

Empowering Employee Wellbeing in the New World of Work

Powered by the **ACHIEVERS** WORKFORCE INSTITUTE



Achievers

CONTENT

- 3. Introduction
- 4. Key findings
- 5. Wellbeing trends and challenges
- 7. The HR-employee disconnect
- 9. Stress and the COVID-19 pandemic
- 11. Recognition key to unlocking wellbeing
- 13. Seniority and at-risk workers
- 14. How to support marginalized groups at work
- 19. Recommendations: building your wellbeing plan
- 20. Appendix: country trends
 - Australia
 - Canada
 - UK
 - USA
- 24. About Achievers



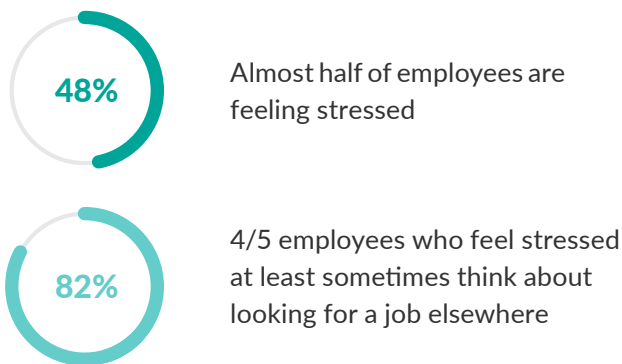
Introduction

Just one in five employees feels a strong sense of wellbeing, despite a focus on wellbeing by HR leaders over the past few years.

In the wake of the Great Resignation and a tight labor market, the need for organizations to think more broadly about employee wellbeing has never been more imperative.

The companies that are able to align cross functionally and execute on a wellbeing strategy that's holistic and accounts for individual needs and preferences will have a competitive advantage over those who don't. According to the [Future Workplace 2021 HR Sentiment Survey](#), 68% of senior HR leaders say employee wellbeing and mental health is a top priority. Add to this trend the COVID-19 pandemic, which challenged employees and organizations to embrace a new way of working, and we see an accelerating need to consider stress and wellbeing in this new world of work.

As we look ahead at the months and weeks to come, it's easy to think that the worst is behind us with vaccinations on the rise and many businesses starting a phased return to the office. However, the wellbeing research from Achievers Workforce Institute (AWI) shows that stress remains high, with COVID-19 as a key driver.



This is even higher for employees who report they have a disability. This cohort makes up 20% of the workforce and is twice as likely to say they are "very stressed". HR needs to understand how and why marginalized groups are experiencing heightened stress, otherwise inequities will deepen and result in cultural erosion over time.

Stress and wellbeing are having a direct impact on organizational results and need to be top of mind for HR and business leaders.

Organizations that support employee wellbeing report higher levels of engagement, with employees more likely to report feeling physically and mentally healthy. In addition, employees who say their employer is supportive of their wellbeing are three times more likely to say they are enthusiastic about their job and that they would recommend their company as a great place to work. They are also almost three times more likely to say they rarely think about looking for a job elsewhere. Taken together, this data demonstrates that an organizational commitment to employee wellbeing drives strikingly positive outcomes including higher productivity, lower absenteeism, and reduced turnover.

Unfortunately, not many organizations are making the decision to prioritize wellbeing. Just 24% of employees say their organization supports employee wellbeing and only one-third of HR leaders say they have a budget to support employee wellbeing initiatives. Those organizations failing to attend to wellbeing do so to their detriment, with just one in five of their employees reporting they feel a strong sense of physical and mental wellbeing.

With half of respondents feeling stressed and just one in five reporting a strong sense of wellbeing, organizations are at risk.

Unless organizations take steps to address stress and wellbeing in the workplace, they are at risk of high absenteeism, low productivity, and increasing turnover.

Today's business leader has the challenge and opportunity to introduce bold wellbeing initiatives, based on employee feedback and market best practices, to enhance their employees' lives both inside and outside the workplace. Developing a thoughtful wellbeing strategy and supportive tactics to enhance employee health and wellness ensures a happier, healthier employee population — a critical driver in a competitive business market.

This report is intended to guide you in understanding the core issues of wellbeing and to help you identify specific ways in which to take action to drive wellbeing success, ensuring a brighter future for your employees and your organization.



Dr. Natalie Baumgartner
Chief Workforce Scientist





Key findings

1 Most people are not feeling a strong sense of wellbeing

Just one in five people feel a strong sense of physical and mental wellbeing, and even fewer say their workplace supports their wellbeing. Engagement, belonging, productivity, and absenteeism are impacted because of a lack of widespread wellbeing.

2 There is a concerning HR-employee disconnect around wellbeing

HR practitioners at all levels tend to vastly overestimate the impact and reach of their wellbeing initiatives, suggesting that despite the extra effort HR has been expending, more work needs to be done to collectively shift employee perceptions and employee experience in this area.

3 Lack of wellbeing drives turnover

Employees who say their employer doesn't support their wellbeing are twice as likely to say they regularly think about looking for a job elsewhere. Organizations that are focused on employee wellbeing and are successful in bridging the gap between HR and employees are likely to improve retention as well.

4 Frequent recognition drives wellbeing

Employees who say they receive weekly meaningful recognition are twice as likely to report a high level of physical and mental wellbeing and are twice as likely to say they feel capable of managing their stress at work. In addition, organizations with a recognition platform outperform those without a formal program when it comes to wellbeing outcomes.

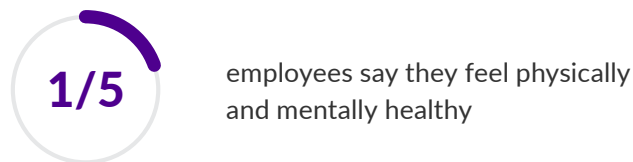
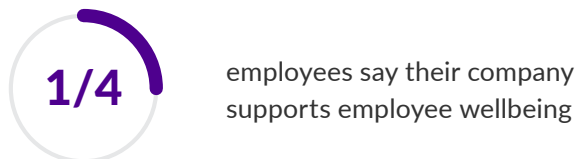
5 The pillars of belonging correlate positively with feelings of wellbeing

According to employees, the top three drivers of wellbeing at work are:

- a) Feeling included, accepted, and valued at work
- b) Being warmly welcomed and made to feel part of the team
- c) Having a supportive manager

Wellbeing trends and challenges

Employees are not getting the wellbeing support they need. Only a quarter of employees say their company supports employee wellbeing and just one in five say they feel physically and mentally healthy. Even fewer report that their wellbeing is supported at work.



According to the AWI [2021 Culture Report on Belonging at work](#), employees who feel supported to take care of their physical and mental wellbeing are 2.5 times more likely to feel a strong sense of belonging, and thus more likely to be engaged, productive, and resilient.



The Achievers Workforce Institute data scientists found that the biggest drivers for physical and mental wellbeing were:

- 1) Organizational support:** “My company supports employee wellbeing.”
- 2) Manager support:** “My manager supports me in balancing work and personal demands.”
- 3) Colleague support:** “I can receive support from my colleagues if I need it.”

Employees who feel supported by their organization, manager, or colleagues are more than twice as likely to feel both physically and mentally healthy.

Belonging and wellbeing: intertwined at work

The undeniable relationship between belonging and wellbeing points to the powerful roles that interpersonal relationships and the experience of support play in driving wellbeing — underscoring the five pillars of belonging as described in the AWI [2021 Culture Report on Belonging at work](#).

The five pillars of belonging are feeling **welcomed**, **known**, **included**, **supported**, and **connected**.

Employees report that the three biggest factors contributing to their feeling of wellbeing at work are:

- 1) Feeling included, accepted, and valued at work
- 2) Being warmly welcomed and made to feel part of the team
- 3) Having a supportive manager

This illustrates the connection between belonging and wellbeing, with organizations that are focused on the belonging pillars also fostering a greater sense of wellbeing for their employees.



Action: enhance feelings of support among employees

a Invest in wellbeing and communicate widely about wellbeing programs

Organizational support for wellbeing correlates strongly with feelings of physical and mental health. Success in this area requires both investment and communication. First of all, establish a budget for wellbeing, knowing you will see return on your investment thanks to improved engagement and productivity. Then ask the experts — your employees — about what programs and tools would improve their wellbeing. Finally, communicate widely about the programs you implement to ensure widespread adoption and improved wellbeing in your workforce.

b Educate people leaders

What does manager support look like? This is an important aspect of wellbeing, however, without guidance, every manager may have a different idea of what it means to be supportive. From [effective one-to-one meetings](#) to developing a coaching mentality, there are many ways to better support employees. Develop consistent training programs based on the [manager empowerment model](#) to ensure meaningful support throughout your organization.

c Create networks for peer support

Receiving support from colleagues can be as easy as asking your teammate for help, or as complex as trying to find the right contact in another department for a specific piece of advice. Break down silos with an employee connections solution to ensure it's easy to build internal relationships and have a robust and accessible intranet site that enables people to find the right contact easily.

The HR-employee disconnect

In our research at AWI, we posed similar questions to HR leaders as we did to employees – and found some stark differences between them.

Employees were only half as likely as HR leaders to say their company supports employee wellbeing.

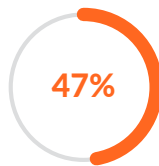
And while two in five HR leaders said they offer employee resources to specifically support physical and mental wellbeing, only half as many employees said they feel supported in these areas.

This striking data points to a significant disconnect between HR and employees when it comes to wellbeing. While HR may believe they are taking the right steps to support employees in this area, if individuals don't experience that support as effective, then the effort is not meeting the goal.



HR leaders ▶

My company supports employee wellbeing



• Strongly agree

My company offers employees resources to support their physical wellbeing

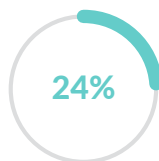


My company offers employees resources to support their mental wellbeing



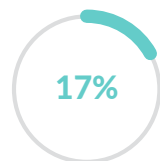
Employees ▶

My company supports employee wellbeing

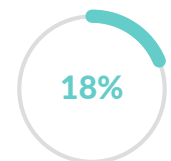


• Strongly agree

I feel supported at work in managing my physical wellbeing



I feel supported at work in managing my mental wellbeing



So, what is the answer to better meeting the wellbeing needs of employees?

We must ask.

That is, we must seek input from employees to develop programs that meaningfully impact their sense of wellbeing. However, when asked whether their organization takes action to solve problems based on employee feedback, just 18% of employees agreed, compared to 30% of HR leaders.

The easiest way to identify solutions to the challenges employees face, such as wellbeing, is to first ask for their feedback and then to take action on the input provided. Following up with action, however, is a struggle for many organizations. When employees provide feedback but don't feel that any action is taken, they get frustrated and are less likely to respond in the future.



AWI research shows that inaction fatigue is the biggest risk for inadequate survey response rates.

How to avoid this pitfall? Seek employee feedback in multiple ways, as employees have many different preferences. From quarterly pulse surveys to ad hoc feedback polls and regular one-to-one meetings with managers, there are many ways to collect information from employees – organizations should utilize all of them.

When you have the information you need from employees, it's then vital to communicate back regarding what action is being taken and when, so employees know their input has been heard and valued.

HR leaders ▶

My organization takes action to solve problems based on the feedback employees provide

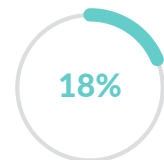
• Strongly agree



Employees ▶

My organization takes action to solve problems based on the feedback employees provide

• Strongly agree

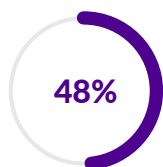


Taking action on feedback also correlates positively and significantly with feeling supported to manage physical and mental wellbeing, showing that collecting and acting on feedback is crucial for meeting the overall needs of your employees for their wellbeing.

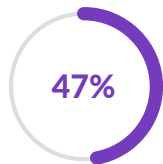


Stress and the COVID-19 pandemic

Half your employees feel stressed, and half their stress comes from COVID-19. While it may feel to some leaders that we are on the way out of the pandemic and that the most stressful times are behind us, our research found that the stress from the pandemic has not abated and is even driving people to take stress leave.



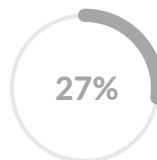
of people are feeling at least somewhat stressed



say that some or most of their stress is COVID-19 related

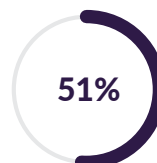
Some organizations have recognized the increased risk of burnout and leave associated with these high levels of stress, with one-third saying they have enhanced their wellbeing support since the pandemic started.

Employees who feel high levels of stress are more likely to be looking for a job elsewhere.



of people have taken time off due to stress

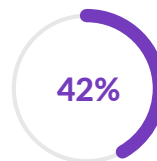
When we look at data from marginalized groups, leave due to stress increased substantially:



of disabled respondents



of respondents of color



of LGBTQ+ respondents

Notably, technology workers are most likely to have taken stress leave (35%) followed by finance (34%). This is not to say that stress levels are higher in these industries, but likely a sign that stress leave is more accepted and accessible in certain industries, such as tech and finance.



The stress conundrum

AWI research looked at the relationship between stress and numerous other factors including wellbeing, support, work/life balance, role fit and more, but none were significant predictors of reduced stress. In fact, even the experience of feeling capable of managing stress had only a weak relationship to the level of stress employees reported. However, feelings of wellbeing correlated with feeling capable of managing stress, which will help mitigate the impact of stress on an employee and organization.

So how can employers address stress in the workplace if there isn't a clear answer to what impacts stress levels?

1 Ask employees and take action

Talk to employees about their stress levels and what they need, then implement changes based on feedback provided. Employees who said their employer took action on feedback were 17% less likely to be stressed. Just 18% of employees say their organization does this. Your employees are experts in terms of both their stressors and their needs, so tap into their insights and experience.

2 Monitor workloads

Workload is a major driver of stress. Ensure your employees have manageable workloads by monitoring to-do lists and looking at ad hoc requests that are adding to tasks without strategic value. Enable employees to push back on tasks if it will require them to work longer hours or manage too many projects. One example of a helpful way to frame new requests is: "If a new task is taken on this week, what can we delay to next week or month?"

3 Encourage downtime

True downtime is vital for reducing stress and preventing burnout. Allow workers to switch off outside of work hours by being clear that there is no expectation to reply to emails or messages that arrive after hours. Encourage use of vacation time and model work/life balance from the top. If managers and senior leaders are taking leave and switching off from emails, it sends a positive message to employees, giving them permission to do the same.

4 Ensure role clarity

One of the biggest drivers of stress is lack of clarity around role and tasks. When it isn't clear what an employee is responsible and accountable for, or what objectives they are being assessed upon, levels of fear, uncertainty, doubt, and stress are raised. Maintain up-to-date job descriptions and specific objectives, and make it easy for employees to clarify any questions they have about their roles and responsibilities.

5 Communicate to reduce uncertainty

Finally, ensure ample, accurate communication to reduce areas of uncertainty. As the pandemic continues and organizations navigate different ways of working, stress levels remain high for many employees. The AWI [Critical Response Model](#) identified [communication](#) as a powerful pillar driving workplace resilience during times of stress. Communicate frequently, transparently, and honestly about challenges and solutions that the organization is working through to reduce both uncertainty and resulting stress.

Recognition key to unlocking wellbeing

Recognition can play a powerful role as a protective factor for wellbeing. In fact, individuals who say they receive meaningful recognition weekly report better wellbeing outcomes on a range of measures.

One-third of companies increased their reward and recognition budget during the pandemic.

AWI research demonstrates that if this increased focus leads to more frequent recognition, then it could have a significant impact on employee wellbeing.

	Average	Recognized weekly
My company supports employee wellbeing	24%	47%
Employees receive recognition for participation in wellbeing initiatives	17%	36%
I feel supported at work in managing my physical wellbeing	17%	38%
I feel supported at work in managing my mental wellbeing	18%	37%
I feel capable of managing my stress at work	21%	40%

What is meaningful recognition?

One of the most common concerns around launching a recognition program has to do with ensuring that it doesn't become a conduit for exchanging vapid, meaningless praise. For recognition to be effective at reinforcing key behaviors and impacting culture and belonging, it must be meaningful.

The [Recognition Best Practices](#) guide from the 2021 AWI Essentials series describes the blueprint for getting recognition right – and four factors they especially emphasize include being:

1 Personal

Recognition should align with an employee's values and goals. If they value being creative, look for opportunities to recognize them for creative behaviors.

2 Timely

If too much time elapses between action and recognition, it becomes less impactful and thus less meaningful.

3 Specific

A generic "thanks for your work" doesn't mean as much as being specific regarding the action being recognized. "Thank you for staying late on Tuesday to help me solve my computer issues" is more specific, and therefore a more powerful recognition.

4 Values-based

At AWI we say that what gets recognized gets repeated. Organizations that want to increase values-based behavior need to use values-based recognition as a tool in reinforcing their core values and culture.

Ready to optimize your recognition program?
Get our checklist [today!](#)



It's not just frequent recognition that drives better feelings of wellbeing. Recognition for the right behaviors can help drive the holistic health that employers are seeking to support. In fact, employees that receive recognition for participation in wellbeing initiatives are 2.5 times more likely to say they feel a sense of physical and mental wellbeing. However, just 28% of HR leaders say their organization recognizes wellbeing activity.

What's more, AWI identified a gap between senior leaders and individual contributors, both junior and senior, when it comes to how much employees are recognized for participation in wellbeing initiatives. Specifically, one-third (36%) of C-suite respondents believe employees receive recognition for these types of initiatives, compared to just 14% of senior individual contributors and 12% of junior individual contributors reporting the same.

While many leaders believe they are recognizing wellbeing behaviors, that action isn't being perceived by most of their team members.

The role of a recognition platform

Recognition platforms can play a powerful role in driving effective recognition for wellbeing efforts. Employees who have access to a recognition platform are twice as likely to receive meaningful recognition weekly or monthly, compared to those without a platform. This will have a direct impact on retention and turnover, as employees with a strong sense of wellbeing are more committed to their role. Those with a recognition platform also report better wellbeing outcomes.

	No recognition platform	Recognition platform
My company supports employee wellbeing	18%	32%
Employees receive recognition for participation in wellbeing initiatives	11%	26%
I generally feel physically healthy	17%	26%
I feel supported at work in managing my physical wellbeing	13%	24%
I generally feel a sense of mental wellbeing	17%	24%
I feel supported at work in managing my mental wellbeing	15%	24%
I feel capable of managing my stress at work	18%	25%

Seniority and at-risk workers

According to our research, senior leaders are most likely to feel healthy, but also more likely to have taken stress leave. More specifically, C-suite leaders are twice as likely as independent contributors to say they feel physically and mentally healthy and are almost twice as likely to have taken stress leave.

	Overall	C-suite	VP/ director	Senior manager	Manager	Senior individual contributor	Junior individual contributor
I generally feel physically healthy	20%	35%	22%	28%	22%	17%	16%
I feel supported at work in managing my physical wellbeing	17%	30%	26%	23%	20%	14%	13%
I generally feel a sense of mental wellbeing	19%	35%	22%	26%	24%	17%	13%
I feel supported at work in managing my mental wellbeing	18%	29%	24%	23%	20%	15%	14%

However, C-suite executives are still less likely to have taken stress leave than VPs and directors, more than half of whom say they have taken time off work due to stress.

	Overall	C-suite	VP/ director	Senior manager	Manager	Senior individual contributor	Junior individual contributor
Have you taken any time off due to stress?	27%	39%	54%	41%	28%	24%	20%

Cause for concern

While retention efforts are often focused on intermediate and senior roles, there is a risk of creating a revolving door environment for junior employees. By focusing on improving conditions for individual contributors, employers can reduce turnover and absenteeism for all staff.

It's important to remember that stress is a relative experience with negative impacts, regardless of job level or position. While senior leaders may have more accountability and responsibility, they also have years of experience to help them cope with these job stresses. Junior workers need additional support. Whether that is informing them of the option to take leave if needed, or mentoring to help them develop stress management skills, organizations have a responsibility to take better care of workers at all levels.

How to support marginalized groups at work

For this research, AWI asked individuals to self-identify in a number of categories, including whether they have a disability, which, if any, gender they are, whether they are a member of a racial minority, and if they are a member of the LGBTQ+ community. These groups are more likely to have been marginalized historically and we wanted to understand how this marginalization impacts wellbeing and feelings of support. The trends we found can help organizations better support wellbeing for all employees. Introducing these measures for marginalized groups will improve attraction and retention for a large proportion of your workforce.

Employees with disabilities say they need more support

Respondents with a disability are less likely to say they feel physically or mentally healthy and are less likely than average to say they feel capable of managing their stress at work.

With one in five respondents reporting they have a physical or mental disability that impacts daily life, this segment of employees represents a significant proportion of the workforce — a group disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Those reporting a disability say they are less physically and mentally healthy, have worse work/life balance, and are less likely to feel supported in achieving their personal and professional development goals at work.

Employees with disabilities are also more than twice as likely to say they are currently stressed and, as noted above, COVID-19 is a big concern for this group, with 62% reporting that most or all of their stress stems from the pandemic.



Supporting employees with disabilities*

With one in five employees reporting they have a disability, supporting this group in the workplace is key to better business outcomes. Here are five ways you can better support employees with a disability.

1 Create an environment that reduces unconscious bias and ableist language

From the start of the hiring process through to the last day on the job, ensure people with disabilities feel welcome at your organization. Introduce unconscious bias training for leaders and hiring managers to reduce obstacles in the hiring and onboarding process. Strive to create a work environment where ableist language — words such as dumb, lame, or crazy — isn't accepted, and where jokes and gossip at the expense of people with disabilities is non-existent. Consider introducing sensitivity training for all employees, but especially managers who must lead diverse teams.

2 Ensure your space is accessible

Consider the extent to which all employees are able to easily access and navigate your spaces, both real and virtual. People often think of accessibility in terms of wheelchair users, but there are many groups that may feel excluded by design elements, from the blind and vision-impaired to the deaf and hard of hearing. When building a new site, consider incorporating universal design so everyone feels welcome. This should extend to company events as well. If some people can't access the annual awards or holiday party, you're telling that group that they're not valued or important.

3 Involve affected groups in policy development

Having set policies for accommodation and accessibility is a great way to ensure consistent treatment of everyone within your organization. However, developing these policies without input from those affected groups can lead to ineffective and biased policies. Ensure you have feedback from people with a range of disabilities on the committee developing these policies.

4 Provide accommodations discreetly but not secretly

Accommodations can sound scary to employers, but in most cases accommodations are inexpensive and simple to implement. Don't make a spectacle of accommodations or special arrangements you make for disabled employees. At the same time, don't treat accommodations like a deep dark secret. The goal is to normalize accommodations without making a spectacle of them. As often as possible, work with disabled employees to keep their coworkers appropriately in the loop about accommodations. This can help discourage speculation, gossip, and resentment over why one employee is getting "special treatment" that their coworkers don't understand.

5 Ask for feedback from all employees

Many disabilities are invisible and not every employee with a disability will choose to disclose. Use resources such as surveys, anonymous Q&As, chatbots, and other [voice-of-employee](#) tools to gather information on challenges and opportunities that allow you to improve conditions for all workers. Accommodations and policies for one group often benefit others, such as the ramp installed for wheelchair users that also improves accessibility for parents with strollers and elderly people using walkers.

*This list was produced with help from Shelley Andrews, employment counsellor at Avalon Employment, and Andrew Pulrang, disability activist and author of [How To Make Workplaces More Welcoming For Employees With Disabilities](#) on *Forbes*.

Gender in the workplace: ensuring women feel welcomed at work

Women are 23% less likely to say they feel a strong sense of mental wellbeing, compared to men.

There has been significant focus on gender equality in the workplace, with some progress being made in the last decade. However, women were disproportionately affected by COVID-19 with many having to leave the workforce. According to our research, women benefit less than men on wellbeing factors, indicating a need for organizations to improve how they are meeting women's needs in the workplace. This finding aligns with those gender insights shared in the AWI [2021 Culture Report on Belonging at work](#), which found women were less likely than men to feel a strong sense of belonging.

So, what can employers do to improve women's sense of wellbeing and belonging at work?

To begin, ensure they truly feel welcome. This study found that feeling warmly welcomed at work is particularly important to women, with two-thirds saying it contributes to their feeling of wellbeing at work. The same was true for only half of men surveyed.



That said, leaders should consider how they are welcoming all employees to the team, and whether there are traditions or processes that might be alienating to particular groups. Ask employees what would help them feel better welcomed to the workplace and work across levels to implement ideas offered. Lifecycle surveys utilized in the first 30 days of work can help determine better ways in which to ensure all new employees feel welcomed and invited to be part of the team.

Connection is another crucial element that fosters a sense of both belonging and wellbeing, one that's important to both men and women. Asked about the importance of having strong connections and friendships at work, 51% of women rated it highly, compared to just 43% of men.

One way some organizations are increasing opportunities for individuals to connect is through an [employee connection](#) tool, which can foster stronger relationships and networks within the company, driving both belonging and positive individual and organizational outcomes. These programs enable employees to meet and connect with people they might not otherwise encounter in their day to day, reducing silos between departments and ultimately increasing productivity.

Finally, women are 24% less likely to have been recognized by their manager in the last week when compared to men. Organizations should train managers on the importance of meaningful recognition to ensure they understand the role they play in recognizing and engaging all employees. A recognition platform that integrates with your HRIS can be a critical tool for measuring whether a gender gap exists in your organization and for taking action to reduce it. One Achievers customer worked with our AWI data scientists to analyze gendered language in recognitions and, from that research, was able to educate and inform managers on ways to improve equitable language and fairness on their recognition platform.



Remote work options valued by employees of color

Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) respondents are 29% more likely to say they feel a lot of stress at work right now.

Respondents who self-identified as belonging to a racial minority group were almost a third more stressed than average, employers should look closely at equity regarding workloads and other work-related stress factors. This group is also 67% more likely to have taken stress leave. While leave can have a negative impact on business outcomes, this behavior may actually serve as a positive wellbeing datapoint with employers supporting their teams with time off when needed.

Work-from-home options are especially valued by BIPOC respondents. This cohort is 25% more likely to say they would consider looking for a new job if they can't work remotely. This is higher than any other group surveyed for this report. One reason for this change may be that working conditions have improved for people of color while working from home. [Bloomberg reports](#) that Black employees were 55% more likely to say they were treated fairly at work in 2021 than in 2020. Experts interviewed for the article suggest that a reduction in microaggressions and improving the ability to set boundaries at work could be some of the factors at work for this group.

This suggests that for organizations looking to attract and retain BIPOC employees, offering remote work options could be a crucial tool in achieving this goal but it's important to seek more specific feedback directly to determine why remote work is desired and to identify even more ways to support workplace success.

LGBTQ+ employees are asking for help managing stress

LGBTQ+ employees are 24% less likely to say they feel capable of managing their stress at work.

With stress levels high across the organization, some groups are faring worse than others when it comes to the impact on wellbeing. LGBTQ+ workers reported slightly higher rates of stress than average (56% versus 48%) but, most notably, were considerably less likely to say they felt capable of managing that stress. They were also 55% more likely to have taken stress leave, compared to the overall average.

What's more, this additional stress was linked to worse wellbeing outcomes for LGBTQ+ employees, who were 30% less likely to report feeling healthy, compared to average.

So, how can organizations help reduce this level of stress? We've already explored some of the key steps in our earlier section on stress and COVID-19. Above all, be sure to gather feedback from all parts of the organizational community — and then act on that feedback. Providing methods for anonymous feedback, such as surveys and chatbots, allows employees to share input they may not be comfortable voicing publicly.

Beyond stress, LGBTQ+ respondents rated feeling included as the number-one factor contributing to their feelings of wellbeing at work. Remember, some employees may not be out at work, which can add to their stress levels as they strive to keep two parts of their lives separate.

Support every employee by ensuring you have a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ individuals:*

- 1 Introduce specific diversity and inclusion training**, especially for managers so they understand the different needs of their diverse teams and can combat common challenges such as unconscious bias.
- 2 Create inclusive policies** that are regularly reviewed, shared, and updated to make it clear that harassment at work is unacceptable. For example, homophobic or transphobic language shows LGBTQ+ employees that they are not truly welcomed or included.
- 3 Use inclusive language** throughout the organization. For example, asking about partners, instead of assuming someone has a boyfriend/husband or girlfriend/wife based on their perceived gender. Use “they” instead of “he/she” to include all genders.
- 4 Ask and act:** as discussed earlier, getting feedback from marginalized groups is the fastest way to understand their challenges and address them across the organization. Anonymous surveys and continuous listening tools empower all employees, even those who may not be out at work, to have their say.
- 5 Support employee resource groups (ERGs)** to create communities for LGBTQ+ employees to feel safe and welcomed.

* This list was produced with input from Achievers Proud, an employee resource group (ERG) that ensures Achievers maintains a forward-thinking, inclusive, and safe environment for all LGBTQ+ employees, and Pride at Work's [Beyond Diversity: An LGBT Best Practice Guide for Employers](#).

Recommendations: building your wellbeing plan

When employees feel a strong sense of wellbeing, it has a knock-on effect for engagement, productivity, absenteeism and more. HR and business leaders that improve wellbeing at their organization will see these efforts pay dividends as their employees are happier, healthier, and better resourced to drive results.

1 Invest in wellbeing initiatives and recognize participation

Organizations that support employee wellbeing have better wellbeing outcomes. This may seem intuitive, but just half of HR leaders and a quarter of employees say their organization supports wellbeing. Employees at organizations that recognize participation in wellbeing initiatives are twice as likely to feel physically and mentally healthy, and to feel supported in maintaining that wellbeing.

2 Close the HR-employee disconnect with two-way communication

This disconnect is two-fold. Firstly, initiatives are not reaching employees — they remain unaware of programs available to support them. Secondly, some initiatives are not successful in improving wellbeing — they are ineffective even when they reach employees. The solution to this is a continuous cycle of communication, feedback and action to iterate and improve on programs. Communicate amply about every initiative on multiple channels and more than once per channel. Seek feedback from employees on what they need and what would help them feel a greater sense of wellbeing. Take action on all information attained.

3 Take action to reduce stress at every level

While VPs and directors are most likely to describe themselves as “very stressed”, all job levels report similar levels of stress overall. Meanwhile, junior employees are least likely to feel capable of managing their stress or to take stress leave. Stress management tools and support must be made readily available to all employees. Consider introducing a stress management training course or a quarterly stress management speaker. See [page 10](#) for more stress-busting tips.

4 Formalize your recognition program with a software solution

Our research showed the powerful role recognition plays as a protective factor for holistic wellbeing. Organizations with a technological recognition platform not only have higher recognition rates and more engaged employees, but also experience better wellbeing outcomes. Recognition should be one of the tools in your wellbeing toolkit and our data shows that future-thinking organizations that are investing in their employees' wellbeing have a recognition platform as part of their efforts.

5 Continue your belonging journey to improve employee wellbeing

The connection between belonging and wellbeing is clear: the belonging pillars of being welcomed, known, included, supported, and connected are strong drivers of wellbeing. Employees rated being welcomed, included, and supported as the three most important factors for their own wellbeing, showing that employers that are invested in their employees' wellbeing must also be working to actively drive a deep sense of belonging through each of those lenses.

Armed with this strong data and clear recommendations, HR and business leaders have a clear call to action to improve wellbeing in their organization. We are just tapping into the true power of a strong sense of wellbeing at work, and it is clear there is a strong business case for investing in the drivers of wellbeing.



Appendix: country trends



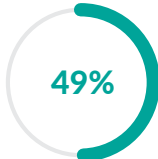
AUSTRALIA

Highlight: Employees in Australia are most likely to say that they feel supported in managing their physical and mental wellbeing.

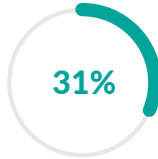
Hotspot: Feeling supported isn't translating into higher rates of physical health, with just 19% of employees in Australia saying they feel physically healthy.



are highly engaged
Global average: 28%



feel at least somewhat stressed
Global average: 48%



have taken stress leave
Global average: 27%

	Global average	Australia
I get meaningfully recognized at least monthly	40%	45%
I generally feel physically healthy	20%	19%
I feel supported at work in managing my physical wellbeing	17%	21%
I generally feel a sense of mental wellbeing	19%	20%
I feel supported at work in managing my mental wellbeing	18%	21%



CANADA

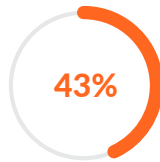
Highlight: Employees in Canada are most likely to say they feel capable of managing their stress at work.

Hotspot: Respondents from Canada lag the global average on numerous other metrics including employer support for wellbeing, feeling supported for physical and mental wellbeing, and receiving recognition for participation in wellbeing initiatives.



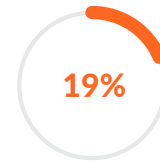
are highly engaged

Global average: 28%



feel at least somewhat stressed

Global average: 48%



have taken stress leave

Global average: 27%

	Global average	Canada
I get meaningfully recognized at least monthly	40%	33%
I generally feel physically healthy	20%	19%
I feel supported at work in managing my physical wellbeing	17%	15%
I generally feel a sense of mental wellbeing	19%	17%
I feel supported at work in managing my mental wellbeing	18%	16%



UNITED KINGDOM

Highlight: Respondents from the UK are most likely to say they have healthy work/life balance and are also most likely to say they generally feel physically and mentally healthy.

Hotspot: UK respondents are least likely to say they would recommend their employer and just 29% say their role is a good fit based on their skills and interests.



are highly engaged

Global average: 28%



feel at least somewhat stressed

Global average: 48%



have taken stress leave

Global average: 27%

	Global average	United Kingdom
I get meaningfully recognized at least monthly	40%	42%
I generally feel physically healthy	20%	21%
I feel supported at work in managing my physical wellbeing	17%	17%
I generally feel a sense of mental wellbeing	19%	21%
I feel supported at work in managing my mental wellbeing	18%	19%



UNITED STATES

Highlight: US respondents are most likely to say their company supports employee wellbeing and most likely to say they find meaning and purpose in their work.

Hotspot: Just 15% say they feel supported at work in managing their physical and mental wellbeing.



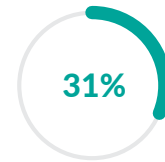
are highly engaged

Global average: 28%



feel at least somewhat stressed

Global average: 48%



have taken stress leave

Global average: 27%

	Global average	United States
I get meaningfully recognized at least monthly	40%	37%
I generally feel physically healthy	20%	20%
I feel supported at work in managing my physical wellbeing	17%	15%
I generally feel a sense of mental wellbeing	19%	18%
I feel supported at work in managing my mental wellbeing	18%	15%



About the report

This Achievers Workforce Institute research is based on a survey of 2036 employed respondents and 952 HR leaders conducted in October 2021.

	US	Canada	UK	Australia	Unknown country
Employee respondents	516	511	505	504	N/A
HR leaders	260	220	250	130	90

About Achievers

Great culture is the ultimate driver of organizational success. Achievers' employee voice and recognition solutions bring your organization's values and strategy to life by activating employee participation and accelerating a culture of performance.

Achievers leverages the science behind behavior change, so your people and your organization can experience sustainable, data-driven business results anywhere in the world. Integrated insights fuel smarter solutions that deliver just-in-time nudges to the entire organization and an industry-best customer success and support team guides you on every step of the journey. [Contact us today.](#)

Global offices

Canada
99 Atlantic Ave, Suite 700
Toronto, ON M6K 3J8
Canada
Phone: 1-888-622-3343

UK/EMEA
2 New Bailey, 4 Stanley Street
Manchester
M3 5JL
Phone: 0344 3815061

Australia & Singapore
Level 2, 534 Church St,
Richmond, Victoria, 3121
Australia
Phone: +61 3 9107 4418



Toronto | Pleasanton | London | Melbourne
experts@achievers.com | www.achievers.com

