

2024

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# The state of workplace health and wellness in Canada





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# Introduction

This annual report is published by Environics Research and Dialogue following Canada-wide surveys with Canadians and Human Resource (HR) professionals to better understand workplace health and wellness. The research was sponsored by Dialogue.

The 2024 surveys were completed by 1,027 employed Canadians (part-time and full-time) – representing all age groups and all provinces, and 86 HR professionals – between February 1 and 16, 2024.

These surveys are conducted annually to measure changes in attitudes toward health and wellness over the past year, while also understanding evolving workplace realities in Canada.



# Executive summary

Canadian HR professionals report facing a host of challenges, with more on the horizon. These issues are interconnected and have the potential to create a less-than-ideal work environment. At the top of the list are employee mental health and well-being concerns, as employers strive to address the worsening physical, mental, and financial health of their workforce.

HR teams and employees are in agreement: these factors are the biggest contributors to overall well-being. And if not cared for effectively, they can negatively impact the health of the workplace as a whole, resulting in a less healthy, less productive, and more absent workforce.

Other HR challenges, including overworked employees, talent retention, and talent attraction, are significantly influenced by mental health and well-being.

But there's good news. **Organizations that provide adequate support demonstrate less turnover and face fewer hurdles in talent acquisition.** Therefore, making sure employees are well taken care of becomes crucial for companies aiming for long-term growth.

Taking a step back, we see issues that extend beyond individual employee challenges, with employers identifying a lack of productivity, innovation, and resources as critical business problems. At the heart of these challenges are people — when employees are not supported in their well-being, they may struggle to propel the organization forward.

While HR professionals are doing their best to meet the needs of their teams, employees note that the benefits and services available to them are still lacking. Yet, they're willing to explore new and different ways of seeking support.

Almost all want to improve their personal well-being and expect their employers to play a role in supporting them. Investing in virtual care, self-guided tools, and tailored support can help Canadians manage their health, offering employers a means to better employee well-being.





# Detailed findings

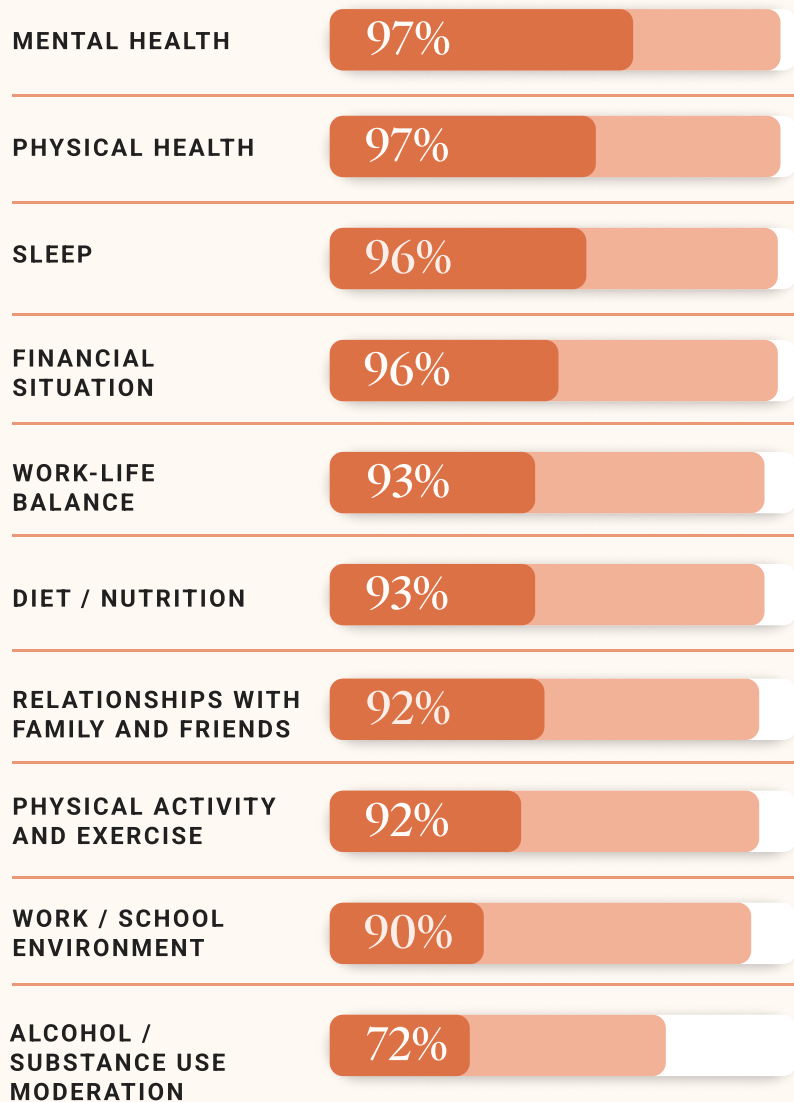
## Employee health and well-being

As HR professionals struggle to find effective solutions for employee well-being, understanding the contributing factors is a crucial first step. This ensures employees are satisfied, feel supported, and stay with the organization.

Most employed Canadians continue to state that physical health (97%), mental health (98%), sleep (95%), financial situations (95%), work environment (90%), and work-life balance (93%) are important factors in their well-being. Yet, a third **feel negatively** about their current physical health (27%), mental health (28%), sleep (28%), and financial well-being (24%), noting a decline in these areas over the past year.



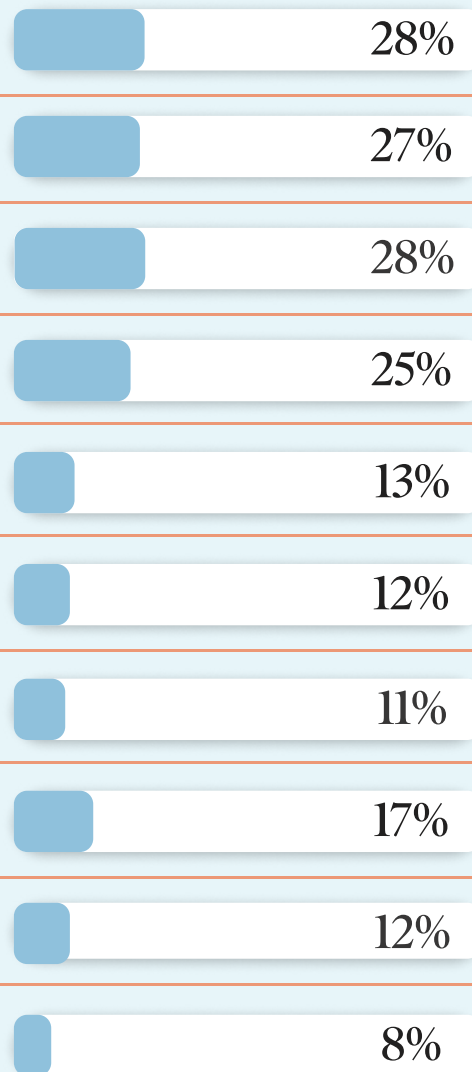
## Top contributors to well-being for working Canadians



People who answered that the factor is very important

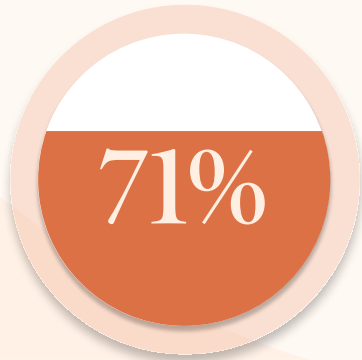
People who answered that the factor is important

## Decline in well-being factors for workers



People who answered that the factor worsened or significantly worsened in the past year

These factors are often interconnected. For instance, financial stress or anxiety can impact mental health, hindering the ability to prioritize physical health and disrupting sleep patterns. **What does this mean?** To truly have a positive impact on employee well-being, a holistic and comprehensive approach is fundamental.

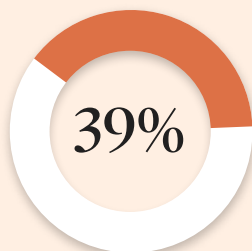


of working Canadians are more conscious of their health.

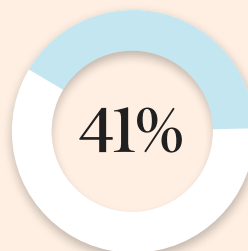
Declining health has led to working Canadians being more health-conscious than ever before.

In 2021, 56% were more conscious of their health. Today, 71% of Canadians report feeling the same, and 96% of them indicate an interest in improving well-being. Yet, several barriers hinder employees from taking action, leading many to rely on workplace benefits for quick access to convenient and cost-effective care.

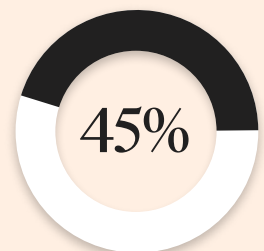
Employees face barriers to prioritizing their well-being.



have financial constraints

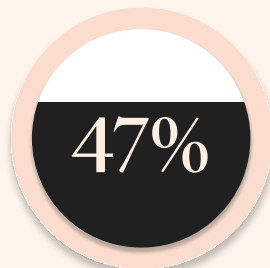


experience a lack of motivation



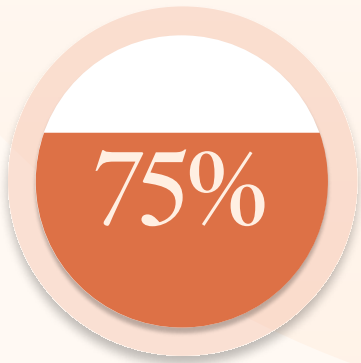
don't have enough time

As a result



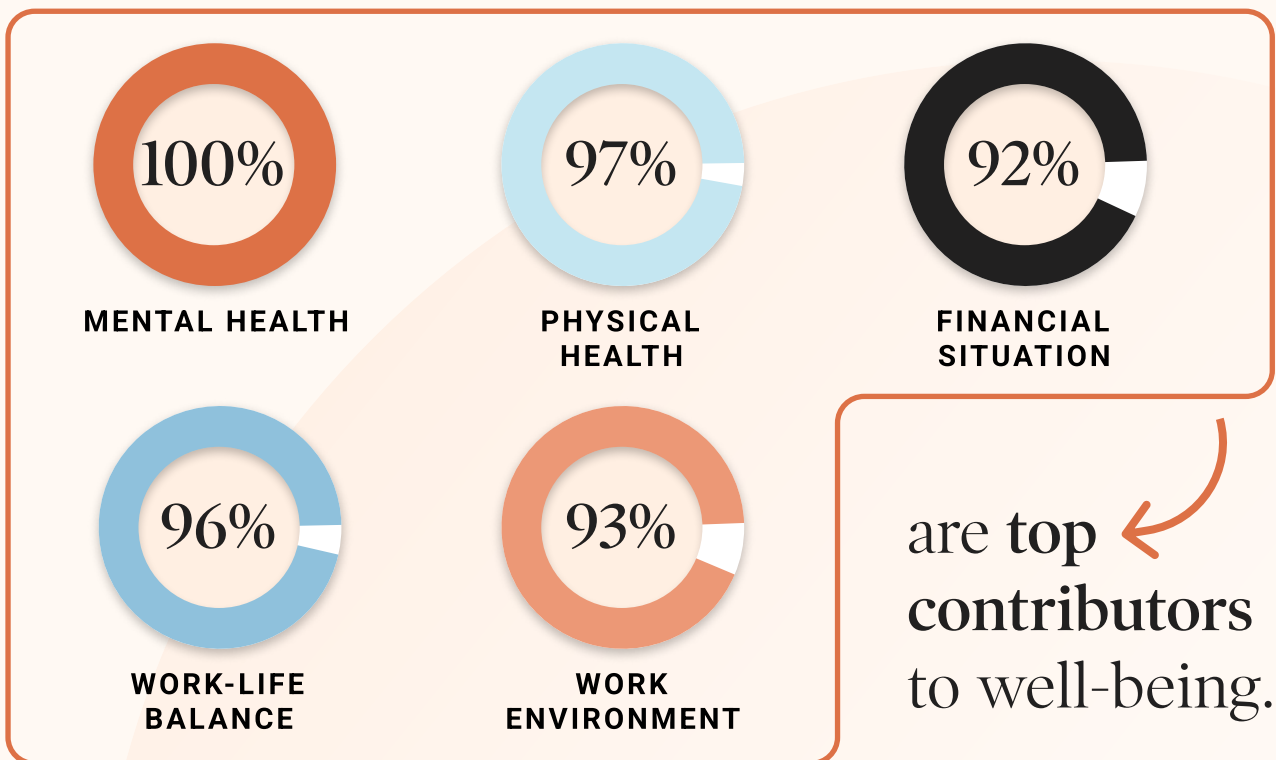
rely on their employee benefits plans

Employers can also help their teams stay motivated on their health journeys by offering a range of engaging tools – like company-wide wellness challenges, which 54% of employees would be likely to use.



of HR professionals indicate employee well-being is a pressing challenge.

Like working Canadians, HR professionals agree that



are top contributors to well-being.

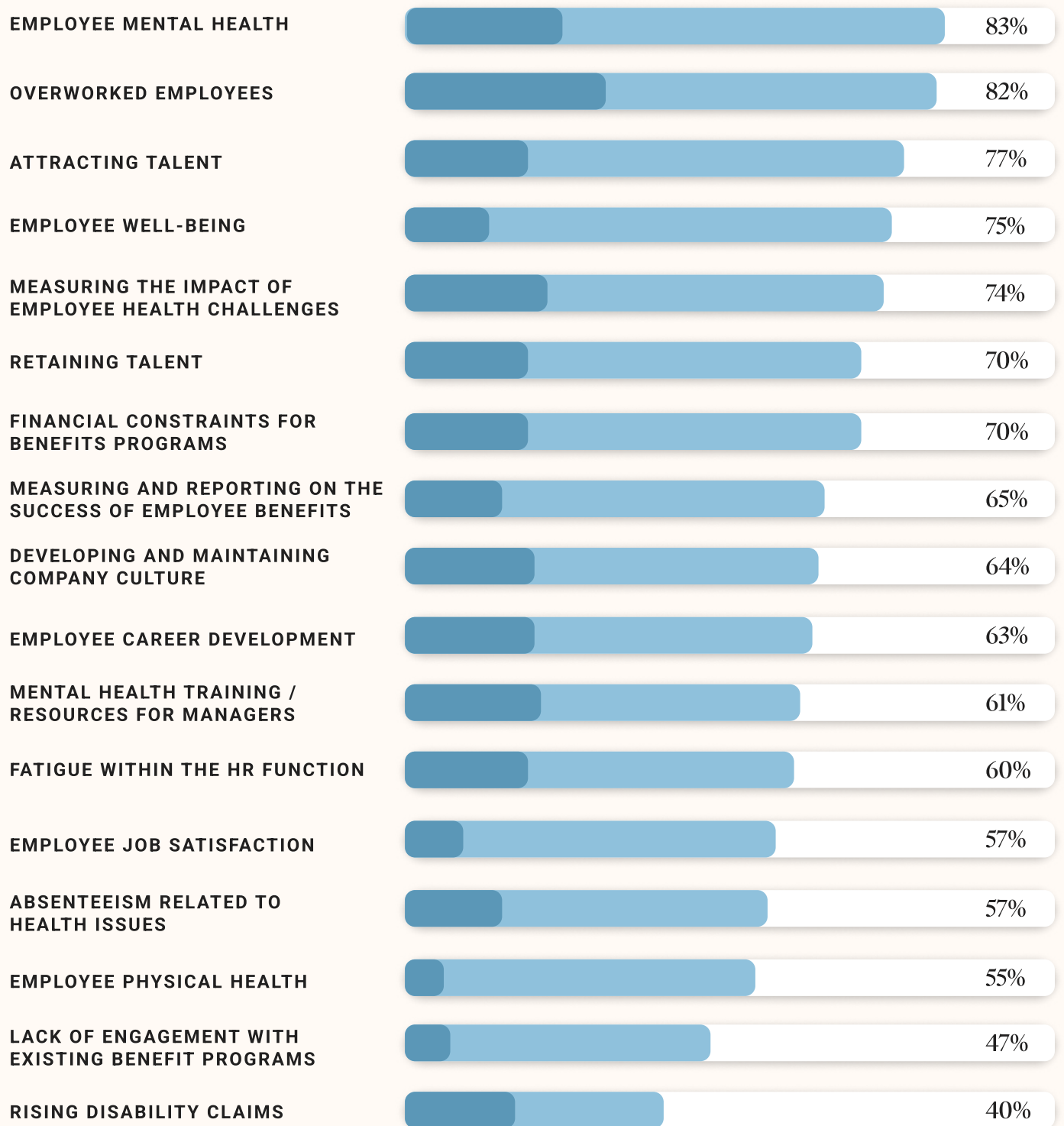
Despite this shared understanding, employee well-being remains a significant concern (75%). And other challenges, like overworked staff (82%), talent attraction (77%), and low retention (70%), could stem from poor employee well-being.

HR professionals also face financial constraints (70%), making it tough to secure resources and support for employee benefits. The challenge escalates as organizational decision-makers prioritize business matters (99%) over HR issues (88%) – despite these issues being closely connected.



Additionally, HR teams find it difficult to measure the impact of employee benefit plans (65%) and ensure employees effectively use their benefits (48%). Without these clear **success metrics**, HR may struggle to get the buy-in needed to continue investing in the right resources.

## Top challenges faced by HR professionals



People who answered that the factor is extremely challenging

People who answered that the factor is somewhat challenging



The current situation may seem grim, but employers should persevere in enhancing employee well-being. The right benefits providers — ones that **enable organizations to measure the business and health outcomes** of well-being initiatives — can help overcome these obstacles and provide employees with the necessary support.



## Most working Canadians must wait 4 or more days to see a family doctor.

Most (62%) working Canadians must wait four or more days to see a family doctor. During this time, they may lack the support needed for health concerns — further affecting their well-being and work performance. Longer wait times could lead to more missed work and deter employees from seeking help, potentially worsening health problems and increasing costs for employers due to lost productivity and absenteeism.





# Employee mental health

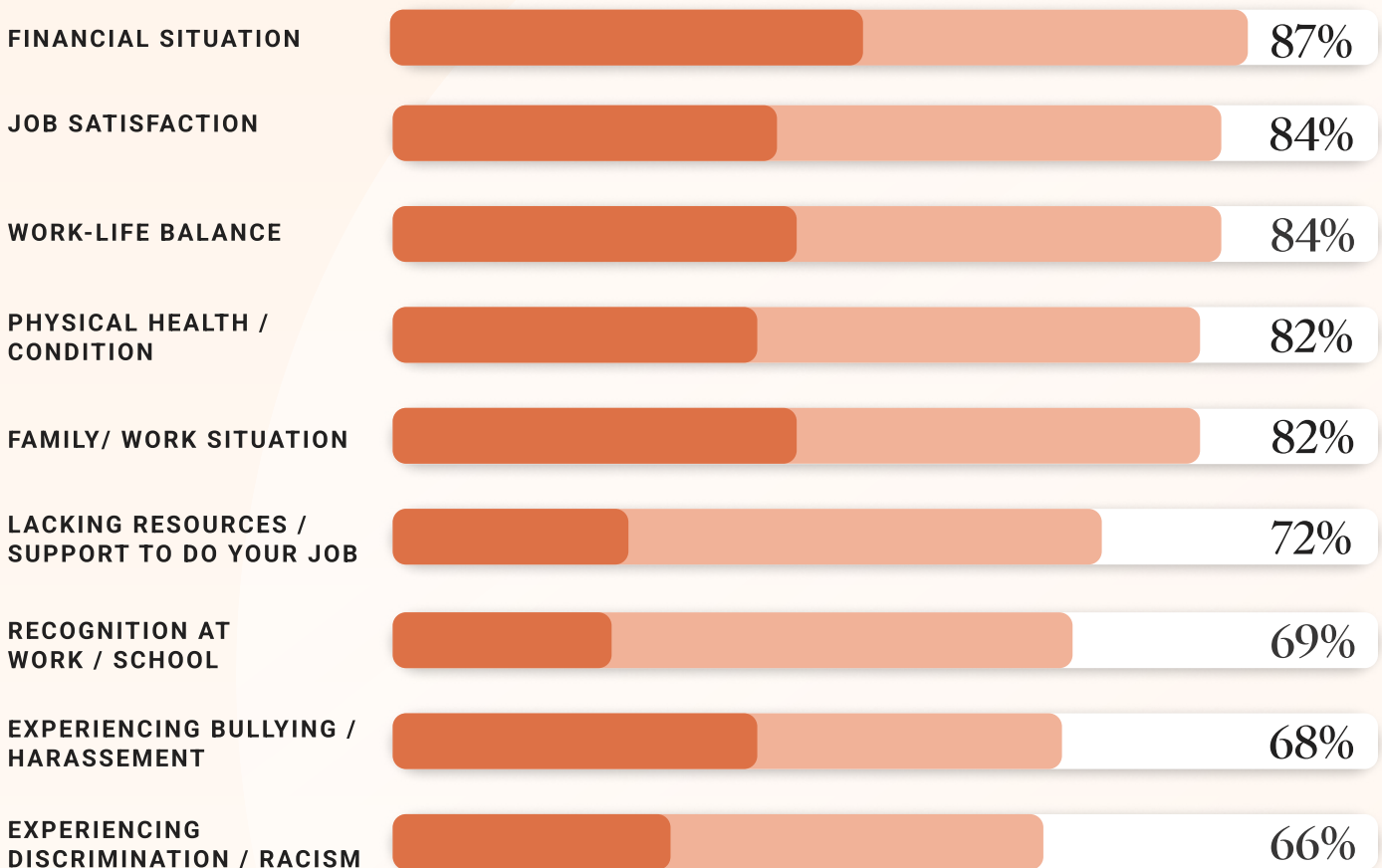
People’s work environments have a profound impact on their mental well-being. So, it’s upon employers to prioritize the mental health of their employees. While HR professionals acknowledge this responsibility and believe their organizations are taking appropriate measures to safeguard well-being, employees themselves may not always perceive these efforts.

In fact, nearly 4 in 10 working Canadians (37%) report that their employers do not prioritize mental health. This is surprising considering that 86% of HR professionals affirm that their organizations value employee mental health — highlighting a **significant gap between employer actions and employee perceptions**.

When it comes to lifestyle factors, most working Canadians agree that their financial situation (87%), job satisfaction (84%), work-life balance (84%), physical health (82%), and family/work situation (82%) contribute to mental health.



## Top contributors to mental health for working Canadians



People who strongly agree that the factor contributes to mental health

People who agree that the factor contributes to mental health



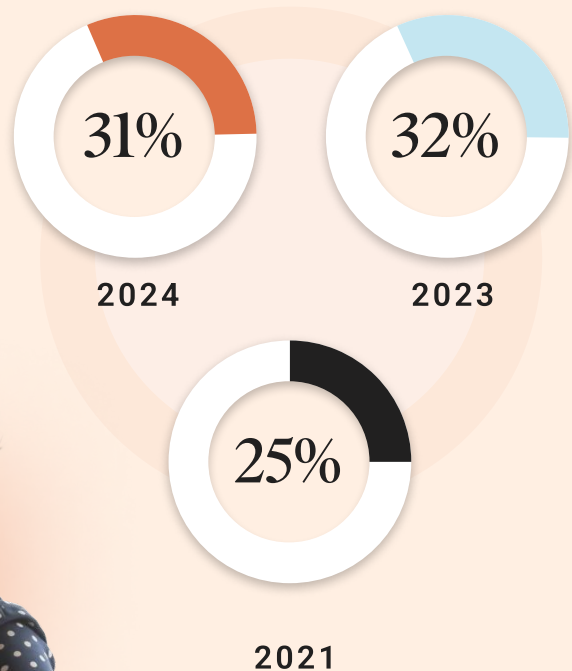
The role of employers in ensuring accessible and affordable mental health support is further highlighted, with 4 in 10 (39%) **working Canadians lacking the financial means to seek professional care.**

So, to better support their teams, HR leaders should focus on comprehensive and holistic mental health resources – this includes tools and resources to improve lifestyle factors influencing mental well-being. Plus, ensuring employees know about the support available (benefits, initiatives, etc.) boosts the likelihood of them actually using these resources.

 **1 in 3**  
**employees and HR professionals continue to view workplace mental health benefits as insufficient.**

In addition, working Canadians continue to view the mental health support provided through benefit plans to be insufficient. Another 3 in 10 don't have access to mental health support (17%) or are not aware of the support available to them (11%).

**Employees who view their mental health benefits as insufficient:**

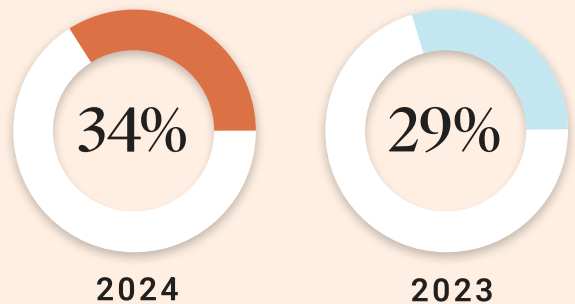







Similarly, while most HR professionals (95%) believe it's important to provide mental health support, an increasing number consider their offerings to be insufficient. This reinforces the need for employers to evaluate how support is offered. Benefits plans must meet employees' needs and expectations — while **prioritizing communication to improve awareness and utilization.**

Even though 95% of HR teams see the importance of mental health training for managers, only 18% of working Canadians indicate their managers are equipped to recognize and support employees' mental health. This suggests that mental health issues may be misunderstood or go unnoticed — leading to deteriorating health, and broader business challenges like poor productivity and turnover.

### HR professionals who find their mental health benefits inadequate:



### On the bright side, employees continue to agree that:

- 
 Treating mental health proactively is important (95%)
- 
 Mental health support can prevent mental health issues (94%)
- 
 Self-help mental health resources empower individuals to be proactive (88%)

By investing in a range of diverse tools, including self-guided resources, employers can demonstrate their grasp of employee concerns and expectations — and exhibit a readiness to address health needs effectively.



A circular graphic with an orange border. The top half is white and the bottom half is black. The text '89%' is written in white on the black background.

89%

of Canadians believe it's important for employers to improve well-being.

## Workplace well-being programs

Almost all working Canadians agree: employers should provide support for improving well-being. However, less than half (38%) have noticed employers taking initiative.

On the other hand, almost all HR professionals (93%) state their organizations have taken steps to enhance employee well-being – once again **revealing a discrepancy between organizational actions and employee perceptions.**

Despite the effort, most well-being initiatives don't reflect employees' needs, which can limit the impact of these initiatives.

On a positive note, employers do recognize the need for flexibility, showcased by the number of organizations offering flexible and remote work options.

Yet, Canadians still seek greater flexibility at work and in managing their well-being. This is evident in their preference for more monetary value of benefits, flexible vacation days, wellness spending accounts, and personal time off. But, many workplaces have not yet made these accommodations.

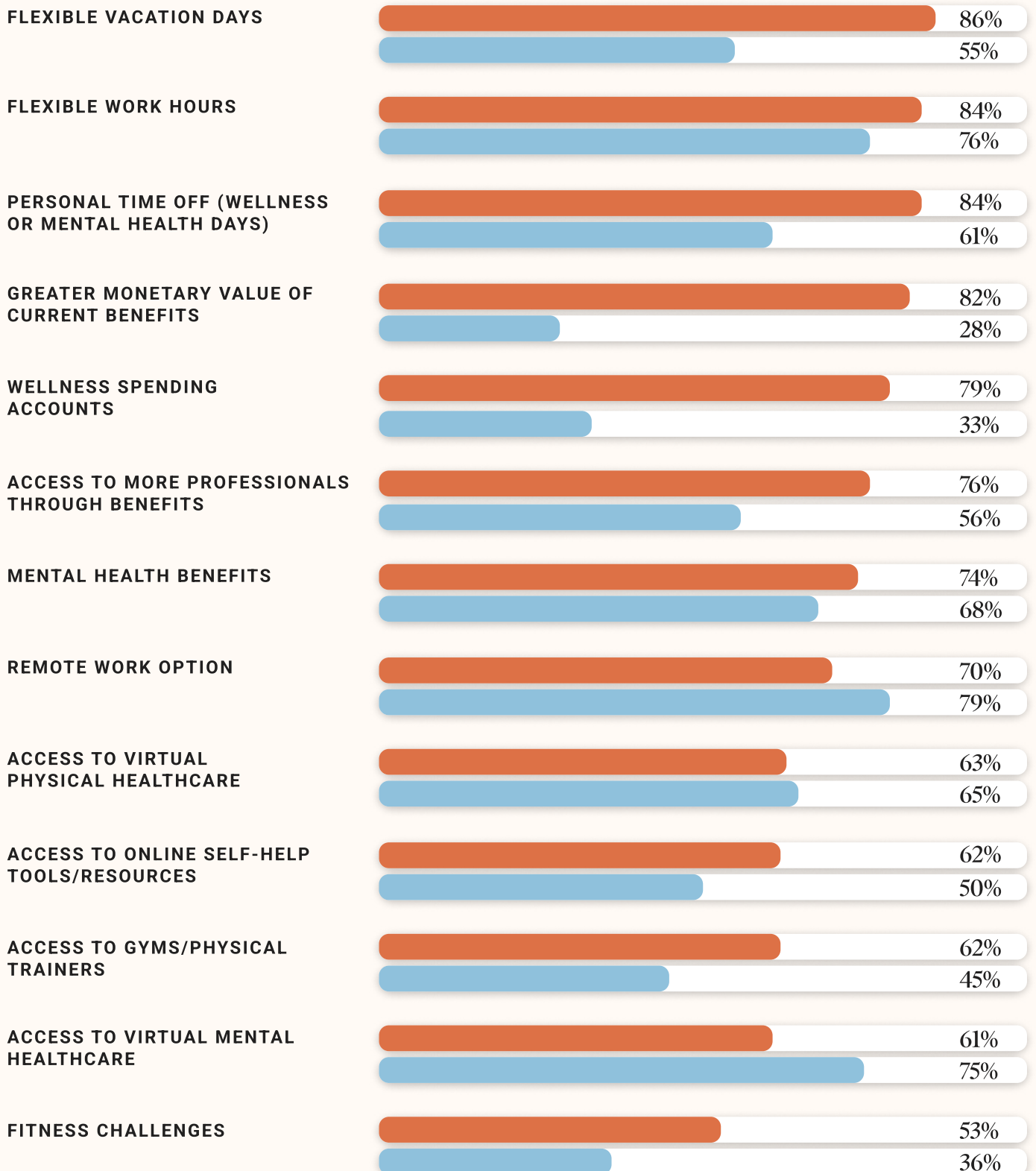




**Initiatives Canadians are likely to use for their well-being**

People who answered that they are very likely or likely to use the initiative

**Initiatives offered by Canadian organizations**





71% of employees and 98% of HR professionals agree that employee well-being initiatives are helpful.



Organizations that have taken appropriate measures to improve employee well-being have seen positive outcomes. Employees and HR professionals agree that **it has led to:**



Improving job satisfaction



Reducing absenteeism



Helping employees feel supported



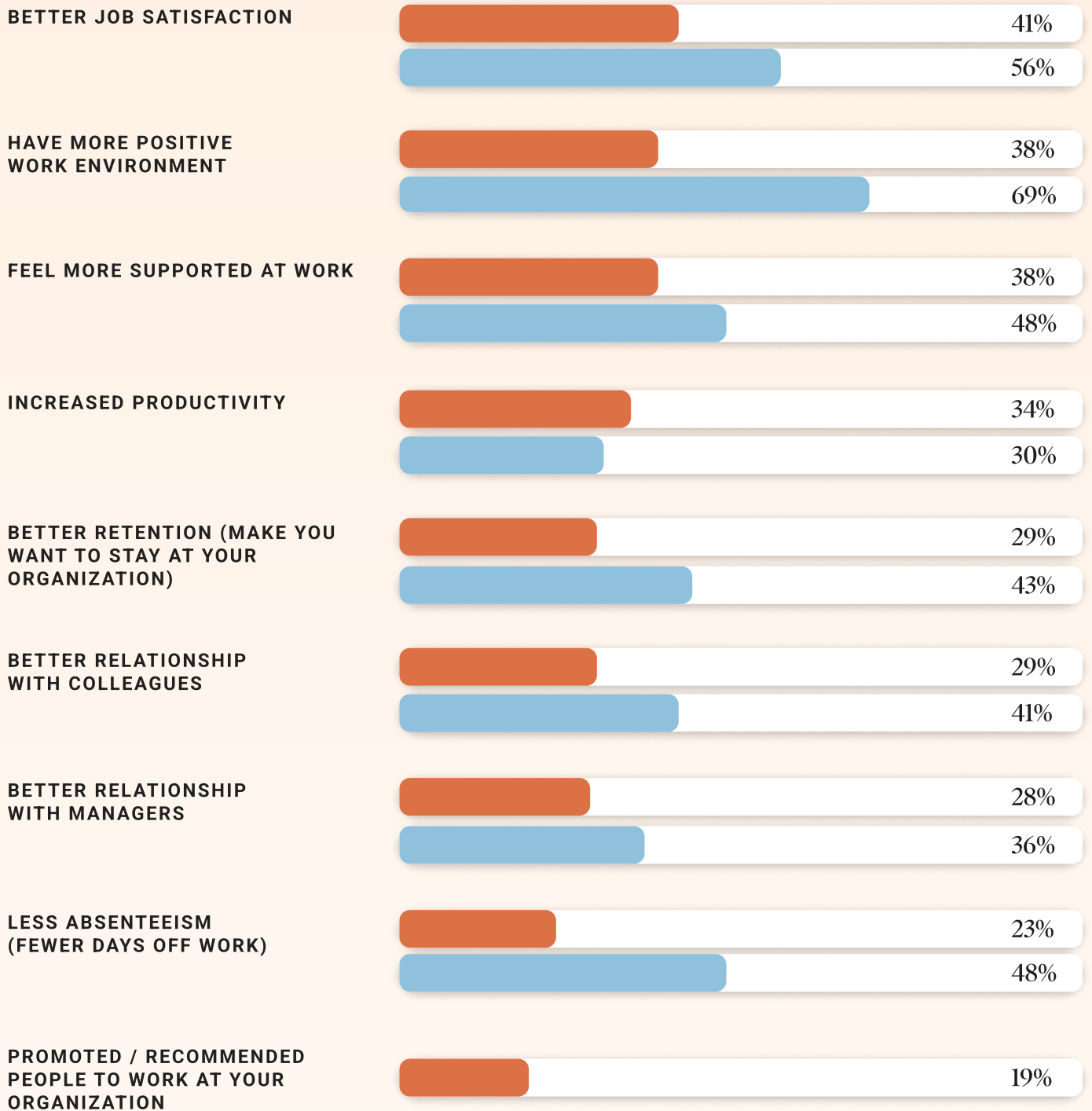
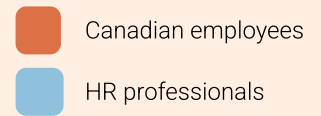
Increasing productivity



Fostering a more positive work environment



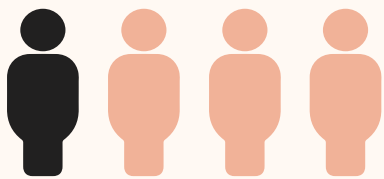
## The perceived impact of employee benefits





## Impact of employee benefit plans

Selecting the right benefits provider can be challenging for HR professionals. It requires input from various decision-makers and stakeholders, all while working within financial limits. This gives organizations even more reason to help employees maximize their benefits – starting by making sure they’re well-informed about available support and can easily access it.



Only 1 in 4 employees are “very aware” of available benefits.

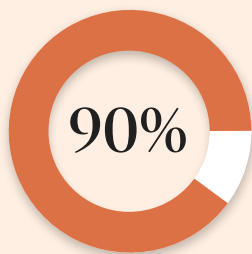
Among working Canadians, only a quarter (28%) are very aware of the benefits available to them. This could be attributed to the fact that over half (52%) of HR professionals state that their benefits are offered through different vendors. This can confuse employees as they must navigate various providers, channels, and access points – resulting in them missing out on available services or being unaware of them.

This suggests that **providers that offer a comprehensive range of services through a centralized access point** have a higher chance of driving utilization and positive outcomes.

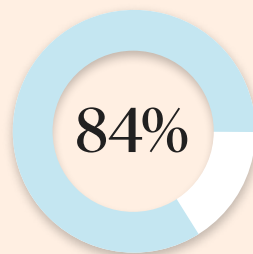


# 1 in 2 employees find their benefits insufficient or not meeting their needs.

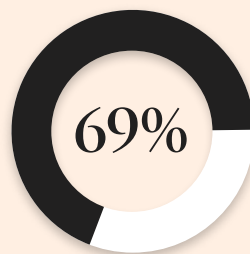
Choosing benefit providers is a tedious task for HR professionals, as evidenced by the number of influential parties in the process:



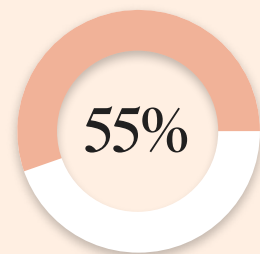
indicate HR is influential



indicate C-suite is influential



indicate the finance department is influential



indicate group advisors/brokers are influential

**One group that lacks influence is employees.**

Over half of working Canadians view their benefits to be insufficient (34%) or state that their benefits don't meet their needs (17%). At the same time, a third of HR professional (27%) indicate that employee feedback is not influential when selecting a benefits provider. — which may contribute to why **employees feel their benefits are lacking**.

Consulting with employees in those decisions can better align benefit plans with expectations. This can be done through surveys, focus groups, or one-on-one meetings.

When it comes to an employee assistance program (EAP), over a third (35%) of working Canadians indicate not having one or being unaware of one. Of those who do have an EAP, most have never accessed it (53%) or haven't done so within the past twelve months (29%).

When used, EAPs are noted as being especially helpful for mental health support, family issues, and financial counselling.



# Health and well-being expectations

To make a positive impact, employers must offer well-being services or programs that meet the needs and high expectations of their employees, which HR teams align with.

46% of working Canadians believe that employers should offer EAPs, including legal, family, career, and financial counselling. Another 53% believe employers should offer well-being programs (54%), including tools for habit-building, self-led fitness content, and wellness challenges.





And the majority (82%) agree that employers should provide virtual health and wellness options.



Employers seeking to provide virtual support should note that employees have high expectations – which HR professionals typically agree with.






Most want access to a variety of health-related supports that deliver **personalized and high-quality care** through the right professional – this means that platforms centralizing different care options and offering access to multidisciplinary care teams are key.

## EMPLOYEES AND HR AGREE THAT VIRTUAL CARE:

-  Enables faster access to healthcare (84%)
-  Prevents work absences (82%)
-  Allows proactivity for individual and family health (79%)
-  Increases productivity at work (75%)

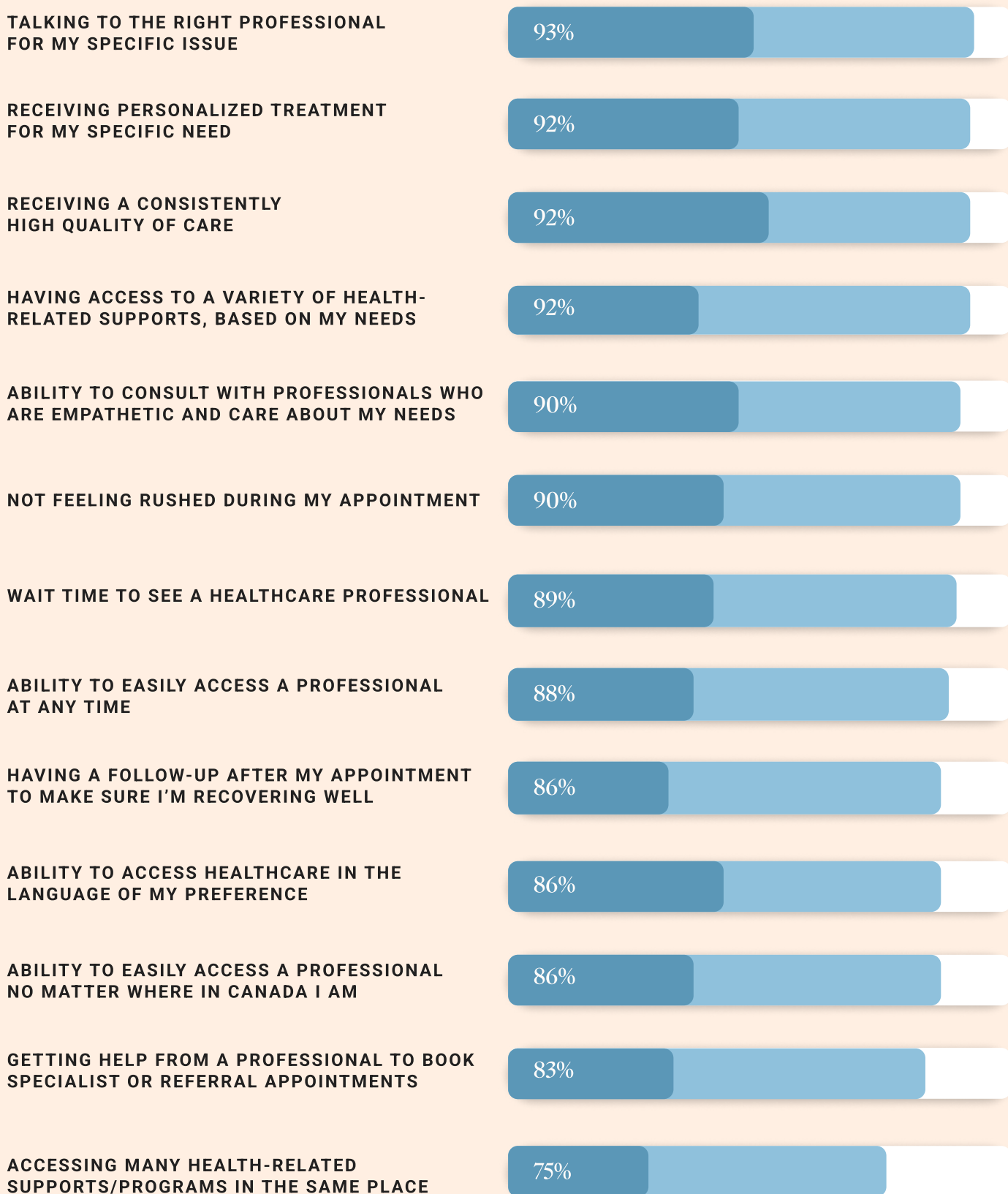
# 8 in 10 Canadians agree that employers should provide virtual care options.

## OTHER NOTABLE CRITERIA INCLUDE:

-  Not feeling rushed
-  Empathetic professionals
-  Short wait times
-  24/7 access and follow-ups
-  Support to book referral appointments



## What matters to employees when accessing care\*



People who answered that the factor is very important

People who answered that the factor is important



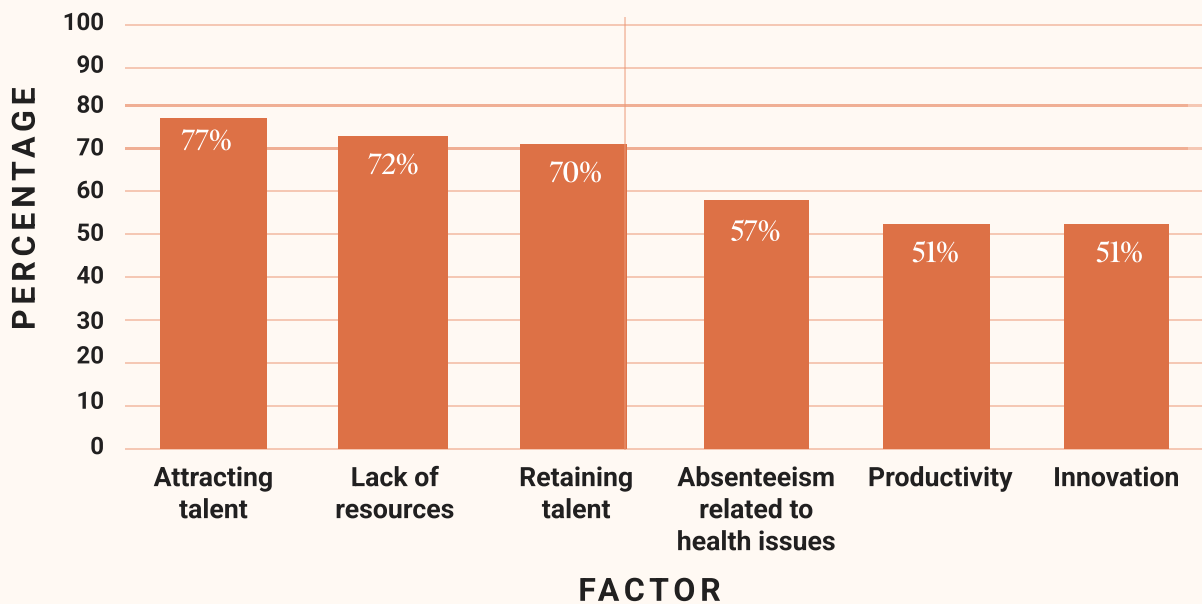
# Key considerations

Taking care of your business means taking care of your people.

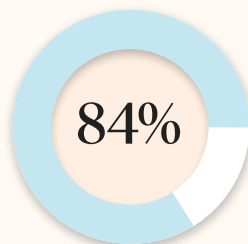
When employees are unwell and lack proper support, it can be detrimental on an individual and organizational level. When employees face declining health, decreased performance, and burnout, organizations risk dealing with increased absenteeism, high turnover, innovation gaps, and reduced productivity.



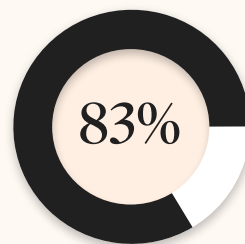
Of the top organizational challenges, the vast majority are interconnected:



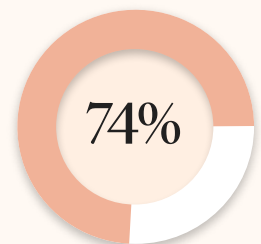
And can stem from other HR issues:



Employee mental health



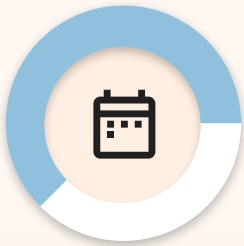
Overworked employees



Employee well-being



Essentially, employees' worsening physical, mental, and financial health can negatively affect the business. These issues worsen when employees can't access adequate support promptly and effectively.



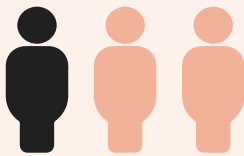
**62%**  
of working Canadians  
must wait 4+ days to  
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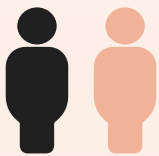
**35%**  
indicate not having  
or not being aware  
of an EAP.



**ONLY**  
**1 in 4**  
are “very aware” of the  
benefits available to them.



**1 in 3**  
continue to view their workplace  
mental health support as insufficient.



**1 in 2**  
view their overall benefits plan as  
insufficient or not meeting their needs.



By listening to how employees actually feel about their benefits and addressing health challenges head-on, employers can start mitigating the issues impacting the larger business.



# Opportunities for your organization

Employees have made it clear: they want high-quality care that is empathetic, accessible, and personalized to their needs. So, how do you ensure that your benefits providers can deliver on these expectations?



## Prioritize personalization

**Prioritizing personalization** not only helps your team members feel cared for, but it also drives more positive health outcomes. Tailored care experiences allow:



Appropriate level of care paired with the right professional



Personalized treatment plans and follow-ups as needed

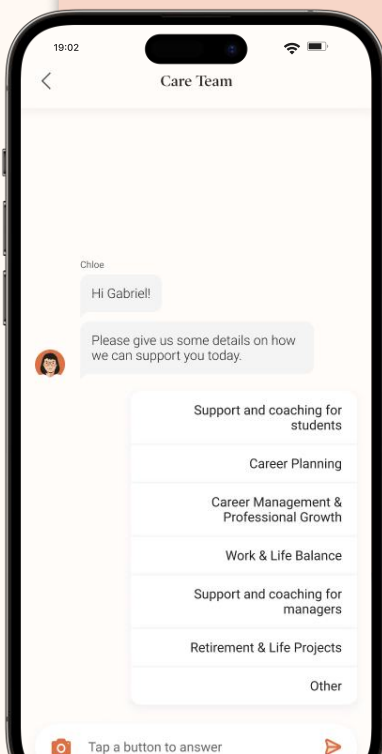


Smoother health journeys and referrals



Faster return to function

A personalized experience can also empower your members to engage in proactive, ongoing well-being — leading to lifelong health awareness and fewer issues down the line.





## Invest in high-quality, evidence-based care

**Investing in high-quality, evidence-based care** ensures your employees get top-notch support, skipping unnecessary and ineffective treatments that slow down recovery and increase costs.

Identify top clinical care providers by seeking those that offer:

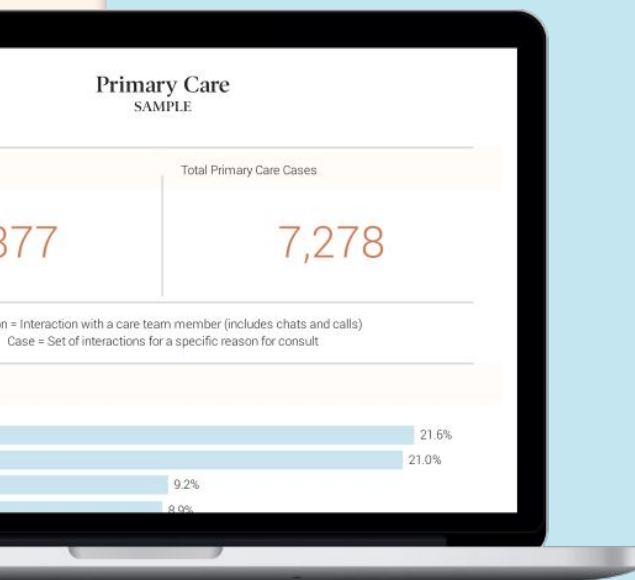
- Accredited and vetted care training, safety, and processes
- Regular clinical audits
- Demonstrated health outcomes



## Measure the outcome

**Measuring the outcome** of your benefits plan helps track its impact and informs future investments and decisions — making it easier to get the resources and buy-in you need for your next initiative.

Choose benefits providers that offer clear insights into your employees' benefits usage, and help improve utilization through effective onboarding and engagement support. It's even simpler when a single provider offers a comprehensive range of services, centralizing member support and streamlining reporting for easier decision-making.



So, what's next? Dialogue could be the partner you're looking for. To learn how we can help you and your members, discover the [Integrated Health Platform™](#).



## ABOUT ENVIRONICS RESEARCH

### Environics Research delivers evidence-based solutions to clients working in a range of sectors and industries.

Our team is drawn from many disciplines – from business and marketing, to sociology and urban affairs. This mix makes Environics a creative and intellectually vibrant research and consulting firm, where methodological rigour and unrivaled analytical capabilities come together. Our experience, our people and our sophisticated tool kit help our clients get answers to their most important questions.

Today, Environics' international clients include a number of the world's largest consumer marketers. In Canada, most of the country's governments, many leading non-profit entities, and businesses working in a range of industries (including financial services, telecommunications, natural resources, print and broadcast media, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, and packaged goods) trust Environics to develop actionable insights that inform evidence-based decision-making.

Environics has an extensive record of conducting health-related research, and of delivering evidence and insight to inform public health strategies and health policies at the provincial and federal levels.

Headquartered in Toronto, we employ more than 50 staff across Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa.

For more information about Environics Research or questions about this report, please contact:

**Ahsan Sadiq**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ahsan Sadiq', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Vice President, Health & Wellness  
ahsan.sadiq@environics.ca  
[environicsresearch.com](http://environicsresearch.com)

## Tailored, measurable, high-quality care for your members.

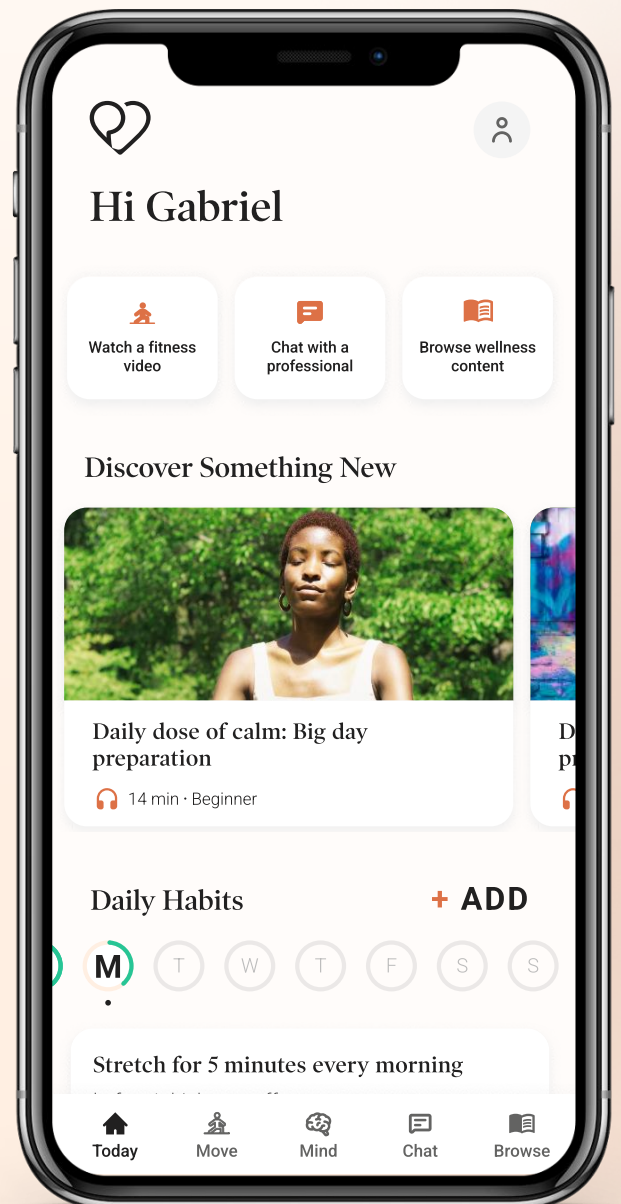
If you value business resilience, then team health and wellness should be a top priority.

Dialogue helps organizations like yours boost well-being and mental health through proven high-touch solutions. By doing so, you can foster a healthy and productive workforce that is empowered to drive your business forward.

As the leading virtual care provider in Canada, we're committed to personalized care, high clinical standards, and actionable insights to ensure your members see the health outcomes they expect and deserve.

**Learn more about Dialogue's approach to team well-being.**

**SCHEDULE A CALL**



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