



## Section 2

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# Employee wellbeing and mental health





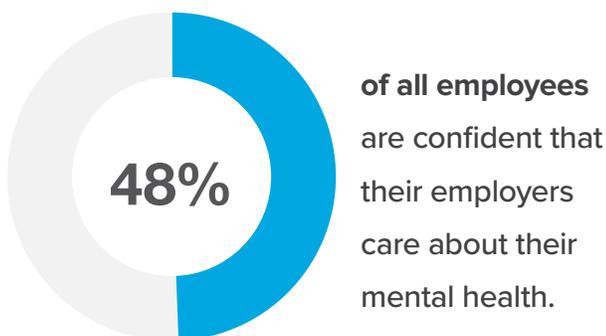
## Employee confidence in how much their organizations care for them is waning and impacting not just mental health, but also job satisfaction.

In 2021, nearly 60% of employees surveyed said they believed their employers cared about their well-being at least somewhat. One year later, that number had dropped to 56%, and this year, it plunged another eight points to 48%. What's driving this dramatic shift in the way workers perceive how much their employers care about them? And how can employers regain lost ground?

Certainly, some of this discontent can be attributed to stress and shifting work conditions caused by COVID-19, rising inflation and the wave of layoffs that rippled through tech and other sectors last year. As inflation cools and the pandemic continues to ease, employers should look to providers for ways to reestablish the trust their employees have lost and increase their job satisfaction.

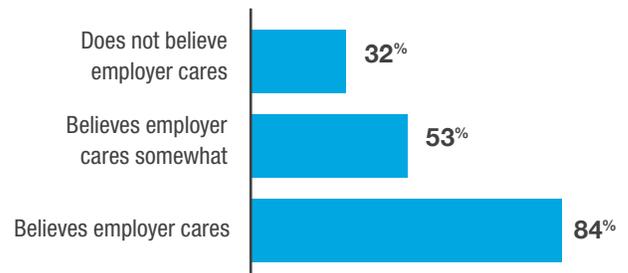
**About half (48%) of all employees are confident their employers care about them.**

**Question:** How much do you believe your employer cares about your overall mental health?\*



**And this belief is associated with job satisfaction. More than 4 in 5 (84%) of those who believe their employers care about them report high job satisfaction, compared to just a third (32%) of those who don't think their employers care.**

**Question:** Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?\*

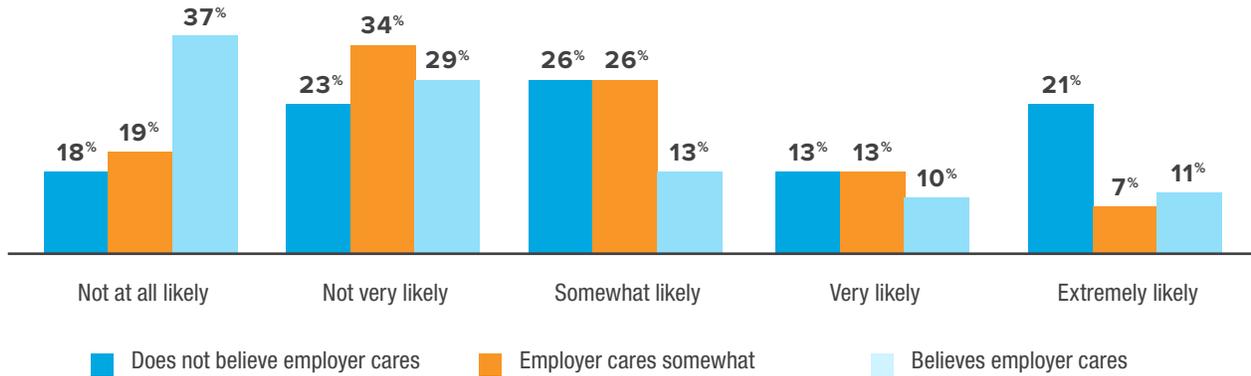


\*Figures represent the highest two responses selected.

## Further, it's *causing* them to look for a new job.

Employees feel it is vital that their employers care about their well-being, and many are willing to act. Of employees who say they believed their employers didn't care about their well-being, 60% are at least somewhat likely to look for a new job in the next 12 months. Again, employers need a way to regain trust in 2023.

**Question:** How much do you believe your employer cares about your overall mental health? Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?

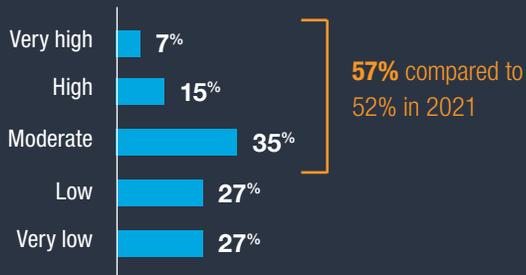


## Burnout and workplace stress remain top concerns in 2023, again disproportionately affecting both women and younger workers.

Consistent with 2022 levels, more than half (57%) of all American workers state that they are currently experiencing at least moderate levels of burnout. Further, we see high levels of workplace stress among employees, with three-quarters reporting at least a moderate level of stress. Heavy workload is the primary culprit for workplace stress, though there are other contributing factors.

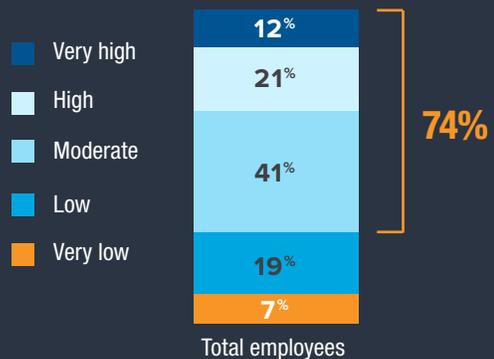
How employees experience burnout varies widely depending on demographics, especially age. Gen Z and millennials are more than twice as likely as baby boomers to experience high or moderate burnout. Women are vulnerable, too, with 75% reporting burnout at work as opposed to 58% of men. Providers have an opportunity here to help employers identify vulnerable populations and provide them with tools and resources to better cope with stress to stay well ahead of burnout.

**Question:** How would you rate your current level of **burnout**?



Well over half, 57%, of all American workers are experiencing at least moderate levels of burnout. This remains significantly higher than what was seen in 2021.

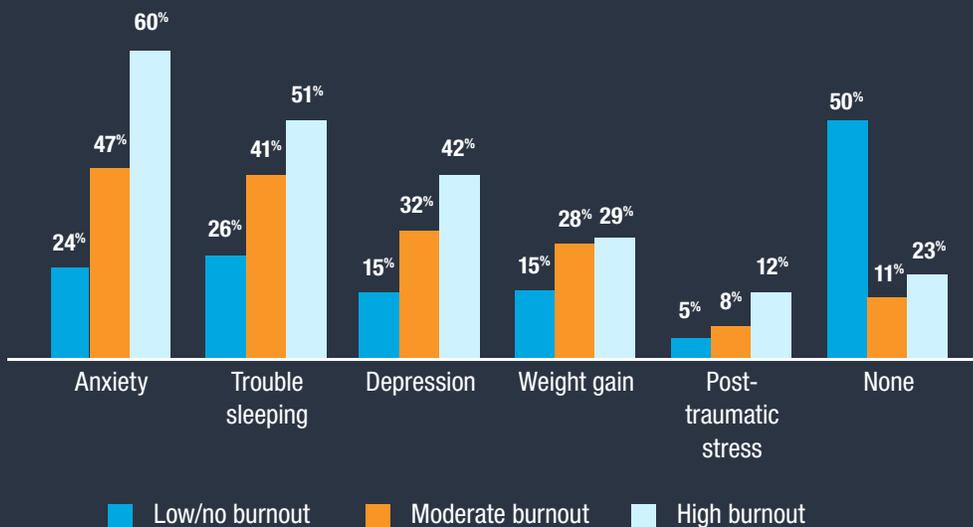
**Question:** How would you quantify the amount of **workplace stress** you experience?



We also see high levels of workplace stress, but a meaningful proportion of employees appear to be able to cope with stress without getting burned out.

And it's critical for employers to address burnout among their employees before the employees start to experience other more severe symptoms. This year, the percentage of employees who report having trouble sleeping jumped 6 percentage points from last year. On top of that, employees who experience burnout were more likely to experience anxiety and depression while dealing with sleep issues. Employers have an opportunity to intervene with proactive care up front that will help employees mitigate these issues before they worsen.

**The overwhelming majority (89%) of employees who report high levels of burnout have also suffered other mental health challenges over the past year — most commonly anxiety, depression and trouble sleeping.**



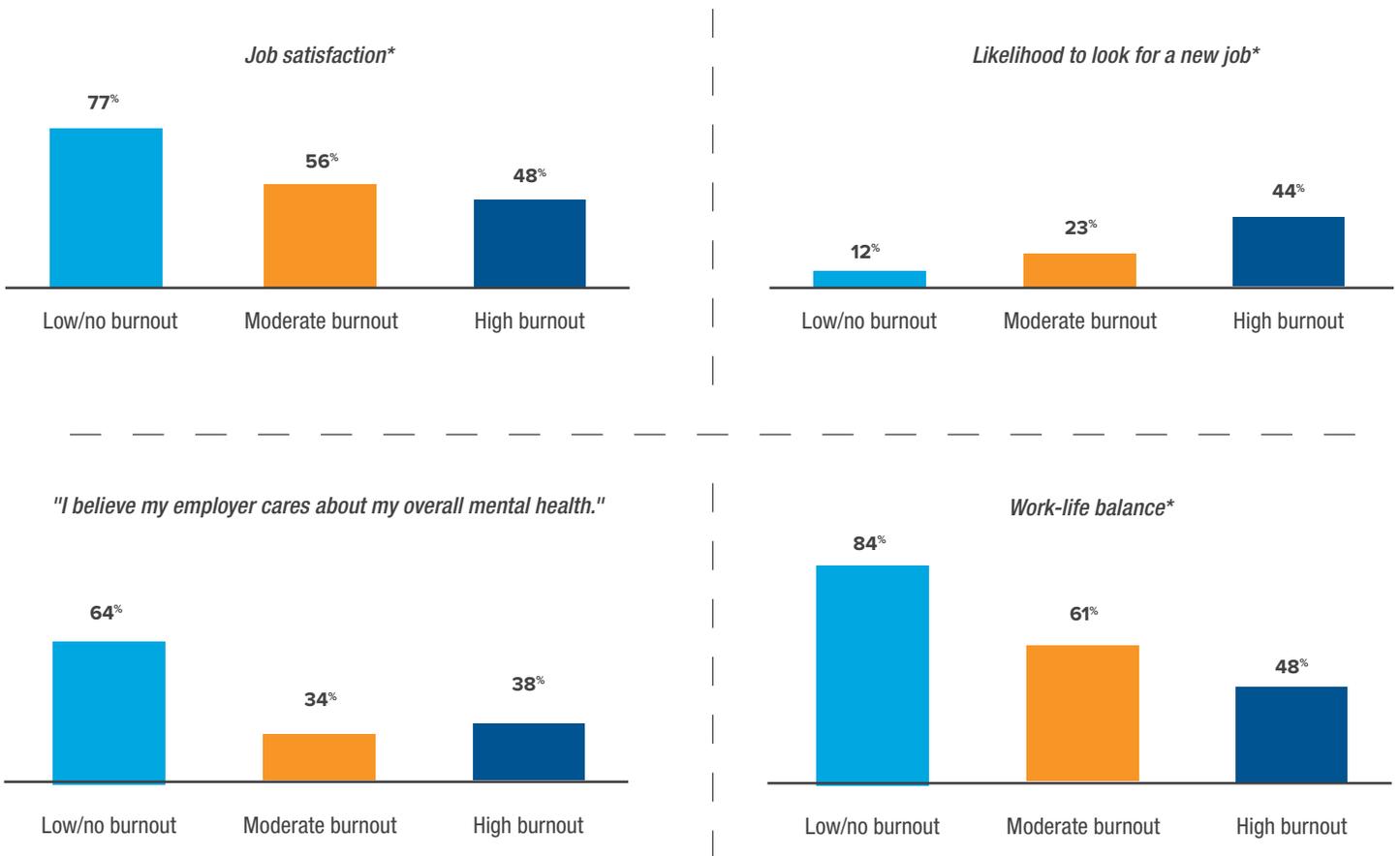
**Question:** Have you experienced any of the following in the past 12 months?

\*Only displaying options that were selected by at least 5% of respondents.



**Pro tip: Help ease employee stress with the option of supplemental insurance.** In scenarios where providing a salary increase might not be feasible, offering supplemental insurance may be a good solution. Supplemental insurance offers employees added reassurance, helping to give them financial security in the event of an unforeseen medical event. Further, given that many plans are employee-funded, this approach can help employers effectively manage their expenses. For instance, 56% of American workers were negatively impacted by high medical bill costs with reasons including missed credit card payments, affected credit scores, and missed rent or mortgage payments, among others. These were key contributors to their financial stress and mental distress.

Not addressing burnout also may have downstream implications on an organization's workforce — namely diminished job satisfaction and work-life balance among those suffering from burnout, as well as a higher likelihood of looking for a new job over the next year.



\*Figures represent the highest two responses selected.

**Burnout is, unsurprisingly, associated with lower job satisfaction and loyalty, as well as one's impressions of work-life balance and how much an employer cares about their well-being.**

**Fortunately, when it comes to mental health, most employees still feel they have someone they can turn to – often their own managers.**

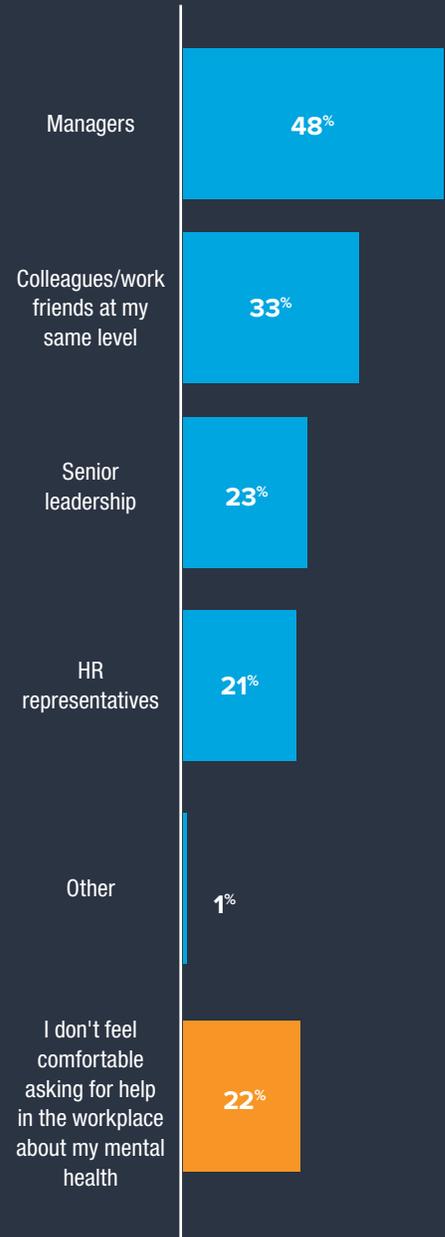
It would seem to contradict the fact that many employees don't believe their organizations care about their well-being while they also feel confident they have someone in the organization to talk to about their own mental health struggles and even ask for PTO. One explanation for this could be that while they view their organization overall as not caring enough about their well-being, there are individuals within the organization — namely, their supervisors — whom they trust and are willing to confide in.

Of note, while employees across all generations would feel comfortable talking to a manager about mental health struggles in the workplace, it is the younger generations who are willing to turn to their peers for support. While nearly half of all Gen Z (46%) and 40% of millennial employees trust their colleagues with this information, far fewer Gen X (28%) or baby boomer (17%) employees feel comfortable discussing such matters with their peers.

**Question:** Who, if anyone, in your workplace do you feel comfortable asking for help or time off should you need it as it relates to your mental health? / To what extent would you say your organization's employees feel comfortable asking for help or time off should they need it as it relates to their mental health in the workplace?



**Pro tip: Empower individuals, not institutions.** When it comes to something as personal as mental health, how employees deal with it and who they confide in can vary from person to person. Rather than fighting this by prescribing rigid programs that require everyone at work to deal with something that's very subjective, organizations should empower supervisors to take the lead in conversations about mental health and give employees the resources they need to choose their own path.



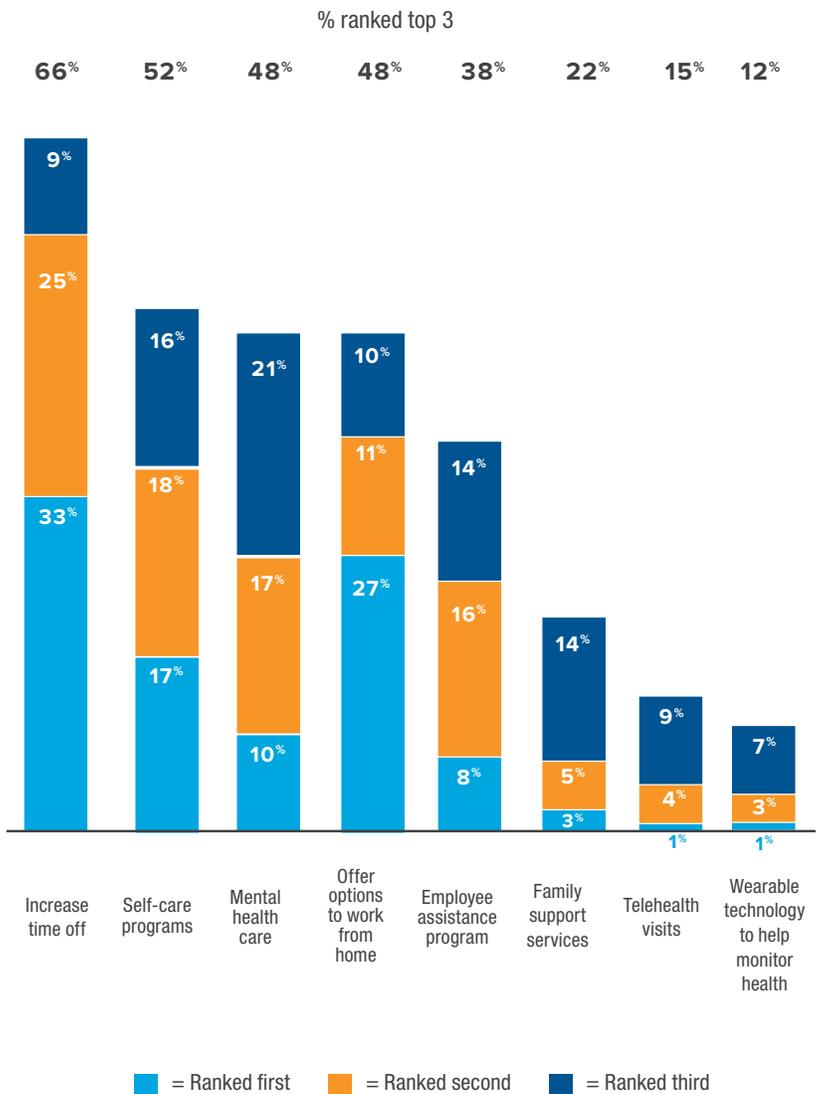
**76%**  
of all employers are confident that their employees are very or extremely comfortable asking for support or time off to address mental health.



Outside of increasing pay, employers have many options for helping to improve employee stress and burnout. Of the options presented, 1 in 3 (33%) employees surveyed ranked increased time off as their first choice for addressing burnout. Options to work from home and self-care programs also top employees' lists for practical ways employers can offset the extra strain.

**To address burnout and prevent their mental health from further deteriorating, employees want more time off.**

**Question:** Which of the following would be most useful with helping you deal with burnout or personal mental health concerns?



## About the Study

The 2023-2024 Aflac WorkForces Report is the 13th annual Aflac employee study examining benefits trends and attitudes. Conducted by Kantar on behalf of Aflac, the employer survey took place online between June 2 and June 25, 2023, and the employee survey took place online between June 2 and June 27, 2023. Throughout this report, some percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. The surveys captured responses from 1,201 employers and 2,000 employees across the United States.

For more information, visit [aflac.com/awr](https://aflac.com/awr).

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