health (54%), social health (59%) and mental health (62%) have all declined, though financial health has dropped most sharply, down to 46%.

Employees who cited low mental health specified the following as significant drivers or causes:



Financial health stands out as the most significant challenge to employee wellbeing, lagging 16 percentage points behind all other measures of holistic health. Overall, employees reported a decline in their financial health since 2022, continuing the trend since 2020. Employees who rated their financial health as lower indicated a range of causes, including:



Spotlight on disabled and neurodivergent workers

Negative feelings or outcomes in employee care and wellbeing are particularly noticeable for both disabled and neurodiverse employees.

When compared to overall employee figures, these cohorts report lower job satisfaction (64% for people with a disability, 68% for neurodiverse, 73% overall), care shown (49% disability, 51% neurodiverse, 58% overall) and job loyalty (43% disability, 40% neurodiverse, 51% overall).

Disabled and neurodiverse workers:

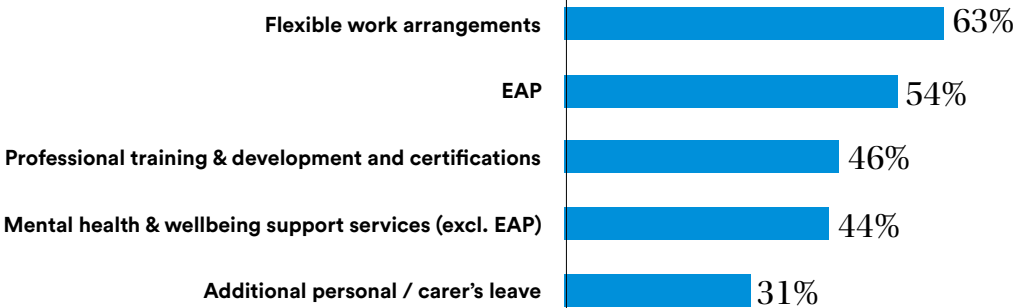




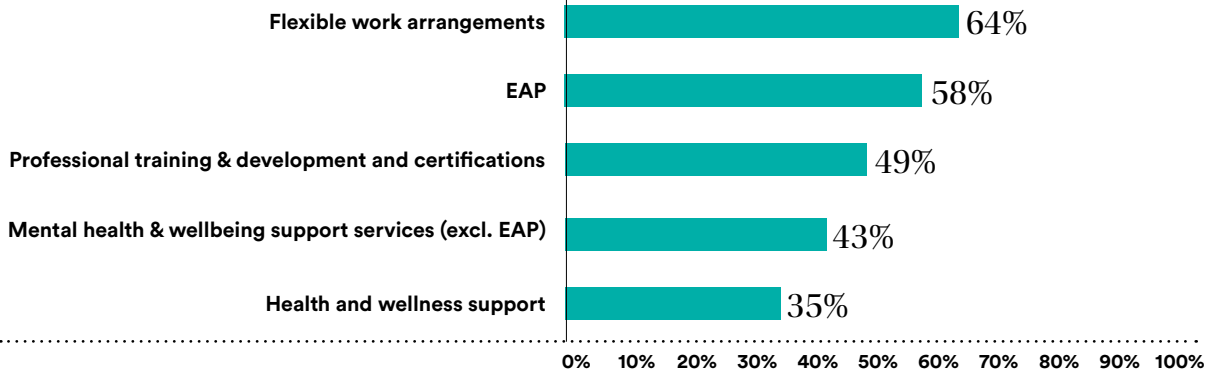
### Employees living with a disability and with neurodiversity

Top “must have” employee benefits:

**NEURODIVERGENT:**



**DISABILITY:**

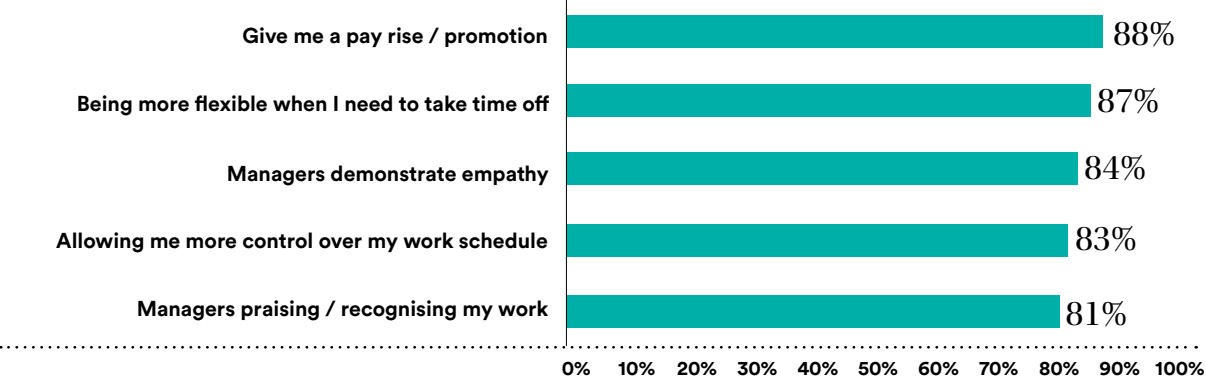


Ways employers can demonstrate employee care:

**NEURODIVERGENT**



**DISABILITY:**



## Demonstrating care through the employee experience



There is a strong connection between holistic wellbeing and satisfaction with all dimensions of the employee experience, and employers that are able to demonstrate that they care about their employees inside and outside the workplace are likely to see an increase in loyalty, engagement and overall health.

### Work and life moments with expectations of employer care:

Experiencing harassment or bullying at work

94%

Workload too heavy

91%

Loss of family member/friend

90%

Serious medical diagnosis and/or procedure

89%

Feeling burnt out

89%

Ongoing mental health condition (e.g., depression, anxiety)

88%



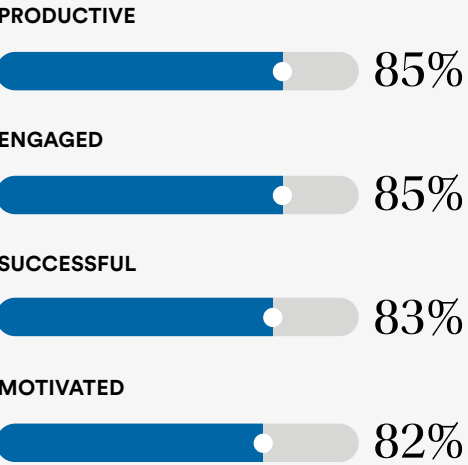
# Anchoring employee care on benefits:

## A best practices-based approach

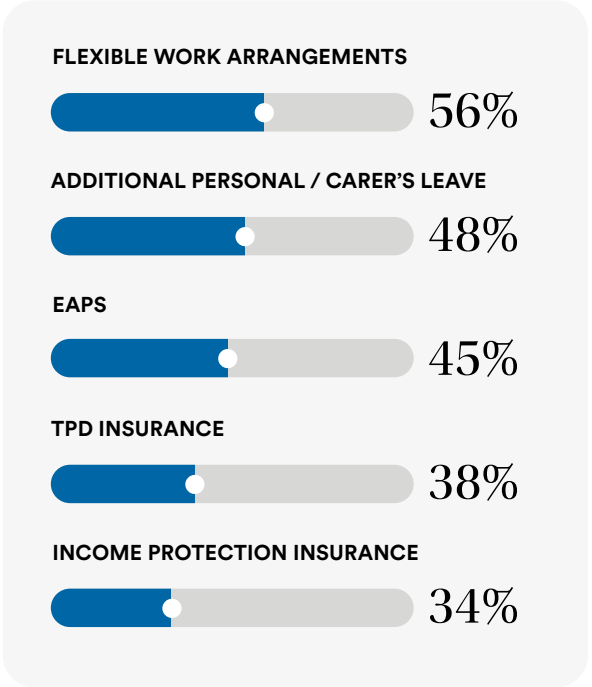
Delivering employee care effectively and consistently across work and life moments requires a unified leadership vision around strategic priorities and a strong commitment to executing tactical details. The elements of the employee experience provide a framework for employers to design robust models for always-on employee care, with benefits at the heart.

Our results make clear why benefits are important. Employees who choose, use and are satisfied with the benefits that employers offer have better work-life outcomes:

### Employees who are satisfied with five or more benefits are:



For employers looking to achieve these outcomes, an important starting point is to design benefits based on employee needs. In particular, the benefits that employees consider ‘must have’ have changed since 2019/pre-covid. In the following cases, each benefit has grown in importance to employees since this time:



Employees are also interested in emerging benefits that prioritise wellbeing, though there is much scope for improvement among employers in many cases. Employers are seemingly aware of the importance that employees place on mental health, with 46% offering mental health days, but need to be prepared to handle an evolving workforce. With employees living and working for longer, it is important for employers to be able to strike a balance between work and life, through providing access to wellbeing days, the ability to take extra days off could help keep employees more productive, engaged and motivated.

### EMPLOYEE INTEREST IN EMERGING BENEFITS INCLUDES:



Attractive benefits packages lay the foundation for a more engaged, loyal and productive workforce, while a compelling benefits experience can help organisations become top performers in talent management and employee wellbeing. Such leadership starts with clear and proactive communications about what benefits are available, why they’re important and how to use them. They must also design an approach to benefits education, greater utilisation, personalisation and integration that satisfies the unique needs and preferences of the entire workforce.

The following best practices, based on insights from our research, point the way forward to achieving the outcomes both employees and employers want.

# 1 Improving health and wellness benefits

Employers see health and wellbeing as important, with 82% seeing it as a priority. Top concerns of poor employee mental health are employee burnout (66%), loss of productivity (57%), absenteeism (48%) and loss of employee engagement (48%). While over 1 in 2 employers do provide benefits like EAPs, health and wellness support, mental health services and allowances for wellbeing-related activities, unfortunately employee utilisation of available health and wellbeing benefits is lagging, with under half (44%) using these benefits and only 45% satisfied with the offering at all.

For employers looking to improve the uptake of benefits, one area of opportunity can be found with EAPs and other employer-provided support. Employers should look to dispel mistrust in EAPs, less than 50% of employees are comfortable with using EAPs for mental health support. One of the biggest barriers is that 48% of employees worry that their information may be used against them. Employers can improve uptake of these services by providing more clarity over the confidentiality of these services.



### Employees on EAP concerns:

- “ If my employer was to offer it, I'd be inclined to use it only if I was assured of confidentiality and it was managed via a third party.
- “ Having some way of knowing that what is discussed stays private and that the information is not accessible by management.




For employers, one area of opportunity in health and wellbeing benefits comes through increasing awareness. Our Study shows that only 40% of employees are aware of the wellbeing services offered by their employer or super fund, but that nearly 6 in 10 are interested in knowing more and nearly 7 in 10 would be likely to use benefits if they heard about their colleagues using them. With increased awareness comes loyalty, with 6 in 10 saying that access to wellness-related services such as mental health support, health coaching, and lifestyle programs would make them more loyal to their employer and super fund.

Employees who understand their benefits are 1.7x more likely to be satisfied with them. Employees that understand their benefits are 77% more trusting of employer leadership and 52% more likely to be satisfied with their job.


Communication is key to unlocking benefits satisfaction employees preference when it comes to learning about benefits:



**This means that communication is important and employees have a range of preferences when it comes to learning about benefits:**

 Email 50% of employees

 Talking with someone in person 49% of employees

 Website/online portal/intranet 49% of employees

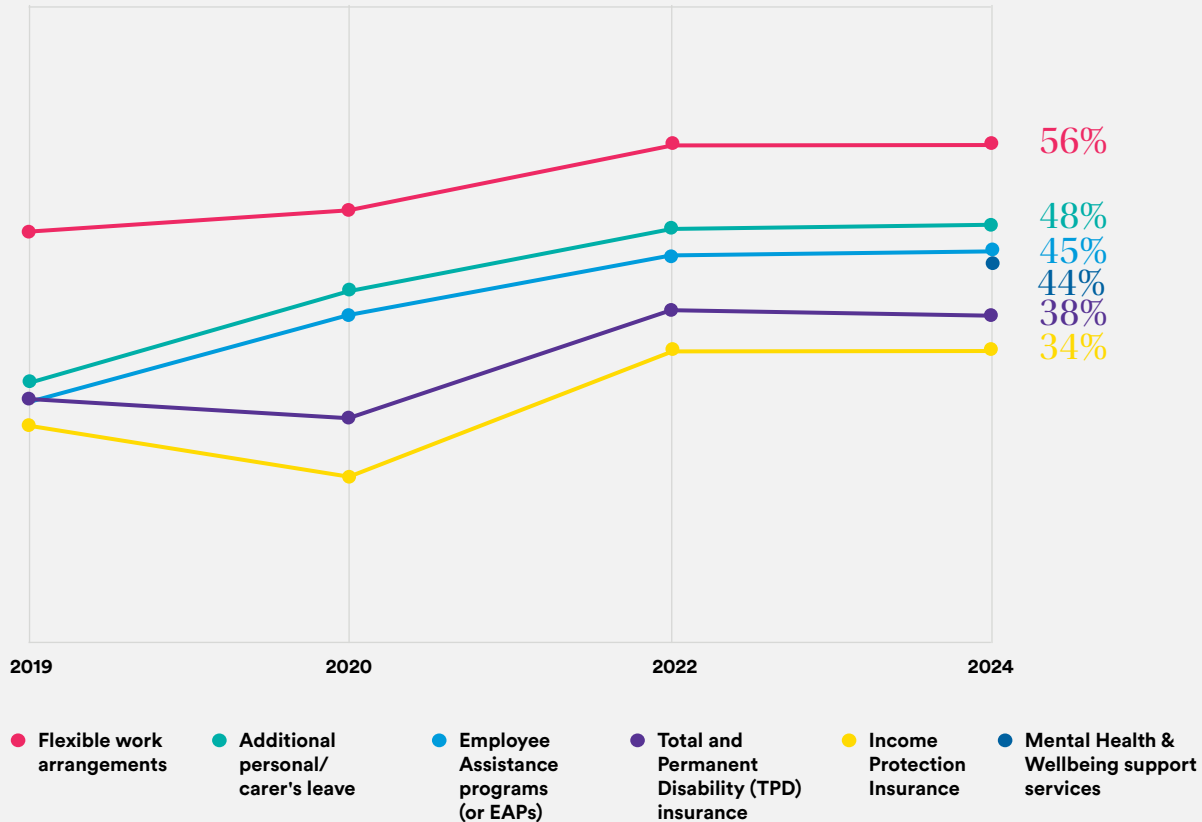
 Social media 46% of employees

 Video resources/podcasts 49% of employees

## 2 Optimising/ providing the right the mix of benefits

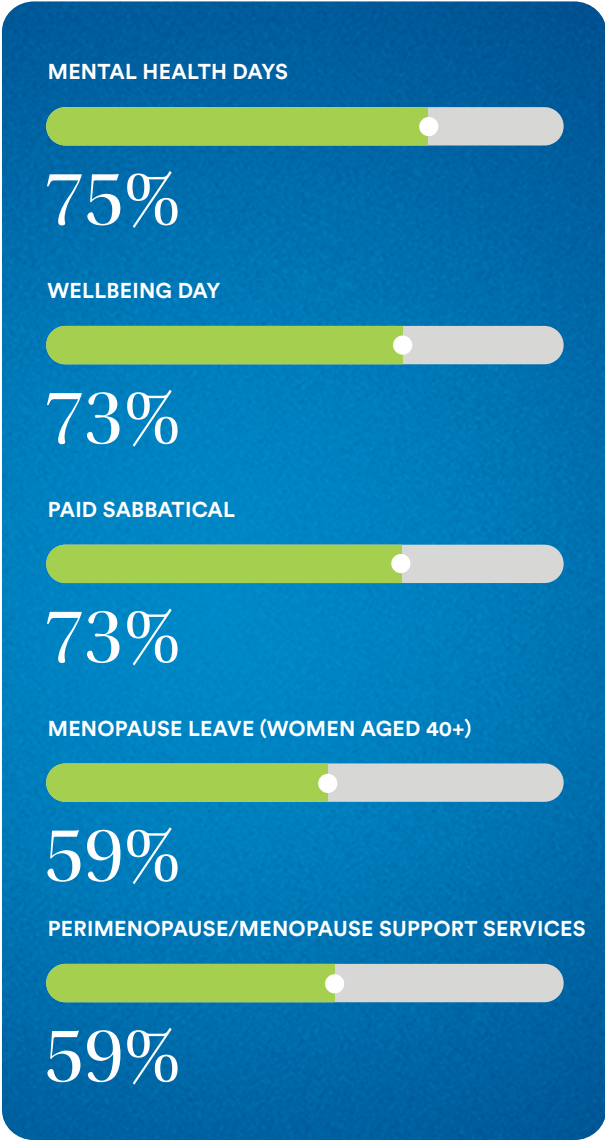
For employers looking to increase the attractiveness of the benefits they offer, as well as employee utilisation, it's important to pay attention to employee opinions on the type and mix of benefits available. Since 2019, benefits with increased employee interest include flexible working arrangements, additional personal leave, EAPs, TPD insurance and income protection.

LARGEST MOVERS IN 'MUST-HAVE' BENEFITS FROM 2019 (PRE-COVID):





While we are seeing previously tracked benefits increase to their highest levels it is also important pay attention to emerging benefits, with our study suggesting there is strong interest in benefits related to balance and wellbeing:



Getting the right mix of benefits – as well as the right benefits themselves – is important to overall employee satisfaction. Our Study finds that employees satisfied with 5 or more benefits have a more positive outlook on many workplace experiences compared with those satisfied with 4 or fewer. These workplace experiences include feeling committed to employer goals (91% vs 56%), feeling successful in working life (89% vs 60%) and trusting of employer leadership (87% vs 50%). For employers, getting the mix of benefits right to take advantage of these positives is all about understanding the diversity of employees.

Energising the employee experience with benefits

Benefits can be a strong foundation for a work environment that promotes employee wellbeing even in stressful and uncertain times. Our Study suggests that 82% of employers believe benefits play an important role in sustaining workplace culture. On the employee side, workers are increasingly interested in benefits such as flexible work arrangements (56%), additional personal/ carer’s leave (48%), professional training and development (46%) and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) (45%).

As we will highlight in chapter 3, boosting satisfaction with benefits requires that employees are:

1

Are aware of the benefits available

2

Use the benefits available to them

3

Experience positive outcomes

Of the benefits they use, employees expressed the highest satisfaction with paid and unpaid leave benefits (64%), work-life management benefits/programs (52%) and mental wellness benefits/programs (45%). Lower satisfaction rates can be seen in access to specialist health professionals on demand (30%), financial wellness benefits/programs (29%) and physical wellness benefits/programs (28%).

Investing in care

Employees believe that employers have a responsibility for their care and wellbeing (78%) while more than half believe that care should extend beyond the workplace and into private life. Employers, for their part, certainly understand the value of care and many organisations have made substantial investments in delivering it, investing in benefits to improve workplace culture (64%) and morale (54%), and show employees they care (53%). Employers have looked to find ways to provide the best possible benefit offering, with 1 in 3 employers altering investments in particular benefits, opting to create more of a balance that meets employee needs.

### Employees on benefits and care

“ It makes the employee feel like there is an additional value other than just being paid.

“ Everyone needs some sort of incentive paired with good working conditions and knowing the company you work for very much appreciates their staff.

Employers recognise the importance of employee wellbeing as a key objective, backed by employee data that suggests employers that can deliver care results in greater job satisfaction (91%), greater happiness when working (85%) and feeling mentally healthy (71%). While 8 in 10 employers agree that greater care will lead to greater engagement, productivity and loyalty. Being able to provide access to benefits can be a challenge, only 42% find it easy to secure funding for HR initiatives when there is not direct financial benefit to their business.



Addressing barriers to care

There are many tactical challenges in authentically demonstrating care. Managers, in particular, report facing barriers when caring for employees, including:

	of employers
Creating a culture of openness	59%
Needing more working time/flexibility to manage direct reports	56%
Needing more training	51%
Needing more guidance on employee benefits	50%
Struggling to support hybrid/remote workers	40%



Gaining insight into specific worker needs

To demonstrate care in ways that meet the needs of different types of employees, employers must first understand the diverse and varied backgrounds of their workers. With these insights, they can tailor the employee experience and benefits packages in ways that satisfy the diverse needs of employees, fulfil their own talent objectives and strengthen their organisational cultures in alignment with their industry's norms and characteristics.

However, employee expectations for care extend beyond the workplace. While most employees and employers largely agree that care is an employer responsibility (74% employers, 78% employees), 51% of employees also expect care in their personal lives, with an expectation for employers to show care in specific situations like loss of family member/friend (90%) and medical diagnoses/procedures (89%). Nearly half of employees (45%) say that their organisation has a responsibility to support employees through financial matters.



Employees on care outside of work

“ It goes both ways. If I am taking some of the work life into my personal life, I would expect my employer to be understanding at least when I am going through something.



Employees who feel cared for by their employer are...

MORE SATISFIED WITH THEIR JOB



91%

HAPPIER



85%

PRODUCTIVE



82%

The bottom line: employee care and wellbeing pay off

Our research indicates that employee care results in real benefits for both employees and employers. Where the data compares levels of low and high care, the Study suggests that employees with higher care are more likely to stay in their jobs, feel engaged with their work and feel generally healthy, reaffirming to businesses the importance of providing quality care.

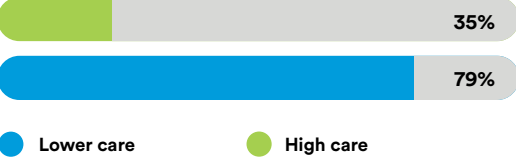
Employees that are cared for are also showing signs of being more loyal, engaged and healthier in their lives:

GREATER LOYALTY

NPS

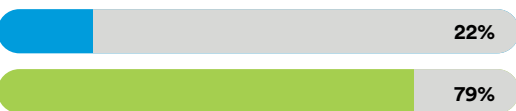


These looking around for another role:



GREATER ENGAGEMENT AND ALIGNMENT

Manager has high level of empathy



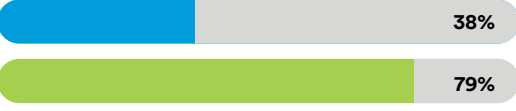
I feel committed to my employer's goals



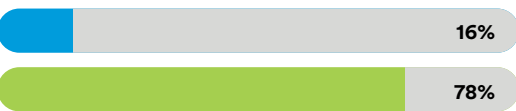
I feel a strong sense of purpose when I'm working



I feel successful in my work life

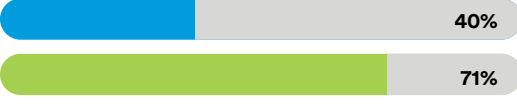


I trust my employer's leadership

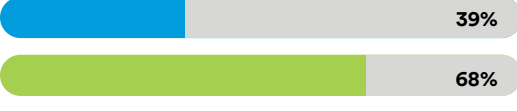


GREATER ENGAGEMENT AND ALIGNMENT

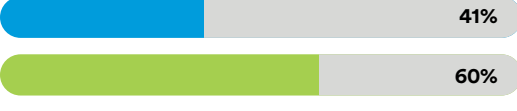
Mental Health



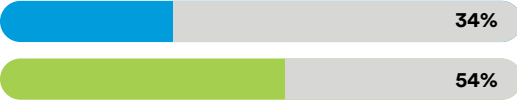
Social Health



Physical Health



Financial Health



BUILDING CARE INTO EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE WILL ENSURE THAT WORKERS:

- 1 Are more loyal to their employer
- 2 Feel more engaged in their work
- 3 Feel healthier overall

82% of employers state that they see the health and wellbeing of their employees as a high priority, with most employers highlighting mental health as a key factor of overall health and wellbeing. For employers, there are real business concerns associated with poor employee mental health:

Employee burnout:	66%
Reduced productivity:	57%
Missing work:	48%
Reduced engagement:	48%

As we'll see in subsequent chapters, the most effective employee care strategies balance all elements of the employee experience while focusing on the moments that are most meaningful to employees. Such strategies will move the needle not only on employee perceptions of feeling cared for, but also on key talent metrics for employers.



# Chapter 2

## Pathways to wellbeing: uncovering the moments that impact the employee experience

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Boosting employee wellbeing through employee care strategies requires a deeper understanding of critical moments and events at work and in workers’ personal lives.

Our research shows that the effective delivery of care improves talent outcomes, including satisfaction, loyalty and engagement, as well as employees’ sense of belonging and being appreciated.

A perception gap exists between employees and employers for care delivery in certain experiences, including those that are unplanned, have negative connotations, and require care for an extended period, as well as those that employers may not know about.

Our research shows that the effective delivery of care improves talent outcomes across the entire employee experience.





The concept of an employee journey can be useful to employers seeking to demonstrate care to enhance workers’ wellbeing, improve talent management outcomes and generate stronger returns on their investments in the work environment and organisational culture.

The typical employee journey encompasses common events and milestones (e.g., interviews during hiring, promotion, job change). Employers typically recognise many of these moments, though our research reveals a few gaps. However, the employee lifecycle also incorporates experiences outside of the workplace that may not be easily visible to employers.

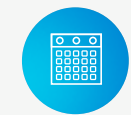
With the blurring of the boundaries between work and life and growing interest in purposeful work, these experiences have a significant effect on employee wellbeing and talent outcomes. At most organisations, the moments and experiences outside of work are not fully accounted for in employee journey models and recruitment and retention strategies.

# Delivering employee care at key moments

For this year’s EBTS, we examined a variety of these moments, identifying those that employees are most likely to experience, their level of comfort in discussing these moments with their employer, and how employers are delivering against employee expectations of care. These experiences include some of life’s meaningful and impactful moments (e.g., loss of a family member, having a child, receiving a promotion) and more routine events and interactions (e.g., taking a sick day, completion of training). What they have in common is a unique power to shape the overall employee experience, contribute to workers’ individual sense of belonging, and provide motivation and fulfilment throughout their careers. The research shows a positive relationship between care delivered during these moments and talent outcomes, with incidences of greater employee loyalty and improvements in health metrics. But a significant care gap exists today, as we highlight throughout this chapter.



## Australian workers on a journey: the breadth of moments that can shape employee attitudes and performance



### WORK MOMENTS

- Experience burnout
- Lack of appreciation or recognition for the work I do
- Did not get promotion I wanted/expected
- Experience harassment or bullying
- Heavy workload
- Change in leadership
- Switch manager(s)
- Take on leadership role within company
- Nearing retirement
- Start a new role with a new employer
- Change careers
- Become a manager/mentor to an individual or team
- Start a new role with the same employer
- Promotion



### LIFE MOMENTS

- Significant unplanned financial stress/expense
- Ongoing mental health condition
- Becoming primary income-earner
- Child struggling at school
- Bought first home/made a deposit on a first home
- Loss of family member/friend
- Child commitments
- Marriage/engagement
- Growing your family
- Serious medical diagnosis and/or procedure
- Experiencing menopause
- Caregiving responsibilities for adult family members
- Ongoing medical treatments for chronic conditions





Those moments with the highest incidence include:



Work moments:

Taking a sick day

Lack of work recognition

Feeling burnt out

Heavy workload



Life moments:

Experiencing perimenopause or menopause (among women aged 40+ years)

Child commitments (among parents)

Significant unplanned financial stress

Ongoing mental health condition (e.g. depression, anxiety)



Our research shows that when employers demonstrate care for their employees, they see a positive lift in talent outcomes and employee wellbeing. Specifically, employees who feel more cared for are:

More likely to feel committed to employer goals

79% 34%

High Care Low Care

Trust employer leadership

78% 16%

High Care Low Care

Feel a strong sense of purpose when working

79% 42%

High Care Low Care

By identifying high-impact moments, employers can focus their investments in the employee experience on those areas that will help them realise these gains and drive the other talent outcomes they want.

Our Study shows that employers creating a caring work environment can see substantial benefits to work-related metrics, with some large differences between employees reporting high or low care:

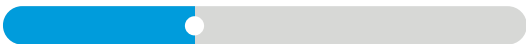


55% with low care

VS.



82% of employees with high care feel productive

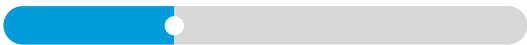


30% with low care

VS.



72% with high care feel successful

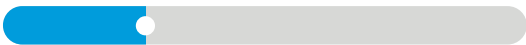


39% with low care

VS.



77% high care feel engaged



16% with low care

VS.



73% high care feel valued or appreciated



## Identifying critical moments for care

Today, there are substantial differences between the perception of care in specific moments and the impact of those experiences. We analysed the full range of experiences that constitute the employee lifecycle, as well as critical personal milestones and moments that may affect professional performance. We sought to identify the most meaningful moments based on:



### Incidence

Whether the employee has experienced the event in the past 12 months



### Comfort zone

The number of employees willing to openly discuss the event with their employer



### Expected care:

The number of employees that expect their employer to demonstrate care during the event

From this data, we could identify care gaps for specific moments. Care gaps refer to the difference between the expected level of care by the employee compared to the actual care shown by the employer to those who experienced the event.

The larger the care gap, the greater the risk that employees will feel less cared for and, therefore, less satisfied, loyal and valued. The lower the care gap, the more likely it is that employers are delivering care effectively for that moment. Care gaps are generally larger for most high-incidence moments. But they are most pronounced in negative moments, when employees may face greater stress and difficulties.



### Negative work moments include:

Care gap

Bullying/harassment

50%

Expect care = 93%, Care shown = 43%

Lack of appreciation or recognition

48%

Expect care = 88%, Care shown = 40%

Feeling burnt out

44%

Expect care = 89%, Care shown = 45%

Heavy workload

40%

Expect care = 91%, Care shown = 51%

Missed promotion

37%

Expect care = 79%, Care shown = 42%



### Negative life moments include:

Care gap

Experiencing perimenopause or menopause\* (women aged 40+ years)

41%

Expect care = 65%, Care shown = 24%

Significant unplanned financial stress:

41%

Expect care = 75%, Care shown = 34%

Ongoing mental health condition

38%

Expect care = 87%, Care shown = 49%

Becoming sole income earner

27%

Expect care = 68%, Care shown = 41%

Serious medical diagnosis / procedure

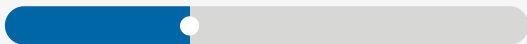
27%

Expect care = 68%, Care shown = 41%



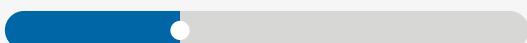
### When employees don't feel cared for in negative moments (e.g., financial stress, mental health condition, loss of family/friend), the impact on talent outcomes can be significant:

SIGNIFICANT UNPLANNED FINANCIAL STRESS:



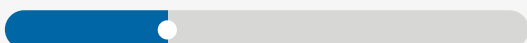
33% less likely to be loyal

ONGOING MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION



32% less likely to be loyal

LOSS OF FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND



30% less likely to be loyal

Conversely, when employers demonstrate care in ways that meet or exceed employee expectations at these key moments, it leads to improvements in the measures of a successful work life, with employees having feelings of greater positivity toward the organisation, feeling more engaged, loyal, trusting of their employer and committed to employer goals. However, our research confirms that currently there exists a significant gap between employee expectations for care and what employers currently provide or deliver during many of these moments.

Employee care strategies should account for the “visibility” of moments – that is, employers’ awareness of what employees may be experiencing. The care gap is also greater for moments that are difficult for employers to recognise, many of which involve workers’ personal circumstances. For instance, employers may have little way of knowing about employees facing unplanned financial stress.

At work, employers should be aware of high-impact moments, which may result in large care gaps, as is the case for employees who experience harassment or bullying. To gain insight into important events in employees’ personal lives and at the workplace, employers can – and should – promote supportive cultures that encourage open communication and psychological safety. An environment where workers feel psychologically safe helps facilitate always-on care in that employees can feel comfortable voicing their needs and using all the resources that employers make available to them.

To truly differentiate as care-led organisations, employers can shape care solutions for those moments that have the highest impact. Those who deliver care effectively in these moments are likely to see a bigger uplift in employees feeling cared for, with a strong correlation to key talent management outcomes. Effective care delivery also promotes greater feelings of happiness, success and belonging at work, which are the markers of a successful work life. Employees who feel cared for also feel valued and appreciated to a greater extent than their peers who don't feel cared for.

### The measures of a successful work life include feelings of:

- ✓ Job satisfaction
- ✓ Success
- ✓ Loyalty, or intent to remain with the current organisation
- ✓ A sense of belonging
- ✓ Productivity
- ✓ Being valued
- ✓ Happiness
- ✓ Being appreciated



# Exploring meaningful work and life experiences

We see ample opportunities to improve care delivery in contexts where employees believe employers are falling short.

There are also many ways for employers to enhance care delivery where they are already meeting – and in some cases exceeding – employee expectations. The reasons to make these efforts and investments are clear: as our research confirms, they are likely to promote holistic wellbeing, boost talent outcomes and increase returns on employer investments in the work environment, organisational culture and employee experience.

Each employer will need to shape its employee experience and employee care strategies based on its workforce, industry, and talent objectives, as well as the frequency and impact of these moments on its workforce. But understanding which moments are meaningful to employees, how much they matter to different employee groups and what workers need in each circumstance can inform the design of employee care strategies.



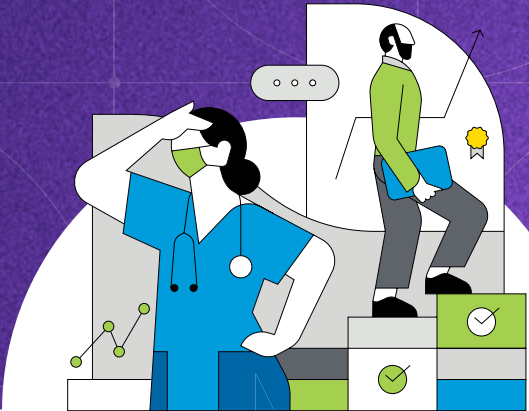
## Employees on the intersection of work and life:

“ You program yourself to think that there are only two modes – work and home. There are all the things in between that really comprise what life is. You really can't put all your time and effort into the company and really hope to come out of it better as a complete individual.



# The top 10 work moments impacting employees

For some of these moments, employers are delivering quite effectively. For others, there are substantial gaps that can – and should – be addressed.



Impact	Work experiences	Incidence	Comfort zone	Care gap
1	Lack of appreciation or recognition	52%	57%	48%
2	Feeling burnt out	51%	53%	44%
3	Workload too heavy	50%	73%	40%
4	Switched to new manager(s)	31%	54%	34%
5	Missed promotion	23%	47%	37%
6	Changing careers	22%	47%	31%
7	Taking on a leadership role	22%	71%	28%
8	Becoming a manager or mentor	21%	68%	32%
9	Nearing retirement	20%	56%	25%
10	Experiencing harassment or bullying	19%	76%	50%



# The top 10 life experiences impacting employees



Impact	Life experiences	Incidence	Comfort zone	Care gap
1	Experiencing perimenopause or menopause **	49%	34%	41%
2	Child commitments*	44%	71%	7%
3	Significant unplanned financial stress	42%	33%	41%
4	Ongoing mental health condition	38%	36%	38%
5	Child struggling at school*	34%	58%	24%
6	Loss of family member / friend	29%	77%	23%
7	Ongoing medical treatment for chronic condition	26%	60%	22%
8	Caregiving responsibilities	25%	71%	18%
9	Becoming a sole income-earner	19%	56%	27%
10	Serious medical diagnosis and/or procedure	18%	65%	27%

\*Among parents \*\*Among women aged 40+



Employees have different expectations for care for different experiences. For some, employees consistently expect higher levels of care and support than their employers currently demonstrate.

Many employers have invested in benefits, programs and resources that help meet employee expectations for care at key moments, including those that are easily recognisable by employers, can be planned for and are generally perceived as positive. For instance, training and development and social and supportive cultures are the elements of the employee experience where employees are most likely to say that they feel cared for.

Our research demonstrates how organisations that find ways to support employees in less visible, unplanned and negative experiences will be better positioned to support the holistic wellbeing of their employees. For instance, the loss of a family member and a serious medical diagnosis are high-impact experiences where employees need support on an ongoing or continuous basis. In these situations, making appropriate benefits available can demonstrate care even when workers are not inclined to disclose these experiences.



## Life experiences in which employees are shown significantly less empathy than they expect:

	Care gap
Perimenopause/ Menopause	41%
Significant unplanned financial stress	41%
Mental health conditions	38%
Becoming sole income earner	27%
Serious medical episode	27%
Child struggling at school	24%
Loss of family member/friend	23%
Ongoing medical treatment for chronic condition	22%



# Spotlight on women

How employers respond to women who are experiencing perimenopause/menopause can have a significant impact on perceptions of employer care and the overall workplace experience.



Our Study shows that among women aged over 40 years, 49% experienced perimenopause/menopause within the past 12 months, with 63% of those reporting that symptoms are impacting their work, including missing deadlines, taking extra time for appointments and missing social events.

For employers, demonstrating care during this experience is an area of significant opportunity, with just 18% of female employees over 40 feeling supported by their employer. The gap is likely due to the level of employer understanding with figures showing that 57% have a limited understanding of how menopause affects women in the workplace. Work remains to be done in this area, with 57% of female employees believing that menopause should be more openly addressed by employers, but only 31% of women over 40 feeling comfortable sharing with their employers.



Menopause is a natural part of life, and while not all women experience symptoms, including those who are transgender, non-binary or intersex, supporting those who do can enhance their work performance.

At MetLife, we are dedicated to creating inclusive working conditions and adequate self-care during menopause. We have established a formal menopause policy, rolled out menopause guidelines for people leaders, provide flexibility depending on employee needs, including flexibility with hours, hybrid working conditions, the opportunity for more comfortable office locations (including temperature controls and quiet areas), offer a wellbeing day every half a calendar year, as well as up to 10 days of paid leave per calendar year for permanent employees experiencing menopause, ensuring they can manage their health without impacting personal leave. MetLife aims to ensure it provides the right support to women to manage menopausal symptoms at work.



**Women experiencing perimenopause/menopause in the workplace can benefit from – and are asking for – care policies and initiatives.**

**These include:**

### Care policies

More flexibility with leave Impact:	91%
More remote working opportunities:	80%
Reduced workload:	63%

### Initiatives

Relaxation:	77%
Therapy sessions:	71%
Stress management:	67%

As employers evaluate high-impact moments with existing care gaps for specific demographic groups, they should recognise where and when they are delivering the care employees expect and formulate ideas to go further.

Addressing the persistent negative outcomes for employees is vital for employers to close the care gap. Embedding care in targeted ways can help them boost holistic wellbeing for all workers and drive the talent management outcomes they are looking for. In Chapter 3, we will highlight specific examples and recommended actions for demonstrating care for distinct high-impact moments and experiences, both at work and in employees' personal lives. The good news from this year's Study is that employers can build out more robust employee care models based on a stable foundation of key talent metrics and harness the positive momentum of improving employee attitudes.



# Chapter 3

## What it takes to deliver always-on care across the employee experience

KEY TAKEAWAYS

To better understand care delivery across the employment lifecycle, we have evaluated a range of different moments that impact employee attitudes about their jobs and organisations and their perceptions of care.

While employees have higher expectations for care in the workplace, significant numbers of workers expect employers to provide more support in their personal lives.

Designing the employee experience around the concept of “always-on” care will help employers navigate the complex and diverse needs of the workforce in pursuit of increased wellbeing and better talent management outcomes.

Significant numbers of workers expect employers to demonstrate care in their personal lives.



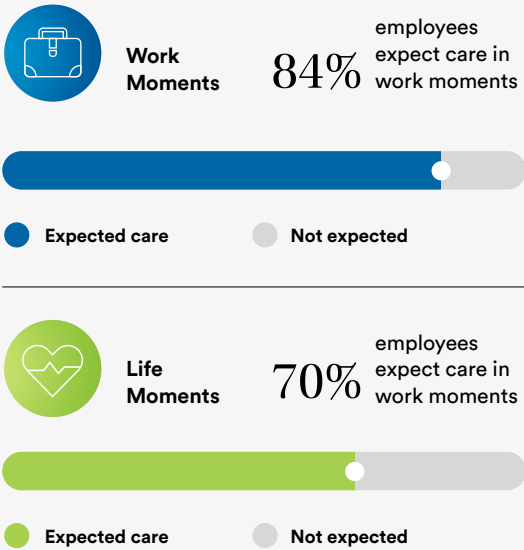


In designing an employee experience and work environment to support a broad range of needs, employers benefit from recognising the relationship between workers’ expectations for employee care at work and outside of it.

Our research shows that employees expect employers to deliver care in response to both work and life moments.

Trends in our findings suggest that delivering employee care outside of work is becoming a baseline expectation; 70% of employees say employers have a responsibility to support employees through personal matters outside of work. And for certain personal experiences effective care delivery has an outsize impact on employee wellbeing and talent outcomes.

### Employees expect a level of care across work and life moments



## Always-on care: what it is, why it works

To navigate these expectations, employers can adopt an “always-on” approach to care delivery with employee experiences designed to provide consistent, ongoing support in the workplace and outside of work. Always-on care strategies reflect fundamental realities of work and life today:

- 1 Increasingly fluid boundaries between work and home for most employees
- 2 The unpredictability of key life events and experiences, including those outside of the control of employees and employers
- 3 The impact of many different experiences on employee wellbeing and their attitudes toward their jobs and employers

Always-on care strategies can be designed to support relatively common and predictable occurrences, such as job changes, promotions, starting a family and preparing for retirement. Standard policies, procedures and benefits go a long way to satisfying employee expectations for care in these instances. But the “ready for anything” quality of always-on care strategies is what sets them apart; employers can be ready to provide support when unexpected events – such as sudden illness and financial setbacks – happen.

The persistent nature of always-on care delivery is another significant advantage; employees can feel supported in situations that don’t conform to fixed timelines and may last for extended periods (e.g., lingering financial stress, caring for ailing family members). Our analysis shows that consistent demonstration of care is possible across both predictable events and unexpected scenarios.

To work effectively, continuous employee care requires that employees are aware of the benefits available to them, know where to access those benefits and understand how to use them when key moments arise.

### Depending on their unique workforce and employee experience, employers can enhance their ability to deliver always-on care by:

- 1 Leveraging existing models to deliver care in moments where they are already effectively supporting employees
- 2 Creatively and proactively designing care strategies for areas where they are not delivering against employee expectations for care



## A holistic approach to key moments

Effective care strategies incorporate every element of the employee experience.

Employers can make use of each element as a lever as they seek ways to enhance holistic health and improve talent outcomes. Specifically, employers can evaluate how key moments, events and experiences align with the specific elements of employee experience and which benefits and offerings can best address employee needs.

For some experiences, appropriate care responses will seem clear and relatively straightforward; employers can demonstrate care through specific offerings, such as training, wellness programs or insurance benefits. Others call for more creative solutions, such as enhancements to the work environment, scheduling policies or internal communications that reinforce the organisational purpose.

Such integrated care strategies help employers realise the upside of care delivery (i.e., happier, healthier and more engaged workers) and avoid the downside risk of falling perceptions of care. By adjusting the mix of offerings and elements of the employee experience, employers can enable consistent care delivery which results in more employees feeling supported both at work and in their personal lives.

To be clear, individual employees will have different care needs and priorities for different experiences and the right care strategies will vary considerably based on organisational priorities, cultures, and the composition of the workforce. Still, our research reveals several principles and common themes that employers can keep in mind as they devise care strategies to support employees in the full range of moments.



For work-related moments, flexibility, supportive cultures and purposeful work are vitally important in driving perceptions of care. Empathetic managers are perhaps the most powerful force in care delivery, particularly in making employees feel seen and valued as individuals. Our research suggests that employers should not underestimate the influence and value of managers with strong interpersonal and communication skills. Indeed, by empowering and equipping managers to check in with employees who may be facing challenging situations and help them feel comfortable, employers can have a substantial effect on worker perceptions of care.

Our Study also reveals that overall, where care is required, employees value a mix of employer flexibility and a supportive work culture. Some of the ways that workers prefer to be shown flexibility include when employees need to take time off (81%), having flexible leave policies (80%) and greater autonomy with work schedule (75%). For a supportive culture, employees prefer when managers show empathy (80%), praise or recognise work (79%) and make a comfortable workplace (71%).



When employers show care, employees report:

91%  
are satisfied with their job

2.6 x higher than those with low care

85%  
feel happy at work

2.8 x higher than those with low care

71%  
feel mentally healthy

1.8 x higher than those with low care

Our Study analysed work and life moments based on several points, determining the relative level of care perceived by employees and areas of opportunity for employers in addressing concerns.

Key



Incidence

Whether the employee has experienced the event in the past 12 months



Comfort zone

The number of employees willing to openly discuss the event with their employer

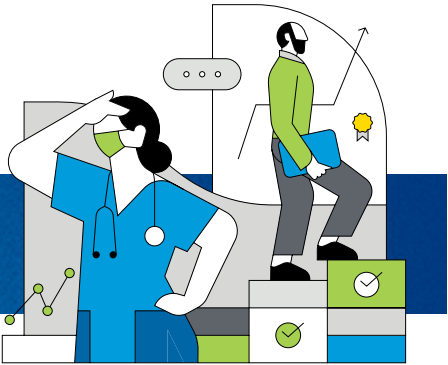


Care gap

The difference between expected level of care by employee vs. actual care shown by employer to those who experienced event



Work



1 Experiencing harassment / bullying: Strong inclusion is an imperative

Employee data and insights

19% of employees have experienced some form of harassment/bullying in the past 12 months. Of this group only 64% willing to let their employee know.



Impact: High



Care gap: High

EMPLOYEE DATA AND INSIGHTS

There are groups of individuals that are experiencing this disproportionately more than the overall. Having strong inclusion in place an imperative to help everyone in the workplace.

	Incidence	Comfort zone	Care gap
Neurodivergent	22%	70%	70%
Disability	27%	63%	69%
Female	17%	80%	69%
Overall	19%	76%	50%
LGBTQIA+	21%	65%	44%
Born overseas	20%	77%	33%
Male	21%	72%	32%

82%

(+17%) vs. overall

Have sought out some form of help for their mental health in the past 5 years.

49%

(+9%) vs. overall

Have sought help from a professional with close to 60% having done so in the last 12 months.

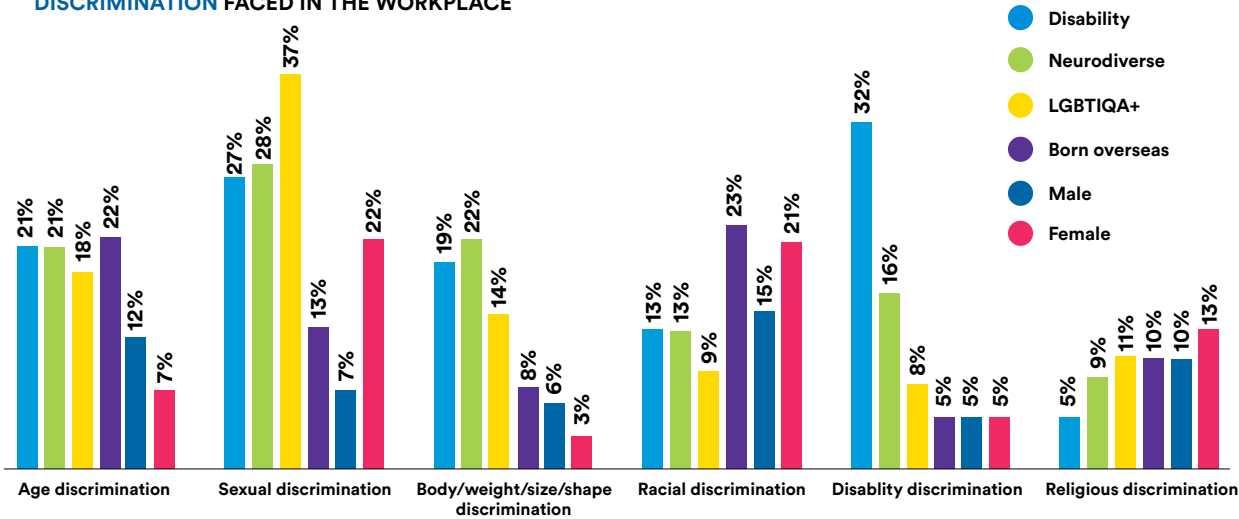
Employees who have gone through this experience are also reluctant to access work provided programs for fears of reprisal.

64%

(+16%) vs. overall

Believe mental health information will be used against them if they use an employer provided service.

DISCRIMINATION FACED IN THE WORKPLACE







# Work

Experiencing harassment/bullying:  
Strong inclusion is an imperative

## Opportunities for employer action

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS:

TOP 5 “MUST HAVE” BENEFITS	VS. overall
Flexible work	+3%
Additional personal/carer’s leave	+9%
EAPs	+8%
Professional training and development	+4%
Mental health and wellbeing support	+2%

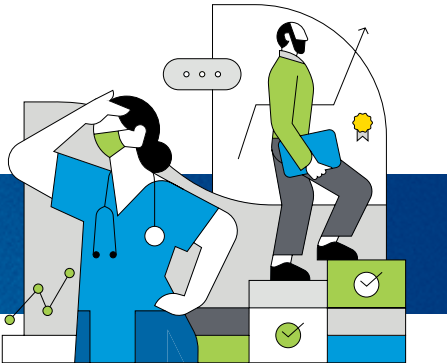
TOP 5 EMERGING BENEFITS	
Additional long weekend annual leave days	+1%
4-day work week	+3%
Wellbeing days	+8%
Mental health days	+5%
Paid sabbatical	+5%

WAYS EMPLOYERS CAN DEMONSTRATE  
EMPLOYEE CARE:

- ✓ Managers demonstrate greater empathy
- ✓ More training/opportunities for professional development
- ✓ Greater flexibility with work locations (i.e. more WFH)
- ✓ Managers checking in more regularly
- ✓ Reduce/alleviate workload
- ✓ Provide resources and online tools



# Work



## 2 Lack of appreciation or recognition: Sustaining morale

### Employee data and insights

52% of employees aren’t feeling appreciated or recognised for the work they do. They are more likely to feel neglected across several key work areas:



Impact: High



Care gap: High

42% Feel cared for (-16%)

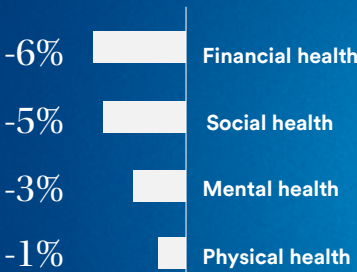
60% Are satisfied with the job (-13%)

63% Are looking around at other opportunities with another employer (+14%)

### EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCING A LACK OF APPRECIATION/ RECOGNITION IN THE WORKPLACE: LARGEST DIFFERENCES VS OVERALL



### THOSE RATING THEMSELVES AS HEALTHY (VS OVERALL):



### THOSE RATING LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH BENEFITS – TOP 5 LARGEST VARIANCE (VS OVERALL):



66%

of employees that feel a lack of appreciation or recognition say that there are benefits they would be interested in that their employer doesn’t currently offer (+8%)





# Work

Lack of appreciation or recognition:  
Sustaining morale

## Opportunities for employer action

### EMPLOYEE BENEFITS:

#### TOP 5 “MUST HAVE” BENEFITS

VS. overall

Flexible work	+5%
Additional personal/carer's leave	+7%
Professional training & development	+5%
Mental health and wellbeing support	+3%
EAP	+1%

#### TOP 5 EMERGING BENEFITS

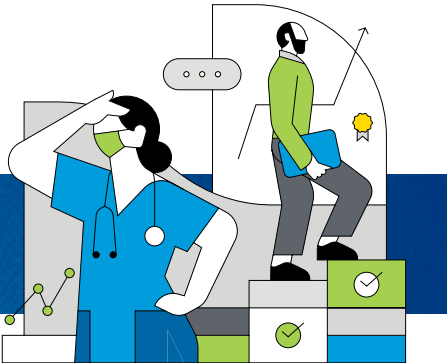
Additional long weekend annual leave days	+4%
4-day work week	+4%
Wellbeing days	+4%
Mental health days	+2%
Paid sabbatical	+5%

#### WAYS EMPLOYERS CAN DEMONSTRATE EMPLOYEE CARE:

- ✓ Provide pay rise/promotion
- ✓ Managers praise/recognise work
- ✓ Managers demonstrate greater empathy
- ✓ Managers to help employees feel more comfortable
- ✓ More training/opportunities for professional development
- ✓ Reduce/alleviate workload



# Work



## 3 Feeling burnt out: Demonstrate care and empathy

### Employee data and insights

Experiencing burnout highly impacts employees, yet a significant number do not feel sufficiently cared for in this moment.



Impact: High



Care gap: High

### EXPERIENCING BURNOUT VS. OVERALL

53% VS. 62%

Mentally healthy

41% VS. 46%

Financially healthy

54% VS. 59%

Socially healthy

52% VS. 54%

Physically healthy



Outside of financial concerns  
top 3 reasons (vs overall):

1. Balance work life (+5%)
2. Lack of appreciation (+9%)
3. Increased workload (+13%)

47%

of employees that have experienced burnout believe their employer demonstrates care (-11%)

52%

of employees that have experienced burnout that say their manager has a high level of empathy with them (-9%)

### HOW EMPLOYEES EXPERIENCING BURNOUT FEEL IN THE WORKPLACE. LARGEST DIFFERENCES VS OVERALL

Valued/appreciated	-11%	
Motivated	-7%	
Successful	-7%	

Positive

Mentally checked out	9%	
Stressed	15%	
Overwhelmed	15%	

Negative

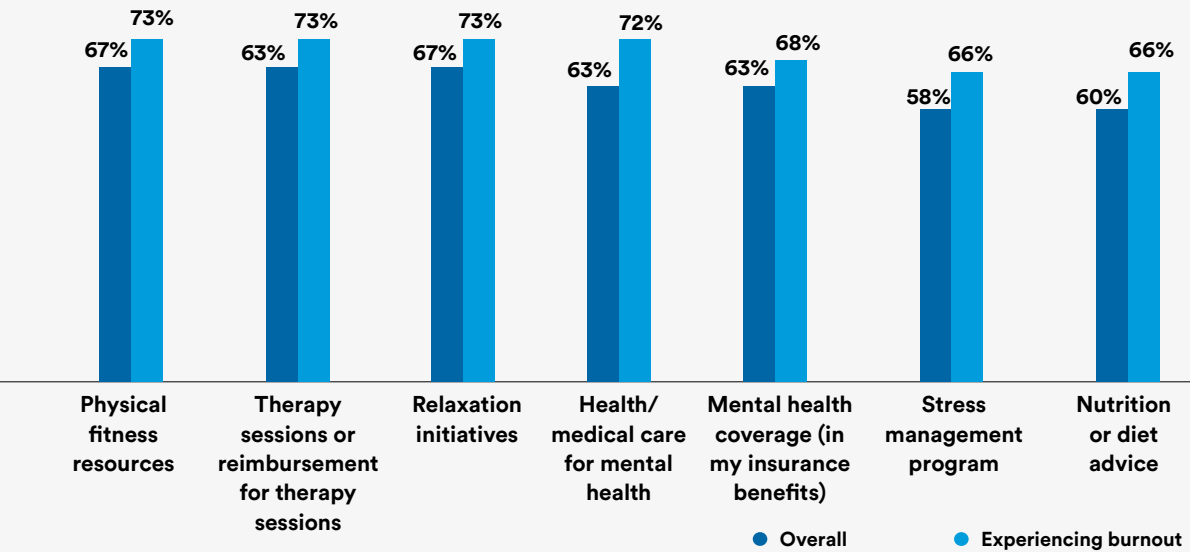




# Work

Feeling burnt out:  
Demonstrate care and empathy

WAYS TO HELP EMPLOYEES MANAGE THEIR MENTAL HEALTH:



Oppotunities for employer action

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS:

TOP 5 "MUST HAVE" BENEFITS		VS. overall
Flexible work	+4%	
Additional personal/carer's leave	+8%	
EAP	+6%	
Professional training & development	+4%	
Mental health and wellbeing support	+3%	
TOP 5 EMERGING BENEFITS		
Additional long weekend annual leave days	+7%	
4-day work week	+6%	
Wellbeing days	+8%	
Mental health days	+6%	
Paid sabbatical	+6%	

WAYS EMPLOYERS CAN DEMONSTRATE  
EMPLOYEE CARE:

- Managers praise/recognise work
- Managers demonstrate greater empathy
- Greater flexibility with time off/leave policies
- Provide opportunities to work on things they're passionate about
- Allow more control over work schedule
- Reduce/alleviate workload



# Life



1 Experiencing perimenopause/  
menopause: Feeling supported in  
managing symptoms in the workplace

Employee data and insights

49% of women aged 40+ years have experienced perimenopause/menopause in the past 12 months. While many won't feel comfortable raising with their manager/employer (66%), providing care and support is crucial, and expected.



Impact: High



Care gap: High

VERBATIM ON HOW IT IMPACTED

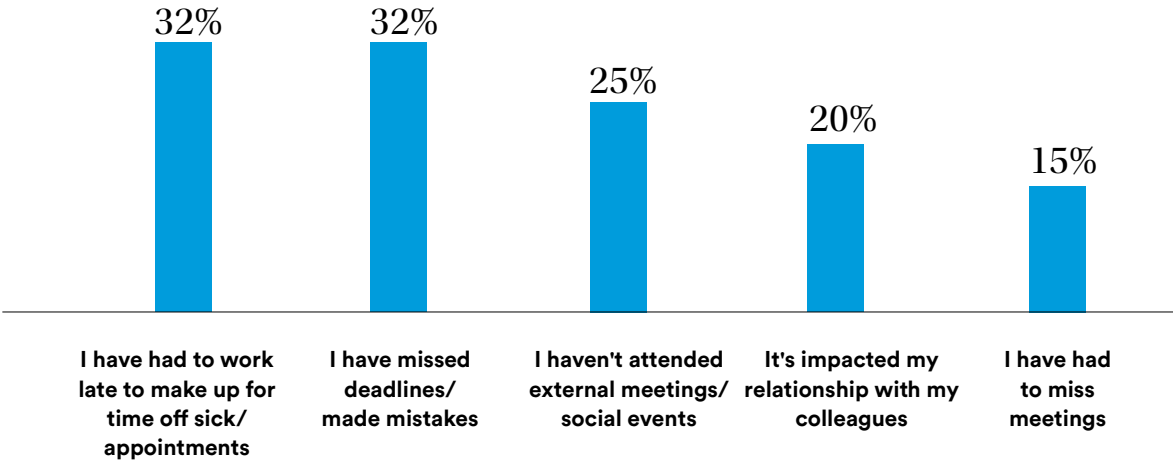
63% impacted their work

40% of employers claim they have formal support programs/policies in place

18% positively rate the support provided by employer

"Tiredness and focus."  
"Hot flushes."  
"I feel like crap constantly and everyone who comes in my office freezes to death while I'm still sweating."  
"Had to take leave."  
"Constant fatigue makes it hard to concentrate at work. Forgetfulness."  
"Had to have more sick days."  
"Sweating uncontrollably and experiencing heat whilst others do not is embarassing and imapcts certain aspects of my work."  
"Anxiety and time off."  
"Making mistakes due to brain fog. Being anxious/upset/weight gain."  
"Just felt generally unwell."  
"Struggled with organising my workload."

IMPACT OF MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS







Life Experiencing perimenopause/menopause:  
Feeling supported in managing symptoms in the workplace

Employer perspective

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING:

Our organisation has a limited understanding of menopause	58%
Our organisation has a limited understanding of how menopause impacts women in the workplace	57%
Our organisation has a limited understanding of how menopause impacts women's retirement outcomes	60%

WHAT CAN BE DONE:

Organisations have a responsibility to engage employees in the conversation around perimenopause/menopause	53%
Menopause should be more openly addressed and supported by our organisation	58%
Our organisation could do more to educate employees about how menopause impacts women in the workplace	60%

Opportunities for employer action

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS VS. OVERALL:

TOP 5 "MUST HAVE" BENEFITS	VS. overall
Flexible work	+4%
EAP	+8%
Mental health and wellbeing services	+8%
Additional personal/carer's leave	-2%
Professional training & development	-2%
TOP 5 EMERGING BENEFITS	
Wellbeing day	+15%
5 x long weekend annual leave days	+5%
4-day work week	+7%
Employer provided independent perimenopause/menopause support services (excl. EAP)	+24%
Menopause leave	+21%

WAYS EMPLOYERS CAN DEMONSTRATE  
EMPLOYEE CARE:

- ✓ Flexible working arrangements
- ✓ Time off for appointments
- ✓ Allowing employees experiencing symptoms to miss face-to-face meetings
- ✓ Check in more regularly with employees experiencing symptoms
- ✓ Provide a space within the office to relax/recover from a symptom
- ✓ Offer guidance to employees on what benefits are available to help manage symptoms







# Life

## 2 Significant unplanned financial stress: Seeking solutions for unexpected situations



### Employee data and insights

Experiencing significant unplanned financial stress is a high-impact, often crisis moment where employees generally do not feel cared for by their employer.

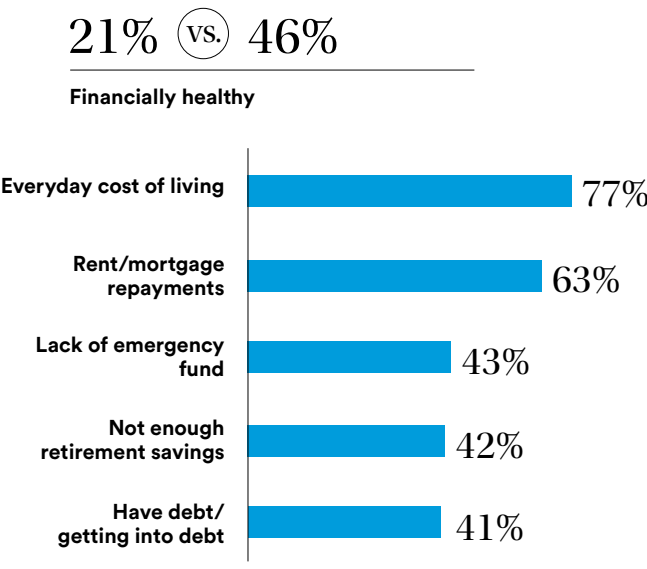


Impact: High

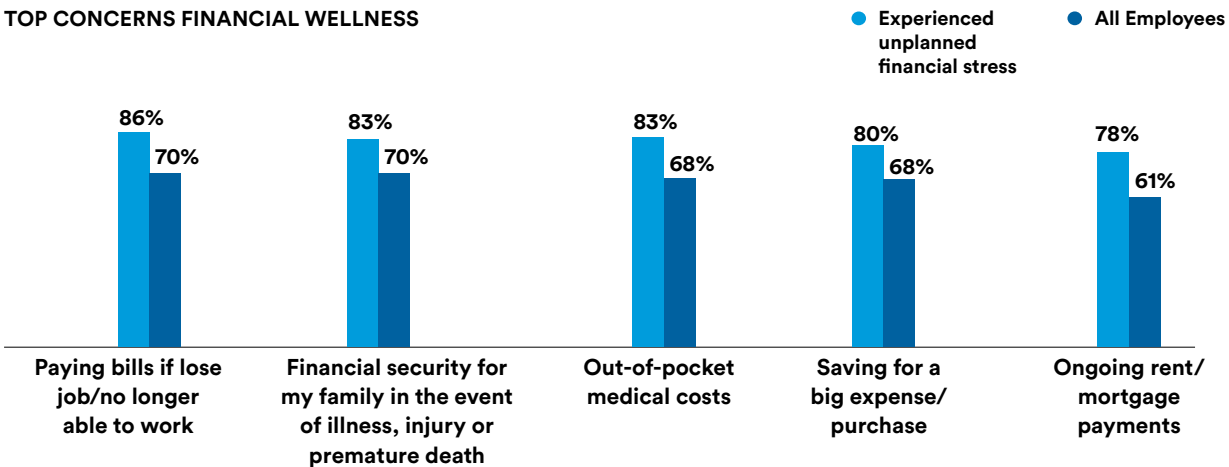


Care gap: High

### AMONG EMPLOYEES WHO EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT UNPLANNED FINANCIAL STRESS (VS. OVERALL):



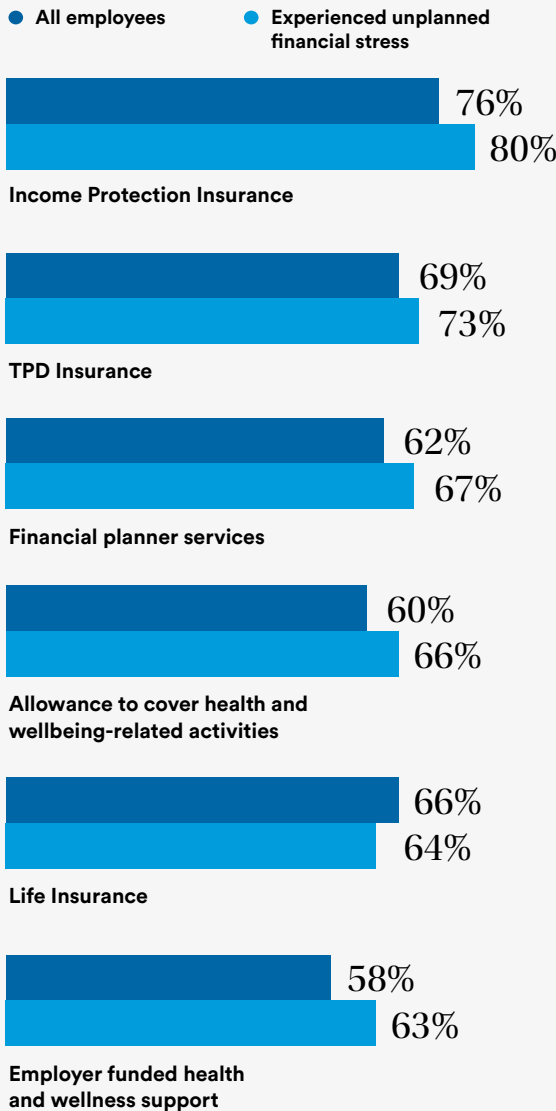
### TOP CONCERNS FINANCIAL WELLNESS



# Life

## Significant unplanned financial stress: Seeking solutions for unexpected situations

Besides a higher salary (91%) and bonus (80%), employees are most interested in these benefits to help them feel more financially secure:



While employees see the importance of insurance, 55% are worried they don't have enough life insurance cover (either inside or outside of super) (+10%) vs. overall.

### Key concerns include:

#### Unsure about the details of their life insurance coverage:

"Honestly don't know much about it, i think it's a part of my Super? Need to be more aware."

"Whether there will be enough to support four kids through private school and pay for housing."

#### The cost of insurance leading to reduced coverage:

"I can no longer afford life insurance due to cost of everything getting so expensive so that was something I had to give up."

"Cost of life insurance is very expensive and I don't think I would be able to afford to continue with it for the amount I would require, cost of these insurances have tripled in the last few years, and I need to focus on today's cost if living."

"Cancelled life insurance after the children married and moved out, in an attempt to save money, probably should have reduced the amount to reduce the payments."

#### Worried about protecting family:

"Over the past few years, my concerns about not having enough life insurance coverage have grown significantly. Initially, I felt my policy was adequate when I was single and had fewer financial responsibilities. However, since getting married and starting a family, my financial obligations have increased substantially. I now worry about whether my current coverage would be sufficient to support my spouse and children in the event of my untimely death."

"The cost of living has increase and if I was to die my life insurance may not help my partner in the same way as it would of previously. The money won't go as far or cover as much of the mortgage as it would of in the past."





# Life

Significant unplanned financial stress:  
Seeking solutions for unexpected situations

## Opportunities for employer action

### EMPLOYEE BENEFITS:

TOP 5 "MUST HAVE" BENEFITS	VS. overall
Flexible work	+3%
Mental health and wellbeing services	+8%
EAP	+7%
Additional personal/carer's leave	+3%
Professional training & development	+1%
TOP 5 EMERGING BENEFITS	
5 x long weekend annual leave days	+2%
4-day work week	+3%
Mental health days	+5%
Paid sabbatical program	=
Employer provided independent perimenopause/menopause support services (excl. EAP)	+6%

### WAYS EMPLOYERS CAN DEMONSTRATE EMPLOYEE CARE:

- ✓ Give pay rise/promotion
- ✓ Being more flexible with leave/policies
- ✓ Managers praising/recognising work
- ✓ Allowing more control over work schedules
- ✓ Provide a point of contact/more regular comms to find out what benefits are available
- ✓ More training/opportunities for professional development



# Life



## 3 Ongoing mental health condition (e.g. depression, anxiety): Finding help when it's needed

### Employee data and insights

Experiencing an ongoing mental health condition highly impacts employees and many do not feel cared for in this challenging, and often less visible moment.

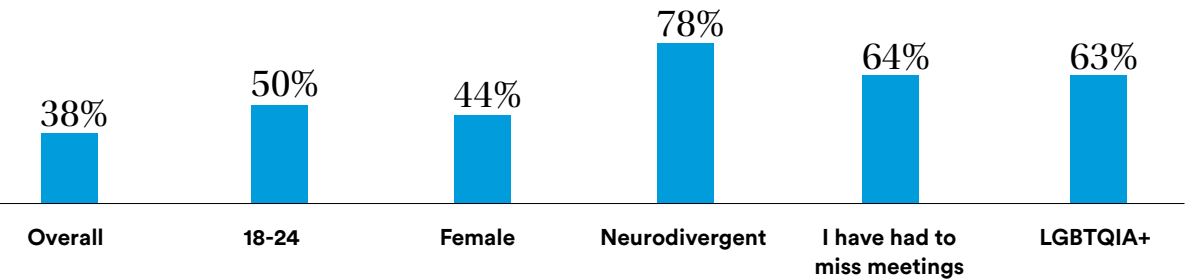


Impact: High



Care gap: High

### AMONG EMPLOYEES WHO EXPERIENCE ONGOING MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION:



### WHAT'S DRIVING ONGOING MENTAL HEALTH

51% VS. overall +4%

#### Financial concerns

47% VS. overall +9%

#### Feeling stress from reasons outside work

41% VS. overall +9%

#### Lack of appreciation or recognition at work

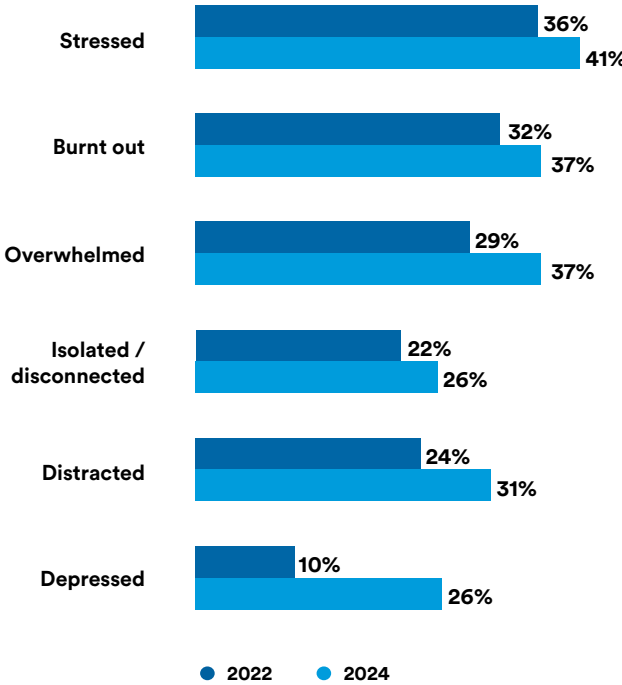
37% VS. overall =

#### Balancing home and work life

27% VS. overall -2%

#### Increased or increasing workload

### IMPACT ON ENGAGEMENT IN THE WORKFORCE – THOSE EXPERIENCING ONGOING MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION:





## Life Ongoing mental health condition (e.g. depression, anxiety): Finding help when it's needed

### Opportunities for employer action

#### TOP 3 "MUST HAVE" EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

65%

VS. overall

Flexible work arrangements (+9%)

57%

VS. overall

EAP (+12%)  
25% of those that have experienced ongoing mental health conditions have utilised their EAPs (+13%)

56%

VS. overall

Mental health & wellbeing support services (+12%)  
38% rank these solutions as a top 3 benefit that would improve health (+10%)

#### TOP 5 MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

- 1 Mental health coverage (insurance)
- 2 Therapy sessions (incl reimbursement)
- 3 Health/medical care for mental health
- 4 Relaxation initiatives
- 5 Stress management program

#### WAYS EMPLOYERS CAN DEMONSTRATE EMPLOYEE CARE:

- ✓ Give pay rise/promotion
- ✓ Managers demonstrate empathy
- ✓ Managers praising/recognising work
- ✓ Being more flexible with leave policies
- ✓ Allowing more control over work schedules
- ✓ Provide a point of contact to find out what benefits are available



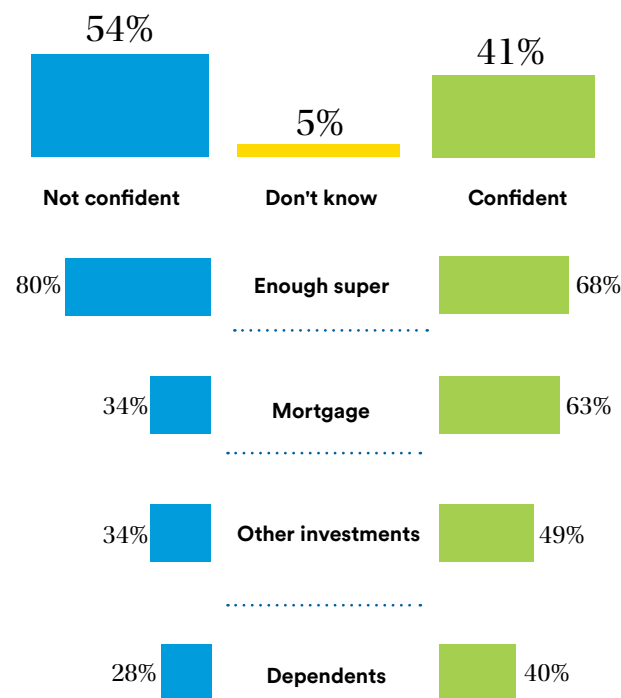
## Spotlight on Employees preparedness for retirement



A large proportion of the workforce is now entering the retirement phase of their careers. Looking at those aged 40+ years, a large proportion are concerned about their retirement position: 45% have no retirement plan at all, 50% haven't calculated what they'll need in retirement, and only 41% feel confident they will be financially prepared for the retirement lifestyle they want to live.

### A large proportion of employees not prepared for retirement:

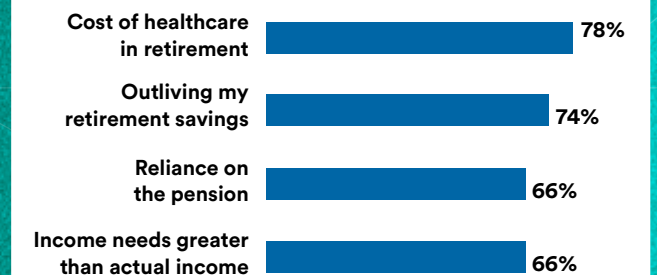
#### CONFIDENCE FINANCIALLY PREPARED TO LIVE LIFESTYLE THEY WANT



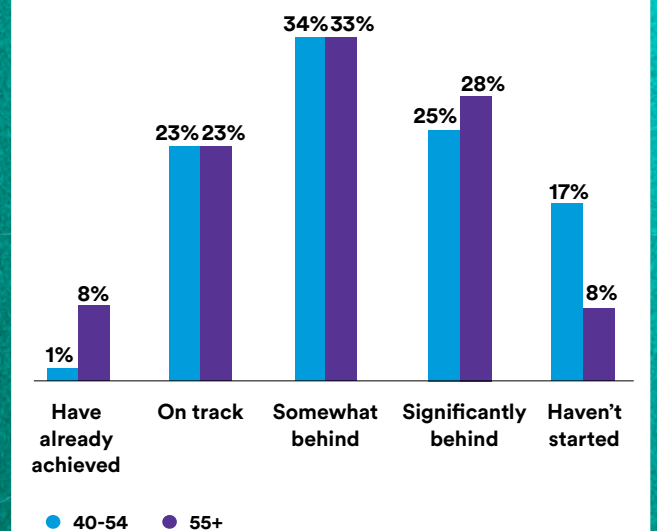
94%

Expect to draw income from their superannuation followed by savings (44%)

### Overall employee concerns at retirement:



### Retirement planning: 40+ years







EMPLOYER DATA AND INSIGHTS

54% of employers say they should help employees prepare for retirement

68% of employers are seeing employees delay retirement

49% of employers are set up to accommodate for this older segment of their workforce

54% of employers have had to evolve the benefits they offer

SPECIFIC RETIREMENT BENEFITS EMPLOYERS SAY THEY HAVE IN PLACE / OFFER TO EMPLOYEES:



Opportunities for employer action

TOP 5 “MUST HAVE” BENEFITS

	VS. overall
Flexible work	+3%
EAP	+5%
Additional contibutions	+15%
Additional carers leave	=
TPD Insurance	+11%

WAYS EMPLOYERS CAN DEMONSTRATE EMPLOYEE CARE:

- ✓ Higher salary
- ✓ Bonus / incentive schemes based on performance
- ✓ Income Protection insurance
- ✓ Access to personalised financial planning services
- ✓ TPD Insurance

# Comparing blue-collar and white-collar workers

It is important for employers from different industries and backgrounds to consider the needs and circumstances affecting their employees. Whilst the holistic health of both blue and white collar workers are similar overall, how employees are impacted is different. For instance, financial concerns are having a greater impact on blue collar workers than white collar workers (58% vs 44%), especially on their mental health.

Cost-of-living pressure is likely to be more of an issue for blue-collar workers compared with white-collar workers; 47% of blue-collar workers have experienced unplanned financial stress (vs 41% of white collar workers) in the past 12 months. This is likely a result of blue-collar workers more likely to be living pay to pay (48% vs 42%) and fewer blue-collar workers with a three-month savings cushion (38% vs 49%). Further contributing to the finance-related mental health strain is the reduced likelihood of blue-collar workers accessing mental health assistance, with 41% not seeking such assistance in the past 12 months compared with 33% of white-collar workers.



When it comes to benefits, both cohorts have distinct preferences, and employers should take this into account when structuring such benefits programs. In general, blue-collar workers report that their employer provides less access to the top 10 benefits, with some of the larger discrepancies including: when structuring such benefits programs.

In general, blue-collar workers report that their employer provides less access to the top 10 employee benefits, with some of the larger discrepancies including:

FLEXIBILITY:



EAP:

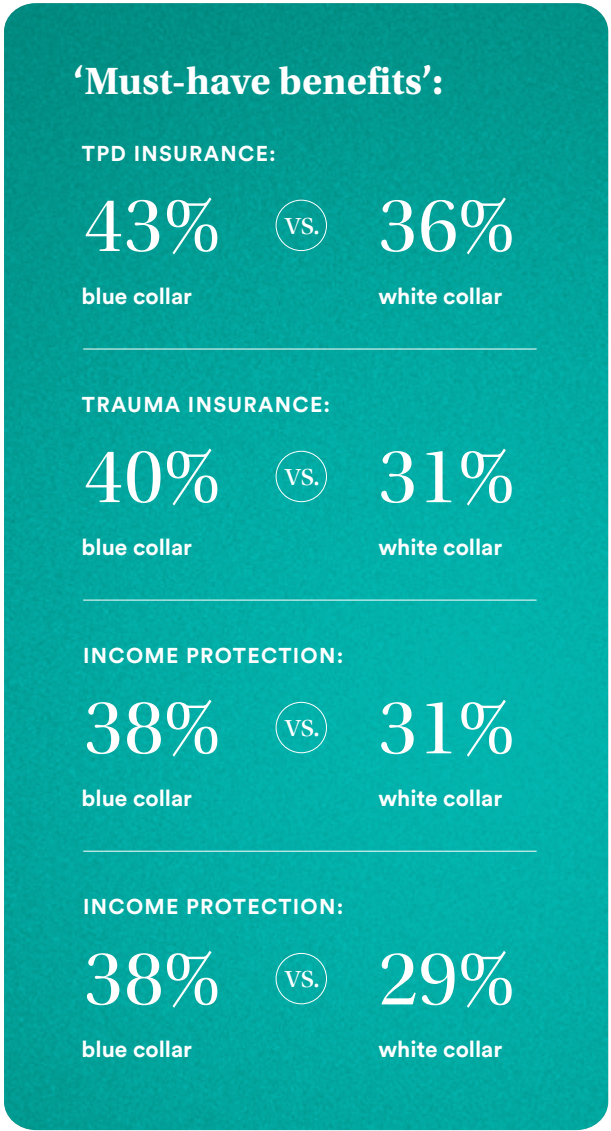


PROFESSIONAL TRAINING





The Study also found that blue-collar workers prefer benefits that offer protection to them and their families:



# A new approach to satisfying workers’ diversifying needs

With an increasingly heterogeneous workforce, employers across industries are challenged to satisfy the needs of workers from different generations, cultures and lifestyles. As we’ve seen through this Study, there are vastly different requirements for groups such as women experiencing menopause, those living with disability and neurodiversity, employees approaching retirement, and the polarised experiences of blue and white-collar workers. With such differing demands, employers should strongly consider tailoring their benefits programs and other care policies with a more nuanced approach, rather than painting with broad strokes.

# Supporting utilisation

Our research makes clear that many employees misunderstand or are misinformed about their benefit entitlements, with less than half (44%) utilising wellness benefits. The issues causing this are complex, as we’ve discussed, and include a lack of benefits appropriate to specific cohorts – women experiencing menopause, for example – as well as missed opportunities to communicate benefits through preferred channels, a mistrust of services such as EAP (with employees reluctant to share personal information) and an overall lack of benefits awareness.

**Employees on the utilisation of benefits:**

“Feeling cared about is something I expect with my day-to-day stuff and my personal life. I think that comes down to more of my team lead and my manager.”



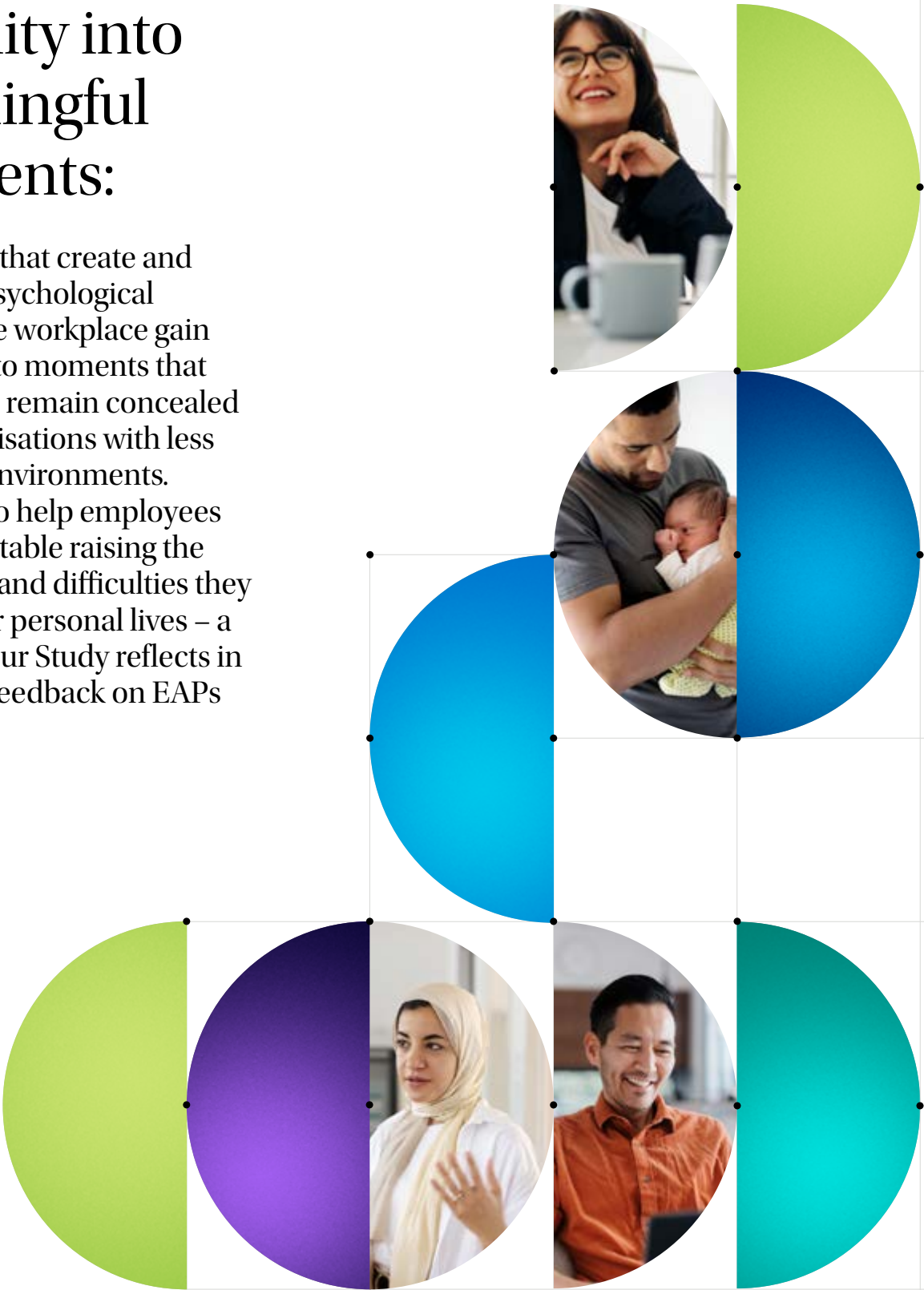
**Increased utilisation is one way to improve employee satisfaction with benefits, which sinks as low as 28% employee satisfaction for some initiatives such as physical wellness benefits, and 29% for financial wellness benefits. Higher satisfaction with benefits can be improved by:**

- 1 Providing benefits specific to the needs of employee cohorts
- 2 Increasing benefits awareness/communicating benefit information effectively
- 3 Increasing trust in benefits (particularly EAP)
- 4 Ensuring quality outcomes/overall employee satisfaction with used benefits



# Promoting visibility into meaningful moments:

Employers that create and maintain psychological safety in the workplace gain visibility into moments that are likely to remain concealed from organisations with less safe work environments. The key is to help employees feel comfortable raising the challenges and difficulties they face in their personal lives – a challenge our Study reflects in employee feedback on EAPs



# The payoff for employee care: improved talent outcomes

Our research clarifies how “always-on” care models pay off for employers and employees, which is why organisations should consider investing in them.

Enhancing employees’ perception of care in areas where they do not feel particularly cared for leads to better talent management outcomes. Employees who feel cared for rate higher levels of holistic health and score higher on success indicators in both work and life.



## The value of employee care

Employees who feel cared for vs. those who don’t:

Productivity	82% (vs. 55%)	Engagement	77% (vs. 39%)
Looking for other work	35% (vs. 79%)	Happiness	85% (vs. 30%)
Success	72% (vs. 30%)	Valued/ appreciated	73% (vs. 16%)
Satisfaction	91% (vs. 35%)	Holistic wellbeing	1.6x <small>more for employees who feel cared for</small>



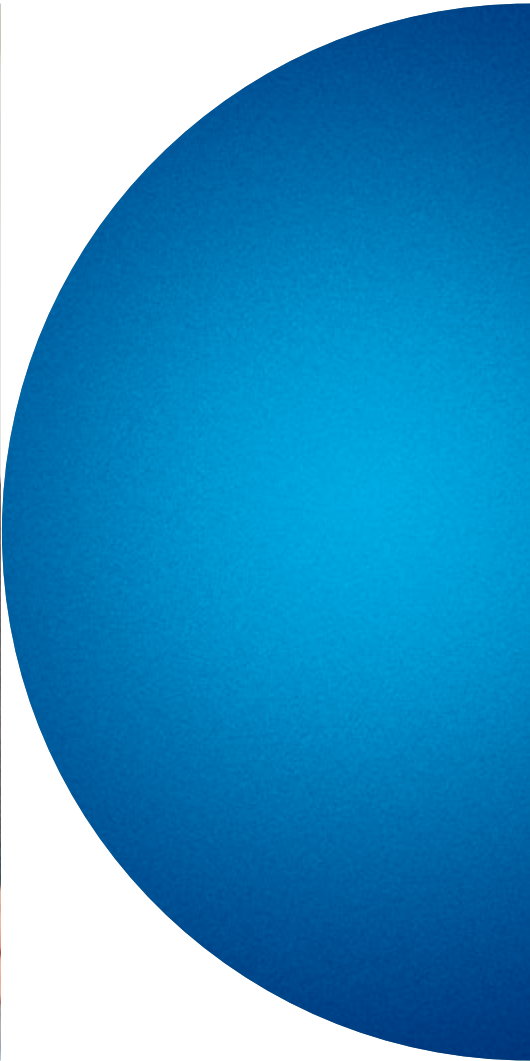
# Conclusion

While overall employee talent outcomes and satisfaction with benefits have improved employee expectations for the employee experience and benefits continue to rise. Specifically, they are looking for more personalised options, increased decision-making support and clearer communications regarding benefits.

As the macroeconomic environment continues to evolve and shape individual workplaces, employers can positively impact employee wellbeing and keep up with employee expectations by demonstrating care in key moments, particularly those with outsized impacts on the overall experience.

Though employers and employees see the value of care, there are key moments within the employee journey at which employers are not responding in line with worker expectations. In assessing how to bridge these gaps, employers will need to delineate strategies for different events, moments and points in the overall employee lifecycle – from those that occur regularly to more infrequent occasions and covering both workplace experiences and those that take place in employees’ personal lives. They must also plan to adjust other elements of the employee experience.

Employers should look to build on those moments where they are having success today, even as they determine how to better serve employees in moments and situations where their care delivery falls short today. As our research shows, this is the way forward to enhance employee wellbeing and improve talent outcomes in the years ahead.





# MetLife Australia EBTS 2024 Survey Breakdown

EMPLOYEE: N=1056

Gender	
Male	46%
Female	54%
Non binary/third gender	0.2%

Age	
18-24	9%
25-39	33%
40-54	35%
55+	23%

Industry	
Health Care and Social Assistance	14%
Education and Training	11%
Retail Trade	10%
Administrative and Support Services	10%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	9%
Financial and Insurance Services	7%
Public Administration and Safety	6%
Construction	5%
Manufacturing	4%
Accommodation and Food Services	4%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	4%
Information Media and Telecommunications	3%
Arts and Recreation Services	3%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	2%
Wholesale Trade	2%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	1%
Mining	1%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1%
Other (please specify)	1%

State	
NSW	36%
VIC	20%
QLD	22%
SA	8%
WA	7%
TAS	4%
ACT	2%
NT	1%

Employment Status	
Employed full time	
Employed part time or casually	

Employment Status	
Employed full time	69%
Employed part time or casually	31%

Number of Jobs	
No, only employed by one organisation	88%
Yes, have two different jobs	11%
Yes, have three different jobs	1%
Have four or more different jobs	0.4%

Occupation	
CEO / Head of Business (e.g. Managing Director)	1%
Key Management Personnel (e.g. Head of Operations, Head of Finance)	3%
Managerial (e.g. Senior Manager)	19%
Professional	24%
Technical / Sales / Administrative Support	21%
Customer Service (retail, hospitality)	10%
Farming / Forestry / Fishing	0.1%
Craftsman / Tradesperson	3%
Operator / Labourer	6%
Teacher / Professor	6%
Other	7%

Parental Status	
Yes	44%
No	56%

Income	
Under \$30,000	4%
\$30,000-\$39,999	5%
\$40,000-\$49,999	8%
\$50,000-\$74,999	20%
\$75,000-\$99,999	27%
\$100,000-\$149,999	21%
\$150,000-\$199,999	7%
\$200,000 or more	2%
Prefer not to answer	6%

Living Arrangement	
Own home outright	17%
Own home with mortgage	48%
Renting	28%
Living at home	6%
Other	1%

Marital Status	
Single, not living with partner	23%
Defacto or live together	17%
Married	50%
Widowed	1%
Divorced/separated	9%

Born Overseas	
Yes	24%
No	76%

Neurodiverse	
Yes	7%
No	90%
Prefer not to answer	3%

Have a disability	
Yes, I do identify as neurodivergent	11%
No, I do not identify as neurodivergent	87%
Prefer not to answer	2%

Identify as LGBTQ+	
Yes	7%
No	92%
Prefer not to answer	1%

EMPLOYER N=330 Number of Employees	
2-99	36%
100-499	38%
500+	26%

State	
NSW/ACT	41%
Victoria	31%
QLD	16%
SA / NT	6%
WA	5%
Tasmania	1%

**About 360Health:**  
We understand that being healthy is important to our customers' overall wellbeing. That's why we provide access to medical expert advice, health support and specialised services through MetLife 360Health to support their health and wellbeing goals. With MetLife 360Health, customers can access a suite of award-winning health services from medical and mental health to nutrition and fitness advice. Most of these services can be used whenever they need them, whether making a claim or not. They complement existing treatments to help support health and wellbeing goals.

Industry	
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	1%
Mining	2%
Manufacturing	6%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	2%
Construction	9%
Wholesale Trade	5%
Retail Trade	12%
Accommodation and Food Services	4%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	3%
Information Media and Telecommunications	5%
Financial and Insurance Services	8%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	1%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	9%
Administrative and Support Services	4%
Public Administration and Safety	2%
Education and Training	5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	10%
Arts and Recreation Services	3%
Other (please specify)	9%

**Research Methodology:**  
Two distinct surveys were conducted between May and June 2024 among employers and employees in Australia, questions were based off latest 2024 MetLife U.S. Employee Benefit Trends Study and localised as well as including Australian specific questions. The employee survey included a representative sample of 1056 respondents, aged 18+ and employed in Australia, with a mix of full-time and part-time employees working at Australian based companies with at least two employees, while the employer survey included 330 key decision makers and influencers of employee benefits offered at Australian based companies with at least two employees. A full breakdown of responses is provided at the end of this report. Research conducted in collaboration with independent research partner, Zylo Group.

**About MetLife Australia:**  
MetLife Australia is a leading provider of life insurance. We work with employers, super funds, and financial advisers to help Australians protect their lifestyle and provide assistance when they need it most. With over 150 years of experience and a strong global presence, we protect customers in over 40 countries and lead the market in corporate insurance solutions in the US, Latin America, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. At MetLife Australia, we believe that life is for living, not for worrying about what could go wrong. Our vision is to focus on the needs of our customers and aim for a future where our customers, their loved ones, and their finances are protected. We strive to provide our customers with the fastest, easiest, and most caring life insurance experience possible. We treat our customers with empathy and compassion, supporting them through some of the most vulnerable and stressful moments in their lives.



**To find out more, please contact  
your Relationship Manager or email  
[auservices@metlife.com](mailto:auservices@metlife.com)**

