

# Global mental health in 2022.

Combining data and insight from TELUS Health's reports on the soaring mental health crisis.



# Executive summary

The TELUS Health Global Mental Health report provides insight into trends of employee mental health in North America, Europe and the APAC region. As a global leader in employee wellbeing solutions, we are well positioned to discover and share global trends. In this report, you will learn about the global state of employee mental health and the associated impact of a tumultuous 2022.

You can use this report for:



Developing strategy



Comparison between region

Mental health has deteriorated since the COVID-19 pandemic began. This has had negative effects on employees' emotions, cognitions, and behaviours. However, positively, help seeking behaviour has increased and our service utilisation's outcome data demonstrate that care offerings remain effective. This information can be leveraged when creating or modifying your unique global employee mental health strategy and making buying decisions for employee supports.

## Macro environment

A tumultuous global environment in 2022 had an immediate and lasting impact on mental health. Armed conflict, natural disasters, cost of living crises and the lingering pandemic directly led to deep impacts on anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions.

- The war in Ukraine is impacting Europeans, with 54% reporting that the conflict has negatively impacted them and 40% concerned that the conflict will escalate and broaden
- The energy and cost-of-living crises impacted the most vulnerable. There is a strong correlation between income and mental health

## Global mental health status

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a sharp drop in mental health levels globally in 2020 with a gradual improvement since that time. Unfortunately, the lasting impact of the pandemic has paired with a challenging macro environment. It is therefore unlikely that a return to pre-pandemic mental health levels will be realised in the coming years.

- Over half of employees globally report being at high or moderate risk in terms of their mental health
- Over one third report being regularly exhausted at the end of their workday
- Over one quarter report having increased alcohol consumption since the onset of the pandemic

The picture described so far is rather negative; however, there have been benefits to mental health since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

- Mental health stigma has shown reductions across all our regions and the majority of respondents report a willingness to seek professional help if struggling with stress



## Behaviour

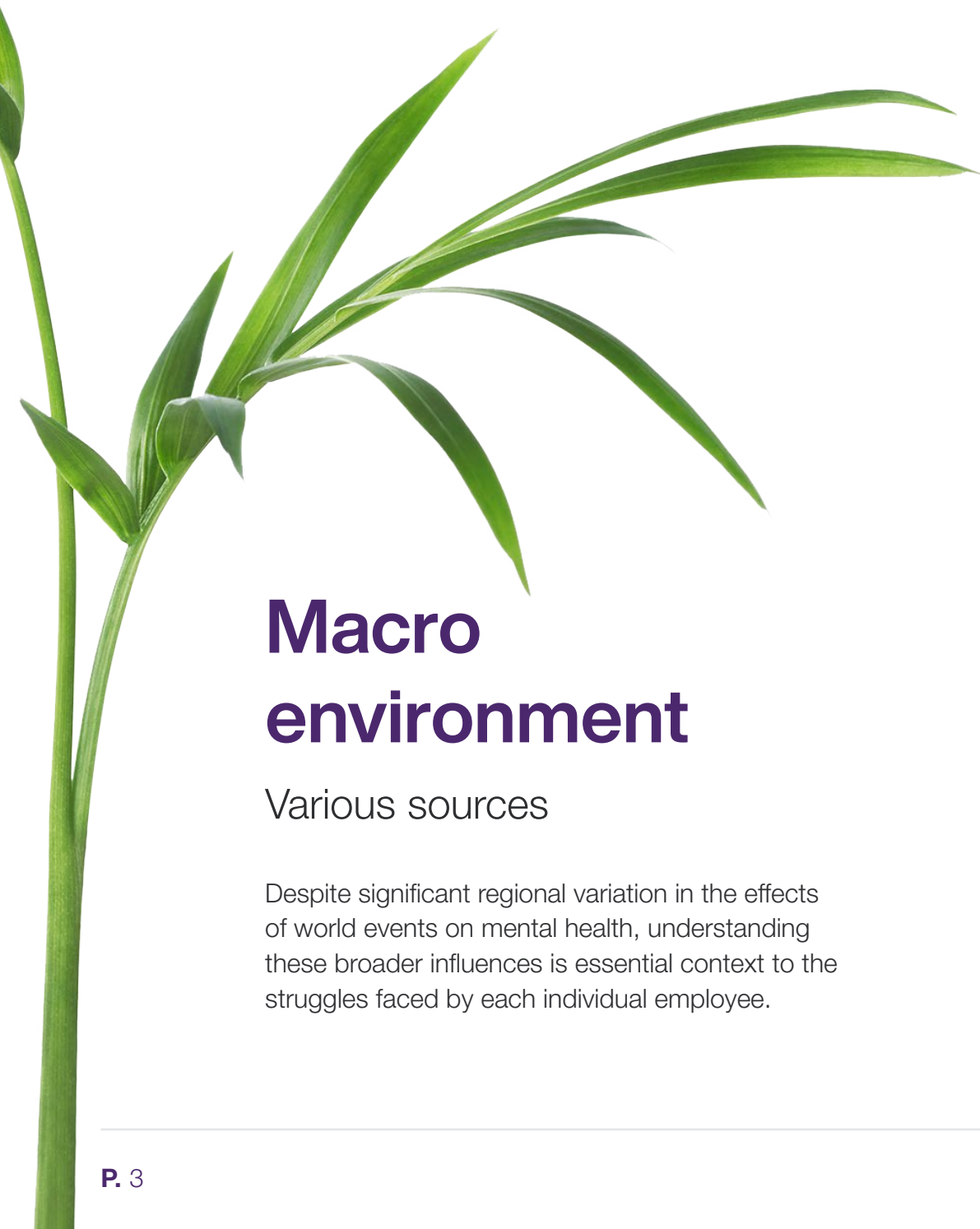
Help seeking behaviour held steady patterns in 2021 and 2022 with some distinct deviations.

- Over a one third of Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) calls over both years were for personal stress, anxiety, or depression
- 2022 saw an increased percentage of personal stress and depression cases with a lower percentage of anxiety cases. Trends that are partially explained by the war in Ukraine and global inflation
- Digital resource utilisation was robust with anxiety and depression as the two most accessed digital self-help programmes
- Wellbeing assessments captured that steps were being taken to improve upon negative mental health
- Two thirds of employees being assessed as having higher than average levels of stress are actively taking steps to lower stress levels going forward
- A majority of employees who are assessed as being at increased risk from alcohol consumption are actively trying to control this behaviour

## Outcome data

The Workplace Outcome Suite data, an industry standard, demonstrates that EAP counselling benefits employees and employers.

- The average counselling case reduces work absenteeism by 57%
- 40% of lost productive time is recovered following the average counselling case
- Counselling led to a statistically significant reduction in workplace distress and an increase in life satisfaction as well as work engagement
- 1-2% utilisation rate per year is sufficient to yield savings to cover the entire cost of the EAP budget. In fact, the ROI for EAP, in 2020, was \$5.04:1



# Macro environment

Various sources

Despite significant regional variation in the effects of world events on mental health, understanding these broader influences is essential context to the struggles faced by each individual employee.

## Macro environment

Various sources

### Global mental health status.

LifeWorks mental health index data.

### Behaviour

LifeWorks platform usage data.

### Outcome data

Workplace outcome suite.



Disasters

Global conflict



Cost of living



Social movements



Pandemic & endemic

# World events and trends.

An uncertain world can make employees more vulnerable to stress and anxiety triggering mental health problems.

## Cost of living.

The rising cost of food and energy is putting pressure on populations across the globe, causing significant strain on people's mental health around their financial wellbeing.

1 in 4

people are struggling.<sup>1</sup>



The developed world.



71 million

people have been pushed into poverty in just 3 months.<sup>2</sup>

The developing world.

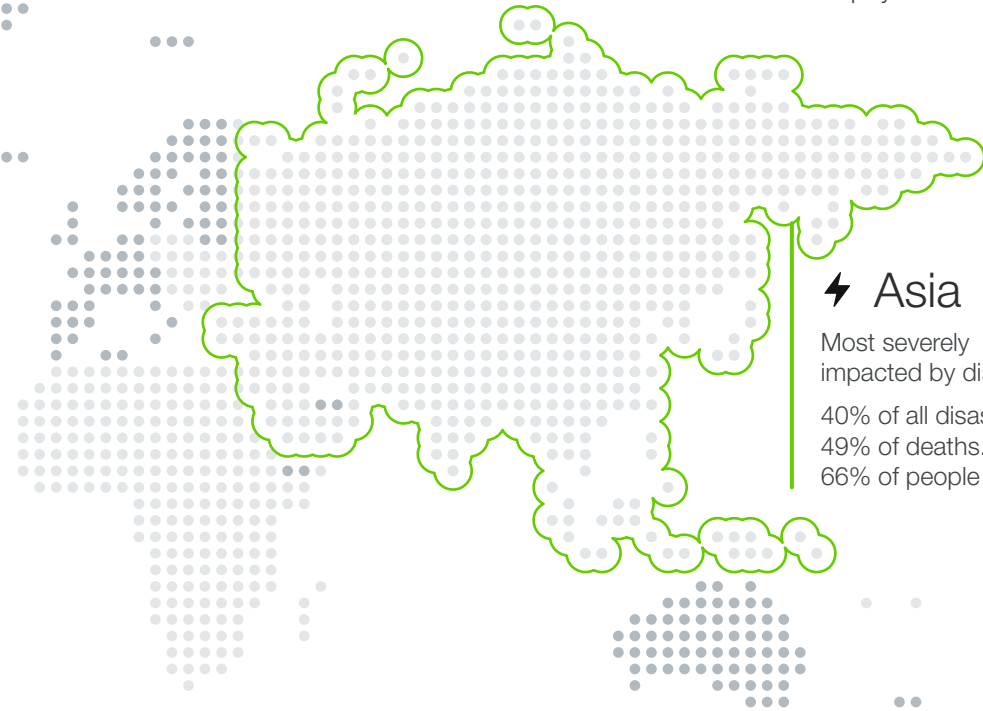
= 1 million people.

# 5x

increase in the number of natural disasters recorded over the past 50 years.<sup>3</sup>

## Disasters

Every year, millions of people are affected by both human-caused and natural disasters, putting people at risk for emotional and physical health problems.



⚡ Asia

Most severely impacted by disasters.

40% of all disaster events.  
49% of deaths.  
66% of people affected.<sup>4</sup>



101.8 million

were affected by disasters in 2021.<sup>5</sup>

+132

countries have experienced significant protests since 2017.<sup>6</sup>

+400

significant antigovernment protests have erupted worldwide.<sup>7</sup>



## Social movements

Black Lives Matter, #MeToo... recent social movements have unlocked conversations around race and gender, impacting corporate governance and the workplace.



77%

of Gen Z want to work at organizations whose values align with theirs.<sup>8</sup>



27 conflicts ongoing worldwide.<sup>9</sup>

## Global conflicts

Conflict impacts countries in countless ways, causing destruction and tearing families and communities apart.



25%

of the population currently live in conflict-affected areas.<sup>10</sup>

# Pandemic & endemic.

Dealing with the unforeseen social and economic challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a significant toll on people across the world.

+76 million

cases of anxiety disorders due to the pandemic.<sup>13</sup>



204

territories and nations saw an increase of depressive and anxiety disorders due to COVID-19.<sup>11</sup>

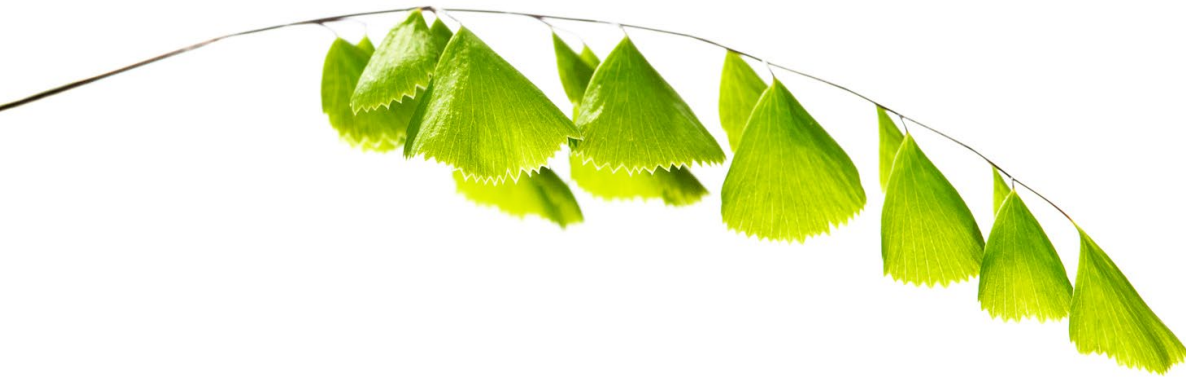
100 million

worldwide have or had long COVID.<sup>12</sup>



Fluctuation of major depressive disorder during the pandemic, 2020.<sup>14</sup>





# Global mental health status.

Mental health index data.

Global events might impact workforces differently depending on their location. Understanding the mindset of regional employees is key to anticipating potential challenges and establishing a targeted approach to wellbeing.

## Macro environment

Various sources

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LifeWorks mental health index data.

## Behaviour

LifeWorks platform usage data.

## Outcome data

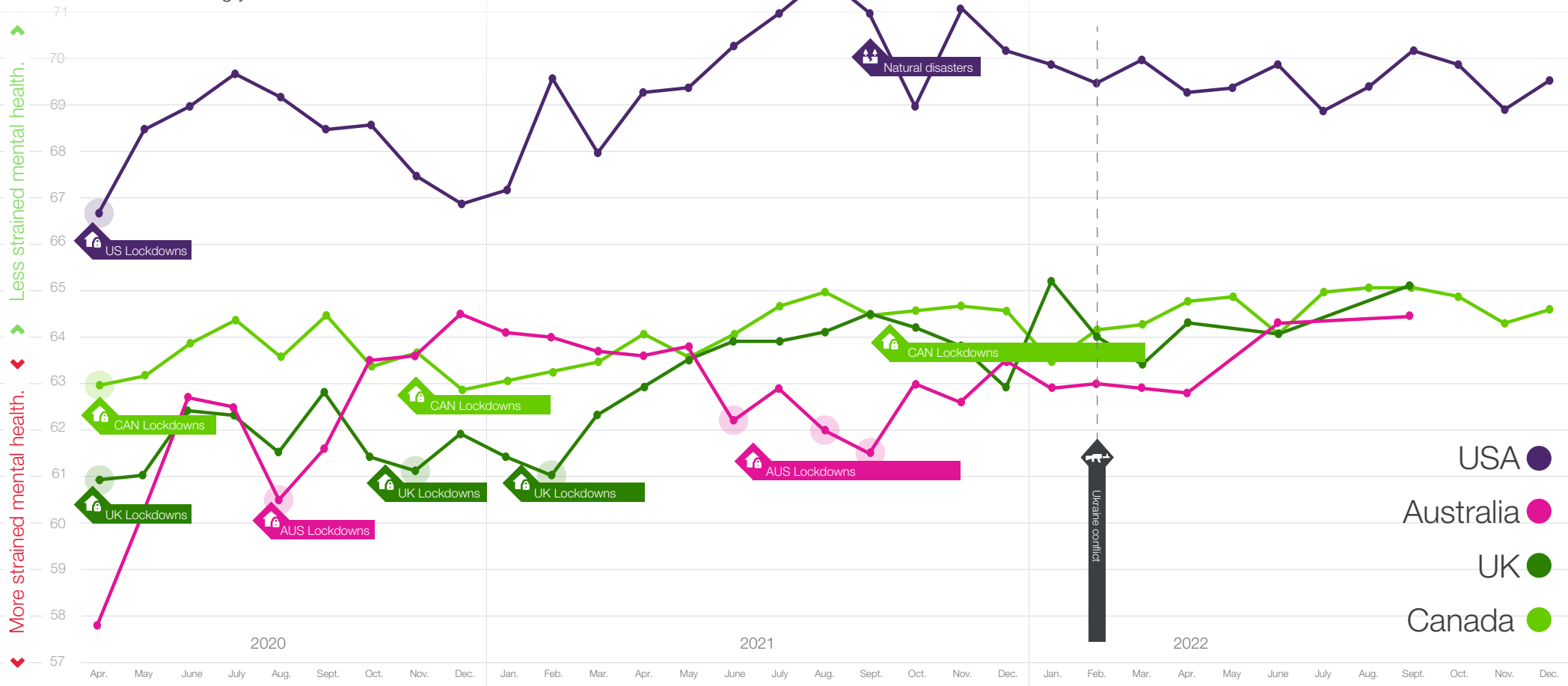
Workplace outcome suite.

# Mental health overview.

Macro environment has a direct and lasting impact on employees' mental health, wherever they are located.

- For the past 3 years, the mental health of the working population has been significantly strained
- While the return to normality is ongoing, global events such as the Ukraine conflict and the cost-of-living crisis are slowing the recovery of employee mental health
- It is unlikely that a return to pre-pandemic levels will be realised in the coming years

Mental health score and key global events from 2020 to 2022 by geography.<sup>1</sup>



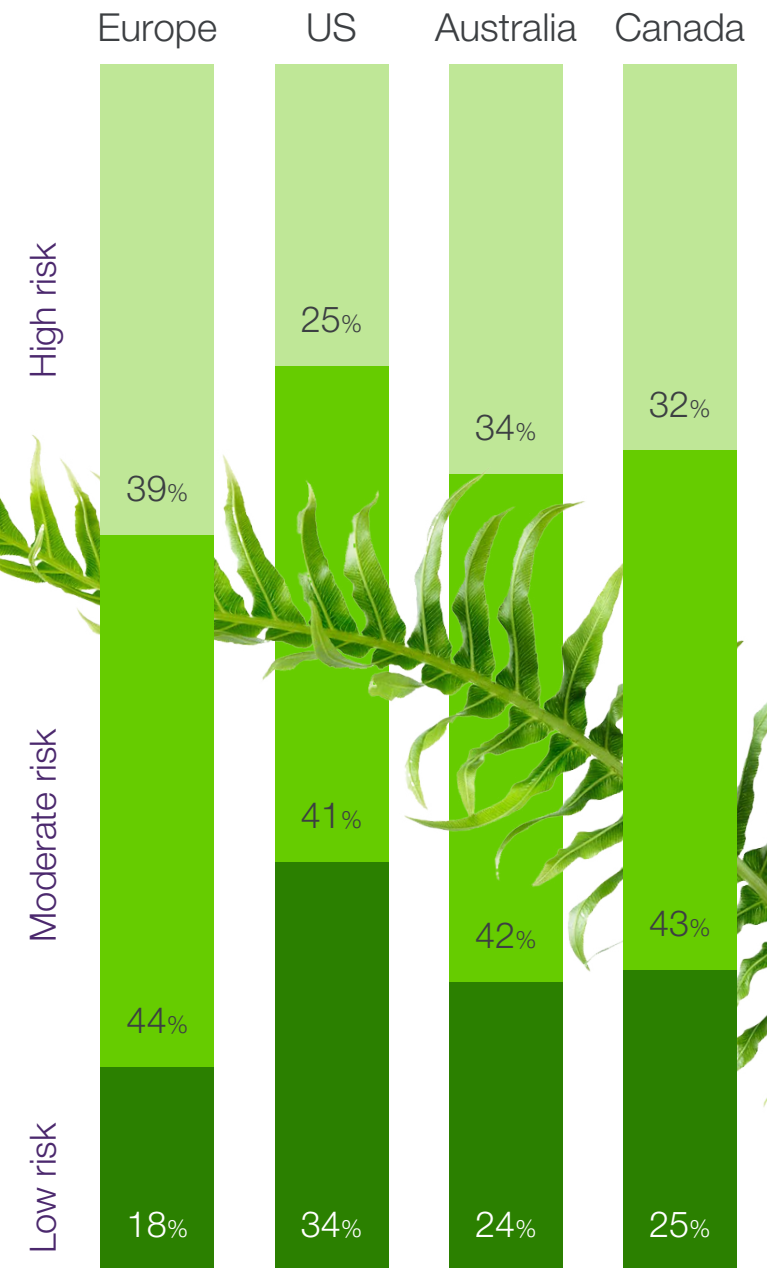


# Mental health risks.

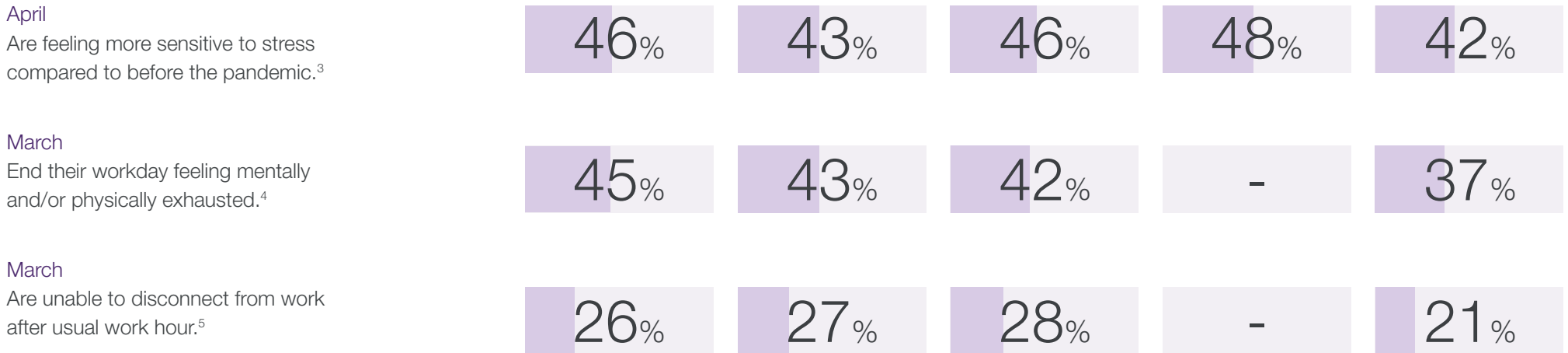
Over 50% of the global working population has a mental health at moderate or high risks.

- Employers need to provide adequate support to their staff, such as mental health trainings or access to a wellbeing platform. Healthy workers are more engaged at work, more productive and safer
- Organisations choosing to ignore these issues risk seeing a loss of productivity, rising absenteeism and elevated risks of burnout at work - ultimately impacting their bottom line

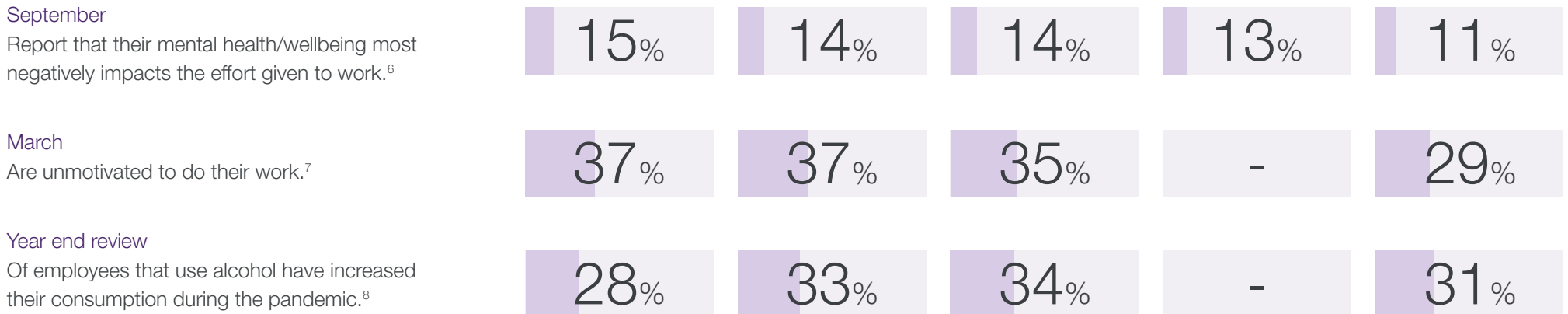
Mental health risk by geography.<sup>2</sup>



## Risk of burnout.



## Loss of productivity.



Percentage of employees who report the pandemic has had a negative impact on their ongoing mental health.<sup>9</sup>



# COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is still impacting the mental health of employees globally.

- Lockdowns, furlough schemes, social isolation and overall uncertainty tested the resilience of workforces across the world
- People had to shuffle their priorities and change the way they work overnight causing tremendous stress
- Organisations providing mental health support can help alleviate the long-term impact on employees for a healthier workforce

# Wider impacts of the pandemic.

## Rising alcohol and substance use.

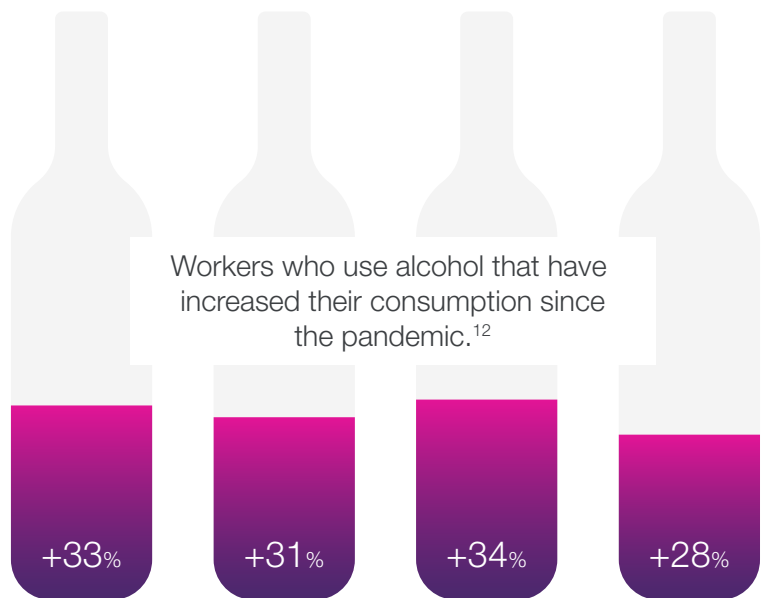
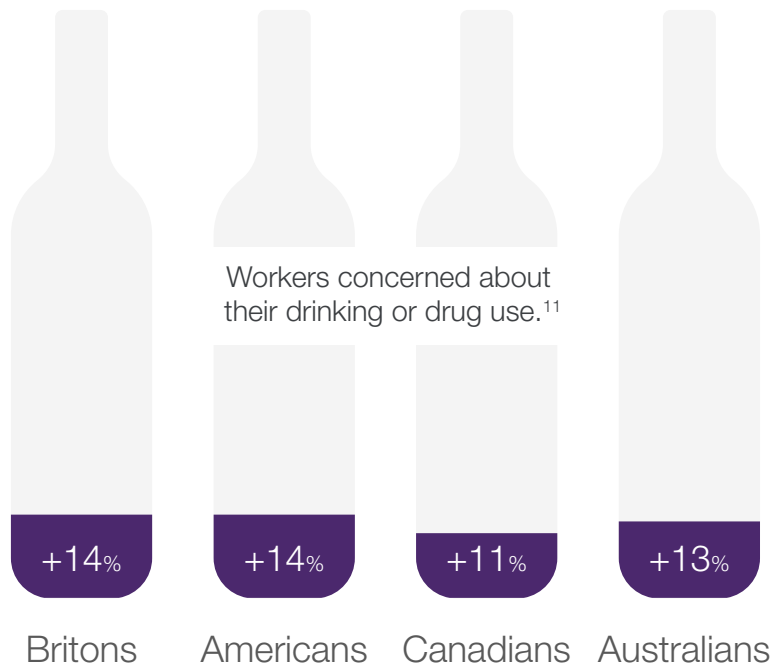
Struggling employees have turned to alcohol and substance use to cope with the uncertainty of the pandemic impacting on their personal and professional lives. This problem could become a lasting issue as people leaders feel unprepared to provide support.

**50%** of managers don't know, or are unsure, what to do if they have an employee with a substance use issue.<sup>10</sup>

## How can you support employees dealing with substance use?

Absenteeism, lost productivity, accidents, turnover, recruitment, and training are only a few of the costs organisations bear if substance abuse is not identified and treated. Here are some ways you can support your people.

- Provide trainings and resources that employees and people leaders can use to assist and support an addicted employee
- Implement a workplace-sponsored addiction programme, such as TELUS Health's (formerly LifeWorks) Breaking Free, that employees can use anonymously to help support their path to recovery
- Build a supportive culture by regularly communicating on available supports and programmes





# Impact of the Ukraine conflict.

The Ukraine conflict is affecting the morale and mental health of millions worldwide.

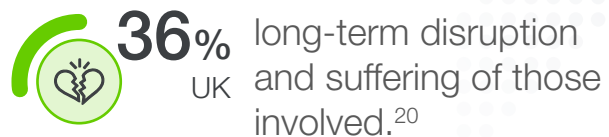
- Political disruption, displaced people and unstable energy costs are just some of the triggers influencing the mental health of employees
- By providing an Employee Assistance Programme to affected workforces, employers can minimise the impact on work



reported the conflict in Ukraine is negatively impacting them.<sup>19</sup>

38% UK | 34% US | 38% AUS | 38% CAN

## What do European and UK employees fear?





# The rising cost of living.

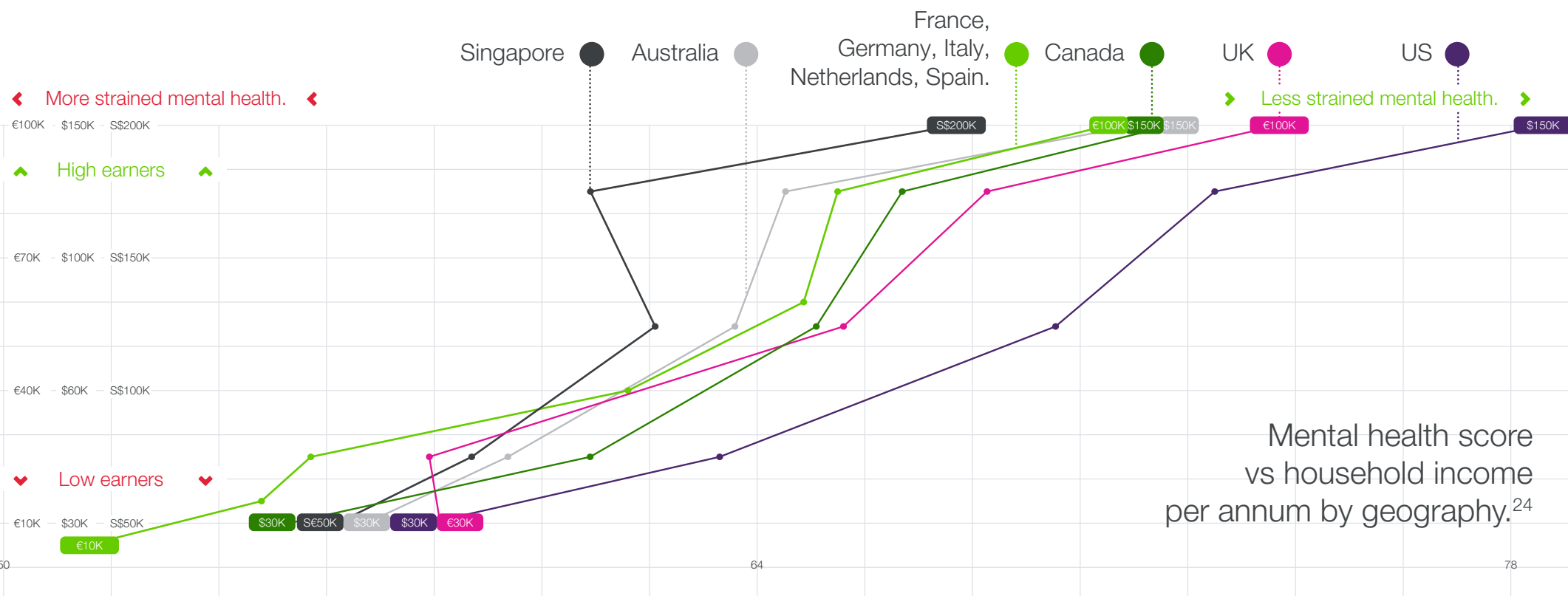
Across geographies, those with lower incomes and without emergency savings have lower mental health scores which can affect their work performance.

Percentage of employees that do not have emergency savings.<sup>23</sup>

24% UK

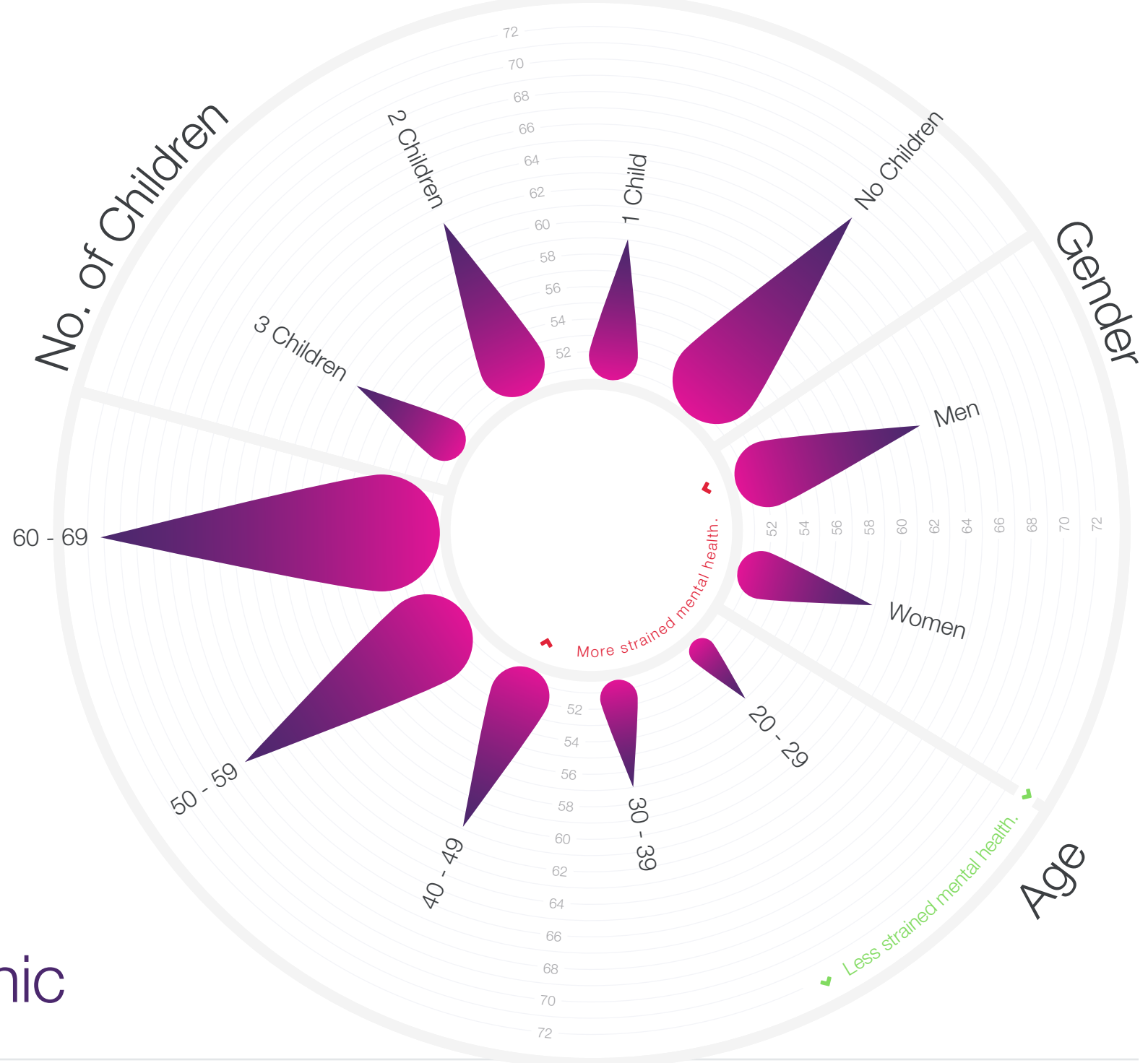
38% Europe

Britons without savings are 60% more likely to report the pandemic has negatively impacted their ongoing mental health.



## Mental health score by demographic.<sup>25</sup>

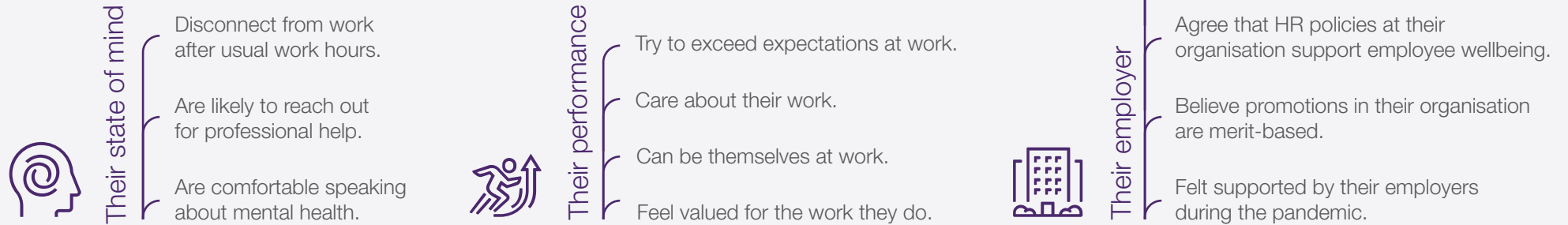
- Mental health is getting worse with each generation, with Gen Z recording the lowest mental health scores despite being more vocal about their needs
- Women and parents are more likely to report lower mental health scores too, putting them more at risk for severe mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression
- Employers need to take action now to get ahead of future challenges by innovating with their wellbeing policies and programmes to keep an engaged workforce



## Demographic

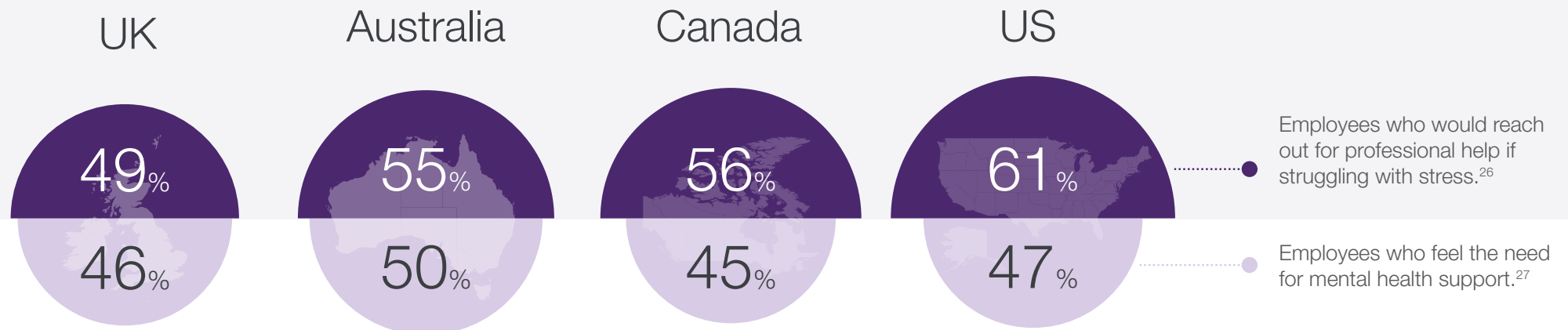
# The benefits

Employees with the highest mental health scores:



# Seeking support

These intensifying issues have a silver lining, as the stigma around mental health decreases more people are looking for help.





# Behaviour

LifeWorks platform usage data.

Understanding the mental state of employees is important to predict possible challenges in an organisation; however, this is only one side of the story.

Analysis of LifeWorks platform utilisation (or usage) reveals employee behaviour and activity that may inform areas of concern (or issues to be addressed).

## Macro environment

Various sources

## Global mental health status.

LifeWorks mental health index data.

## Behaviour

LifeWorks platform usage data.

## Outcome data

Workplace outcome suite.

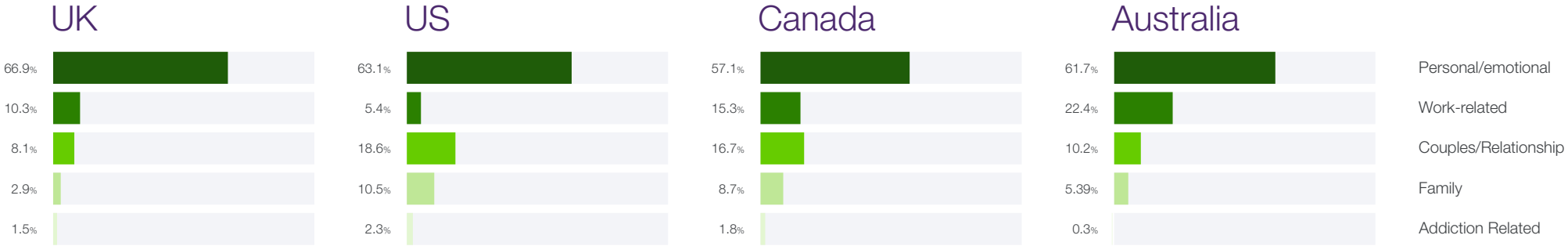


# Understanding the support EAP provided in 2022.

Uncertainty is putting pressure on employees wellbeing.

Understanding the issues for which help is being sought will help organisations ensuring the right resources and policies are in place to proactively support their people.

Top categories: 2022 monthly EAP calls.<sup>5</sup>



## Access to healthcare.

With public healthcare systems working through their backlog from COVID-19, employees feel helpless and stressed if looking for medical support.<sup>7</sup>

## Cost of living impacting all populations.

Global inflation and its impact on real income caused a sharp rise in personal stress amongst employees.<sup>8</sup>

## Impact of the Ukraine conflict.

In March, TELUS Health's (formerly LifeWorks) EAP services in Europe received 20% more calls from employees asking for support than the previous month.<sup>9</sup>

## Persistent mental health crisis.

With over half of all EAP calls, personal issues remain the main reason why employees seek assistance across the world, proving the need for constant mental health support.<sup>5</sup>



# Resources

Using mental health and wellbeing resources for support in times of need.

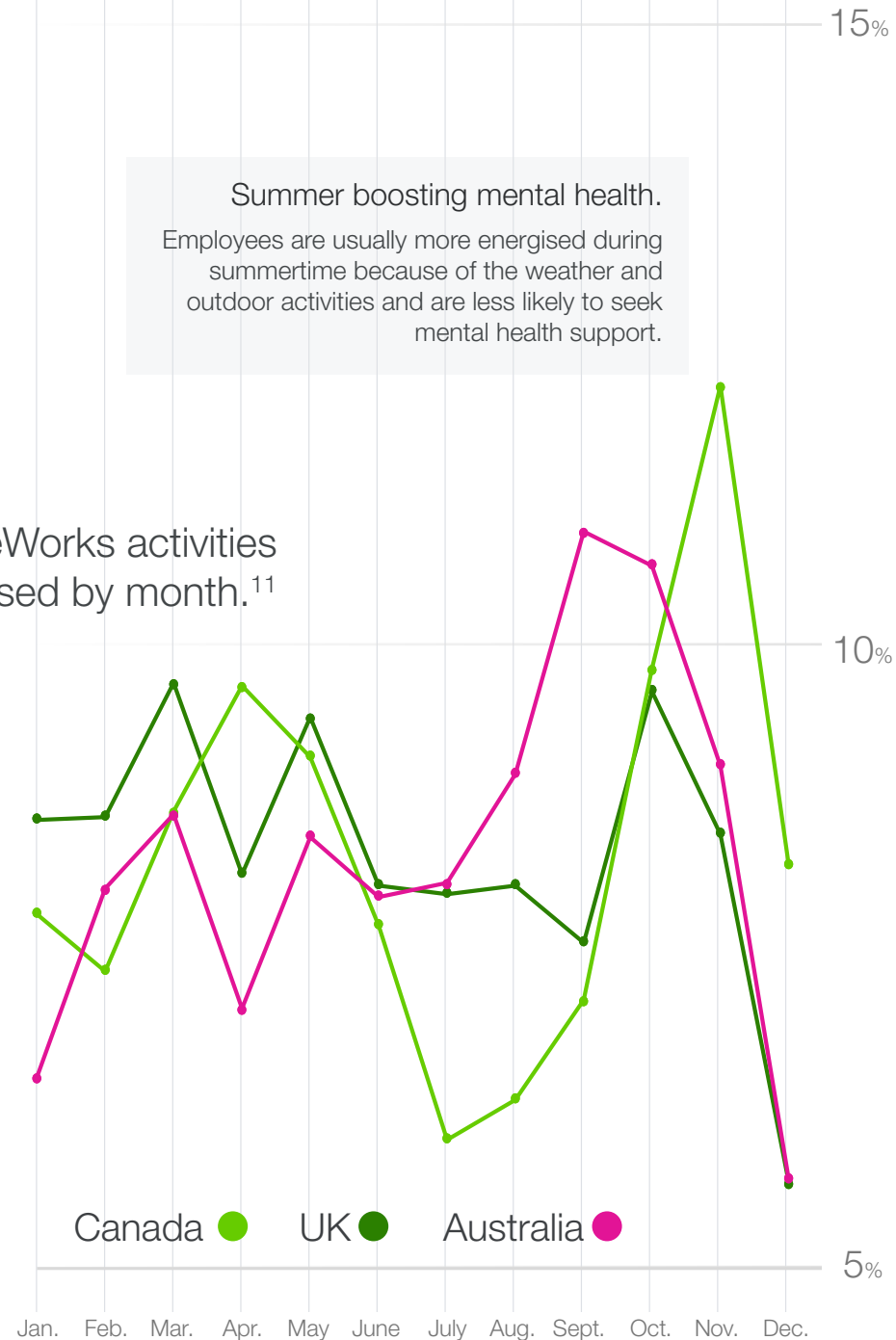
Providing simple and consistent access to support is key to maintaining a healthy workforce and more engaged workplace.

**Economic uncertainty**  
Employees are likely to suffer from low mental health and seek more support as inflation and recession fears grow.

## TELUS Health (formerly LifeWorks) CareNow programmes started.<sup>10</sup>

CareNow programmes for Anxiety are the most used; this aligns with the most commonly reported EAP accesses.

LifeWorks activities accessed by month.<sup>11</sup>

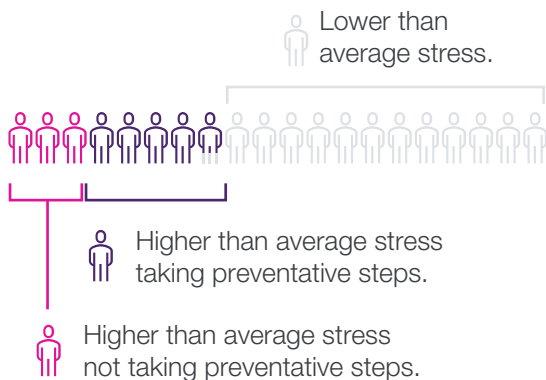


# Stress

A working population crippled with stress.

Stress levels are rising all over the world. If not managed properly by organisations, this can have a negative impact of work performance, employee engagement and retention.

- 36% of employees that completed the stress assessment have higher levels than average
- Of those, one third are not taking active steps to prevent stress from getting worse
- Most popular articles on the wellbeing platform are linked to overcoming mental health challenges (burnout, anxiety, self-care...)<sup>12</sup>



# Most vulnerable groups.

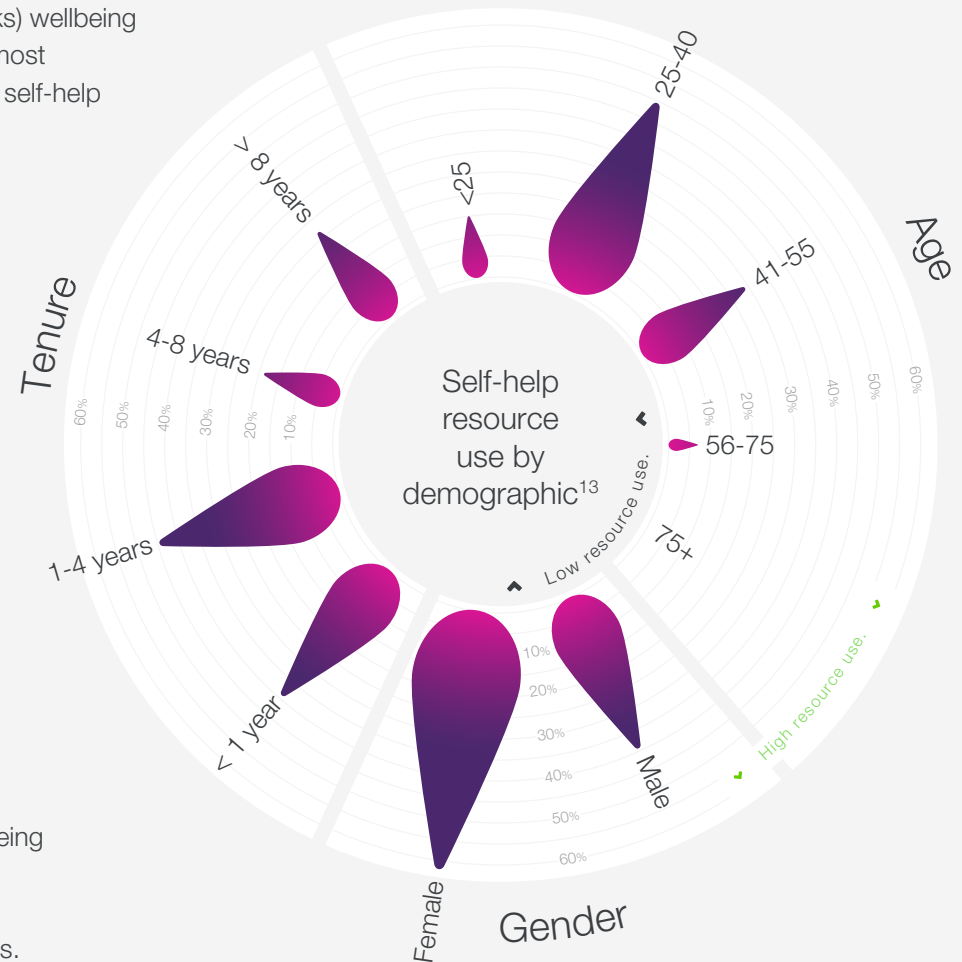
Younger generation, women and parents amongst the most vulnerable groups.

Not everyone experiences adversity equally. Young adults, women, parents, and part-time employees typically have less security putting them at higher risk than their counterparts.

These groups are the most active on TELUS Health's (formerly LifeWorks) wellbeing platform, completing the most assessments and seeking self-help resources.

As more Gen Z enter the workforce, employers need to ensure they put forwards wellbeing policies to better support these groups if they want to retain their top talents.

These more precarious groups are also the most active on TELUS Health's (formerly LifeWorks) Wellbeing platform, completing the most assessments and seeking self-help resources.





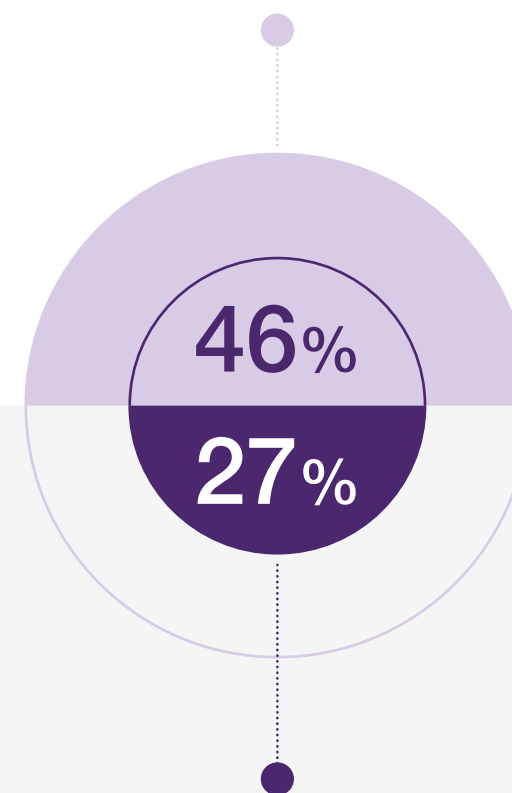
# Alcohol and substance use.

During the pandemic, 1/3 of British, American, Canadian, and Australian employees increased their consumption.<sup>14</sup>

People react differently to uncertainty, leaving some more exposed to negative feelings and anxiety. Alcohol and other substance use is a negative coping mechanism that may cause harm to employees, their teams and the organisation if left unmonitored.

- 46% of employees that completed the alcohol use assessment are at high or increased risk<sup>15</sup>
- A majority of employees at high risk are actively trying to control their behaviour

of employees that completed the alcohol use assessment are at high or increased risk.



of employees that completed the assessment are in a weak financial position.

# Financial health and stress.

Financial wellbeing is the most popular assessment completed on the TELUS Health (formerly LifeWorks) wellbeing platform.

The increasing cost of living is putting some employees, and their families, in precarious situations, leaving them feeling stressed and lacking. Employees without emergency savings are more likely to have a low mental health score which may impact their work performance.

- 27% of employees that completed the assessment are in a weak financial position<sup>16</sup>
- A weak financial position is likely to drive anxiety and increase personal stress

Providing the right tool to support a willingness to change helps aid the process, having a positive impact in and out of the workplace.



# Outcome data

Workplace outcome suite.

The impact on employees and organisations.

## Macro environment

Various sources

## Global mental health status.

LifeWorks mental health index data.

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Workplace outcome suite.

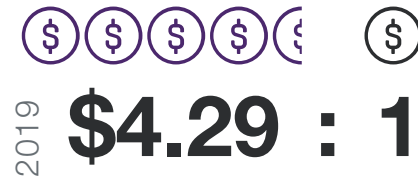
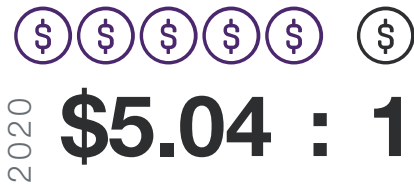
# Impact of EAP on workplace productivity.

Providing an Employee Assistance Programme to employees positively impact the bottom line of organisations.

- 1-2% utilisation rate per year is sufficient to yield savings to cover the entire cost of the EAP budget
- Brief counselling from the EAP improves multiple aspects of work functioning
- Work presenteeism and life satisfaction outcomes improved the most

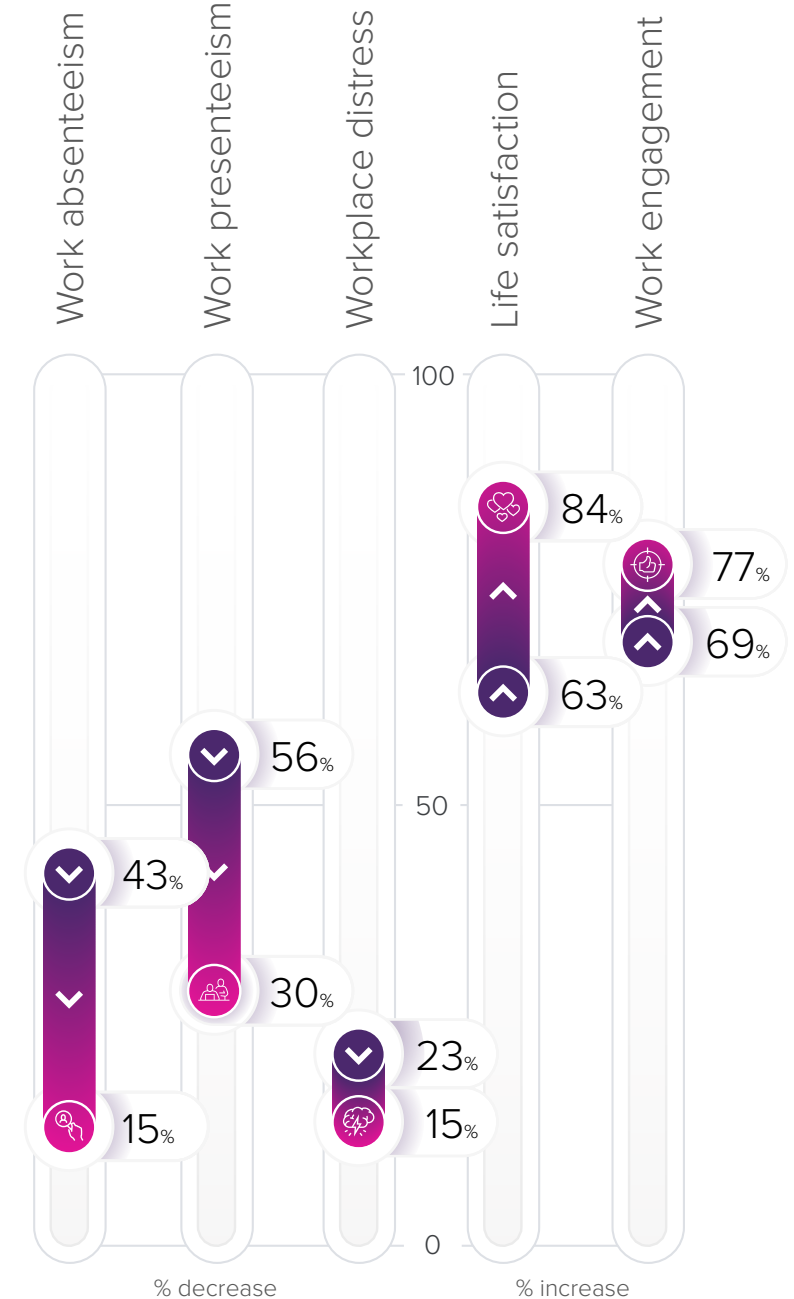
Work outcomes after EAP counselling.<sup>2</sup>

ROI for EAP:<sup>1</sup>



Average EAP counselling  
**3.3 sessions per case**

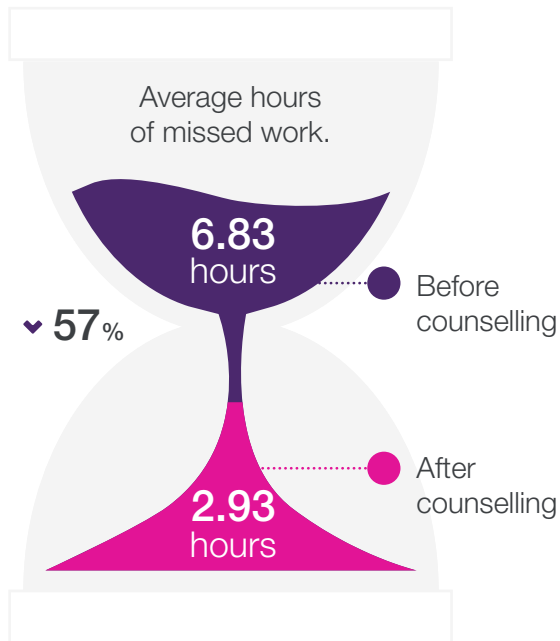
Average active EAP treatment period  
**7 weeks**



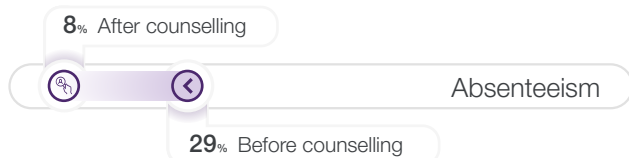
# Benefits of EAP counselling for organisations.

## Getting employees back to work.<sup>3</sup>

Clear reduction of work absenteeism.



The biggest impact is on employees missing 1 day or more of work.



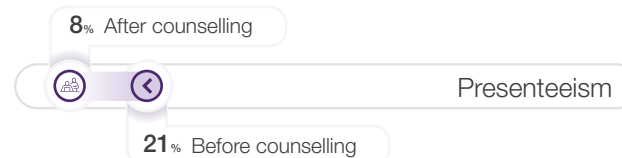
## A more productive workforce.<sup>4</sup>

Overcoming presenteeism.

EAP helps employees be more productive by reducing work presenteeism from 56.8 hours to 35.7 hours per month.

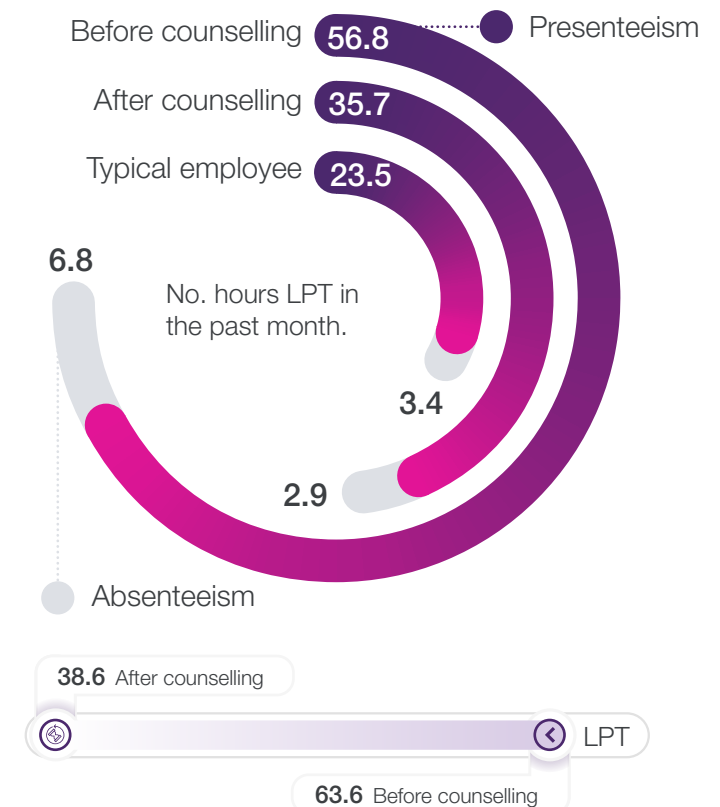


EAP counselling has the biggest impact on employees reporting more than 100 hours lost due to presenteeism.



## 40% of lost productive time recovered.<sup>5</sup>

Employees who accessed EAP counselling, gained just over 3 days (3 x 8 hours shifts) worth of work compared to before counselling.



# Supporting employees during global challenges.

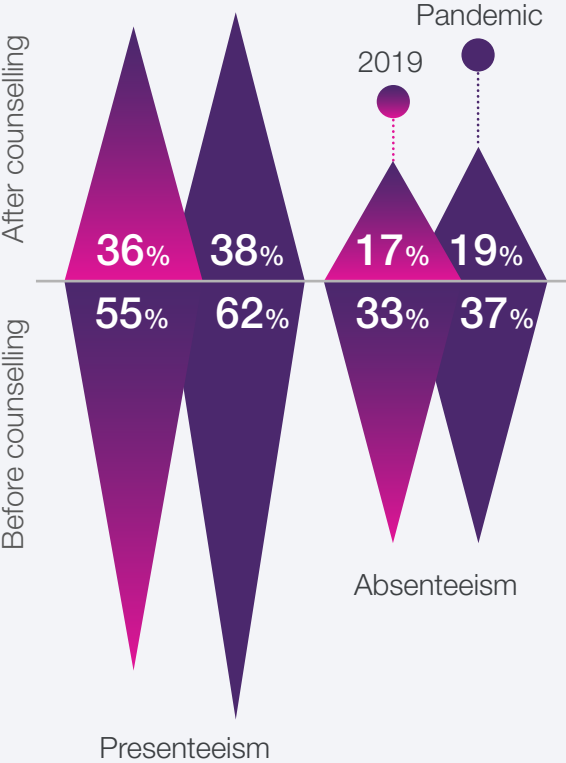
Mental health support available 24/7/365 can support employees during unpredictable situations, enabling them to get back to work faster.



## Continuous support needed post-pandemic.<sup>7</sup>

More employees that used EAP during the pandemic reported that their challenges impacted their work productivity (absenteeism and presenteeism) than among those who used EAP prior to the pandemic.

In spite of this increase, the rate of people reporting improved productivity after counselling was similar to the prior year indicating the quality of the service stayed the same.



# How can you improve your wellbeing strategy?



The UK Workplace Strategy Index for mental health provides a way to measure what employers are doing to support workplace mental health, and recommendations to improve their strategy.

It is impossible to manage something well if you are not able to measure it.

The UK Workplace Strategy Index for Mental Health takes between 25 – 40 minutes for an organisational/human resource leader to complete and is available at no cost, for a limited time.

Once completed, the report is immediately available with your scores, relevant benchmarks, and specific recommendations.



[Find out more or start the assessment now >](#)

American, Canadian and Australian assessments also available.



## Workplace Strategy Index for mental health report.

Prepared for: ABC Inc.

Index completed by: John Smith

Index completed on: Wednesday, February 22, 2023

 TELUS<sup>®</sup> Health

# Recommendations



## 1. Keep track of mental health trends.

Assess your employee's mental health regularly and analyse their aggregated wellbeing data. Every organisation is unique and requires a tailored understanding of their employee base. The Mental Health Index is available to assess employees in individual organisations.



## 2. Create an inclusive wellbeing strategy.

Understand your mental health support offerings and create a globally coherent employee wellbeing strategy. The Workplace Strategy Index for Mental Health is available to support mental health strategy development and refinement.



## 3. Build a strong support ecosystem for employees.

Ensure foundational supports are available when employees need them. Employee assistance programmes, long term counselling supports, substance use resources, self-paced digital educational material must be available when an employee in need decides to seek help. A well-rounded support ecosystem will ensure any macro events in 2023 and beyond will not catch you by surprise. A TELUS Health business development professional is available to ensure supports are in place in your organisation when they are needed.



## 4. Prioritise proactive support.

Ensure prevention is prioritised. A culture of health, wellbeing, and belonging takes effort to create but is an excellent way to ensure low stigma, high help seeking behaviour, and prepared managers. A TELUS Health Learning professional is available to ensure your training needs are met and your culture change process intact.



# Sources

## Macro environment

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## Global mental health status.

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