



TELUS Mental Health Index.

South Korea | Q1 2026

Table of contents

1. What you need to know: Q1 2026	3	3. The Mental Health Index by region	12	6. Overview of the TELUS Mental Health Index	29
2. The Mental Health Index	5	4. The Mental Health Index by industry	14	Methodology.....	29
Mental health risk	6			Calculations.....	29
Mental Health Index sub-scores.....	7	5. Spotlight	15	Additional data and analyses.....	29
Depression.....	8	The relationship between			
Isolation.....	9	MHI scores and productivity	15		
Anxiety	10	Presenteeism.....	16		
Mental health by gender and age	11	Employer support for wellbeing.....	17		
Mental health by employment status.....	11	Barriers to mental health support	19		
Emergency savings.....	11	Workplace culture.....	22		
		Turnover	23		
		Adoption of AI at work.....	27		

What you need to know: Q1 2026.

Mental health has been gradually trending upward, yet the score at this level signals concern.

Mental health among workers in Korea has improved to 56.9, up 1.5 points from the fourth quarter of 2025, with depression and isolation remaining the most significant challenges. Key indicators from this period include:

- 46 per cent of workers have a high mental health risk; 44 per cent moderate; 11 per cent low
- All mental health sub-scores have either increased or are unchanged from Q4 2025, apart from optimism
- Depression and isolation have been the lowest mental health sub-scores since the launch of the Mental Health Index in January 2025
- 45 per cent of workers report feeling depressed; 44 per cent feel isolated; 43 per cent report feeling anxious
- 34 per cent of workers lack emergency savings to cover basic needs
- 30 per cent of workers report that their mental health is negatively affecting work productivity
- Mental health scores have improved in the Honam, Capital, and Central regions, but have declined in the Yeongnam region compared to Q4 2025
- Managers continue to score higher than non-managers, and labourers score lower than both service industry and office workers

Employees are calling for expanded employer support in six critical areas: expanded family benefits, physical and mental health support, career development, resilience training, and healthcare navigation.

At least a third of workers report unmet needs related to physical health, while one in five say the same for mental health support.

- 34 per cent of workers believe their employer could better support their physical health; 20 per cent say the same for mental health
- Workers wanting better mental health support score **five points lower** on the Mental Health Index than those who don't need additional support; these workers also lose **57.6 days per year in productivity**, 12 more days than workers who don't require additional support
- 24 per cent of workers want better support for career development
- 24 per cent of workers want better support for stress management
- 23 per cent of workers want support with healthcare navigation



Cost is the most cited barrier to accessing mental health support.

Nearly half of workers identify cost or affordability as a barrier to accessing mental health support, and stigma continues to deter help-seeking behaviour.

- 45 per cent of workers citing cost as a barrier **score 14 points lower** on the Mental Health Index and **lose 12 more days per year in productivity** compared to workers who report no barriers
- Workers who report a lack of energy as their primary barrier to seeking care have the lowest mental health score, and **lose 26 more productivity days** than workers facing no barriers
- 26 per cent of workers say discomfort sharing is a barrier, and 19 per cent say they're concerned about perception
- Workers over 50 are nearly twice as likely as those under 40 to report facing no barriers to accessing support

AI adoption is growing, with outcomes varying by employer support and frequency of use.

Two in five workers report that their employer supports or encourages the use of AI in the workplace, with nearly a third remaining neutral

- 66 per cent of workers use AI tools at least several times per month
- 76 per cent of workers who use AI report improved efficiency
- The lowest mental health score is among 14 per cent of workers whose employers actively discourage AI use, nearly four points lower than workers whose employers encourage it
- Managers are more likely than non-managers to report both improved efficiency from AI tools and employer encouragement of AI use

Outcomes differ substantially based on whether workers perceive their organisation's culture as supportive of their wellbeing.

A third of workers describe their organisation's culture as supportive of their wellbeing; those who don't lose 10 more days of productivity annually.

- Workers who feel their organisation's culture doesn't support their wellbeing **score eight points lower** on the Mental Health Index and **lose 10 more days per year in productivity**
- 17 per cent of workers are considering leaving their jobs; this group **scores 13 points lower** and **loses 14 more days annually in productivity** compared to workers not considering leaving
- 23 per cent of workers are uncertain about whether to leave; they **lose 12 more days per year** and **score nearly 12 points lower** than workers who are not considering leaving
- Better career opportunities, higher compensation, and improved benefits are the primary drivers of turnover intention

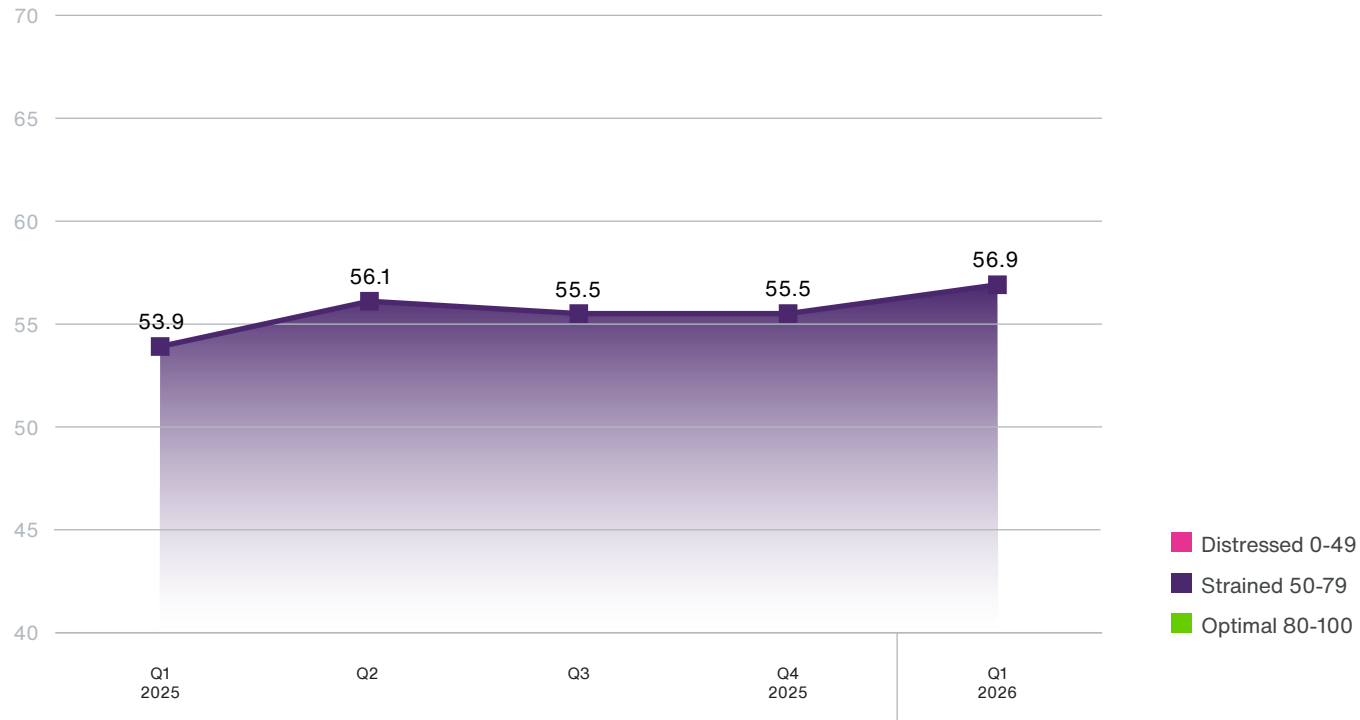
In this report, **productivity loss** refers to the number of workdays lost per year due to physical health issues and/or emotional or mental health challenges. Some fluctuations in productivity are inevitable, as employees naturally experience varying levels of efficiency throughout their workday..



The Mental Health Index.

The overall Mental Health Index (MHI) for Q1 2026 is 56.9.

Despite a modest increase of 1.4 points, the mental health of workers in Korea remains significantly strained.

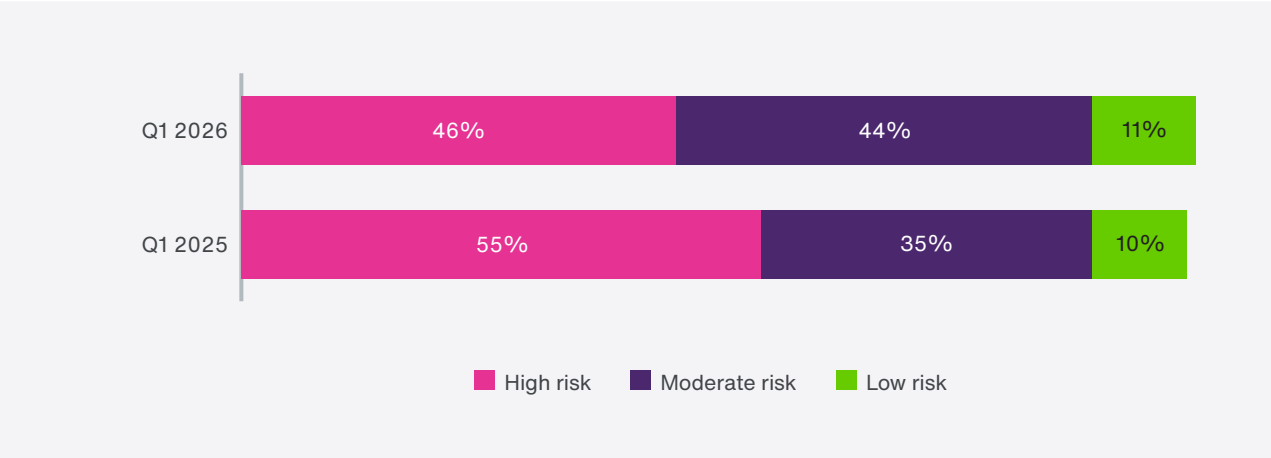


MHI Q1 2026	Q4 2025
56.9	55.5



Mental health risk.

In the first quarter of 2026, 46 per cent of workers have a high mental health risk, 44 per cent have a moderate mental health risk, and 11 per cent have a low mental health risk. The proportion of workers in the high-risk group has declined by five percent since Q1 2025.



Approximately 30 per cent of workers in the high-risk group report diagnosed anxiety or depression, seven per cent report diagnosed anxiety or depression in the moderate-risk group, and one per cent of workers in the low-risk group report diagnosed anxiety or depression.

Mental Health Index sub-scores.

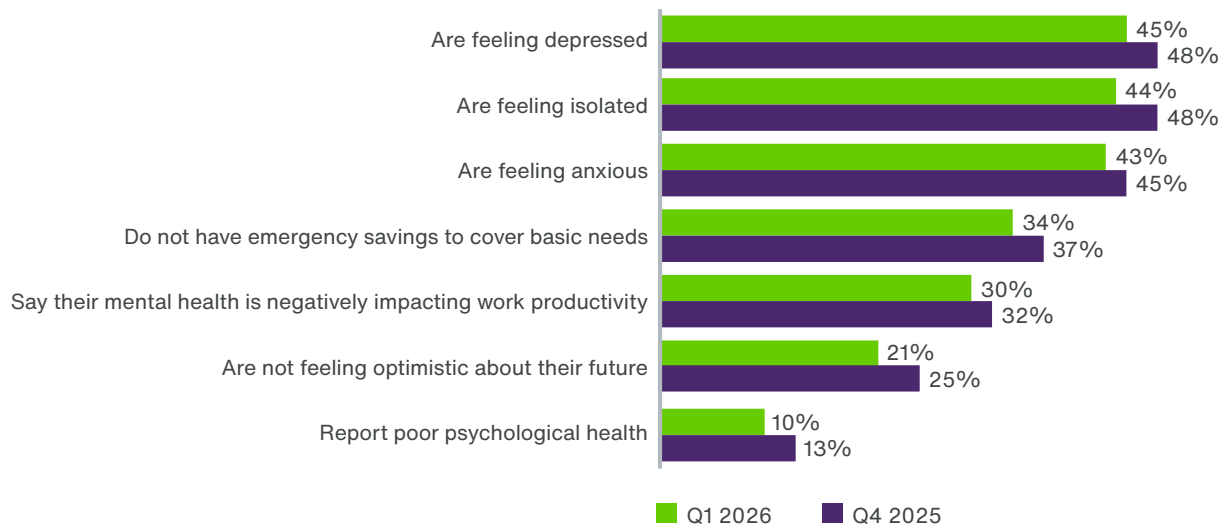
Depression (49.3) has been the lowest Mental Health Index sub-score for the fifth consecutive period. Isolation (49.9), anxiety (50.5), optimism (59.4), work productivity (60.5), and financial risk (64.9) follow. General psychological health (69.4) remains the most favourable mental health measure in Q1 2026.

- All mental health sub-scores, apart from optimism, have either increased or remained unchanged compared to the previous period
- The psychological health sub-score continues to be the most favourable mental health measure since Q4 2025

Nearly half (45 per cent) of workers feel depressed, 44 per cent feel isolated, 43 per cent feel anxious, 34 per cent do not have emergency savings for basic needs, 30 per cent say their mental health is negatively impacting work productivity, 21 per cent do not feel optimistic about their future, and 10 per cent of workers cite poor psychological health.

Mental Health Index Sub-scores	Q1 2026	Q4 2025
Depression	49.3	47.1
Isolation	49.9	47.5
Anxiety	50.5	49.3
Optimism	59.4	59.5
Work productivity	60.5	59.2
Financial risk	64.9	62.6
Psychological health	69.4	69.0

Percentage at risk by MHI sub-score



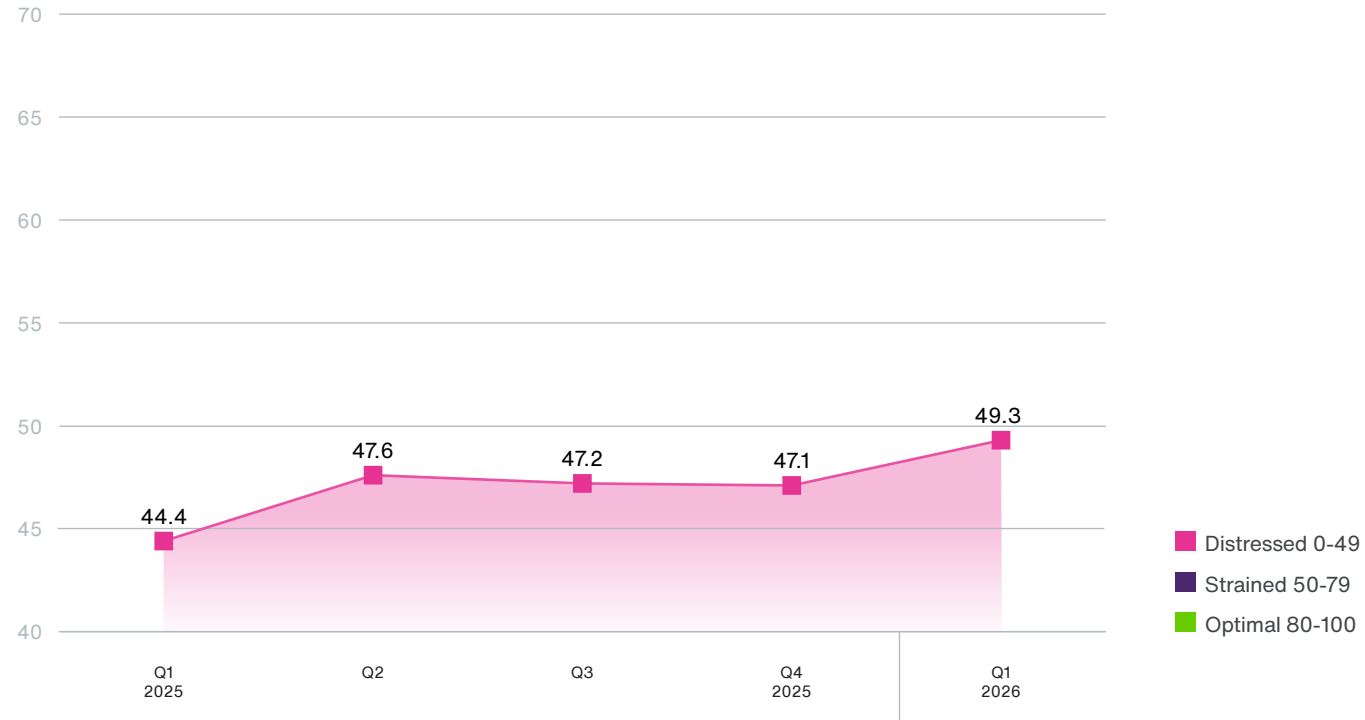
Depression

In the first quarter of 2026, 45 per cent of workers often feel a sense of helplessness.

Depression has been the lowest mental health sub-score since the launch of the Index in January 2025.

Despite a consistent upward trend, nearly half of workers continue to feel depressed, and the sub-score remains the lowest.

Sub-score
Q1 2026
49.3

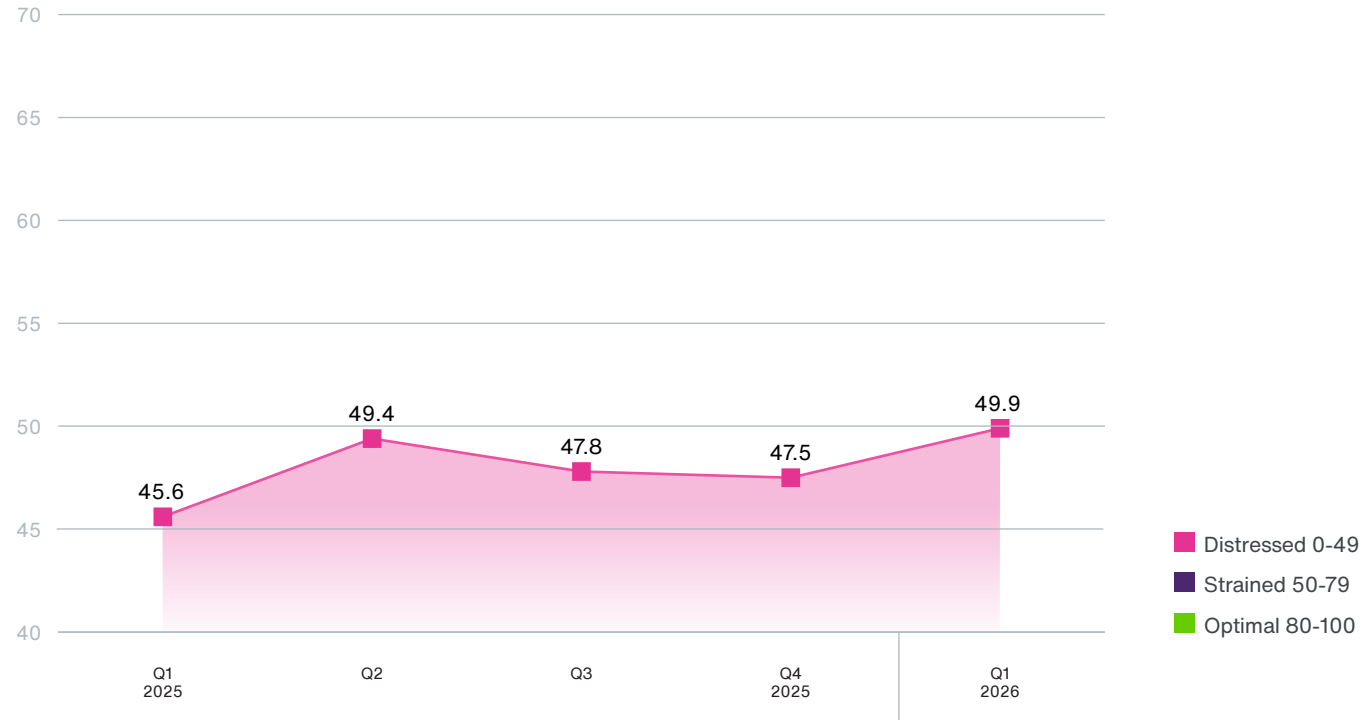


Isolation

In the first quarter of 2026, 44 per cent of workers say they often feel alone.

Following two periods of decline, the isolation sub-score has improved by more than two points in Q1 2026. Despite this increase, isolation remains the second-lowest mental health sub-score since the launch of the Mental Health Index in January 2025.

Sub-score
Q1 2026
49.9

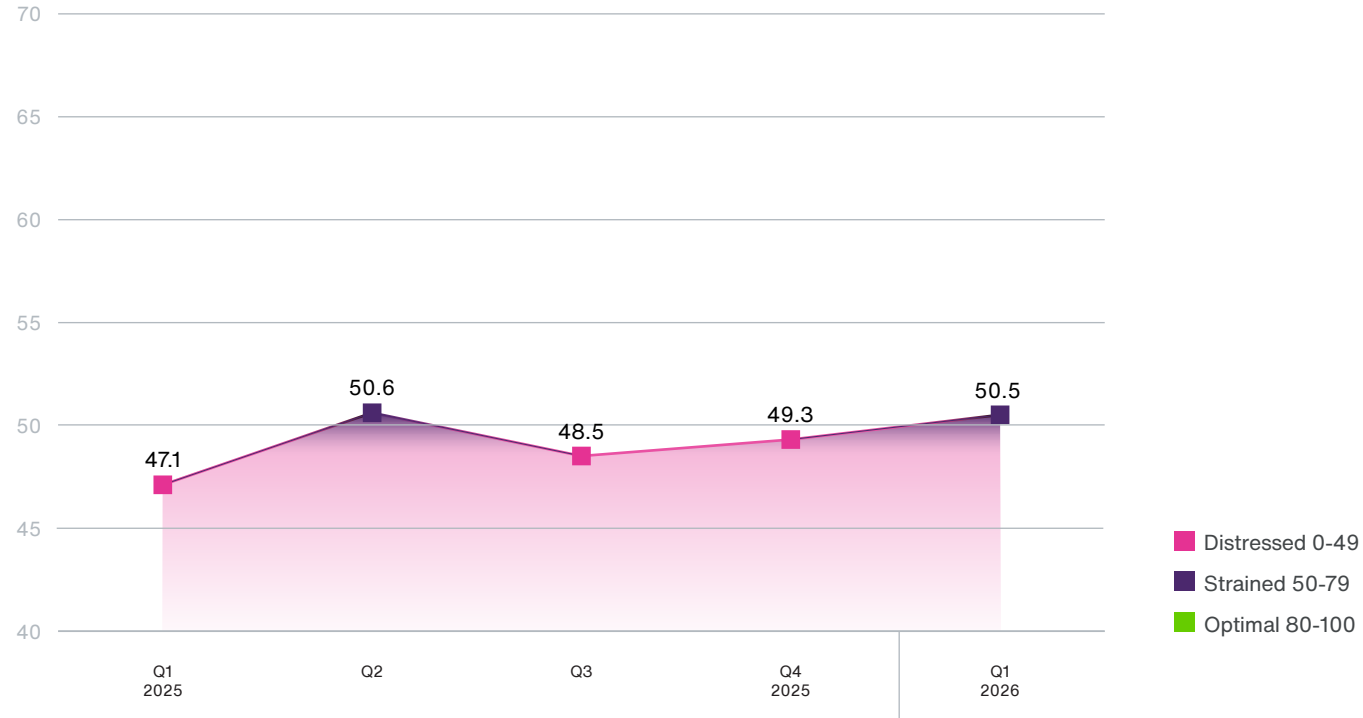


Anxiety

In the first quarter of 2026, 43 per cent of workers report often feeling unsettled and nervous.

Despite incremental improvements since the launch of the Mental Health Index in January 2025, the anxiety sub-score has remained within the score range of 50, toggling between distressed and strained levels.

Sub-score
Q1 2026
50.5



Mental health by gender and age.

- Since the launch of the MHI, women have had significantly lower mental health scores than men. In Q1 2026, the mental health score for women is 54.8, compared with 58.8 for men
- Since January 2025, mental health scores have improved with age
- While differences in mental health scores between workers with and without minor children are evident in other countries, the same is not found for South Korea. Workers with at least one child have the lowest score (56.8), but workers with three or more children have the highest mental health score (61.1)

Mental health by employment status.

- Overall, four per cent of respondents are unemployed¹ and seven per cent report reduced hours or reduced salary
- Workers reporting reduced salary compared to the previous month have the lowest mental health score (49.1), followed by workers reporting fewer hours than the last month (53.9), respondents not currently employed (56.9), and workers with no change to salary or hours (57.3)
- Managers have a higher mental health score (58.1) than non-managers (55.8)
- Labourers have a lower mental health score (54.5) than service industry (55.9) and office workers (57.6)
- Respondents working for companies with more than 10,000 employees have the highest mental health score (65.4)
- Self-employed/sole proprietors have the lowest mental health score (52.3)



Emergency savings

- Workers without emergency savings continue to experience a lower mental health score (46.9) than the overall group (56.9). Workers with an emergency fund have an average mental health score of 61.9

¹ MHI respondents who have been employed in the past six months are included in the poll.

The Mental Health Index by region.

In the first quarter of 2026, the Honam (58.2) and Capital (57.7) regions have the highest mental health scores, while the Yeongnam (55.7) and Central (53.0) regions have the lowest.

- In Q1 2026, mental health scores have improved in the Honam, Capital, and Central regions compared to Q4 2025
- Despite having the highest mental health score in Q4 2025, the Yeongnam region now has the second-lowest score



Region	Q1 2026	Q4 2025
Capital Region	57.7	55.8
Central Region	53.0	52.1
Honam Region	58.2	55.6
Yeongnam Region	55.7	55.9

Numbers highlighted in pink are the lowest/worst scores in the group.
Numbers highlighted in green are the highest/best scores in the group.

Employment status	Q1 2026	Q4 2025
Employed (no change in hours/salary)	57.3	56.1
Employed (fewer hours compared to last month)	53.9	53.0
Employed (reduced salary compared to last month)	49.1	45.6
Not currently employed	56.9	52.0

Age group	Q1 2026	Q4 2025
Age 20-29	52.6	53.1
Age 30-39	53.7	53.4
Age 40-49	56.7	54.8
Age 50-59	59.6	58.1
Age 60-69	68.5	64.6

Number of children	Q1 2026	Q4 2025
No children in household	56.9	55.2
1 child	56.6	56.1
2 children	56.7	56.2
3 children or more	61.1	49.0

Gender	Q1 2026	Q4 2025
Men	58.8	57.8
Women	54.8	52.6

Household income/annum	Q1 2026	Q4 2025
< 20,000 won	49.9	52.0
20,000 to < 40,000 won	53.2	49.7
40,000 to < 60,000 won	55.7	54.7
60,000 to < 100,000 won	58.3	58.5
100,000 won and over	63.7	60.0

Employer size	Q1 2026	Q4 2025
Self-employed/sole proprietor	52.3	52.5
2-50 employees	55.7	54.1
51-100 employees	56.5	53.4
101-500 employees	57.4	59.6
501-1,000 employees	57.1	54.5
1,001-5,000 employees	61.3	60.1
5,001-10,000 employees	63.3	58.1
More than 10,000 employees	65.4	63.2

Manager	Q1 2026	Q4 2025
Manager	58.1	57.5
Non-manager	55.8	54.0

Work environment	Q1 2026	Q4 2025
Labour	54.5	52.6
Office/desk	57.6	57.0
Service	55.9	53.8

Numbers highlighted in pink are the lowest/worst scores in the group.
Numbers highlighted in green are the highest/best scores in the group.

The Mental Health Index by industry.

Workers in Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles have the lowest mental health score (50.6), followed by workers in Media and Telecommunications (53.3), and Other Service Activities (53.3).

Workers in Financial and Insurance Activities (62.9), Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply (61.3), and Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities (60.0) have the highest mental health scores in the first quarter of 2026.



Industry	Q1 2026	Q4 2025	Change
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	57.2	46.6	10.6
Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	61.3	52.5	8.7
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	54.1	49.6	4.5
Transportation and Storage	59.8	55.4	4.4
Other Service Activities	53.3	48.9	4.5
Financial and Insurance Activities	62.9	58.7	4.2
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	57.3	53.6	3.7
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	60.0	56.8	3.3
Technology	57.4	55.1	2.3
Manufacturing	58.9	57.3	1.6
Construction	59.4	58.5	1.0
Education	58.6	58.0	0.6
Public Administration and Defense; Compulsory Social Security	58.7	58.6	0.1
Media and Telecommunications	53.3	53.2	0.1
Human Health and Social Work Activities	56.8	57.3	-0.5
Real Estate Activities	54.7	57.0	-2.3
Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	50.6	53.9	-3.3
Administrative and Support Service Activities	54.7	58.8	-4.1
Information and Communication (excluding media and telecommunications)	55.8	60.7	-4.9

Spotlight

The relationship between MHI scores and productivity.

Productivity losses are calculated using an assessment of four key metrics:

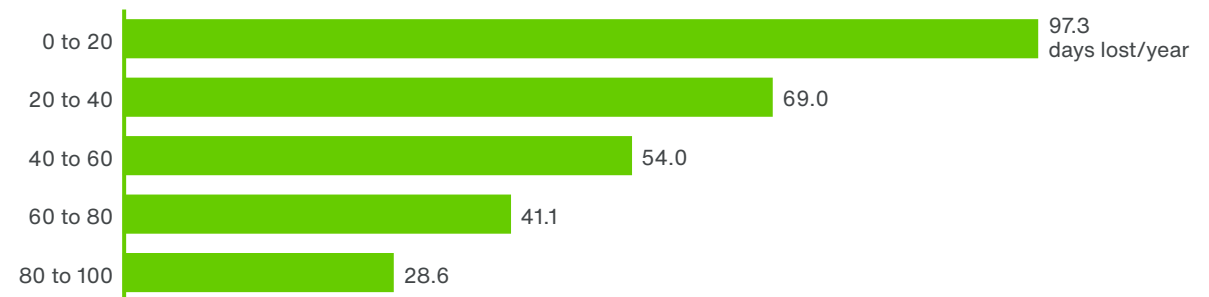
1. Work effort when feeling well
2. Absenteeism when feeling unwell
3. Instances of working when feeling unwell (commonly referred to as Presenteeism)
4. Work effort when feeling unwell

Productivity loss is reported as a percentage of working time lost and as the number of workdays lost per year, based on a standard 240-day work year.

- Mental health scores are strongly correlated with productivity. Workers with lower mental health scores experience greater productivity loss, while those with higher scores experience less productivity loss
- Nearly two in five (39 per cent) workers have a mental health score of 50 or lower. The productivity loss of this group is twice the number of lost workdays, as 11 per cent of workers have a mental health score of 80 or higher



Productivity loss in working days per year by MHI score

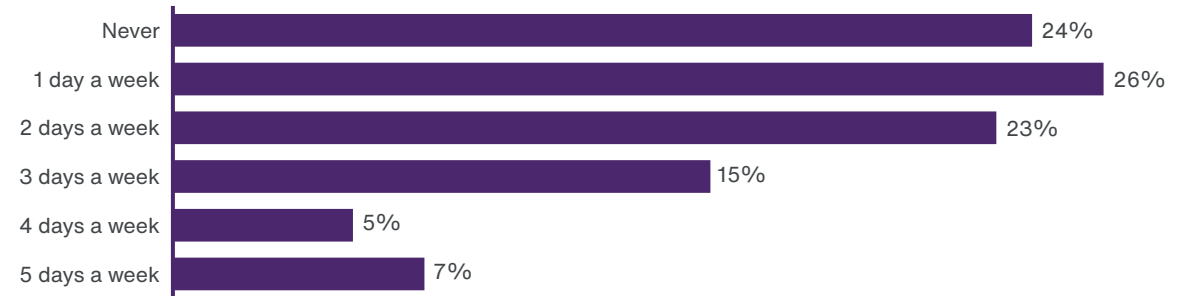


Presenteeism

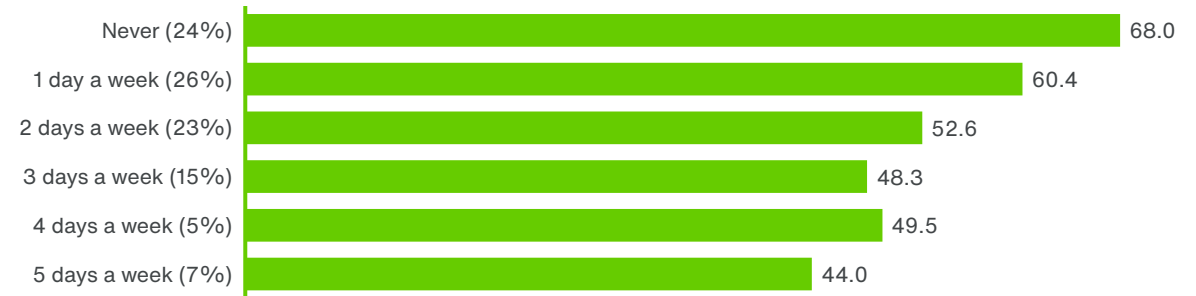
Presenteeism refers to productivity loss when someone is working while unwell. Three in four workers report doing their jobs at least one day per week while feeling unwell.

- 76 per cent of employees report working while feeling unwell at least one day per week; this group has significantly lower mental health scores and experiences greater productivity losses compared to workers who never work while unwell
- The highest mental health score (68.0) is among 24 per cent of workers who never work while unwell, more than 11 points higher than the national average (56.9)
- Workers over 50 are more than twice as likely as workers under 40 to report never working while unwell
- Non-parents are 40 per cent more likely than parents to report never working while unwell

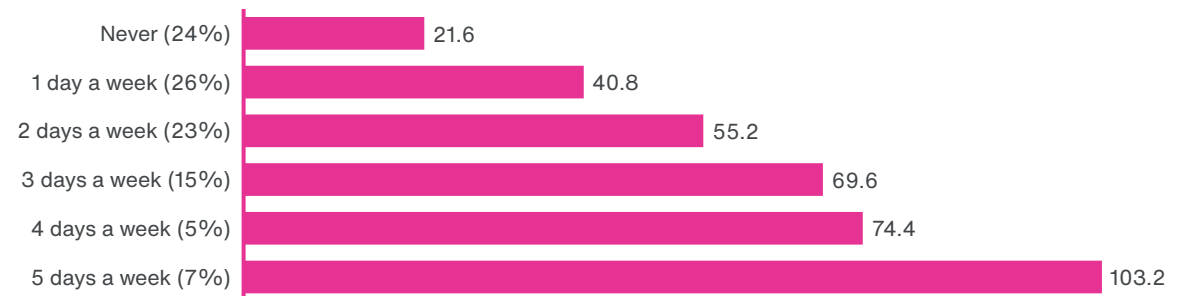
In a typical week, how often do you do your job feeling mentally or physically unwell?



MHI score by “In a typical week, how often do you do your job feeling mentally or physically unwell?”



Productivity loss by “In a typical week, how often do you do your job feeling mentally or physically unwell?”



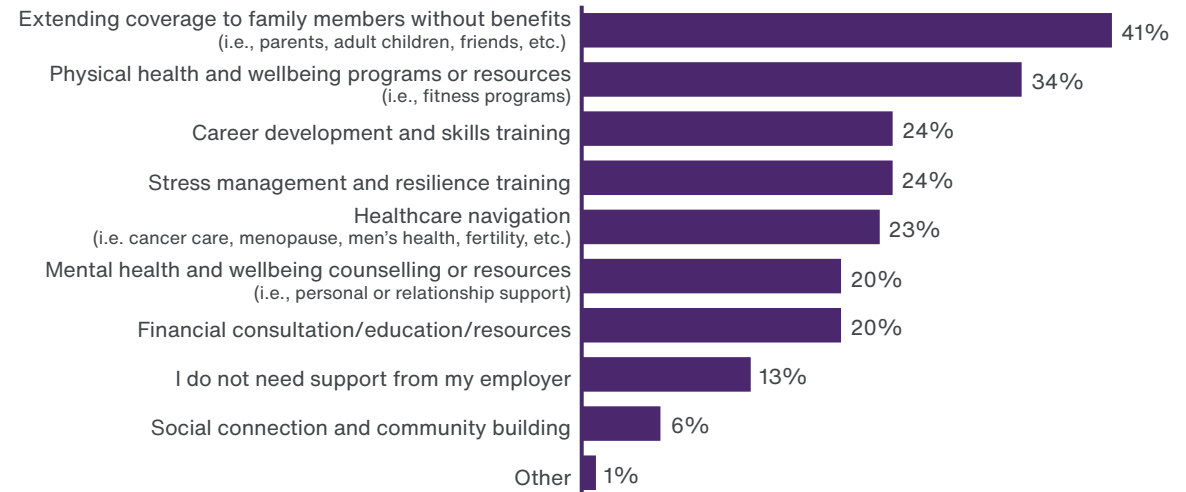
Employer support for wellbeing.

Employees want more from their employers: extended family coverage, physical and mental health support, career development, resilience training, and healthcare navigation.

- More than two in five workers (41 per cent) say their employer could provide better support by extending benefits to family members; 34 per cent want better support for their physical health; 24 per cent want career development and skills training; 24 per cent want stress management and resilience training; 23 per cent want better healthcare navigation; 20 per cent want better mental health support, and 20 per cent want support with financial resources, education or consultation
- Non-parents and non-managers are twice as likely to say they don't need support from their employer

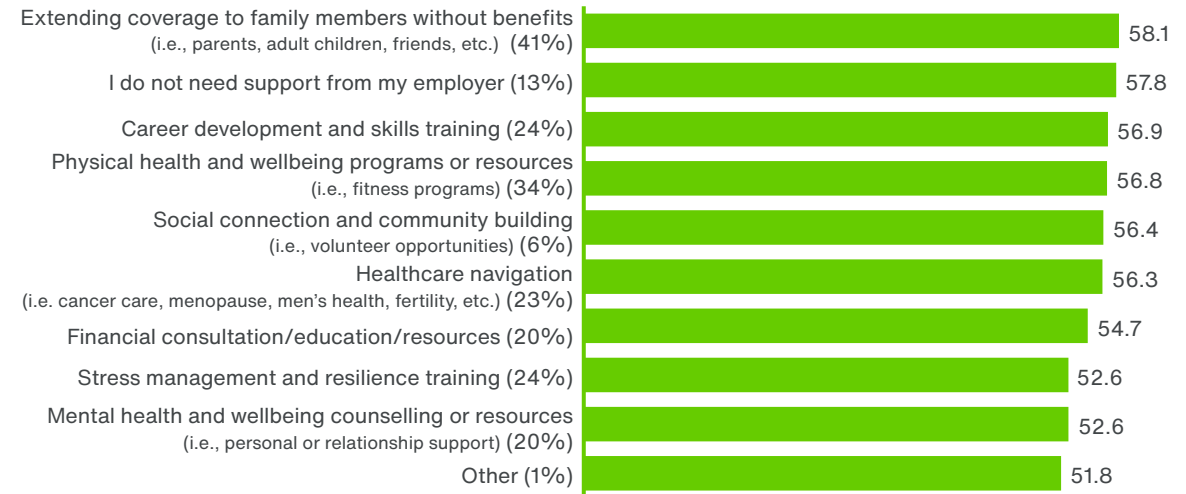


Are there any areas where you feel your employer could provide better support?

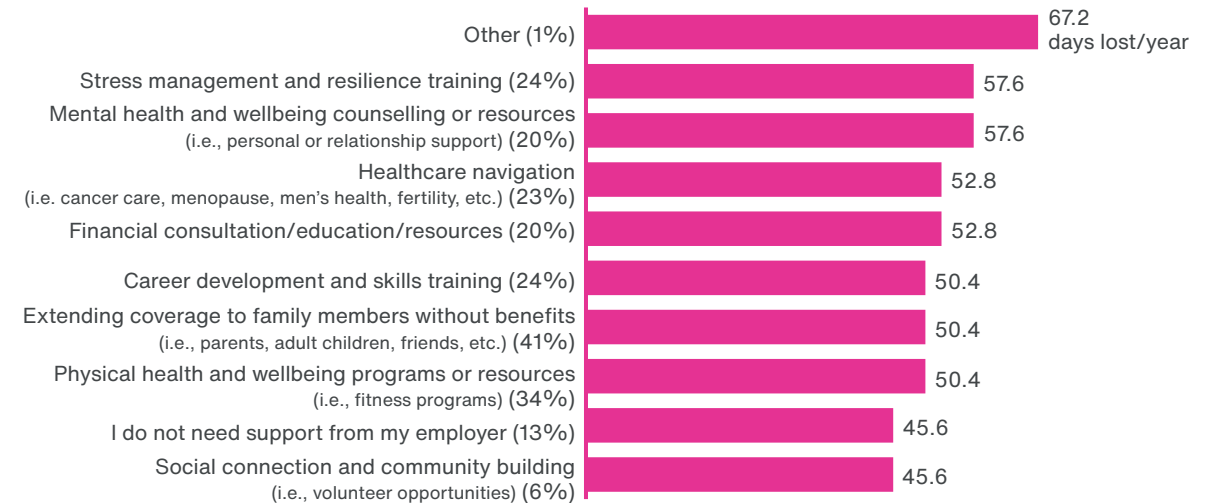


- The lowest mental health score (52.6) is among 20 per cent of workers wanting better support for their mental health, five points lower than workers not needing support from their employer (57.8), and more than four points lower than the national average (56.9)
- Workers wanting better support for their mental health have an annual productivity loss of 57.6 days, 12 days more compared to those requiring no support (45.6 working days per year)

MHI score by “Are there any areas where you feel your employer could provide better support?”



Productivity loss by “Are there any areas where you feel your employer could provide better support?”

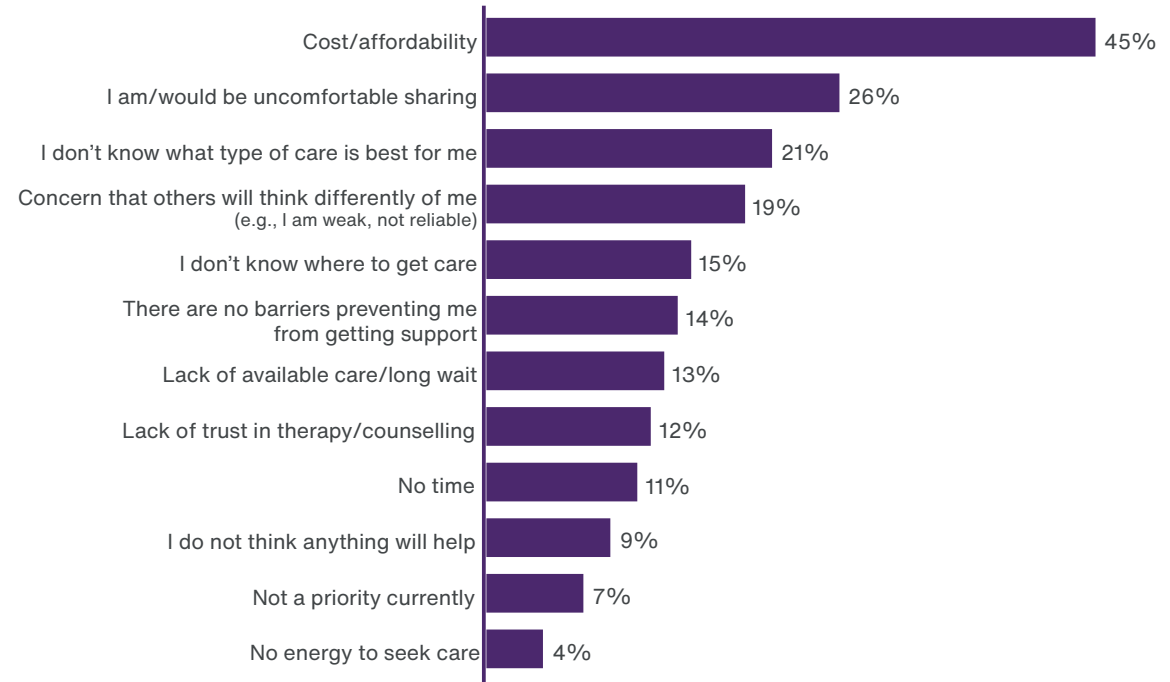


Barriers to mental health support.

Cost/affordability, along with discomfort sharing, prevent workers from accessing mental health support.

- Nearly half (45 per cent) of workers say cost/affordability is preventing them from getting mental health support, 26 per cent say they would be uncomfortable sharing, 21 per cent don't know what type of care is best, 19 per cent are concerned that others will think differently of them, and 15 per cent don't know where to get mental health care
- Managers, parents, and workers under 40 are at least 25 per cent more likely to be concerned that others will think differently of them if they seek mental health support
- Workers over 50 are nearly twice as likely as workers under 40 to report that there are no barriers to support
- Non-parents are twice as likely as parents to report that there are no barriers to support

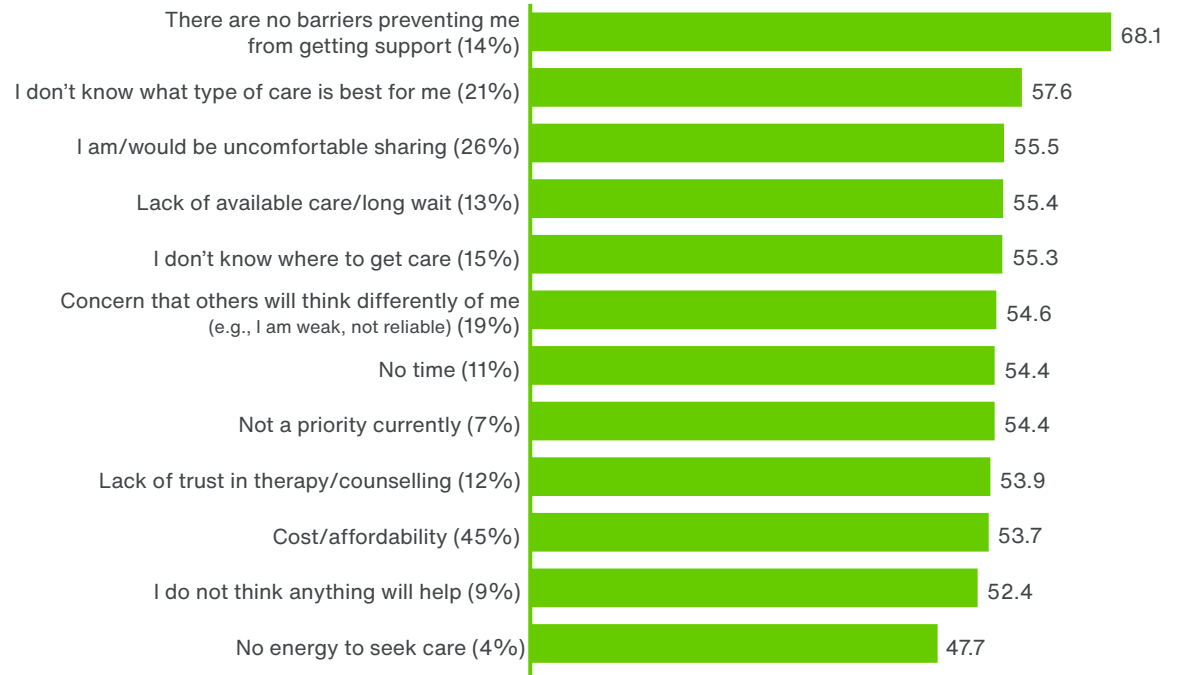
What would prevent you from getting mental health support if you needed it?



- The highest mental health score (68.1) is among 14 per cent of workers reporting there are no barriers to getting mental health support, more than 11 points higher than the national average (56.9)
- The lowest mental health score (47.7) is among four per cent of workers who say they have no energy to seek care, more than 20 points lower than workers reporting no barriers to support (68.1) and more than nine points lower than the national average (56.9)



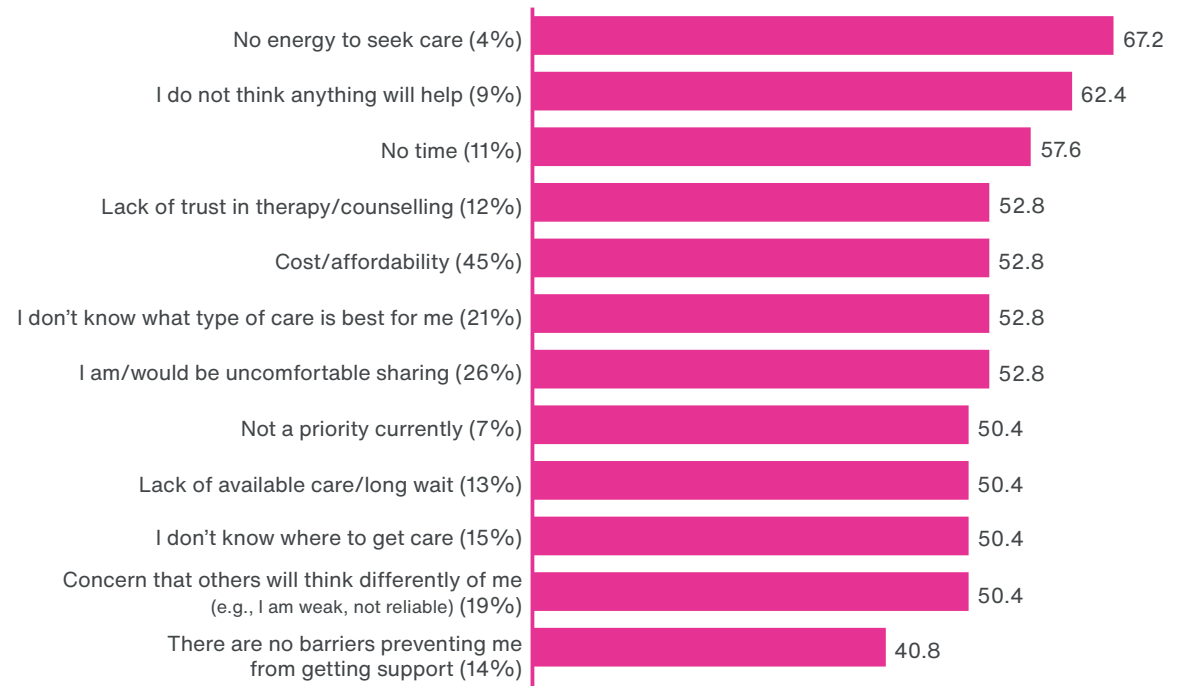
MHI score by “What would prevent you from getting mental health support if you needed it?”



- Workers reporting no barriers to support have an annual productivity loss of 40.8 working days, 26 days fewer compared to those lacking the energy to seek care (67.2 working days per year)



Productivity loss by “What would prevent you from getting mental health support if you needed it?”



Workplace culture

Only one-third of workers believe their organisation’s culture supports their wellbeing.

- Nearly one-third (32 per cent) perceive their workplace culture as supportive of their personal wellbeing; this group has the highest mental health score (60.5), nearly four points higher than the national average (56.9)
- More than one-quarter (28 per cent) don't perceive their workplace culture as supportive of their personal wellbeing; this group has the lowest mental health score (52.0), eight points lower than workers who perceive their workplace culture as supportive (60.5) and five points lower than the national average (56.9)
- Workers who perceive their workplace culture as supportive of their personal wellbeing have an annual productivity loss of 44.8 days; 10 days fewer compared to workers who perceive it as unsupportive (54.5 working days per year)

The workplace culture at my organisation supports my personal wellbeing



MHI score by “The workplace culture at my organisation supports my personal wellbeing”



Productivity loss by “The workplace culture at my organisation supports my personal wellbeing”

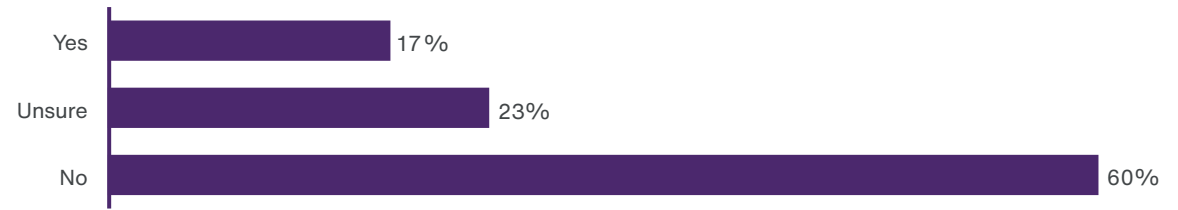


Turnover

Two in five workers are considering leaving their jobs or are uncertain about staying.

- Three in five workers (60 per cent) are not thinking about leaving their jobs; this group has the highest mental health score (61.7), nearly five points higher than the national average (56.9)
- One in six (17 per cent) workers are thinking about leaving their jobs; this group has the lowest mental health score (48.4), 13 points lower than workers who are not thinking of leaving their jobs (61.7), and nearly nine points lower than the national average (56.9)
- Workers not considering leaving their jobs have an annual productivity loss of 45.6 days, a difference of 14 days compared to workers considering a change (60.0 working days per year)

Are you thinking of leaving your job?



MHI score by “Are you thinking of leaving your job?”



Productivity loss by “Are you thinking of leaving your job?”

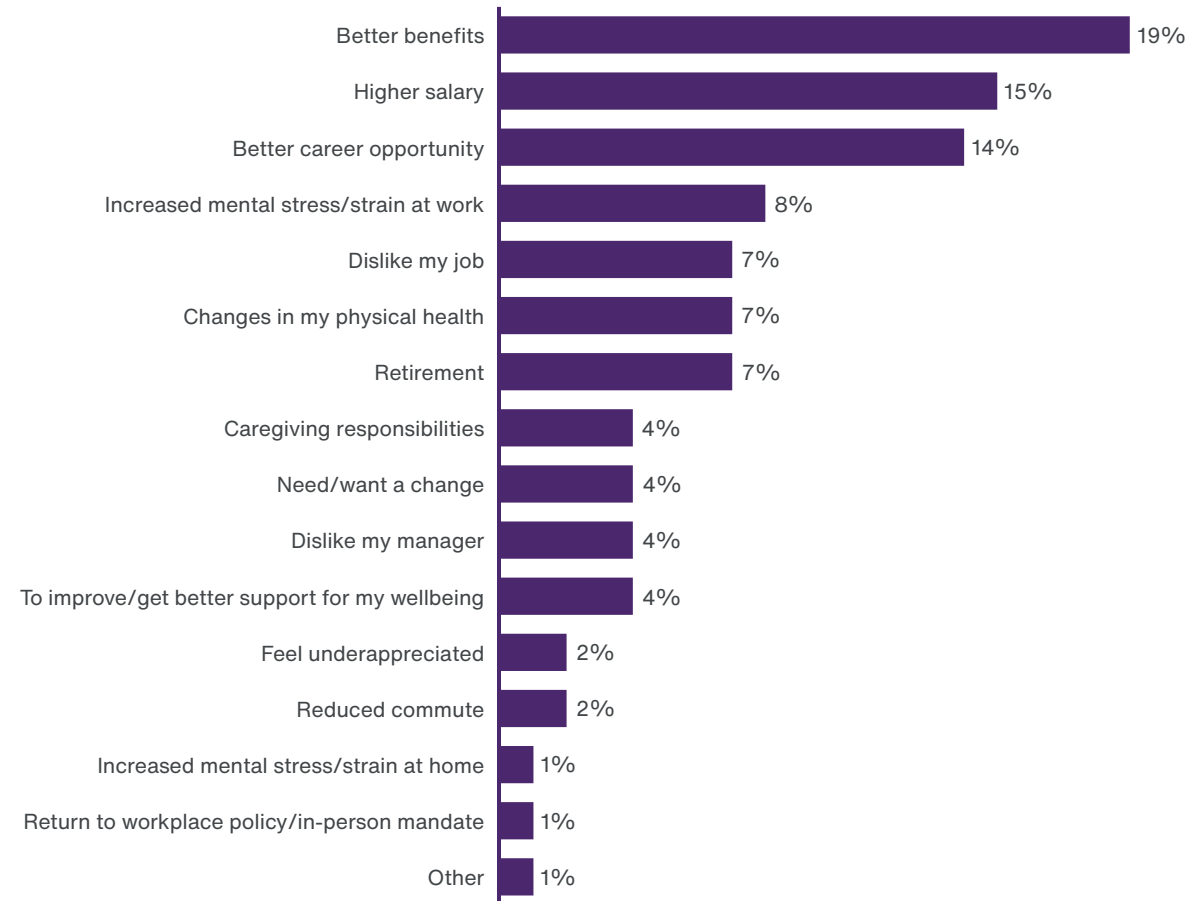


Better benefits, higher salaries, and better career opportunities are the primary drivers of turnover intention.

- Nearly one in five (19 per cent) workers who are thinking of leaving say better benefits are the primary reason for considering leaving their jobs, 15 per cent say it's for a higher salary, and 14 per cent say career opportunities are the reason
- Workers without children and non-managers are more likely to report better career opportunities as the reason for leaving their jobs



What is the primary reason you are thinking of leaving your job?



- The mental health score of 19 per cent of workers considering leaving their jobs for better benefits (48.7) is more than eight points lower than the national average (56.9); this group also experiences a productivity loss of 45.6 days annually

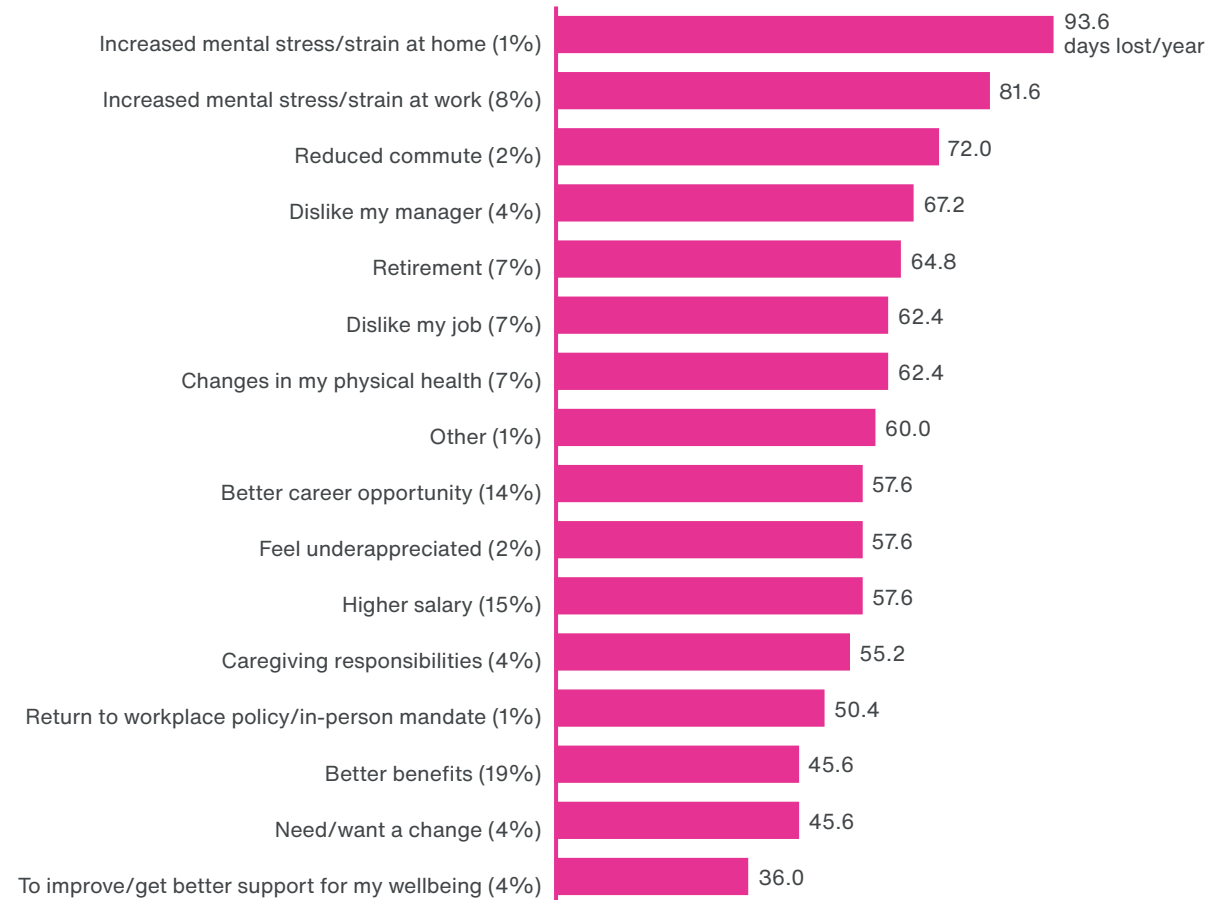


MHI score by “What is the primary reason you are thinking of leaving your job?”





Productivity loss by “What is the primary reason you are thinking of leaving your job?”



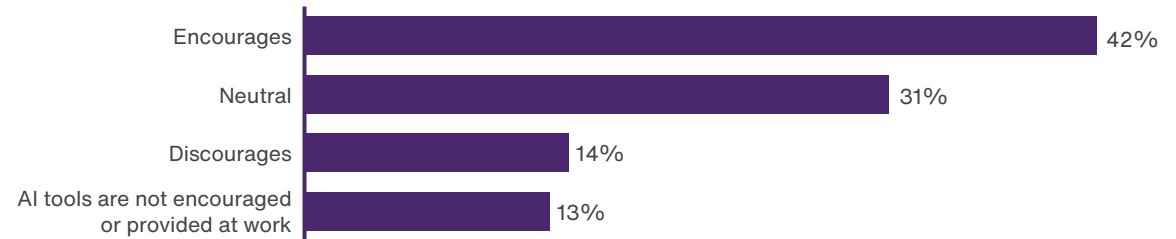
Adoption of AI at work.

More than two in five workers are encouraged to use AI tools in their work.

- More than two in five workers (42 per cent) report that their employer encourages AI use, 31 per cent report their employers are neutral on the matter, 14 per cent are discouraged from using AI, and 13 per cent say AI tools are not encouraged nor provided at work
- Managers are 80 per cent more likely than non-managers to say their employer supports or encourages the use of AI tools in their work
- The lowest mental health score (53.9) is among 14 per cent of workers reporting their employer discourages the use of AI tools in their work, nearly four points lower than workers whose employers encourage AI tools (57.7) and three points lower than the national average (56.9)



To what extent does your employer support or encourage the use of AI tools in your work?



MHI score by “To what extent does your employer support or encourage the use of AI tools in your work?”

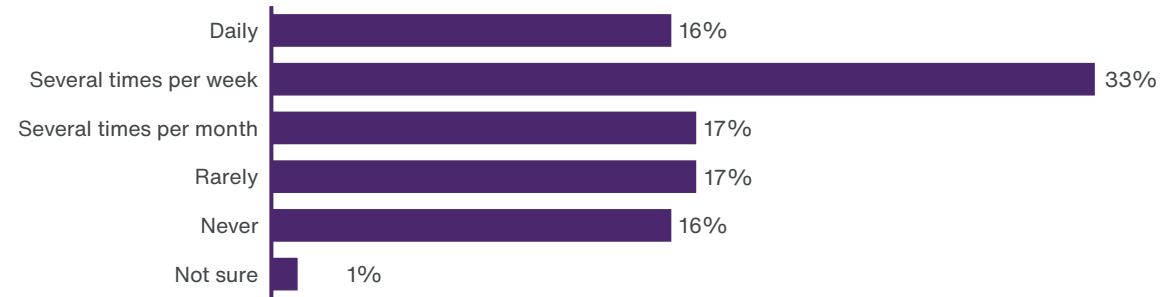


Among workers who use AI tools or technologies at work, nearly eight in 10 report improved efficiency.

- Almost half (49 per cent) of workers use AI in their work at least several times per week; a further 17 per cent use AI in their work several times per month
- More than three-quarters of workers (76 per cent) using AI report improved efficiency
- Managers are 30 per cent more likely than non-managers to report that AI tools/technologies have improved their efficiency at work



How often do you use AI tools or technologies in your current job?



How would you describe the impact of AI tools/technologies on your efficiency at work?



MHI score by “How would you describe the impact of AI tools/technologies on your efficiency at work?”



Overview of the TELUS Mental Health Index.

The mental health and wellbeing of a population are essential to overall health and work productivity. The Mental Health Index measures the current mental health status of employed adults. Increases and decreases in the MHI are intended to predict cost and productivity risks and inform the need for investment in mental health support by businesses and governments..

The Mental Health Index report has two parts:

1. The overall Mental Health Index (MHI).
2. A spotlight section that reflects the specific impact of current issues in the community.

Methodology

Data for this report is collected through an online survey of 1,000 people who live in South Korea and are currently employed or who were employed within the last six months. Participants are selected to represent the age, gender, industry, and geographic distribution in South Korea. Respondents are asked to consider the previous two weeks when answering each question. Data for the current report were collected between February 25 and March 9, 2026.

Calculations

To create the Mental Health Index, a response scoring system is applied to turn individual responses into point values. Higher point values are associated with better mental health and less mental health risk. The sum of scores is divided by the total number of possible points to generate a score out of 100. The raw score is the mathematical mean of the individual scores. The distribution of scores is defined according to the following scale:

Distressed 0 - 49 **Strained** 50-79 **Optimal** 80 - 100

Additional data and analyses.

Demographic breakdowns of sub-scores and specific cross-correlational and custom analyses are available upon request. Benchmarking against the national results or any subgroup is available upon request.

Contact MHI@telushealth.com





www.telushealth.com

