

# Indicators of a Thriving Workplace Survey

2023 KEY INSIGHTS



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# Message from Superfriend's CEO and CRO



These days it's easy to roll out statistics that paint a daunting picture of workplace mental health. Whether it's the number of claims for compensation, millions of dollars of lost productivity or how many people are leaving workplaces in search of greener pastures, the picture can look quite bleak. Often the focus is on the negative, but that would mean we fail to see the positive potential workplaces have when it comes to mental health and wellbeing.

It is important to understand how the workplace plays a role in people's health and wellbeing, whether they take time off work and whether they see a future in their current role. The 2023 Indicators of a Thriving Workplace survey has been strengthened through the addition of questions that assess general psychological distress, burnout and measures commonly used by employers, such as employee retention, to track how they are performing as a business.

What you will read in the 2023 Key Insights report includes our early findings that demonstrate how SuperFriend's five Domains, alongside workplace Psychosocial Hazards, are connected to these essential outcomes. Better scores in Connectedness, Safety, Leadership, Capability and Work Design are reflected in lower levels of psychological distress for employees. There are also clear benefits for employers in terms of productivity, burnout and retention of talented professionals.

Our data runs much deeper than we can fully describe in a short report. We welcome your questions from the workplace about how SuperFriend's research can better guide action in workplaces nationally to help people thrive at work, both today and tomorrow.

Handwritten signature of Darren Black in white ink.

**Darren Black**  
MBA GAICD  
CEO

Handwritten signature of Ross Iles in white ink.

**Ross Iles**  
Associate Professor  
CRO



We would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands, their elders past and present. As an organisation with National reach, SuperFriend would also like to pay our respects to First Nations people across all of Australia.

We also acknowledge all Australian communities including those who, through their lived experience, help guide our research and education so that we can help build more mentally healthy and thriving workplaces. We recognise their valuable contribution at all levels and value the courage of those who share their unique perspectives for the purpose of learning and growing together to achieve better outcomes for all.



# About the 2023 Indicators of a Thriving Workplace survey

This is the ninth year of the Indicators of a Thriving Workplace survey, the continuation of SuperFriend’s research to benchmark the state of workplace mental health and wellbeing in Australia.

Last year we updated our Domains of a thriving workplace to ensure they reflect the latest trends in workplace mental health. This year, we were able to emphasise the connection between our Domains and common mental health outcomes observed in workplaces everywhere. Once again we measured nine common workplace Psychosocial Hazards that reflect recent workplace health and safety obligations for employers to keep their employees healthy and safe from harm.<sup>1</sup>

## What are the new measures?

We captured a range of **new information** to provide deeper insights into how the workplace impacts mental health and how people feel at work. Armed with this information, employers have the opportunity to build places where workers can thrive.



### Psychological distress

We applied the Kessler 10, a clinical measure of psychological distress, made up of questions about negative emotions experienced in the four weeks prior.<sup>2</sup>



### Productivity

Productivity was measured by a self-rating of job performance, whether workers had been absent due to mental health, and whether their workload was appropriate.



### Burnout

Burnout is a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed<sup>3</sup>. We measured the symptoms of exhaustion which presented as burnout.<sup>4</sup>



### Intention to stay

Employers invest significantly in recruiting and training staff and benefit from employee retention. We measured the likelihood that employees would remain with their organisation over the coming 12 months.

## How did we measure Australia's National Thriving Workplace score?

The Indicators of a Thriving Workplace Survey contains more than 100 questions about factors known to influence mental health. We summarise this information into Domain scores that describe different components of mental health in the workplace across five Domains.

	<b>Connectedness</b>
	<b>Safety</b>
	<b>Leadership</b>
	<b>Work Design</b>
	<b>Capability</b>

Each Domain is made up of several indicators which are added to find a total Domain score. Domain scores can be used as benchmarks across industries, locations and a range of other characteristics. Domain scores can be used to identify priority areas for action for workplaces to improve mental health and wellbeing.

Combining the five Domain scores into an average provides us with a National Thriving Workplace score. We can use this to rank industries and identify those leading the way in supporting workers to thrive at work. These industries can be a source of initiatives to help others support mental health and wellbeing.

## How did we gather this information?

Over 10,000 Australian workers completed an online survey in August 2023. Responses were gathered across the nation and to ensure a nationally representative sample, results were weighted according to gender, age, 19 Australian industries<sup>5</sup> and work location as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).<sup>6</sup>

## What does it mean?

The 2023 Indicators of a Thriving Workplace survey has consolidated the role of SuperFriend's Domains when it comes to mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. Not only do the Domain scores describe how each industry is performing, the strong connections to outcomes such as psychological distress, burnout and productivity underline the benefits to workplaces that come with prioritising mental health. Currently, **many workplaces are an underutilised avenue to improving mental health**, and there is **huge potential for more workplaces to play a positive role in enabling Australian workers to thrive**.



# Executive Summary

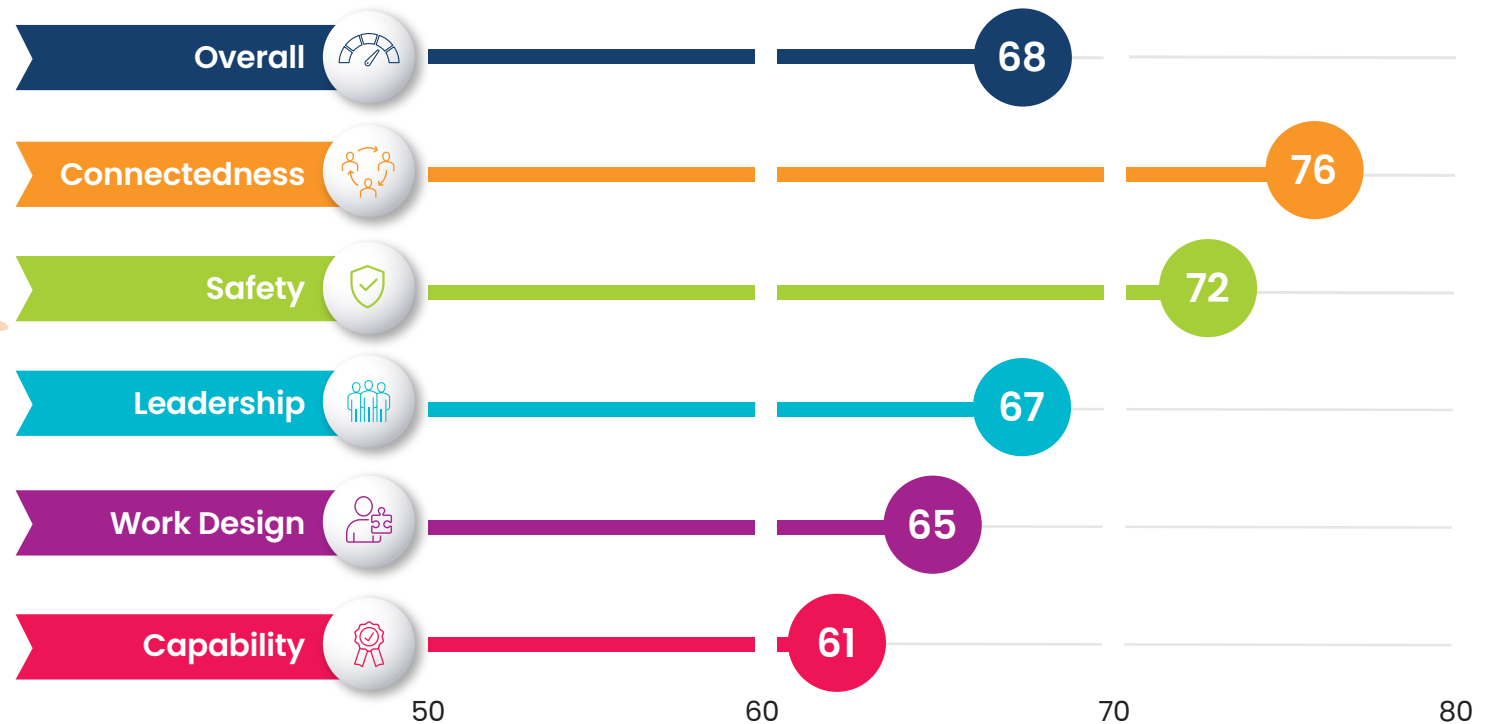
The National Thriving Workplace score in 2023 was

**68**  
out of 100



Domain scores provide us with action areas to improve workplaces across the nation. Connectedness was once again the highest rated Domain, and Work Design and Capability the lowest. Work Design and Capability must be prioritised for action to improve workplace wellbeing, however there is room for improvement across all Domains.

National Thriving Workplace Scores by Domain



	Relationships & Fairness	77
	Environment	76
	Role Clarity	75
	Management Support	↑ 75
	Traumatic Events	↓ 74
	Job Control	↓ 72
	Workload	↑ 71
	Change Management	↓ 70
	Recognition	↓ 66

	Ranked higher than in 2022
	Ranked the same as in 2022
	Ranked lower than in 2022

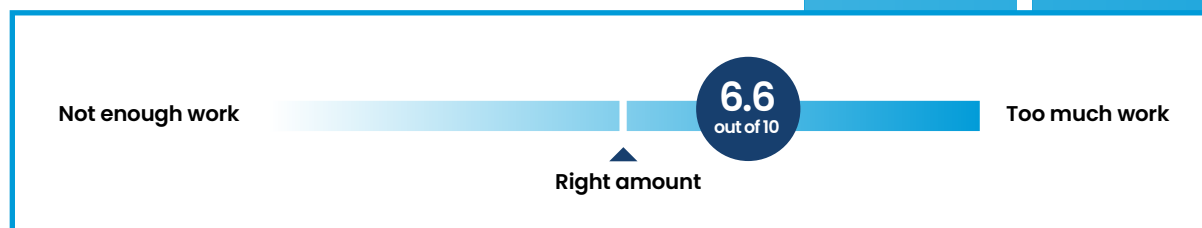
\*Refer to the glossary for a definition of each hazard

## Psychosocial Hazards

Psychosocial Hazards are aspects of work that have the potential to cause a stress response that leads to psychological harm.<sup>1</sup> Higher scores represent a higher level of control, whereas lower scores indicate the highest risk to employee health and wellbeing. In 2023, Workload, Change Management and Recognition of workers' efforts were identified as hazards most likely to lead to harm in the workplace. The three lowest and three highest scoring hazards have not changed since the 2022 survey.

## Workload

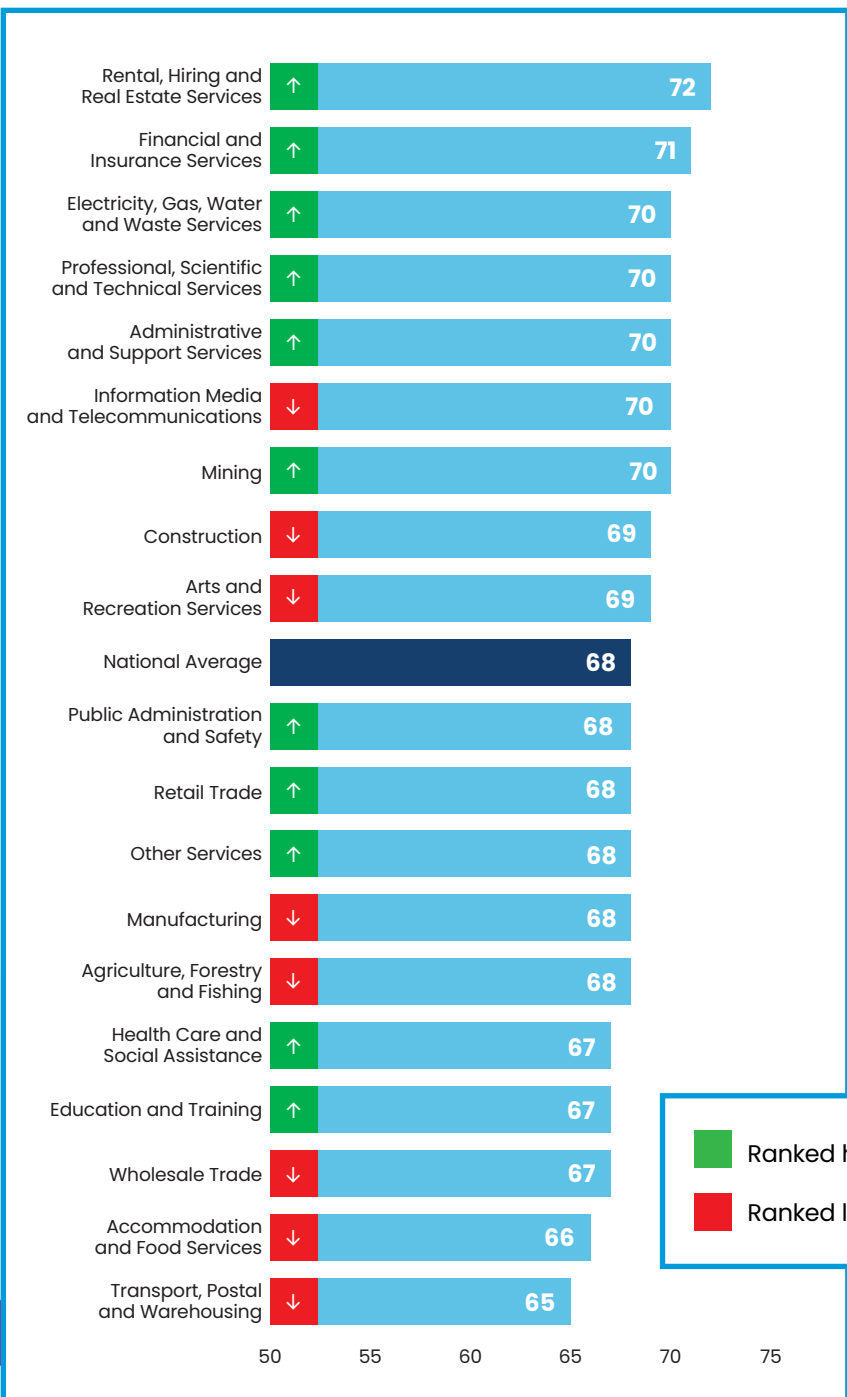
On average people reported having too much work to do.



## National Thriving Workplace Scores by Industry

Thriving Workplace scores can be calculated for each of the 19 industries captured in the survey. Rankings highlight industries that are making inroads to provide environments where workers can thrive. Industries with the lowest scores must be prioritised for initiatives to improve workplace mental health and wellbeing, many of which may be adapted from those leading industries.

The largest improvement in ranking compared to 2022 came from Rental, Hiring and Real Estate, Mining, and Other Services. Financial Services and Retail Trade held the steadiest, only changing a single position. The industries with the greatest decline in rankings were Transport, Postal and Warehousing, and Manufacturing.



■ Ranked higher than in 2022  
■ Ranked lower than in 2022



**Contact SuperFriend**  
if you would like to know more about your industry



## Workplace Mental Health Outcomes

### Psychological distress

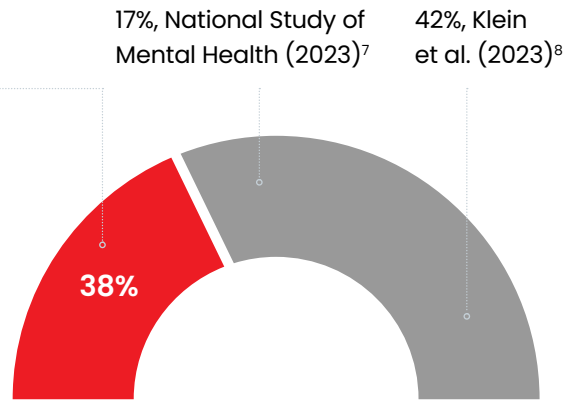
38% of workers reported experiencing either high or very high levels of distress in the four weeks prior to completing the survey. This proportion falls between those described in other 2023 national studies (see below).

These levels of anxiety, depression and other negative feelings are consistent with symptoms of a moderate to severe mental health condition. The Connectedness Domain had the strongest relationship with psychological distress and acts as a protective factor against mental ill-health.



The Domains of **Connectedness, Safety, Leadership, Work Design** and **Capability** are strongly connected to psychological distress, burnout and other markers of workplace mental health and wellbeing. Domain scores are clear guideposts to help more workplaces to become a positive influence on the mental health of the Australian workforce.

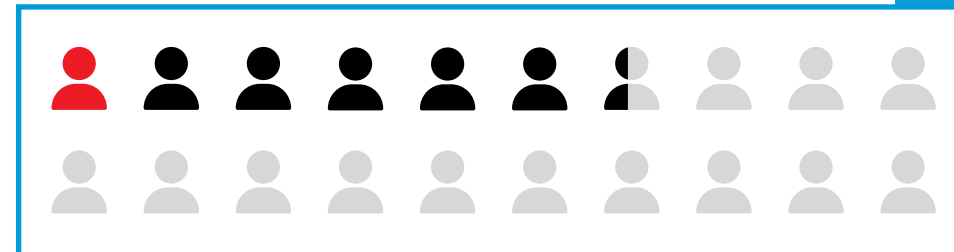
### 38% reported high levels of psychological distress



### Burnout

Almost one in three workers reported some symptoms of burnout, while one in 20 reported being “completely burned out”.

Burnout is associated with lower productivity, lower intent to stay, and it also makes workers more likely to experience high levels of psychological distress.



For every 20 people in the workplace, 6 will report some symptoms of burnout, with one being completely burned out.

# Domain: Connectedness



Quality of interpersonal relationships

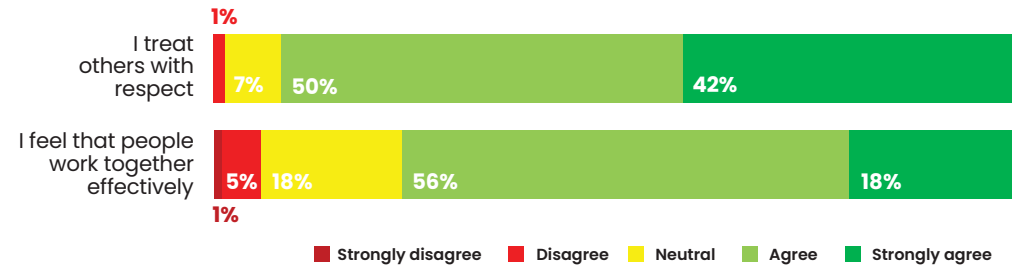
**76**  
out of 100

The Connectedness  
Domain score in 2023

## Connectedness is high with little variation by industry

The Education industry had one of the best scores (77), with the Transport, Postal and Warehousing industry the lowest (73). Otherwise, there was not much variation from the national average score (76).

## % Agreement with Connectedness indicators



## There is room for organisations to improve teamwork

Connectedness scores were driven higher by workplace indicators about individual respondent's behaviour, e.g. "I treat others with respect." Given that 24% of workers did not agree that people work together effectively, there is an opportunity for organisations to focus on developing a positive culture where people can work together well.

**"I make sure I get to ask each employee weekly how they are doing... so if I suspect a problem then to deal with it quickly so that it doesn't fester away."**

Health care manager at a private practice in VIC

### Connectedness is the most important Domain for keeping a workplace mentally healthy

Feeling connected is a strong protective factor for psychological distress, overall mental health, and general wellbeing. It also encourages a safe space for people to be open about their mental health experiences with co-workers and potential to have a positive impact on people’s mental health.

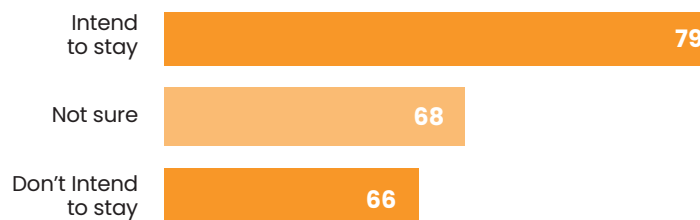
### This Domain is also a strategy for organisations to combat burnout

Quality relationships can be utilised to quickly respond when people are feeling stressed at work. To prevent burnout, organisations are recommended to focus on building an environment where workers feel both psychologically safe as well as a sense of belonging.<sup>9</sup>

“It [work] gave me a reason for being. My managers and coworkers were very supportive and were easily able to cheer me up and make me feel like I belonged there.”

Management consultant at a large company in SA

#### Connectedness score by intention to stay



### Connectedness score is a great predictor of employee retention

There is a strong association between Connectedness and people’s intent to stay with their current organisation for the following 12 months. Developing and maintaining positive relationships within organisations is also something that can be improved without the need for large investments.



# Domain: Safety



Protection from harmful experiences such as harassment, bullying, discrimination and violence

**72**  
out of 100

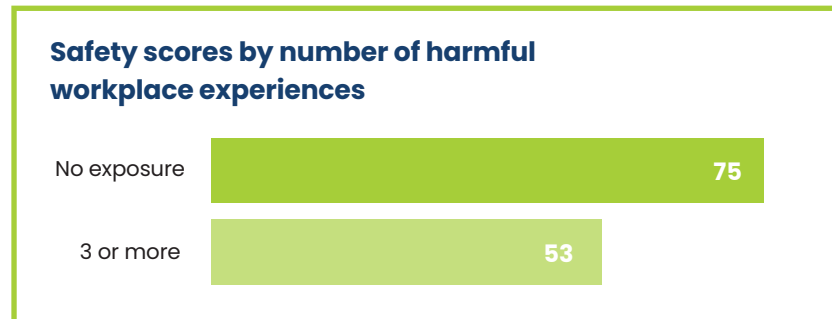
The Safety Domain score in 2023

## Concerningly, one in four workers were exposed to a harmful workplace experience in the past 12 months

Given the high incidence of harassment, bullying, discrimination and violence, the importance of the Safety Domain cannot be understated. In the last 12 months:

- 1 in 10 experienced bullying
- 1 in 13 experienced violence perpetrated by someone either internal or external to the workplace
- 1 in 10 people in larger organisations (200+ employees) experienced discrimination

The more harmful experiences workers have, the more likely they are to have a lower Safety score



### Safety Domain by industry

**Lower performing industries include:**



Accommodation and Food Services (69)



Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (68)

**Higher performing industries include:**



Financial and Insurance Services (75)



Mining (74)

Despite scoring below average overall, the Education and Training industry is doing well in Safety and on par with the national average (72).

## Feeling safe in the workplace is fundamentally associated with mental health

### Safety scores by whether people agreed that their workplace is mentally healthy



### When employees clearly understand policies, they are more likely to be engaged with them

When workers were aware of four or more workplace policies (for example, Return to Work or Mental health/Wellbeing policies) they had a higher score for Safety (75) than those who reported either one or none (62).

Taking the time to put formal policies in place and improving awareness and the communication of them is definitely worthwhile. When policies exist that put the employee’s safety and wellbeing ahead of performance metrics, organisational support is embedded into everyday operation.<sup>9</sup>

“[In my ideal workplace] potential stressors that can be prevented or controlled are. There is training involving typical potential stresses such as bullying, workplace OHS, discrimination, aggression and violence.”

Health care worker at a large hospital in Melbourne



# Domain: Leadership



How managers support  
their employees'  
mental health

**68**  
out of 100

The Leadership Domain  
score in 2023

## Leaders have a strong role to play in building the culture of an organisation

Leaders have been referred to as 'culture architects' whose influence is a key factor in meeting organisational goals.<sup>10</sup> Scores for Leadership were related to three key Psychosocial Hazards: Relationships and Fairness, Change Management, and Role Clarity. This suggests that employees consider their managers to be responsible for controlling these risks to health and wellbeing.

## % Agreement with Leadership indicators



## Change management is an area for leaders to improve that can drive culture

Only 59% agreed their leaders had the expertise to effectively manage change, compared with 73% who agreed that they support teamwork.

**"Where any large scale changes are made, at the planning stage, involve a group of employees to measure the impact and how the messages are received - this will help better prepare the delivery of the message and how the change is received."**

Health care worker at a large hospital in Melbourne

## Employees expect their leaders to facilitate a safe work environment

Leadership scores declined by 10 points among individuals who encountered even a single harmful workplace experience (e.g. bullying) at their workplace. Larger organisations (200+ people) were also more likely to have a lower score (65) compared with smaller organisations (2-19 people) that sat higher (71).

## Leadership scores are a strong contributor to whether people experience burnout

32% of people report symptoms of burnout at work. The presence of burnout is associated with lower levels of productivity and a lower intention to remain with the organisation. Leadership scores are a significant driver of burnout and people with a low score are far more likely to experience burnout.

## Workplaces, through strong leadership, can have a positive impact on employee mental health

Ensuring strong leadership is a step towards building a workplace that has a positive impact on mental health. Of people with a mental health condition, those who said their workplace had a positive impact reported a Leadership score almost 20 points higher than those who said their workplace made it worse.



### Leadership scores by symptoms of burnout



### Leadership scores by impact of the workplace on mental health



# Domain: Work Design




How roles, tasks and responsibilities are organised


**65**  
out of 100


The Work Design Domain score in 2023

## Work Design remains the second lowest score nationally at 65

The three poorest performing industries are all ones which require hands-on work tasks with fewer opportunities for flexible work, including:

 Transport, Postal and Warehousing (59)

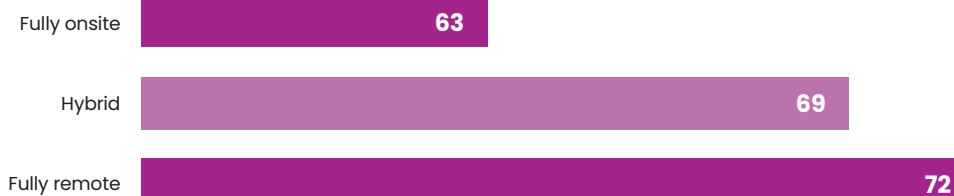
 Education and Training (59)

 Health Care and Social Assistance (61)

## The opportunity to work from home drives increased Work Design scores

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the choice to work remotely has become more important for employee satisfaction with the average preference to work 2.2 days from home per week.

### Work Design scores by working arrangement



One in three Australians who work from home would quit their job or look for another if their employer required them to work full-time from an office.<sup>11</sup>





## Working from home is not the only way to provide autonomy

67% of workers agree that they can contribute to decisions that affect their job and these people have higher scores for Work Design (77) compared with those who don't (45). Workers who are empowered to influence the way they work report a much more mentally healthy workplace overall, as well as higher job satisfaction.

When people get to the point of exhaustion and are burnt out, their Work Design scores drop significantly (57). Poor Work Design drives increased levels of burnout across every industry.

Work Design scores were higher for:



Small organisations with 2-19 employees (69)



Organisations with a Flexible work policy (70)



Senior Managers or Business Owners (71)

## Leaders promote work-life balance, but can do more in practice to help workers thrive

65% of workers said that their manager supports work-life balance. However, when it comes to mental health, only half agreed that their managers demonstrate how they support their own mental health. Leaders can do more by modelling supportive behaviour and encouraging everyone in the team to look out for signs of burnout, such as changes in behaviour like withdrawal or reduced performance.

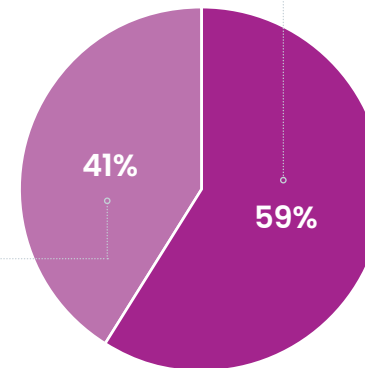
## Workload plays a key role

Only 59% of respondents agreed their workload is appropriate. Those that disagreed, had a Work Design score of only 59, compared with a score of 73 for those who agreed.

### More people report having either too little or too much work

59% did not have an appropriate workload

41% reported a reasonable workload



# Domain: Capability



Skills and resources available to support mental health

**61**  
out of 100

The Capability Domain score in 2023

The Domain with most room for improvement is Capability which scored only 61

Capability scores were higher for:



Workers in the Mining (67) or Public Administration and Safety industries (65)



Organisations with Mental health/Wellbeing policies (67)



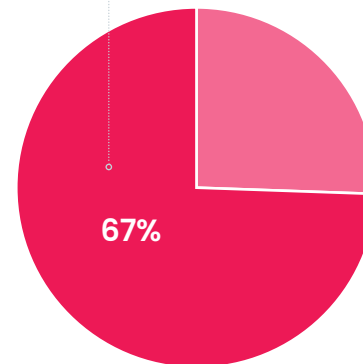
Large organisations with 200+ employees (64)

## The workplace is an underutilised source of mental health support

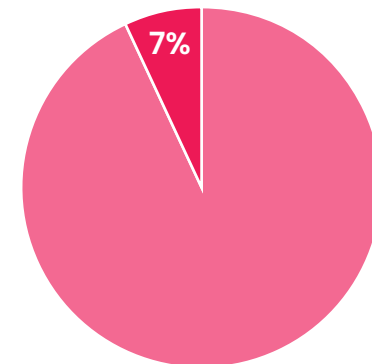
Over half of Australians say they have trouble accessing mental health support due to barriers like cost or appointment wait times<sup>12</sup> but the workplace remains an underutilised avenue for support.

### Utilising mental health support

67% agreed they had access to counselling



...despite many experiencing psychological distress, only 7% accessed a health professional through work



## One in 10 workers said that the workplace has had a positive impact on their mental health condition

There is a huge opportunity to increase the positive influence the workplace can have on mental health and wellbeing. Only 12% of workers reached out to co-workers for mental health support in the past 12 months, but if there are efforts to reduce stigma in the workplace, this will encourage more help-seeking.

Capability scores are lower for:



Casual workers (55)



Employers with <1 year job tenure (59)



Small organisations with 2-19 employees (57)

**“I shared my mental health and other health issues with my organisation to a very warm and positive response by management”**

**Aged care worker in a junior management role in regional QLD**

## Organisations that invest in building mental health capabilities can increase productivity at the same time

People who rate themselves as being at their top performance have higher scores for Capability. Implementing mental health programs is worthwhile for organisations, who can gain a \$15 return on investment in the way of productivity, retention, and reduced work injury claims, for every \$1 spent on effective initiatives.<sup>13</sup>

### Capability scores based on self-rated productivity












## Compassionate leadership creates an environment where workers feel more comfortable reaching out

Just 38% agreed that managers participate in regular mental health training, so there is room for managers to develop the skills they need to be a compassionate leader. It is vital that managers are proactive in starting supportive conversations with employees who might be struggling. Empowering leaders with the capabilities to support mental health is one of the key recommendations to help people thrive at work.<sup>14</sup>

# Psychosocial Hazards

According to Safe Work Australia Psychosocial Hazards are 'anything that could cause psychological harm.'<sup>1</sup> Here, Psychosocial Hazards have been scored in a way where a higher score represents a higher level of control, whereas a lower score indicates a higher risk to employee health and wellbeing. Compared to 2022, the three highest scoring hazards are unchanged. Recognition showed the largest negative change to replace Workload at the bottom of the list.

	Relationships & Fairness	77
	Environment	76
	Role Clarity	75
	Management Support	↑ 75
	Traumatic Events	↓ 74
	Job Control	↓ 72
	Workload	↑ 71
	Change Management	↓ 70
	Recognition	↓ 66

Legend:

- Ranked higher than in 2022
- Ranked the same as in 2022
- Ranked lower than in 2022

\*Refer to the glossary for a definition of each hazard

**Psychosocial Hazards are important – it is the responsibility of the employer to manage those that are most prevalent and are having most impact on workers within their workplace.**

Focusing on the hazards that scored the lowest:



### Recognition

Recognition was the lowest scoring hazard overall. In particular, respondents wanted to see improvement in how they are rewarded for achievements at work. Rewards can include small gestures of gratitude for good work or dedication, beyond just standard salary compensation.



### Change Management

Strong leadership skills and proactive leaders are important in guiding employees through changes. Communication is key during these times as only 59% of workers say that their leaders clearly communicate why organisational changes are needed.



### Workload

Workload was the third lowest scoring hazard. Those with higher workload levels reported lower job performance, signalling a drop in performance as an indicator of having too much to adequately deal with.

On average people rated themselves as having too much work to do. Ongoing work overload is a significant contributor to burnout.

**“[In my ideal workplace there would be] recognition of the emotional labour of our roles... they would seek feedback from on the ground staff to improve psychological safety, rather than disregarding it completely”**

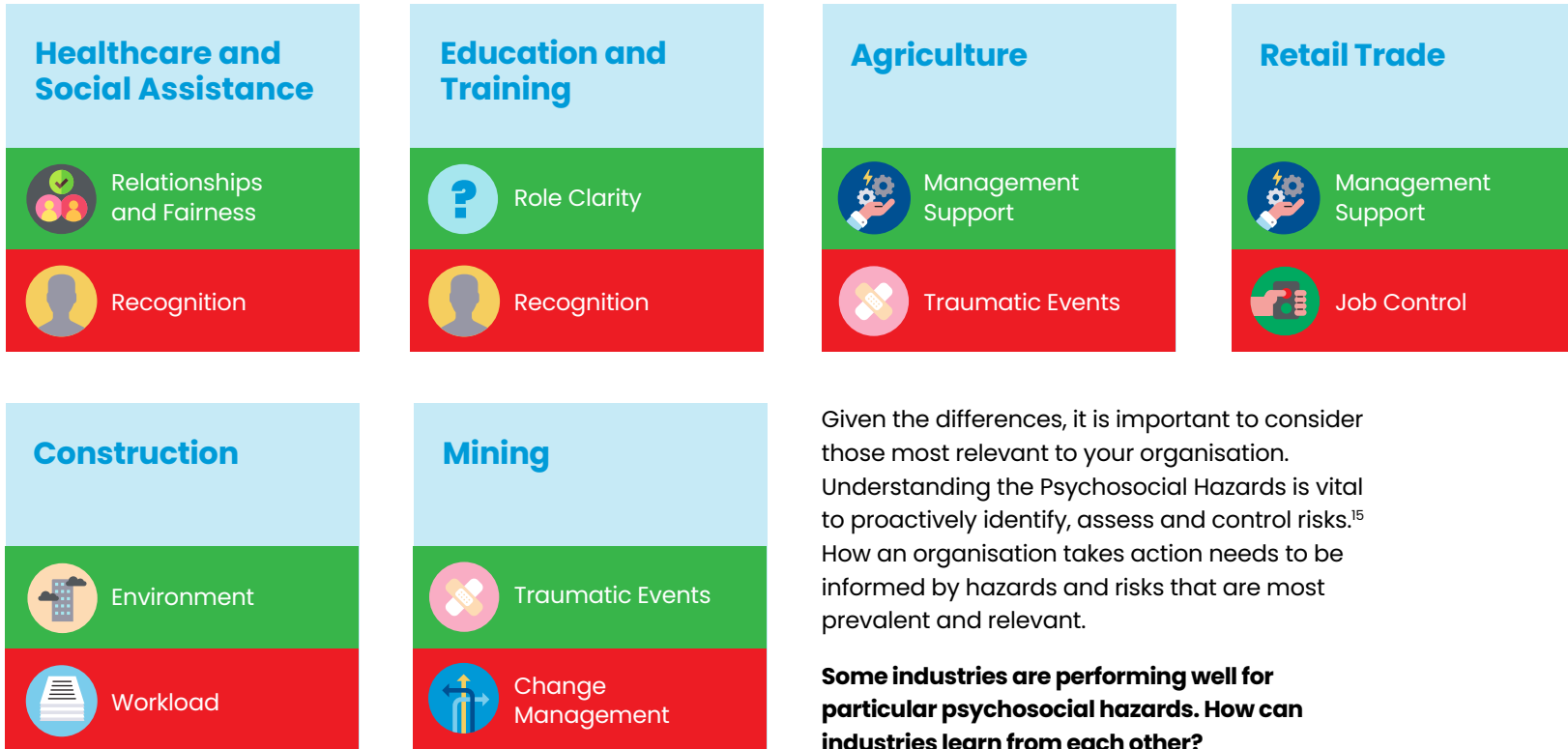
Community services worker in regional QLD working entirely remotely

**“[In my ideal workplace there would be] Reductions in workload to allow completion of tasks at a slower pace”**

Senior manager in government in WA.

# Psychosocial Hazards by Industry

Psychosocial Hazards are different across work environments, which may be due to work roles and the nature of activities. The scores for Psychosocial Hazards varied greatly across industries.



Given the differences, it is important to consider those most relevant to your organisation. Understanding the Psychosocial Hazards is vital to proactively identify, assess and control risks.<sup>15</sup> How an organisation takes action needs to be informed by hazards and risks that are most prevalent and relevant.

**Some industries are performing well for particular psychosocial hazards. How can industries learn from each other?**

Best  
 Worst



If your industry isn't here, [contact us](#) to find out more

# Workplace Mental Health Outcomes

## Psychological distress

**Over one in three** workers reported psychological distress in the past four weeks. That is, symptoms consistent with a moderate to severe mental health condition.



### The workplace can worsen mental health conditions, but it can also have a positive impact

Of the 40% of workers with a lifetime mental health condition, 46% responded that their workplace had either caused or contributed to their poor mental health. However, one in 10 credited work as a positive influence on their mental health.

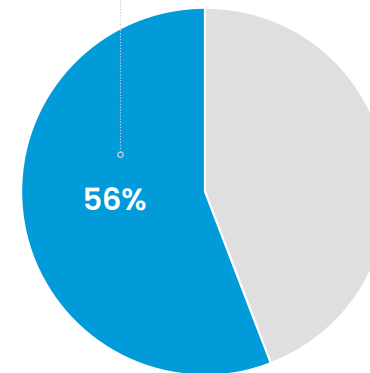
**“My workplace has helped me to find a more meaningful line of work along with great work friends”**

Community services worker in regional QLD working entirely remotely

### Distress can arise before, during and after work

When so much time is spent in the workplace, it would benefit the one in three people experiencing moderate to severe symptoms of distress to be able to talk about it. However, a little over half of the workforce feel comfortable enough to talk about their mental health at work.

56% of Australian workers felt comfortable talking about their mental health at work



## Burnout

### Burnout is present as a result of continued workplace stress and drives increased psychological distress

According to the World Health Organisation, burnout is a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.<sup>3</sup> Workers were specifically asked about any feelings of exhaustion they had which presented as burnout.

Almost one in three workers reported at least one symptom of burnout, with one in 20 saying:

**"I feel completely burned out and often wonder if I can go on. I am at the point where I may need some changes or may need to seek some sort of help."**

Burnout can lead to a reduction in both effectiveness and quality of work, with another study finding that 57% of people who were burned out reported their productivity falling in the past 12 months.<sup>9</sup>

### Those belonging to minority groups were more likely to be burned out

Groups which had a higher risk of burnout included:



Those of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin



Those identifying as LGBTQIA+



Women



Younger people (18 – 34 years old)

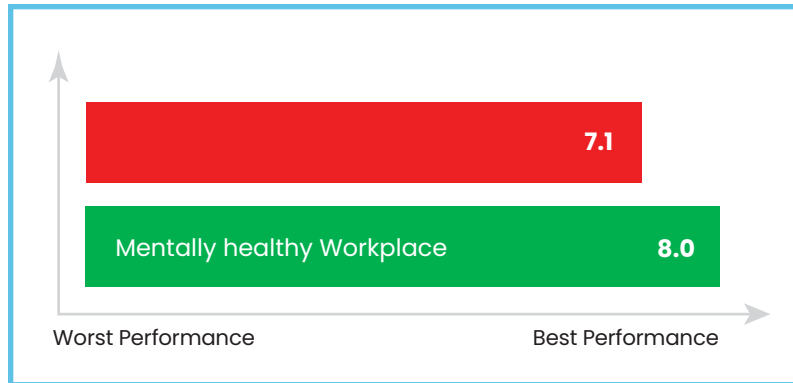
Workers currently under financial stress, that is having difficulty paying for housing, utilities and groceries, were also at higher risk. 45% of those experiencing high financial stress reported burnout, compared with only 25% of those with low financial stress.





## Productivity

Self-rated productivity over the past four weeks was measured on a 10 point scale. On average workers rated their productivity as higher if they agreed that their workplace was mentally healthy.



The Australian Productivity Commission has estimated economic losses in Australia between \$12 – \$32 billion annually due to decreased labour participation and job performance related to mental health.<sup>15</sup> Investing in mental health supports can help to reduce these costs.

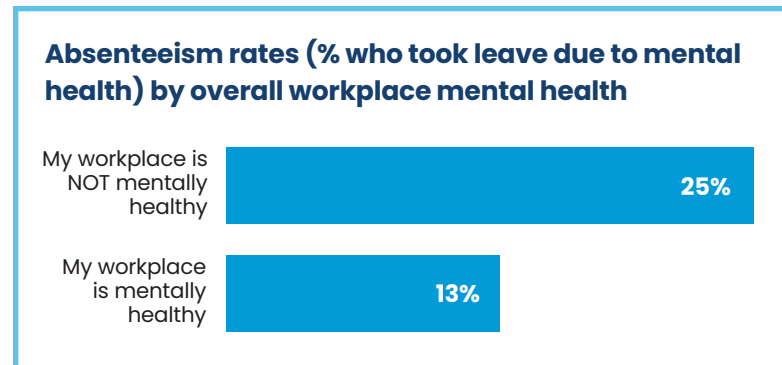
## Absenteeism

### A mentally healthy workplace has a lower rate of absenteeism

Absenteeism was defined as absence from work for at least one day due to poor mental health. In the 4 weeks prior to completing the survey...

- **One in three** had daily activities impacted by mental health issues
- **One in five** took at least one day of leave due to mental health

Absenteeism has continued to increase over the past decade<sup>16</sup> and is concerning given the implications for productivity across the Australian workforce. When workers had a mentally healthy workplace overall, they had a lower rate of absenteeism.













Over a full year the impact of poor mental health can reduce productivity for up to 107 work days (an average of 8.2 days every 4 weeks) and result in up to 50 days absent from work (an average of 3.8 days every 4 weeks) for every employee experiencing poor mental health. Creating a mentally healthy workplace can nearly halve the impact of mental health related reductions in productivity and absenteeism.

**One in 10 workers intended to leave their employer within the next year**

Workers were asked about the future they see in their current workplace, and 11% did not intend to stay over the next 12 months. This was slightly higher than measures of recorded job mobility from the ABS, which found that 9.5% of Australian workers changed jobs over the past 12 months.<sup>18</sup> Failing to retain workers comes at great cost, both direct costs such as hiring, and indirect ones such as loss of productivity due to time spent onboarding and training new employees.

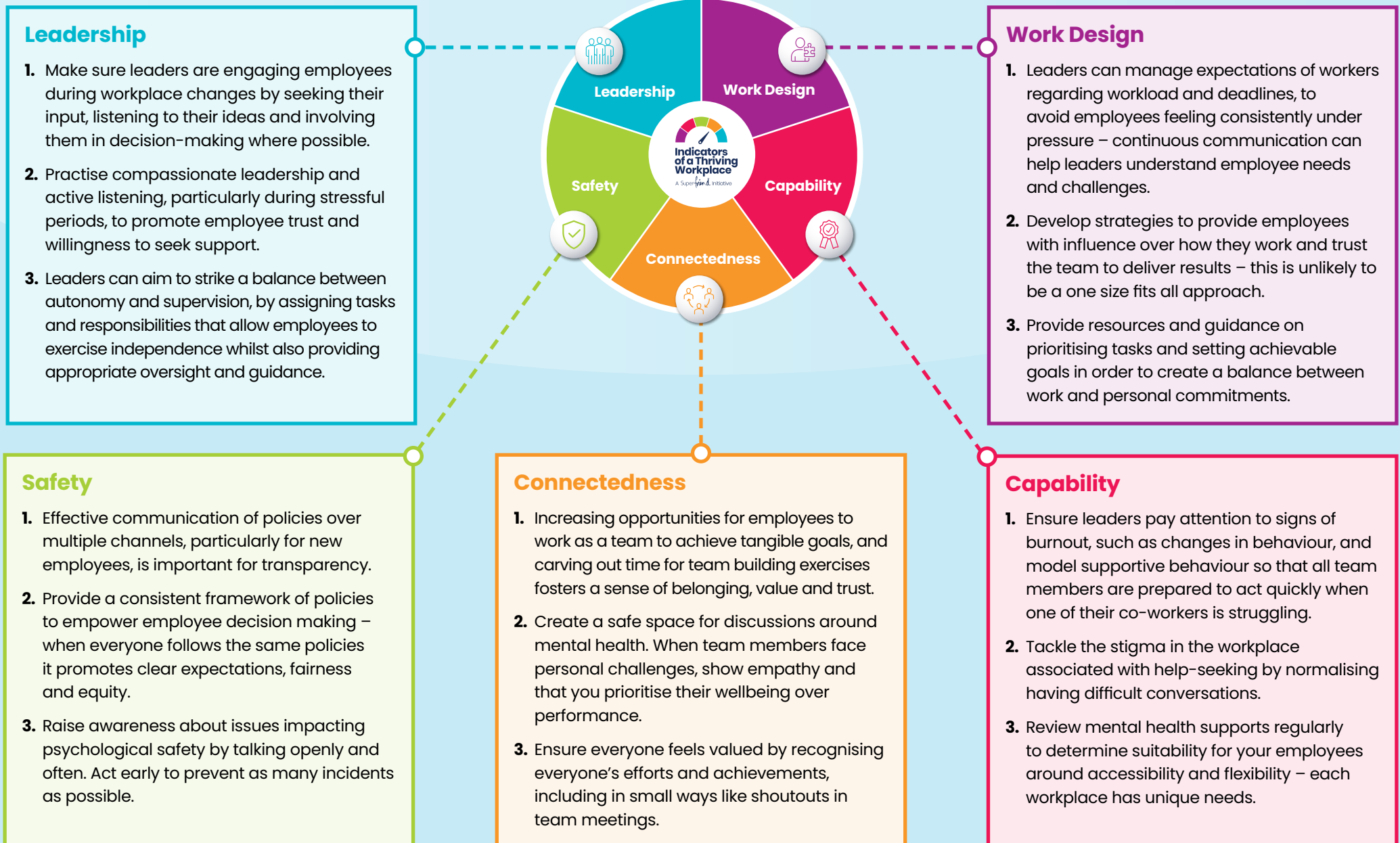


# How does each Domain influence these mental health outcomes?

 <p><b>Burnout</b></p> <p>Positive scores for <b>Work Design, Safety</b> and <b>Leadership</b> reduced burnout levels. Improving burnout was also associated with better productivity and increased employee retention.</p> 	 <p><b>Absenteeism</b></p> <p>Those who took leave due to mental health in the past four weeks were more likely to have lower scores for <b>Leadership</b> and <b>Safety</b>. A mentally healthy workplace had a lower absenteeism rate.</p> 	 <p><b>Psychological distress</b></p> <p><b>Connectedness</b> was a key protective factor for psychological distress. The workplace can make a positive impact on mental health through positive relationships.</p> 	 <p><b>Productivity</b></p> <p>When work had a positive impact on their mental health, workers rated their job performance as higher. Productivity was also positively associated with <b>Capability</b> and <b>Work Design</b> scores.</p> 	 <p><b>Intent to stay</b></p> <p>Higher <b>Leadership, Connectedness</b> and <b>Capability</b> scores were associated with a greater intent for workers to stay at their current organisation.</p> 
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# Strategies to build a thriving workplace



# How does your organisation measure up?

This report provides a high-level snapshot of the extremely rich data captured in this survey. SuperFriend will continue to use this information to learn more about how workplaces can play a positive role in mental health and wellbeing. We can provide national and industry-level insights and will continue our work to highlight how effective action can and should differ based on essential characteristics that emerge from the data.

SuperFriend has developed the Thriving Workplace Index tool to provide a workplace-level assessment that can be mapped to these findings. It provides a workplace comparison with national and industry Domain scores, Psychosocial Hazards and mental health outcomes. The Thriving Workplace Index also enables measurement of the impact of interventions when applied before and after workplace mental health and wellbeing initiatives are implemented.

**Contact us to find out if the Thriving Workplace Index is suitable for your organisation.**



## Learn more

To learn more about the data-driven insights available, including where your industry sits and questions about the survey methodology, please contact us using the details below.

## Contact SuperFriend

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# Technical Notes

This survey was completed by 10,012 Australian workers during August 2023.

The data was collected across 19 different industries, as defined by the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC)<sup>5</sup> and shown in the sample profile.

To ensure a representative sample, rim weighting was used with four different sample characteristics: industry, gender, age and work location. The data used for weighting was sourced from Labour Force Australia data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2022.<sup>6</sup>

Scores were calculated using a five level response scale from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree.'

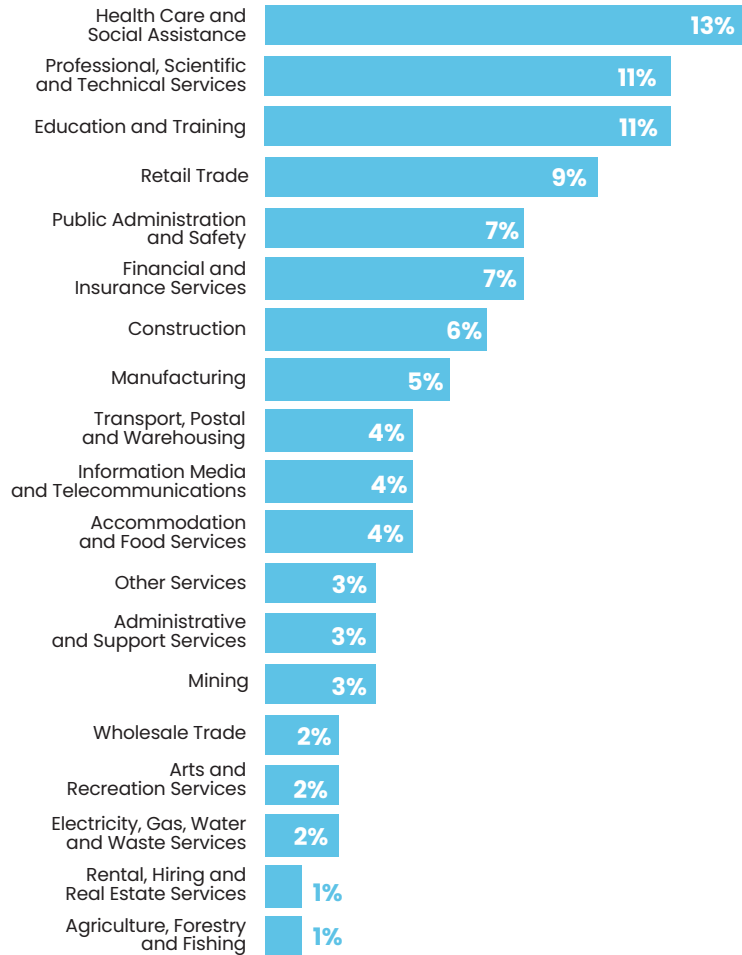
Mental health conditions were self-reported and included those that have not been diagnosed by a medical professional.

Since the 2022 report, names of the Psychosocial Hazards have been adjusted for clarity in communication. No changes were made to method of scoring.

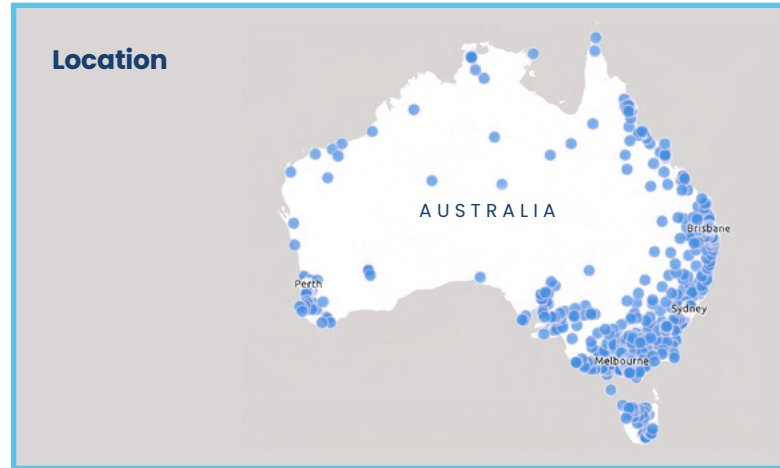


# Sample Profile

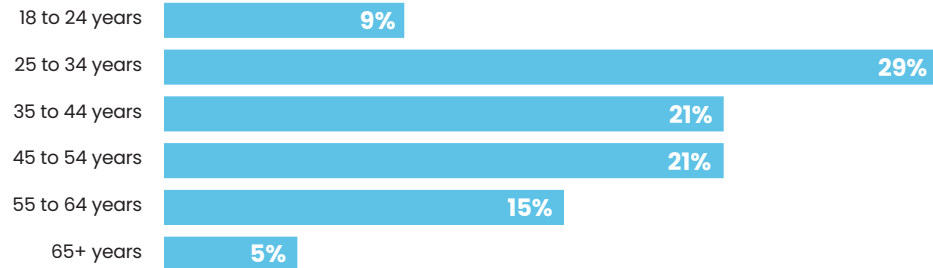
## Industry



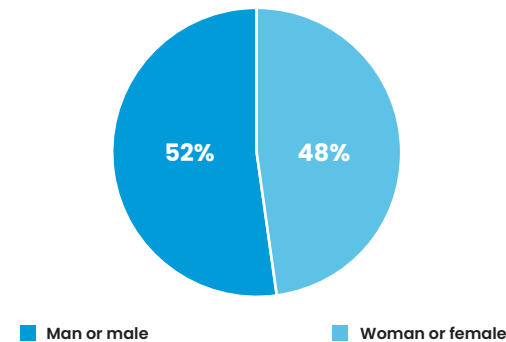
## Location



## Age



## Gender



\*Non-binary sample too small to report

## 5 Domains of a Thriving Workplace

**Domains** are each a summary of multiple indicators that represent characteristics of a thriving workplace.

**Thriving Workplace Score** is an average of the five Domains (Leadership, Connectedness, Safety, Capability and Work Design) and gives an overall measure of how mentally healthy an industry is.

**Leadership** comprises how managers enable their teams to achieve shared organisational goals. This includes modelling positive behaviours, providing feedback for growth, and nurturing a culture where workers can utilise their strengths.

**Connectedness** refers to the quality of interpersonal relationships in the workplace. High-quality connections are characterised by mutual respect, trust, and collaboration. This can be seen when workers support each other to succeed and there is a sense of belonging.

**Safety** describes the processes put in action so that workplaces are free from harassment, bullying, discrimination and violence. These processes provide proactive support and promote positive social interactions.

**Work Design** is the way that roles, tasks and responsibilities are organised. Stronger engagement occurs when workers are empowered to shape the way they work. This promotes a balance between work and individual preferences.

**Capability** is about equipping the workplace with skills and resources to support mental health. It involves putting policies into action to minimise risks, respond to harm, and promote the positives that support good mental health and wellbeing for all.

A **thriving workplace** is a positive culture where workers, teams and the organisation are collectively functioning well, striving for growth, and workers feel good about themselves and their work. The key Domains which support a positive culture include Leadership, Connectedness, Safety, Work Design and Capability. Actions across all Domains protect workers from harm, promote positive behaviours and provide support where required.



## Psychosocial Hazards

**Psychosocial Hazards** are aspects of work that have the potential to cause psychological harm and may lead to physical harm.

**Environment** measures how physically safe the working environment is.

**Traumatic Events** covers the extent to which support is available if violence or trauma is experienced at work.

**Recognition** refers to whether people are rewarded and recognised for their achievements at work.

**Change Management** is the degree to which there is clear communication, consultation or effective processes during workplace changes.

**Job Control** is the amount of control workers have over decisions relating to how their work is performed.

**Workload** looks at whether workload is appropriate (neither too low nor too high), balanced, and there is access to flexible working arrangements.

**Management Support** is the assistance or guidance that leaders provide to workers.

**Relationships and Fairness** describes whether there is fair access to opportunities and processes, conflict and inappropriate behaviour is minimised, and whether there are positive relationships in the workplace.

**Role Clarity** is about the understanding workers have of their work tasks, responsibilities and the expectations on them.

## Mental Health Outcomes

**Burnout** is a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It has been measured in this survey by a five-level response agreement scale to identify whether a respondent has experienced any symptoms of burnout or none at all. The particular measure used here focusses on what has been defined as the exhaustion dimension of burnout. The question asked was:

*Overall, based on your definition of burnout, how would you rate your level of burnout?*

*1 = I enjoy my work. I have no symptoms of burnout;*

*2 = Occasionally I am under stress, and I don't always have as much energy as I once did, but I don't feel burned out;*

*3 = I am definitely burning out and have one or more symptoms of burnout, such as physical and emotional exhaustion;*

*4 = The symptoms of burnout that I'm experiencing won't go away. I think about frustration at work a lot;*

*5 = I feel completely burned out and often wonder if I can go on. I am at the point where I may need some changes or may need to seek some sort of help.*

**Psychological distress** is the experience of non-specific symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression. High levels of psychological distress have a strong association with anxiety or affective mental health conditions.

**The Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10)** is a simple validated and widely used clinical measure of psychological distress. It involves 10 questions about negative emotional states (e.g. nervousness, depression or fatigue) over the preceding four weeks, each with a five-level response scale that are added up to a total possible score of 50. The scores are grouped to indicate the level of distress of a respondent, with a higher score indicating higher psychological distress. Scores have been grouped as per the National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing that is conducted by the ABS<sup>7</sup>. Someone returning a score in the high or very high range is likely to benefit from psychological intervention by a trained health professional.

Low – 10-15

Moderate – 16-21

High – 22-29

Very high – 30-50

**Employee retention** is the degree to which an organisation retains their current employees. The goal is to minimise turnover and keep the most productive and highly valued employees.

**Intent to stay** is an indicator of employee retention, and was gathered by asking respondents whether they intend to stay in their current organisation over the following 12 months.

**Absenteeism** or sickness absence is defined in this survey as any time an employee does not attend work at scheduled times due to the experience of psychological distress. It was measured here by identifying how many days (if any) a respondent has taken leave due to experiencing psychological distress as described by the K10.

**Job performance** is considered here as the degree to which an individual achieves their maximum possible productivity at work. In this survey job performance was self-rated and asked as follows.

*On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is the your worst job performance and 10 is the performance of a top worker, how would you rate your overall job performance on the days you worked during the past 4 weeks?*



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