

# Workplace Wellbeing Index 2024

The must-know HR trends for the coming year and beyond



Keep your finger on the pulse.

[www.layahealthcare.ie/wellbeingindex](http://www.layahealthcare.ie/wellbeingindex)

# Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to laya healthcare's [Workplace Wellbeing Index](#) for 2024 – our fourth comprehensive national report.

It'll keep you a beat ahead over the next year. How? By giving you the lowdown on the trends that will galvanise HR priorities and shape the wellbeing at work landscape over the next year and beyond.

[Sinéad Proos](#)  
Head of Health & Wellbeing,  
laya healthcare



Since 2020, our extensive national surveys of employees and employers in Ireland have sought to uncover the crucial trends shaping health and wellbeing at work.

This report highlights key findings from our 2023 research, while offering expert advice on what you should prioritise and which critical actions to take now and over the next 12 months.

Over the coming months, we'll bring you three deep-dives on the trends you can't ignore, including action plans to inform your strategy for 2024 and beyond.

By building on our previous research waves, laya healthcare leads the market in identifying the true state of workplace wellbeing, and highlighting where HR leaders and teams can focus their efforts.

### Looking to 2024

As you seek to address the wellbeing challenges at your organisation, the Workplace Wellbeing Index is a valuable resource to help you strategise and prioritise. It's time to build a strong, inclusive and compelling culture to help steer your organisation into the future.

Discover more vital guidance and insights to help you shape your HR strategies and initiative. Visit [layahealthcare.ie/wellbeingindex](https://layahealthcare.ie/wellbeingindex)

# About the research

Laya healthcare's Workplace Wellbeing Index research offers HR teams a snapshot of today's most pressing wellbeing issues, as well as a considered look at trends and changes over time. Use it as a resource for refreshing and refocusing your strategy.

Our ongoing research explores Irish employers' and employees' attitudes and concerns about:

- changing working practices
- recruitment and retention
- mental and physical health issues
- maintaining wellbeing and avoiding burnout
- energising organisational culture
- diversity, equality and inclusion

On our behalf, international insights and research agency Spark conducted independent research from May to July 2023 into employee and employer attitudes, perceptions and behaviours.

Spark surveyed 1,000 employees across Ireland, in roles from entry-level to senior manager. They also polled 200 employees, in organisations of all sizes and across a wide range of sectors.

Our Workplace Wellbeing Index research aims to:

- identify key health and wellbeing themes currently resonating with employers
- determine how employers are adapting to current challenges and planning for the future
- understand how employees are dealing with the changing workplace
- update trended data on key measures over the course of the research programme.

Find further insights in our previous reports and playbooks at: [layahealthcare.ie/wellbeingindex](https://layahealthcare.ie/wellbeingindex)



# 10 key health and wellbeing @ work trends

Which issues will drive your HR agenda for 2024 and beyond?

Our research found these are the top trends for Irish organisations to understand and address.



# 10 key health and wellbeing @ work trends

1. Acute anxiety is intensifying.
2. Cost of living remains the top stressor.
3. Substance abuse struggles have doubled.
4. Health and wellbeing leadership is stronger.
5. Women's wellbeing still trails men's.
6. Job satisfaction continues to rise.
7. Employees are choosing their hours.
8. Companies are setting in-office days.
9. At-home productivity keeps growing.
10. The shorter week is gaining momentum.

# Acute anxiety is intensifying

While the prevalence of anxiety has been falling since 2020, 84% of people still feel some level of anxiety.

Intense anxiety has been on the rise. In 2023, more than one in three (38%) people report feeling anxious frequently or all the time.

Worryingly, the always-anxious cohort within that group is now 15% of employees, up from 6% in 2020.

## Stress/anxiety levels over the past six months

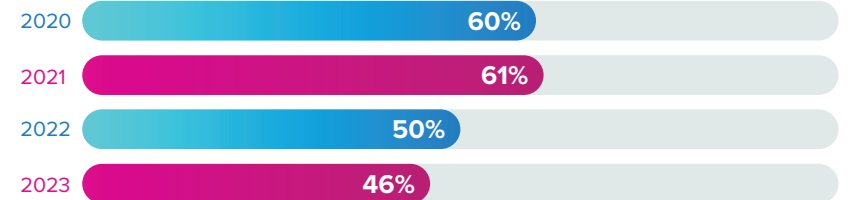
### I'm concerned/anxious all the time



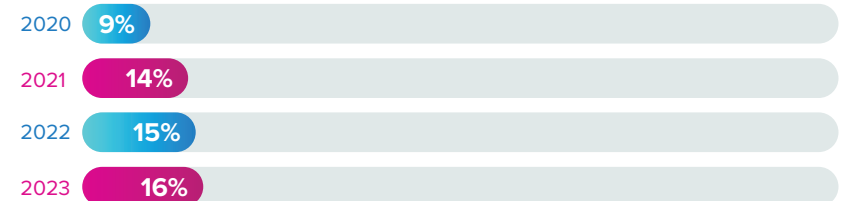
### I'm concerned/anxious frequently



### I'm concerned/anxious occasionally



### I'm not concerned/anxious at all

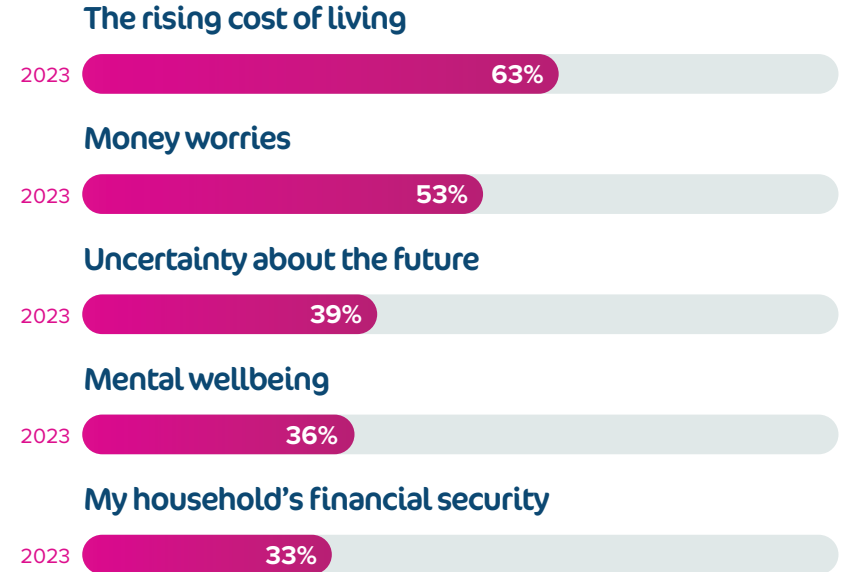


# Cost of living remains the top stressor

The rising cost of living is again the top cause of anxiety, with **63%** citing it as a reason, down only slightly from 2022, when it suddenly became a cause for concern.

As in 2022, three of the top five stressors are money-related.

## Top five reasons for feeling more stressed





# Expert advice

“No employer can afford to ignore the rise in substance abuse challenges and the other effects of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis on employee mental health. Support your employees by asking them to share their concerns, helping them to understand where and when they can take breaks and step back, and by making sure they have access to counselling and other health and wellbeing resources.”



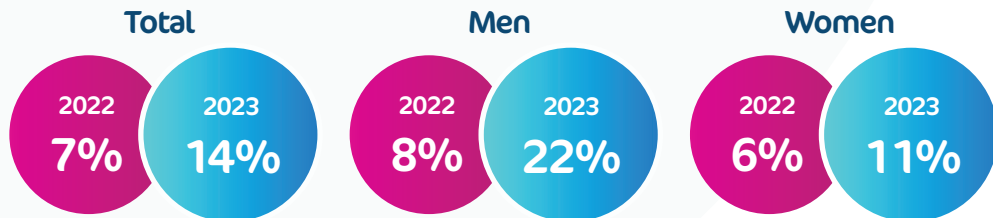
Dr Emelina Ellis  
Chief Clinical Operations Lead, Spectrum.Life

# Substance abuse struggles have doubled

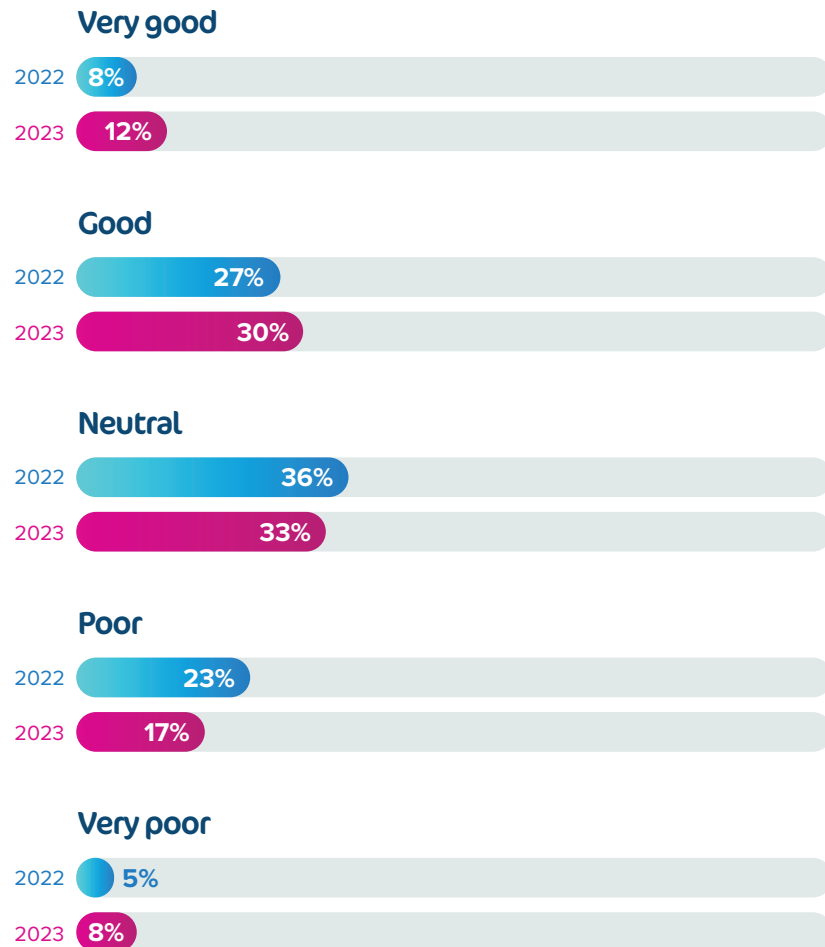
Alongside a rise in those reporting very poor mental health, the percentage of employees reporting substance abuse as an effect of their poor mental health has doubled.

This trend is affecting men at twice the rate of women.

## Substance abuse among those with poor mental health



## Mental health and wellbeing over the past six months



## Health and wellbeing leadership is stronger

Some bright news – more employees feel encouraged by leadership to take care of their health and wellbeing. That's up to 62% from 56% last year.

Seven in 10 employees, up from six in 10 last year, feel able to take time off to look after themselves.

More employees also feel leadership where they work promotes a culture that supports health and wellbeing, and actively participates in it.

**Employers are seen as doing a better job**

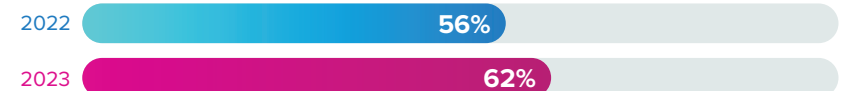
I have taken/would be able to take time off to look after my health and wellbeing



Leadership promotes a culture of supporting employee health and wellbeing



I feel encouraged by leadership to take care of my health and wellbeing



I feel that leadership actively participates in the health and wellbeing supports offered

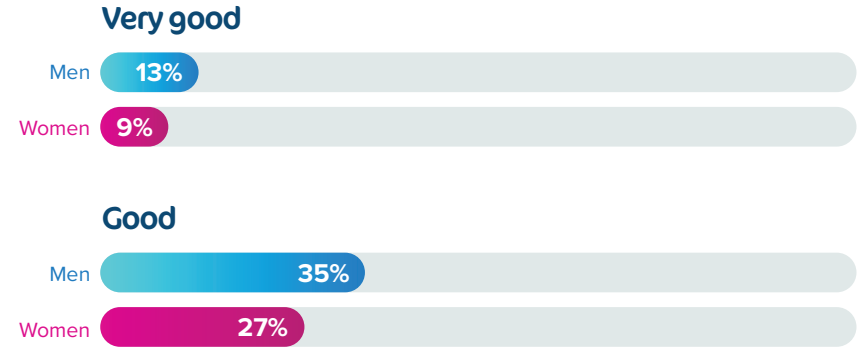


## Women's mental health and wellbeing still trails men's

Women's mental health and wellbeing has improved, with 36% reporting good or very good mental health and wellbeing compared to 30% in 2022.

Yet a gap persists between women and men, with 48% of men reporting good or very good mental health and wellbeing in 2023.

### Mental health and wellbeing over the past six months



# Expert advice

“While all employees need support and strong encouragement to take the best care of themselves, bridging the wellbeing gap means focusing particular efforts on women’s needs. Encourage women in your workplace to engage with wellbeing initiatives, to take time out when needed, and to talk to peers and professionals about their concerns.”

Dr Sumi Dunne  
Women’s health expert



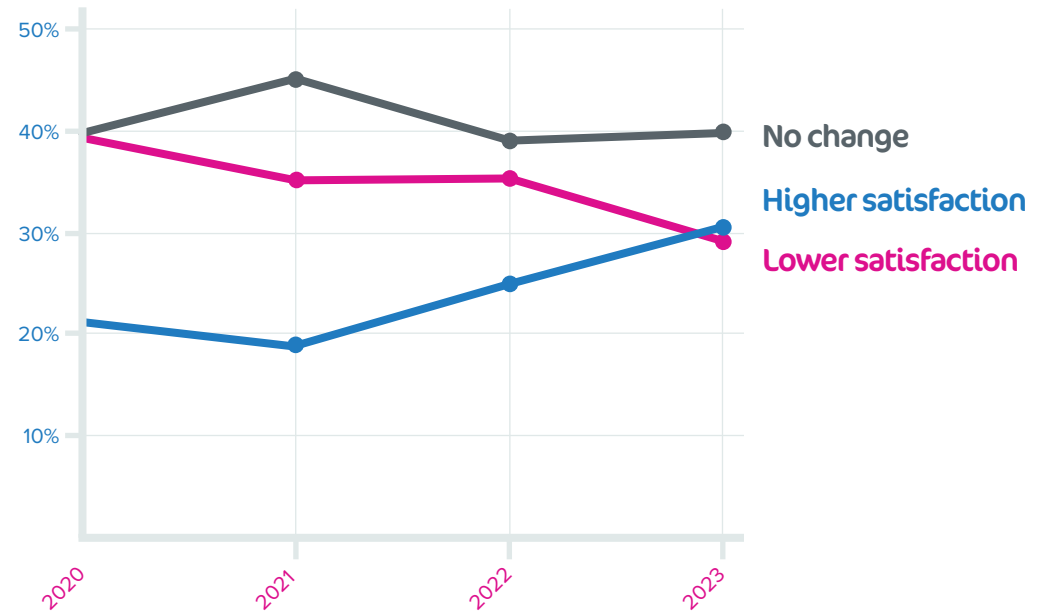


## Job satisfaction continues to rise

Overall, job satisfaction has been improving since 2020, with 31% of employees feeling higher satisfaction in 2023.

Better work-life balance (47%) and flexibility (42%) are contributing most to that sense of wellbeing.

### Job satisfaction rating



# Employees are choosing their own hours

Two fifths (40%) of companies let employees work the hours that suit them, as long as they get the work done.

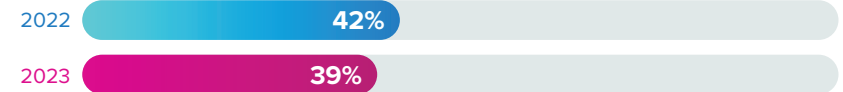
Another 39% offer flexibility outside of core working hours.

## Employees' working hours

Employees are allowed to work the hours that suit them as long as the work gets done



We have core working hours in place but employees can choose their own hours outside of these



We have defined working hours that employees must adhere to

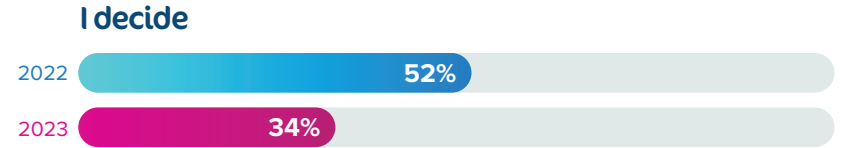


# Companies are setting in-office days

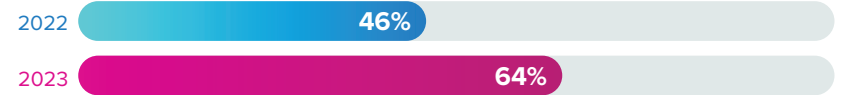
In 2022, 52% of employees were deciding for themselves how many days to spend in the office.

In 2023, the ball moved into the employers' court – 64% of employers now set in-office days, with two work-from-home days becoming the norm.

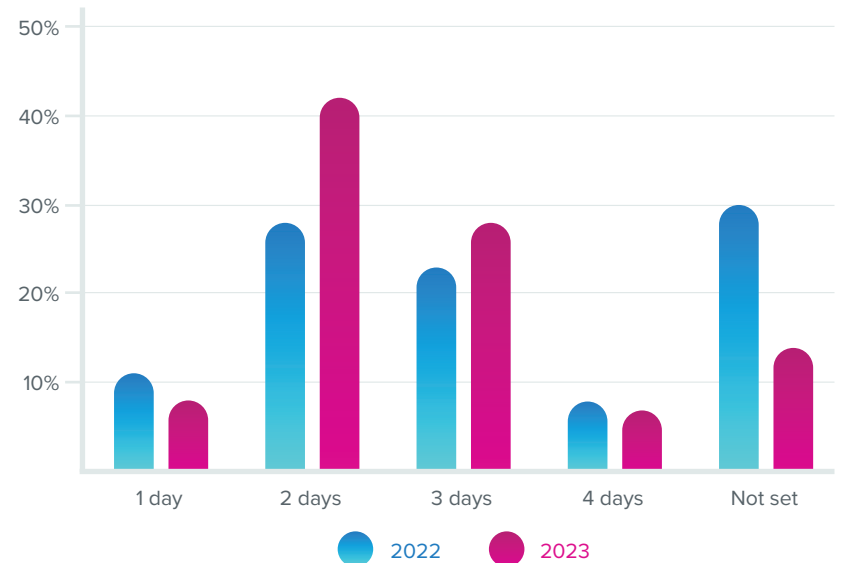
**Who decides how many days you work in the office?**



**Company decides**



**How many days are employees working from home?**

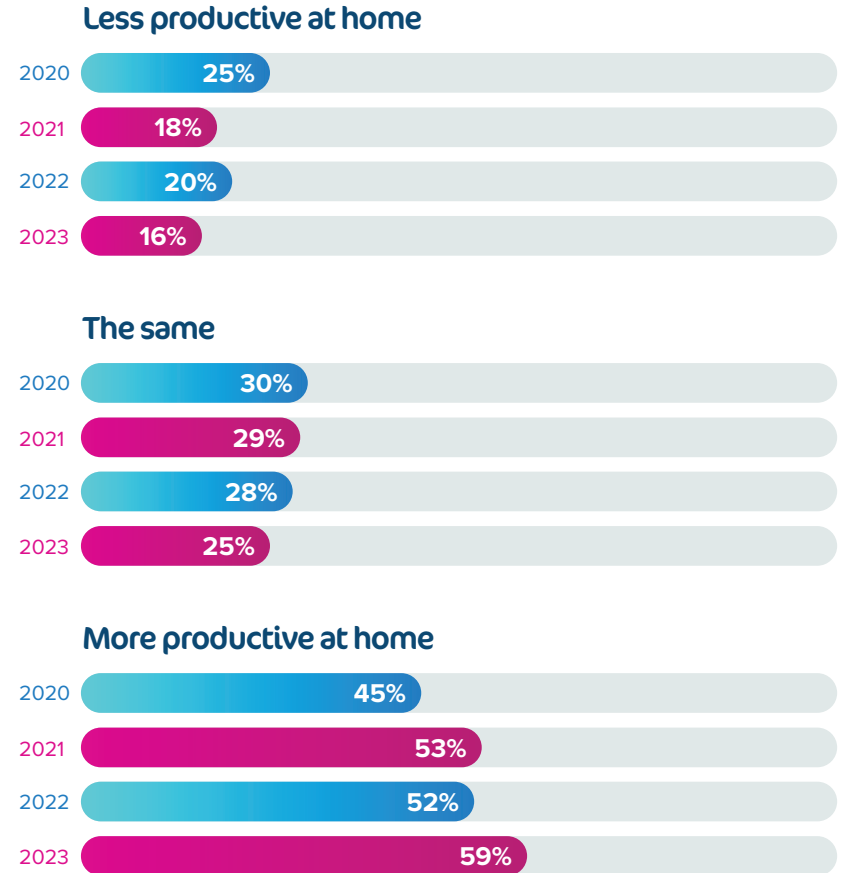


## At-home productivity keeps growing

Since 2020, at least 75% of hybrid workers have felt at least as productive at home as in the office. In fact, in 2023 that figure is 84%.

The percentage feeling more productive at home grew to 59% in 2023 from 52% in 2022 and 45% in 2020.

### Productivity rating at home vs. in the office



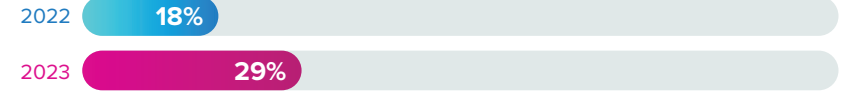
# The shorter week is gaining momentum

Shorter work weeks are fast gaining traction. In fact, 40% of HR professionals say their businesses plan to introduce a shorter week – for example, a four-day working week or nine-day working fortnight.

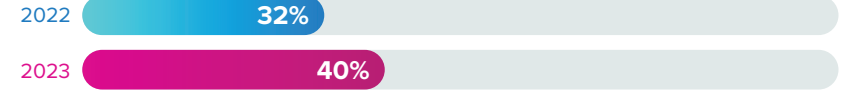
Another 29% say they already have a shorter working week in place, a sharp rise from 18% in 2022.

## HR professionals on the shorter working week

Percentage of HR professionals who say they currently have a shorter working week in place



Percentage of HR professionals who say they plan to introduce a shorter working week





# Expert advice

“We know hybrid working is here to stay. Blended workforces are the new normal, so it’s crucial to plan in detail how you’ll take care of your employees and maintain a strong culture. Give your workers – on-site, hybrid or remote – the tools, resources and networks they need to manage the tidal wave of work-related information they get and to thrive in their careers.”



Dr Na Fu  
Professor in Human Resource Management,  
Trinity Business School, Trinity College Dublin

# Next steps as you plan for 2024

To build on their health and wellbeing gains, and to address wellbeing gaps and challenges, employers should focus on three key areas:

## Communication

- Redouble your efforts to promote your health and wellbeing programme to all employees.
- Make sure employees know they can and should take time off when they're unwell.
- Offer one-to-one support to employees who are struggling, and stress confidentiality.

## Awareness

- Be mindful of the rise of addiction issues, particularly among men.
- Stay alert to the knock-on effects of poor mental wellbeing, especially in women.
- Be sensitive to the variety of challenges people face, for example, when trying to start a family, as well as when balancing work and parenting.

## Culture

- Schedule in-office events for midweek to connect more of the team.
- Foster a culture of openness around hard issues – take a stand against stigma.
- Lead the way: be actively involved in your company's wellbeing programme.

# Expert advice

“Now that new ways of working are bedded in, it’s time to ensure no one in your organisation gets left behind. Close the wellbeing gap in your business by enabling HR leaders and teams to do their best work. They need particular support and resources, so they can help everyone else be happy and productive at work.”

Erika O’Leary  
Director of People & Culture, Iaya Healthcare



# A beat ahead in workplace wellbeing

A group of three business professionals (two women and one man) are looking at a tablet together in an office setting. The man is on the left, wearing a brown jacket and glasses. The woman on the right is wearing a white shirt and glasses. The woman in the middle is wearing a white shirt and glasses. They are all smiling and looking at the tablet.

Over 2,500 organisations across Ireland stay a beat ahead with laya healthcare's health and wellbeing programmes.

To find out more go to:  
[layahealthcare.ie/wellbeingindex](https://layahealthcare.ie/wellbeingindex)



Keep your finger on the pulse.



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