



BRITISH
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE
IN CHINA

中国英国商会

WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

2022



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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

The British Chamber of Commerce in China is proud to present the findings of its recent Wellbeing and Resilience Survey, a snapshot of the professional and personal challenges negatively affecting the mental, physical and emotional health of employees within the British business community and the steps that their organisations are taking to promote wellbeing and provide support.

The decision to conduct this survey was an easy one for the Chamber to make. Over the course of the last three years, we have all experienced first-hand the devastating and disrupting effect the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the lives of so many people in China, the UK and across the world¹. The pandemic has highlighted the growing importance of mental, physical and emotional health in the workplace and the positive impact empathy and compassion can have on staff engagement and morale. It has brought employee wellbeing and resilience to the forefront of the corporate, and thus the Chamber's, agenda.

The survey findings demonstrate that each and every one of us, from those in entry level positions to those sat on the Board, is facing their own professional and/or personal challenges. These are leading to stress, burnout and anxiety and have the capacity to negatively impact our health, our performance at work and the quality of our personal lives. Worryingly, many employers are unaware of such problems, and how they might be negatively impacting their staff and their work. 30% of employees feel they are unable to give their full selves to work due to ongoing factors in their personal lives. 40% feel they cannot tell their organisations about the professional and personal challenges they are facing for fear of it harming their career. And 43% are considering leaving their job specifically due to a stressful working environment.

Fortunately, organisations that develop open, supportive and understanding working environments, and that are able to incorporate wellbeing initiatives into their operations, are more likely to help their employees build the health and resilience they need to thrive in both their personal and professional lives.

The Chamber strongly believes that workplace wellbeing is not only good for employees, but also good for businesses and their clients. It is also the right thing to do. It is thus dedicated to raising understanding, reducing stigma, and promoting empathy, compassion and health in the workplace. It seeks to support member organisations create workplace environments where their people are inspired and healthy and actively encouraged to bring their whole selves to work every day.

We hope that this survey will be the beginning of a journey in which, together, the Chamber, its member organisations and their employees can explore and share wellbeing and resilience resources, as well as knowledge and best practice, to help their leaders, and their people, be the best versions of themselves.



ROSS PARSONAGE

(At-Large) Member of the Executive Committee,
British Chamber of Commerce in China
Wellness & Resilience Hub Chair

¹ 75% of employees report that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on their overall wellbeing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Employees in China generally feel empowered and motivated to support the organisations they work for, and report relatively high levels of mental, physical and emotional health. However, stress brought about by challenges in their professional and personal lives is impacting their happiness, their performance and their chances of remaining with their organisation.

Companies need to care about wellbeing in their workplace. Without it, junior staff and senior leaders alike will do less work, do poorer work and will be less committed to their work. And employees are aware of this. 89% of employees believe that wellbeing should be talked about more in the office. 55% strongly believe that a supportive culture is the foundation of a healthy workplace.

WELLBEING CAN BE DRIVEN BY A SUPPORTIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

In some ways, this supportive culture already exists. Employees feel that they are able to take time off work if they feel unwell or overwhelmed. They feel empowered to make their own decisions. Very few report being impacted by harassment or bullying. The majority are in companies that have some level of wellbeing support, notably active structural policies like flexible working arrangements, passive benefits like sympathetic line managers and beneficial activities like yoga, exercise and/or fitness classes. These may all contribute to the fact that over half of the people who took this survey noted relatively good mental, physical and emotional health.

At the same time, one in three employees feel that their mental and emotional health is only fair or poor, a number that drops to one in four for physical health. Stress is endemic in organisations, with 80% of members of the

business community reporting that it has negatively affected their wellbeing at work. High workloads, poor management, unclear expectations in the workplace and unclear career paths follow as leading challenges impacting the wellbeing of anywhere between half and three-quarters of employees. Stronger communication, greater empathy, compassion and kindness, as well as higher visibility of 'wellbeing champions', could help alleviate some of these pressures.

The difficulties that COVID-19, lockdowns and restricted travel have brought are also factoring into employees' wellbeing. Over 75% of employees believe that COVID-19 has negatively affected their wellbeing, at least to some extent but 41% believe that their organisation has not effectively addressed this issue. The disconnect caused by being in the Chinese mainland's COVID-19 bubble is being reinforced by a sense of being disconnected from nature. Addressing these two key personal challenges facing many employees by, for example, increasing greenery in workspaces or providing sympathetic HR policies that support employees struggling with loss and ongoing separation from their families overseas, could go some way to improving the mental and emotional health of offices and increasing morale.

Stress often manifests as particular mental, physical or emotional problems, affecting employees' wellbeing at work. In particular, employees are reporting heightened stress levels, anxiety, sleeping problems, neck and head pain, frustration and the risk of burnout. While conversations are happening in companies about putting measures in place that recognise, and seek to reduce, these problems, the majority of employees believe more needs to be done.

THE COST OF NOT ACTING IS HIGH

The cost of not acting is high. Around 40% of employees feel that they cannot tell their company about the pressures they are under without hurting their career. 60% put themselves at risk of burnout. This all contributes to churn in an organisation. 43% of employees are considering leaving their job specifically due to a stressful working environment. This not only puts companies at risk of spending resources on recruitment and training



employees that are then driven away by a stressful work culture, but also risks limiting talent pools if an organisation's stressful culture becomes widely known.

Some key actions companies can take have already been outlined above. Other strategic steps companies can take include gathering data to understand their employee population and their needs, identifying common ways to gain and maintain leadership support, increasing employee communication and engagement, and developing performance measures to evaluate the efficiency of different wellbeing initiatives.

Above all, organisations must remember that their employees are individuals, with different experiences and challenges that have formed who they are today. Tailoring wellbeing support to the individual is desirable but not always practical, however. Rough demographic groupings are not a perfect solution but could be a starting point to finding wellbeing solutions that fit your employees needs.

THE WELLBEING OF WOMEN AT WORK IS PRECARIOUS

For example, it is vital to look at wellbeing through the lens of gender. Half of female employees are considering leaving their job due to workplace-related stress or anxiety. Women seem to face significant wellbeing challenges, and report poorer levels of mental health than men. They find themselves in the midst of a stressful working culture more frequently, feel less empowered (even at senior levels of an organisation) are more likely to be worried about making mistakes, and are more than twice as likely to report harassment and bullying.

Men also face challenges that women may, statistically, be less concerned by. They are more likely to report addiction to or abuse of nicotine or alcohol, and are more likely to be stressed by challenges related to COVID-19 to the point that it affects their wellbeing. If men's and women's voices are not given equal weight and treated

with equal sensitivity in the conversation around gender, their unique concerns will not be addressed effectively.

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING NEEDS DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY

Different industries also nurture different styles of office culture that create unique pressures. In looking at both the education sector and the financial, legal and professional services (FLPS) sector, it is evident that the two operate differently and that employees in these sectors face different sources of stress.

79% of education sector employees report feeling stressed over the last six months, with 70% reporting high levels of anxiety and 40% reporting depression. Leading causes of this include COVID-19, a lack of appreciation at work and long work hours. Just over half of employees find their workplace actively promotes wellbeing, and 61% are motivated and enthusiastic about contributing to their organisation's success – but a significant minority do not.

Reports of high levels of stress are, somewhat unsurprisingly, also extremely common in the FLPS sector. 68% of employees in FLPS companies report feeling high stress levels and 56% report suffering from anxiety in the last six months. This is driven in particular by unclear expectations, high workloads, a lack of clarity when it comes to career opportunities, demanding or competing deadlines and challenges with performance or billing targets. Nevertheless, significant majorities report good, very good or excellent mental (69%), physical (81%) and emotional (71%) health. In addition, many feel motivated to support their organisation and supported in terms of wellbeing.

As expected, a mix of responses was found across age groups as employees at different stages of their career face different pressures and challenges. Young professionals in their 20s complained of insufficient control over their workload and insufficient training, but are less worried about job insecurity or fear of redundancy than those in other age groups. Employees in their 30s want greater clarity around career opportunities. Mid-management employees in their 40s are most concerned with unclear expectations and policies, working from home as well as conflict between work and home life balance, albeit feel more in control of their workload than



employees in other age groups. Employees aged 50 and above are more worried about business finances, dealing with international clients, different time zones and the need for 24-hour availability.

The findings of this survey reinforce that wellbeing is a nuanced, individualistic and highly complicated topic. Nevertheless it is one that companies must address. A burnt out, stressed and anxious workforce will not give its organisation the edge it needs to survive in China. A full-blown wellbeing programme may not be financially feasible for everyone, but small actions – from increasing the number of plants in the office, to organising regular fitness and yoga classes, to creating anonymous check-in channels, could be the first step that's needed to make a difference.

VALUES STATEMENT

The British Chamber of Commerce in China builds awareness of, shares knowledge about, provides a community for, and advocates on wellbeing and resilience issues through its Wellbeing and Resilience Hub.

The Chamber's aim is to support member organisations create safe workplace environments where their people feel inspired and healthy and actively encouraged to bring their whole selves to work every day.

It believes that a healthier workforce is more engaged, focused, and invested in their company and its clients. In turn, healthier employees produce more for their companies. A win-win.





METHODOLOGY

The *British Business in China: Wellbeing and Resilience in the Workplace Survey 2022* is the inaugural annual survey conducted by the British Chamber of Commerce in China

on the needs of the British business community in terms of wellbeing support. The survey measures the feelings of employees on their physical, emotional and mental health, major influences on their personal and professional lives, and support they receive from their companies.

Invitations to complete the online survey were sent to members of the chamber community from the 26th August to the 10th September 2021, receiving valid responses from 301 individuals.

*Ambivalent here means that respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement

55%

I strongly believe a supportive culture is the foundation of a healthy workplace

59%

I agree that I can take time off work because of physical, mental and/or emotional problems

27%

I am ambivalent* about whether or not I am judged negatively if I do not work long hours

32%

I somewhat agree that I can bring my full self to work

89%

I believe wellbeing be talked about more in every organisation

31%

I am ambivalent about my organisations addressal of mental, physical and emotional challenges related to COVID-19

67%

I feel empowered to make decisions at work

71%

I am motivated and enthusiastic about contributing to my organisations success

51%

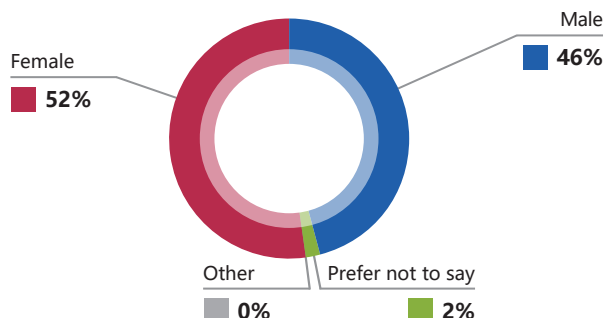
I agree that my organisation has created a positive work environment and clearly communicates its values



1 WHAT EMPLOYEES WANT

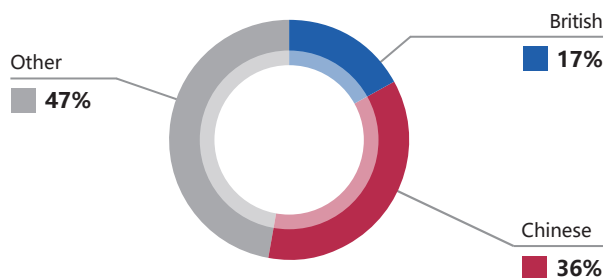
2 RESPONDENT PROFILE

WHAT GENDER DO YOU IDENTIFY AS?



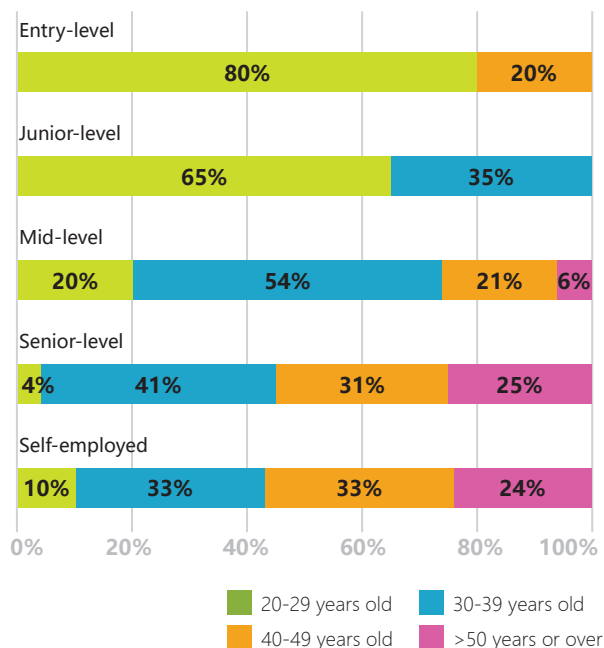
46% of employees identify as male, while 52% identify as female. This is slightly divergent from China's demographic composition, where 51% of the population is male and 49% is female. 2% of employees preferred not to disclose their gender.

WHAT IS YOUR NATIONALITY?



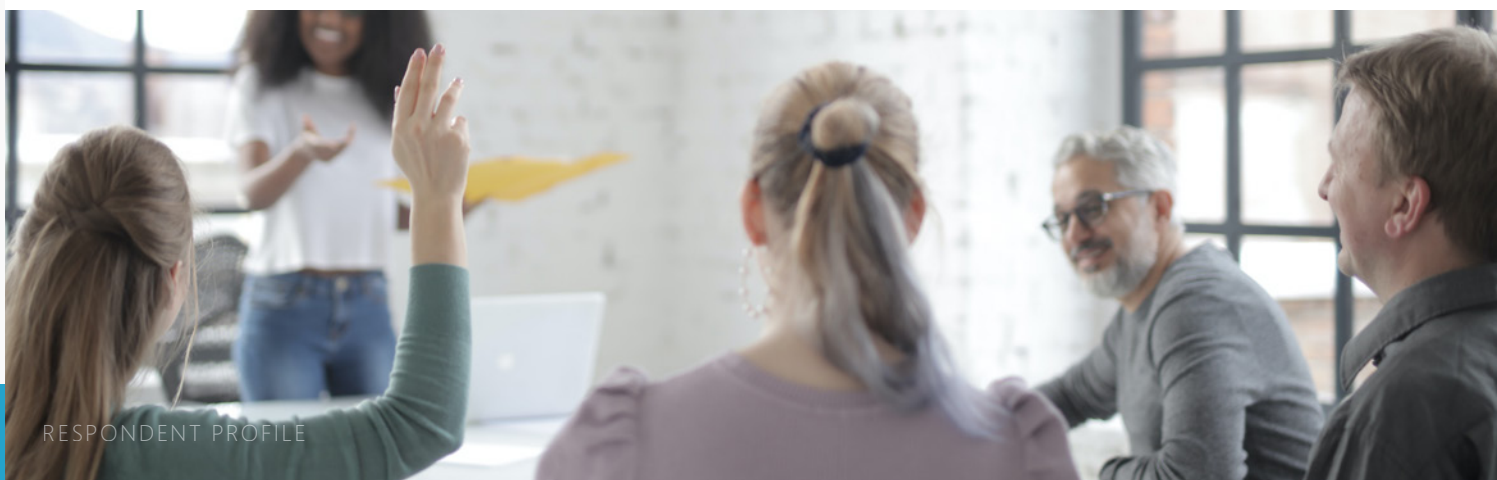
36% of employees are Chinese, 17% are British and 47% are of neither British nor Chinese nationality.

EMPLOYEES IN DIFFERENT MANAGEMENT STRATA BY AGE

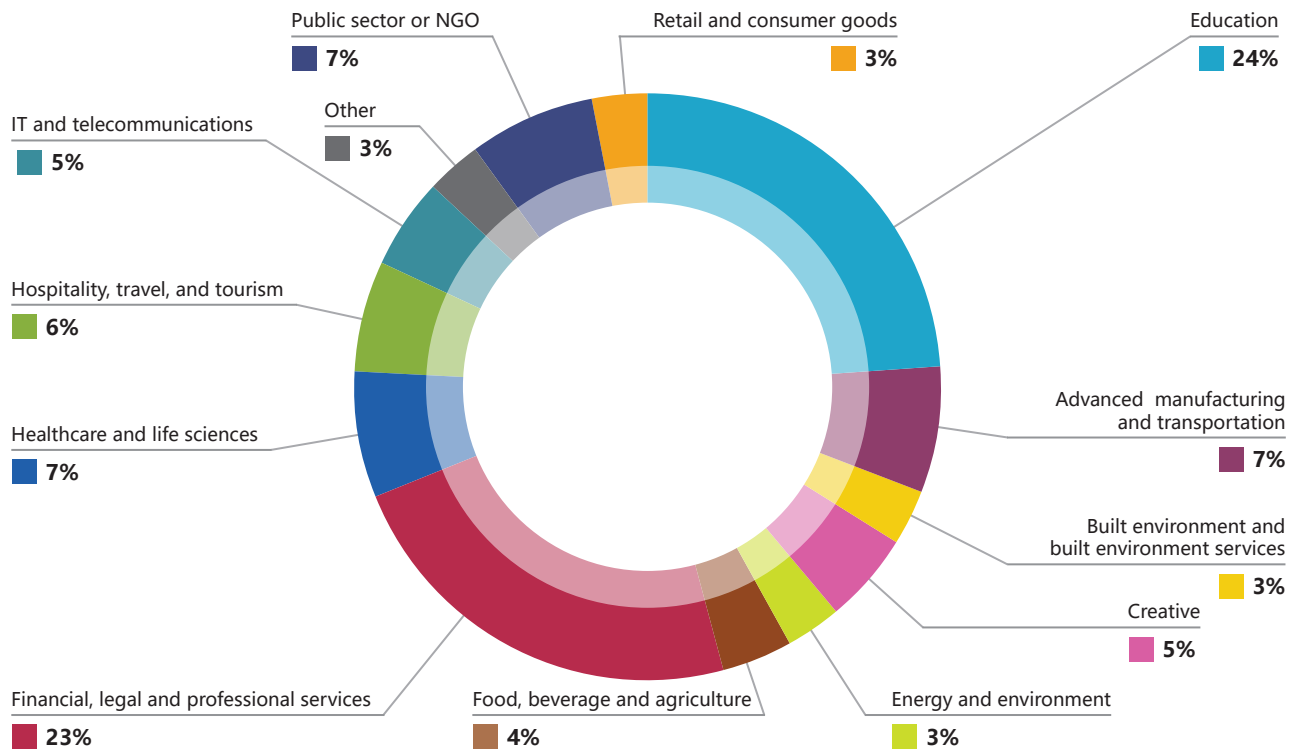


The largest proportion of employees are between 30 and 40 years old, with 21% in the 30-34 age bracket and 24% in the 35-39 age bracket. 18% of employees are in their twenties. Employees from older age brackets are less likely to be represented in the sample.

Two fifths of employees are mid-level employees in their company. Senior-level staff make the next largest category of employees, at 39%, followed by junior staff (9%) and entry-level staff (2%). The vast majority of employees are salaried staff, while only 7% are self-employed.

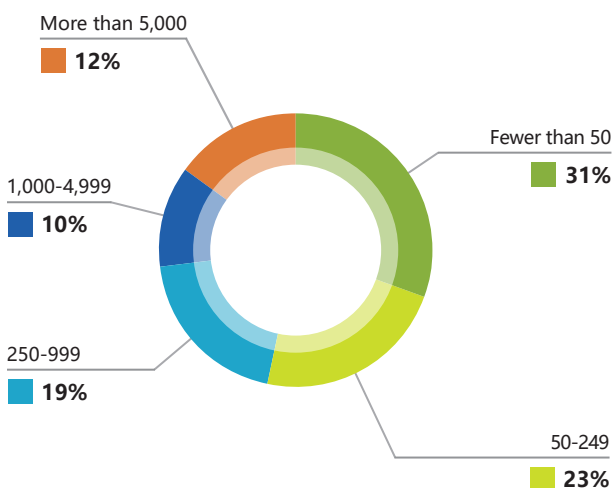


IN WHICH SECTOR(S) IS THE ORGANISATION YOU WORK FOR?



Workers from a variety of industries have responded to the survey. The most strongly represented sectors are education (28%) and financial, legal and professional services (28%).

HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE IN YOUR ORGANISATION?

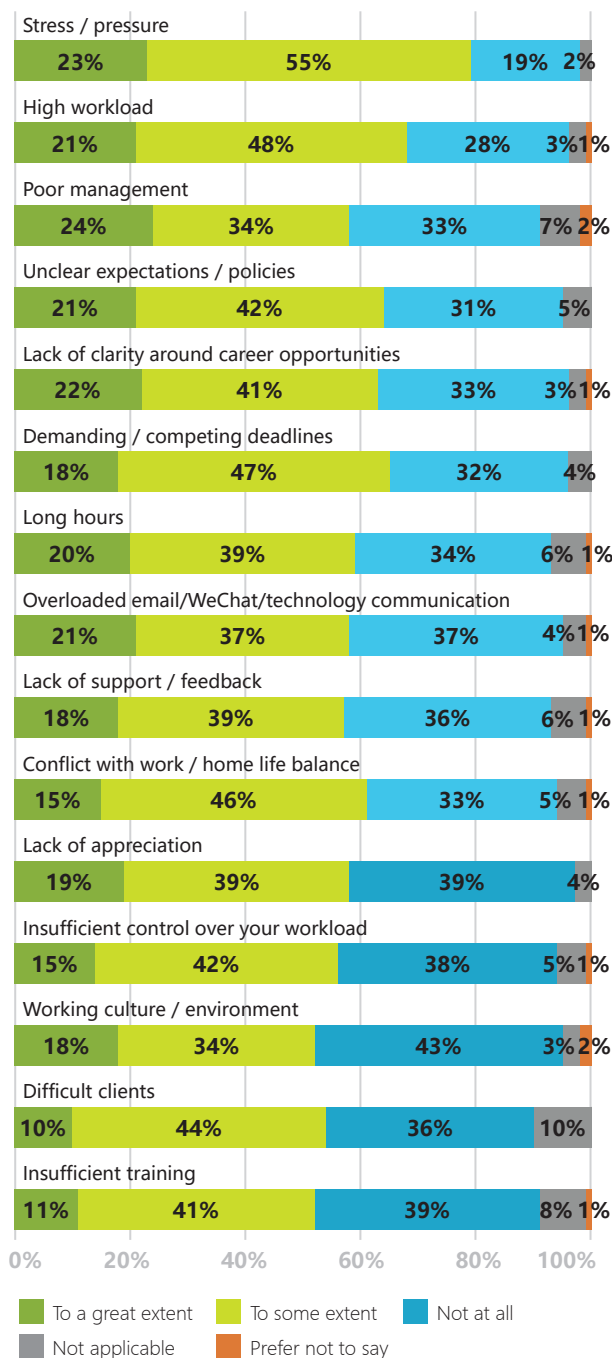


53% of employees work in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), while 47% work for large multinational organisations. Small companies are those that employ fewer than 50 people, while medium companies are those that employ fewer than 250 people.



3 EMPLOYEES' PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL CHALLENGES

OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS, TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE FOLLOWING FACTORS IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL / WORK LIFE HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON YOUR OVERALL WELLBEING?



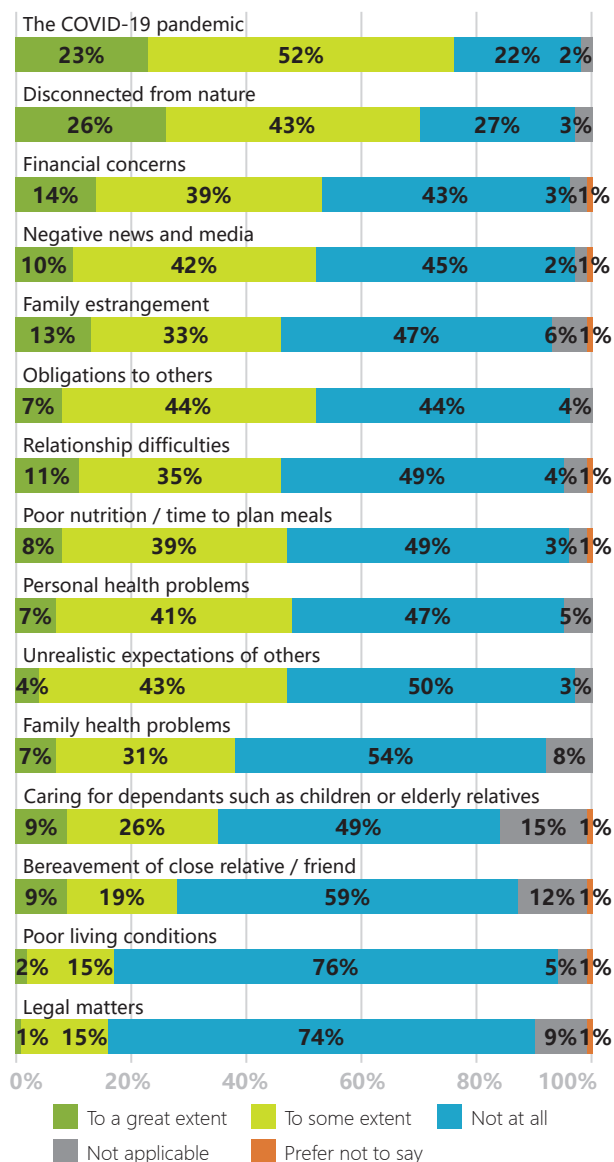
Stress has become an inevitable part of our daily lives. In the workplace, small amounts of stress can be healthy and provide positive motivation, as well as help to improve work productivity and efficiency. Too much stress, however, can be detrimental to one's health.

Eight out of ten employees who completed the survey believe that stress or pressure has had a negative impact on their overall wellbeing in the last six months. Stress was ranked highest of all negative professional life factors reviewed in the study, closely followed by high workload and poor management. Respondents in their 30s, women, and employees in the education sector are more likely to be impacted by stress or pressure than employees in other age ranges, other genders and other sectors.

A number of the highest ranking professional life factors having a greatly negative impact on employee wellbeing were attributed to workplace conditions (acts and/or omissions) that managers could probably do something about by providing greater support and communication. These include poor management (24%), lack of clarity around career opportunities (23%), unclear expectations or policies (21%), lack of appreciation (19%), work culture or environment (18%), and lack of support or feedback (18%).

Other factors that also negatively impacted employee wellbeing to a great extent and that could be attributed to the demands of modern working life included overloaded email or technology communication (21%), high workload (21%), long hours (20%) and demanding or competing deadlines (18%). Positively, harassment or bullying (4%), discrimination (5%) and tough or long commutes (6%) were not considered to negatively impact the wellbeing of the majority of employees.

OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS, TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE FOLLOWING FACTORS IN YOUR PERSONAL LIFE HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON YOUR OVERALL WELLBEING?



Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has had the largest negative impact on the overall wellbeing of employees in the last six months. Men are twice as likely to worry to a great extent about the COVID-19 pandemic than women (32%, compared to 16%).

Over 26% of employees believe that feeling disconnected from nature is having a greatly negative impact on their wellbeing (higher than all other professional and personal factors considered), and found it ranked second highest of all personal factors – a reflection perhaps that we are all spending less and less time in natural environments due to housing density, commute times, office hours













increases and self-isolation requirements during COVID-19 lockdowns.²

Men and women face different challenges in their personal life that come to bear on their performance. Women are more likely than men to find that financial concerns (59% compared to 47%), personal health problems (59% compared to 34%) and poor nutrition or lack of time to plan meals (58% compared to 35%) are having a negative impact on their overall wellbeing. Men were more likely to worry to a great extent about negative news and media than women (13%, compared to 7%).

Caring for dependants such as children or elderly relatives was more likely to negatively impact the overall wellbeing of employees in their 40s and over 50s (45%), and those working in the financial, legal and professional services industry (42%). It is a concern shared equally by both men and women (34%).

² "Nurtured by nature - Psychological research is advancing our understanding of how time in nature can improve our mental health and sharpen our cognition", American Psychological Association, April 2020.

Rank	Male	Female	20s	30s	40s	50s
1	 The COVID-19 pandemic	 Stress / pressure	 High workload	 Stress / pressure	 The COVID-19 pandemic	 The COVID-19 pandemic
2	 Stress / pressure	 Lack of clarity around career opportunities	 Stress / pressure	 Disconnected from nature	 Disconnected from nature	 Stress / pressure
3	 Disconnected from nature	 Unclear expectations / policies	 The COVID-19 pandemic	 Lack of clarity around career opportunities	 Unclear expectations / policies	 Negative news and media
4	 High workload	 Poor management	 Insufficient control over your workload	 The COVID-19 pandemic	 Poor management	 High workload
5	 Demanding / competing deadlines	 Disconnected from nature	 Disconnected from nature	 Poor management	 Conflict with work / home life balance	 Demanding / competing deadlines

Ranking: Over the past six months, to what extent have the following factors in your professional / personal life had a negative impact on your overall wellbeing? *A Great Extent / Some Extent*

Every employee is an individual with their own personal strengths and issues. They inevitably take work stress home with them, impacting family life and relationships. And vice-versa. Expecting workers to leave their personal problems at home is unrealistic. In order to keep employees motivated and happy so that they will continue

to be a contributing member of the team, organisations need to treat their staff as individuals, try to help them find a work / home life balance and be able to help them deal with the inevitable personal and health problems that impact their lives.



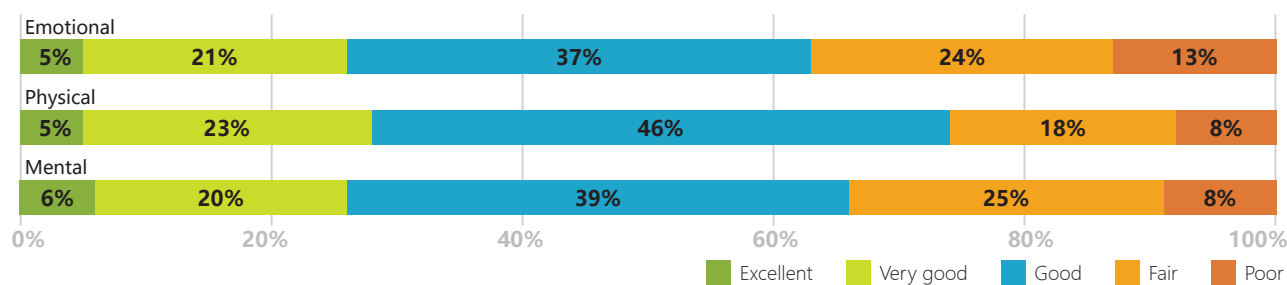
4 THE PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL EFFECTS

Employees ranked high stress levels significantly higher than any other factors as having a negative impact on their wellbeing in the workplace. These could describe anything from ongoing pressures at work to a feeling of being overwhelmed at home.































Although stress is a natural part of life, long-term stress can be detrimental to mental, physical and emotional health. Simplistically, the mind and the body are intrinsically linked. Research shows that when you improve your physical health, you'll experience greater mental and emotional wellbeing³, and vice-versa. Encouragingly, 74% of employees in China report positive physical health (described as good, very good or excellent), 65% reported positive mental health and 63% reported positive emotional health. More could still be done however, with over a quarter of employees only rating their mental and emotional health as either fair or poor.



A COMPARISON OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF HEALTH



³ Physical health and mental health - We often think of our mind and body as separate, but our mental health and physical health are interconnected. Mental Health Foundation

Rank	Male	Female	20s	30s	40s	50s
1	 High stress levels	 High stress levels	 High stress levels	 High stress levels	 Anxiety	 High stress levels
2	 Risk of burnout	 Anxiety	 Anxiety	 Sleeping problems	 High stress levels	 Frustration / irritation
3	 Frustration / irritation	 Worry / nervousness	 Low energy levels / lethargy	 Restlessness / agitation / distracted	 Risk of burnout	 Unhappiness / disillusionment / disappointment
4	 Anxiety	 Restlessness / agitation / distracted	 Risk of burnout	 Anxiety	 Unhappiness / disillusionment / disappointment	 Isolation / loneliness
5	 Sleeping problems	 Sleeping problems	 Worry / nervousness	 Risk of burnout	 Frustration / irritation	 Emotionally drained / overwhelmed

Ranking: Over the past six months, to what extent have the following adversely affected your wellbeing at work?
A Great Extent / Some Extent

Employees report a range of mental, physical and emotional health challenges adversely affecting their wellbeing at work. High stress levels, anxiety, risk of burnout and sleeping problems are ranked highest by both genders and nearly all age groups. Worry and nervousness were more prevalent in female staff and

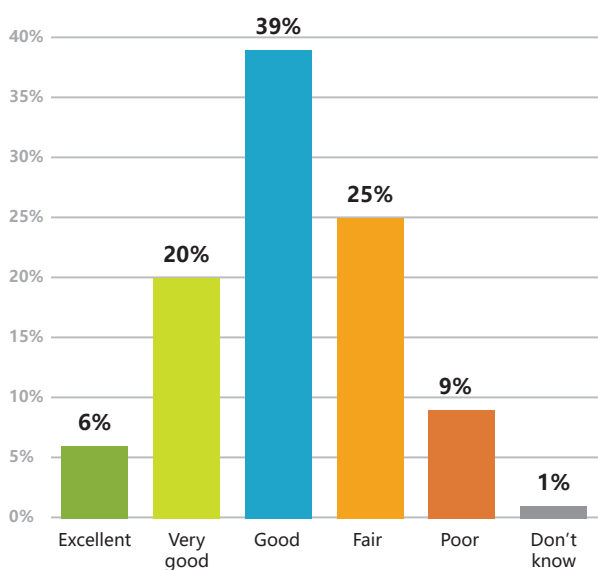
employees in their 20s, while risk of burnout is a key problem for everyone apart from those aged 50 or above. Employees in their 40s and over 50s are more likely to feel unhappiness to an extent that it affects their wellbeing at work. Employees over 50 are more likely to admit to feelings of loneliness.





MENTAL HEALTH

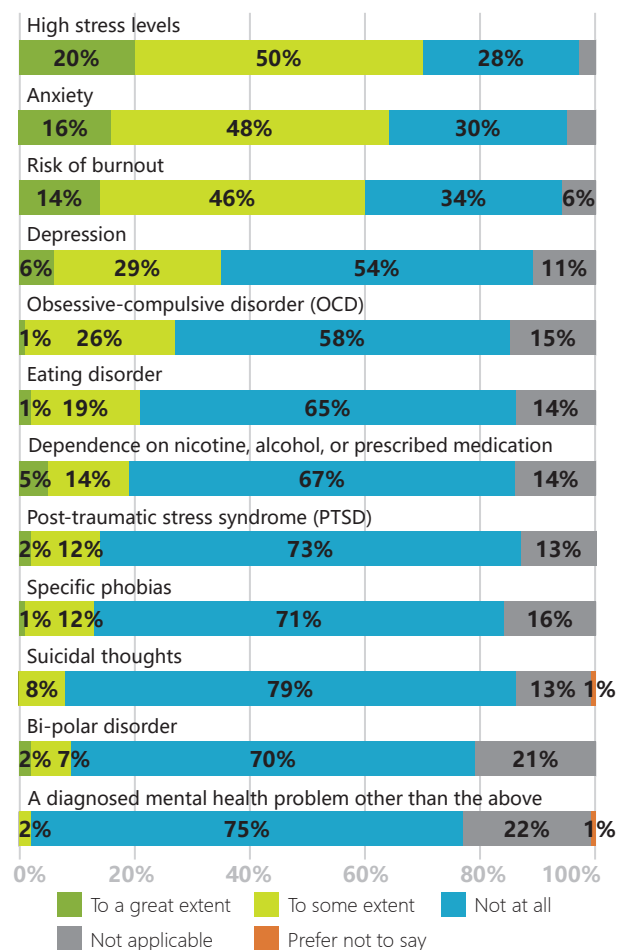
OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS, HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR OVERALL MENTAL HEALTH?



Encouragingly, most employees rate their mental health relatively highly, with good being the most common response (39%), and very good and excellent standing at 20% and 6% respectively. Less than 10% of employees feel their mental health is poor, while 25% believe it to be fair.

Women are twice as likely to be suffering from poor mental health compared to men, at 12% compared to 6%. At the other end of the scale, men are three times as likely to report excellent mental health (9% compared to 3%).

OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS, TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE FOLLOWING ADVERSELY AFFECTED YOUR WELLBEING AT WORK?



The state of our mental health can be a difficult topic for many people to discuss. Anecdotally, we hear that a stigma around mental health means many do not feel safe discussing with colleagues, especially for men.

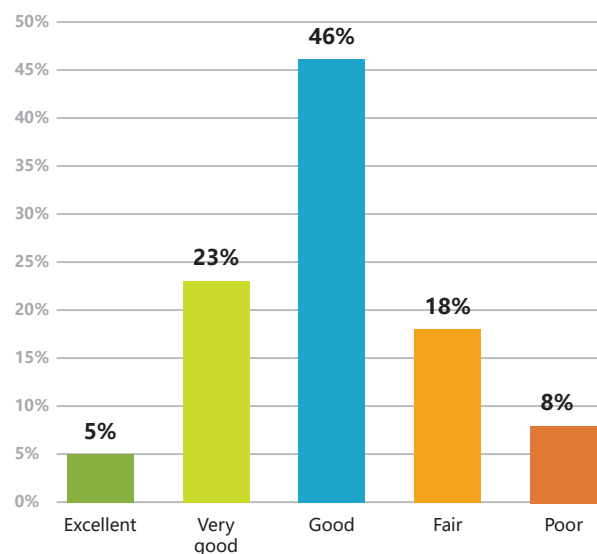
High stress levels, anxiety and risk of burnout rank highest in our survey with approximately two thirds of employees stating that they are adversely affecting their wellbeing at work. The risk is higher for some demographics than others. 17% of employees in their 20s and 30s report a risk of burnout to a great extent, compared to employees in their 40s (9%) or older (13%). 21% of women suffer anxiety to a great extent, compared to 9% of men.

Depression is also a major concern, with over one third of employees (35%) reporting it impacts them. One in ten employees in their 40s report depression to a great extent, compared to none in their 20s, 7% of those in their 30s and 50 and above. Men and employees in their 40s in particular are much more likely to report dependence on nicotine, alcohol, or prescribed medication.



PHYSICAL HEALTH

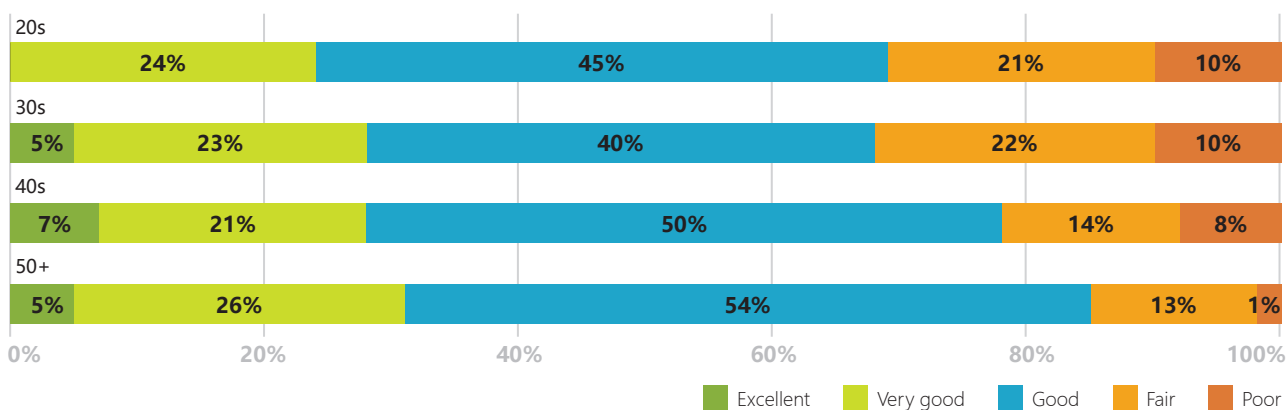
OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS, HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR OVERALL PHYSICAL HEALTH?



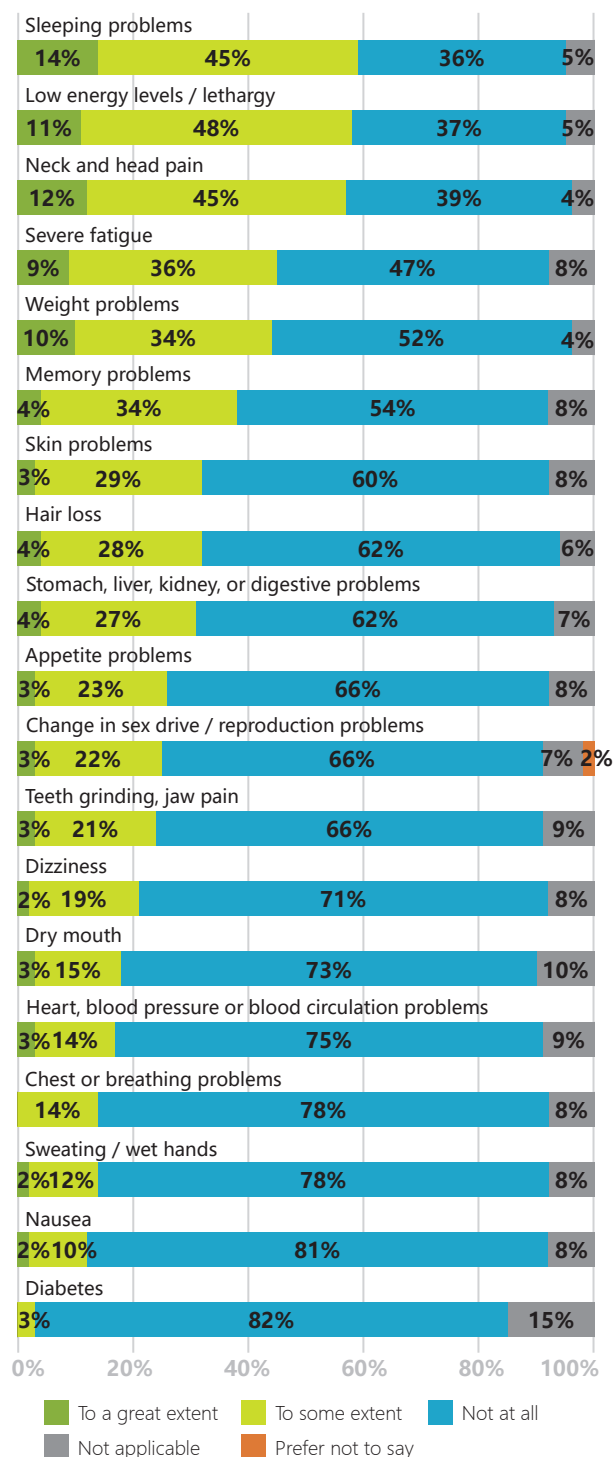
Employees are more likely to report better physical health than mental health. Around three quarters report good, very good or excellent physical health.

Similarly to mental health, however, significant differences between genders is evident. Men (77%) are more likely to report good, very good or excellent physical health than women (69%). Twice as many women (10%) report that their health is poor compared to men (5%). In terms of age, employees in their 40s and 50s are more likely to report good, very good or excellent physical health than other, younger age groups. No employees in their 20s reported excellent physical health.

HOW DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS FEEL ABOUT THEIR PHYSICAL HEALTH



OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS, TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE FOLLOWING ADVERSELY AFFECTED YOUR WELLBEING AT WORK?



Over half of employees state that problems with sleep, low energy levels and lethargy, as well as neck and head pain are adversely affecting their wellbeing at work.

Sleeping problems are ranked the top issue across nearly all demographics. One in five employees in their 30s report a greatly negative impact on their wellbeing from problems with sleeping. Women (18%) are twice



as likely as men (9%) to suffer to a great extent. In fact, women are more likely to complain of physical problems than men across nearly all answers. Although only 3% of both men and women both reported that there was a greatly negative change in sex drive or reproduction problems, men ranked it as a higher concern than women (#7 compared to #13). Nearly half of employees in their 20s (48%) reported no problems at all with their sleep, but they were more likely to report low energy levels or lethargy (19%) than employees in their 30s (13%), 40s (5%) and over 50s (5%).

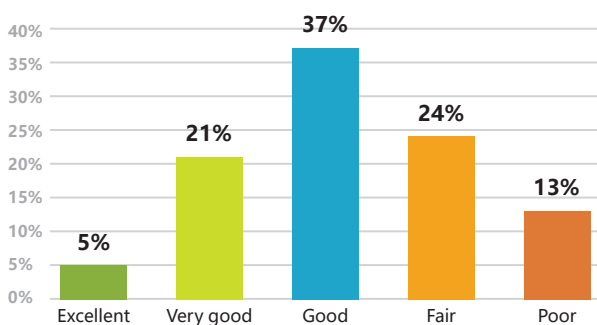
Although more than one in ten Chinese adults have diabetes, making China the country with the highest number of diabetics in the world⁴, it does not seem to factor as a major concern by employees in our sample.

4 China's diabetes epidemic in charts - CGTN | Diabetes in China - statistics & facts | Statista



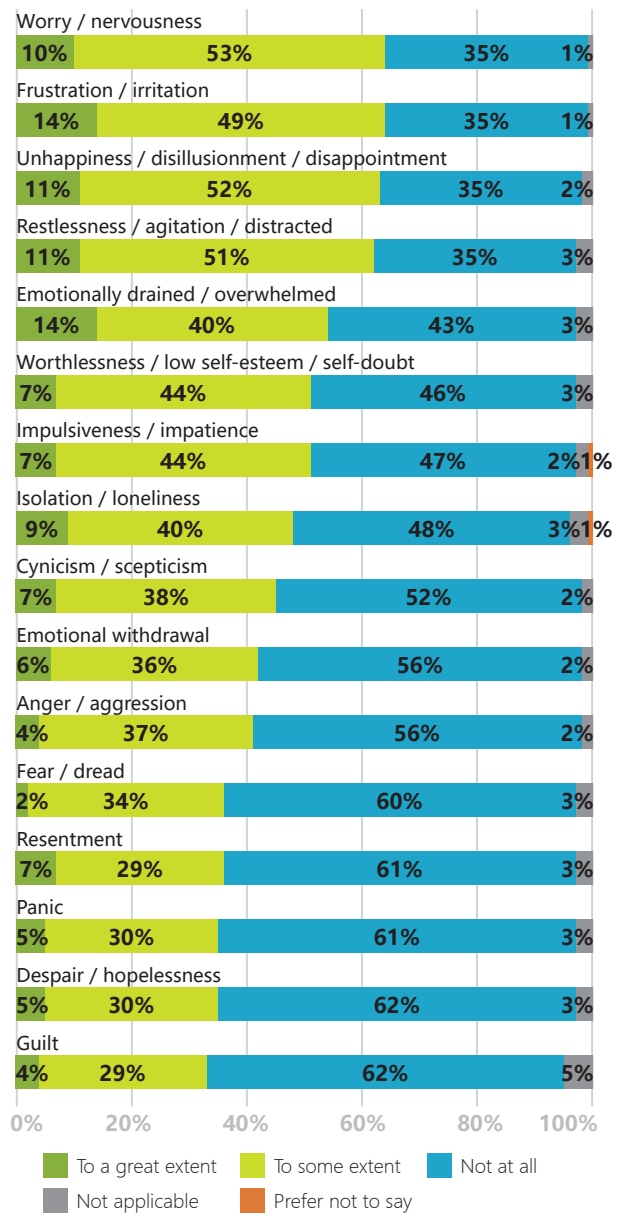
EMOTIONAL HEALTH

OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS, HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR OVERALL MENTAL HEALTH?



Emotional and mental health track relatively closely, with 63% of the business community feeling their emotional health is either good, very good or excellent. There is once again a fissure along gendered lines, with a ten percentage point difference between men (7%) and women (17%) suffering from poor emotional health. 13% of employees report poor emotional health, slightly higher than those reporting poor mental health (8%) or physical health (8%).

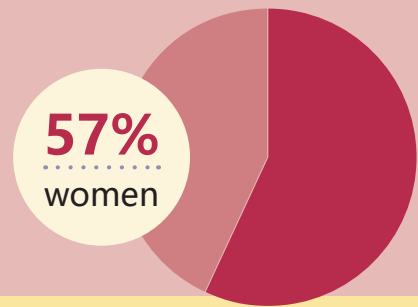
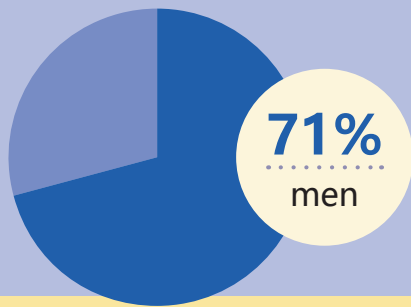
OVER THE PAST LAST SIX MONTHS, TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE FOLLOWING FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS ADVERSELY AFFECTED YOUR WELLBEING AT WORK?



For approximately two-thirds of employees worry (the most impactful of the four issues), frustration, unhappiness and restlessness (the least impactful of the four) adversely affect their wellbeing at work.

Women rank worry or nervousness higher (77%) than men (50%), and are more likely than men to identify with nearly all of the negative emotions listed (the only exceptions being feelings of cynicism and emotional withdrawal). It is concerning that this is particularly true for more 'extreme' emotions – women are more likely to feel worthless (59% compared to 44%), significantly isolated (53% compared to 43%), and/or despairing than men (39% to 31%).

5 GENDER AND WELLBEING



report good, very good or excellent mental health

Percentage of men and women negatively affected by...

A stressful working culture

47%



57%

Fear of making mistakes

35%



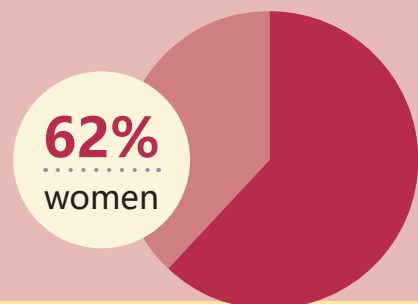
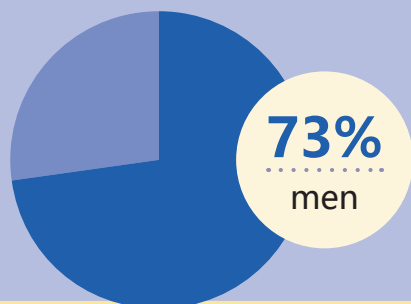
58%

Harassment and bullying

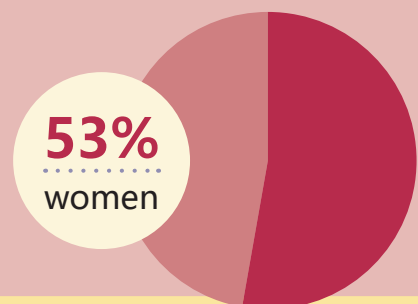
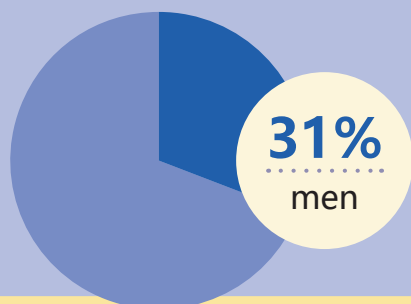
10%



23%



feel empowered to make decisions at work



are considering leaving their job due to workplace-related stress or anxiety



Companies must also look at wellbeing through the lens of gender, for two reasons. Firstly, women are particularly likely to be interested in wellbeing. 55% of women strongly believe that organisations should discuss wellbeing more, compared to 43% of men. Roughly two-thirds of women also believe that a supportive culture creates a healthy work environment, compared with just under half of men.

They also face different challenges in the workplace. Stress and pressure in the workplace have the most negative impact on wellbeing overall, but men also feel more negatively impacted by day-to-day corporate culture issues, such as high workloads and managing deadlines. Women are more worried about their career prospects, including unclear career paths or unclear expectations at work.

While the average employee feels well-supported by their organisation, this is generally less true for women than men. Men are slightly more likely to feel able to fully express themselves at work (62%) than women (51%). On balance, employees generally feel empowered to make decisions, but this is again more true for men (73%) than women (62%).

Men and women's assessments of their mental and

emotional health also differ greatly. Roughly 70% of men report good, very good or excellent mental and emotional health, compared to just over half of women. Women are more likely than men to report features of unhealthy work environments, such as a stressful working culture or environment (56% compared to 45%), fear of making mistakes (57% compared to 35%) and harassment and bullying (22% compared to 10%).

On average, women are far less likely than men to either be aware of wellbeing support or to find them effective. 45% of female staff feel that they do not have access to sympathetic HR staff, compared to 36% of men. 45% of women also fear that they will be judged if they do not work long hours, compared to 30% of men. This translates to tangible differences in staff turnover – stress and anxiety are leading 53% of women to consider leaving their job, compared to 31% of men.

The ways stress manifests also varies between men and women. Anxiety is prevalent irrespective of gender – two in four men suffer anxiety to at least some degree, rising to three in four for women. Men are far more likely to suffer from substance dependence (25% compared to 13% of women). For women, obsessive-compulsive disorder (33%) and eating disorders (25%) are more common manifestations.

6 EDUCATION AND FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES (FLPS) INDUSTRIES AND WELLBEING

Whether you work in high-demand, low-control jobs or high-stakes work environments, one certainty is that all jobs, at all levels of the organisation, in every industry come with their own unique challenges and stressors. A review of the survey results show that employees in the education sector and financial, legal and professional services are dealing with unique challenges and health concerns and are impacted by stress in different ways.

THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Employees in the education sector face a range of challenges around wellbeing. 79% of education employees report experiencing stress in the past six months, with 70% indicating high levels of anxiety and 42% with depression over the same time period. Almost half have considered leaving their job due to ongoing stress and anxiety.

A range of external issues contribute to this trend. 82% of education employees cite the COVID-19 pandemic as negatively impacting their wellbeing, followed by negative news and media (62%) (perhaps exacerbated by recent changes and uncertainty in the sector in China). But workplace pressures are also overwhelming employees. Almost three-quarters of education employees feel unappreciated at work, and a similar number find pressure to work long hours burdensome. Over two thirds of employees feel unsupported and lacking feedback as well as feeling overloaded with email, WeChat and technology communication.

The stress that these factors cause affect employees' physical health, with two-thirds reporting sleeping problems and low energy levels. Feelings of severe

fatigue (53%) and weight-related health issues (48%) are also common.

Although 54% of employees in the education sector answered that their workplace actively promotes wellbeing, there is still more that could be done. 41% of education employees do not believe that their organisation has enacted effective mental health measures in response to COVID-19, and just 19% feel they have access to sympathetic HR personnel in their company. On a positive note, 61% remain motivated and enthusiastic about contributing to their organisation's success.





FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Stress is also endemic in the financial, legal and professional services (FLPS) sectors. In addition to dealing with a high workload, unclear expectations or policies, demanding and competing deadlines, and long hours, employees in the FLPS are also more likely than those in the education sector to rank challenges around lack of clarity when it comes to career opportunities, performance or billing targets, conflict with work and home life balance, difficult clients and working culture / environment higher.

68% of FLPS employees report feeling high stress levels and 56% report suffering from anxiety in the last six months. Nevertheless, significant majorities report good, very good or excellent mental (69%), physical (81%) and emotional (71%) health.

Furthermore, 75% of employees are enthusiastic about contributing to their organisation's success (compared to only 5% actively disengaged). Respondents generally find that wellbeing was actively promoted in the workplace (60%). Wellbeing solutions commonly offered by FLPS workplaces include sympathetic staffing, such as flexible working arrangements (46%) and a sympathetic line manager (43%).

Interestingly, FLPS companies seem to be relatively advanced in terms of recognising and actioning the need for wellbeing support. FLPS employees are more likely to report that their organisation offers accessible or effective wellbeing support, especially compared to the education sector. In particular, FLPS employees report that they have access to flexible working arrangements (46%, compared to 29%), a sympathetic line manager (43%, compared to 30%) and yoga, exercise, and/or fitness classes (33% compared to 22%).

Education vs FLPS



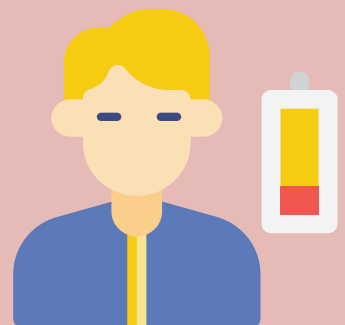
82% of education employees
70% of FLPS employees

believe that the COVID-19 pandemic is negatively impacting their wellbeing in the workplace



A lack of clarity around career opportunities is the **#1** issue negatively affecting wellbeing in the workplace in the FLPS sector (ranking **#13** for education sector employees).

66% of education sector employees struggle with lack of sleep and low energy levels (compared to 53% of FLPS sector employees).



75% of FLPS employees are motivated and enthusiastic about contributing to their organisation's success (compared to 61% of education employees).

34% of education sector employees feel they are unable to give their full selves to their work because of wellbeing challenges in their personal lives (compared to 22% of FLPS sector employees).



SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF LIFE

There is no one cause of stress, nor one solution to improve wellbeing, in the workplace. Every worker is an individual at a different stage in their personal career and life journey and brings different issues from both their professional and personal lives to the workplace. These may have unanticipated influences on their performance, their feelings of stress and their overall wellbeing.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS AND WELLBEING

97% believe wellbeing should be talked about more in an organisation

Young professionals bring energy and entrepreneurialism to an organisation. Two-third of employees in entry or junior level positions are in their 20s.

Employees in their 20s are three times more likely than people in their 30s, and six times more likely than people in their 40s, to believe that insufficient control over their workload is having a significant negative impact on their wellbeing at work. 73% of employees in their 20s believe that insufficient training is having a negative impact (compared to 57% of people in their 30s and 38% of people in their 40s or older).

64% of employees in their 20s report positive mental health⁵ and 69% report positive physical health. That said, employees in their 20s feel significantly more emotionally healthy compared to more senior employees. That said, employees in their 20s are more likely to suffer from worry or nervousness and are more cynical and sceptical than those in other age groups.

On the positive side, support from the organisation and direct managers can be largely influential in determining wellbeing outcomes. For this age demographic, the survey found high-levels of having a sympathetic manager (45%) which is often a promoting factor in raising the wellbeing of employees. Equally, they reported being able to take time off work for physical, mental and/or emotional problems (69%). This provides insights into areas that organisations can leverage further to support their employees' wellbeing.

MID-PROFESSIONALS AND WELLBEING

61% believe that their organisation's working culture is unhealthy

43% of the employees that responded to our survey are currently in a midlevel position within their organisation. Of these 61% are female, and 39% are male. Over half of employees in their 30s (54%) are in a mid-level role, whereas two in five employees in their 40s also occupy the same level.

Middle-level, or mid-career, managers play a number of important and challenging roles in their organisations. They are expected to understand, execute and implement

⁵ Defined as respondents who reported good, very good or excellent mental health.

top-level management plans as well guide and manage lower level employees.

There is significant demand for wellbeing strategies among this group. Mid-level managers are more likely to strongly agree that wellbeing should be talked about more in every organisation (53%) and that a supportive workplace culture is the foundation of a healthy workplace environment (57%) than junior or senior colleagues.

Mid-level professionals also experience significant job uncertainty. 28% of those in their 30s reported having concerns around their career opportunities. Furthermore, 47% expressed higher job insecurity/redundancy. This was also expressed by 20% of individuals concerned about finances which was another peak area for this age demographic.

Unfortunately, over half of all mid-level employees (51%) also feel isolated to a great or some extent and that a lack of support or feedback (65%), as well as a lack of appreciation is having a negative affect on their overall wellbeing (64%). Unclear expectations and policies (75%), as well as insufficient training (59%) are also having a stronger negative impact on mid-level employees than on employees at other levels.

Mid-level employees are more likely to report that the working culture is unhealthy (61%) and that they are receiving lower levels of sympathetic support from their line manager (73%) and HR personnel (46%) than those sitting at other levels in their organisations.

SENIOR LEADERS AND WELLBEING



67% are overwhelmed by communication technology

40% of survey respondents are in senior positions within their organisations. Of these 57% are male, 40% are female, and 3% prefer not to say. Respondents in senior positions can be found in all age groups with 56% of them aged 40 or above.

Senior leaders are faced with a variety of challenges from every level of their organisation. Key factors that are more likely to negatively impact their wellbeing to a great extent include WeChat or other communication technology, demanding or competing deadlines (22%), long hours (21%), business financial worries (18%), performance or billing targets, (15%), insecurity or fear of redundancy (15%) and fear of making mistakes (12%). The COVID-19 pandemic (24%) and being disconnected from nature (29%) were also more likely to negatively impact senior leaders than other staff.

Being a senior leader comes at a cost. 28% report that stress and pressure is having a greatly negative impact on their wellbeing, more than in any other job position, and are more likely to report poor or fair mental (38%), physical (30%) and emotional health (43%) than those in lower positions. Senior leaders were also more likely to report to a great extent about high stress levels (24%), risk of burnout (16%), depression (10%) and dependence on nicotine, alcohol or prescribed medication (7%). They were also more likely to complain of serious sleeping (16%) and weight problems (14%), as well as feeling emotionally drained or overwhelmed (16%).

Positively, senior leaders are more likely to report that their organisation promotes wellbeing to a great extent (13%). They strongly agree that they are motivated and enthusiastic about contributing to their organisation's success (32%) as well as empowered to make decisions at work (31%).

Unfortunately, many senior leaders do not feel comfortable speaking out about the different wellbeing challenges they face. 20% feel strongly that they cannot express themselves fully at work, and 18% feel strongly that they cannot tell their organisation about their professional and personal problems for fear of it harming their career.

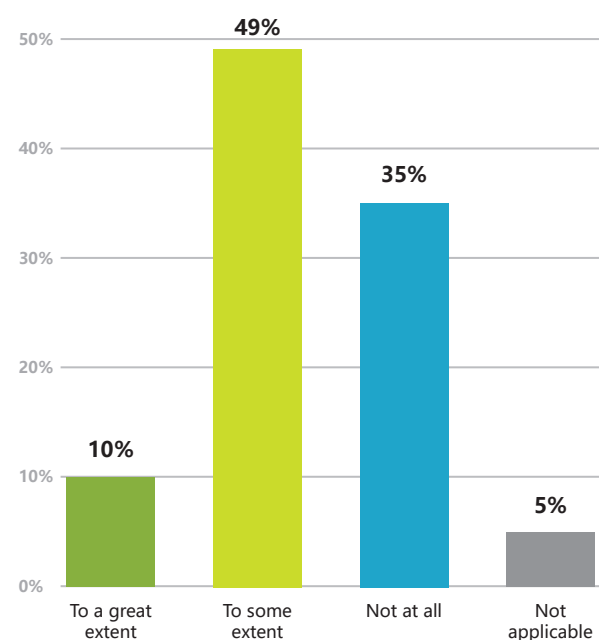


TO WHAT EXTENT DOES YOUR WORKPLACE ACTIVELY PROMOTE WELLBEING?

Positively, over half of employees (59%) felt that their organisation was actively promoting wellbeing. The larger the organisation, the more likely their employees are to report that they actively promote wellness, with 67% of employees of large organisations reporting that they see active wellbeing promotion, compared to 40% of those in small organisations and 47% of those in medium organisations.

However, relatively few employees report that their organisation actively promotes wellbeing to a great extent, and a third say their organisation is taking no action around wellbeing. As such, there is still significant room for growth in uptake of wellbeing support in organisations.

Interestingly, there appears to be a disconnect between older and younger employees on this issue. Senior employees are more likely to believe that their organisations are actively promoting wellbeing in the workplace than their younger counterparts. 14% of employees in their 40s and 16% of employees over 50 were more likely to believe their organisations were actively promoting wellbeing to a great extent, compared to those in younger age groups (3% of those in their 20s, and 6% of those in their 30s). Men (12%) were also twice as likely to believe their organisations were actively promoting wellbeing to a great extent than women (5%).



COMPANY SUPPORT

Investing in and promoting employee wellbeing in the workplace has been shown to lead to increased resilience, better employee engagement, reduced sickness absence and higher performance and productivity⁶. More and more companies recognise the importance of supporting their staff's overall wellbeing in the workplace by expanding their existing health and safety arrangements to include more preventative measures and initiatives that focus on improving mental, physical and emotional health, and not just physical safety⁷.




- 6 Wellbeing at work - Understand the links between work, health and wellbeing, and the role of stakeholders in adopting an organisational approach to employee wellbeing Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Wellbeing at Work | Factsheets | CIPD Or Worker wellbeing and workplace performance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- 7 See Stress at work - Mental health conditions, work and the workplace - HSE




DOES YOUR ORGANISATION PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING HEALTH AND WELLBEING SUPPORT?



The five most effective and accessible initiatives that have been introduced are flexible working arrangements (40%), a sympathetic line manager (36%), yoga, exercise and/or fitness classes (27%), sympathetic HR personnel (23%) and a personal mentor/buddy system (19%).



Inaccessible and ineffective	Men	Women	Difference
 Yoga, exercise, and/or fitness classes	3%	20%	-17%
 A sympathetic line manager	18%	27%	-10%
 Training in stress management / resilience	9%	17%	- 8%

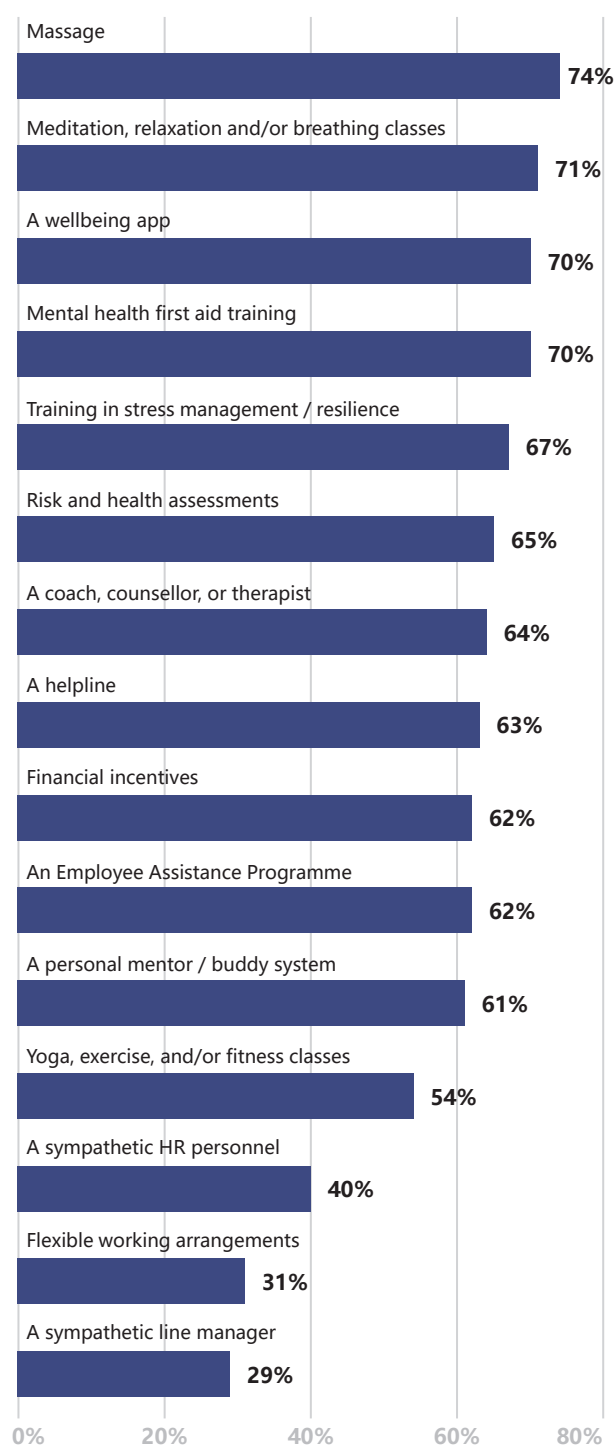
Not at All	Men	Women	Difference
 Flexible working arrangements	26%	36%	-10%
 A personal mentor / buddy system	57%	66%	-9%
 A sympathetic HR personnel	36%	45%	-8%

However, these wellbeing initiatives may fall short of their full potential. While a significant number of organisations do have some sort of wellbeing support, a number of employees report that they find this support inaccessible or ineffective. This can be particularly true for minority groups – women are more likely to find that the support offered is less available, accessible and effective than men.

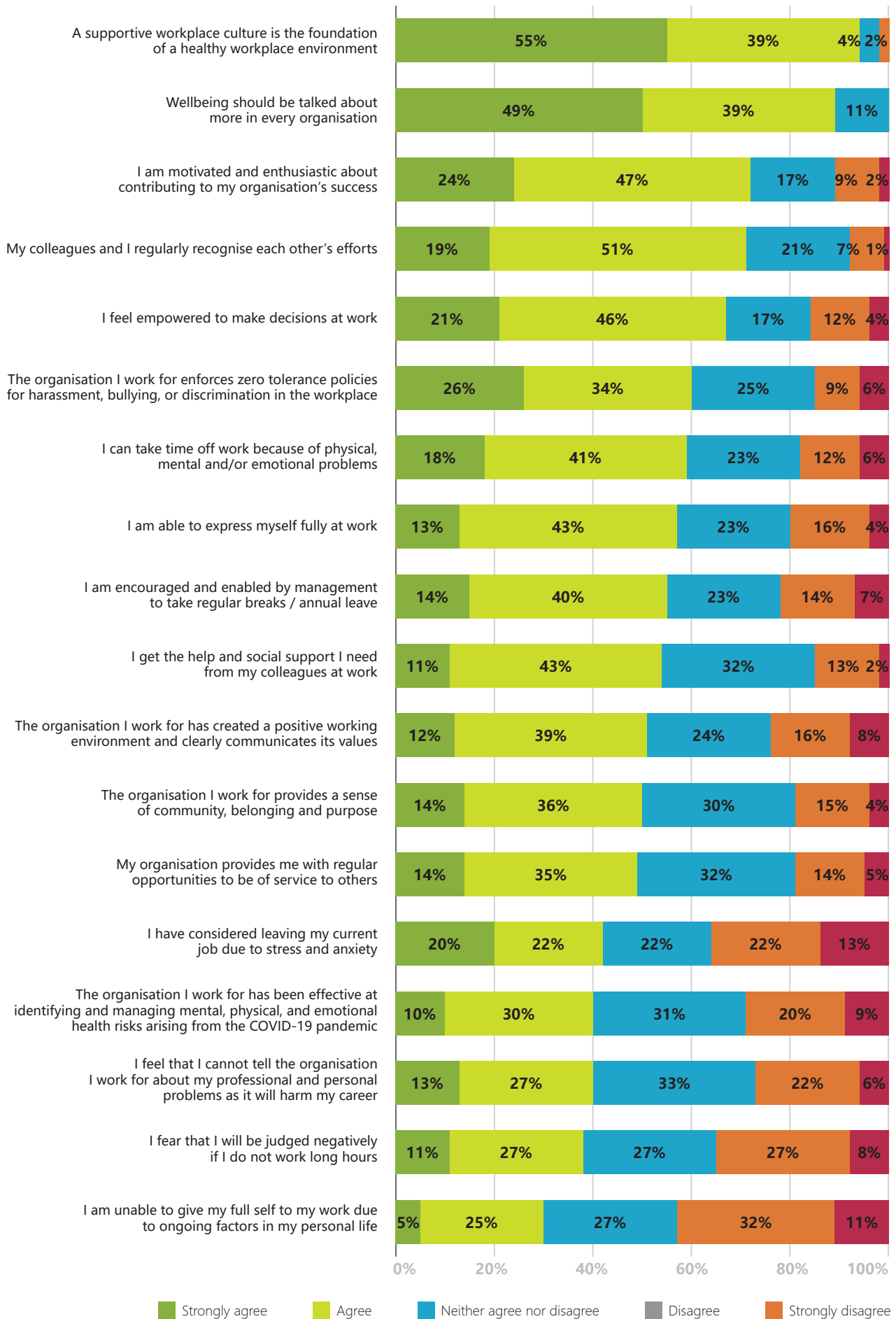
In addition, approximately half of all employees that work for organisations that offer a technical solution or a significant upfront investment, such as an Employee Assistance Programme EAP, a helpline or a wellbeing app, report that they were inaccessible or ineffective.

PERCENTAGE OF COMPANIES THAT DO NOT OFFER THE FOLLOWING WELLBEING SUPPORT MEASURES

Of particular concern is that many low cost and easily accessible initiatives have not been considered or implemented as well. Nearly two thirds of all employees confirmed that their organisations did not offer massage, meditation, relaxation and/or breathing classes, training in stress management and resilience, or risk and health assessments.



TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?



There is very large support from over half the employees who strongly agree that a supportive workplace culture is the foundation of a healthy workplace environment. Women are more likely to strongly agree with the statement than men (63%, compared to 47%), as are employees in their 20s (66%) compared to employees in their 30s (49%), 40s (57%) and over 50s (58%).

The statement wellbeing should be talked about more in every organisation was also strongly supported by all employees, with women and employees in their 20s more likely to strongly agree.

Employees in large organisations were more likely than employees in medium and small organisations to agree that their organisation has created a positive working environment and, clearly communicates its values,

provides a sense of community, belonging and purpose, provides regular opportunities to be of service to others and has been effective at identifying and managing mental, physical, and emotional health risks arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees in medium sized organisations were more likely to agree that they are unable to give their full self to their work due to ongoing factors in their personal life and have considered leaving their current job due to stress and anxiety.

Worryingly, peer pressure and a lack of psychological safety in the workplace concerns a third of workers. 40% of employees feel they cannot tell their work about their professional and personal problems, 38% fear that they will be judged negatively if they do not work long hours, and 30% are unable to give their full self to their work due to ongoing factors in their personal life.



9 CALLS TO ACTION

The Chamber offers three reasons why organisations in China should care about the wellbeing and resilience of their employees: it's good for business, good for clients and is the right thing to do.

1. GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Employee wellbeing contributes to organisational success. Employee health is a form of human capital that can provide a competitive advantage. Employees suffering from mental, physical and/or emotional health issues, or who are bringing unresolved personal problems to work, and vice-versa, are not going to be able to perform to their full potential.

In addition, employee wellbeing and engagement is linked to organisational success factors such as increased retention, client satisfaction, creativity, higher productivity and profitability. Employees who are not engaged because of poor management practices, working environment or culture and/or who believe they are not getting the support and sympathy they need from their line managers, coworkers and HR to combat health concerns and/or life's professional and personal stressors, are not going to be able to fully deliver for their organisations.

In short, greater understanding and promotion of employee health, wellbeing and resilience is good business and makes sound financial sense.

2. GOOD FOR CLIENTS

Clients rely on the cognitive abilities of their service provider's employees to make good decisions, evaluate risks, plan for the future, prioritise and sequence actions, and cope with new situations.

Employees handling unresolved professional and/or personal challenges, or those experiencing mental, physical or emotional health issues, are more likely to suffer from impaired executive functioning, including diminished working memory, attention, and problem-solving, abstraction, planning, organising – all which may impact the level of competence and service they are able to offer their clients.

3. RIGHT THING TO DO

Third, promoting wellbeing in the workplace and helping our staff be the best that they can is the right thing to do. Organisations can always do more to improve their working environment, culture and internal management practices and make them as inclusive, open, kind, nurturing and safe as possible. By helping employees make healthy, positive work/life choices that improve their quality of life within their families and communities, organisations can help them become the best versions of themselves, which in turn will help them make responsible decisions for their clients and act in the best interests of their organisations. Our interdependence creates a joint responsibility for developing long-term health and wellbeing solutions.



ABOUT THE BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN CHINA

The British Chamber of Commerce in China, established in Beijing in 1981, is a membership organisation in the Chinese mainland focused on providing advocacy, business support and networking opportunities for British business in China. For more than 100 years, our chapters across Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong and Southwest China have brought the British business community together to help them thrive in one of the world's fastest growing markets.

The Chamber would like to thank our network for their support, and to Ross Parsonage, Nathan Cornwell, Luke Cavanaugh, Stefania Jiang, Sally Xu and Anika Patel for assistance in preparing the survey questions and for drafting the report. Our appreciation also goes to Boglárka Miriszlai for designing the report.





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