

Why your AI strategy thrives with a human-first approach



THE STATE OF
WORKLIFE WELLNESS
2027

WELLHUB · 2027

The State of Work-Life Wellness 2027

Why your AI strategy thrives with a human-first approach

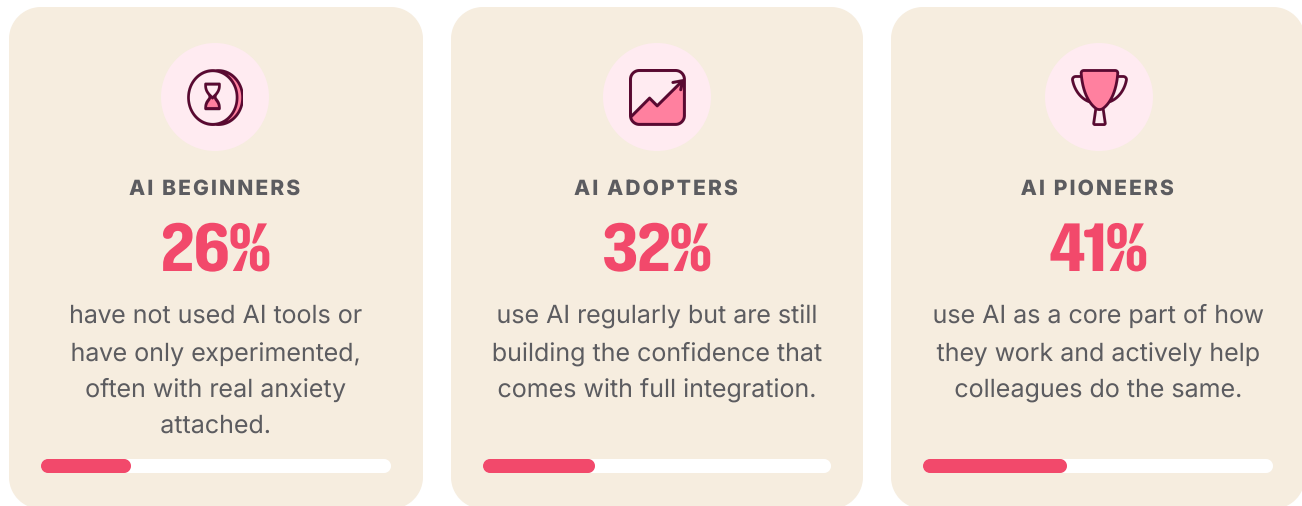
Key Findings

The workforce is splitting by AI fluency

We surveyed 5,021 full-time employees across the globe and introduced a new framework to understand how AI is reshaping wellbeing: the AI Fluency Score. Every respondent received a score from 0 to 9 based on current AI usage, adoption confidence, and agreement with a set of fluency statements, sorting the workforce into three groups.

THE WORKFORCE SPLITS INTO THREE AI-ADOPTION SEGMENTS

Employee AI-adoption segments, based on the Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.



Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,021 respondents.



Burnout and Workload

24%

of AI Pioneers experience burnout symptoms every day compared to 16% of AI Beginners

30%

of all employees agree their company's use of AI has increased their workload rather than reduced it

40%

of AI Pioneers agree AI has increased their workload compared to 15% of AI Beginners

79%

of AI Pioneers coach teammates on AI use, on top of their own work



Job Security and Adaptability

53%

of AI Pioneers say their job security is better than last year compared to 22% of AI Beginners

87%

of employees who feel equipped to work with AI also feel resilient and able to adapt to the pace of change compared to 45% of those who don't



Wellbeing Support and Retention



How Employees Are Coping

73% of AI Pioneers say access to wellbeing support helps them perform and adapt in an AI-driven environment
compared to 46% of AI Adopters and 24% of AI Beginners

83% of employees would consider leaving a company that does not focus on employee wellbeing

87% of AI Pioneers would consider leaving a company that doesn't focus on employee wellbeing
compared to 84% of AI Adopters and 73% of AI Beginners

47% of AI Pioneers agree using AI at work has reduced meaningful interaction with colleagues
compared to 22% of AI Beginners

50% of AI Pioneers use AI tools for personal wellbeing regularly
compared to 23% of AI Adopters and 11% of AI Beginners

30% of employees say screen time is disrupting their sleep
the only sleep disruptor that has worsened every year since 2025

48% of employees are currently in some form of therapy or counseling
up from 37% in 2025

77% of employees at companies with a clear, well-communicated AI policy feel resilient and able to adapt
compared to 39% of those unsure a policy even exists

Only 55% of employees rate their overall wellbeing as good or thriving

Key Learnings

AI fluency is now a wellbeing fault line. Employees are no longer splitting mainly by generation or role when it comes to workplace wellbeing. How much AI someone uses, and how confident they feel using it, now predicts burnout, job security, and resilience.

The employees driving AI adoption are absorbing the most strain. The workforce most responsible for AI integration inside companies today is also the one carrying the heaviest daily burnout and the steepest workload increase, a cost currently falling on early adopters.



Feeling equipped matters more than using the tools. Resilience tracks far more closely with whether someone has been given time and support to build AI competence than with how long they've been using AI at all, which makes it a condition organizations can build.

Clear AI policy functions like a wellbeing benefit. Employees who understand their company's AI policy report meaningfully higher resilience, regardless of their own fluency level, evidence that policy clarity itself is a form of psychological support.

Wellbeing is now inseparable from AI-era retention. The employees most critical to AI-era performance are also the most likely to leave without wellbeing support, making retention strategy inseparable from wellbeing investment.

Foreword

A year ago, companies were still early in their AI journey and the conversation about this new technology's impact on work was still mostly theoretical. Would it replace jobs? Would it make us faster? Nobody was quite sure what daily work with AI would actually feel like. That conversation is over. Employees now know exactly what it feels like, because they're living it: faster deadlines, higher expectations, and a heavier information load, as day-to-day work shifts from execution to judgment and quality assurance.

To understand what that shift is actually doing to people, Wellhub surveyed more than 5,000 full-time employees across 10 global markets and introduced a new lens for this year's research: the AI Fluency Score. It sorts the workforce into three groups, Beginners, Adopters, and Pioneers, based on how much they use AI and how confident they feel doing it. What we found is a workforce splitting along a line nobody was tracking. AI fluency is now a strong predictor of burnout, job security, and resilience.

The employees driving AI adoption inside their companies, the Pioneers, are absorbing the most strain from it. They report the steepest workload increases and the heaviest daily burnout of any group, often while coaching colleagues on the side, sometimes unpaid and unplanned for. And yet they also report feeling better about their wellbeing than colleagues who are less fluent with AI: physically, mentally, and socially. Two things help explain why. The first is that Pioneers do not wait for the pressure to pass. They know that being well makes them better equipped to handle what AI adoption demands of them, so they prioritize it: **41% build a wellness activity into the workday at least once a day, compared to 24% of Beginners.** The second is that they are not doing it alone. **Sixty percent say their manager actively backs their wellbeing, compared to 31% of Beginners.** One possible reason: Pioneers may simply have better managers overall, the kind who guide them through the AI shift and help them prioritize their wellbeing at the same time.

That distinction, between support that leaders or companies in general think exists and support that an employee actually feels, runs through the rest of this year's findings. **Employees at companies with a clear, well-communicated AI policy report resilience at nearly double the rate of those who aren't sure a policy exists at all: 77% versus 39%.** A clear AI policy spells out what's expected of employees, not just what's technically allowed, and gets communicated and modeled until people actually know it. What separates those two groups isn't the document. It's whether anyone ever explained it and whether leaders visibly work by it, effectively role modelling the expected behaviors. A policy nobody has heard of does the same thing for an employee as no policy at all.

The same holds for wellbeing support, which is more than a line item on a benefits list: **87% of employees say they perform better when they prioritize their wellbeing.** The most concerning part: Pioneers, whose skills are the hardest to replace, are also the most likely to leave if that

support disappears, exactly the people a company can least afford to lose.

We measured what happens when wellbeing support is genuinely in place. Employees at organizations offering Wellhub report better outcomes than employees without it on every single wellbeing dimension we measured this year, sleep, culture, resilience, mental and physical health. The folks in charge of the benefit see the positive impact too, in lower healthcare costs, higher productivity, better retention of talent. None of it required slowing AI down, only building the infrastructure to actively support employee wellbeing underneath it at the same pace.

AI is not going to wait for organizations to catch up. But the advantage won't go to whoever adopts it fastest. It will go to whoever looks after the wellbeing of the people adopting it. This year's data reinforces that moving fast and taking care of people were never really a tradeoff. No matter the technology change or business challenge they're the same decision and the only way to ensure sustainable results.



Livia Martini

Livia Martini

Chief People Officer • Wellhub

1 The New Rhythm of Work: AI, Acceleration, and the Always-On Employee

Most workweeks now end the way they used to end only during a crunch: one more notification after dinner, one more question that "will only take a second," one more tab left open past the hour anyone meant to close it. That used to be the exception, reserved for a launch week or a closing quarter. For a growing share of the workforce, it's just Tuesday, and it's happening at the exact moment employers are being told AI is finally about to make work easier.



That gap between the promise and what people are actually living through is where this chapter starts, because the one thing that hasn't changed in any of this is the human being doing the work. People still need movement, rest, food, and contact with each other to function, the same requirements that have shaped how humans work for centuries. What has changed is the speed at which work moves around those needs. AI is compressing timelines and raising the baseline for what counts as a normal day's output faster than any previous shift in how people work, and it's doing so before most organizations have adjusted the conditions employees need to keep up. Stress, burnout, and disengagement aren't a mystery showing up in this year's engagement survey. They're the predictable output of a body being asked to run past the limits it was built to sustain.

1.1 Rest and connection are biological requirements

Start with the most basic input: sleep. Adults need seven to nine hours a night for full physical and cognitive recovery. Consistent sleep at that threshold measurably improves memory and impulse control compared to insufficient sleep (National Sleep Foundation / American Academy of Sleep Medicine; Sleep Health), which means an organization running on a sleep-deprived workforce is running on people who are measurably worse, in a literal, clinical sense, at the judgment calls their jobs depend on. Treat that as a structural constraint on how decisions get made, not a line on a wellness checklist.



Connection works on the same principle, even though it rarely gets treated with the same seriousness. The physical health effects of chronic loneliness are comparable to smoking fifteen cigarettes a day, and poor social connection raises the risk of heart disease by 29% and stroke by 32% (U.S. Surgeon General, "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation"). Put next to a sleep statistic, a stroke-risk statistic reads like it belongs in a different report, one about public health rather than workplace culture. And there lies the issue. Few leaders make the connection: a 32%

jump in stroke risk would trigger a safety review anywhere else in the business. Loneliness carries that same risk, unnoticed. It deserves the same response, not as a cultural nicety, but as a measurable health risk.

The long view backs this up. The Harvard Study of Adult Development, one of the longest-running studies of adult life ever conducted, found that how satisfied someone was with their relationships at age fifty predicted how healthy they'd be at eighty more reliably than their cholesterol levels, or any other midlife health marker researchers measured. Decades later, connection outperformed the biomarkers doctors actually watch for. That's a strange thing to be true, and it's also the clearest evidence available that connection isn't a soft variable sitting next to physical health. It's one of its better predictors.

None of this is a new discovery. What's new is that the current pace of work leaves so little room for either one, and that shortfall is quietly becoming expensive for organizations that still file rest and connection under personal life rather than performance.

1.2 AI promised to give time back. It's taking more.

Here's the overload employees are already living inside, before AI enters the picture at all: 85% of HR leaders say information overload at work is negatively affecting employee mental health (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing 2026). Employees are saying something close to the same thing from their own side: 42% report their work stress has increased over the past 12 months. That number isn't an abstraction, because the structure of the workday backs it up in granular detail. Employees are interrupted every two minutes during core work hours, averaging 275 interruptions a day (Microsoft, 2025 Work Trend Index). Each of those interruptions carries a real cost to recover from: an average of 23 minutes and 15 seconds to fully regain focus after a significant one (Gloria Mark, UC Irvine). Do that arithmetic across a single day and the eight hours on the calendar stop resembling the eight hours anyone actually gets to spend doing focused work.



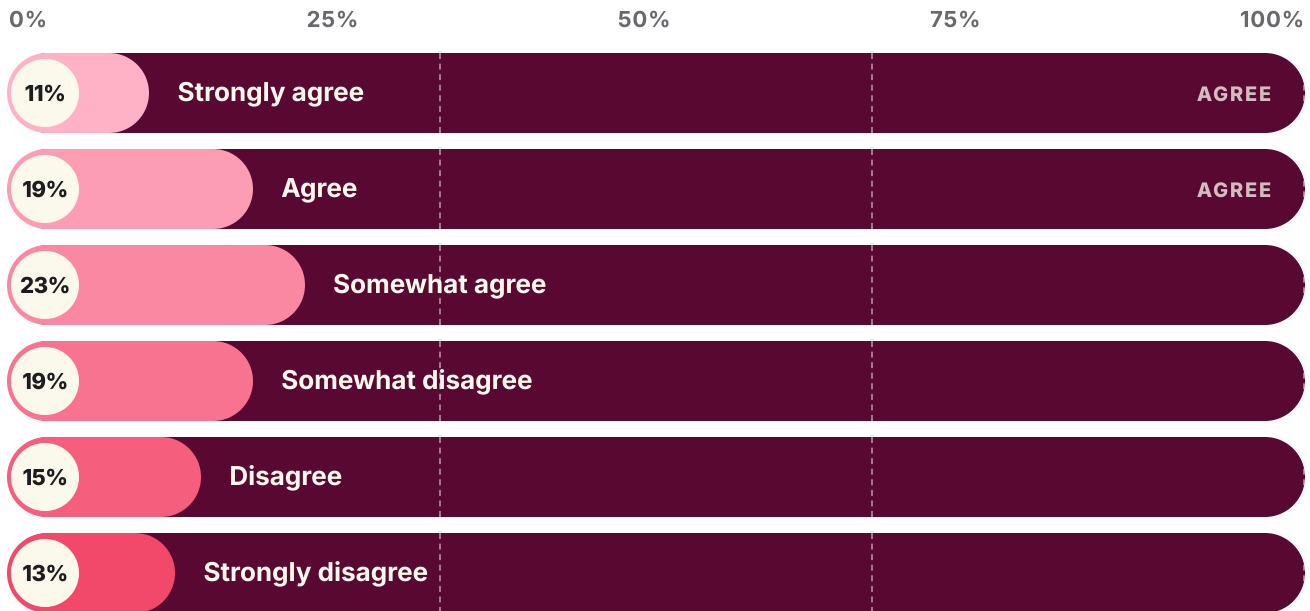
AI arrived with a specific promise attached to it: it would hand some of that time back. However, **30% of employees agree their company's use of AI has increased their workload rather than reduced it.** Instead of subtracting work, AI adds a layer of prompting, verification, and oversight on top of the work that already existed, work that still has to fit inside the same eight or nine hours it always did. The logic of the tool and the logic of the day don't match. A tool built to speed up an individual task does nothing to protect the sustained attention that task still requires, so a faster task doesn't automatically add up to a lighter day, and in a workday already fragmented by hundreds of interruptions, it may not add up to anything at all. For an HR leader who rolled out AI tools on the promise of time saved, here's the test: check that promise against what employees actually report. Don't assume the pitch and the outcome are the same thing.

AI IS ADDING TO THE WORKLOAD IT WAS SUPPOSED TO EASE

Question from the Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey: to what extent do you agree with the statement — "My company's use of AI has increased my workload rather than reduced it?"

30%

**STRONGLY AGREE
OR AGREE**



Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,021 respondents.

1.3 Leaner teams are absorbing the acceleration

The other half of the AI story is happening in headcount, not hours. Forty-one percent of employers anticipate reducing staff as AI automates tasks previously done by humans (World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs Report 2025), and this isn't a forward looking guess so much as a trend already underway. Global tech layoffs reached nearly 154,000 in the first half of 2026 alone, on pace to exceed the 246,000 recorded across all of 2025, with AI cited as the leading driver (Layoffs.fyi, via Gulf News).



It's worth being precise about what a layoff actually does inside a company that's simultaneously rolling out AI. It doesn't just remove a job. It takes the output that a job used to produce and redistributes it across the people still there, at the exact moment AI is raising the bar for what "output" is supposed to look like in the first place. Whoever remains on a team after a reduction is now doing more, faster, with fewer people to share the load. That's two forces compounding at once, on the same person, and it's exactly the kind of combination that tends to show up first in burnout data, well before it shows up as a resignation.

1.4 The workday no longer has edges

Layer one more shift on top of the first two: the boundaries that used to mark the start and end of a workday are eroding. After-hours chats are up 15% year over year, with employees sending an average of 58 messages before or after standard working hours. Meetings

scheduled after 8 p.m. are up 16% year over year, and 30% of meetings now span multiple time zones, up eight points since 2021 (Microsoft, 2025 Work Trend Index).



Any one of those numbers on its own looks like a minor scheduling quirk. Together, they describe something bigger: a workday that has stopped ending at a fixed point and has started quietly expanding into hours that used to be off-limits by default, not by policy but by habit. Those are the same hours a workforce already short on sleep and connection, per the research earlier in this chapter, would otherwise be using to rebuild both. Work isn't just getting longer. It's colonizing the exact recovery time people need most, at the exact moment they need it most.

1.5 Where this leaves employees

Put the three shifts together and a pattern emerges that's bigger than any one of them. Compressed timelines, leaner teams, and a workday without edges are already defining how workplace wellbeing conversations are unfolding in 2026, even as the technology driving all three is marketed as a source of relief (Global Wellness Institute, "Workplace Wellbeing Initiative Trends for 2026"). For a growing share of employees, this isn't a temporary spike tied to one bad quarter. It's the new rhythm of the job itself, built on acceleration, uncertainty, and sustained pressure with no obvious end date.



That pressure doesn't land the same way on everyone, though, and this is where the story turns from something universal into something an HR leader can actually act on. How much of this strain any individual employee is absorbing right now depends heavily on where they sit in relation to AI itself. **Twenty-six percent of our survey respondents are still AI Beginners. Thirty-two percent are Adopters, further along but still building confidence. Forty-one percent are Pioneers, using AI as a core part of how they work.** That split predicts more about how much strain someone is carrying

than their tenure or their role does, and it's the lens the rest of this report uses to explain why the same technology can feel like relief to one employee and an added burden to the one sitting next to them.

1.6 Perspective: Mita Mallick



Mita Mallick

Bestselling author, *The Devil Emails at Midnight*; executive coach and advisor; Wellhub US Advisory Board

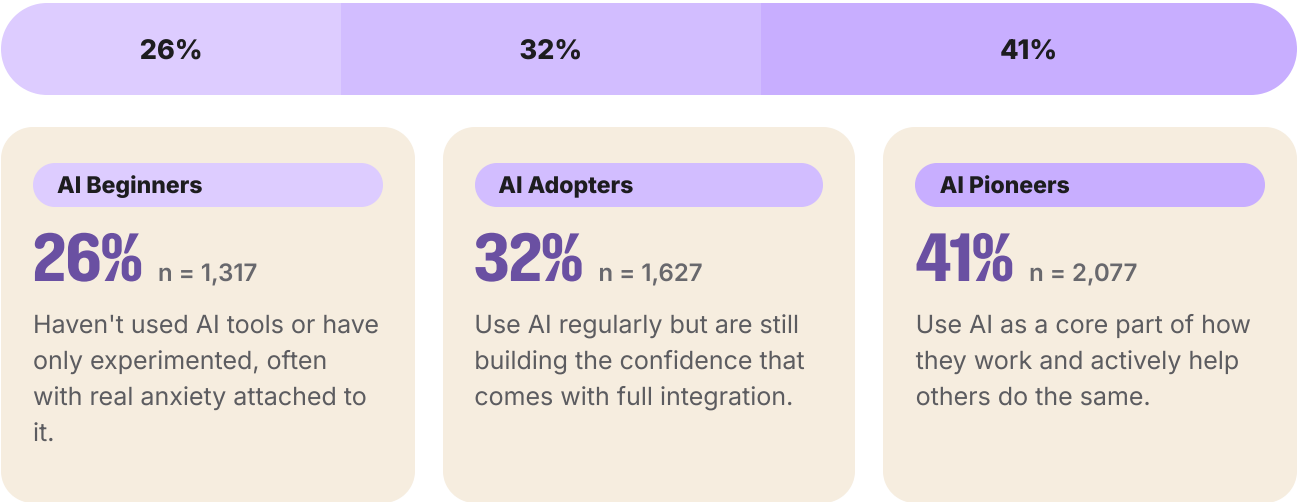
2 What AI Is Doing to the Workforce



Ask ten people inside the same company how AI is affecting their work, and it's common to get ten different answers, not because the technology changed halfway through the year, but because "the workforce" was never really one workforce to begin with. To understand how AI is reshaping wellbeing, WLW 2027 introduces a segmentation built for exactly that problem: the AI Fluency Score. Each of the 5,021 full-time employees surveyed received a score from 0 to 9, based on current AI usage, adoption confidence, and how many of a set of fluency statements they agreed with. The result sorts the workforce into three groups. AI Beginners (26%, n=1,317) haven't used AI tools or have only experimented, often with real anxiety attached to it. AI Adopters (32%, n=1,627) use AI regularly but are still building the confidence that comes with full integration. AI Pioneers (41%, n=2,077) use AI as a core part of how they work and actively help others do the same. Every

wellbeing finding in this chapter reads through that split, because the workforce isn't experiencing AI as one shared shift. It's experiencing three different versions of it at once, inside the same buildings and the same org charts.

EMPLOYEE AI-ADOPTION SEGMENTS, BASED ON THE WELLHUB WORK LIFE WELLNESS 2027 SURVEY



Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,021 respondents.

2.1 Most employees use AI. Fluency still varies

It helps to picture these three groups less as points on a spectrum and more as three separate workforces sharing a building, each with a different relationship to the tools reshaping their jobs, and each likely needing a different kind of support to close the gap between them.

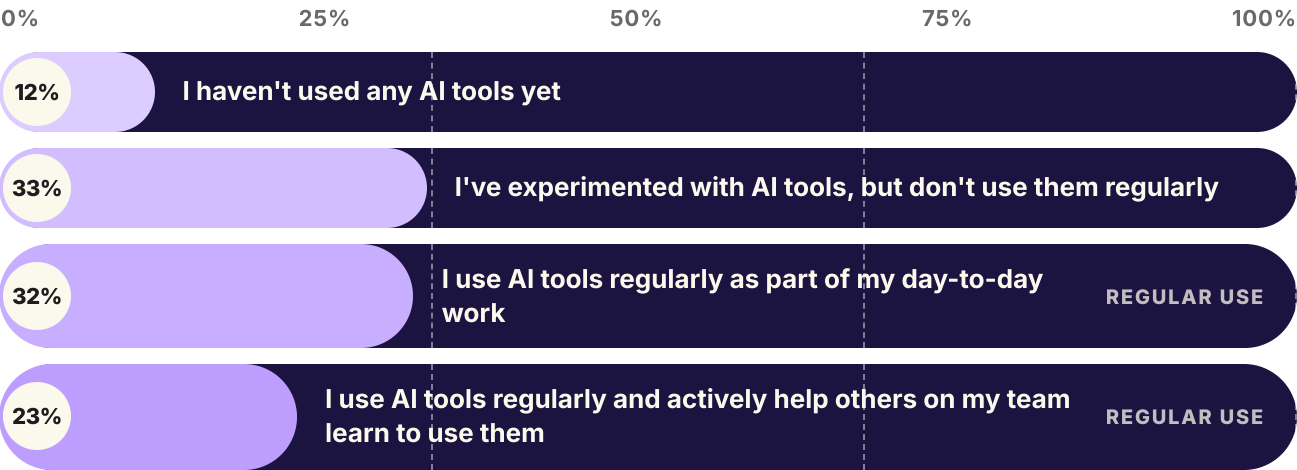


Start with plain usage. **Fifty-five percent of employees use AI tools regularly: 32% as part of their daily work, and a further 23% who also coach colleagues on top of that.** The remaining 45% haven't gotten there yet, split between 33% who have only experimented and 12% who have never used AI at all.

MORE THAN HALF OF EMPLOYEES NOW USE AI TOOLS REGULARLY

Question from the Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey: which best describes how you currently use AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Copilot, Claude, Gemini)?

55%
USE AI REGULARLY



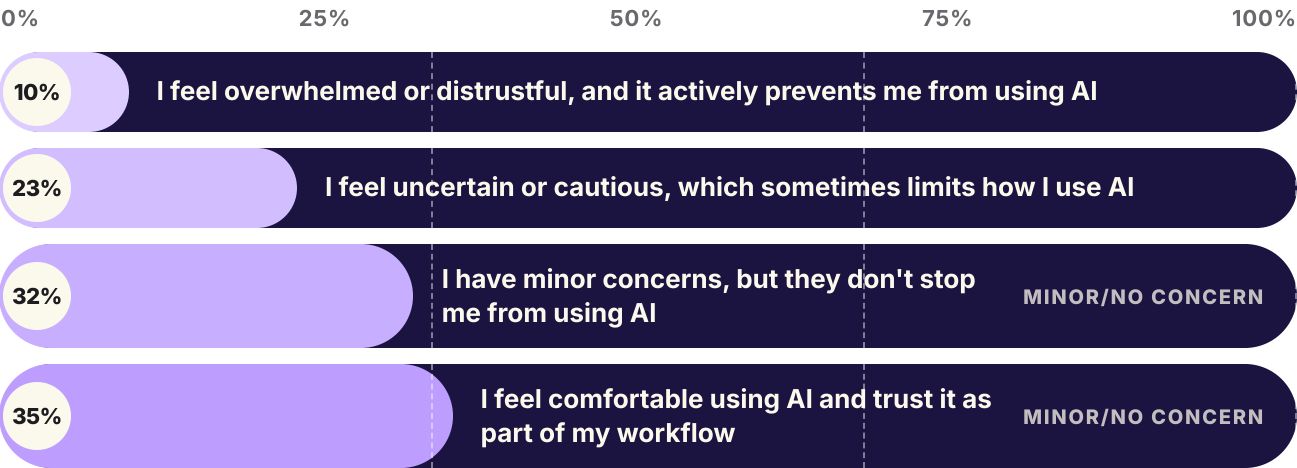
Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,021 respondents.

Confidence follows a similar shape, though it's worth reading on its own terms rather than as a mirror of usage. Sixty-seven percent of employees feel comfortable using AI, or have only minor concerns that don't get in their way. **Twenty-three percent feel uncertain or cautious enough that it limits how they use it, and 10% feel overwhelmed or distrustful enough that it keeps them from using AI at all.**

TWO-THIRDS OF EMPLOYEES HAVE ONLY MINOR OR NO AI CONCERNS

Question from the Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey: what is your level of AI adoption confidence?

67%
MINOR OR NO CONCERNS



Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,021 respondents.

Put those two findings together and a design problem shows up for HR: over half the workforce needs something closer to advanced enablement, roughly a third needs a low-stakes way to start experimenting, and around one in ten needs their concerns addressed before enablement can even begin. One training rollout aimed at the middle of that range misses both ends.

2.2 The employees doing the most with AI are carrying the heaviest load

The employees furthest along in AI fluency are not coasting on the productivity gains that adoption is supposed to deliver. They're absorbing the steepest workload increase of any group, and doing informal training on the side, which suggests the burden of building AI fluency inside most organizations is currently falling on the people who volunteered to build it first.



Twenty-four percent of AI Pioneers experience burnout symptoms every day, compared to 22% of Adopters and 16% of Beginners.

THE MORE EMPLOYEES LEAN ON AI, THE MORE OFTEN THEY BURN OUT

Share of each AI-adoption segment who experience burnout symptoms every day, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.

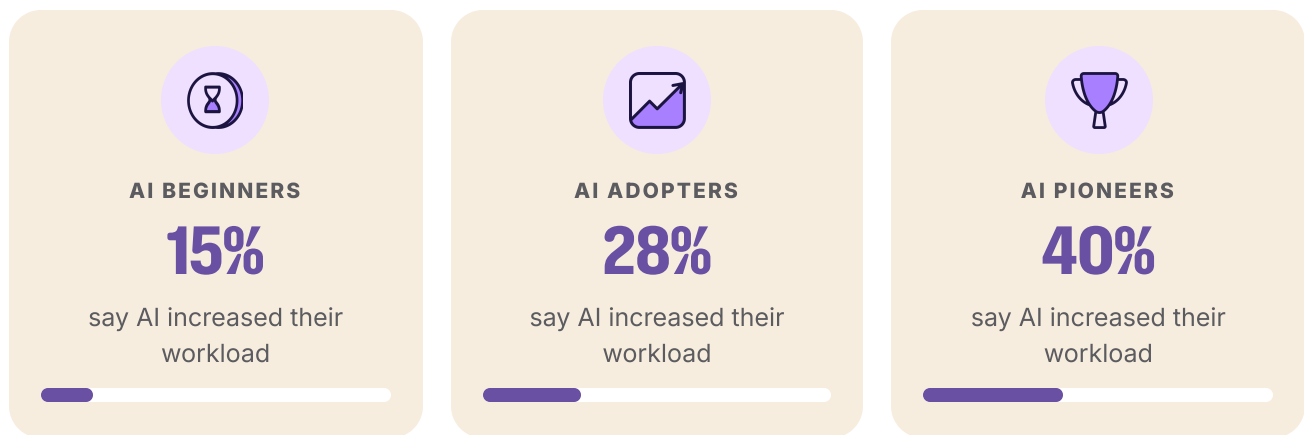


Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,021 respondents.

The workload data tells the same story from a different angle: **40% of Pioneers agree AI has increased their workload, against 28% of Adopters and 15% of Beginners.**

THE HEAVIEST AI USERS FEEL THE WORKLOAD INCREASE MOST

Share of each AI-adoption segment who agree AI has increased their workload, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.



Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,021 respondents.

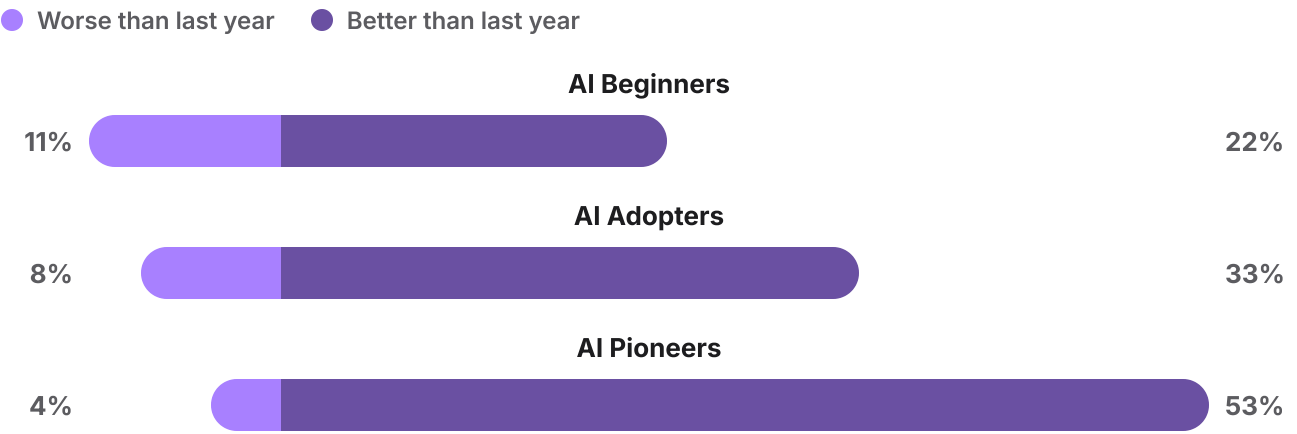
The employees an organization depends on to model AI use are the same ones showing the earliest signs of burnout. The coaching they do for colleagues, that 50%-mentoring figure from earlier, isn't factored into anyone's workload plan. It's volunteer labor that happens to be essential.

2.3 AI fluency already functions as job security

Fifty-three percent of Pioneers say their job security is better than last year, compared to 33% of Adopters and 22% of Beginners. The gap holds at the other end too: only 4% of Pioneers say their job security is worse, against 8% of Adopters and 11% of Beginners.

HEAVY AI USE TRACKS WITH GREATER JOB SECURITY

Question from the Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey: How would you rate your job security this year vs. last year?



Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,021 respondents.



HR leaders see the same risk from their side of the table. Sixty-two percent separately report concern about losing employees with in-demand AI-related skills (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing 2026). Employees and HR leaders are seeing the same thing from opposite sides. Pioneers correctly sense that their AI skills make them harder to replace. HR leaders, worried about losing that same group, are sitting on the same insight: burnout among Pioneers is a retention risk, whether or not their retention strategy currently treats it that way.

2.4 Feeling equipped predicts resilience

Only 19% of AI Beginners say they feel equipped to work effectively with AI, compared to 39% of Adopters and 67% of Pioneers. That's the widest gap in this chapter so far. It comes down to whether someone was ever taught to use AI well, not simply whether they've used it at all.

Time and support tell the same story from the input side rather than the outcome side. Only 18% of Beginners say they've been given the time and support to learn the AI skills their role requires, against 43% of Adopters and 73% of Pioneers, almost the identical spread. Feeling equipped, in other words, tracks whether employers actually carved out the time for someone to build the skill.



The gap shows up a third time, on resilience itself. **Eighty-seven percent of employees who strongly agree they feel equipped to work with AI also feel resilient and able to adapt to the pace of change, compared to 45% of those who strongly disagree they feel equipped**, a 42-point swing driven almost entirely by whether someone had the time and support to build that competence in the first place. That's the most useful finding in this section for an HR leader, because it reframes resilience from a trait some employees have and others don't into a condition an organization can choose to build, on a timeline it controls.

2.5 Pioneers are already turning to AI to fill their own wellbeing gaps



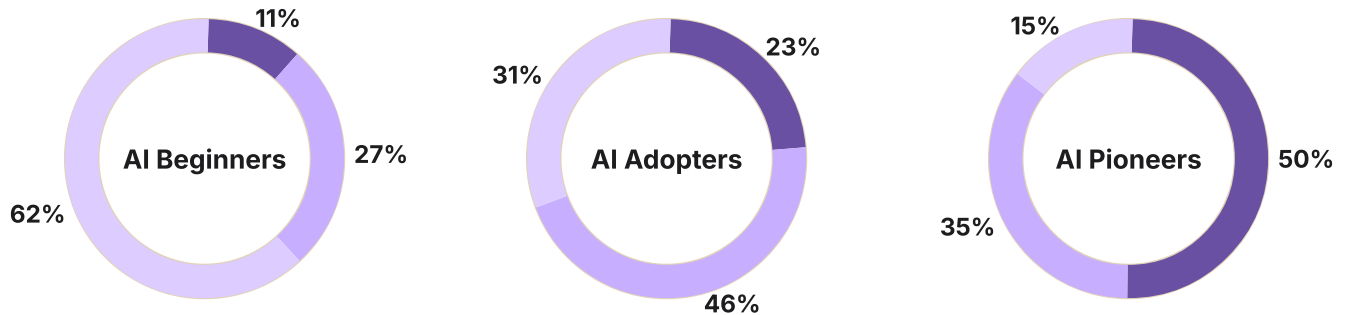
The same employees most fluent in AI are also leaning on it hardest for their own mental health, often without the scrutiny they'd apply to any other wellness tool. That combination, high use paired with real risk of harm, deserves attention on its own terms. And it's a blind spot that hits hardest exactly where scrutiny is weakest: the group most comfortable with the technology is also the one least likely to question it.

Fifty percent of Pioneers use AI tools for personal wellbeing regularly, compared to 23% of Adopters and 11% of Beginners. Eighty-five percent of Pioneers have used AI for personal wellbeing at least once, against 69% of Adopters and 38% of Beginners.

AI PIONEERS LEAD IN USING AI FOR THEIR OWN WELLBEING

■ Use regularly ■ Used at least once ■ Never used

Share of each AI-adoption segment who have used AI tools for personal wellbeing, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.



Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,021 respondents.

Comfort with the whole idea splits just as sharply in the other direction. **Thirty-four percent of Beginners say they wouldn't be comfortable using AI for wellbeing support at all, compared to 10% of Adopters and just 3% of Pioneers**, meaning the group most enthusiastic about using AI for their wellbeing is also the group least likely to question whether it's actually helping.

Whether it's actually helping matters, because not every interaction has gone well: **30% of employees overall say they've received an unhelpful or harmful response from an AI tool while seeking wellness support.** For HR leaders, that's a case for treating AI-for-wellbeing as a real category needing real guardrails, the same way any other wellness resource would get vetted before an organization implicitly endorses it by staying silent.

2.6 Perspective: Cara Brennan Allamano



Cara Brennan Allamano

Chief Work Officer, Soul; co-founder, PeopleTech Partners; Wellhub US Advisory Board

I run a company where agents already do a real share of the work, so I don't need this chapter's data to tell me tenure isn't the variable that matters. I've watched it happen inside my own team. The person who's used a tool the longest isn't automatically the person handling it well. The person who was actually taught to use it well is.

That's the distinction I keep coming back to: feeling equipped isn't the same as having access. Anyone can hand someone a login on day one. Equipping them is a decision a company has to keep making, week after week, as the tools and the expectations both keep moving.

So here's what changed for us. We stopped treating AI fluency as something people pick up on their own time, and started treating it as infrastructure we're responsible for building, the same way we're responsible for anyone's laptop actually working. What matters to us is whether people feel confident and equipped, not adoption numbers that look good in a board deck. Perks are theater. Systems are what actually change behavior, and resilience is a system output, not a personality trait some people happen to have.

The real test isn't whether your workforce has used AI the longest. It's whether the people using it feel like someone built the ground under them before asking them to run faster on it. Most companies haven't asked that question yet. We measure productivity obsessively. We barely measure depletion. That has to change before the tools get any better.

3 How Employees Are Coping

Work keeps taking more hours, and the hours have to come from somewhere. For most employees they come from the same four places: sleep, meals, exercise, and time with other people. A single skipped workout is harmless. So is lunch eaten over a keyboard, a night shortened by forty minutes, a week that passes without seeing a friend. A year of them, accumulating quietly, decides how a person is actually doing.

Only 55% of employees rate their overall wellbeing as good or thriving, and that number varies sharply by AI fluency. The employees deepest into AI, the Pioneers, report the best wellbeing of any group. They also report the most burnout: 24% have symptoms every day, compared to 16% of Beginners.

That reads like a contradiction. It stops being one once you separate the load someone is carrying from what they have to absorb it with. Burnout tracks the load. Wellbeing tracks the resources. The two are connected, because resources determine how much of a load turns into damage, and Pioneers are carrying a load unlike any other group's.

Look at the size of the two gaps. **Pioneers report a workload increase more than two and a half times that of Beginners: 40% say AI has added to their workload, compared to 15%.** Their daily burnout runs eight points higher, 24% compared to 16%. The strain is real and it is landing. It is not landing anywhere near in proportion to the load. Something is absorbing the difference.

Two runners can log very different mileage and finish a season describing similar soreness. What separates them is rarely toughness. It is whether recovery kept pace with training.

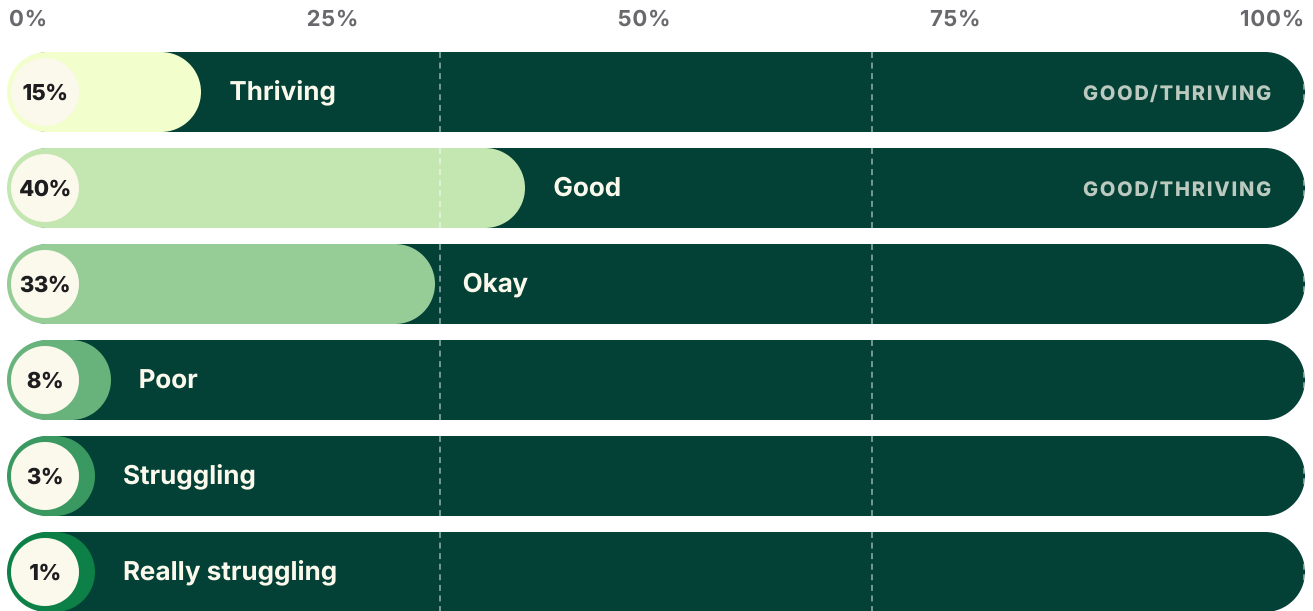


For Pioneers, some of it does. They know that being well makes them better equipped to handle what AI adoption demands of them, so they build it into the day: 41% do a wellness activity during the workday at least once a day, compared to 31% of Adopters and 24% of Beginners. And their managers protect that time. Sixty percent say their manager actively backs their wellbeing, compared to **42% of Adopters and 31% of Beginners**

JUST OVER HALF OF EMPLOYEES SAY THEY'RE THRIVING OR DOING WELL

55%
GOOD OR THRIVING

Question from the Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey: how would you currently rate your overall wellbeing?



Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,021 respondents.

3.1 Physical Wellbeing

The World Health Organization recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate activity a week. That threshold isn't about appearance. It's the amount of movement a body needs to keep its basics running: a healthy heart, sound sleep, stress it can recover from.

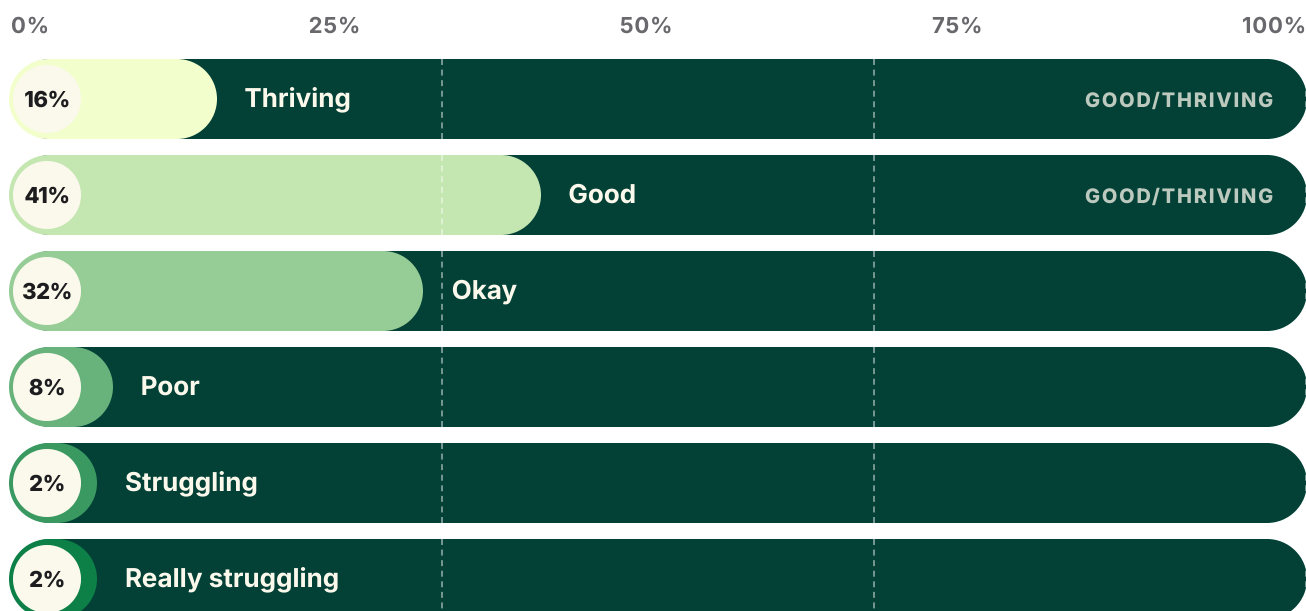
Most employees are closer to that bar than they've been in years. Eighty-one percent exercise at least once a week, and 49% now describe themselves as fit or extremely fit, up from 47% last year and 39% the year before. It adds up to the healthiest of the five pillars: **57% of employees rate their physical wellbeing as good or thriving.**

MOST EMPLOYEES RATE THEIR PHYSICAL WELLBEING AS GOOD OR THRIVING

57%

GOOD OR THRIVING

Question from the Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey: how would you rate your physical wellbeing?



Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,021 respondents.

By every surface measure, this pillar is fine. Which is exactly why it deserves a second look.

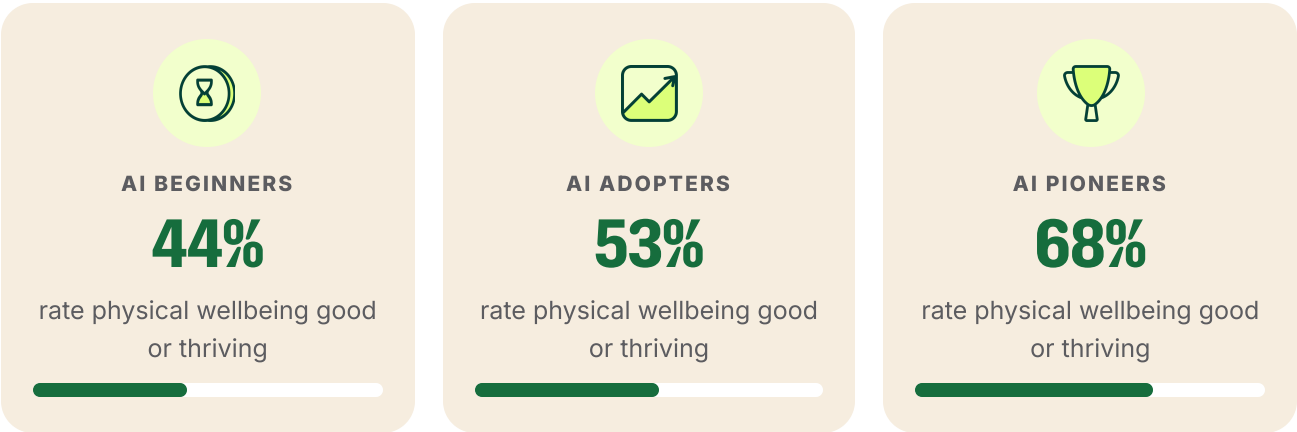
Break the numbers down by fluency and the average stops being reassuring: **44% of Beginners rate their physical wellbeing as good or thriving, compared to 53% of Adopters and 68% of Pioneers.** A 24-point spread on the healthiest pillar is the widest fluency gap in this chapter so far, and it needs an explanation.



Time is the simplest one. Exercise is the wellbeing habit that most depends on a block of open time in the day: not knowledge, not equipment, just an hour that nothing else claims. When the workday expands, that hour is among the first things employees give up. The groups differ in whether anyone helps them keep it. Pioneers are the group most likely to build a wellness activity into the workday itself, a workout, a walk, a class at lunch, and the group whose managers most actively back that time. Beginners are the least likely on both counts. The employees who can tend to their fitness during the workday are doing well. The employees who can only attempt it before or after work, in the hours the workday is steadily absorbing, are not.

PHYSICAL WELLBEING RISES SHARPLY WITH AI FLUENCY

Share of each AI-adoption segment rating their physical wellbeing as good or thriving

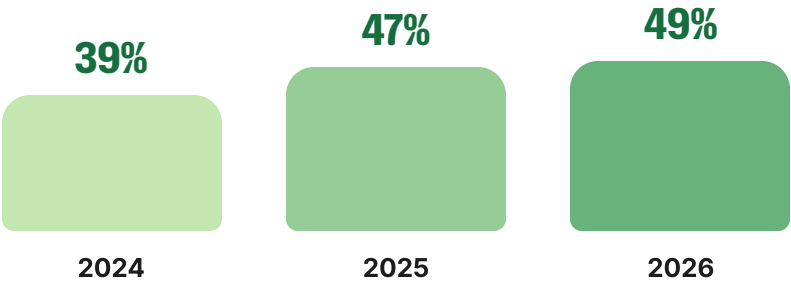


Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,021 respondents.

The trend lines add texture to that snapshot. **Forty-nine percent of employees now rate themselves as fit or extremely fit, up from 47% in 2025 and 39% in 2024, a steady three-year climb.**

SELF-RATED FITNESS HAS CLIMBED STEADILY FOR THREE YEARS

Share of employees who rate themselves fit or extremely fit, Wellhub Work Life Wellness survey, 2024–2026.



Wellhub Work Life Wellness survey, 2024–2026 waves.

That is the practical lesson for a benefits team. A gym membership used at 6am is the same line item as one that goes unused, but they deliver very different returns. The companies getting value from this benefit are the ones treating a midday workout as a normal part of a working day rather than a stolen hour: managers who take the walk themselves, calendars where a class at noon is unremarkable. Access gets employees to the door. Permission to go during daylight is what gets them through it.

3.2 Mental Wellbeing

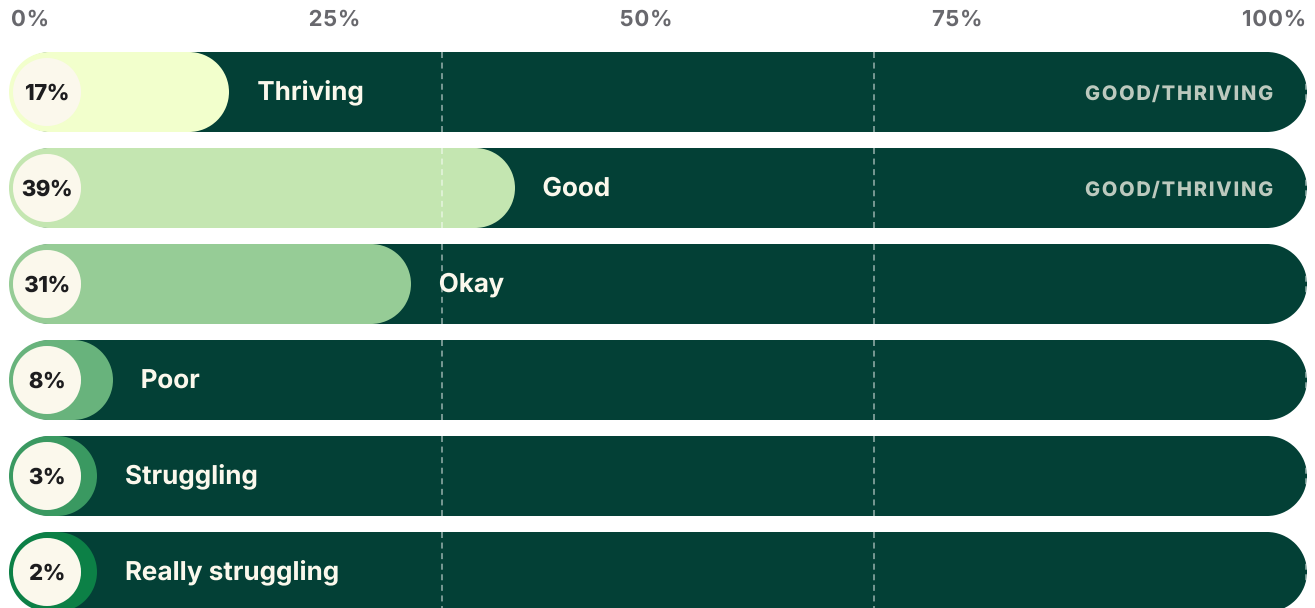
Depression and anxiety drain roughly \$1 trillion a year from the global economy in lost productivity, according to the World Health Organization. Almost none of that loss is visible as it happens. It looks like a decision that takes a week instead of a day. A sharp colleague who goes quiet. Work that's finished, but thinner. By the time any metric catches it, it has been eroding the work for months.

Most employees say they are managing. **Fifty-six percent rate their mental wellbeing as good or thriving, nearly identical to physical wellbeing.**

JUST OVER HALF RATE THEIR MENTAL WELLBEING AS GOOD OR THRIVING

56%
GOOD OR THRIVING

Question from the Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey: how would you rate your mental wellbeing?

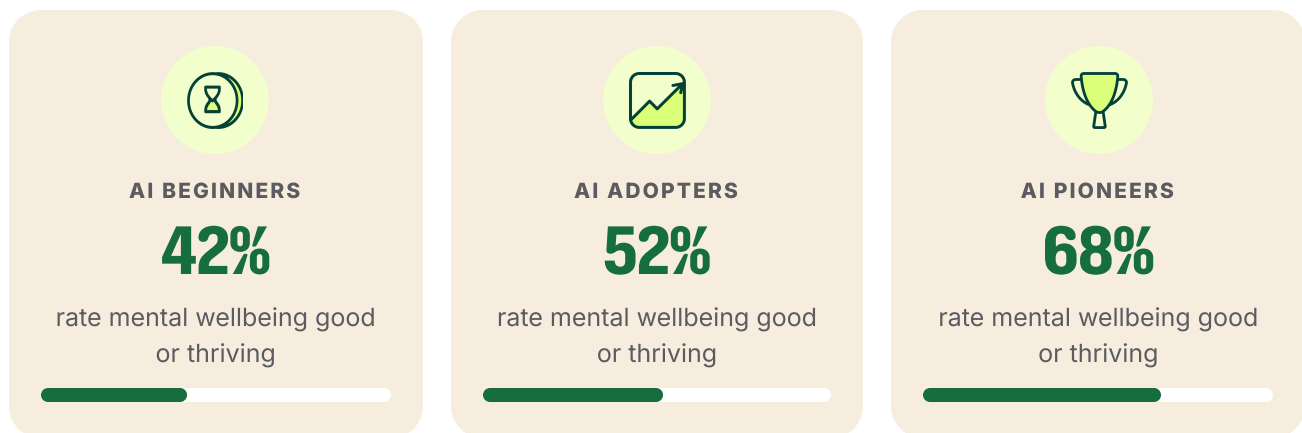


Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,023 respondents.

But managing is not evenly distributed: **68% of Pioneers** rate their mental wellbeing as good or thriving, compared to **52% of Adopters** and **42% of Beginners**.

MENTAL WELLBEING RISES SHARPLY WITH AI FLUENCY

Share of each AI-adoption segment rating their mental wellbeing as good or thriving, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.



Part of that split is the same support that runs through every pillar: time for wellbeing inside the workday, and a manager who protects it. Mental wellbeing adds a factor the other pillars don't have: job security. **Fifty-three percent of Pioneers say theirs improved over the past year, compared to 22% of Beginners**, and the research on what that fear does to a mind is unambiguous. A meta-analysis of 20 long-term studies found that simply perceiving your job as insecure raises the risk of developing depressive symptoms about as much as actually losing it (Kim & von dem Knesebeck, 2016). The worry does the same damage as the event. In a year when 54% of US workers say job insecurity is significantly affecting their stress (American Psychological Association, 2025), the group that believes AI made them harder to replace is carrying meaningfully less of that weight, and the group that fears AI will replace them is carrying the most.



What now stands between the other half and that support is money. Cost is the number one barrier, cited by 34% of employees who aren't in therapy, up from 23% two years ago. Employees already believe in the value of professional support; half of them are paying for it. The question for a benefits team is no longer how to convince people mental health support is worth using. It's whether the person who needs it can afford to use it more than once.

3.3 Nutrition

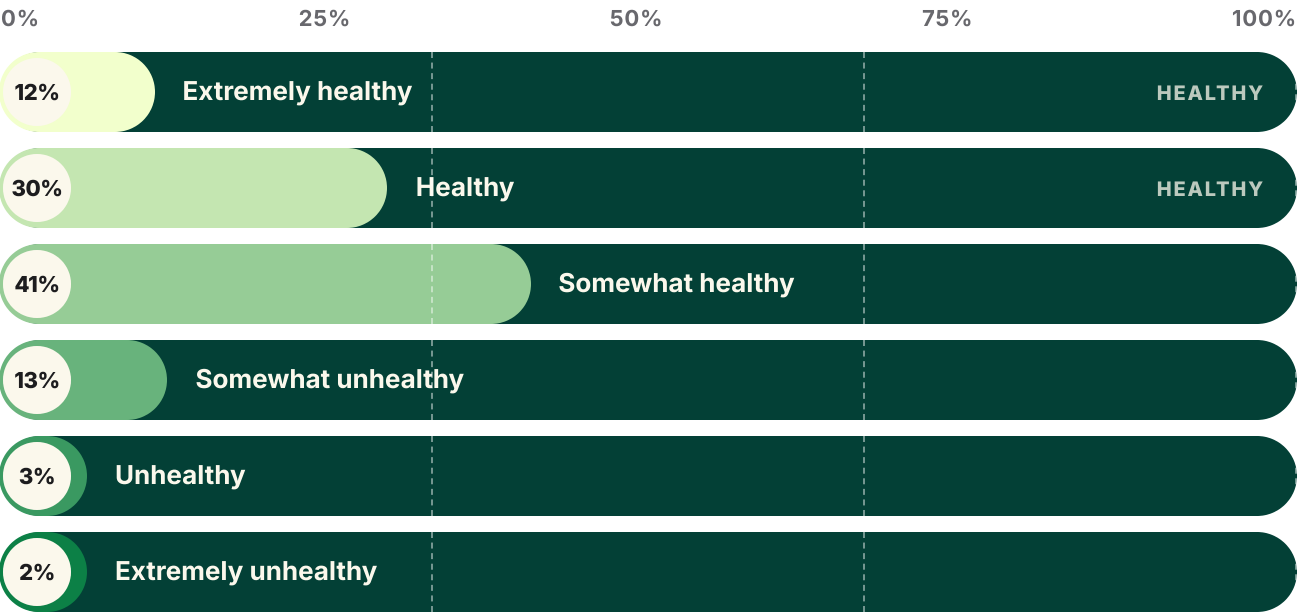
The lunch break is the one block of time the workday still officially reserves for wellbeing, but it is quickly shrinking. Across 26 countries, the average worker's main break is down to 35 minutes, when they take one at all, and a typical full-time employee now skips lunch outright once a week (Compass Group Global Eating at Work Survey, 2023). A third of workers worldwide eat alone. What used to be a meal with a fixed place in the day is becoming something eaten over a keyboard, between meetings, or not at all.

Employees know it. **Only 42% describe their nutritional health as healthy or extremely healthy, the second-lowest score of any pillar, behind only sleep.**

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES THAT RATE THEIR NUTRITIONAL HEALTH AS HEALTHY OR EXTREMELY HEALTHY

Question from the Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey: how would you rate your overall nutritional health?

42%
HEALTHY OR
EXTREMELY
HEALTHY



Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey. n = 5,021 respondents.

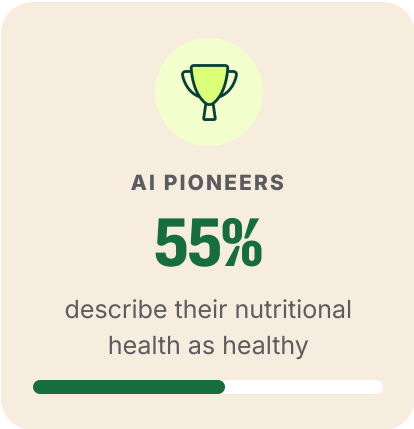
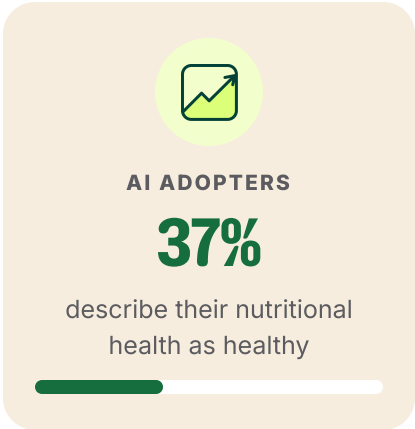
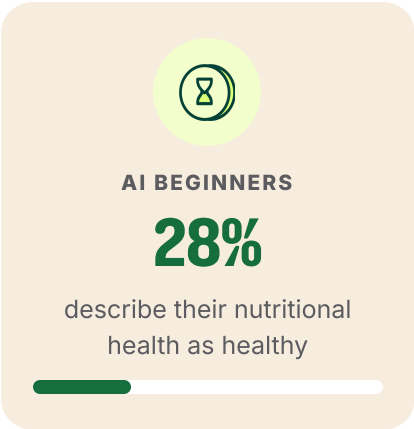
By fluency, nutrition splits wider than any other pillar: 28% of Beginners describe their nutritional health as healthy, compared to 37% of Adopters and 55% of Pioneers, a 27-point spread. Knowledge can't explain a gap that size.

NUTRITION SPLITS WIDER BY AI FLUENCY THAN ANY OTHER PILLAR

Share of each AI-adoption segment describing their nutritional health as healthy, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.

27 pts

BEGINNER-TO-PIONEER SPREAD



Knowledge can't explain a gap that size. Nobody needs a wellness program to hear that vegetables matter, and no fluency segment knows it better than another. What differs is the shape of the day. Eating well at work takes an actual break, taken at an actual mealtime, without a meeting bleeding into it. Pioneers are the group most likely to have that time protected, by their own routine and by a manager who treats a real lunch as normal rather than as slacking. A protected lunch is the nutrition version of the midday workout.



Pioneers bring one more advantage the other groups don't: they've pointed their fluency at their own habits. Half of Pioneers regularly use AI tools for their personal wellbeing, compared to 11% of Beginners, and food is one of the most natural places those tools land, planning a week of meals or simply logging what got eaten. That visibility matters more than it sounds. Most people's picture of their own diet is assembled from intentions, and it flatters them. A tracked week replaces the guess with the actual pattern, and the actual pattern is what changes behavior.

Employers have more at stake in that pattern than most realize. In a study of nearly 20,000 US workers, employees with an unhealthy diet were 66% more likely to report a loss in productivity, compared to those who regularly ate whole grains, fruits, and vegetables (Merrill et al., 2012). The workday is shaping what employees eat, and what employees eat is shaping the work. A company doesn't need a nutrition curriculum to act on that. The cheapest intervention available is a lunch break that actually happens, at a normal hour, away from the desk, ideally with other people at the table.

3.4 Sleep

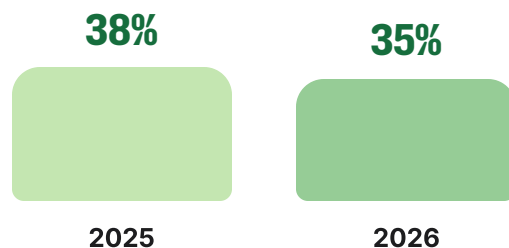
A dults need seven to nine hours of sleep a night for full physical and cognitive recovery (National Sleep Foundation / American Academy of Sleep Medicine). Most employees miss that bar: 69% sleep fewer than seven.



Sleep is the lowest-scoring pillar and the only one in decline: **only 35% of employees rate it as healthy or extremely healthy this year, down from 38% in 2025.**

SLEEP IS THE ONLY WELLBEING PILLAR IN DECLINE

Share of employees who rate their sleep health as healthy or extremely healthy, Wellhub Work Life Wellness survey, 2025-2026.



The same workforce that is exercising more than it has in years is sleeping worse than it did last year. Effort is not the problem. Sleep sits at the end of the day, and the day keeps ending later.

The workday is what's arriving in those hours. After-hours messages are up 15% year over year, with an average of 58 landing in an employee's inbox outside standard hours, and meetings after 8 p.m. are up 16% (Microsoft, 2025 Work Trend Index). What the job doesn't take, employees give up on their own. Sleep researchers call it bedtime procrastination: delaying sleep with no outside obligation forcing the delay, because the late evening is the first time all day that feels like one's own. A meta-analysis of 43 studies links the habit to shorter sleep, worse sleep quality, and more daytime fatigue (Hill et al., 2022). The disruptor data shows the same pattern. Stress and anxiety have both declined as reported sleep disruptors over the past two years. Screen time is the one disruptor still growing, cited by 26% of employees two years ago, 27% last year, and 30% today. The late-night scroll is a discipline failure, and it keeps happening for a reason: it's the only unclaimed time left in the day, and it's being spent awake.

That's what makes the fluency split legible: 25% of Beginners rate their sleep as healthy, compared to 33% of Adopters and 44% of Pioneers. When researchers ask people why they delay sleep, the most common answer is not insomnia but autonomy: the evening is the only time that belongs to them, so they spend it, even at the cost of the next morning. By that logic, personal time taken during daylight should protect the night.

SLEEP HEALTH RISES WITH AI FLUENCY

Share of each AI-adoption segment who rate their sleep as healthy, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.

19 pts

BEGINNER-TO-
PIONEER SPREAD



AI BEGINNERS

25%

rate their sleep as healthy



AI ADOPTERS

33%

rate their sleep as healthy



AI PIONEERS

44%

rate their sleep as healthy



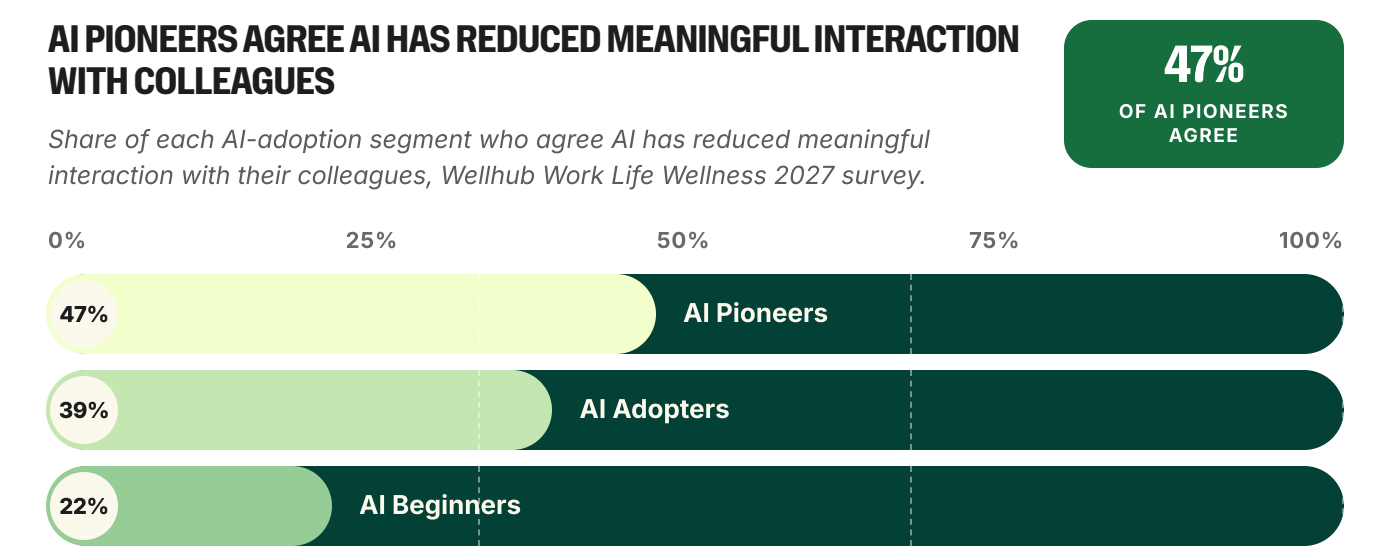
Even a full night can look better than it was. Someone who spent seven hours in bed and got four hours of real, restorative sleep will call that a full night, right up until a sleep tracker or wearable shows them the difference. As with a tracked week of meals, the measured pattern is what changes behavior, because it replaces the flattering guess with the actual number.

Sleep looks like the pillar an employer can influence least. The economics argue otherwise. Insufficient sleep costs the US economy up to \$411 billion a year, 2.28% of GDP, in lost productivity (RAND, 2016), and the leading workplace causes are things a company directly controls: messages sent after hours, meetings scheduled into the evening, a workday with no fixed end. No benefit can put an employee to bed. A company can stop taking the hours that get them there. A clear after-hours communication policy costs nothing to write, and it returns the one resource every other pillar depends on.

3.5 Social Connection

Poor social connection raises the risk of heart disease by 29% and stroke by 32%, a health effect comparable to smoking fifteen cigarettes a day (U.S. Surgeon General). Those numbers would trigger a safety review if they came from a chemical in the building. They come instead from something quieter: how often people actually talk to each other.

On the first four pillars, Pioneers lead everything. Here they come last. **Forty-seven percent of Pioneers agree AI has reduced meaningful interaction with their colleagues, compared to 39% of Adopters and 22% of Beginners.** The explanation is the most literal one available. The tasks AI absorbs first, drafting a first pass, pulling a status update, checking a number, were the tasks that used to require asking another person. Each one was small. Together they were most of the reasons coworkers spoke during a day. The work still gets done, faster than before. The conversation that used to come with it doesn't happen, and nobody decided to cut it. It simply stopped being necessary.



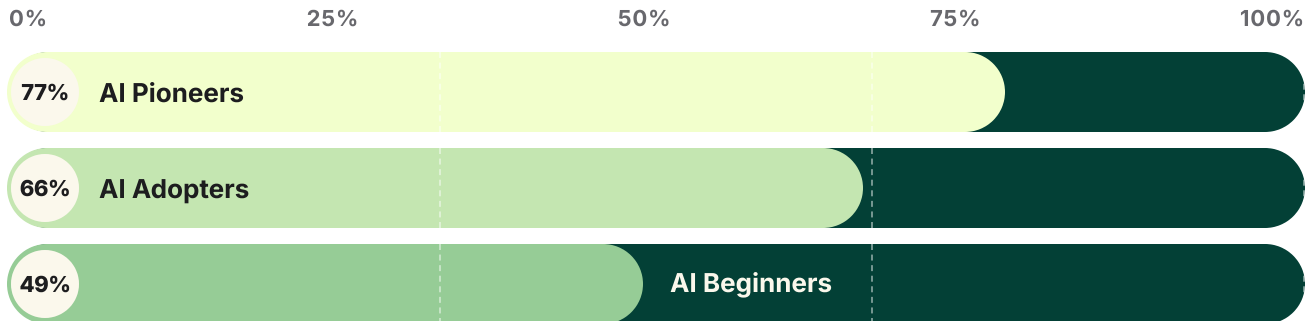
Losing it isn't making anyone want it less. **Sixty-six percent of employees say they want to feel more connected at work, and the want runs highest exactly where the loss runs deepest: 77% of Pioneers, compared to 66% of Adopters and 49% of Beginners.** The group that automated the small talk out of its workday is the group most actively missing it.

EMPLOYEES WANT TO FEEL MORE CONNECTED AT WORK

Share of each AI-adoption segment who want to feel more connected at work, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.

66%

OF ALL EMPLOYEES
WANT TO FEEL
MORE CONNECTED



What isn't working as a replacement is AI itself. **Only 20% of employees agree that using AI for wellness support is an adequate substitute for real human connection.** What is working sits somewhere few companies think to look: the wellness routine. **Sixty-four percent of employees say community or social support is extremely or very important to keeping long-term wellness habits, and 41% say their wellness routine helps them feel connected to others, not just physically healthy.** A class, a run club, a shared workout does two jobs at once: it builds the habit and the relationship in the same hour.



A manager notices this long before it shows up in any employee engagement survey. A team channel that used to carry back-and-forth now carries automated task updates. A standing one-on-one keeps getting pushed because the status check it used to cover happens on its own. None of it looks like a problem on any given week. For an employer, the practical answer is not to slow the automation down. It's to stop treating connection as something the workday produces automatically, because it no longer does. Time for shared activity, wellness done in groups rather than alone, meetings that still contain two minutes of talking about nothing: these used to be free byproducts of how work happened. Now they have to be built on purpose.

3.6 Perspective: Jen Fisher



Jen Fisher

Founder and CEO, The Wellbeing Team; former Chief Wellbeing Officer, Deloitte US; Wellhub US Advisory Board

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur adipiscing elit. Quisque faucibus ex sapien vitae pellentesque sem placerat. In id cursus mi pretium tellus duis convallis. Tempus leo eu aenean sed diam urna tempor. Pulvinar vivamus fringilla lacus nec metus bibendum egestas. laculis massa nisl malesuada lacinia integer nunc posuere. Ut hendrerit semper vel class aptent taciti sociosqu. Ad litora torquent per conubia nostra inceptos himenaeos.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur adipiscing elit. Quisque faucibus ex sapien vitae pellentesque sem placerat. In id cursus mi pretium tellus duis convallis. Tempus leo eu aenean sed diam urna tempor. Pulvinar vivamus fringilla lacus nec metus bibendum egestas. laculis massa nisl malesuada lacinia integer nunc posuere. Ut hendrerit semper vel class aptent taciti sociosqu. Ad litora torquent per conubia nostra inceptos himenaeos.

4 The Employer-Employee Support Gap

Ask a company what it does for employee wellbeing and the answer comes quickly: a gym benefit, a counseling line, a manager who checks in. Ask employees whether they feel supported and the answer comes slower. Both sides are being honest. The investment is real, and so is the experience of not feeling it, and the space between those two truths is where this year's most actionable findings sit.

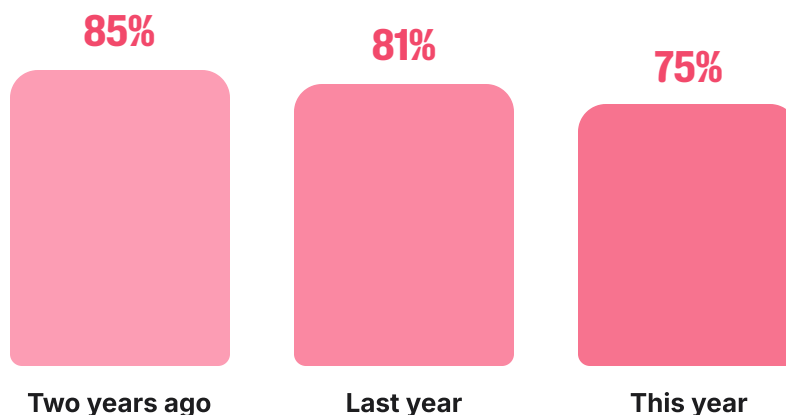


Employees are adjusting to that space. **Seventy-five percent say their employer bears some responsibility for their wellbeing, down from 81% last year and 85% the year before.** They aren't deciding they need less help. They're revising their expectations to match their experience, and an employee who has stopped expecting support is a bigger retention risk than one who's still complaining about it. A frustrated employee is still negotiating. A resigned one is comparing offers.

EMPLOYEES SAY THEIR EMPLOYER BEARS SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR WELLBEING

Share of employees who say their employer bears some responsibility for their wellbeing, Wellhub Work Life Wellness survey, three-year trend.

75%
SAY THEIR
EMPLOYER BEARS
SOME
RESPONSIBILITY



When employees describe the support that does reach them, three sources come up again and again: a clear AI policy, a manager who backs them, and a wellbeing program they can actually use. Those three levers share a flaw. All three deliver most reliably to the employees who are already doing best.

4.1 AI Policy

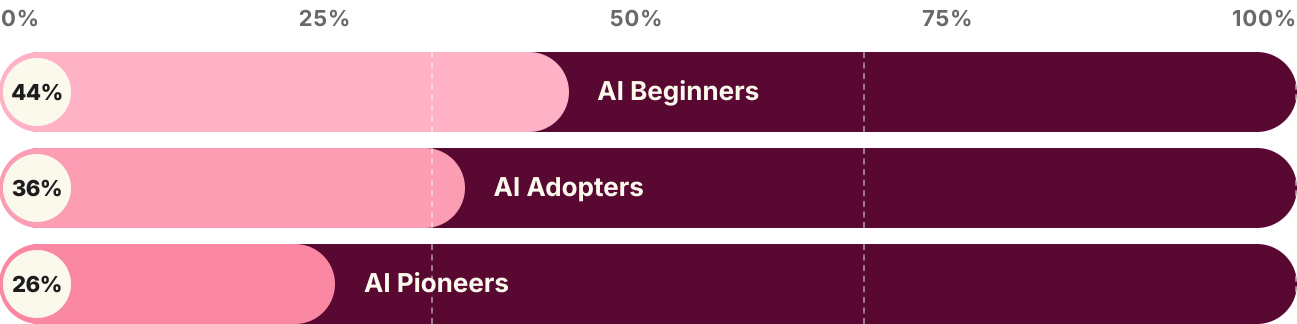
An AI policy sounds like a technology decision, something for IT and legal to settle. The wellbeing data say it belongs on HR's desk too. How fluent employees are with AI, and how supported they feel while building that fluency, now shapes their burnout, their job security, even their sleep. A policy is where that support becomes official. It tells every employee what's allowed, what's expected, and what they'll be judged on, and a real one is a working program: expectations people can repeat from memory, communicated often, and modeled by leaders who follow the same rules themselves. A document that sits in a shared drive and appears once during onboarding is not a policy. To an employee, it's silence.

Thirty-four percent of employees say their company has no formal AI policy at all, and the silence is loudest for the people who need guidance most: 44% of Beginners report no policy, compared to 36% of Adopters and 26% of Pioneers.

EMPLOYEES REPORTING NO FORMAL AI POLICY AT THEIR COMPANY

Share of each AI-adoption segment reporting no formal AI policy at their company, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.

34%
SAY THEIR
COMPANY HAS NO
FORMAL AI POLICY



Pioneers can work without stated rules because they've had time to build their own judgment. Beginners, already the most anxious group about AI, are left guessing at the exact question a policy exists to answer: is using this encouraged here, or will it be held against me?

Knowing where you stand turns out to be worth a lot. **Seventy-seven percent of employees at companies with a clear, well-communicated AI policy feel resilient and able to adapt to the pace of change, compared to 39% of those who aren't sure a policy even exists.** Both groups work with the same technology at the same pace. The difference is that one of them isn't spending the day wondering.

For HR, this is the fastest lever of the three, and the mistake is thinking the document is the deliverable. The 77% belong to companies where the policy is communicated and demonstrated: leaders who use the tools openly, expectations repeated until they're familiar. Companies spend heavily on AI tools and training. The data suggest the cheapest thing they could offer employees is certainty.

4.2 Manager Support

Everything a company intends for employee wellbeing travels through one person. The program can be generous and the policy can be clear, but it's a manager who decides, mostly in small moments, whether any of it is usable: whether stepping out for a workout reads as normal or as slacking, whether a calendar block for a walk survives the week, whether anyone ever asks how someone is actually doing. Manager backing was one of the two conditions that explained why Pioneers stay well under the heaviest load. This is where that condition gets distributed.



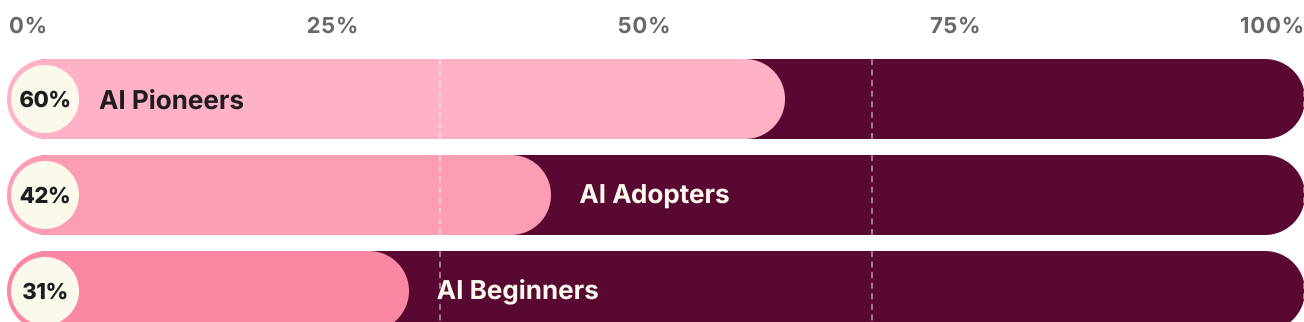
It is not distributed evenly. **Sixty percent of Pioneers say their manager actively supports their wellbeing, not just their output, compared to 42% of Adopters and 31% of Beginners, a 29-point spread.** In 1971, a Welsh physician named Julian Tudor Hart described what he called the inverse care law: good medical care tends to reach the people who need it least. Half a century later, wellbeing support at work is obeying the same law. Beginners report the worst wellbeing on every pillar and the most fear about their future, and they are the least likely to have a manager backing either. That's a loop that feeds itself. A struggling employee doesn't stop getting noticed; they stop getting backed. Less backing leads to worse wellbeing, worse wellbeing drags down performance, and declining performance draws scrutiny instead of the positive, constructive attention that helps a person recover.

EMPLOYEES WHOSE MANAGER ACTIVELY SUPPORTS THEIR WELLBEING

Share of each AI-adoption segment who say their manager actively supports their wellbeing, not just their output, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.

29 pts

BEGINNER-TO-
PIONEER SPREAD



Managers aren't doing this carelessly. Support has become a retention tool, and managers spend it on the people whose departure would hurt most: **82% of employees with a strongly supportive manager say they'd consider leaving if that support disappeared.** Most managers aren't even making a deliberate choice. They're overloaded: 51% of organizations flag manager overload as a significant risk to company performance (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing 2026). A stretched manager protects their top performers first. Everyone else is left to manage on their own.

What makes that triage expensive is that it forfeits the manager's real power. The same attention that keeps a Pioneer from leaving can turn a Beginner into a Pioneer, and an underperformer into a high performer. The 29-point spread isn't just a map of where support currently goes. It's a map of conversions nobody is attempting, at the exact moment companies need more fluent, resilient employees than they can hire. So the fix runs on two levels. Make baseline wellbeing support standard for every employee, part of how the company operates rather than something a manager hands out, so nobody has to be noticed to be supported. That frees the manager's limited attention for the thing only a manager can do: developing the people with the furthest to climb.

4.3 Wellbeing Programs

Of the three levers, the wellbeing program is the one with the most reach. A clear AI policy removes uncertainty and a supportive manager protects time, but both of those clear the way. The program is what fills it: the actual workout, the therapy session, the nutrition plan,

the night of sleep. It's the only lever that touches every pillar of wellbeing at once, and the only one that reaches every employee directly instead of depending on who their manager happens to be.

Only 26% of employees rate their company's wellbeing program as good this year, down from 29% last year and 41% two years ago. That decline is not fading interest in wellbeing. Employees are exercising more than they have in three years, half of them are in therapy, and when asked what support they're missing, they ask for more in every category. Demand for what the program offers is rising while the rating of the program falls. What employees are marking down is the fit between the program they were given and the workday they actually have.



41% **Two years ago** rated their company's wellbeing program as good



29% **Last year** rated their company's wellbeing program as good



26% **This year** rate their company's wellbeing program as good

The clearest evidence is time. Forty-six percent of employees say their company does not give them the time and space in the workday to manage their wellbeing. Usage follows that permission: **41% of Pioneers build a wellness activity into the workday at least once a day, compared to 31% of Adopters and 24% of Beginners**, the same groups whose managers most and least protect their time. A program can be well designed and still unusable, if using it requires an hour the day never gives.



41% **AI Pioneers** build a wellness activity into the workday at least once a day



31% **AI Adopters** build a wellness activity into the workday at least once a day



24% **AI Beginners** build a wellness activity into the workday at least once a day

That's the test a modern program has to pass, and passing it takes three things.

The first is accessibility. Support has to fit into the openings a real day offers: a class near the office at lunch, a gym near home in the evening, ten minutes of meditation between calls. When wellbeing can happen in the gaps the day already has, no one has to negotiate for a bigger one.

The second is variety. **Ask employees which kinds of wellbeing support they need but don't have, and they name every category at nearly the same rate:**

EMPLOYEES NAME EVERY KIND OF MISSING SUPPORT AT NEARLY THE SAME RATE

Share of employees naming each kind of wellbeing support they need but don't have, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.



29% Fitness programs



29% Therapy or counseling



28% Financial wellness tools



28% Flexible work



27% Nutrition



27% Mindfulness

Employees aren't asking for one missing benefit. They're asking for all of it, because the pillars hold each other up: a full night of sleep makes the morning workout likelier, the workout steadies mental health, a decent meal fuels all three, and a class taken with other people rebuilds the connection the workday has been quietly draining. Support one pillar and you've helped it. Support them together and each one starts reinforcing the others.

The third is range. An employee who hasn't exercised in years needs a gentle way in: a beginner class, a walk that counts. An employee who trains five days a week needs options that keep pace with them. A single offering can't serve both, which is why programs built around one gym or one app keep disappointing someone: whoever it wasn't designed for.



One measure tells a benefits team whether a program passes all three tests. Enrollment counts who signed up. Engagement counts who keeps coming back, and only a program that's easy to reach, broad enough to matter, and built for every level keeps earning that return visit.

Step back from the chapter and the three levers tell one story. The AI policy exists, but the employees who most need the rules never heard them. The manager cares, but the caring goes to the people already thriving. The program is funded, but half the workforce was never given the time to use it. None of this was designed. It's what happens by default when a company assumes support will find its way to people on its own. The companies that close the gap will do it deliberately, from both ends at once: a program accessible, varied, and engaging enough to put a

floor under every employee, and managers freed to do what only managers can, lifting the people with the furthest to climb. What that's worth, in retention and in performance, is where the data go next.

5 Wellbeing as the Key Lever for AI-Era Performance



Getting the most out of AI is usually framed as a technology problem: pick the right tools, train people fast enough, stay ahead of the curve. But every gain AI delivers still runs through a person, someone expected to learn faster, produce more, and keep adapting with no finish line in sight.

That's a level of sustained demand no one meets while running on empty. Supported employees keep pace with the AI era. Unsupported ones quit, first quietly, then in writing.

5.1 Wellbeing drives performance

In January 2021, an investor could have tried a strange strategy: ignore every financial metric and buy the 100 publicly listed companies whose employees reported the highest wellbeing. Two years later, that portfolio would have beaten the S&P 500 by 20%. The result comes from Oxford's Wellbeing Research Centre, which scored 1,636 listed companies on how their employees were actually doing and checked those scores against the fundamentals: companies with higher employee wellbeing showed stronger return on assets, higher profits, and better market performance (De Neve et al., 2023). Wellbeing looks like a soft metric. It trades like a leading indicator of performance.



The mechanism is not mysterious. Modern work runs on attention, judgment, and stamina, and those are physical capacities, built and rebuilt by sleep, movement, decent food, and contact with other people. AI has raised the cognitive intensity of nearly every job it touches: new tools to learn, output to verify, a pace that keeps resetting. The employee who maintains those capacities can meet that intensity. The employee running depleted meets it worse every week. Employees are direct about this: **87% agree they perform better at work when they prioritize their wellbeing.**

EMPLOYEES PERFORM BETTER AT WORK WHEN THEY PRIORITIZE THEIR WELLBEING

Share of employees who agree they perform better at work when they prioritize their wellbeing, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.



AGREE THEY PERFORM BETTER AT WORK WHEN THEY
PRIORITIZE THEIR WELLBEING

87%

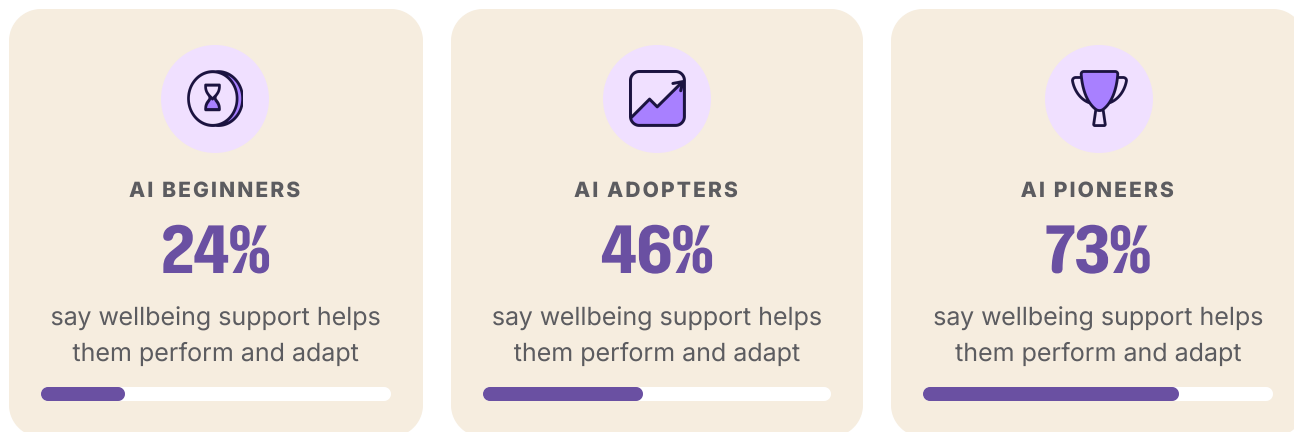
Wellbeing support matters most to the people doing the most adapting. **Seventy-three percent of Pioneers say access to wellbeing support helps them perform and adapt in an AI-driven environment, compared to 46% of Adopters and 24% of Beginners.** To read that spread, consider what the AI era looks like from each end of it. A Pioneer is working at full stretch and holding their ground, and for someone in that position, wellbeing support is fuel: the workout and the full night of sleep are part of how they sustain the pace. A Beginner is standing in front of tools they haven't mastered, unsure their job survives the transition. What that person is missing first is not a wellness class. It's training, time to learn, and some evidence they have a future, and that much uncertainty makes it hard to see any support clearly. Beginners aren't saying they need less wellbeing support. They're saying they need to be equipped as well, and they're right.

WELLBEING SUPPORT MATTERS MOST TO THE PEOPLE DOING THE MOST ADAPTING

Share of each AI-adoption segment saying access to wellbeing support helps them perform and adapt in an AI-driven environment, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.

49 pts

BEGINNER-TO-
PIONEER SPREAD



The practical lesson is that the two investments only work together. Equip a Beginner, with training, time, and a reason to feel secure, and wellbeing support starts doing for them what it already does for Pioneers. **Only 18% of Beginners say they've been given time and support to learn the AI skills their role requires, compared to 73% of Pioneers**, which means most companies are running the experiment in only one segment of their workforce. The 73% of Pioneers who vouch for wellbeing support are a preview of what the rest of the workforce says once somebody equips them.

The labor market has already priced this in: 83% of employees say they'll only consider employers that place a clear emphasis on wellbeing when looking for their next job. Investors reward companies that keep their people well, and candidates now require it. A company that treats wellbeing as a cost is arguing with both.

5.2 Holistic wellbeing builds resilience and sustains engagement

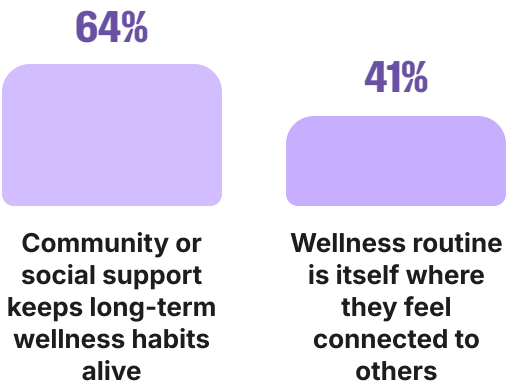
Wellbeing budgets are built on tradeoffs. Fund the gym benefit this year and maybe therapy next year; add the meditation app, let the nutrition idea wait. Underneath those choices sits an assumption so common nobody says it out loud: that the pillars of wellbeing are separate purchases, and a company can pick the two or three it can afford.

The results suggest the pillars don't behave like separate purchases. Across physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, nutrition, and sleep, the same employees lead every time and the same employees trail every time, in the same order, on all four. People aren't well in one column and unwell in another. Wellbeing shows up as a package, and it erodes as a package: the missed sleep becomes the skipped workout, the skipped workout becomes the harder Tuesday. A company funding two pillars out of five isn't getting two-fifths of the result. It's leaving the system that connects them unbuilt.

One pillar holds the others in place: social connection. **Sixty-four percent of employees say community or social support is what keeps their long-term wellness habits alive, and 41% say their wellness routine is itself where they feel connected to others.**

SOCIAL CONNECTION KEEPS WELLNESS HABITS ALIVE AND BUILDS COMMUNITY

Share of employees who say community or social support keeps their long-term wellness habits alive, and who say their wellness routine is itself where they feel connected to others, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.



Read those two numbers together: connection keeps the habits going, and the habits are where connection happens. Community is also where accountability lives. A promise to yourself gets rescheduled; a promise to the people expecting you at the morning class does not. And for remote employees, whose workday contains the fewest built-in human moments, a shared wellness routine can be the steadiest community they have at work, which makes it double as infrastructure for every other pillar. A benefit used alone gets abandoned. A class with familiar faces gets attended.

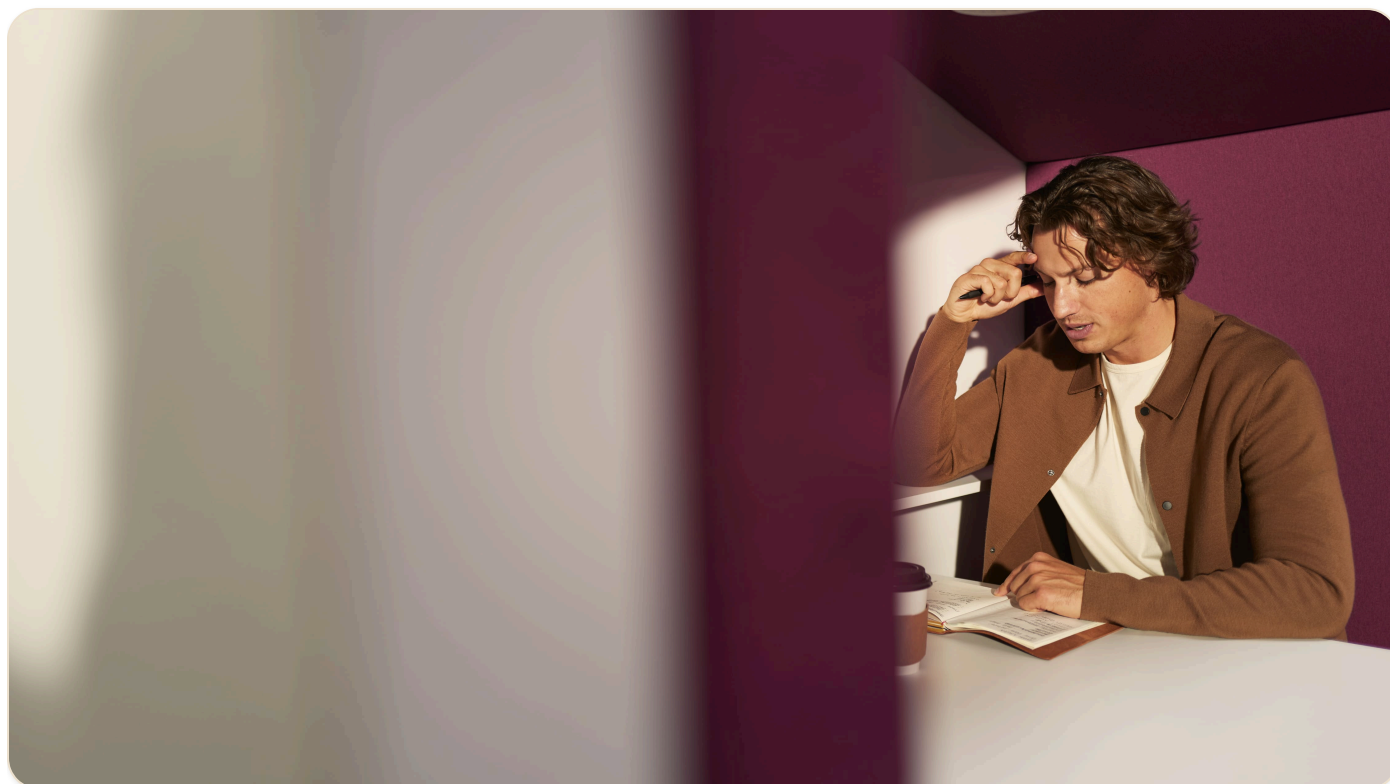


HR leaders, surveyed separately from the employees in this research, describe the same interdependence from the management side. Asked what sustains employee performance and resilience, they rate every pillar as critical at nearly the same rate: 84% for fitness and physical activity, 83% for sleep and recovery, 78% for social connection, 76% for therapy and mindfulness, 75% for nutrition (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing 2026). Five pillars within nine points. The people watching employees perform for a living can't find a pillar to skip either.

What the whole system buys is the durability this chapter is about. **Employees who feel fully equipped to work with AI report resilience at nearly twice the rate of those who feel least equipped, 87% compared to 45%,** and feeling equipped is not a personality trait: it's the product of time, training, and support a company either provides or doesn't. The same is true of engagement, and the bill for neglecting it is already arriving: 36% of employees report emotional disengagement right now, the state strain becomes when nothing addresses it. Resilience and engagement are system outputs. Fund one pillar and starve the rest, and the system quietly stops producing them.

5.3 The employees most likely to leave are the hardest to replace

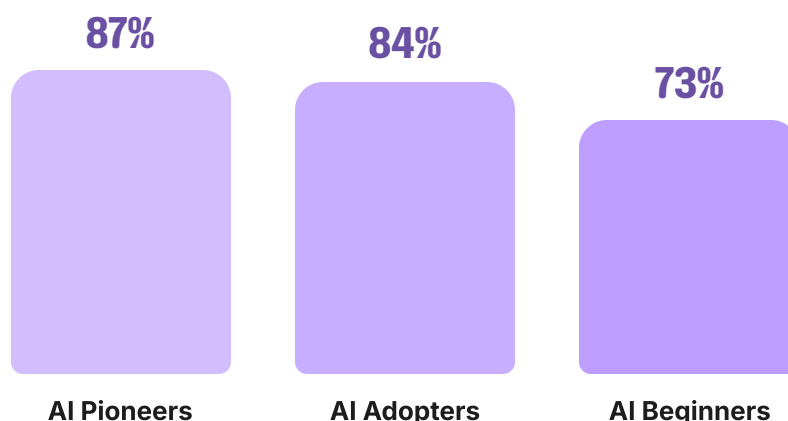
No resignation letter says the company's wellbeing support fell short. It says something about a better offer, a new opportunity, timing that just worked out. The real decision forms months earlier, and it forms fastest among the people a company can least afford to lose.



Eighty-seven percent of Pioneers would consider leaving a company that doesn't focus on employee wellbeing, compared to 84% of Adopters and 73% of Beginners.

EMPLOYEES WOULD CONSIDER LEAVING A COMPANY THAT DOES NOT FOCUS ON EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

Share of each AI-adoption segment who would consider leaving a company that does not focus on employee wellbeing, Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.



The smallest of those three numbers is still nearly three out of four employees. Wellbeing has become a condition of staying for just about everyone. What rises with fluency is how firm the condition is, and it's firmest in exactly the group whose exit costs the most.

Count what leaves the building when a Pioneer resigns. These are the employees who use AI as a core part of how they work, and half of them coach their teammates on it, which means a departing Pioneer takes two jobs with them: the work they produced and the informal training program they were running for free. Gallup puts the cost of replacing an employee at one-half to two times their annual salary, and that math assumes a replacement is easy to find. For a Pioneer, it rarely is: 62% of HR leaders say they're concerned about losing people with in-demand AI skills (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing 2026), and skills that scarce sit at the expensive end of every replacement estimate. So the employees companies most fear losing are also the ones most willing to walk over wellbeing. They're openly stating their price, and it isn't money.

The part that should change how HR teams operate is that almost none of this has to happen. Gallup also finds that 52% of employees who leave voluntarily say their manager or organization could have done something to prevent it. The warning is rarely hidden. In this data, it sits in wellbeing responses collected months before anyone updates a resume, a leading indicator for any HR team that reads it that way instead of as a post-mortem. That's the resignation letter nobody has to write.

5.4 Perspective: Betsy Atkins



Betsy Atkins

Chair, Wellhub US Advisory Board; public company director; Forbes contributor

Every board I sit on eventually asks the same question about any risk: where does it show up in earnings? This chapter answers that question for employee wellbeing, and boards should stop treating it as an HR slide.

The employees hardest to replace, the ones whose skills your competitors would hire away tomorrow, are also the ones most willing to walk if they don't feel supported. That's not a culture problem but concentrated retention risk sitting on the same balance sheet as any other asset a company depends on, and most boards have no line of sight into it at all.

Here's the question I'd put to any management team: which of our people are hardest to replace, and do we actually know how close they are to leaving? If the honest answer is "we don't track that," that's the finding. A board that would never accept "we don't track customer churn" should feel the same discomfort here.

Wellbeing support isn't a perk line item competing with other perks for budget. This chapter treats it as a performance lever, and the data backs that up: employees who feel supported perform better and stay longer, full stop. Boards already know how to price retention risk. They just haven't been handed the right dashboard for this particular version of it.

My advice to any board reading this: ask management for the wellbeing number the way you'd ask for the churn number. If nobody has an answer, that's worth more attention than the earnings call.

6 The Wellhub Effect

6.1 The difference shows up on every pillar

Everything to this point describes what the right wellbeing support would look like. It would fit into the openings of a real workday. It would cover every pillar instead of forcing a choice between them. It would work for the employee who has never tended to their wellbeing and the one who has trained for years. And it would reach everyone, not just the people a manager is already protecting. That reads like a wish list. The rest of this chapter is what happens at companies where it's an actual benefit: employees at organizations offering Wellhub, compared with employees at organizations without it.

This comparison holds one thing constant: every employee in it works for a company that funds a wellbeing program. The only difference is which one.



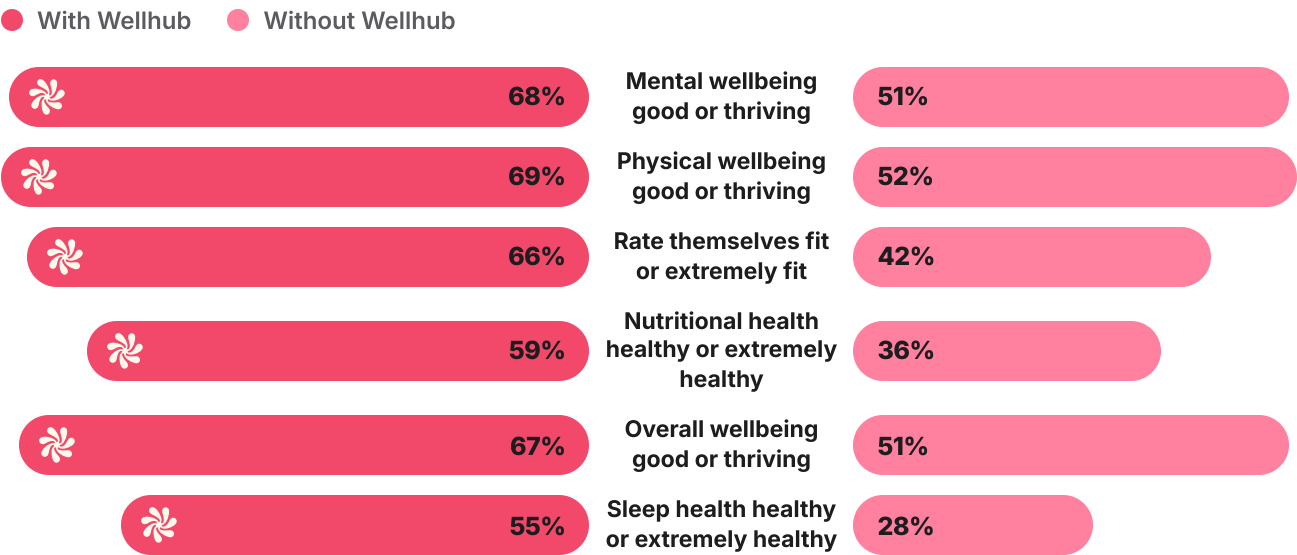
Sixty-seven percent of employees with Wellhub rate their overall wellbeing as good or thriving, compared to 51% of employees with another program. In a company of 1,000 people, that difference is 160 employees doing well instead of getting by, decided by which program the company picked.

The advantage holds on every pillar, and it's largest on the hardest ones. Employees with Wellhub rate their mental wellbeing higher, 68% compared to 51%, and their physical wellbeing higher, 69% compared to 52%. On fitness, it's 66% compared to 42%. On nutrition, 59% compared to 36%. And on sleep, the workforce's weakest pillar, 55% compared to 28%: nearly double.

The order of those results is the story. Nutrition and sleep are the pillars other programs make the least headway on, and they're exactly where Wellhub employees pull furthest ahead. That's what breadth buys: support that reaches the pillars a gym benefit alone never touches.

EMPLOYEES WITH WELLHUB COME OUT AHEAD ON EVERY WELLNESS PILLAR

Six different questions about six different wellbeing pillars of a person's life and Wellhub employees report better outcomes on all of them.



Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.

6.2 Why the design wins

A program works when employees can actually use it: when it's accessible, varied, and built for every level. Those are design choices, and they're the ones Wellhub makes. One membership covers fitness, mindfulness, nutrition, and sleep, so an employee never has to choose which part of their wellbeing deserves the benefit. The same membership serves the employee taking their first class in years and the one who trains five days a week, which is how it reaches Beginners and Pioneers instead of one end of the workforce. It fits the openings a real day offers: a class near the office at lunch, a gym near home in the evening, a session in the ten minutes between calls. And because so much of it happens with other people, a class, a gym, a familiar face at the same hour, it carries the accountability that keeps a habit alive past January.



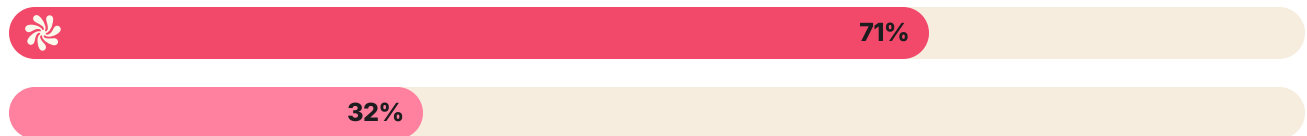
Multiply that across a workforce and it becomes something bigger than personal habit. One employee slipping out to a lunchtime class is a routine. Hundreds doing it is a norm: the class is on calendars, people talk about going, and colleagues join instead of raising an eyebrow. And a single shared membership is what lets managers lead it. A manager on Wellhub holds the same benefit as their whole team, so when they take the noon class or the walk between calls, they're not exercising an executive perk, they're visibly using the same thing they're encouraging everyone else to use. Every open use is permission the team can see, and no memo grants permission as convincingly as a manager's calendar. Employees can tell when that's happening. **Seventy-one percent at Wellhub companies say wellness is genuinely built into how their company operates, compared to 32% of employees with another program: the widest difference on any measure this year. Resilience follows: 76% feel able to adapt to the pace of change at work, compared to 57%, and 70% say they're happy at work, compared to 43%.** A workforce that recovers a little every day has more left when the pace picks up.

CULTURE, RESILIENCE, AND HAPPINESS TELL THE SAME STORY

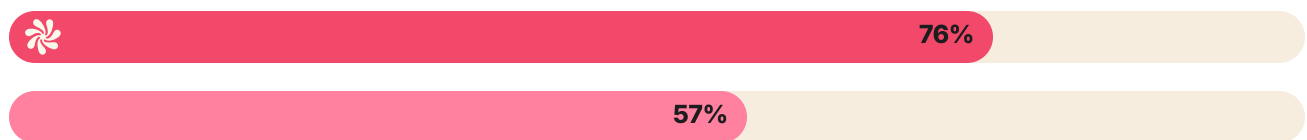
Workplaces that feel genuinely supportive are also the ones where people can absorb change without cracking under it, and actually enjoy showing up.

● With Wellhub ● Without Wellhub

Say wellness is genuinely built into how their company operates



Feel able to adapt to the pace of change at work



Happy or extremely happy at work



Wellhub Work Life Wellness 2027 survey.

6.3 Companies see the same effect from their side

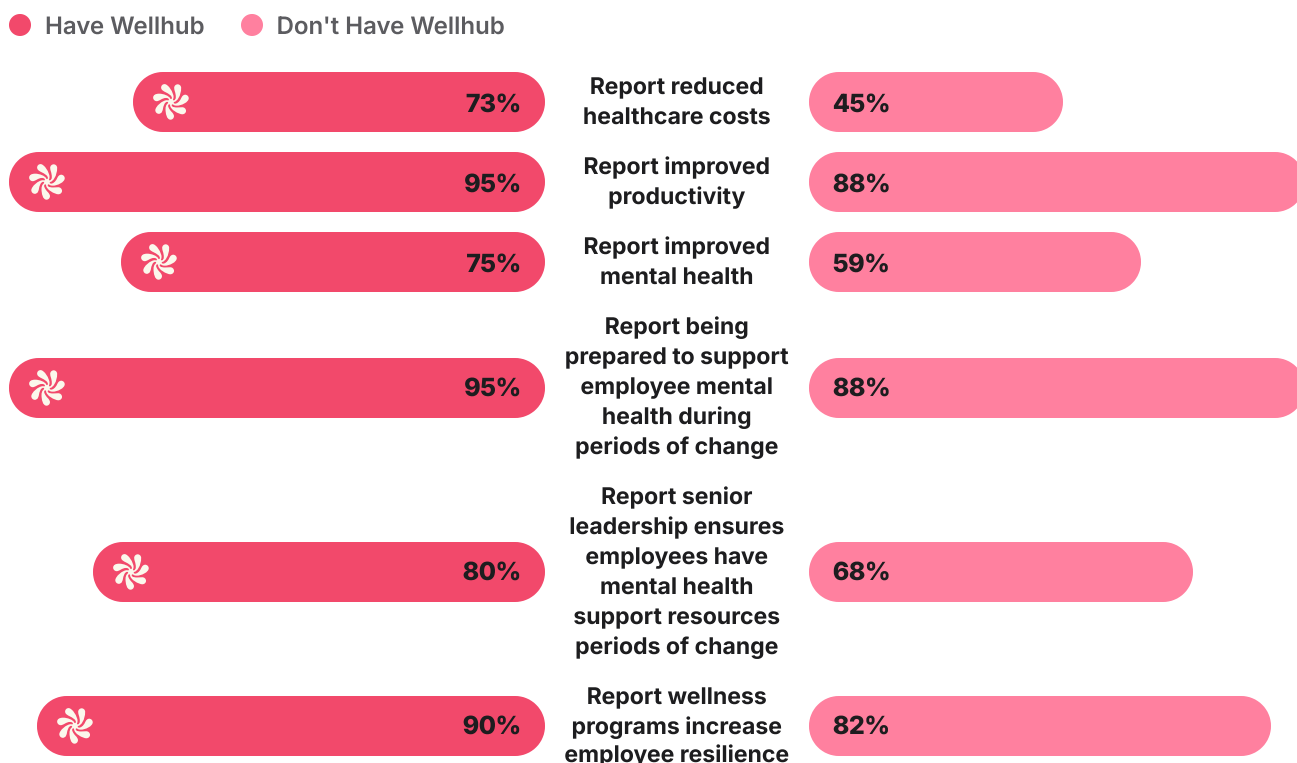
Employers don't experience their people's sleep or nutrition directly. They experience what those things produce: the healthcare claims, the output, the way a team handles a hard quarter. On every one of those, organizations offering Wellhub report better results than organizations running other wellbeing programs (Wellhub, Return on Wellbeing 2026).



Start with the number a CFO checks first. Seventy-three percent of organizations using Wellhub report reduced healthcare costs, compared to 45% of those using other programs. Wellbeing that goes unaddressed long enough becomes a medical claim, which makes healthcare spend the hardest-nosed measure a wellbeing program can be judged on, and it's where the difference is largest.

The performance measures follow the same order. **Ninety-five percent of HR leaders at organizations with Wellhub report improved employee productivity, compared to 88% at organizations with other programs:** most wellbeing investment helps productivity, and this one helps more often. Seventy-five percent of HR leaders at Wellhub organizations report improved employee mental health, compared to 59% at organizations with other programs. And 90% say Wellhub has made their employees more resilient in the face of work-related challenges, compared to 82% of HR leaders crediting other programs with the same.

WELLHUB GIVES COMPANIES AN EDGE COMPARED TO OTHER WELLNESS PROGRAMS



The company funds the benefit. The employee uses it. Both sides report that it's working, and they're describing the same chain from opposite ends: employees perform when their wellbeing holds, wellbeing holds when support actually reaches them, and support reaches them when it's built the way people are: accessible, varied, and shared. That's the Wellhub effect.

7 Conclusion

The tools of work have changed more in three years than in the thirty before them. The people using those tools haven't changed at all. They still need sleep, food, movement, and one another, and they need those things most during exactly the kind of upheaval AI has brought to their jobs. Any company's AI strategy is, whether it says so or not, a bet on how long its people can sustain the pace of change. That bet is winnable. It has conditions.

The employees keeping pace with AI are not tougher than everyone else. They're better supported. They make time for their wellbeing inside the workday, and a manager protects that time. They know what their company expects of them with AI, so they aren't carrying uncertainty on top of the workload. They feel secure enough about their future to sleep at night. Take those conditions away and the same person struggles; put them in place and a struggling person catches up. Nothing found this year suggests a resilient kind of employee exists. There are only supported employees and unsupported ones.

For an employer, that reduces to three moves. The first is a clear AI policy: write it, communicate it constantly, and have leaders visibly work by it, because certainty is the cheapest wellbeing a company can provide. The second is empowered managers: encourage them to actively back their people's wellbeing, not just their output, to protect the time that wellbeing takes, and to model it in the open, the noon class on the calendar, the walk between calls, so that an employee's support stops depending on which manager they happen to have. The third is one wellbeing program with real reach: spanning the pillars, meeting every level, fitting inside a real day, because the pillars rise and fall together, and a program that covers two of them was never going to hold up the rest.



The return on those moves is not a matter of sentiment. Employees say almost unanimously that they perform better when their wellbeing holds. The companies whose employees report the highest wellbeing outperform their peers on profits and market returns. And the people most likely to leave when support is missing are the ones with the scarcest skills and the most recruiters in their inbox, in departures half of them say their company could have prevented it. An AI investment pays off through people or it doesn't pay off at all.



Wellhub is built for exactly this. One membership spans fitness, mindfulness, nutrition, and sleep, with the range to serve an employee taking their first class in years and one who trains five days a week, in whatever opening the day offers. Because the whole team holds the same benefit, a manager using it grants permission just by being seen, and wellness moves from a benefit some individuals use to how the company operates. Employees at organizations with Wellhub report better outcomes on every pillar than employees with other programs. Their employers report lower healthcare costs and stronger productivity. Both sides are describing the same thing: support that reaches the people it was bought for.

The companies that come out ahead of this shift won't be the ones that adopted AI the fastest. They'll be the ones that supported the people adopting it.

8 Worldwide Wellness

- Global
- United States
- United Kingdom
- Brazil
- Argentina
- Chile
- Spain
- Italy
- Germany
- Mexico
- Romania

SEGMENT	GLOBAL	UNITED STATES	UNITED KINGDOM	BRAZIL	ARGENTINA/ CHILE	SPAIN	ITALY	GERMANY	MEXICO	ROMANIA
Burnout symptoms every day										
Pioneers	24%	38%	23%	23%	25%	19%	23%	19%	20%	26%
Adopters	22%	37%	23%	20%	27%	18%	20%	21%	13%	22%
Beginners	16%	22%	11%	11%	27%	18%	17%	11%	16%	15%
Agree AI reduced meaningful interaction with colleagues										
Pioneers	48%	65%	54%	36%	42%	39%	51%	43%	49%	52%
Adopters	39%	50%	43%	34%	38%	32%	41%	39%	32%	47%
Beginners	22%	24%	18%	19%	24%	19%	26%	16%	20%	28%
Would consider leaving a company that doesn't focus on wellbeing (trend line)										
All employees	83%	83%	83%	91%	84%	81%	85%	72%	76%	86%
Pioneers	67%	75%	71%	73%	61%	59%	66%	59%	66%	71%
Adopters	53%	55%	52%	55%	46%	59%	56%	44%	36%	64%
Beginners	37%	36%	35%	51%	50%	41%	34%	23%	37%	41%
Use AI tools for own wellbeing, regularly										
Pioneers	50%	67%	51%	52%	43%	45%	47%	43%	56%	44%
Adopters	23%	31%	22%	18%	22%	28%	24%	18%	20%	24%

SEGMENT	GLOBAL	UNITED STATES	UNITED KINGDOM	BRAZIL	ARGENTINA/ CHILE	SPAIN	ITALY	GERMANY	MEXICO	RUSSIA
Beginners	11%	17%	9%	9%	16%	7%	9%	6%	12%	15%
Coach teammates on AI use (see note)										
Pioneers	79%	86%	82%	82%	78%	77%	71%	74%	76%	81%
Adopters	36%	40%	34%	42%	38%	37%	31%	33%	27%	37%
Beginners	7%	11%	4%	6%	7%	3%	4%	5%	9%	10%
Agree AI has increased their workload										
All employees	30%	41%	30%	31%	26%	27%	27%	22%	27%	37%
Pioneers	40%	60%	43%	37%	32%	30%	39%	34%	42%	44%
Adopters	28%	37%	27%	20%	25%	31%	25%	27%	24%	36%
Beginners	15%	19%	14%	13%	16%	13%	12%	10%	15%	21%
Job security better than last year										
Pioneers	53%	52%	57%	55%	49%	57%	41%	45%	46%	69%
Adopters	33%	31%	36%	42%	32%	31%	37%	26%	21%	51%
Beginners	22%	25%	18%	28%	26%	25%	20%	16%	21%	36%
Screen time as a sleep disruptor										
All employees	30%	30%	27%	38%	35%	33%	26%	25%	22%	29%
Currently in therapy/counseling (any form)										
All employees	48%	56%	48%	60%	49%	49%	49%	36%	42%	57%
Rate overall wellbeing as good or thriving										
All employees	55%	63%	54%	58%	53%	53%	59%	48%	44%	67%
Wellbeing support helps perform/adapt in AI environment										
Pioneers	73%	81%	76%	75%	71%	70%	73%	67%	59%	76%
Adopters	46%	47%	46%	48%	46%	48%	47%	37%	39%	59%
Beginners	24%	28%	23%	17%	28%	33%	26%	17%	19%	30%

Sources

- American Psychological Association · 2025
Majority of U.S. Workers Say Job Insecurity Is Causing Stress (Work in America Survey)
 - Compass Group · 2023
Global Eating at Work Survey
 - Global Wellness Institute · 2026
Workplace Wellbeing Initiative Trends for 2026
 - Hart, J. T. · 1971
The Inverse Care Law. The Lancet.
 - Harvard Study of Adult Development, via Harvard Gazette · 2017
Over Nearly 80 Years, Harvard Study Has Been Showing How to Live a Healthy and Happy Life
 - Kim, T. J., & von dem Knesebeck, O. · 2016
Perceived Job Insecurity, Unemployment and Depressive Symptoms: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Prospective Observational Studies. International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health.
 - Layoffs.fyi data, reported by Gulf News · 2026
Tech Layoffs Near 154,000 in 2026 Amid AI Restructuring
 - Merrill, R. M., et al. · 2012
Poor Employee Health Habits Drive Lost Productivity (BYU Study of Nearly 20,000 American Workers)
 - Microsoft · 2025
Breaking Down the Infinite Workday (Work Trend Index)
 - National Sleep Foundation / American Academy of Sleep Medicine
Joint consensus statement
 - RAND Corporation · 2016
Why Sleep Matters: The Economic Costs of Insufficient Sleep
 - Sleep Health, journal of the National Sleep Foundation · 2023
Sleep Health (2023)
 - U.S. Surgeon General · 2023
Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation (Advisory)
 - World Economic Forum · 2025
The Future of Jobs Report 2025
-

Methodology

Wellhub conducted its **State of Work-Life Wellness 2027** survey to assess the current status of worker wellness and examine how well employee benefits packages are meeting worker needs.

Between **June 12, 2026 and June 19, 2026**, more than 5,000 full-time employees were surveyed online through the polling agency QuestionPro. The response pool included only workers 18 and older who have worked a full-time job in the last three months. The results have a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

Response options for the survey's 86 questions included Likert scales, multiple-choice, and multi-select options.

The countries included in this survey were: **United States, United Kingdom, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Spain, Italy, Germany, Mexico, and Romania**. Between 500 and 505 responses were collected from each country. Where necessary, question sets and response options were adapted to reflect regional variations in benefit availability.

Respondents were sorted into three AI segments, Pioneers, Adopters, and Beginners, using a combined AI Fluency Score built from three inputs. The first captured how respondents currently use AI tools such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Claude, and Gemini, on a scale from never having used one to using AI daily and actively coaching colleagues on it, scored zero to three as stated. The second captured respondents' own AI anxiety, from feeling overwhelmed or distrustful to feeling fully comfortable and trusting of AI, also scored zero to three, with lower anxiety producing a higher score. The third asked respondents to agree or disagree with nine statements about their day-to-day use of and reliance on AI at work, and scored them zero to three points based on how many they agreed with: zero agreements scored zero points, one or two agreements scored one point, three to five scored two points, and six to nine scored three points.

The three scores combine into a total ranging from zero to nine. Respondents scoring seven to nine are classified as AI Pioneers, four to six as AI Adopters, and zero to three as AI Beginners. Every wellbeing comparison broken out by these three groups throughout the report uses this score as its basis.

Contributors

Perspective commentary throughout this report is provided by members of the Wellhub US Advisory Board, who are compensated by Wellhub for their advisory services.
